

VIRTUES FOR THE PEOPLE
ASPECTS OF PLUTARCHAN ETHICS

PLUTARCHEA HYPOMNEMATA

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VIRTUES FOR THE PEOPLE

ASPECTS OF PLUTARCHAN ETHICS

Edited by

GEERT ROSKAM and LUC VAN DER STOCKT

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Efficiency and Effectiveness of Plutarch's Broadcasting Ethics

G. ROSKAM – L. VAN DER STOCKT

Ever since Plato, philosophy faced the question as to what extent its experts were expected to play an active role in society. Should the philosopher descend again into the cave in order to share his high insights with his fellow citizens and make them better? Plato himself answered in the positive, as did the Stoics later. Through their notorious *ἀναισχυντία* and their shocking conduct, even the Cynics advocated a radical moral message. Epicurus, by contrast, as a rule refrained from entering into public life¹, although this withdrawal obviously does not imply that he refused to benefit other people². Similarly, the ideal of a pure *vita contemplativa*, far away from the turmoil of politics, no doubt remained attractive for many philosophers of different schools³, but even such a theoretical life need not have been sterile and other-worldly. Maximus of Tyre even argues that a contemplative philosopher such as Anaxagoras contributed no less to social harmony and to the preservation of the state than his more public-spirited colleagues (XVI, 3).

Although most philosophers were thus willing to benefit in their own ways their neighbours, cities, and even the world at large⁴, the question remains whether their voices were heard by the ordinary citizens. Some of the most respected philosophers, it is true, were from

¹ Although he was prepared to take into account several exceptions; on Epicurus' apolitical philosophy, see most recently Roskam (2007a).

² Strikingly enough, one of the clearest examples of a philosopher who tried to benefit as many persons as possible may well be that of the Epicurean Diogenes of Oenoanda, who undertook to divulge Epicurean philosophy through a monumental inscription in his native city.

³ The classic study of the ideals of *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa* is Joly (1956). For Plutarch's position towards this question, see, e.g., Riley (1977); Babut (1984); Georgiadou (1995), 192-95.

⁴ Cf., e.g., the position of Ariston of Chios, who talked with everyone and expressed his wish that even the beasts could understand his words (see Plutarch, *Maxime cum principibus* 776C = *SVF* I, 382).

lower social classes. Socrates, for instance, though an Athenian citizen, was the son of a mason and a midwife. Cleanthes was a former boxer (Diogenes Laertius VII, 168) and Epictetus even a former slave. But did they really succeed in spreading their messages to the large group of artisans, farmers, or soldiers? Apart from a few exceptions, it is most unlikely. Simon the shoemaker associated with Socrates and later published many Socratic dialogues on different subjects⁵. And there is the charming anecdote of the Corinthian farmer who read Plato's *Gorgias* and left his field in order to 'plant' Plato's doctrines (Themistius, *Orat.* XXIII, 295cd). But the great majority would probably side with the Thracian servant girl who jeered at Thales after he fell into a pit while studying the stars (Plato, *Tht.* 174a).

Plutarch of Chaeronea (° ca. 45-† ca. 125 AD), Platonist, polymath, and prolific writer, was by no means an armchair philosopher. He strongly believed in the necessity for a philosopher to affect the lives of his fellow citizens. In his short work *Maxime cum principibus philosopho esse disserendum*, for instance, he argues that a public-spirited philosopher should try to maximize his usefulness by associating with a ruler, thus benefiting πολλοὺς δι' ἑνός (777A and 778E)⁶. And Plutarch himself practiced what he preached, for he served his fellow citizens as a teacher, as a politician, and as a priest of Apollo. Even his own life thus showed his eagerness to promote the individual and social welfare of his fellow men.

The same urge inspired many of his writings that sought to meet what he considered people's true needs. Posterity has much appreciated those writings and privileged their preservation. ZIEGLER, in his basic article on Plutarch, recognizes that Plutarch's particular strength as an author was situated precisely in these 'popular-philosophical' writings⁷, and in his classification of the Chaeronean's œuvre, the so-called 'popularphilosophisch-ethische Schriften' go first. Yet ZIEGLER

⁵ Diogenes Laertius, II, 122-123; see further Hock (1976) and Sellars (2003).

⁶ See Roskam (2009).

⁷ Ziegler (1951), 702: "...so erweckt doch eine Durchmusterung dieser erhaltenen 'Moralia' den Eindruck, daß die popularphilosophische Belehrung (einschließlich der theologischen und pädagogischen Arbeiten) innerhalb der Schriftstellerei P.s durchaus, auch mengenmäßig, im Vordergrund gestanden und das Übrige gleichsam nur eine Appendix gebildet habe. [...] Die Popularphilosophie hat also innerhalb der Schriftstellerei P.s nur einen, wenn auch bedeutenden, Sektor gebildet, vielleicht ein Drittel, und allerdings scheint es, daß hier die besondere Stärke des Autors gelegen und die Nachwelt recht daran getan hat, vorwiegend diese Schriften (und die innerlich zu ihnen gehörigen Parallelbiographien) immer wieder zu studieren und zu vervielfältigen."

nowhere makes his criteria explicit for placing singular writings under this heading (nor, for that matter, for excluding some). There is even a remarkable shift in ZIEGLER's presentation: in the table of contents (col. 637) of the article, he groups twenty-one authentic writings under that heading, but later on (col. 703) he broadens the class by adding five 'pädagogische Schriften', though again without explaining his motives.

ZIEGLER's 'palinode' – based, to our minds, on a sound intuition – triggers many questions that are central to this volume. Indeed, the problem of classification is not just an 'academic' one. A classification of writings, just as a classification of sciences, presupposes the knowledge of their 'core business', and as such involves an overall assessment of the proper nature (structure and theme) and aim of each writing, as well as a detailed observation and explanation of their interrelations (concerning theme and aim). Is there a common purpose and procedure of the 'popular-philosophical' writings? *A priori* it is likely that they want to affect actual morality⁸ and replace it with a more systematic philosophic ethics, but if that is true, then what is at the core of this ethical project? And also, do the popular-philosophical writings share a common set of logical arguments and literary devices with which Plutarch tries to convince his audience of the necessity and feasibility of a genuine ethical philosophy? How do the 'popular-philosophical' writings interrelate? Are we supposed to believe that they are non-technical by nature and that they address a public of non-specialists? But what then about *De virtute morali*, a theoretical anti-Stoic polemic and defence of the Academic point of view⁹? Genre does not seem to be the unifying factor either: dialogue (e.g., *De cohibenda ira*), treatise (e.g., *De profectibus in virtute*), *consolatio* (e.g., the *Consolatio ad uxorem*), and letter-essay (e.g., *De tranquillitate animi*) are all represented in the group. Yet at the same time, why is a work such as *An virtus doceri sit* excluded from this class? If its highly rhetorical outlook is the reason for its exclusion, its very theme clearly suggests a strong link with "popularphilosophisch-ethische Schriften mit einschluß der pädagogischen"¹⁰.

It is clear, then, that Plutarch's 'popular-philosophical' writings raise many particularly challenging questions, not only because the writings

⁸ As the set of pre-reflexive principles actually applied by the public addressed; cf. Dover (1974), 1-5. This morality has to be inferred from Plutarch's writings themselves. In *De cohibenda ira*, for instance, Plutarch declares that the common view on anger as a sign of (male) bravery or righteous indignation is a misunderstanding (456F and 462EF); cf. also *De frat. am.* 482C.

⁹ See Ingenkamp (1999).

¹⁰ Ziegler (1951), 703.

involved do not always at first sight *seem* thematically related, but also because of the large number of writings. Moreover, in spite of the intensive scientific research on the *Corpus Plutarcheum* during the last two decades, Plutarch's 'popular-philosophical' writings have attracted only limited scholarly attention. They have never been studied *as a group*¹¹ and most of them still lack a proper literary analysis (including questions of genre, addressed public, cultural embedding) or thorough philosophical discussion. The nineteenth century, however, devoted to *Quellenforschung*, produced much valuable material¹² that, if prudently handled, is instrumental to the assessment of Plutarch's *own* authorial aims and philosophical stance. Especially the parallels which *Quellenforschung* laid bare allow for 'explaining Plutarch by Plutarch'¹³ and establishing interrelations between various writings, particularly through the analysis of repetitive clusters¹⁴. Moreover, concerning the subclass of the psychotherapeutic writings, INGENKAMP has done excellent work: he analyses the train of thought of the essays involved and discusses their theme as well as their structure from the perspective of Plutarch's psychotherapeutic method¹⁵.

The present volume contains a collection of essays that were originally presented at an international conference at Delphi and that focus on different aspects of Plutarch's 'popular philosophy' in general and on his 'popular-philosophical' writings in particular. The volume is subdivided into four main parts, which deal with this rich material from different perspectives and together throw new light upon the important and multifaceted domain of Plutarch's thinking and writing.

In the first part (*Virtues for the people*), several key questions relating to the concept of 'popular philosophy' and its implications are discussed. What may be understood by Plutarch's 'popular philosophy'? What kinds of virtues are recommended and who is addressed? What is the social context and relevance of Plutarch's philosophical advice?

A correct, historically sound understanding of the notion of 'popular philosophy' may take its point of departure in a study of what ZIEGLER probably understood by the term *Popularphilosophie*. **Luc**

¹¹ The work of Betz (1978), apart from being incomplete, treats the essays independently and largely without attention to their interrelations.

¹² See also Mansfeld (1999), 14.

¹³ Cf., e.g., Van der Stockt (2006).

¹⁴ See on the cluster-method, e.g., L. Van der Stockt (1999a); Id. (1999b); Id. (2004).

¹⁵ See Ingenkamp (1971); cf. also Id. (2000).

Van der Stockt shows that this concept should in all likelihood be traced back to a philosophical movement in the German *Aufklärung*. Concerned with the social relevance of philosophy, *Popularphilosophen* tried to educate the people towards happiness and tranquillity of mind by introducing them to practicable truths through rhetorical discourse. A careful analysis of Plutarch's *De amicorum multitudine* (compared with other 'popular philosophers' such as Themistius and Maximus of Tyre) reveals a broadly similar approach: Plutarch's arguments in this work often lack solid logical demonstration; frequently appeal to the emotions, common sense, and self-esteem of his target audience; and recommend a clear ideal of 'exclusive' friendship.

Chris Pelling connects the notion of 'popular philosophy' with the demotic sort of wisdom that is mentioned in the *Life of Solon*. It is a wisdom that has to do with moderation (*μετριότης*) and that can often be reached by 'ordinary' people more easily than by powerful statesmen or brilliant philosophers. This wisdom, however, which is not limited to the Greeks, is beyond the great multitude, which can at best be educated towards virtue by cultivated, responsible politicians and needs their moral and political guidance. In the *Parallel Lives*, then, popular philosophy is not demotic or vulgar thinking but the philosophy of the educated and refined *pepaideumenoi*.

That Plutarch primarily addressed these *pepaideumenoi* in his *Parallel Lives* is shown by **Tim Duff**, who points out that the *Lives* only rarely contain explicit and straightforward moral evaluations and/or advice. The general, paired structure of the *Lives*, the significant amount of thematic overlap between different *Lives*, the subtle techniques of focalization, and the introduction of an additional perspective in the final *synkriseis* all stimulate the reader's active reflection and invite him to make necessary distinctions and qualifications. Such an attitude of critical reading was often recommended in ancient pedagogical contexts and can actually be found several times in Plutarch's *Moralia* (esp. in *De audiendis poetis*). Plutarch's readers, in short, are not satisfied with easy answers or ready-made conclusions, but actively engage with the text, form their own judgements about it, and are able to derive from it moral lessons which they can apply to their own individual situations.

The question remains, then, how these *pepaideumenoi* can, on the basis of their own sophisticated and critical reflection, assume their honourable task of educating their fellow citizens in the concrete political context of Plutarch's day. This problem is examined by **Paolo Desideri**, who confronts Plutarch's major political treatises with several speeches of Plutarch's contemporary Dio of Prusa and with Aelius Aristides' famous oration *Regarding Rome*. One of the principal tasks of the statesman, in Plutarch's view, consists of finding a delicate

equilibrium between respect for the Roman ruler and the preservation of as much local autonomy as possible. To that purpose, he should take care that concord in the city is maintained. The people, once again, turn out to be a passive object, and although the façade of democracy is never completely pulled down, fundamentally, the local aristocratic *πρώτοι* are pulling the strings. Once again, then, the question remains as to whether virtues *for* the people become virtues *of* the people.

The next two contributions throw further light on the paramount importance of the social context for Plutarch's ethical reflections. In her study of *De tuenda sanitate praecepta*, **Lieve Van Hoof** shows how Plutarch, while writing for *φιλόλογοι καὶ πολιτικοί*, often appeals to their pre-philosophical presuppositions and sense of honour, taking into account the demands of their social status and taking care that his dietetic (or diet-ethical) advice can be reconciled with their actual lives. At the same time, Plutarch in different ways tries to support his claim of authority as a philosopher on medical topics. Rather than turning his learned and public-spirited readers into professional philosophers, he prefers to reserve the respected role of philosopher for himself.

The close connection between Plutarch's philosophy and real life is also underlined by **Iolanda Capriglione**. In her view, the Chaeronean was not interested in developing abstract, unworldly theories or a rigid set of rules, but recognised the importance of concrete *πράξεις* in a social context. His moral advice neither ignores parameters such as usefulness (*χρεία*) and common sense, nor disregards the relevance of the particular circumstances. Decisions should be made on the basis of *παιδεία* and calculating intelligence. This perspective underlies Plutarch's general view of the passions (as appears from his rejection of Stoic *ἀπάθεια* as an unfeasible ideal), and in particular his treatise *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate*, which rejects an ideal world without enemies as imaginary and prefers to take (moral) advantage of the less ideal situation in which enmity is an important factor in social life.

Plutarch, then, did not philosophise *in vacuo*. The fact, however, that Plutarch's 'popular philosophy', or his 'popular-philosophical' writings, were closely connected with a concrete, contemporary socio-political context does not imply that they largely ignored theoretical questions. A few such fundamental questions are discussed in the second part of this volume (*Some theoretical questions on ethical praxis*).

The first paper in this part still recalls the fundamental importance of concrete life for Plutarch's thinking, as it was discussed in the previous section of this volume. **Hubert Martin** raises the interesting question whether Plutarch's ethical thinking should be regarded

as consequentialist or non-consequentialist. The famous proem of the *Life of Pericles* clearly shows a non-consequentialist approach: the decision to perform a particular virtuous action does not rest on a careful calculus of benefits or harms but on a kind of moral state which precedes and is conducive to this virtuous action. Yet this perspective is counterbalanced by other passages where Plutarch argues that the statesman should not merely bear in mind his own moral excellence but also take care of public interest. This concern for the welfare of one's fellow citizens, however, entails a consequentialist perspective which prefers τὸ συμφέρον to τὸ δίκαιον. Traces of both perspectives can often be found in the *Lives*, and this 'flexible inconsistency', which is ultimately rooted in the complex variety of the material world, is in itself a striking illustration of Plutarch's humanity.

Jan Opsomer deals with the complex relationship among virtue, luck, and 'happiness' or success in Plutarch's works. Theoretical treatises such as *De virtute morali* provide an interesting general perspective that reveals Plutarch's fundamental willingness to take into account levels of irrational disorder and passions, of contingency and luck. More detailed information can be found in the *Lives*. The *Life of Dion*, for instance, throws light on the interaction between nature and education and its implications for the problem of 'moral luck', and on the traditional question of the self-sufficiency of virtue, whereas other *Lives* clarify to what extent perfect (or imperfect) virtue can be corrupted by bad fortune. All of these passages illustrate Plutarch's acknowledgement of the moral relevance of contingent circumstances and show that he developed a well-considered, subtly balanced position towards the particularly complex topic of the interplay between virtue and luck.

In the last paper of this section, **Geert Roskam** focuses on Plutarch's position towards parental love for children. At first sight, this may seem a typical topic of 'popular philosophy', closely connected as it is with everyday life, yet a study of the philosophical tradition before Plutarch shows that it was also a much-discussed issue in theoretical debates among different schools. Plutarch's *De amore prolis* should be understood, against this theoretical background, as an attack against the Epicurean view of parental love. Plutarch borrows many arguments from the previous literary and philosophical (Platonic, Stoic, and Peripatetic) traditions, and rhetorically reworks them for his own polemical purposes.

Although such theoretical questions are far from irrelevant for Plutarch's 'popular philosophy', in that they actually deal with several of its presuppositions or implications and thus provide important information about the speculative background against which the 'popular-philosophical'

writings should be understood, they probably do not constitute the core of Plutarch's 'popular philosophy'. No less important in this respect is Plutarch's concern with moral education and his repeated attempts to cure the most different passions of the soul. Various aspects of his elaborate and fairly systematic moral psychagogy and of his interest in, and treatment of, moral issues in the *Moralia* and the *Lives* are discussed in the third part of this book (*Virtues and vices*).

Three of Plutarch's treatises that are devoted to 'minor' foibles (*De garrulitate*, *De curiositate*, and *De vitioso pudore*) are carefully analysed by **Anastasios Nikolaidis**. The three works show basically the same tripartite structure and contain fairly similar arguments, although each of them also has peculiar features. That Plutarch gives so much attention to these, at first sight, rather unimportant weaknesses may be explained by two reasons: they both show irrational disorder and a diseased soul in need of a moral cure, and they can have pernicious consequences for social life. Plutarch's therapy of these foibles rests on rational reflection and habituation, while taking into account many lessons from the rich previous tradition and preferring common sense to excessive moral rigidity.

Whereas the above three treatises belong to the group of Plutarch's 'psychotherapeutic' writings, *De vitando aere alieno* does not directly aim at *Seelenheilung*. **Heinz-Gerd Ingenkamp** demonstrates that this work should rather be regarded as a moral *suasoria* or *ὁμιλία*, in which Plutarch promotes (the traditional ideal of) an interiorized *αὐτάρκεια* and *σχολή* as a corrective of erroneous convictions regarding borrowing. Quite remarkable in *De vitando aere alieno* is the great number of logical flaws in Plutarch's argument, which shows that the author primarily addresses a (virtual) group of half-cultivated and not particularly rich people who want to be entertained by the speaker's embellished discourse and are willing to accept more than one obvious *non sequitur*.

In dealing with the passion of competitiveness or the desire to win (*φιλονικία*), **Philip Stadter** focuses on an important aspect of the agonistic Greek world which no doubt continued to play a crucial role in the social and political life of Plutarch's day. In classical authors, *φιλονικία* appears as an ambivalent term, and a similar ambivalence can in fact be found in Plutarch's works as well. In the *Moralia*, competitiveness is almost exclusively negative: it is a passion which threatens to destroy harmony and concord in both the *οἶκος* and the *πόλις*. Several *Lives*, by contrast, suggest a more differentiating view: *φιλονικία* can yield positive results, provided that it is governed by reason and aims at honourable ideals (such as the freedom of Greece). When, however, the politician gives free rein to his competitive passion, so that it becomes excessive, it has destructive and pernicious consequences for himself and his community.

Moral progress, the therapy of wickedness, and reflection on virtues and vices are no doubt part and parcel of Plutarch's 'popular philosophy'. Yet this 'popular philosophy' is not merely a synonym of moral edification. To the extent that it deals with common experience and everyday life, its domain is much broader and much more varied, as is demonstrated in the last part of this volume (*'Popular philosophy' in context*).

Aurelio Pérez Jiménez deals with the presence of astrometeorological opinions in Plutarch's works. Whereas such convictions about the direct influence of the sun, the moon, and the stars on the sublunary world of plants, animals, and human beings can sometimes be traced back to the previous literary or scientific tradition, they often appear to be rooted in popular belief. While Plutarch is interested in such widespread but uncritical convictions, he does not confine himself merely to mentioning them but also tries to rationalize and/or explain them from a scientific, philosophical, or religious and eschatological perspective. In his view, these scientific or physical explanations contribute to the refutation of superstitious opinions, while remaining perfectly compatible with authentic piety.

The discussion now turns from the stars to the beasts. Animals have always occupied an important place in human life, in antiquity no less than now. In *De sollertia animalium* and *Bruta animalia ratione uti* (or *Gryllus*), Plutarch argues against the Stoics that animals are not entirely devoid of reason. **Judith Mossman** and **Frances Titchener** show how Plutarch develops this philosophical position in a fairly sophisticated rhetorical way. Against the background of a general framework in which technical discussion has to yield to entertaining empirical observation, Plutarch uses metaphors, comparisons, and an anthropomorphic approach as argumentative strategies in order to blur the clear-cut distinction between animals and human beings. At the same time, subtle allusions to celebrated works of classical authors (such as Xenophon's *Cynegeticus*) add to the literary quality of the works, whereas the *mise-en-scène* and the characterization of the participants in the dialogues helps in avoiding the danger of 'one-dimensionality'.

The above paper thus illustrates, as so many others in this volume, the paramount importance of rhetoric and literary embellishment in a context of 'popular philosophy'. This also holds true for the last contribution, in which **Françoise Frazier** examines the imagery of the mirror in Plutarch's oeuvre. Her study shows how Plutarch perfectly succeeds in reconciling the thoroughly Platonic use of this image with its more ordinary use in a moral context. The mirror indeed functions both as a kind of mediator between the intelligible and the sensible realm and as an instrument which contributes to self-knowledge and enables people to refashion themselves while looking at the paradigmatic excellence of other men (esp. the famous statesmen of the past).

In this sense, Plutarch's use of the image of the mirror is a beautiful illustration of the harmonious combination of common topics and more fundamental philosophical issues, and of a literary and a more theoretical approach, a combination that is one of the basic features of Plutarch's 'popular philosophy'.

I. VIRTUES FOR THE PEOPLE

Semper duo, numquam tres? **Plutarch's *Popularphilosophie* on Friendship and Virtue in *On having many friends***

L. VAN DER STOCKT

1. Plutarch's *On having many friends* and *Popularphilosophie*

1.1. *Popularphilosophie*

K. ZIEGLER's article "Ploutarchos" in *RE*, 1951, as a *status quaestionis* of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century scholarship on Plutarch, was at the same time the influential forerunner of the renaissance of Plutarch studies that was soon to come. In that article, ZIEGLER offered a classification of Plutarch's works and constructed fourteen categories, one of which is entitled '*Die popularphilosophisch-ethischen Schriften*' and includes *On having many friends*.

We take it that ZIEGLER used the term *Popularphilosophie* against the background of the history of German philosophy, and that he applied to a group of Plutarchan works the activity of a number of philosophers of the German *Aufklärung* in the second half of the eighteenth century. A short exploration¹ of the main characteristics of this German *Popularphilosophie* will allow us to throw some light on Plutarch's own philosophical activity and notably also on his 'popular philosophical' works. In fact, those familiar with Plutarch will hear the bell ringing several times.

As a historiographical term, *Popularphilosophie* refers to a movement that, although clearly inspired by the ideas of Enlightenment, constructed an educational project that stood somewhat apart from the (mathematical) rationalism that was *de rigueur* in the German University programs then. In fact, *Popularphilosophie* was generally rather averse to committing itself to one system or doctrine. Devoted to the idea of

¹ This paragraph is based on Holzhey (1989); van der Zande (1995); Brown (2001); Copleston (2003 [= 1960]); Ueberweg (1953¹³).

independent, personal judgement (“in the sense of open-mindedness and readiness to question ill-founded authority”²), it welcomed any argument (especially the kind of argument that testified to ‘common sense’, ‘common experience’, or ‘sense perception’), and it was in this sense eclectic. Besides, professional, academic philosophers were felt to be isolated from society, and *Popularphilosophen* were convinced that philosophy should have a positive social function.

The overall goal of *Popularphilosophie* was indeed to make man perfect and happy (it was, in this sense, philanthropic), and its conviction was that this could be realised by educating people. Education of people operates through the communication of “truths that educate people and free them from harmful notions”.

This ‘communication of truths’, however, is not to be understood as the ‘communication of comprehensive technical-philosophical systems’. The truths to be communicated belonged to what we now call physics, moral philosophy, political science, history, geography, anthropology, and so on. *Popularphilosophie*, like most ancient philosophy, was encyclopaedic and did not make a sharp distinction between philosophy and science. At the same time, the communication of truths, it was felt, should take its root in practical experience – there was, in fact, a strong emphasis on practical philosophy – and “everyday and interesting subjects”³. These subjects were to be treated in the Socratic way: “beginning playfully, it should end with instruction”⁴. Cautious deliberation over these subjects would end in what was, for *Popularphilosophie* as *Lebensphilosophie*, the highest aim in human life: *tranquillitas animi*.

Communicating and assimilating ‘truths’, then, boils down to being a philosopher for the world, for society, for a broad (and educated!) audience⁵. It follows that *Popularphilosophie* was “deliberately rhetorical in nature”: “for the popular philosophers rhetoric created the public sphere in which communication in a common language was possible and as such was a means to escape from the logomachies they associated with scholastic learning. Social discord was meaningless and philosophical debate trivial until it resolved into harmony. Broad learning, not specialization, and the art of conversation, not a scholar’s jargon, were the first requisites for these purposes”⁶.

² Van der Zande (1995), 434.

³ Holzhey (1989), 1096, quoting Kant.

⁴ Van der Zande (1995), 427.

⁵ Petrus (1995) discusses the question of the readership of popularising scientific texts, and specifically the more or less implicit demands of their authors vis-à-vis their readership.

⁶ Van der Zande (1995), 422.

It goes without saying that ZIEGLER's label of *Popularphilosophie* suits many of Plutarch's works, perhaps even more works than those he classified under that category. Plutarch indeed shares with German *Popularphilosophie* several important characteristics. We do not have to dwell on his philanthropy, his educational drive, his rhetorical vein, his devotion to social harmony, his activity as an anthropologist, his inclination to cautious inquiry, his interest in everyday subjects like those discussed in *De vitioso pudore* or *De curiositate*, to his *De tranquillitate animi* and other treatises. His dedication to *Lebensphilosophie* is made very clear in *Old Men in Public Affairs* 796C-E:

Most people think all this [*viz. holding office, being ambassador, vociferating in the assembly, etc.*] is part of statesmanship, just as they think of course that those are philosophers who sit in a chair and converse and prepare their lectures over their books; but the continuous practice of statesmanship and philosophy, which is every day alike seen in acts and deeds, they fail to perceive... Socrates... was the first to show that life at all times and in all parts, in all experiences and activities, universally admits philosophy⁷.

1.2. On having many friends

One of the practical topics that attracted Plutarch's attention was *philia*, the broad spectrum of loving relationships, among which is friendship. On this subject he wrote several essays and letters, all reflecting not only the accumulated Greek scholarship but also his own actual intuition and experience.

On having many friends is a short text that starts "playfully" with a witty anecdote (93AB), treats the practical problem of the role of friendship in daily life, and ends with a clear-cut summary of the communicated instruction: "For this reason a steadfast friend is something rare and hard to find" (97B). This closure itself makes it clear that the text is not only a plea about (or against) multiple friendships, as its title would suggest, but also a reflection on, even an exhortation to 'true friendship'⁸.

⁷ All translations are from the *LCL* editions of Plutarch's works.

⁸ In the introduction to his edition and translation of the text, Klaerr (1989), 216 states that "le traité dépasse son objet précis, qui est une mise en garde contre la recherche d'amitiés multiples", but then states that the text becomes "un élément d'une vaste enquête sur l'amitié [...] dont la partie positive est malheureusement perdue". Giannattasio (2000), 226 n. 4 convincingly argues against the suggestion that the text merely constitutes the *pars destruens* on the topic of friendship.

BABBITT suggested that “Plutarch’s essay on friendship may possibly have been offered on some occasion as a lecture”⁹; KLAERR repeated that suggestion¹⁰, and, apparently on the grounds of its rhetorical vein, dated it “de la fin de la période de formation de l’auteur”¹¹. But GIANNATTASIO warns that the formal rhetorical tricks do not necessarily imply that the text was actually delivered as a *declamatio*: “un testo di qualunque natura, drammatico e non, trovava la sua efficacia nell’attualizzazione assegnata alla voce”¹². Perhaps the question whether *On having many friends* was actually delivered as a *declamatio* or not, comes as close as possible to a satisfactory solution through YAGINUMA’S felicitous interpretation of Plutarch’s style as “‘lecture’-style”¹³: “He wrote primarily with a particular friend in mind, and he therefore wrote as if he were talking to a friend. This is not to say that Plutarch wrote in a colloquial style, but rather that the texts seem to resemble lectures held for a small circle of hearers”.

It remains to be seen, however, in what way that kind of communicative situation bears on the interaction of philosophical tenets with rhetorical invasiveness in this particular ‘lecture’. There are in fact some paradoxes to be elucidated. It seems indeed paradoxical that a man like Plutarch would argue against having many friends: in modern times, he is reputed to have cultivated many friendships himself¹⁴. And yet, as has been noticed above, *On having many friends* has been considered “a warning against the pursuit of multiple friendships”. Besides, the “warning against multiple friendships” itself seems to be counterintuitive. Clearly, Plutarch upholds a rather exclusive notion of friendship, one that limits its extent through the fullness of its content. And finally: what kind of people was Plutarch talking to? To what kind of people did this essay make sense? Who would be interested in having many friends and/or was in need of a ‘warning’ against multiple friendships? In short, how does the communication operate in *On having many friends*, if it is understood as one of the *Popularphilosophische Schriften*?

⁹ Babbitt (1998=1928), 45.

¹⁰ Klaerr (1989), 215: “destiné peut-être à une lecture publique”.

¹¹ Klaerr (1989), 217.

¹² Giannattasio (2000), 234.

¹³ Yaginuma (1992), 4741-42.

¹⁴ Puech (1992).

2. On having many friends §1-2: rhetoric and philosophy

2.1. A sample of Plutarch's rhetoric

The exordium (§§ 1-2a)¹⁵: questioning a common craving

To catch the attention of the audience, one does well to start with a story, an anecdote¹⁶. But the witty story of Meno (from Plato, *Meno* 71e) serves other ends as well. It also warns the audience against conceited pseudo-wisdom, and thus appeals to their inquisitiveness. And it also allows for a parallel between virtue and friendship in a way that discredits the very idea of cultivating a plurality of friendships from the start. The exemplum is clearly partial, and it will be effective only inasmuch as the audience will not question the authority and the appropriateness of the example. That is to say: Plutarch presupposes some philosophical background, specifically a certain degree of sympathy with Plato, in his audience, as well as an uncritical adherence to the (unquestioned!) philosophical thesis about virtue.

Apparently that is the case, for on the basis of this tacit consensus Plutarch mercilessly constructs what we call a paradox: the contrast between our craving for many friends and the actual situation: we do not even have a single friend! He is confronting his audience with (a construction of) conflicting values: *polyphilia* against having a single friend, or 'true friendship'. That is to say: Plutarch invites his public to take a stand in an ambiguous matter (an *amphidoxon*: Lausberg # 64, 2), though without leaving much doubt about his own position: craving many friends is ridiculous if one hasn't even a single one.

But all this is brought up in a very rhetorical way: Plutarch ironically imagines his audience to be *afraid* of having many friends, and at the same time, like a good preacher, he includes himself in his audience (φοβούμεθα: 93C). In fact, this is a rhetorical *tour de force*: Plutarch must have known very well that the paradox was a real problem for his audience. His irony, however, allows him to bring his audience, from the start, somewhat closer to his position: they will no longer, for fear of being ridiculous, cling uncritically (μη λάθωμεν) to their craving for many friends and will realise that, by striving to have multiple friendships, they will prevent themselves from acquiring a single one.

¹⁵ I propose a structure somewhat different from the one given by Klaerr (1989), 215, who takes § 1 and 2 together as an "introduction". Πρώτον μὲν οὖν (93E), however, marks a transition.

¹⁶ Lausberg (1990³), # 271.

Even more: the daring comparison with licentious women (93C) appeals again to feelings of shame¹⁷. But then, again, the implicit confession of complicity makes the diagnosis easier to swallow: each one of us is attracted to anything new; the suggestion is that we (ἡμῶν) would be (or better still: each one of us [ἕκαστον ἡμῶν] would be) somewhat frivolous...

The thesis (§2b): semper duo, numquam tres!

- a. Then¹⁸ a solemn and emphatic appeal to tradition limits the ideal number of friends: they “are *paired* in the bond of friendship” (93EF), as examples from Greek history and myth show. The appeal to the collective (Greek) memory is, of course, an *argumentum ex auctoritate*: the audience is not invited to suggest that there were numerous examples of foes being pairs as well, nor of friends being more than two.
- b. Etymology/synonymy/homonymy affords another argument (a friend is ‘the other self’ and can be called *ἑταῖρος*, that is to say: *ἕτερος*, the other one of two). But then, of course, this ‘definition’ is a partial construction¹⁹ (with a shift from *φίλος* to *ἑταῖρος*!). The audience is invited to be pleased with the clever point, and thus to accept the argument as at least probable: “duality is the measure of friendship” (93E).
- c. The trick of a metaphor must serve as a final argument, which comes to an appeal to nature. Let us analyse the train of thought: “We buy friends as well as slaves (!?). You cannot buy many slaves with ‘little money’ (actually the Greek says: ‘little coin’), nor can you buy many friends with ‘little money’. Now the money/coin of friendship is actually ‘little’ in the sense that it is rare. Why is it rare? Because *nature* made that money/coin a most rare combination of ‘goodwill and graciousness combined with virtue, than which nature has nothing more rare’ (93F)”.

We leave it to the reader to question Plutarch’s tacit assumptions (the analogy of slaves/friends, the very idea of buying friends, the identification of the coin with the merchandise), only to observe that they allow him to bring in, almost in passing, a definition of friend-

¹⁷ But not in the audience, nor in the speaker: it would be most ineffective to insult the audience or to debase oneself. Therefore I do not accept Babbit’s insertion of *ἡμῖν* in 93C.

¹⁸ The clearly marked transition (“In the first place then, let us begin at the hearth-stone”) invites the audience to be all ears; cf. Lausberg (1990³), # 288.

¹⁹ Cf. Lausberg (1990³), # 392.

ship, and a strongly authoritative argument: the definition is afforded by nature itself. Nature argues against having many friends. Nature argues against *polyphilia*, as the comparison with rivers also suggests (but are we to believe that love becomes enfeebled by being ‘portioned out’ among many people? Do we split up our love when we love many people?); in fact, it argues for a singular friend, “since also animals [always a strong (Cynical) indication for what is ‘natural’], if they have strongly implanted love for their young, will give birth to but one young” (but surely there are also animals who give birth to and love many young?). “The same goes for humans: our own very Homer [*Il.* IX, 482; *Od.* XVI, 19] calls the beloved son ‘the only one’” (but what about parents with many children: are they ‘unloving’, yet alone ‘unnatural’?²⁰).

The audience is constantly invited to be led by the comparisons, to accept given definitions, to have faith in tradition and common sense, to trust nature and . . . to side with Plutarch. They are not invited to wonder, to analyse, to scrutinize, to debate. They have to forget that they have been driven out of their natural propensity for multiple friendships and that they have been confronted with the *problem* of *polyphilia* as opposed to true friendship. They have to be already somewhat convinced that the number of friends must be limited to two. The thesis prepares the audience to listen benevolently to the *probatio*.

2.2. A glimpse of philosophy?

So far we have argued that the first two chapters of *On having many friends* constitute a well wrought piece of rhetoric. In spite of the Platonic opening scene, the ‘philosophical dogma’ has a mainly Aristotelian ring, as has often been observed in general terms²¹. Thus Aristotle is the expected authority for the basic idea that true friendship is possible between a limited number of persons only (*EN* IX, 10)²², and there is allusion to Aristotle in the proposition that “a friend is another self” (*EN* IX, 4, 1166a32; IX, 8, 1169b6; IX, 9, 1170b6), and that “friendship is a unity of three ingredients: goodwill, graciousness and virtue”²³. One might even conjecture that the definition of

²⁰ Plutarch must have realized that he was skating on thin ice. In § 3, he will immediately accept that one can have more than one friend, if only there is this one special, best friend . . .

²¹ Brokate (1913), 16-17; Klaerr (1989), 217; Postiglione (1991), 14.

²² Klaerr (1989), 219 n. 4 points out that, as far as the idea of canonical “duos” of friends are concerned, one may compare Plutarch with *EN* IX, 10, 1171a15: “the friends one sings about (i.e. in poetry) go by pairs”.

²³ Cf. Bohnenblust (1905), 30.

friendship as a *σύννομον ζῶον* is a deliberate variation on Aristotle's definition of a human being as a *πολιτικὸν ζῶον*. It is, however, remarkable that Plutarch seems to know only one kind of friendship, viz. 'true friendship' (*ἡ ἀληθινὴ φιλία*: 94B), whereas Aristotle knew three kinds, one of which is the 'perfect friendship' (*τελεία φιλία*: *EN VIII.3.6*). Aristotle's doubts as to whether friendship for the sake of pleasure or for the sake of utility really deserves that name have no place in Plutarch's talk. The 'true friendship' is the 'perfect' one, and there seem to be no alternatives²⁴. Clearly, Plutarch wanted to create a polar opposition at the cost of philosophical nuance and doubt. He must have considered his own authority impressive enough to be able to confront his audience with the dilemma 'true friendship or multiple friendships' without their starting to quote Aristotle. And this strategy in turn strengthens his authority: firmly pleading for true friendship, this Plutarch is most likely a perfect friend!

At the same time, however, the 'philosophical dogma' is also no more than a collection of *topoi*²⁵, unquestioned commonplaces which take their authority from 'common sense'. As such, they are fertile ground for an adroit speaker. It is indeed not likely that our author simply copies a specific peripatetic source. The way of arguing (by comparison, anecdote, and example), the authors explicitly referred to in § 1 (Plato; Menander, one of Plutarch's favourites), the images from daily life, the very way of developing a train of thought – in sum, the very texture – bear Plutarch's own personal stamp. And Plutarch must have considered the potential of the *materia* involved to be so great, that he recycled it when dealing with this other kind of *philia*, brotherly love:

Table 1

<i>On having many friends</i> §§ 1-2 (93C-94A)	<i>On brotherly love</i> §§ 2-3 (478D-479D)
A. Briareus of a hundred hands	D. idea of pairs, and examples
B. Menander II, 743 Körte: "if he but have the shadow of a friend"	G'. brothers, through being 'spread' as a pair, are designed to cooperate
C. craving for numerous friends compared to lascivious women	A. creatures of three bodies and a hundred hands
D. idea of pairs, and examples	C'. craving for numerous dishes
E. definition: friendship is a partner-minded animal	E. definition of our nature as seeking for friendship

²⁴ Cf. Klaerr (1989), 217.

²⁵ See Bohnenblust (1905), 39-40; O'Neil (1977), 121.

Table 1 (cont.)

<i>On having many friends</i> §§ 1-2 (93C-94A)	<i>On brotherly love</i> §§ 2-3 (478D-479D)
F. friend = ‘the other’	(H stranger from the market-place or the gymnasium)
G. spreading friendship over many persons makes the friendship weaker	B. Menander II, 743 Körte: “if he but have the shadow of a friend”
(§3: H. pick friends from the inn, gymnasium, market-place)	F. friend = ‘brother’

I will not discuss this cluster of parallels in detail²⁶. Apart from the fact that no one has ever seen any reason to attribute *On brotherly love* § 2-3 to any Peripatetic source²⁷, I only stress that Plutarch, who in *On having many friends* used the argument of ‘nature’ as the ground on which the limitation of the number of friends to two ultimately rests, was going to get in trouble with this argument (cf. also n. 20), if it was to be applied to brotherly love. For although there was the happy contingency that the essay *On brotherly love* was dedicated to two brothers, nature sometimes provides for more than two brothers... Hence the furtive correction: “nature from one seed and one source has created two brothers, or three, or more, not for difference, etc.” (478E). Nature, for that matter, would have gotten Plutarch into more trouble: if nature dictates that spreading love means weakening it (G in *On having many friends*), this natural law has to be corrected in “nature’s design for the two or many brothers to cooperate” (G’ in *On brotherly love*).

On the one hand, this example illustrates the flexibility with which Plutarch applies his own rhetorical ‘format’ to different contexts. On the other hand, the question is legitimate as to what degree Plutarch’s appeal to ‘nature’ is consistent and convincing from a philosophical point of view. The strategy of ‘naturalising’ friendship between two people seems to be a purely rhetorical trick. Here, then, we have a philosopher who doesn’t want to discuss such a fundamental notion as ‘nature’, but whose concern it is to bring practical philosophy or, better still, a practicable philosophy in a persuasive way to his audience. Plutarch is not really philosophising, but pleading a cause and offering

²⁶ For a thorough analysis, see Van Meirvenne (2002), 392-400.

²⁷ Even Brokate (1913), 20 thinks it is very likely that Plutarch composed *On brotherly love* § 1-8 himself.

practical advice. His plea does not rest on logical demonstration but operates through an appeal to the emotions and to common sense²⁸.

3. *True friendship: Plutarch and Themistius*

Plutarch must have realized that his emphasis on ‘having but one friend’ was driving home the plea against having *many* friends, and that he would ruin his case by rubbing the audience the wrong way (stubbornly confronting them with a *paradoxon*²⁹). As a speaker he is clever enough – and as a man he is wise enough – to concede without completely giving up his position: “We do not maintain that our friend should be ‘the only one’, but along with others let there be some ‘child of our eld’ and ‘late-begotten’...” (94A). Plutarch is differentiating among ‘friends’ here. The one friend, *who is the true one*, has been with us since long ago. The others are fair-weather friends, casually met in the malls, the fitness centre, the hotel, or a bar; they will take advantage of us as long as possible. Plutarch clearly plays on the instinctive fear of ‘strangers’ who are eager to take advantage of us; he also appeals to our feelings of shame in the event that we are taken advantage of³⁰. The naïve confidence in casual acquaintances may very well be “the fashion of the day” (94A), but Plutarch is not insisting on that point. It is not his intention to inveigh against his times, but rather to promote true friendship. Thus ‘the true friend’ is opposed to chance acquaintances, who are associated with ‘friendship for the sake of profit’.

Plutarch then defines true friendship:

But true friendship seeks after three things above all else: virtue as a good thing, intimacy as a pleasant thing, and usefulness as a necessary thing³¹, for a man ought to use judgement before accepting a friend, and to enjoy being with him and to use him when in need of him, and all these things stand in the way of one’s having many friends; and most in the way is the first (which is the most important) – the approval through judgement (94B).

²⁸ The assessment is inspired by the approach of H.G. Ingenkamp (2000).

²⁹ Lausberg (1990³), # 64, 3.

³⁰ Cf. Konstan (1998), 292: “Flatterers [...], like the hangers-on or parasites who attached themselves to the houses of the well-to-do, [...] are a stock character in New Comedy”.

³¹ In fact, this definition was prepared for already in 93F: “What then is the coin of friendship? It is goodwill and graciousness combined with virtue”.

The definition is, at the same time, a discrete way of instructing the audience (*docilem parare*) about the topics that will be treated. Indeed, the demonstration will be structured as follows:

1. Virtue as a mark of true friendship opposes one's having many friends (from §3, 94B σκεπτέον δὴ πρῶτον to §5, 94F ἐν πολλῶ κριθεῖσαν; about 39 lines in the Loeb edition). The section begins and concludes with the advice to take the necessary time before engaging in a friendship³²;
2. intimacy as a mark of true friendship opposes one's having many friends (from §5, 94F ἄρ' οὖν κρίναι to §5, 95B παγείσῃ γενέσθαι; about 20 lines in the Loeb edition). It is impossible to be intimate with many friends at the same time;
3. usefulness as a mark of true friendship opposes one's having many friends (from §5, 95B τοῦτο δ' εὐθύς ὑποβάλλει to the end of § 7; about 90 lines in the Loeb edition). For practical reasons, one cannot be of service to many friends at the same time.

We expect to get some clarification about the 'exclusive virtue' (cf. 1.2 above) in the first part of the demonstration, especially since Plutarch himself calls virtue the most important mark of true friendship. In terms of quantity, however, the topic of 'virtue' catches relatively little attention. Moreover, through the shift from 'virtue' to 'judgement before accepting a friend'³³, Plutarch's practical advice is that one has to take the time to make a good ("rightly and surely tried": 94D) judgement. This is absolutely necessary since "friends are to strip for a general contest with every kind of fortune" (94C), and friends are there to stand by our side in "numerous and great perils" (94CD). Furthermore, if the judgement was wrong, the 'bad friend' will cause much discomfort (94D). Notice that Plutarch, again, appeals to feelings of fear. Besides, one might think that this argument would more appropriately be brought up under the heading 'usefulness of friends'. Anyway, so far we haven't learned much about the content of the required virtue. But then the more deterrent mood changes into positive advice: "we should seek after those who are *worthy of our friendship* (τοὺς ἀξίους φίλους)", and "*of our own motion* (αὐτοῦς) [...] embrace those of whom

³² Cf. Aristotle, *E.N.* VIII.3.8, concerning the perfect friendship: "Such friendships... require time".

³³ The theme of κρίσις is Theophrastean: see *On brotherly love* § 8 in Table 2.

we approve as *worthy of our attention and useful to us* (τοῖς ἀξίοις σπουδῆς καὶ ὠφελίμοις)³⁴ (94E).

The repetition of the notion ‘like us/worthy of us’ is striking; it is repeated throughout the ‘lecture’: one should reach out to those “worthy to keep up the same participation, that is to say, those who are able, in a like manner, to love and participate” (96D); potential friends have lives which hold to our principles (96E); they should show “agreement in words, counsels, opinions, and feelings” (96F) and “likeness in characters, feelings, language, pursuits, and dispositions” (97A). Plutarch expects his audience to have a deep self-respect: they are to be themselves the touchstone of potential friends. According to him, we should not be “unsparing of our virtue by uniting and intertwining it now with one and now with another” (96D). Apparently Plutarch is talking to an audience he deems capable of making their own decisions and being eager to do so: he appeals to their sense of dignity. The audience Plutarch is talking to consists of free individuals, centres of decision-making who can apply their own criteria: *subjects* of friendship³⁵. In short, he imagines his audience to be rather adult³⁶.

This doesn’t mean Plutarch is unaware of situations in which the choice is simply not ours: sometimes we are the objects of friendship, or doomed to be ‘friends’. The former is the case when other people offer us their friendship, and then the question arises whether they are friends or flatterers (*On friendship and flattery*); the latter occurs when nature has placed us in a bond of brotherhood (*On brotherly love*). The *topos* of judging friends will thus naturally pop up in those contexts as well³⁷, and it will be formatted in the standard Plutarchan way:

³⁴ In this more positive advice within the section about ‘virtue’ as a mark of true friendship, the interpretation of σπουδῆς as ‘attention’ is somewhat weak; one might prefer ‘respect’.

³⁵ This may explain the somewhat offensive metaphor from commerce (93E): an adult person doesn’t waste his money, let alone ‘the coin of friendship’.

³⁶ Cf. Ph.A. Stadter (2000), concerning the implied audience for the *Lives*.

³⁷ There will, of course, be different accents. *On friendship and flattery* is addressed to a ‘person in high station’, and friendship there has some political implications, largely absent from *On having many friends*. For political aspects of friendship, see, e.g., *Precepts of Statecraft* § 13 and L. Van der Stockt (2002); Dio of Prusa, *Third oration on kingship* and D. Konstan (1997).

Table 2

<i>On Friendship and Flattery</i> § 2a, 49C-E	<i>On having many Friends</i> § 3 (94B-D) and § 7 (96C)	<i>On brotherly love</i> § 8 (481F-482C)
	A. proverbial bushel of salt	H. quotation from tragedy (<i>TrGF</i> I, 43 fr. 6)
E. examine flatterers before they can harm	B. leisure-time friends are no real friends	E. Theophrastus' maxim on judging friends
C. comparison: flatterers//lice	C. comparison: mass of friends// mass of flies	A. proverbial bushel of salt
F. comparison: friend//coin	D. the tripartite nature of friendship	B. attitude of/toward leisure-time friends contrasted with that of/toward brothers (482A and 482B)
G. harm caused by a false friend; comparison with deadly drugs	E. make judgements on friends before the time of need	
D. the tripartite nature of friendship	F. comparison: false friend//false coin	
	G. pain and injury caused by a false friend; comparison with harmful food	
	H. 96C: quotation from tragedy (<i>TrGF</i> I, 43 fr. 6)	

Be that as it may, we still regret Plutarch's silence about the nature of the 'virtue' displayed by the one who decides to make someone a friend and required from the one who is to become one's friend. Are we to write virtue here with a capital V? Should the friend be the embodiment of a Platonic Idea? The fact that Plutarch doesn't elaborate on this matter is inexplicable unless we assume that he was pretty sure his audience knew what he meant. In other words, Plutarch is appealing to the 'ideology of a friend's *virtue*', the prevailing set of opinions and behaviours concerning virtue and *philia* in his circle.

To know more detail about this ideology, we can turn to another famous 'popular philosopher' – and he explicitly claims to be just that! – viz. Themistius. Some two hundred years after Plutarch, he discoursed on friendship, possibly addressing an emperor (and thus actualizing Plutarch's ideal of the philosopher at the service of the

princeps)³⁸. In *Or. XXII (On Friendship)*, 267a-271b, he offers a very concrete checklist that defines true friendship³⁹. According to him, the following are the ‘tracks of our prey’:

1. The person put to the test must be “very affectionate and very loving of those close to him”, for “this is a quality that contributes to the forming of attachments”. So how does that person treat his father, mother, brother, wife?

This sounds very modern: the family as the school for developing social skills, and, conversely, unsocial behaviour originating from unsound familial relations... Plutarch treated familial love in separate essays like *De fraterno amore*, *De amore prolis*, *Coniugalia praecepta*. One will look in vain for this topic in *De am. mult.*, except for the hint at parental love in 93F-94A. Perhaps also his treatment of ‘intimacy’ (section 2, 94F-95B) comes close to this topic; but, as an argument against multiple friendships, it is disappointingly weak: it repeats with abundant redundancy the ‘enjoyment of friendship’, ‘the sweetness of its association and daily commerce’, ‘its continual association and mutual acts of kindness’, its ‘mutual goodwill’, only to state, without any demonstration, that multiple friendships create ‘disunion, separation, and divergence’. As such, this section does not teach, it makes one dream. Anyway, the capability of reciprocal loving is mentioned (also in the transition to the last part of the text: τοῖς ὁμοίως φιλεῖν καὶ κοινωνεῖν δυναμένοις [96D]) as the mark of a friend, but not made operational in a procedure of testing potential friends.

2. “Does he utterly lack a sense of gratitude”? “Just examine how people are inclined. See if they will give back as much as they can”.

Gratitude, or the exchange of services rendered, was considered an integral part of friendship in antiquity⁴⁰, and Plutarch voices the common opinion on the utility of friendship. He reckons graciousness among the characteristics of true friendship (93F, 94B); he also touches upon this subject in the large section 95B-96D, but in order to argue against multiple friendships: the exchange of services among many friends is impossible *for the one who engages in multiple friendships*. Again, Plutarch treats this topic, graciousness as the mark of a true friend,

³⁸ For Themistius’ dedicatee, see Penella (1999), 18 n. 65 and 66; the quote is from his translation.

³⁹ Themistius’ *Or. XXII* displays many striking reminiscences of Plutarch’s essays on friendship. A closer look at this intertextual play would be worthwhile. For Plutarch in Themistius, see also P. Volpe Cacciatore (2004) and (2005).

⁴⁰ See Konstan (1998).

from the point of view of his audience as subjects of friendship: *their* deficiencies in rendering service can cause *them* great difficulties.

3. Can he forgo pleasures and endure hardships?

The capability of enduring hardships *on behalf of a friend* is alluded to in 94CD and 95E. But again, this is rather a request from the subjects of friendship, viz. of Plutarch's audience, and it is in itself, again, an argument against multiple friendships.

4. Is he jealous, stingy, a lover of fame, addicted to being first, or easily irritated?

All these character traits, or rather vices, are, of course, opposed to the (apparently moral) virtue of the true friend. Plutarch hints at these deficiencies of the 'many friends' only indirectly: they do not have "our character, our opinions, our lives, our principles" (96EF). As we have seen, Plutarch flatters his audience by assuming that they are the touchstone, possessing 'virtue' (*capatio benevolentiae ab auditorum persona*⁴¹). Yet, at the same time, Plutarch's omission to elaborate on moral qualities concerning friendship was unnecessary if his audience was well aware of his moral teaching (*On envy and hate, On the control of anger, On love of wealth, etc.*).

5. Is he "excessively given to the pursuit of something that is not unconditionally good for him (τῶν οὐ πάνυ τι χρηστών): [...] dice-playing (κυβείαν), checkers, or playing the lyre or the flute"? "If all a man's desires [...] incline to one such pursuit, then his friendships cannot be strong enough to nurture the better things (τὰ μείζω)".

As is clear by now, Plutarch is not keen on listing this kind of concrete criteria for testing potential friends. The mention of gambling (συγκυβέουσάντες) in 94A is part of an altogether different argument. But the exordium of Plutarch's *Life of Pericles* shows that he would certainly agree with Themistius in playing down the value of artistic activities such as 'playing the lyre or the flute' vis-à-vis the effectuation of moral virtue: "Therefore it was a fine remark of Antisthenes, when he heard that Ismenias was an excellent piper: 'But he's a worthless man,' said he, 'otherwise he wouldn't be so good a piper.' And so Philip once said to his son, who, as the wine went round, plucked the strings charmingly and skilfully, 'Are you not ashamed to pluck the strings so well?' [...] Labour with one's own hands on lowly tasks gives witness, in the toil thus expended on useless things (ἐν τοῖς ἀχρήστοις), to one's indifference to higher things (εἰς τὰ καλὰ)" (*Per.* 1.4-2.1).

Themistius' next observation⁴², which is a kind of interim conclusion, is that it will not be easy to find a man of such purity, and that

⁴¹ Lausberg (1990), # 274.

⁴² Penella (1999), 94 n. 16 calls it a "digressionary observation".

“you must be content if even one such person should pass the test. Clearly, a man who knows how to select true friends will not have many friends (πολύφιλος), will not have countless friends”. This statement makes a perfect transition to the following criterion.

6. “Next, it is essential that your potential friend, while not himself resting content with [too] few friends, also avoid too many”. Much like Plutarch in the third section of his demonstration, Themistius then points to the inconveniences created by divergent fortunes and expectations. Themistius’ nuanced criterion “while not himself resting content with [too] few friends, also avoid too many” clearly marks the exclamation “you must be content if even one such person should pass the test” (see sub 4) as a rhetorical exaggeration. For Plutarch, even if he adds some nuance, the alternative for ‘having many friends’ is not ‘having a few friends’, but rather ‘having one true friend’. In this respect, there is more rhetorical bias in Plutarch’s plea than in Themistius’ checklist.

7. Are the ‘small defects in his soul’ different from our own and, as it were, complementary (“a person who is insensible to maltreatment will fit well with someone who is insulting...”)?

Themistius at least allows for small defects in both friends, and gives advice according to the principle of compensation. On the one hand, Plutarch couldn’t possibly give such advice: it would have implied the presence of ‘small defects’ in the subjects of friendship he was talking to, and that would have gone counter to his tactics of playing on the common, virtuous disposition of himself and his audience⁴³. On the other hand, Themistius’ advice touches on the theme of ‘ὁμοιότης’, and again, as will become clear, Plutarch’s picture of the ideal friendship is far more demanding than Themistius’ pragmatic checklist.

To sum up: Plutarch and Themistius share some specific viewpoints on the nature of true friendship; these topics are, if not commonsensical, then at least common Greek Aristotelian subjects. They differ mainly in the organisation of the topics within their proper discourse. Themistius offers a stern and pragmatic checklist, developing a procedure to test a potential friend. He invites his audience to scrutinise that potential friend’s character and behaviour to see if he qualifies as a friend. Plutarch’s discourse, however, starts from a formal definition of friendship which includes several of Themistius’ topics, but it has them function within the systematic strategy of opposing multiple friendships: they are contraindications for having many friends. Moreover,

⁴³ In the case of brotherly love, however, he considers the question of how to deal with ‘a bad brother’ (*De frat. am.* §8).

the potential friend should be tested not by going through a checklist, but by holding the potential friend up against one's own 'virtue'. The tacit assumption is that "we, the speaker and the audience, are the decent people, aren't we?"⁴⁴ This might explain Plutarch's reticence to elaborate on the content of that decency. His silence should most likely not be attributed to any intentional avoidance of flattering his audience by enumerating various aspects of its decency. Plutarch is voicing an uncritical and at the same time performative conviction.

4. Likeness and friendship: in search of the *Doppelgänger*

The transition to the last two chapters of Plutarch's text is smooth and nothing but logical: if 'we' are the ultimate touchstone, friends can only be those persons who are our equals. As Plutarch puts it, "friendship comes into being through likeness (*δι' ὁμοιότητος*)"⁴⁵. This likeness should be complete: "but in our friendship's consonance and harmony there must be no element unlike, uneven, or unequal, but all must be alike to engender agreement in words, counsels, opinions, and feelings" (96EF). It follows that no one can "assimilate and accommodate himself to many persons" (96F) unless he behaves like the octopus and testifies to possessing no "firmly founded character of his own" (97A), for "the possession of a multitude of friends will necessarily have, as its underlying basis, a soul that is very impressionable, versatile, pliant, and readily changeable" (97B).

⁴⁴ This is not quite what Aristotle meant when he said (*E.N.* VIII.3.6): *τελεία δ' ἐστὶν ἡ τῶν ἀγαθῶν φιλία καὶ κατ' ἀρετὴν ὁμοίων*. His point is that, among the three kinds of friendship, the one between the good is the perfect one.

⁴⁵ Plutarch dealt with this matter in the same way in his essay *On friendship and flattery*:

<i>On friendship and flattery</i> § 5 and 6-8 (51BC and 51E-52F)	<i>On having many friends</i> § 8-9 (96D-97B)
A. "character likeness is the beginning of friendship"	A. "character likeness is the beginning of friendship"
B. the flatterer has no one, fixed, abiding place of character	D. image of the octopus
C. 5 scenes of imitative behaviour	B. the flatterer has no one, fixed, abiding place of character
D. image of the octopus	C. 6 scenes of imitative behaviour

So far, the audience might have the impression that Plutarch is implicitly urging them to remain faithful to *their own* stable character, and thus to understand that such a stable character is incompatible with *craving* many friends. But, somewhat surprisingly, Plutarch's conclusion has some bearing on the potential friend out there: since there are not many stable characters that are at the same time 'like us' in all aspects, "for this reason a steadfast friend is something rare and hard to find" (97B). The required *ὁμοιότης*, then, is a characteristic of the potential friend. Set apart from the foregoing three characteristics of true friendship, it is an additional requirement that strengthens the tendency to idealise friendship and that, as "the greatest obstacle of all to having a multitude of friends" (96D), makes it so 'exclusive'. Whereas Themistius allowed for at least some unevenness, viz. concerning the minor flaws in the character of friends, Plutarch is quite formal: "And it must be as if one soul were apportioned among several bodies" (96F)⁴⁶.

Starting with the thesis that "friendship comes into being through likeness", Plutarch reaches his conclusion that "a steadfast friend is rare" only by meandering through five comparisons (with brute beasts, music, the octopus, the mythological Proteus, a concept from natural philosophy), two rhetorical questions, and a poetic quotation. This is not to say that there is no logic in his discourse, but that the alternation of illustration and apodictic statement is a highly rhetorical way of persuading his audience. An essential part of this rhetorical tactic is to naturalise the idea of complete likeness and total harmony through the comparisons with natural phenomena. And perhaps the effect of this rhetoric is not only the conviction that the true friend is rare, but also that he exists altogether. There can be only one out there who will make a perfect fit: he will be our soul mate. And isn't the suggestion also that this ideal friend is the one who seems to know all about it, who speaks so authentically about it, who stands in front of his audience?

5. Concluding observations. *Plutarch and Maximus*

Plutarch has offered a sketch of the ideal friendship. In contrast with *polyphilia*, true friendship meets the demands of decency, pleasure,

⁴⁶ Babbitt (1978), 67 translates *ὡσπερ μιᾶς ψυχῆς ἐν πλείοσι διηρημένης σώμασι* as "as if one soul were apportioned among *two or more* bodies" (my italics). Plutarch speaks of 'more [than one]', or 'several bodies'. Splitting a soul inevitably means to apportion it to at least two bodies; but Plutarch meant, of course, 'to two bodies at most', although he is – perhaps deliberately – not explicit; cf. 94A, *supra*.

and usefulness together. This ideal friendship is ‘exclusive’ in two respects:

- a. Partial actualizations of the unique mix are not regarded as ‘friendship’. Relationships that actualize only one of the ingredients cannot be labelled ‘friendships’: instead they would be (lascivious) lust, or parasitism, or end in stern and unsocial behaviour⁴⁷. Nor do ‘friendly’ relations that actualize the mix only partially find favour in the eyes of Plutarch: his discourse is about that true friend as opposed to ‘the others’ (94A: his phrasing enables him to not even use the word ‘friends’ for these others).
- b. We can have but one true friend. Not only is it impossible to have many friends, but the requirement of ‘likeness and (thus of) constancy of character’ tends to limit the number of friends to ‘one’.

Consequently, ‘true friendship’ is rare⁴⁸. Plutarch’s discourse is in keeping with the popular high esteem for true friendship as well as with the despair at ever having a true friend. The praise of true friendship continuously presupposes that it is an achievable goal, and Plutarch tacitly assumes that his audience has all the necessary potential for engaging in authentic friendships. If his target audience consisted of (young) adults, this positive approach was the only justifiable, i.e., educationally responsible, one. His basic *caveat* is not to be ‘unsparing of our virtue’, and this warning was most pertinent inasmuch as Aristotle’s observation (*E.N.* VIII.3.5) was pertinent: “Hence they [viz. the young] both form friendships and drop them quickly, since their affections are with what gives them pleasure, and the tastes of youth change quickly”.

Inasmuch, however, as the ideal friendship is actually rare and difficult to acquire, another Siren was lurking: the melancholic lament on ‘degeneration’, on the moral incapacity of contemporary humanity to achieve this high goal. Apart from casual rhetorical generalizations (‘our days’ behaving stupidly [94A]), Plutarch is not giving in to this temptation. By way of contrast, one may read Maximus of Tyre on the subject of ‘Friendship and Virtue’ (*Or.* XXXV). Maximus lived in the second century AD, and was... a popular philosopher. It has been

⁴⁷ For an example, see Cato in *Precepts of statecraft* 808EF.

⁴⁸ Aristotle (*E.N.* VIII.3.8) says that perfect friendships are rare “because such men [viz. good men] are rare”. Plutarch links the scarcity of true friendship to the scarcity of ‘people like us’. The idea is basically the same, inasmuch as the ‘people like us’ are people who equal our virtue. But for Plutarch the likeness extends to more than simply ethical qualities.

suggested⁴⁹ that his *Philosophical Orations* were addressed to young adults who were about to crown their education with the pearl of philosophy. Reading his *Or.* XXXV, however, one might fear he threatened to turn his audience into a bunch of despairing pessimists. Maximus' diagnosis of earlier and contemporary morality is flatly hypochondric:

But as matters now stand, in a single herd under the guidance of a single shepherd, you can see many conflicts and disputes as they butt and bite each other, and only a few flickerings gathered laboriously together to make a small sum of friends (§2),

and

The reason for this [sc. universally observable misguided human pursuits] is a mistrust of friendship, and a lust for gain, and a fear of want, and evil habits, and a desire for pleasure, by all of which friendship is hounded and buried and sunk, barely preserving itself in weak and feeble traces (§3),

and

After that [sc. after Harmodius and Aristogeiton] there was no friendship in Attica; all was diseased and rotten and treacherous and corroded, full of envy and anger and boorishness and greed and ambition. If you move on to the rest of Greece, you will find an abundance of sombre tales... (§4-5).

To be sure, virtue is a mark of friendship for Maximus as well. But his diagnosis of universal depravity, and especially of greed (and its instrument: money), makes friendship actually an unattainable goal. It seems indeed altogether unrealistic to promote the abolition of money and the return to a stage "before the invention of metallurgy and coinage"⁵⁰. This kind of primitivism is foreign to Plutarch, whose plea, even if it is also *against* something, sounds at the same time far more positive and optimistic. Maximus' ('populist'?) message tends to confirm cynical distrust of humankind altogether; help must come *from outside*, from philosophy: "let us call on Philosophy to aid us! Let her come, let her make peace, let her proclaim it" (§8). I would prefer Plutarch as a teacher. Even if his rhetoric does not invite a nuanced

⁴⁹ Trapp (1997), xx-xxii; the quote is from his translation.

⁵⁰ Trapp (1997), 227 n. 14.

critique of the philosophical tenets implied, it communicates a more balanced, commonsensical wisdom. Moreover, the rhetorical tactic of appealing to the virtue *within* the audience is in keeping with Plutarch's educational strategy⁵¹ of making the pupil himself responsible for his own development.

⁵¹ For Plutarch's educational methods, see Roskam (2004).

What is Popular About Plutarch's 'Popular Philosophy'?

Chr. PELLING

In this chapter I will tentatively and obliquely address two general issues that tell on the question 'what is popular about "popular philosophy"?' First, does Plutarch himself have a concept of 'popular philosophy' which is different from some sort of ethics which is, say, more philosophical or *recherché* or theoretical? If so what, distinctively, is it *for*, on what sort of issues is it felt to have particular purchase? And, secondly, not merely 'what' is popular philosophy for, but *whom* is it for? Is the relation between 'popular philosophy' and 'virtues for the people' a wholly straightforward one? Is the sort of correct behaviour that Plutarch addresses – on superstition, or talkativeness, or greed, or curiosity, or politics – correct for everyone? Or are there different virtues 'for the people' and for the sort of persons Plutarch is writing for, whoever they may be? Those are not small questions, and the second in particular I shall address through only one aspect, that of political conduct – the area, perhaps, where it is most likely that the *demos* may have interests of its own and right and wrong conduct of its own. The obliqueness of the approach will be that it will be almost wholly through the *Lives*. Any implications for those works of 'popular philosophy' themselves will be no more than hinted; and that includes the most basic question whether 'popular philosophy' is really the most appropriate way to categorise those works, rather than (say) 'practical ethics'¹.

Popular wisdom?

Let us start with that fount of popular wisdom, the meeting of Solon and Croesus; and with what Plutarch does with the story that he, and clearly his audience too, knew so well². In a famous passage he

¹ This (very good) suggestion was made by Françoise Frazier in discussion of this paper at the Delphi conference.

² Cf. Pelling (2002a), 267-68 on the way that the stories of Tellus, then of Cleobis and Biton, are not told in detail. An audience who did not remember them from Herodotus would be put under strain.

draws attention himself to the chronological difficulty: “but when a story is so famous and well-attested, when (more important) it fits Solon’s character so well and is so worthy of his wisdom and largeness of spirit, I am not prepared to reject it because of the so-called rules of chronology” (*Sol.* 27.1). One can say many things about that remark³, but for the moment let us just note that it has a function in its context: that is not the way one would introduce a passage that was casual or trivial or unintegrated into the *Life* and the pair⁴. The story ‘fits Solon’s character so well’: there will clearly be points here that relate to wider themes. And it ‘is worthy of his wisdom and largeness of spirit’: the wisdom may not be altogether straightforward to read, but wisdom it will be.

Whether or not the audience notice it, one of the most central suggestions in Herodotus’ original is here abandoned, the notion that the divine was φθόνερόν τε καὶ παραχῶδες (I, 32.1): *not* a theme which Plutarch would readily have associated with any divinity, and therefore, not surprisingly, not a theme with any purchase in the pair. Plutarch’s Solon concentrates much more on the wheel-of-fortune element in Herodotus, the notion that anyone’s fortunes may change (so not, as φθόνερον would suggest, a point that applies only to the rich and famous). It is too early yet to felicitate Croesus: that would be like crowning an athlete when he was still in mid-race, when he still might trip and fall (27.9).

The way Plutarch’s Solon puts it strikes further notes which are less explicit in Herodotus, and very relevant to the earlier portrayal of Solon in the *Life*. “The Greeks, o King of the Lydians,” says Solon (the wordorder strikes the national identity note, itself a Herodotean preoccupation but not so explicit in the Herodotean context here), “have been given moderation (μετρίως ἔχειν) by Heaven in other ways too, but especially through being able to share, through μετρίότης, in a diffident (so it seems) and demotic sort of wisdom, not one which is kingly or ostentatious...” (27.8). This ‘diffident (so it seems) and demotic sort of wisdom’ – σοφίας ἀθαρσοῦς ὡς ἔοικε καὶ δημοτικῆς: ‘popular’ wisdom, perhaps? – is therefore seen as something distinctively Greek, and something that is open to anyone, not just the rich and famous (Tellus has just been *dismissed* by Croesus as a mere δημοτικὸς καὶ ιδιώτης rather than an example of power and empire, 27.6); and it is marked

³ Many of them are said by Duff (1999), 312-14.

⁴ No surprise, then, that this episode should be used so elaborately as the starting-point for the synkritic epilogue (*Comp. Sol. et Publ.* 1); nor that Plutarch’s readers should be expected there to remember the details of Tellus’ story in Herodotus (*Comp.* 1.2-4), sketchily though they have been given in Plutarch’s own narrative (n. 2 above).

by *μετριότης*, the sort of reasonableness that “does not allow one to think big about one’s current prosperity, nor to feel awestruck by the good fortune of a man when there is still time for it to be overthrown” (27.8). That teases out themes that are already there in Herodotus, or some of them⁵; but it does so in a more explicit and clear-cut way, especially with that emphasis on reasonableness, *μετριότης*, and on something ‘demotic’ or ‘popular’, *δημοτικῆς*. Neither is a key-word in Herodotus⁶; both are relevant to the themes of this volume. And Croesus just does not understand, any more than he did in Herodotus⁷. Solon departs ‘after giving Croesus pain, but not wisdom’ (27.9).

There are several things of interest here. One is that, indeed, Croesus does not get it. And this is not the only time in Plutarch that it is a weakness of the rich and powerful to miss simple points which more ordinary people instinctively understand – that ‘diffident and demotic sort of wisdom’. Sometimes that is a feature of the individual, particular blind spots which do not afflict all the rich and powerful but go with the peculiarities of a Coriolanus or a Demetrius or an Alcibiades: it is *not* a good idea to treat the Roman *demos* so haughtily as Coriolanus did, nor to have sex with one’s favourite women and boys in the Parthenon (*Demetr.* 23.5-24.1), nor indeed to seduce your hostess, especially if her husband happens to be King of Sparta (*Alc.* 23.6-9). But those are temptations and opportunities that do not come to everyone even among the powerful. There are other tendencies of the rich and mighty that seem to be less individual and more of an occupational hazard of riches and power: to succumb to flattery, for instance, or to

⁵ Some of them, but by no means all. Besides the turbulent nature of the divine, other themes in the original which are not echoed in Plutarch include the importance of Solon’s travel for giving him insight; the importance of *συμφορά* as a key notion (echoed at *Sol.* 28.5, but in a context where Croesus may be misreading Solon’s wisdom, n. 7 below); and the careful semantic distinction of different types of ‘good fortune’. I make some attempt to disentangle the various strands in the Herodotean Solon’s moralising in Pelling (2006), 146-60: I there argue that Solon is made to be *expressively* roundabout, treading very carefully to avoid too direct and undiplomatic an approach.

⁶ *Μετριότης* does emerge in passing, with Solon’s remark that many who are *μετρίως ἔχοντες βίου* are also fortunate (*εὐτυχέεις*), I, 32.5.

⁷ At Pelling (2002a), 267-68 I argued that, even once Plutarch’s Croesus has been brought to acknowledge Solon’s wisdom, he does not understand its content. He concludes that “it was a greater evil to lose this wealth than a good to gain it” (28.4), and that this is what Solon must have ‘foreseen’ (28.5) – a misreading, I there suggested, even if an understandable one for someone so preoccupied with wealth. For the argument that the Herodotean Croesus does not fully understand the lesson that Solon might have taught him, see Pelling (2006), 155-59; but the misunderstanding there takes a different form.

be overcome by an ambition which goes beyond anything creditable or healthy. On the second, one thinks particularly of the exchange between Pyrrhus and Cineas at *Pyrrh.* 14. What will Pyrrhus do after conquering Rome? Conquer Italy. And after Italy? Why, conquer Sicily. And then? Carthage and Libya. And then? Macedonia and all of Greece. And then? We can relax, and drink, and enjoy each other's company. But, says Cineas, we can do that already... And "with those words Cineas gave Pyrrhus pain rather than persuading him..." (*Pyrrh.* 14.14), not unlike the way that Solon gave Croesus pain rather than wisdom. Such are the encounters of the powerful with the wise: the powerful just cannot understand.

Not all politicians, it is true, are subject to so intense a passion for fame. When similar remarks are made about Julius Caesar towards the beginning of *Antony* (ch. 6), this is a point not just about Caesar as an individual but about Antony too, so easily distractable by other pleasures – including in his case the pleasures of flattery, another occupational hazard of the great man. But there are enough cases to suggest that the rich and famous are in danger of being just *not like us*, and not seeing things that we ordinary people do see; and it is no coincidence that these issues are very much the ones that figure in what this volume addresses as the 'popular philosophy' works of Plutarch. Indeed, on those particular issues, flattery and over-ambition, we have whole treatises devoted to each, *De adulate et amico* and *De tranquillitate animi*, works which deal particularly with problems that threaten the great. Think of the highly wrought⁸ introduction to *De tranquillitate animi*, for instance, where the dedicatee Paccius is commended, with Plutarch...

... sharing your pleasure that, despite your imperial friends and your unmatched fame among public speakers, you have still not succumbed to what happened to the tragic character Merops, nor has 'the congratulations of the crowd knocked out of you' [Eur. *TrGF* V.2, fr. 783a, from the *Phaethon*], as it knocked out of him, the natural emotions; and you often remember hearing that an aristocratic shoe does not cure one of the gout, nor an expensive ring from a hanging nail, nor a diadem from a headache. (*De tranq. an.* 465A)

Who knows, perhaps this prominent Roman Paccius was indeed an exception to the rule; or perhaps this is the familiar protreptic trope whereby one congratulates someone on achieving already what it is

⁸ As Ingenkamp (forthcoming) observes, Plutarch's disavowal of *καλλιγραφία* in this passage is itself an example of extreme *καλλιγραφία*.

one's purpose to encourage. (One notes that Paccius will remember often 'hearing' that wealth is not the answer to everything; not often 'saying'.) Either way, it is clear what is more normally to be expected of the famous and influential⁹; and it is their insight into 'natural emotions' (τῶν φυσικῶν παθῶν) which is at risk. And – to return to *Solon* – the play there on the key-word μέτριος may also suggest that there is a conceptual link between moderation of possessions and moderation of insight. For if 'the God has given us Greeks μετρίως ἔχειν', that suggests moderate wealth, especially when a contrast with Croesus is in point: that indeed was the one context in which μετρίως ἔχοντες did appear in the Herodotean original (I, 32.2: n. 6 above), and there personal wealth was clearly the point. So that sort of material μετριότης does seem to belong closely with that other μετριότης which typifies that Greek, diffident view of transient human good fortune. That links closely with δημοτικῆς too: this is wisdom which the great and grand may find particularly difficult to grasp, simply *because* they are not so ordinary as those who can. Here at least the notion of 'popular philosophy' or 'popular morality' maps closely on to language that Plutarch himself uses.

"The God has given us Greeks μετρίως ἔχειν..." Let us pursue this idea of *Greek* wisdom, something distinctive about Greek insight – and few things could be more distinctively Greek than μηδὲν ἄγαν, an idea that underlies the μετριότης that we see here. Should we go further?

⁹ Ingenkamp (forthcoming) delicately shows how this pleasure that Plutarch shares at Paccius' moderation and insight serves as a 'springboard' to the forward movement of the argument. I am less sure that he is right to claim that the expression of 'pleasure', introduced by the participle συνηδόμενος, is only loosely linked with the previous and parallel participial clause "thinking that you were seeking this work not as a mere showpiece, the sort that goes in search of fine writing, but because you felt a genuine need for help". Ingenkamp argues that the 'thinking' clause gives a genuine reason why a hastily compiled work might be enough, but the 'sharing your pleasure' clause does not. But the way Paccius has creditably avoided the temptations of power can itself be reflected by his ability to recognise his own 'genuine need for help' and by his readiness to turn to Plutarch for it; it may also encourage Plutarch to feel more confident that Paccius will not be offended by a work that – so Plutarch affects – is unpolished. If all this is left a little more oblique than it might be, then that too conveys something about the nature of power: it does not do to be too explicit about the treatment that one might more regularly expect of someone in Paccius' position. So the 'pleasure' clause is *both* logically integrated *and* a 'springboard', and the tactful indirectness of the logical integration is itself testimony to the audience's familiarity with the normal expectations of power. Not that all this need be taken literally: the real-life Paccius may in fact have retained a considerable grandness of manner just as Plutarch's writing retains a considerable καλλιγραφία. But even the polite *affectations* can only work if those 'normal expectations of power' are taken as familiar.

Is 'popular philosophy' more generally figured as something which Greeks are more likely to have some instinctive feeling for, something where foreigners – especially in the context of the *Lives* the Romans, but not only these – are more likely to fall short? (We might recall Simon SWAIN's argument that Romans' degree of interest in philosophy and education is more likely to be highlighted than Greeks': it can be more taken for granted on the Greek side¹⁰.) If that were so, it would be most important to recent discussions of Plutarch's stance vis-à-vis the Roman empire, and what Professor BOULOGNE calls the Roman 'occupation' of Greece¹¹; should we see Plutarch as championing Greek dignity and 'identity' by representing Romans as deficient in natural moral understanding, perhaps even in something close to what we might call 'common sense' and what the eighteenth century would, with rather different nuance, have called *sensus communis*, the instinctive understanding for moral and aesthetic values and humanity which attends the more refined among human beings? That would give even more bite to the proem of *De tranquillitate animi*, where it is indeed the temptations of Roman power and influence that put those 'natural emotions' particularly at risk.

That would indeed be interesting if so – but actually I do not think it *is* so. Some non-Greeks do fall short, and it is interesting that Coriolanus and Demetrius came to mind a moment ago as two of the prime examples; but Alcibiades was not far behind. If we looked to other pairs, Nicias might fail against the criteria established in *De superstitione* to more or less the same degree that Crassus fails against those built in *De cupiditate divitiarum*; Agesilaus seems to get his treatment of his friends more wrong than Pompey gets his treatment of his wives, in each of those two cases an instance of a laudable affection which misfires when it interacts in the wrong way with public affairs (so again a temptation which only the great and powerful have to face). Rather than looking here for a way in which Plutarch might be projecting Greek cultural superiority, we should find yet another example of his moral even-handedness, something which we can see elsewhere both in the way so many of his synkritic epilogues end as moral draws¹² and in his equal readiness to take his examples in the political works from Greek and from Roman history – examples both of good behaviour and of bad. So the 'Greekness' of such 'popular philosophy' is not, I suggest, something on which we should dwell.

¹⁰ See esp. Swain (1990a), (1990b), and (1992a).

¹¹ Boulogne (1994).

¹² Swain (1992b); Duff (1999), 257-62; cf. Pelling (2002a), 360, and (1997b), 244 n. 55 = (2002a), 386 n. 64.

We are still taking that *Solon* passage in isolation. It is time to look more closely at the way that, in the context of the *Life* and the pair, the crucial words *μετριότης* and *δημοτικῆς* are thematically loaded. This is where different nuances come into play, of moderation in politics as well as in wealth and insight, and of *δημοτικῆς* as not merely 'popular' but 'democratic', even 'populist', with an implication for the political policies that the man who is steeped in Greek wisdom ought to adopt. This may also illuminate that initial question, what exactly is popular about popular philosophy?

Μετριότης first. Solon is of course the great moderate: this is the man who stood with his strong shield sheltering both sides, not just the rich and powerful but the ordinary folk too (18.5 = Solon fr. 5 W²); this is the man whom Delphi had advised to 'sit in the middle of the ship' (14.6)¹³. From the beginning, too, he had sensed the dangers coming from both sides (14.3): his first measures satisfied neither (16.1). But *δημοτικῆς* has also been a key to Plutarch's presentation of Solon, with an insistence that he identified with the poor, the 'demotic' side, rather than the rich (esp. 3.2-3), a theme which goes on into *Publicola* too (esp. *Publ.* 11-12.1, *Comp. Sol. et Publ.* 2). It is they, rather than the rich, who needed Solon's protection, and got it from his laws (*Sol.* 18.6-7).

It is telling, too, that the political dichotomy with which Plutarch's Solon has had to deal has usually been described in those terms of 'rich' and 'poor', not as in the *Ath. Pol.* in terms such as *γνώριμοι*¹⁴: this Solon is welcomed as an arbitrator by the rich as one who was well off himself, but his fears centre on their greed and acquisitiveness (*φιλοχρηματίαν*, 14.3)¹⁵. So popular politics and material wealth are here

¹³ 'Moderation' can often be sensed as an underlying theme in the less politically charged legislation too, for instance at 21.4, 24.5. The implied contrast is with the laws of Draco, 'written in blood' (17.3). Notice particularly the rules on slander (21.1-2): it would not be practicable to outlaw anger completely, so it is sensible to restrict outbursts to particular places and times: laws must be practicable if they are to be useful... There speaks the author of the *De cohibenda ira*, alert as he is to finding practical advice for developing self-control: that essay ends with a description of how he trained himself to lay anger aside for defined periods (464B-D).

¹⁴ Esp. *Ath. Pol.* 5.1, 6.2, 11.2 *bis*, 28.2; also *πρῶτοι* (5.3); but 'rich' is used as well (5.3).

¹⁵ 'Riches' is another theme that persists into *Publicola*, and is linked with the struggle of democracy against tyranny in further ways. Notice esp. 1.2, *Comp. Sol. et Publ.* 1.7 on *Publicola*'s personal wealth; 15.5-6, the comparison of wealth then and in Plutarch's own day; 3.1-4, 8.1, 19.9-10, 21.4, the importance of first the Tarquins' wealth (used badly) and then Porsenna's (used well) and Ap. Claudius' (exploited skilfully for Rome's benefit). In that *Life* too the ordinary people are described as the

coming together in a further way: Plutarch's Solon has *always* been dealing distinctively with riches, and has done so in a quite different register from that of Croesus, dealing for the good of the state rather than for his own pocket (and that is another theme, the opportunities for enrichment which Solon had had but neglected: esp. 2.13-14)¹⁶. At Athens then and at Sardis now, riches get in the way of political sagacity: the rich at Athens were carping and difficult to Solon, causing embarrassment as well as obstacles (esp. 15, 20.3), as the even wiser Anacharsis foresaw more surely than Solon himself (5.4-6); and now it is the super-rich Croesus who just does not get the point. So we do see some implication here for the sort of policies that a sensible, moderate, but people-aware politician ought to pursue¹⁷. This 'Greek' wisdom is given much more political a ring, and integrated more closely into the rest of Solon's activity, than it had been in Herodotus.

But then the poor are captious too (*Sol.* 16.1, 29.1), and need restraining once the debt measures have led them to get above themselves (οἰδοῦντα καὶ θρασυνόμενον, 19.1). They cannot be allowed to debate just anything at all, but need a *boule* to vet any proposal before it can be brought before them; and indeed a further *boule* above that too, as an extra anchor to keep the people stable (19.2). Elsewhere it is a recurrent theme in Plutarch (including *Publ.* 2.4) that the poor provide the hotbed of revolution. Sure enough, in *Solon* it is then the poor who carry Peisistratus to power (29.3-4, 30.1, 30.4), easily 'deceived' as they are when he tells them what they want to hear (29.4, cf. 30.1-3) – even though he, interestingly, has a dash of μετρίότης himself (31.2-3; cf. πρὸς τὰς ἔχθρας ἐπιεικῆς καὶ μέτριος, 29.3). So then does Publicola (*Publ.* 10.8, 12.1), but he too runs into envy and suspicion from both powerful (14.3) and plebs (esp. *Publ.* 11-12, *Comp. Sol. et Publ.* 2), δημοτικός though this 'Cultivator of the People' may be. The

'poor', 2.4, 11.1; funding the war for freedom is difficult yet crucial, 2.4, 12.3-4; and the outcome of Publicola's policy is eventually to enrich them (23.2).

¹⁶ Notice here another small adaptation. Herodotus' Solon was one of the wise Greeks who '[came] to Sardis at the height of its wealth' (1, 29.1). There is a hint here that the court's prosperity is one of the reasons why they came. Plutarch's Solon, unlike Herodotus', is *invited* by Croesus (*Sol.* 27.2, 28.4): it is Croesus' desire to display his wealth, not any interest of Solon in inspecting or experiencing it, that brings the wise man there.

¹⁷ Cf. *Pel.* 5.2: Pelopidas belongs to a *hetaireia* which appeared to him φιλελεύθερος καὶ δημοτική, while his opponents are ὀλιγαρχικοί καὶ πλοῦστοι καὶ μέτριον οὐδὲν φρονούντες... It is clear where μετρίότης is to be expected and where it is not, and riches are assumed to belong on the other side.

excessive suspicions of the Roman *demos*¹⁸, and the lengths Publicola has to go to in order to lay them to rest, are a recurrent theme of that *Life*. The people are so little to be trusted that even this 'moderate' Publicola refuses to let them hear the seductive proposals made by the exiled Tarquin (2.3-4), and he is clearly right to do so. Even the *demos* themselves ultimately recognise the value of the man they had treated so badly during his own lifetime (*Publ.* 23.4-5; cf. *Comp. Sol. et Publ.* 1.6), and that is the note on which the *Life* ends.

So whatever popular wisdom might be, it certainly does not involve doing whatever the *δημος* wants. The synkritic epilogue quotes approvingly Solon's own insight that "the *demos* would follow its leaders best if it is neither let too loose nor pressed too tight" (*Comp. Sol. et Publ.* 2.6, quoting fr. 6 W²): moderation again – but it is also clear that the ideal *demos* behaviour is to 'follow its leaders'. If there is an instinctive insight of 'ordinary people', then these insightful people are not as ordinary as all that. This is not a case of the romanticised view of 'simple things' sometimes found in Euripides, for instance, where τὸ φαυλότερον πλῆθος may understand deep human truths better than kings do (and probably better than noble greybeards and seers do too; *Bacchae* 430-1)¹⁹. Politicians need to see things better and more shrewdly than the people they lead. That is something that one could illustrate from many *Lives*, for instance from *Nicias* and its relation to *De superstitione*: after the eclipse Nicias' particular failing was that he did not see things any more wisely than the ordinary people (*Nic.* 23; *Comp. Nic. et Crass.* 5.3)²⁰, that he did not have the sort of

¹⁸ And not just the Roman *demos*: what happens to Appius Claudius among the Sabines is tellingly similar (21.6, 22.1). Publicola bears so little a grudge for his own experience as to be able to exploit it skilfully for Rome's benefit (21.7-10, 23.1).

¹⁹ Cf. Dodds (1960) and Seaford (1996) *ad loc.* Seaford cites Arist. *Pol.* 1319a24-5 to illustrate how readily such language transposes to a political context (cf. also, e.g., 1282a26, Plut., *Mar.* 29.9; *Praec. ger. reip.* 807A), and thinks this 'indicates the democratic nature of Dionysiac cult': perhaps it does, but the other passages cited by Dodds also bring out a wider element of romanticising the insight of the φαῦλοι in contrast to the σοφοί, e.g. *Ion* 834-5. Notice esp. *TrGF* V.1, fr. 473, Heracles as φαῦλον, ἄκομψον, τὰ μέγιστ' ἀγαθόν: Plutarch liked that line and quoted it at *Cim.* 4.5 and *Marc.* 21.6, but the point in *Cimon* is that such lack of education was un-Athenian, and in *Marcellus* that the *demos* was robustly unsophisticated until Marcellus spoiled them into becoming chattering classes. Marcellus is not left without a reply – he is educating these people (21.7) – and Plutarch's point is certainly not that such unsophistication carried a deeper *wisdom*.

²⁰ The critique there is implicit and not unsympathetic: in the narrative he explains how the eclipse could be 'a matter of great fear to Nicias and those of the others who, through lack of experience or superstition, had been terrified by things like that' (23.1), and a brief sketch of the history of eclipse-explanation contextualises that

spiritual sophistication which a Pericles might have had (*Per.* 35.2). The issue becomes more explicit in the words of ‘Galaxidorus’ in *De genio Socratis*. Whatever a true philosopher might make of divination, men engaged in public affairs need to *exploit* the people’s superstition and ensure that it serves the public good; they should not be slaves to it themselves (580A).

So any ‘popular philosophy’ or ‘wisdom’ should not be *that* popular, and certainly not vulgar. Those ‘natural emotions’ of *De tranquillitate animi* may be shared by all, but true insight into their implications is not something that just anyone can manage. In the same way eighteenth-century *sensus communis* was not usually figured as being as common as can be: it requires a certain refinement to grasp what the shared human condition implies.

Virtues for the people?

So good government is government for the people, not by the people. That is no surprise: such ideas are familiar from the *Praecepta gerendae rei publicae*, with its frequent stress on the short-sighted views taken by the *demos*, the possibilities for the politician to manage and at times to hoodwink them in their own best interest, and the moral rightness of doing so (esp. 799B-800A, 801BC, 813A-C, 816EF, 817F-819B)²¹.

Where does that leave ‘virtues for the people’, especially in the realm of politics? In what ways do – and in what ways should – politicians develop virtues that are different from the virtues of the people

‘terror’ (23.2-6). In the synkritic epilogue both Nicias and Crassus are vulnerable to criticism over omens, the one for over-caution and the other for total neglect (*Comp. Nic. et Crass.* 5.3). Nicias’ respect for traditional piety there puts him marginally ahead. (That, incidentally, is not necessarily the view we would expect from *De superstitione*, where ‘the superstitious man’ is similarly played against ‘the atheist’ and seems on the whole to come off worse: cf. esp. 169A on Nicias himself.) But the phrasing of the two passages in *Nicias* and in the *synkrisis* leaves no doubt that others were more sceptical (‘those of the others who...’) and that both Nicias and Crassus do deserve criticism. Aemilius handles a similar issue better (*Aem.* 17.10). Dover’s remark on Thucydides is almost apposite to Plutarch too (*HCT* iv.428-9): “Thucydides’ criticism of Nicias is not that he was more superstitious than the men whom he commanded but that as an educated man in a responsible position he should have paid less attention to seers...and should have recognized eclipses as a natural phenomenon”. (‘Almost’ apposite but not quite, because Plutarch does not view ‘seers’ so indiscriminately, but stresses rather that Nicias’ usual and more responsible seer had just died, and that it might be possible to regard the eclipse as an omen but interpret it differently, 23.7-8.) On superstition in the *Lives*, cf. also Wardman (1974), 86-93.

²¹ On this, see Desideri, below, pp. 83-98, esp. p. 96 on the *Praecepta* as an ‘open letter’ but ‘only to the Greek political class, surely not to the common Greek people’.

themselves? Is there an almost Platonic picture here, of each part of the state having its own distinct part to play, its own distinct 'virtues'? Is the political irresponsibility of the *demos* a simple fact of life that has to be accepted, or is there hope of improving and educating and moulding ordinary people into something more advanced? And there are questions too about the flexibility of 'virtue'. Another theme of the *Praecepta* is how different *demoi* can be, so that the Athenian *demos* is very different, and requires handling in a different way, from (say) the people of the Carthaginians or Thebans (799C-E), or – so at least we might expect²² – the people of Rome. How much difference do those differences make? Is morality variable? Are things right for a leader in Athens which would be wrong in Rome?

First, the potential of the *demos* for improvement and education. Here Plutarch is not very optimistic. Even in those *Lives* which give some time to the more amiable qualities of the *demos*, those qualities do not suggest responsibility or even a potential for responsibility. The *demos* in *Alcibiades* may have a rather different, more playful texture than its grim, threatening equivalent in *Nicias*: these are the people who fall for Alcibiades' charm, and when the young man lets his pet quail escape during a speech they bustle round to help him find it (*Alc.* 10.1-2; cf. *Praec. ger. reip.* 804A). But in the long run that playfulness is just as catastrophic as the more severe counterpart in *Nicias*, and Alcibiades falls foul of them just as inevitably²³. Possibly all that would have been better if the *demos* had been treated more wisely by its leaders: for instance, Plutarch thinks that Plato may have been right to criticise Themistocles for those reforms which turned the people from stolid hoplites to flibertigibbet sailors (*Them.* 4.4-5). But it does not look as if those mistakes were in failing to give them enough *paideia*, strongly committed though Plutarch himself is to those values of education. Elsewhere too we see a resigned, negative view of the possibility of worker education. Anacharsis mocks Solon for trying to correct citizens' greed and injustice by mere laws and letters, Solon replies that he is giving laws which both sides will regard it as in their interest to observe – but "these things turned out more in line with what Anacharsis foresaw than with what Solon hoped for" (*Sol.* 5.5). We are left to understand that there is force in the observation of Anacharsis that follows, that among the Greeks wise people speak and uneducated people make the decisions (5.6). And in *Praecepta gerendae rei publicae* Plutarch warns of the dangers of trying too much to educate, of 'attempting to mould and change the people's

²² Though that expectation may be a wrong one: see below, pp. 54-55.

²³ Pelling (1992), 19-27 = (2002a), 124-30.

character': better to accept the ways they are, and adapt oneself to them (799B-800A). You might shape your friends, and perhaps even your enemies (809E-810C), but the *demos* is a different matter, and can only be 'led just a little toward the better course, and gently taken in hand': changing them completely is a massive task (800AB). Small steps may be possible; big ones not.

All that makes particularly interesting those passages where the *demos* does get praise. After Cannae,

...one should particularly admire the city's spirit and its mildness of temper when the consul Varro reached home after his flight. He returned in a humble, downcast state, as was natural for one who had suffered such disgrace and such extreme misfortune; but the senate and the whole people came to greet him at the city gate. The magistrates and first men of the senate, including Fabius, allowed everything to fall silent, then commended Varro for not despairing of the city after so great a calamity, but for returning to govern and to take control of laws and citizens who he thought were not beyond salvation. (*Fab.* 18.4-5)

Yet note where the emphasis here falls. Yes, the 'whole people' (τὸ πλῆθος ἅπαν) have their role to play. But what Plutarch has stressed is their uncontrollable grief and despair when the news first arrived (17.7), and then the exemplary lead Fabius has given, showing gravity and self-control himself as he walked around the city, then setting guards on the gates to prevent deserters, and strictly defining the period and mode of mourning (17.7-18.1). The people are not credited with any *intrinsic*, or indeed national, characteristics of dignity or resolve. They are simply capable of being led.

Here we might contrast the way Herodotus or Thucydides talks about 'the Athenians' and their resolve in the fifth-century (Hdt. VII, 139; Thuc. VII, 28): of course those Athenians too were led, but it is not the way either author puts it – indeed Herodotus delays the entry of the great Athenian leader and places it (expressively) just a few chapters later (VII, 143); while Thucydides' narrative technique is subtly catching an aimless phase of Athenian leadership style at precisely that phase of the war²⁴. If we look at *Themistocles*, we will find praise there too of the Athenian resolve, in particular their readiness to abandon their city. Memorable praise it is too, as they steeled themselves to leave their old folk behind, and Plutarch dwells on the

²⁴ Rood (1998), 159-82.

bitter-sweet sight of the devoted domestic animals who swam with their masters as they sailed away (*Them.* 10.10). But this is again a popular *response* to leadership, to the strong guidance and manipulation of the divine that Themistocles has given: the next chapter begins "These were indeed great deeds of Themistocles, and also..." (11.1). Peoples follow; great men lead. The pattern recurs elsewhere: consider, for instance, *Coriolanus*, where the people respond in kind both when treated badly (initially in their secession, then in the prosecution of Coriolanus) and when led well (by Menenius, then by Marcius himself on the battlefield and even in politics when he is prepared to display his wounds as a consular candidate). Not all the people's actions in that *Life* are ones of which Plutarch would approve, but he is much more inclined to blame the nobles, or Coriolanus, or the demagogue leaders Sicinnius and Brutus than to hold the *demos* itself to blame²⁵. If the *demos* is easily swayed, that is only to be expected; the job is to sway it in the right direction.

Not that there is only one way of giving those leads. The style of Menenius Agrippa, speaking to the Roman *demos* in the simple language of fable (*Cor.* 6), certainly contrasts with the crass, militaristic tones of Coriolanus; it also contrasts with the more authoritarian leadership in a crisis given by a Fabius, or the more devious manipulation of omens given by a Themistocles, or the stylish charm of an Alcibiades. Are there national patterns here?

Perhaps there are, to some extent: let us take the paired *Lives* of *Pericles* and *Fabius*. In *Pericles*' case any 'monarchy' has to be masked, in Plutarch as in Thucydides it has to purport still to be democracy (*Per.* 9.1, citing Thuc. II, 65.9); not so in *Fabius*' Rome, where *Fabius* is praised for making a display of the greatness and majesty of his office

²⁵ The sequence at *Cor.* 17-18 is especially telling. *Coriolanus* and his aristocratic followers are clearly stigmatised for their strong line (17.1-4); when the consuls urge compromise, the language and style changes to suggest their wisdom (17.7-8), and the *demos* typically and commendably are prepared to meet them half way (18.1); but the tribunes are the ones who inflame the people by their invective against *Coriolanus* (18.1), and *Coriolanus*' uncompromising rhetoric in response makes things worse. The tribunes' calculating manipulation ('judging their man well', 18.2), contrasting with the passions on every side, is the really chilling element: the people themselves seem to be given credit for being unhappy about the extremes to which they are being led ('many even of the plebs thought what was happening was horrible and extreme', 18.4), but there is no question by then of their being able to exercise restraint for themselves, or being criticised for not doing so. The focus again switches sharply to the tribunes (18.5-9).

(τὸ μέγεθος καὶ τὸν ὄγκον, 4.3; cf. 24.1-4)²⁶. Rome is a world where a dictator need not shy from words like ‘control’ and ‘mastering’, κρατεῖν and δεσπόζειν (*Fab.* 5.7). Athens was not like that. That was a world where Pericles had to adopt demagogic methods ‘contrary to his true nature, which was anything but populist’ (παρὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν ἥκιστα δημοτικὴν οὖσαν, 7.3), and only when he had used these to establish his authority could he adopt an ‘aristocratic and kingly’ style of leadership (15.1). He is not stigmatised for playing such a hypocritical game, any more than Fabius is stigmatised for being over-grand. True, even at Rome there are times when Plutarch lays his moralistic cap aside, and does not condemn the demagogic tactics of Caesar, say, as much as we would expect²⁷. But at Rome we are not left, as we often are in Athens, with the impression that the politician had no option but to play the popular game. If Cato is forced to accept the wisdom of a dole (*Ca. Mi.* 26.1; *Caes.* 8.6-7; *Praec. ger. reip.* 818D), that is a feature of the crisis of the moment, not a permanent fact of political life. It is not quite the same world as that in which a Nicias has to use his wealth in the stereotyped ways to counter the demagogy of a Cleon (*Nic.* 3.1-2).

So perhaps some courses would indeed be at least *prudentially* right amid one *demos* which might not be so in another, sufficiently so to make them excusable if not positively laudable; and that comes as close as can be to making them *morally* right as well, at least morally right for that particular person and time. At the same time, one must be careful not to overstate these differences between different cities and circumstances. The variation comes in means rather than ends; this, perhaps, is a case where the ends justify the means, an issue about which NIKOLAIDIS and FRAZIER have written very interestingly²⁸. The ends – strong leadership, production of *homonoia*, avoidance of external perils wherever possible, resolve in meeting them if and when they threaten anyway – remain the same. And even those different *demoi* of Athens and Rome are not so different as all that, perhaps indeed are made more like one another than they were in history²⁹. Even within *Fabius* the dispirited consul Paullus says that, if it comes to the worst, it would be better to fall before the enemy’s weapons than

²⁶ True, Pericles too has his own ὄγκος (*Per.* 4.6, 7.6, 39.4), but that is more a matter of his *personal* style, not of a display of *official* majesty. I ruminate a little more on this implied comparison of the two cities in Pelling (2005), 326-32.

²⁷ Thus the treatment of Caesar’s shows and indebtedness is much less negative in *Caes.* itself than we would expect from, e.g., *Praec. ger. reip.* 802D, 821F, 822C-823E; *Ca. Mi.* 46.8, 49.6; *Aem.* 2.6; and *De vitando aere alieno*.

²⁸ Nikolaidis (1995); Frazier (1995), 166-71.

²⁹ Pelling (1986b); de Blois (1992).

by the votes of his fellow-citizens (*Fab.* 14.7). That is Nicias almost exactly (Thuc. VII, 48.4 ~ *Nic.* 22.3)³⁰, and as discreditable at Rome as it was in Athens. In this case Paullus' leadership contrasts with the much more laudable model set by Fabius himself; but by the end of the *Life* Fabius himself has fallen into his own demagogic phase, 'shouting' in the assembly and attacking fellow-politicians as vehemently and shamefully as any Cleon (*Fab.* 25-26). The two political worlds, and the moral consequences of dealing with those worlds, are not as different as all that. Perhaps, indeed, it is no coincidence that that passage of the *Praecepta gerendae rei publicae* contrasted the character of the Athenian *demos* not with Rome but with Carthage (799B-E, above, p. 51). For his own reasons, Plutarch preferred to make his two great *demoi* approximate closely to each other³¹.

Conclusion: 'popular philosophy' – or 'educated ethics'?

If the ordinary member of the *demos* does not have that instinctive understanding of 'popular philosophy'; if the rich and powerful do not either; then who does? A degree of *paideia* is needed, the sort of immersion in literature and the past which was lacking in the likes of Marius or Coriolanus – and, again to be evenhanded between Greek and Roman, was lacking in Philopoemen too³². But there must be moderation even there, and a further recurrent theme is the way that the over-theorised, the over-philosophical get things wrong. Dion and Cato are examples of that: Plutarch cites Cicero's fine remark that Cato behaves as if he is living in Plato's Republic rather than the sewers of the Roman state (*Phoc.* 3.2), and Dion too has to learn the hard way about the difficulties of applying Platonic philosophy to the hard world of practical politics³³. It was a particular mistake of Cato to let his high principles get in the way of a marriage-alliance with Pompey: that drove Pompey into Caesar's arms, and soon destroyed the Roman state. "None of that perhaps would have happened, but for Cato's actions: in fearing the small failings of Pompey he overlooked

³⁰ That phrasing clearly figured in his source (cf. Livy XXII, 40.3, which Rodgers [1986], 336 linked with the Thucydides passage), but Plutarch would be aware of the resonance. I discuss this a little more in Pelling (2005), 331.

³¹ What those reasons might have been is another question, and not one to explore here. I gave answers myself of different emphasis in (1986b) and in (2002a); at Pelling (2002a), 225-26 I added some reflections on this.

³² Cf. *Mar.* 2.2-4, *Cor.* 1.3-5, *Phil.* 3-4. On the importance of (Hellenic) *paideia*, cf. Swain (1990a), (1990b), (1992a); Pelling (1997a), 125-35, (2002a), 340-41, 400-401; Walsh (1992).

