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Illinois Classical Studies is published semi-annually by Scholars Press. Camera-ready copy is edited and produced in the Department of the Classics, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Each contributor receives twenty-five offprints.

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PLUTARCH

ROBERT FLACELÈRE
(1904–1982)

IN MEMORIAM
Preface

The present issue of *ICS* comprises the papers presented at the Conference of the International Plutarch Society held in the summer of 1987 at Athens. I have included the contributions by the scholars unable to attend the Athens Conference. In preparing the typescripts for publication I have been assisted by such renowned Plutarchean scholars as Fr. E. Brenk, S.J. (Rome), J. P. Hershbell (Minneapolis), and Ph. A. Stadter (Chapel Hill). My gratitude to them is sincere and immense. Thanks are also due to D. Tsekourakis (Thessaloniki), M. M. Kokolakis (Athens), W.D.E. Coulson (Director, American School of Classical Studies, Athens), and C. Williams (Director, Canadian Archaeological Institute, Athens) for their kind assistance with the Conference.

The Plutarch-issue of *ICS* is dedicated to the memory of Robert Flacelière (1904–1982), in recognition of his invaluable efforts and merits for the creation of the Budé Plutarch over twenty-five years (1957–1982).

Mary Ellen Fryer, Barbara Kiesewetter, and Dr. Richard Warga have successfully processed foreign languages.

Miroslav Marcovich
Contents

1. Rencontres avec Plutarque
   JACQUELINE DE ROMILLY, Collège de France, Paris 219

2. Plutarch and Athens
   ANTHONY PODLECKI, University of British Columbia, Vancouver 231

3. Nepos and Plutarch: From Latin to Greek Political Biography
   JOSEPH GEIGER, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem 245

4. Aspects of Plutarch's Characterisation
   CHRISTOPHER PELLING, University College, Oxford 257

5. The Proems of Plutarch's Lives
   PHILIP A. STADTER, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill 275

6. Remarques à propos de l'usage des citations en matière de
   chronologie dans les Vies
   FRANÇOISE FRAZIER, Paris 297

7. Notes on Plutarch: Pericles and Fabius
   DAVID SANSONE, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign 311

8. Is Plutarch Fair to Nikias?
   ANASTASIOS G. NIKOLAIDIS, University of Crete, Rethymnon 319

9. Plutarch's Philopoemen and Flamininus
   SIMON SWAIN, Wolfson College, Oxford 335

10. The Lives of the Caesars and Plutarch's Other Lives
    ARISTOULA GEORGIADOU, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign 349

11. Plutarch and Platonist Orthodoxy
    JOHN DILLON, Trinity College, Dublin 357

12. Plutarch's Portrait of Socrates
    JACKSON P. HERSHBELL, University of Minnesota 365
13. La part du rationalisme dans la religion de Plutarque: l'exemple du *De genio Socratis*
   DANIEL BABUT, Université Lyon II

14. Una nuova interpretazione del *De genio Socratis*
   ADELMO BARIGAZZI, Università di Firenze

15. Plutarco, Socrate e l'Esopo di Delfi
   MARIA JAGODA LUZZATTO, Università di Firenze

16. Plutarco ed Euripide: alcune considerazioni sulle citazioni euripidee in Plutarco (*De aud. poet.*)
   PAOLO CARRARA, Università di Firenze

17. Plutarch's *Erotikos*: The Drag Down Pulled Up
   FREDERICK E. BRENK, S.J., Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome

18. Πρὸς τὸν εἰπόντα—Sources and Credibility of *De Stoicorum Repugnantis* 8
   JOHN GLUCKER, Tel Aviv University

19. Plutarch, Hesiod, and the Mouseia of Thespiai
   ROBERT LAMBERTON, Princeton University

20. Der Höhepunkt der deutschen Plutarchrezeption: Plutarch bei Nietzsche
    HEINZ GERM GERINGKAMP, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn
Rencontres avec Plutarque*

JACQUELINE DE ROMILLY

Nous devons tous être reconnaissants aux organisateurs de ce congrès et à la Grèce qui veut bien l'accueillir.

Que la Grèce soit hospitalière pour des gens qui aiment Plutarque n'a rien qui doive surprendre. Hospitalière, elle l'a toujours été. Et Plutarque n'est pas seulement un des très grands auteurs de la Grèce ancienne: il est celui qui a, si l'on peut dire, révélé la Grèce à l'Europe de la Renaissance. En France, la découverte de Plutarque fut un phénomène sans précédent; il était dû en partie à la qualité de la traduction d'Amyot, mais avant tout au fait que l'on trouvait dans l'œuvre de Plutarque tous les aspects de l'Antiquité: les grands hommes de l'histoire, les doctrines des philosophes, la religion de Delphes, et aussi, entremêlés, des citations de poètes et des mots historiques, des arguments et des anecdotes, et des hauts faits, et des curiosités. L'engouement, d'ailleurs, ne fut pas propre à la France: Érasme a traduit du Plutarque comme Guillaume Budé, et Shakespeare, plus tard, s'en est inspiré plus largement que Corneille.

D'autre part, si tout converge et se rencontre en Plutarque, comment n'offrirait-il pas un thème de choix pour des échanges internationaux? La collaboration, avec lui, est une loi. On ne peut en effet comprendre une Vie de Plutarque si l'on n'a pas une solide formation d'historien de l'Antiquité, si l'on ne peut comparer les sources et les critiquer à l'aide de documents divers: il faut être historien de Rome et de la Grèce, des époques les plus anciennes comme les plus récentes, historien de Solon comme de Sylla, d'Aristide comme de Philopoemen; et le travail fait pour une des Vies ne prend vraiment quelque portée qu'une fois comparé avec les résultats obtenus pour d'autres. Sans compter qu'il en va de même pour ces centaines d'anecdotes, cousues l'une à l'autre dans les Traité moraux: elles ont leurs sources, elles aussi, plus difficiles à discerner, et parfois leurs variantes, sur lesquelles il faut faire le point. Mais c'est loin d'être tout. Car, si l'histoire envahit les Oeuvres morales, il n'est pas une page des Vies où n'affleure la réflexion morale, avec de brefs commentaires inspirés de Platon ou bien des stoïciens;

* Remarques destinées à l'ouverture du Congrès Plutarque à Athènes.
et, du coup, c'est toute la philosophie de la Grèce qui intervient à côté de l'histoire, et toute sa religion aussi, chaque fois qu'un geste de piété ou d'impétue sujette une remarque de l'auteur. Qu'il s'agisse des Vies ou des *Moralia*, la collaboration et les échanges sont également nécessaires. Et je ne dis rien de l'histoire de la langue ni des emprunts littéraires, avoués ou non, qu'il est si nécessaire de percevoir si l'on veut comprendre le texte à fond.

En un sens, cela justifie qu'intervienne aujourd'hui quelqu'un qui comme moi—vous le savez—n'est d'aucune manière spécialiste de Plutarque: ainsi sera du moins respecté l'équilibre entre les diverses spécialités, dont aucune ne sera alors privilégiée.

Je voudrais, en fait, profiter de cette incompétence même. Car j'essaierai de partir de mon expérience d'helléniste habituée au cinquième siècle avant J. C. et à des textes qui se placent un demi-millénaire avant Plutarque. Cela fait un grand recul. Et le recul est parfois utile. Il permet en l'occurrence de mieux mesurer les changements profonds qui sont intervenus en Grèce et qui ont permis à Plutarque de devenir ce qu'il est devenu. C'est grâce à eux qu'il a pu produire cette oeuvre qui est comme la somme de l'Antiquité, en effet, mais une somme déjà tout entière tournée vers un monde et vers des habitudes modernes. Oui, il a fallu des changements profonds; et mes rencontres avec Plutarque aideront à mesurer, par contraste, cette puissante transformation interne de la pensée grecque.

* 

J'ai d'abord rencontré Plutarque dans le prolongement de Thucydide. Le plus austère et le plus sobre des historiens m'a conduite au biographe de Périclès, de Nicias, d'Alcibiade, et à ces anecdotes personnelles que ces Vies apportent sur leur vie privée. Il faut être juste: formée à l'école d'un historien comme Thucydide, j'ai parfois éprouvé quelque agacement pour la liberté avec laquelle Plutarque traite les différentes versions d'un événement, ou néglige la densité des analyses au profit du détail révélateur. L'année dernière encore, j'étais à Jérusalem, et je faisais une conférence sur Thucydide et Plutarque, comparant dans le détail les emprunts et leur modèle;1 or, je dois l'avouer, j'insistais surtout sur ce qui s'était perdu en cours de route, sur l'affaiblissement du sens et le rétrécissement de la pensée politique.

Mais le point de vue que j'adoptaïs là faussait les perspectives. Car Plutarque savait ce qu'il faisait et ne songeait pas à être un nouveau Thucydide. Il fondait un genre nouveau, appelé à devenir le grand genre à la mode de nos jours; et il le fondait consciemment, lucidement.

Je dis "fondait"; et j'ai l'air par là de prendre parti dans les longs débats des dernières décennies sur l'origine de la biographie; en fait, par cette

expression, je refuse plutôt de prendre parti. Car il est clair que Plutarque n'est pas parti de rien, qu'il a eu des modèles et des précédents. Sans même rappeler ici le rôle, tant commenté, des biographies hellénistiques, comment oublier qu'il fut, pour le domaine latin, postérieur à Cornelius Nepos et contemporain de Suétone ? Tout cela était dans l'air du temps. Mais l'ampleur de l'oeuvre de Plutarque et la variété des vies traitées, sans parler du talent, font de lui, aux yeux de la postérité, la véritable père de la biographie. Et il avait un but lucidement défini. On cite en général le témoignage de la Vie d'Alexandre; et il est décisif: "En effet, nous n'écrivons pas des Histoires, mais des biographies; et ce n'est pas surtout dans les actions les plus éclatantes que se manifeste la vertu ou le vice. Souvent, au contraire, un petit fait, un mot, une plaisanterie montrent mieux le caractère que des combats qui font des milliers de morts, que les batailles rangées et les sièges les plus importants" (1, 2). C'est pourquoi il cherche, dit-il, grâce à ces signes distinctifs de l'âme, "à représenter la vie de chaque homme, laissant à d'autres la grandeur et les luttes."

Je ne m'attarderai pas sur ces déclarations de principe, si précises et au demeurant si connues. Elles justifient tous les traits du récit: le recours à l'anecdote, aux sentiments, à ce que nous appelons la "petite histoire" (encore que nos modernes aillent beaucoup plus loin que lui sur cette voie!). Elles justifient le souci d'une présentation vivante, du dialogue, de la scène révélatrice. Mais, si elles m'intéressent, c'est plutôt parce qu'elles révèlent, depuis mon Vème siècle avant J. C., une véritable révolution dans les principes.

Tout l'intérêt a basculé. Et le contraste avec Thucydide est ici éclatant. Thucydide, homme de la cité avant tout, ne s'intéressait à Péliclès que dans la mesure où son action avait déterminé le sort d'Athènes. Au second siècle après J. C., en revanche, le temps des cités est depuis longtemps révolu. Plutarque, certes, ne dédaigne pas les responsabilités ni les magistratures; il ne désespère pas non plus d'avoir, par ses écrits, une influence sur ses contemporains, soit en offrant des modèles et des principes de conduite aux hommes politiques, soit en aidant, par sa juxtaposition des grands hommes Grecs et Romains, à fonder l'amitié destinée à faire de Rome la protectrice de la liberté et de la culture grecque. Mais ce qui l'intéresse avant tout est—il l'a dit—de discerner les "signes distinctifs de l'âme" et la vie de chacun (τὸν ἐκδίκασθαν βίον). Donc les hommes d'État eux-mêmes comptent à ses yeux en tant qu'individus. Il montre Péliclès avec ses maîtresses, Péliclès avec Aspasie, Péliclès en deuil, Péliclès mourant... Un tel intérêt ne pouvait évidemment naître qu'après une mutation complète de la vie des gens et des cités. Elle ne pouvait naître, aussi, que dans le sillage de toutes les curiosités nouvelles que cette mutation avait facilitées, et en fonction d'habitudes de vie nouvelles qu'elle avait suscitées. Plutarque ne pouvait venir qu'après l'essor de la psychologie et de la morale individuelles: après Aristote et Théophraste, après les querelles entre stoïciens et épiciens, après Sénèque. De même, il ne pouvait venir que dans un
moment de culture livresque, permettant que s'épanouisse un homme érudit, éloigné des affaires—un homme, si j'ose dire, appartenant aux temps nouveaux de l'Antiquité.

Ces gauchissemens de l'histoire, telle que Plutarque la perçoit, sont donc passionnants à cerner, jusque dans le détail des mots: ils sont eux-mêmes, directement, le reflet même de l'évolution historique.

Cependant le déplacement d'intérêt que traduit le contraste entre Thucydide et Plutarque va plus loin encore. Car Plutarque ne veut pas seulement définir de façon vivante la psychologie de l'individu: il se veut moraliste et trace des modèles. Il le dit franchement—par exemple au début de la Vie de Périclès, quand il parle des actions qui inspirent l'admiration et l'émulation. Certes, ces modèles ne sont pas tracés à coup de faits mensongers ou d'inventions gratuites: ce n'est jamais le cas; mais le choix d'un épisode, la mise en valeur d'une qualité et le choix même des qualités à mettre en valeur, tout cela est son œuvre et révèle une série d'interventions subtiles, dont nous n'avons pas fini de déceler la présence ni les procédés.

Il faut révéler cette orientation, car elle est bien à lui. Après tout, Plutarque est contemporain de Tacite, et contemporain de Suétone: l'œuvre du premier prouve que l'on pouvait encore être un historien lucide et exigeant; celle de la seconde prouve que l'on pouvait se faire biographe sans flatter ses personnages ni chercher à présenter des modèles d'ordre moral. Plutarque a fait ce choix, préférant le rayonnement du bien à l'éclat même du vrai. Il l'a fait avec honnêteté et prudence; mais l'intention apoligétique existe. Et je crois que le fait explique pour une bonne part l'étrange destin qui fut le sien. Car le XVIème siècle s'émerveilla de trouver dans son œuvre "les beaux dits des Grecs et des Romains" ou bien "de sages avertissements et de fructueuses instructions"; mais la notion même de modèles, unie à celle de grands hommes, a détourné de lui les lecteurs en des âges plus blasés et moins confiants dans les leçons du passé. C'est ce que le livre de R. Hirzel rendait déjà sensible en 1912: depuis, le culte des grands hommes ne s'est pas accru, non plus que le souci d'imiter le passé, il s'en faut! Et le rayonnement de Plutarque en souffre. Quand on fait table rase du passé et que l'on veut inventer soi-même ses valeurs, on se détoure de lui.

Je voudrais cependant relever ce qu'a d'injuste l'espèce de suspicion qui pèse sur lui et l'assimile un peu trop vite à ce que l'on a appelé le culte des héros. Car la merveille est justement que, porté par ce souci moral indéniable, Plutarque soit resté toujours modéré, lucide, et gentiment critique. On pourrait ainsi rappeler (et ce serait vrai) qu'il y a des biographies qui n'offrent nullement des modèles (comme celles de Démétrios ou d'Antoine, sans parler de celle de Néron, qui est perdue): Plutarque aime discerner des vertus, différentes selon les cas, et il se réjouit chaque fois que l'occasion s'en offre; mais il n'est jamais de mauvaise foi. D'autre part ses grands hommes n'ont pas grand chose à voir avec les "héros" de Carlyle. Ils ne les a même pas choisis en tant que modèles, mais simplement parce qu'il s'agissait d'hommes sur lesquels, à cause leur grand rôle, on est mieux
renseigné que sur les autres. Leurs actes ont eu des conséquences, leurs paroles ont été transmises, leur sort comporte un enseignement qu'il est possible de dégager. Ils aident à comprendre l'homme, comme ces grands caractères d'écriture, plus lisibles que les petits, où Platon cherchait une définition de la justice en se référant d'abord à la justice dans l'État. Ils ne sont que des signes, comme les héros de la tragédie, dont les auteurs montraient la grandeur, sans pour autant les présenter ni comme parfaits ni comme des modèles à imiter.

Je retiendrai donc surtout de cette notion de modèle, si injustement perçue de nos jours, une difficulté de plus pour les spécialistes de Plutarque. Avec lui, même dans le domaine historique, c'est toujours de morale qu'il s'agit. Il faut donc à tout prix s'occuper de dégager les procédés subtils par lesquels il réussit à orienter les faits sans les trahir et à mettre en relief des vertus dans un récit qui n'est pourtant pas tendancieux. Voilà du travail! Il faut aussi savoir quelles sont ces vertus.

Et là, avouons le, nous aurons aussitôt la confirmation éclatante de la différence entre ses hommes illustres et les héros à la Carlyle. Car il se trouve que Plutarque raconte la vie des hommes illustres avec le souci constant de célébrer en eux des vertus de douceur et de mansuétude, qui conviennent entre toutes à la vie individuelle, à la vie privée.

Je viens d'employer le mot de "douceur": il me mène tout droit à ma seconde rencontre avec Plutarque.

* 

Cette seconde rencontre s'est faite à l'occasion de mon livre La douceur dans la pensée grecque (il ne s'agit pas, comme certains l'ont cru, d'une étude sur les desserts et autres sucreries, mais des vertus qu'expriment des mots comme πράγμα, ἐπειτεκίς, φιλάνθρωπος). Or tout, dans ce livre, me jetait vers Plutarque. En effet, alors que je suivais au cours des œuvres les emplois de ces mots et les progrès de cette notion, je consacrais très rarement un chapitre entier à un auteur; mais, pour Plutarque, il en a bien fallu deux: un pour les Vies et un pour les Moralía! Et j'ai dû m'arrêter là, à Plutarque, car il fournissait le parfait épanouissement de ces idées. Dans les deux séries d'œuvres, les résultats étaient les mêmes: ces mots étaient partout, dans chaque vie, dans chaque traité, et avec tous leurs sens, réunis en gerbe. Bien plus, il y avait d'autres. Plutarque emploie des mots comme εὐγνώμων, φιλόφρον, et μέτριος, et ἰλαρός. Il a aussi de beaux substantifs: le φιλοστόργον (un mot qui ne commence qu'avec Xénophon), le φιλητικόν (un mot qui ne commence qu'avec Aristote), l'ὁγχαπτικόν (un mot qui ne se rencontre pas avant Plutarque lui-même); il recourt là à des neutres substantivés, toujours aptes à désigner les dispositions de l'âme. Et tous ces mots, il les distingue, les groupe, les combine. D'autre part, il découvre des applications de cette vertu partout. Il en reconnaît le bien-fondé et l'universalité. Comme il le dit—et cela est très peu stoïcien—"Il y a dans
notre âme un penchant à l'affection: elle est faite pour aimer"; ou encore: "à moins de contrarier la nature, nous ne pouvons vivre sans amis, sans relations, en solitaires."\(^2\) Cette \(\varphi\lambda\alpha\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\alpha\) est à ses yeux la vertu grecque par excellence. Dans l'appréciation du mérite de chacun, elle est le premier critère. Et elle peut s'étendre à tous les gestes de la vie quotidienne, chez les simples particuliers. La vertu d'humanité vaut même pour la conduite envers les serviteurs, envers les animaux domestiques; elle doit se prolonger quand ils sont vieux—vieux chevaux ou vieux chiens, usés par l'âge. Et il le dit, notre Plutarque. Il le dit même—voyez cette combinaison imprévue—dans la Vie de Caton l'Ancien (5)—cela parce que le sens de l'économie empêchait ce dernier de pratiquer ces formes de douceur: ce défaut du personnage nous vaut, de la part de Plutarque, une page entière de commentaires sur la beauté de tels égards et de tels gestes d'humanité envers les animaux atteints par l'âge.

Je ne poursuivrai pas plus loin la démonstration de ce rôle extraordinaire que joue l'idéal de douceur et d'humanité chez Plutarque. Il avait d'ailleurs été signalé par d'autres avant moi.\(^3\) Je voudrais plutôt m'arrêter, ici encore, à la mutation profonde qu'un tel choix impliquait.

Cet idéal avait pénétré lentement l'atmosphère morale du monde classique, qui s'attachait plus à la justice et au courage qu'à de telles vertus. On le voit progresser peu à peu, régulièrement, de façon visible et indéniable. Mais ce n'est pas tout. Car quand la douceur avait commencé à pénétrer les textes classiques, au IVème siècle, il s'agissait presque toujours de célébrer la clémence des vainqueurs ou la douceur du bon roi. Or la douceur célébrée par Plutarque—nouveau signe des temps—est très souvent une vertu de la vie privée. Naturellement, la forme politique existe toujours. Mais, même pour les princes ou les chefs d'armée, elle se traduit aussi dans leurs vies d'hommes. On a vu, dans le passage cité à l'instant, que Caton était dur: oui, mais dur pour les travailleurs, dur pour les animaux. D'autres ont, dans Plutarque, un air avenant avec chacun, qui leur gagne les coeurs. D'autres acceptent la mort avec sérénité. . . L'intérêt pour les individus, qui expliquait le passage de l'histoire à la biographie, nous fait ici passer du domaine public au domaine privé. Et, si les vertus douces ont en effet pour caractéristique de s'appliquer aisément au commun des hommes, leur puissant épanouissement en cette èpoque tardive n'est pas non plus un hasard. Cet épanouissement, lui aussi, suppose la fin du monde des cités. Il suppose également un intérêt accru pour la psychologie individuelle.

\(^2\) Solon, 7, 3; De l'amour fraternel, 479c.

Jacqueline de Romilly 225

Et voilà tout à coup toutes les formes de la tendresse humaine qui interviennent. On sait que Plutarque a écrit de merveilleuses pages sur la tendresse qui lie un homme à sa femme, quand, avec les années, progressent entre eux deux “le respect, la complaisance, l’affection et la confiance mutuelle.” Avant Plutarque, seul Xénophon avait célébré cette tendresse; mais la sensibilité de Plutarque laisse loin derrière elle l’austérité de L’Économique; et les détails de la vie conjugale ne s’arrêtent plus aux soins du ménage... Plutarque a aussi parlé des enfants, de leur façon de donner un jouet ou de leur chagrin de le perdre: les enfants de l'époque classique ne surgissaient que dans le deuil de la tragédie ou dans le pathétique des adieux. Plutarque a parlé des repas, de la politesse, du bavardage, de la patience. Comme il a plusieurs fois traité des sujets parallèles à ceux de Sénèque, la comparaison est facile: au stoïcisme de l’un s’oppose le sourire de l’autre; le sage ici, est marié, et bon mari, et bon maître de maison.

Marquer ces petits décalages et ces nuances souvent subtiles est une des tâches du spécialiste de Plutarque quand il s’occupe de son idéal moral.

Mais il est temps de le dire: bien d’autres tâches l’attendent, en ce domaine, notre spécialiste. Car, emportée par mon élan, j’ai tout de suite évoqué ce rôle de la douceur et de l’humanité. Mais c’était simplifier les choses que de les présenter comme l’expression naïve d’un tempérament affable. En fait, la morale de Plutarque présente un autre trait qui n’est pas moins surprenant quand on part du Vème siècle athénien: c’est qu’elle se double d’une philosophie, où se reflètent les âpres débats théorétiques des nouveaux temps. Même là où Plutarque semble innocemment prêcher une vertu de simple humanité, il est clair qu’il retouche son très cher Platon à la lumière des vertus de sociabilité découvertes par Aristote; et il est clair aussi qu’il retouche, plus qu’un peu, les idées des stoïciens sur le rôle des sentiments et de l’affectivité. Nous découvrions donc là, affleurant à peine, mais bien réel, tout un monde de débats où se sont peu à peu posés les problèmes.

La fidélité de Plutarque au platonisme pourrait faire croire à une continuité entre deux grands auteurs. Mais il suffit d’un simple coup d’œil sur les traités pour voir que la philosophie s’était compliquée et nuancée. Interprétation du Timée, problèmes du destin et du libre arbitre, rôle et action de la providence, existence d’un âme animale: tout était débattu, à coup d’arguments et de preuves. L’aimable douceur de Plutarque plonge donc ses racines dans de laborieux échanges, dont il est passionnant de retrouver le fil—dans un congrès, par exemple, ou bien dans les échanges qui prennent naissance lors d’un congrès! Ces débats savants rendent d’autant plus remarquable l’accent personnel que Plutarque a su donner à ses choix.

Or j’ai parlé de l’idéal moral, mais il en va exactement de même de la religion. Là aussi, on trouve, par rapport à l’âge classique, de nouveaux problèmes, un nouveau cadre de pensée, de nouvelles orientations.

Dans ce domaine aussi, les questions ont fusé. Il n’y a pas eu seulement les curiosités historiques qu’un homme instruit et pieux comme
Plutarque ne pouvait pas ne pas éprouver: sur l'E de Delphes, ou sur les oracles de la Pythie, ou sur le débat des oracles. Il y a eu aussi, et surtout, toutes les questions métaphysiques posées au cours des années, y compris l'interprétation allégorique des mythes et des rites de la religion traditionnelle, et l'existence des démons, avec les diverses questions qu'elle pose et qui, aujourd'hui, nous déroutent un peu comme les débats scolastiques du Moyen-Age. Les spécialistes connaissent bien ces problèmes, et les embûches qui guettent le lecteur de Plutarque, même s'il est armé d'une solide culture dans la philosophie du temps—et à plus forte raison s'il y est tant soit peu étranger.

C'est là encore du travail en perspective; mais aussi encore une marque du lent renouvellement de la pensée antique. Et j'ajouterais encore une différence radicale de cadre!

Car c'est un fait: au temps de Thucydide ou des tragiques, la religion était essentiellement affaire collective. Les dieux protégeaient la cité, présidaient aux fêtes et aux concours, exigeaient, récompensaient. La théologie existait bien: Eschyle en est la preuve; mais elle ne cherchait qu'à comprendre, pour guider son action, le sens de la justice divine. Au temps de Plutarque tout s'est renouvelé. Les débats dans lesquels il faut prendre parti impliquent des choix individuels, des réponses individuelles.

Et pourtant, tout comme la morale de Plutarque semble le reflet d'une personnalité, ses choix et ses orientations dans le domaine religieux forment un ensemble où on le trouve.

Prêtre d'Apollon à Delphes, il croit aux dieux, aux oracles, aux prophéties. Il approche parfois du mysticisme et aime à citer des cas étranges d'inspiration ou de révélations. Mais, avec cela, il n'a rien d'un dévot perdu dans le culte ou même dans la contemplation. Il ne renonce ni à l'action humaine, ni à la raison. Et la "superstition" lui paraît pire que l'athéisme. Il juge en effet stupide de toujours craindre un pouvoir divin qui est en fait "doux comme un père." N'évoque-t-il pas comme une explication possible aux délais de la justice divine l'idée que dieu aurait voulu accorder aux coupables le temps de se réformer? Sa religion aussi a de la "douceur."

En tout cas cette religion, ainsi intérieuriée et teintée de spiritualité, est donc aussi différente de la religion classique que l'était sa morale. On perçoit l'évolution, la longue mutation qui est intervenue. Et le fait est que l'on a parfois cherché des concordances entre lui et les textes chrétiens, qui étaient en gros contemporains, mais qu'il ne connaissait pas.

À la comme en tout, Plutarque apporte la somme du passé, mais avec cette touche nouvelle qui l'oriente déjà vers le monde et la pensée modernes. Sans doute est-ce pour cela qu'il a naguère rendu l'héritage ancien si aisément accessible à des lecteurs qui en ignoraient presque tout.
Tout cela suggère bien l'importance du travail qui attend encore les savants, travail de comparaison, verticale et horizontale, établissant des relations, directes et indirectes, qui permettent de situer Plutarque dans cette longue file de textes divers, où se reflète une maturation intérieure dont il est l'un des aboutissements. Une telle recherche vaut tous les efforts; et le croisement de tant de fils en ce point de rencontre que constitue Plutarque lui donne un prix particulier.

Mais avant de laisser les spécialistes s'engager dans ces voies, je voudrais encore évoquer une troisième rencontre avec Plutarque: c'est une rencontre, et si je puis dire, par personne interposée; et elle nous ramènera à un Plutarque que nous aurions risqué d'oublier. À force de le voir dans l'histoire et couronnant une longue évolution, nous pourrions en effet perdre de vue cet aspect intemporel que l'on peut appeler la sagesse de Plutarque, et qui est de tous les temps.

On reconnaîtra là le titre d'un petit ouvrage d'extraits qu'à composé Robert Flacelière. Et, puisqu'il s'agit aujourd'hui d'honorer cet ami disparu, je voudrais, pour finir, évoquer son souvenir. Car, à travers lui, tel que je l'ai connu, on avait un peu le sentiment d'être directement en contact avec un Plutarque redivivus.

Que l'on se rassure: je ne suis pas aveuglée ni par l'amitié ni par le patriotisme. Je sais, comme vous, ce que les études sur Plutarque doivent à de grands savants de divers pays. Konrat Ziegler a ouvert la voie; et nul ne pourrait travailler sur Plutarque sans avoir recours à lui. Je cite ce nom; je pourrais en citer bien d'autres. Chaque année voit surgir de nouvelles éditions commentées, de nouvelles Vies ou de nouveaux traités, de nouvelles études. Je ne citerai personne, par crainte d'omettre trop de noms.

Mais Robert Flacelière occupe une place privilégiée; et il a consacré toute sa vie à Plutarque.

Né en 1904, il avait été membre de l'École française d' Athènes et, à ce titre, avait été travailler à Delphes. Delphes—cela voulait dire Plutarque: Plutarque, qui était prêtre d'Apollon à Delphes et citoyen de cette ville; Plutarque, qui avait laissé de nombreux traités sur Delphes et ses oracles... Tout jeune encore, Flacelière consacra sa thèse complémentaire à une édition commentée du traité Sur les oracles de la Pythie. Puis d'autres traités l'occupèrent, et il les édita: les traités delphiques et les traités sur l'amour; et puis, pendant vingt-cinq ans, de 1957 à 1979, ce furent toutes les Vies qui, grâce à lui, parurent à un rythme régulier dans notre collection des Universités de France (dite collection Budé). Ce n'était pas une petite affaire que de traduire Plutarque en français après Amyot: la traduction nouvelle est aisée et précise. Ce n'était pas non plus une petite affaire que de se débrouiller dans tous ces faits, dans toutes ces sources. Flacelière ne pouvait pas faire oeuvre originale sur tout; mais il a su être toujours bien informé et raisonnable, dégager l'essentiel, faire le point de façon lucide. Cela lui était
rendu facile par la familiarité ininterrompue qu'il avait entretenue avec son auteur. Chez nous, en France, on ne nommait jamais Plutarque dans une conférence, même en passant, sans que les regards se tournent vers Flacelière, en souriant, comme si l'on avait parlé de lui.

Et voyez cette vie studieuse de Plutarque, ce désir de s'initier à tout, de se faire une idée des problèmes, et de rédiger ouvrage sur ouvrage: ce fut la vie de Flacelière. Aucun auteur grec n'occupe dans la collection Budé autant de volumes que Plutarque (qui en occupera vingt-cinq): aucun collaborateur n'en a produit autant que Flacelière. Cela n'empêchait pas Plutarque d'exercer des fonctions publiques à Chéronée: Flacelière a de même assumé la direction de plusieurs grands établissements. Sa maison était accueillante, comme celle de Plutarque. Plutarque aimait les récits vifs et vivants: Flacelière détestait les exposés lourds et prétentieux. La morale de Plutarque était de douceur, de courtoisie: Flacelière était souriant, bienveillant. Plutarque a chanté la tendresse conjugale: la vie de Flacelière en fut remplie à un point rare. Et les deuils éprouvés en commun ont encore rapproché les époux, comme pour Plutarque. Plutarque était prêtre d'Apollon, et plein de foi dans la divinité: la foi chrétienne de Flacelière rayonnait du même éclat.

Ces traits peuvent provenir—et proviennent sûrement en partie—d'une rencontre de tempéraments, qui a, précisément, poussé le jeune savant vers l'auteur à qui il se consacra. Mais je crois aussi que l'on se laisse peu à peu influencer par un auteur, quand on passe sa vie entière à le lire et à le fréquenter.

Et, à la vérité, ce n'est pas pour le seul plaisir de rendre hommage à un savant disparu que j'évoque ici cette parenté à travers les siècles, et presque cette symbiose: c'est parce que je crois, pleinement, à ce rayonnement des œuvres.

J'ai évoqué tout à l'heure le texte célèbre de la Vie de Périclès, où Plutarque dit qu'il faut diriger la pensée vers des spectacles susceptibles de faire naître l'émulation et le désir d'imiter ce qui est bien: il ne me déplaît pas qu'à travers ce qu'un auteur comme lui admire et fait admirer, il naisse chez le lecteur un même désir d'imitation, conscient ou inconscient, fondé sur la sympathie.

Le fait que Plutarque intervienne si directement dans ses œuvres facilite cette sympathie. Le fait qu'il ait le talent de présenter agréablement ses idées l'encourage. Et tout ce qu'il devait lui-même aux livres crée un admirable précédent.

Tous les témoignages des premiers lecteurs modernes trahissent bien cette influence et cette sympathie. Montaigne s'est réjoui de trouver en Plutarque "des opinions douces et accommodables à la société civile"; Brantôme a parlé de cette "si affectueuse recommandation de la vertu." La sagesse de Plutarque déteint sur ses lecteurs, tout comme, dans ses dialogues, elle semble déteindre sur les amis qu'il met en scène.

Et l'on arrive alors à un double résultat.
Parce qu'il était un homme infiniment cultivé, qu'il multipliait partout les récits, les citations, les allusions aux poètes et aux philosophes, Plutarque a pu devenir l'agent de transmission de l'héritage classique, dont il était nourri et pénétré. Mais, parce que sa sagesse a pris, à ce contact, un certain tour courtois et ouvert, il a à son tour contribué—et peut encore contribuer—à façonner et à aider d'autres générations d'hommes. Ce phénomène est très exactement ce que l'on appelle la culture.

L'exemple de Flacelîère nous éclaire sur le rôle que peut jouer Plutarque. Et c'est un très beau rôle.

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On me dira qu'un congrès scientifique ou un recueil d'études savantes n'ont pas à se soucier de ce rayonnement moral, fait pour les profanes, et que la science et la culture suivent des voies divergentes. Dans le cas des auteurs anciens, et plus particulièrement de Plutarque, j'en doute un peu. J'aurais plutôt tendance à penser qu'elles ne cessent de s'entraider, sans même qu'on le désire ou qu'on le sache. Et je souhaite, en l'occurrence, qu'elles continuent. Car enfin ce Plutarque, qui a représenté à la Renaissance le meilleur de la culture classique et qui a été plus lu et plus traduit qu'aucun autre, mériterait bien d'être aujourd'hui un peu moins négligé. Or il n'est pas exclu que l'attention des savants, leurs découvertes et leurs émerveillements soient de nature à réveiller le goût de lire un auteur. Plutarque en aurait bien besoin. Et notre monde actuel plus encore.  

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4 Ce texte a été préparé pour le Congrès Plutarque d'Athènes; des difficultés de dernière heure tenant à l'organisation du congrès et à mes propres obligations m'ont empêchée de me rendre à Athènes pour en donner lecture. Je suis d'autant plus reconnaissante à ceux qui ont bien voulu l'accueillir aujourd'hui.
Periclean Athens, a city raised by one man's will to its cultural and military zenith, is a concept that owes much of its vitality to Plutarch.¹

This topic suggested itself to me by a passage in the Life of Aristeides. Struck by the largesse of the Athenian people to a descendant of Aristeides and Aristogeiton's grand-daughter, Plutarch remarks: "We need not be surprised to hear that the people took such care of families living in Athens. . . . The city of Athens has given many such examples of humanity and goodness of heart (φιλανθρωπίας καὶ χρηστότητος . . . δείγματα) even in my own day, and for this she is justly praised and admired."² I asked myself, what kind of practical effect did this favorable impression made by Athens have on Plutarch's work? How often, in fact, does he allude to Athenian customs, institutions, cults and monuments? What kinds of things does he record about ancient Athens? What particularly has stuck in his mind, so that he singles it out for mention?

A preliminary word about method. Research for this paper was done with the TLG laser disc and an Ibycus computer at the University of Washington, Seattle; I am grateful to the Classics department and especially Professors L. Bliquez, J. Clauss and M. Langdon for their courteous assistance. I have left out of account those treatises marked doubtful or spurious by D. A. Russell.³

One obvious yardstick of Plutarch's interest in Athens is the number of Athenian subjects of his biographies: 10 out of the 23 Greek Lives (3 Spartan, 2 Theban and the rest "other").⁴ But within the Lives themselves and scattered throughout the Moralia there are numerous references to Athenian cults, customs and institutions. In addition, there are certain treatises that are devoted to Athenian topics, either wholly, such as De gloria Atheniensium, or in part, such as De malignitate Herodoti; or that

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² Arist. 27. 6–7, trans. Scott–Kilvert; cf. Mor. 558C for honors paid to Cimon's descendants.
⁴ Cf. R. H. Barrow, Plutarch and His Times (London 1967) 53.
have an Athenian setting, e.g., certain books of the Quaestiones convivales; or which almost of necessity (because of the subject matter) draw their examples largely from Athenian history, like Praecepta gerendae rei publicae.

Of course, Plutarch had ample opportunity to become familiar with Athens and her monuments and to learn about her history. Born sometime between 40 and 45 A.D. he was a pupil of the philosopher Ammonios at Athens in about 65, is known to have been there in about 80 and was present at the celebration of the City Dionysia of 96–97. At some point in his career he was made an honorary Athenian citizen of the tribe Leontis. At the end of Themistocles Plutarch reveals that some of the information about the descendants of the fifth-century statesman came from a later Themistocles, whom Plutarch describes as “a friend and fellow-student of mine in the school of Ammonios the philosopher” (Them. 32. 6, trans. Scott-Kilvert). He has special information about the tribe Aiantis (Arist. 19. 6, Mor. 628A–E), which suggests that he was on close terms with someone from that tribe, or at least that he took special care to seek out information about it. He relates an incident towards the end of Demosthenes that he says occurred “a little while before I moved to Athens” (Dem. 31. 1). Athens was, as Plutarch reminds his friend the poet Serapion, who had the cultural advantages offered by residency there, a “great city” (Mor. 384E). In Plutarch’s view there was something permanent, unchanging, but utterly characteristic of Athens and her people. “One could recognize Athens [Plutarch remarks] on seeing it after a lapse of thirty years, and the present traits and moods, games and graver interests, favoritisms and angers of the δὲμος are like those of old” (Mor. 559B).

To return to the passage at the end of Aristeides. The qualities which Plutarch commends in the Athenian nation are φιλανθρωπία and χρηστότης. As a small but telling example of this φιλανθρωπία Plutarch twice cites the refusal of the Athenians to break the seal in the letter sent by Philip of Macedon to his wife Olympias when the Athenians had intercepted Philip’s messengers and read all the other letters they had seized (Demet. 22. 2, Mor. 799E). There is another, rather frivolous, example in the De sollertia animalium. Plutarch tells two animal stories, the first of which he says occurred “when our fathers were studying at Athens.” A dog relentlessly pursued a robber whom it had seen stealing treasures from the temple of Asclepius. Finally the culprit was apprehended and punished, whereupon the dog was rewarded with a public ration of food and entrusted to the care of the temple priests (Mor. 969F–970A). This reminds Plutarch of another incident illustrative of the Athenians’ φιλανθρωπία: a mule

5 Plutarch and Ammonios at the time of Nero’s visit to Greece: Mor. 385B, C. P. Jones, Plutarch and Rome (Oxford 1971) 16–17; “in Athens in the early 80s,” Jones 22 with n. 16; Dionysia of 96–97, Jones 27 n. 52.
6 Jones (preceding n.) 21, 109.
that because of age and infirmity had been retired from its task of hauling stones for the Parthenon nevertheless voluntarily accompanied the other draught-animals, "turning back with them and trotting along by their aide, as though to encourage and cheer them on" (Helmold's trans.). As with the dog, the Athenians rewarded the enterprising beast with maintenance at public expense (Mor. 970A–B and Cat. mai. 5. 3).

This quality of gentle and civilized self-restraint ("philanthropy") clearly made a strong impression on Plutarch. The characteristic is mentioned, but is not the only quality to be included in a list of items that, for Plutarch, mark the Athenian character. In the Praecepta gerendae rei publicae he comments at length on the necessity that the statesman, ὁ πολιτικός, be versatile, adaptable and ready to mould himself to the ever-changing populace he is trying to lead. "For the Athenian δήμος," Plutarch comments, "is easily moved to anger, easily turned to pity, more willing to suspect quickly than to be informed at leisure; as they are ready to help humble persons of no reputation, so they welcome and especially esteem facetious and amusing speeches; while they take most delight in those who praise them, they are least inclined to be angry with those who make fun of them; they are terrible even to their chief magistrates, then kindly [the word Plutarch uses is again φιλάνθρωπος] even to their enemies" (Mor. 799C, trans. Fowler).

At the end of the Life of Dion, Plutarch reports that Dion's slayer, the Athenian Callipus, sent a letter back to Athens, an outrageous act from which he should have been deterred by "reverence and fear of that city, only second to the gods," after committing such a sacrilege. "But it seems [Plutarch remarks] that it is truly said of Athens that she produces good men who are the best in virtue and bad men who are worst in vice, just as the Athenian soil grows the sweetest honey and the deadliest hemlock" (Dion 58. 1).

There are other allusions to this theme. "Cimon's liberality surpassed even the ancient hospitality and φιλάνθρωπία of the Athenians" (Cim. 10. 6). Nicias pleaded with his captor, Gyllippus, to return like for like, saying "when the Athenians were successful, they dealt moderately and gently (μετρίως . . . καὶ πράως) with you" (Nic. 27. 5). When the pro-Spartan Thebans fled to Athens after the capture of the Cadmeia in 382 B.C., Sparta actually demanded that they be handed over. The Athenians refused, both, Plutarch says, in repayment of the favor shown by the Thebans, who declined to join in overthrowing the democracy in 403 B.C., and also "in accord with the philanthropy which was ancestral and natural to them" (Pelop. 6. 4–5). A less attractive, perhaps even dangerous aspect of this mildness or leniency (πραότητας) of the Athenians was their willingness to gloss over Alcibiades' flagrant misbehavior, calling it mere "playfulness and ambition" (Alc. 16. 4). Plutarch is troubled by the reaction at Athens to news of Philip's death. The Athenians "leapt upon and sang Paecans over his
corpse,” even though, when Athens herself was down, “Philip had treated her ἡμέρως καὶ φιλανθρώπως” (Dem. 23. 4).

In the short, rather strange treatise De gloria Atheniensium, the paradoxical position is maintained that Athens' most lasting and significant achievements were those of her military commanders, not of her tragedians, historians or orators (this is a bias that manifests itself elsewhere in Plutarch's work, as, e.g., at the beginning of Pericles). Plutarch singles out for special commendation the bravery of the exhausted and outnumbered Athenians who faced Epaminondas at Mantinea in 362 B.C. (Mor. 346B ff.), and in a rhetorically effective passage he contrasts various orators' accounts of Athens' accomplishments with the glorious events themselves: Aristeides at Plataea, the deposition of the “Thirty Tyrants,” Phocion's expedition to Byzantium in 339 B.C. (Mor. 350B–C). Plutarch had a deep and genuine admiration for what Athens had achieved in the military and political spheres. In the De exilio (604D–E) he conflates two passages from Euripides (frs. 360. 7–10 and 981 Nauck), referring to the lines as the “Encomium on Athens.”7 The quality praised by Euripides' character in the first passage is autochthony (...λεως οὐκ ἐπακτὸς ἄλλοθεν, αὐτόχθωνες δ' ἐφομεν) in contrast with other cities, whose populates had had to be imported (εἰσαγωγίμοι). (A contrast between Athens and Rome in this respect may have been in the back of Plutarch's mind as he cited the lines; he contrasts the two cities elsewhere in his work.) The second Euripidean citation praises Athens' climate, οὐφρονὸν ... εὖ κεκραμένον, neither too hot nor too cold, with a variety of natural products (or perhaps imported foods). Several times, in fact, Plutarch remarks on certain natural and topographical features of the city. Athens and Syracuse are about the same size (Nic. 17. 2). The Academy (which Sulla ravaged) was the most wooded of Athens' suburbs (Sulla 12. 3), and during the siege by Sulla the Heptachalcon (near the Peiraic gate8 and an area which was regularly left unguarded) proved to be the weak spot in the city's defenses, for it was through this that Sulla led his troops and took control of the city. During Sulla's invasion the Ceramicus “ran with blood” (Mor. 505B).

Athens and Rome

Given Plutarch's career, the comparison with Rome seems often very near the surface in his remarks about Athens, and occasionally it breaks out into the open. At the beginning of the Life of Theseus Plutarch explains why he has gone back to this subject after publishing his Lycurgus and Numa: “I decided [he writes] to make the founder of lovely and famous (τῶν καλῶν καὶ ἄνωθεν) Athens stand against the founder of invincible and glorious

7 This suggests (although it does not prove) that Plutarch found the lines already anthologized.
8 Cf. Judeich, Topographie von Athen, 2nd ed., 368 n. 8.
In chapter two he comes back to his reasons for pairing Romulus and Theseus: "Of the most outstanding (τῶν ἐπιφανεστάτων) cities, Romulus founded one and Theseus synoecized the other" (Thes. 2. 2). Plutarch is of course aware that Rome's comparability to Athens is of relatively recent date. "By the side of the great public works, the temples, and the stately edifices, with which Pericles adorned Athens, all Rome's attempts at splendor down to the times of the Caesars, taken together, are not worthy to be considered; nay, the one had a towering pre-eminence above the other, both in grandeur of design and grandeur of execution, which precludes comparison" (Comp. Per. et Fab. 3. 7, trans. B. Perrin). At Cat. mai. 23. 2–3 he observes that Cato was wrong when he said Rome would lose her empire when she became filled with Greek learning; "when Rome was at its greatest height," Plutarch remarks, "she naturalized (ἐσχέν οἰκείως) every form of Greek learning and culture." From Cato's perspective the contrast could work to Greece's disadvantage. Plutarch refutes the story that, while in Athens, Cato delivered a speech in Greek before the Athenian δῆμος in which he alleged that he admired the ὀρετή of the ancient Athenians and was pleased to be an admiring observer (θεατής) of the city's beauty and size. Plutarch finds this story difficult to accept in view of the acid comment made by Cato who, while in Athens, availed himself of the services of an interpreter; "... the Athenians were astonished at the speed and pungency (δξότης) of his discourse. For what [Cato] himself set forth with brevity, the interpreter would repeat to them at great length and with many words; and on the whole [Cato] thought the words of the Greeks were born on their lips, but those of the Romans in their hearts" (Cat. mai. 12. 7, trans. B. Perrin). There is a similar criticism, this time by Plutarch himself, implied in the observation of the different relationships between Nicias and Marcus Crassus and their respective cities. The former held back when the Athenians were enflamed with martial ardor for the conquest of Sicily, whereas Crassus' φιλαρχία and φιλοτιμία coerced the Romans into undertaking war with the Parthians against their better judgement; "the Athenians sent an unwilling Nicias to war, but it was the Romans who were unwilling when Crassus led them out" (Comp. Nic. et Crass. 3. 8). One further explicit comparison made by Plutarch may be noted. In the Fortuna Romanorum he remarks that the μέγας δαίμων of Rome blew upon the city not just by sea (ἐνότιος), as that of Athens did, but "from its first creation [it] grew in maturity, in might, and in polity together with the city, and remained constant to it on land and sea, in war and in peace, against foreigners, against Greeks" (Mor. 324B, trans. F. C. Babbitt). In other words, Rome's successes were far more varied and enduring than those of other powers, among them Athens, with which Rome might in principle be compared.
Dates

Since Plutarch has in mind an international audience, which he must have hoped would include literate Athenians, he frequently mentions equivalent Athenian dates. (He also had a special interest in dates and wrote a treatise περὶ ἡμερῶν9.) Hekatombaion is Boeotian Hippodromios (Cam. 19. 4). Syracusan Carneios is equivalent to Metageitnion (Nic. 28. 2; Plutarch dates the Syracusan festival Asinaria, created to celebrate Nicias' capture, on the 26th of that month; Metageitnion is also mentioned in passing at Mor. 601B). The second day of Boedromion is unlucky and regularly omitted from the Athenian calendar because of Poseidon's quarrel with Athena on that day (Mor. 489B; cf. Quaest. conv. IX. 6, 741 ff.). The battle of Plataea occurred on 4th Boedromion (Arist. 19. 8); he dates the battle of Gaugamela by an eclipse in Boedromion, "just about the beginning of the mysteries in Athens." The Athenians label one of their months from seeding-time, Pyaneption (Mor. 378E). Roman January is equivalent to Poseideon (Caes. 37. 3). Athenian Lenaion (i.e., Gamelion) has no Boeotian homonym (fr. 71a). Athenian Anthesterion is equivalent to Boeotian Prostaterios (Mor. 655E) and Macedonian Daisios (Arat. 53. 5; Plutarch remarks that Aratus "freed the city [Sicyon] from tyranny" on the 5th, which is kept as a feast day).

Monuments

Naturally, Plutarch's residence at Athens allowed him time for sight-seeing, and many of her buildings and civic monuments (such as statues and other works of art) made a special impression on him. In a glowing passage in Pericles he describes the spiritual exhilaration he derives from contemplating these memorials to Athens' past greatness. Each of the buildings, he remarks, "possessed a beauty which seemed venerable the moment it was born, and at the same time a youthful vigor which makes them appear to this day—μὲ χρή νῦν—as if they were newly built. A bloom of eternal freshness hovers over these works of [Pericles] and preserves them from the touch of time, as if some unfading spirit of youth, some ageless vitality had been breathed into them" (Per. 13. 5, trans. Scott-Kilvert). Elsewhere, Plutarch links the Olympieion with Plato's Critias as "beautiful fragments."\(^{10}\) He is shocked by Demetrius Poliorcetes' misbehavior on the Acropolis (Demet. 24. 1 and Comp. Demet. et Ant. 4. 2), even though the goddess Athena herself had allegedly entertained Demetrius in the Opisthodomos of the Parthenon. Plutarch says it would not be becoming to the city" to tell the sordid details.

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9 Fr. 142, from Cam. 19.
10 Sol. 32. 2. The temple was completed by Hadrian in 131/2.
Various other buildings are mentioned as enduring to Plutarch's own time (μέχρι έτη νόν, καιθ' ήμισε). At Gargettus there was an ἄροτήριον or shrine which commemorated Theseus' cursing of his ungrateful compatriots (Thes. 35. 5). He mentions a μνημεῖον Ἰνδοῦ which marked the spot where an Indian grandee in Augustus' train lay down on his own funeral pyre (Alex. 69. 8). He notes the tomb of the ἔταρχα Pythionice, built for her by her husband Harpalus, which was still there to be seen in Hermus, on the road from Athens to Eleusis (Phoc. 22. 2; cf. Paus. 1. 37. 5). Plutarch describes Nicias' dedications which included a Palladion that had lost its gilding and a temple surmounted by his choregic tripod in the precinct of Dionysus (Nic. 3. 3). He alludes to Pheidias' statue of Athena with its attendant snake (Mor. 381D; Sulla let Athena's lamp go out for want of oil, Sulla 13. 3–4), the statue of Athena Hygeia dedicated by Pericles (Per. 13. 3), and the wooden statue of Athena Polias preserved to his own time (fr. 158. 5). He is not quite sure whether the altar of Peace which the Athenians showed him really was a commemoration of the "Peace of Callias," as they maintained (Cim. 13. 5). He says that he saw at Athens the pillars that were to be removed to Rome by Domitian, which were recut for the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus (Publ. 9. 3). Everyone, he says, venerated the Theseion along with the Parthenon and Eleusinion, even though Theseus had to go into exile (Mor. 607A). He mentions the temple of Asclepius (Mor. 969E), and a temple or precinct known as the ἐνωρεῖον (Arist. 27. 4). He recounts how the statue of Dionysus in the Gigantomachy near the south wall of the Acropolis (dedicated by Attalos of Pergamum, according to Paus. 1. 25. 2) was dislodged by strong winds, along with colossal statues of Eumenes and Attalos himself, and blown down to the theater below (Ant. 60. 4). He explains the significance of the bronze tongueless lioness at the Acropolis gates (Mor. 505E–F).

Cults

Plutarch has an abiding interest in cults and religious observances (which is not surprising, in view of his own career). He notices the following Athenian festivals, ordered by Attic month as in Athens' "Festkalender" (Dübner): [Hekatombaion] Kronia (Mor. 477D), Panathenaia (Thes. 24. 3; Demet. 12. 3), peplos Mor. 477D – cf. fr. 212, where Theodoret credits Plutarch with the statement that the Panathenaia, Dionysia, Thesmophoria and Eleusinian mysteries were brought to Athens by Orpheus; [Boedromion] thanks for Plataea (Mor. 349E), Artemis Agrotera (Mor. 862B, also 862A procession to Agrae, 1099E Marathon feast ἕχρι νόν), Boedromia (Thes. 27. 3), Greater Mysteries (Phoc. 6. 7, Alex. 31. 8, Demet. 26. 1, Mor. 604C; cf. Lyc. 30. 6 the Spartan Strattonikos' comment that "the Athenians should conduct mysteries and processions, since that's what they excel at"); [Metageitnion] Metageitnia (Mor. 601B); [Pyanepsion] Theseia (Thes. 4. 1, 36; Cychreus 10. 3; Theseus' appearance at Marathon
Illinois Classical Studies, XIII.2

35. 8 with Paus. 1. 15. 4), Thesmophoria (Dem. 30. 5; Mor. 378E fast by women sitting on the ground on the second day, the Nesteia; cf. fr. 212), Oschophoria (Thes. 22); [Gamelon] Lenaea (fr. 71A) and Theogamia (fr. 165. 18 near conjunction of the sun and moon); [Anthesterion] Anthesteria (Pithoigia Mor. 655D–E, cf. 735D–E; Choes on the second day Ant. 70. 3), Lesser Mysteries, or Mysteries in Agrai (Demet. 26. 1), Diasia (Mor. 477D); [Elaphbolion] City Dionysia (Demet. 12 festival renamed "Demetria"; Menander Mor. 347E; cf. 604C, fr 212); [Munichion] "Munichia" victory at Salamis (Mor. 349E ff.), Olympiaia (Phoc. 37. 1 hippeis' procession to Zeus); [Thargelion] Thargelia (Demet. 8. 5; Plato born during festival Mor. 717D), Plynteria (Alc. 34. 2); [not securely dateable] Adonia (Nic. 13. 11, Alc. 18. 5 with Dover's n. in Comm. on Thuc. vol. IV, p. 271).

Besides these official cults of Athens Plutarch alludes to other matters of a cultic nature. He notes the special sacrifice offered by the Aiantid tribe after Plataea (Arist. 19. 6). There are perpetual fires at Delphi and Athens—the latter the lamp before Athena's statue in the Parthenon—which have to be relighted with mirrors whenever they are allowed to go out (as, for example, by Sulla) (Num 9. 5). He describes three sacred ploughings, at Skiron, at Raria near Eleusis, and the Bouyzgian one at the base of the Acropolis (Mor. 144B). At Mor. 291A (cf. fr. 157. 28) he reports that no ivy is allowed inside Hera's temple at Athens, but it is used in the Dionysiac festivals of Agrionia (cf. 299F, 717A) and Nuktelia (cf. 364F). Zeus Meilichios is called by the Athenians Maimaktes (Mor. 458B). The festival of Metageitnia is celebrated by former residents of Melite who moved to Diomeia (Mor. 601B–C). A "Muse festival," perhaps private to members of the Academy, is given as the setting of Book IX of the Quaest. conv. (Mor. 736C). The Athenians hold the seventh of every month sacred as being the day on which Apollo was born; they carry laurel branches and deck the basket with garlands and hymn the god on that day (fr. 103. 10 dubium). At Demet. 40. 8 Plutarch reports that Demetrius personally conducted the Pythian Games at Athens, saying that Apollo was the founder of the Athenian race.

Myths

Plutarch notices the following myths directly or indirectly concerned with Athens. Castor and Pollux are called "Anakes" there (Numa 13. 6). The story of the contest between Poseidon and Athena for possession of the territory was invented by the kings of Athens in order to turn the Athenians away from seafaring to tillage of the soil (Them. 19. 3: Themistocles had to counteract this; the story is alluded to also at Mor. 489B and 740F). It was Celeus of Eleusis who first established a diurnal σώματος called "Prytaneion" (Mor. 667D). There is a passing reference to Ion at Mor. 1125D.
Plutarch says he saw remains of Solon's ἀξίους preserved in the Prytaneion (Sol. 25. 1). He knows that the ephubes take their oath in the sanctuary of Agraulos (Alc. 15. 7). In several places he alludes to the procedure of ostracism and twice he describes it in detail (Them. 22. 5, Arist. 7. 5–6). He knows of the ancestral (πάτριον) custom of selecting archons and thesmothetai by lot (Per. 9. 4, Demet. 46. 2; cf. Mor. 340C). He alludes to the law forbidding χορηγοί (who were allotted from the tribes: Alex. 29. 2) to use foreign χορευτική, and Demades' flouting of it (Phoc. 30. 6). He mentions the law prohibiting the cutting out of a sacred olive (Mor. 703C). He makes passing reference to the Prytaneion and Thesmotheteion (Mor. 714B; Sol. 25. 1 for the Prytaneion), and to presidency of the Areopagus and membership in the Amphictyonic Council, for which he says even old men were eligible (Mor. 749B). He remarks that Demosthenes' fine could not simply be remitted, "for it was unconstitutional for the people to abolish a penalty by an act of grace" (Dem. 27. 8). He notes the importance in his time of the στρατηγία, which was held three times by his teacher Ammonios (Mor. 813D). He tells his readers that members of the Areopagus were forbidden to write poetry (Mor. 348B). Large numbers of spectators were enabled to attend the theater even in Plutarch's day through distribution of the Θεωρητικόν (Mor. 122D–E). The Athenians buried their war-dead in δημόσιαι ταφαί (Mor. 350C).

Athenian democracy comes in for special notice. He reports Solon's eulogy of the Athenian system of government, in which the people "hearken to one herald and one archon, law" (Mor. 152D). In his essay on the three forms of government (of which Plutarchan authorship has been questioned, in my opinion wrongly) he singles out Athens as an example of a nation that has reached the apogee of her power and dominion over others under an "autonomous and unmixed democracy" (Mor. 826F). On the other hand he disapproves of senseless chauvinism and finds laughable the attitude that "there is a better moon at Athens than at Corinth" (Mor. 601C, from De exilio); the various local officials such as archons, διοικηται and πρυτάνεις have to be forgone in exile, or transcended in a "cosmic" world-view like that of Socrates (601A). He notes that Antony was made an Athenian citizen and that he held the office of gymnasiarch (Ant. 33. 7). He names Anytus son of Anthemion as the man who reputedly first bribed a jury (Cor. 14. 6).

Plutarch devotes one of the Greek Questions to a discussion of why the girls of Bottiaea shout, as they dance, "Let's go to Athens!" (Mor. 298F–299A; cf. Thes. 16. 3). In olden times, he remarks, the Athenians called their dead "Demetrians" (Mor. 943B). From of old Athenians were the natural enemies of wolves, because they were pastors and not farmers (Sol. 23. 4; cf. Dem. 23. 6). They were not originally natural seafarers (Thes. 17. 6). They have an ancestral custom of dividing their days into "good,"
“bad,” and “intermediate” (fr. 101. 5), and regularly choose a day near the conjunction of the sun and moon for marriages (fr. 105. 18; cf. the doubtful fr. 1 from Alexandrian Proverbs). Their gymnasium is consecrated to Apollo (Mor. 724C). Bitches were debarred from the Acropolis because they copulated openly (Comp. Demet. et Ant. 4. 2; cf. 290B from Aitia Romana).

The Theater at Athens

Plutarch was present at the Great Dionysia in the winter of 96–97; he says he attended the victory celebration (ἐπινίκια) when his friend Serapion won the dithyrambic competitions for the tribe Leontis.11 At De exilio 604C he comments (with a tone of some disapproval) that the exile is too busy to Διονυσίως ἐν ἄστει [sc. Athens] πανηγυρίζειν. At 710F he quotes an anonymous Spartan’s remark about the extravagant costs of mounting theater productions and the excessive competitiveness of the actors and poets: “it was senseless of the Athenians [the Spartan remarked acidly] to sport in such earnest.” There is another, similar disparagement from an unnamed Spartan at glor. Athen. 348F: “the Athenians erred greatly in expending such zeal (σπουδήν) on mere play,12 i.e., wasting on the theater money that could have supported major embassies and campaigns.” There are dismissive remarks to a similar effect elsewhere in the Moralia. At apoph. Lac. 230B Nicander is reported to have said to an anonymous Athenian who charged him with being “too opposed to leisure,” “you’re right, we don’t σπουδάζομεν about casual matters or waste our σπουδή.”13 At 477D Plutarch heaps scorn on οἱ πολλοί who eagerly await the Kronia, Diasia and Panathenaia and pay money to laugh at mimes and dancers. He remarks that on Cyprus the kings act as χορηγοὶ, whereas at Athens they are allotted from the tribes (Alex. 29. 2). He alludes to an Athenian law forbidding foreigners to be χορευται and Demades’ showy flouting of it by bringing into the theater the 1000-dr. fine for each foreigner he employed.14 At Phoc. 19. 1–2 he describes an occasion on which a χορηγός refused to accede to an actor’s request for an extravagant retinue which the actor considered appropriate for the role he was playing. Elsewhere, he makes remarks of a more general kind on the nature of acting and “impersonation.” Although they are not necessarily to be connected to specific performances, they suggest that Plutarch was a fairly frequent visitor to the theater. At

11 Mor. 628A; see n. 5 above.
12 Compare the anecdote Plutarch reports of how Solon chided Thespis after a performance for “telling such lies before so many people.” When Thespis tried to defend himself on grounds that this was just “play,” Solon silenced him by remarking that there was a risk that this “play” would be carried over into serious political business (Sol. 29).
14 Phoc. 30. 6; cf. p. 239 above.
Dem. 22. 5 he comments on actors who play kings or tyrants: “these men do not weep or laugh as their feelings dictate, but as the subject of the drama demands” (trans. Scott-Kilvert). In the *glor.* *Athen.* he makes a passing reference to actors “exhibiting the deeds of generals and kings, and merging themselves with their characters as tradition records them” (*Mor.* 345E, trans. F. C. Babbitt; in section 5 he expresses the view that tragedians like Sophocles did not do as much for Athens as the city’s great generals).

Criticism of Athenian Democracy

Plutarch saw some dangers inherent in the Athenian system, particularly the evils of demagogy. His clever formulation of the changeable and impressionable nature of the Athenian δήμος has already been cited.\(^{15}\) They were likely to be swept along and to overrule the more measured advice of a cautious general like Nicias (*Comp. Nic. et Crass.* 3). Nicias knew how ferocious the Athenian people could be to an unsuccessful commander, for Plutarch reports him as saying, after his defeat in Sicily, that he would rather risk death at the hands of his enemies than have to face his fellow-citizens (*Nic.* 22. 2–3; cf. Thuc. 7. 48. 4). Their willingness to follow—even blindly—a forceful leader like Themistocles is implied by the story of Themistocles’ remark to his son who, Themistocles said, held greatest power over the Greeks: the Athenians gave orders to the Greeks, Themistocles gave orders to the Athenians, Themistocles’ wife gave orders to him, and the boy gave orders to his mother (*Them.* 18. 7, *Cat. mai.* 8. 5, the doubtful *Mor.* 67C). Plutarch cites Solon’s quip that he gave the Athenians not the best laws, but “the best that they would accept” (*Sol.* 15. 1–2). The following story may be unhistorical, but it is useful for pointing the moral which Plutarch wishes to draw. Aristeides sought re-election to some magistracy, but his motive was to demonstrate to the Athenians how gullible they could be. He was purposely lax in not making some public officials give an accounting of their tenure of office. He then went before the people with the public rebuke: “it brings a man more reputation in your eyes if he gratifies criminals than if he protects public property” (*Arist.* 4; a similar remark attributed to Lycurgus at *Mor.* 541F and cf. 842A–B). Another story to illustrate how easily the wool could be pulled over the eyes of the Athenian δήμος is told in the *Life of Alcibiades.* Pericles had been worrying about “handing in his accounts” after holding an office (by implication, the ἐπιμέλεια of the Parthenos-statue), and Alcibiades advised him to seek a way instead of not having to give an accounting to the people (*Alc.* 7. 3).

The Athenian *Lives* contain a fairly large number of anecdotes whose point is the fickleness and basic lack of common sense of the Athenian

\(^{15}\) *Mor.* 799C; see above p. 233.
electorate. For example, Phocion is reported to have rebuked the tiro orator Pytheas for pandering to the people and thus playing their νεόντις, "new slave" (Phoc. 21. 1). Phocion was noted for his simplicity of life and a kind of showy abstemiousness that annoyed the Athenians; it was, Plutarch remarks, as if they considered him a living reprimand to their own extravagant customs, like expensive victory banquets (Phoc. 20. 5). Demosthenes castigated the Athenians with the remark, "I will be your adviser if you don't want it, but not your sycophant even if you do" (Dem. 14. 4). When in exile Demosthenes asked the goddess Athena with some bitterness how she could take delight in the "three harshest beasts—the owl, the serpent and the Athenian δῆμος" (Dem. 26. 6). The Athenians of the classical period arrogantly thought themselves invincible; they couldn't believe the report that their fleet had been destroyed in Sicily (Nic. 30. 1 = Mor. 509A). At Mor. 20C he quotes Melanthis' dictum that the Athenian state was saved by the constant quarrelling of its rhetors. Luckily, they didn't all crowd to the same side of the boat, so someone was always preventing a capsize by drawing in the opposite direction.

Athens and Her Conquerors

Alexander said he would show the Athenians that he was a great man, not a παῖς or μειράκιος, as Demosthenes had called him (Alex. 11. 6), but he absolved Athens of all blame, saying she would have to rule Greece if anything happened to him (Alex. 12. 2 = Phoc. 17. 8). After the victory at the Granicus he sent three hundred shields to Athens (Alex. 16. 17), and at the Hydaspes he cried, "Athenians! Can you believe what danger I am undergoing to win glory in your eyes?" (Alex. 60. 6). When Athens sent envoys to Sulla to sue for peace they used various examples from ancient Athenian history, Theseus, Eumolpus and Athens' services in the Persian Wars; Sulla retorted that the Romans sent him not to be taught history (φίλομακρός) but to subdue the rebels (Sul. 13. 4). Pompey gave Athens fifty talents and was specially munificent to her philosophers (Pomp. 42. 5). Antony was dubbed "philathenaios" (Ant. 23. 2) and, as was noted above, held the office of gymnasiarch; the Athenians were especially fond of his wife Octavia.

Athens and Sparta

When Alcibiades was in the western Peloponnese urging that Patras build long walls to the sea, a native of the place remarked that it appeared they were to be swallowed up by the Athenians; Alcibiades replied, "Yes, but it will be little by little and starting at the feet, whereas the Spartans will swallow you whole and at one gulp" (Alc. 15. 6). Erasistratus son of Phaiax commented that the Spartans were better in public, the Athenians in private life (Ages. 15. 5). An Athenian was boasting to Antalcidas that his
countrymen had often driven the Spartans from the river Cephisus; Antalcidas remarked wryly that the Spartans had never driven the Athenians from the Eurotas (*Ages. 31. 5 = Mor. 810F*). Pleistoanax son of Pausanias said, in retort to a charge that the Spartans were òμοθείς, “we are the only Greeks who have learnt no evil from you Athenians” (*Lyc. 20. 4*).

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Plutarch’s admiration for Athens and appreciation of her achievements, which it has been my purpose to document, was not entirely unmitigated. He was sensitive to the snooty superiority shown by the Athenians to his fellow-countrymen and he seems pained to have to report that the Athenians “used to call us Boeotians ‘thick and insensitive and stupid’” (*Mor. 995E*). Athenian citizenship might be a much-sought-for prize, and one awarded only rarely in the earlier period of her history, but some, at any rate, could keep it in perspective. Plutarch shows a certain delight in telling how the Stoic philosophers Zeno and Cleanthes refused the award, explaining that they might seem to be injuring their own cities were they to become Athenians (*Mor. 1034A*), and Panaetius of Rhodes refused a similar grant with the remark that “one city was enough for a sensible man” (*fr. 86. 11*).

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16 I am grateful to members of the audience at the Athens Conference, especially Mrs. Judith Binder, for encouraging comments.
Nepos and Plutarch: From Latin to Greek Political Biography

JOSEPH GEIGER

It is now almost a hundred years since the publication of Soltau's article on Nepos and Plutarch—the only study, as far as I am aware, that deals exclusively with the two biographers. It will come as no surprise that Soltau's paper was devoted solely to Plutarchean Quellenforschung, written, as it was, in the heyday of that genre. (As a matter of fact it was well above par for the course). The present study aims at putting the relationship between the two writers in a broader context. While there is no need to discuss again those Plutarchean biographies where Nepos was used as a source it may well be worth the while to try and reconstruct the circumstances in which Plutarch came to rely on Nepos as well as the extent of that reliance; a better understanding of Plutarch's dependence on Nepos will help us to assess the extent of his innovation and achievement.

I

The assassination of Domitian on September 18th, 96 not only started a new era in the political history of the Roman world, en era “during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous,” but also was the commencement of a new period in the literature of the Empire, ubi sentire quae velis et quae seniias dicere licet (Tac. H. 1. 1). Tacitus was not alone: at the same time that he turned to denouncing the tyranny and to exalting the newly found rara temporum felicitas in the Life of his father-in-law Agricola, his Greek contemporary Plutarch engaged in his first work of historical relevance, the Lives of the Roman Emperors from Augustus to

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1 I wish to thank Dr. Deborah Levine Gera for her advice and criticism of this paper. Needless to say, the remaining faults are my own.


4 Gibbon, Decline and Fall ch. 3 (I. 70 Modern Libr. ed.).
Vitellius. In this choice Plutarch displayed both his preoccupation with biography, the chief source of his later fame, and his interest in Roman history. In fact the remarkable parallel between Plutarch and Tacitus goes beyond the coincidence that both started to work on historical material during the short reign of Nerva. Tacitus, after his first major work treating the Year of the Four Emperors and the Flavian dynasty, decided to cover the earlier part of the Principate in the Annales; in the event, while composing that masterpiece he may have felt compunction for not starting earlier than the accession of Tiberius. That Plutarch's acquaintance with Roman history was superficial and commonplace I have endeavoured to show in an analysis of his references to figures from Republican history in the Moralia. Thus it is not possible to know what gave him the impetus to write biographies of Republican personages: but it must have occurred if not during, at least very briefly after his work on the Emperors. Moreover, even in the series of the Parallel Lives the composition of biographies of persons from the remote past came at a late stage (Thes. 1): it is clear that Plutarch's historical interests were only gradually awakened.

One should not exaggerate Plutarch's achievement in the series of Imperial biographies: on the one hand these Lives hardly merit their description as biographies and on the other hand Plutarch was acquainted with histories of countries that took the form of biographical series. Moreover, Plutarch may have had some prior experience with biographical writing. The single Lives composed perhaps early in Plutarch's life and known to us by title or a few fragments only were apparently not political biographies, though he may have toyed with the idea of the Parallel Lives or a related concept for some time.

6 On this see the valuable contribution of R. Flacelière, "Rome et ses Empereurs vus par Plutarque," AC 32 (1963) 28 ff.
7 Ann. 3. 24. 3; in the magisterial words of his most eminent commentator: "Before Tacitus had gone very far with the Annales he became conscious of his predicament—if not his mistake" (R. Syme, Tacitus [Oxford 1958] 370).
9 Plutarch's relatively late interest in the figures of Hellenistic history (cf. Hermes 109 [1981] 88 ff.) provides another instance that demonstrates his progressing from better-known periods to relatively grey areas.
10 He could be influenced by such factors as the success of the series or his pleasure in it: see Aem. Paul. 1.
12 For such series see Geiger, Hermes 109 (1981) 86 n. 5; for Plutarch's acquaintance with at least one such series see Pomp. 49 = FG + H 88 F 9 and Jacoby II C p. 221 on the nature of Timagenes' work.
13 We have no clues to the dates of the single Lives, but perhaps those at least that seem to reflect Plutarch's local interests may have been written at an early date. Possibly the Scipio Africanus was also undertaken shortly before the Parallel Lives: cf. Geiger, Hermes 109 (1981) 87.
The dawn of the new era was perhaps not quite as glorious and quite as immediately felt in distant Chaeronea as at the seat of the tyrant, still it must have been perceptible enough if it was to occasion now, at a relatively advanced age, the composition of the first major work of historical interest of our author. It is not my aim here to resume the controversy surrounding Plutarch’s sources in the two extant Lives of Galba and Otho\textsuperscript{14} and even less so to speculate about the presumably non-extant sources of the non-extant Lives; yet certain conclusions as to the availability of material and Plutarch’s manner and rate of work present themselves from our dating of the biographical series. It was perhaps completed by the end of the short reign of Nerva, but even so it must have been almost immediately afterwards that he started work on the great project of the Parallel Lives.

It has been suggested\textsuperscript{15} that the dedication to Sosius Senecio coincided with the latter’s consulate in 99, leaving very short time indeed to plan and start work on the series. Whatever it was that gave Plutarch his first impetus towards a composition on such a grand scale we may assume that he must have formed a general idea and a plan of the work before he started its execution.

In all probability such a general plan would have included at least three ingredients: it must have been based on the cardinal idea of the Parallel Lives, viz. the juxtaposition of Greek and Roman statesmen and generals; it must have contained at least a preliminary list of the heroes whose lives were to be the subjects of the biographies; and it must have surmised a certain literary format of the biographies.

No doubt the synkrisis of individual Greek and Roman statesmen and generals on a more or less equal footing is the most impressive single feature of the series. These comparisons supply much of the characteristic flavour of the work and are certainly one of the important reasons for their great literary success.\textsuperscript{16} Of course Plutarch employed this literary technique also often in the Moralia,\textsuperscript{17} yet it never became, either in the other writings of Plutarch or in those of any other author of Antiquity, such a predominant literary feature as in the Parallel Lives. The question as to Plutarch’s goals in these comparisons has been debated with some vigour;\textsuperscript{18} it seems to me that for our present purpose this question should be subordinated to the one concerning the process by which Plutarch arrived at his plan. In other


\textsuperscript{15} C. P. Jones, “Towards a Chronology of Plutarch’s Works,” JRS 56 (1966) 70.

\textsuperscript{16} For the latest contribution on this subject see C.B.R. Pelling, “Synkrisis in Plutarch’s Lives,” Miscellanea Plutarchea (Quaderni del Giornale Filologico Ferrarese 8 [Ferrara 1986]) 84 ff.

\textsuperscript{17} J. Barthelmess, “Recent Work on the Moralia,” ibid. 61, has recently reminded us all of the basic unity of the Lives and the Moralia.

words, I do not believe that Plutarch first defined his goals, whether literary, moralistic or political, and then sought the ways and means to execute them, but rather that only after the idea of the comparisons had occurred to him did he guide it in the direction most appropriate to his outlook. Now it has been suggested that Plutarch may have derived his idea from Nepos' juxtaposition of series of Greek (later Foreign) and Roman generals, a feature that must have been present also in the other books of the De viris illustribus. Though this contention cannot be proven it is greatly enhanced by the facts that Nepos is the only writer who is known to have based a long series of Lives on synkrisis and that Plutarch must have become acquainted with Nepos' writings at a relatively early date.

It has been shown that North Italians predominated among Plutarch's Roman friends. Yet the link with Nepos was perhaps provided by a man whose own acquaintance with Plutarch is not directly attested. Four of Plutarch's friends were also friends of Pliny the Younger: Arulenus Rusticus and Avidius Quietus, remnants of the circle of Thrsea Paetus, who may have provided him with the latter's biography of Cato the Younger; C. Minicius Fundanus, a close friend of Pliny, is the principal speaker in the De cohibenda ira; and, lastly and most importantly Sosius Senecio, the addressee of the Parallel Lives as well as of the Quaestiones convivales and the Quomodo quis suos in virtute sentiat profectus was a friend of Pliny. Thus the circumstantial evidence for Pliny's acquaintance with Plutarch seems to be complete. On the other hand Pliny mentions Nepos only once (Ep. 5. 3. 6), in a fleeting reference to those Romans who composed light poetry. Interestingly enough Nepos' poetical efforts are nowhere else mentioned in our extant sources—may one surmise that Pliny's reference reveals an intimate acquaintance with otherwise unknown details of the work of his North Italian compatriot? The massive use made of Nepos by the Elder Pliny and the interest of the latter's nephew in the work of his uncle would certainly support such a hypothesis.

Pliny or any other of Plutarch's North Italian friends may have suggested to Plutarch to read Nepos. Be this as it may, Plutarch's acquaintance with the work of Nepos is a fact. The references leave no place for doubt of the use made by the Greek biographer of his Latin

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20 On Nepos' work see J. Geiger, Cornelius Nepos and Ancient Political Biography (Historia Einzelschriften 47 [Stuttgart 1985]) 84 ff.

21 Jones, Plutarch and Rome, 48 ff., esp. 58, provides all the essential references for what follows.

22 Jones, Plutarch and Rome 61 suggests that Pliny may have omitted Plutarch from his correspondence because the Greek was not well-connected enough. But it is more simple to assume that the omission is due to Plutarch not having visited Rome for some years before the start of Pliny's correspondence.

23 Marc. 30; comp. Pel. Marc. 1 = Marc. 31; Luc. 43; TiGr. 21.
forerunner. It is not too far-fetched to assume that the acquaintance antedates, at least briefly, the inception of the work on the Parallel Lives. However, there still remains the difficulty that the structure of the Parallel Lives, viz. the comparison of individual statesmen and generals, is basically different from the comparison of groups as practised by Nepos. I shall return to this issue presently, but first I should like to say a few words on Plutarch's choice of heroes.

It has been mentioned above that Plutarch's knowledge of Roman history and acquaintance with its heroes, as mirrored in the *Moralia*, was restricted to commonplaces and the minimum of conventional education. However, even though we know (*Aem. Paul. 1*) that Plutarch did expand the series as it progressed he must have had some initial plan, a tentative list of heroes whose lives he intended to describe. I have suggested, and wish now to reaffirm the suggestion, that such a tentative list of Roman heroes was derived from Nepos' *De viris illustribus*, who thus served as Plutarch's first guide to Roman biography.²⁴

Up to this point I have been reiterating and to some extent confirming and expanding the connexions between Plutarch and Nepos as suggested by other scholars and by myself. Indeed the influence of Nepos on Plutarch is not to be underestimated. On the other hand if our emphasis has resulted in making light of the originality of Plutarch it is time now to redress the balance.

As I have stated, the general idea of the Parallel Lives may have been influenced by Nepos, and the list of Roman heroes to be treated may also have been derived from Nepos. However, besides the basic idea of comparisons and a general outline of the contents, a third ingredient, at least, is to be assumed in Plutarch's blueprint, viz. the literary format of the individual Lives—or rather books containing a pair each—and of the series as a whole. It is here that Plutarch's dependence on Nepos ends and his genius comes to full fruition. It must have been at a very early stage that Plutarch decided on the scale of his biographies, and it is this scale where the most obvious difference between him and Nepos can be seen.

Dare we guess that comparison of pairs of Lives rather than of whole series was a consequence of the size of Plutarch's biographies? Certainly a comparison such as Nepos' would not have been practicable after a number of book-length pairs such as Plutarch's. Size and literary format are

²⁴ I cannot discuss here the problem of the sources of the anonymous *De viris illustribus* found in the Aurelian corpus (see P. L. Schmidt in *RE Suppl.* 15. 1641 ff., disregarding his contention that what is known as Nepos is in fact Hyginus: J. Geiger, "Comelius Nepos and the Authorship of the Book on Foreign Generals," *LCM* 7 (1982) 134 ff.; on the elogia of the forum of Augustus see M. M. Sage, "The Elogia of the Augustan Forum and the *De viris illustribus*," *Historia* 28 (1979). Unfortunately Sage in this and two other papers devoted to the *De viris illustribus* refuses to reexamine the question of the sources). If Nepos was a source the similarities between the lists of Plutarch and the *De viris illustribus* may be regarded as circumstantial evidence in favour of our hypothesis.
inseparably connected. Plutarch must have sensed at an early stage that the strait-jacket of short Lives, more or less on the scale of those of Nepos, would hardly provide the opportunity to develop characters such as envisaged by him. That literary works, not unlike living organisms, attained to the peak of their development only at an optimal size was a doctrine already established by Aristotle (Poetics 1450b35–1451a15). Indeed it is too often that modern commentators ignore or pay too little attention to this important aspect of literary genre.

There must be a certain correlation between the theme an author undertakes to treat and the literary genre employed by him. Plutarch's biographies seem to owe at least part of their success to their size—not only in relation to Nepos, but also to some of their modern mammothian counterparts. The insistence of modern literary criticism on the significant differences in genre between novel, short story, "short short story" etc. emphasizes, rather than otherwise, the importance of length for the various genres: taking the various lengths as a datum they seem suited to the expression of basically different literary forms.  

II

There is no need to stress Plutarch's achievement as an author nor to emphasize again that his biographies should not be used as quarries that only provide stones to erect the edifices of Greek and Roman history. Nevertheless literary analyses of Plutarchean Lives are still few and far between. I shall devote the second part of this paper to a literary analysis, or, rather, the analysis of two important literary aspects of one of the most successful Lives, the Cato minor, with a view to demonstrate Plutarch's achievement and to show how this achievement was bound up with shaking off the fetters of the short, Nepos-sized, biographies.

Leo  established that at the outset of a Life, before the narration of the πράξεις of the hero proper, Plutarch assembles certain sets of information

25 See e.g. R. J. Kilchenmann, Die Kurzgeschichte. Form und Entwicklung 5 (Stuttgart etc. 1978); B. von Wiese, Novelle 3 (Stuttgart 1967); V. Shaw, The Short Story. A Critical Introduction (London and New York 1983). It is perhaps not too fanciful to admit the analogy from biology. Apparently Aristotle's postulates have been vindicated by modern biology: though there is a certain correlation between the size of an animal and the size of its brain, so that larger mammals need larger brains simply to fulfil the same functions as small mammals, we may predicate the intelligence of a certain species by its deviation from the quotient postulated for it between body-size and brain. Man is more intelligent than other animals not because the size of its brain—elephants and whales have larger ones—but because it has the largest positive deviation from the expected brain-size for an animal of its dimensions: S. J. Gould, Ever Since Darwin. Reflections in Natural History (Harmondsworth, Middlesex 1986) 181 ff. Similarly, other characteristics are achieved at greatest effect at a certain body size.

26 F. Leo, Die griechisch-römische Biographie nach ihrer literarischen Form (Leipzig 1901) 180 ff.
divided into categories. These categories include, in the present case, Cato's γένος, ἡθος, παιδεία, δίαιτα and λόγος. Yet after the analysis of these characteristics one realizes immediately that a large section of the first part of the Life, chs. 2–3, is left out of this analysis. Though Leo refers to this section briefly in saying that sometimes, as in the case of both Catos and of Alcibiades, characteristic anecdotes are told beforehand, the significance of these chapters goes far beyond that and is crucial to the structure of the whole Life. The two chapters are, on their face value, the narration of a number of anecdotes from the childhood of Cato. Yet these episodes are not merely “characteristic anecdotes told beforehand” but suggestive in their features of the central issues of the whole Life. There is no need here to repeat that Plutarch regarded characteristic deeds, even if of small significance in themselves, as the best way to expound the character of his heroes. It is clear that these anecdotes are inserted in their place not only because they belong to Cato's childhood, but also because they reveal much about his ἡθος, which was ἀτρεπτὸν καὶ ὀπαθὲς καὶ βέβαιον ἐν πάσιν (1. 3). His steadfast character was bound to react over and over again in the same way in the same circumstances and have the same reactions; hence these childhood anecdotes are not merely characteristic stories about our hero, but become foreshadowings, subtle prefigurations of other, more important incidents in his life. Thus the themes of these episodes assume the force of leitmotifs, and in ever-recurring incidents of a familiar shape we are reminded of the main traits of the character of our hero.

In the first of the childhood anecdotes we are told (2. 1–5) how Poppaeidius Silo, the Italian leader, when at Livius Drusus' home in Rome during the agitation of the Allies for citizenship, asked Cato, then four years old, to exert his influence with his uncle on behalf of the claims of the Italians. When the boy silently refused, Silo turned to menaces and threatened to throw him out of the window. After all this was of no avail he let him go and expressed to his friends his admiration for Cato's character.

This steadfastness of character and absence of fear of physical harm were time and again put to trial in later life, when the violent clashes of the Late Republic often converted the forum into a battle-field. Plutarch emphasises the courage of Cato, last to retreat even against the most formidably superior enemy: thus he defies Metellus Nepos and his gangs and bravely fights back until victory (27. 4–28. 5). He is last to retreat when Caesar's men maltreat Bibulus and his followers and drive them away from the forum (32. 4). When he offered single-handed resistance to Caesar's Campanian

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27 For the following cf. my dissertation A Commentary on Plutarch's Cato minor (Oxford 1971) and the Introduction to the forthcoming bilingual Italian edition and translation of the Life (Rizzoli, Milano).

28 One of the most important utterances to this effect is contained in the Cato minor itself (24. 1).
Law he did not stop arguing and persuading even when led away to prison (33. 2). Cato is the last to retreat before the partisans of Pompey when they use force to stop Domitius from presenting himself as a candidate for the consular elections (41. 6–8). Lastly, Cato resists force used against him in his various attempts to stop the passing of the lex Trebonia (43. 2–7).

In the second of the childhood anecdotes (2. 6–8) young Cato, while taking part in the games at a birthday-party, is asked for help by a boy imprisoned in a chamber by an elder boy; Cato frees him and then, angrily departing, is escorted home by the other boys. The purpose of the anecdote is to show Cato's inherent sense of justice and righteousness, brought out again and again in the Life.

Among the many acts of justice related by Plutarch it will suffice to mention Cato's handling of the Treasury (17. 2–4), the story about the absolute trust in his uprightness even by his adversaries (21. 5–6), his choice as umpire to ensure the fairness of elections (44. 7–14 with a short digression on the virtue of δικαιωσόνη); his support for Favonius against foul play at elections (46. 2–3), and his saving the Uticans from mass-murder (58. 1). Small wonder that Cato becomes a by-name for uprightness (19. 7) and his membership on a jury is considered sufficient to ensure a fair and just trial (48. 9–10). His being escorted home by his playmates is often repeated in later life by his supporters: on the last day of his quaestorship he is escorted home by almost all the citizens, who approve of his conduct (18. 5); the senators accompany him when he is led away by Caesar to prison (33. 3); upon his return from Cyprus he is met by all the magistrates, priests, senate and a large part of the people (39. 1); when defeated at the praetorian elections he is escorted home by more people than all the successful candidates together (42. 7); and when arrested by Trebonius he is followed on the way by such a crowd that the tribune prefers to let him go (43. 6).

Two of the anecdotes told by Plutarch are dated to Sulla's dictatorship. When the aristocratic youth were performing the "Troia" under Sulla's regime the participants insisted on substituting Cato for their appointed leader (3. 1–2). Subsequently Plutarch is at pains to make Cato appear as a popular favourite, always deemed worthy of leadership, though of course his failure to obtain the highest offices of state could easily be suggestive of the contrary, as Plutarch himself must have been aware.29 Cato receives from his soldiers while a military tribune δόξα κοί χάρις κοί υπερβάλλουσα τιμή κοί φιλοσφοσόνη (9. 8); there is a graphic description of the emotional scenes when he leaves them (12., 1). He is invited to stand for the tribuneship (20. 1); in the praetorian elections he would have headed the poll but for Pompey's machinations (42. 4); only Cato, of all the commanders, is able to arouse the soldiers before Dyrrhachium (54. 7–9); in Africa he

29 Cf. Phocion 3. 1.
yields the command to Metellus Scipio, his superior in rank, although he is the popular favourite (57. 6); he is appointed commandant of Utica upon request of the inhabitants as well as of Scipio (58. 2); the council in Utica prefer to die with him than to escape by betraying his virtue (60. 2); the horsemen who escaped from Thapsus said that they did not need Juba to pay them and would not be afraid of Caesar if Cato were to lead them (63. 3); and his esteem in the eyes of the Uticans is shown by the lamentations and the honours they bestow on him after his death (71). His escort on many occasions is another series of examples of the favour he commanded.

Perhaps the most interesting and certainly the most important among the anecdotes of Cato's youth is the one where he, then fourteen years old, asks his tutor Sarpedon for a sword to slay Sulla and free the State from slavery (3. 3–7). Libertas and Cato's determination to fight for it is the leitmotif that goes through the whole of the Life, gaining strength as the fight for the survival of the Republic becomes more and more desperate, until Cato's self-immolation on the altar of Libertas ends his story in an all-powerful crescendo. Cato, who as a youth wanted to slay the tyrant Sulla, prefers to die rather than to receive mercy from the hands of the victorious tyrant Caesar. Characteristically, Cato already envisages the possibility of death in the fight for Libertas when Metellus Nepos returns to Rome to stand for the tribunate in 63 (20. 5); henceforth ἔλευθερα is the watchword that permeates all the political controversies in which Cato takes part; every struggle and fight of Cato from now on is a fight for Roman Libertas; Cato dies when there is no hope for Libertas, and there is no hope for Libertas when Cato dies. Even the epilogue carries on the story of Libertas, telling how Cato's son falls at Philippi in the cause of Freedom (73. 5) and his daughter commits suicide after the death of her husband Brutus the Liberator (73. 6).

The last episode in the series tells us about the brotherly love of Cato and Caepio and Caepio's admiration for his half-brother's σωφροσύνη and μετριότης (3. 8–10). The story is to some extent out of the line with the preceding ones since its concern is with the δίαιτα, the private conduct of the hero and not his public image and behaviour. Nevertheless the one is as much part of the biography as the other, and the episode told here is as characteristic of Cato's δίαιτα in later life as were the foregoing anecdotes of his public life. Love for his brother, we are told, made him join the army in the war against Spartacus (8. 1), and his conduct at the untimely death of Caepio (11) is sufficient proof of this trait of his character. Indeed his reliance on family and marriage ties (with Silanus 21. 3; Lucullus 29. 6; Domitius 41. 3) may reveal something of the same feature. Last but not least Caepio's praise for Cato's σωφροσύνη and μετριότης should be noted; here we should mention, besides the characteristics that Plutarch assembles under the category of δίαιτα (5. 6–6. 7), his first campaign (with brother Caepio!) where his εὐταξία and ἀνδρία, reminiscent of his glorious
ancestor, are mentioned among the virtues as opposed to the μονάκια and τριφθη of his fellow soldiers (8. 2; cf. 3. 10); there is great emphasis on his modesty as military tribune (9. 4) and on his Asian journey (12. 3–4); the modest prizes he gives to the victors at the games (46. 4–5) and, of course, his conduct when leading his troops through the hardships of the African desert (56. 6–7).

So it happens that at the outset of the narration of Cato's career we have not only sufficient knowledge of his background, ἡθος, παιδεία, διάτα etc., but the events of the life themselves, the πράξεις of his career, from the beginning to the glorious end, present themselves to us with an ease that makes any explanations and interruptions in the flow of the narrative superfluous. Clearly such a highly sophisticated narrative technique, showing off Plutarch's artistry to its best advantage, could only be possible in a biography of a certain size, where recurrent leitmotifs had ample space for development.

I wish to conclude with a few remarks on Plutarch's technique of synkrisis in the Cato minor, the more so since it has been recently suggested\(^\text{30}\) that it is of no importance in that Life. It will become evident that such a technique could have been developed by Plutarch only in biographies of the size contained in the Parallel Lives and must have been basically different from whatever comparisons were included in Nepos' works.

The Phocion-Cato minor is, together with the Alexander-Caesar, the Themistocles-Camillus and the Pyrrhus-Marius, one of the few pairs in the Parallel Lives that lack a formal synkrisis. Indeed the formal comparisons at the end of the books serve too often to point out the differences rather than the similarities between the two heroes. In our case it is again a technique of recurring motifs that binds the two Lives in this pair together—they are not compared κατὰ κοινὰς ὁμοιότητας but simply as good men devoted to the state (Phoc. 3. 6). The reason for linking them is their outstanding virtue:

"But the virtues of these men, even down to their ultimate and minute differences, show that their natures had the one and the same stamp, shape and general colour; they were an equal blend, so to speak, of severity and kindness, of caution and braveness, of solicitude for others and fearlessness for themselves, of the careful avoidance of baseness and, in like degree, the eager pursuit of justice."

It is important to remember that this outline is the most extensive direct characterization of the two heroes: in the Lives proper the

delineament of character is done by the usual means of the πράξεως of the men. Thus it is left to the reader to follow up and judge for himself to what extent Phocion and Cato conform in their actions to Plutarch's sketch.

The mixture of αὐστηρόν and φιλάνθρωπον in Phocion is apparent from the contradiction between his ἔθος and his countenance (5. 1); the Athenian people, when in need of a commander, would call upon one who was αὐστηρότατος and φρονιμότατος (8. 3). Phocion, though harsh and stern, earns the surname of χρηστός (10. 4), and in the following section Plutarch discusses at length this mixture of austerity and kindness.

In Cato too austerity seemingly overcame kindness: hence the saying of Curio (14. 7–8). Cato seemed to be a by-word for austerity (19. 9), yet it is suggested that this austerity was outward, deemed suited for public business, while in private he behaved εὐνοικός καὶ φιλανθρώπως (21. 10). Cato's legislation to provide cheap food for the populace is an act of φιλανθρωπία and μετριότης (29. 4); Cato's speech to the Uticans displays his ἀδελφος, γενναῖον and φιλάνθρωπον (60. 1).

The combination of ἀσφαλές and ἀνδρεῖον is more easily apparent in Phocion, whose public career was in the first place that of a military leader. Phocion attached himself to the general Chabrias, whose boldness was not counterbalanced by caution, as was the case with Phocion (6. 1 ff.); on the whole, his entire art of war demonstrated the admirable balance of the two qualities, as can be seen e.g. from the battles chs. 13; 25. Cato on the other hand never had real opportunity to display his qualities as a general (and only for the general is caution becoming), yet on the occasion of his service in the slave-war his courage was among the qualities that were admired (8. 2).

The next shared quality of Phocion and Cato, their care for others mingled with fearlessness for their own person, is again and again demonstrated in their Lives: e.g. Phocion, always fearless for his own person, is worried about the resources of the city (23. 3), does everything possible to save his fellow-citizens (23. 1; cf 31. 2), and his chief concern when facing trial is not for himself, but for his fellow defendants (34. 8). Examples of Cato's fearlessness have been collected above, starting with his behaviour as a four-year-old; his care for others is extended to the Syracusans (53. 4) and to all cities subject to Rome and Roman citizens (53. 5–6); he saves the Uticans from mass-murder (58. 1), and during his last days constantly the fate of his friends and the inhabitants of Utica is before his eyes, while he prepares without fear for death.

Finally, the two share an avoidance of meanness and the pursuit of justice. The examples are too numerous to be collected here entirely; for Cato what has been assembled above should suffice. With Phocion the examples of his treatment of prisoners and allies (13. 7 ff.), and his own

31 As was Plutarch's wont to do: cf. Stiefenhofer, op.cit. 468.
relatives (22. 4) are characteristic of a man who, in true Socratic fashion, would prefer to suffer rather than inflict injustice (32. 6\(^{32}\)) and who was recognised after his death by the people as a patron and guardian of moderation and justice (38. 1). Phocion rejected all attempts to be bribed or influenced by money (21. 3–4; 18. 1; 30. 1), and it is Plutarch's belief that to attack Cato for \(\alpha\iota\sigma\chi\rho\omicron\kappa\epsilon\rho\delta\epsilon\iota\alpha\) is like accusing Heracles of cowardice (52. 8).

Thus on the whole Plutarch was successful in demonstrating the similarities of character between Phocion and Cato. Few will lament the absence of a formal synkrisis at the end of the book, which would hardly add significantly either to our historical knowledge or to our psychological understanding of Plutarch's characters by pointing out in antithetical form the minute differences of the fortunes and fates of the two heroes. On the other hand the transition between the two Lives of the book, making use of a \(\mu\epsilon\nu\ldots\delta\epsilon\—\)clause, is a most skilful structural device. The last sentence of the Phocion draws the parallel between the deaths of Phocion and Socrates: it is left to the reader to draw the parallel between the deaths of Socrates and Cato, so often alluded to, but never expressly stated in the Life.

I think it should be clear by now that Plutarch's art of comparison is sometimes most dominant where it is only implied rather than given a separate section in the book. Most importantly for our subject, it is here that his relation to Nepos seems to be most typical: possibly he owed the idea of comparison to Nepos, but it was his literary genius that brought it to full fruition.

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\(^{32}\) Cf. Plato, *Gorg.* 469c.
Aspects of Plutarch's Characterisation

CHRISTOPHER PELLING

1. Childhood and Development

Immediately we consider Plutarch's treatment of his heroes' childhood, we find ourselves confronting a strange paradox.\(^1\) He is clearly most interested in childhood and education; indeed, it is the exclusive concern of several of his moral essays.\(^2\) He has a quite elaborate theory of youthful development, drawing heavily on the Aristotelian ethic: our initial δυνάμεις render us capable of feeling and responding to specific πάθη, and our responses gradually constitute particular ἐξεις of habitual activity; these eventually evolve into settled θην which inform our moral choices. All that comes out particularly clearly in the De virtute morali. Naturally enough, he insists that moral development of character is the norm for all human beings, and that education has a peculiar value in moulding character and restraining passions.\(^3\) Naturally enough, too, in the Lives he makes a good deal of whatever childhood material he finds in his sources, often straining uncomfortably to extract unreasonably large consequences from slight anecdotes (Sulla is a good example of that). He also gives extensive space

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1 This paper overlaps closely with my essay on “Childhood and Personality in Greek Biography” (henceforth “Childhood”), to appear in Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature, a collection of essays which I am editing for the Oxford University Press (1989): but the scope of that essay did not allow any extended treatment of individual Lives, nor any discussion of the distinguished analysis of Dihle. Some of the points are also treated in an essay on “Plutarch: Roman heroes and Greek Culture” (henceforth “Roman heroes”), to appear in Philosophia Togata (ed. J. Barnes and M. T. Griffin [Oxford 1989]). The present article is lightly annotated: further argument and exemplification of several points may be found in those papers. I apologise for this immodest ring of self-reference, and hope readers will not find the circle too vicious.

2 Especially De profectibus in virtute, An virtus doceri possit?, and De audiendis poetis.

to education—to isolating the teachers of Pericles, for instance, or stressing Lucullus' or Cicero's early intellectual prowess. And there are times when he shrewdly points to the importance of influences, sometimes in ways which involve quite extensive psychological reconstruction: the effect on the young Cleomenes of his marriage to Agis' widow, for instance, when she would constantly describe to him those stirring events (Ag.—Cl. 22 [1]. 3); the influence on Marcellus of being brought up at a time when Rome was constantly at war, so that he had no time to indulge his supposed taste for Hellenic culture (Marc. 1); the impact on Theseus of the heroics of his kinsman Heracles (esp. Thes. 6. 8–8. 2, 11. 2); the effect on Coriolanus of his close and dominant mother (Cor. 4. 5–8). All this seems to bring Plutarch surprisingly close to the themes and interests of modern biography, with its taste for tracing influences and psychological development, and for bringing out and explaining individual differences.

