

Symposion and Philanthropia in Plutarch

José Ribeiro Ferreira, Delfim Leão
Manuel Troster e Paula Barata Dias
(eds.)

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PREFACE

The volume that is now being published assembles great part of the papers presented during the Eighth International Conference of the International Plutarch Society – IPS, held at Coimbra from 23 to 27 September 2008. The contributions deal with *symposion*, *philanthropia*, and related subjects in six major sections: after an overview on Plutarch's place in the genre of *symposion*, the first two sections focus on the philosophical, literary and socio-political functions of Plutarchan banquets. This is followed by a number of papers on violence and conflict in disruptive *symposia* and by studies of the key concepts of *philanthropia*, *philia* and *eros*. Finally, separate sections are devoted to two specific works, viz. the *Quaestiones convivales* and the *Convivium septem sapientium*.

The intended audience of this book extends well beyond the growing community of Plutarchists and includes anybody who makes regular or occasional use of the *Lives* or of the *Moralia*. Considering the scope and nature of Plutarch's multi-faceted work, the studies presented will be of interest to scholars and students from a whole range of disciplines, such as history, politics, philosophy, literature, education and arts.

The book may be used as a guide to study the *symposion* as a literary genre, thus helping to analyse, from a structural and compositional point of view, works that have the banquet as a scenario. At the same time, it shows the broad range of functions and connotations associated with the *symposion* as a space for philosophical, political and social gatherings. Beyond this, the volume is designed to deepen the understanding of artistic expressions, such as poetry, music and dance, by reading the *symposion* as a performative space and as a place that encourages the participants to develop affective ties among themselves.

The organization of the conference and the publication of this volume would not have been possible without the support of the International Plutarch Society, the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology - FCT (through the project "Plutarch and the Founding of a European Identity"), the

Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the SoPLUTARCO (Portuguese branch of the IPS), and the Centre of Classical and Humanistic Studies at the University of Coimbra. The editors should also like to express their gratitude to the editorial board of *Classica Digitalia* for having so readily accepted to include this volume in the *Humanitas Supplementum* series.

Special thanks are owed to Christopher Pelling, president of the IPS, for all his support and for having agreed to write the introduction to the volume, tying together the many strands covered both by the individual contributors and by Plutarch himself. The editors are equally grateful to the international board of independent referees for their willingness to collaborate and for their helpful criticism. Finally, thanks should be given to Ália Rodrigues and Rodolfo Lopes, who spent many hours editing the individual contributions and preparing the *Index Locorum* and *Index Rerum* to the volume.

COIMBRA, NOVEMBER 2009

THE EDITORS,
J. RIBEIRO FERREIRA, D. LEÃO, M. TRÖSTER & P. BARATA DIAS

INTRODUCTION

Christopher Pelling
Christ Church, University of Oxford

Symposion and *philanthropia*, civilised drinking and friendship towards one's fellow-humans: the two things have always gone closely together, and were appropriately linked as the subject of the eighth International Conference of the International Plutarch Society.

In his smug Roman way, Cicero claimed that the Latin notion of *convivium* was somehow superior to the Greek *symposion*, because the Greek word focused just on communal drinking while the Latin extended to the whole notion of a shared life (*ad Fam.* 9.24.3, *de Senectute* 45). But Greeks, and Plutarch in particular, knew that there was a lot more to the *symposion* than simply drinking. Indeed, one could reply to Cicero that the *symposion*, when it went well, did *not* embrace every aspect of shared human life, but rather some of its highest elements – as Plutarch might put it himself (see Lopes' paper in this volume), goodwill (*eunoia*), fellowship (*koinonia*), friendship (*philia*), and of course *philanthropia*, that warm affection for one's fellow human beings. Those qualities gave participants much to talk about at the conference, which was held at Coimbra in Portugal on 23–27 September 2008.

Any reader of this volume will be struck by the range of topics that are covered. As Teodorsson brings out in his introductory essay, *symposia* were important features both of real Greek life and of the Greek literary landscape; and inevitably the literary and the social aspects interact in multiple ways, as the literary descriptions both reflected and provided a model for real-life behaviour: that suggests a rather refined sense of 'realism' in the portrayal, a topic discussed by Titchener. That 'modelling', educational aspect is indeed important, for just as real-life *symposia* provided an opportunity for the younger participants to learn from the elder, so Plutarch's own representations of fictional *symposia* provide a picture of how such occasions ought to proceed: one can learn manners, certainly, and also a vast range of other things, as the more experienced and better-informed give a practical illustration of the

ways to carry, and convey, one's learning lightly (Roskam). One catches the personal note here of Plutarch himself: contrast Maximus of Tyre, with his view of *symposia* as a threat to proper education, and his advice to the aspiring philosopher to stay away if he is wise (Lauwers).

In real life, *symposia* can go wrong; in Plutarch's historical writings, we see examples of that in plenty, and it is normally because those ideal qualities are travestied or reversed, with hatred and hostility replacing friendship and goodwill, and wine producing violence rather than good fellowship. That is especially clear in a barbarian *symposion* such as that of Artaxerxes: Almagor traces the way in which features of an idealised Greek *symposion* are there subtly travestied and juggled to produce off-key, sometimes inverted, versions of what it ought to be: the host's character indeed emerges, just as it should, but here in a chilling way. This notion of a bloody feast builds on a long literary tradition (Rodrigues), but on real life as well. In Greek as in Persian and Roman culture, feasts were one of the few opportunities when the powerful mingled with an extended company and – precisely because of all those relaxed and friendly features of the ideal *symposia* – might be off their guard (Muñoz Gallarte); poisoning was always a possibility too (Romero González). A banquet was indeed a disturbingly dangerous place to be.

Macedonian *symposia* might be a special case, more drunken than the Greek, with arms readily available, so that the potential for violence was even more acute (Molina Marín). The banqueting of Alexander therefore provided a specially rich theme, and one can see the skill with which Plutarch integrated the theme within the texture of a particularly complex *Life*. Beneker brings out the comparison with Alexander's father Philip, whose wedding with Cleopatra provided so clear a warning of how a feast can go violently wrong: Alexander, so highly educated in Greek culture, has every opportunity to do better than his father – but, in a pattern that is distinctively Plutarchan, ends by falling back into tellingly similar behaviour, with the murder of Cleitus evoking memories of that disastrous early wedding-scene. Gómez and Mestre relate the development to the evolving character of Alexander, and particularly the effect of his interaction with eastern culture and the difficulties he finds in integrating the two worlds: that makes it an especially challenging test-case for how an ideal ruler should behave, and how far Alexander falls short of that ideal.

In Plutarch's own day there were new rulers: the men of Rome, men with different values and a different mode of dining, one with greater excess and – generally – rather less culture. Not that all Roman habits were bad ones; there are times when one can sense the influence of Roman ideas of *humanitas* (Molina Marín); Roman banquets were certainly more civilised than their Parthian equivalents (Chlup); and Plutarch, with his typically advanced views about women, would at least be torn on the Roman practice of a female presence at the banquet, even if in his own constructed *symposia* the female dimension is found rather in the nature of the topics discussed than in the presence of women to discuss them (Rodrigues). The character of a person's *symposia* certainly provided a useful register for gauging a Roman's Hellenism,

and in particular that crucial characteristic of *philanthropia* (Pinheiro, Tröster, Chlup). And Romans could often outdo Greeks in their organisational skill in putting together banquets and other spectacles if they so chose – but there remained an uncomfortable taste of the military about it all (Tröster); there was often some trumpeting of social standing (de Blois), something that a tactful host would try to sidestep in a Greek *symposion*; and an imperial banquet could go very badly wrong indeed, again owing to an uncomfortable intrusion of the military and a reversal of the proprieties of imperial authority (de Blois again).

If Alexander's banquets were the great test-case in the Greek *Lives*, the Cato's *symposia*, and especially the elder Cato's, were an equivalent among the Romans. As so often – more on this below – Plato's Socrates is in the background as a permanent benchmark of comparison, one that is especially clear in the *Younger Cato*; the Roman dinners there come out less well (Beck). As for the elder Cato, *philanthropia* is once again the key quality for evaluation throughout the *Life* (Ramón Palerm, Candau Morón, Beck again), and Cato is several times found wanting, at the dinner-table as with his slaves and his wives: it is paradoxical, perhaps, that he falls down most in his marital behaviour towards the end of his life, at the time when he was finally more receptive to Greek culture. It is striking too that *philanthropia* so often becomes a crucial register for assessing the behaviour of a more powerful person towards those who are weaker, as it is in Cato's treatment of his slaves; that is also clear in *Demosthenes–Cicero*, a most carefully worked pair, and Várzeas there argues for the importance of Sophocles' *Antigone*, especially his Creon, as giving an intertextual register for this exploration of humane generosity in power.

So even within these historical descriptions in the *Lives*, we find thought-provoking exploration of moral questions, and especially questions that concern the nature of power and the behaviour of the powerful. That is also true as we turn to the fictional *symposia* in the *Moralia*. Two works are particularly relevant here, the *Septem Sapientium Convivium* and the *Quaestiones Convivales*. The *Septem Sapientium Convivium* is often viewed as a fairly early work (and González Equihua agrees); if so, it is particularly interesting to see how features of Plutarch's later thinking and artistic technique are already developing – the suggestive use of animal imagery (Newmyer), the preference for practical wisdom, the synkritic technique, the deft characterisation, and particularly the deft use of pointed anecdotes and sayings, *chreiai* (González Equihua again). That last feature in particular was one whose incorporation sometimes stretched Plutarch's historical and literary imagination (Kim). Then the *Quaestiones Convivales*, clearly a work of Plutarch's maturity, are dedicated to Q. Sosius Senecio, twice Roman consul, accomplished military man and civilised Hellenophile – an instance in his own person of the humane mix of cultures that the *Quaestiones* optimistically represent. Senecio is also the dedicatee of the *Parallel Lives*, and it may well be that Plutarch regarded the *Lives* and the *Quaestiones Convivales* as his major works: they are certainly the longest and arguably the most ambitious. So the *symposion* is indeed a

setting where wisdom can speak to power, whether in the remote and semi-legendary setting of the *Septem Sapientium Convivium* or in the more Roman and contemporary world of the *Quaestiones Convivales*. In the *Septem Sapientium Convivium* this has the interesting consequences traced by Leão, with Periander, the most uncompromising of the men of power, increasingly backstaged as the work goes on.

If such conversation is to work well, it must be properly managed, and one of the educative functions of the *Quaestiones Convivales* is to give a picture of proper party manners. Older and younger participants both have distinctive roles to play, and the younger people in *Quaestiones Convivales* do not always get their lines quite right (Roskam). A particularly important organisational role falls to the symposiarch (González Julià), whose tactful party-management provides a broader model for local political leadership as well (Stadter) – another example to show that it was not just Cicero who saw a *convivium* as a slice of life in general, reflecting themes that go beyond the drinking. Room can be found for various activities to make the party go with a swing, though they tend to the cerebral rather than the riotous. Texts may be read after dinner, in a way that has interesting analogies in early Christian communities (Alikin), but it is important to have the right sort of text, Homer or Plato or Menander (d'Ippolito). Perhaps riddles are appropriate, more so in *Septem Sapientium Convivium* than in *Quaestiones Convivales*, provided they have some content of philosophical substance (Beta). As for music (Júnior) and dance (Jesus), those staples of real-life sympotic entertainment need not be banished completely, but they figure as topics for reflective discussion rather than for practical activity, a think-up rather than a knees-up.

But discussion, especially philosophical discussion, is the key. Finding the right level is important, so that the topics can draw in the less expert rather than exclude them (Lopes, González Julià): practical philosophy is especially appropriate (Vela Tejada), partly because it is more accessible and partly also because it suits Plutarch's own characteristic insistence that the philosopher needed to play a part in public life. But there is a lot more too that can count as philosophy, including matters that we might today call scientific ('natural philosophy', as it used to be called): 'why truffles seem to be born through the agency of thunder', for instance (Setaioli), or matters of astrometeorology (Pérez Jiménez), and even the Seven Wise Men can be brought to consider matters of household management and lifestyle as well as statecraft (Vela Tejada). Manner is as important as theme. One always needs to bear in mind who is present, and tailor the presentation accordingly (González Julià). That of course is part of rhetorical good practice as well as of philosophy, and rhetorical theorists from Plato and Aristotle onwards had insisted on the need to gauge one's audience if one wished to be persuasive: no surprise, then, that in this world where *paideia* (education) is so important, signs of rhetorical education are particularly prominent (González Julià again, Vicente Sánchez). The careful presentation of one's own character was a basic aspect of rhetorical technique, and in the symposium it presented a particular problem, as a

speaker whose learning and insight outclasses the other diners can dampen conversation rather than making it flow. Plutarch's own self-presentation as a speaking character in *Quaestiones Convivales* is one interesting issue here (Brenk); another is the way in which the discussions themselves so often demonstrate an ideally civilised way and spirit in which different speakers can disagree. One example is the discussion of the meaning of Plato's remark that 'God is always doing geometry', a suitable theme treated by the speakers in a suitable matter (Ferrari). And one can also take the whole presentational manner of *Quaestiones Convivales* as conveying a similar educational lesson: the authorial voice is there so often elusive, an ideal way of airing 'provocative and problematic views' on each side without pushing any of them too pushily on to a reader (Brenk again).

So the content and the manner of the discussions come together closely to present a strong view of *philanthropia*. Yet there is a danger here of seeming, or making Plutarch seem, over-bland. Could anyone after all find *philanthropia* problematic? No-one, after all, was going to leap to his or her feet and challenge Plutarch by delivering a paean on misanthropy, claiming that the real model for human wisdom was Timon rather than Socrates. Still, it may also be true that Plutarch could see the quality under threat in his contemporary Roman world (Becchi) – at least in some moods, though we should also remember that *humanitas* was a prized quality in the ideology of Trajan's world (Candau Morón, Molina Marín): if there was a tension there between noble ideal and more grubby reality, that was hardly unprecedented in the ancient world or unparalleled in the modern. There were other ways too in which *philanthropia*, even if in itself an unambiguously positive quality, could raise problems in practical reality. The demands of political life could sometimes be hard to reconcile with genial sociability (Nikolaidis); Pericles had his reasons for shunning social engagements. And the quality could raise philosophical issues too. If Volpe Cacciatore is right, *philanthropia* could not coherently be attributed to the Stoic Zeus, but could to the Zeus in which the Platonist Plutarch could believe. If *philanthropia* was 'the very kernel of his moral outlook' (Nikolaidis), it provided Plutarch with a perspective that did not shirk the genuine moral and practical issues which real life could present.

'The Platonist Plutarch ...': and of course Plato's *Symposium* is a constant intertextual presence in all this. It is not the only one: Hesiod's *Works and Days* mattered too (Fernández Delgado), not surprisingly given Plutarch's interest in both theology and practical wisdom; and of course Homer is a constant referent, not least because of all the banqueting in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (cf. Fernández Zambudio on the ps.-Plutarchan *On the Life and Work of Homer*). Menippean satire may well also be relevant, and so of course is the *Symposium* of Xenophon (Teodorsson). But it is Plato who keeps coming back: in the *Quaestiones Convivales*, where he is such a constant presence (it is there that Plutarch tells us that he and his circle still celebrated Plato's and Socrates' birthdays, separated as they were by only one day, *Q.C.* 717b); in the *Alcibiades*, where the Platonic echoes go beyond sympotic behaviour and are

thought-provoking on themes such as education, love, and ambition (Duff); in *Septem Sapientium Convivium*, where the unexpected arrival of Periander's brother Gorgos echoes the arrival of Alcibiades in Plato (Kim), even as he goes on to add an echo of Herodotus too with his skilful retelling of the story of Arion and the dolphin (Newmyer).

Where Plato's *Symposium* is felt, love, especially philosophically informed and educative love, will be felt too: not all *philanthropia* is erotically charged, of course, but some will always be. Badnall explains how Plutarch adapts and remoulds elements from Plato's work to underpin and immortalise the praise of conjugal love, mixing elements of the epithalamial – a rather different sort of banquet is in point there – and the philosophically charged *symposion*. This adaptation of Platonic thinking to emphasise the heterosexual, stressed also by Bárbara, is vital to Plutarch, and seen also in the *Amatorius*; it brings out how dynamic and malleable his Platonism can be, a repertoire of adaptable models for exploring every aspect of human endeavour rather than an ideological straitjacket. Scannapieco brings out how even the imagery for heterosexual love is sympotic, with the 'mix' of wine in the *symposion* figuring also the mix of human elements in a good marriage to generate a new and stable unity.

Philanthropia, philia, eunoia, koinonia, all tempered by civilised manners and learning borne lightly: no wonder Plutarch's portrayal of the *symposion* can continue to be a model for us all. And it certainly proved a model at Coimbra, not merely for the papers and the formal discussion but also for the good fellowship that followed, including a final *symposion* where Portuguese hospitality flowed freely and in style – with music playing a larger role than Plutarch might have recommended, but in a way that he would fully have appreciated (and probably added a further *Quaestio* on why Portuguese toasting has such a musical dimension and has so much lip-smacking). Thanks of all participants are again due to Delfim Leão for his role as symposiarch, just as readers will be grateful to him for collecting and editing these papers with such exemplary despatch.

CHRISTOPHER PELLING
PRESIDENT, INTERNATIONAL PLUTARCH SOCIETY
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OPENING SESSION

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THE PLACE OF PLUTARCH IN THE LITERARY GENRE OF *SYMPOSIUM*

SVEN-TAGE TEODORSSON
Göteborg University

Abstract

Plato's idea to have a dialogue on serious philosophy taking place at a drinking-party is actually astonishing, considering the traditionally rather "unphilosophic" entourage of these feasts. His *Symposion* covers a vast scope extending from the most subtle philosophic reasoning of Socrates to the final deranged, unrestrained drinking-bout. In spite of this vulgar ending, however, the work is basically a philosophic dialogue. That this work happened to form the starting-point of a new literary genre, the symposion, may have been largely due to Xenophon. Many more contemporary and somewhat later writers produced works of the kind, but all are lost. Since the third century B.C. the Cynic Menippean sympotic genre became prevalent instead of the philosophic Socratic one, which, as far as we know, is totally absent until Plutarch revived it with his *Sept. sap. conv.* In addition he created a new subgenre of sympotic writing, the *Quaestiones convivales*. He probably wrote his convivial works in opposition to the Menippean kind. His evident ethical and educational purpose is singular in the genre of symposion; he received no followers.

The banquet, constituted of the two sections, δεῖπνον and συμπόσιον/πότος, was an essential part of ancient Greek culture. It can be traced back as far as Homer¹, and during the Archaic period the sympotic customs were established in a regular, almost ritualized form, the aristocratic συμπόσιον. This was an institution for the upper classes, and it had its place in the courts of kings and tyrants and in the ἀνδρῶνες of citizens in prominent position. The symposion was an integrated part of life of the political and military clubs, the aristocratic ἐταιρεῖαι. These circles of educated and well-to-do people was a natural environment for song, music, dance and recitation, which inspired poets to the lavish productions of the archaic lyric and choral poetry, not least the so-called *scolia*, and painters got abundant motives for vase paintings. Artists of different profession, such as musicians, dancers, actors, acrobats and merry-makers, were often engaged by the host, but the guests themselves also took on large parts of the entertainment. The well-known competitive spirit of the Greek society found a natural arena in the symposion. There were competitions in song and music, or in solving riddles and other problems. A demand was laid on the symposiasts that each in turn should sing a song accompanying himself with the lyre. For such performances a formal musical education was presupposed. In the Archaic age all participants at symposia had acquired the necessary competence. But towards the end of the sixth century the great changes in the political state of things in Athens also brought about changes in the character of the symposion. The conventional educational system was modified, new groups of citizens advanced to power, and after the Persian wars the living standards of the population rose. The institution of the symposion received a more luxurious, and also more private and varied

¹ *Il.* 1. 595-604; 9.197-224.

character, different from the conventionally regulated, aristocratic archaic symposion. Plutarch tells of an incident that gives a notion of the easy manners in the symposion of the Classical time. In the *Life of Cimon* he reports that Themistocles once frankly declared that he had not learnt to sing, nor to play the lyre, but that he knew how to make the city great and rich². In the course of time the ability to play the lyre declined, and recital gradually replaced singing³. As a consequence, less exacting activities filled larger parts of the sympotic program, such as competitions of easy, banal kind, informal singing and dancing⁴, merry-making and, above all, heavy drinking, either freely or as a contest performed serially around the company. The κῶμος became more important as an ostentatious display of drunkenness⁵. The change from the symposion of the Archaic age into that of the period of democracy can be studied in the motives of vase paintings of the time⁶.

The symposion was in itself always aimed at pleasure. It offered the opportunity of relaxation and permitted, or occasionally rather imposed upon, the revellers to drink abundant quantities of wine, and thus to indulge in misbehaviour and quite unbridled licence of erotic or violent kind. The vase paintings offer abundant evidence, and indications can also be found in literature⁷. It was therefore entirely to be expected that Plato should adopt a negative attitude towards symposia. In the dialogues Socrates never fails to repudiate the heavy drinking that ran rampant at the contemporary symposia, together with everything else that occupied it⁸. He disdains listening to the equivocal witticisms of the jesters and he scorns the customary riddles and puzzles that occupy ordinary people's minds at the drinking-parties; he compares them with children's riddles⁹. It is Plato's conviction that philosophers can have nothing in common with ordinary men. Enjoying drinking-parties is not part of a philosopher's παιδεία. In the *Theaetetus* Plato's Socrates draws a very clear line of demarcation between the philosophers and the people of the city who are busy with their politics and their symposia. Both should be strictly avoided. Socrates says: "These meetings and banquets and revellings with chorus girls, it never occurs to the philosophers even in their dreams to indulge in such things."¹⁰

² Ion *ap.* Plu., *Cim.* 9.1; cf. *Them.* 2.3-4.

³ Cf. S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1989, pp. 59-63.

⁴ At X., *Smp.* 7.1-2 Socrates improvises a song.

⁵ This behaviour was prevalent both in the upper classes and among common people, cf. the known revel and κῶμος of Alcibiades and his group, and see the descriptions of the vulgar πότος in Ar., *V.* 1208-1537. See also F. FRAZIER, 2000.

⁶ See J. N. BREMMER, 1990, pp. 144-5, with a vast bibliography on the subject.

⁷ See, e.g., F. LISSARAGUE, 1982, and cf. Ath. 13.577 E-F. 579 A, D, 607 CD.

⁸ Pl., *R.* 389 d-e σωφροσύνης ἄρα οὐ δεήσει ἡμῖν τοῖς νεανίαις; Πῶς δ' οὐ; Σωφροσύνης δὲ ὡς πλήθει οὐ τὰ τοιάδε μέγιστα, ἀρχόντων μὲν ὑπηκόους εἶναι, αὐτοὺς δὲ ἄρχοντας τῶν περὶ πότους καὶ ἀφροδίσια καὶ περὶ ἐδωδάς ἡδονῶν, *id.* 395 e-396 a, *et al.* See M. TECUŞAN, 1990, pp. 238-43.

⁹ *R.* 479 b-c. For the nature of the riddles and puzzles see S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1990, pp. 143-4.

¹⁰ *Tht.* 173 d σπουδαὶ δὲ ἐταιριῶν ἐπ' ἀρχὰς καὶ σύνοδοι καὶ δεῖπνα καὶ σὺν αὐλητήρισι

Plato held these views nearly all his life. However, in his old age he changed his mind. He abandoned his negative, reluctant attitude and advocated a moderated and controlled use of wine as an integrated part of the παιδεία. As is well known he devoted the first two books of the *Laws* to a lengthy discussion on symposia, wine and drunkenness. He denounces practically all the symposia of his time as totally deranged and presents a reform program. He argues that symposia, wine and intoxication can and should be used as a means of education. For example, intoxication can be used for testing the ἀρετή¹¹. This awareness of the revealing effect of the wine was not new; for example, it can be found in Alcaeus, Aeschylus and Ion of Chios¹².

Plato's *Symposium*

Now, I would like to suggest that this was exactly what Plato had in mind when he decided to locate his important dialogue on Eros in the sympotic entourage. He wanted to demonstrate the ideal ἀρετή of Socrates, both his sublime σωφροσύνη and self-control concerning carnal love-passion, and his ability to withstand the negative effects of intoxication.

It is noticeable that in reporting the course of events of his *Symposium* Plato describes everything as decent and orderly. This was probably how the gatherings in the Academy were carried out under his guidance, in a decorous way and characterized by intellectual conversations, though not entirely sober. This kind of drinking-party Plato wanted to present to his readers when he wrote his *Symposium*, and it was of course the condition necessary for a proper philosophical dialogue, as is announced at the beginning, when the flute-girls are dismissed, and drinking is inhibited.

After Socrates has finished his sublime speech, the spell is suddenly broken when Alcibiades and his band rush in and bring about an abrupt change in the lofty philosophic atmosphere. The time has now come for the test of Socrates' virtue. Alcibiades' detailed report of Socrates power of resistance to his efforts of seduction is substituted for a scene of that sort in real time at the party, and then the final drinking-bout displays Socrates as the victor in this test also.

Plato's *Symposium* is obviously far from being a representation of a real banquet. His aim was entirely philosophic, to bring out the philosophic Eros in full relief, incarnated in the person of Socrates, as contrasted with

κῶμοι, οὐδὲ ὄναρ πράττειν προσίσταται αὐτοῖς (sc. τοῖς κορυφαίοις).

¹¹ *Lg.* 649 d-e τούτων δ' εὐτελή τε καὶ ἀσινεστέραν πρότον μὲν πρὸς τὸ λαμβάνειν πείραν, εἶτα εἰς τὸ μελετᾶν, πλήν τῆς ἐν οἴνω βασάνου καὶ παιδιᾶς τίνα ἔχομεν μηχανὴν εἰπεῖν ἕμμετρον μᾶλλον, ἂν καὶ ὀπωστιοῦν μεθ' εὐλαβείας γίγνηται; ... (650 a) ἦθος ψυχῆς θεάσασθαι; (648 b) ... μετ' ἀσφαλείας καὶ ἄνευ κινδύνων.

¹² Alcaeus frg. 95 Rein. (=frg. 366 V.) οἶνος, ὦ φίλε παῖ, καὶ ἀλάθεια, frg. 73 Rein. (=frg. 333 V.) οἶνος γὰρ ἀνθρώπων δίοπτρον; A. frg. 393 R. κάτοπτρον εἶδος χαλκός ἐστ', οἶνος δὲ νοῦ; cf. Theoc. 29.1-3 'Οἶνος', ὦ φίλε παῖ, λέγεται 'καὶ ἀλάθεια'. | κάμμε χρῆ μεθύοντας ἀλαθείας ἔμμεναι. | κίγῳ μὲν ἐρέω τὰ φρένων κέατ' ἐν μύχῳ; Io Chius frg. 26.12 West (= frg. 89 Leur.) οἶνος ἔδειξε φύσιν; See W. RÖSLER, 1995, pp. 106-12.

the inferior one of Alcibiades. Although Plato delusively makes efforts to depict the scenery in realistic terms, the work comes out as a product of Plato's imagination in order to present his philosophic message.¹³

Xenophon's *Symposium*

With his *Symposium* Plato founded a literary genre that was to live on throughout antiquity and even further. It was no doubt thanks to the figure of Socrates that there was a sequel at all. It was the figure of Socrates that inspired Xenophon with the idea to write a similar work. But of course he had no intention to emulate Plato. He had no motive for treating any philosophical problem; his intention was simply to tell his readers what it was like to spend a night at a drinking-party in company with Socrates. He wanted to represent his friend in the role of a symposiast taking part in the conversation and the entertainments of a conventional banquet. He declares his purpose directly in the first sentence, where he states that according to his opinion it is worth while to report the deeds of Socrates even in times of relaxation. In fact, Xenophon's *Symposium* might be regarded as a separate addition to the *Memorabilia*¹⁴, written in order to complete the picture of the figure of Socrates. Just as in that work he most probably had the ambition to represent him in a realistic and thrustworthy way.

I called Xenophon's *Symposium* a conventional one. That is true as regards the unconstrained variation of ingredients. The alternation between entertainment and more of less serious conversation gives a seemingly realistic picture of a normal banquetal scene. However, if Plato's sweeping description of the drinking-parties of the time as totally deranged was true to reality, it would mean that the party reported by Xenophon was also exceptional, just as that of Plato. There are no erotic indecencies, and when Philippus the jester, exhausted after having performed a tiring dance, asks for a big cup of wine, and Callias the host gladly agrees and says that all are thirsty from laughing at him, Socrates intervenes. He calls for caution and gives a short lecture on the proper use of wine, in the shape of a simile. Just as plants are thrown to the ground and cannot produce fruit, when Zeus pours too much rain on them, so it is with us: if we drink a lot of wine at once, both body and soul will stagger, and we will be unable to say anything of value. And Socrates proposes that the attending boys should besprinkle the company with small drops only. Everyone agrees to the proposal, although Philippus the jester wants the boys to fill up the cups faster¹⁵. After that, nothing is said about wine¹⁶, and there is no final drinking-bout. This agreement, a result of the intervention of Socrates, announces the mode of behaviour that

¹³ See D. BABUT, 1980.

¹⁴ This was the opinion of J. MARTIN, 1931, pp. 177-8 (following Ullrich).

¹⁵ See Ch. 2. 23-27.

¹⁶ At Ch. 6. 2 Hermogenes answers Socrates' question, what unconvivial behaviour (παροινία) is: "To give pain to one's companions under the influence of wine".

is to characterize the party, namely a decorous social intercourse under his unobtrusive guidance.

As in Plato's *Symposium*, Socrates had hesitated to accept the invitation to the banquet. The rich Callias, who is paying large sums of money to Protagoras for wisdom, seemed to him not to be the host to his taste. Xenophon describes the feeling during dinner as quite depressed, with the guests feasting in deep silence as though ordered to do so by some authority (I.11). Not even Philippus the jester was able to cheer up the company.

After dinner, however, the atmosphere changes as Socrates gradually takes the lead. He politely praises Callias for the perfect dinner and the performance of the young artists, but when the host also offers perfume, he declines and takes the chance of making some philosophic reflections on fragrances. In his view, there is no need of perfumes at all. Young men who exercise in the gymnasium should smell of olive oil, and women smell of perfume themselves. Elderly men, however, should smell of καλοκάγαθία.

When Socrates had thus broken the ice and a lively discussion had arisen, we would expect that he should go on philosophizing. He does not; instead he himself proposes to postpone conversation until a second performance has been given by the young dancers and acrobats. After this he makes some remarks on their achievements and observes that women can very well be educated and even learn courage. By such little sophisticated comments Socrates determines the intellectual level of the conversation. The result is an exchange of views and opinions of rather poor substance.

Now Socrates proposes that the symposiasts should themselves try to benefit and delight each other, and it is decided that each person should speak about what he considers himself good at and is proud of. What follows is a multifarious conversation more or less guided by Socrates. It is notable that during these discussions he often exposes himself to irony and teasing, while he is also ironic himself. Nevertheless the atmosphere is almost unchangingly pleasant and friendly.

Of course we cannot judge whether Xenophon describes Socrates truly or not, but in fact he makes us believe that he was really such a highly amiable, humorous and conciliatory man. In any case, Xenophon represents him as extraordinarily able to bring about an orderly and friendly symposium. As to the intellectual standards of the subjects he initiates, however, we may doubt whether Xenophon does him justice. Most of the talk on the various subjects during the conversation that extends over four chapters (3-6) is rather nugatory. Only the speech of Antisthenes on his poverty, which he calls wealth, is of a certain philosophic value. But Xenophon is apparently satisfied with the conversation and remarks (IV 29): "In this way they mixed playful and serious."

After this mixed, partly trivial conversation Xenophon makes Socrates finish off the discussion with a long speech, very clearly following the lead of Plato's *Symposium*. It would seem that Xenophon felt obliged somehow to make Socrates appear in his role as "thinker", though at a not so sophisticated level. The theme is arguably Eros, but since he was probably not able to represent

him as speaking of his sublime vision of αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν, he chooses to make him speak on the basis of the speech of Pausanias in Plato's work.

Socrates describes the nature of Eros as not only dual but downright antagonistic in nature, the one variant contending with the other, and he declares that he will speak frankly against the Eros that is the opponent of the one that is dwelling in himself¹⁷. His speech then develops into a rather magisterial lecture about the two conflicting Erotes. Socrates argues in favour of friendly love, whose object is the good soul, and he underlines that this chaste love is no less graced by Aphrodite than the love of the body¹⁸, and that actually no loving relation worthy of mention can exist in the absence of friendship¹⁹.

The serious tone adopted by Socrates in his speech contrasts in a striking way to the easy-going, humorous conversation otherwise prevailing in the symposion. And after his speech he apologizes for having spoken more seriously than is appropriate at a drinking-party. It is also noticeable that Socrates directs his outspokenly didactic and rather moralizing speech to Callias, his host, but he does not take offence. Instead he expresses his appreciation, and Lycon, the father of Callias' beloved Autolycus, praises Socrates as a good and noble man²⁰.

Plato's picture of Socrates as able to resist even an Alcibiades' efforts of seduction seems thus to be substantiated by the representation of him by Xenophon. His speech appears to be critical only to pederasty²¹, and this is also incidentally suggested by contrast in the end of the work, when the married guests hurry home to their wives, inspired by the scenic display of the marriage of Dionysus and Ariadne by the young actors. The chaste kind of Eros that Socrates praises as providing the love of souls and which he affirms is the one dwelling in him, this Eros seems in reality to be φιλία, friendly love, to judge from how he describes it. As a matter of fact there is no properly erotic atmosphere in Xenophon's *Symposium*, except precisely in the final theatrical performance, although Xenophon tries to keep up a semblance of a feeling such as in Plato's *Symposium*. Instead, it is the friendly, good-humoured spirit of φιλία that prevails throughout, and which Socrates confirms in his speech.

The followers

The ethos of friendliness, good temper and sense of humour which characterizes Xenophon's *Symposium* was to determine the nature of the Socratic kind of symposium for the future, as we can observe in Plutarch's convivial works. With his *Symposium* Xenophon broadened the scope of the

¹⁷ Ch. 8. 24 ὁ αἰεὶ σύνοικος ἐμοὶ ἔρωσ κεντρίζει εἰς τὸν ἀντίπαλον ἔρωτα αὐτῶ παρρησιάζεσθαι.

¹⁸ Ch. 8. 15 ἡ δὲ τῆς ψυχῆς φιλία διὰ τὸ ἀγνή εἶναι ... οὐ ... διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἀνεπαφροδιτοτέρα.

¹⁹ Ch. 8. 13 ὅτι μὲν γὰρ δὴ ἄνευ φιλίας συνουσία οὐδεμία ἀξιόλογος πάντες ἐπιστάμεθα.

²⁰ Ch. 8. 1 Νῆ τῆν Ἴηραν, ὦ Σώκρατες, καλός γε κάγαθος δοκεῖς μοι ἄνθρωπος εἶναι.

²¹ Ch. 8. 32-40.

newly founded genre. With the good spirits and the easy-going conversation Xenophon added substantially to the foundation of the genre laid by Plato. The greater comprehensibility of the content and the less sophisticated linguistic form may have been what inspired the numerous writers at the time who followed his lead and composed sympotic works. We may suppose that these differed considerably among themselves according to the authors' different interests and preferences. But unfortunately, all of these writings are lost.

Aristotle is known to have written some kind of sympotic work²², but our sources provide very scarce information on it; perhaps it bore a resemblance to the scholarly *Deipnosophistae* of Athenaeus²³. According to Plutarch, Theophrastus and Aristoxenus also wrote *Symposia*. He mentions that both treated questions of music in these writings²⁴. Epicurus' *Symposium* is the only work of this genre at that time, on which we have a more detailed information²⁵. Plutarch blames him for excluding questions about music and similar inquiries from the drinking-parties and for enjoying instead in vulgar buffooneries²⁶. Athenaeus informs us that in the *Symposium* of Epicurus the guests formed a company of flatterers who praised one another, and he contrasts this with the character of Plato's and Xenophon's works. He censures the absence of an introduction and a specification of place and time in Epicurus' *Symposium*, and he criticizes that the subjects discussed are mainly sympotic and he also finds fault with his clumsy literary style²⁷. It appears, then, that Epicurus' *Symposium* may have been enacted in his Garden, that his guests all belonged to his circle, and that the conversation was in the main confined to the sympotic sphere.

It is worth noticing that only two Academics, Speusippus and Dion of Alexandria, are given as writers of *Symposia*, but only by Plutarch who only mentions their names²⁸. The absence of any positive information on these texts, and considering that there are contrary indications as to their character, makes it seem questionable whether they really were *Symposia* at all²⁹. Even if the scarcity of information makes our judgement uncertain, then, we may raise the question why there was little or practically no continuation of the true Socratic symposium among Platonists. One would think that it should have been natural for members of the Academy to follow the lead of the founders and add works of their own to the new genre.

²² D. L. 5. 22 (5. 1.12). Only one fragment is preserved: Athen. 15.674 F-675 A; cf. *Schol. in Theocr.* 3. 21 p. 122.16 Wendel.

²³ See R. HIRZEL I, 1895, pp. 284-5, 346 n. 1; J. MARTIN, 1931, pp. 204-5.

²⁴ *Non posse* 1095 E ἐν δὲ συμποσίῳ Θεοφράστου περὶ συμφωνιῶν διαλεγόμενου καὶ Ἀριστοξένου περὶ μεταβολῶν. Athen. 14.632 A-B quotes a work by Aristoxenus entitled Σύμμικτα συμποτικά.

²⁵ Phld., *Rh.* 90.27, 96.22, 97.22 Sudhaus.

²⁶ *Non posse* 1095 C-D.

²⁷ Ath. 5.182 A, 186 E, 187 C.

²⁸ *Quaest. conv.* 612 DE.

²⁹ See J. MARTIN, 1931, pp. 162-3, 196-7; S.- T. THEODORSSON, 1989, pp. 35-6.

Non-Socratic sympotic writings

1. PERSAEUS

Now, a new sort of sympotic writings originated, apparently initiated by Persaeus, the pupil of Zenon of Citium. In his work, entitled Συμποτικοὶ διάλογοι, or Συμποτικά ὑπομνήματα, he seems to have limited himself to sympotic subjects in a strict sense, and with a strong emphasis on sexual matters at that³⁰.

2. MENIPPEAN SYMPOSLA

Not much later, in the third century, Menippus the Cynic appeared as the founder of a new genre, the Cynic satire. Among his works there was also a *Symposium*. We know of it only thanks to a short mention by Athenaeus in a passage on different kinds of dance³¹. However, although we know so little about Menippus' own sympotic writings, we may infer upon their character from the *Symposia* and similar texts written by his numerous imitators, Meleager, Lucilius, Varro, Horatius, Petronius, Lucian and Julian the Emperor. This new kind of convivial literature, the so-called Menippean Cynic symposium, differed very much from the classical Socratic one, to say the least. Conversation on philosophic or other serious subjects is absent; instead there are ironic allusions, wrangle and overt verbal attacks, and in the end it may even come to blows. The happenings in Lucian's *Symposium* are most illustrative of the intentions of the writers of this kind of literature. Their aim is to make fun of and mock at prominent people, not least philosophers, setting out their imperfections and oddities in such a way as to make them appear as caricatures.

The considerable number of writers of this kind of works suggests that this genre was rather popular. Shall we perhaps suppose that the Socratic kind of symposium was not able to keep up with the competition? At any rate, the contrast between the considerable frequency of that genre and the virtual absence of Socratic symposia during about four hundred years, from the late Classical time till Plutarch, calls for an explanation.

PLUTARCH

We can take for granted that Plutarch knew the Menippean kind of symposium fairly well. We should of course not think that he had actually read Petronius' *Cena Trimalchonis*, but it is reasonable to suppose that he had knowledge of its content. Judging from what we know of his personality and

³⁰ Ath. 13.607 B Περσαίου τοῦ Κιτιέως ἐν τοῖς Συμποτικοῖς ὑπομνήμασιν βοῶντος καὶ λέγοντος περὶ ἀφροδισίων ἀρμοστὸν εἶναι ἐν τῷ οἴνῳ μνεῖαν ποιεῖσθαι, id. 4. 162 B-C Περσαίου τε τοῦ καλοῦ φιλοσόφου Συμποτικούς διαλόγους συντεθέντας ..., ἐν οἷς ζητεῖ, ὅπως ἂν μὴ κατακοιμηθῶσιν οἱ συμπόται, καὶ πῶς ταῖς ἐπιχύσεσι χρηστέον πηνίκα τε εἰσακτέον τοὺς ὠραίους καὶ τὰς ὠραίας εἰς τὸ συμπόσιον καὶ πότε αὐτοὺς προσδεκτέον ὠραῖζομένους κτλ. (Περσαῖος), ὃς περὶ ταῦτα τὴν διάνοιαν ἀεὶ στρέφων.

³¹ Ath. 14. 629 EF καλεῖται δὲ τις καὶ ἄλλη ὄρχησις κόσμου ἐκπύρωσις, ἧς μνημονεύει Μένιππος ὁ κυνικός ἐν τῷ Συμποσίῳ.

ethical outlook, we may safely assume that he looked with disgust at that sort of feasts and that kind of literature. It therefore appears as probable that his loathing for such depravation was actually his main motive for composing a quite different sort of symposium. It was certainly natural for him to decide upon writing a symposium with participants interested in philosophic questions, and differing among themselves in character and outlook, so as to bring about a varied, interesting conversation. In short, Plutarch wanted to write a Socratic symposium³². For his *Symposium of the Seven Wise Men* he no doubt used Xenophon's *Symposium* as a model. Plato's extraordinary work did not match his purpose. His choice of the Seven Wise Men as participants at the banquet shows his intention, to compose a symposium that would contain a large range of topics and variegated discussions. The result was a work of very mixed content, and with a distinct aim and direction. Plutarch makes this quite clear from the beginning. He assigns the first two chapters to the declaration of his intention.

The story is well-known: Periander, the tyrant of Corinth, has invited the Seven and many more to a banquet. Three of these, Thales, Neiloxenus of Naucratis and Diocles the narrator, are on their way to the place on foot, since Thales has dismissed the fashionable carriage placed at their disposition by the host. The walk thus affords them the opportunity of free and undisturbed talk. The main topic turns out to be about the despotic rule of kings and tyrants, a rather surprising one for invited guests on their way to a host who is a ruling tyrant. Thales is very outspoken and says that he regards Solon as very wise in refusing to be a tyrant. And he adds that Periander, who is afflicted with the disease of despotism, is actually making fair progress towards recovery now that he is bringing about gatherings with men of sense.

But then it occurs to Thales that it is not appropriate to talk only about what can be demanded of the host. There should also be some preparations on the part of the guests. He then delivers a very Plutarchan speech on how a guest should put his character in order and be prepared to take part in serious or humorous conversations, and to listen and to talk on any topic that happens to be suggested.

With these straightforward preliminaries Plutarch sets the tone for the symposion. Thales, the only one of the Seven who is a philosopher, is the natural mouthpiece of Plutarch. He is to play a prominent part in the conversation, always expressing wise and sensible thoughts, for example when he reproves the young Alexidemus, who angrily complains of having been assigned an ignominious place at table. Thales censures this behaviour, telling him that his complaint means objecting to his neighbour rather than the host. But Plutarch is ironic at his own expense when he makes the young man retort:

“But I observe that you wise men are also eager for being honoured!”.

³² Plu., *Quaest. conv.* 686 C-D explicitly uses this term to denote a symposion where conversation on topics of philosophic inquiry is essential.

Plutarch frequently makes use of his sense of humour in the work, thus avoiding the imminent risk of appearing too didactic. Taken as a whole, his *Symposium* is a well composed mixture of seriousness and pleasantry, perhaps even more well-balanced than that of Xenophon. The merry-maker Aesop tells his fables, but the jesting replies and repartees of the guests contribute more to the humorous and friendly convivial atmosphere. As in Xenophon, seriousness receives a greater weight toward the end, but it is not concentrated to one long speech like that of Socrates in that work³³. The content of the work as a whole is more varied than in Xenophon.

This is owing to the different number of topics in the two *Symposia*. There is virtually only one in that of Xenophon, the question of what each is good at and is proud of, whereas in Plutarch we distinguish as many as eight, namely

1. the question of what an absolute ruler should be like,
2. the list of questions of the Ethiopian king, which are seriously answered by Thales,
3. the topic on democratic government,
4. the question of management of a home,
5. the question of the adequate acquisition of property,
6. the discussion on food, drink and diet,
7. the topic of drinking caused by Periander's toast to Chilon, and
8. the telling of wonderful stories about dolphins on the occasion of the rescue of Arion.

Most of these topics give rise to serious utterances and speeches as well as pleasantries. Consequently, the conversation as a whole is more substantial and rich in view-points in Plutarch's *Symposium* than in that of Xenophon.

As a matter of fact, there is a lot of ingredients in Plutarch's *Symposium* that have no correspondence in that of Xenophon or in any other known earlier symptic work. They are:

1. The long preliminaries with a varied conversation before the banquet.
2. The narrator who remains unknown until the end of the third chapter.
3. The incident with the "monster", the infant centaur.
4. The incident with the guest who leaves in anger.
5. The numerous (Plutarchan) apophthegmata interspersed in the talk.
6. Political questions are discussed over the cups.
7. Women are present during the drinking-party.
8. The extraordinary story of Arion is reported to the company.

On the other hand, we observe that some elements are absent. It is noticeable that entertainment is absent; only a flute-girl plays in connection with the libation. And there is no erotic mood in the company, either a genuinely erotic atmosphere as in Plato's *Symposium*, or a more or less artificial one as in Xenophon's work. And there is no heavy drinking. When Periander drinks to Chilon in a big cup, this does not lead up to a drinking-bout, but instead to a discussion on questions related to the wine, e.g., Pittacus' law

³³ Admittedly, there is also the short radical speech of Antisthenes in Ch. 4.

that prescribed a double penalty for a man who commits an offence when drunk than for a sober man, and it is emphasized that the task of Dionysus is not intoxication and gulping down wine but rather the friendly feeling, the longing and the association one with another. Thus the good-humoured atmosphere is preserved throughout the party, even when delicate political topics are discussed. Periander puts up rather well with listening to critical remarks on despotic rule. Only once (152 B) he sets a hard face. Seeing that, Aesop demonstrates sympathy with him and wisely reproves the critics, and after there has been some talk on other things, the tyrant reenters into the conversation (153 E), showing no resentment any more.

By these means of composition Plutarch succeeds on the one hand to show the natural reaction of the tyrant to the criticism, and then to suggest how irritation can, and should, be toned down. Plutarch simply does not accept bad feelings at a symposium. He gives an expressive proof of his attitude when he tells of how Thales blames the guest who takes offence at the placing at table and leaves before the beginning of the banquet. Plutarch certainly wanted to demonstrate his principle directly at the beginning that uncivil persons have no place at a symposium. It is noticeable that nobody asks the young man to stay.

Indeed, Plutarch does not conceal that he was writing his *Symposium* with an ethical intent. We may assume that he wanted to lodge a protest against the contemporary deranged convivial behaviour, and presumably his attack was not least directed against Roman drinking-parties. A depressing survey of the hard drinking in the Roman upper classes has been presented by Philip Stadter³⁴.

Moreover, looked upon as a literary work it seems likely that Plutarch intended his *Symposium* to be a counterbalance to the contemporary satirical descriptions of chaotic symposia. It appears that it was the predominating trend at the time to represent exactly these worst drinking-parties in sympotic works. Instead, Plutarch wanted to describe a symposium conducted in good order as an attempt at a revival of the Socratic kind of symposium. His decision to write it may well have been precisely a reaction to Petronius' work, published not much earlier. Plutarch's *Symposium* cannot be dated with any certainty, but it was most probably written in the 80ies or 90ies. In any case, it was written before the *Quaestiones convivales*³⁵.

This work is singular in all respects. Since it is the only one of its kind that is extant, we do not know if Plutarch had any model for it. We know that Didymus Chalcenterus wrote a work that carried the title Συμποσιακά or Σύμμικτα³⁶, but we have no reliable knowledge of its shape. However, to judge from what we know about the content and general nature of this writer's

³⁴ P. A. STADTER, 1999, pp. 488-9.

³⁵ See C. P. JONES, 1966, pp. 72-3.

³⁶ D. L. 5. 76 (V 5.6); Clem. Al. *Strom.* 4. 19. 618 P.; *EM.* 718.35; *St. Byz.* 305.1, 314.6, 452.8; Herenn. *Philo Ammon. De diff.* p. 35 Valck; *Et. Gud.* 124.2; *Eust.* 1788.53-54; and see J. MARTIN, 1931, pp. 172-3.

overwhelming authorship, of which we have rather scarce fragments, we may suppose that this work was of a scholarly type similar to that of Athenaeus. The fact that Plutarch considered it appropriate to elucidate the difference between the terms *συμποτικά* and *συμποσιακά* indicates that the latter term had not been used before in the sense he uses it. We are thus entitled to assume that with his *Συμποσιακά* he actually founded a new kind of convivial literature. He presents his program for this kind in the very first talk of the work where he expressly refers to Plato's and Xenophon's *Symposia*. He declares that in a company of educated men serious philosophic and scientific topics should be allowed to dominate to a large extent. It would seem that such a claim should have been unnecessary, especially for a philosopher, and a Platonist at that. Does it really mean that substantial discussions over the cups were rather uncommon at the drinking-parties of his time?

Plutarch declares that in a company of ordinary, less educated men different kinds of entertainment may be allowed to predominate. But in a mixed company the uneducated persons should keep quiet like mute consonants between sonant vowels. Drinking should be controlled, as it is in the *Quaestiones convivales*. And there entertainment occurs only as an exception³⁷, but it is frequently made the object of discussion, in which certain kinds of music and dancing are expressly condemned³⁸. More than anything else Plutarch makes the pantomime the target of his scorn, as in the outburst at the very end of the work.

Strong commitment to the amelioration of the symposion was then obviously a main incentive for Plutarch to write his *Symposium of the Seven Wise Men* and thus to revive the Socratic symposium. But this ethic incentive is no less obvious in the *Quaestiones convivales*. This being the case, it seems to me that the cause of origin of this work must be reconsidered. I will certainly not call in question that Plutarch actually composed it on the request of Sosius Senecio, but I think we should pose this question: Is it actually reasonable to think that it was *only* because of Sosius' desire that Plutarch decided to compose and publish his recollections of drinking-parties, either preserved in his own memory or in some kind of notes? I feel doubts about that. It is obvious that large parts of the *Quaestiones convivales* are based on Plutarch's own memories. Now, if he had actually made some notes of the main features of his symposia, as to place, time, occasion, participants, subjects discussed etc., should we imagine that he made these notes only for his private use, as a kind of diary, with no intention to use the material for publication? I venture to say that this is highly improbable. I dare to suggest that Plutarch was actually prepared to publish at least part of the material, and that he communicated his plans to his old companion at many symposia, Sosius Senecio. It will have been quite natural for Plutarch to do that, and for Sosius gladly to commend the publication.

What I argue, then, is that it was Plutarch himself who got the idea of writing a series of short symposiac texts based in part on his own

³⁷ As in *Quaest. conv.* VII 5.

³⁸ E.g., *Quaest. conv.* VII 8.

remembrances and notes and in addition on collections of *Problemata* and *Zetemata* and a great number of other sources. The result was a pioneer work of a new kind within the genre of symposium. Presumably, Plutarch got a vision of this new kind of convivial writing from his own experiences of symposia characterized by conversation on subjects of value over the cups in a friendly environment.

It appears as probable, then, that Plutarch produced his convivial writings in two separate steps. First he decided to write a truly Socratic symposium with the aim to revive this kind. The result was the *Septem Sapientium convivium*. Then, in the course of time, he got the idea of a new kind of sympotic writing, inspired by his own experiences, and with the aim to propagate these to wider circles of educated people. The result was the Συμποσιακά. With this innovative work he actually laid the basis for the possible development of a new branch within the genre of symposium. But unfortunately, his work was not followed by others of similar kind. The writings of Athenaeus, Macrobius, Apuleius or Gellius have a quite different character and are not properly symposiac writings.

And in addition the satiric Menippean tradition was not broken, as Plutarch might have hoped, but instead was continued not much later by Lucian, and then by Julian the Emperor.

The place of Plutarch in the history of the genre of symposium therefore stands out as virtually exceptional. His convivial works are singular for three reasons:

1. The revival of the Socratic symposium,
2. The founding of the new genre of Συμποσιακά aiming at a close combination of education and amusement, and
3. The ethical purpose displayed in both of these convivial writings.

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SECTION 1

Philosophical and Literary Contexts of the *Symposium*

(Página deixada propositadamente em branco)

TRABAJOS Y DÍAS COMO HIPOTEXTO DE LAS OBRAS SIMPOSÍACAS DE PLUTARCO

JOSÉ ANTONIO FERNÁNDEZ DELGADO
Universidad de Salamanca

Abstract

After analyzing the influence of the Hesiodic *Theogony* on all of Plutarch's work in a former paper (J. A. Fernández Delgado, 2007), the study of the quotations of *Works and Days* just in the sympotic works by Plutarch is justified because, firstly, the number of these quotations throughout the whole Plutarchan corpus is so high that a complete approach to them would vastly exceed the limits of a paper; secondly, the number of these quotations in the sympotic works by Plutarch is not only relatively abundant, but it sometimes affects the treatment of organizational aspects of the symposium or illustrates a question as inherent to it as wine is; finally, such an important "question" as the first of the ninth and last book of the "convivial" ones deals with "On verse quotations made opportunely or inopportunely", as if it were indeed a programme of our research, and two quotations from *Works and Days* respectively open and close the chapter. Those aspects of the quotations are dealt with in this paper as well as their different uses in each of the two sympotic Plutarchan works, their functional classification, and their greater or lesser degree of intertextual "tension", in the sense of their relative distance from the Hesiodic statement.

1. Si en un trabajo anterior de extensión similar al presente he podido abordar el estudio de la relación intertextual entre la *Teogonía* hesiódica y el conjunto de la obra plutarquea¹, el análisis de la presencia de *Trabajos y Días* solamente, en el marco de las piezas simposíacas de Plutarco, condicionado por la temática del presente congreso, se justifica en primer lugar por el elevado número de citas de este poema hesiódico en la obra del Queronense en general, proporcionalmente mayor incluso que el de las citas homéricas, que son con mucho las más numerosas². De hecho el número de pasajes de *Teogonía* citados a lo largo de la obra de Plutarco – en realidad a lo largo de *Moralía*, pues en *Vitae* no se registra ninguna – es de 18 ó 19 según los cálculos de Helmbold & O'Neil³, aunque tres de ellos son evocados dos o tres veces; el número de citas de *Trabajos y Días* en sus obras simposíacas solamente, asciende a 24. De ellas curiosamente corresponden la mitad al *Banquete de los Siete Sabios* y la mitad a *Cuestiones Simposíacas*, si bien es cierto que dos de estas últimas (*Mor.* 692B: VI 7 y *Mor.* 701D: VII 3) podrían referirse al mismo pasaje hediódico (*Op.* 368 s.) y la extensión de las obras es de 105 (*Mor.* 146B-164D) y 812 (*Mor.* 612C-748D) parágrafos de la paginación de Estéfano respectivamente, con lo que el índice de frecuencia de las citas es aproximadamente de 8:1 a favor de *Banquete*.

¹ J. A. FERNÁNDEZ DELGADO, 2007.

² Cf. W. C. HELMBOLD & E. O'NEIL 1959, s. v. Hay que tener en cuenta, no obstante, que la mayoría de las citas de *Trabajos y Días* provienen del *Comentario* que Plutarco le ha dedicado. Cf. también la selección de citas hesiódicas de Plutarco analizadas por A. PÉREZ JIMÉNEZ, 2004.

³ Idem.

2. El carácter de las citas, por el contrario, es muy distinto en una y otra obra, y no sólo por el hecho de que las de la primera se muestran acordes con el contenido, más discursivo y menos simposial, de la obra, mientras que las de la segunda tienen mucho más que ver con su ambiente propiamente simposiaco y los elementos característicos de este, su organización, la comida y la bebida, y otros temas típicos de conversación del banquete.

2. 1. Las primeras se concentran todas al final del cap. 13 (*Mor.* 156E: *Op.* 744) y al final del cap. 14 (las once restantes), de los 21 de que consta el opúsculo; las segundas, en proporción mucho menor (y todavía más si se comparan con las citas homéricas, las de la tragedia o las de Platón), se distribuyen, no obstante, aquí y allá, más o menos regular y parsimoniosamente a lo largo de sus IX “libros” con sus diez o más cuestiones cada uno (el IX contiene quince cuestiones), aun cuando las cuatro últimas cuestiones del libro IV no se nos hayan conservado, siendo las únicas excepciones dignas de nota la concentración de cuatro citas en el libro VII (cuestiones 2, 3, 4 y 6) y de tres en el libro IX (cuestiones 1 y 2), a las cuales hay que sumar, cosa que no sucede en *Banquete* (donde no hay ninguna otra cita hesiódica segura⁴), la presencia de tres citas de *Teogonía* en la cuestión 14, otra en la cuestión 15, más otra del fr. 9 M.-W. (*Eeas*) en esta misma cuestión⁵.

2. 2. De las citas de *Trabajos* en *Banquete*, a excepción de la primera (*Mor.* 156E: *Op.* 744), que se aplica a una acción tan típicamente simposiaca cual es la prohibición hesiódica de poner la enocoe sobre la cratera de vino, y de la última (*Mor.* 158B), que sirve para dar un quiebro al tema tratado calificando al contertulio Esopo de discípulo de Hesíodo con mayor derecho que Epiménides de Creta, al hacerle heredar de la fábula hesiódica del halcón y el ruiseñor (*Op.* 203-212) toda su sabiduría fabulística, las diez restantes se aplican al tema de la dieta, ya sea en la forma de alimentación dietética practicada por Epiménides (*Mor.* 157E: *Op.* 41), ya sea como frugalidad alimenticia (*Mor.* 157E: *Op.* 45 y *Op.* 46) o directamente como medicina (*Mor.* 158B: las siete citas restantes, todas comprendidas entre *Op.* 559 sqq. y *Op.* 750). De ellas solo las cuatro primeras reproducen más o menos literalmente el verso (*Mor.* 157E: *Op.* 41 y *Mor.* 157F: *Op.* 46) o al menos la expresión clave (*Mor.* 156E: *Op.* 744 y *Mor.* 157F: *Op.* 45) del correspondiente pasaje de *Trabajos* y *Días*, las ocho restantes son solamente alusiones⁶, de localización a menudo no unívoca, referidas a la dieta médica, con excepción de la última⁷.

⁴ El par de hexámetros atribuidos a Hesíodo en *Sept. sap. conv.* 10 (*Mor.* 154A) y no localizados en la obra hesiódica conservada, levemente modificados son puestos en boca de Homero en el *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi* 100, que, en términos no concordantes con los de Plutarco, se refiere como aquel a la participación de Hesíodo en los juegos fúnebres en honor de Anfídamante, episodio recordado nuevamente en *Quaest. conv.* V 2 (*Mor.* 675A), según luego veremos.

⁵ Sobre la distribución de las citas y su naturaleza en la obra de Plutarco cf. E. BOWIE, 2008.

⁶ De acuerdo con la clasificación formal de la cita establecida por J. M. DÍAZ LAVADO, 1994 a partir de otras clasificaciones anteriores (J. ANDRIEU, 1948; J. BOMPAIRE, 1958, 382-404; S. MORAWSKI, 1970; A. COMPAGNON, 1979; G. D'IPPOLITO, 1985).

⁷ Dice Plutarco por boca de Cleodoro (*Mor.* 158B): “Hesíodo tenía conocimientos de

Las citas de *Trabajos* en *Cuestiones Convivales*, en cambio, proceden de un espectro de pasajes del poema mucho más amplio y de ellas la mitad se aplican a aspectos organizativos del simposio (I 2, *Mor.* 618F: *Op.* 26; VII 4, *Mor.* 703D: *Op.* 748; VII 6, *Mor.* 707C: *Op.* 342) o a un elemento tan inherente al mismo como es el vino (III 9, *Mor.* 657D: *Op.* 464; VI 7, *Mor.* 692B: *Op.* 368; VII 3, *Mor.* 701D: *Op.* 368), y la otra mitad se aplica a temas de discusión propios del banquete (VII 2, *Mor.* 701B “De quién es el lanzacuernos en Platón”: *Op.* 471; VIII 5, *Mor.* 725D “De por qué los navegantes se proveen de agua del Nilo”: *Op.* 595) y más particularmente a cuestiones escolástico-literarias (V 2, *Mor.* 675A: “De que era antiguo el certamen de poesía”: *Op.* 654 sqq.; IX 1, *Mor.* 736E y 737C “Sobre las citas de versos hechas oportuna o inoportunamente”: *Op.* 11 y 763, la única “cuestión convival” que se sirve de dos citas de *Trabajos y Días*; IX 2, *Mor.* 738A “De cuál es la causa por la que la alfa es la primera de las letras”: *Op.* 405).

Frente al tipo de cita alusiva predominante en *Banquete*, aquí prevalece la cita literal, ya sea de versos enteros o casi enteros (*Mor.* 725D: *Op.* 595, *Mor.* 736E: *Op.* 11) o de amplias partes de versos (*Mor.* 703D: *Op.* 748, *Mor.* 707C: *Op.* 342, *Mor.* 737C: *Op.* 763), o bien la leve paráfrasis, de todo o casi todo un verso (*Mor.* 618F: *Op.* 26, *Mor.* 657D: *Op.* 464, *Mor.* 701D: *Op.* 368) o de partes de verso (*Mor.* 701B: *Op.* 471), mientras que la cita compendiaria (*Mor.* 692B: *Op.* 368, *Mor.* 738A: *Op.* 405) o la alusión (*Mor.* 675A: ¿*Op.* 654 sqq.?) son menos frecuentes.

2. 3. Por lo que respecta a un aspecto de la cita no menos importante que el de su morfología, que es el de la función que esta desempeña en el texto receptor, las diferencias entre *Banquete* y *Cuestiones Convivales* en relación con las citas de *Trabajos* también son notables. En la primera de las obras, a pesar de la importante diferencia morfológica entre las cuatro primeras citas y las ocho alusiones restantes, según hemos dicho, todas ellas desempeñan una función esencialmente erudita, según la cual la opinión de Hesíodo es mencionada como punto de referencia para la propia argumentación⁸. Es más, el afán de remitir a Hesíodo los principios de argumentación fuerza a Plutarco, por un lado, a establecer a veces en la citación a modo de retruécanos que aparentan contradecir la opinión hesiódica, como en *Mor.* 156E, donde al tipo habitual de banquete, en el que *Trabajos* 744 exhorta a “no posar la enocoe sobre la cratera”, contraponen el banquete de los Sabios en los siguientes términos: “las Musas, poniendo en medio de vosotros la palabra cual cratera de sobrio contenido,...suscitan, fomentan y reparten amabilidad, dejando que la jarra permanezca quieta la mayor parte del tiempo “sobre la cratera”, algo que Hesíodo prohibió en reuniones de hombres más capaces de beber que de dialogar”⁹; o en *Mor.* 157F, donde la cita de parte del v. 45 y todo el v. 46 de

medicina, pues es evidente que no habla a la ligera y sin experiencia sobre la dieta, de la mezcla del vino, del valor del agua, del baño de las mujeres, del momento adecuado para las relaciones sexuales y de cómo se ha de sentar a los recién nacidos”.

⁸ Cf. J. M. DÍAZ LAVADO, 1994, p. 694.

⁹ αἱ Μοῦσαι καθάπερ κρατήρα νηφάλιον ἐν μέσῳ προθέμεναι τὸν λόγον, ᾧ πλεῖστον

Trabajos, que Hesíodo remite a la Edad de Oro, en que no había necesidad de trabajar, es contrapuesta a la refinada elaboración de los digamos complejos vitamínicos mediante el siguiente juego de palabras, fuente de dificultades todavía hoy no resueltas en la transmisión del texto: “¿Cómo entonces en Hesíodo no estará puesto “el timón al humo” y “se acabarían los trabajos de los bueyes y los sufridos mulos”, si ha de ser necesaria tanta preparación?”¹⁰. Por otro lado, la cita del v. 41 de *Trabajos* “cuán gran provecho hay en malva y asfódelo”¹¹ es sucesivamente sometida a una triple interpretación – y con ello puesta implícitamente de manifiesto la riqueza y complejidad del texto hesiódico – por parte de los sabios simposiastas Solón, Periandro y Anacarsis, de los cuales para el primero es el germen de la particular dieta alimenticia seguida por Epiménides de Creta, para el segundo recomendación de sobriedad y frugalidad en la alimentación y para el tercero alabanza de sus propiedades salutíferas (tesis apoyada a continuación por Cleodoro mediante la cita de la serie de alusiones de *Trabajos* en relación con los conocimientos médicos de Hesíodo). En tercer lugar, una vez sobrepasado el umbral de la primera cita del poema (cap. 13, *Mor.* 156E: *Op.* 744), aplicada al carácter especial del presente simposio, todas las demás (cap. 14, *Mor.* 157E-158B) se ensartan en un anillo compositivo que comienza haciendo a Epiménides discípulo de Hesíodo y, tras el despliegue de referencias de su poema al tema objeto de discusión, a través de la última cita acaba concediéndole ese honor en mayor medida a Esopo por su deuda para con este en una faceta distinta y no menos brillante de su saber, la fábula (τῆς καλῆς ταύτης καὶ ποικιλίης καὶ πολυγλώσσου σοφίας, como la califica Cleodoro).

La función de las citas de *Trabajos* en *Cuestiones Convivales* es mucho más variada que en la otra obra, hasta el punto de que su casuística comprende las tres clases a las que básicamente puede reducirse la tipología funcional de la cita¹² y de las cuales en *Banquete* no se constata más que el tipo erudito; a saber, y aun con la dificultad que supone encasillar un tipo de intertexto en el que generalmente más de una función se halla presente al mismo tiempo¹³, citas ornamentales (dos: *Mor.* 657D, 701B) y, dentro de las citas del tipo llamado lógico por su implicación en el discurso del texto receptor, citas de autoridad (seis: *Mor.* 618F, 692B, 703D, 707C, 725D, 737C) y citas eruditas (cuatro: *Mor.* 675A, 701D, 736E, 738A). Tal diversificación con respecto a *Banquete* alcanza

ἡδονῆς ἅμα καὶ παιδιᾶς καὶ σπουδῆς ἔνεστιν, ἐγείρουσι τούτῳ καὶ κατάρδουσι καὶ διαχέουσι τὴν φιλοφροσύνην, ἕωσαι τὰ πολλὰ τὴν ‘οἰνοχόην’ ἀτρέμα κείσθαι ‘κρητῆρος ὑπερθεν,’ ὅπερ ἀπηγόρευσεν Ἡσίοδος ἐν τοῖς πίνειν μᾶλλον ἢ διαλέγεσθαι δυναμένους.

¹⁰ Manteniendo el texto transmitido por la mayoría de los mss. se puede entender que el dicho hesiódico de la malva y el asfódelo es equiparado, como sinónimo de sobriedad, al tiempo de la Edad de Oro, en el que se colgaba el timón del carro por no haber necesidad de trabajar, contraponiendo hiperbólicamente esa situación a la laboriosidad requerida por la fabricación de los fármacos dietéticos.

¹¹ Ὅσον ἐν μαλάχῃ τε καὶ ἀσφοδέλω μέγ’ ὄνειαρ. El verso ha sido privado por Plutarco de su negación inicial para adaptarlo al contexto.

¹² Cf. J. M. DÍAZ LAVADO, 1994, pp. 693 sqq.

¹³ Ibidem, p. 691.

también a las citas de versos enteros o secciones importantes de versos, que, para empezar, aquí son la mayoría y no solo las dos de la otra obra, y de ellas:

Mor. 618F: *Op.* 26 πτωχὸς γὰρ πτωχῶ <φθονέει> καὶ αἰοιδὸς αἰοιδῶ “el mendigo envidia al mendigo y el aedo al aedo”

desempeña principalmente una función de autoridad (aparte de ornamental y erudita), como justificación de la actitud del simposiarco (Lamprias, el hermano de Plutarco), quien se propone colocar a los comensales por rasgos complementarios de su carácter o condición e impidiendo reclinarsse juntos a los de una misma profesión (maliciosamente ejemplificada con “al sofista...con un sofista y al poeta con un poeta”) para evitar fricciones.

Mor. 657D: *Op.* 464 ἀλεξιάρην παίδων εὐκηλήτειραν “ahuyentadora de males y contentadora de niños”

cita esencialmente ornamental (además de erudita) trasladada de su aplicación hesiódica al rastrojo, a la mezcla de dos partes de agua con tres de vino “la más musical,...adormecedora y quitapenas”.

Mor. 701B: *Op.* 471 εὐθημοσύνην ἀρίστην “(no encuentran) la mejor disposición”

cita entre ornamental y de autoridad de la segunda mitad pospentemímera del verso, declinada, que Plutarco aplica a las semillas que al arrojarlas chocan con los cuernos de los bueyes y no se entierran, y Hesíodo predica en positivo del ocultamiento de la semilla para que no la coman los pájaros, dato del texto hesiódico que Plutarco deja inferir a sus cultos lectores.

Mor. 701D: *Op.* 368 s. ἀρχομένου πίθου καὶ λήγοντος ἐμπορεῖσθαι, μεσόθι δὲ φεῖδεσθαι, “hartarse cuando se empieza y termina la tinaja, y economizar a la mitad”

desempeña una función básicamente erudita (además de ornamental) frente a la cual se establece una aparente polémica (que en el fondo no es tal, puesto que se trata de aspectos distintos del mismo asunto) por boca del suegro de Plutarco, Alexión, el cual sostiene sobre la calidad del vino la opinión contraria, es decir, que el vino mejor es el del medio de la barrica.

Mor. 703D: *Op.* 748 ἀπὸ χυτροπόδων ἀνεπιρρέκτων “de marmitas sin consagrar”¹⁴

cita entre erudita y de autoridad de cierta prohibición hesiódica para explicar cómo las relaciones de agradecimiento y comunicación deben tenerse no solo entre los humanos sino también con los seres inanimados.

Mor. 707C: *Op.* 342 Τὸν φιλέοντ’ ἐπὶ δαῖτα καλεῖν “invita al banquete al que te quiere”

cita de autoridad aplicada a la desaprobación de la costumbre de que los invitados llamados sombras acudan acompañando a otros invitados.

Mor. 725D: *Op.* 595 κρήνης δ’ ἀενάου καὶ ἀπορρύτου ἢ τ’ ἀθόλωτος “de una fuente sempiterna y continua que esté limpia”

cita de autoridad y erudita aplicada a la explicación de cómo el agua quieta es más fácilmente corruptible, por la tierra que acumula, que el agua corriente.

¹⁴ Amplia porción del verso, no intercesural.

Mor. 736E: *Op.* 11 Οὐκ ἄρα μῶνον ἔην Ἐρίδων γένος “Sin duda no fue uno solo el linaje de las Disputas”

cita fundamentalmente erudita, cantada intencionadamente para abrir la tertulia simposiaca subsiguiente al banquete con el que Amonio, el maestro de Plutarco, agasajó a los efebos y profesores de cierta escuela ateniense, los cuales se picaron entre sí.

Mor. 737C: *Op.* 763 φήμη δ’ οὐ τις πάμπαν ἀπόλλυται “Ningún rumor muere totalmente”

cita de autoridad en la cual cierto senador poco sensible basa su exhortación a Casio Longino, a quien le había llegado el rumor de que había muerto su hijo, a no desdeñar el chisme.

La diversificación alcanza también a los pocos casos de fuerte paráfrasis y de alusiones, muchas menos que en *Banquete*: *Mor.* 675A (*Op.* 654 sqq.), alusión a los juegos de Anfidamante como mero testimonio erudito; *Mor.* 692B (*Op.* 368), alusión con función de autoridad en pro de la tesis de que no hay que filtrar el vino, sino beberlo directamente de la tinaja; *Mor.* 738A (*Op.* 405), paráfrasis con función erudita del verso 405 de *Trabajos* Οἶκον μὲν πρῶτιστα γυναικὰ τε βοῦν τ’ ἀροτῆρα, al cual, como en algún otro caso mencionado, aparentemente contradice por mor de la explicación de que la alfa es la primera de las letras porque así lo dispuso su inventor, el fenicio Cadmo, dado que los fenicios llamaban así al buey, “al que consideraban no la segunda ni la tercera de las cosas necesarias, como Hesíodo, sino la primera”.

3. Ahora bien, independientemente de las importantes diferencias observadas entre *Banquete* y *Cuestiones Convivales* en el grado de apropiación de *Trabajos* como hipotexto, si no más numerosa sí más regular en su distribución, así como más extensa y detallada, a la par que mucho más diversificada, tanto en su morfología como en su función, en la segunda de las piezas simposiacas con respecto a la primera, hay algunos aspectos del uso de las citas en los que ambas obras muestran una cierta coincidencia.

3. 1. El primero se refiere al ya apuntado gusto por el juego de palabras aparentemente polémico que se observa en la introducción de algunas de las citas hesiódicas de *Banquete* mencionadas (*Mor.* 156E: *Op.* 744, *Mor.* 157F: *Op.* 45 s.) y que, lejos de cualquier intento de desmarcamiento de la doctrina hesiódica, lo que hacen es confirmar su homenaje a esta mediante una vuelta de tuerca del ejercicio evocador; algo así encontramos en la citación de *Op.* 368 s. (“Hartarse cuando se empieza y se termina la tinaja...”) en *Cuestiones Convivales*, *Mor.* 701D, la cual es recusada con el argumento de que lo mejor del vino es lo del medio: pero la recusación es puesta en boca del suegro de Plutarco (mencionado solo aquí por el autor), del cual dice este que se mofaba de Hesíodo por ello, sin darse cuenta, podemos añadir nosotros, de algo de lo que sin duda Plutarco sí se daba cuenta y es que el dicho hesiódico no se refiere a la calidad del vino, sino que funciona como metáfora del ahorro¹⁵; parece ser,

¹⁵ Como bien ha explicado Plutarco en su *Comentario a Trabajos y Días*, ad loc. y pace Teodorsson y los comentaristas antiguos *Geop.* VII 6, 8 y *Macrob. Sat.* VII 12, 13, que no lo han

pues, una refutación sarcástica y de ahí que el autor termine diciendo “dejemos en paz a Hesíodo”; o en la citación de *Op.* 405 en *Mor.* 738A, donde, para enfatizar que los fenicios consideraban al buey la primera de las cosas necesarias, hace una *recusatio* sesgada (“no la segunda ni la tercera de las cosas necesarias, como Hesíodo”) y en todo caso deudora de la rotunda y no incompatible declaración hesiódica “la primera cosa, casa, mujer y buey de arada”.

3. 2. Un segundo punto de coincidencia en el manejo de las citas entre las dos obras simposíacas en estrecha relación con este es el procedimiento de citación en general, el cual constituye uno de los rasgos definitorios en la caracterización de las citas como hecho de intertextualidad¹⁶. A diferencia de lo que ocurre, sin ir más lejos, con las citas plutarqueas de un autor nada dudoso de la estima del Queronense como es Homero, a juzgar por el ejemplo de *De audiendis poetis*, donde de unos 136 casos solamente 12 se hacen acompañar por el nombre del poeta o por una perífrasis del mismo (en dos casos)¹⁷, las citas de *Trabajos* en *Banquete* son todas introducidas bajo la mención del nombre de Hesíodo, ya se trate de las cuatro citas literales o ligeramente parafrásticas (*Mor.* 156E-157F), o bien del bloque de alusiones subsiguiente (*Mor.* 158B), de modo que el número no elevado de citas se ve de alguna forma compensado por la memoria expresa (probablemente más necesaria en este caso que en el de Homero) que Plutarco hace de las enseñanzas del poema.

De las doce citas de *Trabajos* diseminadas a lo largo de *Cuestiones Convivales*, solamente tres son inidentificadas, y para eso la segunda de ellas (*Mor.* 675E), una alusión erudita a los juegos de Anfídamante que se supone es cita-testimonio de *Op.* 654 sqq., no menciona a Hesíodo pero añade que este y Homero, según una fuente no hesiódica¹⁸, tomaron parte en aquellos; la primera (*Mor.* 618F) y la tercera (*Mor.* 737C) son sendos hexámetros (el segundo no completo) de las secciones inicial y final del poema de “Trabajos” propiamente dicho, sumamente sonoros y lo suficientemente bien conocidos probablemente para poder halagar los conocimientos del lector plutarqueo sin necesidad de proporcionarle más datos; eso mismo se deduce de los términos en que es introducido el segundo hexámetro por el senador que lo pronuncia (“como si no supieses y hubieses leído eso de que...”), términos que también indican que la fuente es escrituraria (y no de tradición oral, en el caso de una supuesta proverbialización del verso). Otras cuatro citaciones (*Mor.* 657D, 701B, 701D y 738A) mencionan el nombre de Hesíodo (o el adjetivo derivado, en *Mor.* 657D) en términos algo más que neutros, si bien su triple mención en *Mor.* 701D y su mención en *Mor.* 738E son aparentemente polémicas, como hemos dicho. De las cinco citaciones restantes dos se confían abiertamente a la autoridad hesiódica (*Mor.* 692B “como recomendaba Hesíodo” y *Mor.* 707C “obedeciendo principalmente a Hesíodo”), las otras tres además la ensalzan

entendido así, cf. S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1996, comm. ad loc.

¹⁶ Cf. J. M. DÍAZ LAVADO, 1994, pp. 684 sqq. Sobre las citas como elemento intertextual cf. N. PIÉGAY-GROS, 1996, pp. 45 sqq., 95 sqq. y bibliografía citada *supra* en n. 6.

¹⁷ Cf. J. M. DÍAZ LAVADO, 1994, p. 684.

¹⁸ *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi* 60 sqq.

en términos que conocemos por su empleo con estructuras retórico-literarias afines a la cita, como la *chreía*, la sentencia o la propia fábula¹⁹, elogiando la última citación, en lugar de al autor, el comienzo propiamente dicho del poema (*Mor.* 703D “con razón Hesíodo no permite”, *Mor.* 725D “hermosamente Hesíodo alabó”, *Mor.* 736E “el principio de los *Trabajos*...lo alabó como muy adecuado al momento”).

3. 3. Precisamente esta última cita se halla íntimamente ligada al tercer punto de afinidad, de orden compositivo y semántico, que puede observarse entre las dos obras plutarqueas al respecto, por encima de sus diferencias. Ya hemos dicho cómo la primera cita de *Trabajos* en *Banquete* se refiere al tipo de simposio, en este caso el de los Sabios, y la última ensalza el valor educativo-literario del poema hesiódico a través de la fábula, aun cuando la ubicación de las citas en la pieza plutarquea no coincide con su comienzo y final, sino que se agolpan en dos capítulos centrales de esta. De un modo paralelo, aunque en este caso dispersas a lo largo de los Libros I al IX y último de las *Cuestiones Convivales*, la primera cita de *Trabajos* en esta obra se refiere a la colocación de los simposiastas en el banquete y las tres últimas, correspondientes a las Cuestiones 1 y 2 del Libro IX y último, pueden calificarse, como su homóloga de *Banquete*, de educativo-literarias. Con lo cual la aplicación de dichas citas tanto en una como en la otra obra parece seguir una trayectoria que comienza evocando el simposio de eruditos, recorre los diversos temas o “cuestiones” tratados y termina con una alusión más o menos explícita al importante papel que las citas de *Trabajos* desempeñan no solo en estas obras de Plutarco sino en algo para nosotros y para él mismo mucho más trascendente, que es el sistema educativo y sociocultural en el que su producción literaria, y la propia técnica de la cita, en gran medida se inserta.

Las tres últimas citas de *Trabajos* en *Cuestiones Convivales*, en efecto, tienen lugar dos en la Cuestión primera y una en la Cuestión segunda de las quince de que, en lugar de las diez habituales, originariamente constaba, en razón de la importancia de su temática, el Libro IX, consagrado a las Musas, con cuyo número coincide y es eco de las conversaciones mantenidas en su fiesta ateniense; ya hemos dicho cómo, además de estas, la Cuestión decimocuarta del Libro, que es la propiamente dedicada al número de las Musas, contiene tres citas de *Teogonía* y la Cuestión decimoquinta una de *Teogonía* y otra de *Eeas*²⁰. La cita de la Cuestión segunda es aplicada, según dijimos, a la explicación cadmea de por qué la alfa es la primera de las letras, cuestión filológica, como un buen número de las del libro, suscitada en la fiesta de las Musas entre geómetras, gramáticos, rétores y músicos (*Mor.* 737D-E), es decir, entre los representantes de los cuatro pilares en los que se asentaba la educación intelectual griega²¹. Las dos citas de la Cuestión primera son la primera y la penúltima de una serie

¹⁹ Cf. J. A. FERNÁNDEZ DELGADO, 2007, p. 745 y n. 30.

²⁰ La nómina de las citas hesiódicas en esta obra se cierra con otra cita de *Teogonía* en la Cuestión quinta (*Mor.* 678F) más una cita de *Teogonía* y otra de la *Boda de Céix* (fr. 267 M.-W.).

²¹ Cf. H. I. MARROU, 1970, pp. 195-214; R. CRIBIÖRE, 2001, 185-230.

de nueve²² de las cuales la primera “Sin duda no fue uno solo el linaje de las disputas” (comienzo del poema de *Trabajos* propiamente dicho) constituye el tema del canto con que el músico Eratón da comienzo al simposio ofrecido por Amonio, el maestro de Plutarco, siendo estratego en Atenas, a los alumnos y profesores de las disciplinas indicadas, tras una prueba escolar exitosa, cuando la rivalidad entre los maestros se había puesto ya de manifiesto.

Alabado el verso por Amonio como muy adecuado al momento, a continuación este hizo recaer la conversación nada menos que “Sobre las citas de versos hechas oportuna o inoportuna”, consciente de que estas, nos informa el autor, tienen “no solo encanto (χάρις) sino utilidad (χρεία) a veces grande”, es decir, adelantando en muchos siglos la actual clasificación funcional de la cita en sus dos tipos fundamentales (de ornato y lógica)²³. El resto de las ocho citas aparte la segunda de *Trabajos* ya indicada (“Ningún rumor muere totalmente”, última gnóme de la parte del poema que precede a los *Días* y tándem simétrico por tanto de la otra cita hesiódica de la Cuestión IX 1 en cuanto a su ubicación no solo en esta sino también en el poema) ilustra la oportunidad o inoportunidad de las mismas poniéndolas en boca de dos rapsodos, del filósofo Anaxarco compañero de Alejandro Magno, de un niño de Corinto a quien el cónsul romano que destruyó la ciudad le mandó escribir un verso para averiguar qué niños libres sabían escribir, de la esposa de un actor dirigiéndose a este, de la hija de Pompeyo Magno leyéndosela a este por indicación de su profesor al regreso de aquel de la guerra, y de un asistente a una exhibición de un gramático en un teatro en Rodas respondiendo a su demanda de un verso. No solo los dos de *Trabajos* sino todos los ejemplos son a cual más ingeniosos, a la vez que una demostración brillante y compacta de la pericia con que Plutarco domina el arte de la cita, así como del grado de incidencia que esta presenta en la educación y en la vida escolar y social grecorromana al mismo tiempo.

4. Esta insistencia por parte de Plutarco en conectar las citas, y las citas de *Trabajos* en particular, con la escuela y las clases intelectuales, así como el amplio y rico despliegue no desde el punto de vista numérico sino de destrezas y estrategias en el manejo de las mismas en sus obras simposíacas, se entiende muy bien en un contexto educativo como aquel en el que se formó tanto Plutarco como sus lectores y oyentes, y del que, si no exactamente una teoría de la cita, sí conocemos la teoría de ejercicios prerretóricos, o *progymnasmata*, más o menos afines, como la *chreía*, la sentencia o la fábula²⁴. En el otro cabo de la etapa escolar del *grammatikós*, es decir, al comienzo de la equivalente a lo que es nuestra segunda enseñanza, estaba la lectura y asimilación de los grandes prosistas y poetas de la

²² Cuatro de Homero, una de una tragedia desconocida, otra del *Orestes* de Eurípides y otra de la *Electra* de Sófocles.

²³ Cf. J. M. DÍAZ LAVADO 1994, pp. 690 s.; J. BOMPAIRE, 1958, pp. 382-404: “Les citations”.

²⁴ Cf. Theón 62, 65, 70: L. SPENGLER (ed.), 1854, pp. 57-130; M. PATILLON & G. BOLOGNESI, 1997, L-LX.

historia de la literatura griega, entre los cuales Hesíodo era un puntal seguro en todas las listas canónicas²⁵, como atestigua asimismo el importante número de papiros, no solamente de *Trabajos*, conservados, algunos de ellos escolares²⁶. A ello hay que añadir el particular *feeling* que sin duda suscitó en el moralista de Queronea el poema gnómico de su paisano beocio, como demuestra el hecho de que Plutarco le haya dedicado un amplio comentario en cuatro libros²⁷, en cierta medida conservado por Proclo, Tzetzes y Moscópoulos.

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²⁵ Cf. R. CRIBIORE 2001, 197 s. Según Libanio, *Ep.* 1036, 4 “Homero, Hesíodo y los otros poetas” eran de lectura obligatoria para las personas educadas.

²⁶ *Ibidem* y cf. G. BASTIANINI & A. CASANOVA, 2008, p. 8.

²⁷ Gell. XX 8. El comentario plutarqueo de *Trabajos* y *Días*, cuya referencia aquí intenta servir solamente como ulterior argumento *in cauda* en pro del enorme interés de Plutarco en la obra del moralista paisano, es actualmente objeto de investigación específica por nuestra parte.

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MODERACIÓN EN EL SIMPOSIO EN SOBRE LA VIDA Y POESÍA DE HOMERO DE PSEUDO-PLUTARCO

JOSEFA FERNÁNDEZ ZAMBUDIO
Universidad de Murcia

Abstract

This study analyses the defense of moderation in eating and drinking in the *Essay on the Life and Poetry of Homer* ascribed to Plutarch, looking at the author's use of quotations from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Food and wine are considered necessary and beneficial but, when consumed to excess, can have adverse effects on human health. The text forms part of a well-known tradition, as is evidenced by parallels with ancient medicine and Plutarch himself.

Este estudio pretende analizar la defensa de la necesidad de moderación en la comida y bebida en *Sobre la vida y poesía de Homero* (Περὶ τοῦ βίου καὶ τῆς ποιήσεως τοῦ Ὀμήρου), atribuida a Plutarco. Para ello, se parte del uso de las citas de la *Iliada* y la *Odisea* del autor del tratado, que demuestra que los excesos tienen efectos adversos en la salud humana. Ilustramos la tradición en la que se encuadra esta idea a partir de los paralelismos con la medicina antigua y el propio Plutarco.

El interés del propio Plutarco por los estudios homéricos se demuestra en una obra de la cual desgraciadamente sólo conservamos algunos fragmentos, y que aparece en el catálogo de Lamprias como Ὀμηρικῶν μελετῶν βιβλία δ', los *cuatro libros de las Cuestiones Homéricas*. A pesar del atractivo que revisten estos fragmentos, no se corresponden con *Sobre la vida y poesía de Homero*, que no ha podido ser relacionada con ningún otro título plutarqueo y que, además, según demuestran estudios de lengua y estilo, se data a finales del siglo II d.C. y no fue escrita por el de Queronea¹. Eso no impide que el anónimo autor parezca conocer las ideas de Plutarco, y que se hayan señalado paralelismos que pueden deberse a préstamos tomados directamente de él². El autor de *Sobre la vida y poesía de Homero* es un *grammaticus*, un profesor, ya que el objetivo de la obra es demostrar la afirmación de que "todo está en Homero", que en los versos de la *Iliada* y *Odisea* ya encontramos todos los saberes.

En este interés tan propio del mundo antiguo por descubrir el "primero", el descubridor, el εὐρετής de cada aspecto de su cultura, Homero es el "inventor" por excelencia. Por ejemplo, aunque sea simplemente en germen, en él encontramos todos los géneros literarios griegos. Cualquier aspecto de la vida cotidiana se rastrea en el épico griego y, además, se llega más allá y, según una concepción trascendental, los versos homéricos esconden bajo su superficie enigmas. Esta idea aparece en la *Cueva de las ninfas* de Porfirio³,

¹ Cf. B. WEISSENBERGER, 1994.

² Coincidencias ya señaladas en G. N. BERNARDAKIS, 1896. Sobre las *Cuestiones Homéricas* y la *Vita Homeri*, cf. H. SCHRADER, 1899.

³ Edición de A. NAUCK, *Porphyrrii philosophi Platonici opuscula selecta, iterum recogn. Augustus Nauck*, Leipzig, 1872² (1860). Cf. A. BARCENILLA, 1968.

donde encontramos una doctrina metafísica y cósmica escondida tras los nueve elementos de la descripción de la cueva en el libro XIII de la *Odisea*⁴.

En el tratado *Sobre la vida y poesía de Homero* se estudia, en primer lugar, brevemente las tradiciones sobre la biografía del épico, para pasar a un análisis de su obra desde diferentes puntos de vista. Así, se observan las figuras retóricas, las particularidades de la lengua homérica, las diversas clases de discursos, y otras cuestiones que podemos denominar *varia*. En este apartado aparece la medicina, que es el tema que nos ocupa, y que se trata en los capítulos 200 y siguientes.

Homero no se ha limitado a un interés teórico, sino que también en su obra se encuentran referencias a la práctica médica, τὸ δὲ πρακτικὸν μέρος τῆς ἰατρικῆς⁵. En este ámbito, además de cómo ha de ser el ejercicio saludable⁶, Homero ha tratado la dietética, es decir, cómo y, sobre todo, cuánto, se ha de comer y beber.

El autor de *Sobre la vida y poesía de Homero* utiliza citas de la *Iliada* o de la *Odisea*⁷ para ilustrar los temas de los que se ocupa Homero en sus poemas. En los capítulos objeto de nuestro análisis (205 y 206), comienza Pseudo-Plutarco refiriéndose a la δῖαιτα, que sólo será saludable (ὕγιεινή) cuando sea λιτή. Los héroes homéricos no se interesan por la comida, se alimentan de carne cocida y no les gustan los grandes banquetes, pues son conscientes de la necesidad de moderación. Sin embargo, la excesiva frugalidad no es tampoco buena, pues sólo los dioses pueden comer sólo ambrosía. Los héroes, en cuanto mortales, necesitan la energía proporcionada por los alimentos: ἡ γαστήρ ἀεὶ δεῖται προληρώσεως.

Esta necesidad de llenar el estómago se concreta a través de algunos términos que encontramos en los ejemplos homéricos de textos de la *Odisea*: κελεύω, ἀνάγκη, πίμπλημι. Las dos citas para este pasaje pertenecen al libro VII, donde Ulises pide que le dejen cenar tranquilo antes de preguntarle quién es, según las leyes de la hospitalidad⁸:

ἀλλ' ἐμὲ μὲν δορπῆσαι εἶσατε κηδόμενον περ·
οὐ γάρ τι συγερῆ ἔπι γαστέρι κύντερον ἄλλο
ἔπλετο, ἢ τ' ἐκέλευσεν ἔο μνήσασθαι ἀνάγκη
(*Od.* 7.215-217)

ὥς καὶ ἐγὼ πένθος μὲν ἔχω φρεσίν, ἡ δὲ μάλ' αἰεὶ
ἐσθέμεναι κέλεται καὶ πινέμεν, ἐκ δέ με πάντων
ληθάνει, ὅσσ' ἔπαθον, καὶ ἐνιπλησθῆναι ἀνώγει.
(*Od.* 7.219-221)

⁴ En ella introduce Atenea a Ulises para transformarlo en pordiosero y tramar así la venganza contra los pretendientes.

⁵ *Vit. Hom.* 204.

⁶ En *Vit. Hom.* 207.

⁷ Sobre las citas de Homero en la Segunda Sofística, cf. J. F. KINDSTRAND, 1973; en Plutarco, cf. J. M. DÍAZ LAVADO, 2001.

⁸ Cf. A. MARCO PÉREZ, 2002.

Encontramos también en estos versos una referencia a πίνω, que Pseudo-Plutarco aprovecha para pasar a hablar de la bebida y de cómo precisa igualmente de moderación: se tiene que beber vino con mesura, pues el vino μέτριος es ωφέλιμος, beneficioso, pero si se bebe πολύς, será βλαβερός, peligroso.

En los poemas homéricos se describen varios beneficios proporcionados por el vino:

- Proporciona fuerza a los héroes. Esta afirmación se concreta en el tratado con la expresión δυνάμεως ποιητικός, apoyada por algunos términos de las citas homéricas: μένος, ἄξει, θαρσαλέον:

ἀνδρὶ δὲ κεκμηῶτι μένος μέγα οἶνος ἄξει
(*Il.* 6. 261⁹)

ὄς δέ κ' ἀνὴρ οἴνοιο κορροσάμενος καὶ ἐδωδῆς
ἀνδράσι δυσμενέεσσι πανημέριος πολεμίζῃ,
θαρσαλέον νύ οἱ ἦτορ ἐνὶ φρεσίν, οὐδέ τι γυῖα
(*Il.* 19. 167-170¹⁰)

- Ayuda a la φιλοφροσύνη, pero sólo cuando es ἡδύς. Pseudo-Plutarco recoge el verso que introduce las dos ocasiones en que Pontónoo prepara la mezcla del vino a instancias de Alcínoo.

ὥς φάτο, Ποντόνοος δὲ μελίφρονα οἶνον ἐκίρνα
(*Od.* 7. 182; 13. 53)

- Hasta puede curar, convertirse en una medicina. Así ocurre con el vino de Pramno, el que Macaón herido bebe en la tienda de Néstor¹¹.

Sin embargo, estos beneficios sólo se producen si está presente la moderación. Por ello, cuando el vino es fuerte y deja de ser ἡδύς y στυφώς, si es un vino σφοδρός y καρωτικός, se convierte en perjudicial. Este es el vino que Ulises da a Polifemo, y que le permite engañar y cegar al cíclope¹².

En resumen, el tema de este texto es la necesidad de moderación tanto en la dieta como al tomar vino: una dieta ligera es sana, pero comer no deja de ser una necesidad para el hombre, incluso si es un héroe homérico. Sólo los dioses se han librado de la esclavitud del estómago¹³. Por otra parte, el vino es

⁹ Hécuba ofrece vino a su hijo Héctor para aumentar su ardor, pero él lo rechaza, temiendo que tenga el efecto contrario, y le quite el que ya tiene. Pseudo-Plutarco sólo utiliza el consejo de Hécuba, “olvidando” citar también los temores del héroe troyano.

¹⁰ Ulises convence a Aquiles de la conveniencia de preocuparse de comer y beber antes de aprestarse al combate, pues el ayuno puede quitar vigor al guerrero. También en esta ocasión el autor obvia los reparos que expresa Aquiles.

¹¹ En *Iliada* 9. 639. Néstor saca de la batalla a Macaón y lo agasaja en su tienda. La esclava en realidad prepara un brebaje, añadiendo al vino de Pramno queso de oveja rallado y harina. El vino de Pramno también lo utiliza Circe en el libro X de la *Odisea* para que los compañeros de Ulises se olviden de su patria.

¹² En el libro IX de la *Odisea*.

¹³ Cf. el célebre verso de la *Teogonía* de Hesíodo, “ποιμένες ἄγραυλοι, κάκ' ἐλέγχεα, γαστέρες

perjudicial si se bebe de más, o si es un vino fuerte, pero siempre y cuando sea dulce y suave proporciona energía y valor, ayuda a la φιλοφροσύνη, e incluso puede curar a los enfermos.

La idea de la moderación, de la necesidad de un comportamiento μετριότης en todos los ámbitos de la vida se resume en la consigna “nada en demasía”, μηδὲν ἄγαν. Esta idea se aplica a la dieta, a los hábitos de comida y bebida, tanto en los textos médicos conservados como en el propio Plutarco. Se trata de una concepción que cuenta con una tradición bien conocida y por ello me limitaré a exponer algunas ideas generales y textos significativos, donde además de las correspondencias de contenido encontramos también un léxico similar al que aparece en *Sobre la vida y poesía de Homero*.

La medicina antigua se basa en la búsqueda del equilibrio en el cuerpo humano: las enfermedades se deben a excesos y la salud es el equilibrio entre todos los componentes¹⁴. En los textos científicos se estudia la dieta que cada enfermo debe seguir para recuperar la salud, y cuándo el vino es perjudicial, pero también encontramos remedios en los que el vino es uno de los ingredientes¹⁵. En el *Corpus Hippocraticum* ya tenemos un tratado que ha sido titulado *Περὶ διαίτης ὑγιεινῆς* y proporciona normas para la δίαίτα según el momento del año y el carácter de cada persona.

Se trata de la misma idea de la necesidad de una dieta sana y la moderación, que aparece en este texto del *Protréptico* de Galeno:

ὡς Κόροιβ<ος> ἀνοήτως κατεγνωνκότες. ὁ μὲν γὰρ ὑγιεινὴν δίαίταν ὑποτιθέμενος ἔλεγε πόνοι σιτία ποτά ὕπνοι ἀφροδίσια, πάντα μέτρια (17)

El de Queronea también participa de una tradición que era bien conocida en los círculos cultos de su época. Recordemos que en las *Vidas* la afición por la borrachera se tolera sólo cuando sus consecuencias se producen en la intimidad, pero es inadmisibles en la vida pública. Así, Alejandro es ποτικός (4.7), aunque se le defiende de su fama de bebedor porque no descuida los asuntos públicos¹⁶. Además, Plutarco se recrea en mostrar los efectos de los excesos del vino a través de anécdotas, y también trata el tema de la moderación teóricamente, como en este conocido texto del *De tuenda sanitate praecepta*¹⁷. Después de hablar someramente de la dieta, el de Queronea dirige su mirada a los líquidos, y más concretamente al vino:

πρὸς δὲ τὸν οἶνον ἅπερ Εὐριπίδης πρὸς τὴν Ἀφροδίτην διαλεκτέον

εἷς μοι, μέτριος δέ πως
εἷς, μηδ' ἀπολείποις

οἶνον” (26).

¹⁴ Cf. W. D. Smith, 1979.

¹⁵ Cf. J. JOUANNA, 1996.

¹⁶ C. ALCALDE MARTÍN, 1999.

¹⁷ Sobre la comida y la bebida en Plutarco cf. J. F. MARTOS MONTIEL, 1999.

καὶ γὰρ ποτῶν ὠφελιμώτατόν ἐστι καὶ φαρμάκων ἥδιστον καὶ ὄψων ἀσικχότατον, ἂν τύχη τῆς πρὸς τὸν καιρὸν εὐκρασίας μᾶλλον ἢ τῆς πρὸς τὸ ὕδωρ.

(*Mor.* 132B)

El tema de la necesidad de moderación reaparece en las *Quaestiones convivales* o *Charlas de sobremesa* a propósito de los usos convenientes en el banquete. Además, en el libro V la cuestión cuarta discute precisamente un verso homérico, relativo al vino que Aquiles ofrece a sus amigos en el libro IX. A pesar del desprecio por la comida y la bebida del que se hace eco *Sobre la vida y poesía de Homero*, como hemos visto, el héroe ofrece a sus mejores amigos un vino ζωρότερον κέραιε, un vino con una mezcla más fuerte. Aquiles tenía conocimientos de medicina y como tal sabía cuál era la importancia de la moderación en la dieta en ocasiones, como con los caballos enfermos, pero para recuperar el vigor tras pasar el día luchando, prefiere ofrecer un vino fuerte¹⁸:

Ἀχιλλεὺς τῶν θ' ἵππων πρὸς τὸν καιρὸν οἰκείως ἐπεμελεῖτο καὶ τῷ σώματι τὴν ἐλαφροτάτην διαίταν, ὡς ὑγιεινοτάτην ἐν τῷ σχολάζειν, παρεσκεύαζεν ἄνδρας δ' ἐν μάχῃ καὶ ἀγῶνι δι' ἡμέρας γεγεννημένους οὐχ ὁμοίως ἀξιῶν διαιτῶν τοῖς ἀργοῦσιν ἐπιτείνειν τὴν κρᾶσιν ἐκέλευσε.

(*Mor.* 678A 7-B 1)

La idea subyacente en *Sobre la vida y poesía de Homero* del vino como φάρμακον aparece desarrollada en la medicina y en Plutarco: el vino puede ser tanto un veneno como un remedio¹⁹. La diferencia estriba precisamente en cuál es la justa medida, en beber (y comer) con moderación. Del mismo modo que en *Sobre la vida...* se decía que el vino μέτριος es ὠφέλιμος, Galeno afirma que un modo de vida sano (ὑγιεινὴ διαίτα) incluye la moderación en todos los aspectos, incluidos la comida y la bebida (σιτία, ποτά). En las *Quaestiones* Aquiles cura a los caballos, así como Macaón se reconstituía con vino en la *Iliada* según Pseudo-Plutarco.

En conclusión, el texto que hemos presentado pertenece a una tradición que también encontramos en Plutarco y la medicina griega, y que en último lugar se relaciona con la famosa sentencia “nada en demasía”. Comer y beber es necesario, incluso tiene efectos beneficiosos, pero una cantidad excesiva es siempre perjudicial.

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¹⁸ S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1989-1996.

¹⁹ Cf. E. CALDERÓN DORDA, 1999.

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PLATO'S *SYMPOSIUM* AND PLUTARCH'S *ALCIBIADES*

TIMOTHY E. DUFF
University of Reading

Abstract

This paper examines Plutarch's exploitation of Plato's *Symposium* in chs. 4-7 of the *Life of Alcibiades*. It aims to demonstrate that the *Symposium* is much more than a "source" for the *Alcibiades*. Rather the *Alcibiades* invites an intertextual reading with the *Symposium*, and becomes more meaningful when read with the *Symposium* in mind. In particular, knowledge of the *Symposium* reveals how Plutarch has constructed Socrates' attitude to and relationship with Alcibiades as that of the ideal lover with his beloved.

Plato's *Symposium* offers perhaps the most vivid, and certainly the most influential, picture of Alcibiades to survive from classical antiquity. It is no surprise, then, that Plutarch should in his *Life of Alcibiades* draw heavily on it, as well as on other Platonic texts such as the *First Alcibiades* and *Republic* Book 6¹. A full analysis would attempt to trace Plutarch's use in this *Life* of all the Platonic texts; indeed it is the way the *Alcibiades* uses allusions to multiple Platonic texts, together with material drawn from non-Platonic sources, especially Thucydides and the rhetorical tradition, that makes it so rewarding and so complex. But the aims of this paper are more limited. I shall focus solely on the *Symposium* and shall attempt to show not only the depth of Plutarch's engagement with that text, especially in chs. 4-7, but also how the *Alcibiades* becomes richer and more meaningful if it is read with the *Symposium* in mind².

The importance of Alcibiades' relationship with Socrates and of the Platonic texts is made clear right at the start of the *Life*, where, after dealing briefly with Alcibiades' family, Plutarch makes the surprising claim that Alcibiades' fame was owed "in no small part" to Socrates' kindness to him; a little later he cites Plato as a source for the name of Alcibiades' tutor (1.3)³. In ch. 3 Plutarch mentions a scandalous story of Alcibiades' running away from Pericles' house to one of his lovers (3.1); the kind of precocious sexual behaviour exhibited there might suggest to readers the story of Alcibiades' failed seduction of Socrates in *Smp.* 218b-219d⁴. At any rate it provides a nice

¹ There are allusions to numerous other Platonic texts in the *Alcibiades*, including the *Phaedrus*, *Gorgias*, and *Apology*. Important discussions are in D. A. RUSSELL, 1966, pp. 39-41 (= repr. 1995, pp. 195-8); C. B. R. PELLING, 1996, pp. xlvii-xlix; 2005, pp. 116-25; D. GRIBBLE, 1999, pp. 270-6; T. E. Duff, 1999, pp. 224-7; and, on the use made of both Plato and other Socratic writers, F. ALESSE, 2005.

² Cf. C. B. R. PELLING, 2005, p. 125: "In *Alcibiades*, then, pervasive intertextuality with Plato lends depth and resonance to the sort of associations which we saw in Plutarch's other works, and draws the reader into tracing how rich is the possibility of learning from Socrates' example – and also how difficult it can be". Cf. also C. B. R. PELLING, 2008, p. 548.

³ The reference is to *Alc.* 1, 122b.

⁴ Alcibiades' reference to Marsyas, the inventor of the flute, in 2.6 may recall his comparison

link to the theme of the rivalry between Socrates and Alcibiades' other lovers, who compete for influence over him, which fills chs. 4-7 of the Life.

Plutarch begins by noting the strong contrast between the motivations of the two groups: they are "awestruck" (ἐκπεπληγμένοι) at his beauty⁵, whereas Socrates does not stop merely at such external attributes; indeed Socrates' love is evidence of Alcibiades' "potential for virtue" (τῆς πρὸς ἀρετὴν εὐφυΐας), which he could see "hinted at in his appearance and shining through". This contrast, between those interested in a beautiful boy for his looks alone and those interested in fostering his moral development, is central in Platonic and post-Platonic discussions of love, and exemplified in Socrates' behaviour to Alcibiades in the *First Alcibiades*, which is clearly in mind here⁶.

Plutarch now describes, in a passage heavily influenced by *Republic* 6, how Socrates tried to protect Alcibiades from the corrupting flatteries of his other lovers (4.1)⁷. Plutarch continues, giving Socrates motivation: "For" [sc. Socrates thought] fortune never so surrounded or fenced anyone off with so-called good things⁸ that he becomes invulnerable to philosophy and unreachable by words which have boldness and bite" (ὥστ' ἄτρωτον ὑπὸ φιλοσοφίας γενέσθαι καὶ λόγοις ἀπρόσιτον παρρησίαν καὶ δηγμὸν ἔχουσιν)⁹. The metaphor of biting to describe the effect of outspoken criticism, is known from elsewhere in Plutarch¹⁰. Its use here might make one think of the story of Alcibiades' literal biting of his opponent in a wrestling match in 2.2-3; this time it is he that is bitten, by philosophy. But it also draws on Alcibiades' claim in *Smp.* 217e-218a,

of Socrates to Marsyas in *Smp.* 215a-216c. The story of Alcibiades' killing one of his attendants (ἀκολουθούντων mss) or servants (ἀκολούθων Cobet) at a wrestling ground (3.1) might also bring to mind Alcibiades' wrestling with Socrates before his attempted seduction, as well as the attendant who used to accompany him on his meetings with Socrates (217a) and the ἀκόλουθοι mentioned at his entrance to the party (212c-d); cf. also the ἀκόλουθοι in Th. 6.28 who inform on Alcibiades' profanation of the Mysteries.

⁵ This recalls Alcibiades' words in *Smp.* 215d, where he declares that he and everyone else are awestruck (ἐκπεπληγμένοι) by Socrates' words; the interests of Alcibiades' lovers are in a less high-minded direction. There may also here be an allusion to the reaction of Charmides' admirers to his physical beauty (*Charm.* 154c), suggesting a parallel between Alcibiades and Charmides.

⁶ For Socrates as interested in improving Alcibiades' soul rather than merely possessing his body, see e.g. *Alc.* 1 131e; Aeschines, *Alc.* fr. VI A 53.26-27 Giannantoni = 11 Ditmar; cf. Plato, *Prt.* 309c. Xenophon states this as a general principle of Socrates in *Xen., Mem.* 4.1.2 and has Socrates himself argue that love of the soul is more noble than love of the body in *Xen., Smp.* 8.1-41.

⁷ See *Rep.* 491d-492a and 493e-5b: see below, nn. 9, 30, 35, 44, and C. B. R. PELLING, 1996, p. xlviij; 2005, pp. 120-1; T. E. DUFF, 1999, pp. 224-7; D. GRIBBLE, 1999, pp. 219-20, 272-3.

⁸ Τοῖς λεγομένοις ἀγαθοῖς; an allusion to *Rep.* 6: the philosophical nature is corrupted and diverted from philosophy by τὰ λεγόμεθα ἀγαθὰ, defined first as "beauty, wealth, strength of body, influential family connections in the city and all such things" (491c) and later as "wealth and all such paraphernalia" (495a).

⁹ Possibly also an allusion to *Smp.* 219e, where Alcibiades notes that Socrates was invulnerable (ἄτρωτος) to money; Socrates knows that *no-one* is invulnerable to the superior power of philosophy.

¹⁰ "Biting" παρρησία: *De aud.* 47a; *De adul.* 55c-d; 59d; 68f-69a; *Phoc.* 2.3; *Per.* 15.1 (with P. A. STADTER, 1989, ad loc.); *Praec. ger.* 810c; fr. 203 Sandbach.

that the effect of Socrates' words on him was worse than a snake-bite: only one who has been bitten by a snake can imagine the pain. "I have been bitten by a more painful creature and in the most painful way one could be bitten - in my heart or soul or whatever one should call it, wounded and bitten by the words of philosophy" (πληγείς τε καὶ δηχθεὶς ὑπὸ τῶν ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ λόγων). Such words, he declares, "adhere more fiercely than a viper, whenever they grip the soul of a young and not untalented (μὴ ἄφουός) man". Plato's *Alcibiades* goes on to appeal to his fellow-symposiasts, naming six of them, who had all experienced what he calls "philosophic madness and frenzy". Memory of that passage underlines how painful Alcibiades' experience of being exposed to Socrates' philosophic probing was. It also explains and lends more force to Plutarch's Socrates' belief that *no-one* is invulnerable to philosophy.

Plutarch now talks, in a passage enriched by further allusions to the *Republic*, of the efforts of Alcibiades' flatterers to prevent him from listening to Socrates, though in fact, despite this, Alcibiades did let Socrates approach him (4.2). Alcibiades, Plutarch continues, "listened to the words of a lover who was not hunting unmanly pleasure (ἡδονὴν ἄνανδρον) nor begging for kisses and touches . . ." (4.3). The insistence that Socrates was not interested in Alcibiades' body is probably meant to bring to mind Socrates' rebuffing of Alcibiades' sexual advances in the *Symposium*. The phrase "unmanly pleasure" recalls Alcibiades' wonder, after his rejection, at Socrates' "nature, self-control and manliness (ἀνδρείαν)" (*Smp.* 219d). It invokes a set of ideas, common in ancient thought, which associated love of pleasure with the feminine. Plutarch's words are perhaps not to be taken as implying a criticism of pederasty per se; rather the point here is about the *goal* for which a relationship with a boy is pursued: the courting of a free-born boy for sexual gratification alone, without any educational or moral intent, was in the Classical period, as in Plutarch's own, seen as unacceptable and had in fact been condemned in no uncertain terms by Pausanias in his speech in the *Symposium* (183d-185b). Socrates, then, was not interested in Alcibiades merely for physical pleasure; instead he wanted to improve Alcibiades morally. The claim that Socrates was not seeking "unmanly pleasure" is also a point about the *effects* of Socrates' love on Alcibiades. Socrates' love was not one that "unmanned" him, through encouraging soft-living, love of pleasure and luxury - the kind of things that his other lovers offered (cf. 6.1, πολλὰς ἡδονὰς ὑποβάλλουσιν). Rather, it toughened and hardened him. Plutarch will return to the hardening effect of Socrates' love in ch. 6, where he compares Socrates' treatment of Alcibiades, when he returns from his other lovers, to thrusting iron which has been softened by heat into cold water. He will also demonstrate in ch. 7, when he deals with Socrates and Alcibiades' service together on campaign, that Socrates' love really did encourage Alcibiades to be a man, to fight bravely in the battle-line and not shirk from danger¹¹.