³³ For *Dion*, cf. Pelling (2004), 91-97.

the biggest thing of all...” (*Ca. Mi.* 30.9-10). So in those cases too there is a hint of a wisdom that is difficult for the more extreme types of humans to catch. That emerges in less political contexts as well, for instance (to return to *Solon*) in Plutarch’s impassioned insistence that Thales was quite wrong to deny himself the joys of parenthood because of his fear of losing those he loved (*Sol.* 6-7). There it is not merely that Solon himself proves wiser (not only in his having children, but in his legislation for the family later in the *Life*); we can also contrast the more natural, ‘popular philosophy’ view of the issue visible in *De amore prolis*. Thales may be clever, but he is not sensible, and in this respect not really wise³⁴.

We still have to identify the positive counterpart of all these negatives, the sort of person who is well-equipped to understand what the rich, the powerful, the poor, the self-interested *demos*, the over-smart, and the over-philosophical will miss. The answer will probably be something not too far from the idea of the educated *pepaideumenoí* that become a staple of Greek thought in the Second Sophistic. Perhaps, one might even say, it might be someone like Plutarch himself, with that pervasive self-characterisation which is such an important feature of both *Lives* and *Moralia*. His works convey so clear and so attractive a picture of the man who is capable of being interested in finding out about anything, of immersing himself in history and literature and philosophy and life, and in reflecting deeply but indulgently on the human strengths and frailties that he finds³⁵.

Perhaps we should take this further, for not merely do the *Lives* and *Moralia* here tell the same story of what Plutarch is like, they also tell a *joint* story, where one feature of this characterisation is that of a person who can write and think in a multitude of different ways and articulate his thoughts in a whole series of different genres. Would we – should we – read the ‘popular philosophy’ works differently because of our awareness that they are part of a more comprehensive *oeuvre*? That proem to *De tranquillitate animi* is yet again suggestive: the importunate Paccius has asked Plutarch both for something on εὐθυμία and for some technical explanations on the *Timaeus*, and Fundanus –

³⁴ In discussion at Delphi Tasos Nikolaidis reasonably objected that Dio, Cato, and Thales could simply be regarded as not very *good* philosophers, at least in these respects. They get it wrong, but that need not reflect negatively on philosophical *paideia* itself. I take the point, but we might still talk of occupational hazards: if the rich and famous are prone to miss one sort of simple point about human life, philosophers may be prone to miss another.

³⁵ On this, see esp. Stadter (1988); Russell (1993); Pelling (2002a), 238, 249, 267-82, 367.

presumably the same Fundanus whose record of irascibility is central to *De cohibenda ira* 452D-453E – has also urged the letter-bearer Eros to hurry up. The proem provides its own model of how a man of εὐθυμία should respond to such scholarly deadlines, and Plutarch affects to have thrown together *De tranquillitate animi* quickly from his notes. The more demanding *Timaeus* request is not mentioned further – but it may not be forgotten. Plutarch has reminded us that he is a man of many parts, and being an expert on the *Timaeus* is one of those parts too. Is it then a wider feature of the self-characterisation that he is a person who can also write more technical works on philosophy or on history, but finds such specialisms less appropriate for the real business of everyday moral living than the register of those more ‘popular philosophy’ essays? That, *for topics like these*, Plato or Panaetius or Epicurus or Zeno are of more use for stray aphorisms and anecdotes than for sustained analysis or engagement, that they just need to be thrown into a wider cultural amalgam along with Homer and Euripides and Herodotus, a great literary meadow from which the *pepaideuementos* knows how to weave the right sort of garland? Perhaps so.

Let us return to our initial questions, and – still tentatively – sketch some answers. First, the notion of ‘popular philosophy’ does seem valuable: there is a sort of wisdom which ‘ordinary’ (in some sense) people may grasp more instinctively than the great and prominent, for the latter may find their greatness and prominence a barrier to understanding. The same may even be true of the great and wise: abstract philosophical wisdom does not always transpose into good practical sense. If we ask *what* any such ‘popular philosophy’ is for, those very barriers give a clue. Such wisdom has particular purchase on those issues where too much wealth or power, too many possibilities for ambition, too much abstract theorising, too many insincere flatterers may get in the way. And *whom* is it for? In one important way, it is even for the good and great, who should try to cast off their particular filters and try to see things as more ordinary people might – rather as Paccius has succeeded, or Plutarch can pretend that he has, in that proem to *De tranquillitate animi*. Many great men have failed, even those deserving sympathy, and Plutarch of all people is alert to the difficulties of learning those lessons and making them stick. But that is no reason not to try. More ‘ordinary’ people may find it easier – yet not the *totally* ordinary: popular philosophy is not demotic philosophy. And so the notion of ‘virtues for the people’, at least in the political sphere, becomes problematic. A *pepaideuementos* can hope to acquire insight and to apply it in ways which are not realistically open to the *demos*, or rather are open to it only in so far as it is material for the cultured, educated, sensible person to work on and exploit. The most relevant virtue is one that others will seek to acquire and to apply to

the *demos*, not one which it is realistic to hope that members of the *demos* will acquire themselves. They need leadership. A *demos* needs demagogues. All one can hope is that it gets the right ones.

How far this applies to other, less politically charged fields of activity remains a question. Of course the *very* ordinary are faced with the need to restrain their anger, to reduce their debt, to control their tongues or their curiosity rather more often than they have a chance to direct the policies of a great state. But can they be expected to do so in the same way and to the same extent as their intellectual betters? The rest of this volume may suggest some answers to that question.

Plutarch's *Lives* and the Critical Reader¹

T.E. DUFF

You yourself will judge (ἐπικρινεῖς αὐτός) these things from the narrative (*Agis* 2.9).

In several of his prologues, Plutarch makes explicit claims for the moral benefit to be derived from reading about the great men of the past (e.g., *Aem.* 1; *Per.* 1-2; *Demetr.* 1). It is therefore striking that the *Parallel Lives* contain very little explicit instruction on what to learn from reading about their subjects or how to behave as a result². In this paper I shall attempt to explore the ways in which the text does or does not guide the audience's response to the subjects of the *Lives*. I shall argue that the lack of explicit injunction is revealing about the kind of contract Plutarch envisages between author and reader and about the kind of readers Plutarch constructs for his *Lives*: not passive readers expecting instruction but active, engaged and critical readers – just the kind of reader Plutarch imagines for some of the texts in the *Moralia*³.

¹ I am grateful to Luc Van der Stockt for his invitation to attend the conference which gave rise to this volume and to Geert Roskam for his patience.

² The lack of direct injunction is noted by Pelling (1988b), 15-16, and (1995), especially 205-208 and 218-20 (= repr. [2002a], 237-39 and 247-49), an article which is still the starting point for any discussion of how moralism worked in Plutarch. Pelling distinguishes 'protreptic' moralism, which seeks to guide conduct, from 'descriptive' moralism, which is "more concerned to point truths about human behaviour and shared human experience" (1995, 208). He also distinguishes 'expository' and 'exploratory' moralism: the latter encourages the reader's reflection on the human condition rather than offering direct guidance on conduct (1995, 218-20 = repr. [2002a], 247-49). See my summary and discussion in Duff (1999), 52-71; (2007/8), 4-7.

³ I have been particularly influenced by Stadter (2000), who argues for the *Lives* as 'adult education' (504), in which Plutarch expected readers to distinguish for themselves what was good and bad, and compare their own lives with what they read; and by Konstan (2004), who argues that Plutarch's *De aud. poet.* advocates a critical, questioning style of reading. (See also Konstan [2006], on ancient reading practises more generally.) Other important studies on the moralism of the *Lives* are Martin (1995); Duff (1999); Stadter (1997), (2003/4).

1. *The road not taken*

It might be worth starting by looking at some examples of what Plutarch tends *not* to do. Take this passage of Xenophon's *Hellenica*. Xenophon has just described the extraordinary scenes of popular devotion as the Spartan commander Teleutias left Aegina in 389 BC. He continues:

γινώσκω μὲν οὖν ὅτι ἐν τούτοις οὔτε δαπάνημα οὔτε κίνδυνον οὔτε μηχανήμα ἀξιόλογον οὐδὲν διηγούμαι· ἀλλὰ ναὶ μὰ Δία τόδε ἄξιόν μοι δοκεῖ εἶναι ἀνδρὶ ἐννοεῖν, τί ποτε ποιῶν ὁ Τελευτίας οὕτω διέθηκε τοὺς ἀρχομένους. τοῦτο γὰρ ἤδη πολλῶν καὶ χρημάτων καὶ κινδύνων ἀξιολογώτατον ἀνδρὸς ἔργον ἐστίν.

Now I am aware that I am not describing here anything which cost a lot of money or was very dangerous, or any memorable stratagem. But by Zeus, it seems to me well worth a man's while to consider what sort of conduct it was that enabled Teleutias to inspire such feelings in the men he commanded. For this is the achievement of a real man, more worthy of note than large sums of money expended or dangers faced. (*Hell.* V, 1.4)

Here Xenophon not only makes an explicit narratorial statement, phrased in the first person ("I am aware... it seems to me"), and gives a clear moral judgement ("this is the achievement of a man...") but also states explicitly what reaction the reader should have ("it seems to me well worth a man's while to consider..."). Note, however, that, despite this explicitness, Xenophon stops short of actually spelling out what a reader should do as a result of thinking about Teleutias: the reader is not told explicitly to imitate that conduct, though that is certainly implied.

Xenophon slightly later makes another explicit statement of the lessons to be learned from Teleutias' career. This time the lesson is a negative one, and concerns Teleutias' death in battle: he had advanced too close to the walls of Olynthus in 381, and been killed, and his death had led to a general collapse of the army with great loss of life. Xenophon comments:

ἐκ μέντοι γε τῶν τοιούτων παθῶν [ὡς] ἐγὼ φημι ἀνθρώπους παιδεύεσθαι μάλιστα μὲν οὖν <ὡς> οὐδ' οἰκέτας χρὴ ὀργῇ κολάζειν· πολλάκις γὰρ καὶ δεσπότηται ὀργιζόμενοι μείζω κακὰ ἔπαθον ἢ ἐποίησαν· ἀτὰρ ἀντιπάλους τὸ μετ' ὀργῆς ἀλλὰ μὴ γνώμη προσφέρεσθαι ὅλον ἀμάρτημα. ἢ μὲν γὰρ ὀργῇ ἀπρονόητον, ἢ δὲ γνώμη σκοπεῖ οὐδὲν ἤττον μὴ τι πάθη ἢ ὅπως βλάβη τι τοὺς πολεμίους.

From such disasters I myself say that men are taught the lesson, in particular, that they ought not to punish even a slave in anger. For even masters when angry suffer more harm than they inflict. But to charge an enemy in anger and without thought is totally mistaken. For anger does not foresee, whereas thought considers no less how to avoid suffering harm as it does how to inflict it on the enemy. (*Hell.* V, 3.7)

Here we have once again an explicit moral judgement expressed in an emphatic first person (“I myself say”). But this time the practical application of that judgement is stated more explicitly. And the application is expressed not only in terms of military leadership (the immediate context) but also in general terms, abstracted from the particular, military situation (not hitting even a slave in anger). That more general lesson is one that could be applied, one assumes, by many of Xenophon’s readers, even if they took no part in soldiering. This might give us a clue to how ancient readers were expected to abstract general, moral lessons from the particular details of statesmanship and war, and to apply them in the more mundane circumstances of their own lives.

2. *Telling and showing*

I mention these passages not to claim that such authorial interventions are common in Xenophon⁴, but rather to show the sort of thing that Plutarch could have done, had he wanted⁵. This makes all the more striking the rarity, in the body of the *Lives*, of explicit statements about what is right or wrong or attempts to guide the readers’ conduct explicitly. In order to understand both what Plutarch does and does not do, let us attempt to construct a typology of examples, arranged in what we might call a descending order of explicitness.

Very occasionally we do find apparently general, gnomic statements in the present tense about what ‘is’ right or wrong or how the world, usually the world of politics, works. Such general statements usually arise from description of a subject’s behaviour and imply a judgement on it. So, for example, in discussing the quarrel between Agesilaus and

⁴ Though cf. also *Hell.* V, 4.1.

⁵ Compare also the famous passage in Nepos’ *Eumenes*, where a direct and explicit comparison is made between the indiscipline of Eumenes’ army and that of contemporary Roman armies: “And so there is danger that our soldiers may do what the Macedonians did, and ruin everything by their licence and lawlessness...” (8.2). See Pelling (1995), 208-209 (= repr. [2002a], 239-40).

Lysander, Plutarch comments on the dangers which ‘ambitious natures’ can pose to their societies (*Lys.* 23.3; *Ages.* 8.4). This could have been converted to an injunction: “Keep your ambition within check; don’t let quarrels with others damage the community”. Plutarch himself makes this injunction directly in the *Political Precepts* (809B-810A). Indeed in that text Plutarch uses Agesilaus’ snubbing of Lysander as an exemplum of how young men at the start of their careers should not behave to their patrons (809F). But that is not how it is put in the *Life*: the connection between the historical data and the reader’s own response is left for the reader to draw out him- or herself⁶. This is a point to which we shall return.

Similar are Plutarch’s comments on the behaviour of kings in *Demetr.* 42.8-11, which begin “For nothing is so befitting for a king as the work of justice”. Plutarch goes on to cite in confirmation various statements from Homer and other poets which associate kingship or godhead with justice, before criticising Demetrius for priding himself rather on the name ‘Besieger’. The immediate reference is thus to Demetrius, but the present tense might encourage us to take this as a statement with more general reference⁷. Similar might be said of the comment at *Demetr.* 30, also phrased in the present tense, on how “the most worthless proof of goodwill in a mob towards kings and dynasts is the extravagant bestowal of honours”. But in both cases the sense of present-day applicability is muted; although kings and dynasts still existed in Plutarch’s day (Plutarch himself dedicates several works to Philopappus of Commagene), the days of the Hellenistic monarchies were over and talking here of kings⁸ rather than merely rulers

⁶ Cf. *Cor.* 14.6, a disquisition on the ill effects of bribery at both Athens and Rome; and *Pomp.* 23.5-6, on the dangers facing a general in politics (discussed by Pelling [1995], 205-206 = repr. [2002a], 237). In both cases no explicit link to the reader’s own time is made.

⁷ The passage ends (42.11), “Thus evil having advanced to the place of good under the influence of ignorant power brought injustice into relation with glory” (*συνφκείωσε τῇ δόξῃ τὴν ἀδικίαν*). The aorist tense might suggest that the immediate reference is to Demetrius and perhaps other Hellenistic kings, but it could equally be taken as a ‘gnomic’ aorist, and so have a more general reference.

⁸ Some readers might possibly think here of Roman emperors, a connection made easier by the fact that βασιλεύς was, from near the end of Plutarch’s life, used of Roman emperors in informal contexts: Mason (1974), 120-21. But, though one of the characters in the *Amatorius* refers to Vespasian as ‘reigning’ (*βασιλεύειν*: 771C), Plutarch never refers to emperors as βασιλείς (see Jones [1966], 62 = repr. [1995], 97-98] on *De tranq. an.* 467E). Cf. *Arist.* 6, where he criticises Hellenistic kings for making themselves gods. Scott (1929) argues that this would be taken as criticism of the imperial cult, but the most we can say is that some readers might have chosen

or those in authority would serve to distance most readers from the point being made⁹.

Besides such general moral statements, which use the behaviour of the subject as a jumping-off point for generalised reflection, we also occasionally find explicit statements of approval or disapproval which are directed more specifically to the behaviour of the subjects. For example, in describing Demetrius' cavorting with whores on the Athenian acropolis, which Plutarch characterises with the loaded term *hubris*, Plutarch comments in a parenthesis that Demetrius 'ought' to have respected Athena (*Demetr.* 24.1)¹⁰. In *Ant.* 19.4, discussing the proscriptions of 43 BC, Plutarch comments, in a very rare example of a first-person verb, "I do not think anything could be crueller or more savage than this exchange"¹¹. Similarly direct judgements are found in *Dem.* 22.4-7, where Plutarch explicitly condemns the actions of the Athenians in celebrating Philip's death ("For my part, I could not say that it was good...for besides inviting *nemesis* it was also ignoble..."), and praises Demosthenes for rising above his private grief: "However, that Demosthenes left his domestic misfortunes...I praise [ἐπαινῶ], and I hold it to be the mark of a statesmanlike and manly spirit to...". The passage concludes with general reflections, phrased as a rhetorical question, about how consolation from private griefs can be found in public service.

Such rare authorial comments, as well as guiding the audience, also serve to construct for Plutarch a particular authorial persona¹². This is perhaps clearer in those cases where he defends rather than

to read it like this: see Jones (1971), 123-24; Bowersock (1973), 187-91; Swain (1996), 182 n. 146.

⁹ In general Plutarch seems to avoid in the *Lives* making obvious references to present-day institutions or recent history, leaving readers to make those connections for themselves. See Pelling (1995), 205-220 (= repr. [2002a], 243-47; (2002c). For a different view, see many of the papers in Stadter – Van der Stockt (2002), reviewed in Duff (2005).

¹⁰ Δημήτριος δέ, τὴν Ἀθηναίων αὐτῷ προσήκον εἰ δι' ἄλλο μηδὲν ὧς γε πρεσβυτέραν ἀδελφὴν αἰσχύνεσθαι... For other such parentheses with *προσήκον*, cf. *Pomp.* 67.4; *Cleom.* 5.2, 16.3; *Arat.* 3.3. A more forthright example is *Nic.* 14.1-2: Nicias' not being carried away in the enthusiasm for the Sicilian expedition "was the mark of a good and moderate (*σώφρωνος*) man"; but once the expedition had been voted and Nicias put in command, "it was no longer the time" (*οὐδαίς ἔτι καιρὸς ἦν*) for caution: he "ought" (*ἔδει*) to have attacked immediately.

¹¹ Cf. Pelling (1988b), 149: in this part of the *Ant.* Plutarch's "moral commentary is unusually direct, both in praise (14.4, 17.4-6) and in blame (15.5, 19.4, 20.4)".

¹² Pelling (1995), 207 (= repr. [2002a], 238); (2002b), 277-78. He cites as examples of such self-characterising judgements *Ca. Ma.* 5.6, *Ages.* 15.4, and *Otho* 2.1-2.

attacks: Lysander “should not be blamed too much” for his craving for praise, as this was almost unavoidable for one brought up in the Spartan system (*Lys.* 2.4)¹³; Alcibiades’ forceful preventing of his wife from filing for divorce “was not thought lawless or inhumane”, since, in fact, Plutarch says, the law wanted husbands to have the chance to stop their wives (*Alc.* 8.6). In such passages Plutarch is presenting himself as (by contemporary *mores*) reasonable and humane, not quick to judge, as sympathetic to cultural nuance, but ready to condemn where necessary: just the way he presents himself in the prologue to the *Cimon – Lucullus*, where he famously claims that he will neither omit nor over-emphasise negative features of his subjects, “as though out of respect for human nature” (*Cim.* 2.3-5)¹⁴.

In all the cases we have mentioned so far narratorial intervention makes a very clear moral point, though the reader is not addressed directly and there is no attempt to convert the moral point into advice or injunction. However, a reader primed to think ‘morally’ could easily convert Plutarch’s comments into injunctions and see ways that those injunctions might be applicable to his or her own life. Not, of course, one assumes, that many readers would find themselves tempted to consort with ladies of ill-repute on the acropolis of Athens (or of any other *polis*); and few might be in a position to agree upon a list of political opponents to be murdered. But more widely applicable lessons could easily be abstracted from the specific historical situation. We saw Xenophon doing this explicitly for his readers when commenting on the dangers of anger as shown by Teleutias’ death. But we should note that the moral lesson in all these examples is so uncontroversial (‘don’t be unjust in authority’, ‘don’t commit sacrilege’, ‘don’t be faithless’, ‘don’t betray your friends’), that, as Pelling has emphasised, the authorial comment merely strengthens what one may assume to have been the reaction of most readers anyway¹⁵.

Such instances of direct judgemental comment on specific actions are, however, rare¹⁶. More common are passages of character-analysis

¹³ On this passage, see Pelling (1988a), 268-74 (= repr. [2002a], 292-97); (1990), 225, 232 (= repr. [2002a], 293, 312, plus postscript 324); Duff (1999), 177-80; Duff (2008a), 14.

¹⁴ On *Cim.* 2.3-5, see, e.g., Pelling (1995), 208 (= repr. [2002a], 239); Duff (1999), 59-60.

¹⁵ Pelling (1995), 207 (= repr. [2002a], 238).

¹⁶ Much rarer than one might think. *Aem.* 13.2 and *Agēs.* 23.6 both use *δεινόν* (‘terrible’) in a moral sense (though in each case the behaviour criticised is that of a character other than the subject of the *Life*: Perseus or Phoebidas). In most other cases where terms such as *δεινόν* or *κακόν* are used they represent the thoughts or words of characters within the text rather than authorial comments.

(that is, where Plutarch describes or discusses a subject's character directly). Here too a clear narratorial, moral position can be discerned. The link between character-analysis and morality or judgement rests on the fact that for Plutarch, as for ancient writers more generally, character was itself conceived of in essentially moral terms; character-analysis thus often consists of an enumeration of virtues and vices¹⁷. Plutarch himself, in his famous statement at the start of the *Alexander – Caesar*, in which he declares a focus on material that will reveal character (ἦθος), glosses character in terms of “virtues and vices” (ἀρετῆς καὶ κακίας) (*Alex.* 1.2). Direct characterisation, then, usually implies a moral judgement and invites a moral reading, and Plutarch regularly uses the language of virtue and vice to describe what we might call character-traits¹⁸. Thus, for example, when Plutarch ascribes Camillus' success in a bitterly divided Rome to his moderation (μετριότης) and shrewdness (φρόνησις) (*Cam.* 1.4), or states that Aemilius is said to have surpassed his contemporaries in “manliness, trustworthiness, and good faith” (*Aem.* 2.6), he invokes well-known virtues¹⁹. In such cases it would be clear to an ancient reader, steeped in the language of virtue and vice, praise and blame, that virtues are admirable and to be imitated and vices despicable and to be both deplored and avoided²⁰. Plutarch himself makes that point in several prologues, though he never says so explicitly in the body of the *Lives*. That is a step the reader is left to make for him- or herself.

In such cases of direct characterisation, judgement on the subject's moral character is stated as authoritative, narratorial comment and draws on a set of accepted and uncontroversial virtues and vices. A particular feature of the *Lives*, however, is that statements about a subject's

¹⁷ For the ancient tendency to conceive of character in moral terms, see Gill (1983); (1990); (1996a).

¹⁸ And conversely, where we might expect Plutarch to make a comment on an *action*, he often speaks in terms of *character*: so, when Perseus surrenders to the Romans Plutarch comments, “At that time he made it clear that his love of life was a more ignoble evil in him than his love of money” (*Aem.* 26.7).

¹⁹ Similarly, when Plutarch points out the similarities of character between Pericles and Fabius Maximus and points to their calmness and justice, and their ability to endure opposition, he labels such qualities ‘virtues’ (ἀρετάς) (*Per.* 2.5).

²⁰ Though he tends to emphasise virtues rather than vices: see Martin (1995). Of course the moral implications of characterising statements may not always be obvious to the modern reader. This might be the case, for example, where Plutarch uses terms drawn from Platonic philosophy, such as when he invokes Plato's distinction between reason (λόγος) or reasoning (λογισμός), spirit (θυμός), and passion or emotion (πάθος). On Plutarch's deployment of such Platonic terms in the *Lives*, see, e.g., Duff (1999), ch. 3.

character or judgements of his actions are sometimes fully or partly focalised through onlookers or minor characters: we are presented with the subject in action and with judgments on that action made by those who witness it, in what Pelling has called “characterisation by reaction”²¹. As a result of this technique, an interest in morality often seems to emerge directly out of the story rather than to be imposed on it from outside. Thus, when Alexander is pressing eastwards on horseback in pursuit of Bessus, Plutarch describes how he refused water offered to him, as there was not enough for his parched men to drink. Plutarch concludes, “When his cavalry saw his self-control and high-mindedness (τὴν ἐγκράτειαν αὐτοῦ καὶ μεγαλοψυχίαν), they began shouting out for him to lead them forward with confidence and they whipped on their horses, declaring that they did not regard themselves as tired or thirsty or even as mortal as long as they had such a king” (*Alex.* 42.6-10). It is not wholly clear here to what extent the focalisation is to be taken as the narrator’s or merely that of Alexander’s men. But in fact there is no conflict: it is plain not only from the terms with which Alexander’s behaviour is described, but also because a general’s sharing in the hardships of his men was itself a stock virtue²², that the reader is expected to consider this a virtuous act. The reactions of a group of onlookers, like a chorus in a play, guide or model the reader’s reaction. And though this is not stated, most readers will feel confident that the narrator’s viewpoint coincides with that of such onlookers, and that they are expected to share both²³.

In other cases, opposing reactions are given, though often with a strong hint at which should carry more weight. Thus, when Marius exercises for war in the Campus Martius, despite being of great age, Plutarch comments “Some people were pleased to see him doing this, and they used to go down and watch his competitiveness and struggles. But the best people (τοῖς . . . βέλτιστοις), when they saw him, were moved to pity at his greed and love of glory, because, although he had become very

²¹ See Pelling (1988b), *s.v.* ‘characterisation by reaction’; (1992), 13 (= repr. [2002a], 119-20); Duff (1999), index of themes, *s.v.* ‘onlookers, as mouthpiece for author’.

²² See, e.g., Pelling (1988b), ad. *Ant.* 4.4-6 and 43.6. In the *Caesar*, the *Life* paired with the *Alex.*, Plutarch makes the point about Caesar’s sharing the hardships of his troops explicitly (*Caes.* 17).

²³ For another example, cf. *Cic.* 6.1: when Cicero takes up the quaestorship of Sicily in 75 BC, Plutarch declares, “When the Sicilians had experience of his carefulness, justice, and calmness [τῆς ἐπιμελείας καὶ δικαιοσύνης καὶ πραότητος αὐτοῦ], they honoured him more than they had ever honoured any other governor” (*Cic.* 6.1). The language chosen here invokes well-known and uncontroversial virtues, and readers will have felt confident that the narrator’s view coincides with that of the Sicilians.

rich from being poor and very powerful from being powerless, he did not know how to set a bound to his good fortune" (*Mar.* 34.6). Similar is *Ant.* 9, where Antony's behaviour in suppressing Dolabella causes the multitude to hate him, but the good and prudent (τοῖς... χρηστοῖς καὶ σώφροσι) are said to dislike not this but his general manner of life: "they loathed his ill-timed drunkenness, his heavy expenditures, his cavorting with women..." (*Ant.* 9.2); the passage continues with a list of Antony's debaucheries, still presented as the thoughts of sensible observers²⁴. As Antony's behaviour is mapped onto an uncontroversial set of stock vices, most readers would presumably identify with the good and prudent and share their disapproval. But such cases of multiple internal focalisations encourage the reader to enter into the act of judging the behaviour of the subjects themselves, even though the conclusion to which they are steered is never really in doubt²⁵. They also, perhaps, serve to broaden the reader's moral perspective. Although one interpretation is privileged, many readers might not feel that the other is wholly worthless: perhaps, a reader might muse, there *was* something mildly admirable about Marius' exertions in old age, despite the fact that they revealed his inner discontent and greed, and perhaps Antony's suppression of Dolabella was distasteful, even if it was necessary. We shall have more to say about the way the *Lives* encourage the reader to *think* in the next section.

Finally there are many cases in the *Lives* where the actions of the subject are described, whether as part of a continuous, chronologically organised narrative or of self-contained anecdotes, but there is no explicit reference to a virtue or vice, however focalised, and no reference to the opinions or judgements of onlookers. This accords the reader more autonomy. But even in these cases, readers alert to issues of morality, and used to what we might call a 'judgemental' approach to character and behaviour, will often have had no problem in reading such episodes in a moralising fashion. In *Alex.* 15, for example, Plutarch describes how, before crossing the Hellespont, Alexander distributed nearly all

²⁴ ἐλύπουν ('grieved') and δεινὸν... ἐποιοῦντο ('they thought it terrible') show that all this is still focalised through the sensible observers. On this passage, see Pelling (1988b), *ad loc.*

²⁵ Similar might be said of some of those cases where the thoughts of the subject of the *Life* are given. When Coriolanus is described as "thinking that winning and beating everyone at all times was the mark of bravery, not of weakness and softness" (*Cor.* 15.5), or Pyrrhus as "thinking that it was sickeningly boring not to do evil to others or have it done to him by them" (*Pyrrh.* 13.2), it is clear both from the context of the *Life* as a whole, and from the way in which these views, common though they must have been amongst many of Plutarch's contemporaries, flatly contradict philosophical values, that the reader is expected to reject their reasonings.

the royal lands or revenues to his companions, though some, such as Perdiccas, refused to accept them; Plutarch quotes the latter's declaration that he would rather share Alexander's hopes for the future. It is clear that one of the points of this story is to indicate Alexander's generosity to his friends, a stock virtue in kings, and the way it won their devotion in return, as well as his single-minded ambition. Indeed anecdotes in Plutarch, and in ancient literature in general, tend to function in this way: that is, they tend to suggest, illustrate, confirm or amplify character traits. So it would be natural for an ancient reader to read such stories with an eye to the moral import – that is, to see them as having at their heart, as Plutarch puts it, “the revelation of virtue and vice” (*Alex.* 1.2)²⁶. We might make similar comments about Plutarch's words in *Phoc.* 7 on Phocion's behaviour to Chabrias, the man who had promoted and supported him as a young man. While Chabrias was alive, Plutarch says, Phocion continued to honour and pay him respect, and after his death he took care of Chabrias' relatives, especially his wayward son, who caused him considerable trouble. Few ancient readers would have failed to see this as admirable behaviour towards a patron. Conversely, when Plutarch talks of the slaughter which Sulla wrought on Athens, so great that the blood stains were visible two hundred years later (*Sull.* 14.5-7), or of the money-grubbing of Themistocles (*Them.* 5.1-2), few readers will have failed to see both as reprehensible. But Plutarch does not say so, and leaves to the reader the work both of extracting the general moral from the particular incident and of considering how, if at all, that lesson might be relevant or applicable in their own lives²⁷.

3. *Multivalence*

In the *Lives*, then, Plutarch tends not to ‘tell’ the readers the moral lessons they should learn from any given incident or *Life*. Still less does he tell them how to apply such lessons in their own circumstances. He can work in this understated, implicit way because he relies on his readers' possessing both a mentality of moralism in general (that is, a ‘judgemental’ attitude to human behaviour in both present and past) and a common set of notions about what made virtuous or vicious behaviour, a common repertoire of virtues and vices. It is, nevertheless, the reader who does the work of abstracting notions of virtue

²⁶ See, e.g., Stadter (1996).

²⁷ Stadter (2003/4), 91-94 is particularly good on how “Plutarch relies on his readers to be able to distinguish what is admirable from what not in a *Life*” (91). See also idem (2000), 500-505.

and vice from the specific particular events or actions narrated and of translating all this into application in their own lives. It is this notion of an engaged and critical reader that I wish to emphasise in the second half of this paper.

In all the cases we have dealt with so far, the 'moral' has been fairly clear, even if it has not been stated explicitly or any guidance given as to practical application. However, not all incidents, or all *Lives*, can have been seen as having such a clear-cut moral or as so easy to evaluate. Indeed, that last story, of Phocion doing his best to keep his patron's son on the straight-and-narrow after the latter's death, contains a disturbing element – or rather, an element that enriches and deepens the meaning that a reader might extract from it, while complicating any attempt to convert it into a simple injunction. Phocion, Plutarch says, recognised that Chabrias' son was unstable and difficult to lead (ἐμπληκτον... καὶ ἀνάγωγον) but persisted in trying to correct him. However, Plutarch continues, the young man caused him a great deal of trouble, and was particularly annoying on campaign, causing Phocion to cry out that he was paying Chabrias back generously "in enduring his son" (7.4). To a reader who already knows of Phocion's fate, or who looks back to this story after reading on, Phocion's trouble with Chabrias' son prefigures the very difficulties which Phocion would have with the *demos* (e.g. *Phoc.* 9; 24), which he also tried to straighten out; insubordination on campaign and in military matters was a particular problem (12.3; cf., e.g., 9.3-7; 24.1-5). Readers who call to mind Phocion's death at the hands of an ungrateful *demos* (chs. 31-38) may have seen his insistence on trying to take Chabrias' son in hand, admirable though it will still have seemed, in a more complex light. Or to put in another way, Phocion's relationship with Chabrias' son, just like his relationship with the people, will have provided a tricky moral problem or crux, made all the more poignant by Phocion's own evident failure to reform his own sons (*Phoc.* 20, 30, 38)²⁸.

Many Plutarchan anecdotes are as rich and multivalent as this story, especially when – as we have done for this one – they are read against the background of the whole *Life* of which they form part. Take the story of Alexander's out-of-season visit to Delphi (*Alex.* 14.6-7). When the priestess refuses to see him, Alexander tries to drag her to the temple. As with the Phocion anecdote, and as often with ancient anecdotes generally, the main point comes in a punch-line given in direct speech and forming the end of the anecdote. Here, the priestess exclaims, as

²⁸ Plutarch *could*, of course, have avoided the moral complexity suggested here, had he wanted: he might, for example, have avoided ending the story with Phocion's cry of woe, or removed the reference to trouble on campaign.

she is manhandled, “You are invincible, my son!” The anecdote thus points forward to Alexander’s victories, though it is left unclear whether the priestess’s words are to be taken as having some supernatural force (do they predict his greatness, or somehow bring it about?) or whether they merely provide a revealing comment on Alexander’s character, and in so doing explain his successes. Her words also serve to characterise Alexander by bringing out his decisiveness and his refusal to take no for an answer²⁹. But would all readers have seen the anecdote as redounding so simply to Alexander’s credit? This incident, placed shortly after the narration of the sack of Thebes (*Alex.* 11-13), might suggest also a violent character, and a disregard for the gods³⁰; it might bring to mind not only his later violence to both enemies and friends but also his demands to be treated as a god. Similar might be said of the later episode at Gordion, where Alexander, with similar violent decisiveness, cuts through the famous knot with his sword and takes upon himself the prophecy that he would become lord of Asia. To reduce anecdotes like these either to a simple, univocal message about Alexander’s character, let alone to an injunction to the reader (“don’t take no for an answer”, perhaps?) would be to miss their wealth of significance and their potentially disturbing or destabilising aspects.

Another example of such multivalence is provided by the story of the conversation of Antony and his lieutenant Canidius shortly before the Battle of Actium (*Ant.* 63). Canidius urges Antony to send Cleopatra away, withdraw eastwards and fight it out on land. “For in fact”, Plutarch continues, apparently summarising Canidius’ arguments, “Diocomes the king of the Getae was promising to come to their aid with a large army, and he said it was no disgrace to give up the sea, as Caesar had practised himself there in the Sicilian war...”³¹ Good advice, we might think, which Antony should have heeded. But several factors might give us pause. Canidius is said to have changed his mind “in the face of danger” (*παρὰ τὰ δεινὰ*), which seems to suggest that his change of heart might have been made under the grip of emotion

²⁹ The anecdote and the priestess’s words recall the anecdote of the taming of Bucephalus, which had concluded with Alexander’s father telling him, “Seek a kingdom which is your equal; Macedonia is too small for you” (6.8) – a similarly characterising statement, with some predictive force. On the characterising function of Plutarchan anecdotes, see Stadter (1996), including 291-94 on the Bucephalus incident. On anecdotes ‘foreshadowing’ later themes, see Duff (2003) and (2008b).

³⁰ Indeed, in *Alex.* 13.3-4 Alexander himself links the sack of Thebes and his later misdeeds with “the wrath and *nemesis* of Dionysus”.

³¹ The first part of this sentence (*καὶ γάρ...*) could be taken as Plutarch’s narratorial explanation or parenthesis. But context seems to imply that it is to be taken as summarising Canidius’ words.

or fear³². Furthermore, the claim that the Getae (Thracian or Dacian tribes) would come to Antony's aid, or that this would make much difference, must be considered doubtful at best³³. Thus it is not entirely clear that the reader should, after all, side with Canidius. But this is presumably at least part of the point. Plutarch could have closed off any doubt by making an authorial pronouncement about what the true situation was and what Antony should have done; but by presenting the case for retreat in such a weak way, and by hinting that it may have been motivated by panic or fear rather than strict reasoning, Plutarch instead draws the reader into the dilemma faced by Antony: to stand and fight bravely or to risk accusations of cowardice by casting his hopes on an uncertain future?

We noticed earlier how Plutarch often focalises the characterisation of the subject of a *Life* through the thoughts or comments of groups such as the people or onlookers. In those earlier examples the reader seems to have been expected to share the judgements of such onlookers or, where divergent reactions are presented, is given a strong push as to whom they should side with – though, as we noted, even there, divergent focalisation tends to have the effect of exposing the reader to different perspectives, even if one is obviously to be preferred. But in some cases in Plutarch it is not at all clear whether judgements made by minor characters in the *Life* are to be shared by the reader or which of two divergent points of view should be adopted. In *Alc.* 16, for example Plutarch gives the thoughts of “the reputable men” (οἱ ἐνδοξοί), as they looked on Alcibiades' outrageous behaviour: “alongside their loathing and indignation, they were afraid at his contemptuousness and lawlessness, thinking these things were tyrannical and monstrous” (16.2). The *demos*, however, Plutarch continues, combined enthusiastic love and hate for Alcibiades, and forgave all his misdeeds (16.3-5). One might be tempted at first reading to think that the reader should follow the lead of the reputable onlookers and simply condemn Alcibiades (“We don't react like the fickle *demos*...”). But such a straight-forwardly negative reaction would go against the tenor of the *Life* so far, which has stressed Alcibiades' good nature as well as his flaws; indeed, proof of his good nature was provided, Plutarch says, by Socrates' attachment for him (*Alc.* 4.1; 6.1). Furthermore, Plutarch's source here, Thucydides,

³² Other occurrences of *παρὰ τὰ δεινά* refer to people who show courage or discipline or keep their cool and act rationally “in the face of danger”, e.g., *Aem.* 12.2, 24.8; *Sert.* 10.2; *Eum.* 16.10; *Dion* 42.3; *Brut.* 49.7; *Comp. Pel. et Marc.* 3.6; *De ad. et am.* 69A; *Reg. et imp. apophth.* 172F; *De Al. Magn. fort.* 333C.

³³ Pelling (1988b) comments *ad loc.* that “P. phrases Canidius' arguments powerfully and presumably intends them to carry conviction”, but, notes that, in referring to the Getae, “Canidius was clutching at straws”.

has *all* the Athenians fearing Alcibiades; Plutarch has thus chosen to introduce a split-focalisation and with it an element of uncertainty³⁴. Finally, Plutarch himself will later distinguish objective reality from the viewpoint of the leading citizens on exactly the point made here: Alcibiades' tyrannical ambitions. They feared after his return from exile that he wanted to make himself tyrant, but, declares Plutarch, "what attitude he himself had concerning tyranny is unclear" (35.1). Plutarch thus avoids guiding the reader about how to evaluate Alcibiades. But that is presumably the point: the reader is faced with the same difficulty which faced the Athenians. And in considering that problem, the engaged reader will think about what exactly makes a good leader, what are the temptations and dangers offered to the man who embraces the *demos*, to what extent crises demand leaders who might in normal times be considered distasteful or dangerous³⁵.

4. Compare and contrast

This need for the reader's active involvement in weighing-up competing alternatives or priorities is in fact reinforced by the distinctive, paired structure of the *Parallel Lives*. Readers only ever approach a single *Life* as part of a book, alongside another *Life* coupled with it. The juxtaposition of two *Lives* makes differences between them particularly clear, and this double presentation encourages the readers' critical involvement, as they look at two men similar enough to be comparable, but different in both character and in the environment, culture and period in which they lived. Seeing the two men side by side encourages the reader to examine their different moral choices, the different ways they acted in the same situation or the way in which different circumstances brought the same actions to very different results³⁶.

Some paired *Lives*, for example, when read synchronically, seem to highlight ways in which different sorts of morality might conflict. Take the *Phocion – Cato*, which provides two contrasting examples of how a statesman might react when faced with the inevitability of the imposition of autocracy on his state. Cato's philosophical commitment to principle at all costs seems to be presented as virtuous and admirable, though

³⁴ See Pelling (1992), 22-24 (= repr. [2002a], 127-28).

³⁵ Cf. Pelling's 'exploratory' moralism (see n. 2). On Plutarch's *Alcibiades* as thought-provoking, Duff (1999), 229-40.

³⁶ See especially the illuminating analysis of Stadter (2000), 507-509; (2003/4), 94. Stadter helpfully compares Plutarchan *synkrisis* to the projection of two pictures side by side in an art history class: "The system of pairs thus increases the readers' ability to recognize and differentiate virtues in their different manifestations..." (2000, 508). Cf. Plutarch's own defence of *synkrisis* in *Mul. virt.* 243B-D.

even from the start several less attractive features seem to undermine this very positive presentation, suggesting that he was extreme and over-rigid. Furthermore, while many of Cato's actions, taken one by one, seem virtuous and praiseworthy, his life as a whole seems less so. This applies even more if one looks at the results of his life within the context of the particular society in which he lived and the particular problems he faced. Indeed, the prologue to the *Phocion – Cato* invites the reader to think of this very thing: Plutarch quotes Cicero's dictum on Cato "acting as though he was a politician in Plato's Republic not among the dregs of Romulus" and declares that, like fruit that appears out of season, "Cato's old-fashioned nature, which came along after many years among corrupt lives and debased habits, had great glory and fame, but did not fit what was necessary because of the weight and size of his virtue, which were out of proportion to the immediate times" (*Phoc.* 3.2-3)³⁷. Right from the prologue, then, we are encouraged to wonder whether Cato's virtue was not unsuited to the realities of political life in the late Republic. Might not Phocion's willingness to compromise his private principles for the common good, the reader is invited to ponder, have been the better course? But Phocion has no monopoly on virtue or political good-sense; he ended up murdered by the *demos* which he had spent his life trying to guide and curb. At any rate, by juxtaposing these two *Lives*, Plutarch invites the alert reader to engage in the job of weighing up their contrasting political choices³⁸.

Not only do paired *Lives* present competing interpretations of the same periods or individuals, but the collection as a whole offers multiple presentations of the same periods from very different angles. Thus the *Phocion* (paired with the *Cato the Younger*) and the *Demosthenes* (paired with the *Cicero*) present Athens' response to the threat of Macedon from two very different viewpoints; at the risk of simplifying excessively, in the *Phocion* the sympathy is with those who argued for compromise and quiescence, in the *Demosthenes* for those who resisted Macedonia to the end. In the *Phocion*, the *demos* appears unstable and dangerous; in the *Demosthenes* the *demos* receives a much more positive portrayal. Similarly, the *Pelopidas* portrays the events of the 370's and 360's BC from a Theban point of view, whereas the *Agésilas* portrays them from a Spartan one. The *Philopoemen* presents the viewpoint of those who

³⁷ For analysis of the prologue of the *Phocion – Cato*, see Duff (1999), 137-41.

³⁸ See Duff (1999), 131-60. There is no *synkrisis* to the *Phocion – Cato* to provide any kind of final judgement. On this pair of *Lives*, see also Trapp (1999); Zadorojnyi (2007). Similar questions are raised by the *Lysander – Sulla*: see Duff (1999), 161-204; also Stadter (1992a); (2003/4), 91-94.

resisted Roman domination of Greece, the *Flaminius* (paired with the *Philopoemen*) those who brought that conquest. In fact, the whole collection of *Parallel Lives* can be regarded as a fabric of overlapping narratives, each presenting history from a slightly different angle: the late Republican *Lives* of Lucullus, Cicero, Pompey, Crassus, Cato the Younger, Caesar, Brutus and Mark Antony all cover roughly the same ground, but each gives slightly different emphases and each focalises the narrative through a different figure³⁹; similarly with, e.g., *Themistocles* and *Aristides*, or *Nicias* and *Alcibiades*. The notion that the *Lives* give us a series of overlapping narratives, distinguished by their differing focalisations, takes us back to the point we made earlier about the tendency within individual *Lives* for some of the moral judgements to be focalised through observers rather than stated as authorial comment. In all cases, a discerning, critical reader is presupposed.

This sense of the reader as judge is particularly strong in the formal *synkriseis* which follow most pairs of *Lives*. One might expect the *synkriseis* to provide resolution, to offer a final authoritative judgment, to *tell* the readers how to judge the two men. There is certainly a good deal of ‘telling’: for example, Pompey, it is declared, came to power justly, whereas Agesilaus gained the throne “by sinning against gods and men” (*Comp. Ages. et Pomp.* 1.2); Pompey, however, helped his country only when it suited him, whereas Agesilaus abandoned his expedition in Asia and returned home when his country called him (*Comp. Ages. et Pomp.* 2.5-6). But that last example might give us pause: did not Pompey disband his army when he returned to Italy in 61 BC (*Pomp.* 43.1-5) – an act which might have been judged as equally selfless as Agesilaus’ return from Asia? In fact, this sense of the provisionality of the judgements made in the *synkriseis*, that they could have been done differently, seems to be central to them. The *synkriseis* do not provide a reasoned, authorial ‘conclusion’ on the *Lives* of the two men just narrated; rather they are rhetorical *tours de force*, attempts to argue a series of cases, or to show how they might be argued, on behalf of each of the men. Indeed, a few *synkriseis* divide neatly into two contrasting sections, each arguing the case of one of the subjects in turn. Furthermore, both the presentation of events and the judgements made in the *synkrisis* can sometimes be radically different from that implied in their two *Lives*. This ‘closural dissonance’, which is a notable feature of several *synkriseis*, has the effect of presenting the reader with two distinct views of the past, and with two distinct

³⁹ See Pelling (1979), which argues that the last six in this list were worked on simultaneously; (1980), on the differences between them; Beneker (2005), which argues that *Caesar*, *Pompey*, and *Crassus* were designed to be *read* together.

ways of evaluating the subjects of the two *Lives* which have preceded, which the reader is left to evaluate⁴⁰.

In most *synkriseis*, furthermore, there is no resolution, no final decision about which man should be considered more admirable, or which of their virtues should be imitated. Of those five *synkriseis* which do conclude with a closing judgement, four invite the reader to judge for themselves whether they agree or disagree. For example, the *synkrisis* to the *Agis/Cleomenes – Gracchi* ends: “You yourself can see [συννορᾶς μὲν οὖν καὶ αὐτός] the difference [between them] from what has been said. But if it is necessary to set forth a decision about each one, I vote [τίθημι]⁴¹ that Tiberius was first of all of them in virtue...” (*Comp. Ag., Cleom. et Gracch.* 5.7)⁴². These cases make explicit what is implicit in the other *synkriseis*, that is, the invitation to the reader to participate in the act of judging. In all cases the point is not that readers come down in favour of one man or the other but that, by thinking for themselves and weighing the two men against each other, they gain greater insights into both and become practised in the art of moral thought. Similar can be said for the one case of a *synkrisis* which ends with a strident closing judgement without any hedging or address to the reader, the *Coriolanus – Alcibiades*. Here the *synkrisis* argues consistently for the superiority of Alcibiades, a judgement which seems not inconsistent with the two *Lives* themselves. But the final lines contain an unexpected reversal: “These are the things about which one might accuse the man [Coriolanus]. But all the rest are brilliant. For temperance and financial self-control it is right to compare him with the best and purest of the Greeks, not with Alcibiades, who, by Zeus, became in these matters the most audacious of men and who most despised what is good” (*Comp. Cor. et Alc.* 5.2). The very inconsistency of this judgement compared with what went before invites the readers to play their own parts in assessing the two men⁴³.

⁴⁰ Duff (1999), 252-86. On the *Comp. Ages. et Pomp.*: ibid. 275-78.

⁴¹ τίθημι sc. ψήφον or γνώμην (*LSJ* A II 5), a court-room metaphor: cf. *Comp. Thes. et Rom.* 3.3 (ψήφους); *Comp. Cim. et Luc.* 3.6 (ψήφον).

⁴² Other examples: *Comp. Cim. et Luc.* 3.6: “The result is that for someone who takes everything into consideration, the judgement is hard to make [δυσδιαίτητον εἶναι τὴν κρίσιν]...”; *Comp. Phil. et Flam.* 3.5: “After this examination”, Plutarch tells us, “since the difference is hard to define [δυσθεώρητος], consider [σκοπέει] whether we shall not be fair arbitrators if we award the Greek the crown for military skill and generalship...”; *Comp. Lys. et Sull.* 5.6: “It is time to consider [ῥα δὴ σκοπεῖν] whether we shall not miss the truth by much if we declare that Sulla succeeded more but Lysander sinned less...”

⁴³ Duff (1999), 203-204, 268-69, 282-83. Pelling (2002b), 274-75 also stresses the tentativeness of most closing judgements and the way they suggest collaboration

5. *The critical reader in the Moralia*

One might argue that talking of critical, sophisticated readers is merely to mount a rather desperate defence of, or to try to put as good a face as possible on, passages or texts which might otherwise seem confusing and inconsistent⁴⁴. Is there any other evidence that Plutarch expected the kind of sophisticated readers whom we have imagined or indeed that ancient texts were ever read in this way?

First, the prologues to several pairs of *Lives* refer to or invite the reader's active participation. The prologue to the *Aemilius – Timoleon* presents history as a mirror in which Plutarch, and by implications his reader, "adorns" his life and attempts "to make it like their virtues" (*Aem.* 1.1): the image of the mirror suggests a complex process of observation, comparison and self-criticism⁴⁵. At the start of the *Demetrius – Antony* Plutarch argues that discrimination or, as he puts it, "the power to make distinctions" (τὴν περὶ τὰς κρίσεις... δύναμιν, *Demetr.* 1.1), is what marks out our rational capacity; the senses, Plutarch argues, must passively receive all stimuli, but we can direct our minds where we will. It is this power of discrimination, he continues, which enables us to benefit from examples of bad conduct as much as good, as we can judge the correct response to each (1.1-5). In making this argument Plutarch sets up a contrast between casual readers, who read merely for pleasure, and serious readers who self-consciously choose material that will benefit them, and are able to distinguish what behaviour to avoid and what to imitate⁴⁶. The prologue to the *Pericles – Fabius* makes a similar point about our ability to focus attention on what we choose, claiming that the object of our attention should be virtuous deeds, from which we may learn morally. Towards the end of that

between 'narrator' and 'narratee'. He also notes (*ibid.* 269-70) that the narrator's presence, and that of the narratee, is felt more keenly in the *synkrisis*, as it is also in the prologues, than in the *Lives* themselves. His n. 8 lists first-person verbs and pronouns in the *synkrisis*, to which may be added *Comp. Thes. et Rom.* 1.6; *Comp. Lyc. et Num.* 1.4, 2.6, 3.6; *Comp. Sol. et Publ.* 1.3, 4.1; *Comp. Arist. et Ca. Ma.* 3.3; *Comp. Per. et Fab.* 1.1; *Comp. Nic. et Crass.* 2.3; *Comp. Dem. et Cic.* 1.2; *Comp. Phil. et Flam.* 3.5; *Comp. Pel. et Marc.* 1.8; *Comp. Ag., Cleom. et Gracch.* 5.7; *Comp. Lys. et Sull.* 5.1, 5.6.

⁴⁴ A criticism made (very politely) by Brenk (2002), 455.

⁴⁵ Stadter (2000), 500-505; (2003/4), 89-91. Stadter compares how in *On lack of anger* the speaker Fundanus describes how looking at the ill effects of anger in others encouraged him to control his own (e.g., 455E-456B). For further analysis of *Aem.* 1 and the mirror image, see Duff (1999), 32-34.

⁴⁶ On the *Demetr. – Ant.* prologue, see Duff (2004). Other prologues also distinguish ideal from less than ideal readers: *Nic.* 1.1; *Alex.* 1.1-3. See Pelling (2002b), 275-76.

prologue Plutarch talks of how the study of the virtuous deeds of the past “forms the spectator’s character not through imitation but through the investigation of the deed [τῆ ἱστορίᾳ τοῦ ἔργου]”. What Plutarch calls ἱστορία here probably refers both to the author’s research and narrative and to the reader’s own thoughtful analysis and reflection⁴⁷. This sense of the reader’s active involvement in a mutual investigation, in which he or she does the work of assessing and judging the moral character of the subjects and responds actively to the text through which these subjects are presented, recurs in the very final words of that prologue. After running through briefly some of the similarities in character between Pericles and Fabius, Plutarch concludes by inviting the reader’s own participation: “But whether we aim correctly at what we should it is possible [*sc.* for you] to judge [κρίνειν] from my account” (*Per.* 2.5). Several other prologues end with an explicit or implied invitation to the reader to play an active part in assessing the *Lives* of the two men which follow⁴⁸.

This sense of the reader’s own active engagement with, and interrogation of, the text seems to be consistent with ancient pedagogical methods and reading practices. Students studied texts in the classroom by answering a series of questions put to them by their teacher. This approach seems, as David Konstan has suggested, to have influenced ancient techniques of reading more generally; the scholia and the ancient commentators preserve traces of such reading practices, which involve posing questions and answering them. As Konstan puts it, “Young people... were trained to look for conundrums and seek for solutions, whether in works of philosophy or literature”⁴⁹. Furthermore, ancient critics recognised the effectiveness of leaving some things unsaid which the reader must infer for themselves. The treatise *On Style* ascribed to Demetrius cites Theophrastus for the view that “It is not necessary to go through everything in great detail; one should leave some things

⁴⁷ On the prologue to the *Per. – Fab.*, and on the interpretation of this sentence, see Duff (1999), 34-45.

⁴⁸ E.g., “You yourself will judge [ἐπικρινεῖς αὐτός] these things from the narrative” (*Agis* 2.9), which is picked up in the *Comp. Ag., Cleom. et Gracch.* 5.7 (quoted above); “We pass over perhaps some additional similarities, but it will not be difficult to collect them from the narrative itself” (*Cim.* 3.3); “... it would be difficult to judge whether nature made them more alike in their manners or fortune in the facts of their lives” (*Dem.* 3.5); “they will make it a matter of dispute [διαμφισβήτησιν] whether the greatest of their successes were a result of their good fortune or their good sense” (*Aem.* 1.6).

⁴⁹ Konstan (2006), on which this paragraph is wholly dependent. The quotation is from p. 12. On ancient reading practices, Konstan cites especially Criboire (2001) and Nünlist (2009).

out for the reader to understand and reason for himself. For when he understands what has been left out by you, he will be not only your audience but also your witness, and at the same time better disposed for you. For he will think himself intelligent because of the opportunity for exercising his intelligence which you have given him...⁵⁰.

Furthermore, many ancient readers will have been familiar with texts which present them with conflicting positions or arguments that demanded the reader to make a judgement: *agones* in tragedy, for example, or paired speeches in history, the dialogue form in philosophy, or that staple of Greek rhetorical education, the declamation⁵¹. Declamations often took key moments in history, or counter-factuals drawn from history, and presented the reader with knotty problems or dilemmas. For example, the fourth-century AD orator Sopater suggests topics such as, “A prize is available for the best generals, and Eurybiades and Themistocles dispute it” (5.92.28 Walz) or “The enemy put up a statue of Pericles, and he is tried for treachery” (5.55.2). Declamations cast audiences as judges of the speeches given before them, often in pairs arguing opposing cases, which they were expected to weigh critically. One of the most ambitious sets of such declamations is Aelius Aristides’ second-century AD ‘Leuctrian’ orations: not two, but five speeches, imagined as delivered in the Athenian assembly in 370 BC, in which the first and third argue in favour of Athens’ allying with Sparta against Thebes, the second and fourth in favour of her allying with Thebes against Sparta, and the fifth in favour of neutrality (*Or.* 11-15)⁵². The audience here plays the part of the assembly, which after listening to the speeches, will, in this sophisticated role-play, decide the issue.

Plutarch’s own extant works include several texts which contain paired speeches, each arguing opposite cases. In *Which are cleverer: land animals or sea animals* a debate is staged in which the case for each side is put in turn. The two speeches are framed by a dialogue, and the closing comment makes clear that neither speech is to be seen as superior but that, taken together, they prove the more general point, directed against the Stoics, that animals as a whole do possess reason: “For when you combine what you have just said against each other, you will both be able to struggle well together against those

⁵⁰ *On Style* 222 = Theophrastus fr. 696 Fortenbaugh. I owe my knowledge of this passage to Konstan (2006), 13-14.

⁵¹ Duff (1999), 244; Konstan (2006), 13-16. See also Yunis (2003), 201-204, on the way Thucydidean speeches invite the reader’s critical involvement, and 204-12 on the way in which Plato “portray[s] critical reading vividly in the text” (p. 211).

⁵² On Greek declamation, see Russell (1983), esp. 4-5. For a catalogue of themes of historical declamations, see Kohl (1915).

who deprive animals of reason and intelligence” (985C). The frame is important in making clear how the whole is expected to work: the reader is presented with an unresolved conflict between opposing arguments, but the result is to reinforce a notion common to both. This provides a good indication of the purpose of the unresolved questions in the *Lives* or their *synkriseis*: the reader's moral sensibilities are deepened by being exposed to conflicting viewpoints and drawn into the work of assessing or resolving them. But the broader context of moral thought is never in doubt⁵³.

Several other Plutarchan works cast the audience as judges by taking up one side of an argument and leaving the other to be inferred. Take the *On the fortune or virtue of Alexander*. The positions adopted here are extreme: Alexander owed his success, it is argued, to virtue alone and not luck; indeed he was supremely unlucky. And Alexander was not merely a brilliant general, it is claimed, but a philosopher, who educated as well as conquered: indeed he was a more successful philosopher than Plato and others. All of this might seem weak and forced; indeed, this work has generally been seen as so one-sided that it is assumed to be the product of an immature mind, and so assigned to Plutarch's *juvenilia*. But to make such a judgement is to miss the way in which such texts work, the way they invite the reader to take part, to have in mind the opposite argument. The *De Al. Magn. fort.* is surely not intended to be taken as a reasoned statement of Plutarch's own views, but as a rhetorical *tour de force*, demonstrating how one might make the case, and do it well, for this extreme position. That we are meant to have in our minds the opposing position, or the possibility of an opposing position, is made clear in the opening words, which refer to a speech made on behalf of fortune or perhaps put into fortune's mouth: “This is the speech of fortune, who claims Alexander as her own unique handiwork. But some answer must be made on behalf of philosophy, or rather on Alexander's behalf...” (326D; cf. 340E). The position of the reader is once again as a judge of the arguments presented: not passive, but actively engaging with and weighing the arguments. Similar could be said of the *Were the Athenians more glorious in war or in wisdom?*. This treatise argues the surprising case that Athenian military successes were more important than

⁵³ See Duff (1999), 245-48 for more examples of texts in the *Moralia* which present opposing arguments or deliberately one-sided positions as a means of encouraging reflection, and for the possibility that Plutarch's name may have been associated by Favorinus with just this kind of argumentation. See also Swain (1992b), 104-106.

their artistic or literary achievements. Few readers can have read this without considering in their own minds the opposite case⁵⁴.

Finally, in his *How the young man should listen to poems* Plutarch himself argues for the kind of active reader which we have imagined⁵⁵. In this text, Plutarch accepts that there is much in poetry that may be harmful to the young reader but does not counsel that poetry should be kept from the young, just as Plato had wished to expel poetry from his ideal state. Instead, he advises that the young should be taught to read carefully and critically. They should recognise that not everything the poet says is true (16A-17F), and that the poet's representing of bad behaviour does not imply that he approves of it (17F-18F). When they come across bad behaviour, they should pay attention to the 'hints' (ἐμφάσεις) that the poet gives as to its correct evaluation (19A). They should look for contradictions (20C-21D) and consider what they read in the light of the words of the philosophers (21D-22A). They should realise that heroes or gods do not always do the right thing, and be ready to recognise when they do not (25E ff). "One should be habituated", Plutarch advises, "to shouting out boldly 'wrong' and 'badly done' as much as 'right' and 'well done'" (26B).

The young reader, furthermore, should be made aware of different ways of interpreting the same scene. For example, Nausicaa's wish to marry Odysseus could be taken as indicating wantonness and *akolasia*, if she merely saw a strange man and "had the same experience as Calypso". But if, on the other hand, she is influenced by her admiration for Odysseus' character and conversation, she should be admired. Similarly, Odysseus' pleasure at the gifts Penelope had persuaded the suitors to give her might be interpreted negatively (he rejoices in the profits of prostituting his wife) or positively (he thinks he will have them more in his power) (27A-C). As David Konstan puts it:

It is important to note that Plutarch does not insist that one interpretation of Odysseus' or Nausicaa's behaviour is more correct than the other. He is perfectly happy to leave the moral valency of these episodes indeterminate. Plutarch is not concerned to educe the authentic meaning of a text or the original intention of the poet. Poetry for him is rather an occasion for listeners to exercise and sharpen their

⁵⁴ Similarly the *On the fortune of the Romans* poses the question of whether Rome's success should be owed to luck or virtue. It is possible that it was meant to be read alongside a (lost) *On the virtue of the Romans* or *On the fortune or virtue of Alexander*. See Swain (1989b), 504; Schröder (1991); Duff (1999), 300.

⁵⁵ I am indebted to Konstan (2004) for what follows. See also Duff (2004), 285-86; Konstan (2006), 10-11.

interpretive skills. To be sure, students are expected to evaluate each episode according to a set of high-minded ethical criteria, to which Plutarch himself no doubt subscribed. But the moral standard serves in practice as a stimulus to ingenuity... The way to make poetry safe is to create a sophisticated and questioning audience for it⁵⁶.

Young readers, in other words, are to be trained not only to read with the kind of moral or judgemental attitude which we noted earlier, but also to interrogate the text itself. They should be taught to engage critically with the text, to question it, to *resist* it: "For", as Plutarch puts it, "he who opposes and resists [*ἀπαντῶν καὶ ἀντερείδων*] and does not give himself up to every argument broadside as though to a gust of wind but thinks that it has rightly been said that 'a fool tends to be aflutter at every argument' will thrust aside much of what is not truly or profitably said" (28D)⁵⁷. One tool for such interrogation is comparison: to better understand Achilles' speech to Agamemnon, Plutarch says, one should compare it with Thersites' and note the differences (28F-29A); similarly one should note the differences between Calchas and Nestor, and the Trojans and the Greeks (29C-30C). Above all, readers should not read in a desultory fashion, or merely for amusement, but actively seek out what may benefit them and improve their character, as a bee seeks out flowers (30C-F).

This is exactly the sort of reader Plutarch expects in the *Lives*: engaged, reflective, critical. Such readers interrogate what they read, compare one *Life* with another *Life*, see historical figures in the round, question their actions and debate their moral valency. Such ideal readers also abstract moral lessons for themselves from what they read and seek ways to apply such lessons in their own lives, rather than waiting to be told or expecting to be preached at. They are also alert to complexities, subtleties and contradictions, as well as to allusions and references to earlier literature. When faced with morally or intellectually challenging material, they see this as an opportunity to flex their critical muscles. The *How the young man should listen to poems* ends with the claim that the young man needs to be taught to read poetry critically "in order that, having gained a preliminary education [*προπαιδευθεὶς*]... he may be conveyed by poetry to philosophy [*ὑπὸ*

⁵⁶ Konstan (2004), 20.

⁵⁷ Konstan points out that Plutarch in this way pre-empts the modern critical emphasis on the role of the reader and 'the death of the author'. As he puts it, "Accountability for the meaning or message of the text is thus shifted from the poet to the audience" (ibid. 8).

ποιητικῆς ἐπὶ φιλοσοφίαν προπέμπηται]” (37B)⁵⁸. In the *Lives*, Plutarch expects more mature readers who, by applying their critical faculties, are able to read history philosophically, that is, to see in the *Lives* of the great men of the past a stimulus to their own critical reflection⁵⁹. As Plutarch once puts it in another context, they are to use “history as material for philosophy”⁶⁰.

⁵⁸ Cf. 15F: “Poems should not be avoided by those who intend to pursue philosophy, but they should use poems as an introductory exercise in philosophy [προφιλοσοφητέον τοῖς ποιήμασιν], as they become accustomed to seek the useful in the pleasurable and so be satisfied”.

⁵⁹ Cf. Duff (2007/8), 14-15. Cf. also Stadter (2002b), 6: “There is every reason to think that Plutarch saw his political essays and especially his *Parallel Lives* as his attempt as philosopher to enter the cave of politics” (alluding to Plato, *R.* 519c-521b); Id. (1997), 78 on the *Aristeides – Cato Major*: “... the emphasis from the beginning of the pair has been a philosophical problem, but one worked out in the real world”.

⁶⁰ The phrase is from *De def. or.* 410B and describes a certain Cleombrotus, who συνήγεν ἱστορίαν οἷον ὕλην φιλοσοφίας θεολογίαν ὥσπερ αὐτὸς ἐκάλει τέλος ἐχούσης. On this passage, see Flacelière (1974); Brenk (1977), 90-91.

Greek *Poleis* and the Roman Empire: Nature and Features of Political Virtues in an Autocratic System

P. DESIDERI

My contribution to this symposium will be to assess the particular characteristics which mark Plutarch's idea of the perfect statesman: better said, of the perfect Greek statesman in a situation of autocratic external control of the city-state, *i.e.*, in the context of the Roman Imperial age in which Plutarch himself lived¹. The first point to make is, in fact, that in his statements Plutarch accurately distinguished the politicians of his own lifetime (of whom he spoke mostly in his *Moralia*) from the great men both of Greek and Roman past history (who were the protagonists of his *Vitae parallelae*). This is not to deny that his historiographical ideas were strongly influenced by, and imbued with, contemporary problems and impressions, but simply to acknowledge Plutarch's keen awareness that the world of his heroes was completely different from that of his own times, especially as regarded its political aspects and requirements. Reviewing once again the history of the two peoples as represented by the most influential personages of both sides, Plutarch aimed at reaffirming the dignity, not to say the superiority, of Greek values and culture over Roman ones. The Greek statesmen of modern times, who lived under the overall dominion of Rome, were,

¹ I touched more than once upon the problems discussed in this paper: see especially Desideri (1986), (1994a), and (2002); in those essays the most relevant recent bibliographical contributions are conveniently quoted, but I would like to add at least Merola (2001). As far as Plutarch is concerned, it will be enough to mention here Renoirte (1951) and Carrière (1977) – which are alluded to in the text – and the quite recent collections of essays: Stadter – Van der Stockt (2002); De Blois *et al.* (2004) and (2005); see also Boulogne (1994). As regards Aelius Aristides' *Eis Pwμwv*, Klein (1983), with a German translation and a rich commentary, is still the best guide. As for Dio's speeches, I ought to refer to Desideri (1978), (1991), (1994b), and, for the particular situation of Tarsus, (2001). The translations of Plutarch and Dio given in my text are those of the *LCL* editions, respectively by H.N. Fowler (Plutarch), and J.W. Cohoon and H. Lamar Crosby (Dio). The translations of Aelius Aristides are by Behr (1981).

however, strongly advised not to emphasize the great political past of Greece in their political activity – a behaviour which was decidedly defined as ‘demagogical’, because of the unwholesome effects it was likely to produce on the public order of the Greek towns. This idea was all too clearly expressed by Plutarch in a celebrated passage of his *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae* (the most important of his political essays), regarding the memories of Thermopylae, Eurymedon, Plataea – which he suggested should be left to the schools of rhetoric (814C).

To emphasize the relevance of the gap which Plutarch envisaged between the political situations of past and present Greece, recalling a few passages of these same *Praecepta* will suffice. “Nowadays”, Plutarch asks, “where the affairs of the cities no longer include leadership in wars, nor the overthrowing of tyrannies, nor acts of alliances, what opening for a conspicuous and brilliant public career could a young man find?” (805A). Later on, after affirming that “the greatest blessings which States can enjoy are peace, liberty, plenty, abundance of men, and concord”, Plutarch goes on to observe that “so far as peace is concerned the peoples have no need of statesmanship at present, for all war, both Greek and foreign, has been banished from among us and has disappeared; and of liberty the peoples have as great a share as our rulers grant them, and perhaps more would not be better for them” (824C). These same ideas are echoed in a passage of the *An seni res publica gerenda sit*, where Plutarch observes that in the present day – “when one lives in luxury in states that are free from tyranny or any war or siege” – continuing one’s political activity is much easier and safer than in past times, when physical requisites could discourage or even hinder an elderly man from engagement in politics (784F). In all these passages Plutarch ostensibly considers the present situation as happier for the Greeks than that of past ages; but the same Plutarch denounces, a few lines after the second quoted passage of the *Praecepta*, “the weak condition of Greek affairs, in which it is best for wise men to accept one advantage – a life of harmony and quiet – since fortune has left us no prize open for competition” (824E). I will deal extensively with this apparent contradiction inside Plutarch’s mind. For the moment, it is enough to point out Plutarch’s consciousness of the diversity between the ancient and modern Greek political situations, and of the effects it is likely to produce on the characters of statesmanship in single Greek *poleis*.

Returning to the first of the above-mentioned passages, it is useful to remember the context in which it is inserted: Plutarch is dealing with the ways a young man may best begin his political career, and, in the fields of both external and internal politics, excludes the most traditional ones, which assumed a situation of complete autonomy on the part of the political subject. What then does he suggest as the

most convenient point of departure in the present situation? “There remain”, he says, “the public lawsuits and embassies to the emperor, which demand a man of ardent temperament and who possesses both courage and intellect” (805A). As far as embassies are concerned, Plutarch recalls later having taken part, when still young, in one which his motherland, Chaeronea, had sent to the proconsul (*ἀντιστρατηγός*), the provincial governor of Achaia (816D), and which apparently had been the beginning of his own career, considering that Plutarch had the main responsibility in its handling and that its results were presumably profitable for the town (otherwise Plutarch would not have mentioned the episode). As for lawsuits, possible different occasions for them are enumerated: one may complain to the local authorities who do not care about useful improvements in the managing of public affairs, or denounce a single politician’s bad practices, or even better protect a weak client against a powerful opponent (805B). Finally Plutarch mentions in this context “boldness of speech in behalf of the right against a wicked governor (*ἡγεμῶνα μοχθηρόν*)”: as we will see later, the provincial governor is, together with the emperor, the real interlocutor of the statesman of a polis, the man whose mere presence marks the limits of both the latter’s political autonomy and that of the polis itself.

If these are the ways Plutarch indicates for the rapid rise of a political leader in the present situation, it is fair to add at once that he does not recommend a sudden jump into the political scene. On the contrary, he strongly suggests a slow career for the future statesman, constructed in the shadow of some older politician, safely rooted in the social and civil terrain of the polis (805F-806F). A slow ascent does not change, of course, the general conditions in which a political life may develop under the Empire; it only serves to give the local statesman more time to learn about them, and to equip himself with the political qualities he needs to become able to face the particular difficulties to which these conditions are likely to expose him in the future. These particular difficulties are foreshadowed in the above-mentioned passages. If the polis has scarce real autonomy before the territorial empire of Rome, even though it still preserves its political structures – magistrates, councils, assemblies, law courts, and so on – the main problem is how to ensure for these structures the greatest possible vitality as against the imperial administration, with its organization and officers. As we learn from Aelius Aristides’ celebrated speech *Regarding Rome* (*Εἰς Ρώμην*) – which was written and delivered more or less a generation after Plutarch’s *Praecepta* – the Greek towns of the East do in fact have an important role to play inside the Empire; that is why they may aspire to preserve some portion of their political freedom. Let us look, once again, at this interesting

text, which in my opinion is not to be considered mainly (as some scholars believe) a rhetorical product, a cold and conventional praise of the Roman Empire, but rather an intelligent attempt to analyse and interpret its complicated and original political structure – even though the eulogistic aspects of a speech given before the Emperor and the Roman Senate cannot be ignored, of course. As our main interest is to expound upon Plutarch's ideas concerning the virtues of a statesman I will limit myself to singling out the elements of that speech that can most profitably be brought into relation with the Plutarchan topics and problems which have already been pointed out, and others which will have to be detected.

As is well known, Aristides' discourse aims not only at affirming and emphasizing the superiority, both in terms of territorial extension and of chronological duration, of the Roman Empire, above all the previous imperial, or hegemonic, experiences of the Eastern and Greek worlds, as in, for example, Polybius' or Dionysius' *Proems*; but his discourse especially aims at researching and identifying the reasons for that superiority. Of these, the first and most important had been, in his opinion, the Roman ability to ensure the loyalty of subdued cities and peoples, which in its turn had, and still, depended on two main factors: 1) their liberality in awarding other peoples or, better said, the best elements of other peoples, with their own citizenship, thus giving them the civic and political rights of the ruling power; and 2) their skill in controlling the administrative personnel sent to govern their foreign dominions, the provinces. Leaving aside for the moment the former of the two factors, let us concentrate on the latter, which is more important from the point of view of Plutarch's political interests. Plutarch, in fact, does not urge the Greeks towards a more intense integration into the Roman imperial government. On the contrary, he tries to discourage them from it. "Is there any comparison", he asks in another passage of the *Praecepta*, "between such a favour and the procuratorships and governorships of provinces from which many talents may be gained and in pursuit of which most public men grow old haunting the doors of other men's houses and leaving their own affairs uncared for?" (814D). The favour (χάρις) he is speaking of is that which an influential Greek personage (such as Plutarch himself) may obtain for his own town thanks to his Roman friends – the correct way, in his opinion, of posing the problem of the political relationships between Greeks and Romans, which ought not to mean an annihilation of Greek identity amidst the bureaucratic requirements of the imperial administration.

According to Aelius Aristides, then, the Romans were much cleverer than the Persians – the greatest historical parallel as builders of a universal empire – in structuring the administration of their territories. The

Persians “had not cared for the empire as their own, nor had increased the beauty and greatness of either the cities or the territories, but like those who have made an incursion upon what does not belong to them, shamefully and badly had depleted their empire, seeking to rule over the weakest possible subjects” (19). “The reason”, Aristides comments, “is that they did not know how to rule nor did their subjects fulfil their duty: for it is impossible to be good subjects whenever the rulers rule badly. Empire and despotism had not yet been distinguished, but king and master were the same [οὐπω γὰρ ἦ τε ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ δεσπόζειν διήρητο, ἀλλ’ ἦν ἴσον βασιλεὺς καὶ δεσπότης]” (23). The symbol of this political insufficiency was the Persians’ inability to establish a real administration of their empire, which was always characterized by extreme disorder and instability: satraps fighting against one another, as if they had no king; some cities siding with these and others with those; garrisons sent to some and expelled from others (29). Nor had the Greek ephemeral hegemonies been better from this point of view. The Athenians, for instance, had not been able to ensure the control of their nominally allied cities, which they tried to rule by imposing strong garrisons, always no less numerous than the individual native population. In this way they created suspicion in the minds of those not yet guarded by garrisons, and as a consequence they did not hold the cities securely and were hated as well (52). Conversely, the Romans had been able to discover and fulfil a real art of external, so to speak, government (58), as regards first of all the opportunity of limiting the inevitable interferences of the dominant power in the local affairs of the subjected communities, but also by preventing any malfeasances on the part of their representatives in even the remotest regions of the empire.

The fact is that “the rulers who are sent to the cities and to the peoples [*i.e.*, the provincial governors] are each the rulers of those under them, but in regard to their personal position and their relations to each other are equally subjects. And, indeed, one would say that in this respect they differ from their subjects, in that they first teach the duties of a subject. So much fear is instilled in all for the great ruler and president of the whole” (31), that is, the emperor. Aristides is pleased to stress this point in front of the emperor himself (Antoninus Pius), who is invoked as a guarantee of the fact that the Romans “are the only ones ever to rule over free men [μόνοι γὰρ τῶν πάποτε ἐλευθέρων ἄρχετε]”. And Caria, he goes on,

has not been given to Tissaphernes nor Phrygia to Pharnabazus, nor Egypt to another, nor are the people, like a household (οἶκος), spoken of as belonging to so-and-so, to whomever they were given to serve, although not even that man was free. But like those in

individual cities, you govern throughout the whole inhabited world as if in a single city and you appoint governors as it were by elections for the protection and care of their subjects, not to be their masters. Therefore governor is succeeded by governor whenever his term has expired; and it is improbable that he would even meet his successor – so far would he be from raising a dispute as if the land were his own (36).

What we have here is the acknowledgment – or the request, at worst – of the strong engagement of the imperial government in controlling the activities of the Roman governors in the provinces, apparently to the end of preserving local political space. That is why Aristides concludes this point by crying out, “How is this form of government not beyond every democracy?” (38).

This definition of the Roman Empire as a political system superior even to democracy – evidently considered the best possible *politeia*, as is confirmed by a later passage (60) where Aristides acclaims that, thanks to this same Empire, “there has been established a common democracy of the world” (*κοινή τῆς γῆς δημοκρατία*) – seems to be an answer to other ideologists who supposedly exalted democracy as against the autocracy of the imperial government. In any case, it leads us back to Plutarch’s statesman in at least two senses. On the one hand, it reminds us of the famous Thucydidean definition (II, 65.9) of the Athenian political system in Pericles’ time as one which was “in name a democracy, but in fact the rule of the foremost man”. Plutarch actually appropriated that definition in the *Praecepta* (802C), even if only to underline that mastership of rhetorical equipment – so far as it can ensure a single man’s supremacy even in a democratic system – is the necessary prerequisite for political activity. In Aristides the reference to democracy as the general scheme of the Empire does not have any implication of this kind, but apparently takes up the same Thucydidean suggestion, but in a slightly different sense: that a true democracy needs a strong authoritative guardianship. On the other hand, and more significantly, that definition offers a fundamental key for the correct understanding of the special characteristics which, according to Plutarch, the municipal statesmanship ought to assume in the general imperial system. As we have already anticipated, and will examine in detail, the major problem is perhaps that of marking the appropriate limits between the provincial administration on the one side, and the municipal autonomies on the other.

But before resuming our main discourse on Plutarch, we must dedicate our attention to the first of those points whose importance for the stability of the Roman Empire we have, following Aristides, underlined above: that of Roman liberality in awarding citizenship to

foreign peoples. Here we can, in fact, find the premises of the political role that, in Aristides opinion, the ancient Greek towns are called to play inside the Roman organization. Briefly, what Aristides says is that the social and political élites of the towns, to whom the imperial government grants Roman citizenship, are the real warrantors of the stability of the empire itself:

You (*sc.* the Romans) have divided into two parts all the men in your empire...and everywhere you have made citizens all those who are the most accomplished, noble and powerful people, even if they retain their native affinities, while the remainder you have made subjects and the governed (59)...Since people have been divided in this way, many in each town are citizens of yours no less than of their fellow natives, and some of them have not even seen this city. There is no need of garrisons holding acropolises, but the most important and powerful people in each place guard their countries for you. And you hold their cities in a double way, from here (*i.e.*, from Rome, where Aristides is speaking), and individually through them (64).

The reference to the garrisons in the acropolises is of course directed at the hegemonial system which the orator had previously described as typical of the Athenian Empire: a system which had caused the collapse of that empire. Aristides strongly underlines that the present system, which ensures the stability of the Roman Empire, is in itself proof of the Roman political ability. At the same time it attributes to the local political élites a role to which some degree of joint political responsibility with the Roman establishment must necessarily correspond. Thanks to the loyal activity of local statesmanship, the Romans may refrain from the direct political and military engagement which otherwise would be necessary to preserve their empire. But at this point they must safeguard the credibility of that same statesmanship before the populations of individual towns, and must consequently reduce the initiatives (and eventually embezzlement) by their provincial governors, as we have already seen.

Plutarch's political writings, which are not interested so much in analysing systems of government or theorizing on them, as in indicating ways of behaving on the part of the political actors, reflect a very similar situation, although with special nuances, probably as a consequence of a different chronological stage of development of the Empire. The problem of the confrontation of the local statesman with the Roman governor and the Roman administration is in fact at the centre of his attention. Let us recall the well-known main passages in the *Praecepta*. The first, in the natural sequence of the Plutarchan text, is rather shocking:

When entering upon any office whatsoever, you must not only call to mind those considerations of which Pericles reminded himself when he assumed the cloak of a general: “Take care, Pericles; you are ruling free men, you are ruling Greeks, Athenian citizens”; but you must also say to yourself: “You who rule are a subject (*ἀρχόμενος ἀρχεῖς*), ruling a State controlled by proconsuls, the agents of Caesar... You should arrange your cloak more carefully and from the office of the generals (*ἀπὸ τοῦ στρατηγίου*) keep your eyes upon the orators’ platform, and not have great pride or confidence in your crown, since you see the boots of the [Roman] soldiers just above your head. No, you should imitate the actors, who, while putting into the performance their own passion, character, and reputation, yet listen to the prompter and do not go beyond the degree of liberty in rhythms and metres permitted by those in authority over them” (813D-F).

Continuing, Plutarch obscurely refers to a recent cruel punishment inflicted by the Roman administration on the Sardinian Pardalas and his followers, “who had forgotten their proper limitations”, and launches his famous, already mentioned, attack against the politicians who incorrectly use the great past of Greece, “foolishly urging the people to imitate the deeds, ideals, and actions of their ancestors, however unsuitable they may be to the present time and conditions”. He concludes by confirming that “the statesman should show himself and his native State blameless towards our rulers” (814A-C).

It is hard to find any hint of the scheme of the relations between the urban communities and the governor, such as Aristides describes, in the above passages. But if we move ahead a few lines, we read:

The statesman, while making his native State readily obedient to its sovereigns (*τοῖς κρατοῦσι*), must not further humble it; nor, when the leg has been fettered, go on and subject the neck to the yoke, as some do who, by referring everything, great or small, to the sovereigns (*ἡγεμόνας*), bring the reproach of slavery upon their country, or rather fully destroy its constitutional government, making it dazed, timid and powerless in everything. For... those who invite the sovereign’s decision (*ἡγεμονικὴν κρίσιν*) on every decree, meeting of a council, granting of a privilege, or administrative measure, force their sovereign (*ἡγουμένους*) to be their master more than he desires.

According to Plutarch, the reason for referring everything to the sovereign officials is the “greed and contentiousness of the foremost citizens”, who, not accepting being defeated by their fellow citizens, “call in those who are mightier [*τοὺς κρείττους*, the Roman officials]”, and, as

a result “senate, popular assembly, courts, and the entire local government lose their authority” (815AB). So, the real problem would seem to be that the Greeks themselves were unable to profit even from the fixed amount of liberty the Roman government would have liked to give them. But at the end of his booklet Plutarch again states that it is the Roman dominion which has to be attributed the responsibility for this situation: “What sort of power is it which a small edict of a proconsul may annul or transfer to another man and which, even if it lasts, has nothing in it seriously worthwhile?” (824EF). Summing up, it appears that Plutarch is genuinely uncertain as regards the final responsibility for the political weakness of the Greek world – aside from the problem of how to explain Greek decline against the background of the overall happiness of the Roman times.

It may be useful to compare this Plutarchan uncertainty with the positions which emerge on this same theme from some of the writings of another great intellectual figure of the period, Dio Chrysostom, a native of the Bithynian town of Prusa. In this case, unlike in Aristides’, we are dealing with a strict contemporary of Plutarch’s. After considering Dio’s positions, it should be easier to understand Plutarch’s point of view, and in particular to realize why he believes that it makes sense, anyway, to give political instructions to the category of local statesmen; that is, to define the kind of statesman who would be able to cope in the best (moral and political) way with the difficult situations of his times. The first Dionean text to consider is the *Rhodian* (XXXI). In this discourse, which is addressed to a public assembly of one of the most glorious Greek towns, the rhetor speaks in very general terms about the situation of the Greeks inside the Roman Empire. The Rhodians’ disgusting practice of erasing the dedications on ancient statues, in order to be able to offer those same statues anew, with a different inscription, to the then important, mostly Roman, personages, becomes – in Dio’s opinion – a sort of symbol of the shameful Greek demobilization of their past and political traditions before the Romans. To the eventual Rhodian objection that it would be too expensive for them to dedicate completely new statues, while, at the same time, some act of adulation was necessary to preserve their freedom, Dio expresses great indignation: “If your freedom is in so precarious a state that it can be stripped from you on any petty pretext, it would in every way be better for you to be slaves forthwith” (112). In fact, as he has already observed, “you must not suppose that the Romans are so stupid and ignorant as to choose that none of their subjects should be independent or honourable but would rather rule over slaves” (111). We are confronted with the same dilemma we found in the Plutarchan *Praecepta*: are not the Greeks themselves the most responsible for their servility towards the Romans? In the case

of the Rhodians, moreover, there is the aggravating circumstance that the island is a ‘free town’, meaning in principle not subjected to the control of a Roman governor.

More analytical elements, which have to do with the concrete relations between provincial towns and Roman governors, and among the towns themselves of one and the same province, are to be found in the *Nicomedian* (XXXVIII) and in the second *Tarsian* (XXXIV) discourses, respectively dedicated to the situation of the two Asian provinces of Bithynia and Cilicia. In the *Nicomedian* we find the clearest analysis of the conditions which offer an unscrupulous governor the possibility of mismanaging a province, taking advantage of the rivalry among its towns; while the *Tarsian*, which is concerned with problems of rivalry among the Cilician towns as well as of internal political disorder in the provincial capital, puts in a better light the behaviour of the governors, who appear to search for a difficult balance among the local parties. The governors even risk paying the price themselves for a situation which only in part depends on them: they may actually be prosecuted, at the request of the provincial assembly (κοινόν), at the end of their governorships. Summarizing briefly Dio’s arguments in the *Nicomedian*, we see that he urges his audience – who are the inhabitants of one of the two most important towns of the province – not to exasperate their disputes with the other, Nicaea, in order to avoid unpleasant consequences for the whole province that might derive from their quarrelling. Dio asks:

Is it possible you are not aware of the tyrannical power your own strife offers to those who govern you? For at once whoever wishes to mistreat your (*i.e.*, the Bithynian) people comes armed with the knowledge of what he must do to escape the penalty. For either he allies himself with the Nicaean party and has their group for support, or else by choosing the party of Nicomedia he is protected by you. Moreover, while he has no love for either side, he appears to love one of the two; yet all the while he is wronging them all. Still, despite the wrongs he commits, he is protected by those who believe they alone are loved by him (36-37).

According to Dio, there is no reason at all for strife between the two towns: the quarrel is merely about the ‘primacy’, that is, the honorific titles they claim, which ought to sanction the superiority of one of them above the other: “objects of utter contempt in the eyes of all persons of discernment, [which] especially in Rome excite laughter and, what is still more humiliating, are called ‘Greek failings’” (38).

As far as the *Tarsian* is concerned, we are confronted, through Dio’s eyes, with what could be called a rebellion of many of the minor

towns of Cilicia – Mallus, Aegeae, Adana, Soli – against the provincial capital, a situation which urges the Tarsians themselves to stress exaggeratedly their ‘nationalistic’ sense of defence of the interests of the province against the Roman governors, two of whom had recently been accused before the imperial tribunal (9; 42). At the same time, a series of internal conflicts inside the town emerges, which tends to dissolve its political and social cohesion: “Is it not true that but a day or two ago the assembly [δημος] took one course and the council [βουλή] another, and that the elders [γέροντες] still maintain a position of independence, each body clearly consulting its own self-interest?” (16). Recommending that the civic assembly – which he “is addressing and counselling by divine guidance” (4) – not persist in their resistance to the claims of the minor towns of the province, Dio goes on to observe that real harmony can be obtained in a community “only by getting rid of the vices that excite and disturb men, the vices of envy, greed, contentiousness, the striving in each case to promote one’s own welfare at the expenses of both one’s native land and the common wealth” (19). This is precisely what is not happening in Tarsus at that moment, in spite of apparent manifestations of last-minute concord. In fact, according to Dio, it is essential to preserve imperial favour “through good behaviour and through giving no occasion for criticism” (25) – a sentence that exposes him to the inevitable objection of his listeners, concerning the insignificance of political life at the municipal level, as we can infer from Dio’s anticipated answer:

Let no one suppose that in saying this I am advising you to put up with absolutely anybody and to endure any and every thing; nay, my purpose is rather that you, being acquainted with your own situation, may not only take better counsel in the present instance, but may also in the future demand that the man who comes forward to speak shall make his proposals to you, not in an off-hand manner nor on the inspiration of the moment, but with full knowledge and after careful examination of every detail (26).

Dio is openly discrediting – as is obvious in even more explicit words in the passages that follow (27-37) – the local politicians, who are suggesting to the Tarsians a line of political behaviour which does not correspond to the Roman interests in the area.

Later on Dio insists, as regards relations with the governor, that the Tarsians “should be so minded as not, on the one hand, to submit to any and every thing and allow those in authority to treat them simply as they please, no matter to what lengths of insolence and greed they may proceed; nor, on the other hand, to be disposed to put up with nothing disagreeable whatever, or to expect, as you might, that

some Minos or Perseus – these are two great Tarsian divinities – will arrive in these days to take care of them”: the former way of behaving would be typical of slaves, the latter would be irresponsible (38-39). The important thing is to decide immediately what to do, in order to avoid suspicion and uncertainties, but it is clear that, at the end, Dio’s suggestion to the Tarsian assembly is – confirming what was previously stated – to renounce their alleged rights towards the other Cilician towns, as the stakes are not so high: “it is an ass’s shadow, as the saying goes, over which you squabble” (49). The final consideration that “actually, the right to lead and wield authority belongs to others” introduces a retrospective reference to the longstanding ancient quarrel between Sparta and Athens, which led to the successive ruin of both poleis: “and yet those states of old possessed real power and great utility... whereas anyone seeing the disputes and occasions for hostility of the present time would, methinks, blush for shame, for in reality they make one think of fellow-slaves quarrelling with one another over glory and pre-eminence”. The question immediately following, which Dio attributes to the listeners – the same question as above, and the same we had already found at the end of the Plutarchan *Praecepta* – is inescapable: “What then? Is there nothing noble in this day of ours to merit one’s serious pursuit?” (51). Dio’s answer, too, is very similar to Plutarch’s: the great ethical and political values do not change with time, and it is for them that one must strive, putting aside “the base and unprofitable pursuits and ambitions”. Yet the abrupt conclusion of the speech, with its allusion to a storm which is going to rage, seems to indicate that the assembly is not well-disposed towards this type of argument.

And now, let us return to Plutarch and to his statesman, beginning from the obvious connection between the final considerations of the *Tarsian* and the *Praecepta*. Plutarch specifies that the fundamental (and only) task of the modern politician is

always to instil concord and friendship in those who dwell together with him and to remove strife, discords and all enmity. He will talk, as in the case of quarrels among friends, first with the persons who think they are the more aggrieved, and will appear to share their feeling of wrong and anger, then he will try in this way to mollify them and teach them that those who let wrongs go unheeded are superior to those who are quarrelsome and try to compel and overcome others, not only in reasonableness and character, but also in wisdom and greatness of spirit, and that by yielding in a small thing they gain their point in the best and most important matters (824DE).

The importance of this special virtue – the ability to produce and ensure concord among the citizens – in the political context of Plutarch's times can be easily understood: it serves to prevent any police intrusion by the Romans, based on the necessity of guaranteeing public order inside the town. Plutarch makes clear this aim through his reference to the already mentioned troubles which had occurred recently in Sardis, "which came near to destruction" as a consequence of the enmity between Pardalax and Tyrrhenus – events all too present, he underlines, to the Sardinian Menemachus (825D), the addressee of the letter-booklet which is the formal envelope of the *Praecepta*. (Plutarch had, in fact, as we saw above, already mentioned a bloody Roman intervention in Sardis, otherwise unknown, in *Praecepta* (813EF). This reference, strategically placed close to the end of the letter, could in itself be a reminder of the relevance of this theme in Plutarch's mind. In another passage Plutarch speaks metaphorically of the opportunity, in case of sedition, of "having as little need as possible of physicians and medicine drawn from outside" (815B): once again, a reference to the Romans. The same is true for Dio, as we have just seen, even though Plutarch apparently never considers an aspect of concord which is perhaps even more important than that of the social cohesion inside the town: the concord among the various towns of a province. This is probably owed to the fact that no such problem happens to be present in Achaia in this particular period.

Direct Roman intervention, in a military form, had to be avoided – first of all because its disavowal of whatever ideology of liberty could be promoted at the local level was too evident. One, and not the least important, of Plutarch's aims was in fact stimulating well-to-do Greeks towards active and proper participation in the political activities of their own towns. Politically revivifying the towns was the best way to preserve and improve what could be useful from the glorious heritage of the Greek past. This vitality was necessary for the survival of Greekness, but it was also welcomed by the Roman government, which could avail itself of the loyalism of the local élites in order to ensure the stability of their empire and avoid excessive administrative costs. To this end Plutarch displayed great intellectual energy, which is recognizable in many other works of his *Moralia*. It was not an easy job: on the one hand, political interest meant political ambition and competition, and almost inevitably would produce internal dissension among the inhabitants of a town; on the other, stimulating local pride and sense of superiority had as a possible consequence violent rivalry among the citizens of different towns. These negative effects of political activity became even more dangerous in a context like that of the Greek towns in the Roman Empire. The Romans, in fact, not only could not

tolerate any political excesses, not to say disturbances, inside or outside towns, but also demanded that their will be at any rate respected. At the same time, however, it was easily to be expected that the local political leaders, or most of them, aimed at obtaining the support of the Roman provincial authorities, first of all the governors, in order to overcome their rivals. In this situation – of which we also have clear, coherent testimonies in other Greek (and Latin) texts of the same period – the kind of political virtue that Plutarch might propose to his candidate statesman was far from exalting. One can speak of balance or equilibrium, but in fact – probably using too harsh an expression, and one which Plutarch would not have accepted – it was the virtue of systematic compromise, which inevitably meant, in particular, the ability to deceive the people as regards the real conditions of political life and the real issues at stake.

The objective to conceal as far as possible the Roman presence, in order to safeguard the political prestige of the municipal organization, demanded indeed that the Plutarchan statesman possess a complete set of virtues which, in general terms, following Carrière's suggestion, one could call 'Machiavellian'. If the *Praecepta* may, in fact, be defined an 'open letter' (Renoirte), it must be added at once that it was open only to the Greek political class, surely not to the common Greek people. In what is probably the most significant passage from this point of view Plutarch advises the political élite to overcome the possible distrust of the people towards an important measure which has to be taken, by feigning not to agree on it: "in the assembly the statesmen ought not all express the same opinion, as if by previous agreement, but two or three of the friends should dissent and quietly speak on the other side, then change their position as if they had been convinced; for in this way they draw the people along with them, since they appear to be influenced only by the public advantage" (813B). But deceiving the popular assemblies was not the only Machiavellian element in the political equipment of the local politician: Plutarch plainly degrades the idea of freedom (824C), and suggests using religion as a political instrument (818D; 822B), and in a word shakes the very foundations of that 'democracy' which is in theory advocated (816EF; cf. 802B) as the normal political system of a Greek *polis*. Contempt of the people and the democratic institutions is the keynote of these suggestions. When recommending that his statesman always keep in mind what Pericles used to say to himself about the limits of his power – the passage we mentioned above: 813D-F – Plutarch completely changes the sense of the great statesman's sentence: in fact, it becomes an open confession of the necessity the statesman has of deceiving the people in order to comply with the Roman governor's wishes. Actually, it is not difficult to find clear indications throughout Plutarch's work of the author's

lack of confidence in any capability of the people to exercise political rights and duties: the population is “a suspicious and capricious beast” (800C), and it is to “be held chiefly by the ears”, that is, managed by rhetorical skill; otherwise it will become the prey of the demagogues, “who pull them by the belly, by means of banquets or gifts of money or arranging ballet-dances or gladiatorial shows” (802D).

We could ask ourselves what amount, if any, of political responsibility or awareness Plutarch was prepared to acknowledge in the urban *demos*, in order to bestow a simulacrum at least of plausibility to this pretended democracy – in other words, whether or not the people could, in Plutarch’s opinion, be expected to behave politically in an acceptable way, and what this way ought to be. It is a difficult question to answer, precisely because the people nearly always appear in the *Praecepta* as political objects, not as independent actors. The following may be said, at any rate: the people have the right, and the duty, to judge the customs and the behaviour of the statesmen (800E-801C), even though they may be misled by the rhetorical ability of some of them; indeed, it is the people’s job to select their magistrates (813C). Moreover – and what is more interesting, in my opinion – Plutarch strongly asserts the right of humble and poor persons to compete for public appointments, and the obligation of the rich and famous to “obey those in authority, even if they happen to be deficient in power and reputation” (816F). Otherwise they would “use their own high standing to insult and destroy that of the State, instead of enhancing it rather and adding to the office and power derived from themselves” (817A). Plutarch goes so far as to suggest that the well-to-do “endure the evil speech and anger of a man in office”, thinking that they will have the possibility of a requital at the right time, that is, “after the magistrate’s term of office is ended” (817C). Acting in this way, they will save ‘democracy’, Plutarch comments. They are also expected to cooperate with the magistrates, giving them good advice on what has to be done, but – Plutarch underlines – if the magistrates themselves reveal “any reluctance, delay, or ill-will as to putting such suggestions into effect, then one ought to come forward of oneself and address the people, and he should not neglect or slight the public interests on the ground that because someone else is in office it is not proper for him to meddle and mix in the administration of affairs”. The appropriate model here is Xenophon, who saved the Ten Thousand though he was “neither a general nor a captain” (817DE). One can speak of a democracy under guardianship, as in the Thucydidean judgement about Athenian democracy, which Plutarch had previously (802C) recalled in a slightly different meaning, and what is fundamental, truly “statesman-like” (πολιτικόν), is to keep the people in the dark about that *arcanum imperii*, a result which can be obtained by following this precept: “Win

the favour of the people by giving way in small things in order that in greater matters you may oppose them stubbornly, and thus prevent them from committing errors” (818A). This is, perhaps, ‘virtue for the people’, but one wonders if, behaving in this manner, the Plutarchan statesman had any possibility of preserving Greek dignity against Roman imperial pressure. The reverse was much more likely to happen.

Del Satiro che voleva baciare il fuoco (o *Come trarre vantaggio dai nemici*)

J.C. CAPRIGLIONE

Mi piace pensare che Plutarco è, a ben guardare, il risultato finale di un mondo che ha visto troppe guerre e troppe violenze, troppe lotte fratricide e sa, sente di essere arrivato ad un punto di non-ritorno: la pace con tutte le sue strane regole, le sue necessarie ipocrisie, la capacità di piegare molti istinti ‘naturali’ alle ragioni della ‘buona vita’ a fronte della minaccia del nulla, del baratro di barbarie che rischia di distruggere irreversibilmente i delicati equilibri interni ed esterni su cui poggia quella straordinaria macchina di potere che è l’impero romano.

Mi piace pensare che Plutarco sia il rappresentante migliore di quella cultura ellenica, orgogliosa figlia di Isocrate e della sua idea di pace e di progresso, capace però di accogliere il meglio dalla romanità che ha ormai bisogno di prender fiato, di una pausa dopo secoli di rincorsa ansiosa verso il dominio del mondo.

Plutarco non è un teorico né un politologo, non vuole, alla maniera di Polibio o Dicerco, spiegare quali sia l’*ariste politeia* né, alla maniera di Platone, quale sia l’*ariste polis*: egli è un Signore cosmopolita che ha molto vissuto ed è pratico delle ‘cose del mondo’ così che può mettere a disposizione di tutti la sua esperienza.

Noi non sappiamo se rispondono a verità le molte voci che lo vogliono maestro di questo o quell’imperatore, ma, in fondo, non è molto importante perché il fatto stesso che si sia costruita una *vox* così significativa è testimonianza del suo altissimo prestigio, ma anche del fatto che già gli antichi sapevano che nella nascita della politica degli Antonini, rivolta ad un ideale di pace e di stabilità, il suo ruolo fu di non poco conto.

Molti elementi ci inducono a ritenere che egli non fu solo un ottimo studioso della vita politica e del *modus agendi* dei politici: ricoprì molte cariche pubbliche fino all’incarico, conferitogli da Adriano, di governatore della Grecia, almeno secondo Eusebio (*Chron.* 2 p. 164, ed. Schoene). Suda (IV, 150.27-29 Adler) ci dice che Traiano lo nominò

console quando era già stato telearco, arconte eponimo e beotarca (cfr. *Quaest. conv.* 642F; 693E-694A; *Praec. ger. rei publ.* 811BC).

Plutarco, insomma, non parlava in astratto, non era l'epigono di una schiera di filosofi, che comincia con Platone, che parlano *ex cathedra*, al riparo del limbo dorato delle loro accademie senza mai scendere veramente in campo, il che non è certo una colpa, ma la premessa di un'altra visione del mondo.

Plutarco aveva sperimentato in prima persona molte delle cose che diceva, ne aveva misurato le difficoltà e l'importanza sulla propria pelle ed è per questo che non smette mai di spiegare, chiarire, ammonire, spesso facendo appello agli stessi temi variamente motivati grazie agli *input* che gli vengono offerti dalla sua immensa cultura e dalla sua straordinaria biblioteca.

D'altra parte è bene ricordare che per nascita e *paideia* egli apparteneva al bel mondo degli *happy few*: conosceva e frequentava, dunque, ricchi signori, ma soprattutto rappresentanti del potere ai quali dedicava libri, scritti vari, prendendo in cambio la loro esperienza di vita.

Molti, come Carlo Diano¹, hanno voluto vedere segni di cristianesimo in queste opere ricche di *humanitas*, ma, a dire il vero, io vedo ben poco di cristiano nelle opere di Plutarco: vedo, invece, un greco, profondamente impregnato di cultura greca che cerca di trasfondere negli *homines novi* (*novi* rispetto ai secoli di etica ellenica), dei principi di buona vita, che cerca di porre un argine culturale alla logica del potere per il potere che striava di sangue il centro e la periferia dell'impero.

Che io creda o meno alla religiosità di Plutarco è questione davvero secondaria: di fatto, tutti i suoi *praecepta* appartengono ad una logica molto laica, che risponde alle regole del buon uso della *φρόνησις* e questo forse spiega perché egli ha potuto attraversare con successo i millenni, le civiltà, le monarchie, le repubbliche, le religioni.

Il titolo che è stato dato a questo breve *pamphlet*, *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate*, è di stampo machiavellico o, se si vuole, alla Mazzarino², ma in realtà nulla è più lontano dalla logica di questi

¹ Diano (1968), in particolare pag. 60: "In tutta la filosofia antica si prescrive di non vendicarsi dei nemici e la ragione è sempre la medesima: non imitarli in ciò che la loro azione ha avuto di passionale e di stolto; una ragione d'igiene personale che, mentre li esenta dalle pene, nega e offende in essi la loro natura di uomini. Plutarco ne ha una migliore, già cristiana". E' vero che il *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate* ebbe fortuna al punto che nel VI-VII fu tradotto in siriano, ma non fu certo l'unico. E' bene precisare che non cerco qui di dire che Plutarco fu del tutto estraneo alla *humus* culturale che si spargeva nel Mediterraneo, dico solo che più che la bontà è un'altra la categoria che lo ispira, l'utilità, τὸ ὠφελίμον.

² Mi riferisco naturalmente al famoso *Breviario*, anzi al *Breviarium Politicorum secundum Rubricas Mazarinicas* la cui prima edizione fu stampata a Colonia nel 1684

‘perversi’ e potenti consiglieri di principi perché, invece, la logica alla quale si ispira Plutarco appartiene in parte alle dimensioni esteriori della vita, in parte a quelle interiori. L’uomo felice di Plutarco non è colui che si tiene lontano dai problemi né è colui che gestisce un grande potere servendosi degli altri come oggetti, ma è colui che riesce a trovare un equilibrio *insieme* agli altri ponendosi al servizio della polis, grande o piccola che sia.