And yet so often these interests of Plutarch seem to lead to peculiarly shallow and disappointing results. So often his treatment of childhood itself is banal and unpenetrating; so often we are left with very little idea of any evolution of the grown man; and, despite those few cases where he does go in for psychological reconstruction, so often he seems to regard understanding the development of his heroes as a surprisingly low priority. Why? It is not a shortage of material; true, he is reluctant to supplement it irresponsibly—but we can also often see him failing to analyse the material he does have, or to carry through the sort of reconstruction of which he was capable. Why doesn't he reconstruct how the elder Cato or Marius must have felt, when they first came from the country to join in smart city life? Or what it must have been like for an Artaxerxes or a Timoleon in the nursery, with such dominant and powerful brothers? Or what Agesilaus must have felt about his lameness, or Themistocles about his dubious parentage? Plutarch has the resources to make such reconstructions, and the interest in youthful development to encourage them: Cleomenes shows that, or Theseus, or Coriolanus; and in each case the theme is stressed enough—rusticity, or the brothers, or the physical disability, or the bastardy. Yet the psychological capital made of it is curiously disappointing, and we are not really led to any deeper understanding of the heroes or their development.

Albrecht Dihle offers a most interesting explanation in his Studien zur griechischen Biographie (Göttingen 1956), when he points to a difference between modern and ancient ideas of the personality. He suggests that modern writers postulate a large number of varied predispositions (Anlagen) in a personality: some are aroused and fostered by specific experiences, especially in childhood; others become stunted or atrophied; and we place especial weight on the irrational in describing these distinctive experiences,
and the psychic drives which they encourage or deflect. Such an analysis need not put especial weight on the development of "the moral will" or "moral consciousness" (though it certainly need not deny that such a will or consciousness exists, with the function of ethically assessing and censoring a person's Anlagen and accommodating them with life's demands): still, a figure can often be represented as passive, a locus for the various predispositions and stimuli to fight it out. This modern picture does clearly posit a complex process of the development of personality, even if it finds little to say about the development of the moral will or consciousness. Plutarch, by contrast, is firmly in the Peripatetic tradition in stressing the moral will. It is that which controls the way in which one's original δυνάμεις respond to particular πάθη, ensuring that these are controlled and guided in such a way that a pattern of ethical conduct (ἐξεια) is followed, which is gradually strengthened into a stable aspect of a person's character (ηθος). The irrational is relevant to the portrait, but only in defining the quality of the πάθη and the δυνάμεις that enable us to respond to them; and it will be natural to concentrate less on the δυνάμεις or the πάθη themselves than on the rational moral will or consciousness that masters them, something that (again in Aristotelian fashion) will be visible in the adult's moral choices which those settled πάθη inform. Thus the irrational typically remains at a level below that of the literary presentation, assumed as part of the individual's development but not explicitly traced. "It is evident," concludes Dihle, "that in so narrow a biographical psychology the modern conception of development has no place."

There is much to admire in this extremely subtle analysis. Dihle is certainly right to draw attention to our view of a person's complex blend of varied Anlagen, and his stress on Plutarch's conception of moral will is also illuminating: the development of such an undifferentiated moral will is very much the register in which education is treated, at least when it is successful—in the cases of Aemilius, for example, or Brutus, or even (with some qualifications) Pericles. Such a will should give one control of the πάθη (cf. esp. Mor. 77d–78e, 82b–c); and Dihle is right to suggest that there is more interest in emphasising the will than in the differentiated analysis of the πάθη themselves, even in cases where those πάθη are important to Plutarch's view of his central figure. But some qualifications should still be made.

First, Dihle's analysis of modern assumptions is closer to theoretical psychology than biographical practice. With some exceptions, especially

5 Cf. esp. Mor. 31b–c, 443d, 451b ff., 467b.
the psychoanalytic school, modern biography does not especially concentrate on these *irrational* elements in childhood; it may include them, but the early display or development of rational traits tends to be much more stressed—particularly in political biography, where the comparison with Plutarch is sharpest, and where a certain gravity and respect for the subject normally inhibits too strong a stress on the irrational. Dihle's analysis is in fact as redolent of Proust as it is of Freud, and in many ways it suits the biographical or autobiographical novel better than biography itself: it is suggestive that Dihle's sole example is not a biography at all but the *Entwicklungsroman* "Grüne Heinrich." And even such novels do not characteristically analyse the predispositions which remain stunted or undeveloped, only those which prefigure important later traits; such an analysis is not far removed from the Peripatetic treatment of \( \delta \nu \nu \hat{\alpha} \mu \varepsilon \iota \) and \( \pi \acute{\alpha} \theta \eta \) which interact to produce later characteristics. (Dihle reasonably observes that the interaction is now described rather differently. We tend to speak of a constant mutual interaction, with *Anlagen* refined and remoulded as a result of experiences; whereas the Peripatetic analysis would regard the \( \delta \nu \nu \hat{\alpha} \mu \varepsilon \iota \) as a constant given, and the interaction as producing distinct \( \xi \varepsilon \varsigma \) and eventually \( \hat{\eta} \theta \eta \). But the difference is at least in part semantic.)

Indeed, in many ways Plutarch stresses irrational \( \pi \acute{\alpha} \theta \eta \) more, not less, than his modern counterparts, at least when he is describing adult figures. This is particularly clear in cases such as *Marius*, *Coriolanus*, *Demetrius*, or *Antony*, where heroes are clearly bad at controlling their passions; but the phenomenon is in fact much more widespread. Time and again we find Plutarch analysing heroes' self-control, and finding them lacking: and we find this particularly frequently in cases where Hellenic education is in point. Marcellus, for instance, had Hellenic tastes, and did his best to indulge them in a warlike period: but he was eventually destroyed by his inability to control his natural bellicosity. Cicero was extraordinarily educated, yet so often he showed himself unable to match up to the emotional demands of the political choices he had to make, and unworthily followed the instincts of his \( \pi \acute{\alpha} \theta \eta \) rather than his reason: in his poor showing in exile, for instance, or in his choice of sides in the civil war, or in his extravagant reaction to his daughter's death. Some people did better, for instance Aemilius, again a man with educated and Hellenic tastes, or Brutus and the younger Cato, both followers of Greek philosophy; others worse, particularly those whose education was lacking—Marius,

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8 Most influentially Erikson's *Young Man Luther* (New York 1958), though ironically his book was published two years after Dihle's.

9 This emerges from the examples I discuss in "Childhood," section III.

10 Dihle, p. 76: this is also noted by Gill, art. cit. (above, n. 3), 471 n. 16.

11 This point is extensively argued in "Roman heroes," whence the following examples are drawn, and in Part II of Simon Swain's Oxford D. Phil. thesis, "Plutarch and Rome: three studies" (1987).
Coriolanus—or whose Hellenism was defective, like the elder Cato. This link of the πάθη with education is unsurprising, given Plutarch's stress on education as the vital prerequisite for self-control: but this leads us back to the original paradox. Plutarch stresses these πάθη in later life, but does very little to trace the development of a hero's self-control in the crucial years of his youth. Admittedly, we do sometimes find something of the kind: Coriolanus' mother stimulating his pride, for instance, or Heracles setting Theseus alight with ambition. Nothing precluded such analysis; but the oddity is that it is so rare, when it is precisely what the interest in the πάθη and their linkage with youth and education would seem to demand. We still need an explanation, and the attitude to the irrational does not offer it: it instead makes the problem more pressing.

In fact it is questionable how far the Peripatetic theory of character illuminates this question. Indeed, that theory would seem to encourage treatment of character-development, with its emphasis on that development of ἔξεσις and that gradual formation of ηθος. Aristotle himself is very clear that both intellectual and moral virtues require development, though it is of a different kind in each case (N. E. 2. 1103a14 ff.); and children have their distinctive pleasures, which everyone likes to grow out of, and their distinctive values (N. E. 10. 117a1-4, 1176b21-33, cf. 3. 1119b5-7). It is utterly appropriate that he should end Book 2 of the Nicomachean Ethics by giving us advice on how to manage our own development, and Book 10 by a more general treatment of education and its importance. If anything, it is Peripatetic practice that goes the other way—the failure of Theophrastus, for instance, to generate much interest in the background or development of individual figures: and indeed the same goes for Aristotle himself, in his typed sketches in N. E. 4 and in his stray biographical comments elsewhere. In fact, Aristotle and Theophrastus seem to provide their own version of the paradox we have already noticed with Plutarch: a theory which implies a considerable preoccupation with education and development, but a curious absence of that preoccupation in practice.

But in their cases it is easier to see why; and this may give a hint for Plutarch too. Dihle himself very properly brings out what Theophrastus and Aristotle are trying to do in producing such stereotyped portraits. They are not suggesting that such types exhaust the definition of any individual human's personality, but rather providing a convenient shorthand portrait of a particular ηθος which an individual may show, along, doubtless, with many other such ηθος. And those typed figures need not even preclude a measure of development: it is simply that in such cases the development would not be very complex or interesting. Plutarch's figures, as again Dihle stresses, are much more individuated, even if (say) his Nicias owes

13 Dihle, 71-73.
14 For Theophrastus cf. Gill, art. cit. (n. 3), 469 n. 4.
something to a Peripatetic typed δεισιδακίμων. His biographical insight is so much richer than anything we can confidently ascribe to the Peripatetics, and if he uses their categories he does so with much more discrimination and human insight. In these more complex cases we might consequently expect development to be more complex too, and at first sight it is still surprising that, in this most obvious area, we seem to have no advance at all. But something like the same explanation may still be the right one. Plutarch's figures may be more complex, but not, perhaps, in a way which needs to posit a particularly singular or interesting process of development.

Here we should follow a different hint of Dihle's account. So far we have been talking only of the complexity of the varied "predispositions" of a child: but just as important is the differing degree of complexity of traits in the formed, adult character, a point which Dihle has made a few pages earlier (72). Moderns love complex characters, and particularly love the idiosyncratic, paradoxical combination of unexpected traits—in Wilamowitz' words, "the contradictions that are found in every soul of any richness, and whose unification alone creates a person's individuality."15 Ancient authors were less wedded to such quirkiness. Critics often warn us not to expect the idiosyncratic in the characters of Greek Tragedy: the individuality of a Clytemnestra or a Philoctetes certainly remains, but it is an individuality of a different sort from ours.16 The same applies to Plutarch. His characters too are individuated, but they are what I have elsewhere called "integrated" characters:17 a man's qualities are brought into some sort of relation with one another, and every trait goes closely with the next. We are unsurprised if Antony is simple, passive, ingenuous, susceptible, soldierly, boisterous, yet also noble and often brilliant; or the younger Cato is high-principled and determined, rigid in his philosophy, scruffy (as philosophical beings often are), strange but bizarrely logical in the way he treats his women, and disabasingly inflexible and insensitive in public life. These are not stereotypes, but the different qualities cluster very naturally: Wilamowitz would hardly speak of such combinations as "the contradictions . . . whose unification alone creates a person's individuality." Even an Alcibiades is not

15 Internationale Wochenschrift für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Technik 1 (1907), 1109 (= Kleine Schriften VI [Berlin and Amsterdam 1972] 124)—a fine, provocative passage, which is subjected to an extended critique in the concluding chapter to Characterization and Individuality (as in n. 1, above).


manysided in a modern sense, any more than Homer's Odysseus: both can be described swiftly and adequately, and even in such cases every trait really predicts the next. One could even talk meaningfully of "a sort of person like" Antony, or Alexander, or even Alcibiades: one might not meet that "sort of person" very often, but at least their qualities group together so naturally that they could conceivably recur again in the same blend in another human being. Talk of "a sort of person like" Hamlet, or Prince André, or Hedda Gabler would seem distinctly more peculiar.

Such "integrated" characters leave distinctly less to be explained than, in the world of the idiosyncratic, we have come to expect. Today writers have to foreshadow or explain a considerable multiplicity of divergent traits, and are often striving to explain why such a unique combination could possibly have come about. With idiosyncratic characters, development is typically problematic. For Plutarch it is much simpler. A few childhood traits, broadly sketched, can suffice, not because the adult personality is going to show only those traits, but because any new adult traits will naturally complement the ones we know from childhood. The infant Cato is determined, humourless, and intense, and it is not difficult to see how these early traits group naturally with those which develop later, the political inflexibility, the philosophy, the bizarre treatment of his women. Nothing is surprising as the characterisation deepens, and nothing requires any particularly refined explanation. It is not that his characters are "static," but their development is, for our tastes, curiously straightforward. Even in the cases of the uneducated or ill-controlled, he can allow the points to come out gradually throughout the Life, as he will be painting them with a very broad brush. If we wish, we will not find it difficult to infer what their childhood must have been like—but, however important their development may have been, it will not have been especially differentiated, or necessarily very arresting. Plutarch does not need to strain from the outset to extract every ounce of understanding, as so many of his modern counterparts do. There is so much less to understand.

Nor, finally, should we relate this "integration" to distinctively Peripatetic thought. Aristotle's ethical theory can leave it open for a character to show any number of distinct ἔθνη, in any sort of relation to one another (though it is true that his virtuous man will not vary over so large a range). The assumptions in fact go much deeper: this integration is an almost universal ancient habit, and indeed one shown by many more recent civilisations as well as the Greek. It is very much our post-Romantic nineteenth-and twentieth-century culture which is the odd one out, with our particular taste for the idiosyncratic and the quirky.

18 On this see the thoughtful treatment of Gill, art. cit. (n. 3).
2. *Aratus* and "integrated" characters

It is still possible to claim that some ancient authors integrated more fully than others, and that Plutarch's integration was particularly thoroughgoing. The comparison with his contemporary Suetonius already suggests as much: Suetonius' style of presentation by categories is much better suited to bringing out a modern style of many-sidedness, and the protean complexities of a Julius Caesar emerge more clearly from Suetonius' *Life* than from Plutarch's. Suetonius' *Augustus*, his *Claudius*, even his *Vespasian* are rather in the same mould. But a more telling comparison can be drawn from the case of Plutarch's *Aratus*. Polybius had commented on the man's varied character:

He had in general all the qualities that go to make a perfect man of affairs. He was a powerful speaker and a clear thinker and had the faculty of keeping his own counsel. In his power of dealing suavely with political opponents, of attaching friends to himself and forming fresh alliances he was second to none. He also had a marvellous gift for devising *coup de main*, stratagems, and ruses against the enemy, and for executing such with the utmost personal courage and endurance . . . . But this very same man, when he undertook field operations, was slow in conception, timid in performance, and devoid of personal courage. The consequence was that he filled the Peloponnese with trophies commemorating his defeats, and in this respect the enemy could always get the better of him. So true it is that there is something multiform (πολυλειδές) in the nature not only of men's bodies, but of their minds, so that not merely in pursuits of a different class the same man has a talent for some and none for others, but often in the case of such pursuits as are similar the same man may be most intelligent and most dull, or most audacious and most cowardly. For instance some men are most bold in facing the charge of savage beasts in the chase but are poltroons when they meet an armed enemy . . . I say this in order that my readers may not refuse to trust my judgement, because in some cases I make contrary pronouncements regarding the conduct of the same men even when engaged in pursuits of a like nature.

(Polybius 4. 8. 1–9, 12, trans. Paton.)

That was a passage Plutarch knew; but, when he gave his own summary of the man's character at *Arat*. 10, the emphasis was subtly different.20

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20 Some influence of Polybius on *Aratus* is anyway clear (especially at 38. 12 and 47–48): cf. the commentaries of W. H. Porter (Dublin and Cork 1937), xv, xviii, and A. J. Koster (Leiden 1937), xvi–xvii, xxvi, li–lii. But in this case we also find some odd verbal echoes, with Polybius' vocabulary or conceits transferred to Plutarch's own summary in *Arat*. 10 but exploited in slightly different contexts: ὑπαίθρος, for instance (Plb. 4. 8. 5 = *Arat*. 10. 4), or ἐπιβολὼς (Plb. 4. 8. 5) = ἐπιβολώσατος (*Arat*. 10. 2), or ἐν δίνει (Plb. 4. 8. 5) = δίνεις (*Arat*. 10. 4), as well as the odd emphasis on προάσπις (Plb. 4. 8. 2, *Arat*. 10. 2) and the more natural one on εὐφυῖος (Plb. 4. 8. 7 = *Arat*. 10. 5) or τόλμη (Plb. 4. 8. 3, 7 = *Arat*. 10. 3); the
Aratus was a natural politician, great-spirited, more attentive to the commonwealth than his own affairs, bitterly hating tyranny, and developing friendships and enmities to suit the public good. For this reason he seems to have been less consistent as a friend than generous and merciful as an enemy: he changed his tack in both directions according to his statesmanship, and the needs of the moment. His ambition was to bring states together into alliances; he was eager for a union, a theatre speaking with one voice—as eager for this as for any noble ideal. He was lacking in confidence and pessimistic about open warfare, but the sharpest of men when it came to guileful initiatives, or secret negotiations to bring cities and tyrants to his side. For this reason his enterprise brought many unexpected successes, but he also seems to have failed to gain many possible successes because of his caution. The sight of certain wild beasts, it seems, is acute at night but dulled in the day, with the moisture of the eye turning dry and insubstantial as it cannot bear contact with the light: and in just the same way there is a sort of human cleverness (δεινότης) and understanding (σοφευς) which by its nature is easily perturbed in open and public encounters, but gains courage when it comes to secret, undercover initiatives. This sort of inconsistency is created in gifted people by a lack of philosophical training, for they produce virtue without knowledge as if it were a self-seeded fruit, with no cultivation . . .

Plutarch's Aratus is more clearly guided by his state's shifting needs, which prepares us for an underlying rationality that explains some of the surface inconsistencies: Polybius began the chapter on that note, but put it less sharply and pressed it less insistently. Plutarch's Aratus shows "caution" rather than Polybius' "cowardice" in open warfare (and the point recurs in Plutarch's later narrative, especially at 31. 2–4 and 35–36):21 that too sits more comfortably with the initiatives he did undertake, and the contrast becomes a more explicable one, the politician who prefers guile to the dangers of open fighting, who shows daring in one sphere but not in a different one. Polybius' formulation in fact captures the difference very clearly: his Aratus shows inconsistency in, explicitly, the same sort of pursuits; Plutarch's two spheres are more distinct. Polybius consequently

wild-beast image of Arat. 10. 4 also recalls the hunting parallel of Plb. 4. 8. 9. D. A. Russell observed a similar phenomenon in Plutarch's use of Dionysius in Coriolanus, and fairly concluded that "it is perfectly possible that, when he came to his own writing, whole stretches of Dionysius' not very memorable prose were running in his head" (JRS 53 [1963] 22 and n. 7): the same goes for Polybius' rather more memorable phrases here.

20 Koster (as n. 19), xxxxiv, is enthusiastic but perhaps a little over-simple: "at nobis . . . profiendum est, cum eadem fere de Arati moribus uterque scripsent (my italics), suavitatem quandam orationis et brevitatem nos magis delectare quam loquacitatem Polybii."

21 For the dispute cf. also 29. 7–8: but even there Plutarch notes only that others derided Aratus' cowardice, without explicitly endorsing the criticisms. The contrast of Arat. 35. 6 and the parallel narrative at Ag.-Cl. 25 (4). 9 is particularly suggestive. Aratus' caution is at least explicable, probably even approved, in Arat., but derided in Cleomenes: such aspects as the smallness of Cleomenes' force are suppressed in the Arat. version.
directs more attention to Aratus' demeanour in covert action, stressing his endurance (κωκοπάθεια) as well as his daring, and that sharpens the contrast with the battlefield cowardice, which is inexplicably so different: Plutarch concentrates more on the planning than the action, and the spheres are again more widely separate, one much more mental, one more physical. And the inconsistency that remains is also dealt with differently. Polybius regards it as an individual quirk of Aratus, and makes it a general truth of human nature that such quirks are often found—a very unusual emphasis for an ancient author. Plutarch rather stresses that the combination of such traits is a regular one, that this sort of differentiated δεινότης is not at all unnatural, and could easily recur. That, in the terms discussed above, is "integration": Plutarch is stressing how regular the cluster of traits really is. We could readily find the cluster recurring in another person, and hence it would be natural to talk of "a sort of person like Aratus": but like Plutarch's Aratus, not Polybius'.

The end of Plutarch's chapter confirms the relevance of childhood: "this sort of inconsistency is created in gifted people by a lack of philosophical training, for they produce virtue without knowledge as if it were a self-seeded fruit, with no cultivation." The first point to notice is simply that Plutarch can generalise in that way: "this sort of inconsistency is produced ..." It evidently happens all the time, and regularly for the same reasons. Polybius' generalisation rather took the form that "any sort of inconsistency can happen," because humans are like that: if such inconsistency is to be explained, then different explanations will be needed in each case. Secondly, the sort of explanation Plutarch favours turns so very naturally to childhood; but, once again, for our tastes it is so shallow. What is there, or what is good, comes from education: what is absent or bad comes from the lack of it. He does not feel the need to differentiate exactly what Aratus learnt from any particular school or tutor; indeed, it is striking that in the chapters on Aratus' youth he said virtually nothing about education, leaving the point for this later development. As in Marius and even Marcellus, defective education seems important to understanding the hero: but in the early chapters of all these Lives Plutarch does not feel the need to trace the theme in any detail. For him, the phenomenon of this sort of δεινότης is so regular, and comes about for such uniform educational reasons, just like Marcellus' bellicosity or Marius' lack of self-control. It is so easy to work out what the crucial education must have been like, and there is so little that is individual to say. There is no problem in understanding how this Aratus became "the sort of person" he is. Had Polybius grasped the nettle of explaining his quirkier, more irregular blend of traits, the analysis of development would have had to be distinctly more differentiated.

That concluding stress on education may still seem surprisingly intrusive and unsubtle; but it is less surprising specifically in Aratus, where the moralism is often rather cruder and more explicit than in the Parallel Lives (cf. e.g. 9. 7, 19. 4, 25. 7, 26. 4–5, 30. 2, 38. 5–12, 44. 6). It is
indeed a very pedagogic *Life*, as the introduction makes clear: Plutarch is providing Polycrates with a model for his own two sons to imitate (1. 5–6), hoping that they will be inspired to emulate the virtues of their ancestor. But first they need to sit at their books: the emphasis on education suits the youthful audience, and indeed a similar point is made a few chapters later, when Antigonus' pleasures are sadly lacking in λογισμός, that distinctive attribute of the rational, educated man (17. 7). Not, of course, that Plutarch would wish the sons of Polycrates to go out and try to rebuild the Achaean League; or assert the independence of Hellas; or even emulate Aratus' peculiar knack for getting on with foreign kings—though the relevance of *that* to the present time might, in a cruder author, seem more immediate. But Plutarch is not so crude; and his political sense is much too acute for the assumption of such unsophisticated parallels between past and present. But there are still lessons of virtue and vice for history to teach to public men.22

This peculiarly insistent moralism may prompt further suspicions about the "integration." One effect of this form of characterisation is to reduce Aratus to more of a type; and it is natural to wonder if the typical nature of such a hero goes along with a certain sort of moralism, and certain taste for the exemplary. After all, Plutarch's Aratus has a much clearer paradigmatic relevance than Polybius': his brand of δεινότης and σύνεσις are represented as familiar human traits, familiar enough for us to be on the look out for them in ourselves and others, and to draw conclusions. Polycrates' sons could indeed find, or themselves develop into, "a sort of person like Aratus": the more regular the combination of traits, the easier it is to extract morals, and the more generally applicable those morals will be. It would doubtless be a mistake to assume that the search for exemplariness is necessarily *primary*—that Plutarch consciously reduced a character's singularity in order to make it more straightforward to extract his morals for everyday life: integration came more naturally to him than so coldblooded an analysis would suggest. But one can at least suspect that the two tendencies reinforced one another, that integration encouraged or facilitated the extraction of morals, and the taste for morals reinforced the assumption of integration. And in the case of *Aratus* the moral can indeed be a straightforward, protreptic one. The sons of Polycrates should try to be like Aratus in some ways but not in others; and if they set to their education like good boys, they may prove worthy of their ancestral model, and in some way may even improve on him. The moral, like the character, is very straightforward.

22 *Mor.* 457a ff., 814a–c clarify his view on the moral lessons which history can teach contemporary politicians.
Lysander is less straightforward, both in its characterisation and in its moralism: the character is much less clearly a type, and the extraction of morals becomes a more delicate business. But there are similarities too, for here again we have an “integrated” character, even if a more singular and elaborate one; here too we have an interest in childhood and childhood influences, but one which might seem curiously shallow; and here again this is largely because even so complex a character is not too difficult to understand. Plutarch was not straining all the time to penetrate a problematic character, as a modern biographer might. Other things mattered more.

The interest in childhood influences is immediately clear, and so is the concern to relate Lysander to the norms of Spartan behaviour:

2. 1 It is said that Lysander’s father, Aristocleitus, did not belong to the royal family, though he was descended from the children of Heracles.
2 Lysander himself was brought up in poverty, and showed himself as amenable as any Spartan to training in the customs of his country: he showed too that he had a manly spirit and was indifferent to all pleasures, except for those which honoured and successful men win by their own glorious exploits—and indeed it is no disgrace for a young Spartan to yield to these. The Spartans expect their boys from the very first to be conscious of public opinion, to take any censure deeply to heart as well as to exult in praise, and anyone who remains indifferent or fails to respond to these sentiments is despised as an idle clod, utterly lacking in any ambition to excel. This kind of ambition and contentiousness (φιλότιμον . . . καὶ φιλόνικον), then, had been implanted in Lysander by his Spartan training, and it would be unfair to blame his natural disposition too much in this respect. On the other hand he seems to have displayed a gift for paying court to the powerful such as one would not expect in a Spartan, and to have been able to bear the arrogance of those in authority when it was necessary: that is a quality which some people regard as an important element in political shrewdness. Aristotle, when he observes that great natures, such as those of Socrates, Plato, and Heracles, are especially prone to melancholy, notes that Lysander also became a prey to melancholy, not at first, but in his later years.
3 The most distinctive fact about his character, however, is that although he himself endured poverty honourably, and was never enslaved or even momentarily corrupted by money, he nevertheless filled his own country not merely with riches but with the craving for them, and he deprived Sparta of the admiration she had always enjoyed for her indifference to wealth. This came about because he brought immense quantities of gold and silver into Sparta after the war with Athens, although he did not keep a single drachma for himself. On another occasion, when Dionysius, the tyrant of Syracuse, sent Lysander’s daughters some luxurious Sicilian tunics, he refused them,
saying that he was afraid they would make his daughters look uglier.

8 A little later an ambassador was sent from the same city, Sparta, to
the same ruler.23 Dionysius presented the ambassador with two dresses
and told him to choose whichever he preferred and take it back to his
daughter: the ambassador answered that she could choose better
herself, and took both dresses away with him.

(Lysander 2, translated Scott-Kilvert [adapted]).

One typical feature of Plutarch's technique is his progressive redefinition
of character.24 He tends to begin by presenting traits or themes rather crudely
and bluntly, only later complementing and refining and adding the
subtleties, and a character tends to become more singular as his Life
progresses. The same technique is used here to define Lysander's relation to
the conventions of his city. At first he is not an especially singular figure:
indeed, his "ambition and contentiousness" (2. 4) are two of the most
regular traits in Plutarch's repertoire;25 and, for the moment, it is these
characteristics which—perhaps surprisingly, at least in the case of
"contentiousness"—are related to his Spartan education (2. 2–4). At this
point the explicitly unspartan qualities are only his capacity to pay court to
the powerful, and his curious attitude to money: Plutarch points the
paradox that he was impervious to greed himself, but eventually filled
Sparta with wealth, to her ultimate catastrophe. But the Life goes on to
stress how the "ambition and contentiousness"—the Spartan traits—gave
rise to a much wider range of unspartan behaviour, not just in paying court
to foreign potentates, but also in Lysander's deviousness, his versatility and
enterprise, his religious unscrupulousness (explicitly "unspartan" at 8. 5),
and his shrewd but bloody exploitation of party divisions in foreign states in
the interest of his own followers. Lysander understands and exploits
unspartan qualities in others, whether enterprise or greed (3, 4, 6–7, 5. 5 ff.,
13. 5 ff., 19. 4),27 and ends as a very individual figure himself, vitally

23 On the interpretation of this passage see D. Sansone and R. Renehan, CP 76 (1981) 202–
07. Both rightly insist that Lysander must here be contrasted with a separate "ambassador." The
text had hitherto been read as if Lysander himself was the ambassador, so that Plutarch would be
contrasting his earlier and later behaviour: that would be clumsy Greek, leaving ἐκ τῆς αὐτῆς
πόλεως particularly pointless, and incoherent in view of Lysander's later characterisation. I
follow Renehan in assuming that no textual alteration is necessary to support the
reinterpretation.

24 On this technique cf. my commentary on Antony (Cambridge 1988) 12–13, 25, 42–43;
and "Childhood," section II.

25 Cf. Bucher-Islter (as n. 3), 11–13, 31, 41, and especially 58–59; D. A. Russell, "Plutarch,

26 Cf. below, p. 272.

27 There are times when close comparison with other sources reveals Plutarch's distinctive
emphases. For instance, in ch. 3 he affords much more space than Xenophon or Diodorus to the
seething entrepôt Ephesus, a very unspartan milieu which Lysander knows how to exploit; and
at 4. 6–7 he puts more weight than his source Xenophon on the consequences of extracting the
extra obol from Cyrus—the extensive desertions from the enemy fleet, seduced by that greed
different from the norms of his country—indeed, so unspartan that he even tries to subvert the whole constitution (24. 3–6, cf. 30. 3–5, *Sulla* 40[2]). He is contrasted with a series of foils who are much more predictable in their Spartan ways: first the avaricious ambassador of 2. 8; then, more elaborately, the conventional Callicratidas at 5. 7–7. 1, with his simplicity, pride, and justice, “worthy of Sparta” as they are (7. 1); then the boorish Callibius, who does not know how to rule free men (15. 7–8); then Gylippus, who disgraces himself with his avarice (16–17. 1), and fits a different but equally familiar type, the Spartan abroad who cannot resist wealth; and finally Pausanias, with his lack of enterprise, style, or success.

In several ways, then, Plutarch gradually brings out the singular and paradoxical features of Lysander's character; it is central to his point to bring out how unsterotyped a Spartan this is, how he belies the normal expectations which are pointed by those stereotyped foils; and he ends as much less Spartan than that introduction at ch. 2 would suggest. And yet his traits still cluster very naturally, the resourcefulness, the capacity to exploit others, the deviousness, the unscrupulousness, and the bloodiness; and we can see how readily all these traits complement those which were introduced in the first chapter. The crucial ambition, φιλοτιμία, remains, and he duly rejoices in the honours (τιμωί) he is paid at 18. 4–19. 1; but that ambition comes to go closely with a rising contempt for others (at 19. 1 Plutarch explicitly connects the two qualities). This megalomaniac arrogance becomes a disabling weakness, especially at 22. 1–5; and—when it is crossed—it develops into the eventual melancholic wrathfulness which that early chapter had foreshadowed (2. 5, cf. 28. 1). The melancholia, wrath, and megalomania might have come as more of a surprise if the φιλοτιμία had not served as a linking theme: that, surely, is why he is at such pains to reintroduce the theme of the ambition in ch. 18, just before the contempt and wrath become so important to the narrative. With that firmly in our minds, nothing now seems too difficult or idiosyncratic; and we again see how even an unsterotyped, singular figure shows traits which cluster in a very “integrated,” unmodern way, and how Plutarch carefully controls his narrative in order to make the grouping more natural.29

which Lysander so shrewdly knows how to generate. But only a very full commentary could pursue such points through the whole *Life*. Some of the necessary material, but little of the interpretation, is furnished in J. Smits' largely linguistic commentary (Amsterdam 1939).


29 It is interesting here to note a slightly different emphasis in the *Synkrisis* (*Sulla* 40 [2]. 6), where Lysander is said to commit his outrages “on behalf of his friends,” to secure their power in the allied states. One can see how that interpretation could fit the facts as the *Lysander* narrative presents them: but it was not the tenor of the *Life* itself, where Lysander rather installs his friends in power in the ruthless interest of his own, and Sparta's, power. The narrative emphasis sits better with Lysander's other traits, whereas that of the *Synkrisis* would have left
Whether we quite have the psychological understanding we expect from a modern author is a different point. How far do we really grasp what turns Lysander into so individual a Spartan? It would be wrong, surely, to think that Plutarch traces much development in his character, except for that late growth of arrogance and melancholia. Ch. 2 certainly links the "ambition and contentiousness" to his education, and so posits a process of development in his youth; but we do not see that development in any depth, and thereafter Lysander does not really change from a Spartan into an unspartan, nor do we see how those initial Spartan traits change into counterparts which are less traditional and more subversive (interesting though such a portrayal might have been). After that general introduction in ch. 2, Lysander is fairly unspartan from the moment we see him, and the conventional Callicratidas is his foil as early as 5. 7-7. 6. This is not development, though this is equally a more unconventional figure than the introduction had led us to expect: it is rather the same technique of progressive redefinition, the use of an initial description which is deliberately inadequate and then gradually refined. And yet the only explanations of his character are given precisely in that initial description, where we are given only the faintest suggestions of the character we are later to see.

Even the attitude to wealth, explicitly marked at 2. 6-8 as an individual and unspartan trait, is explained rather disappointingly. It simply seems to be related to the poverty of his family background (a view which was clearly controversial, and one which Plutarch can only support by straining the slight evidence he had). But that penury, as Plutarch presents it, only explains Lysander's capacity to do without wealth himself: it does not help us to understand why he developed so shrewd an ability to exploit the avarice of others, or why he so catastrophically kept sending wealth back home to Sparta. Given Plutarch's capacity for imaginative reconstruction, he might so easily have built a picture of Lysander's first reaction to seeing foreign luxury, a mixture perhaps of inner contempt and ruthless determination to exploit it for Sparta's interests. Plutarch could even have gone further: had he wanted to prefigure Lysander's later insensitivity, he

his character less "integrated"; ironically, the Synkrisis point is closer to the treatment afforded Agesilaus in his Life, where susceptibility to friends is an important theme. So too Lysander's ἀκολούθησις δίαιτα is more stressed in the Synkrisis (Sulla 41[3]. 2) than in the narrative: in the narrative we might have inferred it from his attitude to wealth, but too insistent a stress would have sat uneasily with the emphasis on his style in courting wealthy luxurious potentates, so different from that of a Callicratidas (5. 5-7. 1).

30 For the controversy cf. e. g. 18. 3, Athen. 12. 543b, Nep. Lys. 4. Plutarch's presentation may be influenced by the comparison with the poor but noble Sulla, as Dr. O. D. Watkins has suggested to me.

31 Twentieth-century treatments of Russian moles in the British establishment offer suggestive parallels.
might have linked the contempt for wealth with a failure to grasp what it would really mean for Sparta; had he preferred to stress the self-seeking, he might rather have suggested a shrewd perception of exactly what wealth might mean, and of the possibilities of power it might leave for a person who remained impervious to its charms. Yet this style of reconstruction was not what he was here interested in, though other Lives suggest that it was well within his range: this peculiarly rich Life already had enough paradoxes and contrasts to satisfy his taste.

And what tasty paradoxes and contrasts were these? A further oddity of ch. 2 gives one clue. It might be natural enough to regard “ambition” or “love of honour,” φιλοτιμία, as a product of the Spartan educational training; “contentiousness” certainly clusters closely with “ambition,” but is a less expected Spartan trait. The beginning of Agesilalus is suggestive here, for the qualities Agesilalus inherits from the Spartan ἀγωγή are there his “common touch and kindliness of manner” (1. 5), while his contentiousness is made a more individual feature (2. 1): that too is not a wholly cogent treatment (“kindliness of manner,” τὸ φιλάνθροπον, does not really convince as a Spartan trait), but it certainly suggests a rather different view of the ἀγωγή from that of Lysander. Perhaps the reason is that in Lysander it will indeed be important to find these traits of ambition and contentiousness recurring in other Spartans, especially in Agesilalus himself, men who had presumably suffered the same training. What is more, this will contribute decisively to Lysander’s final reverses: for, singular though Lysander may be, it is a peculiar irony that he is finally destroyed when he encounters the same traits in others. His capacity to court (θεραπεύειν) foreign dynasts was always a strength, as 2. 4 stressed and as was immediately clear in his dealings with Cyrus (4. 1–6): but, when he returns to Asia Minor at 19. 1–2, he himself comes to play the dynast, and it is those who pay court to him (ὁ θεραπευόντες, 19. 2) who inflame his ambition and his contempt. That is just the point where the reversals in his fortune begin to become important, and Plutarch stresses the distaste he aroused among conventional Spartans (19. 3, 19. 7 ff., though cf. already 14. 3).32 Then these same θεραπευόντες are instrumental in provoking the discord between Lysander and Agesilalus, when Agesilalus is so irritated that no court is paid to him; Lysander himself has eventually to advise them to go and θεραπεύειν Agesilalus instead (23. 5–11). Here of course it is Agesilalus’ own φιλοτιμία and contentiousness which is at play (cf. 23. 3); Lysander cannot control his own φιλοτιμία in response (23. 7); but by now, clearly, he is meeting his match. He similarly is outdone in devisiveness by Pharmabazus (20: cf. especially 20. 2, πρὸς Κρήτα δ’ ἀρο

32 The placing of the digressions on Spartan wealth, 17, and the skutale, 19. 8–12, is thought-provoking. The length of both may seem clumsy, but both in different ways stress elements of distinctive Spartan tradition: and it is precisely now that Lysander’s unconventional traits are leaving him dangerously at odds with traditional Spartan sentiment.
... κρητικῶν, and 20. 5, "οὔν ἄρ’ Ὀδυσσεύς ἐστιν αἰμύλος μόνος"); and ephors and kings are showing themselves able to meddle in local party politics as well (21. 2–7). Lysander was unspartan enough; but, when he sets the tone, others can readily follow, and combine to generate his catastrophe. He duly dies, in battle: and in that battle a crucial role is played by 300 Thebans who had been accused of Laconising and were eager to prove their loyalty (28. 12). The local feudings which Lysander had always exploited so deftly come to play a strange role at the end.

The reversals combine to generate a peripeteia of peculiar neatness. It is indeed highly reminiscent of tragedy, where so often a figure's peculiar characteristics or strengths unleash forces which eventually destroy him, frequently with a chilling symmetry: one thinks of Oedipus, or Clytemnestra, or Ajax, or Hippolytus, or the Creon of Antigone.33 It is no surprise, indeed, to find a fitting dominance of tragic imagery in the closing chapters of the Life. With Agesilaus in Asia, for instance, it is "like a tragedy," with Lysander as a chief actor playing a subordinate social role (23. 6); when Lysander begins his plot to subvert the constitution, he is ὁσπερ ἐν τραγῳδίᾳ μηχανήν αἱρῶν ἐπὶ τῶν πολιτεῖς (25. 2), adducing for his case a series of prophecies and oracles—themselves of course the stuff of tragedy; and finally "Lysander's part in the drama came to an end through the cowardice of one of his actors and accomplices" (26. 6), men who had earlier been described as his "fellow actors in the dramatic plot" (τῶν μόθου συνεργώνισται, 26. 2).34 After that, what more suitable setting for Lysander's death could there be than the birthplace of Dionysus, the god of tragedy himself (28. 7)? For indeed, as often in tragedy, we are surely aware of numinous powers at play as he meets his death, and that is particularly appropriate for one who had so often taken the names of the gods in vain: it is not, for instance, a casual coincidence that his death miraculously and paradoxically proves some ancient oracles true (29. 5–12). One final irony is that Lysander, for all his deviousness and megalomania, has usually promoted Sparta's interest with some sureness of touch: many for instance had been eager to see his return to Asia, rather than more of the virtuous Callicratidas (5. 7–8, 7. 2). Even as the rift with his country grows deeper, he is still alert to performing what service he can (23. 13); it is his domestic enemies whose meddling comes to endanger the city (21. 2–7). The charge was laid against Pausanias that he had taken the Athenian people when they were bridled by an oligarchy, and loosed them for further violence and arrogance: that increased Lysander's reputation as a man who had ruled in a powerful and individual style, but not to gratify others nor

34 Cf. Smits (as n. 27) ad loc. συνεργώνιστης can itself be used more generally (cf. LSJ s.v. and Wytenbach's index), but hardly with τοῦ μόθου, or in this context of extended theatrical imagery.
theatrically (οὔδὲ θεατρικῶς), but in pursuit of Sparta's interests" (21. 7). Clearly, Lysander is not the only actor in this drama, nor is it only his tragedy. Tom by discord and corrupted by wealth, Sparta is a victim too.

This is a very fine and tightly structured Life, and its moralism is thought-provoking and profound. But few of its themes really depend on understanding Lysander's psychology, and one can see why Plutarch did not make this his priority. What is more, this is a different moralism from that of Aratus, and one which combines with an "integrated" character in a rather different way. Polycrates' children might be able to draw simple morals from Aratus' history for their own experience; but none of Plutarch's audience were likely to find themselves in any remotely similar circumstances to Lysander's, or feel tempted to behave in any remotely similar way. True, none would feel tempted to go and assert Greece's independence in the style of Aratus or Philopoemen either, but in those cases latter-day analogies could be found, and Polycrates' sons could still feel inspired to behave with circumspect worthiness of their Greek past. In the case of Lysander it is hard to see what even these latter-day analogies would be: after all, no reader would find his temperament chafing against Spartan discipline in any remotely parallel style, nor be tempted to turn himself into any equivalent of a melancholic or megalomaniac dynast. The moralism in such a case is of a different sort, rather closer to that of tragedy: this is a more descriptive moralism, pointing a truth of human experience rather than building a model for crude imitation or avoidance. Human nature can produce a figure like Lysander, even or especially in a city like Sparta; and figures like that tend to generate their own destruction, in tragically appropriate ways. For an audience brought up on "integrated" characters, the more tightly Lysander's traits would cluster, the more convincing they might find him: to that extent, the integration of his characterisation once again reinforces the moralism, though not in the sense that Plutarch's audience might really fear growing into Lysanders themselves, or finding one in other people. Indeed, Plutarch's readers might not find themselves behaving very differently at all after understanding Lysander's story. But they would find their grasp of the human experience enhanced: and, if a moralist could achieve that, he was achieving something very worthwhile.

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The Proems of Plutarch's Lives

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According to the proverb, "Well begun is half done." Plutarch certainly accepted this principle, for he lavished special care on the openings of his Parallel Lives. In this he was not unusual. Ever since Homer, artists had taken pains with the beginnings of their works. When rhetorical theory became the principal means of discussing literary organization, detailed rules were established governing the proper treatment of formal beginnings, or proems (προοίμια, Latin exordia). Other prose writers—philosophers, historians, technical writers—borrowed and adapted these theories for their own works. No writer, however, excels Plutarch in the variety, charm, and technical skill of his proems.

The very number of the proems in the Parallel Lives\(^1\)—more than twenty—makes them a proper subject for study for anyone interested in the form of ancient prose or its use of rhetorical principles. But they are of more than formal interest, since they also reveal the expectations and assumptions of Plutarch and his readers. In them Plutarch expresses his motivations and purposes, and several contain major statements on method. In addition, since proems are especially directed at gaining the interest of the reader, they implicitly reveal the nature of his audience: their social status, leisure activities, and intellectual interests. The proems to the Lives do not follow the model of other biographical proems, or of historical proems, although there are similarities of topic. In their variety and techniques they often remind one, as might be expected, of the essays of the Moralia. This study, after a summary account of earlier biographical proems, will explore the principal themes and techniques which Plutarch employs in the proems to the Parallel Lives, their relation to rhetorical theory, and some of the features which distinguish them from those of other writers.

\(^1\) The appendix contains a brief discussion of the proems to the Aratus, Artaxerxes, and Galba (the Otho does not have one, being part of the same work as the Galba), which are not part of the Parallel Lives.
There are twenty-two extant pairs of lives: of these thirteen have formal proems. The others may be said to use "informal" or integrated proems. The formal proems can be distinguished by the asyndeton which begins the body of the life; on a few occasions this is replaced by a logical particle. Informal proems are not separated in this way: the body of the life begins with δέ (δ’ονύ at Sol. 2. 1). References to the dedicatee of the Lives, Sosius Senicio, occur only in the formal proems, and the first person is regularly used only in them. Finally, the formal proems, with only two exceptions, carefully name the two persons who will be subjects of the pair of lives and end with a justification for the decision to compare these two lives. Informal proems are based on the standard opening topics of a biography: family, education, or physical appearance. The formal proems, instead, avoid these topics and explore a variety of topics suggested by the lives, and especially the purpose and method of Plutarch's work. The informal proems may be recognized as serving a proemial function by their use of techniques common to historical proems, especially a display of sources, as will be seen. Their role as proems is confirmed by the fact that similar passages do not usually appear in the second life of a pair.

The proems and the concluding comparisons (συγκρισις) mark the pair of lives as Plutarch's unit of composition, a book. Plutarch himself frequently refers to a pair as a separate unit. The length of this book was extremely flexible. The shortest, Sertorius-Eumenes, runs 46 Teubner pages, the longest, Alexander-Caesar, 186, four times as much, with the

3 That is, Sol.-Publ., Them.-Cam., Arist.-CatMag., Cor.-Alc., Philop.-Flam., Pyr.-Mar., Lyc.-Num., Lys.-Sul., and Ages.-Pomp. The Ages.-Pomp. has perhaps the weakest claim to having even an informal proem, but the treatment of Agesilas' early life seems to fulfill that purpose. See below. Informal prefaces in Plutarch should be distinguished from the concealed preface or insinuatio (cf. Lausberg [cited n. 12], pp.150-51, #263-65; 160-61, #280-81, which is normally used when there is reason to think that the audience will resist a regular proem. Lucian seems to refer to something like this when, in reference to Xenophon's Anabasis, he speaks of δυνάμενη τινὰ προοίμια (How to Write History 23).
4 Per.3. 1 (γάρ), Phoc. 4. 1 (μν. οὖν), Demetr. 2. 1 (τονύν), Nic. 2. 1 (οὖν).
5 The first person is found in informal proems only at Lyc. 1. 7 (περιορισμένα) and Arist. 1. 3 (καθ' ἡμένα).
6 The Nicias neither names Crassus nor justifies the selection of the pair; the Alexander omits the justification. Plutarch may speak of choosing one or the other life first, and then seeking a companion. The Roman life was chosen first in Thes.-Rom., Cim.-Luc., Sert.-Eum., AgCl.-Grac. No precedence is indicated for Per.-Fab., Dem.-Cic., Aem.-Tim., Demetr.-Ant., Phoc.-Cat. (although Cato is introduced two chapters later than Phocion), Pel.-Marc., or Dio-Brut.
7 Cf. Dem. 3. 1, Per. 2. 5, Dio 2. 7. It is thus a mistake to shift the order of lives in a pair, or to move the proem from one life to another, as was done by the Aldine edition, still followed in the Budé edition. Ephorus' use of proems to the books of his history are the first indication of a clear awareness of book-length units in a larger work. The histories of Herodotus and Thucydides and the Republic of Plato do not seem to have been divided by the author into book-length units.
average being about 97 pages. The extraordinary length of the Alexander-
Caesar perhaps explains the loss of the beginning of the Caesar: the book
would have been divided into two rolls, making the beginning of the second
life vulnerable. Most of the pairs which can be identified as written early
run below the average: the only exception is Lysander-Sulla at 100 pages.
The three longest pairs, averaging 165 pages, were all written late. It is
noteworthy that the Roman lives of these pairs are all drawn from the Civil
War period, and average 90 pages in length.

It is clear from the proems that each book had a title, with the name of
the author, since Plutarch did not indicate in the informal proems the second
of the lives to be treated, and even neglects to mention Crassus in the
formal preface of the Nicias. As has been pointed out by Pelling, the two
lives should be read as a unit, in which the first life may establish themes or
questions which are developed or resolved in the second. The body of the
formal proems, as opposed to the indication and justification of the selection
of heroes, may not relate to both lives, but only one: e.g., the first life in
the Nicias, the second in the Cimon.

Before analyzing the proems of the Parallel Lives, it is useful to review
the best preserved proems of pre-Plutarchean biography, in order to
distinguish more precisely the achievement of Plutarch.

In the first half of the fourth century B.C. biography came into
existence as a genre separate from both history and oratory. While much
influenced by oral encomia, it shaped its own objectives in an intermediate
ground between the epideictic oration of praise or blame and the historical
narrative of men and events.

The earliest biographies, Xenophon's Agesilaus and Isocrates' Evagoras,
reflect two opposing conceptions of the role of a proem, although both
consider their work an ἐνωνομια, or encomium. Isocrates opens his
Evagoras with an elaborate proem (1–11) on the importance of fame to great
men and the difficulties of writing a suitable encomium in prose. The first
period draws an extended contrast between the honors which Nicocles has
performed for his father and the still more valuable gift of praise of the dead
king's life and of the dangers he underwent. A proper account would make
Evagoras' arete immortal. The second point is the value of encomia for
contemporaries as encouragement to great action. Such emulation, Isocrates
writes, is currently discouraged by the comparison with heroes of the past
and by the envy of contemporaries: this deadening situation should be
broken by those willing to change the world for the better. Isocrates is

8 These are rough counts, based on the latest Teubner edition. A more accurate count would
use the TLG database to calculate the length of each life.
9 Alex.-Caes., 186 pp.; Ages.-Pomp. 156.5 pp.; Demetr.-Ant., 152 pp.
83–96.
11 On the emergence of biography in the fourth century, see especially A. Mormigiano, The
willing to be such a pathbreaker. Although the resources of poetry for an encomium in many ways are superior to those of prose, he will dare to be
the first to attempt an essay of this nature.

As a student of Gorgias and for many years the leading teacher of
rhetoric in Greece, Isocrates employs a number of standard techniques
developed by orators and teachers of rhetoric and later codified in written
handbooks, from Aristotle and Anaximenes of Lampsacus to Cicero and the
rhetoricians of the empire. These rules were meant especially for judicial
speeches, but were transferred, with such modifications as were necessary, to
other kinds of prose works. Isocrates himself was a major participant in
this phenomenon, since he regularly presented his works, including the
Evagoras, as speeches, even when they were clearly intended for a reading
public. With regard to the proem or opening section of a speech, the
rhetoricians established that it must accomplish three goals: 1) render the
judge or juror interested in the speech, 2) create in him a sense of goodwill
toward the speaker, and 3) make him willing to learn from the speech. To
use the later Latin terms, the proem should render the audience attentus,
benevolus, and docilis. This formula did not fit all speeches equally well,
and Aristotle, for example, noted that particular emphases were necessary for
an epideictic address as opposed to a judicial one. Even less did it apply to
other prose forms, although the influence of rhetorical theory, because of its
central role in the educational system, was omnipresent.

In the Evagoras, Isocrates arouses the interest of his reader, the dead
king’s son Nicocles. He speaks feelingly of the son’s piety toward his
father and the father’s desire for praise. At the same time he stresses the
newness of the attempt at prose epainos. The same statements also invite
goodwill, since Nicocles will naturally be well-disposed toward someone
praising his father, and understanding is to be expected for a speaker
attempting a new and difficult task. The emphasis on Isocrates’ own
decision to write, the risks he is taking, and his expectation of a noble

12 The theory of proems is effectively presented, with many references to literary works, by
H. Lausberg, Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik2 (München 1960) I, 150–63. See also R.
Volkmann, Die Rhetorik der Griechen und Römer in systematischer Übersicht2 (1885, repr.
1963) 127 ff., and J. Martin, Athenische Rhetorik (München 1974) 64 ff. For Latin prefaces, see T.
Janin, Latin Prose Prefaces (Stockholm 1964), E. Herkommer, Die Topoi in den Proömmen der
römischen Geschichtswerke (Stuttgart 1968), and M. Ruch, Le préambule dans les œuvres
philosophiques de Cicéron (Paris 1958). For a discussion of particular features in Latin proems,
see M. Erren, Einführung in die römische Kunsprosa (Darmstadt 1983) 60–62, 66–89. I have
not seen R. Böhme, Das Proömium (Bühl 1937).

13 Lucian, for example, when discussing the writing of history, notes that a historical proem
need not work for the goodwill of the reader, since that is presumed. The historian will
concentrate on arousing the attention of the reader, indicating the greatness, the necessity, the
relevance, or the usefulness of the subject, and encourage his grasp of the material by a
presentation of causes and a summary of major points (How to Write History, 53). Cf. G.
Avenarius, Lukian’s Schrift zur Geschichtsschreibung (Meisenheim-Glan 1956) 113–18; H.
accomplishment, involve the speaker with his subject and with his audience, while making an implied comparison with Evagoras’ own benefactions. The use of comparisons and elaborate periods is appropriate to an epideictic proem, as later formulated in rhetorical treatises. There is little connection with the proems of Herodotus and Thucydides, with their emphasis on methods of handling sources and on accuracy, although Isocrates does note that the truth of an encomium of a contemporary is assured because the auditors are well-informed (5), a familiar, if illogical, *topos*.

Xenophon, instead, employs a very short four-line proem, simply stating that while it is difficult to write a eulogy in praise of a great man, it must be attempted, since it is not right for a man to lack praise for the sole reason that he was outstanding. He avoids both the historical *topoi* of method and accuracy and the rhetorical claims for attention and good will, although the simple statement of Agesilacus’ greatness does serve to arouse the attention of the reader, and may be paralleled with the historians’ claim for the greatness of their subject.  

The notion of inadequacy to the topic, however, is itself a rhetorical *topos*, especially suitable to speeches of praise, and is found, for example, in Thucydides’ Funeral Oration. Despite the presence of these *topoi*, Xenophon appears to reject Isocrates’ conscious rhetorical development of proemial themes.

After Isocrates and Xenophon, the paucity of extant biographies forces a leap to the first century B.C. The proem to the *Life of Augustus Caesar* by Nicolaus of Damascus exists only in fragments found in the *Excerpta de virtutibus* (FGrHist 90 F 125–26), so that its overall effect cannot be known. Like Xenophon (although at greater length), he notes that the virtues of his subject have made his task more difficult. In narrating Augustus’ deeds he will make it possible for all to know the truth. A new

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15 This is not to take a stand on the relative priority of the two works. There is no external evidence, and the internal evidence cannot be considered probative in either direction. They were in any case written within a short time of each other.

16 The biography of Euripides by Satyrus, the only Hellenistic biographer of which sizeable fragments are preserved, does not include material from the proem.
feature is the *divisio*, which sets out the sections of the first part of the work, those particularly suited for a biography: origin (*genos*), nature (*phasis*), parents, and rearing and education (*trophe* and *paideusis*). The fundamental theme seems to be the greatness of Augustus, which Nicolaus will attempt to present in the life. The list of benefactions and conquests both arouses interest in the reader and renders him *docilis* by giving a foretaste of the contents of the life. In the extant fragments, there is no special justification of the author's competence or of his method. Unfortunately, such comments if they existed would not have interested the excerptor.

The *Lives of outstanding generals* by Cornelius Nepos represents a change of method from earlier extant biographies, offering a collection of short lives rather than an isolated study of one person. Nepos precedes his collection with a formal proem, leaving the individual lives either without introduction or with a very short statement of the moral interest of the life.\(^{17}\) The proem, addressed to Atticus, attempts to justify *hoc genus scripturae*, arguing that it is useful to study great men of other nations, even though their customs and habits are often alien to Roman ways and expectations. As such it is an attempt to win the goodwill of the reader, who otherwise might be inclined to reject the book as un-Roman and useless for his own growth or recreation. Since Atticus himself was a philhelle, and would hardly have been scandalized, e.g., by the philosophical interests of Epaminondas, and since in general the educated Roman of this period was quite cosmopolitan, the problem could not be a real one. Nepos evidently is both employing a traditional *topos* of Roman self-sufficiency, similar to those employed by Cicero in his speeches and treatises, and at the same time suggesting the interest of these lives, that they record "exotic" customs. Nepos mentions his haste to complete his task, but is silent on questions of method, sources, or accuracy. The reader is expected to be interested because of what can be learned from these lives.

Since the beginning of the *Divus Julius* has been lost, it is uncertain whether Suetonius prefixed a proem to his *Lives of the Caesars*. The individual lives do not have proems, nor do those of the lives of the poets or other fragments. They represent a collection, like that of Nepos, but the lives are more tightly bound together both chronologically and thematically by the restriction of subject to the twelve Caesars from Julius to Domitian.

The *Agricola*, instead, opens with a powerful proem (1–3), in which Tacitus explores the implications for his own time of the act of recording the lives of distinguished men.\(^{18}\) Unlike Nepos or Suetonius, Tacitus does

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\(^{17}\) *Epaminondas* 1. 1–4 is an exception, a longer statement excusing the subjects' "inappropriate" interests in music and philosophy. The lives with no introductory statement are *Miltiades, Cimon, Conon, Dion, and Datames*.

\(^{18}\) On the proem to the *Agricola*, see the sensitive analysis by A. D. Leeman in "Structure and Meaning in the Prologues of Tacitus," *YCS* 23 (1973) 169–208 at pp. 199–208. Cf. also K.
not see himself as chronicling the past, but as making a statement for his own time through a presentation of one man's life. The proem's most impressive feature is the denunciation of the repression under Domitian and the sense of disgust for the subservience of the ruling class, including Tacitus himself. Rhetorically, this is the appeal for the reader's goodwill ab adiunctis, that is, from the circumstances of writing. But because of its stress on the new opportunity to write, the denunciation also powerfully arouses the reader to expect in this work something long desired but previously unavailable. At the same time, Tacitus includes a number of elements applicable to biography in general. He begins with a succinct definition of the genre: clarorum virorum facta moresque posteris tradere. But his own experience has made him aware that remembering greatness is not simply a question of convincing others that these men are worthy of praise, or a presentation of exempla to imitate, but a statement of values in a world which may oppose or despise them, an act of freedom dangerous to a tyrant, impossible for a slave. The traditional purposes of biography, praise of virtue and invitation to emulation, in Tacitus' proem are radically politicized. Throughout there is the implication that Agricola is indeed worthy of this honor, and at the end Tacitus employs the topos of an apology for his lack of skill in presentation. Tacitus closes the proem with a union of typical items and his own distinctive viewpoint, combining the naming of his subject, the explanation of his relation to him, and his particular reason for writing with an ironic awareness of the audience: hic interim liber honoris Agricolae societis mei destinatus, professione pietatis aut laudatus erit aut excusatus.

Since it contains so many features found in Plutarch, another proem to an individual life should be considered, even though it was written a century after Plutarch's Lives. The proem which introduces Philostratus' Life of Apollonius of Tyana (1. 1–3) is perhaps the most elaborate preface to any ancient biography, befitting the extraordinary length of the life itself. After beginning with a digression on Pythagoras of Samos and his special relation to the gods, Philostratus turns to the similar practices of his subject,


19 The phrase is borrowed from Cato's Origenes: cf. Ogilvie-Richmond ad loc.

20 The introductory digression on Pythagoras is especially striking as a technique to arouse the reader's interest before introducing the actual subject of the life. Although apparently off the point, the transition to Apollonius is made smoothly. For parallels, see the very brief statement on the treatment of thieves and moneylenders at the beginning of Cato's De agricultura, or the account of Cicero's philosophical writings in De divinatione II, which seem more closely tied to the subject than the more elaborate excursus which introduces Sallust's Catiline.
Apollonius. He refers to Apollonius' many outstanding qualities, but notes that he has also been slandered as a magos, and defends him from that charge. Philostratus, in writing his biography, will not condone ignorance such as that shown by these attacks, but "be most precise (ἐξακριβῶς) both as to the times when Apollonius did or said something and to the habits of 'wisdom' by which he came to be considered διαμόνιος and θεῖος." This statement on accuracy introduces a treatment of sources, which he asserts have been collected from many cities and temples, from the accounts of others and from Apollonius' own letters. A catalogue of sources follows this general statement. Philostratus has used the account of Damis of Nineveh, who studied with Apollonius and later wrote of his travels, opinions, discourses, and prophecies, the book of Maximus of Aegae on Apollonius' stay in Aegae, and the testament of Apollonius himself. He scorns as worthless the four books written by Moeragenes. The empress Julia Domna had provided the specific occasion for the biography, when she asked Philostratus to recast in a more elegant narrative (ἀκογγελίο) the memoirs of Damis, which although most interesting, had not been skillfully told. Philostratus complied, and by adding new sources created a new biography as an honor for the sage and to instruct lovers of learning.

Philostratus' use of rhetorical structures and techniques is obvious. The proem arouses the interest of the reader by comparing Apollonius favorably with Pythagoras and indicating Apollonius' wondrous practices and prophecies. By refuting the charges that Apollonius was a magos, the preface invites the reader's goodwill toward him, while the allusions to the patronage of Julia Domna, to the excellences of the sources used, and to the author's care with style create a good disposition toward the work itself. Finally, the hints as to Apollonius' life and activities prepare the reader to learn more about him. Note especially that Philostratus has integrated the historians' treatment of sources and accuracy into the captatio benevolentiae. According to rhetorical theory, the use of such material ab adiunctis, that is, from matters indirectly related to the topic, was especially suitable for epideictic rhetoric, a category which could include both history and biography.  

21 A variation of the same technique can be seen in the geographical excursus which introduce books II, III, and V of the life. On this use of the excursus and other features of a literary proem, see Erren, Einführung, 66–84.

The introduction to Philostratus' Lives of the Sophists appeals more simply and directly to its dedicatee, the future emperor Gordian, expecting his interest because of Gordian's relationship to Herodes Atticus and their previous conversations on the orators. Nevertheless the author reinforces that interest by noting that he has not given a detailed treatment, but only presented the features most important to understand the subjects' virtues and vices, successes and failures. Its purpose is to lighten the worries of a busy man, not to overwhelm him with factual detail. The avoidance of many standard features suggests that the work may not be biography at all: cf. C. P. Jones, in G. W. Bowersock, Approaches to the Second Sophistic (University Park, PA 1974) 11–12. On the dedication, see I. Avotins, "The Date and Recipient of the Vitae Sophistarum of Philostratus," Hermes 106 (1978) 242–47.
This brief review of biographical proems reveals both similarities and differences in emphasis. The biographical proem often emphasizes praise of the subject, a theme also found in historical prefaces, although rarely as a major item.\(^{22}\) The importance of praise, however, does not hold true of all biography: there is a radical difference between the biography of a single person (Agesilaus, Evagoras, Augustus, Agricola, Apollonius) and a set of biographies (Nepos, Suetonius, Philostratus' Lives of the Sophists). The major emphasis in the latter is not praise (although that may be a component) but the variety of persons and ways of life treated, and the pleasure to be drawn from learning about them. Philostratus is unusual in referring specifically to his sources in the proem to the Apollonius, presumably because this too was an account of the past, not a contemporary encomium, as are the other individual lives.\(^{23}\) All employ proems which attempt to interest the reader in the work at hand.

When Plutarch's proems are considered in the light of those just reviewed, it becomes clear that he employs many of these same features to create a distinctive and flexible form which does not conform to any established pattern. The Theseus supplies an excellent example.\(^{24}\)

The proem to the Theseus opens with a striking comparison of the biographer to geographers preparing maps, which plays on the reader in several ways. The opening comparison, and the direct address to the dedicatee, Sosius Senecio, are standard rhetorical techniques meant to arouse the interest of the reader, the first purpose of a proem in rhetorical theory.\(^{25}\) The special request to the "listeners" to accept his presentation of τὸ μυθόδευς with goodwill (1. 5) addresses the second purpose, and the brief summary in chapter two of the common features of the lives of Theseus and Romulus the third, that is, to render the reader "ready to learn" (docilis), by giving him a foretaste of the subject. But the real focus of the proem is on Plutarch himself, and his relations to his subject and his reader. The elaborate introductory period,\(^{26}\) with its vivid simile, turns on the discomfiture of the author in reaching a "territory" where there are no clear markings or guideposts. By sharing with the reader this discomfiture, this sense of venturing into uncharted lands, he invites the reader's

\(^{22}\) History stresses the importance of the particular subject being presented, whether a given war, a special period, or the history of a nation. The utility of the history is also important, although this varies from the broadest insight into human nature and the historical process to specific exempla of human action, "of what to avoid as bad, and imitate as good," as Livy says.

\(^{23}\) A statement on method, justifying the new history, appears regularly in historical proems. Histories of the past concentrate on the use of good sources and the improvement over past accounts, in style and completeness.


\(^{25}\) For the use of comparisons, see H. Lausberg, Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik (München 1960) 155, #271 δ', δ' citing Quintilian 4. 1. 70.

\(^{26}\) For the use of periods in proems, see Lausberg, Handbuch p. 469, #947.
comprehension and sympathy, and forestalls the potential objection against the mythical element in this pair of lives. In the following sentence Plutarch expresses his determination to "purify" the mythical element, and give his account the appearance of history (ιστορίας ὑπεκούσατο, but it "rashly scorns the credible" (αὐθάδος τὸν πιθανὸν περιφρονη). The mythical is a wild beast, with a mind of its own, not easily tamed. Whereas in the well-known Alexander-proem Plutarch reminds his reader that he is writing biography, not history, here he stresses his affinity with the historian, working in areas "accessible to reasoned argument (ἐφικτὸν εἰκότι λόγῳ)" and "well-grounded on history clinging to facts" (Βάσιμον ιστορία προειμέτων ἐχομένη).

But why does Plutarch choose to write on Romulus and Theseus at all? The answer comes in carefully phased stages: first Romulus is chosen, as already being quite close in time to Numa and Lycurgus, the most recent pair treated (all belong to the eighth century). Thinking of Rome’s founder then suggests to Plutarch the founder of Athens, even though this man, Theseus, takes him back another five centuries, well into the mythical world prior to the Trojan war, populated with monsters and heroes, the τερατοδή καὶ τραγικά described by poets and mythographers, to which he had earlier alluded. While Romulus is the stuff of legend, it is only with Theseus that Plutarch truly enters the realm of myth, and it is immediately after mentioning him that Plutarch warns that the material is indomitable and invokes the goodwill of the reader. That done, the rest follows easily. Once the choice of subjects is accepted (indicated by δ’ ὁδί at 2. 1), Plutarch can go on to the other similarities with Romulus which justify the choice of Theseus. Note also in this proem the two “heroic” quotes from Aeschylus and the Iliad, which both ornament the passage and set the atmosphere for the heroic stories which will follow in the lives. This proem thus prepares the reader for the lives which follow by capturing his interest, winning agreement on the treatment of the subject, and creating a bond of interest and sympathy between the author and the reader. It sets the tone of mythical-heroic narrative, and invites the reader to share with the author the sense of exploring a strange land, where there is no reliable information. The Theseus represents a breakthrough into mythical time, beyond the frontier of history. The proem warns the reader of the danger, while assuring him of the conscientiousness of his guide.

Although concerned with a very particular problem, the proem to the Theseus is not unusual. The thirteen formal proems in the Parallel Lives each respond to the particular needs of a pair of lives, displaying similar patterns of themes and techniques. The most frequent theme is Plutarch’s purpose in writing the Lives. Simply stated, he intends to incite his readers to virtue, as he asserts most
clearly in the *Pericles*. There he argues that it is the duty of every person to focus and nourish his mind on the best objects, especially actions which derive from virtue, since those inspire one to noble imitation. His biographies of Pericles and Fabius will provide just such examples. In the *Aemilius*, Plutarch speaks of the lives as similar to a mirror, in that they provide an image by which one can order one's own life according to the virtues of those men. Again, they are like being a guest in someone's house, sharing their life. In this way one assumes a conscious control over one's mental images, expelling anything ignoble, and concentrating on the finest paradigms. Negative examples can also serve an educative purpose, as Plutarch notes in the *Demetrius*. An awareness of human weakness should make the readers “be more zealous spectators and imitators of better lives” (1. 6).

Other proems explore the moral features of the *Lives* not simply as exempla, but by posing fundamental questions of the ethical life. The *Cimon* argues that the biographer must not give undue attention to the weaknesses of his subject, but emphasize his strengths, recording only enough of the imperfections as to insure a recognizable likeness. The fact is, Plutarch notes, that human nature is imperfect, and no one is without failings.

Several proems focus on the dominant role of external factors in a man’s life. Often the successes or failures of great men are not determined by their own qualities, but by circumstances over which they have no control. The proems to *Dio-Brutus* and *Eumenes-Sertorius* relate the final defeats of these men to their fortune: as Plutarch states in the former, τῷ χῆ must accompany φρόνησις and δικαιοσύνη. The accounts of parallel supernatural appearances to Dio and to Brutus before their deaths raise the question whether τὰ δαίμονια shake the philosophical conviction of the wise man and challenge the whole notion and utility of conscious progress in virtuous living. In the *Sertorius*-proem, Plutarch considers “tyche flowing now here, now there in the infinity of time.” The ostensible theme of the proem is historical coincidences, but there is a moral facet as well, since along with their similarities of character and life-stories, both Sertorius and Eumenes “met a violent and unjust tyche at the end.”

Phocion and Cato Uticensis are men fighting not their personal tyche, but that of the times. Phocion was fighting with his arete the τῶν τῆς Ἑλλάδος. Cato, according to Plutarch, “fought a great battle with tyche, which seized and threw down the republic through other men, but because of Cato and his arete the republic almost survived. Fortune won only with difficulty, and slowly, and after a long time” (*Phoc.* 1. 4, 3. 4).

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27 Cf. also *Aratus* 1, where Plutarch commends consideration of noble ancestors as paradigms for one's own behavior.

28 In practice, however, Plutarch devotes a surprising amount of attention to the faults of both Cimon and Lucullus, as has been shown by R. McComb in an unpublished paper.
rather Cato's arete, wrestled with tyche, and was almost able to conquer it. Two other heroes, Aemilius Paullus and Timoleon, shared both good personal choices and good fortune, so that the reader must ask "whether they succeeded more from good luck (εὐποτμία) or intelligence (φροννήσει)" (Aem. 1.6). The search for fame can also affect virtue. The proem to Agis and Cleomenes considers the relation between δόξα and ἀρετή: the discussion in chapter two could easily come from one of the Moralia. Arete is confirmed by praise, but "an excess of political ambition is destructive," since it leads to a mania and senselessness.

The proems thus arouse interest by posing an inquiry which Plutarch clearly considers most significant to his readers, the nature of arete, how it manifests itself, how it is affected by the differing circumstances in which it is expressed, and how it can be imitated.

The second major theme is the discussion of method, and is closely related to the moral purpose, since the method used in the lives is meant to bring out the arete of the heroes. Plutarch's statement of method in Alexander I is well known: since he writes biographies, not histories, he will concentrate on small matters—jokes, sayings, anecdotes—which often reveal more of character than do great battles. His method, that is, is determined by the desire to explore the ethos of his subjects. Military campaigns and political decisions are relevant only in so far as they help the biographer toward this goal. The Cimon notes that a portrait should be accurate and not omit (as an encomium would) a person's faults, but also argues that excessive precision in presenting weaknesses of character is not suitable. Again, historical detail is relevant only in so far as it contributes to the portrait being painted. Yet the proem to the Theseus reveals Plutarch's uneasiness when he moves beyond the normal domains of history to the poetic and mythological, and reminds the reader that Plutarch wishes to base his lives on firm historical material. In fact, several of the formal proems are devoted to the questions of sources and accuracy in the Lives. In the Nicias, overwhelmed by the excellence of Thucydides' narrative, which he cannot improve upon in style or vividness, he nevertheless justifies his account by the additional decrees, dedications, and other material which he will include, and which he hopes will better illuminate Nicias' character. The Demosthenes notes the difficulty of working in Chaeronea, away from the libraries and learned conversation of a city like Athens, at a time when Plutarch needed to collect passages drawn from scattered foreign writers. Moreover, his knowledge of Latin is insufficient to attempt the kind of literary comparison which might be expected in a book on Demosthenes and Cicero (Dem. 2). In fact, in the Demosthenes Plutarch cites over twenty

29 The contrast of luck and virtue is a standard philosophical and rhetorical debating point: cf. Plutarch's De fortuna Romanorum and De fortuna an virtute Alexandri.
30 Note Plutarch's comment at the end of the Demosthenes, "Now you have, Sosius, the life of Demosthenes, from what we have read or heard" (31. 7), and again at the beginning of the
sources, including historians, philosophers, comic poets, and orators, but for the Cicero he restricts himself chiefly to a few of Cicero's own works. According to Pelling, "the second half of Cicero, in particular, is scrappy and ill-informed." Later, when composing other Roman lives of the Civil War period, he would investigate the matter more thoroughly, revealing that despite his lament in the Demosthenes proem he had by that time been able to get access to other sources.

References to unusual or contradictory sources are also the most frequent means of augmenting the rhetorical effectiveness of the informal proems found in nine pairs of the Parallel Lives. As has been noted, in the openings of these nine lives, which lack formal proems, Plutarch adapts the common biographical categories of origin and family, education, and physical appearance to fulfill the standard proemial functions of arousing interest in his book and establishing goodwill toward the author. His consideration of the source problem in connection with one of these categories usually involves as well a question of character, and thus focuses once more on the ethos of his subject.

For example, the Solon opens with an abstruse quotation from Didymus giving a unique identification for Solon's father. Another quotation from Heraclides Ponticus introduces the question of Solon's relationship as kinsman and lover to Peisistratus, which is explored at some length. The discussion concludes with a reference to Peisistratus' relationship to Charmus and the statue of Eros in the Academy connected with that affair. The chapter combines the themes of special knowledge of sources, family history, and friendship, erotic or not, with a famous tyrant. In the opening chapter of the Aristides-Cato Major pair, Plutarch examines and systematically refutes the arguments of Demetrius of Phaleron concerning the wealth of Aristides' family. He is clearly trying to catch the reader's attention by deploying a variety of evidence: he quotes the inscription on the choregic tripod; he recalls the cases of Epaminondas and Plato, who were helped by their wealthy friends Pelopidas and Dion to pay for choruses; he cites the researches of Panaetius; he inserts his own knowledge of the ostracism of Pericles' counselor Damon and makes a passing mention of a variant found in Idomeneus; and finally, he gives his own sceptical judgement of Demetrius' motives. Plutarch converts what might have been a simple statement on Aristides' justice despite his relative poverty into an elaborate historical analysis. Thus he both emphasizes the importance of the notion of the just man's independence from money and

*Comparison,* "This is as much of what is worth recalling or what has been investigated concerning Demosthenes and Cicero as has come to our knowledge."


32 On the sources used in these later lives, see Pelling, "Plutarch's Method . . ." pp. 83–91.
draws the reader into his work by involving him in the scholarly disputes which had arisen around Aristides' archonship.

In a similar manner, in the proem to the *Themistocles* Plutarch explores Themistocles' humble parentage, from which he rose to such great heights, through the citation of an epigram, quotations from Phanias and Neanthes, a discussion of the Cynosarges gymnasium, and a reference to the shrine at Phyle mentioned by Simonides. In the three cases of Solon, Aristides, and Themistocles the category of origin and family has been elaborated to serve a proemial function, exploiting the wealth of sources that Plutarch had available.

Other lives employ different formulas. The *Pyrrhus* opens with an extended history of Pyrrhus' house, beginning not with Achilles, which might have been enough, but with the flood. The mythological references to Phaethon, Deucalion, and Pyrrha precede the heroic figures of Achilles, Neoptolemos and his wife Lanassa (granddaughter of Heracles). Finally, semi-historical times are reached with the first Hellenized king, Tharrupas, and his descendants. The graceful display of erudition (even to noting that Achilles receives divine honors in Epirus, under the name Aspetos) arouses the attention and interest of the reader. In addition, the barbarian interlude in the genealogy suggests a certain rawness in Pyrrhus' ambition, which is confirmed in the course of the life, and further paralleled in the companion figure of Marius.

For the *Lycurgus*, the theme of the informal proem must be the obscurity of the subject: "Concerning Lycurgus the lawgiver one can say absolutely nothing certain, since his origin, his journey abroad, his death, and especially his legislation are reported variously; the greatest differences are found with regard to the time when he lived." There follow a series of citations from Aristotle, Eratosthenes, Apollodorus, Timaeus, and Xenophon which illustrate the different positions taken on Lycurgus' lifetime. Finally, Plutarch contrasts the name the poet Simonides gives for Lycurgus' father, Prytanis, and the common account of his descent from Heracles, in which his father was Eunomos the son of Prytanis. The hope Plutarch expresses to "provide a narrative with as few contradictions and as many prominent witnesses as possible" (*Lyc.* 1. 7) is at risk from the beginning.

Plutarch exploits his own special knowledge of Delphi in the *Lysander*, which opens with a digression on the statue at the treasury of the Acanthians. This, he asserts, is a statue of Lysander, not of Brasidas, as commonly supposed. The reason for the error is the inscription on the treasury, "Brasidas and the Acanthians, from the Athenians." The statue shows Lysander to be a man tied to the old traditions of Lycurgan Sparta, with long hair and a noble beard. The hair style permits Plutarch to correct those, including Herodotus, who did not think that this was a custom deriving from Lycurgus, and at the same time to set the tone for his portrait
of Lysander as an upright man and preserver of the old ways. In this case
the category of physical appearance has been adapted to serve as proem. 33

Three of the proems which discuss the method of the biographer may be
seen as meeting potential objections to the works in question, a standard
proemial function. 34 In the Nicias, Plutarch explains that he is not
attempting to rival the brilliance of Thucydides’ Sicilian narrative, while in
the Alexander and Theseus he asks the indulgence of the reader, either for
passing over so quickly famous battles and other historical set pieces, or for
presenting material so patently fabulous.

Intimately related to the problem of moral growth and the development
of virtue is the question of education. In two of the informal proems
Plutarch uses the standard biographical topic of early training as the peg on
which to hang his proem. The story of Cleandrus of Mantinea, who came
as an exile to Megalopolis and became the guardian of Philopoemen after
the death of his father, opens the Philopoemen. The young hero was trained
by Cleandrus as Achilles was by Phoenix. Later the young man’s education
was completed with the knowledge of philosophy and freedom, learned from
Ecdelus and Demophanes, men trained in the Academy and active in political
affairs, the very men who freed Megalopolis of the tyrant Aristodemus,
helped Aratus expel Nicocles tyrant of Sicyon, and reorganized the
government of Cyrene. Inspired by their teaching and example, Philopoemen was ready to become “the last of the Greeks,” the last fighter
for Greek freedom. Education plays a different role in the Coriolanus: the
hero was noble by nature (φύσις), but suffered from lack of training
(πατιδείος). Therefore the book opens with some of the illustrious figures
of the Marcian gens, which indicate and assure Coriolanus’ inborn nobility,
but then focuses on the absence in his early years of proper formative
influences, as a result of which he lacked also the measure and disposition
which is necessary for greatness. The same lack of πατιδείος was found also
in the companion hero, Alcibiades, though in a quite different way. Finally,
in the Agesilus, which comes closest of all the lives to having no preface
at all, Plutarch writes that thanks to being first a private citizen, Agesilus
came to ruling “having already been trained to rule,” and so was uniquely
able to be in tune with his subjects. 35

A standard theme of historical proems is the praise of history, both of
its usefulness and the pleasure it brings. The praise of biography, and
especially of the moral biography which he writes, is Plutarch’s principal
topic in the Aemilius proem and a major element of that of the Pericles.

33 The proem of Sertorius also takes advantage of a physical feature, Sertorius’ loss of one
eye, to build its discussion of τύχη.
34 The figure, called προληπτικός or anticipatio, forms part of the praeparatio which begins in
the proem. See Lausberg, pp. 424–25, #854–55 and Quintilian 9.2.16, 4.1.9.
35 The first chapter of Agesilus, which seems to fill the role of informal proem, is less than
one page, as against the total for Agesilus-Pompey of 156.5 pages.
both of which have already been discussed. In general, however, Plutarch in his proems prefers to express the value of biography indirectly through his statements of purpose and method.

In developing the themes of his proems, Plutarch employs rhetorical techniques to achieve the goals of attention and docility. He occasionally strives also for good will, but more often presumes that his reader is already well-disposed toward him and his work. The variety and sophistication of these techniques, and the success with which they are adapted to the individual lives, establishes Plutarch as a master of proemial style. Rhetoricians noted that the reader's interest might be aroused by chreiai, gnoma, comparisons, digressions, metaphors, and indirection—and Plutarch uses all of these, usually several in a given proem. Thus in the Pericles Plutarch opens with a chreia, a short historical anecdote focusing on the words of (Augustus) Caesar, who asked, when he saw some foreigners fondling monkeys and puppies in their arms, “Don't their wives bear children?” Then Plutarch moves, via a consideration of τὸ φιλητικόν in humans, to an extended analogy between the proper objects of the senses and of the mind, an analogy enriched by comparisons with the occupations of dyeing, perfume-making, and sculpture. The thought is reinforced by additional chreiai from Ismenias the flute-player and Philip of Macedon. Finally, he concludes with a general gnome on the effect of τὸ καλὸν in moving the soul to noble action.

The chreia is Plutarch's favorite opening technique, sometimes used as an authority, to reinforce the argument, as in the Pericles, sometimes as a foil for Plutarch's own opinions, as in the Demosthenes. There Plutarch begins by quoting the encomium of Alcibiades' Olympic victories, which asserted that for happiness a man needs first of all a famous city. Plutarch, however, rejects this, and affirms his own opinion that happiness depends most on character and interior condition. The use of chreiai is flexible, and leaves much room for variety. Other lives are introduced by related forms of traditional discourse, such as proverbs or fables. For example, the opening of the Aratus corrects one version of a proverb with an older one; Agis-Cleomenes begins with anonymous interpreters of the Ixion myth. Of the thirteen formal prefaces in the Parallel Lives, five begin with some form of chreia.37

A different technique is found in opening of Cimon-Lucullus. The vivid short story of Damon, the descendant of a founding family of Chaeronea who killed a Roman officer and turned outlaw, is exceptional as

36 Cf. Lausberg, Händbuch, pp. 155-56, #2718. A chreia is a saying ascribed to a famous person, whose authority guarantees the value of the statement, whereas a gnome or sententia is a general statement not tied to a particular historical figure. See Lausberg pp. 536-40, #1117-20 and pp. 431-34, #872-79.

37 Per., Dem., Phoc., Dio, and Pel., to which may be added Sol. from the informal proems, Arat. from the individual lives, and Galba from the Lives of the Caesars. Negatively cited chreiai are found in Sol., Phoc., Arat. and Galba.
an opening for one of the Parallel Lives. However, this kind of short narrative is one form of digression, which is a common device in proems to arouse interest. Other examples include Philostratus' digression on Pythagoras at the beginning of the Life of Apollonius, as well as Sallust on the development of leadership in the Catiline or Cicero on his philosophical works in De divinatone II. Their purpose is to arouse the interest of the reader, and need not be connected with the work that follows, although Plutarch's story in the Cimon is in fact tied to the pair of lives it introduces, since Lucullus' testimony saved the city from Roman punishment for Damoc's murders. The discussion of historical coincidences which opens the Sertorius serves a similar purpose. The first two chapters of Agis-Cleomenes discuss the relation of δόξα and ἀρετή, starting with an interpretation of the myth of Ixion which sees Ixion's fate as analogous to the situation of the φίλοδοξοῖ, who pursue δόξα as an εἰδωλον τῆς ἀρετῆς. Only in the third chapter does Plutarch turn to the particular case of the Gracchi, and then of the revolutionary Spartan kings. The Demetrius begins with a discussion of the manner in which persons understand through opposites, in the crafts and other skills, and then develops a comparison between the perceptions and crafts. The specific reference to the subjects of the pair of lives does not come until I. 7–8. As has been seen, the Aemilius takes its start from the biographer's own delight in his work, and the usefulness he finds in it, while the Theseus begins with a comparison between biography and map-making.

The writing of proems was apparently a common school exercise. Even experienced writers could prepare collections of proems at leisure, so that they would be available to add to a new essay or treatise. In one letter to Atticus (16. 4. 4), Cicero admits shamefacedly that by mistake he had prefaced his newly composed De gloria with a proem from his private collection which had already been used for Academics III. He noticed the error only later when he was rereading the Academics. A major fault for a proem was that it could be attached to any work indiscriminately. Plutarch usually avoids this charge, taking some pains to integrate the theme of the proem to the pair of lives which follow. Nevertheless, some general proems, such as those of the Aemilius on biography or of the Pericles on the contemplation of virtuous deeds, would fit a number of lives. The preface to the Alexander, distinguishing biography from history, might equally have been applied to Agesilaus-Pompey, though it is true that the latter pair had received less treatment from historians.

Comparison of Plutarch's proems with those found in other biographical works reveals the variety of techniques and approaches he has employed. The format of the Parallel Lives required an exceptional number

38 They are frequently found in the separate introductory pieces called prolalai or lalai found in Lucian. A description of a beautiful object was also recommended as an opening: cf. Lausberg, Handbuch p. 155, #271 e, α'.

Philip A. Stadter
291
of proems, and he took the opportunity to explore diverse modes of introducing his pairs of lives. Those essays of the *Moralia* which preceded the *Lives* would have given him practice in opening treatises on a broad spectrum of topics, and in fact the proems owe much to the philosophical and moral considerations so common in those essays. Many show the same technique of discussion by means of comparison and analogy, freely flowing between verse quotations, *chreiai*, and examples from the arts and natural sciences. Another sort of model was offered by histories with multiple books, each introduced by a proem, such as were found in Ephorus and are known from Diodorus. However, being part of a predetermined and structured whole, those prefaces would have a different function from the proems to pairs of lives written one at a time, the author adding to them as the fancy struck him. The treatment of method and emphasis on research in out of the way sources, although present in later historians, is rare for biography. Even Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius*, which makes a point of identifying and justifying the sources it employs, gives proportionately less weight to the question than has been found in Plutarch.

Throughout all the proems, formal and informal, the most distinctive feature is the way in which Plutarch uses them to establish his own ethos. Those with dedications to Sosius Senecio (*Dem.*, *Dio*, *Thes.*, *Aem.*, *AgCl.*) clearly are meant to express an air of friendship, intellectual pleasure, and high moral values. But the others continue that same warmth, the feeling of being in contact with an understanding and intellectually curious person, someone who is serious yet not stuffy, aware of life in all its manifestations, yet deliberately avoiding the unseemly and trying to present the best side of his subjects. Plutarch does not usually give his readers biographical details, as do, e.g. Dionysius of Halicarnassus or Appian (the proem to the *Demosthenes* is an exception). But he often unselfconsciously shares with them his feelings and assessments: his discomfiture at leaving the bounds of known history in the *Theseus*, his delight in writing biographies, which he sees as an aid to his own moral development (*Aem.*), his disdain for the profession of sculptor (*Per.* 2), and his fears that something might shake the calm of the philosopher (*Dio*).

What notion of the audience for these lives can be derived from these proems? His readers were male, upper-class, and leisured. They were distrustful of the populace and the errors of *hoi polloi* (*Phoc.* 2. 1, 8), scornful of dyers and perfumers (*Per.* 1. 5), and supportive of the Roman order, even though they recognized that individual Romans would misuse their authority. On this point the story of Damon in *Cimon* 1–2 is most revealing: although Damon comes from an old Chaeronean family and has been sexually harassed by a Roman officer, the sympathy of the narrative is with the town officials who outlaw him after he murders his tormentor. Lucullus is seen as the fair and honest Roman official who saves the city when the hostility of a neighboring Greek town might have destroyed it. Plutarch's readers were also politically active, and expected to learn from the
lives of statesmen and to imitate their virtues and avoid their errors in their own everyday affairs. Yet Plutarch never suggests, as is frequent in proems,\(^{39}\) that his readers were hurried and had to be presented with important material as rapidly as possible.

Though involved in government, Plutarch's audience were also intellectuals, well-read and familiar with the science of their day. They enjoyed tragic quotations, were familiar with maps of strange places (Thes. 1), and with histories of Alexander the Great. They understood metaphors drawn from the philosophy of perception or astronomy (Per. 1. 3, Phoc. 2. 6). They admired Thucydides, but were wary of the fabulous (Thes. 1), and did not read for pleasure—or at least admit to reading—stories of scandal and sexual dalliance (Demetr. 1. 5). They were philosophically inclined and interested in moral growth (Aem. 1). While they admired writing as a means of understanding philosophical and ethical truths (Per. 2, Aem. 1), they considered the other arts on a different level, and their practitioners—flautists, sculptors—as low class, since what they produced, while beautiful, was fundamentally useless (Per. 1. 5–2. 1).

Such a portrait could easily match the dedicatee of the Lives, Sosius Senecio, or at least the way he would like to see himself. It would also match Plutarch himself, and this is perhaps one of the secrets of the Lives, that Plutarch envisions an audience so much like himself, not only interested in but sharing his feelings on moral improvement, duty, and the importance of philosophy in guiding one's life. If the reader did not actually live this way, he wished to. Plutarch does not write up to his audience, as a client to his patron or an inferior to a superior, nor down, as a teacher to his pupils, the expert to the uninitiated. Rather he establishes a relation of friendship and equality, in which he has pride of place because of his reading and devotion to higher ideals. Plutarch accepts that he is on the road to wisdom, but implies that his reader is too, and invites him to walk with him. It is this unpretentious and unquestioned unity of interests between author and reader, so apparent in the proems, which creates much of the charm and the power of the Parallel Lives.

This examination of the proems of the Lives should naturally lead to comparison with those of Plutarch's other essays, and of other works intended for a general readership, such as Seneca's letters or some of the essays of Galen. However, this attempt to set the lives in the context of belles-lettres in general must be set aside, as Plutarch would say, "for another essay." But even with this examination of Plutarch's proems, it is possible to appreciate the variety of techniques that he has employed, and the importance of a few major themes. The ethos of his heroes is central, meant to be an example and often an inspiration to his readers. The formation of character is complex, since, as the proems frequently assert,

\(^{39}\) Cf. e.g. Nepos, or Philostratus' Life of the Sophists.
favorable or adverse circumstances and the training one receives can significantly shape even a virtuous man's career. Finally, the proems often demonstrate Plutarch's delight in employing a variety of sources, while keeping their focus on his primary goal, to understand the nature of the man, not merely to describe his deeds.

Appendix: The non-parallel Lives

Four of Plutarch's Lives do not belong to the set of Parallel Lives: Aratus, Artoxerxes, Galba and Otho. Of these the last two belong to another set, Lives of the Emperors. The proem of the Galba introduces a new book, which would have included the Otho and the lost life of Vitellius, thus concluding his series of the emperors. Suetonius also had combined the three emperors of 69 A.D. in one book. The Otho has no proem, but continues directly after the Galba, with the first day of the new emperor's reign. Otho had already been introduced in the course of the former Life. Like the formal proems of the Parallel Lives, that of the Galba is set off by the asyndeton at 3. 1 from the body of the life. The life itself is concerned almost completely with the events of 68 and 69 (4. 3 to the end, 28 of 29 pages). The opening is provided by a chreia, which here introduces the theme of the corruption of the soldiery by money and pleasure. The theme is expanded with other chreiai by Aemilius Paullus and Plato, then applied to the particular case of the events after Nero's death. Another chreia introduces the comparison of the Romans with the sufferings of the Titans, and a comparison with the ten-month reign of the tyrant Polyphron emphasizes the disintegration at Rome, where four emperors ruled in a like period. The theme of corruption of the soldiery is reintroduced, this time specifically applied to Nymphidius Sabinus, who by his payments to the troops destroyed not only Nero, but also Galba. Finally, there is a recusatio, similar to that in the Alexander-proem: a detailed account belongs to πραγματική ιστορία, but Plutarch will not pass over the ἀξια λόγου of the actions and sufferings of the Caesars. Here, contrary to the Alexander, Plutarch does not say he is looking for ethos, or virtue and vice, and leaves quite vague what exactly he considers ἀξια λόγου and how much he thinks he should include of that which is not "actions and sufferings." The Galba is given a kind of epilogue in c. 29, in which Plutarch takes the sum of Galba's attempt to be emperor and suggests the strengths and weaknesses of his character. From this it appears that Plutarch's principal aim in fact has been to illuminate the character of the emperors, and what they did and suffered is used as indications of the character. In this the Lives of the Emperors were similiar to the Parallel Lives, but did not (apparently) include the emphasis on education and life before the accession, which is so

40 For a more detailed study of the proem to the Galba and its relation to the Otho see the paper of A. Georgiadou, No. 10 in this volume.
important in most of the Lives. Obviously, however, an Augustus or Tiberius would be much richer than a Galba or Otho.

The Artoxerxes does not have a formal proem, but the account of the family and of Artoxerxes' pre-accession name serves as an informal proem, moving the reader into the world of Persia and introducing two of Plutarch's major sources, Deinon and Ctesias (the third, Xenophon, will be mentioned in c. 4). However, other proemial themes are lacking. Plutarch does not say why he chose to write this life: was he considering a collection of Persian kings, similar to that of the Roman emperors? Or was he attracted because of the confluence of first-hand sources in Xenophon and Ctesias? The Aratus, on the other hand, has a full formal proem, marked off by the asyndeton which begins c. 2.41 The proem is divided into two parts, the general considerations on praising one's ancestors, and the particular statement of Plutarch's decision to write on Aratus and his reasons for it. The two are united by the references to the dedicatee, Polycrates, at 1. 1, 3, and 5.42 The proem opens with the quotation of a proverb, as quoted by Chrysippus, but then corrected according to the grammarian Dionysodorus. The point is that while some bad men substitute praise of their distinguished ancestors for their own good actions, it is right for good men also to praise their ancestors, using them as "homegrown examples" for their lives. This notion of paradeigmata which ties together the generations, leads naturally to Plutarch's desire to write the biography of the famous Aratus for the children of his friend, himself a descendant of Aratus, so that they can be nourished by these examples, and learn what they should imitate. The use of lives as sources of virtues to imitate is one of the fundamental objectives of the Parallel Lives: see especially the proems to Pericles and Aemilius, and in a negative sense, the Demetrius. The sententia which concludes the proem generalizes again the notion to the wider readership which Plutarch expects. At the very end of the Life (54. 8), however, Plutarch recalls the personal dedication, noting that the family of Aratus "survives in Sicyon and Pellene to our own day."

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41 See on the proem A. J. Koster, Plutarchi Vita Arati (Leiden 1937) XVII–XVIII, XXVIII–XXXIX.
42 Polycrates is probably to be identified with the friend mentioned at De Pyth. Or. 409B and Quaest. Conv. 667E ff., and with the Helladarch Tib. Claudius Polycrates (PIR² C969, SIG³ 846): cf. C. P. Jones, Plutarch and Rome (Oxford 1971) 26, n. 41, 40.
Remarques à propos de l'usage des citations en matière de chronologie dans les Vies

FRANÇOISE FRAZIER

C'est en étudiant l'organisation du récit historique dans la Vie de Nicias qu'un passage de cette Vie a attiré mon attention sur le peu de rigueur chronologique montré par Plutarque lorsqu'il doit produire comme documents des textes littéraires, qui sont, pour l'essentiel, des œuvres poétiques, vers d'Homère ou d'Hésiode, élégies, passages des comiques.¹

 Parties d'une telle constatation, les remarques que je voudrais proposer s'attacheront surtout à la conception que Plutarque se fait de la chronologie et à l'intérêt, limité, qu'il lui porte. Il s'agit par là de mieux préciser la distance qui le sépare des historiens modernes, lors même qu'il semble recourir à une méthode documentaire voisine et d'adapter en conséquence nos propres études critiques.

 Cela ne saurait mieux se faire qu'en s'appuyant sur quelques passages, narratifs ou descriptifs, des Vies où apparaissent nettement les rapports chronologiques entre époque du texte cité, époque des faits relatés et présent du narrateur; je me propose donc d'étudier de très près quelques extraits, essentiellement des Vies de Solon et de Nicias et, pour la commodité de l'exposé, et dans la mesure où leur texte grec n'est pas essentiel, je donnerai le texte des citations poétiques en traduction.²

 Les citations n'étant ainsi qu'un moyen privilégié d'aborder les questions chronologiques, un seul point technique retiendra notre attention: le temps

¹ Homère: Thes. 25. 3 et 34. 1—voir aussi 20. 2; Hésiode: Thes. 3. 4, 16. 3 et 20. 1; Sol. 2. 6; Simonide: Agés. 1. 1—il serait aussi l'auteur des inscriptions citées in Pel. 1. 7; Them. 8. 5 et Arist. 1. 7—; Archilochique: Thes. 5. 3; Ion de Chios: Thes. 20. 2; les tragiques Mélanthios, auteur de vers de circonstance: Cimon 4. 1, 7 et 9; Euripide: Thes. 3. 4 et 15. 2, Nic. 9. 7 et Alc. 11. 3, Eschyle: Them. 14. 1; Critias pour une élégie: Alc. 33. 1; surtout les comiques, cités en bloc: Arist. 5. 8; Demosth. 9. 5—Per. 8. 4 et 24. 9 (en ταξις καιματιως) et nommément, avec Aristophane: Nic. 4. 7 et 8. 3–4, Alc. 1. 7 et 16. 2–3, Per. 26. 4 et 30. 4, Cim. 16. 5—voir aussi Ant. 70. 1; Crainos: Sol. 25. 2, Per. 3. 5, 13. 8, 13. 10 et 24. 9, Cim. 10. 4; Eupolis: Per. 3. 7 et 24. 10; Alc. 13. 2, Nic. 4. 6; Cim. 15. 4; Télécilèdes: Per. 3. 6 et 16. 2, Nic. 4. 5; Phrynichos: Nic. 4. 8; Archippos: Alc. 1. 8; Hemisthos: Per. 33. 8; Platnon le Comique: Per. 4. 4, Them. 32. 6, Nic. 11. 6–7, Alc. 13. 9—voir aussi Ant. 70. 1; Ménandre: Alex. 17. 7 et Philippiades: Demet. 12. 7.

² Selon la traduction de R. Flacelière dans la C.U.F.
du verbe, déclaratif comme φάωι, λέγειν, ou plus démonstratif comme μαρτυρεῖν, ἔμφασιν ou δηλοῦν, qui introduit la citation. On constate une large majorité de présents; vient ensuite le parfait, temps qui maintient un certain rapport avec le présent du narrateur en produisant le texte comme le résultat toujours actuel et existant d'une rédaction ou d'une énonciation passée. Au contraire l'aoriste qui replacerait la production du texte dans son cadre historique est rarissime: je n'en ai relevé que deux cas, l'attaque de Philippidès contre son ennemi, le flatter de Démétrios, Stratoclès; la rédaction de certaines lettres, preuves de son intérêt pour ses amis par Alexandre;3 dans le dernier cas surtout, il est clair que Plutarque a voulu insister sur l'action même du roi se donnant la peine d'écrire à ses amis: d'où l'emploi exceptionnel de l'aoriste.

En général cependant, grâce à cet emploi massif de présents ou de parfaits, le texte cité se trouve détaché de la continuité narrative; il est un élément à part, toujours accessible dans le présent et vérifiable, au même titre que les inscriptions, monuments, décrets que Plutarque se plaît à mettre en avant. Sa pratique alors ne diffère guère en apparence du souci de documentation de l'historien moderne, mais cette similitude ne résiste pas à l'examen.

En premier lieu, un historien moderne—sauf à être historien de la littérature—ne voit guère dans le texte littéraire qu'un moyen d'éclairer la situation historique qu'il analyse en y retrouvant, par exemple, un reflet des préoccupations de l'époque. Chez Plutarque, en revanche, les relations entre texte littéraire et récit historique paraissent fonctionner dans les deux sens: le récit peut être appuyé par la citation, mais le texte peut aussi recevoir une certaine lumière du récit.

Un exemple particulièrement significatif, entre autres,4 se lit dans la Vie de Péricalès; ayant évoqué le marquage des prisonniers athéniens par les Samiens et des prisonniers samiens par les Athéniens—qui avaient imprimé une Samienne sur leur front—, Plutarque ajoute (Per. 26. 4):

C'est à ces marques, dit-on, qu'Aristophane a fait allusion en disant: "Ce peuple de Samos, comme il est riche en signes!"

Πρὸς ταύτα τὰ στίγματα λέγουσι καὶ τὸ Ἀριστοφάνειον ἤνίχθαι.