¹¹ The notion that a lover might want to keep his beloved from being a man — a reversal of the usual justifications of pederasty for its educational benefits — is set out in Socrates' one-sided attack on love in his speech in *Phaedrus* 238e-241d: a lover will want to make his beloved

Plutarch is here, then, making explicit what emerges implicitly from Alcibiades' narrative in the *Symposium*: that Socrates' love, unlike that of his other suitors, neither sought pleasure as its goal nor unmanned its object. Instead, Plutarch continues, Socrates was a lover, ". . . who tried to expose the cracked elements of Alcibiades' soul and squeeze his empty and foolish pride" (ἐλέγχοντος τὰ σαθρὰ τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτοῦ καὶ πιεζοῦντος τὸν κενὸν καὶ ἀνόητον τῦφον). This is loosely based on *Smp.* 215c-216a, where Alcibiades speaks of the powerful effects of Socrates' λόγοι on him, which made him cry and reduced him to a feeling of inadequacy and shame, and implanted desires both to listen and to run away. The word ἐλέγχοντος is particularly appropriate for Socrates and suggests his question-and-answer method of teaching, which often resulted in the ignorance of his interlocutor being exposed, as it does to Alcibiades in the Platonic *First Alcibiades*¹². The wrestling metaphor implied in πιεζοῦντος (cf. 2.2) is also particularly appropriate; it brings to mind the wrestling of Socrates and Alcibiades in the *Symposium*, which Alcibiades hoped would lead to his seduction; instead of sex he gets a psychological going-over at Socrates' hands¹³.

Despite this rough treatment, Plutarch goes on, "Alcibiades thought that Socrates' business (πρᾶγμα) was in reality a service of the gods directed towards the care and salvation of the young" (4.4). The phrasing brings to mind, and implicitly refutes, the charges on which Socrates was tried and condemned, that he corrupted the young and denied the existence of the gods¹⁴; it also recalls Socrates' own claim in the *Apology*, "I think that there has never been a greater good in the city than my own service to the god" (*Ap.* 30a). But the word πρᾶγμα alludes to the lead-up to the failed seduction scene in the *Symposium*, where Alcibiades says that he invited Socrates to dinner to find out "what his business (πρᾶγμα) was" (*Smp.* 217c)¹⁵. In the rest of Alcibiades' speech in the *Symposium* we have a picture of a man profoundly affected by Socrates, though it is not quite clear how deep this goes; Plutarch is here a little more clear and explicit. Alcibiades *himself now recognises* the divine nature of Socrates' mission, and this not only shows the profound spiritual and intellectual effect that Socrates had on the young man, but also confirms, as Plutarch puts it, Alcibiades' own "potential for virtue" (4.1, 4.2).

weaker, poorer and more isolated, so he can master him more fully. Cf. esp. 239c-d: "We should now see how he who has been forced to pursue pleasure rather than good will care for the body of whomever he masters. He will plainly pursue someone soft (μαλακόν) and weak, not brought up in the clear sunshine but under a mingled shade, accustomed not to manly toils and healthy sweat but a soft and unmanly way of living (ἀπαλῆς καὶ ἀνάνδρου διαίτης) . . . In war and in other important crises such a body makes the enemy take heart but makes friends and even lovers afraid." Cf. *Amat.* 749f.-750a.

¹² C. B. R. PELLING, 2005, p. 118.

¹³ T. E. DUFF, 1999, pp. 217-8; C. B. R. PELLING, 2005, p. 118. The language of wrestling can also be used metaphorically for sex and that may add to the resonance here: e.g. Ar., *Peace* 896-898; *Ecccl.* 964-5; ps.-Luc., *Golden Ass* 7-11; *AP* 12.206, 222.

¹⁴ Plato, *Ap.* 23c-d; 24b-26b; 30b; 33c-34b. Cf. Xen., *Mem.* 1.1.1; 1.2.1, 8; *Ap.* 10.

¹⁵ It also recalls the question asked by the young Alcibiades in the Platonic *First Alcibiades* (104d) about why Socrates kept bothering him, "For I really do wonder what your business is" (ὅ τι ποτ' ἐστὶ τὸ σὸν πρᾶγμα). For Socrates' πρᾶγμα, cf. also cf. *Ap.* 20c; *Crito* 53c-d.

That we are meant to be thinking here of the *Symposium*, and of the failed seduction scene, is confirmed by Plutarch's description immediately afterwards of how Alcibiades "despised himself, but admired him, loved his friendliness but was ashamed in the face of his virtue" (καταφρονῶν δ' αὐτὸς ἑαυτοῦ, θαυμάζων δ' ἐκεῖνον, ἀγαπῶν δὲ τὴν φιλοφροσύνην, αἰσχυνόμενος δὲ τὴν ἀρετὴν). This is based on the emotions that Alcibiades confesses to feeling in the *Symposium* after his failure (219d-e): he thought himself "insulted, and yet was amazed at this man's nature, chastity and manliness" (ἠγούμενον μὲν ἠτιμάσθαι, ἀγάμενον δὲ τὴν τούτου φύσιν τε καὶ σωφροσύνην καὶ ἀνδρείαν). But Plutarch has made explicit what is implicit in Alcibiades' words in the *Symposium*, that is, his self-loathing, and has also drawn the notion of Alcibiades' shame before Socrates from earlier in his speech (216a-b). Indeed, in the *Symposium* Alcibiades had described how Socrates "despised", i.e. counted as unimportant, his beauty (216e; 219c). Here Alcibiades extends that to a more thorough-going self-despising.

The *Symposium*, as we have noticed, leaves it unclear to what extent Alcibiades' feelings went beyond passionate obsession, curiosity and mortification at having his beauty held at nought, though his speech in praise of Socrates does suggest that he had some appreciation for Socrates' uniqueness and wisdom. Plutarch is much more definite in his assertion that Alcibiades really did love Socrates back, claiming (4.4) in a quotation from the *Phaedrus* (255d), that Alcibiades acquired "an image of love . . . in return for love". Socrates' love, then, was a true, moral and educative one, and Alcibiades, to his credit, returned that love¹⁶. "The result", Plutarch continues, "was that everyone was amazed when they saw him dining with Socrates, and wrestling with him and camping with him (συνδειπνοῦντα καὶ συμπαλαίοντα καὶ συσκηνοῦντα), while to all his other lovers he was harsh and hard to get to grips with . . ." In the *Symposium* Alcibiades had talked of his wrestling and eating with Socrates as part of his strategy of seducing him (συνεγινόμην. . . συνημερεύσας . . . συγγυμνάζεσθαι . . . συνδειπνεῖν: 217b-d)¹⁷. Here Plutarch uses this shared life as evidence of Alcibiades' love for Socrates, which causes the amazement of everyone else¹⁸. Plutarch thus transforms what in Alcibiades' mouth had been a tale of sexual desire and failed seduction into evidence of a life lived together.

Plutarch goes on to contrast Alcibiades' love for Socrates, and his humility in his presence, with his arrogant behaviour to other lovers, citing two examples of such arrogant behaviour (4.4-5.5)¹⁹. One of the examples which Plutarch

¹⁶ The *Symposium* makes clear Alcibiades' love for Socrates (cf. 222c). But there it is a passionate, obsessive and shocking love, in which Alcibiades takes the role of the *erastes*, though much younger than Socrates. Here the suggestion is of a more calm and chaste love. Cf. C. B. R. PELLING, 2005, p. 119.

¹⁷ The notion that Socrates did not regard himself as above his pupils but lived alongside them seems to have been an important one: cf. *An seni*. 796d, συμπίνων καὶ συστρατευόμενος ἐνίοις καὶ συναγοράζων.

¹⁸ Note the sequence: they were first awe-struck at Alcibiades' beauty (4.1); now they are amazed that he hangs around with Socrates (4.4).

¹⁹ The thought is familiar from the *First Alcibiades*, where, as here, there is a contrast between

mentions, the incident of Alcibiades' outrageous treatment of Anytus (4.5-6), may have been partly inspired by the description of Alcibiades' entry in the *Symposium*. The setting is the same: a symposium, to which Alcibiades arrives late and drunk, "stands at the door" (ταῖς θύραις ἐπιστάς; cf. *Smp.* 212d, ἐπιστῆναι ἐπὶ τὰς θύρας), and interrupts proceedings by his outrageous behaviour (cf. esp. *Smp.* 212d-e)²⁰. But whereas his entry in the *Symposium* was greeted with indulgence, the consequences here are much more serious: the other guests talk of Alcibiades' *hubris* and arrogance (ὕβριστικῶς καὶ ὑπερηφάνως) – the first appearance of accusations which will later in the *Life* become more frequent; and Anytus, though he indulges Alcibiades now, will later (as the readers are presumably meant to know) be one of Socrates' accusers. One can certainly see how Alcibiades' behaviour here might have lent weight to accusations that Socrates corrupted the young men under his tutelage. And that the mention of Anytus might bring these associations to mind is suggested by the fact that, when Plutarch tells the same story in his *Dialogue on love*, direct allusion is made to Anytus' later role as Socrates' prosecutor (*Amat.* 762c-d)²¹. This anecdote, then, like the next one in which Alcibiades forces a lover to bid for an expensive tax-farming contract (5.1-5), shows, as Plutarch makes clear in ch. 6, that Socrates' influence on Alcibiades was limited and did not affect a complete transformation; indeed, Alcibiades' arrogant behaviour may have contributed to his teacher's prosecution and death.

In 6.1 we return to Socrates' love for Alcibiades. Here, as in 4.1-2, Alcibiades wavers between devotion to Socrates and the attractions of his other lovers, who offer him pleasure and play on his ambition. Plutarch is once again drawing heavily on the *Republic* and *First Alcibiades*, but the clearest allusion is to Alcibiades' speech in the *Symposium* on the effect which Socrates had on him (esp. 215d-216c). Despite his many rivals for Alcibiades' affections, Plutarch begins, "Socrates' love would sometimes master (ἐκράτει) him, when because of his good nature (δὲ εὐφυΐαν) Socrates' words would touch him and twist his heart and force out tears" (ἀπτομένων τῶν λόγων αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν καρδίαν στρεφόντων καὶ δάκρυα ἐκχεόντων). This is an adaptation of

Alcibiades' attitude to Socrates and to his "other lovers": *Alc.* 1 103a-104c; cf. *Plu., Alc.* 4.1; 4.4; 5.1; 6.1.

²⁰ The theme of Alcibiades' drunken processions was a familiar one in declamation, influenced ultimately, one assumes, by the *Symposium*, and by the accusations that he was involved in the mutilation of the herms and profanation of the mysteries (Th. 6.28, which mentions drinking). Libanius, *Decl.* 12.20 has him arrive drunk to see Timon (πρὸς ἑσπέραν ἐπέστη μεθύων Ἀλκιβιάδης), and going on a *komos* with "torches from the mysteries" (*Decl.* fr. 50, title). Several speeches imagine him being prosecuted for *hubris* after going on a *komos* to where the Spartan prisoners from Sphacteria are held (Apsines, *RG* 1.348.4-7 [= 242 6 Spengel and Hammer]; Syrian, *Scholia ad Hermogenis librum* Περὶ στάσεων 4.601.15-17 Walz). Cf. R. KOHL, 1915, pp. 35-6.

²¹ Cf. C. B. R. PELLING, 1996, p. xlvi; 2005, pp. 123-4; R. L. HUNTER, 2004, pp. 103-4. As Pelling notes, the reminiscence of *Ap.* 30a (Socrates' speech at his trial) in 4.4 ensures that the trial is in our minds. Both Socrates' detractors and defenders claimed that Socrates was executed for the behaviour of his pupils, especially Alcibiades and Critias, as much as for anything he himself said or did (e.g. Xen., *Mem.* 1.2.12-48).

Alcibiades' words at *Smp.* 215e, "For my heart leaps, and tears pour out under the influence of his words" (ἡ τε καρδία πηδᾷ καὶ δάκρυα ἐκχεῖται ὑπὸ τῶν λόγων τῶν τούτου)²², but Plutarch has added στρεφόντων ("twisting"), which gains particular force because of the wrestling metaphor which follows in 6.2 (cf. also πιεζοῦντος in 4.3); it also looks back to the earlier story of Alcibiades' wrestling in 2.2-3: though in real wrestling Alcibiades could beat his opponent through a trick, emotionally and intellectually Socrates outwrestled him²³. Plutarch has also added from the *Republic* the notion of Alcibiades' εὐφυΐα, prominent already in ch. 4 (cf. *Smp.* 218a, μὴ ἀφροῦς). Here, as in ch. 4, it provides an explanation for why Socrates took such an interest in Alcibiades; it also explains why Socrates' words had such an effect on Alcibiades: it was to his credit that he allowed Socrates to master him.

In ch. 4, when discussing the tough treatment Alcibiades received at Socrates' hands, Plutarch had quoted a line of a lost play, probably by the tragedian Phrynichos, "a cock, he crouched down like a slave, lowering his wing"²⁴. The image is of a defeated bird in a cock-fight, which seems to have been called a δοῦλος (4.4)²⁵. Now Plutarch presses the metaphor of slavery further: "There were times", he continues (6.1), "when Alcibiades surrendered himself to his flatterers too, who offered many pleasures, and he would slip away from Socrates and like a runaway slave (δραπετεύων) would be quite simply hunted down, only towards Socrates having the experience of shame and fear" (πρὸς μόνον ἐκείνον ἔχων τὸ αἰδεῖσθαι καὶ τὸ φοβεῖσθαι) (6.1). The notion of Alcibiades as a runaway slave draws on his speech in the *Symposium*, where he describes himself as "in a state of slavery" to Socrates (215e: ὡς ἀνδραποδωδῶς διακειμένου), and as trying to avoid listening to him but to flee instead. When he is in Socrates' presence, he admits his deficiencies and feels ashamed: "I experienced only with this man, what no-one would have thought me capable of – shame before anyone. Only before him am I ashamed"²⁶. But when he leaves Socrates' presence he is "defeated by the honour which comes from the multitude". "So I run away from him and flee (δραπετεύω οὖν αὐτὸν καὶ φεύγω), and when I see him I am ashamed as I think of my former admissions" (216b-c)²⁷. But whereas Plato left it vague

²² Noted by D. A. RUSSELL, 1966, p. 40 (= repr. 1995, 196). Plutarch also paraphrases this passage in *Prof. in Virt.* 84d, *Quomodo adulat.* 69f, and *Cat. Ma.* 7.1

²³ Στρέφω can be used of inflicting pain in general (e.g. Plato, *Rep.* 330e), but also of twisting an adversary in wrestling: e.g. Pollux 3.155; M. B. POLIAKOFF, 1982, pp. 140-1. ἀπώλισθαι in 6.1 ("used to slip away") may suggest slipping out of an opponent's grip in wrestling. The word is frequent in Plutarch though otherwise always used literally, but cf. Epict. 3.25.1 (ἀνάλαβε κάκεινα ὧν ἀπώλισθες).

²⁴ Or, "he crouched down like a slave-cock . . .": ἐπιτηξ' ἀλέκτωρ δοῦλος ὡς κλίνας περὸν.

²⁵ Cf. Ar., *Birds* 71-72, ὄρνις ἔγωγε δοῦλος, with N. DUNBAR, 1995, p. 158. Its application to the young Alcibiades suggests both his strutting and preening (cf. 1.8; 16.1) and the totality of his humiliation at Socrates' hands. For cocks seen as symbolising strutting confidence, cf. Dem. 54.9.

²⁶ πέπονθα δὲ πρὸς τοῦτον μόνον ἀνθρώπων, ὃ οὐκ ἄν τις οἶοιτο ἐν ἐμοὶ ἐνεῖναι, τὸ αἰσχύνεσθαι ὄντινοῦν· ἐγὼ δὲ τοῦτον μόνον αἰσχύνομαι.

²⁷ D. A. RUSSELL, 1966, p. 40 (= repr. 1995, p. 196) notes the parallels with 216b.

where Alcibiades runs off to (though the mention of the honour which comes from the multitude is suggestive), Plutarch is specific: to his other lovers, “who suggest many pleasures” (6.1).

But was pleasure all they offered? Plutarch has already hinted that it was not merely pleasure when he calls them “flatterers” (κόλαξι). He now explores this, and the contrast with what Socrates offers, further. First he quotes a saying of the Stoic philosopher Cleanthes, that he used words to attract his beloved, whereas his rivals could use the physical pleasures of the body. As before, knowledge of Alcibiades’ speech in the *Symposium* deepens the implications of this passage: Cleanthes, Plutarch says, claimed that “someone loved by him [i.e. Cleanthes] had to be mastered by the ears, but provided many holds to his rivals in love which were out of bounds to him . . .” (6.2). The image is once again of wrestling²⁸. But Cleanthes’ saying also recalls Alcibiades’ words in *Smp.* 216a: if he were willing to “lend Socrates his ears” (παρέχειν τὰ ὦτα) he would not be able to resist his arguments, and would have to admit that “I neglect myself while attending to the affairs of the Athenians”. “Therefore”, Alcibiades said, “I withhold my ears (ἐπισχόμενος τὰ ὦτα) as from the Sirens and make off, in order not to grow old, sitting here beside him”. We have already heard of the attempts of Socrates’ rivals to prevent Alcibiades from listening to Socrates (4.2)²⁹. Memory of the *Symposium* passage confirms that Alcibiades was not an altogether willing or cooperative beloved. It also suggests the emotional turmoil in which Alcibiades found himself: he is deeply affected by philosophical talk and deeply attracted to Socrates; he wants to listen but, like Odysseus before the Sirens, he knows how dangerous listening to Socrates is³⁰. Furthermore, memory of the *Symposium* passage also makes clear that it was Alcibiades’ political ambitions which pulled him away from Socrates; thus although Plutarch has talked of the “pleasures” his other lovers offered (6.1), and the saying of Cleanthes was about the pleasures of the flesh providing rival attractions to the words of the philosopher, we know that the stronger pull was Alcibiades’ political ambition, which he feared Socrates would make him want to give up. Indeed Plutarch now makes this point explicitly: “Alcibiades was of course susceptible to pleasures too” (ἦν μὲν ἀμέλει καὶ πρὸς ἡδονὰς ἀγώγιμος); however (οὐ μὴν ἀλλά) it was rather through taking hold of his love of honour and glory that those who were trying to corrupt him began

²⁸ An anecdote about Zeno uses the same metaphor: “the right hold to use on a philosopher is by the ears (ἐκ τῶν ὠτων). So persuade me and drag me off by them” (Diog. Laert. 7.24 = *SVF* 1.278). There is perhaps here a punning reference to a type of kiss, associated particularly with parents and children, which involved holding by the ears: *De aud.* 38c; Pollux 10.100; Tib. 2.5.92; Aristaenetus, *Ep.* 1.24; Clem. Alex., *Strom.* 5.1.13.1.

²⁹ . . . ἀποκλειόμενος ὑπὸ τῶν πρὸς χάριν ἐξομιλούντων εἰσακοῦσαι τοῦ νουθετοῦντος καὶ παιδεύοντος, which alludes to *Rep.* 494d and 559d-560a.

³⁰ Plutarch himself hints that Alcibiades might be seen as Odysseus by applying the word πολύτροπος to his fortunes (2.1) and his cleverness (24.5). Like Odysseus Alcibiades will wander in exile and desire to return home (cf. 32.1). Coriolanus was compared directly to Odysseus (*Cor.* 22.4). Cf. D. GRIBBLE, 1999, pp. 26-7; 269-70.

thrusting him prematurely into grandiose thinking, convincing him that, as soon as he entered upon public life . . ." (6.3)³¹.

The result of such flattery was that Alcibiades was made conceited, and Socrates was forced to do some tough-talking and to humble and crush him (6.5). As we have already noted, the metaphor which Plutarch uses here, of iron which has been softened in the fire and is then condensed and hardened in cold water, suggests very well both the painfulness of Socrates' shock-treatment of Alcibiades, but also that his love had the effect of toughening Alcibiades and making a man of him (cf. 4.3). Socrates, Plutarch continues, made Alcibiades understand "how much he lacked and how incomplete he was in virtue" (ἡλικῶν ἔνδεής ἐστὶ καὶ ἀτελής πρὸς ἀρετήν). The reference to Alcibiades' incompleteness in virtue recalls 4.1 where Socrates had recognised Alcibiades' "potential for virtue" (εὐφυΐα πρὸς ἀρετήν). The return to this notion here not only provides a sense of closure to the section before we move on to a cluster of anecdotes, but also expresses neatly the Socratic method; the first and most important step for the gifted pupil was for him to acknowledge how truly ignorant he really was³². The wording also recalls Alcibiades' speech in the *Symposium*, where he had declared, "He forces me to admit that, although I am sorely in need (πολλοῦ ἔνδεής³³), yet I neglect myself . . ." (216a)³⁴.

Several anecdotes follow, which seem to show Alcibiades' desire for learning, but also his arrogance and ambition (7.1-3). We then hear two stories about Socrates and Alcibiades at Potidaea and Delium, the source for which is once again Alcibiades' speech in the *Symposium* (7.3-6 ~ 220d-221c). The two campaigns were actually separated by some eight years, and Delium (424 BC) postdates Alcibiades' marriage, which is discussed in the next chapter (ch. 8)³⁵. But in the *Symposium* Alcibiades talks about Delium directly after Potidaea, and Plutarch follows that order. He has, however, made some significant changes³⁶.

³¹ Plutarch cites in evidence Thucydides' famous words about the "παρανομία of Alcibiades' lifestyle as regards his body" (6.3 ~ Th. 6.15.4). For Plutarch's use of this quotation, see C. B. R. PELLING, 1992, pp. 18-9; 1996, pp. xlix-li.

³² Contrast Coriolanus at *Cor.* 18.2-3, 21.1, who refuses to be humble when some humility would help.

³³ ἔνδεής can also mean "inferior" (LSJ b.3): the flatterers persuade Alcibiades that he will "put in the shade" other generals and orators, and "surpass" even Pericles (6.4) but Socrates shatters his illusions.

³⁴ It also recalls the start of the *First Alcibiades*, where Socrates tells a younger Alcibiades "you say that you are not in need of anyone for anything" (οὐδενὸς φῆς ἀνθρώπων ἔνδεής εἶναι εἰς οὐδέν; 104a). Both parallels are noted by D. A. RUSSELL, 1966, p. 40 (= repr. 1995, p. 196). There is also allusion to *Rep.* 491d: if a plant lacks the proper food and environment, the stronger it is the more it falls short of perfection (ἐνδεῖ τῶν πρεπόντων); so with talented men deprived of philosophical education. Cf. *Cor.* 1.3, alluding to the *Rep.* passage: a good nature which is lacking in education (παιδείας ἔνδεής) is unstable.

³⁵ The battle associated with the Potidaea campaign is probably the one fought in 432 before the siege of Potidaea began, in which the Athenians lost their general and 150 hoplites, not counting allies (Th. 1.62-63). See K. J. DOVER, 1980, p. 165.

³⁶ He has also introduced some parallels with the *Coriolanus*. The mention that Socrates and A. "distinguished themselves" (ἡρίστευσαν) and the discussion of the prize (ἀριστεῖον) recall the description of the young and ambitious Coriolanus, who is said to have "joined

He describes Socrates as Alcibiades' tent-mate and comrade in the battle-line (σύσκηνον...καὶ παραστάτην) (7.3; cf. 4.4, συσκηνοῦντα). This is Plutarch's embellishment; in *Symp* 219e Alcibiades says merely that they ate together; indeed, they were from different tribes, so may have had to camp separately and were almost certainly brigaded in different hoplite units³⁷. But having them fight together perhaps draws on another part of the *Symposium*, before Alcibiades' entry: Phaedrus' speech in *Smp.* 178e-179b. There, in arguing for the blessings that pederastic love brings, Phaedrus imagines pairs of *erastai* and *paidika* fighting side by side, defending each other on the battlefield. Plutarch thus assimilates Alcibiades and Socrates to this kind of idealised pederastic couple³⁸.

Plutarch's description of Socrates' saving Alcibiades at Potidaea, and of the award of the prize for valour to Alcibiades (7.4-5), is close to Alcibiades' words in the *Symposium* (220d-221c)³⁹. But Plutarch's version is more vivid, as he creates a picture of Socrates standing guard (προέστη καὶ ἤμυνε) over a fallen Alcibiades. Furthermore, the term ἤμυνε recalls 4.1, where Socrates wanted to protect Alcibiades and not allow him to be corrupted (ἀμύνειν καὶ μὴ περιορᾶν . . .). Here Socrates' protective role, exercised in the physical rather than spiritual dimension, is made concrete⁴⁰. Plutarch's version of the award of the prize is also more vivid and dramatic than the Platonic original⁴¹; the

exploits to exploits (ἀριστεΐαις ἀριστείας) and added spoils to spoils" (4.3). The eagerness of A.'s commanders to give him the crown and suit of armour and Socrates' testimony on his behalf recalls Coriolanus' commanders, who were "always striving with their predecessors to honour him and to surpass in their testimonials (marturiva)". "From none of the numerous conflicts in which Rome was involved did Coriolanus return uncrowned or without a prize". Alcibiades, then, under Socrates' influence, is as brave on the battlefield and as decorated as the soldierly Coriolanus. For other parallels, see nn. 32, 34, 40 and 46.

³⁷ Cf. P. KRENTZ, 2007, p. 164.

³⁸ Plutarch is here of course making more explicit what was implicit already in Plato: Alcibiades' description of Socrates saving him in *Smp.* 220d-e would itself have brought Phaedrus' speech to mind. The notion of pairs of lovers fighting side by side became reality in the early fourth century (i.e. around the time when Plato was writing the *Symposium*) in Thebes' so-called Sacred Band; Xen., *Smp.* 8.32 mentions the Sacred Band in his discussion of pederasty; Plutarch in his discussion of the Sacred Band in *Pel.* 18-19 refers to Phaedrus' speech (*Smp.* 179a), as well as to the *Phaedrus* itself (255b) (18.6); in *Pel.* 17.13 he quotes from Phaedrus' speech (*Symp.* 178d): after Leuctra the other Greeks realised that it was not Sparta which produced good fighters, but wherever young men αἰσχύνεσθαι τοῖς αἰσχροῖς καὶ τολμᾶν ἐπὶ τοῖς καλοῖς. Cf. *Amat.* 761b.

³⁹ In particular, Plutarch's τοῦ δ' Ἀλκιβιάδου τραύματι περιπεσόντος ὁ Σωκράτης προέστη καὶ ἤμυνε, καὶ μάλιστα δὴ προδήλως ἔσωσεν αὐτὸν μετὰ τῶν ὄπλων is closely based on *Smp.* 220d-e: οὐδεὶς ἄλλος ἐμὲ ἔσωσεν ἀνθρώπων ἢ οὗτος, τετρωμένον οὐκ ἐθέλων ἀπολιπεῖν, ἀλλὰ συνδιέσωσε καὶ τὰ ὄπλα καὶ αὐτὸν ἐμέ.

⁴⁰ Contrast Coriolanus' lonely death without any one to protect him: προσήμυενεν οὐδεὶς τῶν παρόντων (*Cor.* 39.8). For other parallels between *Alc.* 7 and the *Coriolanus*, see T. E. DUFF, 1999, pp. 217-8.

⁴¹ *Plu., Alc.* 7.5: ἐπεὶ δ' οἱ στρατηγοὶ διὰ τὸ ἀξίωμα τῷ Ἀλκιβιάδῃ σπουδάζοντες ἐφαίνοντο περιθεῖναι τὴν δόξαν, ὁ Σωκράτης βουλόμενος αὐξεσθαι τὸ φιλότιμον ἐν τοῖς καλοῖς αὐτοῦ, πρῶτος ἐμαρτύρει καὶ παρεκάλει στεφανοῦν ἐκείνον καὶ δίδοναι τὴν πανοπλίαν. Plato, *Smp.* 220e: καὶ ἐγὼ μὲν, ὦ Σώκρατες, καὶ τότε ἐκέλευον σοὶ δίδοναι τὰριστεΐα τοὺς στρατηγούς ...

imperfects ἐμαρτύρει καὶ παρεκάλει draw the reader into the scene, as though we were watching it happen – a device typical of Plutarchan narrative⁴². The idea that the generals were influenced by Alcibiades’ “rank in society” (ἀξίωμα) is in Plato, but in Plutarch it gains extra point as it, like ἤμυνε, recalls 4.1, where Socrates’ desire to protect Alcibiades comes from his fear of the effect of Alcibiades’ “wealth and rank” (ἀξίωμα), and of those who, as Plutarch puts it, “rushed to lay hold of him with flatteries and favours”⁴³. Thus for Plutarch the generals’ desire to curry favour with Alcibiades becomes part of this process of flattery.

Plutarch has introduced two other changes⁴⁴. First, he omits Alcibiades’ claim that he himself had urged the generals to award Socrates the crown. This may be because Plutarch simply judged Alcibiades’ claim unreliable (he *would* say that, wouldn’t he?). At any rate, in Plutarch’s telling, the sequence and its implications are simpler: Socrates deserved the prize but urged the generals to give it to Alcibiades; Socrates is the protector, educator and champion, Alcibiades the recipient of Socrates’ kindness (cf. 1.3) and protection⁴⁵. Secondly Plutarch inserts a motive for Socrates’ championing of Alcibiades’ cause: he “wanted his [Alcibiades’] ambition in fine things (τὸ φιλότιμον ἐν τοῖς καλοῖς αὐτοῦ) to increase”. That is, he wanted to direct in a worthy direction the ambition which has been such a feature of the early chapters of the Life (esp. 2.1) and which his flatterers played on (6.4)⁴⁶. The phrase thus presupposes that Alcibiades’ ambition might well be aimed at an unworthy goal, and

ἀλλὰ γὰρ τῶν στρατηγῶν πρὸς τὸ ἐμὸν ἀξίωμα ἀποβλεπόντων καὶ βουλομένων ἐμοὶ δίδόναι τάριστεία, αὐτὸς προθυμότερος ἐγένοντο τῶν στρατηγῶν ἐμὲ λαβεῖν ἢ αὐτόν.

⁴² E.g. *Alc.* 5.5; 14.12; 20.1; 25.2; 32.3; *Pyrrh.* 28.1-3, 5-7; 29.5-6. Smyth §1898 labels this the “imperfect of description”: “The imperfect often has a dramatic or panoramic force; it enables the reader to follow the course of events as they occurred, as if he were a spectator of the scene depicted”. On Plutarch’s tendency to use imperfects in narrative, see T. E. DUFF, forthcoming.

⁴³ φοβούμενος δὲ τὸν πλοῦτον καὶ τὸ ἀξίωμα καὶ τὸν προκαταλαμβάνοντα κολακείαις καὶ χάρισιν ἀστῶν καὶ ξένων καὶ συμμάχων ὄχλον (4.2), itself an allusion to *Rep.* 494c, προκαταλαμβάνοντες καὶ προκολακεύοντες τὴν μέλλουσαν αὐτοῦ δύναμιν. Alcibiades’ ἀξίωμα (“rank in society”: LSJ 3), was owed in large part to his noble birth (Th. 5.43.2, ἀξιώματι προγόνων τιμώμενος; 6.15.3). Later in Plutarch’s Life his noble birth and wealth will “open great doors” (μεγάλας κλισιάδας) to his political career (10.3.)

⁴⁴ He has also specified that the award consisted of a crown and suit of armour, a detail which he probably took from Isoc. 16.29. Crowns were regularly awarded for valour (e.g. Hdt. 8.124; Aesch. 2.169; Plato, *Rep.* 468b: W. K. PRITCHETT, 1974, ii, pp. 276-90); it is not clear whether at this period they might be of gold or of e.g. laurel. There is no other evidence for the award of armour, though the use of the article suggests that Plutarch might have thought it well known: *ibidem*, pp. 289-90.

⁴⁵ Cf. C. B. R. PELLING, 2005, pp. 122-3 n. 41: keeping attention focused on Socrates’ action rather than Alcibiades fits the larger theme of the struggle of Socrates and the flatterers for influence over Alcibiades.

⁴⁶ This seems to find a parallel in the discussion of the effect of honour gained in war upon the young Coriolanus in *Cor.* 4.1-4 (see above, n. 36). Honour gained too early in life, Plutarch argues, may extinguish the desire for honour in “lightly ambitious souls”. But in the case of “weighty and firm spirits” (i.e. like Coriolanus) the honours impel them to “the apparent good” (πρὸς τὸ φαινόμενον καλόν). The contrast between “the apparent good” and Alcibiades’ “ambition ἐν τοῖς καλοῖς” is suggestive.

shows Socrates combating the malign influence of Alcibiades' flatterers. It also shows Socrates not only playing a pedagogical role but playing this role in the practical context of the battlefield; his love was not enervating or corrupting, as was theirs (cf. 4.3), nor was his instruction merely theoretical⁴⁷.

But the phrase "ambition in fine things" also alludes specifically to Phaedrus' speech in the *Symposium* (178c-179b). Phaedrus speaks of love bringing the greatest blessing a man can have. What love brings, Phaedrus claims, cannot be obtained by "kinship, honours or wealth" (all advantages that Alcibiades had)⁴⁸; it provides a moral principle for life, that is, feeling "shame at shameful things, and ambition for fine things" (τὴν ἐπὶ μὲν τοῖς αἰσχροῖς αἰσχρὴν, ἐπὶ δὲ τοῖς καλοῖς φιλοτιμίαν) (178d); thus, Phaedrus argues, lovers defend and never desert each other on the battlefield. By alluding to this passage, Plutarch makes more explicit what is implicit in Alcibiades' description of the Potidaea campaign in the *Symposium*, namely, that Socrates and Alcibiades on campaign are to be seen as an ideal pederastic couple, with the older exercising an educational and protective role over the younger, and inspiring him towards fine conduct⁴⁹.

The success of Socrates' tutelage is revealed in the next incident, the story of how Alcibiades, in the aftermath of the Athenian defeat at Delium, despite being on horseback, refused to leave Socrates and make his own escape (7.6). This is closely based on *Smp.* 220e-221a, though Plutarch focuses attention more squarely on Alcibiades' actions in defending Socrates rather than on Socrates' calmness under attack. But this incident gains extra point in Plutarch from its placing immediately after Socrates' attempt to nurture Alcibiades' "ambition in fine things" (τὸ φιλότιμον ἐν τοῖς καλοῖς αὐτοῦ); in Plutarch's account Alcibiades' defence of his teacher seems to show Socrates' success in stirring Alcibiades to noble action, and thus confirms Alcibiades' good nature and that he really did love Socrates⁵⁰. Phaedrus in the *Symposium* imagined that no lover would desert his beloved, and at Potidaea Socrates had defended Alcibiades. Now Alcibiades, the beloved, defends Socrates, suggesting a mutuality in their love, a mutuality which Plutarch himself had emphasised in ch. 4, with a quotation from the *Phaedrus* itself (Alcibiades acquired "an image of love . . . in return for love"). Indeed Plutarch's παρέπεμψε καὶ περιήμυεν ("escorted and protected him")⁵¹ recalls Socrates'

⁴⁷ Cf. D. A. RUSSELL, 1966, p. 41 (= repr. 1995, p. 197); C. B. R. PELLING, 1996, p. xlvi; D. GRIBBLE, 1999, pp. 273-6.

⁴⁸ See 4.1-2; 10.3; Plato, *Rep.* 494c; *Alc.* 1.104a-b. Cf. *Lys.* 14, 18, 38; *Dem.* 21.143; *Diod.* 12.84.1.

⁴⁹ Plutarch is possibly influenced by *Lys.* 14.42, where Alcibiades' son accuses his opponents of ἐπὶ μὲν τοῖς καλοῖς αἰσχροῦνεσθαι, ἐπὶ δὲ τοῖς κακοῖς φιλοτιμεῖσθαι.

⁵⁰ Antisthenes had Socrates deserving a prize for bravery here too but giving it to Alcibiades (*Antisthenes fr. V A 200 Giannantoni=FGrH 1004 F 4*).

⁵¹ But περιήμυεν, the reading of Υ, is doubtful; περιαιμύω is attested only here in Greek literature. Ziegler's apparatus suggests προσήμυεν ("came to the aid of"), which may be right (cf. *Fab.* 16.5, ἀπολιπὼν τὸν ἵππον πεζὸς τῷ ὑπάτῳ προσήμυεν, and Holden on *Them.* 9.3). Ν's περιέμεινεν ("waited for") seems bland, but may also be right.

protection both moral (4.1: ἀμύνειν) and physical (7.4: προέστη καὶ ἤμυνε). Here Alcibiades is able to return Socrates' protection⁵².

To conclude, my point in this paper has been a simple one. That is, that the *Alcibiades* draws heavily on Plato's *Symposium*, and that knowledge of the *Symposium* enriches the experience of reading the *Alcibiades*; the chapters that we have examined (4-7), in which Plutarch frequently uses phraseology drawn from the *Symposium*, and frequently makes explicit what had been implicit there, become more meaningful when approached with the *Symposium* in mind. This is different from saying merely that the *Symposium* was used as a "source" for the *Alcibiades*; rather these chapters of the *Alcibiades* invite an intertextual reading with the *Symposium*, and for their full effect presuppose a reader who is familiar with it⁵³. This has important implications for the way we might approach Plutarch's use of other texts and other authors, both in the *Alcibiades* and elsewhere, where we might look not for a one-sided exploitation of source texts but for a creative dialogue with them.

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⁵² C. B. R. PELLING, 2005, p. 123.

⁵³ Cf. the similar remarks made by C. B. R. PELLING, 2007 about the *Themistocles – Camillus*, a text which presupposes a reader familiar with Herodotus, esp. p. 155: "By now Herodotus should seem much more than a simple "source" for Plutarch's *Life*: he offers a *repertoire of possibilities*, one which Plutarch knew extraordinarily well, and assumed his audience knew well too; and an author whose themes and subtleties he thoroughly understood".

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“IN LEARNED CONVERSATION”. PLUTARCH’S SYMPOSIAC LITERATURE AND THE ELUSIVE AUTHORIAL VOICE

FREDERICK E. BRENK

Pontifical Biblical Institute of Rome

Abstract

The *Symposiacs* offer a good entry point for understanding Plutarch’s dialogues. Plato’s, such as the *Symposion*, are often used as a model to interpret Plutarch’s without consideration of the changed circumstances in the Imperial period. Also, toward the end of Plato’s life, his dialogues became treatises in which the interlocutors are hardly important. Plutarch used no single character throughout his dialogues. Like Cicero he wanted to present the opinions of the philosophical schools, and often his own position is difficult to discern. The role and importance of various persons in the spirited intellectual discussions of the *Symposiacs* offer a clue to his intentions in the dialogues. At the same time, unlike his dialogues, his own *persona* appears frequently and with a surprising assertiveness. In some *Symposiacs*, especially the Ninth Book, as in *The E at Delphoi* and the *Erotikos*, he appears as fairly young, possibly a distancing technique. The *Symposiacs* in any case offered an opportunity to present his views in various shapes and sizes.

Μισέω μνάμονα συμπόταν

I hate a fellow drinker with a good memory.

(opening of the *Symposiacs*)¹

This citation from an unknown poet, used to open the *Symposiacs*, pretty well destroys our approach to the theme of the *symposion* if not of *philanthropia*. Perhaps we should not try to remember what occurs in a drinking party². However, with a good memory for Plutarch’s *Symposiacs* (*Quaestiones convivales*), one can possibly come closer into the circle of his friends and get a better understanding of the authorial voice not only in the *Symposiacs* but also in his major dialogues³. Perhaps none of the *personae* who appear in Plutarch’s dialogues, not even the *persona* Plutarch, completely represents his thought. For example, in the *Erotikos*, by presenting himself as a newlywed, many years before, he is able to convey to his readers a certain distance between himself and the *persona*⁴. Throughout his writings Plutarch indicates that he is searching for the true voice of Plato among his different speakers and dialogues. Undoubtedly Plutarch’s readers, too, were searching

¹ *Symposiacs* 612C; D. A. CAMPBELL, 1993, p. 405, Anonymous, no. 1002. He lists three other authors who cite it, including Lucian, *Symposion* 3, and notes an allusion to the saying in Martial, 1.27.7. See the indispensable commentary of S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1989-1996, I., pp. 31-2.

² Actually at 6.1 (686D) Plutarch gives just the opposite advice, the necessity of remembering the discussions, something which justifies his own writing of the *Symposiacs*.

³ On Plutarch’s friends, see F. FUHRMANN, 1966, pp. 65-7; B. PUECH, 1992; S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1989-1996; and E. N. O’NEIL, 2004.

⁴ Here the views of S. Goldhill, 1995, and J. M. Rist, 2001, represent rather opposite ends of the spectrum of interpretation.

for guidance, and the present tendency in Plutarchan scholarship, as in the recent work of Jan Opsomer, is to try to identify his own position. Plato's dialogues, such as his *Symposium*, are often used as the model with which to interpret Plutarch's, but Plutarch's often require a different methodology⁵. Oddly enough, Plato composed even one of his latest works, the *Timaios*, a long treatise which turns into a monologue and in which Socrates has only a minor part, as a *symposion*⁶. In general, at least during his early and middle periods, Plato's Socrates remained his principal spokesman. Moreover, the speeches of the minor characters seem to work together with his to form an artistic whole⁷. Toward the end of Plato's life, his dialogues became treatises in which the interlocutors change and lose importance. On the other hand, Plutarch used no single character as his spokesman, so that his own position is difficult to discern. Where he wrote treatises without the pretense of a dialogue, his position is clear. However, the dialogues remain very problematic. His *Symposiasts* are a good example of lively discussions of different opinions among many speakers, often without necessarily indicating his own belief. As so often in studying authors of the Imperial period, we have in our minds the literature of the fifth or fourth centuries B.C., without always taking into account the great changes that took place by the Imperial period. Not only did Plutarch not use a single main speaker like Socrates through several dialogues, but those who do appear often make no second appearance. On one rare occasion when he appears himself as a *persona* and as the principal speaker in a dialogue, in the *Erotikos* (*Dialogue on Love, Amatorius*), even the views of his own *persona* are very problematic⁸. In contrast to the dialogues, though, in the *Symposiasts* Plutarch often appears as a final or principal speaker. In fact, his own role is astoundingly forceful. His voice seems particularly strong in the opening of the books of the *Symposiasts*, where, after the preface to the dedicatee, Sosius Senecio, we find rather long "questions", really small treatises. However, apart from the opening questions there are other quite extensive ones, perhaps for variety, or perhaps because they needed more development. At any rate an advantage of the genre is the possibility to craft a particular question as brief or long as desired, and to inject or omit the author's *persona* at any point.

Cicero's philosophical dialogues bear a striking lack of resemblance to Plato's and in many respects are much closer to some of Plutarch's. This may be partially due to the philosophical allegiance of both to "the Academy". In

⁵ For Plato, see, e.g., R. B. RUTHERFORD, 1995, pp. 180-205, 305-6; C. GILL, 2002, esp. pp. 147-9 and 161-4; R. HUNTER, 2004; and C. J. ROWE, 2007. For Xenophon, see D. L. GERA, 1993, pp. 132-54. An excellent discussion of Plutarch's relationship to Plato and the use of characters to develop his own views can be found in J. M. RIST, 2001, esp. 558-61.

⁶ See the excellent contribution of M. TECUŞAN, 1990, esp. p. 243. She discusses Plato's changing attitude toward the value of the *symposion* (esp. pp. 244, 246, 255-60).

⁷ D. BABUT, 1992 repr. in D. BABUT, 1994, pp. 457-501. F. FRAZIER, 2006, has criticized the approach of F. ILDEFONSE for an interesting twist in interpreting Plato, see F. C. WHITE, 2008, who holds that Alkibiades' speech is more important than that of Diotima.

⁸ So S. GOLDHILL, 1995, pp. 159-60.

Cicero the principal thrust seems to be presenting the opinions of the major philosophical schools, favoring and criticizing certain views on the way, but in general allowing the representatives of the schools to speak their minds⁹. Langlands, who attributes it to the rhetorical tradition, has noted how fond Romans were of being subjected to contradictory opinions before choosing the best or coming to their own solution¹⁰. We must imagine that the dedicatee of the *Symposiacs*, who also participates as a *persona* in them, Sosius Senecio, was one of these Romans. This practice contrasts at times with Plutarch’s voice in the *Symposiacs* where his own *persona* often goes on at length or decides the question, and is similar to his tractates, such as *On the Generation of the Soul in the Timaios* (*De animae procreatione in Timaeo*), where his position is crystal clear. We have something similar to the *Symposiacs* in Aulus Gellius, Athenaios, and in the parody of the genre in Lucian’s *Symposion* (or *Dinner of the Lapiths*)¹¹. Evidently one of the major purposes of the philosophical *symposion* was to introduce the reader to the most prominent philosophical views of the time and discuss them, often in a critical fashion. In more philosophical dialogues such as Cicero’s the reader would then be given guidance on how to evaluate the opinions. Though Lucian’s *Symposion* is a rather sadistic farce, reading between the lines one can imagine a serious philosophical *symposion* of the time¹².

Where we have something like Cicero’s extended philosophical dialogues is in individual tractates, where Plutarch writes in his own person. In this case he clearly states his views (and often, naturally, misrepresents those of the adversary). Often more polemical than Cicero, he usually defends the Platonic position and attacks Stoic or Epicurean ones. He belongs in these cases to his time, reflecting the debates between the well-established schools. *On the Face in the Moon* (*De facie in orbe lunae*) begins very much in dialogue form, with the presentation of various opinions. But then it branches out into a treatise, with one speaker developing the central view or thesis and accompanying it with an eschatological myth. In this case, which resembles Plato’s *Timaios* in its format, the main speaker is Plutarch’s brother Lamprias. We are thus left wondering again about what might have been Lamprias’ contribution¹³.

⁹ See e.g., P. G. WALSH, 2000, esp. p. xvi, who speaks of Cicero’s “intensive reflection” on the central concerns of the Hellenistic schools as viewed by their spokesmen. The *Tusculan Disputations*, something like Plutarch’s *Symposiacs*, supposedly took place each on a different day. For the complexities of his presentation of the Hellenistic schools, see C. LÉVY, 2008, pp. 1-5, and in the same volume, pp. 5-20.

¹⁰ R. LANGLANDS, 2009, esp. pp. 160-3.

¹¹ Gellius claimed that his discussions were a shortcut to a general education for those too busy for much study, Preface, 11-12. On Aulus Gellius, see L. HOLFORD-STREVEVS, 1988, esp. 27-32 (27) (rev. ed., 2003); W. H. KEULEN, 2009, pp. 2-14, 240, 253, 279, 282, 288-92, 300, stressing the difference between the Roman and Greek intellectual worlds at the time. She rejects (p. 8) what she sees in S. SWAIN, 2004, pp. 17, 20, 35 as a “deflating picture of Latin intellectuals”.

¹² On the contrast between this and Plutarch’s *Symposiacs*, see J. HALL, 1981, esp. pp. 204-5; C. P. JONES, 1986, pp. 28-41; R. BRACHT BRANHAM, 1989, pp. 108-10; I. MÄNNLEIN, 2000. F. FRAZIER, 1994, pp. 125-30, takes a much harsher view of Lucian than Bracht Branham.

¹³ On Lamprias, see D. A. RUSSELL, 1973, pp. 4, 69, 71-3; and C. P. JONES, 1971, pp. 9-10.

In the very first book of the *Symposiacs*, Plutarch remarks that if only philosophically inclined persons are present, philosophy would be a suitable topic, but if not, many would be excluded. For this reason, the topics must be familiar, simple, and easy (614D)¹⁴. Petronius' "Dinner of Trimalchio" in his *Satyrica* (*Satyricon*) can give valuable insights, in spite of it being satirical. The work was written earlier than Plutarch's *Symposiacs* but within his lifetime, satirizing the attempt of *nouveau-riches*, who ape intellectual discussions and presumably in the attempt to carry on a kind of *symposion*. Several of the themes satirized are similar to those we find in the *Symposiacs*, ranging over natural phenomenon, religion, what we might call pseudo-science, popular philosophy, and the like¹⁵. In any case, Plutarch's *Symposiacs* do not descend to the level of a "commonplace book" such as typifies much of Aulus Gellius and Athenaios, nor are they anything like the sadistic farce of Lucian's *Symposion*. Examination of the dialogues of Aulus Gellius, Athenaios, and Lucian quickly reveals how distant they are not only from Plato, but even from Plutarch¹⁶. At the same time these works give us good insights into the genre Plutarch used.

The novel creation of the *persona*, the newly married Plutarch as recounted by his son, in the *Erotikos*, allowed him more freedom to present provocative and problematic views. These contrast with his own traditional views of love and marriage elsewhere and permitted him, intentionally or not, to gain an enviable place in "the history of sexuality". But even in this dialogue, where the final views are presumably those of the author, other speakers initially have their say. Their speeches on heterosexual or homosexual love are quite aggressive, but one could perhaps point to their "propedeutic" function rather than their "tonality"¹⁷. As in the *Symposiacs*, such a strong projection of opposing views seems to have satisfied a desire in the readers to participate vicariously in spirited, contemporary intellectual discussion. The views presented here raise serious problems, enough so as to wonder whether Plutarch is not just being ironic, or problematic, or over-influenced by other genres, such as that of comedy¹⁸.

¹⁴ O. MURRAY, 1990, p. v, citing *Moralia* 629D, notes the difference between *symptomika* (talk about the *symposion*) and *symposiaka* (talk suitable for the *symposion*).

¹⁵ See, e.g., F. DUPONT, 2002, pp. 61-114, popular, but covering the major works.

¹⁶ Gellius had read Plutarch and mentions him at the beginning of his work 1.1.1. On Gellius, see L. HOLFORD-STREVENIS & A. VARDI (eds.), 2004, esp. pp. 10-4; and in the same volume A. VARDI, esp. pp. 183-6. On Athenaios see A. LUKINOVICH, 1990, esp. pp. 265-7; D. BRAUND & J. WILKINS (eds.), 2000, esp. J. WILKINS, pp. 23-40; L. ROMERI, pp. 256-71; and G. ANDERSON, pp. 316-27; also S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1989-1996, I, p. 12, who finds the closest parallels to be Athenaios, *Deipnosophists* and Macrobius *Saturnalia*, the latter of which he takes to be an imitation of Plutarch.

¹⁷ See, e.g., J. M. RIST, 2001, esp. pp. 560-61.

¹⁸ J. M. RIST, 2001, esp., p. 558, sees Plutarch building up, through the speeches, a very complicated and sophisticated conception of love. This in Rist's view represents a kind of "commentary" on Plato's theories, which he sees primarily as those of the *Phaidros*. I am grateful to Ann Chapman for having seen her forthcoming dissertation. She treats Plutarch's views as not very favorable toward women. See also F. E. BRENK, 2007.

For this reason, a good place to start is Plutarch’s *Symposiacs* (or *Table Talk*, *Quaestiones convivales*), where we also have the dominant *persona* of Plutarch, including that of his youth. With the exception of his *Symposiacs* few of his works have a symposiac setting in the strict sense. The notable exception is the *Symposium* (or *Dinner of the Seven Sages* (*Septem sapientium convivium*)¹⁹. However, the themes treated are not normal, at least for the extant Classical or Imperial *symposia*, and may be too traditional in scope to say much about Plutarch’s originality or emphasis. Nonetheless, Mossman finds a number of original elements, such as the selection of Sages, the introduction of Aesop and the women (the clever Kleoboulina and Melissa), and probably the story of Arion and the dolphin, not to speak of the deliberate omission of homosexual themes and substitution of heterosexuality²⁰. To Mossman’s list one could add the emphasis on divine providence at the end of the work. She points out that the *Dinner of the Seven Sages* and *The Daimonion of Socrates* (*De genio Socratis*) are the only works which Plutarch set in the distant past. The *Erotikos*, a very late dialogue of Plutarch, might qualify as a Platonic *symposion* if we consider its theme. But the *mise-en-scène* is not a *symposion*, *daimones* do not appear, there is only a hint of love being directed to the intelligible world, the denouement involves heterosexual love, and a very unusual marriage is played out before one’s eyes. In *The Daimonion of Socrates*, the principals are in an indoor setting and *daimones*, so prominent in Plato’s *Symposion*, play a major role, but the occasion is never called a *symposion*, or even a dinner, and the participants’ major purpose for being there is their involvement in a bloody revolt against the Spartan overlords at Thebes²¹.

Perhaps we can look at some particulars at the end of the *Symposiacs*, the Ninth Book from Plutarch’s student days. These are the last *Symposiacs* he wrote, though the recollections, whether fictional or real, chronologically would come first. They may recall real discussions held at the time, possibly in the Academy, but some topics seem suspiciously generic. The speakers appear to be real persons and possibly at least some of the speeches may represent what they actually said²². As in other *Symposiacs*, though, it is impossible to determine, especially if the topic is a common theme, whether any speech is an invention or real²³. In some other *Symposiacs* Plutarch is presented as quite young, appearing in what should be the commanding company of Ammonios, his philosophy professor, with his father, or even his grandfather. Most of the *Symposiacs* are not very philosophical by our standards, often resolving folkloric questions about natural phenomena

¹⁹ On this see the excellent study by J. M. MOSSMAN, 1997; also D. E. AUNE, 1972; S. JEDRKIEWICZ, 1997, review, F. E. BRENK & F. LO CASCIO, 2000; A. BUSINE, 2002; and D. L. LEÃO, 2005.

²⁰ J. M. MOSSMAN, 1997, esp. pp. 124-6, 133-4.

²¹ Perhaps to contrast with the dinner (*deipnon*) in which Archias, the commander, is assassinated (588B). Phyllidas uses wine and food as part of his trap for Archias (596C), “at the hour when most people are at dinner”.

²² See S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1989-1996, III, pp. 299-300, on the unusual qualities of this book of the *Symposiacs* compared to his others.

²³ S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1989-1996, I, pp. 12-5, stresses the element of authenticity.

or presumed natural phenomena, with, to us, pseudo-scientific guesswork²⁴. Eleni Kechagia has suggested that through them Plutarch was instructing the reader to think like a philosopher. Certainly there is a methodology at stake: verification of the data, exploration of various possibilities, citation of the experts (like Aristotle), testing and debating of the data and opinions, subjection of the result to common sense, and attestation of parallel phenomena. Sometimes the result seems ridiculous, but some of the *Symposiacs*, for example, on whether fish or meat is better for one's health could stand up well today.

The *Symposiacs* offer information on the speakers and their importance, and, thus, on the possible authorial voice of Plutarch in his other dialogues. Most surprising is his own commanding role. Of a total of 72 *Symposiacs* useful for this purpose, Plutarch astoundingly, is the principal speaker in 33, or almost half, at least in the sense of having the final word. In 39 cases either he is absent or yields the ground to another speaker who has the principal or final word. In a couple of them Plutarch has a rather extensive speech, as in 2.1, which goes on for 15 (Loeb) pages²⁵. However, in the later books the first question becomes much shorter. Sometimes he defers to important personages such as Sosius Senecio, to whom these books and the *Lives* were dedicated, or to his former teacher Ammonios²⁶. Though invited to do so by Ammonios, he has no complexes about developing a long and rather convincing counter-argument to his teacher's proposition about ivy being hot (3.2). He also has no qualms about taking on a respected physician on a medical matter (7.1). Nor does he go completely unopposed. In *Symposiac* 1.9, his friend Theon comes close to calling him "full of baloney". Thus, half the time, we search for the authorial voice, looking for Plutarch in disguise. But would his own *persona* utter opinions he never subscribed to, even the brilliant nonsense of his youth in *The E at Delphoi* (*De E apud Delphos*)? At times he seems sympathetic to a principal speaker's views. Sometimes his *persona* even says so. In most cases, though, his mind remains a little inscrutable.

Several of the speakers who appear in later dialogues make possibly their first appearance in the *Symposiacs*. Among these are his brother Lamprias and two friends named Theon, one of whom is called his "companion". Then there is Ammonios, and naturally, Plutarch himself. In the dialogues, Plutarch appears as a young student in *The E at Delphoi*, as a philosophy professor in *That Epicurus Actually Makes Life Impossible*, and as a young married man in the *Dialogue on Love*. The Theon who is a grammarian from Egypt appears in *The Face on the Moon*. The other, the "companion" — and according to Puech, Plutarch's most constant friend in the *Moralia* — is a participant in both *The E at Delphoi* and *The*

²⁴ S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1989-1996, III, pp. 299-300, notes that the 9th book is an exception in treating only musical, literary and philological question, and that all the discussions take place during the festival of the Muses in Athens.

²⁵ Perhaps he thought Senecio might read the first question but not the others.

²⁶ On Sosius Senecio, spelled Sossius by Plutarch, see B. PUECH, 1992, pp. 4883-5; on Ammonios, 4835-6; and C. P. JONES, 1966, pp. 205-11.

Oracles at Delphoi (*De Pythiae oraculis*)²⁷. In the latter he is the principal speaker, whose speech takes up 20 pages of the dialogue. He appears as well in *A Pleasant Life is Impossible* (*Non posse suaviter vivere secundum Epicurum*). Plutarch’s brother Lamprias has a minor role in *The E at Delphoi*. It is easy to forget that here, though the young Plutarch is reprimanded for a little wisdom being a dangerous thing, he has a longer speech than the sublime one of his teacher Ammonios, which concludes the dialogue. In *The Obsolescence of Oracles* (*De defectu oraculorum*) Ammonios plays quite a prominent role. He guides the conversation and prefers the theory that *daimones* are souls. Nonetheless, Lamprias is the principal speaker and offers the final solution to the cause of the prophecy. This involves, strangely, a physical emanation coming from the ground at Delphoi. He also appears in *The E at Delphoi* (*De E apud Delphos*) and is, amazingly, the narrator and principal speaker in *The Face on the Moon*. Thus, the cast of characters of the dialogues bears a strong resemblance to some of the *Symposiacs*. Lamprias has the last word in three of them (1.2, 2.5, 4.5, and 8.6) is the main speaker in three or four (2.9, 5.9, and 7.5, and possibly in 7.10). Most remarkably, Ammonios is a relatively minor character in the *Symposiacs*, considering his intellectual and political stature in real life and his enormous theological role in *The E at Delphoi*. He is the principal speaker in only two *Symposiacs* (9.1 and 9.14) and is only one among others in another two (9.2 and 9.5).

Plutarch’s readers, like all Greeks and Romans, as we are often told, had better memories than we, whose computers do our remembering for us. Thus, judging by the *Symposiacs* alone, Lamprias lacks prestige and is sometimes on the wrong side. He might have been the author of the materialistic solution to the functioning of prophecy in *The Obsolescence of Oracles*, but how could he be responsible for the great scientific exposition in *The Face on the Moon*? Certainly Plutarch’s friends would have immediately recognized him behind the mask of Lamprias. More problematic is how to interpret Ammonios, the great Alexandrian theologian who pronounces such sublime doctrine at the end of *The E at Delphoi*, identifying God with Being and the Good²⁸. He is not such a commanding figure in the *Symposiacs*, but his philosophical stature would permit him to have a commanding voice. In this case there might have been something of a compromise. Reading his speech in the *E at Delphoi*, Plutarch’s friends would certainly expect to find some resemblance to Ammonios’ real teaching. They might have wondered, too, why Plutarch left him on the sidelines so long. One suspects an attempt to keep some distance between his philosophy and Ammonios²⁹.

²⁷ See B. PUECH, 1992, p. 4886. Others are less certain about their roles; see P. A. CLEMENT, 1969, pp. 48-9, note b.

²⁸ J. OPSOMER, 2007, sees the topics of the *Platonic Questions* being picked up and developed in the dialogues, e.g. *The E at Delphoi*, including the deliberate introduction of errors to be corrected. In this case, Ammonios carries on the role that Plutarch had in the *Platonic Question* (5). In the end useful or worthy aspects of the false views will be incorporated into the final, superior solution, at times one original with Plutarch (esp. ms. pp. 17-20). For the position of the *Symposiacs* in this, see ms. p. 17.

²⁹ See my forthcoming article, “Proceeding to Loftier Heights’: Plutarch the Theologian and

The role of Theon, the Egyptian *grammatikos*, who appears in only two *Symposiacs* (1.9 and 8.8), might barely allow him to be a speaker in *The Face on the Moon*. The other Theon, the “companion” of Plutarch, whom we find in only three *Symposiacs* (1.4, 4.3, 8.6), surprisingly appears in the *E at Delphoi*, *The Oracles at Delphoi*, and *That Epicurus Makes a Pleasant Life Impossible*. That he should be such an authoritative figure in *The Oracles at Delphoi*, with the final and definitive speech of 18 pages, comes as a great surprise. Certainly the suspicions of Plutarch’s readers and friends would also be aroused by Kleombrotos, the Spartan friend, who describes the *daimones* in such horrendous terms in *The Obsolescence of the Oracles*, and receives 17 pages³⁰. He appears in no other work, including the *Symposiacs*, but his Frankensteinian exposition has captivated the imagination of great religious scholars (410C-F, 414F-418D). The Stoic Sophist, Philippos of Prousius on the Hypios in Bithynia is responsible for the story of the death of the Great Pan off the Island of Paxos (near the present Corfu) in the Ionian Sea (419B-E)³¹. He is the only speaker in 7.7 and has a few words in 7.8, but appears nowhere else in Plutarch’s works³². What goes for Kleombrotos applies as well for Demetrios of Tarsos, a grammarian friend of Plutarch’s, responsible for the story of the “Great Souls” dying off the coast of the British Isles (6 pages) (419E-420A). He, too, is absent from the *Symposiacs* and appears nowhere else in the *Moralia*³³.

In conclusion a bad memory may be a plus for drinking partners, who usually have bad memories anyway and sometimes even complete amnesia. But let us opt for Plutarch in *Symposiac* 6.1, where he champions the necessity to remember the philosophical discussions which occur in *symposions* and even to record them. Thus justifying the reason for their existence, he has passed on the *Symposiacs* to posterity, including us, even if leaving the vague impression that all was not, strictly speaking, “recorded”.

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³⁰ B. PUECH, 1992, p. 4843, presumes he was a companion, in the *ephebeia*, of the Philippos who was ephor of Sparta in 87/89 A.D.

³¹ Prousius, not Prousa. O’Neil’s index for the *Moralia* still gets it wrong.

³² Evidently the same person, though in 418A described only as an historian (συγγραφεύς). See B. PUECH, 1992, pp. 4869-70, but her remark (p. 4870) about him mentioning Bithynia in *On the Oracles at Delphoi* seems to be mistaken.

³³ B. PUECH, 1992, pp. 4844-5, has a long entry on Demetrios.

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PLUTARCH'S *TECHNE RHETORIKE* FOR THE SYMPOSIUM IN
QUAESTIONES CONVIVALES: THE IMPORTANCE OF SPEAKING WELL
TO CULTIVATE FRIENDSHIP

LLUÍS GONZÀLEZ JULIÀ
University of Barcelona

Abstract

This paper discusses the advice on rhetorical matters that Plutarch gives in the *Quaestiones Convivales* to stress the importance of good conversational skills in establishing fruitful relationships with other people during after-dinner table talk. Reflecting the association between education and the symposiac context under the Roman Empire, Plutarch suggests procedures for choosing and discussing the best themes for conversation, and for interacting in an appropriate manner with the other guests. Rhetoric thus takes up a central position in situations in which friendships may be made or strengthened.

The banquet in Ancient Greece was one of the favourite occasions for the transmission of values and knowledge. The conversations held after the meal, accompanied by wine – the final part of the gathering, known as the *symposion* – ranged over the most topical themes of the moment and helped their participants to build up links of friendship based on common interests and beliefs. Praise for bravery and youth centred the conversation in the circles of Callinus and Tyrtaeus, while slightly later, Alcaeus and Theognis celebrated the membership of a political faction which trained the young in the traditional values that they will need to perpetuate their status. Plato described another kind of banquet that emerged during the Classical Era, a banquet where the philosophical conversation of the most distinguished citizens helped the guests to understand the world around them. In the Empire, the banquet was retained as a space for encouraging fellowship and the exchange of ideas. However, as befitted the times of the Second Sophistic, the subjects addressed were more trivial: the *pepaideumenoí*, cultivated men educated in the system of the *egkyklios paideia*, showed off their knowledge in erudite debates in which every participant could learn something new regarding the theme under discussions¹.

Rhetoric was also a fundamental ability for those cultivated men seeking to hold interesting table talks with their friends. After several centuries in which the dedication to laudatory and deliberative rhetoric predominated, in the Empire the importance of forensic rhetoric gradually increased². A rhetor of the Second Sophistic would not only have trained pupils for careers in political councils or the courts where they would make declamations or representations in front of auditoria, but would also have had pupils who did

¹ F. PORDOMINGO PARDO, 1999 stresses the literary character of the banquets of the Empire, and E. SUÁREZ DE LA TORRE, 2005, pp. 472-9 places Plutarch's *symposia* inside the environment of academic and cultural circles.

² Plutarch (*QC* IX 14.3, 744d) considers this form of rhetoric to be the first to have developed.

not wish to devote themselves professionally to sophistry but were interested in learning the ways of good speaking for its own sake³. At school, then, pupils studied everyday situations in which an educated man could gain distinction by demonstrating his oratory skills. Weddings, births, anniversaries, farewells or funerals were occasions for showing one's knowledge of oratory and rhetoric. In the classroom, teachers used small manuals which described the most appropriate themes for each occasion and how they should be presented. In the *Technē rhetorikē* (attributed to Dionysius of Halicarnassus, but thought to date from the third century AD⁴) are seven examples of these manuals, known as μέθοδοι; they advise that speeches to celebrate births should begin by mentioning the day the subject was born, the time of year, and the place, and then should speak of the qualities of the newborn and prophesize a promising future (D. H., *Rh.* III)⁵. Likewise, even if not in a systematic way, but rather by means of interspersed comments often found in the prefaces, or in the form of personal observations during the discussions between the guests, Plutarch establishes in *Quaestiones Convivales* (*QC* hereafter) a theory of rhetoric for speeches and conversations at banquets, which would not have been out of place in any rhetorical handbook of his time.

Rhetoric was the third and last stage in the Graeco-Roman educational system and completed the acquisition of knowledge of cultivated people. In parallel to its technical specificity, the learned men belonging to educated circles such as Plutarch's, found in the teachings of rhetors the essential elements of their culture⁶. "Matière de base de la *paideia*, la rhétorique ne cessait de fournir des cadres de pensée aux *pepaideumenoï*"⁷, and, therefore, rhetoric was not excluded from their table talks, as well as they discussed many other subjects from the other two previous educational levels. Certainly, Plutarch's *QC* contains many passages that deal with the subjects of the first stages of the education given to the young of the Empire⁸. For instance, some questions discuss the nature of the letters of the alphabet: one discussion enquires about the numerical proportion between the quantity of vowels and semivowels (*QC* IX 3, 738c-739a), and another why the *alpha* is placed first among the letters (*QC* IX 2, 737c-738c). Plutarch clarifies

³ T. WHITMARSH, 2001, p. 5 describes a society that marked its prestige in terms of its knowledge and immersion in the Greek *paideia*, not only among those who devoted themselves actively to literature but also in society in general.

⁴ Cf. G. KENNEDY, 1972, p. 320 and A. MANIERI, 2005, p. 18 for the attribution and the date of composition of the work.

⁵ In spite of this ancient interest in speeches delivered in private occasions, there is not any extant treatise on the rhetoric of conversations; cf. L. PERNOT, 1993b for a reflection about the lack of a conversational theory in rhetorical texts,

⁶ The theory and practice of rhetoric in other treatises by Plutarch have been studied in depth in the collective volume of L. VAN DER STOCKT, 2000 and in H. M. MARTIN JR., 2001. Specific studies of the theme in the *QC* are G. MATINO, 1991 and S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1996.

⁷ F. FRAZIER, 2000b, pp.188-89.

⁸ H. I. MARROU, 1948, pp. 389-421 and R. CRIBIORE, 2001, pp. 160-245 describe a three-stage educational process in which the young learnt to read and write with the *grammatistes*, studied and discussed literary authors with the *grammatikos*, and practised techniques of composition with the *rhetor*.

that the answer proposed by Hermeias was the stock reason given in the schools (*QC IX 2.2, 737e*). Words, and especially their use and their etymology, constitute an object of discussion in their own right. Among the numerous examples we find throughout the nine books, two cases apply directly to the context of the symposium. First, Lamprias defends the etymology of the term used in Latin to designate the “supper” (coena-κῆνα) as the meal that is taken along with friends, thus deriving from the word κοινωνία (“fellowship”) (*QC VIII 6.5, 726e*)⁹. The second example is a question that debates the meaning of the expression Achilles uses to ask Patroclus for more wine: “ζωρότερον δὲ κέραιε” (*QC V 4, 677c-678b*). Among the replies, Niceratus rejects the traditional interpretation of “unmixed” for the term ζωρός and proposes the meaning of “hot” for the word ζωρότερον, suggested by words such as ζωτικού (“life-giving”) or ζέσεως (“boiling”); but the poet Sosicles argues that the term means “well-mixed”, given the relation between the expression and a sentence in Empedocles.

In the schools of the grammarians, the verses of the poets were discussed and interpreted exhaustively in order to teach the pupils their meaning and the methods of expression they used. Indeed, the commentary of literary passages (especially texts by Homer) was an endless source of themes for after-dinner table-talk. The *QC* presents many examples in which the diners debate matters such as why the poet used a particular epithet for each particular liquid, but called oil only liquid (*QC VI 9, 695e-696d*), or which of Aphrodite’s hands Diomedes wounded (*QC IX 4, 739a-d*). Literary quotations¹⁰ are found throughout the discussions, and are mostly from authors who made up the core of the school syllabus¹¹. On one occasion Plutarch himself states that some of the issues that come up in the discussions of the literary passages, such as the question of the antinomy of the third book of the *Iliad*, should be studied by rhetoricians, who are well skilled in this field (*QC IX 13.1 742a-b*). So rhetoric was of considerable importance in the banquet context; it served not only to resolve doubts presented in trivial questions, but had a key role in ensuring that diners could enjoy the company and the conversation to the full. Ammonius¹² claims that everybody needs culture and speeches (*QC IX 14.2, 743e-f*), just after Herodes the

⁹ Cf. M. CERZO, 1986 and B. ROCHETTE, 1997, pp. 239-41 for an outline of Plutarch’s use of Greek and Latin. B. ROCHETTE, 1997, p. 261 specifically studies the discussion of the etymology of κῆνα.

¹⁰ The use of literary quotations in speeches was a demonstration of the speaker’s learning and erudition, but they were also an important rhetorical device that could enhance the speech’s elegance and charm: ἐπειτα περὶ στίχων εὐκαιρίας ἐνέβαλεν λόγον, ὡς μὴ μόνον χάριν ἀλλὰ καὶ χρεῖαν ἔστιν ὅτε μεγάλην ἐχούσης. 736e IX 1, 2; cf. Demetr., *Eloc.* III 150 and Quint., *Inst.* I 6.39. For a discussion of the use of quotations from Homer in Plutarch, see J. M. DÍAZ LAVADO, 1994 and I. SLUITER, 2004-2005.

¹¹ T. MORGAN, 1998 analyses the content, number, and importance of the literary texts used in the schools of the Empire.

¹² Ammonius had organized a banquet for some teachers to celebrate the end of the exams at the Diogeneion; there they talked about the appropriate occasion to quote ancient books (*QC IX 1.1, 736d*), which shows a close relation between education and some banquets.

rhetor has praised the function of rhetoric in conversation, attributing to rhetoric the same importance in conversation as it has in front of the jury or in deliberations (IX 14.1, 743d).

For Herodes, the ideal diner was a good ὁμιλητικός, a person able to speak well when attending an “*entretien*”¹³. Throughout the *QC*, the success of a banquet depends not so much on the food served but on the conversation and the company. Plutarch tells Sosius Senecio of a comment once made by an amiable man:

Χαρίεντος ἀνδρός, ὃ Σόσσιε Σενεκίων, καὶ φιλανθρώπου λόγον ἔχουσι Ῥωμαῖοι διὰ στόματος, ὅστις ἦν ὁ εἰπών, ἐπεὶ μόνος ἐδεῖπνησεν, ‘βεβρωκέμαι, μὴ δεδειπνηκέμαι σήμερον’, ὡς τοῦ δείπνου κοινωνίαν καὶ φιλοφροσύνην ἐφιηδύνουσαν αἰὲ ποθοῦντος. (*QC VII Praef.* 1, 697c).

The Romans, Sosius Senecio, are fond of quoting a witty and sociable person who said, after a solitary meal, ‘I have eaten, but not dined to-day,’ implying that a ‘dinner’ always requires friendly sociability for seasoning.¹⁴

For this man, the banquet context always represented tolerance and cordiality. Plutarch also explains that the most important aspect of the banquet is the presence of a friend, family member or acquaintance – not to eat and drink with us, but to take part in the give-and-take of conversation (*QC VII, Praef.*, 1, 697d)¹⁵. In fact, the first of the questions posed in the second book tries to establish whether it is better for the food at a banquet to be served to each guest or on common trays from which each guest should serve himself (*QC II 10*, 642e-644e). Hagias favours the use of common trays, since, in his view, the banquet is an occasion that invites the company to general fellowship (*QC II 10.1*, 642f-643a), manifested not only in sharing a common meal but also in singing, entertainments and conversation (*QC II 10.1*, 643b). Conversation is the sustenance that feeds the soul once the body has had its fill of food and drink (*QC V Praef.*, 1, 673a); men of wit and taste devote themselves to it and feed the soul once they have eaten, in order to enjoy the pleasure that derives from talk (*QC V Praef.*, 1, 672e).

So it is not only the body that should be satisfied at the banquet. Guests come to share not only meat, wine and dessert, but also entertainments such as conversation and the amiability that leads to friendship (*QC IV Praef.*, 660b). For Dicaearchus, it is important to obtain the empathy of all, especially that of well-bred people; the banquet is a better setting than the market place – a place where people go to discuss their business – since people normally attend parties in order to make new friends or to give a good time to the old (*QC IV Praef.*, 659e-660a). Dicaearchus is not alone; significantly, in the preface to the

¹³ Cf. L. PERNOT, 1993b, pp. 428-29.

¹⁴ Translation taken from E. L. MINAR ET AL., 1961, p. 5.

¹⁵ P. A. STADTER, 1999 stresses the importance of conversation in the banquet, which Plutarch compares with the enjoyment of fine food (see also L. ROMERI, 2002, pp. 183-9).

first book Plutarch repeats the common belief that eating together encourages friendship (*QC I Praef.*, 612d)¹⁶. Later, one of the norms established for the celebration of the banquet is the prohibition of doing or saying anything that may impede its principal function: that is, to heighten fellowship, or to engender it through pleasure (*QC I 4.3*, 621c). At a banquet it is better to run out of wine than to take away the pleasure of conversation (*QC V 5.2*, 679a), because this would imply the division of the party into separate groups and would destroy the idea of community (*QC V 5.2*, 679b). Alexander the Great, whose deeds and sayings acquired the category of *chreiai*¹⁷ in the Empire, is also praised in the *QC* as a model of a wise man who spent a great deal of time in banquets, but drank little, preferring to spend his time conversing talking with friends (*QC I 6.1*, 623d)¹⁸.

But, how should these conversations technically be according to Plutarch? The first question of the first book seems to be a declaration of intentions, as Plutarch sets out the types of theme that are suitable for table talk (*QC I 1.4*, 614a-b). He also summarizes them in the preface to the fifth book (*QC V Praef.* 1, 673a). In general, they are themes taken from history or from everyday life, which allow reflections on life itself, history, or unusual subjects. Among the questions discussed in the *QC* are the appropriateness of talking about politics (*QC VII 9*, 714a-d and *QC VII 10*, 714d-716c) or about philosophy (*QC I 1*, 612e-615c). Politics and philosophy, it is concluded, have their place at the banquet, providing they do not interfere with the main object of the occasion¹⁹. Philosophical themes should be sought that do not cause angry confrontations or are so difficult or technical that non-specialists are unable to take part in the conversation²⁰ and begin singing or telling foolish stories (*QC I 1.5*, 614f-615a). Plutarch concludes that pedantry has no place at the banquet (*QC I 1.5*, 615b). All the diners must be included and, whether or not they speak, must feel that they are participants in the conversation (*QC VI Praef.* 1, 686c). This is the basic norm for the choice of a theme at a banquet (*QC VII Praef.*, 697e).

“What, according to Xenophon, are the most agreeable questions and jokes to make at table?” (*QC II 1*, 629d-634f) is the first question of the second book: the answer is not very different to the one Plutarch gives for philosophy:

¹⁶ Plutarch represents friendship as one of the most important elements of society. The multiple ways of representing and denoting it, both in the *Lives* and in the *Moralia*, have been discussed by M. CEREZO, 1997, pp. 110-22; R. GIANNATTASIO ANDRIA, 2000; M. L. DESCLOS, 2001; R. M. AGUILAR, 2002 and S.-T. TEODORSSON, 2007.

¹⁷ A *chreia* was an example of the words or deeds of a famous person which generally contained a pedagogical or moral element. cf. R. CRIBIÖRE, 2001, pp. 223-5 and R. WEBB, 2001, pp. 294-6 on their rhetorical use as *progymnasmata* at school.

¹⁸ Cf. the contribution of P. GÓMEZ & M. MESTRE in this volume and T. WHITMARSH, 2002, pp. 182-3, on the use of the figure of Alexander in the banquet.

¹⁹ For an analysis of the themes addressed in the *QC* see E. SUÁREZ DE LA TORRE, 2005, pp. 476-9 and F. MARTÍN GARCÍA, 1987, p. 26. S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1995 specifically analyses the inclusion of politics in the *QC*.

²⁰ For this precise reason, Plutarch cannot include any systematical treatment of the rhetorical theory in *QC*, and has to spread his opinions in several passages.

the most agreeable questions are the ones that are accessible to the greatest number of the guests (*QC I 1.5, 614e*). They should be simple, easy to answer, and must deal with singular themes:

εἰ δὲ δοκεῖ καὶ ἡμᾶς ἐπιθέσθαι τῷ λόγῳ, πρῶτον ἡδέως ἐρωτᾶσθαι μοι δοκοῦσιν ἃ ῥαδίως ἀποκρίνασθαι δύνανται· ταῦτα δ' ἐστὶν ὧν ἐμπειρίαν ἔχουσιν. ἃ γὰρ ἀγνοοῦσιν, ἢ μὴ λέγοντες ἄχθονται καθάπερ αἰτηθέντες ὃ δοῦναι μὴ δύνανται, ἢ λέγοντες ἀπὸ δόξης καὶ εἰκασίας οὐ βεβαίον διαταράσσονται καὶ κινδυνεύουσιν. ἂν δὲ μὴ μόνον ἔχη τὸ ῥαδίον ἀλλὰ καὶ τι περιττὸν ἢ ἀπόκρισις, ἡδίων ἐστὶ τῷ ἀποκρινομένῳ. (*QC II 1.2, 630a*)

And yet if it is decided that we too apply ourselves to the problem, it seems to me, in the first place, that men are glad to be asked what they are able to answer easily, that is, questions about matters in which they have experience; for about what they do not know, either they say nothing and are chagrined as though asked for what they cannot give or they reply with a guess and an uncertain conjecture and so find themselves in a distressing and dangerous situation. However, if the answer is not only easy but somehow striking, it is more agreeable to the answerer²¹.

It is important to ask about things that one's interlocutor will be pleased to answer (*QC II 1.2, 630c*); one should not ask about wrongs or misfortune suffered (*QC II 1.3, 630e*), but should encourage people to speak about their successes (*QC II 1.3, 630f-631a*). Similarly, the questions should not lead to conflict; they should elicit not anger or envy among the diners, but goodwill (*QC II 1.3, 631b*). However, care is required with conversations that might contain praise²². It is important that the host should not drink to one guest before another (*QC I 2.2, 616b*), since this may arouse envy and jealousy (*QC I 2.3, 616e*). And above all one must avoid praising oneself, as the company may be irritated by the speaker's vainglory (*QC II 1.2, 630d*).

So, as well as determining which themes are acceptable at a banquet, another point should be considered before starting to speak: one must bear in mind who is present (*QC I 1.3, 613d*)²³. If the philosopher (or, by extension, any speaker) sees that his dining companions are not interested in his words, he should change his tone and his subject, in order to follow the others and find pleasure in their entertainments (*QC I 1.3, 613f*). An awareness of the right occasion and the situation in which one finds oneself (καιρός)²⁴ is especially

²¹ Translation taken from P. A. CLEMENT & H. B. HOFFLEIT, 1969, p. 111.

²² L. PERNOT, 1993a, lists all the aspects that regulated the techniques of composing and delivering speeches of praise. Despite dealing with epideictic oratory, they can be applied as well to praises in conversations.

²³ Knowing the audience to which one addresses a speech was a basic norm for the orators in courtrooms and tribunals; by adapting their words to the occasion, their speech could achieve its objective, according to Quint., *Inst.* XI 1.43.

²⁴ Appropriateness is one of the basic virtues of the orator. A speech should be delivered in the right place, at the right moment and in the right manner; cf. Arist., *Rh.* III 7 1408a-b and Quint., *Inst.* XI 1.1.

important to avoid errors when speaking (*QC* I 1.1, 613a). As Simonides says to one of his interlocutors who remained silent, it may even be preferable to say nothing if one runs the risk of saying something inappropriate:

Σιμωνίδης ὁ ποιητής, ὃ Σόσσιε Σενεκίων, ἔν τινι πότῳ ξένον ἰδὼν κατακείμενον σιωπῇ καὶ μηδενὶ διαλεγόμενον, ὃ ἄνθρωπῳ εἶπεν, ‘εἰ μὲν ἡλίθιος εἶ, σοφὸν πράγμα ποιεῖς· εἰ δὲ σοφός, ἡλίθιον.’ ἄμαθίην γὰρ ἄμεινον ὡς φησὶν Ἡράκλειτος [fr. 95] ‘κρύπτειν’. (*QC* III *Praef.* 1, 644e)

When the poet Simonides at some drinking-party, my dear Sossius Senecio, saw a guest sitting in silence and holding no conversation with anyone, he said, ‘Sir, if you are a fool, you are doing a wise thing; but if wise, a foolish thing.’ As Heraclitus remarks, ‘it is certainly better to conceal ignorance’²⁵.

When one is ready to speak and is sure that the *inuentio*²⁶ is correct, the *elocutio*²⁷ of the speech must also conform to certain basic precepts. In the fourth question of the first book, Plutarch examines the qualities of the ideal director of the feast. One of them is the ability to give brief and concise instructions (*QC* I 4.1, 620b). In fact, *brevitas*/βραχύτης²⁸ is one of characteristics stressed most by treatises on rhetoric. It is required especially in the narrations of events and the presentation of arguments: in the first case, so that the explanations should not be excessively long and the thread of the story be lost, and in the second, so that the presentation should be energetic, vigorous, clear, and direct. Although Plutarch does not mention the point explicitly, his reproduction of the conversation of his dining companions suggests that the most important features of their interventions are moderation and brevity. This brevity should not be considered as a lack of expressiveness, but as the need to avoid superfluity or irrelevance to the theme under discussion²⁹ and to make sure that a single speaker should not turn the conversation into a monologue and thus defeat the point of the banquet. In the arguments presented during the symposiac gathering, Plutarch also recommends that speakers try to persuade their audiences rather than to demonstrate things to them; they should reserve the use of methods such as enthymemes or syllogisms³⁰ for situations that require a more energetic and direct type of argumentation (*QC* I 1.4, 614c).

²⁵ Translation taken from P. A. CLEMENT & H. B. HOFFLEIT, 1969, p. 199.

²⁶ The *inuentio* (εὐρεσις) is the part of rhetoric that analyses the elements that should be included in speeches; cf. Quint., *Inst.* III 3.1 and Hermog., *Inv.* 1.65.

²⁷ The *elocutio* (λέξις) is the part of rhetoric that analyses how the thought and ideas in the speech are expressed in language; cf. Arist., *Rh.* III 1 1403b, Quint., *Inst.* VIII 1.1.

²⁸ Brevity is one of the main virtues of speeches in the simple style; cf. Demetr., *Eloc.* IV 197-198, Cic., *Inv.* 1.28 and Quint., *Inst.* IV 2.31.

²⁹ Quint., *Inst.* IV 2.42 notes that brevity does not imply speaking little, but that the speech should not last longer than is strictly necessary. However, excessive brevity is considered an error: the speaker may leave out important details.

³⁰ Enthymemes and syllogisms are variations on the method of argumentation which proceeds from deductions made on the basis of logical and dialectical premises and conclusions; cf. Arist., *Rh.* I 2 1356a-b and Quint., *Inst.* V 14.5.

Menander, whose works were among the main instruments used to teach Greek to schoolchildren, was a model for the ideal style that should be used in the speeches and his works were appropriate at the banquet as well (*QC* VII 8.3, 712b). This seems to mean that the style of a table talk must be agreeable and simple³¹, without great ornamentation or metrical rhythms more characteristic of grander occasions, and must use simple, sensible sentences. And finally, to heighten the pleasure, seriousness and light-heartedness should be combined³², as Plutarch notes in other passages (*QC* I 4.3, 621d). The place of jokes at the banquet is discussed in detail in the *QC*, though the instructions given concerning their use are the same as those that refer to serious interventions³³. One should only use jokes that give pleasure. Just as one should be aware of the aptness of what one is about to say, one should consider whether it is better to make the joke or to remain silent (*QC* II 1.4, 631c); one must be alert to the opportune moment (*QC* II 1.10, 633e). A successful joke is one that emerges naturally from the conversation, one that has an unaffected tone, and does not appear to be premeditated or forced (*QC* II 2.13, 634d-e). In summary, then, jokes should be used with discretion, in the same way as good sense is applied to avoid problems in other situations such as the market place, the arena, or the courtroom (*QC* I 5.2, 622b).

The harmony of the meeting will be maintained if all these rules of protocol are followed. However, the director of the feast must know what to do and what to say on occasions in which this harmony is threatened. The main dangers that the host may face are disputes between his fellow diners and the excesses caused by wine. Some, who have little interest in maintaining friendship, raise topics of conversation that may bring to light the imperfections in the character of the others (*QC* III *Praef.* 2, 645b). Quite often diners may argue with each other, or with a servant or with the host himself. This situation is unbecoming among friends and in the banquet context (*QC* II 10.2, 644a)³⁴. So the host should be careful to seat the guests at table in such a way as to reduce rivalries as far as possible; difficult guests should be kept apart so as to avoid fights between poets and sophists (*QC* I 2.6, 618e) or teachers (*QC* IX 1.1, 736e). In general, then, the host must also create a cordial atmosphere among the diners to avoid situations of tension (*QC* I 4.2, 621a). Wine is an excellent instrument for helping people to relax, to speak to the other guests and to strike up friendships (*QC* IV *Praef.*, 660c)³⁵; but excess may lead to inappropriate behaviour and may

³¹ For Dionysius of Halicarnassus (D. H., *Th.* 48) the skill in the application of the virtues of expression should be present both in courtrooms and tribunals and in conversations between friends.

³² The importance of laughter as a fundamental part of the banquet and as a counterpoint to the seriousness of philosophical conversations has been stressed by P. GÓMEZ & M. JUFRESA, 1999 and F. FRAZIER, 2000a, pp. 487-9.

³³ Cf. M. A. BELLU, 2007 for a detailed study of the conception of jokes in Plutarch's *QC*.

³⁴ P. GÓMEZ, (in press), analyses the vision given by Lucian, in the *Symposium or the Lapiths*, of a banquet disrupted by the fights between sophists and philosophers caused by excessive drinking.

³⁵ As explained by L. ROMERI, 2002, pp. 172-6, S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1999 and F. B. TITCHENER,

cause men to chatter about matters that should remain concealed (*QC III Praef.* 2, 645b). Excessive drinking also reduces the ability to speak correctly (*QC III* 5.2, 652d)³⁶, a skill that is of vital importance to the success of the banquet. Indeed, there is nothing more imprudent or out-of-place than a conversation produced by excessive drinking (*QC VIII Praef.*, 716e)³⁷. Finally, if nothing can be done to resolve a conflict or to calm a squabble more typical of the market place than of a feast, the discussion should stop and make way for musical entertainment (*QC VII* 8.4, 713e-f). But music should not be introduced if it is unnecessary: the diners should take their main pleasure from conversation (*QC VII* 8.4, 713d), because conversation should be the centre of the banquet at all times (*QC VII* 8.4, 713b-c).

So appropriate conversation helps to create a congenial atmosphere and to establish bonds of empathy and fellowship feeling between the guests. Talk is the most important element of the banquet, its foundation. As a rhetor would have done, Plutarch details the themes that should be discussed at banquets, how one should speak and even what one should do if the conversation flags. Though scattered throughout the *QC* rather than brought together in a cohesive whole, Plutarch's descriptions are sufficient to show the reader that even at the dinner table, an intimate and relaxed meeting, the *techne rhetorike* help guests to participate in a suitable manner in the conversation and help them to make and maintain friendships.

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1999, wine occupies a key function in the banquet, as the name *sym-posion* itself shows; in moderate amounts, it animates diners and helps them to participate actively in conversation.

³⁶ Quint., *Inst. XI Praef.*, 1 identifies the effects of wine on the ability to speak as poor pronunciation, a mannered air, tomfoolery, or the trembling characteristic of old age.

³⁷ The vocabulary that Plutarch uses to denote excessive drinking and its consequences for the drinker is the key feature of the study of E. CALDERÓN DORDA, 2001.

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INFLUENCIA DE LOS *PROGYMNASMATA* EN LA COMPOSICIÓN DE LOS *SYMPOSLA* DE PLUTARCO: EL CASO DE *EL BANQUETE DE LOS SIETE SABIOS*

ANA VICENTE SÁNCHEZ
Universidad de Zaragoza

Abstract

In the ancient schools of rhetoric some exercises (called *progymnasmata*) were practiced in order to teach the students how they should write literary compositions. This training had some influence on the composition of the *Septem Sapientium Convivium*. These “preliminary exercises” are preserved in some textbooks of prose composition and rhetoric. In this case, the earliest collection of exercises has been used: Theon’s *Progymnasmata Handbook*, which probably dates from the first century after Christ. The three *progymnasmata* analysed in this study are: *χρεία* (*chreia* or *anecdote*), *μῦθος* (*fable*) and *διήγημα* (*narration*). They are present in the *Septem Sapientium Convivium* in many different ways. The aim of this study is to specify them, to compare their form to Theon’s *Handbook*, and to explain how Plutarch used them.

Como reza el título de este trabajo¹ se va a estudiar la presencia y uso de algunos ejercicios preparatorios propios de las escuelas de retórica en *El banquete de los Siete Sabios*. Evidentemente nos encontramos ante una composición literaria que, como tal, no va a reproducir con exactitud esos *προγυμνάσματα*, pero sí pueden vislumbrarse las huellas de la formación retórica: unas características y unos rasgos que inequívocamente nos remiten a ellos². Dada la extensión de este trabajo, se va a limitar el análisis a tres tipos de *progymnasma*: *χρεία*, *μῦθος* y *διήγημα*; y, por el mismo motivo, sólo se expondrá algún ejemplo representativo de cada ejercicio. El punto de partida de estas comparaciones va a ser el manual de Teón, el primero que se nos ha conservado³, probablemente contemporáneo⁴ de Plutarco.

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² Vide otros trabajos que desarrollan esta relación entre los *progymnasmata* y la técnica compositiva de Plutarco: M. BELLU, 2005 y 2005b; J. A. FERNANDEZ DELGADO, 2000 y 2005; L. MIGUÉLEZ CAVERO, 2005; F. PORDOMINGO PARDO, 2005; A. VICENTE SÁNCHEZ, 2005.

³ El propio autor comenta que existen manuales anteriores: Theon, p. 59: *περάσομαι παραδοῦναι, οὐχ ὡς οὐχι καὶ ἄλλων τινῶν συγγεγραφότων περὶ τούτων, ἀλλ’ οὐ μικρόν τι καὶ αὐτὸς ἐπίζων συλλήψεσθαι τοῖς λέγειν προαιρουμένοις*. Se ha utilizado la edición de M. PATILLON, 1997, conservando la numeración de la canónica de L. SPENGLER, *Rhetores Graeci*, vol. II, Leipzig, 1854.

⁴ Compuesto quizá este manual de ejercicios en el siglo I o entre finales del siglo I y principios del II; cf. R. F. HOCK & E. N. O’NEIL, 1986, p. 10; M. PATILLON, 1997, pp. VII sqq., G. A. KENNEDY, 1972, pp. 615 s., y 1983, pp. 54 sqq. y 2003, p. XII s. y 1. Para una datación más tardía, vide M. HEATH, 2000, pp. 129 sqq., aunque la crítica en general – y también este trabajo – prefiere esa datación en torno al siglo I.

I. Χρεΐαι. Las siguientes seis χρεΐαι pronunciadas en *El banquete*⁵ pueden conformar una idea de su forma y uso en este tratado⁶, si bien son muchas más las que contiene la obra⁷.

nº 1 y 2. 147A-B: ὡς ἐρωτηθεῖς ὑπὸ Μολπαγόρου τοῦ Ἴωνος τί παραδοξότατον εἶης ἐωρακῶς, ἀποκρίναιο ‘τύραννον γέροντα’, καὶ πάλιν ἔν τινι πότῳ, περὶ τῶν θηρίων λόγου γενομένου, φαίης κάκιστον εἶναι τῶν μὲν ἀγρίων θηρίων τὸν τύραννον, τῶν δ’ ἡμέρων τὸν κόλακα.

nº 3. 147B-C: πρὸς δὲ τὴν μετάθεσιν τὸ τοῦ νεανίσκου πέπονθα τοῦ βαλόντος μὲν ἐπὶ τὴν κύνα πατάξαντος δὲ τὴν μητριαν καὶ εἰπόντος ‘οὐδ’ οὕτω κακῶς.’

nº 4. 148A: ὅθεν ἄριστα Χίλων, καλούμενος ἐχθές, οὐ πρότερον ὠμολόγησεν ἢ πυθέσθαι τῶν κεκλημένων ἕκαστον. ἔφη γὰρ ὅτι σύμπλουν ἀγνώμονα δεῖ φέρειν καὶ σύσκηνον οἷς πλεῖν ἀνάγκη καὶ στρατεύεσθαι· πρὸς δὲ τὸ συμπόταις ἑαυτὸν ὡς ἔτυχε καταμιγνύειν οὐ νοῦν ἔχοντος ἀνδρός ἔστιν.

nº 5. 152A: τοὺς νόμους ὁ Σόλων ἔφη μετακινήτικους εἶναι.

nº 6. 153E: ὁ δὲ προπίνων τὴν θάλατταν Ἀμάσιδι βάρβαρος ἐδεῖτο τῆς Πιττακοῦ βραχυλογίας, ἧ πρὸς Ἀλυάττην ἐχρήσατο προστάττοντά τι καὶ γράφοντα Λεσβίοις ὑπερήφανον, ἀποκρινάμενος οὐδὲν ἀλλ’ ἢ μόνον κελύσας κρόμμυα καὶ θερμὸν ἄρτον ἐσθίειν.

La chreia es, según el manual de Teón, un breve dicho o acción atribuidos a un personaje generalmente conocido⁸, como es el caso de la mayoría que

⁵ El texto procede de la edición de J. DEFRADAS ET AL., *Plutarque. Oeuvres morales*, II, París, 1985.

⁶ Sobre su presencia en *De tuenda sanitate praecepta*, vide M. BELLU, 2005, pp. 209 sqq. y 2005b, pp. 176 sqq.; sobre su uso en otras obras, vide M. BELLU, 2005b, pp. 325 sqq. (agradezco a la autora, Mariangela Bellu, su gentileza al permitirme consultar su tesis doctoral).

⁷ Además de las estudiadas en este trabajo, pueden citarse las siguientes χρεΐαι pronunciadas por los personajes: 147C (Tales se sirve de una afirmación de Pítaco), 149A-B (Tales reprocha a Alexídemo mediante las palabras de un lacedemonio anónimo), 155 D (Quilón sustenta su parecer a través de una contestación de Licurgo), 158C (Cleodoro cita una opinión de Tales), 160A-B (Solón utiliza unos versos homéricos). A éstas podrían añadirse las χρεΐαι que Plutarco, a través de la narración de Diocles, se permite utilizar: 147A (una afirmación de Nilóxeno), 150B-C (réplica de Bías a Tales), 152A-D (χρεΐαι de los sabios respondiendo a la propuesta de Periandro sobre reyes y tiranos; a ellas se añade la aportación de Periandro a petición de sus comensales), 152D (intervenciones de Quilón y Esopo), 154D-E (opiniones de los sabios y de Periandro sobre el gobierno igualitario, a petición de Mnesifilo), 155C-D (opiniones de los sabios acerca de la mejor casa, a petición de Diocles), 157B (Cleobulo, para contestar a una demanda de Quersias, cuenta una fábula cuyo “enlace” - vide infra - consiste en una χρεΐα), 157 C (primera parte de la contestación de Cleobulo a Cleodoro), 157D (intervención de Tales sobre la persona de Epiménides).

⁸ Theon, p. 96: χρεΐα ἐστὶ σύντομος ἀπόφασις ἢ πράξις μετ’ εὐστοχίας ἀναφερομένη εἰς τι ὠρισμένον πρόσωπον ἢ ἀναλογοῦν προσώπῳ, p. 97: ἢ μὲν γὰρ σύντομος. Puede hacer referencia, por otra parte, tanto a lo particular como a lo general (Theon, p. 96: καὶ τῷ ποτὲ μὲν τὸ καθόλου, ποτὲ δὲ τὸ ἐπὶ μέρους ἀποφαίνεσθαι τὴν χρεΐαν), y se caracteriza también especialmente por ser útil o graciosa o ambas cosas a la vez (Theon, p. 96: ἔτι δὲ τῷ χαριεντίζεσθαι τὴν χρεΐαν ἐνίοτε μὴδὲν ἔχουσιν βιωφελές, p. 97: εἴρηται δὲ χρεΐα κατ’ ἐξοχήν, ὅτι μᾶλλον τῶν ἄλλων πρὸς πολλὰ χρεΐώδης ἐστὶ τῷ βίῳ). Sobre la definición y uso de *la chreia* en la retórica, vide M.

incluye Plutarco en *El banquete de los Siete Sabios*; las atribuidas a personajes no determinados son muy poco frecuentes, como la del joven de la *χρεία* nº 3⁹.

Respecto de las clases de *chreia*, tenemos representados en *El Banquete de los Siete Sabios* casi todas las que Teón propone: verbales, de acción y mixtas. Así, siguiendo su clasificación, tiene el opúsculo *chreiai* verbales¹⁰ - las que sólo contienen un dicho - tanto enunciativas de tipo espontáneo¹¹ y de tipo circunstancial (así las *chreiai* nº 2 y 5), como del género llamado “de respuesta”, de cuyos tipos utiliza especialmente Plutarco el de indagación y el interrogativo-causal: uno consiste no sólo en afirmar o negar, sino en una respuesta extensa¹² (nº 1) y el otro en añadir a la respuesta una causa, un consejo o algo similar¹³ (nº 6)¹⁴. Asimismo habla Teón de un último tipo dentro de las verbales que serían las dobles¹⁵, por contener afirmaciones de dos personajes¹⁶, aunque una de ellas sola ya puede considerarse una *chreia*. Otro género de *chreiai* son las acciones que sin palabras muestran un pensamiento¹⁷. Y, por último, habla Teón de *chreiai* mixtas¹⁸, mezcla de las anteriores y ejemplificadas en nº 3 y 4.

Por otra parte las *χρεῖαι* tienen distintos modos de enunciación según Teón (τρόποι, Theo, p. 99) y en *El banquete* tenemos representados casi todos esos modos, de los que aquí vamos a reflejar algunos mediante los seis ejemplos seleccionados. Un modo de enunciación ciertamente frecuente es la sentencia (γνωμολογικῶς, Theo, p. 99), como puede apreciarse en la afirmación de Solón acerca de las leyes (nº 5). Igualmente reiterada es la expresión de una *χρεία* con forma de demostración (ἀποδεικτικῶς, Theo, p. 99), como la de Quilón respecto de los compañeros de banquete (nº 4). Muy apreciadas

BELLU, 2005b, pp. 65 sqq.

⁹ Anónima es también la pronunciada por un lacedemonio en 149A-B.

¹⁰ Theo, p. 97: τῶν δὲ λογικῶν εἶδη δύο, ἀποφαντικὸν καὶ ἀποκριτικόν· τοῦ δὲ ἀποφαντικοῦ αἱ μὲν εἰσι καθ’ ἑκούσιον ἀπόφασιν, οἷον (...): αἱ δὲ κατὰ περίστασιν, οἷον Διογένης (...). οὐ γὰρ ὁ Διογένης ἀπλῶς ἀπεφάνητο, ἀλλ’ ἐξ ὧν εἶδεν. ἔτι καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀποκριτικοῦ εἰσιν εἶδη τέσσαρα, τό τε κατ’ ἐρώτησιν, καὶ τὸ κατὰ πύσμα, καὶ τὸ κατ’ ἐρώτησιν αἰτιῶδες, καὶ τὸ ὁμωνύμως τῷ γένει λεγόμενον ἀποκριτικόν.

¹¹ Como la de Pítaco en 147C, o la de Tales en 158C.

¹² Theo, p. 97 s.: τὸ δὲ πύσμα μακροτέραν ἀπαιτεῖ τὴν ἀπόκρισιν·

¹³ Theo, p. 98: αἱ δὲ κατ’ ἐρώτησιν αἰτιῶδεις εἰσίν, ὅσαι ὥρως τῆς πρὸς τὴν ἐρώτησιν ἀποκρίσεως καὶ αἰτίαν τινὰ ἔχουσιν ἢ συμβουλήν ἢ τι τοιοῦτον.

¹⁴ Otros ejemplos son las opiniones de los sabios y de Periandro sobre el gobierno de reyes y tiranos en 152A-D, la *chreia* de 157B, las opiniones sobre el gobierno igualitario de 154D-E y sobre el de una casa 155C-D, opiniones todas ellas que responden a algún comensal que así lo ha pedido (a petición de Periandro en 151E-F, de Quersias en 157A, de Mnesifilo en 154C-D y de Diocles en 154F, respectivamente).

¹⁵ Theo, p. 98: ἔστι δὲ παρὰ ταῦτα καὶ ἄλλο εἶδος ἐμπύπτον εἰς τὰς λογικὰς καλούμενον διπλοῦν, διπλῆ δὲ ἐστὶ χρεία ἢ δύο προσώπων ἀποφάσεις ἔχουσα, ὧν καὶ ἡ ἕτερα μεθ’ ἐνὸς προσώπου χρεῖαν ποιεῖ.

¹⁶ Como las intervenciones de Quilón y Esopo en 152D.

¹⁷ Theo, p. 98: πρακτικαὶ δὲ εἰσὶν αἱ χωρὶς λόγου ἐμφαινόμεναι τινὰ νοῦν. De ellas hallamos en el *Banquete de los Siete Sabios* el tipo activo (Theo, p. 98: τῶν δὲ πρακτικῶν αἱ μὲν εἰσιν ἐνεργητικάι, αἱ δὲ παθητικάι, ἐνεργητικάι μὲν ὅσαι δηλοῦσί τινὰ ἐνέργειαν) de estas πρακτικαὶ χρεῖαι en la afirmación de Nilóxeno acerca de la relación de Bías con los reyes (147A).

¹⁸ Theo, p. 99: μικταὶ δὲ εἰσὶν ὅσαι τοῦ μὲν λογικοῦ καὶ τοῦ πρακτικοῦ κοινωνοῦσιν, ἐν δὲ τῷ πρακτικῷ τὸ κῆρος ἔχουσιν.

son las *χρεῖαι* pronunciadas con gracia (κατὰ χαριεντισμόν, Theon, p. 99) y en *El banquete* ese es el resultado de la respuesta de Tales a Molpágoras acerca de lo más extraordinario que ha visto: “un tirano viejo” (nº 1)¹⁹. La enunciación puede hacerse de forma figurada (τροπικῶς, Theon, p. 100), y así se expresa Tales al identificar a los tiranos con la peor de las fieras salvajes, y a los aduladores, con las domésticas (nº 2). Cuando se emite una respuesta distinta a la pregunta realizada, dice Teón que se trata del modo denominado *metalepsis*²⁰, algo que utiliza sabiamente Pítaco para replicar a Aliates cuando éste de un modo soberbio escribió y envió ciertas órdenes a los lesbios, y Pítaco no le contestó otra cosa que animarle a comer cebollas y pan caliente (nº 6). Por último hay un modo que baraja los anteriores, con la posibilidad de múltiples combinaciones²¹, y así, por medio del ejemplo (κατὰ παράδειγμα, Theon, p. 100) y compuesto con gracia (κατὰ χαριεντισμόν, Theon, p. 99), menciona Tales la *χρεῖα* de un joven (nº 3): “Y en relación con esta situación, he experimentado lo del joven que tirando a su perra, le dio a su suegra y dijo: “no está mal así tampoco”²².

A la hora de componer las *chreiai* pueden ejercitarse una serie de pasos (γυμνάζονται, Theon, p. 101), comenzando por una exposición clara (καὶ ἡ μὲν ἀπαγγελία φανερά ἐστι, Theon, p. 101), algo que, como puede apreciarse en la selección de textos, Plutarco cumple a la perfección. En segundo lugar, como es natural en un ejercicio escolar, se recomienda practicar los distintos números y casos²³ en cada *chreia*, y también Plutarco ilustrará esta práctica: así pasa en la enunciación del singular al plural en nuestros ejemplos nº 2, 4 y 5²⁴, o manteniendo el singular en nº 1, 3 y 6. En cuanto a los casos, tal y como lo indica Teón²⁵, el nominativo no presenta ninguna dificultad y todas

¹⁹ Si bien a continuación Tales atribuye esta *χρεῖα* a Pítaco, mencionando, además, que la dijo en broma (147B: ‘ἀλλὰ τοῦτο μὲν’, εἶπεν ὁ Θαλῆς, ‘Πιττακοῦ ἐστίν, εἰρημένον ἐν παιδιᾷ ποτε πρὸς Μυρσίλον’.

²⁰ Theon, p. 100: κατὰ μετάληψιν δέ ἐστιν, ὅταν τὸ λεγόμενον καὶ τὸ ἐρωτώμενον ἐπ’ ἄλλο τις ἀποκρινόμενος μεταλαμβάνῃ.

²¹ Theon, p. 100: ὁ δὲ συνεζευγμένος τρόπος οὐκ ἀδηλός ἐστιν, ὅτι πολλαχῶς γίνεται· ἢ γὰρ γνωμικῶς χαριεντισμῶ συμπλακίσεται, ἢ παραδείγματι συμβολικῶς ἢ ἀμφιβολία καὶ μεταλήψει ἢ ἀπλῶς καθ’ ὅσους καὶ ἄλλους τρόπους δύναται συγγενέσθαι συζυγία, ἤτοι δυοῖν ἢ καὶ πλειόνων τρόπων εἰς μίαν χρεῖαν παραλαμβανομένων. Es frecuente esta miscelánea en el *Banquete*: con gracia y de forma alegórica (συμβολικῶς, Theon, p. 100 – según el uso que Teón le da a este modo συμβολικῶς; vide M. PATILLON, p. 23, n. 142 y D. *Eloc.* 99 sqq.) le replica Bías a Tales acerca de su capacidad de discusión bajo los efectos de Dioniso (150B-C); sentencia más demostración encontramos en la *chreia* de Cleobulo en 157B; o sentencia más ejemplo en 157C.

²² La misma combinación aparece en las palabras del lacedemonio anónimo de 149A-B.

²³ Theon, p. 101: ἡ δὲ κλίσις ἐστὶ ποικίλη. τὰ γὰρ ἐν τῇ χρεῖα πρόσωπα εἰς τοὺς τρεῖς ἀριθμοὺς ἐναλλάττομεν, καὶ τοῦτο οὐχ ἀπλῶς, ἀλλ’ οἷον ἐνὸς πρὸς ἓνα καὶ πρὸς δύο, καὶ πρὸς πλείους, καὶ πάλιν δυοῖν πρὸς ἓνα καὶ πρὸς δύο, καί... .

²⁴ También en 147A, 154D-E, 157C, 160A-B, y en 152A-D y 155C-D combina ese paso con *chreiai* de singular a singular, que también tiene lugar en 147C, 149A-B, 150B-C, 152D, 155D, 157B, 157D y 158C.

²⁵ Theon, p. 101: ἡ μὲν οὖν ὀρθὴ οὐδεμίαν ἔχει δυσκολίαν· κατὰ γὰρ αὐτὴν ἐκάστη τῶν χρεῶν εἴωθε προφέρεσθαι.

las *chreiai* suelen enunciarse con dicho caso, como ocurre con la mayoría que utiliza Plutarco (nº 4 y 5 de la selección²⁶), aunque también incluye alguna *chreia* enunciada en vocativo (κλητική, Theon, p. 102 s.; nº 1 y 2), genitivo (γενική πτώσις, Theon, p. 101 s.; nº 3 y 6) y acusativo²⁷. A continuación puede añadirse un *epifonema* que demuestre de modo apropiado y breve que la *chreia* es verdadera, hermosa, útil, de acuerdo con la opinión de hombres reputados²⁸, como en la nº 3, que se corrobora mediante otros personajes - Solón y Pítaco -, dignos de mención por compartir el mismo punto de vista²⁹; y puede replicarse a partir de los contrarios³⁰: tras las *chreiai* nº 1 y 2, como *epifonema* de réplica, se critica lo poco agradable de la actitud de Tales³¹; en la nº 5 se considera la imposibilidad de tal afirmación tildándola de “ridícula”³². En quinto lugar puede ampliarse o abreviarse la *chreia* (Theon, p. 103), siendo esta última opción la preferida de Plutarco, parco en casi todas ellas³³. Y, por último, se pueden refutar las *chreiai* desde diversos puntos de vista (Theon, p. 104 s.), aunque no todos son siempre posibles. Esta parte del desarrollo de la *chreia*, dada la brevedad hacia la que tiende Plutarco, no es muy frecuente en *El banquete*, pero aun así encontramos algún ejemplo como el de la inconveniencia (ἐκ δὲ τοῦ ἀσυμφόρου, Theon, p. 104 s.) de las *chreiai* nº 1 y 2³⁴. Por otro lado, también pueden confirmarse (Theon, p. 105) a partir del argumento contrario de lo defectuoso (ἐκ τοῦ ἔλλείποντος, Theon, p. 104), como en la confirmación de la *chreia* nº 6 (148A: ὅθεν ἄριστα χίλων) antes de enunciarla³⁵. Entre otros elementos amplificadores de la *chreia*, propone Teón también añadir un proemio (Theon, p. 105 s.), pero dado que Plutarco emplea las *chreiai* como un elemento más en su narración, evidentemente ha de prescindir de incluir todas las partes de que puede constar según el manual de ejercicios retóricos.

²⁶ También en 147A, 147C, 149A-B, 150B-C, 152A-D, 152D, 154D-E, 155C-D, 155D, 157B, 157C, 157D, 158C.

²⁷ Theon, p. 102: ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς αἰτιατικῆς, por ejemplo en 160A-B.

²⁸ Theon, p. 103: ἐπιφωνεῖν δὲ ἔστιν ἀποδεικνυμένους οἰκείως καὶ συντόμως τὸ εἰρημένον διὰ τῆς χρείας, ἢ ὡς ἀληθές ἐστιν, ἢ ὡς καλόν, ἢ ὡς συμφέρον, ἢ ὡς καὶ ἄλλοις τὸ αὐτὸ τοῦτο ἔδοξεν ἀνδράσι δεδοκιμασμένοις.