Naturalmente sappiamo già che molte delle sue affermazioni, molte delle sue esortazioni sembrano appartenere al genere dell’utopia, come quando afferma nella *Vita di Demostene* (22.5): “Considero fra le virtù dell’uomo politico e dotato di animo virile quella di far sempre attenzione al bene comune e di saper porre in secondo piano i propri dolori e le proprie disgrazie rispetto agli interessi pubblici”.

Ma, in realtà, questo è esattamente ciò che accade ai grandi uomini votati alla vita pubblica che, anche quando ricavano dal loro agire interessi privati per sé e per la propria famiglia, fatto per Plutarco quasi ovvio, concretamente vivono come se la vita pubblica fosse il loro vero οἶκος.

Egli è certamente erede di quell’idea di πολιτικός ἀνὴρ che già Pericle aveva contrapposto all’ιδιώτης nella celebre orazione tucididea. Πολιτικός ἀνὴρ è colui che non vive chiuso in se stesso, colui che rifiuta di “vivere nascosto”, anche se non ricopre necessariamente una carica pubblica, come scrive nell’*An seni*: “Chi è veramente animato dal sentimento della comunità, da amore per l’uomo e la patria, chi ha a cuore le sorti della sua città ed è politico nel senso vero della parola, anche se non riveste la clamide, fa sempre politica, stimolando i potenti, guidando quelli che hanno bisogno di guida, assistendo chi deve decidere, dissuadendo i malvagi, incoraggiando gli onesti, mostrando chiaramente di non prestare una distratta attenzione agli affari pubblici” (796EF).

C’è una verità importante in questa tesi che ritorna più volte negli scritti di Plutarco, la constatazione, cioè, del fatto che molti e molteplici sono i volti del potere. C’è qualcosa in più però nel *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate* che poco traspare nei Πολιτικά παραγγέλματα che sembrano ispirati piuttosto a quello che in Italia viene detto “buonismo”, una categoria etica strana che fa della bontà un eccesso, una ὑπερβολή fino al punto da falsare la realtà stessa attraverso le lenti di

ed ha come *Fondamento di tutta l’Opera* queste dichiarazioni di principio: “A solo due massime restringevano gli antichi Filosofi la lor più sincera filosofia, e sono le seguenti: *Sopportati* e *Astieniti*. A due altresì i Politici riducono la lor professione, cioè: *Simola* e *dissimola*; o pure: *Conosci te stesso* e *conosci parimenti gli altri*, le quali due parti ultime (se non m’inganno) sostengono le due prime” (ed. G. Macchia, Milano 1981, pag. 9). Non credo ci sia bisogno di commenti.

una bontà, di una *φιλανθρωπία* non sempre utile perché solo apparente e, quindi, strumentale.

Il *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate* sembra quasi una risposta (e certamente non lo è) alla domanda silente di chi, come me, leggendo gli altri scritti politici di Plutarco si è chiesto se egli si fosse posto la questione della tutela di sé doverosa per chiunque, la questione del dover fare necessariamente i conti con l'indole di ciascuno di noi che non accetta con facilità il richiamo di un Bene astratto e sovente invisibile. Penso a consigli come questo dei *Precetti politici*: "L'uomo politico non deve trascurare alcuno degli interessi pubblici, ma volgere a tutti l'attenzione con buona disponibilità e conoscere ciascuna cosa né deve, come l'ancora sacra in una nave, mantenersi in disparte..." (812B). Facile a dirsi, difficile a farsi.

Sembra più di trovarsi di fronte al passo di un'orazione sacra che allo scritto di un importante filosofo della politica cui erano, peraltro, note le pratiche non sempre gradevoli della politica.

Eppure, a ben guardare, i timori di scarsa concretezza, di scarsa conoscenza della complessa natura umana sono infondati perché proprio questo breve *pamphlet* è la chiave di volta per capire fino a che punto e quanto profondamente Plutarco fosse consapevole di tutti i limiti connaturati all'indole di ciascuno, sulla scorta anche dell'analisi che egli aveva condotto sulle passioni e che lo aveva portato a confutare gli Stoici accusandoli di irrealismo.

E' noto, infatti, che l'argomento principale che egli usò *contra Stoicos* riguardava proprio l'impossibilità di cambiare la natura umana in nome di un astratto principio etico, forse giusto, ma slegato dalla realtà così com'è e, dunque, in questo senso irreali. I *πάθη* non si possono sopprimere, ma controllare, guidare, li si può perfino utilizzare per volgerli al maggior profitto. Se ben riflettiamo è la stessa tesi di fondo che ispira il *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate*: la cattiveria, la malvagità degli altri non possiamo sempre evitarle né tanto meno vivere come se non esistessero o pensare, sperare di poterle eliminare: possiamo tenerle a bada o, ancora meglio, trovare il modo per volgerle a nostro vantaggio. Faccenda complessa e per molti versi pericolosa, più o meno come voler baciare il fuoco (*De cap. ex. inim.* 86E), ma assai vantaggiosa.

L'intento è esplicitamente dichiarato fin dalle prime battute: "Ma se è possibile trovare un paese privo di bestie feroci, come dicono di Creta, non si è vista fino ad ora una politica senza invidia, gelosia o rivalità, passioni assai fertili di inimicizia (d'altra parte le amicizie ci coinvolgono nelle inimicizie, come riteneva anche il sapiente Chilone che chiedeva a chi affermava di non avere alcun nemico se non avesse neppure un amico). Mi sembra che per un politico sia conveniente aver esaminato a fondo la questione relativa ai nemici e aver prestato grande attenzione a quel passo di Senofonte dove si afferma che è proprio di

un uomo assennato *saper trarre vantaggio dai nemici*” (*De cap. ex. inim.* 86E). E questa, come dice subito dopo, non è espressione di buona volontà, ma piuttosto un’arte, una τέχνη con regole sue proprie che si apprende e si applica con metodo.

I nemici, infatti, sono dappertutto, sono intorno a noi, anche se abbiamo raffinato a tal punto tecniche di mascheramento e superamento da esserne quasi del tutto inconsapevoli. Del resto, è per questo che è nata la polis, almeno secondo i più importanti teorici dell’idea di progresso, come Democrito, Ippocrate, Platone, Isocrate: per superare φόβος, per superare la paura del nemico, quale che sia il nemico, animale o umano, e per far fronte a χρεία.

Il mondo nel quale l’uomo nasce, infatti, è un mondo ostile, si potrebbe quasi dire non fatto per l’uomo, ma piuttosto per gli altri animali i quali hanno armi per attaccare e difendersi e sapienza innata per trasformare gli svantaggi in vantaggi.

E’ quello che col tempo, χρόνω, come dice Senofane (21 B 18 DK), imparano a fare anche gli uomini inventando il kosmos-polis. E’ questa, del resto, anche la laicissima tesi di Plutarco: “Agli uomini primitivi era sufficiente non ricevere offesa dagli animali sconosciuti e selvaggi e questo era lo scopo della loro lotta contro le belve. Coloro che sono venuti dopo hanno imparato a servirsene nutrendosi della carne, vestendosi (coprendosi) con le pelli, utilizzando come medicamenti il fiele ed il caglio, il cuoio per armarsi così che è giusto pensare che, privato degli animali, la vita dell’uomo diverrebbe selvaggia, priva di mezzi e imbarbarita” (*De cap. ex. inim.* 86D).

E’ una tesi degna di Ippocrate, perfino strana in un convinto vegetariano come Plutarco, ma molto realistica.

La stessa tecnica, infatti, deve essere applicata nei confronti dei nemici. Bisogna imparare a guardare al di là delle apparenze e non lasciarsi accecare dall’odio o dal rancore o, peggio, dal desiderio di qualche sterile vendetta.

Ancora una volta è la natura la nostra prima maestra. L’acqua del mare è certamente pericolosa per chi volesse berla o innaffiare i campi, ma, ricorda Plutarco, nutre i pesci ed è un agevole via di comunicazione (*ibid.* 86E). Il fuoco che brucerebbe la barba del pazzo Satiro che osasse tentare di baciarlo è produttore di luce e calore (*ibid.*), oltreché διδάσκαλος di tutte le τέχναι, secondo la definizione di Eschilo (*Prom.* 110-1).

La tesi, insomma, è che non esistono amici o nemici in assoluto, ma solo occasioni oggettive e capacità soggettive di vedere il lato positivo di ogni circostanza per metterlo a frutto e trarne importanti lezioni di vita. Un esempio è dato dal fatto che i nemici ci controllano, cercano in ogni modo di entrare negli spiragli lasciati aperti da una nostra condotta di vita sbagliata o superficiale: ebbene, ecco, dunque, che la

cattiveria degli altri può trasformarsi per noi in un ottimo motivo per condurre una vita irreprensibile, senza smagliature, come avviene alle città che le guerre e gli scontri con i vicini costringono a fare buone leggi e una politica sana (*De cap. ex. inim.* 87DE).

Questo non è un comportamento forzato, ma un dato naturale, proprio di tutti gli uomini. E' la competizione la molla di tanti buoni comportamenti, secondo una lezione che viene da lontano, perfino da un insospettabile Cinico come Diogene il quale a chi gli chiedeva come difendersi dai nemici rispondeva: "Fai di te un uomo di irreprensibile virtù" (*ibid.* 88AB)³.

Gli artisti, per esempio, quando sono fra di loro "sono rilassati e svogliati" e si esibiscono in modo approssimativo, ma se devono misurarsi e competere con altri, "rivolgono maggiore attenzione non solo a se stessi, ma anche agli strumenti, accordandoli, facendo maggiore attenzione all'armonia complessiva ed alla sintonia con gli auli. Colui che sa, dunque, che il nemico è antagonista nella vita e nella reputazione, guarda maggiormente a se stesso e fa attenzione ai vari aspetti delle proprie azioni, dà ordine alla vita" (*ibid.* 87F)⁴.

Questa è una regola di vita generale, valida per gli uomini come per le città, come conferma l'esempio di Scipione Nasica che, a quanti dichiaravano di poter star tranquilli dopo la sconfitta di Cartagine, ricordava che ogni forma di rilassamento sarebbe stata pericolosa (*ibid.* 88A).

Insomma, quella di Plutarco non è certo la posizione di chi vuol "porgere l'altra guancia" in nome di un'astratta e invisibile idea di Bene, ma piuttosto la posizione di un uomo concreto che dalla *praxis* e dall'osservazione attenta ha tratto alcuni insegnamenti, primo fra tutti quello relativo al calcolo, parola che in greco fa riferimento ad una facoltà, o forse meglio diremmo un'ἀρετή, ben precisa: la σωφροσύνη che, secondo Platone, è la virtù in grado di produrre un κόσμος (*R.* 430e).

Bisogna imparare a calcolare gli effetti dei nostri comportamenti, bisogna imparare a capire cosa farà più male al nostro nemico: i nostri insulti o l'impossibilità di colpirci ancora: "Se vuoi dar fastidio a colui che ti odia, non trattarlo come un dissoluto né come un effeminato o uno sregolato né come un prepotente o un vigliacco, ma sii tu stesso

³ La tesi ritorna negli stessi termini anche nel *De ad. et am.* 71E = V B 421 Giannantoni: anche qui Diogene riprende una delle formule più antiche dell'etica popolare greca perché ad una domanda più o meno simile su come far fronte ai nemici risponde: "Diventando tu stesso καλός και αγαθός".

⁴ Il paragone fra la vita politica ed il teatro, anche se non esplicito ritorna più volte in Plutarco; cfr. *Praec. ger. reip.* 799A.

un uomo che si comporta da saggio e parla con franchezza, dà prova di umanità e senso della giustizia nei confronti di coloro in cui ti imbatti. Se ti lasci andare alle invettive, fa in modo da tenerti lontano da ciò che rimproveri all'altro. Entra dentro la tua anima, scruta i punti deboli affinché da qualche parte non salti fuori un difetto come quello del verso della tragedia: *fai il guaritore degli altri e sei tu stesso coperto di piaghe*⁵” (*De cap. ex. inim.* 88B).

Ecco, dunque, che parole preziose come *ἐπιμέλεια*, *χρηστότης*, *μεγαλοφροσύνη*, *φιλανθρωπία*, *εὐεργεσία* (*ibid.* 88BC) perdono il difficile statuto di valore in sé per entrare nella tassonomia di strumenti d'uso, sia pure eticamente ineccepibili. Voglio dire che queste preziose virtù, secondo Plutarco, non devono essere cercate e perseguite in vista di un qualche Bene iperuranio o, comunque, superiore, ma devono diventare modi della nostra vita concreta, *ἔθῃ*, perché questa possa essere migliore.

Plutarco, ancora una volta, mostra qui il suo volto pragmatico mettendo a punto una strategia di attacco contro i nemici che non fa uso né di *βία* né di *κράτος*, ma del *politically correct*, come diremmo oggi, cioè di *ἐγκράτεια* e *αὐτάρκεια*, in cui il controllo non è tanto e solo su se stessi, ma piuttosto su ciò che meglio servirà a tenere a freno, a colpire i nemici, a ridurli al silenzio ed all'impotenza.

Non stiamo parlando di una sfida ideale, ma di una strategia pianificata secondo la quale le uscite devono superare le entrate, come in una guerra, se si vuole arrivare alla vittoria finale: i termini che egli usa sono quelli propri di un soldato in battaglia, come è il caso di *νικάω*, ripreso dal verso di un frammento di Pindaro (fr. 229.I Snell): “I vinti sono tenuti in catena dal silenzio” (*De cap. ex. inim.* 88B).

Per dare maggiore autorevolezza alla sua tesi egli invoca la testimonianza di Platone che, però, forse per la prima ed unica volta appare come superfluo e ininfluenza rispetto alla tesi complessiva: “Ogni volta che Platone si trovava tra persone poco degne, era solito allontanarsi chiedendosi: *Sono forse anch'io così?*” (*ibid.* 88DE).

Plutarco non ha dubbi: chi non è in grado, come un bravo marinaio, di *ἀποστρέφειν* la nave della propria vita in funzione del *καιρός* che lo vede in pericolo di fronte agli attacchi, allora non perda tempo perché il suo comportamento sarà vuoto di senso (*κενός*) e *ἄχρηστον*, inutile (*ibid.*).

Come si vede, siamo di fronte a categorie primarie giacché la *χρεία* è una delle strutture portanti dello stesso *κοινὸς βίος*.

Egli arriva addirittura a dire che non solo i nemici hanno una funzione etica perché ci spingono al controllo dei nostri *πάθη*, ma anche

⁵ E' il verso di una tragedia perduta di Euripide; *TrGF* V.2, fr. 1086.

che hanno una funzione sociale perché ormai le relazioni interpersonali sono così degradate, a causa del rilassamento dei costumi, che non è più possibile sapere la verità da un amico: “Poiché l’amicizia al giorno d’oggi ha voce flebile nel parlare con franchezza, mentre nell’adulare è loquace e per di più è muta la voce dell’ammonimento, è necessario ascoltare la verità dai nemici. Come Telefo allorché non riuscì a trovare un medico fra i suoi, offrì la ferita alla lancia nemica, così chi non riesce ad avere ammonimenti ispirati a benevolenza, deve necessariamente sottoporsi con pazienza alle parole di un nemico che lo odia, se queste denunciano e rimproverano il vizio, guardando alle cose e non all’intenzione di colui che parla con cattiveria” (*ibid.* 89BC).

Il punto della questione non è davvero nuovo: non è importante se si è commessa la colpa sociale di cui si viene accusati, ma è importante ciò che appare agli altri perché l’apparenza dei nostri comportamenti può dar forza alla calunnia di qualcuno. A ben guardare, più che un’etica delle azioni, Plutarco sta qui invocando un’etica dei comportamenti che hanno una forma sociale che va rispettata e salvaguardata: una sorta di codice delle apparenze che, se non rispettato, rischia di mettere in crisi anche il rigore della *πραξις* reale. Non si invoca qui una difficile austerità, ma si invoca, invece, il rispetto formale delle regole, dei divieti e delle imposizioni che in una società complessa come quella ellenistico-romana, dove sono confluiti e si sono intrecciati tanti *νόμοι* e tante culture diverse, non costituiscono un *corpus* organico, ma proprio per questo richiedono un forte *sensus sui*. E’ necessario sapersi mettere in gioco e riuscire a calcolare al meglio il margine di trasgressione consentito a ciascuno, in rapporto alla situazione oggettiva ed al suo *status* sociale. Possiamo qui ricordare un incidente nel quale era occorso il grande Pompeo per una disattenzione non comportamentale, ma addirittura gestuale che in chiunque altro sarebbe apparso solo un vezzo: Pompeo fu accusato di effeminatezza, egli che pure era lontanissimo da tale *ἀκολασία*, perché si grattava la testa con un dito, proprio come era accaduto a Lacide, re di Argo, accusato di *μαλακία* perché portava i capelli troppo lunghi e cedeva in maniera troppo languida (*ibid.* 89E).

Cito questi esempi per sottolineare il fatto che è impossibile dare un codice rigido di regole che, invece, devono essere inventate di volta in volta a seconda della situazione sociale che ci si trova a vivere: questo è possibile solo se si è educati a farlo, se la *παιδεία* ha fatto di noi un soggetto morale forte, in grado cioè non tanto di conformarsi passivamente al costume vigente, quanto piuttosto di condurre se stesso verso il meglio, di avere una condotta rispondente al meglio, dove per *meglio* si intende ciò che è *ωφέλιμον και χρήσιμον*, utile e vantaggioso (*ibid.* 89B).

Lungi da me l'idea che Plutarco stia qui suggerendo azioni riprovevoli da coprire con il manto di una falsa moralità, così come non credo che Plutarco intenda riferirsi a buoni comportamenti occasionali, singoli episodi di vita perché questi non basterebbero davvero a fare di noi persone inattaccabili. Plutarco pensa ad un'ἀσκησις che faccia di noi un soggetto morale giacché non solo è ovvio che non nasciamo perfetti giacché, come abbiamo già detto, dobbiamo fare i conti con i nostri *pathe*, ma in più dobbiamo anche tener conto del *καιρός* e del *νόμος* che insieme danno vita ad un codice incerto e sempre *in fieri*: possiamo dire che, con l'eccezione della *Repubblica* e delle *Leggi* platoniche, l'antichità greco-romana non ha conosciuto codici rigidi forniti da pensatori e moralisti.

Credo che questo sia il grande elemento di frattura fra il paganesimo e la cristianità che invece fornisce tavole intangibili, comandamenti, prescrizioni e divieti assoluti perché dettati da Dio stesso.

Nella *χρήσις παθῶν*, dunque, l'individuo deve imparare a farsi il proprio codice etico, ma non nel senso che non esistono regole sociali, collettive: il *κοινὸς βίος* si trasforma in *πολιτικὸς βίος* proprio quando intervengono *αἰδώς* e *δίκη*, premessa del buon vivere che ha come premessa la condivisione di *νόμοι*. Il punto è che non esiste un comandamento definito una volta e per sempre: per questo un nemico può diventare un *μέτρον*, un'unità di misura, una sorta di cartina di tornasole della nostra *εὐπραξία*.

Come ricordava Platone nelle *Leggi* non è felice colui che segue acriticamente un qualche schema prefissato, ma "Felice è colui che sa ciò che bisogna fare, quanto deve e per quanto deve", mentre, invece, "colui che agisce senza sapere e al di fuori di ogni convenienza, al di fuori del *kairos*, vivrà in modo opposto all'altro" (636de).

Questa è una regola che abbiamo già conosciuto nella storia dell'etica greca: penso, a titolo esemplare, allo Pseudo Demostene dell'*Eroticos* che parla ad Epicrate per dargli buoni consigli affinché il suo comportamento sia degno della massima stima (c. 4) perché quanto più in alto salirà più sarà in vista e, quindi, sarà più bisognoso di *ἐγκράτεια*, quella forza interiore che gli consentirà di 'inventare' pratiche sociali consone alla nuova condizione sociale che si trova a vivere.

Se è vero, infatti, come dice Simonide a Gerone, che l'amore per la gloria è ciò che distingue gli uomini dagli altri animali (Xen. *Ger.* 7), è anche vero che un capo deve sapersi distinguere dagli altri privati cittadini "non per la nobiltà, ma per la fermezza" con cui sa resistere, o comunque rispondere in maniera adeguata, "alle *ἡδοναί* e ai *πάθη*" (Xen. *Ages.* 5).

Non a caso, allorché Socrate nei *Memorabili* di Senofonte deve ricordare a Critobulo le qualità che rendono un uomo rispettabile pone al primo posto la temperanza (II, 6.1-5), la *σωφροσύνη*, la capacità,

cioè, di saper contemperare, in base ad un sapiente calcolo delle convenienze, la propria *praxis* alle circostanze, la stessa virtù che Platone nella *Repubblica* avrebbe voluto attribuire allo stato tutto.

Erede di questa cultura, Plutarco sa bene che non possono esistere leggi universali date una volta e per sempre: queste esistono come un grande contorno, che è anche un limite al di là del quale c'è la ὑβρις, mentre l'individuo socialmente responsabile è chiamato di volta in volta alle scelte pratiche che gli permettano di ἄρχειν, inanzi tutto su se stesso. Uso il verbo nel senso che Platone gli attribuisce nel *Gorgia* allorché deve spiegare in cosa consista l'essere σώφρων: ἄρχειν i piaceri e i desideri (491d; cfr. *Lg.* 626e; Arist., *EN* 1145b)⁶.

La forza etica dell'ἀγαθὸς ἀνὴρ plutarcheo consiste nella padronanza di questa τέχνη nelle scelte, memori del fatto che “la cattiva condotta dei nostri nemici ci rende più sensibili e, quindi dobbiamo fare in modo che non restino senza frutto il piacere o il dispiacere che proviamo di fronte ai loro fallimenti o successi, ma tener conto degli uni e degli altri, facendo attenzione ai primi per diventare migliori e imitando i secondi per non essere peggiori” (*De cap. ex. inim* 92D-F).

⁶ Cfr. *Praec. ger. reip.* 801EF: “E’ utile (ὀφελει) che l’uomo politico abbia in sé (ἐν ἑαυτῷ) sia il νοῦς che governa sia il λόγος che dà ordini”.

Plutarch's 'Diet-Ethics' *Precepts of Healthcare* Between Diet and Ethics

L. VAN HOOF

This article deals with Plutarch's *Precepts of Healthcare*¹. Previous scholars have yielded valuable insight into the text's philosophical or medical ideas, but they have not treated it as a literary composition as a whole. I propose to do for Plutarch's treatise what John FERRARI, Chris GILL, and others have done for the Platonic dialogue, viz. read it as a unified composition². Additionally, I will read it from a broadly new-historicist perspective, as a struggle for intellectual authority in Plutarch's contemporary world. My reading of this text thus combines close-reading with cultural-theoretical and socio-anthropological models, and will thereby touch upon issues such as authorial self-presentation and identity, the dynamics and power of literary practice, and the social and political agendas involved in the strategic dissemination of culture and knowledge.

At first sight, a text on *Precepts of Healthcare* may seem an odd choice in order to illuminate aspects of Plutarch's ethics. Indeed, used as we are, nowadays, to a strict division between medicine and philosophy or, for that matter, other branches of knowledge, we may find it strange for a philosopher to write about dietetics. Yet, apart from the fact that there was of course no "Lizenzsystem" for doctors in antiquity³, philosophers often had a distinct interest in medicine, as appears not only from their own works, but also from medical works from Hippocrates to Galen and beyond. Although some works of Plato, Aristotle, and Theophrastus therefore contain traces of dietetics⁴, no

¹ Unless indicated differently, all quotations are taken from Paton – Wegehaupt – Pohlenz (1974), all translations from Babbitt (1928).

² See, for example, Ferrari (1987), esp. 1-36 and 57-59 on the *Phaedrus*; or the afterword of Gill (1996b).

³ Wöhrle (1990), 95, with further bibliography in n. 4.

⁴ Cf. Wöhrle (1990), 117-57 about Plato and Aristotle, and 107 n. 29, and 178 about some fragments of Theophrastus.

philosopher seems to have written any work specifically on the topic – until Plutarch, that is, who, in line with his generally testified interest in medical questions⁵, composed his *Precepts of Healthcare* (ὕγιενὰ παραγγέλματα) some time after 81 AD⁶. As a philosopher, however, his authority over the matter, far from being self-evident, was under challenge. As we shall see, Plutarch reveals himself to be very much aware of this challenge and eager to take it up. The form of the dialogue is important in this respect. Oddly enough, however, previous scholars have been almost unanimous in dismissing the opening dialogue as a mere façade before the philosophical or medical ideas that were supposed to be Plutarch's 'real message'⁷: they banalised the work's dialogical presentation as "merely a literary subterfuge to present an essay in a slightly (! *LVH*) more attractive form"⁸. Yet, what power emanates, in this text, from the genre of the dialogue, with its plural voices? How does the dialogue influence the way in which this text works? What were Plutarch's aims and stakes, as a writer and as a philosopher, in opting for the dialogic form, and why does he not speak within it in his own voice? For indeed, the name 'Plutarch' nowhere occurs in *Precepts of Healthcare*. Traditionally, scholars have identified him with the unnamed 'companion' that appears in the text, and whose opinions are being divulged by another character⁹. And indeed, I am

⁵ For Plutarch's interest in medicine, see Boulogne (1995), and also Babbitt (1928), 214; Ziegler (1951), 791; Defradas – Hani – Klaerr (1985), 93; Lopez Ferez (1990); Sensazono (1992), 7-8; Tirelli (1992), 386 n. 11; Durling (1995); Aguilar (1996) and (2001); and Grimaudo (2004).

⁶ The *terminus post quem* is the death of Titus, which occurred in 81 AD (cf. 123D). Cf. Babbitt (1928), 215; Jones (1966), 71; Defradas – Hani – Klaerr (1985), 98; and Bellu (2005), 211. The argument of Sensazono (1992), 9-11, based on structural similarities between *Precepts of Healthcare* and *On the Control of Anger*, is not convincing.

⁷ *Quellenforschung* has pointed out a range of medical and, to some extent, philosophical sources from which Plutarch drew in writing his *Precepts of Healthcare*. See Wendland (1886), 60; Babbitt (1928), 214; Boehm (1935); Ziegler (1951), 791; Defradas – Hani – Klaerr (1985), 95; Morales Otal – Garcia Lopez (1986), 120-21; Lopez Ferez (1990), 220; and Sensazono (1992), 11-36, referring to Plato, Epicureanism, the Hippocratic Corpus, Erasistratus, and Asclepiades.

⁸ Babbitt (1928), 215. See also Boehm (1935), 4-5; Smith (1979), 42; Defradas – Hani – Klaerr (1985), 97; Morales Otal – Garcia Lopez (1986), 119; and Gallo (1998), 3522. And although Sensazono (1992), 1-17 seemed to take a step in the right direction, his interpretation of the text nowhere takes real interest in the dialogic form.

⁹ The equation was already made by Hirzel (1895), II, 166, taken over by Babbitt (1928), 215; Boehm (1935), 3-4; Ziegler (1951), 676, 678, and 687; Glucker (1978), 165; and Defradas – Hani – Klaerr (1985), 97, 305 n. 5, 306 n. 1, and 311 n. 2; and, recently, Sensazono (1992), 145 n. 9; Tirelli (1992), 387; Aguilar (2001), 461; and

convinced that, unless in a clearly ironic mode, people do not write these kinds of texts promoting opinions they do not at all believe in. The opinions promoted in *Precepts of Healthcare*, then, will ultimately be Plutarch's. Yet, in my view, this does not solve the question, but only makes it even more pressing: if Plutarch wanted to promote his opinions on a healthy way of living, why did he opt for a dialogue in which he himself does not figure, either as a character or by name? To my mind, the dialogue staged in *Precepts of Healthcare* is a rhetorical strategy designed to provide readers not only with a philosophical diet, but also with different possible models of approaching the text, which, however, all have in common that they stress not only the adoption of philosophy but also its integration into life, and which thereby add to the symbolic capital and authority of its author. This, then, is what I hope to show in the following pages.

1. *The opening dialogue: setting the context*

As indicated in the introduction, *Precepts of Healthcare* is a dialogue. Its opening scene stages a doctor called Moschion in conversation with a friend of his called Zeuxippus:

ΜΟΣΧΙΩΝ· Σὺ δὴ Γλαῦκον χθές, ὦ Ζεύξιππε, τὸν ἰατρὸν ἀπετριψω
συμφιλοσοφεῖν ὑμῖν βουλόμενον;

ΖΕΥΞΙΠΠΙΟΣ· Οὐτ' ἀπετριψάμην, ὦ φίλε Μοσχίων, οὐτ' ἐβούλετο
συμφιλοσοφεῖν ἐκεῖνος, ἀλλ' ἔφυγον καὶ ἐφοβήθην λαβὴν φιλομαχοῦντι
παρασχεῖν. ἐν μὲν γὰρ ἰατρικῇ καθ' Ὁμηρον ὁ ἀνὴρ “πολλῶν ἀντάξιος
ἄλλων,” οὐκ εὐμενῆς δὲ πρὸς φιλοσοφίαν, ἀλλ' αἰεὶ τι τραχὺ καὶ δύσκολον
ἔχων ἐν τοῖς λόγοις. καὶ νῦν ἐναντίος ἐφ' ἡμᾶς ἐχώρει, βῶαν ἔτι πρόσωθεν
οὐ μικρὸν οὐδ' ἐπιεικῆς ἔργον ἡμῖν σύγχυσιν ὄρων τετολμησθαι διαλεχθεῖσι
περὶ διαίτης ὑγιεινῆς. [...]

ΜΟΣΧΙΩΝ· Ἀλλὰ καὶ τούτων ἔγωγε καὶ τῶν ἄλλων, ὦ Ζεύξιππε, πρόθυμος
ἀκροατῆς ἠδέως ἂν γενοίμην·

ΖΕΥΞΙΠΠΙΟΣ· Φιλόσοφος γὰρ εἶ τὴν φύσιν, ὦ Μοσχίων, καὶ τῷ μὴ
φιλιατροῦντι χαλεπαίνεις φιλοσόφῳ. [...]

ΜΟΣΧΙΩΝ· Ἀλλὰ Γλαῦκον μὲν ἐώμεν, ὦ Ζεύξιππε, ὑπὸ σεμνότητος αὐτοτελεῖ
βουλόμενον εἶναι καὶ ἀπροσδεῖ φιλοσοφίας. [...]

ΖΕΥΞΙΠΠΙΟΣ· Ἔφη τοίνυν ὁ ἐταῖρος ἡμῶν... (*Precepts of Healthcare*
122B-E)

Bellu (2005), 211. The hypothesis of Smith (1979), 33 n. 6, that the companion would be Glaucus, is not convincing. Moreover, in his main text, Smith (1979), 34 states that “since Plutarch is the author, the teachings are those he has chosen to present”.

MOSCHION: So, Zeuxippus, yesterday you drove away Glaucus, the physician, when he wished to join in your philosophical discussions?

ZEUXIPPUS: No, my dear Moschion, I did not drive him away, nor did he wish to join in philosophical discussion, but I avoided him and feared giving an opening to a man fond of contention. In medicine the man is, as Homer puts it, ‘worth many others together,’ but he is not kindly disposed towards philosophy, and there is always a certain harshness and ill-nature inherent in his remarks. And just then he was coming at us full tilt, crying out, even before he came near us, that it was no small or suitable task, amounting in fact to a confusion of all bounds, which had been boldly assumed by us in discussing a healthful manner of living. [...]

MOSCHION: Well, in this and in other matters, Zeuxippus, I should be very glad to be your attentive listener.

ZEUXIPPUS: That is because you, Moschion, have a natural gift for philosophy, and you feel incensed at the philosopher who does not take an interest in medicine. [...]

MOSCHION: Well, Zeuxippus, let us say no more about Glaucus, who is so self-important that he wants to be a law unto himself, needing no help from philosophy. [...]

ZEUXIPPUS: Well, our companion asserted that...

Moschion asks Zeuxippus to tell him about the conversation on health-care (περὶ διαίτης ὑγιεινῆς, 122C)¹⁰ he was having with another, unnamed companion of theirs (ὁ ἑταῖρος ἡμῶν, 122F) the day before, when Glaucus, another doctor, interrupted them by shouting that philosophers shouldn’t busy themselves with medicine. Of what happened next, Moschion, the text suggests, has already heard a rumour, apparently quite hostilely disposed towards Zeuxippus and his companion. He therefore now bids Zeuxippus to tell him his version, but above all, to tell him what the companion said. The remainder of the work is Zeuxippus’ answer.

At first sight, the reader may get the impression that the text begins in the middle of a conversation, since the circumstances in which the conversation takes place are not further specified. Yet the repeated nominal addresses with which the characters introduce each other to the reader as in drama, betray – if there was any doubt – the conscious staging of the dialogue: *Precepts of Healthcare* is not a snapshot of ‘real’ life; it is a literary construction. That it is becomes even more

¹⁰ For a fuller account of the etymology and possible meanings of *διαίτα*, see Wöhrle (1990), esp. 31-36 and 111.

clear if one examines the first chapter more closely: the opening of the text is carefully designed so as to form an interpretative framework in which to read the remainder of the text.

What scholars have traditionally examined in this part of the text is the question of which historically attested individuals can be discovered 'behind' the characters that appear in it¹¹. The references to the *Inscriptiones Graecae* and other such *corpora* which resulted from this inquiry confirm the textual impression that Plutarch and his characters belong to the cultured elite of the Roman Empire.

As I read this text, however, the characters staged in the opening scene are first and foremost dramatic roles. This does not mean that these characters are necessarily fictitious, but that their primary role is to steer the real reader's responses to the text. We will have to come back to this later, in view of the text as a whole, but two elements catch the eye immediately. The first is that characterisation takes shape around the tension between philosophy and medicine. Now, doctors and philosophers always seem to have had an ambiguous relationship in antiquity. References to this debate can be found already in the Hippocratic treatise *On Ancient Medicine*, where the author refutes the opinion of "certain physicians and philosophers <who> assert that nobody can know medicine who is ignorant what a man is"¹², stating, instead, that medicine will yield clear knowledge about natural science rather than the other way around. Plato, on the other hand, took care to show that philosophy was better than medicine because of its more important object (soul versus body). In the wake of this early debate, many doctors and philosophers took care to define their own positions. Whereas the Empiricist school did not conceive of medicine as a positive science, Celsus, for example, emphasised the difference between the scientific knowledge of the doctor and the general wisdom of the philosopher¹³. And while Maximus of Tyre stated that philosophy alone is enough to cure both the soul and the body¹⁴, Galen supported his view *That the Best Doctor is Also a Philosopher* by presenting

¹¹ All three characters are discussed by Ziegler (1951) and Puech (1992). Apart from this, for Moschion, see Deichgräber (1933), 349-50; Boehm (1935), 2; Fuhrmann (1972), 106; and Boulogne (1995), 2764 n. 18. For Glaucus, see Puech (1992), 4850. For Zeuxippus, see von Geisau (1972), 379 (# 5), and Glucker (1978), 265 n. 35.

¹² Translation taken from Schiefsky (2005), 101. The Greek text reads λέγουσι δέ τινες ιητροὶ καὶ σοφισταί, ὡς οὐκ εἶη δυνατόν ιητρικὴν εἰδέναι ὅστις μὴ οἶδεν ὃ τί ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος (§20).

¹³ See the proemium of Celsus' *On Medicine*, §§45-64 and 74-75. Cf. also Mudry (1993).

¹⁴ *Oration XXVIII*, esp. § 4. Cf. Trapp (1997), 231-36.

Hippocrates as a doctor-philosopher¹⁵. As these examples suggest, the relationship of philosophy and medicine was still an issue at the time Plutarch wrote his *Precepts of Healthcare*¹⁶. And indeed, the fact that Glaucus starts shouting at Zeuxippus and the companion *already from afar* (βοῶν ἔτι πρόσωθεν, 122C) draws attention to the vividness of the debate, and thereby strikingly highlights the challenge Plutarch, as a philosopher, sees himself confronted with when writing on healthcare. As such, this opening scene upheaves the self-evidence of this philosophical text on healthcare and challenges Plutarch's authority over the matter. As Plutarch apparently refers to this challenge in the opening scene, I want to explore how he presents it, and what strategies he adopts to claim authority over medical matters for himself as a philosopher.

The second element that catches the eye in the opening dialogue is the fact that Plutarch does not present his characters objectively, but in a way so as to guide the reader's opinion. Schematically, Plutarch's design of each of the four characters involved can be represented as follows:

	Glaucus	Moschion	Zeuxippus	The 'companion'
Doctor	+	+	-	-
Philosopher	-	-	-	+
Endorsing Philosophy	-	+	+	+
Agreeable in Manner	-	+	+	+

Whereas Zeuxippus and Moschion, who are interested in philosophy, appear as polite and well-educated gentlemen, Glaucus, who is not quite so well-disposed towards philosophy, is portrayed as highly defective in social interaction. In Plutarch's presentation, then, philosophical interest and social behaviour are, in other words, inherently linked with one another.

¹⁵ Cf. Singer (1997), 33. In Greek, the text reads δηλον ὡς, ὅστις ἂν <ἀληθῆς> ἰατρὸς ᾗ, πάντως οὐτός ἐστι καὶ φιλόσοφος. On Galen's own philosophical interests and education, see Donini (1992); Aguilar (1996), 24 and n. 3; Swain (1996), 357-79; and Grant (2000), 9.

¹⁶ For the actuality of the question in Plutarch's days, see also Foucault (1984), 135-36; Tirelli (1992), 386-87; Van der Stockt (1992), 288; and Boulogne (1995), 2771-72.

2. Establishing 'diet-ethics'

From the beginning of *Precepts of Healthcare*, Plutarch makes it very clear that the healthcare he is proposing is philosophical in nature. In the very first sentence of the work, for example, the word *συμφιλοσοφείν* ("take part in philosophical discussions", 122B) occurs, and before the end of the first chapter, the word *φιλοσοφείν* or its derivatives recur no less than seven times. Throughout the remainder of the work, this initial characterisation is reaffirmed. Thus, the terminology adopted for describing the promoted diet, "a moderate and temperate" one (134D), has a philosophical flavour. Again, self-control, brought up twice in *Precepts of Healthcare* (125F and 126F), is familiar from philosophical writings¹⁷. Also, in order to make people drink water instead of wine when necessary, these two drinks are strategically endowed with ethical qualities: water is said to be mild (*ἡπιος*, 132D), while wine would be "not kindly or humanely disposed toward recent affections" (*οὐκ εὐμενῆ τοῖς προσφάτοις πάθεσιν οὐδὲ φιλόανθρωπον*, 132E)¹⁸. Also, the appeal to Nature as an argument typically recurs in works of philosophy¹⁹. More generally, the choice for the genre of the dialogue can, at least partly, be encouraged by the will to make a philosophical statement. For, whereas an essay could be either philosophical or medical, a dialogue seems to be typically philosophical. More specifically, the fierce intervention of Glaucus in the style of Plato's Polus or Callicles in the *Gorgias*, followed by a continuous account of the opinions of an unnamed 'companion' recall certain Platonic narratological devices²⁰. In so far as Plutarch's *Precepts of Healthcare* offers a philosophical approach to healthcare, then, it can be termed *diet-ethics*.

As such, Plutarch's diet-ethics faced competition from divergent views on healthy diet advocated by athletic trainers and doctors. Dietetics was often thought to have originated in the advice of athletic trainers. In a recent study, Jason KÖNIG has shown that many

¹⁷ For *ἐγκράτεια* as a philosophical concept, see Chadwick (1962), 343-47, and Hadot (1995), 324-27.

¹⁸ For the ethical qualities of wine, see Davidson (1997), 156, Nikolaidis (1999b), and Teodorsson (1999); or, for the opposite point of view, Wilkins (2000), 243-56, on 'wine and wisdom'. For Plutarch's ideal of mixture, see Duff (1999), 89-94, Nikolaidis (1999b), and Teodorsson (1999).

¹⁹ On the use of nature as an argument in ethics, see Annas (1993), 135-220. Naddaf (1992) and (2005) discusses the notion in earlier Greek thought, with the intention of doing so for the subsequent period in two more volumes.

²⁰ Throughout his *œuvre*, Plutarch repeatedly introduces disturbing figures in his dialogues only to let them disappear almost immediately. Cf. Hirzel (1895), II, 190 and 214.

athletes and athletic trainers vied for status in the Roman Empire, and one field in which they tried to distinguish themselves was dietetics. Galen, for one, greatly disapproves of their healthcare advice²¹. In *Precepts of Healthcare*, Plutarch finishes off with athletic trainers in a few short strokes²²:

ἂν δ' ἡμᾶς μηδ' ἄλλο τι ζητεῖν ἢ φιλοσοφεῖν ἢ ἀναγιγνώσκειν παρὰ δεῖπνον ἕωσι τῶν ἐν τῷ καλῷ καὶ ὠφελίμῳ τὸ ἐπαγωγὸν ὑφ' ἡδονῆς καὶ γλυκῦ μόριον ἐχόντων, κελεύσομεν αὐτοὺς μὴ ἐνοχλεῖν, ἀλλ' ἀπιόντας ἐν τῷ ξυστῷ ταῦτα καὶ ταῖς παλαιστραῖς διαλέγεσθαι τοῖς ἀθληταῖς, οὓς τῶν βιβλίων ἐξελόντες ἀεὶ διημερεύειν ἐν σκώμμασι καὶ βωμολοχίαις ἐθίζοντες, ὡς ὁ κομψὸς Ἀρίστων ἔλεγε, τοῖς ἐν γυμνασίῳ κίσιν ὁμοίως λιπαροὺς πεποιήκασιν καὶ λιθίνους (*Precepts of Healthcare* 133CD).

But if they will not allow us to start any other inquiry or scholarly discussion, or to read while at dinner any of those things which, besides being beautiful and useful, contain also the element of pleasurable allurements and sweetness, we shall bid them not to bother us, but to take themselves off, and in the training grounds and buildings to engage in such talk with the athletes, whom they have torn from their books, and by accustoming them to spend the whole day in jesting and scurrility, have, as the clever Ariston said, made them as glossy and blockish as the pillars in a gymnasium.

Inquiries, scholarly discussions, and books are – so it is stated, not argued – beautiful, useful, and pleasant. If athletic trainers and teachers of gymnastics do not want to allow these, “we shall bid them not to bother us, but to take themselves off”. The verdict is strong: we shall order (κελεύσομεν) them to go away. ‘We’, then, are the ones in control at the dinner table, and others can be present only by our grace. The ensuing part of the sentence even prosecutes athletic trainers in their own biotopes: as opposed to the cultivated atmosphere around the dinner table where people enter into inquiries or discussions with one another, the place where athletic trainers and teachers of gymnastics are active produces athletes who are “as glossy and blockish as the pillars in a gymnasium”, people, that is, who may be brilliant from the outside, but who have never worked at their inner selves; people, so it may even be implied, who are beautiful but who do *not really live*.

²¹ König (2005), esp. 254-300. For the popularity of Greek athletics in general in both the West and the East of the Empire, see Farrington (1997); Scanlon (2002), 40-63; and Newby (2005).

²² Compare the short but decisive negative description of the effects of athletic training and diet in Plutarch’s *Roman Questions* 40, 274DE.

Reference to the athletic lack of any cultural formation will probably have been enough to deter the philological target readers of *Precepts of Healthcare* from following athletic healthcare. As a result, Plutarch can take an authoritarian stance when it comes to refuting athletic dietetics.

The situation in the case of doctors was quite different, of course, as they may well have been thought to be *the* authorities in matters of healthcare. As a result, *Precepts of Healthcare* over and over again opposes Plutarch's diet-ethics favourably to medical practice. A few examples. Throughout the text, Plutarch insists that diet-ethics aims at the preservation of health through relatively simple and pleasurable habits. This advice is placed in strong contrast with medical healthcare: as Plutarch presents it, turning to a doctor almost automatically implies having fallen ill first, with all kinds of unpleasant consequences. Doctors are, moreover, presented as taking an authoritarian stance over their patients, who become entirely dependent upon them:

ἐν ὑπονίᾳ καὶ προπαθείᾳ σώματος ἀγεννὲς ἡγούμενοι μίαν ἡμέραν ἐν κλίνῃ διάγειν καὶ μὴ παραθέσθαι τράπεζαν, αἰσχίστα πολλὰς ἡμέρας κείνται καθαιρόμενοι καὶ καταπλασσόμενοι καὶ θωπεύοντες ἰατροὺς καὶ θεραπεύοντες (*Precepts of Healthcare* 128B).

Those who regard it as ignoble, amidst suspicious premonitory symptoms of their body, to spend one day in bed, and not to take their meals at table, keep to their bed most shamefully for many days, under purging and poulticing, servile and attentive to physicians.

Plutarch, by contrast, not only explicitly promotes everyone's autonomy in medical matters, but also steps back from his text to the extent of not even naming himself within it.

If one examines this step back more closely, it turns out to be much more than an illustration of the topos of modesty²³: it is in fact a sophisticated discursive strategy for conferring authority on himself and his diet-ethics. First of all, having Zeuxippus divulge his opinions on healthcare at the request of Moschion as it were sanctions these opinions: Zeuxippus manifestly finds them worthwhile to pass on, and

²³ Cf. Lausberg (1990), 275b, 157-58. Plutarch's 'modest' intentions with his dialogue at the beginning of *Precepts of Healthcare* were discussed by Hirzel (1895) II, 166. As a narratological device, an unnamed character is of course familiar from Plato's dialogues. A 'stranger from Elea' takes part in the discussion of the *Sophist*, for example, and an 'Athenian stranger' has the most important role in the dialogue of the *Laws*.

Moschion, a doctor, apparently approves of them. This obviously adds to the credibility and authority of the text: if a doctor approves of it, readers may be more easily inclined to believe in the philosophical advice on health given in the text. Secondly, by staging Zeuxippus and Moschion, Plutarch provided his readers with a model: the characters Zeuxippus and Moschion provide an exemplary response to Plutarch's text because they embody what I will show to be the distinctive characteristic of Plutarch's diet-ethics: they integrate an enhanced care of the self in their usual lives. Thirdly, by not naming himself in his text Plutarch avoids taking a polemical stance in person. On the one hand, this may be a precaution against hostile doctors: although everybody knows that the opinions divulged are Plutarch's own, no one will be able to prove it. On the other hand, not taking a polemical stance in person places Plutarch, as it were, above the discussion: he discusses his opinions with those who are interested and leaves polemics for others. It is significant, in this respect, that the presentation in the opening dialogue between Zeuxippus and Moschion suggests that it was Zeuxippus, rather than the companion who drove away Glaucus the day before. A fourth advantage in Plutarch's having someone else spread his teachings may have been to remove any sense of his being pedagogic. As we shall see below, this may be of considerable interest in view of Glaucus' specific reproaches.

3. *An active middle course between paralysing extremes*

Throughout the history of Greek medicine, much attention had been given to observing the right balance – for example, between hot and cold, or wet and dry²⁴. Although Plutarch's *Precepts of Healthcare* is not very technical²⁵, it gives similar advice. Thus Plutarch explicitly argues for a “moderate and temperate way of living” to make sure one never has to vomit. Likewise, he is also in favour of inexpensive food, as this “keeps the appetite to its natural limits of moderation” (τὰ γὰρ εὐτελεῆ κρατεῖ τὴν ὄρεξιν ἐπὶ τῶν φυσικῶν μέτρων, 125F)²⁶. Or again, he advises not to eat too much meat, and to dilute wine with water. In

²⁴ See, e.g., the Hippocratic treatise *On the Nature of Man* 3-4; *On Regimen* 1.3-5; or Galen, *Precepts of Healthcare* 1.1, and esp. 1.6. Cf. Joly (1967), xviii; Lonie (1977), 237; Defradas – Hani – Klaerr (1985), 96; and Lloyd (1991), 60-64.

²⁵ A quick look at, say, Galen's *Precepts of Healthcare* suffices to illustrate the difference between both works. Note, moreover, that in the opening discussion Zeuxippus twice (οὐ μετὰ σπουδῆς, 122C, and οὐ πάνυ μετὰ σπουδῆς, 122E) stresses that the philosophical conversation about a healthy way of living which he had on the previous day was not carried out systematically.

²⁶ For parallel passages, see King (2005), 8-9.

fact, the very first advice given in *Precepts of Healthcare*, immediately following the opening dialogue, regards the conservation of the right temperature within the body: in order to keep one's hands warm, one should be careful not to allow the cold in one's extremities when one is not engaged in manual labour. Somewhat later, in chapters 6 and 7, Plutarch argues that one should respect nature regarding the boundaries of enjoyment: when hungry, one should enjoy eating either necessary or pleasant foods; when not hungry, one should not create any extra appetites. Plutarch, then, is in line with tradition when he stresses the importance of moderation *regarding the content of one's diet*.

There is, however, in Plutarch's *Precepts of Healthcare*, also another and, in my view, much more prominent plea for moderation, situated on the meta-level of attributing *to diet* the right place in one's life: much attention goes indeed to the amount of time and energy to be spent *at healthcare*. Some people, for different reasons, do not give much attention to their way of living and its consequences for their health; they give in to their pleasures regardless of the effect on their health. Others, for equally diverse reasons, are so much concerned about their health as to train their bodies excessively, for example, or acquire medical knowledge in a pedantic way.

As Plutarch presents it, the common denominator between these two extremes is that they impede people from continuing to live their lives as usual. Too little healthcare leads to illness, and that impedes not only usual activities such as politics²⁷ and reading, but also enterprises, travels, or pastimes, as Plutarch repeatedly stresses (126BC, 137DE). Moreover, all pleasure becomes impossible if, as a result of neglecting one's health, one falls ill. Pleasure, Plutarch states, derives from the inside, not from the outside, in the same way as it depends on the person who eats whether sweet or costly food is actually pleasant (128C). Too much healthcare, on the other hand, implies neglecting one's mind in favour of one's body²⁸, and thereby giving up one's role in social institutions for the educated. Those who follow a very strict medical diet, for example, are not likely to participate in symposia:

οὐ γὰρ ἀσφαλὲς οὐδὲ ῥάδιον οὐδὲ πολιτικὸν οὐδ' ἀνθρωπικὸν ἀλλ' ὀστρέου τινὸς ζωῆ προσεικὸς ἢ στελέχους τὸ ἀμετάστατον τοῦτο καὶ κατηναγκασμένον ἐν τροφαῖς καὶ ἀποχαῖς καὶ κινήσει καὶ ἡσυχίαις εἰς ἐπίσκιόν τινα βίον καὶ σχολαστὴν καὶ μονότροπὸν τινα καὶ ἄφιλον καὶ ἄδοξον ἀπωτάτω πολιτείας καθίσασιν ἑαυτοὺς καὶ συστείλασιν, οὐ κατὰ γε τὴν ἐμὴν ἔφη γνώμην (*Precepts of Healthcare* 135AB).

²⁷ For the importance of politics in *Precepts of Healthcare*, see Senzasono (1997).

²⁸ Compare Plato's discussion of medicine in *Republic* III, 403c-412b, esp. 407bc.

For it is not safe, nor easy, nor befitting a citizen or a man, but like the life of an oyster or the trunk of a tree – this immutability and forced compliance in the matter of food and abstinence, movement and rest in men who have reduced and restricted themselves to an obscure, idle, solitary, friendless, and inglorious life, far removed from the duties of citizenship. “No,” said he, “it fits not with my opinion.”

The companion here condemns too rigid a diet regarding food or activity as “not safe, nor easy, nor befitting a citizen or a man” (οὐ γὰρ ἀσφαλές οὐδὲ ῥάδιον οὐδὲ πολιτικόν οὐδ’ ἀνθρωπικόν). Apart from the fact that it is not healthy, people who impose it upon themselves, he says, are condemned to lead obscure lives, far from any community and without friends or glory – a way of life also termed ‘idle’.

Over and over again in *Precepts of Healthcare*, Plutarch disapproves of both extremes in matters of healthcare, arguing, for example, that one should neither show off through bathing nor deal with bathing thoughtlessly, neglecting one’s bodily condition. Yet he does not suggest that, in order to conserve one’s health, one should forego bathing completely. On the contrary, over and over again throughout *Precepts of Healthcare*, Plutarch stresses that healthcare should not imply inactivity²⁹:

οὐ γὰρ ἀργίας ὦνιον ἢ ὑγίεια καὶ ἀπραξίας, ἃ γε δὴ μέγιστα κακῶν ταῖς νόσοις πρόσσεστι, καὶ οὐδὲν διαφέρει τοῦ τὰ ὄμματα τῷ μὴ διαβλέπειν καὶ τὴν φωνὴν τῷ μὴ φθέγγεσθαι φυλάττοντος ὁ τὴν ὑγίειαν ἀχρηστία καὶ ἡσυχία σώζειν οἰόμενος· πρὸς οὐδὲν γὰρ ἑαυτῷ χρήσαιτ’ ἂν τις ὑγιαίνειν κρεῖττον ἢ πρὸς πολλὰς καὶ οὐκ ἀφιλανθρώπους πράξεις. ἤκιστα δὴ τὴν ἀργίαν ὑγιαίνον ὑποληπτέον, εἰ τὸ τῆς ὑγείας τέλος ἀπόλλυσι, καὶ οὐδ’ ἀληθές ἐστι τὸ μᾶλλον ὑγιαίνειν τοὺς ἡσυχίαν ἄγοντας· οὔτε γὰρ Ξενοκράτης μᾶλλον διυγίαινε Φωκίωνος οὔτε Δημητρίου Θεόφραστος, Ἐπίκουρον δὲ καὶ τοὺς περὶ Ἐπίκουρον οὐδὲν ὤνησε πρὸς τὴν ὑμνουμένην σαρκὸς εὐστάθειαν ἢ πάσης φιλοτιμίαν ἐχούσης πράξεως ἀπόδρασις. ἀλλ’ ἐτέραις ἐπιμελείαις διασωστέον ἐστὶ τῷ σώματι τὴν κατὰ φύσιν ἕξιν, ὡς παντὸς βίου καὶ νόσον δεχομένου καὶ ὑγίειαν (*Precepts of Healthcare* 135BC).

For health is not to be purchased by idleness and inactivity, which are the greatest evils attendant on sickness, and the man who thinks to conserve his health by uselessness and ease does not differ from

²⁹ Cf. *On Tranquillity of Mind* 465C, where it is also said that inactivity (ἀπραξία, 465C; compare *Precepts of Healthcare* 135B) would be too expensive a price (cf. ὦνιον, 465C; *Precepts of Healthcare* 135B) for tranquillity.

him who guards his eyes by not seeing, and his voice by not speaking. For a man in good health could not devote himself to any better object than to numerous humane activities. Least of all is it to be assumed that laziness is healthful, if it destroys what health aims at; and it is not true either that inactive people are more healthy. For Xenocrates did not keep in better health than Phocion, nor Theophrastus than Demetrius, and the running away from every activity that smacked of ambition did not help Epicurus and his followers at all to attain their much-talked-of condition of perfect bodily health. But we ought, by attention to other details, to preserve the natural constitution of our bodies, recognising that every life has room for both disease and health.

In this passage, Plutarch proves that idleness and inactivity (*ἀργίας, ἀπραξίας*, 135B) are not the price to be paid (*ὄνιον*, 135B) for health. His first argument is an *argumentum e contrario*: inactivity is the sign of sickness, not of health. In the second place, he makes a *reductio ad absurdum*: inactivity as a means for keeping healthy is like saving one's eyes by not looking or conserving one's voice by not making any sound. Next, he argues that the very best of health is the opposite of inactivity, that is, "numerous humane activities" (*πολλὰς καὶ οὐκ ἀφιλανθρώπους πράξεις*, 135C), and that, conversely, inactivity "destroys what health aims at" (*τὸ τῆς ὑγιείας τέλος ἀπόλλυσι*, 135C). Finally, he adduces examples to illustrate that inactivity does not automatically lead to good health. The people presented through these examples are philosophers. On the one hand, two philosophers, *who supposedly led lives of inactivity*, are set in apposition to two of their famous disciples³⁰, who were politicians, to create two contrasting pairs: Xenocrates and Phocion, Theophrastus and Demetrius. It is said that the former of each pair did not remain in better health than the latter. On the other hand, it is stated that a life without ambitious activities did not help Epicurus and his disciples to attain perfect health. Since³¹, then, every kind of life has room for both disease and health, it is not through giving up one's activities but in other ways that one should preserve the good natural condition of one's body. The target readers of *Precepts of Healthcare*, *philologoi* and *politikoi*, should not change their lives in order to remain in good health.

³⁰ For the precise, parallel relationship between both couples of men, see Senzasono (1992), 127 n. 152. Also, compare *On Tranquillity of Mind*, chapter four, where philosophers are opposed to politicians as illustrating contentedness.

³¹ For *ὡς* as a particle with a participle, see *KG*, II.1, 90.

If the mass of people, who have to work for their living, risk destroying their bodies by sleepless nights and running hither and thither about their various tasks, this is no danger in the case of “men with an interest in letters and men in public life, with reference to whom our discussion has taken its present form” (ἄνδρες φιλόλογοι καὶ πολιτικοί, πρὸς οὓς ἐνέστηκεν ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος, 137C). What these men have to fear, instead, is the neglect of their bodies in favour of their souls. Yet the very importance these people attach to their souls should incite them to give heed to their bodies. For indeed, if the soul does not give in a little to the body when the latter needs it, the body will fall sick and thereby compel the soul to give up “books and discussions and studies” (τὰ βιβλία καὶ τοὺς λόγους καὶ τὰς διατριβάς, 137D)³². The conclusion is that, in line with Plato’s advice to conserve the balance of a well-matched team between body and soul, the soul should give most heed to the body when the body most helps the soul. For one should realise, so the text adds, that the very best thing that health has to offer is that nothing impedes attaining and practising virtue both in words and in deeds. Health, then, is presented as the *conditio sine qua non* for mental activities and virtue in word and deed. If the text thus stresses the importance of health, it promotes itself at the same time: if health is important for men with an interest in letters and men in public life, *Precepts of Healthcare*, a writing on health for precisely such men will be useful for them to read if they want to pursue virtue in word and deed. Ending on this note, the precepts of healthcare given in the text are also placed within a certain framework: health is important because it enables one to realise the higher end of virtue, a philosophical end, that is. For all its importance, medicine is, in the end, at the service of philosophy.

4. *Pivoting on the reader’s motivations*

When people give either too little or too much attention to healthcare, Plutarch argues, their behaviour is often guided by a desire for pleasure or honour. People eat too much out of gluttony (127E), or eat special foods (125C) because they think that doing so conveys honour; or, again, they subject themselves to strict fasting (123B), or pedantically study medical terminology (129D)³³ in order to show off.

³² On the Platonic origin of this idea, see Wöhrle (1990), 124-40, and Boulogne (1995), 2772, and n. 87.

³³ Compare Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* XVI, 3 on Favorinus’ showing off by setting out Erasistratus’ medical theories whilst visiting a sick friend. Cf. Gleason (1995), 140-41.

If, then, people believe in satisfying their desires for pleasure and honour through giving what is, according to *Precepts of Healthcare*, either too little or too much healthcare, the work shows that their behaviour in fact brings only harm and shame. An anecdote about a sophist from Chaeronea called Niger³⁴ clearly illustrates the point:

Νίγρος δ' ὁ ἡμέτερος ἐν Γαλατία σοφιστεύων ἄκανθαν ἐτύγχανεν ἰχθύος καταπεπωκώς. ἑτέρου δ' ἐπιφανέντος ἔξωθεν σοφιστοῦ καὶ μελετώντος, ὀρρωδῶν ὑφειμένου δόξαν παρασχεῖν, ἔτι τῆς ἀκάνθης ἐνισχομένης ἐμελέτησε· μεγάλης δὲ φλεγμονῆς καὶ σκληρᾶς γενομένης, τὸν πόνον οὐ φέρων ἀνεδέξατο τομὴν ἔξωθεν βαθεῖαν. ἡ μὲν οὖν ἄκανθα διὰ τοῦ τραύματος ἐξηρέθη, τὸ δὲ τραῦμα χαλεπὸν γενόμενον καὶ ρευματικὸν ἀνεῖλεν αὐτόν (*Precepts of Healthcare* 131AB).

Our Niger, when he was giving public lectures in Galatia, happened to swallow a fish bone. But, as another sophist from abroad had made his appearance and was lecturing, Niger, dreading to give the impression that he had yielded to his rival, still lectured although the bone was sticking in his throat; unable to bear the distress from the great and stubborn inflammation that arose, he submitted to a deep incision from the outside, and through the opening the bone was removed; but the place grew sore and purulent and caused his death.

Whereas Niger thought to enhance his honour by talking despite his bad bodily condition, history shows that he made the wrong decision: he harmed his body so much that he lost his life. And on top of that, he apparently did not gain, by doing so, an eternal reputation of invincibility. The anecdote does not so much glorify Niger as it pities him. It is indeed designed to change the reader's behaviour through pointing out the devastating consequences of bad healthcare³⁵.

As one would expect in a work dealing with health and disease, the references to harm primarily regard physical discomfort. And indeed,

³⁴ On Niger, see Ziegler (1951), 679; Babut (1969), 252-54; Defradas – Hani – Klaerr (1985), 120 n. 1; Puech (1992), 4863-64; and Senzasono (1992), 107 n. 101. On the current anecdote and the information it yields about sophistic competition, see Schmitz (1991), 114-15, and Gleason (1995), 4.

³⁵ In *Precepts of Healthcare*, the anecdotes about Titus (123D), Alexander and Medius (124C), Regulus and Titus (124C), and Lysimachus (126E) can be interpreted as negative examples that are to deter the reader from certain forms of behaviour. The references to Eteocles (125D), Iason (135E), and Hesiod (127D) do not seem to trigger strategies of distanciation, but are, rather, *Sprungbretts* serving the progression of the argument. On *Sprungbretts*, see Ingenkamp (forthcoming).

Precepts of Healthcare mentions pain and illness, as well as specific diseases and more general physical discomforts³⁶. Apart from pointing out the harm caused by bad healthcare, these references sometimes also highlight the shame felt when one can no longer conceal these diseases³⁷. Shame is also evoked for excessive healthcare: the person who wants to show off his medical knowledge when visiting sick friends is rebuked as “talking pedantically [σοφιστικῶς, 129D] and officiously [περιέργως, 129D]”, and is thereby assimilated to the unfavourable figure of the *adoleschēs*, the chatterbox, as pictured in Plutarch’s *On Talkativeness*; again, cold bathing, for example, is termed “epideictic and juvenile” (ἐπίδεικτικὸν καὶ νεανικόν, 131B). Thus, if the reader does not want to be associated with socially inferior people, he should imitate the behaviour Plutarch ascribes to ‘people of sense’. For after all, who would want to be associated with the foolish, childish, or servile behaviour of the insensible, the vulgar, or the masses³⁸? Negative social perception is used, then, as an argument for turning people away from their usual practices regarding healthcare.

At the same time, however, Plutarch makes it clear that his philosophical healthcare does take social expectations and ambitions into account. A good example can be found in 125C:

ὅταν οὖν τι τῶν σπανίων ἀπολαυσμάτων ἢ ἐνδόξων παραγένηται, φιλοτιμητέον ταῖς ἀποσχέσεσι μᾶλλον ἢ ταῖς ἀπολαύσεσι.

Whenever, then, someone of those rare and notorious means of enjoyment is afforded us, we ought to take more pride in abstinence than in enjoyment.

³⁶ For pain (πόνος), see 128C, 128E, 129E, 129F, 131A, 132D, 135D, 136A, 136B, and 136F; for illness (νόσος), 123B, 123C, 126B, 126C, 126D, 127D, 129B, 129F, 135B, 135D, and 136D. Boehm (1935); Defradas – Hani – Klaerr (1985); and Lopez Ferez (1990), 221-23 explain some more technical terms. With Scarborough (1969), 103, it must be said, however, that Plutarch does not adopt much technical medical terminology in his *Precepts of Healthcare*. This is in line with the advice he gives his readers in the fifteenth chapter, viz. not to talk “sophistically and officiously about stoppages, irruptions, and trite generalities, and incidentally displaying some acquaintance with medical terminology and literature”. See also Lopez Ferez (1990), 221.

³⁷ See 124E, 125B, 128A, 134B, and 136E. For the link between harm and shame, and the role played by fear, see Ingenkamp (1971), 76.

³⁸ Foolish: cf. ἀβελτέρως (127E); childish: cf. παιδαριώδης (128A) or καθάπερ οἱ παῖδες (132E); servile and vulgar: cf. ἀνελευθέρους κομιδῆ καὶ φορτικᾶς (124F); boorish: ἀγροίκου τινός (124B); insensible people: cf. οὖν οὐκ ἔχοντος οὐδὲ λόγον (124B); the mass of people: οἱ πολλοί (126E, 134A, 134E, 135D, 136A, 136B) or τοὺς δὲ πλείους (127E).

The context of this passage is that according to Plutarch, many people consume rare kinds of food just so that they can then boast having eaten them. Instead of doing this, Plutarch argues, the reader should rather display self-control. The argument he uses to promote self-control, however, is not that honour is of no importance in matters of food, but that self-control regarding food is a better way of satisfying one's love for honour. In this way, Plutarch appeals to the reader's sense of honour in order to slip in the philosophical values he wants to instil in his readers.

This last kind of argument, playing on the reader's sense of honour, points towards a distinctive characteristic of Plutarch's view on health-care: his diet-ethics, rather than impeding or even discouraging people from their usual activities, are not only compatible with the reader's usual life, they will make him live this life more successfully. The most elaborate example regards symposia and parties. To begin with, Plutarch discusses the precautions to be taken before banquets:

μάλιστα δὲ φυλακτέον πλησμονὰς καὶ μέθας καὶ ἡδυπαθείας ἑορτὴν τινα μέλλουσαν ἢ φίλων ὑποδοχὴν ἐν χερσὶν ἔχοντας ἢ προσδοκῶντες ἐστίασιν ἡγεμονικὴν καὶ συμπεριφορὰν ἀπαραίτητον, οἷον ἐπιόντος ἀνέμου καὶ κύματος εὐσταλὲς τὸ σῶμα καὶ κοῦφον ἐν εὐδία παρασκευάζοντας. ἔργον γὰρ ἐστὶν ἐν συνουσίαις καὶ φιλοφροσύναις αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τῶν μετρίων καὶ τῶν συνήθων φυλάξαι μὴ πᾶσι μετ' ἀηδίας δεινῆς ἐπαχθῆ φανέντα καὶ φορτικόν (*Precepts of Healthcare* 123DE).

We ought especially to guard against excess in eating and drinking, and against all self-indulgence when we have immediately on hand some festival or a visit from friends, or when we are expecting an entertainment of some king or high official with its unavoidable social engagements; and thus we should, as it were, in fair weather make our body trim and buoyant against the oncoming wind and wave. It is indeed a hard task, in the midst of company and good cheer, to keep to moderation and one's habits and at the same time to avoid the extreme disagreeableness which makes one appear offensive and vulgar³⁹ to the whole company.

³⁹ Translation modified. I think it is indeed necessary to change the Loeb translation, which renders φορτικός as 'tiresome': φορτικός definitely carries along connotations of a lack of cultivation, and as such forms again a social argument against the behaviour described.

Plutarch's advice in matters of partying is to eat less before going to a banquet, so that one can then fully take part in the party⁴⁰. The text here implicitly conceptualises banquets as an institution, as a specific aspect of social life, that is, in which people's behaviour and relationships are regulated by a complex of written and/or unwritten rules⁴¹: when one meets with other people on the occasion of a banquet, one is *expected* to play a certain role. Conversely, as Plutarch indicates, "it is a hard task" (ἔργον [...] ἐστίν, 123E) *not* to perform the role one is expected to play without appearing "offensive and vulgar", whether by refusing an invitation or by eating moderately at a party. If people do not play their expected roles, in other words, social controls will sanction their behaviour.

What this passage clearly betrays is that *Precepts of Healthcare* is not just concerned with the healthiest diet for an individual *an sich*, but also takes into account that individual's social position and role in order to determine his diet. In the end, it is better to change one's diet, if necessary, than to fall out of one's role. The next chapter, however, takes a somewhat different stance towards dealing with unexpected social events for which one cannot take precautions:

ἢ τε γὰρ παραίτησις ἂν τὸ ἐπιδέξιον ἔχη καὶ τὸ ἀστείον, οὐχ ἦττον ἔσται κεχαρισμένη τῆς συμπεριφορᾶς· ἂν τέ τις παρέχων ἐστίασιν ὥσπερ θυσίαν ἄγευστον αὐτὸς ἀπέχηται, παρῆ δὲ τῇ κύλικι καὶ τῇ τραπέζῃ μετὰ προθυμίας καὶ φιλοφροσύνης ἅμα τι παίζων καὶ λέγων εἰς ἑαυτὸν, ἡδίων φανέεται τοῦ συμμεθυσκομένου καὶ συνοψοφαγοῦντος (*Precepts of Healthcare* 124BC).

For a request to be excused, if characterised by cleverness and wit, is no less agreeable than joining in the round of gaiety; and if a man provides a banquet in the same spirit in which he provides a burnt-offering which it is forbidden to taste, and personally abstains when the wine-cup and the table are before him, at the same time volunteering cheerfully some playful allusion to himself, he will create a pleasanter impression than the man who gets drunk and gormandises for company.

⁴⁰ Notice the difference with Epictetus, who, in a discourse about social intercourse (περὶ συμπεριφορᾶς, *Discourses* IV, 2) opts for the latter alternative, between "either to be loved just as much as you used to be by the same persons, remaining like your former self, or else, by being superior to your former self, to lose the same affection".

⁴¹ Cf. Parsons (1952), 39, and Van Hoof – Van Ruysseveldt – Snijders (1996), 23. For the privileged position of banquets as social institutions in Plutarch's *œuvre*, esp. in the *Lives*, see Titchener (1999), esp. 481.

Rather than giving in to social pressure by eating and then becoming ill, the reader is taught how to decline food and drink without incurring social disapproval. If one is clever and witty in one's request to be excused, one can do as one pleases and still appear more pleasant than "the man who gets drunk and gormandises for company" (124C). Thus what Plutarch offers his readers is philosophical advice that will allow them to react flexibly in ever-changing social practices⁴² and thereby, at the same time, stay healthy *and* promote their social positions.

After the advice regarding social behaviour at banquets, Zeuxippus concludes the fifth chapter of *Precepts of Healthcare* by saying that "these are the teachings which Glaucus ridiculed and flung in the others' faces as 'pedagogic' [παιδαγωγικά, 124D]". In reproaching the companion that his advice is "pedagogic"⁴³, Glaucus touches on Plutarch's point and, at the same time, betrays himself to have missed it: the precepts indeed have a practical aim, and even, especially in the preceding advice regarding banquets, suggest some rules and cares for manners and morality. Yet they are in no way childish or pedantic! Quite the contrary: the companion, far from imposing a fixed set of rules on eating and banqueting, suggests ways of strategically and creatively dealing with these issues in social practice. Thus Glaucus' very derision of the others, derived from a deficient and partial understanding of their opinions, makes him ridiculous himself: his very reproach of pedagogy betrays him to be in need of education. In this way, then, the last scene in which Glaucus is mentioned confirms the image that was drawn of him in the opening dialogue, in which, notwithstanding his own claim not to need philosophy, he was pictured as being very much in want of it.

5. Conclusion: Plutarch's Precepts of Healthcare and beyond

Time to come to a conclusion: what is Plutarch's *Precepts of Healthcare* about, and how does the text work? What my analysis has shown is

⁴² The quoted passage indeed illustrates that society is not (only) governed by strict rules, but by the flexible medium of practice. For Bourdieu's notion of practice, see Bourdieu (1972), esp. 174-89, and (1980), esp. 87-109. In practice, of course, strategy and timing are of major importance. And indeed, whereas the condition of cleverness and wit (cf. τὸ ἐπιδέξιον καὶ τὸ ἀστέιον, 124B) in one's request refers to strategy, timing greatly matters if one wants to cut the ground from under other people's feet by cheerfully and playfully alluding to oneself.

⁴³ In translating thus, I follow the lead of Aguilar (2001), 463, who paraphrased ὡς παιδαγωγικά as "propias de un pedagogo". On the role of the παιδαγωγός, see Marrou (1965), 220-21, with further bibliography in n. 4.

that *Precepts of Healthcare* is not just a philosophical work about what to eat or how to behave at a symposium; it is also a highly meta-reflexive text debating its own status and the authority of its author. In order to explore these auto-referential issues, Plutarch strategically deploys the possibilities of the philosophical genre of the dialogue. First of all, the opening dialogue draws attention to the challenge Plutarch, as a philosopher, sees himself confronted with in writing a work about healthcare. The acute way in which the problem is raised provides a fruitful context within which to interpret the remainder of the text, which, as we have seen, teems with references to competing views on healthcare, and especially to those of doctors. But there is more. The genre of the dialogue, with its different stances towards the debate between doctors and philosophers, is ingeniously managed, on the one hand to involve the reader by making him wonder where he positions himself, but also, on the other hand, to actually steer the reader's attitude. Above, I have already pointed out that whereas Glaucus is portrayed as socially defective, Zeuxippus and Moschion are characterised in a much more positive way. What an analysis of the text as a whole makes clear in addition, is that the latter two actually embody the fundamental characteristics of Plutarch's approach to healthcare: they not only fully embrace Plutarch's diet-ethical advice and thereby as it were sanction his authority, but they do so *while continuing to live their own lives*. Thus by pointing out that Moschion is a doctor and by suggesting that Zeuxippus is a man with an interest in letters and maybe a politician, Plutarch makes it clear that following his diet-ethical advice does not entail any change of life: his readers, whom he terms *philologoi* and *politikoi*, are not to turn into *philosophoi*! On the one hand, this is an important argument for why the text's target readers should follow Plutarch's advice on healthcare rather than that of a doctor, which, as Plutarch presents it, would bring a much more radical change to their lives. Some of the strongest arguments in *Precepts of Healthcare* indeed hinge upon the reader's pre-philosophical motivations, presenting diet-ethics not as a healthy alternative for social life, but as a help for living one's life within society both healthily and successfully. On the other hand, however, not turning his readers into philosophers would also be to Plutarch's *own* advantage, as it reserves the role of the philosopher exclusively for himself.

In this way, my reading of Plutarch's *Precepts of Healthcare* thoroughly changes the prevailing image of Plutarch as a very bookish author: while he had indeed read a lot and was constantly interacting with earlier literature, my reading shows him to have been a sophisticated author capable of *manipulating* his literary and philosophical heritage to his own ends. As such, he may be much closer to the

more sophistic authors of his age than is usually assumed. Yet what distinguishes him is the refined rather than epideictic discourse he develops about himself and his cultural capital. For indeed, taking Plutarch, as it were, out of the library and reading him in his socio-cultural context also nuances his elitism: socially he is of course an elitist, but as my reading of *Precepts of Healthcare* shows, he is not so in a self-evident or straightforward way. Rather, he opens up a debate about different kinds of intellectual and cultural authority: the social honour which diet-ethics subtly promises to yield to the reader is favourably opposed, over and over again, to the epideictic⁴⁴ show that athletic trainers achieve through bodybuilding, or doctors advise through strict fasting, or by juggling with medical terminology. As such, the work offers a distinctive view of what elite culture should be like – a view that firmly grounds Plutarch as an intellectual and cultural authority and that therefore once more reveals him to be a clever social player.

⁴⁴ Ἐπιδειξίς, whether in words or deeds, is indeed reprehended repeatedly throughout *Precepts of Healthcare*. See 123B, 129D, 131B, and 133E.

2. SOME THEORETICAL QUESTIONS ON ETHICAL PRAXIS

Plutarchan Morality: *Arete*, *Tyche*, and Non-Consequentialism

H.M. MARTIN

There is, to my sensibilities, very little in the writings of Plutarch of Chaeronea that is more eloquent and emotionally penetrating than *Demosthenes* 12.7-13.6¹. This passage begins with the statement (12.7-8) that, once Demosthenes had taken up the advocacy of the cause of the Hellenes against Philip as a noble purpose for his public life and had proved to be a worthy antagonist in this endeavor, he quickly became famous and so well known for the candor of his speeches that he was admired in Hellas, courted by the great king, and of greater concern to Philip than the other popular leaders; even his bitter enemies, moreover, acknowledged that they were contending with a man who had made his mark. To Theopompus' claim (13.1) that Demosthenes was of an unstable temperament and not capable of consistency with regard to either policies or political alliances, Plutarch replies (13.2) that, on the contrary, the orator steadfastly maintained a uniform singularity of purpose from the beginning of his political career to its very end – and not only rejected any alteration in the purpose of his life but even gave up life itself that such alteration might not occur. In contrast to those politicians, Plutarch continues (13.3-4), who gainsaid themselves and changed policy and allegiance for personal advantage, Demosthenes is not subject to the charge that he ever altered the purpose and direction of either his words or his actions; his public advocacy, in fact, never but sounded, as it were, a single note from a single scale. To the philosopher Panaetius' assessment (13.5) that

¹ Cf. Martin (1997), 724-25. In writing the present essay, I have benefited from conversations with Daniel H. Frank and Alan R. Perreiah, faculty colleagues in the Department of Philosophy, as well as with Paul M. Carelli, my former student and now a graduate student in philosophy, and with Kevin J. Harrelson, also a graduate student in philosophy. My greatest debt in the area of philosophy, however, is to Jan Opsomer of the University of Cologne, who read my typescript and discussed its philosophical content with me. These individuals have saved me from at least some of the errors in my philosophic thinking, and are nowise to be held responsible for those that remain.

the majority of Demosthenes' orations are predicated on the assumption that what is right in and of itself must be the exclusive basis of policy (ὡς μόνου τοῦ καλοῦ δι' αὐτὸ αἰρετοῦ ὄντος), Plutarch appends his own peroration (13.6):

In all of these [viz. the orations explicitly cited by Panaetius], he does not attempt to lead his countrymen into the course of action that will furnish the greatest pleasure or ease or profit (τὸ ἥδιστον ἢ ῥᾶστον ἢ λυσιτελέστατον); instead, under many circumstances he is of the opinion that what is right and honourable (τὸ καλὸν καὶ τὸ πρέπον) must have precedence over security and safety (ἢ ἀσφάλεια καὶ ἡ σωτηρία) – so that, if only martial courage and incorruptibility had accompanied his dedication to his purposes and the nobility of his words, he would deserve to be placed, not in the number of orators like Moerocles and Polyeuctus and Hypereides, but high above that at the rank of Cimon and Thucydides and Pericles.

Let us now direct our attention to the last term in my subtitle, 'Non-Consequentialism', and consider its relation to the passage that we have just examined. *Consequentialism*, a word devised by G.E.M. ANSCOMBE, was introduced by her into the conceptual vocabulary of academic moral philosophy in 1958, in an article ambiguously titled 'Modern Moral Philosophy'². ANSCOMBE employs consequentialism narrowly to designate a tripartite doctrine which she ferrets out from the works of Henry SIDGWICK and George E. MOORE: namely, that the moral value of an action resides exclusively in its consequences; that right action is "the action which produces the best possible consequences"; and that "one must be said to intend any foreseen consequences of one's voluntary action". So defined by her, consequentialism is a doctrine that ANSCOMBE palpably despises, along with its authors and advocates; as a result, the term consequentialism was initially fraught with pejorative connotations. It nonetheless was a term that elicited the attention of moral philosophers in Great Britain and the United States and managed to transcend the narrow usage and pejorative quality imposed on it by its creator and to develop into a concept word of generic proportions that subsumed 'utilitarianism' among its species³. In this process of becoming respectable and magisterial, consequentialism readily, and of virtual necessity, generated the antithesis that appears in my subtitle. In the present essay, I shall use these two terms as they are comprehensively defined by J.P. GRIFFIN in the *Oxford Companion to*

² Anscombe (1958). See esp. pp. 9-13.

³ On consequentialism in general, see, among a multitude of works, Scheffler (1982) and (1988); Slote (1985); Honderich (1995), 154-56.

Philosophy (1995)⁴: *consequentialism* as “the view that all actions are right or wrong in virtue of the value of their consequences”, and *non-consequentialism* as “the view that some actions are right or wrong in virtue of something other than the value of their consequences”.

I am keenly aware that Epicureanism, as a species of consequentialism in the sense in which I will be using the latter term, is, from a purely historical perspective, the clearest and most meaningful foil to Plutarch’s moral thought. For, three of his explicitly anti-Epicurean treatises have come down to us – *Adversus Colotem*, *Non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum*, and *An recte dictum sit latenter esse vivendum*, the first two of considerable length and substance⁵ – and Epicurus and his followers are the object of incidental criticism throughout the *Moralia*⁶. I have, however, chosen modern consequentialism as my foil, in an attempt to universalize Plutarchan morality by bringing it into our own world, and by not leaving it exclusively in the past as a relic of antique Platonism. Perhaps, moreover, there is a tenuous thread of connection between consequentialism and Epicureanism in the fact that one may regard classical utilitarianism, a distinctive and venerable species of consequentialism broadly conceived, as, in philosophic essence, Epicureanism with a social conscience.

To return to the *Demosthenes* passage, Plutarch obviously holds the Athenian orator in the highest esteem because of his unswerving and unfaltering advocacy of a public policy that is undergirded by a dedication to what is right in and of itself, irrespective of the consequences. The actual failure of that policy is of no moment in Plutarch’s present evaluation of Demosthenes’ political career: it is emphatically a non-consequentialist evaluation of a career whose centerpiece, in Plutarch’s judgment, was a rigorously non-consequentialist policy. It will perhaps now be profitable to turn to Plutarch’s other works and examine some passages appropriate to accounting for and interpreting the Chaeronean’s assertively favorable response to Demosthenes’ non-consequentialism.

We may begin empirically in the world of human nature and human experience with the preface to the *Lives* of Pericles and Fabius Maximus (*Pericles* 1-2)⁷. Here Plutarch makes the following assertions, which are pertinent to the present inquiry:

⁴ Honderich (1995), 154.

⁵ The Lamprias Catalogue lists six more treatises of anti-Epicurean polemic (nos. 80, 129, 133, 143, 148, 159).

⁶ On Plutarch and Epicureanism, see Hershbell (1992); Berner *et al.* (2000); Flacelière (2003), cxxi-clx.

⁷ On this preface in general and for treatment of items I have ignored as not germane to my topic, see Stadter (1989), xxix-xxx; Duff (1999), 34-45. The careful reader will note that I have summarized interpretively.

1. Among its native attributes, our soul is by very nature possessed of a desire to learn and a desire to observe (φιλομαθές τι κέκτηται και φιλοθέαμον ἡμῶν ἢ ψυχῇ φύσει), two attributes that it is reprehensible to expend on sounds and sights unworthy of our regard if it be to the neglect of what is good and beneficial (τὰ καλὰ και ὠφέλιμα) (1.1-2).
2. Inasmuch as each of us is endowed by nature with a free will that enables us to employ our minds (τῷ νῷ δ' ἕκαστος, εἰ βούλοιτο, χρῆσθαι...πέφυκεν) for the purpose of fixing our attention on the object of our choice, it is our duty to seek out what is best (τὸ βέλτιστον), in order that we may not only behold it but also may be nurtured by what we behold (1.2).
3. We must needs, therefore, direct our intellect (ἢ διάνοια)⁸ to sights that by the joy they arouse summon it to its peculiar good (τὸ οἰκεῖον ἀγαθόν), these being sights that consist in acts emanating from virtue (τὰ ἀπ' ἀρετῆς ἔργα), which kind of acts instills in those who have observed them (τοῖς ἱστορήσασιν) a keen eagerness to engage in imitation (μίμησις) (1.3-4).
4. In contrast, the admiration we experience for the products and performances of artisans and musicians is limited, or should be limited, to mere admiration for what we have seen or heard, and does not rightly yield an impulse (ὀρμή) to do ourselves what they have done (1.4-6).
5. Personal labor at menial tasks testifies to one's indifference to noble actions (τὰ καλὰ); and no youth of good natural parts (εὐφυῆς νέος), though he may enjoy the products of sculptors and poets, conceives a desire to become one of them (2.1).
6. Works of sculpture and poetry are of no essential benefit because they do not arouse in the beholder an eagerness to imitate (μιμητικὸς ζήλος) or a response that compasses a ready impulse to assimilate (προθυμία και ὀρμή ἐπὶ τὴν ἕξομοίωσιν) and become a producer of such works (2.2).
7. Virtue in action (ἢ γ' ἀρετὴ ταῖς πράξεσιν), however, straightaway so disposes the beholder that his admiration for her works and emulation of their creators constitute a simultaneous response; for, moral beauty (τὸ καλόν) creates motion toward itself and instantly produces in us an impulse to action (πρακτικὴν εὐθὺς ὀρμὴν ἐντιθησιν) according to its dictates (2.2-4).

⁸ Plutarch has a notable stylistic tendency to vary his vocabulary within a given context by the use of synonyms and synonymous phrases. I doubt, therefore, that there is even in the present philosophical context any essential difference in the meaning of νοῦς and διάνοια.

Plutarch is here elaborately generalizing a personal experience that he doubtless enjoyed time and again as he gazed into the mirror of history in which were reflected the actual βίῳι from whose mirrored reflections he was composing his literary βίῳι (*Aem.* 1.1-4)⁹, and as he went about his activities both public and private. The *Demosthenes* has furnished us an example in the former category. *De curiositate* will serve our purposes well in the latter, at 522DE, where Plutarch recounts an incident that occurred when he was once lecturing in Rome: his audience included, he tells us, the famous Rusticus whom Domitian later put to death out of envy at his reputation. When a soldier came through the lecture hall and gave Rusticus a letter from the emperor, all became silent and Plutarch paused in his remarks, that Rusticus might have an opportunity to read it; Rusticus, however, declined the opportunity and did not break the seal until Plutarch had concluded his lecture and the listeners had dispersed. All, Plutarch adds, reacted with admiration at the dignity (τὸ βᾶρος) of the man. I would suggest that with this ‘all’ Plutarch is again, as in the case of the *Pericles* passage, generalizing a personal experience. Let me nonetheless quickly add that I am aware that, from one point of view, Plutarch’s generalization in either instance is not derived exclusively from personal experience but certainly from personal experience justifiably buttressed by his impression and assessment of the reaction, often undoubtedly an attested reaction, of other persons. Yet, from the standpoint of a rigorous elenchus – if I may focus my reader’s attention on the *Pericles* passage – an impulse (ὁρμή) to emulate moral agents (those who simultaneously create and perform τὰ ἀπ’ ἀρετῆς ἔργα) that is grounded in a native attribute of the soul (τὸ φιλοθέαμον), however much this attribute has been consciously schooled and refined by one’s mind (νοῦς) and intellect (διάνοια), and is immediately inspired by admiration for the moral actions of these moral agents, can be vouched for, can be empirically tested and discursively explained *only* by the single individual who has experienced the impulse. Now, by saying all this I do not in the least mean to disparage Plutarch’s presentation at *Pericles* 1-2; that presentation is a reasonable and effective way for an essayist – and the Chaeronean, I think, is ever the essayist on those occasions when he chooses to write a biographical preface – to say, in essence, “Here is a description of an experience I have often had, and it is my sense that it is an experience common to all who have properly cultivated their moral and aesthetic instincts. But what do you think about my description? Does it accommodate your own experiences?”

⁹ On *Aem.* 1.1-4, see Stadter (2003/4); Duff (1999), 30-34. On the mirror image, cf. *De prof. in virt.* 85AB; *De facie* 920F-921A.

If *Pericles* 1-2 goes some distance in the way of accounting for and explaining Plutarch's admiration for such moral paradigms as Demosthenes' non-consequentialist policy and Rusticus' dignified conduct, I would suggest that it also offers some assistance in accounting for the very fact of Plutarch's initial adherence to Platonism, which might well have appealed to him because it furnished a means of understanding basic moral impulses that seemed to belong to his very nature¹⁰. Be that as it may, it was certainly Platonism – even if that Platonism was Plato reinterpreted by Plutarch, his mentor Ammonius, and many another Platonic philosopher before them – that provided the subtext of terms and concepts from which Plutarch composed *Pericles* 1-2¹¹. The two dominant themes of the passage are: the employment of the mind (νοῦς, διάνοια) for the purpose of cultivating a moral state that will enable one to respond with proper admiration to moral beauty (τὸ καλόν) and the works of virtue (τὰ ἀπ' ἀρετῆς ἔργα); and, that state having been achieved, the power of moral beauty and the works of virtue to inspire in their beholder a simultaneous desire to engage in imitation (μίμησις) of the works and to achieve a resemblance (ἑξομοίωσις) to their agents. Four examples from the *Moralia* will serve to illustrate the Platonic atmosphere of *Pericles* 1-2.

Three concern the nature and function of the mind, and comment on the references to νοῦς and διάνοια in the *Pericles* passage. We may here begin with the opening chapter of Plutarch's essay on Isis and Osiris, where he remarks (351CD) that, while human beings receive from the god the other things they require, he grants them only an imperfect share of intellect (νοῦς) and intelligence (φρόνησις), for these are his peculiar attributes (οἰκειά)¹². Again, in *De sollertia animalium*, Plutarch's father and spokesman Autobulus, arguing against Stoic doctrine about the nature of animals (960A-965B), presents the Platonic thesis (960B-D) that all of animate nature (τὸ μετὰ ψυχῆς λόγον ἔχον καὶ διάνοιαν, ἢ ἔμψυχος φύσις) is endowed with both intelligence and the capacity for ἀρετή. His sympathetic interlocutor Soclarus, who asks just

¹⁰ Cf. St. Paul's version of the law of nature (*Ep. Rom.* 1.18-2.16), with its reference (2.14-15) to gentiles who fulfill the requirements of the law (νόμος) by very nature (φύσει) and on whose hearts is written the work of the law (τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου). Cf. also Martin – Phillips (1978), 422 (on *Cons. ad ux.* 608E) and 482 (on *Amatorius* 755D).

¹¹ On Plutarch's Platonism in particular, see Dillon (1977), 184-230; Lamberton (2001), 25-44, 146-55, 172-87. On his overall philosophy and theology, which are fundamentally inseparable and consistently operate under the aegis of Platonism, see Ziegler (1951), 939-46; Flacelière (2003), cxxi-cc.

¹² Dillon (1977), 193 regards the beginning of *De Is. et Os.* as Platonic in tone. See also Betz (1975), 37-38.

the right questions and is convinced by Autobulus' replies, later remarks, as he raises another straw man, that λόγος exists for the purpose of producing ἀρετή (961F-962A)¹³. In the third, through the agency of the myth told by one Sulla that brings the dialogue *De facie* to conclusion (942F-945D), Plutarch sets out in grand detail one of his most creative revisions of Plato's thought. Only a statement at the beginning of the passages is appropriate to our immediate purposes (943A): νοῦς is not a part of ψυχή, as most people think, but is instead a discrete entity, so that a human being consists of mind, soul, and body, with mind being better and more divine than soul to the same degree that soul is such in relation to body; and the conjunction of mind and soul is the source of ἀρετή and κακία¹⁴.

Lastly, at *De sera numinis vindicta* 550DE¹⁵, Plutarch, speaking as a member of the Academy (549EF) and citing Plato as the author of the views he is presenting (550D), raises the thought of *Pericles* 1-2 to the cosmological and metaphysical level and reveals that in the *Pericles* passage he is in fact describing, from the perspective of the world in which they live, the process whereby human beings may achieve resemblance to deity. "The god", Plutarch begins, "has placed himself in our midst as a model of all things that are beautiful, and he thereby bestows on those who are able to follow god human virtue, which somehow consists in a resemblance to himself" (πάντων καλῶν ὁ θεὸς ἑαυτὸν ἐν μέσῳ παράδειγμα θέμενος τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην ἀρετὴν, ἕξομοίωσιν οὖσαν ἀμωσγέπως πρὸς αὐτόν, ἐνδίδωσιν τοῖς ἔπεισθαι θεῷ δυναμένοις). Plutarch continues by explaining that, as all-embracing nature, previously in chaos, became a universe "by assimilation to and participation in the very idea of virtue that environs deity" (ὁμοίότητι καὶ μεθέξει τινὶ τῆς περὶ τὸ θεῖον ιδέας καὶ ἀρετῆς), so nature herself has kindled vision in us for the purpose that, from beholding and admiring the heavenly bodies in motion, we may nurture our souls into a state that will enable them to follow god and pursue virtue. "God has", Plutarch concludes, "bestowed on human nature no greater blessing than the capacity to attain unto a state of virtue by imitating and pursuing the beauties and blessings that reside in him" (οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν ὃ τι μείζον ἀνθρώπος ἀπολαύειν θεοῦ πέφυκεν ἢ τὸ μιμήσει καὶ διώξει τῶν ἐν ἐκείνῳ καλῶν καὶ ἀγαθῶν εἰς ἀρετὴν καθίστασθαι). I remarked above that the present

¹³ On *De soll. an.*, see Martin (1979).

¹⁴ With 943A, cf. *De virt. mor.* 441D-442A and *De genio Socr.* 591DE. See Cherniss – Helmbold (1957), 196-97, and Dillon (1977), 211-14. Plutarch's thought in these passages is developed ultimately from *Timaeus* 30b and 90a.

¹⁵ On the teleological significance of this passage, see Dillon (1977), 192-93, and, more generally, Betz (1975), 194-97; Klaerr – Vernière (2003), 198.

selection from *De sera numinis vindicta* elucidates the moral process described in *Pericles* 1-2; I would now add that the latter passage, in its turn, explains how it is that human beings may encounter god in their midst as a paradigm of πάντα καλά and how they may imitate τὰ καλά καὶ ἀγαθὰ that reside in him and thereby achieve ἕξομοίωσις to him: it is vicariously by the imitation of τὰ ἀπ' ἀρετῆς ἔργα (*Per.* 1.4) that they behold, in the world about them, acts such as are themselves the human expression of τὸ καλόν. Now, Plutarch was a deeply religious man: the manner in which he harmonizes Platonic metaphysics with Dionysiac beliefs and traditional religious practices in the *Consolatio ad uxorem* (611D-612B), for the purpose of comforting his wife and himself at the death of their dear daughter of two years, is sufficient both to make the point and to demonstrate that, for the Chaeronean, there was no line of demarcation between his religion and his philosophy¹⁶. It is, therefore, not surprising to discover that vicariousness, a prominent if little noted feature of religious thought, has found a (subtle and implicit) place in Plutarch's theology in a passage where he is discussing the relationship between man and deity¹⁷.

Perhaps now is an appropriate point at which to comment on τὸ καλόν, a term and concept that stands at the heart of Plutarch's moral thought and links it inextricably to Plato's¹⁸. Above, I have translated the term either as "what is right" (*Dem.* 13.5, 13.6) or as "moral beauty" (*Per.* 2.4), in an attempt to suit translation to context. Yet, in its fundamental sense, τὸ καλόν is simply τὸ καλόν; it is nothing other than itself. To render the term into another language, however necessary and useful such translation may be, is unavoidably to diminish its generic stature and to reduce it to a species of itself. To describe τὸ καλόν in English: on the human level it is that which is *simultaneously* beautiful, good, noble, and right; on the metaphysical level it is the essence and totality of all beauty, goodness, nobility, and righteousness. And whenever it is beheld, whether by the material eye or by the noetic eye, it is beautiful – so that its aesthetic and its moral qualities always meld into a harmony of beauty and goodness. Hence it is that Plutarch treats intellect as the analogue of sight and speaks of beholding the works of virtue and of being drawn to moral beauty (*Per.* 1.2-4, 2.2-4); hence it is that he presents the sight of the heavenly bodies in motion

¹⁶ On *Cons. ad ux.* 611D-612B, see Martin – Phillips (1978), 437-41.

¹⁷ Cf. these examples of vicarious thought from the New Testament: *Ev. Marc.* 9.37; *Ev. Matt.* 10.20, 25.31-46; *Ev. Jo.* 14.4-11; *Ep. Rom.* 1.18-21. Cf. also the discussion of the *pharmakos* by Burkert (1985), 82-84.

¹⁸ Cf. Duff (1999), 37.

as an aesthetic experience that can mold the soul into a state whereby it may attain unto virtue (*De sera num.* 550DE).

Such employment of sight for the cultivation of a moral state is here only by implication, if at all, a voluntary action (*Per.* 1.2 would suggest that it may be either voluntary or involuntary). The employment, however, of noetic vision, the vision of the mind (νοῦς, διάνοια), for a similar cultivation, which Plutarch enjoins at *Per.* 1.2-3, is a different matter: it is clearly presented as a voluntary action. Let me now, before leaving the *Pericles* passage and against the background of these two sets of remarks concerning the cultivation of a moral state that is preparatory to virtuous action, try my hand at the exegetically troublesome statement about τὸ καλόν at *Pericles* 2.4: τὸ γὰρ καλὸν ἐφ' αὐτὸ πρακτικῶς κινεῖ καὶ πρακτικὴν εὐθύς ὁρμὴν ἐντίθησιν, ἡθοιοιοῦν οὐ τῇ μιμήσει τὸν θεατήν, ἀλλὰ τῇ ἱστορίᾳ τοῦ ἔργου τὴν προαίρεσιν παρεχόμενον. Taking προαίρεσις as a term that denotes a moral state and οὐ τῇ μιμήσει as a sort of corrective whose purpose is both to remind the reader that moral action is the result of a threefold process (which begins with observation of virtue in action, which action in turn produces in the observer an impulse to imitate that action, which impulse in its turn creates the moral state that culminates in the exercise of the moral impulse initially inspired by observation) and to stress that a moral state must exist, no matter how quickly or slowly established or by what combination of λόγος and θέαμα, before acts of ἀρετή may transpire, I would translate as follows:

Moral beauty, in brief, activates motion toward itself and straight-away instills an impulse to act, although it forms the character of the beholder not in virtue of his imitation of the deed he has observed but by providing him with a propensity for moral conduct in virtue of his very observation of the deed.

However satisfactory, or unsatisfactory, my explication and translation of this problematic sentence may be¹⁹, I would claim that, at the least, in *Pericles* 1-2 and *De sera numinis vindicta* 550DE Plutarch evinces a belief in some kind of a moral state that is preparatory to moral action, a state that is, if you will, a mortar in which deeds of

¹⁹ For other interpretations and translations, see Jones (1971), 103 n. 2; Stadter (1989), xxix-xxx, 60-61; Duff (1999), 37-42. Duff provides a superbly thorough and insightful explication of the sentence. I differ from him, however, in that I am inclined not to apply the processes described at *Per.* 1-2 so restrictively to the *Lives* as he does but more generally to the totality of Plutarch's moral and aesthetic experience; and from Jones, Stadter, and Duff in that I have not tampered with οὐ τῇ μιμήσει.

virtue are compounded and from which they issue forth. A process similar to the one I detect in the sentence just translated is described at *Coriolanus* 32.5-8²⁰, a passage in which Plutarch is arguing in general that when Homer depicts the gods as instigating human beings to actions of grand proportions that require high inspiration and extraordinary behaviour he does so in a manner that does not deprive the agents of these actions of their free will. The faculty of the ψυχή that concerns the decision to act is here designated as τὸ πρακτικὸν καὶ προαιρετικὸν (32.8), and the gods activate this faculty by instigating fantasies (φαντασίαι) and notions (ἐπίνοιαι), which are themselves not impulses (ὄρμαι) but which produce the impulses that in turn create a state of decision to act (προαίρεσις), which state in its turn culminates in the action initially thought or fantasized (32.5, 7-8). The psychic process here described is the same as that of *Pericles* 2.4, although, inasmuch as it involves divine inspiration and its sphere of action is not confined to morality, its commencement is φαντασίαι καὶ ἐπίνοιαι rather than the beholding of τὸ καλόν. Such a process also would seem quite reasonably to furnish the subtext upon which, at *Maxime cum principibus philosopho esse disserendum* 776CD, Plutarch constructs, in a vocabulary reminiscent of those of the *Pericles* and *Coriolanus* passages, the following assertion: ὁ τῆς φιλοσοφίας λόγος... ἐνεργὰ βούλεται ποιεῖν ὧν ἂν ἄλγεται καὶ πρακτικὰ καὶ ἔμψυχα καὶ κινητικὰς ὀρμὰς ἐντίθησιν καὶ κρίσεις ἀγωγοὺς ἐπὶ τὰ ὠφέλιμα καὶ προαιρέσεις φιλοκάλους καὶ φρόνημα καὶ μέγεθος μετὰ πραότητος καὶ ἀσφαλείας²¹. We note that the discourse of philosophy is here personified, and that this discourse voluntarily undertakes to effect, in the sequence in which I list them, the following events: the transformation of whatever it has contact with into matters that are vital and conducive to action; the production of stimulating impulses; the production of states of judgment and decision that, respectively, lead to what is beneficial and involve a love of moral beauty; the production of virtue in action.

A dominant feature of Plutarch's moral thought, and moral advice, is thus the creation of a moral state whose culmination and capstone will be virtuous action. It was such a state that enabled Rusticus not to break the letter's seal in the lecture hall, and it was a state that had been replaced by moral chaos when Demosthenes deserted his post at

²⁰ I am indebted to Duff (1999), 39-40 for making me aware of the pertinence of *Cor.* 32.5-8 to my topic.

²¹ I here choose, as more appropriate to context, the universal reading of the MSS (in the English sense of 'steadfastness') rather than Wyttenbach's ἀφελείας, which the Teubner and Budé editors have preferred.

Chaeronea (*Dem.* 20.2)²². It is also such a state as gives no thought to consequences. With this in mind, let me construct an imaginary circumstance and compose *in Plutarchi persona* a supposed response to a modern consequentialist who has assailed the Chaeronean over his indifference to the consequences of putatively moral actions, and who has vigorously argued the case that “all actions are right or wrong in virtue of the value of their consequences” – claiming in the process that Plutarch has foolishly ignored all consideration of pleasure and pain, of benefits and detriments, of social and psychological effects.

Even if one were to grant that some forms of consequentialism have a value in the examination and assessment of actions already completed, either by oneself or by another, the palpable fact, which my critic fails to take into account, is that his philosophy is worthless and contemptible as a guide to arriving at a personal decision as to whether a prospective action is right or wrong. What he seems to be unaware of is that, while consequentialism requires an intellectual process, often one that is lengthy and elaborate, of analysis, comparison, and synthesis, of accommodating the unknown and speculating about the reactions of others, the majority of our moral decisions – and I refuse to grant that they are moral in any relative manner and not absolutely so – must be made without reflection on the spur of the moment, as was the situation with Rusticus in the lecture hall and with Demosthenes on the battlefield at Chaeronea; it is only a sound moral state with a steadfast propensity for virtuous action that will serve one’s needs when questions of right and wrong must be answered instantly by a sort of moral instinct. And if once established, such a state is fully adequate as well for those circumstances in which there is sufficient time for the intellectual processes that consequentialism demands. Right and wrong are, in fact, meaningless terms that have no substance if they are cast on the shifting wasteland sands of consequentialist philosophy and are not deeply rooted in the soil of moral beauty.

Perhaps there is too much of myself and too little of Plutarch in this statement. Be that as it may, please allow the statement to presently serve the mere purpose of pointing up the chasm that often separates Plutarch’s moral dialogue from its counterparts in the modern world, both popular and erudite.