Τὸ Ἀριστοφάνειον, sans référence même à la comédie d'où il est extrait, confère au vers une sorte d'existence propre; il se suffit à lui-même comme vers "énigmatique" et le verbe ἤνίχθαι, employé ici, est très courant dans l'interprétation littéraire. Tout ce passe donc comme si, en annexe au récit

3 Demetr. 26. 5 et Alex. 41. 3; il est intéressant de comparer ce passage de la Vie d'Alexandre où Plutarque insiste sur la marque de dévouement que constitue le fait même d'écrire et introduit tous les exemples par έγγαφε avec le début du chapitre suivant où, s'attachant au contenu des lettres, il recourt désormais au présent θαυμάσαι δ' αὐτῶν έστιν ὅτι καὶ μέχρι τοιούτων ἐπιστολῶν τοῖς φίλοις ἐσχάλαζεν· οἷά γράφει...

4 Voir aussi Cim. 10. 4—avec le δόξα qui dénonce l'effort exégétique—; 15. 4; Alex. 17. 7.
du siège de Samos, Plutarque se faisait ici l’écho de débats littéraires sur un vers difficile: ce que paraît confirmer l’emploi de λέγονσι.

De ce glissement de la narration vers la critique littéraire, on trouverait un autre exemple très intéressant dans le récit de l’intervention de Solon dans l’affaire de Salamine que je n’évoquerai que rapidement. Le Sage a composé une élégie pour convaincre ses concitoyens et l’a apprise par cœur, puis—le texte grec mérite d’être cité (Sol. 8. 2): ἡναβῶς ἐπὶ τὸν τοῦ κήρυκος λίθον ἐν φόνῳ διεξῆλθε τὴν ἐλεγείαν ἢς ἐστὶν ἀρχῇ. Suivent deux vers qui ne nous intéressent pas directement. Par le biais de cette citation, on glisse de l’énonciation passée διεξῆλθε à l’éternel présent du texte έστι;5 le commentaire qui suit la citation est plus évident encore. Plutarque ajoute: τοῦτο τὸ ποιήμα Σαλαμίς ἐπιγέραται.

Le verbe traduit sans ambiguïté le passage du poème récité par Solon au texte écrit qu’a pu lire Plutarque qui donne son appréciation esthétique: καὶ στίχων ἐκατόν ἐστὶ, χαριέντος πάνω πεποιημένον. Après quoi il renoue avec le fil du récit par un τότε δέ.

Dans de tels cas,6 la citation n’est plus vraiment, ou du moins plus seulement un document. Sa valeur propre d’œuvre littéraire prend le dessus; le texte devient une sorte de monument et la question de la chronologie tombe d’elle-même, puisque la citation suspend en fait le récit en une sorte de parenthèse littéraire intemporelle.

Cette attitude d’érudit méritait d’être signalée, même rapidement, mais c’est sur l’usage documentaire des citations que je voudrais insister à travers deux exemples, dont le texte de la Vie de Nicias qui a suscité mon intérêt.

Il s’agirait du chapitre 8 de cette Vie. Au chapitre précédent, Plutarque a raconté la séance au cours de laquelle Nicias a cédé le commandement à Cléon. La victoire de celui-ci est mentionnée en quelques mots et le biographe s’attarde sur le discrédit que valut à Nicias ce désistement. Le fait est d’abord nettement posé: ce fut pour Nicias la cause d’une grande impopularité. Est donnée ensuite l’explication morale de cette réprobation:

5 On peut même hésiter sur l’interprétation du membre de phrase final τὴν ἐλεγείαν ἢς ἐστὶν ἀρχῇ et comprendre—soit “il récita l’élégie en question, son élégie, dont voici le début” en considérant que l’article défini vient de ce que l’élégie a déjà été mentionnée auparavant (ἐλεγεία συνθετές); la relative est alors une pure introduction, assez lâche;—soit “il récita l’élégie dont le début est” en faisant de l’article une sorte d’appel du relatif et en donnant à la relative une valeur pleinement déterminative; les deux vers permettent alors, éventuellement, au lecteur de repérer de quelle œuvre de Solon il s’agit. C’est ainsi que semblent avoir compris B. Perrin dans la Loeb (“the elegy which begins”) et le plus récent traducteur, N. Manfredini (“l’élégie di cui questo è l’inizio”). R. Faccilére en revanche penche pour la première solution—mais se laisse aller à fausser le temps de la relative—en traduisant “il chanta toute son élégie qui commençait ainsi.” Dans ce cas, le glissement ne se fait qu’avec la relative ajoutée comme présentation; dans l’autre interprétation c’est tout le groupe objet qui sort déjà du narratif.

6 Voir aussi Thes. 20. 1–2 (vers supprimés et ajoutés chez Hésiode et Homère); Demosth. 9. 5–6 (exégèse d’une raillerie: sens général ou particulier); Mari. 11. 10 (origine de la Nékyia).
Il n'avait pas jeté son bouclier, mais il semblait avoir commis une action pire et plus honteuse en renonçant volontairement par lâcheté à rester à la tête de l'expédition et en abandonnant à son adversaire l'occasion d'une si grande victoire, tandis qu'il se démettait lui-même de son commandement.

C'est à ce point qu'interviennent les citations d'Aristophane :

Aussi Aristophane le raille-t-il une fois de plus, lorsqu'il dit dans les Oiseaux: "Non, ce n'est pas pour nous le moment de dormir, ni de temporiser, par Zeus, comme Nicias!" et qu'il écrit dans les Laboureurs: "Je veux labourer. — Eh bien, qui t'en empêche? — Vous. J'offre mille drachmes pour être dispensé des magistratures. — Nous acceptons: Cela fait deux mille drachmes avec celles de Nicias."

Considérons d'abord la phrase d'introduction, au présent comme de coutume: Σκόπει δ' αὐτὸν εἰς ταύτα πάλιν Ἀριστοφάνης ... λέγων ... Le πάλιν ne peut guère renvoyer qu'à une citation précédente du même auteur, au chapitre 4, où le vers 358 des Cavaliers a été utilisé pour illustrer la pusillanimité de Nicias terrorisé par Cléon. Par hasard, il se trouve que les Cavaliers sont vraiment antérieurs aux Oiseaux—encore que, si l'on suit Plutarque et la chronologie que suppose son récit, les pièces se rapprochent singulièrement, puisque les Cavaliers ont été joués au lendemain de Sphactéria, en 424, comme sembleraient l'avoir été les Oiseaux.

En effet le εἰς ταύτα, rendu par un vague "aussi" dans la traduction de R.Flacelière, est beaucoup plus précis et renvoie clairement à la dérobade de Nicias. Il est impossible d'arguer d'un caractère général de cette raillerie des Oiseaux: Plutarque la donne, sans doute possible, comme suscitée par Sphactéria et 1 à où le bâton nous blesse, c'est que ces événements datent de 425 quand la pièce est de 414: onze ans de réflexion font une plaisanterie bien réchauffée! Plutarque commet donc une erreur chronologique. Une erreur sporadique ne prêterait pas à conséquence et, surtout, ne permettrait pas de tirer de conclusion. Mais, si l'on regarde les autres citations documentaires d'Aristophane, on retrouve exactement le même phénomène.

7 Nic. 4. 7. Plutarque y attribue à tort à Cléon une réplique du charcutier, Agoracritos. G. Marasco voudrait voir dans cette confusion (Vita di Nicia [Roma 1977] 15) une confirmation de l'hypothèse selon laquelle toutes ces citations littéraires seraient de seconde main. Cela ne me paraît guère convaincant: en quoi est-il plus vraisemblable que l'erreur se soit trouvée dans la source de Plutarque et que Plutarque, qui connaissait la pièce, n'ait pas songé à la rectifier? On peut tout aussi bien penser que Plutarque, qui travaillait surtout de mémoire—et en particulier pour des citations de ce genre, ses notes devant principalement concerner les faits— a été trahi par elle; c'était d'autant plus aisé que, dans leur affrontement verbal, Cléon et Agoracritos disent sensiblement la même chose, le second se contentant de surenchérir sur le premier; il pouvait en outre être tentant de mentionner plutôt l'homme politique réel, que le récit allait mettre ensuite face à Nicias, qu'un personnage de fantaisie.

8 Cim. 16. 8; Per. 8. 4, 26. 4 et 30. 4; Nic. 4. 7 et 8. 3–4; Alc. 1. 7 et 16. 2; Ant. 70. 1 contient une référence sans citation; Them. 19. 4 reprend une expression portant jugement sur l'action de Thémistocle.
Deux exemples, particulièrement nets, peuvent être cités. Dans la Vie d'Alcibiade, le héros, à la veille de l'expédition de Sicile où il imposera ses vues sur celles de Nicias, atteint un sommet de gloire et Plutarque s'arrête pour peindre les sentiments mêlés éprouvés à son endroit par ses concitoyens. Ses brillantes qualités politiques et militaires les emplissent d'admiration, mais ses scandales privés les dégoûtent et les indignent. Plutarque recourt alors aux Grenouilles (Alc. 16. 3):

Les dispositions du peuple à son égard, Aristophane ne les a pas mal décrites quand il a dit: "Il l'aime, il le déteste et pourtant veut l'avoir." Et, avec plus de sévérité encore, dans cette allusion: "Surtout, ne pas nourrir un lion dans la ville, mais, si on le nourrit, se prêter à ses moeurs."

La difficulté pour nous, c'est que ces vers—les vers 1425 et 1432–33 des Grenouilles—ont été inspirés à Aristophane par le grand débat autour du rappel d'Alcibiade en 405: encore une fois dix ans après l'époque où en est le récit.

Plus curieux encore pour nous—car, on pourrait, à la limite, dire que les Athéniens ont toujours eu la même opinion d'Alcibiade, tout au long de sa carrière—est un passage de la discussion, au demeurant fort embarrassée, de la responsabilité de Périclès dans le déclenchement de la guerre du Péloponnèse. A cette occasion sont développés les démêlés avec Mégare. Le héros athénien ayant été tué en chemin, Athènes durcit encore sa position. Mais, écrit Plutarque (Per. 30. 4):

Les Mégiens, niant l'assassinat d'Anthémocritos [le héros], rejettent la responsabilité sur Aspasie et Périclès en citant ces vers célèbres et populaires des Acharniers:

"De jeunes Athéniens, après s'être enivrés, en jouant au cottabe
Pour enlever la courtisane Simaëtha se rendent à Mégare.
Alors les Mégiens, furieux et pareils à des coqs de combat,
Pour venger cet affront, s'en vont chez Aspasie raver deux courtisanes."

De quels Mégiens Plutarque parle-t-il? S'il pense à des contemporains de Périclès—et l'irruption d'un présent de narration pour souligner leur riposte est d'autant moins étonnante que celle des Athéniens à l'assassinat d'Anthémocritos vient d'être introduite par un γράφει κατ' οίτων ψήφωμα Χαρίνος—alors, l'anachronisme qui préside à la reconstitution de ce débat est flagrant, puisqu'il leur prête comme argument un historique fantaisiste tiré d'une pièce de 425 av. J. C. Si en revanche, ce qui peut sembler plus vraisemblable, il s'agit d'écrits mégiens postérieurs, le présent introduisant banalement une citation dont la seule originalité est d'être au deuxième degré, la désinvolture vis à vis de la chronologie n'est pas moins patente, puisque Plutarque saute sans crier gare du décret de 431 av. J. C. à une époque totalement indéterminée. Dans les deux cas, il écra le perspective temporelle et avance les arguments des deux camps, tels qu'ils ont été élaborés au cours du temps, mais comme s'ils étaient contemporains.
Ce faisant, il traite les thèses de chacun comme des sortes de données intemporelles qu'on peut insérer sans difficulté dans une discussion des responsabilités, sans prendre garde qu'elles ne coïncident pas avec le point du récit où il en est arrivé.

Au vu de tous ces textes, il faut admettre que nos calculs des dates, nos interrogations pour savoir si tel texte postérieur reflète néanmoins l'opinion de l'époque n'intéressent pas Plutarque alors qu'il lui serait sans doute possible, s'il le voulait, de déterminer la date des pièces. Les manuscrits d'Aristophane portaient en effet à l'époque des didascaliés indiquant sous quel archontat la pièce avait été jouée et Plutarque fait référence dans les Vies aux listes officielles des archontes. Mais il ne songe pas à de telles recherches. Il attend du texte qu'il lui livre un argument ou un jugement adapté à son propos et peu importe à quel moment précis a été rédigé ce qui fonctionne désormais comme une sorte d'élément moral intemporel.

Quand on a bien compris cette indifférence totale du biographe à la précision chronologique, on s'aperçoit par là même qu'il devient inutile de l'accuser ou de le défendre d'avoir commis des "erreurs" historiques: simplement ce qui est erreur pour nous ne l'est pas pour lui et il n'y a rien à ajouter à cela.

En le défendant même, on peut aboutir parfois à des résultats curieux, comme le montre l'édition commentée de G. Maresco, à propos de notre chapitre 8 de la Vie de Nicias où l'on passe d'une justification du biographe à une mise en cause de l'actualité des pièces d'Aristophane! Un tel saut mérite qu'on s'y attarde quelque peu.

La citation des Oiseaux gêne suffisamment l'éditeur italien pour qu'il y revienne deux fois. Dans sa note au texte, il se contente de suggérer que seule la date de la pièce a pu faire songer à rapporter à l'expédition de Sicile une pique qui dénonçait un trait habituel de Nicias; mais on peut très bien l'interpréter autrement: à preuve ce que fait Plutarque. Un éditeur doit certes essayer de bien comprendre son auteur, mais de là à lui manifester une telle confiance...

Le point est à nouveau soulevé, avec un peu plus de détails dans un appendice consacré au Nicias d'Aristophane. G. Marasco pose en principe que les Oiseaux sont une pièce apolitique et qu'il ne saurait donc y avoir d'allusions à l'expédition de Sicile. Après quoi il n'a plus de problème et peut écrire:

9 Je dois cette indication à l'obligeance de M. Chantry.
10 Arist. 5. 9-10.
11 Ed. cit. n. 3, 96: "Poiché la commedia è del 414, l'accenno è stato, da alcuni, riferito alla tattica temporeggiatrice di Nicia in Sicilia. Tuttavia la tendenza a temporeggiare era una caratteristica dello stratego, che gli spettatori conoscevano bene e che si era esplicita in varie occasioni. Lo stesso Plutarco, del resto, riferisce chiaramente il verso al comportamento di Nicia nell'episodio di Sfacteria e tale conclusione appare accettabile."
Ces prémisses posées, il n’est pas nécessaire de voir dans les allusions au personnage de Nicias une référence précise à sa conduite en Sicile; ces vers ne doivent pas être nécessairement rapportés à la tactique temporisatrice de Nicias en Sicile; c’était en effet une habitude du stratège, bien connue des spectateurs et qui s’était manifestée en diverses occasions. C’est pourquoi on ne doit pas considérer comme une erreur le fait que Plutarque rapporte ces vers au comportement du stratège dans l’épisode de Sphactérie.

Et il rejette en bloc, dans une note sèche, l’opinion contraire, émise pourtant par un spécialiste du théâtre, R. Goossens.

Cette opinion se trouve exposée dans un article de l’Antiquité classique de 1946, dont le titre “Autour de l’expédition de Sicile” oriente déjà l’interprétation des allusions des Oiseaux. R. Goossens insiste d’abord sur les méfaits du préjugé d’apolitisme attaché à cette pièce, responsable du refus de comprendre les railleries d’Aristophane comme visant les affaires de Sicile: cette attitude est, trente ans plus tard, toujours celle de G. Maresco.12 La temporisation moquée pourrait très bien être celle que Plutarque reproche aussi à Nicias au lendemain de sa brillante victoire de Dascôn—le texte se trouve au chapitre 16 de la Vie13—. Ayant invoqué aussi les analyses concordantes des modernes, G. Glotz et J. Hatzfeld, qui voient dans ce début d’expédition une suite d’atermoiements et de fausses manoeuvres, le savant poursuit à propos du vers qui nous intéresse:

Cette allusion maligne n’a jamais embarrassé aucun commentateur. Car rien n’est plus connu que cette faiblesse de Nicias; nos sources antiques sont unanimes à le lui reprocher. Mais ici encore il convient de se souvenir que la comédie ancienne, dans sa partie satirique, emprunte tous ses effets à l’actualité la plus immédiate.

Il n’est pas question de discuter ici ce présupposé, mais de montrer comment une citation faite à contre-temps par Plutarque dégénère en débat sur l’apolitisme des Oiseaux et, plus largement, sur l’actualité des attaques dans la Comédie ancienne;14 questions passionnantes, mais qui n’ont rien à voir


13 Nic. 16.8: “La victoire éclatante qu’il avait remportée ne lui servit à rien, car, bien vite, quelques jours après, il se retira à Naxos pour y passer la mauvaise saison. Il dépensait beaucoup pour une si grande armée et n’obtenait que de minces résultats auprès de quelques Sicèlès qui se ralliaient à lui … Tout le monde alors blâmait Nicias qui, à force de réfléchir, de temporiser et de prendre des sûretés, laissait passer les occasions d’agir.”

14 Il est à noter qu’on trouve la même hésitation dans les scolies (contrairement à ce que dit R. Goossens qui ne paraît pas connaître les scolies de R et de V). Ces deux manuscrits donnent en effet une interprétation d’actualité “ός ἀνεβάλλετο ἀπελθεῖν εἰς Σικελίαν”; ailleurs, on trouve une interprétation générale “ὅτι βραδὺς ἦν περὶ τὰς ἐξόδους. καὶ ὡς οἱ διαβάλλοντες οὐχὶ προνοοτικὸς ἦν, ἀλλὰ ἀμελητής. Τίνες δὲ φασὶ τὸ προνοτικὸν καὶ μὴ προστετ. τούτων αὐτῶν εἶναι.” Il n’est d’ailleurs pas sûr que des scolies, datant au plus tôt de l’époque hellénistique, nous livrent l’explication exacte des allusions d’actualité.
avec Plutarque. Une fois mis au jour son usage "achronologique" des citations, il est clair que les spécialistes d'Aristophane n'ont aucune lumière à attendre de lui et surtout, que les spécialistes de Plutarque n'ont pas à gaspiller leur énergie à le défendre d'avoir enfreint des règles chronologiques ignorées de son époque, en empiétant de surcroît sur le terrain de leurs collègues, spécialistes de la comédie.

A côté de cette citation des Oiseaux qui nous a occupés si longuement, on trouve encore, dans ce chapitre 8, une citation des Laboureurs. Pour cette pièce perdue, les choses se présentent différemment, puisque sa date est inconnue. Mais, précisément, ce fragment joue un grand rôle dans l'établissement de celle-ci et il semble bien que, peu ou prou, les critiques se laissent influencer par Plutarque. L'auteur fondamental sur cette question est Bergk dans l'édition Meineke (II. 2., p. 983 sqq.). Le savant allemand reconnaît avoir longtemps hésité pour savoir si la dérobade de Nicias visait Sphactérie—comme dit Plutarque—ou la Sicile—ce que suggère le rapprochement avec les Oiseaux—. Pour trancher, il ne s'appuie que sur Aristophane: ce qu'on sait de l'argument de la pièce la rapproche des Acharniens ou de la Paix15 donc la situe loin de l'époque de l'expédition de Sicile.16 Mais, quand il en vient à chercher une date précise, parmi les années disponibles, il rejette sans hésiter l'année 42217 pour s'arrêter sur les Dionysies de 424 au motif que "la pièce n'a pas pu être jouée très longtemps après Sphactérie": ce qui revient à faire confiance à Plutarque. Il a peut-être en effet raison, mais il peut tout aussi bien avoir tort. L'allusion au don d'une somme d'argent dans le texte ne convient pas pour Sphactérie et a laissé perplexes tous les commentateurs: il se peut qu'elle s'explique par l'intrigue de la pièce; il se peut aussi qu'elle vise un autre fait ignoré de nous. Là encore, je ne suis pas en mesure de trancher; je ne peux que suggérer aux spécialistes de ne pas trop se fier à Plutarque dans ce genre de questions.

L'indifférence à l'exactitude chronologique, patente chez lui, ne doit cependant pas être confondue avec un désintérêt total pour tout ce qui est chronologique. On trouve un certain intérêt, si limité soit-il, une certaine vision de celle-ci qu'un second passage, tiré de la présentation de Solon, va nous aider à déterminer.

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15 Voir les derniers éditeurs des fragments, Austin et Kassel (vol. III. 2 [1984]), qui rappellent que certains ont même voulu, à tort, faire de cette pièce une seconde version de la Paix.

16 "De tempore autem, quo fabula acta esse videatur, diu dubius haesitavi, nunc vero omnino contendo scriptam esse non ita multo post expeditionem ad Sphacteriam. Namque, fr. I Niciae cunctabundus animus rideatur ita a poeta, ut illum insigne aliquod verecundiae documentum edidisse necesse sit; atque de Sicula quidem expeditione cogites cave, nam aliae prorsus similis comoediae in illud cadunt tempus, itaque potius referenda est fabula ad illud tempus, quo Nicias Cleoni imperium cessit isque Sphacteriam expugnavit."

17 Plus prudents, Austin et Kassel gardent cette possibilité et ne tranchent pas entre les Dionysies de 424 ou de 422.
Au chapitre 2, Plutarque traite de l'état de fortune du Sage. Quasi ruiné par les générosités de son père, il dut se lancer dans le commerce. Vie chrématistique et commerce n'ayant pas bonne presse, il est cependant des auteurs pour attribuer ses voyages à son goût de la connaissance (πολυτερία καὶ ἱστορία) et non à la recherche du gain (χρηματισμός). Plutarque creuse alors ces mobiles: il établit rapidement l'amour de la science grâce à la célèbre citation "Je vieillis en apprenant toujours," puis en vient aux rapports avec l'argent. C'est le passage qui nous intéresse:

La richesse ne l'éblouissait pas et il dit que sont également riches
   "celui qui possède des masses
   D'argent et d'or, des champs fertiles en foment,
   Des chevaux, des mules, et celui qui n'a rien
   Que sa vigueur—bon estomac, bons flancs, bons pieds—
   Puis, le moment venu, la beauté d'un garçon
   Ou d'une femme: ainsi son bonheur est parfait."

Cette mise en balance de biens matériels et non matériels—qui rappelle la hiérarchie du septième skolion attique18—est donc regardée, par le biographe comme l'expression d'une opinion personnelle, conformément à la méthode classique dite "de Chamailéon" en vigueur dans toutes les biographies d'écrivains.19 Elle convient parfaitement à un homme pour qui l'argent n'a pas une importance capitale. Mais, à ce point, lui revient un autre texte où il est question d'argent et il poursuit:

Mais ailleurs il dit:
   "Je veux avoir de l'or, mais non pas l'acquérir
   Injustice: après viendrait le châtiment."

Les textes semblent se contredire dans l'optique qui est celle de Plutarque. On pourrait songer à résoudre cette contradiction en regardant le contexte, littéraire ou historique, dans lequel ils ont été écrits: mais, c'est encore raisonner en moderne. Pour Plutarque, les textes ainsi isolés sont en soi l'expression d'une certaine vérité générale: relative dévalorisation de l'argent pour le premier, valorisation pour le second—et attaché qu'il est à voir ce que pense Solon de la richesse, il n'insiste pas non plus sur le point essentiel: la justice dans l'acquisition des biens. A y regarder de plus près, ce n'est pas même la contradiction qui le gêne, mais le seul contenu du second texte. Si le premier correspond parfaitement au détachement exigé de


l'homme de bien, il faut justifier le désir d'acquérir des biens exprimé dans le second; ce que Plutarque fait en deux temps.

Une règle morale s'efforce d'abord d'établir le juste milieu entre dédain du nécessaire et recherche du superflu que doit trouver l'agathos kai politikos aner.20 Puis est avancé un argument historique: l'honorabilité dont jouissait à l'époque le travail—et donc le commerce—prouvée par le vers 311 des Travaux et des Jours. Plutarque rappelle:

En ce temps-là "travailler n'avait rien de honteux," comme dit Hésiode, et l'exercice d'un métier n'entraînait aucune discrimination.

Cette insistance sur l'absence de discrimination, note R. Flacelière, vient peut-être de ce que dans "l'aristocratique Béotie" natale de Plutarque, il existait des préjugés tenaces, au point que, selon Aristote,21 était exclu des fonctions publiques tout homme n'ayant pas cessé son activité lucrative depuis plus de dix ans.

Cet état d'esprit influence peut-être la reconstruction du passé à laquelle se livre Plutarque qui en fait un négatif du présent; en tout cas, il est net qu'Hésiode figure ici comme le représentant de la mentalité d'autrefois, sans plus de précision, et il est fort aventuré de suggérer à partir de cette citation que "Plutarque semble placer Hésiode à l'époque de Solon, bien que le poète des Travaux paraisse avoir vécu vers le milieu du VIIème siècle." En écrivant cela, R. Flacelière montre bien comment même les spécialistes les plus éminents peuvent parfois se laisser aller à appliquer nos propres méthodes à Plutarque, cherchant des dates précises là où il se contente d'approximations.22

Qu'Hésiode soit bien à ses yeux le représentant d'une sagesse ancienne aux contours chronologiques des plus flous (év τόις τότε χρόνοις), on le voit aussi dans la Vie de Thésée, quand est évoquée la figure du sage Pitthée, grand-père du héros (Thes. 3. 2–3):

Il acquit la plus grande réputation en se montrant l'homme le plus savant et le plus sage qui fût de son temps. Cette sagesse était, semble-t-il, du même genre et du même caractère que celle qui permit à Hésiode d'écrire ce qui surtout fit sa gloire: les sentences que renferme son poème des Travaux.

Et de préciser que, selon Aristote, une de ces sentences serait même reprise de Pitthée. Avec ou sans cet emprunt, Hésiode fournit un point de repère commode pour définir une sagesse gnomique, essentiellement morale, qui était celle des temps anciens et qui règne toujours à l'époque de Solon. Si

20 Sur cette question chère à Plutarque, voir la Comparaison d'Aristiide et de Caton l'Ancien et Per. 16. 7.
21 Pol. 3. 3. 4, 1278 a 25 cité pas R. Facelière, C.U.F. II, n; 1, p. 12.
22 Dans la dernière édition de la Vie de Solon, L. Piccirelli (Verona 1977) 117 dénonce sans détour l'assertion de R. Flacelière comme erronée, mais, très curieusement, fait de cette évocation de la mentalité d'époque l'expression du sentiment de Plutarque ("per Plutarcho, che si basa sull'autorità di Esiodo [Op. 311], nessun lavoro è degradante... ").
Françoise Frazier

I'on continue la lecture de la Vie de Solon, Plutarque explique en effet au chapitre 3:

[§ 6] Il eut, comme la plupart des sages de son temps, une prédilection particulière pour cette partie de la philosophie qui a trait à la morale et à la politique alors que, dans les sciences physiques, il se montre d'une simplicité par trop archaïque.

Et, après une nouvelle citation illustrant cette simplicité, il poursuit:

[§ 8] Il semble, en somme, que seule la sophia de Thalès poussa alors par la théorie au-delà de l'utilité pratique, tandis que c'est à leur mérite politique que les autres durent leur renom de sophia.

Cet élargissement du point de vue fait apparaître deux formes de sophia, inscrites dans une certaine perspective historique. Il semble que prédomine d'abord une sagesse éprise d'utilité et privilégiant le politique — celle de Pitthéée, d'Hésiode, de Solon et de la plupart de ses contemporains — ; puis se développa une forme appuyée sur la théoria et attachée à la connaissance des phénomènes physiques dont Thalès fut un précurseur. Se dessine ainsi une certaine vision de l'histoire de la philosophie dont on trouve ça et là des éléments dans les Vies.

Ainsi Mnésiphois de Phréarres, maître de Thémistocle, est-il présenté comme "n'étant ni un rhéteur, ni l'un de ces philosophes qu'on appelle physiciens, mais faisant profession de ce qu'on nommait alors sophia et qui était en réalité l'habileté politique et l'intelligence pratique, conservées fidèlement par lui comme une doctrine héritée de Solon" (Them. 2. 6).

Cette sagesse politique, précise-t-il encore dans la Vie de Périclès [4. 2] pour Damon, dans la Vie de Lycurgue [4. 2-4] pour le Crétois Thalès, d'aucuns l'ont dissimulée d'abord sous le nom de musique: dans ces passages, l'influence de l'historique de Protagoras dans le dialogue du même nom ne fait guère de doute.23

Probablement influencée par Platon et transmise dans les écoles, une certaine vision de l'histoire de la philosophie peut ainsi être reconstituée avec une première sagesse politique et gnémique, éventuellement dissimulée sous un autre nom, puis le développement de l'intérêt pour les phénomènes physiques et de la théoria qui acquit définitivement droit de cité avec le divin Platon, comme l'explique la digression sur la connaissance des éclipses dans le Vie de Nicias.24

23 Prot. 316 d-e: "Pour moi, j'ose affirmer que la profession de sophiste est ancienne, mais ceux qui la pratiquaient dans les premiers temps, craignant la défaveur qui s'y attache, la pratiquaient sous le déguisement ou le voile de la poésie, comme Homère, Hésiode, Simonide ou des mystères et des oracles... J'ai remarqué que quelques-uns même l'abritaient derrière la gymnastique...; c'est sous le manteau de la musique que votre Agathocles, ce grand sophiste, s'est caché..." (traduction E. Chambrly).

24 Nic. 23. 2 sqq.: "Le premier de tous à avoir traité par écrit des phases de la lune avec beaucoup de netteté et de hardiesse, à savoir Anaxagore, n'était pas lui-même bien ancien à cette
Il n'est pas surprenant de voir Platon marquer le grand tournant de la philosophie; il est plus piquant de le voir figurer dans notre chapitre de la *Vie de Solon* au nombre de ceux qui montrent qu'à l'époque le commerce n'était pas déshonorant—puisqu'il vendit de l'huile en Égypte—, aux côtés de gens aussi divers que Protis, fondateur de Marseille, Thalès et Hippocrate le mathématicien. Cette collection hétéroclite de personnages d'époques variées censés illustrer la mentalité ancienne et parmi lesquels Platon fait tache, montre bien comment l'esprit de Plutarque fonctionne par grandes idées générales: il s'agit de montrer l'honorabilité du commerce, et oubliant qu'il l'a circonscrite en τοῖς τότε χρόνοις, il énumère tous les hommes illustres qui l'ont pratiqué, descendant même jusqu'à Platon; s'agit-il de dessiner l'évolution des connaissances et de la sagesse, il se contente de grandes lignes sans repères chronologiques avec de vagues τότε ou ὑπερ. 

Ainsi, si datations et synchronismes peuvent sporadiquement l'intéresser quand il s'agit de personnages—à preuve les réflexions sur l'impossibilité d'après les tables chronologiques d'une rencontre entre Solon et Crésus,\(^2\) de telles considérations ne s'étendent ni aux faits ni aux textes cités. Plutarque exploite ces derniers,\(^2\) sans considération de temps, pour appuyer une idée générale, par exemple "Solon n'aimait pas l'argent" ou pour illustrer les conséquences d'un acte, comme l'impopularité de la dérobade de Nicias. Parfois même il semble s'intéresser plus à la citation en soi qu'à ce qu'elle peut apporter au récit: c'est ce que j'ai proposé d'appeler la "citation-monument." Monument ou document, le texte cité est, en tout état de cause, hors du temps; toujours disponible dans le présent, il est prêt à s'inscrire dans la biographie au moment *narrativement* opportun, qui ne coïncide pas nécessairement avec le moment historique de sa composition. Cette désinvolte chronologique de Plutarque, qui rappelle la pratique des citations des rhéteurs, dénaturant sans scrupule des extraits de poètes pour les faire entrer dans leurs vues au mépris du sens propre des passages dans leur contexte et dans leur époque, cette désinvolture si étrangère à nos propres conceptions ne doit jamais être perdue de vue par le commentateur moderne: sa vigilance se relâchant, il risque en effet de se laisser emporter tout naturellement à des inductions chronologiques hasardeuses ou à des

date et son ouvrage... était encore secret et circulait entre un petit nombre d'initiés... En effet, on ne supportait guère les physiciens ni ceux qu'on appelait les météorologues, parce qu'en rapportant tout à des causes dépourvues de raison, à des forces aveugles et à des événements nécessaires, ils sapillaient la puissance divine... Plus tard, la doctrine de Platon, qui reçut un vif éclat de la conduite de ce grand homme, et aussi du fait qu'elle subordonnait aux principes divins et souverains le déterminisme du monde physique, dissipait les préventions contre ces études et ouvrait à tous la voie des sciences.”

\(^2\) *Sol.* 27. 1; voir aussi *Them.* 2. 5 et 27. 1—2; *Per.* 27. 4; *Numa* 1 et *Lyc.* 1.

\(^2\) Même pour les faits, Plutarque ne s'embarrasse pas toujours de chronologie et tend à les prendre isolément à l'appui de tel ou tel trait du personnage, comme je m'attache à le montrer dans la thèse que je prépare actuellement sur les rapports entre morale et histoire dans les *Vies.*
discussions stériles. L'œuvre de Plutarque est assez riche et vaste pour qu'on évite le plus possible de telles déperditions d'énergie et qu'on s'attache à "étudier Plutarque lui-même dans ses Vies," selon le conseil de Wilamowitz sur lequel R. Flacelière a choisi de terminer l'introduction générale à son édition des Vies: qu'il me soit permis de parachever cet hommage en faisant mienne sa conclusion.

Paris
Notes on Plutarch: *Pericles and Fabius*

DAVID SANSONE

Per. 1. 1 Ξένους τινάς ἐν Ἀθήναις, πλουσίον πονήρον έχοντας και πιθήκων, ἐν τοῖς κόλποις περιφέροντας καὶ ἀγαπώντας ἰδίων ὁ Καίσαρ ἀς ἔσεικεν ἡμῶν τὴν ἡμέραν εἰ παιδία παρ’ αὐτοῖς οὖ τίκτουσιν αἰ γυναῖκες . . .

Most of Plutarch’s commentators fail to indicate that this anecdote is preserved also in Athenaeus (518f = FGrH 234 F 8). In a discussion of the luxury-loving ways of the Sybarites, the author of the *Deipnosophistae* says πρὸς οὓς καὶ τοὺς ὀμοίους τούτοις Μασσανάσσας οἱ τῶν Μασσανάσσων βασιλεῖς ἀπεκρίνατο, ὃς ἠκούσε τοὺς Πολεμαίους ἐν ὑγιῶν Ὀπομημάτων, ζητοῦσιν συνανείσθαι πιθήκους, 'παρ' ὑμῖν, ὡς οὖν, αἰ γυναῖκες οὐ τίκτουσιν παιδία; From the obscurity and precision of Athenaeus’ reference and the contrasting vagueness (Julius Caesar or Caesar Augustus?) of Plutarch’s, it appears at first sight as though Plutarch has carelessly ascribed to “Caesar” an incident that in fact belongs with the king of the Numidians. But this cannot be the whole truth. In the first place, there were no longer any Sybarites in the third century, when Massanassa was born. (This troubled only Cobet, whose marginalia include the note, “apparet aliquid excidisse in hanc sententiam καὶ τοὺς ὀμοίους τούτοις (ὀρθῶς ἢ τοῖς εἰποὶ ᾧ ἡ γυναῖκες τοι);” cf. S. P. Peppink, *Observationes in Athenaei Deipnosophistae* [Leiden 1936] 1 and 69.) In the second place, it is possible to find other instances in which Athenaeus has apparently lifted material from Plutarch without acknowledgement, modified it in such a manner as to disguise his borrowing and, in some cases, attributed the material to a more obscure source. It is hoped that the following selection may inspire another scholar to investigate this matter more thoroughly: at 576d Athenaeus attributes to a certain Zenophanes, to whose existence he is our only witness, information concerning Cyrus’ concubine Aspasia which he could readily find at Plut. *Per.* 24. 11. At 419a he recounts, on the authority of an otherwise unknown Megacles, an anecdote that Plutarch (*Cat. mai.* 2. 2) derived probably from the writings of Cato. At 44b-c Athenaeus attributes to “Aristotle or Theophrastus” the story of a certain Philinus who ate and drank nothing but milk, which is merely a confused version of what Athenaeus found at Plut. *mor.* 660e (see K. Hubert in *XAPITEΣ Friedrich Leo zum sechzigsten Geburtstag dargebracht* [Berlin
The word οὗτος seems to have caused troubles for the commentators. Amyot did not translate it and Koraes wished to delete it as superfluous. (Not Cobet; “Cob.” in Ziegler’s apparatus is a misprint for “Cor.”) The note in the school commentary by Siepert and Blass reads, “das οὗτος auf den ganzen Ausdruck und nicht etwa bloß auf εκ διαλειμμάτων,” which is neither helpful nor even intelligible. Only Schaefer has seen that εκ διαλειμμάτων is a technical expression and that it belongs to medical terminology. (For οὗτος excusing metaphors, see Alex. 11. 2, Cor. 21. 2, Flam. 2. 2, Mar. 45. 4, Marc. 22. 5, Per. 8. 1, Pyrrh. 3. 6.) The expression occurs some hundred times in the medical writers and only very rarely elsewhere (Epicur. Epist. 3. 131, Jos. Ant. 1. 330, D. L. 10. 131, Luc. de Dom. 8). But Schaefer misleads by noting that “morbi dicuntur εκ διαλειμμάτων ingruere.” For, while the expression is used in this way by the medical writers, it is also used by them to refer to the gradual application of various treatments (e.g., Galen 6. 426. 6, 758. 8, 7. 942. 4, 10. 371. 9, 977. 3, 12. 413. 10, 13. 169. 10 Kühn, Actius Iatriec. 2. 96 [= 186. 5 Olivieri]), and this is surely a more appropriate association here. Plutarch portrays Pericles as the skillful physician, who supplies remedies at just the right time and in the appropriate quantities. Compare 15. 1 μιμούμενος ἀτεχνῶς ιατρὸν ποικίλῳ νοσήματι καὶ μακρῷ κατὰ καιρὸν μὲν ἡδονᾶς ἁβλαβείς, κατὰ καιρὸν δὲ δημούς καὶ φάρμακα προσφέροντα σωτήρως and 34. 5 καθάπερ [πρὸς] ιατρὸν η πατέρα τη νόσῳ παραφρονῆσαντες ἀδικεῖν ἐπεχείρησαν. This notion of the statesman as physician (which shows up in the Lives also at Agis 31. 7, Brut. 55. 2, Cam. 9. 3, Dion 37. 7, Lyc. 4. 4 and Marc. 24. 2) is Platonic; cf. Dodds on Pl. Gorg. 503d5–505b12 (and add Gorg. 521a). For Plutarch’s interest in medicine, see F. Fuhrmann, Les images de Plutarque (Paris 1964) 41–43.

Per. 9. 1 άλλοι δὲ πολλοὶ πρῶτον ύπ’ ἐκείνου φασί τὸν δήμον ἐπὶ κληρουχίας καὶ θεωρικά καὶ μισθῶν διανομῆς προσαχθῆναι, κακῶς ἐθισθέντα καὶ γενόμενον πολυτελῆ καὶ ἀκόλαστον . . .

The Budé translation reads, “il lui donna de mauvaises habitudes.” Similarly Perrin (“thereby falling into bad habits”) and Scott-Kilvert (“they fell into bad habits”). But there seems to be no parallel for κακῶς ἐθισθέντα in this meaning. The closest is apparently mor. 532c οὕτως ἐθισθεῖς, but the preceding ἐθιστέον . . . καλεῖν shows that an infinitive is to be supplied. Although Plutarch does occasionally use ἐθίζω absolutely with the meaning “habituate” (Phil. 14. 4, mor. 18b, 329a,
616b, 982e), the following passages rather suggest that κακῶς refers to the disapproval expressed by the “many others” and that Plutarch originally included an infinitive dependent upon ἐθισθέντα: Cor. 11. 6 καλῶς ἑθίζοντες . . . ἔγεισθαι, Sol. 18. 6 ὄρθῶς ἑθίζοντος . . . συνανθάνεσθαι, mor. 41b ὄρθως πάνυ καὶ πολιτικῶς ἑθίζοντες . . . ἔγεισθαι, 132ε ἑθίζομενοι καλῶς μὴ ζητεῖν, 528f ὄρθως ἑθίζων . . . δεδέναι, 534a κακῶς ἑθίζει . . . ἀμύνεσθαι. The general meaning of the infinitive is suggested by the passage that Plutarch clearly had in mind, Pl. Gorg. 515e Περικλέα πεποιθήκεναι Ἀθηναίους ἄργους καὶ δειλοὺς καὶ λάλους καὶ φιλαργύρους, εἰς μισθοφορίαν πρῶτον καταστήσαντα. Perhaps something like μαλακίζεσθαι or, better, καθήσεθαι has dropped out before καί.

Per. 11. 1 οἱ δ’ ἀριστοκρατικοί, μέγιστον μὲν ἥδη τὸν Περικλέα καὶ πρόθεν ὀρθόντες γεγονότα τῶν πολιτῶν, βουλόμενοι δ’ ὄμος εἶναι τίνα τὸν πρὸς αὐτόν ἀντιτασσόμενον ἐν τῇ πόλει καὶ τὴν δύναμιν ἀμβλύνοντα . . .

What is the force of the article before πρὸς αὐτόν? The sentence would read as well or better without it and, indeed, most translators behave as though it did not exist. It does exist, however, at least in the manuscripts, and some account must be taken of it. Holden simply refers to Goodwin SMT §825, which states that “the participle with the article may be used substantively, like any adjective.” But why should Plutarch wish to refer to “the man opposed to him” rather than simply “some man”? (The use of the article with the future participle, e. g. Fab. 3. 7, 16. 6, 18. 1, Flam. 7. 1, Phil. 12. 2, Them. 19. 2, to refer to an indefinite person or persons is not comparable; if it were, there would be no need of τίνα here.) Amyot sensed the difficulty and translated, “voulans qu’il y eust quelcon de leur part” (reading τίνα τῶν πρὸς αὐτῶν?). Similarly Bryan, perhaps influenced by Amyot, commented, “malim τίνα αὐτῶν, aliquem ex suo numero.” But it seems otiose to specify that the aristocrats wanted “one of their own” to oppose Pericles. I think it more likely that τῶν represents the ending of some adjective, the beginning of which has fallen out. If Plutarch had written τίνα δυνατῶν πρὸς αὐτῶν, the corruption would be readily explained (ΔΥΝΑ = ΤΙΝΑ) and the sense excellent. The aristocratic party wished that there be some man of influence opposing him (for ἄντιτ. πρὸς + acc., cf. Arist. 1. 2), and so they chose Thucydides, the son-in-law or brother-in-law of Cimon, as Pericles’ antagonist.

Per. 28. 5 ἐδεξιόυντο καὶ στεφάνοις ἀνέδων καὶ ταινίαις ὀσπερ ἀθλητῆς νικηφόρων

Surprisingly, commentators do not cite what is surely the source of this anecdote, Thuc. 4. 121. 1 τὸν Βρασίδαν τά τ’ ἄλλα καλῶς ἐδεξαντο καὶ δημοσίως μὲν χρυσῷ στεφάνῳ ἀνέδησαν . . . ίδία δὲ ἔταινίου τε
καὶ προσήρχοντο ὁσπερ ἄθλητη. But it is not simply the case that Plutarch took Thucydides’ anecdote about Brasidas and transferred it to Pericles. The same anecdote had already been applied (by Theopompos?) to Alcibiades: Nepos, Alc. 6. 3 ὁμνὲς illum prosequebantur et id quod numquam antea usu venerat nisi Olympiae victoribus coronis aureis (laureis Westermann) taeniiisque (Muretus: aeneisque codd.) vulgo donabant; Plut. Alc. 32. 3 πρὸς ἐκεῖνον συντρέχοντες ἐβδόμ., ἡσπαζόντο, παρέπεμπον, ἑστεφάνουν προσιόντες, perhaps under the influence of Plato’s portrait (Symp. 212d–e) of Alcibiades at Agathon’s symposium: ἐπιστήναι ἐπὶ τὰς θύρας ἑστεφανομένων αὐτὸν κύττῳ τῇ τίνι στεφάνῳ δασεὶ καὶ ἵων, καὶ ταινίαις ἔχοντα ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς. According to Ephorus (D. S. 13. 68. 3), the Athenian generals returning to Athens in 408 B.C. crowned their own triremes, which practice Duris attributed to Alcibiades: Athen. 535c (also Eustath. ad II. 16. 419–20 = 3. 876. 20–21 van der Valk) ἑστεφάνωσε τὰς Ἀττικὰς τριήρεις θᾶλλῷ καὶ μῖτραις καὶ ταινίαις.

Per. 28. 6 ταῦτ᾽;', ἐφη, ἡθαυμαστά, Περίκλεις, καὶ ἄξια στεφάνων, ὦς...

According to Holden, “ὁς is used as if (ταῦτα) σοι had preceded.” But, although he is usually keen to provide parallels for grammatical constructions, he gives none here, and Reiske was perhaps right to introduce an antecedent for the relative pronoun. He supplied σοὶ τὰ before θαυμαστὰ. Ziegler modified Reiske’s conjecture and wrote θαυμαστά (σοι). But Reiske’s proposal is unidiomatic, and Ziegler’s can be nothing more than a mere guess, for it is not immediately apparent why σοι should have dropped out. Much more attractive, both from the point of view of sense and from that of palaeographical likelihood, would be θαυμαστά (τὰ σοί). For the relative referring to the noun implied in a possessive pronoun, see [Aesch.] PV 752-53 τοὺς ἐμοὺς ἄλλους φέροις, ὦτω, Soph. OT 1193-96 τὸν σὸν δαίμονα, τὸν σόν, ὁ τλάμον Οἰδίπόδα, ... ὀστίς, OC 730-31 τῆς ἐμῆς ἑπεισόδου, ὦν, Xen. Cyg. 5. 2. 15 οἰκία ... ἡ ὑμετέρα ... ὦ, Isocr. Panath. 191 τῆς δ′ ἡμετέρας (sc. πόλεως) ἔτι βασιλευομένης, ἐφ᾽ ὀν. In the end, however, the manuscript reading can likely be defended. For the relative pronoun, without antecedent expressed, introducing a relative clause with causal force, see the passages cited by Jebb on Soph. OC 263.

Per. 31. 4 τὸ δὲ σχῆμα τῆς χειρός, ἀναιτινοῦσης δόρυ πρὸ τῆς ὄψεως τοῦ Περικλέους ... 

Scott-Kilvert translates, quite correctly, “The position of the hand, which holds a spear in front of Pericles’ face ...” But the hand in question is that of Pericles, and τοῦ Περικλέους is as unwelcome in Greek as “Pericles” is in English. The words should be deleted. They entered the text either from an interlinear notation by a reader or from τοῦ Περικλέους
David Sansone

eikóna immediately above.

Fab. 4. 6 εὐξάτο τοὶς θεοῖς ἐνιαυτοῦ μὲν αἰγόν καὶ συών καὶ προβάτων καὶ βοῶν ἐπιγονήν, ὅσην Ἰταλίας ὥρη καὶ πεδία καὶ ποταμοί καὶ λεμάνες εἰς ὄραν ἐσομένην θέργουσι, καταθύσειν ἄπαντα (UMA: ἄπαντας S).

Clearly the reading of S is a mere error. But is ἄπαντα, which all editors print, possible Greek? The only construction for it is in some adverbial capacity. (It cannot be internal accusative, like πολλὰ καταθύσαντες Caes. 63. 12, as that would leave no construction for ἐπιγονήν.) And so the Budé translation renders, "il promit de l’immoler entièrement." But this is an odd way of saying something for which there exists, in any case, a perfectly clear expression (namely ὀλοκαυτεῖν; in Plut. only mor. 694b), for one would expect the adverb to be πάντως. Both sense and grammar would seem to require ἄπασαν. For the pattern ὅσος-clause + verb + form of πᾶς, see Cim. 10. 7 ὃσα ὄραι καλὰ φέρουσι χρῆσθαι καὶ λαμβάνειν ἄπαντα, Phil. 16. 5 ὃσοι δ’ ἤσαν ὑπὸ τῶν τυράννων ἀποδεδειγμένοι πολίται τῆς Σπάρτης, μετέκειξεν ἄπαντας and Pomp. 30. 1 ὃσοις Λευκολός ἄρχει χώρας καὶ δυνάμεως, Πομπήιον παραλαβόντα πάσαν. Plutarch elsewhere has rather lengthy ὅσος-clauses followed by forms of πᾶς referring to the antecedent; cf. Ages. 19. 2, Caes. 48. 3, Eum. 10. 2, Thes. 35. 3 and especially mor. 325ε ὃσα γὰρ φέρει καὶ θάλασσα καὶ νῆσοι καὶ ἥπειροι καὶ ποταμοί καὶ δένδρα καὶ ζῷα καὶ πεδία καὶ ὥρη καὶ μέταλλα, πάντων ἄπαρχάς.

Fab. 6. 6 βοῦς . . . ἐκέλευσε συλλαβόντες ἀναδήσαι δόδα πρὸς ἕκαστον κέρας ἡ λύγων ἡ φρυγάνων αὐτών φάκελον.

A. J. Kronenberg (Mnem. 1 [1934] 162) notes, "Et ipsa res suadet ut corrigamus καὶ λύγων et Livii historia XXII 16, 7: ‘faces undique ex agris connectae fasesque virgarum atque aridi sarmenti praeligantur cornibus boum.’ Saepius in mss. confunduntur καὶ et ἡ." Livy, the sense of the passage and palaeographical considerations would be equally well satisfied if we wrote instead καὶ φρυγάνων. For the corruption, see Cato mai. 9. 12, 23. 5 (καὶ UA: ἡ S), 20. 10 (ἡ S: καὶ UA) and especially 13. 5 (ἡ τάξις καὶ S: ἡ τάξις ἡ UA).

Fab. 7. 7 ταύτ’ ἀκούσας ὁ Φάβιος τὴν μὲν ὄργην ἐφερε πράξες τῶν πολιτῶν, χρήματα δ’ ὅσ’ ἔχουν, διασυνεσσαθαί δὲ τὸν Ἀννίβαν καὶ προεσθαί τοὺς πολίτας ὅσ’ ὕπομένων.

It is awkward for τῶν πολιτῶν and τοὺς πολίτας to refer, in the same sentence, to different groups. For it was not "the citizens" whom Fabius could not bear to betray, but the legionaries captured by Hannibal (cf. Cato min. 30. 5 ὅμηρα δ’ ὦ προήσεται). One possibility would be to read τοὺς
Illinois Classical Studies, XIII.2

όπλιτας (for this easy corruption, see e. g., Jos. Vit. 372). Cassius Dio fr. 57. 35 Boissevain, however, appears to confirm the correctness of the word πολίτας, but suggests that it needs to be somehow qualified: ὁ Φάβιος τοὺς πολίτας (τοὺς Bekker) ἐν ταῖς πρὶν μάχαις Ἰωμηρηθέντας τοὺς μὲν ἄνδρα ἀντ’ ἄνδρος ἐκομίσατο. (Cf. Fab. 7. 5 ἄνδρα μὲν ἄνδρι λύσθαι τῶν ἀλισκομένων.) Read, therefore, τοὺς τῆς πολίτας, vel sim.

Fab. 9. 1 θόρυβος διῆξε τοῦ δῆμου πολύς

For the expression, cf. Pomp. 68. 3 πανικοὶ τινες θόρυβοι διάττοντες ἐξανεστησαν αὐτῶν. One would have thought that the simple genitive with διῆξε was impossible in prose—it is certainly unexampled in Plutarch—but for Jos. BJ 6. 298 φάλαγγες ἔνοπλοι διάττουσα τῶν νεφῶν.

Fab. 20. 6 εὑρεν ἐρωτὶ παιδίσκης κατεχόμενον τὸν ἄνδρα καὶ κινδυνεύοντα μακρὸς ὄδοις ἐκάστοτε, φοιτῶντα πρὸς ἐκείνην ἀπὸ τοῦ στρατοπέδου.

Ziegler seems to have been the first to punctuate after ἐκάστοτε. Earlier editors had omitted punctuation, perhaps because they did not feel confident that they knew whether the adverb went with what precedes or with what follows. While Ziegler is to be commended for refusing to sit on the fence, he has, I think, come down on the wrong side. The adverb, which means “on several occasions,” goes with φοιτῶντα, as at Ages. 7. 1 ὄχλου φοιτῶντος ἐπὶ τὰς θύρας ἐκάστοτε and mor. 543a τὴν Ἄθηνᾶν ἠφασκεν αὐτῷ φοιτῶσαν εἰς δυσὶν ἐκάστοτε τοὺς νόμους ὑπηγεῖσθαι.

Fab. 21. 3 αἰσχρόν ὤμεν ἀνάγκης οὐδὲν

Although reference to Euripides is not explicitly made, this should be added to the testimony to Eur. fr. 757. 9 Nauck (= Hypsipyle fr. 60. 96a Bond), which Plutarch elsewhere cites in the form δεινὸν γὰρ οὐδὲν τῶν ἀναγκαίων βροτοῖς (mor. 111a, 117d; cf. Clem. Alex. Strom. 4. 7. 53 [= p. 273. 4 Stählin]), but which is quoted by Stobaeus as οὐκ αἰσχρόν οὐδὲν τῶν ἀναγκαίων βροτοῖς (Ecl. 3. 29. 56).

Fab. 22. 5 ἔντασθα μέντοι δοκεῖ φιλοτιμίας ἦττων γενέσθαι τοὺς γὰρ Βρεττίους πρῶτους ἀποσάφτειν ἐκλευσεν, ὡς μὴ προδοσία τὴν πόλιν ἔχουν φανερὸς γένοιτο.

What Fabius feared was not the revelation that he held the city through treachery, but that he had captured it through treachery. See 21. 1 τὴν δὲ Ταραντίνων πόλιν ἔσχαν ἐκλαυκόντι ἐκ προδοσίας. Two possibilities readily suggest themselves, σχῶν and ἐλῶν. The former is unlikely, as the aorist participle of (uncompounded) ἔχω is rare in Plutarch, occurring only at Nic. 13. 11 and mor. 1071f. By contrast, the aorist participle of αἰρέω is found nearly forty times in Plutarch in the masculine nominative singular
alone, often with the name of a city as the direct object (Alc. 20. 2, Alex. 9. 1, 17. 2, Ant. 3. 7, Arat. 36. 3, Cor. 29. 1, Crass. 2. 4, 6. 6, Dion 29. 6, Luc. 46. 1, Lys. 9. 5, Marc. 24. 3, Rom. 24. 4, Sulla 43. 5, Tim. 22. 4, mor. 97c, 183b, 195f, 199c, 201e, 816a). At mor. 195f the reference is precisely to Fabius’ capture of Tarentum, and at Cat. mai. 2. 3 we read Φαβίου δε Μαξιμου την Ταραστινον πολιν ἔλοντος. For the corruption, compare Arist. 23. 1 παρελμονος] παρεξόμενος S, Dion 29. 6 ἐλὸν] ἐχον Q, mor. 57b ἐλὸν Courier: ἐχον codd., Aesch. Ag. 1288 εἶλον Musgrave: εἶχον codd.

Fab. 23. 2 ὡσπερ ἀθλητὴς ἀγαθὸς ἐπαγωνιζόμενος τῷ Ἀννίβα καὶ βαδίως ἀπολυόμενος αὐτοῦ τὰς πράξεις, ὡσπερ ἀμματα καὶ λαβάς ὑσκεί τὸν αὐτόν ἐχοσας τόνων.

The expression ἀπολυόμενος αὐτοῦ τὰς πράξεις is odd, and the translations (“déjoué facilement toutes les tentatives” Budé, “baffling all his undertakings” Perrin, “frustrating his opponent’s moves” Scott-Kilvert) give unexampled meanings to either ἀπολυόμενος or πράξεις. The meaning of the former should be “extricating himself from,” as is clear from C. Gracch. 15. 5 τὰς περιβολὰς ἀπολυσάμενος αὐτής and from the wrestling metaphor in which this is embedded. For the latter we need a word meaning something like “attacks, onslaughts,” preferably one that is appropriate to the athletic context. Such a word is προσπάξεις. As often, a rare word has been corrupted into a common one. Plutarch does not elsewhere use the word, but he has σύρραξες (Ages. 18. 3, Caes. 44. 8, Eum. 7. 5, Mar. 26. 10, mor. 339b) and the verbs συρράσσειν (Pel. 17. 6) and καταρράσσειν (Caes. 44. 6). Pollux (Onom. 3. 155) lists ράσσειν among technical wrestling terms. For this use of the verb and its compounds, see P. Von der Mühll, Mus. Helv. 21 (1964) 51–53. The uncompounded noun ράξις occurs nowhere outside of Buck and Petersen’s Reverse Index of Greek Nouns and Adjectives, where it is attributed to Plutarch (p. 602), as a result of a misunderstanding of the entry in Stephanus’ Thesaurus, which reads, “ῥάξις, εως, ἡ, οθέν σύρραξις, Conflictus acierum. Bud. ex Plut.”

Fab. 29(2). 3 Ἀθηναίοις μὲν ὡς Περικλῆς προέγνω καὶ προείπειν ἐτελεύτησεν ὁ πόλεμος.

Perhaps ὡσ(περ) Περικλῆς. Cf. Per. 34. 4 ὡσπερ εἷς ἀρχῆς ὁ Περικλῆς προηγόρευσεν, Arist. 19. 1 ὡσπερ αὐτῷ προεσήμην τῷ Ἀμφισσαίῳ μοντείον, Hdt. 1. 86. 5 πάντα ἀποβεβηκί τῇ περ ἐκείνος εἶπε, 8. 86 οἶον περ ἀπέβη, Xen. Ages. 1. 29 ὡσπερ προείπεν, Jos. Ant. 16. 81 τῷ δ’ οὖν ὡσπερ ἐνότης ἄπεβη. The loss of -περ before Περ- is understandable and can, in fact, be paralleled in the manuscripts of Plutarch. At Cor. 12. 5, manuscripts U and A have ὡσπερ περίσσωμα (or -ττ-) while N reads ὡσπερ εἰ σῶμα. At mor. 417b the same phrase is transmitted in the manuscripts of Plutarch, but those of Eusebius, who quotes this passage at Praep. Evang. 5. 4. 3, have (according to Mras’
The same corruption is found at Xen. An. 1.5. 3, where some manuscripts read ὁς πέρδικες for ὥσπερ πέρδικες, and at D. H. Amm. 8, where the manuscripts give ὁς Περικλῆς in a quotation from Arist. Rhet. 1411a2, the manuscripts of which read ὥσπερ Περικλῆς.

Fab. 30(3). 2 ἄνδρας ἄγαθος καὶ ἄριστοκρατικός εἰς φυγήν ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ τοῦστρακον ἐκπεσόντας.

The only possible syntax for τοῦστρακον is following εἰς. But “banished into exile and ostracism” is nonsense. Read with Sauppe (Philol. 54 [1895] 575) ἐμπεσόντας, “being subjected to exile and ostracism through his agency.” At Them. 10. 10 the manuscripts are divided between ἐκπεσεῖν and ἐμπεσεῖν. Here, given the context, it was inevitable that ἐμ- be corrupted to ἐκ-. For the meaning, compare Alc. 13. 9 οὐδεὶς ἐνέπιπτεν εἰς τοῦτον τὸν κολασμὸν (sc. τὸν ἕξοστρακισμόν!), Crass. 1. 5 εἰς τὴν ὑποψίαν ἐκείνην ἐνέπεσε, Demosth. 31. 4 εἰς αἰτίαν ἔφυκτον ἐμπεσόντα, Rom. 27. 3 εἰς ὑποψίαν καὶ διαβολὴν ἐνέπεσε, mor. 855d εἰς τὴν τραγικὴν ἐμπέπτειν κατάραν, Demosth. 18. 292 δι’ ἐμ’ εἰς πράγματα φάσκων ἐμπεσεῖν τὴν πόλιν, LXX Is. 10. 4 τοῦ μὴ ἐμπεσεῖν εἰς ἐπογωγήν, Polyb. 20. 11. 10 εἰς ὑποψίας καὶ διαβολάς ἐμπεσόν, 21. 5. 3 εἰς τὴν ἀλὸςιν ἐνέπεσον (cf. also 15. 21. 5, 22. 13. 9, 32. 2. 8, 39. 7. 7). 1

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1 I should like to express my gratitude to Professor Philip A. Stadter, who generously agreed to read a draft of these notes and whose helpful comments and suggestions have proved most valuable.
Is Plutarch Fair to Nikias?*

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It is almost generally admitted that Plutarch was of a kindly and well-meaning nature, and that, owing to this, he had a tendency to look sympathetically at historical figures, bring into relief the good aspects of a man's character rather than the bad ones, and treat with leniency and understanding the weaknesses and shortcomings of his heroes. Acknowledged exceptions, although not on moral but on philosophical or philological grounds, are his fierce attacks against the Stoics and the Epicureans and, above all, his treatise on the malignity of Herodotus. The aim of this paper is to indicate a similar exception of this kind, which occurs in the Lives and concerns Plutarch's unexpectedly severe judgement on Nikias, and to try to give some explanation for it.

Plutarch's prejudice against Nikias is perhaps most evident in the Comparison with Crassus, but several unfavorable judgements and innuendos can be also discerned in the Life proper. This does not mean that Plutarch never praises Nikias nor that he altogether rejects him. It only means that, contrary to his usual tendency (in other Lives) of stressing the

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* A version of this paper was presented at a conference of the International Plutarch Society in Athens, June 1987. I am grateful to Dr. A. J. Gossage for reading my manuscript and offering several useful comments and suggestions. The following works will be cited only by author and/or abbreviated title: W. R. Connor, Thucydides (Princeton 1984); A. W. Gomme, A. Andrewes and K. J. Dover, A Historical Commentary on Thucydides (hereafter HCT), vols. III and IV (Oxford 1956, 1970); G. Grote, History of Greece, vols. V and VI (London 1888); H. D. Westlake, “Nicias in Thucydides” (hereafter NT), CQ 35 (1941) 58–65, and Individuals in Thucydides (hereafter IT), (Cambridge 1968).

1 Cf. R. H. Barrow, Plutarch and his Times (London 1967) 147: “It was a mind essentially kindly, unwilling to think ill of anyone, tolerant . . .”; F. H. Sandbach, “Plutarch” in Camb. Anc. Hist. XI (1936) 700: “He was deeply interested in people and always ready . . . to find good in them”; A. J. Gossage, “Plutarch” in Latin Biography, ed. T. A. Dorey (London 1967) 56: “Plutarch is more clearly concerned to present a character in a good light and to reject evidence suggestive of blemishes”; and H. A. Holden in the Introduction of his Nikias (Cambridge 1887) XLIII speaks of Plutarch's “all-absorbing desire to exhibit his hero in the most favorable light.”
good qualities of his heroes, in this *Life* he appears to try to bring into relief the faults of Nikias.2

In the second chapter Plutarch mentions Aristotle's opinion that Nikias was one of the three best Athenian politicians, as far as their goodwill towards the people was concerned,3 and then proceeds to explain why the demos, although they had their own champion, Kleon, also favored and supported Nikias. The reason, according to Plutarch, was not only Kleon's rapacity and effrontery,4 but mainly Nikias' own political conduct, which, by being neither harsh nor offensive but, on the contrary, blended with some circumspection, gave the impression that he actually feared the multitude.5 Moreover, Plutarch continues, Nikias was by nature timid and pessimistic (2. 5: ἀθαρσίης καὶ δύσελπις), although in war he managed to hide his cowardice thanks to his good fortune; for on the whole he was a successful general (ib.: ἐν μὲν τοῖς πολεμικοῖς ἀπέκρυπτεν εὐτυχία τὴν δειλίαν· κατώρθου γὰρ ὠμαλῶς στρατηγῶν—(cf. also p. 4 below). In other words, Plutarch tells us here that Nikias' achievements on the battlefield were not the result of any ability but rather of his good fortune, which, moreover, concealed his innate cowardice. Thucydides, however, whom Plutarch greatly respects and follows closely in this *Life*, says absolutely nothing to this effect.6

Another manifestation of Nikias' cowardice, according to Plutarch, was his pusillanimity in political life and his sensitiveness regarding slanders (2. 6: τὸ δ' ἐν τῇ πολιτείᾳ ψοφοδέες καὶ πρὸς τοὺς συνοψάντας εὐθοροβητὸν αὐτοῦ). In order to avoid a calumny, Nikias would buy the prospective slanderer off, says Plutarch, and in general his cowardice was a source of revenue for scoundrels (4. 3: καὶ ὅλως πρόσοδος ἦν αὐτοῦ τοῖς τε πονηροῖς ἡ δειλία). These characteristics, Plutarch observes, made him popular with the masses, since they betrayed his fear of the demos, but they also occasioned humiliating remarks on the part of the comic poets with whom, however, Plutarch appears to agree.7

Chapter 3 deals with Nikias' magnificent choral and gymnastic exhibitions, his lavish donations and various other offerings to the Athenian

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2 This has been already noted by Westlake, *NT* 64: “Plutarch's tone is more critical in the *Nicias* than in most *Lives*.”

3 The other two are Thucydides, son of Milesias, and Theramenes (*Athen. pol. 28. 5*).

4 *Nik. 2. 2*: ἀντίταξα τινοιμένων αὐτὸν πρὸς τὴν Κλέανος βδέλυριαν καὶ τόλμαν . . . 2. 3: ὅμως δὲ καὶ τὴν πλεονεξίαν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν ἐταμωσίαν καὶ τὸ θράσος ὀρῶντες . . . οἱ πολλοὶ τῶν Νικιάν ἔπηγνον.

5 *Nik. 2. 4*: Καὶ γὰρ ὃσς ἦν αὐστηρὸν οὐδ' ἐπαχθὲς ἤγαν αὐτοῦ τὸ σεμνὸν, ἀλλ' εὐλοβεῖα τινὶ μεμιμένων, αὐτὸ τὸ δεδέναι δοκοῦντι τοὺς πολλοὺς δημαχγοῦν.

6 See also below pp. 4–5. For Nikias' military abilities see *HCT*, vol. IV 462, and for Plutarch's admiration of Thucydides cf. *Nik. 1. 1*. Yet, as Westlake remarks (*NT* 64), many of Plutarch's inferences from Thucydides' account are unfavorable (cf. n. 2 above).

7 *Nik. 4. 8*: ὡποδηλοὶ δὲ καὶ Φρύνιχος τὸ ἄθαρσις αὐτοῦ καὶ καταπεληγμένον ἐν τούτοις; ἢ ἦν γὰρ πολίτης ἀγαθὸς, ὡς εὗ ὦδ' ἐγώ, / κοῦ κυκταεῖς ἐβᾶδιςν, ὥσπερ Νικίας. See also earlier *ib. 4. 4–7*. 
people. Plutarch appears to recount the relevant details with certain admiration, but the way he introduces us to Nikias' munificence is somewhat disparaging. For he thinks fit to remember Perikles here and say that he, leading the Athenians by means of real excellence and powerful eloquence (3. 1: ἀκό τ’ ἁρετίς ἀληθινῆς καὶ λόγου δυνάμεως τὴν πόλιν ἄγων), had no need to resort to such artifices in order to win them over. Nikias, by contrast, lacking these qualities but being excessively rich, employed his wealth to secure popular favor (ib. Νικίας δὲ τούτοις μὲν λειψόμενος, οὐσία δὲ προέχων, ἀπ’ αὐτῆς ἐδημαγώγει).

A brief consideration of Plutarch's characterization of Perikles reveals his bias from another angle. In the Life of Perikles he relates without comment that Perikles, as a young man, was exceedingly fearful of the multitude (Per. 7. 1: νέος μὲν ὄν σφόδρα τὸν δήμον εὐλαβεῖτο). Nor does he find there any wrong with Perikles' policies to counterbalance Kimon's popularity, policies involving assumed manners and simulation which he obviously criticizes in Nikias. For Perikles, although relatively rich and of a brilliant lineage, espoused the cause of the poor and the many instead of that of the few and the rich, and this, Plutarch himself says, was contrary to his nature which was anything but popular (Per. 7. 3: παρὰ τὴν αὐτὸν φύσιν ἥκιστα δημοτικὴν οὖσιν). Yet, being inferior to Kimon in wealth, by means of which the latter supposedly allured the populace, Perikles resorted to the distribution of public money (Per. 9. 2). Plutarch relates all this, but neither in the Life of Perikles nor in the Life of Kimon does he make any negative comment on the use of wealth for winning public favor. He does so, however, in a rather less appropriate context (for Nikias' generosity did not serve only his political ambitions; it was partly due to his piety, as we shall see), namely in the Life of Nikias. Thus he reduces Nikias' munificence to an artifice for winning public support as opposed to the real excellence of Perikles, who had no need to assume any "persuasive mannerisms" with the multitude.

Next, Plutarch characterizes Nikias' munificence as ostentatious and vulgar (4. 1: πολὺ τὸ . . . πανηγυρικὸν καὶ ἀγορατικόν), but he also adds that, judging from his character and manners, one could attribute it to his reverent piety (ἐὐσεβείας ἐποικολούθημα). This piety, however, he then tries to disparage by quoting a certain Pasiphon, whom he never mentions again in all his writings, who had written that Nikias would sacrifice every day to the gods and keep a personal diviner in his house, only ostensibly to consult him about public affairs; in reality he employed him for making inquiries about his own private matters, especially in connection with his silver mines at Laurion.

On account of his fear of informers Nikias avoided social intercourse and familiar gatherings; his public duties undoubtedly took much of his

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8 Cf. also Moralia 802D.
time, but, even if he had no public business, he still stayed at home to avoid people (5. 2: δυσπρόσοδος ἦν καὶ δυσέντευκτος, οἰκουρόν καὶ κατακεκλεμένος). This reminds us again of the way of life which Perikles had adopted, possibly on the advice of Anaxagoras, whom Plutarch admires. Here, however, the man who helped Nikias to acquire a similar dignity, a certain Hiero, is rather slightly said to have supported him by representing him to the people as one who labored busily for the sake of the city.

The early military activity of Nikias is also presented in a rather unfavorable light. For Nikias, according to Plutarch, seeing that the eminent and powerful commanders were finally discredited by the people, despite their successes, tried to avoid major and difficult commands and was content with generalships of secondary importance. But even in these his chief aim was safety and therefore he was most successful, of course (6. 2: ὅποιος δὲ αὐτός στρατεύοιτο τῆς ἀσφαλείας ἐξόμους καὶ τὰ πλείστα κατορθῶν, ὡς εἰκός . . . ). Moreover, Plutarch continues, all these successes Nikias would not ascribe to his own abilities or value but to fortune and the divine powers, so as to escape envy. Yet, if we go to Thucydides for the details of these commands, we shall nowhere find any role played by fortune in Nikias' successes, while one of them at least, namely the expedition against Korinth in 425, is described in terms of a significant enterprise, and the clash between the two armies as strongly contested. It should also be noted that in other Lives Plutarch praises the commander who ascribes his victories to fortune or the divine powers, and commends this kind of modesty, both of which he carefully avoids doing in the case of Nikias.

The Sphakteria episode is another instance where Plutarch finds serious fault with Nikias. What he did, he says, by stepping voluntarily out of office appeared more disgraceful than casting away his shield, because he

9 Cf. Perikles 7. 5 f.
10 The phraseology of the passages concerned speaks for itself. Per. 4. 6: ὁ δὲ πλείστα Περικλῆι συγγενόμενος καὶ μάλιστα περιθές ὅγχον αὐτῷ καὶ φρόνημα δημαγωγίας ἐμπρόσθετον, ὥς τε μετεωρίσας καὶ συνεξάρας τὸ ἄξιομα τοῦ ἱθούς, Ἀναξαγόρας ἦν. Nik. 5. 3: Καὶ ὁ μάλιστα ταῦτα συντραγῳδὸν καὶ συμπεριθές ὅγχον αὐτῷ καὶ δὸξαν ἔρων ἦν . . . προσποιούμενος δὲ ύιὸς εἶναι Διονυσίου τοῦ Χαλκοῦ προσαγωγευθέντος. The συντραγῳδῶν of the second passage clearly points to a deliberate pose for the sake of "a public relations exercise," as A.W.H. Adkins puts it ("The Arete of Nicias: Thucydides 7. 86," GRBS 16 [1975] 389 n. 38). The same insinuation is evident, I think, in 5. 2, where Nikias' friends, trying to excuse his seclusion, would say to those who were in waiting at his door that Nikias was even then busy with public affairs ( . . . ὡς καὶ τότε Νικίαν πρὸς δημοσίας χρέες . . . ὄντος—Note the use of ὡς).
11 But why a cautious general should be necessarily successful Plutarch does not bother to explain.
12 Cf. Thuc. 4. 42—44, esp. 43. 2: καὶ ἦν ἡ μάχη καρτερὰ καὶ ἐν χερσὶ πάσα.
13 Cf. Sulla 6. 5—9, 34. 3—4; Timol. 36. 5, and also Moralia 322E, 542E—543A.
was thought to have abandoned his command\textsuperscript{14} out of cowardice, thus giving his political opponent the opportunity of a spectacular achievement. Moreover, Plutarch continues, Kleon's success, enhancing, as was natural, his reputation and influence in the city, caused no little harm to the Athenians (chs. 7 and 8). Thucydides, however, has not a single word against Nikias in relation to this affair,\textsuperscript{15} and it is perhaps rather unlikely that Plutarch would have found such a condemnation of Nikias in another historian.\textsuperscript{16} As a matter of fact, Thucydides believed that Kleon's boastful promise to capture or slay on the spot the Spartans of Sphakteria was mad (\textmu\upsilon\upsilon\nu\upsilon\varepsilon\digamma\upsilon\nu\upsilon\omicron\varepsilon\upsilon\upsilon\upsilon\upsilon\varepsilon\sigma\tau\alpha\iota\omicron\upsilon\epsilon\nu\gamma\omicron\upsilon\nu\omicron\upsilon\nu\alpha\omicron\nu, cf. 4. 39. 3), and confesses that his success was totally unexpected (4. 40. 1: \textpi\alpha\rho\alpha\varsigma \gamma\nu\omicron\omega\mu\omicron\nu \tau\epsilon \delta\eta \mu\alpha\lambda\iota\sigma\tau\alpha \tau\omega\nu \kappa\alpha\tau\alpha \tau\nu\nu).

\textsuperscript{14} Gomme (\textit{HCT} v. III 468) rightly remarks that from Thucydides' narrative we cannot know if Nikias had any command at Pylos; and he suggests that the words της επι Πυλώ ώρχης (\textit{Thuc.} 4. 28. 3) mean only that "if reinforcements were to be sent, Nikias, as strategos, would have good claim to their command."

\textsuperscript{15} Cf. J. de Romilly, \textit{Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism}, transl. Ph. Thody (Oxford 1963) 181 n. 5: "Thucydides is constantly sympathetic towards Nicias... In the episode itself one can see how he differs from those who tried to criticize Nicias for his 'desertion'." By contrast, Westlake (\textit{NT} 60) thinks that "Thucydides must have recognized that his account would expose Nicias to damaging charges." And on the whole Westlake regards the prevailing belief among modern scholars that Thucydides "treats Nicias too indulgently" as highly disputable. Cf. his \textit{IT} 182 and 185. Gomme later noted \textit{ad loc.} (\textit{HCT} v. III 469): "The light-hearted dereliction of duty by Nikias, though not concealed, is not explicitly condemned." Nikias, however, is neither explicitly nor implicitly condemned (cf. also Westlake, \textit{IT} 88) and, as a matter of fact, Thucydides counts him among the wise Athenians in 4. 28. 5 (see n. 18 below). So the charge of dereliction of duty is perhaps too severe and, besides, somewhat contradictory to Gomme's own suggestion in the previous note. On the other hand, Holden believed (XLIII) that Nikias' temporary discredit, "because of his resignation in favour of Kleon, is probably an inference of Plutarch's own from allusions in the contemporary poets." This may well be so, but would Nikias have been discredited, if Kleon had failed? What might have occasioned Nikias' disrepute was not his resignation it itself, but rather Kleon's unexpected success (see further pp. 5-6).

\textsuperscript{16} As a matter of fact, whether he did or not is of little importance; for even if he did, it was his own decision to accept the condemnation and repeat it (contrast his usual tendency in Gossage's quotation, n. 1 above). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that in connection with the Sphakteria incident Diodorus makes no mention at all of Nikias (cf. 12. 63). Besides, there is no need to believe that Philistus and Timaeus were biased against Nikias, as some scholars imply (e.g. Westlake, \textit{NT} 63 and 64 nn. 1 and 3). The fragments to which they refer are rather irrelevant, while Pausanias' information (1. 29. 12), going back to Philistus, that Nikias' name was deliberately omitted from the casualty list at Athens because he had surrendered himself (see p. 330 below), shows, if true, the feelings of the Athenian authorities and not of Philistus (cf. also Westlake, \textit{NT} 64 n. 5). In my view, since Nikias' opposition to the expedition was well-known, it is more likely that the Sicilian historians were less hostile to him. Cf. Diodorus (and that also means Ephorus to some extent) 12. 83. 5 and esp. 13. 27. 3-4.
So, we are allowed, I think, to surmise that Thucydides himself must have sided with those sensible Athenians (Nikias undoubtedly among them) who, by trusting this particular generalship to Kleon, looked forward to his being killed. But regardless of what Thucydides says or might have thought, one is also allowed to suppose that Nikias gave up the command because he wanted either to humiliate Kleon by calling his bluff or, taking into account the stalemate at Sphakteria, to give him an opportunity to try his own way for the sake of the city. The fact that Kleon’s unexpected success increased his political influence, owing to which he subsequently made havoc in the political life of Athens, is a judgement a posteriori, and Plutarch himself

17 As a matter of fact, this refers to the unexpected surrender of the Spartans, which, however, vindicated Kleon. Some modern scholars give the debate over Pylos in the Athenian assembly another dimension. Connor (116–17), for example, revives an older view (cf. G. Busolt, Grießiche Geschichte [Gotha 1893–1904], v. III 1101 n. 2) and suggests that Kleon was collaborating with Demosthenes, the commander at Pylos, and deliberately provoked Nikias by questioning his manliness (Thuc. 4. 27. 5: ἐάν δὲρες εἴεν οἱ στρατηγοὶ, πλεύσαντας λαβεῖν τοὺς ἐν τῇ νήσῳ), in order to cause his resignation and take over himself (but see HCT v. III 471 and n. 14 above. Against Busolt cf. also Westlake, IT 72 n.1). But then, why should Kleon have needlessly made his bragging promise once Nikias had resigned and the command was given to him according to his plan? For Connor, Kleon’s behavior supports his suggestion, but, if he is right, μακιώδης seems to describe better Kleon’s behavior rather than the contents of his promise. On the other hand, Grote (v. V 264 ff.) expresses his surprise for this characterization on the part of Thucydides and accuses him of bias against Kleon. On this see also Gomme, “Thucydides and Kleon,” Ελληνικά 13 (1954) 1–10 and A. G. Woodhead, “Thucydides’ portrait of Cleon,” Mnemosyne 13 (1960) 290 and esp. 316. Cf. also Westlake, IT 60 ff., esp. 70 f.

18 Thuc. 4. 28. 5: Τοῖς δὲ Ἀθηναῖοις ἐνέπεσε μὲν τι καὶ γέλατος τῇ κουρολογίᾳ αὐτοῦ, ἀσμένοις δ᾽ ὄμοις ἐγίγνετο τοῖς σκώρασα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, λογιζόμενοι δυόν ἄγαθον τοῦ ἔτερου τεύχεεα, ἢ Κλέωνος ἀπαλλαγήσασθαι, ὃ μᾶλλον ἥπιζον, ἢ σφαλείς γνώμης Λακεδαιμονίων σφῖσι χειρώσασθαι. The ultimate meaning of ἀπαλλαγήσεσθαι here is that the Athenians expected that Kleon would be killed during the operations at Pylos. Cf. Aristoph. Equit. 973–76: ἡδίστον φῶς ἡμέρας / ἐσᾶται τοῦτο παραθη / τοῖς δὲρ ἄφικνουμένοις / ἢ Κλέων ἀπόληται.

19 Cf. Nik. 7. 4: καὶ μὴ ἀφαίνεσθαι λόγους ἀκυνδύνους, ἀλλὰ ἐργῶν τι πόλει παρασχέαι ἄξιον σπουδῆς. For Grote (255–56), however, Nikias appears in this occasion so “deplorably timid, ignorant and reckless of the public interest,” seeking only to ruin his political adversary, that he forces Kleon “into the supreme command against his own strenuous protest, persuaded that he will fail, so as to compromise the lives of many soldiers and the destinies of the state.” Woodhead also (op. cit. 313 f.) finds Nikias’ conduct here “highly reprehensible,” but other scholars take a milder view. Westlake, NT 60: “He was perhaps guilty rather of miscalculation than of disloyalty to the state;” and Westlake’s opinion on the peace efforts of Nikias, namely that nothing suggests that he “was deliberately sacrificing Athenian interests in order to further his own” (IT 95), is, I think, equally valid here. For a judicious defence of Nikias’ conduct see A. B. West, “Pericles’ Political Heirs,” CP 19 (1924) 212–14.

20 Grote (v. V 360 ff.), of course, does not agree with the picture of Kleon as a sinister demagogue, which rests upon the partial evidence of Thucydides and Aristophanes. Cf. also n. 44 below.
explicitly disapproves of such judgements, as we shall see in the *Comparison* with Crassus (p. 329 below).

The peace of Nikias provided, among other things, the exchange of strongholds, cities and prisoners of war, and the party to restore its gains first was to be decided by lot. Nikias now, says Plutarch, on the authority of Theophrastus, secretly bought up the lot, so that the Lacedaemonians would restore first (10. 1). Plutarch makes no comment on this act of Nikias, which, although somewhat dishonest, is indicative of his patriotism, and one tends to believe that this omission is due to moral grounds; but, once more, when we come to the *Comparison* (3. 4), we see that Plutarch does not object to political bribery, and in fact he indirectly praises Themistokles for buying off a worthless man from office at a time of emergency.21 The prejudice against Nikias, although the emphasis is somewhat different in the *Comparison*, is again evident.

Furthermore, Plutarch finds fault with Nikias in the way he conducted the Sicilian expedition right from the beginning. Nikias, he tells us, was wise to oppose the expedition,22 but, once he had failed to dissuade the Athenians or to be relieved of the command, he should have put aside his caution and hesitation and attacked the enemy at once. Now, to what extent a general can act contrary to what he believes to be strategically right is rather debatable, but then the question arises, why did Nikias accept the command under these circumstances? In my opinion, Thucydides’ account shows that Nikias was practically trapped by the hard—as he thought—pre-conditions, which he himself had set to the Athenians for the realization of the expedition.23 So, when the Athenians agreed to meet these conditions, Nikias could no longer go back on his word.24 As for his plan—much

21 See also Themist. 6. 1–2.
22 Nik. 14. 1: Τὸ μὲν οὖν ἔναντιωθῆναι ψηφιζομένη ἐν στρατείᾳ τὸν Νικίαν . . . ἀνδρὸς ἢν χρηστοῦ καὶ σώφρονος. That the Sicilian expedition was a mistake, if with some qualification, is also Thucydides’ opinion. See 2. 65. 11 (ἵμαρτηθῇ καὶ ὁ ἐς Σικελίαν πλοῦς) and cf. de Romilly (op. cit. n. 15) 205–09.
23 Cf. Thuc. 6. 19. 2: Καὶ ὁ Νικίας γνών ὅτι . . . παρασκευής δὲ πλήθει, εἰ πολλην ἐπιτάξει, τάχ’ ἐν μεταστήσεις αὐτοῦ . . . , See also 6. 24. 1 and cf. Westlake, *IT* 172. Nikias employs in fact, as Connor points out (166), a technique well known from ancient rhetorical books. If one cannot prevent an action by arguing it is wrong, shameful etc., he can try to prevent it by arguing that it is too laborious and costly (cf. Rhet. ad Alex. 1421b24). That Nikias undertook this generalship against his will is also evident in the *Alkibiades* 18. 1 (ὁ δὲ Νικίας ἄκων μὲν ἰρέθη στρατηγός, οὐχ ἦκαστα τὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ διὰ τὸν συνάρξαντα φεύγων) and *Moralia* 802D ( . . . ἄλλ’ ἐφέτο βίορ φερόμενοι εἰς Σικελίαν καὶ συνεκτραχηλιζόμενος). Cf. also Thuc. 6. 8. 4: Καὶ ὁ Νικίας ἀκούσος μὲν ἰρημένον ἄρχειν. Yet G. de Sanctis believed (Riv. di Fil. Class. 7 [1929] 433 ff. = *Problemi di storia antica*, [Bari 1932] 109 ff.; cf. H. A. Murray, “Two Notes on the Evaluation of Nicias in Thucydides,” *BICS* 8 [1961] 42) that Nikias was the real instigator of the expedition, because he wanted to “restore himself to favour and to cloak his political bungling!”
24 Had he done so, he would have rightly been regarded as worse than Kleon, who also had not retreated, when trapped in his boasting. (See p. 5 and nn. 15 and 17 above).
scorned by later authors and modern scholars—first to make only a display of his fleet and then sail back to Athens, one should note that Thucydides, who relates in detail the plans of Nikias, Lamachos and Alkibiades, makes, at that point, no comment in favor of or against any of them.25

In any case, Nikias' misgivings and his hesitation to attack the Syracusans at once are thought to have abated the enthusiasm of his men and boosted the courage of the enemy.26 Yet, one might again wonder whether Nikias' procrastination was not owing merely to caution or timidity, but also to the fact that, after the recall of Alkibiades, Nikias tacitly decided to put into operation, albeit in a modified form, the plan of the former, on which Lamachos had also agreed.27 Now, according to Alkibiades' plan, the Athenians should first rob the Syracusans of their allies by making the latter defect to their side, and then march against Syracuse itself.28 That plan also involved some sort of delay, but at the same time it increased the safety of the Athenian troops, a factor to which Nikias attached, as we have seen (p. 4 above), supreme importance.

But, despite all his caution and hesitation, when Nikias moved his armament against Syracuse, he showed such excellent generalship, seizing strategic places, routing the invincible cavalry of the enemy, beating the Syracusans in many skirmishes and nearly cutting off their city from its hinterland despite his malady, that Plutarch feels somewhat forced to admit that the Athenians would have defeated the Syracusans many more times, if the gods or fortune had not opposed them at the very pinnacle of their

25 Cf. Thuc. 6. 47—49. Nikias' proposal conformed to their typical orders from the Assembly (47: πλεῖν ἐπὶ Σελινοῦντα πᾶσῃ τῇ στρατῷ, ἐν ὑπὲρ μᾶλλον ἐκέμβρησαν), but also provided for some action, if need be (καὶ παραμείναντα Σελινοῦντίος ἢ βίον ἢ ἐξομβόλησι διαλαλάξα οὐτοῖς), a detail suppressed by Plutarch. According to him, Nikias' plan αὐτίκα τε τὴν γνώμην ὑπεξέλυσε καὶ κατέβαλε τὸ φρονήμα τῶν ἄνδρων (Nik. 14. 3), which R. Flacelière (Vies VII, Budé, p. 292) rightly regards as "un jugement sévère sur Nicias." (Cf. Westlake, NT 64). Perhaps Plutarch was in favor of Lamachos' plan (Nik. 14. 2: ἀλλ' εὖθες ἔτει τοὺς πολεμίους ἐμφύνα καὶ προσεκέμενον ἐλένχειν τὴν τῆχην ἐπὶ τῶν ὑγίων) and so was Thucydides. Cf. 7. 42. 3: ἀφικώμενος γὰρ τὸ πρῶτον ὅ Νικίας φοβερός, ὥς σὺν εὖθες προσέκειτο ταῖς Συρακούσαις . . . ὑπερώθη (cf. also Nik. 15. 3). But this again is a judgement a posteriori. Finally, Westlake notes (NT 62 and n. 1) that Lamachos' plan "is favored—perhaps erroneously—by most modern scholars." Cf. also Grote, v. VI 28 ff. One last remark: Demosthenes, leading the second, supporting force to Sicily, did not choose to linger and undergo what had happened to Nikias. He attacked the enemy as soon as he arrived and was heavily defeated (cf. next page and n. 31).

26 Cf. Nik. 14. 2 (previous note) and 15. 3: ἀποστάτῳ τῶν πολεμίων ἐκπεπλέαν Σικελίαν θάρσος ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς.

27 Cf. Thuc. 6. 50. 1: Λάμαχος μὲν ταῦτα εἰτῶν ὢμος προσέθετο καὶ αὐτὸς τῇ Ἀλκιβιάδου γνώμῃ. See also Alkibiades 20. 2.

28 Thuc. 6. 62 shows, I think, that Nikias was in fact following a plan that combined his own ideas with those of Alkibiades. See also 6. 71. 2, 74—88 and cf. HCT v. IV 339 and Westlake, UT 179 and 182.
power. 29 Is not this judgement somewhat inconsistent with Plutarch's earlier evaluation of Nikias' strategic qualities and efficiency? 30

Ch. 22 deals with the aftermath of the unsuccessful Athenian assault on Epipolai. Plutarch says nothing at all against Demosthenes, who, acting contrary to Nikias' advice, had led two thousand Athenians to slaughter, 31 but openly suggests that Nikias' refusal to leave Sicily in time (when everyone appeared to wish for departure) 32 was chiefly owing to his fear of his compatriots in Athens. 33 Thucydides, it is true, also refers to the apprehensions of Nikias regarding the malignant accusations which he would have to face on his return, 34 but he also mentions three more reasons

29 Cf Nik. chs. 16–17 and esp. 17. 4: οὐκ ὡκτῶ δὲ νῖκας, ἀλλὰ πλείονας ἀν τις εὗροι Συρακοσίους νενικήτησαν ὦν' αὐτῶν, πρίν ἐκ θεοῦ ὄντως ἡ τύχης ἀντίστασιν τινα γενέσθαι τοῖς 'Αθηναίοις, ἐπὶ πλείοτον αἰρομένους δυνάμεως.

30 In Nik. 16. 9, Plutarch adopts the generally admitted view that Nikias' greatest fault was his excessive indecision, dilatoriness and caution, on account of which he missed the proper time for action (ἐπεὶ τάς γε πράξεις οὖδεις ἀν ἐμέμησατο τοῦ ἀνδρός. Ὁρμήσας γὰρ ἡν ἐνεργός καὶ δραστήριος, ὀρμήσαι δὲ μελλήσῃ καὶ ἀτολμῶς—see also 18. 5–6). This comment also includes complimentary elements (cf previous note and Comp. 5. 1), but, on the whole, Plutarch's opinion of Nikias' military competence is unfavorable and sometimes even derisive. See esp. 14. 2–4, 15. 3, Comp. 3. 5, 4. 3 (οὗ Σκάνδειαν, οὐ Μένυνθν έκκριπτόν οὐδὲ φεύγοντας Λιγνήτας ἀπολειολιστάς την ἑαυτῶν ὄστερ ὄρνιθας εἰς ἔτεραν χώραν ἀποκεκρυμμένους ἐκθυρατέον). As for his dilatoriness Connor (199 n. 39) rightly notes that some of "Nicias' delays were not primarily of his own choosing, but were forced by circumstances." For his earlier career see pp. 4–5 above, and for a brief appreciation of Nikias' military efficiency see IHC v. IV 462.

31 Nik. 21. 3: τοῦ Δημοσθένους εὐθὺς ἐπιχειρεῖν τοῖς πολεμίοις κελέυοντος . . . ἐδέστο μηδὲν ἀπεγνωσμένος πράττειν μη' ἀνόητος. Cf. also Thuc. 7. 43. 1: οὐκέτι ἐδόκει διατρίβειν, ἀλλὰ πείσας τὸν τε Νικίαν καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ξυνάρχοντας, ὡς ἐκπέφει, τὴν ἐπιχείρησιν τῶν Ἐπιπολῶν ἐποιεῖτο. Because Thucydides does not explicitly mention whether Nikias raised any objections, Westlake affirms (IT 197 n. 2) that Plutarch, or his source, has taken liberties here with the facts, by transferring to this conference details from the conference after the defeat at Epipolai. This claim is not well-grounded; in my view, the πείσας in the text of Thucydides makes it more likely that Nikias had raised objections. See also Diodorus 13. 11. 3.

32 According to Diodorus (13. 12. 3), however, the military council which Nikias and Demosthenes convened was divided: Τῶν δὲ εἰς τὸ συμβούλιον παρεπηλήμενοι οἱ μὲν τῷ Δημοσθένει συγκατέθεντο περὶ τῆς ἀναγωγῆς, οἱ δὲ τῷ Νικίᾳ τὴν αὐτήν γνώμην ἀπεραιώνοντο.

33 Nik. 22. 2: Ὁ δὲ Νικίας χαλεπῶς ἦκουε τὴν φυγὴν καὶ τὸν ἀπόλουν, οὗ τῷ μὴ δεδείνει τοὺς Συρακοσίους, ἀλλὰ τῷ μᾶλλον τοὺς Ἀθηναίους καὶ τὰς ἑκείνων δίκας καὶ συνυφασάς φοβείσθαι.

34 Thuc. 7. 48. 3–4 and esp. 4: ὁδὼν βούλεσθαι αὐτῶς γε . . . ἀδίκας ὦν' Ἀθηναίοι ἀπόλαβοι μᾶλλον ἢ ὑπὸ τῶν πολεμίων, εἰ δὲι, κινδυνεύον ὑπὸ τοῦτο παθεῖν ἰδίᾳ. (Cf. Plat.. Fab. 14. 7). From this K. J. Dover (Thucydides Book VIII [Oxford 1965] 41,---see also IHC v IV 426) infers that Nikias would rather sacrifice the rest of the Athenian force and put his country in moral peril than face trial in Athens and risk execution; and he suggests that what underlay Nikias' obstinacy was, perhaps, "a perverse spite" (against the Athenian demos, by implication). Dover has surpassed even Grote here, who accused Nikias only of "guilty fatuity" and "childish credulity" (v. VI 145), but his inference and condemnation are not in line with the subsequent conduct of Nikias and his surrender to Gyllippus (p. 330 f. below). Or would it have been difficult for him, one might ask, not to return to Athens, if he
for Nikias' unexpected insistence on remaining, at which Plutarch barely hints (cf. 22. 4). First, Nikias did not want an open vote for departure, because, if the enemy got wind of their decision, their very departure would be at risk;35 secondly, because he believed that, despite the sorry situation of the Athenian army, the besieged Syracusans were even worse off;36 and thirdly, because, according to his intelligence information, some of the Syracusans were almost ready to surrender to the Athenians.37 All this information may have been deliberately false, of course,38 but even then one could perhaps charge Nikias with misjudgement, or even credulity, but not with selfishness and cowardice.39

Finally, owing to an epidemic among the Athenians, Nikias decided to remove their camp. But as they were ready to depart, there occurred an eclipse of the moon by night. Nikias, says Plutarch, along with the ignorant and superstitious, was terrified by the event (23. 1), and, as he happened to be without an expert soothsayer at that time (23. 7), he decided, and persuaded the Athenians, to wait for another full period of the moon before they departed (23. 9: ὁ δὲ Νικίας ἀλλὰν ἐπεισε σελήνης ἀναμένειν περίοδον). Thucydides' account shows once more Plutarch's prejudice. For, according to him, it is not Nikias and the ignorant and superstitious but the majority of the Athenians who urge the generals to halt the departure, and it is not Nikias but the diviners who enjoin the twenty-seven days delay.40

wanted to save his skin? Other scholars are not so absolute in their judgement and take more into account Thucydides' evidence in 7. 48–49. Cf. de Romilly, Thucydide VI–VII (Budé) 170 and Westlake, /T 198 f.

35 Cf. Thuc. 7. 48. 1. Westlake (/T 199) shrewdly remarks here: "as well as being a safeguard against detection by the enemy, the absence of an open vote would hamper the prosecution if, after returning to Athens, any of the generals were impeached there."

36 Cf. Thuc. 7. 48. 2, 5 (Τά τε Συρακούσιον ἐφή δῶς ἐς ἡγούσα τοῦ σφετέραν εἶναι); 49. 1. See also Nik. 21. 4 and cf. de Romilly, n. 34 above.

37 Thuc. 48. 2: Καὶ ἢν γὰρ τι καὶ ἐν ταῖς Συρακούσαις βουλόμενον τοῖς ΑΘηναίοις τὰ πράγματα ἐνδούναι, ἐπεκηρυκεύετο ὡς αὐτὸν καὶ ὅπει ήπι ἀπανιστάσθαι. See also Nik. 21. 5.

38 Cf. Flacelière (n. 25) 298: "car certains de ses informateurs peut-être le trompait." Dover (n. 34) 40 is sure that this was the case and speaks of a "fifth column" among the Syracusans.

39 Cf. Grote, v. VI 145: "Childish as such credulity seems, we are nevertheless compelled to admit it as real." On the cowardice charge see n. 34 above and cf. Nikias' own claim in Thuc. 6. 9. 2: καὶ ἥσσον ἔτερόν περὶ τὸ ἐμαυτῷ σῶματι ὑποθέτω. See also Connor, p. 163.

40 Thuc. 7. 50. 4: Καὶ οἱ ἈΘηναίοι οἱ τε πλεῖοι ἐπισήχην ἐκέλευσαν τοὺς στρατηγοὺς ἐνθύμομεν, καὶ ὁ Νικίας . . . οὐδ' ἄν διαβουλεύσασθαι ἐπὶ ἔρη πρὶν, ὡς οἱ μάντες ἐξηγούντο, τρὶς ἑνέκα ἡμέρας μεῖναι, ὅπως ἄν πρῶτον κινθῆτην. Similar is the testimony of Diodorus 13. 12. 6: Διόπερ ὁ Νικίας . . . συνεκάλεσε τοὺς μάντες. Τούτων δ' ἀποφημανόν άναγκατὸν εἶναι τὰς εἰθυσμένας τρεῖς ἡμέρας ἀναβάλλεσθαι τὸν ἐκπλοῦν . . . . Yet, despite these explicit statements, Westlake asserts (IV 63) that "it cannot be held that the greater part of the army is
Passing now to the *Comparison* with Crassus, we see that Nikias comes out superior in most of the headings under which Plutarch chooses to compare the two men, but this superiority is curtailed by several remarks to the detriment of Nikias. For example, although it is acknowledged that Nikias, by contrast to Crassus' military inadequacy, was a successful general and the Athenians kept electing him to office, even against his will, because they trusted his reasonableness and wisdom,\(^41\) it is also added that, if wrong must be done, one should abandon justice for something great, such as the conquest of the East, and not for something trivial, such as raiding small towns and chasing their fleeing inhabitants (*Comp*. 4. 3; cf. n. 30).\(^41\) Moreover, says Plutarch, one also has to take into account what would have happened had Crassus managed to fulfill his purpose. For, certainly, it is not fair to praise Alexander's expedition and, at the same time, blame Crassus. Those who do that make a judgement *a posteriori*, which is wrong (4. 4: "οὐκ εὖ τὰ πρῶτα κρίνουσιν ἀπὸ τῶν τελευταίων").\(^42\)

In other instances the bias against Nikias is more evident. E.g., Nikias' political career and achievements are recognized as more important (2. 7), but after all, says Plutarch, Crassus had to vie with such great men as Pompey and Caesar, while Nikias contended with inferior opponents such as Kleon and Hyperbolos.\(^43\) One cannot help noting here that Hyperbolos is rather irrelevant in connection with Nikias, the important figure of

associated with Nicias in his superstitious fears in order to lessen his responsibility." For, as Dover points out (*HCT*, v. IV 429), "Thucydid's 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." Connor (194 n. 27), however, is right in making the point that "confronted with this mood in the army and the interpretation of the soothsayers, no Athenian commander would find it easy to urge an immediate retreat." I should add that in promptly condemning Nicias for his overscrupulous regard for religious omens, modern scholars tend to judge him in terms of their own enlightened times. Yet, the Spartans, who had a similar regard for omens, are not less respected because of this.