²⁹ 147C: διὸ καὶ Σόλωνα σοφώτατον ἠγησάμην οὐ δεξάμενον τυραννεῖν. καὶ Πιττακὸς οὗτος εἰ μοναρχία μὴ προσῆλθεν, οὐκ ἂν εἶπεν ὡς ‘χαλεπὸν ἔσθλων ἔμμεναι’. También puede mencionarse como *epifonema* el uso de una fábula de Esopo por parte de Cleobulo (157B: ὡσπερ ὁ Αἰσώπου κύων...), o la actitud del propio Cleodoro que ha suscitado en 157C la *chreia* de Cleobulo, quien a continuación la va a comparar con el proceder del médico (157C: καὶ σὺ καθάπερ τῷ νόμῳ τῷ λόγῳ τρέφων καὶ διαιτῶν καὶ φαρμακεῶν τοὺς κάμνοντας οὐκ ἴσον ἐκάστῳ, τὸ δὲ προσήκον ἀπονέμεις ἅπασιν).

³⁰ Theon, p. 103: ἀντιλέγομεν δὲ ταῖς χρεαῖς ἐκ τῶν ἐναντίων.

³¹ 147B: τοιαῦτα γάρ, εἰ καὶ πάνυ προσποιοῦνται διαφέρειν οἱ βασιλεῖς τῶν τυράννων, οὐκ εὐμένως ἀκούουσιν.

³² 152A: καὶ ἐγὼ ‘γελοῖος’, ἔφην, ‘ὁ λόγος’ οὕτω γὰρ ἔδει πρῶτον ἀποποιεῖσθαι τὸν Λυκοῦργον αὐτοῖς νόμοις ὅλην μετακινήσαντα τὴν Λακεδαιμονίων πολιτείαν’.

³³ Quizá se extiende un poco más con las explicaciones Cleobulo en 157B y Tales añade los versos de su anfitrión en Éreso para explicar el dicho sobre Epiménides en 157D.

³⁴ 147A: ἀλλ’ ὅπερ ἔφην, διεβλήθης μισοβασιλεὺς εἶναι, καὶ τινες ὕβριστικαί σου περὶ τυράννων ἀποφάσεις ἀνεφέροντο πρὸς αὐτόν.

³⁵ Y a partir de lo conveniente en 149A-B.

II. Μῦθοι. A continuación ilustraremos el segundo *progymnasma* estudiado a través de uno de sus ejemplos³⁶, la *fábula del lobo y los pastores* (156A)³⁷. Según el *progymnasma* Περί μύθου es la fábula una composición falsa pero que representa la verdad³⁸ y que a pesar de ser falsa e imposible, sin embargo, es verosímil y útil³⁹. Puesto que Plutarco las emplea como un elemento más dentro de su composición, no tendremos las fábulas como tal ejercicio retórico con todas sus partes y secciones⁴⁰, pero aun así pueden observarse algunas de las características que propugna la *progymnasmatica*, como su exposición, su declinación, su enlace a un relato, su abreviación y, en ocasiones, su confirmación. La exposición (ἀπαγγελία, Theon, p. 74) debe hacerse de una forma sencilla y natural y, a ser posible, sin ornato⁴¹, tal y como nos la presenta Plutarco (156A):

Τοῦ δὲ Πιπτακοῦ γελάσαντος ὁ Αἴσωπος λόγον εἶπε τοιοῦτον· “λύκος ἰδὼν ποιμένας ἐσθίωντας ἐν σκηνῇ πρόβατον ἐγγὺς προσελθὼν, ‘ἠλίκος ἂν ἦν,’ ἔφη, ‘θόρυβος ὑμῶν, εἰ ἐγὼ τοῦτ’ ἐποίουν.’

El caso empleado en su declinación (κλίνομεν, Theon, p. 74) es el nominativo únicamente (λύκος...)⁴² y pasa de singular a plural. Por otra parte se inserta la fábula (συμπλέκομεν, Theon, p. 75)⁴³ tras unos comentarios sobre beber vino (155D-156A) y tras plantearse la cuestión de por qué no bebía vino en ese momento Solón. Anacarsis explica que en realidad teme una ley de Pítaco que sin embargo él se atrevió a transgredir, momento que aprovecha Esopo para contar una graciosa fábula. A continuación le responde de nuevo

³⁶ Otras fábulas que aparecen en *El banquete* son: 150A-B, 155B-C, 157A-B, 157B.

³⁷ Sobre la presencia de la fábula esópica en la obra de Plutarco vide C. GARCÍA GUAL, 1994, pp. 605 sqq., y sobre la influencia de la preceptiva escolar, vide J. A. FERNÁNDEZ DELGADO, 2005, pp. 77 s.; acerca de la fábula y del papel de los animales en el *Banquete de los siete sabios*, vide M. A. DURÁN LOPEZ, 2005, pp. 112 sqq.

³⁸ Theon, p. 59 y 72: μῦθος ἐστὶ λόγος ψευδῆς εἰκονίζων ἀλήθειαν. G.-J. VAN DIJK, 1997, pp. 47 sqq., analiza la información que acerca de la fábula proporciona Teón, cuya definición es la más antigua conservada.

³⁹ Theon, p. 76: (...) αὐτὸς ὁ μυθοποιὸς ὁμολογεῖ καὶ ψευδῆ καὶ ἀδύνατα συγγράφειν, πιθανὰ δὲ καὶ ὠφέλιμα.

⁴⁰ Theon, p. 74: καὶ γὰρ ἀπαγγέλλομεν τὸν μῦθον καὶ κλίνομεν καὶ συμπλέκομεν αὐτὸν διηγήματι, καὶ ἐπεκτείνουμεν καὶ συστέλλουμεν, ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἐπιλέγειν αὐτῷ τινα λόγον, καὶ αὖ λόγου τινὸς προτεθέντος, μῦθον εἰκότα αὐτῷ συμπλάσασθαι. ἔτι δὲ πρὸς τούτοις ἀνασκευάζομεν καὶ κατασκευάζομεν.

⁴¹ Theon, p. 74: (...) ἐν δὲ τοῖς μύθοις ἀπλουστέραν τὴν ἐρμηνεῖαν εἶναι δεῖ καὶ προσφυῆ, καὶ ὡς δυνατόν, ἀκατάσκευόν τε καὶ σαφεῆ.

⁴² Como ocurre en las fábulas de 150A-B, 155B-C; en 157A-B se declina en acusativo; y en 157B pasa de nominativo a acusativo.

⁴³ De modo que se enlaza esta fábula a su relato a continuación de éste, como en 157A-B, mientras que otros ejemplos del *Banquete* realizan un enlace tanto a lo anterior como a lo posterior. Así en 150A-B Esopo cuenta una fábula referida a la actuación de Alexídemo (148E-F, asunto mencionado de nuevo a partir de 149F) - que abandona airado el banquete al considerar que se le había adjudicado una posición deshonrosa -, pero Plutarco hace que sirva igualmente respecto del propio Esopo gracias al posterior comentario de Quilón: Ὁ δὲ Χίλων λακωνίσας τῇ φωνῇ· ‘καὶ τούνη’, ἔφη, ‘βραυδὺς καὶ <κατ>τρέχεις τὸν ἡμίονον’.

Quilón, que va a aplaudir su intervención - 156A: καὶ ὁ Χίλων ὀρθῶς, ἔφη, Ἀἴσωπος ἡμύνατο, μικρὸν ἔμπροσθεν ἐπιστομισθεὶς ὑφ' ἡμῶν, εἶτα νῦν ὀρῶν ἑτέρους τὸν Μνησιφίλου λόγον ὑφηρηπακότας-, de modo que se convierte en la confirmación (κατασκευή, Theon, p. 76 s.), pues Quilón alaba la conveniencia de la fábula en ese momento. Ante la doble posibilidad de ampliación o abreviación de la fábula (Theon, p. 75) se decanta Plutarco en sus ejemplos de fábula por la abreviación⁴⁴.

III. Διηγήματα. Finalmente vamos a ver la puesta en práctica de otro *progymnasma* igualmente repetido en *El banquete de los Siete Sabios*⁴⁵, el del relato. Y nos va a servir de ejemplo el primero que Diocles refiere, el relato de Gorgo y el citaredo Arión (160D - 161B y 162A - 162B). Según la definición del manual, un relato debe tratar hechos acaecidos o como si hubieran acaecido⁴⁶, y Plutarco se las ingenia para conseguir estos efectos, si bien en este análisis únicamente se va a hacer referencia a las dos partes clave en el ejercicio del relato, que son los elementos básicos y las ἀρεταί de la narración, puesto que el resto de indicaciones ofrecen cierta libertad de seguimiento y más bien consisten en una clasificación de las posibilidades que un relato presenta.

Diocles nos informa a la entrada de Gorgo en el banquete de lo siguiente: quién es, cuándo llega, adónde había sido enviado, el motivo, el hecho y la forma de llevarlo a cabo⁴⁷; mientras que a través de las palabras de Gorgo nos enteraremos, además, del momento y del modo de la acción. De esta manera quedan cubiertos los elementos necesarios para constituir un relato, como bien especifica Teón⁴⁸: el personaje es Gorgo al mando de una expedición religiosa; el asunto es llevar a cabo una θεωρία y sacrificios a Posidón; la acción tiene lugar en el Ténaro; la expedición religiosa había sido motivada por unos oráculos; el momento de la acción es durante la noche del último día de los tres que duró la expedición; y, por último, según las indicaciones de Teón⁴⁹, podemos decir que el modo de la acción es involuntario por azar, ya que ellos no esperaban encontrarse lo que sucedió en la playa (160F sqq.), o por necesidad, puesto que son unos oráculos divinos los que han inspirado la expedición junto al mar⁵⁰. Por lo tanto ya se han expuesto los elementos necesarios para que el relato sea completo, siguiendo las instrucciones de Teón⁵¹.

⁴⁴ Parece ser esta una tendencia general en el uso de la fábula por Plutarco, vide J. A. FERNÁNDEZ DELGADO, 2005, p. 80 s.

⁴⁵ Y en otras partes de la obra plutarquea, vide F. PORDOMINGO PARDO, 2005, p. 130.

⁴⁶ Theon, p. 78: διηγημά ἐστι λόγος ἐκθετικὸς πραγμάτων γεγονότων ἢ ὡς γεγονότων.

⁴⁷ 160 D: Ἐτι δὲ τοῦ Σόλωνος λέγοντος εἰσήλθε Γόργος ὁ Περιάνδρου ἀδελφός: ἐτύχχανε γὰρ εἰς Ταίναρον ἀπεσταλμένος ἐκ τινων χρησμῶν, τῷ Ποσειδῶνι θυσίαν καὶ θεωρίαν ἀπάγων.

⁴⁸ Theon, p. 78: στοιχεῖα δὲ τῆς διηγήσεως εἰσιν ἕξ, τό τε πρόσωπον (εἴτε ἐν εἴῃ εἴτε πλεῖω) καὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα τὸ πραχθὲν ὑπὸ τοῦ προσώπου, καὶ ὁ τόπος ἐν ᾧ ἢ πρᾶξις, καὶ ὁ χρόνος καθ' ὃν ἢ πρᾶξις, καὶ ὁ τρόπος τῆς πράξεως, καὶ ἔκτον ἢ τούτων αἰτία.

⁴⁹ Theon, p. 79: τῷ δὲ τρόπῳ ἀκουσίως ἢ ἐκουσίως: ἐκάτερον δὲ εἰς τρία διαιρεῖται, τὸ μὲν ἀκούσιον εἰς ἄγνοιαν καὶ τύχην καὶ ἀνάγκην.

⁵⁰ Después comenta Gorgo que la divinidad parece estar detrás de todo el asunto (162B: ὄντως οὖν εἰκέναι θεία τύχη τὸ πρᾶγμα).

⁵¹ Theon, p. 78: τούτων δὲ ὄντων τῶν ἀνωτάτω στοιχείων, ἕξ ὧν συμπληροῦται, ἡ τελεία

Y respecto de la segunda de las claves que mencionábamos, las ἀρεταὶ διηγήσεως, en ellas se basa la eficacia del relato y, en la medida de lo posible, deben estar presentes en toda narración: claridad, concisión y verosimilitud⁵². Siguiendo las indicaciones de Teón, puede decirse que este relato de *El banquete* se ha compuesto con claridad en cuanto al tema y al estilo (Theon, p. 80): por una parte en cuanto al tema⁵³, puesto que ni siquiera la actuación de los delfines resultaría ajena al auditorio⁵⁴ y solamente se narra un hecho⁵⁵, sin mezclarlo con otros simultáneos, además de hacerlo con orden⁵⁶ y sin digresiones⁵⁷; por otra parte, en cuanto al estilo⁵⁸, deben evitarse las nuevas creaciones y los términos poéticos, los metafóricos, arcaicos, extranjeros y homónimos, la ambigüedad en la expresión, el hipérbaton (suave se permite), las digresiones extensas, la falta de nombres o utilizar un caso que puede hacer referencia a dos nombres distintos dando lugar a confusión: la única excepción que aparece en este pasaje de *El banquete* la constituiría el término (161A) συνεποκείλαντες⁵⁹. También la concisión va a surgir de los hechos y del estilo. Lo primero⁶⁰ se consigue cuando no se incluyen muchos asuntos, no se insertan unos en otros, se dejan de lado los que se sobreentienden, no se empiezan los asuntos desde lejos, etc. Y para ser conciso en cuanto al estilo hay que evitar sinónimos, perífrasis, elementos superfluos, compuestos, y decantarse por los nombres más

διήγησις, ἐξ ἀπάντων αὐτῶν συνέστηκεν καὶ τῶν συνεδρευόντων αὐτοῖς, ἔλλιπής δέ ἐστιν ἢ τινος τούτων ἐπίδεουσα.

⁵² Theon, p. 79: ἀρεταὶ δὲ διηγήσεως τρεῖς, σαφήνεια, συντομία, πιθανότης. διὸ μάλιστα μὲν, εἰ δυνατόν ἐστιν, ἀπάσας τὰς ἀρετὰς ἔχειν δεῖ τὴν διήγησιν. Vide su antecedente en Anaximenes. *Rb.* 1438 a 3-1438 b 13.

⁵³ Theon, p. 80: ἐκ μὲν οὖν τῶν πραγμάτων, ὅταν λεγόμενα τὰ πράγματα μὴ τὴν κοινὴν ἐκφεύγῃ διάνοιαν.

⁵⁴ Son animales de frecuente aparición, además de en otros ámbitos artísticos, en la literatura griega, como en *Iliada* 21. 22 sqq. (se emplea el delfín para comparar el temor que provoca en los peces pequeños a los que sin duda va a devorar, con la actitud de los troyanos en el río Janto huyendo de un Aquiles enfurecido); famosos por su rapidez, como señala Píndaro en *Nemea* VI 64; conocidos por sus danzas marinas (Eurípides, *Helena*, v. 1455); y son numerosas las fábulas esópicas con delfines, como la 62, 73, 113 o la 145 (edición de B. E. PERRY, *Aesopica*, I, Urbana, 1952).

⁵⁵ Theon, p. 80: ἢ ὅταν μὴ πολλὰ ὁμοῦ διηγήται τις, ἀλλὰ καθ' ἕκαστον.

⁵⁶ Theon, p. 80: φυλακτέον δὲ καὶ τὸ μὴ συγχεῖν τοὺς χρόνους καὶ τὴν τάξιν τῶν πραγμάτων, ἔτι τε καὶ τὸ δις τὰ αὐτὰ λέγειν.

⁵⁷ Theon, p. 80: παραιτητέον δὲ καὶ τὸ παρεκβάσεις ἐπεμβάλλεσθαι μεταξὺ διηγήσεως μακράς.

⁵⁸ Theon, p.81: Κατὰ δὲ τὴν λέξιν φυλακτέον τῷ σαφηνίζοντι τὸ ποιητικὰ ὀνόματα λέγειν καὶ πεποιημένα καὶ τροπικὰ καὶ ἀρχαῖα καὶ ξένα καὶ ὁμώνυμα, etc...

⁵⁹ A partir de las formas ὀκέλλω y ἐποκέλλω, habituales en la lengua griega, crea Plutarco el compuesto συνεποκέλλω; simplemente añade Plutarco a una forma conocida el preverbio συν- para reforzar la imagen de que los delfines realizaban el depósito de Arión conjuntamente y todos a la vez sobre la playa (véase también el uso inmediatamente anterior de συναγαγόντες, 161A).

⁶⁰ Theon, p. 83: ἐκ μὲν οὖν τῶν πραγμάτων, ὅταν μῆτε συλλαμβάνωμεν ἅμα [τὰ] πολλὰ πράγματα, μὴθ' ἑτέροις ἐπεμβάλλωμεν, παραλείπωμέν τε ὅσα συνυπακούεσθαι δοκεῖ, μῆτε πόρρωθεν ἀρχώμεθα, etc...

breves, sin llegar a caer ni en la vulgaridad ni en la oscuridad⁶¹. Todos estos requisitos los cumple Plutarco con cierta seriedad en su relato. Por último, pone gran cuidado en preservar la tercera ἀρετή διηγήσεως, la verosimilitud. La conversación privada de Gorgo con Periandro llama la atención de nuestro narrador Diocles por las reacciones que en el tirano provoca. Tanto es así que Periandro termina por dirigirse alegremente a los comensales para hacerles partícipes de la historia que acaba de oír. Pero antes se cuestiona el tirano la conveniencia de hacerlo público dado que no cree que parezca verdadero y mucho menos posible (160D: βούλομαι μὲν, ἔφη, πρὸς τὸ παρὸν φράσαι τὸ προσηγγελλόμενον· ὀκνῶ δ' ἀκούσας Θαλέω ποτ' εἰπόντος ὅτι δεῖ τὰ μὲν εἰκότα λέγειν, τὰ δ' ἀμήχανα σιωπᾶν). El planteamiento de esta cuestión se debe probablemente a que, tal y como se especifica en los manuales escolares, un relato debe tratar hechos acaecidos o como si hubieran acaecido, según la definición de Teón que citábamos al principio. La verosimilitud es, además, uno de los medios para realizar la confirmación de un relato (Theon, p. 93 s.), que es parte importante en el desarrollo de cualquier *progymnasma* (Theon, p. 65), y el narrador, evidentemente, tratará de reforzar esa credibilidad al máximo⁶². Por ello, la mayor preocupación de Plutarco antes de pasar a la narración, es sustentar de alguna manera esa credibilidad de cara a los comensales y a los lectores. Pero Bías va a echarle un cable a Periandro igualmente a través de otra máxima también de Tales, con la intención de no dar por sentada la posible inverosimilitud demasiado a la ligera (160E): ὑπολαβῶν οὖν ὁ Βίας ἄλλὰ καὶ τοῦτ', ἔφη, Ἐθαλέω τὸ σοφὸν ἐστίν, ὅτι δεῖ τοῖς μὲν ἐχθροῖς καὶ περὶ τῶν πιστῶν ἀπιστεῖν, τοῖς δὲ φίλοις καὶ τὰ ἄπιστα πιστεῦειν, ἐχθροὺς μὲν, ἔγωγ' ἠγοῦμαι, τοὺς πονηροὺς καὶ ἀνοήτους, φίλους δὲ τοὺς χρηστοὺς καὶ φρονίμους αὐτοῦ καλοῦντος'. Así pues, por medio de esta confirmación, queda un tanto salvaguardada la verosimilitud del relato y Periandro puede ya ceder la palabra a su hermano Gorgo.

En este trabajo se han utilizado tres (χρεῖα, μῦθος y διήγημα) de los distintos ejercicios que se practicaban en las escuelas de retórica y que sirven, según las indicaciones de Teón, en cualquier tipo de composición (Theon, p. 60 s., 70 s.), cuya corrección depende en gran medida del empleo de estos *progymnasmata*, de los que proporciona ejemplos presentes en autores consagrados como Heródoto, Tucídides, Platón, Demóstenes, etc. (Theon, p. 66 s.). A través de los casos aquí estudiados se ha podido constatar la coincidencia entre esa preceptiva escolar y algunos aspectos de *El banquete de los Siete Sabios*, de modo que podemos comprender mejor la técnica compositiva de Plutarco: por una parte, trabaja en buena medida de acuerdo con las teorías retóricas de la época, y, por otra parte,

⁶¹ Theon, p. 84: ἐν δὲ τοῖς κατὰ τὴν λέξιν παρατηρητέον καὶ τὸ μῆτε συνωνύμοις χρῆσθαι (...), μῆτε λόγον ἀντὶ ὀνόματος ποιεῖν (...) ἔτι δὲ καὶ τὰ συνυπακουόμενα πάντως συμπεριαιρετέον τῷ συντόμως ἀπαγγέλλειν βουλομένῳ, χρηστέον δὲ καὶ τοῖς ἀπλοῖς ὀνόμασι μᾶλλον ἢ τοῖς συνθέτοις, καὶ τοῖς βραχυτέροις μᾶλλον ἢ τοῖς μακροτέροις...

⁶² Teón señala que se confirma y refuta un relato a través de los mismos medios que ha explicado para la fábula – a los que puede añadirse algún otro –, y también en ese *progymnasma* comienza destacando la importancia de la defensa de la verosimilitud para ratificar cada fábula (Theon, p. 76).

puede observarse que, además de un trasfondo *filosófico-moral-religioso*, la forma está sumamente cuidada, pues lo contrario sería un grave error, como advierte Teón en las primeras líneas de su manual (cf. Theon, p. 59).

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SIMPOSIO E FILOSOFIA: IL PROBLEMA DEL “DIO GEOMETRA”

FRANCO FERRARI
Università di Salerno

Abstract

According to Plutarch, philosophical questions could be treated in the table talks, but with caution. The most philosophical problem concerns the meaning of Plato's dictum that the God is always doing geometry (*Quaest. conv.* VIII 2. 718 B-720 C). The text proposes four solutions, all in the spirit of Platonic philosophy. The first one is epistemological, the second ethical and political, the third cosmological and finally the fourth is cosmological and metaphysical. The correct answer is the fourth, according to which the meaning of the dictum is that the creation of the world can be equated to the solution of a geometrical problem, namely the problem to construct, given two figures, a third figure which is materially identical to one and formally similar to the other. In this context, Plutarch introduces a theory based on three principles: God (as demiurge), matter (as substrate) and the world of ideas (as model).

La questione dell'opportunità di trattare argomenti filosofici nel contesto dei simposi dovette essere avvertita da Plutarco come estremamente importante, se egli si sentì in dovere di aprire le *Quaestiones convivales* proprio proponendo il seguente problema: Εἰ δεῖ φιλοσοφεῖν παρὰ πότον; (I 1, 612E-615 C).

La soluzione che sembra emergere dalle sue riflessioni appare, come spesso accade nel caso di questo prolifico intellettuale greco dell'impero romano, improntata a un sano buon senso. Come è noto, egli respinge tanto l'atteggiamento serio di chi ritiene che la filosofia debba essere bandita da simili contesti, quanto quello di coloro che pretendono di affrontare nei simposi questioni filosofiche eccessivamente ardue e complesse. Del resto, se la filosofia è τέχνη περὶ βίον, ossia *ars vitae*, la sua completa esclusione dalle conversazioni conviviali non sarebbe davvero ammissibile; d'altra parte, risulterebbe fuori luogo la presenza di dispute intrise di tecnicismi e difficili problemi logici, quei προβλήματα διαλεκτικά ai quali appartiene, per esempio, il celebre “argomento dominante” di Diodoro Crono. Occorre insomma sapere scegliere i temi adatti, e dimostrarsi in grado di trattarli in modo appropriato, senza escludere i partecipanti non filosofi, ma nello stesso tempo senza cadere nella banalità¹.

Nel delineare i contorni generali del συμποτικὸν γένος Plutarco sembra stabilire l'esigenza che il metodo in vigore nei simposi sia quello degli *exempla*, ossia dei παραδείγματα, e dei racconti o esposizioni narrative (μυθολογίαι) piuttosto che quello della dimostrazione (ἀπόδειξις), certamente più adatto alle discussioni logiche e filosofiche in senso stretto (si pensi ai trattati polemici contro stoici ed epicurei, oppure a uno scritto come il *De animae procreatione in Timaeo*). Inoltre egli invita a proporre argomenti che si fondino sulla plausibilità o probabilità piuttosto che sulla rigida consequenzialità

¹ Sull'integrazione di Plutarco nella tradizione della letteratura simposiaca, e sull'esigenza di mescolare nel simposio “speculazione seria e ironia”, cf. M. VETTA, 2000, p. 221 e passim.

logica (διὰ τοῦ πιθανοῦ μᾶλλον ἢ βιαστικοῦ). In generale vanno proposte questioni che possano suscitare la riflessione e perfino l'acume intellettuale dei partecipanti al simposio, ma va evitata l'introduzione di problemi intricati, che richiedano approfondimenti ai quali possono accedere solo gli specialisti di filosofia. Insomma la filosofia non va affatto bandita dalle discussioni simposiache, ma va praticata, per così dire, *cum grano salis*, avendo di mira tanto il coinvolgimento di tutti i partecipanti quanto il particolare contesto emotivo in cui essi si trovano².

II

Una rapida lettura delle *Quaestiones convivales* sembra in effetti confermare le indicazioni programmatiche schizzate da Plutarco in apertura dello scritto. Gli argomenti, anche quando richiamano tematiche di carattere filosofico, vengono affrontati in modo relativamente lieve, per mezzo di esemplificazioni prese dalla vita di tutti i giorni, e comunque con l'evidente obiettivo di non allontanare il lettore che non sia filosofo in senso stretto (simile in questo ai partecipanti a un simposio).

Un'eccezione a questa prassi abbastanza consolidata sembrerebbe venire fornita dalla seconda *quaestio* dell'VIII libro (VIII 2, 718 C-720 C), che intende affrontare il problema del perché Platone avrebbe affermato che il Dio geometrizza sempre (Πῶς Πλάτων ἔλεγε τὸν θεὸν αἰεὶ γεωμετρεῖν). In effetti, sia l'interrogativo proposto sia lo sviluppo della *quaestio* non mancano di sottigliezza filosofica; nel corso della discussione vengono toccate tematiche importanti e complesse, che attengono all'ambito dell'epistemologia, della filosofia morale e politica, della teologia platoniche (senza dimenticare che al lettore è richiesto anche un minimo di competenza matematica, necessaria alla comprensione tanto dell'andamento della discussione quanto della soluzione finale avanzata da Plutarco). Tuttavia il tono complessivo adottato da Plutarco evita di indulgere in eccessivi tecnicismi. Inoltre l'intera *quaestio*, e in particolare l'interrogativo alla quale intende fornire una soluzione, vengono presentati come un omaggio reso a Platone nel giorno in cui ricorre il suo compleanno³. Quest'ultimo aspetto dovrebbe contribuire a integrare la conversione nel contesto simposiaco, allontanandola dalle dispute tecniche proprie dei seminari specialistici rivolti agli "addetti ai lavori".

Plutarco dimostra di essere perfettamente consapevole del fatto che l'autore dei dialoghi non ha mai formulato espressamente la sentenza che gli viene attribuita. Essa tuttavia si adatta molto bene al punto di vista di Platone, risulta cioè, per usare le parole di Plutarco, Πλατωνικοῦ χαρακτήρος, di carattere platonico⁴. Si tratta di un eccellente tema intorno al quale discutere

² Su tutta la prima *quaestio* cf. il commento *ad locum* di S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1989, pp. 38-63 e A. SCARCELLA, 1998, pp. 253-80.

³ Si veda M. BALTES, 1996, p. 360.

⁴ Sulla corrispondenza della formula non alla lettera bensì al pensiero di Platone cf. R. SEIDE, 1981, p. 109, S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1996, p. 162, e soprattutto M. BALTES, 1996, p. 360, il quale osserva che "der Wortlaut dieses Ausspruchs in Platons Dialogen nirgends zu finden ist".

nel giorno del compleanno di Platone, in modo da rendere omaggio al grande maestro, ricordando alcune delle sue concezioni, accennando a importanti elementi della sua filosofia, e discutendo in modo amichevole e “privo di invidia”. E in effetti, come vedremo, l'intero *zetema* costituisce un omaggio a Platone, come dimostra la semplice constatazione che tutte le risposte fornite all'interrogativo iniziale si richiamano a concezioni effettivamente formulate da Platone. Insomma, se si vuole onorare Platone nell'ambito di un simposio, non sembra esserci modo migliore di quello scelto da Plutarco in questo *zetema*.

III

Nel corso della *quaestio* vengono suggerite quattro soluzioni all'interrogativo relativo al perché Dio opera sempre in modo geometrico. Esse vengono assegnate rispettivamente a Tindato, Floro, Autobulo e a Plutarco stesso, che è anche il narratore dell'incontro. Non c'è dubbio che la risposta corretta è quella fornita da Plutarco in conclusione della discussione. Tuttavia, anche le altre tre soluzioni possiedono una loro validità, soprattutto perché esse, in forma diretta o indiretta, riprendono importanti concezioni platoniche, come lo stesso Plutarco riconosce introducendo il suo intervento. Egli spiega infatti che le opinioni espresse finora sono autoctone (εἰρημέναις δόξαις ὡς ἰθαγενεῖς καὶ ἰδίας), ossia appartengono alla scuola di provenienza, quella platonica. E così deve essere, perché, secondo Plutarco, non bisogna né disprezzare se stessi (ἐαυτῶν μὴ καταφρονῆτε), ossia la propria scuola, né rivolgersi completamente al di fuori (μηδ' ἕξω βλέπητε παντάπασιν), cioè ad altri orientamenti filosofici, ma occorre ricercare la soluzione all'interno degli insegnamenti forniti dalla scuola platonica (719 F)⁵.

Del resto, le risposte avanzate dai partecipanti alla conversazione non sono veramente in conflitto tra di loro, non si escludono cioè a vicenda, ma risultano in qualche modo complementari, e in ogni caso possono venire integrate in un quadro relativamente unitario. Come, per altro, è naturale che sia, trattandosi in tutti i casi di soluzioni conformi allo spirito della filosofia di Platone⁶.

Dunque le risposte suggerite dai protagonisti della discussione simposiaca sono tutte di matrice platonica. Ciascuna di esse mette in luce un aspetto particolare della funzione che la geometria esercita nell'ambito della riflessione di Platone. E' vero che solo una, quella suggerita da Plutarco, risponde in modo corretto e appropriato all'enigma iniziale; ma è altrettanto vero che tutte colgono un importante aspetto della filosofia di Platone, e in questo modo contribuiscono a rendere omaggio al grande pensatore.

Il primo a prendere la parola è Tindaro, il cui tentativo di soluzione consiste nel richiamo alla funzione epistemologica della geometria, la quale è in grado di allontanarci dalle cose sensibili indirizzandoci verso la natura noetica ed eterna (ἀποστρέφουσα ἐπὶ τὴν νοητὴν καὶ αἰδίων φύσιν), ossia verso il mondo delle idee (718 C-D). Il significato del detto attribuito a Platone

⁵ Cf. per questo punto M. BALTES, 1996, p. 361.

⁶ Ha richiamato l'attenzione sulla natura non conflittuale di queste risposte S. PIERI, 2005, p. 150.

consiste dunque, secondo Tindaro, nella particolare funzione che occorre assegnare, conformemente alle indicazioni platoniche contenute nel libro VII della *Repubblica*, alla geometria, la quale è in grado di purificare l'anima, allontanandola dalle cose sensibili per indirizzarla verso il pensiero vero e proprio, cioè verso la conoscenza intelligibile⁷. Per poter assolvere in modo compiuto al suo ruolo di avviamento alla conoscenza del mondo intelligibile, la geometria deve abbandonare ogni approccio empirico, meccanico e costruttivista, quel tipo di approccio al quale indussero invece, secondo il rimprovero di Platone (condiviso da Plutarco), autori quali Eudosso, Archita e Menecmo (718 E-F)⁸.

Tindaro aggiunge poi (718 E) che nelle discipline matematiche (e negli oggetti delle stesse) si manifestano, come in specchi regolari e lisci, tracce e immagini della verità degli enti intelligibili (τῆς τῶν νοητῶν ἀληθείας ἵχνη καὶ εἶδωλα), alludendo in questo modo alla concezione, sviluppata da Plutarco in altri scritti, che assegna agli enti matematici lo statuto di δεύτερα νοητά ο δεύτερα εἶδη, ossia di “secondi intelligibili”, copie e immagini dei “primi intelligibili”, costituiti naturalmente dalle idee⁹. In quanto copie e immagini delle idee, cioè della realtà intelligibile vera e propria, gli enti matematici e le discipline a loro relative (prima fra tutte le geometria) rappresentano un'eccellente via di accesso alla conoscenza intelligibile, in virtù del principio secondo il quale la copia riproduce in qualche misura la perfezione dell'originale. Non c'è dubbio, in ogni caso, che la soluzione prospettata da Tindaro possa venire considerata di tipo *epistemologico* perché pone l'accento sulla funzione propedeutica e introduttiva che la geometria svolge nell'ambito del processo epistemico che conduce l'anima dalle cose sensibili alle realtà intelligibili.

Dopo Tindaro prende la parola Floro, il cui intervento si apre con un'esplicita confutazione della risposta precedente (719 A). Egli ha infatti buon gioco nell'osservare che la soluzione di Tindaro è sbagliata perché non spiega affatto il motivo per cui Dio geometrizza, ma si limita a indicare la ragione per la quale la geometria risulta necessaria a noi uomini non agli dèi (μὴ θεοῖς ἀλλ' ἡμῖν ἀναγκαίαν τὴν γεωμετρίαν). E del resto, obietta Floro, Dio non ha bisogno di un *mathema* come di uno strumento per orientare il pensiero dalle cose generate agli esseri (ἀπὸ τῶν γενητῶν ἐπὶ τὰ ὄντα), dal

⁷ Per i paralleli platonici, tratti soprattutto dal VII libro della *Repubblica*, cf. S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1996, p. 163 e S. PIERI, 2005, p. 145.

⁸ Analogo rimprovero si legge in *Vit. Marc.* 14,9 sqq. Sull'accusa rivolta a Eudosso, Archita e Menecmo di avere trasformato la geometria in una disciplina “meccanica” cf. S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1996, pp. 166-7. Sulla strategia plutarca volta a purificare la geometria da ogni aspetto meccanico, per farne una disciplina unicamente teoretica, si veda A. GEORGIADOU, 1992, passim.

⁹ Cf., per esempio, *Plat. quaest.* III 1001 C. Per una discussione più approfondita della collocazione ontologica degli enti matematici e del loro *status* di “secondi intelligibili” devo rinviare a F. FERRARI, 1995, pp. 156-8 e 1996, p. 138 sqq.; si veda anche CH. SCHOPPE, 1994, pp. 203-7, che intende molto giustamente gli enti matematici in termini di *vermittelnde Instanzen zwischen den Ideen und den πράγματα*, e ora S. PIERI, 2005, p. 146.

momento che questi esseri, cioè le idee o gli intelligibili, si trovano già “in lui, sono con lui e intorno a lui” (ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ ἔστιν ἐκείνω καὶ σὺν αὐτῷ καὶ περὶ αὐτόν)¹⁰.

Il significato di questa affermazione dovrebbe essere il seguente: Dio non ha bisogno di ricorrere alla geometria come strumento per indirizzare l'anima dalle realtà sensibili alle idee per la semplice ragione che egli si trova già presso le idee, facendo parte, insieme ad esse, della sfera intelligibile e suprema della realtà (Dio si trova ἐν τοῖς νοητοῖς per usare la formula di *Plat. quaest.* III 1002 B). La sua conoscenza delle idee non rappresenta il frutto di un percorso epistemico, ma risulta in qualche modo già da sempre data. Non è mancato chi ha voluto vedere in questa misteriosa precisazione di Floro un'allusione alle celebri concezioni delle idee come pensieri di Dio, molto diffusa tra gli autori platonici contemporanei di Plutarco¹¹. Non è questa la sede per affrontare ed eventualmente dirimere la questione. In ogni caso l'obiezione di Floro contro la soluzione epistemologica avanzata da Tindaro funziona bene anche postulando che tra gli ὄντα, cioè le idee, e Dio esista una relazione molto stretta (di vicinanza e appartenenza al medesimo ambito ontologico, appunto: θεὸς ἐν τοῖς νοητοῖς), senza che si debba per forza ipotizzare che tale relazione si configuri nella forma della famosa dottrina delle idee come pensieri di Dio.

Confutata la risposta di Tindaro, Floro avanza la sua personale soluzione all'enigma, richiamandosi alla funzione etica e politica della geometria, che troverebbe espressione nella preminenza della proporzione geometrica rispetto a quella aritmetica (719 A-C). Nel ragionamento di Floro la proporzione assume un valore simbolico che gli consente di collegare la matematica a motivi extra-matematici, di natura politica e giuridica¹². Egli può infatti menzionare a sostegno della sua risposta l'apprezzamento di Platone nei confronti di Licurgo, il quale estromise dalla Laconia la proporzione aritmetica (solidale alla democrazia) per sostituirla con quella geometrica, adatta alla oligarchia moderata e alla monarchia legislativa (ὀλιγαρχία σώφρονη καὶ βασιλεία νομική). Del resto, aggiunge Floro, Dio stesso si serve della proporzione geometrica come parametro per giudicare le azioni; egli infatti privilegia il criterio dell'onore (κατ' ἄξιαν) rispetto a quello della mera uguaglianza, il quale trova invece espressione matematica nella proporzione aritmetica.

Con quest'ultima considerazione Floro può saldare il motivo etico a quello politico; ai suoi occhi la frase attribuita a Platone si spiega dunque sulla base di considerazioni di natura *etico-politica* (ricavate in forma diretta o indiretta da dialoghi quali la *Repubblica* e le *Leggi*)¹³.

Dopo Floro prende la parola Autobulo, quasi certamente uno dei figli di Plutarco, il quale si rifiuta di entrare direttamente in polemica con l'interlocutore

¹⁰ L'interpretazione esatta di questo passo, e in particolare la corretta identificazione degli ὄντα con le idee e non con gli enti matematici, si trova in Ch. SCHOPPE, 1994, p. 147 n. 32.

¹¹ Per esempio S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1996, p. 168 e io stesso in F. FERRARI, 1995, pp. 242-7.

¹² Del tutto condivisibili le considerazioni svolte da S. PIERI, 2005, pp. 146-7.

¹³ Per l'indicazioni dei passi platonici ai quali dovrebbe alludere Floro cf. S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1996, pp. 169-70.

che lo ha preceduto, come gli aveva chiesto di fare Tindaro. Egli riconosce comunque che la sua proposta di soluzione si muove su un altro terreno. Ai suoi occhi, infatti, l'affermazione relativa al Dio geometra si spiega in riferimento alla funzione della geometria all'interno dell'impianto cosmologico ricavato, anche qui in forma diretta o indiretta, dalla lettura del *Timeo* (719 C-E). Per Autobulo l'oggetto della geometria è costituito dalle proprietà e dai caratteri dei limiti (τῶν περὶ τὰ πέρατα συμπτωμάτων καὶ παθῶν), dei quali Dio si è servito allo scopo di ordinare la materia illimitata (ἄλη ἄπειρος). Egli spiega infatti, rifacendosi in modo indiretto alle affermazioni platoniche contenute nel *Timeo* (specialmente 53 C), che linee, superfici e solidi (geometrici) forniscono le prime εἶδη καὶ διαφοράς per la generazione dei corpi semplici, ossia aria, terra, acqua e fuoco. Queste entità costituiscono in un certo senso la prima forma di ordinamento del sostrato indeterminato, dal momento che la loro presenza scandisce l'inizio del processo di organizzazione razionale della materia, in se stessa dominata dal disordine (ἀταξία) e dallo sconvolgimento (πλημμέλεια). Non ci sono dubbi che il contesto nel quale si muove Autobulo è di carattere *cosmologico* e rinvia al *Timeo*, interpretato anche alla luce della riflessione tardo-pitagorica ben nota a Plutarco¹⁴.

Questa rapida panoramica sulle prime tre soluzioni al problema del "Dio geometra" induce a proporre la seguente considerazione: Tindaro, Floro e Autobulo presentano risposte platoniche all'interrogativo della *quaestio* e per questo vanno lodati; nessuna di esse è veramente corretta (dal momento che nessuna risponde in modo appropriato all'interrogativo iniziale), ma tutte mettono in luce un importante aspetto della concezione platonica della geometria, contribuendo a rendere omaggio a Platone, secondo lo spirito della conversazione simposiaca.

IV

Plutarco prende infine la parola per fornire la soluzione esatta all'interrogativo iniziale, mostrando come la cosmogenesi operata dalla divinità assuma le vesti della soluzione a un problema geometrico, e precisamente quello di costruire, date due entità (la materia e il paradigma ideale), una terza realtà che sia materialmente uguale a una e formalmente simile all'altra, cioè uguale al sostrato indeterminato, ossia alla materia, e simile al modello, cioè al mondo delle idee (720 A-C). Egli dichiara di richiamarsi alla διαίρεσις, che sarebbe contenuta nel *Timeo* (48 E e soprattutto 52 D)¹⁵, dove Platone descrive il processo che ha portato alla generazione del mondo, e i cui "protagonisti metafisici" sarebbero, nell'interpretazione plutarchea, il più disordinato dei sostrati, cioè la materia (ἄλη), il più bello dei modelli, ossia il mondo delle idee (qui nella forma di un singolare collettivo: ἰδέα), e la migliore delle cause, cioè Dio. Come è noto, il problema al quale allude Plutarco era ben conosciuto

¹⁴ Sulla valenza cosmologica dell'intervento di Autobulo cf. S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1996, pp. 172-4, R. SEIDE, 1981, pp. 109-10 e soprattutto S. PIERI, 2005, pp. 147-8.

¹⁵ Sui riferimenti testuali platonici cf. S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1996, pp. 177-8 e soprattutto M. BALTES, 1996, p. 362 sqq.

a Platone (probabilmente grazie al circolo di Archita)¹⁶ e viene menzionato anche da Euclide (VI, 25); esso consiste nel costruire, date due figure, una terza che sia uguale alla prima e simile alla seconda (τῶ μὲν ἴσον τῶ δ' ὅμοιον).

L'atto per mezzo del quale Dio genera il cosmo sensibile rappresenta dunque agli occhi di Plutarco la soluzione a un problema simile a quello geometrico appena menzionato. Il cosmo infatti è uguale dal punto di vista dell'estensione materiale alla ὕλη (il che significa che esso esaurisce tutta la materia esistente), mentre è simile dal punto di vista formale al παράδειγμα, cioè alla totalità unificata del mondo delle idee: esso è οἷον ἢ ἰδέα καὶ ὅσον ἢ ὕλη, per usare le parole di Plutarco. Questa risposta fornisce effettivamente la soluzione corretta all'enigma di partenza perché spiega la ragione per la quale Platone avrebbe sostenuto che Dio geometrizza, ossia opera in modo geometrico. La generazione del mondo, ossia l'atto fondamentale della divinità, viene infatti assimilata alla soluzione di un problema geometrico.

Come detto, Plutarco dichiara di riprendere questa *diairesis* dal *Timeo*. Tuttavia nel dialogo platonico non si trova una classificazione immediatamente riconducibile a quella plutarchea, neppure nei passi ai quali Plutarco sembra alludere. Platone parla di tre generi (48E sqq.), l'essere intelligibile, la sua copia, e un terzo genere, oscuro e misterioso, che egli chiama in diversi modi – χώρα, πανδεχές, ὑποδοχή πάσης γενέσεως, ecc. – e che Plutarco, conformemente all'uso aristotelico ormai diffuso tra i platonici, assimila alla “materia” (ὕλη). Quindi, alla fine della descrizione della genesi ontologica dei corpi fisici (52 D), Platone si riferisce a questi tre principi con i termini “essere” (ὄν), “spazio” (χώρα) e “divenire” (γένεσις). Come si vede, dalla presentazione platonica sembra del tutto assente Dio, cioè il demiurgo. L'operazione esegetica di Plutarco non è però del tutto priva di plausibilità e aderenza al testo. Egli identifica in modo immediato e non problematico la χώρα platonica con la ὕλη; poi, sdoppia il principio intelligibile e noetico in due entità, il modello (ιδέα) e la divinità demiurgica (θεός); infine equipara, implicitamente, la γένεσις al cosmo sensibile, ossia al prodotto dell'atto cosmopietico¹⁷. Quasi seguendo il testo platonico (che alla descrizione delle entità che preesistono alla generazione del mondo fa seguire l'introduzione degli enti matematici, cioè numeri e figure, di cui il demiurgo si serve per ordinare il sostrato), Plutarco dichiara che Dio si serve di λόγος καὶ μέτρον καὶ ἀριθμός allo scopo di κοσμηῆσαι τὴν φύσιν, ossia di ordinare la natura indeterminata¹⁸. Accennando alla funzione strumentale degli enti matematici (i quali costituiscono appunto gli “strumenti” per mezzo dei quali il demiurgo attua il processo cosmopietico), Plutarco riprende in qualche modo la tesi avanzata nell'intervento precedente da Autobulo, il quale

¹⁶ Per questo cf. S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1996, p. 176.

¹⁷ Quest'ultima assimilazione non può venire operata esplicitamente da Plutarco per la semplice ragione che altrove egli identifica la *genesis* di *Ti.* 52 D con l'anima precosmica irrazionale, ossia con il principio del movimento disordinato che sconvolge la materia prima della generazione del cosmo: cf. *An. procr.* 1024 B-C. Sulla teoria dei principi di Plutarco (Dio, materia, anima precosmica) e sull'identificazione dell'anima precosmica con la *genesis* di *Ti.* 52 D cf. F. FERRARI, 1995, pp. 72-90 e M. BALTES, 1996, pp. 399-402.

¹⁸ Il riferimento platonico è a *Ti.* 53 A-B (cf. anche 69 B); si veda M. BALTES, 1996, p. 363.

aveva richiamato l'attenzione sul ruolo giocato dalle linee, dalle superfici e dai solidi geometrici nel processo di ordinamento e razionalizzazione della materia indeterminata¹⁹.

La soluzione avanzata da Plutarco risulta dunque largamente dipendente dal *Timeo*, interpretato naturalmente secondo la particolare prospettiva dell'autore. Detto ciò, vale comunque la pena di spendere due parole sulla concezione metafisico-cosmologica che emerge da questo intervento e in particolare dalle parole con le quali Plutarco risolve l'interrogativo della *quaestio*. È universalmente noto che Plutarco venga considerato come il massimo rappresentante, almeno tra gli autori medioplatonici, dell'interpretazione letterale, cioè temporale, della cosmogenesi descritta nel *Timeo*. Contrariamente agli interpreti accademici (Speusippo e Senocrate) e alla maggior parte dei suoi colleghi medioplatonici (Eudoro e Alcino), egli intende in senso letterale le parole di Platone relative alla nascita del mondo (il famoso γέγονε di 28 B). Ai suoi occhi, infatti, la generazione del cosmo dipende da un atto unico compiuto dalla divinità e non può venire interpretata come la descrizione metaforica di un rapporto di dipendenza perpetuo, ossia nel senso della cosiddetta *creatio continua*²⁰.

Tuttavia le parole con le quali egli fornisce la soluzione all'interrogativo di partenza, e la forma stessa di questo interrogativo (nel quale ricorre l'avverbio αἰεί), inducono a ritenere, come alcuni studiosi non hanno mancato di osservare, che egli tenti una sorta di conciliazione tra le due prospettive, quella letterale (per la quale la genesi del cosmo è un atto unico operato da Dio) e quella metaforica (per la quale tale genesi allude al fatto che il cosmo costituisce un'entità generata, cioè costantemente soggetta a un processo di generazione)²¹. In effetti Plutarco ribadisce la tesi dell'unicità dell'atto divino (consistente appunto nella soluzione di un problema simile a quello geometrico), ma poi aggiunge che Dio φυλάττει διὰ παντός τὸ ἴσον τῆ ὕλη καὶ ὁμοιον τῆ ιδέα τὸν κοσμόν, vale a dire si impegna a preservare per la totalità del tempo la condizione per cui il cosmo risulti uguale alla materia e simile all'idea. Aggiunge poi che il cosmo è *sempre* (αἰεί), cioè incessantemente, sottoposto al processo di generazione e sconvolgimento prodotto dalla σύμφυτος ἀνάγκη τοῦ σώματος, ossia dalla necessità connaturata all'elemento corporeo, e che viene aiutato dal padre e demiurgo, cioè da Dio, il quale rivolgendosi al modello definisce la sostanza, cioè la materia (πρὸς τὸ παράδειγμα τὴν οὐσίαν ὀρίζοντος).

Con la generazione del cosmo il compito di Dio non è dunque terminato. Egli deve preservare l'integrità dell'universo costantemente messa a repentaglio

¹⁹ L'idea che gli enti matematici (numeri e figure geometriche) costituiscano gli strumenti di cui Dio si serve nella sua azione di ordinamento di un'entità indeterminata (corpo o anima) ritorna numerose volte nelle opere filosofiche di Plutarco: cf. *An. procr.* 1013 C; 1015 B; 1017 B; 1023 D; 1029 E; *Plat. quaest.* IV 1003 A. Si veda S. PIERI, 2005, pp. 151-2 nota 121. Sugli enti matematici come "misure quantitative" cf. CH. SCHOPPE, 1994, pp. 204-7 e F. FERRARI, 1996, p. 139.

²⁰ Sull'esegesi letterale (cioè temporale) della cosmogenesi del *Timeo* in Plutarco cf. M. BALTES, 1998, pp. 406-14.

²¹ Per esempio S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1996, p. 162 e 180.

dall'azione della σύμφυτος ἀνάγκη, ossia della condizione che appartiene costitutivamente alla corporeità, secondo il celebre mito cosmologico del *Politico* (269 C-274 E). È noto, inoltre, che Plutarco assimila la σύμφυτος ἐπιθυμία di cui si parla nel dialogo platonico all'anima precosmica irrazionale, cioè al principio del disordine e del male. In realtà, la tesi secondo la quale l'intervento di Dio non si limita all'atto di cosmogenesi ma prosegue per sempre, rappresenta la risposta di Plutarco a un importante problema legato all'esegesi del *Timeo*. Si tratta della questione di spiegare come sia possibile che un'entità generata, come è secondo Plutarco il cosmo sensibile, risulti eterna, ossia destinata a non perire mai. Attraverso un'ardita interpretazione del passo 41 A del *Timeo* (dove il demiurgo dichiara che le cose da lui generate sono indissolubili, a meno che lui stesso non voglia dissolverle), Plutarco (seguito poi da altri platonici) pone l'accento non sulla prima parte dell'affermazione platonica, bensì sulla seconda, e, probabilmente sulla base di *Pol.* 270 A, intende il passo nel senso che il mondo, preso in se stesso, è destinato a perire; tuttavia l'azione provvidenziale del demiurgo gli trasmette una sorta di ἐπισκευαστή ἀθανασία, ossia di immortalità restaurata, rifatta, prodotta cioè dall'esterno²². Tutto ciò non viene espressamente detto da Plutarco, ma non sembra davvero azzardato ipotizzare che la concezione qui ricostruita agisca alle spalle delle affermazioni contenute nella parte conclusiva di questo *zetema*.

La risposta plutarchea comporta dunque la conseguenza che l'attività (geometrica) di Dio non si limiti all'atto di cosmogenesi, ma prosegua incessantemente per tutto il tempo in cui il cosmo persiste, ossia per sempre. Per fare in modo che il mondo costituisca sempre una realtà quantitativamente identica alla materia e formalmente simile al modello intelligibile, Dio deve operare sempre in modo geometrico, anche perché gli strumenti con i quali egli può attuare quest'opera di conservazione sono esattamente i principi di natura geometrico-matematica, come Autobulo aveva dimostrato nell'intervento precedente.

Anche in un contesto simposiaco, dunque, Plutarco non rinuncia ad accennare a importanti tematiche filosofiche: in questo caso cosmologiche e metafisiche. Abbiamo visto, poi, come la sua interpretazione del *Timeo* si appoggi in larga misura sulla lettura del grande mito cosmologico del *Politico*.

A suggello di questa rapida panoramica sulla più filosofica delle *Quaestiones convivales*, credo che si possa proporre la seguente considerazione. La seconda *quaestio* dell'VIII libro si presenta come un eccellente esempio del modo di fare filosofia παρά πότον teorizzato in apertura di questa raccolta. I partecipanti alla conversazione, e l'autore della medesima, offrono un omaggio a Platone, e lo fanno nel modo più appropriato: discutendo πλατωνικῶς, cioè sia servendosi di concezioni platoniche (intorno a un interessante enigma platonico), sia ricorrendo alla forma dialogica.

²² Su questa nozione cf. M. BALTES, 1998, p. 422 sqq. e 525.

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RIDDLING AT TABLE
TRIVIAL AINIGMATA VS. PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMATA

SIMONE BETA
University of Siena

Abstract

In his work *On Proverbs*, Clearchus writes that “the solution of riddles (*griphoi*) is not alien to philosophy, and the ancients used to make a display of their knowledge by means of them. For in propounding riddles in their drinking-bouts they were not like the people of today who ask one another, what is the most delightful form of sexual commerce, or what fish has the best flavour”. Symposiastic riddles were in fact a very popular sub-literary genre, as is witnessed by some epigrams of the *Greek Anthology* (book 14th) and by the Latin *Aenigmata Symposii* or *Symphosii*, but in order to find the ‘philosophical riddles’ mentioned by Clearchus we must turn to literary banquets. The topics dealt with in Plato’s and Xenophon’s *Symposia* (the praise of the god of Love; the definition of the most beautiful thing in the world) are in fact philosophical questions (what is love? What is the most beautiful thing in the world?).

This paper deals with Plutarch’s position regarding the riddles (*griphoi* and *aenigmata*) banqueters were asked to solve in real symposia and the questions (*problemata*) banqueters were addressed in literary symposia; particular attention is devoted to two of Plutarch’s works, the *Questiones convivales* and the *Convivium septem sapientium*.

In the first book of his work *On Proverbs*, the Peripatetic philosopher Clearchus of Soli writes the following lines: “The solution of riddles (γρίφοι) is not alien to philosophy, and the ancients used to make a display of their knowledge by means of them. For in propounding riddles in their drinking-bouts they were not like the people of today who ask one another, what is the most delightful form of sexual commerce, or what fish has the best flavour or is at the height of excellence at that season, or what fish is to be eaten chiefly after the rising of Arcturus or of the Pleiades or of the Dog-star”¹.

We owe this quotation to Athenaeus, the Egyptian erudite who, in his most famous work, the *Deipnosophistai*, makes the wise protagonists of his long dinner quote a good number of the typical symposiastic conundrums Clearchus seemed to regard with disdain². These riddles were a sub-literary genre that happened to be very popular in real banquets, as is witnessed by many Greek and Latin authors, starting with Aristophanes, continuing with some fifty epigrams of the *Greek Anthology*, and reaching late antiquity with the hundred Latin *aenigmata* written by the mysterious *Symphosius* or *Symposius*³.

Plato did not like this kind of riddle either: in the fifth book of his *Republic*, while hinting at the famous riddle of the eunuch (the ‘man who is not a man’)

¹ Clearchus, fr. 63 Wehrli.

² Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists*, 10.457 CD. All Athenaeus’ passages are quoted according to GULICK’s translation, 1930.

³ Aristophanes, *Wasps* 20 sqq.; *Greek Anthology*, book XIV. The last edition of Symphosius’ riddles is BERGAMIN, 2005. On riddles in classical literatures, see FRIEDRICH, 1860; ÖHLERT, 1886, 1912²; SCHULTZ, 1909, 1912²; SCHULTZ, 1914. On the fifty-three riddles quoted in the fourteenth book of the *Greek Anthology*, see F. BUFFIÈRE, 1970.

and the bat (the ‘bird that is not a bird’), he defines this typical ‘drinking-bout riddle’ an ἀίνιγμα τῶν παίδων (a ‘childish riddle’)⁴.

Not all these riddles were so stupid as Clearchus and Plato seem to say, though. This might be true of some funny and gross quizzes, such as those attested by the poets of the Middle comedy Eubulus and Diphilus – although their solutions (πρωκτός and πέος respectively) fitted in with the loose atmosphere that marked some quite inebriated symposia⁵. But other questions were more serious. For instance, the riddle of the cupping-glass (“I saw a man gluing bronze upon another man with fire so closely as to make them of one blood”), quoted by Athenaeus and Plutarch, who attributed it to Cleobulina, was considered by Aristotle an example of both a clever riddle (ἀίνιγμα) and a good metaphor (μεταφορά): in his *Rhetoric*, the philosopher states that “metaphor is a kind of enigma, so that it is clear that the transference – the etymological meaning of the word μεταφορά – is clever”⁶.

But which were the riddles whose solution was, according to Clearchus, “not alien to philosophy”? In the second part of Athenaeus’ quotation, the philosopher says that “the ancients preferred such problems as these: answering the first guest who recited an epic or iambic line, each one in turn capped it with the next verse; or, if one recited the gist of a passage, another answered with one from some other poet to show that he had spoken to the same effect; further, each in turn would recite an iambic verse”. And, later on, “similarly to what has been described, they would tell the name of each leader against Troy, or of each leader among the Trojans, or tell the name of a city in Asia – all beginning with a given letter; then the next man and all the rest would take turns in telling the name of a city in Europe, whether Greek or barbarian, as prescribed. Thus their very play, being not unreflective, became a revelation of the friendly terms with culture on which each guest stood; and as a reward for success they set up a crown and bestowed applause, by which, more than anything else, mutual friendship is rendered sweet”⁷.

Since Clearchus’ quotation ends here, we are uncertain as to the philosophical nature of such pastimes: it’s hard to tell whether this play with words and letters had the gravity real philosophy should have.

Therefore I must put for a second time the question I have just asked: which were the philosophical riddles praised by Clearchus? In order to answer this question, we must turn to other banquets – not real, but literary banquets.

⁴ Plato, *Republic* 479 BC. A fuller version of this riddle is quoted by Athenaeus (10.452 C) and attributed to Panarces; Athenaeus has drawn it from Clearchus’ work (fr. 94 Wehrli). The most complete version of the riddle can be read in *Schol. ad Plat. Resp.* 479 C (p. 235 Chase Greene).

⁵ Eubulus, fr. 106 Kassel-Austin (with the interesting remarks of R.L. HUNTER, 1983), and Diphilus, fr. 49 Kassel-Austin. These riddles are quoted by Athenaeus as well (10.449 EF; 451 BC).

⁶ ‘Cleobulina’ fr. 1 West; Athenaeus 10 452 B; Plutarch, *Convivium septem sapientium* 154B; Aristoteles, *Rh.* 1405a37 and *Po.* 1458a29; Demetrius, *De elocutione* 102. A slightly different version of the same riddle can be read in the *Greek Anthology* (XIV 54).

⁷ Athenaeus 10 457 EF.

Let us start with the most celebrated one, Plato's *Symposium*. If we consider the main topic dealt with in this work, namely, the seven speeches in praise (ἔγκωμια) of the god of Love uttered by Phaedrus, Pausanias, Eryximachus, Aristophanes, Agathon, Socrates and Alcibiades, what else are these seven speeches other than different answers to the philosophical question "what is love?". The philosophical dimension of this πρόβλημα is strengthened by the philosophical earnestness of the answers – and, if we may doubt whether all the answers were really earnest, we must admit that Socrates' surely was.

The same considerations can be made about the other Socratic symposium: in their different (and sometimes amusing) definitions of what is the personal feature they are most proud of, the banqueters of Xenophon's *Symposium* do answer a kind of philosophical question ("what is the most beautiful quality of a man?"); the fact that some answers are provocative and ridiculous (for instance, Socrates asserts he is proud of his being a pander) does not wipe out the philosophical side of the overall discussion.

Other interesting information can be gained from the two symposiastic works of Plutarch, the Συμποσιακῶν προβλημάτων βιβλία θ' (*Quaestionum convivialium libri novem*) and the τῶν ἑπτὰ σοφῶν συμπόσιον (*Septem sapientium convivium*), where we find many useful remarks about this subject.

The Συμποσιακῶν προβλημάτων βιβλία as a whole are a crystal-clear indication of Plutarch's opinion concerning this topic. Its very generic title has led modern translators to choose a more precise expression and to underline the conversational side of the work ('table-talk', 'propos de table', 'conversazioni a tavola', and so on). But the Latin translation (*quaestiones*) is more akin to the Greek word used by Plutarch to define the subject of each 'talk' (πρόβλημα). Plutarch mentions it right at the very introduction of his work, when he states that "each of the nine books contains δέκα προβλήματα" ('ten questions')⁸. But what does πρόβλημα precisely mean? Its most common English translation, *problem*, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is glossed as "a thing thrown or put forward; hence, a question propounded for solution"⁹; in Greek literature as well, πρόβλημα is a 'question' that covers a broad range of meanings, since it can be a mere synonym of 'riddle' but can also mean something deeper such as a real philosophical problem¹⁰. In Clearchus' definition, the word πρόβλημα appears twice: "A riddle (γρίφος) is a problem put in jest (πρόβλημα παιστικόν), requiring, by searching the mind, the answer to the problem (τὸ προβληθέν) to be given for a prize or forfeit"¹¹. In the introduction to the sixth book of the *Quaestiones convivales*, while he says to his friend Sossius Senecio that one of the valuable privileges guaranteed by

⁸ *Quaestiones convivales* 612 E.

⁹ OED, vol. VIII, p. 1403.

¹⁰ The OED makes a similar distinction: *problem* is either "a difficult or puzzling question proposed for solution; a riddle; an enigmatic statement", or "a question proposed for academic discussion or scholastic disputation", or "a doubtful or difficult question; a matter of inquiry, discussion, or thought; a question that exercises the mind".

¹¹ Athenaeus 10 448 C (= Clearchus, fr. 86 Wehrli).

Plato to the guests of his *Symposium* was that of recalling afterwards what had been said over the drinks, Plutarch uses the expression προβλημάτων δὲ καὶ λογῶν φιλοσόφων ὑποθέσεις for indicating “the topics of philosophical inquiry and discussion”¹².

Many of the *Quaestiones convivales* are in fact significant philosophical topics that could be (and possibly really were) discussed by learned people during a symposium: this is for instance the case of the first of the ‘table-talks’ (“Whether philosophy is a fitting topic for conversation at a drinking-party”), where Plutarch states that the only questions that should be posed and answered during a literary banquet must be – if I may borrow the Clearchean expression – “not alien to philosophy”¹³.

But, in spite of the fact that in this work (his longest one) he hardly mentions a single symposiastic riddle (apart from the quotation of a line that was part of a very popular αἰνίγμα)¹⁴, Plutarch did not spurn that kind of προβλήματα. In the introduction to the fifth book, he says to Sossius that “after dinner even common, unliterary people allow their thoughts to wander to other pleasures, as far away as possible from the concerns of the body”: when their belly is full, they “take up conundrums and riddles (αἰνίγματα καὶ γρίφους), or the Names and Numbers game”¹⁵.

This attitude can be better seen in the other Plutarchean symposium, the *Septem sapientium convivium*. The nine questions put by Amasis to the Ethiopian Pharaoh and discussed by the seven wise men are real philosophical questions (as a matter of fact, they are called προβλήματα). They are the following: “What is the oldest thing? What is the most beautiful? What is the greatest? What is the wisest? What is the most common? What is the most helpful and the most harmful? What is the strongest and the easiest?”¹⁶.

¹² *Quaestiones convivales* 686 C (English translation by H. B. HOFFLEIT, 1969).

¹³ If one skims through the index of the *Quaestiones convivales*, he will find other philosophical questions (or questions about philosophy), such as question three in book two (“Whether the hen or the egg came first”, a question that is much more philosophical than it appears) or questions seven and eight in book eight (two προβλήματα about Pythagorean precepts).

¹⁴ *Quaestiones convivales* 660 D, that is the second line of a riddle quoted in full by Athenaeus 10 457 B. On the peculiarities of Plutarch’s quotation, see M. S. CAPONIGRO, 1984, pp. 293–296; on the riddle, see also E. FABBRO, 2003.

¹⁵ *Quaestiones convivales* 673AB. In his note in the Loeb edition, after having said the “the letters of the alphabet were regularly used as numerals (*alpha* being 1, *beta* 2, etc.)”, HOFFLEIT, 1969, writes that “in a game called *isopsepha* the sum of the values of the letters of a name was equated with the sum comprised in another name” and refers to the many examples in verse that can be found in the sixth book of the *Greek Anthology* (321 sqq.). D. L. PAGE, 1981, p. 504, in the section dedicated to the *isopsepha* epigrams of Leonidas of Alexandria, writes that “there is a curious example in a Bithynian epitaph of the second century A.D., Peek 1324: the deceased invites the reader to guess his name, giving clues including the sum of the nine letters”. Galen’s father, the mathematician and architect Aelius Nico, was very keen on such riddles (see H. DILLER, 1936).

¹⁶ *Convivium septem sapientium* 152 F. Because of the significance of the topics, the answers given by the Ethiopian king are discussed at length by the banqueters in the following chapters of the dialogue. On these riddles, see I. M. KONSTANTAKOS, 2004 and 2005.

But in this symposium it is also possible to find less philosophical riddles. Cleobulus, one of the seven *sophoi*, who was famous for his conundrums, goes to the dinner offered by Periander together with his daughter Eumetis, better known by the surname 'Cleobulina' and not unequal to her father in the cleverness of her riddles. Two of the most celebrated Cleobulina's riddles are explicitly quoted in the dialogue. In the fifth chapter, Aesop mentions the riddle of the Phrygian flute ("Full on my ear with a horn-bearing shin did a dead donkey smite me"); here the verb used to indicate the creation of this riddle is αἰνίττομαι (connected with the noun αἰνίγμα)¹⁷. In the tenth chapter, the same Aesop mentions the riddle of the cupping-glass; here the action of propounding the riddle is indicated through the verb προβάλλειν (connected with the noun πρόβλημα)¹⁸.

The mention of this conundrum (and of conundrums in general) is caused by the intervention of the master of the house after the discussion of the king's riddles: Periander recalls the famous game of riddles between Homer and Hesiod held at Chalcis during the funeral of Amphidamas¹⁹. At this point, one of the banqueters, the physician Cleodorus, asks a question that, in a certain sense, summarizes the topic of this paper: "What difference is there between things like this (that is, riddles like those asked by Homer and Hesiod) and Cleobulina's riddles? Perhaps it is not unbecoming for her to amuse herself and to weave these as other girls weave girdles and hair-nets, and to propound them to women, but the idea that men of sense should take them at all seriously is ridiculous"²⁰.

In other words, Cleodorus seems to deny the possibility of a distinction between trivial αἰνίγματα and philosophical προβλήματα. Cleobulina blushes and does not answer the question; Aesop takes her part and asks the physician if it is not even more ridiculous not to be able to solve riddles such as the one of the cupping-glass (a riddle which, as Aesop points out, ought to be very easy for a doctor like Cleodorus who owed his reputation as a good physician to the use of cupping-glass as a form of treatment).

Between these two extreme positions, Plutarch prefers to take a much more balanced stand. Such a position is expressed at best by the words uttered by Thales, one of the seven *sapientes*, at the beginning of the dialogue: when Neiloxenus of Naucratis pays Cleobulina a compliment for the popularity of her riddles in Egypt and praises her for the cleverness and the skill shown in them, Thales says that she uses those conundrums "like dice, as a means of occasional amusement. (...) But she is also possessed of wonderful sense, a statesman's mind, and an amiable character, and she has influence with her father so that his government of the citizens has become milder and more popular"²¹.

¹⁷ *Convivium septem sapientium* 150 EF; 'Cleobulina' fr. 3 West (English translation by BABBITT, 1928).

¹⁸ *Convivium septem sapientium* 154 B.

¹⁹ This famous game is the subject of the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod*.

²⁰ *Convivium septem sapientium* 154 AB (BABBITT's translation).

²¹ *Convivium septem sapientium* 148 DE (BABBITT's translation).

These words acknowledge that the ability to construct trivial riddles good enough to make people enjoy themselves during a banquet is as important as the capacity to solve more difficult questions that involve significant spheres such as literature, politics, science and, last but not least, philosophy.

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THE READING OF TEXTS AT THE GRAECO-ROMAN SYMPOSIUM AND IN THE CHRISTIAN GATHERING

VALERIY ALIKIN
University of Leiden

Abstract

Classical scholars who researched the topic of the activities taking place at Graeco-Roman banquets, extensively described the artistic presentations that accompanied eating and drinking. They have paid much attention to the singing, dancing and dramatic performances given at banquets. Less attention has been given to the subject of public reading in the context of the after-dinner symposium. The custom of reading literary works at symposia is well attested in the symposiastic literature of the first and the second centuries CE. Plutarch's *Moralia* are one of the more important sources that attest the reading of literature at the Graeco-Roman symposium. In the late 90s it has been argued by several scholars that the early Christian communities during their weekly gatherings followed the same pattern of Graeco-Roman dining. This paper seeks to argue that the reading of texts in the early Christian gathering is the historical counterpart of the reading of texts at the Graeco-Roman symposium.

Introduction

Classical scholars have carefully investigated the activities that accompanied Graeco-Roman banquets and the entertainment and artistic contributions that surrounded the eating and drinking.¹ They have paid much attention to the singing, dancing and dramatic performances given at banquets². However, they have taken less interest in the subject of the public reading of literary texts in the context of the after-dinner symposium.³ The custom of reading literary works at symposia is well attested in the symposiastic literature of the first and second centuries CE. Plutarch's *Moralia* is one of the more important sources for our knowledge about the reading of literature at the symposium. In the late 90's of the last century, several scholars have convincingly shown that the weekly gatherings held by early Christian communities conformed to the custom of many voluntary associations in the Graeco-Roman world which would gather periodically for a supper and a symposium⁴. However, it has not been argued sufficiently and in detail that various elements of the Christian gatherings such as reading of Scripture, preaching and singing have their origins in customs practised at Graeco-Roman banquets. This paper tries to argue that the reading of texts in the early Christian gathering is the historical counterpart of the reading of texts at the Graeco-Roman symposium.

¹ K. DUNBABIN, 1998, pp. 81-101; E. STEIN-HÖLKESKAMP, 2005, pp. 220-52.

² K. DUNBABIN, 1996, pp. 66-80.

³ Discussions of reading at the symposium are found in R. STARR, 1990-1991, pp. 337-43; Ch. JONES, 1991, pp. 191-92.

⁴ M. KLINGHARDT, 1996, pp. 269-378; H. J. DE JONGE, 2001, pp. 209-37; D. SMITH, 2003.

The Reading of texts at the Graeco-Roman Symposium

Public reading in antiquity could be performed in various social settings. Dio Chrysostom describes how, walking through the hippodrome, he encountered people playing the flute, dancing, performing tricks, reading out a poem, singing, and recounting a history or tale⁵. The most common context, however, was the after-dinner symposium.⁶ Numerous Greek and Roman authors give descriptions of banquets at which the reading of texts played a prominent role. The reading of texts at a symposium usually served two purposes. First, it provided entertainment for the guests. Juvenal writes in his *Satirae*: “My party today will offer other forms of entertainment. We’ll have a recitation from the author of *Iliad* and from the poems of Virgil which challenge Homer’s supremacy. With poetry like this, it hardly matters how it is read”⁷. Second, the reading of texts at banquets could give the impulse for a good conversation and, according to Plutarch, also help “to raise morals to a higher standard of fairness and kindness”⁸.

At the symposium various types of texts could be read: philosophy, scientific treatises, history, poetry, and comedy. According to Aulus Gellius, at a banquet of the philosopher Taurus the *Symposium* of Plato was read.⁹ At the dinner of the philosopher Favorinus “there was usually read either an old song of the lyric poets, or something from history, now in Greek and now in Latin”¹⁰. Gellius once heard the reading of a passage from the treatise of Gavius Bassus *On the Origin of Verbs and Substantives*¹¹. Plutarch notices that, as entertainment at a banquet, the dialogues of Plato could be recited and even performed¹². According to Lucian, the blessed ones who live on the Isle of the Blest enjoy a symposium accompanied by poetry and songs. Here, mostly the poems of Homer are read or recited¹³. In Lucian’s *Symposion*, the grammarian Histiaios recited a combination of verses of Pindar, Hesiod and Anacreon¹⁴. Plutarch states that the comedian Menander is particularly fit to be read at symposia¹⁵.

The reading at symposia could be performed by persons of various statuses. First, the person who read the literary text could be the author of the text himself, who by reading his composition hoped to elicit the comments and reactions of the participants in the banquet¹⁶. Petronius relates that Trimalchio

⁵ D. Chr., XX 10.

⁶ Plu., *Quaest. conv.* 7.711b-712c; Plin., *Epist.* 1.15.2.

⁷ Juv., *Sat.* 11.180.

⁸ Plu., *Quaest. conv.* 7.712d.

⁹ Gell., *NA* 17.20.

¹⁰ Gell., *NA* 2.22.

¹¹ Gell., *NA* 3.19.

¹² Plu., *Quaest. conv.* 7.711c.

¹³ Luc., *VH* 2.15.

¹⁴ Luc., *Symp.* 17.

¹⁵ Plu., *Quaest. conv.* 7.712b.

¹⁶ E. J. KENNEY, “Books and Readers in the Roman World”, in E. J. KENNEY & W. V. CLAUSEN (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature Volume II: Latin Literature*, Cambridge, 1982,

at his banquet read his last will and also some poetry of his own making.¹⁷ Second, the reading could be performed by the host of the banquet. Third, the task of reading could be assigned to a special reader (ἀναγνώστης, lector). Such readers would often be educated slaves, whose duty in Roman houses was to entertain their master and his guests at table by a recitation in Greek and/or Latin¹⁸.

Atticus, for instance, had very good readers, whom he thought indispensable at dinner parties¹⁹. Gellius relates that a slave usually stood by the table at dinner with the philosopher Favorinus²⁰. Plutarch states that slaves could be charged with the recitation and performance of Plato's dialogues²¹. The evidence cited so far may suffice to warrant the conclusion that reading of literary compositions at symposia was a widely spread custom.

The Reading of texts in the Gatherings of Christians

Generations of scholars have traced the reading of Scripture in early Christian communities back to the reading of the Law of Moses in the Jewish synagogue. In this traditional and still current view, it is taken for granted that the reading of Scripture in Christian assemblies goes back to the reading of the Law in the synagogue if only for the fact that it was the Jewish Scriptures that were read in the Christian gatherings²². The earliest Christians, who were Jews, would have taken over not only the custom of meeting weekly to read and interpret the Law and the Prophets but also the practice of singing psalms and saying prayers and thanksgivings. Jews would have held their scrolls in great veneration, a respect that was enhanced by the ritualized reading in a religious setting. In time, the reverence for the word of God and the use of sacred books in religious gatherings would have become characteristic of Christians as well²³. This argument for tracing back the reading of Scripture among Christians to the synagogue profits from the fact that there are no clear-cut or convincing parallels for the cultic reading of texts in other religions than Judaism, apart from religions that have been influenced by Christianity itself. Thus, on the assumption that there was historical continuity between Jewish and Christian cultic practices, scholars inferred and still infer that the reading of Scripture in the Christian gathering has its roots in Judaism or has been influenced by Judaism in one way or another²⁴.

However, the view that the reading of texts in Christian communities derives from the practice of reading and studying the Law in Jewish

p. 11; R. STARR, 1987, p. 213.

¹⁷ Petron., *Satyr.* 71.4; 55.

¹⁸ See J.W. DUFF and A. J. S. SPAWFORTH, "anagnostes," in *OCD*³, p. 80.

¹⁹ Nep., *Att.* 13.3; 14.1.

²⁰ Gell., *NA* 3.19.

²¹ Plu., *Quaest. conv.* 7.711c.

²² F. YOUNG, 2004, p. 91.

²³ *Ibid.*, 92.

²⁴ G. ROUWHORST, 2002, p. 305.

communities does not seem to be confirmed by the data contained in early Christian literature.

To clarify the origin of the reading of Scripture in the gatherings of Christians it is necessary to look at the context of reading in the Christian Church during the first and second centuries.

In the last ten years there has been a substantial shift in the way scholars viewed the periodical gatherings of the early Christians. This shift began with the publication of *Gemeinschaftsmahl und Mahlgemeinschaft* by Matthias Klinghardt (1996)²⁵ and became stronger through studies by H. J. de Jonge (2001) and D. Smith (2003)²⁶. The essence of these authors' new approach can be formulated as follows: the local early Christian community, as a sociological phenomenon, functioned as a voluntary religious association just like many other associations in the Graeco-Roman world of the first century CE. There is firm evidence from the first two centuries CE to support this view. For instance, in 55 CE Paul compares the local Christian community with pagan religious associations in Corinth²⁷. In 112 CE Pliny does the same in his correspondence with the Roman Emperor Trajan²⁸. Lucian in the second century CE calls the leader of a Christian community a *thiasarches*, that is, leader of a cult association²⁹. About 200 CE Tertullian compares meals of the Christian communities with meals of various other religious associations such as the *collegia Saliorum* and the Dionysus and Sarapis cults³⁰.

Recent scholarship mostly accepts and subscribes to the view that, sociologically, early Christian communities functioned as Hellenistic cult associations. Such associations, whether pagan, Jewish, or Christian, held periodical gatherings that had a bipartite structure: a meal (*deipnon*) and a drinking party (*symposion*) afterwards. Most descriptions of Christian gatherings in the first three centuries present these gatherings as banquets that took place weekly on Sunday evening (Paul, Pliny, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Municius Felix, Tertullian). Basically, the early Christian gathering was a supper with a drinking party, not a meeting for the study of the Bible, as was the synagogue meeting on Sabbath. The early Christians met in private houses on Sunday evening and held their symposia more or less the same way as other groups did in those days. During the symposium part of the evening, Christians not only engaged in such oral communication as prayer, singing, speeches, homilies, lessons and revelations, they also practised public reading of texts.

It may seem exaggerated to seek the roots of the reading of texts in the gatherings of Christians one-sidedly and exclusively in the Hellenistic symposium, and not both in synagogue and symposium. There are, however,

²⁵ M. KLINGHARDT, 1996, pp. 269-378.

²⁶ H. J. de JONGE, 2001, pp. 209-37; D. SMITH, 2003.

²⁷ 1 Cor. 10:16-21.

²⁸ Luc., *Peregr.* 11.

²⁹ Plin., *Epist.* 10.96.

³⁰ Tert., *Apol.* 39.

strong reasons to trace the Christians' reading exclusively to the symposium. The meeting in the synagogue took place on Saturday in the morning did not comprise a meal or a symposium. The literary evidence from Philo and Josephus suggests that the synagogue was used primarily for reading and interpreting the Law of Moses³¹. Christians did not read the Torah or the Law of Moses as was the custom in the synagogal meeting. Moreover, during the first century, Christians read texts without any interpretation that followed the reading. There simply no continuity: neither between the ceremonies involved, nor between the texts read.

The first Christian texts to be read in Christian gatherings were apostolic letters, for instance, those of Paul. These were read from the middle of the first century onwards. This can be inferred from the Pauline correspondence and the Book of Acts³². At first, the reading of the apostles' letters was not yet a liturgical practice; rather these letters were read just as letters received. In certain cases, the messenger who brought them could read such letters to the audience.³³ Many early Christian letters were intended to be heard by all members of the community to which they were addressed; this means that they had to be read aloud in that community's weekly gathering at the symposium.

It should be admitted that reading at the Hellenistic symposium could have different functions and goals, and that various genres were read. But one function could certainly be the instruction or edification of the audience, which comes close to that of the reading of apostolic letters among Christians. Plutarch said that one should read moral stuff, especially Plato's dialogues.³⁴ Moreover, one should not conceive of the apostolic letters read in the Christian communities as documents of high canonical, holy or divine status. At first, they were no more than messages from contemporary teachers, and documents almost of the level of every-day life; nothing particularly special. Furthermore, it is already significant of and in itself that reading occurred at the Christian symposium: why would one suppose that this has other roots than reading at symposia in general. That the genres that were read could vary, both within paganism and between paganism and Christianity, does not alter the fact that reading at symposia was the continuation of the reading at symposia in general.

Around 100 CE the author of 1 Timothy admonishes his addressee to devote himself to the public reading of the Scriptures.³⁵ Since there is no evidence that there existed special meetings intended only for the reading of Scripture and preaching, it is probable that 1 Timothy means that portions of the Old Testament in Greek should be read at the symposium on Sunday evening. Until the third century³⁶ there is no indication that Christians in their

³¹ Philo, *Som.* 2.127; Jos., *Ant.* 16.2.4.

³² 1 Thess. 5:27, Acts 15:31; Col. 4:16.

³³ Luc., *Symp.* 21.

³⁴ Plu., *Quaest. conv.* 7.711.c.

³⁵ 1 Tim. 4:13.

³⁶ Or., *Hom. Josh.* 4.1; *Hom. Gen.* 12.1. According to Melito of Sardes, *On Pascha*, he read

gatherings read the Law of Moses; it is most probable, therefore, that they read other books of the Old Testament, for example, the Prophets or the Psalms.

In the second century, in addition to letters and Prophets, the writings read at Christian symposia included sermons, apocalypses and accounts of Christian martyrdoms³⁷.

Explicit information about the reading of Gospels in the gatherings of Christians is provided by Justin Martyr (*ca.* 155):

On the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together in one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits. Then, when the reader has finished, the president in a discourse instructs and exhorts to the imitation of these good things³⁸.

Thus, in Justin's Church in Rome, the reading of Gospels and/or Prophets was followed by a speech, including ethical exhortations, and prayers. Only then would the supper begin.

Some decades later, the reading of Gospels in gatherings of Christians is attested by the *Acts of Peter*, written between 180 and 190 CE. Here Peter is said to have entered the house where the Christians had gathered. When he came into the dining-room (*triclinium*), "he saw that the gospel was being read. And rolling it up he said, 'Men, who believe in Christ and hope in him, you shall know how the holy scriptures of our Lord must be explained Now I will explain to you that which has been read to you.'"³⁹ The reading and exposition of Scripture are concluded with a supper (ch. 22). The course of things described here must be that of the Roman Church in the late second century.

In about 200 CE, Tertullian gives a brief description of the Christian gathering in North Africa. With respect to the reading of Scripture in this gathering he observes:

We assemble to read our sacred writings, if any peculiarity of the times makes either forewarning or reminiscence needful. However it be in that respect, with the sacred words we nourish our faith, we animate our hope, we make our confidence more steadfast; and no less by inculcations of God's precepts we confirm good habits⁴⁰.

Interestingly, in Tertullian's view the reading has a pastoral purpose. The hearing of Scripture strengthens the listeners' faith, hope and morality.

Whereas at Graeco-Roman symposia the reading of texts normally took place after the supper, the evidence in Justin and Tertullian suggests that, in

Ex. 12 on Easter day, but this is of course a special case; it is not the reading in a regular Sunday gathering.

³⁷ 2 *Clem.* 19.1.; Rev. 1:3-8, 11; Herm., *Vis.* 2.8.4; *Canon Muratori*, lines 71-78; *M. Polyc.* 20.

³⁸ Just., 1 *Apol.* 67.3.

³⁹ *Acta Petri* 20.

⁴⁰ Tert., *Apol.* 39.3.

the second century, Christians reversed the order and put the reading before the communal meal. The easiest explanation of this reversal is that it allowed those who were not yet full members of the community, the catechumens, to participate in the gathering until the supper began, from which moment on they were excluded⁴¹. If the reading of Scripture took place *after* the supper it was difficult to arrange for the catechumens to arrive precisely in time to hear the reading. It was, thus, much more practical to put the reading, together with the exposition, before the supper.

The office of “reader” or “lector” has arisen in the Church at the end of the second century: Tertullian in North Africa is the first to attest the existence of the function of reader⁴². The office originated certainly some time before Tertullian makes mention of it.

Before the office of reader originated, the reading of Scripture in Christian gatherings must have been performed by ordinary members of the community. This earlier practice is reflected in Revelation 1:3, where a blessing is pronounced over “the one who reads” the Book of Revelation out loud in Church. Obviously, this reader does not yet have an official capacity, for he is designated with the participle ἀναγνώσκων, not with the noun ἀναγνώστης. On the other hand, in 1 Timothy 4:13, the responsibility for the reading of Scripture is assigned to the leader of the community. Apparently, around the turn of the first to the second century, practices as to who performed the reading still varied.

Towards the middle of the second century we encounter someone who reads his own composition in a Christian congregation, namely the author of the homily known as *2 Clement*. This author concludes his homily by stating: “Brothers and sisters, . . . , I am reading to you an exhortation to pay attention to that which is written, that you may save both yourselves and the one who reads among you”⁴³. Obviously, “reading” is the delivering of the homily; it is read aloud by the author himself.

Justin’s account of the Sunday gathering mentions “the person who reads [namely, a passage from a Gospel or a Prophet]”⁴⁴. But Justin does not use a noun designating the reader and it cannot be inferred from this passage that he already knew the office of lector. Tertullian, however, as already stated, is acquainted with the reader as an official of the Church.⁴⁵ From the third century onwards the reader regularly appears as an official functionary who, at various places, assists bishops and other clergy in conducting the service of Christian congregations. The ceremony of the appointment of a reader is mentioned in a mid-third-century manual on Church practice from Rome, the *Apostolic Tradition*; it states: “A reader is installed as the bishop hands him a book. He

⁴¹ *Did.* 9.5.

⁴² Tert., *Praescr.* 41.8.

⁴³ *2 Clem.* 19.1.

⁴⁴ Just., *1 Apol.* 67.4.

⁴⁵ Tert., *Praescr.* 41.8.

has no laying on of hands”⁴⁶. Around the same time, the appointment of *lectores* is attested by other authors in Rome and Carthage⁴⁷. In the *Syriac Didascalia* (ca. 215 CE?) it is not a reader, but the bishop himself who performs the reading from the Scriptures.⁴⁸

One may find it difficult to accept that readers in Christian communities are analogous with the slave lectors at Graeco-Roman symposia. However, as it has been stated in the beginning of this article the reading at symposia could have been performed by various persons provided they have ability to perform the reading. As long as Christian communities conducted their gatherings in the evening following the standard pattern of meal plus symposium the reading of various texts could be performed by host himself, his educated slave or any member of the community who could do it. Christian communities may have lacked educated slaves who read texts at Hellenistic symposia, but with time they began to appoint some members of their congregations to perform reading of authoritative texts in their gatherings. In any case the office of reader in Christian Church can be best traced back to reader at symposia in the Graeco-Roman world in general.

Conclusion

Christians in the first and second centuries met in private houses on Sunday evening. They held their symposia in the same way as other, non-Christian, groups did in those days. Accordingly, they practised public reading of texts at their symposia and had special readers to do the reading, at least from some point of time in the second century onwards. The reading of authoritative writings took place in the social gathering that followed the supper. This was the context in which apostolic and other important letters, Prophets, Gospels and other genres were read aloud to the community. There is a close analogy between the reading of texts at non-Christian banquets and the reading of texts in the weekly gatherings of Christians. This analogy cannot be incidental. We are witnessing here one and the same phenomenon in both non-Christian and Christian contexts. The analogy challenges the current view, recently upheld by some scholars, according to which the reading of the Scriptures in the gatherings of Christians should be traced back to the Jewish practice of reading and studying the Law of Moses on Sabbath in the synagogue. There is no continuity between the reading in the synagogue and that in the Church. The public reading of Scripture in Christian communities goes back, not to the reading of the Law in the synagogue, but to the reading of literature at the Hellenistic banquet in general.

⁴⁶ *Trad. ap.* 11.

⁴⁷ Eus., *Hist.* 6.43.11 (Rome, 251 CE); Cypr., *Epist.* 29.1 (Carthage, ca. 250 CE).

⁴⁸ *Did. ap.* 2.58. The bishop is supposed to perform the reading in a sitting position.

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PLUTARCO E LA LETTURA NEL SIMPOSIO

GENNARO D'IPPOLITO
Università di Palermo

Abstract

In the symposium, by then merged into the banquet, Plutarch practises, in accordance with the rules of his “ethical anthropology”, the collective reading of poetry and prose writers not only for mere entertainment but as a stimulus for a debate of high cultural dignity, always directed to improve man. Refusing many authors of popular convivial praxis, e. g. Aristophanes, he prefers Plato among the prose writers and Homer and Menander among the poets.

Rispetto al simposio greco del periodo arcaico e classico e al banchetto-spettacolo romano, il simposio greco d'età postclassica non godeva di molta attenzione da parte degli studiosi sia per un'obiettiva carenza di fonti sia per la falsa idea che esso avesse perduto d'importanza. Ma negli ultimi anni sono apparsi diversi lavori¹ che hanno ribadito, anche per l'età alessandrina e romana, il suo ruolo come istituzione sociale e come luogo di presentazione di letteratura attraverso letture o esibizioni attoriali².

Fra gli autori greci della prima età imperiale, a Plutarco si devono le testimonianze più importanti sul simposio. Esse ci dimostrano la sua vitalità ed insieme la sua trasformazione³.

Com'è noto, a parte gli episodi simposiaci che s'incontrano nelle *Vite* e contribuiscono alla caratterizzazione morale dei personaggi⁴, due dei *Moralia* sono proprio dedicati al simposio: uno è il Συμπόσιον τῶν ἑπτὰ σοφῶν (cito secondo il *Catalogo di Lampria*), l'altro i Συμποσιακά. Il primo, il *Septem sapientium convivium*⁵, ci riporta, col tipico gusto nostalgico di Plutarco e sulla scia dei due *Simposi* precedenti, di Platone e di Senofonte, ad un simposio arcaico e indubbiamente inventato, dove si segue l'esempio di Platone, centrato sulla discussione, piuttosto che quello di Senofonte, che, dando rilevanza allo spettacolo, con le sue *performances* meliche, orchestiche, drammatiche, mimiche o acrobatiche, riproduceva più fedelmente il costume conviviale greco. I Συμποσιακά, che opportunamente, nella edizione napoletana del *Corpus Plutarchi Moraliūm*, vengono presentati come *Conversazioni a tavola*⁶, in effetti

¹ Mi riferisco soprattutto al capitolo III (“The symposium”: pp. 71-103) del volume callimacheo di A. CAMERON, 1995, e ad una serie di convegni sull'argomento (O. MURRAY, 1990; W. J. SLATER, 1991; O. MURRAY & M. TECUŞAN, 1995).

² In un volume sulla lettura nel mondo ellenistico L. DEL CORSO, 2005, dedica un paragrafo (pp. 114-25) a “La lettura in gruppo e il simposio”, non trascurando Plutarco.

³ Sul simposio in Plutarco cf. A. M. SCARCELLA, 1998, pp. 117-33, F. PORDOMINGO PARDO, 1999 e M. VETTA, 2000.

⁴ Cf. A. BILLAULT, 2008.

⁵ Cf. F. LO CASCIO, *Plutarco. Il convito dei sette sapienti* (introduzione, testo critico, traduzione e commento a c. di F. L. C.), Napoli, 1997.

⁶ Editi finora solo i libri I-IV: A. M. SCARCELLA 1998 e IDEM, *Plutarco. Conversazioni a tavola. Libro quarto* (introduzione, testo critico, traduzione e commento a c. di A. M. S.),

documentano già una trasformazione, cui non è estranea l'influenza romana. Se prima *symposion* e *deipnon* erano nettamente distinti, le due situazioni adesso appaiono confuse: così il termine *symposion* vale a indicare anche il *deipnon*⁷, che talora è detto *συνδείπνον*, mentre il momento del bere, nell'ambito del banchetto, spesso viene espresso dal generico *πότος*⁸.

Pur considerando la letterarietà delle descrizioni simposiali di Plutarco, non v'è dubbio che le sue parole lascino trasparire la realtà contemporanea⁹. Accanto alla sopravvivenza e all'incremento di un simposio di puro intrattenimento, le testimonianze plutarchee convergono nel difendere soprattutto un simposio serio, filosofico, di ascendenza sofistico-platonica, dove si pratica la lettura collettiva di poeti e prosatori, ma in genere non solo per motivi ricreativi, bensì come stimolo per avviare una discussione di alta dignità culturale.

Per quel che concerne le testimonianze specifiche sulla lettura, e in particolare sulla lettura nel simposio, Plutarco porta la nota inconfondibile della sua ideologia profonda, che altrove ho definito "antropologia etica"¹⁰ e che si caratterizza per una amorevole attenzione per l'uomo e per una costante propensione a migliorarlo.

Secondo Plutarco, la pratica di leggere ad alta voce, consigliata in genere come esercizio atto a migliorare la respirazione (*De tuenda sanitate praecepta*, 16, 130A-D), a tavola, nel corso dei pasti, è giovevole sia al corpo sia allo spirito, purché gli argomenti non provochino discussioni accese (ib., 20, 133B-C). Ma su questo tema egli mantiene la sua preferita posizione di medietà.

E dice: "Le parole dei massaggiatori e i discorsi dei maestri di ginnastica, pronti a ripetere ad ogni occasione che un dotto ragionare durante il pranzo rovina il pasto e appesantisce la testa, si devono temere solo se a pranzo vogliamo risolvere 'il problema indiano' o discutere 'l'argomento dominante'¹¹. ... Ma se costoro non ci consentono di svolgere durante il pranzo qualche altra ricerca o discutere di filosofia o leggere testi che, nell'ambito del bello e dell'utile, offrano un elemento di attrattiva e di gradevolezza che dà piacere, li inviteremo a non importunarci ed a tornare, invece, nelle gallerie dei ginnasi e nelle palestre e discutere di questi argomenti con gli atleti: sono loro che li allontanano dai libri e li abitua a trascorrere l'intera giornata fra scherzi e buffonate, e così li rendono, come diceva l'arguto Aristone, lucidi e duri come le erme del loro ginnasio".

Napoli, 2001; A. CAIAZZA, *Plutarco. Conversazioni a tavola. Libro secondo* (introduzione, testo critico, traduzione e commento a c. di A. C.), Napoli, 2001; I. CHIRICO, *Plutarco. Conversazioni a tavola. Libro terzo* (introduzione, testo critico, traduzione e commento a c. di I. C.), Napoli, 2001. Sull'opera cf. S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1989-1996. Una 'conversazione a tavola' è pure il Περὶ μουσικῆς, dialogo di discussa attribuzione, che si conclude richiamando l'utilità della musica nel convito.

⁷ Cf. A. M. SCARCELLA, 1998, pp. 121-5.

⁸ Cf., per es., il titolo del primo problema del Libro I delle *Quaestiones convivales* (612E): Εἰ δεῖ φιλοσοφεῖν παρὰ πότον.

⁹ Cf. F. PORDOMINGO PARDO, 1999.

¹⁰ G. D'IPPOLITO, 2005, pp. 898-9.

¹¹ Non sappiamo esattamente che cosa voglia dire, ma di certo allude a problemi in sommo grado ardui e complessi.

Plutarco si cura di indicare i testi che conviene leggere e commentare. Anche se il simposio plutarco è soprattutto luogo della discussione filosofica, non cessa per questo di essere pure un luogo privilegiato per ascoltare poesia. Accanto, però, all'uso di testi destinati specificamente al convito, soprattutto epigrammi¹², è diffusa ormai la ripresa di generi classici, concepiti a suo tempo per fruizioni differenti.

Ma Plutarco, vedremo, per il suo banchetto pone dei veti che lo allontanano dal costume corrente.

Le indicazioni sono discusse in Plu., *Quaest. conv.* 711A-713F: si tratta dell'ottavo πρόβλημα del libro settimo, che così viene enunciato: Τίσι μάλιστα χρηστέον ἀκρόασι παρὰ δειπνον, cioè *Quali audizioni ammettere nel corso del banchetto*. Da notare due termini: ἀκρόασι, che privilegia l'udito rispetto alla vista, e δειπνον, che sta ad indicare come all'intrattenimento e alla discussione comunitaria non sia più specificamente destinata la parte finale del banchetto, il tradizionale simposio. La discussione continua ed integra la precedente, che si occupava della convenienza o meno dell'uso della musica, in particolare di αὐλητρίδες, durante il banchetto. Gli interlocutori sono ospiti di Plutarco a Cheronea: l'amico Diogeniano di Pergamo, che, come vedremo, è portavoce delle idee dell'autore, ed inoltre due stoici abbastanza diversi, il primo dei quali è un sofista anonimo, dalla lunga barba (βαθυπώγων), che si adombra perché si vuol sonare il flauto o la lira in un banchetto, e si rende ridicolo col manifestare disgusto per i piaceri più innocenti, mentre il secondo è Filippo di Prusa, che al contrario è convinto che il banchetto sia il momento migliore per concedersi una pausa e una distrazione sotto il segno di Dioniso. Ma l'anonimo esponente del Portico insiste proponendo un passatempo venuto da Roma e non ancora molto diffuso: si tratta di utilizzare i dialoghi drammatici di Platone per recite affidate agli schiavi davanti ai convitati di un banchetto. Allora Filippo taglia corto e, con un discorso perfettamente in linea con le idee di Plutarco altrove manifestate, ammette che anche lui è contrario a chi pretende di ridurre Platone a servire da passatempo ai bevitori e di consumare i suoi dialoghi tra leccornie e profumi. E del resto anche la lettura delle poesie di Saffo o di Anacreonte sarebbe fuori luogo.

E tuttavia Plutarco parla (*Quaest. conv.* 700C) di πλατωνικαὶ συναναγνώσεις, di "letture in comune" dei testi di Platone. E in *Cato Minor* 67 si ricorda che Catone "andò a tavola con un bel gruppo di persone ... tutti i suoi compagni e le autorità di Utica" e che "dopo la cena, il simposio (πότος) fu assai colto e gradevole, e si passarono in rassegna argomenti filosofici, uno dopo l'altro, finché la discussione cadde sui cosiddetti paradossi stoici, in particolare su quello per cui solo l'uomo onesto è libero e invece i malvagi sono tutti schiavi".

Qui va osservato che Plutarco, nel negare la opportunità di certe letture durante un convito alla sua maniera, lascia intravedere che appunto queste letture ricorrevano durante i banchetti contemporanei.

¹² Sulle antologie poetiche destinate ai simposi cf. F. FERRARI, 1988 e F. PORDOMINGO PARDO, 2001.

Rincarare la dose Diogeniano soggiungendo (*Quaest. conv.* 711E) che “certo bisogna radiare dalla lista la più parte delle audizioni, e in primo luogo la tragedia, i cui clamori non sono affatto adatti al convito, ma troppo severi, rappresentando azioni che smuovono passione e pietà”. Dunque, contro la tragedia Plutarco non riprende gli argomenti di Platone, ma tuttavia giudica il suo tono incompatibile con l’atmosfera del convito¹³. Ed in questo ci fa arguire che almeno Euripide fosse oggetto non raro di lettura.

Quindi lo stesso Diogeniano passa ad affrontare il tema della commedia¹⁴, e distingue nettamente fra l’antica e la nuova (*Quaest. conv.* 711F). “Quanto alle commedie, io dico che l’*archaia*, a causa della sua disomogeneità, non è adatta ai simposiasti: infatti nelle parti che si chiamano *parabasi* la gravità e la libertà di parola presentano troppa violenza e tensione; e la propensione agli scherzi e alle buffonerie è terribilmente nauseante quando si scatena infarcendosi di espressioni volgari e parole scurrili”. Per di più sarebbe necessario, per intendere bene il testo, che ciascuno avesse accanto, oltre al coppiere, all’*oivoxóos*, anche un maestro di scuola, un *γραμματικός*, il quale gli spiegasse il significato di questo o quel nome legato ad una attualità sociopolitica vecchia di cinque secoli, sicché il convito diventerebbe un *γραμματοδιδασκαλείον*, una scuola.

Secondo lo stilema ilomorfo della *σύγκρισις*¹⁵, Plutarco fa seguire al rigetto della commedia antica l’elogio della commedia nuova, della quale afferma Diogeniano (Ib. 712B-C): “Essa è così legata ai conviti, che sarebbe oggi più agevole progettare un convito senza vino piuttosto che senza Menandro”. Infatti lo stile che accompagna l’azione è gradevole e semplice, e perciò non può essere spregiato dai sobri né mai annoierà gli ebbri. Le riflessioni oneste e sincere, penetrando dentro, addolciscono anche i caratteri più duri come in un fuoco e li piegano ad una maggiore moderazione; parallelamente la mescolanza di serio e faceto per nulla sembrerebbe essere stata realizzata se non per il piacere ed insieme per il profitto di quelli che hanno bevuto e si sono rasserenati.

Non ultima delle qualità della poesia menandrea – aggiunge ancora Plutarco per bocca di Diogeniano – è la trattazione della tematica erotica sempre in maniera conforme all’etica della famiglia: le seduzioni si concludono ordinariamente col lieto fine del matrimonio, e mai si indulge alla licenza e all’amore pederotico¹⁶: parlando di eros, perciò, la commedia nuova appaga la morale dei convitati, che dopo il banchetto si andranno a coricare accanto alle mogli, rilassati dal vino e dalla piacevolezza di Menandro.

L’elogio di Menandro non è però fondato su un giudizio relativo e contingente, legato al momento particolare del simposio: Diogeniano esprime qui anche un giudizio in termini assoluti di valore artistico, che riflette le idee di

¹³ Su Plutarco e la tragedia cf. A. M. TAGLIASACCHI, 1960, L. DI GREGORIO, 1976 e F. JOUAN, 2002.

¹⁴ Su Plutarco e la commedia cf. R. M. AGUILAR, 1997, G. ZANETTO, 2000 e O. IMPERIO, 2004; su Menandro, in particolare, A. CASANOVA, 2005 e M. DI FLORIO, 2005.

¹⁵ Cf. G. D’IPPOLITO, 1996.

¹⁶ Cf. G. D’IPPOLITO, 2007.

Plutarco medesimo, come assicura la fondamentale concordanza col giudizio, ancor più severo, pronunciato nella *Aristophanis et Menandri comparatio* (853A-854D)¹⁷. Già all'inizio in un tricolon di aggettivi sostantivati vengono sinteticamente fissate le ragioni di una scelta. “Τὸ φορτικόν,” φησίν, “ἐν λόγοις καὶ θυμικόν καὶ βάνουσον ὡς ἔστιν Ἀριστοφάνει, Μενάνδρῳ δ' οὐδαμῶς. “Il linguaggio volgare, la teatralità, il cattivo gusto come sono in Aristofane, in Menandro non lo sono mai”.

Dirà più avanti (854A-B): “Menandro, al contrario, con la sua eleganza si mostra assolutamente sodisfacente: nei teatri, nelle conversazioni, nei simposi, presenta la sua poesia come oggetto più accettato di lettura (ἀνάγνωσμα), di studio e di rappresentazione drammatica fra le cose belle che la Grecia ha prodotto”. E qui, insieme con l'esaltazione della poesia menandrea, fa capolino “un certo orgoglio nazionale”, proprio di un greco che, ormai politicamente soggetto alla potenza romana, “rimane comunque consapevole della grandezza del suo popolo nel campo dei valori spirituali”¹⁸.

Testimonianza ulteriore di un'apprezzata presenza di Menandro nel convito è in *De vitioso pudore* 531B, dove un attore strapazza (ἐπιτρίβει) il poeta davanti ai simposiasti, e per questo applaudirlo sarebbe un peccato di δυσωπία, cioè di “esagerazione di pudore” (ὑπερβολή τοῦ αἰσχύνεσθαι).

Tirando le fila del discorso, mentre spesso si può essere incerti sulla modalità della presenza di un autore nei banchetti, se essa, cioè, si risolva in una lettura di gruppo o nella declamazione attoriale di un testo memorizzato, tuttavia nessun dubbio permane almeno nel caso di Platone, Menandro ed Omero: per il primo, infatti come abbiamo visto, Plutarco parla di (συν)αναγνώσεις, mentre per gli altri due usa il termine ἀνάγνωσμα¹⁹.

Così, Ὅμηρος ἦν ἀνάγνωσμα, Omero era la lettura per eccellenza (*De Alexandri magni fortuna aut virtute* 328D), e non solo per Alessandro. Ce lo conferma Plutarco, *De garrulitate* 504D:

Di tutti i giudizi espressi nei riguardi del poeta Omero il più esatto è che solo lui riesce veramente a vincere la noia dei suoi lettori, perché è sempre nuovo e al colmo della leggiadra vigoria espressiva.

Infine, in *Quaest. conv.* 683B-C Plutarco introduce nel convito la declamazione di Omero, riportando un verso e un emistichio

¹⁷ Cf. O. IMPERIO, 2004, pp. 192-3.

¹⁸ M. DI FLORIO, 2008, p. 116 n. 48.

¹⁹ Lingue moderne indicano con lo stesso termine – l'italiano con “lettura”, il francese con *lecture*, lo spagnolo con *lectura*, il portoghese con *leitura*, l'inglese con *reading*, il tedesco con *Lektüre* – i due concetti che in greco, ancora oggi, vengono indicati con due parole: ἀνάγνωσις” e ἀνάγνωσμα sono i due termini che designano il primo la “lettura” come azione del leggere, coerentemente col valore del suffisso -σις”, che indica *nomen actionis*, il secondo la “lettura” come testo destinato alla lettura, d'accordo col suffisso -μα, che indica *nomen rei actae*. Anche il latino usa *lectio* per indicare sia l'azione di leggere sia il testo letto, ma mentre qui si distingue fra lettura privata, *lectio*, e lettura pubblica, *recitatio*, il greco usa per entrambe le accezioni il termine ἀνάγνωσις.

“συκέαι τε γλυκεραὶ καὶ μηλέαι ἀγλαόκαρποι
καὶ ἔλαϊαι τηλεθώσσαι”

derivati da due versi omerici, *Od.* 7. 115-116:

ὄγχλαι καὶ ῥοιαὶ καὶ μηλέαι ἀγλαόκαρποι
συκέαι τε γλυκεραὶ καὶ ἔλαϊαι τηλεθώσσαι.

peri e granati e meli con splendidi frutti,
e fichi dolci e ulivi rigogliosi.

Va osservato che Plutarco non riferisce i versi omerici così come tramandati, bensì opera uno spostamento di emistichi, mostrando in tal modo che Omero, oltre ad essere lettura preferita nei conviti, veniva anche declamato a memoria.

Concludendo, tra autori bocciati ed autori promossi la testimonianza di Plutarco è importante non solo perché chiarisce qual era il tipo di letture che riteneva preferibile nel suo convito ideale ma anche perché, attraverso la polemica, apre uno spiraglio su quella che era la prassi conviviale alla sua epoca.

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SECTION 2

The *Symposion* as a Space for Social and Political Gatherings

(Página deixada propositadamente em branco)

LEADING THE PARTY, LEADING THE CITY THE SYMPOSIARCH AS *POLITIKOS*

PHILIP A. STADTER

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Abstract

Plutarch's outline of the aims and duties of the symposiarch at *Quaest. Conv.* 1.4 (620A-622B) and the conversations he reports offer many similarities to the political program of his *Precepts for Politicians*, notably his focus on concord and the obstacles to it. This paper explores the implications of these parallels for Plutarch's thinking on the polis and on leadership. The symposium as a community of friends is a kind of idealized polis, but nevertheless the host and symposiarch must be alert at all times to the potential for divisiveness and ill-feeling. Wine may reveal both good and bad qualities in the members of the party, which will need to be guided and harmonized by the leader. Even seating or the distribution of food at the dinner preceding may be a cause of ill-will, and the most innocent-seeming topics inflame the spirits of the participants. In the *Precepts*, Plutarch outlines the goals of political activity, the means a leader should use, and the obstacles he will encounter. The chief goal is civic concord; the chief obstacle rivalry among the city's elite, prompted by ambition, competitiveness, and greed. The potential for discord at the symposium mimics in a restricted situation the potential discord of the polis. In both cases the leader must use great skill in facilitating an atmosphere of good will and harmony.

The *Symposiaca*, Plutarch's longest non-biographical work, is also the most puzzling. The difficulty lies in discovering unity and purpose in the ninety-five reported conversations from many different dinner parties, distributed among nine books¹. This paper will trace one important theme which runs through the work and helps unify it: the nature of the civil society which this work describes, the leadership which it requires, and the parallels with the needs of political leadership in Plutarch's day.

The political context of this work is an empire still remembering the revolts and civil wars of the first century. At the local level, cities ruled by an elite backed by Rome frequently suffered from aristocratic rivalry, which destabilized their economies and not infrequently led to factional fighting and violent Roman intervention.

Within this world of political conflict, Plutarch sought by his essays and biographies to encourage self-knowledge and virtue in his contemporaries, especially those who were responsible for the governance of cities, provinces, and the empire itself. His two great biographical projects, the *Lives of the Caesars* and the *Parallel Lives*, examine political leadership through narrative studies of the emperors and of outstanding Greek and Roman statesmen. His *Rules for*

¹ Nine of the conversations, with fragments of three others, (4.6b-10 and 9.6b-12a) have been lost. I have found especially helpful F. FRAZIER, 1996; S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1989-96 and A. CAIAZZA, 2001. An earlier version of this paper was read at the 'Plato and Platonism' conference, University of South Carolina, Columbia SC (March 20-22, 2008). I am grateful for the comments of Melissa Lane to that version of this paper, and to the respondent Mark Beck and others present then, as well as to the anonymous reader of this paper for generous advice.

Politicians sets out practical advice for conducting oneself as an effective leader in a Greek city under Roman rule. There Plutarch advises his young addressee to seek concord for his city and avoid the ambition, competitiveness, and greed - *philotimia*, *philonikia*, *philokerdia* - which have cost his city and its political class so much grief.

The *Symposiaca*

The *Symposiaca* are dedicated to Sosius Senecio, the same extremely distinguished member of Trajan's court to whom were dedicated the *Parallel Lives*, and they share a central purpose with the *Lives*, to make moral discourse concrete through narrative. The *Symposiaca* create a narrative model of community and interpersonal relationships within the limited compass of the symposium.

The central theme of the *Symposiaca* is *to philopoion*, 'friend-making' (612D)². In the words of Plutarch's friend Theon, the aim of a symposium is "through pleasure to produce or heighten friendship among the participants" (621C). But friend-making is not automatic.

In the very first conversation of the *Symposiaca*, Sosius Senecio raises the question: how is it possible at a drinking party to avoid wrangling and self-display (*tous erizontas kai sophistiōntas*)? Plutarch's *Symposiaca* respond to this question, modeling good drinking parties, in implicit opposition to the degenerate variety often documented in our sources³. Senatorial and imperial dinner parties often served to assert the power and wealth of those who gave them. Plutarch rejects this attitude. Instead he focuses on the strategies which may be used by the host, the symposiarch, and the guests to foster friendship. I will treat these strategies under three heads: the guests at the party, the role of the symposiarch or host, and the topics proposed for discussion. At the end I will consider parallels with political life.

The guests at the party

Ideally, the guests should know the host and each other, so that they can be comfortable together. When they do not, there is a risk of misunderstandings. For this reason, a particular difficulty arises when one guest invites other guests, the so-called shadows (*Symposiaca* 7.6). On the plus side, this practice

² Plutarch's work deliberately operates at a lower plane than Plato's *Symposium*. It diminishes the erotic charge which energizes Plato's masterpiece, discussing eros in only a few of the conversations (the major treatments are in *Quaest. Conv.* 1.5, 2.1, and 7.8, with other references in 5.7, 7.7, and 9.14). On Plato's blending of banquet practice with philosophical argument, see D. BABUT, 1994.

³ I have treated this topic more fully in "Drinking, *Table Talk*, and Plutarch's Contemporaries", in J. G. MONTES CALA ET AL. (eds.), 1999. For recent discussions of Greek dining, see P. SCHMITT-PANTEL 1992, and for symposia in particular see SLATER 1991 and the bibliography cited there; for Roman banquets, see the special number of *AJP* 124, 3 (2003) on Roman dining; K. VÖSSING, 2004 and E. STEIN-HÖLKEKAMP, 2005.

allowed friends to introduce new members into the group, or to have a favorite companion present, as we nowadays regularly will include a spouse, partner, or companion in a dinner or party invitation. Plutarch recommends that when possible a guest should invite those who are already friends of the host, or share common interests with him, whether in philosophy, literature, or politics. (In Plato's *Symposium*, Socrates himself had invited such a friend to Agathon's party.) But such was often not the case. In Plutarch's day the desirable friendly atmosphere could be compromised when a Roman governor, senator, or other imperial or civic official had been invited to a dinner party. The political world, with all its stresses, intruded into the social. Besides the tension caused by the presence of one person more powerful and wealthier than the other guests, the great man would expect to bring some of his friends or staff, and the host had no choice in the matter. Such a party became a quite different occasion from a simple meeting of friends (708B), and the risks of offense, ill-temper, or hostility were correspondingly higher.