This chasm is starkly apparent in the case of Phocion. Both his conservatism and his personal qualities are repugnant to Peter GREEN,

²² Up to the battle, he had been an ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός (*Dem.* 20.2).

who detests him and depicts him as a moral and political villain²³. Plutarch thought otherwise: Phocion is one of his grand moral heroes²⁴. It is noteworthy that the Chaeronean focuses his evaluative gaze on Phocion's character, and is as indifferent to the fact of his conservatism as he is to that of the ideological stance of his democratic rival Demosthenes²⁵. Plutarch, however, makes clear in the preface to the paired *Lives* of Phocion and Cato of Utica that he is in no way indifferent to the obligation he has as Phocion's biographer to redeem his subject's splendid virtue (*ἀρετή*) from the ill effects of fortune (*τύχη*) on his career and reputation (*Phoc.* 1.4-6). And Plutarch goes on in this same preface to make a radical discrimination between personal *ἀρετή* and its public consequences when he describes Cato's morality (*Phoc.* 3.1-5): his character (*ἦθος*) was displeasing to the mob and distinguished by an *ἀρετή* whose grandeur was out of harmony with the decadent times in which it flourished; in despite of this circumstance, it was only after a great and prolonged struggle that *τύχη* managed to prevail over Cato and his *ἀρετή* and to overthrow the Republic. Cato's *ἀρετή* thus emerges as a thing of intrinsic value that transcends the effects of ill fortune and therein the question of success or failure in the area of policy²⁶. Another preface of immediate interest is that to the *Lives* of Dion and Brutus. Plutarch indicates that the former enjoyed a personal association with Plato and that the latter was nurtured on Platonism (*Dion* 1.1-2), and then immediately avails himself of the coincidental Platonism of his protagonists to assert a discrimination between *ἀρετή* and its public consequences that is reminiscent of the one we encountered in the case of Phocion and Cato (*Dion* 1.3): Dion and Brutus, Plutarch tells us, bear witness to the fact that power and good fortune (*τύχη*) must coincide with Plato's wisdom (*φρόνησις*) and rectitude (*δικαιοσύνη*) if political actions are to result in achievements that have beauty (*κάλλος*) and grandeur²⁷. Plutarch then comments (2.1-2)

²³ Green (1990), 40-44. Green's account of Phocion's career is warped by vitriol and ideological bias. Green has little to say about Demosthenes. For a more favorable view of Phocion, see Tritle (1988).

²⁴ See esp. *Phoc.* 3.5-9, 5.1, 14.1, 34-37, 38.1-2.

²⁵ The same objective focus on character permits Plutarch to admire the conservatives Aristides and Cimon as well as their respective democratic rivals, Themistocles and Pericles.

²⁶ On the *Phoc.* – *Ca. Mi.* preface, cf. Duff (1999), 137-39.

²⁷ In the two Alexander declamations (326D-345B), Plutarch attributes Alexander's achievements to *ἀρετή* rather than *τύχη* and then depicts his life as the story of the triumph of his *ἀρετή* over a malevolent *τύχη*. The Roman declamation (316C-326C), in spirit a eulogy of Rome, is the surviving half of a debate as to whether *τύχη* or *ἀρετή* may claim credit for the creation of the Roman empire; only the case for *τύχη*,

that it was *τύχαι*, τοῖς συμπτώμασι μᾶλλον ἢ ταῖς προαιρέσεσιν οὔσαι αἰ αὐταί (“their fortunes, being similar with regard to accidents rather than purposes”), that account for the similarity in their lives; for both alike perished before they could accomplish the purposes to which they had dedicated themselves; yet, he adds, there was no more amazing similarity than the fact that a supernatural power (τὸ δαιμόνιον) sent to each a phantom that intimated his approaching doom²⁸ – in an apparently jealous and malignant attempt to shatter his ἀρετή.

Now, one may wonder how it is that προαιρέσεις, even if they be political rather than moral, are here placed by Plutarch in the domain of τύχη, and perhaps how τὸ δαιμόνιον, also designated as a δαίμων (*Dion* 2.4, 2.6; *Brut.* 36.7, 37.6), may be related, if at all, to τύχη. *Demosthenes* 3.3-5 raises a similar set of questions: ὁ δαίμων, Plutarch states, appears to have fashioned Cicero in the likeness of Demosthenes, not only inserting into his φύσις many of the same qualities, such as love of honour and of liberty in public life and cowardice in the face of dangers and wars, but also arranging for him a unique array of similarities with regard to τὰ τυχηρά; in the latter category are listed the facts that both rose from obscure and lowly beginnings to become great and powerful orators, that both clashed with kings and tyrants, that both lost daughters, that both were driven into exile but were recalled with honour, that both fled again and were seized by their enemies, and that the death of each coincided with the decease of liberty for their fellow citizens. Plutarch concludes with a simile: should there be a contest between φύσις and τύχη, as between craftsmen, it would be difficult to decide whether the former had fashioned Demosthenes and Cicero more similar in temperament (οἱ τρόποι) or the latter in circumstances (τὰ πράγματα). Again, there is much, very much indeed, that seems out place in the domain of τύχη. And again, ὁ δαίμων is an exterior supernatural entity quite separate from the individual.

I must confess that I have now led us – and more particularly myself – into an interpretive cul-de-sac. For Plutarch’s daemonology is beyond the scope of this essay, and the result of a vigorous struggle with the problem of the role that Plutarch assigns τύχη in human affairs

and then not all of that, remains. On these declamations, see Hamilton (1969), xxiii-xxxiii; Swain (1989b); Martin (1997), 718-20; Duff (1999), 245, 263. *De fortuna* (97C-100A) is a slight piece in which Plutarch argues that the influence of τύχη on the lives of human beings is insignificant in comparison with that of their own effort and design.

²⁸ For Plutarch’s account of the appearance of these phantoms, see *Dion* 55 and *Brut.* 36-37. On the *Dion* – *Brut.* preface, cf. Duff (1999), 134, 138-39.

is that I have been thrown and subdued by this problem²⁹. In Plutarch's conceptual universe, a *δαίμων* may be ultimately responsible for both the *φύσις* and the *τύχη* of an individual; but in the pragmatic world of the *Lives*, *τύχη* seems to be more or less – and this *more or less* is the stumbling block – responsible for everything that he himself, according to some opaque personal standard, does not attribute to *φύσις* and *ἦθος*. The line of demarcation between the domain of *τύχη* on the one hand and that of *φύσις* and *ἦθος* on the other may, in fact, remain ever murky for readers of the *Lives*; for I suspect that it was rather vague in Plutarch's own mind. Indeed, its very vagueness may have given him an interpretive and stylistic flexibility that he found congenial; for the Chaeronean does not impress me as a systematic and categorical thinker.

I should like now to address a problem that has been with us from the beginning but which I have so far ignored. There is a fly in the ointment of Plutarch's non-consequentialism. It is implicitly present in the *Demosthenes* selection with which we began, when Plutarch observes with approval and admiration (13.6) that Demosthenes “does not attempt to lead his countrymen into the course of action that will furnish the greatest pleasure or ease or profit; instead, under many circumstances he is of the opinion that what is right and honourable must have precedence over” the security and safety of the state (*ἢ ἀσφάλεια καὶ ἢ σωτηρία*). And it is explicitly acknowledged by Plutarch at *Phocion* 32.1-9. The narrative situation is this: a council of the Athenians has been convened in the Peiraeus that Nicanor, the commander of the Macedonian garrison stationed on Munychia, may address them (4); Nicanor has entrusted his person to Phocion, but when he comes before the council the Athenian commander of the district attempts to arrest him (4-5); Phocion, however, allows Nicanor to escape, for which he is censured (6); Phocion, in defense, asserts (6) that he trusts the man and expects no harm from him, but that, if events prove otherwise, he would rather be known for suffering wrong than for doing wrong (*μᾶλλον ἐθέλειν ἀδικούμενος ἢ ἀδικῶν φανερός γενέσθαι*)³⁰. At this point, Plutarch suddenly, and contrary to his typical practice, interrupts his story to insert the following comment (7): “These words would seem honourable and noble on the lips of a man who is speak-

²⁹ On Plutarch's notions of *τύχη* and *δαίμων*, see Brenk (1977), 50-64, 85-183; Dillon (1977), 208-24; Pelling (1988b), 23-25; Swain (1989a). For background to these notions, see Plato, *Smp.* 201d-205a; Herzog-Hauser (1948).

³⁰ For the Platonic origins of these words, aptly spoken by a man who had studied at the Academy under Plato and later Xenocrates (*Phoc.* 4.2), see *Cri.* 49a-e and *Grg.* passim (e.g., 479b-e, 509c-e).

ing in a private capacity and on behalf of himself alone. But when that man is putting the safety (*σωτηρία*) of his country at risk, and is a commander and a magistrate at that, I do not know but what he is guilty of committing a transgression against a principle that is even grander and more venerable, that of his duty toward his fellow citizens [*τὸ πρὸς τοὺς πολίτας δίκαιον*].”

It is the insertion of *πρὸς τοὺς πολίτας* that transforms *τὸ δίκαιον* from an absolute moral principle into one that is contingent upon the welfare of others and is, therefore, within Plutarch’s frame of moral reference, consequentialist. It is as if he had expanded the reference to moral beauty at *Pericles* 2.4 to *τὸ πρὸς τοὺς πολίτας καλόν*, and his own at *Demosthenes* 13.6 to *τὸ καλὸν πρὸς τοὺς πολίτας καὶ τὸ πρέπον*, and had altered Panaetius’ from *τὸ καλὸν δι’ αὐτό* (13.5) to *τὸ πρὸς τοὺς πολίτας καλόν*.

In point of fact, the exercise of consequentialist judgments by Plutarch, whether implicit or, as at *Phocion* 32.7, explicit, permeates the *Lives*. Two others in the latter category will be particularly useful for our purposes. The first of these will take us into the world of myth and legend (*Comp. Thes. et Rom.* 6.1-5), where Plutarch vindicates the rape of the Sabine women with the following argument³¹. In contrast to the promiscuous raping of women by Theseus (6.1-2), Romulus (6.2) allotted these women to unmarried Romans and retained only one for himself: “Then, by the honor in which after that the women were held, by the affection with which they were treated, and by the rectitude on which they could rely, he transformed that deed of violence and injustice into one that was most fair and most conducive to political harmony” (*ἔπειτα τῇ μετὰ ταῦτα τιμῇ καὶ ἀγαπήσει καὶ δικαιοσύνῃ περὶ τὰς γυναῖκας ἀπέδειξε τὴν βίαν ἐκείνην καὶ τὴν ἀδικίαν κάλλιστον ἔργον καὶ πολιτικώτατον εἰς κοινωνίαν γενομένην*). Plutarch concludes the passage with a description of the benefits that derived from these enforced marriages between Roman and Sabine (6.3-5). Another prominent instance of explicit consequentialism occurs in the *Life of Themistocles*. After describing the process (*Them.* 3.5-4.4) whereby Themistocles, through foresight, boldness, and shrewdness, persuaded the Athenians to build a hundred triremes with the revenue from the silver mines at Laurium, and made his city into a maritime power, Plutarch indicates (4.4) that Themistocles’ detractors, however, accused him of corrupting the Athenians by turning them from sturdy spearmen into servile rowers. In his response (4.5-6), Plutarch brushes aside such accusations as theoretical speculation and focuses our attention on a far more crucial issue: “Whether or not Themistocles in fact harmed

³¹ Cf. Duff (1999), 132.

the integrity and purity of the body politic”, he writes, “is a question suitable for examination in a more philosophic setting; but what is certain and most significant is that Xerxes himself, by his behaviour after Salamis, testified to the fact that deliverance [σωτηρία] at that time came to the Hellenes from the sea and that those very triremes of Themistocles raised up again the city of the Athenians”.

Plutarch’s consequentialist thinking in the *Aristides*, however, if it is actually that, is nuanced and only implicit³². In his account (13) of the anti-democratic conspiracy before the battle of Plataea, which Aristides dealt with by a deft plan of partial exposure and selective arrests, Plutarch, without passing judgment, merely explains (13.2) that Aristides feared disastrous consequences if he applied a standard of justice (τὸ δίκαιον) rather than one of expediency (τὸ συμφέρον). A similar mixture of nuance and reservation of judgement characterises *Aristides* 25.1-8. At the formation of the Delian Confederacy, Plutarch records (25.1), Aristides had, by the oaths he swore and exacted, bound the Athenians and the other Hellenes in sacred obligations to one another; yet, when circumstances later demanded otherwise, he bade the Athenians hold himself responsible for the perjury and manage affairs to their own advantage (ἢ συμφέρει). Plutarch next cites Theophrastus for a comprehensive assessment of Aristides’ character (25.2): he was rigorously upright (ἄκρως δίκαιος) with regard to his own affairs and the manner in which he dealt with his fellow citizens; but in foreign affairs he implemented the policy of his country, even though that policy required a substantial amount of injustice (ἀδικία). Plutarch concludes this passage with an illustration from each of these two areas of Aristides’ conduct; that from the area of foreign affairs will satisfy our present concerns (25.3): when deliberation was in process about transferring the treasury of the Delian Confederacy from Delos to Athens, Aristides pointed out that, while such an act was not right (δίκαιον), it was certainly expedient (συμφέρον). Now, Plutarch, in accordance with an extremely flexible principle of moral evaluation that he enunciates at *Cimon* 2.5, has a notable, though not uniform, tendency to regard the moral failures of basically honourable and upright men, not as expressions of vice, but rather as human-condition failures to achieve perfect virtue; and when he regards moral failures in this manner, he also exhibits a tendency, again not uniform, to incorporate them into his biographical story without pejorative comment³³. This principle and process may be at work in the *Aristides* passages we have just examined. I am, however, inclined to believe that something more basic and

³² Cf. Duff (1999), 132-33.

³³ See Martin (1995).

morally significant is occurring in these passages: that, quite simply, Plutarch is giving tacit and implicit recognition to the fact that, when the welfare of one's country is at stake, τὸ συμφέρον must sometimes have precedence over τὸ δίκαιον. I am encouraged in this belief by the lax morality of chapter 4 of the *Nicias – Crassus* synkrisis³⁴. Here, in partial vindication of Crassus' Parthian expedition, Plutarch first remarks (4.3) that, if τὸ δίκαιον is to be violated, at least let it be done for some grand purpose, and then adds (4.4): "Those who praise the expedition of Alexander but find fault with that of Crassus make the mistake of judging beginnings by their results".

Plutarch has emerged from my analysis as a confirmed non-consequentialist; he has also emerged as a confirmed consequentialist. In conclusion, I should like to submit this conflicted quality of his moral thought to a reflective consideration that extends far beyond the *Lives* and the *Moralia* – indeed, far beyond classical antiquity itself – and places this quality within the universal context of human experience as such experience falls within my personal ken. Let me begin by freeing the Chaeronean from the shackles of modern moral philosophy, from the shackles of consequentialism and non-consequentialism whereby I confined him to patterns of thought that were designed to serve my interpretive purposes. And let me now simply say that there is inconsistency in his moral judgments, that, when he gazed into the mirror of history, he sometimes beheld conduct that he admired and valued exclusively for its moral beauty, irrespective of its consequences, and at other times he beheld conduct that he admired and valued exclusively for its consequences, and at still other times, perhaps most, there was a mingling of the two reactions. Also, although he gazed into that vast mirror from a firm moral position, his moral vision was, as he tells us at *Aemilius* 1.1-5, sharpened and refined by what he beheld, and was therefore inevitably altered; and since what he beheld was never static but was ever varied and changing, it was likewise inevitable that those alterations and that variety would find expression in the *Lives* he was creating as literature. Given the process by which this literary creation took place, there would be, if you will, a certain unnatural inconsistency of manner out of sympathy with moral development if Plutarch's moral judgments were in fact rigidly consistent.

The either-or-ness of consistency, moreover, belongs to the material world and its adjuncts. The stove is either on or off and cannot be both simultaneously. And in the last analysis, Schrödinger's cat must be either dead or alive; it cannot, save by a process of imagination that ignores the law of absurdity, be simultaneously neither. But

³⁴ Cf. Duff (1999), 132.

even in the material world, contradiction and inconsistency can enrich understanding: light may be described and depicted as either waves or particles. There is, however, an inherent both-andness that characterizes the world of religion and morality. I know not how often I have responded to a moral dilemma by simultaneously both recognizing that I have a free will and realizing that I have no choice in the matter. The notion of incarnate deity, subscribed to by billions over the centuries, both learned and unschooled, assumes that a self-moving and self-functioning entity is simultaneously mortal and immortal. When Abraham reached for the knife with which to slay his son Isaac, who lay bound on the altar, he was in a contradicted state of simultaneous belief and obedience, for the act of obedience could not but remove forever the possibility that his belief would be fulfilled (*Genesis* 15, 17, 21.1-8, 22.1-18)³⁵. It should, therefore, not be surprising to find Plutarch's moral judgement in a contradicted state of evaluating conduct *both* exclusively in virtue of its consequences *and* exclusively in virtue of its inherent moral beauty. Such contradiction and the resultant inconsistency belong to the human condition.

Consistency firm yet flexible is a benign goddess, for she enables us to accomplish things, she guides us from a beginning to an end through a milieu of accidents and designs. But her rigid sister is a severe creature who demands of her devotees that they sacrifice on her altar a substantial portion of their humanity. It was a sacrifice that the humane Plutarch was not prepared to make.

³⁵ For more on this episode and on the depiction of Abraham in *Genesis*, see Martin (1987).

Virtue, Fortune, and Happiness in Theory and Practice

J. OPSOMER

Good luck and bad luck are surely facts of life. In the archaic Greek perception, lucky persons seemed to benefit from the protection of benign higher powers, whereas malignant powers were held to be responsible for the misfortunes of those that were hit by bad luck. Hence the lucky ones were called *eudaimones*, “in possession of a good daemon”. It has been said many times: the traditional translation for *eudaimonia* is misleading, as “happiness” nowadays refers to a certain feeling – it is private, subjective, psychological and episodic –, whereas *eudaimonia* denotes an objective quality, that, moreover, attaches to an entire life¹. “The fulfilled life” is one of the various alternative renderings that have been suggested. Be this as it may, *eudaimonia* does signify important aspects of our “happiness”, most notably the requirements that one’s life be successful, that it be enjoyable or at least preferable².

Because the word *eudaimonia* does not mean “a life in which I have done everything I could to be good”, or “a moral life”, but normally implies that one’s life is satisfactory, and that one is successful in one’s endeavours, a tension between morality and the desire to be *eudaimon* is bound to arise. For it is the claim of ancient philosophy that it shows the way to *eudaimonia*. This it does by developing an ethical system, or, in the case of some schools, at least certain ethical principles. Living according to those, so is the claim, will, if not guarantee, then at least be conducive to, *eudaimonia*. A conflict with traditional expectations about what constitutes a successful life seems inevitable. For no school could promise that its pupils would be successful according to the accepted standards of society – not even if its pupils actually succeeded³ in living a completely philosophical, that

¹ E.g., Horn (1998), 61-62, 66-68; Cooper (1999), 219-20. The idea of happiness as predicable of a life as a whole is Solonian. Cf. Plut. *Sol.* 27.7-9.

² Annas (1993), 330, 426.

³ Horn (1998), 147.

is, a fully moral life. Money, pleasure, honour are not (always) the fruits of a virtuous life.

One answer would be to give up the strict promise of happiness and to replace it with a more modest claim, such as that of the sceptics: by getting rid of unwarranted and even false theoretical assumptions – i.e., by abolishing theory as such – some important sources of unhappiness are removed and favourable conditions for a happier life are created. Another, drastic, option was chosen by the Stoics and consists in a radical revision of the notion of *eudaimonia*. The happy life is now located in virtue alone; it will not be made any more happy by adding so-called external goods. This position stands in marked contrast to the Aristotelian one: for Aristotle, virtue alone is not sufficient for happiness, but must be supplemented by external goods⁴.

The notion of ‘what is in our power’ plays a key role in this debate. Aristotle, on the one hand, is aware of the fact that we have no full control over external goods, and is prepared to accept the consequence that we are not in full control of our happiness; living virtuously is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition. It is very well possible that a virtuous person suffers the greatest misfortunes. The Stoics, on the other hand, wanted happiness to be in our power. For this purpose they proclaimed it to consist in virtue alone: if virtue is up to us, happiness is up to us. The good person is therefore completely autarchic as far as her happiness is concerned. In Socratic fashion⁵ they declared that our true selves cannot be harmed by external things. The misfortunes lamented by unwise people are in reality not bad or evil at all. The enlightened Stoic knows that moral vice is the only evil. Hence virtue is sufficient for happiness. Virtue is lacking in nothing; that is, it is complete and self-sufficient. This means that we humans can be autarchic as far as our happiness is concerned: we only have to be virtuous⁶ (unfortunately, that is not so easy). In order for us to accept that being virtuous makes us happy, we have to revise our priorities and modify our original intuitions about happiness. In so doing we create the condition for it to happen⁷.

The Stoics could have stopped here, but obviously wanted more. A cosmo-theological argument is brought in at this point: from the perspective of the whole there is no evil. Even moral evil, which is

⁴ Annas (1993), 427.

⁵ Socrates famously claimed that the Athenians, by condemning him to death, could not harm him, only his body. Cf. Pl. *Ap.* 30cd; see also 29de, 36bc, 39b.

⁶ E.g., D.L., VII, 127 = *SVF* I, 187; III, 49; Plut., *De Stoic. rep.* 1046D = *SVF* III, 53; *SVF* III, 49-67, 208.

⁷ Annas (1993), 391-94.

evil for the individual, serves a purpose. All is part of a divine plan. This *Logos* is alternatively called Zeus, Providence (*πρόνοια*), or Fortune (*τύχη*). This means nothing less than a redefinition⁸ of the notion of fortune or luck (*τύχη*): what is usually thus called now becomes a contingency only for the individual, who has no complete understanding of the divine plan. In the greater perspective there is no *real* luck, for everything has been foreseen and planned – just not by us, humans. By equating luck with providence, the Stoics have actually denatured the former concept. When they continue to use it, they use it catachrestically. The Stoic view on the relation between the good and the contingent is thus revisionary in two ways, i.e. at an ethical and at a cosmo-theological level: (1) what counts as external contingencies and for the individual is indeed a matter of luck plays no role towards happiness; (2) in the cosmological perspective there is no true luck at all, only divine providence, which is completely good.

The latter level tends to be left out or played down in contemporary studies of Stoic ethics, as it is obviously considered to be of no importance for a *moral* theory. In the ancient context, however, both aspects are inextricably linked, as it seems to me. In the ancient replies to the Stoics, e.g. in Plutarch's *Platonism*, ethical arguments are very often placed in the context of cosmology (contingency and determinism), theology (theodicy), and metaphysics (highest principles, monism, dualism, etc.).

In Plato's view, self-sufficiency and completeness are restricted to what is good⁹. *Autarkeia* characterises the divine – god, the *kosmos*¹⁰ – and is not fully attainable for human persons. The latter have to organise themselves in societies and can be *relatively* self-sufficient by leading decent lives (that is, the morally good person is more self-sufficient than others)¹¹. Self-sufficiency was an ideal that permeated Greek ethical thinking¹² and was considered to be godlike. Plato, Aristotle, but also the Cynics believed that it was the privilege of the gods to be,

⁸ This counts as a redefinition as far as the history of philosophical concepts is concerned. A more accurate description, from a broader historical point of view, would probably start from the idea that the Stoics incorporated popular Hellenistic conceptions of *Tyche* into their system. On the latter, see Swain (1989a); Ingenkamp (1997), 74-5.

⁹ *Phlb.* 20d, 60c, 67a; ps.-Pl., *Def.* 412e10-11.

¹⁰ *Ti.* 33d2-3, 68e3-4. Compare ps.-Pl., *Def.* 411a3 (Θεός ζῶν ἀθάνατον, αὐταρκες πρὸς ἐνδαιμονίαν).

¹¹ *R.* 369b6-7, 387d4-e1. Cf. ps.-Pl., *Def.* 413e10.

¹² Kappl (2002).

for everything that matters, truly independent of fortune¹³. Only the Stoics appear to have believed this condition was, at least in principle, i.e. for the sage, within human reach.

Plutarch's rejection of the fundamentals of Stoic ethics is beyond doubt. Well known are his criticisms of their monolithic and intellectualist conception of the soul, their moral psychology, the austerity of their ethics, their cosmological determinism, and their failed theodicy¹⁴. Plutarch is a Platonist at heart, but is willing to incorporate into his works ideas, concepts, arguments, and examples from a different provenance, as long as they are in harmony with his Platonic convictions¹⁵. In the case of ethics, this means that he takes a great deal of his material from Aristotle and the Peripatetic tradition. As he argues in his *De virtute morali*, Plato and Aristotle have in common a fundamentally dualistic conception of the soul that entails a view of moral virtue as the right mean between emotions ('passions'). *Metriopatheia*, which Plutarch presents, with some justification, as *Platonic doctrine*, is set against the Stoic ideal of *apatheia*¹⁶. The idea that virtue is a mean follows from the fact that the passions are not, as the Stoic would like to see them, perverted reasonings, but belong to a second, irrational part of the soul, that is essentially different from reason. The Platonic view of the soul entails that the passions constitute the ineradicable¹⁷ disorderly element, but also the dynamic force of our psychic life¹⁸. This irrational force has to be disciplined and made obedient to reason (*logos*), which is the right mean, the proportion (*logos*) in which

¹³ Arist., *EN* I, 7, 1097a30-b21. Aristotle held the life of contemplation to be self-sufficient and happy to the highest degree, divine, but possibly not fully attainable for us, in the sense that only gods are able to live lives that consist of nothing but contemplation (*EN* 1176b3-5, 30-31; 1177a12-18, 27-b1; and esp. 1177b24-34). Cf. Stemmer (1992); Cooper (1999), 235. For the Cynics, see D.L., VI, 105.

¹⁴ Babut (1969a), 22-69, 276-366.

¹⁵ This strategy should not be confused with eclecticism. For a practical example of Plutarch's approach (Stoic and Platonic ideas on cosmopolitanism), see Opsomer (2002), 286-90.

¹⁶ Babut (1969b), 75: "...Plutarque était donc loin de trahir Platon pour Aristote ou de sacrifier à l'éclectisme, il restait au contraire sur un terrain authentiquement platonicien"; Donini (1974), 64-5, 80-1; (1986), 214: "...una dottrina etica che è sostanzialmente quella aristotelica, anche se qua e là riformulata nel modo più adeguato a caratterizzarla in senso platonico".

¹⁷ *De virt. mor.* 451B-F, 451E-452B.

¹⁸ Compare *De virt. mor.* 451DE.

consists moral virtue. Reason imposes limit and structure¹⁹, or even, in a sense, *is* the limit establishing itself²⁰. In becoming virtuous the human soul not only assimilates itself to god²¹, i.e., reason (λόγος, νοῦς), but imitates the primordial cosmic event that was the birth of the world soul (a cosmic well-ordered soul). In the state of things before the creation of a world soul, there was already a psychic force, but one that was completely irrational and disorderly. When this irrational soul partook of order, through a demiurgic intervention, the world soul and with it the world came into being, as a cosmic soul and a cosmos, respectively. The precosmic disorderly element is made obedient and is thus integrated into the world soul. Within the cosmic soul the irrational is not just that which tends to disorder, but also the dynamic, motive principle. It is, as Plutarch calls it in his treatise on the composition of the world soul, ‘soul itself’. Similarly, the passions are the motive force in the life of the human psyche²². At the cosmic level, the demiurge has bestowed a rational structure upon soul itself. This rationality is something that stems from himself²³. In the human soul, too, reason is something divine.

This summary makes clear that Plutarch’s moral psychology is firmly anchored in his interpretation of the *Timaeus*²⁴. As a virtue ethics, it stands in a Platonic-Aristotelian tradition. Now it is time to look at our main question. What has Plutarch to say about the relation between virtue and luck? Certainly a few things in his theoretical treatise on practical virtue. Yet Plutarch has not only examined the problem from a theoretical point of view. More than other philosophers he has looked at the matter as it presents itself in real life. Plutarch has done some *case studies*, in his *Lives*, that is. So I will first analyse a passage from the theoretical text *De virtute morali*²⁵, and then look at one *Life* in

¹⁹ *De virt. mor.* 443CD (τὸ ἄλογον ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου πλαττόμενον... ἄλλ’ ὄρον τινὰ καὶ τάξιν ἐπιτιθέντος αὐτῷ καὶ τὰς ἠθικὰς ἀρετάς, οὐκ ἀπαθείας οὐσας ἀλλὰ συμμετρίας παθῶν καὶ μεσότητος, ἐμποιοῦντος), 444B (λόγου... ὀρίζοντος), 444C, 444D (τάξις καὶ διακόσμησις; cf. 449B: κοσμούντος καὶ τάττοντος), 446D (συνήρμωσται καὶ συγκέκραται τὸ ἄλογον πρὸς τὸν λογισμὸν), 448AB, 451A (παθητικαῖς ὀρμαῖς); *De an. procr.* 1013A, 1014C, 1025A.

²⁰ *Quaest. Plat.* 9, 1009B: ὡς περὶ ἢ τοῦ λόγου δύναμις ἀντιλαμβανομένη κινουμένων ἀλόγως τῶν παθῶν καὶ συναρμόττουσα περὶ αὐτὴν εἰς τὸ μέτριον ἐλλείψεως καὶ ὑπερβολῆς μεσότητα καθίστησι.

²¹ Cf. *De sera num.* 550DE. Cf. Alcín., *Did.* 181.19-26 Whittaker; Stob., II, 7.3^f (50.6-10 W.). The classical Platonic text is *Tht.* 176bc.

²² See *De virt. mor.* 452B.

²³ *Quaest. Plat.* 2, 1001C.

²⁴ For a more extensive analysis, see Opsomer (1994).

²⁵ As Ingenkamp (1999), 87-90 has argued, the treatise is probably meant for Platonist students, who are confronted with the alternative view of the Stoics and who

which the difficult relation between virtue and luck is thematic: the *Life of Dion*. I have chosen this text because Dion is presented as someone who through the influence of philosophy – what is more: of Plato in person – has developed into a virtuous man. Better philosophical conditions seem to be impossible²⁶. Other external contingencies, however, came to play a decisive role in his biography. One of the questions at which we will have to look concerns the applicability of the theory to the real world²⁷. I will supplement my discussion of the *Life of Dion* with selected extracts from other *Lives* that give additional information on an important aspect of the relationship between luck and virtue. But first the theory.

After having reviewed various opinions over the questions whether there are many virtues or just one fundamental virtuous disposition that expresses itself in various ways depending on the areas to which it is related (ch. 2, 440E-441B), Plutarch explains the standard Stoic view according to which virtue is a disposition of the governing faculty, and passions are the same faculty in a different disposition (ch. 3, 441B-D). To this view he opposes his own dualistic conception of the soul (ch. 3, 441D-442C) and explains that the irrational part has to be coaxed into being subservient to reason and being made harmonious (ch. 4, 442C). An *ēthos* (ἦθος) is defined as a quality of the irrational, acquired by habit (ἔθος); reason does not want to eradicate the passions completely, but rather puts upon them some limit and order (ὄρον τινὰ καὶ τάξιν ἐπιτιθέντος), thus implanting the moral virtues, which are not absence of passion but due proportion and measure of passions (οὐκ ἀπαθείας οὐσας ἀλλὰ συμμετρίας παθῶν καὶ μεσότητας, 443CD). Through habituation, training, and education²⁸ it is possible to bring *pathos* to a virtuous acquired state²⁹.

need to be strengthened in their faith. The method is introspection: Plutarch appeals to our experience of conflicting parts or forces within ourselves.

²⁶ See also *Maxime cum principibus* 777A.

²⁷ We will have to evaluate (cf. n. 97) Brenk's harsh verdict: "There is, then, a dichotomy between Plutarch's historical writing and his philosophical works over *tyché*. Probably what happened was that without his knowing it his philosophical speculation simply did not fit the hard realities of history as he came to examine it ever more closely" (Brenk [1977], 163).

²⁸ Cf. Babut (1969b), 147 n. 66 and 63, citing Pl., *Lg.* VII, 792e1-2; Arist., *EN* II, 1, 1103a11-b25; *EE* II, 2, 1220a38-1120b7; *MM* I, 6, 1185b38-1186a8; Plut., *De sera num.* 551E.

²⁹ 443D: ἡ δ' ἔξις ἰσχὺς καὶ κατασκευὴ τῆς περὶ τὸ ἀλογον δυνάμεως ἐξ ἔθους ἐγγενομένη, κακία μὲν, ἂν φαύλως, ἀρετὴ δ', ἂν καλῶς ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου παιδαγωγηθῇ τὸ πάθος.

Since this does not apply to all virtue, but only to moral virtue, the author in ch. 5 has to explain the difference between moral and intellectual virtue, starting from first principles (*ἀρξαιμένοις ἄνωθεν*). Plutarch in fact discusses the nature of our theoretical function, distinguishes its two functions, and then explains that the lower of the two, which is active in the realm of contingency, has to cooperate with the irrational part in order to achieve anything. The two virtues of the theoretical faculty are wisdom (*σοφία*) and prudence (*φρόνησις*). The distinction is an Aristotelian one³⁰, but when Plutarch distinguishes both virtues by their objects, he does so in terms that suggest Platonic metaphysics³¹: wisdom is concerned with the unchanging intelligibles, whereas prudence operates in the sensible realm³². This means that the latter must come down “among things that are full of error and confusion, and is often confronted with *chance* and forced to deliberate³³ about things that are unclear” (*τὴν δὲ φρόνησιν εἰς πράγματα πλάνης μεστὰ καὶ παραχῆς καθιεῖσαν ἐπιμίγνυσθαι τοῖς τυχηροῖς πολλακίς ἀναγκαῖόν ἐστι καὶ τῷ βουλευτικῷ χρῆσθαι περὶ τῶν ἀδηλοτέρων*, 444A). It has to deal with practical issues that have to do with the passions, that is, with the irrational

³⁰ See esp. *EN* VI, 5-8, 1140a24-1142a30. As Babut (1969b), 150 n. 81 points out, Plutarch is using *φρόνησις* in its Aristotelian, not in its Platonic sense. Plato tends to use *φρόνησις* for the contemplation of the unchanging.

³¹ Actually the matter is more complicated: at first Plutarch makes a distinction between absolute and relative things. Examples of the first are earth, heavens, and stars; things “that exist in relation to us are good and evil”. Later he treats this distinction as if it were equivalent to that between the intelligible and the sensible, which of course it is not. The mix-up is probably to be explained by the fact that Plutarch, in view of his polemical intentions, wanted to couch a Platonic-Aristotelian distinction in Stoic terms: for “relative to us” he uses the expression *τὰ δὲ πῶς ἔχοντα πρὸς ἡμᾶς*, which he had already used earlier, in his account of Ariston of Chios’ conception of virtue (*τῷ δὲ πρὸς τί πως*, 440F). The difficulties in the interpretation of this passage have been adequately explained by Babut (1969b), 12-13, 48-49.

³² Again this is a simplification. In the *Magna moralia* wisdom is said to pertain to the things that are always the same, to the eternal and divine, whereas prudence has to do with things that undergo change (I, 34, 1197a33-35, b8). Plutarch’s expression *εἰς πράγματα πλάνης μεστὰ καὶ παραχῆς καθιεῖσαν* (444A), however, indisputably evokes the *Timaeus*.

³³ The explanation – a geometer does not deliberate whether the triangle has its internal angles equal to two right angles – is again of Aristotelian provenance, though taken from a different context: *EN* III, 3, 1112a21-22. Cf. Babut (1969b), 150 n. 82. We deliberate, says Aristotle, about what happens through us, though not always in the same way (*μὴ ὡσαύτως δ’ αἰεὶ*, 1112b3). Similarly, chance and luck have to do with things that do not always happen in the same way (*GC* 333b4-7; *Ph.* II, 5; II, 8), hence are contingent (*Metaph.* V, 30, 1025a14-21; VI, 2, 1126b27-33).

(τὸ πρακτικὸν καὶ παθητικὸν, 443F³⁴). Now, that prudence is concerned with coincidences is something the Stoics explicitly deny³⁵. Plutarch is, however, explicit on this point: prudence needs³⁶ chance (φρόνησις τύχης δέεται, 443F). It also needs deliberation (βουλής).

The context for human action is the sensible world, an environment that is less than fully rational. It is characterised by motions that are “out of control”, at times too violently and swiftly, at other times too weakly and slothfully than would be good (444B). To put it differently, this is a world in which there is true contingency, the turmoil and disorder of which make it unpredictable³⁷. In this unstable environment our reason has to find a way for sensible³⁸ action, which it can only do by introducing itself some order, by finding the right mean between excess and deficiency. It has to collaborate with the irrational soul, which is our soul-faculty that is most akin to this world. This cooperation has two sides: since the passions of the soul are of themselves erratic, *they* need to be set in order first by reason; but the passions are also that which allows reason to have some grip on the turbulences of the external world. If we want to interact with the world – we have little choice – we have to act through our irrational faculty. One can also put this less positively: we are drawn by our passions, which are themselves pulled in various directions by external contingencies. Reason has to come in and find a way to deal with this situation rationally.

These considerations are very general. They say not much more than that we are living in a world that is not exempt from contingencies. Chance, luck, coincidences, disorder, and passions, though they are not the same things, are closely associated³⁹. What all of this could mean concretely can be seen when we look at individual biographies, that is, at literary narratives about historical individuals. For lack of time and space, I shall focus on one of Plutarch’s *Lives*, as I have already announced⁴⁰. There we hope to find some answers to, or gain some insight into, questions that have not even been addressed so far. We

³⁴ Cf. Babut (1969b), 149-150 n. 79.

³⁵ Proclus contrasts their view with Plato’s: *in Ti.* I, 197,28-29 = *SVF* III, 51. See also Plut. *De Stoic. rep.* 1046D = *SVF* III, 53.

³⁶ He can say it *needs* chance because it operates only in the domain of chance; otherwise the activity of intellect would be purely contemplative.

³⁷ See also *De an. procr.* 1024B.

³⁸ Here the adjective is not used in its Platonic sense.

³⁹ *De virt. mor.* 444DE; *De sera num.* 550DE (ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τεταγμένον ἀπεχθάνηται τοῖς ἀναρμόστοις καὶ πλανητοῖς πάθεσι καὶ φεύγει τὸ εἰκὴ καὶ ὡς ἔτυχεν); *De genio Socr.* 575C.

⁴⁰ For more extensive discussions, see Duff (1999), esp. 137-41, 263-64; Brenk (1977), 154-83, esp. 175-79.

have learned that chance is an ingredient of the world's make-up, and that it takes practical and theoretical virtue (*ἀρετή*) to cope with contingencies⁴¹. Yet important questions remain open: what is the impact of fortune on our chances of being successful? For even our virtuous actions may fail to produce positive results in the turmoil of the outside world. An even more troubling worry may be this: how does chance – the circumstances of our birth, education, or social environment in our later life – impact on our very ability to develop a virtuous character? Are not the conditions that favour one's development into a virtuous person themselves a matter of luck? Plutarch apparently agrees, but does not seem to find this problematic, as we will see.

Before we turn to the *Lives*, a preliminary remark on terminology needs to be made: the word that in *De virtute morali* and in philosophical texts in general is translated as 'chance' or 'luck', *τύχη*, takes on other meanings in the *Lives*. There it often bears connotations of divine intervention. This is not, however, of primary interest for us here. What interests us is still the tension between character (virtue), chance, and success. For the individual it does not seem to matter much whether external circumstances hindering or favouring her projects are the result of pure chance or caused by some divinity. It would make a difference if she were aware of divine intervention and took this awareness as a matter for reflection. That, however, is an issue that falls outside the scope of this paper.

Introducing the pair *Dion – Brutus* Plutarch points out that the first circumstance linking their biographies is their acquaintance with the Academy: Dion was an immediate disciple of Plato, while Brutus was nourished on the doctrines of Plato: "both set out from the same training-school, as it were, to confront the greatest struggles". Their careers confirm

the doctrine of their teacher in virtue (*τῷ καθηγμένῳ τῆς ἀρετῆς*), that prudence and justice (*φρονήσει καὶ δικαιοσύνη*) must be united with power and good fortune (*δύναμιν... καὶ τύχην*) if public careers are to take on beauty as well as grandeur. (*Dion* 1.2-3, trans. B. Perrin, *LCL*, slightly modified).

The combination of virtue and fortune will be a running theme in the *Life of Dion*. Both are necessary for success. Without fortune, virtue may guarantee 'beauty' (*κάλλος*), but 'grandeur' (*μέγεθος*) will surely be found lacking. Plutarch's second reason for comparing Dion's and

⁴¹ See also *De fort.*, esp. 100A; *De genio Socr.* 575C.

Brutus' biographies is exactly that they ran into a similar fate (2.1); the third that they both saw an apparition as a sign of their approaching deaths (2.3-6)⁴².

I am not here concerned with 'fate' in the strong sense of something that has been determined by higher powers and is therefore inescapable. 'Fate' here refers merely to what happened to each of the two men. Plutarch points out that the fortunes or fates (*αἱ τύχαι*) of the two men are identical in what befell them (*τοῖς συμπτώμασι*) rather than in what they elected to do (their fundamental choices, *ταῖς προαιρέσεσιν*)⁴³. So the most pressing question at the moment pertains to the tension between those things to which we are related in a passive way and those that we actively determine, through our own virtue. Whether there is a higher power that is causally responsible for the adversities or opportunities, whether they are determined or the result of pure chance, does not need to concern us here. For philosophers, and especially given the confrontation with the Stoics and the Epicureans, these are of course important issues. Theological and metaphysical issues are essential for an appropriate understanding of Plutarch's ethics, as I have argued above. For the sake of analysis, however, the relation *ἀρετή-τύχη* can be studied in isolation from these larger problems, and that is what I propose to do now, keeping in mind, however, that the other issues mentioned are not unimportant. In this way I hope to be able to disentangle to some extent the muddle presented by various ideas found in Plutarch's works⁴⁴. As regards the issue of determinism and contingency, let it suffice to say that for Plutarch, in my view, there is such a thing as real contingency⁴⁵, random events that may not be uncaused, but are not planned by the gods either. The irrational turmoil *is* part of this world. Higher powers do have a hand, however, in other events that appear as pure coincidences to us⁴⁶. Let us, however, put these issues to rest for now. What is of immediate interest

⁴² The fact that they are both philosophically educated men and therefore neither superstitious nor credulous is taken by Plutarch as rather strong evidence for the existence of evil daemons (2.5). Cf. Brenk (1977), 205-206; Duff (1999), 138.

⁴³ Duff (1999), 39 n. 78.

⁴⁴ I do not, however, try to detect, as Brenk (1977), 145-83 does, an evolution in Plutarch's thoughts. At the same time, I do not exclude the possibility that Plutarch's views did develop and that in some *Lives* he substituted a more 'tragic' view of his heroes for the 'philosophically severe' moralism of other *Lives*; cf. Pelling (1980), 138-39.

⁴⁵ See, e.g., *Sert.* 1.1-3.

⁴⁶ I have addressed some of these issues, and pointed out certain tensions and unresolved problems in Plutarch's views, in Opsomer (1997). See also Swain (1989a), 273, 276; Ingenkamp (1997), 73. Swain (p. 275) points out that Plutarch tends to

is the tension between character and *external* circumstances that are not under our control and are not foreseeable by us⁴⁷, and what this entails for our chances of reaching a fulfilled life.

Throughout the *Life* great emphasis is placed on education. Dionysius the Elder is fully aware of the power of education, and therefore protects his son against the influence of sensible men who could make him less inclined to vice (*Dion* 9.2 – it would not be wrong to suspect Plutarch of sarcasm here). Similarly, Philistus is said to be afraid of Plato’s influence on Dionysius II: he fears that through habit and time (*χρόνω καὶ συνηθεία* – cf. 16.2) it would become irresistible, seeing that the young man had already changed after only a brief period of time spent in Plato’s company (*εἰ νῦν ἐκ συνουσίας ὀλίγης ἡλλοίωκεν οὕτω καὶ μεταβέβληκε τὴν γνώμην τὸ μειράκιον*, 13.6). Education indeed seems to make all the difference for the formation of character, yet it should not be ignored that humans have an individual, innate and inalienable nature⁴⁸. Even before he met Plato, Dion was already a “lofty character, magnanimous, and manly” (*ὑψηλὸς τῶ ἦθει καὶ μεγαλόφρων καὶ ἀνδρώδης*, 4.3)⁴⁹. The association with Plato made him an even better man. He was therefore very fortunate to have met the great philosopher. Plutarch calls it “a divine good fortune” (*θεία τινὶ τύχη*) that is not the

invoke providence for larger historical developments only, and not for the sake of individuals.

⁴⁷ Cf. ps.-Plut. *De fato* 572A (on chance events).

⁴⁸ This thought is not un-Platonic. Plato himself states that there are different types of souls. Of course each soul is responsible for the type of life it chooses (*R.* X, 617d7-618b6; *Phdr.* 248c3-249d3, 250b7-8, 252c3-253c2; *Ti.* 41d4-42d3). It is not clear, however, what is responsible for the differences among the souls in the first place. But perhaps this is not a very useful question. From the *Timaeus* one could infer that souls are of unlike quality (41d7). They have equal chances in that their first incarnation is the same for all (41e3-4). Soon, however, some fare better than others. The reason seems to be none other than blind necessity, i.e., pure chance, which is ineradicable from the material world (cf. *Ti.* 42e2-3, and the later parts of the work). Despite our protests that this kind of moral luck (cf. *Grg.* 526a1-d2) is not fair, it may be a fact that is *unhintergebar*. A way to make Plato’s account more digestible may be this: if the *Timaeus* is not interpreted literally and the idea of a *beginning* of the cycles of reincarnation is rejected, it could be argued that, if the cycles are perpetual in both directions, all souls will undergo all kinds of fate eventually and moral luck will be distributed equally. The description of the equal chances at the beginning could then be a mere metaphor intended to emphasise the justice of the whole.

⁴⁹ Brutus had a different nature: he was rather sedate and mild, and needed to be stimulated rather than restrained. He modified his position by the “training and culture which philosophy gives”. In perfect accordance with Plutarch’s moral psychology, Brutus’ virtue consists in a harmonious mixture of contraries; cf. *Brut.* 1.3.

result of human deliberation, but is probably (ὡς ἔοικε) due to some daemon planning far ahead to bring freedom to the Syracusans (4.4). The divine intervention, if indeed there was any (as always, Plutarch remains cautious), will not have been aimed at the well-being of one man, but at that of a whole city⁵⁰. Whether there was divine intervention, whether it favoured Dion personally and for his own sake, or whether he just profited from it or even from pure chance: for Dion, the result is the same. The fact is, he has been lucky, and that is all that counts for our purposes.

He had not been so fortunate before, for he had grown up in unfavourable circumstances: he had been “reared in habits of submission under a tyrant” and “was accustomed to a life that was subservient and timorous, as well as to ostentatious service at court and vulgar luxury and a regimen that counts pleasures and excesses as the highest good” (4.6). Here we get a short depiction of the kind of vices⁵¹ to which Dion’s virtue will be antithetical and which are associated with tyranny and lack of freedom⁵².

Some interesting ideas can be teased out from this chapter. The circumstances under which Dion grew up were adverse to the development of good character, but despite this he was already to some extent virtuous before he met Plato. One may wonder how this is possible, or why others who grew up in the same environment, say Dionysius the Younger, did not manage to be the better of it. The reason may be that Dion had a better innate predisposition. Plutarch says indeed that his soul was “speedily on fire” as soon as he “got a taste of rational philosophy” (4.7), and that, “of all the companions of Plato, he was by far the quickest to learn and the readiest to answer the call of virtue” (4.5). Dion naively thought that Dionysius could benefit in a similar way from the association with Plato⁵³ and therefore introduced them

⁵⁰ See also 26.4: a τύχη παράλογος prevents a messenger from reaching Dionysius. Cf. Swain (1989a), 283; compare *Brut.* 47.5.

⁵¹ Cf. 6.4, 7.4, 34.1 (ἐκ πονηρίας καὶ θρασύτητος εὐδοκιμῶν), 41, 53.

⁵² I shall not go into the political aspects of the *Life* and the role of Platonic philosophy in this matter. Suffice it to say that Plutarch’s condemnation of tyranny, and of democracy (53.4), are in line with Plato’s views (5.1, 6.4, 40). Plutarch further points out that Dionysius’ tyranny managed to survive longer than it normally would due to the dissension among the citizens (34.5; cf. 49.2). This has an obvious parallel in the psyche, where dissension entails vice (cf. *De virt. mor.* 441F, 445D, 446EF, 447C, F). Another link with individual moral psychology is obvious, and entirely Platonic: tyranny caters to ἐπιθυμία (18.5).

⁵³ 4.7: τῇ περὶ αὐτὸν εὐπαθείᾳ τῶν καλῶν ἀκάκως πάνυ καὶ νεωτερικῶς προσδοκήσας ὑπὸ τῶν αὐτῶν λόγων ὁμοία πείσεσθαι Διονύσιον κτλ.

to each other⁵⁴. This expectation would indeed prove to be naive: Dionysius' Platonic education was not a success, although he tried to keep up appearances and pass for a philosopher:

However, with a desire to make head against the bad repute (*κακοδοξίαν*) which he had also won among the philosophers on Plato's account, he assembled at his court many men with a reputation for learning (*πολλοὺς τῶν πεπαιδευσθαι δοκούντων* – flatterers, it is implied; cf. *infra*). But he was ambitious (*φιλοτιμούμενος*) to surpass them all in discussion, and therefore made an inapt use of what he had imperfectly learned from Plato (*ἡναγκάζετο τοῖς Πλάτωνος παρακούσμασι κακῶς χρῆσθαι*).

It ends in self-reproach: Dionysius realises he should have made a better use of Plato's presence and wants to have him back (18.2-4). Ironically, Dionysius the Elder had named two of his children *Sōphrosynē* and *Aretē* (6.1).

Dionysius is clearly more interested in reputation⁵⁵ than in real philosophy; he wants to win debates (he is *φιλόνικος*, in other words), which shows his being driven by baser, tyrannical desires (*ἐπιθυμία*, 18.5). What he has learnt from Plato he has learnt imperfectly and he has certainly not made much progress towards virtue⁵⁶. So why did Dion succeed where Dionysius failed? The answer appears to be: maybe he was less exposed to bad influences and more to Plato, but probably he was also better endowed by nature⁵⁷.

In the passages on the education and instruction of Dion and Dionysius it is thus possible to detect a special kind of luck that may be called moral luck, and more specifically constitutive luck⁵⁸. It determines the chances we have to become virtuous. This is something very different from incidental luck, which affects only our actions and not our moral constitution itself. Plutarch is clearly aware of at least one form of moral luck: that which is implied in the circumstances of

⁵⁴ See also 9.1: Dion wants to do something about Dionysius' *ἀπαιδευσία*. Cf. 10.1.

⁵⁵ Cf. *Dion* 16.3.

⁵⁶ Cf. *De prof. in virt.* 79B: "When students of philosophy pass from the ostentatious and artificial to the kind of discourse which deals with character and the passions [*εἰς τὸν ἀπτόμενον ἠθους καὶ πάθους λόγον*] they begin to make real and unaffected progress".

⁵⁷ At *Dion* 9.2 it is suggested that Dionysius II was not so bad by nature: "by nature he did not belong to the worst class of tyrants", but his father deliberately kept him away from potentially beneficial influences. Surely this still does not mean that Dionysius' nature was of the same quality as Dion's.

⁵⁸ For the terminology, see Williams (1981), 20.

our upbringing and education. In this respect he explicitly says that Dion was lucky, although he does not elaborate on the theoretical implications. Another, even more radical kind of moral luck is that which determines our very innate natures. Here Plutarch does not use the word 'luck', and may even have thought it would be inappropriate to do so⁵⁹. At any rate, there is no indication that he found any of these kinds of moral luck (if he would be willing to describe them thus) problematic.

The most explicit passage on constitutive luck is to be found in the *Life of Marius*: Plato is said to have counted himself lucky because he was born a human being, and not an irrational animal (the most radical form of luck); a Greek, and not a barbarian. Moreover he lived during Socrates' lifetime and was fortunate to meet him. Plato is said to have made this avowal near the end of his life. Plutarch also records a similar statement by Antipater of Tarsus (*Mar.* 46.1-2)⁶⁰.

Dion has received a successful philosophical education that has made him into a virtuous man. His virtue, which is described in terms of Plutarch's Platonism, translates into virtuous action, which is for the good of his city, and directed against vice and tyranny. In good Platonic fashion, Dion wants to be a doctor⁶¹ for the vices of the city and its citizens. This is also why he wants to right Dionysius' education⁶². What is more, Plato himself came to Sicily in order to cure it; he wanted to show that his philosophy was more than just theory and

⁵⁹ Something may be said for that. We are morally responsible for our actions, but also for the kind of persons we are, insofar as that is in our power. To ask what is responsible for our innate (genetic) differences may make no sense. The issue is more problematic from a theological perspective, and hence for Plutarch: maybe god is to blame? That idea is obviously blasphemy to Plutarch and to any Platonist. Actually, Plato himself famously denied that god is to blame, but that does not solve the problem to everyone's satisfaction (cf. n. 48). Theology may also offer a solution within its own framework, as god can give us an eschatological compensation. The secular answer is that the demand to make some entity responsible for moral luck makes no sense.

⁶⁰ Compare *Dem.* 1: Plutarch cites the view that the first condition for happiness is to be born in an illustrious city (a case of luck); Plutarch, however, claims that to be virtuous is much more important for happiness. This text does not provide an example of constitutive luck, as the luck of birth is treated as merely external and not as constitutive of a moral character. The text does provide a testimony for the notion that virtue is conducive to happiness.

⁶¹ *Dion* 37.7; *Comp. Dion. et Brut.* 2.2.

⁶² Cf. n. 54; see esp. *Dion* 10.3.

prove that he was not unwilling to take action⁶³. Dion's attempt to redress Dionysius' character is described with reference to the Platonic *telos*: Dion tries to "assimilate the young man to the most divine paradigm of all being, and the most beautiful, in obedience to whose direction the universe issues from disorder into order"⁶⁴. Whereas the idea of assimilation to god and the talk of the most beautiful and divine paradigm is ultimately derived from the *locus classicus* in the *Theaetetus*⁶⁵, the change from 'disorder' to 'order'⁶⁶, both in a cosmological and in a moral sense, is clearly reminiscent of the context of the *Timaeus* and its interpretation in *De animae procreatione* and *De virtute morali* (cf. *supra*). If Dion succeeds, Plutarch adds, Dionysius would "procure great happiness for himself, and great happiness for his people"⁶⁷. Here Plutarch states more or less explicitly that Dionysius' virtue – had it been achieved – would have been a sufficient condition for his own happiness.

That this is in accordance with Plato's teaching and that Plutarch is aware of it, is confirmed by an earlier passage, in which Dionysius the Elder is reported to have mocked Plato, when he ordered Pollis to kill Plato, if possible, or else to sell him into slavery: "for he would not be harmed, but would be quite as happy, being a just man, even if he should become a slave"⁶⁸. There can be no doubt that Dionysius is sarcastically echoing Plato's own teachings.

Later in the story, Plato's opponents accuse the philosopher of trying to persuade the tyrant to dismantle his military force and waste his time in the Academy looking for a mysterious Good and trying to *become happy* by doing geometry⁶⁹. The tone of the passage is derisory, as it

⁶³ *Dion* 11.3. Compare *De ad. et am.* 52F. There is even a parallel in ps.-Plut. *De lib. ed.* 8B: Dion follows Plato's good example in combining philosophical study with participation in public life.

⁶⁴ *Dion* 10.2: πρὸς τὸ θεϊότατον ἀφομοιωθεὶς παράδειγμα τῶν ὄντων καὶ κάλλιστον, ᾧ τὸ πᾶν ἡγουμένῳ πειθόμενον ἐξ ἀκοσμίας κόσμος ἐστί.

⁶⁵ *Tht.* 176b2-3, e3-4; 177a1-33. Cf. n. 21.

⁶⁶ See also 10.2 (διακοσμηθεὶς τὸ ἦθος εἰς ἀρετὴν λόγῳ), 10.5, 53.4.

⁶⁷ *Dion* 10.3: πολλὴν μὲν εὐδαιμονίαν ἑαυτῷ μηχανήσεται, πολλὴν δὲ τοῖς πολίταις.

⁶⁸ *Dion* 5.6: βλαβήσασθαι γὰρ οὐδέν, ἀλλ' εὐδαιμονήσειν ὁμοίως δίκαιον ὄντα, κἂν δοῦλος γένηται.

⁶⁹ *Dion* 14.3: ἐν Ἀκαδημίᾳ τὸ σιωπώμενον ἀγαθὸν ζητεῖν καὶ διὰ γεωμετρίας εὐδαιμόνα γενέσθαι. The connection between happiness and geometry (cf. 13.4) may seem strange. It should not be forgotten that this is part of the mockery of the opponents, who want to ridicule Plato's philosophy. A Platonist, however, may see a connection: geometry is, after all, central to Platonic philosophy (cf. *Quaest. conv.* VIII, 2), and moreover, the determination of the right mean in ethics can be seen as a geometric operation (although it pertains more to harmony; cf. *De virt. mor.* 444DE).

presents the (understandably) hostile perception Plato's philosophy got from the friends of the tyranny (in narratological terms: the focalisation is that of the opponents). What is clear, however, is that Plato's Academy promised happiness as a reward for virtue. Virtue, in other words, is its own reward⁷⁰.

What a successful Platonic education means can be seen in Dion's own character. In accordance with the metaphors used in *De virtute morali*, Plutarch tells us how Plato *mixed* his disposition with respect to the right measure, or the *kairon*⁷¹, tried to *temper* it, that is, to make it less harsh, and render it *harmonious*⁷². As a result, in Dion's conduct there was "nothing that is rude, or tyrannical, or effeminate, but rather great moderation, virtue, and courage [manliness], and a becoming devotion to letters and philosophy"⁷³. The popular leader Heraclides at one point admits that he should not have opposed Dion and concedes moral superiority to his opponent: Dion is superior in every virtue, he acknowledges, and he should also show himself a better master of his anger (47.2). Against his own allies, who try to persuade him not to be merciful, Dion explains that in the Academy he has indeed learned to conquer anger, envy, and all contentiousness (47.4). This is, he says, why he is moderate and kind⁷⁴, even to his opponents. Real superiority lies not so much in power and cleverness, as in goodness and justice (47.5-6). Taking vengeance on Heraclides may in the eyes of the law be more just than doing wrong unprovoked; by nature, however, it springs from the same weakness (47.8, although Dion does not say expressly what this source is, it is clear for any Platonist that he means the irrational⁷⁵). This is clearly Dion's Academic credo. He adds an interesting remark about self-sufficiency: virtue is autarchic, contrary to successes in war. For military success does not depend on virtue alone, but just as much on luck (47.7).

⁷⁰ Cf. Plato *Tht.* 177a2-3: οὐ δὴ τίνουσι δίκην ζῶντες τὸν εἰκότα βίον ᾧ ὁμοιοῦνται.

⁷¹ Cf. *De virt. mor.* 441A, 444B; *De ad. et am.* 66B.

⁷² *Dion* 17.3: βουλομένου τοῦ Πλάτωνος ὁμιλίᾳ χάριν ἐχούση καὶ παιδιᾶς ἐμμελοῦς κατὰ καιρὸν ἀπτομένη κεραυνόμενον ἐφηδύνεσθαι τοῦ Δίωνος τὸ ἦθος.

⁷³ Οὐδὲν ἐν τῇ διαίτῃ σόλοικον ἐπιδεικνύμενος οὐδὲ τυραννικὸν οὐδὲ διατεθρυμμένον, ἀλλὰ σωφροσύνην καὶ ἀρετὴν καὶ ἀνδρίαν καὶ περὶ λόγους καὶ περὶ φιλοσοφίαν εὐσχήμονας διατριβᾶς. Also *Dion* 2.5. Throughout the *Life* Plutarch emphasises courage and manliness: 4.3, 5.1, 6.5, 9.8, 17.6, 21.8, 30.9, 52.2.

⁷⁴ Cf. *Dion* 13.3, 16.1, 52.1 (cf. 39.1). On *πραότης* and *φιλανθρωπία* in Plutarch, see Frazier (1996), 231-39; Duff (1999), 77.

⁷⁵ The constant awareness of the fact that there is an ineradicable irrationality in ourselves is the most important condition for becoming virtuous. This may be the main message of the *De virt. mor.* (cf. n. 25) and is often repeated in Plutarch's moralistic treatises. Cf., e.g., *De ad. et am.* 61D; *De gar.* 510CD; *De cur.* 515DE.

In accordance with the ethical ideal of *metriopatheia*⁷⁶, Dion's character is often said to be *tempered*, moderate, *metrios*⁷⁷. To remain moderate is especially important at times when fortune smiles at one. For this is when the virtuous person can distinguish himself even more. Dion knew particularly well how to make a discreet and decorous use of his good fortune, and showed himself modest in prosperity. This attitude was inspired by the Academy, says the author (52.1-4).

After Dion's victory over Dionysius everyone considered Dion to be blessed by fortune (52.2; cf. 51.2). Dionysius' fate, on the contrary, was considered to illustrate *par excellence* what a complete reversal of fortune could mean (50.4). Dion is of course fully aware of the fickleness of fortune, and of course fortune would bring his success to an untimely end⁷⁸. He also knows that fortune does not always favour those who deserve it⁷⁹. Adversity can be a test by which the truly virtuous can show their resilience⁸⁰.

Nonetheless Dion's virtue is not perfect. In several cases Plutarch points out that he is too harsh and inflexible towards others, both in his criticisms (where their harshness may at times have rendered them ineffectual⁸¹) and in cases where there was no particular need for severity⁸². Plato did manage to make Dion's character less harsh⁸³, but apparently even he could not redress it to full satisfaction. Nor could Plato's education prevent relapses.

⁷⁶ At *Dion* 32.1, Plutarch mentions Dion's *ἐπάθεια*. Although Duff (1999), 76 claims that in the *Lives* Plutarch is closer to the Stoics than in the *De virt. mor.*, I do not think this passage counts as an example. *Ἀπάθεια* here does not characterise Dion's attitude in general, but is limited to a particular case, where Dion remains undisturbed in difficult circumstances.

⁷⁷ *Dion* 52.3, 4. See also 18.7, 30.3. Cf. ps.-Plato, *Ep.* XIII, 362e8.

⁷⁸ *Dion* 2.2, 29.4. At 36.2, Plutarch censures a fellow historian, Timaeus, for gloating over the misfortunes of Philistus: misfortune befalls the best of men. At the same time, one should not, like Ephorus does, praise a villain. Here too, the golden mean is to be sought (36.4).

⁷⁹ When his allies were distressed by adversities, Dion expressed the *hope* that the gods would reward them for their bravery and virtue of the past (43.5).

⁸⁰ Cf. *Dion* 21, "a not so useless digression" on Theste. See also Swain (1989a), 275.

⁸¹ Cf. *De ad. et am.* 66AB. As the comparison with *De ad. et am.* 66D shows, Dion's mistake can be explained within the terms of the *De virt. mor.*: he fails to reach the right mean.

⁸² *Dion* 8.2-5, 32.5, 37.6, 52.5; and *De ad. et am.* 69F-70A. Plutarch refers to what he thinks are Plato's own words, warning Dion for this character trait of his. Cf. ps.-Plato *Ep.* IV, 321b. The Chaeronean attributes (8.2) Dion's *ὄγκος* and *αὐθάδεια* to his nature – another case of moral luck. Compare *Comp. Cor. et Alc.* 3.3.

⁸³ *Dion* 17.1.

Especially in the exercise of frank speech (*parrhēsia*) did Dion at times show himself to be too intransigent and harsh⁸⁴. On the whole, however, his *parrhēsia* is to be counted to his favour⁸⁵. It is not a secret that Plutarch sets great store by this technique⁸⁶, which he considers the duty of a true friend. More than in *De ad. et am.* the word *parrhēsia* carries its (original) political overtones, but just like in *De ad. et am.* Plutarch opposes it to flattery⁸⁷, which is pernicious to virtue. *Parrhēsia*, to the contrary, is essential to the acquisition of virtue⁸⁸. If one happens to have a friend who exerts it, one may count oneself, once more, lucky.

Dion was a very virtuous man, who suffered under the vicissitudes of fortune. It is one thing to have fortune affect the outcome of one's actions. It is quite a different matter when fortune makes us commit morally reprehensible actions. We have seen that Dion handled his bad fortune well, at least in general. He made a few mistakes, but not to the extent that his conduct would have to be described as morally bad. A more radical reversal under the influence of fortune would be that which amounts to the loss of the virtuous disposition itself. For a discussion of this possibility, however, we have to look in other biographies.

By now scholars have disposed with the myth that ancient historiographers, including Plutarch, did not consider the possibility that a character could change⁸⁹. This conviction used to be a scholarly *idée fixe*, which may seem very odd, because it is contradicted countless times by our sources. This conviction was probably strengthened by the observation that in general the ancients had no qualms about distinguishing different types of personalities and explaining certain forms of behaviour as issuing in an almost deterministic way from

⁸⁴ *Dion* 8.1, 32.5. Cf. *De ad. et am.* 69F-70A.

⁸⁵ Even if it brings him into disfavour with the ruler. Cf. *De ad. et am.* 53E.

⁸⁶ *Dion* uses it in the context of νουθέτησις (8.1). Compare *De ad. et am.* 50B (τὸ νουθετοῦν [...] καὶ παρρησιαζόμενον); see also 59C, 61B, 66E, 67B, 68E, 69B, 70E, 70F, 71E, 71F, 72C, 72E, 73A, 74D, 74E. Κηδεμονικὴ νουθέτησις is a technical term indicating the therapeutic context ('therapy of the soul') in which *parrhēsia* is exercised: Philod., *De lib. dic.* frg. 26,6-10 and Plut., *De ad. et am.* 50B, 55BC, 59D, 67B.

⁸⁷ *Dion* 6.4, 7.4, 8.3, 32.5.

⁸⁸ *Dion* 5.8, 6.4, 8.1, 8.3, 32.5. Cf. 21.9 (Theste), 22.2 (Speusippus), 34.1 (ἀνεῖσθαι τὴν παρρησίαν in a pejorative sense), 34.5 (idem: *parrhēsia* as mere licence; this use reflects the perspective of Sosis, a man of "baseness and impudence"), 54.4.

⁸⁹ Gill (1983); Frazier (1996), 89-93; Verdegem (2004), 25-27. Compare Brenk (1977), 177: "there are indications that Plutarch did not entirely accept the thesis that character was basically unchangeable".

such types⁹⁰. In general, they certainly believed human individuals had a certain innate and unchangeable nature. Moreover, Aristotle had expressed the idea that our *ēthos* is our second nature⁹¹. This metaphor was not intended to imply, however, that a character, once acquired, would be unalterable. That characters are not unchangeable is actually an assumption that is essential for Plutarch's moralism. If they were not, it would make no sense to try to improve other people's *ēthos*. A change does not have to be for the better, of course; it is often for the worse.

The case that worries Plutarch is that of a person who on the whole has led a decent and virtuous life deteriorates in later life⁹². An example is Sulla, for whom Plutarch considers two possibilities: either his personality ('his nature') changed under the influence of fortune (ὕπὸ τύχης), or, more probably (εἴτε μᾶλλον), he always had a bad nature which he managed to hide and suppress; as soon as it was safe, he revealed his true character or nature⁹³ (ὕποκειμένης ἀποκάλυψις ἐν ἐξουσίᾳ κακίας, *Sull.* 30.5)⁹⁴. The possibility of dissimulation and therefore the need to expose the true nature of a person were certainly major themes in ancient historiography⁹⁵.

Plutarch's most interesting remarks on this issue are to be found in the *Life of Sertorius*. Just like Dion, the latter had for most of his life proved to be moderate in good fortune (μέτριος εὐτυχίαν ἐνεγκεῖν, 10.2), and had shown restraint in his punishment of mistakes (10.4). Yet, at the end of his life he proved to be extremely harsh and vicious against his enemies, which seems (δοκεῖ) to show that his nature is not mild. This suggests that, until then, calculation had made him dissimulate his true nature, out of bare necessity (10.5). Plutarch, however, dissociates himself from this version by offering an alternative explanation which he expressly presents as his own view (ἐμοὶ δὲ...δοκεῖ): virtue that is pure (ἀρετὴν μὲν εἰλικρινῆ) and rationally constituted (καὶ κατὰ λόγον συνεστῶσαν) cannot by some (ill-)fortune be turned into its opposite (τύχη τις ἐκστῆσαι πρὸς τοῦναντίον, 10.6); yet, at the same time, it is

⁹⁰ This is not true either in Plutarch's case: Gill (1983), 474.

⁹¹ *EN* VII, 10, 1152a30-33 (citing Evenus).

⁹² Gill (1983), 478.

⁹³ It is not clear whether Plutarch really considers the possibility that one's innate nature can change; φύσις is sufficiently vague to stand for someone's personality type or character, without implying anything about the question whether this is innate or acquired. In this passage, and in the *Arat.* text cited below, the opposition is not between acquired and innate, but between appearance and underlying reality.

⁹⁴ See also *Arat.* 51.4 (on Philippos V): τὸ δ' οὐκ ἦν ἄρα μεταβολὴ φύσεως, ἀλλ' ἐπίδειξις ἐν ἀδείᾳ κακίας, πολὺν χρόνον διὰ φόβον ἀγνοηθείσης.

⁹⁵ Frazier (1996), 91.

possible for excellent natures and moral constitutions, when they are undeservedly hit by extreme bad fortune (προαιρέσεις καὶ φύσεις χρηστὰς ὑπὸ συμφορῶν μεγάλων παρ' ἄξιαν κακωθείσας), to change their characters together with their fortunes (τῷ δαίμονι⁹⁶ συµμεταβαλεῖν τὸ ἦθος, 10.6). This is, says Plutarch, what happened to Sertorius when his luck deserted him and fortune treated him undeservedly badly (10.7). Plutarch's solution entails that pure virtue is incorruptible by fortune, whereas noble but imperfect virtue is not⁹⁷. Sertorius' excellence of character turns out to have been not "fully and rationally integrated into his psyche"⁹⁸.

The Stoics notoriously held that virtue – i.e., wisdom – once it is acquired, can never be lost. Stoic sages are, however, extremely rare. Whereas Plutarch does not appear to accept the Stoic dichotomy between the virtuous and the fool, he does appear close to their view⁹⁹ when he suggests that a pure form of virtue *may be* unalterable (he expresses himself cautiously¹⁰⁰). Nevertheless he admits elsewhere (*Sol.* 7.1-2¹⁰¹) that a virtuous disposition may not be indestructible: no matter how virtuous a person is, it is possible that disease or drugs destroy his virtue. Plutarch appears to have been familiar with the research

⁹⁶ The 'daemon' that can be good or bad here stands for good or bad fortune. Cf. Swain (1989a), 273-74.

⁹⁷ The distinction is not one between ἦθος and nature (Brenk [1977], 178 points out that in *De virt. mor.* ἦθος is more superficial than nature; see already Arist., *EN* VII, 10, 1152a29-30), but between perfect virtue, on the one hand, and very good, but not pure virtue, on the other. See Verdegem (2004), 26-27 n. 10, and Brenk (1977), 179: "Between crass vice and the pure philosophical virtue there exists a middle ground of noble, but not pure virtue." I am not sure I agree with the conclusion Brenk draws from this: "It is in fact saying that the old philosophical definitions about *aretê* and *tyché* are of no practical value in political biography." The reason for my disagreement is that, in my view, Plutarch was never committed, on a theoretical level, to the view that a person's character is basically unchangeable (cf. *supra*). This would be the core of my reply to Brenk's contention (cf. n. 27) that there is a dichotomy between the *Moralia* and the *Lives*. See also Gill (1983), 470.

⁹⁸ Gill (1983), 481.

⁹⁹ Plutarch has not, however, moved over to the Stoic position on the nature of virtue and passions, for he does not say that virtue is right reason, but talks instead of a pure virtue that is constituted *according to* reason.

¹⁰⁰ *Sert.* 10.6: ἐμοὶ δὲ . . . οὐκ ἄν ποτε δοκεῖ . . . ἐκστῆσαι. It is not impossible that Plutarch did not want to make any definitive pronouncements on this issue, in true 'Academic' vein. The New-Academic Carneades is reported to have defended the view that virtue is adequate security for a happy life (Cic., *Tusc.* 5.83: *virtus satis habeat ad vitam beatam praesidii*), yet to have done so for dialectical reasons (so that he could always claim that this was never his own position). Moreover, he did not say virtue was an absolute guarantee for happiness.

¹⁰¹ See also *De am. prol.* 497CD.

done by Theophrastus into this matter (*Per.* 38.2)¹⁰². Though on the surface the *Solon* passage seems to contradict that of the *Sertorius*, there is no real inconsistency. In the latter dialogue he is considering the possibility that adversities make one lose one's previous virtue. In the *Solon* the issue is different: drugs and disease are external influences that fall under the broad denominator of *tychē*, but are not the kind of bad luck referred to in the *Sertorius*, where the question is whether ill-fortune will make the virtuous person reconsider his convictions and choices, and correspondingly alter his behaviour, which will eventually lead to a change in disposition. The *Solon* passage can even be read as a corroboration of the *Sertorius* passage, for it provides the exception that confirms the rule. It would be absurd and dishonourable, says Plutarch, not to want to acquire some good – wealth, reputation, or wisdom – for fear of losing it. For indeed, *even* virtue, which is the greatest and most enjoyable possession, can be dispelled by drugs or disease. This at least suggests that nothing else could destroy virtue¹⁰³ (when it is perfect).

A different light is thrown on the issue by the *Life of Cimon*, where Plutarch emphasises the Platonic idea¹⁰⁴ that in human life nothing is pure and untainted (*Cim.* 2.3-5). One could apply this passage to the idea in the *Sertorius* and formally gain full consistency between the *Sertorius*, *Solon*, and *Cimon* passages: no perfect virtue can ever be lost; but perfect virtue is not humanly possible, so there is no theoretical problem when humans lose what virtue they have. I think, however, that it is quite unlikely that this is what Plutarch had in mind when he wrote the *Sertorius*. It would almost be a case of *restrictio mentalis*, in that the crucial premise would be kept from us on purpose. He would be promising us that virtue can never be lost again if only it is sufficiently pure, without telling us that this condition could never be fulfilled.

Although the fit between theory and practice may not always be perfect, there seems to be no great divide between the *Moralia* and the *Lives*. The latter offer applied ethical theory, but so do many works that are

¹⁰² Compare Arist., *EN* VII, 6, 1149b35-1150a1.

¹⁰³ An explicit explanation for why one may think this is the only thing that could destroy virtue is not given. On the most plausible reading of the passage, however, the phrase “which is the greatest and most enjoyable possession” should be taken as meant to explain why Plutarch says that “*even* virtue can be lost” (*Sol.* 7.2: *καὶ γὰρ ἀρετὴν, ἥς κτήμα μείζον οὐδὲν οὐδ’ ἦδιον, ἐξισταμένην ὑπὸ νόσων καὶ φαρμάκων δρώμεν*): if virtue is indeed so good to have, no one would give it up willingly. So only physiological causes, over which one has no control at all, could make one lose this desirable thing.

¹⁰⁴ *De an. procr.* 1026C.

part of the *Moralia*. *De virtute morali* is Plutarch's most theoretical work on moral virtue, but even there the aims of the work are practical in part¹⁰⁵. The *Lives* offer case studies that show, in greater detail than in *De virtute morali*, what becomes of virtue in various circumstances. How do people who, to various degrees and in various ways, are virtuous or vicious behave in adversity or prosperity?

The relations between fortune and virtue are complex and variegated. Fortune can render someone's virtue ineffectual, but may also reward it. When it merely affects the outcome of one's actions, we may call it incidental. Plutarch knows that more is needed than philosophical insight into the nature of virtue – not just luck, but also other types of knowledge and abilities. The prudence that takes into account situational contingencies is explicitly mentioned in *De virtute morali*. Only case studies can teach us what this means in practice. Thus they supplement theoretical insights, without therefore contradicting them. The *synkriseis* bring out the role of external conditions even more than separate *Lives*: the different circumstances under which, for example, Dion and Brutus lived gave them different opportunities to show their virtues, or their shortcomings, and made their deeds – and the courage they displayed – more valuable and significant, or less so¹⁰⁶. These circumstances codetermine the moral appreciation of their lives (which is already a form of true moral luck). Still, Dion is partly to blame for his problems. Plato himself censures Dion for choosing such friends as would prove to be his ruin¹⁰⁷. Dion is too naive, too trusty, one might say¹⁰⁸. In terms of Plutarch's Platonist moral psychology, one could even add that, whereas Dion was enough of a self-consciously ethical person to be aware of, and in control of, the irrational within himself, he forgot about the unruly element in others, and in society – i.e., the *dēmos*.

Virtue may not be a sufficient condition for success¹⁰⁹, yet Plutarch tends towards the Socratic, and Stoic, position that it is sufficient for

¹⁰⁵ Cf. n. 25.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. *Comp. Dion. et Brut.* 2.

¹⁰⁷ *Comp. Dion. et Brut.* 4.8.

¹⁰⁸ Plutarch makes an interesting remark in *De vit. pud.* 530C (οὕτω παραπώλετο Δίων, οὐκ ἀγνοήσας ἐπιβουλευόντα Κάλλιππον ἀλλ' αἰσχυνθεὶς φυλάττεσθαι φίλον ὄντα καὶ ξένον), which confirms, but is more explicit than, *Dion* 56.3 or *Reg. et imp. apophth.* 176F-177A.

¹⁰⁹ I have deliberately refrained from examining the reasons for failure or success, insofar as they are not attributable to chance. The case of people who are successful despite lacking virtue did not concern us either, although Plutarch treats it as an important aspect of the problematic relationship between virtue and fortune. The clearest examples are Sulla and Lysander. See Duff (1999), 161-204.

happiness¹¹⁰. He does not accept, however, that the virtuous person does not need to worry about contingencies. True contingency exists and is morally relevant, for this is where practical virtues *and* prudence operate. Plutarch thus adopts a middle position between Aristotelians and Stoics.

A special case is constitutive luck. Plutarch is at least aware of the possibility – at least as far as the circumstances of one’s upbringing and environment, as well as later life are concerned – but does not develop its theoretical implications. Chance or luck may not always be constructive; quite often it is destructive. Plutarch is highly aware of the problem. For most of us, adversity can become a real danger indeed, since our virtuous dispositions are often precarious to some degree. Only those happy few whose virtue is fully rational and complete may be immune to this danger.

In the *Life* that I have examined in more detail, that of Dion, Plutarch’s moral appreciation of the main character is in full accordance with the Platonism of his more theoretical philosophical works – but that should come as no surprise¹¹¹.

¹¹⁰ See also *Dem.* 1 and n. 60. In purely ethical terms it should be said that, for Plutarch as for Plato, virtue is its own reward. To this he adds theological considerations that contain the promise of eschatological rewards for virtue (in *De sera num.*, for instance).

¹¹¹ I thank the participants in the conference for their useful suggestions.

Plutarch Against Epicurus on Affection for Offspring A Reading of *De amore prolis*

G. ROSKAM

1. Introduction: Plutarch's De amore prolis, a problematic text

Anyone who is looking for beautiful testimonia of parental love for children in ancient literature will soon find Plutarch's *Consolatio ad uxorem*. Confronted with the death of his little daughter Timoxena, Plutarch decided to write a letter of consolation to his wife. Near the beginning of this moving letter, he recalls the great joy at the birth of the child and refers to the pure delight that his affection (φιλοστοργῶ) brought him (608C; cf. also 610E). Some pages further down, he also calls to mind the death of his eldest child and of his son Charon. In these painful circumstances too, his wife has given evidence of remarkable self-restraint, despite the fact that she had nursed the little Charon at her own breast and had endured surgery when her nipple was bruised, a conduct that was honourable and that – once again – shows motherly love (φιλόστοργα) (609E). From the whole picture it is clearly evident how much Plutarch and his wife loved their children, and although few people would question the sincerity of Plutarch's parental love, his self-disclosure in the *Consolatio ad uxorem* should also be regarded in the light of his moral pedagogical project¹. Backing his ethical theories with his own actions², he offers himself to the reader as an example of right moral behaviour³, showing how one should love one's children while always observing the standards of moderation (cf. 609A).

¹ The formality of the letter also shows “that this is not only a private comfort but a public demonstration of a father's affection (φιλοστοργία) and a wife's piety and self-control. They are a model family” (Russell (1993), 429).

² On the importance of consistency between words and deeds, see, e.g., *De prof. in virt.* 76AB, 79F-80A, 84B-85B; *De Stoic. rep.* 1033AB; Roskam (2005), 320-35.

³ Cf. *De se ipsum laud.* 547F: ἀφεξόμεθα τοῦ λέγειν περὶ αὐτῶν, ἂν μὴ τι μεγάλη μέλλωμεν ὠφελεῖν ἑαυτοὺς ἢ τοὺς ἀκούοντας.

For Plutarch's theoretical reflections on love for one's children, one should turn in the first place to his short work *Περὶ τῆς εἰς τὰ ἔγγονα φιλοστοργίας* (*De amore prolis*). Unfortunately, however, this work poses a great number of difficult problems. In fact, there is hardly any conclusion about it that has not been questioned by other scholars.

First of all, the work gives a careless, unpolished impression, containing some instances of hiatus, rather sudden transitions, and abrupt mental jumps. As a result, its authenticity was occasionally called into question⁴, though with little success⁵. Usually scholars try to explain the work's shortcomings by arguing that it remained unfinished and that it was probably published after Plutarch's death⁶ (it may be noted that *De amore prolis* is mentioned in neither the Lamprias catalogue nor in Photius, *Bibl. codex* 161, 104a23-36).

Secondly, it is not clear to which literary genre the work belongs. Some scholars seem to think that *De amore prolis* is part of a greater, more or less systematic treatise, of which it would be a fragment or epitome⁷. Others call it a diatribe⁸. Nowadays, it is usually regarded as a *declamatio*⁹, in line with its markedly rhetorical character, although calling it a *thesis* (or discussion of a *quaestio infinita*) would perhaps be more appropriate.

Thirdly, there is the problem of the date of the work. Unfortunately, the work contains no direct and explicit indication for either an absolute or a relative chronology¹⁰. Usually, its rhetorical character¹¹ and aspects of its content¹² are regarded as indications that *De amore prolis* is a work of Plutarch's youth, but no argument is really conclusive.

⁴ Weissenberger (1895), 66-68 regards the work as inauthentic. According to Doehner (1862), 26ff., the work as it has come down to us is a later compilation, containing both material taken from a greater treatise of Plutarch's with the same title, and material taken from other sources.

⁵ The authenticity has been defended by Patzig (1876), 3-21; Dyroff (1897a), 38; Hein (1914), 159-60; Ziegler (1951), 744, and in all recent literature.

⁶ See Helmbold (1939), 328-29; Ziegler (1951), 744; Babut (1969a), 74; Pohlenz (1972), 255; Dumortier – Defradas (1975), 182; Postiglione (1991), 141; Becchi (2000), 206 n. 6.

⁷ Volkmann (1869), I, 186-87; cf. Weissenberger (1895), 66 and 68; Korus (1977), 220.

⁸ Hartman (1916), 244.

⁹ Ziegler (1951), 743; Pohlenz (1972), 255; Postiglione (1991), 141; Barigazzi (1994b), 171; Caballero Sánchez (1999a), 107 n. 6; Id. (1999b), 550.

¹⁰ Accordingly, it remains absent from the list of Jones (1966), 70-73.

¹¹ Cf., e.g., Ziegler (1951), 744; Barigazzi (1994b), 171.

¹² Cf. Babut (1969a), 78; Postiglione (1991), 142.

Furthermore, one should note that the study of its prose rhythm does not confirm an early date¹³.

Fourthly, it is far from clear which sources Plutarch used in writing *De amore prolis*. More than once, it has been argued that Plutarch made use of a Stoic source¹⁴, but this view has also been refuted¹⁵ and parallels have been established between Plutarch's position in *De amore prolis* and Peripatetic doctrine¹⁶.

Fifthly, Plutarch's argumentation in *De amore prolis* also raises several problems. Indeed, there can be found embarrassing inconsistencies between different passages in the work, and between Plutarch's position in *De amore prolis* and his views in other works (esp. *De sollertia animalium* and *Bruta animalia ratione uti*). This immediately leads to another question: what is the place of *De amore prolis* within the whole *Corpus Plutarcheum*? Usually, and in spite of the inconsistencies, the work is regarded as typical of Plutarch¹⁷. Often, it is connected with Plutarch's writings on animal psychology¹⁸. Others prefer rather to read it in the context of his family ethics and link it with writings such as *De fraterno amore* and *Coniugalia praecepta*¹⁹. Again, others place it in the group of polemical, anti-Epicurean writings²⁰. Striking in this respect is ZIEGLER's hesitation: in the table of contents of his basic article (col. 636), *De amore prolis* ranks among the 'tierpsychologischen Schriften'²¹. Some pages further down, however, the same work

¹³ See Sandbach (1939), 196-97, who argues that preference for the clausula – υ – – ~, and avoidance of – – ~ ~ is a feature of an early period in Plutarch's style. On the basis of this criterion, however, *De amore prolis* cannot be regarded as a work of Plutarch's youth.

¹⁴ See Dyroff (1897a), 38, with n. 4. See also Caballero Sánchez (1999b), according to whom Plutarch was inspired by the Stoic teleological conception of nature and by the social part of the Stoic theory of οἰκείωσις. According to Mayer (1910), 563, Plutarch's argumentation should at least partly be traced back to Ariston of Chios.

¹⁵ Babut (1969a), 76: "Ainsi, puisque les rencontres avec le stoïcisme apparaissent comme partielles et peu significatives, et puisqu'elles n'excluent pas d'importantes divergences, il faut écarter résolument l'idée d'un modèle stoïcien" (cf. also p. 78).

¹⁶ Barigazzi (1994b), 159 and *passim*.

¹⁷ See, e.g., Volkmann (1869), I, 187: "Ihrem Inhalte nach passt die Abhandlung vortrefflich zu Plutarchs sonstigen Ansichten"; Ziegler (1951), 744: "In den Gedanken wie in Sprache und Stil ist die Schrift echt plutarchisch"; Babut (1969a), 76: "D'autre part, on ne peut dire que le thème général ait rien de spécifiquement stoïcien; il s'accorde au contraire très bien avec les idées qui se font jour ailleurs chez Plutarque".

¹⁸ See, e.g., Babut (1969a), 74; Becchi (2000), 205.

¹⁹ Volkmann (1869), II, 165ff.; Teixeira (1982).

²⁰ Hartman (1916), 244; Barigazzi (1994b), 141-42.

²¹ Although Ziegler later on (col. 743) remains cautious: "anhangsweise, da inhaltlich nur zu einem Teil hergehörig, sei behandelt...".

is included in his list of ‘popularphilosophisch-ethische Schriften’ (col. 703). Of course, the determination of the principal theme of the work is important for its classification, but even on this question opinions greatly differ: a discussion of the Stoic theory of *οικείωσις*²², an anti-Epicurean polemic²³, a discussion of *φιλοστοργία εἰς τὰ ἔγγωνα* in general²⁴, or a condemnation of the wickedness of Plutarch’s contemporaries²⁵.

Even from this brief survey it has become clear that *De amore prolis* is not Plutarch’s easiest work and that more than one point remains open to discussion. In this article I propose to do two things. First, I will take a quick glance at the previous tradition concerning *φιλοστοργία* in general and *φιλοστοργία* towards children in particular. For, no doubt, Plutarch continuously kept this tradition at the back of his mind while writing *De amore prolis*. Accordingly, an insight into this tradition proves to be indispensable for a correct understanding of the content and scope of the work. Secondly, Plutarch’s argumentation in *De amore prolis* will be examined. The different arguments which he presents will be analysed and evaluated against the background of the previous tradition and in light of parallel passages in Plutarch’s own works and in those of other authors. This detailed analysis will contribute to a better understanding of the place and purpose of *De amore prolis* and of Plutarch’s approach and method in this text.

2. The previous tradition

2.1. The concept of *φιλοστοργία*

First of all, *φιλοστοργία* was in antiquity apparently regarded as a typically Greek concept. There seems to have been no real Latin equivalent available. Cicero, in any case, who so often tries to find a correct Latin translation for a Greek philosophical term²⁶, merely leaves the word

²² Caballero Sánchez (1999b), 550: “el tema central de esta obrita reelabora y recrea con acentos personales las ideas estoicas corrientes sobre la relación entre el amor paternal y la justicia”; see, however, also 551 on the ‘propósito central’ of the work.

²³ Barigazzi (1994b), 169; cf. Ziegler (1951), 743.

²⁴ Postiglione (1991), 140.

²⁵ Santese (1999), 50: “*De amore prolis*, opuscolo il cui obbiettivo primario è quello di denunciare l’immoralità dei costumi dei contemporanei” (cf. also 59); Teixeira (1982), 29-30 and 41.

²⁶ See, however, *fin.* 3,15: *et tamen puto concedi nobis oportere ut Graeco verbo utamur, si quando minus occurreret Latinum.*

φιλοστοργία untranslated without comment in his *Letters* to his friend Atticus²⁷. Fronto went even further:

φιλοστοργία vero nescio an Romana: quippe qui nihil minus in tota mea vita Romae repperi quam hominem sincere φιλόστοργον; ut putem, quia reapse nemo sit Romae φιλόστοργος, ne nomen quidem huic virtuti esse Romanum. (p. 111,17-20 v. d. H.²⁸)

A warmth of affection, however, possibly not Roman: for there is nothing of which my whole life through I have seen less at Rome than a man unfeignedly φιλόστοργος. The reason why there is not even a word for this virtue in our language must, I imagine, be, that in reality no one at Rome has any warm affection. (trans. HAINES)

Of course, it is hard to believe that Fronto's negative evaluation of his contemporaries is entirely justified and that no Roman would have been able to give evidence of an attitude that could correctly be termed φιλοστοργία. It rather appears to be a rationalization of the difficulties the Romans had in introducing the Greek notion with its specific connotations into their own language.

The earliest occurrences of the term φιλοστοργία are connected with the names of Hecataeus of Miletus and the Attic orator Antiphon. Both cases, however, cause their own problems. The word is used twice in a longer passage from Diodorus of Sicily that can be traced back to Hecataeus (*FGrHist* 3a 264 F 25). The author respectively deals with the φιλοστοργία of different governors for the courtesan Rhodopis (I, 64.14) and with affection for kinsmen (συγγενικὴν φιλοστοργίαν, I, 71.4). It is far from certain, however, that Hecataeus coined or even used the term. In all likelihood, the formulation of the ideas stems from Diodorus, who in any case frequently uses the term elsewhere too²⁹.

Much more interesting is the passage concerning Antiphon. According to a later source, Antiphon would have used (or discussed?) the terms ἀστοργία, φιλοστοργία, and στοργή in his ῥητορικαὶ τέχναι³⁰. Now, in Antiphon's days, Attic prose was still in its infancy and the

²⁷ *Att.* 13,9,1 *nihil possum dicere* ἐκτενέστερον, *nihil φιλοστοργότερον*; 15,17,2: *ipsius litterae sic et φιλοστόργως et <εὐ>πινῶς scriptae*.

²⁸ Cf. also p. 173,15-16 v. d. H.: *philostorgum* [...], *quoniam eius rei nomen apud Romanos nullum est*; Marcus Aurelius, I, 11.

²⁹ III, 58.3 and 59.1; IV, 38.1, 44.1 (τὴν φυσικὴν τῶν γονέων εἰς τέκνα φιλοστοργίαν), 61.5; XIX, 33.1; XXXI, 19.3; XXXIV/XXXV, 4.2 (= Posidonius, fr. 139 Th.); XXXIV/XXXV, 11 (= Posidonius, fr. 144 Th.); and XXXI, 2a (= Posidonius, fr. 192b Th.).

³⁰ Anonymus Antatticista, in *Lexica Segueriana*, p. 78,6-7 Bekker (= Antiphon, fr. 73 Blass – Thalheim).

field still remained wide open to anyone interested in exploring the possibilities of literary language. Other testimonia show that Antiphon's *Art of Rhetoric* was (partly?) about word formation³¹ and about the precise meanings of words³². If one combines these data and tries to complete the picture, it might be tempting to trace back the coinage of the term φιλοστοργία to Antiphon. Things are rarely easy in the domain of classical philology, however. Here, too, conclusions are considerably complicated by difficulties concerning the identity of the author and the authenticity of the work. Indeed, it is not clear whether the ῥητορικὰ τέχναι should be attributed to Antiphon of Rhamnus (the orator) or rather to Antiphon the Sophist (who appears in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* I, 6.1-6.15) – unless these two Antiphons were in fact one and the same person. Furthermore, already in antiquity, some regarded the work as spurious³³. As a result of these difficulties, complete certainty about the origin of the word φιλοστοργία cannot be reached, and regarding Antiphon as the ὀνοματοθέτης of the term remains, in the end, an attractive but at best only plausible theory.

It is only with Xenophon and Plato that we are finally on solid ground. The former regards φιλοστοργία as a quality of Cyrus³⁴ and of Agesilaus (*Ages.* 8.1). The latter uses the term only once, in his last work, the *Laws*. There, he expects that the guardians will exhibit fear of the gods, of the souls of the dead, and of those among the living who are old and highly honoured, “since when the state has good laws and is prosperous, their children's children live with pleasure while showing affection to the old” (XI, 927b: ὅτι οὐπὲρ πόλις εὐνομοῦσα εὐδαιμονεῖ, τούτους οἱ παῖδες παίδων φιλοστοργοῦντες ζῶσι μεθ' ἡδονῆς). Both authors use the term without further explanation, which shows that it had become sufficiently current.

In the *Corpus Aristotelicum*, the term φιλοστοργία is always used with regard to animals: horses (*HA* 611a11-12), the *glanis* (a river fish; *HA* 621a29-30), or the lion (*Phgn.* 809b35-36). Theophrastus uses the term in a metaphorical sense, as denoting the love for Mother Earth (*ap. Porph., Abst.* II, 32.1 = Theophrastus, *De pietate* fr. 19 Pötscher or L91 Fortenbaugh). Clearchus refers to the natural φιλοστοργία of jackdaws (*ap. Athen.* IX, 393AB = fr. 3 Wehrli), but also connects the word with conjugal love (*ap. Athen.* XIII, 555CD = fr. 73 Wehrli).

³¹ See fr. 76 B.-Th.: Ἀντιφῶν [...] ὅς γε ὅπως αὐτὰ ποιητέον ἐκδιδάσκει.

³² See fr. 72 B.-Th. on the difference between the terms σημεῖον and τεκμήριον.

³³ See Pollux, VI, 143 (= fr. 74 B.-Th.): δοκοῦσι δ' οὐ γνήσιαι. The authenticity of the work is rejected by Pedrick (2002), 252-53, but defended by Gagarin (2002), 101-102.

³⁴ *Cyr.* I, 3.2 (φύσει φιλόστοργος ὤν), and I, 4.3 (φιλοστοργία).

A formal definition of φιλοστοργία can finally be found in Stoic philosophy. The Stoics define φιλοστοργία as “a certain skill with regard to loving friends or relatives”³⁵. This general and even somewhat vague (cf. the indefinite τις) definition connects this virtue with a rather broad domain. At the same time, however, it is only to be found in the good (to whom it is natural), not in the bad (D.L. VII, 120 = *SVF* III, 731), and thus proves to be extremely rare, given the universal wickedness of man.

In later Stoicism, the term φιλοστοργία remains current. Antipater, for instance, distinguishes the φιλίαι and φιλοστοργίαι of husband and wife (which resemble a κράσις δι’ ὄλων) from other ones (which can rather be compared with the mixing of pulses and such things that are only mingled by juxtaposition: κατὰ τὰς παραθέσεις)³⁶. Here, too, the term φιλοστοργία has a rather general meaning. Elsewhere, however, Antipater uses the term to denote more specifically the love of parents for their children. He warns that one should avoid marrying a girl whose parents have looked away from what is useful because of an excessive love for their children (διὰ τὴν ἄγαν φιλοστοργίαν; Stobaeus, IV, 22d.103, p. 539.20-21 H. = *SVF* III, Ant. 62). This interesting passage illustrates that Antipater only regards parental φιλοστοργία as a virtue *sub condicione*: it should be in line with the rational demands of what is useful.

A similar restriction can be found in Epictetus, who deals with the concept more than once³⁷. The virtue of φιλοστοργία is explicitly discussed during an encounter with a certain official who tells Epictetus that he has run away from the sick bed of his little daughter, and claims that this reaction is natural (I, 11.1-5). Epictetus, of course, disagrees³⁸. After underlining the great importance of knowing the criterion of what is good and bad, or what is in agreement with

³⁵ Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* II, 9, 41.6 (= *SVF* III, 292): φιλοτεχνία τις οὔσα περὶ στέρξιν φίλων ἢ οἰκείων.

³⁶ Stobaeus, IV, 22a.25 (p. 508.11-14 H.) = *SVF* III, Ant. 63. For the Stoic distinction between κράσις and παράθεσις, see Stobaeus, I, 17.4 (= *SVF* II, 471). For the view of marriage as a κράσις δι’ ὄλων, cf. also Plutarch, *Con. praec.* 142F-143A, and *Amatorius* 769F.

³⁷ Hence, it is not surprising that Marcus Aurelius, too, regards φιλοστοργία as a component of ideal behaviour; see II, 5; VI, 30.1; XI, 18.9. He found the virtue in Sextus of Chaeronea (the nephew of Plutarch; I, 9.3) and in his wife (I, 17.7). For Epictetus’ great influence on Marcus Aurelius, see, e.g., Grimal (1991), 311; Hadot (1992), 23.

³⁸ According to Wirth (1967), 163-75, the entirety of *Discourse* I, 11 is the work of Arrian; cf. also, somewhat more nuanced, Wehner (2000), 38-40. According to the *communis opinio*, however, Arrian, even if he does not offer Epictetus’ own words, in

nature and what is not (I, 11.9-15), Epictetus begins putting forward some general theses: τὸ φιλόστοργον turns out to be natural and good (I, 11.17) and compatible with what is reasonable (τὸ εὐλόγιστον; I, 11.17-19). Now, abandoning one's sick daughter is obviously neither reasonable (I, 11.20) nor does it show φιλοστοργία, for otherwise, the mother, the nurse, and the pedagogue, who all love the child, should likewise have run away, so that the poor child should have been left alone (I, 11.21-26). If the father indeed left his child, he did so not out of φιλοστοργία but because of his own δόγματα (I, 11.27-33). Epictetus thus finally arrives at a conclusion that very often returns in his works: a man who acts wrongly should not blame external things but only his own judgements (I, 11.34-40)³⁹.

The whole discussion with the official makes it perfectly clear that φιλοστοργία is a virtue and a function of the father⁴⁰. Epictetus, however, just like Antipater, does not regard φιλοστοργία as a virtue without qualification. Indeed, he explicitly underlines that it should never damage our own inner freedom. The distinction between what is in our power (ἐφ' ἡμῖν) and what is not (οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν) is a leitmotiv that returns on every page of the *Discourses*. Now, our wives and children should in principle also be ranged among what is not in our power. What, then, can still be the place of φιλοστοργία in such a perspective? How should a man become φιλόστοργος? Epictetus' answer, as usual, is straightforward: as a noble man, as a fortunate one⁴¹. Again, φιλοστοργία should be in perfect harmony with the demands of reason (cf. also II, 17.37-38). For instance, a man should always, while loving his children, be prepared that they can die⁴². When a man would become a slave through his φιλοστοργία, however, it is not useful at all to be φιλόστοργος⁴³. That, however, a harmonious combination of

general remains fairly close to his master's teaching; see, e.g., Stadter (1980), 26-28; Hershbell (1989), 2152-53; Long (2002), 39-41.

³⁹ Cf., e.g., I, 17.25-26 and 25.28; II, 16.24 and 40; III, 3.18-19; IV, 5.28; *Encheiridion* 5; 16; and 20; Long (2002), 27-28.

⁴⁰ Cf. also III, 18.5: ἔστι τι τοῦ πατρός σου ἔργον, ὃ ἂν μὴ ἐκπληρώσῃ, ἀπώλεσεν τὸν πατέρα, τὸν φιλόστοργον, τὸν ἡμερον.

⁴¹ III, 24.58: πῶς οὖν γένωμαι φιλόστοργος; – ὡς γενναῖος, ὡς εὐτυχής.

⁴² III, 24.85-88 and 105; cf. the famous *dictum* of Anaxagoras quoted in Plutarch, *De coh. ira* 463D and *De tranq. an.* 474D (both passages are probably based on one of Plutarch's ὑπομνήματα; see Van der Stockt – Van Meirvenne, forthcoming); many other parallels in Sternbach (1963), 54.

⁴³ III, 24.59: εἰ δὲ διὰ τὴν φιλοστοργίαν ταύτην, ἤντινά ποτε καὶ καλεῖς φιλοστοργίαν [Antipater would presumably call it ἄγαν φιλοστοργίαν], δοῦλος μέλλεις εἶναι καὶ ἄθλιος, οὐ λυσιτελεῖ φιλόστοργον εἶναι; cf. also III, 24.83.

φιλοστοργία and reason is indeed possible has been demonstrated by Socrates, who loved his children, but in a free way⁴⁴.

Epictetus thus succeeds in giving the concept of φιλοστοργία a meaningful place within the framework of his Stoic philosophy. The Stoics, however, were not the only philosophers who made use of the term. The Middle Platonists also knew the concept and introduced it into their own perspective.

In the works of Philo of Alexandria, the term φιλοστοργία nearly always denotes parental love for children⁴⁵. This φιλοστοργία is regarded as a natural quality (*Mos.* I, 150; *Virt.* 128; cf. *Virt.* 192) that should be reconciled with the demands of reason. Accordingly, Moses acted wisely when he did not make his own sons his successors but put rational criteria before his natural parental love (*Mos.* I, 150), and fathers who are φιλοστοργότατοι are right in disinheriting wicked sons (*Virt.* 192). Abraham, too, set an excellent example: his strong love for his only son Isaac was not only based on a natural feeling but also on his own critical judgement of his son's character (*Abr.* 168). And even then, his great parental love did not prevent him from sacrificing his son at God's request (*Abr.* 198).

Even so, φιλοστοργία that is not in line with rational standards can lead to negative consequences for both children and parents. Indeed, excessive love for children (ὑπερβάλλουσα φιλοστοργία or τὸ λίαν φιλόστοργον) can result in too great an indulgence and thus in a corruption of the child's character (*Spec.* II, 240; cf. the position of Antipater discussed above). Furthermore, excessive φιλοστοργία (τὸ λίαν πρὸς τοὺς ἐγγυτάτω γένους, as opposed to what is useful) can urge good parents to die instead of their guilty children (or virtuous children instead of their wicked parents), an unreasonable decision that should be regarded as blameworthy and unjustified (*Spec.* III, 153-157). For Philo, as for Antipater and Epictetus, φιλοστοργία is only a quality when it is in agreement with the demands of reason.

In Plutarch's works (leaving aside, for the time being, *De amore proliis*), the term φιλοστοργία covers the traditional broad domain. It often refers to conjugal love⁴⁶, but also to affection in other family

⁴⁴ III, 24.60; on Socrates as Epictetus' great model, see, e.g., Schweingruber (1943); Döring (1974); Hershbell (1989), 2153-55; Long (2000); Id. (2002), 67-96 and *passim*.