\(^{41}\) *Comp*. 3. 6: "Εκεῖνο μέντοι μεγάλης ἐπιτεκίες σημεῖον, ὅτι δυσχεραίνοντα τὸ πολεμεῖν ἀεὶ καὶ φεύγοντα τὸ στρατηγεῖν οὐκ ἐπαύοντο χειροτονοῦντες ὡς ἐμπειρότατοι καὶ βέλτιστοι. See also 5. 1–2 and cf. Alkib. 13. 1: καὶ Νικιάν τὸν Νικηφάρτου . . . στρατηγὸν ἄριστον εἶναι δοκοῦντα . . . . Murray (op. cit. n. 23 above, 35), however, following G. F. Bender, *Der Begriff des Staatsmannes bei Thukydides* (Würzburg 1938) 49–51, believes that, according to Thucydid, Nicias neglected or lacked ἔξονες. But Westlake (*IT* 210) convincingly argues against this and finds nothing in Thucydid suggesting that "he believed Nicias to have been lacking in intelligence."

\(^{41\text{a}}\) Note, however, that the Euripidean lines to which Plutarch appeals here (*Phoen*. 524 f.: εἶτερ γὰρ ὄδικεῖν χρή, τυραννίδος πέρι / κάλλιστον ὀδικείν), he explicitly condemns in *Moralia* 18D–E and 125D.

\(^{42}\) But this is exactly what Plutarch himself, Thucydid and most scholars do when they condemn Nicias' conduct of war in Sicily. See p. 6 and n. 25 above.

\(^{43}\) *Comp*. 2. 4: "ὁ δὲ Κράασος υψηλὸς περὶ γε ταῦτα καὶ μεγαλόφρον, οὖ πρὸς Κλέονας σοῦ· Ὑπερβόλους . . . τοῦ ἀγώνος ὄντος, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὴν Καῖσαρος λαμπρότητα καὶ τρείς τοῦ Πομπήιον βριαμβοῦς . . .
Alkibiades, his main political opponent, is not mentioned, and Kleon, regardless of his moral foibles, was in no way deficient in political shrewdness or military capacities.\footnote{Cf. Connor 116: “Cleon, whatever his faults, was clearly a clever and skillful politician.” See also Woodhead (op. cit. n. 17 above, 290, and also 304, about his military competence) and Grote (n. 20 above).}

Nikias, says Plutarch, should not have given in to Kleon's presumptuousness and put a base man into office; neither should Crassus have risked so much in the war against Spartacus. But Crassus, after all, had the legitimate ambition to finish the slave war himself, lest Pompey should come and rob him of his glory, whereas Nikias had no excuse for surrendering office to Kleon. He did not step down from a promising or easy command, but fearing the dangers, which that particular generalship involved, he preferred to betray the common interest in order to secure his personal safety.\footnote{Cf. Comp. 3. 1–6 and esp. 3. 3 (Οὐ γὰρ ἐλπίδας οὐδὲ ῥᾳστῶν ἐξουσίας ἔξεστι τῷ ἐχθρῷ φιλοτιμίας καὶ ἀρχῆς, ἀλλὰ κίνδυνον ὑφορόμενον ἐν τῇ στρατηγίᾳ μέγαν, ἡγάπησε τὸ καθ’ αὐτὸν ἐν ἁμαρτείᾳ θέμενος προέσθη τὸ κοινόν) and 3, 5 (‘Ο δ’ αὐτὸν ἐπὶ Μίνωον καὶ Κύθηρα καὶ Μηλίους τοὺς ταλαιπώρους φυλάττων στρατηγίαν, εἰ (δὲ) δεότε μέχρευσθαι Λακεδαιμονίας, ἀποδυόμενος τὴν χλεμώδα καὶ ... στρατηγίαν ἐμπερίας ἄκρας δειμένην παραβολοῦς, οὐ τὴν ἐκατοτο προέσθη δολάν, ἀλλὰ τὴν τῆς πατρίδος ἀσφάλειαν καὶ σωτηρίαν. But see nn. 19 and 39 above).} This, I think, is a very severe and unfair judgement. In the first place, Thucydides neither says nor hints at anything against Nikias in relation to this affair (see p. 5 and n. 15 above); but also in the Life proper we can nowhere find Nikias showing such interest in his personal safety at the expense of the common good. On the contrary, his first priority always appears to be the public interest and the safety of his men.\footnote{Cf. Nik. 6. 2 (p. 4 above), 10. 1 (p. 325 above), his vindicated disbelief in the prospects of financial aid from Segesta (Thuc. 6. 12. 1, 22, 46. 2) and the terms under which he surrendered to Gylippus. See also de Romilly (n. 34 above) and Westlake, IT 206 and 207 (n. 48 below).}

Finally, Plutarch's prejudice against Nikias culminates, perhaps, in the way he relates and interprets the deaths of the two men. Crassus' death, he tells us, was less blameworthy (ἀμεμπτότερος), for he did not surrender himself, nor was he cheated by the enemy (5. 4: οὗ παραδοθεὶς ἐκατοτὸν οὐδὲ δεθεὶς οὐδὲ φενακυσθεὶς). Nikias, on the contrary, hoping to be saved in an inglorious way put himself into the hands of his enemies, thus making his death a greater disgrace (ib.: ὁ δὲ Νικιάς αἰσχρὰς καὶ ἀκλεοὺς ἐλπίδα σωτηρίας ὑποθεσον τοῖς πολέμῳς, αἰσχύνα ἐκατοτὸ τὸν θάνατον ἐποίησεν). Neither of these interpretations is endorsed by the facts, while the contradiction with the details in the Life of Nikias is most glaring. Crassus, it is true (as Plutarch tells us, that is), had not believed in the sudden conciliatory proposals of the Parthians and was certain of their fraud (cf. Cras. 31. 2), but, being forced by his soldiers to accept them, he
did surrender himself all the same.\textsuperscript{47} On the other hand, Nikias surrenders to Gylippus only when the Athenian retreat becomes a savage carnage for his desperate men, and it is clear that he begs his mercy not for himself, but for the rest of his army (27. 5: "Ελέος ὑμᾶς, ὦ Γύλιππε, λαβέτω νικόντας, ἐμοῦ μὲν μηδεὶς . . . τῶν δ’ ἄλλων Ἀθηναίων . . .").\textsuperscript{48}

In view of Plutarch's severe judgement on Nikias, as the preceding pages have tried to show, and also taking into account the scarcely commendable \textit{Life} of Crassus, I suggest that the \textit{Nikias–Crassus} pair was amongst those that were intended to portray examples to be avoided rather than imitated.\textsuperscript{49} These examples Plutarch wrote towards the end of the whole series, so that, as he himself says, the reader of his biographies might not be left, in his quest for virtue, without accounts of the bad and blameworthy.\textsuperscript{50} Now, examples of vice par excellence are the \textit{Lives} of Demetrius and Antony, but, in a wider context of un commendable or less commendable characters, one can also include the pairs \textit{Alkibiades–Coriolanus} and \textit{Pyrrhus–Marius}. This suggestion is supported, perhaps, by the relative chronology of the \textit{Lives} as established by C. P. Jones; for, according to Jones's arrangement, the \textit{Nikias–Crassus} pair along with the other three just mentioned are amongst the very last of Plutarch's biographies.\textsuperscript{51} This arrangement and the chronological consequences it entails could also account for Plutarch's different standpoint regarding the importance of ἀσφάλεια and εὐλάβεια in the \textit{Lives} of Perikles and

\textsuperscript{47} Cf. \textit{Crassus} 30–31. His last words to his closest officers are indeed tragic in their irony. 30. 5: ὅρατε τῆς ἐμῆς ὀδόν τὴν ἀνάγκην καὶ σύνιστε παρόντες, ὡς αἰσχρὰ πᾶσχω καὶ βιασυν, τοῖς δ’ άλλοις ἁπασίν ἀνθρώποις λέγετε σωθέντες, ὡς Κράσσος ἀπατηθεῖς ὑπὸ τῶν πολέμων, σὺκ ἐκδοθεῖς ὑπὸ τῶν πολιτῶν ἀπόλετο. But, the actual circumstances—according to Plutarch's account—in which Crassus was killed and the subsequent humiliation of his body (31. 5–7) makes, perhaps, his death more disgraceful than that of Nikias.

\textsuperscript{48} Cf. also \textit{Thuc.} 7. 85. 1: Νικίας Γυλίππος ἐαυτὸν παραδίδωσιν, πιστεύσας μᾶλλον αὐτῷ ἢ τοῖς Συρακοσίοις: καὶ ἐκτέθη μὲν χρήσασθαι ἐκέλευεν ἐκεῖνον τε καὶ Ἀκεδαμονίους ὃ, τι βούλονται, τοὺς δὲ ἄλλους στρατιώτας παύσασθαι φονεύοντας. This is further “evidence of his unselfish devotion to the men under his command” (Westlake, \textit{JT} 207; cf. Connor 204), but his motive in choosing to surrender to Gylippus has been suspected. Westlake again (1. c.) rightly justifies Nikias. “That he tried to seize a possible chance of saving his own life when his death could not benefit the Athenians would be judged by many to be a pardonable, even sensible action. Had he lived, he would surely have made efforts to persuade the Syracusans to mitigate their inhuman treatment of the Athenian prisoners.”

\textsuperscript{49} In view of the character and the career of Crassus, the very fact that Plutarch chose him to pair with Nikias shows, perhaps, that he regarded Nikias as something of a failure.

\textsuperscript{50} Cf. \textit{Demetrius} 1. 6: οὕτω μοι δοκούμεν καὶ ημείς προθυμότεροι τῶν βελτίων ἔσεσθαι καὶ θεαται καὶ μεμπται βίων, εἰ μηθε τῶν φαύλων καὶ ψεγομένων ἀνισοτητῆς ἔχομεν.

\textsuperscript{51} “Towards a Chronology of Plutarch's \textit{Works},” \textit{JRS} 56 (1966) 68.
Fabius, where cautiousness and regard for safety are clearly praised;\(^{52}\) but the Perikles–Fabius pair, being the tenth of his biographies (\textit{Per.} 2. 5), stands almost in the middle of the whole series and therefore must have been written several years earlier than the Nikias–Crassus pair.\(^{53}\)

As for the points unexpectedly accredited to Crassus in the \textit{Comparison}, I think that they must be attributed to Plutarch's deliberate effort to maintain some balance between the two men, a feature characterizing nearly all his \textit{Comparisons}.\(^{54}\) For, as a matter of fact, Nikias emerges superior to Crassus on almost every score. The way he acquired and—especially—used his wealth was not so discreditable, but even commendable in many respects (cf. \textit{Comp.} ch. 1); his political conduct was more dignified, despite his timidity and cautiousness, and his political achievements, notably the peace bearing his name, more praiseworthy (2. 1–3, 7); his military capacities and successes far more important (3. 6, 5. 1–2); even his religious fearlessness, although responsible for some of his political mistakes (notably his failure to extricate in time the Athenian force from Sicily, p. 327 f. above), is regarded as preferable to Crassus' lack of respect for traditional beliefs and practices.\(^{55}\) Plutarch comes to the end of his \textit{Comparison}, and the only points he has accredited to Crassus—namely that he dared to contend with greater political opponents, and that his ambition to conquer the East was not blameworthy (2. 4, 4)—are minimal and doubtful. He has said many things against Nikias, of course (esp. 3. 1–5), by which he tried to detract from his superiority, but the scales nonetheless incline clearly to Nikias' side. At this point, it seems to me, Plutarch felt obliged to write something distinctly in favor of Crassus and against Nikias, but the only thing left for comparison was the way the two men died. So Plutarch

\(^{52}\) See esp. \textit{Perikles} 18. 1 ('Εν ταῖς στρατηγίαις εὐδοξίμευ μάλιστα διὰ τὴν ἀσφάλειαν, οὗτε μάχης ἐχώσης πολλῆς ἀδηλότητα καὶ κύνδυνον ἐκουσίως ἀπτέμνονς, οὗτε τῶν ἐκ τοῦ παραβάλλεσθαι χρησιμένως τύχη λαμπρά καὶ θαυμασθέντας ὡς μεγάλους ἵππον καὶ μυμοῦμενος στρατηγοῦς) and contrast Nik. 6. 2 (p. 4 above). See also \textit{Per.} 8. 6 and \textit{Fab.} 1. 6 (οὕσαν ... εὐβουλίαν δὲ τὴν εὐλάβειαν), 5, 17. 7.

\(^{53}\) It should be added, though, that in the case of Plutarch a long lapse of time cannot always be postulated to explain divergences in his approach and attitude, as is indeed the case in other authors. Plutarch, however, is a particularly multifarious and unconventional writer, and the interpretation of his material depends each time on the particular purpose he wants to serve. As C.B.R. Pelling, "Plutarch's adaptation of his source-material," \textit{JHS} 100 (1980) 131, puts it: "In each \textit{Life} Plutarch selected the interpretation which suited the run of his argument." Cf. also Gossage (\textit{op. cit.} n. 1 above) 55–56 and n. 55 below.

\(^{54}\) Cf. Barrow (\textit{op. cit.} n. 1 above) 59: "Plutarch is at pains to give each hero his due; indeed he sometimes seems anxious to make the score equal." See also A. Wardman, \textit{Plutarch's Lives} (London 1974) 236 ff.

\(^{55}\) \textit{Comp.} 5. 3: ἐπειδὲ καταργήσεων δὲ τοῦ παρανόμου καὶ αὐθάδος τὸ μετὰ δόξης παλαίς καὶ συνήθους δὲ εὐλάβειαν ἀμαρτανόμενον. But in the \textit{De Superst.} 169A Plutarch says that it might have been better for Nikias to have committed suicide than to cause the death of so many people and meet himself an inglorious end on account of his superstition. Cf. n. 53 above.
proceeds to enhance Crassus and belittle Nikias by straining the evidence and even contradicting himself. The Comparison closes with the statement that Crassus' death was less reproachable and that of Nikias more disgraceful, because the latter surrendered himself to the enemy, whereas the former did not (5. 4). The factual evidence is, as we have seen (p. 330 f.), totally against this interpretation, but the desired balance between the two men has somehow been restored.

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As a promoter of Hellenic culture and a participant in Greek politics, as well as a friend of important men at Rome, Plutarch had good reason to address present day relations between the cities of Greece and the Roman state (in De exil., An seni resp. ger. sit, Praec. ger. reip.). But how did he see their past relations? Roman involvement in Greece is touched on in a number of the Roman Lives (for example, Luc., Sul.). But in one pair, Phil.–Flam., Plutarch had to portray the attitudes of Greece and Rome to one another more extensively at the very time that Roman power was beginning to deprive Greece of her liberty. This pair gains special vitality from the unique appearance of one hero in the Life of the other, and the like structure demands careful attention to similarities and differences which Plutarch has introduced in the careers of the two subjects. In the following pages I explore Phil. and Flam. individually, and then consider them as a pair.

Phil. 1–5 are introductory chapters where Plutarch typically outlines his hero’s character and aims, and brings out the important themes of benefaction, ambition, and contentiousness which recur through the narrative.¹

Philopoemen's political life begins in c. 5 “when he was thirty years of age.” After winning fame at Sellasia (6.7, 7.1), he never looks back.² His policy is contrasted with that of Aratus in c. 8. Aratus had achieved the political unity of the Achaean League at the price of using προστάταις ἐπεισόδινοι (8.6), Macedonians,³ “whereas Philopoemen... increased

Translations have been based on the Loeb edition by B. Perrin (London/Cambridge Mass. 1921).

¹ Benefaction: 1.5, 11.3–4, 15.2, 21.12, synk. 1.1. Φιλοτιμία: 3.1, 6.10, 7.5, 9.13, 13.1; for the idea, cf. 4.10, 7.1, 11.2–3, 13.5; at 9.7 φιλοτιμία is used of the Achaens, at 15.1 of Flamininus. Φιλονικία: 3.1 bis, 17.7, synk. 1.4, 1.7; for the idea, cf. 13.8, 16.3; φιλονικία is used of Greece at 18.3.

² Cf. 7.3, 7.9, 12.1, 14.1, 15.1, 19.1, 21.9–11, synk. 2.2.

³ Cf. Arat. 16.4 (Macedon is an ἐποικόν ἀρχήν... ἀλλόφυλον), Ag./Cleom. 37.7.
not only the power but also the will of the Achaean, who were accustomed
to winning under him and to being successful in most of their contests.”

Their main success came at the battle of Mantinea against the Spartan
tyrant Machanidas (c. 10). As a consequence of this Philopoemen put on a
military display of the winning force at the Nemean Games in the following
summer of 206 B.C.,

and we are told (at 11. 3 sq.) that, “just as they made
their entrance Pylades the citharode happened to be singing the opening
verse of the Persians of Timotheus, ‘Glorious the crown of freedom which
he fashioneth for Hellas,’ [§ 4] whereupon . . . all the spectators turned their
eyes on Philopoemen and applauded him joyfully. For in their hopes the
Greeks were recovering their ancient prestige [ἀξίωμα], and in their will
they were getting very close to the spirit of their past.”

Philopoemen is inspired by Greek sentiment, especially ἐλευθερία,
and though he is not comparable with Flamininus in the scale of his
benefactions (synkrisis 1. 1), he is a benefactor of Greece. His εὐεργεσίαι
are not only material, but are also spiritual. This is explicit in the record
of the Nemean Games. It is no coincidence that Flamininus' announcement of
the total liberation of Greece at the Isthmian and Nemean Games occurs
more or less at the same point in his Life. It is the most important
common theme of the pair, and one most dear to Plutarch who several times
laments the Greeks' loss of liberty to the Hellenistic kings.

Philopoemen is (Phil. 1. 6 sq.) “a late-begotten child [ὁφύγονος] which
Hellas bore in old age as a successor to the ἀρχηγὸς of her ancient
commanders . . . and a certain Roman . . . called him 'last of the Greeks.'”

At De amic. mult. 94a Plutarch says we ought to ask for one true and dear
friend among our others who is, as Homer puts it, τήλεγετός τις καὶ
ὁφύγονος. Philopoemen is loved by Greece, and is a loyal and true friend to
her. In c. 1 we learn that he was imbued with Hellenism from his early
years. Kleandros, the friend of Philopoemen's deceased father, brought him
up “rather as Homer says Achilles was reared by Phoenix, so that from the
very outset his character took on a noble and kingly form and growth” (1.
2). Later he came under the care of the philosopher politicians Ekdelos and
Demophanes: “they certainly counted the education of Philopoemen among
their other deeds, thinking that by means of philosophy they had turned out
a man who was a κοινὸν ὀφελοῦς to Greece” (1. 5).

4 Cf. Polyb. ii. 40. 2: (Philopoemen) ἀγωνιστὴν δε καὶ τέλεσσοργόν.
6 Cf. Dio of Prusa xxxi Rhodian 157, τὸ κοινὸν ἀξίωμα of Hellas.
7 Cf. Phil. 15. 2, Demosth. 19. 1, Phoc. 1. 4, Ag./Cleom. 37. 1.
8 Cf. Arat. 24. 2. As J. Deininger, Der politische Widerstand gegen Rom in Griechenland
217–86 v. Chr. (Berlin 1971) 125, notes, there is nothing in the tradition to indicate the
appellation is "cynical" (Errington [op. cit., n. 5], 218)—Plutarch certainly did not take it that
way (cf. Brut. 44. 2: "[Brutus] called Cassius the last man among the Romans, implying that it
was no longer possible for a spirit so great to arise in the city").
One of Plutarch’s sources for *Phil.* was probably the encomium written in three books by Polybius (see Polybius x. 21). There is no cause to look elsewhere for the early biographical details. But it is not merely due to Polybius’ interest that these have been introduced strongly in the first chapter of Plutarch’s *Life*. Education was plainly important to Plutarch, and heroes’ possession of Hellenic πατεία may entail respect for Greece. The notes on Philopoemen’s upbringing serve the purpose of emphasizing his commitment to Hellenic thought and to the idea that the right sort of education may relate to the right sort of action.

The values inculcated into Philopoemen make it natural that he opposed Rome’s advancing power in Greece. The presentation of the advance and of Philopoemen’s opposition is interesting. There is nothing in the *Life* about Flamininus’ complete liberation of Hellas. In c. 14 Philopoemen returns from Crete to find Philip defeated. Here there could have been a note on the liberation of the Greeks, which would not have been entirely irrelevant. Instead we straight away have a clash between Philopoemen and Flamininus. The nature of the discord is rivalry (on Flamininus’ part) about who benefited Greece more. Philopoemen, on putting down Nabis, is highly honoured by the Greeks and thus secretly upsets Flamininus, who is φιλότιμος (15. 1) and thought he should have received more honour than Philopoemen because he had freed those parts of Greece which were subject to Macedon. In *Phil.* the spotlight is on Philopoemen (τιμώμενος ἐκπρεπείας); the implication is that the honours paid to him surpass those paid to Flamininus (at *Flam.* 13. 2—the same incident—Philopoemen gets equal honour, which annoys Flamininus just as much). It does seem that Plutarch is keen in *Phil.* to stress Philopoemen’s genuine popularity with the Greeks (1. 6, 11. 4, 15. 1; cf. 10. 13); note how honours often come in the sequence of liberating wars against tyrants (Machanidas, Nabis; cf. his glory in the battle of Sellasia against Cleomenes). Flamininus receives gratitude—that is something different.

Chapters 16 and 17 are particularly important for Philopoemen’s attitude to Rome. In 16 he warns Diophanes, the Achaean general for 191 B.C., not to provoke trouble in the Peloponnese, “when Antiochus and the Romans are hovering with so many armies,” then prevents Diophanes and Flamininus from reaching Sparta. Plutarch does not approve of this, labelling it “an act which was not lawful, still less produced by just principles”; but there is a degree of admiration when he hails it as “great and prompted by a great spirit.” In 17 we hear of Philopoemen’s opinions on the war against Antiochus: he begrudged the Romans their victory because of Antiochus’ sloth and luxury. “When the Romans,” Plutarch continues

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9 Cf. *Luc.* 1. 4–8, 7. 4–7, 20. 1–6, *Cim.* 1–2; *Marc.* 1. 2–3, 19. 6, 20. 1, 21. 7; *Aem.* 2. 6, 28; I discuss this matter along with the general importance Plutarch attached to education, especially for Roman heroes, in an article to appear in *JHS*.

10 Cf. *Luc.* 23. 3 where Lucullus enjoys real popularity and good-will among the Greeks.
(17. 2 sq.), "had conquered Antiochus, they were already becoming more closely involved with Greek affairs, and were encompassing the Achaeans in their power as the demagogues inclined to their support. Their strength, with the help of the δικόων, was growing great in all areas, and the end was near to which fate decreed the fortune [of Greece] must come in its due cycle. Here, Philopoemen, like a good helmsman contending against high seas, was on some subjects compelled to give in and yield to the times. But in most he continued his opposition by attempting to draw those who were powerful in speech or action in the direction of freedom."

This most important statement about Philopoemen's opposition to Rome covers the years following the defeat of Antiochus, for which no detailed narrative is given. It is interesting that Plutarch does portray Philopoemen opposing the Romans in this period, for it is unclear how Polybius treated his attitude. Certainly in his defence of Philopoemen before Mummius at Corinth in 146 B.C. Polybius concentrated on Philopoemen's policy at the time of the wars against Philip and Antiochus, and perhaps deliberately skirted over the period between Antiochus' defeat and Philopoemen's death, the period of clashes of policy with Rome. There are, though, some traces of opposition activity in the general assessment of Philopoemen at xxiv. 11. 1–13. 10, the comparison and contrast with Aristainos. The occasion for this posthumous (cf. xxiii. 12) evaluation is probably the embassy of Kallikrates to Rome in 181 B.C. (xxiv. 8. 1–10. 15). The patriotic, though contrasting, views of Philopoemen and Aristainos are no doubt intended to show the basic consensus of earlier Achaean politicians, since Polybius says that Kallikrates' prompting was the first occasion when Rome was invited to think of self-interest in Greek affairs (xxiv. 10. 2 sqq.). Plutarch knew that Polybius had chosen to understand Rome's methods too late (Phil. 17. 2), and he clearly believed that Philopoemen's resistance to Rome was more than a rumour (Polybius xxiv. 13. 10).

Plutarch's departure from Polybius on these matters may explain his different positioning of the contrast between Philopoemen and Aristainos (17. 4). His context suggests the League synod of 191 B.C. (cf. Livy xxxvi. 35. 7), since he cites as an example of Philopoemen's independence his resistance to the requests of Flamininus and M'. Acilius to restore the Spartan exiles (17. 6–7). It may be that Plutarch has inserted the contrast haphazardly, but more probably the positioning is deliberate, and the opportunity is taken to use the contrast between the two Achaean politicians as

12 Naturally Polybius saw that Rome's involvement in Greece had already become much closer as a result of the wars against Philip and Antiochus (xxiv. 11. 3).
to flesh out the increasing emergence of Philopoemen's contentiousness against Rome.

The following chapters (18–21) deal with Philopoemen's death fighting Deinokrates of Messene. The theme of Greek freedom and Roman encroachment is not relevant, for the whole action concentrates on Philopoemen the man and his death. In the final chapter of the Life Plutarch does return to this major theme, albeit from a different angle. At 21. 10 he records that many statues of Philopoemen were set up in the cities, and then mentions a proposal by a Roman following the sack of Corinth that the statues be destroyed, since Philopoemen was an enemy of Rome. After some debate Mummius and his staff decide not to allow the honours to be destroyed, "although he [Philopoemen] had made considerable opposition to Flamininus and Acilius. These judges distinguished, it would seem, between virtue and necessity, and between honour and advantage. They rightly and properly considered it was always the case that benefactors ought to receive reward and gratitude from their beneficiaries, and good men honour from the good."14 The final message of the Life hails the justice of Mummius and his commissioners in upholding the statues of Philopoemen despite his opposition to Rome. These later Romans recognize that Philopoemen's opposition did not stem from idle reasons. Plutarch is happy to agree with them.

So, at the beginning of the Life Philopoemen is the inheritor and promoter of the Greeks' antique virtues (1. 6); at the end it is for virtue and nobility that he receives posthumous commendation from Rome.

II

The reader or hearer would approach Flam. with Rome's later vindication of Philopoemen (and Plutarch's agreement) in the forefront of his mind. Flam. follows the form of Phil. In c. 1 the main points of the hero's character are laid out. Plutarch comments on Flamininus' preference for doing favours rather than receiving them, and on his general stance as a benefactor (1. 2). This is the most important theme of the Life.15 Going with it is the idea of the liberator.16 There is a further link with Flamininus' desire for φιλοτιμία

14 Cf. Pel.-Marc. synk. 3. 10, De cap. ex inim. util. 91a.
15 Benefaction: 12. 6, 12. 8, 13. 3, 15. 3, 15. 6–9, 16. 4, synk. 1. 1, 3. 4; cf. Nero at 12. 13.
16 Liberation: 5. 8, 10. 5 sqq., 12. 6, 12. 11.
Illinois Classical Studies, XIII.2

and δόξα. Φιλοτιμία is stressed heavily.17 Love of δόξα is also prominent.18

Hellenic sympathies are clearly important in the presentation of Flamininus (cf. 2. 3, 5. 6–8). However, Plutarch has nothing comparable to the notes on Philopoemen (cf. 1. 4—Flamininus’ παιδεία consisted of τὰ στρατιωτικά). The cause is Plutarch’s awareness that Greek educational methods at Rome were not freely available at this time, together with a lack of material from which to reconstruct,19 and the omission does not undermine Flamininus’ Hellenic outlook.

Plutarch begins the narrative by bringing out Flamininus’ energy and motivation, his youth (2. 2 “he was not yet thirty years of age,” the same age as Philopoemen when first active, Phil. 5. 1), and his diplomacy (2. 3). This was the first time, Plutarch says, that Greece was brought into close contact with Romans, and unless their commander had been “a naturally good man who employed words instead of war . . . and laid the greatest stress on what was just, [Greece] would not so easily have welcomed an ἀλλόφυλον ἄρχην in the place of those she was accustomed to.” Plutarch adds (2. 5),

ταύτα μὲν οὖν ἐπὶ τῶν πράξεων αὐτοῦ δηλούται.

This statement—or its equivalent—is on several occasions to be found near the beginning of a text and/or after remarks of an introductory nature, asking the reader or hearer to examine the truth of what has been said from what follows.20 Here we are invited to judge from the narrative not so much of the character of Flamininus, but of the methods by which Greece came to accept foreign dominion.

Plutarch comments on Greek views at 5. 6 sqq.: “they had heard the Macedonians say that a commander of a barbarian army was marching against them subduing and enslaving everything through force of arms. Then, when they met a man who was young in years, humane in appearance, a Hellene in voice and language, and a lover of true honour, they were amazed and charmed . . . (5. 8) and then at last it became quite clear even to the partisans of Philip that the Romans had come to wage war not on the Greeks, but on the Macedonians on behalf of the Greeks.”

17 Φιλοτιμία: 1. 3, 3. 3, 5. 3, 7. 2 ἱσχυρός, 9. 5, 17. 2—against Philopoemen, 20. 1, synk. 1. 4; cf. 12. 11–12; it is used at 6. 5 of Attalus, 7. 4 of the Romans and Macedonians; the related concepts of φιλονικία and ξιλονικία are used of Flamininus at 13. 2 (φιλονικία is used also of Greece at 11. 6).

18 Love of δόξα: 1. 3 bis, 7. 2, 13. 2, 20. 2, 21. 1, synk. 2. 2; cf. 16. 5–7, 17. 1; it occurs at 15. 2, 21. 10 in a different sense applied to others.

19 The result is seen in Flamininus’ surrender in later years to unseasonable ambition (controlled by education, De virt. mor. 452d).

20 Cf. Mar. 2. 4; Aratus 10. 5; Per. 2. 5, 9, 1; Cim. 3. 3; Ag./Cleom. 2. 9; Phoc. 3. 9; Quaest. con. vii intro. 697e.
At 2. 5 Plutarch had described the Roman hegemony as an ἄλλαϕυλος ἄρχη (cf. 11. 7). The same expression is applied to Macedon at Arat. 16. 4. However, Rome and Macedon are not to be equated, for Macedon was an unwelcome power. Indeed, its interference in the Peloponnese at the invitation of Aratus was tantamount to the barbarization of the area (id. 38. 6–7, Ag./Cleom. 37.7). Thus it is that Plutarch is keen to emphasize that Rome is not in any way βάρβαρος (Flam. 5. 6), and that far from coming to enslave Greece, the Romans had come to liberate her from Macedon (5. 8).

In keeping with this presentation, Flamininus' duplicity in the embassy sent after the conference of Nicaea 21 is held to be due to his being φιλότιμος . . . ἵσχυρος and concerned for his δόξα (7. 2), and there is no hint that he was ready to betray the Greeks. 22 Plutarch is in no doubt that Flamininus would have made peace had a successor been appointed, but there seems to be no criticism of his motives so far as Greece is concerned, perhaps because Flamininus did make a very satisfactory peace for the Greeks a little later (9. 8).

The central chapters (10 and 11) of the Life are perhaps the most important. In 10 Plutarch records the proclamation at the Isthmian Games in 196 B.C. 23 In 11 he records the resulting opinions of the Greeks, contrasting Flamininus favourably with "men like Agesilaus, Lysander, Nicias, and Alcibiades," and pointing out that most of the Greeks' wars had been against themselves, whereas "ἄλλαϕυλοι ἄνδρες who were thought to have only slight sparks and insignificant traces of a common remote ancestry . . . had undergone the greatest dangers and hardships to rescue Greece and set her free from harsh despots and tyrants" (11. 7). The thoughts put into the mouths of others are Plutarch's own. 24 Parallel versions in Polybius and Livy both have comments on the Roman action of liberating Greece (xviii. 46. 13–15; xxxiii. 33. 5–8). Their remarks are about Rome, her ideals, power, and virtue. There is, especially in Livy, an element of romance. Plutarch is different: he dwells on Greece, and on the distinctively Greek flaws of φιλοτιμία and the inability to live in peace. 25

21 The conference has been alluded to at 5. 8 (the relation between conference and embassy is obscured by the anachronistic accession of Boeotia in c. 6). C. P. Jones, Plutarch and Rome (Oxford 1971) 95, holds that Flamininus' peace offer to Philip at 5. 8 is that made at the river Aous rather than at Nicaea; a comparison of Plutarch's narrative with that of Livy shows that this is not so.

22 On Flamininus' aims at Nicaea, see E. Badian, Titus Quinctius Flamininus, Philhellenism and Realpolitik (Cincinnati 1970) 40 sqq.

23 This is made more dramatic by the return of the "fetters of Greece"—Demetrias, Chaleis, (Acro-)Corinth—before the announcement; cf. Polybius xviii. 45. 12, Livy xxxiv. 50. 8, 51. 1–4.

24 Cf. e. g., Phoc. 28. 3, Pomp. 70, Sul. 12. 9–14.

In c. 12 Flamininus proclaims the freedom of Greece again at the Nemean Games. The proclamation in fact took place after the war against Nabis in 195 B.C., not before, as here, and concerned the Argives only (Livy xxxiv. 41). Plutarch is eager to restate Flamininus' commitment to liberation, and to hail his policy of instilling εὐνομία, ὀμόνοια, and φιλοσοφία into the Greek cities (12. 6), reminding us of Aratus at Phil. 8. 3 (ὁμόνοια καὶ πολιτεία). At Flam. 12. 8 Plutarch comments in his own right on Greek attitudes towards Rome: "in the case of Flamininus and the Romans the gratitude of the Greeks for the benefits they received led not only to expressions of praise, but also to confidence among all men and to power δικαίως." The Romans had acted justly, and hence the Greeks came over to them (cf. 5. 4–6). "The result was that within a short time—and perhaps God was lending a helping hand—everything became ὑπήκοος to them. But he [Flamininus] himself took most pride in the liberation of Hellas" (12. 10–11).

Compare with this Phil. 11. 4 and 17. 2–3 (Philopoemen at the Nemean Games; his opposition to increasing Roman power). In Flam. the Greeks are grateful to Flamininus and the Romans, but the latter have no genuine popularity. They had restored to the Greeks their freedom, but unlike Philopoemen they had not been able to restore to them their παλαιὸν ἀξίωμα (Phil. 11. 4). Rome's actions in Greece on behalf of Greece could be presented as liberation or domination. In Phil. there is nothing of the former, and 17. 2 sq. emphasizes the latter. Philopoemen is presented as struggling against forces outside his control in the manner of Phocion or Cato Minor (Phoc. 1–3). In Flam. the tone is one of liberation and gratitude. The Greeks voluntarily join the Romans. The Romans treat the Greeks with respect, and the policy of liberation is conscious (2; 11. 7). Even the rôle of the divine is open to doubt (12. 10), as it is not at Phil. 17. 2.

The presentation accords carefully with the manner most suitable for either Life. It is difficult to gauge Plutarch's own view. At Flam. 12. 13 he notes that in his own time Nero had, like Flamininus, chosen Corinth to proclaim the Greeks "free and autonomous." Nero's grant of freedom in 67 A.D. (SIG3 814) must have made an impression on the Greeks, spiritually and economically. It was an event which had stuck in Plutarch's mind (cf. De sera num. vind. 568a); but it seems likely that its abrogation by Vespasian (Pausianias vii. 17. 4) was remembered by him also (and accounts in part for his strong dislike of that emperor, Amat. 771c). His narration of the first declaration of liberty in 196 B.C. is not "naive and uncritical." He is aware of the expediency at the back of Flamininus' policy. Note again how unromanticized the philhellenism is—it stems partly from Flamininus'

26 Plutarch's failure to give a cause of Rome's war against Philip (i. e. his alliance with Hannibal) makes its intervention seem all the more noble.
own personal desire to be a benefactor and to receive honour, partly from Roman awareness of the best way of making an ἀλλόφυλος ἀρχή acceptable to Greece (2. 5). Plutarch realizes Greek failings and appreciates Roman benefits, but he is not interested in rehearsing Roman propaganda about idealized liberation. He knew that it was only a little later that the Romans came to control everything in Greece and the Greek East (Phil. 17. 2; Flam. 12. 10), just as he knew very well that the proclamation of Nero was only of temporary effect.28 We should distinguish Flamininus himself from Rome—as Plutarch does: showing typical care for his hero he deliberately states that Flamininus continued to take pride in his liberation (12. 11).

This concern to preserve Flamininus' claims to be the liberator of Greece is noticeable also in the narration of the war against Antiochus and even in the peace made with the tyrant Nabis (13–16). In c. 17 Plutarch goes on to summarize his hero's attitude to the Greeks in a series of apophthegms. These are designed to illustrate his character before the narration of his activities at Rome (18–21).

I turn now to consider the characterization of the two men together.

III

That the presentation of liberation or domination differs in each Life is partly due to the need to distinguish the heroes. Yet this is not the whole story—it does seem that Plutarch is also distinguishing and presenting discrete interpretations of the historical events, for the characteristics of the two men are quite similar.

Sufficient work has been done in recent years to make it clear that Plutarch envisages a common base between his heroes and demonstrably incorporates common themes in either half of the paired Lives.29 There is no cause to see Phil.—Flam. as exceptional in this respect. In this pair Plutarch's moral/ethical interests focus on φιλοτιμία with its neighbouring traits of φιλονικία and φιλοδοξία. He might seem to have characterized Flamininus with the more neutral quality of φιλοτιμία, and Philopoemen with the ostensibly worse quality of φιλονικία, especially in the synkrisis.30 At Phil. 3. 1 Philopoemen is typified by φιλονικία and ὀργή, qualities not really brought out in the following narrative.31 But the

28 The methods of Roman control (invitation by factions and demagogues—Flam. 12. 9–10, Phil. 17. 2) were familiar to him from the present too (Praec. ger. reip. 814e sqq.).
30 Cf. Pelling [op. cit., n. 25] 84–89; generally Wardman [op. cit., n. 27] 115–24. The distinction between φιλοτιμία and φιλονικία is the basis of a very different approach to Phil.—Flam. in an as yet unpublished paper by Joseph Walsh.
31 Φιλονικία occurs 3. 1 bis, 17. 7; ὀργή occurs 3. 1 bis, 17. 5.
primary quality at 3. 1 is τὸ φιλότιμον. This was "not altogether free of φιλονικία nor devoid of ὀργή." What Plutarch says here is that φιλονικία was a facet of Philopoemen's ambition, not that it was permanently displayed (the same is true of anger). Similarly, when he adds that Philopoemen could not always "remain true" (ἐμμένειν) to Epaminondas' πράξεων, βοθῶ, and φιλάνθρωπων, he does not mean that these statesmanlike qualities were entirely unknown to him (cf. 16. 1–3), but that he had a soldierly rather than a political ἀρετή. Plutarch does not deny Polybius' testimony to Philopoemen's political skills (xxiii. 12. 8–9).

With Flamininus φιλοτιμία is again the key element in the character and lies behind his good and bad points. He is in fact (1. 3) φιλοτιμότατος. He is also (ib.) φιλοδοξότατος. Rather than combining τὸ φιλότιμον with τὸ φιλόκαλον as one ought (De cap. ex intim. util. 92d), Flamininus' φιλοτιμία is associated with δόξα. This is its aim when it goes to the bad, especially towards the end of his life (7. 2, 20. 1, 21. 1), and δόξα is the counterpart of Philopoemen's φιλονικία (at 13. 2 δόξα is linked with φιλονικία and ζηλοτυπία).

There are a number of passages which demonstrate that for Plutarch φιλονικία, φιλοτιμία, and even φιλοδοξία were really very similar. Both φιλοτιμία and φιλονικία may be good33 as well as bad,34 and the pursuit of δόξα naturally has points of contact with the other two terms.35

There are naturally differences between Philopoemen and Flamininus, but they share as their leading characteristic φιλοτιμία and its associated traits. This characterization is far stronger and more obvious than anything in the tradition. Consider Philopoemen. In Livy there is nothing on his ambition or contentiousness against the Romans. Philopoemen is praised for his military ability (xxxv. 26. 10, 28. 1), and held to excel all of his time in prudentia and auctoritas (xxxv. 25. 7). Only an excerpt from Polybius testifying to his having been φιλοδοξήσας in politics (xxiii. 12. 8; cf. similarly 14. 1 of Scipio; in Plutarch's treatment it is of course Flamininus who must pursue glory) and other passages indicating a readiness to dispute with fellow-politicians or with Rome (xxii. 19, xxiii. 5. 13–18, xxiv. 11. 6–8, 13. 1–10) offer a clue.

32 Cf. Sul. 7. 2: φιλοτιμία and δοξομανία are the "ageless passions."

33 Cf. De virt. mor. 452b: lawgivers have included φιλοτιμία (and ζηλος) in constitutions, i. e. at Sparta; Ages. 5. 5 (ὑπέκκαμα τῆς ἀρετῆς ... τοῦ φιλονικοῦ καὶ φιλότιμον), Lys. 2. 4.

34 Cf. Ages. 5. 7 ("excessive φιλονικία ... entail great dangers"), Ag./Cleom. 2. 3 (perils of excessive πολιτική φιλοτιμία), Arist.-Cat. synk. 5. 4 (φιλοτιμία is "troublesome and highly productive of envy"), Praec. ger. reip. (dangers of public φιλονικία: e. g. 819b, 825a, 825e; of public φιλοτιμία: 819f–820f, 825f).

35 Cf. esp. Ag./Cleom. 1–2; for 1. 2 (the erroneous identification of glory with virtue), cf. Coriol. 4. 5, and note that the only mention of Flamininus' ἀρετή is in the context of his love of glory (Flam. 1. 3).
Again, Flamininus is not associated with rank ambition and craving for fame. For example, his ambition is given great play in Flam. 7 (cf. 7. 2 ἵσχυρως), which concerns his aim of proroguing his command. Compare Polybius and Livy. Polybius may attribute some duplicity to Flamininus concerning his private conversation with Philip on the second day of the conference at Nicaea (xviii. 8. 8); nothing is made obvious though. Perhaps the Livian version (xxxii. 32. 6–8) lends itself more readily to identifying a leading characteristic, which Plutarch exaggerates; cf. similar worries of Flamininus about the war with Nabis (xxxiv. 33. 14). On another occasion, however, Plutarch deliberately departs from Livy: Flamininus' φιλοτιμία emerges for him most strongly in the embassy to Prusias at the end of the Life, whereas Livy makes fear of Hannibal a principal reason for the embassy (Plutarch notes this at Flam. 21. 14), imputes no base motives to him, and in the final sentence of Hannibal's speech—omitted in Plutarch's translation at 20. 10–11—speaks of Flamininus' mission as official (xxxix. 51. 11).

What emerges from this is the deliberate introduction of similar traits for the two heroes. We have the common technique where Plutarch explores a certain characteristic and shows the strengths and weaknesses it may bring out in a man. Given this, is it significant with regard to Philopoemen that one of Plutarch's criticisms of the Greek generals of old at Flam. 11. 6 concerns their φιλονικία? Since both Philopoemen and Flamininus have closely related defects in their ambitious natures, including contentiousness, it is unlikely that Plutarch is here stigmatizing Philopoemen. Nevertheless, in the Praec. ger. reip. he does recommend avoiding the strife and discord of previous generations of politicians, and at 825d–f he singles out φιλονικία and ὀργή. Philopoemen is linked with these in his Life, and as he is the "last of the Greeks" (1. 7), will have similarities with earlier leaders. But, as we have seen, he is not so cruelly damned by Plutarch. And although it is stated at Flam. 11. 5 that past leaders did not know how to use their successes πρὸς χάριν εὐγενῆ καὶ τὸ καλὸν, at Phil. 21. 12 χάρις and τὸ καλὸν are among the qualities Plutarch says the Roman judges "correctly and fittingly" ascribed to Philopoemen. It is difficult to resist the view that the last of the Greeks was in fact seen by Plutarch as a genuine benefactor of his country and an inheritor of her ancient virtues rather than vices (1. 6; cf. Polybius xxiii. 12. 3). Plutarch was fully aware that the supremacy of one Greek state entailed the downfall of another—that is why he never exalts the Athenian and Spartan hegemonies. Yet it produced great men. Among individuals, after Timoleon (cf. Tim. 29. 5–6, 35, 36. 1–4, 37. 4–6, 39. 7) it is perhaps Philopoemen who is represented as benefiting Greece as far as possible.

Consideration must now be given to the synkrisis. Can we detect a preference for one hero over the other? Philopoemen is apparently condemned for φιλονικία in synkrisis 1. Why is this so? Simply because this section is about ἄμαρτήματα, not overall character. It is true that
hardly anything is made of Flamininus' faults. On the other hand, Plutarch has been dwelling on Flamininus' failings in cc. 18–21 of his *Life*. We should bear in mind that the *synkrisis* are often not rigorously organized in terms of the space allotted to each hero. So, in c. 3 it is Philopoemen who receives greater treatment than Flamininus, but here to his credit. Really Plutarch is not saying that Philopoemen was a worse man than Flamininus.

One might say that the *synkrisis* has more on Philopoemen than Flamininus. This may be due to the lack of balance and organization common in these pieces. Equally, it may be that Plutarch found Philopoemen a more sympathetic character. Flamininus' status as Greece's most important benefactor is unrivalled. But it is not what Plutarch is most concerned with. In the final section he brings together a principal theme of the *Phil.* (Philopoemen's independence) and the theme he promised to spotlight at *Flam.* 2. 5 (Roman involvement in Greece). At 3. 4 we are told,

\[ \Gammaενναία \ μὴν \ οὖν \ Τίτον \ τὰ \ πρὸς \ τοὺς \ ''Ἐλληνας \ ἐπιεικῆ \ καὶ \ φιλάνθρωπα, \ γενναιότερα \ δὲ \ Φιλοποίμενος \ τὰ \ πρὸς \ τοὺς \ Ρωμαίους \ σκληρά \ καὶ \ φιλελέυθερα\' \ βάσαν \ γὰρ \ χαριζέσθαι \ τοῖς \ δεομένοις \ ἡ \ λυπεῖν \ ἀντιτείνοντα \ τοὺς \ δύνατοτέρους \ (cf. *Flam.* 1. 3, Phil. 17. 3).\]

Philopoemen is an object of genuine admiration and affection in Plutarch's portrait. Even the end of the *Life* (cc. 18 sqq.)—where he might appear especially quarrelsome—really shows him in a good light. As a mature and elderly statesman his spirit of contention has diminished, and he is looking forward to a quiet old age, mirroring the waning power of Greece (18. 2); Flamininus' later years at Rome are marred by bad statesmanship (19. 7) and immaturity (20. 2). Remember *Phil.* 21. 12, where the reader or listener learns that Philopoemen's benefactions were never made for himself. Coming immediately after this to *Flam.* he finds out that the Roman's benefactions were not altruistic and stemmed from a love of ambition (1. 3). Thus though praised at *synkrisis* 3. 4, Flamininus' benefactions are less *γενναία* than Philopoemen's opposition.

The Roman benefited Greece, but the Greek attempted to preserve her freedom (*Phil.* 11. 4, 17. 3). Flamininus was “better” for Greece, and— granted—a better example for inter-Greek relations of any age (but not for political relations in general). Philopoemen's ways were those which caused Greece's downfall. But when Plutarch claims they were *γενναιότερα*, can we deny that he allows himself to be ruled by his heart more than by his head and that he is here expressing his profound admiration?

“The difference [between Philopoemen and Flamininus],” Plutarch continues (3. 5), “is, now they have been examined, hard to define.” It is not clear whether he is referring here to the circumstances of their lives or to their characteristics. One could argue both ways. In support of the first view is the fact that they were after all contemporaries and involved to a
large extent in the same theatre of operations. And yet their contacts in the Lives are not extensive. They did many different things. Differing circumstances are distinguished in the synkrisis (cf. 2. 2, 4; 3. 1). It is better to take Plutarch as thinking in terms of character, for we have seen that the leading characteristics of the two men, that is φιλοτημία or φιλονικία, are really very similar in his eyes. How, then, are these heroes to be distinguished? "Consider if we have not arbitrated fairly by awarding the Hellene the crown for military and strategic expertise, and the Roman that for justice and goodness of heart" (3. 5). Roman involvement in Greece provides the rationale for this decision.\(^{36}\) Throughout the pair Flamininus is presented as liberator and benefactor, and in particular is commended for his justness—all of this in his dealings with Greece (cf. Flam. 2. 5, 11. 4, 12. 6), for neither justice nor χρηστότης are shown in his domestic politics or in his action against Hannibal. Philopoemen has been a fighter all his life. Most of his military worth was proved against Greeks and was "not happy" for that reason (synkrisis 2. 3); but is it not particularly in his resistance to Rome that he is praiseworthy for his fighting spirit (Phil. 16. 3; 17. 3, 7) and for which even the Romans commend him (21. 12)\(^{36}\)? If this is so, we may say that against an historical background of increasing Roman involvement in Greece and declining Greek independence, the qualities Flamininus is attributed at 3. 5 are in no way impaired, while those of Philopoemen are excused and enhanced.

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\(^{36}\) Note Lys.-Sul. synk. 5. 6 where Sulla is preferred for military skills, Lysander for moral qualities; further, Ag./Cleom.–Grac. synk. 5. 7.
The Lives of the Caesars and Plutarch's other Lives

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The Lives of Galba and Otho have, in general, drawn very little attention from scholars, unlike other Lives. It seems that originally they were a part of a series of biographical sketches running from Augustus to Vitellius. Only these two now survive of the eight Lives of the Caesars which are mentioned in the Lamprias Catalogue. Consequently, observations and suggestions about the lost Lives can only be speculative.

How are we to regard the Lives of Galba and Otho? Where do they stand in relation to the Parallel Lives? I shall attempt to answer these questions by focusing in this paper on a few prominent features of these two Lives.

Let us first examine Plutarch's programmatic statement at the beginning of the Life of Galba and then compare it with similar statements which appear in other Lives. After a few sentences summing up the character of the times, he breaks off, reminding himself that a detailed account of such events would belong to a full, systematic history, whereas he must confine himself to what the Caesars did and suffered. So, he makes it clear from the beginning that he is leaving the narration of details to formal history, but that he will not pass over what is worth mentioning in the actions and experiences of the emperors. Likewise, he says in

1 A slightly different version of this paper was delivered at the International Conference of the Plutarch Society, in Athens, in the Summer of 1987, entitled "Short Lives, Short Reigns: the Lives of Galba and Otho." I am indebted to Dr David Larmour and Professors J. Geiger, D. Sansone, Ph. A. Stadter, who read the article in manuscript and offered several helpful suggestions.

2 Apart from Plutarch, accounts of the brief reigns of these two emperors are also given by Suetonius, Tacitus (Hist. i. 1–ii. 49) and Dio Cassius (64. 1–15). For the dating of these two Lives see J. Geiger, "Zum Bild Julius Caesars in der römischen Kaiserzeit," Historia Band 24, Heft 3 (1975) 444–53 and R. Syme, "Biographers of the Caesars," Museum Helveticum 37 (1980) 104–28, esp. pp.104–11.

3 Galba 2. 5 τὰ μὲν οὖν καθ’ έκκαστα τῶν γενοµένων ἀπαγγέλλειν ἀκριβῶς τῆς πραγµατικῆς ιστορίας έστίν, δόσα δὲ ἄξια λόγου τοῖς τῶν Καίσαρῶν ἔργοις καὶ πάθεις συµµέτειξαι, οὐδὲ ἐμοὶ προσήκει παρελθεῖν.
Pompey 8. 7: "Pompey’s early deeds were extraordinary in themselves, but were buried by the multitude and magnitude of his later wars and contests, and I am afraid to revive them, lest by lingering too long upon his first ventures, I should leave myself no room for those achievements and experiences (ἐργα καὶ παθημάτων) of the man which were the greatest, and most illustrative of his character (ηθος)."^4 So far, what makes this programmatic statement look slightly different from the one set forth in the Life of Galba is Plutarch’s explicit emphasis on character, the matter which interested him most in his biographies. Again, in the Life of Nicias 1. 5: “I cannot pass over the actions narrated by Thucydides and Philistus, because the temper and disposition (τρόπον καὶ διάθεσιν) of Nicias, hidden under his many great sufferings (παθθῶν), are involved in them. I have touched on them briefly, relating only the bare essentials, in order not to appear completely careless and lazy, but I have tried to collect other details which have escaped most writers . . . in doing that, I am not gathering a mass of useless information, but passing on the means of observing a man’s character and temperament (ηθος καὶ τρόπος)."^5 So, in both Pompey and Nicias Plutarch’s method is to eliminate some actions in favour of others, in order to draw out information about the character from these events. He feels no responsibility whatsoever to give a continuous history of events—this the reader can easily find elsewhere. His interest is focused on ηθος, because he hopes that his readers may be led by examples of virtue to become better themselves.6 Now, Plutarch in his statement of purpose in Galba mentions nothing about providing his readers with material which might illustrate the ηθος and τρόπος of the Caesars. However, he does say that he will not omit such incidents as are worthy of mention in the ἔργας καὶ πάθεσιν of the Caesars.7 "Εργα καὶ πάθη are also the key-words in the other two programmatic statements, and it is through these that Plutarch illustrates the character of his figures. While Plutarch disclaims in Galba the composition of πραγματικὴ ἱστορία, he does not admit that he is writing mere Lives,8 as he clearly states in the Life of Alexander 1. 1–2,

^4 . . . οὕτως ὡς ἔκραξε τότε πράξεις ὁ Πομπήιος, αὐτὰς καθ’ ἑαυτός ἀπερεφείς οὕσας, πλήθει δὲ καὶ μεγέθει τῶν ὑστερον ἄγανων καὶ πολὲμων κατακεχωσμένας, ἐδεδίετι κινεῖν, καὶ περὶ τὰ πρῶτα πολλῆς διακριθῆς γενομένης τῶν μεγίστων καὶ μάλιστα δηλούντων τὸ ήθος ἔργαν καὶ παθημάτων τοῦ ἀνδρός ἀπολειψθέως.

^5 . . . ό γάρο Θουκυδίδης ἑξενεγκε πράξεις καὶ Φιλιστος ἐπεὶ παρελθεῖν οὐκ ἔστι, μάλιστα γε ὡς τὸ τρόπον καὶ τὴν διάθεσιν τοῦ ἀνδρός ὑπὸ πολλῶν καὶ μεγάλων παθῶν ἀποκαλυπτομένης περιεχούσας, ἐπιδραμὼν βραχέως καὶ διὰ τῶν ἀναγκασών, ἵνα μὴ παντάπασιν ἀμελῆς δοκῶ καὶ ἀργός εἶναι, τὰ διαφέροντα τοὺς πολλοὺς . . . πεινώρμαι συναγαγεῖν, οὖ τὸν ἀχρηστόν ἀθροίζων ἱστορίαν, ἀλλὰ τὴν πρὸς καταλέγων ἦθοις καὶ τρόπου παραδιδοῦσ.


^7 Galba 2. 5 (quoted in n. 3).

^8 See E. G. Hardy, Plutarch’s Lives of Galba and Otho (London 1890) xii; also Fabius Maximus 16. 5.
Aristoula Georgiadou

where he says "I do not tell of all the famous actions of these men (i.e. Alexander and Caesar), but in epitome for the most part . . . for it is not Histories that I am writing, but Lives." 9

I believe that Plutarch is at pains to define the exact nature of this series of Lives, and not without reason. He is not prepared to give a history of the whole empire during the specific period he has chosen, as Tacitus promises to at the beginning of the first book of the Histories (1-4), but will rather select only those events which are directly or indirectly related to the personal fortunes of the emperors, that is the ἔργα καὶ πάθη of the Caesars. In this connection, it is informative to examine to what extent his judgements and reflections about the events and persons involved in them reveal the general didactic and moralizing attitude seen in other Lives. Also, to what extent, if at all, is he prepared to change in practice his theoretical outlook of biographical writing in this series of historiographical sketches, represented only by the Galba and Otho?

Plutarch's moralizing introduction in the Life of Galba 1. 1-2. 1 closely resembles the introductory chapters of many of the Parallel Lives, which open with one or more moral concepts and then 10 describe the heroes in accordance with the concept, as far as possible. 11 So, from the very beginning, the familiar Plutarchian moral tone and didactic tendencies, so strongly present in the other Lives, establish some connections in terms of structure and attitude between these two Lives and all the others. Also, it has to be noted that this moralizing preface appears, when it occurs, only in the first Life of the pair, and is usually followed by, or includes within it, one or more comparisons, 12 which serve to concentrate and direct the moral

9 . . . έάν μη πάντα μηδὲ καθ’ ἐκαστὸν ἐξειργασμένως τι τῶν περιβοτον ἀπογγέλλομεν, ἀλλ’ ἐπετείμοντες τὰ πλείστα, μὴ συκοφαντεῖν. οὕτε γάρ ἱστορίας γράφομεν ἀλλὰ βίους . . . .
10 See Aratus 1. 1-4; Agis 1. 1-2. 6; Demetrius 1. 1-6; Sertorius 1. 1-7; Phocion 1-2; Demosthenes 1-2; Alexander 1; Dion 1; Aem. Paulus 1; Pelopidas 1. 1-2. 8; Pericles 1. 1-2. 4; Nicias 1; Cimon 2. 2-5; Theseus 1.
12 Demosth. 3. 1-5 (Demosthenes is compared with Cicero); Pelopidas 3-4: Pelopidas is compared with Epaminondas and both are contrasted with other famous political pairs: Themistocles-Aristides/Cimon-Pericles/Nicias-Alcibiades; Agis 2. 7-11 (Agis and Cleomenes are compared with the Gracchi); Philopoemen 3. 1 (Philopoemen is compared with Epaminondas); Demetrius 1. 7-8 (Demetrius is compared with Anthony); Pyrrhus 8. 2 (Pyrrhus is compared with Scipio and Hannibal); Sertorius 1. 8 (Sertorius is compared with Philip, Antigonus and Hannibal); Phocion 3. 7-8 (Phocion is compared with Cato in virtue, Alcibiades with Epaminondas in bravery, Themistocles with Aristides in wisdom, Numa with Agesilaus in justice; [again in Phocion 38. 5 Phocion is compared with Socrates in justice]); Fabius Maximus 1. 9 (his maxims are compared with those of Thucydides, ibid 9. 2 the fate of Minucius is compared with the one of the son of Manlius Torquatus; Fabius Maximus is compared with Flaminius, Minucius, Varro, Marcellus, Scipio); Per. 5. 3 and 7. 3 (Pericles is compared with Cimon; [ibid 18. 2-3 he is compared with Tolmides, in 6. 2-3 and 8. 4 with Thucydides); there is also a series of comparisons in Per. 16. 3 between Pericles and Ephialtes, Leocrates, Myronides, Cimon, Tolmides and Thucydides).
reflections that are the primary purpose of Plutarchan biography. Why the above mentioned features, i.e. the preface and comparisons of moralizing nature, appear only in the first Life of each pair of Lives can be explained by Plutarch's desire to draw immediately the attention of the readers to the basic didactic purposes which, presumably, made him choose these specific Lives. To go back to the Lives of Galba and Otho, we see that the same features reappear in them: the moralizing preface occurs in the first Life of the pair, and includes a series of moralistic precepts about how the army should behave according to Iphicrates, Aemilius Paulus and Plato (Galba 1. 1–3), as opposed to what was actually happening during the reign of Nero and after his death. There follows a comparison between the brief reign of Alexander, the king of Pherae (Galba 1. 6–7), and the reigns of the four emperors: Nero, Galba, Otho and Vitellius (1. 8–9).

The Lives of Galba and Otho were not originally conceived as a pair, like the Pairs of the Parallel Lives. However, although they were probably designed to be read one after the other, like a series of interdependent annalistic narrations, they present some similarities, perhaps superficial, to the other Lives, as far as their overall structure is concerned.

The compositional device of σύγκρισις occurs very frequently in the Lives. As D. A. Russell remarks, “either character or circumstance may be the basis of a syncriis; similar events affecting dissimilar persons and similar persons reacting to contrasting events alike provide a suitable field for the exercise . . . .” Plutarch, in his Life of Galba, uses a series of comparisons as the starting-point of his narration of events. The syncritical technique, however, is not limited to the preface, but appears again and again throughout the Life of Galba, throwing the main characters into relief and displaying both their virtues and their limitations. In the Life of

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14 Titles of Plutarch’s works appearing in the Lamprias Catalogue attest to his strong tendencies to compare and classify: Πότερον Ἀθηναίοι κατὰ πόλεμον ἢ κατὰ σοφίαν ἐνδοξότεροι, Συγκρίσεως Αριστοφάνοις καὶ Μενάνδροι ἐπιτομή, Περὶ τοῦ πότερον ὕπαρ ἢ πῦρ χρησιμότερον, Πότερα τῶν ἔρων φρονιμότερα τὰ χερσαία ἢ τὰ ἔνυδρα, Περὶ τῆς διαφορᾶς τῶν Πυρρονείων καὶ Ἀκάδημαικῶν, Πότερον ὁ περσικῶς ἀριθμός ἢ ὁ ἄρτιος ἀμείνων, Σταϊκῶν καὶ Ἐπικουρείων ἐκλαταί καὶ ἐλεκτοί, Πότερον τὰ ψυχῆς ἢ σώματος πάθη χείρονα, Αἰτίαὶ τρωμαίκαί, Αἰτίαι βαρβαρικαί, Γυναικῶν ἀρεταί.


16 See 16. 1–3, where the policies of Galba and Nero are compared; in 16. 4 Galba is compared with Vinius; in 19. 2 Otho is compared with Paris; in 19. 4–5 Otho is compared with Nero; in 20. 3–6 Otho with Vinius; in 22. 7 Flaccus Hordeonius is compared with Galba; in 29. 1–5 we have the general concluding comparison between Galba and Nero and in 29. 4–5, Galba’s idea of commanding Tigellinus and Nymphidius is compared to Scipio’s, Fabricius’ and Camillus’ leadership of the Romans of their time.

Otho we notice again the same feature, though to a lesser degree, because the Life of Otho is much richer in the narration of military events and factual instruction in general, and more meager in appraisal of characters than the Life of Galba, in which the description of acts illuminating the person's character are both many and lengthy. It is Plutarch's moral emphasis and deep interest in the study of character in the Life of Galba which establish, more than anything else, strong connecting links between this particular Life and the others. And it is for this reason, I believe, that Plutarch's programmatic statement at the beginning of the Life of Galba actually applies with more consistency to the Life of Otho than to the Life of Galba.

At this point, reference should be made to the concluding comparisons which form a kind of an epilogue to these two Lives. It is very likely that these two Lives were written singly and without parallels, like the Aratus and Artaxerxes, though they formed a group, unlike those. Formal parallels were not needed, anyway, since the primary purpose in writing the Lives of the Caesars was to narrate the events which were related to the ἐργα καὶ πάθη of the Caesars. Yet, Plutarch, carried away by his desire to draw moralistic lessons from these two Lives, as well, and thus to illustrate more graphically his heroes' characters, uses the procedure of σύγχρυσις here, as he does later, in his Parallel Lives, but makes it undergo a kind of metamorphosis: he incorporates at the end of each Life an "internal" σύγχρυσις, which makes up for the absence of the formal σύγχρυσις seen in the other Lives. So, in Galba 29. 4 Galba's fate is compared with Nero's, and in Otho 18. 2 Otho's life and conduct are compared with Nero's. These two comparisons are not entirely unexpected, as both Galba and Otho are compared with Nero on other occasions: in Galba 16. 1-4 Galba's policy is juxtaposed to Nero's in a lengthy passage, and in Galba 19. 1-5, Otho's lavish prodigality in his private life is likened to Nero's similar habits. It is

18 In Otho 4. 34-36 Otho and Vitellius are compared; also in 9. 5 three pairs of public persons are brought together: Sulla-Marius, Caesar-Pompey and Vitellius-Otho; in 12. 4 the legion of Otho is compared with that of Vitellius.

19 Otho 3. 1; 4. 3; 9. 2; 9. 4.

20 The portrayal of Galba's character is given in 3. 2-3, 4. 1, 5. 2, 6. 4, 15. 2, 15. 4, 16. 1-3, 17. 2, 21. 1, 27. 2, 29. 1-4; Otho's character in 19. 2-5, 20. 1-4, 21. 2, 23. 3-4, 25. 1; Vitellius' character in 22. 5; Piso's in 23. 2-3; Verginius Rufus' in 6. 1-3, 10. 1-3; Tigellinus' in 2. 1, 8. 2, 13. 2, 17. 2-5, 19. 1, 23. 4, 29. 3; Nymphidius Sabinus' in 1. 5, 8. 1-5, 9. 1-4; Clodius Macer's in 6. 2; Vinius' in 11. 2-12. 3, 17. 1, 17. 3-4; Clodius Celsius' in 13. 4; Flaccus Hordeonius' in 22. 5.

21 I only partly agree with C. P. Jones' emphasis on Plutarch's ethical interest in both Lives, because, as I have already shown, most moral characterizations and ethical reflections regarding Galba and Otho are included in the Life of Galba and not in the Life of Otho; see also Jones (above, n. 8), pp. 73-74.
with these two final, internal comparisons, which play the role of an
informal σώγκρισις, that Plutarch brings the two Lives to an end.22

Additionally, what makes these two Lives look unlike the other Lives
is their strong interdependency. They are interlocked in such a marked way,
that it is, in fact, impossible to understand the Life of Otho without
constantly referring to the Life of Galba. For instance, all the information
about Otho, his lineage, his connections with Nero, Galba, Vinius and other
political figures, his early military career, his conspiracy against Galba, and
the events which led to his proclamation as emperor by the army, are
narrated in the Life of Galba. Plutarch, beginning the Life of Otho, plunges
in medias res, after Otho's proclamation as emperor. By doing so, Plutarch
stays in line with his programmatic statement, that he will only be
concerned with the ἔργα καὶ πάθη of the Caesars, which implies, I
believe, that only the period during which the Caesars held their office will
be covered by the author. Plutarch makes no effort whatsoever to sum up
the most crucial incidents concerning Otho at the beginning of the Life, and
thus to introduce us more gently to the reign of the new emperor. He does
not even spare a few words to explain how the new emperor came into
power. He silently sends us back to the previous Life. Any reiterations and
reminders in the Life of Otho would only make it look just like one of the
other Lives.

The Life of Vitellius must have also been composed in the wake of the
Life of Otho. We see, for example, that, in the Life of Galba, Galba is the
center of attention, but the spotlight is often turned on Otho, and, to a lesser
degree, on Vitellius.23 In the Life of Otho the same pattern is followed:
Plutarch focuses his attention primarily on Otho, but, at the same time,
Vitellius' personality and pre-imperial activities are, on occasion,
appropriately highlighted.24 So, Plutarch constantly reminds his readers of
the future development of events and tactfully introduces, well in advance,
the emperors who will succeed Galba: in the Life of Galba, Otho and
Vitellius are introduced, and in the Life of Otho, Vitellius and Vespasian.25
Accordingly, I would suggest that the Lives of Otho and Vitellius were also
interconnected, in a manner resembling what we have seen in the Lives of
Galba and Otho.

A similar feature of interdependency between Lives can be traced in the
Lives of Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus, which, however form a double Life

22 It is entirely possible that the other Lives of the Caesars, now lost, also concluded with
similar general comparisons of each emperor's character, fate and conduct of affairs with that of
his immediate predecessor.

23 Galba 22. 5; 22. 7; 27. 5.
24 In Galba 22. 7 Vitellius accepts the title "Germanicus," but not "Caesar"; in Otho 4. 1
there were rumors that Vitellius had assumed the dignity and power of emperor; in Otho 13. 7,
after the defeat of Otho's army at Bedriacum, the army took an oath to support Vitellius and
went over his side.
25 Otho 4. 5.
and not two separate ones. All the initial information about Gaius is given in the *Life of Tiberius* 1.8–3.3 and, when Plutarch starts the *Life of Gaius*, he picks up the thread of events from where he left it in the *Life of Tiberius*. Thus, Plutarch can by no means claim to present in the *Life of Gaius Gracchus* an all-rounded portrait of Gaius, or in the *Life of Otho* a full portrait of Otho.

Another feature, which is directly related to the device of interdependency, is the brevity of the two *Lives* and particularly of the *Life of Otho*. The absence of features which occur regularly in other *Lives* accounts for the striking shortness of the *Life of Otho*. References to Otho's personality, early military career and private life all occur in the *Life of Galba*. Also, the usual details of the boyhood and education of both men are completely absent from the two *Lives*. Finally, Plutarch focuses primarily on the events immediately preceding the death of Nero in 68 A.D. and up to the death of Otho in 69 A.D. This very short period offers fewer opportunities for expansions and digressions than the rest of the *Lives*, in which Plutarch could take the whole life-span of his protagonists into consideration. It is true that the *Life of Galba* is much more eventful and informative than the *Life of Otho*, as persons and circumstances had to be adequately presented in this *Life* before the more factual and annalistic narration of events takes the leading role in the *Life of Otho*.

Finally, I should like to mention one more feature common to nearly all of Plutarch's *Lives*, that of Plutarch's polarized attitude towards the individuals' physical appearance.26 His descriptions of physique fall within two clearly defined and opposed categories, which reflect an attitude of polarization: beautiful, graceful, symmetrical and generally idealized features are opposed to asymmetrical and "defective" ones. He speaks, for instance, of Pyrrhus' "awful mouth defect," or of Sulla's "fearful facial expression with coarse red blotches," of Fabius Maximus' "wart on the upper lip" or of Philopoemen's "waist which is out of proportion with the rest of the body," of Sertorius' one eye, of Demosthenes' "lean and sickly body," of Pericles' "oddly shaped head," of Galba's "baldness and wrinkled face," of Otho's "weakness and effeminacy of the body,"27 or of Flaccus "who was physically incapacitated by acute gout" (*Galba* 18.8).28 It is not accidental that Plutarch selects from among all the features of an individual only those which may produce a certain dramatic effect with their "peculiarity" or "ugliness." No doubt he bears in mind that such features are better impressed upon the readers' memory. It is not accidental either that

26 Plutarch's physiognomical descriptions in his *Lives* are treated in a greater detail in my unpublished paper "*Iōna and the theory of Physiognomy in Plutarch's Lives*.

27 *Galba* 25.2.

28 *Pyrrhus* 3.6; *Sulla* 2.1; *F. Maximus* 1.4; *Philopoemen* 2.3; *Sertorius* 1.8; *Demosthenes* 4.4–5; *Pericles* 3.3; *Galba* 13.6.
three such statements occur in the *Life of Galba*, which is more concerned with matters of personality and character than the *Life of Otho*.

In conclusion, then, the *Lives of Galba and Otho* are both similar to, and different from, the corpus of *Parallel Lives*. In his introductory remarks, Plutarch's comments suggest that the *Lives of Galba and Otho* will be more given to facts than to moral instruction. This would appear to mark a significant divergence from his practice in the *Parallel Lives*. As we have seen, however, Plutarch does not fully adhere to his statement of intent: the *Life of Otho* is indeed different from the *Parallel Lives*. The *Life of Galba*, however, with its moralizing preface, its series of comparisons, its self-contained development, its emphasis on ethics and character and its use of physiognomy in the service of morality, is clearly a less distant relative of the *Parallel Lives*.

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The question of the place of Plutarch within the Platonic School is still a live one, but it has changed its nature somewhat in recent years, especially in view of the successful demolition of the Platonic Academy as an institution in his day, and the inevitable fall-out from that in terms of positing a coherent doctrinal tradition within Platonism. The removal of the actual institution which might maintain (or propound) orthodoxy does not in itself, it would seem, dispose of the general concept of a Platonic orthodoxy, the alternatives to which are necessarily "heresy" or "eclecticism." Plutarch in his day has been accused of both of these deviations. The concept of orthodoxy itself, then, and the standing of Plutarch within the Platonic School, both still merit examination.

Plutarch's position in the Platonist tradition cannot be properly evaluated, however, it seems to me, so long as the notion of an "orthodox" Platonism is maintained, whether propounded by an official Platonic Academy, or not. Heinrich Dörrie, in an article published in 1971, before Lynch and Glucker had published their books (with which, however, he would not necessarily have agreed), distorts the position of Plutarch by postulating something that he calls "Schulplatonismus," which he sees represented by such figures as Taurus in Athens, and Albinus in Smyrna (Plutarch's teacher Ammonius he is not too sure about, op. cit. p. 36, n. 1). But in fact we have no indication that there was in Athens at this time—let

*This article originated in a talk to be given to the Plutarch Conference held in Athens in June 1987, but not delivered then. It will appear also, in slightly different form, as an essay, "Orthodoxy and Eclecticism in Middle Platonism and Neopythagoreanism," in The Question of Eclecticism: Studies in Later Greek Philosophy, ed. J. Dillon and A. A. Long (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1988) 103-25.

1 I refer to the works of John Lynch, Aristotle's School (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1972), and John Glucker, Antiochus and the Late Academy, (Göttingen 1978).


3 We will see before long what he felt about this, when the later volumes of his history of Platonism, Der Platonismus in Antike (Vol. I, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstadt 1987), appear.
us say, 70 to 120 A.D.—anything like a “regular” Platonic School for Plutarch to be contrasted with.4

John Glucker has done us the great service of “re-drawing the map” of Middle Platonism,5 showing that what we are dealing with in the period after about 80 B.C. is no more than a series of individual teachers, in various centres, including Athens, but also Alexandria and the great cities of Asia Minor, identified as Platonists, and bound to the tradition (and to varying extents to each other) through their own teachers, who were in turn dependent on their teachers. To this extent only did the “Golden Chain” of Platonic philosophy continue during this period. Individual philosophers knew whether they were Platonists or not. So did their pupils, and so did the general public. The ancient Mediterranean intellectual élite was a small world, by modern standards.

It is strange, therefore, that Glucker should boggle,6 even to the extent that he does, at certain admittedly troublesome remarks which Plutarch makes about the Academy in the course of his writings.7 In a well-known passage of the dialogue On the E at Delphi (387F), for example, Plutarch describes himself as “devoting myself to mathematics with the greatest enthusiasm, although I was destined soon to pay all honour to the maxim ‘Nothing to Excess’, when once I had come to be in the Academy (ἐν Ἀκαδημείᾳ γενόμενος).” This to me certainly indicates a recognition by Plutarch of a period in his intellectual development when he would not have described himself as being in the Academic tradition, but rather, perhaps—to judge from the context—as a Pythagorean. The context, after all, is that one Eustrophus of Athens (whom Plutarch seems here to claim as a particular associate8), utters a very Pythagorean encomium (388E), first, of Number in general (as the basis and first principle of all things divine and human), and then of the number Five in particular, to which Plutarch himself assents enthusiastically (ἑπον οὖν κάλλιστο τὸν Εὐστροφον τῷ ἀριθμῷ λύειν τὴν ἀπορίαν, 387F).

4The Epicurean, and perhaps the Stoic, Schools seem to have survived into the second century A.D. (evidence usefully assembled by Glucker, op. cit. pp. 364–73), but there is no comparable trace of a definitive Platonic (or Peripatetic) School. Rather, there were, if anything, a multiplicity of them (in Athens, Alexandria, Smyrna, and so on), each with their own diadochoi, possessing a precarious continuity for a generation or so, and not aspiring to any exclusive orthodoxy, though naturally all feeling themselves to be part of the intellectual “succession.”

5To borrow a phrase of his from his review of my book The Middle Platonists in CR 30 (1980) 58.

6Antiochus and the Late Academy, ch. 6, 256–80.

7Particularly, De. E 387F; Def. Or. 431A; De Sera 549E; Quaest. Conv. IX 12, 741C; De Facie 922F.

8This I take to be the significance of the rather coy statement (388F) τῶντα πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἔλεγεν οὐ παίζον, ὃ Εὐστροφος, ἀλλ’ ἐπεί τηνικάντα προσεκείμην τοὺς μαθήμασιν ἐμπαθῶς, κ.τ.λ.
Now Glucker takes the phrase ἐν Ἀκαδημείας γενόμενος to mean that at the time of this conversation Plutarch, although already a pupil of Ammonius, did not regard himself as yet being "in the Academy." Since he, like me, does not wish to postulate a philosophic institution of that name, he is forced to the desperate suggestion—which, as he says (p. 271), he offers "not without compunction"—that somehow Plutarch means by this, joining the Academy as a gymnasium, in connection with serving as an ephèbe (which foreigners could certainly do early in the next century, at least), and that a reverence for the more sceptical traditions of the Academy could have resulted from this.

But I do not see that the phrase must be construed in such a way as to imply that Plutarch did not then yet see himself as "in the Academy." The force of the participle may after all be quasi-concessive, i.e. "although I was destined soon to pay all honour to the maxim 'Nothing to Excess', seeing as I had now joined the Academy," or "such as was proper for one who had joined the Academy." It is plain, after all, from Ammonius' own remarks that he regards Pythagorean numerology with considerable irony. Plutarch, as a new member of "the Academy," has not at this stage (66–67 A.D.) yet moderated his youthful enthusiasm for it.

I must apologise for dwelling so long on such a detail, in what is after all almost a private argument with my good friend Glucker, but this is a potentially troublesome passage, which, yet, correctly interpreted (as I hope it now has been), is of considerable interest for our picture of Plutarch's intellectual development and standing within Platonism.

One other aspect of this passage (and of some others, such as those listed in n. 7 above) is important, however, and that is Plutarch's attitude to Academic scepticism. As we know, later Platonists, after Antiochus of Ascalon, could, and did, take one of two possible attitudes to the New Academy and its philosophical methods. The one was to condemn it as a deviation from true Platonism, a view propounded forcefully by Antiochus himself, in his dialogue Sosus\(^9\) (and doubtless elsewhere), and developed eloquently and amusingly by Numenius in his polemical treatise On the Unfaithfulness of the Academy to Plato;\(^10\) the other was to accept the view of Antiochus' predecessor Philo of Larisa that the Academic tradition was one and unbroken, with at most a difference of emphasis manifested in the New Academy.\(^11\) This was certainly the line taken by Cicero, and also by

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\(^9\) As reported in Cicero, Acad. Pr. 11 ff.


\(^11\) Philo himself is possibly the source of what is no doubt a pious fiction, certainly widespread in later Platonism (cf. Sextus Emp. PHI 234), that "The New Academy had a habit of concealing their opinions, and did not usually disclose them to anyone except those that had lived with them right up to old age" (Aug. Contr. Acad. 3. 20. 43, quoting a lost part of Cicero's Academico).
Plutarch, though in neither case does this make them sceptics to any serious
degree.\textsuperscript{12}

Undoubtedly Plutarch had an interest, and a sympathetic interest, in the
New Academy. The works of his that would exhibit this most clearly,
unfortunately, are all lost, but from their titles we can learn a certain
amount. \textit{On the Unity of the Academy since Plato} (Lamprias Cat. 63)
places him firmly in the tradition of Philo of Larisa; \textit{On the Difference
between the Pyrrhonians and the Academics} (ibid. 64) presumably argued
that the Academy had a positive doctrine behind its scepticism, or at least
that their scepticism was not complete.\textsuperscript{13} On the other hand, the essays \textit{That
there is no such thing as Understanding} (συνίεναι) (158) and \textit{Whether he
who suspends judgement} (ὁ ἐξέχων) on \textit{everything is condemned to
inaction} (210) sound distinctly sympathetic to Scepticism, and that \textit{On
Pyrrho's Ten Tropes} (158) probably was so also.

In the surviving works, too, we have a number of passages indicating
that Plutarch accepted a view of the Platonic tradition which included the
New Academy. At \textit{De Facie} 922F, for example, he allows the Stoic
Pharnaces to reproach his brother Lamprias as follows:

\"Here we are faced with that stock manoeuvre (τὸ περιακτόν) of the
Academy; on each occasion that they engage in discourse with others they
will not offer any accounting of their own assertions but must keep their
interlocutors on the defensive lest they become the prosecutors.\"

Lamprias has just been satirising the Stoic theory of the moon's substance.
Such complaints go back, of course, to the interlocutors of Socrates,\textsuperscript{14} but
we may still take this, I think, as a good indication that Plutarch recognises
New Academic methods of argument as a proper part of a Platonist's
armoury.

On the other hand, Lamprias goes on to present a positive theory as to
the moon's composition, which serves to show that Plutarch draws on the
"Socratic" tradition of \textit{elenchus} primarily as a weapon in inter-school
controversy, not as an integral part of this philosophical method, which was
predominantly expository and dogmatic.

He makes use of the Academic tradition of "suspending judgement"
also, I suspect, when he wants to save himself the trouble of going into
questions of physical philosophy deeper than he wants to (very much like
Cicero before him). An instance of this is his remark at the end of his short

\textsuperscript{12}\textit{For} Cicero, see now the useful discussion of Stephen Gersh, in \textit{Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism. The Latin Tradition}, Vol. I, 58–63, and for Plutarch, Phillip de Lacy's \textit{"Plutarch and the Academic Sceptics,\"} \textit{CJ} 49 (1953–54), 79–85.

\textsuperscript{13}As against Aenesidemus, for example, who certainly wished to claim Plato and probably
the New Academics, as Sceptics. We find the counterpart to this essay in Sextus Empiricus \textit{P. H.} I. 220–35, his chapter \"How Scepticism Differs from the Academic Philosophy.\"

essay On the Principle of Cold (955A)—addressed, significantly enough, to the sophist Favorinus, who professed Academic scepticism:

"Compare these statements, Favorinus, with the pronouncements of others, and if these notions of mine are neither deficient nor much superior in plausibility (πιθανότης) to those of others, say farewell to dogmas (δόξα), being convinced as you are that it is more philosophical to suspend judgement (ἐπέχειν) when the truth is obscure than to come to conclusions (συγκατατίθεσθαι).

(Trans. Helmbold, slightly emended)

All this, however, concerns Plutarch's attitude to Scepticism and the allied question of the unity of the Academy. There is a good deal more to the problem of orthodoxy than that, and it is to some of these other areas that we must now turn.

The only place where we find Plutarch setting himself explicitly against what could be regarded as the "orthodox" Platonist position is in his treatise On the Creation of the Soul in the Timaeus, and it is interesting to observe how he phrases his opposition. Pace Dörrie (op. cit. p. 48), he does not present himself as taking on a Platonist "establishment." He recognises that he is going against the views of all, or at least "the most highly regarded" (οἱ δοκιμῶτας ὁμίδρες, 1012D), of previous commentators, but he does not view those commentators as a homogeneous group. Though all choose to deny that the world was created at a point in time (1013A), some are followers of Xenocrates' view, and others of that of Crantor, while others, like Eudorus, seek to reconcile both views, and he deals with each of them in turn. Nor does he speak here as an outsider attacking the establishment, but as the true interpreter of Plato's doctrine correcting the mistakes of predecessors: "Such being the whole of what they say . . . to me they both seem to be utterly mistaken about Plato's opinion, if a standard of plausibility is to be used, not in promotion of one's own doctrines, but with a desire to say something that agrees with Plato" (1013B, trans. Cherniss).

It may seem to us that promoting his own doctrines in the guise of an exegesis of the Timaeus is precisely what Plutarch himself is doing, but that is not, plainly, how he sees it. Elsewhere, in his treatise On Moral Virtue, though his position of hospitality to Aristotelian ethical doctrine might be considered almost as controversial, we find no suggestion that he has any consciousness of this. His polemic is all with outsiders, chiefly the Stoics. And yet there is much that is peculiar in his doctrine here.

One of Plutarch's most distinctive doctrines, apart from his well-known dualism (though closely involved with it), is his view of the soul as essentially (αὐτῇ καθ’ ἐξωτήν) non-rational (Proc. an. 1014DE), and distinct from intellect. It is this essential soul that he sees in the "nature divided about bodies" of Timaeus 35A, and in the "maleficent soul" of Laws
10, and it is the cornerstone of his theory in the Proc. an. It also figures in the treatise On Moral Virtue.\textsuperscript{15}

At the outset (440D), Plutarch raises the question, "what is the essential nature (ousia) of moral virtue, and how does it arise; and whether that part of the soul which receives it is equipped with its own reason (logos), or merely shares in one alien to it; and if the latter, whether it does this after the manner of things which are mingled with something better, or rather, whether it is said to participate in the potency (dynamis) of the ruling element through submitting to its administration and governance."

Here, admittedly, he speaks of a part (morion) of the soul, rather than of soul in general, but it becomes plain presently that what he has in mind is not really the lower or "passionate" soul in the traditional Platonic sense, so much as soul distinct from intellect. A little further on, in the course of his introductory survey of previous opinion, he criticizes those, particularly the Stoics, who assume intellect and soul to be a unity:

"It seems to have eluded all these philosophers in what way each of us is truly two-fold and composite. For that other two-fold nature of ours they have not discerned, but merely the more obvious one, the blend of soul and body."

Pythagoras, on the other hand, and above all Plato, recognized "that there is some element of composition, some two-fold nature and dissimilarity of the very soul within itself, since the irrational, like an alien body, is mingled and joined with reason (logos) by some compulsion of nature.\textsuperscript{16} Here he speaks, rather misleadingly, of the two-fold nature of "the very soul within itself," but we can take it, I think, that he is using "soul" in a loose sense, as those who have not discerned the true situation would use it. The truth, as we see, is that there are three entities, body, soul, and nous (intellect) and this trichotomy leaves soul as essentially and of itself alogos, non-rational, though having a part which is receptive of reason (441F ff.).

In the Virt. mor., it must be admitted, Plutarch obscures the doctrine which he presents very plainly in the Proc. an., by speaking, for the most part, of the "non-rational part" (alogen meros) of the soul, rather than the soul itself, as opposed to nous, and it is possible that he has not yet fully clarified his position in his own mind (if, as I assume, the Virt. mor. is earlier than the Proc. an.), but he says enough, I think, to show that this

\textsuperscript{15} Plutarch's doctrine of the soul has recently been excellently set out in the useful study of Werner Deuse, Untersuchungen zur mittelplatonischen und neuplatonischen Seelenlehre (Wiesbaden 1983) 12-47, though Deuse does not pay as much attention to the Virt. mor. as he should have, confining himself largely to Proc. an. and De Is. et Osir.

\textsuperscript{16} Helmbold's Loeb trans., slightly emended.
remarkable doctrine was already in his mind.\textsuperscript{17} What is interesting for our present purpose is that he shows no consciousness of "unorthodoxy" on this point, as he does on the matter of the temporal creation of the world (though, as I have said earlier, "unorthodoxy" is not quite the right word).

The other notable aspect of the treatise \textit{On Moral Virtue}, of course, is its wholehearted adoption of Aristotelian doctrine, derived directly from the \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}, chiefly Books 2. 5–7 (On the Mean) and 6 (on \textit{Akrasia}), with some influence also from the \textit{De anima}.\textsuperscript{18} This can be labelled eclecticism, but I do not see that that term is very useful. It is clear from his presentation of Aristotle's position at 442B–C that Plutarch regards him as substantially adopting Plato's doctrine of the soul (except that he "later" assigned the "spirited" past (\textit{thymoeides}) unequivocally to the irrational part of the soul—a development which Plutarch does not quarrel with). This enables Plutarch to present, for instance, the theory of the Mean (in 444C–445A) unhesitatingly as Platonic doctrine.

Although the chief source of his doctrine here, as I have said, is \textit{Nicomachean Ethics} 2. 5–7, there are some elements observable, modifying the Aristotelian position, which, once again, might misleadingly be termed "eclectic." First of all, Aristotle describes Virtue as a \textit{hexis} or state (1106b36), but Plutarch, at 444F, describes it as a "movement" (\textit{kinesis}) and "power" (\textit{dynamis}) concerned with the management of the irrational, and doing this by fine tuning and harmonising of its discordant excesses (cf. 444E, 445C). This seems a Pythagorizing turn of phrase, and that, together with the laudatory mention of Pythagoras in the doxography (441E), points to a Pythagorean element in the mix which Plutarch is presenting to us. This Pythagoreanism can be shown with fair certainty to be mediated through Posidonius, by a comparison with Galen, \textit{De plac. Hipp. et Plat.} 4. 7. 39 (p. 290 De Lacy) and 5. 6. 43 (p. 334 De Lacy),\textsuperscript{19} but Plutarch's interest in Pythagoras and Pythagoreanism is well enough attested apart from this\textsuperscript{20} to make it probable that he is not simply dependent on Posidonius here. Further, the activity of virtue is described as a "harmonising" (\textit{synharmo\i\a}) of the irrational by the rational soul in a

\textsuperscript{17} Even in the midst of his exposition of the doctrine in the \textit{De facie} (943D) he refers to those who have made της θυσιν το θαλόγον και τη παθητικον orderly and amenable to their λόγος, using traditional terminology.

\textsuperscript{18} See on this the useful discussion of D. Babut, in pp. 44–54 of the Introduction to his edition of the work, \textit{Plutarque, De la vertu éthique} (Paris 1969). He refutes satisfactorily earlier attempts to postulate Posidonius or Andronicus of Rhodes as intermediaries for the doctrine of this part of the work, though the anti-Stoic polemic of the second part (from 446E on) does show dependence on Posidonius (as reported in Galen, \textit{De. plac. Hipp. et Plat.} 4). His view, with which I concur, is that Plutarch read Aristotle for himself, though he was doubtless acquainted with later Peripatetic works as well.

\textsuperscript{19} Quoted by Babut in his notes \textit{ad loc}.

\textsuperscript{20} E.g. \textit{Is. et Osir.} 360D; 384A; \textit{Proc. an.} 1027F; 1020E ff. \textit{Quaest. conv.} 8.7 and 8; \textit{De. E} 388C, etc.
variety of Pythagorean pseudepigrapha,\textsuperscript{21} which indicates a tendency in many of these works to claim Aristotelian ethical theory for Pythagoras. Metopos' treatise \textit{On Virtue} (pp. 116–21 Thesleff) is a good example of this (he also produces the formulation, found at the beginning of \textit{Virt. mor.} (440D), that the passions are the "matter" (\textit{hyle}) of ethical virtue, p. 119. 8). While not being necessarily \textit{dependent} on any of these intermediate sources for his interpretation of Aristotle, therefore, Plutarch was doubtless aware of most of them.

If this is eclecticism, it is certainly not mindless eclecticism. It is based on a view of the history of philosophy, mistaken perhaps, but perfectly coherent, which sees Plato as a follower of Pythagoras, and Aristotle as essentially still a Platonist, and a consistent ethical position being held by all three. As to the doctrine of the distinctness of soul and intellect, which does not, as I say, receive clear articulation in this treatise, but comes out clearly in the dialogues \textit{On the Face of the Moon} (943A ff.), and \textit{On the Daemon of Socrates} (591D ff.), as well as in the \textit{Proc. an.}, that is a piece of "unorthodoxy," on the origins of which I have speculated elsewhere, though without definite conclusions,\textsuperscript{22} but it is one for which Plutarch is at pains to find Platonic antecedents (e.g. \textit{Tim.} 30B; 90A, \textit{Phaedr.} 247C; \textit{Laws} 12, 961D; 966D–E), and which, as I have said, he does not regard as setting him in opposition to any official Platonic tradition.\textsuperscript{23} In summary, Plutarch may be a bit of a maverick, but he does not view himself as such (except perhaps in the matter of temporal creation), and I can see no evidence of any contemporary "Schulplatonismus" from which he can be said to deviate.

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\textsuperscript{22} \textit{The Middle Platonists} 211–14. A similar distinction is made in some treatises of the \textit{Corpus Hermeticum} (notably I and X), and it is analogous to the distinction in Gnostic thought between soul and \textit{pneuma}, but I am uncertain what to conclude from this. Atributing the doctrine to Posidonius, in default of any hard evidence, is a once easy option no longer open, I think.

\textsuperscript{23} \textit{At De facie} 943A, he criticises \textit{οἱ πολλοὶ} for wrongly believing man to be composed of just two parts, but these "many" need not be regarded as any set of philosophers, never mind Platonist philosophers.
Plutarch's Portrait of Socrates

JACKSON P. HERSHBELL

Since the recent studies of K. Döring, it is clear that there was a renewal of interest in the person of Socrates in the first and second centuries A.D.¹ Such an interest is reflected, for example, by Dio of Prusa's speeches on Socrates (Or. 54 and 55), and by frequent references to him in the works of Seneca and of Epictetus. Indeed, as Döring observed in Exemplum Socratis, a study of Socrates' influence on the Cynic-Stoic popular philosophy of the early Empire, Plutarch was influenced by and contributed much to his contemporaries' concerns with Socrates,² writing at least three works on Socrates, two of which are lost: A Defense of Socrates (Ἀπολογία ὑπὲρ Σωκράτους), and On the Condemnation of Socrates (Περὶ τῆς Σωκράτους ψηφίσεως).³ A third work, On the Sign of Socrates (Περὶ τοῦ Σωκράτους δαίμονιον or De genio Socratis) is still extant, and has recently received great attention.⁴ Moreover, the first of the Platonic Questions

² Döring, Exemplum Socratis, 9–11, briefly mentions aspects of Plutarch's treatment of Socrates, but he is mainly concerned with Seneca, Epictetus, and Dio of Prusa, and has little on Plutarch.
³ These are No. 189 and No. 190 respectively in the so-called Lamprias Catalogue of Plutarch's works, on which see K. Ziegler, Plutarchos von Chaironeia (Stuttgart 1964) 60–64 = s.v. "Plutarchos," RE 21. 1 (1951) cols. 696–702.
Speculation on Plutarch's lost treatises is futile. Possibly they were
directed against Polycrates' Accusation of Socrates (Κατηγορία Σωκράτους),
but as Döring noted, this matter "entzieht sich unserer
Kenntnis." Yet the extant De genio Socratis, and numerous references to
Socrates in the Moralia and Lives, deserve attention, and contribute much
toward a reconstruction of Plutarch's portrait of Socrates. Hence,
this study's purpose is to present a comprehensive and detailed examination
of Plutarch's treatment of Socrates, in which problems concerning Plutarch's
sources and reasons for referring to Socrates are considered. It is hoped that
such a study provides insights into an era when Socrates was once more in
vogue, and illuminates Plutarch's own thinking as a representative of the
Academy.

For the moment, source questions require brief consideration: Plutarch
knew the works of Plato and of Xenophon quite well. That these two
authors' accounts of Socrates were almost definitive for later antiquity, was
stressed by G. C. Field and others, and Plutarch's derivation of many

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7 See Döring, Exemplum Socratis, 7–8. For the so-called Old Academy, there is no extant evidence of Socrates' importance. Beginning with Arcesilaus, however, there is evidence for interest in Socrates' disclaimer to knowledge and his use of the elenchus. Plutarch represented so-called Middle Platonism, on which see J. Dillon, The Middle Platonists (London 1977) 184–230.

8 For Plutarch's knowledge of Plato, see the still valuable study of R. M. Jones, The Platonism of Plutarch (Menasha, Wisconsin 1916), and the many references in W. C. Helmbold and E. N. O'Neil, Plutarch's Quotations (Oxford 1959) 56–63. For Xenophon, ibid., 75–76, and Ziegler, Plutarchos, 286 = RE 21.1, col. 923, who affirms that Plutarch knew the writings of Xenophon (whom he considered a philosopher) "wirklich gut und
gründlich."

9 See G. C. Field, "Socrates and Plato in post-Aristotelian Tradition," CQ 18 (1924) 127 ff. Aristotle and Aristophanes are often considered sources for the historical Socrates. Aristotle, however, probably relied on Plato, Xenophon, and other Socrates for his information, and Aristophanes was not concerned with impartial examination of Socrates. For a judicious account of Aristotle and the comic poets, see Guthrie, Socrates, 35–37 = HGP, 355–57. A useful treatment of Aristotle as a source for Socrates is T. Deman, Le témoignage d'Aristote sur Socrate (Paris 1942), who collected Aristotle's texts on Socrates, and who gave a summary (11–21) of previous scholarship on Socrates.
reports on Socrates from Plato's dialogues is beyond reasonable doubt. There are, for example, likely references to the *Apology* at 1116F and 1117E; to the *Phaedo* at 16C, 17F, 499B, 607F, 934E, and 975B; to the *Symposium* at 632B, 707A, 710C, 823D, and 1117E; to the *Theaetetus* at 999C ff., and to the *Meno* at 93B. Moreover, in combining historical narrative with philosophical discussion in *De gen. Socr.*, Plutarch used the *Phaedo* as a model, and various parallels between both works have often been noticed. Plutarch also relied on Xenophon's *Symposium* and *Memorabilia* as sources, e.g., the former at 124E, 130F, 401C, 630A, 632B, 709E, 711E, and the latter at 124D, 328E, 513D, and 661F. In addition to works of Plato and of Xenophon, Plutarch was familiar with Aristotle's "Platonic writings" (see 118C, most likely a reference to Aristotle's *On Philosophy*), Demetrius of Phalerum's *Socrates* (see Aristid. 1. 2 and 27. 3), and with Panaetius' *Socrates* (Aristid. 1 and 27. 3). In this latter work Panaetius apparently denied that Socrates had a second wife, and it was perhaps due to Panaetius' influence that Socrates as a thinker who "brought philosophy down from the skies" (see Cic. *Tusc.* 5. 4. 10) became a popular belief. Plutarch's other sources, e.g., at 486E, 512F, and 516C, are unknown, but the majority of his reports remain traceable to Plato and Xenophon.

That Plutarch's interest in Socrates was more than biographical, is well illustrated by a passage in *Quaestiones convivales* VIII.1 (717B ff.), where he states that "on the sixth of Thargelion we celebrated the birthday of Socrates, and on the seventh that of Plato." These dates also furnished Plutarch and his company with their topics: days on which some eminent persons were born, and stories of births from divine parents. Later in the symposium, Florus, a friend of Plutarch very familiar with the

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10 See the notes on these passages in the appropriate LCL volumes. References to Socrates and Plato's *Apology* are also in the probably spurious *Letter of Condolence to Apollonius* (*Consolatio ad Apollonium*). On this work, see Ziegler, *Plutarchos*, 158–65 = *RE* 21. 1 cols. 794–802.