The symposiarch

In Plato's *Symposium*, the drunken Alcibiades burst into the party and appointed himself symposiarch, that is, the man chosen by the group to regulate the drinking of the party. He immediately ordered that all drink heavily, as he had already (213E). For Plutarch such behavior is unsuitable and contrary to the goal of the symposium. He is more influenced by Plato's *Laws*, in which the symposium is a site of moral education, where the young may learn to resist the temptation of pleasure under the watchful eye of a wise ruler (*archon*) who will see that the drinking is orderly and follows rules. Thus the properly regulated symposium will encourage not just amusement (*paidia*), but also temperance (*to sôphronein*), under the supervision of a sober, older leader (*Laws* 2.673e, cf. 1.639c-641c, 649d-650b, 2.671 c-d).

The qualities of Plutarch's ideal symposiarch, less severe than Plato's, and not expressly moralistic, are set out in one of the early conversations (*Quaest. Conv.* 1.4). He must be neither reluctant to drink nor given to drunkenness, but rather *symptomikotatos*, "especially symposiastic". The unusual superlative, Plutarch explicitly states, was suggested by Plato's discussion of the guardians in the *Republic*, where he asserts that the commanders (*archontes*) of the guardians should be *phylakikôtatoi*, 'especially protective' of the city (*R.* 412C). Thus Plutarch insists that we compare the role of his ideal symposiarch with that of the guardians in Plato's ideal state. The symposiarch should have a relation of *philia* with those in his care, as the Platonic guardian must love, *philei*, the city and do what is best for it (*R.* 412 D-E). Plutarch goes on to make the parallel of symposiarch and ruler yet more precise with an anecdote of Pericles, found also in *Rules for Politicians* (813 E, cf. *Apophth. Reg.* 186 C). Pericles used to say to himself, as he assumed his duties as general, "Remember, Pericles, that you rule free men, you rule Greeks, you rule Athenians". The symposiarch, Plutarch explains, should remember that "he rules friends", and

thus should do what is best for them, and neither allow them to become rowdy nor deprive them of their pleasure. As the symposiarch himself should seek a mean in his drinking, so also in his governance of others he should observe a mean between dull sobriety and drunken carousing.

Unlike Plato's Alcibiades, the symposiarch should be sensitive to the physical and psychological state of the guests, exactly to avoid drunkenness (*Quaest. Conv.* 1.4, 620E-621A). The symposiarch must, in Plutarch's words,

know what change drinking produces in each person, into what emotional state he is liable to fall, and how he carries strong drink. . . . Like a musician adjusting a lyre, he should give one a little more (wine) and another a little less, to bring their dispositions (*physeis*) into evenness and concord (*symphonia*) from their original diversity⁴.

If the symposiarch does not know the guests as intimately as this fine tuning requires, he should at least use general criteria: old men and gloomy ones get drunk more quickly than the young and the cheerful, for example. This knowledge permits the symposiarch to regulate the harmony and good behavior of the party. He will foster the blend of seriousness and play, *spoudê* and *geloion*, necessary for a good party. This blend will reflect that of a good wine, which warms the austere and charms the more lively. The party guests are the citizens of his little city, and he should govern them like Plato's guardians, not for his profit, but thinking of the best for them, always aiming at a harmonious concord. This is the ideal.

Topics that avoid hostility and violence

However, as someone observes early in the *Symposiaca*, parties are often shipwrecked by mockery and insults, and engender hostility and anger, unless they are guided rightly (621C-622B). I will touch on some general points regarding this guidance that emerge from the conversations Plutarch records.

Those who have lived through rancorous political campaigns will appreciate the total avoidance of contemporary politics in the *Symposiaca*. Such conversations did occur at parties, of course: one concerning items coming before the Athenian assembly is fleetingly mentioned at the beginning of a chapter before a new subject is introduced⁵. Plutarch considers a proper selection of topics for discussion essential, but politics is not one of them. Topics must fit the occasion, the *kairos*, as he illustrates in the very first discussion (1.1,

⁴ This requirement recalls Plato's insistence that the orator know different types of souls and the arguments proper to each (*Phaedrus* 271a-272b). Compare also Plato's discussion in the *Laws* of the proper ages for wine, noting that Dionysus had given wine as "a helpful medicine for the austerity of old age" (2.666b).

⁵ *Quaest. Conv.* 7.9, 714A. Just before, at the end of 7.8 (713F), Plutarch had noted that musical performances could divert a conversation moving toward political controversy. Theon's strictures against turning the party into a democratic assembly or sophist's school (621B) indicate Plutarch's aversion to such subjects. Cf. S.-T. THEODORSSON, 1995, pp. 433-7.

613A-C) and often throughout the work. Stories from history or everyday life are especially suitable (614A), for they allow a more relaxed presentation, and provide examples of admirable behavior, without requiring a rigorous philosophical demonstration. If philosophical topics are raised, Plutarch remarks, gentle persuasion works more effectively than ironbound proof (614 CD). Bringing up a topic suitable to a given guest requires skill, thought, and respect for the person addressed. In the first conversation of the second book, Plutarch gives examples of well-chosen questions which permitted a guest both to entertain the company and win admiration by discussing subjects he knows and loves. For instance, travelers are glad to be questioned about the distant places they have visited, or statesmen about missions they have served on or posts they have held (630A-631C).

Guests regularly entertained themselves by setting requirements or challenges to one another, or teasing them for habits or predilections. Plutarch warns (621D-622B, cf. 631C-F) that too often these carry a degree of maliciousness or mockery which is not playful but hybriatic. Ideally a challenge should give someone a chance to show his talent, not ridicule his incapacity. The object of the symposium is kindness and friendship (*philophrosyne*), not self-assertion or scorn.

The entire ninth book of the *Symposiaca*, some fifteen chapters, is devoted to a single party given by Plutarch's teacher Ammonius in Athens for the teachers at a school for young men, to which Plutarch and other friends were invited as well. Very soon the underlying tensions between the teachers of different disciplines, and between those whose pupils had done well or poorly, made itself apparent, and it is all that Ammonius and his friends can do to dispel the contentious atmosphere. In this case Plutarch focuses on Ammonius' adroit redirection of the conversation through addressing questions to different people and suggesting topics for discussion. Once, when a discussion broke down into a competitive wrangle of claims and counterclaims, Ammonius invited a guest to sing some poetry. As with Alcinous' similar request in the *Odyssey*, the singing introduced a pause and permitted the talk to resume on a different subject (736E, cf. *Od.* 8.250-55). Later, Ammonius required that professors of the same discipline may not question each other, but only someone in a different area, thus avoiding boring or contentious 'shop-talk' (737DE). He reinforced this by urging Plutarch to respond to a question on grammar (738A). Other guests also tried to help, not allowing a professor who had fared badly in the competitions to sit grumpily, for instance, but teasing a good-humored response from him (739E, 741A). The symposium is brought into harmony not only by controlling the flow of wine, but by channeling the conversation into suitable topics. The 'tuning' of the society depends on 'tuning' of the discourse.

Fittingly, the ninth book, and the *Symposiaca*, ends with two speeches on the role of the Muses. In the first (746B-747A), Plutarch asserts that both the desire for pleasure and the desire for the good, cited by Plato as the two principles of action (cf. *Phaedrus* 237D), require the divine guidance of the Muses. These goddesses can direct human desires to their proper fulfillment

in a noble pleasure, free from anything disorderly, debauched or violent. This speech expresses the ideal of the symposium, and of civil society. In the second speech (747B-748D), Ammonius explains how the art of dance is able to delight the divine in men. The dancer's body creates a kind of silent poetry, a discourse leading men to noble pleasure⁶. In these final conversations, as throughout the *Symposiaca*, the presence of the Muses, representatives of harmony, limit, and refined pleasure, protect conviviality and drinking from degenerating into insults, violence, and debauchery.

Politics

Plutarch's desire for peace and harmony at a symposium is parallel to his view of the ideal society founded on concord. The guests at a symposium may be compared to the citizens of a city or state: both are the raw material from which a civilized society is constructed⁷. Each group shares, at least ideally, a common aim, the happiness of the whole, and accepts that they all individually have a role in reaching that goal. Moreover, they recognize a ruler or leader, either imposed on them or chosen by them, who has the responsibility of fostering the unity of the assemblage and enabling its movement toward the common goal. Ideally, they will all be friends or friendly to each other, but in fact there will usually be differences of rank, wealth, temperament, and personal objectives which tend to divide them.

The quality of self-control so basic to Plutarch's symposiarch was necessary to a leader as well. In addition, the political leader, like the symposiarch, must understand men's natures and recognize their differences, either individually or according to general classes. In his *Rules for Politicians*, Plutarch explains how the politician must know his fellow citizens and adjust his behavior to their qualities. The politician who wishes to alter the *ethos* of the citizen body must move slowly, first accommodating himself to the people's pre-existing character, then gradually modifying it (799B), as the symposiarch does when adjusting the doses of wine. The politician should not assimilate himself to the popular character, as flatterers do, but "understand it and employ for each kind that by which it can be won over" (800A). Once he has become influential and trusted, then the politician can try to lead the character of the citizens toward a better state, one of harmony and concord, and bring them into tune as a musician does his lyre (cf. e.g. 809E). The statesman needs the same knowledge of character, individually and in classes, as the symposiarch.

In a city as in a symposium, small matters may lead to major disruptions in a city. In his *Rules for Politicians*, Plutarch observes that:

⁶ The speech reflects back to earlier in the book, when some of the students had performed a dance for the guests. The dance is given a higher role than just entertainment by Ammonius.

⁷ The parallel is affirmed early in the *Symposiaca* through the anecdote of Aemilius Paullus, who asserted that the same man could organize both fearsome armies and delightful dinner parties, since both required good order (*eutaxia*, *Quaest. conv.* 1.2, 615 E-F, cf. *Aem.* 28.9, *Apophth. reg.* 198B, already in Polyb. 30.14, Livy 45.32.11).

Violent civil conflict is not always kindled by disputes on public matters, but frequently private differences prompted by personal offences affect public life and throw the whole state into disorder (*Praec. rei publ. ger.* 825A).

The same sort of small offences which can disrupt a drinking party can disrupt a state as well. A poorly guided party will lead to anger and enmity, as a poorly ruled city degenerates into civil war and tyranny.

Like the leader of a symposium, a political leader must consider carefully what topics are suitable for which people, and the proper moment to introduce them. In speeches as at parties, stories are usually better than logical argument to persuade an audience. As serious philosophical discussion may be out of place at a convivial party, moral rigidity in a politician may not fit the times, and as with Cato of Utica, be like fruit ripening out of season, attractive but useless (*Phoc.* 3.2). Overall, a sense of limit and harmony is necessary to achieve the consensus needed in a civil society.

The tension between theoretical ideal and political practice means that neither a party nor a polis is ever in a stable state: each needs constant care by both its leaders and the individuals which comprise it to maintain the concord and harmony essential to its function, under the protection of the Muses⁸.

The *Symposiaca* describe gatherings that at first reading seem commonplace and tame, far removed from the brilliance of Plato's imagined drinking party. Nevertheless, these unremarkable dinner parties speak to the ethical underpinnings of society. Contemporary political life, in Plutarch's view, required the self-examination and principles of action of his own brand of moral and political philosophy, with its emphasis on self-improvement, conscious control of the passions, and goodwill and concord among friends and in states. The *Symposiaca*, in the concern of a good-natured and sensitive leader to respect the individuality and dignity of each participant and in the goodwill and harmony of their conversations, express an ideal of humanity and friendship which we can still admire and recognize as the basis of human society⁹.

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⁸ The necessity of constant care by a leader to maintain a city or state is a frequent theme in Plato, e.g. in the shepherd analogy of *Republic* 1 and the ancient tale in the *Statesman*. Cf. the analysis by M. S. LANE, 1998.

⁹ In a vignette, Plutarch presents King Cleomenes III of Sparta as just such an ideal ruler in his simplicity and graciousness at table, where he won friends by conversation, not gifts (*Cleom.* 13.4-9).

Philip A. Stadter

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A “BARBARIAN” SYMPOSIUM AND THE ABSENCE OF *PHILANTHROPIA* (*ARTAXERXES 15*)*

ERAN ALMAGOR

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Abstract

This paper studies a unique *symposium* scene in the *Artaxerxes* and aims to understand its narratological significance in the biography. It is a “barbarian” banquet, which in many respects is the complete opposite of its Greek counterpart. Yet familiar features of the *symposium* are nevertheless discernible in it. During the feast, Mithridates, an inebriated Persian, is tricked into telling a certain truth, which contradicts the official royal version. As a result he is brutally punished by Artaxerxes, in a deed that essentially removes the trait of *philanthropia* from the monarch. The paper presents how, on the one hand, the wine imbibed at the party can be regarded as revealing the true character of the king, and how, on the other, the *symposium* is crucial in altering the *ethos* of Artaxerxes. Like Mithridates at the banquet, the reader is also baffled by the interplay of ethnic stereotypes, and by the thin line between the real and the apparent, artistically presented by Plutarch.

The Greek *Symposium*, according to Plutarch, should produce *Philanthropia* and friendly feeling among its participants¹. By contrast, in a non-Greek setting found in the biography of Artaxerxes (15.1-7), a “barbarian” *symposium*, as it were, is portrayed by Plutarch as leading to the effective removal of the trait of *Philanthropia* from the Persian king. It is the aim of this paper to show the manner in which this reverse outcome is created, and to demonstrate the narratological significance of the Greek *symposium* in this *Life*².

The context is a feast taking place in the aftermath of the battle of Cunaxa (401 BC), which saw the victory of Artaxerxes over his rebellious brother, Cyrus the Younger³. The guests in this dinner are barbarian, including a young Persian named Mithridates, who was responsible, according to one version, for striking Cyrus in the temple with his spear⁴. He was not the only one who

* I am grateful to Profs. C. Pelling and D. Gera for commenting on earlier drafts of this paper.

¹ *Quaest. conv.* 1.4.3.621c, 4.Proem. 660ab; *Cons. ad ux.* 610a; *Sept. sap. conv.* 156cd, 158c. Cf. S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1989, p. 102; 1999, pp. 66-9; A. G. NIKOLAIDIS, 1999, p. 342 n.17.

² The banquet is not presented as typically Persian. In the *Quaest. conv.* Plutarch sometimes discusses special features of the Persian dinner, which do not specifically appear here. E.g., 1.1.613a (Persians drink and dance with their concubines rather than with their wives); 1.4.620c (the ability of Cyrus the Younger to hold his wine; cf. *Reg. et imp. apophth.* 173e); 2.1.629e-630a (many questions posed at the Persian banquets of Cyrus the Great; cf. *X., Cyr.* 5.2.18); 7.9.714a, d (deliberation on issues of state over wine, a custom no less Greek than Persian; cf. *Hdt.* 1.133; *Str.* 15.3.20). A rather different approach to the text of Plutarch and to this scene in particular is presented by Binder, C., *Plutarchs Vita des Artaxerxes: Ein historischer Kommentar*, Berlin, 2008, 244 (“reine Fiktion”).

³ On this battle see J. KROMAYER, 1924; J. K. ANDERSON, 1974, pp. 106 sqq.; P. A. RAHE, 1980; J. M. BIGWOOD, 1983; G. WYLIE, 1992; R. B. STEVENSON, 1997, pp. 84-93; P. BRIANT, 2002, pp. 627-30.

⁴ *Art.* 11.5: καὶ παρατρέχων νεανίας Πέρσης ὄνομα Μιθριδάτης ἀκοντίῳ βάλλει τὸν

injured the prince in the course of the combat. Another person, a Carian slave from the city of Caunos, is reported to have stabbed Cyrus from behind, in the back of the leg, and the wounds inflicted by the two men brought about the death of the prince⁵. During the dinner, Mithridates relates his part in the event and instantly causes his own downfall, since the facts revealed by him contradict the official royal version. Even though Artaxerxes himself was not involved in the killing of Cyrus, as the king was quickly removed from the battle after incurring an injury (*Art.* 11.2-3) and was not even present at the ensuing clash (*Art.* 11.4-10, 12.2, 13.1), he nevertheless appropriated the glory for it. Before the feast, the king gave Mithridates gifts; but these were allegedly for another deed – namely, presenting the monarch with the blood-stained saddle-cloth of Cyrus, which had fallen from the prince's horse⁶.

Mithridates received the gifts silently and walked away (*Art.* 14.7). Still, at the banquet, he is induced to disclose his feelings by Sparamizes, the chief eunuch of the queen mother, Parysatis, who wishes to avenge the death of her son Cyrus⁷. The ill-advised conduct of Mithridates at the dinner party leads to his brutal execution by Artaxerxes, which is detailed in the next chapter of the biography⁸. This scene is an adaptation of a story recounted in the *Persica* of Ctesias, the Greek physician at the court of the Great King (*FGrH* 688 F 16.67)⁹.

κρόταφον αὐτοῦ παρὰ τὸν ὀφθαλμόν, ἀγνοῶν ὅστις εἴη. Cf. the description of Xenophon (*An.* 1.8.27), who does not name Mithridates but merely claims ἀκοντίζει τις and locates Cyrus' wound below the eye (ὑπὸ τὸν ὀφθαλμόν). It is most probable that Xenophon relied on Ctesias' account. Cf. S. R. BASSETT, 1999, who seems to infer too much from the minor differences between the two authors.

⁵ *Art.* 11.9-10: ἐν δὲ τούτῳ Καύνιοι τινες ἄνθρωποι...τῇ τοῦ βασιλέως στρατιᾷ παρακολουθοῦντες, ἔτυχον συναναμειχθέντες ὡς φίλοις τοῖς περὶ τὸν Κύρον...εἰς οὖν ἐκείνων ἐτόλμησεν ἀγνοῶν ἐξόπισθεν βαλεῖν τὸν Κύρον ἀκοντίῳ. τῆς δὲ περὶ τὴν ἰγνύαν φλεβὸς ἀναρραγεΐσης, πεσὼν ὁ Κύρος ἅμα παίει πρὸς τινι λίθῳ τὸν τετρωμένον κρόταφον, καὶ ἀποθνήσκει. It should be noted that both Mithridates and the Carian struck Cyrus without knowing his identity.

⁶ *Art.* 14.5: οἰόμενος [scil. βασιλεύς] δὲ καὶ βουλόμενος δοκεῖν καὶ λέγειν πάντας ἀνθρώπους, ὡς αὐτὸς ἀπεκτόνοι Κύρον, Μιθριδάτη τε τῷ βαλόντι πρῶτῳ Κύρον ἐξέπεμψε δῶρα καὶ λέγειν ἐκέλευσε τοὺς διδόντας ὡς “τούτοις σε τιμᾶ [ὁ] βασιλεύς, ὅτι τὸν ἐφίππειον Κύρου πῖλον εὐρὼν ἀνήνεγκας”. Cf. 11.6: τὸν δ' ἐφίππειον πῖλον ἀπορρύνετα λαμβάνει τοῦ τὸν Κύρον βαλόντος ἀκόλουθος αἵματος περίπλεω.

⁷ It is possible that the whole banquet was organized by Parysatis in order to trap Mithridates, the queen mother wanting to avenge Cyrus' death by causing the noble Persian to bring harm on himself. The resigned demeanour of Mithridates upon receiving the gifts from the king had not suited her intentions, and she may have plotted to engineer his ruin. Cf. her manipulations in getting rid of other persons in *Art.* 17.1-8, 23.1.

⁸ Mithridates was punished by the torture of the boats (ἀποθανεῖν σκαφευθέντα: 16.2), a method of execution that inflicts a horrendous death. The condemned man is placed between two boats (σκάφαι), one on top of the other, and is force-fed until he incurs severe diarrhea. While his intestinal waste accumulates in the boats, worms and other creatures breed in it and devour his flesh.

⁹ On the *Persica* see F. JACOBY, 1922, pp. 1640-66; R. DREWS, 1973, pp. 103-16. On its shortcomings see J. M. BIGWOOD, 1976, 1978, 1983 (errors, questionable numbers, faulty geography, bias, simplification, confusion, duplication, anachronisms, etc.). See also R. B.

The feast portrayed here is very different from a Greek *symposium*, and one could say that it is its complete opposite¹⁰. To begin with, this is not an all-male gathering¹¹, as some of the participants are eunuchs, a problematic group in Greek imagination¹², and the chief figure is a eunuch belonging to a woman, the queen mother. Nor is this an event of aristocratic and free members, since the eunuchs are slaves. Moreover, the dinner betrays no social equality among the guests, and this fact is reflected in the garments Mithridates chooses to wear to the banquet. These clothes, which were gifted to him before the banquet with the intention of exalting him above the others, are indeed admired by the rest of the company¹³.

The setting too is unlike that of a Greek banquet. Strictly speaking, there is no clear distinction between eating and drinking, as was customary in the Classical *symposium*¹⁴. In addition, drinking seems to take place before the prayer that generally accompanied the libation in the Hellenic ritual, marking the beginning of the banquet¹⁵. No entertainment is mentioned, neither music nor dance. The participants do not sing or recite¹⁶. Though there is no direct reference to drinking wine neat, in the barbarian manner, a word play on the unrestrained (*akrates*), intoxicated Mithridates alludes to the unmixed (*akratos*) wine¹⁷.

STEVENSON, 1997, pp. 3-9; D. LENFANT, 2004, pp. vii-xxiv. Though lost, a short summary of the work was made in the 9th century AD by the patriarch Photius and is included in his *Bibliotheca* (Codex 72). The parallel passage to Plutarch's description is extremely short: ὡς Ἄρτοξέρξης παρέδωκεν αἰτησαμένη Μιτραδάτην Παρυσάτιδι, ἐπι τραπέζης μεγαλαυχήσαντα ἀποκτεῖναι Κύρον, κάκεινη λαβοῦσα πικρῶς ἀνείλε. On the value and reliability of Photius' summary of Ctesias see G. GOOSSENS, 1950, p. 519, J. M. BIGWOOD, 1976, pp. 2-5. The discrepancies between the versions of Plutarch and Photius may point to an adaptation of the original account of Ctesias by the biographer, or, alternatively, reveal that the patriarch's epitome is not accurate. There is no need to suppose that Plutarch used a different source here.

¹⁰ On the actual form of the oriental *symposia* see W. BURKERT, 1991.

¹¹ On the *symposium* as a drinking party intended for males only see O. MURRAY, 1982; 1983, p. 199; 1990, p. 6; M. J. VICKERS, 1984, p. 5. The female flute players, dancing-girls (*Ar., Ach.* 1093, X., *Smp.* 2.1) and *hetairai* attended the *symposium* solely to entertain the men.

¹² Cf. Athen. 10.452c (ἀνὴρ τε κούκ ἀνὴρ). Cf. Pl., *R.* 5.479b-c.

¹³ By contrast, sympotic participants all wore wreaths (cf. Thgn. 1001; *Ar., Ach.* 1091, 1145; *Ec.* 844; Menander, *Pseuderaclides*, Fr. 451.15 Kassel-Austin; Athen. 15.669c), which not only was a ritual act signifying initiation into a new reality (see W. RÖSLER, 1995, p. 108) but probably also highlighted the aspect of equality and commensality. Cf. D. TOLLES, 1943, pp. 28-9.

¹⁴ The host openly exhorts the guests "πίνωμεν ἐν τῷ παρόντι καὶ ἐσθίωμεν". On the distinction between *deipnon* and *symposium* see A. HUG, 1931, pp. 1266-7; O. MURRAY, 1990, p. 6; 1995, p. 225. Cf. G. PAUL, 1991, p. 158 on its gradual erosion in Hellenistic and Roman times.

¹⁵ Cf. Pl., *Smp.* 176a; X., *An.* 6.1.5; *Cyr.* 4.1.6; *Smp.* 2.1; Athen. 4.149c, e; *Ar., Eq.* 105. Cf. F. LISSARRAGUE, 1990, p. 25-6. The sequence here may fit a Sassanian custom, in which a prayer for the gods and the king apparently comes after the banquet. This practice is known from a document published by J. C. TAVADIA, 1935, pp. 11, 19, 89.

¹⁶ Nevertheless, the practice of asking riddles (αἰνίγματα or γρίφοι) is hinted at. For this custom see Athen. 10.448b; Plut. *Sept. sap. conv.* 152f; *Quaest. conv.* 5.proem. 673ab; *Ar. V.* 20, 1308-13; Pl. *Smp.* 215a. Cf. Thgn., 681-2.

¹⁷ An observation made by T. DUFF, 1999, p. 92 n. 76 with regard to the double meaning

The banquet proceeds contrary to the code of behaviour appropriate to a *symposium*. There are instances of *paroinia*, that is, irresponsible and offensive drunkenness, insolent talk, or *hybris*¹⁸. No feelings of ease and joy are felt, no friendship, or *euphrosyne*¹⁹. There is no calm and civilized conversation, nor, for that matter, any evidence of talk flowing freely. Quite the reverse is evident; the other participants are silent upon perceiving Mithridates' calamity (*Art.* 15.7). Their silence is a sort of behaviour depicted by classical authors as inappropriate²⁰. The only discourse presented in the scene – namely that between Mithridates and Sparamizes – concerns war or conflict, topics that early poets²¹ banned as themes unsuitable to a *symposium*. The dialogue is lethal. Note the mention of a knife in the first act (15.2). The very presence of weapons, in the form of the Persian *akinakes*, symbolizes strife in what is supposed to be a peaceful context²². All in all, the atmosphere is one of mistrust, lack of transparency and treachery. Mithridates is seduced into exposing his thoughts and harming himself, and he is isolated, as the rest of the guests let him bring about his own destruction. Though this picture supposedly describes a real party, it seems to present a thought experiment, so to speak, a suggestion of what could happen if the institution of the *symposium* were to fall into the hands of non-Greeks²³.

It is in these barbarian circumstances that the notion of the Greek *symposium* is introduced, enfolded in the words of Sparamizes the eunuch on the question of truth, “ἐπεὶ δέ φασιν Ἕλληνας οἶνον καὶ ἀλήθειαν εἶναι” (15.4).

of ἀκρασία.

¹⁸ On *paroinia* see X., *Smp.* 6.2 with B. HUSS, 1999, pp. 333-4 *ad loc.* and S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1999, p. 63-64. Cf. Hsch. s.v. παροινία (π 968 Schmidt): κραϊπάλαι. ὕβρεις ἀπὸ οἴνου Cf. Plu., *Quaest. conv.* 2.10.2.644a. On avoiding *hybris* at dinner parties by doing “what is right” (τὰ δίκαια) see Xenophanes, B1 West 15-17. Cf. Plu., *Quaest. conv.* 2.1.629e and W. J. SLATER, 1990, pp. 214-5.

¹⁹ On *euphrosyne* in banquets see Anacreon, *Eleg.* Fr. 2 West; Cf. H. ORANJE, 1984, pp. 103-7; W. J. SLATER, 1990, p. 213. For examples of discordant behaviour at *symposia*, disrupting the ideal pleasant atmosphere, see G. PAUL, 1991; F. TITCHENER, 1999, pp. 492-4. Cf. another banquet where things go wrong in Plut. *Alex.* 51.

²⁰ See X., *Smp.* 6.2 and B. HUSS, 1999, pp. 334-5. Cf. Plu., *Quaest. conv.* 3.prooem. 644f.

²¹ See Anacreon, *Eleg.* Fr. 2 West; Xenophanes, B1 West 21-24; cf. Thgn., 763-4. Cf. W. J. SLATER, 1981.

²² See W. J. SLATER, 1990, pp. 215-6. Cf. the humorous allusion to *Il.* 2.381 (νῦν δ' ἔρχεται ἐπὶ δεῖπνον ἵνα ξυνάγωμεν Ἄρηα) in Plu., *Quaest. conv.* 1.1.613c. Cf. Hdt. 5.20 on the concealment of daggers in the Macedonian banquet.

²³ Much more than a garbled adaptation of Hellenic practices, as in *Crass.* 33.1-7 (on which see in this volume J. CHLUB, pp. 185-7), this scene indicates a mismatch of Greek institutions and a non-Greek context. The description fits the image of the Persians in Greek literature as not free, slaves either to the king or to their passions, and suits the portrayal of the Persian court as a scene of decadence, corruption, arbitrary decisions, hypocrisy, betrayal of trust and brutality. In accordance with the prevailing orientalist image of the Eastern Empire, men are depicted as effeminate and women as dominant. Persia is seen as a place which breeds creatures on the fringes of human society, such as eunuchs, and on the other hand blurs the distinction between a human king and divine beings. See H. SANCISI-WEERDENBURG, 1987; W. NIPPEL, 2002, p. 290; D. L. GERA, 2007.

This saying, connecting wine and truth, which is known from other sources²⁴, is, according to some scholars, the very essence of the Greek *symposium*²⁵. It reflects the obligation of the participants to disclose their thoughts openly and completely, as well as encapsulating the symbolic transition to a new state of existence, in which full understanding and communication are present. Yet the employment of this proverb in the present context not only evokes the Hellenic practice of the banquet but also does it in a manner considered to be a Greek way of action, one involving cunning, and an indirect scheming instead of outright savagery²⁶.

The mention of truth entails a play on Persian religion and royal ideology. In the Zoroastrian Avesta, the world is divided between *drug* (the Lie, or disorder) and *aša* (Truth, or cosmic, social and ritual order)²⁷. The *drug* corresponds to the evil spirit (Angra Mainyu) and the *aša* is championed by the good spirit (Ahura Mazda), who will eventually prevail²⁸. Ahura Mazda upholds Truth (*Yasna* 31.8), is a friend of the truthful ones or believers (*ašanan*: cf. *Yasna* 47.5)²⁹ and punishes liars. This belief was familiar to Greek readers - and certainly to Plutarch himself - from the portrayal of the Persians in Greek literature, with its emphasis on telling the truth as a key concept in the education of the young³⁰, and with the depiction of lying and dishonesty as being in Persia the most despicable of evils³¹. In the royal Achaemenid ideology the Lie (*drauga*) is considered a serious offence against the king³²; it is tantamount to rebellion, as "those following the Lie" are regarded as lawbreakers³³. But by persuading

²⁴ Alcaeus, F. 366 Lobel-Page: οἶνος, ᾧ φίλε παῖ λέγεται καὶ ἀλάθεια; Ion of Chios, F 26.12 West; Pl., *Smp.* 217e; Theoc., *Idyll* 29.1; Ath. 2.37f; Zenobius, *Paroem.* 4.5, Diogenianus, *Paroem.* 4.81 (ἐν οἴνω ἀλήθεια); Diogenianus, *Paroem.* 7.28 (οἶνος καὶ ἀλήθεια). Cf. Alcaeus, F. 333 Lobel-Page (οἶνος γὰρ ἀνθρώπων δίπτρον); Thgn. 500; A., *TrGF* F 393; Pl., *Lg.* 649a-650b. Cf. Horace, *Sat.* 1.4.89; *Carm.* 3.21.14-16; cf. Pliny, *Nat.* 14.141. Cf. the treatment of this view in Plu., *Quaest. conv.* 3. Proem. 645a-c and 7.10.715d-f.

²⁵ See W. RÖSLER, 1995; W. J. HENDERSON, 2000, p. 17.

²⁶ See M. DETIENNE & J. P. VERNANT, 1978.

²⁷ On the centrality of this opposition between truth and lie in the Indo-Iranian religious setting prior to the emergence of the Zoroastrian belief see H. LOMMEL, 1930, pp. 40-52; M. STAUSBERG, 2002, pp. 91-5.

²⁸ Cf. *Yasht* 19.92-96; Cf. M. BOYCE, 1975, pp. 200-1, 283; 1982, pp. 120-1. In the *Gathas*, the oldest stratum of the Avesta, *drug* appears more frequently than the evil spirit itself. See M. BOYCE, 1982, p. 123.

²⁹ Cf. XPh. 46-56: The king demands respect for the law Ahura Mazda has established in order to be blessed (*artava*-). Cf. M. BOYCE, 1982, pp. 174-7.

³⁰ Hdt. 1.136 (ἀληθίζεσθαι). Cf. Strabo, 15.3.18 (ἀληθεύειν).

³¹ Hdt. 1.138; cf. 7.102, 7.209. Interestingly, cf. Plu., *De vit. aer. alien.* 829c, who claims that they were the second worst things in Persia.

³² Cf. DB 4.33-5: "Darius the King says: These are the provinces which became rebellious. The Lie made them rebellious, so that these (men) deceived the people"; cf. DB 4.36-39: "Darius the King says: You who shall be king hereafter, protect yourself vigorously from the Lie; the man who shall be a Lie-follower, him do you punish well" (trans. by R. G. KENT, 1953, p. 131). Cf. DB 1. 34, 4.63; cf. DNb.12. The supposed pretenders in the Behistun text are presented as liars. cf. 1.39, 1.78, 3.80. See P. BRIANT, 2002, pp. 126-7, 138.

³³ The Liars are habitually punished in Greek depictions of Persia. See Ctesias, *FGrH* 688 F 9.1 (ὄτι ἐψεύσατο ἀγνοεῖν εἰπὼν ἐρευνώμενον Ἀστυίαν.); cf. Hdt. 3.27.

Mithridates to tell the truth about the incidents that occurred during the battle, the king's own version turns out to be a lie; Artaxerxes becomes a liar, while the truthful Mithridates is made to seem a rebel³⁴. There is also irony in the employment of deceit to bring out the truth³⁵. After all, it is stated clearly that Sparamizes, the eunuch of the queen mother, was not ignorant of the truth (οὐκ ἀγνοῶν τὸ ἀληθές: 15.5) but pretended to be so in order to manipulate Mithridates.

Before the feast Mithridates kept his account of the events to himself. It is the false presentation of a frank and friendly fellowship typical of a *symposium* that leads him to divulge everything. Mithridates seems convinced that in accordance with the Greek sympotic ethical code – apparently introduced by Sparamizes' allusion to the banquet – his vulnerable state will not be abused by any other participant at dinner and that his words will not harm him later³⁶. He is unable to see the plot against him. Just as he missed (τοῦ ... ὀφθαλμοῦ μικρὸν ἤμαρτον: 15.6) Cyrus' eye and struck him elsewhere, he cannot perceive that his words about the prince's destruction in fact harm another person, namely, himself. The ploy is therefore successful. Mithridates is tricked into relating his part in slaying Cyrus, thus proving false the official version, which had Artaxerxes as the sole killer.

But the report of the events is not the only truth revealed by the unfortunate inebriated Persian. The true character of Mithridates is also disclosed through wine, and this is what Sparamizes is trying to uncover. Mithridates shows signs of excessive *philotimia*. Not satisfied with the rewards given him by the king, he also wishes to gain the glory of being Cyrus' killer, a title officially held by Artaxerxes. In fact, Mithridates presents himself as competing with the king, and Plutarch shows this ambition in various ways. Mithridates' arrival at the dinner wearing the clothes and jewellery he received from Artaxerxes³⁷ alludes to a previous scene in the biography, in which Tiribazus wore the king's robe and necklace, although forbidden to do so³⁸. The contrast made by Mithridates between idle talk about the saddle-cloth and his own actual deed³⁹ matches Artaxerxes' distinction between the general liberty to speak

³⁴ On the Orwellian overtones of this passage see B. LINCOLN, 2007, p. 94.

³⁵ Notwithstanding n. 33, Greek authors do not hesitate to point at Persian hypocrisy, and the question of truth is often found to be the subject of ironic descriptions. For instance, according to Herodotus, the Magus' reign as king involves a deceit (3.61-3), and it also takes a lie to overthrow him. Cf. Darius' saying that sometimes the lie is necessary (ἔνθα γάρ τι δεῖ ψεῦδος λέγεσθαι, λεγέσθω: Hdt. 3.72). When Cambyses does tell the truth, the nobles do not believe him (Hdt. 3.66). On deceitfulness versus truthfulness as a *Leitmotiv* in Herodotus' third book see S. BENAÏDE, 1969, pp. 69-98. Cf. also Hdt. 8.142 (ὡς βαρβάροισι ἔστι οὔτε πιστὸν οὔτε ἀληθές οὐδέν).

³⁶ Cf. Thgn, 309-312.

³⁷ Art. 15.1: ἦκεν ἔσθητι καὶ χρυσῷ κεκοσμημένους οἷς ἔλαβε παρὰ βασιλέως.

³⁸ Art. 5.3-4: οὕτως ἐποίησεν εἰπών· “δίδωμι μὲν ὧ Τριβάζε, σοὶ τοῦτον, φορεῖν δ' ἀπαγορεύω.” τοῦ δὲ Τριβάζου μὴ φροντίσαντος ... ἀλλὰ τὸν τε κίνδυνον εὐθὺς ἐκέκρινον ἐνδύντος καὶ δέραια χρυσᾶ [καὶ γυναικεῖα] τῶν βασιλικῶν περιθεμένου, πάντες μὲν ἠγανάκτου· οὐ γὰρ ἔξην.

³⁹ Art. 15.6: “ὕμεις μὲν ὅ τι βούλεσθε πῖλους λέγετε καὶ φλυάρους· ἐγὼ δ' ὑμῖν λέγω

as one wishes and the monarch's unique privilege to act⁴⁰. Finally, when the young Persian claims that what he did "on *that day* is worthy of great things"⁴¹, he appears to allude to Tiribazus' words of advice to the king at the scene of the battle to "remember *this day*, for it is unworthy of forgetfulness"⁴². What seems to be insinuated here is a war of versions between that of Artaxerxes and that of Mithridates. The young Persian gives the impression that it was he who saved the crown of Artaxerxes on that fateful day, that his acts were powerful enough to decide the feud over the monarchy, and by implication – that his power surpasses that of the king.

Upon hearing these alarming words, Artaxerxes sends Mithridates to his horrible death. This outcome causes the words of the intoxicated Persian noble to appear as conveying yet another truth, for his claim that he felled "the man" (κατέβαλον τὸν ἄνδρα, *Art.* 15.6), ostensibly referring to Cyrus, also seems to predict the downfall of Mithridates himself⁴³. As in the battle he missed Cyrus' eye yet fatally injured the prince, now his words deliver an unintended and no less deadly blow to himself. It is the king, however, who turns this description into reality, by interpreting this utterance as disobedient and deserving of punishment. With its focus on wine and truth, the Greek *symposium* envisioned the human body as if it were a sort of instrument for processing liquid and transforming it into truthfulness⁴⁴. Analogous to that practice, the body of Mithridates is expected to function as a similar device when he incurs the torture of the boats: into his mouth are poured fluids (milk and honey)⁴⁵ and this punishment is meant to prove Artaxerxes' account as accurate⁴⁶. In fact, through the disintegration and complete destruction of the young Persian's body, the king establishes once and for all his version of the

διαρρήδην ὑπὸ ταύτης ἀνηρήσθαι Κύρον τῆς χειρός."

⁴⁰ *Art.* 5.2: "σοὶ μὲν ἕξεστιν εἰπεῖν ἃ βούλη, ἐμοὶ δὲ καὶ λέγειν καὶ ποιεῖν".

⁴¹ *Art.* 15.3: "μειζόνων γὰρ ἐγὼ καὶ καλλιόνων βασιλεῖ τὴν ἡμέραν ἐκείνην ἄξιον ἐμαυτὸν παρέσχον".

⁴² *Art.* 10.1: "ὦ βασιλεῦ, μέμνησο τῆς ἡμέρας ταύτης· οὐ γὰρ ἀξία λήθης ἐστὶ".

⁴³ On Dionysus giving the gift of prophecy see E., *Ba.* 298-301.

⁴⁴ P. Dubois, 1991, pp. 68, 75-91 (and *passim*) shows how, in the Greek mind, truth was conceived of as an inaccessible, buried secret within the body, which had to be brought to the surface, even by coercion. Presumably, one such means was liquids. Plato, *Lg.* 1.648a-c, 649e proposes that wine should be used, rather than some other test (βάσανος), to reveal true facts about the character of a person. Cf. P. Dubois, 1991, pp. 108-10. Note that Diogenianus (7.28) explains the phrase οἶνος καὶ ἀλήθεια in a manner which suggests that the Persians substituted tortures (βάσανοι) for wine with the aim of extracting the truth: Εὐάνδρος παρὰ τοῖς Πέρσαις φησὶν οὐ βασάνους ἐξετάζεσθαι, ἀλλὰ μεθυσκομένους. In his *Indica* (*FGrH* 688 F 45.31) Ctesias describes a liquid obtained from a spring, which acts as wine; when someone drinks it, he ἐξαγγέλλει πάντα ὅσα ἔπραξε. Ctesias adds that the king makes use of it whenever he wishes to find the truth concerning an accusation. One would assume that here again torture is being replaced by a beverage.

⁴⁵ *Art.* 16.4: φαγόντι δὲ πιεῖν μέλι καὶ γάλα συγκεκραμένου ἐγγέουσιν εἰς τὸ στόμα...

⁴⁶ *Art.* 16.2: ἐβούλετο [scil. βασιλεὺς] γὰρ βαρβάρους ἅπαντας πεπεῖσθαι καὶ Ἑλλήνας, ὡς ἐν ταῖς ἐξελάσει καὶ συμπλοκαῖς δούς καὶ λαβῶν πληγὴν, ἐτρώθη μὲν αὐτός, ἔκτεινε δ' ἐκεῖνον.

events as the ‘true’ one⁴⁷.

This cruelty exhibited by the king is not at all what we would expect from the foregoing narrative. Earlier on (*Art.* 4.4), he is described as one who appears φιλόανθρωπος and mild. Specifically, it is stated that the king seems no less generous and kind as a recipient of favours than when he bestows favours upon others⁴⁸. But here, Artaxerxes emerges as ungrateful to Mithridates, the man who struck down Cyrus and effectively handed him power. Seemingly, by his action the monarch demonstrates that the former description was false⁴⁹. Up to this point in the story, the king had never tortured or sentenced anyone to death. He released Cyrus even though his brother was suspected of having attempted assassination (*Art.* 3.5–6); he ignored Tiribazus’ insolence with respect to the royal robe and its mutinous overtones, in a way that could have only been interpreted as weakness on the king’s part (*Art.* 5.4); towards Euclides, who admonished him publicly, he was temperate (*Art.* 5.2); he was relatively lenient with defectors during the war (*Art.* 14.3–4); even the Carian who, like Mithridates, claimed the glory for Cyrus’ death, was not punished by Artaxerxes himself, but was handed over to Parysatis, the queen mother (*Art.* 14.9–10). The punishment meted out to Mithridates constitutes therefore a turning point in the revelation of the king’s character. We begin to doubt whether the former Greek traits describing the barbarian monarch were accurate, especially regarding the application of the essentially Hellenic quality of φιλοανθρωπία⁵⁰. Artaxerxes is now seen as a brutal, despotic oriental ruler, whose real personality is exposed by his resort to torture.

The narratological significance of the *symposium* is thus immediately seen. It has already been shown that wine proverbially reveals truth, but Plutarch appears to play with the idea of *in uino ueritas*. Here it is not merely Mithridates’ own truth that his drinking reveals, but also Artaxerxes’ truth. It is the wine imbibed by Mithridates that reveals the true nature of the king, the truth of what the king *is*⁵¹.

Yet this is only one way of seeing the importance of the Greek banquet in the *Life* and the role it plays in the characterization of the hero. Another view is possible: our *symposium* may not, after all, lead the way to the truth,

⁴⁷ According to B. LINCOLN, 2007, pp. 87–94, the punishment of Mithridates was in fact a Zoroastrian “judicial ordeal”, involving a careful examination of its outcome and the application of pressure in order to disclose the inner moral nature of the accused. If Mithridates was guilty, he would have to be destroyed in the process, and his physical decay would demonstrate his moral corruption.

⁴⁸ ἐν ἀρχῇ δὲ καὶ πάνυ ζηλοῦν ἔδοξε τὴν Ἀρτοξέρξου τοῦ ὁμωνύμου πραότητα ... ἐν <δὲ> τῷ δέχεσθαι χάριτας οὐχ ἥττον τοῖς διδοῦσιν ἢ τοῖς λαμβάνουσιν ἐν [δὲ] τῷ διδόναι φαινόμενος εὐχάρις καὶ φιλόανθρωπος. Cf. *Reg. et imp. apophth.* 172b.

⁴⁹ This may also be seen in the use of the word ἄνθρωπος (*Art.* 16.7) at the end of the torture portrayal to mark the gap between the previously attributed trait and reality.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Phil.* 8.1; *Flam.* 5.7; *Lys.* 27.7; *Pyrrh.* 1.4. See H. M. MARTIN JR., 1961, pp. 166–8, 174; Cf. R. HIRZEL, 1912, p. 25; J. DE ROMILLY, 1979, pp. 279, 303–4; A. G. NIKOLAIDIS, 1986, pp. 239–40.

⁵¹ This notion is an expansion of the idea that wine discloses the true character of the drinker, on which see T. DUFF, 1999, pp. 15 n. 6, 32 n. 56.

but rather deviate from it, creating a new reality altogether. Plutarch seems to take great pains in creating the strong impression that truth is absent from the description of the "barbarian" feast. He does it with the help of an array of literary devices. Sparamizes is explicitly presented as deceiving his fellow drinker (15.5). The act of casting their eyes downward attributed to the guests (εἰς τὴν γῆν ἔκυψαν: 15.7)⁵² echoes a Platonic image concerning the limited vision of people who shy away from true reality⁵³. Even the young Persian's story is only partially true, since, as will be recalled, Cyrus died as a result of injuries inflicted by two men, a Carian as well as Mithridates. Leaving the Carian out of the account is not telling the whole truth. Moreover, in the last two parts of the dialogue between Sparamizes and Mithridates the king himself is omitted: First, he is not mentioned as the recipient of the saddle-cloth⁵⁴; second, he is neglected in the report of the battle (*Art.* 15.6). Contrary to the picture given earlier, in which Artaxerxes did try to aim a blow at his brother before being wounded himself⁵⁵, here mention is made only of the attempt by the commander of the Cadusians, Artagereses, to strike Cyrus (*Art.* 9.3)⁵⁶. The struggle of the brothers and their entourages (*Art.* 11.1-2) is skipped over. These are clear cases where *aletheia* gives way to *lethe*⁵⁷. Noteworthy also is the absence of truthfulness indicated by the imagery of failure to hit the mark, which is prominent in the speech of Mithridates (*Art.* 15.6), since truth signifies correspondence with reality, like a spear hitting the target, not missing it⁵⁸. To the same effect is perhaps the recurring *motif* of utterances that miss a real correspondence in the closing picture of the scene (15.7: λόγους δὲ μείζους ἢ καθ' ἡμᾶς) and in the Mithridates' description of an empty throw (15.6: Ἀρταγέρσης ἠκόνηται κενὸν καὶ μάταιον), where Plutarch is probably alluding to Demosthenes' idiom in the second Olynthiac oration (12) about words being vacuous and vain if unaccompanied by deeds⁵⁹.

⁵² Plutarch employs this expression elsewhere (*Brut.* 27.5: κύφαντας εἰς γῆν ἡσυχίαν ἄγειν; *Ages.* 12.5: κύπτοντας εἰς τὴν γῆν). The context in the *Agesialos* is the Spartans' reaction to the complaints of Pharnabazus on the destruction done by them to his land. In this case, the biographer's intervention in the text can be ascertained by a comparison of this description with its probable source, X., *HG.* 4.1.34. Cf. D. H. SHIPLEY, 1997, pp. 184-5.

⁵³ Pl., *R.* 9.586a: Οἱ ἄρα φρονήσεως καὶ ἀρετῆς ἄπειροι... ὑπερβάντες δὲ τοῦτο πρὸς τὸ ἀληθῶς ἄνω οὔτε ἀνέβλεψαν πώποτε οὔτε ἠνέχθησαν... ἀλλὰ βοσκομάτων δίκην κάτω αἰεὶ βλέποντες καὶ κεκυφότες εἰς γῆν καὶ εἰς τραπέζας βόσκονται χορταζόμενοι καὶ ὀχεύοντες...

⁵⁴ *Art.*, 15.4: τί λαμπρὸν ὦ τῶν ἡ μέγα, πῖλον εὐρεῖν ἵππου περιρρύνετα καὶ τοῦτον ἀνενεγκεῖν;

⁵⁵ *Art.*, 11.2: βασιλεὺς δ' ἀφείς τὸ δόρυ Κύρου μὲν οὐκ ἔτυχε, Σατιφέρνην δὲ πιστὸν ἄνδρα Κύρω καὶ γενναῖον ἔβαλε καὶ κατέκτεινε.

⁵⁶ Cf. X., *An.* 1.8.24

⁵⁷ On the ancient understanding of truth as something that is perceived or transmitted without any gaps caused by forgetfulness, neglect or ignorance, that is, complete and with no omissions, see B. SNELL, 1975; T. COLE, 1983.

⁵⁸ Cf. T. COLE, 1983, pp. 13-6 on the meaning of the archaic word νημερτής denoting Truth, as something not failing to strike the target. *Vide supra*, on the correspondence between Mithridates' missing the mark in battle and his failure to grasp the situation at the *symposium*.

⁵⁹ ...ἅπας μὲν λόγος, ἂν ἀπῆ τὰ πράγματα, μάταιόν τι φαίνεται καὶ κενόν... Plutarch also uses this phrase in the *Philop.* 9.7; *Quom. adolesc.* 28b.

What the ‘barbarian’ *symposium* lacks in truthfulness, it gains in passion. Traditionally, the unrepressed barbarian, especially Scythian, consumption of wine was conceived of as the counterpart of the Greek banquet⁶⁰. It was set as a sort of limit, one not to be transgressed by members of the civilized community⁶¹. However, in the reverse world depicted here by Plutarch, it is the Greek way of drinking that is presented both as a model to be followed by the barbarians and as having no restraints. Mithridates is encouraged to abandon his self-control and act “as the Greeks do”. Ironically, while it was usually the Greeks who regarded the barbarians as uninhibited and unconstrained in their demeanour⁶², here it is the other way around: the Hellenes are seen as basically licentious and lacking in restraint.

Passions appear to be uncontrolled when the Greek *symposium* is situated in a barbarian context⁶³. In his retort, Sparamizes questions the greatness involved in bringing a saddle-cloth to the king⁶⁴. He implicitly doubts the merit of a form of restraint, in this case, applicable to a horse but symbolically relevant to the behaviour of Mithridates. The reader will recall at once the Platonic imagery of the soul in the *Phaedrus* as a chariot driven by a team of winged horses (246a)⁶⁵. Now it is the black, unrestrained steed, evidently representing the passionate part of the human soul⁶⁶, that drags down its driver⁶⁷, far away from the plain of Truth and from beholding the true being (248bc)⁶⁸. The soul then sheds its wings and plummets to earth, only to be incarnated in a

⁶⁰ Anacr., Fr. 11b Page = *PMG* 356; Hdt. 6.84; Pl., *Lg.* 1.637e; Arist., *Pr.* 3.7.872a3-9; Athen. 10.427a-c; 11.499f. Cf. F. HARTOG, 1988, pp. 169-70; M. C. MILLER, 1991, p. 68.

⁶¹ This sentiment may provide a clue for the occasional appearances of symposiasts in typically oriental dress, including the *tiara* cap, found painted on vases. Cf. F. LISSARRAGUE, 1990, pp. 11-3, who argues that these images signify the search for otherness experienced in the *symposium*, an escape from social restrictions. For other interpretations, which suggest that the figures represent foreign guests at dinner parties or else wealthy Athenians aping Eastern ways and dress, see K. DE VRIES, 1973, p.39 and M. C. MILLER, 1991, pp. 69-71.

⁶² E. HALL, 1989, pp. 79-84, 101 sqq.; E. ALMAGOR, 2005, pp. 50-2. In Plutarch's writing, the barbarians are known for their lack of temperance. They engage in acts of savagery and cruelty (A. G. NIKOLAIDIS, 1986, pp. 241-2; T. S. SCHMIDT, 1999, pp. 27-67), indulge in luxury (A. G. NIKOLAIDIS, 1986, pp. 237-8; T. S. SCHMIDT, 1999, pp. 107-139), are generally untrustworthy (T. S. SCHMIDT, 1999, pp. 203-12) and hold superstitious beliefs (A. G. NIKOLAIDIS, 1986, pp. 234-35; T. S. SCHMIDT, 1999, pp. 224-34), to name but a few their negative traits.

⁶³ Cf. Hdt. 5.18-20. Compared with these depictions, Xenophon's descriptions in the *Cyropaedia* of the Persian banquets as devoid of drunkenness (cf. C. J. TUPLIN, 1990, p. 26; D. L. GERA, 1993, pp. 150-1) would seem a literary idealization.

⁶⁴ *Vide supra* n. 54.

⁶⁵ Cf. *Ant.* 36.2. Cf. C. B. R. PELLING, 1988, p. 217; T. DUFF, 1999, pp. 78-9, 85. Cf. M. B. TRAPP, 1990 on the popularity of this image in second century AD literature.

⁶⁶ On the exact nature of this correspondence see R. HACKFORTH, 1952, p. 72; C. J. ROWE, *Plato. Phaedrus, with Translation and Commentary*, Warminster, 1986 ad loc. 246b1-3; cf. D. A. WHITE, 1993, pp. 89-93; E. BELFIORE, 2006.

⁶⁷ 247b: βρήθει γὰρ ὁ τῆς κάρης ἵππος μετέχων, ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ῥέπων τε καὶ βαρύνων ᾧ μὴ καλῶς ἦν τετραμμένος τῶν ἡνιόχων. Other souls strive to follow the gods in seeing the true being, which provides pasturage proper for their noblest part, but none has a full vision of it.

⁶⁸ Cf. Plu., *De def. orac.* 422b.

mortal body and embedded in the cycle of births⁶⁹. While basing his account on Ctesias' description, Plutarch seems to skillfully combine this imagery of passion as an unbridled horse, deviation from truth, and a general movement downward, manifested in the action of the banquet participants, whose eyes are cast earthward⁷⁰.

At the end of the dinner scene, the host, assuming one of the key functions of a *symposiarch*⁷¹, tones down emotions by urging the participants to keep their differences within bounds as they eat and drink, and to prostrate themselves before the king's *daimon*⁷². Here a play of stereotypes is manifest, since it is one thing, a very Greek thing, to be a calming *symposiarch* but quite another to do so by recommending this most non-Greek of actions. This play has a bearing on the character of the monarch. The appeal to this deity seems to fulfill a restrictive role; it is now expected of the king to restrain the passions so recklessly exhibited during the feast⁷³. But instead of curbing passions with a measure of self-control as he has done on previous occasions, Artaxerxes stifles them in another manner.

It would seem that the insertion of the potentially disorderly Greek *symposium* into barbarian circumstances, inherently devoid of the Hellenic rules and codes for self-control - which consist of trust, cooperation and equality - produces a new situation. The king chooses to react with unprecedented cruelty to the misbehaviour of Mithridates and to suppress passion with even greater passion. Since this unbridled conduct is directly linked with the loosening of control begun at the banquet and caused by it, the *symposium* appears not so much as revealing the king's true character but as totally altering it from its previous portrayal.

At this juncture in the narrative, the reader is not sure as to the correct interpretation of the *ethos* of Artaxerxes⁷⁴. One possibility is that his inner

⁶⁹ 248c: ὅταν δὲ ἀδυνατήσασα ἐπισπέσθαι μὴ ἴδῃ, καὶ τινι συντυχίᾳ χρησαμένη λήθῃς τε καὶ κακίας πλησθεῖσα βαρυνθῆ, βαρυνθεῖσα δὲ πτερορρυήσῃ τε καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν πέσῃ...The souls are incarnated in several types of men, ranging from the philosopher to the tyrant, in accordance with the measure of the truth seen by them (248d).

⁷⁰ It is also manifested in the statement of Mithridates κατέβαλον τὸν ἄνδραν (15.6).

⁷¹ See *Quaest. conv.* 1.4, 620a-622b. Cf. S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1999, p. 61.

⁷² A significant question is whether the host is the same person as Sparamizes, as both use the relatively uncommon phrase ὦ τᾶν when addressing Mithridates (15.4, 15.7). Several scholars have already been baffled by this difficulty or have confounded the two. (Cf. F. E. BRENK, 1977, p. 151). W.W. TARN, 1928, p. 209, claims to have formerly equated the two and then changed his opinion after a conversation with A. D. Nock. Did Plutarch mean to confuse his readers? It should be noted that one of the characters aims to restrain passion while the other aspires to give vent to it. Attributing these two conflicting roles to the same figure may point to the two possible routes of action expected of the king with regard to the offence of Mithridates, and even to an innate inconsistency within the *ethos* of Artaxerxes, which is also displayed by the mention of the *daimon* and which constitutes a recurring *motif* in the biography to its very end (culminating in 29.11).

⁷³ I deal with the literary significance of the king's *daimon* in a forthcoming paper.

⁷⁴ Three scholars suggest different portrayals of the king. Orsi (in M. MANFREDINI & ORSI, 1987, pp. xxvii - xxviii) stresses a positive characterization emerging from the biography; D. C. HOOD, 1967, pp. 68-85, on the other hand, emphasizes a negative image. T. S. SCHMIDT, 1999, p.

savagery, so far concealed, has been finally unmasked. Another is that he has degenerated from a mild and *philanthropos* monarch to a cruel and harsh despot⁷⁵. The banquet scene plays an important role in this uncertainty. For wine itself is an ambiguous beverage. Sweet and dangerous, it reveals as much as it distorts, making the real apparent and the apparent real. It discloses the truth as much as it leads to forgetfulness, generates civilized fellowship and *philanthropia* but at the same time may cause the lowest form of brutal behaviour. One would assume that what is needed is moderation, or finding the right measure, which Mithridates and Artaxerxes, being barbarians, are clearly shown to lack. Or is it so? Plutarch does not simply adopt ethnic stereotypes. He plays on them and exploits various familiar ethnic themes to create a complex interplay. The difficulty of interpreting what is happening in this “barbarian” *symposium* reflects how disconcerting it is when familiar features from the Greek banquet combine in a new and disorienting way. Eventually the evasiveness of the categories makes understanding of the situation a complicated matter for the reader, just as it proves to be for Mithridates.

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318-24, in his research into the representation of barbarians in Plutarch’s *Lives*, advances a more attractive and balanced approach by combining both views. He depicts Artaxerxes as better than other barbarians, including the minor characters in this biography, though he argues that his portrait reveals more negative traits. Perhaps the development of the presentation of Artaxerxes’ character should also be considered in the evaluation of his personality; notice, then, should be taken of the story-line of this *Life*.

⁷⁵ Plutarch was long seen as ascribing a static *ethos* to his heroes, thus making ostensible dramatic changes, such as cruelty, to be understood as the revelation of true character traits, which were concealed for various reasons (cf. Philip’s case in *Aratus*, 49.1, another non-parallel *Life*). Nevertheless, this approach has been challenged by scholars who believe that Plutarch espoused a belief in the possibility of an altered character. See F. E. BRENN, 1977, pp. 176-81; S. SWAIN, 1989. Cf. *De sera*, 559bc. According to this modified view, Plutarch holds that a person confronted with great changes in circumstances, or vitiated by undeserved calamities, may lose his internal balance between the rational and irrational. Compare the notable case of Sertorius (*Sert.* 25.6). See D. A. RUSSELL, 1966, p. 146; B. BUCHER-ISLER, 1972, pp. 79-80, for the opinion that Plutarch believes in the constant nature (*physis*) of a hero, i.e., his inborn qualities, as opposed to his changeable character. Cf. *De tranq. an.*, 475d-476a. Yet cf. C. GILL, 2006, pp. 412-21, who advances the possibility of a collapse of character in Plutarch’s *Lives*, consistent with the biographer’s Platonic-Aristotelian view (cf. C. GILL, 1983 for an earlier formulation of this idea, based on a conceptual contrast between ‘character’ and ‘personality’, on which cf. C. B. R. PELLING, 2002, pp. 283-329).

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CENA APUD CATONES: IDEOLOGY AND SYMPOTIC BEHAVIOR

MARK BECK

University of South Carolina, Columbia

Abstract

In this paper I will analyze the ideological ramifications of the sympotic behavior of Cato Censorious and Cato Minor as exhibited in their respective *Lives*. In particular their treatment of slaves or other participants at the symposia will be discussed. I will demonstrate that Plutarch is at pains to contrast their behavior negatively with that of Socrates who figures in all four *Lives* of the two pairs as an extraneous foil. Ultimately I will examine the primary target of Plutarch's literary attack; Cicero's highly idealized portraits of both of these Roman exemplars. I will show that Plutarch is pursuing an ideological agenda that seeks to negatively evaluate two great symbols of Roman virtue against the truly philosophical Socratic paradigm.

Our earliest sources of information in the history of Greek literature and culture characterize the symposium as a place of relaxation for the elite members of society. Dining, drinking, sexual activity, all of this and more took place with regularity. It was also a social function in which an individual's "civilized behavior patterns" or lack thereof could be scrutinized behind "a pretence of entertainment"¹. From the gross transgressions of Penelope's suitors to Alcibiades' encomium to his would-be-*erastes* Socrates, the attention to social norms or their violation could be represented in great works of literature that depict such scenes. Socrates, for Plato, as well as for Plutarch, was the exemplar, the canon, whose public behavior mirrored his philosophic principles. As Plutarch writes: "He was first to show that life at all times and in all parts, in all experiences and activities, universally admits philosophy" (*An seni ger. r. p.* 796D)². This paper will explore Plutarch's use of the Socratic paradigm in several biographies that touch on sympotic behavior³.

The *Lives of Aristides, Cato the Elder, Phocion, and Cato the Younger* all contain explicit and implicit references to the Athenian. The figure of Socrates functions as an extraneous foil in all of these *Lives*⁴. In the *Life of Aristides*, Socrates is mentioned comparatively early on in the section discussing Aristides alleged poverty (*Arist.* 1.9)⁵. The linkage of Socrates with Aristides appears to be a natural one for Plutarch elsewhere. Aristides is mentioned in the same breath with Socrates as an example of moderation in the *De cobibenda ira* (458C-D), both of whom exemplify the qualities of "mildness (πραότητος) and forgiveness (συγγνώμη), and moderation in passion (μετριοπαθείας)".

¹ T. WHITMARSH, 2005, p. 32.

² Translation by H. N. FOWLER, *Plutarch's Moralia X*, LCL.

³ See C. B. R. PELLING, 2005b. Pelling focuses in particular on the *Life of Alcibiades*.

⁴ I treat this topic in greater detail in a forthcoming article, "Contrasting Catos: The Socratic Paradigm in Plutarch's *Lives*".

⁵ See also the reference to the book by Demetrius of Phalerum entitled *Socrates* in the proem (*Arist.* 1.2).

Phocion underwent philosophic training in the Academy that informed to some extent his political behavior, and his mode of death recalled Socrates' end (*Phoc.* 5.4-5⁶; 32.6-7⁷, 38.5)⁸. The contrast of the two Catos with Socrates is distinctly different and, for obvious reasons, much less natural.

We know that when Plutarch penned the Censor's *Life* he had the Younger Cato in mind since he makes explicit reference to him saying that he was "the best and most illustrious man of his time" (*Cat. Ma.* 27.7). This statement comes at the close of the *Life*, just prior to the *synkrisis*. Plutarch's lavish praise of the Younger Cato at the conclusion of the Censor's *Life* makes us immediately realize that no such comparably enthusiastic assessment of the Censor has been made in his *Life* that we have just read. In contrast we discern in it the exploration of several realms of activity that find no parallel in the *Life of Aristides* and that Plutarch construes quite negatively. These same themes, moreover, appear to link the *Life of Cato the Elder* to the *Life of Cato the Younger*, a linkage reinforced by references to Socrates and by the explicit reference to the Censor at the beginning of the Younger Cato's *Life* and twice thereafter (*Cat. Mi.* 1.1; 5.1; 8.2-3). They include the treatment of slaves, women, and frugality. The intertwining of the theme of the treatment of slaves with the Socratic paradigm is particularly crucial, as we shall see.

The Elder Cato, whom I shall call the Censor to avoid confusion, explicitly rejects Socrates, the blameless symbol of Greek culture in the eyes of Plutarch⁹. Plutarch portrays the Censor's criticism as an attempt "to discredit Greek civilization and culture as a whole":

After all, even Socrates was, according to him [sc. Cato] a chatterbox and coercive, whose intention it was to lord it over his homeland by using whatever means he could, namely by undermining traditional values and by compelling his fellow citizens to modify their views so that they were no longer in conformity with the laws (*Cat. Ma.* 23.1)¹⁰.

The allusion to Plato's *Apology* and the charges against Socrates presented therein is evident in Plutarch's paraphrase of the Censor's critique of Socrates cited above.

Early in the *Life* the Censor's oratorical ability is favorably compared with Socrates' (*Cat. Ma.* 7. 1). This is Plutarch's own assessment, since the general

⁶ Cf. Pl., *Prt.* 342a-343d.

⁷ Cf. Pl., *Grg.* 469c; 474b ff.; *Crit.* 49b; *R.* 335d; *Ap.* 30c-d; 41d.

⁸ See M. B. TRAPP, 1999, pp. 487-98. See also H.-J. GEHRKE, 1976, pp. 139-41; L. TRITTLE, 1988, pp. 30-3; C. ALCALDE MARTÍN, 1999, pp. 159-71, T. DUFF, 1999, pp. 131-58, and C. B. R. PELLING, 2005b, 115-6.

⁹ A. E. ASTIN, 1978, p. 339 thinks that the Censor's remarks about Socrates may be derived from the *Ad filium*.

¹⁰ Translation D. SANSONE with some modification.

viewpoint is that Cato's brand of oratory resembles that of Lysias, as he himself informs us (*Cat. Ma.* 7.2). Socrates is not the man one would normally expect to be mentioned as a rhetorical paragon. The youth of Rome emulate him and associate with him (*Cat. Ma.* 4.2-5; 8.6; cf. also 19.7, and 25.3). The Censor is their role model. The Censor's only positive remark about Socrates concerns his role as father and husband. As Plutarch relates, Cato used to say that "the only thing he admired about him [sc. Socrates] was his abiding civility and restraint in his dealings with a shrewish wife and retarded children" (*Cat. Ma.* 20.3)¹¹.

The Censor, we are informed, enjoyed dinner parties at which the topic of virtuous conduct was aired. Plutarch comments on this (*Cat. Ma.* 25.3-4):

He tried to outdo himself also with the feasts that he provided on his farm. He would always invite his friends from the neighboring farms and the surrounding areas and would have a delightful time with them. Nor was it only his contemporaries who found his company pleasant and who sought him out. He appealed also to the young, since he had, after all, undergone so many valuable experiences and since he was familiar with so many writings and important speeches. He regarded the table as the very best creator of friendships and, while considerable praise of fine and upstanding citizens was allowed, considerable neglect of those who were worthless and wicked was the order of the day, since Cato would permit neither censure nor commendation of such men to gain admittance to the party.

His role as exemplar for the youth, it will be noted, is brought out by Plutarch in this passage. This is an important theme throughout the *Life*¹². Apparently he had some less successful imitators like Socrates (Pl., *Apol.* 23c-d) who were known as "left-handed Catos" (*Cat. Ma.* 19.7). Early in the *Life* the frugality of Manius Curius, who is visited by an embassy from the Samnites while he is boiling turnips for dinner, inspires the Censor's own brand of frugality, according to Plutarch (*Cat. Ma.* 2.1-3). Manius Curius' example has a profound impact on the young man:

With his head full of these things Cato would return home and, when he contemplated instead his own house, his estate, his slaves, his way of life, he would exert himself all the more and would cut back inessential expenses (*Cat. Ma.* 2.3)¹³.

This is the first mention of slaves (θεράποντας) in the *Life*, another very significant theme, as we shall see, and one that is interlocked with the frugality

¹¹ Translation by D. SANSONE.

¹² On the Elder Cato as a moral example in Plutarch see A. PÉREZ JIMÉNEZ, 2002, pp. 109-11.

¹³ Translation by Sansone with a slight modification. On Plutarch's source for this anecdote see D. SANSONE, 1989, p. 205 ad loc who thinks, with F. PADBERG, 1933, p. 57, that Plutarch found it in Cato's *Origines*.

theme. Use of Cicero's *De senectute* has been detected in this anecdote¹⁴. While Manius Curius's meeting with the Samnite embassy is referred to in other ancient sources¹⁵, only Cicero in *De senectute*¹⁶ connects it explicitly with the Censor's visit to the great Roman statesman's farm.

Immediately after this passage we encounter the introduction of another major theme, the Censor's first encounter with Greek philosophy, his training in Pythagorean doctrine by Nearchus:

In the course of conversation he heard from him those doctrines which Plato too had formulated, namely that the greatest enticement to wrongdoing is pleasure, that the soul's chief encumbrance is the body, that those exercises of reason that most successfully sunder and divorce the soul from corporeal sensation are the true liberators and purifiers of the soul. This caused him to espouse still more fondly the life of simplicity and self-discipline (*Cat. Ma.* 2.3-4)¹⁷.

The references to the *Phaedo* (64e-65d) and the *Timaeus* (69d) are unmistakable¹⁸. As David Sansone in his commentary notes, the only other source that mentions this most likely fictitious encounter is Cicero in his *De senectute* 12.41 and it is most likely of Cicero's own invention. In his commentary on *De senectute*, Powell also thinks that Plutarch draws on Cicero here, but is less inclined to think that Cicero is "indulging in completely unfounded invention at this point"¹⁹. We know that Plutarch was familiar with this work of Cicero's because he explicitly cites it (*De senectute* 12.42) in his *Life of Titus Flamininus* (18.10) and in his *Life of Cato the Elder* (17.5)²⁰. The scene in the *Life of Titus Flamininus* (18.3-19.6) dramatizes the cruel execution of a prisoner at a symposium by Titus' brother Lucius to gratify a young male lover. The scene, which is also depicted even more lavishly in the *Life of Cato the Elder* (17.1-6) also serves to introduce the Censor's successful expulsion of Lucius from the Senate for this horrific spectacle committed at

¹⁴ On Plutarch's use of *De senectute* in general, see J. G. F. POWELL, 1988, p. 19, n. 50 and on this passage in particular 218-219, ad loc.

¹⁵ Plu., *Mor.* 194f, *Apophth. Rom.* Curius 2, Ath. 10.419a (=Megacles, FGH 4,443), Plin., *Nat.* 19.26 (87), Flor. 1.13.22, V. Max. 4.3.5a.

¹⁶ He also makes very brief reference to the Censor's connection with Manius Curius in *De rep.* 3.40.

¹⁷ Translation by D. SANSONE.

¹⁸ Cf. D. SANSONE, 1989, p. 206 ad loc., who only notes here the reference to Plato's *Timaeus* 69d.

¹⁹ J. G. F. POWELL (ed.), 1988, p. 182 ad loc. notes: "...it seems highly likely that this passage of Plutarch derives from Cicero, and so cannot be used as independent corroboration."

²⁰ See E. VALGIGLIO, 1982, p. 291, in reference to the close correspondence of Plu., *Cat. Ma.* 2.5 and Cic., *Sen.* 1.3, who acknowledges the possibility that Plutarch used *De senectute*, but thinks it probable that Plutarch used another (unnamed) source, yet nevertheless concedes (p. 299) the significance of Cicero as an important source for Plutarch in general: "Cicerone è fonte autorevole per Plutarco". Valgiglio appears to be unaware of the direct citation of *De senectute* in the *Life of Titus Flamininus*. See also the suggestive remarks of A. E. ASTIN, 1978, p. 300.

the banquet. There can be little doubt that Plutarch has his eye on Cicero's representation of the Censor as he composes his *Life*.

Cicero's idealized portrait of the Censor not only makes him out to be a *sapiens*, a proto-philosopher in a pre-philosophic era in Rome, it also explicitly contrasts him positively with Socrates²¹. For Cicero at any rate Cato's superiority as a paradigm derives not just from his words, as in the case of Socrates, but from his deeds as well²². Especially in *De senectute*, Cicero holds up the Censor's behavior in old age as exemplary and praiseworthy. The vigor in old age that Cicero praises is an ambiguous trait for Plutarch because it leads to immoderate behavior, actions never mentioned or even misrepresented by Cicero. For example, one immediate consequence of his wife's death is that the Censor takes a young slave girl as his concubine (*Cat. Ma.* 24.1-10). This act is the²³ source of estrangement between father and son. Cato attempts to eradicate the problem by contracting a marriage with a young woman of lower status who is a fraction of his age. His explanation to his son that he wishes to sire more sons is branded a boldfaced lie by Plutarch, who evidently regards the old man's inability to master his passion in old age as reprehensible (*Cat. Ma.* comp. 33/6.1-2). This entire chain of events is related in great detail by Plutarch who does not always delve into his subject's private lives with the enthusiasm and graphic detail of a Suetonius²⁴. Both the Censor and Cato the Younger lie to their sons, according to Plutarch!

Clearly however Plutarch adopts his most critical stance with respect to the Censor's treatment of slaves. We are informed initially that he works alongside them in summer and in winter, eating the same bread and drinking the same wine as they do (*Cat. Ma.* 3.2)²⁵. We are also told that he never paid more than 1,500 drachma for a slave as a general rule and was accustomed to sell off the aged and infirm ones (4.5-6). This latter habit elicits one of the most decidedly critical discussions in the entire *Life*, in which Plutarch maligns the unfeeling attitude (ἀτενοῦς ἄγαν ἥθους) that he thinks must be responsible for this practice (*Cat. Ma.* 5.1-7)²⁶.

²¹ See in particular F. PADBERG, 1933; R. GNAUK, 1936; U. KAMMER, 1964.

²² *Amic.* 2.6-10.

²³ Cf. Cicero's Censor (*Sen.* 14.47).

²⁴ See, e.g. Plutarch's *Life of Julius Caesar* in comparison with Suetonius's *Divus Julius*. On male sexual behavior in Plutarch in general see P. A. STADTER, 1995, P. WALCOT, 1998, T. DUFF, 1999, pp. 94-7, J. BENEKER, 2003 and M. BECK, 2007a, pp. 53-66. See also H. GUGEL, 1977, pp. 73-95, for a detailed analysis of the category *Erotika* in Suetonius' biographies.

²⁵ This was not a typical Greek *desiderium*. Cf. P. CARTLEDGE, 1998, p. 12: "...the Pagan Greeks were mostly agreed that working for one's living was not an intrinsic good, and their term for hard physical toil, *ponos*, is generally pejorative; to be without *ponos* was, according to Hesiod, to live like the blessed immortal gods." See also *Cat. Ma.* 1.9.

²⁶ See P. A. STADTER, 1997, pp. 77-8, M. BECK, 2000, pp. 15-32 and B. AHLRICHS 2005, pp. 220-2. This same adjective *atenes* (indicating in Plutarch rigid, inexorable, and inflexible behavior) recurs in the *Life of the Younger Cato* several times (2.3; 4.1-2), where it appears to characterize Cato's unbending pursuit of justice (*dikaiosune*) in association with the Stoic

Later in the *Life* the Censor's commitment to frugality is called into question. We are told he possessed many slaves (*Cat. Ma.* 21.1). Cato, we are told, regularly subjected those slaves who delivered less than attentive service at the dinner table to a postprandial lashing (*Cat. Ma.* 21.4). The fear of severe punishment was the determinant of his slave Paccius' suicide (*Cat. Ma.* 10.6)²⁷. We can infer this from Plutarch's later description of the harsh discipline and complete control the Censor appears to maintain over his slaves, even restricting even their sexual behavior in a way that generates increased revenue for himself (*Cat. Ma.* 21.1-3). He contrived to foment divisiveness among them as a prophylactic measure against any suspected concord which he feared (*Cat. Ma.* 21.4). Those slaves whom he found guilty of some serious offence he executed in front of the other slaves, presumably as a warning (*Cat. Ma.* 21.4). The repeated evocation of this theme in the *Life of the Elder Cato* finds no corresponding parallel in any of the other *Lives* with perhaps one exception. Generally slaves are mentioned in their expected roles, as incidental participants in various events²⁸. Only in the *Life of Antony* do we find frequent reference to slaves and slave-like behavior that appears to be thematic, though in a very different way²⁹.

In the context of our discussion, his punishment of slaves at *symposia* requires further scrutiny because Plutarch describes a transformation in the Censor's behavior over time:

Now, at first, when Cato was still poor and serving in the army he was not at all fastidious about his meals. Instead, he made it clear that it was singularly reprehensible to bicker with a slave for the sake of one's belly. Later however,

philosopher Antipater of Tyre. It is no accident that this same adjective is applied to Aristides (*Arist.* 2.2), in contrast to Themistocles, to describe his characteristic unwavering pursuit of justice.

²⁷ "...when Cato found out about it he hanged himself rather than face him." (trans. D. SANSONE) Cf. K. R. BRADLEY, 1994, p.111: "It seems that Paccius was so afraid of Cato and his powers of correction that forestalling certain punishment by the act of suicide was all that he could do."

²⁸ See, e.g. *Lyc.* 2 (enslavement of helots), 11, 16, 24 (helots), 28 (the killing of helots during the *krupteia*, etc.), *Sol.* 7, *Arist.* 10 (Spartans accompanied by 7 helots each), *Them.* 30, *Aem.* 22, *TG.* 2, 8, *CG.* 37(16), *Mar.* 2, 5, 37, 43-44, *Sull.* 9, 28, 37, *Pomp.* 49, 75, *Caes.* 46.

²⁹ Antony is depicted as dressing like a slave (*Ant.* 10). He changes into a slave's clothes to avoid detection (*Ant.* 14). Slave boys resembling Eros accompany Cleopatra, as Aphrodite, on her yacht as she sails to Antony, as Dionysus (*Ant.* 26). Both Antony and Cleopatra dress like slaves to walk the streets of Alexandria (*Ant.* 29). The role of various slaves is foregrounded in the final phase of the *Life*, as their master and mistress become increasingly passive and helpless (*Ant.* 63, 67, 75, 76). Antony and Cleopatra die as slaves among their slaves (*Ant.* 75-87). Perhaps telling in this context of Plutarch's underlying motives is the depiction of Antony's virtual enslavement of freeborn Greeks, including Plutarch's great-grandfather Nicarchus, by forcing them with whips to carry grain to the harbor, after having taken their money, slaves, and yoke-animals (*Ant.* 68). The negative paradigmatic value of the *Lives of Demetrius and Antony* is of course explicit (*Dem.* 1). Here the criticism is directed at those who behave in slavish ways, hinting at a lack of self-mastery.

as his circumstances improved, when he entertained friends and colleagues, no sooner was dinner over than he would punish those who had been the slightest bit negligent in any aspect of the service or preparation of the feast by beating them with a leather strap (*Cat. Ma.* 21.4).

It is unclear whether the Censor's guests were still present to witness this unsightly spectacle. The important point is that it is not the mark of a *sapiens* to behave in this manner. This passage needs to be read with the one cited above that follows about the discussions permitted at the Censor's dinner parties (*Cat. Ma.* 25.3-4)³⁰. This type of behavior would be unthinkable for Socrates who also preferred edifying topics of conversation at the dinner table. As we can well imagine, Cicero does not refer to the Censor's punitive treatment of slaves in *De senectute* (14.46). Nevertheless *De senectute* may be Plutarch's source for the Censor's custom of hosting edifying dinner parties³¹. Notably Cicero has the Censor quote a remark of Socrates related in Xenophon's *Symposium* (2.26). Plutarch's insertion violently disrupts the Socratic illusion. In Plutarch's *Life of Cato the Elder*, self-mastery vis-à-vis his own slaves seems to be a central issue³².

This same question is raised in the *Life of the Younger Cato*. If we turn to that *Life* we encounter a dramatic scene that abruptly calls into question the Younger Cato's self-mastery and treatment of his slaves³³. I am referring to the prelude to his suicide and the depiction of his death. This scene has recently been closely analyzed by several scholars so I will be brief³⁴. We are first made aware of Cato's state of mind at a symposium the night prior to his death. Cato rises to the defense of one of the paradoxes of the Stoic position that "the good man alone is free, and that all the bad are slaves" which has been opposed by an unnamed Peripatetic³⁵ who is present (*Cat. Mi.* 67)³⁶. Cato's long reply is delivered in a tone that is loud, harsh, and astonishingly contentious (σφοδρὸς ἐμπεισῶν ὁ Κάτων, καὶ τόνον προσθεὶς καὶ τραχύτητα φωνῆς, ἀπέτεινε πορρωτάτω τὸν λόγον, ἀγῶνι θαυμαστῶ χρησάμενος). The vehemence of this verbal onslaught, we are informed, signals to the onlookers that Cato has decided to take his own life. This type of behavior at a symposium is obviously unacceptable and unphilosophic in the extreme. His emotional

³⁰ Read this also with his prosecution of Lucius for disrupting a symposium with violence (*Cat. Ma.* 17.1-6).

³¹ See J. G. F. POWELL, 1988, p. 19, n. 50.

³² T. WIEDEMANN, 1988, p.182, in citing this passage, notes: "Even in antiquity, Cato was seen as an example of a cruel master, and his attitude towards his slaves was considered inhumane."

³³ Cf. also Cato's reluctance to free the slaves in an emergency situation (*Cat. Mi.* 60. 3-4).

³⁴ See J. GEIGER, 1999, M. B. TRAPP, 1999; A. V. ŽADOROJNYI, 2007 and M. BECK (forthcoming, see n. 4).

³⁵ Presumably Demetrius. Cf. *Cat. Mi.* 65.11 and GHILLI's note, 1993, p. 514 n. 458, in her edition.

³⁶ Perrin's translation. The intensity of Cato's reaction would appear to contradict Plutarch's earlier (*Cat. Mi.* 1.5-6) assessment of Cato's slowness to anger.

volatility is again underscored when, later that night, he begins to raise his voice (μᾶλλον ἐνέτεινε τὴν φωνήν) at his slaves who do not bring him his sword and ends by striking one of them on the mouth with his fist so hard that he injures his hand, now in a state of anger and shouting loudly (χαλεπαίνων καὶ βοῶν ἤδη μέγα) (*Cat. Mi.* 68.4-5). This type of behavior towards slaves is explicitly rejected by Plutarch (*De coh. ira* 459B-460C; 461A-462A; 463B) and Seneca (*De ira* 2.25.4; 3.1.4; 3.24.2; 3.35.1-3; 3.39.2-4) in their treatises on restraining rage³⁷.

Here in the final moments of his life Cato clearly does not embody the calm and serene Stoic sage³⁸. In the world of Socrates, as portrayed to us by Plato, Cato's behavior is more like that of a Thrasymachus or Calicles. This comportment unbecoming of a philosopher is juxtaposed with the eminently philosophic pastime of reading Plato's *Phaedo*, bearing here its ancient title of *On the Soul*³⁹. We are informed no less than four times that Cato is reading or returning to his reading of this dialogue, the classic portrait of philosophic death (*Cat. Mi.* 68.2; 68.3; 68.4; 70.2)⁴⁰. This striking contrast reflects the culmination of the Socrates-motif, a motif alluded to in the *Life* (cf. *Cat. Mi.* 46.1, where Cato is implicitly compared to Socrates). Through mention of this dialogue an educated audience is prompted to recollect and contrast Cato's agitated final moments with Socrates' calm bearing to the detriment of our image of the former⁴¹. Cato's bloody mode of death is equally divergent (*Cat. Mi.* 70). Returning to his reading of the *Phaedo*, we are informed that he has managed to read it through twice completely. After sleeping for a while he summons his freedmen Butas and doctor Cleanthes. Cleanthes bandages his hand. Left alone he then attempts to kill himself with his sword, but because of his injured hand the thrust is not lethal and his bowels sag out of the wound. In his death throes (δυσθανατῶν) he falls to the floor overturning a geometric

³⁷ W. V. HARRIS, 2001, pp. 317-36 provides an excellent survey.

³⁸ Plutarch also related that Cato shifts the focus of the conversation (which has now stalled thanks to his outburst) to those who are attempting to escape by sea, etc. At this juncture Cato expresses his fear (δεδιώς repeated twice) for their safety, another inappropriate emotion for a Stoic sage to confess (*Cat. Mi.* 67.4). Cf. also *Phaedo*'s assessment of Socrates's fearlessness (ἄδεώς) and nobility (γενναίως) in confronting death that finds confirmation in the subsequent dramatization of the condemned philosopher's death (Pl., *Phaed.* 58e). I find it impossible to follow T. DUFF, 1999, pp. 143-4) here who writes: "The calm of both men [sc. Phocion and Cato] at crises, and particularly at their deaths, is another Sokratic feature... Like Sokrates, both men remain calm despite the emotions of others." T. DUFF, 1999, p.151) later seems to notice the incongruity of Cato's behavior.

³⁹ Plato (*R.*, 8. 548e-549a) associates the harsh treatment of slaves with the uneducated man.

⁴⁰ Cf. TH. EBERT, 2004, p. 7: "Das Bild des philosophischen Todes, das Platon seinen Lesern im *Phaidon* vorstellt, hat diesen Dialog über die Jahrhunderte zu dem klassischen Beispiel einer *consolatio philosophiae* werden lassen."

⁴¹ The *exemplum Socratis* includes inter alia the restraint of anger. Cf. e.g., Sen., *De ira* 3.13.3 and Plu., *De coh. ira* 455B. Socrates' calm and jovial bearing is frequently alluded to in the *Phaedo*.

abacus that stood near him⁴². His servants, summoned by the noise, discover him still alive. His doctor tries to replace his bowels and sew up the wound but Cato thrusts him away, rips open the wound and claws at his bowels with his hands and so dies. Only Plutarch's account provides us with details such as the striking of the slave and the repeated references to Cato's resumption of reading the dialogue until he has read it through twice. The other major accounts of this event that we possess lack these details⁴³.

This Socrates-motif⁴⁴, as I said, is found in the *Life of Phocion* too⁴⁵. The difference is that Phocion's death reminded the Athenians of Socrates' end and was not antithetical to it (*Phoc.* 38.5). Cato and Phocion may both go around barefoot in public as Socrates⁴⁶ customarily did (*Phoc.* 4.4; *Cat. Mi.* 6.6; 44.1; 50.1), both underwent philosophic training which informed in some way their political activities (*Phoc.* 3.1 (referring to Cicero's critique of Cato acting as though he lived in Plato's commonwealth⁴⁷); 4.1-2; 5.4-5⁴⁸; 32.6-7⁴⁹, *Cat. Mi.* 4.2; 10.1-3; 46.1), but, in a crisis situation, only Phocion maintains fidelity to the behavioral guidelines his training in philosophy advocates and thus faces death with admirable calmness and élan (ἐθαύμαζον τὴν ἀπάθειαν καὶ μεγαλοψυχίαν τοῦ ἀνδρός) (*Phoc.* 36.1)⁵⁰. Cato's behavior in contrast appears to cast doubt on the depth of his commitment to philosophy and successful internalization of its precepts⁵¹. The contrast in the *Life of Phocion*, as we have indicated, focuses on the retention of emotional control under trying circumstances. The possession of inner calm founded on conviction so vividly depicted in the *Phaedo* is reduplicated in Phocion's death scene. The Younger Cato lacks this inner calm born of conviction. His frenetic reading and rereading of the *Phaedo* in the final moments of his life may serve to underscore this. His overt display of immoderate grief at the death of his half-brother Caepio

⁴² On the symbolic nature of this see A. V. ZADOROJNYI, 2007, p. 219, and Plato, *Phaedo* 108d with BURNET's, 1911, p. 128 and 150) note and Appendix II.

⁴³ Appian, *b. c.* 2.99; Cassius Dio, 43.11.4-5; Florus, 2.13.71-2; Livy, *Per.* 114; [Caes.], *b. Afr.* 88.3-4. On the provenance of this account see J. GEIGER, 1979 and below.

⁴⁴ The parallels and differences between Cato's suicide and Socrates's execution are recounted in detail by M. B. TRAPP, 1999.

⁴⁵ See H.-J. GEHRKE, 1976, pp. 139-41; L. TRITLE, 1988, pp. 30-3; C. ALCALDE MARTÍN, 1999, pp. 159-71, and T. DUFF, 1999, pp. 131-58.

⁴⁶ Cf. Pl., *Phdr.* 229a and *Smp.* 220b supported by Aristophanes, *Clouds* 103 and 363.

⁴⁷ Cicero, *Att.* 2.1.8.

⁴⁸ Cf. Pl., *Protagoras* 342a-343d.

⁴⁹ Cf. Pl., *Grg.* 469c; 474b ff.; *Crit.* 49b; *R.* 335d; *Ap.*, 30c-d; 41d.

⁵⁰ Cato appears to possess this quality too in better times (*Cat. Mi.* 65. 10).

⁵¹ We remember Plutarch's early judgment that Cato's apparent "reluctance to be persuaded made his learning more laborious" (*Cat. Mi.* 1.8). His rereading of the *Phaedo* in such a short time span might seem to allude to this defect. Another problem that may have troubled Cato (at least in Plutarch's conceptual world) is that Socrates in the *Phaedo* (61c-62c) appears to forbid suicide explicitly. On suicide in the *Phaedo* see J. WARREN, 2001, pp. 91-106. On the Stoic conception of suicide as permissible for rational reasons in certain exigencies (εὐλογος ἐξαιγωγή) see *SVF* 3.757-768 with GIGON's, 1951, p. 476) note in his edition of the *Tusculan Disputations*, M. GRIFFIN, 1986, pp. 72-5, and J. WARREN, 2001, pp. 100-1.

is interpreted by Plutarch as signaling a failure in his philosophic training (*Cat. Mi.* 11. 3-8)⁵², a failing shared by another contemporary Roman devotee of Greek philosophy, Cicero, whose overwhelming grief at the death of his daughter Tullia is regarded by Plutarch as a sign of the statesman's philosophic insufficiency (*Cic.* 41.8)⁵³.

Michael Trapp has rightly pointed out that Socrates is an intermediary foil sharing resemblances that allow comparison of Cato and Phocion in a way that obviates the need for a formal *synkrisis* at the end, which this pair lacks⁵⁴. He also notes (correctly in my opinion) that the message – whatever it may be – that Plutarch is seeking to communicate “bears more closely on Cato than on Phocion”⁵⁵. Trapp then suggests that Plutarch's intent was to critique subtly earlier Roman writing on Cato known (?) from Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* (1.71ff.); Cicero had employed the Cato-Socrates comparison to embellish the man's legend⁵⁶. For Cicero, Cato in particular exemplified the principle that the philosopher's way of life is really a preparation for death. In a particularly telling passage a comparison of Cato's with Socrates's mode of death serves to introduce a paraphrase of Plato's *Phaedo*⁵⁷ (*Tusc.* 1.71-75). Undoubtedly there was more of this in Cicero's lost work *Cato*, in response to which Caesar penned his scathing *Anti-Cato*, also lost to us⁵⁸. This book, as Goar notes, “established Cato as

⁵² [sc. Κάτων] ἐμπαθέστερον ἔδοξεν ἢ φιλοσοφώτερον ἐνεγκεῖν τὴν συμφορὰν. Cf. *Consol. ad uxor.* 608c, 609b, 611a. See also T. DUFF, 1999, p. 151. We are informed in the *Life* (*Cat. Mi.* 6.2-4) that Cato's civic duties kept him from literary pursuits (*philologeîn*) and that he spent his nights drinking and conversing with philosophers (νύκτωρ καὶ παρὰ πότον συγγίνεσθαι τοῖς φιλοσόφοις). Early in the *Life* we are led to question Cato's pursuit of literature in a passage that stresses his excessive love of dice-throwing and overindulgence in drinking: “At suppers he would throw dice for the choice of portions [...] At first, also, he would drink once after supper and then leave the table; but as time went on he would allow himself to drink very generously, so that he often tarried at his wine till early morning. His friends used to say that the cause of this was his civic and public activities; he was occupied with these all day, and so prevented from literary pursuits, wherefore he would hold intercourse with the philosophers at night and over the cups. For this reason, too, when a certain Memmius remarked in company that Cato spent his entire nights in drinking, Cicero answered him by saying: ‘Shouldn't you add that he also spends his entire days throwing dice?’” (*Cat. Mi.* 6.2-5)

⁵³ Cf. also Cicero's reaction to his exile (32.5-7). S. SWAIN, 1990b/1995, p. 242f. sees excessive grief in Plutarch as symptomatic of “ineffective education”. For Plutarch's attitude towards how one ought to mourn the death of a loved one see the *Life of Fabius Maximus* 24.6.

⁵⁴ M. TRAPP, 1999, p. 495: “And Socrates, ultimately the Socrates of the *Phaedo*, is the principle medium through which the comparison is developed. Plutarch uses him as a ‘third man’, a *tertium comparationis* whose resemblances to both of the other two individually allow them to be compared not only with him but with each other.” The only other pairs lacking a formal *synkrisis* are the *Lives of Themistocles and Camillus, Pyrrhus and Marius*, and *Alexander the Great and Caesar*.

⁵⁵ M. TRAPP, 1999, p. 496.

⁵⁶ M. TRAPP, 1999, p. 496 (Trapp himself does not in the end subscribe to this view). See also J. GEIGER, 1999, pp. 357-64 on the subsequent tradition of the Cato/Socrates coupling.

⁵⁷ Cf. Pl., *Phaedo* 67d and 80e

⁵⁸ On Cicero's role in establishing the Cato legend and Caesar's response see R. GOAR, 1987,

the Roman model of the Stoic sage — a fact of great importance for later adherents of Stoicism”⁵⁹. Seneca’s frequent juxtaposing of the deaths of Cato with Socrates attests to this⁶⁰. Much of the material critical of Cato that Plutarch presents in the *Life* appears to be drawn from the *Anti-Cato*⁶¹. It is notable that Plutarch, in his *Life of Julius Caesar* (54.6), mentions that both of these works continued to have many eager readers in his own day because of Caesar and Cato. The presentation of this material in the *Life* and the nature of the juxtaposed portrait of Phocion, in my opinion, are expressive of Plutarch’s opposition to Cicero’s idealized image of the man qua Stoic sage and its survival into the imperial period, especially in the writings of Seneca⁶². Plutarch’s portraits go a long way towards undermining this image of the proto-Stoic Censor and his grandson Cato, the paradigmatic Stoic sage.

In conclusion it appears that Plutarch inserted the figure of Socrates into the *Lives of Aristides, Cato the Elder, Phocion, and Cato the Younger* to discredit the ideologically motivated comparison of the Censor and Cato the Younger with Socrates that Cicero presented to posterity. Both men are portrayed as disrupting the civilized and civilizing atmosphere of the symposium with reproachable behavior. While Aristides and Phocion are positively compared to Socrates who clearly functions as a positive canon, the Censor and Cato the Younger fall short. Superficially they resemble Socrates. Their virtue is admired in certain circles. They function as role models for the youth. They dress modestly. The younger Cato even goes barefoot in public. Both however deviate most strongly from the Socratic paradigm in their violent treatment of slaves. Not surprisingly the treatment of women, children, slaves, and animals is constantly mentioned by Plutarch in *De cobibenda ira* as indicative of a man’s self-control. Ability in this area is for Plutarch directly related to education (*paideia*), specifically philosophical training. Plutarch, in adopting this rhetorical strategy, invites us to contrast the Censor with the Younger Cato and both with Socrates. He wants us to realize that Late Republican Rome had made some progress that could be directly attributed to their increasing assimilation of Greek culture but that even their best representatives still were not fully trained in the philosophic arts as the comparison with the Socratic paradigm fully reveals. The Ciceronian idealization of the two men is thus repudiated.

pp. 13-8.

⁵⁹ R. GOAR, 1987, p.15.

⁶⁰ See Sen., *Ep.* 67.7; 71.17; 98.12; 104. 28f.; *Prov.* 3.4; 3.12ff.; *Tranq.* 16.1; *Marc.* 22.3 (collected by J. GEIGER, 1979, p. 64-5, n. 61).

⁶¹ See, e.g., J. GEIGER, 1979, pp. 54-6. I disagree with Geiger’s skeptical conclusion (p. 56) that questions Plutarch’s direct acquaintance with both the *Anticato* and Cicero’s *Cato*. Just the opposite would likely be true, i.e., that the availability and continued popularity of both works in Plutarch’s own time (cf. *Caes.* 54.6) would virtually ensure that he read them.

⁶² See especially J. GEIGER, 1999 on this.

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BANQUET AND PHILHELLENISM IN THE *LIVES OF FLAMININUS* AND *AEMILIUS PAULLUS*

MANUEL TRÖSTER
University of Coimbra

Abstract

The *Lives of Flamininus* and *Aemilius Paullus* are good examples of Plutarch's tendency to judge his Roman heroes according to their Hellenic qualities and benefactions to Greeks. While modern scholars rightly stress that both politicians were mainly driven by Roman interests and personal ambition, the biographer chooses primarily to highlight their philanthropic nature as well as their favourable attitude to Greek liberty and culture. Conspicuously, his praise is particularly generous in two episodes related to feasts and spectacles. Following the proclamation of liberty at the Isthmian Games, Flamininus' policies are celebrated in the course of a banquet, with his achievements being judged equal or superior to those of the most eminent Greek statesmen of the past (*Flam.* 11). In the *Aemilius*, it is the protagonist himself who organises splendid feasts in a way that inspires profound admiration on the part of the Greeks (*Aem.* 28). While Livy's account suggests that the victory celebrations at Amphipolis should primarily be seen as a show of Roman power, Plutarch essentially describes the event as a pleasant entertainment with a view to revealing Aemilius' personal qualities. Greek-style festivals and banquets thus provide a most suitable background for presenting the 'liberators' of Greece as exemplars of philhellenism and *philanthrōpia*.

While much attention continues to be devoted to the significance of the *Parallel Lives* as an expression of a shared Graeco-Roman identity among the imperial élite, recent scholarship has tended to stress the essential Greekness of Plutarch's outlook and criteria of judgement¹. Evidently, this does not imply that the Greek heroes are systematically presented as superior to their Roman pairs², yet it is important to acknowledge that the great men of the *res publica* are often accorded praise and blame on the basis of their attitude to Hellenic culture and their benefactions to Greeks³. Thus, the representatives of Rome are expected to prove their worth on a playing field defined by the norms and values of Greek civilisation, and it is by displaying *πράτης, φιλανθρωπία*, and other qualities cherished by Second Sophistic authors that they earn recognition and acclaim⁴.

¹ Cf. T. E. DUFF, 1999, pp. 287-309; R. PRESTON, 2001, pp. 97-109; S. GOLDHILL, 2002, pp. 254-71; G. ROSKAM, 2004, pp. 255-64; also G. D'IPPOLITO, 2005, pp. 182-6; M. A. O. SILVA, 2007.

² Rather the protagonists are treated as equals, as can be seen most clearly in the *synkriseis*. Cf. T. E. DUFF, 1999, pp. 257-62, who argues that this is meant to focus the reader's attention on the moral issues involved. Also note J. BOULOGNE, 1994, pp. 62-9; idem, 2000, who thinks of a cultural programme.

³ In particular, this applies to their Hellenic education. Cf. C. B. R. PELLING, 1989; S. SWAIN, 1990; also idem, 1996, pp. 139-144; further L. A. GARCÍA MORENO, 1995, pp. 136-47; idem, 2002.

⁴ On Plutarch's use of these concepts cf. H. M. MARTIN JR., 1960; idem, 1961; C. PANAGOPOULOS, 1977, pp. 216-22; J. DE ROMILLY, 1979, pp. 275-307; F. FRAZIER, 1996, pp. 231-9.

The *Lives of Flamininus* and *Aemilius Paullus* may be particularly relevant in this respect since the two protagonists were not only benefactors but also conquerors of Greece⁵. Both of them are commonly viewed as exponents of philhellenism, yet it is perfectly clear that this concept cannot be separated from the parameters of Roman power, public relations, and political manoeuvring⁶. In the case of Aemilius Paullus, it is surely significant that the sources place at least as much emphasis on his devotion to *mos maiorum* as on his admiration for Greece, but the actions of Flamininus, too, must be understood primarily with reference to the pursuit of glory, honour, and dignity in the competitive culture of Republican Rome⁷.

This less romantic perspective is by no means absent from Plutarch's biographical portraits. However, the two statesmen's commitment to Roman values and the affirmation of Roman power is not viewed as a serious limitation on their philhellenic inclinations and policies. In the *Flamininus*, the two spheres are to a large extent structurally separated: while political machinations do play a certain rôle in the account of the general's command in Greece (*Flam.* 7.1-3; 13.1-4), they are clearly secondary to the focus on Flamininus' 'Hellenic' qualities and his φιλοτιμία to confer benefactions (12 and *passim*). Later on, his return to Rome marks the beginning of excessive, unreasonable, and untimely ambition both in destructive conflicts with his peers and in the relentless hunt for Hannibal (18.3-21.14)⁸. Consequently, Plutarch's overall judgement of the 'liberator' of Greece is by no means wholly flattering or uncritical⁹, but this does not diminish his generous praise for the protagonist's philhellenism.

Contrary to the biographer's usual practice of ascribing both positive and negative qualities to his heroes, the *Life of Aemilius* provides an exceptionally favourable portrait of the victor of Pydna, which Alberto Barzanò has even called a piece of "pagan hagiography"¹⁰. Above all, the protagonist is depicted as a wise educator of those around him in matters

⁵ On Plutarch's attitude to the 'liberators' of Greece cf. J. M. BREMER, 2005.

⁶ On the political dimension of Roman philhellenism cf. esp. J.-L. FERRARY, 1988, pp. 96-117 and *passim*. Consequently, the impact of 'sentimental' considerations and deference to Greek culture should not be overestimated. Cf. E. BADIEN, 1970, pp. 53-7; E. S. GRUEN, 1984, pp. 267-72; R. M. ERRINGTON, 1999; also N. PETROCHILOS, 1974, pp. 105-11.

⁷ Cf., e.g., H. BECK, 2005, pp. 368-93; R. PFEILSCHIFTER, 2005, pp. 325-42 and *passim*.

⁸ On the dual structure of the *Life* cf. C. B. R. PELLING, 1997, pp. 309-18; also *idem*, 1989, pp. 208-14; J. J. WALSH, 1992, pp. 219-21.

⁹ Cf., e.g., R. FLACELIÈRE & E. CHAMBRY, 1969, pp. 163 sq.; C. P. JONES, 1971, p. 99; pace J. M. BREMER, 2005, p. 257 (see following note). Nor is the biographer's assessment consistently more favourable than that advanced by Polybius. Cf. C. B. R. PELLING, 1997, pp. 299-309. Also note H. TRÄNKLE, 1977, pp. 162-4.

¹⁰ Cf. A. BARZANÒ, 1994: "agiografia pagana" (p. 406); also *idem*, 1996, pp. 97-9. However, this view is partly based on a misreading of *Aem.* 1, which Barzanò takes to indicate a deliberate choice on the part of Plutarch to "eliminare dal suo racconto tutti gli aspetti negativi" (A. BARZANÒ, 1994, p. 404). For a similar appraisal, cf. W. REITER, 1988, pp. 97-106. Further note J. M. BREMER, 2005, p. 257, who suggests that both the *Flamininus* and the *Aemilius* "come close to hagiography".

of ancestral customs (*Aem.* 3.2-7), in political and military affairs (11; 17.4)¹¹, and as regards the vicissitudes of fortune (26.8-27.6; 36)¹². At Rome, he admirably succeeds in overcoming the common divide between Senate and people, acting as a champion of the aristocracy while at the same time winning the affection of the multitude (38.1sq.; 38.6)¹³. Beyond the capital, too, Aemilius is represented as being held in high esteem even among his enemies (39.7-9), whereas his order to pillage the cities of Epirus is excused as being “contrary to his good and kind nature (παρὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν, ἐπιεικῆ καὶ χρηστήν οὖσαν)” (30.1)¹⁴. In contrast to the vile and cowardly figure of Perseus¹⁵, the Roman general thus emerges as a paradigm of wisdom and excellence.

This paper takes a closer look at two spectacular events that epitomise the relationship between Flamininus and Aemilius Paullus on the one hand and the Greek public on the other: the proclamation of liberty at the Isthmian Games in 196 and the victory celebrations at Amphipolis in 167. In both cases, Plutarch not only takes the opportunity to stress the Roman statesmen’s ‘Hellenic’ qualities but also chooses to highlight the concomitant admiration and amazement on the part of the Greeks. Conspicuously, this is expressed in the context of banquets: while Flamininus’ policy of liberation is praised by dining Greeks, Aemilius excels as the courteous and attentive host of a Greek-style feast.

In the *Life of Flamininus*, the account of the celebrated proclamation of liberty is focused not so much on the protagonist himself as on the historical significance of the declaration and the consequent gratitude of the Greeks. This does not mean that the impact of Flamininus’ personality and philhellenic disposition is lost on the reader. For one thing, the episode is preceded by a clear statement to the effect that it was the proconsul himself who insisted on withdrawing the Roman garrisons from the whole of Greece (*Flam.* 10.1-

¹¹ Also note 31.4-10 on the education of the people by the consular M. Servilius.

¹² Cf. S. SWAIN, 1989, pp. 323-7; also M. PAVAN, 1961, esp. pp. 602-4 and 609 sq. on Plutarch’s elaboration of Aemilius’ speeches on τύχη. In addition, note P. DESIDERI, 1989, pp. 204-9. More generally, cf. L. L. HOLLAND, 2005 for Plutarch’s Aemilius as a philosopher statesman. However, also note V. PFEIFER, 1997, pp. 56-8 on the rejection of passionate impulses as an element of Aemilius’ family tradition.

¹³ For the antithesis between βουλή and δῆμος in the Roman *Lives* cf. esp. C. B. R. PELLING, 1986, pp. 165-87/ 2002, pp. 211-25; also L. DE BLOIS, 1992 passim; M. MAZZA, 1995, esp. pp. 264-8; K. SION-JENKIS, 2000, pp. 66-9.

¹⁴ On Aemilius’ harshness and cruelty towards (some of) the Greeks cf. R. VIANOLI, 1972, pp. 87-9; A. BARZANÒ, 1994, pp. 417-9; IDEM, 1996, pp. 110-2. Also note the emphatic statement in W. REITER, 1988, pp. 141 sq.: “amidst the ruins of seventy cities and one hundred and fifty thousand lives, there is no room for the image of Aemilius as a man of benevolence and humanity”. For a balanced assessment, cf. J.-L. FERRARY, 1988, pp. 547-53.

¹⁵ Cf. R. SCUDERI, 2004/05 with references. Citing the prominence of the Macedonian king, A. BARZANÒ, 1994, pp. 405 sq.; IDEM, 1996, pp. 87-90 argues that Aemilius is not even the real protagonist of the *Life*, but this goes too far. On the elaboration of the theme in the historical tradition beyond Plutarch cf. G. DI LEO, 2003.

3)¹⁶. For another, Plutarch subsequently resumes the narrative by praising Flamininus' actions as being consonant with the pledges made at Corinth (*Flam.* 12.1).

As for the event of the proclamation itself, the protagonist is mainly viewed and characterised through the eyes of the Greek audience¹⁷. Thus, the assembled multitude is described as watching the athletic contests, as listening to the words of the herald, and as reacting first with tumultuous confusion and then with a vocal outburst of joy, extolling Flamininus as “the saviour and champion of Greece (τὸν σωτῆρα τῆς Ἑλλάδος καὶ πρόμαχον)” (*Flam.* 10.4-7). While the Roman statesman himself is reported to have retired from the scene, the Greeks are said to have gathered together, shouting about Flamininus' tent until nightfall (*Flam.* 11.1sq.).

Up to this point, Plutarch's narrative is broadly in agreement with Polybius, who similarly focuses on the expectations and reactions of the crowd before, during, and after the proclamation (Plb. 18 F46.1-12). In his account, which is likely to be Plutarch's main source, this leads on to a number of authorial reflexions on the wider significance of the episode and on the generosity of Flamininus and the Romans (18 F46.13-15). Livy, too, describes the event primarily from the perspective of the Greek audience, though he also makes an observation regarding the joy of the young Flamininus at reaping the concomitant reward of *gloria* (Liv. 33.32.3-33.3). Moreover, he relates that expressions of gratitude continued for many days, and goes on to depict the Greeks as praising Rome's commitment to the promotion of justice, right, and law (33.33.4-8: *ius, fas, lex*)¹⁸.

What follows in Plutarch is something quite different. Having shown enthusiastic appreciation for Flamininus, the multitude continues its celebrations in the Greek fashion: “with greetings and embraces for any friends and fellow citizens whom they saw, they turned around to eat and drink with one another. And here, their pleasure naturally increasing, it occurred to them to reason and discourse (λογίζεσθαι καὶ διαλέγεσθαι) about Greece” (*Flam.* 11.2sq.). The event is thus characterised as a spontaneous feast involving an exchange of thoughts and ideas. Significantly, this is an entirely Greek activity, in which the Romans merely figure as objects of reflexion and evaluation. This perspective is further reinforced

¹⁶ Cf. the fuller accounts in Plb. 18 F45.7-12; Liv. 33.31.7-11. In actual fact, this may be quite misleading. Cf. R. PFEILSCHIFTER, 2005, pp. 285-302, who suggests that the discrepancies between the policies favoured by Flamininus and the senatorial commission, respectively, were rather minor. By contrast, the personal factor is stressed by A. M. ECKSTEIN, 1987, pp. 294-302; J. J. WALSH, 1996, pp. 355-8.

¹⁷ On the various functions of public opinion in Plutarch's biographical technique cf. generally F. FRAZIER, 1996, pp. 110-24.

¹⁸ E. M. CARAWAN, 1988, pp. 231 suggests that Livy is here “influenced by an annalistic tradition in which the treachery of the allies was given greater emphasis, and Flamininus, for his futile crusade, was held to blame”. This may or may not be true.

at the beginning of the next chapter, which concludes the deliberations of the Greeks while at the same time shifting the narrative focus to the subsequent actions of Flamininus (*Flam.* 12.1).

In the actual debate about the meaning of the proclamation, the name of the proconsul is conspicuous by its absence. In fact, the whole discussion is concerned with the general characteristics of Greece and Rome rather than with the virtues of any individual leader¹⁹. To be sure, Flamininus is on the reader's mind when Plutarch mentions a number of outstanding generals from Greek history as exemplars of valour and wisdom (ἀνδρεία καὶ φρόνησις) who fell short of the ideal of the just man (ὁ δίκαιος, *Flam.* 11.4–6). By implication, the Roman politician is thus judged to be superior to statesmen as eminent as Agesilaus, Lysander, Nicias, and Alcibiades, and his achievements stand comparison with the great victories over the Persians in the first half of the fifth century.

Notwithstanding, the main point of the considerations ascribed to the participants in the banquet is a history lesson about Greece and Rome. Instead of achieving freedom on their own, the Greeks are said to have fought most of their battles to bring servitude (ἐπὶ δουλείᾳ) upon themselves, chiefly due to the baseness and contentiousness (κακία καὶ φιλονικία) of their leaders (*Flam.* 11.6). This observation is all the more instructive as φιλονικία is the central characteristic of Flamininus' pair Philopoemen, "the last of the Greeks" (*Phil.* 1.7)²⁰. Owing to this lack of common purpose, the liberation of Greece is seen as depending on the intervention of foreigners who would undergo the greatest dangers and hardships in order to set her free from the harshest and most tyrannical despots (*Flam.* 11.7). Thus, the Greek admirers of Flamininus and the Romans take a remarkably negative view of the whole of Greek history²¹, though Plutarch's readers may well be expected to remember at this point that Rome herself was later to be torn apart by war and civil strife²².