⁴⁵ *Abr.* 168 and 198; *Mos.* I, 150 (τὴν φυσικὴν πρὸς τὰ τέκνα φιλοστοργίαν); *Spec.* II, 240; *Virt.* 91, 128 (τινα φυσικὴν μητέρων πρὸς ἔγγονα φιλοστοργίαν), and 192; *Praem.* 158. In *Spec.* III, 154 and 157, the term denotes love of parents for children and *vice versa*; in *Legat.* 36, it points to love of a cousin.

⁴⁶ *Agis* 17.2; *Cleom.* 1.2; *Dion* 51.3; *Brut.* 13.3; *Cons. ad Apoll.* 106B; *Con. praec.* 140D and 144F; cf. *De ad. et am.* 56C (φιλόστοργον as the flatterer's alternative for ἐρωτικόν).

relations (*De frat. am.* 489C), such as the love of parents for their children⁴⁷, that of children for their parents (*De frat. am.* 483C), or that of a sister for her brother (*Fab.* 21.1; cf. also *Ca. Mi.* 11.1-3 on Cato's φιλοστοργία for his brother), and it concerns not only human beings but also animals (*De soll. an.* 970E, 971C, 972F, and 982A). It is clear, then, that the concept of φιλοστοργία has a wider spectrum of connotations in the *œuvre* of Plutarch than in that of Philo⁴⁸.

With regard to their philosophical evaluation of the concept, however, Plutarch and Philo basically agree. Indeed, Plutarch, too, underlines that φιλοστοργία is a natural quality (*Sol.* 7.2 and *Per.* 1.1), adding that this natural quality should be guided by reason⁴⁹. And, just like Philo and Epictetus, he was convinced that it is at the death of one's child that it becomes especially evident whether or not one's φιλοστοργία is in harmony with rational standards. He commends Demosthenes for wearing a garland even though his daughter had died only six days before, because the Athenian statesman showed by this conduct that he deemed the public interest more important than his private misfortune (*Dem.* 22.2 and 4). And he praises his own wife, Timoxena, for her moderation at the burial of their daughter, being convinced that continence and φιλοστοργία can be perfectly reconciled at such occasions (*Cons. ad ux.* 609A; cf. *Sol.* 7.2-4). Once again, the final standard proves to be not φιλοστοργία, but reason.

2.2. The debate over love for one's children

The foregoing brief outline shows that Plutarch's position towards φιλοστοργία is rooted in a previous and contemporary philosophical tradition, where the fairly general concept of φιλοστοργία (of which parental love for children is but one species) was usually regarded as

⁴⁷ *Mul. virt.* 258D; *Cons. ad ux.* 608C and 609E; *Quaest. conv.* II, 1, 634E; *De soll. an.* 962A; cf. *Per.* 1.1; *Dem.* 22.2 and *Cons. ad ux.* 609A.

⁴⁸ Plutarch's use of the term can be compared, however, with that of Clement of Alexandria. The latter used the term to denote [1] conjugal love (*Strom.* IV, 20, 125.3; cf. also *Paed.* II, 10, 93.1); [2] parental love for children (*Paed.* I, 11, 97.2; cf. also *Strom.* IV, 19, 121.1, and II, 16, 75.2 on animals: φυσική μὲν γὰρ ἡ πρὸς τὰ τέκνα φιλοστοργία τοῖς ζώοις); [3] Christian charity (*Paed.* III, 12, 96.4, quoting *Ep. Rom.* 12.10); and [4] a characteristic of God (*Protr.* 10, 94.1 and *Paed.* I, 6, 41.3). He also used the term in a metaphorical sense to refer to the mother's breast (*Paed.* I, 6, 35.3; cf. 39.2).

⁴⁹ In *De virt. mor.* 451E, Plutarch perhaps even regards φιλοστοργία as a kind of passion that can contribute to the virtue of friendship. According to Babut (1969b), 171, however, the text should be changed, because φιλοστοργία was never regarded as a passion in Stoic doctrine; *contra*: Becchi (1990), 231.

a natural quality that can and should be reconciled with the demands of reason. This philosophical tradition is the general background against which Plutarch's arguments in *De amore proliis* should be understood. There is, however, also a more specific background that is of paramount importance for a correct understanding of *De amore proliis* – that is, the traditional philosophical debate about the precise nature of parental love for children.

Most people, including Plato (*Smp.* 208b: τὸ αὐτοῦ ἀποβλάστημα φύσει πᾶν τιμᾶ) and Aristotle (*GA* III, 2, 753a7-15; *EN* VIII, 1, 1155a16-19), presumably assumed that love for children is natural⁵⁰. From the very beginning, however, there were also dissentient voices. Thales, for instance, was opposed to marriage and children⁵¹, and Democritus likewise explicitly denied the necessity of having children (fr. 68 B 276 DK = Stobaeus, IV, 24b.31), underlining the great troubles and anxieties that were connected with their upbringing⁵². If a man nonetheless feels the need of having a child, Democritus argued, he should rather have one by adoption (fr. 68 B 277 = Stobaeus, IV, 24b.32).

In Hellenistic philosophy, both poles of this debate were further systematized by the Stoics and the Epicureans, respectively. Epicurus' avoidance of both marrying and rearing children is one of the direct consequences of his philosophical position, according to which pleasure should be regarded as the final end. Indeed, the responsibilities involved in marriage and in raising children risk entailing many troubles and solitudes that seriously damage the philosopher's ἀταραξία⁵³. Even so, even Epicurus could not deny the existence of parental love for children. What he denied, however, was that this love is natural⁵⁴. If parents indeed love their children, he believed, they do so not by nature but because they derive some benefit from it.

⁵⁰ Cf. Democritus, fr. 68 B 278 DK (= Stobaeus, IV, 24b.33): ἀνθρώποισι τῶν ἀναγκαίων δοκεῖ εἶναι παῖδας κτῆσασθαι ἀπὸ φύσιος κτλ.

⁵¹ Plutarch, *Sol.* 6.1-3; cf. also his paradoxical answer to the question why he had no children: διὰ φιλοτεκνίαν (D.L. I, 26 = fr. 11 A 1 DK); the same reply to the same question is attributed to Anacharsis (Stobaeus, IV, 26.20) and to Solon (*Gnom. Vat.* 509).

⁵² Fr. 68 B 275 DK (= Stobaeus, IV, 24b.29) and 68 B 276 DK (= Stobaeus, IV, 24b.31); cf. also Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* II, 23, 138.3, and Theodoretus, *Graec. aff. cur.* XII, 74 (p. 317.25-318.2 Raeder).

⁵³ See, e.g., D.L. X, 119 (= fr. 19 Us.); Seneca, *De matrimonio*, fr. 45 Haase (= fr. 19 Us.); Epictetus, I, 23.3 (= fr. 525 Us.); Theodoretus, *Graec. aff. cur.* XII, 74 (p. 317.25-318.2 Raeder); cf. Epictetus II, 20.25 (= fr. 511 Us.), and III, 7.19 (= fr. 525 Us.); Chilton (1960), 71-73; Brennan (1996), 348-52.

⁵⁴ Plutarch, *De am. prol.* 495A (= fr. 527 Us.); *Adv. Colot.* 1123A (= fr. 528 Us.); cf. also *Non posse* 1100D; Cicero, *Att.* 7,2,4 (= fr. 528 Us.).

This position should be placed back into the broader perspective of Epicurus' philosophy. In Epicurus' view, every relation with other people is based on a *calculus* of what is useful. Justice rests on a kind of contract of mutual non-interference (*RS* 31 and 33) and even friendship has its beginning in utility⁵⁵. In short, nobody loves someone else unless for his own sake⁵⁶. Epicurus' position regarding children is only one application (though a radical one) of this general principle.

Of course Epicurus did not deny that parents actually love their children. His dissuasion from marriage and the begetting of children should not even be regarded as a law of the Medes and Persians⁵⁷, nor is it impossible that he himself was fond of children. He only refused to regard such love for children as natural (and thus normative). Presumably he will have appreciated children because of the pleasure he could derive from them, while he will at the same time have congratulated himself for not having had to change his baby's nappy or having to undergo the pubertal crisis of a sullen son or daughter.

The Stoics took a radically different path, by strongly underlining the natural character of parental love for one's offspring⁵⁸. As in the case of Epicurus' position, that of the Stoics can only be understood when it is placed into the broader framework of their ethical thinking. Indeed, φιλοστοργία for one's offspring played a crucial part in the Stoic theory of οἰκειώσις. The great outlines of this theory are sufficiently known⁵⁹. According to the Stoics, every living being is, from birth on, by nature appropriated to itself, being aware of its own constitution and always trying to preserve it⁶⁰. Next to this personal οἰκειώσις, the theory also included a social component: when human beings grow older and become rational, they also become naturally appropriated to other rational human beings, first to their next and more distant

⁵⁵ See, e.g., *SV* 23; Cicero, *fin.* 2,82 and 84 (= fr. 541 Us.); D.L. X, 120 (= fr. 540 Us.). Much has been written on Epicurus' view of friendship; see, e.g., Turner (1947); Rist (1972), 127-39; Mitsis (1987); Id. (1988), 98-128; O'Connor (1989).

⁵⁶ Lactantius, *inst.* III, 17,42 (= fr. 540 Us.): *dicit Epicurus [...] neminem esse, qui alterum diligat nisi sua causa*; cf. Cicero, *Att.* 7,2,4 (= fr. 523 Us.).

⁵⁷ Cf. D.L. X, 119 (= fr. 19 Us.): *κατὰ περιστάσιν δέ ποτε βίου γαμήσειν*; cf. also Brennan (1996), 348-52. Metrodorus was married and had children; Seneca, *De matrimonio*, fr. 45 Haase (= fr. 19 Us.); D.L. X, 19 and 21 (= fr. 217 Us.).

⁵⁸ D.L. VII, 120 (= *SVF* III, 731): *φασὶ δὲ καὶ τὴν πρὸς τὰ τέκνα φιλοστοργίαν φυσικὴν εἶναι αὐτοῖς* [sc. τοῖς σπουδαίοις]; Cicero, *fin.* 3,62 (= *SVF* III, 340); *off.* 1,12.

⁵⁹ See, e.g., Brink (1955/6); Pembroke (1971); White (1979); Striker (1983); Engberg-Pedersen (1990).

⁶⁰ See, e.g., D.L. VII, 85 (= *SVF* III, 178); Cicero, *fin.* 3,16 (= *SVF* III, 182); Seneca, *epist.* 121 (cf. *SVF* III, 184); Hierocles, col. 1.1-8.60; cf. also Cicero, *off.* 1,11-12.

family, then to other relatives and fellow citizens, and finally to the whole human race⁶¹.

Now (one of) the hinge(s) that connected 'personal' and 'social' *οικείωσις* with one another was precisely *φιλοστοργία* for one's children. On the one hand, the Stoics argued that we are, from the moment of our birth, not only appropriated to ourselves and our members, but also to our own offspring (personal *οικείωσις*)⁶². On the other hand, they regarded natural affection for one's offspring as the principle of social life and justice (social *οικείωσις*)⁶³. That not all the details of this Stoic position are perfectly clear⁶⁴ should not detain us any longer. Here it will suffice to note that, by considering *φιλοστοργία* for children to be natural and using it as an important argument for their own view on the process of natural (moral) development, the Stoics did not merely provide an interesting alternative for the Epicurean interpretation of parental love⁶⁵, but also made it a vital link that contributed to the theoretical coherence of their own ethical thinking.

Hellenistic philosophy thus led to a further polarisation with regard to the problem of *φιλοστοργία* for one's offspring. Both alternatives (nature and utility) could be defended and introduced into a consistent philosophical system. In the course of time, the question whether parental love for children is natural or not became a standard problem in the philosophical discussions of the school⁶⁶. In the debate between the philosophical schools, Middle Platonists and Peripatetics sided with the Stoics. Some Platonists even adopted the entire framework of the Stoic theory of *οικείωσις* and tried to introduce it (eventually in a slightly modified version) into their own Platonic perspective⁶⁷, whereas in Arius

⁶¹ Cicero, *fin.* 3,62-64; Hierocles, *ap. Stob.*, IV, 27.23 (the famous argument of the concentric circles); cf. also Hierocles, col. 9.1-9.10 and 11.14-11.21; Anon., *In Theaet.* 5.18-7.14.

⁶² Plutarch, *De Stoic. rep.* 1038B (= *SVF* III, 179: ... ἐν παντί βιβλίῳ φυσικῶ νῆ Δία καὶ ἠθικῶ γράφων ὡς οἰκειούμεθα πρὸς αὐτοὺς εὐθὺς γενόμενοι καὶ τὰ μέρη καὶ τὰ ἔκγονα τὰ ἑαυτῶν).

⁶³ Plutarch, *De soll. an.* 962A: τὴν γοῦν πρὸς τὰ ἔκγονα φιλοστοργίαν ἀρχὴν μὲν ἡμῖν κοινωνίας καὶ δικαιοσύνης τιθέμενοι; Cicero, *fin.* 3,62 (= *SVF* III, 340): *pertinere autem ad rem arbitrantur intellegi natura fieri ut liberi a parentibus amentur; a quo initio profectam communem humani generis societatem persequimur.*

⁶⁴ Cf. Inwood (1983), 196-99.

⁶⁵ That the whole theory of *οικείωσις* was a response to Epicurus' thinking appears from D.L. VII, 85-86 (= *SVF* III, 178) and Cicero, *fin.* 3,17 (= *SVF* III, 154).

⁶⁶ As appears from Plutarch, *Quaest. conv.* II, 1, 634E; on the meaning of the passage, see Bolkestein (1946), 115-117, and Teodorsson (1989), 204.

⁶⁷ E.g., Antiochus of Ascalon (*ap. Cic.*, *fin.* 5,24; on Antiochus' theory of *οικείωσις*, see, e.g., Fladerer [1996], 151-66; one should note, however, that in antiquity Antiochus

Didymus' summary of Peripatetic ethics, the doctrine of *οικείωσις* is reconciled with the Peripatetic point of view⁶⁸. In this summary, the discussion passes from love for children to love for parents, family, fellow citizens, and finally all human beings (*ap. Stob.*, II, 7.13, p. 119.22ff.; cf. the analogous Stoic discussion). At the same time, other Platonists explicitly rejected the Stoic theory of *οικείωσις*⁶⁹. Among them was Plutarch⁷⁰. And yet Plutarch, too, was convinced that *φιλοστοργία* for one's offspring should be regarded as natural. On which arguments was this conviction based? At this point, we should return to *De amore prolis*.

3. *Plutarch's argument in De amore prolis*

3.1. Chapter I

Instead of immediately focusing on (a first aspect of) the subject of *φιλοστοργία* for one's offspring, Plutarch begins the work with a general reflection on the 'argument from the animals'. He points out that this argument is often used in philosophical discussions and suggests two possible reasons that might explain its popularity. On the one hand, irrational animals remain impartial and present, as it were, 'objective' evidence; on the other hand, the frequent use of the 'argument from the animals' can be interpreted as a charge against the wickedness of human beings, who look for rules of conduct in animals as if they lacked indications of nature in themselves (493A-C). The phrase *πῶς γαμῶμεν αὐτοὶ καὶ γεννῶμεν καὶ τεκνοτροφῶμεν* (493C) is an important specification of the vague *τῶν προβλημάτων ἕνια* (493B), and a first introduction of the actual theme of the work.

It is clear that, in spite of the adversative *ἤ* (493B), the two reasons are not necessarily incompatible with one another. Nonetheless, they can be connected with different philosophical traditions. In dif-

was usually regarded as a Stoic philosopher rather than as a Platonist; see, e.g., Cicero, *ac.* 2,67; 2,69; 2,132; 2,137; S.E., *P.* I, 235; cf. Augustine, *civ.* 19,3; *c. acad.* 3,41; Plutarch, too, probably regarded Antiochus as a Stoic rather than as an Academic philosopher; see *Cic.* 4.2; Babut [1969a], 198-99; Opsomer [1998], 172; *contra*: Nikolaidis [1999a], 408-11) and Apuleius (*Plat.* 2,2 p. 222; cf. also 2,16 p. 242; Praechter [1916], 517-29; Moreschini [1978], 102-104). Taurus was familiar with the doctrine of *οικείωσις* (*ap. Gell.*, XII, 5.7) but explicitly introduces it as a Stoic theory (XII, 5.6: *quae fuisse dicturum [...] si quis nunc adesset Stoicorum*).

⁶⁸ *Ap. Stob.*, II, 7.13; for an analysis of the whole passage, see Moraux (1973), 316-50, and Görgemanns (1983).

⁶⁹ E.g., Anon., *In Theaet.* 7.14-19: *ὅθεν οὐκ ἀπὸ τῆς οἰκειώσεως εἰσάγει ὁ Πλάτων τὴν δικαιοσύνην, ἀλλὰ ἀπὸ τῆς πρ[ὸ]ς τὸν θεὸν ὁμοιω[σεω]ς*.

⁷⁰ For Plutarch's attack on Stoic *οικείωσις*, see Caballero Sánchez (1999a).

ferent schools, the ‘argument from the animals’ was used in order to prove the truth of philosophers’ own positions. Epicurus, for instance, regarded children and animals as *specula naturae* (Cicero, *fin.* 2,32 = fr. 398 Us.), which sufficiently prove that pleasure should be regarded as the highest good and pain as the chief evil (Cicero, *fin.* 1,30 = fr. 397 Us.; 1,71; 2,32 = fr. 398 Us.), and which make any further argumentation unnecessary⁷¹. The Stoics, too, referred to the behaviour of animals in order to support their position. Chrysippus used animal conduct as an argument for approving of certain offensive practices (Plutarch, *De Stoic rep.* 1044F-1045A = *SVF* III, 753). Even so, the ‘argument from the animals’ is far from decisive in all cases. Indeed, in another context, Chrysippus himself rejected it on the ground that the behaviour of animals, which have no reason, is irrelevant to the matter under discussion (*Ibid.* 1045AB = *SVF* III, 754)⁷². Cicero, too, rejects the argument as it is used by Epicurus, pointing to the fact that even the beasts may be wrong⁷³.

The second reason, which blames human wickedness and implies the moral superiority of animals, can also be connected with the previous philosophical tradition. Sophists like Callicles had already pointed to the animal world as a model of the natural right of the stronger (cf. Plato, *Grg.* 483d; cf. also *Lg.* III, 690b), but it was especially in Cynic philosophy that animals came to be regarded as the paradigm of right behaviour⁷⁴. But this aspect of the ‘argument from the animals’ was no less problematic than the other one. Plato (*Phlb.* 67b; cf. *Lg.* VIII, 836c) and Seneca (*dial.* IV, 16.2) both refused to regard animals as moral examples and rather chose respectively to follow the philosophical Muse and to imitate the god. Another, more amusing, example of criticism can be found in Aristophanes’ *Clouds*. When Phidippides recalls how cocks and other animals retaliate against their fathers (*Nu.* 1427-1429; cf. *Av.* 757-759 and 1344-1352), his father Strepsiades retorts, “If you want to imitate cocks in everything, then why don’t you also eat the dung and sleep on a wooden perch?” (*Nu.* 1430-1431). One should be cautious in regarding the beasts as examples.

⁷¹ Cicero, *fin.* 1,30 (= fr. 256 Us.): *itaque negat opus esse ratione neque disputatione quamobrem voluptas expetenda, fugiendus dolor sit. Sentiri haec putat, ut calere ignem, nivem esse albam, mel dulce, quorum nihil oportere exquisitis rationibus confirmare, tantum satis esse admonere.*

⁷² Plutarch, of course, here immediately detects an inconsistency; *De Stoic. rep.* 1045B: ἄτοπον μὲν οὖν τὸ ἐκεῖ μὲν εὐκαιρον εἰπεῖν τὴν τῶν ἀλόγων ζῴων ἀποθεώρησιν ἐνταῦθα δ’ ἀπὸ λόγου; cf. Dyroff (1897b), 373.

⁷³ Cicero, *fin.* 2,33: *bestiarum vero nullum iudicium puto. Quamvis enim depravatae non sint, pravae tamen esse possunt.*

⁷⁴ See, e.g., Plutarch, *De esu* I, 995D; Lucianus, *Vit. Auct.* 10; Dierauer (1977), 180-87.

The second reason, then, entails an elaborate comparison among human beings, animals, and plants. The *scala naturae* in this passage is quite striking, for at the top we find the plants, which always follow the path of nature. The next level is that of the animals, which already give evidence of a little-developed rationality, and thus sometimes slightly deviate from the natural path. In this perspective, human beings occupy the lowest level: owing to their rationality, they are able to form their own opinions, which lead them on paths that are no longer those of nature (493C-E; cf. *Gryllus* 990EF; Aristotle, *Pol.* VII, 13, 1332b6-8). Usually, Plutarch adopts exactly the opposite position, underlining the superiority of man on the basis of his rationality (see, e.g., *De fort.* 98C; *De frat. am.* 478E). The rather remarkable hierarchy in this passage is explained by the fact that [1] conformity to nature is used as the only criterion, and that, moreover, [2] ‘nature’ is understood in a strongly biological sense. From such a perspective, human reason easily conflicts with nature and is devaluated because of that opposition. Later in the *De amore proliis*, however, this picture will be adjusted (see *infra* on chapter 3).

3.2. Chapter 2

In the second chapter, Plutarch turns to the subject of the animals’ conformity to nature (τὸ κατὰ φύσιν) with regard to marriage. In line with the striking hierarchy proposed in chapter 1, he first points to the great contrast between the natural world of the beasts and human culture, where marriage and the begetting of children are regulated by law (493E; cf. *Gryllus* 987CD on courage). And even these laws prove inadequate for eradicating moral corruption, as appears especially from the last example, viz. the improper use of the *ius trium liberorum* by many Romans, who marry and beget children not in order to have heirs, but to inherit (οὐχ ἵνα κληρονόμους ἔχωσιν ἀλλ’ ἵνα κληρονομεῖν; 493E). The rhetorical paradox helps to show how human wickedness turns natural patterns upside down.

Plutarch then proceeds by drawing an idealized picture of animal sexual behaviour. Since the beasts do not regard pleasure but procreation as the end of sexual intercourse, they only consort with one another in spring, when the conditions are favourable. As soon as the female is pregnant, she retires out of concern for her offspring and later, together with the male, takes care of the young (493E-494A; cf. *Gryllus* 990CD)⁷⁵. It is interesting to note that Plutarch in this pas-

⁷⁵ The whole passage contains traditional material; cf., e.g., Plato, *Lg.* VIII, 840de; Aristotle, *HA* V, 8, 542a20-32, and VI, 18, 573a29-32; Lucretius, I, 10-20; Philo of

sage ascribes several qualities and virtues to the animals: well-ordered behaviour (494A: κοσμίως), φιλοστοργία, πρόνοια, καρτερία, and ἐγκράτεια (494A). In what follows, he also refers to their σοφία and τέχνη (494A), which he illustrates with many concrete examples.

The first three examples (the kingfisher, the sea-dog, and the she-bear; 494A-C) can probably be traced back to a previous tradition that finds its ultimate roots in Aristotle and the early Peripatos. The next three examples (494C-E) are all taken from Homer and illustrate more or less the same idea of animals' exceptional care for their offspring (even beyond their usual capacities). Finally, the list is completed by two additional examples (partridges and hens; 494EF), again taken from the Aristotelian tradition. All of this is clearly traditional material⁷⁶ which Plutarch had at his disposal and which he could use and reuse in different contexts. An analysis of the way in which Plutarch deals with this material can throw light on his method of working⁷⁷. To give but one example, the bird in Homer returns in *De prof. in virt.* 80A, where, however, it is not introduced as a model of right behaviour (that is, of loving care for its offspring), but rather as an illustration of bad conduct. Traditional material is skilfully adapted and reorientated to fit into the surrounding context.

The question remains, however, what all of these examples contribute to the subject that is discussed in *De amore prolis*. One scholar went so far as to argue that the whole passage could be omitted without any problem⁷⁸. And yet, the examples do have much argumentative value. First of all, they support Plutarch's general claim that the animals give evidence of σοφία and τέχνη in the bearing and rearing of offspring (494A). Secondly, they provide a concrete illustration of good behaviour and thus have a protreptic character. Man should in his own way try

Alexandria, *De anim.* 48-49; Aelian, *NA IX*, 63; Oppian, *Cyn.* I, 376-392; *Hal.* I, 473-478.

⁷⁶ Most examples can be found in other authors too, and more than one is used by Plutarch himself in other works. To the parallels given by Helmbold (1939), 337-40 can be added: [1] on the kingfisher: Aristotle, *HA VIII(IX)*, 14, 616a14-29; [2] on the she-bear: Ovid, *met.* XV, 379-381; Pliny, *nat.* VIII, 126; Donatus, *Vita Verg.* 22; [3] on the bird in Homer: Musonius Rufus, fr. XV H., with the reconstruction of Powell (1937), 175-78.

⁷⁷ This has been done in a systematic way with the analysis of repetitive 'clusters' in Plutarch's writings; see, e.g., Van der Stockt (1999a) and (1999b); Van der Stockt – Van Meirvenne (forthcoming).

⁷⁸ Barigazzi (1994b), 145: "Si potrebbe omettere tutto il lungo passo 2.494A οἶον εὐθύς – 494F παρὰ δύναμιν e passare così subito all'impostazione della tesi εἶτα ταῦτ' οἰόμεθα senz'alcun cambiamento o con qualche piccolo arrangiamento, e si tornerebbe nella normalità".

to imitate and emulate the animals in his care for his own children. Moreover, Plutarch himself clarifies the relevance of all the examples in what follows: nature has not (only) produced these emotions in animals because she takes thought for their offspring, but (also) in order to give examples for those who want to follow her and to blame the insensibility (*ἀπάθεια*) of unfeeling people (494F-495A)⁷⁹. The latter turn out to be the Epicureans. Indeed, Epicurus' philosophical position implies – according to Plutarch – that human nature is the only one that does not know disinterested affection and only loves because of utility (*χρεία*), or for pay (*μισθοῦ*). Such a position would be rejected, always according to Plutarch, by the animals themselves and should be regarded as shameful (495AB).

With this attack on Epicurus' conviction, Plutarch finally arrives at the central theme of his work. His elaborate discussion of the conduct of animals now proves to be a first argument against the Epicurean position: conclusions concerning the natural behaviour of the beasts, based on careful observation of 'plain facts', can be extrapolated to human beings. Moreover, Plutarch immediately brings moral discredit on Epicurus' position: the latter turns out to be *ἀπάθης* and *ἀνάληγτος*⁸⁰. The two reasons that were proposed to explain the popularity of the 'argument from the animals' at the beginning of chapter 1 thus return at the end of chapter 2. Epicurus' philosophical convictions, indeed, are both at odds with 'objective evidence' and illustrate his moral wickedness which makes him even inferior to the beasts. It is clear that chapters 1 and 2 form one harmonious and well-structured whole.

3.3. Chapter 3

After a short and quite emphatic rejection of Epicurus' position – a rejection that once again recalls the two reasons mentioned above: *ἀλλ' οὗτ' ἀληθῆς ὁ λόγος οὗτ' ἄξιος ἀκούειν* (495B) – Plutarch introduces several new arguments. He first compares wild plants, which have already imperfect principles of cultivated fruits, with beasts, which show imperfect love for offspring, and then opposes both to man, a rational and social animal (*λογικὸν καὶ πολιτικὸν ζῶον*). For the latter, love of his children is the basis of justice, law, the worship of the gods,

⁷⁹ This anthropocentric view was common in ancient thinking; cf., e.g., Xenophon, *Mem.* IV, 3.9-10; Aristotle, *Pol.* I, 8, 1256b15-22; Cicero, *nat. deor.* 2.37 (= *SVF* II, 1153) and 2.154-162; Porphyry, *Abst.* III, 20.1-2 (= *SVF* II, 1152); Origen, *Cels.* IV, 54 (= *SVF* II, 1155); Epictetus, I, 6.18 and 16.1-5; II, 8.6-8.

⁸⁰ For this reproach, see also *De sup.* 164E; *Amatorius* 767C; *Praec. ger. reip.* 824B; cf. *Sol.* 7.3.

the founding of cities, and friendliness (495BC). This is an important passage in *De amore proles*, also because it places what precedes in a somewhat different perspective.

First of all, Plutarch's understanding of the concept of 'nature' now proves more nuanced, and entails a completely different hierarchy in the *scala naturae*. If uncultivated plants bear only imperfect fruits, the implication is of course that cultivation through human beings would yield better results. Even in the case of plants, leaving everything to nature will thus not yield the best of their possibilities⁸¹. For human beings, the component of nature is even less important for reaching perfection. According to the previous philosophical tradition, moral virtue can be reached through a combination of nature, reason, and habituation⁸². The component of nature alone can lead to natural virtues (φυσικαὶ ἀρεταί)⁸³, to be sure, but these should not be regarded as perfect virtue⁸⁴. Plutarch's position is perfectly in line with this tradition⁸⁵. Reaching moral virtue presupposes a firm προαίρεσις and a whole process of *Seelenheilung* based on ἐπιλογισμοί and ἐθισμοί⁸⁶. For that reason, animals can never reach the moral level of human beings⁸⁷. In this perspective, it also becomes clear why Plutarch elsewhere – again in conformity with the previous and contemporary tradition – regards φιλοστοργία only as a virtue *sub condicione*: if man indeed proves to

⁸¹ It is typical that Gryllus, the champion par excellence of a purely natural course, adopts exactly the opposite position; see *Gryllus* 986F-987A: ἤκουσα γάρ σου ποτὲ διηγουμένου τῆ Κίρκῃ περὶ τῆς τῶν Κυκλώπων γῆς, ὡς οὐτ' ἀρουμένη τὸ παράπαν, οὔτε τινὸς εἰς αὐτὴν φυτεύοντος οὐδέν, οὕτως ἐστὶν ἀγαθὴ καὶ γενναία τὴν φύσιν, ὥσθ' ἅπαντας ἐκφέρειν τοὺς καρποὺς ἀφ' αὐτῆς· πότερον οὖν ταύτην ἐπαινεῖς μᾶλλον ἢ τὴν αἰγίβοτον Ἰθάκην καὶ τραχεῖαν, ἢ μόλις ἀπ' ἔργων τε πολλῶν καὶ διὰ πόνων μεγάλων μικρὰ καὶ γλίσχρα καὶ μηδενὸς ἄξια τοῖς γεωργοῦσιν ἀναδίδωσι;

⁸² See, e.g., Plato, *Men.* 70a and *Phdr.* 269d; Aristotle, *EN* I, 10, 1099b9-11; II, 1, 1103a14-26; X, 10, 1179b20-21; *EE* I, 1, 1214a15-21; *Pol.* VII, 13, 1332a38-40; Xenophon, *Mem.* III, 9.1-3; *SVF* III, 218; Shorey (1909).

⁸³ Aristotle, *EN* VI, 13, 1144b3-6; *EE* III, 7, 1234a28-30; cf. *EN* VII, 9, 1151a18-19; Plato, *Lg.* IV, 710a.

⁸⁴ Aristotle, *EN* VI, 13, 1144b6-9 and 13-17; cf. Plato, *Lg.* XII, 963e; Seneca, *epist.* 90.44 (*non enim dat natura virtutem; ars est bonum fieri*); 90.46; 124.7 and 20.

⁸⁵ Albin (1997), 59: "Although in his [= Plutarch's] extant work there is no direct reference to the 'educational triad', it nevertheless pervades both *Lives* and *Moralia*". The traditional triad is mentioned, however, at *De soll. an.* 962C: λόγος μὲν γὰρ ἐγγίνεται φύσει, σπουδαῖος δὲ λόγος καὶ τέλειος ἐξ ἐπιμελείας καὶ διδασκαλίας; cf. also Ps.-Plutarch, *De lib. educ.* 2A-C.

⁸⁶ See esp. Ingenkamp (1971), 99-105; cf. also Rabbow (1954), 340-42.

⁸⁷ They do not even make moral progress; cf. Soclarus' objection in *De soll. an.* 961F-962A (but *contra* Autobulus in *De soll. an.* 962E: μᾶλλον προήχθαι φύσει πρὸς ἀρετήν).

be a λογικὸν ζῶον, he should always take into account the demands of reason⁸⁸ (cf. *supra*).

In this crucial passage, Plutarch regards love for one's offspring as the basis for a more elaborate social ethics. This, of course, can be traced back to the well-known analogous Stoic position. This Stoic idea, however, is isolated from its original context (viz. the doctrine of οἰκειώσις) and introduced into a new one. Furthermore, the relevance of φιλοστοργία for social life seems to be even broader in Plutarch's view than in that of the Stoics, since Plutarch also connects love for one's children with the worship of the gods (θεῶν τιμὰς; 495C). This addition may find its origin in Plutarch's polemical aims. Elsewhere, in any case, he often condemns Epicurus for his atheistic convictions⁸⁹. Finally, one should note that the whole idea is put forward without any further argument (as it is in our Stoic sources). Just like Cicero (*Att.* 7,2,4) and Philo (*Virt.* 128-132), Plutarch apparently regarded the argument as evident, or at least presented it as such.

With the following reflections on the constitution of the human body, a new argument is introduced. This argument presupposes a teleological view of nature (495C), which returns also elsewhere in Plutarch⁹⁰ and which was defended before by Aristotle and by the Stoics⁹¹. Of this general, teleological perspective, two concrete applications are given. The first one, which is about the sexual organs, is merely mentioned in passing (495CD). This elegant *praeteritio* might have compositional advantages⁹², to be sure, but is no doubt primarily motivated by moral reasons. It remains true, though, that in other contexts Plutarch is much less reticent on this topic. In one of his *Table Talks* (III, 6), for instance, the question concerning the suitable time for coition is discussed in detail. Even more, the whole argument begins with a refutation of the criticism that certain young men passed on Epicurus: their claim that

⁸⁸ In *De soll. an.* 982D, the crocodile meets these standards, as she shows her affection for her young not by emotion (πάθει) but by judgement (κρίσει), as the wisest of men think right (καθάπερ οἱ σοφώτατοι τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀξιούσι).

⁸⁹ See, e.g., *De sup.* 164F; *Non posse* 1100E-1103E; *Adv. Colot.* 1112C and 1119EF; cf. Roskam (2007b), 128-29.

⁹⁰ *De soll. an.* 960E: ἡ γὰρ φύσις, ἣν ἕνεκά του καὶ πρὸς τι πάντα ποιεῖν ὀρθῶς λέγουσιν, κτλ.; *Quaest. conv.* III, 1, 646C and VII, 1, 698B.

⁹¹ For Aristotle, see, e.g., *Pol.* I, 2, 1253a9 and 8, 1256b20-21 (more passages in Teodorsson [1989], 293); for the Stoics, see, e.g., Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Fat.* 11, p. 179.30-31 Bruns (= *SVF* II, 1140); Marcus Aurelius, V, 16.

⁹² See Barigazzi (1994b), 149-50: "è stata omessa la descrizione degli organi della riproduzione [...], con la motivazione che non è conveniente parlarne (495CD), ma in realtà è stata operata un'opportuna riduzione della parte scientifica e ottenuta una maggiore proporzione delle parti, a vantaggio dell'argomento centrale".

Epicurus' discussion of this issue in his *Symposium* was unnecessary and morally blameworthy shows that they have no experience with literature and that they have not carefully read Epicurus (653B-E).

The second application is about the production of mother's milk (495D-496A). Contrary to the previous application, this one is elaborated at length. Again, Plutarch makes it clear that his detailed, medical discussion⁹³ should be placed into a general teleological perspective (495D and 496A), from which it also derives its relevance to his anti-Epicurean argument: all corporeal changes which a woman undergoes during pregnancy and after giving birth would be useless if nature had not produced in mothers affection for their children (496A). This argument, which again returns in Stoic sources⁹⁴, is further motivated by a reference to the condition of a newborn baby, who, owing to his ugliness, is only cared for by someone who shows a natural love (496B; cf. *Amatorius* 758A). Plutarch's words here recall the traditional debate on the condition of human beings at the moment of birth (as opposed to that of animals). Protagoras, for instance, in the Platonic dialogue that bears his name, refers to the natural nakedness and helplessness of man in his account of the myth of Prometheus and Epimetheus (*Prt.* 321c). This position, which soon became a popular *topos*⁹⁵, is rhetorically elaborated by Plutarch, through an accumulation of synonyms that culminates in the paradox *φονευομένω μᾶλλον ἢ γεννωμένω ἔοικώς* (496B).

The chapter concludes with a short reflection on the place of the woman's breasts, from which Plutarch again infers that the final end (*τέλος*) of bearing and rearing a child is not utility but friendship (*οὐ χρείαν ἀλλὰ φιλίαν*; 496BC). The argument may seem rather naive, but one should note that similar considerations return rather frequently in Plutarch's works: nature places the teeth in front of the tongue like a fence in order to guard it (*De gar.* 503C; cf. *Fr.* 89 Sandbach); the fact that we have two hands, feet, eyes, etc. can teach brothers collaboration instead of strife (*De frat. am.* 478D); and the general constitution of the human body shows that man is not by nature carnivorous (*De esu* I, 994F-995B). In all of these cases, the presupposition of the argument is clearly teleological: the corporeal constitution of human

⁹³ Cf. *Aem.* 14.3-4; for Plutarch's familiarity with medicine, see Boulogne (1996), who concludes on the basis of the parallel passage in *Aem.* that Plutarch took personal interest in the theme of the mother's milk (pp. 2775-76 n. 110).

⁹⁴ See esp. Cicero, *fin.* 3,62. A similar argument, though focusing on the love of a living being for himself, occurs in D.L. VII, 85 and Hierocles, col. 6.40-43.

⁹⁵ See esp. Lucretius V, 222-234, and Pliny, *nat.* VII, 1-5; cf. Seneca, *epist.* 121,6. The opposite view is defended by Xenophon, *Mem.* I, 4.4-4.14 and IV, 3.3-3.14.

beings can give information about the moral goal of nature (cf. also *De aud.* 39B and *Quaest. conv.* VII, 1, 698B).

3.4. Chapter 4

The fourth chapter contains two additional arguments against Epicurus' view on affection for offspring. The first argument Plutarch finds in the condition of primitive mankind: *prima facie* one could reasonably expect that, at that early moment, mothers were harsh to their children, since they had suffered terrible labour pains and had no prospect of any return⁹⁶. The contrary is true, however: even immediately after giving birth and while still suffering, the primitive mother took care of her baby, which shows that she loved the child not because of her own benefit but because of nature (496C-E). Plutarch's argument is based on two pillars. On the one hand, it is probably inspired by a passage in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, where Socrates shows his oldest son, Lamprocles, that he owes much gratitude to his mother because she has taken much trouble in caring for him without getting much use from it and while remaining uncertain of any return (II, 2.5). It is clear that Socrates' position is grist for the mill of Plutarch's anti-Epicurean polemic. On the other hand, Plutarch tries to make the argument even more convincing by transposing it to the context of primitive mankind. At that moment, indeed, there was less influence of human culture (cf., e.g., the absence of a νόμος [...] τεκνοτροφεῖν προστάττων; 496C) and less place for the element of utility. Furthermore, Plutarch also points to the situation of the παλαιοί as an argument for his own position elsewhere (cf., e.g., *Quaest. conv.* VIII, 8, 729EF; *De esu* I, 993C-994B). An interesting example, proposed in an anti-Epicurean context as well, can be found in *De lat. viv.* 1128E, where Plutarch regards the custom of primitive people (οἱ σφόδρα παλαιοί) of submitting their sick to public inspection as an argument against Epicurus' advice to pursue an unnoticed life⁹⁷. In all of these cases, the reference to the conduct of the παλαιοί functions as an *argumentum ex auctoritate* that strongly supports Plutarch's own philosophical position.

In what follows, the argument derived from primitive mankind is completed by a second argument, which deals with Plutarch's contemporaries (τοῖς νῦν). Just like their ancient predecessors, they have no prospect of gain, since for human beings the process of education

⁹⁶ Contrast, however, Aristotle, *EN* IX, 7, 1168a21-26: ἔτι δὲ τὰ ἐπιπόνως γενόμενα πάντες μᾶλλον στέργουσιν [...]. διὰ ταῦτα δὲ καὶ αἱ μητέρες φιλοτεκνότεραι ἐπιπονωτέρα γὰρ ἢ γέννησις.

⁹⁷ Cf. Roskam (2007b), 106-109.

takes much effort and time, so that most fathers – Plutarch offers six examples – only know the imperfect behaviour of their sons, without ever witnessing their virtue. Nevertheless, they, too, continue to rear children, and most of all those who least need them (496E-497A). This second argument indirectly recalls both the great difficulties of reaching the final end⁹⁸ and the importance Plutarch attaches to education⁹⁹. Furthermore, it may add a new dimension to Epaminondas' famous statement – often mentioned in Plutarch, though not in *De amore prolis* – that his greatest good fortune was his parents' living to see his victory over the Spartans at Leuctra¹⁰⁰.

The addition of *μάλιστα δ' οἱ παιδῶν ἥκιστα δεόμενοι* (497A) leads to a particular application which brings the second argument to a head. Those who least need children are the rich, since they have no need of children to support or bury them, nor in order to have an heir. For, of course, a childless rich man can everywhere find heirs who are much more grateful than his own children would be, and for him the birth of a child may even entail a loss of friends and power. If the rich nonetheless continue to rear children, their behaviour obviously illustrates the power of nature (497A-C). It is clear that the case of the rich man was especially interesting for Plutarch in the context of *De amore prolis*, because it shows the greatest contrast (crystallised in the rhetorical opposition *μάλιστα... ἥκιστα*; 497A) between having children and utility, and thus casts the greatest doubt on Epicurus' conviction. Moreover, it is interesting to note that this argument presupposes wicked behaviour, as it is based on the premise that children are *not* grateful to their parents and do *not* show them due respect. Such behaviour is, of course, diametrically opposed to Plutarch's own moral ideals (see, e.g., *De frat. am.* 479F-480A). One could argue, then, that Plutarch here merely describes how things *are*, not how they *should be*, and that by adopting a descriptive rather than a normative view, he wishes to show how aspects of real life refute Epicurus' conviction. Such an interpretation, however, risks neglecting the fact that the evaluation of how things are is at least partly determined by the moral perspective in which this evaluation is presented. Musonius Rufus, for instance, expresses a completely different judgement of 'how things are'. Wishing to prove that one should rear all one's children, he underlines that a man who has many children is highly esteemed in his city and has

⁹⁸ Cf., e.g., *De prof. in virt.* 85E-86A; accordingly, perfect virtue remains (almost) inaccessible to men; see Babut (1969a), 301-304.

⁹⁹ See on this, e.g., Pelling (1989) and (2000); Swain (1990a) and (1996), 139-45.

¹⁰⁰ See *Reg. et imp. apophth.* 193A; *An seni* 786D; *Non posse* 1098AB; *Cor.* 4.3; on the last passage, see Roskam – Verdegem (forthcoming).

more influence than his peers (fr. XV A, p. 78.14-18 H.). Both authors clearly present a biased evaluation of ‘reality’ that perfectly suits their respective purposes.

3.5. Chapter 5

In the last chapter of the work, Plutarch’s polemic takes a somewhat unexpected turn. He again points to the corrupting influence of vice and more precisely focuses on the problem of suicide and self-mutilation. In Plutarch’s view, these practices should not be regarded as an argument against his view that human beings have natural self-love but rather as a disease that turns them from the natural course (497CD). The background of this passage can probably be found in the traditional philosophical discussion of self-love (in the broader context of the debate on *οικειωσις*), as appears from a parallel passage in Cicero’s *De finibus* (5,28-29), where Antiochus, by pointing out that self-hate is a *contradictio in terminis*, argues that every animal loves itself. The practice of suicide does not refute this thesis, since it is motivated by passion and can finally even be interpreted as an indication of self-love¹⁰¹. Both Plutarch and Antiochus thus refuse to regard suicide as a convincing objection against the existence of natural self-love. What function, however, does this traditional argument have in the context of *De amore prolis*, which is not about self-love but about love for one’s offspring? Plutarch does not explain the precise purpose of the argument. He may have considered – in line with the previous philosophical tradition¹⁰² – love for one’s offspring to be love for a part of oneself. If that is true, the problem of suicide indeed becomes relevant; for if the practice of suicide would prove that self-love is not natural, it would be much more difficult to defend that love for one’s offspring is natural. In that sense, Plutarch’s argument at the beginning of chapter 5 can be understood as a refutation of a possible objection against his own position.

With a reference to animals that destroy their own young (497D; cf. *De soll. an.* 962E on the partridge), Plutarch then returns to the issue of love for offspring. Such a conduct in beasts might cast doubt on Plutarch’s view that love for offspring is natural. Again, Plutarch

¹⁰¹ Cicero, *fin.* 5,29: *quotienscumque dicetur male quis de se mereri sibi que inimicus esse atque hostis, vitam denique fugere, intellegatur aliquam subesse eiusmodi causam ut ex eo ipso intellegi possit sibi quemque esse carum.*

¹⁰² See, e.g., Plato, *Smp.* 207a-208b; Aristotle, *EN* VIII, 14, 1161b18-29; *SVF* III, 179 (= Plutarch, *De Stoic. rep.* 1038B); cf. also Aristotle, *de An.* II, 415a26-b2; *Rh.* I, 11, 1371b24-25.

thus introduces a possible objection against his own position in order to refute it: such behaviour is regarded as a bad omen and as an exception to the general rule of natural love for one's own offspring (cf. *Gryllus* 990E)¹⁰³.

Even more, in such bad examples there can still be found evidence for the natural character of love for one's offspring. This general claim is finally illustrated by one more example: the fact that poor people do not rear their own children (cf. Musonius Rufus, fr. XV B, p. 80.4-7 H.) is not at odds with Plutarch's view, since it can be shown that they do this precisely out of love. They want to avoid that, as a result of their poor education, their children will share their fate (497E). Plutarch thus introduces a last objection against his view of natural love for offspring. Here, however, he does not merely deny that the objection refutes his thesis, but also shows that it rather justifies his position. Now, it has rightly been noted that Plutarch is not concerned about the social problem of poverty in this passage¹⁰⁴. But it is clear that this particular problem is not directly relevant in the context of *De amore prolis*. Plutarch is not interested here in the problem of poverty but only reinterprets the inability of the poor to give their children a good education in the light of his polemical goal. That such an argumentation *de facto* continues social disparity is simply irrelevant to the matter under discussion¹⁰⁵.

4. Conclusion

The foregoing analysis has shown that *De amore prolis* is a polemical work directed against Epicurus' view on parental love for offspring. Plutarch adduces different arguments which all have the same purpose: to show that love for one's offspring is not based on a rational calculation of one's own benefit, but is rather implanted by nature. This results in a clear, cumulative structure which is only obscured by two elements: [1] the first chapter should be understood as a kind of generalizing meta-reflection on the first argument against Epicurus, proposed in

¹⁰³ Plutarch does not mention here the practice of infanticide among the Spartans (cf. *Lyc.* 16.1-2), which could be regarded as a strong argument against natural love for offspring. The objection could have troubled him, as he probably connected the Spartan practice with Plato's eugenic views in the *Republic*; see Huys (1996).

¹⁰⁴ Dumortier – Defradas (1975), 179; Postiglione (1991), 195; cf. Gréard (1885), 125: "On ne saurait présenter un déplorable sophisme sous une forme plus spécieuse". Plutarch's position with regard to this problem is then sought in the Ps.-Plutarchan *De lib. educ.* 8E; Dumortier – Defradas (1975), 195 n. 1; Korus (1977), 220; Teixeira (1982), 37 n. 42.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. also Barigazzi (1994b), 169.

chapter 2, and both chapters should thus be read in close connection; [2] the anti-Epicurean, polemical purpose of the work only becomes clear at the end of chapter 2. On the basis of these two observations, the general structure of the work¹⁰⁶ can be reconstructed as follows:

- first argument against Epicurus' position: the 'argument from the animals'
 - introductory reflection on the argument (493A-E) chapter 1
 - the argument itself (493E-495B) chapter 2
- second argument: the rational and social nature of human beings (495BC) chapter 3
- third argument: the corporeal constitution of human beings (495C-496C)
- fourth argument: the situation of primitive mankind (496C-E) chapter 4
- fifth argument: the contemporary situation
 - in general (496E-497A)
 - the specific example of the rich (497A-C)
- refutation of several objections against Plutarch's own position (497C-E) chapter 5

The previous analysis also throws light upon the place of *De amore prolis* in Plutarch's *œuvre*. Since Plutarch does not thematize the conduct of animals for its own sake but merely uses it as one argument in his anti-Epicurean polemic, an interpretation that emphasizes the close connection between (the first chapters of) *De amore prolis* and Plutarch's writings on animal psychology risks misrepresenting the true scope of the work. The same is true for those interpretations that associate the work with treatises on family ethics. Although each classification remains of course somewhat artificial, I would prefer to link *De amore prolis* with Plutarch's anti-Epicurean polemics¹⁰⁷.

¹⁰⁶ For other proposals concerning the structure of *De amore prolis*, see Korus (1977), 220; Barigazzi (1994b), 147-49.

¹⁰⁷ As was done by Hartman (1916), 244, and Barigazzi (1994b), 141-45. The latter rightly establishes a close parallel between *De amore prolis* and *De latenter vivendo*: "Appare subito l'analogia con il *De latenter vivendo*: ambedue gli scritti si oppongono alla dottrina epicurea, disgregatrice della famiglia e della società e paralizzante ogni nobile attività in favore della comunità umana e del suo progresso. Con l'uno si mostrano le gravissime conseguenze che deriverebbero dalla vita appartata e dedita al piacere personale; con l'altro si difende l'istinto naturale ad amare la prole, fondamento della famiglia e della società e della civiltà. È dunque chiaro che le due declamazioni hanno il medesimo scopo e fan parte della polemica antiepicurea" (pp. 144-45).

In this light, the end of the work should be reconsidered. Many commentators are convinced that a great part of *De amore prolis* has not survived¹⁰⁸. The question remains, however, whether this conviction is not based on wrong expectations. The reader should *not* expect further discussions on right conduct in the domain of family relations, since such reflections are not directly relevant to the polemical context of *De amore prolis*. At the same time, it remains true that the work ends rather abruptly¹⁰⁹, and Plutarch could have added other arguments against Epicurus' position. On this point, a cautious *non liquet* may well be the only certain conclusion.

Plutarch never showed sympathy for Epicurus' philosophy¹¹⁰. As was true for most aspects of Epicurean thought, Epicurus' position with regard to parental love for children was diametrically opposed to what Plutarch deemed important. At the end of this chapter, one may finally return to Plutarch's *Consolatio ad uxorem*, with which it began. There, Plutarch repeatedly emphasized the great pleasure he derived from his little daughter (608C and EF; 610E). The reader of *De amore prolis* cannot but conclude that these feelings of pleasure were only one aspect of his parental love and that Plutarch wanted to base them on a more fundamental foundation, which would finally enable him to be both a respected philosopher and a good father.

¹⁰⁸ See, e.g., Volkmann (1869), II, 165; Weissenberger (1895), 66; Hartman (1916), 244 ("dubium non est quin multo maior pars perierit"); Helmbold (1939), 328 ("a good deal is doubtless lost at the end").

¹⁰⁹ The last μέν is no longer followed by a δέ, which makes unlikely the thesis of Patzig (1876), 3-4, according to whom the work is finished. According to Barigazzi (1994b), 168-70, there is at most a small lacuna.

¹¹⁰ On Plutarch's anti-Epicurean position, there is now the study of Boulogne (2003); cf. also Hershbell (1992).

3. VIRTUES AND VICES

Plutarch's 'Minor' Ethics: Some Remarks on *De garrulitate*, *De curiositate*, and *De vitioso pudore*

A.G. NIKOLAIDIS

According to ZIEGLER's classification, the largest category (twenty-three titles) of the *Moralia* treatises comprises those which ZIEGLER (1964) labels as "Die popularphilosophisch-ethischen Schriften" (coll. I, 66, 131ff.), a category which can accommodate even more titles, in my opinion, because some essays classified as "rhetorisch-epideiktischen" are in essence, despite their declamatory nature, fully fledged ethical tracts: *An virtus doceri possit*, for example, or *An vitiositas ad infelicitatem sufficiat*, or *Animine an corporis affectiones sint peiores*. In any case, if we attempt to subdivide Plutarch's writings on popular ethical philosophy into smaller and more homogeneous groups, we will probably create five subclasses. One would include, for instance, the essays dealing with virtue and vice (and their manifestations) in general and at a more or less theoretical level, notably *De virtute morali*, *De virtute et vitio*, *De invidia et odio*, etc.¹. A second category would include essays that contain practical advice with direct bearing on our daily association with our fellow men. Here I would list *De adulatore et amico*, *De amicorum multitudine*, *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate*, and even *De laude ipsius*. A third subclass consists, I think, of essays pertaining to family relations and values: *De fraterno amore* and *De amore proliis*², but also *Coniugalia praecepta*³. The fourth category is

¹ In this category we may also include *De profectibus in virtute* and *De cupiditate divitiarum*.

² Ziegler (1964), col. I lists this declamatory essay under the heading "Die tierpsychologischen Schriften".

³ But I would be disinclined to include here the *Consolatio ad uxorem* or the *Amatorius*, both also belonging to Plutarch's popular ethical philosophy according to Ziegler. Yet, consolatory literature is a category on its own (let alone that this is a private and personal letter rather than a rhetorical piece with the usual stock themes and motifs; contrast the spurious letter to Apollonius, and note that the *Lamprias Catalogue* features two more consolatory epistles, nos. 111 and 157), and its contents often go beyond, I think, popular ethics. And so do several lofty pronouncements and

comprised of *De tranquillitate animi* and *De tuenda sanitate praecepta* – that is, two treatises which are concerned with living happily at large, and therefore furnish us with ample advice on how to achieve and maintain an appropriate state of mind and body⁴. Finally, the fifth subclass would include the treatises which discuss certain faults and foibles and suggest ways to help us get rid of them. Here belong *De cohibenda ira*, *De garrulitate*, *De curiositate*, *De vitioso pudore*, and, perhaps, *De vitando aere alieno*.

This paper will discuss the manner with which Plutarch treats the minor foibles of ἀδολεσχία (garrulity, talkativeness), πολυπραγμοσύνη (indiscreet curiosity, inquisitiveness, meddlesomeness)⁵, and δυσωπία (compliance, excessive shyness or modesty, overscrupulousness)⁶. The reason for which I am leaving out *De cohibenda ira* and *De vitando aere alieno* from this discussion is that irascibility is commonly regarded as a very grave fault and not a minor shortcoming⁷, whereas, by contrast, borrowing is a dangerous habit rather than an actual moral failing. Plutarch himself, after all, nowhere in his essay calls borrowing an affection (πάθος) or a disease (νόσημα)⁸, as he repeatedly does so in the case of the other foibles above.

For *adoleschia* see 502E (disease), 504F (affection and disease), 510CD (affect./dis.), 511E (dis.), 513D (dis.); for *polypragmosynē* 515C (affect.), 518C (affect.), 519C (dis.), 520D (affect.), 522CD

ideas of the *Amatorius*, of course. One might further object that affections such as love and grief are not easily susceptible to moral assessment and regulation.

⁴ The desired balance between the two was proverbial (Νοῦς ὑγιής ἐν σώματι ὑγιεῖ). Cf. Pl., *Ti.* 88bc. It is worth remembering here that for Plutarch the end of good health is to enable man to obtain and practise virtue (cf. *De tuenda* 135C and 137E).

⁵ As our discussion will make clear, *polypragmosynē* in Plutarch's essay means something different from its well-known (and mostly political; cf. Adkins [1976]) connotations 'occupation or interference with many things', 'propensity for intrigue', 'over-activity and restlessness'. Cf. Van Hoof (2008), 297 n. 6 and 300-303; see also p. 208 below.

⁶ Despite its clear etymology (δύσ- + ὤψ [ὄπωπα]), this word lends itself to various (albeit kindred) senses and nuances and is difficult to translate into any language. See the pertinent remarks of De Lacy – Einarson (1959), 42 and 46 n. a; Klaerr (1974), 178 n. 4; and, above all, Zucchelli (1965), who provides an excellent survey of the meaning and usage of *δυσωπία/δυσωποῦμαι* in earlier Greek literature (pp. 215-20).

⁷ See, e.g., [Arist.], *MM* 1202b11: ἡ περὶ τὴν ὀργὴν οὕσα ἀκρασία ψεκτοτάτη. Cf. also Ingenkamp (1971), 80, 92ff., 125.

⁸ Yet, in 829C, being in debt (τὸ ὀφείλειν) is characterized (if through Herodotus and the Persians) as a serious error (ἀμάρτημα); and in 829E it is recognized that borrowing brings along *αἰσχύνην καὶ ἀνελευθερίαν καὶ... τῆς ἐσχάτης ἀφροσύνης καὶ μαλακίας ἐστίν* (cf. also 830B).

(affect./dis.); for *dysōpia* 528D (affect.), 529E (affect.), 530E (dis.), 532D (affect./dis.), 533D (affect.), 535F (affect.), 536C (affect.). By calling the above foibles affections and maladies of the soul, Plutarch can open the war against them more easily; first, because affections in general are directly linked with vice (cf. *Animine an corp.* 500E: ... ἡ κακία πολύχυτος καὶ δαψιλῆς οὕσα τοῖς πάθεσιν), and, secondly, because the affections of the soul are far worse than those of the body, as the latter are at least perceived by the reason, whereas the former escape notice, since reason is part of the afflicted soul (*ibid.*: τῶν μὲν γὰρ περὶ τὸ σῶμα νοσημάτων ἔρρωμένος ὁ λογισμὸς αἰσθάνεται, τοῖς δὲ τῆς ψυχῆς συννοσῶν αὐτὸς οὐκ ἔχει κρίσιν ἐν οἷς πάσχει, πάσχει γὰρ ᾧ κρίνει). Cf. *De vit. pud.* 531E. For the close relationship between *pathos* and *nosēma*, cf. also *De ad. et am.* 60D, the relevant references above (affection/disease – see nn. 30-31 and p. 220), and Pettine (1992), 129 n. 16.

To begin with, the structure of our three essays is fairly uniform⁹. One part includes the definition of the foible and a brief discussion of its main features; another consists of examples – taken from real daily life but mainly from history and literature – illustrating the behaviour of the character concerned as well as the consequences of this behaviour (dangers, ridicule, etc.); and a third part deals with the therapy of the ailment by means of suggestions and advice on the steps which one has to take in order to cure oneself. The above structure, however, is not as distinct and clear-cut as it sounds (see Appendix). Plutarch is a good prose artist and, as such, far from allowing himself to become monotonous, he is always after *variatio* and multiplicity in presenting his material (cf. Klaerr's remark in n. 16).

De garrulitate, for example, starts off with the observation that ἀδόλεσχία, subsequently depicted as one of the maladies of the soul (502E: ... νοσήμασι τῆς ψυχῆς), is very difficult to cure; for while its remedy requires listening, the garrulous always talk and never listen (502C: οἱ δ' ἀδόλεσχοι οὐδενὸς ἀκούουσιν· αἰεὶ γὰρ λαλοῦσι)¹⁰. Thus, we also understand what *adoleschia* is, since no proper definition is ever given in the treatise. *De curiositate*, by contrast, begins with an exhortation to the inquisitive: if you cannot uproot your πολυπραγμοσύνη (two definitions of the *pathos* [515C] are given in this case, at 515D

⁹ For a diagram of this structure, see my Appendix. For a comprehensive analysis of their subject matter see Ingenkamp (1971), 44-62.

¹⁰ From this we may gather that Plutarch derived ἀδόλεσχία from ἀδην + λέσχη (= 'talk to satiety'), and not from ἀηδόλεσχία (α-privative + ἀδῆς + λέσχη, namely, 'unpleasant talk').

[p. 215] and 518C [n. 42]), shift its direction and make it look inwards, instead of outwards. In other words, make your inquisitiveness investigate your inside, your inner self, and your own affairs, instead of the affairs and troubles of others. As for the beginning of *De vitioso pudore*, compliancy is introduced as a bad outgrowth of a good nature (528D: χρηστῆς δὲ φύσεως...[ἐξάνθημα])¹¹, although immediately afterwards (and throughout this essay), *δυσωπία* is treated in Aristotelian terms, as one of the two vicious extremes around the quality of proper modesty (*αἰδώς*)¹².

Our treatises differ in their central parts too. In *De garrulitate* Plutarch, on the one hand, underscores what a tedious and irksome fellow man the *ἀδολέσχης* makes (worse than the drunkard, for he talks foolishness when he is sober too – 504B) and, on the other, points out with many examples the capital dangers he is liable to bring upon himself on account of his talkativeness. These examples, however, at the same time – and perhaps primarily – illustrate and glorify the unique value and usefulness of the opposite conduct: remaining silent and being reticent. The central part of *De curiositate* is not clearly demarcated. Besides, unlike *adoleschia*, which is illustrated with examples mostly taken from history and literature, the apparent lack of such examples of *polypragmosynē* obliges Plutarch to illustrate the behaviour of the inquisitive by means of instances from contemporary daily life, a welcome boon for us, indeed, because some of his examples allow us to take glimpses at contemporary social conditions and mores (see, e.g., 516E or 522A). But several of his pertinent remarks here in fact belong to the other parts of the treatise, namely, to the definition and therapy sections (cf. 517C, 518BC, 519C, and see Appendix).

The words *πολυπράγμων*, *πολυπραγμοσύνη*, *πολυπραγμονεῖν* do occur in the *Lives*, but mostly denote what their etymology suggests: to busy oneself about many things (cf. Van Hoof [2008], 300-303). VAN HOOF suggests that one reason for which Plutarch's heroes are free from *polypragmosynē* “as understood in *On Curiosity*” should

¹¹ Hence the treatment of this foible requires delicate handling; for, unlike garrulity and meddlesomeness, which cannot be mistaken for some good character trait, compliancy is not very far from the commendable qualities of modesty, self-respect, and decency. In trying, therefore, to drive out one's immoderate shyness, one ought to be careful enough so as not to eradicate one's sense of decency along with it.

¹² Aristotle's attributes are *ἀναίσχυντος*, *καταπλήξ*, *αἰδήμων* (cf. *EN* 1108a33-35, *EE* 1221a1, *MM* 1193a1-2). Instead of *κατάπληξις* and *καταπλήξ* (the extremes on the side of excess), Plutarch has *δυσωπία* and *εὐδυσώπητος* (*De vit. pud.* 528D). Note, however, that for Aristotle *αἰδώς*, although a commendable quality, is not a proper virtue (*EN* 1108a32: ἡ γὰρ αἰδώς ἀρετὴ μὲν οὐκ ἔστιν, ἐπαινέται δέ; cf. also *ibid.* 1128b10).

be ascribed to the narrative character of the *Lives*, which “makes *polypragmosynē* not so suited as an affection for the protagonists” (p. 307). This is not very convincing, because the same narrativity does not prevent Plutarch from imputing so many other affections and failings – also unsuitable for a protagonist – to his heroes; see, e.g., Nicias’ superstition or Alcibiades’ frivolity. *Polypragmosynē* is absent from the *Lives* simply because Plutarch’s worthies were not *polypragmones* (in the sense in which the term is used in the essay), as VAN HOOFF herself rightly observes (*ibid.*). For other discussions of Plutarch’s concept of *polypragmosynē*, see Volpe Cacciatore (1987) and the commentaries of Pettine (1977) and Inglese (1996).

Finally, the central part of *De vitioso pudore* is the shortest of all (only one chapter). And what Plutarch’s scant literary/historical examples of *dysōpia* actually demonstrate, is, as in the case of *adoleschia* (see p. 208 and, e.g., 504F), the devastating consequences of this weakness (see below)¹³.

The third part of our essays, which is devoted to the treatment of the respective foibles, is the longest and most uniform (see Appendix). But even here Plutarch’s regimens are set out in various ways. In *De garrulitate* we are first required to diagnose and admit our failing, and subsequently to muse upon its shameful and painful effects, which moreover constitute the very antithesis of our expectations¹⁴. Then we must consider the opposite behaviour and bring to our minds the mysterious and solemn character of silence as well as the praises bestowed on reticence or on pithy and aphoristic speech. Garrulity is not checked by reins, but can be controlled by habituation (511E: ... ἔθει δεῖ κρατῆσαι τοῦ νοσήματος). Accordingly, accustom yourself to remain silent in various situations; practise answering not hastily, but thoughtfully and succinctly; avoid speaking and dilating on your favourite subjects¹⁵; and a last tip, albeit of rather doubtful usefulness: turn your garrulity into writing, for written *adoleschia* is less unpleasant (514C: ἦττον γὰρ ἀηδὲς ἔσται τὸ λάλλον ἐν τῷ φιλολόγῳ πλεονάζον). The gist, then, of Plutarch’s psychotherapy is: first ponder on the disadvantages of your ailment, and then take up exercises intended to habituate you out of it.

¹³ Literary/historical examples of resisting *dysōpia* are appropriately discussed in the third part of the essay, where Plutarch invigorates his suggested psychotherapy by providing models for imitation as well.

¹⁴ Cf. 510D: ... φιλεῖσθαι βουλόμενοι μισοῦνται, χαρίζεσθαι θέλοντες ἐνοχλοῦσι, θαυμάζεσθαι δοκούντες καταγελῶνται... ὥστε τοῦτο πρῶτον ἴαμα καὶ φάρμακόν ἐστι τοῦ πάθους, ὁ τῶν ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ γινομένων αἰσχυρῶν καὶ ὀδυνηρῶν ἐπιλογισμός.

¹⁵ Cf. 514AB: an interesting psychological insight, for whoever is inclined to dilate on familiar subjects discloses his being *φιλαντος*... καὶ φιλόδοξος. See also 513E.

The therapy of *polypragmosynē* is already adumbrated in the first part of *De curiositate*. And later, chapter 5 expands the idea of turning one's inquisitiveness inwards, by suggesting its further diverting to the marvels and secrets of nature or even to the countless evildoings and crimes of history, given that *polypragmosynē* is inclined to search out evil (see p. 215 below). But Plutarch's psychotherapy proper comprises again two things: a) reflection on the fault (dangers involved, the futility and uselessness of one's indiscreet inquiries), and b) acquiring habits which overpower (in fact undermine) one's inquisitiveness (520D: μέγιστον μέντοι πρὸς τὴν τοῦ πάθους ἀποτροπὴν ὁ ἐθισμός).

Some examples: refrain from reading the inscriptions on tombs or walls, accustom yourself not to look inside another's house as you walk past it, refrain from attending a street brawl, get accustomed to ignore useless shows and spectacles, exercise to check even normal curiosity (take your time to read the letters you receive). Remember, finally, that by being inquisitive you resemble a detested informer (cf. Arist., *Rh.* 1382a7: ...μισεῖ καὶ τὸν συκοφάντην ἅπας). But this last item, which concludes the whole essay (523AB), belongs to the province of reflection, of course (cf. n. 14). Some of the above features of a *polypragmōn* appear to sustain VAN HOOFF's view that the meaning and treatment of *polypragmosynē* in Plutarch's essay may have its roots in comedy (cf. p. 303 and nn. 28 and 34). But I would not go so far as to say that Plutarch's portrait of the *polypragmōn* is unrealistic and caricatural (p. 305), because this would defeat the serious ethical purpose of the treatise (cf. also pp. 215-16 below).

In *De vitioso pudore*, however, reflection and exercise (or *Krisis* und *Askesis*, to use Ingenkamp's terminology; [1971], 6 and 74-124), the two pivots on which Plutarch's suggested psychotherapy revolves, are presented in a reverse order¹⁶. First come some new habits and attitudes we ought to adopt – in other words, the training and practice we need in order to overcome our weakness (chapters 5-8)¹⁷ – and then fol-

¹⁶ This reversal is probably deliberate, because Plutarch, regarding *dysōpia* as a dangerous malady that causes many evils, makes haste to advise how it may be cured (530E: Ὡς οὖν πολλῶν κακῶν αἴτιον τὸ νόσημα τοῦτο ὃν πειρατέον ἀποβιάζεσθαι τῇ ἀσκήσει); note also that he mostly calls *dysōpia* a *pathos* (see p. 207 above). Klaerr (1974), however, sees this reversal as "la manifestation de la liberté de Plutarque", who nowhere in his writings applies with rigour a particular plan, but "s'abandonne volontiers aux détours de l'inspiration" (p. 24). Generally speaking, however, this remark is right on the mark. See also *ibid.* p. 24 n. 2.

¹⁷ The exercises suggested are graded (cf. also *De cur.* 520D). By not yielding to usual social pressures (e.g., to keep on drinking against your will or to praise

lows the reflection part, namely, a number of thoughts accompanied by historical examples¹⁸, which, if borne in mind and taken into due account, are also expected to facilitate our endeavour to resist *dysōpia* (chapters 9-19). One salutary reflection, for example, is to remember that affections often involve us in situations contrary to those we desire and strive after. Thus, as *philodoxia* may lead to disgrace, *philēdonia* to distress, *philonikia* to defeat, and so on, *dysōpia*, by fearing ill repute, may involve us in outright disrepute (532D; cf. p. 220)¹⁹. What is peculiar to the third part – that is, to the advice section of *De vitioso pudore* – is the great number of historical and literary examples, which, however, also pervade the central parts of the other two essays. But, whereas there Plutarch appeals to history and literature to illustrate the foibles concerned and exemplify the behaviour of the garrulous and the inquisitive, here he finds it more fitting to use historical examples in order to validate his advice on how *dysōpia* can be resisted.

Let us now concentrate on each one of our treatises in turn. In Theophrastus' *Characters*, there are four human types representing foibles related to speaking: the ἀδολέσχη wears out his interlocutor, whom he often does not know, with his trivial, incoherent, and foolish talk that concerns, more or less, himself and his affairs. The λάλος is not a simpleton (as the ἀδολέσχη seems to be), but suffers from real incontinence of speech (ἀκρασία λόγου)²⁰; he is unable to keep his mouth shut, and thus he either exasperates others or makes them doze off by

someone out of politeness; cf. 530F-531C), you will gradually be able to reject all unlawful requests. Cf. 532C: 'Ο γὰρ οὕτως ἐθισθεὶς καὶ ἀσκήσας δυσάλωτος ἔσται, μᾶλλον δὲ ἄλλως ἀνεπιχειρήτος, ἐν τοῖς μείλοσι.

¹⁸ These are mostly clever repartees of illustrious men towards those who importuned them with unlawful requests. We are called to bear them in mind and somehow imitate them (533A ff.).

¹⁹ As a matter of fact, we are often aware that the petitioner is a scoundrel and that our complying with his request out of bashfulness will damage us; this is why, in the case of *dysōpia*, regret is present right from the start (533D: Διὸ τῶν παθῶν μάλιστα τῷ δυσωπεῖσθαι τὸ μετανοεῖν οὐχ ὕστερον, ἀλλ' εὐθὺς ἐν οἷς πράττει πάρεστι; cf. also 535D). Another reflection: if the wicked do not abandon their vices for our sake (tell a miser to lend money without a bond, or an ambitious man to step down from office), why should we abandon our virtue for their sake (535BC)? A final one: we ought to remember our previous regrets and the damage suffered because of our *dysōpia* (536CD). Cf. *De cur.*, chapter 10 *ad init.*

²⁰ But this 'Theophrastean' definition (as well as most of the definitions of the *Characters*) is a later addition (cf. Rusten [1993²], 30-32 and 73 n. 1). In Plutarch τὸ περὶ τοὺς λόγους ἀκρατὲς καὶ ἀόριστον emblemizes drunkenness, which is linked with *adoleschia* on account of this very characteristic (503E); cf. also 508B. It is worth noting here that, for Plutarch, *polypragmosynē* is also a form of incontinence (519E: ἀκρασίας γὰρ τὸ πολυπραγμανεῖν).

his incessant talk. The *λογοποιός* is the newsmaker, the rumourmonger who invents untrue reports or events; and, finally, the *κακολόγος* is the evil-speaker, the person who enjoys disseminating bad news, relishes slanderous and malicious gossip, and is generally bent towards presenting everything in the worst possible light.

Plutarch's *ἀδολέσχης* (invariably called *λάλος* and *φλύαρος* as well)²¹ combines all the characteristics of the Theophrastean types²², except, perhaps, those of the newsmaker²³. But he also has an important particularity that is missing from the portraits of Theophrastos: sometimes because of his inability to control his tongue and keep his mouth shut, but more often out of frivolity, thoughtlessness, or misjudgement, the Plutarchean *adoleschēs* divulges secrets that incur his ruin²⁴.

Yet, its consequences aside, why is garrulity *per se* an affection (*πάθος*) and a malady (*νόσημα*) of the soul (cf. pp. 206-207 above), comparable moreover to such diseases as avarice (*φιλαργυρία*), ambition (*φιλοδοξία*), and lasciviousness (*φιληδονία*)? The more so, since the garrulous is well-intentioned, his aim being, as we are told, to gratify others and gain their love and admiration (see n. 14). Be that as it may, wherever we encounter examples of passions or affections or emotions in both Plutarch and other authors, we usually hear of anger, envy, malice, pity, cowardice, ambition, contentiousness, avarice, hatred, spitefulness, insolence, sexual desire, profligacy, etc.²⁵. In Aristotle, for instance, *ἀκρασία* (with no qualifier) denotes incontinence or self-indulgence only in bodily pleasures²⁶, whereas the qualified *akrasia* (e.g., incontinence in anger, honour, gain – but never in speech) is an error (*ἁμαρτία*) and not a vice proper²⁷. In any case, outside Plutarch's essay, talkativeness,

²¹ Especially for *lalos*, cf. 502F, 503D, 509A, 514C; for *phluaros*, 508C, 510C, 511D. Other synonyms are *μωρολογία* (504B) and *γλωσσάλγία* (510A).

²² For *lalos*, see 502F, 507C-E; for *kakologos*, 504F, 505B, 509A-C.

²³ Yet 507D (... προσέθηκε τὸν κοινὸν ἀπάσης ἀδολεσχίας ἐπωδὸν, τὸ 'ταῦτα μηδενὶ φράσης ἀλλὰ σιώπα') does bring to mind Theophr. *Char.* 8,9 (Δεῖ δ' αὐτὸν σε μόνον εἶδέναι).

²⁴ Inability to control his tongue and keep his mouth shut: 508AB (for he knew it was a secret, as 508B makes clear). Frivolity/thoughtlessness: 505B, 505CD, 508F, 509F. Misjudgement: 505CD, 508D-F, 509DE.

²⁵ As far as Plutarch is concerned, see, e.g., the affections mentioned in *Animine an corp.*, esp. 501A-D.

²⁶ Cf. Arist., *EN* 1147b22-24; 1149b25-26 (καὶ ὅτι ἔστιν ἐγκράτεια καὶ ἡ ἀκρασία περὶ ἐπιθυμίας καὶ ἡδονὰς σωματικῆς, δῆλον); 1150a13; *MM* 1202b3-4. Cf. also Ps.-Pl., *Def.* 416a.

²⁷ Cf. Arist., *EN* 1145b20; 1148a3 ff.; 1148b10; *MM* 1202b7-9 (τιμὴ μὲν οὖν καὶ δόξα καὶ ἀρχὴ καὶ χρήματα καὶ περὶ ὅσα ἄλλα ἀκρατεῖς λέγονται, οὐκ εἰσὶν ψεκτά, αἱ δ' ἡδοναὶ αἱ σωματικαὶ ψεκταί). From another viewpoint, even the unqualified *akrasia* is not a real vice, because the *akratēs* resists his passion before succumbing to it (cf. *EN* 1151a5-

however incessant or foolish or harassing, is nowhere else described, to my knowledge at least, as an affection or a disease of the soul²⁸. Plutarch himself gives two indirect reasons for this characterization, but neither is plausible, let alone convincing. The first is because garrulity is dangerous, ridiculous, and detestable, which all are supposed to be features of passions at large²⁹, and the second because it can be combated by proper training and exercise like, again, all the other affections of the soul³⁰.

Why then does Plutarch call *adoleschia* an affection and treat it as such? I would suggest two reasons, which, as will be seen, are equally valid in the case of the other foibles. One is philosophical, as it were, and the other peculiar to Plutarch's idiosyncrasy. The philosophical reason is that, in Plutarch's eyes, controlling one's tongue manifests in fact the overall control of reason – in other words, the preponderance of the rational part of the *psyche*. Accordingly, incontinence of speech indicates lack of this control, which in turn suggests a disarranged *psyche* governed, or at least influenced, by the irrational element³¹, a situation to be strongly condemned, of course, by a faithful follower of Plato. Plutarch adroitly proves his point with the most suitable example of Odysseus sitting admirably composed beside Penelope only a few days before the slaughter of the suitors. Odysseus controlled, Plutarch tells us after quoting the relevant Homeric lines (*Od.* XIX, 210-212), every limb of his body, with all parts in perfect obedience and submission, his eyes ordered not to weep, his tongue not to utter a sound, his heart not to tremble; for his reason extended even to his irrational or involuntary movements and made everything amenable and subservient

8: ὅτι μὲν οὖν κακία ἢ ἀκρασία οὐκ ἔστι, φανερόν (ἀλλὰ πῆ ἴσως)· τὸ μὲν γὰρ παρὰ προαίρεσιν τὸ δὲ κατὰ τὴν προαίρεσιν ἔστιν). For the Stoics also, *akrasia* is not a primary, but a subordinate (to *akolasia*) vice (cf. *SVF* III, 265 [p. 65.19]).

²⁸ With the exception, perhaps, of the slanderous talkativeness (*διαβολή*), which betrays hatred (cf. *Arist., Rh.* 1382a1ff.). On the other hand, among other lovable characters one also finds *καὶ τοὺς μὴ κακολόγους* (*ibid.* 1381b5-7). The Stoic lists of affections (*πάθη*) feature no term akin to *adoleschia* either (cf. *SVF* III, 391ff. [p. 95-100]).

²⁹ Cf. 504F: Τῶν δ' ἄλλων παθῶν καὶ νοσημάτων τὰ μὲν ἔστι ἐπικίνδυνα τὰ δὲ μισητὰ τὰ δὲ καταγέλαστα, τῇ δ' ἀδολεσχίᾳ πάντα συμβέβηκε.

³⁰ 510C: τῶν γὰρ παθῶν κρίσει καὶ ἀσκήσει περιγινόμεθα. Cf. Ingenkamp (1971), 74ff.; Pettine (1992), 151 s.f.; Klaerr (1974), 4 and 23. Also 511E: ... ἄλλ' ἔθει δεῖ κρατῆσαι τοῦ νοσήματος.

³¹ For the composition of *psyche*, see, conveniently, *De virtute morali*, esp. 441F-442E.

to itself (Helmbold's LCL translation)³². And, further below, Plutarch propounds that reason should be a permanent barrier in the tongue's way³³. As a matter of fact, if reason had played its role as such a barrier, many characters of his historical examples would not have perished as they did (see p. 212 with n. 24 above).

As for the idiosyncratic reason, it is linked with a fundamental characteristic of Plutarch's nature and personality, namely, his practical spirit combined with his loyalty to common sense³⁴. I have discussed this aspect of Plutarch elsewhere (see (1991), 175-86), but here suffice it to say that the very titles of several of his essays, and the amount of practical advice or perspective contained in nearly all his *Moralia*, clearly demonstrate his pragmatic ethics³⁵. It can hardly be doubted that Plutarch's moral essays mainly aimed at two things: individual ethical improvement and harmonious human relationships. In other words, Plutarch was chiefly interested in helping people to lead good lives both as individuals and as members of a wider society³⁶. Accordingly, apart from appreciating individual moral conduct, he attributes equal importance to one's performance as a social being, for he also believes that moral excellence is tried and proven continually in our daily intercourse with our fellow men. He is, moreover, aware that the desired harmony in human relationships is best secured and maintained not (so much) by such cardinal virtues as courage (*andreia*) and temperance (*sōphrosyne*), for example, but

³² 506AB: ... οὕτω τὸ σῶμα μεστὸν ἦν αὐτῷ πανταχόθεν ἐγκρατείας, καὶ πάντ' ἔχων ὁ λόγος εὐπειθῆ καὶ ὑποχείρια προσέταττε τοῖς ὄμμασι μὴ δακρύνειν, τῇ γλῶττι μὴ φθέγγεσθαι, τῇ καρδίᾳ μὴ τρέμειν... μέχρι τῶν ἀλόγων κινήματων διήκοντος τοῦ λογισμοῦ καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὸ αἷμα πεπονημένου κατήκοον ἑαυτῷ καὶ χειρόρηθες (cf. also *De virt. mor.* 442DE and *De tranq. an.* 475A).

³³ Cf. 510A: διὸ δεῖ πεφράχθαι, καὶ τὸν λογισμὸν ὡς πρόβολον ἐμποδῶν ἀεὶ τῇ γλῶττι κείμενον ἐπισχεῖν τὸ ῥεῦμα καὶ τὸν ὄλισθον αὐτῆς. Cf. also how Socrates controlled his thirst: he would drink only after he had drawn up and poured out the first bucketful, so that his irrational part (τὸ ἄλογον) might acquire the habit of τὸν τοῦ λόγου καιρὸν ἀναμένειν (512F).

³⁴ Or "le bon sens est sa règle", as Gréard (1874), 382 puts it. Cf. Russell (1973), 85, and Trench (1873), 130 (cf. n. 63).

³⁵ Titles: *How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend, How to Profit by One's Enemies, How the Young Should Study Poetry, How a Man May Become Aware of His Progress in Virtue, How to Praise Oneself Inoffensively, How to Control One's Anger, How to Keep One's Peace of Mind*, etc. Advice: besides the essays discussed in this paper, see also the practical perspective of his *Health Precepts, Marital Precepts, and Political Precepts*. Cf. also his attacks on the Stoics and the Epicureans: the dogmatism of the former not only militates against common sense, but also renders their teachings useless; on the other hand, the tenets of the latter condemn man to inactivity.

³⁶ Cf. Hartman (1916), 668: "altiora spectavit [sc. P.] nihilque magni fecit quod non ad aeternam hominum pertineret salutem et felicitatem".

rather through less pretentious qualities, such as considerateness, kindness, moderation, tolerance. And the glorification of *praotes* and *philanthropia* in his *Lives* is directly related, I would argue, to these very beliefs. Similarly, he also observes that people are not alienated from each other only by acts of injustice or a display of malice, but perhaps more often through the impact of minor failings such as garrulity or indiscreet curiosity. Finally, Plutarch assumed morality to be one, undivided and unchangeable (cf. Russell [1966], 142), and did not make a sharp distinction between major and minor ethics. He believed that such a distinction was superficial and that a person susceptible to the weaknesses of avarice, inquisitiveness, hot temper, or immoderate bashfulness could never attain ethical fulfilment. He agreed, then, with the Stoics that moral excellence was one and undivided, but, contrary to them, he also saw it from a progressive perspective (cf. his *De profectibus in virtute*). This ethical fulfilment is not given by nature or fortune, but has to be conquered step by step through the most personal efforts of the moral agent, the whole human being. Hence the importance which Plutarch attaches to denouncing those minor foibles (cf. Gréard [1874], 204).

On the other hand, the characterization of *polypragmosynē*³⁷ as a disease appears to be more justified, since, according to Plutarch's definition, inquisitiveness is free from neither envy nor malice (515D: φιλομάθειά τις ἐστὶν ἀλλοτρίων κακῶν, οὔτε φθόνου δοκοῦσα καθαρεύειν νόσος οὔτε κακοηθείας)³⁸. As a matter of fact, it is Plutarch's psychological interpretation of *polypragmosynē* that dissociates it from mere meddling and renders it a vice. The Plutarchean πολυπράγμων is an ill-willed person (516A: τῇ κακονοίᾳ τὴν περιεργίαν ὥσπερ ὀφθαλμὸν ἐντίθησι), and therefore interested in inquiring about nothing except whatever is

³⁷ As a synonym to *polypragmosynē*, Plutarch occasionally uses the words *περιεργία* (516A, 519A), *τὸ περιεργον* (517E), and *τὸ φιλοπευθές... καὶ φιλόπραγμον* (515F). It is worth noting that the Theophrastean *περιεργος* (the officious, the overzealous) has nothing to do with the Plutarchean one. *Lamprias Catalogue* 151 features a *Περὶ περιεργίας*, "conceivably an alternative title for *Περὶ πολυπραγμοσύνης*", according to Sandbach (1969), 22, or the title of a non-extant separate essay, according to Volpe Cacciatore (in Van Hoof [2008], 302 n. 22).

³⁸ Cf. also 518C, where inquisitiveness is described as fondness of prying into whatever is hidden (*φιλοπευστία τῶν ἐν ἀποκρύψει καὶ λανθάνοντων*); and what is hidden, Plutarch implies, must be something bad, since nobody conceals a good possession (*οὔδεις δ' ἀγαθὸν ἀποκρύπτει κεκτημένος*). See also 519C and E, where inquisitiveness is compared with adultery but also with evil speaking (see n. 53 below). Cf. also nn. 15 and 22 above.

evil, contains evil, or smacks of evil³⁹, provided, however, that this evil always concerns the other and never himself. In reality, the inquisitive is so wicked, and his soul so full of all kinds of vices, that he simply cannot bear to face them. Thus, shuddering and frightened at what is within, the inquisitive feeds his malice on the evil he finds without, more specifically on the troubles of others⁴⁰. In other words, prying into the affairs of others is in fact a way of escaping from oneself, a very unphilosophical attitude indeed, given that the aim of philosophy, according to Socrates at least, was first to recognize one's own faults and then try to get rid of them (516C: ἐπιγνώναι τὰ ἑαυτοῦ κακὰ καὶ ἀπαλλαγῆναι)⁴¹. This is why our *polypragmōn* has no curiosity about the movements of the heavenly bodies or about the ways by which the plants grow and bloom (p. 210 above); because he can find no evil (οὐθέν κακόν) in those things (517E). Yet, by desiring to search out the troubles of others, the inquisitive reveals his malice, a brother affection of envy and jealousy, offspring of his own vicious nature⁴².

As far as *dysōpia* is concerned⁴³, although Plutarch almost exclusively describes it as a *pathos* (see p. 207), he is at the same time careful to point out a peculiarity of this affection (namely its affinity with modesty), which of necessity requires special treatment (see n. 11). For, unlike indiscreet curiosity, which springs from a malicious nature, excessive bashfulness is a blemish of a good nature (528D; p. 208) or, to use Plutarch's own words in the proem of the *Life of Cimon*, a deficiency of virtue rather than a base product of vice⁴⁴. In fact, what makes *dysōpia*

³⁹ Cf. 517E: ἀλλ' εἰ δεῖ πάντως τὸ περιέργον ἐν φαύλοις τισὶν... αἰεὶ νέμεσθαι καὶ διατρίβειν... For the association of *polypragmosynē* with evil, cf. also 517F, 518B (τὰ τῶν πολυπραγμόνων ὡς τὸς φαυλοτάτους λόγους ἐπισπάται). See also previous note.

⁴⁰ Cf. 516D: ... ἀλλ' ἡ ψυχὴ γέμουσα κακῶν παντοδαπῶν καὶ φρίττουσα καὶ φοβουμένη τὰ ἐνδον ἐκπηρᾷ θύραζε καὶ πλανᾷτα περὶ τὰλλότρια, βόσκουσα καὶ πιαίνουσα τὸ κακότηδες...; and 516E: τὰ κρυπτόμενα καὶ λανθάνοντα κακὰ πάσης οἰκίας ἐκλέγουσι. Cf. also 519F.

⁴¹ For everyone is full of faults, according to Democritus (cf. *Animine an corp.* 500D: ἂν δὲ σαυτὸν ἐνδοθεν ἀνοίξης, ποικίλον τι καὶ πολυπαθὲς κακῶν ταμιεῖον εὐρήσεις καὶ θησαύρισμα). What is important, though, is to examine your inside and recognize this fact (515E: οὕτω σοι τὰ μὲν ἐστὶν ἀπὸ φθόνου κακὰ κείμενα, τὰ δ' ἀπὸ ζηλοτυπίας, τὰ δ' ἀπὸ δειλίας, τὰ δ' ἀπὸ μικρολογίας: ταῦτα ἐπέλθε, ταῦτα ἀναθεώρησον); this is the first step towards one's cure, as we have already seen (*De gar.* 510CD, p. 209 with n. 14 above).

⁴² 518C: κακῶν οὖν ἱστορίας ὁ πολυπράγμων ὀρεγόμενος, ἐπιχαιρεκακίας συνῆχεται πάθει, φθόνου καὶ βασκανίας ἀδελφῶ... ἀμφοτέρα δ' ἐκ πάθους ἀνημέρου καὶ θηριώδους γεγένηται τῆς κακοηθείας.

⁴³ Zucchelli (1965), 215 rightly observes that Plutarch's essay constitutes the very first treatment of this notion (and the only one, as Ziegler [1964/1951], 146/782 had already ascertained), which presupposes a rich personal experience of this phenomenon (cf. also *ibid.* pp. 224-25 and 229). Hence, in agreement with De Lacy – Einarson (1959), 45, he plausibly regards this treatise as belonging to Plutarch's maturity (p. 216).

⁴⁴ *Cim.* 2.5: ... ἐλλείμματα μᾶλλον ἀρετῆς τινος ἢ κακίας πονηρέματα.

an undesirable character trait is the element of the excess involved (528E: ὑπερβολὴ γὰρ τοῦ αἰσχύνεσθαι τὸ δυσωπεῖσθαι... [τὴν] αἰσχυντηλίαν μέχρι τοῦ μηδ' ἀντιβλέπειν τοῖς δεομένοις ὑπέικουσαν [δυσωπίαν ὠνόμασαν]), on account of which shyness drifts into undue submission and compliance with any request (unlawful ones included), and as such it becomes the cause of bad behaviour (528D: αἰτίαν... μοχθηρίας) and many evils (see n. 16); for those who are too shy and comply with every petition make the same mistakes as the shameless, the only difference being that the former rue their errors and grieve over them, while the latter take pleasure in theirs⁴⁵.

Dysōpia, therefore, is a negative quality only because of its consequences. And this Plutarch aptly demonstrates by observing that when Homer says that modesty greatly harms and benefits men, he puts its harmfulness first⁴⁶. Appropriately so, Plutarch comments, for modesty “becomes helpful and profitable to men, only when reason removes its overplus and leaves us with the right amount” (LCL transl.); in other words, when reason transforms it from *dysōpia* to proper modesty. This once again brings to the fore the important role of reason, by the directives of which Plutarch weighs and assesses moral conduct⁴⁷. Thus, as the therapy of garrulity is ultimately effected with the help of reason (see pp. 213-14), so in the case of *dysōpia* it is reason again that will treat one's excessive shyness or overscrupulousness and render it harmless; for a good nature (and *dysōpia*, as we saw [p. 208], is a blemish of such a nature) responds well to the cultivation of its rational part⁴⁸. Similarly, as excessive talkativeness betrays a lack of the control of reason (see p. 213), so immoderate bashfulness prevents us from using our reason (532AB: ... ἡ δυσωπία... περὶ τὰ μείζονα παραιρεῖται τὸ συμφέρον τοῦ λογισμοῦ); for we often act contrary to our better judgement, sometimes lest we should appear offensive⁴⁹, and sometimes because we allow the shamelessness of the petitioner (although we loathe and resent it) to bring down and overpower our reason (533D: ... ἀλλὰ δυσχεραίνοντες καὶ βαρυνόμενοι τὴν ἀναίδειαν ἀνατρέπουσαν ἡμῶν καὶ καταβιάζομένην τὸν λογισμὸν).

⁴⁵ 528D: τὰ γὰρ αὐτὰ τοῖς ἀναισχύντοις οἱ αἰσχυνόμενοι πολλακίς ἀμαρτάνουσι, πλὴν ὅτι τὸ λυπεῖσθαι καὶ ἀλγεῖν ἐφ' οἷς διαμαρτάνουσι τούτοις πρόσεστιν, οὐχ ὡς ἐκείνοις τὸ ἡδεσθαι.

⁴⁶ 529D: ‘αἰδώς, ἥτ' ἀνδρας μέγα σίνεται ἡδ' ὄνησι’. This line comes in fact from Hesiod, *Op.* 318, but Plutarch apparently believed that he had taken it from *Iliad* XXIV, 44-45.

⁴⁷ See mainly his *De virtute morali* and cf. Zucchelli (1965), 226.

⁴⁸ 528D: ... καὶ λόγῳ παρασχέιν ἐργάσιμον ἑαυτὴν ἐπιεικῶς δυναμένης [sc. χρηστῆς φύσεως].

⁴⁹ Some examples: when ill, we call in our family doctor and not the specialist; instead of choosing competent teachers for our children, we use those who beg for employment; instead of hiring the best lawyer for our case, we commit it to the unskilled son of a friend or relative in order to do him a favour, etc. Cf. also 531E.

This and 532AB above eloquently illustrate the motivation underlying *dysōpia*. We yield to a request, now because we are flattered and wish to be obliging and agreeable, and now because we are timorous of the brazen importunity of the petitioner (cf. also 535D-536C). Yet we ought to make a firm stand against both and yield neither to intimidation nor to flattery (535EF). Modesty (*αἰδώς*) is also some fear of disrepute (cf. Arist., *EN* I 128b12: φόβος τις ἀδοξίας) but the *αἰδήμων* (who shows proper modesty) is interested only in the opinions of the right people, not in those of everyone, as the *καταπλήξ* (cf. n. 12) is (cf. *EN* I 108a35: ὁ πάντα αἰδούμενος; *EE* I 233b28-30: ... ὁ δὲ πάσης [sc. δόξης] ὁμοίως [sc. φροντίζων] καταπλήξ, ὁ δὲ τῆς τῶν φαινομένων ἐπεικῶν αἰδήμων). The Stoics made a distinction between *αἰσχύνη* (*SVF* III, 409 [p. 99.1]: φόβος ἀδοξίας) and *αἰδώς* (*SVF* III, 432 [p. 105.40]: εὐλάβεια ὀρθοῦ ψόγου). Cf. Zucchelli (1965), 220 and notes *ibid*.

But reason intervenes correctively also in the case of *polypragmosynē*. Since inquisitiveness is linked with information supplied by the senses, the more we use our minds, the less we need our senses (521D: τὴν αἴσθησιν ὀλίγιστα κινούσιν οἱ πλείστα τῇ διανοίᾳ χρώμενοι). It follows, then, that our inquisitiveness will drastically be curtailed if it is trained to obey reason (521E: μεγάλα δ' ὠφελήθησῃ τὸ πολύπραγμον... ὑπακούειν τῷ λογισμῷ συνειζόμενον)⁵⁰.

Despite their essential differences, *adoleschia* and *polypragmosynē* share common aspects too⁵¹. Perhaps the most apparent one is that both foibles prevent those involved in them from fulfilling their desires. The garrulous man, for instance, yearns for listeners, but whenever he approaches a company, people either run away or remain silent to avoid furnishing him a hold (502EF). Similarly, when a snooper turns up, people stop talking about their affairs or some confidential matter, so that they may not give the *polypragmōn* food for gossip (519D). Further, there is also a certain interrelation between garrulity and inquisitiveness. In *De garrulitate* we see that garrulity may also give rise to inquisitiveness, for the garrulous wish to hear many things

⁵⁰ As a matter of fact, the role of reason in combating one's faults is self-evident. See generally the reflection sections of our treatises, and esp. *De gar.* 510D: to get rid of our passions (and faults), we must first realize, with the help of reason, their harmfulness and shamefulness (Οὐδείς γὰρ ἐθίζεται φεύγειν καὶ ἀποτριβεσθαι τῆς ψυχῆς ὁ μὴ δυσχεραίνει. δυσχεραίνουεν δὲ τὰ πάθη, ὅταν τὰς βλάβας καὶ τὰς αἰσχύνας τὰς ἀπ' αὐτῶν τῷ λόγῳ κατανοήσωμεν). See also n. 14 and pp. 213-14 with nn. 32-33 above. Cf. also Ingenkamp (1971), 74-80.

⁵¹ As Helmbold (1939) observes, the respective essays "are akin in many ways; portions of the later treatise [which he takes to be *De garrulitate*] are merely a reshaping of ideas and commonplaces which the earlier had adumbrated" (p. 471).

so that they may have many things to tell⁵². In *De curiositate*, however, the same phenomenon is viewed from the opposite side, and garrulity, in the form of evil-speaking, is here presented not as the starting point, but as a necessary concomitant of indiscreet curiosity; for, what the inquisitive zealously search out they delight to tell everybody else⁵³. In the former essay garrulity is the primary fault, while inquisitiveness is presented as a spin-off or side effect⁵⁴; in the latter, however, the primary fault is inquisitiveness, which naturally engenders evil-speaking, given that indiscreet curiosity arises from one's malignity (see above pp. 215-16)⁵⁵.

All in all, Plutarch's moral treatises are well organized: his argumentation is clear and coherent, his various observations (and here I include his comments on the historical/literary examples which he adduces) are more or less judicious and on the mark, and his psychological insights perceptive and remarkable⁵⁶. Yet, his zeal to substantiate his points with multiple arguments and as many practical examples as possible occasionally leads him to some unfortunate comparisons, and even contradictions or far-fetched and groundless assertions (see also p. 213). In the second chapter of *De garrulitate*, for instance, Plutarch remarks that, contrary to other maladies of the soul, such as *philargyria*, *philodoxia*, and *philēdonia*, where those affected may fulfil their desires all the same (502E: τὸ γοῦν τυγχάνειν ὧν ἐφίενται περίεστι), the garrulous man can hardly be as successful, because his prospective listeners tend

⁵² 508C: τῆ δ' ἀδολεσχία καὶ ἡ περιεργία κακὸν οὐκ ἔλαττον πρόσεστι· πολλὰ γὰρ ἀκούειν θέλουσιν, ἵνα πολλὰ λέγειν ἔχωσι.

⁵³ Cf. 519C: τῆ δὲ περιεργίᾳ τὴν κακολογίαν ἀνάγκη συνακολουθεῖν· ἂ γὰρ ἠδέως ἀκούουσιν ἠδέως λαλοῦσι, καὶ ἂ παρ' ἄλλων σπουδῆ συλλέγουσι πρὸς ἐτέρους μετὰ χαρᾶς ἐκφέρουσιν.

⁵⁴ But the circle is vicious; garrulity gives rise to inquisitiveness, but inquisitiveness will furnish the garrulous with material to rattle on.

⁵⁵ The interrelation between *adoleschia* and *polypragmosynē* can also be seen in that they both constitute a form of incontinence (see n. 20), and, moreover, in that aspects of the behaviour of the *polypragmōn* (519AB) bring to mind the behaviour of the Theophrastean *λογοποιός* (cf. *Characters* 8,2-3 and n. 23 above).

⁵⁶ See, for instance, 512C (*adoleschia* as impertinence), 520E (the harm from reading useless things), 533E (*dysōpia* makes us promise things beyond our power), 534B (it is easy to say 'no' to obscure or humble people). Cf. also n. 15. Mounard (1959) may indeed exaggerate when she calls Plutarch "un théoricien de l'âme" (see Zucchelli [1965], 225 n. 46, and Klaerr [1974], 23 n. 3), but only if we understand this statement in Aristotelian terms; for, Aristotle aside, she rightly affirms that Plutarch was "plus qu'un observateur" (*ibid.*), since several of his psychological judgements have gone through the filter of philosophy, if they do not directly emanate from philosophical premises (see also p. 213 above).

to avoid him (p. 218)⁵⁷. Common experience would not agree with Plutarch here, because although the garrulous often get the opposite of what they expect from their audience (see n. 14), their propensity and desire for chattering is nevertheless fulfilled. Besides, whereas in *De garrulitate* the lovers of money, pleasure, and glory may fulfil their desires, in *De vitioso pudore* we are told that the same characters find themselves in situations which are the exact opposite of what they are seeking (532CD: *πᾶσι μὲν τοῖς πάθεσιν ἀκολουθεῖ καὶ τοῖς νοσήμασιν ἂ φεύγειν δι' αὐτῶν δοκοῦμεν, ἀδοξία φιλοδοξίας καὶ λύπαι φιληδονίας καὶ πόνοι μαλακίας καὶ φιλονικίας ἦτται καὶ καταδίκαι*. See also p. 211).

Plutarch's essay on talkativeness is at the same time a eulogy of silence and reticence. As a matter of fact, half of *De garrulitate* (chapters 7-18) is a comparative consideration of the advantages of reticence *vis-à-vis* the utmost perils of *adoleschia*. All appear to revolve around the motto *οὐδείς γὰρ οὕτω λόγος ὠφέλησε ῥηθεὶς ὡς πολλοὶ σιωπηθέντες* (505F)⁵⁸. This being so, Plutarch's attack on garrulity occasionally takes extreme forms. Here is a comparison with drunkenness (*μέθη*) and madness (*μανία*): madness (which, by implication, is worse than anger) is a bad thing and certainly to be avoided; drunkenness is madness of short duration, but more culpable than madness, because it is voluntary. The worst and most dangerous aspect of drunkenness is the incontinence of speech it involves; it follows, then, that garrulity, being incontinence of speech *par excellence*, is far worse and far more dangerous than drunkenness and madness (503D-F)⁵⁹.

Many men of letters, before and after Plutarch, devoted their lives to studying, reviewing, and exploiting in various ways the bulk of classical literature. Plutarch, however, differs from most of them in that he did not indulge in the study of antiquity for professional reasons, or antiquarian and scientific interest only, or out of a desire to be wise, or even an inner yearning for truth; he did so in view of a practical purpose, namely, in order to glean from Greek and Roman authors as many moral lessons as he could, and effect through them the ethical improvement of himself and his contemporaries⁶⁰. And he tried to accomplish this by strongly emphasizing the importance of

⁵⁷ A similar observation is also made in *De cur.* 519D with regard to the inquisitive (see p. 218).

⁵⁸ Cf. also *De gar.* 515A; *De tuenda* 125D; and [*De lib. educ.*] 10F: *καὶ γὰρ αὐτὸ σιωπήσας μὲν οὐδείς μετενόησε, λαλήσαντες δὲ παμπληθεῖς*. Further, Pettine (1992), 141 n. 81 reminds us here of Hor., *Ars poet.* 390: *nescit vox missa reverti*.

⁵⁹ Somewhat far-fetched (if only because it is hard to observe it) is also the following exhortation in the therapy section of *polypragmosynē*: "Refuse to hear even words that have supposedly been spoken about yourself" (522B).

⁶⁰ See the proem to *Aem.-Tim.* (1-3) and cf. n. 36.

virtuous conduct and skilfully connecting it with the great men and achievements of the two races. Plutarch indeed aims at man's moral edification, but he is not the typical moralist, who, the whip of moral law in his hand, sermonizes *ex cathedra* and terrorizes his audience with the threat of the predominance of evil. Nor does he ever set up unbending rules or entirely perfect – and therefore unreal – models of ethical behaviour. Plutarch is convinced that perfect and absolute virtue is unattainable⁶¹, and so his admonitions are always within the capabilities of human nature, which has produced no character absolutely good and indisputably virtuous⁶². This is why the majority of his works have always appealed to ordinary people and to common sense⁶³.

If all the above are taken into due account, we will perhaps be more indulgent towards Plutarch and his treatises on popular moral philosophy. Despite the ethical preoccupations and the relevant didacticism of the author, and regardless of the overabundance of practical advice and some hackneyed arguments, these writings, far from being simply a manual of commonplaces⁶⁴, perhaps constitute, if compared with other similar works of later and more modern times, the best specimen of the essay genre.