14 See Guthrie, *Socrates*, 98 = *HPH*, 418, M. Pohlenz, *Die Stoa*, Vol. I (Göttingen 1947), and Schmid-Stählin, *Geschichte*, 239. According to Plutarch, the story that Socrates had a second wife, Myro, was doubted by Panaetius (Aristid. 27).

philosophies of Plato and of Aristotle, claims that Apollo by Socrates' agency (Διὸ Σωκράτους) made Plato heal greater ailments and illnesses than those cured by Asclepius (717D–E). For Plutarch himself, philosophy had practical results, and he did not believe that it consisted of ex cathedra pronouncements, or of learned commentaries. Philosophy involved all of daily life, and at An seni respubl. ger. sit. 796D, he writes:

Socrates at any rate was a philosopher, although he did not set out benches or seat himself in an armchair or observe a fixed hour for conversing or promenading with his pupils, but jested with them, when it so happened, and drank with them, served in the army, or lounged in the market-place with some of them, and finally was imprisoned, and drank the poison. He was the first to show that life at all times and in all parts, in all experiences and activities, universally admits philosophy. (H. N. Fowler's translation)

The above passage demonstrates well Plutarch's concern for ethics or practical morality, and his conviction that philosophy is, above all, the art of living well.16 Similar views about Socrates are expressed at Quaest. Plat. 999E, De curios. 516C, and Adv. Col. 1117D–E. These passages reflect not only a "Zeitgeist," but also Plutarch's personal beliefs, beliefs often formed or held in opposition to rival philosophical schools. A clear illustration of this phenomenon is the Adversus Colotem. In order to understand Plutarch's polemic against Colotes, it must be remembered that Plutarch was probably a life-long opponent of Epicureanism, and that Socrates was much maligned by the Epicureans, e.g., by Zeno of Sidon, who considered Socrates scurra Atticus,17 and by Colotes in his "On the Point that Conformity to the Views of the Other Philosophers Actually Makes it Impossible to Live."18 When beginning his defense of the philosophers attacked by Colotes, Plutarch specifically mentions the "insolent rudeness" of Colotes' critique of Socrates (1108B). As R. Westman noticed, Colotes' attack on Socrates was enough "einen überzeugten Sokrates-Verehrer vor den Kopf zu stossen."19 After Plutarch's

16 D. Babut calls attention to Plutarch's interest in practical philosophy, an interest which is among "des traits communs dès l'époque hellénistique," Plutarque et le Stoïcisme (Paris 1969) 276 f.
17 R. Flacelière's thesis that there was an evolution in Plutarch's attitude toward Epicureanism seems untenable. For his views, see "Plutarque et l'épicurisme," Epicurea, in memoriam Hectoris Bignone, (Genoa 1959) 197–215, and for criticism, see H. Adam, Plutarchs Schrift non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum = Studien zur antiken Philosophie 4 (Amsterdam 1974) 3. For the Epicurean attack on Socrates, see Schmid-Stählin, Geschichte der griechischen Literatur, Pt. I, Vol. III, 276, and Westman, Plutarch gegen Kolotes, especially 60–66 and 274–75.
18 The translation of the title is that of the LCL, on which see B. Einarson and P. De Lacy, Plutarch's Moralia XIV (Cambridge, Mass. 1967) 153 ff. The probably definitive study of this work is R. Westman, Plutarch gegen Kolotes.
19 Westman, Plutarch gegen Kolotes, 123.
initial remark that Colotes' manner of "presenting Socrates with 'grass' and asking how comes it that he puts his food in his mouth and not in his ear," might cause laughter when thinking of Socrates' "gentleness and kindness" (προκότης καὶ χάριν),20 he discusses Colotes' charges in detail, providing more information about Colotes' book than in any other section of Adv. Col. (see 1116E–19C). Plutarch considers three matters in Colotes' treatment of Socrates: 1) the famous Delphic oracle in which Socrates was declared the wisest of mortals (1116E–17C); 2) Socrates' belief that sense perception is not accurate or trustworthy (1117D–18B; and 3) Socrates' inquiry into the nature of human beings (τί ἀνθρωπός ἐστι), and the famous Delphic inscription "know yourself" (1118C–19C).21

Each of Colotes' charges is met by Plutarch with polemics against the Epicureans. For example, Colotes' accusation that Chaerephon's report on the Delphic oracle is nothing but "a cheap and sophistical tale" (τὸ τελέως σοφιστικὸν καὶ φορτικὸν διήγημα, 1116F) is rebutted as follows: if this was a cheap sophist's trick, then adulation of Epicurus by his followers is equally cheap and sophistical. Tu quoque criticism is also in Plutarch's response to Colotes' attack on Socrates' views of sense perception, which are discussed at some length. Plutarch concludes: "of these matters Colotes will give us an occasion to speak again" (1118B–C), presumably in his account of the Cyrenaics and the Academy of Arcesilaus at 1120F–21E and 1123B–24B.22

Plutarch was angered by Colotes' "blasphemies" of Socrates (1117E), and Colotes' critique of Socrates' alleged scepticism especially disturbed him. Now some of Colotes' criticisms of Socrates are similar to those directed against Arcesilaus (see 1121F ff.), and hence there is reason for thinking that Colotes' treatment of Socrates as a Sceptic was partially influenced by Arcesilaus' views, and that Colotes' general accusation that the philosophers made life impossible, is a variant of his attack on the Academic Sceptics.23

Little is known about Arcesilaus, who was probably scholar of the Academy when attacked by Colotes,24 but Plutarch reports that sophists contemporary with Arcesilaus accused him of foisting his scepticism on Socrates, Plato, Parmenides, and Heraclitus (see 1121F–22A).25 Hence, in

20 Einarson and De Lacy, LCL XIV, 195, translate the phrase as "unruffled wit" (1108B).
21 Each of Colotes' charges is discussed in detail by Westman who plausibly observes that Colotes derived his information about Socrates from Plato's dialogues. Yet Colotes apparently realized that Plato sometimes used Socrates as a spokesman for his own views. See Westman, Plutarch gegen Kolotes, 63, note 1.
23 See the remarks of Einarson and De Lacy, LCL XIV, 153–57.
24 See Westman, Plutarch gegen Kolotes, 77, note 3; LCL XIV, 154, note a; and Döring, Exemplum Socratis, 9.
25 The "sophists" were probably the Theodoreans and Bion. See LCL XIV, 277, note e. See also Westman, Plutarch gegen Kolotes, 294.
treating Socrates as a Sceptic, Colotes seems to agree with an Academic tradition possibly going back to Arcesilaus (cf. Cic. Acad. post. 1. 4. 15–18). In any case, Colotes attacked Socrates for denying the “plain evidence of the senses” (see 1117F), and for considering sense perception unreliable.

Was the basis for Colotes' polemic, then, a Sceptic interpretation of Socrates, and does Adversus Colotem, together with other works of Plutarch, show that Plutarch himself was an Academic Sceptic? This composite question can probably be answered in the negative.26 First, in defending Arcesilaus against the charge of foisting his own belief about “the impossibility of infallible apprehension on Socrates,” Plutarch asserts at 1122A that Socrates and other thinkers did not need such an interpretation, and “we are thankful to Colotes and everyone who shows that the Academic reasoning came to Arcesilaus as an ancient tradition (ἀνωθεν ἢκειν εἰς Ἀρκεστάλαυν).” Second, Plato's tremendous influence on Plutarch cannot be overlooked, and is far more important than that of any other thinker. For example, at De aud. poet. 17 D–F Plutarch argues that the poetic art is not concerned with truth, and that truth about divine matters is very hard to obtain, as Empedocles, Xenophanes, and Socrates realized.27 In support of his mention of Socrates, Plutarch probably relies on Plato's Phaedo (69D). Also at Quaest. Plat. 999E–F Plutarch emphasizes Socrates' aversion to dogmatism:

So Socrates with his refutatory discourse (τῶν ἔλεγκτικῶν λόγων) like a purgative medicine by maintaining nothing claimed the credence of others when he refuted them, and he got the greater hold on them because he seemed to be seeking the truth along with them, not himself to be defending an opinion of his own.

(H. Cherniss's translation)

A similar opinion about Socrates is expressed at Quomodo adulator ab amico internoscatur 72A, where Plutarch states that Socrates quietly took young men to task, “not assuming he himself was exempted from ignorance, but thinking that he along with them had to study virtue, and to seek for truth.”28 Moreover, the idea of Socrates as someone who treated not the body, but purged “the ulcerous and corrupted soul” is found at Quaest. Plat. 1000C. As Cherniss noted, the source for this latter view of Socrates is Plato's Sophist 230c–231b, and inspiration for the first of Plutarch's

26 J. Schroeter's belief that Plutarch was a Sceptic, Plutarch's Stellung zur Skepsis (Greifswald 1911), has been well argued against by P. De Lacy, "Plutarch and the Academic Sceptics," CJ 49 (1953–54) 79–85.

27 Schroeter cites this passage, Plutarch's Stellung, 24, as an example of Plutarch's scepticism, but Plutarch is thinking of the Socrates of Plato's Phaedo. Earlier in De aud. poet. (at 16C), Plutarch relies on the Phaedo when he reports that Socrates took up poetry and put Aesop's fables into verses.

28 See also Adv. Col. 1117D, and Cherniss, LCL XIII, Pt. I, 22, note e.
Quaest. Plat. is clearly Plato's Theaetetus. Nothing thus far indicates that Plutarch's portrait of Socrates was based on anything other than Plato's works.

Returning to Adv. Col. and to Colotes' polemic against Socrates: when Colotes attacked Socrates for denying the reliability of sense perception, he was probably not thinking of Socrates' often expressed conviction that he knew nothing. According to R. Westman, Socrates' disclaimer of knowledge was "allgemein und prinzipiell," whereas Colotes attacked a specific δόξα on sense perception's reliability. Possibly Colotes thought of Socrates' critique of knowledge as sense perception in the Theaetetus (151e–186e), or still more likely, of Phaedo 83a, where Socrates claims that lovers of knowledge realize that "the eyes and the ears and the other senses are full of deceit (ἀνάτης)." In brief, there are no good reasons to look beyond Plato's writings either for Colotes' attack on Socrates, or for Plutarch's views on Socrates. Plutarch himself was not an Academic Skeptic, and his portrayal of Socrates goes back mainly to Plato, and not to Arcesilaus.

Any interpretation of Socrates as an Academic or theoretical Skeptic should also take account of Plutarch's other remarks on Socrates. At Adv. Col. 1117A he is called "a zealot (θεόληπτος, lit. 'inspired' or 'possessed') for virtue," and Plutarch later mentions the importance of Socrates' teaching for preservation of human society (1124D). Again, at 1126B Plutarch commends Socrates' refusal to escape from prison, and his adherence to Athens' decrees. Other incidents in Socrates' public life cited at Adv. Col. 1117D are also in Plutarch's Alcibiades (7. 4–6). In brief, Socrates not only conversed with his fellow citizens (see also De latenter viv. 1128F) and cast doubt on sense perception: he was a thinker with an active role in his community, and a seeker after virtue.

This latter aspect of Plutarch's portrait also appears in Alcibiades. Though Socrates competed with others for Alcibiades' affection, he somehow mastered (ἐκφάτει) him to the extent that he respected only Socrates (6. 1). Whenever Socrates found Alcibiades full of debauchery and vanity (Θρύσιως καὶ χαυνότητος), he influenced him with his talk, and Alcibiades learned ever more about his lack of virtue (6. 4). At Potidaea, Socrates was Alcibiades' "tent-mate and comrade-in-action," and defended the wounded man. Plutarch most likely draws on Plato's Symposium to portray Socrates in his Alcibiades as a person of action: he campaigned at

29 Ibid., 19 and 22, note a.
30 Westman, Plutarch gegen Kolotes, 62 ff.
31 Plutarch's words on Socrates' refusal to escape, "klingen," according to Westmann, "wie ein Nachhall von Xen. Mem. 4. 4. 4," Plutarch gegen Kolotes, 274–75.
33 Ibid., 118.
Potidaea and at Delium (7. 4), and he was generally a restraint to the ambitious Alcibiades.

After narrating these incidents, Plutarch mentions Socrates only once more in *Alcibiades*, before the disastrous Sicilian expedition (17. 4):

Socrates the philosopher, however, and Meton the astrologer, are said to have had no hopes that any good would come to the city from this expedition; Socrates, as it is likely, because he got an inkling of the future from the divine guide (τοῦ δειμνονίου) who was his familiar...

(B. Perrin's translation)

Some fourteen years after this expedition, both Socrates and Alcibiades were dead.

A contrast like that between the ambitious, dissolute Alcibiades and the serene, self-controlled Socrates is at *De tranq.* 466D–67C, where Plutarch briefly compares Socrates with the legendary Phaethon. In this "central passage" of *De tranq. an.*, Plutarch claims that reason and wisdom (τὸ φρονείν) produce contentment whatever life's circumstances may be. A series of paired examples (παραδείγματα) supports this thesis: Alexander contrasted with Crates, Agamemnon with Diogenes, and Socrates with Phaethon. In each pair, the difference between contentment and discontent depends on reason and wisdom, and the philosopher is meant to be the more fortunate: Socrates conversed philosophically with friends in prison, whereas Phaethon, gone to heaven, wept "because no one would deliver to him his father's horses and chariots." Alcibiades' discontented life is not unlike Phaethon's, and in both cases Socrates exemplified the life of reason and reflection.

The friendship or love between Socrates and Alcibiades introduces a common theme of Middle Platonic literature: that of Eros, and especially Socrates' ἐρωτικῆ τέχνη. For not only in the *Alcibiades*, but also in the *Amatorius* (primarily chaps. 13–21), and in *Quaest. Plat.* 1. 4 (1000D–E),

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34 In Plutarch's "comparison" (σύγκρισις) of Alcibiades and Coriolanus, not a word is mentioned about Socrates.


36 The pairing of Socrates and Phaethon may be Plutarch's own, but as D. A. Russell noted (ibid. 24–25) Socrates and Phaethon also appear as examples of wisdom and folly in *De exilio* 607F. Perhaps the contrast was an "inherited commonplace."

37 See *De Pythiae oraculis* 406A, where it is remarked that "it is not righteous nor honourable to say that the Academy and Socrates and Plato's congregation were loveless, for we may read their amatory discourses (λόγους ἐρωτικοῖς)." See also Döring, *Exemplum Socratis*, 10–11, who notes that Plutarch's friend Favorinus composed a work on Socrates and his ἐρωτικῆ τέχνης.

38 Commenting on Plutarch's views on love, A. Wardman, *Plutarch's Lives* (London 1974) 61, writes: "In the *Amatorius*, however, which is Plutarch's version of Plato's *Symposium*, the writer does expressly idealize love between man and woman as preferable to a pederastic relationship. There is some disagreement here between the Plutarch of the *Lives* and the
Plutarch deals with Socrates' "amatory art." In this latter work, Plutarch discusses Socrates' role as midwife, and asserts that Socrates' view of wisdom (σοφία), or what "he called passion for the divine and intelligible" (τὴν περὶ τὸ θεῖον καὶ νοητὸν ἔρωτικὴν), is for mortals not a matter of procreation or of discovery, but of reminiscence (ἀνάμνησις). Plutarch also claims that Socrates taught nothing, but by arousing perplexities in young men, he helped them to deliver their "innate conceptions" (ἐμφυτοῖς νοησεῖς). Socrates called this procedure "obstetric skill" (μακωτικὴν τέχνην). Platonic views of Socrates are obviously in Plutarch's mind, for explicit reference to the Theaetetus is at the beginning of Quaest. Plat. I (997D), and Socrates' beliefs about "wisdom," and the power of Eros are traceable to the Republic and Symposium.

Plutarch's Amatorius, one of his "loveliest creations," treats the concept of Eros at great length. Without detailed analysis of the dialogue, the following observations seem sufficient. Plutarch's view of Eros in the Amat. is basically that of the Phaedrus, where Socrates claims that Eros "is a god or something divine" (θεὸς ἡ τί θείον, 242d-e). Hence, Plutarch's insistence on Eros' divinity (756A–63F) differs from the view of Eros in the Symposium, where Diotima claims that Eros is not a god, but a daimon, or a being intermediate between gods and mortals. Second, Eros' function, according to Plutarch at 764E–66B and 766E–67B, is to guide souls of lovers by recollection (ἀνάμνησις) to Beauty "pure and genuine" (καθορῶν καὶ ἀνευδές ... κάλλος, 765A). Differences between the sun and Eros are noted: The sun in visible, Eros is intelligible; the sun directs attention away from intelligibles to sensibles, whereas Eros does the opposite (764D–E). In brief, in these sections of the Amat. Plutarch works with material taken from Plato, especially the Phaedrus (Socrates' palinode in 244a–57b), and the Symposium (the Diotima-Socrates passage, 201d–12a). Yet Plutarch does not merely borrow from Plato—he mingles his own thoughts with those of his master, e.g., the "quite un-Platonic" references to fair women and their importance in awakening the soul to beauty (766E ff.).

Plutarch of the Moralia; yet it is probably true to say that both in the Lives and in the Amatorius his main target is pedaestrian sexual indulgence."

39 The conceptions are not "inbred" as they were for the Stoics. See Chemiss, LCL XIII, Pt. I, 28, note e.

40 The phrase is Ziegler's who writes, Plutarchos, 159 = RE 21. 1, col. 796, that the Amat. "... zu seinen schönsten Schöpfungen zählt und auch kompositionell, in der Verschlingung der novellistischen Handlung mit der Erörterung des durch sie gelieferten Themas, besonders gelungen ist."

41 I am especially indebted to H. Martin Jr.'s discussion for this and other observations on the Amatorius. See his "Plutarch, Plato, and Eros" CB 60 (1984) 82–88.

42 Ibid., 84.
In the Amatorius and Quaestiones Platonicae passages noted above, emphasis is on Eros' role in "recollection" (ἀνάμνησις) of the eternal Forms. Despite this similarity, the works are very different in genre, and in their treatment of Socrates. In Quaest. Plat. I, Socrates' role as midwife is the focus of the inquiry, whereas in the Amat. Socrates is mentioned only once at (762D) in connection with Anytus' friendship with Alcibiades and his prosecution of Socrates. Given the works' different natures, Plutarch's reticence about Socrates in the Amat. may not be surprising. But it is possible to go further, as H. Martin, Jr. has argued.

The Amatorius opens with conversation between Plutarch's son Autobulus and Flavian. Autobulus had agreed to narrate a dialogue learned from his father (748E ff.), and within this narrative Plutarch himself assumes the role of main speaker. Commenting on Plutarch in the Amat., H. Martin, Jr. wrote:

... by casting himself as his own spokesman in the Amatorius, a role Plato has reserved for Socrates in the Symposium and the Phaedrus, Plutarch is thereby presenting himself as Socrates' successor...

Martin's remark is persuasive. It calls attention to Socrates and Plato as Plutarch's spiritual ancestors, and explains his avoidance of Socrates' name other than at 762D. In brief, the Amatorius is an important work for Plutarch's understanding of the Platonic-Socratic concept of Eros.

Another popular subject of Middle Platonic literature was Socrates' daimonion; e.g., Apuleius' De deo Socratis, esp. chaps. 17–20, and Maximus of Tyre's lectures (Διαλεκτική), 8 and 9, represent interest in this phenomenon. There was apparently a "Dämonisierung" in the religious and philosophical beliefs of the early principate, and so, not surprisingly, Plutarch devoted De genio Socratis to this topic. But his interest in Socrates' daimonion was not confined to this treatise. In Quaest. Plat. I (999D–E and 1000D), Plutarch refers to Socrates' "divine sign," and his references will be considered after examination of De gen. Socr.

In addition to A. Corlu's work on De gen. Socr. (1970), two other studies especially helpful for understanding this dialogue are those of M. Riley and D. Babut, both concerned with problems of the unity and purpose of De gen. Socr. They seem agreed that the dialogue's true subject is neither the liberation of Thebes, nor the nature of Socrates' daimonion.

43 As Wardman noted, Plutarch's Lives, 202–04, Plutarch says little either in the extant Moralia or Lives about Socrates' trial. In Nicias 23, for example, he mentions Protagoras' exile and Anaxagoras' imprisonment, and "for good measure in his illustration he throws in the trial of Socrates."
44 On Flavian, see Ziegler, Plutarchos, 39–40 = RE 21. 1, cols. 675–76.
46 See Döring, Exemplum Socratis, 11.
47 See Cherniss, LCL XIII, Pt. I, 21, note e.
48 See note 4 of this study for bibliographical details.
Rather a main concern of De gen. Socr. is the relationship between the "practical life" (πρακτικός βίος) and the "contemplative" or "theoretical" life (δεισιδαιμονία). Beyond this point, their interpretations diverge. Riley saw tension between the two kinds of life "resolved completely in Socrates," who "was the only man who could combine both the role of the complete philosopher... and the role of the active citizen." In bridging the "gap" between these roles, Socrates' daimonion had decisive influence, for "Socrates displayed concretely the type of soul that a daimon could guide." Babut, however, found in De gen. Socr. a fundamental opposition between the practical and contemplative lives, and regarded Socrates not as combining them, but as the "divine" man, the pure philosopher who, like Epameinondas, "refuse les compromissions de l'action politique." Both scholars perhaps overstated their positions, and review of Plutarch's portrayal of Socrates in De gen. Socr. is in order. First mention of Socrates is at 588B, where Galaxidorus responds to Theanor's dependence on a divine sign (δαιμόνιον) as an example of "humbug and superstition" (τύφος καὶ δείσιδαιμονίας). For him, philosophy is a matter of reason without recourse to divination and visions; Socrates is the true philosopher who avoided "humbug."

The seer Theocritus objects, and cites Socrates' own daimonion as proof of divine guidance. His ensuing exchange with Galaxidorus is interrupted by Polynnis, who reports that some believed Socrates' divine sign was a sneeze which encouraged or prevented action contingent on its occurrence (581A–B). Polynnis disbelieves this explanation, because Socrates' actions and convictions were not those of one guided by sneezes or voices, but "by a higher authority and principle to noble conduct" (581D).

While discussing Socrates' sign, Polynnis mentions some biographical particulars: Socrates' life-long poverty, his safe retreat from Delium in response to his daimonion, his prediction of Athenian failure in Sicily, his refusal to escape from prison, and his fearlessness toward death. These biographical details are probably important, as will be seen, for Plutarch's portrayal of Socrates in De gen. Socr.

50 Ibid., 272.
52 Galaxidorus probably offers only a partial view of Socrates. For Galaxidorus, and all persons of the dialogue, see Corlu, Le démon de Socrate, 13–22. Galaxidorus is discussed in 18–19 et passim. It is interesting to note that "humbug" (τύφος) appears in Plutarch's other descriptions of Socrates. The term was used by the Cynics, and may represent Cynic influence. See I. Nachov, "Der Mensch in der Philosophie der Kyniker," in Der Mensch als Mass der Dinge, ed. R. Müller (Berlin 1976) 375 and 380.
53 On this view attributed to Terpion of Megara, see Corlu, Le démon de Socrate, 50.
54 Socrates' poverty is mentioned elsewhere by Plutarch, e.g. at 84F of Quomodo quis suos in virtute sentiat profectus.
55 Together with Alcibiades and Laches.
Galaxidorus then expresses interest in Simmias' views on Socrates, and briefly rebuts Polynnis by asserting that experts in divination see great significance in minor signs such as sneezes, just as readers learn about wars and rulers from the alphabet's letters, which mean nothing to illiterates. A sign can have divine origin; it is an instrument of a god used to communicate with mortals (581F–82C).

Discussion of Socrates' daimonion ends temporarily with the entrance of the mysterious visitor, Theanor.\footnote{On Theanor, see especially Corlu, Le démon de Socrate, 20–22.} At 588B it resumes with Simmias' interpretation of Socrates' sign. For him, this was a voice (φωνή) from the divine realm, and a guide in life (ἡγεμόνα πρὸς τὸν βίον, 589F). Socrates' intellect (νοῦς) and soul were guided by a superior intellect and more divine soul (ὑπὸ νοῦ κρείσσονος . . . καὶ ψυχῆς θειότερας, 589B), and so Socrates did not need to interpret the "symbols" of human speech in order to have contact with the divine.

Simmias then relates the experiences of Timarchus, also Socrates' disciple, in Trophonius' cave at Lebadeia.\footnote{For a clear summary of Timarchus' vision, See Riley, GRBS 18 (1977) 264 ff.} Briefly, after a vision of the cosmos, Timarchus hears a voice describing the nature of daimones and of human souls (591D–92E). Every soul has a higher part which many call intellect or mind (νοῦς), but which should really be called the daimon (591E). "Daimonic" influence on human souls is as follows. There are souls so immersed in the body and distracted by passions, that they pay almost no attention to their daimones. Timarchus sees them moving about confusedly (591D). Other souls are partly submerged in the body and give their daimones some control, but move in jerks, since their daimones must occasionally pull on the reins guiding them (591E–92B). Still other souls obey their daimones from birth, and are inspired (θεοκλητοῦμενον, 592C), or become obedient because of their nurture and education (διὰ τροφῆν καὶ παιδείαν, 592A).

After Simmias' report of Timarchus' vision, Theanor gives a somewhat different account of daimones.\footnote{Riley, ibid., 266 remarks that the accounts of Simmias and Theanor are "both equally exact or inexact."} He explains how the gods guide the best mortals directly "by language expressed in symbols" (λόγῳ δὲ συμβόλων, 593B). Other mortals are guided by the signs and omens from which divination arises. According to Theanor, daimones are souls released from the cycle of rebirth and who assist mortals near their cycle's end, just as athletes help their successors (593D–94D). And for Theanor, Socrates' soul has almost reached its goal.

Despite the complexities and obscurities of Simmias' and Theanor's speeches, the following observations seem apposite. First, Socrates' soul, like that of Hermodorus of Clazomenae (592C), was born inspired, and remained obedient to its daimon's guidance. Both Socrates and Hermodorus
were persons to whom, according to Simmias, *daimones* spoke directly. The character (*ηθος*) of each was “calm and undisturbed” (αθρουβον και νήνημον, 589D). And the souls of those with understanding (νοσιν ἔχεν, 591F), Timarchus sees as floating on high, not submerged in the body, or concerned with earthly affairs.

Now Polymnis had previously sketched Socrates as such a person, mentioning his poverty and courage toward death (581C ff.), and one theme of *De gen. Socr.* is restraint of the passions, and the importance of philosophical training. At 584A Epameinondas claims no disgust at poverty, and later argues (584E ff.) that desires or passions must by subded by reason (ὑπὸ τὸν λόγον κολαζομένας). Similarly, in Simmias’ report of Timarchus’ vision, *daimones* beat the soul until subdued (κολαζομένη) like a tame animal (592B).

Philosophy provides training needed to overcome the desires, and Polymnis gave Epameinondas the “best upbringing” in philosophy (585D), a goal of which is freedom from passion (ἀπαθης, 588D, applied by Simmias to Socrates), or an undisturbed and calm character (589D). Socrates and Epameinondas are thus similar in being above human desires, and the latter, often considered a “Boeotian Socrates,” had received a “distinguished and exceptional education” (παιδείας διαφόρου καὶ περιττής, 576D). In Simmias’ account, Socrates also belongs to human beings who are “divine and exceptional” (θείους καὶ περιττοίς ἀνδράσι, 589C), and who alone receive direct messages from *daimones*. At 593B Theanor mentions mortals distinguished with “a peculiar and exceptional schooling” (ἰδίας τινος καὶ περιττής παιδαγωγίας). As Babut noted, the term “exceptional” (περιττός) seems significant in *De gen. Socr.* Like Socrates, Epameinondas also belongs to exceptional persons guided through life by their *daimones*. They are among the few, select mortals to whom divinity manifests itself directly (cf. 593C).

Moreover, the long discussion between Epameinondas and Theanor on poverty and the value of riches (chaps. 13–14), emphasizes not only Epameinondas’ moral character, but also the parallels between him and Socrates. For the poverty espoused by Epameinondas was an important part of Polymnis’ description of Socrates at 581C: Socrates freely “remained poor throughout his life, when he could have had money which the donors would have been delighted and thankful to see him accept.”

Hence, in *De gen. Socr.* Plutarch sketches portraits of “divine” persons such as Socrates, Epameinondas, and Theanor. Their moral or spiritual superiority was due to direct contact with the divine world, and to their freedom from physical desires. But there are also humans totally enslaved

60 At *Adv. Col.* 1119C Plutarch concludes his defense of Socrates and mentions Epicurus’ attack on the gods and “godlike men” (θείους ἀνδράσι).
by their passions, and who like, Thebes' tyrannical rulers (see 578B), are blind to signs warning them of a dire fate. Between these extremes are Thebes' liberators, who lack freedom from their passions despite their courage and other moral qualities. That this "tripartition de l'humanité" exists in De gen. Socr., has been noticed by Babut. 62 But his critique of Riley and others who see Socrates as the philosopher and citizen, a figure reconciling the theoretical and practical lives, is less convincing. Babut seems to forget Polymnis' description of Socrates (at 581D–E) when he writes that he is never presented as "un homme d'action ni même comme un citoyen." 63 Moreover, if there is opposition between theory and practice in Plutarch's view of Socrates in De gen. Socr., it is not reflected in other works, e.g., in Adv. Col., An seni respubl. gen. sit. (769D), or Quaest. Plat. I, where Plutarch refers to Socrates' examination of others as a way of freeing them from "humbug" (τόπος, 999E), almost Galaxidorus' view of Socrates in De gen. Socr. Socrates is the critic of human opinions, not a contemplative thinker. Plutarch emphasizes divine influence on Socrates in De gen. Socr., but this does not prevent him from being a friend to Alcibiades and others involved in Athenian affairs.

In sum, the following matters seem certain: first, Socrates' divine sign and the liberation of Thebes are two main subjects of De gen. Socr., though their exact relationship in Plutarch's mind remains uncertain. Second, the importance of philosophical education and restraint of the passions is stressed, and both Socrates and Epameinondas are similar in demeanor and guided by their daimones. Moreover, in the dialogue's philosophical sections, Plutarch's account of daimones is not unlike those of De sera num. vin. (563E–68A) and of De facie in orb. lun. (942C–45D). 64 Third, whatever the purpose(s) of De gen. Socr. may have been, Plutarch tells an exciting story of political intrigue and revolution, the tension which is often relieved or increased by discussion of Socrates' divine sign. Despite the obscurities of De gen. Socr., the views of Riley and others seem convincing: Socrates is not a pure or theoretical philosopher, but one who combined philosophical thinking with civic duty and responsibility to others, and who unlike many human beings was led through life by his daimon.

Thus far, examination of Plutarch's portrait of Socrates has shown considerable indebtedness to Plato. But both in De gen. Socr. and Quaest. Plat. I there appear to be divergences from Plato's account of Socrates'...

62 Ibid., 69.
63 Ibid., 71, note 6. His criticism of Riley, who considered Socrates' prediction of disaster in Sicily as political, is niggling. Babut says it is not political, because "Plutarque prend soin de préciser qu'elle est fait en privé, à quelques amis." The retreat at Delium is not quite explained by Babut.
64 See Riley, GRBS 18 (1977) 264, note 16. Socrates is mentioned only once in De fac. in orb. lun. (at 923F) where there is brief reference to Socrates' myth about the earth in the Phaedo 1106 ff. See Cherniss, LCL XII, 140, note a.
daimonion. According to Plato (Ap. 31D), Socrates' sign always held him back from what he thought of doing, and never urged him forward (ἀεὶ ἀπρόφευτη ἴπτινει . . . πρὸπρέπει δὲ οὐποτε . . . ; cf. Phdr. 242C). At Quaest. Plat. 999E, however, Plutarch refers to a "divine and spiritual cause" which guided or instructed (ὑπηγήσατο) Socrates to examine others. Cherniss noted that ὑπηγήσατο cannot be used of the sign described by Plato's Socrates, and referred to Polymins at De gen. Socr. 581B, according to whom Socrates daimonion either deterred or prompted him ( . . . κωλπον ℃ κελευον).65 Such a description of Socrates' sign seems more consonant with Xenophon's reports, namely, that Socrates' inner voice always told him what he should or should not do (Mem. 4. 3. 12; 1. 1. 4; Apol. 12–13).66 Yet even in Plato's account, Socrates' sign did not always oppose or stop him from a course of action (Ap. 40B), and even gave him some mantic powers (Phdr. 242C). In view, however, of Xenophon as a likely source for other reports of Plutarch on Socrates, it is quite possible that his description of Socrates' daimonion was also influenced by Xenophon.

Another example of Xenophon's influence on Plutarch is at De cap. ex intim. util. 90E, where in this originally extemore address67 Plutarch states that Socrates bore with Xanthippe "who was irascible and acrimonious," for he thought that if he got along well with her, he would succeed in getting along with others. The source for Xanthippe's bad temper was probably Xenophon (Mem. 2. 2. 7), who reports her son's complaints about her nasty disposition, and who in the Sym. (2. 10) has Antisthenes ask Socrates why if he believed women to be as teachable as men, he had not trained Xanthippe, but continued to live with "the most troublesome woman of all time."68 Other examples of Xenophon as Plutarch's source for Socrates can be cited; e.g., at De tuenda sanitate praeccepta 124D–E Plutarch relates Socrates' advice against eating or drinking things which cause us to eat or drink when not hungry or thirsty, and adds that Socrates considered dancing a pleasant exercise. These reports are most likely based on Xenophon's Memorabilia 1. 3. 6 and Symposium 2. 17–20, respectively.69 Xenophon is often a source for Plutarch's or his friends' remarks on Socrates in Quaestiones convivales, and at 629E Xenophon is called "the Socratic." Given the nature of Plutarch's own Quaest. conviv., it is not surprising to discover likely references to Xenophon's Symposium,70 e.g., at 632A and 711A, and some material in Quaest. conviv. is found elsewhere in Plutarch's

65 See Cherniss, LCL XIII, Pt. I, 21, note e.
67 See Ziegler, Plutarchos, 167 = RE 21.1, col. 804
68 On Xanthippe, see Guthrie, Socrates, 63.
69 See notes a and c in LCL II, 228.
70 See, for example, F. Fuhrmann, Plutarque, Oeuvres morales, IX, Pt. I (Paris 1972), p. XXI.
works, e.g., Socrates' advice against dishes tempting to eat when not hungry (661F, 124D–E, 513C, and 521E) or his praise of the dance (711D, 124E, and 130E).  

Before concluding, it is important to return to Plutarch's remarks on Socrates in the Lives. A. Wardman noted that "Socrates appears in the Lives only in passing references," and nowhere does Plutarch deal with the charge that Socrates corrupted the young.  

Wardman's observation emphasizes the fact that Socrates' trial received almost no attention in the extant Lives or Moralia. Perhaps Wardman is correct in claiming that Plutarch considered the charge of corrupting the youth not "worth refuting in detail." At the end of Phocion (38. 2), Plutarch suggests that the Athenians realized their error in killing Phocion was as serious as the execution of Socrates. Most likely, Socrates' trial and execution were treated in detail by Plutarch in his lost Defense of Socrates and On the Condemnation of Socrates, mentioned earlier in this study.

It is now time to conclude this attempted reconstruction of Plutarch's portrait of Socrates. If Schmid, Döring, and others are correct, Plutarch's works very much reflect his era's renewed interest in Socrates. Plutarch wrote in a tradition established by Plato and Xenophon, both of whom admired Socrates. Plutarch was not, however, bound by this tradition, and responded to it creatively by composing several works in which he transformed inherited material for his own purposes, among which were rebuttal of Epicureanism (Adv. Col.), the creation of an historical "Novelle" (De gen. Socr.), and an unusual treatment of the Platonic concept of Eros (Amat.).

That Plutarch's primary sources were Plato and Xenophon is certain. He was, of course, extremely well read, and probably also used works of Aristotle, Demetrius of Phalerum, and Panaetius. With access to these and possibly other sources on Socrates, he makes many anecdotal references to Socrates throughout the Moralia and Lives. His main emphasis, however, is on Socrates as a "divine" man who followed his daimon throughout life (De gen. Socr.), performed his duties as an Athenian (De gen. Socr. and Adv. Col.), challenged his fellow citizens to reflect, while acting as a midwife (Quaest. Plat.), and who was somewhat sceptical about human beliefs and sense perception. Perhaps Plutarch regarded himself as Socrates' successor (Amat.). Certainly there is evidence for thinking that Plutarch, like some of his contemporaries, considered Socrates a model or paradigm for the best human life. Socrates followed his daimon, and led a busy life.

71 It is quite likely that Plutarch makes use of his hypomnēmata in these passages. On his hypomnēmata, see Chemiss, LCL XIII, Pt. II, 398 ff.
73 Ibid. 202.
74 See Ziegler, Plutarchos, 205 = RE 21. 1, col. 841.
while maintaining self-control and the capacity for quiet reflection. Plutarch's own life was not wholly different.\textsuperscript{75}

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\textsuperscript{75} I wish to thank Hubert Martin, Jr., University of Kentucky, and Philip A. Stadter, University of North Carolina, for reading an earlier version of this paper, and making suggestions for improvement.
La part du rationalisme dans la religion de Plutarque: l'exemple du *De genio Socratis*¹

DANIEL BABUT

Un trait qui retient particulièrement l'attention dans le dialogue *Sur le démon de Socrate* est que nous y sommes présentés deux portraits nettement différenciés, voire opposés, du personnage de Socrate. Il y a en effet d'un côté le Socrate philosophe et rationaliste, ennemi déclaré de la superstition dont Pythagore, Empédocle et leurs émules ont “infecté” la philosophie, tandis que lui-même s'est toujours efforcé, selon la formule d'un des participants à la discussion, de “faire appel à la sobre raison dans la recherche de la vérité” (λόγος νηφοντι μετέναι τὴν ἀλήθειαν, 580C 6). Mais il y a aussi le Socrate qui entretient une relation spéciale avec la Divinité, par le truchement du fameux “démon,” à l'exemple, cette fois, de Pythagoriciens tels Lysis (cf. 579F, 596A), et conformément à la doctrine exposée au chapitre 24 par un autre Pythagoricien, Théanor. D'après Simmias, un des personnages principaux du dialogue, souvent tenu pour un porte-parole de l'auteur, un oracle aurait prescrit au père de Socrate, quand ce dernier était encore enfant, de le laisser suivre ses impulsions sans contrainte, “parce qu'à coup sûr l'enfant avait en lui-même, pour se conduire dans la vie, un guide qui valait mieux que mille maîtres et mille pédagogues.”¹⁴ Aussi a-t-on pu soutenir que le dialogue semblait “flotter” entre deux interprétations, “mystique” et “rationaliste,” du personnage, celles-ci s'appuyant, d'une part, sur l'expression, de l'autre, sur l'expression, que Ton retrouve dans la bouche du Stoïcien Philippe de Pruse dans Quaest. conv. 710F 2 (Minar), rappelle celle d'Epicure dans la Lettre à Ménécée, 132 (νήφων λογισμός). Voir mon étude sur *Plutarque et le stoïcisme* (Paris 1969) 251, avec note 5. Sur l'origine et l'histoire de la métaphore, cf. E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos* (Stuttgart 1913 = 1956) 132 (ajouter Platon, *Phèdre*, 61 c [Diès], κρήνης νηφοντικήν καὶ δοιονον).


⁴ 589E-F, traduction Hani.
respectivement, sur "le merveilleux pouvoir du démon de Socrate" et sur "la sagesse qui caractérise le philosophe athénien."

On observera par ailleurs qu'il est difficile de résoudre le problème en supposant que seule l'une de ces deux interprétations—en l'occurrence la première, celle que développent, dans le dialogue, Simmias et Théanor—serait prise à son compte par l'auteur, l'autre ne représentant que le point de vue personnel d'un personnage dont le rôle semble moins important, Galaxidoros. Et cela pour deux raisons. D'abord parce qu'il est arbitraire de faire de Galaxidoros, champion, dans notre dialogue, du Socrate rationaliste et anti-pythagoricien, un simple "faire-valoir" de Simmias et Théanor, dont la thèse ne serait exposée que pour être ensuite rejetée et dépassée par ceux qui interviennt après lui dans la discussion. Ensuite parce que l'on aperçoit le même genre d'opposition entre une explication rationnelle et une explication surnaturelle des faits dans l'autre partie du De genio, c'est-à-dire dans la narration historique des événements ayant abouti à la libération de Thèbes en 379, narration qui fait contrepoint, dans la construction de l'ensemble, aux discussions philosophiques sur la nature du démon de Socrate. La libération de Thèbes semble en effet y être présentée tantôt comme un événement quasi miraculeux, où se manifeste clairement la main des dieux, tantôt comme le fruit de la détermination et du courage des patriotes groupés autour de Charon et de Pélopidas, dont les qualités morales éminentes sont fortement contrastées avec la corruption et l'aveuglement de leurs adversaires.

Pourquoi cette dualité de points de vue, dans l'une et l'autre partie du dialogue, et de quel côté penche, éventuellement, la balance aux yeux de l'auteur? Celui-ci est-il plus proche de la foi religieuse d'un Théanor ou du rationalisme d'un Galaxidoros? Ou bien a-t-il délibérément maintenu un certain équilibre entre les positions de ces personnages? Pour tenter de


6 Cf. Hani (ci-dessus, n. 3), Notice p. 46.

7 Voir à ce sujet mon article sur "La doctrine démonologique dans le De genio Socratis de Plutarque: cohérence et fonction," L'Information Littéraire 5 (1983) 201-02.

8 Sur les liens organiques entre ces deux parties du dialogue et sur l'unité thématique de celui-ci, voir l'article du BAGB cité à la note 1.

9 Voir en particulier le retournement de la situation en 587D sq., quand l'initiative catastrophique d'Hippothénidas se révèle finalement salutaire, et la réflexion de Caphisias en 588B 1-3, "... m'adressant à Hippothénidas, je lui pris la main et l'exhortai à avoir confiance, lui disant que les dieux eux-mêmes nous appelaient à l'action" (...) ὅς καὶ τῶν θεῶν παρακαλοῦντον ἐπὶ τὴν προσφις, trad. Hani, comme dans la plupart des citations qui suivent.

répondre à ces questions, on examinera brièvement d'abord le problème des interventions divines dans le cours des événements rapportés dans le récit historique, puis les théories exposées successivement par Galaxidôros, Simmias et Théanor.

Quelle est la part de la divinité dans la libération de Thèbes, d'après le récit qu'en fait Plutarque dans le De genio? On notera tout d'abord qu'il n'y est jamais fait mention d'une intervention directe de puissances divines qui aurait pour effet d'infléchir le cours normal des événements. Ce sont les acteurs humains qui conçoivent et exécutent le plan qui doit conduire au renversement des tyrans et à la récupération de la Cadmée, et ce plan se déroule, dans l'ensemble, conformément à leurs prévisions initiales. Dès le début, Phyllidas indique en effet qu'il va donner une réception, au cours de laquelle il compte enivrer Archias pour le rendre plus vulnérable (577C 2–4). Et comme il n'est pas possible de réunir tous les ennemis des conjurés au même endroit, ceux-ci devront se diviser en deux groupes, qui se chargeront respectivement d'Archias et de Léontiadas. Une fois ces derniers éliminés, "je pense," ajoute Phyllidas, "que les autres disparaîtront en prenant la fuite ou, en tout cas, se tiendront tranquilles, trop heureux si on leur laisse la vie sauve" (577C 6–D 3). De fait, au moment du l'attaque du premier groupe de conjurés, Archias est trop ivre pour se défendre (597A 8–9), tandis que le second groupe vient simultanément à bout de Léontiadas et d'Hypatas (596C 11 sq., 597D 2 sq.). La suite vient confirmer les prévisions de Phyllidas: les partisans des tyrans, croyant que toute la ville est aux mains de leurs adversaires, courent se réfugier à la Cadmée, tandis que la garnison, "frappée de peur devant le danger," ne pense même pas à profiter de sa supériorité numérique pour contre-attaquer (598E 3–F 3).

Il est vrai que le cours de l'action est marqué par plusieurs rebondissements spectaculaires, qui semblent, aux yeux des participants du complot, s'expliquer par des raisons surnaturelles. A deux reprises, notamment, alors que le succès de l'entreprise paraisse irrémédiablement compromis, un coup de théâtre, fortement marqué dans le récit, vient rétablir la situation et rendre courage aux patriotes d'une façon apparemment miraculeuse. Il y a d'abord l'épisode d'Hipposthénidas, qui a pris l'initiative malheureuse d'envoyer un messager à cheval au groupe des bannis partis d'Athènes, pour les inciter à faire demi-tour, empêchant ainsi l'exécution du plan prévu, alors que les conditions du succès paraissaient réunies (586B–C). Mais au moment où tout semble perdu, on s'aperçoit que le messager dépêché par Hipposthénidas, que l'on croyait arrivé à destination, n'est en
réalité même pas parti: ce qu'Hipposthénidas prend d'abord pour un accident malheureux (597E 2, φεύ, μή τι χαλεπώτερον σωμβέβηκε;) se révèle ainsi une chance, qui fait brusquement passer les conjurés de l'abattement à l'anxiété suscitée par l'imminence du danger (588A 8–10). A l'épisode d'Hipposthénidas répond par ailleurs celui de la convocation de Charon chez Archias (594E sq.),\(^{14}\) au moment même où les conjurés s'apprêtent à passer à l'action: alors que tous sont "frappés d'épouvante" (595A 5) et prêts à se 387 et souriant," et les exhorte à reprendre confiance; car Archias, informé du retour des bannis, a été assez aveugle pour confier à Charon lui-même le soin d'enquêter sur les rumeurs, et s'est laissé berner par les fausses assurances de Phyllidas (595C–96A). La prière que les conjurés adressent alors aux dieux (596C 5) a bien l'air d'une réponse à une aide providentielle sans laquelle l'entreprise humaine n'aurait pu être menée à bien.

Mais un examen attentif du texte montre qu'il faut y distinguer entre l'impression que ces coups de théâtre successifs font sur l'esprit des acteurs du drame\(^{15}\) et la réalité objective des faits: surpris à chaque fois par l'événement, les futurs libérateurs de Thèbes croient tout naturellement que les dieux sont de leur côté, mais il n'y a pas un mot, dans le récit de Caphisias, qui suggère que l'auteur du dialogue endosse personnellement cette explication des événements et veuille la communiquer à son lecteur. Tant s'en faut: dans tous les cas les rebondissements de l'action ont des causes parfaitement naturelles qui nous sont exposées tout au long. Ainsi, le messager d'Hipposthénidas est empêché d'accomplir sa mission à cause de son caractère emporté,\(^{16}\) qui transforme un incident trivial (le prêt d'une bride à un voisin) en une violente scène de ménage (587F–88A). De même, Charon et ses compagnons doivent leur salut non à une intervention miraculeuse de la Divinité, mais simplement aux moeurs dissolues de leurs adversaires,\(^{17}\) et plus particulièrement à leur propension à l'ivrognerie, qui, après les avoir rendus incapables de prendre au sérieux les rumeurs de

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\(^{14}\) Sur le parallélisme structural des deux passages, voir l'article du BAGB cité à la note 1, pp. 65–67.


\(^{16}\) Cf. 587F 8–9, ἀγανακτούντος δ' ἐμοῦ καὶ κακῶς σύνθην λέγοντος... , 588A 2–3, Τέλος δὲ μέχρι πληγών προσχεῖς ὅποι' ὀργής... L'insistance de Plutarque sur ce point semble destinée à mettre en relief l'explication psychologique de l'incident.

\(^{17}\) Cf. 596F 4–5, ἴτι προσδοκία τῶν γυναικῶν ἀνεπτυπμένοις, F 10, 597A 2–3 (voir la note 2 de Hani, p. 233), et surtout 594D 1–6, dont le rapprochement avec 577C 8 montre que le plan de Phyllidas se réalise jusque dans le détail.
complot,¹⁸ leur interdit même de se défendre efficacement contre leurs assaillants.¹⁹

Ainsi, malgré les apparences, la raison d'être de ces deux épisodes ne saurait être de suggérer que la libération de Thèbes n'a pu être obtenue que grâce à l'aide des dieux. Bien plus: l'extension même que le récit donne à ces incidents (bien qu'ils n'aient, en définitive, aucune influence réelle sur la suite des événements) et le contenu des développements qui y sont consacrés révèlent une intention bien différente de la part de l'auteur. Non seulement, en effet, il ne s'agit pas d'attirer l'attention sur une possible intervention divine, mais l'accent est mis délibérément sur les initiatives des hommes et sur leurs motivations morales.

Cela ressort particulièrement de la scène dont Charon est le centre (594E–96C). Tout y paraît en effet calculé pour faire ressortir le contraste entre l'affolement des autres conjurés, qui soupçonnent injustement une trahison d'Hippothénidas (595A), et la noblesse d'âme sereine de Charon, qu'il commence même à son jeune fils.²⁰ La scène fait par ailleurs manifestement pendant à celle qui ouvre le récit de Caphisias (576C–D). La supériorité dont Charon y fait preuve sur ses compagnons est en effet la réplique de son attitude, à la nouvelle de l'arrivée imminente des bannis venant d'Athènes: "Tandis que nous étions embarrassés et perplexes, Charon, lui, consentit à offrir sa maison" (576D 4–5). L'épisode de la convocation de Charon chez Archias apporte ainsi la confirmation concrète du jugement formulé, dès le début du récit, sur cette figure exemplaire de la conjuration: "Caphisias, cet homme n'est pas un philosophe et il n'a pas reçu une éducation distinguée et exceptionnelle comme ton frère Épaminondas; et pourtant, tu vois qu'il est tout naturellement conduit par les lois à faire le bien et qu'il prend spontanément les plus grands risques pour le salut de la patrie" (576D 10–E 2).²¹ On peut en conclure que les coups de théâtre qui marquent cette scène sont destinés plutôt à mettre en

¹⁸ Cf. 595F 8–96A 3, 'Ο γὰρ Ἀρχίας ἄνθρωπος ἦν ἐμὲ κεκλημένον, ἦδον βαρές ὑπὸ τῆς μέθης ὀντες καὶ συνεκλημένοι τοῖς σώμασι τὰς ψυχάς, μικρὶς διαναστάντες ἔξω προήλθον ἐπὶ τὰς θύρας.

¹⁹ "Lorsqu'il reçut [la lettre de son homonyme d'Athènes, l'avertissant du complot], Archias était déjà complètement terrassé par l'ivresse (τῇ μὲθῇ κατακεκλημένος)... Le porteur de la lettre lui ayant fait observer qu'il y était question d'affaires sérieuses: ‘Eh bien! à demain les affaires sérieuses,' s'écria Archias, et il mit la lettre sous son coussin; puis, demandant une coupe, il la fit remplir, et il envoyait sans cesse Phyllidas à la porte pour voir si les femmes arrivaient" (596F 3–9). Cf. aussi 597B 5 sq. (Cabirichos).

²⁰ Cf. surtout 595C (Ταύτα τοῦ Χαρώνου λέγοντος τὸ μὲν φρόνημα καὶ τὴν καλοκάγαθίαν ἐθαυμάζομεν...), D–E, "Les paroles de Charon, Archédamos, firent venir les larmes aux yeux de la plupart d'entre nous; mais lui, c'est sans verser une larme, sans aucune émotion, qu'il remit son fils à Pélopidas et franchit la porte en pressant les mains de chacun de nous et en nous adressant des paroles d'encouragement. Mais tu aurais trouvé plus admirable encore la joie rayonnante du fils et son intrépidité en face du danger; comme un autre Néoptolème, on ne le vit ni pâlir, ni montrer aucune crainte..."

²¹ Sur les raisons de cette promotion du personnage de Charon dans le De genio, voir mon article du BAGB (ci-dessus, n. 1), pp. 55 et 56, avec note 1.
relief les dispositions morales des participants qu'à suggérer qu'ils n'auraient dû leur succès qu'à une intervention directe de la divinité en leur faveur.

Moins évidentes apparaissent, au premier abord, les motivations de l'épisode d'Hipposthénidas. Mais là encore l'intérêt de l'auteur semble aller, au moins en partie, à la confrontation des attitudes morales des personnages mis en scène. Hipposthénidas est d'abord accusé par Phyllidas de lâcheté (586B sq.) et sévèrement jugé par Charon (586D 2–3). Pour sa défense, il demande qu'on ne confonde pas courage et témérité (586B 9–13), et surtout explique que le but n'est pas de faire éblouissement de bravoure en faisant bon marché de la vie, mais de mettre le maximum de chances de son côté pour parvenir effectivement au résultat recherché, qui est de libérer Thèbes: "Tuer, mourir, cela n'est pas difficile à faire ou à subir; mais arracher Thèbes à tant de forces ennemies qui l'investissent, et chasser la garnison des Spartiates au prix de deux ou trois meurtres, ce n'est pas aussi facile. . ." (586D 10–E 3). Inversement, lorsque Charon sera appelé inopinément chez Archias, un autre conjuré, Céphisodôros, reprochera à ses compagnons leurs tergiversations et les pressera de marcher immédiatement sus à l'ennemi, "plutôt que de rester enfermés dans une salle où [leurs] ennemis [les] extermineraient comme un essaim d'abeilles" (595E 4–F 2). La confrontation entre Hipposthénidas et ses compagnons met ainsi sous nos yeux les conflits auxquels donnent lieu, dans toute entreprise qui comporte de grands risques, les efforts de ceux qui s'y sont engagés, pour concilier courage et efficacité.

Est-ce à dire que les dieux seraient entièrement absents du récit de Caphisias sur la libération de Thèbes? Aucun lecteur du dialogue n'oserait sans doute le prétendre. Bien au contraire, ce récit met moins l'accent, au total, sur l'action elle-même que sur les présages et signes divins qui l'accompagnent.22 La divination ne constitue pas seulement, en effet, le thème dominant de la première partie du dialogue (577A–82C), comme on l'a soutenu,23 elle est pour ainsi dire omniprésente d'un bout à l'autre de l'oeuvre.24 Mais il n'en est que plus remarquable que ce foisonnement de présages soit pratiquement sans influence sur le déroulement et l'issue de

23 Cf. M. Riley, "The Purpose and Unity of Plutarch's _De genio Socratis_;" _GRBS_ 18. 3 (1977) 259 sq. Voir notamment 577D ("... signes et présages inquiétants et sinistres pour Sparte"); 578A (présages interprétés par les habitants d'Haliartos comme des signes de la colère suscitée chez les dieux par la violation du tombeau d'Aleme); 578A–C (mesures prises par les Lacédémoniens pour échapper au châtiment annoncé par d'autres signes, et pour se conformer à un oracle); 579 B (oracle relatif à l'autel des Délphes); 579E (songes et signes apparus à l'Étranger arrivé à Thèbes pour s'occuper de la sépulture de Lysis).
24 Cf. 585F (révélation faite à Théanor pendant la nuit passée près du tombeau de Lysis sur la conduite à tenir au sujet de la sépulture de ce dernier); 586F–87A (présages et songe qui ont incité Hipposthénidas à décommander le retour des bannis); 594E (heureux présage marquant l'arrivée des bannis à Thèbes); 595F (présage favorable tiré d'un sacrifice par le devin Théocritos).
l'action.25 Ainsi, les précautions multipliées par Lysanoridas pour empêcher la vengeance divine de frapper ceux qui ont violé le tombeau d'Alcmène (578A–B) se révèleront inopérantes, et n'éviteront pas à Lysanoridas lui-même d'être plus tard atteint par le châtiment (cf. 598F 5–6), parce que nul ne lui indiquera l'emplacement exact du tombeau (578C). Surtout, dans la plupart des cas, les présages restent irrémédiablement obscurs pour ceux qui les reçoivent, de sorte que ceux-ci sont incapables d'en tirer profit. Typique, à cet égard, est le cas d'Hippothénidas,26 qui manque de faire capoter toute l'entreprise des patriotes, pour s'être lié à l'interprétation défavorable que les divins ont donnée d'un sacrifice (586F), et pour s'être trompé lui-même sur la signification d'un son qui lui est apparu (587A–B). Et même si le divin Théocritos a vu plus clair que lui en cette occasion (cf. 587B–C), ce même Théocritos27 ne sera pas plus lucide un peu plus tard, quand il pressera imprudemment ses compagnons de se lancer immédiatement à l'attaque sans attendre le retour de Charon (595F).28 Loin d'indiquer une faveur divine spéciale, qui aurait rendu possible le succès des libérateurs de Thèbes, l'accumulation des présages dans la narration historique du De genio semble bien plutôt destinée à faire ressortir le contraste entre ceux qui, engagés dans l'action, doivent recourir aux moyens incertains de la divination ordinaire, et les hommes "exceptionnels" (591C 11, cf. 593B 5–6) qui, tel Socrate, bénéficient d'avertissements directs de la divinité.29

La confirmation nous est d'ailleurs fournie par l'auteur lui-même, d'abord dans un passage qui prend un relief particulier en raison de sa position, puisqu'il se situe dans la conversation préliminaire qui sert d'introduction au récit de Caphisias et en définit par avance l'esprit et l'orientation générale (575A 1–C 9).30 Archédamos y oppose, grâce à une comparaison avec les gens qui regardent les tableaux des peintres, deux catégories d'auditeurs ou de lecteurs de récits historiques: "celui dont la pensée est paressuse se contente, pour son information, d'apprendre seulement les grandes lignes et l'issue de l'événement; tandis que celui qui, plein d'émulation et d'amour du beau, contemple les réalisations de la vertu comme celles d'un grand art (τὸν δὲ φιλότιμον καὶ φιλόκαλον τῶν ὑπ' ἀρετῆς ὀσπερ τέχνης μεγάλης ὀπειραγασμένων θεατῆν), prend plutôt plaisir au détail des événements, avec l'idée que, si leur issue doit beaucoup

25 Cf. BAGB, ibid., p. 65.
26 D'autant plus remarquable que, comme le montre la comparaison avec la Vie de Péléopidas (8. 5), il s'agit d'un motif délibérément introduit par Plutarque dans le récit de Caphisias (cf. BAGB, ibid., p. 64, n. 1).
27 La défaillance du devin est anticipée par l'anecdote symbolique du chapitre 10, voir BAGB, ibid., pp. 61–62.
28 Cf. BAGB, ibid., pp. 67, avec la note 4, et 68.
29 La distinction entre les deux espèces de divination dans le discours de Théanor (cf. 593C sq.) donne manifestement la clé de tout la dialogue, cf. BAGB, ibid., pp. 60–61.
30 Sur la valeur "programmatique" de ce texte, voir en dernier lieu Desideri (ci-dessus, n. 1), p. 570 sq.
au hasard (τόδε μέν τέλος πολλά κοινά πρὸς τήν τύχην ἔχοντος), dans le
détail des causes et des actes eux-mêmes, par ailleurs, il découvre le spectacle
des combats de la vertu contre les circonstances fortuites (τούς δ' ἐν ταῖς
αἰτίαις καὶ τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῖς ἐπὶ) mérous ἀγώνας ἀρετῆς πρὸς τὰ
συντυχίαντο... καθόροντα) et des audaces raisonnées, dans le danger,
d'une pensée rationnelle confrontée avec l'occasion et la passion" (575C 3–
9).31 Il en ressort en effet, sans la moindre équivoque, que Plutarque voit
dans la libération de Thèbes une "réalisation" de la "vertu" des patriotes
groupés autour de Charon, que l"issue" de l'événement ressortit selon lui au
"hasard," bien plutôt qu'à une quelconque intervention divine,32 et qu'enfin
son intérêt va avant tout, comme nous l'avait suggéré l'examen des épisodes
d'Hipposthénidas et de la convocation de Charon chez Archias, à la
confrontation des réactions morales des acteurs de l'histoire avec les
vicissitudes du sort.
À cette déclaration liminaire d'Archédamos, qui reflète, selon toute
apparence, le point de vue propre de l'auteur, fait écho33 d'une manière que
l'on croira difficilement fortuite,34 la réflexion insérée par son partenaire
Caphisias dans son récit, juste avant la mention de l'ultime événement qui
risque de faire échouer le complot pour la libération de Thèbes:35 "Mais,
mon cher Archédamos, la mauvaise fortune ('H... χείρων... τύχη) qui
cherchait à mettre en balance la lâcheté et l'ignorance36 de nos ennemis avec
notre audace et nos préparatifs, et à faire de notre entreprise une espèce de
drame qu'elle semait depuis le début d'épisodes périlleux, vint croiser son
exécution même, et nous jeta dans l'épreuve soudaine et terrible d'une
péripétée inattendue" (596D 8–E 3, trad. Hani légèrement modifiée). Pour
Caphisias comme pour Archédamos, l'histoire de la libération de Thèbes est
celle des tribulations de la vertu des patriotes thbains aux prises avec les
aléas de la fortune.
Ainsi s'explique un fait qui a surpris plus d'un commentateur du De
Genio, et que certains se sont évertis à nier ou à minimiser:37 les démons,

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31 Le texte est ici celui de De Lacy-Einarson (Plutarch's Moralia, VII, L.C.L., 1959), adopté
par A. Corlu (Plutarque, Le démon de Socrate, [Paris 1970]). Je suis responsable de la
traduction proposée dans le texte.
32 Sur la place faite par Plutarque au hasard, dans sa conception du monde et de l'histoire, voir
33 Cf. Desideri (ci-dessus, n. 1), 574 sq.
34 L'interpellation d'Archédamos en 596 D 8 a vraisemblablement pour fin, comme en 595 B 3
e D 7, d'attirer l'attention sur un point important.
35 Il s'agit de l'envoi à Archias de la lettre dans laquelle son homonyme athénéen lui révèle
36 Aloni (ci-dessus, n. 10), p. 235, n. 8, propose de lire ἄνοιας (596D 9) au lieu d'
ἄγνοιας. Mais ce dernier mot, leçon des deux manuscrits, est repris par parαακεναλος comme
μαλακός l'est par τόλμας.
37 Cf. Riley (ci-dessus, n. 23), 257 sq. (voir BAG, ibid., 53, avec n. 6). En dernier lieu
Desideri (ci-dessus, n. 1), 578 sq., qui en a eu d'inventer l'intervention du "démon
d'Alcmène," et à mettre sur le compte des démons tous les présages mentionnés dans le récit de
dont les possibilités d'intervention en faveur des hommes font l'objet des discussions philosophiques qui alternent avec le récit historique, ne jouent aucun rôle dans celui-ci et n'y sont même pas mentionnés une seule fois. La constatation est d'autant plus frappante qu'elle contraste avec celle que l'on est amené à faire, dans le débat philosophique, au sujet de Socrate, ou d'autres hommes “exceptionnels” ou “aimés des dieux” (cf. 589C 11, 578E 6, 593A 8–9 et B 5–6), tel Théanor, qui à l' inverse des acteurs de la libération de Thèbes, communiquent directement avec la divinité et en reçoivent une aide personnelle et décisive par l'intermédiaire d'un démon.38

Au reste, cette fois encore, Plutarque s'est chargé lui-même de dissiper toute incertitude, en faisant préciser par Théanor, dans le discours qui apporte au débat philosophique sa conclusion, en même temps qu'il fournit la clé de tout le dialogue, les conditions dans lesquelles les démons peuvent intervenir dans les affaires humaines. Ce sont en effet “les meilleurs d'entre nous,” nous est-il expliqué dès le début de ce discours, que “les êtres qui sont audessus de nous isolent pour ainsi dire du troupeau, et à qui ils impriment leur marque, jugeant qu'ils ont droit d'être guidés d'une manière particulière et dans des conditions exceptionnelles (ιδίαις τινάς καὶ περιττής παθόμαξας ἀξιοῦσι),39 sans qu'il soit fait usage de rènes ou d'étrivière pour les diriger, mais seulement de la raison, par le moyen de signes qui restent totalement ignorés de la masse du troupeau” (593B 4–8). Il est curieux qu'on ne se soit pas avisé que le phrase excluait pratiquement toute possibilité d'une intervention des dieux ou des démons en faveur des libérateurs de Thèbes: quels que soient, en effet, les mérites de ces derniers, il est clair qu'ils font partie de ce que Théanor appelle ici “le troupeau,” et que, loin d'être directement guidés par les puissances divines, comme les privilégiés que sont Socrate et Théanor, ils en sont réduits à interpréter tant bien que mal les signes à l'usage de “la masse,” “qui constituent la matière

Caphisias, sans remarquer, du reste, que ces signes divins restent, en tout état de cause, sans aucun effet sur l'issue des événements.

38 Voir notamment, pour Socrate, 580E (anecdote racontée par Théocritos sur la façon dont Socrate a pu éviter, grâce au démon, le rencontre d'un troupeau de pores qui a mis à mal ses compagnons dans une rue d'Athènes); 581E (intervention du démon en faveur de Socrate lors de la retraite de Délon); pour Théanor et ses amis pythagoriciens, 583B (le démon de Lysis avertit ses amis de sa mort); 585F (message du démon de Lysis à Théanor sur la conduite à tenir au sujet de la dépouille du défunt).

39 Comparez 576D 11 (μετείληψε παθέματα διαφόρον καὶ περιττής... ἔμπαιμενόνδιος); 578 E 6 (περιττό γὰρ... τινι καὶ οὐκ ἰδιώτῃ προσέοικετ, ἀπορος de Théanor); 579F 12 (ὡς θεοφίλεις καὶ περιττοὶ τινες εἶναι δοκοῦσιν...); 580F 9 (τὸ Σακράτους δαμασκόν ἰδιῶν καὶ περιττήν ἐσχηκέναι δύναμιν...); 589C 10–12 (ὁ ἄληρ ἐκπόμονος δι’ εὐπαθεῖαν ἐνεσμαίνεται τοῖς θείοις καὶ περιττοῖς ἀνδράσι τὸν νοῦςαντονό λόγον); 589F 1–2 (ὡς κρίτηνα δήποτεν ἄχοντος [sc. Σακράτους] ἐν αὐτῷ μυρίων διδασκάλων καὶ παθόμαξων ἡγεμόνα πρὸς τὸν βίον).
de l'art appelé divination’ (cf. 593D 1–2, ..., tois dé pollois σημεία διδοσιν [sc. το θεῖον], εξ ον ἡ λεγομένη μαντικὴ συνέστηκε).40

La suite du discours en apporte du reste la confirmation la plus nette. “Car il est de fait,” ajoute en effet Théanor, “que les dieux ne règlent la vie que d'une minorité d'hommes (θεοὶ μὲν γὰρ οὖν ὄλγον ἀνθράπον κοσμοῦσι βίον), à savoir ceux qu’ils veulent combler au plus haut point et rendre véritablement divins” (οὐς ἂν ἀκρας μακαρίους τε καὶ θείους ὦς ἀληθῶς ἀπεργάζοσθαι βουλήθωσιν, 593D 3–6).41 Et pour montrer que “la puissance démonique ne s'associe pas à n'importe qui” (οὐ γὰρ οἷς ἐξυχε συμφέρεται το δαιμόνιον, 593E 8), Théanor compare alors l’assistance des démons à celle que l'on peut apporter à des naufragés qui cherchent à se sauver à la nage: s’ils sont encore loin du rivage, on se contente d'observer en silence (σωπη!) leurs efforts; mais s’ils sont tout près du bord, on les encourage de la voix et du geste, on interviennent directement pour les aider à se sauver; “telle est aussi ... la manière d’agir de la puissance démonique; tant que nous sommes en effet submergés par nos affaires (βαστιζομένους ὑπὸ τῶν πραγμάτων) ... elle nous laisse nous démenner seuls et faire preuve de persévérance, en nous efforçant, par notre propre vertu, de nous sauver et d’atteindre le port ...” (αὐτοὺς ἐξωμιλλάσθαι καὶ μακροθυμεῖν δί’ οἰκείας πειραμένους ἀρετῆς σοφεῖσθαι καὶ τυγχάνειν λιμένος, 593 F 6–9). Il n’est pas douteux que la phrase s’applique tout particulièrement aux patriotes thébains dont le récit de Caphisias relate l’entreprise, et dont Archédamos évoquait par avance, dans le dialogue introductif, la vertu aux prises avec les vicissitudes de la fortune (τοὺς ... ἀγώνας ἀρετῆς πρὸς τὰ συντυχίαννα, 575C 6–8).

Ainsi, le récit que nous offre le De genio de la libération de Thèbes fait apparaître que pour l’auteur du dialogue cet événement est, pour l’essential, l’œuvre des hommes, tandis que, malgré les apparences, la divinité n’y a joué en définitive qu’un rôle négligeable.42 Cette conclusion ne devrait du reste pas surprendre les lecteurs des Vies, car si des interventions divines y sont souvent mentionnées,43 Plutarque s’y est toutefois attaché à en marquer les limites, notamment dans une remarquable digression de la Vie de Coriolan (32, 4 sq.),44 dont la double convergence avec le récit de Caphisias

40 Voir ci-dessus, p. 389.
41 Comparer 586A 5–6, Μυρία μὲν γὰρ ἀτραποὶ βίων, ὄλγαι δὲ ὡς δαίμονες ἀνθρώπους ἄγουσιν.
42 Sans doute les présages indiquent-ils que l’issue de l’entreprise est connue de la divinité avant même son déclenchement (cf. notamment la réflexion apparente fortuite de Simmias en 578D 7, alors qu’il vient de déplorer la barbarie inhérente à la tyrannie: Ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν ἢς ψεύδε τινα θεῖο μελήσα. Riley [ci-dessus, n. 23], 271, y voit à juste titre un exemple de κληδόν, présage tiré d’une parole fortuite, qui prend valeur prémonitoire, cf. 581D 2). Mais il n’en reste pas moins que ces présages ne contribuent aucunement à la réussite finale de l’entreprise.
43 Voir mon étude sur Plutarque et le stoïcisme (Paris 1969) 478–82.
et avec les explications de Théanor sur "la manière d'agir de la puissance démonique" aurait mérité de retenir l'attention des commentateurs. Il s'agit de l'initiative prise par Valérie d'aller trouver la mère et l'épouse de Coriolan pour les inciter à faire auprès de ce dernier la démarche à laquelle Rome, assiégée par les Volques, devra son salut. Plutarque voit dans cette initiative extraordinaire et imprévisible l'effet d'une "intuition à laquelle l'inspiration divine n'était pas étrangère" (κατ’ ἐπίνοιαν οὐκ ἄθεαιατον, 33, 3, trad. Flacelière-Chambry). Il la compare aux interventions divines relatives par Homère, interventions qui suscitent le scepticisme ou les critiques des esprits forts, parce qu'ils y voient des "fictions impossibles" et des "inventions incroyables," qui aboutissent à priver la raison humaine de sa liberté de choix. Prenant la défense d'Homère, Plutarque soutient alors que le poète réserve ces interventions "aux actions extraordinaires et audacieuses, qui exigent une poussée d'enthousiasme et d'exaltation" (ἐν ταῖς ἀτόποις καὶ παραβόλοις πράξεσι καὶ φοράς τινος ἑνθουσιώδους καὶ παραστάσεως δειμένας, 32, 7, trad. Flacelière-Chambry), alors qu'il laisse au pouvoir de chacun "les actes naturels, habituels et qui s'accomplissent logiquement" (τὰ ... εἰκότα καὶ συνήθη καὶ κατὰ λόγον περαινόμενα, 32, 6).45

On ne s'étonnera donc pas que la libération de Thèbes nous soit dépeinte dans le De genio comme l'oeuvre d'hommes courageux confrontés avec les aléas de la fortune, car non seulement, comme le dit Théanor, la divinité n'intervient qu'en faveur d'une minorité de privilégiés, mais de plus, elle limite ses interventions directes, comme l'indique la Vie de Coriolan, à des cas exceptionnels.

La théorie de Galaxidoros est exposée dans trois chapitres qui se suivent de près (9, 11, et 12) et correspondent respectivement à trois développements liés, mais distincts. Le premier, de portée générale, a pour point de départ une condamnation de la superstition, prolongée par une critique vigoureuse des conceptions religieuses de certains prédécesseurs de Socrate (Pythagore, Empédocle ...), et par une profession de foi rationaliste. Puis, en réponse à une objection de Théocritos, Galaxidoros applique les principes qu'il vient d'énoncer au problème du démon de Socrate. Enfin, il défend sa conception du démon contre deux espèces d'objections, formulées par Phidolaos et Polyminis. On résumera brièvement ces trois développements.

La condamnation de la superstition (579F 8—9, ως ἔργον ἐστίν εὑρεῖν ἄνθρωπος καθαρεύοντα τόφου καὶ δεισιδαιμονίας) est motivée par un propos de Polyminis, signalant qu'un étranger, arrivé le jour même dans la ville (Théanor), a passé la nuit près du tombeau de Lysis pour y recueillir, éventuellement, un signe divin relatif à la sépulture de ce dernier. Galaxidoros voit là une manifestation de la fâcheuse propension, si

45 Comparer, sur le problème des interventions divines chez Homère, les réflexions parallèles de Plutarque dans De Pyth. orac., 405A sq.
répandue, à “diviniser” ses actes, en s'abritant, soit par faiblesse d'esprit soit par supercherie, derrière des songes, des visions ou d'autres fariboles du même genre (579F). Il peut être utile aux politiques d'user de la superstition “comme d’un frein,” pour contenir les débordements d'une foule indisciplinée, mais de tels procédés sont indignes de la philosophie et contraires à sa mission, qui est de justifier rationnellement une conduite conforme à la morale, et non de “chercher refuge auprès des dieux,” en recourant à des prophéties et des visions, “domaine dans lequel l'homme le plus médiocre n'obtient souvent pas moins, par le jeu de la chance, que le plus éminent” (580A–B). Le véritable esprit de la philosophie, caractérisé par la simplicité, le refus des faux-s semblants, l'amour sincère et exclusif de la vérité, c'est justement Socrate qui l'incarnait, loin de l’“enflure” propre au sophiste, plutôt qu'au philosophe.

Ce n'est pas à dire, pourtant, que Galaxidoros rejette la position des accusateurs de Socrate, qui lui reprochaient de mépriser les choses divines. Bien plutôt, selon lui, Socrate a-t-il purifié la philosophie, que Pythagore et son école avaient “remplie de visions, de mythes et de superstition”;46 et, tandis qu'Empédocle la lui avait transmise “en plein délire” (ἐὰν μάλα βεβακχευμένη), il “l'habitua à mesurer pour ainsi dire son inspiration à la réalité et à poursuivre la vérité par la sobre raison” (580C 5–6).47

Mais comment concilier cette conception de la philosophie socratique avec ce que l'on rapporte au sujet du démon de Socrate, demande alors le devin Théocritos. Car il n'est pas possible de rejeter cette tradition comme une “fable” (ψεῦδος), comparable aux supercheries que vient de dénoncer Galaxidoros. Pour le prouver, Théocritos raconte alors un incident dont il dit avoir été le témoin, en même temps que le devin Euthyphron,48 et qui établit la supériorité de la divination socratique, appuyée sur les avertissements du démon, par rapport à la divination ordinaire des devins professionnels, tels Euthyphron et Théocritos lui-même.49

Dans sa réponse, Galaxidoros se garde de mettre en doute la réalité du démon, mais en propose une interprétation qui se concilie à la fois avec sa conception rationaliste de la philosophie et avec l'idée qu'il se fait de la personnalité de Socrate. Le démon, explique-t-il, n'est pas une révélation “particulière et exceptionnelle” (ἰδίων καὶ περιττήν) qui serait consentie par faveur personnelle à un individu. C'est, en réalité, un phénomène qui relève de la mantique ordinaire, mais se manifeste “dans les situations obscures et rebelles aux conjectures raisonnables” (ἐν τοῖς ἐδήλοις καὶ ἀτεκμάρτοις τῷ λογισμῷ). Quand le raisonnement ou la faculté de

47 Cf. ci-dessus, p. 383, avec n. 2.
48 Il se pourrait que l'anecdote, pour laquelle Plutarque est notre seule source, ait été imaginée par lui pour les besoins de la cause.
49 Voir ci-dessus, n. 27.
prévision sont en échec, un facteur en soi insignifiant, comme un éternuement ou une parole fortuite (πταρμος ἕ κληδών) peut faire pencher la balance d'un côté plutôt que de l'autre. Voilà pourquoi Socrate, dans de telles situations, se laissait guider par ce genre de présages, auxquels on a donné le nom de "démon de Socrate" (580F–81A).

Les objections de Phidolaos et de Polynnis donnent enfin à Galaxidóros l'occasion de préciser sa pensée sur deux points importants. Au premier, qui s'était indigné qu'on pût ainsi "tourner en ridicule une telle manifestation de la puissance prophétique et la réduire à des éternuements et à des voix" (581E 11–12), il répond que des signes en apparence insignifiants peuvent avoir une grande importance pour la connaissance de l'avenir. Socrate était donc fondé à tenir compte de ces signes pour déterminer sa conduite et à prendre au sérieux ce qu'il appelait son démon (581F–82B). Quant à Polynnis, il trouvait surprenant que Socrate eût attribué à l'action du démon ce qu'il décidait d'après un banal éternuement, et voyait là une manifestation de l"enflure" (τυφος) et des faux-simulants justement dénoncés par Galaxidóros (581B). Mais ce dernier lui fait observer qu'il est légitime de distinguer entre le signe (l'éternuement) et celui qui l'envoie (le démon) et de mettre l'accent sur le second plutôt que sur le premier (582B–C). Cette réponse, comme la précédente, confirme que la théorie de Galaxidóros ne nie en aucune façon l'existence du démon, mais rejette seulement l'idée que ce démon communiquerait directement avec certains hommes, par des apparitions ou des messages verbaux.

Quelle est la portée de cette théorie de Galaxidóros, quelle fonction faut-il lui reconnaître dans la construction du dialogue? Faut-il croire qu'elle correspond, en tout ou en partie, aux vues personnelles de l'auteur sur le sujet, ou au contraire qu'elle représente une simple étape dans le débat, destinée à être ensuite dépassée par les interventions des autres participants, et définitivement rejetée? Les commentateurs ont généralement opté pour cette dernière interprétation. Ainsi, Hirzel pensait que le point de vue de Galaxidóros était proche de celui des Cyniques, et pouvait refléter les idées qui étaient celles de Plutarque dans sa jeunesse, à l'époque où il écrivait son pamphlet Sur la Superstition.50 Galaxidóros représenterait alors la "période radicale" de la pensée de Plutarque, dont celui-ci était sans doute déjà assez éloigné quand il rédigait le De genio.51 De même, H. von Arnim affirme que Plutarque prend nettement parti contre Galaxidóros pour se ranger sans restriction aux côtés des Pythagoriciens Simmias et Théanor,52 en leur

faisant reconnaître, dans le cadre du dialogue, une autorité supérieure, tandis que, par ailleurs, Galaxidôros lui-même ferait en quelque sorte acte d'allégeance à la personne de Simmias. Plus récemment, enfin, A. Corlu et J. Hani ont vu dans ce personnage un contradicteur de tendance stoïcienne, dont la théorie, erronée et peu cohérente, ne serait exposée que pour mieux mettre en valeur, par contraste, les conceptions du démon développées ensuite par Simmias et Théanor.

Cependant, cette interprétation du rôle dévolu au personnage dans la construction du dialogue paraît difficilement conciliable avec une série d'indications convergentes fournies par le texte à son sujet. On notera tout d'abord que les idées exposées par Galaxidôros ne sont jamais globalement ni expressément réfutées par ses partenaires au cours de la discussion. Seul Simmias semble le critiquer, quand, à la fin de son intervention (589F 3–6), il rejette dédaigneusement, mais sans nommer Galaxidôros, l'opinion de ceux qui parlent de "paroles fortuites, d'éternuements ou de choses du même genre" (κληδόνας ἢ πταρμοῦς ἢ τι τοιοῦτον) pour expliquer le démon de Socrate. Mais cette critique laisse intacte, en tout état de cause, toute la première partie de la thèse de Galaxidôros, qui n'est pourtant pas la moins importante (condamnation de la superstition, de la crédulité excessive des prédécesseurs de Socrate, y compris Pythagore—sans que le Pythagoricien Simmias trouve à y redire...—, interprétation strictement rationaliste de la philosophie de Socrate...). Qui plus est, il n'est même pas plausible, à la réflexion, que Simmias vise Galaxidôros dans ce passage: non seulement le pluriel dont il use (τῶν κληδόνας...<eιρηκότων>) peut désigner d'autres adversaires, mais dans sa réponse à Polymnis Galaxidôros s'est expressément démarqué de ceux qui professent l'opinion rejetée par Simmias; "... pour ma part, je m'étonnerais qu'un homme éminent dans la pratique de la discussion et dans la maîtrise de la langue, comme l'était Socrate, ait dit que c'était l'éternuement, et non le démon qui lui faisait signe. C'est comme si l'on disait que l'on a été blessé par le trait, et non par le tireur au moyen du trait, ou encore que le poids est mesuré par la balance, et non par celui qui pèse au moyen de la balance. Car ce n'est pas l'instrument qui fait l'oeuvre, mais celui à qui appartient l'instrument, et qui en s'en sert pour produire l'oeuvre. Or, c'est aussi une sorte d'instrument que le signe, dont se

53 Voir notamment, pour Simmias, 576B 7–9, 578A 1–3, 578F 9–10 (figure typique de philosophe), 580B 3–4, 580D 5–6, 581E 7–10, 588C 3 sq. (représentant autorisé de la pensée de Socrate); pour Théanor, 578E 6–7.
54 Cf. 581F 5–7, Kai ὦ Γαλαξίδωρος· Συμμικρύν, ἢφη, Φειδίακες, περὶ τοῦτων, εἰ τι Σωκράτους αὐτὸς λέγοντος ἤκουσεν, ἔτοιμος ἄκροβαται καὶ πειθέσας μεθ' ὕμων...; 582C 10–11, Ἀλλ' ὅπερ εἶπον, εἰ τι Συμμικρύν ἤτοι λέγειν, ἀκουστέον, ὡς εἰδότος ἄκροβατερον.
56 Cf. ci-dessus, n. 3, p. 53.
57 Conjecture de Bernardakis pour le participe substantif par τῶν et dont dépendaient nécessairement les trois accusatifs κληδόνας, πταρμοῦς, et τι τοιοῦτον.
Il est vrai qu'avant que ce dernier expose sa propre théorie, le narrateur signale qu'il avait répondu déjà aux arguments de Galaxidoros sur "la nature et le mode d'action du démon" (588B 12–13). Mais Caphsisias précise aussitôt qu'il n'a pas entendu lui-même cette réponse de Simmias (588C 1–3, "Α μὲν οὖν πρὸς τὸν Γαλαξίδωρον λόγον ἀντιτινέπεν ὁ Σιμμίας οὐκ ἱκουσάμεν). Plutarque aurait pu soit reproduire ou résumer la réfutation de la thèse de Galaxidoros, soit la passer totalement sous silence. En optant pour la solution intermédiaire, il donne l'impression de suggérer que tout n'est pas faux dans cette thèse. En tout cas, au moment où Simmias prend la parole pour donner sa propre explication du démon, tout se passe comme si Galaxidoros, le premier à s'être exprimé sur le sujet, était sorti vainqueur de la première partie du débat, sans que personne ait été en mesure de le réfuter, alors que lui-même n'a eu aucune peine à réfuter les objections de ses contradicteurs (cf. 581F 7–8, τά δ' ὑπὸ σοῦ [sc. Φειδολάου] ἀλεγμένα καὶ Πολύμνιος υἱὸς Χαλεποῦ ἀνελέιν). On ajoutera que la place qui est réservée à son exposé dans la construction du dialogue59 et le fait qu'il reste maître du terrain à l'issue de la première phase de la discussion, jusqu'à ce que la question soit reprise dans le dernier tiers du dialogue, ne se comprendraient guère si Plutarque n'avait accordé aucune valeur à ses arguments. On peut déjà en inférer que le statut de Galaxidoros dans le De genio est totalement différent de celui des personnages qui, dans d'autres dialogues,60 jouent le rôle de trouble-fête ou de contradicteurs grossiers, dont l'intervention n'a d'autre but que de permettre aux interlocuteurs sérieux, une fois débarrassés du perturbateur, d'entamer le véritable débat.61

En second lieu, il n'est pas vrai que la thèse de Galaxidoros reflète le point de vue des Cyniques,62 ni même celui des Stoïciens,63 même si son

58 Contrairement à ce qu'affirme notamment Corlu (ci-dessus, n. 31), p. 52.
59 La première discussion sur le démon, dominée par Galaxidoros, occupe 4 chapitres sur 34, soit 6 pages 1/2 de l'édition Hani sur un total de 57.
60 Ainsi Didyme-Planétiade dans le De defectu oraculorum, "Épique" dans le De sera numinis vindicta, et même Pharmace dans le De facie in orbe lunae.
63 Comme j'ai eu tort de l'admettre dans Plutarque et le stoïcisme, p. 252. Les arguments par lesquels von Arnim (ci-dessus, n. 52, p. 5; cf. Corlu, ibid., pp. 49–50; Hani [ci-dessus, n. 3], p. 220, n. 1) cherche à prouver l'origine stoïcienne des vues de Galaxidoros ne sont pas probants. Même si la notion d'oracle est stoïcienne, le mot appartient en effet à la langue philosophique commune, et son emploi ne suffit évidemment pas à indiquer une filiation stoïcienne. Par ailleurs, le rejet de la divination naturelle au profit de la divination artificielle est en contradiction avec la position stoïcienne, qui admet aussi bien la première que la seconde, cf. le De vita et
langage rappelle occasionnellement celui de Chrysippe.\textsuperscript{64} On en trouvera la preuve dans la concordance frappante qui apparaît entre ce que dit Galaxidôros du rôle de la divinité dans la dispensation des signes de la divination artificielle (582C 3–10, cité ci-dessus), et la manière dont Xénophon prenait déjà la défense du démon de Socrate contre ses détracteurs: Socrate, expliquait-il, ne faisait rien d'autre que ceux qui usent des procédés habituels de la divination. Mais tandis que la plupart des gens disent (à tort) qu'ils ont été guidés par des présages, Socrate s'exprimait plus correctement, en disant que c'était la puissance démonique qui lui faisait signe (cf. \textit{Mémorables}, I, 1, 4 τὸ δαιμόνιον . . . ἔφη σημαίνειν, à rapprocher de \textit{De genio}, 582C 3–4, Σωκράτης . . . τὸ δαιμόνιον αὐτῷ σημαίνειν ἔλεγεν).\textsuperscript{65} La thèse de Galaxidôros apparaît donc d'une parfaite orthodoxie "socratique," et c'est sans doute pourquoi Plutarque a tenu à lui faire décerner, par l'intermédiaire de Polymnis (cf. 581A 8 sq.), le label d'authenticité et la garantie d'un compagnon direct de Socrate, Terpsion de Mégare.\textsuperscript{66} Parallèlement, la vigueur de sa réaction, quand il est soupçonné de faire cause commune avec les ennemis de Socrate (cf. 580B 9 sq.), et la manière dont il se défend, dans ses réponses à Phidolaos et à Polymnis, de vouloir ravaler le "démon" à un phénomène banal et purement matériel montrent qu'il se range résolument dans le camp des Socratiques. De fait, en faisant de Socrate le parfait représentant de l'autheutique esprit philosophique, qui n'aspire qu'à "poursuivre la vérité par la sobre raison," il incarne sans doute la réaction rationaliste de certains cercles socratiques contre une interprétation de l'héritage socratique jugée trop entachée de religiosité et trop influencée par le pythagorisme.\textsuperscript{67}

\textit{poesi Homeri} attribué à Plutarque, II, 212, p. 456, 14–18 (Bernardakis), et \textit{Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta} II, 1188 sq., 1196 sq. Enfin, il est douteux que 580F implique une adhésion au dogme stoïcien de la "sympathie" universelle.


\textsuperscript{65} Voir aussi 582B7–9, . . . καὶ τῶν φασικῶν αὐτῶς οὐ παραμόνοι οὐκ ἔφοιν ἀλλὰ δαιμόνιον αὐτῷ τῶν πράξεων ὑφηγείσθαι. Encore plus étruit est le parallèle entre le propos de Galaxidôros et ce que Xénophon fait dire à Socrate dans son \textit{Apologie}, 13: "... tandis que [les autres] nomment ce qui les avertit 'oiseaux,' 'paroles,' 'rencontres fortuites,' 'devins,' moi je l'appelle un 'signe divin' (δαιμόνιον), et j'estime qu'en usant de ce nom je m'exprime avec plus de vérité et de piété que ceux qui attribuent aux oiseaux le pouvoir qui appartient aux dieux" (trad. F. Ollier).

\textsuperscript{66} Terpsion est mentionné par Platon, avec son compatriote Euclide, au nombre des disciples étrangers qui étaient aux côtés Socrate le jour de sa mort (\textit{Phédon}, 59 c 3). On le retrouve d'autre part, toujours avec Euclide, dans le prologue du \textit{Théétète} (142 a–43a), et c'est à lui qu'est faite la lecture de l'entretien rédigé par Euclide qui forme le contenu du dialogue.

\textsuperscript{67} Voir la référence de la n. 46, ci-dessus.
Quant au fait que Galaxídôros accepte de s'en remettre à l'autorité de Simmias au sujet de démon, il n'implique en aucune façon un reniement de sa propre théorie. Tant s'en faut: en déclarant qu'il est prêt à écouter ce que Simmias a à dire à ce sujet et à y souscrire, Galaxídôros fait plutôt comprendre que sa propre explication du démon pourrait recevoir de la bouche de Simmias, grâce à la longue intimité de ce dernier avec Socrate, son complément naturel, en même temps que d'utiles éclaircissements.

Son appel à Simmias fait donc prévoir un prolongement et un approfondissement du débat, bien plutôt qu'un retour en arrière et un départ sur nouveaux frais. Ainsi, à la fin de la première phase de la discussion au sujet du démon, rien ne laisse prévoir une réfutation de la thèse qu'y a développée Galaxídôros, et de fait, comme nous l'avons vu, Plutarque a ostensiblement exclu une telle réfutation dès la reprise du débat (588C 1-3, cf. ci-dessus).

Enfin, l'importance positive de la contribution de Galaxídôros à la discussion philosophique du De genio ressort avant tout des convergences qu'on y découvre avec des idées que l'auteur reprend ailleurs à son compte. C'est vrai, tout d'abord, de la véhémence condamnation de la superstition qui marque le débat de son intervention (579F sq.), et que l'on retrouve d'un bout à l'autre de la carrière de Plutarque,71 depuis l'œuvre de jeunesse qu'est sans doute le De superstitione jusqu'à de nombreux passages des Moralia et des Vies que l'on peut assigner à la maturité ou à la vieillesse de l'auteur.72 Même l'idée que les hommes politiques peuvent légitimement user de la

68 Voir ci-dessus, n. 54.
69 Rien ne justifie l'affirmation de Hani (ci-dessus, n. 3), p. 222, n. 2 de la p. 89, selon laquelle la position de Galaxídôros se serait modifiée "à la fin de son intervention" (582C) "par rapport à ce qu'elle était au début (580)." Cf. "La doctrine démonologique dans le De genio ..." (ci-dessus, n. 7), pp. 204-05.
72 Cf. Plutarque et le stoïcisme, p. 505 sq., et comparer en particulier la formule de Galaxídôros en 579F 8-9, ὡς ἔργον ἐστὶν ἐφεξῆς ἀνδρα καθαρεύοντα ... δεισιδαιμονίας, avec De Iside et Osiride, 352B 3-4, à propos des Hiéraphores et Hiérostos des culte d'Isis, où l'on δ' εἰσιν οἱ τῶν ιερῶν λόγων περὶ θεῶν πάσης καθαρεύοντα δεισιδαιμονίας καὶ πειρεγίας ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ φέροντες κ.τ.λ.
superstition “comme d'un frein” pour imposer à une foule indocile ce qui est conforme à son intérêt (580A 1–5) apparaît à plusieurs reprises dans les *Vies*, notamment dans la *Vie de Numa*, où elle est expressément rapprochée de la philosophie de Pythagore.

De même, l'auteur des *Vies* fait plus d'une fois écho à la protestation de Galaxidôros contre ceux qui recourent abusivement à la divination au lieu de raisonner (580A 9–11), qu'il s'agisse de Nicias, qu'il représente paralysé “par l'ignorance et la superstition” lors d'une éclipse de lune, ou, inversement, de Démosthène, qu'il approuve implicitement d'avoir refusé de “prêter attention aux oracles et d'écouter les prophéties,” dans lesquelles il ne voyait, à l'exemple de Périclès, que prétextes pour se conduire en lâche, se dispenser de raisonner. Et la raison morale invoquée ici par Galaxidôros—les présages sont à la portée de l'homme le plus médiocre, aussi bien que du meilleur (cf. 580B 1–3)—est aussi celle qui inspire par exemple, dans la *Vie de Paul-Émile*, la réflexion de Plutarque au sujet de Persée, qui s'imaginait que sacrifices et prières pouvaient compenser sa lâcheté: “… il n'est pas licite que celui qui n'a pas visé atteigne le but, ni que celui qui lâche pied soit vainqueur, ni, d'une façon générale que celui qui ne fait rien connaisse le succès et que le méchant prospère.”

Plus généralement, la profession de foi rationaliste de Galaxidôros, son refus de “diviniser” les actions humaines, comme de “chercher refuge auprès

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73 Voir *Plutarque et le stoïcisme*, pp. 505 (avec la note 5) – 506.
74 8. 4 et 6–7 (cf. *Plutarque et le stoïcisme*, p. 506, notes 6 et 7).
77 Cf. *Vie de Nicias*, 23. 1 sq.
des dieux," correspond à une tendance profonde de la pensée de Plutarque, dont un passage fameux de la *Vie de Périclès* (6. 1) offre peut-être la meilleure illustration. Plutarque y explique le bénéfice principal que, selon lui, Périclès a tiré de la fréquentation d'Anaxagore: "... il s'éleva grâce à lui au-dessus de la superstition. Celle-ci naît de l'effroi inspiré par les phénomènes célestes aux hommes qui n'en connaissent pas les causes, et qui, par suite de leur ignorance, sont pris de trouble et d'effroi et de fatigue en matière de religion (περὶ τὰ θεῖα δαιμονίατα καὶ ταχροτομένων). La science de la nature, en bannissant cette ignorance, substitue à la superstition timide et fébrile la piété ferme que de bonnes espérances accompagnent" (trad. Flacelière-Chambry). Entre la religion rationnelle que Plutarque admire ici chez Périclès et la philosophie de Socrate, telle que la présente Galaxidôros, la ressemblance est évidente, de sorte que la sympathie de l'auteur va nécessairement à la seconde aussi bien qu'à la première. De même, on ne peut guère douter que Lamprias soit son porte-parole dans le passage du dialogue *Sur la disparition des oracles* où il explique que les "théologiens et poètes de l'ancien temps" n'avaient en vue que les causes divines des événements, en négligeant leurs causes naturelles, tandis qu'inversement les modernes ont eu tendance à privilégier les secondes au détriment des premières. "Aussi la doctrine des uns et des autres est-elle défective, puisque ceux-ci ignorent l'agent et l'auteur, ceux-là les origines et les instruments" (436D–E). La voie moyenne que s'efforce de tracer ici Lamprias est bien celle qu'entend suivre de son côté Galaxidôros, en récusant à la fois ceux qui veulent "diviniser" nos actions et ceux qui "méprisent les choses divines" (582B 10–C 2) en confondant le signe et celui qui l'envoie (582C 5–10). Elle correspond par ailleurs aussi bien à la théorie exposée dans la *Vie de Coriolan* sur les limites des interventions divines dans les affaires humaines qu'à son application pratique dans la narration historique du *De genio*.

Ces remarques nous amènent nécessairement à conclure que, pour l'auteur du *De genio*, la théorie de Galaxidôros sur le démon n'est pas fausse, mais appelle des compléments et des rectifications, qui seront apportés dans la deuxième phase de la discussion philosophique, en particulier par Simmias, auquel Galaxidôros passe en quelque sorte ostensiblement le relais en 582C 11–12. La fonction de son intervention apparaît dès lors de préparer le terrain à ceux qui prendront la parole après lui, en posant des principes et en affirmant des positions qui ne seront pas remises en question, et en écartant, corrélativement, les explications erronées et opposées, tant de ceux qui multiplient indûment les interventions du démon et y voient abusivement des messages directs de la divinité, que de ceux qui en nient la réalité et dessaisissent le démon au profit de signes purement matériels.

79 Voir Plutarque et le stoïcisme, pp. 510–14.
Tandis que pour Galaxidôros le démon est un phénomène qui ressortit à la divination ordinaire, et auquel il ne convient pas de prêter "un pouvoir particulier et exceptionnel" (ïdian καὶ περίπτων δύναμιν, 580F 9), pour Simmias, au contraire, il s'agit d'un avertissement spécial dont bénéficient certains hommes "exceptionnels" (ἐνσημαίνεται τοῖς θείοις καὶ περιττοῖς ἀνδράσι . . ., 589C 10–11). Cependant, malgré l'importance de cette divergence, et bien que Simmias, dans la conclusion de son exposé, semble faire cause commune avec Phidolaos plutôt qu'avec Galaxidôros (cf. 589F 3, Ἡμῖν μὲν, ὁ Φειδόλας, répondant à 581E 10, Τί οὖν, ὁ Φειδόλας εἶπεν, ὁ Σιμμίας), on découvre de nombreuses convergences entre ses propos et ceux de son prédécesseur.

Les premiers mots que Caphisias rapporte de l'intervention de Simmias—tout de suite après avoir signalé qu'il n'avait pas entendu sa réponse à Galaxidôros—sont pour signaler que Simmias n'avait pas reçu de réponse directe de Socrate, quand il l'avait interrogé sur son démon. En revanche, ajoute-t-il aussitôt, "il avait souvent entendu Socrate exprimer l'avis que les gens qui prétendent avoir des visions grâce auxquelles ils avaient communiqué avec un être divin étaient des imposteurs" (πολλάκις δ' αὐτῷ παραγενέθηκα τοὺς μὲν δι' ὄνεις ἐννεχειν θείω τινι λέγοντος ἀλαζόνας ἡγομένων, 588C 5–6). Cette entrée en matière, dont tous les détails sont significatifs, est destinée à indiquer au lecteur, nous l'avons vu, que l'exposé de Simmias n'annule pas celui de Galaxidôros, mais le corrige et le complète. En second lieu, en précisant d'entrée de jeu qu'il n'a pu obtenir de réponse de Socrate sur la nature du démon, Simmias donne à entendre que sa propre explication ne prétend pas à la vérité absolue, mais, comme celles de ses partenaires, n'est rien d'autre qu'une hypothèse raisonnable appuyée sur les faits connus de tous. Corrélativement et enfin, en écartant d'embâlin la possibilité d'une communication directe de la divinité au moyen de visions, Simmias fait écho à la protestation initiale de Galaxidôros contre ceux qui "divinisent leurs actions en dissimulant les fantaisies qui leur viennent à l'esprit derrière l'écran de songes, d'apparitions (φάσματα) et d'autres inventions prétentieuses du même genre" (579F 12–14).

Cet accord de départ entre Galaxidôros et Simmias prend un relief accru si l'on s'avise que la même position est encore affirmée à deux reprises dans

80 588C 1–3, voir ci-dessus, p. 397.
81 Comparer la conclusion du discours, en 589F 3–5, Ἡμῖν μὲν . . . καὶ ζῶντος Σακράτους καὶ τεθηκὸς οὕτως ἐγνοεῖν περὶ τοῦ δαιμονίου παρίσταται . . ., et cf. 588C 9, (παρίστατο). Cf. toutefois 588C 6–8 (suite de la phrase citée dans le texte ci-dessus), τοῖς δ' ἀκούσαι τῶν φωνής φάσκοις προσέχοντες τὸν νόον καὶ διαπυθηκανομένω μετὰ σπουδῆς. La phrase, tout en marquant l'accord de Simmias avec Théanor (cf. 585F 8, et voir le texte ci-dessus), montre que sa théorie, sans être plus qu'une hypothèse, bénéficie tout de même, jusqu'à un certain point, de l'appui de Socrate lui-même.
82 Cf. également 580B 1, . . . πρὸς μαντεύματα τρέχεται καὶ ονειράτων ὑφείς . . .
le dialogue, en dehors même du contexte du débat philosophique sur la nature du démon. En 585F, Théanor rapporte en effet que la nuit où il est resté près du tombeau de Lysis pour recevoir éventuellement les instructions du défunt (cf. 579F 6), il n'eut “pas de vision,” mais crut “entendre une voix” (ἐτόν μὲν οὖν ἄκοψαί δὲ φωνής ἔδοξα). Parallèlement, dans le mythe de Timarque, le narrateur raconte qu'au début de son séjour dans l'Au-delà, “quelqu'un qu'il ne voyait pas s'adressa à lui” (εἰτεύν τινα πρὸς αὐτὸν οὖν ὁρᾶμενον, 591A 3–4). Plus tard, quand la voix de son guide cesse de se faire entendre, Timarque tente de se retourner pour voir celui qui lui parlait. En vain: à ce moment précis, il reçoit de nouveau un violent choc sur la tête et perd connaissance (592E). Il est clair que dans le De genio personne, pas plus le personnage mythique de Timarque que les Pythagoriciens Simmias et Théanor ou le rationaliste Galaxidôros, ne croit à la possibilité de l'apparition d'êtres divins, et il n'est pas moins clair que l'auteur du dialogue partage entièrement ce scepticisme, 83 montrant ainsi que sa piété s'apparentait plutôt à celle de l'hellénisme classique 84 qu'à la religion plus crédule de sa propre époque. 85

La même tendance domine en réalité tout l'exposé de Simmias, qui apparaît ainsi comme une tentative systématique de rationalisation d'un phénomène religieux présenté comme exceptionnel, et où l'on perçoit, à tout moment, un effort presque pathétique pour concilier croyance religieuse et explication rationnelle. On le constate dès que Simmias, après avoir écarté toute idée d'apparition du démon, en vient à formuler sa propre explication: “C'est pourquoi il nous vint à l'esprit, en réfléchissant dans nos réunions entre nous, de nous demander si peut-être le signe démonique de Socrate n'était pas, plutôt qu'une vision, la perception de quelque voix ou l'appréhension d'une parole entrant en contact avec lui de quelque extraordinaire façon (οὐκ ὃνις ἀλλὰ φωνῆς τινος οἴσθησις ἡ λόγου νόησις . . . συνάπτοντος ἀτόμῳ τινι τρόπῳ πρὸς αὐτὸν), tout comme, dans le sommeil (ἀσπερ καὶ καθ' ὑπνὸν), il n'y a pas de voix, mais des 83 On en trouvera la confirmation, notamment, dans le prologue de la Vie de Dion (2. 3 sq.), où Plutarque a bien de la peine à admettre qu'un démon malfaisant ait pu apparaître à Brutus, et se montre sensible à l'argument de ceux qui soutiennent que “jamais un homme sensé n'a eu la vision d'un démon ou d'un spectre” (μηδενὶ ἄν νοῦν ἔχοντι προσπευσανταίς φάντασμα δαίμονος μηδ' εἴδολον). Finalement, c'est la qualité exceptionnelle des témoins, des ândres, émousseurs et philosophe, et πρὸς οὕνει ἄκρουσφαλείς οὐδ' εὐάλοις καθος, qui le fait pencher, non sans hésitation, à prendre en considération une aussi extraordinaire tradition: οὐκ οἶδα μὴ τῶν πάνω παλαιῶν τῶν ἀτοπότατον ἀναγκασθῶμεν προσδέχεσθαι λόγον . . . par rapport aux textes cités du De genio, ce passage du prologue de Dion relève pour ainsi dire l'exception qui confirme la règle.