Evidently, this is not merely a point about the past. In his political writings, Plutarch insists that bickering, rivalry, and excessive ambition ought to be avoided at a time when concord and consensus appear to serve the interests of the Greek *poleis* and the local aristocracy under the Roman Empire²³. As Christopher Pelling has pointed out, he is much more reluctant

¹⁹ This point has also been made regarding the pair as a whole. Cf. C. B. R. PELLING, 1997, pp. 148–53 and 254–258; also J. J. WALSH, 1992, pp. 212–8.

²⁰ Cf. *Phil.* 3.1; 17.7; *Flam.* 22.4; 22.7, with the analysis in C. B. R. PELLING, 1997, pp. 129–35; also J. J. WALSH, 1992, pp. 209–12. Both studies emphasise the relevance of the theme to the pair, on which cf. further C. B. R. PELLING, 1986a, pp. 84–9/ 2002, pp. 350–3. However, also note S. SWAIN, 1988, pp. 343–5, who stresses the similarity between Philopoemen's φιλονικία and Flamininus' φιλοτιμία, concluding with regard to *Flam.* 11.6 that "it is unlikely that Plutarch is here stigmatizing Philopoemen" (p. 345).

²¹ Cf. E. GABBA, 2004, p. 313: "un ragionamento che è di fatto una visione del tutto negativa, o almeno fortemente restrittiva, dell'intera storia greca classica e dei suoi protagonisti".

²² I am grateful to Philip Stadter for suggesting this reading to me.

²³ Cf. esp. *Mor.* 814e–825f (*Praecepta gerendae rei publicae*), with the discussions in P.

in the *Lives*, most notably in the *Philopoemen – Flamininus*, to spell out moral lessons for his own present²⁴. Undoubtedly, the contemporary resonance matters, yet much is left to the reader's interpretation²⁵. Interestingly, the following chapter of the *Flamininus* draws a comparison with Nero's proclamation of liberty in 67 A.D. (*Flam.* 12.13), which plainly made a strong impression on the Greeks of Plutarch's generation. This reference is preceded by some considerations regarding the appeal of the Romans and the rapid growth of their power, to which everything became subject in the end (*Flam.* 12.8-10). As for Flamininus himself, however, it is not the subjection but the liberation of Greece which the biographer chooses to underscore, citing the proud inscriptions recording his dedications at Delphi (*Flam.* 12.11sq.)²⁶.

While these final remarks do not alter the fact that Plutarch's treatment of the Isthmian Proclamation is primarily concerned with Greece and with Greek perceptions of Rome, it would obviously be wrong to conclude that the episode is only marginally relevant to the portrait of Flamininus. For one thing, the proconsul is ennobled by the emotional response of the Greek audience and by the favourable comparison with some of the greatest generals of Greek history. For another, the reflexions voiced in the course of the banquet serve to characterise him as a just man and generous benefactor. What is more, his subsequent actions closely match the hopes and expectations of the Greeks as he endeavours to establish among them good order, great justice, concord, and mutual friendliness (*Flam.* 12.6: εὐνομίαν ἅμα καὶ δίκην πολλὴν ὁμόνοιάν τε καὶ φιλοφροσύνην πρὸς ἀλλήλους.)²⁷. Beyond these political benefactions, Flamininus is also reported to have performed the rôle of ἀγωνοθέτης for the Nemean Games (*Flam.* 12.5), where liberty was proclaimed to the Argives²⁸.

This latter aspect of the protagonist's active involvement in the organisation of spectacles emerges much more prominently in the second passage to be discussed in the present paper. In the wake of his victory at Pydna, Aemilius Paullus, too, is described as a benefactor of the Greeks, whose perspective is again highly relevant to the evaluation of a Roman general's actions. Unlike in the account of the Isthmian Proclamation, however, the biographer's focus is mainly on the proconsul himself and on Roman behaviour in front of a Greek audience.

DESIDERI, 1986; S. SWAIN, 1996, pp. 161-86.

²⁴ Cf. C. B. R. PELLING, 1995, esp. pp. 213-7/ 2002, pp. 243-7.

²⁵ Thus, P. DESIDERI, 1998, pp. 934 sq. suggests that the *Flamininus* serves to express the idea of a "*consortium imperii*", in which the Greeks provide "una legittimazione del dominio romano ... in cambio di un privilegio di libertà, anche se non illimitata" (p. 935).

²⁶ The distinction between Rome and Flamininus is heavily stressed by S. SWAIN, 1988, pp. 342 sq.; idem, 1996, pp. 148 sq.

²⁷ Cf. also Liv. 34.48.2 and Flamininus' advice to the Greeks at 34.49.9sq.

²⁸ Cf. Liv. 34.41.1-3. Plutarch decontextualises the event and misleadingly suggests that liberty was once more proclaimed to the whole of Greece. Cf. C. B. R. PELLING, 1997, pp. 384 sq., n. 116.

Following the surrender of Perseus, Aemilius embarked on an extensive tour of Greece, which Plutarch mainly describes in terms of his hero's philhellenism and benefactions (*Aem.* 28.1-5). Having praised the commander's conduct as honourable and humane (ἔνδοξον ἄμα καὶ φιλάνθρωπον), the biographer goes on to record that Aemilius restored political order, offered gifts from the king's stores, and expressed admiration for the Zeus sculpted by Phidias. Apart from this, Plutarch does not fail to mention the general's order to put his own statue on the great monument that was meant to honour Perseus at Delphi (*Aem.* 28.4)²⁹. This demonstration of power as well as Aemilius' interventions in the affairs of the Greek states unmistakably indicate that the trip was not merely a sightseeing tour designed to pay homage to Hellas³⁰. As Ulrich Eigler has convincingly argued, Livy actually describes the journey as an act of Roman dominance over Greek culture (*Liv.* 45.27.5-28.6)³¹. By contrast, the emphasis in Plutarch's narrative is clearly on the protagonist's φιλανθρωπία rather than on the expression of Roman supremacy.

Subsequently, even the harsh conditions imposed on the defeated Macedonians are interpreted as generous benefactions; for the biographer stresses that the former subjects of Perseus received liberty and independence, with their financial burden being less than half the amount due to the Antigonid kings (*Aem.* 28.6)³². Prior to his departure, moreover, Aemilius is depicted as wisely exhorting them to preserve their freedom by good order and concord (*Aem.* 29.1: δι' εὐνομίας καὶ ὁμονοίας). As emerges from Livy's account, the announcement of the terms regarding the future of Macedon formed part of the lavish victory celebrations at Amphipolis (*Liv.* 45.29-33)³³, which Plutarch essentially reads as a delightful event organised by the Roman general to please his Greek guests³⁴.

Thus, the biographer relates that Aemilius "held spectacles of all sorts of contests and performed sacrifices to the gods, at which he gave feasts and banquets, making use of abundant supplies from the royal stores, while in the arrangement and ordering of them, in seating and greeting his guests, and in paying to each one honour and friendliness (τιμῆς καὶ φιλοφροσύνης) according to their dignity (κατ' ἀξίαν), he showed such accurate and

²⁹ Cf. L.-M. GÜNTHER, 1995, who reads this act as a "machtbewußte Siegerpose, keine sympathieheischende Geste philheller 'paideia'" (p. 84).

³⁰ This point should not be overstated, however. Cf., e.g., the categorical statement in E. FLAIG, 2000, p. 138: "Mit Philhellenismus hatte das nichts zu tun", which may be contrasted with J.-L. FERRARY, 1988, pp. 554-60, who speaks of "une véritable offensive de charme" (p. 556), as well as with E. S. GRUEN, 1992, p. 246. Further note P. BOTTERI, 1974/75 (1979), pp. 167 sq., who suggests that Aemilius chiefly sought to acquire foreign *clientelae*.

³¹ Cf. U. EIGLER, 2003: Livy "inszeniert vielmehr die Tour als einen Akt ideeller Besitzergreifung Griechenlands" (p. 262).

³² Cf. the more detailed and similarly apologetic treatment in *Liv.* 45.29.4-30.8 and 32.1-7, which serves to celebrate the just order established by Rome. Also note D. S. 31 F8.1-9.

³³ On Amphipolis as a place on Livy's 'mental map' of the Roman Empire cf. U. EGELHAAF-GAISER, 2006, pp. 49-51.

³⁴ According to C. LIEDMEIER, 1935, p. 223, Plutarch's failure to identify the locality indicates that his version is based on the work of a compiler, but this is not cogent.

thoughtful perception that the Greeks were amazed (θαυμάζειν), seeing that not even their pastimes were treated by him with neglect, but that a man involved in such great affairs gave even to small things their due attention” (*Aem.* 28.7sq.).

Just as in the case of the Isthmian Proclamation, it is conspicuous that Plutarch views the event through the eyes of the Greeks present on the occasion. Not only are the guests amazed at Aemilius’ organisational skills, but their reactions are also thought to show that the Roman general himself provides them with the most pleasant enjoyment and spectacle (*Aem.* 28.9). While these remarks evidently serve to eulogise the proconsul, it should also be noted that the quality the Greeks admire most of all is his extraordinary attention to detail – a trait that the biographer has earlier associated with his hero’s concern for ancestral customs and ceremonies at Rome (*Aem.* 3.2-7). Accordingly, Aemilius appears successfully to apply skills developed in a Roman context to impress a Greek audience. This point is actually reinforced by his dictum that the same spirit is required to do well both in marshalling a line of battle and in presiding at a symposium (*Aem.* 28.9).

While Plutarch fails to elaborate on this statement, which corresponds to a Polybian fragment (Plb. 30 F14)³⁵, the laudatory context clearly suggests that it signals the biographer’s approval of the carefully arranged order of the banquet³⁶. However, it may be more appropriate to read Aemilius’ comment not simply as a witty *bon mot*, let alone as an innocent remark regarding an enjoyable festival, but as a reminder of Roman supremacy in the military sphere and beyond³⁷. Significantly, a much less harmonious picture of the victory celebrations emerges from the more comprehensive account given by Livy, who represents the event primarily as a show of Roman *maiestas* and power³⁸. Thus he describes the setting of the ceremony as frightening to the audience (Liv. 45.29.2: *novi in<perii> formam terribilem praebuit tribunal*), and stresses that Aemilius chose to announce the decisions of the Senate in Latin before having them translated into Greek (45.29.3)³⁹.

³⁵ Cf. also Liv. 45.32.11; further D. S. 31 F8.13. According to F. W. WALBANK, 1979, p. 437, Polybius thus intends “to point the contrast with the victory games given by L. Anicius” at Rome, which are judged by him to have been disorderly and utterly uncivilised (Plb. 30 F22). This may be true but hardly constitutes the sole function of the statement.

³⁶ Cf. G. PAUL, 1991, p. 160. Also note Plu., *Mor.* 198b (*Regum et imperatorum apophthegmata*); 615e-f (*Quaestiones conviviales*).

³⁷ Pace R. FLACELIÈRE & E. CHAMBRY, 1966, p. 69, who call it a “boutade”. Further note C. LIEDMEIER, 1935, p. 236: Aemilius “wil als het ware een tweede Achilles zijn, die behalve een verwoed strijder de organisator was van de grootse lijkspeelen ter ere van Patroclus”.

³⁸ Cf., e.g., E. S. GRUEN, 1992, pp. 245-7. E. FLAIG, 2000, pp. 139 sq. puts it more crudely: “Die Feier von Amphipolis war ein römisches Spektakel, eingerahmt von römischer politischer Symbolik, welche die Griechen und ihre Athleten zu Statisten degradierte” (p. 139). A different perspective is provided by J.-L. FERRARY, 1988, pp. 560-5; J. C. EDMONDSON, 1999, pp. 78-81 and *passim*, who both stress the importance of Hellenistic precedents and parallels.

³⁹ Cf. Plu., *Cat. Ma.* 12.5-7 on Cato’s speech to the Athenians in 191. Also note V. Max. 2.2.2. J. KAIMIO, 1979, p. 100 suggests that Aemilius’ choice was made with a view to producing a “dramatic effect”.

What is more, Livy highlights Roman interference in the internal affairs of the Greek polities and records the severe punishment of those who had actually or supposedly been aligned with the losing side in the war (45.31). As for the ensuing festival, the admiration of the Greeks is related not so much to Aemilius as to the Romans in general, who were then inexperienced (*rudes*) in giving spectacles (45.32.10). Consequently, it appears as though a Roman proconsul can outdo the Greeks even in organising Greek-style games and banquets – if he so chooses⁴⁰. While Livy does not fail to mention the gifts handed out to the participants from the royal stores, it is quite revealing that the event is concluded by the dedication of spoils from the enemy and by the display of the booty to be carried off to Rome (45.33.1-7). Thus, the celebrations of Amphipolis are presented to the reader as an eloquent manifestation of the Roman conquest of Greece.

Evidently, this interpretation is rather different from Plutarch's version. Instead of exploring the implications of the event in terms of Roman power, the biographer's narrative goes on to highlight Aemilius' ἐλευθεριότης and μεγαλοψυχία as evidenced by his supposed disinterest in the gold and silver of the royal treasuries (*Aem.* 28.10)⁴¹. At the same time, Plutarch obviously approves of his hero's decision to appropriate Perseus' library as an invaluable resource of Greek learning for the benefit of his sons (*Aem.* 28.11)⁴². However, it should not be overlooked that the king's books were undoubtedly of great material and symbolic value as items of booty⁴³. What Plutarch reads as enthusiasm for Greek erudition appears simultaneously to reflect a selective and power-conscious approach in claiming and using objects of Hellenic culture⁴⁴. The analysis of the victory celebrations of 167 thus leads back to the issues raised at the beginning of this paper regarding the interrelation between philhellenism and the pursuit of individual and collective interests by the representatives of Rome.

In the Plutarchan accounts of the Isthmian Proclamation and the festival at Amphipolis, there is a deliberate, though hardly surprising, emphasis on 'Hellenic' qualities and benefactions to Greece. In the case of Flamininus and the declaration of 196, it has been seen that the focus is on Greece and Greek history rather than on the protagonist himself, yet Plutarch's narrative also serves to praise the proconsul's justice as being equal or superior to that of

⁴⁰ Cf. U. EGELHAAF-GAISER, 2006, p. 52 with further considerations.

⁴¹ For the theme of Aemilius' poverty and indifference to wealth cf. also *Aem.* 4.4sq.; 39.10; *Tim.* 41.8; *Mor.* 198b-c (*Regum et imperatorum apophthegmata*) as well as Plb. 18 F35.4-6; 31 F22.1-7; *Liv. Per.* 46.14; D. S. 31 F26.1 sq.; D. C. 20 F67.1; *Zonar.* 9.24.4; *Cic., Off.* 2.76; *Orat.* 232; *V. Max.* 4.3.8; *Vir. ill.* 56.6. Cf. I. SHATZMAN, 1975, pp. 243 sq. for an estimate of his property.

⁴² Cf. also Isid., *Etym.* 6.5.1.

⁴³ Thus, rightly, A. BARZANÒ, 1994, p. 413; idem, 1996, pp. 106 and 218, n. 181.

⁴⁴ Hence the often stressed difference between Aemilius' outlook and that of Cato (cf., e.g., J.-L. FERRARY, 1988, pp. 535-9) may not be all that great. On the meaning and limitations of Cato's anti-Hellenism cf. D. KIENAST, 1954, pp. 101-16; A. E. ASTIN, 1978, pp. 157-81; E. S. GRUEN, 1992, pp. 52-83; H.-J. GEHRKE, 1994, pp. 599-607; M. JEHNE, 1999.

the most eminent statesmen of the Greek past. By contrast, the biographer's treatment of the victory celebrations after Pydna is mainly concentrated on Aemilius Paullus' courteous behaviour and outstanding skills in entertaining his guests. What both episodes have in common is not only the context of feasts and spectacles, but also the crucial rôle assigned to the Greek audience and its expressions of admiration and amazement. Consequently, the two Roman statesmen are judged with reference to Greek values, on the basis of their attitude to Greece, and according to their ability to impress the Greek public. Greek-style festivals and the world of the banquet thus provide a most suitable background for presenting the 'liberators' of Greece as exemplars of philhellenism and φιλανθρωπία⁴⁵.

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⁴⁵ For their paradigmatic function cf., e.g., Plu., *Sull.* 12, where their philhellenic benefactions are favourably contrasted with the cynical policies pursued by Sulla. I am grateful to Lukas de Blois for pointing out to me the significance of this passage.

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CRASSUS AS SYMPOSIAST IN PLUTARCH'S *LIFE OF CRASSUS*

JAMES T. CHLUP

University of Manitoba, Winnipeg

Abstract

The references to Crassus as a host of, and a guest at, dinner parties in the *Life of Crassus* suggest a complex persona. Three references appear in the early chapters, followed by the description of the symposium at the Parthian court at the end of *Life*. This paper examines these four passages. It argues that the simplicity of Crassus' repasts are carefully positioned by Plutarch to contrast sharply Crassus' reputation as Rome's most famous plutocrat, and the debauched Parthian symposium redeems partially Crassus for his failure as an imperialist.

The Romans say that the many virtues of Crassus were obscured by the sole vice of desire for wealth; it is likely that this one vice became stronger, weakening the others. (2.1)¹

This sentence reveals *Nicias-Crassus* to be a study of how a single negative character trait can obscure good character traits, and the (very serious) consequences of such a situation. In the case of Crassus, the vice of avarice (φιλοπλουτία) overshadows his many virtues. This is not the opinion of Plutarch alone, since he reports what his (Roman) sources write. By the time that Plutarch came to write the *Later Roman Lives*, avarice had been the defining historical fact about Crassus for over a century².

Closer inspection of the *Life of Crassus* suggests that Plutarch problematises his exploration of Crassus' love of wealth through the inclusion of well-placed references to his moderation with respect to dinner parties. Three references to Crassus as an abstemious host and guest serve to mediate the discussion of his apparently insatiable taste (thirst?) for the acquisition of wealth³. Plutarch concludes the *Life* with an extensive description of a dinner party at the Parthian court, where the debauchery of the Parthians serves to absolve partially Crassus of his *philoploutia* and undertaking of the Parthian expedition.

I.

Plutarch frequently comments upon his subject's behaviour at dinner parties in the early chapters of the *Life*⁴. Thus in the third chapter one finds the following:

¹ Translations are adapted from the Loeb Classical Library.

² Cicero refers to Crassus' wealth several times: *Att.* 1.4.3 and 2.4.2; *Tusc.* 1.13; *Div.* 2.22; *Off.* 3.75-76. So too Sallust: *Cat.* 48.5. See B. A. MARSHALL, 1976, p. 149; cf. *idem*, pp. 178-9.

³ E. S. GRUEN, 1977, p. 117 summarises Crassus thus: "an enigma indeed: fearsome and unpredictable, *greedy and beneficent, ostentatious and temperate, affable and explosive*" (italics are mine).

⁴ Examples from the *Roman Lives* include: *Sull.* 2.2; *Cic.* 36.3 (there are earlier references at 3.5 and 8.2 where Plutarch comments upon Cicero's delicate digestion); *Pomp.* 2.11-12; *Cat. Mi.* 6.1.

When he entertained at table, his invited guests were for the most part plebeians and men of the people, and the simplicity of the repast was combined with a neatness and good cheer which gave more pleasure than lavish expenditure. (3.2)

If Plutarch disapproved of Crassus, then this passage is unique in that the author appears to express approval of one aspect of his subject's character⁵. Symposia comprise three elements: the meal (both food and drink), the guests, and the conversation or entertainment; Plutarch expeditiously identifies all three in this sentence. Crassus appears to subscribe to the maxim of quality over quantity: the success of his dinner parties is attributed to the entertainment (i.e., intelligent conversation) rather than the amount of food or drink provided⁶. The limited amount of wine ensures that the conversation is not adversely affected⁷. Given the tradition of Crassus as (one of) Rome's wealthiest citizen(s), the placement of this passage early in the Life establishes Crassus as a complex persona, since his tremendous wealth, the process by which he came to acquire it Plutarch begins to describe in the previous chapter (see below, p. 184), does not automatically mean that he enjoys excessive indulgences. That is, one might expect Plutarch to explain how Crassus became wealthy, then explore how he uses his wealth for personal profit. Such an approach would underline effectively Crassus' dominant negative character trait of *philoploutia*. Rather, Crassus appears to be the opposite sort of person: he scolds those who spend money on trivialities, dinner parties included, although his criticism of others is not contained in this Life⁸. His aversion to excessive expenditure is revealed by his treatment of his philosopher-companion Alexander, who was given a cloak for travelling only to have to return it upon the journey's completion (3.8)⁹.

The passage above introduces a section in which Plutarch catalogues Crassus' positive attributes: his desire to be an effective public speaker; his willingness to plead cases when those presumably more talented than he – Pompey, Caesar and Cicero – are unwilling to serve as advocate; his warm greeting towards those he meets in public, especially plebeians; and his strong interest in history and philosophy (3.3-8). These attributes extend from, and feed back into, Crassus' effective execution of his role as symposiarch. The first and last of these – his desire to be an eloquent advocate and his historical and

⁵ F. TITCHENER, 1999, p. 496.

⁶ F. TITCHENER, 1999, p. 496: "a certain panache vis-à-vis banquet arranging was definitely a mark in someone's favor, but the main attraction in Plutarch's view should be companionship and conversation".

⁷ And his guests are not corrupted, as Plutarch writes that Catiline did (*Cic.* 10.5).

⁸ Pompey and Crassus criticise Lucullus for his extravagance (*Luc.* 38.5; Plutarch describes Lucullus' dinner parties at 41). Both R. FLACELIÈRE, 1972, p. 302 and M. G. BERTINELLI, 1993, p. 330 note the sharp differences between Crassus and Lucullus in this respect.

⁹ Including an interjection from Plutarch or an indirect quotation from one of his sources: "Alas the patience of this unfortunate man, for his philosophy did not regard poverty as an indifferent condition".

philosophical predilections – are intellectual pursuits, and the latter reveal the probable source of the “good cheer” (φιλφροσύμην) for which Crassus’ guests appreciate – and presumably seek out – his company¹⁰.

Crassus’ disinclination to host elaborate dinner parties is not a decision he makes on his own, for, as Plutarch writes in the opening sentence of the *Life*, Crassus’ *paideia* shaped his attitudes in this area:

Marcus Crassus was the son of a man who had been censor and had enjoyed a triumph; but he was reared in a small house with two brothers. His brothers were married while their parents were still alive, and all shared the same table, which seems to have been the main reason why Crassus was temperate and moderate in his manner of life. (1.1-2)

The moderate appetite of Crassus’ family is supported by a passage in Macrobius’ *Saturnalia* (3.17.7-9), which ascribes to Crassus’ father a sumptuary law in his tribunate of 103 BCE. By beginning the *Life* in this way, Plutarch implies that his presentation of Crassus may not follow the historical tradition established by his sources¹¹. Plutarch immediately establishes Crassus as someone who eschews unnecessary ostentation, and the tautology “temperate and moderate” (σώφρων καὶ μέτριος) situates Crassus in an exceptionally advantageous position upon which he can draw or away from which he can deviate. By how much he does the former or how quickly he does the latter determines the final verdict on Crassus’ character.

A very illuminating perspective is offered by a passage which features Crassus not as a host, but as a guest of Vibius Paciacus in Spain during Crassus’ self-imposed exile under Cinna:

Now, the meals were abundant, and so prepared as to gratify the taste and not merely to satisfy hunger. For Vibius had made up his mind to pay Crassus every sort of friendly attention, and it even occurred to him to consider the young man his guest, and he was quite a young man, and that some provision be made for the enjoyments appropriate to his years; the mere supply of his wants he regarded as the work of one who rendered help under compulsion rather than with ready zeal. (5.2)

Vibius is the attentive host by providing Crassus’ needs and anticipating his desires. Plutarch does not indicate whether Crassus partook of the extra provisions, gastronomical and otherwise, but one might reasonably expect that had Crassus refrained from so doing, it would be mentioned here. One might postulate that Crassus’ abstemiousness in this instance would have appeared inappropriate; that is, while he became a good host, his behaviour as a guest

¹⁰ *Table-Talk* 6.14b indicates that history and contemporary events are appropriate topics for a dinner party.

¹¹ *Pace* C. B. R. PELLING, 1979, I do not believe that Pollio (or the Pollio-source) was the main source for *Crassus*. In my view, the most likely main source on Crassus available to Plutarch in this instance was Livy.

was poor. The use of the same word – φιλοφροσύνη¹² – to describe the good cheer of Crassus' symposia and Vibius' provision of Crassus' needs establishes a connection between Vibius and Crassus as host. Crassus does not emulate Vibius in terms of the kind of repast provided, but Vibius remonstrates the need for being a convivial host. In other words, Vibius exerts a positive influence, helping to mould Crassus into the congenial symposiarch for which he becomes famous. This passage appears as part of the only extended anecdote in the *Life*; therefore, the decision to include it strongly suggests that Plutarch believed it was important to establishing Crassus' character, which in turn confirms the importance of the previous references to symposia in the *Life*¹³.

II.

The three references to Crassus' as symposiast discussed above are contained in the first five chapters of the *Life*; that is, they end approximately one-sixth the way in. And these passages do not stand on their own, but are surrounded by passages which indicate Crassus' avarice¹⁴. The first reference follows directly from Plutarch's opening comments about Crassus' family in the form of an anecdote of Crassus' suspected involvement with the vestal Licinia (1.4). Seeking to acquire her substantial home cheaply, Crassus fell under suspicion of corrupting her. Ironically, Crassus' avarice absolves him of this serious accusation, that he does not have a more serious flaw: deviant sexual inclinations. Crassus' involvement with Licinia, it ought to be noted, probably involved entertaining her or being her guest at dinner; it was the frequency with which this occurred that brought Crassus under suspicion.

The most famous example of Crassus' *philoploutia* appears in the description of his acquisition of property in the second chapter, where he takes advantage of the misfortune of others when he buys homes on fire (2.5). This was clearly something of which Plutarch disapproved, since in the beginning of the *synkrisis* (1.1), he declares that the manner through which Nicias became wealthy was "more blameless" (ἀμεμπτοτέρων). Plutarch notes disapproval of Crassus for his proscribing someone in order to acquire his property, which he does without Sulla's permission (6.8). We might identify an additional passage referring to Crassus as a good symposiarch in the sentence immediately prior, which might be seen as partially negating the unwarranted proscription, when Plutarch writes that Crassus on one occasion saves Sulla from military defeat, an action for which his only request is to ask for dinner for his men (6.7, δείπνον τοῖς στρατιώταις)¹⁵.

¹² The word is used for a third time at 12.3 (negated with οὐ μὴν) to describe the absence of friendship or spirit of co-operation between Crassus and Pompey during their first consulship.

¹³ T. W. HILLARD, 1987, p. 23 calls it "outstanding". The source appears to be Fenestella, identified by name at 5.6. See B. A. MARSHALL, 1976, pp. 177-8.

¹⁴ See also T. SCHMIDT, 1999, pp. 303-4.

¹⁵ Plutarch mentions another large feast at 12.3 and *Syn. Nic.-Crass.* 1.4 (see below, n. 30), where Crassus feeds the people (τὸν δῆμον), also providing them with grain for three months. These passages do not contradict the impression of Crassus for which I argue in section I. In both instances, Plutarch makes the point that Crassus provided for a very large number of

The passages identified here are deftly interwoven with the passages on Crassus as symposiast, and, depending on one's perspective, Crassus' abstemiousness as symposiast weakens the negative impression of his *philoploutia*, or his *philoploutia* dilutes the positive impression of his moderate provision and consumption of food and drink. It would seem preferable to choose the former over the latter, since these early examples of Crassus' avarice do not necessarily portray him in a negative light. The first two are similar in that they reveal Crassus' desire to achieve the maximum benefit for the minimum price. This is similar to what he does as a host: getting the maximum benefit (making friends and political allies) for the lowest possible cost (offering a simple repast). And while Crassus desires to acquire property, despite his immense resources (which in addition to money and land includes a very large number of slaves, some of whom are builders and artists), he does not construct himself a new (that is, a larger and more ostentatious) home. In fact, Plutarch indirectly quotes a *bon mot* of Crassus that those who are fond of building are their own worst enemies (2.6)¹⁶.

Political actions – in as far as Crassus' political career is covered by Plutarch – which one might expect to be presented as additional evidence of Crassus' avarice in fact appear relatively innocuous. His plan to annex Egypt, for instance, which Plutarch calls a “dangerous and violent policy” (13.2), does not appear to have been undertaken out of the expectation of personal profit. Most importantly, Crassus' tremendous joy at being assigned Syria as his province is initially represented as the desire for recognition (*philotimia*), not financial gain (16.1-2)¹⁷.

III.

If the positive references to Crassus as symposiast do not obviate the negative impression of his ineffectiveness as a political figure and his failure as imperialist in Mesopotamia, that is, his *philoploutia* remains the dominant impression, then the biographer redeems partially Crassus through his intricate construction of the final episode of the *Life*: the dinner party at the Parthian royal court (33.1-7). The positive generalities of Crassus' symposia weigh favourably against the grotesque details of the Parthian party¹⁸.

citizens; he does not necessarily provide luxurious repasts. In fact, that he provides bread (12.3, οἶτον) implies that he provides basic sustenance only.

¹⁶ A similar thought appears to be expressed by Juvenal (10.105-09).

¹⁷ This is the approach taken by B. A. MARSHALL, 1976, p. 177. Note Florus 1.46.1: “Both gods and men were defied by the avarice (*cupiditas*) of the consul Crassus, in coveting the gold of Parthia (*dum Parthico inhiat auro*), and its punishment was the slaughter of eleven legions and the loss of his own life”. But note the *synkrisis* of *Nicias-Crassus* (4.1-4), where Plutarch suggests that Crassus ought not to be blamed for his Parthian failure, since he was only undertaking an expansive military campaign; Pompey, Caesar, and Alexander were praised for the same. Crassus receives criticism from Plutarch when he does not advance immediately but waits for his son to arrive from Gaul. Instead of using that time productively by arranging for training exercises for his soldiers, he devotes himself to counting the money he has been able to collect in Syria and Palestine (17.8-9).

¹⁸ A. V. ZADOROJNYI, 1995, p. 180: “Plutarch constructs his Parthia as a moral antiworld,

Most striking is Crassus' involuntary participation in this dinner party through the presentation of his head¹⁹ during the staging of the final moments of Euripides' *Bacchae*²⁰. In *Crassus*, then, intellectual discussion and drunken revelry are mutually exclusive activities; Romans appear to do the former, Parthians indulge in the latter. Granted, that the Parthians are drunk is not stated explicitly by Plutarch, but reading between the lines it is clear that Plutarch intends for them to be perceived as intoxicated. Plutarch therefore redeems Crassus by representing him as the (Greco-Roman) ideal against which the Parthians consciously position themselves. If "to Plutarch statecraft was stagecraft"²¹, then in *Crassus* the opposite is true also. Reading the narrative of Crassus' Parthian misadventure as an extended metaphor for his (lack of) leadership ability, the depravity of the Parthian symposium appears as a highly condensed parallel which illustrates their inability to govern themselves, which indirectly redeems both Crassus' political actions (including the Parthian campaign itself) and (ironically) Roman politics of this period.

Crassus' lack of a clearly defined role as either host or guest in the symposium endangers the Parthians, who, delighting and participating in the spectacle, inadvertently cross the boundary from being spectators to Bacchants, from dinner guests to entertainment, instead of redirecting their efforts towards critical appreciation of dramatic art or serious political discussion. In the case of Surena, his behaviour at the dinner party – grabbing Crassus' head and completing the verse instead of the actor in an act of obeisance to Hyrodes – abnegates the positive impressive of Surena and the Parthian troops which Plutarch crafts in the previous chapters²². Surena inadvertently engages in amateur dramatics through which he seamlessly and instantaneously downgrades his political and social position, from triumphant military commander to mediocre actor (and shortly afterwards disenfranchised corpse; see below). This contrasts very sharply a symposium hosted by Crassus, where, to recall the main passage on Crassus' dinner parties, his guests were "for the most part plebeians and men of the people" (τὰ πολλὰ δημοτικὴ καὶ λαώδεις),

where the notion of *philanthropia* is unknown, or even deliberately challenged". Cf. G. PAUL, 1991, p. 157: "In Greco-Roman historiography accounts of symposia and *deipna* often have a cautionary or admonitory effect. The incidents related may range from there merely disquieting to the murderously dire but their effect is to disturb and dissipate the atmosphere of ease and joy that the ideal symposium or dinner is expected to create". Plutarch revisits an Eastern symposium in *Artaxerxes*: see in this volume E. ALMAGOR.

¹⁹ A. V. ZADOROJNYI, 1995, p. 181: "I do believe, that nearly all the acts of the Parthians, like cutting-off heads... that appear so cruel and perverted to Plutarch, are in fact ritual". Plutarch thought the harsh treatment of the defeated enemy was a sign of βαρβαρικός: A. G. NIKOLAIDIS, 1986, p. 241; D. BRAUND, 1993, p. 469.

²⁰ Euripides' *Bacchae* permeates Plutarch's *Crassus*, with Crassus as a Pentheus figure: D. BRAUND, 1993. Scholars point out the symmetry of Plutarch's references to Euripides at the end of both *Crassus* and *Nicias*, but with very different results: M. G. A. BERTINELLI, 1993, p. 422; D. BRAUND, 1993, p. 469; R. FLACELIÈRE, 1972, p. 310; A. V. ZADOROJNYI, 1995, p. 180.

²¹ G. W. M. HARRISON, 2005, p. 59 calls this episode "melodramatic".

²² See the analysis of T. SCHMIDT, 1999, pp. 301-2. On murder and decapitation at a dinner party, see G. PAUL, 1991, pp. 164-66.

Romans who may have courted Crassus' attention in order to advance their own position in Rome's political and social circles, as well as to improve their minds.

The most noticeable difference between Roman and Parthian symposia manifests itself in the performances of Hyrodes and Crassus as symposiarch, where Plutarch intends for the men to be compared, and for Crassus to appear the better person. Plutarch ascribes to both men an extensive knowledge of literature, but only Crassus appears to derive a benefit from this knowledge. Plutarch suggests this through the placement of his description of the literary tastes of each man in relation to the description of his behaviour as symposiarch. Crassus is described as a good host with his knowledge of history and philosophy noted several sentences later (see above, 182-3). Hyrodes' extensive knowledge of literature is mentioned first, followed by the description of the Parthian party. Plutarch therefore establishes Hyrodes' literary expertise, and by implication his cognizance of, and for the reader insists upon the expectation of, the proper social conventions described therein, which presumably includes symposia, before revealing his disregard for the same²³. By revealing Crassus' literary predilections *after* describing his (repeated) successful performances as symposiarch, there is no such expectation placed upon him, although the statement reinforces Plutarch's judging Crassus' parties to be intellectually edifying.

To recall a point made earlier, the quality of the company is the main criterion by which a dinner party is judged in this *Life*. The Parthian dinner party appears to meet this criterion, but Plutarch replaces pleasure with treachery in the final sentences of the *Life* (33.8-9), in which he describes the deaths of Hyrodes and Surena. The death of the latter at the hands of the former confirms the superficiality of the camaraderie at the dinner party, since to kill a guest during or after dinner is inappropriate (in narrative-time Plutarch places the murder as immediately following the dinner party)²⁴. The deaths of Hyrodes and Surena underline the degeneracy which Plutarch describes in the earlier passage. The ultimate failure of a Parthian symposium, then, is the fact that those in attendance quickly turn against each other, which contrasts very sharply the conviviality of Crassus' symposia.

IV.

And Nicias? Nicias and Crassus share the dubious honour of being their country's wealthiest citizens at a time when said wealth would presumably enable them to achieve a political position far greater than their natural abilities (or lack thereof) would normally allow, and thereby prove equal to, or

²³ Plutarch notes that Crassus' soldiers were found to have erotic texts in their possession, but this is mitigated by the Parthian reading of the *Bacchae* later: A.V. ZADOROJNYI, 1997, pp. 181-2 and 2005, p. 120.

²⁴ Plutarch elsewhere writes that Pompey considered fleeing to Hyrodes' court after his defeat at Pharsalus (*Pomp.* 76.6); ironically he is killed before being received as a dinner guest by Ptolemy.

perhaps even eclipse, their more talented political rivals²⁵. Nicias and Crassus are similar in that neither spends money with the explicitly stated expectation of earning political support.

The attitude of both men towards dinner parties reveals their characters, and therefore for Plutarch marks a subtle yet important point of divergence in the pair. Crassus appears admirable because he refrains from offering lavish dinner parties. Nicias appears excessively cautious by refusing to dine with others for fear of being spied upon: “since [Nicias] was inclined to be wary of public informers, he would neither dine with a fellow citizen, nor indulge in general interchange of views or familiar social intercourse” (5.1)²⁶. Crassus’ parties contribute to maintaining the established, albeit indirect, avenues of political discourse, in Rome²⁷; Nicias’ lack of dinner parties do the opposite in Athens: they closing down, or at the very least severely limit, political discussion. As argued above, Plutarch takes Crassus’ abstemiousness as indicative of his other positive qualities; Nicias’ restraint points to his negative qualities, upon which scholars note Plutarch appears to dwell²⁸. Reading *Nicias*, then, serves to bring into sharper focus Crassus’ positive attributes; or, Crassus’ positive attributes accentuate the perception of Nicias’ shortcomings²⁹. That *Nicias* comes first in the pair indicates that the latter is probably the case³⁰.

V.

Twenty years ago the *Life of Crassus* was called “a particularly lightweight and anecdotal Life”³¹. While *Crassus* compares (very) unfavourably with the Lives alongside which it was very likely composed, the intricacy of his presentation of Crassus as symposiast enables us to appreciate better this enigmatic text. The references to Crassus as a moderate symposiast juxtaposed with the elucidation of his career as an ineffective politician and failed imperialist enables Plutarch to offer a complex portrait of his subject in a short text. The apparent inconsistency between Crassus’ moderate tastes and his avarice may have been what attracted Plutarch, and therefore by studying the description of Crassus’ gastronomical preferences, one comes to a better understanding why Plutarch wrote *Crassus*.

²⁵ On Crassus’ inferiority to Pompey and Caesar, which appears to be conveyed in the Lives of all three men, see J. BENEKER, 2005, esp. pp. 320-25.

²⁶ Cf. *Per.* 7.4.

²⁷ On Crassus in Roman politics, see E. S. GRUEN, 1977, and A. M. WARD, 1977; on Plutarch’s treatment of Crassus’ political career, see C. B. R. PELLING, 1986, pp. 161-3. Plutarch appears to imply that Nicias only used his wealth to advance his political career against the actions of Cleon (*Nic.* 3.2).

²⁸ A. G. NIKOLAIDIS, 1988; J. E. ATKINSON, 1995.

²⁹ F. TITCHENER, 1991, p. 158 suggests that Plutarch only wrote *Nicias* to provide a Greek pair for *Crassus*.

³⁰ A passage in the *synkrisis* (1.4) may suggest another view, at least when examining Crassus from the perspective of his *philanthropia*: see in this volume the paper of A. G. NIKOLAIDIS; S.-T. TEODORSSON, 2008, p. 88. On the *synkrisis* of *Nicias-Crassus*, see A. G. NIKOLAIDIS, 1988, pp. 329-33; T. E. DUFF, 1999, pp. 269-75.

³¹ C. B. R. PELLING, 1986, p. 161.

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SECTION 3

Disruptive *Symposia*

(Página deixada propositadamente em branco)

DRUNKEN VIOLENCE AND THE TRANSITION OF POWER IN PLUTARCH'S *ALEXANDER*

JEFFREY BENEKER

University of Wisconsin, Madison

Abstract

This essay compares two episodes from Plutarch's *Alexander*: the wedding of Philip and Cleopatra (9) and Alexander's attack on Cleitus (50-51). The wedding episode, in which an angry, drunken Philip attacks Alexander, foreshadows Alexander's own attack on Cleitus, but it also marks an important turning point in the development of the young Alexander. Prior to the wedding episode, Plutarch portrays Alexander as highly rational, wise beyond his years, and eager to rule. In creating this image, Plutarch uses Philip as a foil, showing how Alexander was better suited than his father to be king and how he had grown restless in his role as heir. Thus their clash over insults traded at the wedding party is the result of a rift in the father-son relationship and is intimately tied both to the positive and negative aspects of Alexander's character and to the transition of power between father and son¹.

The *Life of Alexander* fits quite well with the theme of the symposium, since, according to Plutarch, Alexander was a drinker by nature and made a habit of spending late nights at drinking parties. There are two episodes in particular that feature symposiastic settings and appear to be significant to the overall structure of the biography. The first is the wedding party from chapter nine, where a drunken Philip draws his sword on Alexander, and the second is the drinking party in chapters 50 and 51, where a drunken Alexander attacks and kills his friend Cleitus. Others, including Judith Mossman and John O'Brien, have argued convincingly for a relationship between these episodes, showing how Philip's attempt on Alexander's life prefigures Alexander's drunken assault on Cleitus later in the book². In this essay, I will take that idea as a starting point and then argue further that Plutarch has used both episodes to mark important transitions in Alexander's acquisition and use of power.

Let me begin by summarizing very briefly the relevant details of both episodes. Philip's wedding party is on the surface a relatively straightforward affair. Philip has married a young Macedonian woman – too young perhaps, since Plutarch says that Philip loved her *παρ' ἡλικίαν*, contrary to his age. At the wedding banquet, the bride's uncle, Attalus, urges the guests to pray that this marriage produce a legitimate heir to the throne. Alexander is insulted by the insinuation that he, the present heir, is illegitimate, and he verbally rebukes Attalus and throws his cup at him. Philip immediately rises up, draws his sword, and charges his son, but “luckily for both men Philip tripped and fell on account of his anger and his drunkenness (*διὰ τὸν θυμὸν καὶ τὸν οἶνον*)”. Then Alexander closes the scene with a cutting remark: “Look, men, this man is making preparations to cross from Europe into Asia, but he's been tripped up

¹ I would like to thank Craig Gibson, who read earlier drafts of this paper and provided helpful comments and criticism.

² J. M. MOSSMAN, 1988, p. 86 (= 1995, p. 215); J. M. O'BRIEN, 1992, p. 139.

crossing from one couch to another”. Following this confrontation, Alexander leaves Macedonia, moving his mother to Epirus and biding his time among the Illyrians.

At its core, the second episode is quite similar to the first in that it involves drunkenness and anger, but there is an important difference as well. At the wedding, Philip and Alexander escaped disaster because they both were lucky (εὐτυχία δ’ ἐκάτερου). But in the Cleitus affair, luck will not be on Alexander’s side. Plutarch writes that, “if we consider both the cause and the moment, we discover that the king did not act according to a plan, but through some misfortune (δυστυχία τινί) he offered his anger and drunkenness (ὀργήν καὶ μέθην) as an excuse to the *daemon* of Cleitus”. The critical elements of the story are as follows: at a drinking party, Alexander and Cleitus begin to fight after Cleitus is offended by a song that ridicules some Macedonian generals; he then goes on to mock Alexander for being subservient to the Persians; in a rage, Alexander seeks his sword and calls his body guard, but these are withheld and Cleitus is rushed from the room; he returns, however, chanting yet another insult, and Alexander runs him through with a spear. As soon as Cleitus falls dead, “the anger of Alexander left him immediately (εὐθύς ἀφῆκεν ὁ θυμὸς αὐτόν)” and he is barely kept from killing himself with the same spear.

Mossman rightly says that, “Philip’s drunken attempt to attack Alexander is a doublet of the death of Cleitus”. Before making a forward comparison to the Cleitus episode, however, I would like to look backward to the preceding chapters on Alexander’s youth. For the wedding scene represents not only a foreshadowing of Alexander’s own drunken and angry violence, but also the culmination of a rather complex character portrait that Plutarch has been sketching over the course of several chapters. The young Alexander whom we meet at the wedding party has been cast as highly rational, wise beyond his years, and ready to rule. In creating this image, Plutarch uses Philip as a foil, showing how Alexander was better suited than his father to be king and how he had grown restless in his role as heir apparent. Thus their clash over the insults traded between Attalus and Alexander is the result of a much deeper divide in the father-son relationship and is intimately tied to both the positive and the negative aspects of Alexander’s nature.

Plutarch introduces a fundamental element of his portrait of Alexander in the well-known passage from chapter two, where Philip has a dream in which he is closing his wife’s womb with a seal that bears the image of a lion. Aristander the seer interprets the dream correctly when others cannot: Philip’s wife Olympias is pregnant with a child who will possess a lion-like and a spirited (θυμοειδής) nature (2.4-5). Plutarch adds depth to this prediction in chapter four, where he explains the origins and implications of Alexander’s spiritedness, adds that he also possessed temperance (σωφροσύνη) with regard to pleasures of the body, and introduces a discussion of Alexander’s ambition (4.7-11). Plutarch does not dwell on the first two elements of Alexander’s nature, but he uses the remaining element, his ambition, to make two important points. First, he asserts that the young Alexander’s ambition was exceptional

for his age and so kept his thought or purpose “weighty and high-minded” (ἢ τε φιλοτιμία παρ’ ἡλικίαν ἐμβριθὲς εἶχε τὸ φρόνημα καὶ μεγαλόψυχον). Second and more important, he introduces a comparison between Alexander and Philip that runs through several chapters, up to and including the wedding episode in chapter nine.

Plutarch introduces this comparison ostensibly to support his point about Alexander’s high-mindedness, but it becomes the vehicle for a more detailed sketch of his character. Plutarch begins by explaining that Alexander’s seriousness of purpose made him discriminating when it came to building his reputation:

For Alexander did not love glory of every kind or from every source, as Philip did, who adorned himself sophistically with cleverness of speech (λόγου τε δεινότητι σοφιστικῶς καλλωπιζόμενος) and engraved his chariot victories at Olympia on his coins; but when those around Alexander kept asking if he wished to compete in the footrace at the Olympic games, since he was a fast runner, he said, “Sure, if I would have kings as competitors” (4.9-10).

The comparison in this passage is somewhat surprising, because Plutarch has claimed that Alexander’s ambition was παρ’ ἡλικίαν, contrary to his age. We might have expected an example of how Alexander surpassed one or more of his young companions in high-minded and weighty thoughts. Instead, he surpasses even his father, a point that Plutarch seems eager to press. He tells us that Philip took pride in his success at the Olympic games; then he has Alexander denigrate this sort of victory as being beneath a king. Plutarch is referring to the years of Alexander’s youth, and so his ambition is certainly contrary to his age, but his high-minded remark also distinguishes him from his father, the king that he will eventually replace. Comparing this passage to the wedding episode, we cannot help but notice that Alexander was ambitious παρ’ ἡλικίαν, while Philip was in love with Cleopatra παρ’ ἡλικίαν: the young Alexander exceeds expectations, while the mature Philip fails to meet them. Between these two points in the biography, Plutarch builds his case for Alexander’s superiority.

Philip, according to the passage above, not only celebrated his Olympic victories, but he also “adorned himself sophistically with cleverness of speech”. Plutarch takes up this point again after the quip about kings as competitors, going on to say that Alexander was generally disinterested “in the race of athletes” but preferred instead to stage contests for tragedians, musicians, hunters and men who fought with rods (4.11). Plutarch is creating an antithesis here between displays of physical skill and intellectual skill, with Alexander showing an obvious preference for the intellectual over the physical. Plutarch does not claim that Alexander, who is fast enough to compete at Olympia, had disdain for athletics, but only that he preferred to be around intellectual types. Philip, on the other hand, eager for any type of glory, settled for sophistries, just as he proudly won Olympic victories against lesser competitors.

This discussion leads directly to an anecdote, in chapter five, that reinforces the intellectual prowess of Alexander in comparison with Philip. An embassy from the Persian king arrives in Macedonia while Philip is absent. Alexander meets the visitors and does not question them as a young, inexperienced man would, but he makes serious inquiries about the Persian king, his military strength, and the geography of the Asian interior. As a result of his questioning, the ambassadors “were amazed and thought that the legendary cleverness of Philip (τὴν λεγομένην Φιλίππου δεινότητα) was nothing compared with the boy’s eagerness and his inclination to do great deeds”. As with the example from the previous chapter, this comparison with Philip is not automatic. Alexander does not ask “any small or childish question”, so the Persians might naturally have compared him to other young men his age. But as Plutarch narrates the anecdote, in their eyes Alexander is superior even to Philip, who is again relegated to the intellectual backseat, enjoying a reputation for cleverness, but as a leader paling in comparison with his son.

Plutarch rounds out this chapter by exposing the tension between Alexander’s “inclination to do great deeds” and his lack of real political power. He describes him as agitated when he hears of Philip’s victories in war, and worried that his father will leave him nothing to conquer (5.4-6). He also describes two of Alexander’s teachers, pointing out that one, Leonidas, was called Alexander’s foster-father (τροφεύς) and the other, Lysimachus, referred to himself as Phoenix, to Alexander as Achilles, and to Philip as Peleus (5.7-8). There is no doubting who is best in that trio, and so for a third time Alexander is compared favorably to his father. Moreover, the description of both teachers serves to emphasize that Alexander’s education is making him independent of Philip, and while being heir limits his opportunity to act, at least for the moment, it does not limit the potential of his nature. This notion is reinforced in anecdotes that appear in subsequent chapters, when Alexander is reported to have said that he had life on account of Philip but a virtuous life on account of Aristotle (8.4); and when the Macedonians, as a result of Alexander’s military success at age sixteen and his actions at the battle of Chaeronia, call Alexander their king but Philip their general (9.4)³.

There is an additional anecdote that precedes the wedding episode and that fleshes out Alexander’s rational nature and his relationship to Philip. This is the famous taming of Bucephalus in chapter six. Philip Stadter and Tim Whitmarsh have shown that the Platonic undertone of this passage fits well with Plutarch’s emphasis on the philosophical education of Alexander⁴. All Philip’s men are unable to break the horse, and when Philip decides to send the animal away, Alexander charges that the men are soft and inexperienced. In response, Philip confronts his youthful son, saying, “Are you reproaching your elders, as though you know more or are better able to control the horse?”.

³ Looking even farther ahead, when Cleitus is insulting Alexander at the drinking party, he accuses Alexander of rejecting Philip and promoting the idea that Zeus Ammon was his real father (50.11).

⁴ P. A. STADTER, 1996, pp. 293-4; T. WHITMARSH, 2002, pp. 180-1.

Alexander does, in fact, know more than the others. Rather than try to break the horse physically, as Philip's men had done, Alexander observes the horse's behavior, recognizes that it fears its own shadow, and then turns the horse (Platonically, as Whitmarsh says) toward the sun and masters it with relative ease. Once he succeeds, Philip joins other characters of this *Life* in acknowledging Alexander's superiority: "My son," he says, "seek a kingdom that is your equal, because Macedonia cannot contain you!" It seems reasonable to take Philip's words as prophetic and to look ahead to Alexander's war against the Persian empire⁵, and so this episode says something important about Alexander's future campaigns as well as his nature: he will conquer Persia not by force alone but mainly by wisdom, and he will succeed where Philip would have failed. Taking Philip's declaration together with Alexander's cutting remarks about racing at Olympia, the reaction of the Persian ambassadors, and the Macedonians' praise of Alexander's leadership, we are encouraged to conclude that Philip was a great general, but that Alexander was the king who could compete with Darius. By the time we arrive at the wedding scene, Alexander himself is impatient enough to confront Philip with the truth.

Thus the wedding scene is the culmination of an extended comparison of Alexander to Philip. However, in addition to putting Philip in his place, Alexander also reacts angrily and impulsively to the insult of Attalus. This reaction is at odds with the portrait that Plutarch has been creating: apart from describing Alexander's spirited and thirsty nature in chapter four, he has presented his hero as rational and controlled. The discussion of his philosophical interests and his training under Aristotle, which comes in chapters seven and eight, between the taming of Bucephalas and the wedding episode, only reinforces this point. Looking backward from the murder of Cleitus, the precedent set by Philip's attack on Alexander is obvious, but the embarrassment of Philip at the end of the scene overshadows Alexander's anger, so that on its own, the wedding scene is not particularly foreboding.

There is, however, an anecdote in the very next chapter that also demonstrates Alexander's tendency to act out of anger and further complicates the picture of a rational hero. The marriage of Philip to Cleopatra and the insult of Attalus raised doubts for Alexander about his standing in the family. When he hears that Pixodarus, the king of Caria, is planning to marry his daughter to Philip's other son, Arrhidaeus, he becomes upset and he makes arrangements to marry the daughter himself. Philip discovers his plan and chastises him, explaining that such a marriage was beneath him. In contrast to the disagreement over the taming of Bucephalas, Philip is right about the Carian princess, and Alexander is wrong. More important, Alexander's behavior reveals that when he is suspicious or feels slighted, his judgment may be confused – διαταραχθεῖς, Plutarch writes – and he may act in an irrational manner. In this case, he has acted more like Philip at the Olympic games, seeking out the glory of a royal marriage even to the daughter of a lesser man.

⁵ Of the extant accounts, Plutarch is the first to report Philip's prophecy; see A. R. ANDERSON, 1930, pp. 17-21.

This scene, even more than the drunken fight with Philip, casts an ominous shadow over Alexander's future, and both together serve as background for his angry attack on Cleitus in response to a perceived insult⁶.

Looking forward to the Cleitus episode, Plutarch has left no doubt that Alexander is acting irrationally in attacking his friend: he says at the start that the event was not premeditated (οὐκ ἀπὸ γνώμης) and at the end that it was driven by Alexander's anger (θυμός). His spirited nature has proved to be his Achilles' heel, but this episode also leads to a fundamental change in Alexander's behavior and even his character. As Whitmarsh has written, the Cleitus episode ushers in a reevaluation of Alexander's relationship to philosophy, and it is therefore no coincidence that the murder takes place in a symposiastic setting. "If Plato's and Xenophon's *Symposia* constitute the paradigms of philosophical friendship, then the Cleitus episode represents the negative image of such serenity and self-control"⁷. What better way to represent Alexander's break with his philosophical past than an angry, lethal fight at a symposium⁸. Plutarch, in fact dwells for several chapters on philosophical matters following the murder. In order to relieve Alexander's suffering, the philosopher Anaxarchus convinces him that he is a law unto himself and therefore need feel no shame for killing Cleitus. This argument, according to Plutarch, relieved Alexander's suffering, but it also changed him, making "his *ethos* in many respects *chaunoteron* and more lawless" (52.7). "*Chaunoteron*" in this passage may mean "more frivolous" or "more conceited"⁹, but in either case, it represents a departure from the Alexander that we met in the early chapters, whose ambition kept his thoughts weighty and high-minded. In fact, Alexander has not only acted like Philip in attacking his friend; in heeding Anaxarchus' sophistic justification for the murder and becoming *chaunoteron*, he has actually become more like Philip, whom Plutarch described as vain and adorned with sophistic cleverness, and who Alexander charged was unfit to invade Asia as a result of his drunken stumble. As Alexander looks forward to a new campaign in India, this is certainly not a positive development¹⁰.

Plutarch also describes here the severing of ties between Alexander and Aristotle, even though this happened at a later time. He writes that Alexander

⁶ E. D. CARNEY, 1992, examines both the wedding episode and the Pixodarus affair for their historical accuracy but without fitting them into Plutarch's larger narrative.

⁷ T. WHITMARSH, 2002, p. 183.

⁸ Excessive drunkenness was not a rare event at a typical Macedonian drinking party (see E. N. BORZA, 1983), and so we may view Alexander's behavior as not only a break with his philosophical training but also a return to his more basic instincts.

⁹ See *LSJ*, χαῦνος II.

¹⁰ The Cleitus affair is by no means the first irrational moment for Alexander following the incident at Philip's wedding and the attempt to arrange a marriage with Pixodarus' daughter, but like the wedding episode, it represents the climactic moment in an extended illustration of Alexander's character. In Plutarch's narrative, Alexander becomes more violent and irrational as his reign progresses, and he is always susceptible to rash behavior when he suspects an insult; cf. 42.4: "And especially when slandered he would abandon good sense (καὶ μάλιστα κακῶς ἀκούων ἐξίστατο τοῦ φρονεῖν) and would become cruel and obstinate, because he valued his reputation above his life and his kingdom". See B. BUSZARD, 2008, pp. 189-90.

had a falling out with Callisthenes, the great-nephew of Aristotle, and eventually Callisthenes was implicated in the pages conspiracy, for which Alexander put him to death (53-55). Plutarch quotes from a letter in which Alexander vows to punish not only Callisthenes, but also “those who sent him and who are harboring in their cities conspirators against me”. Plutarch says that by this letter, Alexander “openly revealed himself as being against Aristotle” in whose home Callisthenes had been raised (55.7-8). Alexander once said that Philip gave him life, but Aristotle gave him a virtuous life; now he accuses Aristotle of supporting a conspiracy to kill him, rejecting his philosophical father in order to preserve the life that his ordinary father, Philip, had granted him.

All of this happens, as Plutarch admits, much later, but by narrating the break with Aristotle immediately following the murder of Cleitus, Plutarch encourages the reader to consider them together. And when Plutarch steers his narrative thread back to the present, he does so with an anecdote that ties the Cleitus affair back to the wedding scene and makes a point about transitions in leadership. Following the confrontation at the wedding in chapter nine, Alexander left Macedonia for Illyria. Straightaway, Demaratus the Corinthian visits Philip and chides him for inquiring about the political situation in Greece when he cannot keep his own household in order (9.12-14). This counsel leads Philip to recall Alexander; then the very next chapter narrates the affair with Pixodarus and Philip's murder. Thus Demaratus plays a small but critical role in the transition of power from father to son.

Following the murder of Cleitus, Plutarch inserts the digression on Callisthenes and Aristotle; then the wise Demaratus returns again in chapter 56, this time expressing pity for the Greeks who died before seeing Alexander on the throne of Darius. Then he also dies. This anecdote is poignant, but it seems out of place, because Demaratus has already made this observation, in chapter 37, when Alexander sat on Darius' throne for the first time at Persepolis. In his commentary, J. R. Hamilton remarks that the good treatment that Demaratus receives from Alexander is meant to stand in contrast to the harsh treatment of Callisthenes¹¹. This is no doubt true, but this final appearance by Demaratus leaves an ominous impression. As Plutarch has constructed the narrative, Demaratus was on hand to facilitate or to mark Alexander's surpassing of two kings, Philip and Darius. By returning a third time, after Alexander has killed his friend Cleitus in anger, developed a more frivolous character, and made a formal break with his philosophical past, he signals a less hopeful transition: it seems that he can die now because he has seen Alexander at his peak. The ascent toward high-minded glory began when Alexander declared that the stumbling Philip was unfit to invade Asia, and it has ended with Alexander's own drunken assault on Cleitus, which serves as a warning that he, too, may now be unfit for the campaigns that lie ahead.

The very next chapter opens with Alexander's preparations to make a crossing into India. He will accomplish amazing things, to be sure, but his

¹¹ J. R. HAMILTON, 1969.

behavior will continue to deteriorate and he will eventually lose control of his army. Thus both the wedding scene and the Cleitus affair signal important transitions in the personality of Alexander and in the leadership of the Macedonians. The fight at the wedding marks the ascendance of Alexander while at the same time revealing a crack in his rational foundation. The violent disruption of the symposium, and the concomitant rejection of philosophical ideals, vividly illustrates the power of Alexander's θυμός and also marks the beginning of his decline as king. In the Cleitus affair, Alexander has taken the role that his father played in the wedding episode, but rather than yield to a better man, as Philip did after his drunken mistake, Alexander gives way to a lesser version of himself.

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POLÍTICA Y CONFRONTACIÓN EN LOS BANQUETES MACEDONIOS EN LA OBRA DE PLUTARCO

ANTONIO IGNACIO MOLINA MARÍN
Universidad de Murcia

Abstract

In the ancient world, the symposium was a way to make politics. Consequently, it is also a reflection of ancient society and its inherent conflicts. There is a very curious case that surprisingly has not attracted much attention from specialists: Plutarch's mention of Macedonian banquets. These banquets were very much influenced by the Homeric tradition, and very different events happened there, for example, singers sang and the king gave gifts. But it was even a suitable place to denigrate an enemy or to plan his murder. It was also a way to win the support of the Macedonians, to introduce literary discussions or to talk politics. It was even present in funeral rites. The versatile character of Macedonian banquets was due to the fact that there were no assemblies or councils that met periodically. Moreover, the Macedonians drank pure wine in their banquets, which was considered a barbarian act by the Greeks. Many times Plutarch shows his condemnation of Macedonians' drunkenness. For example, in his *Lives* he condemns Philip and Demetrius when they get drunk. By contrast, he defends Alexander when he does it. This is because of the sources, but also, and, above all, because of the admiration Plutarch feels for Alexander. Let us remember that in one of his first works (*Moralia* 329C) Plutarch had presented Alexander as a supporter of Greek culture and philanthropy. All that had led to contradictions in his biography of Alexander.

Convocar un simposio implica abrir las puertas del hogar, *oikos*, al resto de la ciudad, lo que, en definitiva, significa entremezclar lo público y lo privado. Un banquete es por tanto algo más que un espacio de esparcimiento y de ocio, sino también el fiel reflejo de las tensiones que acucian la sociedad en la que se celebra, puesto que implica una reunión.

Además, esta celebración en el mundo antiguo, como en todo encuentro, no dejó de ser una forma de hacer política, y fue por tanto un reflejo del tipo de estado imperante.

El simposio es un universo en el que existe siempre un frágil equilibrio entre el ciudadano con el ciudadano, el hombre con el dios o el súbdito con su emperador. Todas estas tensiones están muy presentes siempre en la obra de Plutarco de Queronea. Un caso curioso son las menciones que realiza a los banquetes macedonios. Si bien los simposios aparecen con frecuencia en la obra de Plutarco, son frecuentemente descripciones de eventos griegos o romanos¹, y muy pocos de pueblos bárbaros². El pueblo macedonio al ser considerado por la mayoría de los griegos como un pueblo bárbaro³, pero que al mismo tiempo reivindicaba su helenidad a través de sus gobernantes⁴ es un caso diferente al del resto y merece ser estudiado detenidamente.

¹ Cf. Plu., *Thes.* 30; *Lyc.* 10; 12; 26; *Phoc.* 19; *Dio* 20; *Lys.* 4; *Aem.* 27; *Cat. Ma.* 17; *Cor.* 23.

² Plu., *Art.* 15.

³ D., *Philippica* III 31. Ep

⁴ Cf. N. G. L. HAMMOND, 1992, p. 42.

Si en Atenas el banquete podía reflejar formas políticas acordes con el mundo democrático⁵, en Macedonia la forma de gobierno era la monarquía, lo que implicaba que el simposio fuese siempre mucho más jerarquizado con un centro de autoridad muy definido, el soberano. Un monarca cuyo modelo era el mundo homérico y que, por lo tanto, estará presente en las festividades macedonias.

Al igual que Demódoco amenizaba con su música la comida a la que fue invitado Odiseo por el rey Alcínoo, en Macedonia se perpetuó la costumbre de banquetear acompañados con música. Esquines y Demóstenes con motivo de su embajada a Filipo II tuvieron la oportunidad de ver a un jovencísimo Alejandro mostrar sus habilidades con la citara durante una comida⁶ (Aeschin., *Contra Timarco* 168). Algo que le valió los reproches de su padre, Filipo, pues a un verdadero rey le bastaba con ser un espectador y dejar que fuesen otros quienes tocasen⁷ (Plu., *Per.* 1.6).

Un arte que sin duda el joven Alejandro dominaba debido a su admiración por otro consumado músico su antepasado Aquiles (*Il.* 9.185-89). El propio Plutarco nos cuenta la anécdota de como rechazó la lira de Paris en Troya, porque prefería la de Aquiles (Plu., *Alex.* 15.9).

En cualquier caso no parece haber sido una costumbre únicamente del reinado de Alejandro. Demetrio Poliorcetes gustaba de celebrar sus simposios acompañado de flautistas, como la célebre Lamia (Plu., *Demetr.* 16, 27).

Precisamente, eran exclusivamente las hetairas y las artistas las únicas mujeres que tenían acceso al banquete⁸. Heródoto (V.18-21) cuenta que los embajadores del Gran Rey a su llegada a Macedonia pidieron que fuesen atendidos por mujeres macedonias durante el transcurso de un banquete. Los macedonios accedieron a regañadientes, porque no era costumbre que las mujeres de condición libre estuviesen presentes en tales eventos. Cuando los persas intentaron abusar de las mujeres, el príncipe Alejandro I con la excusa de que tenían que arreglarse adecuadamente para sus huéspedes las recondujo al gineceo, pero en lugar de devolvérselas introdujo a jóvenes macedonios disfrazados con ropas de mujer que dieron muerte a los persas. La historia, aunque falsa, muestra una práctica que era realidad entre los griegos, y seguramente entre los macedonios, la exclusión de las mujeres de estos eventos⁹.

Conocemos los nombres de algunas de las mujeres que acompañaron a los macedonios en su expedición, como Antígona la amante de Filotas (Plu., *Alex.*

⁵ Pl., *Smp.* 177d.

⁶ Sobre el recital de Alejandro ante Demóstenes consúltese a I. PETROPOULOS, 1993; quien califica la escena descrita por Esquines de *στιγμιότυπο*, una “instantánea” de la vida del joven macedonio.

⁷ Otro ejemplo de una actitud similar a la mostrada por Filipo hacia la música se encuentra en Plu., *Them.* 2.4. Cf. W. AMELING, 1988, pp. 665-6.

⁸ Cf. W. W. TARN, 1948, p. 48, quien niega que en los banquetes macedonios participasen flautistas.

⁹ Plu., *Pel.* 11 cuenta una historia similar a la de Heródoto. Cuando Pelópidas y sus soldados se introdujeron en un banquete para asesinar a los oligarcas tebanos lo hicieron disfrazados de mujeres, de tal modo que nadie sospechó de ellos.

48.4-49.1) y Taíde la de Ptolomeo que tuvo un papel destacado en el incendio de Persépolis:

Pero ocurrió que habiéndose entregado junto a sus compañeros a una fiesta y celebración, también se unieron a ellos unas mujeres para beber junto a sus amantes. Destacaba entre todas ellas Taíde, natural de Ática, compañera de Ptolomeo, el que más tarde sería rey. En parte por elogiar cumplidamente a Alejandro, en parte por gastar una broma, se dejó llevar en medio de la bebida a hacer una propuesta muy propia del carácter de su patria, aunque de mayor trascendencia de lo que a sí misma correspondía¹⁰.

Sin embargo, la presencia de mujeres no significaba que las relaciones homo-eróticas estuviesen excluidas del simposio. Se sabe que Alejandro y Hefestión fueron amantes. El propio monarca macedonio besó públicamente a su eunuco Bagoas en el transcurso de una fiesta, donde se había servido abundante vino (Plu., *Alex.* 67.7-8).

El rey, por lo que cuenta Arriano (VII 11.8-9), debía de sentarse siempre en el centro de la estancia al igual que lo hacía cuando administraba justicia (Cf. Polieno IV 24). Una posición, el centro, que había sido un elemento vital en el desarrollo del pensamiento griego. Tenía un matiz político y por supuesto tenía un valor moral que la filosofía supo emplear. Pero también servía para designar lo común, lo cotidiano, a la comunidad¹¹. Siendo también el banquete un lugar idóneo para recompensar a quienes se habían distinguido en el combate, una forma sencilla de hacerlo era permitir que tomaran asiento junto al rey. Cuanto más próximos estaban del soberano más claro quedaba que ocupaban una posición importante. Esto quedó patente cuando el rey Antígono Dosón invitó a un banquete a Arato de Sición, para mostrar que era muy estimado por el rey fue sentado en un sitio más elevado que el suyo propio e incluso el propio Antígono se encargó de arroparlo (Plu., *Arat.* 43). El modelo de este protocolo vuelve a encontrarse en los poemas homéricos. Alcínoo sentó a su lado a Odiseo porque era su huésped preferente (*Od.* 7.169), al igual que había hecho Aquiles cuando recibió a los embajadores que encabezaba el Laertida en su tienda (*Il.* 9.215-21).

Pero no sólo la situación en el banquete denotaba la importancia del invitado, según la forma en la que éste se sentase podía revelar que se trataba de un guerrero consumado. Ateneo (I 18a) nos recuerda que ningún macedonio podía comer reclinado en un lecho sin haber matado, anteriormente, a un jabalí con la única ayuda de su lanza. Una costumbre que tuvo que experimentar el mismísimo rey Casandro en los banquetes macedonios.

Una de las escenas típicas de la *Odisea* es la entrega de regalos al invitado durante el simposio (*Od.* 6.587-615). El banquete macedonio, un lugar donde se reunían los guerreros, era el sitio indicado para que los soldados presumiesen de sus hazañas ante una audiencia, y sobre todo delante del rey, que debía

¹⁰ Plu., *Alex.* 38.1-2.

¹¹ J.-P. VERNANT, 1993, p. 198.

distribuir premios conforme al valor mostrado¹². Plutarco (*Alex.* 39.2) cuenta que el líder de los peonios, Aristón, le mostró la cabeza de un enemigo pidiéndole el premio acostumbrado entre los suyos, una copa de oro. Alejandro respondió entregándole una copa llena de vino puro y brindando por él.

El propio rey podía agasajar a uno de sus amigos con un banquete en su honor. Esto fue lo que se hizo cuando Nearco retornó de su periplo (*Alex.* 75.4-5) o cuando Alejandro asesinó a Clito (*Alex.* 50.7). Los invitados debían de ocupar un sitio cercano al del monarca como sus huéspedes de honor, puesto que el macedonio habría querido oír detalles sobre el viaje de su almirante o conversar con Clito, a quien no habría podido asesinar de no haberse sentado cerca del monarca.

Durante el banquete se realizaban numerosos brindis en honor del huésped principal. Una forma de honrar a los invitados y de que la alegría se extendiera entre los comensales (cf. Plu., *Demetr.* 25; 36; *Alex.* 67.1-6; 69.9). Aunque también podía ser el mejor medio para desprestigiar a un adversario. Átalo realizó un brindis durante los festejos nupciales de Filipo II con su sobrina Cleopatra para poner en duda la legitimidad de Alejandro como sucesor al trono¹³.

El rey Demetrio (Plu., *Demetr.* 25) disfrutaba en sus banquetes cuando sus hombres realizaban brindis descalificando a sus adversarios. Un Filipo ebrio, en las celebraciones que siguieron a la batalla de Queronea, cantó el principio de un decreto de Demóstenes, llevando el compás con los pies y las manos¹⁴. Se habría tratado de un *kómos epinikios*¹⁵ similar al que realizó Alejandro en el incendio de Persépolis, para vengarse de Jerjes (Plu., *Alex.* 37.5). Pausanias, el asesino de Filipo, fue también vejado por Átalo en el transcurso de un banquete. Plutarco (*Alex.* 10.5) no especifica el lugar, pero Diodoro dice, rotundamente, que ocurrió en el transcurso de una cena en la que fue emborrachado y violado por los hombres de Átalo¹⁶. Los enemigos de Arato aprovechaban los banquetes para menoscabar la confianza de Filipo V en su persona (Plu., *Arat.* 48.7).

Incluso era el lugar idóneo para eliminar físicamente a un rival. Esto fue lo que intentó Alejandro, el hijo de Casandro, inútilmente con Demetrio Poliorcetes (Plu., *Demetr.* 36). Pirro aprovechó el momento contra su enemigo Neóptolemo (Plu., *Pyrrh.* 5). Del mismo modo Alejandro dio muerte a Clito en el transcurso de una cena (Plu., *Alex.* 51.9-10). El modelo mítico que justificaba un asesinato durante la celebración de un banquete lo ofrecía Odiseo, que había dado muerte a los pretendientes que acosaban a su esposa (*Od.* 22.8-325).

El envenenamiento era otro de los métodos que podían ser empleados para acabar con un rival en un simposio. La sombra de la sospecha podía caer

¹² Plu., *Alex.* 48.5, Filotas fanfarroneaba como suelen hacer los soldados en la fiesta.

¹³ Plu., *Alex.* 9.7-11.

¹⁴ Plu., *Dem.* 20.

¹⁵ D. S. XVI 87.1.

¹⁶ D. S. XVI 93.7.

sobre el anfitrión cuyo huésped moría poco después de un festín. Esto fue lo que le ocurrió a Medio de Larisa¹⁷ tras la muerte de Alejandro Magno (Plu., *Alex.* 75.4-5; OBRA CITADA Arr.VII 25.1) o a Filipo V tras la de Arato de Sición (Plu., *Arat.* 52; Plb. VIII 12 1-6).

Pero también era un medio de aliviar el cansancio y de ganarse el apoyo de los macedonios. Pocas cosas unen tanto a los hombres como el compartir la misma comida y el mismo pan¹⁸. El banquete que siguió a la victoria de Queronea y el de la boda entre Filipo y Cleopatra tenía ese objetivo; Alejandro organizaba muy frecuentemente juegos y representaciones teatrales para contentar a sus soldados¹⁹; la bacanal de Carmania se realizó para celebrar la vuelta victoriosa de Alejandro de la India, y paliar los padecimientos que había sufrido el ejército en el desierto de Gedrosia²⁰. Los enemigos de Éumenes de Cardia intentaron acabar con la creciente popularidad del griego entre los macedonios obsequiando a sus tropas con numerosos banquetes (Plu., *Eum.* 13.5; 14.2).

Quizás el banquete más importante, que tuvo lugar buscando la concordia y la filantropía entre griegos, macedonios y persas, fue el que se celebró poco después del motín del Opis (Arr. VII 11.8-9).

Tal era la importancia del simposio en la vida cotidiana de la antigua Macedonia que estaba presente hasta en los ritos funerarios. En una tumba encontrada en Agios Athanasios, a unos 20km de Tesalónica, se ha hallado un impresionante fresco donde se representa un banquete funerario²¹. De igual modo, se celebró un banquete funerario en honor de Cálano (Plu., *Alex.* 70.1-2; Ath. X 49), después de su inmolación.

Con la misma finalidad lúdica podían organizarse banquetes en el estado macedonio en los que se podía disfrutar de discusiones literarias o filosóficas. Calístenes se ganó la enemistad de la corte cuando según Plutarco (*Alex.* 53.3-4) mostró sus dotes como orador defendiendo un argumento y posteriormente su contrario, dejando entrever su animadversión por los macedonios. Duelos dialécticos como los tenidos entre Anaxarco de Abdera y Calístenes de Olinto pudieron entretener a los macedonios (Plu., *Alex.* 52.8-9).

Al ser el simposio el sitio donde solía encontrarse la cúpula del poder era el lugar idóneo para practicar la política en un ambiente más distendido. Los embajadores de la paz del 346 fueron agasajados con un banquete en el transcurso del cual pudieron admirar las grandes dotes de Filipo como bebedor (Plu., *Dem.* 16). Alejandro cuando quiso introducir la *Proskýnesis* en el ceremonial de su corte prefirió hacerlo en la atmósfera del simposio²².

Igualmente el rey podía presentarse públicamente vestido con el atuendo persa (Plu., *Mor.* 329F-330A, *Alex.* 45.2; *Ant.* 54.8; Diod. XVII 77.5; Curt. VI

¹⁷ Cf. H. BERVE, 1926, pp. 261-2; L. PEARSON, 1960, pp. 68-70; J. AUBERGER, 2005, pp. 116-22; A. I. MOLINA MARÍN, 2007, pp. 287-90.

¹⁸ X., *Cyr.* VIII 2.2-3.

¹⁹ Plu., *Alex.* 4.11, 10.2-4, 29.1-6, 47.7, 67.7-8, 72.1-2; Arr. VII 14.10; Ath. XIII 595.

²⁰ Plu., *Alex.* 67.1-6.

²¹ M. TSIMBIDOU-AVLONITI, 2006, p. 324.

²² Plu., *Alex.* 54.4-6.

6.4-5; Justin. XII 3.8; Arr. IV 7.4; 9.9, VII 6.2. 22.2-5; Ps.-Callisth. I 34.2) o disfrazado en cenas con los atributos divinos de Heracles, Ártemis o Hermes (Ath. XII 537e) para promover su adopción de las costumbres foráneas. El banquete era un lugar más apropiado que las audiencias reales para sondear el éxito que tendría su orientalización.

La necesidad de discutir y confrontar los problemas de la sociedad macedonia en el transcurso de un banquete puede deberse a que al contrario de lo que ocurría en otras ciudades como en Atenas, donde había un lugar específico para las discusiones políticas, como la asamblea (*ekklesía*) y el consejo (*boulé*) que se reunían periódicamente, no existía un marco espacial definido en el que poder solventar las tensiones que acuciaban a los macedonios. Es cierto que los banquetes griegos no eran ajenos a estas tensiones, pero la existencia de instituciones políticas provocaba que nunca fuesen tan serias como ocurría en Macedonia. Por el contrario, los banquetes se celebraban más frecuentemente y al ser un lugar donde se encontraba la plana mayor del ejército era normal que se tomaran decisiones políticas, o que se produjesen discusiones. A lo largo de la historia de Macedonia la autoridad siempre estuvo muy claramente representada en la figura del rey, pero conforme los monarcas fueron ganando poder, resultaba más difícil tener acceso a su persona (Plu., *Demetr.* 42). Durante el banquete los dignatarios podían luchar por ganarse el favor del rey²³, mediante el halago como Proteas (Plu., *Alex.* 39.6) o bien hacer alarde de sus méritos o de los desméritos de sus rivales como hemos visto.

Los asesinatos, las violaciones y las disputas internas debieron de escandalizar profundamente a los griegos. De igual modo, la presencia de armas en los banquetes macedonios (Plu., *Alex.* 9.9; 51.9; *Demetr.* 36) no era común desde el siglo VI a.C., entre los griegos. Pero lo que más debía disgustar a los helenos era que los macedonios bebiesen el vino puro²⁴ (*ákratos*). Beber vino simbolizaba el hacerse adulto para un griego, (Cf. *Il.* 9.485-95), y su desconocimiento demostraba la falta de civilización de un pueblo. Aunque beberlo en estado puro y de forma inmoderada era un signo de barbarie. El ejemplo más claro nos lo ofrece Plutarco (*Thes.* 30) cuando describe la embriaguez de los centauros. Los macedonios eran equiparables en las mentes de los griegos a estos seres monstruosos cuando se emborrachaban.

Era costumbre de los macedonios organizar competiciones de bebedores en las que llegaban a producirse varias muertes debido a las enormes cantidades de vino puro que se ingerían. Prómaco murió tras haber bebido unos 4 congios (13 litros) de vino sin mezclar (Plu., *Alex.* 70.1-2). Filipo aparece borracho frecuentemente en nuestras fuentes (Plu., *Dem.* 16, 20; *Alex.* 9.9-10); De Alejandro se dice que era capaz de vaciar la copa de Heracles (Plu., *Alex.* 75.5) y Demetrio aparece muchas veces borracho en la vida de Plutarco (*Demetr.* 19, 52). En gran parte la pasión de los macedonios por el vino estaba originada

²³ E. N. BORZA, 1990, p. 242: "The symposium was the arena in which were played out the sometimes deadly political games of the Macedonians".

²⁴ E. N. BORZA, 1983. La práctica de beber vino puro, *ákratos*, aparece dos veces en la vida de Alejandro (Plu., *Alex.* 39.3; 70.2).

en la importancia que tenían los cultos orgiásticos a Dioniso en Macedonia, que diferían profundamente de los del resto de Grecia por ser más brutales (Plu., *Alex.* 2.9). El exceso de vino es siempre el responsable de numerosas desgracias o errores a los ojos de Plutarco²⁵: Átalo insultó a Alejandro por el vino (*Alex.* 9); Filipo intentó matar a su hijo porque estaba borracho (*Alex.* 9.9-10); Alejandro quemó Persépolis por los efectos del vino (*Alex.* 38.2); el asesinato de Clito se produjo porque tanto Alejandro como él estaban ebrios (*Alex.* 50.9); Calístenes insulta con su discurso a los macedonios tras haber bebido (*Alex.* 53.3-4); el vino también está muy presente en la bacanal de Carmania que Plutarco desapruueba (*Alex.* 67.1-6.); bebido besa a Bagoas (*Alex.* 67.7-8); mueren 41 personas por el concurso de bebedores (Plu., *Alex.* 70.1-2); Hefestión muere tras beber una jarra de vino (Plu., *Alex.* 72.2). Solamente parece haber sido el causante indirecto de una buena acción, el haberle rendido honores a la estatua de Teodecto, un alumno de Aristóteles (Plu., *Alex.* 17.9).

Sin embargo, la valoración que tiene Plutarco de Alejandro es muy positiva pese a su adicción, al contrario que en otras obras, en las que sus protagonistas también se dejan vencer por los efectos del vino.

Signe a Aristóbulo de Casandrea cuando dice que bebía por el mero placer de la conversación (Plu., *Alex.* 23.1; Arr. VII 29.4), pero más adelante señala que cuando lo hacía se convertía en un vulgar y jactancioso soldado que era presa fácil de los aduladores (Plu., *Alex.* 23.7). La afición a la bebida (φιλοποσία) es la responsable directa de que Alejandro pierda la moderación (σωφροσύνη) que anteriormente se había encargado de destacar Plutarco (*Alex.* 22). Estas contradicciones son debidas en parte a las distintas fuentes que emplea el de Queronea de forma directa o indirecta²⁶. Fuentes totalmente hostiles a la memoria del macedonio como Efipo de Olinto²⁷ que achacaba su muerte a los excesos con el vino y positivas como Aristóbulo o Cares de Mitilene que intentó justificar su abuso del alcohol atribuyéndolo a una costumbre india (Cf. Ath. X 43). Con algunos héroes como Catón, se muestra comprensivo al decir que su adicción al vino se debía a los asuntos de gobierno que le apartaron del estudio y de la erudición (Plu., *Cat. Ma.* 6.1). No obstante, para Plutarco el vino sería un elemento impuesto por la propia naturaleza de Alejandro. El calor de su cuerpo es el responsable de que se produzca un buen olor corporal, pero como contrapartida le obliga a beber en exceso²⁸.

La diferencia entre el macedonio y los otros protagonistas de las vidas radicaba en que Plutarco siendo más joven, había escrito un discurso llamado *Sobre Fortuna o virtud de Alejandro*. Siguiendo a Onesícrito de Astipalea había alabado la filantropía del conquistador por haber extendido la *paideia* griega entre los pueblos de Asia (328 c-d). Es llamativo que siendo considerado Alejandro por sus contemporáneos un bárbaro fuese esgrimido como un

²⁵ M. CEREZO MAGÁN, 1999, p.171. Es el exceso el responsable de los vicios y no el vino, pues Plutarco (*Mor.* 715 E) admite que puede ser beneficioso para el alma de quien sabe beber.

²⁶ J. E. POWELL, 1939; A. E. WARDMAN, 1955, p. 107.

²⁷ H. BERVE, 1926, p. 161; L. PEARSON, 1960, pp. 61-8.

²⁸ Plu., *Alex.* 4.7.

representante del helenismo. No fue un hecho aislado, otro contemporáneo de Plutarco, Dión Crisóstomo, ensalzó a Alejandro como un héroe griego²⁹. Alejandro era griego porque su *paideia* lo era.

Se trataba de una visión más positiva de la que daría posteriormente en su biografía y totalmente diferente de la de T. Livio (IX 17) que había infravalorado las conquistas de Alejandro por haberlas hecho ante pueblos afeminados. Mientras que el éxito de los romanos en *De Fortuna Romanorum* radica en su *virtus* y en su fortuna, no en su *paideia* o filantropía³⁰.

El Alejandro de la *Moralia* 328 c-d fue un instrumento de Plutarco para reivindicar la importancia de la civilización helena en el imperio romano. En el imperio del macedonio todos los hombres, independientemente de su origen o raza, podían ser integrados en él, simplemente a través de su educación, algo que no ocurría en el imperio romano. Este es el motivo por el que Plutarco, a diferencia de otros ilustres macedonios, muestre una mayor simpatía por Alejandro, al considerarlo un filósofo que fue capaz de llevar la teoría a la práctica, pero también al ser un símbolo político.

Si para los romanos era un modelo del emperador, para los griegos de la segunda sofística era un ejemplo de lo que debía de haber sido un héroe heleno y en cuyo reinado incluso los orgullosos romanos llegaron mostrarse sumisos enviándole embajadores³¹.

Esto no quiere decir que Plutarco negase el papel y la importancia del Imperio Romano. Pese a todas sus críticas a los romanos, él mismo justifica sus conquistas y no puede escapar a trasladar su ideología a sus obras. De hecho la concepción que muestra Plutarco de la filantropía está muy influenciada por el concepto romano de la *humanitas*³². La filantropía en el mundo helenístico era solamente extensible a los súbditos del gobernante, pero en el caso de Alejandro se dice que pretendía unir a todos los pueblos. Estando más cerca del concepto romano de la *humanitas*³³.

En definitiva, la admiración e importancia de Alejandro de Macedonia para Plutarco hace que se intenten suavizar algunos rasgos de los banquetes macedonios que en época clásica e imperial romana podían ser considerados como propios de un pueblo bárbaro.

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²⁹ G. ZECCHINI, 1984.

³⁰ S-T. TEODORSSON, 2005, pp. 435-6.

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THE BANQUETS OF ALEXANDER

PILAR GÓMEZ & FRANCESCA MESTRE
University of Barcelona

Abstract

Banquet scenes are often described in Plutarch's *Lives*. In the *Life of Alexander*, Plutarch defines the exemplary profile of the Macedonian king in his relations with others – his companions and friends and his defeated enemies. The social institution of *symposium*, so deeply rooted in the Greek tradition, is used as an instrument to highlight certain aspects of Alexander's "Greekness", either to contrast them with the customs of the barbarians, or, alternatively, to confirm that the conqueror fully adopted barbarian ways.

In spite of the fact that Alexander behaves immoderately at banquets, Plutarch neither criticizes him openly nor censures him; the behaviour should not be taken as belonging to Alexander's ἤθος, but to the changes that he introduces in the Greek tradition itself.

The ritualized act of sharing food and drink played an important role in the social, political and religious cohesion of Archaic and Classical Greece, since the banquet, either public or private, offered an occasion to strengthen ideological links and friendships¹. Due to the economic outlay that it represented and the time it required, the private symposium was associated above all with an aristocratic lifestyle; it was a reunion *inter pares* in an exclusively masculine environment².

Equally, the size of the group that participated in the symposiac gathering – and the venue – had a direct effect on the nature of the loyalties inside the group and on the formation of the corresponding *ἐταιρεία*, bearing in mind that the symposium – “un spettacolo a se stesso”³ – became a space that was outside the *polis*, with specific rules and norms of its own. Examples are its distinct treatment of sexuality, both in terms of the homoerotic relations established among the young in the closed setting of the banquet – in parallel with the gymnasium and the *palaestra* –, the creation of a kind of free love associated with the hetairae and artists who customarily attended symposia, and the development of forms of ritual exhibitionism and violence inherent in the event's final κῶμος⁴.

From the fourth century onwards, the decline of the cities and the changes in the forms of power were often attributed to the extreme luxury in which the richest sectors of society lived. This impression was greatly reinforced by the tales of the fabulous banquets of the Hellenistic monarchies, which were obvious examples of the transformation that the institution of the symposium had undergone. This explains why Plutarch speaks so highly of the private

¹ Cf. P. SCHMITT-PANTEL, 1992, pp. 13-117.

² The Etruscans and Romans admitted their wives and daughters to their banquets; the Greeks regarded this as a clear example of their lack of education and morality; cf. Theopomp. Hist. *FGH* 115 F 204; Cic., *Ver.* 2.1.64-66.

³ Cf. L. E. ROSSI, 1983.

⁴ Cf. E. PELLIZER, 1990, pp. 182-3.

banquet as a privileged space where knowledge and friends could meet, a place where diners come “to share not only meat, wine, and dessert, but conversation, fun and the amicability that leads to friendship”⁵.

The discussions and entertaining talk would take place during the symposiac stage *per se* of the banquet⁶, in which wine always played a central role. The wine was not an end in itself but the prologue to speech – in particular, of the philosophical speech that was an integral part of the symposium and which brought to the banquet measure and appropriateness (τὸ μέτρον καὶ τὸν καιρόν)⁷. The wine should be mixed with water so that the conversation and the entertainment could last as long as possible, and to prevent the misbehaviour that might ensue from excess, distorting the true aim of the banquet and disrupting the harmony of the meeting. Indeed, the drinking of pure wine was considered to be a practice of barbarian peoples⁸.

The controversial figure of Alexander the Great plays a key role in the contraposition between the Greek and the non-Greek, and, to an extent, constitutes a point at which this duality undergoes a change in direction. As has been noted elsewhere⁹, Plutarch’s presentation of Alexander changes as his *oeuvre* progresses: that is, he does not apply the same analytical parameters in the *Moralia* as in his extensive biography of the Macedonian king. In treatises such as *On the fortune of Alexander*, influenced by the rhetorical tradition of the conqueror and the ideology of the Flavian dynasty, Plutarch presents a vindication of the Macedonian king whose mission is to carry out a vast geopolitical project involving the fusion of various territories; later, while writing the *Life*, Plutarch appears to enjoy greater freedom in his presentation of Alexander as a model and reference point for Roman emperors.

In this article we explore the *Life of Alexander* in order to establish how and to what extent the banquet – the place in which Plutarch’s heroes may display moral virtues such as φιλία or φιλανθρωπία¹⁰ – contributes to defining the exemplary profile of the Macedonian king in his relations with others, both his companions and friends and his defeated enemies. In this way we aim to determine whether Plutarch uses this social institution, so deeply rooted in the Greek tradition, as an instrument to highlight certain aspects of Alexander’s “Greekness” and to contrast them with the customs of the barbarians, or, alternatively, to confirm that the conqueror fully adopted barbarian ways.

⁵ Cf. Plu., *Mor.* 660 b: ὁ γὰρ σύνδειπνος οὐκ ὄψου καὶ οἴνου καὶ τραγημάτων μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ λόγων κοινωνὸς ἵκει καὶ παιδιᾶς καὶ φιλοφροσύνης εἰς εὐνοίαν τελευτώσης. Translations of *Table Talks* are by Clement & Hoffleit (LCL).

⁶ From the Hellenistic era onwards, however, the contacts first with Macedonia and later with Rome linked erudite discussion to the meal; cf. Ath. IV.

⁷ Cf. Plu., *Mor.* 613 b. On the connection between wine and the word, see L. ROMERI, 2002, pp. 171-89.

⁸ Cf. O. MURRAY, 1990, p. 6.

⁹ Cf. L. PRANDI, 2000, pp. 385-6.

¹⁰ Cf. F. FRAZIER, 1996, pp. 233-6.

Banquet scenes are often described in Plutarch's *Lives* and take on a variety of functions¹¹. Following the tradition of Plato and Xenophon, Plutarch is particularly interested in the ethics of the symposium, presided over by controlled enjoyment, friendship, and the freedom of speech¹². With its flexibility and its duality (it may be public or private, formal or informal, comic or tragic) the banquet becomes an appropriate setting for Plutarch's narration of some of the episodes in the biographies. The banquet serves as the backdrop for the discussion of political questions, for murdering one's enemies, for impressing one's friends and one's adversaries – or making fun of them, or drawing attention to their differences –, as a meeting-place for lovers, and so on. The symposium, then, offers Plutarch an ideal opportunity to reveal the true characters of his heroes, perhaps because it is a context in which individuals behave in consonance with their true nature¹³. This may have been why Pericles did not attend the banquets in the homes of his friends during his political career: "Conviviality is prone break down and over power the haughtiest reserve, and in familiar intercourse the dignity which is assumed for appearance's sake is very hard to maintain"¹⁴.

In the *Life of Alexander* banquet scenes appear time and again to highlight the conduct, culture and character of its protagonist, whose liking for wine in fact formed part of his legend¹⁵. Plutarch devotes one of his *Table Talks* (I 6) to Alexander's drinking, and reports that the conversation with Philinus and others was indeed on the πολυποσία of the Macedonian king, but in the sense that "he did not drink excessively, but did spend much time in drinking and conversing with his friends"¹⁶. Nonetheless, Plutarch's Philinus denies this, stating that in the royal *Journal*, compiled by Eumenes of Cardia and Diodotus of Erithras, "it is written, 'after a bout of drinking Alexander slept this day through', sometimes with the addition of 'and the following day also'. Accordingly he was very lazy about love-making, though his bold and choleric temperament indicated a hot-natured body"¹⁷. Plutarch also states that one of the reasons why Callisthenes earned himself the enmity of Alexander was that he did not share the king's liking for pure wine, remarking "that he did not wish to drink from Alexander's cup and so stand in need of Asclepius"¹⁸.

¹¹ Cf. G. PAUL, 1991 who presents a catalogue of anecdotes that took place during the celebration of a banquet in the *Parallel Lives*; cf. also L. ROMERI, 2002, p. 173.

¹² Cf. T. WHITMARSH, 2002, p. 182.

¹³ Cf. F. TITCHENER, 1999, p. 499.

¹⁴ Cf. Plu., *Per.* 7.5.

¹⁵ Cf. Ath. 434 b; Ael., *VH* 3.23.

¹⁶ Cf. Plu., *Mor.* 623 d: λόγος ἦν περὶ Ἀλεξάνδρου τοῦ βασιλέως ὡς οὐ πολὺ πίνοντος ἀλλὰ πολὺν χρόνον ἐν τῷ πίνειν καὶ διαλέγεσθαι τοῖς φίλοις ἔλκοντος.

¹⁷ *Ibidem* 623 e: ἀπεδείκνυεν δ' αὐτοὺς φλυαροῦντας Φιλίνος ἐκ τῶν βασιλικῶν ἐφημερίδων, ἐν αἷς συνεχέστατα γέγραπται καὶ πλειστάκις ὅτι 'τήνδε τὴν ἡμέραν ἐκ τοῦ πότου καθεύδων' ἔστι δ' ὅτε 'καὶ τὴν ἐφεξῆς' διὸ καὶ πρὸς τὰς συνουσίας ἀργότερος ἦν, ὀξὺς δὲ καὶ θυμοειδὴς ἅπερ ἐστὶ σωματικῆς θερμότητος.

¹⁸ *Ibidem* 624 a: δοκεῖ δὲ καὶ Καλλισθένης ἐν διαβολῇ γενέσθαι πρὸς αὐτόν, ὡς δυσχεραίνων συνδειπνεῖν διὰ τὸν πότον· ἐπεὶ καὶ κύλικα λεγομένην Ἀλεξάνδρου μεγάλην ἔλθοῦσαν ἐπ'

Let us look now at several particularly significant episodes in Macedonia, Persepolis and Samarkand.

In Plutarch's *Life*, the first banquet that serves as the background to a manifestation of Alexander's character is the one held at the Macedonian court to mark the wedding of Philip to the young Cleopatra, after the king's repudiation of Olympias on suspicion of infidelity. In this symposiac scene – devoid of any amicable conversation – it is Alexander's antagonists who are inebriate. Despite his youth, Alexander reveals a passionate and spirited nature (θυμοειδής)¹⁹ as he defends his legitimate status as heir to the Macedonian throne; he insults Attalus and laughs at his father who is too drunk to stand up, while he, Alexander, appears to be unaffected by the wine. Attalus, the uncle of the bride, “being in his cups” (ἐν τῷ πότῳ μεθύων, *Alex.* 9.7)²⁰, proposes an ill-chosen toast, urging the Macedonians to pray to the gods to bless the union of Philip and Cleopatra with an heir to the throne. Alexander, beside himself with fury (παροξυνθείς), hurls a goblet at him and shouts at him: “But what of me, base wretch? Dost thou take me for a bastard?”²¹. Hearing this insult, Philip stands up, his sword in his hand, and makes for his son, but, “fortunately for both, his anger and his wine made him trip and fall”. Alexander, in his insolence (ἐφυβρίζων) exclaims sarcastically: “Look now, men! here is one who was preparing to cross from Europe into Asia; and he is upset in trying to cross from couch to couch”²². This scene confirms, then, that the explosiveness of Alexander's character is due to his nature, not due to his liking for wine.

After describing Alexander's extraordinary triumph at the battle of Issus (333 BC), Plutarch briefly interrupts his narration of historical events to highlight Alexander's exemplary treatment of the Persian royal captives – Darius' mother, his wife, and his two unmarried daughters. With them the Macedonian victor behaves chivalrously and keeps his word (τοῦ λόγου ταῖς γυναιξιν ἡμέρου καὶ χρηστοῦ φανέντος, *Alex.* 22.3), and is above all humane in his actions (ἔτι μᾶλλον τὰ τῶν ἔργων ἀπὴντα φιλόανθρωπα, *ibidem*). The meeting takes place when Alexander is going to dine. Despite the daughters' extraordinary beauty, the Macedonian treats them with respect and does not even deprive them of honours, since – in the opinion of Plutarch – “it would seem, considering the mastery of himself a more kingly thing that the conquests of his enemies”²³. Alexander also shows presence of mind in his treatment of the other captives, who also have a fine bearing: “Persian women were torments to the eyes.” – he says – but Plutarch adds that the king “displaying in rivalry

αὐτὸν ἀπέωσατο φήσας οὐκ ἐθέλειν ἄλεξάνδρου πίων ἄσκληπιοῦ δεῖσθαι. This anecdote is also found in Athenaeus (X 434 d).

¹⁹ Cf. T. DUFF, 1999, p. 85.

²⁰ Translations of *Life of Alexander* are by Perrin (LCL).

²¹ Cf. Plu., *Alex.* 9.8.

²² *Ibidem* 9.10.

²³ *Ibidem* 21.7.

with their fair looks the beauty of his own sobriety and self-control, he passed them by as though they were lifeless images for display”²⁴.

In this same context Plutarch devotes an entire chapter to Alexander’s conception of drinking and banqueting. In an echo of the *Table Talk* (I 6) Plutarch now says that Alexander spent a long time on each drink, devoting more time to talking than to drinking, and drinking only in times of leisure, “for in the stress of affairs he was not to be detained, as other commanders were, either by wine, or sleep, or any sport, or amour, or spectacle”²⁵. So, Plutarch presents Alexander as a perfect host, concerned that his guests be served as equals and in abundance, and repeats that the drinking was spread over a long period of time, for the sake of the conversation²⁶.

However, Plutarch recognizes in the next paragraph of the *Life* that under the effects of wine the Macedonian conqueror acts like any other soldier and abandons himself to boasting and adulation, to such an extent that the success of the banquet is put at risk. This places the diners of a finer spirit in a particularly awkward situation, wishing neither to compete with the flatterers nor to appear reticent in their praise, since the former course appears shameful to them and the latter dangerous²⁷. After the bout of drinking, Alexander would wash and sleep profoundly until midday, and on occasion would spend the entire day asleep, as we saw in the *Table Talk* mentioned above²⁸.

Excessive drinking can lead to the death of somebody, as in the case of Cleitus, in an episode which Whitmarsh²⁹ considers emblematic of Alexander’s progressive decline into barbarity and which reveals how Alexander has begun his slide into decadence by renouncing Greek austerity for Eastern luxury. It is no coincidence that the episode occurs after Alexander has begun to adopt Persian dress and other attributes³⁰. In this scene, Alexander runs Cleitus through with a spear; Cleitus, “who was already drunk and naturally of a harsh temper and wilful” (ἤδη μεθύων, καὶ φύσει τραχὺς ὢν πρὸς ὀργὴν καὶ αὐθάδης, *Alex.* 50.9), had rebuked the Macedonian king for allowing diners at the banquet to sing verses mocking the Macedonian generals who had recently been defeated by the barbarians at the siege of the acropolis of Maracanda³¹. Far from the camaraderie and relaxed atmosphere characteristic of a banquet, the confrontation between Alexander and Cleitus, his loyal friend and companion who had even saved his life at the battle of the Granicus, provokes uproar. The

²⁴ Ibidem 21.10. The good treatment given by Alexander to the Persian captives is also recorded in Ps.-Callisth. II 22.

²⁵ Ibidem 23.1-2.

²⁶ Ibidem 23.6. Plutarch (*Mor.* 620 a-622 b) devotes the fifth question of the first book of the *Table Talks* to a discussion of the ideal nature of the director of a banquet, a figure who was essential to the success of the celebration; cf. P. GÓMEZ & M. JUFRESA, 1999, pp. 261-3.

²⁷ Ibidem 23.7.

²⁸ Cf. Plu., *Mor.* 623 e; Ath. X 434 b.

²⁹ Cf. T. WHITMARSH, 2002, p. 182.

³⁰ Cf. Plu., *Alex.* 45.

³¹ Cf. Arr., *An.* IV 3.7.

king commands Cleitus to be silent, but Cleitus refuses, and invites Alexander “to speak out freely what he wished to say, or else not to invite to supper men who were free and spoke their minds, but to live with Barbarians and slaves, who would do obeisance to his white tunic and Persian girdle”³².

Plutarch places side by side the freedom of speech – the *παρρησία* as a key component of the Greek symposium³³– and the verbal or physical violence deriving from a lack of self-control in both Cleitus and Alexander. It is also interesting to see how Cleitus celebrates this banquet context, understood as a free conversation between equals, as the centre of “his” model of Hellenicity which he refuses to abandon in order to follow his king. Cleitus formulates this explicitly, speaking “in all boldness” (*τοιαῦτα τοῦ Κλείτου παρρησιαζομένου*, *Alex.* 51.3), and saying that he envies the Macedonians who died before seeing Alexander give way to Persians and Medes. However, at the same time, Plutarch seems to suggest that Alexander has his own model of Hellenicity which, going beyond the norms of an ancient institution such as the banquet, consists precisely in integrating new lands inside the Hellenic structure. Cleitus’s death at the hands of Alexander during the banquet is an example of excess against the moderation, restraint, kindness and friendship which, for Plutarch, should always preside over the relations between the participants at a symposium: a death that represents everything that Alexander’s model of Hellenicity wishes to leave behind. It is clear that in this celebration it is not the word as a vehicle for education that conditions action, but violence; but since Plutarch is not excessively critical of this violence, what the episode in fact shows, in our view, is the difficulty of adapting the immutability of the Hellenic to the outside world, to the context beyond the classical *polis*; a new context in which Greeks, Macedonians and Barbarians act at the same level.

In Plutarch’s account – the episode has not survived in the version by Diodorus Siculus – it is Cleitus who provokes the king with words. Alexander responds with actions, and there is no doubt that his reaction is excessive. Plutarch, however, wishes to excuse Alexander: the act was performed in a moment of fury, when he had lost control of his senses. So, like Ajax when he realizes that he has not killed Odysseus, Alexander, when he realizes what he has done and comes to himself (*γενόμενος παρ’ ἑαυτῷ*, *Alex.* 51.11), tries to commit suicide, only to be prevented by his companions and friends; he spends the night weeping and the next day says not a word until the philosophers Callisthenes and Anaxarchus of Abdera are brought to him to alleviate his suffering. Anaxarchus consoles Alexander for the murder saying that Zeus also has *Dike* and *Themis* seated next to him, so that all that is done by a king appears legitimate and just³⁴. Nonetheless, in the treatise *To an uneducated ruler* Plutarch presents Anaxarchus as an example of a flattering philosopher; he states that a sovereign should be more afraid of doing wrong than suffering

³² Cf. Plu., *Alex.* 51.5.

³³ Cf. W. RÖSLER, 1995, pp. 108-9.

³⁴ Plutarch’s contemporary Dio of Prusa compares the government of a good king with that of Zeus as well, cf. D.Chr. I 37-41, II 75-78, III 51-53, IV 40-43.

it, while before Alexander “neither correct nor helpful were the means he [Anaxarchus] took in endeavouring to heal the king’s remorse for his sin, by encouraging him to further acts of the same sort”³⁵. Underlying this anecdote, however – and going beyond the strictly literal interpretation – we find one of the favourite themes not only of Plutarch but of other writers of the era: the virtues of the good ruler. Naturally enough, one of the virtues of the good ruler is the ability to impose his will when necessary, in spite of the opposition of those around him³⁶, even if a certain amount of violence is required.

So, as we have seen, Plutarch excuses Alexander of the murder of Cleitus, which he considers to have occurred not “of set purpose, but through some misfortune of the king” (οὐκ ἀπὸ γνώμης, ἀλλὰ δυστυχία τινί, *Alex.* 50.2). In justifying the king’s behaviour, then, Plutarch just links the king’s misfortune (δυστυχία) to Cleitus’ destiny (δαίμων). In the same way, Cleitus also had attributed the defeat of the Macedonian generals sent to put down the revolt in the Sogdian region to misfortune (δυστυχία)³⁷ not to cowardice (δειλία), when he tried to restore the honour of the fallen in the face of the scorn heaped on them by the other diners – which Alexander did nothing to stop (*Alex.* 50.9-10). In so doing, Cleitus only brings on his own death³⁸.

The recognition of his murder leaves Alexander speechless and filled with remorse. In this way, also, Plutarch maintains the link between philosophy – that is, philosophical themes and the men who devote themselves to them – and the banquet, understood as a space in which philosophy verifies in fact (ἔργῳ) what the word (λόγος) teaches, as proof of its value as a vehicle for education, as it is presented in *Table Talk* I³⁹. However, in the biography, and facing such a problematic affair, Plutarch wishes to make clear that the position of philosophers is not always convenient: Anaxarchus is blamed for increasing Alexander’s vanity and lawlessness, and for being indulgent with his whims, whereas Callisthenes, after the death of Cleitus, alleviates the king’s pain by considerate and gentle methods, employing insinuations and circumlocutions (ἠθικῶς ἐπειράτο καὶ πράως ὑποδύμενος τῷ λόγῳ καὶ περιῖων ἀλύπως λαβέσθαι τοῦ πάθους, *Alex.* 52.3)⁴⁰. Thus, Anaxarchus is described as arrogant and inconsiderate towards his associates, a philosopher who had always followed a path of his own – in clear contrast to Callisthenes, who finally falls foul of the Macedonian king in spite of giving clear signs of

³⁵ Cf. Plu., *Mor.* 781 b. However, in *Mor.* 331 e, Plutarch reports that Anaxarchus was the friend that Alexander held in most esteem – precisely as an example of the king’s love of wisdom.

³⁶ Cf. D.Chr. II 71-72.

³⁷ Cf. F. MESTRE & P. GÓMEZ, 2005, on the meaning of τύχη in the *Parallel Lives*.

³⁸ Cf. Plu., *Alex.* 52.4. Nonetheless, on another occasion, Plutarch describes Cleitus as an example of vainglory (“when he had scuttled three or four Greek triremes at Amorgos, caused himself to be proclaimed Poseidon and carried a trident”, *Mor.* 338 a), which he contrasts with Alexander’s sobriety in matters of state, “nor was he made drunk nor led to revelling by authority and power” (*Mor.* 337 f).

³⁹ Cf. Plu., *Mor.* 613 c; L. ROMER, 2002, p. 275; E. SUÁREZ DE LA TORRE, 2005, p. 480.

⁴⁰ Cf. J. M. MOSSMAN, 1988, pp. 88-90.

leading an ordered, dignified and independent life, and in spite of his renown as an orator⁴¹.

Perhaps for this reason Plutarch uses the figure of Callisthenes to question Alexander's adoption of the Persian custom of προσκύνησις or obeisance. This custom was an act of homage in recognition of the sovereign's rank, but it was interpreted by the Greeks as an exaggerated act of veneration, treating the king as a god. On the subject of the obeisance, Plutarch notes that Callisthenes was the only man who in the presence of Alexander "rehearsed in public the reasons for the indignation which all the oldest and best of the Macedonians cherished in secret"⁴². Like Cleitus, Callisthenes became the victim of his own παρρησία by acting ill-manneredly, appearing to want to force the king, rather than to persuade him, to give up this barbarian custom.

Callisthenes' open rejection of obeisance appears again during the banquet, when Alexander, after drinking, hands the cup to a friend who takes it, makes obeisance to the king, kisses him and resumes his place on the couch. All the guests do the same, until it is Callisthenes' turn; he takes the cup, drinks, and goes towards the king to kiss him. Informed by Demetrius that Callisthenes had not honoured him, Alexander refuses the kiss –Plutarch notes that Alexander had been distracted, conversing with Hephaestion.

Alexander's friends – men like Hephaestion, Lysimachus and Hagnon – close ranks around him; Callisthenes is the object of slander and false accusations and is implicated by his detractors in Hermolaus' failed conspiracy against Alexander⁴³. Callisthenes's refusal to make obeisance "by refusing sturdily and like a philosopher to perform the act" (ισχυρῶς καὶ φιλοσόφως, 54.3), is interpreted by Whitmarsh not so much as an ethical analysis of Alexander's conduct, already contaminated by barbarian practices, but as an example of how philosophy resists submitting to power⁴⁴; again we see how the ancient model of the banquet, an ideal institution for "philosophy", seems to have difficulty in maintaining its position in a new context. Nonetheless, on another occasion, Cassander incurs the wrath of Alexander by laughing at some barbarians making obeisance to their king, since he "had been reared as a Greek and had never seen such a sight as this before"⁴⁵. Again, Greek and Barbarian customs are found in opposition in the context of the banquet.

An excess of wine is also present in Alexander's death. The king has overcome his grief for the death of Hephaestion – also caused by drinking "a huge cooler of wine"⁴⁶. In the biography, after participating in a splendid

⁴¹ Cf. Plu., *Alex.* 53.1.

⁴² Ibidem 54.3.

⁴³ Hermolaus, son of Macedonian nobles, was a member of Alexander's bodyguard. He was severely punished for flouting protocol during a hunt. Seeking vengeance, he and his companions agreed to kill the monarch while he slept. Hermolaus may also have been urged on by the philosophers who disapproved of Alexander's orientalizing (cf. Arr., *An.* IV 13.2).

⁴⁴ Cf. T. WHITMARSH, 2002, p. 184.

⁴⁵ Cf. Plu., *Alex.* 74.3.

⁴⁶ Ibidem, 72.2.

banquet in honour of Nearchus, Alexander is persuaded by Medius to attend another feast where he drinks all night and the following day: Plutarch states that Alexander did not finish “the bowl of Heracles”, but fell victim to a high fever, and felt a great thirst; he drank wine and became delirious, until finally he died⁴⁷. However, Diodorus Siculus states that at this feast, which Alexander attended in the company of his friend Medius, the king drank a large quantity of pure wine⁴⁸, and drank a great bowl of Heracles, down to the last drop⁴⁹.

The barbarization of Alexander mentioned in some of the passages above – all of them related to the symposiac context: interdict of *παρρησία*; obligation of *προσκύνησις*; drinking pure wine, ... – contrasts with the respect for Greek tradition that, in Plutarch’s account, the Macedonian king displays in Persepolis, also during the course of a celebration. During a feast, the Attic courtesan Thaïs proposed that they set fire to the palace of Xerxes in order to avenge the burning of Athens during the Persian invasion of the fifth century BC. Alexander is easily persuaded, and he himself “with a garland on his head and a torch in his hand, led them the way”⁵⁰. Plutarch suggests that there were several reasons for his action, among them the fact that burning the palace and destroying it was a clear sign of the will of someone who is not intending to settle in barbarian lands – perhaps it is no coincidence that the episode of the palace fire occurs just before Alexander adopts Persian dress⁵¹. For this reason, Plutarch states that the Macedonian king repented immediately and ordered the fire to be put out⁵². Again, the version of Diodorus Siculus differs here, as he presents Alexander in a much more exalted state because of the drink consumed at the splendid feasts that he prepared for his friends, at the head of a Dionysiac retinue which, led by Thaïs, set fire to the Persian royal palace⁵³.

Alexander’s conduct in the symposiac context does not reveal an exemplary paradigm of the Greek tradition. He is by no means a model guest or a magnificent host. For Plutarch, the director of the feast must be a good drinker, neither inclined to drunkenness nor an enemy of wine; he must be aware that he is leading a group of friends; he must make it possible for the guests to engage in serious discussion and jocular speech; and, like a pleasant wine, without being sour, should have a natural tendency towards gravity

⁴⁷ Ibidem 75.6. In the narration of the king’s death, Plutarch explicitly mentions his source, Aristobulus, as he considers that other versions have been invented by those who felt it necessary to create a tragic end, worthy of a great drama.