⁶¹ Cf. *Cim.* 2.4:...ἐπεὶ χαλεπὸν ἔστι, μᾶλλον δ' ἴσως ἀμήχανον, ἀμεμφῆ καὶ καθαρὸν ἀνδρὸς ἐπιδείξαι βίον. Cf. Russell (1973), 85: "He did not believe in the perfectibility of human nature".

⁶² Cf. *Cim.* 2.5:...καλὸν οὐδὲν εἰλικρινὲς οὐδ' ἀναμφισβήτητον εἰς ἀρετὴν ἦθος γεγονὸς ἀποδίδωσιν (sc. human nature). See also previous note.

⁶³ As Trench (1873), 130 aptly put it, "Plutarch's advices are both practical and practicable. Practical because they bear directly on the matter in hand and are well adapted to bring about the result desired. And practicable for they make no too difficult demand on men and are fairly within reach of all who are seeking in earnest to shun evil".

⁶⁴ See esp. Gréard's (1874) judicious criticism of this view (pp. 217 and 409 ff.).

APPENDIX

Essay division	<i>De garrulitate</i>	<i>De curiositate</i>	<i>De vitioso pudore</i>
Part I: Definition and earmarks	1-6: 502B-504E	1-2: 515B-516C 4 (partly) 6-9: 518A-519F	1-3: 528D-530B
Part II: Illustrative examples	7-15: 504F-510C	3-4: 516D-517C 6-9 (partly)	3 (partly) 4: 530B-E
Part III: Advice for therapy	16-23: 510C-515A	5: 517C-F 10-16: 520A-523B	5-19: 530E-536D (+ examples of resisting <i>dysōpia</i>)

Plutarchs Schrift gegen das Borgen (Περὶ τοῦ μὴ δεῖν δανείζεσθαι): Adressaten, Lehrziele und Genos

H.G. INGENKAMP

1. Die Adressaten

a) Einleitung: Zum Stil des Traktats

Will man den Leser- oder Hörerkreis einer Schrift feststellen, den ein Autor sich wünscht, so gibt in den meisten Fällen der Blick auf ihre rhetorische Aufbereitung eine erste Auskunft. Nun führt die Frage nach dem Stil eines literarischen Werks zu verschiedenartigen und teilweise komplizierten Analysen, die im Rahmen dieser Untersuchung nicht möglich und, weil die Verhältnisse relativ einfach liegen, auch nicht nötig ist. Es sei deshalb nur darauf hingewiesen, daß der uns jetzt beschäftigende Traktat durch die Verwendung nicht weniger „Sprungbrett-Argumente“ auffällt, was ihn der in einem ähnlichen Rahmen untersuchten Schrift über die Seelenruhe (Περὶ εὐθυμίας) anzunähern scheint¹. Mit dem Ausdruck „Sprungbrett“ oder „Sprungbrett-Argument“ habe ich Einleitungen in einen Gedanken bezeichnet, die oft in einem Zitat, einem Vergleich oder einer Anekdote bestehen und bei näherem Hinsehen nicht recht oder nur oberflächlich zu diesem Gedanken passen. Das etwas weit hergeholte Zitat oder die nicht ganz passende Anekdote bzw. auch der nicht ganz passende historische Parallelfall soll dann auf lockere Weise in den folgenden, wichtigeren Gedanken einführen. Plutarch scheint diese Prozedur in *De tranquillitate animi* οὐκ ἀηδῶς δεῦρο μετενεγκεῖν „([einen Gedanken] auf heiter-angenehme Weise in den augenblicklichen Zusammenhang herübertransportieren)“ zu nennen.

Der Traktat über das Borgen (827D-832A) beginnt bereits mit einem solchen Sprungbrett. Platon, so Plutarch, habe in den *Nomoi* verordnet,

¹ Ich beziehe mich auf einen Vortrag mit dem Titel „Οὐκ ἀηδῶς δεῦρο μετενεγκεῖν. Sprungbrett-Argumente bei Plutarch“, den ich im Rahmen eines Symposions 2001 in Leuven gehalten habe.

daß man sich vom Grund und Boden eines Nachbarn so lange kein Wasser holen (μεταλαμβάνειν) dürfe, wie man selbst nicht, um Wasser zu finden, auf eigenem Land bis hinab zur Lehmschicht gegraben habe (Platon denkt an kostenloses Wasserholen im Normalfall, bei Wasserknappheit allerdings auch an den Ankauf von Wasser zu einem von den ἀγορόμοι festgesetzten Preis, Lg. 844b). Wenn dem aber so sei, fährt Plutarch fort, so müsse es auch ein Gesetz gegen das Borgen geben, „damit man nicht bei Fremden borgt und somit an anderer Leute Quellen geht, solange man nicht die eigenen Ressourcen genau geprüft und alles Verwendbare zusammengebracht hat“. Das Borgen ist nun aber nicht, wie im Fall des Wasserholens, eine Beeinträchtigung des Besitzes derjenigen, die das Wasser spenden (wie geringfügig sie auch sein mag), sondern ein lukratives Geschäft für die Kreditgeber, und gerade darauf legt Plutarch auf den sich anschließenden Seiten immer wieder Wert. Bedenkt man noch, daß Plutarch bald sagen wird, daß nur Kreditwürdige, also Besitzende, borgen, andere, die nichts haben, dagegen keinen Kredit bekommen, so wird die Diskrepanz zum Ausgangszitat noch deutlicher. Akzeptiert wird dergleichen entweder bei gläubiger Unaufmerksamkeit (darauf setzt der Kapuziner in „Wallensteins Lager“) oder, wenn Bereitschaft vorhanden ist, dergleichen heiter zu nehmen, eben als ein οὐκ ἀηδῶς δεῦρο μετενεγκεῖν des Platonzitats.

Ich gebe noch einige weitere Beispiele. Im 3. Kapitel heißt es, die Pythia habe den Athenern mitgeteilt, der Gott werde ihnen eine hölzerne Mauer geben. Diese hätten daraufhin alles hinter sich gelassen und um der Freiheit willen auf den [hölzernen] Schiffen Zuflucht gesucht. Und so gebe der Gott *uns* einen hölzernen Tisch, eine Schüssel aus Ton und einen schlichten, rauhen Mantel, wenn wir frei [also ohne Schuldenlast] leben wollen. Plutarch setzt auf einen Kalauer. Die Pythia sagt: „Geht auf die Schiffe!“, Plutarch sagt: „Beschränkt euch mit Einfachem!“ Nur weil Pythia in Rätseln gesprochen und das Wort „hölzern“ verwendet hatte, kann der Autor seine Pointe anbringen. Ein weiterer Jokus besteht in der Verwendung der Vorstellung einer spendenden Gottheit. Im ersten Fall ist es konkret Apoll, der rät; wenn aber von dem Gott die Rede ist, der uns hölzerne Tische usw. gibt, so ist fromm darauf verwiesen, daß der Mensch alles, was er hat, als Geschenk „von oben“ anzusehen hat, wenn die Formulierung nicht nur eine *façon de parler* ist.

Im folgenden stelle ich, auch in Ergänzung zu den Beispielen, die ich in dem oben erwähnten Beitrag geliefert habe, zwei Fälle vor, in denen die Künstlichkeit des μετενεγκεῖν von Plutarch mit Absicht hervorgehoben zu sein scheint, dem Postulat gemäß, daß dies μετενεγκεῖν eben heiter, vielleicht gar lustig, οὐκ ἀηδῶς, vonstatten gehen solle. Dergleichen hatte ich in *De tranquillitate* nicht gefunden.

Im 6. Kapitel läßt Plutarch den Cato einem sich übel aufführenden Greis sagen, er solle doch zu dem Schlimmen, das das Alter ohnehin an sich habe, nicht auch noch die Schande (*αἰσχύνη*) hinzufügen. „So“, fährt Plutarch fort, „häufe du nicht auf die Armut, die ohnehin schon viele Übel mit sich bringt, auch noch die sich aus dem Borgen und den Schulden ergebenden Verlegenheiten (*ἀμυχάνειαι*)“ usw. Der Sprung von der *Schande* zu den *Verlegenheiten* ist so groß, daß man getrost Absicht voraussetzen darf. Warum auch sollte Plutarch nicht von der *Schande* des Schuldenmachens sprechen? Der Predigtton seiner Schrift hätte es erlaubt.

Der Anfang des 7. Kapitels gibt ein mehraktiges Beispiel für Plutarchs Freude daran, vom Hölzchen aufs Stöckchen zu kommen. Wir müssen wissen: Rutilius leiht auf Zinsen, Musonios leiht sich Geld. Rutilius: „Musonius, Zeus borgt nicht.“ Musonius: „Er verleiht aber auch nicht.“ Der Konter trifft: der Schuß ist nach hinten losgegangen. Plutarch macht sich aus der Anekdote zunächst, indem er einen Teil von ihr einfach fallenläßt², das Material für ein Vorgeplänkel gegen die Stoa: Typisch für Stoiker, gleich mit Zeus zu kommen. Das kann man einfacher haben: Schwalben und Ameisen borgen auch nicht, und die (sind nicht nur keine Götter, sondern) haben weder Hände noch Vernunft noch Kunstfertigkeit. (Nun denkt man: Aha, zum Borgen bedarf es einer gewissen Intelligenz. Aber das darf natürlich nicht folgen. Der Redner muß also eine Kurve nehmen.) Plutarch benutzt nun ein Sprungbrett, und zwar eins, das ihm mehr schlecht als recht weiterhilft: das Tierreich und die Intelligenz. (Natürlich kann es nicht um intelligente *Tiere* gehen: Man müßte ja erwarten, daß solche Tiere leihen können.) Also, der Hörer wird's schon hinnehmen, geht es so weiter: Menschen sind besonders klug und sie sind praktisch veranlagt. Sie halten sich Tiere (!), nämlich Hunde, Rebhühner, Hasen, Krähen. (Das hat nun mit der Ausgangsanekdote und dem Ameisenargument nichts mehr zu tun, aber das Tierreich wahrt den Kontakt.) Und du?, geht der Redner auf den erschrockenen Hörer los, hast so wenig Vertrauen zu dir selbst, daß du dich nicht in den Dienst von Menschen stellen (d.h. dein Geld durch Zuwendungen verdienen statt zu borgen) kannst? Hält man sich an Worte, ist der Kontakt mit der Ausgangsanekdote gewahrt: Verbale Verknüpfungen gibt es von Schritt zu Schritt. Um so auffallender ist das Ziel, bei dem Plutarch gelandet ist. Er ist gehüpft, nicht gegangen, und er hat dazu jeweils etwas zu einem Sprungbrett ernannt, was ihm gerade geeignet schien.

² Die Pointe der Anekdote ist damit auf der Strecke geblieben, Plutarch „schlachtet“ sie einfach „aus“.

Plutarch geht meistens ernsthafter mit seinen Hörern und Lesern um. In der Regel passen die einleitenden Bilder, Anekdoten usw. nicht nur sehr gut zu dem, was folgt, sondern können auch noch dazu dienen, den Hauptgedanken zu erläutern. Wenn Plutarch so redet wie in der Schrift über das Borgen, denkt er wohl an ein Publikum, das zwar durchaus nicht ungebildet ist, aber nicht nur belehrt, sondern auch unterhalten sein will und als unterhaltend u.a. kalauerndes Witzeln empfindet. Conferenciers reden heute oft so, früher taten es geistliche Prediger, die auf Märkten und ähnlichen Plätzen auftraten (man denke an den schon erwähnten Kapuziner), durchaus ernste Botschaften hatten, aber sich „volkstümlich“ gaben, und noch früher kynische Wanderprediger und ähnlich motivierte Weltverbesserer.

b) An wen richtet sich die Schrift?

Anders als *De tranquillitate animi* richtet sich der gegen das Borgen gerichtete Traktat nicht an eine namentlich genannte Einzelperson, sondern an eine Gruppe von Zuhörern, deren sozialer Status und deren innere Einstellung erst dem Text entnommen werden muß. Weil Plutarch kaum andere als hochrangige Kontakte in Rom gehabt haben dürfte, gehört der Adressat von *De tranquillitate*, Paccius, sicher der römischen Oberschicht an³.

Die soziale Stellung der Adressaten von *De vitando aere alieno* ergibt sich aus den Schlußkapiteln. Kap. 6 und 7 richtet der Prediger sich an Leute, die wenig besitzen und hoffen, sich durch Borgen mehr Komfort schaffen zu können, Kap. 8 an Reiche, die ihren Besitz durch Borgen noch vermehren möchten. Dies Schlußkapitel wirkt aber wie ein Anhang, denn auch der Tenor der Kapitel 1-5 läßt durchweg an die erstgenannte Gruppe, also an diejenigen denken, die den in ihren eigenen Augen spärlichen Besitz durch Borgen vergrößern möchten. Kap. 8 bringt zwar, wie gesagt, eine andere Gruppe von Adressaten ins Spiel, soll aber gleichzeitig wohl auch demonstrieren, daß das Borgen *generell* zu widerraten ist, auch dann, wenn es nicht unmittelbar und so leicht für jedermann einsichtig zum völligen Ruin führen kann.

Allgemein ist festzuhalten, daß *große* Geldgeschäfte in der Antike bei weitem nicht dieselbe Bedeutung wie in der Neuzeit hatten. Den Wucherern fielen in der Regel kleine Leute zum Opfer, die wenig Geld aufnahmen und dabei ihr knapp bemessenes Hab und Gut riskierten. „Auch die Armen waren [über Kleinkredite] in die Geldwirtschaft eingebunden“⁴. Der Schluß des ersten Kapitels läßt diese Situation

³ Ziegler (1951), 639; (1964), 57.

⁴ Kloft (1992), 244. Eine Bibliographie zum Thema S. 251.

möglicherweise erkennen. Geborgt werde nur Kreditwürdigen, sagt Plutarch dort, das heißt also Leuten, die schon *etwas* (philosophisch gesehen also: *genug*) haben. Heutzutage würde man dieser Art der Warnung vor Kreditaufnahme entgegenhalten können, daß derjenige, der kreditwürdig ist und sich nicht in der Lage sieht, erstens erträgliche Bedingungen auszuhandeln, zweitens dann mit dem Kredit zu seinem Vorteil umzugehen, (schlimme, zeitlich und lokal begrenzte, Verhältnisse einmal ausgeschlossen) ein *charakterliches* Problem hat; mit dem Kreditwesen als solchem muß das nichts zu tun haben. Bezogen auf die zu Plutarchs Zeiten üblichen Kleinkredite, die auch von *Armen* aufgenommen wurden, macht die Aussage aber Sinn. Der Kreditgeber wird von vornherein das die Kreditwürdigkeit bedingende Vermögen sehr niedrig angesetzt haben; ist dies der Fall, so ist der Ruin des unter diesen Umständen als kreditwürdig eingestuften Borgenden damals wie heute leicht vorstellbar: Kreditwürdig ist dann ja noch der, dem heutzutage keine Bank mehr etwas leiht. Man denke an die Praktiken unseriöser Kreditinstitute.

Stellt man sich nun aber die intellektuellen Ansprüche an die Leser oder Hörer vor Augen, die sich aus den zahlreichen Zitaten und Anspielungen auf dies und jenes ergeben, und an die zusätzlichen Anforderungen durch das οὐκ ἀηδῶς μετενεγκεῖν von anders gerichteten Zitaten, Anekdoten usw. zum Zweck des heiteren Einstiegs in einen Gedanken, also an die Sprungbretter, so sieht man leicht, daß es sich bei diesem Hörer- und Leserkreis um vielleicht nicht begüterte, wohl aber, wie sich auch schon ergeben hat, halbwegs gebildete Personen gehandelt haben muß. Unter anderem wird ihnen empfohlen, im Zweifelsfall als Bäcker tätig zu sein, um *philosophieren* zu können, wie Kleantes das vorgelebt hatte (Kap. 7). In erster Linie angesprochen ist also, wie sich hieraus ergeben könnte, die nicht sonderlich wohlhabende *Mittelschicht*, nicht aber eine Gemeinde, wie die Christen sie wohl schon zu Plutarchs Zeiten versammelten, in der, jedenfalls prinzipiell, *alle* sozialen Gruppen und Bildungsschichten repräsentiert waren.

Die Schrift hat ein politisches 4. Kapitel, das sie für den Althistoriker interessanter machen könnte, wenn das Thema etwas deutlicher und konkreter behandelt würde⁵. Trotz seiner Schärfe, die es von den zurückhaltenderen Spitzen der *Praecepta rei publicae gerendae* abhebt⁶, weist es nur verschwommen, allerdings ohne jede Konzession

⁵ Weder Finley (1973) noch Kloft (1992) scheinen es zu berücksichtigen. Mit Recht sagt Barigazzi (1994a), 107ff., daß die Schrift kaum als Dokument der damaligen sozialen Verhältnisse angesehen werden kann. Bei Barigazzi auch weitere Sekundärliteratur zu unserer Schrift.

⁶ Vgl. besonders 813D-816E.

an *political correctness*, auf „Ausländer“ hin, die Griechenland mit Schuldverschreibungen überschwemmen. Man kann schlecht umhin, nicht unter anderem auch an Römer zu denken⁷. Das Kapitel steht im Zusammenhang der Behandlung von Krediten für weniger Begüterte, und so könnte man, wenn man denn den Traktat politisch lesen *will*, daran denken, daß er insgesamt eine Warnung an die sogenannten kleinen Leute vor den *ausländischen* Kredithaien ist: So hätte er einen aktuellen Bezug und wäre ein wertvolles Zeitzeugnis. Aber man muß ihn schon so lesen *wollen*, um ihn so zu verstehen; bei unbefangenen Lesen handelt es sich beim Kapitel 4 um eine Warnung neben anderen, und es ist Sache von persönlichem Empfinden, wenn sie einem damaligen Hörer oder heutigen Leser als schriller Ton im Ohr bleibt. So oder so kann man aber sagen, daß Kap. 4 der angesprochenen sozialen Schicht der kleineren Leute etwas mehr Farbe und Bestimmtheit gibt.

War es nun aber die gesamte so charakterisierte soziale Gruppe, an die sich der Traktat gerichtet hat? Ich glaube nicht. Dazu klammern Plutarchs Einzelargumente zu deutlich manche Aspekte der Wirklichkeit aus, von denen wohl alle doch hier und da schon einmal gehört haben mochten. Nirgendwo scheint der Text zugeben zu wollen, daß das Kreditwesen für den Borgenden auch in der Antike funktionieren konnte, nämlich dann, wenn man es nicht beim sterilen Leihen und zinsbelasteten Rückzahlen beließ, sondern wenn man das Geborgte „arbeiten“ ließ⁸. Auch anderswo konnte man sich Mittel verschaffen, die zur Tilgung der Schuld führten: In großem Maßstab demonstriert dies das Schuldengenie Caesar⁹. Wie unreal die Welt ist, in der Plutarch argumentiert, zeigt sich auch schon zu Anfang, nämlich im 2. Kapitel. Wenn ich kreditwürdig bin, heißt es dort, dann bedeutet das, daß ich Güter besitze, die ich im Falle eines Kredits ja gewissermaßen als Pfand für diesen Kredit einsetzen muß. Habe ich den Kredit erhalten, so zahle ich den Zins dann *eigentlich*, um diese Pfänder behalten zu können. (Wollte ich nämlich anders als durch Kredit an flüssiges Geld kommen, müßte ich einen Teil dieser Güter verkaufen.) Sieht man nun der Sache auf den Grund, dann, so Plutarch, stellt sich heraus, daß man Zins für seine eigenen Güter zahlt, weil man die ja behalten will. Man brauchte sie ja nur zu verkaufen, um zinsfrei zu sein! Diese Überschlauheit des eifernden Redners wird bei einem nicht glaubenswilligen Publikum Heiterkeit hervorrufen, denn nur einem solchen kann man zumuten, was „Heiden eine Torheit ist“. Nur wer nicht genau hinhört, wer letztlich etwas

⁷ Ganz entschieden vertritt die Auffassung Ziegler (1951), 780; (1964), 144.

⁸ Dergleichen kam allerdings selten vor; das meiste Borgen war unproduktiv. Vgl. Finley (1973), 141ff. u.ö.; dort weitere Literatur.

⁹ Siehe Will (1992), 220ff.

anderes hören will, wer sich im Hinblick auf dies andere *bestätigen* lassen will, wird ernsthaft in sich hineinnicken und befriedigt sagen: „Ja, ja, so ist es. Gut, daß jemand das einmal so klar sagt!“

Hinzutritt, daß sich die in diesem Traktat vertretene radikale These nicht gut mit Plutarchs sonstigen Aussagen verträgt¹⁰. Der in einem anderen als gerade diesem Zusammenhang sprechende Autor hat eine deutlich maßvollere Einstellung zum Kreditwesen.

Plutarchs persönliche Einstellung mag am besten in einer Epameinondasanekdote zum Ausdruck kommen, von der wir annehmen dürfen, daß sie in der *Vita* dieses vom Biographen besonders geschätzten Helden erzählt worden ist. Epameinondas war vor der Schlacht bei Leuktra in großer Geldnot. Jason von Pherai, Tyrann von Thessalien und Verbündeter Thebens, schickte unaufgefordert 2000 Goldmünzen, die Epameinondas aber nicht annahm. Stattdessen borgte er 500 Drachmen bei einem seiner thebanischen Mitbürger und fiel in die Peloponnes ein (*Reg. et imp. apophth.* 193BC). Die Anekdote lehrt, daß man borgen kann, ohne seine Freiheit zu verkaufen: Das war wohl das Motiv des thebanischen Feldherrn, und Bewahrung der finanziellen Unabhängigkeit ist, wie wir sehen werden, das positive Lehrziel der Schrift gegen das Borgen. Ferner wird Plutarch persönlich die Haltung Phokions bewundert haben, der sich trotz Drängens nicht zu einer finanziellen Spende herbeiließ, weil er zuerst seine Gläubiger bezahlen wollte (*Phoc.* 9.2; *Reg. et imp. apophth.* 188A; *De vit. pud.* 533A; *Praec. ger. reip.* 822DE). Richtig Arat, der nicht borgt, sondern stattdessen verkauft (*Arat.* 19.2, vgl. auch *De prof. in virt.* 83C). Selten gleicht der Ton demjenigen in *De vitando aere alieno*: ein Fall findet sich erwartungsgemäß in der Parallelschrift *De cupiditate divitiarum* (523F), auf die ich noch zu sprechen komme, ferner Ähnliches in *De cap. ex inim.* 87C; *Apophth. Lac.* 221F; *De am. prol.* 495B und *Quaest. conv.* 706B; indirekt *Cic.* 12.4 über Ciceros Mitkonsul Antonius. Der Druck der Schuldenlast wird öfter erwähnt, ebenso der politische Schachzug ihrer Aufhebung mit verschiedenen Mitteln, aber das ist kein Hieb auf das Kreditwesen und das Schuldenmachen insgesamt. Ansonsten gehören Borgen und Geldverleih zum alltäglichen Leben, es wird oft ohne moralischen Kommentar erwähnt, und auch da, wo man ein ernstes Wort erwarten könnte, hält Plutarch sich zurück, z.B. wenn er berichtet, daß Demosthenes wegen der Höhe des Zinses verbotenerweise sein Geld im Seehandel anlegte (*Comp. Dem. et Cic.* 3.7), oder daß die Inkarnation des *mos maiorum*, der alte Cato, tüchtig am Geldverleih verdiente (*Ca. Ma.* 21.6). Interessanter noch ist ein Fall wie der des Eumenes, der sich bei seinen Feinden Geld borgt, um vor ihnen sicher

¹⁰ Zu Plutarchs „Technik der Übertreibung“ vgl. Brenk (2000), 45ff.

zu sein, und der Trick hat funktioniert (*Eum.* 13.12-13 und 16.3). Kein Kopfzerbrechen bei Plutarch, wenn Caesar es durch Borgen zum *pontifex maximus* bringt (*Caes.* 7.3). *De Pyth. orac.* 408C ist Geldverleih so natürlich wie Heiraten und Seefahrt, und offenbar ist er Sache von alten Männern (*An seni* 795F), die in der gesamten Antike, wenn sie sich nicht gerade auffällig falsch verhielten, besonders angesehen waren. Alles in allem kann man, auch im Falle von *δανείζεσθαι* und *δανείζειν*, von einem gesunden, ausgewogenen Urteil sprechen, wie man es von Plutarch gewöhnt ist.

Plutarch spricht also vor einer virtuellen „Gemeinde“, d.h. vor *glaubensbereiten*, sicher etwas aufgeregten Zeitgenossen, die sich von radikalen, getrost auch etwas absurden, Empfehlungen Hilfe erhoffen. Solche Leute gab es zu seiner Zeit mehr als genug. Interessant für den Plutarcheer ist, daß der große, umfassend gebildete Autor auch diese Schicht „bedient“.

2. Das Lehrziel

Die erstrebte Lebenshaltung ist die der *αὐτάρκεια* (persönliche Souveränität). Damit setzt sich die Schrift anhand eines sehr speziellen Sonderthemas für das *τέλος* der Ethik *aller* hellenistischen Schulen (Epikureer, Stoiker, Kyniker, Skeptiker) ein. In dieser Hinsicht ist sie für eine *sehr große* virtuelle Gemeinde geschrieben. Der Wert *αὐτάρκεια* oder auch *ἐλευθερία* tritt im 2. Kapitel sofort in den Vordergrund und zwar in der Form, wie wir ihn aus *De tranquillitate animi* kennen: als das – so allerdings hier nirgends formulierte – Demokriteische Postulat *χρηῖσθαι τοῖς παροῦσιν*, wobei die *παρόντα* als wenig kostspielig und schlicht vorausgesetzt sind: „Du hast einfaches Geschirr; warum willst du dich durch Borgen in Gefahr bringen, um mit feinem Geschirr zu prunken?“ Durch den Wert *σχολή* wird der Wert *αὐτάρκεια* / *ἐλευθερία* im 3. Kapitel mit einem Merkmal versehen, der die Gruppe der Angesprochenen auf den ersten Blick kenntlicher macht: es sind *gentlemen*, die notfalls, aber zufrieden und stolz, so leben wie die Tiberones in Rom¹¹. Im weiteren Verlauf präzisiert sich das Konzept der *σχολή*, und zwar so, daß man fragen kann, ob es überhaupt beibehalten wird. Um der persönlichen Souveränität willen empfiehlt Plutarch nämlich unter anderem banausisches Arbeiten. Zunächst allerdings rät er zu dem mehr einem *gentleman* gebührenden Mittel, sich Freunde zu machen und es mit einem Austausch von Gefälligkeiten zu versuchen (Kap. 6, 830A). Dann wird er aber energischer und empfiehlt eine Karriere als Lehrer, Pädagoge (das ist noch erträglich, man denke an die englischen *gover-*

¹¹ Vgl. Plut., *Aem.* 4.7; vgl. Cic., *Mur.* 75f.

nors und die deutschen Hofmeister, aber nun folgt die Überraschung:), Pförtner, Seemann und seefahrender Handlungsdiener (*παραπλέων*). Je tiefer die soziale Position ist, die Plutarch für den Notfall empfiehlt, desto deutlicher wird das *αὐτάρκεια*- und damit auch das *σχολή*-Konzept unseres Traktats. Alle aufgezählten Tätigkeiten, so wenig angesehen sie sein mögen, sind nämlich nach Plutarch nicht so schändlich (*αἰσχρός*) und so lästig (*δυσχερής*) wie die Aufforderung „[Jetzt] zahlen!“ hören zu müssen. Ein wenig später folgt dann noch die Empfehlung, sich als *θεράπων* ein Auskommen zu verschaffen (auch dies durchaus noch eine Tätigkeit für *gentlemen*, aber vgl. *De cup. div.* 525D, wo dergleichen Tätigkeiten wenig rühmlich scheinen) oder unter die Bäcker zu gehen, um die nötige Unabhängigkeit zum Philosophieren zu bewahren: davon war weiter oben schon die Rede.

Das Leben als seefahrender Handlungsgehilfe, Bäcker, Türsteher oder *θεράπων* eines Großen (darunter ist u.a. auch ein Posten als Leibwache verstanden) ist sicherlich nicht frei von äußerem Druck, und Autarkie sowie *σχολή* sind für damit befaßte Personen entschieden eingeschränkt. Warum soll denn *ἀπόδος*, die Forderung des Geldverleihers, unerträglicher sein? Der Unterschied zwischen den beiden Zwangslagen besteht nach meiner Meinung darin, daß im Fall der Forderung des Gläubigers der Druck auf klaren Rechtsverhältnissen beruht: die Fristen laufen unerbittlich ab („die Uhr tickt“), und die zu entrichtende Summe bleibt ungerührt so hoch wie vereinbart (so jedenfalls die Voraussetzung Plutarchs). Die Abhängigkeit, in die sich der Schuldner begibt, hat etwas Mechanisches. Daß auch ein Gläubiger mit sich reden lassen kann, daß die Fähigkeit, sich Freunde zu machen, für sich einzunehmen, auch auf Banker wirken kann, bleibt ausgeklammert: Wir müssen uns aber hier an die von Plutarch aufgestellten, sehr künstlichen Spielregeln halten. Im Rahmen der übrigen Zwangslagen, also etwa der banausischen Arbeiten oder des Aufwartens, scheint Plutarch immer noch *Gestaltungsspielraum* für den in eine Notlage Geratenen zu sehen: Es gibt keine derartig unerbittliche und durchgängige Abhängigkeit von der Uhr, es gibt keine derartig verbrieft Verpflichtung wie im Falle der Geldaufnahme, sondern man kann sich bei solchen Beschäftigungen seinen Freiraum bewahren. So bescheiden ist das für die antiken Gebildeten sonst so wichtige *σχολή*-Konzept geworden. Eine so eingeeengte Autarkie, ein so geringer Grad von zeitlicher Ungebundenheit müßte übrigens auch von Sklaven erreicht werden können, soweit sie in Privathäusern oder auf überschaubaren Gütern dienten (natürlich nicht z.B. von denen, die in den Bergwerken schufteten), aber Plutarch begäbe sich, auch in seiner entwickelten Epoche und als Philosoph, auf ein heikles Terrain, wenn er sich zu der Empfehlung herbeiließe, man solle doch lieber Sklave werden als Geld aufzunehmen. Wer aber z.B. aus Plutarchs Empfehlungen heraushört, daß es besser ist, Parasit

zu sein als Schuldner, hätte den Text des 7. Kapitels auf seiner Seite. Man sieht daran, auf welche Gratwanderung der Autor sich hier einläßt, um sein Ziel durchzusetzen, und auf wieviel entgegenkommende Gläubigkeit und Bereitschaft, Unausgegorenes zu verdauen, er in seiner virtuellen Gemeinde rechnen muß.

Die *αὐτάρκεια* und die *σχολή*, die Plutarch im Sinn hat, sind also, wie sich gezeigt hat, salopp gesagt, Zustände unseres Kopfes, sie sind Einstellungs- und Gefühlssache, es geht, so grob und ungeschliffen der Gedanke insgesamt sein mag, um eine sehr verinnerlichte Form der Autarkie und der *σχολή*. Denn das *χρῆσθαι τοῖς παρούσιν* bezieht sich ja nur noch auf das, was in unserem *Kopf* als „vorhanden“ erscheint (*πάρεστιν*), die Leiter des Sich-kleiner-Setzens hat nach unten hin kein sichtbares Ende. Die Aufforderung, Freiheit als Einstellungssache zu nehmen, erinnert, mehr als vieles andere bei Plutarch, an manche Stellen aus der ebenfalls schulübergreifenden Philosophie der ersten 30 Senecanischen *Epistulae morales* mit ihrer Lehre *introrsus tua bona spectent* (*epist.* 7,12), vgl. etwa *epist.* 8,3-5, ohne daß diese *libertas* dort am selben *Gegenstand*, also dem Schuldenmachen, demonstriert würde. Dieser Gegenstand paßt nicht in die Welt der beiden Korrespondenten Seneca und Lucilius, die sich wirtschaftlich komfortabel eingerichtet haben. Es ist ja kein Zufall, daß das Thema „Wuchern und Schuldenmachen“ ausgerechnet bei den Kirchenvätern häufiger ist¹²: Dort gab es das Publikum für dies Sujet. Basilius predigt im Sinne Plutarchs und benutzt unseren Traktat¹³, Gregor von Nyssa setzt die Predigt des Basilius voraus und geht gegen die Wucherer vor¹⁴; zum Thema spricht auch Johannes Chrysostomos¹⁵. Aber der defensive Zug der ersten 30 Senecabriefe und das dort dem Anfänger empfohlene Streben nach *securitas*, demgemäß man sich soweit wie möglich zurücknehmen soll, schlagen einen wenigstens von weitem ähnlichen Ton wie *De vitando aere alieno* an.

3. De cupiditate divitiarum und die Gattung von De vitando aere alieno

Was für eine Art Schrift ist nun *De vitando aere alieno*? Es handelt sich zunächst nicht um eine Seelenheilungsschrift¹⁶.

Rein äußerlich fehlt die Vorschrift oder die Empfehlung praktischer Übungen bzw. der Hinweis auf erste Schritte, die zum erstrebten Typ

¹² Kloft (1992), 244.

¹³ *De divitiis et paupertate*, PG 31, 1168.

¹⁴ PG 46, 434ff.; vgl. bes. 452.

¹⁵ *Hom. in Matth.* 61, PG 58, 591.

¹⁶ Ingenkamp (1971), 74ff.

innerer Unabhängigkeit führen. Sodann ist der Ton der „Analyse“ der inneren Einstellung, die zum *Borgen* führt, deutlich weniger auf die Erregung starker abwehrender *Emotionen* ausgerichtet als in 4 der 5 Seelenheilungsschriften im engeren Sinne, wo ja selbst bei so harmlosen Krankheiten wie Neugier oder falscher Scham sogar mit Lebensgefahr gedroht wird. Diese trennenden Züge nehmen die Schrift aus der Medizin im weiteren Sinne heraus. Stattdessen ist sie verwandt mit Anklagereden in der Justiz (angeklagt ist das Borgen, Richter ist der *λόγος* des Hörers oder Lesers) oder mit abratenden Reden in der Politik. Es handelt sich um eine ethische Suasorie, also um eine *ὁμιλία*, eine beratende Meinungsäußerung, wie sie im Inhalt von Sokrates (Xenoph., *Mem.* I, 2.6 und 15), im Ton allerdings eher von „Sokratikern“ und den hellenistischen Nachfolgern des Sokrates erwartet wurde. Es ist niemandem zu verwehren, die Gattungsbezeichnung „Diatriben“ so weit zu fassen, daß auch *De vitando aere alieno* darunter fallen kann; ZIEGLER nennt sie in diesem Sinne eine derbe kynische Predigt¹⁷. Man darf darüber nur nicht übersehen, daß sie bei aller Derbheit auch *rather learned, rather literary* ist¹⁸, und das *soll* sie auch wohl sein: Der (in der Wahl seiner Mittel nicht immer gut beratene) Autor will auch diese Schrift zu einem Leckerbissen machen, wozu nicht zuletzt das manchmal halsbrecherische Jonglieren mit Zitaten, Anekdoten und Reminiszenzen aus dem Geschichtsbuch – man denke vor allem an die Sprungbretter – beitragen soll.

Sie ist aber wohl derber als *De tranquillitate animi* und *De cupiditate divitiarum*. Diese zuletzt genannte Schrift ist für uns in diesem Zusammenhang interessant. POHLENZ und ZIEGLER sind der Auffassung, sie breche vorzeitig ab, es sei nur die *κρίσις*, nicht mehr die *θεραπεία* geboten¹⁹. Damit ist vorausgesetzt, daß *De cupiditate divitiarum* eine verstümmelte Seelenheilungsschrift sei, und um nichts falsch zu machen, habe ich sie seinerzeit versuchsweise und in Anmerkung so behandelt²⁰. Ich bin aber inzwischen der Meinung, daß diese Auffassung nicht überzeugt. Das Ende in Kapitel 10 muß nicht als abrupt angesehen werden, und was den Typ der Schrift angeht, so scheint es einen schwachen Hinweis von Plutarchs eigener Hand darauf zu geben. Lese ich diesen Hinweis richtig, so gehört *De cupiditate divitiarum* zu *De vitando alieno*, ist also eine *ὁμιλία*, keine Seelenheilungsschrift.

De cupiditate divitiarum kann man in eine Einleitung und einen Hauptteil oder auch in zwei Hauptteile teilen. Der zweite Teil (oder der Hauptteil: das muß der Leser entscheiden) wird am besten überschrieben

¹⁷ Ziegler (1951), 781; (1964), 144.

¹⁸ Fowler (1950), 315; daneben führt er weitere Qualifikationen auf.

¹⁹ Ziegler (1951), 779; (1964), 143; Pohlenz in der Teubneriana, Band III, p. 332.

²⁰ Ingenkamp (1971), 86 n. 19.

mit einem Satz, der seinerseits den *zweiten* Abschnitt dieses zweiten Teils (II B) einleitet. Diesem Satz gemäß benutzt man seinen Reichtum entweder *nicht* oder *falsch* (Kap. 8, 527A). So handelt II A 1 (ab Kap. 4b, 524F [ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῦτο]) von der Besitzgier des *Geizigen*: Der Geizige verwendet seinen Besitz ja *nicht*. Am Schluß des Abschnitts, also II A 2 (Kapitel 7b, 526F [ὃ ταλαίπωρε] / 527A) kommen die positiven Gegenwerte gegen den *Geiz* kurz ins Bild, nämlich *ἐλευθερία* und *σχολή*. II B 1 (Kapitel 8 in. bis einschließlich Kap. 10a, 527F [τὸ μηδὲν ἐστίν]) handelt von der Besitzgier, die mit *Prunksucht* verbunden ist. Der Schluß (II B 2) bringt positive Gegenwerte gegen die *Prunksucht* in Erinnerung: *σωφρονεῖν*, *φιλοσοφεῖν*, *γινώσκειν ἃ δεῖ* (!) *περὶ θεῶν*, überhaupt *ἀρετή*, *ἀλήθεια* und die Wissenschaften: all das hat seinen Glanz in sich selbst. Der Prachtentfaltung bedarf es nicht, schließt die Schrift, sondern der Besonnenheit und der Gerechtigkeit. Das ist ein kräftiges Wort, und gerade Plutarch mag gedacht haben, daß ihm ein stärkerer Abgang nicht mehr einfallen wird, und deswegen hier zum Schluß gekommen sein. Die Parallelität des Aufbaus spricht für Absicht.

Der erste Teil oder die Einleitung redet über das, was man an *Allgemeinem* vom Diagnostiker der *φιλοπλουτία* wissen möchte. Die Kapitel 1 und 2 (I A) leiten in die Homilie ein und behandeln in der Folge A-B-A-B-A-B die eigentlichen Werte, *αὐτάρκεια* und *χρῆσθαι τοῖς παρούσιν* (A), und die innere Unlogik der *φιλοπλουτία* (B): Reichtum macht nicht glücklich (Glück ist natürlich als das vernünftige Ziel aller vorausgesetzt), Reichtum macht die Besitzgier immer größer und: Wer dem Reichtum nachjagt, hat später nicht einmal mehr das Nötige. Die Kapitel 3 und 4a (I B) sind die für uns interessantesten, weil Plutarch sich hier mit der systematischen Einordnung der *φιλοπλουτία* befaßt. Sie ist in der Tat eine Krankheit. Das Kapitel 4 ist voll von darauf beruhenden Assoziationen. Es wird dieser Aspekt der Argumentation gewesen sein, der zur Ansicht geführt hat, die Schrift sei eine unvollständige Seelenheilungsschrift. Aber *νόσος* ist ein Wort, das so gern metaphorisch gebraucht wird, daß man von seiner bloßen Verwendung jedenfalls nicht auf einen medizinischen oder auch nur therapeutischen Zusammenhang schließen kann, obwohl, in einer Anekdote und wieder wohl metaphorisch, auch das Wort *θεραπεύειν* fällt; später werden sogar die medizinischen Prozeduren *ἐκβολή* und *καθαρισμός* erwähnt. Die folgenden Bestimmungen machen aber klar, worin sich die von Plutarch hier ins Auge gefaßte *φιλοπλουτία* von den von ihm behandelten seelischen Krankheiten *unterscheidet*. *Φιλοπλουτία* und die gleichbedeutende *ἀπληστία* beruhen nämlich auf falschem und unvernünftigem *Urteil*²¹. Nun fährt Plutarch, oberflächlich betrachtet noch

²¹ [Τὸ πάθος ἐστίν] ἀπληστία <...> καὶ φιλοπλουτία, διὰ κρίσιν φαύλην καὶ ἀλόγιστον ἐνοῦσα (524D).

mehr zu der falschen Zuteilung der Schrift beitragend, fort, φιλοπλουτία sei deswegen eine ψυχική νόσος, womit er aber, dem Zusammenhang gemäß, nur *mentale* Krankheit meinen kann²². Das wird deutlicher, wenn Plutarch abschließt, der Kranke leide an einer ψυχική πενία, was soviel bedeutet wie daß diese Krankheit eine Sache seines Kopfes ist, denn nur in seiner *Vorstellung* ist er ja arm. Als Plutarch weiter oben im selben Kapitel 4 von der erforderlichen *Therapie* des Besitzgierigen sprach, fügte er übrigens, vielleicht um die Metapher als solche klar zu machen, unmittelbar hinzu, daß der „Kranke“ *der Erläuterung bedürfe, aus welcher Ursache er mit diesem Leiden behaftet ist*. Die naheliegende Bezeichnung der φιλοπλουτία als einer ἐπιθυμία, also als eines *Affektes*, nicht als eines falschen Urteils, erscheint in Kapitel 4b, aber dieser Aspekt bleibt im Hintergrund. Auf die Beseitigung von Affekten reagiert man nämlich mit verschiedenen Formen von Bedrohung: So geht Plutarch wenigstens in seinen Seelenheilungsschriften vor. Hier dagegen kann all das, was gegen die φιλοπλουτία gesagt ist, ohne die in den Seelenheilungsschriften angewandten „Keulen“ als *Argument* verstanden werden – und wenn φιλοπλουτία vorab als Fehlleistung der Urteilskraft definiert ist (nämlich in 4a), so wird man sich von der Formulierung, sie sei eine ἐπιθυμία <...> μαχομένη πρὸς τὴν αὐτῆς πλήρωσιν – das klingt ja wie einer Definitionssammlung nach der Art derjenigen des Andronikos Rhodios nachgebildet²³ –, nicht verwirren lassen, läßt es sich doch in lockererer Argumentation auch zwanglos unter die eigentliche Definition einordnen (und belegt ja auch die *Unsinnigkeit* der Besitzgier). Aber all diese Unschärfen im Ausdruck haben zu der Auffassung geführt, der Traktat sei eine unabgeschlossene Seelenheilungsschrift.

Der Abschnitt 4a könnte übrigens allmählich in die Behandlung des *Geizigen* überleiten: ψυχική πενία ist ja auf den ersten Blick keine passende Beschreibung für die auf *Prunksucht* hinauswollende Besitzgier. Das darf der Leser so sehen; aber daß gerade das in diesem Zusammenhang signifikante πενία metaphorisch gemeint, steht fest, seitdem kurz vorher eben *bestritten* worden war, daß die Krankheit in Armut besteht: „Armut nicht, sondern Unersättlichkeit und Besitzgier aufgrund eines falschen und unvernünftigen Urteils ist sein [sc. des Befallenen] Leiden“ heißt es ja 524D. Jeder Besitzgierige, ob er das nun aus Geiz oder Prunksucht ist, ist in diesem metaphorischen Sinn arm, weil er nämlich immer meint, noch zu wenig zu haben.

²² Ψυχή (auch) auf den Intellekt bezogen ist nicht ungewöhnlich und findet sich auffallend häufig in Platons *Phaidon*.

²³ Vgl. *SVF* III, 397, 401, 409 usw. Andronikos hat φιλοχρηματία δὲ ἐπιθυμία ἀμετρος χρημάτων (*SVF* III, 397).

Wenn, um nun wieder auf *De vitando aere alieno* zu kommen, Plutarch gegen das Borgen vorgeht, so deshalb, wie mir scheint, weil er auch diese Neigung für eine ψυχική νόσος, und dies im Sinne von *mentale* Krankheit, hält. Er rückt falsche *Vorstellungen* zurecht, er heilt keine Seele. Und das dürfte auch sein Ziel in *De tranquillitate animi* sein.

Hier haben wir also drei argumentierende Homilien vor uns, deren theoretisches Fundament, verschwommen formuliert, aber doch deutlich genug, in *De cupiditate divitiarum* Kap. 3f. zu suchen ist, und keine praktischen Seelenheilungsschriften, deren theoretisches Fundament mit wünschenswerter Klarheit in *De garrulitate* Kap. 16 und 19 in. vorliegt. *De vitando aere alieno* ist sicher „derber“ als *De cupiditate divitiarum*, aber im Ton nicht ebenso deutlich verschieden von *De tranquillitate animi*. Diese beiden Schriften werden unter anderem durch die Fülle von Sprungbrettern verbunden, wohingegen *De cupiditate divitiarum*, anders als die beiden anderen Traktate, den Leser mit gut passenden Zitaten, Vergleichen und Anekdoten unterhält²⁴.

²⁴ Die Gruppe ist offen. Ob eine Homilie wie *De esu carniarum* dazugehört, würde ich offenlassen, schon wegen der religiösen Tonalität der Schrift. Das ist dann eine Predigt im eigentlichen Sinne. Aber die Grenzen sind fließend.

Competition and its Costs: *Φιλονικία* in Plutarch's Society and Heroes

PH.A. STADTER

“Winning isn’t everything, it’s the only thing.” These words encapsulate not only the philosophy of Vince Lombardi, the professional football coach who made them famous, but that of a major segment of our society. Athletic contests, including the modern Olympic Games, honour victory above all. Intense competition arises from the pursuit of victory, so that athletic contests stir up and are nourished by rivalries not only among individuals and teams, but even among cities or nations. Competition in fact has become a hallmark of our society, and its benefits are exalted in politics as essential to democracy and in the business world as fundamental to the global economy. When ideas, businesses, and countries – and even schools and universities – compete in an open market, everyone profits, experts say.

Many ancient Greeks would have agreed. Ancient Greece too was an agonistic society, in which victory over competitors in games, in politics, or in wars brought many rewards, from a parsley crown to an empire¹. Romans within the ruling elite also competed fiercely for honour and status. Augustus concentrated rule in one man, but this did not halt the struggle for glory and power. Under the principate it became all the more important to advance one’s career at Rome, in the provinces, and with the armies. The struggles after Nero’s death, or Domitian’s, reveal the currents of ambition and hostility which seethed below the surface of calm imperial order².

¹ Cf. *Il.* VI, 208: ‘αἰὲν ἀριστεύειν καὶ ὑπείροχον ἔμμεναι ἄλλων’. Agonistic competition extended beyond athletics, dramatic contests, politics, and war even to intellectual life: see, e.g., Thomas (2000), 249-69.

² Tacitus is the fundamental source, but Pliny’s criticism of Regulus gives a concentrated view of the struggle (*epist.* I, 5). On the constant and competitive quest for honor in Rome and throughout the empire under the principate, from the emperor down, see Lendon (1997).

Plutarch's writings, composed as the empire was attempting to recover from these vicious explosions of political competition at Rome, are a particularly rich source for practices based on and attitudes toward the drive to win. His ideal of harmony in nature, in human beings, and in politics contends with his recognition that a political leader might need to raise himself above other contenders for power³. His *Political Precepts*, on the one hand, has long been appreciated for its insights into the dynamics of local politics within Greek cities under the empire, where aristocratic competition for prestige and power played a major role. In writing his *Parallel Lives*, on the other hand, Plutarch considered political competition at a level which reflects, and I believe was meant to influence, the emotional and psychic factors found in the competition of Rome's governing elite. Dealing with the messiness of history as seen in individual statesmen's lives, Plutarch goes beyond philosophical theory and indicates the often unresolved tensions between the positive and negative aspects of competition when the stakes are high. His insights and his hesitations warn us, as they did Greek aristocrats and Roman senators, both of the constant presence of the passion to win and of its dangers.

Competition as a subject is far too broad for a full treatment, even when restricted to Plutarch⁴. My more limited analysis will be devoted entirely to words from the stem φιλονικ-: φιλονικία, φιλόνομος, φιλονικέω, and their compounds. The first half of this paper will consider these and related terms as they were used by classical authors and as they were understood by Plutarch. In the second half I will review Plutarch's use of these terms and argue that in the *Moralia* he regularly refers to his own society and the connotations are almost wholly negative, while in his *Lives* Plutarch engages a more difficult issue, whether it is possible to channel the competitive instinct in politics into constructive and beneficent channels.

Φιλονικία or φιλονεικία?

Evaluation of φιλονικία, φιλόνομος, and related words has been complicated by the instability of the word's spelling from Hellenistic times on, in inscriptions, papyri, and our manuscript tradition. The phenomenon of itacism, which caused the sounds written *i* and *ei* to acquire the

³ Cf., e.g., *Praec. ger. reip.* 813C; *Per.* 15; *Comp. Per. et Fab.* 3,2-4; *Sol.* 16.2.

⁴ See now the papers collected in Konstan – Rutter (2003). For a full study of a related passion, anger, see Harris (2001).

same pronunciation⁵, led to this family of words being spelled both *φιλονικ-* and *φιλονεικ-*. This instability in spelling occurred in many other words and is usually normalized. Nevertheless, since alongside *νίκη* ('victory') there exists also the word *νεῖκος* ('strife'), modern readers of Greek have often believed that the spelling *φιλονεικ-* reveals a compound of *νεῖκος*, meaning 'loving strife, contentious'. Etymologists reject this possibility: the compound adjective with *νεῖκος*, strife, would be **φιλονεικῆς* and the noun **φιλονεικεία*, neither of which is supported by the evidence⁶.

Nevertheless, even when they recognize that the etymology is false, editors of classical texts have frequently followed a different course, accepting both *φιλονικ-* and *φιλονεικ-* in their texts, as if derived from two different stems. They have argued that Greeks of the Hellenistic and Roman periods, influenced by *νεῖκος*, used *φιλονεικ-* with the sense of 'contentious, lover of strife', and have therefore kept *φιλονεικ-* or emended *φιλονικ-* to *φιλονεικ-* according to their judgement of the context⁷. Editors of Plutarch have emended manuscript readings in both directions⁸. This can become absurd, and enormously confusing. For the *Lives*, ZIEGLER'S Teubner edition regularly restored *φιλονικ-*⁹, but PERRIN'S Loeb kept *φιλονεικ-*, leading one scholar to discuss *φιλονικία* in

⁵ Cf. Allen (1987), 70; Meisterhans (1900), 49-50; Mayser (1970), 60-70; Gignac (1976), 189-91; Threatte (1980), 190-202.

⁶ See Chantraine (1968), s.v. 'νίκη'; Frisk (1961), s.v. 'νίκη'; LSJ s.v. 'φιλόδικος', ad fin.; Nikolaidis (1980), 366-70; Pelling (2002a), 347 n. 24; and cf. the summary in Duff (1999), 83 n. 38.

⁷ Cf., e.g., Huart (1968), 396 n. 1: "En réalité, les sens sont un peu différents... Mais il se peut que la différence de valeur, que nous relevons chez Thucydide, corresponde à l'origine à un différence de mots".

⁸ See, e.g., Pohlenz (1974), XLIII: "Contra codices qui semper fere *φιλονεικία* exhibent, *φιλονικία* reposuimus, ubi vincendi notio suberat laudandique causa proferebatur, sed I 159, 24 τὸ *φιλόδικον* καὶ *δύσπερι* similesque locos intactos reliquimus". Cf. also Teodorsson (1989), 107 ad 622B, where he reads *φιλονεικίας*: "Fuhr[mann] restored the correct reading. Hu[bert], followed by Clem[ent], mistakenly printed *φιλονικίας*"; and p. 164 ad 629A, preferring *φιλονικία*; Carrière (1984), 190 (to *Praec. ger. reip.* 815A): "le sens exige souvent qu'on adopte *φιλονικία* et *φιλόδικον* au lieu de *φιλονεικία* et *φιλόδικον*", with examples. Chantraine (1968), s.v. 'νίκη' suggests that the spelling with *-νικ-* may have been supported by reference to *νεῖκος*.

⁹ Cf. Ziegler (1960), XIX. In general, he says, it is not desirable to try to restore the precise orthography of Plutarch: "Ubi autem optimi codices, ut Seitenstettensis, semper vel semper fere unam eandemque formam praebent, hanc in iis quoque vitis, ubi deest meliorum codicum fides, restituere non dubitavi. Sic [...] *φιλονικία*, quod saepissime, constanter scribendum esse censui".

Phil. – Flam., while another treats φιλονεικία in the same pair¹⁰. In the *Moralia*, every editor makes his own choice: POHLENZ prefers φιλονικ-, BABBITT and the Budé editors φιλονεικ-, but each makes exceptions¹¹.

This editorial confusion is significant because it reveals a fundamental ambivalence in the nature of victory. There are times when it is good to try to win, and times when it is not, and so times when it is good to show φιλονικία, and times when it is not. Françoise FRAZIER has documented a similar ambivalence in φιλότιμος and its relatives, starting from Aristotle's recognition of the problem¹². As Aristotle explains, "Sometimes we praise the φιλότιμος man as brave and 'manly' or 'noble', and sometimes we praise the man not φιλότιμος as 'measured' and 'restrained.' It is obvious that we speak of 'love of x' (φιλοτιοῦτο) in more than one way, so we do not always apply φιλότιμος to the same thing, but when we praise we apply it to being more than most people, but when we criticize to being more than is suitable" (IV, 10, 1125b). In a similar way, we must think of φιλόνικος as being laudatory in some usages and derogatory in others, while the word remains the same.

At the risk of seeming contentious, I believe that φιλον(ε)ικία is always associated with νίκη, and νεῖκος is never intrinsic to its meaning in Attic Greek. Several arguments confirm the continuing association with νίκη. First, two of the earliest users of φιλόνικος, Pindar and Thucydides, writing long before Hellenistic sound shift would have encouraged an etymology derived from νεῖκος, employed the term to refer to contentiousness or hostility. They clearly saw love of victory as being on occasion undesirable. This negative sense continues alongside the positive one in the fourth century, as we shall see shortly. Second, Aristotle in the *Rhetoric* regularly connects φιλονικία with victory¹³. Finally, the name 'Philonikos' and its derivatives in all periods, even

¹⁰ Contrast, e.g., Swain (1988) and Walsh (1992). Pelling (1986a) uses φιλονεικία, the reedited text of (2002a) uses φιλονικία. Flacelière's C.U.F. edition writes φιλονικ-.

¹¹ Editors of Aristotle also vary on their spelling of the term: in *TLG*, eight φιλονικ- (five in *Rhetoric*, using Ross's edition) against fifteen φιλονεικ- (including four in *Politics*, also Ross' edition). For Plato, Burnet gives only φιλονικ-; for Xenophon, Marchant gives only φιλονικ-, except for the one case in the *Hellenica*, his earliest volume; the editors used by *TLG* for the Attic Orators all prefer φιλονικ-, except for Isocrates frag. 12; for Dio Chrysostom, von Arnim gives φιλονικ- in all cases but one.

¹² *EN* II, 7, 1107b27 ff.; cf. Frazier (1988), 110-11.

¹³ *Rh.* I, 6, 1363b1; I, 10, 1368b21 (here the negative aspect of love of victory is especially apparent); I, 11, 1370b33; II, 12, 1389a12. Plutarch does the same (*De frat. am.* 488A; *Quaest. conv.* 724B; *Praec. ger. reip.* 811D; *De soll. an.* 971A).

when it is spelled in inscriptions ‘Philoneikos’, clearly refers to victory, not strife¹⁴.

It seems best to treat this family as derived from one stem, φιλονικ-, and always connected in some way with the desire to win a contest¹⁵. I will bring together all examples, whether spelled in the editions with -ι- or -ει-. The question is not one of textual conservatism or ignorance of Hellenistic and imperial style, but orthography. For convenience, in what follows I will use φιλονικία to refer to all words using this stem, unless specifically noted.

Φιλονικία in classical writers

Already in the fifth century the term was ambivalent, though negative associations are more frequent than positive. The compound φιλονικ- first appears in a lyric fragment ascribed to Simonides (...]θαλοί τε φιλονικίαι, 36.11 Page), where the context of envy suggests a negative connotation. Similarly, Pindar couples the word with δύσερις and modifies it by ἄγαν, so that it is clearly negative (*Ol.* VI, 19): the poet is “neither ill-tempered nor excessively insistent on winning [a point]”. Democritus is quoted as saying that “all φιλονικία is senseless” (fr. 68 B 237 DK)¹⁶.

Φιλονικία appears eleven times in Thucydides, occasionally in a positive sense, such as the eagerness to win of the competing navies at Syracuse (VII, 70.7, 71.1), but more often referring to a single-minded focus on winning to the detriment of other attachments or obligations,

¹⁴ The *Lexicon of Greek Personal Names* lists 110 cases of Philonikos in vols. I-III B (plus one of Philonike, five of Philonika, and four of Philonikidas). Three examples of Philonikos are spelled with -νι-, as are three of the four examples of Philonikidas. There are many examples of names ending in -νικος, but we have no reason to believe names were made in -νικος. Editors have regularly restored Philonikos at *Aem.* 38 (though Flacelière does not) and *Praec. ger. reip.* 810B. Pohlenz writes (*Mor.* V, 1, XXV): “quis unquam pater filio suo nomen ‘Litis cupidus’ dedit?” Names, perhaps originally nicknames, were indeed derived from *αἰσχρός*, *κόπρος*, etc.: see *OCD*³, s.v. ‘names, personal, Greek’, but these are single stem names, not compounds. The name of Oedipus’ son Polyneikes seems unique; if the text is correct at *Sept.* 830, Aeschylus invents a corresponding adjective *πολυνεϊκής*.

¹⁵ Cf. also the analysis of Shipley (1997), 71-72. Pelling (2002a), 347 n. 24 agrees that there are not two separate words, but thinks it likely that “both sets of association were simultaneously felt”. However, the connections he adduces with *ὀργή* and *θυμός* do not support this.

¹⁶ The stem φιλονικ- does not appear in the tragedians or Aristophanes. The negative usage is clearly documented in LSJ.

as with Alcibiades (V, 43.2)¹⁷. Several times he associates the term with war and factional strife. The Corcyreans in Thucydides see the φιλονικία of the moment as determining friends and enemies regardless of previous associations (I, 43). When analyzing the origins of stasis, Thucydides finds the sources of the major element of stasis, the urge to win, φιλονικία, in the greed and ambition, πλεονεξία and φιλοτιμία, of the factions (III, 82.8). Later, the Athenians enter into rivalry, φιλονικία, dividing themselves into democrats on Samos and oligarchs at Athens (VIII, 76.1)¹⁸. In all cases, however, one can recognize ‘the determination to win’ as the base meaning.

Xenophon and the orators use φιλονικία in both laudatory and derogatory senses. In Xenophon, the two aspects are about equally common, since he thought, following the Spartan model, that φιλονικία in the political class could be useful to the city (e.g. *Ages.* 2.8; *Lac.* 4.2). In the orators Kenneth DOVER notes a predominance of the positive sense in the early fourth century, but later the negative usage becomes more prominent¹⁹.

Plato is of central importance, both for his psychology and for the influence he had on Plutarch²⁰. He addresses the psychological understanding of φιλονικία at *R.* 545b-586c²¹. There he associates the ‘timarchic man’ with the Spartan system and characterizes him as resolved on winning and ambitious (φιλόνομος, φιλότιμος, 545a). In this system the spirited element of the soul (τὸ θυμοειδές), which is marked by these qualities, prevails (548c, 550b)²². The person dominated by

¹⁷ For Thucydides’ usage, see Huart (1968), 395-97, who notes the negative and positive aspects, but thinks there might be two stems at work. He tries to distinguish (unsuccessfully, I believe) φιλονικεῖν, ‘have a passion for greater success’ (VII, 71.1) derived from νίκη, from φιλονικεῖν (III, 82.8; IV, 64.1; V, 111.4; V, 43.2) ‘have a spirit of rivalry’ derived from νέικος; similarly φιλονικία: ‘passion to win’ (I, 41.3; VII, 70.7), ‘ardor’ (V, 32.4), ‘readiness to fight, spirit of combat’ (VII, 28.3), versus ‘spirit of rivalry’ (III, 82.8; VIII, 76.1).

¹⁸ In a different but also derogatory sense, the Athenians urge the Melians, who are determined to resist, not to insist obstinately (φιλονικεῖν) on choosing the worse option, war (μὴ τὰ χεῖρω φιλονικῆσαι, V, 111.4).

¹⁹ See Dover (1974), 233-34. Φιλονικ- occurs some twenty-three times in Xenophon, fifty-three times in the Attic orators.

²⁰ For an overview of Plato’s ethical thinking, see Irwin (1995), especially 211-14 on the spirited part of the soul. Plato uses compounds in φιλονικ- some fifty-two times.

²¹ A different usage appears when Socrates’ dialectic becomes an issue, and the accusation is made that an interlocutor is φιλόνομος, that is, merely wishing to score points in the argument, rather than seeking truth.

²² The ‘oligarchic man’ instead fears rivalries (φιλονικία) that might cost him money (*R.* 555a). See the further comments at *R.* 581c, 582e, 586c.

the spirited part of his soul will not use his reasoning or intellect (λογισμός, νόυς, 586c) and therefore needs to be guided by someone more rational²³.

In the *Laws* Plato addresses more concretely the role of competition in the state. He finds competition in athletics or other contests valuable (Lg. 796a, 820a, 834a, 840a), since it is right to compete for virtue (φιλονικεῖν πρὸς ἀρετήν, 731a) and in defending the gods (907b). But the man who acts contentiously in the city, who uses his eloquence merely to win a point, or to subvert justice in the courts, must immediately be stopped by the magistrates (860d, 935c, 938b). If φιλονικία leads him to speak unjustly a second time, he should be executed, if a citizen, or deported, if an alien. The contentious person has no role in Plato's Cretan city²⁴.

I have already noted that Aristotle regularly associates φιλονικία with νίκη in the *Rhetoric*. He also connects it with the young and with those who are δυσέριδες (Rh. 1389a12, 1381a31). In the *Athenian Constitution* and in the *Politics* φιλονικία refers to factional fighting within the city (Ath. 5.3, 13.4; Pol. 1305b23, 1306b1, 1308a31).

These observations are sufficient to indicate that φιλονικία, the desire to win, while it could be associated with a healthy competition in athletics or a striving for personal or civic virtue, what I will call 'good φιλονικία', from its earliest appearance was frequently seen as a negative quality. Thucydides and Aristotle consider φιλονικία as a major feature of factional strife. Plato saw the φιλόνομος person as acting from spiritedness rather than intelligence, and therefore prone to misdirect his energies and potentially dangerous²⁵.

Φιλονικία as a passion

Plutarch's psychology follows that of Plato in placing φιλονικία among the passions (πάθη), and connecting it with τὸ θυμοειδές, the 'spirited' part of the soul²⁶. Unlike the Stoics, Plutarch believes the passions

²³ Cf. *Ti.* 90b: someone who is occupied with φιλονικία will focus his thinking on mortal things only.

²⁴ Cf. Paul's exclusion of the φιλόνομος from the Christian assembly, *1 Ep. Cor.* 11.16.

²⁵ Gill (2003) argues that Plato, followed by the Epicureans and Stoics, saw no possibility of virtue in the rivalrous emotions (particularly envy, indignation, and emulation, but φιλονικία could be included), whereas Aristotle saw positive aspects in them. As we shall see, Plutarch tends generally towards Plato's view, but allows room for positive aspects as well.

²⁶ *Ages.* 2.1, 18.2, 26.3; *Comp. Ages. et Pomp.* 1.4; *Cor.* 1.4; *Alex.* 26.14; *Dion* 47.4. Cf. Plato *R.* 548c, 550b, 586c. Φιλονικία as a πάθος in the *Moralia: De virt.*

should not be eradicated, but their dynamic energy should be used according to reason²⁷. He often employs φιλονικία in combination with other words, which clarify its connotations and associations. When combined with ζήλος or σπουδή, φιλονικία may be positive, referring to the enthusiasm of a fighter; used with φιλοτιμία, it may refer to the politician's or private citizen's desire for recognition through prevailing over others (as also with the much rarer φιλόπρωτος). Most often, however, it is associated with passions such as ὀργή (nineteen times), φθόνος (fourteen), and ἔρις (nine), with similar vices (πλεονεξία, θράσος, αὐθάδεια, κακία, φιλοδοξία, φιλοπλουτία, ζηλοτυπία), and with fighting (μάχαι, σύγκροτοι, παράταξις, ἄμιλλα)²⁸. Its opposites are πραότης, λογισμός, and πειθώ. Frequently Plutarch uses the term when reason is weak or absent and the person affected demonstrates an irrational and sometimes extreme or violent insistence on prevailing in politics or argument.

Φιλονικία is closely related to φιλοτιμία, but appears more rarely. Almost every statesman shows φιλοτιμία, but while this quality can be disruptive, it also spurs the greatest achievements. Φιλονικία in a statesman, on the other hand, is rarely a useful quality for Plutarch, as we shall see.

Φιλονικία in Plutarch's Moralia

In the *Moralia*, φιλονικία is almost uniformly negative. Three major areas of operation can be discerned in the four works which speak of it most: between brothers within the family, between friends and acquaintances, and in the politics of the polis. *On Brotherly Love* identifies φιλονικία as one of the emotions that can divide brothers (481D, 483A), especially when splitting the family inheritance (483E). In families, major hatreds can grow from youthful hurts (or passions, πάθη), giving rise to uncontrollable φιλονικία and φιλοτιμία in mature men. Therefore the first small beginnings of ill-feeling must be resisted (487F, 488A). Similarly a controversy over practical matters can easily degenerate if brothers yield to the passions of φιλονικία or anger (488B). In sum, this work presents φιλονικία as an emotion destructive of good relations

mor. 447D; *De frat. am.* 481D, 488B; *De vit. pud.* 532D; *Praec. ger. reip.* 825E. On Plutarch's psychology, see his *De virt. mor.*, Becchi (1990), and the summary account in Duff (1999), 72-78; for his political thinking, see Aalders – de Blois (1992), 3389-97.

²⁷ *De virt. mor.* 452AB. Cf. Irwin (1995), 213: according to Plato, the emotions create a desire to act. If guided by reason, they focus on the 'right features of situations'.

²⁸ In *Dion* 47.4, Dion remarks that in Plato's Academy he had learned to control θυμός, φθόνος, and φιλονικία.

between brothers, as between any persons. It can arise in childhood from the smallest differences and grow to implacable hatred²⁹.

Several passages in *Table Talk* call attention to the danger of φιλονικία arising among acquaintances³⁰. Quarrels can begin at a symposium over a disputed place assignment, or at a palaestra (617E, 622B). An uncultured man is liable to be disturbed by φιλονικία in discussion, but music is good for calming φιλονικία at a symposium (716A, 713F)³¹. For this reason, Ammonius, who was hosting a party for the students and teachers of the Diogeneion at Athens, called for music when the φιλονικία of the teachers became heated (736E). The simplest pleasures can be threatened by an uncontrolled insistence on coming out on top³².

Competitiveness within the Greek city appears often in two political treatises, *On Old Men in Politics* and *Rules for Politicians*. The former argues that the elder politician is in a unique position to work for concord in the state by reason of his maturity. Elderly statesmen are less likely to suffer from φιλονικία, both because the hostility directed against them is less, and because their own passions have cooled (787F, 788E). Young men's qualities, Plutarch notes further on, may often appear as virtues, and even φιλονικία and recklessness may seem attractive at that age, but pitiable in an old man (794A). Rather, the senior statesman can be a kind of umpire of the disputes of the young, and gently dispel their φιλονικία, insulting language, and anger (795A).

Menemachus, the young noble and addressee of *Rules for Politicians*, on the other hand, is urged to work in harmony with other aristocrats and not be too confrontational as he makes his way in civic politics. Considering, like Aristotle, that young men are prone to φιλονικία, Plutarch asserts that that emotion is not a good motive for entering politics; in fact the future statesman should expel it from his soul (798C, 807A). For example, he should avoid the φιλονικία and φιλοτιμία revealed by a desire to hold offices constantly (811D). Plutarch warns that the φιλονικία and πλεονεξία of leading citizens often lead the rivals to ask the Romans to intervene in every civic decision³³. For this reason

²⁹ Cf. also *De ad. et am.* 73F and *Con. praec.* 138D.

³⁰ Φιλονικία occurs eight times in *Table Talk*, but there is no concentrated discussion. One example is positive: Apollo is called φίλαθλος and φίλονικος at 724B. Ajax's φιλονικία is suggested as the reason why the tribe Aiantis is never listed last (629A).

³¹ On the role of music in *Table Talk*, see Stadter (1999a).

³² Cf. also *De aud.* 39D; *De ad. et am.* 71A, 72D.

³³ Note the frequent exhortation to the parties to abandon φιλονικία in decrees referring to city arbitrations, e.g., *IG XII*, Suppl. no. 142, frag. A, 7; *IC III*, 4, nos. 9, 12, and 36; *IMagnesia* no. 90, 12-13; *Mylasa I*, no. 101, 41 and no. 141, 2.

the statesman should explain to his fellow citizens how great an evil *φιλονικία* is, even preferring to be defeated rather than to win unjustly (815A, 815B). He should avoid harshness, which trains the *δῆμος* to compete against him (*ἀντιφιλονικεῖν*, 818A). A politician should choose associates who are sensible and free of *φιλονικία*. In addition, if the politician recognizes his own deficiencies, his friends can contribute their strengths without engendering *φιλονικία* (819B, C). Finally, not all *φιλονικία* arises from public issues (825A). The politician should be wary especially of private quarrels, which (like the childhood quarrels of brothers) can flare up into public fights (825E). Speaking to the young Menemachus, then, Plutarch insists that *φιλονικία*, competitiveness, among the leaders in a city is almost always excessive and, if not curbed, will cause internal hostility and violence and lead inevitably to Roman interference.³⁴

The *φιλονικία* in the works I have discussed so far manifested itself in three areas: within families, among friends or companions, and among the politically active citizens in a contemporary Greek polis. In all of these its effect was uniformly negative – and for this reason editors have frequently printed *φιλονεικία*. In the *Lives*, Plutarch broadens the scope of action considered, and also the possibilities for a positive value for this emotion.

The Plutarchan hero and φιλονικία

Plutarch's engagement with the greatest leaders and the greatest conflicts of Greek and Roman history forces him to confront directly some of the tensions implicit in political action. In what follows I will look at all the examples of *φιλονικία* in four pairs of *Lives* where such rivalry is especially significant, that is *Lycurgus and Numa* (4), *Agésilas and Pompey* (17), *Aristides and Cato the Elder* (7), and *Philopoemen and Flamininus* (8), with glances at some other *Lives*³⁵. The examination will reveal Plutarch's awareness both of the ambivalence of the term and of the role of conflict in politics. It may suggest as well that Plutarch himself had not resolved the issue of political competition in his own mind.

In *Lycurgus and Numa* Plutarch illustrates two different kinds of *φιλονικία* within early Sparta and Rome and the effect of each on their

³⁴ For *φιλονικία* in government, see also *De cap. ex inim.* 86C, 91D, 91E, 92BC; *De prof. in virt.* 80B, 84E.

³⁵ Examples not treated in the following text or notes are *Cim.* 8.8; *Luc.* 1.3, 11.2; *Eum.* 13.4 (*bis*); *Comp. Sert. et Eum.* 2.1; *Ca. Mi.* 33.3; *Agis* 10.1; *Demetr.* 40.3; *Dion* 47.4, 52.5; *Arat.* 3.4; *Art.* 17.5.

interaction with their neighbours. In the Greek life the lawgiver required the Spartan elders to encourage the fights and φιλονικίαι of the youths as a means of evaluating their spirit (*Lyc.* 16.9). Φιλονικία here refers to competitiveness and a willingness to give one's utmost to win a contest, and is a positive quality³⁶. In the *Numa*, however, φιλονικία is something to be avoided: the Sabines and Romans wished to end the competition (φιλονικία) between them (*Num.* 3.2) and Numa devised policies to end their clashes and φιλονικίαι (17.2)³⁷. In this as in other ways the pair contrasts the calming methods of Numa and the stimulation used by Lycurgus, leading to the ultimate contrast that Numa was more Greek as a legislator than Lycurgus (*Comp. Lyc. et Num.* 1.10). Numa harmonized (συναρμόσαντα) his citizens, not by violence, but through wisdom and justice (*Comp.* 4.15). He established peace between Rome and its neighbours, and Roman expansion began only after his death. Lycurgan φιλονικία in later years would permit Sparta to dominate its neighbours. Plutarch suggests that Rome might have been better if it had continued Numa's policies, seeking the good by πραότης rather than war (*Comp.* 4.12-13)³⁸. While he sees the positive purpose of Lycurgus' encouragement of φιλονικία, the pair as a whole questions its longterm value³⁹.

In *Agesilaus*, the Lycurgan system of training and the φιλονικία it encouraged comes under closer scrutiny⁴⁰. In the first chapters Plutarch problematizes the value of φιλονικία. Agesilaus is described as φιλονικότατος and θυμοειδέστατος among the youths, exactly the qualities that Lycurgus wished to encourage (*Ages.* 2.2; cf. *Lyc.* 16.8-9).

³⁶ Cf. *De virt. mor.* 452B. In *Lys.* 2.4, Plutarch attributes Lysander's φιλοτιμία and φιλονικία to his Spartan training, following Lycurgus' principles. The two qualities were already combined and associated with Sparta in Xenophon and Plato. However, when Lysander later entrusted the rule of the Greek cities to the θρασυτάτοις and φιλονικοτάτοις of each city's oligarchs (*Lys.* 13.9), Plutarch's first adjective indicates the negative valuation put on φιλόνικος there.

³⁷ Expressing his own thinking, Plutarch refuses to argue over Roman traditions about Numa, considering any φιλονικία on the subject puerile (*Num.* 8.21).

³⁸ See further Stadter (2002a).

³⁹ Some other lives also call attention to an admirable φιλονικία. Pelopidas shares with his friends a φιλονικία for glory and bravery, and pairs of Theban lovers, like horses filled with rivalry and φιλονικία, pursue fine deeds (*Pel.* 8.2, 19.5). Marcellus inspires zeal and φιλονικία in his troops (*Comp. Pel. et Marc.* 1.11). The ξηρις και φιλονικία of Timoleon's cavalry commanders might have been destructive if Timoleon had not known how to direct it positively (*Tim.* 31.4).

⁴⁰ Forms in φιλονικ- occur more frequently in this life than in any other, eleven times: *Ages.* 2.2, 4.4, 5.5, 5.7, 7.4, 11.6, 18.4, 23.11, 26.6, 33.2, 34.2. In addition, they occur five times in the parallel life, *Pompey* (14.3, 31.2, 35.2, 67.9, 70.1), and once in the *synkrisis* (1.7).

This competitive spirit leads Lysander to put him on the throne. When Agesilaus becomes king, however, he replaces the traditional royal φιλονικία toward the ephors with goodwill and ready obedience (4.4). The ephors become disturbed by his ability to reconcile his enemies, win friends, and thus achieve more power – they are less content with this king than with those who openly fought against them. Is this a new kind of φιλονικία? At this point Plutarch inserts his own opinion on competition in the state. On the one hand, he notes, Lycurgus' encouragement of φιλοτιμία and φιλονικία as tinder (ὑπέκκαυμα) for virtue is similar to the Empedoclean idea of the necessary role of strife (νεῖκος and ἔρις) in the universe⁴¹. Agreement is not the same as concord (ὁμόνοια), he writes, perhaps thinking of the Socratic *elenchus* as well as the Homeric passage he cites⁴². And yet, Plutarch concludes, the matter is not so simple: “Excess of φιλονικία is difficult to deal with and holds great danger for states” (5.5-7). Φιλονικία, it appears, is not an unambiguous good, so that the more one possesses, the better it is. Competition is necessary and desirable, but there is a limit beyond which it becomes destructive.

The rest of the *Agesilaus* explores the limits of φιλονικία. At the beginning the king's φιλονικία seems to be an asset, permitting him to resist the temptation of the handsome Megabates (11.6) and, in association with φιλοτιμία, to defend his royal prerogatives against Lysander (7.4). Nevertheless, in the latter case, Plutarch concludes that both men suffered from too much φιλοτιμία, which in excess “has more of evil than of good” (8.5-7). In this period Agesilaus' chief preoccupation is the war against the Persians, which he conducts brilliantly. When he is called back to aid Sparta in its war with its revolting allies, however, Agesilaus' φιλονικία takes a destructive turn, which will continue for the

⁴¹ On Plutarch's familiarity with Empedocles, see Hershbell (1971). No doubt Plutarch has in mind as well Hesiod's famous words on ἔρις (*Op.* 11). In *De Is. et Os.* 370DE he cites Heraclitus (fr. 22 B 94 DK) for ἔρις alongside Empedocles for νεῖκος and δῆρις, and speaks of a similar opposition of Ares and Aphrodite: he is ἀπηνής and φιλόνικος, she μελιχίος and γενέθλιος. It is tempting to take the *Agesilaus* passage as evidence for a compound stem φιλονεικ-. It is better to resist: Plutarch's use of νεῖκος almost always refers specifically to Empedocles (*De Is. et Os.* 370E; *De facie* 926E; *De prim. frig.* 952B; *De an. procr.* 1026B; *Demetr.* 5.1) or cites poetic quotations (*De aud. poet.* 32C, 35C; *De ad. et am.* 57E; *Con. praec.* 143D; *Sept. sap. conv.* 164C); twice it is used in the plural when a peacemaker stops the fighting (νείκεν, *Mul. virt.* 246C; *Num.* 12.3). It is not a customary prose word for strife.

⁴² Agamemnon rejoiced at the quarrel of Odysseus and Achilles (*Od.* VIII, 77). Plutarch allows the reader to supply another more obvious negative example, Achilles' quarrel with Agamemnon, which almost ruined the Greeks. Plutarch preferred Homer for positive rather than negative examples: see Bréchet in this volume.

rest of his life. At Coronea, incited by θυμός and φιλονικία, he attacks the retreating Thebans unnecessarily, receives multiple wounds, and loses many Spartans (18.4). From this point on the king regularly chooses war rather than friendship⁴³, and “was often carried away by φιλοτιμία and φιλονικία, especially when dealing with Thebes” (23.6), when he was motivated by nothing “except his θυμός and φιλονικία” (26.6, cf. *Comp.* 1.7). Nor did this φιλονικία follow the Lycurgan model, since multiple expeditions against a single enemy violated the Lycurgan system (26.5). Predictably, Agesilaus’ hyper-Lycurgan competitiveness soon led to the city’s defeat by Thebes, after which Sparta would never recover the wealth and manpower which had allowed it to dominate the Peloponnesus. Agesilaus’ φιλονικία never permitted him to accept the loss of Messenia (34.2). Nevertheless, the crisis for Sparta, with the Theban army at the Eurotas and revolutionary conspiracies within the city, led Agesilaus finally to adopt a non-confrontational policy and abandon “his inborn passions of φιλονικία and φιλοτιμία” (33.2), refusing to march out against the Thebans or to challenge the conspirators at Sparta openly.

The Lycurgan system was designed to promote peace, excellence, and concord, Plutarch observes at this point, but the Spartans’ push toward imperial rule imposed by force (ἀρχάς και δυναστείας βιαιούς) had destroyed the system (33.4). Has the biographer forgotten Lycurgus’ encouragement of φιλονικία? Surely not: rather, Lycurgan φιλονικία must be contained in a context of peace and concord, as Plutarch had imagined it in the *Lycurgus*. Competitiveness, taken beyond the proper limit, is destructive – αἱ γὰρ ὑπερβολαὶ τῶν φιλονικιῶν χαλεπαὶ ταῖς πόλεσι καὶ μεγάλους κινδύνους ἔχουσαι (5.5) – as appears also in *Rules for Politicians*⁴⁴.

The parallel life, *Pompey*, unfolds the consequences of φιλονικία on Rome’s much grander stage. The reader, already familiar with the urge to win from the first life⁴⁵, recognizes Pompey’s paradoxical combination of an easygoing disposition towards his friends and an extreme competitiveness that never yields to his opponents. Sulla recognized Pompey’s φιλονικία and tried to curtail what he considered his youthful insolence (*Pomp.* 14.3). Pompey’s military successes, even more than those of Agesilaus, might suggest that his φιλονικία was a simple and positive love of victory. However he was quite willing

⁴³ Note especially his rejection of a Theban peace offer, *Ages.* 22.

⁴⁴ On the influence of Plato’s negative analysis of Spartan φιλοτιμία and φιλονικία in *R.* VIII, 547b-551a on the *Agesilaus* see Cartledge (1987), 402, and Stadter (1999b).

⁴⁵ On the importance of sequential reading of the *Lives* of a pair, see Pelling (1986a); Duff (1999), 250-51 and cc. 4-7. *Pompey* employs the term φιλονικία only five times: 14.3, 31.2, 35.2, 67.9, 70.1-2.

to snatch the palm of victory from others' hands, an attitude which Plutarch twice identifies as φιλονικία of a nastier kind (31.2, 35.2)⁴⁶. Ultimately, Pompey's competitiveness, like Agesilaus', was destructive. Plutarch reserves his most significant comment for the moment when the trumpets signal the opening of the battle of Pharsalus: "the best Romans and some Greeks... reflected to what point greed [πλεονεξία] and φιλονικία had brought the empire,... demonstrating how blind and mad human nature is when controlled by passion [ἐν πάθει γενομένη]" (70.1-2). Competition, coupled with greed, led to a *stasis* even worse than that described by Thucydides.

In both lives, φιλονικία is revealed as a πάθος which destroys those who cannot limit it. That salutary φιλονικία envisioned by Lycurgus as a stimulant to ἀρετή had brought great victories, but had then degenerated into the mad, blind, and destructive competition which enervated Sparta. The φιλονικία which had brought empire thrust Rome into a disastrous civil war, and cost Pompey his glory and his life⁴⁷.

Aristides' φιλονικία, unlike that of Agesilaus and Pompey, develops in a positive direction. Aristides, early in life, was φιλόνομος towards Themistocles, when the two were rivals for the same youth, but as time went on his φιλονικία revealed him to be honest and solid – unlike Themistocles, who proved to be audacious and unscrupulous (*Arist.* 2.2). This positive progression is apparent in the *Life*. As the two men matured, Aristides' youthful φιλονικία towards Themistocles was transferred to the political arena, but soon he attempted to control his φιλονικία both towards Themistocles and towards others (*Arist.* 2.4, 3.3, 4, 5.3). Even after Themistocles had engineered his ostracism, he recommended to him at Salamis that they "put aside our empty and childish rivalry [στάσις] and begin a salutary and noble competi-

⁴⁶ In a third case, 67.9, it is senators with Pompey at Pharsalus who display their ἔριδες...καὶ φιλονικίαι to gain Caesar's priesthood.

⁴⁷ The *Lives of Agis and Cleomenes and the Gracchi* exemplify especially φιλοδοξία, but the *Life of Tiberius Gracchus* also unfolds the gradual surrender of a noble young reformer to φιλονικία, urged on by his desire for approval by the Roman people. After his mild reform was opposed by the φιλονικία of the senate (9.3, 10.7), he then debated the issue with φιλονικία, but not ill temper (10.5); later, acting from anger and φιλονικία, he introduced harsh laws curbing the senate (16.1). A noble and well-educated leader surrendered reason to emotion. At the end of the *Life of Gaius Gracchus* Plutarch records two significant items. First, the punning graffito written upon Opimius' temple, 'the temple of Concord is the work of Madness' (δμόνοια/ἀπόνοια, Latin *concordia/vecordia*)' (*CG* 17.9): the senate's irrational φιλονικία had won out. Second, Cornelia's stoic calm, an example of how virtue can bear defeat (*CG* 19.4), suggesting that it would have been nobler for the Gracchi to have resisted φιλονικία and endured their fortune, as Cornelia did, rather than stir up civil war.

tion [φιλονικία], vying with each other [ἀμιλλώμενοι] to save Greece" (8.3). The competition Aristides suggests here is still between two politicians, but the motive is not personal honour or anger, but the freedom of Greece⁴⁸.

Φιλονικία as a term does not occur in *Cato Major*, the parallel *Life*, but the theme of political infighting is prominent because of Cato's aggressive and litigious (ἀγωνιστικός, 7.1) nature. Only in the *synkri-sis* does Plutarch contrast explicitly Aristides' freedom from ambition (ἀφιλότιμον) with Cato's ambition (φιλοτιμία): the former is the route to political mildness (πραότης); the latter is harsh and extremely productive of envy (φθόνος). In the next sentence Plutarch for the first time criticizes Cato's opposition to Scipio Africanus, contrasting Cato's φιλονικία in hampering Scipio's preparations for the expedition against Carthage with Aristides' setting aside of his own φιλονικία with Themistocles to aid in the fight against the Persians (*Comp Arist. et Ca. Ma.* 5.4). For Plutarch, Cato's contentiousness almost ruined Rome's chances of defeating Carthage.

The context of the *Lives of Philopoemen and Flamininus*, Rome's conquest of Greece, permits Plutarch to illustrate the noble and inglorious action of φιλονικία in the same person⁴⁹. Philopoemen, like Aristides, fights for the freedom of Greece; unlike Aristides, he is defeated, and φιλονικία plays its part. At the beginning of his *Life*, Plutarch states that Philopoemen's φιλοτιμία was mixed with φιλονικία and anger, an amalgam that prevented him from imitating the calmness, the gravity, and the humanity (τὸ πρᾶον, τὸ βαθύ, τὸ φιλόανθρωπον) of his hero

⁴⁸ Similarly the Corinthians, during the dispute for the prize of valour after Plataea, urged the Greeks to set aside their φιλονικία and award the prize to the Plataeans (*Arist.* 20.2), thus putting Greek harmony above the interests of individual cities, and reinforcing the notion of Greece as a unity. In the *Life of Themistocles*, the canny hero used the φιλονικία and anger of the Athenians against Aegina to build the fleet which would save the Greeks from Xerxes (*Them.* 4.2). Plutarch does not speak of Themistocles' φιλονικία, but says that he was eager to be first, quarreled with Aristides, and revealed the φιλοτιμία which saved Greece by his emulation of Miltiades (*Them.* 3.2-5). Themistocles' Roman counterpart, Camillus, abandoned his φιλονικία for the consulship because the contest was a cause of στάσις (*Cam.* 40.1). Similarly, Publicola eschewed φιλονικία when the Roman crowd opposed his behaviour, and pulled down the great house which offended them (*Publ.* 10.5). This is the behaviour the Gracchi should have chosen (see preceding note).

⁴⁹ See Pelling (1989), (1997a), and (2002a), 243-47 (= [1995], 213-17), 350-53 (= [1986a], 85-88); and Scuderi (1996). Walsh (1992) emphasizes competition in this pair, but the spelling φιλονεικία in Perrin's edition perhaps leads him to stress the negative aspect, missing the sincere praise of Philopoemen which is brought out by Swain (1988).

Epaminondas, and fitted him more for warfare than for politics (*Phil.* 3.1-2). His contentiousness was apparent in his frequent actions against other Greek states. When dealing with the Romans, moreover, his pride inspired him to be *δύσερις* and *φιλόνικος* toward the Romans even when they wanted to restore exiles (17.7)⁵⁰. So far Philopoemen seems to be like Agesilaus, pursuing a destructive rivalry with other Greeks. The point is reinforced in the *Life of Flamininus*, where Plutarch asserts that the Roman liberated Greece not only from Macedonian domination but also from the Greeks' incessant strife, the disastrous product of the reprehensible competitiveness of their leaders (*κακία καὶ φιλονικία*, *Flam.* 11.6). As examples of Greeks fighting against Greeks Plutarch then lists distinguished men: Agesilaus, Lysander, Nicias, and Alcibiades⁵¹. Moreover, even in old age Philopoemen thoughtlessly attacked Messene, driven by *ὄργή* and *φιλονικία* (*Comp. Phil. et Flam.* 1.4, 7). The reader might easily conclude that Philopoemen's *φιλονικία* was thoroughly destructive, personally and politically.

Yet Plutarch's *synkrisis* challenges this judgement. Setting his heroes side by side, he asserts that Flamininus' clemency and humanity towards the Greeks were noble⁵², but even nobler were Philopoemen's firmness and love of freedom with regard to the Romans (*γενναιότερα... τὰ πρὸς τοὺς Ῥωμαίους ὄχυρὰ καὶ φιλελεύθερα*, *Comp.* 3.4). Philopoemen's *φιλονικία*, his proud unwillingness to give up the fight, is also part of his nobility, since in fighting the Romans he was fighting "for the liberty of Greece". This *φιλονικία* is no mere contentiousness, the destructive competition denounced in the *Moralia* and the *Agesilaus and Pompey*. The nobility of the object, freedom, justifies the passion of *φιλονικία*. The reader, startled, is forced to reevaluate the criticism of Greek *φιλονικία* at *Flam.* 11. The Greek victories which should be admired, Plutarch says there, were those of Marathon, Salamis, Plataea, Thermopylae, Eurymedon, and Cyprus – all battles fought against a foreign enemy to preserve Greek freedom. In fighting the Romans, Philopoemen was imitating those great contests, defending the freedom of all Greeks.

⁵⁰ Plutarch notes also that as the Greeks were weakened, τὸ φιλόνικον in their cities declined (*Phil.* 18.2).

⁵¹ On the first two, see above. *Φιλονικία* is not mentioned in the *Nicias*, but it is important in the *Alcibiades* (cf. 2.1, 30.7; *Comp. Cor. et Alc.* 2.5) and its companion, *Coriolanus* (1.4; cf. 21.6 and 29.4, referring to the Volscians and the Roman senate). Among other generals who fought Greeks, Themistocles exploits the Athenians' *φιλονικία* against Aegina (*Them.* 4.2), and Pericles is criticized for his *φιλονικία* towards the Megarians and Spartans (*Per.* 29, 31.1).

⁵² Though even he felt *φιλονικία* when he saw the extent of Philopoemen's honours (*Flam.* 13.2).

Philopoemen's life, then, demonstrates that his φιλονικία was both admirable and deplorable: a strength when defending Greek freedom, and a failing when quarreling with other Greek cities. In embodying both the noble love of liberty and the competitiveness of his countrymen, Philopoemen is truly 'the last of the Greeks' (*Phil.* 1.7)⁵³.

What of Plutarch's two most successful commanders, Alexander and Caesar, who might be expected also to be φιλονικότατος? In fact, φιλονικία hardly appears in their pair. True, as Alexander planned the journey to Siwah, Plutarch notes that "fortune had made him more determined by yielding to his attacks, and his fiery nature [τὸ θυμοειδές] had rendered his φιλονικία invincible, forcing not only his enemies, but places and occasions as well" (*Alex.* 26.14). But other appearances of the term in that *Life* refer to the unheroic φιλονικία of lesser figures (*Alex.* 29.3, 31.3, 52.9). Caesar's φιλονικία, driven by his inborn φιλοτιμία, was directed not towards Pompey but towards his own prior deeds: ζῆλος αὐτοῦ καθάπερ ἄλλου καὶ φιλονικία τις ὑπὲρ τῶν μελλόντων πρὸς τὰ πεπραγμένα (*Caes.* 58.4-5). As in *Pompey*, the triviality of the φιλονικία of Domitian and Spinther at Pharsalus for the pontificate of Caesar emphasizes his stature above his opponents (42.2). But whereas in the *Pompey* Plutarch's comments before Pharsalus seemed to condemn the φιλονικία of both opponents (*Pomp.* 70.1-2), in the *Caesar* he makes no explicit judgement, but reports the courageous answer of the centurion Crassinius, which showed the spirit which would win the battle for Caesar (44.9-12). In the case of Alexander and Caesar their φιλονικία is subsumed into their φιλοτιμία as part of what has made them absolutely preeminent. Their overvaulting ambition seems to take them beyond the kind of competition implicit in φιλονικία. For the two men, the struggle against internal opposition and external enemies is harsh, sometimes barbaric, and always victorious, but to Plutarch their greatest battle is to exceed their own humanity.

Conclusion

The Plutarchan hero is frequently defined by violent confrontation⁵⁴. His conflict with political and military enemies reveals how the nature he was born with, the training he has received, and the decisions he has made play out in action. Nevertheless Plutarch rejects Vince Lombardi's "winning is the only thing", and he demonstrates in a variety of situations

⁵³ Pelling (1997a), 330-31 acutely notes that Plutarch's final award of a crown to each hero (*Comp. Phil. et Flam.* 3.5) fittingly caps the themes of φιλοτιμία and φιλονικία in this pair.

⁵⁴ Frazier (1996), 101-108.

in both his treatises and his *Lives* the evil effects of φιλονικία. The competitive emotion, so powerful among both Greeks and Romans, could only be desirable if it were shaped by reason towards a noble goal, especially that of defending the freedom of Greece. Since the aim of political life for Plutarch is living in peace and harmony, any competition that stirs up anger and hatred and drives out reason is unacceptable. Plutarch's philosophy has no real place for the competitive politics of ancient and modern times, except when carefully regulated. Not surprisingly, his model states are mythical: Lycurgus' Sparta and Numa's Rome.

But Plutarch is also pragmatic, judging the value of competition by its results. Pericles may ostracize his opponents, but his honesty and reasoned policy, as well as the beauty of the Acropolis, justify his sole rule, and he is not considered φιλόνομος⁵⁵. Agesilaus' policy weakens Sparta, and Pompey's defense of the senate is both misguided and unsuccessful, so the φιλονικία of both is condemned. The highest rule is what is just and profitable for the state⁵⁶. It is the duty of the citizen to be in competition with every magistrate in terms of forethought and care for the public interest, even taking action without legal basis when he has as justification the necessity or the greatness and nobility of the action⁵⁷.

Plutarch's own times had often been marked by violent φιλονικία. For Greeks, the Roman conquest had ended the armed struggles between cities, and Roman rule had suppressed violent στάσις within them, but the contest for honour, glory, and power continued as before. The incessant pleas for self-control, restraint, and concord in the Greek cities, found in the *Rules for Politicians*, as in Dio of Prusa⁵⁸, bear witness to the continual competition of the local elites under the empire. If their scope was not as large as in classical times, their passions were as great, and potentially as destructive. Still more competitive was the situation among the Roman governing class, to which in this period Greeks were beginning, hesitantly, to be admitted. The emperor, of course, had to always be supreme, and those who seemed in any way threatening had to be removed. Execution or exile awaited a false step by a senator or general. Fear of conspiracy dictated harsh measures; the possibility of revolt and civil war was always near. The stakes were

⁵⁵ Alcibiades' φιλονικία is ambiguous: dubious at first (*Alc.* 2.1), it leads to his cool courage at Selymbria (30.7). The problem goes back to Thucydides (cf. V, 43.2).

⁵⁶ Cf. *Praec. ger. reip.* 817E: "The law always gives first place in government to the person who does what is right and knows what is advantageous".

⁵⁷ *Praec. ger. reip.* 817D, F.

⁵⁸ See Jones (1978), 83-94; Salmieri (2000), 74-81.

high. Plutarch may have hoped that under Trajan reason would prevail over emotion, that the φιλονικία of the emperor and the imperial elite would be directed towards foreign enemies rather than each other. In his *Parallel Lives* he gave ample evidence of the dangers of φιλονικία, and suggested how its energy could be used to productive ends. Given past history, he cannot have been too sanguine about the chances of avoiding new outbreaks of violent confrontation. Surprisingly, after Trajan's accession the empire saw three generations of relative calm. May the φιλονικία in our present world have an equal outcome.

4. 'POPULAR PHILOSOPHY' IN CONTEXT

Astrometeorología y creencias sobre los astros en Plutarco

A. PÉREZ JIMÉNEZ

I

En la inmensa obra de Plutarco, con excepción de algún tratado muy específico como el *De facie in orbe lunae*, las referencias astrales son relativamente escasas. Eso no significa que no las haya, que ciertamente las hay y enfocadas desde todos los puntos de vista con que se podía afrontar el tema de los astros en el siglo I/II d.C. Quizá por eso la bibliografía sobre esta cuestión es también relativamente escasa. Hay algunos artículos que se ocupan de los conocimientos astronómicos de Plutarco, como los de Luigi TORRACA, a propósito del *De facie*¹ y Esteban CALDERÓN, en el *De Iside*²; se ha discutido con cierta profundidad el tema de los eclipses, por Robert FLACÉLIÈRE³; Maria CHIODI ha tratado el famoso pasaje del *De Iside et Osiride* donde Plutarco se pronuncia sobre el dualismo caldeo, aunque derivando más hacia cuestiones relativas a la astrología babilonia que al pensamiento del propio Plutarco⁴; Paola VOLPE ha tratado sobre los animales del Zodíaco⁵; y yo mismo me he ocupado de la presencia de cuestiones astrológicas y astrometeorológicas en *Vidas y Moralia*⁶, así como de los elementos astrales en los mitos de Plutarco, tema éste tratado igualmente por trabajos específicos sobre esos mitos⁷ y con bastante detalle en el libro de Yvonne VERNIÈRE⁸.

Por lo que se refiere al *Corpus Plutarcheum* casi todos los materiales se encuentran, además del *De facie* y del *De Iside*, ya mencionados,

¹ Torraca (1992).

² Calderón (1996).

³ Flacelière (1951). Vid. también, sobre la astronomía, Id. (1976).

⁴ Chiodi, (1994).

⁵ Volpe (2005).

⁶ Pérez Jiménez (1992), (2007/8) y (2009).

⁷ La bibliografía esencial puede leerse en nuestros trabajos Pérez Jiménez (1996) y (2001).

⁸ Vernière (1977), espec. pp. 63-122 y 153-216.

en el *Comentario a los Trabajos y Días*, cuya última parte, la correspondiente a los *Días*, es rica en interpretaciones astrometeorológicas relativas a la Luna. Que, pese a la aludida escasez de referencias, el tema astral interesó especialmente a Plutarco, lo evidencian algunos títulos del *Catálogo de Lamprias*, como el 99, *Περὶ κομητῶν*, 119, *Αἰτίαι τῶν Ἄρατου Διοσημείων*⁹ y 150 y 200a, *Περὶ ἡμερῶν*¹⁰, así como algunas particularidades discutidas en las *Quaestiones convivales*, de las que, salvo excepciones, como la de III 10 (*Διὰ τί τὰ κρέα σήπεται μᾶλλον ὑπὸ τὴν σελήνην ἢ τὸν ἥλιον*), por desgracia, sólo nos han llegado pequeños fragmentos o simplemente los títulos (así IV 7: *Διὰ τί τὰς ὁμωνύμους τοῖς πλάνησιν οὐ κατὰ τὴν ἐκείνων τάξιν ἀλλ' ἐνηλλαγμένως ἀριθμοῦσιν· ἐν ᾧ καὶ περὶ ἡλίου τάξεως*¹¹ y IX 10: *Διὰ τί, τῶν ἐκλειπτικῶν περιόδων ἡλίου καὶ σελήνης ἰσαριθμῶν οὐσῶν, ἡ σελήνη φαίνεται πλεονάκις ἐκλείπουσα τοῦ ἡλίου*)¹².

Pues bien, como decíamos, el interés de Plutarco por los astros abarca todos los enfoques posibles y esto dependerá del colorido especial de los tratados o del contenido de los diálogos en los que se inserte el tema.

Predomina, sin duda, el punto de vista culto, científico, astronómico, tan propio de un filósofo platónico-aristotélico, sensible al valor de la razón como instrumento para eliminar las supersticiones¹³, aunque eso sí, subordinando siempre las explicaciones científicas a los condicionamientos religiosos de la auténtica piedad. Así, la mayoría de las citas astrales dejan constancia de la verdadera naturaleza de los eclipses de sol y de luna, ya sea como argumento esgrimido por el buen general para alejar el miedo de sus soldados, como en el caso de Pericles (*Per.* 35.2) y de Dion (*Dion* 24.1-3), o como instrumento utilizado por el

⁹ Que, según parece, debía estar enfocado sobre todo desde el punto de vista de las predicciones astrometeorológicas, como demuestra Monica Negri en su interesante artículo sobre este tratado; vid. Negri (2004).

¹⁰ Es probable que contuvieran referencias astrales el tratado 58, *Περὶ εἰμαρμένης*, 66, *Περὶ τοῦ γεγενῆαι κατὰ τὸν Πλάτωνα τὸν κόσμον*, 71, *Περὶ μαντικῆς ὅτι σώζεται κατὰ τοὺς Ἀκαδημαϊκοὺς*, 118, *Περὶ τοῦ κατ' Ἴσιν λόγου καὶ Σάραπιν*, 119, *Αἰτίαι τῶν Ἄρατου Διοσημείων*, y 212, *Περὶ σεισμῶν*.

¹¹ Al menos la discusión debía versar sobre el orden de los planetas y las tutelas de las primeras horas (un tema astrológico) por éstos (cf. Teodorsson (1990), 134-36).

¹² Las interpretaciones astrometeorológicas recogidas en *Quaestiones convivales* han sido objeto de un estudio reciente por nuestra parte (Pérez Jiménez (2009)), así como, parcialmente, por A. Casanova (2005); en consecuencia, en este trabajo, me referiré a estos pasajes sólo tangencialmente.

¹³ *De sup.* 171A: *οὐ γὰρ ἐν οὐρανῷ τι μεμπτὸν οὐδ' ἐν ἄστροις οὐδ' ἐν ὥραις ἢ περιόδοις σελήνης ἢ κινήσεων ἡλίου περὶ γῆν, ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτὸς δημιουργοῖς*, ... [“pues nada censurable hay en los astros, ni en las estaciones ni en las revoluciones de la luna o movimientos del sol en torno a la tierra, ‘demiurgos del día y de la noche’...”].

buen gobernante para usar en beneficio de la comunidad, mediante la religión, las supersticiones que generan supersticiones astrales (como en el caso de Emilio: *Aem.* 17.7-13); en otros casos, la explicación científica refuerza la crítica del propio Plutarco a la actitud supersticiosa de sus personajes, como en el caso de Nicias (*Nic.* 23)¹⁴ o se propone como exigencia formativa para los ciudadanos corrientes, con el fin de darles armas contra las pretensiones embaucadoras de magos y falsantes, como la tesalia Aglaonica¹⁵. En fin, en el tratado *De facie in orbe lunae*, la explicación científica de los eclipses responde totalmente a los parámetros astronómicos en que se mueve el diálogo y sirve más bien como argumento para la demostración de la naturaleza terrea de nuestro satélite.