84 Comparer par exemple Euripide, Hipp., 86 (Hippolyte à Arétiès), κλὼν μὲν αὐθήν, ὃμα δ' οὖν ὄρθων τὸ σον; Sophocle, Ajax, 15–16 (Ulysse à Athéna), καὶ ἄκοπτος ἦς ὁμώς, ἐφ' ὑπνίμῳ ἄκουοι καὶ συναπτάςα φρενι, et déjà Hymne hom. à Déméter, 111, χαλέποι δὲ θεοί νυντοῦν ὁρᾶσθαι.

85 Ainsi pour Apulée, De deo Socratis, 20, le signe divin de Socrate n'est pas seulement une voix, mais une apparition, ipsius daemonis species.
impressions et des appréhensions de paroles que l'on reçoit, et qui font croire que l'on entend des gens parler” (588C 9–D 4).

Ce qui importe, dans un tel texte, n'est évidemment pas la pertinence, ni même la rationalité objective de l'explication proposée, mais l'état d'esprit qu'elle révèle chez celui qui l'avance. Or, il est clair que Simmias cherche essentiellement à rendre acceptable rationnellement, autant que faire se peut, le phénomène qu'il s'agit d'accréditer. A cette fin, il écarte non seulement l'idée d'une apparition du démon, mais même, dans un second temps, l'idée qu'il y avait d'abord substituée, à savoir celle de l'audition d'une voix: φωνής τινος αἰσθήσις εστιν εἰς ηνεχώρητος τούτος αὐτόπως τινὶ τρόπῳ. Après quoi, pour tenter d'atténuer l'étrangeté du phénomène invoqué, il recourt à une analogie empruntée à l'expérience, en évoquant les voix que l'on croit entendre en rêve, bien qu'il n'y ait ni son ni percept verbal.

Ce passage du discours de Simmias a un parallèle remarquable (qui n'a pas échappé à la sagacité de Robert Flacelière) dans la fameuse digression de la Vie de Coriolan au sujet des paroles qu'aurait prononcées la statue de la Fortune Féminine lors de sa consécration à Rome, après le retrait des Volsques (37. 5). Plutarque y expose d'abord longuement les raisons d'accueillir avec scepticisme ce que l'on rapporte au sujet de prodiges de cette espèce (38. 1–3). Mais il poursuit alors sa réflexion en ces termes: “Pourtant, lorsque l'histoire veut forcer notre assentiment en citant de nombreux témoins dignes de foi, c'est qu'un phénomène différent de la perception s'est produit dans la partie imaginative de notre âme (ἀνόμοιον αἰσθήσιει πάθος ἐγγεννόμενον τῷ φανταστικῷ τῆς ψυχῆς), et nous entraîne à croire vraie une apparence, de même que dans le sommeil (ἀντιποτέ καί ὑπνοιά) nous croyons entendre, alors que nous n'entendons pas, et voir alors que nous ne voyons pas” (38. 4).

L'intérêt particulier de ce chapitre de la Vie de Coriolan, pour le problème qui nous occupe, c'est que le rapport existant entre ses deux parties (38. 1–3 et 38. 4) est semblable à celui que nous avons cru déceler, dans le De genio, entre l'intervention de Galaxidôros et celle de Simmias: le scepticisme que Plutarque commence par exprimer au sujet du prodige de la statue parlante correspond à celui de Galaxidôros au sujet des apparitions ou des messages directs du démon, tandis que l'argument par lequel il tente ensuite de justifier rationnellement le prodige est la réplique de celui dont use Simmias pour rendre plausibles les manifestations du démon. Le

87 "Ὅπου δ' ἡμᾶς ἡ ἱστορία πολλοῖς ἄποβιαιζεται καὶ πιθανοῖς μάρτυσιν . . . La phrase fait exactement pendant, dans ce contexte, à Εἰ δὲ Δίων καὶ Βρούτος, ἄνδρες ἐμβρίθεις καὶ φιλόσοφοι καὶ πρὸς οὐδὲν ἀκροσφαλεὶς οὐδὲν εὐάλωτοι πάθος, οὕτως ἐπὶ φάσματος διετέθησαν . . . οὐκ οἶδα μὴ τῶν πάνω παλιών τῶν ἀπόκαταστημάτων ἀναγκασθέντων προσδέχεσθαι λόγον . . ., dans le contexte du prologue de la Vie de Dion (2. 5, cf. ci-dessus, n. 83). Voir Plutarque et le stoïcisme, p. 512, n. 6.
88 Traduction Flacelière-Chambry légèrement modifiée.
rapprochement nous apporte donc la preuve que, dans le débat philosophique de notre dialogue, la position personnelle de l'auteur ne s'exprime pas uniquement dans l'exposé de Simmias, mais aussi et conjointement dans la contribution de Galaxidôros.

La suite du discours de Simmias confirme que sa préoccupation essentielle est bien de fournir un support rationnel à sa conception du démon, considéré comme un avertissement divin parvenant à quelques hommes supérieurs. D'où la référence à l'état du corps, qui est un obstacle, chez les hommes ordinaires, à l'appréhension de ces messages démoniques (588D). Ainsi s'explique également qu'il recouvre de nouveau à l'analogie de l'expérience pour tenter d'accréditer l'idée que la "pensée sans voix" d'êtres divins puisse atteindre, par un contact insensible, et conduire une âme d'élite "simplement en l'effleurant," comme un petit gouvernail suffit à faire virer un gros bateau, ou comme la main du potier, "par simple atouchement," imprime une rotation régulière au tour (588E–F). Plus loin, la faculté qu'à l'âme de mouvoir le corps est invoquée pour faire comprendre qu'"un esprit puisse être guidé par un esprit supérieur, et une âme par une âme plus divine . . ." (589A–B). Après quoi, Simmias revient à son idée d'un langage purement spirituel, qui serait transmis sans le truchement de la parole, et l'appuie sur l'analogie de la transmission dans l'air du langage ordinaire (589C), puis sur une expérience physique (certains sons ne sont captés que par certains objets récepteurs: de même, les messages démoniques ne sont perçus que par une minorité privilégiée, 589D).

Deux phrases du discours confirment péremptoirement que tout l'effort de Simmias vise bien à désarmer les sceptiques: en 589C 6, il estime que "le phénomène du langage permet d'une certaine façon de convaincre les incrédules" (τοὺς ἀπιστοῦντας); tandis qu'en 589D 9, il s'étonne que le vulgaire admette les inspirations divines pendant le sommeil, tout en jugeant "étonnant et incroyable" (θαυμαστὸν καὶ ἀπίστον) que le même phénomène puisse se manifester à l'état de veille. Par là, Simmias se révèle, en définitive, plus proche de Galaxidôros, pour qui la "raison" et la "démonstration" sont la marque distinctive de la philosophie (580A 9–10), que des Pythagoriciens critiqués par ce dernier, et parmi lesquels ou le range lui-même habituellement en même temps que Théanor. Ce qui permet de comprendre, pour finir, la ressemblance que l'on perçoit entre les modes de raisonnement dont usent les deux personnages pour étayer leurs thèses: tout comme Galaxidôros se référant aux symptômes médicaux et aux phénomènes naturels pour montrer que des faits insignifiants peuvent annoncer de grands événements (581F–82A), Simmias recourt aux exemples du gouvernail et de la roue du potier pour faire admettre qu'une force immatérielle puisse agir sur l'esprit par un contact insensible.

L'exposé de Théanor s'ouvre par une phrase qui fait délibérément écho aux propos de Simmias en 589C 6 et D 9: "... je serais bien surpris qu'on refusât de croire ce que Simmias nous dit (θαυμάξει δ' εἰ τούς ὑπὸ Σιμμίου
Il est parfois nécessaire de se refuser à croire (ἀπιστοῦντες) qu'il existe des hommes divins et aimés des dieux . . .” (593A 6 sq.). De fait, toute la première partie de son discours vise essentiellement à convaincre les sceptiques, comme avait voulu le faire Simmias, qu'il n'y a rien d'absurde ni de déraisonnable dans la notion d'un démon intervenant directement en faveur d'un homme. Corrélativement, son but n'est pas de rejeter entièrement les idées défendues par Galaxidòros, mais—toujours en accord avec l'intervention de Simmias—de leur apporter un complément et un correctif importants. Théanor montre en effet que si dans la plupart des cas les choses se passent effectivement comme l'avait dit Galaxidòros, il existe cependant une minorité d'hommes privilégiés qui bénéficient d'avertissements directs de la part de la Divinité.89

On peut même penser90 que le passage du discours dans lequel Théanor développe sa distinction des deux espèces de divination (593C sq.) est destiné, dans l'esprit de l'auteur, à intégrer en quelque sorte la théorie de Galaxidòros à celle de ses partenaires:91 si cette théorie est en effet applicable à la grande majorité des cas, il apparaît maintenant qu'elle ne suffit pas à rendre compte de quelques exemples, qui ressortissent à la divination naturelle inspirée, d'interventions directes de la Divinité, dont la deuxième partie du discours s'efforce de prouver la réalité.

La continuité qui apparaît ainsi entre l'intervention de Théanor et celles de ses partenaires du débat démonologique est d'autre part confirmée par l'utilisation du même type d'argumentation. Comme Simmias et Galaxidòros, en effet, Théanor recourt avec prédilection à l'analogie et à l'expérience pour atténuer ce qui pourrait paraître choquant dans sa thèse du point de vue rationnel. Ainsi faut-il comprendre, notamment, la longue comparaison, au début de son discours, entre l'attitude des dieux à l'égard de leurs favoris et celle des hommes envers les animaux qu'ils sélectionnent pour un dressage spécial (593A–B, καθάπερ οὖν ἄνηρ . . . οὖτω καὶ οἱ ὑπὲρ ἡμᾶς). Théanor s'efforce ainsi de justifier, en invoquant l'expérience humaine, une idée que Plutarque prend ailleurs à son compte en la qualifiant de “hautement philosophique.”92 De même, dans la deuxième partie du discours, la multiplication des comparaisons qui s'accumulent les unes sur les autres ne relève pas principalement d'un motif littéraire: en recouvrant successivement aux exemples du traitement spécial que les rois et les chefs

89 593B 4–6, οἱ ὑπὲρ ἡμᾶς τοὺς βελτίστους . . . ἰδίας τινὸς καὶ περίττης παιδαγωγίας ἄξιοσυν, répond expressément à ἰδίαν καὶ περίττης δύναμιν en 580F 9. Comparer d'autre part 589D 5–6, où Simmias anticipe, en opposant ιεροὺς καὶ δαιμονίους ἀνθρώπους ὃ ὑπὲρ τολμαί, la thèse que développera plus loin Théanor.
90 Ainsi Riley (ci-dessus, n. 23), p. 266.
91 Théanor reprend en 593B l'argument de Galaxidòros en 582C, mais en l'appliquant exclusivement à l'élite des théoi ou θεοφιλεῖς ἄνθρωπου.
militaires réservent à leurs intimes, de l’aide apportée par les anciens athlètes à ceux qui ont pris leur relève, et du secours que l’on accorde seulement aux naufragés près de toucher terre (593C–F), Théanor a surtout cherché à faire admettre que ni l’idée d’une communication privilégiée de la Divinité avec certains hommes, ni la vieille croyance en un démon personnel intervenant en faveur de ses protégés ne sont intrinsèquement absurdes.

Finalement, on constatera à quel point Théanor, à l’instar de Simmias, est attentif à faire sa place au rationalisme de Galaxidôros, en restreignant autant que possible le champ d’application de cette divination inspirée, dont il entend pourtant prouver la possibilité. De là son insistance à souligner que seule une minorité d’élus est en mesure d’en bénéficier.93 Corrélativement, il prend bien soin de rappeler dans sa conclusion (593F 9 sq.) qu’il ne s’agit pas d’un privilège consenti par la Divinité à quelques favoris, mais de la sanction morale d’une vie qui a atteint son plus haut degré d’élévation, et s’est approchée d’elle-même du monde divin par la pratique de la vertu. Ses derniers mots apportent ainsi une ultime réponse à l’exigence de Galaxidôros, qui voulait que les messages du démon ne fussent pas dispensés indifféremment aux plus médiocres et aux meilleurs.94

On peut donc conclure qu’aux yeux de Plutarque il n’y a pas contradiction entre les deux images de Socrate présentées successivement dans les deux parties de la discussion philosophique du De genio sur le démon. L’interprétation rationaliste de Galaxidôros n’est pas reniée par ses partenaires, mais prolongée et amendée pour tenir compte du cas exceptionnel de Socrate et de quelques autres hommes “divins” ou “aimés des dieux.” Corrélativement, la partie narrative du dialogue confirme pleinement les résultats de la discussion philosophique, en montrant que la libération de Thèbes a été pour l’essentiel l’œuvre des hommes engagés dans l’action, puisque, comme l’explique Théanor, les dieux n’interviennent qu’exceptionnellement pour favoriser les entreprises de certains hommes. Ainsi, dans tout le dialogue, comme dans le reste de son œuvre,95 Plutarque s’est efforcé de faire sa part à l’explication rationnelle des choses sans sacrifier pour autant les “causes divines,”96 c’est-à-dire, en définitive, de

93 Voir ci-dessus, pp. 391–92.
concilier sa foi de prêtre d'Apollon avec ses exigences de philosophe.\textsuperscript{97}

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Una nuova interpretazione del *De genio Socratis*

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Sul *De genio Socratis* è stato scritto molto, per lo più sui temi religiosi e teologici che contiene, ma sul problema primario, lo scopo e l’unità dell’opera, la critica è rimasta disorientata, non avendo ancora saputo indicare una linea d’interpretazione soddisfacente. In realtà suscita subito una grande meraviglia il fatto che il titolo fa pensare a una discussione filosofica e poi si trova di fronte alla narrazione, molto drammatica, di una gloriosa impresa della storia tebana, capace di suscitare forti emozioni e sentimenti patriottici. Ci sono personaggi storici di grande rilievo e altri minori, ardenti di amore per la libertà; c’è gioia per la vittoria conquistata sui tiranni e i nemici, uccisi o in ritirata. La discussione filosofica ha un’estensione abbastanza ampia, inferiore alla narrazione, ed occupa la parte centrale. Il problema dominante sta appunto nel trovare un rapporto fra le due parti, quella demonologica, un argomento che a Plutarco stava molto a cuore, e quella storica, un’impresa che nobilitava la terra dell’autore e lo riempiva di orgoglio.

Si sono analizzati e confrontati i dati relativi al medesimo fatto, la liberazione di Tebe dal giogo spartano nell’inverno del 379 a.C., forniti da Plutarco nella *Vita di Pelopida* (cc. 6–13) e da altre fonti: Senofonte (*Hell. V* 4. 1–13), Callistene di Olinto, Diodoro Siculo (15. 25–27), Cornelio Nepote (*Vita Pelopidae* 1–4; *Vita Epaminondae* 10). Si sono note uguaglianze e differenze nei particolari, cercate le fonti di Plutarco, si è tentato di separare ciò che è realmente accaduto da ciò che è un prodotto della fantasia. Sull’altro versante si è illustrata la dottrina demonologica, il *daimon* socratico e i segni della divinazione e il *daimon* personale e gli aspetti miracolosi e mistici collegati con quella materia, su cui discutono, in casa di Simmia, lo scolaro di Socrate, i congiurati rimasti a Tebe, e naturalmente anche qui si sono indagate le fonti. Ma tutti questo elude il problema di fondo: il titolo, si afferma, non conviene e non se ne sa indicare un altro più appropriato, perché si riconoscono nel dialogo tre o

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1 Si veda specialmente E. von Stern, *Gesch. der spart. und theban. Hegemonie vom Königsfrieden bis zum Schlacht bei Maniithea*, (Diss. Dorpat 1884) e Xenophons *Hellenika und die bötheische Geschichtsüberlieferung* (Dorpat 1887).
quattro argomenti, che procedebbero in ordine sparso. Non trovando una spiegazione, i critici hanno attenuato o annullato il valore di una delle due parti: qualcuno ha privilegiato la parte storica e ha definito il resto "une assez longue digression," che non mantiene le sue promesse, come del resto le due dissertazioni 8 e 9 Hobein (14 e 15 Dübner) di Massimo Tirio ugualmente sul tema demonologico.2 Altri hanno privilegiato la parte filosofica dopo l'asserzione di R. Hirzel3 che Plutarco vorrebbe confutare l'antica ingiuria di μισολογία contro i Tebani, un'accusa ricordata nel c. 1 del dialogo. In particolare per W. Christ4 la parte storica sarebbe solo da cornice e il resto rivelerebbe, attraverso il discorso demonologico, la potenza della divinità nel determinare il destino degli uomini, configurato da una parte nel successo dei congiurati, dall'altra nella sconfitta e punizione degli Spartani. Ma lo stesso Chirst giudica non felice la combinazione delle due parti, la storica e la filosofica, e, per dar rilievo al difetto, ricorda come nel Fedone platonico, un dialogo che Plutarco avrebbe tenuto presente nel comporre il suo, la discussione sull'immortalità dell'anima è strettamente connessa con le ultime ore di Socrate.

In realtà, perché è stato scelto il tema demonologico, quando a illustrare l'eroica impresa del 379 sarebbe stato più adatto nella discussione un argomento come l'amor di patria? L'obiezione è valida anche contro la tesi, sostenuta speciamente da C. Kahle,5 di una difesa dei Tebani dall'accusa di μισολογία, ed è chiaro che non basta osservare che il daimonion socratico era un tema di attualità al tempo di Plutarco, come mostrano gli scritti di Apuleio e di Massimo Tirio. Non è più di una semplice dichiarazione quel che dice A. Corlu,6 che il titolo indicherebbe l'argomento di maggiore importanza, che il proemio giustificherebbe il quadro storico e la narrazione sarebbe solo un mezzo per ottenere un effetto estetico e alleviare lo spirito dei lettori con l'alternarsi dei discorsi filosofici e delle fasi del racconto.

Ma perché la parte narrativa è così ampia, molto più dell'altra? Proprio il proemio, che preannuncia discorsi e fatti intrecciati, costringe a riflettere e a cercare una connessione fra le due parti; altrimenti si rinunzia a intendere e non c'è da meravigliarsi che si sia giunti ad una conclusione come quella di Th. Eisele,7 il quale, discutendo dell'opinione del Christ, dichiarò senza mezzi termini che la dissonanza fra azione e discussione, fra realtà e misticismo è stata voluta dall'autore stesso per ottenere, con originalità, uno scopo estetico.

Bastano i brevi cenni che abbiamo dato per mostrare quanto grande sia il disorientamento della critica; la quale in ogni tempo sullo scritto di Plutarco

2 B. Latanzus, Les idées religieuses de Plutarque (Paris 1920) 112.
3 Der Dialog (Leipzig 1895) vol. II, 167.
6 Plutarque, Le démon de Socrate (Paris 1970) 89.
ha espresso giudizi negativi. L’ammirazione di Montaigne per il De genio Socratis\(^8\) riguarda la profondità e varietà dei pensieri, non la struttura; ma i Croiset\(^9\) hanno sentenziato: “une composition franchemant mauvaise.” E perché la cosa risaltasse di più sì è fatto il confronto con L’Eroticos, che è ugualmente un dialogo drammatico, in cui le fasi di un racconto e i discorsi filosofici sull’amore s’intrecciano con una convenienza e una misura tali che perfino R. Flacelière\(^10\) si è sentito costretto a riconoscere che l’uso del racconto nel De genio Socratis è “excessif et disproportionné.” Anche K. Ziegler, che ha tradotto coi quattro dialoghi pitici il De genio Socratis\(^11\) ed è l’autore del repertorio Plutarchos nella Real–Encyclopädie XVI 1 (1951), non ha trovato di meglio che riprendere, a danno di Plutarco, il confronto con il Fedone e giudicare esteriore il legame fra l’azione e la discussione demonologica, realizzato artificiosamente con l’introduzione del pitagorico Teanore, che sarebbe “un personaggio certamente inventato,” e del mito di Timarco, e riaffermare la vecchia tesi che l’autore voleva sfatare il pregiudiziu sui Beoti come μυσόλογοι e fors’anche “mettere in luce il suo diretto legame con Atene e l’Accademia.”\(^12\)

Qualche tentativo di risolvere il problema dell’unità è stato fatto recentemente. D. A. Stoike\(^13\) vede una corrispondenza fra la libertà che ci congiurati cercano di ottenere per Tebe e la libertà che è cercata dalle anime nel regno dei demoni: la lotta per la libertà vista come interazione fra eventi umani ed eventi cosmologici sarebbe l’idea centrale dell’opera. In questo modo l’impresa tebana sarebbe in funzione del pensiero filosofico. Ma in tutto lo scritto non s’incontra mai un accenno a quella connessione di idee e, a parte la lunghezza della narrazione in cui non poche cose sovrabbonderebbero, la figura preminente di Epaminonda, col suo deciso rifiuto di partecipare alla strage, non rientrebbe bene nell’atmosfera di viva aspirazione alla libertà; infatti, se fosse stata seguita la sua condotta, la liberazione di Tebe non sarebbe avvenuta così rapidamente e brillantemente.\(^14\)

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8 Essais III 9, éd. par. A. Thibaudet (Paris 1950) 1115.
9 Hist de la Littér. grecque, t. V (Paris 1920) 495.
12 Plutarco, trad. ital. (Brescia 1965) 245.
Anche le tesi di M. Riley e di D. Babut non convincono, sebbene i due articoli, come quello dello Stoike, siano ricchi di osservazioni particolari degne di attenzione. Il primo, rifacendosi all'osservazione di G. Méautis che il "trattato unisce il πρακτικὸς βίος, nel racconto della liberazione di Tebe, col θεωρητικὸς βίος, nelle considerazioni sul genio di Socrate," ha tentato di mostrare che l'intento di Plutarco era di illustrare l'ideale dell'unione tra il pensiero e l'azione, tra la filosofia e l'impegno politico, spiegando come il logos operi quando gl'individui in una data situazione fanno delle scelte e come queste possano essere guidate da potenze superiori come i démoni. Epaminonda sarebbe la figura che getta un ponte tra il filosofo e il cittadino, il simbolo della felice unione tra filosofia e politica. Ma nel dialogo non c'è il minimo accenno alla nota attività futura, politica e militare, di Epaminonda; quel che è detto alla fine sull'intervento del personaggio (34. 598 CD) non è sufficiente a farlo considerare un uomo di azione, perché, nel confronto con Carone, con Pelopida e gli altri congiurati, egli appare "inerte e senza coraggio" (ἀμβλύς καὶ ἀπρόθυμος), come lo giudica l'indovino Teocrito (3. 576E), e in nessuna parte c'è un richiamo all'ideale dell'unione di pensiero e azione o a qualche personaggio che la possa rappresentare.

Alla conclusione opposta è arrivato il Babut: notando che nel dialogo ci sono due categorie di persone dal comportamento contrastante, quelli passionali come Carone e quelli capaci di dominare le passioni come Epaminonda, che assomiglia a Socrate, il quale fu allontanato dalla politica dal suo daimon, il critico conclude che l'intento di Plutarco è di mostrare l'inconciliabilità della condotta dell'uomo d'azione e di quella dell'uomo di pensiero. A comprova viene addotta la Vita di Pericle (c. 16), dove, a proposito di Anassagora che per amore della filosofia lasciò andare in rovina il suo patrimonio, si nota che c'è una grande "differenza tra la vita del filosofo contemplativo e quella dell'uomo politico," perché l'uno si applica alle cose nobili e belle senza sentire il bisogno di ciò che è materiale, l'altro si trova a contatto con i bisogni degli uomini e sperimenta che a volte la ricchezza è un bene necessario. Ma in quel passo, si può osservare, si fa una constatazione: non si afferma nessuna inconciliabilità, che del resto non è conforme al pensiero di Plutarco. La differenza fra le due condotte di vita è basata sulla differenza fra virtù noetica e virtù etica, ma ciò non esclude il filosofo dalla vita politica come partecipazione e incremento al bene comune. Quel che il Babut osserva (p. 73 s.), a sostegno della sua tesi, sulla distinzione appunto fra virtù noetica e virtù etica nel De virtute morali


appartiene alla teoria, non si traduce in una inconciliabilità pratica: la *phronesis*, o saggezza pratica, attinge alla *sophia*, o sapienza teoretica; questa è del tutto immateriale e senza mescolanze (440D), l'altra invece si manifesta nell'azione, tra le passioni degli uomini e le vicende della fortuna, da cui può uscire vittoriosa perché non è soggetta alla fortuna e in luogo dell'instabilità e della confusione può instaurare l'ordine e la tranquillità. L'irrazionale può essere superato dal razionale, e questo anche nel campo politico, come si ricava chiaramente dagli scritti politici di Plutarco. Egli non si stanca mai di esaltare la potenza del *logos*, che non è scritto su tavole come le leggi positive, ma convive e coabita sempre in noi e non ci abbandona mai lasciandoci senza guida; per questo egli ama soffermarsi su coppie di personaggi come Platone e Dione, Panezio e Scipione l'Emiliano, a riprova dell'importanza e necessità dell'unione dell'azione e del pensiero.17 Il governante ben educato e assennato sente sempre dentro di sé la voce della ragione, come il re dei Persiani era avvertito ogni mattina, quando si alzava, da uno dei ciambellani: “Alzati, o re, e rifletti sulle cose sulle quali il grande Oromasde vuole che tu riflettia.”18 Di qui nasce la necessità dell'educazione filosofica perché l'uomo politico senta vivo il dovere di servire la comunità per il bene pubblico anche nella vecchiaia, un argomento a cui è dedicato lo scritto *An seni res publica sit gerenda*: l'attività politica non consiste, come credono i più, nell'avevare incarichi ufficiali, parlare alla tribuna e gridare nelle assemblee, come fare il filosofo non significa insegnare da una cattedra e scrivere libri, ma trasferire nelle azioni quotidiane i principi morali, come faceva Socrate; e il politico vecchio può ancora istruire, incoraggiare quelli che nutrono retti pensieri, dissuadere quelli che fanno del male.19

La figura di Socrate che viene fuori da questo trattato e da altri scritti non è quella di un uomo contemplativo che non trova una conciliazione fra l'azione e il pensiero: il *daimon* che egli ascolta concerne anche le vicende politiche. Se veramente nel *De genio Socratis* si illustrasse la separazione tra filosofia e politica e si volesse dimostrare che il filosofo, per la sua diretta comunicazione con la divinità, esce vincitore dal confronto, resterebbe offuscata la bella impresa compiuta dai Tebani, e questo non è ammissibile. Se poi si volesse esaltare solo l'impresa, resterebbe danneggiato il riflessivo Epaminonda: cosa anche questa inaccettabile per la grandissima ammirazione che Plutarco ha per quel grandissimo conterraneo. In breve, l'uno e l'altro aspetto sono degni di approvazione e ambedue cooperano all'esaltazione di Tebe, della sua storia e dei suoi personaggi, il che equivale a dire che azione e pensiero sono conciliabili.

Se si bada alla proporzione delle parti, viene spontanea l'idea di non considerare la narrazione storica, molto ampia, in funzione della parte

17 *Max. cum. princ. philos. esse diss.* 1. 776A–777A.
18 *Ad princ. ind.* 3. 780CD.
19 *An seni res p. sit ger.* 26. 796 ss.
filosofica, ma viceversa questa in funzione di quella, cosicché l'impresa, tanto celebrata perché portò alla liberazione di Tebe dalla tirannide e poi alla sua egemonia sulle città greche, riceve un chiarimento dalla dottrina demonologica. Si potrebbe subito pensare ad un'opposizione fra Tebani e Spartani, i primi come guidati dalla divinità perché amanti della giustizia, gli altri come oppressori, passionali e violenti, e vedere nello scritto una giustificazione dell'egemonia tebana, meritata e accordata dal volere divino. Molti particolari potrebbero trovare un significato sotto questa luce e soprattutto si otterrebbe una connessione fra il tema storico e quello filosofico. Ma questa è una semplificazione eccessiva e troppo schematica. Per la tirannide parpeggiano anche dei Tebani, del partito oligarchico, Archia, Filippo, Leontiada, e anche fra i congiurati non mancano le persone passionali e violente. Non ci si può quindi accontentare di una schematica opposizione fra buoni, protetti dalla divinità, i Tebani, e cattivi, condannati dalla divinità, gli Spartani.

A mio parere, bisogna porre maggiore attenzione alla figura di Epaminonda: questa, se è ben intesa, può far capire quale è l'intento del dialogo, la sua struttura, la sua unità, il suo valore artistico. Epaminonda ha un grande rilievo sia in principio sia nella parte centrale sia nella chiusa. All'inizio (3. 576D–577A) è presentato un grave problema di coscienza del personaggio: egli rifiuta di partecipare all'uccisione dei concittadini, perché non vuole far morire nessun cittadino senza processo. Ciò è messo in rilievo da un personaggio rispettabile, l'indovino Teocrito, in opposizione alla condotta di Carone, il quale non ha esitato ad offrire la sua casa per ospitare gli esuli che stavano tornando da Atene per compiere l'impresa. Osserva Teocrito a Cafisia, fratello di Epaminonda: "Carone non è un filosofo né ha avuto un'educazione distinta ed eccezionale come Epaminonda, ma per natura, come vedi, è guidato dalle leggi verso ciò che è bello, addossandosi volontariamente il più grave rischio per il bene della patria. Epaminonda invece, che si considera superiore a tutti i Tebani per la sua educazione, è senza mordente e slancio (αμβλώς και ἀπρόθυμος: 3. 576DE)."

Questa parola suonano come un rimprovero o una severa condanna, tanto che Cafisia si sente costretto a difendere il fratello tacchiando l'indovino di precipitazione nel giudicare, con una certa ironia per la ripresa di un vocabolo al superlativo in senso contrario: per Teocrito Epaminonda è ἀπρόθυμος, per Cafisia Teocrito è προθυμότατος, cioè eccede nell'ardore: "O impetuoso Teocrito, noi compiamo quello che è stato deciso; Epaminonda, senza riuscire a persuaderci del contrario, è naturale che resistia alle nostre sollecitazioni e si rifiutò di fare ciò che è contro la sua natura e le sue convinzioni. Anche un medico che promette di guarire la malattia senza ricorrere al ferro e al fuoco, non sarebbe ragionevole a costringerlo a tagliare e bruciare. Egli non vuole, senza una grave necessità (ἄνευ μεγάλης ἀνάγκης), uccidere nessun concittadino senza processo (ἀκριτος), ma è
pronto a lottarre con coraggio insieme a quelli che cercano di liberare la città senza spargimento di sangue e massacri di cittadini. E poiché non riesce a persuadere la maggioranza e noi ci siamo mossi per questa via, chiede solo di lasciarlo libero di cogliere, puro del sangue e senza responsabilità, il momento favorevole per contribuire anche al bene comune senza offendere la giustizia (μετὰ τὸ δικαίωμα καὶ τὰ συμφέροντι προσοποπομενος). Pensa infatti che l'impresa non avrà un limite: forse Ferenico e Pelopida volgeranno le armi contro i più colpevoli e malvagi, ma Eumolpide e Samida, uomini di temperamento irascibile e focoso, profitando della notte, non deporranno le spade prima di aver riempito la città intera di stragi e d'aver ucciso molti nemici personali” (3. 576F–577A).

A nessuno deve sfuggire l'importanza di questa difesa di Epaminonda, ed è significativo che essa è ripetuta nell'ultima sezione dell'opera (25. 594B), dopo la discussione demonologica, quando sta per cominciare l'azione conclusiva. Teocrito, insieme a Cafisia e a Galassidoro, compie un ultimo tentativo per convincere Epaminonda, ma non sortisce un effetto migliore. La motivazione del rifiuto non cambia, ma è più chiara: accanto alla volontà di non uccidere senza processo nessun cittadino, si nota che è nell'interesse del partito democratico che qualcuno dei coniurati resti estraneo alle uccisioni e non sia accusato o sospettato di aver agito per qualche vantaggio personale e si possa così credere alla sincerità dei suoi consigli. Qui con la frase το πλήθος το Θηβαῖον si allude al partito democratico, a cui appartenevano i coniurati, e in generale c'è riferimento ai difficili rapporti futuri con il partito oligarchico che aveva appoggiato l'occupazione spartana nel 382.° La giustificazione appare ragionevole e tutti sanno che Epaminonda non era contrario all'impresa antitirannica: conosce esattamente il giorno in cui i fuorusciti tornano a Tebe e mantiene il segreto; ha già preso accordi con Gorgida e altri per intervenire nel momento opportuno (25. 594B). Ed è Epaminonda che, finita la dotta conversazione sui demoni, invita il fratello Cafisia a scendere con gli amici al ginnasio per raggiungere i compagni e dare inizio all'esecuzione finale del piano (25. 594A).

Nella Vita di Pelopida (c. 7) Plutarco informa che, come Pelopida ad Atene incitava e sosteneva moralmente i compagni esuli, così Epaminonda in patria istillava nei giovani nobili pensieri spingendoli a misurarsi nei ginnasi con gli Spartani e umiliandoli, quando riuscissero vincitori, col rinfacciare loro la vergogna di tollerare la schiavitù che opprimeva Tebe. E fu Epaminonda, si dice ancora in quella vita (c. 12), che, dopo l'uccisione dei polemarchi, presentò Pelopida e i suoi compagni nell'assemblea del popolo, salutati da tutti con grida ed applausi come benefattori e salvatori della patria. Non siamo dunque di fronte ad un filosofo contemplativo: Epaminonda è rimasto inerte solo quoad cum civibus dimicatum est, come

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20 Plut. V. Pelop. 5; Xen. Hell. V 2. 25 ss.
si legge in Cornelio Nepote (v. Pel. 4), non avendo voluto partecipare a
essuno dei due gruppi che si assunsero il compito di sopprimere i
concittadini filospartani, l'uno guidato da Carone e Melone contro Archia e
Filippo, l'altro da Pelopida e Damoclida contro Leontiada e Ipata (30.596D).

Anche in un altro punto si accenna al tentativo di persuadere
Epaminonda: dopo l'episodio di Ippostenida che mette in grande agitazione i
congiurati, Fillida si allontana a preparare l'inganno del banchetto, Carone se
va a casa sua a riceverci gli esuli e Teocrito con Cafisia ritorna da Simmia
per avere l'occasione di conferire ancora con Epaminonda (19.588B). Il
particolare prepara il colloquio riferito poi nel c. 25. Si tratta di un
semplice cenno, nient'affatto necessario; ma è molto significativa tutta
questa insistenza sul rifiuto di Epaminonda ed esige una spiegazione, perché
intorno ad esso sembra che si aggiri tutto il resto, sia la discussione
demonologica sia la distribuzione dei compiti nell'esecuzione finale
dell'impresa (25.594CD; 30.596CD; 34.598CD).

Daremos una risposta in seguito: per ora notiamo che l'avversione di
Epaminonda alle lotte fratricide e in generale alla violenza si accorda con il
senso dell'iscrizione sulla tavoletta trovata nella tomba di Alcmena ad
Aliarto e interpretata da un dotto sacerdote egiziano (7.578E–579D). Essa
ordinava ai Greci di istituire degli agoni in onore delle Muse e di rinunziare
alle guerre deponendo le armi e vivendo nella concordia e nella giustizia con
l'aiuto della ragione e della paideia. L'ordine divino non fa parte della
trattazione demonologica, che sarà discussa in seguito in casa di Simmia,
ma è connesso ugualmente con presagi celesti, perché alla violazione della
tomba di Alcmena da parte di Agesilaò sono seguiti indizi sfavorevoli agli
Spartani, che il capo della guarnigione nella Cadmea, Lisantorîa, cerca di
stornare, dopo che la carestia e l'inondazione del lago Copaide hanno colpito
gli abitanti di Aliarto, consenzienti all'apertura del sepolcro. Di questo fatto
non si hanno notizie da altre fonti: può far parte della speciale politica
lacedemone che trasportava a Sparta le spoglie di eroi mitici per cercare di
giustificare le pretese sui territori occupati e consolidare l'egemonia sulla
Grecia;21 ma per noi è significativo il fatto che la fine delle guerre e delle
discordie fra le città greche è presentata come una ingiunzione della divinità e
che sulla cosa s'insiste con l'episodio della duplicazione dell'altare di Delo,
che si risolveva in un invito a mitigare i costumi e attendere solo alla
cultura e all'educazione (7.579B–D).

Il motivo, che compare prima della trattazione demonologica e poco
dopo il rifiuto di Epaminonda, col quale sicuramente è da mettere in
relazione, è come una premessa che pare suggerire un'interpretazione
dell'intera impresa tebana come una tendenza verso la pace, suprema
aspirazione dell'attività umana, con la soppressione delle ingiustizie e della

violenza. Ciò sembra consonare con una spiegazione della storia politica della Grecia che circolava ancora ai tempi di Plutarco, quando, sotto la guida dei Romani, i Greci avevano trovato finalmente la pace. Secondo la tradizione storiografica del Tricarano, attribuito a Teopompo, l'esperienza negativa delle tre egemonie, ateniesi, spartana e tebana, aveva dimostrato che era impossibile instaurare una pace duratura in Grecia con la supremazia di una grande città e che bisognava trovare un'organizzazione politica e un'educazione morale che escludesse il particolarismo e mirasse ad una concezione più universale. In ciò consensiva Plutarco, il quale nel De genio Socratis raffigura Epaminonda contrario alla violenza, come colui che è fornito di una profonda educazione filosofica ed è guidato, come Socrate, da un'intima voce divina.

Epaminonda è di gran lunga il più virtuoso e questa sua superiorità morale è messa in luce nella parte centrale del dialogo, dopo che egli è comparsa sulla scena, nei cc. 13–24. Ma, per dare rilievo alla cosa, il suo arrivo è stato preannunciato dal padre Polinnide, che è stato l'artefice di quella educazione: egli verrà insieme al filosofo pitagorico Teanore, suo ospite, che è giunto dall'Italia per riportare in patria la salma di Liside, il maestro pitagorico di Epaminonda, morto e sepolto a Tebe. L'operazione vien fatta in ottemperanza a certi segni divini ed è questo che dà origine alla discussione sulla demonologia, che naturalmente porta il discorso su Socrate. La lunga trattazione sulla ricchezza e il suo uso (cc. 13–15), che ha la forma di un ἔγγον secondo le norme della retorica, non è una digressione inopportuna, come è stata giudicata, che voglia dar corpo e sostanza alla figura di Teanore e alla sua presenza, ma al contrario è la presenza del filosofo pitagorico che tende a esaltare la grandezza morale di Epaminonda, e nasce il sospetto che a questo scopo sia stato inventato tutto quello che concerne Teanore, e forse il personaggio stesso, e che sia stato abilmente inserito nella discussione demonologica, un argomento in cui il filosofo mostra di essere un'autorità, per dare il tocco definitivo, col commento al mito di Timarco, alla personalità morale di Epaminonda (24. 593A–594A). Infatti questo è molto caro alla divinità ed è in comunione con essa non per mezzo di segni esterni, che sono propri dell'arte divinatoria e richiedono un'intrepitazione, ma direttamente per mezzo di un daimon personale, privilegio concesso a pochissimi, come a Socrate.

Quando Epaminonda ha esposto le sue profonde ragioni per rifiutare la grossa somma di denaro offertagli da Teanore per le cure prestate a Liside, Simmia, preso da ammirazione, esclama: μέγας, μέγας ἄνηρ ἐστιν

23 Cf. C. Kahle, De Plut. ratione dialog. compon. (Diss. Göttingen 1912) 79; A. Corlu, op. cit. 44.
24 Vedi per es. F. Bock, Untersuchungen zu Plutarchs Schrift Ἡπιδ Σ. δαμ. (Diss. München 1900) 18.
25 Cf. A. Corlu, op. cit. 80 s.
Eppomenevondas (16. 585D), e l’elogio si estende al padre Polinnide che ha educato così i suoi figlioli. La povertà di Epaminonda e della sua famiglia richiama alla mente quella di Socrate, già ricordata e lodata da Polinnide (11. 581 C) e certamente Simmia ha pensato al suo maestro associando a lui Epaminonda, e questo è nelle intenzioni di Plutarco. Infatti la somiglianza con Socrate culmina quando Epaminonda viene annoverato fra i pochissimi uomini che sono assistiti da un daimon personale: ciò riconosce lo stesso Teanore—e non ha dubbi perché il pilota si riconosce dal modo di navigare—, quando, dopo aver rinunziato, obbedendo ad una voce udita nella notte, a disseppellire il corpo di Liside perché la sua anima è già stata giudicata e rinviata ad un’altra esistenza, fissa gli occhi su Epaminonda come se volesse scoprire la costituzione fisica e l’aspetto di Liside.

Qui c’è la consacrazione, fatta da un pitagorico, di Epaminonda, educato da un pitagorico, fra gli uomini più perfetti, e il confronto con Socrates diventa stringente per il famoso daimonion del filosofo ateniese, su cui, dopo un intermezzo non breve relativo ai congurati (cc. 17–19), viene portato il discorso degli interlocutori (cc. 20–24). Attraverso l’esame della natura e del modo di manifestarsi del daimonion socratico e del mito di Timarco si conclude che gli uomini sono guidati più o meno da demoni, a seconda di come sono mescolati con la materia: alcuni, del tutto immersi nel corpo, sono completamente in balia delle passioni (22. 591D); altri sono

26 16. 586A. Vorrei conservare όναθέμενος dei codici, corretto da Leonicus in άναθεμένος che tutti gli editori hanno accetto, e leggere poi τὴν φύσιν (έκεινο κατά εἶδος (il κατὰ è stato aggiunto da Victorius). Con έκείνο si riprende έκείνου τάνδρος di qualche riga prima, con riferimento a Liside, un’espressione tipica del pitagorismo per indicare un maestro defunto; έξ ύπαρξις “di nuovo” è in rapporto con l’affermazione precedente che Epaminonda aveva il medesimo daimone di Liside (χρόνον τάντον δαίμονι). Insomma si vuol dire che Teanore, visti gli effetti del demonc di Liside, spontaneamente è portato a ravvisare in Epaminonda la fisionomia di quello (άναθεμάτι τῆς τινος “attribuire, trasferire qualcosa a qualcuno”). Dal passo si ricava, pare, che l’anima di Liside, staccatasi dal corpo con la morte, dopo il giudizio (κεραμένη), è stata sottoposta ad un’altra incarnazione ed è stata unita ad un altro daimone, mentre quello che aveva in precedenza era passato a dirigere Epaminonda. Dunque ad ogni incarnazione tocca in sorte un daimone nuovo (έλλε παλαιονος συνάλαγοσαν: cf. Max. Tyr. 8. 8f Ηοβ. επανηχεν). Ciò sembra naturale, perché le esistenze sono diverse e non è opportuno pensare ad un’assenza contemporanea a due esistenze da parte di un medesimo daimone. Anche il singolare τὸ δαίμονιν in 24. 593F non porta a concludere che il daimone segue la medesima anima sino alla fine del ciclo delle incarnazioni: esso è usato in senso generico, con allusione ai vari demoni. Alla fine di quel capitolo s’illustra la fase prossima alla conclusione del ciclo delle innumerevoli nascite (593F τῆς περίδου συμμετακομίσης), quando un’anima, dopo aver lottato bene, si avvicina al porto: allora il daimone (quello a cui era toccato l’assunzione in quel periodo) si fa più zelante ed esorta con energia l’anima a salvarsi. Ma questi sono punti particolari della demonologia, nella quale non tutto è chiaro. Al nostro fine conta questo: la condotta di vita di Epaminonda è parallela a quella d’un sant’uomo come era il filosofo Liside, suo maestro, e quindi degno della massima credibilità, poiché la divinità gli ha assegnato il medesimo daimone. Per il fondo pitagorico della parte demonologica, oltre G. Soury, op. cit. 131 ss., si può vedere A. Corlu, op. cit. 52 ss., 59 ss.; J. Hani, introd. nell’edizione del De genio Socraticis (Belfes Lettres 1980) 52 ss.; tenta di fare delle precisazioni K. Döring, art. cit. in n. 15. 390 s.
mescolati parzialmente alla carne e il loro démone può esercitare una qualche guida, non continua ma oscillante (22. 591E–592A); infine altri, muovendosi in linea retta, obbediscono sempre dolcemente al loro démone fin dalla nascita. Questi sono gli uomini indovini e ispirati (22. 592C); ma gli dei, mentre di solito manifestano la loro volontà attraverso sogni e prodigi, che sono l’oggetto della divinazione e hanno bisogno di essere interpretati, talvolta comunicano direttamente con alcuni, molto pochi, che dagli esseri superiori sono scelti fra noi come in un gregge il pastore segna e cura i capi migliori, e li fanno degni di un’educazione particolare ed eccezionale (24. 593B). Quei pochissimi uomini prescelti sono detti “divini e beati al massimo.”

In questo modo Epaminonda, la cui educazione è definita “superiore e straordinaria,” è raffigurato come un altro Socrate, il “Socrate tebano” accanto al “Socrate ateniese.” Per questo, mentre gli altri congiurati mostrano incertezza nell’interpretare i segni celesti che loro capitano (si veda in particolare l’episodio di Ippostenida: cc. 17–19) e ondeggiando fra speranze e paure, Epaminonda vede chiaramente le cose e si comporta senza dubbi e tentennamenti. Dunque anche la lunga discussione demonologica è strettamente collegata con Epaminonda e si può comprendere il titolo del dialogo De genio Socratis: è un accostamento onorifico del tebano al grande filosofo ateniese e suona come se fosse più chiaramente De genio Socratis atque Epaminondae oppure De Genio alterius Socratis.

Ma la definizione di “Socrate tebano” che rapporto ha con il tema della congiura? A chiarimento, si potrebbe fare un’altra domanda: come si sarebbe comportato Socrate nella circostanza di Epaminonda? È molto importante al nostro fine un passo dell’Apologia di Socrate (31C–32C) in cui Platone ci fa vedere come Socrate prestava ascolto al suo démone. Plutarco certamente l’aveva presente per giustificare la condotta di Epaminonda nell’impresa del 379. Può sembrare strano, dice Socrate in quel luogo, che io mi preoccupi tanto di dare consigli in privato e non vada alla tribuna a parlare al popolo. Non è perché mi manchi il coraggio; come vi ho detto più volte, e ne ha parlato anche Meleo nell’accusa, c’è dentro di me una voce divina, che si fa sentire fin dalla mia fanciullezza e mi dissuade dal fare azioni che sto per compiere: è questa voce che mi vieta di occuparmi di cose politiche. E mi par che faccia bene a vietarmelo, perché, se non avessi obbedito, sarei già morto da tempo e non avrei fatto le cose utili che ho fatto, perché avrei cercato d’impedire che si commettessero nella città.

24. 593D ὅσοι μὲν γὰρ οὖν ὡλίγων ἀνθρώπων κοιμοῦσι βίον, ὡς ἣν ἀκρός μακαρίους τε καὶ θείους ὡς ἀληθῶς ἀπεργάσασθαι βουληθῶσιν. Sulla corrispondenza di espressioni che sottolineano il carattere straordinario si veda Babut, art. cit. 57.

25 La cosa è stata notata da tempo: cf. C. Kahle, op. cit. 85 e 93; anche D. Babut, Plutarque et le stoïcisme, 344 ss.

26 Su questo comportamento contrastante insiste il Babut, art. cit., 64 ss.; ma non si deve dimenticare che tali contrasti appartengono al carattere drammatico e Plutarco v’indulge anche per motivi artistici.
cose ingiuste. Una volta che era membro del Consiglio dei Cinquecento—ed è l'unica carica di cui abbia fatto parte nella nostra città—, mi opposi con voto contrario, unico dei pritani, alla condanna dei generali accusati di non aver raccolto i naufraghi e i morti dopo la battaglia delle Arginuse, una condanna illegale come in seguito riconosceste anche tutti voi. E un'altra volta sotto i Trenta oligarchi mi rifiutai di andare a Salamina per condurre Leonte ad Atene e metterlo a morte, e lasciai andare gli altri quattro che avevano ricevuto l'incarico con me. Come vedete, non c'è mancanza di coraggio nella mia condotta né paura della morte, ma ferma decisione di difendere sempre e dovunque la giustizia.

Molto simili sono i sentimenti di Epaminonda quando rifiuta di partecipare all'uccisione degli oligarchi filospartani: non rifiuta per paura di morire, ma per timore che siano uccisi anche cittadini innocenti; era il suo daimon che lo dissuadeva. Come il divieto demonico a Socrate di svolgere attività politica si limitava all'aspetto ufficiale implicante cariche pubbliche, non nel senso di non occuparsi in assoluto di politica, perché la sua predicazione morale era in sostanza un'azione politica, di critica a quella ufficiale, così il divieto del daimon di Epaminonda era circoscritto; tanti vero che, riconquistata la libertà, egli fu al servizio della sua patria politicamente e militarmente e morì sul campo di battaglia, sempre intento a non offendere i suoi principi filosofici. Senza ricordare le imprese posteriori, Plutarco ha voluto giustificare la condotta del personaggio in quella particolare circostanza e l'ha attribuita ad un consiglio del daimon che lo guidava, cioè ad una voce celeste, e poteva spiegare in quel modo anche il ritardo, notato in De lat. viv. 4. 1129C, della sua partecipazione alla vita politica dopo i 40 anni. Evidente dunque ed efficace è il confronto con il daimonion socratico, che dà il titolo all'opera.

Dall'esame che abbiamo fatto risulta che Epaminonda è la figura centrale del De genio Socratis. In rapporto a lui il dialogo può essere diviso in tre parti: 1. 575B–12. 582C; 13. 582D–24. 594A; 25. 594A–34. 598F. Nella prima parte è presentato il problema di coscienza che trattiene Epaminonda dal partecipare alla strage, anche se egli condivide l'ideale di libertà; nella seconda parte è data la giustificazione di quel comportamento, fondata non sul piano pratico, ma religioso e morale con il richiamo a Socrate; nella terza parte è illustrata la partecipazione di Epaminonda all'insurrezione dopo che sono stati uccisi i polemarchi; e con la visione del popolo che, eccitato da lui, insorge e tumultua brandendo le armi, mentre gli Spartani corrono a chiudersi nella cittadella, da dove poco dopo si ritireranno lasciando libera la città, l'opera si conclude.

Questa raffigurazione di Epaminonda, non lo possiamo negare, ci sorprende, perché in quell'impresa egli non occupa, nella tradizione storiografica, una posizione di rilievo. In Senofonte30 egli non è neppure

30 Ἡελλ. V 4. 1–12.
menzionato; fra i pochi personaggi ricordati spicca Fillida come orditore della trama. Nella *Vita di Pelopida* dello stesso Plutarco il primo posto è tenuto da Pelopida, che solitamente viene menzionato per indicare la schiera dei congiurati e fra gli esuli è il principale sostenitore degli animi (c. 7). Di Epaminonda si dice che, quando Pelopida, Ferenico e non pochi altri furono cacciati in esilio, "fu lasciato in pace perché non lo si credeva importante, giudicandolo un innocuo studioso di filosofia e senza potere per la sua povertà." È un modo per dire che egli non fu tra i protagonisti della congiura. Sul problema di coscienza e l'astensione dalle accisioni, il motivo fondamentale del *De genio Socratis*, non c'è parola; invece è ricordata la sua attività dopo l'accisione dei polemarchi, nel sollevare il popolo e chiamarlo a raccolta in quella notte e nel presentare, sul far del giorno, all'assemblea Pelopida e i compagni fra grida ed applausi.\(^3\) La giustificazione del rifiuto di Epaminonda si trova nella *Vita di Epaminonda* di Cornelio Nepote e costituisce un elemento significativo nel problema delle fonti; ma anche là è Pelopida che figura come capo degli esuli tornati in patria e quindi dell'impresa;\(^3\) Epaminonda, *quamdiu facta est caedes civilium, domo se tenuit, perché omnem civilem victoriam funestam putabant; poi, postquam apud Cadmeam cum Lacedaemoniiis pugnari coeptum est, in primis stetit*. Le medesime cose sono ripetute da Cornelio nella *Vita di Pelopida*, nella quale quell'impresa occupa quasi tutta la breve biografia e l'astensione di Epaminonda è notata per far risaltare il merito maggiore di Pelopida: *itaque haec liberatarum Thebarum propria laus est Pelopidae, ceterae fere communes cum Epaminonda* (c. 4).

Non è qui opportuno affrontare il problema delle fonti storiche,\(^3\) ma nasce il sospetto, e si rafforza esaminando i particolari, che nella tradizione ci siano stati degli ampliamenti a favore di Epaminonda, il cui comportamento in quell'occasione non poteva non suscitare qualche sorpresa, perché la sua gloria restasse intatta e anche il primato nella famosa coppia tradizionale Epaminonda–Pelopida, nella quale Pelopida *fuit altera persona Thebis, sed tamen secunda ita ut proxima esset Epaminondae*.\(^3\) Così sembra voler colmare un vuoto la notizia che Epaminonda a Tebe, come Pelopida ad Atene, spronava i giovani a liberarsi dalla vergogna della

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3\(^2\) *V. Epam. 10 duce Pelopida.*

3\(^3\) Si veda in proposito la lucida esposizione del Corlu, *op. cit.* 22–39.

3\(^4\) Nep. *V. Pelop.* 4. 3.
schiavitù.\textsuperscript{35} La giustificazione di voler evitare l'uccisione di cittadini innocenti trovava un saldo fondamento, e perciò facile credito, nella profonda educazione filosofica del personaggio. Contribuisce a darle rilievo l'episodio di Cabirico (31. 597BC). Nella sala del banchetto in cui sono uccisi Archia e Filippo, c'è anche un magistrato con funzioni religiose, Cabirico, un personaggio che non è ricordato in nessuna altra fonte. Si cerca di risparmiarlo, "essendo sacro e consacrato per il bene della patria": abbandoni i tiranni e cooperi alla liberazione della città. Poiché, pieno di vino, non era in grado di ragionare e si mise ad agitare la lancia che gli arconti usavano portare sempre con sé, Cafisia, afferrata quell'arma, gridava all'uomo di lasciarla e di salvarsi, altrimenti sarebbe stato ucciso. Ma Teopompo, un congiurato meno riflessivo, colpisce Cabirico con la spada gridando: "Giaci qui morto con quelli che adulavi; in Tebe libera non porterai più la corona e non sacrificherai più agli dei, nel cui nome lasciasti molte imprudenza contro la patria pregando spesso per i suoi nemici." Caduto Cabirico, Teocrito, che era lì vicino, ha l'avvertenza di sottrarre la sacra lancia dalla contaminazione del sangue. Furono uccisi anche alcuni pochi servi che avevano osato opporre resistenza, ma gli altri che stavano fermi furono rinchiusi nella sala del banchetto, per timore che si spargessero per la città ad annunziare prima del tempo quel che era accaduto.

Questo episodio, raccontato con molti particolari, vuol togliere ogni aspetto odioso d'inutile violenza e sembra inventato\textsuperscript{36} o almeno ampliato da Plutarco. L'uccisione di Cabirico e dei pochi servì è un esempio di quella μεγάλη διάνοια, di cui parla Epaminonda giustificando il suo rifiuto col timore che dette persone violente profitassero dell'occasione e uccidessero per interessi personali. In realtà gli eccessi non mancarono. A parte le donne che calpestarono e coprirono di sputi il cadavere del carceriere, ucciso da Fillida quando furono liberati i prigionieri politici (33. 598B), un comportamento femminile verso il nemico ucciso che è deplorato già in Platone,\textsuperscript{37} Senofonte\textsuperscript{38} ricorda che, quando gli Spartani uscirono dalla cittadella dietro a garanzia di aver salvato la vita, quelli che furono riconosciuti come nemici personali, malgrado le libagioni e i giuramenti, furono presi e uccisi; alcuni furono sottratti e salutati dagli Ateniesi, che erano venuti dai confini in aiuto ai Tebani, ma si arrivò anche al punto di prendere e sgozzare i figli degli uccisi. La tradizione storiografica tebana e filotebana, come suole accadere, passò sotto silenzio le azioni vergognose e cercò di tramandare le cose onorevoli, come il profondo senso di giustizia del grande Epaminonda.

\textsuperscript{35} Plut. \textit{V. Pelop.} 7.
\textsuperscript{36} Vedi anche Babut, \textit{art. cit.} 56.
\textsuperscript{37} Resp. 469D.
\textsuperscript{38} Hell. V 4. 12.
Anche a questo, com’è noto, non mancarono gli avversari politici, come Meneclide menzionato da Cornelio Nepote,39 e sono noti i processi che il generale dovette subire per abuso di potere.40 Plutarco, che non si stanca mai di esaltare il grande compatriota, nel De genio Socratis ha concentrato la sua attenzione su una circostanza della vita in cui gli avversari potevano trovare motivi di biasimo e ha voluto liberarlo da ogni accusa o macchia di viltà o di tepidezza, in una gloriosa impresa che brillava solo di luce, e cercò di dare un fondamento religioso e filosofico alla sua condotta, presentandolo come guidato dalla divinità. E si noti come sia rilevata anche una saggezza politica non comune: dopo la cacciata degli Spartani, era necessario per il bene di tutti trovare una conciliazione con il partito oligarchico, che si era compromesso con la tirannide. Questa lungimiranza contemperava la difesa sia della giustizia sia degli interessi generali della città41 e fa pensare all’attività posteriore del grande Epaminonda che costruì sulla sconfitta di Sparta l’egemonia di Tebe.

In una lettera di Platone,42 a proposito dell’opposizione di Dione a Dionisio di Siracusa, si trova il consiglio che il saggio non usi la violenza per rovesciare il governo costituito, se bisogna ricorrere a uccisioni, prosciizioni ed esili; Plutarco all’autorità del grande filosofo ha sostituito una voce divina, comunicata ad uno degli uomini migliori e più vicini agli dei e degni di essere paragonati a Socrate. È questa una difesa su un piano superiore all’umano, che intende troncare ogni velleità di replica e levare definitivamente ogni ombra.

Tutta l’impresa della liberazione della Cadmea, che fu compiuta da pochi uomini e nella quale, come dice Plutarco,43 “Pelopida senza abattere rocche o mura, entrando in una casa qualsiasi con soli undici suoi amici, sciolse e spezzò, per usare una metafora che esprime bene la verità, le catene del predominio spartano, credute indissolubili e infrangibili”, fu per tempo considerata come favorita dagli dei. Proprio sotto questa luce la espone Senofonte, il quale premette questa osservazione che richiama il pensiero di Erodoto:44 “Si potrebbero in generale addurre altri esempi fra i Greci e i barbari a prova che gli dei non si dimenticano di coloro che violano le leggi divine ed umane, ma dirò solo quel che segue. Gli Spartani, che, dopo aver giurato di lasciare l’autonomia alle città, s’impadronirono dell’acropoli di Tebe, ricevettero la punizione ad opera di quelli stessi di cui avevano violato

39 V. Epam. 5. Un aneddoto dentro il quadro di questa inimicizia è ricordato anche da Plutarco in De laude ipsius 9. 542B; vedi anche Praec. ger. rei p. 10. 805C e specialmente V. Pelop 25. 5 ss.
41 Cf. 3. 577A μετά τού δίκαιου και τῷ συμφέροντι προσοιόδομον.
42 Ep. VII 331D.
43 V. Pelop. 13.
44 Hell. V 4. 1.
i diritti, essi che non erano mai stati vinti da nessuno; e per abbattere il governo di coloro che avevano appoggiato l’operazione allo scopo di dominare personalmente, bastarono sette dei cittadini mandati in esilio.” In questa atmosfera religiosa, del tutto consona allo spirito di Plutarco, è stata immersa anche la figura di Epaminonda, illuminato da una saggezza superiore, che pochissimi uomini hanno avuto in dono dalla divinità.

Ora siamo in grado di rispondere alla domanda, posta in precedenza (p. 416), perché Epaminonda sia il personaggio centrale del De genio Socratis: verso di lui, per somiglianze o per contrasti, converge ogni cosa. L’accusa di ἀμβλύτης e di mancanza di προθυμία che l’indovino Teocrito gli rivolge all’inizio (3. 576E), in contrasto con la generosità e prontezza di Carone, nonostante la differenza di educazione, apparteneva verisimilmente alla tradizione e non è escluso che vi si accennasse nella lacuna non breve segnata nei codici in quel luogo (60 lettere in E, 56 in B), per esempio in questo modo: Ἐπαμεινόνδας δὲ Βοιωτῶν ἀπάντων τῷ πεπαιδεδοθαί πρὸς ἀρετὴν ἀξίων διαφέρειν ἀμβλύς ἐστὶ καὶ ἀπρόθυμος, (τούτῳ δὲ λέγουσιν, οὐδὲ βοηθεῖ τοῖς ψυχήν κυνδυνεύουσιν, ὡς ὀστερον, μετὰ) τούτων ἢ τινα (λαβῶν ἢ οὐδένα) βελτίων καιρόν, αὐτῷ περικύτι καὶ παρασκευασμένῳ χαλῶς οὕτω χρησίμονος. “Epaminonda, che si considera superiore a tutti i Tebani per l’educazione alla virtù, è inerte e senza volontà—questo diranno un giorno—e non reca aiuto a quelli che ora corrono pericolo, come se volesse in seguito, senza poter cogliere dopo questa quasi nessuna altra occasione migliore, mettere a profitto le sue belle qualità naturali e acquisite con l’educazione.”

La difesa e l’esaltazione sono fatte su un piano superiore, diverso da quello solito davanti ai tribunali degli uomini: Epaminonda è un uomo eccezionale, fa parte dei pochissimi ἀκρως μακάριοι te καὶ θεοί ἄνδρες (24. 593D), come sono detti dal filosofo pitagorico che nel nome Theanor rivela la sapienza divina, e biasimare la sua condotta è da persone superficiali e irreligiose. A ragione si lamenta la perdita della Vita di Epaminonda per vari motivi; fra l’altro ci avrebbe aiutato non poco a comprendere, credo, il De genio Socratis. Anche le Vite offrono non poco materiale per riflessioni sui rapporti fra i personaggi e i demoni, tanto che possono essere considerate una demonologia in atto o un’interpretazione filosofica e religiosa della storia. 

Le ragioni del rifiuto addotte da Epaminonda hanno convinto non solo Cafisia e l’indovino Teocrito (3. 576F), ma anche gli altri congiurati o almeno la maggior parte (25. 594C). Naturalmente non pochi lettori non

45 Le parole τοῦτο e τοῦτον potevano trovarsi all’inizio o alla fine di due righe consecutive e l’occhio poté trascorrere per errore da una riga all’altra; così l’apografa fra τινα e οὐδένα potrebbe essere stata causata dall’identità della sillaba finale. Per ἢ τις ἢ οὐδένα, frase idiomatica per dire “quasi nessuno”, “per non dire nessuno”, cf. Xen. Cyr. VII 5. 45 ecc
sono stati né saranno soddisfatti, perché non credono che l'idealismo morale possa conciliarsi con l'attività politica. Ma il nostro compito è di comprendere Plutarco, senza lasciarci deviare da problemi non pertinenti. Costoro hanno un predecessore in Filippo il Macedone, che da ragazzo visse come ostaggio a Tebe e “se potè sembrare che volesse imitare Epaminonda, forse capì le ragioni delle sue capacità militari, ma non ebbe niente di comune con lui per le doti morali, quelle che fecero l'altro veramente grande e che Filippo non ebbe né per natura né per educazione.”

Ma Plutarco non giudicò Filippo degno di una sua biografia.

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47 *V. Pelop. 26.*
Plutarco, Socrate e l’Esopo di Delfi

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Plutarco parla spesso di Esopo inquadrandolo in un ben preciso contesto storico-culturale e descrivendo con grande sensibilità filologica il tipo di sophia rappresentato dall’antico favolista. Questo approccio plutarcheo merita a mio parere uno studio approfondito non solo perché lo studioso di Cheronea, come è riconosciuto ormai universalmente è, in ogni caso, una ricchissima miniera di dati, ma anche e soprattutto perché, come è successo in questi ultimi decenni, gli studi sulla favolistica esopica hanno paradossalmente sepolto Esopo come personaggio storico. Il redattore dell’esteso articolo sul favolista nella Realencyklopädie dice senza mezzi termini che “der legendäre Aisopos” deve essere inteso solo come “Verkörperung einer praktischen Lebensweisheit” e che, per quel che ne riguarda la personalità, bisogna ritenere assodato che, nonostante le numerose attestazioni antiche, Esopo appartiene in realtà al mondo del mito. Anche chi, come B. E. Perry o M. Nøjgaard, crede senz’altro all’esistenza di un Esopo storico nel VI secolo a.C., si limita a fare una constatazione che rimane però improduttiva in una ricerca che ha per oggetto solo le tarde raccolte esopiche dal primo secolo d.C. in poi (Fedro, Babrio, la Collectio Augustana, ecc.) oppure altrettanto tardi prodotti come il cosiddetto Romanzo di Esopo. Ma la consistenza storica dell’antico favolista è stata, mi sembra, messa in ombra soprattutto da coloro che, dall’eterogeneo materiale esopico di età imperiale, impiegano di motivi del

4 La fable antique, I (København 1964) 456 sgg.
tardo cinismo, hanno estrapolato, con evidenti forzature filologiche, gli elementi portanti di quella che sarebbe una 'ideologia' esopica: si negano o si ignorano le più antiche e fedeli testimonianze e si cerca di cogliere il significato della *sophia* esopica tra le amare meditazioni autobiografiche dei prologhi di Fedro, o tra le pagine del tardo romanzo più ricche di motivi cinici. Così uno dei più importanti studiosi di favolistica greca, Otto Crusius, scriveva che "die Geschichte der Fabel in Europa beginnt mit dem Aufsteigen der niederer Volksschichten, der Bauern und Halßbürtigen..." ed in recenti studi si afferma che Esopo fu per gli antichi "il tipo dello schiavo, del proletario, del plebeo" e che la favola esopica costituisce un passo decisivo "nell'elaborazione di una cultura laica popolare." Il leggendario Esopo ha per scopo di impersonare la condizione degli strati sociali più umili e l'antica favola esopica è addirittura vista come "geeignete Lektüre für die breitesten Volksmassen." A questo punto una domanda: nella selva di questi aprirismi ideologici, può aiutarci l'Esopo di Plutarco? Gli studiosi di favolistica esopica lo hanno praticamente ignorato ed i brevi accenni di coloro che si sono occupati del problema servono poco dal nostro punto di vista perché appaiono chiaramente condizionati in parte dagli stessi luoghi comuni su Esopo cui ho fatto appena riferimento. Così per il Wilamowitz l'Esopo che nel *Convivium sepiem sapientium* discute con Solone, Biante e gli altri *sophoi* è un personaggio leggendario, "der Schalk dessen Mutterwitz über die Schulweisheit triumphiert." e questo nonostante che Plutarco dia chiaramente alla personalità di Esopo lo stesso spessore storico che dà agli altri personaggi politici protagonisti del dialogo e nonostante che Esopo nel *Convivium* manifesti di possedere, come vedremo, non meno cultura greca degli altri convitati. L'opinione del Wilamowitz è stata ripresa tale e quale da August Hausrath nell'importante articolo *Fabel* sulla *RE*. J. Defradas, nell'introduzione alla sua edizione del

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9 Cfr. l'introd. a C. H. Kleukens, *Das Buch der Fabeln* (Leipzig 1913), p. IX.

10 Così A. La Penna in "La morale della favola esopica come morale delle classi subalterne nell'antichità," *Società* 17 (1961) 528.


12 Così S. Josifović nell'art. in *RE*, cit., col. 22, 1 sgg.


Convivium plutarcheo\textsuperscript{15} trova una grande somiglianza tra l'operetta di Plutarco che chiama (seguendo il Wilamowitz) 'il Romanzo dei sette sapienti' ed il tardo Romanzo di Esopo. In particolare, trova che l'Esopo del Convivium presenti le stesse caratteristiche dell'Esopo del Romanzo: di fronte a personaggi come Solone o Biante, "in face de ces aristocrates il fait figure du rustre, de révolutionnaire, il est du coté des masses populaires . . ."\textsuperscript{16} e ancora "à l'aristocratie des Sept Sages qui consacrent au dieu de Delphes leurs maximes de sagesse, s'oppose son esprit populaire et frondeur . . ."\textsuperscript{17} Ma Plutarco, come vedremo, non ha detto niente di simile ed il suo interesse per Esopo non aveva nessuna motivazione romanzesca o novellistica. 

In effetti, e questo è, a mio parere, il nodo del problema, gli studiosi non sembrano essersi accorti del fatto che Plutarco parla di Esopo con grande serietà e lo ricorda in particolare (il fatto non mi sembra sia stato notato) in testi connessi con Delfi, con la religiosità del santuario e con la antica morale di ispirazione delfica. E' ben noto quanto lo scrittore di Cheronea fosse legato all'entourage delfico: egli fu anche a più riprese sacerdote del dio\textsuperscript{18} ed indagatore appassionato, soprattutto nella tarda maturità e nella vecchiaia, dei dati storici, religiosi e culturali riguardanti il prestigioso santuario. Il suo interesse per la personalità dell'Esopo storico era dettato non solo dal desiderio di ricostruire attraverso le fonti più sicure i contorni precisi della sophia di un famoso personaggio del sesto secolo a. C., ma anche e soprattutto dal fatto che, secondo una ben documentata e compatta tradizione storica, Esopo proprio a Delfi era stato protagonista di una tragica vicenda.

Come attestano concordemente autorevoli fonti antiche, Erodoto, Aristofane, Aristotele,\textsuperscript{19} Esopo fu messo ingiustamente a morte dai cittadini di Delfi sotto la falsa accusa di ιεροσοβλησσα. Ne seguì una lunga vicenda giuridico-finanziaria, conclusasi appena pochi decenni prima della nascita di Erodoto.\textsuperscript{20} La cronaca di Eusebio ed il cosiddetto Chronicon Romanum (che pure, per altre date del VI\textsuperscript{o} secolo, discorda dalla cronografia apollodorea ed eusebiana) danno concordemente, per la morte di Esopo, la data del 563

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p. 24.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p. 25.
\textsuperscript{19} Hdt. II 134; Aristoph. Vesp. 1446 e schol. vet. ad loc.; Arist. fr. 487 Rose (dalla Δελφῶν πολιτείας); cfr. i Testimonia vet. de Aesopo a cura di B. E. Perry, Aesopica I., cit., test. 13, 20, 21 (test. 27 è da Zenob. vulg. che ha soppresso la citazione da Arist. presente nel passo originale di Zenobio pubblicato da M. E. Miller in Méli. de Littér. Grecque [Paris 1868], 369 = II 106).
a. C.\textsuperscript{21} Con questa datazione si concilia benissimo la notizia che Diogene Laerzio deriva dal biografo peripatetico Ermippo, secondo la quale Αἰσώπος ὁ λογοποιός ἦμαξε intorno alla 52\textsuperscript{a} Olimpiade, quindi tra il 572 ed il 569 a. C.\textsuperscript{22} La notorietà del compositore di logoi,\textsuperscript{23} il grande prestigio religioso e politico di cui godeva Delfi nella prima metà del VI\textsuperscript{o} secolo ed il lungo strascico giudiziario che ebbe la vicenda sono tre elementi che spiegano bene perché la data della morte di Esopo fosse registrata nelle cronografie e perché Aristotele, in uno scritto dal taglio storico-politico come la Δελφών πολιτεία, inserisse il tragico scontro tra Esopo ed i cittadini di Delfi fra le vicende significative riguardanti quella polis. Stando a quanto ci dice un breve bios esopico restituitoci da un papiro del II\textsuperscript{o} secolo d. C.\textsuperscript{24}, a ricordo ed ammenda di quella clamorosa morte i Delfi costruirono, ai piedi della rupe dalla quale Esopo era stato gettato, un piccolo memoriale con un βωμός presso il quale Esopo, considerato ἤρως, ricevette, non sappiamo fino a quando, l'omaggio ufficiale del più prestigioso santuario greco: un dato sul quale non abbiamo motivo di dubitare se si considerano ben documentate usanze proprio di quell'epoca.\textsuperscript{25}

Che la vicenda delfica di Esopo fosse da Plutarco considerata un fatto storico sul quale non c'era da dubitare è dimostrato da due fra i più significativi passi che egli dedica all'antico favolista. Nel De Pythiae oraculis, un dialogo che R. Flacelière, su basi molto convincenti, data agli ultimi anni di vita di Plutarco,\textsuperscript{26} la guida mostra ai visitatori di Delfi il

\textsuperscript{21} Precisamente Euseb.—Hier. ol. 54. 1, p. 102b Helm (anno 564–63); Chron. Rom. in FGrHist II n. 252, 30 (anno 563–62), cfr. F. Jacoby, comm. ad loc. (II 2, p. 829, 23 sgg.). Cfr. B. E. Perry, Aesopica, cit., test. 9–10. Anche Suid. s. v. Αἰσώπος riporta la stessa data: ἐν γάρ Δελφῶν θεοκτονος ἀπόλεσθαι ... κατὰ τιν ... Ὀλυμπιάδα.

\textsuperscript{22} Cfr. A. La Penna, "Il romanzo di Esopo," art. cit., pp. 281–82 (dove nota giustamente che "della cronologia di Esopo si è avuta sempre una coscienza abbastanza chiara").


\textsuperscript{24} Si tratta del \textit{POxy}. XV 1800: il fr. 1 contiene le vite di Saffo e Simonide, i frr. 2–3 (consecutivi) contengono le vite di Esopo, Tucidide, Demostene, Eschine. E' significativo che il bios di Esopo sia posto fra bioi di proscritti ed ancor più significativo dal nostro punto di vista che la vita del \textit{logopoios} sia collocata fra bioi di personaggi storici. Il \textit{POxy} dà grande spazio all'episodio delfico (30 righe della col. II del fr. 2) confermando la fama e del favolista e della sua morte. Cfr. A. Lamedica, "Il \textit{POxy}. 1800 e le forme della biografia greca," SIFC ser. III 3 (1985) 57–58.


\textsuperscript{26} Cfr. "Plutarque et la Pythie," \textit{REG} 56 (1943) 73.
luogo nel quale erano collocati in tempi antichi gli obelischi di ferro dedicati dalla ricchissima e famosa cortigiana Rodopi. Ad uno dei visitatori, il giovane Diogeniano, Plutarco, sacerdote del dio di Delfi, fa pronunciare un severo rimprovero per gli antichi abitanti di quel luogo sacro (cfr. 400E): la polis (il termine è significativo) che concesse ad una cortigiana il terreno dove sistemare le cospicue decime dei suoi illeciti guadagni, è davvero la stessa polis che ha messo ingiustamente a morte Esopo.\footnote{27} Parole dure che sono allo stesso tempo condanna dei bassi interessi della polis di Delfi e difesa di Esopo e della sacralità del luogo.

Nel De sera numinis vindicta, dialogo ambientato a Delfi e scritto, come il De Pythiae oraculis, negli anni della vecchiaia,\footnote{28} Plutarco sviluppa la sua meditazione moralistico-religiosa sulla tragica sorte di Esopo e ritiene che la grave punizione che il dio inflisse ai Delfi, e la pesante ammenda che essi dovettero pagare dopo ben tre generazioni, siano da annoverare fra i fatti storici che dimostrano che esiste ed è giusta una sera numinis vindicta nei riguardi di una collettività di cittadini che abbiano gravemente peccato. Questa è in sostanza la risposta che Plutarco stesso dà nel dialogo al fratello Timone che poco prima aveva narrato dettagliatamente l'episodio delfico (cfr. 556F sgg.) proprio al fine di dimostrare il contrario, cioè l'ingiustizia di una punizione che colpisca i figli ed i figli dei figli per le colpe dei padri. Fra i vari episodi citati da Timone, Plutarco sceglie proprio la vicenda di Esopo per sostenere la sua tesi: la trasmissione della pena attraverso il tempo da una generazione all'altra può essere paragonata alla trasmissione di un grave contagio attraverso lo spazio, anzi “desta più ammirazione il fatto che di un male nato in Etiopia sia morto ad Atene Pericle, che non il fatto che, essendo stati malvagi i cittadini di Delfi . . . „, la giustizia si sia compiuta sui loro figli” (558F). Con la medesima consapevole severità Plutarco fornisce al suo interlocutore una seconda ragione: la responsabilità collettiva di una polis si perpetua attraverso i secoli ed ogni generazione, così come ha diritto di vantarsi delle glorie dei padri, allo stesso modo deve subire il contraccolpo dei loro errori collettivi (559A–C). E' lecito supporre che le opinioni personalmente sostenute da Plutarco in questo dialogo riflettano tradizionali tratti della morale e della religiosità delfica ufficiale. Non va dimenticato inoltre che Plutarco, come sacerdote e membro del consiglio anfizionico, avrà potuto consultare direttamente antiche fonti delfiche: certo è che, per

\footnote{27} Per la connessione Rodopi–Esopo fonte storica era Hdt. II 34 (si noti, per inciso, che Erodoto usava la connessione con Esopo proprio per fornire un elemento preciso al fine di datare Rodopi, cfr. la giusta osservazione di Ém. Chambry nella “Notice sur Ésop” premessa ad Ésop, Fables, Paris 1927, p. IX): un'altra utile testimonianza per dimostrare come già per Erodoto la datazione di Esopo era un dato storico preciso sul quale basare sincronismi.

vicende lontane nel tempo, riguardanti la storia politico-religiosa di Delfi nella prima metà del sesto secolo a. C., Plutarco, almeno in un caso, ha fatto esplicito ricorso proprio agli hypomnemata ufficiali del santuario.29 Per questi motivi assume per noi particolare importanza la già menzionata narrazione dello scontro tra Esopo e gli abitanti di Delfi in 556F sgg. Da una attenta lettura del passo si ricavano le seguenti informazioni:

I) Esopo venne a Delfi inviato ufficiale di Creso di Lidia. La stessa notizia è data da Plutarco in Sept. sap. 150A, un passo da cui risulta che Esopo, sempre su mandato di Creso, prima di recarsi a Delfi si fermò a Corinto, alla corte del tiranno Periandro. Il Convivium di Plutarco ha appunto come cornice storica la presenza di Esopo e di altri sophoi a Corinto in una data che non può che essere vicinissima a quella storicamente ben attestata della morte di Esopo a Delfi, il 563 a. C. (v. sopra). La riunione dei sophoi presso Periandro è anche ricordata in Sol 4, 1. Secondo un'altra informazione fornita da Plutarco in Sept. sap. 155B, Esopo e Solone prima di incontrarsi a Corinto si erano già visti alla corte di Creso: quanto prima non è specificato. L'incontro di Solone ed Esopo alla corte di Creso è menzionato da Plutarco anche in Sol. 28, 1 subito dopo la famosa descrizione dell'incontro fra Solone e Creso (derivata da Hdt. I 30–33): una notizia, quest'ultima, ritenuta generalmente leggendaria per il fatto che, secondo lo schema cronologico vulgato, i viaggi di Solone sarebbero avvenuti subito dopo il 594–92 circa e Creso invece sarebbe diventato re appena nel 561–60.30 Inoltre, se Esopo è stato ucciso a Delfi nel 563 e Creso è divenuto re al più presto nel 561 anche la storicità dell'ambascieria di Esopo per conto del sovrano orientale viene fortemente incrinata. D'altra parte il severo contesto del De sera numinis vindicta nel quale è inserita la notizia sull'ambascieria del sophos dimostra, come abbiamo visto, che Plutarco considerava l'episodio tutt'altro che leggendario. Inoltre le considerazioni metodologiche che lo stesso Plutarco premette alla narrazione dell'incontro fra Solone e Creso in Sol. 27, 1 dimostrano che anche quell'episodio era da lui considerato storico: egli infatti rileva che gli évôι che rifiutano la storicità dell'incontro si basano per il loro rifiuto su tavole cronologiche (χρονικοὶ κανόνες) che per quell'epoca così antica non hanno raggiunto alcun assestamento sicuro ed univoco. Si fa un torto allo spirito critico di Plutarco dicendo che “il sait et il dit que la chronologie s'oppose à la possibilité de cette rencontre”;31 egli anzi dice proprio che nel caso delle date riguardanti Solone e Creso non c'è una cronologia ma ci sono cronologie in contrasto fra di loro; sono solo évôi che rifiutano la storicità

dell'episodio e solo alcuni χρονικοί κανόνες che danno loro ragione. Stando così le cose, Plutarco ritiene di non avere ragioni sufficienti per considerare leggendario un episodio testimoniato da molte fonti autorevoli (τοσούτους μάρτυρας ἐχοντα) e perfettamente rispondente a criteri interni di analisi della personalità soloniana. Quanto criticamente fondata fosse l'obiezione di Plutarco alla validità assoluta delle tavole cronologiche per il sesto secolo lo dimostrano alcuni recenti studi storici che tendono a rivalutare la testimonianza erodotea rispetto alla cronologia vulgata di origine ellenistica. Così ad es. A. R. Burn notava a proposito di Erodoto che, per quel che riguarda le date del sesto secolo, la datazione erodotea è senz'altro preferibile a quella degli storici posteriori e sosteneva che "the majority of the dates earlier than the period of the Persian wars, which pass current in our Greek history text-books, are wrong."32 In particolare una meticolosa operazione di scavo nella cronologia erodotea per il sesto secolo ha dato alcuni risultati di grande interesse: risulta così che, stando ad Erodoto, Creso fu re non dal 561 al 547 circa (cronologia vulgata) bensì dal 571 al 557 circa e che i viaggi di Solone in Egitto, a Cipro ed a Sardi si svolsero non poco dopo il 594–92 ma in una data che sta fra il 569 ed il 560.33 La storiografia recente quindi giudica che nessuna ragione cronologica scientificamente valida si opponga all'incontro Solone-Creso35 e, possiamo aggiungere noi, questa cornice cronologica erodotea rende perfettamente plausibile storicamente anche il fatto che Esopo fosse inviato dal re Creso a Corinto ed a Delfi nel 563 circa. Non è improbabile che per questi episodi riguardanti Esopo, Solone e Creso Plutarco avesse a disposizione precise registrazioni degli hypomnemata delfici (v. sopra): non si può far a meno di notare, infatti, che sia l'incontro di Solone e Creso,36 sia l'ambascierà di Esopo sono eventi strettamente legati alla storia politica ed alla morale

34 Cfr S. S. Markianos, art. cit., 17.
delfica e che gli stretti e frequenti rapporti di Creso con Delfi, attestati dal punto di vista sia storico che archeologico, avevano certo una posizione di rilievo nella storia del santuario nel VI° secolo e quindi anche negli hypomnemata riguardanti quell'epoca.

Rimanente vedere se con questa collocazione cronologica dell'ambascierà di Esopo per conto di Creso nel 563 circa possa conciliarsi l'altra notizia, quella riguardante la missione di Esopo presso Periandro di Corinto (v. sopra). Anche in questo caso ci troviamo davanti a due cronologie totalmente inconciliabili fra di loro: da una parte la cronologia vulgata di Periandro che fa perno sulla data del 585, anno in cui, secondo lo storico ellenistico Sosicrate, sarebbe avvenuta la morte del tiranno (D. L. I 95); dall'altra parte la datazione ricavabile dai vari passi di Erodoto in cui è menzionato Periandro (soprattutto Hdt. V 94–95 e III 48), secondo la quale il tiranno, pur molto vecchio, era ancora politicamente attivo nel 561 o poco dopo, quando Pisistrato già governava Atene. Ritengo che E. Will abbia ben dimostrato quanto "le témoignage d'Hérodote, les plus anciens, les plus cohérents, les plus développés aussi dans sa brièveté" sia preferibile a quello della storiografia ellenistica. Inoltre una lettura non preconcettata di Hdt. III 48 e del corrispondente passo del De Herodoti malignitate di Plutarco, ha

il vantaggio di rispettare la compattezza della tradizione manoscritta erodotea in quel luogo, di far concordare Erodoto con sè stesso e con Plutarco e anche di far concordare Plutarco con sè stesso dato che nel *Convivium septem sapientium* egli considera appunto Periandro ancora attivo nel 563 (data che si ricava, come abbiamo visto, dalla presenza di Esopo che poco dopo morirà a Delfi). Del resto si può senz'altro pensare che anche per la cronologia dei Cipselidi Plutarco avesse a disposizione una fondamentale documentazione delfica dato che Cipselo, il fondatore della dinastia, ebbe stretissimi rapporti politico-religiosi col santuario: l'oracolo sostenne ai suoi albori la sua tirannide illuminata chiamandolo βασιλεύς e Plutarco, proprio alla fine del *Convivium* e nel *De Pythiae oraculis* (399F) si sofferma sul significato della famosa palma di bronzo dedicata da Cipselo a Delfi a memoria del suo legame col dio.

In conclusione si può affermare che il contesto in cui Plutarco colloca la figura di Esopo nel *De sera minis vindicta* e nel *Convivium* ha tutti i caratteri della storicità, risale a fonti fra le più antiche a lui disponibili (Erodoto e gli hypomnemata delfici) e comunque precellenistiche e dimostra quanto arbitrario sia fare un qualsiasi paragone fra lo spirito di queste testimonianze storico-biografiche plutarchee e lo spirito del *bios* esopico quale risulta dal tardo *Romanzo* (v. sopra, ad es. Defradas): basti pensare che nel romanzo non c'è nessuna menzione di figure quali Solone o gli altri famosi uomini politici e *sophoi* contemporanei di Esopo (Biante, Pittaco, ecc.), il re Creso non è contemporaneo di Ahmose II (Amasi) ma di Nectanabo, contemporaneo di Alessandro Magno ed ha un ruolo essenziale un re Lykoros di Babilonia mai esistito. In Plutarco invece abbiamo scarsissime notizie storiche, solo quelle che l'erudito di Chersonea poteva su buone ed antiche basi considerare sicure e sono, non a caso, come si è visto, notizie connesse con la presenza di Esopo nella Grecia continentale, tra Corinto e Delfi e con le gravi conseguenze della sua ingiusta morte.

l'offesa subita dai nomi alla fine del regno di Aliatte. Erodoto invece con γενετί πρότερον segnala solo genericamente che l'offesa era stata fatta (γενόμενον) alla generazione che era adulta e matura più di un terzo di secolo prima della spedizione e la data più precisa la dà con il sincronismo che segue (κατὰ δὲ τὸν αὐτὸν χρόνον . . .) col quale rimanda, come si è detto, alla fine del regno di Aliatte (egli non accetta, evidentemente, la versione dei fatti data dagli accussi stessi, i Sami, che, come è detto in 70, datavano la vicenda ai tempi della caduta di Sardi, per Hdt. il 557 circa, vedi sopra). Cfr. invece la lunga discussione di Servais, pp. 62–79 (le ragioni gramaticali e sintattiche non convincono: γενετί è infatti ben altro che un dativo di tempo, cfr. Rosén, nota ad loc. e τοῦ κρ. τι ἄριστον non può essere esposto perché perfettamente erodoteo, cfr. Hdt. III 47, 1 p. 284, 3 Rosén).


Proprio la scarcezza di questi dati, peraltro storicamente precisi e dettagliati, dimostra che anche davanti ad Esopo e agli altri sophoi Plutarco si pone con quella stessa tipica attitudine di biografo ed erudito che, in casi più fortunati, nei quali le fonti erano molto più generose, come per il bios di Solone, costituisce a tutt’oggi il più valido aiuto per ricostruire le tipologie della sophia morale e politica della Grecia preclassica.42

II) Nel passo del De sera numinis vindicta citato sopra, Plutarco afferma esplicitamente che Esopo giunse a Delfi come inviato di Creso e con un duplice incarico, uno religioso,43 nei riguardi del santuario e del dio, l’altro politico-diplomatico nei riguardi dei cittadini di Delfi. Plutarco sottolinea che Esopo realizzò la parte religiosa della sua missione, rendendo al dio l’omaggio dovuto, non realizzò invece la transazione politico-diplomatica: infatti a seguito di un violento dissidio con i cittadini, l’inviatore di Creso rimandò indietro tutti i cospicui donativi a Sardi con la motivazione che coloro ai quali erano destinati si erano rivelati del tutto indegni di riceverli.44 Dalla somma di questi scarsi dati si può dedurre che Plutarco riteneva notizie storicamente fondate: a) che Esopo nell’ultima fase della sua vita fu politicamente legato al basileus lidio45 ed intrattenne per suo conto rapporti ad alto livello con realtà politico-religiose della Grecia centrale (Corinto e Delfi); b) che il sophos orientale fu condannato a morte in seguito ad uno scontro con una collettività di cittadini (polis, come dice Plutarco stesso nella sua risposta a Timone, v. sopra) e che nessun ruolo specifico ebbero i sacerdoti o il santuario. Conviene osservare inoltre che il dissidio fra Esopo e la polis di Delfi suppone, come del resto è confermato

43 Questo preciso scopo è confermato anche da Sept. Sop. 150A.
dalla testimonianza di Callimaco (v. sopra), che Esopo avesse parlato davanti ai cittadini svolgendo una demegoria.

E' facile vedere quanto poco questi scambi mai precisi dati si concilino con "l'esprit populaire et frondeur" che J. Defradas intravedeva nell'Esopo di Plutarco o con la "cultura laica e popolare" di cui parlano molti studiosi di favolistica esopica o ancora con il supposto Esopo "antiapollineo" che intravedono coloro che hanno preso in considerazione solo il tardo Romanzo ed anzi una sola fra le due redazioni, quella di G, che è più ricca di interpolazioni tardoantiche.46

III) Plutarco è ben a conoscenza della tradizione storica tramandata da Hdt. II 134 secondo la quale Esopo fu schiavo a Samo: lo dicono sia Diogeniano sia Timone nei due passi su citati del De Pythiae oraculis (400E) e del De sera numinis vindicta (557A); in quest'ultimo è ricordato Idmon (o Iadmon) "nipote di coloro che avevano comprato Esopo a Samo." Due frammenti della Costituzione dei Sami di Aristotele, uno tramandatoci dal compendio di Eraclide Lembo,47 l'altro da uno scolio ad Aristofane,48 confermano la storicità della schiavitù di Esopo a Samo e aggiungono due importanti notizie: che egli fu liberato da Idmon e che divenne famoso raccontando pubblicamente ai Sami un logos. Come ha ben notato il Sarkady,49 il fatto che Aristotele parlassi di Esopo in un trattato storico-politico indica già di per sé stesso che il favolista dopo che fu liberato ebbe un qualche ruolo pubblico e politico nella vita di Samo. Ed in effetti in un famoso passo della retorica di Aristotele, in cui si parla dell'impiego politico del logos di animali (Rhet. II 20, 1393b, 22 sgg.), Esopo δημαγόρης ἐν Σάμῳ narra una favola squisitamente politica, quella della volpe e della zecche, e paragona un demagogo50 ricco ad una zecca grossa e ben pasciuta:

46 Significativa soprattutto la trattenzione dell'argomento data da B. E. Perry nell'Introd. a Babrius and Phaedrus, cit., pp. XL sgg. (cfr. in particolare la n. l a p. XLJ). Lo studioso accetta l'assurda tesi di A. Wiechers, Aesop in Delphi (Meisenheim am Glan 1961) il quale a sua volta basa le sue deduzioni solo sulla recensione G del Romanzo di Esopo. A. La Penna nell'articolo su Athenaenem del 1962, su cit., rifiuta giustamente (p. 277, n. 33) la tesi dei Wiechers ma parla poi (p. 278) di "anticlericalismo esopico" e di "satura contro i preti parasiti in cui già allora si esprimeva la protesta di certi umili..." Il passo del De sera numinis vind. di Plutarco non è commentato, a quanto mi risulta, da nessuno studioso. La prima attestazione della ostilità tra Esopo e gli iepeci di Delfi si ha nel IV° secolo, in una declamazione di Libanio (vol. V pp. 118, 15-119, 1 Foerster) che dimostra comunque come siano di epoca ancora più tarda le interpolazioni della recensione G riguardanti l'ostilità di Apollo per Esopo.
47 Fr. 611, 33 Rose (= Heracl. Lemb. fr. 33 Dills).
48 Cfr. schol. vet. in Av 471 (= Arist. fr. 473 Rose).
49 Art. cit. (sopra, n. 20) 9-10.
50 L'uso del termine "demagogo" fatto da Aristotele per realtà politiche del VII/VI secolo è probabilmente anacronistico e non può avere tutte le valenze che gli erano proprie nella realtà ateniese tra quinto e quarto secolo: demagogos per l'epoca preclassica può indicare infatti solo un membro dell'aristocrazia o dell'oligarchia che cerca di prevalere sugli altri concorrenti al potere appoggiandosi a larghi settori del demos. A conferma di ciò si noti che in Arist. Pol. 1310b,
è meglio per il popolo essere comandato da una zecca sola e per di più ben pasciuta che, uccisa questa, essere assalito da molte zecche magre ed avide di sangue; un *logos* che ben esprime il modo amaro e pragmatico con cui il *sophos* orientale guardava alla realtà politica delle città ioniche caratterizzata da continui sommovimenti e *staseis*. Plutarco conosceva bene anche questa attività demogorica di Esopo a Samo, come dimostra l’uso che fa di questa favola nell’*An seni res publ. ger. sit* 790C.

I dati storici della schiavitù e della attività pubblica e politica a Samo che Plutarco poteva acquisire da testimonianze autorevoli come Erodoto e Aristotele (e certo anche da altre fonti ancora) ci inducono a ribadire che né in Plutarco né in alcuna fonte storica antica c’è il minimo accenno al fatto che la schiavitù di Esopo implicasse una sua provenienza da ceti popolari o un suo particolare coinvolgimento in problemi riguardanti i ceti più umili. In Plutarco e nelle sue fonti la schiavitù di Esopo rimane un puro fatto biografico che rivestì un ruolo giuridico-finanziario nell’annosa e complessa vicenda giudiziaria che seguì alla morte del favolista. I punti di contatto dell’Esopo del tardo *Romanzo* con la tipologia dello schiavo della commedia attica ed il contrasto, tipico nel *Romanzo*, della “rudimentale filosofia dello schiavo con la filosofia del padrone, cioè con la filosofia aulica tradizionale,”⁵¹ sono caratteristiche del tutto assenti dall’Esopo di Plutarco o di Erodoto o di Aristotele e sono da ritenersi invenzione novellistica di età imperiale priva di qualisiasi base storica. Non va infatti dimenticato che Erodoto chiama Esopo λογοποιός, un termine che implicava di per sé una persona colta, attiva culturalmente con scritti in prosa: così ad es. nel medesimo passo (II 134–35) Erodoto parla di Σαξεψος τῆς μουσικοφοίοιο και di Αἰσχίνου τοῦ λογοποίου ed in vari luoghi nei quali è menzionato il prosatore Ecateo di Mileto egli è definito λογοποιός come Esopo.⁵² Aristofane nell’importante passo di *Av.* 471 racconta un antico *logos* esopico a sfondo cosmoconico (assente, si noti, da tutte le tarde raccolte esopiche a noi giunte) e definisce “incolto” (ἄμαθης) chi non lo conosce.⁵³ Lo scolista (schol. vet., *ad loc.*) qualche secolo dopo non poteva fare a meno di richiamare l’attenzione dei suoi lettori, abituati ormai ad un Esopo ben diverso, sul fatto che, ai tempi di Aristofane, τὸν λογοποιόν Αἰσχίνου διὰ σπουδῆς εἶχον.⁵⁴ A questa antica tradizione torna Plutarco quando in

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⁵¹ A. La Penna, “Il romanzo di Esopo,” cit., 300–03.


⁵⁴ L’antica prosa gnomica e politica di Esopo imperniata sull’impiego didattico del *logos* di animali doveva in effetti avere finalità e scopi molto seri ed impegnati, il che non esclude
Sol. 28, I rende ad Esopo il titolo erodoteo di *logopoios* e considera l'es-
chiavo un personaggio culturalmente tanto rappresentativo da poter essere
diventato consigliere e collaboratore di un sovrano orientale.