⁴⁸ Alexander also served pure wine at the wedding of his companions celebrated at Susa with a splendid banquet for nine thousand guests, each one of whom was given a gold cup for the libations; cf. Plu. *Alex.* 70.3

⁴⁹ Cf. D.S. XVII 117.

⁵⁰ Cf. Plu., *Alex.* 38.6.

⁵¹ Ibidem 45; cf. D.S. XVII 77.

⁵² Cf. Plu., *Alex.* 38.8.

⁵³ Cf. D.S. XVII 72; Arr. *An.* III 8.

and austerity, which will make him respectable; but as the wine softens and smooths him, his temper will be pleasant and agreeable⁵⁴.

For all these reasons, even though Plutarch repeatedly justifies Alexander's conduct in the symposium – so often lacking in restraint – it is significant that in one of the few symposiac scenes in the *Life of Alexander* in which drink is associated with the moment after dinner when the conversation proper begins⁵⁵ (a discussion of climate and the temperature of the atmosphere), one of the interlocutors should be Callisthenes⁵⁶, the king's friend, but also the victim of his wrath.

As many scholars have noted⁵⁷, the historical value of the *Life of Alexander* suffers from a clear inconsistency. More than a biography, the account appears to be dominated by a taste for adventure and character analysis of the hero, whose successes Plutarch is keen to portray as due not to the whims of Fortune but to the protagonist's efforts and character. In this biography, then, the writer attempts to defend Alexander against his detractors even to the extent of justifying inexcusable acts – as we have highlighted in the case of the death of Cleitus or the king's animadversion towards Callisthenes – although on other occasions his tone is openly critical⁵⁸.

The *Life of Alexander*, then, describes several occasions on which Alexander behaves immoderately at banquets. Plutarch, however, neither criticizes him openly nor censures him; the behaviour should not be taken perhaps as belonging to Alexander's ἦθος, but to the changes that he introduces in the Greek tradition itself. It is, in our opinion relevant, that, in his attempt to define Alexander as a king and as the man that has hellenized the world, Plutarch chooses the frame of the banquet to show his significant ἦθος, with all the hesitations and contradictions that such an achievement involves. Alexander seems to be obliged to kill Cleitus but immediately after he feels regret over the loss of a friend; he imposes προσκύνησις as a sign of obeisance even if he knows that it is something ridiculous for a Greek; he wants to burn the Palace of Xerxes to revenge the burning of Athens but puts out the fire immediately. It is as if Alexander were forced to restrain his natural being in order to succeed in his hellenizing goal.

⁵⁴ Cf. Plu., *Mor.* 620 a-622 b; and *supra* note 26.

⁵⁵ Cf. P. A. STADTER, 1999, for an analysis of how in the *Table Talks* Plutarch tells his contemporaries of the advantages of those symposia in which the drinking of wine was combined with good conversation, but does not directly attack the dissipation and drunkenness that characterized certain circles in his times.

⁵⁶ Cf. Plu., *Alex.* 52.8.

⁵⁷ Cf. J. SIRINELLI, 2000, pp. 313-16.

⁵⁸ Cf. Plu., *Alex.* 42.4, where Plutarch states that Alexander was increasingly preoccupied with his fame rather than with his life or his kingdom, and therefore behaved cruelly and inexorably; or 57.3, where he states that at the time of the preparations for the invasion of India, Alexander was feared by his men because of the terrible punishments he meted out.

In fact, these banquet scenes, in our view, stress two interrelated themes: first, the model of Hellenicity, and therefore of Hellenization, that Alexander wishes to impose; and second, the virtues of the good ruler – an issue of particular interest to the authors of the Empire⁵⁹. The banquet, then, can be taken as a symbol of the ancient Hellenic institutions, the institutions which Alexander will now adapt in his attempts to make the Hellenic universal.

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⁵⁹ Alexander is in fact the protagonist of two of Dio of Prusa's speeches on kingship: one of them (*Or. II*) is a dialogue between a young Alexander and his father Philip, while the other (*Or. IV*) evokes a meeting between the king and Diogenes the Cynic.

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CROSSING STATUS BARRIERS: THE DISRUPTION OF AN IMPERIAL BANQUET BY ANGRY SOLDIERS IN PLUTARCH'S *OTHO*

LUKAS DE BLOIS

Radboud University of Nijmegen

Abstract

In his *Life of Otho*, chapter 3, Plutarch describes a dinner that the emperor Otho had with 80 senators, some of whom had brought their ladies with them. The dinner was disturbed by soldiers of the praetorian guard, who felt very uneasy and distrustful against the senators, and thought that they had to save the emperor from a senatorial conspiracy after having seen weapons loaded upon wagons. Violating the exclusivity of the imperial dinner, in other words breaking through an important status barrier, they inverted the positive effect of this great banquet, and thus damaged Otho's reputation among the upper classes beyond repair. In Plutarch's *Galba* and *Otho*, which should be read as one *opus*, this dinner story negatively inverts an important means of imperial representation and thus indicates how weak Otho's position really was. It presents as well a clear symptom of the serious deterioration of military discipline that in this year of civil strife (AD 68–69) manifested itself and may be seen as a consequence of bad leadership at the top (by Galba and Otho) and at the second level of authority (by people such as Nymphidius Sabinus, Vinusius, Laco, Icelus and Otho's cronies). By choosing an imperial banquet, which should be a place of friendship with high status *amici Caesaris*, a show-case of imperial power and *paideia*, and a mirror of hierarchies within the urban Roman elite, as the scene where the utter escalation of military misbehaviour and the total loss of imperial authority over the military mob came to light, Plutarch accentuates the social and representational importance of such banquets.

In *Otho* 3.3–7 Plutarch tells us that near Rome soldiers of the praetorian guard became suspicious when they noticed that weapons were loaded on wagons (probably to equip soldiers who were to participate in the war against the Vitellians, LdB). Some soldiers attacked the wagons, others killed two centurions who opposed them, as well as Crispinus, the higher officer in charge. Apparently the soldiers thought that a coup against the emperor Otho was at hand, which they wanted to prevent. The whole mob, putting themselves in array and exhorting one another to go to the help of the emperor, marched to Rome. Here, learning that eighty senators were at supper with Otho – some of them with their wives – they rushed to the palace, declaring that now was a good time to take off all the emperor's enemies at one stroke. In the palace there was dire perplexity, which fell upon Otho and his guests, who kept their eyes fixed upon him in speechless terror. But he sent the prefects of the guard with orders to explain matters to the soldiers and appease them, while at the same time he dismissed his guests by another door; and they barely made their escape as the soldiers, forcing their way through the guards into the great hall, asked what was become of the enemies of Caesar. In this crisis, then, Otho stood up on his couch, and after many exhortations, and entreaties, and not without plentiful tears, at last succeeded in sending them away (Plutarch, *Otho* 3.4–7).

Is this just a minor episode in a chaotic year, the year of the four emperors, which was full of usurpations, civil strife, killing and plundering? Why does Plutarch give us this dinner story, in this very short biography of Otho, when he

could have opted for seemingly more important things, such as heroic episodes in battles and sieges, or political upheavals, or other spectacular events? It is well known that Plutarch in his *Alexander* 1.2 explicitly indicates that the description of the *ethos*, the character, of his heroes was his primary goal, and that trivial things sometimes showed this better than battles and sieges would do. However, this episode is more than such a trivial detail. The suspicious behaviour of some praetorians, who saw weapons being loaded on wagons, and the ensuing disruption of Otho's banquet by soldiers of the praetorian guard is also treated with some emphasis and in full detail by Tacitus, and is more briefly mentioned by Suetonius and Cassius Dio¹. So four important authors or their sources considered this disruption of Otho's dinner an important event, important enough to insert it in their account of Otho's reign. This should not come as a surprise to us. Banquets were of great consequence in Roman social life, they gave the rich and powerful opportunities to show off, to trumpet their own standing, as John Donahue puts it (Donahue 2004, 113). The sharing of food with people of lower status, with equals or among large numbers was a constant feature of social and cultural elite life in Rome and other Roman towns (ibid. 116) and attending dinners gave plenty of opportunities to communicate with equals, or with people of higher or lower standing, to men as well as women. As recently published works have shown, to Roman emperors dinners were an important means to share opinions with senators and other important people, and to show their good character. Imperial dinners were show-cases of imperial *gratia* and *paideia*, and unveiled existing hierarchies within the upper layers of society². To give dinners in the right and proper way was one of many means through which emperors could enhance their reputation; it was one of many ritualized standard practices that enabled emperors to show that they were the right persons in the right place, in other words, could legitimize their position. Other such standard practices were sessions of the senate presided by the emperor, *adlocutiones*, *adventus*, or even better, triumphal processions, which showed the emperors' military prowess. Yet other ones were *salutationes*, receiving embassies, distributing *congiaria* or *donativa* and attending the games at Rome. Some of those standard practices, such as *adlocutiones*, *adventus*, and *liberalitates*, were regularly propagated on coins, in inscriptions, or even in sculpture (think of Trajan's arch at Beneventum), but other ones, like imperial dinners, stayed outside this form of imperial representation. The reason must be that the elite audience that was involved could be present personally or could hear about it first hand, and that other people had nothing to do with it. In this respect imperial dinners were an in-crowd form of imperial representation

¹ Tacitus, *Histories* 1.80-82; Suetonius, *Otho* 8.1f.; Cassius Dio 64.9.2. See K. VÖSSING, 2004, p. 347 and E. STEIN-HÖLKEKAMP, 2005, p. 49.

² See J. F. DONAHUE, 2004, pp. 67-72; K. VÖSSING, 2004, pp. 265-539; E. STEIN-HÖLKEKAMP, 2005, pp. 41-55. In general on Roman upper class banquets see J. D'ARMS, 1999; K. M. D. DUNBABIN, 2003; J. F. DONAHUE, 2004, esp. 113 and 116; K. VÖSSING, 2004, pp. 187-264; E. STEIN-HÖLKEKAMP, 2005.

aiming at a very limited group of senators and other important high status people. So in this case there was a status barrier, which precluded any other people. General advertisement of this type of ritualized standard practice would destroy its exclusive character and break the status barrier.

Ritualized standard practices can be transposed to different contexts, or even inverted into their reverses, in a kind of dynamic of rituals. In this way an author can attack and de-legitimize a ruler, by inverting the standard practices through which he usually shows his prowess, effectiveness, liberality and culture into their negative counterparts. Just one example. The author of the *Historia Augusta*, who clearly wished to give an utterly negative image of the emperor Elagabalus, portrays him giving an *adlocutio* to the prostitutes of Rome, instead of to the military (*HA, Vita Heliogabali* 26.3-4). *Adlocutio* was an important ritualized standard practice of emperors going to war³, but instead Elagabalus is portrayed as plunging into every kind of debauchery instead after his oration to the prostitutes. In *Historia Augusta* 26.3-4 we read:

He gathered together in a public building all the harlots from the Circus, the theatre, the Stadium, and all other places of amusement, and from the public baths, and then delivered a speech to them, as one might to soldiers, calling them 'comrades' (*commilitones*, LdB) and discoursing upon various kinds of postures and debaucheries⁴.

A second example is Nero's triumphal procession after his voyage through Greece during which he won many prizes at the great Greek games. The procession was about victories in Greek games, not about successful battles and sieges. Soldiers forming a special guard, the *augustiani*, had to act as a kind of clique, which had to praise Nero's qualities as a performer at the Greek games. Nero may have staged the procession himself, thinking it would enhance his reputation of a cultured and educated ruler, but if this was the case it completely backfired, for this triumphal procession is utterly condemned by the literary sources in which it is described, which must echo upper class feelings in Rome⁵. In *Nero* 25.1 Suetonius tells us:

... but at Rome he (= Nero) rode in the chariot which Augustus had used in his triumphs in days gone by, and wore a purple robe and a Greek cloak adorned with stars of gold, bearing on his head the Olympic crown, and in his right hand the Pythian, while the rest were carried before him with inscriptions telling where he had won them and against what competitors, and giving the

³ A fine example of the propagation of an *adlocutio* in Severan times is depicted on a medallion published by F. GNECCHI, 1912, II, pl. 93,8. See M. CHRISTOL, 1997, p. 10.

⁴ *HA, Vita Elagabali* 26.3-4: *Omnes de circo, de theatro, de stadio, et omnibus locis et balneis meretrices collegit in aedes publicas et apud eas contionem habuit quasi militarem, dicens eas commilitones, disputavitque de generibus schematum et voluptatum*. See on this emperor and his image in ancient and modern literature M. ICKS, "Heliogabalus, a Monster on the Roman Throne. The Literary Construction of a Bad Emperor", in I. SLUITER & R. M. ROSEN (eds.), *KAKOS. Badness and Anti-Values in Classical Antiquity*, Leiden, 2008, forthcoming.

⁵ On Nero's voyage to Greece (AD 67) see Suetonius, *Nero* 22-26 and Cassius Dio 63.8-9.

titles of the songs or the subject of the plays. His car was followed by his claque and by the escort of a triumphal procession, who shouted that they were the attendants of Augustus and the soldiers of his triumphs⁶.

In his *Life of Otho*, chapter 3, Plutarch gives us another example. Otho's high status dinner with 80 senators and their ladies was disturbed by soldiers, who felt very uneasy and distrustful, especially against the senators, and thought that they had to save the emperor from a senatorial conspiracy as soon as they had seen weapons loaded upon wagons. Violating the exclusivity of the imperial dinner, in other words breaking through an important status barrier, they inverted the positive effect of this great banquet, and thus damaged Otho's reputation among the upper classes beyond repair. This is how Plutarch presents the story to us. Giving this story relatively much space within this short *Vita*, he emphasized how little authority Otho had and how weak his position really was. In contrast, in *Histories* 1.82 Tacitus has the soldiery come to its senses and return to discipline after speeches of the praetorian prefects. In 1.83 f. he adds an oration to the praetorians, which is put into Otho's mouth, and in which the existence of the senate is defended in very positive tones. Tacitus' story is more optimistic about the soldiers of the guard than Plutarch's is, and Tacitus sees fit to use this event to insert a laudatory oration on the position of the senate into his report.⁷ He thus gives us a much more positive image of Otho than Plutarch does. So Plutarch must have deliberately painted Otho's authority in very dark colours, in this way inverting an important, exclusive representation of his power into its negative counterpart.

In my view this dinner story is not fictional. In *Otho* 3.3-7 Plutarch gives us a clever rhetorical elaboration of a story that seems to be historical, given the fact that three other literary sources tell it as well, however briefly or elaborately⁸. I think that the account of the disruption of Otho's banquet, which Plutarch must have found in his written sources or may have got from

⁶ Suetonius, *Nero* 25.1: "... *sed et Romam eo curru, quo Augustus olim triumphaverat, et in veste purpurea distinctaque stellis aureis chlamyde coronamque capite gerens Olympicam, dextra manu Pythiam, praeunte pompa ceterarum cum titulis, ubi et quos quo cantionum quoque fabularum argumento vicisset; sequentibus currum ovantium ritu plausoribus, Augustianos militesque se triumphum eius clamantibus.*

⁷ I owe thanks to Christopher Pelling for pointing this out to me during the discussion that followed my lecture at the eighth conference of the International Plutarch Society, Coimbra, Portugal, 24 September 2008.

⁸ A common source of Tacitus, Suetonius, and Plutarch might have made up this story, in which case it could be largely fictional. I do not believe this, because the story, especially in the versions given by Tacitus and Plutarch, contains too many specific details and because this source, if it had been historiographical, which it probably had, would have been a contemporary of the events of AD 68-69. He would have had to take into account that many eye-witnesses were still around, who would not easily have accepted a fictional story about emperors and their praetorians that had been inserted into an historical work. [I am not so sure about this!] I owe thanks to Philip Stadter, who brought this up during the discussion that followed my lecture at the eighth conference of the International Plutarch Society, Coimbra, Portugal, 24 September, 2008.

hearsay, suited him well. In the opening lines of his *Galba*, Plutarch gives us the main theme of his *Galba* and *Otho*, which should be read as one narrative⁹. This theme is the escalation of military misconduct in times of diminished or missing leadership. In *Galba* 1 Plutarch observes:

Iphicrates the Athenian used to think that the mercenary soldier might well be fond of wealth and fond of pleasure, in order that his quest for the means to gratify his desires might lead him to fight with greater recklessness; but most people think that a body of soldiers, just like a natural body in full vigour, ought to have no initiative of its own, but should follow that of its commander. Wherefore Paullus Aemilius, as we are told, finding that the army which he had taken over in Macedonia was infected with loquacity and meddlesomeness, as though they were all generals, gave out word that each man was to have his hand ready and his sword sharp, but that he himself would look out for the rest. Moreover, Plato (*Resp.* 376c) sees that a good commander or general can do nothing unless his army is amenable and loyal; and he thinks that the quality of obedience, like the quality characteristic of a king, requires a noble nature and a philosophic training, which, above all things, blends harmoniously the qualities of gentleness and humanity with those of high courage and aggressiveness. Many dire events, and particularly those which befell the Romans after the death of Nero, bear witness to this, and show plainly that an empire has nothing more fearful to show than a military force given over to untrained and unreasoning impulses¹⁰.

The disruption of Otho's banquet not only shows Otho's hopeless position, but is also one of many examples of a deterioration of military discipline as a function of bad leadership at the top (by the emperors Galba and Otho) and at the second level of authority (by people such as Nymphidius Sabinus, Vinus, Laco, Icelus and Otho's cronies). By now soldiers of the guard at Rome thought that they could do anything they liked. In Plutarch's *Galba* the worst kind of leadership is displayed by the emperor himself and by his close assistants, men such as Vinus, Laco, and Icelus. Those second line leaders were rapacious and acted in an arbitrary, selfish, tyrannical way. In practically all literary sources

⁹ On Plutarch's *Galba* and *Otho* being one story see C. B. R. PELLING, 2002, p. 188 (+ 195 n. 68), and p. 383 n. 11.

¹⁰ Plutarch, *Galba* 1: Ὁ μὲν Ἀθηναῖος Ἴφικράτης τὸν μισθοφόρον ἤξιου στρατιώτην καὶ φιλόπλουτον εἶναι καὶ φιλήδονον, ὅπως ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις χορηγίαν ἐπιζητῶν ἀγωνίζηται παραβολώτερον, οἱ δὲ πλείστοι, καθάπερ ἐρρωμένον σῶμα, τὸ στρατιωτικὸν ἀξιοῦσιν ἰδία μηδέποτε χρώμενον ὀρμῇ συγκινεῖσθαι τῇ τοῦ στρατηγοῦ. διὸ καὶ Παῦλον Αἰμίλιον λέγουσι τὴν ἐν Μακεδονίᾳ δύναμιν παραλαβόντα λαλιάς καὶ περιεργίας, οἷον διαστρατηγοῦσαν, ἀνάπλεων, παρεγγυῆσαι τὴν χεῖρα ποιεῖν ἐτοιμῆν καὶ τὴν μάχαιραν ὀξεῖαν ἕκαστον, αὐτῶ δὲ τῶν ἄλλων μελήσειν. ὁ δὲ Πλάτων οὐδὲν ἔργον ὀρῶν ἄρχοντος ἀγαθοῦ καὶ στρατηγοῦ στρατιᾶς μὴ σωφρονούσης μηδὲ ὁμοπαθοῦσης, ἀλλὰ τὴν πειθαρχικὴν ἀρετὴν ὁμοίως τῇ βασιλικῇ νομίζων φύσεως γενναίας καὶ τροφῆς φιλοσόφου δεῖσθαι, μάλιστα τῶ πρᾶφ καὶ φιλανθρώπῳ τὸ θυμοειδὲς καὶ δραστήριον ἐμμελῶς ἀνακεραυνυμένης, ἄλλα τε πάθη πολλὰ καὶ τὰ Ῥωμαίοις συμπεσόντα μετὰ τὴν Νέρωνος τελευτὴν ἔχει μαρτύρια καὶ παραδείγματα τοῦ μηδὲν εἶναι φοβερώτερον ἀπαιδεύτοις χρωμένης καὶ ἀλόγοις ὀρμαῖς ἐν ἡγεμονίᾳ στρατιωτικῆς δυνάμεως. On this passage see for example R. ASH, 1997.

Galba is reproached with giving them too much latitude, whereas he refused to give the soldiers their due. He never gave them a proper donative, not even at the occasion of the adoption of an heir, Piso, and he tried in an exaggerated way to be an example of old-fashioned *severitas* towards the soldiers, even if they had more or less justified claims to make. Galba decimated, for example, fleet soldiers, and a band of German bodyguards, for no good reasons. Plutarch tells us that the soldiers began to cherish a dire and savage hatred towards Galba, because he was defrauding them and so doing laid down instructions for succeeding emperors. By treating too positively some of Vindex' supporters, and by not explicitly siding with the soldiers of Verginius Rufus, who had put down Vindex' rebellion in Gaul in AD 67, Galba also lost the support of the armies of the Germaniae, which ended up supporting the ensuing usurpation of Vitellius¹¹.

Otho was really no better leader than Galba had been. In *Otho* 3.2-6 Plutarch tells us that Otho was placing his government on a sound basis and took a number of wise decisions, but all available sources show that Otho was not the master of the soldiers and their officers, but their plaything. In *Otho* 5.3 Plutarch speaks of the disorderly and arrogant spirit of the soldiers, their *ataxia* and *thrasutês*. Otho did not behave as a good, strong leader would have done, and did not overcome the disciplinary problem. His best act seems to have been his impressive suicide¹². In this context an elaborate story about the disruption of Otho's banquet by the soldiery fits in well, showing how low military discipline had become and to what depth Otho's authority over the soldiers and their officers had sunk.

In conclusion. In Plutarch's Galba and Otho, which in my opinion should be read as one story, this dinner story negatively inverts an important means of imperial self-representation and so indicates how weak, in Plutarch's opinion, Otho's position really was. It is as well one of many examples of a serious deterioration of military discipline as a function of bad leadership at the top and at the second level of authority. By choosing an imperial banquet, which should be a place of friendship with high status *amici Caesaris*, a show-case of imperial power and *paideia*, and a mirror of hierarchies within the urban Roman elite, as the scene where the extreme escalation of military misbehaviour and the total loss of imperial authority over the military mob came to light, Plutarch highlights the social importance of such banquets.

¹¹ On Galba's reign see Tacitus, *Histories* 1.4-41; Suetonius, *Galba* 11-20; Plutarch, *Galba* 10-28; Cassius Dio 64.1-6. On the decimation of the fleet soldiers see Suetonius, *Galba* 12.2 and Plutarch, *Galba* 15.3-4. Cf. Tacitus, *Histories* 1.6. In the same paragraph, *Galba* 12.2, Suetonius narrates that Galba also disbanded a cohort of Germans, whom the previous Caesars had made their body-guard and had found absolutely faithful in many emergencies. On Galba, Otho, their assistants, and the soldiers see L. DE BLOIS, 2008.

¹² On Otho's reign see Tacitus, *Histories* 1.44-47; 71-90; 2.11-56; Suetonius, *Otho* 7-12; Plutarch, *Otho* 1-18; Cassius Dio 64.7-15. On Otho's suicide see Tacitus, *Histories* 2.48-49; Suetonius, *Otho* 10-11; Plutarch, *Otho* 16-18 and Cassius Dio 64.13-15.

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FESTINS DE SANGUE: A TRADIÇÃO DO BANQUETE AZIAGO EM PLUTARCO

NUNO SIMÕES RODRIGUES
Universidade de Lisboa

Abstract

This paper's title evokes García Lorca's play *Bodas de Sangre*. In fact, the strong contrast we can find between the feast and the blood is used several times by Plutarch in his *Vitae*. But the Author only follows an ancient literary tradition that can be found in mythological texts as well as in epic and tragic poetry or even in historiography. So, Plutarch makes an important contribution to what we call "pathetic History". Our aim is to demonstrate how well Plutarch fits in this tradition, discussing his qualities and interests as Historian.

Na biografia que escreveu de Teseu, Plutarco assinala que, quando Pirítoos desposou Deidamia, os centauros foram convidados para a boda. Nunca tendo provado vinho antes, porém, quando o fizeram, a natureza selvagem dos centauros revelou-se e estes tornaram-se agressivos, desejando violentar as mulheres presentes no festim¹. O que deveria ter sido uma festa, qual expressão da ordem e da harmonia, terminou em agressões e sangue, acabando por conferir ao banquete de casamento um carácter funesto e caótico.

Na vida do rei Artaxerxes II, Plutarco conta que Parisatis, a rainha-mãe, envolvida nas teias e intrigas políticas da corte persa, decide eliminar a nora, a rainha Estatira, dado o ciúme e a inveja que nutria por ela². Para o efeito, organiza um banquete de reconciliação. Escreve Plutarco, baseado em Ctésias e em Dínon, que, apesar de reconciliadas, as duas rainhas temiam-se mutuamente, pelo que apenas comiam o que a outra também comia e que era servido sempre pelas mesmas mãos. Mas ainda assim Parisatis conseguiu introduzir veneno na refeição, oferecendo à nora um pedaço de carne contaminada. Estatira acabou envenenada, no meio de fortes convulsões e grandes sofrimentos³.

Segundo Plutarco, também a biografia de Alexandre-o-Grande foi influenciada pelo distúrbio ocorrido durante um banquete em que pai e filho se defrontaram, ao ponto de Alexandre se ter retirado com a mãe da casa paterna e refugiado na Ilíria, enquanto Olímpia era levada para o Epiro. Na sequência destes acontecimentos, será relatada a morte de Filipe⁴. Na mesma vida, um outro banquete, em que Alexandre promove um concurso de bebida de vinho, acaba por terminar na morte de quarenta e dois dos convivas⁵.

¹ Plu., *Thes.* 30, 3. Este é o tema que decorava o pedimento ocidental do templo de Zeus, em Olímpia. Nesse conjunto escultórico, a figura de Apolo, ao centro, representa a reposição da ordem, a que se deseja regressar após a experiência do caos. Sobre esta questão dissertou já G. PAUL, 1991, p. 160; sobre as funcionalidades do vinho neste contexto, ver o nosso estudo, 2001.

² Plu., *Art.* 19. Sobre esta *Vida*, ver o estudo de C. SOARES, 2008.

³ Plu., *Art.* 19, 7. Uma análise deste passo pode também ser lida no estudo de D. ROMERO GONZÁLEZ, neste mesmo volume, pp. 255-60.

⁴ Plu., *Alex.* 9.

⁵ Plu., *Alex.* 70.

Na vida de Sertório, o autor das *Vidas* afirma que o general romano mantinha sempre um nível de austeridade e decoro nos banquetes em que participava. Num desses festins, porém, os inimigos de Sertório decidiram aproveitar-se da ocasião para lhe montar uma armadilha. Fingiram estar embriagados e comportarem-se de forma desordeira, de modo a enfurecerem o anfitrião. Sertório tentou fingir que nada o afectava. Ainda assim, os conspiradores levaram o plano avante e assassinaram Sertório enquanto este, impotente, se mantinha reclinado no seu leito⁶.

Também na vida de Crasso, Plutarco informa que foi com um banquete que Orodes, o rei dos Partos, comemorou, juntamente com Artavasdes, o rei arménio, a derrota romana em Carras, no ano 53 a.C. Segundo o relato plutarquiano, os reis orientais assistiam então a uma representação de *As Bacantes* de Eurípidés, viam a cena em que a rainha Agave surge com a cabeça de Penteu. Terá sido precisamente nessa ocasião que um mensageiro entrou no salão com a cabeça de Crasso, que foi aproveitada pelo actor que interpretava Agave, de modo a conferir mais realismo ao momento⁷. Mas os acontecimentos deste festim pressagiam também o castigo que acabou por cair sobre Orodes e a crueldade demonstrada ao longo da sua vida⁸.

Os exemplos citados, a que poderíamos juntar alguns outros, comungam do facto de serem relatos historiográficos, supostamente históricos, enquadrados por um ambiente simposiaco, que confere um estilo patético à narração dos acontecimentos⁹. A utilização do banquete como tema narrativo ou eixo director da descrição dos eventos foi já reconhecida como uma das características do estilo plutarquiano, com particular presença nas *Vidas*.¹⁰ A título de exemplo da sua importância, podemos referir o inesquecível passo da vida de *António*, em que o autor descreve o ambiente no palácio de Cleópatra, em Alexandria, o qual contribui para que o casal protagonista do texto fosse conhecido entre os seus contemporâneos como “os da vida inimitável”¹¹.

O tema em si, porém, está longe de ser uma criação original do tratadista de Queroneia. O motivo do festim maldito, em particular – aquele em que nos centramos –, aparece nas literaturas antigas desde muito cedo. Apresentamos alguns exemplos.

Já na *Odisseia*, no canto em que Circe recebe os companheiros de Ulisses, vemos que a feiticeira os assentou e lhes serviu queijo, cevada, mel e vinho, aos

⁶ Plu., *Sert.* 26. Uma análise deste passo pode também ser lida no estudo de I. MUÑOZ GALLARTE, neste mesmo volume, pp. 245-257.

⁷ Plu., *Crass.* 33.

⁸ Plu., *Crass.* 33, 7-9.

⁹ Ver e.g. Plu., *Pel.* 9, 4-11; *Dem.* 36, 4-12; *Pyrrh.* 5, 7-14; *Cleom.* 7-8. Alguns destes banquetes incluem o vinho como motivo desencadeador do conflito.

¹⁰ A importância do banquete na obra de Plutarco foi reconhecida pelo facto de o autor lhe ter dedicado uma obra, *Symposiaka*. As funções do banquete nas *Vidas* foram já destacadas por G. PAUL, 1991 e por F. B. TITCHENER, 1999. Paul refere outros tratamentos da vida de Alexandre, por exemplo, onde o banquete aziago está igualmente presente.

¹¹ Plu., *Ant.* 28, 2.

quais juntou terríveis drogas, cujo objectivo era transformá-los em porcos¹². O banquete de Circe tem, portanto, um objectivo nefasto, anunciando a desgraça que está para acontecer aos companheiros de Ulisses. No mesmo poema, o desenlace da história do regresso de Ulisses a Ítaca dá-se com a organização de um banquete, onde, desde o início, a tragédia espreita. O Poeta refere-se-lhe do seguinte modo:

Mas nenhuma refeição podia ser mais desgraçosa do que aquela que uma deusa e um homem forte estavam prestes a oferecer-lhes¹³.

É no contexto deste banquete que Penélope consegue que se realize a prova do arco, na sequência da qual ocorre a mortandade dos pretendentes às mãos de Ulisses, trazendo um desfecho inesperado e sangrento à festa¹⁴. É ainda na *Odisseia* que se conta uma variante do mito de Agamémnon. Segundo esta versão, que difere da contada por Ésquilo, Egisto teria recebido o rei de Argos/Micenas, regressado da guerra de Tróia, com um festim, que aproveitou para o matar o atrida “como a um boi”¹⁵. A mesma tradição será seguida por Séneca que, na tragédia *Agamémnon*, traz o registo da morte do rei à cena recorrendo à típica descrição coral, que evoca o motivo do banquete sangrento¹⁶.

Radicado no mito de Agamémnon, conta-se o de Atreu, de quem aquele rei é dito descendente. A maldição que na mitologia grega se cola à família dos Atridas justifica-se precisamente com um acontecimento, *in illo tempore*, cujo acme ocorre durante um banquete maldito. A história de Atreu, filho de Pélops e Hipodamia, é preenchida pelo ódio deste ao irmão Tiestes, bem como pelas vinganças que os dois irmãos planearam alternadamente um contra o outro. Depois de Tiestes se ter tornado amante da cunhada, Aérope, Atreu concebeu o plano de dar a comer ao irmão os próprios filhos dele, num banquete propositadamente preparado para isso¹⁷. O acto horrendo de Atreu fez cair a vingança dos deuses sobre si e sobre todos os seus descendentes. O mesmo enredo pode ser lido nos mitos de Tântalo, Licáon e Tereu.

O primeiro é tido como um dos ascendentes dos Atridas, o que transforma a característica do festim maldito num *topos* familiar, que eventualmente traduz a repetição de um mesmo motivo numa família mitológica¹⁸. Segundo a tradição mitológica, Tântalo teria imolado o seu filho Pélops para servi-lo em forma de guisado, num banquete, aos deuses. A crer em alguns dos autores antigos, Tântalo tê-lo-ia feito por piedade, numa época em que a fome grassava na Hélade e não havia outra vítima para oferecer às divindades. Outros consideravam que Tântalo quis pôr à prova a clarividência divina. Seja

¹² *Od.* 10, 233-240.

¹³ *Od.* 20, 392-393, em trad. F. LOURENÇO.

¹⁴ *Od.* 21-22.

¹⁵ *Od.* 4, 519-537.

¹⁶ Sen., *Ag.* 875-909.

¹⁷ Sen., *Thy.*; A. A. 1590-1601.

¹⁸ I.e., poderemos estar perante uma mesma estrutura de um mito, que ganhou formas de acordo com as variações locais-geográficas e temporais-cronológicas.

como for, todos os deuses reconheceram a carne que lhes estava a ser servida, à excepção de Deméter, cuja fome não impediu que devorasse um ombro da vítima¹⁹. Mas os deuses acabaram por reconstruir o corpo de Pélops, a quem foi assim concedida a ressurreição. No lugar do ombro devorado, foi colocada uma prótese de marfim.

Quanto a Licáon, contava-se entre os Gregos que este era um rei piedoso e que por isso mesmo os deuses o visitavam amiúde. Os filhos do rei, contudo, quiseram saber se as visitas da casa eram efectivamente deuses, pelo que mataram uma criança e misturaram as suas carnes com as da vítima que havia sido preparada para o banquete. Os deuses, horrorizados com o que viram, fulminaram os culpados. Uma variante do mito, porém, reza que, tanto Licáon como os filhos, eram ímpios e que, um dia, Zeus decidiu testar o grau da impiedade do homem. Visitou-o, na forma de um camponês, e Licáon, suspeitando de que poderia tratar-se de um deus, decidiu pôr o hóspede à prova, servindo-lhe a carne de uma criança num banquete. A ira de Zeus levou a que Licáon fosse fulminado²⁰.

O mito de Tereu contém igualmente o *topos* da criança sacrificada e servida num festim. Apesar de casado com Procne e desta ter um filho, Tereu inflamou-se de paixão pela cunhada Filomela. Tereu violou Filomela e, para evitar que esta o denunciasse, cortou-lhe ainda a língua. Mas Filomela encontrou forma de contar o que se havia passado, bordando a sua história num pano. Conhecedora da verdade, Procne decidiu então vingar-se do marido, matando o próprio filho, Ítis, cozinhando as carnes da criança e servindo-as ao marido, que as comeu sem suspeitar de nada²¹. Aquiles Tácio refere-se no seu romance a este mito, numa écfrase, que termina do seguinte modo:

Era assim que o artista tinha concebido a cena bordada no tecido da tela. Quanto ao resto do quadro, as mulheres mostravam a Tereu, numa cesta, os restos do banquete: a cabeça e as mãos de seu filho; riam, mas ao mesmo tempo estavam apavoradas. Tereu estava representado a saltar do leito e, sacando da espada contra as mulheres, dava um empurrão à mesa com a perna; a mesa nem estava de pé, nem estava por terra, dando antes a impressão de que era o quadro que estava na iminência de cair²².

Outro mito em que pontificava o tema do banquete aziago era o das Leucípides. A história destas filhas de Leucipo e sobrinhas de Tíndaro – primas portanto de Helena e de Clitemnestra, as esposas dos Atridas – resume-se à luta que, por sua causa, opôs os Dioscuros, seus primos, a dois outros primos, filhos de Afareu. No festim que Castor e Pólux ofereceram em Esparta a Eneias e Páris, quando estes visitaram Menelau com o objectivo de raptar Helena, os

¹⁹ Ov., *Met.* 6, 401-411.

²⁰ Apollod., *Bib.* 3, 8, 1; Ov., *Met.* 1, 196; Paus., 8, 2, 1-2. Alguns autores consideram que estas lendas estão relacionadas com antigos sacrifícios humanos, associados ao culto de Zeus Licáon.

²¹ Paus. 1, 41, 8; 10, 4, 8; Apollod., *Bib.* 3, 14, 8; Ov., *Met.* 6, 426-674; Ach. Tat. 5, 3.

²² Ach. Tat. 5, 3, 7-8, em trad. A. N. Pena.

filhos de Afareu, motivados pelo vinho que haviam ingerido, censuraram os Dioscuros por se terem casado sem terem oferecido um dote ao tio. Insultados, Castor e Pólux reagiram e a discussão acabou num violento confronto, que levou à morte de um dos gêmeos, bem como de dois dos seus primos²³.

Como se confirma, são vários os episódios mitológicos gregos que aludem ao tema do festim maldito ou aziago. A sua pertinência é de tal modo assinalável que até mesmo as bodas de Peleu e Tétis se celebram num banquete cujo desfecho culmina naquela que veio a ser a mais sangrenta e simbólica das guerras do imaginário grego²⁴.

Mas o tema em causa não surge exclusivamente na mitologia. Ele está igualmente presente nas tradições históricas e historiográficas gregas, ainda que com funcionalidades razoavelmente diferentes, como atestam os casos de Simónides e de Heródoto²⁵. As *Histórias* de Hérodoto são, aliás, particularmente ricas nesta temática. O autor inclui uma série de banquetes, supostamente factuais – o que não é linearmente exacto –, em que a desgraça é a protagonista. Independentemente da factualidade, interessa-nos destacar a pertinência da sua presença na narrativa²⁶. A propósito da egípcia Nitócris, por exemplo, o “Pai da História” refere que, depois de lhe terem matado o irmão e entregado o poder, a rainha convidou os egípcios que considerava terem sido os assassinos do parente a participarem num sumptuoso festim. Enquanto eles se banquetevam, a rainha fez cair sobre eles as águas do rio, através de uma conduta secreta²⁷. Em Heródoto, encontramos também o relato de um banquete que evoca os mitos de crianças cozinhadas, acima referidos. Concedamos voz ao próprio historiador, a propósito de Astíages, rei dos Medos, que deseja vingar-se de Hárpago, por este não ter matado Ciro quando ele era ainda criança, tal como lhe havia sido ordenado:

Ao ouvir estas palavras, Hárpago prostrou-se e, de regresso a casa, considerou uma grande sorte que o seu erro tivesse acabado em bem e que, sob tão bons auspícios, o tivessem convidado para jantar. Mal chegou, mandou a toda a pressa o único filho que tinha, que andava pelos treze anos, com a recomendação de se dirigir ao palácio de Astíages e fazer aquilo que o rei lhe ordenasse. Ele próprio, exultante de alegria, contou à mulher o sucedido. Astíages, quando o filho de Hárpago chegou, mandou-o degolar e esquarterar em pedaços; uma parte das carnes assou-a, outra cozeu-a, e pôs tudo pronto a servir. Quando chegou a hora do jantar e Hárpago e os outros convivas compareceram, a todos os presentes e ao próprio Astíages foram servidas mesas repletas de carne de carneiro, a Hárpago, o corpo inteiro do filho, menos a cabeça, mãos e pés; estas partes ficaram de lado, dentro de um cesto, e cobertas. Logo que Hárpago pareceu satisfeito, Astíages perguntou-lhe se

²³ Theoc. 22; Apollod., *Bib.* 3, 11, 2.

²⁴ Apollod., *Bib.* 3, 13, 4-5.

²⁵ Isso porque o tema da criança cozinhada e oferecida em banquete parece ter tido um objectivo específico ou derivado de situações concretas, como a possibilidade de estar relacionado com eventuais sacrifícios humanos antigos. Sobre esta problemática, ver L. N. FERREIRA, 1996; M. HALM-TISSERANT, 2007².

²⁶ Do mesmo modo que nos interessa assinalar a inclusão de episódios como o de Giges e Candaules ou o de Aríon e o golfinho.

²⁷ Hdt. 2, 100.

tinha gostado do festim. Perante a resposta de que tinha gostado muito, aqueles que estavam incumbidos dessa missão trouxeram a cabeça, as mãos e os pés do rapaz, ainda cobertos; dirigiram-se a Hárpago e convidaram-no a destapar o cesto e a servir-se do que quisesse. Este obedeceu, e, ao destapá-lo, viu os restos do filho. Mas, perante o espectáculo, não se perturbou nem perdeu o auto-domínio. Astíages perguntou-lhe se sabia de que animal eram as carnes que tinha comido. Ele respondeu que sim e que aceitava tudo o que o rei fizesse. Depois desta resposta, pegou no resto das carnes e voltou para casa²⁸.

Como facilmente se conclui, o banquete canibal de Astíages reflecte os dos mitos de Tântalo e Atreu, confirmando a contaminação da historiografia grega pelas temáticas mitológicas²⁹. Mas a sua inclusão no relato funciona sobretudo pelo dramatismo e pelo tom patético que lhe dá forma. No mesmo livro, Heródoto relata também um plano de Creso e Ciro para aniquilar os Masságetas, seus inimigos. Estes são neutralizados através de um lauto banquete que lhes é oferecido. O abuso da comida e da bebida deixa-os totalmente incapazes de reagir contra os Persas que os atacam³⁰. É ainda em Heródoto que encontramos relato de um outro festim, igualmente marcado pelo desfecho funesto, apesar de essa não ter sido uma intenção premeditada, como acontece com outros casos. Trata-se do momento em que Amintas, rei da Macedónia, convida os Persas a banquetear-se na sua casa. Estes, saciados de comida e de bebida, pedem ao anfitrião que, à maneira persa, as mulheres do palácio se juntem aos convivas, ainda que esse não seja um costume grego. Amintas acaba por anuir, mas os convidados, embriagados, não se refreiam e começam a exceder-se no seu comportamento, em relação às mulheres presentes. É então que Alexandre, o filho de Amintas, engendra um plano para inverter a situação a seu favor: faz sair as mulheres do festim e substitui-as por outros tantos mancebos, vestidos de mulheres e armados de punhais. Estes acabam por matar os Persas, marcando o festim com sangue³¹. A semelhança de outros episódios herodotianos, também neste reconhecemos a influência da mitologia, mais concretamente do mito das bodas de Deidamia e Pirítoos, acima referido. No livro IX do mesmo historiador, regista-se outro episódio ainda particularmente revelador das contaminações temáticas na historiografia antiga. Trata-se da história da túnica de Xerxes. Heródoto conta que a rainha Améstris, mulher de Xerxes, teria oferecido ao marido uma túnica feita pelas suas próprias mãos. O rei, porém, viu-se obrigado a oferecê-la à nora, Artainte, por quem estava apaixonado, e que era também filha da cunhada do rei, por quem ele se havia enamorado antes. Ao tomar conhecimento do que se passara, Améstris elabora o seu plano de vingança e para o efeito aproveita a festa de aniversário do rei, pois sabia que nessa o

²⁸ Hdt. 1, 119, em trad. M. F. SILVA in *Heródoto, Histórias I*, trad., introd. e notas de M. F. SILVA e J. RIBEIRO FERREIRA, Lisboa, 1994.

²⁹ Sobre este problema, ver o mesmo estudo, 2007.

³⁰ Hdt. 1, 207. Sobre este episódio, ver C. COULET, 1994, p. 63; S. FLORY, 1987, pp. 42-3.

³¹ Hdt. 5, 19-20. Este banquete tem algumas semelhanças com o narrado em Plu., *Pel.* 9, 4-11, designadamente o elemento eonista.

monarca estava obrigado a atender a todos os pedidos que lhe fossem feitos nessa ocasião³². Amétris decide pedir ao marido que lhe seja entregue a cunhada, mãe de Artainte, que considerava ser a culpada daquela situação. Amétris deixa então emergir a vingança de uma forma atroz sobre aquela que considera sua rival, concretizada com a mutilação sádica e impiedosa do nariz, das orelhas, dos lábios, da língua e dos seios da cunhada³³. A ocasião que proporciona tamanha barbaridade é precisamente a do banquete real ou “Ceia Real”, como Heródoto lhe chama³⁴. Em contexto herodotiano, poderíamos citar ainda o banquete aziago de Atagino, pouco antes da batalha de Plateias, em que um persa prevê a desgraça dos seus conterrâneos no confronto que se aproxima, permitindo o contraste entre a alegria da refeição tomada em comum por Persas e Gregos e a morte que se anuncia e aproxima³⁵.

Em relação a Simónides de Ceos, há que assinalar a antiga tradição que referia que o poeta, depois de ter estado presente num banquete na casa da família de Escopas, teve de regressar ao local do festim para identificar os corpos dos convivas que haviam sido soterrados, na sequência do desabamento do tecto da sala. Um dos testemunhos do episódio é Cícero, que conta que o banquete se realizou na casa de Crânon e que o tecto desabou pouco tempo depois de o poeta de Ceos ter abandonado o local³⁶. O momento de festa foi, portanto, totalmente ofuscado pela tragédia que se lhe seguiu. Na verdade, as opiniões acerca da facticidade do episódio divergem, não faltando os autores que consideram que se trata de uma mera tradição sem qualquer fundamento verídico³⁷.

Uma história muito semelhante pode ser lida em Tácito e Suetónio, contemporâneos de Plutarco, a propósito do principado de Tibério. No autor dos *Annales*, lemos que certo dia, enquanto Tibério jantava numa *uilla* conhecida como “A caverna”, pois localizava-se numa gruta natural, a abóbada soltou-se e parte do tecto caiu, esmagando alguns dos servos. Tácito acrescenta mesmo que terá sido Sejano, o prefeito do pretório, quem salvou o imperador, sobrepondo-se sobre o corpo do príncipe³⁸. O mesmo relata Suetónio, sem no entanto se referir explicitamente a Sejano³⁹. O que nos interessa destacar deste episódio, porém, tenha ele efectivamente ocorrido ou não, é que uma vez mais o festim foi marcado pela tragédia, sendo por isso significativa a sua inclusão na narrativa pelos historiadores antigos.

³² A. M. BOWIE, 2003, destaca o facto de este ser um tema oriental, uma vez que exalta o rei e o seu poder enquanto indivíduo; ver ainda O. STRID, 2006.

³³ Hdt. 9, 108-13. Ver C. SOARES, 2003, pp. 353-9; E. WOLFF, 1964.

³⁴ Hdt. 9, 110.

³⁵ Hdt. 9, 16. Tema já salientado por C. COULET, 1994, p. 64. O passo em que Heródoto conta uma das versões da forma como Cambises provoca a morte da sua esposa-irmã sugere que tudo se terá passado durante um banquete, Hdt. 3, 32. Ver ainda Hdt. 3, 34-35; L. EDMUNDS, 1987.

³⁶ Cic., *Orat.* 2, 86, 351-353; Quint., *Inst.* 11, 2, 11-16.

³⁷ Uma discussão do passo pode ser lida em L. N. FERREIRA, 2005, pp. 138-40.

³⁸ Tac., *Ann.* 4, 59. Trata-se da célebre gruta de *Spelunca*, onde foram encontradas esculturas alusivas à *Odisseia*.

³⁹ Suet., *Tib.* 39.

É ainda da historiografia romana que nos chega o relato de pelo menos mais quatro exemplos de festins fúnebres. O primeiro decorreu durante o principado de Cláudio e diz respeito ao processo que desencadeou a execução da sua mulher, a imperatriz Valéria Messalina. É na sequência de um banquete orgiaco de características trágico-dionisíacas que Messalina é acusada de ter praticado bigamia e conspirado contra o imperador. Estas acusações acabarão por levar a imperatriz à morte, bem como muitos dos que com ela se envolveram no festim báquico⁴⁰. O segundo exemplo data do final do mesmo principado. Ou melhor, marca o final desse mesmo principado, dado que Suetónio levanta a suspeita de Cláudio ter sido envenenado durante um banquete que se realizou no Capitólio⁴¹. O terceiro caso data do principado de Nero e refere-se ao homicídio de Britânico, precisamente o filho de Messalina e Cláudio. Tácito conta, pormenorizadamente, que foi durante um banquete que o jovem príncipe foi envenenado por Nero, através de uma estratégia digna da que Plutarco regista para o episódio de Parisatis e Estatira⁴². É ainda através de Tácito e Suetónio que ficamos a saber que o mesmo Nero maquinou a morte da própria mãe, Agripina Menor, a quem atraiu a um banquete para depois a fazer entrar num navio preparado para naufragar⁴³. Quatro situações fúnebres, germinadas em outros tantos festins.

Estes são alguns exemplos que, quanto a nós, comprovam quão difundido era o tema do festim maldito na literatura greco-latina, no tempo de Plutarco. Mas o *topos* teve um êxito com ecos bem além desse universo. Efectivamente, ele estava já presente nas literaturas orientais pré-clássicas e suas herdeiras. Podemos encontrá-lo, por exemplo, nas culturas do mundo bíblico, em diversos episódios e textos. Na história de José, a morte do padeiro-mor da corte egípcia é decretada enquanto decorre o banquete de aniversário do farão⁴⁴. No livro dos *Juízes*, o relato da vida de Sansão, uma narrativa de forma deuteronomística com contornos épico-trágicos, romanescos e folclóricos datada de entre os séculos VIII e VI a.C.⁴⁵, recorre ao tema por duas vezes. A primeira enquadra o relato do casamento do herói com uma filisteia. Sansão oferece um banquete, em que propõe um enigma a um grupo de jovens. Estes, incapazes de decifrar o que lhes foi apresentado, decidem chantagear a mulher de Sansão, para que ela obtenha do marido a resposta desejada. A filisteia cede e trai o marido. Sansão acaba por revelar-lhe a resposta e a mulher transmite-a aos interessados. Irado por ter sido enganado, Sansão mata os jovens⁴⁶. A segunda vez contextualiza o episódio da morte do herói. Conta-se que os príncipes dos Filisteus se

⁴⁰ Tac., *Ann.* 11, 26-32. Analisámos já este episódio, bem como os ecos mitológico-literários que nele podemos descortinar, em 2003.

⁴¹ Suet., *Cl.* 44.

⁴² Tac., *Ann.* 13, 16.

⁴³ Suet., *Nero* 34; Tac., *Ann.* 14, 3-4.

⁴⁴ *Gn* 40, 20-23. É esse mesmo acontecimento que faz com que o copeiro-mor não volte a recordar-se de José, que ficou na prisão; ver H. GUNKEL, 1964 (1ª ed., 1901).

⁴⁵ Ver R. G. BOLING, 1975, pp. 30-1; J. NUNES CARREIRA, 1993, p. 211.

⁴⁶ *Jz* 14, 10-20. No célebre filme de Cecil B. De Mille, de 1949, o argumentista nomeou a mulher de Sansão como Semadar.

reuniram para oferecer um sacrifício a Dagon e celebrar um banquete. É nesse contexto que Sansão, já cego graças à traição de Dalila – o motivo de Dalila como que repete o da mulher filisteia na história do mesmo herói –, se coloca sob as colunas do templo e fá-lo ruir, esmagando todos os que se encontravam no seu interior⁴⁷.

Outro episódio bíblico em que o banquete proporciona a desgraça pode ser lido no livro de *Judite*, texto judaico que nos chegou na sua versão grega. Apesar de enquadrado no tempo de Nabucodonosor (secs. VII-VI a.C.), a composição deste “romance” deverá datar do século II a.C., mais especificamente do tempo de Antíoco IV Epifânio (168-163 a.C.)⁴⁸. O texto gira em torno de uma bela judia, epónima dos próprios Judeus, que decide tomar parte activa no conflito que opõe Assiro-babilónios a Hebreus/Judeus, matando um dos generais inimigos. Para isso, Judite aceita participar num banquete organizado pelo inimigo Holofernes, que, vencido pelo vinho, acaba decapitado às mãos da bela mulher⁴⁹.

No livro de *Daniel*, igualmente datado do período helenístico, encontramos também um episódio que assume a forma do festim maldito. Trata-se do banquete de Baltasar, no qual o rei babilónio, depois de ter abusado do vinho, decide fazer introduzir no festim os vasos de ouro e prata que Nabucodonosor havia tirado do templo de Jerusalém. Depois de todos os convivas terem bebido pelos objectos referidos, decidem louvar os deuses de Babilónia. É nesse momento que surge do nada uma mão humana que escreve nas paredes do palácio uma frase enigmática. É o profeta Daniel quem acaba por decifrar o seu significado, por indicação da rainha. O enigma anunciava o fim de Baltasar. Diz o texto que “na mesma noite, foi morto Baltasar, rei dos caldeus”⁵⁰. Uma vez mais, o banquete serve de pretexto para o anúncio da desgraça.

Há ainda dois outros banquetes bíblicos aziagos que não podemos deixar de referir neste estudo, dada a pertinência do seu enquadramento e dos motivos a que dão forma. O primeiro deles é o celebre “Banquete de Herodes”, que assinala o aniversário do tetrarca Herodes Antipas e que motiva a execução de João Baptista. Reconhecemos nesta história, aliás, vários motivos comuns à que assinalámos acima, a propósito de Xerxes, Amétris e Artainte. São diversos os elementos comuns entre o relato de Heródoto e o que encontramos nos Evangelhos de Mateus e de Marcos. Estes referem que o tetrarca da Galileia se comprometeu publicamente, no dia do seu aniversário, em oferecer à filha de Herodíade o que a jovem pedisse como recompensa por ter dançado nessa ocasião. A princesa, que Flávio Josefo identifica como sendo Salomé, é instigada pela mãe a pedir a cabeça do Baptista num prato⁵¹. A forma como a

⁴⁷ *Jz* 16, 23-31.

⁴⁸ Ver J. A. RAMOS, 2005, pp. 45-6.

⁴⁹ *Jdt* 12-13.

⁵⁰ *Dn* 5, em trad. J. A. RAMOS in *Nova Bíblia dos Capuchinhos*, Lisboa/Fátima, 1998.

⁵¹ *Mt* 14,3-12, *Mc* 6,17-29; J., *AJ* 18, 110-111, 136-137, 148, 240. O ódio de Herodíade por João explica-se pelo facto de o profeta denunciar o casamento tido como incestuoso entre esta princesa e o seu cunhado, Herodes Antipas. Curiosamente, o nome da jovem permanece oculto nos textos bíblicos.

narrativa é apresentada sugeriu já vários estudos, em particular de autores com formação jungiana, que a relacionam com os antigos mitos telúricos, centrados nas figuras da mãe e da filha⁵². Mas a sua estrutura recorda igualmente o episódio herodotiano do livro IX, em que Ântipas se assume como alter-ego de Xerxes, Herodiade de Améstris e Salomé de Artainte. A comunhão dos dois casos faz-se com o banquete maldito, que acaba por suscitar a desgraça de alguém. Se existe ou não relação entre ambos os textos, não o sabemos nem é este o lugar para proceder a uma discussão em torno dessa problemática. Mas o que nos parece indubitável é a semelhança tópica do *leit motiv* que dá sentido à narrativa.

Foi já notado que o banquete de Herodes prefigura uma inversão da Ceia eucarística⁵³. Assim poderá ser entendido, se tivermos em conta a inclusão de ambos os episódios nos mesmos Evangelhos, bem como a funcionalidade de cada uma das narrativas na economia dos textos em que se inserem. Mas consideramos que a Última Ceia, tal como vem narrada nos textos sinópticos e apesar da sua funcionalidade etiológica no âmbito da instituição do cristianismo como religião e ritual, configura igualmente um outro banquete aziago. Não é em torno desse banquete que se anuncia, processa e concretiza a traição de Jesus de Nazaré por Judas Iscariotes, que acaba com a prisão do Nazareno e sua posterior condenação e execução?

Os textos e tradições assinalados são anteriores ou contemporâneos das *Vidas* de Plutarco, o que nos leva a concluir que, no que diz respeito ao estilo, ao método e à forma, o tratadista de Queroneia estava bem apoiado para a composição das biografias que escreveu, tanto por *exempla* mitológicos, como por tradições e *topoi* literários em geral, mas particularmente associados à historiografia – não podemos esquecer que os textos bíblicos são supostamente História, quer para a cultura judaica quer para a cristã. Trouxemos à colação apenas alguns exemplos que o provam. Longe de se associar exclusivamente ao banquete de tipo oriental⁵⁴, o carácter aziago, nefasto ou maldito de alguns dos festins referidos por Plutarco parece antes seguir uma tradição, cuja escolha não é isenta ou inocente⁵⁵. Efectivamente, a opção de conferir um contexto a um momento que seria supostamente festivo e que se transforma numa catástrofe para os que nele intervêm tem um efeito retórico de significativa eficácia poético-historiográfica, uma vez que a funcionalidade festiva e positiva é substituída pelo inesperado final aziago e negativo, produzindo o efeito contrário do que se espera⁵⁶. A sua utilização poderá mesmo traduzir uma intencionalidade “suspensiva” na narrativa, contribuindo para o que ficou definido como historiografia patética e que

⁵² C. G. JUNG & C. KERÉNYI, 2002, em especial as pp. 119-83. Ver ainda B. L. KNAPP, 1977.

⁵³ *Mt* 26,17-29; *Mc* 14,12-25; *Lc* 22,7-20; M. DOTTIN-ORSINI, 1998, p. 14.

⁵⁴ A. M. BOWIE, 2003, p. 107.

⁵⁵ Apesar de alguns dos exemplos citados sobressaírem pelo tema da criança sacrificada, e mesmo tendo em conta que esse é o tópico principal dessas narrativas, quisemos salientar que outro elemento que lhes é comum na condução da narrativa é o do banquete aziago.

⁵⁶ Sobre o uso do banquete em geral na historiografia, ver G. PAUL, 1991, p. 158.

dominou o estilo dos historiadores durante grande parte da Antiguidade Clássica, particularmente a que floresceu durante o período da Segunda Sofística. Além disso, o método repete-se com alguma frequência. Veja-se como um passo do segundo livro dos *Reis*, por exemplo, é significativamente enriquecido, na paráfrase correspondente de Flávio Josefo, ao se acrescentar um banquete aziago à narrativa em causa⁵⁷.

Note-se também como a maioria destas narrativas tem o vinho e a sua introdução no ambiente do festim como agente catalisador da acção. É a partir do momento em que os convivas o ingerem que estes ficam inoperacionais ou, em contrapartida e no extremo da acção, se revelam elementos perturbadores do ambiente em que estão inseridos. Este é portanto um *topos* complementar do motivo do banquete aziago⁵⁸. O vinho revela-se um dos instrumentos que proporciona que o festim, cujo conceito se associa à ideia de comunhão eucarística, logo de felicidade, se torne através de uma contrafacção no seu próprio contrário e passe a simbolizar o mundo às avessas ou caos⁵⁹. A alegria inicial e expectável é contradita pela fatalidade que se sucede. Ao revelar-se negativo, o que deveria ser supostamente positivo enfatiza a desgraça. Ao evocarmos a obra de Lorca no título deste estudo, pretendemos pois recuperar a mesma força dos contrastes que o dramaturgo espanhol tão bem pressentiu ao escrever o magistral *Bodas de sangre*. Por outro lado, este é um tipo de banquetes que contrasta fortemente com o que Plutarco cultivava nos *Symposiaka*, por exemplo. Por conseguinte, a utilização do tema do banquete acaba por ser também um instrumento para expressar as mundividências antigas do caos e do cosmos, da desordem e da ordem.

Ao considerarmos o trabalho de Plutarco como biógrafo-historiador, o recurso a esta metodologia leva-nos necessariamente a colocar outras questões. Se estamos perante a utilização de motivos literários e de *topoi* com funções estéticas, que lugar há para a factualidade dos acontecimentos narrados pelo autor? Quando pesquisou informação e a recolheu em autores precedentes, tê-la-á Plutarco reproduzido acriticamente? E se o fez, terá sido de forma intencional ou não intencional? Por outras palavras, terá Plutarco descrito e registado acontecimentos tal como lhe foram dados a conhecer ou recriou-os e enriqueceu-os, recorrendo a instrumentos suficientemente conhecidos na sua época e providenciados por tradições literárias anteriores? Por conseguinte, é Plutarco um historiador ou um erudito “contador de histórias”?⁶⁰ Estas são

⁵⁷ J., *AJ* 9, 233-235; *2Rs* 15,25. Outros exemplos joséficis podem ser lidos em G. PAUL, 1991.

⁵⁸ Ver nosso estudo, 2001.

⁵⁹ Idem. Efectivamente, já o Nícias de Plutarco confessava que os banquetes eram ocasiões propícias a conflitos, *Plu., Nic.* 5, 1.

⁶⁰ Sobre o ambiente cultural e historiográfico do tempo de Plutarco, ver J. SIRINELLI, 2000; F. FRAZIER, 1996; P. A. STADTER, 1992; A. MOMIGLIANO, 1971. Como referiu A. LESKY, 1995, p. 862, a Plutarco nunca “preocuparam as conexões históricas ou a etiologia política no sentido de Tucídides: só lhe interessam as grandes figuras humanas, cujos traços característicos... se manifestam não apenas nas grandes acções, mas também em gestos muito pequenos, e em muitos ditos”.

questões que naturalmente se colocam na sequência das nossas reflexões, mas cujas respostas exigem outro tempo e outro lugar de escrita⁶¹.

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⁶¹ Esta problemática foi também abordada por F. E. BRENK, 1992, e por nós próprios, 2002, quando analisámos a presença do mitema de Ísis e Osíris na composição das biografias de António e Cleópatra. Cumpre-nos agradecer ao Prof. Doutor José Augusto Ramos, com quem discutimos várias das ideias que aqui apresentamos.

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EL BANQUETE TRAICIONERO EN LAS *VIDAS* DE PLUTARCO

ISRAEL MUÑOZ GALLARTE
Universidad de Groningen

Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore the topic of the death during the banquet in Plutarch's *Vitae*. The motif is frequent in classical literature and various authors provide us with numerous examples and the question arises whether we are dealing with a literary *topos* or rather with historical facts. Can we find a structural relationship between the texts? By means of an analysis of Alexander, Arquias-Pelopidas and others shorter quotations we will try to determine how Plutarch saw these events and why the conjurers chose this occasion to fulfil their objective.

En una obra, ya clásica, de Nicolae I. Barbu, *Biographies de Plutarque*¹, se puso de relieve la importancia que en las *Vidas* adquieren las muertes y los tipos de muerte descritos por Plutarco. De este modo, el paso a la otra vida, minuciosamente narrado por su autor, parece estar en una interesante simbiosis con las hazañas realizadas por sus protagonistas. En este sentido, el de Queronea afirma acerca de la muerte de Pericles: 'Ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν ἴσως ἑτέρας δόξει πραγματείας εἶναι, corroborando con estas palabras que el final de la vida de los héroes es "una confirmación de sus hechos gloriosos", en el que "Plutarco añade, a veces, sus pensamientos acerca de la vida del personaje o sobre la vida humana en general"².

Algunas de las muertes que describe Plutarco, puntos finales de las vidas ilustres de sus protagonistas, se desarrollan en un escenario concreto, el banquete. En las siguientes páginas se analizarán estos casos de traición y asesinato, documentados por Plutarco en las *Vidas*, con la intención de explicar su significado y la opinión que merecen a su autor.

1. Introducción: ¿era el banquete un evento lúdico?

El banquete en el mundo greco-romano ha sido tradicionalmente descrito como "el encuentro privado que, con ocasión de una cena refinada, reúne a una serie de protagonistas de los ambientes de la política o del pensamiento"³, en cuya atmósfera íntima de juego y esparcimiento los personajes disfrutaban del vino, la comida, la música y la conversación.

Sin embargo, a pesar de la definición anteriormente expuesta, Plutarco no sólo concibe el banquete como un momento de diversión, sino que también afirma categóricamente en sus *Quaestiones romanae* que *la mesa es sagrada* – ἱερὸν δ' ἢ τράπεζα⁴. Este carácter sagrado es imprescindible para entender que,

¹ N. I. BARBU, 1933.

² Idem, p. 15.

³ Quizá reminiscencia del círculo aristocrático en el que tiene su origen el simposio, cf. G. PAUL, 1991, p. 161.

⁴ Plu., *Mor.* 279E. Plutarco inserta esta información al tratar por qué una mesa no puede encontrarse nunca vacía.

aunque se trata de un contexto lúdico donde los comensales pueden divertirse, ciertas acciones de mal gusto, crueles u homicidas pueden corromper las reglas del convite, ocasionando diversas consecuencias que sufrirán quienes las infringieron.

Los banquetes relatados en las *Vitae*⁵ ofrecen múltiples ejemplos en los que se rompen sus características intrínsecas, el ambiente lúdico-festivo o su carácter religioso. Sirva de ejemplo el mítico enfrentamiento surgido entre lapitas y centauros, a propósito de las bodas de Pirítoo⁶, o el anuncio de Catón de su próximo suicidio, cuando en palabras de Plutarco⁷:

μετὰ τὸν λόγον σιωπῆς καὶ κατηφείας γενομένης ἐν πᾶσιν

“tras su discurso, hubo un silencio y tristeza en todos”.

Otro caso de mayor crudeza resulta el destino que corre el cadáver de Craso, asesinado por los partos, cuya cabeza, lanzada por Silaces en medio del banquete, sirvió como atrezo de una improvisada representación de *Bacantes*, embellecida por los versos del poeta Eurípides⁸.

Igualmente son numerosos los casos de complots fallidos en las *Vidas* de Plutarco, documento interesante para conocer las causas que llevan a elegir el banquete como lugar adecuado para este tipo de acciones. Tanto es así que, para el autor de las *Vidas*, una de las más importantes razones para declinar una invitación es la posibilidad de que uno de los comensales pueda atentar contra la vida de otro:

- Medea elige matar con uno de sus venenos a Teseo, quien se hacía pasar por extranjero, durante la comida que celebraba su llegada a Atenas. Pero Egeo, al reconocer la espada de su hijo “arrojó el vaso del veneno” - τὴν μὲν κύλικα τοῦ φαρμάκου κατέβαλε⁹.

- Parisátide, hija extramatrimonial de Artajerjes I, pone fin a la vida de su nuera, Estatira, quien, sin la advertencia de ninguno de los comensales, come del ave envenenada que le ofrece su suegra¹⁰.

- Alejandro V de Macedonia, tras intentar asesinar a Demetrio durante un banquete en Dio, terminó su vida unos días después a la salida de otro convite, a manos de los soldados enviados por Demetrio, sufriendo el mismo final que

⁵ Frances B. Titchener explica la existencia de una dualidad, positiva y negativa, en los banquetes descritos por Plutarco; cf. F. B. TITCHENER, 1999, pp. 491-2.

⁶ Plu., *Thes.*, 30. 3-4.

⁷ Plu., *Cat. Mi.*, 67. Acerca de la posible relación existente entre la muerte de Catón y la de Sócrates, cf. T. E. DUFF, 1999, pp. 144-5.

⁸ Plu., *Crass.*, 33. 1-4. Cf. N. SIMÕES RODRIGUES, en este mismo volumen, p. 232.

⁹ Plu., *Thes.*, 12. 3-4. Cf. D. ROMERO GONZÁLEZ, en este mismo volumen, pp. 257-58.

¹⁰ Plu., *Art.*, 19; Dinon, FGrH 690 F 15b; Ctes., FGrH 688 F 29b. Eludimos abordar en la presente comunicación los casos de asesinato en el banquete mediante la utilización de veneno, tratados por D. ROMERO GONZÁLEZ en este mismo volumen, pp. 255-61. También, cf. N. SIMÕES RODRIGUES, en este mismo volumen, pp. 231-32.

él había urdido¹¹.

- También Otón se vio envuelto en un enfrentamiento, en el que si no hubiera sido por sus ruegos e incluso lágrimas, un grupo de exaltados pretorianos habría dado muerte a ochenta senadores invitados a cenar al palacio del emperador, ya que los soldados creían que de ese modo acababan con los enemigos del César¹².

- Arato y Antonio consiguieron librarse del intento de asesinato de Nicocles¹³ y Menas, respectivamente¹⁴.

Finalmente, el banquete puede ser el escenario para reconocer futuros intentos de asesinato, como el de Lucio Terencio contra su compañero de tienda, Pompeyo, el cual, enterado de lo que iba a ocurrir, mientras finge con Terencio durante la cena, advierte a la guardia de las malas intenciones del simposiasta, lo que acabará con éste¹⁵.

Tras observar estos primeros ejemplos se puede adelantar ya que, lejos de la idílica definición anteriormente aportada del banquete greco-romano, éste, en la práctica, era una celebración llena de luces y sombras, en la que la traición y el homicidio acompañaban al vino y a las conversaciones amistosas.

2. Muertes en banquete

Más interesantes para el tema que aquí se trata son los banquetes en los que se lleva a cabo el peor acto traicionero, la muerte de uno de los convidados¹⁶. En este caso, el simposio ofrece unas posibilidades inmejorables para llevar a cabo un asesinato. Así lo explica Plutarco en la *Vida* de Pelópidas¹⁷:

εἰς δὲ τὴν ἡμέραν ἐκείνην ἐκ παλαιοῦ κατηγγελκῶς τοῖς περὶ τὸν Ἀρχίαν πότον τινὰ καὶ συνουσίαν καὶ γυναῖα τῶν ὑπάνδρων, ἔπραττεν ὅτι μάλιστα ταῖς ἡδοναῖς ἐκλελυμένους καὶ κατοίνους μεταχειρίσασθαι παρέξειν τοῖς ἐπιτιθεμένοις

desde hacía tiempo, había invitado para aquel día a Arquias y a los suyos a una reunión para beber con mujeres casadas, se ocupó de dejarlos muy debilitados por los placeres y beodos para entregárselos a los atacantes.

Plutarco detalla en las *Vitae* tres de estos asesinatos: el de Arquias en la *Vida* de Pelópidas, el de Clito en el relato de la *Vida* de Alejandro y la muerte de Sertorio. Las tres escenas resultan interesantes por los elementos comunes

¹¹ Plu., *Demetr.*, 36.4-12; el mismo final, en semejantes circunstancias, sufre Neoptólemo, a manos de Pirro, cf. Plu., *Pyrrh.*, 5.7-14. Cf. D. ROMERO GONZÁLEZ, en este mismo volumen, pp. 256-257.

¹² Plu., *Oth.*, 3.4.

¹³ Plu., *Arat.*, 6.4-7.1.

¹⁴ Plu., *Ant.*, 32.3.8; App., *BC*, 5.73, 308-11; Dio 48.38.

¹⁵ Plu., *Pomp.*, 3.2.

¹⁶ Son numerosos los casos de complots fallidos; cf. F. B. TITCHENER, 1999, pp. 492-3.

¹⁷ Plu., *Pel.*, 9.4.

que el biógrafo ofrece¹⁸. Junto a estas tres, también se analizarán otras breves noticias de la misma temática recogidas por Plutarco.

2.1. LA MUERTE DE ARQUIAS

La muerte de Arquias se inserta en un contexto concreto: el complot contra los magistrados impuestos por Esparta en Tebas. La traición de Pelópidas era un acto sabido y fácil de predecir, porque la oposición del pueblo tebano era manifiesta y conocida, incluso por algunos de los aliados de Arquias. No obstante, fue la bebida, junto con otros disfrutes del banquete, la que hizo que el tirano tomara la mala decisión de dejar para el día siguiente la carta en que se le ofrecían los datos exactos de la conjura que se urdía contra él. Dice Plutarco:

τὸν Ἀρχίαν ἀπαγαγὼν αὐθις εἰς ἄκρατον πολὺν κατέβαλε καὶ ταῖς περὶ τῶν γυναικῶν ἐλπίσι διεπαιδαγῶγει τὸν πότον

(*scil.* Fílidas) llevándose de nuevo a Arquias le sirvió buena cantidad de vino puro y entretenía el festín con la esperanza de mujeres.

Así, Arquias y los suyos, beodos y perdidos, no pueden oponerse al ataque de Pelópidas y los demás conjurados que, disfrazados de mujeres, entran en el banquete armados y acaban asesinando a los comensales en la misma sala o durante su huida a las casas vecinas.

El levantamiento de Pelópidas, tras una noche de enfrentamientos contra la guardia, termina finalmente con el regreso de los exiliados desde Atenas y la victoria del bando tebano.

Un caso semejante es el crimen de estado que Euriclidias cometió contra los Éforos, por mandato de Cleomenes¹⁹. La imagen del homicida, al igual que la de Pelópidas, fue para Plutarco la del libertador de la patria, lo cual garantiza una justificación ética, según la moral del biógrafo, al acto cometido.

Sin embargo, no todos los magnicidios son éticamente admisibles, como se relata en la *Vida* de Cimón²⁰, en la que el autor relata cómo el joven Damón Peripoltas de Queronea, importunado por un jefe de cohorte que se había enamorado de él, se vio obligado a asesinarlo durante un sacrificio. Posteriormente, los magistrados romanos condenaron a muerte a éste y a sus compañeros de complot, lo que produjo que los conjurados también acabaran con éstos, eligiendo como escenario del crimen una cena.

En esta cita aparecen elementos comunes a la muerte de Arquias, a saber, los conjurados se camuflan, tiznándose los rostros con hollín, y “beben vino puro” – ἐμπιόντες δ’ ἄκρατον –, antes de cometer los asesinatos. Sin embargo,

¹⁸ En la cronología relativa establecida por C.P. Jones, las *Vidas* de Pelópidas y Marcelo ocuparían una posición entre la II y la IV; Sertorio y Eumenes ocuparían un lugar difícil de determinar, o bien II-IV, o bien XVI-XXIII; finalmente, Alejandro y César, serían XIII-XIV; cf. C.P. JONES, 1966, p. 68.

¹⁹ Plu., *Cleom.*, 7-8.

²⁰ Plu., *Cim.*, 1.5.

el final de Damón fue distinto al de Pelópidas y Euriclidas, pues sus crueles desmanes por la región de Queronea, que no buscaban acabar con un gobierno injusto para la polis, sino un bien personal, lo llevaron a ser asesinado en el gimnasio de la ciudad.

Como se puede ver en estos ejemplos, Plutarco no muestra en todas las ocasiones una visión negativa de las muertes en banquete, sino que simplemente las trata como ocasiones favorables para cometer un asesinato. Son la moral y las intenciones de los protagonistas las que le confieren al magnicidio traicionero un valor positivo o negativo para la comunidad.

2.2. LA MUERTE DE CLITO

El final de Clito²¹, famoso ya en tiempos de Plutarco por los numerosos autores que lo habían tratado, comienza con la exculpación de Alejandro, pues, en palabras del autor, este desgraciado hecho se produjo por dos elementos que no suelen faltar en un banquete de esta índole, la cólera y la embriaguez:

δυστυχία τινὶ ταῦθ' εὐρίσκομεν πεπραγμένα τοῦ βασιλέως, ὀργὴν καὶ μέθην
πρόφασιν τῷ Κλείτου δαίμονι παρασχόντος

descubrimos que esta acción fue producto de una desgracia del rey, cuya cólera y embriaguez fueron el pretexto del que se sirvió el mal démon de Clito.

Con esto Plutarco deja fuera de dudas quién es el culpable de la muerte de Clito, el vino²², no siéndolo, en ningún caso, el protagonista de su *Vita* que, en último término, debe ofrecer un ejemplo de comportamiento moral.

Continúa el de Queronea comentando dos πονηρά σημεῖα, “malos augurios”, que anuncian la próxima muerte de Clito: “tres de las reses sobre las que había vertido las libaciones lo siguieron” y la extraña visión que se presentó a Alejandro en sueños.

Ya en el banquete, el autor describe cómo se había bebido gran cantidad de vino y se cantaban canciones de escarnio contra los vencidos. La mezcla de ambos ingredientes, sumados a la osadía de Clito, fueron los detonantes de una airada discusión entre Alejandro y su general, en la que se pone en duda la valentía de Clito, se bromea con la divinidad del soberano, se exalta el origen macedonio del ejército frente a la barbarie de los pueblos sometidos y, finalmente, se acusa de filobárbaro a Alejandro. Éste, sin poder contener su ira, le arroja unas manzanas a Clito y, gracias a la entrada de la guardia, se consigue evitar el enfrentamiento directo de los contendientes. No obstante, la posterior entrada de Clito en la sala del banquete da la oportunidad a Alejandro de robar una lanza a uno de sus guardias y clavársela en el costado al general macedonio.

²¹ Plu., *Alex.*, 50-51. Cf. N. SIMÕES RODRIGUES, en este mismo volumen, pp. 231-232.

²² Acerca de la importancia de esta bebida en la *Vida* de Alejandro, cf. C. ALCALDE MARTÍN, 1999, pp. 90-1. No obstante, también se debe tener en cuenta la distinta interpretación que ofrece Plutarco de este hecho en *Mor.* 71 B: οἶμαι δὲ καὶ Κλείτος οὐχ οὕτω παρῶζυνε διὰ τὸν οἶνον, ὡς ὅτι πολλῶν παρόντων ἐδόκει κολοῦειν Ἀλέξανδρον.

Alejandro, apesadumbrado por sus actos, intenta suicidarse con la misma lanza, pero, tras el impedimento de su propia guardia, se marcha a sus aposentos en los que pasa la noche lamentándose.

A la mañana siguiente, los macedonios consiguen tranquilizarle relativamente, pero éste no volverá a ser el mismo: τὸ δ' ἦθος εἰς πολλὰ χαυνότερον καὶ παρανομώτερον ἐποίησεν, “su carácter se hizo, con mucho, más vanidoso e injusto”.

2.3. LA MUERTE DE SERTORIO

Un tercer ejemplo de homicidio en un banquete es el de Sertorio²³, un relato que Plutarco desarrolla ofreciendo, al igual que en el de Clito, gran cantidad de detalles:

Comienza Plutarco planteando la situación en la que el protagonista de la *Vita* se encontraba en aquel momento, sin un futuro claro, con la mayoría de los hispanienses²⁴ “dominados por la envidia” y con un Sertorio que, habiendo abandonado las ἐπιεικεία y πράοτης –“moderación” y “paciencia”- propias de su carácter, ha cometido una gran injusticia contra los hijos de los nobles íberos que estudiaban en Osca.

En esta situación, que presagia el final de Sertorio, un grupo de conjurados hispanienses con Perpenna a la cabeza decide llevar a término un complot que ya había planeado desde hacía tiempo: la muerte de Sertorio en un banquete.

El plan debe acelerarse por la falta de discreción de Manlio, de modo que, inmediatamente, hacen llegar a Sertorio una carta en la que le proponen celebrar una supuesta victoria militar.

Sertorio, antes del banquete, se encuentra curiosamente, al igual que Clito, realizando un sacrificio en agradecimiento de la buena noticia recibida.

Posteriormente, describiendo ya la preparación del convite de Perpenna, Plutarco se permite un pequeño inciso para explicar cómo a Sertorio le gustaban las comidas caracterizadas por el αἰδῶ y el κόσμον –“respeto” y “orden”-, algo que lo diferencia radicalmente de las desenfundadas celebraciones del ejército macedonio. En ese momento, según el autor, Perpenna busca un “inicio de confrontación” –ἀρχὴν ἀψιμαχίας- con palabras groseras y fingimiento de estar bebidos. Esta actitud provocó que Sertorio diera la espalda a los conjurados, circunstancia que es aprovechada por éstos para acabar con el general²⁵.

Un elemento curioso que ha suscitado una duda en la crítica es el siguiente: la elección del banquete para llevar a cabo un asesinato se explica por sus características esenciales antes mencionadas, es decir, se trata de un ambiente privado de esparcimiento, en el que la víctima no debe esperar el ataque. Por tanto, no se entiende por qué Perpenna y los conjurados provocaron a Sertorio, lo que, sin duda, le pondría alerta. Konrad escribió literalmente: “a happy victim is more easily dispatched than a resentful one who may be on edge and, hence, on guard”. Ante esta duda, el comentarista, basándose en el paralelo de

²³ Plu., *Sert.*, 26. Cf. N. SIMÕES RODRIGUES, en este mismo volumen, p. 232.

²⁴ Romanos del bando Sertoriano, afincados en Hispania.

²⁵ Este mismo hecho aparece resumido por Plutarco en *Pomp.* 20. 3-4.

la muerte de Cicerón, propone que provocando la ira de Sertorio se intenta legitimar el homicidio, al demostrar el carácter despótico de éste. Ernst Badian supone que Perpenna y los conjurados partían de un plan preconcebido, según el cual darían muerte a Sertorio en la confusión de un enfrentamiento²⁶. Quizá la respuesta a esta posible incongruencia se encuentre en la estructura que Plutarco articula a la hora de describir las muertes en banquete.

3. Conclusiones

Si se analizan los relatos de las muertes de Arquias, Clito y Sertorio, se observa que los tres siguen en paralelo detalles clave:

- Los trágicos asesinatos son predecibles antes de ocurrir el suceso, en el caso de Arquias por una carta que anunciaba la próxima conjura, en el de Clito mediante visiones en sueños y en el de Sertorio por la traicionera actividad de sus aliados en Hispania.

- Los dos últimos banquetes se celebran por victorias, una cierta, la otra ficticia, de los ejércitos macedonio e hispaniense, respectivamente.

- Clito y Sertorio celebran un sacrificio de agradecimiento a los dioses antes del banquete.

- En todos los relatos se produce, previo a la muerte, un violento enfrentamiento verbal y físico, en los que se vitupera el mal uso del vino y de las palabras²⁷.

- Finalmente, aquellos que han cometido el homicidio cruel en un banquete sufren unas consecuencias no deseadas, a excepción de Pelópidas y los suyos. El futuro de Perpenna queda pronto cercenado por Pompeyo y su ejército; mientras que el final de Alejandro, según el relato de Plutarco se vuelve a relacionar, por última vez con el vino: αὐτὸν πυρέττοντα νεανικῶς, διψήσαντα δὲ σφόδρα, πιεῖν οἶνον, “le sube una alta fiebre y, teniendo una gran sed, bebe vino”²⁸.

De este modo se puede entender que Plutarco, al escribir los relatos de homicidios en los banquetes, parte de unos elementos comunes que, de manera consciente o inconsciente, estructuran la escena. En esta construcción el autor parece hacer uso de unos hechos históricos y tradicionales que organiza y relata para que cumplan sus propios fines morales²⁹. Así, compone vívidas escenas de las que se extraen claras conclusiones: Plutarco, en este tipo de asesinatos, advierte la posibilidad de que el banquete puede perder sus características

²⁶ Cf. C.F. KONRAD, 1994, p. 212.

²⁷ También paralelo al relato de la muerte de Clito es el enfrentamiento causado por la denuncia de alcoholismo de Alejandro a su padre, Filipo; cf. F.B. TITCHENER, 1999, p. 492.

²⁸ Cf. Plu., *Alex.* 75. Cf. G. PAUL, 1991, p. 162.

²⁹ Resulta interesante observar los textos paralelos a los relatos de Plutarco. Sirvan de ejemplo acerca de la muerte de Sertorio los textos de Salustio, *Hist.* III,81; Livio, *Per.*,96; Apiano, *B.C.I.*, 113,528; Diodoro XXXVII,22; Veleyo II,31,1; Amiano Marcelino 30,1,23; Eutropio 6,1,3; Orosio V,23,13. Especialmente curioso resulta el documento de Apuleyo, en el que se afirma: “(scil. Perpenna) tras haberle emborrachado a él (scil. Sertorio) y a su guardia, que rodeaba la sala del banquete, le dio muerte al acabar la fiesta”.

esenciales, para tornarse en una acción trágica y traicionera, cuando se conjugan dos elementos como ὀργή y μέθη –“cólera” y “embriaguez”–; asimismo también, que quien, aprovechando las circunstancias de este microcosmos, las rompe, en primer lugar, no conseguirá aquello que busca con su acto cruel y, en segundo lugar, acabará sufriendo un final igualmente funesto –lo que parece responder a la concepción religiosa que del banquete defendía Plutarco–. El ejemplo de la muerte de Arquias ofrece un final distinto, puesto que, a diferencia de los anteriores, es un magnicidio legítimo: se trata de acabar con el poder dictatorial, lo que da carta blanca moral a los conjurados.

A la luz de los contextos analizados se constata que Plutarco estaba muy interesado en describir las luces y las sombras que rodeaban los banquetes³⁰. La inversión de aquellos elementos, que se suponen consustanciales al simposio, como el ambiente de juego y esparcimiento, unido a su religiosidad, sirven a Plutarco de *exempla* para advertir al lector del cruel final que puede sufrir, si no observa los sucesos premonitorios, anteriores al banquete, o si bebe en exceso. Una buena solución la encuentra el de Queronea en el comportamiento de Epaminondas, basado en la austeridad y discreción, pues “tal tipo de comida no deja sitio a la traición”³¹.

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³⁰ En contra de la opinión mantenida durante el Congreso por algunos de sus participantes, no existen elementos de juicio que permitan afirmar que las muertes en el banquete siempre se producían durante el ἄριστον. La ambigüedad terminológica de Plutarco se observa en el uso de numerosos y diferentes términos con significado relativamente diferente, pero para referirse a contextos semejantes. A continuación reproducimos el rango de uso de los términos usados por el autor al describir la muerte en banquete: δείπνον (10): *Thes.*, 30.3, *Cat. Mi.*, 67, *Crass.*, 33.6, *Demetr.*, 36.4 y (ab), 36.11, *Pyrrh.*, 5. 7-14, *Ant.*, 32.3, *Pomp.*, 3.2, *Alex.*, 50.7, *Sert.*, 26.7; πότον (4): *Crass.*, 33.1, *Demetr.*, 36.4, *Pel.*, 9.4, *Sert.*, 26.8; δειπνεῖν (3): *Oth.*, 3.4, *Ant.*, 32.4, *Cim.*, 1.5; ἐστίασις (2): *Crass.*, 33.1, *Sert.*, 26.6; ἄριστον (2): *Tes.*, 12.4, *Arat.*, 6.4-7.1; συνουσίαν (1): *Pel.*, 9.4; συσσίτιον (1): *Cleom.*, 7-8; συμπόσιον (1): *Pel.*, 11.3; συνδειπνεῖν (1): *Art.*, 19.1.

³¹ *Plu. Lyc.*, 13, 3.

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(Página deixada propositadamente em branco)

VENENO SIMPOSÍACO: ENVENENAMIENTO EN LOS BANQUETES EN LA OBRA PLUTARQUEA¹

DÁMARIS ROMERO GONZÁLEZ
Universidad de Birmingham

Abstract

In the festive environment of the banquet, it is possible to identify moments when this mood has been broken, and Plutarch presents many examples of it in the *Vitae* and *Moralia*. One possibility of disrupting this context is poisoning the guest, as Parysatis killed Stateira, or trying to do it, such as Medea did with Theseus or Neoptolomeus with Phyrus. Apart from relating these deaths, or failed attempts, by poison at the banquet, Plutarch also adds the consequences for the hosts of breaking down this happy time and the reasons why they committed the murders.

Plutarco, consciente de que el envenenamiento era un crimen bastante habitual, presenta numerosos ejemplos de esto en *Vidas* y, en menor medida, en *Moralia*². Ahora bien, esto no siempre tiene lugar en los banquetes y como muestra de ello se encuentran los siguientes ejemplos, que, por no estar encuadrados dentro del contexto simposíaco, quedan descartados: un primer grupo son los envenenamientos por error de una persona³; un segundo, los que se producen por la mezcla del veneno con un líquido⁴ o con un alimento sólido⁵ y, finalmente, un tercero, en los que el queronense no da ninguna pista que induzca a pensar que se realizan en un banquete⁶.

I. Del complot al envenenamiento

La imagen que se tiene del banquete griego es, en general, idílica: se presenta como la reunión en un ambiente amigable de un grupo limitado de

¹ Agradezco a la Fundación Hardt (Ginebra) la beca que me concedió para consultar su biblioteca y poder realizar esta comunicación. Parto como base del artículo de Rosa M.^a AGUILAR, 2008, en el que se estudia la frecuencia y los sentidos de la palabra *pharmakon* en el queronense.

² Como R. M.^a AGUILAR, 2008, pp. 754-5, 759 dice “en general, excepto si se trata de alguna anécdota, el significado (en *Mor.*) es el de remedio o medicamento, bien en sentido recto o en el figurado. (...) De otra parte, el reparto de significados resulta coherente con el tipo de discurso. En los textos históricos el significado de ‘veneno’ aparece porque el φάρμακον se usa para ejecutar al enemigo o eliminarle ocultamente o, por fin, en un suicidio como recurso último ante la derrota. En cambio, en textos de carácter discursivo o filosófico el significado de ‘medicamento’ o ‘remedio’ muestra mayor frecuencia y, las más veces, figuradamente”.

³ Lúculo, quien murió por los supuestos filtros amorosos de su esclavo (*Luc.* 43.1-2).

⁴ Sinorix a manos de Camma ante el altar de Ártemis (*Mor.* 258B-C, 768C (la mezcla de leche y miel – o también hidromiel).

⁵ Creso, aunque, gracias a la lealtad del panadero, no llegó a comer el pan envenenado que su madrastra quería darle (*Mor.* 401 E-F); el asesinato de un padre por un hijo en un pastel (*Cic.* 26.5).

⁶ El intento de asesinato de Aretafla a su marido Nicócrates y descubierto por su suegra (*Mor.* 256 B-D), el de Hirodes por su hijo Fraates (*Crass.* 33.5) o el de Pirro por su médico (*Pyrrh.* 21.1, *Mor.* 195B), Elisio (*Mor.* 109B), los invitados del padre de Tespesio (*Mor.* 566F).

personas, con una determinada vinculación entre ellos, que se reunían en salas privadas de una casa⁷, acompañados de ciertos divertimentos, como el disfrute del vino y la comida, la recitación o la conversación, entre otros⁸. De hecho, en los ejemplos que dan origen a esta comunicación se cumplen gran parte de estos requisitos: se evidencia el tipo de vinculación que unía a los asistentes, como la familiaridad en el caso de Parisatis y Estatira, suegra y nuera respectivamente; la política, así Gelón busca en Mítilo un aliado “político” para Neoptólemo; y la hospitalidad, cuando Teseo es agasajado como huésped de Egeo. También se disfruta del vino y la comida, ya sea como divertimento de los convidados, sirviendo como ejemplo los brindis que hubo en el banquete de Gelón o la comida dispuesta para agasajo de Teseo, ya sea como instrumento de muerte, así Teseo lleva el veneno en su copa y Estatira muere por el ave ryntakis envenenado ofrecido por Parisatis.

Si bien es cierto que la mayoría de las veces el ambiente suele ser afable, no significa que siempre sea así. Como dice F. B. Titchener, “un banquete era un lugar sorprendentemente peligroso para estar, por norma general”⁹: los banquetes son propicios para los atentados o para planearlos. Plutarco, conocedor de esta realidad, presenta tres ejemplos en *Vidas* de envenenamiento en el banquete, que permiten seguir el recorrido del veneno desde los momentos iniciales, en los cuales se urde el complot, hasta su finalización con la muerte de la víctima elegida.

El primer paso para acabar con el adversario es tramar su muerte, en estos casos, usando veneno. Plutarco lo ejemplifica en *Pyrrh.* 5.7-14. Gelón, partidario de Neoptólemo, encuentra una buena oportunidad de colaborar en la muerte de su enemigo (Pirro) con el desplante que Pirro le hizo a su copero Mítilo:

(*scil.* Gelón) le (*scil.* Mítilo) invitó a un banquete en el que, como algunos dicen, aparte de aprovecharse entre copas de la juventud de Mítilo, le estuvo aduciendo razones y exhortándole a que se uniera a Neoptólemo y asesinara a Pirro mediante un veneno¹⁰.

Ideada la maquinación, ya sólo queda llevarla a cabo. Sin embargo, el tener todos los movimientos planificados, no asegura el éxito, pues siempre hay que considerar el elemento sorpresa. Plutarco lo muestra con los fracasos de Pirro y Teseo.

En el primero de los envenenamientos fracasados, el de Pirro (*Pyrrh.* 5.10-14), dos fueron las causas por las que no tuvo lugar el emponzoñamiento. Éstas fueron, por una parte, la lealtad de Mítilo a Pirro, al que le descubrió todo lo que Gelón tramaba, y, por otra, la excesiva confianza de Neoptólemo en la aparente buena marcha del plan, de modo que bajó la guardia y comenzó a hablar abiertamente de la asechanza.

⁷ P. GARNSEY, 1999, p.131.

⁸ E. PELLIZER, 1994, bosqueja los tipos de entretenimiento en el *simposium*.

⁹ F. B. TITCHENER, 1999, p. 492.

¹⁰ *Pyrrh.* 5.8.

El segundo de los envenenamientos fracasados es quizá uno de los más conocidos en la literatura griega y es el de Teseo por parte de Medea en el banquete en que éste se dio a conocer como hijo de Egeo.

(*scil.* Medea) lo persuadió (*scil.* a Egeo) para que, invitando al extranjero, lo envenenara. Así pues, yendo Teseo al banquete, pensó que sería mejor no descubrir de primeras quién era, sino que quiso dar una pista para ser descubierto, y, cuando la carne se sirvió, sacando la espada para cortarla, se la enseñó. Al instante Egeo se percató y dejó caer la copa de veneno...¹¹

Medea quiso eliminar a Teseo con el inocente beneplácito de Egeo, desconocedor en ese momento de que el extranjero al que homenajearan era su hijo. A diferencia del rey, Medea sí lo sabía, puesto que había indagado sobre Teseo cuando éste llegó a Atenas, pero temía que fuera una amenaza para su posición, ya que ella le dio a Egeo un hijo, Medo¹². Toda esperanza de matar a Teseo se vio frustrada cuando Egeo reconoció como suya la espada que Teseo utilizó para trincar la carne del banquete, objeto con el que Medea no había contado.

El único ejemplo que Plutarco ofrece de envenenamiento exitoso es el de Estatira por Parisatis (*Art.* 19.1-5). Ésta, que era la madre del rey Artajerjes, recelaba de Estatira, esposa del mismo, por el gran influjo que estaba ejerciendo sobre su hijo en detrimento de ella, de modo que decide matarla:

(*scil.* Parisatis) Tenía una esclava fiel llamada Gigis, con gran influencia sobre ella y quien, según Dinón, la ayudó a preparar el veneno, aunque, según Ctesias, fue cómplice involuntaria... Después de un tiempo de sospechas y disensiones, (*scil.* Parisatis y Estatira) habían empezado otra vez a visitarse y a cenar juntas, aunque comían de los mismos alimentos y servidos por las mismas manos por desconfianza y precaución... Parisatis, según Ctesias, trinchó una de estas aves con un cuchillo untado por un lado con el veneno, con lo que esa parte del ave quedó emponzoñada; mientras ella se llevó a la boca para comérsela la que estaba limpia de veneno, dio a Estatira la emponzoñada... Así pues la mujer (Estatira) murió con grandes dolores y convulsiones...

II. De la risa a las lágrimas

Ahora bien, ¿por qué el banquete deja de ser lugar de divertimento para convertirse en lugar de muerte? Porque las intenciones de los anfitriones no son el esparcimiento de sus invitados, sino la muerte de ellos, y se valen del despreocupado contexto festivo en el que se desarrolla el banquete para llevar a cabo sus planes. Ni Teseo, Pirro o Estatira¹³ imaginan las intenciones de

¹¹ *Thes.* 12.2-3.

¹² Estos acontecimientos no los relata Plutarco, sino otros autores como Apollod. I.9.28, *Epit.* 1.5-6, D.S. IV.55.4-6 o Paus. II.3.8.

¹³ Quizá Estatira podría imaginarlo de Parisatis pues Plutarco cuenta que ambas comían los mismos alimentos servidos por las mismas manos, pero al ver que Parisatis degustaba la misma

sus compañeros de mesa, ya que “las diversiones son terribles para mantener cualquier actitud distante”¹⁴.

De ese modo, al producirse la ruptura del ambiente lúdico y sagrado en el que se celebra el simposio¹⁵, se incumple el objetivo por el que éste se festeja y que Plutarco pone en boca de Teón en sus *Quaestiones Convivales*:

...concederá un sitio sólo a aquellas conversaciones, espectáculos y bromas que cumplan con la finalidad del banquete, y esto sería producir en los presentes, por medio del placer, un robustecimiento o el origen de una amistad; pues el banquete es un entretenimiento con vino que por el encanto acaba en amistad¹⁶.

Ninguno de los tres banquetes pretende ese fin, conseguir una nueva amistad o robustecer una ya existente. Gelón, aprovechando el enfado de Mírtilo por el desplante de Pirro, intenta beneficiarse de la cercanía del copero para asesinar a su adversario. Por su parte, Paristatis, que sentía aversión hacia Estatira y estaba celosa del poder que ésta tenía sobre su hijo, reanuda sus relaciones con su nuera para tramar contra ella. Finalmente, Medea, recurriendo a la costumbre griega de la hospitalidad, quiere agasajar a Teseo para envenenarlo.

Sin embargo, este quebrantamiento no queda impune y, como apunta I. Muñoz¹⁷, quienes han tramado o cometido el envenenamiento, sufren las consecuencias de este acto.

Neoptólemo, creyendo que la asechanza seguía adelante y rebosante de alegría porque pronto vería muerto a su enemigo, acude a la invitación de Pirro a un banquete, sin sospechar que éste conoce por partida doble sus planes, primero por Mírtilo y luego por la mujer del mayoral. En ese banquete Pirro lo mata, adelantándosele y teniendo de su parte a los principales de los epirotas¹⁸.

Ahora bien, siguiendo la lógica de lo dicho en el párrafo anterior, Pirro también tendría que haber muerto poco después. Sin embargo, la excepción a esta posible regla, como el propio I. Muñoz señala, se incumple cuando el asesinato se comete como solución a una situación tiránica, tal que sucede aquí: “...debido al odio que les inspiraba la forma opresiva y violenta con que Neoptólemo se conducía en su gobierno”¹⁹.

Tras descubrirse el intento de envenenamiento de Teseo, Medea es expulsada del Ática, junto con su hijo Medo, por Egeo²⁰.

comida que ella, le haría más confiada. Cf. N. SIMÕES RODRIGUES, en este mismo volumen, p. 251.

¹⁴ *Per.* 7.3.

¹⁵ Cf. I. MUÑOZ GALLARTE, en este mismo volumen, p. 246.

¹⁶ *Mor.* 621C.

¹⁷ Cf. I. MUÑOZ GALLARTE, en este mismo volumen, p. 251.

¹⁸ J. M. MOSSMAN, 1992, p. 94, al comparar los intentos de asesinato de Alejandro y Pirro escribe: “Donde Alejandro es un rey que responde a las conspiraciones de hombres inferiores a él, Pirro es un jugador más en un juego de intriga”.

¹⁹ *Phyrr.* 5.2.

²⁰ Cf. n. 12.

Tanto Gigis como Parisatis son castigadas por el emponzoñamiento de Estatira. La condena que recibió la esclava fue, como Plutarco recoge, según la ley en Persia: machacar y moler con una piedra su cabeza, colocada en otra piedra ancha, hasta que la cara y la cabeza quedan deshechas. Para la reina madre, la condena fue más leve y dictada por Artajerjes: es exiliada, estando ella de acuerdo, a Babilonia, ciudad que su hijo Artajerjes no volverá a visitar mientras ella estuviese allí²¹.

III. Conclusiones: Razones para el Envenenamiento

Plutarco, en su faceta de biógrafo, ha hecho acopio de sucesos que pertenecen a la vida de los protagonistas de su obra, completando estas semblanzas con anotaciones de carácter moral, de modo que el queronense no se limita a exponer el envenenamiento de un personaje, sino también las razones que condujeron a ello. Esto ocurre en los casos de Teseo y Estatira, porque en el ejemplo de Pirro no se da ninguna razón para el intento de envenenamiento por parte de Neoptólemo y sin embargo sí se dan muchas para su posterior asesinato: la forma de gobernar de Neoptólemo y su conjura. No obstante, éstas son una excusa de la verdadera razón del asesinato de Neoptólemo: la ambición natural de Pirro (*Phyrr.* 5.1, 14).

La primera causa es el miedo a la usurpación del poder, como le ocurría a Egeo. Plutarco cuenta que Egeo, a causa de sus años, estaba “lleno de celos y sospechas, y temiendo cualquier cosa a causa de la facción que entonces estaba en la ciudad”²². Así pues, Egeo, anciano, estaba sometido a la presión de la presencia de pretendientes al trono, de modo que se deja convencer por Medea para, por una parte, tomar fármacos capaces de hacerle engendrar de nuevo y, por otro, usar un veneno para matar al extranjero Teseo²³.

La segunda causa es la mezcla del odio y los celos que Parisatis sentía hacia Estatira. El odio viene provocado por una acumulación de actuaciones en clara oposición a Parisatis por parte de Estatira, quien tampoco sufría a su suegra, como eran la acusación de ser la culpable del inicio de la guerra fraticida, la muerte del eunuco que cortó la cabeza y la mano a Ciro muerto y el cambio de decisión de Artajerjes respecto al destino de Clearco²⁴. Los celos son reflejo de la impotencia de Parisatis al ver que la influencia sobre su hijo era fruto del respeto y el honor que él tenía hacia ella, mientras que

²¹ *Art.* 19.6

²² *Thes.* 12.2.

²³ H. J. WALKER, 1995, pp. 87-8, observa que, en tan sólo dos frases yuxtapuestas, Plutarco expresa los dos poderes antagonistas de los fármacos: “Pueden destrozar completamente a un hombre y su casa (que es lo que Medea intenta hacer cuando Teseo llega) y son necesarios si un hombre desea preservar su casa (que es la razón por la que Egeo tiene a Medea viviendo con él)”.

²⁴ *Art.* 6.5; 17.6; 18.3. Plutarco minimiza la opinión de Ctesias sobre la muerte de Clearco por influencia de Estatira y en contra de Parisatis, como causa final y definitiva por la que Parisatis, arriesgándose a dar muerte a la mujer legítima del rey y madre de sus hijos, preparó el veneno contra Estatira.

la de su esposa era por el gran amor y la fuerte confianza existente entre ellos²⁵.

La tercera, que por otra parte es la más evidente y concluyente, es que los asesinados son, de una manera u otra, adversarios políticos que se cruzan en el camino del personaje en cuestión: Pirro de Neoptólemo, Teseo de Medea y Estatira de Parisatis. El banquete se presenta entonces como la escena donde se revela una de las caras del poder, el de la violencia que se usa para conservarlo²⁶. Ninguno de los personajes de estos banquetes duda en utilizar cualquier método para eliminar a su adversario y, de ese modo, seguir conservando el poder que temían perder o estaban perdiendo.

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²⁵ Art. 19.1.

²⁶ A. BILLAULT, 2008, p. 578.

SECTION 4

Philanthropia, Philia and Eros

(Página deixada propositadamente em branco)

LA NOTION DE *PHILANTHRŌPIA* CHEZ PLUTARQUE: CONTEXTE SOCIAL ET SOURCES PHILOSOPHIQUES

FRANCESCO BECCHI
Université de Florence

Abstract

In a period in which some natural feelings, like *philia* and *philanthrōpia*, are disappearing, it is natural that an intellectual, like Plutarch, asks for the reasons that have determined this disappearance. The philosopher from Chaeronea identifies them in the greed (*pleonexia*) and in the insatiability (*aplēstia*) that have invaded the soul of the aristocracy of his time. Due to these passions, which derive from wrong judgements and empty opinions, the soul has become attached to goods that are foreign to itself and eventually loses the emotional impulse for showing its proper virtues. Consequently, these passions end up wearing out human relations in such a way as to make man no more familiar and friend to his fellows (*oikeios*), but a stranger (*allogrios*).

Regarding the philosophical coordinates, Plutarch's philosophy of *philanthrōpia* as *oikeiotēs* seems to find its starting point in Aristotle's *EN* and, more in general, in Peripatetic philosophy beginning with Theophrastus.

... μή τι παυσώμεσθα δρῶντες εὖ βροτούς¹

Au cours des premiers siècles de l'époque impériale, durant lesquels l'éthique païenne et l'éthique chrétienne cohabitent et s'opposent², le sentiment qui domine, est, semble-t-il, celui de la *philia* pour les biens matériels. La riche aristocratie de cette période, qui est égoïste et égocentrique, est aussi la proie facile des pires passions de l'âme³, et apparaît dominée par le désir des richesses (φιλοχρηματία), du pouvoir (φιλαρχία) et des honneurs (φιλοδοξία ou φιλοτιμία⁴), ainsi que par l'avidité (πλεονεξία) et par le désir insatiable (ἀπληστία) de nourriture (γαστριμαργία), de vin (οἴνοφλυγία) et de sexe (λαγνεία)⁵. Ces passions malsaines de l'âme ont supplanté et fait disparaître de l'esprit humain des sentiments naturels comme la φιλαδελφία, la φιλοστοργία, la φιλεταιρία ou φιλοφιλία et la φιλοξενία ainsi que la φιλανθρωπία qui avaient caractérisé la civilisation hellénique en général et la

¹ *TGF* 2 F 410a Kannicht-Snell, cité par Plutarque dans *An Seni resp.* 791D et *suav. viv. Epic.* 1099A.

² Voir A. Postiglione dans Plutarco, *L'amore fraterno, L'amore per i figli*, Napoli 1991, p. 25: "Al confine fra l'etica pagana e l'etica cristiana Plutarco dice che bisogna amare tutti gli uomini, ... non conoscendo, e tuttavia quasi presagendo quel comandamento più alto, che ormai si andava diffondendo per il mondo, di amare tutti gli uomini come fratelli". Sur ce point il faut rappeler la recommandation de Plutarque (*Soll. an.* 984) à aimer l'homme καθ' ὃ ἄνθρωπός ἐστι.

³ Comme l'envie ou la colère, qui (*Cob. ira* 462F) est une douleur (λύπη) et un mélange des semences de toutes les passions (πανσπερμία τῶν παθῶν).

⁴ Pour l'acception négative de φιλοτιμία voir Plu., *Sull.* 7. 1; *Agēs.* 23. 33. Sur la notion de φιλοτιμία chez Plutarque voir maintenant M. C. FIALHO, 2008, pp. 45-6.

⁵ Voir V. A. SIRAGO, 1974, pp. 65-83; C. P. JONES, 1978, p. 104 sqq.; P. DESIDERI, 1978, p. 353 n. 29.

civilisation athénienne en particulier⁶. Ainsi la dépravation humaine – comme le commente Plutarque, non sans amertume, dans le *De fraterno amore*⁷ – qui a germé comme la zizanie au milieu du blé⁸, a rendu impossible le fait de trouver un rapport d'amitié qui soit sincère, pur et sans passions⁹. À une époque où la sophistique est en train de devenir prépondérante, il est plus facile de trouver, semble-t-il, quelqu'un capable d'écrire des textes sur l'amitié que quelqu'un qui la mette en pratique¹⁰. Pourtant l'homme, qui est un être non seulement sociable mais aussi rationnel (λογικὸν καὶ πολιτικὸν ζῶον)¹¹, ne peut pas vivre sans la *philia*, moins par son manque d'autonomie (αὐτάρκεια), que parce que cela est contre nature. Dans la *Vie de Solon*¹² Plutarque présente une objection à cette société avide et insatiable (ἀπλήρωτος), qui par ignorance semble avoir abandonné la nature pour suivre la nature de ce qui est contre nature, avec la conviction que le bonheur consiste à accumuler des richesses et à posséder des biens matériels¹³. Pour lui, l'âme humaine, qui par nature est portée à aimer (φιλεῖν), à sentir, à penser, à se souvenir et à apprendre, perd sa charge affective au moment où elle par avidité ou par une ambition excessive perd l'amour pour ce qui lui est propre (οἰκείον) et apparenté et s'attache aux biens matériels (τὰ ἐκτός)¹⁴. Alors, il est naturel que les rapports humains en soient compromis et que la *philanthrōpia* disparaisse. Elle perd – pour citer l'introduction de la *Vie de Périclès*¹⁵ – le sentiment naturel d'amour et d'affection que l'homme a en lui et qu'il est appelé à manifester à l'égard de ses semblables. Ce sont en effet les soucis dus au désir d'argent qui, entraînant pour l'âme des rides précoces et des cheveux blancs, font aussi se faner la *philanthrōpia* (τὸ φιλάνθρωπον) selon le *De cupiditate divitiarum*¹⁶.

En confirmant que le bonheur chez l'homme n'arrive pas de l'extérieur et que ce n'est pas quelque chose que l'on peut acheter¹⁷, le philosophe de Chéronée ne se borne pas à rappeler l'idéal de la modération (πραότης et μετριότης) et de l'autosuffisance (αὐτάρκεια) qui réduit au minimum le besoin des biens

⁶ Plu., *Frat. am.* 478C ; *Cup. div.* 523D; *Comp. Arist. - Cat. Ma.* 4. 2.

⁷ Plu., *Frat. am.* 481F οὗτε τὸ ἐταιρικόν... εἰλικρινές καὶ ἀπαθές καὶ καθαρὸν ἔστιν εὐρεῖν κακίας...

⁸ Voir Plu., *Am. prol.* 497CD.

⁹ Plu., *Cap. ex inim. ut.* 89B ; *Luc.* 41. 9.

¹⁰ Plu., *Frat. am.* 481BC.

¹¹ Plu., *Am. prol.* 495C.

¹² Plu., *Sol.* 7. 3.

¹³ Plu., *Cup. div.* 524B. On devrait penser non seulement au petit traité de Plutarque intitulé *Περὶ φιλορηματίας* (*De divitiarum cupiditate*), mais aussi au texte de Galien *Περὶ τῶν φιλορημάτων πλουσιῶν* (*Sur les riches amoureux de l'argent*), que l'intellectuel de Pergame cite dans le traité *Περὶ ἀλυσίας* (*Sur l'inutilité de se chagriner*), récemment découvert au monastère des Vlatades à Thessalonique et édité par Véronique Boudon-Millot (V. BOUDON-MILLOT ET AL., 2008, pp. 78-123).

¹⁴ Plu., *Sol.* 7.3.

¹⁵ Plu., *Per.* 1. 1-2.

¹⁶ Pour la φιλαργυρία qui obscurcit la φιλάνθρωπία voir Plu., *Cup. div.* 526F-527A; *Tranq. an.* 468EF.

¹⁷ Plu., *Fort.* 99E; *Cap. ex inim. ut.* 92DE; *Virt. et vit.* 100C, 101B-D; *Tranq. an.* 466D, 477A.

matériels¹⁸, mais il montre un nouveau modèle d'humanité aux hommes de son époque, habiles à pratiquer la *philia* uniquement par les mots¹⁹. Ce nouveau modèle est caractérisé par la bienveillance et par la bonté, par la générosité et par la clémence, des qualités qui, dans les rapports humains, trouvent un champ d'application plus vaste que celui de la loi et de la justice²⁰. Dans la *Vie de Caton l'Ancien*, en critiquant le comportement dur de Caton à l'égard de ses vieux esclaves, comportement qui est celui d'un homme qui ne pratiquait pas la *philanthrōpia* mais qui croyait seulement à l'existence de rapports humains fondés sur l'utilité (χρεία), Plutarque affirme que tout naturellement l'homme est porté πρὸς εὐεργεσίας...καὶ χάριτας non seulement dans les rapports humains, mais aussi vis-à-vis des animaux, si ce n'est pour une autre raison, du moins pour s'exercer à la vertu de la φιλανθρωπία²¹.