Otra visión distinta de los astros, de orientación mítico-religiosa, es la que prevalece, porque así lo exige el guión, en el tratado de exégesis teológica *De Iside et Osiride*. Las referencias, en este caso, tienen que ver casi siempre con la representación solar y lunar de los dioses egipcios y con la explicación alegórica de sus mitos respectivos. Esto convierte el diálogo en un rico conglomerado de referencias astrales que intentan aclarar tanto los aspectos místicos y escatológicos, como astrológicos, astronómicos y astro-meteorológicos del Sol, de la Luna y de algún otro astro importante en el cielo egipcio, como es Sirio. De todos modos, el lenguaje, entre religioso y simbólico, con que Plutarco aborda aquí la temática astral, acaba impregnando por completo su pensamiento y actitud hacia los cuerpos celestes. En este sentido, es bastante significativa la clasificación que, en *De defectu oraculorum* (416D) hace de ellos, como paradigma que brinda la naturaleza de los tipos de seres vivos; tiene su importancia para nosotros en ella

¹⁴ Véase también, en este sentido, la opinión de Plutarco en *De sup.* 169AB: ἦν δ' ἴσως καὶ Νικίᾳ τῶ Ἀθηναίων στρατηγῶ κράτιστον οὕτως ἀπαλλαγῆναι τῆς δεισιδαιμονίας ὡς Μίδας ἢ Ἀριστόδημος ἢ φοβηθέντι τὴν σκιὰν ἐκλιπούσης τῆς σελήνης καθῆσθαι περιτειχιζόμενον ὑπὸ τῶν πολεμίων, εἶθ' ὁμοῦ τέτταρσι μυριάσιν ἀνθρώπων φονευθέντων τε καὶ ζώντων ἄλόντων ὑποχείριον γενέσθαι καὶ δυσκλεῶς ἀποθανεῖν. οὐ γὰρ γῆς ἀντίφραξις ἐν μέσῳ γενομένης φοβερὸν, οὐδὲ δεινὸν ἐν καιρῷ περιόδων σκιάς πρὸς σελήνην ἀπάντησις, ἀλλὰ δεινὸν τὸ τῆς δεισιδαιμονίας σκότος ἐμπεσόν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου συγγέει καὶ τυφλώσει λογισμὸν ἐν πράγμασι μάλιστα λογισμοῦ δεομένοις [“Tal vez habría sido mejor también para Nicias, el general de los atenienses, apartarse de la superstición igual que Midas o Aristodemo y no, por miedo a la sombra de un eclipse de luna, dejarse rodear, sentado, por los enemigos y luego, junto con cuarenta mil que fueron cogidos entre vivos y muertos, verse prisionero y morir sin honra. Pues no la interposición de la tierra, situada en medio, es motivo de miedo, ni es terrible que con ocasión de sus giros se proyecte sombra hacia la luna, sino que lo terrible es que la sombra de la superstición se apodere del hombre y confunda y ciegue su razón en asuntos que requieren especialmente de ella.”].

¹⁵ *Con. praec.* 145C y *De def. or.* 417A.

la identificación del Sol y los astros con los dioses, de los cometas con los mortales y de la Luna (astro mixto) con los démones¹⁶. Y por ello tal vez la hilaridad con que rechaza la conflagración universal de Cleantes, resultado de la gran conjunción, y por tanto destrucción, del Sol, la Luna y los planetas, pues no se entiende que podamos invocar como salvadores a los dioses, si ellos son incapaces de salvarse a sí mismos (*De comm. not.* 1075D).

De ahí a la visión mística de las estrellas sólo hay un paso. Y la de Plutarco, como era de esperar, tiene evidentes tintes pitagóricos y platónicos. Así, en el mismo tratado se afirma que las almas viven en el cielo como astros (*De Is. et Os.* 359C), afirmación que se transforma en realidad en las experiencias extáticas de sus mitos; en ellos – igual que en Pitágoras y casi igual que en Platón – la luna y los planetas son como islas, donde – como es el caso de la luna en el mito de Sila – habitan los démones.

Sean dioses o instrumentos de la Providencia divina (segunda providencia, según se dice en *De fato* 572F) el influjo de los astros sobre la tierra, que es un principio elemental de la astrología, se asume, como imagen, en *Ad princ. iner.* 780D. Aquí Plutarco, a propósito de la presencia de la divinidad en el Estado, dice que todo crece por influencia de los astros, de la Luna y del Sol que lo gobierna todo, siendo estos últimos imagen de la divinidad en el cosmos, igual que lo es el gobernante en la tierra. Poco a poco, medio en serio o medio en broma, se acerca al terreno de la astrología cuando cuestiona la interpretación de la E delfica que da el caldeo (*De E* 386A), cuando recuerda la alegoría astrológica del mito de los amores de Ares (Marte) y Afrodita (Venus), en *De aud. poet.* 19F, cuando habla de las exaltaciones y depresiones de los planetas en sentido astrológico, en *Sept. sap. conv.* 149A, o cuando se detiene en la ocurrencia de Casio que, ante la prevención de los árabes, recomendándole esperar a que la luna saliera de Escorpio, respondió que más temía a Sagitario, por no mencionar otros pasajes a los que ya nos hemos referido en anteriores trabajos.

Pero en casi todos estos casos es la tradición culta, literaria y científica, la que determina la presencia de elementos astrales en la obra de Plutarco. En otros, sin embargo, se constatan creencias populares que a veces se asumen como tales, sin discusión alguna y que, en la mayoría de los casos, tratan de explicarse por la naturaleza física de los astros. Esto ocurre generalmente con la Luna; pero, aunque raramente, también se implica al Sol o a los astros en general.

¹⁶ *De def. or.* 416CD.

2

El tipo de influencias más asumible para la razón, ya que se pueden constatar por la experiencia, es la astro-meteorología. Precisamente de su lectura de Arato, como dijimos, a Plutarco le interesan en especial los signos de predicciones astro-meteorológicas, con toda seguridad por lo que atañe a Sirio¹⁷ y al Sol (*Fr.* 13 y 14) y, tal vez, también a la Luna, como sugiere Mónica NEGRI¹⁸. De esos fenómenos, para Plutarco, el primero y que cuenta con una tradición científica importante, es el de las mareas. Nuestro autor las da por seguras, a propósito de la Luna, cuando asume de los egipcios la relación entre sus fases y las subidas y bajadas de nivel de las aguas marinas y fluviales, en particular del Nilo¹⁹. Pero hay otras influencias, también aceptadas por nuestro filósofo, que son fruto de la experiencia popular y que van más allá de la simple meteorología; aunque Plutarco busque para ellas el mismo principio físico: la naturaleza cálida y húmeda atribuida por los astrónomos a la Luna²⁰, o caliente y seca del Sol. Las que los interlocutores de *Quaestiones convivales* discuten, a propósito del

¹⁷ Cf. *Quaest. conv.* 683E.

¹⁸ Negri (2004), 281-82.

¹⁹ Respecto al Sol, véase *De Is. et Os.* 365F-366A: Τῶν τ' ἄστρον τὸν σείριον Ἰσιδος (restituimos la lectura de los manuscritos, ya que entre los egipcios Sirio se asimilaba como Sothis a Isis, aunque los griegos identificaran a Sirio con Osiris, como se dice en 372D) νομίζουσιν ὑδραγωγὸν ὄντα καὶ τὸν λέοντα τιμῶσι καὶ χάσμασι λεονταίσι τὰ τῶν ἱερῶν θυρώματα κοσμοῦσιν, ὅτι πλημμυρεῖ Νεῖλος (cf. Arat., *Phaen.* 151) ἡελίου τὰ πρῶτα συνερχομένοιο λέοντι. [“De los astros consideran a Sirio de Isis por ser portador de agua y honran al León y adornan las puertas de sus templos con fauces de león porque el Nilo produce su inundación ‘cuando el coincide por primera vez con Leo’.”].

²⁰ Casi todos los efectos de la Luna sobre las mujeres, las plantas, el vino y la madera se resumen en *De facie* 939F (cf. Pérez Jiménez (2009), 452-53) y, un poco más abajo (940A), las mareas y el flujo de agua en los estrechos. Por otra parte, en *De Is. et Os.* 367CD se reivindica la influencia generativa de la Luna sobre todos los seres vivos de la Tierra: οἱ δὲ τοῖσδε τοῖς φυσικοῖς καὶ τῶν ἀπ' ἀστρολογίας μαθηματικῶν ἔνια μινύντες Τυφῶνα μὲν οἶονται τὸν ἡλιακὸν κόσμον, Ὅσιριν δὲ τὸν σεληνιακὸν λέγεσθαι τὴν μὲν γὰρ σελήνην γόνιμον τὸ φῶς καὶ ὑγροποιὸν ἔχουσαν εὐμενῆ καὶ γοναῖς ζῶων καὶ φυτῶν εἶναι βλαστήσεσι τὸν δ' ἥλιον ἀκράτῳ πυρὶ καὶ σκληρῷ καταβάλλειν [τε] καὶ καταναίειν τὰ φυόμενα καὶ τεθνήλота καὶ τὸ πολὺ μέρος τῆς γῆς παντάπασιν ὑπὸ φλογμοῦ ποιεῖν ἀόικητον καὶ κατακρατεῖν πολλοῦ καὶ τῆς σελήνης [“quienes con estas explicaciones físicas mezclan algunas creencias astrológicas procedentes de la astronomía, creen que Tifón es el mundo solar y llaman Osiris al lunar; pues la luna, con su luz fecunda y humectante, es propicia para la reproducción de animales y la germinación de plantas; en cambio el sol, con su fuego puro y violento, reseca lo que nace y brota y vuelve la mayor parte de la tierra, a causa del ardiente calor, por completo inhabitable y domina en muchas partes incluso a la luna.”]. Estas influencias son parte de la doctrina general de los astrólogos, como vemos en un texto de Abumasar que, sin duda, resume toda

efecto negativo de la humedad de la luna sobre la carne y la madera o de su papel en algunos procesos fisiológicos de las mujeres y en enfermedades como la epilepsia, ya han sido analizadas en nuestro último trabajo sobre el tema y, como dijimos, no vamos a insistir en ello. Pero en cuanto a otras creencias populares, como la idea de que el plenilunio (fase de oposición entre el Sol y la Luna) no es buen momento para casarse, Plutarco también las comparte y trata de darles una explicación razonable. En este caso, el Queronense la encuentra en la astronomía y en el simbolismo de la conjunción como matrimonio del Sol y la Luna²¹. Es el mismo principio imitativo con que se articulan las prescripciones astrometeorológicas en casi todos los *Lunaria* astrológicos, cuando previenen contra el matrimonio en días de plenilunio²².

3

También son de origen popular las creencias en la influencia de la Luna sobre los animales en general y sobre sus órganos y conductas. Así cuando, explicando el significado de *Op.* 814-816, justifica la docilidad de los animales en el 29 del mes porque la luna comienza a ocultarse en ese día²³, de nuevo tenemos, aplicado a la psicología animal, el principio de imitación²⁴ que volverá a esgrimirse para racio-

la experiencia anterior sobre las virtudes de nuestro satélite: *Περὶ τῶν ἐνεργειῶν τῆς Σελήνης* (*CCAG*, VIII 1, 179-81).

²¹ *Fr.* 105. Se argumenta en apoyo que los atenienses elegían como días propicios para los matrimonios precisamente esos días de la conjunción, en los que celebraban también las Teogamias.

²² Los principales textos astrológicos de esta índole se encuentran en el *CCAG*, III (1901), 32-9, IV (1903), 142-5, VIII 4 (1921), 102-4 y 105-7 (Melampo), X (1924), 121-6, (*Davidis et Salomonis Lunarium*), 196-201 y 243-7, XI1 (1932), 134-44, y XI2 (1934), 157-62, y en *Cod. Par. Nouv. Acq. Lat. 1616* (Svenberg (1963), 23-29) y *Cod. Vat. Lat. 642* (Svenberg (1963), 30-41). Por ejemplo, con referencia al día trece, en *CCAG*, III, 35, se dice que *εἰς γάμον δὲ κακὴ ἐστὶ*, aunque en estos *Lunaria* la confusión es notable y, a veces, sin perjuicio de ese principio imitativo que los rige, se considera bueno para el matrimonio el plenilunio y mala la conjunción.

²³ *Fr.* III: τρίτην εἰνάδα τὴν εἰκοστὴν εἶπεν ἐνάτην... φησὶ γὰρ τῆς σελήνης ἀρχομένης ἐπικρύπτεσθαι δοκεῖν καὶ τὰ θυμοειδέστερα τῶν ἀλόγων ἀμβλύειν τὸν θυμὸν καὶ μὴ ὁμοίως ἀνθίστασθαι τοῖς δαμάζουσιν, ἀσθενέστερα γινόμενα [“Tercer noveno llamó al veintinueve... pues dice que cuando la luna empieza a ocultarse parece que también los animales más furiosos apagan su furor y no plantan cara de la misma forma a quienes intentan domarlos, debido a su mayor debilidad.”].

²⁴ Un principio habitual, como acabamos de decir, en los astrólogos y que se enuncia como tal en *Ps.-Ptol., Fruct.* 61: Ἡ σελήνη δηλοῖ τὰ τοῦ σώματος ὡς ὁμοιοῦντος

nalizar las creencias populares en otros pasajes distintos y de obras menos discutibles.

El primer ejemplo tiene que ver con la reproducción de los gatos, a los que los egipcios les atribuyen tantas crías como días tiene el ciclo lunar (*De Is. et Os.* 376E)²⁵; en principio, la actitud de Plutarco ante este tema es que se trata de puras especulaciones de los sacerdotes egipcios, que califica de fabulosas; pero inmediatamente busca en el principio imitativo el fundamento de ese carácter lunar del gato, cuando relaciona los cambios de las pupilas de los gatos con la luna: pues crecen aquellas en creciente y disminuyen en menguante, una relación que se enmarca en el conjunto de creencias populares relativas a la influencia de las fases de la luna en el crecimiento y el decrecimiento de la naturaleza²⁶. En cuanto al crecimiento y disminución, según las fases de la luna, del hígado de los ratones, que Plutarco aporta como prueba de la influencia lunar en su *Comentario a Hesíodo*²⁷, es un fenómeno bien documentado en la literatura médica. Sorano es muy preciso al respecto: I, 41.1: τινὲς δὲ τῶν παλαιῶν καὶ τοὺς ἀπὸ τῶν ἕξωθεν καιροὺς ὠρίσαν· ἐπιτήδειον γὰρ εἶναι τὸν καιρὸν πληρουμένης τῆς σελήνης. συμπαθεῖν γὰρ τὰ ἐπίγεια τοῖς μεταρσίοις, καὶ ὡς τὰ πλεῖστα τῶν θαλασσίων εὐτροφεῖν μὲν πληρουμένης τῆς σελήνης, ἀτροφεῖν δὲ μειουμένης καὶ τῶν κατοικιδίων μῶν τοὺς λοβοὺς τοῦ ἥπατος αὔξεσθαι μὲν πληρουμένης τῆς σελήνης, ἐλαττοῦσθαι δὲ μειουμένης, οὕτως καὶ τὰς σπερματικὰς δυνάμεις ἐν ἡμῖν τε καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ζώοις αὔξεσθαι μὲν πληρουμένης τῆς σελήνης, ἐλαττοῦσθαι δὲ μειουμένης²⁸. Juan Lido

αὐτῇ κατὰ τὴν κίνησιν [“La luna muestra lo relativo al cuerpo, debido a la semejanza de éste con ella por el movimiento.”].

²⁵ Sobre la extraña identificación del gato como animal lunar y no solar y las razones religiosas en Egipto de la misma (ligada al culto de Isis-Hathor-Bastet), véase Hani (1976), 395-96. La identificación del gato con la luna puede basarse en el mito greco-egipcio de la transformación de dioses en animales por Tifón, que relaciona a Artemis-Bast con un gato (vid. Boll (1903), 324).

²⁶ 376EF y *Fr.* 101; cf. 670B, Plin., *nat.* II, 109-110 (donde se habla sobre el crecimiento y disminución de las enfermedades de los ojos en algunos animales) y Iambl., *Myst.* 5.8. La noticia de Aulo Gelio (XX, 8) sobre los gatos viene sin duda de Plutarco cuyo texto del *De Iside* reproduce. Para el reflejo en la literatura romana de estas creencias, vid. Lunais (1979), 71-73.

²⁷ *Fr.* 101.

²⁸ “Algunos antiguos incluso fijaron las circunstancias externas. Así, es favorable el momento en que la luna crece. Pues hay una relación de simpatía entre los seres de la tierra y los celestes e, igual que la mayoría de los seres marinos crecen con el creciente y menguan con el menguante, y los lóbulos del hígado de los ratones caseros aumentan con el creciente y disminuyen con el menguante, así también las potencias seminales que hay en nosotros y en los demás animales aumentan con el creciente y disminuyen con el menguante”.

refiere la noticia a Arquelao²⁹ y Plinio amplía la información cuando dice que el número de lóbulos del hígado de estos roedores se corresponde con el de días del ciclo lunar³⁰.

El último pasaje, también del *De Iside*, se refiere a los cerdos, considerados impuros por los egipcios por ser el único animal que se aparea durante la fase de luna menguante (354A): ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τὴν ἕν ἀνιερὸν ζῶον ἡγούνται· ὡς μάλιστα γὰρ ὀχεύεσθαι δοκεῖ τῆς σελήνης. La noticia está referida – como hemos dicho – a los sacerdotes egipcios y, aunque en ese pasaje no se da razón alguna, salvo tal vez su carácter excepcional (como en el caso de la cebolla³¹), para esa actitud de los egipcios, ampliamente constatada³², en *Fr.* 103 Plutarco aventura una posible explicación: καὶ μήποτε καὶ τοῦτο τὸ ζῶον, ὡς χθόνιον καὶ γεννήσει χαῖρον, οἰκεῖόν ἐστι πρὸς ταύτην εἰκότως μάλιστα τῆς θεοῦ τὴν συνοδικὴν φάσιν, ἣν πρὸς ἥλιον λόγον ἔχειν ὡς θήλεος πρὸς ἄρρενά φασιν³³. La referencia al animal como χθόνιον y las explicaciones que se dan para la excepcionalidad de la cebolla en los autores latinos (de lo que tratamos más adelante) nos inducen a pensar que Plutarco establece una simpatía entre el comportamiento del cerdo y el de la luna en conjunción con el sol porque esta fase de la luna tiene lugar cuando el astro está (de noche) bajo tierra.

4

Igual que el hombre y los animales, las plantas están sometidas a movimientos y fenómenos de crecimiento y disminución por causa de los astros. Se constata como algo general y evidente la realidad del girasol y de las rosas y los lirios, que giran hacia el Sol, en el *fragmento* 101: δηλοῖ δὲ καὶ τῶν φυτῶν τὰ μὲν σελήνη συγκινούμενα τὰ δ' ἥλιω· τὰ μὲν γὰρ ῥόδα καὶ ἴα καὶ μετὰ τούτων τὰ ἡλιοτρόπια πρὸς ἥλιον ἀνίσχοντα τρέπει τὰ φύλλα καὶ πρὸς καταδύμενον ὡσαύτως εἰς ἐσπέραν ῥέποντα, ...³⁴.

Por lo que se refiere a la Luna, su influencia positiva en el crecimiento de las plantas se explica también unas veces por razones

²⁹ *Mens.* 3.11 (cf. *Ost.* Proem. 7, p. 16 Wunsch).

³⁰ Plinio, XI, 196.

³¹ Vid. infra.

³² Sobre el particular, remitimos a las observaciones de Hani (1976), 320-23.

³³ “Este animal, por su apego al suelo y su gusto por engendrar, está naturalmente ligado sobre todo a la conjunción de la diosa, según dicen; pues la relación de ésta con el sol es similar a la de la hembra con el macho”.

³⁴ “Las plantas se mueven claramente unas con la luna y otras con el sol; así las rosas, las violetas y con éstas los girasoles giran levantando sus hojas hacia el sol e inclinándolas hacia éste del mismo modo cuando se oculta, por la tarde”.

físicas (la humedad cálida que aporta su luz, en creciente o llena³⁵) y otras por el principio de imitación. Al primer tipo corresponde la razón que da Plutarco para que el trece sea bueno para plantar y fijar los árboles³⁶, acción esta que coincide con las creencias de los campesinos romanos sobre la influencia benéfica para estas labores del creciente y el plenilunio³⁷ y, en general, con las advertencias de los textos astrológicos, que, en sus lunarios consideran bueno el trece para estas actividades: Διόνυσος ἐγεννήθη. Ἡ ἄμπελος ἐφυτεύθη ὑπὸ τοῦ Νώε. Αὕτη ἡμέρα καλὴ καὶ ἀγαθὴ ἐστὶν ἀμπέλια φυτεύειν, κλαδεύειν, δένδρα πῆξαι³⁸. Por lo que se refiere al creciente, en concreto Juliano de Laodicea abre sus prescripciones sobre la plantación con estas significativas palabras: Φυτεύειν δεῖ μεσουρανούσης τῆς Σελήνης... καὶ προστιθείσης τῷ τε φωτὶ καὶ τοῖς ἀριθμοῖς³⁹.

En cuanto al principio de la imitación, excepcional es el caso de la cebolla, que – a diferencia de todas las plantas – crece cuando la luna está en menguante y disminuye en creciente. Plutarco constata este fenómeno tanto en *De Iside*⁴⁰ como en el *Comentario a los Días*; pero no trata de explicarlo, tal vez porque en el contexto del tratado sobre Isis (del que parece extraído el segundo pasaje) sólo interesa la excepcionalidad de esta planta, que justifica la prevención religiosa de los sacerdotes. Recogemos aquí el pasaje del *Comentario* (Fr. 102), transmitido por Aulo Gelio, XX, 8: *Id etiam, inquit, multo mirandum est magis, quod apud Plutarchum in quarto in Hesiodum commentario legi: 'cepelum revirescit et congerminat decedente luna, contra autem inarescit adulescente; eam causam esse dicunt sacerdotes Aegyptii cur Pelusiotae cepe non edint, quia solum olerum omnium contra lunae augmenta atque damna vices minuendi et augendi habeat contrarias'*⁴¹.

³⁵ Fr. 105.

³⁶ Fr. 104.

³⁷ Cf. Lunais (1979), 50-54.

³⁸ CCAG, III, 35: “Nació Dioniso. La vid fue cultivada por Noé. Ese día es excelente para plantar viñas, podar y fijar árboles”.

³⁹ CCAG, VIII 4, 251: “Hay que plantar cuando la luna esté en el Medio cielo (es decir en la culminación sur de la eclíptica, o sea, visible en el centro del cielo en nuestro hemisferio y aumentando en luz y tamaño (es decir, en creciente)”.

⁴⁰ 353E: οἱ δ' ἱερεῖς ἀφοσιῶνται καὶ δυσχεραίνουσι καὶ τὸ κρόμμυον παραφυλάττοντες, ὅτι τῆς σελήνης φθινοῦσης μόνον εὐτροφεῖν τοῦτο καὶ τετηλέναι πέφυκεν. ἔστι δὲ πρόσφορον οὐθ' ἀγνεύουσιν οὐθ' ἐορτάζουσι, τοῖς μὲν ὅτι διψῆν τοῖς δ' ὅτι δακρύειν ποιεῖ τοὺς προσφερομένους [los sacerdotes se purifican y rechazan también la cebolla, evitándola, porque sólo ésta coge fuerza y está floreciente cuando la luna mengua. Y no es apropiada ni para los que ayunan ni para quienes celebran fiestas; para aquéllos, porque produce sed y para éstos porque causa llanto a los que se acercan a ella.].

⁴¹ “Esto también, dijo, es mucho más admirable, lo que he leído en Plutarco, en

Sin embargo, a juzgar por las explicaciones que ofrecen los autores agrarios romanos en relación con el ajo y la cebolla⁴², el fundamento de esta creencia parece estar en que, al crecer bajo tierra, se ve influida por la luna cuando está bajo tierra.

La creencia de los campesinos (probablemente ya en las prescripciones que se daban para los días en Hesíodo) de que la madera se pudre si se corta en creciente o plenilunio, encuentra su explicación por la humedad de la luz lunar en Teofrasto, en Catón (*agr.* 37.3) y en Cicerón, que extiende la prohibición a la luna menguante (*div.* 2,33-34)⁴³. Plutarco se hace eco de estas opiniones tanto en el *Comentario a los Días* como en *Quaestiones convivales* y Columela coincide en esta apreciación al decir que el menguante es el mejor momento para cortar la madera destinada a la construcción, así como para otros usos y concreta como época más recomendable los días del veinte al treinta⁴⁴. La misma capacidad corrosiva de la humedad por influencia de la luz lunar afecta a la carne y hace que fermente la harina, por lo que también los campesinos se apresuran a recoger de la era el trigo a final de mes, antes de que aparezca de nuevo la luna y se inicie el creciente y, dado que la luna nueva no tiene efectos humectantes, queda así justificada la recomendación hesiódica de que se abra el vino cuando hay luna nueva⁴⁵.

5

Hasta aquí nuestras consideraciones sobre los principales elementos de las influencias astrales en el mundo sublunar en la obra de Plutarco. De ellas podemos concluir que el Queronense acepta las creencias cultas y populares sobre esas influencias en los cambios de nivel experimentados por ríos y mares, en la sintomatología de determinadas enfermedades, en los procesos fisiológicos, psicológicos y conductas sociales de las personas, en el comportamiento de los animales, en la germinación y crecimiento de las plantas o en la maduración y descomposición de la materia, ya sea vegetal (madera) o animal (carne). Pero no se limita

el libro cuarto de su *Comentario a Hesíodo*: la cebolla reverdece y germina con la luna menguante, y por el contrario se seca con la creciente; esta es la razón, según dicen los sacerdotes egipcios, por la que los pelusiotas no comen cebolla, porque es la única hortaliza que, frente a los crecientes y menguantes de la luna tiene contrarias sus alternancias de disminuir y aumentar.”

⁴² Cf. Lunais (1979), 52.

⁴³ Vid. Teodorsson (1989), 388-89.

⁴⁴ Sobre estas creencias, remitimos a Pérez Jiménez (2009), 452-53 y a las reflexiones de Casanova (2005), 70-73.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 454.

a constatar estos efectos de la luz lunar, sobre todo, la curiosidad de nuestro autor. Llevado por su vocación filosófica, religiosa y científica, trata de explicarlos, de reducirlos a cualquier parámetro de racionalidad, tal como él la entiende. Unas veces será la física (la naturaleza cálida y húmeda de la luna) la que le dé la clave de justificación de esas influencias; otras será la tradición filosófica, avalada por las autoridades del pensamiento grecorromano (naturaleza femenina y cualidad de la luna como principio generativo), la que le permita explicar esos fenómenos naturales; otras será el mito y la religión (identificación de la Luna con Isis, con Hera, Juno-Lucina) o el papel escatológico de la Luna lo que sirva para integrar esos datos de la experiencia en el hilo discursivo de la obra plutarquea; y no faltará la explicación imitativa, más adecuada al carácter popular de estas creencias: si la luna crece, crece todo y, si mengua, también todo mengua.

Pues bien, con todas esas justificaciones y planteamientos de la apotelesmática lunar, Plutarco se nos manifiesta como un hombre de su tiempo. Está abierto a las creencias populares sobre los astros, que, siempre que puede o viene al caso, somete a un proceso de racionalización; se acerca a los planteamientos místicos de las corrientes gnósticas y herméticas, un tema que ya hemos tratado en otras ocasiones y que deliberadamente hemos dejado al margen aquí, por su carácter esencialmente especulativo; subraya el contraste entre las actitudes supersticiosas del pueblo y la sabiduría de sus héroes políticos y militares a propósito de la manifestación de fenómenos celestes (como los eclipses), dejando siempre clara la complementariedad entre la ciencia y la religión; y nos plantea el interrogante de su posición ante doctrinas populares en su época, como la astrología, cuando, en muchos casos, se limita a constatar las predicciones de los caldeos (como en el caso de Casio, en *Crass.* 29.4), sin discutir más que aquellos aspectos ético-políticos de los gobernantes que se dejan convencer por ellos (como en el caso de Octavio, en *Mar.* 42.7-8) o manifestando su curiosidad y asombro ante la técnica de Tarrucio para establecer el horóscopo de Roma en *Rom.* 12 o por el grado de cumplimiento de las predicciones de los caldeos (como en el caso de Sila, en *Sull.* 5.5 y 37.1).

En fin, la relación entre los astros y nuestro mundo sigue siendo un enigma para Plutarco, un enigma transido de religión natural, que se evidencia en las actitudes piadosas de los animales⁴⁶, o de misterios

⁴⁶ Sobre determinados comportamientos de los animales en relación con los astros, véase *De soll. an.* 974EF, referido a los cantos del *oryx* en el momento exacto del orto de Sirio y la actitud de las cabras de los libios que se vuelven a oriente cuando se levanta con el sol (Λίβυες δ' Αιγυπτίων καταγελῶσι μυθολογούντων περὶ τοῦ ὄρυγος, ὡς

que simplemente están ahí, sin que se requiera una explicación, o que evidencia la restauración de la justicia con los grandes hombres por la Providencia divina. Este es el caso, pensamos, de los fenómenos astronómicos y meteorológicos que se vieron a la muerte de César y que en modo alguno repugnan al equilibrio racional que le suponemos al maestro de Queronea:

θαυμασιώτατον δὲ τῶν μὲν ἀνθρωπίνων τὸ περὶ Κάσσιον· ἠττηθεὶς γὰρ ἐν Φιλίπποις, ἐκεῖνῳ τῷ ξιφιδίῳ διέφθειρεν ἑαυτὸν ᾧ κατὰ Καίσαρος ἐχρήσατο τῶν δὲ θεῶν ὃ τε μέγας κομήτης (ἐφάνη γὰρ ἐπὶ νύκτας ἑπτὰ μετὰ τὴν Καίσαρος σφαγὴν διαπρεπῆς, εἴτ' ἠφανίσθη), καὶ τὸ περὶ τὸν ἥλιον ἀμαύρωμα τῆς αὐγῆς. ὅλον γὰρ ἐκείνον τὸν ἐνιαυτὸν ὠχρὸς μὲν ὁ κύκλος καὶ μαρμαρυγὰς οὐκ ἔχων ἀνέτελλεν, ἀδρανὲς δὲ καὶ λεπτὸν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ κατῆι τὸ θερμόν, ὥστε τὸν μὲν ἀέρα δνοφερὸν καὶ βαρὺν ἀσθνεῖα τῆς διακρινούσης αὐτὸν ἀλέας ἐπιφέρεισθαι, τοὺς δὲ καρποὺς ἡμιπέπτους καὶ ἀτελεῖς ἀπανθῆσαι καὶ παρακμάσαι διὰ τὴν ψυχρότητα τοῦ περιέχοντος (*Caes.* 69.2-5).

El suceso humano más extraordinario humanos fue lo que le ocurrió a Casio; pues tras su derrota en Filipos, se dio muerte con el puñal que usó contra César. Y, de los divinos, el gran cometa (pues apareció muy brillante durante siete noches después de la

φωνῆν ἀφιέντος ἡμέρας ἐκείνης καὶ ὥρας ἧς ἐπιτέλλει τὸ ἄστρον, ὃ Σῶθιν αὐτοὶ Κύνα δὲ καὶ Σερίριον ἡμεῖς καλούμεν· τὰς γὰρ αὐτῶν ὁμοῦ πάσας αἰγας, ὅταν ἀνάσχη μεθ' ἡλίου τὸ ἄστρον ἀτρεκῶς, ἐκεῖ στρεφομένης ἀποβλέπειν πρὸς τὴν ἀνατολήν [“lo libios se ríen de las historias que cuentan los egipcios sobre el antílope, a saber, que berrea el día y a la hora en que asciende el astro que ellos llaman Sotis y nosotros Perro y Sirio; pues sus propias cabras, todas a la vez, en el preciso momento en que tiene su orto solar el astro, se vuelven hacia allí y miran al oriente”]], o 972BC, sobre la de los elefantes (noticia procedente de Juba) que se purifican con el agua del mar y se postran ante la salida del sol: ἱστορεῖ δὲ καὶ εὐχῇ χρῆσθαι θεῶν τοὺς ἐλέφαντας ἀδιδάκτως, ἀγνίζομένους τε τῇ θαλάσῃ καὶ τὸν ἥλιον ἐκφανέντα προσκυνούοντας ὥσπερ χειρὸς ἀνασχέσει τῆς προβοσκίδος. ὅθεν καὶ θεοφιλέστατόν ἐστι τὸ θηρίον, ὡς Πτολεμαῖος ὁ Φιλοπάτωρ ἐμαρτύρησε. κρατήσας γὰρ Ἀντιόχου καὶ βουλόμενος ἐκπρεπῶς τιμῆσαι τὸ θεῖον ἄλλα τε πάμπολλα κατέθευσεν ἐπινίκια τῆς μάχης καὶ τέσσαρας ἐλέφαντας· εἶτα νύκτωρ ὀνείρασιν ἐντυχῶν, ὡς τοῦ θεοῦ μετ' ὀργῆς ἀπειλοῦντος αὐτῷ διὰ τὴν ἀλλόκοτον ἐκείνην θυσίαν, ἱλασμοῖς τε πολλοῖς ἐχρήσατο καὶ χαλκοῦς ἐλέφαντας ἀντὶ τῶν σφαγέντων ἀνέστησε τέσσαρας [“cuenta también que los elefantes rezan a los dioses sin necesidad de instrucción, lavándose en el mar y postrándose ante el sol cuando aparece, levantando la trompa, lavando como una mano. Por eso también es muy piadoso este animal, según atestiguó Tolomeo Filópator. En efecto, cuando, tras su victoria sobre Antíoco, quiso honrar de forma especial a la divinidad, sacrificó por la victoria entre otras muchas víctimas cuatro elefantes; luego, por la noche, tuvo sueños en los que la divinidad lo amenazaba airadamente por aquel extraño sacrificio y, entre otros muchos actos expiatorios, erigió cuatro elefantes de bronce para compensar los cuatro sacrificados.”]].

muerte de César, y luego desapareció) y la pérdida de brillo del sol. En efecto, durante todo aquel año estuvo saliendo su círculo pálido y sin resplandor, y el calor que bajaba de él era débil y sin fuerza, de modo que el aire caía sobre la tierra oscuro y denso por la debilidad de la luz que lo separa y los frutos perdían su flor a medio madurar y sin completar y se echaban a perder a causa de la frialdad de la atmósfera.

Bitch is Not a Four-Letter Word Animal Reason and Human Passion in Plutarch

J. MOSSMAN – F. TITCHENER

This pair of papers is dedicated to the memory of B.D. (1999-2009) and G.A. (2001-2003), faithful friends and loving companions both.

Animals matter to us. Many humans are tremendous lovers of companion animals and devote the kind of temporal, monetary, and emotional resources to them and their well-being that we traditionally associate with child rearing. And yet all is not warm and fuzzy when it comes to the friendly beasts. We humans, concerned about our position on top of the food chain, are anxious that what we eat not give us resistance to antibiotics, or vCJ disease, or salmonella. From another perspective, we value animals in scientific research as disease and treatment models. It is becoming clear that all kinds of animals serve as warning systems, from the old canary in the mineshaft to seizure-predicting dogs. And therapy dogs in general do everything from helping their owners dress, to visiting, to entertaining and comforting people confined to institutions.

Considering the integral role of animals in our lives, it is natural that we turn our attention to what we can learn about human virtue from Plutarch's writings about them. In this inquiry, our focus on rhetoric means that we will not investigate the *Parallel Lives*, despite the many appearances of animals in the historical narrative, but will focus rather on the *Moralia*. It is no surprise to us that a humane, compassionate, tolerant, and wise human like Plutarch wrote several essays specifically about animals, notably *Terrestriane an aquatilia animalia sint callidiora (De sollertia animalium)*, *Bruta animalia ratione uti*, and *De esu carniū orationes ii*. These essays were used by philosophers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as early evidence of the so-called "theriophilic paradox, the notion that while the human being occupies a higher rung in the universal hierarchy than the beast, as indicated by human power over the animal world, human behaviour justifies the

claim that human morality is on a lower level than that of the beasts”¹. In modern times, the work of NEWMYER is typical of the use classical scholarship makes of these essays, namely as ammunition for an animal rights movement, which of course can be seen as an extension of the Enlightenment interest in theriophily.

Yet although these ‘animal’ essays are grouped with Plutarch’s other ‘scientific’ essays in Loeb vol. XII (*De facie, De primo frigido, Aquane an ignis sit utilior*), our interest in Plutarch’s animals is not particularly scientific – rather, we are focusing on rhetoric. We hope that analysis of *De sollertia animalium* (and, to a lesser extent, *Bruta animalia ratione uti*²) will provide insight into Plutarch’s own attitudes about virtues, arguing that the use of animals provides a kind of surrogacy or a place for Plutarch to argue his points at a safe remove. We also hope to show that there is more to these charming dialogues in terms of rhetorical skill and subtlety than may immediately be apparent, or has traditionally been assumed.

***I. Rhetorical strategies in De sollertia animalium*³**

The structure of Plutarch’s dialogue on whether land animals are more intelligent than those of the sea is particularly interesting: Plutarch uses quite a technical philosophic debate as a background for a more naïve competition between two younger and less assured speakers, an arrangement which almost seems to be using two sets of arguments – one technical and one almost commonsensical, or at least based firmly on empirical observation – in favour of the proposition that animals are rational and (not: consequently, but: in any case) deserve to be treated well by humans. Coherence is preserved by the fact that the material in the less philosophical part of the dialogue sometimes echoes the earlier conversation, at least in terms of its subject matter and its choice of examples, and, importantly, in the way in which the dialogue comes to a somewhat abrupt end, as we shall see. Throughout both parts of the dialogue Plutarch allows his characters to employ frequent metaphors which quite deliberately suggest the blurring of the divide between animals and humans, and this technique, visible also in the *Lives*, here becomes integral to the argument Plutarch is making. There

¹ Rosenfeld (2003), I. See also García Arranz (1996).

² We omit *De esu carnium* largely because of the relative immaturity of the work and poor text (Cherniss and Helmbold call it “jumbled”, Loeb XII, p. 537).

³ This section was originally published in a slightly different form as ‘Plutarch on Animals: Rhetorical Strategies in *de sollertia animalium*’, *Hermathena* 179 (Winter 2005), 141-63, by kind permission of Luc Van der Stockt; thanks go to the editor of *Hermathena* for in turn allowing the original version to appear.

is no space to summarize the argument in detail, so what follows will concentrate on a few of the most striking ways in which Plutarch uses the dialogue form to explore the issue of animal reason.

1.1. The frame

The *mise-en-scène* and the *dramatis personae* are important to the dialogue's overall effect. The two speakers in the pre-competition dialogue are Autobulus and Soclarus. It seems plausible that this Autobulus, unlike the one who appears in the *Amatorius*, is Plutarch's own father. Soclarus is clearly a friend of Plutarch's family who does appear in the *Amatorius* and turns up often in the *Table Talk*⁴. Their initial discussion (of which more in a moment) is brought to a close by the arrival of the two young contestants in the debate, another character who has agreed to referee, Optatus, as well as other spectators, one of whom, Heracleon of Megara, familiar as a genial character from the *De defectu oraculorum*, is said to be a keen fisherman and has a short speech encouraging Phaedimus. There is thus a clear generational mix: Autobulus and Optatus are older than Soclarus and Heracleon, who are in turn older than Aristotimus and Phaedimus⁵. Just where all this is taking place is unclear, but we are given some important information in the opening speech: the day before this dialogue, the same group of discussants formed the audience for a reading of an encomium of hunting. Autobulus compares the effect of this λόγος to poetry, specifically to the effect of the martial poet Tyrtaeus on Spartan youth. Most interestingly, he also declares that he himself experienced a longing to go hunting again, and expresses his desire with a quotation from Euripides' *Hippolytus*, from the passage where the maddened Phaedra longs to go hunting in emulation of the object of her secret passion. MARTIN, in an excellent piece on this opening, argues that the praise lavished on this encomium is in fact entirely ironic, which rules out any suggestion that Plutarch may be writing himself into the dialogue as the author of the previous day's speech⁶. He does not in fact employ the argument that the tragic context of

⁴ He is almost certainly not L. Mestrius Soclarus, who should be identified as Plutarch's son, but T. Flavius Soclarus of Tithora in Phocis, the son of Aristion, who dedicated a statue to Nerva in 98 (*JG IX I* 200), with his two sons. See Puech (1981) and (1992), 4831-93, esp. 4879-83.

⁵ Soclarus is younger than Autobulus and is contemporary with Plutarch (964D). Optatus is Autobulus' contemporary (965C). Heracleon appears to be roughly contemporary with Plutarch's brother Lamprias in *De def. or.* (see esp. 412E-413B, 418D-419A). There are many references to the comparative youth of Aristotimus and Phaedimus: see, e.g., 965E.

⁶ Martin (1979).

the quotation is that Phaedra's desire is a symptom of her temporary madness, and that therefore Autobulus is implying that the desire he experiences is a form of insanity, but he might have done. However, while agreeing with Martin that there is a degree of irony in this opening sequence, we are not sure that its effect on the dialogue as a whole is quite as straightforward as he suggests, especially in relation to Soclarus, whom he regards purely as a stalking horse for Autobulus, Plutarch's 'spokesman'⁷. It is certainly true that Soclarus introduces the theme of the rationality of animals by quoting from the previous day's discourse and that Autobulus disagrees with the ideas quoted, but Soclarus' admiration for the rhetoric of the encomium need not imply that he is not somewhat detached from the point of view so elegantly expressed. Indeed, his stress on rhetoric and the playful use of the *hapax συνεαρίζων* might even suggest that the choice of the subject of the encomium, and/or the piece itself was not wholly serious. It emerges clearly at 960B that the previous day's occasion was a sympotic one, which might support that assumption. The syntax of 959CD suggests a quotation from the encomium, which might be receiving praise for its literary qualities rather than its argument: a further quotation from Euripides (this time the *Aeolus*) seems to suggest the style of a literary encomium. If Autobulus is allowed to be ironic, so should Soclarus be.

There is no reason to suppose that the encomium referred to is in fact a real piece of writing at all, extant or lost⁸, but we would like to suggest that, although it clearly is not to be identified precisely with the most famous and earliest *κυνηγητικὸς λόγος*, that by Xenophon (because the speaker is said to have mentioned gladiators: if MARTIN is right and the encomium is an actual text by another author, then it must be a contemporary or near contemporary one)⁹, there is a perceptible and important level of intertextuality with that work which is illuminating and which may clarify our view of the rest of Plutarch's dialogue. We think this intertextuality is created by a number of means

⁷ Martin (1979), 102.

⁸ Pace Martin (1979), 100-101.

⁹ Martin (1979), 106. The arena and the theatre continue to feature as a source of exempla throughout the dialogue: 959D and 965A presumably represent Autobulus' considered point of view, though 963C is not altogether easy to read as completely ironic. There is a similarly mixed picture in the rhetorical debate: Aristotimus' anecdotes from the Roman theatre are very much from the respectable end of animal participation – the 'Dumbo' anecdote at 968C and the performing dog at 973E-974A, both very lacking in gore. But Phaedimus darkens the picture at 977D, where he describes animals grouping by species but then running in panic to get away from other wounded or dying animals.

and for quite a specific purpose, which is reflected in the structure of the dialogue: to examine and redefine the relationship of hunting and *paideia*, the assertion of which is the most remarkable non-technical feature of Xenophon's work. It seems very probable to us that for Plutarch's readers the mention of a *λόγος* about hunting would automatically have made them think of Xenophon: clearly Arrian saw Xenophon as the major authority on the subject and based his work directly on Xenophon without apparent regard for any lost works on the same subject. Plutarch is in fact the earliest author to identify Xenophon as the author of this work, and indeed quotes from it directly at *Non posse* 1096C. The strange phrase at 959C, *καὶ γὰρ ἐκεῖνος ἔδοξε μοι τὸ ῥητορικὸν ἐγείρειν διὰ χρόνου* (either: 'for he [i.e., the reader] seemed to rouse his rhetoric from its long disuse', or: 'for it [i.e., the work read out] seemed to rouse its rhetoric from its long disuse')¹⁰, might perhaps be explained as suggesting that this fictitious encomium had a classical precursor, and if so, Xenophon is the obvious choice. Xenophon and his book are also recalled in a number of ways throughout the dialogue, and especially in the early part of it: the connection between hunting and war implicit in Autobulus' mention of Tyrtaeus is explicit in Xenophon (e.g., 1.18, 12.1-5); Autobulus fears that hunting is such an all-consuming passion that it will lead the young men to neglect other things, precisely the objection which Xenophon dismisses at 12.10; Autobulus mentions Phaedra and quotes from the *Hippolytus*, Xenophon twice mentions Hippolytus in his proem (1.2, as a pupil of Chiron, and 1.11 on his holiness and self-control)¹¹. Autobulus, in arguing against the idea that hunting is a harmless outlet for human aggression (Xenophon broadly sees hunting rather as a preparation for war and a means of inculcating virtues; but see 12.9), uses the analogy of the habituation to violence of Athens under the Thirty; not only does Xenophon give an account of this in the *Hellenica*, but he is also concerned with the relationship of hunting to society, though he sees it as beneficial (see esp. 13.15), whereas Autobulus here uses the analogy to suggest that hunting, by encouraging luxury, has been detrimental to human society. There are a number of other intertexts with Xenophon which occur throughout the work, and to which we

¹⁰ We are doubtful about Martin's interpretation of the phrase as meaning that the work roused the rhetoric of the contestants in the following debate (Martin [1979], 106).

¹¹ We are inclined to accept the proem of Xenophon's *On Hunting* as genuine, but even if those who argue that it is spurious are right, this is irrelevant, since Plutarch would have thought it an integral part of the work (as Arrian does: see Stadter [1976] and [1980], 50-59). For the debate, see Marchant (1925), xxxvii and xlii-xliii, and Phillips – Willcock (1999), *ad loc.*

shall return, but this cluster at the opening of the dialogue introduces it as a hypotext for what follows¹².

The precise way in which Autobulus introduces the debate to come is also worth noting: yesterday, he says (960A), they had declared the opinion that all animals are to some extent rational, that they partake of *dianoia* and *logismos*, and the upcoming debate is presented as a consequence of this opinion. But the competition is presented as being offered very much *de haut en bas*: it is intended to be instructive fun. Note the term *βραβεύσομεν*, which suggests adjudication in the Games (and see also 965D)¹³. Legal language is also employed at 960AB: *πρόκλησις* and *συνήγορος* are both legal technical terms¹⁴. We are being prepared for a more superficial and rhetorical debate than a philosophical one¹⁵; the main issues are being presented as already clear. This line of argument is most evident at 962DE: of course animals have reason if you can argue about which class of them has more of it. This sense that the important decisions have already been taken the day before insensibly makes these decisions seem particularly secure, and even when the philosophical debate is partially reopened, by Soclarus urging discussion of matter which was too serious to be dealt with the previous day, there seems to be no real doubt in anyone's mind that the basic view taken then will stand. Thus the anti-Stoic polemic which pervades this dialogue (which could be seen very much in series with Plutarch's other anti-Stoic works)¹⁶ is given further punch by this dramatic device¹⁷.

¹² As Stadter (1976), 161 points out, "Actual citations do not define the debt of one ancient author to another". Schnapp (1997), 28-29 also mentions this link with Xenophon, but does not really pursue it: see further below. Aristobulus' argument in this passage seems tacitly to contradict Plato's *Protagoras* (322b).

¹³ For umpires in Plutarchan debates in this connection, see Hirzel (1895), II, 178 n. 1.

¹⁴ On *πρόκλησις* see Mirhady (1991); on *συνήγορος* see Harrison (1971), 158-61. The legal language is reprised at the start of the first speech of the contest at 965E. On the legal imagery, see also Hirzel (1895), II, 176 n. 4.

¹⁵ 963BC continues the impression that the tone of the rhetorical contest will be less lofty than that of the opening dialogue: the participants are *νεανίσκοι* who will *συνερανίσσειν, φιλολόγους καὶ φιλογραμμάτων ὄντας*, and will adorn (*ἐγκαλλωπίσασθαι*) the argument.

¹⁶ 961D, where the Stoics are seen to undermine themselves because they too try to train their animals, is a typically Plutarchan commonsense attack on the Stoics. See Babut (1969a), 54-62, esp. 60: "Tout comme Diadouménos, en effet, Aristobule s'efforce de se placer sur le terrain de l'adversaire, pour mieux le confondre".

¹⁷ As Sorabji (1993), 192 points out, Plutarch travesties Stoic argument here. Much of the argument which follows is repeated *verbatim* by Porphyry in *De abstinentia* (III, 21-22). As Sorabji (1993) has shown, the positions of both sides really

Finally, it is important that the competition is revealed at the end to be something of a rhetorical device in itself: for all that stress is laid on the competitiveness with which the competitors approach their task, through the legal and athletic imagery discussed above and in other ways, in the end no real judgement is made, certainly not by Optatus, despite Autobulus' reference to him as an umpire at 965D. It is in fact Soclarus who collapses the competition into a draw and almost casually twists the whole contest into a rehearsal for combating the idea that animals do not have reason¹⁸. This setting up of a competition only to undermine it is a literary device used elsewhere by (for example) Lucian¹⁹. Here it further underlines the weight of evidence against the Stoics by stressing that the similarities between the two sides as presented in the debate are far greater than their differences from the Stoics, who are given no significant voice in the dialogue at all.

1.2. Methods of argument

The modes of argument used in the philosophical section are interestingly mirrored in the rhetorical debate which follows:

a) *Comparison*

The speech of Soclarus (961F-962A) which follows Autobulus' dismissal of the Stoics is couched in terms of a comparison between humans and animals. (This is just one feature of the way the discussion is phrased which leads into the extremely anthropomorphic approach, both of the philosophical discussion and of the rhetorical contest: see further below.) So comparison as a tool of argument features not only overtly in the rhetorical comparison between the land animals and the sea animals, but also in the more high-flown philosophical discussion which precedes it. Soclarus compares animals with humans to the detriment of animals, and Autobulus' response is to compare them rather with each other and with plants, at 962F-963A. All plants are virtually the same, but animals are different from each other because they have different types and degrees of reason and virtue. (Plutarch

depend on making different interpretations of what constitutes reason and what merely perception.

¹⁸ The authenticity of the end has been doubted because of its brevity, according to Helmbold's note *ad loc.* (though he does not give any references for this and we have been unable to track any down). But there is no need to suppose that the ending is not genuine: see further in section 1.3.

¹⁹ In the *Toxaris*, for example: see Ní Mheallaigh (2004).

was evidently not a fruitarian.) One point of comparison which is particularly conspicuous by its absence here is one very regularly used to distinguish animals from humans in Greek thought: their lack of language²⁰. Plutarch presumably would not have wished to allow lack of language to be a determinant of lack of reason, though he comes close to allowing Aristotimus to do so at 973A, where he contrasts talking birds with silent fish, very much to the detriment of the fish.

b) Anthropomorphism

Both the philosophical discussion and the rhetorical debate display an attitude to animals which is extremely anthropomorphic. This is, however, apparently quite deliberate: at 961EF Autobulus is specifically made to attack those (perhaps partly Aristotle, but mainly the Stoics) who insist on making animal mental processes into similes with *ὡσανεὶ*. By 962D he is using without argument or comment terms for moral qualities of animals, even including *ἀνδρεία* (see further in the next section). Is this usage metaphorical or not? It is left delicately uncertain (though we shall discuss it under the heading of metaphor). The degree to which these expressions can be read as live metaphors is left deliberately unclear, which can give the narrative an air of naïveté. In a sense, though, any naïveté about this is false: the fact that such terms can be used of animals and have a recognisable application for the reader in itself stacks up the argument against the Stoics. It also seems fair to point out, as NEWMYER has done, that it is still the case that those modern philosophers who wish to accord moral status to animals are vulnerable to charges of anthropomorphism. He quotes GRIFFIN²¹: “When one carefully examines such charges of anthropomorphism, it turns out that they entail the implicit assumption that whatever it is suggested that animals might do, or think, really *is* a uniquely human attribute. Such an assumption begs the question being asked because it presupposes a negative answer and is thus literally a confession of prejudgement or prejudice.” Plutarch has other, rather subtle ways of collapsing the differences between humans and animals, especially his use of metaphor, which we will examine in the next section. His anthropomorphism, we would argue, is not a mistake but a rhetorical strategy.

Anthropomorphism is so widespread in all ancient writings about animals (certainly in Xenophon and Arrian on hunting: see, e.g., Xen.

²⁰ See Gera (2003), 11-17, 57-67, 207-12, and Sorabji (1993), 2, 80-86, and 216-19 on the extraordinary similarities between the ancient and the modern debates about the importance of language in determining animal reason; see also Newmyer (1999).

²¹ Newmyer (1999), 107 n. 18, quoting Griffin (1992), 24.

6.15, Arr. 7.6 on the hounds' enthusiasm for the hunt), that it is easy for Plutarch to slip human qualities into his animal subjects almost without the reader noticing. A more complex instance of this occurs when Autobulus turns the 'humans are better than animals' argument on its head by arguing that animals are often superior to humans in terms of *perception* (but that does not mean humans have no perception at all), which is a clever move because the Stoics' arguments on animal reason depended heavily on an expanded sense of perception. The metaphor he uses for animal intellect at 963B, comparing it to an eye with a cataract, is the climax of this stage. His next argument, that animals can go mad, and therefore must originally be sane (that is, rational), distinguishes perception from reason but continues the human/animal blurring by comparing the mad dog with a mad human (963E).

Soclarus' answering speech is interesting in this context, especially the way in which he expresses the essential problem against which their philosophical opponents are attempting to argue: either humans are unjust or life becomes impossible: *καὶ τρόπον τινὰ θηρίων βίον βιωσόμεθα, τὰς ἀπὸ τῶν θηρίων προέμενοι χρείας* (964A)²². This speech perhaps constitutes the best argument against MARTIN's characterization of Soclarus as a stooge for the Socratic Autobulus²³, since it does raise the question of how to put the implications of the foregoing argument into practice – an important new point. Autobulus picks up on several aspects of its language and argumentation in his response, which still, interestingly, uses anthropomorphism to support its compromise approach²⁴: where Soclarus describes human life as being lived *φιλανθρώπως* at 964A, Autobulus argues at 964F that animals who are *φιλόανθρωπα* should be cherished, not killed²⁵. Significantly, he closes his speech with a

²² There is a note of traditional wisdom in the quotation from Hesiod here, and the general position is very similar to modern contractarianism: i.e., animals do not have rights because they cannot make contracts. See Sorabji (1993), 8, 117, 161-66, and Newmyer (1992), (1995), and (1997).

²³ The midwifery image at the start of Autobulus' reply (964C) is ironically applied by him to his philosophical opponents; it does not particularly characterize him as Socratic.

²⁴ The argument that it is possible to make use of animals without treating them badly is related to the important passage at *Ca. Ma.* 5.2, where Plutarch insists that it is the mark of a good man to treat his animals (and his slaves) well. It is no accident, anyway, that Autobulus is made to attribute this argument to Plato and to Plutarch. Sorabji (1993), 118 and 125 claims that Plutarch is the only ancient author to insist that benevolence demands kindness to animals even if they are not owed justice.

²⁵ Note also the medical language in Soclarus' speech at 964B, answered by *παρηγορία* at 964E and the quotation from Aeschylus answering that from Hesiod.

reference to humans acting μετ' ὀμότητος towards animals, a reversal of the norm, since the original meaning of the expression refers to eating raw meat, an animal characteristic transgressive in humans²⁶.

c) *Animal metaphors*

This brings us to Plutarch's use of animal metaphors in the dialogue, which is pervasive, and, as we have said, contributes to his argument by subtly collapsing the differences between humans and animals. There are numerous examples of animals behaving like humans throughout the dialogue and these can be seen as straightforwardly anthropomorphic, but there are also a number of examples (in the speech of each of the principal speakers) of humans behaving like animals, which are even more interesting. Through metaphor the status of both categories is problematised. Plutarch is, of course, aided in doing this by the literary tradition in which he is working, which from Homer on encouraged the comparison of men to animals. The comparison of animals to people is no huge step from that, and is in turn encouraged by genres such as animal fable (both in prose and in early poetry, such as that of Archilochus) and the mythological topos of metamorphosis. So too in Aristotimus' speech the metaphors are intermingled with examples of man learning from animals which sometimes seem to have a mythological basis: the reference to spiders' webs as a model for weaving (which perhaps recalls Arachne) at 966E begins this theme, which is then developed at 967C through a reference to Heracles, taken up again at 972A and explored more fully in terms of divination at 974A-975C (the end of Aristotimus' speech). Phaedimus to some extent turns this around when he argues, at 975EF, that the land animals have learned to behave more like humans because they have associated with them more than sea animals have. Together with the examples discussed in the previous section, these passages show Plutarch subtly blending metaphor and argument.

i) *Animals as people*

We have already noted Aristobulus' use of ἀνδρεία of animals at 962D; it is also used by Aristotimus of hunted animals at 966B and of ants at 967D (and note ἀνδρώδους at 970E). In general, Aristotimus'

²⁶ There may also be a reference here (965B) to a notorious passage of Xenophon in which he describes trapping deer by using their fawns: 9.1-10; Phillips – Willcock (1999), *ad loc.* point out that the slowness of his scent-hounds probably dictated these cruel tactics.

account of the ants stresses precisely the same good qualities as Aristobulus at 962D: *κοινωνία, ἀνδρεία, τὸ πανούργον περὶ τοὺς πορισμοὺς καὶ τὰς οἰκονομίας* may be compared with Aristotimus' *οἰκονομαίαι καὶ παρασκευαί, τὸ κοινωνικόν, ἀνδρείας εἰκῶν*, all at 967D, and his use of *δικαιοσύνη* (with which compare *δίκαιον* at 970C) mirrors Aristobulus' reference to *ἀδικία* at 962D²⁷. In recounting a Stoic story which has ants ransoming a dead body, Aristotimus uses *λύτρα* as a simile, but the whole story acts as an illustration of the virtues he has ascribed to the ants²⁸. Aristotimus' use of simile in general is very different from that criticised by Aristobulus as an attempt to deny virtues to animals: when he uses similes he is stressing their virtuous qualities, not denying them, as with the example of the ants, or of the ichneumon, described as arming itself like a soldier (966D), and like an athlete (980E). So the spider is like a charioteer or helmsman or net-handler at 966F, the hedgehog like a clever captain at 972A. Phaedimus does the same thing: fish are like wrestlers at 977E, and there is a fish actually called a 'fisherman' and well named at 978D. He also creates an extended ship simile to describe the symbiosis of whales and guide fish at 980F-981B. Tortoises uncovering their young are more joyful than a man digging up treasure at 982C, and the halcyon builds a nest like a ship (983C), like a coracle (983D).

Aristotimus' comment on animals in love is worth dwelling on briefly in this context. We are back with metaphor: *ἔρωτες δὲ θηρίων οἱ μὲν ἄγριοι καὶ περιμανεῖς γεγόνασιν, οἱ δ' ἔχοντες οὐκ ἀπάνθρωπον ὠραϊσμὸν οὐδ' ἀναφρόδιτον ὀμιλίαν*. The expression of this sentence seems at first glance particularly naïvely anthropomorphic (*οὐκ ἀπάνθρωπον*), but when one looks closely at the first part of the sentence one can see Plutarch's use of language clouding the issue²⁹. Some animals have passions which are *ἄγριοι καὶ περιμανεῖς*, says Aristotimus. *Ἐρωτες... ἄγριοι* could be seen as a slightly clumsy use of a transferred epithet – the animals being *ἄγριοι* rather than their passions – were it not that this is a Platonic phrase

²⁷ See also the comments on the social organization (*κοινωνικόν, κοινωνικά*) of elephants and lions at 972B and C.

²⁸ He also uses a Stoic story, that of the dog's syllogism, to argue for animal rationality at 969B, but in both cases he uses the story in a very un-Stoic way, without much acknowledgement that he is twisting it. Is this characterization of Aristotimus as one who isn't all that good at philosophy (he subsequently, confusingly, rejects the idea that the dog is rationalizing and puts its 'decision' down to perception, which can't really be what he wants to argue)? Or is it a deliberate ploy to back up Aristobulus' irritation with the Stoics' determination to misuse the evidence of their own eyes?

²⁹ *Θηρίων* is in fact a conjecture of Helmbold's; if the MS *πολλῶν* is retained, as it is by Drexler, the following point is strengthened further.

used in the *Phaedo* (81a7) of human passions³⁰. Περιμανής appears to be an exclusively Plutarchan word (though of course human love is regularly described as a form of madness, not least in the *Hippolytus*, which was quoted by Aristobulus): he uses it of human love at *De aud.* 43D. On the other hand, the rather flowery vocabulary Plutarch uses in the second half of the sentence (ὠραιΐσμόν, especially, is an extraordinary word to use of an animal, having as it does overtones almost of affectation and effeminacy) stresses with increasing intensity the anthropomorphic quality of some animal affection. So, once again, metaphor can be seen to dissolve the differences between humans and animals and create human beasts and bestial humans.

ii) People as animals

Sometimes in the *Lives* Plutarch can describe individuals and groups as bestial, to great effect. Here similar expressions provide another dimension to the examples in the previous section, again, throughout the dialogue, though they are less frequently used³¹. So Aristobulus refers to human ἀγριότης at 959D, punning on ἀγραι ('hunting trips'), as he leads into his comparison between men killing beasts and men killing men in Athens under the Thirty Tyrants. He describes part of man's nature as φονικὸν καὶ θηριώδες at 959E, and Aristotimus echoes that at 970C (on which, more in a moment). Phaedimus claims that housemartins fear man ὥσπερ θηρίον at 984C. Once again Aristotimus provides us with a complex example of this at 970BC, interestingly as part of an argument that no justice is in fact owed to sea animals. Once again his vocabulary looks back to Aristobulus' (even though, of course, he was not present for the opening discussion). In his last speech when presenting his compromise solution to the problem of how animals should be treated, Aristobulus argued that there is no injustice in killing animals who are ἄμικτα καὶ βλαβερά κομιδῆ (964F); here Aristotimus calls the creatures of the ocean and the deep ἄμικτα γὰρ ἐκεῖνα κομιδῆ καὶ ἄστοργα καὶ πάσης ἄμοιρα γλυκυθυμίας. He then quotes Homer (*Iliad* XVI, 34) and, in expanding the quotation, uses ἄμικτον again, this time of the subject of the quotation (Achilles). But only

³⁰ Aristophanes also uses ἄγριος as a noun of an aggressive homosexual at *Clouds* 349; that it was a technical term for a particularly aggressive type of homosexual is also suggested by Aesch. 1.52. The *Clouds* passage also characterizes this type of love as μανία.

³¹ There is an interesting parallel use of imagery in Xenophon's tirade against the sophists at 13.9: οἱ μὲν γὰρ σοφισταὶ πλουσίους καὶ νέους θηρώνται, οἱ δὲ φιλόσοφοι πᾶσι κοινοὶ καὶ φίλοι. Note also the use of κοινοί, and see Plutarch's use of its cognates to denote animal social cooperation in 972B and C. See also Schnapp (1997), 23-27.

someone who was himself θηριώδης would use the same argument of the land animals. So he applies a quotation – which he explains as comparing a man to the animals in the sea – back to those animals, and at the same time compares a hypothetical opponent to a beast.

1.3. The characters of the rhetorical contest

Finally, we would like to examine aspects of the characterization of the participants of the rhetorical contest before drawing a few conclusions. We have already looked at the preparation for the contest in section 1.1. The start of the contest effectively interrupts Autobulus' tirade against cruelty (including the cruelty of hunters), as Soclarus announces the approach of the contestants and warns Autobulus not to offend them. He instantly identifies the opposing groups, distinguishing each with a quotation from Homer, with a third for Optatus, followed by another from an unknown poet. This volley of poetry clearly marks the change in tone, as does Autobulus' declaration at 965E that they will follow Optatus' experience (ἐμπειρία) rather than Aristotle's books. This seems to be less a rejection of Aristotle's views on animal reason (though Autobulus would indeed wish to reject them) and more a marker of the change in direction towards a more practical and anecdotal set of arguments. It is, then, Soclarus whose exchange with Phaedimus establishes the order of speaking and starts off Aristotimus' speech.

There is a lacuna near the beginning of this speech, but it still seems reasonable to suppose that Aristotimus did not spend too long on the moral weaknesses of fish (his speech is, as it stands, about the same length as Phaedimus'). It seems, therefore, that his material on the capacity of hunting to educate did come early in the speech. We would argue that we have here another set of intertexts with Xenophon, with the twist that he contrasts the educational benefits of hunting with the lack of the same benefits in fishing.

The overt reference in 965EF is to Plato's *Laws* (823d-824a), the full text of which privileges daytime hunting with dogs and horses over all other kinds, and lays down that it should be allowed to take place everywhere, bans night-time hunting with nets, and confines snaring birds and fishing to certain localities. The distinctions between the types of hunting here are made on the basis of the type of *paideia* they provide, and nets are in disfavour as being underhanded³². The vocabulary in all three passages is very similar: for example 966B φιλόπονον (also used

³² Barringer (2001), 51 suggests that Plato here “praise(s) the type of hunting that Vidal-Naquet links to the mature hoplite and condemn(s) that associated with the immature epebe”: if so, he may be wanting to redefine the straightforward paideutic

of the social and anthropomorphized ants at 967D), to which compare *Laws* 824a5 and Xen. 12, where he frequently extols the virtues of hard work using cognate terms. Aristotimus, like Xenophon, points out that the hunt is beloved of Apollo and Artemis (966A; Xen. 1.1, 6.13, 13.16-18). At 971A, the story of the hounds that will not eat the dead hare has no direct parallel in Xenophon, but may nevertheless recall his work in general, as he devotes so much space to hare-coursing, much more than to any other type of hunting.

It is important that the Xenophontic paideutic argument in favour of hunting takes pride of place over any actual philosophic argument here: indeed, at 966B the main point of the previous discussion now appears merely as an attributed argument (οἱ φιλόσοφοι δεικνύουσι), rather than being internalized. It is in this context that the echoes of Autobulus' speech (discussed above in section 1.2c) should be read³³: the hunters and fishermen of the second part of the dialogue arrive at the conclusion that animals have reason from a very different perspective and draw very different conclusions from it. The virtues of the various animals are, in large measure, important, insofar as they reflect well on those humans who interact with them (and this interaction can include killing them).

In any case, it is clear that both speakers are considerably less expert, even on a rhetorical level, than their elders. Aristotimus is the more assured of the two, yet his grasp of the philosophical debate is less than secure (see, e.g., n. 28 above), and he himself acknowledges to some extent that his display of examples is in danger of being a little incoherent: he makes quite an elegant (false) apology for his collocation of ants and elephants at 968B, but at 970E his apology for using a variety of examples on the grounds that animals display more than one virtue at once seems rather engagingly inexpert³⁴. Some of his examples are really more repetitive than polyvalent, like the doublet of Porus' elephant at 970CD and the elephants at 974D, for all his attempts to give them a different aspect. One area where he does seem to introduce a new and germane argument is that of animal – or, more precisely, bird – speech and song, at 972F-973E. It is possible that his remark that birds teach humans 'in some measure [τρόπον τινά] that they too are endowed both with rational utterance and with articulate

approach found in Xenophon (assuming that the *Laws* postdates the *Cynegeticus*). For a full discussion of hunting and Greek education, see Schnapp (1997), 123-71.

³³ In addition to those cited above, see the use of ἡμερος at 970E (of dogs), picking up on the language of 964F.

³⁴ Is there an echo here of Xenophon's self-deprecation at 13.4-5?

[ἐνάρθρου] voice³⁵ looks back in its qualified assertion of animal rationality to 963B; but, as we saw above, in general this well established argument is absent from the first discussion. And Aristotimus does this well, establishing logically that birds teach each other to sing as well as learning to talk, and so simultaneously enlightening their instructors about animal reason. The legal metaphor at 973A (προδικεῖν καὶ συνηγορεῖν) makes the birds' achievement seem the more impressive.

At the end of his speech (975C), Heracleon addresses Phaedimus. His command to him to raise his brows perhaps suggests Homeric-style glowering (as in the formula ὑπόδρα ἰδών), in which case this echoes the Homeric quotations which heralded the first speech. He comments on Aristotimus' speech: οὐ παιδιὰ τὸ χρῆμα τοῦ λόγου γέγονεν, ἀλλ' ἐρρωμένος ἄγων καὶ ῥητορεία κιγκλίδων ἐπιδέουσα καὶ βήματος. This confirms what was said earlier about the contest being not wholly serious in intent, and also picks up on the legal imagery we noticed earlier³⁶. It may also, once again, suggest an educative process: the speakers have progressed beyond childish games and (in terms of the imagery, anyway), into adult activities. But that none of this is very serious becomes apparent at the start of Phaedimus' speech: the fishermen are hungover, Aristotimus disgustingly sober. The reference to the preceding day, though, sets the scene (we would argue) for another oblique reference to Xenophon. Xenophon rejects criticism of hunting on the grounds that it distracts people from their domestic concerns and stresses that it promotes the good of the city and therefore everyone's domestic well-being (12.10-11); in the same section (12.15-21) he insists on the virtue of hard work (intrinsic to the practice of hunting as he has described it)³⁷. Phaedimus' words turn some of this on its head as he describes the dogs and horses and the nets lying idle, and stresses the amount of leisure they have to discuss the issue. And yet there may be an underlying sense that the contest is providing at least as much good *paideia* as a hunting trip could, in light of the earlier discussion and indeed of Heracleon's words, suggesting that the level of debate has been higher than expected. The military word ἐκεχειρία might suggest that Phaedimus shares Xenophon's view of these activities as a good preparation for war, and is explaining the debate in terms which correct

³⁵ The insistence on articulation is tendentious (is Aristotimus once again being characterized as one who has either imperfectly digested his philosophy or is deliberately overriding others' distinctions?): see Sorabji (1993), 80-81 for its importance in the argument of Diogenes of Babylon (D.L. VII, 55).

³⁶ And see also παρατεῖσθαι in 975C.

³⁷ The figure of Heracles seems to be hovering behind the text here, especially in the personification of Virtue, though he is not one of the pupils of Chiron listed in the opening chapter: see Phillips – Willcock (1999), *ad loc.*

the vocabulary of leisure and diversion much in the same way that Heracleon corrected the impression of a childish game with his legal imagery. It could be argued that the whole contest is an illustration of Xenophon's dictum that *παιδευσίς γὰρ καλὴ διδάσκει χρῆσθαι νόμοις καὶ λέγειν περὶ τῶν δικαίων καὶ ἀκούειν*. Certainly Phaedimus' later argument that sea creatures, being harder to catch, train fishermen to be more cunning (976C-E) seems to be developing the Xenophontic argument that hunting promotes other qualities.

But it also may well be that there is an ironic undercurrent here. Phaedimus has, as he points out, the harder task in this debate (975E), but nonetheless sometimes appears a little inept. His argument at 975F, that the land animals have become imbued with human habits because of their proximity to humans, is interesting in itself, but then finishes with a very self-defeating metaphor at 975F. He is essentially employing the same criteria as Aristotimus (*συνέσεως ἔργα καὶ μνήμησ καὶ κοινωνίας*, 975E), but sometimes uses examples less than well (the story of Crassus and his moray eel is over-elaborated for the context, it cannot be wise to describe his fellow fishermen as like the Persians in 977E, and it might be thought dangerous for his argument as a whole that he remarks in 982C on the crocodile's prescience about where the Nile will reach: *οὐ φασι λογικὴν ἀλλὰ μαντικὴν*). He indirectly attacks Aristotimus not only for the dubiousness of some of the sources of his examples (but then uses some dubious sources himself, including the final story – which he admits is mythical and apologises for – but also plenty of material from Egypt which has no health-warning on it), but also for introducing *δόξας φιλοσόφων*, which seems discordant with the first part of the dialogue.

That said, he often takes up points from the previous speech in the manner of a good debater: for example, at 976C he mentions divination with crocodiles, answering Aristotimus' last point, he compares the sea bass favourably with Porus' elephant because it draws the hook out of his own flesh at 977B, refuses to believe Aristotimus' story at 972B, attributed to Juba, about elephants helping each other out of pits (977D), picks up what he says about hedgehogs at 979AB, refocuses his account of the ichneumon preparing to attack the crocodile at 980E, turns Aristotimus' point that the gods prefer hunting to fishing against him at 983E-984C. He even purports to complete one of Aristotimus' dog stories (at 969E) by adding a prequel in the form of an incident where the dolphins bring Hesiod's corpse to light in the first place³⁸. This polemical approach on the whole makes Phaedimus'

³⁸ There are also some sets of examples which less explicitly balance something in Aristotimus' speech: for example, Phaedimus' account of fishy procreation balances

speech less inventive in terms of its arguments than Aristotimus', though we should like to dwell briefly on two passages: first, the octopus at 978F-979A. The starting point for this part of the discussion is the early statement of Aristotimus at 965E that the octopus eats his own tentacles. Phaedimus defends the octopus against this charge (implying, Aristotimus says, that the octopus is ἀργός ἢ ἀναίσθητος ἢ γαστρίμαργος ἢ πᾶσι τούτοις ἔνοχος); on the contrary, its behaviour is caused by cunning and is aimed at ensuring that it remains the hunter rather than the prey. He concludes by interestingly applying the Xenophontic concept of hunting as *paideia* to the fish themselves, and portraying the food chain as a competition in terms which suggest self-reference to the paideutic activity in which he and Aristotimus are involved, as well as referring back to 976DE, where he described the intellect-sharpening benefits of fishing: *καὶ τὸν κύκλον τούτον καὶ τὴν περίοδον ταῖς κατ' ἀλλήλων διώξεσι καὶ φυγαῖς γύμνασμα καὶ μελέτην ἢ φύσις αὐτοῖς ἐναγώνιον πεποιήκε δεινότητος καὶ συνέσεως*. Animal hunters sharpen their wits on each other just as human hunters do³⁹.

Our final passage is 984CD, where Phaedimus stresses the gratuitous nature of the dolphin's affection for man in contrast to that of the land animals, who, he claims, feel only cupboard love for man. He uses vocabulary familiar from the earlier discussion and from Aristotimus' speech (*ἡμερώτατα*), but he reserves *φιλόανθρωπον* for the dolphins. Here he makes his only reference to philosophy, in accordance with his promise at the start of the speech: dolphins have by nature, he says, what the best philosophers seek, *τὸ φιλεῖν ἄνευ χρείας*. There seems to be a suggestion here that dolphins are not only superior to the land animals, but actually to man, in respect of this important virtue at least.

When he draws his speech hurriedly to a close, Aristotimus, in very formal legal language, calls for a vote, which as we have seen does not come to pass. The *agon* is instead collapsed into general proof that animals do have reason. The rhetorical polemic of both speeches (but particularly Phaedimus') is undermined in favour of Soclarus combining both speeches against the Stoic point of view.

Aristotimus' examples of animal passions, and his example of the education of seals reflects Aristotimus on the nightingale teaching her offspring how to sing. The dolphin stories in general provide a counterpart to the dog stories in Aristotimus' speech, and he matches Aristotimus' examples of ingenuity with stories of fishy ingenuity in catching their own prey. On the octopus in this section, see Detienne – Vernant (1991), 27-54.

³⁹ Detienne – Vernant (1991), 33 and n. 42 curiously make this passage apply to human hunters rather than piscine ones.

2. *Rhetorical strategies in Beasts are Rational or Gryllus* (*Mor.* 985D-992E)

This is a dialogue between Odysseus (O.) and Circe (C.), then Odysseus and Gryllus (G.), a pig, or, since he is representing all animals, more correctly ‘the’ pig. O. goes to C. wishing to turn any Greeks she has back into men in order to increase his own fame and glory. C. says that O. must persuade the animals that regaining their human form is advantageous or desirable to them. If the animals agree, C. will restore them, and there is no real penalty if O. loses except acknowledging poor advice (*κακῶς βεβουλεύσθαι*). G. is chosen to argue on behalf of all the animals. The contest is unresolved and the dialogue may be incomplete, to an unknown degree.

This essay is very funny⁴⁰. Plutarch was a master of how best to pitch his product, frequently using theatrical metaphors and theatrical language to sugarcoat the pill, as it were – to make his message palatable to his audience⁴¹. Another of his methods for doing this is to use alter egos, particularly in the dialogues. Gryllus is one of his more creative ‘alter egos’, able to speak quite freely to O. (one reason the essay is so funny is that both C. and G. needle O. quite freely; O. without question spends most of the dialogue on the defensive)⁴². A brief synopsis follows.

1. O. approaches C. about his plans for increasing his own glory by rescuing any transformed Greeks she still has with her, lest they live out a life both pitiful and without honour (*οικτρὰν καὶ ἄτιμον*, 985E). C. accuses him of letting his own ambition (*φιλοτιμία*) bring misfortune not only to himself and his companions, but to those he had never even met. O. says she will make him a beast indeed if he is persuaded that “changing from beast to man spells ruin” (*συμφορά ἐστὶν ἀνθρώπων ἐκ θηρίου γενέσθαι*, 985F). C. asks him if it isn’t true (*οὐ γὰρ ἤδη*) that he has already done worse to himself by turning down immortality with a beautiful woman like herself in favor of a mortal woman whose expiration date has passed (presumably Penelope!), and all in order to add to his notoriety, pursuing phantoms instead of truth. O. gives

⁴⁰ No less than Desiderius Erasmus agreed, using ‘Gryllus’ as an example of the genre at which he was aiming with ‘In Praise of Folly’ (Prefatory Letter by Desiderius Erasmus to His Friend Thomas More [1509?]; Erasmus wrote ‘In Praise of Folly’ while staying with More at his house in Oxford).

⁴¹ Titchener (forthcoming).

⁴² “Generally speaking, the works of Plutarch which deal with subjects relevant to animals are mainly an attack on the Stoics and a defence of the Academic views” (Tsekourakis (1987), 366-93).

up and concedes the entire point, giving a remarkable imitation of the male half of an old married couple when he asks why they must so many times struggle about the same things; she should do him a favor and turn the men loose⁴³. C. invokes Hecate and tells O. he must persuade the animals first, as they are not ordinary (οὐ γὰρ οἱ τυχόντες). If they do not agree, O. must argue with them. If he wins, they will be turned back into men. If O. loses, he must be satisfied that he has been a poor counselor. O. wants to know how such converse can take place between man and beast; C. again mocks his ambition (φιλοτιμία) and says she will provide a representative to speak for all. Gryllus appears, and O. asks how to address him, using a formal Homeric phrase (ἢ τίς ἦν οὗτος ἀνθρώπων, cf. *Od.* X, 325). C. sees no reason to call the pig anything other than G., which means something like ‘Grunter’⁴⁴, and says she will leave the room to avoid any suggestion that G. is not arguing his genuine ideas in order to curry favor with C. (χαριζόμενος).

2. G. appears, greets O., and gets right to the point. O. defends his choice to restore only the Greeks of the transformed swine, and reveals the fact that he has asked C. to transform them. G. rejects the offer to change with some dismay, and compares O’s horror of the transformation to that of a small child trying to escape lessons. O. offers, rather insultingly, the observation that G. has lost both shape and reasoning power, and then attempts reverse psychology, suggesting that G. became a pig because he already was pig-like. G. stops O. cold, using his Homeric epithet ‘King of the Cephallenians’, which here has the connotation of ‘King of the Brainiacs’, and challenges O. to engage in an actual debate on the topic, and give up invective. O. agrees.

3. G. begins a discussion of virtues, in which humans definitely come off the worse⁴⁵. Beasts are not tricky, but have “naked courage under the impulse of genuine valor. No edict summons them, nor do they fear a writ of desertion”. Their nature hates subjection; they are not conquered even when physically overpowered; they never give up in their hearts; their courage concentrates sometimes in one place at the

⁴³ Plutarch uses Circe and her pig-men as a different kind of example in *Praecepta coniugalia* (139A), where he compares Circe’s transformation of the men to fishing with poison – quick and effective, but ultimately rendering the quarry unusable. There is no suggestion that she has elevated the pig-men to some higher existence!

⁴⁴ Earlier in this paper, we delineated Plutarch’s familiarity with Xenophon, and particularly the latter’s work on hunting; it is interesting to note that Xenophon’s father, and his son, were named ‘Gryllus’.

⁴⁵ Space limitations prohibit anything but a brief rehearsal of G.’s argument.

end of their lives so that they ‘fight’ even after death. They don’t beg, ask for pity, or acknowledge defeat. When animals are caught, if they’re full grown they commit suicide by starvation. ‘Taming’ them means performing an emasculation of their fighting spirit. In beasts, valour is common to both genders, showing that it’s more natural than in humans, among whom men only exhibit valour, and this valour consists in avoiding negative consequences. G. invokes Homeric similes, pointing out that no one wants to get compared to a man, but they do want to be ‘lion-hearted’.

The discussion turns to Temperance, defined as “curtailment and an ordering of the desires that eliminate those that are extraneous or superfluous and discipline in modest and timely fashion those that are essential”. Animals are immune to the pull of evil pleasures; they don’t indulge in luxurious living or lack sobriety. G. at this point adds a personal reminiscence about his former (i.e., human) craving for gold and ivory, and envied those who had those things even if it meant acting badly or being unlucky, or even criminal (like Dolon and Priam). G. remembers envying O., whom he’d seen earlier in life, not because of intellect or virtue, but because of a really good cloak, described in considerable detail, including the nature of the clasp. Happily, G. is now immune to these things, since what desires does the beast have? Good smells, while fun, also make it possible to choose the correct food (and are free, besides); plus, one saves all that time and money involved in burning incense or using scented oil. On top of that, you’ve got your own built-in scent, useful when it comes to sex. Females don’t tease but deliver the goods, and everyone quits after pregnancy (which is of course the point of sex!). There is a long diatribe against gay sex, but the real problem appears to be time-wasting during quests (i.e. Heracles literally missing the boat when the Argonauts sailed because he was looking for Hylas). But rooster on rooster action evidently often resulted in one or both getting burned alive, as a bad omen. Even worse, men upset the natural order by attempting sex with goats, sows, and mares, while women go for male beasts, producing monsters. G. says approvingly that no animal feels lust for humans under any circumstances, and only eats them through necessity.

While animals enjoy eating, humans make a fetish of it. G. observed that each animal eats only its proper food but humans eat anything; they eat meat even when plenty of vegetables are available, even though they get terrible gas⁴⁶. In a suddenly serious tone, G. deplors the

⁴⁶ In *De tuenda* 134CD, Plutarch again discusses the problem of gas from eating meat – pain and distention. “The violent disturbances lower down in the bowels result-

slaughter of animals for food, and the fact that no kind of food (animal) is exempt. Useless arts are eschewed by animals, and they don't specialize either – each is a medical specialist, hunter, self-defense expert, and musician! G. allows that some animals are smarter than others, just like humans.

O., having no intellectual recourse, finally suggests that beasts cannot possess reason because they do not have knowledge of god in them (οἷς οὐκ ἐγγίνεται θεοῦ νόησις, 992E). G. retorts with the suggestion that O.'s father, then, cannot be the famous atheist Sisyphus⁴⁷. It is not clear whether this is the true end of the dialogue. On the one hand, the argument appears to be exhausted, and Plutarch does sometimes end essays with a question (e.g., *Praecepta coniugalia*), but the dialogue is known to be incomplete, and it does seem rather abrupt.

Methods of Argument

Comparison. In this dialogue, the main comparison is between humans and animals, with subcategories where men are compared to women, mortals to immortals, and wild to tame. Yet the main comparison may be more subtle. Odysseus does not want to free ALL Circe's pig-men, but only the Greek ones. His first question to Circe is whether she has any Greeks in her menagerie. Upon hearing that she does, he reveals his plan to restore them to humanity and increase his own fame. Upon meeting Gryllus, Odysseus immediately expresses sympathy for all the transformed men, but reiterates his plan to rescue Greeks only, as is reasonable or fitting (εἰκότως). It is inviting to think that Plutarch is slyly applying a Greek/non-Greek comparison to the human/animal dynamic; the Greeks, represented (presumably) by the virtuous animals, will fare better in the comparison, and yet the non-Greeks, identified with the human half of the equation, cannot take offense⁴⁸. This idea is supported by the fact that Gryllus' arguments are, in general, anti-Stoic, and thus we are encouraged to identify Gryllus' arguments with the ideas of Plutarch himself. In particular, Gryllus' insistence on the virtue of animals is at odds with the Stoic idea of reason being the source of virtue.

ing from medication, by decomposing and liquefying the existing contents, increase rather than relieve the overcrowding" (Loeb trans.).

⁴⁷ Elsewhere (*Quaest. Graec.* 301D) Plutarch discusses the tradition that Sisyphus was O.'s real father.

⁴⁸ The question of to what extent Plutarch was or was not speaking for the benefit of the Romans has been thoroughly examined of late, most notably at the Sage and Emperor Conference of 2001 in Chapel Hill, NC, the proceedings of which are available in Stadter – Van der Stockt (2002).

Anthropomorphism. Since this dialogue expressly concerns the comparison of animals to humans, we see fewer human attributes being applied to animals. In fact, during the discussion of the fruit of female/animal unions (the Minotaur, Aegipans, Sphinx, Centaurs, 991A), it is clear that the combination of the two is not a good thing. Some of Plutarch's comments about animal behaviour are just plain wrong. Homosexuality definitely exists among many species; in the mountain west we are familiar with the phenomenon known as the 'sweet bull'. It is also not true, at least in dog owners' experiences, that dogs abstain from certain varieties of food and eat only that which they must have. On the other hand, Gryllus rather startlingly claims to be and have been all along arguing as a sophist (989B), putting his arguments in order and defining his terms, so we cannot dismiss his words as simply amusing chatter. In this, he is surely more man than pig.

The characters

Because one of the participants in the dialogue is not only an animal, but a pig, it is possible for Plutarch to put words in Gryllus' mouth that would be offensive or hard to hear coming from a human. As Gryllus reproaches humankind for its fighting, sexual, eating, and drinking habits, he is immune from reciprocal criticism. He can mock Odysseus ('King of the Brainiacs'), just like Circe can mock Odysseus as uxorious, since she is immortal and not subject to normal human female restraints. This sock puppet-like technique is clearly one of the most appealing things about the dialogue, with no possibility of a Thersites-like comeuppance. In the same way that the Romans could tolerate drama as long as it was Greeks getting drunk, breaking up brothels, tricking their fathers, and behaving badly, Plutarch's audience can tolerate Gryllus' barbs and arguments without being disloyal to the humans.

3. *Conclusions*

HARTMAN called *De sollertia* 'dulcissimus hic suavissimusque liber'; DODDS called it 'one of the most charming of Plutarch's dialogues'⁴⁹; neither they nor most other scholars take it very seriously. *Gryllus*, likewise, is inevitably referred to as slight, light, and charming (the Loeb introduction begins [p. 489] "Many will find this little *jeu d'esprit* as pleasant reading as anything in Plutarch"). We hope to have shown,

⁴⁹ Hartman (1916), 567; Dodds (1933), 104.

however, that both essays feature a high level of literary and rhetorical sophistication, and we would also like to assert that there is some philosophical value to them as well⁵⁰. The claim of *De sollertia* to contribute to the philosophical debate on animals must rest, as SORABJI has shown, on its assertion that animals are owed kindness, even if not justice (see above, n. 24). But its form may also contribute something more serious than attractive and persuasive presentation. In his discussion of the two main modern theories about animal rights, SORABJI identifies as problematic their tendency to ‘one-dimensionality’ (213) and, in comparing the ancient theories with them, remarks (215): “The Stoic idea of animals as occupying a single circle beyond the outermost limit of concern overlooked the variety of connexions we may have with them. The idea that all just dealing depended on contract and expediency overlooked the many other springs of justice. Moral theories may seek to make things manageable by reducing all considerations to one. Insofar as they do, this is so much the worse for them.” He insists upon “the need for multiple considerations in ethics” (218). One of the consequences of employing the dialogue form, and indeed introducing two interdependent discussions, is that Plutarch avoids the danger of one-dimensionality. By introducing four very different major characters, all of whom have very different views of what is owed to animals, but all of whom have, from their different perspectives, respect and admiration for them, Plutarch is able to suggest a wide ‘variety of connexions’ between humans and animals, and to use them against the Stoics. This is not really a piece which ‘attacks’ hunting and fishing, or defends them; it has a wider agenda than that, seeking rather to combat a mindset which Plutarch sees as mistaking the place of man in the universe than to target one activity or another (unlike Plato in the *Laws*). So none of the characters is particularly unsympathetic, none dominant for the whole essay. The intertextuality with Xenophon adds a further dimension. The connection he makes between hunting and *paideia* seems to be sometimes validated, sometimes challenged; but the distinction he makes between sophists and true philosophers (13), and the idea that interaction with animals is important for the rest of one’s activities (12), tacitly inform a good deal of the debate. *Gryllus*, likewise, uses humor and deflection to perpetrate a rather subtle, possibly patriotic, argument, and simultaneously entertains while attacking

⁵⁰ *De sollertia* appears to have had some influence: for one thing, it seems likely that the author of the pseudo-Oppianic *Cynegetica* had in mind the opposition between hunting and fishing presented here when he wrote his companion piece to the *Halieutica*.

Stoic doctrine. The familiar characters of Odysseus and Circe, combined with the seemingly outrageous idea that the transformed pig-men prefer their new status, relax the audience and show yet another weapon in Plutarch's arsenal for making his points palatable. Charming indeed though they may be, there is more to these essays than an amusing collection of cute anecdotes and dodgy natural history.

Autour du miroir

Les miroitements d'une image dans l'œuvre de Plutarque

F. FRAZIER

L'idée de réexaminer l'usage de l'image du miroir, comparaison ou métaphore, chez Plutarque, est née de la convergence de plusieurs remarques ou questions rencontrées au fil du temps, pluralité qui est déjà significative de la richesse et de la complexité du sujet. Dans mes premières recherches d'abord, consacrées aux *Vies*, j'avais été frappée, comme beaucoup, par la préface de *Paul Émile* et la description que Plutarque donnait de sa "vie en commun" avec les illustres modèles qu'il accueillait chez lui, évoquant le "miroir" qu'ils lui offraient pour "parer et conformer sa conduite à l'exemple de leurs vertus". Ensuite, l'édition des *Propos de Table* et la question consacrée à la géométrie (VIII 2) ou encore l'étude du *Dialogue sur l'Amour* et de l'action d'Éros présentant aux *philokaloi* de beaux miroirs des belles choses ont fait apparaître, à côté du miroir éthique des *Vies*, un miroir épistémologique et ontologique¹. Enfin mon entrée dans une équipe de seiziémistes pour l'édition critique de la traduction d'Amyot des *Œuvres morales et mêlées* m'a amenée à retrouver l'image du miroir, utilisée par Montaigne comme instrument de connaissance de soi. Cette diversité, qui appartient à la tradition, a déjà été relevée dans des travaux consacrés au miroir, mais, outre qu'il n'y a pas, à ma connaissance, d'étude exhaustive consacrée à Plutarque², ces travaux généraux soit se bornent à un catalogue, soit proposent des classifications qui ne sont pas nécessairement pertinentes pour Plutarque³. Elles permettent néanmoins de définir les données du problème, c'est-à-dire à la fois de rappeler la tradition dans laquelle s'inscrit Plutarque et de revenir

¹ Ce que Vuilleumier (1998) appelle "miroirs initiatiques".

² Stadter (2003/4), 89-90 et n. 2, donne les principaux textes (mais non pas tous) et souligne la valeur pédagogique de l'image, mais il ne s'intéresse qu'aux *Vies*.

³ Elles sont peut-être même contestables en général, mais cela déborde le cadre de cette communication.

sur les classements à opérer aussi bien à l'intérieur de son œuvre que parmi la vingtaine d'occurrences de l'image du miroir⁴.

Représentatif de la tendance au "catalogage" est le répertoire des comparés auxquels le miroir sert de comparant établi par Françoise FRONTISI-DUCROUX⁵, qui énumère, dans cet ordre, le temps, le vin, la voix, la poésie, l'histoire, les pères modèles, les yeux et les visages, l'amour et l'amitié, le piège du flatteur et la femme, miroir de l'homme. On reconnaît Euripide derrière le temps, Alcée⁶ et Platon derrière le vin, Platon, à nouveau, et le *Théétète* (206d), pour la voix, Pindare pour la poésie (*Nem.* VII, 20-24); Plutarque apparaît pour l'histoire (sont réunis les *Vies*, le *De profectibus in virtute* et le *De gloria Atheniensium*), pour les pères modèles (avec le *De liberis educandis*, qui lui est attribué sans hésitation⁷), pour le flatteur (avec le *De adulate*), et pour la femme (avec les *Coniugalia praecepta* et aux côtés d'Achille Tatius), tandis que Platon est associé, pour les yeux et visages, au Philostrate de la *Vie d'Apollonios* et à Achille Tatius, pour l'amour et l'amitié, où il représente le premier⁸, à Aristote et Eschyle (*A.* 838-40), dans cet ordre, pour la seconde. Il s'agit, on le voit, d'un pur inventaire qui ne se soucie pas plus de la chronologie⁹ que de la spécificité des œuvres utilisées (épinicies, tragédies, dialogues ou traités philosophiques) ou de la rareté des emplois, et dont l'intérêt majeur est de réunir les éléments d'analyse, même si, ici et là, sont dégagés quelques sèmes importants. Le "noyau" de l'image est ainsi posé d'entrée comme un "faire voir"¹⁰, qui s'enrichit, chemin faisant,

⁴ La liste, avant regroupements, s'établit comme suit (j'élimine l'anecdote de Démosthène se regardant dans un miroir pour travailler ces discours, qui dénote un emploi réel et quasi "professionnel" du miroir, ainsi que les considérations plus "techniques" du *De facie*): *Aem.* 1.1; [*De lib. educ.* 14A]; *De aud.* 42B; *De ad. et am.* 53A; *De prof. in virt.* 85B; *Con. praec.* 139F et 141D; *Reg. et imp. apophth.* 172D; *De glor. Ath.* 345F; *De Is. et Os.* 382A et 384A; *De Pyth. or.* 404C; *De coh. ira* 456B; *De genio Socr.* 591E; *Quaest. conv.* Praef. V, 672E, et VIII 2, 718E; *Amatorius* 765B et F; *Ad princ. iner.* 781F; *De soll. an.* 967D; *Quaest. Plat.* 1002A.

⁵ Frontisi-Ducroux (1995), ch. IV "Figures", 112-32.

⁶ Encore que la traduction de *διωπτρον* par "miroir" soit certainement abusive; Alcée dit simplement que le vin est "ce qui permet de voir à travers" le caractère; dans le miroir, c'est la surface lisse et réfléchissante qui joue un rôle essentiel.

⁷ Lui est associée l'interprétation des rêves par Artémidore: se voir dans un miroir annonce paternité ou maternité.

⁸ Est émise l'hypothèse que l'éraсте serait, pour l'époque classique, l'équivalent du père du *De lib. educ.*, ce qui aplatit quelque peu la relation amoureuse.

⁹ Une évolution n'est envisagée un peu longuement que pour les femmes et le mariage – et juste suggérée pour les pères (voir note précédente).

¹⁰ Frontisi-Ducroux (1995), 112: "Ces miroirs des écrivains, miroirs de métaphores et de comparaisons, développent, en s'appliquant à des domaines variés, le motif

des deux notions secondaires, mais importantes, de *mimèsis*¹¹ et de réflexivité, interprétée comme réciprocité.

Un essai de mise en ordre se trouve en revanche dans “l’archéologie” du genre littéraire médiéval du Miroir proposée par Einar Már JONSSON. Médiéviste, l’auteur s’appuie, pour l’Antiquité, sur les analyses antérieures de Norbert HUGEDÉ, consacrées aux origines de la métaphore dans les *Épîtres aux Corinthiens*, lequel s’inspirait déjà d’un article de J. BEHM, aujourd’hui vieux de plus de trois quarts de siècle et centré sur la *Première Épître aux Corinthiens*¹². Supprimant la première catégorie proposée par ce dernier, qui fait du miroir, par sa transparence et sa fidélité, un symbole de pureté ou la manière de désigner une image exacte, JONSSON ne retient que les deux autres types d’emploi de la “symbolique catoptrique”, selon ses termes: le miroir comme instrument de connaissance de soi et la vision dans un miroir pour désigner une connaissance indirecte qui ne peut saisir qu’une image de l’objet, et non l’objet lui-même¹³. Il enrichit l’analyse en proposant de faire correspondre ces deux emplois avec une dualité de l’idéal du savoir. La vision indirecte serait à mettre en relation avec une tendance “scientifique”, qui classe et hiérarchise les formes du réel, et s’appuierait sur les phénomènes de réflexion ou de réfraction et sur l’usage du miroir comme objet d’observation, tandis que la connaissance de soi, qui se réfère à l’emploi du miroir comme instrument de toilette, incarnerait la tendance “socratique”, mais il est obligé de subdiviser à son tour cette tendance en deux thèmes, celui du “miroir de l’âme” qui permet de voir ce que l’on est, et celui du miroir-modèle, qui présente ce que l’on doit être, sans s’aviser que, dès Platon, dans le *Premier Alcibiade* et le *Phèdre*, voir ce que l’on est a une dimension métaphysique qui incline la connaissance de soi vers le domaine qu’il a dévolu à la vision indirecte¹⁴. C’est aussi que son objet principal est la synthèse des deux grandes fonctions, qui s’opérerait à époque impériale, avec

fondamental du “faire voir” qui s’en trouve enrichi et considérablement explicité à nos yeux.”

¹¹ Mais en ignorant la *mimèsis* morale, seule valable selon Platon; voir le commentaire p. 119 des emplois moraux chez Plutarque par “L’inévitable contagion de la *mimèsis* opère avec le miroir comme elle opère au théâtre, où les spectateurs ont tendance à s’identifier aux héros”.

¹² J. Behm, “Das Bildwort vom Spiegel I. Kor. 13, 12”, in *R. Seebergfestschrift*, t. I, Leipzig, 1929, 315-42, que je n’ai pas pu consulter.

¹³ Hugédé (1957), 97.

¹⁴ La difficulté de classement vient de ce qu’il n’y a pas pour Platon de solution de continuité entre métaphysique et morale: l’action, pour être valide, doit imiter le paradigme – voir Goldschmidt (1945), repris *infra*.

le néoplatonisme, le christianisme et le gnosticisme¹⁵, et, dans cette optique, il est amené à privilégier le lien qui s'établirait alors entre la symbolique catoptrique et le thème de l'amour¹⁶, chez les païens avec l'*éros* de Plutarque¹⁷, et chez les chrétiens, avec l'*agapè* paulinienne. Là encore Platon semble gravement méconnu, et l'*Érotikos* exagérément privilégié dans la tradition, alors qu'il s'agit d'un texte un peu particulier, dont le classement même par ZIEGLER parmi les *popularphilosophisch-ethischen Schriften*¹⁸ ne laisse pas de poser des difficultés et permet de s'interroger plus largement en préambule sur la pertinence et le caractère heuristique d'une telle catégorie.

De fait, si un tel classement de l'*Érotikos* fait bien peu de cas et de la forme dialogique du texte, de type platonicien et sans grand rapport avec, par exemple, celle du *Sur le contrôle de la colère*, où elle n'est guère qu'un procédé d'introduction, et de la dimension métaphysique des analyses centrales, c'est, d'une manière générale, le concept même de *Popularphilosophie* qui me semble devoir être précisé en préambule: créé pour s'opposer aux commentaires ou aux polémiques "professionnels"¹⁹, il me semble gros de malentendus. En effet, bien que l'incongruité d'un rapprochement entre Plutarque et des prédicateurs cyniques itinérants s'adressant "aux masses" éclate à son simple énoncé, on a longtemps eu tendance à conjoindre "morale populaire" et "style diatribique" – un autre concept moderne flou – et à suggérer pour les

¹⁵ Ce dernier étant peut-être même, selon Jonsson, à l'origine de la fusion de la connaissance de soi et de la connaissance de Dieu. Il faut toutefois signaler que l'auteur nuance quelque peu sa position (p. 64): "Il serait peut-être exagéré de parler, au départ, de deux formes de symbolisme parallèles, car le symbolisme catoptrique reposant sur l'idée de la vision indirecte semble s'être développé avec plus de facilité que celui qui se référait à la connaissance de soi, mais l'évolution ultérieure du symbolisme présuppose l'existence séparée de deux formes." Et il faut ajouter qu'il est aussi conscient qu'il peut sembler *a priori* étonnant de ne pas classer la connaissance de soi dans les connaissances indirectes, mais il justifie son classement de façon plausible par le rapprochement avec l'optique et la catoptrique.

¹⁶ Point fortement souligné dans les dernières pages de l'étude: Jonsson (1997), 195.

¹⁷ Jonsson (1997), 77, soutient ainsi que Plutarque innove "en établissant une relation entre le symbolisme catoptrique et Erôs"; tout juste peut-on lui accorder qu'il développe les suggestions du *Phèdre*.

¹⁸ Ziegler (1951), col. 636.

¹⁹ Marqué par l'Académisme de son époque, comme l'a indiqué H.G. Ingenkamp lors de la discussion de cette communication, Ziegler (1951), col. 636, distingue ainsi *Die wissenschaftlich-philosophischen Schriften* (cat. 3) et *Die popularphilosophisch-ethischen Schriften* (cat. 4); on pourrait aussi discuter la distinction opérée entre ces écrits éthiques et les écrits pédagogiques et politiques, qui relèvent indiscutablement de l'éthique.

œuvres semblant présenter quelques-uns des caractères attribués à l'une ou à l'autre une visée de vulgarisation de masse²⁰, ce qui ne convient en aucun cas aux conférences, "à la mode" certes, mais certainement pas destinées à un public populaire, au nombre desquelles on peut compter certains ouvrages de Plutarque et peut-être certains entretiens d'Épictète, sans oublier toutefois que l'un comme l'autre critiquent les prestations spectaculaires où le conférencier ne cherche qu'à briller. C'est que, aussi bien pour les *scholai* du premier²¹ que pour les *diatribai* du second, titre sous lequel Arrien a conservé la dernière partie du cours de son maître, le recours à la notion moderne de "diatribe" occulte l'essentiel, qui réside dans l'effort d'analyse et de conviction déployé pour montrer aux auditeurs comment vivre la philosophie, en général, par une réforme radicale et un retour à soi – c'est l'objet d'Épictète – ou sur tel point particulier – ce qui correspondrait davantage aux exposés de Plutarque. De telles œuvres s'inscrivent dans une démarche de morale pratique, qui s'accorde parfaitement avec la fonction de *magistra vitae* dévolue à cette époque à la philosophie. Ce qui est alors désigné par l'appellation de "philosophie populaire", selon la définition que propose P. P. FUENTES-GONZALEZ, reconsidérant la question de la diatribe dans le cadre d'une édition des *Diatribes* de Télès²², ce sont "les motifs qui représentent les exigences les plus répandues d'une époque fortement caractérisée par un esprit d'universalisation comme c'était le cas de l'époque hellénistico-romaine"²³, ou, pour le dire mieux encore, "une série de *topoi* de la philosophie pratique"²⁴. Le philosophe, que nos conceptions modernes désigneraient sans doute

²⁰ Pour le rapprochement entre morale populaire et diatribe, voir Oltramare (1926).

²¹ C'est le terme employé en *De aud.* 37C (lequel n'est pourtant pas rangé dans les *popularphilosophisch-ethischen Schriften* par Ziegler, mais dans les *pädagogischen Schriften*): sur la manière de désigner les conférences, voir la note de Philippon (1989), 27-28.

²² Fuentes-Gonzalez (1998), 44-78, "Le genre littéraire: la question de la « diatribe »", qui reprend et résume l'introduction détaillée de sa thèse, *Las Diatribas de Teles. Estudio introductorio y comentario de los textos conservados*, Granada, 1990; tout en critiquant ces notions inventées par le XIX^e s., il ne renonce néanmoins pas à les utiliser, après avoir fait raison de "l'idée rebattue de *propagande pour les masses*" et les avoir redéfinies.

²³ Fuentes-Gonzalez (1998), 56.