E' ben noto che nell'antichità, in seguito a guerre, rappresaglie ed azioni
di pirateria\(^55\) potevano cadere in schiavitù persone di ogni ceto sociale, da
umili artigiani a personaggi dei più alti ranghi.\(^56\) In un'epoca come il VII°–
VI° secolo a. C. la mancanza di omogeneità del fenomeno schiavitù dal
punto di vista sociale con il conseguente diverso esito delle storie di singoli
prigionieri, cui un mercato cinico quanto altamente selettivo poteva aprire
insospettate possibilità di realizzare in terra straniera le proprie doti
personalì, rendono estremamente verosimili storicamente e socialmente
vicende come quella del *logopoios* Esopo, personaggio colto e percì di
ceto elevato, proveniente da zone fortemente ellenizzate come la Tracia
costiera o la Frigia\(^57\) e trapiantato a Samo, uno dei centri più vivaci della
cultura ionica. Per le ragioni appena dette e per la accertabile assenza di
concentrazioni massiche di schiavi nel quadro politicamente vario e
frammentato delle *poleis* dell'Asia Minore tra il VII° ed il VI° secolo a. C. è
sicuramente anacronistica l'ipotesi che al tempo di Esopo esistesse qualcosa
come una "visione della vita elaborata dagli schiavi e dai reietti" (v. sopra)
della quale il favolista sarebbe stato interprete privilegiato. Sia l'Esopo delle
più antiche fonti storiche, sia l'Esopo fortemente arcaizzante di Plutarco,
sembra contraddire un simile punto di vista.

naturalmente che la finalità seria potesse talora essere raggiunta con una satira ed un'ironia che
potevano arrivare fino al γελοιος. Del resto, come ha ben chiarito R. S. Falkowitz, la storia
della favola di animali nel Vicino Oriente era sempre stata legato alla cultura scritta, alla scuola,
alla didattica, alla retoricà (e quindi, per forza di cose, a ceti socialmente elevati) e niente aveva a
che fare con le strutture della cultura orale e del folklore (cfr. *The Sumerian Rhetoric Collections*
vista è eliminato l'ostacolo ad una "prosa esopica" nel VI secolo che intravedeva B. E. Perry nel
su cit. *Babrius and Phaedrus*, Introd. p. XXXVI. Per una collocazione del genere dei *logoi*
esopici all'interno di una "tradition savante, scolare" fin dal tempi della Grecia arcaica, cfr. gli
interessanti ed originali interventi di M. Nejgaard e di M. Lasserre in *Entretiens Hardt* XXX
griechisch-römische Buchbeschreibung verglichen mit der des Vorderen Orients* (Halle–Saale

\(^55\) I Sami erano famosi per la pirateria, cfr. J. M. Cook, *The Greeks in Ionia and the East*
(London 1962) 90. In particolare nel VI° secolo gli *lawan* (Ioni) sono menzionati da fonti

\(^56\) Cfr. ad es. proprio dei tempi di Esopo, l'importante censimento di prigionieri di guerra su

\(^57\) Sulla provenienza di Esopo cfr. la documentazione completa in B. E. Perry, *Aesopica*, cit.,
Phryger, ibid. IV (1979), col. 823, 2 sgg. e T. J. Dunbabin, *The Greeks and their Eastern
Neighbours* (London 1957) 64 sgg.
Il contesto nel quale la sophia esopica viene collocata nel Convivium septem sapientium è una utile riprova di quanto ho fin qui esposto. L'operetta, sicuramente plutarchea,\textsuperscript{58} è ben lontana dall'essere una divagazione novellistica,\textsuperscript{59} ma rappresenta anzi un tour de force filologico e storico col quale Plutarco cerca di recuperare tra le antiche tradizioni della Grecia preclassica i contorni precisi della sophia arcaica greco-orientale: in essa i proβhîmaτa basilikâ (cfr. 146E; 152F), le ἐρωτήσεις κότι ἀποκρίσεις (153B–D), le σοφίας ἀμιλιῶ (151B), le ἀπορίαι degli antichi agoni poetici (153F), gli αἱνίγματα (148D; 154B), il logos esopico (164B), le antiche massime delfiche (164B–C), gli animali e le piante simboliche del memoriale di Cipselo (164A), assumevano valenze politiche e morali il cui ricordo si era poi in gran parte perduto nella Grecia classica ed ellenistica. L'opera non ha, e non potrebbe avere, la compattezza strutturale della narrazione inventata,\textsuperscript{60} proprio perché è costituita in tutti i suoi particolari da frammenti che Plutarco ha pazientemente raccolto dalle più varie, antiche ed attendibili fonti che aveva a disposizione. Fin dall'inizio il lettore viene messo di fronte alla problematicità della ricostruzione storico-filologica (cfr. 146B) e l'operetta, rivolta sicuramente ad un pubblico dotto,\textsuperscript{61} è scandita da una sottile e continua sensibilità per l'autentico, il genuino, il documentato.\textsuperscript{62} I personaggi più peregrini sono corredati da scarne notizie storico-biografiche, le poche che Plutarco poteva reperire e considerare attendibili: da Nilosseno di Naucrati (146E) ad Araldo di Troezene (150A) a Chersia, poeta di corte dei Cipselidi (156F), a Mnesifilo amico di Solone (154C), niente di novellistico ma solo l'occasione per porre un problema, chiarire una questione, autenticare una tradizione e completare un mosaico di antica cultura ellenica. E tutto converge verso il finale scenato da vicende (Arione, Enalo, Cipselo) legate al dio di Delfi ed alla glorificazione di quel


\textsuperscript{59} Così il Wilamowitz in “Zu Plutarchs Gastmahl . . .,” cit. 196–98 (= Kt. Schrift. III, cit., 117 sgg.). J. Defradas in Plutarque, Oeuvres mor., II, cit., p. 188 nega che Plutarco abbia avuto in quest'opera intenzioni di storico: ma, come abbiamo visto, il contesto storico e cronologico del Convivium non è affatto impreciso e tantomeno impossibile e novellistico (v. le obiezioni di Defradas, ibid. 170 sgg.). Anche K. Ziegler, s.v. Plutarchos, op. cit., col. 883, 40 sgg., afferma che lo scopo di quest'opera è puramente “künstlerisch” e “rhetorisch–sophistisch.” Recentemente però S.J.D. Aalders in “Political Thought in Plutarch's Convivium Septem Sapientium,” Mnemosyne 30 (1977) 30 pur ribadendo che Solone, Amasi, Creso, Periandro non potevano essere contemporanei, ritiene che Plutarco abbia “seriously tried to put this dialogue in its historical setting.”

\textsuperscript{60} Cfr. K. Ziegler, art. cit., col. 883, 27 sgg. e J. Defradas, op. cit., 173.

\textsuperscript{61} Ad es. Amasi è nominato appena in 151B mentre nell'introduzione 146E–F, dove si parla di Nilosseno di Naucrati e della sua missione, Plutarco sottintende che i suoi lettori sappiano che il re di cui si parla è Amasi, mai menzionato esplicitamente.

\textsuperscript{62} Cfr. ad es. 147B (detto attribuito a Pitacco invece che a Talete), 151F (rifiuto della tradizione del dissidio tra Solone e Chilone), oppure le considerazioni sulla differenza fra l'impossibile e l'insolito e fra il παράδοχος ed il παράδεξον che concludono la discussione sulle vicende di Arione e di Enalo (163D).
santuario che tanto ruolo aveva avuto nel custodire e diffondere le più tipiche espressioni delle sophia del sesto secolo, le famose massime dei sophoi. Sicchè ha ragione lo Ziegler ad accostare il Convivium ad un'opera come il De Pythiae oraculis che peraltro, come abbiamo visto, è da collocare negli ultimi anni della vecchiaia di Plutarco. In un'opera di questo genere, concepita dall'autore come un condensato di antichi messaggi culturali, è significativo che il sophos martire di Delfi abbia un ruolo consistente e certo non di secondo piano: la dotta disquisizione sulle tre principali massime delfiche che conclude l'opera (164C) non è affidata a Solone o a Biante o a Chilone, ma ad Esopo, ed è nel Convivium (158B) che leggiamo la più densa lode della sophia esopica definita καλή, ποικίλη, πολύγλωσσος ed affine alla sophia dell'antichissimo Esiodo, che con il logos di animali ammoniva i basilieis. Attraverso il contrasto fra Esopo e lo scita Anacarsi, Plutarco sottolinea l'appartenenza di Esopo alla sofisticata cultura greco-anatolica e la sua estraneità ad alcuni aspetti tipici delle culture barbariche: ad Anacarsi che rifiuta la raffinata ed antica arte del flauto Esopo risponde con un dotto ed allusivo verso di Cleobulina sul flauto frigio (150F) ed in 155A il favolistra scherza sul fatto che il sapiente scita consideri virtù l'essere senza casa e l'abitare in un carro. Sono passi significativi che fanno capire quanto questo antico logopoios che vive alla corte di un re orientale ed è ben integrato nella cultura greca contemporanea (alla fine del Convivium cita ad es. tre versi di Omero) sia lontano dall'Esopo schiavo cinicheggianti delle raccolte favolistiche di età imperiale o del tardo Romanzo. Possiamo supporre che il dotto di Cheronea avesse fonti antiche e precise che gli permettevano di dare ad Esopo quello che era di Esopo e ad Anacarsi quello che era di Anacarsi. E' così che Plutarco, con la sua ricerca erudita sull'arcaico genere sapienziale dei προβλήματα e delle ἀπορίες (146E; 152F; 153F) ci permette di recuperare, dietro a due prolissi e grotteschi episodi della parte samia del Romanzo di Esopo, la antica fonte storico-biografica poi deformata dal tardo romanziere: Biante di Priene aveva risposto alle domande del faroano Amasi (cfr. 146F e 151B–D) come poi l'immaginario e farsesco Esopo del tardo bios (cfr. V. Aes. 51–55 e 68–73 GW) rispondeva al padrone Xanto ed agli scholastikoi di Samo. Così, sempre nel Convivium, un episodio che nell'eterogenea raccolta esopica fedriana vede protagonista Esopo (Phaedr. III 3) risulta in realtà derivato da antiche notizie storico-biografiche su Talete e Periandro, come dimostra Plutarco in 149C–E. Tutte queste costanti e sottile rettifiche erudite inserite con magistrale nonchalance nell'animata cornice del Convivium rivelano con quanto rigore, in ogni capitolo di questa breve opera, Plutarco cerchi di seguire le tracce più autentiche della sophia del sesto secolo. Nell'ottica

plutarchea Esopo non ha un ruolo né minore né subordinato a quello degli altri sophoi.\(^{65}\) come loro è particolarmente interessato alla meditazione di problemi morali e politici apparendoci così in perfetta continuità con la figura del logopoios politicamente attivo di cui parlava Aristotele nelle Costituzioni di Samo e di Delfi. La valenza politico-morale della simbologia tratta dal mondo animale è un leit-motif di questa opera nella quale sono ricordate o narrate per esteso favole esopiche\(^{66}\) e rievocate discussioni politiche περὶ τῶν θηρίων durante antiche riunioni conviviali:\(^{67}\) alla fine dell'opera, poi, i convitati chiedono al dotto poeta Chersia di spiegare cosa simboleggiando le numerose rane del monumento di Cipselo e Plutarco poco dopo (164A–B) ci fa sapere che Chersia aveva lodato i logos di Esopo per il loro stretto rapporto con le massime di Delfi. Attraverso questa attenta panoramica sul simbolo animale nella Grecia pre-classica, dal logos esopico alla discussione politica al monumento pubblico alla poesia impegnata, Plutarco ricostruisce, in maniera frammentaria ma suggestiva, i contorni di un antico genere sapienziale e fa risorgere un Esopo del quale, dopo Aristotele, si erano perse le tracce. Nessuna meraviglia quindi che nella parte centrale del Convivium, dedicata alla trattazione politica sul buon governo, Esopo intervenga ed esprima il suo parere discutendo da pari a pari con Solone e gli altri. Semmai è significativo che, essendo il colloquio articolato in due tempi, prima περὶ βασιλείας, poi περὶ δημοκρατίας, Esopo intervenga solo nella prima parte. In 152B, dopo che Solone, Biante e gli altri sophoi hanno espresso il loro parere sul miglior βασιλεύως καὶ τύραννος\(^{68}\) inducendo il loro ospite Periandro nel più profondo sconcerto,

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\(^{66}\) Cfr. 150A-B (l’indicazione geografica Λυδός è un tratto arcaico, cfr. ad es. Semon. fr. 9 West), 150F, 155B, 156A, 157B; per le favole in 150E e 157B Plutarco è il nostro unico testimone (sulla favola esopica arcaica tornò in un prossimo lavoro).


\(^{68}\) Si noti l’accostamento arcaizzante dei due termini che corrisponde bene al fatto che la discussione avviene davanti a Periandro, figlio di Cipselo, tiranno-re (cfr. quanto notato in proposito più sopra e N.G.L. Hammond in CAH2 III 3 [1982] 348): non mi sembra che “the difference between βασιλεύως and τύραννος . . . plays a considerable role in the Convivium,” come vorrebbe Aalders, art. cit., p. 33.
Esopo interviene in difesa di Periandro rimproverandoli perché invece di essere σύμβουλοι sono κατήγοροι τῶν ἀρχόντων: emerge quindi ancora una volta dietro al logopoios il consigliere e collaboratore di un sovrano, lo stesso che in Sol. 28, 1 spiega all'uomo politico ateniese che con i re bisogna ὡς ἤκυστα ἢ ὡς ἤδυστα ὅμιλεῖν. Poco dopo, sempre in 152B, Esopo rimprovera Solone per non aver preso su di sé il governo di Atene quando l'oracolo di Delfi glielo aveva suggerito e per questa via Plutarco ci dà anche l'opinione che Esopo aveva sulla migliore forma di governo per una polis.69 La totale estraneità del sapiente greco-orientale Esopo al problema della δημοκρατία è dimostrato con un argomento e silenio: Esopo è completamente assente nella seconda parte della discussione (cfr. 154D–E).

Se consideriamo questa testimonianza plutarchea unitamente agli indizi che ci dà la favola che, secondo Artist. Rhet II 20 (v.sopra), Esopo narrò δημηγορῶν ἐν Σάμῳ, possiamo ricostruire una visione politica certo frammentaria per la scarsità dei dati, ma coerente con la personalità di un sophos che aveva lasciato il movimentato mondo ionicico per rimanere alla corte di un sovrano e diventare suo attivo collaboratore. Il logos di Samo vede un demos destinato ad essere sempre in balia di avide zecche, i demagoghi: se ne ammazza una sarà assalito subito dalle altre. L'Esopo del Convivium auspica per la polis il governo di uno solo e considera compito dei sophoi essere σύμβουλοι e non κατήγοροι di chi chiede il loro aiuto per meglio governare. Questo stesso Esopo, collaboratore di Creso e difensore di Periandro, fu ingiustamente ucciso a Delfi in seguito ad un grave dissidio con la polis: e quanto severamente Plutarco nel De sera numinis vindicta condannò questo atto l'abbiamo visto. A questo Esopo, non a Chilone o a Biante, Plutarco fa concludere il Convivium con una disquisizione sulla presenza dei temi delle massime delfiche in Omero: un omaggio alla saggezza morale e politica del logopoios ed alla sua cultura greca.

Il rigore filologico e storico e cronologico col quale questi dati sono presentati da Plutarco ci impedisce di pensare che in tutto ciò ci sia qualcosa che Plutarco non potesse convalidare con le sue fonti. Non solo: l'antichità di questo Esopo è dimostrabile, mi sembra, anche per altra via, con un passo che non è plutarcheo, che è di molti secoli prima e che si illumina di luce nuova se Esopo era così come Plutarco, fedele alle sue fonti, ce lo ha presentato. Si tratta del famoso inizio del Fedone platonico in cui si dice che Socrate in prigione, nei giorni che precedettero la sua morte, compose un inno ad Apollo e mise in versi τοὺς τοῦ Αἰσιόκτου λόγους (Phaed. 60d–61b): a questa attività si dedicò Socrate mentre gli

Ateniesi erano a Delo a rendere omaggio ad Apollo; al ritorno della nave da Delo la condanna a morte doveva essere eseguita (cfr. ibid. 59d; 61a). A Cebete che per conto del poeta Eveno di Paro chiede al condannato perché abbia scelto di scrivere ποιήματα su Apollo e su argomenti esopici Socrate risponde che lo ha fatto obbedendo ad una sollecitazione del dio stesso.70 e prima ha composto l’ino (61b), poi le favole, sicché l’inno ad Apollo appare proemio (60d) alle favole, a loro strettamente legato.71 La critica si è sempre trovata in imbarazzo davanti a questo passo. Perché Socrate prima di morire per mano degli ateniesi si è occupato di logoi esopici?72 E perché questo strano abbinamento dei logoi con un inno ad Apollo? Se pensiamo all’Esopo ricostruibile attraverso la testimonianza plutarchea il passo del Fedone assume una intensa e precisa alluviosità in ogni suo particolare. Socrate, che dal dio di Delfi era stato riconosciuto sapiente (cfr. Pl. Apol. 21a), manda alla polis che lo ha condannato a morte un messaggio attraverso i logoi di quel sophos che anch’egli da una polis fu condannato a morte. Mentre gli ateniesi sono a Delo a rendere omaggio al dio, Socrate con l’ino e con i logoi di Esopo assimila la sua situazione a quella dell’antico logopoiòs che rese omaggio al dio di Delfi e con amari logoi (v. sopra) denunciò la corruzione della polis. Apollo punì gravemente i Delfi per la morte del sophos Esopo: cosa farà per la morte di Socrate?73 Se, come penso, il passo del Fedone è carico di tante alluviosità, sarebbe interessante sapere quali favole esopiche Socrate trattò. Una tradizione biografica certamente antica conservata da Diogene Laerzio (II 5, 42) ci dà i primi due versi di una favola di Socrate: Esopo appare in qualità di demegoros (v. sopra), parla ad una polis, quella di Corinto, ed invita a μὴ κρίνειν ἄρῃ τὴν λαοδίκης σοφῆς, un passo che, a chi tenga presente l’Esopo di Plutarco, suona assai familiare; l’invito a non giudicare la vera areté sulla base della λαοδ. σοφῆς, la sapienza accreditata dal giudizio popolare, dai tribunali del λαός.74 L’Esopo, collaboratore di Creso e difensore di Periandro, che alla fine del Convivium di Plutarco spiega le aristocratiche massime delfiche75 e

70 Gli ἐνύπνια di cui parla consistenmente in Phaed. 60c–61 sono manifestazioni della volontà del dio, cfr. Pl. Apol.33c.
74 Veramente strana l’interpretazione di B. Gentili e C. Prato in Poetae Elegiaci II, (Lipsiae 1985) 80 (appar. a Socr. fr. 1) secondo cui qui κρίνειν varrebbe προκρίνειν, facendo così di λαοδ. σοφῆς una opzione positiva rispetto ad una areté aristocratica.
trova la morte in un tragico contrasto con una polis, poteva effettivamente aver espresso un concetto del genere nella sua sosta a Corinto: l'autenticità del frammento socratico mi sembra difficilmente negabile.\textsuperscript{76} E non è davvero strano che Socrate, che era stato accusato fra l'altro di leggere i poeti (in particolare Omero) in chiave antidemocratica,\textsuperscript{77} abbia deciso di ribadire alcuni concetti fondamentali della sua visione politica e morale con componimenti in versi e non in prosa.

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Plutarco ed Euripide: alcune considerazioni sulle citazioni euripidee in Plutarco
(*De aud. poet.*)

PAOLO CARRARA

Le numerose e non sempre ovvie citazioni poetiche che costellano da un capo all'altro il "corpus" degli scritti plutarchei hanno posto, e continuano a porre, il difficile problema se Plutarco abbia veramente letto di prima mano le opere letterarie dalle quali cita, o se invece un tale tesoro di sentenze non sia altro che parte del patrimonio erudito attinto dallo scrittore di Cheronea alle sue letture filosofico-antiquarie, cioè a "fonti intermedie."

Il problema è ulteriormente complicato dalla constatazione che Plutarco fu realmente uno dei maggiori e migliori conoscitori di letteratura del suo tempo; il che, unito alla sua prodigiosa memoria e all'amore senza riserve per tutto ciò che costituiva il passato glorioso della nazione ellenica, ci obbliga certamente a non ammettere nel suo caso una messe di letture di prima mano cospicua. A ciò sì aggiunga che il secondo secolo fu, per la letteratura greca, un secolo di prodigioso risorgimento, del quale lo scrittore di Cheronea, con la sua appassionata e poliedrica attività di ellenista, fu artefice principalissimo. Saremmo pertanto tentati di concludere che Plutarco abbia letto di prima mano la maggior parte di quei versi e di quelle sentenze con i quali esemplifica e abbellisce di continuo le sue composizioni.

In realtà una conclusione del genere è sicuramente azzardata, anzi illegittima. Le numerose citazioni plutarchee presentano in genere un aspetto assolutamente "convenzionale": sono in gran parte "loci communes" che si trovano anche presso altri scrittori e antologi.

L'impressione che si ricava dalla lettura degli scritti plutarchei

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2 Certo tutt'altro che rari sono anche i casi nei quali Plutarco è, o sembra essere, per noi l'unico testimone di un passo altrimenti ignoto; ma nel giudicare di ciò conviene essere molto prudenti. I frammenti di antologie restituiti dai papiro ci testimoniano continuamente l'esistenza di una tradizione antologica molto più ricca di quella conservata nel Medioevo. Si veda recentemente l'antologia di poeti comici di P. Harris 171 pubblicata da E. Livrea, *ZPE* 58 (1985) 11 sgg.: la maggioranza dei testi in essa contenuti sono nuovi per noi.
sembra piuttosto essere—erroneamente, come si vedrà—quella di una vastissima conoscenza e di una grandiosa compilazione, ma essenzialmente di seconda mano. Si potrebbe ipotizzare—paradosсалmente e non senza forzatura—che Plutarco non abbia letto alcunчe al di fuori di Omero, di antologie e di scritti filosofico-morali. È chiarо che una tesi del genere, a riguardo di colui che fu senz'ombra di dubbio un dottissimo ellenista di età flavio–antonina, dagli sconfinati interessi culturali e dai cosicui mezzi finanziari, è patentemente assurda. Assurda sì, ma non ingiustificata, e soprattutto non molto più assurda dell'altra che pretenderebbe di postulare per il dotto di Cheronea una diretta conoscenza di prima mano per tutti gli originali—epica, lirica, tragedia, commedia, letteratura in generale—dai quali egli attinga un verso o una sentenza.  

Bιsogna premettere, a mio avviso, che un'impostazione "manichea" del problema delle letture di Plutarco, come degli altri autori antichi, non consente di raggiungere nessun apprezzabile risultato, anzi sarà senz'altro fuorviante. Dedurre infatti dalla massa delle citazioni letterarie una univoca correlazione con la massa delle letture sarebbe un'ingenuità, perché prescinderebbe in pieno dal metodo di studio, di formazione e di lavoro proprio della persona colta di età ellenistica e romana. 

Un valido spunto per definire meglio i termini della questione credo che possa trovarsi nell'attenta considerazione della testimonianza che Plutarco stesso ci ha lasciato a questo proposito con lo scritto De audiendis poetis. Mi servirò come campione d'indagine delle citazioni euripidee che in esso si trovano per tentare di illustrare alcuni fenomeni piuttosto interessanti e significativi a riguardo della nostra ricerca. 

Innanzi tutto lo scritto di Plutarco intitolato πος δει τον νεόν τον ποιημάτων ἀκούειν  non è né un trattato di estetica né un trattato teorico di poetica. La preoccupazione dell'autore in esso non è, almeno fondamentalmente, né come i poeti debbano scrivere né che cosa sia la poesia. Lo scritto di Plutarco è un trattato pedagogico–morale. In esso si

5 Il titolo greco, in tutte le sue variante attestate dal mss.—unica eccezione il cosiddetto Catalogo di Lampria che omette τον νεόν—fa esplicito riferimento ai giovani: πος δει τον νεόν ποιημάτων ἀκούειν, cfr. E. Valigilio, Plutarco, De audiendis poetis (Torino, Loescher 1973) 59.
rende in esame il problema, tutto pratico e concreto, se e in qual misura la poesia (oggi diremmo piuttosto “la letteratura”) debba aver spazio nella formazione dei giovani. Lo spunto alle considerazioni plutarchee, sebbene mai direttamente dichiarato, è costituito dalla celebre tesi platonica6 secondo la quale la poesia è sostanzialmente fuori luogo nell’educazione. È naturale che Plutarco, sincero estimatore di Platone e desideroso continuamente di calcare le sue orme,7 sentisse tutto il disagio che in lui, estimatore della poesia e della cultura greca, la posizione del filosofo ateniense creava. D’altra parte, dopo Platone, la tradizione peripatetica e stoica avevano ampiamente riabilitato la poesia e si può dire che la severa condanna platonica fu condivisa, quando lo fu, più su un piano teorico che nei fatti. Plutarco infatti non esita a riconoscere all’esperienza poetica un ruolo importante nel “curriculum” della formazione della persona colta che per lui è, naturalmente, da identificare nel filosofo.8 Tutto il primo capitolo del De audiendiis poetis è basato su questo concetto.

Alcuni secoli dopo, Basilio, metropoli di Cesarea di Cappadocia, fonderà proprio su Plutarco un’idea analoga per poter far spazio nel suo programma educativo alla “letteratura” classico–paganà.9 Il parallelismo fra le due posizioni è evidente, ma deve essere sottolineato richiamando alcune analogie che possono a prima vista venire sottovalutate. In entrambi i casi coloro ai quali si concede la lettura della poesia classica sono giovani: i véoi della cerchia familiare di Basilio,10 Socrate e Cleandro—figli

8 L’istruzione superiore era identificata, per gli antichi, con la retorica o con la filosofia, mentre la lettura della poesia era appannaggio della scuola secondaria (cfr. Marrou 225—tr. it.). Naturalmente c’era contrasto fra i sostenitori della prevalenza della retorica e quelli della filosofia e Plutarco era dichiaratamente schierato con i secondi (cfr. Ziegler 349–52—tr. it.); significativo mi sembra a questo proposito che in De audiendo 8. 41 E–F Plutarco ricorra, nei riguardi della retorica, al tradizionale esempio dell’ape che si applicava proprio alle letture di poeti: bisogna agire come l’ape che sa scegliere non i fiori più belli e atraenti, ma quelli che sembrano mestieri. Il prologo del De aud. poet. non lascia dubbi sul fatto che compito dell’uomo adulto fosse quello di coronare gli studi con il dedicarsi alla filosofia nella sua veste più scientifica e meno inquadrata da lenocini formali, ove una filosofia mescolata ad attrattive poetiche poteva essere concessa ai giovani, per cominciare ad istradarli alla vera sapienza (vd. De aud. poet., 1. 14 D–F). Dello stesso parere l’anonimo compositore dello scritto De liberis educandis (pervenutoci fra le opere di Plutarco), che riferisce, condividendo completamente, il detto del filosofo Bione che paragonava coloro che si dedicano alle discipline “letterarie” ai Proci omerici i quali non potendo avere Penelope (=la filosofia), si accontentavano delle ancelle (le belle lettere), cfr. De lib. ed. 10. 7 C–D.
rispettivamente di Plutarco e di Marco Sedatio, dedicatario del trattatello—nello scritto plutarcheo.

Sia in Plutarco che in Basilio trarre di continuo un sincero e, direi, incoercibile amore per la grande letteratura classica. La posizione teoretica è tuttavia in entrambi i casi improntata a grande cautela e, direi, a diffidenza. Essa denuncia il pesante condizionamento platonico11: se Platone aveva proibito la poesia, Plutarco può al massimo ammetterla come momento propedeutico alla vera e propria formazione dell’adulto, cioè alla formazione filosofica: la posizione di Plutarco nei confronti della poesia è assimilabile a quella nei confronti della retorica,12 tutta l’introduzione al trattatello, con le sue cautele e le sue analogie paraboliche è sintomatica a questo riguardo.

Ci si può a questo punto domandare: se Plutarco assegna alla lettura dei poeti e della letteratura classica in generale un posto, importante si, ma rigorosamente confinato al “vestibolo” della παιδεία, non avrà egli forse fatto ciò basandosi sulla prassi educativa ordinaria del suo tempo? Plutarco non è mai un astratto istorizzatore e, d’altra parte, il tono dell’introduzione del De aud. poet. sembra rispecchiare dei dati di fatto concreti.13 Il De audiendis poetis è, da questo punto di vista, una miniera preziosa di informazioni circa le letture scolastiche che si facevano allora ad un dato stadio della formazione culturale del giovane.14 Una tale considerazione mi sembra che autorizzi a ritenere del tutto fuorviente la pretesa di trovare senz’altro nello scritto una testimonianza della vitalità di questo o quell’autore in quel tempo.

Esaminando le citazioni del De Aud. poet., possiamo dividere il materiale citato in due grandi sezioni. Da un lato le citazioni omeriche, numerosissime: esse costituiscono, per così dire, la struttura portante dell’esemplificazione dello scritto, la testimonianza principe per dimostrare un’asserzione che viene fatta. È questa una caratteristica comune a tutte le opere antiche del genere, ed è pertanto ragionevole pensare che molto materiale omerico citato da Plutarco appartenga alle fonti da esso impiegate. Ma data l’importanza che alla lettura integrale del testo omerico si attribuiva nella scuola, è naturale inferire che molte citazioni omeriche derivino da Plutarco già dalla stessa sua educazione letteraria elementare. Omero infatti, in edizione integrale, continuava ad essere il libro di lettura dell’Ellade.15 Naturalmente ciò equivale a dire, dato i metodi di apprendimento degli


12 Cfr. sopra, n. 8.

13 Cfr. l’accenno a Cleandro in 1. 15 B, e i numerosi riferimenti all’effetto che questo o quell’accorgimento possono avere sui giovani studenti (6. 22 D, 23 A, ecc.).

14 L’importanza dello scritto plutarcheo come testimonianza di primaria importanza per le letture della scuola del tempo di Plutarco è sottolineato dal Bams, II 3.

15 Marrou 224 (tr. it.).
antichi, basati sulla lettura a voce alta e sul mandare a memoria,\(^{16}\) che Omero era conosciuto a memoria dalla totalità delle persone colte.

Una riprova di ciò, se mai ce ne fosse bisogno, è costituita dai ritrovamenti papiracei omerici, superiori di gran lunga a quelli di qualsiasi altro autore. È interessante notare che fra i papiri omerici un posto importante è occupato da testi che in qualche modo si devono connettere con la scuola elementare e con l'apprendimento della scrittura e della lettura.\(^{17}\)

Il trattato plutarcheo, dunque, presupponendo che tale lettura fosse prevista per i giovani destinatari, ci fa concludere con certezza in favore della lettura omerica integrale da parte del suo autore.

Dall'altra parte dobbiamo collocare il blocco di tutte le altre citazioni. Fra queste quelle di letteratura drammatica—in particolare dalle tragedie di Euripide—sono senz'altro una massa notevole. Da dove provengono queste citazioni? Da dove provengono i numerosi passi euripidei che costellano il trattato?

La risposta non è difficile a trovarsi, ma necessita di una considerazione preliminare. In nessun punto del trattato si dà un giudizio, non dico estetico, ma neppure etico su una qualunque tragedia euripidea nel suo insieme, non si accenna mai all'effetto che potrebbe produrre sull'animo del giovane la lettura delle azioni e dei discorsi di questo o quel personaggio, delle parole di questo o quel coro, o la valutazione di questa o quella grande situazione. L'esame della poesia euripidea è \textit{unicamente} confinato alle sentenze del poeta. Cosa dobbiamo dedurre da ciò? Mancanza di sensibilità di Plutarco? Incapacità di valutare per quello che valgono \textit{Medea, Troiane, Baccanii}? Una conclusione del genere sarebbe davvero frutto di grande ingenuità. Dalla constatazione fatta possiamo, a mio avviso, dedurre una e una sola cosa: lo scritto di Plutarco è una guida alla lettura “morale” della poesia: abbiamo visto che esso illumina il giovane sul come accostarsi al primo grande libro dell'Ellade, ad Omero; ora è il momento di passare al secondo grande libro di testo della scuola secondaria greca: gli gnomologi.\(^{18}\)

Sulla genesi, la struttura ed il valore di questi prodotti si è scritto molto; basti qui citare i nomi di Elter, Horna, Barns\(^{19}\); i ritrovamenti papiracei di quest'ultimo secolo, poi, ci hanno restituito numerosi esempi di questo tipo.

\(^{16}\) Si veda l'elogio della memoria e della sua assoluta preminenza nell'educazione che fa l'anonimo \textit{De lib. ed.} 13. 9 D–E.


di libri, in modo da documentarne con sufficiente chiarezza l'ampia e capillare diffusione nell'Egitto ellenistico e romano. Tenendo presente ciò, possiamo ancora una volta costatare come Plutarco, conformemente alla propria indole, non proponga qui astratte considerazioni sulla poesia, sia pure in relazione alla gioventù, ma si attenga strettamente ai dati di fatto, alla prassi scolastica del suo tempo e indichi il modo migliore di metterla a frutto, sviluppandone le potenzialità e reprimendone gli abusi.\textsuperscript{20} Se ciò è vero si potrebbe, paradossalmente, affermare che Plutarco, nella veste di commentatore di libri scolastici, non tragga e non voglia trarre nulla \textit{in questo scritto} dalla lettura diretta del teatro euripideo. Non è Euripide—che egli conosceva benissimo direttamente e che certamente avrà citato a memoria in più passi della sua immensa opera, magari attingendo anche ad opere meno divulgate—non sono i drammì del terzo tragico ateniese che ora gli stanno a cuore; sono i libri scolastici che corrono per le mani di Socràro e di Cleandro e la prassi educativa su di essi imperniata la fonte delle sue preoccupazioni di intellettuale impegnato e l'argomento dei suoi consigli di pedaggio illuminato e prudente.

Vediamone subito un esempio lampante.

\textit{De aud. poet.} 12. 33 C. Plutarco sta esemplificando il metodo usato dagli Stoici per rendere moralmente utili sentenze di poeti, che altrimenti potrebbero essere dannose. Si tratta della \textit{παραδιόρθωσις} ossia \textit{ἐπανόρθωσις}, procedimento che, considerato di per sé, non può non lasciarci perplessi, ma che gli Stoici praticarono ampiamente. Cleante (\textit{SVF} 1 562, p. 128)—dice Plutarco—riscrisse (cfr. \textit{μεταγράφων}) "il passo sulla ricchezza" (\textit{τὸ περὶ τοῦ πλούτουν}, senza alcun accenno all'autore o al dramma: curioso modo di citare da una tragedia! meno strano se si sta citando da un'antologia tematica): si tratta, noi sappiamo, di Eur. \textit{Electr.} 428 sg., che Plutarco cita così:

\[φίλοις τε δοῦναι σῶμα τ' εἰς νόσους πεσόν δαπάναις σῶσαι.\]

Sembra—e la cosa non meraviglia—che la tragedia fosse nota a Plutarco anche nella sua interezza\textsuperscript{21}; egli tuttavia cita il passo con una lezione che non solo non può essere genuina,\textsuperscript{22} ma che ben difficilmente si sarà mai letta in

\textsuperscript{20} Questa è, a mio avviso, anche la posizione di Basilio nel suo \textit{Ad adolescents}: come far sì che una prassi scolastica ormai consacrata dall'uso plurisecolare, ed alla quale i giovani di "buona famiglia" non possono sottrarsi, possa essere usata al meglio dai rampolli di una grande famiglia cristiana ai vertici della società del suo tempo, senza che ciò si traduca in guasti per la vita dello spirito.


\textsuperscript{22} I mss. di Euripide (che in questo caso sono i soli L e P) leggono \textit{ζέοντις} non \textit{φίλοις}. La stessa lezione dei mss. sembra nota anche a Dione Crisostomo (7. 28).
manoscritti completi della tragedia, per quanto cattivi. La variante inferiore φίλως è infatti determinante per il senso che qui si vuol dare al passo euripideo e presuppone l’inserimento in un contesto περί φιλίως, ad esempio uno gnomologico tematico; questo contesto doveva essere presente a chi diede origine al rifacimento attribuito a Cleante. Una controprova di ciò si trova nel fatto che il passo, in una versione più ampia (vv. 426–28) e quindi indipendente da Plutarco, si legge in Stob. 4. 31. 7, e puntualmente troviamo anche qui la variante φίλως. L’“excerptum” dunque, previo necessario adattamento, doveva essere topico in sezioni sull’amicizia che attingevano alle “riscrittture” di Cleante o di chi per lui.

Del resto, tutte le numerose citazioni euripidee che si trovano nel cap. 6 denunciano il loro legame con la letteratura di origine stoica intorno al problema della παραφιλόρθωσις: sia quelle fatte esplicitamente risalire a Zenone e Cleante, sia gli altri esempi aggiunti da Plutarco.23 Analogamente il contesto di De aud. poet. 4. 20 D con la sua struttura “antilogica” rimanda, come giustamente fa osservare Di Gregorio,24 a quel tipo di letteratura gnomologica. Così pure da una discussione, di probabile origine stoica, sul termine εὐδοξιομοία deriverranno le citazioni di tragedie peraltro molto note—e che Plutarco avrà certamente conosciuto—come la Medea e le Fenicie in De aud. poet. 6. 25 A.25 Esaminando il resto dei versi euripidei impiegati da Plutarco nello scritto notiamo in continuazione la solita indifferenza per il contesto originario, spesso l’omissione del nome della tragedia e perfino dell’autore, mentre non di rado ritroviamo che si tratta di versi largamente utilizzati nella letteratura antica. Perfino nel caso del Cresfonte, tragedia che dovette essere nota al Nostro il quale ebbe forse occasione di esserne spettatore in un qualche adattamento teatrale,26 Plutarco cita il comunissimo fr. 449. 2–4 N2 (tradotto anche da Cicerone, Tusc. 1. 48. 115).


'Αγαμέμνονος ὃ κόρα,
ἠλυθόν, Ἡλέκτρα, ποτὶ σὰν ἀγρότειραν οὐλάν,

23 L’esempio di Antistene (33 C) è attribuito (cfr. Sereno ap. Stob. 3. 5. 36) anche a Platone ed il verso è citatissimo nell’antichità.
i versi, cioè, intonati da un Focese nel corso della riunione conviviale degli Spartani all'indomani della presa di Atene ad opera di Lisandro. La citazione è chiaramente di seconda mano non potendo non derivare dalla fonte storica (Duride?) dalla quale Plutarco attinge tutto l'episodio. Il modo con il quale lo scrittore introduce la citazione ... èk τῆς Εὐρυπίδου Ἡλέκτρας τὴν πάροδον, ἤς ἢ ἄρχη ... , con la sua tipica annotazione da grammatico (ἢς ἢ ἄρχη) difficilmente sarà appartenuta all'originale; essa ha tutta l'aria di un'aggiunta, di una puntualizzazione di Plutarco. E non è necessario pensare, col Di Gregorio,27 che nella fonte i versi non fossero riportati, ma venissero semplicemente indicati con εκ τῆς Εὐρυπίδου Ἡλέκτρας τὴν πάροδον e che sarebbero stati aggiunti28 da Plutarco. Il supplemento plutarcheo potrebbe unicamente limitarsi a quell'annotazione squisitamente “scolistica” ἢς ἢ ἄρχη,29 ma tale da farci capire che il luogo era presente alla mente dello scrittore.

Casi analoghi, dove citazioni ovvie e tradizionali possono essere accompagnate da qualche annotazione che rivelano come ci scrive avesse diretta conoscenza del contesto originale dal quale l’“excerptum” proviene sono sparse ovviamente in molti luoghi dell'opera plutarchea30 e accanto ad esse si trovano anche citazioni assolutamente originali.

Da quanto abbiamo fin qui osservato, mi sembra che emerga che, accanto al giudizio sulla citazione e sull'immediato contesto, sia importante valutare nell'insieme l'opera entro la quale la citazione compare. Senza voler dare delle regole fisse ed infallibili, il carattere dello scritto si è visto quanto possa influire. In un'opera di elevatissimo impegno stilistico come la Vita di Lisandro lo scrittore non tralascia di abbellire la propria fonte con un ricordo personale. Nel caso invece del De audiendis poetis, opera tutt'altro che trascurata nello stile, ma di differente destinazione, Plutarco non vuole affatto nascondere di lavorare su fonti intermedie; anzi, egli sente tutto il peso della tradizione gnomonologica ed interpretativa che si era sedimentata nella prassi scolastica e da essa egli vuole prendere le mosse. Se volessimo allora rendere più esplicito il titolo del trattato plutarcheo, potremmo spingerci a scrivere: “Come si debbano comporre ed usare i libri di testo nella scuola secondaria.” In quest'ottica anche la prassi, per noi ripugnante, della παραδιόρθωσις può assumere connotati più precisi. Essa infatti, avendo un intento eminentemente pedagogico, non si esercita per sua natura sui testi della letteratura classica

27 Cfr. art. cit. 57.
28 In ogni caso a memoria e non per collazione del testo euripideo.
29 Si vedano le stereotipate didascalie nelle raccolte di Hypothesisen drammatiche: titolo, ὡς (ἢς, ἢς) ἄρχη (verso iniziale del dramma), ἡ δὲ ὑπόθεσις (segue il riassunto).
come un metodo di critica letteraria (nel senso odierno); essa è piuttosto un modo di utilizzare a pieno, nella formazione del giovane, l'unico patrimonio a disposizione, la tradizione letteraria. Si tratta dunque ancora una volta di operare su testi a loro volta organizzati in "corpora" e finalizzati all'educazione. Non a caso la παραδιόρθωσις fu praticata ampiamente dagli stoici, in particolare da quel Crisippo il cui posto nella tradizione gnomologica fu certamente rilevantissimo.\textsuperscript{31}

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\textsuperscript{31} Cfr. Bams II 9 sgg.
Plutarch's *Erotikos*: The Drag Down Pulled Up

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Plutarch's dialogue on love, or Love, the *Erotikos*—better known to most readers as the *Amatorius*—in spite of its obvious Platonic inspiration advocates heterosexual married love as the ideal.¹ But focus on this aspect seems to have obscured the real novelty of the essay. At least, this study will try to demonstrate that Plutarch's originality consists not so much in the aspect of reciprocal egalitarian love, as the incorporation of this type of love into the Platonic goal of the vision of the Beautiful, and a new concept of what the Form of the Beautiful is.

In the course of the *Erotikos* Plutarch cites Euripides' *Hippolytos* (193–95) as a starting point for an understanding of the true nature of love:

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\text{δυσέρωτες δὴ φαινώμεθ' ὄντες}
\text{τοῦδ' ὅτι τούτο στίλβει κατὰ γῆν,}
\text{δι' ἀπειροσύνην ἄλλου βίοτον . . .}
\]

Ill-starred lovers we seem to be
Of this, whatever gleams upon the earth,
Through inexperience of another life . . .²

Plutarch's context is *lethe* (forgetfulness), which cancels the vision of the Beautiful once seen in another world.³ The words are of Phaidra's nurse in a powerful Greek drama centered on resistance to Eros. In Euripides' play, apparently a classic revision of an earlier *Hippolytos*, Phaidra dies nobly to


save her *aidos* (shame, respect, chastity—linked with fidelity to her marriage vows) rather than surrender to an Eros steeped in the perverted bestiality of her maternal inheritance and dragging her soul downward. She commits suicide rather than attempt to seduce Hippolytos. The quotation, then, is not haphazard. Rather it points to the contrast between the drag down, symbolized by Phaidra's sexual drive, and the pull up—in Platonic philosophy the positive evaluation of Eros which leads to the Beautiful in Itself. The dramatist who offered to the world Phaidra, also created Medea, Helena, Kanake, Stheneboia, Laodameia, and many other women whose relationship to life centered around a destructive Eros.

There can be no doubt that Euripides enormously influenced subsequent Hellenistic literature. The negative treatment of Eros is exemplified in Hellenistic literature by Apollonios of Rhodes' *Argonautika*, dealing with the destructive love of Medea for Iason. Undoubtedly he drew on Euripides' brilliant exposition of the power of love. But in the *Hippolytos* the two major characters, though doomed to die, wrench a moral victory from Aphrodite. Medea submits. Apollonios' shadow fell upon the Dido of Vergil's *Aeneid*. Her passion for Aeneas causes her suicide, and eternal enmity between Carthaginians and Romans. Ovid's generally positive attitude toward *amor* is also influenced by Euripides and Hellenistic writing. However, his is a poetic development paralleling Plutarch's literary-philosophical exposition. Still, the *Erotikos* is remarkable for its clarity in extolling heterosexual married love, and for its striking frame—the love of Ismenodora for Bacchon. The essay seems, then, at first sight an intellectual milestone.

Literature on the *Erotikos* concentrates on the positive evaluation of *eros*, heterosexual reciprocity, and the equal status of the partners. Three distinct approaches to the *Erotikos* can be noted: the anti-Epicurean, the Platonic and the "unitary"—the integration of the sexual and non-sexual aspects of love. The first characterizes to a large extent Robert Flacelière, whose interest in the Greek concept of *eros* can be detected in an article on the anti-Epicurean thrust of the *Erotikos*, his book *L'Amour en Grèce*, and his separate edition of the *Erotikos*—later incorporated into the Budé *Plutarque*. The outstanding love for his own wife seems reflected in his


5 The theme is elaborated in G. Paduano, *Studi su Apollonio Rodio* (Rome 1972), esp. 120–23.

ardor for certain ideas found in Plutarch. Recently Adelmo Barigazzi has deepened the anti-Epicurean dimension of Flacelière's work.

Next, there is the Platonic approach, followed to some extent by Flacelière and elaborated recently by Hubert Martin. Finally, Michel Foucault's chapter on Plutarch in his *L'histoire de la sexualité* focuses on the "unitary aspect" of Plutarch's Eros.

Flacelière and Barigazzi note Epikouros' negative attitude toward *eros* in the following texts:

*ερασθήσεσθαι τὸν σοφὸν οὐ δοκεῖ αὐτοῖς.*
The Epicureans hold that the *sophos* should not fall in love.

*οὐδὲ θεόπεμπτον εἶναι τὸν ἔρωτα,* . . .
Nor does *eros* have a divine origin, . . .

*καὶ μὴν καὶ γαμήσειν καὶ τεκνοποιήσειν τὸν σοφὸν, ὡς Ἕπικουρος ἐν ταῖς Διαπορίαις καὶ ἐν ταῖς Περὶ φύσεως.*
In his *Problems* and *On Nature* Epikouros says that the sage (*sophos*) should *<not*> marry or beget children.

(DL 10. 118; 119 = I 118. 8-10; 119. 12).¹¹

Barigazzi admirably illuminates the long philosophical tradition before and after Epikouros in opposition to the fundamentals of the Epicurean position—revealing Plutarch as much less an innovator than usually

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¹¹ Second numbering that of G. Arrighetti, *Epicuro, Opere* (Torino 1960) 27. Arrighetti in the last passage prints the mss. *μήν, where a negative is required; see Chilton (73) who would read in place of *καὶ μὴν καὶ* either *οὐδὲ* or *οὐδὲ μήν.*
imagined. Martin detects two distinct Platonic strands: the first (758D–59B) treating love as a madness (mania—not psychic disorder but divine inspiration), the second (764E–66B) extolling Eros as the divine guide to recollection of the Form of the Beautiful (to kalon).

Foucault’s treatment of the unitary aspect of Plutarch’s Erotikos is more theoretical and speculative. Greeks before Plutarch conceived Eros in terms of antitheses: noble-vulgar, eros-philia, active-passive. Altruistic and elevating love or friendship is contrasted with lustful satisfaction. Active or passive defines the relationship to the other partner. However, in the excellent unitary view of Plutarch—according to Foucault—the partners, considered as spouses, are joined as active subjects rather than as objects of love: “Better to love than be loved.” Moreover, their sexuality contributes to, rather than distracts from, the higher aspects of love. The principle of reciprocity thus becomes the principle of fidelity: love frustrates the cloying and deforming effects of cohabitation and sexual routine. The opposition between philia and aphrodisia collapses, since, united with grace (charis), both elements contribute to the desired goal. Pederasty, in contrast, which is frustrated in its attempt at perfect integration, is exposed as a horrible failure. Plutarch’s stand, then, is both traditional and revolutionary—traditional in its eulogy of Eros, so fundamental to Greek religion and culture, revolutionary in shattering the barrier between “vulgar” love oriented toward sexual pleasure and “spiritual” love meant for the tendance of souls. Plutarch’s Eros is monistic, based on reciprocity and charis.

Before beginning his discourse, Plutarch prayed to the god of love. With a devout prayer let us, too, return to the shrine of Eros, confident that, though the threshold is worn, its mysteries have not been totally divulged. Fundamental to a proper evaluation of the essay is a thorough study of the massive and complex influences of women and sexuality in the early Empire. Such a vast subject, even if containable in a few pages, requires

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13 Foucault, 224–42, esp. 241–42.

14 R. Macmullen, “Women’s Power in the Principate,” Klio 68 (1986) 434–43, esp. 437, notes high local offices held by Greek women. For treatment of the subject and bibliography,
great specialized competence, and risks betrayal in male hands. But two elements can be explored here. The first is the importance of the literary “frame” of Ismenodora’s “rape” of Bacchon. The second is a clue dropped by Plutarch toward the end of the dialogue that “Egyptian mythology” is the key to the correct Platonic interpretation of Eros.

A brief résumé of the dialogue is in order. The Erotikos begins with an event which startles the dialogi personaee and is intended to shock the reader. The beginning is typical of the more baroque style of Plutarch with its contrasts, movement, and theatricality differentiating it from the mostly static settings of Plato’s dialogues on love, the Phaidros and Symposium. In Ovid’s story of Procris and Cephalus, the aged Cephalus recounts to two youths how he loved his beautiful young wife but tragically slew her while hunting, mistakenly thinking her some beast. The time-frame emphasizes the contrast between youth and age, erotic passion and mature wisdom—a mood suggesting reflection and universalizing on a momentary experience of mutual happiness in the bloom of life.

In the dialogue recounted by Plutarch’s son, the author himself, now in advanced age, is, unusually, the principal character. He has brought his young bride to the festival of Eros, the Erotideia, at Thespiai, a town not far from his home, to offer prayers and sacrifice to the god—an event occasioned by her parents’ bitter rift. The mise en scène, however, is the much of it mentioning Plutarch’s Erotikos in passing, see, for example, E. Cantarella (trans., M. Fant), Pandora’s Daughters. The Role and Status of Women in Greek and Roman Antiquity (Baltimore 1987); and reviews of recent literature: M. B. Skinner, “Des bonnes dames et ménagères,” CJ 83 (1987) 69-74 and G. Casadio, “La donna nel mondo antico . . .” StudPat 34 (1987) 73-90.


nearby shrine of the Muses on Mount Helicon, where Plutarch and his friends have retired for more tranquillity.\(^\text{18}\) For a clamorous event had broken the traditional somnolence of Thespiai. Bacchon, the town's celebrated love (eromenos), had been contemplating marriage with a young and wealthy widow, Ismenodora. But being a minor he had asked for more experienced advice. The two referees, though, deadlocked, have entrusted the decision to Plutarch and his friends. A debate now ensues over the superiority of homosexual or heterosexual love—for boys or women—with each side denigrating the other, and over the relative merits of marrying above one's status. At that moment a friend gallops up to relate that not only has Ismenodora kidnapped the apparently willing Bacchon from the palaistra but her female friends have already dressed him in a wedding gown (himation) (754E–55A).\(^\text{19}\)

The second important consideration is the assertion—in regard to the Platonic doctrine of love—that "dim, faint effluvia of the truth" are scattered about in Egyptian mythology (762A). This is not an isolated cadence, for at 764A Soklaros asks Plutarch to return to the Egyptian material:

But as for your hint that Egyptian myth is in accord with the Platonic doctrine of Eros, you can no longer keep from revealing and explaining your meaning. We would love to hear even only a small bit of matters so great.

Plutarch at this point, as in his essay On Isis and Osiris, alludes to one Egyptian myth identifying Eros with the sun and another identifying Aphrodite with the moon. He continues with his own explanation of the philosophical distinction between the sun, which belongs to the visible (horaion) and Eros, part of the intelligible sphere (noeton).

The matter is dropped there, but it suggests Plutarch's reinterpretation of the Eros of Plato's "middle" period (Symposion, Phaidros, Politeia [Republic], and Phaidon).\(^\text{20}\) Moreover, Plutarch seems to "sign" his work. He apparently is referring here to the final speech of On the E at Delphi—which explains the distinction between the visible sun and the true Apollon-

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\(^{18}\) The feminism of Plutarch's dialogues is limited: women—even his wife and Ismenodora—should be heard (about) but not seen (or talk).

\(^{19}\) Goessler (27) discusses the dramatic techniques here.

Helios, the one and unchangeable God, whose image is the sun. He also seems to publicize a future *Isis and Osiris*, his treatise on Egyptian Isis religion. The vocabulary of the *Erotikos* and the tentative manner of broaching the subject appear to exclude an already issued *Peri Isidos kai Osiridos*.

The reference reinforces the chronological relationship between the *Erotikos* and the *Peri Isidos*—dialogues most likely belonging to Plutarch's latest period of literary activity. We are only beginning to understand the status of women in the Early Empire. But Plutarch, with some ambivalence, certainly succumbed to the epoch's fascination for Isis. In his essay on the Isiac religion he transformed the central myth, the goddess Isis' search for the dead Osiris and resuscitation of her husband's body, into a Platonic allegory of the soul's ascent toward the Form of the Beautiful. But in his desire to metamorphosize the myth into a Middle Platonic allegory with Osiris symbolizing the Form of the Beautiful and Isis as his lover, he redirected the main thrust of Isis religion, which is centered on the power and omnipotence of Isis.

In the light of *On Isis and Osiris* some of the more radical developments of the *Erotikos* receive sharper contours. Plutarch's most spectacular achievement—contrasting with Plato's *Symposion* and *Phaidros*—might appear to be the eulogy of heterosexual married love and, in particular, the element of reciprocity between male and female. But such a view was actually current in philosophical circles long before Plutarch. Such love was a popular theme in Roman literature—though often patronizing, humorous, or pathetic—for example, in Ovid. Plutarch's greatest achievement, then, was not the glorification of heterosexual—and especially married—love over homosexual or pederastic love but rather the introduction of heterosexual love into the Platonist's study—namely the ascent of the soul to the Beautiful in Itself, and a new anthropomorphic conception of the Beautiful as the final goal (*telos*) of the soul. Thus the calling card of the Middle Platonists, "assimilation to God" (δυνατωσθαι θεον) acquires a very literal meaning.

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22 Froidefond treats Plutarch's *daimon* (with the rejection of Plato's *Eros-*daimon), the twist on ὀμοίωσις θεού, and the close relationship between the *Erotikos* and *Peri Isidos* (206–12). See also, D. Babut, "Sur quelques énigmes du 'Phèdre',' BAGB (1987, 3) 260–84; 277.
Plutarch's allegorization of the Isis myth combines—or confuses—the fundamentals of Platonism. Such confusion has enormous consequences for the conception of three fundamentals of Middle Platonism: matter, God (Demiourgos or Nous), and the model (paradeigma or Form). In Plutarch's allegorical interpretation of the Isis myth, reflected in the Erotikos, these elements become terribly confused. Platonic matter (receptacle, potency, etc.) refuses to sit quietly at home while the Form of the Beautiful delights in its (his, His) new-found mind (logos, or nous). A corollary—not fully developed by Plutarch but with a great future—is the divine love for the soul, a love going far beyond the mere paternal or providential love of gods or God in Greek religion or philosophy. The Form of the Beautiful, once only an object, rejoices not only in its new-found mind but also in its power to return or initiate love. But Osiris, who is identified with the Form, also has nous and is responsible for the creation of the world. Thus, Osiris is assimilated somewhat to the Demiourgos. Isis, who is matter, also has nous and as the object of Osiris' love assumes something of the function of the Form.

The Platonic ascent toward the Form of the Beautiful as a passive intellectual object has been transformed by Plutarch into the reciprocal love of the soul and its telos, conceived of as both the Form of the Beautiful and a divine person. First, speaking of Eros as the soul's guide to the Beautiful he compares the god to the sun—in Plato and in Plutarch an image of the Form of the Beautiful. In the ever fluid and slippery allegorical interpretations of Peri Isidos, Osiris, too, like Eros, is the guide to the telos, or vision, and is compared to the sun. This Platonic aspect of the allegorical interpretation of the myth is also traditional.

Once the inner dynamic of the Isis religion enters, the goddess becomes a very active element, analogous to the supreme divinity of the aretalogies. Even in Plutarch's minimalizing account, she is the driving force which discovers and reanimates Osiris' dismembered body, in love overcoming all obstacles, even the death of the beloved. The terminology for the divine union is that of Plato's homosexual or pederastic lovers. But we should not forget that even Plato treated Alkestis, who died for her husband, Admetos, as a supreme example of dedicated love, nor that her love, like that of Isis, overcame death (nor, perhaps, that it was Euripides who immortalized her). Isis, like the pederast, must be the active element; for the quest for the beloved precedes that for the Beautiful. Osiris corresponds first to the beloved boy, then to the Form of the Beautiful in the Platonic works. For the strikingly erotic union of the soul with the Form, Plato again was Plutarch's inspiration, but, as so often, the pupil outstripped the master.

...Subtle, perhaps unconscious, transformations occur in the elaboration of the philosophical myth as Plutarch replaces Plato's primarily homosexual model with a heterosexual one. Osiris (Form of the Beautiful) must according to the myth also be an active element, the eternal lover of Isis (receptacle, chora, matter, potency, etc.). Isis' ardent lover Osiris thus replaces the inanimate object—the passive, though divine and intelligible but not rational, Platonic Form. Reciprocity is extolled. Plutarch has not only betrayed Plato by creating a different function for the Form but has planted a time-bomb in Platonism, the acceptance by future Platonists of an equivalence between God and the Form.

We can begin to discern the creeping metamorphosis of Platonic terminology. "Lovely" (erasmion, Erotikos 765D, F) reflects erasmiotaton used in Phaidros (250E) for the Form of the Beautiful, but "beloved" (agapetos, 765D) is an intruder. Also somewhat unusual is "dear" (philion, 765D). Combined, we find this remarkable description of the soul's reaction to the Beautiful: "...courting...the truly lovable and blessed and beloved of all and dear" (τὸ ἔρωσμον ἀληθῶς καὶ μακάριον καὶ φίλιον ἀπατοῦ καὶ ἀγαπητόν, 765D), echoed at 765F: "produces a refraction of memory from that appearing beautiful here, toward the divine and lovable and in all truth blessed and marvelous Beauty" (...τὸ θεῖον καὶ ἔρωσμον καὶ μακάριον ὡς ἀληθῶς ἐκέινο καὶ θεομάςιον καλὸν).24 In the Phaidros we find "the desire and mystery of true lovers" (προθυμία μὲν οὖν τῶν ὡς ἀληθῶς ἐρώτων καὶ τελετῆ, 253C) but this is applied to human love.25 We do find, though, in relationship to "the divine Beautiful in itself, unique in form" (αὐτὸ τὸ θεῖον καλὸν μονοειδὲς) the ambiguous word "consorting with" (συνεῖναι, συνόντος αὐτῶν, Symposium 211D, 212A), and following upon a ponderastic context "yearn for Being" (ὀργηται τοῦ ὄντος, Phaidon 65C), "love the truth [the true] (ἐραν τοῦ ἀληθοῦς, Philebos 58D).26 Makarion, which has divine, eschatological, and erotic connotations in Plutarch, in Plato is applied to the vision rather than to the Form itself; "the blessed vision ("beauteous vision") and sight" (μακαρίαν ὄνη τε καὶ θέαν, Phaidros 250B), "of mysteries most blessed,...happy, straightforward appearances" (τελετῶν...μακαριωτάτην...ἀπλὰ..."


Since Plato was more concerned with presenting an intellectual vision of the Form, he continually stresses direct vision, sight, an intellectual knowledge or grasp when he comes to speak directly of the Form. The erotic association of Isis with the Form of the Beautiful (Osiris) in the *Peri Isidos* comes from Plato's description of the passion of homosexual love, the prelude to real love—which in the *Phaidros* is reciprocal. At times this vocabulary, when used for the Form, is startling—even though it is more traditional than one might expect. For example we find "associating in beautiful things" (τοῖς καλοῖς ὁμοιόμορφοι, *Erotikos* 766B) and "this goddess also who participates always with the first god and is associated with Him in the love of the fair and lovely things about him . . . in love . . . consorts with him . . . years for him . . . and being importunate over him . . . (συνοῦσαν ἑρωταί τῶν περὶ ἐκείνου ἄγαθῶν καὶ καλῶν . . . ἑράν . . . συνοῦσαν . . . ποθέν . . . γλυκομένην ἐκείνου, *Peri Isidos* 374F–75A), "loving always and pursuing and consorting in love with" (ἔρωταν άεὶ καὶ διώκουσαν καὶ συνοῦσαν, 383A) for Isis' love of the Beautiful (kallos) as a model for the soul's intellectual vision.28

As elsewhere in Plutarch we find him somewhat reluctant to directly identify God with the Form of the Beautiful. Here, for Isis' love of Osiris he employs the phrase "the beautiful and fair things about him" (συνοῦσαν ἑρωταί τῶν περὶ ἐκείνου ἄγαθῶν καὶ καλῶν, 374F–75A), where in the Greek of his period, for example, "those about Epikouros" can simply mean "Epikouros." Similarly the conduct of Osiris, who is equivalent to the supreme God and the Form of the Beautiful, is described in ambiguous language: "... of which end (ielos) is the knowledge of the first and lord—whom the goddess encourages us to seek—beside her and with her living and consorting" (... παρ' αὑτῇ καὶ μετ' αὐτῆς ὄντα καὶ συνόντα, 352A).

*Makarion* also takes on an erotic context. The soul's desire for the Platonic Form at *Erotikos* 765F is for "the divine and lovable and dear and


Professor Donini believes the *Erotikos* presupposes, and was chronologically close to, Plutarch's *De Facie in Orbe Luae*—especially evident at *Erotikos* 764D. In his view, Plutarch in *De Facie* 939E, 944E, and 945C already toys with sexual distinctions and erotic language for the female moon and male sun (as the image of the Good [Politeia] and supreme God and Father—Begetter of the Kosmos [Timaios]); but he discovered in the Egyptian myth more fertile possibilities for sexual and reciprocal symbolism.

Plutarch's allegorical interpretation was aided by virtually limiting himself to pre- or early Hellenistic sources (Griffiths, 75–100, esp. 84–85), where Osiris has more importance than Isis.
beloved . . . Beauty” (*theion, erasmion, makarion . . . kalon)*29 The phrase is not unlike that in Plutarch’s treatise *On the Face in the Moon*, the final part of which contains an eschatological myth. Here intellect sees an image of the Form reflected in the sun. Intellect (*nous*) is separated from soul (*psyche*) through love of “the desirable and beautiful and divine and blessed” (*epheton, kalon, theion, makarion, 944E*) “for which all nature in one way or another yearns” (*öρέγεται—*another ambiguous term).30 Plato’s impersonal descriptions of the Form—“the really real” (*to ontos on*), “of single form” (*monoeides*)—tend to disappear. Plutarch’s *hagnos* (pure, holy, inviolable) joins the Platonic *hieros* (holy) and *katharos* (pure) in the context of the Beautiful: “the holy and sacred (*hieros and hostios*) Osiris,” “the invisible and the unseen, the dispassionate and pure (*hagnon*) kingdom of Osiris” (*Peri Isidos* 375E, 382–83A). In Plutarch’s romantic context the intellectual vision is not only, as in Plato, a mystery (*telete*) but also a marriage made in heaven, a *hieros gamos*.31

The language in some respects echoes Philo, the Alexandrian philosopher of the Julio-Claudian period, who also equates God with the Form of the Beautiful. *On the Cherubim* speaks of God being the summit and the goal (*telos*) of happiness (*eudaimonia*)—“blessed, incorruptible, bestowing on all from the fountain of the beautiful (*Beautiful? [kalon]*)”; for the things of this world would not be beautiful, if they were not impressions from the archetype, in truth, the uncreated beautiful, blessed (*makarion*), imperishable” (86). Or, “God himself becomes our *hierophantes* causing us to see the hidden beauties (*kalle*), invisible to non-initiates . . . You souls, who have tasted the divine love(s) (*theioi erotes*), hasten toward the vision, which draws all eyes to itself . . .” (*On Dreams* I. 164, 165); “. . . he entered into the darkness where God was, that is, into the unseen, invisible, incorporeal, and model essence (*paradigmatike ousia*) of all existent things . . . revealing Himself a work like a painting, all beautiful and divine in form.” (*Moses* I. 158). Some contemplate the “Uncreated, Divine, the First Good, and Beautiful and Happy (*eudaimon*) and Blessed (*makarion*), . . . that better than the Good and more beautiful than the Beautiful, and more blessed than blessedness, more happy, moreover, than happiness itself (. . . to κρείττον μὲν ἁγαθόν, κάλλιον δὲ καλὸν, καὶ μακαριότητος μὲν μακαριώτερον, εὐδαιμονίας δὲ αὐτῆς

29 Martin, “Amatorius,” 492–94, 522. Whittaker, “Platonic Philosophy,” 92, notes that— influenced by *Timaios* 87C—the couplet *theion* and *erasmion* appears as well in Alkinoos, *Didaskalikos* XXVII. 2 (180. 6–8) and may have been popular in Middle Platonism.

30 The term *epheton* is defined as Aristotelian in H. Chemiss and W. C. Helmbold, *Plutarch’s Moralia* XII (Cambridge, Mass. 1968) 213, note g. But Whittaker, seeing its roots rather in *Philebos* 20D, observes that though Plutarch and Alkinoos—independently and alone among Middle Platonists—used it, it did not resurface until the Neoplatonists (“Proclus,” 287–88).

Plato's *Timaios*—on the nature of the universe—for which we have a long Plutarchan commentary, is responsible for some of the changes. Both extol logos and noeton. But though the Form of the Beautiful exists in the noeton, neither Plato nor Plutarch in his commentary attribute logos to the Form. Logos belongs *par excellence* to the Craftsman-Creator, the Demiourgos. Plato's own thought on creation was obviously obscure. The elusiveness of God in Plato elsewhere and the tendency of Platonic philosophy after him suggest that his Demiourgos belongs to an Einsteinerian understanding of the intelligibility granted matter. The kosmos itself contains a kind of intelligence or power of evolution and self-organization—albeit, a rationality (logos), unlike that of the Stoics, physically separate from matter. But outstanding commentators on the *Timaios*, both ancient and modern, have interpreted the Demiourgos not merely as an allegorical representation of the intelligibility shaping matter but as a non-anthropomorphic mind (nous) responsible for the evolution of the cosmos.\(^3\)\(^3\) In any case the line between the complex of Ideas, the intelligible universe (kosmos noetos), and nous had begun to wear thin by Plutarch's day. His simplifying approach to Plato, combining elements from disparate passages, though cautious in its terminology, radically transforms the impersonal telos of Plato into an anthropomorphic, even erotic God. The Isis myth may have led him whither he willed not, but the pretext of an allegorical interpretation allowed him more freedom in expressing his new concept of God than would a strictly philosophical exposition. At least, in the allegorical interpretation he appears more radical than elsewhere.

Heterosexual love, as in the old cosmogonic myths, begins the universe. The love of Isis and Osiris—who apparently had studied Plutarch's commentary on the *Timaios*—generates their child Horos, an ally for the kosmos. Divine love becomes the paradigm for human love. Thus, human *aphrodisia* receive a new philosophical and religious dimension. Human love becomes a reflection of the quasi-eternal divine

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love which begot and continues to beget the world and all within. The *aphrodisia* are not simply the Epicurean sensual motions constituting sexual pleasure—so well described in the verses of Lucretius' *De rerum natura*—motions deprived of mystery and religious significance. Rather, they hint at the soul's eternal destiny. An image of the love which generated Plato's most perfect *kosmos*, they aid in the philosophical ascent. In marriage, though, as in Plato's myth of lovers, human love must deepen. With the passage of time the more sexual or sensual aspects of love should cede to a purer and more intellectual appreciation of the other's true beauty. Marriage, then, initiates Platonic love—conceived, however, not as a movement toward an impassive Form but for a responsive Lover.

Ring composition, appropriate to this Greek setting, will hopefully swing us back where we began, to the tale of Ismenodora and Bacchon. In her love for Bacchon, Ismenodora, like Isis, is the driving force. Her name, though indicating force (is, menos), also suggests Isis. As beautiful and lovable, the boy Bacchon represents the Form of the Beautiful, the destiny of the true lover. His name—a form of Bacchos—suggests Dionysos, the Greek name for Osiris. Passive in receiving her love, once she has taken the initiative, he also actively returns it—becoming even more assimilated to Osiris, the god of reciprocal love.34

A simultaneous plot, leaving the resolution in doubt until the last minute, parallels the denouement of the philosophical inquiry. The literary medium is that of *On the Daimonion of Sokrates*. The theme of this dialogue is the nature of Sokrates' *daimonion* ("the divine," or "supernatural"—not really "genius"), but through the dialogue the exciting events of the Theban inscription under Epaminondas against Spartan rule are woven. The Ismenodora-Bacchon tale, commencing and finishing the dialogue, is not extraneous. The *Erotikos* is played out against a backdrop of the visible love of Ismenodora and Bacchon—the *horaton*, so to speak—while the *noeton*, the invisible *hierogamia* with the now personal Beautiful, embraces the *logos* of the participants. Such a *hierogamia* is the *telos* of each true lover. The female's aggressivity in the quest for the Form of the Beautiful (Bacchon, Osiris), then, is the underlying thread of the "phainomenal" romances which close the work.

As in the entire Plutarchan corpus, divided between philosophy (*Ethika*) and lives (*Bioi*), real events balance against theoretical speculation. Plutarch's examples of heroic women are notable too in not being limited, like those of Plato, to Athens or mythical Greece. Rather, geographically

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34 Professor Barigazzi notes the real etymology of the heroine's name—"gift of Ismenos," (the river of Thebes). Dionysiac associations may be intended; cf. Euripides, *Bacchai* 5: "I have arrived at Dirke's streams and Ismenos' water." Naturally such connotations add to the mystical-eschatological orientation of the *Erotikos*, besides linking "Ismenodora" to "Bacchon." Plutarch omits at this point the role of Bacchon as Eros—mystagog, leading Ismenodora to the Idea (Form) of the Beautiful.
they reflect the universal breadth of the Graeco-Roman world. In tone, too, they breathe a realism not so evident in the world of Plato's dialogues. Camma, who avenges her husband by drinking a poisonous toast with his murderer, is from Gaul. So is Empona, who ostensibly mourning her dead husband, mates with him in his underground hiding place and bears him sons. The quasifictional character, Semiramis—whose assassination of Ninos is related earlier in the dialogue—is Assyrian.

With the exception of the Semiramis story, the tales of female virtue or courage—of Camma and Empona and their husbands—are in fact traditional depictions of womanly virtue. Still they underscore the courage and tenacity of women dedicated to a beloved husband. Above all Ismenodora and Semiramis, who assume male roles, symbolize the new erotic dialectic. One, in abducting Bacchon, assumes the role of Herakles—the epitome of masculinity and philandering. Semiramis, only the maid and concubine of a palace slave of Ninos, becomes through her intelligence a Klytaimestra, not only contriving the execution of the king and ruling in his place but winning Plutarch's approbation. The other accounts, though, besides being illustrations of courage and nobility—demolishing the denigrations of pederasts—contain primary Iasic themes: a wife's search and mourning for her dead or assumed to be dead husband, the bearing of children to the "defunct" (Empona); revenge for murder (Camma), and undying, married love triumphing over death and the grave.

Essential to the dialogue is the counterpoint in themes of harmony and disharmony—not surprising where the Muses and Eros invisibly preside. The dialogue begins with the dissonance between the parents of Plutarch's wife, the event bringing the young couple to Thespiai. There follows the strange resonance between Ismenodora and Bacchon, the disharmonious arguments deadlocking the referees, the choros of the friendly circle of Plutarch, the discord of their arguments, the harmony of Ismenodora and Bacchon, which turns abduction into marriage, the return to the disharmony of the arguments of homo- and heteroadvocates, the accord of Ptolemaios Philadelphos ("lover of his sister") and his concubine Belestiche, the sour note in the love story of Ninos, assassinated by Semiramis, the wedding preparations of Ismenodora and Bacchon soon to be celebrated in song, followed by the Roman Galba's resignation to his wife's strident infidelity, the sun's and moon's tuneful progression, and the harmonious finale, the undying loves of Camma and Sinatus, of Empona and Sabinus.

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35 Recounted in Plutarch's *Mulierum Virtutes* 257E–58C (Flacelière, 152); see also Stadter, *Plutarch's Historical Methods*, 103–06; on Empona, Flacelière, 154–55.
37 And the reconciliation of all the participants (Longoni, 159–60).
In conclusion, the philosophical originality of the Erotikos consists not particularly in its egalitarian treatment of love and marriage. Rather the evaluation of marriage, including sexuality, in the ascent toward the Form, and the identification of the Form with a loving God are its revolutionary aspects. The powerful expression of the dialogue, however, emphasizing striking contrast with Plato’s Symposion and Phaidros conceals the more radical philosophical message.\textsuperscript{38}

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\textsuperscript{38} Thanks are due to Professors Christopher J. Rowe of Bristol and John Whittaker of Memorial University, St. John’s, Newfoundland, for carefully going over the manuscript and making many helpful corrections and suggestions—the first especially in the Platonic matter and the second in the Middle Platonic parallels. The author is grateful also to Professors John Dillon of Trinity College, Dublin, Adelmo Barigazzi of the University of Florence, and Pier-Luigi Donini of Torino, who also kindly looked over the text and suggested improvements.
How does one ascertain that a saying ascribed to Zeno of Citium represents a genuine philosophical view of the founder of Stoicism? This is no idle question. By the time of Diogenes Laertius at the latest, most people seem no longer to have read the works of the early Stoics. Having completed the biographical section in his Life of Zeno (VII. 1-38), Diogenes proceeds to offer us, not a summary of Zeno's own philosophy, but a Stoic κοινή. His excuse for this (VII. 38)—διὰ τὸ τοῦτον κτίστην γενέσθαι τῆς αἱρέσεως—is feeble. The Stoics were no Epicureans or Pythagoreans, claiming to carry on and disseminate the "true doctrines" discovered once for all by a divine founder: even Diogenes' own doxography enters, from time to time, into details about disagreements and disputes among the various Stoics. Plato was also the founder of a "school of thought." This does not prevent Diogenes from presenting us with a long summary of Plato's own ἀρέσκοντα (III. 67-109). When Diogenes' source supplies an account of various ἀγωγαὶ within the same school, he has no hesitation in reproducing his source's doxography with all the shades of difference (III. 86-97). It is merely that by his time, very few people were likely to have read the hundreds of scrolls written by Zeno, Cleanthes, Chrysippus and their disciples and followers—or rather, those of them still readily available. Even by the time of Cicero, the ordinary educated man—even a writer on philosophical themes like Cicero himself—did not attempt to read the original works of the early Stoics, but used summaries and doxographies. What about Plutarch?

It is not my intention here to deal, yet again, with the whole issue of Plutarch's familiarity with early Stoic sources. Much has been written on it, from many different angles, often in terms of such generalities and probabilities as "Plutarch, who read so much . . ." or "Plutarch must have read his Zeno—he quotes him so often" (the examples are my invention, but they are not pure fiction). I have chosen to concentrate on one piece of Plutarchean evidence which, I believe, can be treated as a test case. Here, then, is the text of De Stoicorum Repugnantiis 8:
A genuine piece of evidence for an “eccentric” Zenonian doctrine? This is the way in which our passage has been regarded by numerous distinguished scholars in the last hundred years or so. A. C. Pearson includes two parts of this chapter, as Fragments 29 (the anecdote) and 6 (ἐλεύσ—τους μαθητάς) of Zeno, in his Fragments of Zeno and Cleanthes.\(^2\) On the anecdote, he comments: “The argument is couched in the syllogistic form which Zeno especially affected: see Introd. p. 33”\(^3\)—where the specimens of syllogism he adduces are very different from the disjunctive argument in our passage. What matters, however, is that Pearson takes this chapter of Plutarch seriously as a piece of Zenonian doctrine. So does von Arnim, who has the anecdote as SVF I. 78 (Zeno, Rhetorica), the sentence concerning Plato as I. 259 (Zeno, Ethica), and the sentence on sophisms as I. 50 (Zeno, Logica). Nicola Festa regards the anecdote as the only surviving fragment of Zeno’s lost work Ἐλεγχοι δύο.\(^4\) Alfons Weische takes it to be an argument against Arcesilaus’ practice in utramque partem disputandi.\(^5\) Both are quoted by the late Harold Cherniss in a note to his edition of the text—true, without comments, but with an obvious acceptance of our passage as genuine evidence for a Zenonian doctrine.\(^6\) To crown it all, we have the clear statement of Professor Daniel Babut in his great work on Plutarch and the Stoics:

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1. Text: Pohlenz-Westman. I have omitted the apparatus, since there are no readings relevant to the argument.
3. Ibid. p. 60.
5. Alfons Weische, Cicero und die neue Akademie (Münster 1961) 77–78.
John Glucke

En revanche, *De Stoic. rep.* p. 1034 E (7) [misprint for 8–J. G.], de portée beaucoup moins générale, et où Plutarque semble reproduire presque littéralement le raisonnement par lequel Zénon démontrait qu’il est inutile dans un procès—ou en débat philosophique—de prêter l’oreille aux deux parties ou d’écouter le point de vue de l’adversaire, doit être considéré comme une véritable citation, bien que Plutarque n’ait pas pris la peine ou n’ait pas pu indiquer de quel livre elle provenait, et bien qu’il ne prétende pas la reproduire mot à mot.7

**Doit être considéré comme une véritable citation.** After all this, one finds it surprising that this piece of “Zenonian doctrine” has not yet found its way into the standard histories of Greek Philosophy or of the Stoa.8

But hold. If the argument in our anecdote were to be regarded as representing a genuine philosophical position of Zeno, it would land him, not merely in the contradictions indicated by Plutarch. It would also imply a wholesale rejection of the task of dialectic as described by Zeno himself in *SVF* I. 48–49—both independent of Plutarch. It would also imply that such Chrysippean fragments as *SVF* II. 127–29 (all taken from Ch. 10 of *Stoic. Rep.*) constitute a complete departure from a doctrine of the founder of the school and a total rejection of that doctrine.

Let us now consider the form of the anecdote in our chapter. It is a story about Zeno answering with a counter—argument (ἀντέλεγεν), a literary quotation. Whether the hexametric line μηδὲ δίκην δικάσσης κτλ. is Pseudo—Phocylides9 or Hesiod,10 it is not very likely that the ancient poet would have been introduced by Zeno as ὅ εἰπόν, and that Zeno would quote him simply to contradict him. Zeno is not Socrates of the “aporetic dialogues.” When Zeno wishes to quote poetry—even to alter its order or its sense—other expressions are used: συνεχές τε προσφέρετο ... τοὺς ... ἔριπτίδου στίχους (DL VII. 22); τοὺς θ᾽ Ἡσιόδου στίχους μεταγράφειν οὕτω (ib. 25); φησι το ἐκ τῆς Νιόβης (ib. 28). No. It is far more likely that what we have here is not a quotation from one of Zeno’s own works, in which the ancient hexamer is brought in only to be confuted, but an anecdote about Zeno. Someone, on some occasion, quoted this line of poetry against Zeno. Zeno countered him with his disjunctive argument—showing, by the way, in the very act of refuting him that he had listened to the other side: but on this later.

What we have here looks far more like the sort of literary anecdote called by ancient rhetoricians χρέια. A number of rhetorical manuals from

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8 I find no mention of it, for example, in any edition of Zeller, Ueberweg-Praechter, or Pohlenz.
9 Diehl, *Anth. Lyr.* 3 2, p. 98, v. 87—cited in double square brackets. See his apparatus of testimonia to this line.
10 Fr. 338 Merkelbach-West.
late antiquity deal at some length with χρεία as a rhetorical device. Their treatment of this sub-literary form is almost entirely the same, with many sentences and passages repeated virtually word for word (except for the more lengthy discussion of Theon, which is probably his own extension of what he had found in his source). The question of their common source (Hermogenes?) should be investigated elsewhere. For our purpose, it would be enough to quote at random a definition of χρεία offered by one of these late rhetoricians:

χρεία ἐστὶ λόγος ἤ πράξεις εὑριστοχος καὶ σύντομος, εἰς τι πρόσωπον ὁρισμένον ἔχουσα τὴν ἀναφοράν, πρὸς ἐπανόρθωσιν τινος τῶν ἐν τῷ βίῳ παραλαμβανομένη.13

It may also be of some use for our passage of Plutarch to note that one of these rhetoricians realized that not each and every χρεία has to be serious and to contain a moral: ἐστὶ δὲ χαριντιζέσθαι τὴν χρείαν ἐνίοτε μηδὲν ἔχουσαν βιωφελές.14 For the rest—as one could expect from handbooks of rhetoric for the instruction of beginners—προγυμνάματα—much of their discussion is devoted to such exercises as turning a χρεία from one grammatical case to another; and their standard division of χρεία is into λογικά, πρακτικὰ, μικταὶ—a "literary," rather than a "philological" classification. Fortunately, we have an earlier and very

11 Hermogenes, Progymn. ch. 3; Aphthonius, Progymn. ch. 3, pp. 23–25 Rabe; Theon, Progymn. chs. 5–6, Spengel, Rhet. Graeci 2, pp. 96–106; Nic. Soph., Progymn. ch. 3, Spengel 3, pp. 458–63. Modern literature: G. von Wartensleben, Begriff der griechischen Chreia und Beiträge zur Geschichte ihrer Form (Heidelberg 1901) (with a collection of philosophers' χρεία on pp. 31–124—which does not include our anecdote in the Zeno section, pp. 128–30); Gustav Adolf Gerhard, Phoinix von Kolophon, Texte und Untersuchungen (Leipzig and Berlin 1909) 247–53; 269 ff.; Heinrich Lausberg, Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik (München 1960) vol. 1, 536–40. Gerhard supplies numerous references to modern literature. Lausberg cites a wide range of ancient sources, both Greek and Latin. For more recent literature, see also Klaus Berger, "Hellenistische Gattungen im Neuen Testament," ANRW II. 25. 2, 1031–1432, with an extensive bibliography, pp. 1379–1432. (The section relevant to our discussion: pp. 1092–1110, and bibl. 1092); Robert C. Tannenhill, "Types and Functions of Apophthegms in the Synoptic Gospels," ANRW II. 25. 2, pp. 1792–1829 (bibl. pp. 1826–29). Berger has a "taxonomy" of χρεία in Greek pagan and Jewish sources and the NT, according to "Frage und Anlass der Chriien" and "Struktur der Antwort" (pp. 1096–1103), which comes close to that of Quintilian, and many of his examples are helpful. On p. 1095, he also refers to literature on χρεία in Rabbinic sources. Tannenhill's division of χρεία according to their purpose ("correction stories," "quest stories," "objection stories," and the like) has more to do with modern literary theory than with ancient technique and practice. I owe the last two references to Professor Frederick E. Bremk.

12 This common source is most likely to be later than Quintilian (see below), whose whole treatment is hardly aware of it. The great reputation of Hermogenes in late antiquity suggests that he may be the source.

13 Nic. Soph. (n. 11 above) 459.

14 Theon (n. 11 above) 96. See also his discussion of the "jocular" type of χρεία, pp. 99–101.
different discussion of χρεία, clearly independent of these later manuals, which divides χρεία into more "philological" groups: Quintilian I. 9. 4:

Chriarum plura genera traduntur: umum simile sententiae, quod est positum in uoce simplici: "dixit ille" aut "dicere solebat"; alterum quod est in respondendo: "interrogatus ille," uel "cum hoc ei dictum esset, respondit"; tertium huic non dissimile: "cum quis dixisset aliiquid" uel "feciisset."

Quintilian goes on to mention also what the later rhetoricians called πράκτική χρεία: etiam in ipsorum factis esse chriam putant . . . This should not detain us. For our purpose, the important type of χρεία is Quintilian's second category, in which someone was asked (ἐρωτηθείς) or was told something by someone else (πρὸς τὸν εἶπόντα), and he responded (εἶπεν, ἔφη, φησίν and the like). We shall soon return to this type of chriam in respondendo and cast an eye on the numerous examples of it in Diogenes Laertius and some pseudo-Plutarchean collections of apophthegmata. Let us first consider the nature and development of χρεία as a literary form.

The derivation of χρεία from the Homeric and Hesiodic σῶνις and the Aesopian fables, maintained by some modern scholars, seems to me unlikely. A fable employing animals as symbols of human character and behaviour and a story about a clever repartee by some great man—albeit that the purpose of both is "to point a moral and adorn a tale"—are two different things. Χρεία starts not immediately after the age of epic poetry but a few hundred years later, and in a philosophical milieu. The books of χρεία ascribed to Diogenes of Sinope by Diogenes Laertius, quoting Sotion (DL VI. 80) are given in a "dissenting list": it is not in the main list of his works, probably derived from the Alexandrian catalogues, which precedes it. Von Wartensleben may be right in regarding Metrocles the Cynic (DL VI. 33) as the first compiler of a book of χρεία known to us by title. With Zeno of Citium we seem to be on surer ground. Diogenes Laertius quotes one anecdote about Crates the Cynic, Zeno's own teacher, on the authority of Ζήνου ὁ Κιτιεύς ἐν ταῖς χρείαις (VI. 91). Aristo of Chius is reported by Diogenes (VII. 163) to be the author of χρείων υἱ; and Persaeus (VII. 36) as the author of χρείων Σ'. It is far from certain that the χρεία πρὸς Διόνυσον ascribed by Diogenes (II. 84) to Aristippus of Cyrene is a collection of apophthegms: why the singular? The other work, Χρείαν τρία, is ascribed to him in Sotion's alternative list (II. 85). It thus appears that the practice of gathering such anecdotes and publishing them arose first in the circles of the Cynics and the early Stoics. By the time we reach the first century BCE, we have five anecdotes ascribed expressly to the Χρεία of Hecato, the pupil of Panaetius (DL VI. 4; 32; 95; VII. 26; 172), and two

15 Von Wartensleben (n. 11 above) 8–27; Gerhard (ib.) 247–53.
16 Von Wartensleben 29.
anecdotes likely to have been lifted from the same collection (VII. 2; 181).

One can assume that in the three or four centuries which separate Diogenes Laertius from Hecato, such collections of χρειάζεσθαι must have increased and multiplied as philosophy was leaving its private enclaves and becoming part of a gentleman's education. The pseudo-Plutarchean collections of apophthegms belong to this literary form and most probably to this period. So does much of the material which went into the making of Gnomologium Vaticanum and other gnomologia.

When we come to Diogenes Laertius, we note, not merely that he recounts innumerable χρειάζεσθαι of various types—virtually hundreds of them. We would rather have been surprised if he did not. What is more significant is that most of his χρειάζεσθαι tend to come in series, or in clusters, in one or two places in each life. Since I have not seen this phenomenon noted before, I supply here a provisional list of these clusters of χρειάζεσθαι in Diogenes Laertius:

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<tr>
<td>Book II</td>
<td>Anaxagoras: 7; 10; Socrates: 30–36; Aristippus: 66–82; Stilbo: 114–18; 119; 127–28.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Book IV</td>
<td>Xenocrates: 10; Arcesilaus: 43; Bion: 47 (with the significant introduction: πειστά τε καταλελοιπέν υπομνήματα, ἄλλα καὶ ἀποφθέγματα χρειώθη πραγματείαν περιέχοντα).</td>
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17 See Heinz Gomoll, Der stoische Philosoph Ilektos (Leipzig 1933) 90–91; 112–13.

18 As suggested already by Gerhard (n. 11 above) 252–53.

19 Richard Hope, The Book of Diogenes Laertius (New York 1930), deals mainly with Diogenes' probable sources for anecdotes in the various Lives (pp. 71, 82–83), and with a literary "taxonomy" of anecdotes according to their purpose and function (pp. 169–74). Eduard Schwartz, article Diogenes Laertius (Diogenes 40), RE V (= Realencycopädie, vol. v) (1905) 738–63, finds it sufficient to say: "Dass Diogenes Apophthegmsammlungen vorlagen, sah schon Bahnsch; diese Untersuchungen lassen sich nur auf Grund handschriftlichen Materials weiterführen" (758). But why? Bahnsch has not been available to me. I find no reference to χρειάζεσθαι in our latest book on this theme of the sources, Jorgen Mejer, Diogenes Laertius and his Hellenistic Background, Hermes Einzelschriften 40 (Wiesbaden 1978)—where one might have expected something in the section "Biographies of Philosophers," 90–93.

20 Confirming, in similar words, the etymology offered by Theon (n. 11 above) 97: ὅτι μᾶλλον τῶν ἄλλων χρειωθῆς ἔστι τῷ βιώ. Von Wartenleben (n. 11 above) 28–29, argues for this etymology, against the fantastic derivation from χρησιμος suggested by Wilhelm Goettling, but he does not refer to this passage of Diogenes. The derivation of χρειάζεσθαι from χρειώθης—although not much else about its nature and history—was already taken for granted by Isaac Casaubon, Animadversiones in Athenaeum (Lugduni 1645) ("the last edition revised by the author!") 4, line 22 ff.
Whether Diogenes compiled these large clusters of anecdotes from various collections available to him, or copied them from one or two gnomologia which already existed in his time, is a moot question. We simply do not know about the structure of these early collections of χρεία. Some of the later gnomologia which have reached us are arranged in a "doxographical" manner, by themes; some are arranged by philosophers. The existence of clusters of χρεία in Diogenes, and his general manner of work, would suggest that such a collection of χρεία arranged under the names of individual philosophers (Hecato’s?) was employed. What is of far greater interest to us is the very large number of χρεία in Diogenes and other sources which employ the formulae ἐρωτηθείς or πρὸς τὸν ἐπόνοῳ in their "protasis," and ἐπὶ, εἰπέν (or the like) in their "apodosis": Quintilian’s chria in respondendo. Again, I have not seen this issue of the formulaic structure of χρεία treated anywhere in this particular fashion. I therefore supply here another provisional list of three types of χρεία: the plain dixit or dicere solebat, Quintilian’s first category; interrogatus ille, his category II. 1; and cum hoc ei dictum esset, his II. 2. I have taken my examples, for what is, after all, a provisional list, from Diogenes Laertius, and from the pseudo-Plutarchean Ἀποθέγματα βασιλέων καὶ στρατηγῶν (ΒΣ) and Ἀποθέγματα Λακωνικά (ΑΛ).

I. dixit; dicere solebat (ἐφη, ἔλεγε, ἐφάσκε and the like).
   DL    I. 35; 58; 63; 69; 77; 86; 87; 91; 103; 104; 105; 108;  
          II. 30; 31; 32; 33; 34; 36; 67; IV. 48; 49; 50; 51; V.  
          18; 19; VI. 3; 5; 6; 8; 27; 28; 30; 33; 35; 38; 46; 49;  
          51; VII. 21; 22; 23; IX. 64.

II. interrogatus ille . . . respondit (ἐρωτηθείς and the like . . . ἐφη and  
                              the like).

21 Some, like the famous Gnomologium Vaticanum, are arranged by "doxographical" headings. Since doxography started with Theophrastus, it is not impossible that even some of the earliest books of χρεία may have been arranged in this manner. But it appears that this literary form began in Cynic and Stoic circles. Disciples of the early Cynics and Stoics were at least very likely to arrange their collections by names of philosophers, to glorify their own masters. For a recent discussion of gnomologia, with copious references to manuscript material and modern research, see Dimitri Gutas, Greek Wisdom Literature in Arabic Translation, A Study of the Graeco-Arabic Gnomologia, American Oriental Society (New Haven, Conn. 1975) 9-35.
A note of warning. I have not included here Quintilian's third category, *cum quis dixisset aliquid vel fecisset*. The number of *χρεία* of this type is roughly the same as their number in the other categories—with a slight preponderance of it in the Cynic Lives of Diogenes, as one could only expect. Nor—since this is merely a provisional list—have I given the numbers of *χρεία* of each type in each paragraph of Diogenes or Stephanus page of Plutarch. Many *χρεία* of the same category tend to come in twos or threes in the same region of the text, just as groups of *χρεία* of the same category tend to cluster together within a wider area. It may well be that Quintilian's classification represents divisions and chapter-headings already existent in collections available to him—and to Diogenes later. This should be further investigated. For my present purpose, suffice it if I have shown that *χρεία* beginning with the formulae ἐρωτηθείς and πρὸς τὸν εἰπώντα are as frequent in some of our major sources as are plain maxims or sayings.

I shall not weary the reader with specimens of *χρεία* beginning with πρὸς τὸν εἰπώντα. Almost any of the dozens in my list will do. But our particular *χρεία* in Plutarch has two unusual characteristics: a) instead of the usual beginning of the “apodosis” with ἐπι, ἔτειν or the like, Plutarch has here ἀντέλεγεν; b) the “protasis” is no mere saying or question by someone, but a literary quotation.

It is true that ἀντέλεγεν is unusual. I have found no other example of it in *χρεία* I have checked.22 This may be due to Plutarch's literary art,
wishing to emphasize that, despite the matter of his argument, Zeno did listen to the other side and refuted it. Or he may have wished to emphasize that Zeno's refutation was couched in the "antilogistic," disjunctive form. We shall return to this.

As to χρείαi with literary quotations, they are not all that rare. Here is a partial list of some such χρείαi in Diogenes Laertius: II. 78; 82; 117; IV. 9; 46; 47; VI. 36; 44; 50; 52; 53; 55; 57; 63; 66; 67; 104; VII. 172; IX. 59.

Of all these, perhaps the nearest in form to Plutarch's story of Zeno is Diogenes Laertius' anecdote concerning Diogenes of Sinope and his master Xeniades (VI. 36):

Τῷ πριαμένῳ αὐτόν Ξενιάδης σησί, "Αγε ὅπως τὸ προσ- τατόμενον ποίησεις," τοῦ δʹ εἰπόντος ἄνω ποταμῶν χωροῦσι παγαί.

"εἰ δὲ ἵστρὸν ἐπρίω νοσῶν, οὐκ ἂν," (ἐφη)23 "αὐτῷ ἐπείθου, ἀλλʹ εἰπεὶς ἄν ὡς ἄνω ποταμῶν χωροῦσι παγαί;"

Plutarch himself was not unaware of the nature of χρεία. At least in one passage of his writings, his view of its value is far from complimentary. In Chapter 7 of Progr. Virt., Plutarch speaks of those who begin to apply themselves to the study of arguments (λόγοι)—and begin, usually, by choosing one of the wrong types of arguments. Those who begin by collecting anecdotes are the last on this list (78F):

... ἔνιοι δὲ χρείας καὶ ἱστορίας ἀναλεγόμενοι περισσαῖν, ὡσπερ Ἀνάχαρσις ἔλεγε τῷ νομίσματι πρὸς οὐδὲν ἢ τὸ ἀριθμεῖν χρωμένους ὅραν τοὺς "Ελλήνας, οὕτως τοῖς λόγοις παραριθμοῦμενοι καὶ παραριθμοῦντες, ἀλλο δʹ οὐδὲν εἰς ὄνησιν ἀπ' αὐτῶν τιθέμενοι.

Not that Plutarch himself is above using some χρείαι when it suits him. At least in one place in his Lives (Demosth. 11. 2–7), he recounts some χρείαι of Demosthenes, ending with the words (7), ἄλλα περὶ μὲν τούτων καὶ ἐτέρων γελοίων καίπερ ἐτὶ πλεῖω λέγειν ἔχοντες, ἐνταῦθα παυσόμεθα. This sounds almost as though Plutarch had a collection of χρείαι before him. He could not resist the temptation to tell some of them; but being a serious writer of "morality biographies," he soon checked himself and remembered his real task. He continues: τὸν δʹ ἄλλον αὐτὸν τρόπον καὶ τὸ ἥθος ἀπὸ τῶν πράξεων καὶ τῆς πολιτείας θεωρεῖσθαι δίκαιον ἔστιν.

It is clear that Plutarch knows what a χρεία is, and that he attaches no great value to it as a source of serious information and edification either to

23 Supplied by Stephanus and obviously right, as the formula of the "apodosis."
the historian or to the philosopher. Did he, then, simply slip and forget all
he knew about this sub-literary form and its value when he came to our
story about Zeno? Or did he, in his zeal to amass as many Stoic
contradictions as possible, overlook the fragile nature of this kind of source?
Since we can only guess where he may have found this particular χρειάς
(Hecato, or one of the early compilations by a pupil of Zeno?), and since it
is not unlikely that when he wrote the work before us, he was already
relying on his own notes and excerpts rather than on his sources,24 we can
only guess.

This is not the end of our enquiry. Having told his anecdote, Plutarch
continues: τοῦτον δὲ τὸν λόγον ἑρωτήσας κτλ. Cherniss translates:
“after having propounded his argument (1034E).” But is ἑρωτάω simply
“to propound an argument?” Nor is it simply “to pose a question,” as
translated by Amyot (“& ce pendant luy mesme qui faisoit cest demande” . .
.) and translators who follow him. Zeno poses no question in Plutarch’s
story. It has a more technical sense, some traces of the history of which are
indicated in LSJ, s. v. ἑρωτάω II. 2:

In Dialectic, opp. demonstration, question an opponent in order to
refute him from his answers, Arist. AP. 24a 24; τι ib. 42a 39; hence later,
submit, set forth, propound an argument, λόγον Gal. 5. 257 — Pass., ὁ
λόγος . . ἑρωτήσας φαίνεται Arr. Epict. 2. 19. 1; ἑρωτηθέντος τοῦ
σοφισμάτος S.E. P. 2. 237.

Even this is to simplify matters. It is true that Sextus frequently uses
the combination λόγον ἑρωτάω (ἑρωτάω and variants). But he always
uses this expression for a refutation, usually in the form of a syllogism, of
a “dogmatic” position. The refuting λόγος offered by Sextus is more often
than not a plain syllogism, but sometimes it is a disjunctive argument in
the form of “either . . . or”, concluding with “neither . . . nor” at the point
of final refutation. Here is a provisional list:

Plain syllogistic refutation: PHI I. 20; 33–34; II. 134; 239; 248; 250; 254
(where it is distinguished from σόφισμα); III. 66; 116; 280; M VIII.
215; 216; 227; 234; 444–45; IX. 92; 133; 182; 205; X. 171.

Disjunctive refutation: PHI II. 185 (+ M VIII. 465); 186; III. 76; 127;
163; 239 (referring back to 172); M X. 94; 110.

What is, perhaps of greater interest is that in most of these places,
Sextus applies this expression, ἑρωτάω λόγον and variants, to the
Pyrrhonian’s own refutation of his “dogmatic” opponent. Diódorus Cronus
is mentioned more than twenty times by name in Sextus’ works. Only at

24 See Cherniss (n. 6 above) 369–401, who argues for the use of “note-books” containing
excerpts made by Plutarch himself, as his main immediate source for passages quoted in his
Stoic books.
X. 87, 94 and 110 does Sextus apply this expression to a disjunctive argument by Diodorus—in all three cases, to the same argument against the existence of motion. Yet it is precisely to Diodorus Cronus and his Megaric friends that we must turn if we are to trace the origin of this peculiar expression—which, by the time of Sextus, has been watered down to imply any “structured” argument used in refuting an opponent.

Of Euclides of Megara, we are told by Diogenes Laertius (II. 106):

... καὶ οἱ ἀτρόμοι Μεγαρεῖοι προσηγορεύοντο, εἴτε ἐριτικόι, ὀπτερον δὲ διαλεκτικοί, οὐδὲ σωτικοὶ ἀνώμασε πρῶτος Διονύσιος ὁ Χαλκηδόνιος διὰ τὸ πρὸς ἐρώτησιν καὶ ἀπόκρισιν τοῦς λόγους διατίθεσθαι.25

Of Eubulides of Mileto, Diogenes writes:

... δὲ καὶ πολλοὺς ἐν διαλεκτικῇ λόγους ἠρώτησε, τὸν τε πευδόμενον κτλ. (II. 108; Giannantoni IIB. 13, p. 53; Muller 64, p. 31).

Muller translates properly: “arguments de forme interrogative.” This is confirmed by an anonymous comic fragment—most probably by a contemporary of Eubulides—cited by Diogenes in the same passage:

οὐριστικὸς δ' Εὐμολίδης κερατίνας ἐρωτόν καὶ πευδαλαζόσιν λόγοις τούς ῥήτορας κυλίων κτλ.

This is not the place to discuss in any detail the seven paradoxes of Eubulides counted in this passage of Diogenes.26 But it should be fairly clear by now that some, at least, of these arguments were couched in the form of disjunctive questions, the answer to any of which is “yes” or “no.” A good example—probably the nearest we have to the original form—of this Megaric practice, is supplied by Diogenes Laertius (II. 116), in the form of a χρεία about Stilbo of Megara:


One notes the expression λόγον ἐρωτήσας. A similar expression, συνερωτάτω λόγον, is employed by Sextus in reporting the disjunctive

25 I cannot see why Gabriele Giannantoni, Socraticorum Reliquiae vol. I (Naples 1983) 129, quotes the last part of this sentence only in IIP 3 (Dionysius Chalcedonius). Robert Muller, Les Mégariques, Fragments et témoignages (Paris 1985) 25, quotes the whole passage as 31, the first fragment in Section IC, “Développement et situation dans l’histoire de la philosophie de l’école issue d’Euclée.”

26 For the latest detailed discussion, with the relevant sources (alas, in translation only!), see Muller (last n.), Annexe I, 75–90, and his notes to Frs. 64–65, pp. 113–19; 193 (n. 128)–196 (n. 168).
argument of Diodorus Cronus against movement (Μ X. 87; repeated with ἤρωτήθησαί φασίν τὸν λόγον at 94, and ἤρωτηκε δὲ ὁ Διόδωρος τὸν . . . λόγον at 110).