L'accusation la plus grave que Plutarque adresse à la société de son époque n'est pas seulement celle de la recherche du plaisir (φιληδονία), de l'avidité insatiable et de la goinfrerie (ἀπληστία), dues à un jugement faux et irrationnel (διὰ κρίσιν φαύλην καὶ ἀλόγιστον)²², mais aussi celle de vivre contre nature (παρὰ φύσιν), d'une manière indigne d'un homme libre (ἀνελευθέρως), c'est-à-dire inhumainement (ἀπανθρώπως)²³, sans jamais rien offrir (ἀμεταδότως), en étant dur avec ses amis (πρὸς φίλους ἀπηνῶς) et indifférent à l'égard de ses concitoyens (πρὸς πολίτας ἀφιλοτίμως)²⁴, comme si la nature humaine était incapable d'aimer de façon désintéressée et sans y trouver son compte²⁵. Par contre, parmi les liens sacrés, c'est celui naturel de l'amitié qui est le plus sacré et le plus fort²⁶. La conformité avec la nature de ce sentiment de la *philia*, qui est à la base de tous les rapports humains est démontré par les animaux²⁷ qui, ne possédant pas l'adaptabilité, ni l'excellence, ni la pleine autonomie de la raison, suivent leur instinct et demeurent enracinés dans la nature²⁸, alors que chez l'homme, la raison qui est la reine absolue et qui se trouve influencée par de nombreuses opinions et de nombreux préjugés, est sortie du droit chemin signalé par la nature et a fini par n'en laisser aucune trace claire et visible²⁹.

¹⁸ Plu., *Comp. Arist. - Cat. Ma.* 4. 2.

¹⁹ Les opuscules qui nous sont parvenus où Plutarque développe le sujet de la *φιλία* sont au nombre de trois: *de adulate et amico*, *de amicorum multitudine* et *de fraterno amore*. À ceux-ci on pourrait ajouter le *Πρὸς Βιθυνὸν περὶ φιλίας* (Cat. Lampr. nr. 83) et l'*Ἐπιστολή πρὸς Φαβωρίνον περὶ φιλίας: ἐν ἄλλῳ δὲ Περί φίλων χρήσεως* (Cat. Lampr. nr. 132). Cf. Plutarchus, *Moralia* VII, *Fragmenta* 154 -166 Sdb.

²⁰ Plu., *Cat. Ma.* 5. 2.

²¹ Plu., *Cat. Ma.* 5. 2-5.

²² Plu., *Cup. div.* 524D.

²³ Cf. Plu., *Dio* 7. 5. Voir Plu., *Frat. am.* 479C (ἀφιλάνθρωπος).

²⁴ Plu., *Cup. div.* 525C.

²⁵ Plu., *Am. prol.* 495A κατηγοροῦσι τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως μόνης μὴ προῖκα τὸ στέργειν ἐχούσης μὴδ' ἐπισταμένης φιλεῖν ἄνευ χρείας;

²⁶ Plu., *Frat. am.* 479D.

²⁷ Plu., *Am. prol.* 493BC.

²⁸ Sur l'idée que la nature ne fait jamais rien d'inutile (πανταχοῦ μὲν γὰρ ἡ φύσις ἀκριβῆς καὶ φιλοτέχνης καὶ ἀνελλιπῆς καὶ ἀτέριπτος) voir Plu., *Am. prol.* 495C.

²⁹ Plu., *Am. prol.* 493DE.

Déjà à l'époque de Plutarque (καθ' ἡμᾶς), la pratique de la *philia*, naturelle et propre à un peuple pour les Anciens³⁰, était devenue plus rare que le phénix, rare comme l'avait été la haine chez les Anciens (ἐπὶ τῶν παλαιῶν)³¹; de toute façon, comme nous le confirme Lucien dans son dialogue *Sur l'amitié*, ce sentiment était depuis longtemps bien loin de pouvoir être considéré comme une exclusivité de la civilisation grecque, celle-ci étant désormais uniquement habile à composer des discours sur l'amitié, mais non plus à la mettre en pratique. Dans le dialogue de Lucien, le scythe Toxaris qui s'adresse à son interlocuteur, le grec Mnésippe, affirme :

Valons-nous mieux que les Grecs sous les autres rapports, sommes-nous plus justes, plus respectueux qu'ils ne le sont envers nos parents ? Je ne prétends pas entrer en contestation avec toi sur cette question. Toujours est-il que les Scythes sont, plus que les Grecs, des amis tendres et fidèles, et que l'amitié est chez nous plus honorée que chez vous : ce serait un point facile à démontrer [...] Vous me paraissez capables de faire sur l'amitié les plus beaux discours du monde ; mais, loin que vos actions répondent à vos paroles, vous vous contentez de la louer et de montrer quel grand bien elle est pour les hommes ; puis, au moment d'agir, traîtres à votre langage, vous fuyez, je ne sais comment, la mise en application de vos théories³².

Ainsi, à ses lecteurs qui, comme Caton l'Ancien, ne semblent plus croire à l'existence d'autres rapports que ceux dictés par l'utilité³³, Plutarque ne perd aucune occasion de présenter, comme l'écrivit Ziegler³⁴, des exemples de bienveillance, de bonté, de *philanthrōpia*³⁵; cette dernière étant une vertu profondément enracinée dans son caractère, une vertu qu'il recommanda là où il la rencontra et dont il fit preuve personnellement et non seulement à l'égard de ses concitoyens et de toute créature à visage humain³⁶.

³⁰ Pour la φιλανθρωπία des anciens voir Plu., *Quaest. conv.* II 643D; *Soll. an.* 970A; *Cim.* 10. 6.

³¹ Plu., *Frat. am.* 478C, 481F.

³² Luc., XLI 9.

³³ Plu., *Cat. Ma.* 5. 1.

³⁴ K. ZIEGLER, 1965, p. 367. Cf. J. DE ROMILLY, 1979, p. 293: "la douceur ne semble pas, chez Plutarque, une notion qu'il aurait reçue toute faite, en héritage doctrinal, mais plutôt une valeur enracinée dans sa personnalité et son caractère".

³⁵ Plu., *Aem.* 28. 1, 39. 9; *Ages.* 1. 5; *Alex.* 58. 8; *Ant.* 3. 10, 25. 3; *Arist.* 23. 1; *Brut.* 30. 6 ; *Caes.* 34. 7 ; *Cat. Mi.* 21. 10, 23. 1; 29. 4; *Cim.* 6. 2, 10. 7; *Cleom.* 34. 3-4; *Crass.* 3. 5; *Demetr.* 4. 1, 17. 1, 50. 1; *Fab.* 22. 8 ; *Comp. Phil. - Flam.* 3. 4 ; *Galb.* 11. 1, 20. 5 ; *Luc.* 18. 9, 29. 6; *Marc.* 1. 3, 10. 6, 20. 1 (Marcel est le premier des Romains qui ait fait preuve de φιλανθρωπία); *Pel.* 21. 3; *Per.* 30. 3; *Phoc.* 5. 1 ; *Publ.* 1. 2, 4. 5 ; *Pyrrh.* 11. 8 ; *Sol.* 15. 3 ; *Ibes.* 6. 4, 36. 4. Mais à côté de ceux-ci il ne manque pas dans les *Vies* de Plutarque des exemples aussi d'ἀ-φιλανθρωπία et d'ἀπανθρωπία: *Cat. Ma.* 5. 1, 5. 5; *Dio* 7. 5 ; *Nic.* 11. 2 ; *Sull.* 14. 8.

³⁶ Voir Plu., *Cat. Ma.* 5. 2: "nous ne devons pas traiter les êtres vivants comme des chassures ou des ustensiles, qu'on jette quand ils sont abimés ou usés à force de servir, car il faut s'habituer à être doux et clément envers eux, sinon pour une autre raison, du moins pour s'exercer à la pratique de la vertu d'humanité (φιλανθρωπία)".

*Philanthrōpia*³⁷ dans l'acception commune d' "humanité" ou de "bienveillance" est un terme qui apparaît pour la première fois dans le monde grec dans la première moitié du IV^e siècle av. J.-C. avec les *Discours* d'Isocrate et les *Dialogues* de Platon³⁸, même si l'adjectif *philanthrōpos*, qui durant la période classique est l'un des trois termes "les plus couramment employés ... pour désigner la douceur"³⁹, est déjà connu d'Eschyle qui l'utilise dans son *Prométhée*⁴⁰. Comme idéal civil, la *φιλανθρωπία* entendue comme *φιλία πρὸς πάντας ἀνθρώπους*⁴¹, à laquelle par nature nous sommes liés, car tout homme, *πολιτικὸν ...ζῶον ... καὶ κοινωνικὸν καὶ φιλόκαλον*⁴², est parent (*οἰκεῖος*) et ami (*φίλος*), semble une création aristotélicienne et péripatéticienne plus qu'une doctrine créée par les écoles de pensée modernes qui – en limitant la *φιλία* ou aux sages, comme le stoïcisme ancien, ou aux membres du groupe, comme l'épicurisme – restent fondamentalement étrangères à cette *philia* pour l'homme en tant qu'homme. Après l'idéal cicéronien de l'*humanitas* qui naît comme terme et comme concept au I^{er} siècle, en tant que plein exercice de la nature humaine, on assiste au début de l'époque impériale à la renaissance et à la diffusion du sentiment de *φιλανθρωπία* aussi bien chez les Grecs que chez les Romains comme *humanitas* de la part d'intellectuels comme Philon, Sénèque, Épictète et Dion ; avec eux la *philanthrōpia* ne s'identifie plus avec le plein exercice de la nature humaine, mais elle parvient à devenir "expression du sentiment de la sociabilité"⁴³.

Parmi les intellectuels des premiers siècles de l'époque impériale, Plutarque se révèle être l'auteur qui a fait un "usus frequentissimus" de la notion de *philanthrōpia* aussi bien dans les *Œuvres Morales* que dans les *Vies*, où les occurrences sont bien plus nombreuses qu'a dénombrées Tromp de Rüter dans la première moitié du XX^e siècle dans une étude consacrée au sens et à l'emploi de ce terme⁴⁴. Face aux 11 occurrences pour le substantif, 40 pour l'adjectif et 3 pour les formes adverbiales, que le chercheur a relevées dans tout l'*opus* de Plutarque (*Œuvres Morales* et *Vies*), la banque de données du *TLG* signale 20 occurrences pour le substantif, 79 pour l'adjectif (dont 18 comme adjectif substantivé) et 16 pour l'adverbe dans les *Œuvres Morales*, tandis que dans les *Vies* sont enregistrées 36 occurrences pour le substantif, 96 pour l'adjectif

³⁷ Pour une définition générale de la notion de *φιλανθρωπία* voir D.L. III 98 τῆς φιλανθρωπίας ἐστὶν εἶδη τρία· ἓν μὲν διὰ τῆς προσηγορίας γινόμενον, οἷον ἐν οἷς τινες τὸν ἐντυχόντα πάντα προσαγορεύουσι καὶ τὴν δεξιὰν ἐμβάλλοντες χαιρετίζουσιν. ἄλλο εἶδος, ὅταν τις βοηθητικὸς ἢ παντὶ τῷ ἀτυχῶντι. ἕτερον εἶδος ἐστὶ τῆς φιλανθρωπίας ἐν ᾧ τινες φιλοδειπνισταὶ εἰσι. τῆς ἄρα φιλανθρωπίας τὸ μὲν ἐστὶ διὰ τοῦ προσαγορεύειν, τὸ δὲ διὰ τοῦ εὐεργετεῖν, τὸ δὲ διὰ τοῦ ἐστιᾶν καὶ φιλοσυνουσιάζειν.

³⁸ Pour l'idée platonico-académicienne de *φιλανθρωπία* voir Pl., [Def.] 412E *Φιλανθρωπία ἕξις εὐάγωγος ἡθους πρὸς ἀνθρώπου φιλίαν· ἕξις εὐεργετικῆ ἀνθρώπων· χάριτος σχέσις· μνήμη μετ' εὐεργεσίας.*

³⁹ J. DE ROMILLY, 1979, p. 328; F. FRAZIER, 1996, p. 231.

⁴⁰ A., *Pr.* 11, 28.

⁴¹ Stob., II 120, 20 et 121, 22 W.: Ἔστι δὲ κοινὴ τις ἡμῖν ὑπάρχει *φιλανθρωπία*...

⁴² Voir Asp., *EN*, CAG XIX 1, ed. G. HEYLBUT, Berolini 1889, p. 23, 7-8.

⁴³ Voir M. POHLENZ, 1978², pp. 125, 212.

⁴⁴ S. TROMP DE RÜTER, 1932, pp. 297-9.

(dont 22 comme adjectif substantivé) et 33 pour l'adverbe, pour un total de 280 occurrences environ pour les deux ouvrages⁴⁵.

La notion de *philanthrōpia*⁴⁶ au sein de l'opus plutarquien représente en général une qualité naturelle ou une aptitude de l'âme humaine susceptible d'être éduquée et transformée grâce à l'ἔθισμός dans une disposition permanente, au point de devenir une vertu du caractère (ἦθος / *habitus*). Il s'agit d'un concept à la fois variable et adaptable, selon les circonstances, il se teint des couleurs des meilleures qualités du caractère⁴⁷ comme la χρηστότης, l'ἐλευθεριότης, la πραότης, l'ἐπιείκεια⁴⁸, l'εὐγνωμοσύνη et la μεγαλοφροσύνη⁴⁹, vertu que l'homme est appelé à mettre en pratique ne serait-ce que par humanité⁵⁰. Mais cette qualité de l'âme⁵¹, que Romilly a définie comme une qualité "de sociabilité"⁵² et Frazier d'"humanité"⁵³ se présente dans les *Vies* sous un aspect différent de celui qu'elle revêt dans les *Œuvres Morales*. Dans les *Vies*, la *philanthrōpia* désigne surtout une qualité innée (σύμφυτος *vel* φύσει) de l'âme⁵⁴ et propre au peuple grec⁵⁵ en général et athénien⁵⁶ en particulier, tandis que dans les *Œuvres Morales*, elle se présente le plus souvent comme une véritable vertu du caractère. En effet, dans les *Vies*, l'adjectif *philanthrōpos* se circonscrit plus étroitement à la vie de la cité et devient synonyme de ἑλληνικός⁵⁷, πολιτικός⁵⁸, δημοτικός⁵⁹ et δημοκρατικός⁶⁰ et *philanthrōpia* finit par caractériser la vertu du

⁴⁵ Voir maintenant J. RIBEIRO FERREIRA, 2008, p. 89 n. 5.

⁴⁶ S. TROMP DE RUITER, 1932, pp. 287, 295, 299 : "apud *Plutarchum*

φιλανθρωπία	11	locis	invenitur
φιλάνθρωπος	40	"	"
adverbialiter	3	"	"

... Plutarchi locis allatis satis apparere mihi videtur vocem et notionem philanthropiae admodum florere apud illum auctorem⁷.

⁴⁷ Voir J. RIBEIRO FERREIRA, 2008, pp. 78-84.

⁴⁸ Plu., *Nic.* 9. 6.

⁴⁹ Plu., *Cap. ex inim. ut.* 88C ; *Alex. Magn. fort. virt.* 336E..

⁵⁰ Plu., *Cat. Ma.* 5. 5. Pour la critique de Plutarque à la conduite de Caton l'Ancien, qui poussait la fidélité à ses principes d'austérité jusqu'à vendre ses esclaves, devenus vieux, pour ne pas avoir à les nourrir sans profit voir *supra* n.36.

⁵¹ On pourrait définir la *philanthrōpia* avec les mêmes mots employés par le Stagirite pour caractériser dans l'*EN* (1155a) la *philia*: ἀρετή τις ἢ μετ' ἀρετῆς.

⁵² J. DE ROMILLY, 1979, p. 37.

⁵³ F. FRAZIER, 1996, p. 231.

⁵⁴ Voir Plu., *Marc.* 10. 6 . Mais "une nature généreuse et bonne, quand elle manque d'éducation, produit pêle-mêle des fruits excellents et des fruits détestables, comme un sol riche resté sans culture" (Plu., *Cor.* 1. 3).

⁵⁵ Plu., *Pelop.* 6. 5 ; *Quaest. conv.* II 643D.

⁵⁶ Plu., *Arist.* 27.7 ; *Cim.* 10.6-7 (τὴν παλαιὰν τῶν Ἀθηναίων φιλοξενίαν καὶ φιλανθρωπίαν); *Demetr.* 22. 2 ; *Pel.* 6. 5 (οἱ μὲν οὖν Ἀθηναῖοι, πρὸς τῷ πατρίῳ αὐτοῖς καὶ σύμφυτον εἶναι τὸ φιλάνθρωπον...); *Soll. an.* 970A : τὸ φιλάνθρωπευμα τῶν παλαιῶν Ἀθηναίων).

⁵⁷ Plu., *Phil.* 8. 2 (Ἑλληνικὴν καὶ φιλάνθρωπον πολιτείαν); *Lys.* 27. 7 (Ἑλληνικὰ καὶ φιλάνθρωπα).

⁵⁸ Plu., *Demetr.* 1. 5 (οὐ πάνυ φιλάνθρωπον οὐδὲ πολιτικὴν...).

⁵⁹ Plu., *Agis.* 1. 5; *Crass.* 3. 5; *Galb.* 11. 1; *Oth.* 1. 3.

⁶⁰ Plu., *Comp. Cim.-Luc.* 1, 6; *Nic.* 11, 2; *Agis et Cleom.* 34. 3.

citoyen grec (ἀρετή πολιτική)⁶¹ – tout comme la φιλονικία caractérise la vertu militaire (ἀρετή στρατιωτική) des Romains⁶² – au point d'être inséparable de la notion de civilisation hellénique⁶³. Cependant, dans les *Œuvres Morales* la *philanthrōpia*, considérée comme étant φιλία pour l'homme en tant qu'homme (ἄνθρωπον ἀσπάζεται, καθ' ὃ ἄνθρωπος ἐστί), comme l'affirme le *De sollertia animalium*⁶⁴, et assimilée à la φιλοκαλία⁶⁵, se révèle être une vertu divine ou presque⁶⁶. Se modelant sur la perfection et sur l'amour que la divinité nourrit pour les hommes (πρὸς τὸ καλὸν καὶ φιλάνθρωπον)⁶⁷, elle s'explique dans l'εὐεργετεῖν, dans l'εὐ ποιεῖν et dans le καλὸν τι πράττειν⁶⁸.

Convaincu de l'importance sociale et politique que revêt une telle vertu⁶⁹, tournée vers l'extérieur au point d'embrasser l'humanité entière⁷⁰ mais qui exige à son intérieur une éducation et une formation morale correcte, l'intellectuel de Chéronée ne perd pas une occasion de recommander comme seule διδασκαλία⁷¹, l'exercice (μελέτη) qui permet à la *philanthrōpia* de vertu naturelle qu'elle est à s'élever au niveau de la sphère morale⁷² par le biais de l'ἔθος (vel ἔθισμός)⁷³ ou de la συνήθεια⁷⁴ de ces qui sont les premiers liens humains que les hommes ont

⁶¹ Plu., *Arist.* 27. 7.

⁶² Cf. Plu., *Phil.* 3. 1; *Marc.* 20. 1.

⁶³ Voir l'analyse de H. M. MARTIN JR., 1961, p.167: "These three concepts – *philanthrōpia*, civilization, Hellenism – seem almost inseparable for Plutarch". Cf. D. DEL CORNO, 1982, p. 15.

⁶⁴ Plu., *Soll. an.* 984C ἔοικε τὸ φιλάνθρωπον ... θεοφιλὲς εἶναι. À propos de la définition de φιλάνθρωπος voir Plu., [*Cons. ad Apoll.*] 120A φιλοπάτωρ ... καὶ φιλομήτωρ καὶ φιλοίκεος καὶ φιλόφιλος, τὸ δὲ σύμπαν εἰπεῖν φιλάνθρωπος.

⁶⁵ À propos de la φιλοκαλία dans les textes de Plutarque voir *Amat.* 767A (φιλόκαλος καὶ φιλάνθρωπος); *Cum princ. philos.* 776B (φιλοκάλων καὶ φιλανθρώπων); *An seni resp.* 783E (τὸ φιλάνθρωπον καὶ φιλόκαλον), 791C (φιλοκάτως καὶ φιλανθρώπως ζῆν); *Ad princ. ind.* 781A (τὸ καλὸν καὶ φιλάνθρωπον). À propos de la φιλανθρωπία et de la φιλοκαλία en tant que subordonnées à l'ἀρετή vd. [*Arist.*], *VV.* 1251b 33-36 (voir n. 92).

⁶⁶ Cf. Pl., *Lg.* 713D: ...ὁ θεὸς φιλάνθρωπος ὢν. À propos de la vertu, qui est le bien le plus grand et le plus agréable voir Plu., *Sol.* 7. 2. À propos de la vertu comme le seul bien divin à la disposition de l'homme voir Plu., *Arist.* 6. 3-6 τὴν ἀρετήν, ὃ μόνον ἐστὶ τῶν θεῶν ἀγαθῶν ἐφ' ἡμῖν.

⁶⁷ Plu., *Ad princ. ind.* 781A ; *An seni resp.* 786C.

⁶⁸ Vd. Plu., *Pyth. orac.* 402A (τὸν θεὸν ὡς καρπῶν δοτήρα καὶ πατρῶων καὶ γενέσιον καὶ φιλάνθρωπον); *Gen. Socr.* 593A (τὸν θεὸν οὐ φίλον ἄλλὰ φιλάνθρωπον); *Amat.* 758A; *An seni resp.* 786B ; *Stoic. rep.* 1051E, 1052B.

⁶⁹ Voir Plu., *An seni resp.* 791C λειτουργία γὰρ οὐκ ἐστὶν ἡ πολιτεία ..., ἀλλὰ βίος ἡμέρου καὶ κοινωνικοῦ καὶ πολιτικοῦ ζώου καὶ πεφυκτός ... πολιτικῶς καὶ φιλοκάτως καὶ φιλανθρώπως ζῆν.

⁷⁰ Voir F. FRAZIER, 1996, p. 233: "la *philanthrōpia*, fidèle à son étymologie, est tournée vers l'extérieur et se dilate jusqu'à embrasser l'humanité entière".

⁷¹ Plu., *Quaest. conv.* VII 703B : φιλανθρωπίας διδασκαλία τὸ ἔθος ἐστίν.

⁷² Plu., *Per.* 1. 1; *Virt. mor.* 451E; *Frat. am.* 482B.

⁷³ Plu., *Quaest. conv.* VII 703B φιλανθρωπίας διδασκαλία τὸ ἔθος ἐστίν. Je crois qu'on pourrait étendre à la φιλανθρωπία ce qu'écrivit Plutarque à propos de la φιλία (*Quaest. conv.* IV 660A), c'est à dire qu'elle est ἐν πολλῷ χρόνῳ καὶ δι' ἀρετῆς ἀλώσιμον.

⁷⁴ Plu., *Soll. anim.* 960A (ἡ γὰρ συνήθεια δεινὴ τοῖς κατὰ μικρὸν ἐνοικειούμενοις πάθει πόρρω προαγαγεῖν τὸν ἄνθρωπον); *Es. carn.* I 996A (ὁ πρὸς φιλανθρωπίαν ἔθισμός οὐ δοκεῖ θαυμαστόν εἶναι); *Cat. Ma.* 5. 5 (μελέτης ἔνεκα τοῦ φιλανθρώπου). Sur l'importance de la

entre eux (φιλανθρωπότατα καὶ πρῶτα κοινωνήματα πρὸς ἀλλήλους)⁷⁵. Pour établir ces liens le banquet est un lieu privilégié⁷⁶: son but est moins de boire et de jouir que de faire naître l'amitié et l'affection réciproque (μὴ πρὸς τὸ πίνειν καὶ ἡδυπαθεῖν ἀλλὰ πρὸς φιλίαν καὶ ἀγάπησιν ἀλλήλων προτρέπεται)⁷⁷. En effet, dans le *Septem sapientium convivium*⁷⁸ Plutarque affirme que l'homme judicieux (ὁ νοῦν ἔχων) ne prend pas part à un banquet en se présentant comme un vase à remplir, mais pour trouver du plaisir à la conversation et dans le premier livre des *Quaestiones convivales*, il souligne le caractère élitiste et culturel du banquet, qui doit se tenir dans un climat de sobriété et de retenue, d'équilibre et de mesure, en précisant également l'objectif (τὸ συμποτικὸν τέλος) que l'on se propose d'atteindre. Comme activité (διαγωγή) qui aboutit à l'amitié (εἰς φιλίαν τελευτῶσα)⁷⁹ grâce au plaisir (δι' ἡδονῆς ... ὑπὸ χάριτος)⁸⁰ le banquet vise à entraîner une amélioration du caractère⁸¹ et à consolider ou à engendrer chez les participants la *philia* (εἰς δὲ συμπόσιον οἷ γε νοῦν ἔχοντες ἀφικνοῦνται κτησόμενοι φίλους)⁸². En effet, si le vin⁸³, tel un feu, adoucit les caractères et offre l'occasion d'établir des relations réciproques d'amitié⁸⁴, c'est cependant le λόγος qui, grâce à l'éducation des caractères (τὸ παιδεύειν τὰ ἦθη)

συνήθεια, qui est chose très grande, voir Plu., *Aud.* 37F, 47 BC; *Prof. virt.* 79D; *Tuend. san.* 123C; *Virt. mor.* 443C; *Coh. ira* 459B; *Garr.* 511E (μέγα πρὸς πάντα ὁ ἔθισμός); *Curios.* 520D (μέγιστον ... πρὸς τὴν τοῦ πάθους ἀποτροπὴν ὁ ἔθισμός); *Gen. Socr.* 584E; *Quaest. conv.* V 682C; *Soll. an.* 959F. Plutarque toutefois ne surestime pas l'importance de la doctrine des Stoïciens pour la préférer au λόγος. Cf. Plu., *Tranq. an.* 466F-467A (οὐ γὰρ ἡ συνήθεια ποιεῖ ... τὸν ἄριστον βίον ἡδὺν ..., ἀλλὰ τὸ φρονεῖν); *Garr.* 510CD; *Exil.* 602C.

⁷⁵ Plu., *Sept. sap. conv.* 158C.

⁷⁶ Sur le banquet dans son acception première de 'réunion conviviale' qui suit le banquet proprement dit et à propos du banquet comme l'un des événements les plus singuliers de la civilisation grecque, cf. M. MONTANARI, 1989, pp. 94-5; PLUTARCO, 1998, p. 14 sqq.

⁷⁷ Plu., *Sept. sap. conv.* 148AB; *Quaest. conv.* IV 660B (voir n. 86).

⁷⁸ Plu., *Sept. sap. conv.* 147E οὐ γὰρ ὡς ἀγγεῖον ἡκει κομίζων ἑαυτὸν ἐμπλήσαι πρὸς τὸ δεῖπνον ὁ νοῦν ἔχων, ἀλλὰ καὶ σπουδάσαι τι καὶ παῖξαι καὶ ἀκοῦσαι καὶ εἰπεῖν ὧν ὁ καιρὸς παρακαλεῖ τοὺς συνόντας, εἰ μέλλουσι μετ' ἀλλήλων ἡδέως ἔσεσθαι.

⁷⁹ Plu., *Cat. Ma.* 25. 4 τὴν δὲ τράπεζαν ἐν τοῖς μάλιστα φιλοποιοὺν ἡγεῖτο. Cf. Plu., *Quaest. conv.* II 632E.

⁸⁰ Plu., *Quaest. conv.* I 621C. Sur le rôle que joue la table pour faire naître la philanthropie voir Plu., *quaest. conv.* I 612D (τῷ φιλοποιοῦ λεγομένῳ τῆς τραπέζης), 618E, II 632E, IV 660A. Sur la φιλάνθρωπος τράπεζα voir aussi Plu., *Cons. ad uxor.* 610A.

⁸¹ Plu., *Quaest. conv.* IV 660B, VII 712B: γνωμολογία τε χρησταὶ καὶ ἀφελεῖς ὑπορρέουσαι καὶ τὰ σκληρότατα τῶν ἡθῶν ὥσπερ ἐν πυρὶ τῷ οἴνῳ μαλάττουσι καὶ κάμπτουσι πρὸς τὸ ἐπεικότερον.

⁸² Plu., *Quaest. conv.* IV 660A, I 621C (φιλίας ἐπίτασιν ἢ γένεσιν δι' ἡδονῆς ἐνεργάσασθαι τοῖς παροῦσιν). Sur la capacité qu'a le banquet de consolider de vieilles amitiés et d'en créer de nouvelles cf. Plu., *Quaest. conv.* I 610 AB, 618E (πρὸς εὐνοίας ἐπίδοσιν ἢ γένεσιν), II 643E, IV 660B, 672E.

⁸³ Sur le vin comme ποτῶν ὠφελιμώτατον ... καὶ φαρμάκων ἥδιστον vd. Plu., *Tuend. san.* 132B; *Quaest. conv.* III 647A, 655E.

⁸⁴ Plu., *Sept. sap. conv.* 156D (ὁ Διόνυσος ὥσπερ ἐν πυρὶ τῷ οἴνῳ μαλάσσει τὰ ἦθη καὶ ἀνυγραίνων ἀρχὴν τινα συγκράσεως πρὸς ἀλλήλους καὶ φιλίας ἐνδίδωσιν) ; *Quaest. conv.* I 620DE (ὁ γὰρ οἶνος ἄξει τὸ ἦθος εἰς τὸ μέτριον μαλακώτερον ποιῶν καὶ ἀνυγραίνων), IV 660B (ταῖς δὲ φιλικαῖς λαβαῖς ὁ οἶνος ἀφὴν ἐνδίδωσι), VII 712B. Cfr. Athen., V 185C: δοκεῖ γὰρ ἔχειν πρὸς φιλίαν τι ὁ οἶνος ἔλκυστικόν.

et à la modération des passions (παρηγορεῖν τὰ πάθη) engendre ce sentiment d'affection qui nous lie l'un à l'autre (φιλοφροσύνην καὶ ... συνήθειαν πρὸς ἀλλήλους)⁸⁵, c'est-à-dire la *philanthrōpia*⁸⁶. Celle-ci, tout comme le bien (τὸ καλόν)⁸⁷, attire à soi de manière active (πρακτικῶς), elle pousse tout de suite à l'action et, surtout, elle est capable de façonner le caractère (ἡθοιοιοῦν)⁸⁸.

Déterminer, à la lumière de ce que nous avons évoqué, les sources philosophiques de la doctrine plutarquienne de la *philanthrōpia* se révèle une entreprise assez difficile et encore moins sûre, car la reprise de cet idéal, comme nous l'avons vu, est – semble-t-il – moins le fruit d'une théorie élaborée dans le cadre d'une école de pensée spécifique, que la réponse personnelle et subjective à des exigences sociales qui, à cette époque-là, étaient en train de s'enraciner dans la conscience populaire⁸⁹. Ayant exclu l'influence des écoles de pensée modernes, la notion de *philanthropie* comme φιλία πρὸς πάντας ἀνθρώπους⁹⁰, dont le but est avant tout d'εὐεργετεῖν, liée à des vertus comme l'ἐλευθεριότης, la χρηστότης, l'ἐπιείκεια et l'εὐγνώμοσύνη, et assimilée à la φιλοφιλία, à la φιλοξενία et notamment à la φιλοκαλία se révèle une théorie qui trouve ses prémisses dans l'*EN* d'Aristote (οἰκεῖον ἅπας ἄνθρωπος ἀνθρώπῳ καὶ φίλον...)⁹¹ – même si le Stagirite a recours à ce terme une fois seulement – et trouve correspondance dans un texte pseudo-aristotélicien, le *De virtutibus et vitiis*⁹² aussi bien que dans la doctrine théophrastienne de l'οἰκειότης⁹³, qui est différente de la doctrine stoïcienne de l'οἰκειώσις⁹⁴.

De tout façon ce que l'analyse des textes plutarquiens fait apparaître de manière très claire, c'est la confiance d'un éducateur qui, en conflit contre les écoles de pensée modernes, croit encore à l'existence d'autres rapports interpersonnels, sous-tendus par une grandeur d'âme et non pas dictés par

⁸⁵ Plu., *Sept. sap. conv.* 156CD.

⁸⁶ Plu., *Quaest. conv.* IV 660B (τὸ φιλόανθρωπον καὶ ἡθοιοιοῦν ἐπὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ἐκ τοῦ σώματος ἐποχετεύει καὶ συνδιαδίδωσιν). Vd. S.-T. THEODORSSON, 1990, p. 16: "The thought expressed in this sentence is curious indeed: 'Conversation channels and distributes by means of the wine its kindness and characterforming influence from the body into the soul.' The assertion that wine has a character-forming action is curious, still more that this is produced in the body and must be transported into the soul to be effective".

⁸⁷ Plu., *Ad princ. ind.* 781A τὸ καλὸν καὶ φιλόανθρωπον.

⁸⁸ Plu., *Per.* 2. 4 τὸ γὰρ καλὸν ἐφ' αὐτὸ πρακτικῶς κινεῖ καὶ πρακτικὴν εὐθὺς ὄρμην ἐντίθησιν, ἡθοιοιοῦν. Cf. Plu., *Quaest. conv.* IV 660B.

⁸⁹ Cf. J. DE ROMILLY, 1979, p. 293.

⁹⁰ Stob., II 120, 20; 121, 22.

⁹¹ Arist., *EN* 1155a 20 -22.

⁹² [Arist.], VV. 1250b 33 (φιλόανθρωπία ἀκολουθεῖ τῇ ἐλευθεριότητι), 1251b 33-36 (ἀκολουθεῖ δὲ τῇ ἀρετῇ φιλόανθρωπον καὶ φιλόκαλον).

⁹³ Thphr., *Frr.* L 91, L 195-196 Fortenbaugh. Que Plutarque se soit inspiré de la doctrine de l'οἰκειότης πρὸς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους du chef de l'école péripatéticienne, Théophraste, est une hypothèse qui est confirmée, semble-t-il, aussi dans le deuxième *logos* du *De esu carniūm*. Voir G. SANTESE, 1999, p. 75: "Teofrasto fonda la *communio iuris*, il patto giuridico tra uomo e animale, sul concetto di οἰκεῖον, su un legame originario che lega tra loro i viventi". Voir Plu., *Frat. am.* 428B et 490E = Thphr., *Frr.* L 96 et L 98 Fortenbaugh.

⁹⁴ Sur la doctrine de l'οἰκειώσις et de l'οἰκειότης voir F. DIRLMEIER, 1937, pp. 1-100; C. O. BRINK, 1955; S. G. PEMBROKE, 1971; P. MORAUX, 1973, p. 348; G. STRIKER, 1983.

la justice ou par l'utilité, convaincu que bien vivre signifie aussi vivre avec un sentiment d'amitié et de communauté avec les autres⁹⁵.

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⁹⁵ Plu., *Adv. Col.* 1108C : τὸ δ' εὖ ζῆν ἔστι κοινωνικῶς ζῆν καὶ φιλικῶς καὶ σωφρόνως καὶ δικαίως.

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PHILANTHROPIA AS SOCIABILITY AND PLUTARCH'S UNSOCIABLE HEROES

ANASTASIOS G. NIKOLAIDIS
University of Crete, Rethymno

Abstract

Although the words φιλανθρωπία and φιλόανθρωπος are pivotal terms of his ethical vocabulary, Plutarch often attaches to these words meanings and nuances that appear to be ethically indifferent or neutral. One of these meanings is the sociability-nuance of *philanthropia*, which seems to describe all sorts of refined modes of behaviour such as courtesy, affability, tactfulness, friendliness, hospitality and the like. Plutarch appreciates and encourages these aspects of refined conduct (mainly in the *Moralia*), for he believes that they conduce to good human relations and promote social harmony. Yet, though some of his heroes (e.g., Phokion, Cato, Perikles) appear to be rather unsociable, Plutarch, far from finding any fault with them, explicitly or implicitly justifies and even approves of their sternness and austerity. Sometimes because he is aware that good manners and sociability, especially in the domain of politics, may be a deceptive façade that often conceals crude ambition or devious schemes and machinations; other times because he bows to the hero's moral excellence, which, under certain circumstances, seems to be somehow incompatible with the usual manifestations of sociability.

According to Diogenes Laertios, Plato distinguished three kinds of *philanthropia*: a) by way of salutations, i.e. by addressing everyone you meet on the street and shaking hands with them, b) by way of helping everyone in need, and c) by way of keeping an open house and offering dinner-parties. In other words, *philanthropia* is manifested through salutations, through conferring benefits, and through offering dinners and promoting social intercourse¹.

Nobody recognizes Plato in this description, of course, since the four occurrences of the words φιλανθρωπία and φιλόανθρωπος in the Platonic corpus convey only the literal meaning of the words (love and lover of mankind), which at most could be taken to underlie the second kind in Laertios' passage². Plutarch would also have difficulty, I think, in associating Plato with the three kinds of *philanthropia* above, but for him Laertios' description would have

¹ D. L. 3.98: Τῆς φιλανθρωπίας ἐστὶν εἶδη τρία· ἓν μὲν διὰ τῆς προσηγορίας γινόμενον, οἷον ἐν οἷς τινες τὸν ἐντυχόντα πάντα προσαγορεύουσι καὶ τὴν δεξιὰν ἐμβάλλοντες χαιρετίζουσιν. ἄλλο εἶδος, ὅταν τις βοηθητικὸς ἢ παντὶ τῷ ἀτυχούντι. ἕτερον εἶδος ἐστὶ τῆς φιλανθρωπίας ἐν ᾧ τινες φιλοδειπνισταὶ εἰσι. τῆς ἄρα φιλανθρωπίας τὸ μὲν ἐστὶ διὰ τοῦ προσαγορεύειν, τὸ δὲ διὰ τοῦ εὐεργετεῖν, τὸ δὲ διὰ τοῦ ἐστιᾶν καὶ φιλοσυνουσιάζειν. The above categorization is part of the Διαίρέσεις (*Divisiones*), the last section of D. L., book 3 (§§ 80-109), sometime attributed to Aristotle (see V. ROSE, 1971, p. 677).

² *Euthphr.* 3D: Ἵσως γὰρ σὺ μὲν δοκεῖς σπάνιον σεαυτὸν παρέχειν καὶ διδάσκειν οὐκ ἐθέλειν τὴν σεαυτοῦ σοφίαν· ἐγὼ δὲ φοβοῦμαι μὴ ὑπὸ φιλανθρωπίας δοκῶ αὐτοῖς ὅτιπερ ἔχω ἐκκεχυμένως παντὶ ἀνδρὶ λέγειν, οὐ μόνον ἄνευ μισθοῦ, ἀλλὰ καὶ προστιθεὶς ἂν ἡδέως εἴ τις μου ἐθέλει ἀκοῦειν. *Symp.* 189C-D: ἔστι γὰρ θεῶν φιλανθρωπότητος (sc. Ἔρωτος), ἐπίκουρός τε ὢν τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ ἰατρὸς τούτων ὢν ἰαθέντων μεγίστη εὐδαιμονία ἂν τῷ ἀνθρωπιῶ γένει εἴη. *Lg.* 713D: ...καὶ ὁ θεὸς φιλόανθρωπος ὢν, τότε γένος ἄμεινον ἡμῶν ἐφίστη τὸ τῶν δαιμόνων. *Def.* 412E: Φιλανθρωπία ἕξις εὐάγωγος ἡθους πρὸς ἀνθρώπου φιλίαν· ἕξις εὐεργετικῆ ἀνθρώπων· χάριτος σχέσις μνήμη μετ' εὐεργεσίας.

struck a familiar note. As a matter of fact, Plutarch's usage of *philanthropia* and cognate words, pivotal terms of his ethical vocabulary, covers, as is well-known, a much wider range of meanings and nuances than the three aforesaid kinds³; more importantly, the concept of *philanthropia* in Plutarch is not simply synonymous with sociability and its various ramifications, as the first and third kind of Laertios' passage suggest, but perhaps constitutes the very kernel of his moral outlook. One might aptly say that *philanthropia* for Plutarch is the lens through which he sees, examines, judges and evaluates individuals and human activities at large⁴.

Nevertheless, there are many instances in his writings, both in *Lives* and *Moralia*, where Plutarch employs the words φιλόανθρωπος and φιλοανθρωπία to describe nuances of sociability and all sorts of refined modes of behaviour, such as courtesy, politeness, affability, tactfulness, discretion, friendliness, hospitality, and so on. To put it otherwise, Plutarch uses these words in a way that corresponds to Laertios' first and third kind, thus endorsing and recommending a *philanthropia* that, unlike the one of the second kind, seems to be ethically indifferent or neutral.

The first kind (*philanthropia* through salutations) occurs mostly in the *Lives*, where sociability is often a political device for gaining the favour of the multitude. To this aspect I will return. The third kind (*philanthropia* through dinner-parties and hospitality) is the sociability featuring equally in the *Lives* and *Moralia*, and predominantly, perhaps, in the *Table Talks*. As for the second kind (*philanthropia* through helping and benefitting the needy), which carries more pronounced ethical overtones and illustrates *par excellence* the moral sense of *philanthropia*, it will not concern us here⁵.

Before going to the *Lives*, I would like to discuss a few passages from the *Moralia*, where the notion of sociability primarily occurs in the context of a *symposion*; and for this aspect of *philanthropia* Plutarch's *Table Talks* offer an excellent testimony. The man who, after a solitary meal, said: "today I ate; I did

³ See R. HIRZEL, 1912, p. 25: "Plutarch hat...den Begriff in den verschiedensten Schattierungen verfolgt"; cf. also F. FRAZIER, 1996, p. 234: "On ne peut qu'être frappé par l'ampleur impressionnante de son champ d'action [sc. of *philanthropia*] dans les *Vies*".

⁴ Cf. also J. DE ROMILLY, 1979, p. 280: "La douceur est donc devenue un critère essentiel pour juger un homme" (in Romilly's treatment 'douceur' mainly translates *praotes*, but also – almost to the same extent – *philanthropia*). For the importance of *philanthropia* in P. see R. HIRZEL, 1912, pp. 23-32 (esp. p. 26: "Ich wüßte nicht, was sich mehr eignete für das Prinzip Plutarchischer Moral in Leben und Lehre erklärt zu werden als eben die Philanthropie...die Summe aller Tugenden"); B. BUCHER-ISLER, 1972, p. 20 ("ein Zentralbegriff"); F. FRAZIER, 1996, pp. 233-36; H. M. MARTIN JR.; A. G. NIKOLAIDIS, 2008, pp. XV-XVI; C. PANAGOPOULOS, 1977, pp. 218 sqq., pp. 234-35; J. RIBEIRO FERREIRA, 2008; J. DE ROMILLY, 1979, pp. 275-305, esp. 275-92; K. ZIEGLER, 1964², pp. 306/943.

⁵ For some telling examples of this kind of *philanthropia* see *Publ.* 1.2, 4.5, *Sol.* 15.3, *Thes.* 36.4, *Pel.* 6.4-5, *Marc.* 20.1-2, *Cleom.* 32.5, *Phoc.* 10.7-8; see also *Mor.* 823A, 1051E, 1075E. According to [Arist.], *VV* 1251b31 beneficence belongs to virtue (ἔστι δὲ τῆς ἀρετῆς καὶ τὸ εὐεργετεῖν τοὺς ἀξίους), and so *philanthropia* as beneficence is one of the concomitants of virtue (1251b34f.: ἀκολουθεῖ δὲ τῇ ἀρετῇ...εἶναι καὶ φιλόξενον καὶ φιλόανθρωπον...ἃ δὴ πάντα τῶν ἐπαινουμένων ἐστὶ).

not have a dinner”, is called *χαρίεις* and *φιλόανθρωπος*⁶, since, according to Plutarch, our witty and sociable man implied that a dinner always wants some friendly companionship for seasoning (697C: “βεβρωκέναι, μη δεδειπνηκέναι σήμερον”, ὡς τοῦ δείπνου κοινωνίαν καὶ φιλοφροσύνην ἐφηδύνουσαν αἰὶ ποθοῦντος). In another *Talk* we are urged to emulate the *philanthropia* of the old who, respecting companionship at large, held in honour not only those who shared their hearth and roof, but also those who shared their meals⁷. And in the *Banquet of the Seven Sages* the hearth–fire, the hearth itself, the wine bowls and all entertainment and hospitality are described as *φιλανθρωπότατα καὶ πρῶτα κοινωνήματα πρὸς ἀλλήλους* (158C), due to the belief that it was these things that first brought people closer to each other. Hence, in another essay, even outside the sympotic context, the dinner–table is called *philanthropos* (610A)⁸. And if the *symposion* is a sociable institution because it brings people together, Dionysos, one of the *symposion*’s presidents (the other one is Hunger), is even more sociable (*philanthropos*), because it is wine that stops the fellow–drinkers jostling one another like hungry dogs over the food, and establishes a cheerful and friendly atmosphere among them⁹. By the same token, speech (ὁ λόγος), through which men come close and communicate among themselves, is called ἥδιστον καὶ φιλανθρωπώτατον συμβόλαιον (*De garrul.* 504E)¹⁰.

The *Table Talks* throw light on the ramifications of sociability too. In one *Talk*, for example, *philanthropia* is synonymous with courtesy or tactfulness, since we hear of the Syrian prince Philopappos, the archon of Athens in Plutarch’s time, who, being among the guests of a banquet, joined in the after–dinner discussion out of courtesy and graciousness not less than because of his eagerness to learn (628B: τὰ μὲν λέγων τὰ δ’ ἀκούων διὰ φιλανθρωπίαν οὐχ ἦττον ἢ διὰ φιλομάθειαν). Similarly, the Persian king Artaxerxes was not only agreeable in intercourse (*Art.* 4.4: ἡδὶω θ’ ἑαυτὸν παρεῖχεν ἐντυγχάνεσθαι), but also tactful and gracious in giving as well as in receiving gifts (ibidem: ...οὐχ ἦττον τοῖς διδοῦσιν ἢ τοῖς λαμβάνουσιν φαινόμενος εὐχαρις καὶ φιλόανθρωπος)¹¹. The above cases suggest that the courtesy–nuance of *philanthropia* manifests itself

⁶ According to the pseudoplatonic *Definitions*, *χάρις* is an aspect of *philanthropia* (see n. 2 s.f.). Hence the two concepts are often paired together. Cf. *Mor.* 517C, 660A, *Art.* 4.4 (below), *Cat. Mi.* 26.1 (p. 281), *Sol.* 2.1.

⁷ 643D: ...ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον τὴν τῶν παλαιῶν φιλανθρωπίαν ζηλοῦν, οὐ μόνον ὁμοσίου οὐδ’ ὁμοροφίου ἀλλὰ καὶ ὁμοχοϊνικας καὶ ὁμοσιπούς τῷ πᾶσαν σέβεσθαι κοινωνίαν ἐν τιμῇ τιθεμένων.

⁸ For the connection of the dinner–table with the notion of sociability/hospitality cf. also *GGr.* 19.2, where we hear of Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi, that she was πολύφιλος καὶ διὰ φιλοξενίαν εὐτράπεζος.

⁹ 680B: οὕτως ἡμᾶς ἐν ἀρχῇ συμπεφορημένους ὑπὸ τοῦ λιμοῦ κυνηδὸν ἄρτι παραλαμβάνων ὁ Λυαῖος θεὸς καὶ Χορεῖος εἰς τάξιν ἰλαρὰν καὶ φιλόανθρωπον καθίστησιν. For the pairing of *philanthropos* with *hilaros* see also 660C, *Caes.* 4.8 (p. 285), and *Cleom.* 13.3 (n. 38).

¹⁰ *φιλόανθρωπος* is again paired with *ἡδὺς* in *Mor.* 762D, *Ant.* 25.3, *Cat. Ma.* 3.7 (p. 286 below), *Art.* 4.4 (below).

¹¹ In *Reg. Apophth.* 172B Artaxerxes holds that accepting small gifts with graciousness and goodwill is equally βασιλικὸν καὶ φιλόανθρωπον as giving large gifts. For another instance of *philanthropos* being combined with *basilikos*, see *Ages.* 1.5 (n. 24).

particularly – and more meaningfully – in the behaviour of someone superior towards an inferior; something that occurs again in 617B, where Alkinoos, by asking his son to rise and seating Odysseus beside himself, wins our praise; for it is exquisitely polite and gracious (ἐπιδέξιον ἐμμελῶς καὶ φιλάνθρωπον) to seat a suppliant in the place of a loved one.

In another *Talk* we are warned that there should be limits even in hospitality. For if one holds a dinner-party and invites every possible guest to his house as though to some public show or recitation, his hospitality goes too far (678E: ἔστι γὰρ τις οἶμαι καὶ φιλάνθρωπίας ἀκρασία, μηδένα παρερχομένης τῶν συμποτῶν ἀλλὰ πάντας ἐλκούσης ὡς ἐπὶ θέαν ἢ ἀκρόασιν.)¹²; on the contrary, the younger Scipio was criticized in Rome because, when he entertained his friends at the dedication of the temple of Herakles, he did not invite Mummius, his colleague in office. Thus, although Scipio was otherwise an admirable man, the omission of so slight an act of courtesy brought upon him the reputation of haughtiness (*Praec. ger. reip.* 816C: μικρὸν οὕτω φιλάνθρώπευμα παραλειφθὲν ὑπεροψίας ἦνεγκε δόξαν).

See also 816D in the immediate sequel. For other instances of *philanthropia* in the sense of courtesy or politeness cf. 513A, 517C, 645F, 749D, 762C, *Alex.* 58.8, *Eum.* 13,4, *Oth.* 1.1. See also *Demetr.* 22.1, where *philanthropia* conveys – more precisely – the nuance of discretion or tactfulness. While Demetrios was besieging Rhodes, the Rhodians captured the ship that carried bedding, clothing and letters from his wife Phila and sent it to his enemy Ptolemy. Thus, Plutarch comments, they did not imitate τὴν Ἀθηναίων φιλάνθρωπῖαν, who, having captured Philip's letter-carriers during their war with him, read all the letters except the one from Olympias, which, sealed as it was, they sent it back to him. Occasionally, the various nuances mingle, as, for example, in 546E, where *philanthropia* seems to denote all three kinds of Laertios' passage at the same time. Some people, Plutarch shrewdly observes, are wrong to believe that their self-glorification goes unnoticed when they report praises received from others (...ὅταν βασιλέων καὶ αὐτοκρατόρων δεξιώσεις καὶ προσαγορεύσεις καὶ φιλοφροσύνας ἀπαγγέλλωσιν, ὡς οὐχ αὐτῶν ἐπαίνους, ἀποδείξεις δὲ τῆς ἐκείνων ἐπικεικίας καὶ φιλάνθρωπίας διεξιόντες). For a similar combination of Laertios' three kinds of *philanthropia*, cf. n. 23 below.

It is clear, therefore, that Plutarch attaches some importance to sociability, and perhaps this is why he employs such a weighty ethical term as *philanthropia* to express its various ramifications. Especially in the context of a *symposion* Plutarch appears to particularly favour and recommend sociability, believing that these social gatherings did not simply bring people together in a relaxed and cheerful atmosphere that might give

¹² In *De garrulitate* P. transfers an example of excessive *philanthropia* found in Epicharmos (οὐ φιλάνθρωπος τυ γ' ἔσθ', ἔχεις νόσον χαίρεις διδούς – fr. 212 Kassel-Austin, *PCG*, v. I; and for the liberality-nuance of *philanthropia* in P. see n. 25 below) to the idle talker (510C: ...ἔχεις νόσον χαίρεις λαλῶν καὶ φλυαρῶν). More for this ἀκρασία λόγου see H.-G. INGENKAMP, 1971, pp. 135-6.

rise to new or confirm and strengthen older friendships¹³ but, owing to the sympotic etiquette, they could also effect that the guests (or at least some of them) acquire desirable habits and practices, such as self-discipline and self-restraint, polite manners, consideration for others and so forth¹⁴. In other words, sociability could be regarded as belonging to those so-called minor virtues, on which Plutarch would often discourse, convinced that, through ensuring “die Heilung der Seele”, they also conducted to social harmony and individual fulfilment¹⁵.

Plutarch, agreeing with Aristotle (*EN* 1103a17: ἡ δ' ἠθικὴ [sc. ἀρετὴ] ἐξ ἔθους περιγίνεται, ὅθεν καὶ τοῦνομα ἔσχηκε μικρὸν παρεγκλίνον ἀπὸ τοῦ ἔθους. Cf. also Plato, *Lg.* 792E), does not overlook the importance and power of habituation in acquiring and practising virtue, as several of his moral essays testify (cf. *De virt. mor.* 443C-D, *De coh. ira* 459B ff., *De garrul.* 510D, 511E-F, 512D-F, 514E, *De curios.* 520D ff., 521A-E, 522B, *De vit. pud.* 532C, *De sera* 551E, *De esu carn.* 996A-B). See also Ingenkamps's pertinent remarks on pp. 99-102 and 105-115). Cf. further *Cat. Ma.* 5.5:...ἀλλ' εἰ διὰ μηδὲν ἄλλο, μελέτης οὐνεκα τοῦ φιλανθρώπου προεθιστέον ἑαυτὸν ἐν τούτοις [sc. ζώοις] πρᾶον εἶναι καὶ μείλιχον. But the same relationship between habituation and virtue seems to go back to Pythagoras and it is also highlighted by Zeno of Elea. In *De sollert. an.* 959F we read that the Pythagoreans τὴν εἰς τὰ θηρία πραότητα μελέτην ἐποίησαντο πρὸς τὸ φιλάνθρωπον καὶ φιλοίκτηριμον. For habituation (συνήθεια), by gradually familiarizing men with certain feelings, is apt to lead them onward (δεινὴ τοῖς κατὰ μικρὸν ἐνοικειουμένοις πάθεισι πόρρω προαγαγεῖν τὸν ἄνθρωπον. Cf. also *Mor.* 91C, 729E, 996A-B). And at *Per.* 5.3 we see that Zeno would urge those who called Perikles' gravity (σεμνότης) thirst for reputation and arrogance to have a similar thirst for reputation themselves, believing that even the mere assumption of a noble demeanour might unconsciously produce some zeal for and habitual practice of noble things (...ὡς τῆς προσποιήσεως αὐτῆς τῶν καλῶν ὑποποιούσης τινὰ λεληθότως ζῆλον καὶ συνήθειαν).

This is the impression one gets from observing the sociability-nuance of *philanthropia* in Plutarch's *Quaestiones Convivales* and the other passages we have discussed¹⁶. But when one examines sociability and its manifestations

¹³ Cf. 660A, C, 697D-E. Friendship, after all, is “le but du banquet”, as Billault rightly remarks (2008, p. 582). Cf. also J. SIRINELLI, 1993, pp. 170-1.

¹⁴ Cf. J. SIRINELLI, 1993, pp. 375-6, esp. 376, where it is maintained that the ancient *symposia* cultivated not simply the *savoir-vivre*, but “cet art de communiquer” and “l'art de vivre ensemble”. Cf. also p. 378.

¹⁵ The foibles which those minor virtues cure are masterly discussed by H.-G. INGENKAMP. The same virtues was also the topic of an international symposium organized by Luc Van der Stockt at Delphi in September 2004: “Virtues for the People: Plutarch and his Era on Desirable Ethics”. Its proceedings are to be published next year.

¹⁶ In some cases the sociability-nuance of *philanthropia*, especially in the form of a kind gesture or behaviour, overlaps with the notion of friendliness, as, e.g., when Phokion thinks that the Athenians should accept Philip's friendly policy and kindly overtures to them (*Phoc.* 16.5: τὴν μὲν ἄλλην τοῦ Φιλίππου πολιτείαν καὶ φιλανθρωπίαν ᾤετο δεῖν προσδέχεσθαι). Cf.

in connection with the moral status of several Plutarchean heroes, one acquires a very different impression. Take Phokion and the younger Cato, for example, perhaps the best paradigms of pure virtue, since Plutarch does not simply admire the moral excellence of these men throughout their respective *Lives*, but also avoids – almost completely – making the slightest negative comment or remark concerning their character, especially as regards the former. Phokion and Cato, however, were not at all sociable. For example, although Phokion's nature was most gentle and most kind, his countenance was so sullen that, with the exception of his intimates, it discouraged everyone else from approaching and talking to him (*Phoc.* 5.1: Τῷ δ' ἦθει προσηνέστατος ὢν καὶ φιλανθρωπότατος, ἀπὸ τοῦ προσώπου δυσξύμβολος ἐφαίνετο καὶ σκυθρωπός, ὥστε μὴ ῥαδίως ἄν τινα μόνον ἐντυχεῖν αὐτῷ τῶν ἀσυνήθων). Accordingly, we never see Phokion as a guest at a dinner-party; in fact, there is not even one mention of a dinner-party in the entire *Life of Phokion*¹⁷.

Cato's countenance was similarly sullen and his manners stern¹⁸. But unlike Phokion, the Roman did participate in banquets and would drink heavily to boot¹⁹. However, as Plutarch is quick to clarify, this was not a proof of his sociability (Plutarch employs neither φιλανθρωπία nor any of the usual words describing the sympotic activity, atmosphere and attitudes, e.g., φιλοφροσύνη, ἡδύτης, κοινωνία etc.), but it only showed Cato's desire to converse with philosophers, something that he could not do during the day, because of his pressing public activities (*Cat. Mi.* 6.3: ...καὶ κωλυόμενον φιλολογεῖν, νύκτωρ καὶ παρὰ πότον συγγίνεσθαι τοῖς φιλοσόφοις)²⁰. Otherwise, Cato was not at all sociable, whether in connection with drinking – parties or politics. This is why Cicero openly blames Caesar's prevalence in Rome on Cato, because at a critical moment for the city, the latter, although he had decided to stand for the consulship, he did not try to win the favour of the people by kindly intercourse with them (*Cat. Mi.* 50.2: ...οὐδὲ ὑπῆλθεν ὀμιλίᾳ φιλανθρώπῳ τὸν δῆμον); on the contrary, desiring to preserve the dignity of his manners rather than to acquire the office by making the usual salutations, he forbade even his friends

also *Cam.* 17.2, *Crass.* 18.2, *Demetr.* 37.1, *Dio* 16.1, *Sull.* 43.5, *Pomp.* 79.1, *Ant.* 18.2, *De Herod. malign.* 866F.

¹⁷ See also 4.3: Φωκίωνα γὰρ οὔτε γελάσαντά τις οὔτε κλαύσαντα ῥαδίως Ἀθηναίων εἶδεν, οὐδ' ἐν βαλανείῳ δημοσιεῖοντι λουσάμενον.

¹⁸ *Cat. Mi.* 1.3-6: Λέγεται δὲ Κάτων εὐθύς ἐκ παιδίου τῆ τε φωνῆ καὶ τῷ προσώπῳ καὶ ταῖς περὶ τὰς παιδιὰς διατριβαῖς ἦθος ὑποφαίνειν ἄτρεπτον καὶ ἀπαθές καὶ βέβαιον ἐν πάσιν...καὶ τοῖς κολακεύουσι τραχὺς ὢν καὶ προσάντης...ἦν δὲ καὶ πρὸς γέλωτα κοιμηθῆ δυσκίνητος, ἄκρι μειδιάματος σπανίως τῷ προσώπῳ διαχεόμενος... (cf. previous note about Phokion). Contrary to the sullen look of Phokion and Cato, that of Flaminius was a winsome one (*Flam.* 5.7: τὴν ὄψιν φιλανθρώπῳ).

¹⁹ This is confirmed by Martial 2.89 and Pliny, *Epist.* 3.12.2-3.

²⁰ The philosophers with whom Cato would converse were the Stoics (Cato was in the circle of the Stoic Antipatros of Tyros – cf. *Cat. Mi.* 4.2), to whose doctrines and general influence he especially owed his adherence to rigid justice (ibidem: τὸ περὶ τὴν δικαιοσύνην ἀτενές καὶ ἄκαμπτον εἰς ἐπιείκειαν ἢ χάριν). For Cato's relationship with Stoicism see D. BABUT, 1969, 170-6) and cf. T. DUFF, 1999, pp. 155-8.

to do the things by which the populace is courted and captivated; thus, he failed to obtain the consulship²¹.

Cat. Mi. 49.6:...ἀλλ' ἐν ἧθει, τὸ τοῦ βίου μᾶλλον ἀξίωμα βουλόμενος φυλάσσειν ἢ προσλαβεῖν τὸ τῆς ἀρχῆς, ποιούμενος τὰς δεξιώσεις, μήτε τοὺς φίλους ἐάσας οἷς ὄχλος ἀλίσκεται καὶ θεραπεύεται ποιεῖν, ἀπέτυχε τῆς ἀρχῆς. Cato, however, was not always so rigid and inflexible. As Romilly notes (p. 283 n.1), his proposal that the senate distribute grain to the populace as a means to lure them away from Caesar who had taken refuge with them, was an act of “douceur calculée” (*Cat. Mi.* 26.1: φοβηθεῖς ἔπεισε τὴν βουλὴν ἀναλαβεῖν τὸν ἄπορον καὶ ἀνέμητον ὄχλον εἰς τὸ σιτηρέσιον...περιφανῶς δὲ τῇ φιλανθρωπίᾳ ταύτῃ καὶ χάριτι τῆς ἀπειλῆς ἐκείνης διαλυθείσης). Similarly, as Goar points out (p. 68), to avoid anarchy and civil bloodshed, Cato tempers his rigidity and supports, contrary to his political principles, Pompey's sole consulship in 52 B.C. (*Cat. Mi.* 47.2-4: τῷ μετριωτάτῳ τῶν παρανομημάτων χρησάμενος ἰάματι τῆς τῶν μεγίστων καταστάσεως...συνεβούλευσεν πᾶσαν ἀρχὴν ὡς ἀναρχίας κρείττονα). The special treatment of his brother-in-law Silanus (Cato prosecuted only Murena for having become consul through bribery, but let alone his accomplice Silanus δι' οἰκειότητα) is in fact a case of mitigated severity and favouritism (*Cat. Mi.* 21.3-4). All this seems to tell somewhat against Duff's opinion that Cato lacked Phokion's “ability to mix sternness and gentleness” and was, therefore, “a failure” (p. 150). Goar rightly maintains that, all things considered, Plutarch “does not seem to regard Cato as a failure” (p. 69). Indeed, how can we regard Cato as a failure, even in political terms, knowing that it was him and his virtues that delayed the collapse of the Roman republic (ib. in connection with *Phoc.* 3.5)? True, by comparing the ideal government with the curved course of the sun, Plutarch says that the right statesman should be neither totally inflexible and constantly opposed to the people's desires nor yielding perforce to their whims and mistakes (*Phoc.* 2.6), but he nowhere says directly that Cato represented the inflexible way of government, though, admittedly, his political manners and methods resembled it (but see above). True again, Cato is characterized ἄτρεπτος at *Cat. Mi.* 1.3, but certainly not in a political context (see n. 18). Plutarch is not at all blind to Cato's political blunders (see, e.g., *Cat. Mi.* 30-31), and indeed believes that the ideal statesman should combine sternness with gentleness, a combination, however, which he does find in both Phokion and Cato. In the prologue to this pair he tells us that the very similar virtues of these men demonstrate the great similarity of their characters, ὥσπερ ἴσῳ μέτρῳ μεμιγμένου [sc. ἧθους] πρὸς τὸ αὐστηρὸν τοῦ φιλανθρώπου... (*Phoc.* 3.8).

Somewhat similar was the case of Pompey and Crassus a few years earlier. Owing to his dignified manners, Pompey would shun the crowds of the forum, giving his assistance, if reluctantly, only to a few. Crassus, by contrast, by being always at hand to offer his services and invariably easy to access, managed, through his affability and kindness, to overpower Pompey's gravity.

²¹ Cato himself, however, had another explanation for his failure; see *Cat. Mi.* 50.3 and cf. ch. 42 and 44.1.

Crass. 7.3-4: ...πολλάκις ἤλαττοῦτο [sc. Pompey] τοῦ Κράσσου, διὰ τὸν ὄγκον καὶ τὸ πρόσχημα τοῦ βίου φεύγων τὰ πλήθη, καὶ ἀναδυόμενος ἐξ ἀγορᾶς, καὶ τῶν δεομένων ὀλίγοις καὶ μὴ πάνυ προθύμως βοηθῶν...ὁ δὲ Κράσσοσ ἐνδεδελεχέστερον τὸ χρήσιμον ἔχων, καὶ σπάνιος οὐκ ὦν οὐδὲ δυσπρόσοδος, ἀλλ' ἐν μέσταις αἰεταῖς σπουδαῖς ἀναστρεφόμενος, τῷ κοινῷ καὶ φιλανθρώπῳ περιεγίνετο τῆς ἐκείνου σεμνότητος. Cf. also earlier 3.4, where we again see that Crassus was not at all overbearing or disdainful, but very condescending and willing to plead for everyone who could not find another advocate or had been turned down by the advocate of his choice. Thus, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο μᾶλλον ἤρεσκεν ὡς ἐπιμελής καὶ βοηθητικός. By means of a similar conduct, Otho managed to avoid envy too (*Galb.* 20.5: τῷ δ' ἀνεπιφθόνῳ περιῆν, προῖκα συμπράττων πάντα τοῖς δεομένοις καὶ παρέχων ἑαυτὸν εὐπροσήγορον καὶ φιλάνθρωπον ἅπασιν). As for the pairing of *philanthropos* with *koinos* (above *Crass.* 7.4), cf. also *Publ.* 4.5 below and *Phoc.* 10.7. Nevertheless, Crassus' affability and helpfulness above is not to be matched, *pace* H. M. Martin Jr. (p. 170), with Publicola's *philanthropia*, despite the apparent similarity (*Publ.* 4.5: ...ὤρμησε πρὸς τὸν Οὐαλέριον, μάλιστα πῶς τοῖς κοινοῖς καὶ φιλανθρώποις ἐπαχθεῖς τοῦ ἀνδρός, ὅτι πᾶσιν εὐπρόσοδος ἦν τοῖς δεομένοις, καὶ τὴν οἰκίαν ἀνεωγμένην αἰεταῖς παρέιχε, καὶ λόγον οὐδενὸς οὐδὲ χρεῖαν ἀπερρίπτει τῶν ταπεινῶν); for, unlike Publicola, an affluent aristocrat, who used his eloquence ὀρθῶς καὶ μετὰ παρρησίας αἰεταῖς...ὑπὲρ τῶν δικαίων, and his riches τοῖς δεομένοις ἐλευθερίως καὶ φιλανθρώπως ἐπαρκῶν (*Publ.* 1.2; and cf. 25.7), Crassus did not come from a noble and wealthy family (see *Crass.* 1.1) and, once in the political arena, he acted like a true demagogue (see n. 22).

Crassus was particularly popular with the Romans, because he would indiscriminately and unaffectedly clasp hands with the people on the street and return everyone's greeting, however obscure or lowly, calling him by name at that²². Such conduct, which Plutarch characterizes as *to... philanthropon autou kai demotikon*, clearly illustrates *philanthropia* through salutations, but a bit earlier we see that Crassus was *philanthropos* also by means of his hospitality (*Crass.* 3.1-2: Οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ ξένους ἦν φιλότιμος ὁ Κράσσοσ· ἀνέωκτο γὰρ ἡ οἰκία πᾶσι...ἐν δὲ τοῖς δεῖπνοις ἡ μὲν κλῆσις ἦν ὡς τὰ πολλὰ δημοτικὴ καὶ λαώδης)²³. On the contrary, Nikias was, on the one hand, object of envy because of his huge wealth and, on the other, unpopular because his own way of life was neither *philanthropon* nor *demotikon*, but unsociable and aristocratic

²² *Crass.* 3.5: ἤρεσκε δὲ καὶ τὸ περὶ τὰς δεξιώσεις καὶ προσαγορεύσεις φιλάνθρωπον αὐτοῦ καὶ δημοτικόν. οὐδενὶ γὰρ οὕτως ἀπήντησε Ῥωμαίων ἀδόξῳ καὶ ταπεινῷ Κράσσος, ὃν ἀσπασάμενον οὐκ ἀντιπροσηγόρευσεν ἐξ ὀνόματος. For the close relationship of *philanthropos* with *demotikos* see also *Nic.* 11.2 and *Agas.* 1.5 (n. 24), *Cim-Luc. Comp.* 1.5 (*dēmokratikos*), and *Cat. Mi.* 23,1 (p. 286 below).

²³ Somewhat similar (but perhaps less calculated) was the *philanthropia* of Kimon and Lucullus (cf. *Cim.* 3.3: ἡ περὶ τὰς ὑποδοχὰς καὶ τὰς φιλανθρωπίας [ταύτας] ὑγρότης καὶ δαψίλεια). And, as in the case of Crassus above, Kimon's table was also *dēmokratikḗ* and *philanthropos* (*Cim-Luc. Comp.* 1.5). On the other hand, if we take into account that Crassus was a diligent as well as a powerful speaker, who promptly offered his advocacy to those who needed it (see *Crass.* 3.4 above), one might say that his conduct combined, seemingly at least, all 3 kinds of Laertios' *philanthropia* (cf also 546E on p. 278).

instead²⁴. As has been said, Plutarch highly esteemed *philanthropia*, but he admired neither the *philanthropos*/sociable Crassus nor Nikias who was unsociable and, therefore, not *philanthropos* in this sense²⁵. However, between the two, and from the moral point of view, he regarded Nikias as far superior to Crassus (see *Crass.* 2.1-5, 6.8-9, 14.5). This is evident in the concluding *Synkrisis* of this pair, where Crassus' character is described as abnormal and incongruous, while his ways of amassing and squandering his money are looked upon as emblematic of vice itself (*Nic.-Crass. Comp.* chs 1-2 and esp. 1.4...ὥστε θαυμάζειν εἴ τινα λέληθε τὸ τὴν κακίαν ἀνωμαλίαν εἶναι τινα τρόπου καὶ ἀνομολογίαν, ὀρῶντα τοὺς αἰσχροῦς συλλέγοντας εἶτ' ἀχρήστως ἐκχέοντας).

Perikles is another exemplary *Life*; and of him we also hear that, once he entered public life, he consistently declined all invitations to dinner or similar social occasions. So, during his long political career he participated in not one dinner-party as a guest (*Per.* 7.5: ...κλήσεις τε δείπνων καὶ τὴν τοιαύτην ἅπασαν φιλοφροσύνην καὶ συνήθειαν ἐξέλιπε), except in his nephew's wedding feast, which he did attend, but only until the libations were made; for immediately afterwards he rose up and departed. In recognizing that conviviality is apt to overpower any kind of pretentiousness, and that it is very difficult for one to maintain an assumed gravity in the midst of familiar intercourse (*Per.* 7.6: δειναὶ γὰρ αἰ φιλοφροσύναι παντὸς ὄγκου περιγενέσθαι, καὶ δυσφύλακτον ἐν συνηθείᾳ τὸ πρὸς δόξαν σεμνὸν ἐστὶ), Plutarch seems to endorse Perikles' decision to keep away from dinner-parties.

In the immediate sequel, however, Plutarch contrasts Perikles' conduct with that of truly virtuous men, whose goodness "fairest appears when most appears" (Perrin's Loeb translation), and in whom nothing is so admirable in the eyes of strangers as their daily life is in the eyes of their intimates²⁶. From this one may gather that Plutarch denies the genuineness of Perikles' gravity (and ultimately his virtue), which seems to be invigorated somehow by his earlier observation that Perikles had decided to champion the poor

²⁴ *Nic.* 11.2: τῆς διαίτης τὸ μὴ φιλάνθρωπον μηδὲ δημοτικόν, ἀλλ' ἄμικτον καὶ ὀλιγαρχικὸν ἀλλόκοτον ἐδόκει. See also 5.1-2 where we hear of Nikias that, due to his fear of slanderers, οὔτε συνεδείπνει τινὶ τῶν πολιτῶν...οὐδ' ἄλλως ἐσχόλαζε ταῖς τοιαύταις διατριβαῖς. And when free from public duties, δυσπρόσοδος ἦν καὶ δυσέντευκτος. Agesilaus, by contrast, thanks to his public training as a common Spartan, acquired τῷ φύσει βασιλικῷ καὶ ἡγεμονικῷ...τὸ δημοτικόν καὶ φιλάνθρωπον (*Ages.* 1.5).

²⁵ Although Nikias, owing to his huge wealth, gave money to a lot of people: to the base (who could discredit him; see *Nic.* 5.1 previous note) out of cowardice; to the good (and those deserving to receive) out of liberality (διὰ φιλάνθρωπίαν – *Nic.* 4.3). For the liberality-nuance of *philanthropia* see also *Ant.* 1.1, *Arat.* 12.1, *Di.* 52.1, *Cim.* 10.6-7; and for the association of *philanthropia* with liberality see also H. M. MARTIN JR., 1961, pp. 173-4. Further, the two words are paired together in *Pel.* 3.3 and *Publ.* 1.2. See moreover *Mor.* 333E-F, 510C (n. 12 above) and 527A. Note, finally, that, according to [Arist.], *IV* 1250b33-34, *philanthropia* is one of the concomitants of liberality (ἐλευθεριότης), whereas, according to logic, it rather should be the other way round.

²⁶ *Per.* 7.6: τῆς ἀληθινῆς δ' ἀρετῆς κάλλιστα φαίνεται τὰ μάλιστα φαινόμενα, καὶ τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἀνδρῶν οὐδὲν οὕτω θαυμάσιον τοῖς ἐκτὸς ὡς ὁ καθ' ἡμέραν βίος τοῖς συνοῦσιν.

and the many instead of the few and the rich, contrary to his own nature which was anything but popular (*Per.* 7.3: ...παρὰ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ φύσιν ἤκιστα δημοτικὴν οὖσαν). But when he mentions Ion's criticism of Perikles next to his eulogy of Kimon²⁷, he clearly disagrees with him (*Per.* 5.3: Ἄλλ' Ἴωνα μὲν ὡσπερ τραγικὴν διδασκαλίαν ἀξιοῦντα τὴν ἀρετὴν ἔχειν τι πάντως καὶ σατυρικὸν μέρος ἔωμεν). And by subsequently appealing to what Zeno used to say to Perikles' critics (p. 279 above), Plutarch appears to understand and justify Perikles' conduct, regardless of his personal predilections (as a wealthy aristocrat he was in favour of dinner-parties and similar social gatherings) and, perhaps, his belief that Perikles betrayed an ἔλλειμμα ἀρετῆς here; a shortcoming, however, that Plutarch would ascribe to political necessity (ἐκ... πολιτικῆς ἀνάγκης), as he tells us in the prologue to the *Life of Kimon* (2.5). Further, one could even argue that the supposed arrogance and haughtiness of Perikles might have been an influence of Anaxagoras, who was ὁ...μάλιστα περιθεις ὄγκον αὐτῷ...ὄλως τε μετεωρίσας καὶ συνεξάρας τὸ ἀξίωμα τοῦ ἥθους (*Per.* 4.6; cf. also 5.1). For a somewhat similar influence of the Stoic Antipatros upon the younger Cato, see n. 20.

Half a century before Perikles, we find the young Themistokles declining similar invitations to drinking-parties (*Them.* 3.4: ...καὶ τοὺς πότους παραιτεῖσθαι τοὺς συνήθεις). In his case, the reason for this change of life was Miltiades' trophy, which so monopolized his thoughts and interests that he could pay attention to nothing else; Themistokles could not even sleep on account of his eagerness and constant thinking of how he would surpass Miltiades' success²⁸. Perikles' motive was not essentially different, since both men aimed at the same target: to govern Athens²⁹. Thus, the conclusion drawn from both cases is the same too: drinking-parties apparently impair rather than advance the image of a public figure. No wonder, therefore, that we eventually come to realize that, with the exception of Aemilius Paulus (cf. *Aem.* 28.7-9, 38.6) and Scipio Africanus (p. 286 below), sociable *par excellence* are those heroes who are regarded, whether by Plutarch himself or by several modern critics, as negative paradigms, as examples to be avoided rather than to be imitated; such heroes that is, as Antony, Crassus, Demetrios and, to some extent, also Alkibiades, Lucullus and Sulla³⁰.

²⁷ *Per.* 5.3: μοθωνικὴν φησὶ [sc. Ion] τὴν ὁμιλίαν καὶ ὑπότυπον εἶναι τοῦ Περικλέους, καὶ ταῖς μεγαλαυχίαις αὐτοῦ πολλὴν ὑπεροψίαν ἀναμεμεῖχθαι καὶ περιφρόνησιν τῶν ἄλλων, ἐπαινεῖ δὲ τὸ Κίμωνος ἐμμελὲς καὶ ὕγρον καὶ μεμουσωμένον ἐν ταῖς περιφοραῖς.

²⁸ For a close examination of the Miltiades' trophy motif (literary function, didactic force, political/ethical stimulus), see A. PÉREZ JIMÉNEZ, 2008.

²⁹ Unlike all others, Themistokles believed that the Persian defeat at Marathon was not the end of the war, but the beginning of even bigger struggles, ἐφ' οὗς ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ τῆς ὅλης Ἑλλάδος ἤλειφε... πόρρωθεν ἤδη προσδοκῶν τὸ μέλλον (*Them.* 3.5). For Perikles' similar foresight see *Per.* 8.7; and for his plan to govern Athens see chs 7 and 9.

³⁰ Cf. *Ant.* 4.4-7, 9.5, 28; *Demetr.* 1.8, 2.3, 5.2.2-3; *Alc.* 16; *Luc.* 39-41, *Sull.* 2.5, 36.1-2, 41.5.

Time to conclude. There is little doubt that Plutarch, as a wealthy Greek aristocrat, was fond of dinner-parties. The *symposion*, after all, was traditionally an aristocratic institution and as such also a tradition within Plutarch's own family, as *Quaestiones Convivales* amply testify³¹. At the same time, Plutarch's moral outlook, fashioned partly on his own *philanthropia* in the literal sense of the word³², and partly on his peculiar practical spirit³³, also inclined him to be favourably disposed toward and endorse those social gatherings; for he saw them not as occasions for a drinking-bout – this is very clear in his *Table Talks*³⁴ – but as splendid opportunities for sharing erudition³⁵, practising self-discipline, manifesting finesse, and, above all, tightening human relations with the help of a relaxed and cheerful sympotic atmosphere. In the context of a dinner-party, one should not only be on his guard against becoming drunk or losing his temper and misbehaving, but should also reveal and exercise his sociability at large. In other words, one ought to come out somehow of his narrow self and prove his consideration for his fellows by showing, depending on the particular circumstances, politeness, courtesy, tactfulness, affability, friendliness and so on. For Plutarch, sociability and its ramifications are not negligible character-traits, but in fact aspects of a unified morality, if sociability and its manifestations are genuine, or steps towards morality, if the sociability is assumed (see p. 279 above).

On the other hand, Plutarch is also perfectly aware that these aspects of refined conduct can be affected and artificial. Especially in the context of politics, sociability is usually a façade behind which may lurk crude political ambition and a carefully studied design for winning popularity and establishing one's influence and power³⁶. We saw this kind of sociability in the case of Crassus, and we see it again in the case of Caesar who was too ingratiating for his age (*Caes.* 4.4: πολλή δὲ τῆς περὶ τὰς δεξιώσεις καὶ ὀμιλίας φιλοφροσύνης εὐνοία παρὰ τῶν δημοτῶν ἀπῆντα, θεραπευτικοῦ παρ' ἡλικίαν ὄντος). His enemies believed, Plutarch tells us, that his increasing influence would soon vanish together with his resources, and so let it thrive without trying to check it. Cicero, however, managed to see beneath the surface of Caesar's popular policy and was the first to discern and comprehend the powerful character and the tyrannical purpose hidden under his kindly and cheerful exterior (*Caes.* 4.8: τὴν ἐν τῷ φιλανθρωπῷ καὶ ἰλαρῷ κεκρυμμένην δεινότητα τοῦ ἥθους καταμαθὼν...ἔλεγε [sc. Cicero] τοῖς...ἐπιβουλεύμασιν αὐτοῦ καὶ

³¹ Cf. also R. H. BARROW, 1967, pp. 13-7.

³² Barrow aptly remarks that, though P.'s mind was not a first-rate one, "it was a mind essentially kindly, unwilling to think ill of anyone, tolerant, though shrewd in the judgement of character" (p. 147). Cf. also R. HIRZEL, 1912, A. G. NIKOLAIDIS, 2008, and K. ZIEGLER, 1964² (all in n. 4 above).

³³ Cf. A. G. NIKOLAIDIS, 1991, pp. 175-86.

³⁴ Cf. *Talks* 1.4, 3.9, 4 proem, 8 proem. Occasionally, however, some fellow-drinkers did get drunk (see 620A, 645A-C, 715D).

³⁵ Cf. S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1989, p. 14. Cf. also J. SIRINELLI, 1993, pp. 389-90.

³⁶ Cf. J. DE ROMILLY, 1979, pp. 281-3. This sham *philanthropia* (φιλανθρωπία προσποίησης) is a feature of injustice (*adikia*), according to [Arist.], *VV* 1251b3.

πολιτεύμασι τυραννικὴν ἐνορᾶν διάνοιαν). Similarly, on the basis of Caesar's lenient speech in the senate with regard to the Catilinarian conspiracy, the younger Cato openly had accused him of trying to subvert the state σχήματι δημοτικῷ καὶ λόγῳ φιλανθρώπῳ (*Cat. Mi.* 23.1)³⁷. In the case of Kleomenes, by contrast, who would meet the various petitioners without mediators but in person, conversing at length with those who needed his services and devoting time cheerfully and kindly to them, we have no reason to question the genuineness of the Spartan king's kindness and sociability³⁸. Nor do we need to suspect Scipio's *philanthropia*, who was agreeable in socializing with friends at his leisure, without neglecting in the least matters of import related to the preparation of his war with Hannibal.

Despite Cato's denunciations that in Sicily Scipio acted as a feast organizer rather than as an army commander, the latter ἐν τῇ παρασκευῇ τοῦ πολέμου τὴν νίκην ἐπιδειξάμενος [to the tribunes who came from Rome to find out what was happening], καὶ φανεῖς ἡδὺς μὲν ἐπὶ σχολῆς συνεῖναι φίλοις, οὐδαμῇ δὲ τῷ φιλανθρώπῳ τῆς διαίτης εἰς τὰ σπουδαῖα καὶ μεγάλα ῥάθυμος, ἐξέπλευσεν ἐπὶ τὸν πόλεμον (*Cat. Ma.* 3.6-7). Demetrios also was, on the one hand, ἡδιστος...συγγενέσθαι, σχολάζων τε περὶ πότους καὶ τρυφᾶς and, on the other, most energetic, impetuous, persevering and efficient in action (*Demetr.* 2.3). Gaius Gracchus was another man who, πᾶσιν ἐντυγχάνων μετὰ εὐκολίας, at the same time preserved τὸ σεμνὸν ἐν τῷ φιλανθρώπῳ (*GGr.* 6.4).

It follows then that, unlike Nicias and to some extent Pompey, Crassus, Kleomenes and Scipio enjoyed popularity thanks to their *philanthropia*, namely, by being affable and agreeable in their intercourse with people and by meeting their needs³⁹.

Finally, reservations and warnings concern sociability even outside the domain of politics. Earlier (p. 278), we saw a case of hospitality going too far; and in *De vitioso pudore* we find an example of courtesy going similarly too far, since Plutarch admonishes us that social courtesy should not be carried to the extent of destroying one's individuality. When, for instance, a citharode sings badly at a friend's banquet, we must set aside the flattering equation "compliance equals politeness" (529D: κολακεύουσα τὸν εὐδυσώπητον ὡς

³⁷ Another example of pretended *philanthropia* (if momentarily in this case) can be seen in the deceitful trick which Alkibiades played on the Spartan delegation in Athens during the years of Nicias' peace. In front of the popular assembly Alkibiades asked the delegates πάνου φιλανθρώπως with what powers they had come, and when the Spartans answered exactly as they had been instructed by Alkibiades himself, the latter assailed them μετὰ κραυγῆς καὶ ὀργῆς, ὡς περ οὐκ ἀδικῶν, ἀλλ' ἀδικούμενος, calling them faithless and unreliable (*Alc.* 14-7-12).

³⁸ *Cleom.* 13.3: ... οὐδ' ὑπ' ἀγγέλων ὄχλου καὶ θυρωρῶν ἢ διὰ γραμματέων χρηματίζοντα χαλεπῶς καὶ μολίς, ἀλλ' αὐτὸν ἐν ἱματίῳ τῷ τυχόντι πρὸς τὰς δεξιώσεις ἀπαντῶντα καὶ διαλεγόμενον καὶ σχολάζοντα τοῖς χρήζουσιν ἰλαρῶς καὶ φιλανθρώπως...

³⁹ Note that P. employs the word ἀφιλάνθρωπος (an *hapax* in his works) to describe the Epicureans, who led a life ἀνέξοδον (secluded) καὶ ἀπολίτευτον καὶ ἀφιλάνθρωπον καὶ ἀνευθουσίαστον (with no enthusiasm, i.e. "untouched by any spark of the divine", according to the brilliant translation of B. EINARSON & PH. DE LACY in Loeb – *Non posse* 1098D).

φιλόανθρωπον) and, consequently, not feel compelled to join in the others' applause and admiration, contrary to our own judgement (531B-C). These examples demonstrate that *philanthropia* for Plutarch is not a passive quality, but always presupposes initiative and action on the part of the *philanthropos*. A meek and submissive person, for instance, who is unable to do harm to anyone, but at the same time apt to tolerate everything and, therefore, cannot fight or simply resist baseness, is not *philanthropos*, because for Plutarch *philanthropos* is only one who could also be not simply unkindly, but outright harsh on his fellows when the latter act wrongfully; in other words, a *philanthropos* ought to be also a *misoponēros*, a hater of vice. This is why he puts us on our guard against flattery that calls prodigality "liberality", cowardice "caution", stinginess "frugality", the irascible and overbearing "brave", the worthless and meek "kindly"⁴⁰ (cf. also 529D above).

It seems that *philanthropia* as a positive virtue must include the hatred of wickedness, which is among the things we praise (*De inv. et od.* 537D: καὶ γὰρ ἡ μισοπονηρία τῶν ἐπαινουμένων ἐστὶ). Plutarch, therefore, approves of Timoleon's gentleness, however excessive, because it did not prevent him from hating the base (*Tim.* 3.4: πρᾶος διαφερόντως ὅσα μὴ σφόδρα...μισοπόνηρος). On the contrary, he is not impressed by the gentleness of the Spartan King Charilaos, but agrees with his royal colleague's remark: Πῶς δ' ἂν [οὐκ] εἶη Χαρίλαος ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς ὃς οὐδὲ τοῖς πονηροῖς χαλεπὸς ἐστὶ; (*Lyc.* 5.9; cf. also *Mor.* 55E, 218B, 223E). According to the Peripatetic tradition, after all, justice involves this hatred of wickedness (cf. [Arist.], *IV* 1250b 24: ἀκολουθεῖ δὲ τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ...καὶ ἡ μισοπονηρία), which is also one of the characteristics of virtue itself (1251b 31: ἔστι δὲ τῆς ἀρετῆς...καὶ τὸ φιλεῖν τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς καὶ τὸ μισεῖν τοὺς φαύλους).

As in so many other things, Plutarch strikes again the middle course. Despite his indisputable loyalty to Plato, in matters of practical ethics, the practical Plutarch espouses the Aristotelian principle of the golden mean.

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⁴⁰ *De adul. et am.* 56C: ἐν δὲ ταῖς κολακείαις ὄραν χρῆ καὶ παραφυλάττειν ἀσωτίαν μὲν ἐλευθεριότητα καλουμένην καὶ δειλίαν ἀσφάλειαν...μικρολογίαν δὲ σωφροσύνην... ἀνδρεῖον δὲ τὸν ὀργίλον καὶ ὑπερήφανον, φιλόανθρωπον δὲ τὸν εὐτελεῖ καὶ ταπεινόν.

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È IL DIO DEGLI STOICI FILANTROPO?

PAOLA VOLPE CACCIATORE
Università di Salerno

Abstract

Many passages of Plutarch's *De Stoicorum repugnantis* are devoted to the refutation of Stoic beliefs about gods. Chrysippus' theological doctrine is qualified as 'extravagant', because of the 'extravagant' function the philosopher attributes to the gods: from them come only 'indifferent' things like health or wealth, but they do not provide men with the supreme virtue. What is more, they usually provide bad men with more things than good men, and rich men with more things than poor men. Zeus, the supreme god, the god of justice who has created the city of men and gods, is thus unfair, cruel and ruthless. He creates the world but he destroys it by war. He is by no means a philanthropist, and this conclusion, Plutarch asserts, is a contradictory topic of Stoic doctrine.

“O Zeus, il più nobile degli dei immortali, dai molti nomi, sempre onnipotente, / signore della natura, che governi ogni essere secondo la legge, / salve! È abitudine di tutti i mortali rivolgersi a te (...) / Ti dedico il mio canto e sempre inneggerò alla tua potenza. / A te obbedisce tutto il cosmo che ruota intorno alla terra; / dovunque lo conduci, ti si sommette volentieri, / perché tu hai nelle tue mani invincibili uno strumento: / la folgore forcuta, infuocata, sempreviva. / Sotto il suo colpo tutti gli eventi naturali si compiono. / Con esso tu regoli il Logos comune (...) che dovunque / si aggira (...) senza di te, o dio, niente avviene sulla terra / (...) tranne i disegni che i malvagi con le loro follie mettono in atto / (...). Così, tu hai reso in unità, il bene e il male, / affermando un unico Logos eterno per tutte le cose (...)” (Cleanth. *apud* Stob. *Ecl.* I 1, 12, p. 25, 3 = *SVF* I 537, pp. 121-122 = p. 236 Radice).

L'*Inno a Zeus* di Cleante trova eco in un frammento di Crisippo, allorquando egli definisce la natura di dio: “dio è un essere vivente immortale (ἀθάνατον), razionale (λογικόν), perfetto (τέλειον) ovvero intelligente nella sua beatitudine (νοερὸν ἐν εὐδαιμονίᾳ), esente da ogni male (κακοῦ παντὸς ἀνεπίδεκτον), è la provvidenza del cosmo e delle cose che in esso vi sono (προνοητικὸν κόσμου τε καὶ τῶν ἐν κόσμῳ) (...)” (D. L., VII 147 = *SVF* II 1021, p. 305 = p. 886 Radice).

Zeus è colui che dà vita, è signore dell'etere in quanto Atena, dell'aria perché è Era; a Zeus, dunque, appartiene ogni qualità trascendente ed immanente. Ciò appare una vistosa contraddizione a Plutarco, che si chiede in *def. or.* 29, 426B come possano gli Stoici considerare gli dei ovvero il dio alla stregua di eventi atmosferici, privi di ogni libertà ed autonomia, “rinserrati e inchiodati alla loro corporeità”, e che in *de E ap. Delph.* 19-20 aveva condiviso la posizione di Ammonio, che attribuiva al dio un'eternità atemporale ed immobile (393A). In tal modo erano evidenti il netto “rifiuto della fisica stoica e la ripresa del tema

platonico della separazione tra essere e divenire, riformulata attraverso l'implicita identificazione tra essere e dio e l'accentuazione del carattere divino"¹.

È questo il problema che la ricerca filosofica deve affrontare (Chrysipp. in Philon., *de mun.* I, p. 216 M. = *SVF* II 1010, p. 300 = p. 876 Radice), e cioè se dio esiste e qual è la sua essenza. Pur avvertendo la difficoltà di tale dimostrazione, Crisippo, ricorrendo ad immagini di vita quotidiana, paragona dio ad un artista e il mondo ad un'opera d'arte:

“(...) Chi, alla vista di una statua e di un quadro, non risale allo scultore e al pittore? (...) E così quando noi arriviamo in questa autentica megalopoli che è il mondo, e vediamo valli e montagne lussureggianti di piante ed animali e le correnti dei fiumi, di sorgenti lontane (...) e poi ancora il sole e la luna, signori l'uno del giorno, l'altra della notte (...) non siamo forse autorizzati, anzi costretti a farci un'idea di un padre creatore, e anche reggitore (ἡγεμόν)? E infatti non esiste opera d'arte che si produca da sé e il mondo è opera quanto mai artistica: dunque, deve essere creato da un artefice di somma sapienza e perfezione”.

Dio, dunque, esiste perché creatore e perché ha saputo fare cose superiori all'intelligenza umana; circa poi la sua sostanza, dio è “pneuma dotato di intelligenza, igneo, privo di una forma propria, ma che riesce a trasformarsi in tutto ciò che vuole, facendosi uguale ad ogni cosa” (Aet., *Plac.* I 6 = *SVF* II 1009, p. 299 = p. 874 Radice)².

È evidente la prima differenza tra gli Stoici e Plutarco, perché per i primi dio è immanente alle cose di cui è padre, per il secondo è trascendente a quelle stesse cose. “Quando Plutarco riassume la sua concezione della natura divina con la formula οὐ γὰρ ἄνουν οὐδ' ἄψυχον οὐδ' ἀνθρώποις ὁ θεὸς ὑποχείριον, è il terzo termine che è essenziale e che condiziona, in certa maniera, gli altri due: è perché dio non può essere “a portata di mano dell'uomo”, per il fatto che “non si mescola in nessun modo con noi” non più di quanto si comprometta con il mondo, che la sua essenza non può essere materiale, né mortale come nella fisica stoica.

È proprio qui, in definitiva, che sta il vero punto di rottura con il Portico, secondo il quale, invece, la natura divina è diffusa attraverso la totalità del cosmo ed è *inseparabile dalla materia che anima*³. È quanto Ammonio aveva detto nel *de E ap. Delph.* circa il dio-essere immutabile, al quale Plutarco contrapponeva “un altro dio o meglio un demone” al quale poter attribuire i mutamenti di un cosmo sensibile. Si opponeva in tal modo al monismo stoico, ripercorrendo in *de Is.* (370D-371A) le posizioni dei filosofi antichi – Eraclito,

¹ F. FERRARI, 1995, p. 61.

² Cf. *SVF* II 1075, p. 314 = p. 904 Radice; *SVF* II 1080, p. 316 = p. 908 Radice: “(...) il dio per natura si riferisce a ciascuna cosa: Cerere alla terra, Nettuno al mare e poi altri dei ad altre realtà. È ravvisabile negli stoici e in Crisippo una volontà chiara di tendere da un lato ad un sincretismo religioso e dall'altro ad un monoteismo che non contrastasse con le credenze popolari” (Cf. D. BABUT, 2003, p. 492).

³ D. BABUT, 2003, p. 515.

Empedocle, i Pitagorici – fino a giungere ad Anassagora, che distingue Mente ed Infinito, ad Aristotele che distingue Forma e Privazione ed, infine, Platone, che “talora con espressioni vorrei dire velate e segretamente allusive, dà ai due principi contrapposti il nome di Identità e Diversità. Ma nelle *Leggi*, ormai vecchio, non si esprime più in maniera metaforica e simbolica, bensì in termini molto chiari: il cosmo, egli dice, non è mosso da un solo spirito; probabilmente sono molti, e certamente non meno di due, lo spirito che opera il bene e quello avversario che opera il male. Platone ammette anche un terzo spirito, una natura intermedia che non è di per sé priva di vita, di pensiero, di movimento, come alcuni ritengono, ma deriva da entrambi i principi suddetti (...)”⁴.

La concezione plutarchea, che è – come dice Ferrari⁵– originale, deriva dalla lettura di un passo del libro X delle *Leggi* (896d-e) in cui “Platone accenna in modo non del tutto chiaro a un’anima contrapposta all’anima buona, senza però chiarire se si tratta di un principio cosmico o precosmico, o di che cosa. Quest’anima rappresenta, per Plutarco, il fondamento dell’indeterminazione, del disordine e, di conseguenza (per un platonico) del male”⁶.

È indubbio che il problema del male dovesse essere centrale nella speculazione del filosofo di Cheronea, ed egli lo risolve (*de Is.* 369A) opponendo ad Osiride, il bene, Tifone, il male, ossia colui il quale tiranneggia imponendosi con la forza. Si stabiliva così un dualismo da lui affermato drasticamente; ma allora è possibile spiegarlo in un contesto dove dio è causa di tutto il male? Plutarco percorreva una terza via, quella della presenza dei demoni che “possiedono una forza superiore a quella umana (...) ma l’elemento divino che è in loro non si presenta mai puro e omogeneo, bensì determinato sia dalle caratteristiche intrinseche dello spirito, sia dalle attitudini sensoriali del corpo e come tale passibile di percezioni piacevoli e dolorose” (*de Is.* 360E)⁷.

Sono queste le premesse che animano la polemica antistoica di Plutarco nei due opuscoli *de Stoicorum repugnantibus* e *de communibus notitiis*, nella parte in cui egli tratta della teodicea e della teologia e che si potrebbe sintetizzare nella domanda: “Si Deus est, unde malum?”. È questo l’interrogativo che si pongono gli Stoici e che risolvono alla luce di un dio immanente alla natura e nella convinzione che anche il male – al pari del bene – ha una sua giustificazione in quanto esso si realizza secondo la ragione della natura e, per così dire, si realizza non inutilmente in rapporto al tutto, giacché non vi sarebbe, senza di esso, neppure il bene” (*Stoic. rep.* 1050F - *comm. not.* 1065B).

⁴ Trad. it. di M. CAVALLI, 1995.

⁵ F. FERRARI, 1995, p. 75. Cf. *Ser. num. vind.* 550D: “(...) anche la natura del tutto che era priva di ordine, cominciò a mutare e a diventare cosmo, grazie alla somiglianza e a una certa partecipazione al complesso eidetico e alla virtù che appartengono al divino (...)”.

⁶ F. FERRARI, 1995, p. 61.

⁷ Il dualismo plutarcheo è espresso chiaramente anche in *Def. or.* 428B, dove si parla delle due nature, una intellegibile e l’altra sensibile, e in *Def. or.* 428F, in cui si ricordano l’Uno e la Diade indeterminata. Tale coppia di principi è ricondotta alla generazione del numero (429A); cf. anche *Plac. phil.* 881E.

È la stessa domanda che si poneva Seneca nel *De providentia*. Egli “evita di spiegarne l’origine, la sua causa efficiente (*unde malum?*) concentrandosi sulla causa finale (*cur malum?*) (...). Da dio non può venire alcun male per gli uomini, anzi egli ha allontanato da loro (precisamente, dai buoni) ogni male (*omnia mala ab illis removit* – sc. *Deus* –, *scelera et flagitia et agitationes improbas et avida consilia et libidinem caecam et alieno imminetem avaritiam* [6,1])⁸. L’unico male per Seneca e per l’etica stoica è il male morale, tutto il resto rientra nella categoria degli ἀδιάφορα, ovvero “quelle cose che stanno a mezzo fra i beni e i mali (...) <che> in effetti posseggono un pregio che invita alla scelta, oppure un disvalore che invita al rifiuto, anche se non influiscono sulla felicità della vita” (Stob., *ecl.* II 79,1 W. = *SVF* III 118, p. 128 = p. 1024 Radice). In tale definizione Plutarco evidenziava una contraddizione manifesta e affermava che “ciò che è suscettibile di un uso buono e cattivo, non è – a loro giudizio – né un bene né un male. Della ricchezza, della salute e della vigoria fisica tutti gli stolti fanno un uso malvagio. E pertanto nessuno di questi può essere un bene” (*Stoic. rep.* 1048C). Il discorso plutarco è dialetticamente incalzante, perché se tutti sono in possesso degli ἀδιάφορα⁹, l’unico elemento che distingue il buono dal cattivo è la virtù che, secondo Crisippo, non nasce senza la malvagità (*comm. not.* 1065C-D); e allora se gli dei possono donare la virtù e non lo fanno, di certo essi non possono considerarsi benevoli e allora – conclude Plutarco – “gli dei non arrecano giovamento agli uomini più di quanto ricevano giovamento da essi” (*Stoic. rep.* 1048E). Il male può essere connaturato nella divinità? Crisippo risponde di sì, sostenendo che male e bene non possono esistere se non in connessione reciproca – come la luce non può esistere senza le tenebre – e che il male stesso dà al bene il suo significato. Di certo un platonico come Plutarco non poteva in alcun modo accogliere tale tesi, e neppure poteva accettare che uomini potessero competere con gli dei o essere ritenuti pari a loro¹⁰. Gli sembrava, inoltre, oltremodo incredibile che mentre “il vignaiuolo elimina i tralci quando i germogli sono piccoli e deboli (...) Zeus dopo che non solo ha permesso per la sua trascuratezza che gli uomini divenissero adulti, ma anche li ha lui stesso generati e cresciuti, li distrugge macchinando pretesti di rovina e morte” (*Stoic. rep.* 1049C-D). Può allora considerarsi filantropo un dio di tal genere, detto pure dio della giustizia e della pace? Un dio che è suscitatore di guerre che non nascono dal bene, ma piuttosto dall’amore del piacere, dall’avidità del possesso, dall’amore sfrenato della gloria e del potere. E allora, se è proprio la divinità a causare le guerre, essa stessa è causa di malvagità! Ma Crisippo, pur affermando ciò, “nel II libro dell’opera *Sugli dei* <dice> che ‘non è opinione ragionevole che la divinità sia concausa delle azioni turpi; come infatti né la

⁸ N. LANZARONE, 2008, p. 25.

⁹ Tra il bene e il male, tra il vizio e la virtù, vi è tutta una regione nel mezzo, nella quale si trovano i fini e il progresso. Gli ἀδιάφορα sono tali solo in rapporto al bene e al male. In sé differiscono gli uni dagli altri: alcuni sono neutri, altri sono preferiti e sono quelli che hanno valore, altri ancora sono respinti e sono quelli che hanno disvalore (cf. D. L. VII 105 = *SVF* III 126, p. 30 = p. 1028 Radice).

¹⁰ Cf. M. POHLENZ, 1967.

legge potrebbe essere concausa della violazione della legge né gli dei dell'azione empia rivolta contro di loro, così è ragionevole che nemmeno di alcuna azione moralmente turpe essi siano concausa" (*Stoic. rep.* 1049D-E). Dunque – ribatte Plutarco – nel momento stesso in cui esclude la corresponsabilità del male da parte della divinità, Crisippo ribadisce che tutto è da ascrivere a dio, lodando al contrario i versi di Euripide “se gli dei fanno qualcosa di turpe non sono dei” (fr. 286b, 7 Kn.) e “la parola più comoda tu hai detto, che si accusino gli dei” (fr. 254, 2 Kn.). Il paradosso consiste nel fatto che “la malvagità non solo si realizza conformemente alla ragione di Zeus, ma anche conformemente alla ragione di Zeus viene punita” (*Stoic. rep.* 1050E)¹¹. E dunque, se il male è condizione del bene, sembrerebbe allora quasi ovvio – ironizza Plutarco – che non vi possa essere un Socrate senza Meleto, o un Pericle senza Cleone. Alla luce di quanto detto da Crisippo – continua Plutarco – “la consunzione fisica è venuta all'uomo al fine della buona salute e la gotta al fine della celerità” (*Comm. not.* 1065C). E cosa dice di quel paragone con il riso suscitato dagli epigrammi comici all'interno di una commedia “frutto più piacevole dell'eleganza e della persuasività di Crisippo”¹²?

Ma può il male considerarsi “un intermezzo piacevole e spiritoso e può attribuirsi alla provvidenza il male così come al poeta la composizione di un'opera? E può considerarsi Provvidenza un dio che scatena le guerre, che manda sulla città disgrazie e catastrofi e che scatenò la guerra di Troia per “riassorbire” la massa eccessiva dell'umanità? Questo scrive <Crisippo> nel terzo libro dell'opera *Sugli dei*: “Come le città sovrabbondanti di popolazione espellono nelle colonie la moltitudine eccedente e intraprendono guerre contro qualcuno, così dio suscita occasioni di distruzione”. E adduce come testimoni Euripide e coloro che affermano che la guerra di Troia scoppiò per opera degli dei al fine di diminuire la gran moltitudine degli uomini” (*Stoic. rep.* 1049A-B)¹³. Un dio allora – quello di Crisippo – che mentre appare *verso* gli uomini benevolo e giusto, poi *contro* quegli stessi uomini commette azioni selvagge e barbare degne dei Celti, senza considerare se essi siano buoni o malvagi. Si trattava cioè di giustificare le condanne di Socrate e di Pitagora, le sorti di Zenone e di Antifonte; si trattava di dare una spiegazione alle sofferenze di uomini illustri. E Crisippo la dà nel libro III del *Περὶ οὐσίας*, allorquando egli parla di negligenze possibili nonostante la buona amministrazione del tutto e dell'azione dei demoni malvagi. Ma non sono tali demoni creati da dio essi che sono “superiori agli uomini per forza, ma già invischiati nel mondo dei sensi e accessibili alla gioia e al dolore. Sono dei subalterni della divinità, che li impiega per agire direttamente sugli uomini”¹⁴.

¹¹ Il concetto è espresso pure, con qualche differenza lessicale, in *Comm. not.* 1065.

¹² “Come le commedie – egli dice – presentano versi capaci di suscitare il riso, i quali di per sé sono di nessun valore, ma aggiungono all'opera intera una qualche grazia, così la malvagità potrebbe essere biasimata presa a parte, ma non è senza utilità per il tutto” (*Comm. not.* 1065D).

¹³ Crisippo, per quanto riguarda la testimonianza euripidea, si riferiva ad *Hel.* 36-40, *El.* 1282-3 e *Or.* 1639-42.

¹⁴ M. POHLENZ, 1967, p. 189.

Se è così – come il filosofo stoico dice – anche la malvagità dei demoni non è da ascriversi a dio. È allora veramente filantropo il dio degli Stoici, per giunta limitato nel suo agire dall'εἰμαρμένη? La risposta del platonico Plutarco non poteva che essere negativa, e degli Stoici sottolineava le contraddizioni all'interno del loro pensiero, convinto com'era dell'esistenza degli dei, del loro interesse per le sorti dell'umanità e della loro incorruttibilità. “Quale divinità è mai Zeus, intendo dire lo Zeus di Crisippo che punisce una realtà la quale non si realizza da sé né senza utilità?” Secondo il discorso di Crisippo, infatti, “la malvagità è assolutamente non biasimevole, Zeus invece deve essere biasimato, sia che abbia prodotto, benché nociva, la malvagità, sia che, pur avendola non senza utilità introdotta, la punisca?” (*Stoic. rep.* 1051A). E allora è filantropo il dio degli stoici, quel dio che Cleante cantava come il più nobile degli dei immortali, ma che “ha reso in unità il bene e il male, affermando un unico Logos eterno per tutte le cose”? Quel dio che invece “secondo Platone (...) ha posto se stesso come paradigma di tutte le cose belle e concede la virtù umana che è in certo senso assimilazione a sé, coloro che sono capaci di seguirlo” (*ser. num. vind.* 550D); quel dio che è “puro ed eterno pensiero, anzi “pensiero di pensiero” <e che con> la forza del suo pensiero genera e governa e definisce tutti i moti dell'universo e i fenomeni, qui sulla terra e lassù nei cieli. Il dio dei filosofi è *autómatos*: si muove da sé e muove tutto il resto”¹⁵, ma perché tutto tenda verso il Bene. “Oltre che nel proprio intimo l'uomo trova il bene nel logos universale, nella comunità degli esseri razionali, senza la quale egli non può esistere né manifestarsi sul piano morale conformemente alla propria essenza”¹⁶. Il bene – canta Cleante (*Clem. Al., Protr.* VI 72, p. 61 P. = *SVF I* 557, p. 126 = p. 247 Radice) – “consiste in ciò che è ben disposto, secondo giustizia, santità e pietà; / in quello che è padrone di sé, giovevole, bello, conforme al dovere, / austero, schietto e sempre propizio; / in quello che è senza paura, che non ha né causa dolore, anzi che reca vantaggio./ E' l'utile, il gradito, il sicuro, l'amico, / ciò che è degno di stima e di grazia; è la coerenza,/ la gloria, la modestia, la sollecitudine, l'amorevolezza, lo zelo (...)”.

Restava comunque l'interrogativo: “si est Deus, unde malum?” E Plutarco così si chiedeva (*Plac. phil.* 881 C-D): “se esiste dio, grazie alla cui prudenza e opera le cose umane sono amministrate, perché ai mali succedono i beni e ai beni tutte le avversità?” cercando di dare a se stesso una risposta, ipotizzando l'esistenza – come si è detto – di una ἀνους ψυχή “perfettamente identica alla necessità di *Ti.* 47e 5, 56c 5, all'*apeiron* di *Phlb.* 24a 6 sqq., al principio che determina lo stravolgimento dell'ordine del cosmo, cioè “il desiderio connaturato”

¹⁵ C. SINI, 2007, p. 5 sqq. Una posizione diversa è manifestata da F. FERRARI, 1999, p. 70 sqq., che, in parziale dissenso con la tesi proposta da CH. SCHOPPE, 1994, p. 146, non ritiene sufficienti e probanti le prove filologiche che attesterebbero la presenza in Platone di una “concezione delle idee come ‘pensieri di dio’” (p. 71). Un ulteriore argomento contro l'ipotesi della presenza in Platone di un'idea ontologica di Bene come pensiero di dio è costituita, secondo Ferrari, dal rifiuto all'interno del corpus della “teoria di origine aristotelica dell'autoriflessività del pensiero divino” (ibidem).

¹⁶ M. POHLENZ, 1967, p. 275.

(σύμφυτος ἐπιθυμία) di *Plt.* 272e 5 (cf. *an proc.* 1014E-1015A)¹⁷. Il cosmo – egli dice in *de Is.* 370F – non è mosso da un'unica anima, ma probabilmente da più, certamente da non meno di due; di queste una è produttrice di bene, l'altra, opposta a questa, è creatrice di effetti opposti". Agli stoici contestava di aver fatto di una divinità benevola l'unico principio del male e di aver fatto di Zeus un dio 'a portata di mano'. Plutarco, al contrario, riteneva che il divino, pur intervenendo nella storia umana e nella vita della natura, appartenesse "ad una realtà di ordine superiore, di cui nel mondo sensibile si possono cogliere solo riflessi e lampeggiamenti"¹⁸, facendo sua la definizione di Pindaro (fr. 57 Snell-Maehler) di un dio "artista supremo", di un "dio sovrano e signore di tutto, artefice della giustizia, cui compete di misurare il tempo, il modo e la misura della punizione di ogni singolo malvagio" (*ser. num. vind.* 550A).

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¹⁷ F. FERRARI, 1995, p.75 sqq.

¹⁸ L. TORRACA, 1991, p. 103.

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HARVESTING THE FRUITS OF VIRTUE: *PHILIA*, *EROS* AND *ARETE* IN PLUTARCH

TONI BADNALL
University of Nottingham

Abstract

This essay examines Plutarch's manipulation of epithalamial imagery in the *Amatorius* in conjunction with the motif of the discourse on love from Plato's *Symposium*. In particular, it explores how the *topos* of "fruit", traditionally representing fertility in wedding poetry, is separated from human reproduction by pederastic discourse and instead held to represent "virtue", the fruit of philosophical friendship between men. Women are associated with an inferior "flower", incapable of friendship or virtue. Yet Plutarch combines and develops these images to produce a philosophy on love that is at once relevant to marriage and to philosophic discourse.

If Sappho was proud enough of her songs to write to a rich lady,
"When you are dead, there you shall lie, and there will be no memory of you, who have no share, in roses that the Muses bear,"
will you not be able to have proud and splendid thoughts of yourself, if you have a share not in the roses, but actually in the fruit the Muses bear, and which they have lavished upon those who admire education and philosophy?¹

Thus writes Plutarch to Eurydice in the conclusion to the *Coniugalia Praecepta*. At first glance, this image seems only natural in the context of a marriage – the occasion for this text. The *topos* of fruit and flowers is a commonplace in nuptial literature, dating back at least to Sappho's epithalamia. It betokens sexuality and fecundity, and can be used as a metaphor for the loss of the bride's virginity, as in *frr.* 105(a) and (b) V².

In Plutarch, it serves to bring full-circle his ring-composition in the *Coniugalia Praecepta*³: the epithalamial motif connects with the participle *συνυμμεναιοῦντα*, "join the wedding song", in 138B. The Muses, popular figures in the wedding songs of Sappho⁴, in Plutarch's introduction lay the foundations for the *παιδεία καὶ φιλοσοφία* mentioned here, "ensuring the tunefulness of marriage through discourse (*λόγου*) and harmony and philosophy" (138C). Finally, the "plucking" of virginity implied in the first two precepts (the bride should eat a quince, *μήλου κυδωνίου*, on the wedding night, so that the first *χάρις* of her mouth and voice should be sweet; in Boeotia the bride is crowned

¹ *Con. Praec.* 145F-146A.