²⁴ Fuentes-Gonzalez (1998), 59; voir aussi les remarques de Babut (1969a), 95, sur les convergences entre le *De ira* de Sénèque, le *De coh. ira* de Plutarque et le *Περὶ ὀργῆς* de Philodème, qui ne marquent pas de profonde communauté de vue entre philosophes d'écoles si différentes, mais le recours "au stock d'observations, de remarques ou d'anecdotes recueillies dans la littérature spécialisée "sur la colère", avec ce dédain de l'originalité qui caractérise souvent les auteurs anciens."

plus volontiers comme “moraliste” ou “directeur de conscience”, pense et promeut les valeurs morales fondamentales que se propose, à défaut de toujours les respecter, la société de son époque, c’est-à-dire, pour Plutarque comme pour Épictète, les notables²⁵.

Ces considérations ont des implications directes pour notre image du miroir, d’abord parce que là aussi le plus simple et le plus opératoire est de distinguer emploi “pratique”, ou éthique, insistant sur “l’embellissement” de la conduite, et emploi métaphysique, ou ontologique, centré sur le rapport de l’intelligible et du sensible²⁶, ensuite, parce que dans le domaine éthique, elle a été elle-même étiquetée comme “thème diatribique” relevant de la “philosophie populaire”, dont la banalité même dispenserait de toute réflexion²⁷. Certains emplois de l’image du miroir, dont on trouve des parallèles chez les Latins, semblent en effet relever d’un “*topos* de la philosophie pratique”, mais d’une part ce n’est pas vrai pour tous les emplois, et d’autre part la fréquence de l’image ne dispense pas de s’interroger sur les raisons qui poussent Plutarque à la reprendre dans tel ou tel contexte et sur les inflexions éventuelles qu’apporte ce contexte.

Il semble ainsi nécessaire de regarder d’abord l’ensemble des occurrences, sans sélectionner d’entrée les emplois moraux: il apparaît alors que la coexistence d’emplois qu’on pourrait dire de “morale courante” avec des emplois nettement platoniciens n’est pas pure juxtaposition et que, même si les cinq siècles qui séparent Plutarque de Platon ont “moralisé” et banalisé²⁸ l’image du miroir dans lequel on regarde pour se connaître, Plutarque, en la reprenant, n’est néanmoins pas infidèle à son platonisme. L’usage éthique du miroir et la multiplication des modèles permettent de saisir certains aspects de la vie morale, en particulier d’essayer d’apprécier le poids respectif des exemples extérieurs et de l’introspection; en outre, l’inflexion particulière qu’il sait donner à cette image en fonction du contexte est à mettre au compte de ses talents de moraliste soucieux de la particularité de chaque situation. Enfin, dans cette “vie courante”, où les autres jouent un rôle si important, un examen particulier doit être réservé à ces miroirs eux aussi très particuliers et opposés que sont le flatteur et l’épouse.

²⁵ Il est piquant de constater que les tenants de la *diatribomania* ne se sont jamais avisés qu’il y avait quelque difficulté à associer une morale courante et conformiste avec les contestataires patentés en marge de la société que figurent les Cyniques.

²⁶ L’articulation des deux, possible ou non, est un problème subsidiaire, que l’*Érotikos* permet de poser.

²⁷ Oltramare (1926), 174-77, repris par Hugédé (1957), 101.

²⁸ Dans les deux sens d’affadir et de répandre.

Miroirs, images et paradigmes platoniciens

L'usage que fait Plutarque de l'image du miroir lie le plus souvent celui-ci à la notion de paradigme, ce qui n'est sans doute pas toujours aussi nettement explicite chez Platon, mais s'accorde néanmoins bien avec sa pensée. Si l'on part des emplois du miroir chez le philosophe athénien, ce schème, ainsi que l'a mis en lumière P. VUILLEUMIER, apparaît comme "un acteur important dans la mise en scène du lien entre le visible et l'intelligible" et, en particulier, fait ressortir "la nécessité d'une médiation pour atteindre l'objet"²⁹. Dans l'ordre de la connaissance d'abord, faute de pouvoir accéder directement aux choses et à leur vérité, l'être mixte qu'est l'homme a besoin d'images sensibles pour les approcher et si le texte platonicien mis en avant par P. VUILLEUMIER, le *Phédon* (99d3-100b9), fait des *logoi* mêmes "des miroirs dans lesquels on peut examiner la vérité des choses"³⁰, Plutarque pour sa part, fidèle à son amour de jeunesse pour les mathématiques, utilise avec prédilection l'image du miroir pour la géométrie. C'est ainsi qu'on la trouve aussi bien dans le commentaire réservé à l'image de la ligne de la *République* dans les *Questions platoniciennes*, pour définir la *διάνοια*, à laquelle il assigne pour objet les êtres mathématiques, "où apparaissent comme dans un miroir les intelligibles"³¹ que dans la question des *Propos de table* consacrée à la géométrie³². Diogénianos commence en donnant le sens le plus obvie de l'éloge platonicien de cette discipline, matière qui nous arrache à la sensation pour nous tourner vers l'intelligible:

²⁹ Vuilleumier (1998), 46 et 44.

³⁰ Vuilleumier (1998), 34. L'analyse occupe les pages 34-46. Platon n'emploie pas le mot "miroir", mais comme le paradigme utilise la surface réfléchissante des eaux, le passage relève sans ambiguïté de ce que Vuilleumier a défini comme "le schème du miroir", lequel permet ici de laisser en marge du domaine conceptuel "la question première de l'ontologie, celle du *rapport entre le discours et l'être*... À l'intérieur de cette marge, seul le miroir nous permet de fantasmer des éléments de réponse, loin des justifications dialectiques et des preuves rigoureuses" (41-42).

³¹ *Quaest. Plat.* 1002A: ἡ διάνοια νοῦς ἐστὶν ἐν τοῖς μαθηματικοῖς ὡσπερ ἐν κατόπτροις ἐμφαινομένων τῶν νοητῶν. Cherniss (1976), note *ad loc.*, donne des parallèles chez les néoplatoniciens et indique que cette interprétation persiste encore, bien qu'elle n'ait pas d'appuis dans le texte platonicien.

³² VIII 2: Πῶς Πλάτων ἐλεγε τὸν θεὸν αἰεὶ γεωμετρεῖν; le titre reproduit exactement la formulation du problème par Diogénianos à l'occasion de l'anniversaire de Platon, et si Plutarque connaît assez l'œuvre de Platon pour relever que cette déclaration ne se trouve nulle part "noir sur blanc" (σαφῶς), il ajoute que néanmoins τοῦ Πλατωνικοῦ χαρακτηῖρός ἐστιν (718C).

C'est ainsi que, si dans tout ce qu'on appelle science mathématique, apparaissent, **comme dans des miroirs plans et lisses**³³, les traces et reflets de la vérité intelligible, c'est avant tout la géométrie, principe et mère de toutes les autres sciences, selon Philolaos, qui élève et convertit l'esprit, comme purifié et délivré peu à peu de la sensation³⁴.

Cette utilité de la géométrie, nuance aussitôt Florus, n'est valable que pour l'homme, et Dieu n'a pas besoin de la géométrie pour être peu à peu détourné du monde et ramené à l'être, "puisque c'est en lui-même que l'être réside" (719A), mais elle lui sert à organiser la matière³⁵.

Cette faiblesse humaine et le nécessaire détour pédagogique de la géométrie inspirent encore la comparaison par laquelle est décrite l'action d'Éros, mystagogue et non pédagogue, qui, en parfait accord avec les leçons du *Phèdre* et du *Banquet*, ramène les amants à la vraie Beauté:

De même que les professeurs de géométrie, quand les enfants ne sont pas encore capables d'être initiés aux notions intellectuelles de la nature incorporelle et impassible, façonnent et leur présentent des représentations visibles et tangibles sous forme de sphères, de cubes et de dodécaèdres, de même l'ingéniosité de l'Éros céleste ménage et nous montre **de beaux miroirs des belles réalités, miroirs mortels de réalités divines, passibles de réalités impassibles, sensibles de réalités intelligibles**, qui brillent dans leurs formes, leurs couleurs et leur aspect de l'éclat de la jeunesse, éveillant ainsi peu à peu notre mémoire, que ces objets enflamment dès l'abord³⁶.

³³ C'est-à-dire les meilleurs et les plus fidèles.

³⁴ 718E: *πάσι μὲν οὖν τοῖς καλουμένοις μαθήμασιν, ὡσπερ ἀστραβέσι καὶ λείοις κατόπτροις, ἐμφαίνεται τῆς τῶν νοητῶν ἀληθείας ἵχνη καὶ εἰδῶλα· μάλιστα δὲ γεωμετρία κατὰ τὸν Φιλόλαον ἀρχὴ καὶ μητρόπολις οὕσα τῶν ἄλλων ἐπανάγει καὶ στρέφει τὴν διάνοιαν, οἷον ἐκκαθαυρομένην καὶ ἀπολυομένην ἀτρέμα τῆς αἰσθήσεως.*

³⁵ Soit que, selon l'interprétation d'Autoboulos, il donne à la matière forme et limite en en dégageant des figures géométriques, soit que, comme le suggère Plutarque, il procède en "usant de la proportion pour régler la matière sur son modèle" (720C: *τῷ λόγῳ πρὸς τὸ παράδειγμα τὴν οὐσίαν ὀρίζοντος*).

³⁶ 765AB: *ὡς δὲ γεωμέτραι παισὶν οὕτω δυναμένοις ἐφ' ἑαυτῶν τὰ νοητὰ μυηθῆναι τῆς ἀσωμάτου καὶ ἀπαθoῦς οὐσίας εἶδη πλάττοντες ἀπτά καὶ ὀρατὰ μμήματα σφαιρῶν καὶ κύβων καὶ δωδεκαέδρων προτείνουσιν, οὕτως ἡμῖν ὁ οὐράνιος Ἔρως ἔσοπτρα καλῶν καλὰ, θνητὰ μέντοι θείων <καὶ ἀπαθῶν> παθητὰ καὶ νοητῶν αἰσθητὰ μηχανώμενος ἔν τε σχήμασι καὶ χρώμασι καὶ εἶδει νέων ὥρα στίλβοντα δείκνυσι καὶ κινεῖ τὴν μνήμην ἀτρέμα διὰ τούτων ἀναφλεγομένην τὸ πρῶτον.*

La juxtaposition des adjectifs épithètes des miroirs et des adjectifs substantivés désignant le réel présente ce double intérêt que l'identité des deux premiers (*καλὰ καλών*) met en lumière la **ressemblance** constitutive de l'image reflétée dans un miroir, qui permet l'éveil de la mémoire et la réminiscence, tandis que les adjectifs antithétiques qui suivent rappellent l'abîme ontologique qui se cache derrière ce jeu de ressemblances. L'intelligible ne peut être entraperçu que par réfraction: après celle qu'opère le miroir, c'est le phénomène de l'arc-en-ciel qu'invoque Plutarque pour préciser "l'ingénieux moyen" dont use Éros avec les âmes nobles et éprises de beauté:

Il provoque une réfraction de la mémoire de ce qui ici-bas apparaît et est désigné comme beau vers la Beauté de là-bas, véritablement divine, aimable, bienheureuse et admirable.

Toutefois seules les nobles âmes sont capables de dépasser l'image et la phrase suivante rappelle toute l'ambiguïté du miroir, qui est fondamentalement celle de l'image chez Platon, trompeuse ou initiatique, selon les cas³⁷:

Mais la masse poursuit à tâtons son image, dans l'apparence qu'en donnent jeunes garçons et femmes, comme dans un miroir, incapables de saisir rien de plus solide qu'un plaisir mêlé de peine: leur attitude ressemble au vertige et à l'erreur d'Ixion pourchassant dans des nuées comme parmi des ombres l'objet de son désir, qui n'était que vanité; c'est comme les enfants qui brûlent de saisir l'arc-en-ciel dans leurs mains, attirés qu'ils sont par ce qui apparaît³⁸.

Tout est fait, avec la série de comparaisons, pour souligner l'inconsistance, la pure apparence à laquelle les *polloi* se laissent prendre, et l'erreur est ainsi davantage le fait de celui qui regarde, mal, que du miroir.

³⁷ Voir Desclos (2000), en part. 308, sur la distinction établie par Platon, comme à son habitude, entre "un « côté gauche », celui de la tromperie et de l'illusionnisme, et un « côté droit », étape indispensable vers ce qui est réellement réel."

³⁸ 765F-766A: ταῦτό δὴ τὸ ἔρωτικὸν μηχανήμα καὶ σόφισμα περὶ τὰς εὐφρεῖς καὶ φιλοκάλους ψυχὰς ἀνάκλασιν ποιεῖ τῆς μνήμης ἀπὸ τῶν ἐνταῦθα φαινομένων καὶ προσαγορευομένων καλών εἰς τὸ θεῖον καὶ ἐράσμιον καὶ μακάριον ὡς ἀληθῶς ἐκεῖνο καὶ θαυμάσιον καλόν. Ἄλλ' οἱ πολλοὶ μὲν ἐν παισὶ καὶ γυναιξὶν ὥσπερ ἐν κατόπτροις εἰδῶλον αὐτοῦ φανταζόμενον διώκοντες καὶ ψηλαφῶντες οὐδὲν ἠδονῆς μεμιγμένης λύπη δύνανται λαβεῖν βεβαιότερον· ἀλλ' οὗτος ἔοικεν ὁ τοῦ Ἰξίου ἰλιγγος εἶναι καὶ πλάνος, ἐν νέφεσι κενὸν ὥσπερ σκιαῖς θηρωμένον τὸ ποθοῦμενον· ὥσπερ οἱ παῖδες προθυμούμενοι τὴν Ἴριν ἐλεῖν τοῖν χερσίν, ἐλκόμενοι πρὸς τὸ φαινόμενον.

La délicatesse du maniement des images est ainsi fortement soulignée par Plutarque dans un esprit pleinement platonicien. À travers le sensible, on peut saisir des “traces”, des “reflets” de l’intelligible, mais – et ceci sous-tend les différents emplois de l’image du miroir – il faut bien distinguer le **contenu** du reflet, ce que le miroir rend visible aux êtres sensibles que nous sommes, incapables d’y avoir un accès direct, de la **nature** de ce reflet, qui n’est que reflet et non réalité; à quoi on pourrait ajouter, relevant de la nature et influant sur le contenu, la question de la **qualité de l’image**, tributaire de celle du miroir, car il en est de déformants. Sans entrer dans ce jeu possible de déformation, qui renvoie toujours au même problème essentiel du lien entre sensible et intelligible³⁹, on se contentera de rappeler l’origine que Plutarque attribue à l’erreur de ceux qui dénomment la partie immortelle de l’âme νοῦς et non δαίμων, née de ce qu’ils “la croient à l’intérieur de l’âme comme on croit à l’intérieur des miroirs ce qui y apparaît par réflexion”⁴⁰ ou, à l’inverse, l’affirmation que, si les têtes les plus philosophiques ont cherché des traces du divin jusque dans les êtres inanimés, on doit *a fortiori* regarder les êtres animés, ayant sensibilité, affectivité et caractère, comme “les miroirs naturels les plus manifestes” et, **à travers eux**, honorer le divin⁴¹.

Parmi ces miroirs naturels qui nous approchent du divin, le plus beau, déjà utilisé par Platon dans la *République*, est sans doute celui du Soleil, mais c’est aussi celui dont Plutarque, dans sa polémique contre les Stoïciens, dénonce à plusieurs reprises les risques⁴², si, au lieu de s’en tenir au “beau principe de l’Analogie”⁴³, on confond à travers lui

³⁹ Que Plutarque utilise pour développer son *Organontheorie* dans le *De Pyth. or.*: de même que les empreintes dans le métal ou les reflets dans les miroirs introduisent dans la reproduction du modèle des différences qui leur sont propres, de même la Pythie imprime sa marque à la forme du message qu’elle profère. Voir aussi *Quaest. conv.* praef. V, 672E, pour décrire la sensation et le rapport de l’âme et du corps.

⁴⁰ *De genio Socr.* 591E: τὸ δὲ φθορᾶς λειψθὲν οἱ πολλοὶ νοῦν καλοῦντες ἐντὸς εἶναι νομίζουσιν αὐτῶν, ὥσπερ ἐν τοῖς ἐσόπτροις τὰ φαινόμενα κατ’ ἀνταύγειαν· οἱ δὲ ὀρθῶς ὑπονοοῦντες ὡς ἐκτὸς ὄντα δαίμονα προσαγορεύουσι.

⁴¹ *De Is. et Os.* 382A: εἴπερ οὖν οἱ δοκιμώτατοι τῶν φιλοσόφων οὐδ’ ἐν ἀνύχοις καὶ ἀσωμάτοις πράγμασιν αἰνίγμα τοῦ θεοῦ κατιδόντες ἤξιοῦν ἀμελεῖν οὐδὲν οὐδ’ ἀτιμάζειν, ἔτι μᾶλλον, οἶμαι, τὰς ἐν αἰσθανομέναις καὶ ψυχῇ ἐχούσαις καὶ πάθος καὶ ἦθος φύσεσιν ιδιότητος κατὰ τὸ ἦθος ἀγαπητέον [οὖν], οὐ ταῦτα τιμῶντας, ἀλλὰ διὰ τούτων τὸ θεοῖον, ὡς ἐναργεστέρων ἐσόπτρων καὶ φύσει γεγονότων,...

⁴² Exposé détaillé dans Babut (1969a), 446-47.

⁴³ *De def. orac.* 433DE: ὅθεν οἱ μὲν πολλοὶ τῶν προγεγεστέρων ἓνα καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν ἡγοῦντο θεὸν Ἀπόλλωνα καὶ ἥλιον· οἱ δὲ τὴν καλὴν καὶ σοφὴν ἐπιστάμενοι καὶ τιμῶντες ἀναλογίαν, ὅπερ σῶμα πρὸς ψυχῇ, ὄψις δὲ πρὸς νοῦν, φῶς δὲ πρὸς ἀλήθειάν ἐστι, τοῦτο τὴν ἡλίου δύναμιν εἰκάζον εἶναι πρὸς τὴν Ἀπόλλωνος φύσιν, ἔκγονον ἐκείνου καὶ τόκον ὄντος αἰεὶ γιγνόμενον αἰεὶ τοῦτον ἀποφαίνοντες.

sensible et intelligible, matériel et divin. Parmi les nombreux textes où il apparaît, le *Ad principem ineruditum*, où l'on part de la réfutation métaphysique pour arriver, par analogie, à déterminer le rôle moral du gouvernant, noue en quelque sorte les deux domaines de l'être et de la conduite morale, en descendant du "Dieu d'en haut" au soleil, qui est son image, puis à la lumière de la cité qu'est le prince, semblable dans celle-ci à ce qu'est le soleil dans le ciel:

Il n'est ni vraisemblable ni convenable que Dieu, comme le disent un certain nombre de philosophes, se trouve mêlé à une matière affectée de toutes sortes d'accidents, à des choses soumises à mille nécessités, hasards et changements. En fait quelque part au-dessus de nous, au sein de la réalité qui est éternellement la même suivant les mêmes rapports, Dieu siège sur des fondements sacrés, et, comme dit Platon, "va droit à son but parmi les révolutions de la nature"; et, de même que le soleil, la superbe imitation de lui-même qu'il a placée dans le ciel, **y apparaît comme une image reflétée dans un miroir** à ceux qui sont capables de l'y voir, de même il a installé la lumière de sa justice et de sa raison qui brille dans les cités comme une image dont les mortels heureux et sages tracent une copie en s'aidant de la philosophie, tâchant de se modeler sur la plus belle des réalités⁴⁴.

Si les théories hellénistiques du bon roi se conjuguent ici avec l'idée platonicienne du soleil paradigme du Bien, la sorte de chaîne d'imitation ainsi dessinée permet de mieux situer le domaine de l'action, qui est elle-même, selon la définition très éclairante de V. GOLDSCHMIDT, une "imitation, (qui) résulte de la cause paradigmatique et de la résistance de la matière"⁴⁵, imitation morale qui s'efforce de reproduire le modèle dans un ordre différent, de transcrire en actes les exigences de la Forme.

⁴⁴ *Ad princ. iner.* 781F-782A: οὐ γὰρ εἰκὸς οὐδὲ πρέπον, ὥσπερ ἔνιοι φιλόσοφοι λέγουσι, τὸν θεὸν ἐν ἕλῃ πάντα πασχούσῃ καὶ πράγμασι μυρίας δεχομένοις ἀνάγκας καὶ τύχας καὶ μεταβολὰς ὑπάρχειν ἀναμειγμένον· ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν ἄνω που περὶ τὴν αἰὲ κατὰ ταῦτ' ὡσαύτως φύσιν ἔχουσαν ἰδρυμένους ἐν βάρθοις ἀγίοις, ἢ φησὶν ὁ Πλάτων, εὐθείᾳ περαίνει κατὰ φύσιν περιπορευόμενος· οἷον δ' ἥλιος ἐν οὐρανῷ μίμημα τὸ περικαλλῆς αὐτοῦ δι' ἐσόπτρου εἰδῶλον ἀναφαίνεται τοῖς ἐκεῖνον ἐνορᾶν δι' αὐτοῦ δυνατοῖς, οὕτω τὸ ἐν πόλεσι φέγγος εὐδικίας καὶ λόγου τοῦ περὶ αὐτὸν ὥσπερ εἰκόνα κατέστησεν, ἣν οἱ μακάριοι καὶ σώφρονες ἐκ φιλοσοφίας ἀπογράφονται πρὸς τὸ κάλλιστον τῶν παραδειγμάτων πλάττοντες ἑαυτούς. L'absence d'article devant l'apposition μίμημα ne laisse pas de poser quelques difficultés – ce qui a amené à proposer la restitution d'un καὶ devant εἰδῶλον, qui ferait des deux substantifs des attributs du sujet; si la construction change, le sens général de la phrase ne change pas, non plus que le sens particulier de l'image du miroir.

⁴⁵ Goldschmidt (1945), 142.

Le modèle varie selon l'imitateur et son élévation: c'est ainsi que les philosophes-législateurs, qui ont contemplé les réalités, esquisseront d'abord le plan de la constitution puis, pour parachever leur travail,

ils porteront souvent les yeux des deux côtés, vers l'essence de la justice, de la beauté, de la tempérance et des autres vertus semblables, mais aussi, d'autre part, vers les vertus particulières qu'ils inculqueront aux hommes, constituant par un mélange approprié des institutions **l'image de l'homme**, en s'inspirant de ce modèle qu'Homère, lorsqu'il le voit réalisé chez les hommes, appelle divin et image des dieux⁴⁶.

Dans l'ordre de l'action, la tâche primordiale du philosophe est d'abord de rédiger ces "imitations au second degré" que sont les codes écrits, et de veiller à ce qui pourrait même dispenser de toute prescription écrite, l'éducation et la formation, de telle sorte que "le Bien se reflète, de degré en degré, dans les lois fondamentales, dans les lois complémentaires, dans la jurisprudence et dans l'observance"⁴⁷. Dans ce mouvement de descente, le paradigme s'éloigne de plus en plus de la Forme et les paradigmes courants que sont les *exempla* trouvent aussi leur place: dans la vie politique, c'est au chef du gouvernement qu'il appartient de donner l'exemple "pour tourner les citoyens vers les pratiques de la vertu"⁴⁸. L'idée, amplifiée par les théories hellénistiques du bon roi⁴⁹, sous-tend le texte du *Ad principem ineruditum* et, dans les *Vies*,

⁴⁶ R.VI, 501b, cité et commenté par Goldschmidt (1945), 122-23: ἔπειτα, οἶμαι, ἀπεργαζόμενοι πικνὰ ἂν ἐκατέρωσ' ἀποβλέπειεν, πρὸς τε τὸ φύσει δίκαιον καὶ καλὸν καὶ σῶφρον καὶ πάντα τὰ τοιαῦτα, καὶ πρὸς ἐκείνο αὐτὸ ἐν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐμποιοῖεν, ζυμειγνύντες τε καὶ κεραννύντες ἐκ τῶν ἐπιτηδεύματων τὸ ἀνδρείκελον, ἀπ' ἐκείνου τεκμαιρόμενοι, ὃ δὴ καὶ Ὀμηρὸς ἐκάλεσεν ἐν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐγγιγνόμενον θεοειδές τε καὶ θεοεικέλον.

⁴⁷ Goldschmidt (1949), 129, appuyé sur R. IV, 423e; cette hiérarchie est corroborée par Plutarque dans la *Vie de Lycurgue*.

⁴⁸ Lg. IV, 711b: οὐδὲν δεῖ πόνων οὐδέ τινος παμπόλλου χρόνου τῷ τυράνῳ μεταβαλεῖν βουλῆθεντι πόλεως ἦθη, πορεύεσθαι δὲ αὐτὸν δεῖ πρῶτον ταύτη ὅπηπερ ἂν ἐθελήσῃ, ἕαντε πρὸς ἀρετῆς ἐπιτηδεύματα, προτρέπεσθαι τοὺς πολίτας, ἕαντε ἐπὶ τοῦναντίον, αὐτὸν πρῶτον πάντα ὑπογράφοντα τῷ πράττειν...; le verbe est à relever, qui maintient en filigrane l'idée du législateur-peintre "esquissant" le bon comportement.

⁴⁹ Reprises aussi par Cic. *rep.* II, 69.7: – *Video iam, illum, quem expectabam, virum cui praeficias officio et muneri. – Huic scilicet, Africanus, uni paene (nam in hoc fere uno sunt cetera), ut numquam a se ipso intuendo contemplandoque discedat, ut ad imitationem sui vocet alios, ut sese splendore animi et vitae suae sicut speculum praebeat civibus; voir aussi Ph., *Ios.* 87.*

s'incarne en particulier en Numa. Son règne, selon Plutarque, montre ce qu'est le bon roi, capable d'inspirer la vertu; alors

la multitude, **apercevant la vertu dans l'exemple visible et la conduite éclatante du chef**, embrasse elle-même volontairement la sagesse et tous, unis ensemble par l'amitié et la concorde, pratiquent la justice et la modération et se rangent à cette vie irréprochable et bienheureuse qui est la fin la plus parfaite de toute constitution⁵⁰.

Dans cette présentation idyllique des effets bénéfiques du roi qui fut aussi "un exemple et un témoignage éclatant de la vérité de la parole de Platon"⁵¹ selon laquelle "il n'y avait qu'un moyen pour l'humanité de voir les maux faire trêve et s'arrêter: que la puissance royale se conjuguant par quelque fortune divine avec l'esprit philosophique assure l'empire et la supériorité de la vertu sur le vice", l'accent est mis sur **l'évidence et l'éclat** de l'image d'un côté, et de l'autre, sur l'adhésion volontaire, presque spontanée, de la masse.

Un tel passage dit clairement la force émotionnelle de l'exemple et de l'image, qui prévaut aussi dans la comparaison du miroir, et qui est indispensable à l'être mixte qu'est l'homme: ainsi que le rappelle d'entrée le *De virtute morali*, la vertu éthique se distingue "par le fait d'avoir la passion pour matière et la raison pour forme" (440D), mais si l'image frappe, la mention du miroir, qui la fait apparaître, permet d'ajouter une autre idée. Objet dans lequel il faut regarder, il implique le plus souvent⁵² un effort de confrontation, qui transpose en quelque sorte à l'homme ordinaire le mouvement de va-et-vient attribué par Platon au "peintre-législateur" dont les yeux se portent tantôt sur le modèle et tantôt sur l'œuvre qu'il inspire, et l'image, à son tour, est moins le reflet de l'être que d'un "devoir-être" exigeant un nouvel effort.

⁵⁰ Num. 20.II: αὐτοὶ δὲ τὴν ἀρετὴν ἐν εὐδήλῳ παραδείγματι καὶ λαμπρῷ τῷ βίῳ τοῦ ἀρχοντος ὀρώντες, ἐκουσίως σωφρονούσι καὶ συσχηματίζονται πρὸς τὸν ἐν φιλίᾳ καὶ ὁμοιοῖα τῇ πρὸς αὐτοὺς μετὰ δικαιοσύνης καὶ μετριότητος ἀμύμονα καὶ μακάριον βίον, ἐν ᾧ τὸ κάλλιστον ἀπάσης πολιτείας τέλος ἐστί.

⁵¹ Num. 20.8 sqq: ἐναργῆς ἐξήνεγκε παράδειγμα καὶ τεκμήριον τῆς Πλατωνικῆς φωνῆς...

⁵² Sans idée d'effort, mais avec un accent sur la valeur paradigmatique, le *De soll. an.* 967D fait des fourmis le petit miroir que donne la nature des plus grandes vertus, présentant "dans une goutte d'eau pure" amitié, goût de l'effort, maîtrise de soi, sagesse et justice.

“Regarder comme dans un miroir”: connaissance de soi et progrès moral

L’effort moral de l’examen de soi

Cet effort premier est mis en valeur dans le *De audiendo* où Plutarque, après avoir recommandé “d’examiner et juger de la conférence à partir de soi-même et des dispositions en soi”⁵³, développe son conseil par une comparaison entre corps et âme, qui n’a rien que de familier chez un platonicien: de même qu’on vérifie l’arrangement de ses cheveux au sortir de chez le barbier, de même il faut “porter le regard vers soi-même”, scruter l’effet qu’a eu l’exposé sur son âme⁵⁴. Le texte a ce double intérêt, de se rencontrer avec les exigences d’Épictète, selon lequel il faut que l’auditeur soit amené par la conférence à faire un retour sur soi et à se réformer⁵⁵, et de recommander une introspection où l’on est seul avec soi-même, ce qui n’est pas le cas le plus fréquent chez Plutarque, alors que c’est la démarche normale chez Épictète.

La présentation préférée par Plutarque apparaît bien si l’on compare la manière dont Sénèque et lui présentent le procédé pédagogique que préconisait Sextius, où le miroir n’est pas métaphorique, mais réel; pour faire honte au coléreux de la laideur de sa passion et l’en détourner, il faudrait le faire se regarder dans un miroir. Plutarque écrit:

Pour moi, si j’avais un serviteur plein de mesure et de finesse, je ne me fâcherais pas que, dans mes accès de colère, **il me tendît un miroir**, comme on le présente à certains après leur bain, bien inutilement; car, de se voir dans un état si contraire à la nature et totalement bouleversé ne contribue pas peu à discréditer cette passion⁵⁶.

⁵³ *De aud.* 42A: ποιητέον επίσκεψιν καὶ κρίσιν τῆς ἀκροάσεως ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ τῆς περὶ αὐτὸν διαθέσεως.

⁵⁴ *De aud.* 42B: οὐ γὰρ ἐκ κουρείου μὲν ἀναστάντα δεῖ τῷ κατόπτρῳ παραστῆναι καὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς ἄψασθαι, τὴν περικοπήν τῶν τριῶν ἐπισκοποῦντα καὶ τῆς κουρᾶς τὴν διαφορὰν, ἐκ δὲ ἀκροάσεως ἀπιόντα καὶ σχολῆς οὐκ εὐθὺς ἀφορὰν χρῆ πρὸς ἑαυτὸν, καταμανθάνοντα τὴν ψυχὴν εἶ τι τῶν ὀχληρῶν ἀποτεθειμένη καὶ περιττῶν ἐλαφροτέρα γέγονε καὶ ἡδίω.

⁵⁵ *Epict.* III, 23.37: ἢ εἰπέ μοι τίς ἀκούων ἀναγιγνώσκοντός σου ἢ διαλεγομένου περὶ αὐτοῦ ἠγωνίασεν ἢ ἐπεστράφη εἰς αὐτὸν ἢ ἐξελθὼν εἶπεν ὅτι καλῶς μου ἤψατο ὁ φιλόσοφος· οὐκέτι δεῖ ταῦτα ποιεῖν. Une différence est toutefois à souligner: Épictète s’adresse ici à l’aspirant conférencier, et non à l’auditeur.

⁵⁶ *De coh. ira* 456B: ἐμοὶ δ’ εἴ τις ἐμμελῆς καὶ κομψὸς ἀκόλουθος ἦν, οὐκ ἂν ἠχθόμην αὐτοῦ προσφέροντος ἐπὶ ταῖς ὀργαῖς ἔσοπτρον, ὥσπερ ἐνίοις προσφέρουσι λουσαμένοις ἐπ’ οὐδενὶ χρησίμῳ. τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸν ἰδεῖν παρὰ φύσιν ἔχοντα καὶ συντεταραγμένον οὐ μικρὸν ἐστὶν εἰς διαβολὴν τοῦ πάθους.

L'initiative ne vient pas du coléreux, mais c'est le serviteur, plein de qualités, qui semble prendre sur lui de lui tendre le miroir. Sénèque, au contraire, après avoir détaillé la leçon de son maître, qui insistait sur la stupéfaction des coléreux de se découvrir si changés et méconnaissables dans la colère et, surtout, sur la faiblesse de cette image par rapport à celle que l'on découvrirait si l'on pouvait voir l'âme directement "noire, souillée, écumante, convulsive et gonflée", prend aussitôt ses distances:

On peut croire pourtant qu'un miroir n'a jamais détourné personne de la colère. – Pourquoi donc ? – **Celui qui s'est mis devant un miroir pour changer d'aspect était déjà changé**; pour l'homme en colère aucune image n'est plus belle que celle qui est atroce et horrible, et il veut paraître tel qu'il est. (*dial.* IV, 36.3)

Derrière cette fine remarque sur les noirceurs de la passion perce peut-être autant que le moraliste l'auteur de tragédies. C'est en tout cas assez dire que le miroir est un instrument de perfectionnement moral qui suppose une ferme volonté du sujet.

Le miroir "socratique" chez Platon et Aristote

C'est la leçon que la tradition rapportait à Socrate⁵⁷ et dont Plutarque se fait l'écho dans les *Coniugalia praecepta*:

Socrate enjoignait aux jeunes gens **qui se regardaient dans un miroir** que, laids, ils corrigent leur apparence par la vertu, beaux, ils ne la souillent pas par le vice⁵⁸.

On reconnaît, sous une forme brève et plus facile, la leçon du *Premier Alcibiade*, texte fondateur de la connaissance de soi, où la vision et le moyen par lequel l'œil peut se voir lui-même – dans ce miroir que constitue la pupille de l'autre – servent de paradigmes pour comprendre comment accéder à la connaissance de soi. Le texte, étudié en détail par P. VUILLEUMIER⁵⁹, est résumé par lui dans un tableau très éclairant, que je reproduis⁶⁰:

⁵⁷ Voir aussi D.L., II, 33: ἡξίου δὲ καὶ τοὺς νέους συνεχῆς κατοπτρίζεσθαι, ἵν' εἰ μὲν καλοὶ εἶεν, ἀξιοὶ γίγνοιεντο· εἰ δ' αἰσχροὶ, παιδεία τὴν δυσείδειαν ἐπικαλύπτοιεν et Apulée, *Apol.* 15.4-9. Stobée (III, 21.11) fait remonter le procédé à Bias: θεώρει ὡσπερ ἐν κατόπτρῳ τὰς σαυτοῦ πράξεις, ἵνα τὰς μὲν καλὰς ἐπικοσμήῃς, τὰς δὲ αἰσχροὺς καλύπτῃς.

⁵⁸ *Con. praec.* 141D: ὁ Σωκράτης ἐκέλευε τῶν ἐσοπτριζομένων νεανίσκων τοὺς μὲν αἰσχροὺς ἐπανορθοῦσθαι τῇ ἀρετῇ, τοὺς δὲ καλοὺς μὴ καταισχύνειν τῇ κακίᾳ τὸ εἶδος.

⁵⁹ Vuilleumier (1997), 22-28.

⁶⁰ Vuilleumier (1997), 25.

sujet	but poursuivi	moyen	fonction propre
œil	vision de soi-même	regarder dans un œil	vision
âme	connaissance de soi-même	regarder dans une âme	savoir [<i>sofia</i>] (<i>sic</i>)

Dans le miroir de l'autre âme, ce n'est pas un pur reflet de l'âme qui apparaît, mais "ce qui fait qu'elle est une âme, sa faculté de connaître et de penser", ce n'est pas sa propre *aretè*, ni l'*aretè* de l'autre, mais "cela dans l'âme qui ressemble au divin". Comme le souligne encore P. VUILLEUMIER, le miroir s'efface tandis que le reflet, l'*aretè*, s'impose, "chose portant la ressemblance de l'original, ou, dans les termes du *Sophiste*, « ce qui, étant fait à la ressemblance du vrai, est une autre chose pareille » (τὸ πρὸς τὰ ληθινὸν ἀφομοιούμενον ἕτερον τοιοῦτον, 240a8)"⁶¹. Le reflet tend ainsi à devenir une sorte de double et "le texte ouvre sur l'universel et le divin, aux dépens cependant de la dimension de la personne et de l'individu qu'un lecteur moderne se serait attendu à trouver dans une telle recherche de soi-même à travers un miroir"⁶², bien loin de ce que cherchera un Montaigne. On est ici, en quelque sorte, à l'intersection de l'ontologique et de l'éthique: ce qui est révélé dans cet échange interpersonnel, c'est la nature de l'âme, de toute âme, et les conséquences doivent en être le "souci de soi", l'embellissement de cette partie la plus précieuse par l'acquisition de l'*aretè*.

Ce sont à la fois ce rôle d'autrui et la nécessité d'un effort éthique que conjugue Aristote dans les *Magna Moralia*, où c'est l'ami comme "alter ego" qui devient le meilleur miroir où regarder pour se connaître soi-même⁶³, ce qu'on peut synthétiser à nouveau sous forme d'un tableau, plus simple que celui qu'on tire du *Premier Alcibiade*:

sujet	but poursuivi	moyen	fonction propre
homme	vision de son visage	regarder dans un miroir	———
homme	connaissance de soi-même	regarder dans un ami	[pratique de la vertu]

⁶¹ Vuilleumier (1997), 28 – j'ai rétabli le grec, qu'il donne translittéré.

⁶² Vuilleumier (1997), 28-29.

⁶³ *MM* II, 15, 1213a10-26: ὡς περ οὖν ὅταν θέλωμεν αὐτοὶ αὐτῶν τὸ πρόσωπον ἰδεῖν, εἰς τὸ κάτοπτρον ἐμβλέψαντες εἶδομεν, ὁμοίως καὶ ὅταν αὐτοὶ αὐτοὺς βουλευθῶμεν γινῶναι, εἰς τὸν φίλον ἰδόντες γνωρίσασθαι ἂν.

La visée éthique d'une telle contemplation apparaît moins dans ce texte, dont le but premier est de faire ressortir la nécessité de l'amitié même pour le sage autosuffisant, que dans *l'Éthique à Nicomaque*, où l'ami offre ses actions à la contemplation de l'ami⁶⁴, où l'amitié est présentée comme le moyen à la fois d'exercer sa vertu et de se corriger les uns les autres⁶⁵, de connaître dans l'autre la qualité objective de ses actions, de son *ἦθος* et de sa vie⁶⁶.

À partir de cette moralisation de la connaissance de soi par le truchement d'autrui, le thème semble s'être banalisé et élargi, toute personne étant susceptible de constituer un miroir présentant l'exemple de ce qu'il faut faire ou fuir. Si l'on n'a pas d'attestation conservée chez Ménandre, le thème se retrouve à la fois chez Plaute et chez Térence dans des développements "pédagogiques"⁶⁷; c'est ainsi que, chez le second, Déméa explique à Syrus sa pédagogie en ces termes:

Nihil praetermitto; consuefacio; denique
 inspicere, **tamquam in speculum**, in vitas **omnium**
 jubeo atque **ex aliis sumere exemplum sibi**,

ce qui permet au facétieux esclave de lui rétorquer par une hilarante parodie de la méthode, où il explique comment il invite ses marmitons à regarder dans les casseroles comme dans un miroir⁶⁸, mais ce qui peut aussi faire apparaître les particularités de la démarche pour un Grec, en partie liée à la manière dont le grec exprime l'idée d'exemple.

Là où le sévère père latin invite son fils à "tirer des autres un exemple pour lui-même", le grec insiste moins sur le "prélèvement", le dégagement d'un modèle, marqué par *ex*, préfixe ou préposition, que sur la confrontation, que dénote *παρα-*, et c'est ainsi qu'on

⁶⁴ EN IX, 11, 1169b33-1170a4: θεωρεῖν δὲ μᾶλλον τοὺς πέλας δυνάμεθα ἢ ἑαυτοὺς καὶ τὰς ἐκείνων πράξεις ἢ τὰς οἰκείας, αἱ τῶν σπουδαίων δὲ πράξεις φίλων ὄντων ἡδεῖαι τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς (ἄμφω γὰρ ἔχουσι τὰ τῆ φύσει ἡδέα). ὁ μακάριος δὲ φίλων τοιοῦτων δεήσεται, εἴπερ θεωρεῖν προαιρεῖται πράξεις ἐπιεικῆς καὶ οἰκείας, τοιαῦται δ' αἱ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ φίλου ὄντος.

⁶⁵ EN IX, 12, 1172a10-14: ἡ δὲ τῶν ἐπιεικῶν (φιλία) ἐπιεικῆς, συναυξανομένη ταῖς ὀμιλίαις δοκοῦσι δὲ καὶ βελτίους γίνεσθαι ἐνεργούντες καὶ διορθούντες ἀλλήλους· ἀπομάττονται γὰρ παρ' ἀλλήλων οἷς ἀρέσκονται, ὅθεν ἐσθλῶν μὲν γὰρ ἄπ' ἐσθλά. Voir le commentaire des livres VIII-IX sur l'amitié de Métivier (2000), 305-49.

⁶⁶ Voir Cooper (1977), 295-302, qui insiste sur le thème de la connaissance de soi, et Courcelle (1974/75), I, 21.

⁶⁷ Plaute, *Epidicus* 381-385 et Ter., *Ad.* 414-416 (où l'image du miroir se greffe sur une leçon que les commentateurs rapprochent de Pl., *Prt.* 325d); Oltramare (1926) se croit autorisé par la présence de ce thème à voir aussi dans ces textes théâtraux des témoins de la diatribe.

⁶⁸ Ter. *Ad.* 428-9: *Postremo tamquam in speculum in patinas, Demea, / Inspecere jubeo et moneo quid facto usus sit.*

retrouve le mouvement de va-et-vient relevé pour le peintre-législateur de Platon⁶⁹, qui devient ici mouvement du regard du modèle à soi-même⁷⁰. C'est ce qu'exprime la célèbre préface de *Paul-Émile* (I.1), où il faut relever les actions permises par le miroir, non pas seulement "contempler" (*ἀναθεωρεῖν*) avec admiration la grandeur des héros, mais aussi "parer et conformer sa conduite à l'exemple de leurs vertus" (*κοσμεῖν καὶ ἀφομοιοῦν πρὸς τὰς ἐκείνων ἀρετὰς τὸν βίον*). Dans le *De profectibus* (85AB) de même, il est recommandé au progressant de "mettre sous ses yeux ceux qui ont été véritablement vertueux" (*τίθεσθαι πρὸ ὀφθαλμῶν τοὺς ὄντως ἀγαθοὺς γεγενημένους*) et de réfléchir (*διανοεῖσθαι*) en se demandant ce qu'auraient dit ou fait Platon, Épaminondas, Lycurgue ou Agésilas, "se parant pour ainsi dire comme devant des miroirs" (*οἶόν τι πρὸς ἔσοπτρα κοσμοῦντας ἑαυτούς*): on retrouve le même verbe, mais l'effort de "ressemblance" est, dans un traité consacré à l'effort pour progresser, remplacé par l'idée d'un "remodelage", d'une réforme (*ἢ μεταρρυθμίζοντας*) et concrétisé davantage encore par l'évocation d'une parole trop basse retenue ou de la résistance opposée à une passion (*ἢ φωνῆς ἀγεννεστεράς αὐτῶν ἐπιλαμβανομένους ἢ πρὸς τι πάθος ἀντιβαίνοντας*).

L'idée d'un "remodelage" n'est pas sans évoquer les exhortations constantes et véhémentes d'Épictète, lequel ne recourt guère cependant à l'image du miroir, peut-être parce qu'elle est trop "extérieure" pour la plongée en soi-même, le resserrement sur soi qu'il préconise. Le seul cas où il invite l'élève, trop pressé d'embrasser la mission de philosophe, à se regarder est sensiblement différent de ce qu'on trouve chez Plutarque. Le maître de Nicopolis, après avoir peint la figure du cynique, morigène l'outrecuidant qui prétend "cyniser" en lui rappelant la grandeur de sa tâche:

Vois-tu l'ampleur de l'entreprise où tu vas te lancer ? Commence par **prendre un miroir**, vois tes épaules, examine tes reins, tes cuisses. Tu vas t'inscrire aux Jeux Olympiques, homme, et non pour quelque concours insignifiant et misérable⁷¹.

⁶⁹ Voir aussi la définition du paradigme cognitif in *Plt.* 277d sqq; il faut, dans la lecture, face à un groupe connu et un inconnu, *παραβάλλοντας ἐνδεικνύναι τὴν αὐτὴν ὁμοιότητα καὶ φύσιν ἐν ἀμφοτέραις οὖσαν ταῖς συμπλοκαῖς, μέχριτερ ἂν πᾶσι τοῖς ἀγνοουμένοις τὰ δοξαζόμενα ἀληθῶς παρατιθέμενα δειχθῆ, δειχθέντα δέ, παραδείγματα οὕτω γιγνόμενα, ποιήσῃ τῶν στοιχείων ἕκαστον πάντων ἐν πάσαις ταῖς συλλαβαῖς τὸ μὲν ἕτερον ὡς τῶν ἄλλων ἕτερον ὄν, τὸ δὲ ταῦτόν ὡς ταῦτόν ἀεὶ κατὰ ταῦτὰ ἑαυτῷ προσαγορεύεσθαι.*

⁷⁰ Ce que l'on trouve aussi chez Arist., *EN IX, II, 1169b28*.

⁷¹ Epict. III, 22.51: *τηλικούτω πράγματι ὁρᾷς πῶς μέλλεις ἐγχειρεῖν; ἔσοπτρον πρῶτον λάβε, ἴδε σου τοὺς ὠμούς, κατάμαθε τὴν ὀσφύν, τοὺς μηρούς. Ὀλύμπια μέλλεις ἀπογράφεσθαι, ἀνθρώπε, οὐχί τινὰ ποτε ἀγῶνα ψυχρὸν καὶ ταλαίπωρον.*

L'image majeure dans ce texte n'est pas celle du miroir, dont l'emploi "réel" n'est pas sans rappeler ce que conseillait le Stoïcien Sextius au coléreux, mais celle des Jeux Olympiques, de l'effort, digne du fondateur Héraclès, exigé du vrai philosophe. Avant de se lancer, il faut se connaître soi-même, c'est-à-dire savoir exactement ce dont on est capable, car une telle mission n'est pas donnée à tous. Si l'on se réfère aux quatre *personae* que semble avoir déterminées Panétius d'après le témoignage de Cicéron⁷², il n'est pas question, comme c'est le cas le plus fréquent, de prendre conscience des impératifs de la première personnalité, de la qualité fondamentale d'homme et des exigences posées à un être de raison détenteur d'une parcelle de la raison divine, mais des particularités de la seconde, des qualités et aptitudes propres à chacun, qui déterminent son rôle dans le monde. Cette idée n'est pas totalement absente de l'œuvre de Plutarque, et on la trouve dans le *De tranquillitate animi*, mais sans aucune référence au miroir⁷³. Lorsqu'il invite à "regarder **comme dans un miroir**" – et non pas seulement à **se** regarder dans un miroir⁷⁴ –, il s'agit de se confronter à un modèle, de voir, à travers lui, comment se comporter dans telle ou telle circonstance particulière.

Le miroir de l'Histoire et la familiarité des grands hommes

Le miroir permet ainsi de redonner vie à ceux qui ne sont plus, de faire réapparaître les grands héros de l'Histoire, mais si Plutarque invite alors à se parer *ὡσπερ ἐν ἐσόπτρῳ τῇ ἱστορίᾳ* (*Aem.* I.1), il importe de bien saisir la démarche ainsi préconisée: un peu comme dans le *Premier Alcibiade*, P. VUILLEUMIER soulignait l'effacement du miroir au profit de l'image, de même l'important ici est non l'Histoire, celle à laquelle nous mettons la majuscule, mais d'abord "l'enquête" qui nous fait interroger, par-delà les siècles, Platon⁷⁵ ou les hommes illustres des *Vies*, et plus encore les hommes eux-mêmes et leur conduite. C'est ainsi que la préface des *Apophthegmes*, si elle est authentique, peut insister sur le "pur miroir" que constituent les paroles pour "contempler

⁷² Analyse détaillée par Gill (1988), reprise pour Épictète par Long (2002).

⁷³ *De tranq. an.* 471D-473A – en part. 472C: οὐ πάντα πάντων ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ δεῖ τῷ Πυθικῷ γράμματι πειθόμενον αὐτὸν καταμαθεῖν, εἶτα χρῆσθαι πρὸς ἐν ὃ πέφυκε καὶ μὴ πρὸς ἄλλον ἄλλοτε βίου ζῆλον ἐλκεῖν καὶ παραβιάζεσθαι τὴν φύσιν et la conclusion en 473A: δεῖ δὴ τὸ πρόσφορον ἑαυτοῖς ἐλομένους καὶ διαπονοῦντας εἶν τὰ τῶν ἄλλων; voir aussi le commentaire de Gill (1994).

⁷⁴ Ce qu'on trouve dans le *De aud.*, mais au détour d'une comparaison avec l'examen physique après une coupe de cheveux, et dans le *De coh. ira*, pour voir sa laideur (mais précisément, le procédé semble remonter à un Stoïcien).

⁷⁵ Dans le *De prof. in virt.* 85B.

la pensée de chacun⁷⁶, par opposition aux actions “qui sont mêlées de hasards⁷⁷. L’essentiel réside dans cette sorte de tête-à-tête entre le lecteur-spectateur et le héros, tandis que l’historien est un peu comme l’artisan de Platon, le fabricant qui n’a pas le mode d’emploi de sa production, qui met en œuvre une *mimèsis* inférieure, la *mimèsis* morale étant réservée à l’utilisateur du texte. Ou plutôt, selon la description du *De gloria Atheniensium*, là aussi le texte s’efface et “l’action apparaît à travers lui comme dans un miroir”, tandis que l’auteur ressemble à un acteur, qui se glisse dans la mémoire d’autrui et ne fait que recevoir, “par réfraction, le reflet d’une gloire étrangère⁷⁸.”

Avec le héros qui revit ainsi, modèle accueilli dans les *Vies*, sollicité dans le *De profectibus*, se crée même un lien affectif. Destiné au progressant, ce dernier traité insiste sur la “passion” dont on se prend pour ces illustres modèles de vertu⁷⁹, pierre de touche des progrès, réalisés, lorsque “se comparant aux œuvres et actions d’un homme de bien accompli” (ἔργοις καὶ πράξεσιν ἀνδρὸς ἀγαθοῦ καὶ τελείου παραβάλλον ἑαυτόν), on ressent à la fois douleur de son infériorité et transports d’espoir, lorsqu’on “aime et chérit les dispositions de ceux dont on veut égaler les œuvres et auxquels on s’efforce de ressembler avec affection⁸⁰”. Avec la description plus personnelle de la *συνδιαίτησις καὶ συμβίωσις* avec les grands hommes qu’il reçoit chez lui comme des hôtes (ἐπιξενούμενον) dans la *Vie de Paul-Émile*, Plutarque, selon la suggestion de J. SIRINELLI, semble même trouver dans son œuvre biographique une “manière d’élargir au passé le cercle de ses amis⁸¹” : les grands héros dans la familiarité desquels il entre en rédigeant leur vie deviennent comme des amis en une sorte de croisement, dont il n’a

⁷⁶ *Reg. et imp. apophth.* 172D: ἀλλὰ τῶν μὲν πράξεων αἱ πολλαὶ τύχην ἀναμειγμένην ἔχουσιν, αἱ δὲ γινόμεναι παρὰ τὰ ἔργα καὶ τὰ πάθη καὶ τὰς τύχας ἀποφάσεις καὶ ἀναφωνήσεις ὡσπερ ἐν κατόπτροις καθαρώς παρέχουσι τὴν ἐκάστου διάνοιαν ἀποθεωρεῖν.

⁷⁷ On peut rapprocher de *De gen. Socr.* 575BC, où sont opposés le résultat des actions, largement tributaire de la *τύχη*, et les détails de ces actions, où c’est l’ἀρετή, aux prises avec les *συντυγχάνοντα*, qui tient le devant de la scène.

⁷⁸ *De glor. Ath.* 345F (s’associent image du théâtre et image du miroir): ἀλλοτρίων γεγόνασιν ἔργων ὡσπερ δραμάτων ὑποκριταί, τὰς τῶν στρατηγῶν καὶ βασιλέων πράξεις διατιθέμενοι καὶ ταῖς ἐκείνων ὑποδύμενοι μνήμῃς ἴν’ ὡς αὐγῆς τινος καὶ φωτὸς μετάσχωσιν. ἀνακλάται γὰρ ἀπὸ τῶν πραττόντων ἐπὶ τοὺς γράφοντας καὶ ἀναλάμπει δόξης εἰδῶλον ἀλλοτρίας, ἐμφαινομένης διὰ τῶν λόγων τῆς πράξεως ὡς ἐν ἐσόπτρῳ. Cette dévalorisation de l’historien s’accorde parfaitement avec l’analyse de Plat. *R.* X (où l’on trouve l’image du miroir pour l’imitation fallacieuse en 596d).

⁷⁹ *De prof. in virt.* 84E: ὅταν οὖν οὕτως ἀρχώμεθα τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἐρᾶν...

⁸⁰ *De prof. in virt.* 84D: καὶ γὰρ τοῦτο προκοπῆς ἀληθοῦς ἰδίον ἐστὶ πάθος, ὧν ζήλοῦμεν τὰ ἔργα τὴν διάθεσιν φιλεῖν καὶ ἀγαπᾶν καὶ μετ’ εὐνοίας... ἐξομοιοῦσθαι.

⁸¹ Sirinelli (2000), 310.

sans doute pas conscience, de la tradition pédagogique de l'*exemplum* et des théories aristotéliennes, ou plutôt en une sorte de projection sur le passé de ce qu'il considère comme un rôle possible de ses amis et de ses proches.

Pour appuyer cette idée, il est éclairant de comparer les conseils que Sénèque donne à Lucilius et la sorte de "préceptorat" des anciens qu'il envisage:

Sic fac, inquit, omnia tamquam spectet Epicurus. Prodest sine dubio custodem sibi imposuisse et habere quem respicias, quem interesse cogitationibus tuis judices. Hoc quidem longe magnificentius est, sic vivere tamquam sub alicujus boni viri ac semper praesentis oculis... Cum jam profeceris tantum... licebit dimittas paedagogum: interim aliquorum te auctoritate custodi, aut Cato ille sit aut Scipio aut Laelius aut alius, cujus interventu perditum quoque homines vitia suppresserent, dum te efficias eum cum quo peccare non audeas. (epist. 25,5-6)

Si l'on part d'un véritable maître à penser, Épicure, la suite du texte fait sa place à de grands hommes tels que Plutarque pourrait les choisir⁸², mais il s'agit moins ici d'émulation et de "parure dans un miroir" que de l'exploitation du sentiment moral de honte, qui doit retenir de se mal conduire⁸³. Tant qu'on n'est pas capable de ne pas mal faire pour soi-même, il faut s'imaginer un surveillant, rôle qui est aussi dévolu par Épictète au cynique, vivant exemple *contemporain*, qui "ne se mêle pas des affaires d'autrui quand il inspecte les affaires humaines, mais des siennes propres"⁸⁴, et qui reprend les hommes "comme un père, comme un frère, comme un serviteur du père commun qu'est Zeus"⁸⁵. L'espèce de moine-philosophe qu'il est, tout comme le notable-philosophe, dont son contemporain 'Euphrate de Tyr est un bon exemple aux yeux d'Épictète⁸⁶, apparaît comme un "témoin cité par Zeus" en faveur de la philosophie, la vivante incarnation des leçons de l'école, prêt à expliquer les remèdes et les traitements qui l'ont mené à l'ataraxie⁸⁷.

Ce rôle d'inspecteur, très adouci et rendu nécessaire par la difficulté à saisir les progrès que suscite notre constante présence à nous-mêmes,

⁸² Mais qui ont aussi cette particularité d'avoir été "immortalisés" par Cicéron: le texte joue-t-il un rôle de relais implicite?

⁸³ Sur l'importance de l'*αἰδώς* chez Épictète, voir Kamtekar (1998).

⁸⁴ Epict. III, 22.97.

⁸⁵ Epict. III, 22.82.

⁸⁶ Epict. III, 15.8; IV, 8.17 et Frede (1997).

⁸⁷ Epict. III, 24.110-114 et IV, 8.30-32.

Plutarque l'attribue dans le *De cohibenda ira*⁸⁸ à l'ami, auquel il appartient, plus généralement, de conseiller et de reconforter l'ami, comme l'indiquent aussi le préambule du *De exilio* ou les fragments du *De amore*⁸⁹, pour ne citer que quelques exemples. Plutarque lui-même est la plus belle illustration de cette conception, qui rédige précisément la plupart de ses traités parénétiqes – et même les *Vies* – sur la sollicitation d'amis. Alors, comme le note J. SIRINELLI en le comparant à Dion et Épictète, il “ne s'exprime pas en professeur, mais tout au plus en homme d'expérience et de réflexion vis-à-vis de gens cultivés et habitués à réfléchir”⁹⁰. “Réfléchir”: c'est la double action du miroir et de l'homme devant le miroir, et “regarder comme dans un miroir”, pour s'embellir par l'imitation morale, établit une sorte de communauté avec les grands modèles d'autrefois, qui personnalisent et concrétisent en eux les exigences morales. Le miroir permet ainsi de rapprocher ce qui est éloigné: peut-être cela explique-t-il que, pour les contemporains, l'image du miroir fonctionne un peu différemment.

Deux “miroirs” opposés: le flatteur et l'épouse

Avec les contemporains⁹¹, il ne s'agit plus de “regarder comme dans un miroir”, mais, pour certains, de “se comporter comme des miroirs”: la lumière se déplace de celui qui contemple l'image à celui qui la renvoie, indépendamment de tout didactisme et en liaison avec des thèmes à résonance platonicienne, autour de la flatterie ou de l'amour, qui rappellent l'ambiguïté du miroir. On est au cœur de la vie sociale et familiale et là encore la comparaison avec les Stoïciens, Sénèque et Épictète, peut être éclairante, chez qui ce rôle, pleinement positif, est dévolu au philosophe et lié à la connaissance de soi.

Le plus bel exemple du “philosophe-miroir” se trouve dans le préambule du *De clementia* (I, 1.1), préfiguration des futurs “Miroirs des princes”:

⁸⁸ *De coh. ira* 453A: ἐπεὶ τοίνυν οὐκ ἔστιν αὐτὸν αὐτῷ διὰ χρόνου προσελθεῖν χωρὶς γενομένου καὶ διαστήσαντα τῆς συνεχείας τὴν αἴσθησιν, ἀλλὰ τοῦτ' ἐστὶ τὸ μάλιστα ποιοῦν ἕκαστον αὐτοῦ φαυλότερον κριτὴν ἢ ἐτέρων, δεύτερον ἂν εἶη τὸ τοὺς φίλους ἐφορᾶν διὰ χρόνου καὶ παρέχειν ὁμοίως ἐκείνοις ἑαυτὸν, οὐκ εἰ γέρων γέγονε ταχὺ καὶ τὸ σῶμα βέλτιον ἢ χεῖρον ἔσχηκεν, ἀλλὰ τὸν τρόπον καὶ τὸ ἦθος ἐπισκοπεῖν, εἴ τι χρηστὸν ὁ χρόνος προστέθεικεν ἢ τῶν φαύλων ἀφῆρηκεν.

⁸⁹ *De exilio* 599A-C et *Fr.* 136 Sandbach, où Plutarque nuance les attitudes, plus ou moins sévères, selon la passion dont souffre l'ami.

⁹⁰ Sirinelli (2000), 149.

⁹¹ À l'exception des pères dans le *De lib. educ.*, mais cette exception peut apparaître comme une confirmation du caractère apocryphe du traité.

J'ai entrepris ce traité sur la clémence, Néron César, **pour faire en quelque sorte office de miroir** et t'acheminer, **en t'offrant ton image**, à la volupté la plus grande qui soit au monde. [Même si l'action droite doit être faite pour elle-même], ce n'en est pas moins une jouissance que **de regarder en son âme** et d'en faire le tour lorsqu'elle est sans reproche, et puis de jeter les yeux sur cette immense population divisée contre elle-même... et de se dire à soi-même: "C'est donc moi qu'on a désigné et choisi entre tous les mortels pour jouer sur terre le rôle des dieux !"

L'image ici est, quoi que dise Sénèque de l'image de soi et de la contemplation heureuse de sa bonté, un "devoir-être" qu'il propose à Néron avec toute la diplomatie qu'il se doit quand on s'adresse à l'empereur. C'est en revanche l'autre face de l'image, la dénonciation véhémement des défauts, qu'on trouve chez Épictète, digne héritier de son maître Musonius, et à qui s'en indigne, il rétorque:

Pourtant, moi, quel mal t'ai-je fait? À moins que le miroir n'en fasse à l'homme laid en lui montrant ce qu'il est; à moins encore que le médecin n'insulte le malade quand il lui dit: "Homme, tu crois ne rien avoir, mais tu as la fièvre; il te faut jeûner aujourd'hui et boire de l'eau".⁹²

Miroir renvoyant un modèle ou dénonçant les défauts, le philosophe stoïcien se pose en maître tandis que l'ami plutarquéen s'efforce d'allier franchise et tact et c'est pour le flatteur que l'on retrouve l'image du miroir, avec une utilisation totalement négative, qui en fait un obstacle et non un adjuvant de la connaissance de soi. Tout comme l'historien se parait d'une gloire étrangère, il ne fait que refléter des éléments étrangers et, détournant l'idée qui fait de la ressemblance le fondement de la communauté amicale, il crée une fausse semblance qui conforte l'ami dans ses défauts au lieu de les lui révéler:

On ne le verra en aucune circonstance montrer de constance ni **de personnalité**, ni éprouver des sentiments **propres** d'amour, de haine, de plaisir ou de chagrin, mais au contraire, **à la manière**

⁹² Epict. II, 14.21: *καίτοι τί σοι ἐγὼ κακὸν πεποίηκα; εἰ μὴ καὶ τὸ ἔσοπτρον τῷ αἰσχροῦ, ὅτι δεικνύει αὐτὸν αὐτῷ οἷός ἐστιν· εἰ μὴ καὶ ὁ ἰατρὸς τὸν νοσοῦντα [ἔταν αὐτὸν] ὑβρίζει, ὅταν εἴπῃ αὐτῷ ἀνθρώπε, δοκεῖς μὴδὲν ἔχειν, πυρέσσεις δέ· ἀσίτησον σήμερον, ὕδωρ πίε.*

d'un miroir, recevoir l'image de passions, conduites et mouvements étrangers⁹³.

Le flatteur efface tout élément propre et se fait pure malléabilité, se modelant sur les circonstances, pure passivité, simple récepteur de l'humeur d'autrui, à laquelle il apporte une sorte de caution extérieure, mais, proteste Plutarque,

J'ai besoin non d'un ami qui change en même temps que moi et qui opine dans le même sens (*συμμεθισταμένου και συνεπινεύοντος*) – car mon ombre le fait mieux encore –, mais qui m'aide à être dans le vrai et à décider (*συναληθεύοντος και συνεπικρίνοντος*).

La répétition insistante du préverbe *συν-* martèle la nécessaire communauté entre amis: le flatteur l'imité sans doute, mais il n'est plus question d'association dans le bien, vérité et discernement; il livre l'autre à tout ce qui leur est contraire: au lieu de la stabilité de la vérité, une et toujours semblable, l'incertitude des changements; au lieu de la décision réfléchie, un consentement aveugle qui laisse l'autre à sa solitude. Le miroir reproduit sans rien apporter, et le reflet est alors rapproché par Plutarque de l'ombre, obstacle opposé à la connaissance de soi, et non plus adjuvant. Le thème est assez important pour être mis en exergue de chacun des deux développements qui constituent le *De adulatore*:

[Le flatteur] se range toujours contre le “Connais-toi toi-même” (*ἀντιπάττεται γὰρ αἰεὶ πρὸς τὸ “γνώθι σαυτόν”*), en inspirant à chacun erreur sur soi-même et ignorance de soi, ainsi que des biens et des maux qui le concernent, rendant les premiers incomplets et inachevés, les seconds totalement irrémédiables (49AB).

Et, au contraire,

si, obéissant au dieu, et convaincus que le “Connais-toi toi-même” est pour chacun l'idéal absolu, nous considérons (*ἀναθεωρῶμεν*) les défaillances sans nombre de notre nature, de notre éducation et de notre instruction au regard du bien, tout ce qu'elles comportent de mélange misérable et confus aussi bien dans le domaine des actions

⁹³ *De ad. et am.* 53A: ὄψεται γὰρ αὐτὸν οὐδαμοῦ βέβαιον οὐδ' ἴδιον οὐδ' οἰκίῳ πάθει φιλοῦντα καὶ μισοῦντα καὶ χαίροντα καὶ λυπούμενον, ἀλλὰ δίκην κατόπτρου παθῶν ὀθνεῖων καὶ βίων καὶ κινήματων εἰκόνας ἀναδεχόμενον.

que des réflexions ou des sentiments, alors nous n'offrirons pas des proies faciles aux entreprises des flatteurs (65F).

Cette "considération" ne peut se faire dans le miroir servile, amoral et intéressé du flatteur: il faut regarder ailleurs, en s'aidant de la franchise de l'ami.

Plutarque n'utilise cependant pas l'image du miroir pour l'ami, peut-être parce que l'image du miroir met l'accent sur l'action de celui qui se mire et utilise le reflet, soit qu'il s'inspire des grands modèles qu'il y voit, soit qu'il cherche à voir ses progrès, mais il n'y a ni activité du "miroir" ni expression, à travers lui, d'une réciprocité. C'est ce que semble marquer de prime abord l'emploi du miroir dans les conseils qu'il donne à son élève nouvellement mariée, Eurydice. Sénèque témoigne de la mode des miroirs richement ciselés et ornés⁹⁴ et la comparaison, qui utilise un objet familier à l'univers féminin, permet de jouer sur deux registres, la richesse et le caractère:

Tout comme un miroir orné d'or et de pierres précieuses n'est d'aucune utilité s'il ne donne pas un reflet ressemblant, de même une épouse riche n'offre non plus aucun avantage **si elle ne fait pas ressembler sa conduite à celle de son mari et ne met pas son caractère en accord avec le sien** (οὕτως οὐδὲ πλουσίας γαμετῆς ὄνησις, εἰ μὴ παρέχει τὸν βίον ὅμοιον τῷ ἀνδρὶ καὶ σύμφωνον τὸ ἦθος). Si le miroir renvoie d'un homme réjoui une image chagrine, et d'un homme affligé à l'air chagrin une image joyeuse et épanouie, le miroir est défectueux et sans valeur. Ainsi donc une femme se montre sans valeur ni à-propos, qui est chagrine quand son mari est enclin aux plaisanteries et aux amabilités, et qui plaisante et rit quand il est sérieux: l'un marque un caractère désagréable, et l'autre de l'indifférence (139EF).

L'explication qui est donnée de cette recommandation est exactement inverse des critiques faites au flatteur: alors qu'il lui était reproché de se modeler sur des sentiments étrangers et de ne pas avoir de caractère propre, il faut au contraire "que la femme, sans avoir **aucune affection propre, partage** (μηδὲν ἴδιον πάθος ἔχειν, ἀλλὰ κοινωνεῖν) avec son mari sérieux et plaisanterie, préoccupation et rire" (140A). Ressemblance (ὅμοιον), accord (συμφωνία), communauté (κοινωνία): le premier terme, qui est essentiel à l'image du miroir comme à la constitution d'une *philia* véritable, permet d'introduire les éléments plus propres à l'idéal conjugal développé dans les *Coniugalia praecepta*. Soucieux d'une vie

⁹⁴ Sen. *Q.N.* I, 17.1-5.

quotidienne harmonieuse, le traité évoque, non les vices et les vertus, mais cet accord des humeurs, ces petits riens qui, comme dans le cas de Paul-Émile⁹⁵, peuvent ruiner une union, l'attention à l'autre requise ici de l'épouse, tentée de trop se fier à sa richesse: c'est en ce sens que F. FRONTISI-DUCROUX peut voir dans cette attitude autre chose qu'une pure passivité et dans cette recommandation une "image progressiste, par rapport aux représentations courantes de l'époque classique"⁹⁶.

De fait, reprenant un peu plus loin une expression de la *République* qu'il aime à utiliser⁹⁷, la distinction de "ce qui est à moi et ce qui n'est pas à moi", que Platon n'acceptait pas dans une cité heureuse et qui doit être bannie dans le mariage avec plus de vigueur encore, Plutarque introduit cette fois une communauté **réci-proque** de l'époux et de l'épouse à grand renfort de comparaisons:

De même que les médecins disent que les coups reçus dans la partie gauche du corps diffusent la douleur qu'on en ressent dans la partie droite, de même il est bon **que la femme éprouve les affections de son mari et le mari celles de sa femme** (τὴν γυναῖκα τοῖς τοῦ ἀνδρὸς συμπαθεῖν καλὸν καὶ τὸν ἄνδρα τοῖς τῆς γυναικός), afin que, tout comme les nœuds se renforcent mutuellement par leur entrelacement, ainsi **chacun donnant sa tendresse en contrepartie, ils assurent ensemble leur union** (ἐκατέρου τὴν εὐνοϊαν ἀντίστροφον ἀποδίδοντος ἢ κοινωνία σώζεται δι' ἀμφοῖν). (140DE)

Pour évoquer cette réciprocité, ce n'est donc pas l'image du miroir que retient Plutarque, mais celle des sensations physiques d'abord, qui suggère que les époux ne sont plus qu'un seul être, et celle des nœuds ensuite, qui évoque joliment l'étroitesse de l'union. À l'inverse, ce n'est pas non plus l'idée de réciprocité qui est exprimée dans l'*Érotikos* lorsque sont évoqués les "beaux miroirs des belles réalités" que sont les objets amoureux et l'accent est exclusivement mis sur le rapport entre le sensible et l'intelligible, l'accès donné au second par le premier.

⁹⁵ *Con. praeec.* 141A, où les liens avec l'époux sont créés, non par richesse, naissance ou beauté, mais *ὀμιλία τε καὶ ἡβει καὶ συμπεριφορᾶ*, lesquels doivent être jour après jour *μὴ σκληρὰ μηδ' ἀνιώντα, ἀλλ' εὐάρμοστα καὶ ἄλυπα καὶ προσφίλη*.

⁹⁶ Frontisi-Ducroux (1997), 126. L'explication est donnée à la page suivante (127): "Elle semble pouvoir choisir entre soumission ou refus, et lorsqu'elle consent à se faire le miroir de son époux, son attitude est jugée de façon très positive. Sa docilité mimétique, indispensable condition d'une vie conjugale harmonieuse, apparaît comme l'antithèse de celle du courtisan flatteur, qui trop souvent remplace l'ami."

⁹⁷ On la retrouve dans le *De frat. am.* 484B, pour les frères, et en *Amatorius* 767D, de même pour l'union étroite (exprimée par *τὰς ψυχὰς βίᾳ συνάγουσι καὶ συντήκουσι*) qu'on ne saurait atteindre d'emblée entre époux.

Or ce n'est pas à cela que se bornaient les comparaisons platoniciennes, où le miroir et le jeu entre réflexion et reflet, réel et figuré, permettaient d'accuser la dimension interpersonnelle, dans le *Premier Alcibiade*, de la connaissance de soi, dans le *Phèdre*, du retour à la Beauté. Dans ce dernier texte, où Platon évoque aussi le jeu d'écho (255c4-7) et emploie dans un sens très particulier le mot *anteros*⁹⁸, il explique comment l'éromène aperçoit à son tour la beauté dans le regard de l'éraсте et reçoit le retour du flux amoureux. Mais l'exposé central de l'*Érotikos* insiste plus sur l'opposition entre bon et mauvais amant, amant trop attaché au corps et amant capable de retrouver ses ailes pour regagner le cortège de son Dieu. Il est peut-être significatif qu'on ne trouve l'esquisse de couples que dans l'apothéose d'Éros qui clôt le premier mouvement (18, 763F):

Devant nous, couronné roi, archonte et harmoste par Hésiode, Platon et Solon, il descend de l'Hélicon à l'Académie et, richement paré, s'avance avec de nombreux couples d'amitié et d'union⁹⁹,

esquisse seulement et avec une formulation très abstraite – que j'ai essayé de garder, si curieuse qu'elle soit en français – qui parle d'amitié et d'union, plutôt que d'amis et de compagnons. En revanche la partie la plus platonicienne, où est évoquée l'action de l'Éros mystagogue, ne montre qu'une personne, l'homme voué à Éros (ὁ ὡς ἀληθῶς ἐρωτικός), qui lui-même “se réfracte vers l'au-delà” (ἐκεῖ ἀνακλᾶται, 766A), puis retourné dans cet au-delà, célèbre dans le ciel les mystères d'Éros “jusqu'au moment où, après être revenu s'endormir aux prairies de la Lune et d'Aphrodite, il entame une nouvelle naissance” (20, 766B).

On est loin du processus du *Phèdre* analysé par P. VUILLEUMIER, où “l'amoureux, de même que la pupille dans le paradigme de l'*Alcibiade*, est à la fois miroir et reflet: miroir parce qu'il tend à l'aimé son image et reflet parce qu'il est lui-même cette « image », étant semblable à l'aimé. Cette conclusion force à nouveau la structure de la réflexion à s'ouvrir à l'autre et au divin, en brisant la servitude du reflet du *moi* et en rattachant celui-ci au *toi* et au dieu par le lien transitif de la similitude”¹⁰⁰. Chez Plutarque, le relais de l'autre est comme mis

⁹⁸ Ainsi que le remarque Vuilleumier (1998), 30 n. 27, la note de Léon Robin dans la Pléiade soulignant l'idée de rivalité inhérente au préfixe *anti-* méconnaît l'importance, dans ce passage, du “mouvement de retour en sens inverse” – ce que l'on trouve précisément en catoptrique avec des mots comme *ἀνταύγεια*.

⁹⁹ *Amatorius* 763EF: ἡμῖν δὲ βασιλεὺς καὶ ἄρχων καὶ ἄρμοστής ὁ Ἔρως ὑφ' Ἡσιόδου καὶ Πλάτωνος καὶ Σόλωνος ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἑλικῶνος εἰς τὴν Ἀκαδημίαν ἐστεφανωμένος κατὰ γεται καὶ κεκοσμημένος εἰσελαύνει πολλὰς συνωρίσι φιλίας καὶ κοινωνίας...

¹⁰⁰ Vuilleumier (1998), 32.

entre parenthèses au profit de la “mystagogie” d’Éros et l’importance du regard s’efface devant l’idée de “réfraction”, présente aussi dans l’image de l’arc-en-ciel et finalement rapportée à l’amoureux lui-même: au cœur du texte, Plutarque insiste sur l’horizon métaphysique et néglige l’*innamoramento* qui amorce le retour vers l’intelligible – il ne sera évoqué que dans la dernière partie consacrée à l’amour conjugal, non point d’ailleurs pour en décrire les effets sur les amoureux, mais pour démontrer qu’une femme peut le provoquer. Le miroir des *Coniugalia praecepta* et le miroir de l’*Érotikos*, même s’ils concernent tous deux l’amour, ne semblent pas converger vers une image une de l’union amoureuse, de même que sont en quelque sorte juxtaposées dans ce dernier dialogue la partie qui évoque l’au-delà et celle qui s’attache à l’amour conjugal *hic et nunc*. Si l’on admet avec P. VUILLEUMIER que le schème du miroir – schème et non pas seulement image, sous-entendant l’existence d’un flux igné de la vision – permettait à Platon de dépasser une opposition entre propre et figuré et “en se jouant ainsi de la frontière... (d’) élude(r) le problème du rapport entre l’intelligible et le sensible”¹⁰¹, Plutarque réduit, semble-t-il, les harmoniques de l’image, pour accentuer, selon le domaine retenu, lorsqu’il s’attache à la conduite, la notion de ressemblance, lorsqu’il évoque la recherche métaphysique, la réfraction. Dans un cas, il s’agit de mesurer ou de guider ses progrès moraux, dans l’autre de ne pas rester englué dans le sensible, de voir au-delà, de savoir que l’apparence terrestre n’est pas la réalité ultime.

Ainsi si la prolifération de l’image ne contrevient en aucune manière au platonisme de Plutarque prenant acte en quelque sorte de la nécessité pour l’homme de s’aider de paradigmes, dans le domaine de la connaissance comme de l’action, elle n’établit ni même ne suggère de liens entre les deux. Tout juste l’équilibre entre les deux types d’emplois, ontologique et pratique, tend-il à prouver l’égal intérêt que porte Plutarque à la vie en société et à la vie “spirituelle”, à la pratique des vertus et à l’approche de l’Être. Dans les deux cas, l’image permet de rapprocher et de rendre sensible ce qui est éloigné et surtout sollicite un effort en esquissant un idéal: elle désigne ce qu’il faut regarder et juger à sa juste valeur. Dans l’ordre pratique, qui intéresse particulièrement notre rencontre, elle pose le problème de la connaissance de soi et du rôle respectif des autres et de l’introspection. Si pour Platon, la connaissance de soi à laquelle était invité Alcibiade n’était nullement découverte de sa personnalité singulière, mais prise de conscience de la supériorité de l’âme et de la primauté de l’*aretè*, prélude à un “souci de soi” qui est culture de la vertu, Plutarque en

¹⁰¹ Vuilleumier (1998), 30.

entrant davantage dans le détail de la conduite quotidienne reste aussi fort loin d'une étude de soi telle que pourra la pratiquer Montaigne. Il s'agit toujours de travailler à des progrès moraux, de les guider ou de les mesurer. Dans un effort "au long cours" le rôle des proches est de la première importance, mais Plutarque ne voit pas en eux des miroirs et réserve l'image, dans un sens négatif, au reflet servile du flatteur; le "bon" miroir permet de "se parer", de rechercher la beauté morale, de "se régler" en voyant sa laideur et surtout en se confrontant à des modèles, grâce auxquels on dépasse la pure alternative du beau et du laid. Les exemples anciens, que le miroir fait revivre en présentant peut-être sous une lumière plus vive leurs traits essentiels¹⁰², sont ainsi des images privilégiées et la familiarité avec les grands hommes un élément important de la vie morale. Peut-on pour autant y voir, au même titre que pour Épictète, sans cesse attaché à "circonscrire le moi", à resserrer l'être sur ce qui dépend de lui, une évocation de "ce monde intérieur que son époque découvre avec émerveillement", selon les termes de J. SIRINELLI qui parle encore de "la résurrection littéraire des héros servant à animer le for intérieur du philosophe"¹⁰³? Tout est sans doute une question d'éclairage dans ce mouvement de l'image-modèle à soi-même: l'intériorité de celui qui se mire me semble rester en filigrane, implicite dans l'effort d'appropriation des vertus; plus nette me paraît l'importance, soulignée aussi par J. SIRINELLI¹⁰⁴, qu'une telle démarche peut donner aux nuances de chaque vertu¹⁰⁵, à la particularité de chaque situation¹⁰⁶, à ce qui est devenu pour nous la psychologie, qui est sans doute une forme de vie intérieure, mais plus attachée, ou autrement attachée, me semble-t-il, aux détails de la vie que l'introspection stoïcienne. Ce souci de la psychologie, des émotions, de la dimension existentielle et non pas seulement normative de l'action, se retrouve encore dans la conception de l'union conjugale,

¹⁰² C'est ce que sont censés faire les apophtegmes (*Reg. et imp. apophth.* 172D) ou même le récit historique (*De glor. Ath.* 345F: ἐμφαινομένης διὰ τῶν λόγων τῆς πράξεως, ἡ ἔμφασις ἦθος est aussi le but que se propose la biographie).

¹⁰³ Sirinelli (2000), 309 et 310.

¹⁰⁴ Sirinelli (2000), 151, montrant les difficultés qu'on éprouve à définir la production morale de Plutarque "qui n'est plus un cours, qui n'est pas vraiment une lettre, qui n'est pas exactement un traité" voit là une situation "génératrice aussi d'une nouvelle sorte d'investigation: la psychologie. En effet cette investigation morale qui cesse d'être générale et arbitraire comme dans un cours, puisqu'elle se personnalise et s'incarne dans un cas particulier, est tout à fait différente d'une part du discours éthique et normatif et d'autre part du "caractère" tel que Théophraste l'avait mis à la mode."

¹⁰⁵ Voir la préface de *Phoc.*

¹⁰⁶ Ce que suggèrent les questions du *De prof. in virt.*

où c'est l'accord même qui devient l'idéal, avant telle ou telle vertu. Il semble ainsi qu'on puisse voir dans la diversité des emplois du miroir un reflet des multiples intérêts de Plutarque et que, dans l'ordre pratique, l'association que réalise l'image entre beauté, confrontation et "conformation", mette en valeur les conditions psychologiques de l'action, du côté du modèle miré comme de celui qui se modèle¹⁰⁷ et, plus peut-être que dans son intériorité, nous introduise à une intimité où le face à face avec l'autre, vivant ou ramené à la vie, tient une place importante.

¹⁰⁷ "Se modèle", mais ne se mire pas à proprement parler dans la vie des autres comme pourra le dire Montaigne.

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List of abbreviations

- ANRW *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, Berlin – New York, 1972-.
- BT *Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana*
- CCAG *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum*
- CPM *Corpus Plutarchi Moraliū*
- CUF *Collection des Universités de France*
- DK H. Diels – W. Kranz (eds.), *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Dublin – Zurich, 1966-1967.
- HCT A.W. Gomme – A. Andrewes – K.J. Dover, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides* i-v, Oxford, 1945-1981.
- KG R. Kühner – B. Gerth, *Ausführliche Grammatik der griechischen Sprache. Zweiter Teil: Satzlehre*, Hannover, 1966 [= Hannover – Leipzig, 1898-1904].
- LCL *Loeb Classical Library*
- LSJ H.G. Liddell – R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th edn., rev. H. Stuart Jones, with a revised supplement, Oxford, 1996.
- OCD *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*
- PG *Patrologia graeca*
- RE G. Wissowa (and others) (ed.), *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, München – Stuttgart, 1893-1980.
- SR G. Giannantoni, *Socratis et Socraticorum reliquiae*, Napoli, 1990.
- SVF J. von Arnim (ed.), *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* [indices by M. Adler], Leipzig, 1903-1924.
- TrGF B. Snell – R. Kannicht – S. Radt (eds.), *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, Göttingen, 1977-2004.

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Abstracts

1. *Virtues for the people*

L. VAN DER STOCKT, *Semper duo, numquam tres?* Plutarch's *Popularphilosophie* on friendship and virtue in *On Having Many Friends De amicorum multitudine* (*On Having Many Friends*) is a short text that starts 'playfully' with a witty anecdote, treats the practical problem of the role of friendship in daily life, and ends with a clear-cut summary of the communicated instruction. K. Ziegler classified Plutarch's *On Having Many Friends* as 'Popularphilosophie' for good reasons.

The contribution at hand first sketches the goals and procedures of eighteenth-century German 'Popularphilosophie', and then explores the interaction of philosophical tenets with rhetorical invasiveness in this particular Plutarchan 'lecture'. It makes it clear that Plutarch's rhetorical techniques (as they are also discernible in his *hypomnemata*) as well as his partial representation of traditional philosophical tenets (especially Aristotle) create a positive and stimulating pedagogy. More than Themistius' *On Friendship* (*Or.* 22), the lecture seems to address a youthful audience, appealing to its self-esteem; more than Maximus' *Friendship and Virtue* (*Or.* 35), it testifies to the confidence that the (idealized) friendship is within reach.

Chr. PELLING, What is popular about Plutarch's 'popular philosophy'?

This paper addresses two questions: *what* is popular philosophy, that is, does Plutarch conceive of it as different from other sorts of ethics, and, if so, *whom* is this philosophy for? It approaches these issues obliquely through the *Lives*, and concentrates particularly on questions of politics. Some passages, especially the encounter of Solon and Croesus, suggest that there are particular occupational hazards which the rich and famous face; Plutarch's adaptation of Herodotus there highlights a sort of wisdom that is 'reasonable' and 'popular' (*metrios* and *demotikos*). However, there is no idealisation of 'simple things', no suggestion that ordinary people have an instinctive understanding which their leaders may lack, and 'popular wisdom' certainly does not involve doing whatever the *demos* wants. The *demos* needs leadership, in *Solon-Publicola* as, for instance, in *Pericles*, *Nicias*, and the *Praecepta Rei Publicae Gerendae*. So the ethics of leadership may be different from those of the people themselves; the people's prejudices and lack of insight may have to be manipulated and exploited, and that may even mean that different behaviour is right for politicians in different cities. Where the *demos* is praised, as in its reaction to the disaster of Cannae in *Fabius*, it is for responding to the right lead. Proper *paideia* is necessary for such leadership, but the philosophical face occupational hazards too, and men like Dion, Cato, and Thales may lose contact with the need for compromise that lesser intellects may grasp; it may also be part of Plutarch's own self-characterisation that he projects his ability to strike different notes at different times and in different works. Such 'popular philosophy' is certainly open to the good and great, who may be helped to avoid occupational hazards; but the

more regular target audience is probably, as so often in literature of this period, the elite *pepaideumenos*, who himself has to prepare to give the leadership that ordinary people require.

T.E. DUFF, Plutarch's *Lives* and the critical reader

This paper analyses the kind of reader constructed in the *Lives* and the response expected of that reader. It begins by attempting a typology of moralising in the *Lives*. Plutarch does sometimes make general 'gnomic' statements about right and wrong, and occasionally passes explicit judgement on a subject's behaviour. In addition, the language with which Plutarch describes character is inherently moralistic; and even when he does not pass explicit judgement, Plutarch can rely on a common set of notions about what makes behaviour virtuous or vicious.

The application of any moral lessons, however, is left to the reader's own judgement. Furthermore, Plutarch's use of multiple focalisations means that the reader is sometimes presented with varying ways of looking at the same individual or the same historical situation. In addition, many incidents or anecdotes are marked by 'multivalence'; that is, they resist reduction to a single moral message or lesson. In such cases, the reader is encouraged to exercise his or her own critical faculties. Indeed, the prologues which precede many pairs of *Lives* and the *synkriseis* which follow them sometimes explicitly invite the reader's participation in the work of judging. The syncritic structure of the *Parallel Lives* also invites the reader's participation, as do the varying perspectives provided by a corpus of overlapping *Lives*.

In fact, the presence of a critical, engaged reader is presupposed by the agonistic nature of much of Greek literature, and of several texts in the *Moralia* which stage opposing viewpoints or arguments. Plutarch himself argues for such a reader in his *How the Young Man Should Listen to Poems*.

P. DESIDERI, Greek *poleis* and the Roman Empire: nature and features of political virtues in an autocratic system

This contribution aims at assessing the particular features which mark Plutarch's idea of the perfect statesman: better said, of the perfect Greek statesman in a situation of autocratic external control of the city-state, *i.e.*, in the context of the Roman imperial age in which Plutarch himself lived. Plutarch is well aware of the great differences which exist between contemporary and past conditions of political life in Greece, and strongly recommends his readers not to forget them. The main point, as one can easily recollect from the author's *Praecepta rei publicae gerendae*, is that there is no foreign political activity any longer to be carried out by the Greek *poleis* of present times; as a consequence, the politician's job is confined just to finding the best way to ensure his community's loyalty to the Roman Empire, guaranteeing its internal order and safety. This is not to say that this is an easy job. First of all, the modern Greek statesman cannot be allowed to emphasise, in order to strengthen the political feelings of his community, or, incidentally, to promote his own career, the great military accomplishments and virtues of the glorious Greek past; on the contrary, he will carefully stress episodes of friendly behaviour inside the *polis* and among different *poleis*: much less exciting models, indeed, to be proposed to the masses. In these conditions it is difficult to emerge suddenly as a great leader, and it is much safer to grow slowly, prefer-

ably in the shadow of some successful politician of a former generation, which means, uncomfortably, to arrive at the most important political positions in old age. But apart from anything else, governing Greek *poleis* at that time implied steady confrontation with the symbols of the Roman central government in one's region: that is, with the Roman governors who in fixed times followed one another in the single provinces of the Empire, supervising the correct working of the Roman administrative system therein. The problems which came out of this situation are keenly felt by Plutarch, as well as by other Greek political writers of the period (such as Dio). Plutarch strongly underlines that the Greek statesman must absolutely reaffirm his own and his *polis*' dignity in any circumstance, but at the same time he is fully convinced that only concord among the well-to-do can really be a good solution for such problems.

J.C. CAPRIGLIONE, *Del satiro che voleva baciare il fuoco (o Come trarre vantaggio dai nemici)*

Plutarch was himself thoroughly familiar with political praxis as well as with so many politicians whose experience he took into account when addressing various writings to them. The little pamphlet *How to profit from one's enemies* explores and promotes the art of taking advantage of the wickedness and the malevolence of our enemies. Those enemies offer the best possible motive for leading an irreproachable life, a life guided by *sophrosynè*, that makes the other virtues instrumental. Indeed, Plutarch's pragmatic advice is not only about our control over our own passions, but also about controlling our enemies, about making them silent and impotent. Plutarch's advice is thus ethical and at the same time social: he has in mind an *ethos* that makes us moral subjects capable of assessing the margins of transgression in the varying circumstances, and of moving into the direction of what is best in a given situation. It is not so much an abstract Idea of the Good that inspires Plutarch's advice, but an uncertain code that is always *in fieri*.

L. VAN HOOFF, *Plutarch's 'Diet-ethics'. Precepts of Healthcare between diet and ethics*

In antiquity, the question of what constitutes a healthy regimen was the object of a fierce debate among doctors, athletic trainers, and philosophers. When writing his *Precepts of Healthcare (De tuenda sanitate praecepta)*, Plutarch's authority was therefore far from self-evident. As the opening dialogue of the text makes clear, the author not only reveals himself to be acutely aware of this challenge, but also eager to take it up. This article examines the nature of Plutarch's healthcare programme, and analyses some important strategies used in order to promote this 'diet-ethical' advice in dialogue with competing views on healthcare.

2. Some theoretical questions on ethical praxis

H.M. MARTIN, *Plutarchan morality: arete, tyche, and non-consequentialism*

This essay begins with an examination of *Demosthenes* 12.7-13.6, where Plutarch extols Demosthenes for consistently advocating in his public policy the principle that Athens should do what is right (*to kalon*), regardless of the consequences.

This moral position is then contrasted with consequentialism, ‘the view that all actions are right or wrong in virtue of the value of their consequences’. Various passages in the *Lives* and the *Moralia* are successively analysed in order to present the Platonic essence of the morality extolled in the *Demosthenes* and to emphasise the non-consequentialism of such morality: *Pericles* 1-2, *De Iside et Osiride* 351CD, *De sollertia animalium* 960A-965B, *De facie* 942F-945D, *De sera numinis vindicta* 550DE, *Phocion* 1.4-6, *Dion* 1.1-2. Special attention is paid to *to kalon* as the term and concept that stands at the heart of Plutarch’s moral thought and links it inextricably to Plato’s. The essay then shifts to an array of passages in the *Lives* in which Plutarch assumes a consequentialist position, in that he advocates or approves the notion that expediency (*to sympheron*) must have precedence over what is right (*to dikaion*) when the welfare of one’s country is at stake: *Phocion* 32.1-9, *Theseus-Romulus* 6.1-5, *Themistocles* 3.5-4.4, *Aristides* 13.2 and 25.1-3, *Cimon* 2.5, *Nicias-Crassus* 4.3-4. Finally, this inconsistency in Plutarch’s moral thought is explained as the expression of something that is actually a common feature of human experience, and as a reflection of his unguarded reaction to the moral dilemmas he personally faced when he gazed into the mirror of history and evaluated the conduct of the subjects of the *Lives*.

J. OPSOMER, Virtue, fortune, and happiness in theory and practice

This contribution explores the relations between (good and bad) luck, character, and happiness, primarily in the *Life of Dion*, but also in other works. In order to examine this issue, it is possible to make abstraction of theological and cosmological issues, though they were important to Plutarch. The question whether virtue is conducive to, or even sufficient for, happiness was of great concern to ancient philosophers. As a Platonist, Plutarch is committed to the view that virtue, which consists in the rule of reason over the passions so that the latter are moderated (*metriopatheia*), is strongly conducive to happiness. He is even attracted by the view that virtue constitutes a sufficient condition to that end. Yet he distances himself from the view that luck plays no role at all towards happiness. In *De virtute morali* Plutarch takes into account the role of luck when he is discussing prudence, an intellectual virtue that is exercised in the realm of contingency. The relationship between virtue and luck is central to the *Life of Dion*. Upbringing and education, but also our individual innate nature, are a matter of constitutive moral luck. Dion had a good nature, grew up under adverse circumstances, and was lucky to meet Plato. Dionysius the Younger also met Plato, but, unfortunately for him, he did not have an equally good innate predisposition toward virtue. Once virtue is achieved, it is its own reward, although it does not guarantee worldly success. Even a rather virtuous person such as Dion has to worry about contingencies. Adversity is also a test for character. In the *Life of Sertorius* Plutarch comes close to the Stoic view that virtue cannot be lost due to ill-fortune. Yet he allows for less than perfect forms of virtue, which are not incorruptible. In the *Life of Solon* he claims that a virtuous disposition can be destroyed by drugs or disease. I argue there is no inconsistency between these claims. Plutarch accepts the existence and moral relevance of pure luck, for this is where practical virtues and prudence become relevant. He also accepts constitutive moral luck as a given.

G. ROSKAM, Plutarch against Epicurus on affection for offspring. A reading of *De amore prolis*

This paper contains a full discussion of Plutarch's *De amore prolis* (Περὶ τῆς εἰς τὰ ἔγγονα φιλοστοργίας), a fairly brief but problematic text about the natural character of love for one's children. A correct understanding of Plutarch's position presupposes a good insight in the previous philosophical tradition about the concept of φιλοστοργία in general, and particularly about the previous debate between Stoics and Epicureans on the issue of parental love for children. A concise survey of this rich tradition is then followed by a systematic interpretation of Plutarch's argument in *De amore prolis*, which throws a new light on the argumentative, cumulative structure of the work and points to several interesting parallels from other Plutarchan works and from the works of other authors. This analysis also shows that the text should be understood as an anti-Epicurean polemic and that overemphasising the importance of the topic of animal psychology or family ethics risks misrepresenting the true scope of the work.

3. *Virtues and vices*

A.G. NIKOLAIDIS, Plutarch's 'minor' ethics: some remarks on *De garrulitate*, *De curiositate*, and *De vitioso pudore*

This paper discusses the manner with which Plutarch treats the minor foibles of ἀδολεσχία (garrulity), πολυπραγμοσύνη (indiscreet curiosity, meddlesomeness) and δυσωπία (excessive shyness, compliancy), which he regards as affections (*pathē*) or diseases (*nosēmata*) of the soul. The relevant essays comprise three distinct parts: definition and main features of the foible, examples illustrating the behaviour of the character concerned, and advice for therapy. Plutarch's treatment of *polypragmosynē* and *dysōpia* makes it easy for one to understand why these foibles are described as affections and maladies of the soul, but for *adoleschia* this is not so clear and the reasons offered are hardly satisfactory or convincing. This paper attempts to give an explanation for this and proceeds to suggest some reasons. The worst of the three foibles is *polypragmosynē*, since it springs from a malicious nature, whereas *dysōpia*, irrespective of the disastrous consequences it often entails, is a blemish of good nature. In fact, what makes *dysōpia* an undesirable character trait is the element of excess it involves. As for *adoleschia*, its treatment is at the same time a eulogy of silence and reticence. Despite certain exaggerations, unfortunate comparisons, and far-fetched assertions, Plutarch's treatises are well organized: his argumentation is clear and coherent, most of his observations judicious and on the mark, and some of his psychological insights perceptive and remarkable. Finally, the common denominator among the three essays is that the suggested therapy is effected with the aid of reason, which will not only help us to perceive both the cause and their catastrophic results of our failings, but will also dictate the proper measures (acquisition of certain habits and practices) by means of which we may minimize and ultimately get rid of them.

H.G. INGENKAMP, Plutarch's Schrift gegen das Borgen (Περὶ τοῦ μὴ δεῖν δανείζεσθαι): Adressaten, Lehrziele und Genos

Plutarch's treatise forms a group with (at least) two other essays, *De cupiditate divitiarum* and *De tranquillitate animi*. The theoretical base of this section of Plutarch's writings is *De cup. div.*, ch. 3f. Plutarch says there that the person whom the essay is going to help needs an explanation why she or he is sick (and not a therapy via ἄσκησις that consists of meditation and practice). Plutarch, in this essay, is not a psychotherapist, but an educator. More specifically, (1) he writes for a group of cultured people. This may be inferred from some 'springboard arguments'. Springboard-arguments begin with a quotation, a metaphor, an anecdote, or a simple statement, only to lead the reader in a different direction afterwards. Springboards are lost on an audience that is too uneducated to discover the joke lying in the gap. This essay (2) teaches αὐτάρκεια or ἐλευθερία. According to the treatise, a person disposes of αὐτάρκεια or ἐλευθερία, if she or he is in the state of σχολή while being ready to live on what she or he already possesses (χρῆσθαι τοῖς παροῦσιν). It is this concept of σχολή that is remarkable here. Plutarch says, on the one hand, that in order to avoid the money lender's harsh command 'ἀποδόξ', we should try to make friends with powerful (and rich) people. This, of course, is quite in tune with what the Greek upper class thought, whose σχολή had its base in prosperity. But, on the other hand, Plutarch also suggests earning one's living as a teacher, or a paedagogus or a baker or a doorkeeper or a sailor or a sailing merchant's clerk. Thus we may conclude that the notion of σχολή in Plutarch's text can be taken as a purely mental attitude. His audience may have been educated, as has been said, and, at least partly, poor. It seems to resemble that of the sermons on the same subject of Basilios (who depends on Plutarch), Gregory of Nyssa (who depends on Basilios), and John Chrysostomus.

Ph.A. STADTER, Competition and its costs: φιλονικία in Plutarch's society and heroes

In his *Moralia* and *Parallel Lives*, Plutarch explores the positive and negative aspects of competitiveness, *philonikia* (literally, 'love of victory'). After establishing that the correct form and derivation of the stem is from *nik-* ('victory'), not *neik-* ('strife'), this paper examines Plutarch's use of words formed from the *philonik-* stem. Like classical authors, notably Plato and Aristotle, he recognizes both good and bad aspects of competition. *Philonikia* is a passion that can be directed positively or negatively. In the *Moralia*, on the one hand, Plutarch adopts a hortatory position, warning against the dangers of competitiveness within the family (*On Brotherly Love*), among friends (*Table Talks*), and in politics (*Rules for Politicians*, *Old Men in Politics*). In effect, the *philonikia* described is always undesirable. In the *Parallel Lives*, on the other hand, he recognizes that competition can on occasion spur a political figure to greatness, but can also be destructive, as is shown by an analysis of four pairs of *Lives* (*Lycurgus-Numa*, *Agessilaus-Pompey*, *Aristides-Cato the Elder*, *Philopoemen-Flamininus*). Lycurgus encouraged competitiveness among the Spartan youth, whereas Numa sought to soothe the Romans' martial spirit. Agessilaus carried competitiveness too far, and Sparta suffered for it; likewise, Pompey's insistence on being first led to Rome's civil war and his own death. For both, *philonikia* was a passion they could not control. In the latter two pairs, *philonikia* shows a more positive aspect. Plutarch's philosophy of civic harmony has no real place for

competition, but pragmatically he recognises its usefulness when directed towards what is just and profitable for the state, as in Aristides' case. Therefore he regularly praises his protagonists' self-control in managing their *philonikia*, and urges it for his contemporaries.

4. 'Popular philosophy' in context

A. PÉREZ JIMÉNEZ, Astrometeorología y creencias sobre los astros en Plutarco

This contribution shows that Plutarch, who was highly interested in contemporary religious and scientific issues, was familiar with certain popular beliefs about the stars. This concern is evident in the titles of some lost works, in some *Table Talks* of which only the titles remain, and in several passages of the *Lives* where Plutarch echoes the activity of the astrologers. In this contribution I pay attention to Plutarch's beliefs on astral mysticism as they appear in *De Iside*, as well as to his interpretation of astrometeorological phenomena concerning the behaviour of animals and plants under the influence of the sun and moon. Sufficient information about this theme can be found in the above mentioned *De Iside*, in the *Comment on Hesiod's Works and Days*, and in the *Table Talks*. A closer analysis also shows that Plutarch's beliefs concerning this influence are in line with other literary testimonies of Imperial times and, in particular, with some prescriptions in astrological lunar calendars of late antiquity.

J. MOSSMAN – F. TITCHENER, Bitch is not a four-letter word. Animal reason and human passion in Plutarch

It is no surprise to the authors that a humane, compassionate, tolerant, and wise human like Plutarch wrote several essays specifically about animals, notably *Terrestriane an aquatilia animalia sint callidiora (De sollertia animalium)*, *Bruta animalia ratione uti*, and *De esu carniū orationes ii*. These essays were used by philosophers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as early evidence of the so-called 'theriophilic paradox, the notion that while the human being occupies a higher rung in the universal hierarchy than the beast, as indicated by human power over the animal world, human behaviour justifies the claim that human morality is on a lower level than that of the beasts'. In modern times, classical scholarship has tended to use these essays as ammunition for an animal rights movement, which of course can be seen as an extension of the Enlightenment interest in theriophily.

Yet although these 'animal' essays are grouped with Plutarch's other 'scientific' essays in Loeb vol. xii (*De facie, De primo frigido, Aquane an ignis sit utilior*), our interest in Plutarch's animals is not particularly scientific – rather, we are focusing on rhetoric. We hope that analysis of *De sollertia animalium* (and, to a lesser extent, *Bruta animalia ratione uti*) will provide insight into Plutarch's own attitudes about virtues, arguing that the use of animals provides a kind of surrogacy or a place for Plutarch to argue his points at a safe remove. We also hope to show that there is more to these charming dialogues in terms of rhetorical skill and subtlety than may immediately be apparent, or has traditionally been assumed.

F. FRAZIER, *Autour du miroir. Les miroitements d'une image dans l'œuvre de Plutarque*

This paper aims at an exhaustive reconsideration of the simile of the mirror in Plutarch's works. Generally speaking, the comparison enables drawing nearer something that is far away (e.g., knowledge or virtue) and shows what deserves to be sought or imitated. More precisely, the vast range of uses of this 'mirror' may be classified under two headings, ontology (with its epistemological sequel) and ethics. In the epistemological field, the mirror imagery appears in relation to mathematics – especially geometry – and reminds us of the necessity for human knowledge to lean on sensible images that only reflect intelligible beings and may be deceptive as well as initiatory, as is shown by the ambiguous action of the sun. In the ethical field, Plutarch insists on self-knowledge and emulation of the glorious models of the past, but he also takes into account the demands of particular circumstances. In everyday life friends can contribute to moral improvement, but Plutarch does not use the simile of the mirror for them – as the Stoics, Seneca, or Epictetus do for the philosophers. Instead, only wives or flatterers are called 'mirrors', denoting either conjugal harmony or contemptible servility. The analysis finally raises the (still open) question of the respective roles which interiority and the example of other people have in moral life.