If Diodorus was the inventor of so many Fangschlüsse, he was, according to Diogenes Laertius, still no match for Stilbo of Megara. The story of how Diodorus died of shame because he could not solve dialectical problems put to him by Stilbo is well-known today: it has been spread around by logicians who, even if they would not go as far themselves, look with envy on the serious manner in which those ancient Megarians took their logic. Fact or fiction—this should not detain us here.27 What is of greater importance is the language (DL II. 111):

οὕτως παρὰ Πτολεμαῖρος τῷ Σωτηρὶ διατριβῶν λόγους τινὰς διαλεκτικοὺς ἤρωτήθη πρὸς Στίλπωνος; καὶ μὴ δυνάμενος παραχρῆμα διαλύσασθαι κτλ.29

We have already seen one ἐρώτησις of Stilbo. Diogenes Laertius II. 119 supplies us with two more of this sort. These ἐρωτήσεις are so similar in nature to the long string of Fangschlüsse reported by Diogenes at VII. 186–87, that I am inclined to think they may well be also Stilbonian in origin. Diogenes reports them with the opening sentence ὅ δὲ φιλόσοφος καὶ τοιοῦτος τινὰς ἤρωτα λόγους, and ends with the words οἱ δ' ἕβουλιδοι τοῦτο φασίν. Since, in the first part of 186, we have been given the names of some ὄμονωμοι—two doctors and one writer on agriculture also named Chrysippus—it looks, at first glance, as if what we have here is something like “but to return to Chrysippus the philosopher . . . .” It is therefore taken to be a Chrysippian testimonium by modern scholars.30 But these could hardly be Chrysippus' own arguments. After all, Chrysippus objected to the Megareikà ἐρωτήματα (SVF II. 270–71); and the only argument in this passage which has a Sitz im Leben of a sort is “the Man in Megara” paradox. Add to this the fact that the last of these arguments is ascribed to another Megarian, Eubulides. Quite clearly, ὁ φιλόσοφος at the beginning of this passage is a “bad stitch,” probably by

27 See Muller 128, on Frs. 99–100—who also rightly remarks: “On note, d'autre part, à propos de la dialectique en général, que ces fr. offrent l'avantage de contenir explicitement plusieurs des traits caractéristiques évoqués ailleurs: les arguments en forme de question, l'obligation de répondre sur le champ, et aussi le caractère de jeu de société que révétait volontiers un entretien dialectique.” (My emphasis).
28 Misprinted Πτολεμαῖρος in Long's OCT.
29 Pliny the Elder, NH VII. 180, translates the report he must have found in a similar Greek source: . . . pudore [obii] Diodorus sapientiae dialecticae professor, lusoria quaeestione non protonus ab interrogatione Stilponis dissoluta. A reader of this Latin testimonium alone would have to guess hard in order to arrive at the terminology of its Greek Unterlage. Both Greek and Latin passages: Giannantoni II F 1–2, vol. I, pp. 73–75.
30 Von Armin, SVF II. 279, p. 92, with the “man in Megara” argument—of all things—in spaced letters signifying genuine Chrysippus. Giannantoni III B 13, p. 53, referring to this SVF fragment in evidence of Chrysippean origin. Muller 65, p. 31.
Diogenes himself, who may have found this passage among his notes for his Chrysippus book, without indication of the source. Why not? *Il est capable de tout.* If there is any truth in Heraclides' report (DL II. 120; Giannantoni II 0 4; Muller 167) that Stilbo was also a pupil of Zeno of Citium, one possible explanation is that a string of ἐρωτήσεις formulated by Stilbo, and perhaps "solved" by Chrysippus, found its way into some late doxographic source concerned with Chrysippus. It may have been truncated in that source—or it may be Diogenes who copied only the "juicy" paradoxes. But enough of this.

That the Megarians were not only, or chiefly, logicians, but first and foremost dialecticians—this has been noted (although not as often as it should have been) by some historians of logic, and by the latest editor of the Megaric testimonia. They also note that these Megaric ἐρωτήσεις were originally couched in the form of alternative questions to be answered with "yes" or "no." But almost all the Megaric ἐρωτήσεις which have reached us are already formulated in the form of a disjunctive syllogism—in fact, in the form of a Stoic disjunctive argument, using ἢ or ἢσοι as the disjunctive particles. Why, then, call them ἐρωτήσεις?

A clue to this problem may be found in two versions of the same syllogism, ascribed by Diogenes Laertius to Diogenes of Sinope. In both versions, the argument is almost word for word the same—but the opening formula is distinctly different. Let us have the two:

VI. 37

συνελογίζετο δὲ καὶ οὕτως: πάντα τῶν σοφῶν εἶναι λέγων καὶ τοιούτους λόγους ἐρωτῶν οἶνος ἀνω προειρήκαμεν.

τῶν θεῶν ἐστὶ πάντα· πάντα τῶν θεῶν ἐστὶ·

φίλοι δὲ οἱ σοφοὶ τοῖς θεοῖς· φίλοι δὲ τοῖς σοφοῖς οἱ θεοί·

κοινὰ δὲ τὰ τῶν φιλῶν· κοινὰ δὲ τὰ τῶν φιλῶν·

πάντα ἀρά ἐστι τῶν σοφῶν πάντα ἀρά τῶν σοφῶν

The variations in wording are insignificantly small. But when, at 37, Diogenes Laertius presents this argument as a plain syllogism (συνελογίζετο), he says plainly οὕτως. When, at 72, he presents it as an ἐρώτησις, he uses a more careful language: τοιούτους λόγους ἐρωτῶν οἶνος—indicating that this is not the exact form of Diogenes' original


32 Frede (last n.) 93–96.
ἐρώτησις. I do not accuse Diogenes Laertius of such fine distinctions. He must have found them in his sources. Such language is not restricted to this particular passage. Stilbo's ἐρώτησις at II. 116—although it opens with a proper question (but carries on with two plain σωμπεράματα) is also prefaced with τοιούτον τινα λόγον ἐρωτήσα. So is the string of ἐρωτήσεις at VII. 186–87, just discussed. It opens with τοιούτους τινὰς ἠρώτα λόγους—and indeed, these are already couched in plain disjunctive form.

These are only a few traces of such a distinction. By the time of Sextus Empiricus, ἐρωτάν had already lost its original sense and was merely used for any refutation—disjunctive or plainly syllogistic. A formula like ἐρωτάται δὲ καὶ οὕτως (e.g. M VII. 340) or οὕτως συνερώτα (X. 87) is quite regular. At X. 110, Sextus can even say of Diodorus Cronus ἠρώτηκε δὲ ὁ Διοδώρος τὸν ἐκκείμενον λόγον—referring back to the argument of 87 (τὸν περιφορητικὸν συνερώτα λόγον . . . λέγων—followed by a plain disjunctive argument) and 94 (ὅταν λεγῇ ὁ Διοδώρος—followed by the same disjunction). But could one assume that the more careful formulation, using τοιοῦτος and variants in the passages cited in our last paragraphs (and one can add, e.g., DL VI. 69), is an indication of an earlier practice, at a stage when reports of Megaric ἐρωτήσεις were already being “translated” into the forms of Stoic syllogisms, but when the “translators”—to indicate that this was a reformulated version of the original dialectic argument, used a cautionary τοιοῦτος rather than a plain οὕτως? It is, in any case, not without interest that in our passage of Stoic. Rep., Plutarch opens his story with the cautious τοιοῦτο τινὶ λόγῳ χρώμενος, although he follows it at the end with τοιοῦτον δὲ τὸν λόγον ἐρωτήσας. Is it possible that what he found in his source was τοιοῦτος in both cases—and that Zeno had couched his refutation, in the original setting, in the form of Megaric ἐρωτήσεις?33

How exactly did Zeno do that? In our passage of Plutarch, he asks no questions: he already uses the “translation” into a disjunctive argument. Almost all the ἐρωτήσεις ascribed to the Megarics and Diogenes of Sinope have also reached us in such “translations.” The only exception I know is the opening question of Stilbo’s argument at DL II. 116, beginning as it does with ἀρά γε.

Yet we have a number of such ἐρωτήσεις, beginning with ἀρά or ἀρά γε, ascribed by Aristotle (Soph. El. 20. 177b10–26) to Euthydemus. The immediate context (177a33 ff.) is that of λόγοι παρέ τὴν διαίρεσιν καὶ σύνθεσιν. But the wider context (175al–4 ff.) is that of ἀποκρίσεις το  

33That Plutarch is not invariably careless may, perhaps, emerge from a comparison of Stoic. Rep. 16. 1041C–D, τοιοῦτος ἠρώτηκε λόγου (where the original arguments may have been disjunctive and put in the form of questions—but where, in any case, Plutarch may simply have changed and shortened the various stages of the original syllogisms), with 10. 1036A, where the quotation from Chrysippus is followed by τοιοῦτον, οὕτως λέξειν εἴρηκεν.
Sophistic ἐρωτήματα. Euthydemus and Dionysodorus are described in Plato's Euthydemus (e.g. 272b) as experts in the ἐριστική τέχνη. Their mode of investigation and refutation is clearly that of posing a question of "either . . . or" (e.g. 275d: πὸτεροί εἰσι τῶν ἀνθρώπων οἱ μανθάνοντες, οἱ σοφοὶ ἢ οἱ ἁμαθεῖς;) to which the other side can only answer with one of two alternatives. The refutation (in this example, 276a–b) is conducted in terms of questions, some of which naturally begin with ἀρα. These questions are so often called ἐρωτήσεις ὡς ἐρωτήματα in that dialogue, that one need not bring any reference. That Socrates himself also poses ἐρωτήματα (e.g. 278e), and some of his own questions begin with ἀρα γέ (ibid.), is only part of the whole purport of this dialogue, pointing out the difference between Socrates' questions and refutations, which lead to some positive advancement, and those of the eristics, aimed merely at an easy refutation. The main point is that, at the hands of such Sophists as Euthydemus and his brother, this technique of refutation by a series of questions with alternative answers is clearly described as eristic—the very name given to the Megarians in DL II. 106. We can draw some support for these antecedents of the Megaric eristic in that famous passage of Meno (80d–e), where Meno poses to Socrates two questions, each of which can be described as potentially disjunctive. Socrates, identifying Meno's argument as ἐριστικὸς λόγος (80e2), proceeds to "translate" them into a proper disjunctive argument. Euthydemus' arguments, all beginning with ἀρα questions, as reported by Aristotle in Soph. E1. 20, are very similar in type to the Megarian ἐρωτήσεις we have discussed. Whatever the part played by the Eleatics, and especially by Zeno of Elea, in the formation of the dialectic, both of Euthydemus, Dionysodorus and their like and of the School of Megara—and this is not the place to enter into this old problem—it is clear that one can draw a fairly straight line from the question-and-answer technique of refutation of the two brothers to the technique of Megaric ἐρωτήσεις.

The technique of "translating" Megaric ἐρωτήσεις into Stoic syllogisms—first, with a cautious τοιοῦτος and variants—may well have been instituted by the Stoics themselves, in order to facilitate logical refutation. What is clear is that the Stoics studied such Fangschlüsse and

34 In Rhet. II. 24. 1400a28 ff., Aristotle reproduces the "trireme in Piraeus" ἐρώτησις, as well as some other ἐρωτήσεις of Euthydemus, in shorthand syllogistic form. But then, in his Rhetoric, he is not concerned with the questioning technique of the dialectician, but rather with depicting the same fallacy, τὸ διημένον συντιθέντα λέγειν ἢ τὸ συγκείμενον διαμόρφωτα (1401a25–26) as employed by the orator in "straight" speeches.

35 Muller, 113, on 64–65, notes that no argument ascribed to Eubulides in our sources appears in Plato's Euthydemus, while two of his paradoxes are presented in Aristotle's De Sophisticis Elenchis. This would strengthen the assumption that Euthydemus and Dionysodorus—some of whose arguments, as we have just noted, are reported by Aristotle independently of Plato—were indeed "eristics" in their own right. One can, therefore, also assume that their techniques may well have influenced the Megarians.
employed the whole armoury of their own dialectic to refute them. The zeal of Chrysippus and his disciples in refuting such Megaric ερωτήματα or σοφίσματα is richly attested in SVF II. 270–87, assembled by von Arnim from such diverse sources as Cicero, Plutarch, Galen, Lucian, Diogenes Laertius, Sextus, Epictetus and some of the commentators on Aristotle. But we remember that even in our chapter of Plutarch (= SVF I. 50), we are told of Zeno: ἐλευ δὲ σοφίσματα καὶ τὴν διαλεκτικὴν ὡς τούτο ποιεῖν δυναμένην ἐκέλευε κτλ. From SVF II. 271 (Plutarch), and especially from 272 (Galen), it seems clear that such σοφίσματα are mainly those Megaric paradoxes. It is not unlikely that such Megaric paradoxes were the main preoccupation of Chrysippus' περὶ τῶν σοφισμάτων πρὸς Ἡρακλείδην καὶ Πόλλιν (DL VII. 198 = SVF II. 16). Yet we have seen that in our chapter of Plutarch, Zeno is made to employ precisely this type of Megaric σόφισμα to refute his unfortunate opponent. Plutarch had noted as much as that, and accused Zeno of contradiction. Should we?

Of course not. The anecdote as we have it is no piece of philosophical doctrine, taken out of one of Zeno's serious books, but an amusing χρεία, in which Zeno is reported by someone else as refuting an adversary who thinks he is “too clever by half,” and he does this by using precisely that sort of Megaric dialectic which he spent much of his time refuting. Moreover, by listening to the other man's argument and spending some time in answering it with a counter-argument (Plutarch's emphatic ἀντέλεγεν), Zeno shows in practice that he has, in this case, listened to the other side.

If our χρεία is a genuine anecdote, recounting something which really happened to Zeno—and we must remember that Plutarch is our only source—someone can now use one's imagination and reconstruct roughly what may have happened.

Zeno was most probably expounding in public some of his own ideas and referring with contempt to those of someone else, which he described as “not worth listening to.” Someone in the audience challenged him by quoting the hexametre line, to the effect that one should listen to the other side. Zeno—far from not listening to the other side—even bothered to refute him. In his refutation, he used—quite consciously, I would guess—the Megaric mode of refutation which, as a teacher of dialectic, he did his best to confute. Those of his proper pupils standing around must have realized—and most probably enjoyed—both the fallacious nature of Zeno's argument, and the “refutation in practice” offered by his very action. But

36 If Prantl (n. 31 above) is right in regarding Isocrates 15. 45 as a reference to the Megaric technique—and the similarity in terminology to passages we have examined, where the Megarians are explicitly mentioned, is compelling—then the term ἀντέλεγεν in our passage of Plutarch echoes ἀντιλαμβανόμενον of Isocrates, thus confirming our suggestion that in the original form of this anecdote, Zeno was depicted as using a Megaric ἐρωτήματις technique.

37 See note 22 above.
here was a clever piece of repartee. It would be a pity not to record it. Someone did. It found its way into some collection of χρεία, where—when he was collecting materials for his books against the Stoics—Plutarch found it. By the time he came to write *Stoic. Rep.*, Plutarch most probably had forgotten his source. He either paid no attention to the obvious form of this χρεία, or forgot (what Theon, at least, knew) that a χρεία can sometimes be a mere joke. In his zeal to refute Zeno, he treated this clever little joke as a serious piece of Zenonian doctrine. Unfortunately, he has been followed in this by modern scholarship.

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Plutarch, Hesiod, and the Mouseia of Thespiai

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This study grows out of a number of years of work on Hesiod, rather than on Plutarch. It finds its place in a series of papers on Plutarch because it argues for re-evaluation of the Plutarchan commentary on the *Works and Days*. My primary point rests on the fact that, with reference to the shrine of the Heliconian Muses, Plutarch was a local, and an extraordinarily educated and articulate local. His commentary on the *Works and Days* was an act of piety for his native Boeotia much as his essay on the maliciousness of Herodotus served the same function. His primary concern here was to demonstrate the ethical value of the great Boeotian poet, and in the process he identified as "interpolations" several passages too "trivial" to stand with the rest. But if one looks carefully at the most important interpolation he claims to have identified in the *Works and Days*, its implications are very far-reaching indeed. In fact, when the condemned passage is examined in the context of the other "confessional" passages in Hesiod, it becomes clear that its exclusion calls in question the very idea of a personal and historical Hesiod—a notion that has been examined and subjected to scrutiny only by the two generations of scholarship on archaic Greek poetry since Milman Parry.

Rather than recapitulate here the history of the problem of the Hesiodic corpus, we may simply recall a few facts to serve as a basis for the discussion that follows. First, there is almost no evidence for the state of the text of Hesiod before the Hellenistic period.1 Secondly, the text of Homer—the best available comparandum—was stabilized in the third and second centuries—in the Hellenistic period—to produce what is known as the vulgate, which is both the principal source of the medieval manuscript tradition and the point of departure for modern scholarship.2 The fourth and

2 That the Hellenistic vulgate was a normalization and reduction of the two poems, against the background of the "long" or "wild" texts of the fourth and third centuries is generally accepted (T. W. Allen, *Homer, the Origins and the Transmission* [1924] 271–82, 302–27). Whether that vulgate corresponded to a conservative text predating the "long" texts, and if so, to what degree, are questions more difficult to answer. For a concise survey of the problem, see G.
third centuries knew longer versions of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, now largely lost.\(^3\) Thirdly, the Hellenistic reading public was very fond of the poetry of Hesiod. One might even argue that the *Theogony, Works and Days*, and *Catalogue of Women* (along with such lost works as the *Astronomy*) came into their own when Hellenistic poets imitated Hesiod (or advertised themselves and their contemporaries as his imitators) and Hellenistic scholars worked to refine the text.\(^4\) My contention is that both the *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, though doubtless comprising very old material, much of it far older than any imaginable historical Hesiod, may well have been influenced and shaped even more significantly than the poems of Homer by their normalization (and canonization) in the Hellenistic period.

The historicity of Hesiod is problematic.\(^5\) Along with Homer's, his is one of the two major surviving voices from a larger group of hexameter poets standing at the very beginnings of Greek literary tradition. Of these semi-mythic poets, "Orpheus" would seem to have been little more than a conventional persona, adopted by many poets over many generations. "Musaeus" is more elusive still, and the Homeric corpus, whose speaker maintains a scrupulous anonymity, defies reduction to a single poet's *oeuvre* today as it did in antiquity. Only Hesiod advertises his own identity, organizing his traditional lore around a personality and a series of autobiographical anecdotes so idiosyncratic that it is difficult to read them as purely conventional. The tendency of scholarship in the past 50 years has been to question all the information that such poetry and its parallel biographic traditions offer about its creators,\(^6\) and to view the earliest speakers of Greek poetry—from Homer and Hesiod to Archilochus and Theognis—as personae generated by poetic traditions rather than as creative individuals with recoverable biographies and personalities. The often cited

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\(^3\) Cf. T. W. Allen, *Homer, the Origin, and the Transmission* (1924) 268–69, 301–03.

\(^4\) For citations and echoes in Hellenistic (and other) poetry, see the apparatus of the indispensable *edictio maior* of Rzach (1902). On Hellenistic scholarship on the poems, West (1966) 48–52; West (1978) 63–75.


\(^6\) The trend begins with Milman Parry, but for recent developments, see Nagy (above, n. 5) and M. Lefkowitz, *The Lives of the Greek Poets* (1981).
polemical passage of Josephus (Against Apion 1.12) that presents Homer as a prehistoric, illiterate bard, whose songs were assembled in later days, is unique evidence for a perception among the ancients of the peculiar status of authorship in archaic Greek poetry.

My purpose here is to add Plutarch to the list of ancient witnesses for the conventional character of the personae of archaic Greek poetry. He will not, however, be such a friendly witness as Josephus. Indeed, Plutarch himself had a large stake in the historicity of these illustrious figures from the dim past, and the author of the Lives (and, moreover, of a lost Life of Hesiod, if the Lamprias Catalogue is to be believed)\(^7\) cannot be made into a “Parryist” or “Nagyist”—he believed in a historical Hesiod, beyond any substantial doubt. But without any desire on his part to shatter the Hesiodic persona into a figment of convention, Plutarch provides evidence that is important and underappreciated, pointing to a perception among men of letters of the early centuries of the Christian era that some elements of the “confessional” Hesiod did not correspond to any historical reality. Rather, they were elaborations that served the interests of the institution that had taken possession of Hesiod and his poetry—the Festival of the Muses sponsored by the people of Thespiai in central Boeotia. When this evidence is juxtaposed with the documented doubts about the authenticity of the Hesiodic prooimia voiced by Hellenistic scholars, Plutarch’s testimony takes on crucial importance. If scepticism is justified where Crates, Aristarchus, and Plutarch were sceptical, the confessional Hesiod of Ascra, the shepherd of Helicon with his special devotion to the Muses, crumbles into dust.

What is left is a body of Hesiodic wisdom poetry whose persona is hardly more individualized or confessional than that of the Iliad or Odyssey. The conclusion that this poetry and its conventions (including the persona of its singer) are the products of a tradition of song rather than an individual singer is modern, but the doubts about the integrity of the information provided by the Hesiodic corpus about its singer were present by the Hellenistic period.

Before turning to the text and to Plutarch’s comments on it, it is first necessary to survey the evidence we have for the “Mouseia” of Thespiai, a pentaeteric festival of performance arts, known to Plutarch and to Pausanias. This institution would seem to be the force that perpetuated (if, indeed, it did not create) the highly confessional “Ascraean” bard of the central poems of the transmitted Hesiodic corpus. There is no way of knowing whether there was a Hesiod before there was a festival of the Heliconian Muses, but the Hellenistic scholars and Plutarch provide evidence strongly suggesting that it was after the festival had taken hold of the poems that this highly individualized persona took on its definitive form.

\(^7\) Lamprias Catalogue #35: Ἰησοῦδον βίος. Sandbach, in the Loeb Moralia 15, p. 81, indicates four passages from the Moralia containing material that “may have been used in the Life.”
The Hesiodic topography of western Boeotia is generally well known. It is customary to contrast the nameless, faceless, placeless narrator of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* with that of the Hesiodic corpus, who mentions his own name, that of his brother, and provides about a dozen toponyms to give a locus to his song. The exercise in literary-critical fantasy called the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod* starts off by saying (suggestively, and perhaps paradoxically) that *both* Homer and Hesiod were the objects of competition among various cities which claimed them as native sons—scarcely credible, in the light of the text with its apparent geographical precision—but in all probability the author's point is simply that all the cities would *like* to claim both poets. He quickly goes on to point out that Hesiod, in fact, settled the question of his home-town in the *Works and Days* (639–40), when he informed us that his father came from Kyme in Asia Minor to live in Boeotia,

And settled next to Helikon in a godawful village
Called “Barren Oak,” bad in the winter, awful in the summer,
and never any good.

There were few doubts expressed in antiquity about the correct location of Hesiod's “Barren Oak” or Ashra. Hesiod, though, hardly impresses the reader as a well socialized member of the community in question. One might suspect that the poet would have alienated his neighbors by giving their village's name a snooty Ionian pronunciation—“Ἀσκρῆ rather than Boeotian “Ἀσκρα”—but then, if we are to imagine him a real citizen of a real village of that name, his deprecating portrait of the town would surely be sufficient to guarantee his unpopularity, and his foreign accent and contempt for the jargon of the locals need not be worrisome. No one

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8 Each toponym and the history of its interpretation is discussed in P. W. Wallace, “Hesiod and the Valley of the Muses.” *GRBS* 15 (1974) 5–24. This is now supplemented by the Cambridge-Bradford Boeotia Expedition (see below, n. 14). For the archeology of the valley, see the synthesis by Georges Roux, “Le Val des Muses et les Musées chez les auteurs anciens,” *BCH* 78 (1954) 22–48. The initial publications, by Paul Jamot and others (n. 19, below) were fragmentary and Roux's overview came only a half-century later, when much information (and indeed, some of the inscriptions) had been lost. On the inscriptions, see also Werner Peek, “Die Musen von Thespiai”: 609–34 in *GERAS Antoniou Keramopoullo* (Athens: Etairia Makedonikon Spoudon, 1953).

9 The problem is in the verbal phrase in the opening sentence, εὐχοντα λέγεσθαι. Though it might seem to be saying that all men "boast" that Homer and Hesiod "are called" their own fellow citizens, the sense is more likely to be something along the lines of "rejoice in claiming" or simply "would like to claim."

10 νάσσαστο δ' ἄγῳ Ἐλικώνος δικυρῆ ἐνί καώῃ,
“Ἀσκρῆ, κείμα κακῆ, θερεὶ ἄργαλη, σοῦδε ποτ' ἐσθλῆ.

11 The "translation" is based on a gloss in Hesychius. Cf. Nagy, “Hesiod” 64.

12 If there is a single Boeotian word in the corpus, it is Φίξ[α] (= Σφίγγα), *Theog.* 326.
explicitly doubts Ascra's location, but there is no testimony from any one in antiquity (after Hesiod) who claimed to have visited the village of Ascra. There is, of course, the testimony of Pausanias, who visited a valley northwest of Thespiai to see the shrine of the Muses there, and was shown by the Thespiots who were then in control of the place a hill—no doubt the one now called Pyrgaki—with a ruined tower, which they said was the site of Barren Oak, now uninhabited.13

The story was not without substance. Though Pausanias could not have verified it, there had been a large village—if not on top of Pyrgaki, then on its slopes, with its center roughly at the confluence of the two streams that form the valley of the Muses. This was determined in the 1982 survey work of the Cambridge-Bradford Bocotia Expedition, which located the site and established a tentative chronology for the settlement based on surface finds.14

It is possible that Strabo saw Ascra. He visited Greece as a soldier and probably saw some of the Greek sites he describes. He locates Ascra 40 stadia northwest of Thespiai,15 and no doubt he (or his source) had in mind the hill later shown to Pausanias, and much later yet identified as Ascra by 19th-century travelers.16 Strabo does not say whether the village was inhabited in his time (which was also that of Augustus), and he may have reported the location from an earlier geographer without himself laying eyes on it. The probability is, however, that Ascra was then already a deserted ruin, as it was in Plutarch's time, about a century later. Plutarch's commentary on Hesiod, transmitted through the scholia on the Works and Days, relates that the people of Thespiai destroyed Ascra and that the survivors fled to Orchomenos, some 25 kilometers to the northwest.17 A generation later, Pausanias saw only a tower—Plutarch surely, and Strabo probably (if he saw anything), saw the same. And so the evidence points to an Ascra obliterated by the Roman period, but still located with remarkable precision.

The reason this deserted site of what was apparently never more than an undistinguished village was so easily identifiable is not difficult to find. The valley below may have had few permanent inhabitants, but it was the scene of one of the most important competitive festivals of the arts in Greece.

The excavations in the area initially involved tearing down churches to recover inscriptions on the stones from which they were built. During the 1880's, the French were energetic in their pursuit of this sort of

15 Strabo 9. 2. 25.
16 Wallace (above, n. 8) 6-7, with n. 2.
archaeological research. They destroyed at least a half-dozen little chapels in the valley of the Muses—one map shows nine, but it is unlikely that the continuity from the daughters of Memory to the various saints and manifestations of the Panaghia honored in this valley is as clear cut as that number might suggest. The result of this demolition was a large corpus of inscriptions that provide an exceptionally rich fund of information about the festival and related institutions.

Perhaps the most interesting of these is a contract of the third century B.C which represents a reorganization of the contest. The inscription documents the competition's transition from ἀγώνες θεματικοί—games for prizes—to the more prestigious status of ἀγώνες στεφανιται—games for wreaths, or crowns. There was money at stake, and our inscription is among other things a precious indication of the dynamics of the relationship of the unionized performers to the organizers of the festival. Provision is also made for changing the year of the festival—the inscription clearly represents the embodiment in a formal agreement of the reform of an existing festival. Paul Jamot, who published the inscription in 1895, insisted on this and though he dated the inscription to the third century, wrote, "Mais en même temps nous ne pouvons douter que ces jeux n'existassent déjà avant cette époque, puisque le texte est relatif précisément à la réorganisation du concours." Sketchy as they are, the publications of the French excavators of the valley of the Muses are filled with parenthetical remarks of this sort. The material remains recovered belong to the third century or later, but of course, the excavators reiterate, the festival and the cult must have been much older. Their frustration is understandable. The site is linked to Hesiod and yet it has virtually no archaeological record before the third century B.C. G. M. Sifakis has down-dated the decree cited above from a vague "third century" to the period 220–208. This incidentally puts it close to the largest recorded gift to the Muses of Helicon—25,000 drachmas from Ptolemy IV Philopator. This gift at the very end of the third century may account for some of the architectural remains excavated. The valley has yielded some archaic pottery, including that from the surface finds associated with the large village mapped by the Cambridge-Bradford Boeotia Expedition. A spring high up the slope produced a fragment of a bronze cauldron rim with 10 letters of an archaic inscription to some nameless Heliconian deity, but there is little more.

18 Roux (n. 8, above) 23.
20 Jamot (n. 19, above) 312.
22 P. Roesch, Thespies et la confédération béotienne (1965) 221.
23 A. Plassart, "Fouilles de Thespies et de l'hiéron des Muses de l'Hélicon: Inscriptions (6ème article): Dédicaces de caractère religieux ou honorifique; bornes de domaines sacrés (2),"
The festival, in other words, is attested in the archaeological record only for the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Many of the inscriptions are Roman, and though there may have been interruptions, the Mouseia of Thespiai were apparently celebrated until Constantine looted the site to decorate his new capital. Certainly the valley of the stream now called the Arkhontitsa was inhabited before 300 B.C., and the large village there may have been called Ascra. But there is nothing to connect the ruined village with the festival, and there is nothing to prevent believing that it was the Thespiots, after they destroyed the village, who developed a festival there, in the period after Alexander. That festival advertised its archaic roots and claimed a special relationship to the traditions of archaic wisdom poetry that went under the name of Hesiod. This connection becomes explicit in inscriptions such as IG VII 1785 (no longer extant), apparently a boundary marker for a revenue-producing property in the valley, belonging to the "Synthytai of the Hesiodic Muses." There is nothing, however, to show that this landscape or its festival had any real connection with the poems that seemed to stand at the origin of Greek tradition (though there is ample evidence that it advertised such a connection).

Nothing in the archaeological record, then, stands in the way of suggesting that the festival called the Mouseia celebrated Hesiod's Muses and traced its origins to the crusty old Heliconian sage without the slightest historical connection to the tradition of Hesiodic poetry. If the Heliconian cult of the Muses existed before the Hellenistic period, its shrine in the valley of the Arkhontitsa was so insignificant that no trace of it remains. But from the third century on, this institution was demonstrably affluent and conspicuous. That is, when Hesiodic poetry was held in highest esteem, when it was being praised and "imitated" by the poets of Alexandria and was reaching its first substantial reading audience, an important festival of the arts was advertising its connections with that poetry and its singer and claiming both as its own.

_BCH_ 50 (1926) 385. The bronze cauldron rim was found before 1890 at Kriopegadhi, traditionally identified as Hesiod's Hippokrene: Wallace (n. 8, above) 16–18.

24 Cf. Jamot (n. 19, above) 364, on the gap in inscriptive evidence from the mid-first century B.C. to the late second century after Christ.

What might the Mouscia of Thespiai, celebrated in a valley of Mount Helicon from perhaps 300 B.C. to the decline of the pagan festivals in the fourth century after Christ, have done to the surviving text of Hesiod?

Let me repeat that almost nothing is known of the text of Hesiod before the Hellenistic period. There are echoes in other poets, a great abundance of them, which modern editors of Hesiod have gone to great trouble to assemble. Sadly, however, few of these echoes help in dating even specific portions of the poems. There are also a few quotations in later authors, starting with Plato, but these are surprisingly few and not evenly distributed throughout the Theogony and Works and Days.

There is also the same sort of conflicting testimony about the corpus as that for Homer. While the Boeotians (according to Pausanias) declared only the Works and Days to be the work of Hesiod, and not even all of that, others listed as many as a dozen titles. The Suda represents a typical opinion regarding Hesiod's oeuvre. It lists (s. v. Hesiodos) "the Theogony, the Shield of Heracles, the Catalogue of Women of the Heroic Period, a dirge (for someone named Batrakhos, with whom he was in love), On the Idaean Dactyls, and many others."

Widespread doubt about the authenticity of specific bits of information in Hesiod is reflected by Aelian, who remarks parenthetically in a discussion of the Niobids, "The ancients seem not to agree with one another regarding the number of the children of Niobe ... Hesiod says there were 19, unless the verses are not Hesiod's at all, but like many others have been mistakenly attributed to him."  

The disagreement about what was and what was not Hesiodic in the works of Hesiod seems in fact to have been far more pervasive in antiquity than the similar debate on Homer. As Aelian's remarks indicate, it involved not only the authenticity of entire works, but that of sections or even specific verses within works. The debate continues today, with hardly less energy,  

26 Aelian, Varia historia 12. 36.

27 The most credible recent analysis is that of Friedrich Solmsen, "The Earliest Stages in the History of Hesiod's Text," Harvard Studies in Classical Philology 86 (1982) 1–31. Solmsen divides the Theogony into multiple strata, from an ur-Theogony by way of "Hesiod's additions and revisions" to several levels of "expansions and other changes produced by the rhapsodes." His vast experience of the text of Hesiod guarantees the usefulness of the distinctions he makes, but the entire model is, finally, circular and the conclusions without objective criteria.
first age of Greek culture that included a large reading public and literary scholars in our sense. What went before is unknowable. The literature of archaic Greece as known to us is exclusively a function of the taste and critical acumen of Hellenistic Greece.

Before we turn to the important testimony of Plutarch, a problem that has bothered Hesiod scholars since antiquity deserves attention—that of the prooimia to the two poems. Both were suspect in antiquity. The Pergamene scholar Crates athetized both; Aristarchus obelized that of the Works and Days (texts of which without prooimion are attested).

Any epic poem could have a prologue. The collection called the Homeric Hymns consists of prologues of various lengths that might be prefaced to recitations of longer poems. The Iliad and Odyssey come down without prologues, or with very short, closely adapted ones, certainly not usable with any other poem. Still, there is reason to believe that ancient performances of these epics included prooimia. But how organic is the relationship between the body of an archaic Greek poem and its prooimion? The small size of the sample does not allow any meaningful conclusions, but this is the sort of situation where the taste and perceptions of a later age might be expected to influence the text, to make the decision whether a given archaic poem was separable from its prooimion, or integrally and necessarily bound to it.

The comment of the scholiast on Dionysius Periegetes concerning Crates’ rejection of the Hesiodic prooimia raises a number of problems: “The [prooimia] of the Works and Days and the Theogony might be prefixed to any poem, and therefore Crates rejected them quite rightly [or perhaps: ‘in accordance with his principle’].”

That is one opinion, and a very respectable one—but it was not that of the bulk of the Hellenistic reading public, since the prooimia survived to become part of the text known to the Middle Ages. Why, then, did they survive? It is useful here to look at the question backwards, and ask what would be lost from the text of Hesiod and from the content of the two poems by losing the prologues.

First, Hesiod’s name would be lost—mentioned only once, in the prologue of the Theogony (22)—and along with Hesiod’s name would be lost every Boeotian toponym except Ascra and Helicon, which occur together in the lines quoted above (p. 4). Gone are the eddying Permessos (identified with the Arkhonitsa), gone is very holy Olmeios, and along with them, Hippocrene and the altar of Zeus on top of Helicon. The Hesiodic landscape is left impoverished and nearly anonymous, and the poet himself without a name. Without the prologues, Hesiod approaches the condition of Homer.

28 F. Rühl, “Dionysios Periegetes,” Rheinisches Museum 29 (1874) 83 (Dionysius comments, 64–65): τὸ δὲ τῶν ἑργῶν καὶ ἡμερῶν Ἡσιόδου καὶ τῆς θεογονίας πάσης ἐστὶ προτάξει ποιήσεως· διὸ καὶ ὁ Κράτης αὐτὰ κατὰ λόγον ἠθέτει.
Last and most significant of all, without the prologues the Heliconian Muses fade into insignificance. Outside the prologues, Hesiod mentions the Muses only five times in the Theogony and Works and Days. Their descent from Mnemosyne is noted in the Theogony (915–17), and they are invoked to aid in the performance of the catalogue of goddesses who bore children to mortals (963–68)—a purely Homeric convention, by which the narrative voice asks for help with an exceptional task of recall of traditional material. The last verse of the Theogony (1022), the bridge to the Catalogue of Women, makes a similar request.

The two other references to the Muses outside the prooimia are in the passage in the Works and Days to which I would like finally to turn. It is the digression (if that is the correct term) in the problematic passage on seafaring—Works and Days 646-62.

$\text{Εὔτ' αὖ ἐπ᾽ ἐμπορίνης τρένας ἀεσίφρωνα θυμόν}$
$\text{βούλημα χρέα τε προφυγεῖν καὶ λιμῷν ἀτερπέα,}$
$\text{δείξω δὴ τοι μέτρα πολυφωλισθοῦν θαλάσσης,}$
$\text{oὐτὲ τι ναυτιλῆς σεσοφισμένος οὔτε τι νηών'}$
500 $\text{oὐ γὰρ πώ ποτε νηὶ  γ᾽ ἐπέπλων εὐρέα πόντῳ,}$
$\text{εἰ μὴ ἔς Εὐβοιαν ἔς Αὐλίδος, ὴ ποτ᾽ Ἀχαιοὶ}$
$\text{μεῖναντες χειμώνα πολὺν σὺν λαὸν ἄγειραι}$
$\text{Ἐλλάδος ἔς ιερῆς Τροίην ἔς καλλιγύναια.}$
$\text{ἐνθὰ δ᾽ ἐγὼν ἐπ᾽ ἀεθλᾶ δασίφρων Ἀμφιδάμαντος}$
650 $\text{Χαλκίδα τ᾽ εἰς ἐπέρησα· τὰ δὲ προπεπραθμένα πολλά}$
$\text{ἄθλῳ ἔθεσαν παίδες μεγαλήτορος· ἐνθὰ μὲ φημὶ}$
$\text{естеств νικήσαντα φέρειν τρίποδ᾽ ὀπέστα.}$
$\text{τὸν μὲν ἐγὼ Μοῦσῆς Ἐλικωνιάδεσσ᾽ ἀνέβηκα,}$
655 $\text{ἐνθὰ μὲ τὸ πρῶτον λιγυρῆς ἐπέβησαν ἀοίδῆς.}$
$\text{τὸσσον τοι νηὼν γε πεπείρημαι πολυγόμφων·}$
$\text{ἄλλα καὶ ὡς ἔρεω Ζηνὸς νόον αἰτοῖχοι·}$
$\text{Μοῦσαι γὰρ μ᾽ ἐδίδαξαν ἀθέσφατον ὄμνον ἄείδειν.}$

This amusing passage was clearly part of the poem as known in the Hellenistic period, but there is a voice of exceptional authority raised against it in antiquity—that of Plutarch.

A scholion on the passage, traceable to the commentary on the Works and Days of the Neoplatonist Proclus, reads, 29

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29 Fr. 84, Sandbach. There is disagreement about which lines Plutarch branded as an interpolation (ἐμβεβληθάτας φησιν). Bernardakis (fr. 62, with notes) believed Plutarch considered 13 lines, from 650 through 662, spurious. Sandbach reads the opening phrase more cautiously and retains 650–53, down to the last major syntactic break before mention of Khalkis. Given the oddly self-undercutting tone of the introductory sentence (646–49), along with Plutarch’s lack of patience with the playful ironies of the Hesiodic speaker, and the fact that no other Plutarchan comments relating to those lines are preserved, I suspect that the excision went from 646 to 662. Whichever of these conjectures is correct, however, the scholion is explicit that for Plutarch the “real” Works and Days started again at 663, and so the references to the Muses remain unavoidably within the “interpolation.”
In his discussion of the scholion, M. L. West focused his attention on the problem raised by a phrase, inserted in one version of it, that seems to indicate that the Alexandrians rejected the ten-line passage from 651 to 660. This, then, would be a reasonable attempt to clean up and "restore" the text, based on the perception that the contest of Homer and Hesiod was a "late" invention. These may have been the motives of the Alexandrian scholars, but two facts remain to be explained. First, the survival of the condemned lines, and second, their rejection by Plutarch. One further bit of testimony may explain both.

It is unlikely to have been more than 50 years after Plutarch expressed his contempt for these "frivolous" lines of the received text of Hesiod, that Pausanias visited the valley of the Muses. He reports the usual trivia—Helicon is free of poisonous plants, and hence its poisonous snakes are not as poisonous as those found elsewhere, and so forth. The locals, he tells us, say that Otus and Ephialtes established the cult of the Heliconian Muses—clearly a founding myth fabricated to advertise the antiquity of the shrine. A few verses from a poem already lost in Pausanias's time are cited from a local historian to support the account. And Ascar? As was previously noted, Pausanias saw only the ruined tower visible today—Pyrgaki. He walks on up the valley, admiring the statues in the grove of the Muses and recording the names of the sculptors—his catalogue quite likely includes the statues that stood on the great curved stone base that survives. After various statues of mythical figures and Hellenistic rulers, he arrives at the collection of bronze tripods, and the jewel of the collection is, of course, the

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30 West (1978) 319. The text discussed is Pertusi's (Scholia vetera in Hesiodi Opera et Dies [Pubbl. dell'Università Cattolica del S. Cuore, n. s. 13, 1955] 205–06), where the phrase ἀβεβληθαί φησιν ὁ Πλοῦταρχος οὐδὲν ἔχεται χρηστόν, τὸν μὲν οὖν Ἄμφιδάμαντα ναυμαχοῦντα πρὸς Ἐρετρίεας ὑπὲρ τοῦ Ληλάντου ἀποθανεῖν: ἄθλα δ' ἐπ' αὐτῷ καὶ ἀγάνας θείαι τελευτᾶσαι τοὺς παίδας: νυκτίσαι δ' ἀγωνιζόμενον τὸν Ἡσίοδον καὶ ἄθλον μουσικὸν τρίποδα λαβεῖν καὶ ἀναθεῖναι τούτον ἐν τῷ Ἐλικῶνι, ὅπου καὶ κάτοχος ἔγευνε ταῖς Μούσαις, καὶ ἐπίγραμμα ἐπὶ τούτῳ θυρλῦσθαι. πάντα οὖν ταῦτα ληρόθη λέγων ἐκείνος ἀπ' αὐτῶν ἄρχεται τῶν εἰς τὸν καιρὸν τοῦ πλοῦτος συντεινόντων, "ἡματα πεντήκοντα."  

31 The lines both of Homer and of Hesiod condemned by the Hellenistic scholars seem generally to have survived in the later manuscript tradition (often with explicit indication of such editorial condemnation).


33 Werner Peek, "Die Musen von Thespiai" (n. 8, above).
tripod Hesiod himself won in Khalkis. Pausanias does not record the inscription, but if the Contest can be believed, it read:

\[ \text{'Ἡσίοδος Μούσας Ἐλικονύσι τόνδ' ἀνέθηκεν ὑμνῷ νικήσας ἐν Χαλκίδι θεῖον Ὄμηρον.} \]

Pausanias closes his account of the valley of the Muses with a climb up to Hippocrene, where he is shown a lead tablet with the Works and Days inscribed on it, minus the ten-line prooimion. The locals at the spring did not serve their own interests when they said Hesiod wrote that poem, and no other. What better testimony to support the idea that for once Pausanias was shown a genuine heirloom, displayed without ulterior motive? The locals in the valley of the Muses knew that the oeuvre of the poet who by Pausanias's time had been associated with their valley for at least 400 years had been expanded and inflated in every possible way. They seem to have clung to a purist position at their own expense—who knows?—it may even have contained some shred of historical truth.

To return now to Plutarch: he and Pausanias were alive at the same time, though Plutarch was much older than Pausanias. Was Plutarch's rejection of the passage on Hesiod's victory at Khalkis and the tripod simply an echo of the Hellenistic scholars' perception that the Contest was fabricated after the time of Homer and Hesiod? On the map of western Boeotia, Plutarch's home town, Chaironeia, lies less than 40 kilometers northwest of the valley of the Muses. He could not fail to know, firsthand, the tripod in the collection there, to which the lines in question were said to refer. Plutarch actually portrays himself against the background of the shrine, in the dialogue called the Erotikos (749b).\(^\text{34}\)

The obvious conclusion seems to be that Plutarch knew that the tripod on display in the grove of the Muses was not what it was claimed to be—that it was in fact an attempt on the part of the attendants of a Hellenistic shrine to fabricate archaic roots. By condemning the passage that described it as an "interpolation," he was pulling the rug from under the prized exhibit, but still more important, he was tacitly indicating his own knowledge that the Hesiodic poems had been tampered with at some stage in their history, in order to accommodate them to the shrine and its artifacts. Without the slightest intention to undermine the personal, historic Hesiod, he was indicating how one element of that persona, one bit of pseudo-autobiographical information, entered the canon, in the service of the festival of the Muses.

\(^\text{34}\) The setting of the dialogue can be understood in terms of literary conventions and echoes, and need not be historically accurate. The passages that establish the setting of Plutarch's conversation in the valley of the Arkhonitissa (a conversation fictionally recreated within the Erotikos through the mouth of Plutarch's son) do, however, provide sufficient evidence of a knowledge of the topography of the area and the distance from Thespiae to the valley to leave little doubt that Plutarch had firsthand experience of the shrine of the Muses.
There are various reasons to believe that this sort of fabrication of an archaic past was a widespread phenomenon among Hellenistic institutions. In Samothrace, in the initiatory sanctuary, there is a Hellenistic building with a conspicuous Mycenaean architectural feature—a relieving triangle.\textsuperscript{35} The comparison may be carried further. The building in question, and the whole of the Hellenistic embellishment of the shrine of Samothrace, belong to the time of Apollonius's \textit{Argonautica}, which advertised the importance of the Samothracian mysteries in the Bronze Age—Jason and his crew stopped there to be initiated. Literature and architecture are both called into service to enhance the prestige of the institution. There are examples of archaism in the inscriptions of the valley of the Muses, but if the priests of the Heliconian Muses did not need to represent the archaic roots of their shrine architecturally, the answer may lie in the power of the much more malleable, expressive material at their disposal—the Hesiodic corpus.

Stripped of the passages discussed here—the \textit{prooimia} and the seafaring passage\textsuperscript{36}—the Hesiodic corpus has little local color and no Muses—or rather, it has Muses only as Homer has Muses. With the prologues and the passage on the tripod, the Hesiodic corpus becomes first and foremost a celebration of the Muses, and the daughters of memory move to center stage.

To summarize what has been suggested here: Proclus, when relaying Plutarch's remarks on the seafaring passage, reports that Plutarch believed \textit{Works and Days} 650–62 was an interpolation. The whole story of the contest on Euboea is lost and along with it something of the (oddly undercut) legitimation of Hesiod's seafaring lore. And along with the story goes the legitimation of the prized artifact displayed in Plutarch's time in the valley of the Muses. A century before Proclus's time, the precinct of the Muses on the slopes of Helicon had been looted for the beautification of Constantinople, and the once-important festival there was a thing of the remote past. But Pausanias was shown the tripod in question, and there can be little doubt that Plutarch was shown it as well. This has not been sufficiently appreciated. Pausanias's visit, in the middle of the second century, was only a few decades after the death of Plutarch. Plutarch lived much of his life near the spot, and even portrays himself there, albeit in a highly conventional manner. It is impossible that Plutarch, a half-century before Pausanias, was not shown the same prized artifact. When he


\textsuperscript{36} Plutarch does not condemn the entire seafaring passage, and the "interpolation" he points to was not intended to include the passage (633–40) on Hesiod's father's seafaring ventures, which resulted in his settling in wretched Ascra. This represents the core of Hesiodic autobiography that the tradition has generally accepted until recently (Nagy, "Hesiod," 50). The seafaring passage stands out strikingly from the rest of the \textit{Works and Days} for its seeming irrelevance to concerns that could be localized in the dusty little valley far from the sea that is claimed as Hesiod's home, and it is striking that the speaker chooses just this material as the occasion to remind us that he is really speaking to us from the valley of the Muses.
considered the entire passage an interpolation, he was not reacting simply to its lack of seriousness, its failure to live up to the austere standard of edificatory value he set for the text. He was saying with characteristic tact that the priests' prized artifact was a hoax—and he was saying that a 12-line passage of the *Works and Days* was an *aition*, inserted sometime, by someone, to explain that hoax.

The further implications of this interpolation are suggestive. Along with the *prooimia* (themselves questioned in antiquity), the passage lost here is unique in the Hesiodic corpus in suggesting a special relationship between Hesiod and the Heliconian Muses. It is also juxtaposed with and closely related to the passage on Hesiod’s father’s seafaring activities, which contain the only references to Ascra and to Hesiod’s family (beyond Perses, whose name occurs repeatedly in formulas of address).^37^ Plutarch, as an exceptionally educated and sophisticated local informant, may be providing the keys to an understanding of how the diverse body of wisdom poetry we know as the Hesiodic corpus came to be associated with a specific shepherd in a specific landscape in a remote valley of his own native Bocotia.

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Der Höhepunkt der deutschen Plutarchrezeption: Plutarch bei Nietzsche

HEINZ GERD INGENKAMP

Anfang 1872 erschien die "Geburt der Tragödie." Ein Jahr zuvor hatte Nietzsche eine Anzahl von Seiten zum Thema dieser Schrift zu Papier gebracht, die er dann aber nicht so, wie konzipiert, mitveröffentlichte. Darin heißt es:

"Selbst noch jener abgeblaßte Epigone Plutarch hat so viel griechischen Instinkt in sich, daß er uns sagen kann, kein edelgeborener Jüngling würde, wenn er den Zeus in Pisa schaue, das Verlangen haben, selbst ein Phidias, oder wenn er Hera in Argos sieht, selbst ein Polyklet zu werden . . . Das künstlerische Schaffen fällt für den Griechen eben so sehr unter den unehrwürdigen Begriff der Arbeit, wie jedes banausische Handwerk."\(^1\)

Plutarch also der Vertreter dieser Einschätzung des Kunstschaffens, aber sogar noch Plutarch. Selbst in einem so abgeblaßten Epigonen hat sich das Griechentum noch so sehr durchgehalten, daß . . .

Weihnachten 1872 schickte Nietzsche "Fünf Vorruden zu fünf ungeschriebenen Büchern" an Cosima Wagner. Sie sind erst mit dem Nachlaß veröffentlicht worden. Hier verwendet Nietzsche die Zeilen aus dem inzwischen fast zweijährigen Manuskript, allerdings mit einer bezeichnenden Kürzung. Er schreibt:

\(^1\) KGW III, 352.
“Plutarch sagt einmal mit altgriechischem Instinkte, kein edelgebomer Jüngling werde...” usw.²

Hat er den Ausdruck “abgebläster Epigone” nur weggelassen, weil er den Gedanken jetzt aus der Hand gab, oder hatte sich sein Plutarchbild geändert? Es spricht einiges dafür, daß dies letztere der Fall war. Der Philologe hatte Plutarch tüchtig verwendet—als Steinbruch, wie in seiner Zeit üblich. Um das unbeschwert tun zu können, ist ein Urteil wie “abgebläster Epigone” günstig. Aber aus dem Philologen Nietzsche war über der Arbeit an der “Geburt der Tragödie” ein Philosoph geworden. Das hatte seine Folgen wohl auch für das, was uns hier interessiert.

II 1

In der Jahresmitte 1872³ tobt der Kampf um die “Geburt der Tragödie”: Wilamowitz hat seine Gegenschrift veröffentlicht, Rohde antwortet. Im Wintersemester bleiben die Studenten aus; Nietzsche steht vor leerem Bänken.

In dieser aufregenden Zeit sammeln sich bereits die Gedanken zur späteren “Zweiten Unzeitgemäßen Betrachtung” mit dem Titel “Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben”; wenigstens als Teil des größeren Ganzen “Historie” kommt hier auch die Philologie in die Ziellinie seiner Kritik, und dieser nicht-historistische, nicht-philologische Standpunkt wirkt sich, wie bereits zu erwarten, positiv für das Urteil über Plutarch aus. Unter den Notizen aus dieser Zeit findet sich auch die folgende:⁴


Die Philosophie soll den geistigen Höhenzug durch die Jahrhunderte festhalten: damit die ewige Fruchtbarkeit alles Großen.

Für die Wissenschaft giebt es kein Groß und Klein—aber für die Philosophie! An jenem Satze muß sich der Werth der Wissenschaft.

Das Festhalten des Erhabenen!

Welcher außerordentlicher Mangel an Büchern in unserer Zeit, die eine heroische Kraft ahnen!—Selbst Plutarch wird nicht mehr gelesen!”

Was Nietzsche meint, wird deutlicher werden durch den Kommentar zum nächsten Stück. Hier mag der Versuch einer ausführlichen Paraphrase reichen.

² KGW III 2, 260.
³ Zu einer Notiz von 1871 s. unten S. 31.
⁴ KGW III 4, 14.
Nietzsche notiert, was er als seine Aufgabe ansieht. Zunächst besteht diese darin, die Einheit, das Wesen, den Kern einer jeden "wahren" Kultur (dazu werden u.a. die indische, griechische, römische, französische gehören) zu "begreifen," d.h. wohl: zu einer sie charakterisierenden Formulierung zu kommen. Die beiden folgenden Aufgaben sind spezieller: Es geht ihm um das Mittel, einer Kultur in Gefahr beizustehen (was er meint, wird er sogleich sagen); es geht ihm darum, wie die Kultur sich zum "Volksgenius" verhält, einer etwas mystischen Entität, die wohl z.B. die Möglichkeit der Mythen eines Volkes ist, ein "Abgrund," aus dem in Deutschland z.B. die Reformation geflossen ist ... in deren Choral die Zukunftswweise der deutschen Musik zuerst erklungen.6


Wieder ist die Verbindung zum folgenden nicht einfach. Der Ausdruck "das Festhalten" erinnert an den Ausdruck, die Philosophie solle den geistigen Höhenzug "festoalten"; aber "das Erhabene" lenkt auf andere, mindestens zusätzlich auf andere Höhenzüge: das folgende dürfte das

5 GT 21, KGW III 1, 129.
6 GT 23, ib. 143.
“Erhabene” als “Heroisches” erläutern. 7 Liegt darin, im Festhalten des so verstandenen “Erhabenen,” die im ersten Absatz allgemein formulierter Aufgabe Nietzsches?


In der 2. Unzeitgemäßen Betrachtung wird Plutarch wie folgt erwähnt:

“Und wenn ihr nach Biographien verlangt, dann nicht nach jenen mit dem Refrain ‘Herr So und So und seine Zeit,’ sondern nach solchen, auf deren Titelblate es heissen müßte ‘ein Kämpfer gegen seine Zeit.’ Sättigt eure Seelen an Plutarch und wagt es an euch selbst zu glauben, indem ihr an seine Helden glaubt. Mit einem Hundert solcher unmodern erzogener, das heisst reif gewordener und an das Heroische gewöhnter Menschen ist jetzt die ganze lärrende Afterbildung dieser Zeit zum ewigen Schweigen zu bringen.”

Damit endet der 6. der insgesamt 10 Paragraphen der Schrift. 8 Die Sätze sind in den vorhergehenden Abschnitten nur sehr allgemein vorbereitet: man versteht sie erst voll, wenn man weitergelesen hat. Erst später wird nämlich erst klar, was die beiden den Gedanken tragenden Ideen bedeuten: die Idee des Kämpfers gegen die eigene Zeit und die Idee der Reife.


7 Vgl. unten S. 512 mit UB II 5, KGW III 1, 276.
8 KGW III 1, 291.
jüngeren Cato, des Pompeius, Crassus, Brutus, Ciceros und Marc Antons als Biographien von Kämpfern gegen ihre eigene Zeit im politischen Sinn zu lesen: denn welche Politik soll für „die Zeit“ dieser Männer noch übriggeblieben sein, da sie ja allesamt in dieser oder jener Weise gegeneinander oder aneinander vorbei agierten und in ihrer Gesamtheit andeutungsweise das politische Spektrum der Epoche repräsentieren?

Der Kämpfer gegen seine Zeit, der Nietzsche vorschwebt, ist am Ende des 8. Paragraphen definiert. „Denn rede man,“ heißt es dort, „von welcher Tugend man wolle, von der Gerechtigkeit, Grossmuth, Tapferkeit, von der Weisheit und dem Mitleid des Menschen—überall ist er dadurch tugendhaft, dass er sich gegen jene blinde Macht der Facta, gegen die Tyrannie des Wirklichen empört und sich Gesetzen unterwirft, die nicht die Gesetze jener Geschichtsfluctuationen sind. Er schwimmt immer gegen die geschichtlichen Wellen, sei es dass er seine Leidenschaften als die nächste dumme Thatsächlichkeit seiner Existenz bekämpft oder dass er sich zur Ehrlichkeit verpflichtet, während die Lüge rings um ihn herum ihre glitzernden Netze spint. . . . Glücklicher Weise bewahrt sie (sc. die Geschichte) . . . das Gedächtniss an die großen Kämpfer gegen die Geschichte, das heisst gegen die blinde Macht des Wirklichen und stellt sich dadurch selbst an den Pranger, dass sie Jene gerade als die eigentlichen historischen Naturen heraushebt, die sich um das ‘So ist es’ wenig kümmerten, um vielmehr mit heiterem Stolze einem ‘So soll es sein’ zu folgen.“

In der Tat: solche Kämpfer „gegen die geschichtlichen Wellen,” die die jeweils eigene Epoche an sie heranbringt, kann man in Plutarchs Helden finden: Kämpfer gegen das Alltägliche der Leidenschaften, gegen das, was schon deshalb etwas wert sein will, weil es wirklich ist, und für das „So soll es sein.”


9 ib. 307.
10 ib. 304.
11 ib. 305.
12 ib. 306.
Plutarch gegen Hegel. Hier der Höhenzug des Großen, der zur Gestaltung einer großen Zukunft aufruft, dort der Abgesang auf die Zukunft und der krumme Rücken vor der Geschichte.

Soweit unser Kommentar zum "Kämpfer gegen die eigene Zeit." "Sättigt eure Seelen an Plutarch," heißt es weiter, "und wagt es an euch selbst zu glauben, indem ihr an seine Helden glaubt." Den Sinn dieses Satzes wird die Interpretation dessen, was folgt, deutlich machen. Wenden wir uns also diesem folgenden zu.


'die nie ohr' ein'gen Wahn gelingen,'

wie Hans Sachs in den Meistersingern sagt.

Aber selbst jedes Volk, ja jeder Mensch, der reif werden will, braucht einen solchen umhüllenden Wahn, eine solche schützende und umschleiernde Wolke; jetzt aber hasst man das Reifwerden überhaupt, weil man die Historie mehr als das Leben ehr.'13 Wenn Nietzsche vom "Lebendigen" spricht, das nur innerhalb eines "geheimnisvollen Dunstkreises" gedeihen könne, so hat er, wie die folgenden Beispiele zeigen, ausschließlich das Kulturelle-Lebendige im Auge: Religion, Kunst, Genie sind ja Beispiele, die den Begriff "Lebendiges" erläutern. Er gibt nicht etwa dem Überdauern und Wachsen des Kulturell-Lebendigen einen naturgesetzlichen Hintergrund, indem er allgemeine Bestimmungen dafür der Biologie entnähme. Nietzsche meint also, daß, wie er sich ein paar Zeilen später ausdrückt, "Instincte und kraftige Wahnbilder" das bedingen, was er in seiner Schrift "Leben" nennt. Eine Kultur, der das Attribut "reif" gebührt, ebenso wie ein reifer Mensch, befindet sich, heißt das, in dem Gehäuse von nicht der Kritik unterzogenen, ungeprüften Anschauungen; ihre Prüfung verhinderte gerade die Reife oder

13 UB II 7, KGW III 1, 294.
höbe sie auf. “Sättigt eure Seelen an Plutarch heißt also: Schafft euch “leben” fördernde “Wahn” bilder mit Hilfe Plutarchs. 

Nun zum Schlußsatz des Abschnitts. “Mit einem Hundert solcher unmodern erzogener, das heisst reif gewordener und an das Heroische gewöhnter Menschen ist jetzt die ganze lärrende Afterbildung dieser Zeit zum ewigen Schweigen zu bringen.” Einen ganz ähnlichen Satz kennt des Leser noch aus dem. 2. Paragraphen:

“Nehme man an, dass Jemand glaube, es gehörten nicht mehr als hundert productive, in einem neuen Geiste erzogene und wirkende Menschen dazu, um der in Deutschland gerade jetzt modisch gewordenen Gebildetheit den Garaus zu machen, wie müsste es ihn bestärken wahrzunehmen, dass die Cultur der Renaissance sich auf den Schultern einer solchen Hundert-Männer-Schaar heraushob.”


Aus der Zeit, in der Nietzsche an der Zweiteten Unzeitgemäßen arbeitete, haben wir eine weitere Notiz, in der Plutarch erwähnt ist. Der Gedanke dieser Notiz ist in den Zusammenhang der Zweiteten Unzeitgemäßen zu stellen. Nietzsche schreibt:


Das ist noch nicht bewiesen, wenn denen, die Plutarch nicht kennen, der große Plutarcheer Montaigne entgegengehalten wird—schließlich lebte Montaigne drei Jahrhunderte vor Nietzsche und konnte der Jetztzeit als Vorbild vorgehalten werden. Samuel Smiles hingegen ist Zeitgenosse—könnte aber der Mitwelt als Ausnahme vorgehalten werden. Mir scheint

14 KGW III 1, 256 f.
16 Nietzsche bezieht sich auf Samuel Smiles, Character. 11871, 21876: dort S. 272–76 ausführliche Würdigung Plutarchs.
aber die Klage speziell über die “stilllose naturalistische Sittlichkeit” darauf hinzudeuten, daß, jedenfalls vor allem, die Deutschen gemeint sind.

Im 4. Kapitel der Zweiten Unzeitgemäßen rügt Nietzsche, daß die “Deutschen der Gegenwart . . . mehr als ein anderes Volk an jener Schwäche der Persönlichkeit und an dem Widerspruche von Inhalt und Form zu leiden haben.”17 Was Nietzsche damit tadelnt, ist die Erscheinung, daß der moderne Deutsche so voll ist von Bildung, daß er unfähig geworden ist zur erhabenen Tat. “Es scheint fast unmöglich, dass ein starker und voller Ton selbst durch das mächtigste Hineingreifen in die Saiten erzeugt werde: sofort verhallt er wieder, im nächsten Augenblicke bereits klingt er historisch zart verflüchtigt und kraftlos ab. Moralisch augedrückt: es gelingt euch nicht mehr das Erhabene fest zu halten.”18 Das ist die Skizze der “schwachen Persönlichkeit.”19 Dem Widerspruch von Inhalt (dem Übermaß an Bildung) und Form (der Nachläßigkeit, dem Fehlen an Stil in der Lebensführung) liegt die Irrmeinung der Deutschen zugrunde, Form sei nur “Konvention,” “Verkleidung” und “Verstellung.” So habe sich der Deutsche aus der “Schule der Franzosen” gelöst: “. . . dann er wollte natürlicher und dadurch deutscher werden.” Nietzsche fährt fort: “Nun scheint er (sc. der Deutsche) sich aber in diesem “Dadurch” verrechnet zu haben: aus der Schule der Convention entlaufen, liess er sich nun gehen, wie und wohin er eben Lust hatte und machte im Grunde schlottericht und beliebig in halber Vergesslichkeit nach, was er früher peinlich und oft mit Glück nachmachte.” Nietzsche spricht hier nur vom äußeren Sich-Geben, also sehr konkret von “all unser(em) Gehen, Stehen, Unterhalten, Kleiden und Wohnen,”20 aber was er hier vorträgt, ist nur das auffällige Äußere eines tieferliegenden Fehlverhaltens. Es geht Nietzsche um die Kultur im ganzen, und seine Bemerkungen über die deutsche Scheu vor der Konvention sind nur, eben weil sie besonders Zutageliegendes betreffen, der nächstliegende Beweis dafür, daß die Deutschen keine Kultur haben. Die Bemerkungen stehen unter der kurz zuvor gegebenen Definition, die Kultur eines Volkes sei die “Einheit des künstlerischen Stiles in allen Lebensäußerungen eines Volkes.” Nietzsche erklärt: “. . . diese Bezeichnung darf nicht dahin missverstanden werden, als ob es sich um den Gegensatz von Barbarei und schömem Stil handele; das Volk, dem man eine Cultur zuspricht, soll nur in aller Wirklichkeit etwas lebendig Eines sein und nicht so elend in Inneres und Äusseres, in Inhalt und Form auseinanderfallen.”21 War “Nachläßigkeit”—im Gegensatz zu “Konvention” gesehen—enger als das, was mit “stilllose naturalistische Sittlichkeit” gemeint ist, so ist das “Auseinanderfallen in Inhalt und Form” nun weiter. Aber den Rahmen,

17 KGW III 1, 271.
18 ib. 275 f.
19 ib. 275–77.
20 ib. 271.
21 ib. 270.
innerhalb dessen die Bedeutung jenes Ausdrucks verstanden werden muß, stecken die beiden anderen Ausdrücke ab.

Es ist nun auch klar, was Nietzsche meint, wenn er sagt, "wir" hielten "die antiken Gestalten leicht für deklamatorisch." Die antiken Gestalten nehmen in der Notiz den Platz ein, den im § 4 der Zweiten Unzeitgemäßen die Franzosen einnehmen: man meint, weil sie Stil repräsentieren, seien sie hohl—und dabei ist man nur selbst ein Tölpel und ein Schwächling dazu. Unter den "antiken Gestalten" wird der Leser hier am ehesten die Helden Plutarchs verstehen, die hiermit also indirekt als Vertreter einer echten Kultur figurieren, als Vertreter einer Lebensform, die "als Einheit des künstlerischen Stiles in allen Lebensäußerungen" zu erkennen ist. Indem Plutarch hier gegen Deutschland steht, kommt er in eine zentrale Position des nietzscheschen Frühdenkens hinein. Denn das kulturelle Schicksal Deutschlands ist nicht nur das Anliegen der Zweiten Unzeitgemäßen—bereits die Geburt der Tragödie war im Hinblick auf die deutsche Kultur geschrieben, wie das Vorwort an Richard Wagner zeigt; weitere, nicht veröffentlichte Schriften aus dieser Zeit, die sich im Nachlaß fanden, bestätigen die Zentralität dieser Aufgabenstellung für den jungen Nietzsche.

"Ob ein neuer Plutarch auch nur möglich wäre," fragt er in der Notiz, die wir besprechen, und gibt dem Griechen somit andeutungsweise die Position eines Kulturschöpfers, eines Mannes also, der die Theorie der Zweiten Unzeitgemäßen in Erziehungspraxis umsetzen könnte. Leider aber kennt man ihn nicht.

Wie Montaigne Plutarch einschätzte, wird Nietzsche in seiner Dritten Unzeitgemäßen mitteilen; wir werden sofort darauf eingehen. Fassen wir aber zuvor zusammen, wofür und wogegen die Idee "Plutarch" im Frühwerk Nietzsches steht.

Plutarch steht im Frühwerk für eine gegen die Tyrannei des Faktischen gerichtete, auf einem Glauben (Wahn) an das Heldische und einem Entschluß zum Heldischen gegründete Kultur, die sich zudem in einer gewollten, kontrollierten Sittlichkeit ausprägt, und gegen den Geist wissenschaftlicher, speziell historischer Analyse sowie gegen den Geist "naturalistischer Sittlichkeit"—Tendenzen, die Nietzsche im Deutschland seiner Zeit als verhängnisvoll empfindet.

II 2


Erneut mit Montaigne zusammen, nun aber in einem Kontext, der mit Biographien nichts zu schaffen hat, erscheint Plutarch in der Dritten Unzeitgemäßen. Diese, publiziert im Herbst 1874, betrifft den
Philosophen, der die Epoche beherrscht, den Nietzsche früh trifft, mit dem er sich durchgehend auseinandersetzt, und von dem er nur schwer und sicher nicht in jeder Hinsicht loskommt.

"Ich weiss nur noch einen Schriftsteller," sagt er, "den ich in Betreff der Ehrlichkeit Schopenhauer gleich, ja noch höher stelle: das ist Montaigne. Dass ein solcher Mensch geschrieben hat, dadurch ist wahrlich die Lust auf dieser Erde zu leben vermehrt worden. Mir wenigstens geht es seit dem Bekanntwerden mit dieser freisten und kräftigsten Seele so, dass ich sagen muss, was er von Plutarch sagt: 'kaum habe ich einen Blick auf ihn geworfen, so ist mir ein Bein oder ein Flügel gewachsen.' Mit ihm würde ich es halten, wenn die Aufgabe gestellt wäre, es sich auf der Erdeheimisch zu machen."\(^22\)

Das indirekte Lob Plutarchs ergibt sich zufällig; was gesagt ist, auch über Plutarch, gilt Montaigne. Interessant ist die Stelle für uns, weil Plutarch, wie gesagt, somit kurz als Verfasser der *Moralia* auftritt. 1873 hatte Nietzsche sich 10 Kapitelthemen zu einer Schrift "Der Philosoph" notiert; davon lautet die vierte: "Die Popularphilosophie (Plutarch, Montaigne)."\(^23\) Im Mittelwerk treten noch zwei allgemeine Bemerkungen zu Plutarch als Verfasser der *Moralia* hinzu—dass ist dann alles zu diesem Thema. Die beiden Bemerkungen sind: "Aber eingestehen muss man es sich, dass unsere Zeit arm ist an grossen Moralisten, dass Pascal, Epictet, Seneca, Plutarch wenig noch gelesen werden . . .,"\(^26\) und ein Hinweis auf das Bild vom Aberglaublichen in Plutarchs diesem Typus gewidmeter Schrift.\(^25\)

**II 3**

Bereits im Frühwerk hat Nietzsche sich von dem Vorurteil, sogar ein "abgeblästeter Epigone" wie Plutarch habe noch griechische Instinkte, gelöst; Plutarch—er selbst, ohne kommentierende Erläuterung—erscheint in der Folge gelegentlich dort, wo es um Leitbilder von Kulturschöpfern geht. Dies aber, die Schaffung einer Kultur, d.h. einer "Einheit des künstlerischen Stiles in allen Lebensäußerungen eines Volkes" ist ein zentrales Thema des Frühwerks seit der "Geburt der Tragödie." Obwohl die mit Plutarch verbundene Idee für den frühen Nietzsche zentral ist, gelingt es Plutarch aber nicht, über den Rang eines bloßen Beispiels hinauszukommen. Er wird bei Wege erwähnt, er ist, wo es Nietzsche ernst ist, nicht vergessen: das ist es, was sich gezeigt hat. Immerhin ist bereits das eine in der deutschen Kultur einmalige Position für Plutarch.

Mit der Schrift "Menschliches, Allzumenschliches" beginnt eine neue Phase im Denken Nietzsches. Von jetzt an schreibt er aphoristisch, wenn

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\(^{22}\) UB III 2, KGW III 1, 344.  
\(^{23}\) KGW III 4, 331.  
\(^{24}\) MA I 282; vgl. die Vorstufen KGW IV 4, 211.  
\(^{25}\) M 77.
Heinz Gerd Ingenkamp

auch der Erörterungsstil immer noch durchbricht. Aus dem Rufer nach einer neuen Kultur ist ein Denker geworden, der einer Kultur, wie sie zuvor gedacht war, eher schaden muß: u.a. ein Nierenprüfer, ein Psychologe also, und Nietzsche weiß um die Gefahr. Die Passagen, wo er von Plutarch spricht, weisen auf dies sein Wissen hin und führen so wiederum in das Herz seines im Umbruch befindlichen Denkens; Plutarch ist auch hier nicht vergessen—and das ist auch hier wieder alles.

Wie weit liegt die Schrift über Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben zurück, wenn Nietzsche das zweite Hauptstück seines neuen Buches "Zur Geschichte der moralischen Empfindungen" nennen kann! Im zweiten Aphorismus dieses zweiten Hauptstücks,26 das die Überschrift "Einwand" trägt, schreibt Nietzsche:

"... Oder sollte es gegen jenen Satz, dass die psychologische Beobachtung zu den Reiz-, Heil- und Erleichterungsmitteln des Daseins gehöre, eine Gegenrechnung geben? Sollte man sich genug von den unangenehmen Folgen dieser Kunst überzeugt haben, um jetzt mit Absichtlichkeit den Blick der sich Bildenden von ihr abzulenken? In der That, ein gewisser blinder Glaube an die Güte der menschlichen Natur, ein eingepflanzter Widerwille vor der Zerlegung menschlicher Handlungen, eine Art Schamhaftigkeit in Hinsicht auf die Nacktheit der Seele mögen wirklich für das gesamte Glück eines Menschen wünschenswertere Dinge sein, als jene, in einzelnen Fällen hilfreiche Eigenschaft der psychologischen Scharfsichtigkeit; und vielleicht hat der Glaube an das Gute, an tugendhafte Menschen und Handlungen, an eine Fülle des unpersönlichen Wohlwollens in der Welt die Menschen besser gemacht, insofern er dieselben weniger misstrauisch machte. Wenn man die Helden Plutarch's mit Begeisterung nachahmt, und eine Abscheu davor empfindet, den Motiven ihres Handelns anzuweifeln nachzuspüren, so hat zwar nicht die Wahrheit, aber die Wohlfahrt der menschlichen Gesellschaft ihren Nutzen dabei: der psychologische Irrthum und überhaupt die Dumpfheit auf diesem Gebiete hilft der Menschheit vorwärts, während die Erkenntniss der Wahrheit vielleicht durch die anregende Kraft einer Hypothese mehr gewinnt, wie sie La Rochefoucauld der ersten Ausgabe seiner 'Sentences et maximes morales' vorangestellt hat: 'Ce que le monde nomme vertu n'est d'ordinaire qu'un fantôme formé par nos passions, à qui on donne un nom honnête pour faire impunément ce qu'on veut.' La Rochefoucauld und jene anderen französischen Meister der Seelenprüfung (denen sich neuerdings auch ein Deutscher, der Verfasser der 'Psychologischen Beobachtungen' zugestellt hat) gleichen scharf zielenden Schützen, welche immer und immer wieder in's Schwarze treffen,—aber in's Schwarze der menschlichen Natur. Ihr Geschick erregt Staunen, aber endlich verwünscht ein Zuschauer, der nicht vom Geiste der Wissenschaft, sondern der Menschenfreundlichkeit geleitet wird, eine Kunst, welche den Sinn der Verkleinerung und Verdächtigung in die Seelen der Menschen zu pflanzen scheint."

26 MA I 36.
Nietzsches Fragestellung hat sich also seit der Zweiten Unzeitgemäßen sehr gewandelt, seine Wertung ist wenigstens offener geworden; auch Plutarch steht anders da.

Wenden wir uns zunächst dem Unterschied der Fragestellung hier und in der Zweiten Unzeitgemäßen zu. Dort ging es um die in Ernst und Strenge zu vollziehende Förmung des Großen; Gegen war die Bildung oder genauer die historisch-analytische Überbildung. In “Menschliches, Allzumenschliches” blickt Nietzsche dagegen eben aus der Perspektive des Gebildeten, und er empfiehlt ihm eine Wissenschaft, die im Sinne der Ziele der Zweiten Unzeitgemäßen als noch weit zersetzender angesehen werden muß als die mit viel grüberem Material umgehende Historie: die Psychologie. Die Psychologie wird aber empfohlen, weil man sich durch sie “die Last des Lebens erleichtern könne,” weil sie die Chance bietet, daß man sich, wenn man sich ihr widmet, “ein Wenig wohler fühlt.”27 Wen besser als den Verfasser der Zweiten Unzeitgemäßen beschreibt Nietzsche mit dem Satz “Sollte man sich genug von den unangenehmen Folgen dieser Kunst (sc. der Psychologie) überzeugt haben, um jetzt mit Absichtlichkeit den Blick der sich Bildenden von ihr abzulenken”?27


27 MA I 35.
gegenwärtigen Zustande einer bestimmten einzelnen Wissenschaft ist die Auferweckung der moralischen Beobachtung nötig geworden, und der grausame Anblick des psychologischen Secirtisches und seiner Messer und Zangen kann der Menschheit nicht erspart bleiben.”


Auf dem Wege zu der jetzt erreichten Position in der Frage “Wissenschaft oder Atmosphäre?” ist eine Notiz aus der Zeit von Ende 1876 bis Sommer 1877 (“Menschliches, Allzumenschliches” erscheint April/Mai 1878). Trotz aller Kongruenz im Wortlaut ist ihr Geist noch anders, d.h. näher an der Zweitens Unzeitgemäßen. Plutarchs Position ist indessen schon dieselbe wie an der späteren Stelle. Nietzsche schreibt:

“Nicht nur der Glaube an Gott, auch der Glaube an tugendhafte Menschen, Handlungen, die Schätzung ‘ungeostischer’ Triebe, also auch Irrthümer auf psychologischem Gebiet haben der Menschheit vorwärts geholfen. Es ist ein großer Unterschied, ob einer die Helden Plutarchs mit Begeisterung nachahmt oder anzuzeifelnd analysirt. Der Glaube an das Gute hat die Menschen besser gemacht: wie eine Überzeugung vom Gegenheil die Menschen schwächer mißbraucher usw. macht. Dies ist die Wirkung von La Rochefoucauld und vom Verfasser der psychologischen Beobachtungen: diese scharfziehenden Schützen treffen immer ins Schwarze, aber im

28 MA I 37.
29 Vgl. dazu die Notiz von 1871, unten S. 31.
Interesse der menschlichen Wohlfahrt möchte man wünschen, daß sie nicht diesen Sinn der Verkleinerung und Verdächtigung hätten."30


Wie in “Menschliches, Allzumenschliches” ist Plutarch in der Nachlaßnotiz Antipode La Rochefoucaulds und Paul Rées; wie dort haben Plutarchs Biographien ihren Wert unter der Perspektive der “Wohlfahrt der menschlichen Gesellschaft,” eines Zieles, das hier aber noch nicht relativiert ist. Und wird Plutarch in “Menschliches, Allzumenschliches” dem wissenschaftlichen Sezieren anempfohlen, so ist die anzeifelnde Analyse seiner Helden in der Nachlaßnotiz noch verdächtig gemacht: die Psychologen sind zwar treffsichere Schützen, “aber im Sinne der (hier als Wert nicht hinterfragten) menschlichen Wohlfahrt möchte man wünschen, daß sie nicht diesen Sinn der Verkleinerung und Verdächtigung hätten” (Hervorhebung von mir)—sie haben ihn aber, und damit gerät auch das treffsichere Schießen in Mißkredit.—


30 KGW IV 2, 514.
angefügt wurde. Im Aphorismus Nr. 20 von "Der Wanderer und sein Schatten" heißt es:

"Nicht zu verwechseln.—Die Moralisten, welche die grossartige, mächtige, aufopfernde Denkweise, etwa bei den Helden Plutarch's, oder den reinen, erleuchteten, wärmelieitden Seelenzustand der eigentlich guten Männer und Frauen, als schwere Probleme der Erkenntnis behandeln und der Herkunft derselben nachspüren, indem sie das Complicirte in der anscheinenden Einfachheit aufzeigen und das Auge auf die Verflechtung der Motive, auf die eingewobenen zarten Begriffs—Täuschungen und die von Alters her vererbten, langsam gesteigerten Einzel- und Gruppenempfindungen richten,—diese Moralisten sind am meisten gerade von denen verschieden, mit denen sie doch am meisten verwechselt werden: von den kleilichen Geistern, die an jene Denkwiese und Seelenzustände überhaupt nicht glauben und ihre eigene Armselfigkeit hinter dem Glanz von Grösse und Reinheit versteckt wahn. Die Moralisten sagen: 'hier sind Probleme,' und die Erbärmlichen sagen: 'hier sind Betrüger und Betrogereien'; sie leugnen also die Existenz gerade dessen, was jene zu erklären beflissen sind."31


Dem älteren Aphorismus gegenüber hat sich geändert, daß Plutarchs Biographien nun selbstverständlich (ohne ein mutiges "Trotzdem") Feld psychologischer Analyse geworden sind. Es ist nicht gesagt, daß man Plutarch nicht auch anders lesen darf; aber der Leser findet nun auf der einen Seite die wissenschaftliche Analyse, auf der anderen Seite das böswillige Verkleinern des Großen, und so bleibt es nicht aus, daß er sich auf die Seite der Analytiker stelle, ohne sich jetzt noch an jenen dritten, den nichtwissenschaftlichen Zugang zu den Helden Plutarchs zu erinnern. Wenn die Denkweise u.a. dieser Helden als "großartig," "mächtig" und "aufopfernd" bezeichnet ist, so ist das zwar erstmalig so gesagt, aber neu ist es doch nicht, denn daß die Helden so denken, schwang bisher stets mit, wenn von ihnen die Rede war, oder besser: diese allgemeine Charakterisierung ist alles andere als überraschend.32 Plutarch tritt im übrigen noch weiter zurück als in dem älteren Stück: Er erscheint gerade noch als Verfasser von Heldenbiographien, vorher durch "etwa" als in der Art eines Aperçus eingeführtes Beispiel gekennzeichnet, nachher durch das mit "oder" angefügtes weitere Beispiel noch mehr relativiert. Er ist hier nicht in irgendeiner Weise

31 KGW IV 3, 192.
32 Vgl. die Notiz von 1871, unten S. 31.
als geistesgeschichtlich bedeutsam ins Auge gefaßt, nicht einmal wie zuvor—als nicht-analysierender Biograph.

Im Mittelwerk verflüchtigt sich das Bild von Plutarch als einem Mann der Partei, der auch Nietzsche gehört. Das frühe, nicht veröffentlichte Stück ist in dieser Hinsicht noch dem Frühwerk verwandt; aber wo das dort notierte Material für die Publikation zurückerhalten wird, wird Plutarchs Biographiensammlung zu einem Werk, das man so oder so lesen kann, je nach dem Ziel (Wohlfahrt oder Wahrheit), an dem dem Leser liegt. Plutarch ist also nicht mehr Kampfgefährte, sondern jetzt literarischer Fall, dem Zugriff von verschiedenen Seiten und mit verschiedenen Methoden offen, und Nietzsche selbst hat klare Präferenzen.

II 4

In einer Nachlaßnotiz vom Herbst 1887 tritt Plutarch wieder als Kampfgefährte Nietzsches auf; allerdings ist der Gegner jetzt ein anderer—und somit steht Plutarch auch für etwas anderes. Die Notiz lautet:

"Krieg gegen das christliche Ideal, gegen die Lehre von der 'Seligkeit' und dem Heil als Ziel des Lebens, gegen die Suprematie der Einfältigen, der reinen Herzen, der Leidenden und Mißglückten usw. (—was geht uns Gott, der Glaube an Gott noch an! 'Gott' heute bloß ein verblichenes Wort, nicht einmal mehr ein Begriff!) Aber, wie Voltaire auf dem Sterbebette sagen: 'reden Sie mir nicht von dem Menschen da!'

Wann und wo hat je ein Mensch, der in Betracht kommt, jenem christlichen Ideal ähnlich gesehen? Wenigstens für solche Augen, wie sie ein Psycholog und Nierenprüfer haben muß!—man blättere alle Helden eines Plutarch durch."33

In dem Herbst, in dem Nietzsche diese Notiz zu Papier bringt, erscheint sein Werk "Zur Genealogie der Moral." Im darauffolgenden Jahr wird er die Schrift "Der Antichrist. Fluch auf das Christentum" fertigstellen. Die Erstveröffentlichung erfolgte erst 1895.

Es bietet sich eine große Zahl von "Parallelstellen" zu den Sätzen des ersten Teils der Notiz an, führen sie doch direkt zum Hauptanliegen des späten Nietzsche, der "Umwertung aller Werte." Um diese enge Verbindung der Notiz zum Kern von Nietzsches spätem Denken zu dokumentieren, sollen die Gedanken und typischen Ausdrücke in Nietzsches Spätwerk kurz "belegt" werden.


Die Verbindung der Aussage über die christlichen Ideale und der folgenden über Gott wird sich aus dem Kommentar zu dritten Bemerkung Nietzsches, derjenigen über Voltaire, ergeben. Zunächst aber zu der Parenthese über Gott.

Sie ist so locker angefügt, daß ihr Zusammenhang mit dem Vorhergehenden an sich kaum einleuchtet. Der Leser, der nur diese Notiz vor Augen hat und in seiner Lektüre bis hierhin gekommen ist, dürfte statt

35 A 9.
36 J 195, vgl. GM 7 ff.
37 GM 10, KGW VI 2, 284.
38 ib. 286.
39 KGW VIII 1, 204.
40 ib. 203.
42 KGW VIII 3, 203 mit A 5, auch FWa 5, A 45.
43 J 9. Hauptstück, passim; GM passim; A passim.
44 z.B. A 5.

"(Der Mensch) ist nicht die Folge einer eignen Absicht, eines Willens, eines Zwecks, mit ihm wird nicht der Versuch gemacht, ein 'Ideal von Mensch' oder ein 'Ideal von Glück' oder ein 'Ideal von Moralität' zu erreichen (...). Wir haben den Begriff 'Zweck' erfunden: in der Realität fehlt der Zweck... Man ist nothwendig, man ist ein Stück Verhängniss, man gehört zum Ganzen, man ist im Ganzen (...). Aber es gibt Nichts ausser dem Ganzen!—Dass Niemand mehr verantwortlich gemacht wird, dass die Art des Seins nicht auf eine causa prima zurückgeführt werden darf (...)—damit ist die Unschuld des Werdens wieder hergestellt... Der Begriff 'Gott' war bisher der grösste Einwand gegen das Dasein... Wir leugnen Gott, wir leugnen die Verantwortlichkeit in Gott: damit erst erlösren wir die Welt."47

Die plausibelste Assoziationsfolge ergibt sich aber, wie gesagt, im Zusammenhang mit der Kommentierung der Anekdoten über Voltaire. Wenden wir uns jedoch zuerst dem Inhalt der Parenthese zu.

"Was geht uns Gott, der Glaube an Gott noch an!" Natürlich nichts, denn Gott ist tot.48 "'Gott' heute bloß ein verblichenes Wort, nicht einmal mehr ein Begriff": Ein Theologenbegriff, ein Begriff für Philosophen ist "Gott" sicherlich noch; aber die freien Geister sind mit dieser Theologie und mit dieser Philosophie fertig geworden—Theologen und Philosophen, so hat sich gezeigt, sind der Sprache aufgesessen, der Grammatik, also einer Volksmetaphysik,49 und wenn wir, d. h. die Menschen unseres

45 A 47.
46 ib.
47 KGW VI 3, 90 f.
48 FWi 125 u.ö.
49 FWi 354, KGW V 2, 275; vgl. J 20 u.ö.

Die Voltaireanekdote, um die es uns jetzt gehen soll, steht anderswo im Nachlaß ausführlicher. Nietzsche schreibt:

"Man belästigte, wie bekannt, Voltaire noch in seinen letzten Augenblicken: 'glauben Sie an die Gottheit Christi?' fragte ihn sein Curé; und nicht zufrieden damit, daß Voltaire ihn bedeutete, er wolle in Ruhe gelassen werden, wiederholte er seine Frage. Da überkam den Sterbenden sein letzter Ingrimm: wütend stieß er den unbefugten Frager zurück: 'au nom du dieu!—rief er ihm ins Gesicht—ne me parlez pas de cet-homme-là!'—unsterbliche letzte Worte, in denen alles zusammengefaßt ist, woegen dieser tapferste Geist gekämpft hatte.—

Voltaire urteilte: 'es ist nichts Göttliches an diesem Juden von Nazareth': so urteilte aus ihm der klassische Geschmack.

Der klassische Geschmack und der christliche Geschmack setzen den Begriff ‘göttlich’ grundverschieden an; und wer den ersteren im Leibe hat, der kann nicht anders als das Christenthum als foeda <supersticio> und das christliche Ideal als eine Carikatur und Herabwürdigung des Göttlichen zu empf<inden>.'53


50 GD: Die Verwirrung in der Philosophie 5, KGW VI 3, 72.
51 ibid., 19 u.ö.
52 A 47, GD: Die vier großen Irrthümer 4–8, KGW VI 3, 86–89.
53 VIII 2, 286.
zwar erst später notierten, aber Nietzsche doch wohl schon längst bekannten Voltaireanekdote abhängt, d.h. daß der zitierte Satz Voltaire's der Schlüssel zur gesamten Assoziationsfolge der Notiz sein könnte. Ist das richtig, wäre die auffallend allgemeine und somit den Zusammenhang scheinbar sprengende Parenthese etwas leichter in dem Gedankengang unterzubringen.

Dem beschriebenen christlichen Ideal, so Nietzsche, sieht kein Mensch ähnlich, "der in Betracht kommt." (Jesus, der das christliche Ideal direkt verkörpert, kommt also nicht in Betracht.)

An einer anderen Stelle hat Nietzsche die Zensur "... kommt in Betracht" in weiterem Sinn verwendet. "Schopenhauer, der letzte Deutsche, der in Betracht kommt . . .," beginnt ein Aphorismus der Götzendämmerung 54—aber Schopenhauer ist, wie er hier erscheint, ausdrücklich als Erbe des Christentums bezeichnet und attackiert. Schopenhauer habe "die Kunst, den Heroismus, das Genie, die Schönheit, das grosse Mitgefühl, die Erkenntniss, den Willen zur Wahrheit, die Tragödie" als Formen der Verneiung des Willens zum Leben verstanden. Insofern sei er wie das Christentum der psychologischen Falschmünzerei schuldig; er heisse zwar all jene "Cultur-Thatssachen," die das Christentum ablehne, gut, aber in einem "christlichen . . . Sinne . . . (nämlich als Wege zur Erlösung . . .)." Zu Anfang des Abschnitts scheint die Wertung "der in Betracht kommt" geradezu durch eine andere erklärt zu werden: Nietzsche fügt ihr nämlich in Klammern hinzu "—der ein europäisches Ereigniss gleich Goethe, gleich Hegel, gleich Heinrich Heine ist, und nicht bloss ein lokales, ein "nationales.'"

In der Nachlaßnotiz ist der qualifizierende Ausdruck "der in Betracht kommt" enger gebraucht. Wer in Betracht kommt, sieht dem christlichen Ideal nicht ähnlich, jedenfalls nicht für Forscher, die wie ein "Psycholog und Nierenprüfer" (was Nietzsche seit "Menschliches, Allzumenschliches" ist) der Herkunft der zum Problem gewordenen "Denkweisen" und "Seelenzustände" großer Menschen "nachspüren," indem sie "das Complicirte in der anscheinenden Einfachheit aufzeigen und das Auge auf die Verflechtung der Motive, auf die eingewobenen zarten Begriffs-Täuschungen und die von Alters her vererbten, langsam gesteigerten Einzel- und Gruppen-Empfindungen richten . . ." 55 Als Beleg für seine These, daß kein In-Betracht-Kommender dem beschriebenen christlichen Ideal ähnlich gesehen habe, nennt Nietzsche die Vitensammlung Plutarchs ("man blättere alle Helden eines Plutarch durch").

Diese Helden sind also Nietzsches Ideal näher als der auch in Betracht kommende "Falschmünzer" Schopenhauer. Bezog sich der wertende Ausdruck in der Götzendämmerung nur auf Schopenhauers Größen (auf das, wofür Schopenhauers Idealtypen stehen, kann er sich ja nicht beziehen), so bezieht er sich hier also auch auf die positiven Wertinhalte, für die die

54 Streifzüge eines Unzeitgemäßen 21, KGW VI 3, 21.
55 S. o. S. 518.

"Ihr höheren Menschen,—so blinzelt der Pöbel—es giebt keine höheren Menschen, wir sind Alle gleich, Mensch ist Mensch, vor Gott—sind wir Alle gleich!"

Vor Gott!—Nun aber starb dieser Gott . . .

Diese Herrn von Heute überwindet mir, oh meine Brüder,—diese kleinen Leute: die sind des Übermenschen grösste Gefahr!

Überwindet mir, ihr höheren Menschen, die kleinen Tugenden, die kleinen Klugheiten, die Sandkorn-Rücksichten, den Ameisen-Kribbelkram, das erbärmliche Behagen, das 'Glück der Meisten!'"\(^58\)

Nietzsche meint die, die, wie Zarathustra selbst, eine Brücke zum Übermenschen sind.


Unter Plutarchs Helden ist einer, der offenbar fest zur Gruppe der den Typ des Übermenschen illustrierenden Beispiele gehört: Caesar. Wie auch im Fall Napoleons war es nicht der erfolgreiche Feldherr, den der Philosoph

\(^{54}\) UB II 9, KGW III 1, 313.

\(^{57}\) S. 11 "Zarathustra" (1883 ff.).

\(^{58}\) Z IV, Vom höheren Menschen 1 und 3, KGW VI 1, 352 und 354.

\(^{52}\) GD: Streifzüge 49, KGW VI 3, 145.

\(^{60}\) Man denke an das Paradigma Cesare Borgia, z.B. GD: Streifzüge 37, KGW VI 3, 130.
in Caesar schätzt, sondern der, der unter Mühen aus sich etwas gemacht hat.\textsuperscript{61}

\textit{„Den höchsten Typus freier Menschen hätte man dort zu suchen, wo beständig der höchste Widerstand überwunden wird: fünf Schritte weit von der Tyrannei, dicht an der Schwelle der Gefahr der Knechtschaft. Dies ist psychologisch wahr, wenn man hier unter den ‘Tyrannen’ unerbittliche und furchtbare Instinkte begreift, die das Maximum von Autorität und Zucht gegen sich herausfordern—schönster Typus Julius Caesar——…“}\textsuperscript{62}

Nur scheinbar mit Harmlosigkeiten hat es die folgende Notiz zu tun:

\textit{„Noch ein Problem der Diät.—Die Mittel, mit denen Julius Caesar sich gegen Kranklichkeiten und Kopfschmerz verteidigte: ungeheure Märsche, einfachste Lebensweise, ununterbrochener Aufenthalt im Freien, beständige Strapazen—das sind, in's Grosse gerechnet, die Erhaltungs- und Schutz-Maassregeln überhaupt gegen die extreme Verletzlichkeit jener subtilen und unter höchstem Druck arbeitenden Maschine, welche Genie heisst.—“}\textsuperscript{63}

Hier gibt Nietzsche die Quelle nicht an, aus der er schöpft. Das tut er aber in einem Brief an den ihn verehrenden Heinrich Köselitz (Pseudonym: Peter Gast) vom 13. 2. 1888: „Ich fand bei Plutarch, mit welchen Mitteln sich Cäsar gegen Kranklichkeit und Kopfschmerz verteidigte: ungeheure Märsche, einfache Lebensweise, ununterbrochener Aufenthalt im Freien, Strapazen . . .“\textsuperscript{64}

Plutarch \textit{ist} für Nietzsche ein Lieferant von Beispielen höheren Menschentums, von Menschen, die sich selbst schaffen—and in dem Moment, wo er die Nachlaßnotiz schrieb, die wir hier interpretieren, spürte er wohl auch, was Plutarch für ihn eigentlich war: er sagt: „. . . Man blättere alle Helden \textit{eines} Plutarch durch,” wobei die Verwendung des unbestimmten Artikels amplifizierende Wirkung hat. Plutarch ist eine Art Vorläufer Zarathustras, ein Prediger, der, wie indirekt auch immer, auf den Übermenschen verweist, ein Mahner zu höherem Menschentum, und zwar einem solchen, das mit dem Menschentum (oder einem Teil davon) verwandt ist, das Nietzsche "züchten"\textsuperscript{65} will.

Plutarch ist für den Schriftsteller Nietzsche bei weitem nicht das geworden, was er für den Gedanken Nietzsches—jedenfalls nach dieser Stelle zu urteilen—war. Nirgendwo sonst könnte Plutarch für einen deutschen Denker so zentral stehen, nirgendwo sonst könnte er derart als Vorläufer fungieren—aber er wird nur erwähnt, um sofort wieder aus dem Rüstzeug von Ideen und Formulierungen, mit denen Nietzsche zu hantieren pflegte, zu verschwinden. Ähnlich war es im Frühwerk.

\textsuperscript{61} Kaufmann (s. Anm. 34) 369 f.
\textsuperscript{62} GD: Streifzüge 38, KGW VI 3, 134.
\textsuperscript{63} ib. 31, KGW VI 3, 124.
\textsuperscript{64} KGBr III 5, 251.
\textsuperscript{65} Dazu Kaufmann (Anm. 34) 355 ff.
Nun soll von Plutarch her gefragt werden: in welchem Maße darf er sich rezipiert fühlen?


Bereits 1871 schrieb Nietzsche folgende Zeilen:

66 Vgl. KGW III 3, 311; die Stelle wird sofort zitiert werden.
67 1. Akt, 2. Szene.
Plutarch selbst ist hier Idee Karl Moors aus Schillers Räubern, eben Erzieher zum großen Menschen; der Inhalt der Klammer ruft dem Leser das zitierte Wort Karl Moors in Erinnerung. (Eher nebenbei rückt Plutarch so im Nachhinein in jene Linie, in der auch Schiller steht, vor. Damit ist auch er "als Analogon der heroischen Oper zu messen," seine Biographien moralische Idyllen, ein "Paradies der Menschengüte." Diese Vorstellung weist auf "Menschliches, Allzumenschliches" voraus, wo Plutarch auf differenziertere Weise, nämlich wenn er auf eine bestimmte Art gelesen wird, als Beförderer dieser "Menschengüte" gesehen ist.)

Das zweite Motiv, Plutarchs Moral des Heroismus im Gegensatz zu anderen Handlungsprinzipien, findet sich im 12. der "Briefe über Don Carlos" (1788). Schiller schreibt: "Wer entdeckt nicht in dem ganzen Zusammenhang seines (Marquis Posas) Lebens, daß . . . die Helden des Plutarch in seiner Seele leben und daß sich also unter zwei Auswegen immer der heroische zuerst und zunächst ihm darbieten muß." Der an Plutarch gewachsene Held wählt den heroischen Weg und läßt einen möglichen anderen außer acht—hier lassen sich viele mögliche Wege denken—Nietzsche dachte an besondere, gegen die er eben Plutarch ins Feld führte. Die Schillernotiz gibt ein Muster für seine entsprechenden Bemerkungen.

2. Was Schiller selbst angeht, so gilt er in Nietzsches Frühwerk noch mehr als Plutarch als Kulturbildner. Seit "Menschliches, Allzumenschliches" verliert er diese Rolle; Nietzsches Worte über ihn sind dann oft ironisch, herabsetzend—Schiller wird Gegner. Er zählt zu Nietzsches "Unmöglichen" ("Schiller: oder der Moral-Trompeter von Säckingen.—"

Und auch: "Das Andre, was ich nicht hören mag, ist ein berüchtigtes 'und': die Deutschen sagen Goethe und Schiller,—ich fürchte, sie sagen 'Schiller und Goethe' . . . Kennt man noch nicht diesen Schiller? —Es gibt noch schlimmere 'und' . . .").

Im Frühwerk ist das also noch anders. Schiller steht für dasselbe, wofür auch Plutarch steht. In der im Frühjahr 1872 verfaßten Vorrede zu den öffentlichen Vorlesungen "Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten" klingt dies schon deutlich an, wenn Schiller als der "Kämpfende" gesehen ist, der sich abmüht " . . . Damit der Tag dem Edlen endlich komme," wie

68 S. Anm. 66.
69 GD: Streifzüge 1 und 16, KGW VI 3, 105 und 115 f.
die Schlußworte eines Zitats aus Goethes “Epilog zu Schillers Glocke” lauten. Dergleichen öfter.

Wenn Plutarch die Herabsetzung, die Schiller in Nietzsches späterem Werk erfuhr, erspart blieb, so kann das viele Ursachen haben; sicher jedenfalls nicht die, daß Nietzsche ihm seine Achtung bei genauerem Hinsehen hätte erhalten müssen. Ein Grund dafür, daß Plutarch, anders als Schiller, vor der Verdammnis bewahrt blieb, mag der gewesen sein, daß Schiller im allgemeinen Bewußtsein war und somit jedes Wort, das über ihn gesagt wurde, kontrolliert zu werden Gefahr lief; Plutarch aber war, und das wußte auch Nietzsche, für Nietzsches deutschen Leser mit großer Wahrscheinlichkeit nur ein Name, an den sehr allgemeine Vorstellungen geknüpft waren. Es war also zweifellos auch eine gewisse—Nietzsche nicht anzulastende, sondern allgemeine—Unwissenheit über Plutarch daran beteiligt, daß Plutarch bei Nietzsche eine Art Idee wurde und blieb, die er—im übrigen selten genug—dem Leser, oder, in seinen Notizen, zunächst einmal sich selbst, vielleicht auch in erster Linie nach gewissermaßen kulinarischen Gesichtspunkten servierte.

*Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn*
FORTHCOMING

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