² See R. HAGUE, 1983; R. D. GRIFFITH, 1989; E. CONTIADES-TSITSONI, 1990, esp. pp. 95-7; T. BADNALL, 2008, pp. 15-27.

³ For ring-composition in the *Con. Praec.* and the *Amat.*, see further L. GOESSLER, 1962, p. 46.

⁴ E.g. *fr.* 103.8 V.

with asparagus because the sweetest fruit, ἡδίστον καρπὸν, comes from the sharpest thorns; husbands who cannot put up with the bride's early quarrels are like those who leave a bunch of grapes, σταφυλήν, to others because the first one they plucked was tart, 138D-E) is transmuted to a positive image of marital "harvest" or "bounty" in the last, suggesting a successful integration of the bride into marriage, which is the long-term aim of this treatise.

Though Plutarch makes extensive use of the imagery of the Sapphic epithalamium, however, he seems to reject Sappho's programme in his final remarks to Eurydice. The fruits of the Muses are represented as superior to their flowers; his project must in some way trump that of Sappho: how can we reconcile this simultaneous integration and rejection of the poetess? In the rest of this paper, I will argue that Plutarch's use of this epithalamial image is complex and distinctive. His Muses are not just those of music and marriage, but also of philosophy. In the *Coniugalia Praecepta*, he lays the foundations for the development of that philosophy in the *Amatorius*. This is a very different text, a debate about love more generally rather than precepts for a marriage, but the use of certain themes and imagery from the *Coniugalia Praecepta* suggests that our understanding of the latter text may be enhanced by the former. Here Plutarch adapts Platonic motifs, especially the dialogue on love from the *Symposium*, to another encomium of married love. In doing so, he expounds a theory of ἔρωσ that is at once located in the marriage relationship and at the same time, an appropriate subject for philosophic discourse.

To make sense of this motif, we must examine more closely his quotation of Sappho. The rich woman with no share in the "roses of Pieria" is one with no talent for poetry. But more than this, because of her lack, she will be forgotten, οὐδέ τις μναμοσύνα, after her death. This implies that, unlike Sappho, she will have no share in the immortal κλέος which results from poetry. The flowers of the Muses, then, represent poetic immortality (as may be evidenced in the collections of *anthologia*, or the description of Sappho's poems as her "immortal daughters")⁵. What then, of their fruits? Perhaps they, too, represent immortality – but of a superior kind. As well as love and marriage, Plutarch develops the connection between καρπός and ἀθανασία in the *Amatorius*.

As in the *Coniugalia Praecepta*, marriage forms the occasion for this work – in the immediate context, that of Bacchon and Ismenodora, which prompts the dispute about love, but in the wider narrative frame, that of Plutarch and his own wife, which occasions his presence in Thespieae for that dispute. The festival-goers divide into two camps: those who abjure the love of women, including Bacchon's ἐραστής Piasias and his friend Protogenes; and those who embrace such love, including Plutarch, who referees the debate, Anthemion, the youth's older cousin, who is in favour of the match, and Daphnaeus, Protogenes' dialectical opponent. While the setting is overshadowed by nuptial elements, aspects of the homerotic dialogue on love from Plato's *Symposium* intrude: the περὶ Ἐρωτος λόγους (748F) which Flavianus commands Autoboulus to relate

⁵ AP 7.407, also 7.14, 17.

recall the *περὶ τῶν ἐρωτικῶν λόγων* demanded of Apollodorus after Agathon's *συνδείπνον* (172b). Additional parallels to the *Ilissus* of Plato's *Phaedrus* have been noted on many occasions⁶, and this text, particularly through Plutarch's allusion to the ascent of the soul, may even be a more important paradigm for the *Amatorius*⁷. These allusions are in turn played off against the role of *λόγος* in the opening of the *Coniugalia Praecepta*⁸. A tension is created between the marital and the philosophical⁹.

As Frazier has noted, the dialogue is divided into three parts, each representing a progression of thought towards Plutarch's eschatological, marital *ἔρωσ*¹⁰. In the first part of the discourse, Protogenes, a lover of boys, exploits the abovementioned tension and attempts to dissociate *καρπός* from a nuptial context. Denying that love or *φιλία* has any connection with women, he takes a position familiar from the *Symposium*: "Love, in fact, it is that attaches himself to a young and talented soul and through friendship brings it to a state of virtue" (*εἰς ἀρετὴν διὰ φιλίας τελευτᾷ*, 750D)¹¹. *Ἐπιθυμία*, desire for women, is connected with the flowers identified as inferior in the *Coniugalia Praecepta*: *ῥαυρὰ καὶ σώματος*¹². True love wants only to harvest the fruit: "Love, if he loses the hope of inspiring friendship, has no wish to remain cultivating a deficient plant which has come to its prime (*ῥαυρὰ*), if the plant cannot yield the proper fruit of character (*καρπὸν ἡθους*) to produce friendship and virtue" (750E). On this model, the epithalamial image is divided, though in a different way to the *Coniugalia Praecepta*: flowers are associated with corporeal bloom, the female, and inferior desire; fruit with the soul and character, the male, and superior love. Only the latter is part of a relationship of *φιλία*, which leads to *ἀρετή*.

⁶ Plu. *Amat.* 749A, cf. Pl. *Phdr.* 229a-b. H. M. MARTIN JR., 1984, p. 86; A. BILLAULT, 1999, p. 205; J. M. RIST, 2001, p. 559.

⁷ J. M. RIST, 2001, p. 558; F. FRAZIER, 2005/6, p. 64.

⁸ See also V. WOHL, 1997, p. 170, on the union of Hermes and Aphrodite – or *λόγος* and *ἔρωσ* – in 138C-D.

⁹ I am grateful to F. Brenk for drawing my attention to this tension following the delivery of this paper at the 8th IPS Congress. It arises not so much from the pederasts' subversion of an epithalamial motif – indeed, *καρπός* had also been associated with the mental as well as the physical at least since Pindar (*O.* 7.8, *P.* 2.74, *N.* 10.2) – but from the competing claims on this image of both homosexual and heterosexual philosophy and education.

¹⁰ F. FRAZIER, 2008, pp. IX-XII: the first discussion starts from the question of whether Bacchon should marry Ismenodora, and progresses through Plutarch's 'central intervention' on the divinity and benefits of *Eros*, to his apology and encomium of conjugal love in answer to *Zeuxippus*.

¹¹ While all Plato's dinner-guests accept pederasty as a higher form of love, Pausanias separates *ἔρωσ* into "Common" (love for women, the body, and the unintelligent) and "Heavenly" (love for intelligent boys), 180c-185c. To him, the granting of sexual favours (*χαρίζεσθαι*, 185b) should only be done for the sake of virtue. By the time of Plutarch's writing, the distinction between the two loves is a rhetorical commonplace (cf. Luc., *Amores* 37, F. FRAZIER, 2005/6, p. 80) and the impulse of pederasty towards virtue is typical of Stoic thought: *SVF* III 716-717.

¹² *ῥαυρὰ* is often used metaphorically for the "spring-time" or "bloom" of youth, associated with physical beauty: *Mimn.* 3.1, LSJ s.v. *ῥαυρὰ*. It is specifically associated by Plutarch with *ἄνθος* at *Alc.* 4.1. Cf. also S. GOLDHILL, 1995, p. 174.

Protagoras claims a “philosophical” function for pederasty (751A), based on women’s incapacity for virtue¹³. This attitude is common for the period – the Stoic philosophers in particular held love to be θήρα...ἀτελοῦς μὲν εὐφοῦς δὲ μειρακίου πρὸς ἀρετὴν¹⁴. But by insisting on such pedagogical pederasty and aligning himself with the Stoics, he somewhat forsakes his claim to “Platonic” capital – for this philosopher presented female capacity for virtue as equal to that of men¹⁵.

On the other side of the debate, Daphnaeus argues that Protagoras’ “harvest” is merely the forbidden fruit of pederasty: either it must be gathered furtively, γλυκεῖ ὄπωρα φύλακος ἐκλελοιπότης, which means it has nothing to do with philosophical ἔρωσ, or, if there is to be no sexual intercourse in it, it is Eros without Aphrodite – an oxymoron (752A). Moreover, it denies the legitimate use of any naturalistic imagery: it is a union contrary to nature, παρὰ φύσιν (751C). If the harvest is taken by force, it involves βία and ληλασία; if it happens by consent, it is weak and effeminate – there is no manly virtue involved at all (751E)¹⁶, and being without virtue, it is thus without fruit (ἄκαρπον, 752B). Χάρις, the yielding of woman to man (another epithaliamal motif: χάριεν, Sappho *fr.* 112.3 V), is instead held to be the beginning of φιλία (751E-F).

The tension is exacerbated, but not irreconcilably – for though Daphnaeus rejects the pederastic καρπός and reclaims φιλία for the female sex, he himself does not specify the “fruit” of such a “natural” union. As Martin notes, “he never goes so far as to actually claim that women are capable of ἀρετή”¹⁷, but as Plutarch continues to develop his thought throughout the dialogue, he will attempt to resolve the tension between the epithaliamal and the philosophical¹⁸ (indeed, this part of the dialogue has been identified as “pre-philosophical” – it is more rhetorical, and the true philosophical debate has not yet begun)¹⁹. Plutarch’s encomium of Eros begins on the side of married love. The traditional “fruit” of a marital union – children – are eulogised, and Ismenodora’s capacity for procreation is stressed (754C). In the next part of the dialogue, Aphrodite is called εὐκαρπον, as she is in the *Coniugalia Praecepta* (756E), suggesting

¹³ H. M. MARTIN JR., 1984, p. 83; M. B. CRAWFORD, 1999, p. 291; J. M. RIST, 2001, p. 559.

¹⁴ *De Comm. Not.* 1073B. Marriage and family life were regarded by Stoics as the duty of the sage to the state, and thus a different sphere: *SVF* I 270, cf. D. BABUT, 1963, pp. 57, 60-61.

¹⁵ Pl. *Men.* 72a-73c, *R.* 451d-e, 455d-e, *Lg.* 804e-806c, 829c, but cf. *Ti.* 90e-91a, *R.* 605d-e, *Lg.* 781a-b. “Socrates” also maintained the equality of male and female virtue in other texts: *X., Smp.* 2.9, *D. L.* 6.12, *contra* Arist. *Pol.* 1260a21. See also A. G. NIKOLAIDIS, 1997, pp. 29-30.

¹⁶ M. FOUCAULT, 1986, p. 201; M. B. CRAWFORD, 1999, p. 293. S. SWAIN in S. B. POMEROY (ed.), 1999, p. 89, locates this change from classical ideology in the need for perpetuation of Hellenic identity (through reproduction) of Greek elites at the beginning of the Second Sophistic, but *contra* C. PATTERSON, 1999, p. 129.

¹⁷ H. M. MARTIN JR., 1984, p. 83.

¹⁸ Plutarch briefly resumes the question of women’s virtue in 754A (Πλοῦτον δὲ γυναικὸς αἰρεῖσθαι μὲν πρὸ ἀρετῆς ἢ γένους ἀφιλότιμον καὶ ἀνελεύθερον...) and, in suggesting in the last part of the dialogue that Eros is the source of all virtue (757F ff, esp. 761E), foregrounds its applicability to women.

¹⁹ J. M. RIST, 2001, 561.

the traditional function of sexuality in such a relationship. Eros must also be present for this relationship to produce *φιλία*, but this is not necessarily problematic – the god is traditionally her follower, though Plutarch here reverses their relationship²⁰. Indeed, he seems to be the deity who presides when men *ποθοῦσι δὲ γάμου καὶ φιλότιτος* (757D).

Yet the metaphor of erotic cultivation is more often used as a model for the education of the young through pederasty, and, even when Plutarch supposedly applies it to marital *ἔρωσ*, even he cannot overcome his Platonic paradigm to develop the image beyond the education of boys: though divine love is the guide and helper of marriage, he operates, as Russell states, via the traditional analogies of boy-love: hunting the “fairest prey” (*κάλλιστον θήραμα*), and shaping boys and youths “in the ripening and flowering season” (*ῥορὰ καὶ ἄνθει*, 758E). Indeed, Eros is the god “whose care it is that a man grows straight in the direction of virtue with no deviation or crushing of the main stem of excellence” (757F-758A)²¹. The tension remains, but Plutarch *does* align the image of youth’s flower, *ῥορὰ*, with both the body and the soul (*ῥορὰν καὶ κάλλος ἅμα σώματος καὶ ψυχῆς*, 757E), thus mitigating Protogenes’ strict dichotomy of flower/body/female vs. fruit/soul/male.

The result of this alignment is itself expressed in terms of natural fertility, but this goes beyond the wedding song. Eros is *αὐγὴ δὲ καὶ θερμότης γλυκεῖα καὶ γόνιμος* (764B), a physician, saviour, and guide (indeed, the most philanthropic of gods, 758A) who directs the soul to the Plain of Truth (764F-65A)²². The aid to memory which allows the lover to apprehend the true Beauty which resides on this plain is to be found in pederasty: *ἔν τε σχήμασι καὶ χρώμασι καὶ εἶδεσι νέων ῥορὰ στίλβοντα* (765B)²³. The warmth generated in the true lover by such a memory produces “sap”, just as in a growing plant (*φυτῶ βλαστάνοντι*) which allows the development of *εὐπειθείας καὶ φιλοφροσύνης* (765C). Eros, in this model, is again the cultivator of the human “plant”, which leads to *φιλία*.

While Plutarch’s exposition is linguistically pederastic, he is keen to reclaim this image for marriage in the third part of the dialogue, claiming that the *εἶδωλα* of both boys and women can enter the body of the lover and produce “seed”, as long as *ἦθος* combines with *ῥορὰ* (766E-F). He goes further

²⁰ Cf. Hes. *Th.* 201-2; compare *Amat.* 759E-F; F. FRAZIER, 2005/6, p. 97, 2008, p. XXVII.

²¹ D. A. RUSSELL, 1997, pp. 102-3: “These two analogies are traditional. The lover and the sophist are “hunters” of the young in Plato and Xenophon [e.g. *Pl.*, *Sph.* 221-2, 231D, *Lg.* 831B, *X.*, *Cyn.* 13.9]; the analogy between education and growing plants is also conventional and obvious; and the association between pederasty and education is Platonic”.

²² Here Plutarch departs most obviously from the conversation of Plato’s *Symposium* to that of the *Phaedrus*: τὸ ἀληθείας πεδίον (248b). The motif of ascent of the soul is, however, also present in Socrates’ dialogue with Diotima (*Symp.* 211b-c), demonstrating Plutarch’s manipulation of a number of Platonic theories. See H. M. MARTIN JR., 1984, p. 85; J. M. RIST, 2001, p. 558. J. OPSOMER, 2004, p. 137, however, argues against scholarly opinion, especially that of Cherniss, that Plutarch is “a Platonic interpreter manipulating the texts so as to make them suit his own interests”. Instead, he suggests that Plutarch was searching for doctrinal consistency across dialogues (p. 155), which explains his mixing of theories.

²³ See J. M. RIST, 2001, p. 572.

than Daphnaeus in reclaiming the physical “flower” for a positive usage: to him, women are capable of virtue, and this is inseparable from beauty. “To be sure they say that beauty is ‘the flower of virtue’ (ὥραν “ἄνθος ἀρετῆς” εἶναι); yet it would be absurd to deny that the female produces that flower or gives a “presentation” of a ‘natural bent for virtue’” (767B)²⁴. A woman’s flower is not just in her body, but, in the case of a “good” woman, also in her ἦθος – the character whose fruit, Protogenes insisted, produces φιλία and ἀρετή in boys and men²⁵.

Such encomium of female beauty, in the case of nuptial literature, may inspire the ἔρωσ which allows the groom to consummate the marriage²⁶, and Plutarch applies a novel twist to this traditional *topos*: consummation is itself the beginning of φιλία (769A), which is absent from “philosophical”, pederastic sex (768B)²⁷. We see a progression from the beauty of a good woman, the “flower of virtue”, to ἔρωσ, leading to physical union, which inspires φιλία and the cultivation of the “fruit of virtue”, ἀρετή, which in turn leads to beauty (769B-D). Such a progression forms a never-ending cycle, in which fruit follows flower, which in turn fertilises the human plant so that the flower may bloom again. Neither seems to represent a “superior” metaphor, as they continually supersede one another. The harvest of virginity and the harvest of virtue are equated, though what is intended here is not the singular “reaping” of the bride on the wedding night, but a long-term “cultivation”, a lifetime’s progression or renewal (ἀνανεοῦνται) of φιλία (φιλοφροσύνη, 769A)²⁸.

The idea of “progression” leads us back to the beginning of this paper: the concept of the flower of immortality. For it is the bloom of youth, ὥρα, by which “Love gently excites our memory”; reminding us of the true and intelligible Beauty that lies behind bodily forms (765B). The lover tests the beloved to discover if they, too, can perceive this ideal Beauty, and if so, a communion of ἔρωσ and φιλία results, which refracts the memory of the lover to the Beauty of the other world²⁹. The physical ὥρα “inflamm[s] his spirit” in this life (766B),

²⁴ This is itself a Stoic expression, εἶναι δὲ καὶ τὴν ὥραν ἄνθος ἀρετῆς, *SVF* III 718A, and shows Plutarch developing the contemporary theories put forward by Protogenes as well as those of Daphnaeus earlier in the dialogue. See also G. NIKOLAIDIS, 1997, p. 84, on also *Mul. Virt.* 242F.

²⁵ M. FOUCAULT, 1986, p. 161 argues that female possession of equal virtue is a Stoic innovation; cf. S. GOLDBILL, 1995, p. 157: “[Plutarch], like Musonius, appears to allow a woman in the name of shared virtue to demonstrate the qualities of a man: *to andreion*”.

²⁶ E.g. *Men. Rh.* 407.12-14.

²⁷ Not only does Plato reject the physical consummation of love (e.g. *Symp.* 211b), but consummation with the female leading to philosophic φιλία is a Plutarchian innovation. See M. B. CRAWFORD, 1999, p. 295; R. HAWLEY, 1999, p. 117. In this way, Plutarch reconceptualises, rather than remaining utterly faithful to, Plato; J. M. RIST, 2001, p. 559: he “offers a ‘Platonic’ evaluation of the human experiences available to most of us, not just to the self-conscious followers of Diotima of the *Symposium* or to the philosophical lovers and kings of the *Republic*”; F. FRAZIER, 2005/6, p. 64, 2008, p. XV.

²⁸ A. G. NIKOLAIDIS, 1997, p. 45 on the “general application” of the Solonian legislation on frequency of sex (*Sol.* 20.4) in this context.

²⁹ *Amat.* 765D: ὅπου δ’ ἂν ἔχουσιν ἴχνος τι τοῦ θείου καὶ ἀπορροὴν καὶ ὁμοίότητα

but it is in the next that he progresses upwards and reaps the true benefit: “The true lover, when he has reached the other world and consorted with true beauty in the holy way, grows wings and joins in the continual celebration of his god’s mysteries” (766C). The τέλος generally assumed for marriage has taken on an eschatological form, appropriate to the ἔργον ἱερώτερον (758B) of the marriage-deity³⁰.

This is an intriguing development of both the Platonic and the epithalamial, and may offer some resolution to the tension between them. Daphnaeus had argued that marriage makes mankind immortal through reproduction in *this* life (752A; we see the same formulation in *Symp.* 208); in the ascent of the soul, we may think that Plutarch intends a Platonic progression and contrast between the immortality granted by corporeal offspring and those which result from “spiritual” pregnancy: τεκόντι δὲ ἀρετὴν ἀληθῆ (*Symp.* 212a), or assume, as does Wohl, that “philosophy becomes the child of this union”³¹. But Plutarch goes further than both these ideas *and* that of poetic immortality, to suggest that true love, whose *locus* is marriage, offers immortality in the *afterlife* (μετὰ τὴν τελευτήν, 766B). The begetting of life is mentioned, certainly (769E, 770A), but it is after death that his philosophical lovers are expected to “reap” the “harvest” of their philosophy. As in the *Coniugalia Praecepta*, the “flower” and “fruit” of the epithalamium function as a metaphor for immortality, but with a distinct difference. In the earlier text, flowers had represented poetic immortality and fruit a superior, spiritual one, gained by the young wife through philosophical intimacy with her husband³². In the *Amatorius*, Plutarch uses and develops this imagery in a different way.

In the *Coniugalia Praecepta*, Plutarch implied that the “fruits of the Muses” were superior to their flowers. The theory of pederasty represents this fruit as virtue, the ethical product of a human plant cultivated by Eros. Taking its cue from the contrast between “Heavenly” and “Common” love in the *Symposium*³³, “virtuous” ἔρωσ for boys is contrasted with desire for women, based solely on the physical flower of the body. But to those who support married love, this flower, ὤρα, is connected with both body and soul – thus, in the *Amatorius*, Plutarch presents a far less dichotomised schema either than that of Protogenes, and one that is also different from his own conclusion in the *Coniugalia Praecepta*. As in the epithalamium, beauty combines with χάρις to situate ἔρωσ within an idealised marriage relationship. This is held to produce φιλία, which leads to virtue, of which beauty is the flower. Plutarch struggles to combine the

σαίνουσαν, ὑφ’ ἡδονῆς καὶ θαύματος ἐνθουσιῶντες καὶ περιέποντες, εὐπαθοῦσι τῇ μνήμῃ καὶ ἀναλάμπουσι πρὸς ἐκεῖνο τὸ ἐράσιμον ἀληθῶς καὶ μακάριον καὶ φίλιον ἅπασι καὶ ἀγαπητόν.

³⁰ See also 750C: ἱερωτέρα κατὰ ζευξίς.

³¹ V. WOHL, 1997, p. 184. This assumption is based on the λόγων χρηστών σπέρματα which will prevent a wife who shares her husband’s education from κύουσι evil thoughts and feelings (*Con. Praec.* 145D). Cf. Pl., *Smp.* 210a, in which the budding philosopher may γεννᾶν λόγους καλοῦς in the body of a beautiful beloved.

³² I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer of this article for their comments on this point.

³³ Cf. n. 11; M. FOUCAULT, 1986, p. 195.

philosophic with the epithalamial; finally he mixes and progresses beyond both these and other Platonic elements to a philosophy of immortal love grounded in mortal marriage. This philosophy is more developed in the *Amatorius*, setting up the idea that fruit may supersede flower, only to show that both are part of a continual cultivation of virtue within marriage. Within this philosophy, both images form part of a progression towards immortality that *is* superior to that offered by the “roses of Pieria” – not the preservation of song, but that of soul.

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EROS EM PLUTARCO E A APOLOGIA DO AMOR CONJUGAL

MARIA LEONOR SANTA BÁRBARA
Universidade Nova de Lisboa

Abstract

Eros is a god who had several representations. Also his power on men and gods has been referred to by several Greek authors. Plutarch was no exception and describes him as a god with more power than any other. Gods like Hades, Aphrodite or Ares are nothing when compared with the god of love.

In *Amatorius*, Plutarch presents us another aspect concerning love, which is not usual in Classical Antiquity: the apology of conjugal love. The feeling inspired by Eros is not exclusive of the man and heterosexual love is also inspired by this god. Plutarch praises women's virtues, particularly their capacities of fidelity, tenderness and devotion. He also refers himself to the relationship between husband and wife, as the "integral union", that relationship where, initially love corresponds to some effervescence, which, in time, calms down, giving place to a great stability.

These aspects – the way how Plutarch sees Eros and his conception of conjugal love – are those we intend to approach in this paper.

1. Antiguidade de Eros

Eros é uma divindade bastante antiga, como é comprovado pelo seu culto, que teve como centros mais importantes Téspias, Leuctros, Paros, Atenas, Esparta, Élide, Creta e Samos. Comprovado por autores como Plutarco e Pausânias, entre outros, o seu culto recua a épocas antiquíssimas, nalguns casos desconhecidas¹. Do mesmo modo, as referências que lhe são feitas na literatura confirmam a sua antiguidade. Se Homero o omite, atribuindo a Afrodite as funções que posteriormente veremos dadas a este deus, já o mesmo não se pode dizer de Hesíodo, que a ele alude na *Teogonia*: "Antes de tudo existiu o Caos; em seguida a Terra de largo peito, assento sempre seguro de todos os imortais, que possuem o cimo do nevado Olimpo e o Tártaro sombrio, no fundo da terra de muitos caminhos; e Eros, o mais belo dos deuses imortais, aquele que enfraquece os membros, aquele que, no peito de todos os deuses e de todos os homens, domina o espírito e a vontade sábia"². Diversos poetas lhe fazem referência ao longo do tempo, quer para estabelecer a sua genealogia, quer para se referirem às suas funções, ou ao sofrimento que é capaz de provocar nos outros. Nos líricos, por exemplo, aparece como divindade primordial, tal como

¹ Nos casos de Téspias, Leuctros ou Paros parece evidente pelos testemunhos que este culto recua a épocas remotas. Pausânias chega a referir que o seu culto em Paros – que não é inferior ao de Téspias – parece ser um culto pré-jónico, hipótese que não está completamente demonstrada, visto que se baseia nalgumas moedas da cidade da época de Adriano. Estas pretendiam reproduzir o famoso Eros de Praxíteles, apresentando um *herma* no qual o deus apoiava a perna direita, mas que não se encontra na estátua. No entanto, é possível que este *herma* seja um vestígio de um culto local arcaico, proveniente de uma época em que o deus fosse representado desta forma, ou como divindade ctónica.

² Hesíodo, *Teogonia*, vv. 116-122.

nos poetas trágicos³. No entanto, Eros começa a surgir também associado ao amor e a Afrodite.

Embora tradicionalmente seja considerado filho de Afrodite, nem sempre assim foi referido pelos poetas: para Alceu (fr. 327 Loeb) ele é filho de Íris e de Zéfiro⁴; Safo (cf. *Schol.* Teócrito 13.1-2) refere-o como filho da Terra e de Úrano; Simónides (*Poetae Melici Graeci*, fr. 70) faz dele filho de Ares e de Afrodite; Acusilau (cf. *Schol.* Teócrito 13.2) diz que é filho da Noite e de Éter; Eurípidés (*Hipólito*, vv. 530-534) apresenta-o como filho de Zeus; Sócrates, baseando-se na narrativa de Diotima de Mantinea (Platão, *Banquete*, 203 cd), afirma tratar-se de uma divindade intermédia, filho de Pénia e Poros; em Apolónio de Rodes (*Argonautas*, III. 26) o deus é filho de Afrodite, embora não lhe seja dado um pai. Aliás, saliente-se que esta filiação, relativamente a Afrodite, se verifica principalmente a partir do século III a.C., embora já antes o deus surja ao serviço da deusa⁵.

2. Representações de Eros

Eros teve, ao longo do tempo, múltiplas representações, que já apresentámos noutra local⁶. Divindade do amor, é qualificado como ladrão e comparado com animais como a abelha, que embora pequena provoca feridas lancinantes. A *Antologia Palatina*, sobretudo nos livros V e XII, dedicados aos epigramas amorosos, está cheia destas referências: Mosco refere-se-lhe como escravo fugitivo de Afrodite⁷, enquanto Diófanes de Mirina⁸ o acusa de ser um triplo ladrão, insolente, um indivíduo que não dorme e está sempre pronto a despojar os outros. Associada a estas representações temos a descrição que Mosco faz dele, comparando-o com uma abelha⁹. No entanto,

³ Cf. Ésquilo, *Danaiides*, fr. 44 Nauck. Aqui o deus origina a união do Céu e da Terra. Esta, fecundada pela chuva, produz para os homens cereais e, para os rebanhos, erva. Ver também Sófocles, *Antígona*, vv. 781-800, onde Eros é um poder abstracto que governa todos os seres vivos sobre a terra, embora aqui seja também confundido com o instinto sexual, encarnado por Afrodite. De modo idêntico, na cosmogonia órfica, Eros terá nascido do ovo primordial, engendrado pela Noite. As duas metades deste ovo formam a Terra e o Céu.

⁴ Referido por Plutarco, *Erótico* 765 e.

⁵ Como é visível na taça do pintor Leandro, c. 460 a.C.

⁶ Primeiro, na dissertação de mestrado, intitulada *Eros na Antologia Grega*, apresentada à Faculdade de Letras de Universidade de Lisboa em 1987; posteriormente na comunicação intitulada “Grandeza e pequenez nas representações de Eros na literatura e na arte”, apresentada no IV Congresso da APEC, realizado na Universidade do Algarve, em 2004.

⁷ Cf. *AP* IX. 440. Do mesmo modo, Sátiro (*APL* 195), Mécio (*APL* 198) e Crinágoras (*APL* 199) aludem ao deus como ladrão de corações e prisioneiro. *Anthologie Grecque* (texte établi et traduit par P. Waltz), Paris, 1931-1974 (13 vols.).

⁸ Cf. *AP* V. 309. Cf. *AP* IX. 616, onde o deus é descrito como um ladrão, que rouba as roupas das Cárites enquanto estas se banham.

⁹ Cf. Mosco, XIX: “Certa vez, estando Eros, armado em ladrão, a roubar cera dos cortiços, uma abelha furiosa picou-lhe a ponta do dedo, arranhando-o. Porque estava aflito, soprou a mão, feriu a terra com golpes, saltou e, mostrando a Afrodite a sua dor, queixou-se-lhe que a abelha era um animal pequeno, mas que fazia feridas pungentes. Então a mãe riu-se: «O quê? Não és tu igual às abelhas? Pequeno como és, provocas feridas lancinantes.»”

também o podemos encontrar a auxiliar os outros, como pastor, lavrador e jardineiro¹⁰, ou associado à natureza¹¹.

Foi, ainda, representado sob formas diversas: apesar de o identificarmos com uma criança travessa e alada, esta figuração só surge no séc. III a.C. Antes disso, ele é um jovem que acompanha o cortejo de Afrodite e é como jovem que está no friso do Pártenon.

3. Poder de Eros

Tal como sucede com a sua genealogia e as representações, também o poder que esta divindade exerce sobre homens e deuses é referido em inúmeros autores. A passagem de Hesíodo acima referida testemunha esta ideia: afinal, o poeta já alude ao deus como uma entidade que domina os outros, embora aqui o seu poder seja gerador. Muitos poetas o farão também, designadamente os autores dos epigramas apresentados na secção anterior.

Plutarco não foi excepção, descrevendo-o como uma divindade com um poder superior ao de qualquer outra. Hades, Afrodite ou Ares nada são ao pé do deus do amor. Sem o auxílio de Eros, Afrodite é incapaz de inspirar um sentimento profundo, mas somente uma relação carnal. É Eros que faz surgir a afeição. Diz Plutarco¹² que, sem Eros, o trabalho de Afrodite é algo que se vende por uma dracma. Daí que ninguém corra qualquer risco por ele, se não estiver apaixonado (μη ἔρῳν). Afrodite é o prazer físico, enquanto Eros é o amor e o desejo, ideia reforçada pela seguinte afirmação: “Por isso, o prazer de Afrodite é frágil e inconstante, se não for inspirado por Eros.”¹³

Além disso, embora haja homens capazes de partilhar com outros as suas amantes e, até, as suas mulheres¹⁴, nenhum amante (ἔραστής) faria o mesmo com o seu amado (ἔρόμενος), nem que fosse em troca das honras de Zeus.

Hades, por seu turno, cedeu ao impulso de Eros, como se vê pelo exemplo de Orfeu¹⁵. Quanto a Ares, o que pode o seu valor guerreiro perante a força do

¹⁰ Cf., respectivamente, *AP* VII. 703, de Mirino, *APL* 200, de Mosco, e *APL* 202.

¹¹ A este respeito refira-se a relação de Eros com os jardins, dormindo junto das rosas (*APL* 338, de Juliano), ou à sombra dos plátanos (*AP* IX. 627, de Mariano o Escoliasta); ou a sua relação com os animais (em *AP* IX. 221, Marco Argentário descreve-o conduzindo um leão pela mão, enquanto Páladas – *APL* 207 – no-lo apresenta com um golfinho numa das mãos).

¹² Cf. Plutarco, *Erótico* 759 e.

¹³ Plutarco, *Erótico* 759 f: οὕτως ἀσθενής καὶ ἀψίκωρός ἐστιν ἡ τῆς Ἀφροδίτης χάρις ἣν ἔρωσ μὴ ἐπιπνεύσαντος. Plutarque, *Œuvres Morales*. X : *Dialogue sur l'Amour* (texte établi et traduit par R. Flacelière), Paris, 1980.

¹⁴ Cf. Plutarco, *Erótico* 759 f-760 b, onde encontramos as histórias de Gaba e de Faúlo. O primeiro fingia dormir para que Mecenas pudesse desfrutar da sua mulher, enquanto o segundo vestiu a mulher de homem para que ela se pudesse encontrar com Filipe V, sem que o seu inimigo Nicóstrato se apercebesse do facto. Ambos pretendiam com isso obter algum benefício.

¹⁵ Cf. Plutarco, *Erótico* 761 e-f, que nos apresenta, para além desta conhecido história, alguns exemplos bem conhecidos na literatura grega: Alceste, mulher cujo amor pelo marido foi suficiente para que Hades permitisse que Hércules a levasse de volta a Admeto; Protesilau, recém-casado com Laodamia quando partiu para Tróia, morto por Heitor ao desembarcar. Hades autorizou-o a regressar do seu reino para se despedir da mulher, a quem ele dá o conselho de se suicidar para se juntar a ele (a este respeito, veja-se Luciano, *Diálogo dos Mortos*, 23).

Amor? Isto mesmo é comprovado pelo exemplo de Cleómaco, que auxiliou os habitantes de Cálcis na sua luta contra os de Érétria¹⁶. O seu valor guerreiro em combate foi tanto maior, quanto sabia que o seu jovem amado estava a assistir ao combate, lutando com ardor e assim desbaratando o inimigo. A sua história apresenta Eros como incentivo do espírito guerreiro entre indivíduos que se amam. 761 b é uma alusão explícita a Tebas e ao seu contingente especial, constituído por erastas e erómenos, que assim se incentivavam mutuamente ao combate.

4. Eros e o amor conjugal

Plutarco apresenta-nos, no *Erótico*, um outro aspecto relativo ao amor, pouco comum na Antiguidade: a apologia do amor conjugal. Convém, contudo, não esquecer que esta apologia é feita num contexto em que se discute qual o verdadeiro amor, no sentido de superior, melhor, mais puro: o dos jovens ou o conjugal? Frequentemente é o amor pelos jovens – associado a Eros – que é considerado superior, enquanto a relação com uma mulher é considerada simplesmente física, desprovida de um verdadeiro sentimento de afecto e amizade e, como tal, associada a Afrodite. O objectivo de Plutarco é demonstrar que o sentimento inspirado por Eros não se limita ao sexo masculino, sendo o amor heterossexual inspirado também por este deus. Para isso, ele demonstra a antiguidade e a importância do deus, chamando a atenção para todos os seus benefícios, entre os quais o afecto sincero é um dos mais importantes.

Simultaneamente, como que “reabilita” a mulher e as relações heterossexuais: em 753 f-754 a, defende que, se algumas mulheres se aproveitaram de certos homens, isso deveu-se mais à fraqueza deles do que a defeito delas. As relações de homens pobres e apagados com mulheres ricas provam precisamente o contrário – eles conservaram a sua dignidade e foram respeitados por elas, exercendo sobre elas uma autoridade misturada com afecto, afirmação que se aproxima da célebre Epístola de S. Paulo aos Coríntios.

Recordando Platão¹⁷, Plutarco afirma que Eros preside ao ἐνθουσιασμός (impulso vindo do exterior por acção de um poder superior, que altera a compreensão e a razão humanas e que é produzido pelo facto de entrarmos em comunicação, ou em participação, com um deus). Há vários tipos de ἐνθουσιασμός (profético, báquico, poético e musical), mas nenhum tão forte, tão duradouro, como o do Amor¹⁸.

Eros é uma divindade que proporciona grandes benefícios aos homens, tanto aos amados, como aos que amam. A estes, concede o Amor coragem, alegria, generosidade, liberalidade¹⁹. Concede também a capacidade de ver para lá da aparência: aquele que ama vê no objecto do seu amor qualidades de que os outros não se apercebem.

¹⁶ Cf. Plutarco, *Erótico* 760 e-761 a.

¹⁷ Cf. Plutarco, *Erótico* 758 d-e.

¹⁸ Cf. Plutarco, *Erótico* 758 e-759 b.

¹⁹ Cf. Plutarco, *Erótico* 762 b ss..

Além disso, o seu poder é tal que se sobrepõe a todos, gerando uma união que tende para o divino e para o que há no mundo de mais belo²⁰.

Recuperando lendas egípcias que, a par do Amor vulgar e do celeste, ainda admitem a existência de um terceiro Amor – o sol²¹ –, Plutarco realça a importância do deus por comparação com Afrodite: o sol é um calor doce e fecundante que alimenta os corpos, dando-lhes luz e crescimento. Tal como o sol, ao surgir por detrás das nuvens, é mais ardente, também a reconciliação dos apaixonados, após uma discussão, é mais viva e agradável.

Mas isto não é suficiente. Plutarco retoma a doutrina dos átomos, de Demócrito e de Epicuro: se pequenos corpos, formados à imagem do objecto amado, saem dele, penetram no corpo do amante e estimulam a massa dos seus átomos, pondo-os em movimento e produzindo esperma, não será possível que estes mesmos pequenos corpos possam emanar da mulher²²? Além disso, não possuirão as mulheres virtude (ἀρετή)²³?

Plutarco exalta a virtude das mulheres, especialmente as suas capacidades de fidelidade, ternura e dedicação. São estes sentimentos mútuos que são necessários no casamento²⁴ e que preservam a relação e a fidelidade dos esposos, a lealdade. Cama e Empona são excelentes exemplos desta fidelidade²⁵: a primeira envenenou o assassino do marido e suicidou-se no mesmo momento, na esperança de se reencontrar com o marido; a segunda foi capaz de preservar uma imagem de viúva, enquanto mantinha secretamente a relação com o marido, que todos julgavam morto. Chegou mesmo a levá-lo, disfarçado, para Roma, na esperança de obter para ele o perdão do imperador, acabando por ser mandada matar por este.

A relação física com uma mulher é fonte de amizade, de partilha em comum²⁶. Se a duração do prazer é curta, já o sentimento que se desenvolve a partir daí é duradouro – afecto, amizade, confiança. São estes sentimentos que fazem com que a relação entre cônjuges seja “a união integral”, aquela relação em que o amor gera inicialmente efervescência, que com o tempo se acalma, dando lugar a grande estabilidade. Com efeito, é a solidez desta relação que permite a afirmação de Plutarco: “Pois no casamento, amar é um bem maior do que ser amado.”²⁷

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²⁰ Cf. Plutarco, *Erótico* 763 f.

²¹ Cf. Plutarco, *Erótico* 764 b ss..

²² Cf. Plutarco, *Erótico* 766 e.

²³ Cf. Plutarco, *Erótico* 767 b.

²⁴ Cf. Plutarco, *Erótico* 767 e.

²⁵ Cf. Plutarco, *Erótico*, 768 b-d e 770 d-771c, respectivamente.

²⁶ Cf. Plutarco, *Erótico* 769.

²⁷ Plutarco, *Erótico* 769 d: τὸ γὰρ ἐρᾶν ἐν γάμῳ τοῦ ἐρᾶσθαι μείζον ἀγαθόν ἐστίν.

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KRASIS OINOU DIKEN. AMORE CONIUGALE E LINGUAGGIO DEL SIMPOSIO NELL'*AMATORIUS* DI PLUTARCO

ROSARIO SCANNAPIECO
Università di Salerno

Abstract

The κρᾶσις metaphor of water and wine in a mixture of balanced proportion aimed at ensuring a correct assumption of the drink, respectful of the rules of the convivium, is taken by Plutarch from the world of the symposium and repeatedly applied in his *Amatorius* to the love between husband and wife as a deep connection between their souls. Thus, the author expresses a concept of *eros* coherent with the most genuine Hellenic cultural tradition: this way, *eros* is the projection on a familiar basis of the φιλία that society should rely on, even in politics, according to Plato's point of view. Moreover, the vision of *eros*, as it emerges from the analyses conducted, seems to respect the Aristotelian ethical principle of τὸ μέτριον.

Un'analisi del lessico e della complessa trama metaforica che caratterizza l'*Introduzione* al IV libro delle *Quaestiones convivales* (659E-660A) permette di sviluppare qualche riflessione di ordine più generale sul valore assunto nell'immaginario plutarco dal simposio e dalle sue regole come modello di riferimento per altri ambiti della realtà umana, anche privati, quale potrebbe essere il rapporto coniugale; a questo scopo di notevole interesse può risultare la lettura comparata di alcuni passi tratti dall'*Amatorius*, dai *Coniugalia praecepta* e dal *Septem sapientium convivium*.

Plutarco¹ sostiene nell'*Introduzione* che scopo del simposio, come della

¹ Ὡς ὁ Σόσσιε Σενεκίω, τοῦ Πολυβίου Σκηπίωνι παραινούντος Ἀφρικανῶ μὴ πρότερον ἐξ ἀγορᾶς ἀπελθεῖν ἢ φίλον τινὰ ποιήσασθαι τῶν πολιτῶν, φίλον δεῖ μὴ πικρῶς μηδὲ σοφιστικῶς ἀκούειν ἐκεῖνον τὸν ἀμετάπτωτον καὶ βέβαιον, ἀλλὰ κοινῶς τὸν εὖνον: [...] Φιλία γὰρ ἐν χρόνῳ πολλῶ καὶ δι' ἀρετῆς ἀλώσιμον· εὖνοια δὲ καὶ χρεία καὶ ὁμιλία καὶ παιδιᾶ πολιτικῶν ἀνδρῶν ἐπάγεται, καιρὸν λαβοῦσα πειθοῦς φιλανθρώπου καὶ χάριτος συνεργόν. Ἄλλ' ὅρα τὸ τῆς παραινέσεως, εἰ μὴ μόνον ἔχει δεξιῶς πρὸς ἀγορὰν ἀλλὰ καὶ πρὸς συμπόσιον· ὥστε δεῖν μὴ πρότερον ἀναλύνειν ἢ κτήσασθαι τινὰ τῶν συγκατακειμένων καὶ παρόντων εὖνον ἑαυτῶ καὶ φίλον. Εἰς ἀγορὰν μὲν γὰρ ἐμβάλλουσι πραγμάτων εἵνεκεν καὶ χρεῶν ἐτέρων, εἰς δὲ συμπόσιον οἷ γε νοῦν ἔχοντες ἀφικνοῦνται κτησόμενοι φίλους [...] Καὶ τούναντίον ὁ τούτου παραμελῶν ἄχαριν αὐτῶ καὶ ἀτελεῖ τὴν συνουσίαν ποιεῖ καὶ ἄπεισι τῆ γαστρὶ σύνδειπνος οὐ τῆ ψυχῇ γεγονώς· ὁ γὰρ σύνδειπνος οὐκ ὄψου καὶ οἴνου καὶ τραγημάτων μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ λόγων κοινωνὸς ἦκει καὶ παιδιᾶς καὶ φιλοφροσύνης εἰς εὖνοιαν τελευτώσης [...] ταῖς δὲ φιλικαῖς λαβαῖς ὁ οἶνος ἀφὴν ἐνδίδωσι μινύμενος λόγῳ· λόγος γὰρ αὐτῶ τὸ φιλάνθρωπον καὶ ἡθοποιὸν ἐπὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ἐκ τοῦ σώματος ἐποχετεύει καὶ ἐνδίδωσιν· εἰ δὲ μὴ, πλανώμενος ἐν τῶ σώματι πλησμονῆς οὐδὲν σπουδαιότερον παρέσχεν. Ὅθεν ὥσπερ ὁ μάρμαρος, τοῦ διαπύρου σιδήρου τῶ καταψύχειν τὴν ἄγαν ὑγρότητα καὶ ῥύσιν ἀφαιρῶν, εὐτονον ποιεῖ τὸ μαλασσόμενον αὐτοῦ καὶ τυπούμενον, οὕτως ὁ συμποτικὸς λόγος οὐκ ἔξ διαφορεῖσθαι παντάπασιν ὑπὸ τοῦ οἴνου τοὺς πίνοντας, ἀλλ' ἐφίστησι καὶ ποιεῖ τῆ ἀνέσει τὸ ἰλαρὸν καὶ φιλάνθρωπον ἐγκέραστον καὶ κεχαρισμένον, ἂν τις ἐμμελῶς ἄπτηται, καθάπερ σφραγίδι φιλίας εὐτυπωτάτων καὶ ἀπαλῶν διὰ τὸν οἶνον ὄντων. Il testo di riferimento è quello costituito da A. M. SCARCELLA (ed.), 2001, da cui ci si allontana solo in alcuni punti: è stata infatti accolta la correzione ἐνδίδωσιν proposta dal Wilamowitz per συνδίδωσιν dei codici contro συνδιαδίδωσιν dello Hubert; si è preferito inoltre respingere l'aggiunta di τὸ dello Hubert dinanzi a κεχαρισμένον e la correzione εὐτυπώτων Reiske per εὐτυπωτάτων dei codici; per le prime due divergenze cfr. S.-T. THEODORSSON, 1990,

frequentazione dell'*agorà*, è quello di procurarsi degli amici: chi partecipa al simposio per scopi diversi rende dunque l'incontro privo di piacere (ἄχαρις) e inutile (ἀτελής)². Il simposio è così subito accomunato ad una esperienza collettiva – come potrebbe essere quella politica – che va vissuta e trova giustificazione nell'ambito dei rapporti della *polis*: al simposio, infatti, ci si reca per saziare non solo il corpo, ma anche l'anima attraverso la condivisione di discorsi (λόγοι), momenti di divertimento più leggero (παιδιά) e cordiale allegria (φιλοφροσύνη), il che produce benevolenza (εὔνοια)³. Plutarco distingue a questo punto tra i termini φιλία ed εὔνοια: la prima si conquista nel tempo e attraverso la virtù (ἐν χρόνῳ πολλῶ καὶ δι' ἀρετῆς)⁴, mentre la seconda nasce tra individui della stessa città dalla consuetudine (χρεία), dalla frequentazione (ὁμιλία) e anche attraverso il divertimento (παιδιά), in virtù di quella capacità, che ha la sua radice nella natura filantropica dell'uomo, di attirare la simpatia e il rispetto degli altri con il fascino del proprio carattere (πειθῶ φιλάνθρωπος καὶ χάρις). Perché il simposio non si riduca ad una volgare bevuta occorre però che al vino sia mescolato il λόγος, il quale diffonde nell'anima un'amorevole inclinazione verso il prossimo, mentre il vino da solo vagherebbe nel corpo producendo solo un senso di sazietà (πλησμονή)⁵. Plutarco propone dunque un modello di simposio sobrio in cui si crei tra i partecipanti un *feeling* soprattutto spirituale attraverso la condivisione di uno stile di vita decoroso e del gusto per un divertimento sano ed equilibrato.

A questo punto Plutarco per chiarire il concetto introduce una similitudine tratta dall'ambito dell'arte metallurgica: come il marmo raffredda il ferro incandescente e ne contrasta mollezza e fluidità eccessive, rendendo plastica quella parte che è soggetta ad ammorbidimento e si presta ad essere plasmata, così il λόγος συμποτικός impedisce che chi beve sia in balia degli effetti del vino, ma con l'ammorbidimento che esso produce tiene sotto controllo e guida la tendenza alla cordialità e all'amicizia⁶ rendendola temperata (ἐγκέραστον) e gradevole, come se proprio a causa del vino i partecipanti al simposio diventassero più malleabili e morbidi al sigillo dell'amicizia (καθάπερ σφραγίδι φιλίας εὐτυπωτάτων καὶ ἀπαλῶν διὰ τὸν οἶνον ὄντων)⁷. Il linguaggio plutarceo

pp. 16, 17 e per la terza cfr. *infra*, n. 7. Per tutte le citazioni dall'*Amatorius* il testo di riferimento è quello di R. FLACELIÈRE, 1980 ora riedito in F. FRAZIER, 2008. Le eventuali divergenze dal testo del Flacelière saranno indicate in nota.

² Una celebrazione del ruolo dell'amico nell'ambito del simposio compare anche in *Quaest. conv.* 697D.

³ Il concetto è ribadito più volte da Plutarco: cfr. *Quaest. conv.* 618E, 620C, 643A, ma soprattutto 621C διαγωγὴ γάρ ἐστιν ἐν οἴνῳ τὸ συμπόσιον εἰς φιλίαν ὑπὸ χάριτος τελευτώσα.

⁴ Cfr. *Am. mult.* 94A. Anche per Arist., *EN VIII* 1155 a 2-3 l'amicizia è legata alla virtù; cfr. pure *EN VIII* 1157 a 30-31.

⁵ Cfr. *Ad. et. am.* 66B; *Quaest. conv.* 613B, D; 614E.

⁶ Per il valore assunto dal termine φιλάνθρωπία nel *corpus* plutarceo cfr. S.-T. TEODORSSON, 2007, pp. 187-91.

⁷ La lezione dei codici εὐτυπώτατον potrebbe essere corretta in εὐτυπωτάτων ammettendo un comune scambio ω>ο: cfr. F. T. GIGNAC, 1976, pp. 275-7. La presenza di un superlativo al posto del comparativo è giustificabile come un fenomeno di iperurbanismo, di cui si hanno altre

slitta così impercettibilmente da un piano semantico all'altro; anche se l'uso del termine εὐτυπος prolunga la metafora del metallo, l'autore attinge anche al lessico del simposio: infatti con l'aggettivo ἐγκέραστον⁸ egli indica l'equilibrio raggiunto attraverso l'intervento del λόγος; esso temperando nell'anima gli effetti del vino che, se lasciato agire senza controllo, potrebbe indurre ad atteggiamenti eccessivamente sfrenati, svolge la stessa funzione dell'acqua che si mescola al vino per stemperarne la forza, secondo le convenzioni del simposio ellenico⁹.

Se nel contesto della *performance* (reale o fittizia)¹⁰ delle *quaestiones* era giustificabile l'uso abbondante di metafore simposiali, la loro presenza in opere di natura e struttura diverse è ancora più indicativa di come la categoria del "simposio" potesse fornire un paradigma di comportamento applicabile anche ad altri ambiti della vita quotidiana. Esse ricorrono ad esempio proprio nell'*Amatorius*, il dialogo dedicato, com'è noto, alla definizione della φιλία nell'ambito matrimoniale¹¹. Se confrontiamo le affermazioni contenute nell'*Introduzione* al IV libro delle *Quaestiones convivales* con le idee espresse in più luoghi dell'*Amatorius* noteremo un forte parallelismo occultato per via della dislocazione di tali concetti nel corso del dialogo, laddove nell'altro testo essi vengono espressi in forma più didascalica e concentrati, si direbbe in forma programmatica, all'inizio dell'opera. La finalità dell'amore, come del simposio, è per Plutarco quella di procurarsi un'amicizia virtuosa¹², mentre chi ama solo per soddisfare il bisogno di piacere fisico prova la stessa sensazione di sazietà di chi si ubriaca bevendo vino puro¹³; la συνουσία soprattutto se coinvolge persone dello stesso sesso ed è quindi orientata verso la conquista di un piacere momentaneo e puramente fisico, senza avere come esito la procreazione e la creazione di una famiglia, risulta nauseante e inutile¹⁴. Se dunque l'unione tra uomo e donna costituisce una σύγκρασις¹⁵, quella di due

tracce nel *corpus* plutarco: cfr. G. GIANGRANDE, 1988, pp. 73-5. Per la frequenza di metafore e similitudini tratte dall'ambito dell'*ars ferraria* cfr. A. I. DRONKERS, 1892, pp. 60-1.

⁸ S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1990, p. 17 accetta la correzione εὐκέραστον del Bernardakis contro ἐγκέραστον dei codici; l'aggettivo in effetti è un *hapax*, ma il verbo ἐγκεράννυμι è ampiamente utilizzato, oltre che nel senso di "versare", anche in quello di "mescolare", solitamente in senso figurato: cfr. ad esempio Lucianus, *Am.* 19 κοινὸν οὖν ἀμφοτέρω γένηι πόθον ἐγκερασαμένη.

⁹ Cfr. anche *Quaest. conv.* 657E.

¹⁰ Su questo tema cfr. F. PORDOMINGO PARDO, 1999.

¹¹ Cfr. R. M.^a AGUILAR, 1990-1991; M. H. T. C. UREÑA PRIETO, 1995; A. G. NIKOLAIDIS, 1997; R. J. GALLÉ CEJUDO, 1999; M. VALVERDE SANCHEZ, 2003; J. BENEKER, 2008.

¹² *Amat.* 750E: "Ἔρως δὲ [...] οὐκ ἐθέλει παραμένειν [...] εἰ καρπὸν ἤθους οἰκεῖον εἰς φιλίαν καὶ ἀρετὴν οὐκ ἀποδίδωσιν.

¹³ *Amat.* 752B: [...] "Ἔρως χωρὶς Ἀφροδίτης, ὥσπερ μέθη χωρὶς οἴνου πρὸς σύκινον πόμα καὶ κρίθινον, ἄκαρπον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀτελὲς τὸ ταρακτικόν ἐστὶ καὶ πλήσιμον καὶ ἀψίκoron.

¹⁴ *Amat.* 756E: ἀνέραστος γὰρ ὁμιλία καθάπερ πείνα καὶ δίψα πλησμονὴν ἔχουσα πέρασ εἰς οὐθὲν ἐξικνεῖται καλόν· ἀλλ' ἢ θεὸς Ἐρωτὶ τὸν κόρον ἀφαιροῦσα τῆς ἡδονῆς φιλότητα ποιεῖ καὶ σύγκρασις. Cfr. R. SCANNAPIECO, 2006, p. 89.

¹⁵ Sul valore di σύγκρασις cfr. H. GÖRGEMANN, 2006, nn. 70 e 423; J. OPSOMER, 2006, p. 228, n. 93; J. BOULOGNE, 2006/2007.

uomini viene al contrario definita ἀκρασία, “un miscuglio mal riuscito”, dove i due elementi risultano malamente uniti tra di loro in maniera violenta e non veramente fusi insieme¹⁶. Pertanto, come nel banchetto accanto al vino bisogna dare spazio al λόγος, così nell’amore ad Afrodite, che costituisce la componente fisica, deve unirsi Eros, la componente spirituale ed affettiva che proietta gli individui interessati da questo sentimento nell’orizzonte di un progetto che non è solo di coppia, ma si realizza completamente nello spazio civico. Al contrario il soddisfacimento di un capriccio prodotto dalla pulsione erotica tra due individui dello stesso sesso finisce per appiattirli entrambi sul momento dell’incontro fisico che, privo di πειθῶ e χάρις, risulta al contrario frutto di violenza, sfrenato e sfrontato¹⁷. La componente più furiosa può essere invece eliminata con il saggio ragionamento e il pudore (σώφρων λογισμός μετ’ αἰδοῦς) che del fuoco della passione lasciano sussistere soltanto la luce e il calore; in questo modo l’eros non è più un terremoto sconvolgente, ma un meraviglioso ammorbidimento dell’anima che produce docilità e amabilità (εὐπέθεια καὶ φιλοφροσύνη)¹⁸. Come avviene anche nel simposio, sono dunque seduzione (πειθῶ) e grazia (χάρις) le qualità femminili che ingenerano una dolce sofferenza nell’uomo, ma conquistano il suo affetto conducendolo alla virtù e all’amore¹⁹; infatti senza queste due componenti il rapporto è tenuto insieme solo dalle briglie della vergogna e della paura²⁰.

¹⁶ Amat. 768E: τὴν μὲν πρὸς ἄρρεν' ἄρρενος ὁμιλίαν, μᾶλλον δ' ἀκρασίαν καὶ ἐπιπίδησιν, εἶποι τις ἄν. Nell’uso del termine ἀκρασία si potrebbe ammettere un voluto gioco di parole dal momento che il greco conosce gli omografi ἀκράσια e ἀκράσια, che rispettivamente significano “cattiva mescolanza” e “incontinenza”; se con il primo si prolunga il riferimento al linguaggio del simposio, con il secondo risulta evidente come agli occhi di Plutarco il rapporto non fondato sull’amore sia segno di ἀκρασία, di intemperanza, propria di chi non è in possesso della σωφροσύνη; è il λόγος allora che deve intervenire controllando l’ἐπιθυμία e convogliandola nell’orizzonte di comportamento ritenuto giusto dalla collettività.

¹⁷ Amat. 751D-E: Ἡ (sc. χάρις) δ' ἀπὸ τῶν ἀρρένων ἀκόντων μετὰ βίας φερομένη καὶ ληλασίας, ἄν δ' ἔκουσιως, σὺν μαλακίᾳ καὶ θηλότητι, “βαίνεσθαι” κατὰ Πλάτωνα “νόμῳ τετράποδος καὶ παιδοσπορείσθαι” παρὰ φύσιν ἐνδιδόντων, ἄχαρις παντάπασι καὶ ἀσχήμων καὶ ἀναφρόδιτος. Per questo testo in parte divergente da quello del Flacelière cfr. R. SCANNAPIECO, 2006, pp. 100-1, in part. n. 76. Per il valore assunto dal termine χάρις nell’opuscolo plutarcheo cfr. M. FOUCAULT, 1984 (2007⁹), pp. 205-9; A. VIVES CUESTA & M. A. SANTAMARÍA ÁLVAREZ, 2007.

¹⁸ Amat. 765C: ὅσοι δὲ σώφρονι λογισμῷ μετ’ αἰδοῦς οἶον ἀτεχνῶς πυρὸς ἀφείλον τὸ μακρὸν, ἀνὴρ δὲ καὶ φῶς ἀπέλιπον τῆ ψυχῆ μετὰ θερμότητος, οὐ σεισμόν, ὡς τις εἶπε, κινούσης ἐπὶ σπέρμα κατ’ ὄλισθον ἀτόμων ὑπὸ λειότητος καὶ γαργαλισμοῦ θλιβομένων, διάχυσιν δὲ θαυμαστήν καὶ γόνιμον [...] καὶ πόρους ἀνοίγουσαν εὐπειθείας καὶ φιλοφροσύνης.

¹⁹ Amat. 758B: οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐστὶν αἰσχρὸν οὐδ' ἀναγκαῖον, ἀλλὰ πειθῶ καὶ χάρις ἐνδιδοῦσα “πόνον ἡδὺν” ὡς ἀληθῶς “κάματόν <τ' εὐκάματον>” ὑφηγεῖται πρὸς ἀρετὴν καὶ φιλίαν; cfr. anche 769C: καὶ γὰρ φιλότεκνοι καὶ φίλανδροι, καὶ τὸ στερετικὸν ὅλως ἐν αὐταῖς, ὡσπερ εὐφύης χώρα καὶ δεκτικὴ φιλίας, οὔτε πειθοῦς οὔτε Χαρίτων ἄμοιρον ὑπόκειται. [...] ἡ φύσις γυναικὶ περιθεῖσα χάριν ὄψεως καὶ φωνῆς πιθανότητα καὶ μορφῆς ἐπαγωγὸν εἶδος, τῆ μὲν ἀκολάστῳ πρὸς ἡδονὴν καὶ ἀπάτην, τῆ δὲ σώφρονι πρὸς εὖνοιαν ἀνδρὸς καὶ φιλίαν μεγάλα συνήργησεν; 767D: στέργεσθαι δὲ καὶ στέργειν ἐνί μοι δοκεῖ γράμματι τοῦ στέγειν παραλλάττον εὐθύς ἐμφαίνειν τὴν ὑπὸ χρόνου καὶ συνηθείας ἀνάγκη μειμιγμένην εὖνοιαν. Χάρις εὐ χρεῖα ἀκομπαγνᾶν τὴν φιλίαν in *Ad. et am.* 51B.

²⁰ Amat. 752C: [...] ἄμοιρον ἐνθέου φιλίας κοινωσίαν, ἣν τῆς ἐρωτικῆς πειθοῦς καὶ χάριτος

Se nell'*Introduzione* al IV libro delle *Quaestiones convivales* Plutarco non sembra tanto interessato a stabilire una netta differenza tra *φιλία* ed *εὔνοια*²¹, rigettando la distinzione, che egli definisce sofisticata, di *φίλος* come *ἐκείνος ὁ ἀμετάπτωτος καὶ βέβαιος* ed equiparandolo all'*εὔνοος*, nell'*Amatorius* invece egli distingue tra i due sentimenti per sottolineare con più forza la superiorità del rapporto matrimoniale rispetto alle relazioni omosessuali²²: se, infatti, l'amore contro natura tra i maschi non rovina l'*εὔνοια* è, però, l'*eros* tra maschio e femmina a condurre alla *φιλία* attraverso la *χάρις*²³; le nozze sono inoltre una *κοινωνία* amorosa che partecipa di una divina amicizia (*ἔνθεος φιλία*, 752C). La *φιλία* appare dunque nell'opera una condizione più stabile, certa e consapevole nei rapporti tra gli individui²⁴, in particolare tra quelli di sesso diverso, laddove l'*εὔνοια* rappresenta lo stadio iniziale di quel rapporto, stadio a cui è condannata a fermarsi la relazione tra persone dello stesso sesso²⁵. Insomma se nell'ambito politico e sociale l'*εὔνοια* può essere identificata grosso modo con la *φιλία*, è in quello matrimoniale che la distinzione si fa netta, perché funzionale al messaggio di fondo dell'opuscolo, che poco spazio vuole lasciare all'esperienza omoerotica, relegata all'età giovanile e destinata ad essere superata. Così si moltiplicano nel testo plutarcoo i riferimenti alla condizione di stabilità che caratterizza questa forma di *φιλία*²⁶, mentre l'*eros* omosessuale è instabile e insicuro²⁷. Come vedremo tra breve, per esprimere il senso di precarietà che accompagna una visione distorta dell'*eros* Plutarco si serve dell'immagine ora della tempesta invernale ora della mescolanza turbolenta di liquidi, mentre per l'amore coniugale ricorre alla metafora marina della bonaccia e a quella della *κρᾶσις* dei liquidi.

ἀπολιπούσης μονοῦ ζυγοῖς καὶ χαλινοῖς ὑπ' αἰσχύνῃς καὶ φόβου μάλα μόλις συνεχομένην ὀρώμεν.

²¹ Per la definizione di *εὔνοια* cfr. Arist., *EN IX* 1166b 30; per la discussione su questi due termini e sul loro valore cfr. S.-T. THEODORSSON, 2007, pp. 191-4; per il valore di *εὔνοια* nell'ambito politico cfr. E. ALEXIOU, 2008. Sugli aspetti assunti dalla *φιλία* nelle opere di Plutarco cfr. J. C. FRAISSE, 1974, pp. 434-41; J. GARCÍA LÓPEZ, 1990; R. M.^a AGUILAR, 2002; R. AUGUSTO MÍGUEZ, 2005.

²² Su questo tema è possibile consultare un'ampia bibliografia: cfr. almeno M. FOUCAULT, 1984 (2007⁹); J. C. CAPRIGLIONE, 1999; M. BRIOSO, 2000; S.-T. THEODORSSON, 2004/2005; B. FEICHTINGER, 2006, part. 252-68; G. D'IPPOLITO, 2007.

²³ *Amat.* 751C-D: εἰ γὰρ ἡ παρὰ φύσιν ὁμιλία πρὸς ἄρρενας οὐκ ἀναιρεῖ τὴν ἐρωτικὴν εὔνοιαν οὐδὲ βλάπτει, πολὺ μᾶλλον εἰκός ἐστι τὸν γυναικῶν καὶ ἀνδρῶν ἔρωτα τῇ φύσει χρώμενον εἰς φιλίαν διὰ χάριτος ἐξικνεῖσθαι.

²⁴ Cfr. anche *Am. mult.* 97B. Plutarco doveva seguire in questo il pensiero di Arist., *EN VIII* 1157b 17-24.

²⁵ Cfr. Arist., *EN VIII* 1155b 33-34; *IX* 1167a 6-8, 13-14.

²⁶ Cfr. *infra*, n. 42.

²⁷ Cfr. le osservazioni di Arist., *EN VIII* 1156 a 6-35; 1156 b 1-12, 17-18. Nell'*Amatorius*, del resto, proprio sul modello fornito da Aristotele, trova posto anche una vera e propria classificazione delle forme di *φιλία* (cap. 16, 758C-D).

Ad esempio, nei *Coniug. praec.* 142F-143A²⁸ Plutarco sostiene che in natura alcuni corpi sono costituiti di elementi distinti (ἐκ διεστῶτων), altri di elementi uniti insieme (ἐκ συναπτομένων), mentre gli esseri viventi costituiscono una unità naturale (ἡνωμένα καὶ συμφυῆ); allo stesso modo il matrimonio fondato sull'amore è un'unità naturale (σχεδὸν οὖν καὶ γάμος ὁ μὲν τῶν ἐρώντων ἡνωμένος καὶ συμφυῆς ἐστίν), quello basato sull'interesse economico o sui figli è un accostamento di elementi giustapposti (ἐκ συναπτομένων), quello di chi dorme nello stesso letto risulta di elementi distinti (ἐκ διεστῶτων), e l'esistenza di costoro può definirsi una coabitazione, non una vita in comune (οὐ συμβιοῦν). Plutarco ritiene, infatti, che nel vero matrimonio, che è una συμβίωσις²⁹, le due componenti costituiscano un'unità completa. Infine, spostandosi dal piano fisico a quello dei rapporti umani egli ritorna ad un esempio tratto dalla realtà naturale che serve a chiarire meglio il concetto di matrimonio: "Come la mescolanza dei liquidi investe, secondo la teoria dei naturalisti, ogni loro parte, allo stesso modo corpi, beni, amicizie e relazioni dei coniugi devono realizzare tra di loro un perfetto amalgama"³⁰.

L'espressione δι' ὄλων ... κρᾶσις, che richiama letteralmente il concetto stoico testimoniato da un lungo frammento del *Περὶ γάμου* di Antipatro di Tarso³¹, ricorre anche nel cap. 24 dell'*Amatorius* (769F), dove di nuovo l'autore stabilisce un confronto tra il comportamento dei liquidi in natura e quello della coppia matrimoniale: "Ma come se dei liquidi si mescolassero tra di loro,

²⁸ Τῶν σωμάτων οἱ φιλόσοφοι τὰ μὲν ἐκ διεστῶτων λέγουσιν εἶναι καθάπερ στόλον καὶ στρατόπεδον, τὰ δὲ ἐκ συναπτομένων ὡς οἰκίαν καὶ ναῦν, τὰ δὲ ἡνωμένα καὶ συμφυῆ καθάπερ ἐστὶ τῶν ζώων ἕκαστον. σχεδὸν οὖν καὶ γάμος ὁ μὲν τῶν ἐρώντων ἡνωμένος καὶ συμφυῆς ἐστίν, ὁ δὲ τῶν διὰ προίκας ἢ τέκνα γαμούντων ἐκ συναπτομένων, ὁ δὲ τῶν συγκαθευδόντων ἐκ διεστῶτων, οὓς συνοικεῖν ἂν τις ἀλλήλοις, οὐ συμβιοῦν νομίσειε. δεῖ δέ, ὡς περὶ οἱ φυσικοὶ τῶν ὑγρῶν λέγουσι δι' ὄλων γενέσθαι τὴν κρᾶσιν, οὕτω τῶν γαμούντων καὶ σώματα καὶ χρήματα καὶ φίλους καὶ οἰκείους ἀναμιχθῆναι δι' ἀλλήλων. Il testo di riferimento è quello di G. MARTANO – A. TIRELLI (edd.), 1990.

²⁹ Cfr. *Coniug. praec.* 138D, 141B, 141D; *Aet. Rom.* 263E; fr. 157, ll. 5-6 SANDBACH. Nell'*Amatorius* l'autore usa il verbo συγκαταβίω (754A) accompagnato dall'espressione μετ' εὐνοίας ad indicare una convivenza basata sul sincero affetto reciproco, e συγκαταζάω (*Amat.* 749D) per esprimere l'intenzione di Ismenodora di sposare Baccone e di convivere con lui. Per Arist., *EN VIII* 1157b 7-19 il rapporto di φιλία si rinsalda vivendo insieme (συζῶντες), mentre tra chi non fa vita in comune (μὴ συζῶντες) si stabilisce solo un rapporto basato sull'eύνοια.

³⁰ Per la traduzione qui utilizzata cfr. G. MARTANO – A. TIRELLI (eds.), 1990, pp. 85-7.

³¹ Cfr. *SVF III* 63 = pp. 254-257 VON ARNIM; la definizione che qui interessa è in particolare a p. 255, ll. 12-16 αἱ μὲν γὰρ ἄλλαι φιλία ἢ φιλοστοργία εἰοικασί ταῖς τῶν ὀσπρίων ἢ τιῶν ἄλλων παραπλησίω κατὰ τὰς παραθέσεις μίξεσιν, αἱ δ' ἄνδρὸς καὶ γυναικὸς ταῖς δι' ὄλων κρᾶσεσιν, ὡς οἶνος ὕδατι καὶ τοῦτο ἐπιμέν<ων> μίγεται δι' ὄλων: "Infatti, le altre forme di amicizia o di tenerezza assomigliano a quei miscugli, come di fagioli o di altri legumi, i quali si formano per aggiunta di elementi, invece l'amore fra l'uomo e la donna è una fusione totale come quella del vino con l'acqua, dove questo permane, ma fondendosi completamente <con l'altra>" (trad. in R. RADICE (ed.), 2002, p. 1475). Gli stoici distinguevano in maniera molto sottile tra mistione, commistione, connestione, mescolanza e fusione di corpi: cfr. *SVF II* 463-481. Per la discussione sulla dipendenza da fonti stoiche delle tesi espresse da Plutarco nell'*Amatorius*, cfr. D. BABUT, 2003 (1969), pp. 127-32; J. BOULOGNE, 2006/2007, pp. 5-6; per le idee stoiche sul matrimonio cfr. D. BABUT, 1963; I. RAMELLI, 2000. Sulla letteratura περὶ γάμου cfr. A. CRAWFORD, 1999.

l'amore produce in principio un ribollire torbido e confuso, poi con il tempo assestandosi e trovando un suo pacato equilibrio, raggiunge la condizione di massima stabilità. Siamo davvero di fronte alla cosiddetta 'unione completa', quella degli amanti; mentre quell'unione che interessa quanti vivono in modi diversi assomiglia agli scontri e agli intrecci degli atomi epicurei, perché subisce collisioni e rimbalzi, ma non produce quella stessa unità di cui invece è artefice Amore quando costituisce una unione matrimoniale³².

L'immagine della mistione dei liquidi che all'inizio ribolle e poi trova il suo equilibrio è coerente con quella più volte ricorrente della tempesta prodotta da Eros: nel cap. 5 (751E) Plutarco afferma ad esempio che Solone era uscito dalle tempeste degli amori maschili ed aveva assestato la propria vita nel porto tranquillo del matrimonio e della filosofia³³; nel cap. 9 (754C) ricorda invece che in un rapporto all'inizio ci sono tempeste, perché Eros si precipita sulle anime come il vento su una nave senza pilota, ma quando i due imparano a comandare e a obbedire reciprocamente, allora il matrimonio va in porto³⁴. Ovviamente doveva agire sulla memoria di Plutarco l'immagine tradizionale di Eros come forza violenta, il vento del famoso frammento di Saffo 47 V.³⁵, di cui egli si ricorderà anche altrove nel testo³⁶ e nel fr. 134 Sandbach³⁷, mentre la nave senza pilota potrebbe richiamare l'immagine platonica dell'anima che ha come nocchiero il νοῦς contenuta in *Phdr.* 247c³⁸.

³² Ἄλλ' ὡσπερ ὑγρῶν πρὸς ἄλληλα συμπεσόντων ποιεῖν τινα δοκεῖ ζέσειν ἐν ἀρχῇ καὶ τάραξιν ὁ ἔρωσ, εἴτα χρόνῳ καταστάς καὶ καθαρθεὶς τὴν βεβαιωτάτην διάθεσιν παρέσχεν. Αὕτη γάρ ἐστιν ὡς ἀληθῶς ἡ δι' ὅλων λεγομένη κρᾶσις, ἡ τῶν ἐρώτων <ἡ δὲ τῶν> ἄλλως συμβιούντων ταῖς κατ' Ἐπίκουρον ἀφαῖς καὶ περιπλοκαῖς ἕοικε, συγκρούσεις λαμβάνουσα καὶ ἀποπηδήσεις, ἐνότητα δ' οὐ ποιοῦσα τοιαύτην, οἶαν Ἔρωσ ποιεῖ γαμικῆς κοινωνίας ἐπιλαβόμενος. La traduzione sopra riportata è mia.

³³ [...] ὡσπερ ἐκ ζάλης καὶ χειμῶνος τῶν παιδικῶν ἐρώτων ἐν τινι γαλήνῃ τῇ περὶ γάμον καὶ φιλοσοφίαν θέμενος τὸν βίον.

³⁴ [...] ἐν ἀρχῇ δὲ κυμαίνει καὶ ζυγομαχεῖ, καὶ μᾶλλον ἂν Ἔρωσ ἐγγένηται, καὶ καθάπερ πνεῦμα κυβερνήτου μὴ παρόντος ἐτάραξε καὶ συνέχεε τὸν γάμον. Per l'uso metaforico dell'immagine del vento e del mare in tempesta ad indicare una condizione di pericolo fisico o morale in Plutarco cfr. A. I. DRONKERS, 1892, pp. 81-4, 132-5.

³⁵ Ἔρωσ δ' ἐτίναξέ / μοι φρένας, ὡς ἄνεμος κὰτ ὄρος δρῦσιν ἐμπέτων che richiama Hom., *Od.* 5.368 e Hes., *Op.* 505-511; appare interessante che in entrambi i contesti la forza del vento sia vista in azione sul mare; il modello esiodeo inoltre chiama in causa Borea, che secondo il mito rapì Oritia. Tale mito è rievocato da Platone in *Phdr.* 229b, nel contesto introduttivo che contiene la famosa descrizione dell'Illisso a cui Plutarco allude all'inizio dell'*Amatorius* (cfr. F. E. BRENK, 1995, 1110 = F. E. BRENK, 1998, 51); questo riferimento mitico potrebbe anche giustificare l'uso ricorrente nell'opera della metafora del vento per indicare l'azione di Eros. Su questo *topos* cfr. anche Sapph., fr. 130 V.; Ibyc., fr. 286 D, vv. 9-13; Verg., *A.* IV 441 – 449.

³⁶ Cfr. anche *Amat.* 759F: “Ἐλθῶν δ' ἐξαπίνης ἄνεμος” σὺν ἔρωτι πολλῶ καὶ πόθῳ ταῦτο τοῦτο τῶν Ταντάλου λεγομένων ταλάντων καὶ τῆς αὐτοῦ ἀρχῆς ἀντάξιον ἐποίησεν. οὕτως ἀσθενῆς καὶ ἀψίκόρος ἐστὶν ἡ τῆς Ἀφροδίτης χάρις Ἔρωτος μὴ ἐπιπνεύσαντος.

³⁷ Τῶν Μενάνδρου δραμάτων ὁμαλῶς ἀπάντων ἐν συνεκτικῶν ἐστὶν, ὁ ἔρωσ, οἶον πνεῦμα κοινὸν διαπεφυκῶς. Il testo di riferimento per i frammenti qui come nei prossimi casi è quello di F. H. SANDBACH, 1987, da cui ci si allontana nella conservazione del participio διαπεφυκῶς rispetto alla correzione διαπεφοιτηκῶς del Bernardakis.

³⁸ Ἡ γὰρ ἀχρώματός τε καὶ ἀσημάτιστος καὶ ἀναφῆς οὐσία ὄντως οὐσα, ψυχῆς κυβερνήτη μόνῳ θεατῇ νῶ [...] τοῦτον ἔχει τὸν τόπον.

L'idea della stabilità prodotta dall'amore coniugale rispetto al turbamento e all'instabilità legati all'esperienza omosessuale fa tutt'uno nell'*Amatorius* con l'esigenza di consolidare e stabilizzare la πάτριος καὶ παλαιὰ πίστις³⁹, minacciata da una visione materialistica ed atea del mondo e dei rapporti tra gli uomini, che Plutarco sembra identificare con il pensiero epicureo⁴⁰, il che giustifica il passaggio dall'immagine dei liquidi mescolati confusamente all'urto caotico degli atomi, che aveva fatto la sua comparsa nel ragionamento plutarco già al cap. 19 (765C)⁴¹. La tradizione, infatti, è per Plutarco la solida base che sta a fondamento dell'εὐσέβεια, ma se essa viene turbata e scossa in qualche suo punto, allora diventa instabile (ἐπισφαλῆς) e sospetta⁴². In questo caso è possibile ipotizzare che nell'uso dei verbi ταραττω e σαλεύω all'immagine della tempesta marina si sovrapponga quella del sisma prodotto dal pensiero atomistico degli epicurei⁴³.

La definizione dell'unione coniugale come κῶσις compare anche nel fr. 167 Sandbach (= Stob., IV 28.8, V, p. 678 H.), appartenente all'epistola περὶ φιλίας di Plutarco e che recita: “γάμος γὰρ ἀπὸ μὲν φιλίας διττῆς κράσεως βελτίων, ἑτέρως δὲ σφαλερός” (“È migliore il matrimonio che nasca dalla mescolanza di una doppia amicizia, in caso diverso è fragile”⁴⁴). La testimonianza permette di ipotizzare che nella lettera sull'amicizia trovasse posto in qualche modo anche la riflessione sulla migliore forma di matrimonio, che, come si è visto, nell'*Amatorius* era considerato l'espressione più nobile di una φιλία conseguita attraverso l'ἀρετή. Se l'aggettivo σφαλερός richiama l'ἐπισφαλῆς di *Amat.* 756B, sottolineando di nuovo l'instabilità a livello individuale e sociale di un γάμος che non si fonda sulla φιλία, sulla base di un altro luogo dell'*Amatorius* si potrebbe ipotizzare che con κῶσις Plutarco volesse alludere qui come in *Amat.* cap. 24 (769F) e in *Coniug. praec.* 143A, al modello offerto dalle giuste porzioni di acqua e vino stabilite dalla tradizione del simposio⁴⁵.

Infatti nel cap. 7 (752E) Pisias, difensore dell'amore omosessuale, criticando la scelta da parte di Ismenodora, più grande e più ricca, di sposare l'ancora adolescente Baccone, sostiene che è invece accettabile il matrimonio tra un giovane e una donna povera e di umili origini, perché questa unione decreta la superiorità del giovane come quando il vino si mescola all'acqua (μέγα γάρ, ἂν ἐλαφρᾶ καὶ λιτῆ γυναικὶ μαιρακίου συνελθόντος εἰς ταῦτόν ἢ κῶσις οἴνου δίκην ἐπικρατήσῃ). Il matrimonio appare come un amalgama di

³⁹ Cfr. F. FRAZIER, 1999; F. FRAZIER, 2005; A. I. OSORIO VIDAURRE, 1991.

⁴⁰ Cfr. su questo tema A. BARIGAZZI, 1988; R. SCANNAPIECO, 2006; G. SANTESE, 2007.

⁴¹ Cfr. n. 18.

⁴² *Amat.* 756B: Ἀρκεῖ γὰρ ἡ πάτριος καὶ παλαιὰ πίστις [...] Ἄλλ' ἔδρα τις αὕτη καὶ βάσις ὑφεσιώσα κοινὴ πρὸς εὐσέβειαν, εἰάν ἐφ' ἑνὸς ταραττήται καὶ σαλεύηται τὸ βέβαιον αὐτῆς καὶ νενομισμένον, ἐπισφαλῆς γίνεται πᾶσα καὶ ὑποπτος.

⁴³ Cfr. R. SCANNAPIECO, 2006, p. 96, n. 57.

⁴⁴ La traduzione del frammento è di R. GIANNATTASIO ANDRIA, in AA.VV., Plutarco, *I frammenti*, in corso di stampa.

⁴⁵ Cfr. *Quaest. conv.* 657E. In *Quaest. conv.* 621 C-D Plutarco utilizza il paragone con il vino mescolato all'acqua che ne stempera gli eccessi per ricordare che nel convivio occorre mescolare insieme momenti seri ad altri più leggeri.

acqua e vino in cui è naturalmente il vino, cioè l'elemento maschile, ad imporre e a indirizzare la vita coniugale, pur nell'armonia dell'unione⁴⁶. Se l'opinione di Pisia è contestata ampiamente dallo stesso Plutarco⁴⁷, che non vede nulla di male in una coppia in cui la donna è molto più grande dell'uomo a patto ovviamente che ci sia l'amore, la similitudine dell'unione matrimoniale con il vino mescolato all'acqua doveva essere invece da lui accolta⁴⁸, anche perché essa aveva un autorevole antecedente in un passo del IV libro delle *Leggi* di Platone, 773c-d, che potrebbe essere individuato come testo di riferimento per queste sue affermazioni: il filosofo, infatti, osserva che bisogna evitare per il bene della città matrimoni tra persone dello stesso rango sociale anche se "non è facile comprendere che una città deve essere mescolata come se fosse un cratere, dove il vino puro, appena versato, ribolle, ma una volta temperato da un altro dio sobrio, realizza una bella unione e produce una bevanda buona e moderata" (οὐ γὰρ ῥάδιον ἐννοεῖν ὅτι πόλιν εἶναι δεῖ δίκην κρατῆρος κεκραμένην, οὗ μαινόμενος μὲν οἶνος ἐγκεχυμένος ζεῖ, κολαζόμενος δὲ ὑπὸ νήφοντος ἑτέρου θεοῦ καλὴν κοινωνίαν λαβὼν ἀγαθὸν πῶμα καὶ μέτριον ἀπεργάζεται)⁴⁹. L'uso dell'espressione δίκην κρατῆρος sembra riecheggiata da Plutarco in οἴνου δίκην⁵⁰ mentre l'immagine del bollire iniziale e del successivo equilibrio raggiunto nell'unione matrimoniale doveva essere presente alla sua mente al cap. 24 (769F) dove egli definisce ζέσις il primo stadio dell'incontro tra liquidi e dove la sequenza γαμικῆς κοινωνίας ἐπιλαβόμενος sembra un riecheggiamento del platonico κοινωνίαν λαβὼν.

Al di là delle consonanze sul piano linguistico, proviamo ora a rileggere le affermazioni contenute nel cap. 24⁵¹ alla luce di questo luogo delle *Leggi*: l'ipotesto di riferimento più evidente è senza dubbio il Platone di *Phdr.* 251c⁵²,

⁴⁶ Malgrado si possa cogliere nell'*Amatorius* una visione per certi versi più moderna del rapporto coniugale (cfr. P. WALCOT, 1999; C. PATTERSON, 1999; S. POMEROY, 2002), è probabile che Plutarco non si spingesse tanto lontano da ammettere addirittura l'uguaglianza dei due individui nella coppia; sono numerose al contrario le tracce della volontà da parte dell'autore di sottolineare la superiorità dell'elemento maschile, secondo un'ottica molto tradizionale; in questo senso assume un certo rilievo il ridimensionamento a cui sembra sottoporre proprio nell'*Amatorius* i culti di Iside, che al contrario attribuivano alla donna un ruolo addirittura centrale nella coppia: cfr. R. SCANNAPIECO, 2007, p. 433, n. 43. Per l'idea che la donna deve essere specchio dell'uomo cfr. M. REIG CALPE, 2007. Cfr. anche *infra*, n. 48.

⁴⁷ Cfr. *Amat.* 753C-754E.

⁴⁸ Cfr. anche *Coniug. praec.* 142E. La κοινωνία del matrimonio si preserva attraverso l'affetto che deve essere ricambiato reciprocamente (*Coniug. praec.* 140E). In *Coniug. praec.* 140F infine si auspica anche la messa in comune del patrimonio; Plutarco in questa occasione fa di nuovo riferimento alla mescolanza di acqua e vino: come nel banchetto acqua e vino producono un miscuglio (κράμα) che si continua a chiamare vino, così il patrimonio ottenuto dall'unione dei patrimoni di uomo e donna appartiene comunque al marito, anche se quello della donna dovesse essere più sostanzioso.

⁴⁹ La traduzione riportata è mia. A questo passo platonico si fa riferimento anche altrove nel *corpus* plutarcheo: cfr. [*Lib. ed.*] 15A; *An seni resp.* 790F-791B; fr. 210 SANDBACH.

⁵⁰ Per l'uso avverbiale di δίκην seguito dal genitivo cfr. B. WEISSENBERGER, 1994 (1895), p. 25.

⁵¹ Per il testo cfr. *supra*, n. 32.

⁵² Ζεῖ τε καὶ ἀγανακτεῖ καὶ γαργαλίζεται φύουσα τὰ πτερὰ. H. GÖRGEMANN, 2006, p. 139,

in cui si afferma che l'anima di recente iniziata alla verità quando sulla terra incontra la bellezza in un primo momento ribolle (ζεῖν) per il prurito e l'irritazione che essa produce mentre le fa spuntare quelle ali che la spingono verso l'alto. Il linguaggio utilizzato da Plutarco risulta ancora una volta polisemico: i sostantivi ζέσις e τάραξις potrebbero alludere di nuovo all'ondeggiamento e all'instabilità riattivando la metafora marina⁵³ che abbiamo visto operante in *Amat.* 751E e 754C o quella del terremoto di 765C; in medicina tuttavia essi indicano il primo un'alterazione della temperatura corporea a causa di una malattia o lo stato di agitazione dovuto all'ira⁵⁴ e il secondo un'inflammazione degli occhi⁵⁵; con τάραξις poi l'autore voleva forse indicare anche lo stato di turbamento psicologico in cui cade chi è vittima di Eros (il τό μανικόν), che è considerato un'inflammazione, φλεγμονή⁵⁶, e una malattia, νόσος⁵⁷; il *topos* dell'amore-fiamma e dell'amore-malattia percorre del resto l'intero opuscolo ed è declinato in tutte le sue varianti⁵⁸, non ultima quella relativa alla liquefazione dei metalli⁵⁹, che come si è visto è utilizzata da Plutarco in relazione al tema della φιλία in *Quaest. conv.* 659E-660C. Tuttavia nel contesto del cap. 24 la presenza di ζέσις, alla luce del passo delle *Leggi* sopra citato, avvalorà l'ipotesi che i due liquidi che si incontrano e si fondono siano proprio il vino e l'acqua, anche in virtù della presenza dell'espressione κρᾶσις τῶν ὄλων che, come si è già ricordato, in ambiente stoico indicava una forma completa di fusione, un esempio della quale era proprio la combinazione di acqua e vino. Plutarco del resto stabilisce una

n. 57, indica questo luogo platonico in riferimento ad *Amat.* 752A. Per i modelli platonici tenuti presenti da Plutarco nella sua riflessione sull'*eros* cfr. H. MARTIN, 1984; F. E. BRENK, 1988 = F. E. BRENK, 1998, pp. 13-27; A. CRAWFORD, 1999; A. BILLAULT, 1999; J. BOULOGNE, 1999; J. M. RIST, 2001; P. GILBERT BARBERÀ, 2007, pp. 123-32; F. FRAZIER, 2005/2006; F. FRAZIER, 2008, pp. VII-XLVI.

⁵³ Cfr. ad esempio Hdt., 7.188; Pl., *Phd.* 113a.

⁵⁴ Cfr. Gal., *Diff. febr.* II, in *MedG*, vol. VII, p. 283, l. 7 KÜHN; Hsch., *Lex.*, vol. I, p. 255 SCHMIDT, glossa il sostantivo con θερμότης. Il verbo ζέω è utilizzato anche per indicare il ribollire delle passioni: cfr. almeno S., *O.C.* 434; Pl., *Cra.* 419e, *R.* 440c; Arist., *de An.* 403A 31; *AP* 7. 385,7. Un'interessante testimonianza dell'uso del termine ζέσις in ambito amoroso è inoltre fornita dall'epigramma d'apertura del V libro dell'*Antologia Palatina*, che raccoglie appunto epigrammi erotici: l'anonimo autore sostiene di voler suscitare nei giovani un "saggio ribollire del cuore" e per questo come inizio della sua opera prenderà Eros, che appicca il fuoco alle parole: Νέοις ἀνάπτων καρδίας σοφὴν ζέσιν, / ἀρχὴν Ἐρωτα τῶν λόγων ποιήσομαι · / πυρσὸν γὰρ οὗτος ἐξανάπτει τοῖς λόγοις.

⁵⁵ Cfr. [Gal.], *Intr.*, in *MedG*, vol. XIV, p. 768 KÜHN.

⁵⁶ Cfr. fr. 137 SANDBACH συστέλλεται δὲ καὶ φλεγμονὴ ἐπιθυμίας παρεχούσης τραχὺ κίνημα.

⁵⁷ Cfr. fr. 135 SANDBACH οἱ μὲν γὰρ νόσον τὸν ἔρωτα οἱ δ' ἐπιθυμίαν οἱ δὲ φιλίαν οἱ δὲ μανίαν οἱ δὲ θεῖόν τι κίνημα τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ δαιμόνιον, οἱ δ' ἄντικρυς θεὸν ἀναγορεύουσιν; cfr. anche *Amat.* 755E. Per il rapporto amore - malattia cfr. M. CIAVOLELLA, 1976; per il carattere ambivalente di *eros* nel pensiero plutarco cfr. J. OPSOMER, 2006, pp. 208-20, in part. 219-20.

⁵⁸ Per il fuoco d'amore cfr. *Amat.* 752D, 753A, 758D-759B, 759F, 762C, 764B-D, 765B-C, 766A-B, 767B, 767F; fr. 135, 137, 138 SANDBACH; per l'amore νόσος cfr. invece *Amat.* 755E. Sul *topos* della fiamma d'amore cfr. almeno G. SPATAFORA, 2006. Per l'uso traslato di termini afferenti ai campi semantici della malattia - sanità e del fuoco cfr. A. I. DRONKERS, 1892, rispettivamente pp. 10-4 e 138-41.

⁵⁹ Cfr. *Amat.* 758C, 761C, 762C, 766A, 767E.

stretta relazione tra ubriacatura e innamoramento sia in *Quaest. conv.* 622D⁶⁰, sia nello stesso *Amatorius*: infatti nel cap. 16, dopo aver elencato nelle orme platoniche le varie forme di mania dovute a malattia, all'ispirazione poetica, a Bacco e ad Ares, Plutarco cita quella erotica attribuendole degli attributi dionisiaci⁶¹. Occorre infine sottolineare come l'opposizione presente nel testo platonico tra i participi *μαινόμενος* e *κολαζόμενος* in riferimento al vino⁶² sia riproposta da Plutarco nell'*Amatorius* nell'opposizione tra una sessualità solo istintuale e rivolta alla soddisfazione del piacere personale, che è considerata *παράνομος*⁶³ e che l'autore identifica con l'amore omosessuale da lui relegato all'età giovanile, e quella temperata dal *λόγος*, la forma più alta di *φιλία*, in quanto convoglia l'istinto e l'impulso sessuale maschile verso la procreazione e la costruzione di una famiglia, segnando il passaggio dell'individuo alla maturità, che lo vede ora perfettamente e legittimamente inserito nell'intera comunità, di cui condivide da buon cittadino valori religiosi e culturali⁶⁴. Anche in questo Plutarco doveva seguire il Platone del III libro delle *Leggi* (783a) il quale sostiene che le tre *ἐπιθυμῖαι* del mangiare, del bere e del sesso vanno indirizzate al meglio e contenute attraverso *φόβος*, *νόμος* e *ἀληθῆς λόγος*.

Una stretta relazione tra le funzioni di Afrodite e di Dioniso e quindi di *ἔρως* e di *οἶνος* è poi sottolineata da Plutarco nel *Septem sapientium convivium*, 156C-D⁶⁵: qui egli specifica che Afrodite non è solo, come solitamente si

⁶⁰ Ἐλέχθη δὲ καὶ ὅτι τῷ μεθύειν τὸ ἐρᾶν ὁμοίον ἐστίν.

⁶¹ Cfr. *Amat.* 759A: *λείπεται δὲ τῆς ἐξαλλαγῆς ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ καὶ παρατροπῆς οὐκ ἀμαυρὸν οὐδ' ἡσυχαιὸν, [...] μόριον [...]* “Τί<ς καλλί>καρπον θύρσον ἀνασεΐει θεῶν” τὸν φιλητικὸν τοῦτον περὶ παιδᾶς ἀγαθοῦς καὶ σώφρονας γυναῖκας ἐνθουσιασμὸν πολὺ δριμύτατον ὄντα καὶ θερμότερον; Di una ἐρωτικῆ θερμότης Plutarco parla anche al cap. 18 (762D): cfr. su questo tema L. VAN DER STOCKT, 1992, pp. 110-7; R. CABALLERO SÁNCHEZ, 1998; L. VAN DER STOCKT, 1999.

⁶² Cfr. anche Ath. XIV 613a-c. Per l'uso di *μαινόμενος* in riferimento al vino puro cfr. anche E., *Cyc.* 617 e le osservazioni di A. MERIANI, 1996. L'anonimo autore del trattato *Sul sublime* (32,7) considera il passo platonico di *Lg.* 773c-d un esempio tra gli altri degli eccessi in cui poteva cadere il filosofo che, nell'uso delle metafore, si dimostra così “un poeta davvero non sobrio”.

⁶³ Per il carattere “abnorme” dei rapporti vissuti solo sul piano fisico e pericolosi per il corpo sociale tutto, perché diffondono il culto del piacere e del materialismo cfr. ad esempio *Amat.* 765B e le osservazioni di R. SCANNAPIECO, 2006, pp. 95-6.

⁶⁴ Cfr. G. SISSA, 2003, pp. 126-9; G. TSOUVALA, 2008, pp. 703-4; P. BARATA DIAS, 2007.

⁶⁵ Οὐκοῦν οὐδὲ τῆς Ἀφροδίτης ἔργον ἐστὶ συνουσία καὶ μίξις, οὐδὲ τοῦ Διονύσου μέθη καὶ οἶνος, ἀλλ' ἦν ἐμποιοῦσι διὰ τούτων φιλοφροσύνην καὶ πόθον καὶ ὁμιλίαν ἡμῖν καὶ συνήθειαν πρὸς ἀλλήλους; [...] ἔστι δὲ τῆς μὲν πρὸς γυναῖκας ἀνδρῶν ὁμοφροσύνης καὶ φιλίας δημιουργὸς ἡ Ἀφροδίτη, τοῖς σώμασιν ὑφ' ἡδονῆς ἅμα συμμιγνύουσα καὶ συντήκουσα τὰς ψυχὰς; τοῖς δὲ πολλοῖς καὶ μὴ πάνυ συνήθεισι μὴδ' ἄγαν γνωρίμοις ὁ Διόνυσος ὥσπερ ἐν πυρὶ τῷ οἴνῳ μαλάσσωσιν τὰ ἴθη καὶ ἀνυγραῖνων ἀρχὴν τινα συγκράσεως πρὸς ἀλλήλους καὶ φιλίας ἐνδίδωσιν. [...] οὐδὲν ἔργον ἐστὶν οἶμαι κύλικος οὐδ' οἰνοχόης, ἀλλ' αἱ Μοῦσαι καθάπερ κρατῆρα νηφάλιον ἐν μέσῳ προθέμεναι τὸν λόγον, ᾧ πλείστον ἡδονῆς ἅμα καὶ παιδιᾶς καὶ σπουδῆς ἔνεστιν, ἐγείρουσι τούτῳ καὶ κατάρδουσι καὶ διαχέουσι τὴν φιλοφροσύνην, ἐώσαι τὰ πολλὰ τὴν οἰνοχόην ἀτρέμα κείσθαι “κρατῆρος ὑπερθεν”, ὅπερ ἀπηγόρευεν Ἡσίοδος ἐν τοῖς πίνειν μᾶλλον ἢ διαλέγεσθαι δυναμένους. Il testo di riferimento è quello di F. LO CASCIO (ed.), 1997.

intende, l'unione sessuale (συνουσία καὶ μῆξις) e Dioniso non è solo l'atto di bere del vino (μέθη καὶ οἶνος); essi sono al contrario qualcosa di più: affetto (φιλοφροσύνη), desiderio (πόθος), incontro (δμίλια) e frequentazione (συνήθεια πρὸς ἀλλήλους) che si realizzano rispettivamente attraverso l'unione amorosa e il vino⁶⁶. Afrodite, infatti, è δημιουργός di concordia (δομοφροσύνη) e amore (φιλία) tra uomini e donne, in quanto unisce e fonde (σμμειγνύουσα καὶ συντήκουσα)⁶⁷ le anime attraverso il piacere; Dioniso invece ammorbidisce e inumidisce con il vino (μαλάσσω καὶ ἀνυγραίνων) il carattere dei πολλοί, producendo comunione (σύγκρασις) e amicizia (φιλία) tra individui non legati da particolari vincoli, ma da una certa conoscenza. Questa azione è infine paragonata come al solito a quella della fiamma sui metalli, come suggerisce anche l'uso dei verbi συντήκω e μαλάσσω⁶⁸.

Se i πολλοί hanno bisogno del vino per stabilire un rapporto di amabile affetto (φιλοφροσύνη) mentre la coppia dell'amore, ai saggi basta solo il λόγος che le Muse offrono loro come un cratere sobrio (νηφάλιος), facendo sì che il mestolo rimanga inutilizzato sopra il cratere. Plutarco cita per suffragare la sua affermazione l'autorità di Hes., *Op.* 744, il quale sostiene appunto che se non si è in grado di conversare, ma si pensa solo a bere, non si riesce a tenere mai fermo il mestolo con cui si attingeva il vino dal cratere⁶⁹. Nel fr. 93 Sandbach egli fornisce però una interpretazione diversa della prescrizione esiodea ora intesa nel senso che i saggi non antepongono l'interesse personale a quello comune; il cratere, infatti, è disposto al centro della tavola, mentre i commensali si servono attingendo ognuno singolarmente dal mestolo⁷⁰.

Questa seconda interpretazione del testo esiodeo se da un lato testimonia la libertà con cui il materiale antico veniva piegato da Plutarco alle esigenze del suo ragionamento, è dall'altro coerente con la concezione della φιλία e dell'ἔρω

⁶⁶ Si nota nel ragionamento plutarcoo la volontà di interpretare il testo in chiave moraleggiante.

⁶⁷ Con σμμειγνύω si indica proprio l'unione sessuale; Ar., *Av.* 700 attribuisce questa operazione ad Eros.

⁶⁸ Il verbo συντήκω compare due volte nel discorso di Aristofane contenuto nel *Simposio* platonico (192d – e) per indicare la condizione di completa compenetrazione delle anime che gli amanti si augurano di raggiungere; che anche Platone stesse pensando alla fusione dei metalli è testimoniato dal riferimento ad Efesto, il cui intervento gli innamorati auspicano per essere saldati insieme completamente. Questa immagine ritorna in *Amat.* cap. 21 (767D-E) dove συντήκω compare insieme a συνάγω (cfr. il testo *infra*, n. 73) proprio sul modello platonico sopra indicato; in Platone lo stesso verbo è accompagnato da σμψουσάω e συνέρχομαι. Il ricorso a termini composti con la preposizione σύν, anche sul piano retorico, serve a Plutarco per sottolineare la comunione spirituale che caratterizza la φιλία e, in particolare, il rapporto coniugale; per questi aspetti della tecnica retorica plutarco cfr. R. GIANNATTASIO ANDRIA, 2000. Per μαλάσσω cfr. in Plutarco, *Quaest. conv.* 619A, 660C, 802B; anche questo verbo è utilizzato in greco in riferimento all'ambito della metallurgia (cfr. Pl., *R.* 411b; Arist., *Mete.* 383a 31).

⁶⁹ Il verso completo di Esiodo è μηδέ ποτ' οἰνοχόν τιθέμεν κρητήρος ὑπερθεν.

⁷⁰ Τοιοῦτον οὖν καὶ τὸ ἐπιτιθέναί τῳ κρατήρι τὴν οἰνοχόν συμβολικὸν παίδευμα· τουτέστι μὴ ἐπίπροσθεν ἄγειν τοῦ κοινού τὸ ἴδιον. Per il κρατήρ ἐν μέσῳ come πηγὴ φιλοφροσύνης, che è lo scopo del simposio, cfr. anche Plu., *Alex. Magn. fort.* 329C; *Def. or.* 421A; *Quaest. conv.* 615A–B, 643B.

che emergono rispettivamente dall'*Introduzione* al IV libro delle *Quaestiones convivales* e dall'*Amatorius*. In entrambi i testi, infatti, si sottolinea l'aspetto comunitario e collettivo, e quindi di rilievo a livello sociale, del simposio da un lato e dell'amore coniugale dall'altro⁷¹; le due esperienze vanno vissute non in maniera egoistica e individualistica, ma nell'ottica della condivisione e della μετριότης⁷²: nel caso dell'amore coniugale Plutarco osserva, infatti, che nelle prime fasi della vita in comune i due componenti della coppia distingueranno tra "ciò che è mio" e "ciò che mio non è", ma poi condideranno tutto e diventeranno una sola anima, secondo il proverbio "tutto è comune tra gli amici"⁷³.

Se nel *Septem sapientium convivium* è prerogativa solo del saggio quella di realizzare la φιλοφροσύνη senza bisogno del vino, ma solo con le Muse, cioè con il λόγος⁷⁴, nell'*Amatorius* Plutarco sembra superare questa posizione eccessivamente intellettualistica e austera che parrebbe relegare il sapiente in un mondo privo di piacere e riservare il vino ai πολλοί che non sono in grado di trarre beneficio dal retto uso della ragione, per proporre una forma più "umana" e più concreta di saggezza, in cui l'istinto non viene del tutto cancellato o mortificato, ma continua a sussistere e ad esprimersi, seppure temperato dal λόγος⁷⁵; la κοινωνία έρωτική risulta pertanto ora l'espressione più alta di una formazione intellettuale e spirituale che non nega le passioni del corpo, ma ne placa gli ardori con l'aiuto della ragione⁷⁶ e della cultura, ovvero del rispetto della tradizione e trova espressione in uno stile di vita equilibrato e decoroso⁷⁷.

⁷¹ Cfr. anche G. TSOUVALA, 2008, pp. 713-6. Plutarco sembra condividere il pensiero di Arist., *EN VIII* 1155 a 22-23, secondo cui la φιλία tiene unite le città.

⁷² Cfr. *Quaest. conv.* 615A. Secondo Pl., R. 462c la concordia dello stato nasce proprio quando i cittadini sono d'accordo nel dire "questo è mio, questo non è mio"; quando tale identità di interessi viene meno si apre la strada pericolosa verso la discordia civile.

⁷³ *Amat.* 767D: Ὡι δ' ἄν Ἔρωσ έπισκήψη <τ' ἄφνω> και έπιπνεύσει, πρῶτον μὲν εκ τῆς Πλατωνικής πόλεως "τό έμόν" ξζει και "τό ούκ έμόν" ού γάρ ἄπλως "κοινά τὰ φίλων" <οὐδ' έρώντων>, ἄλλ' οἱ τοῖς σώμασιν όρίζόμενοι τὰς ψυχὰς βίᾳ συνάγουσι και συντήκουσι, μήτε βουλόμενοι δύ'είναι μήτε νομίζοντες. Cfr. anche *Ad. et am.* 65A; *Frat. am.* 490E. Il modello di riferimento è Arist., *EN VIII* 1162a 23.

⁷⁴ Per la svalutazione plutarchea del ruolo del vino nel percorso verso la filosofia cfr. le riflessioni di M. DONÀ, 2007, pp. 49-50.

⁷⁵ Il *Septem sapientium convivium* viene datato al decennio 80-90 d.C. da K. ZIEGLER, 1965, p. 294, mentre l'*Amatorius* per la complessità della sua struttura narrativa e per la profondità della riflessione è considerata un'opera della maturità, se non addirittura una delle ultime composte dall'autore (cfr. R. FLACELIÈRE, 1980, pp. 7-11; C. P. JONES, 1966, in part. p. 72, dove l'opuscolo è datato agli anni successivi al 96 d.C.).

⁷⁶ Cfr. anche *Coniug. praec.* 138F: [...] τὸν ἀπὸ σώματος και ὥρας ὀξύν έρωτα τῶν νεογάμων ἀναφλεγόμενον δεῖ μη διαρκή μηδὲ βέβαιον νομίζειν, ἄν μη περι τὸ ήθος ιδρυθεῖς και τοῦ φρονοῦντος ἀψάμενος έμψυχον λάβη διάθεσιν.

⁷⁷ Plutarco polemizza con l'etica stoica, che predicava la svalutazione totale delle passioni, mentre tendeva a rivalutare la μετριοπάθεια peripatetica: su questi temi cfr. D. BABUT, 2003 (1969), pp. 359-72; F. BECCHI, 2005; F. FERRARI, 2008; sul concetto di "medietà" nel campo della morale cfr. A. BELLANTI, 2003; A. BELLANTI, 2007, pp. 223-64. In particolare, per il ragionamento che si è fin qui svolto, risulta di un certo rilievo che in *Virt. mor.* 451C-D nel sostenere che quanti temono le passioni non le eliminano del tutto, ma le moderano (κεραυνύουσι), proprio come

Il costante ricorso nei testi analizzati ad immagini tratte dall'ambito simposiale e al lessico ad esso relativo non rientra soltanto nella più generale tendenza di Plutarco a creare un linguaggio polisemico in cui lo slittamento del significato di un termine da un piano metaforico all'altro contribuisce ad accrescere la densità concettuale della sua prosa. Al contrario, il riferimento all'istituzione del simposio si fonda su solide basi ideologiche facilmente condivisibili e per questo motivo di più facile impatto sui destinatari delle opere. Pertanto nell'*Amatorius* l'immagine della κρᾶσις di acqua e vino utilizzata per rappresentare la riuscita unione matrimoniale tra uomo e donna, anche in virtù degli autorevoli modelli filosofici di riferimento che si possono individuare in controtelaio (platonici innanzitutto), poteva essere funzionale al messaggio che Plutarco voleva veicolare nel segno di una complessiva difesa delle tradizioni culturali e dei più genuini costumi ellenici. Infatti il simposio, che agli occhi dei greci era da sempre il luogo in cui i desideri e le pulsioni naturali (il mangiare, il bere, il sesso), attraverso le fasi di un rituale ormai codificato e riconosciuto dall'intera società⁷⁸, subivano una decantazione in nome dell'ideale estetico ed etico del τὸ μέτριον, veniva ad essere il termine di paragone più efficace a rappresentare, anche sul piano formale, il giusto equilibrio tra corpo e spirito, tra istinto e ragione, tra φύσις e παιδεία, che è in ultima analisi il modello di vita proposto da Plutarco nel suo opuscolo e probabilmente nell'intero *corpus* delle sue opere.

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chi teme di ubriacarsi non rovescia il vino, Plutarco ricorra proprio alla similitudine con l'ambito del simposio e al lessico relativo; in 452B inoltre osserva che se si stirpassero tutte le passioni la ragione diventerebbe inerte come un nocchiero quando gli viene a mancare il vento; Plutarco ricorre di nuovo alla similitudine tra le passioni e il vento, che, come si è visto, è utilizzata anche nell'*Amatorius*.

⁷⁸ Cfr. J. MARTIN, 1931; H. LICHT, 1969²; H. LICHT, 2006, pp. 103-16; M. VETTA, 1983; L. E. ROSSI, 1983; F. LISSARRAGUE, 1989; P. SCHMITT-PANTEL, 1987; O. MURRAY, 1989; O. MURRAY, 2007²; D. MUSTI, 2001; L. DELLA BIANCA & S. BETA, 2002, p. 40.

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TRAGEDY AND PHILANTHROPIA IN THE *LIVES OF DEMOSTHENES AND CICERO*

MARTA VÁRZEAS
University of Oporto

Abstract

The concept of *philanthropia* is often associated with that of compassion and characterizes, ideally, the relations between the powerful and those who are found to be in a situation of fragility and impotence. The intention of this study is to show how, in the *Lives of Demosthenes and Cicero*, this notion of *philanthropia* takes on a tragic tone, one which is reinforced by the allusions to Sophocles's *Antigone*, a play which seems to serve as an ethical frame of reference for the evaluation of the protagonists' *ethos* in crucial moments of their lives.

In using the term φιλόανθρωπος to characterize the act that cost Prometheus terrible divine punishment, Aeschylus, or whoever composed the drama *Prometheus Bound*, defined the essence of the concept of φιλανθρωπία as a disinterested feeling of friendship, or love of men, born of the compassion for man's situation of abandonment and weakness¹. Prometheus's act, since it is also a gesture of rebellion against the gods, valorizes the human race, not only because it impedes its destruction by Zeus and makes the light of civilization possible, but principally because his altruism and compassion confer a certain dignity upon mortals. Coming from a divinity whose stature is different from that of the gods of Olympus, *philanthropia* is not, in its mythical origin, a divine sentiment that humans are obliged to imitate, or it would not invite punishment. But still it seems, on the human plane, to be a fundamental condition for the transformation of chaos into order, barbarity into civilization. This conception of *philanthropia* as a mark of civilization is one of the meanings of the word and its cognates in Plutarch, as we know. It is not, however, the only one, though it would seem to me that this is one of the fundamental semantic vectors for the comprehension of this concept². One other sense which the word takes on in Plutarch and which is truly central in his moral and political thinking could be translated as "kindness", "generosity" or even "clemency". In this sense it has to do with the relationship between governors and the governed, with the attitudes towards defeated enemies and towards those who are found to be in a situation of fragility and powerlessness. In this particular sense, the concept of *philanthropia* already had a long history in the Greek poetic tradition, even though the use of the word before the Hellenistic period was rare. This is a history that perhaps begins with the *Homeric Poems*, but whose

¹ Cf. *Pr.* 240 sqq.

² On the various meanings the word recovers in Plutarch, see H. M. MARTIN JR., 1961; S.-T. TEODORSSON, 2007; J. R. FERREIRA, 2008. Another word which is central in Plutarch's thought and sometimes has a similar meaning is *praotes*. Cf. H. M. MARTIN JR., 1960 and J. DE ROMILLY, 1979.

truly fertile period of exploration and development occurs in the tragedy of the 5th century B.C.

Indeed, if it is in *Prometheus Bound* that the word, in its adjectival form appears, as far as we know, for the first time, there is no doubt that Sophoclean tragedy presents us with a variety of characters whose attitudes and actions can be translated as *philanthropia*, a feeling of understanding and kindness to others. This feeling is ultimately based on the recognition of that which in them carries the mark of the human condition and allows for a vision of the other as close and similar. This *philanthropia*, this humanity, always associated with the capacity for compassion, defines characters such as Theseus in *Oedipus at Colonus*, Neoptolemus in *Philoctetes*, Deianira in *The Trachiniae*, Ulysses in *Ajax*, or, on the negative side, Creon of *Oedipus at Colonus* and *Antigone*.

The evocation of Greek tragedy in relation to this subject in Plutarch does not derive from a simple association of ideas. Of course, we know that the biographer knew the history of the tragedy well. This assumption rests upon the various allusions and citations of passages, characters and playwrights from Greek tragedy that we find in his oeuvre, as well as from the tragic tone in the narration of some of the *Lives*³. This fact that, in the first instance, attests to the importance of literary education in the Hellenistic *paideia*, is also symptomatic of the prominence that the theatre still possessed in the cultural life of the 1st century AD. And if the moralist Plutarch, influenced by Plato, does not acknowledge the educative role of tragedy and poetry in general without reservations, the truth is that, parting company with the philosopher, he does not reject the potential pedagogic quality of the emotions provoked by dramatic works⁴. From this we can affirm that not only philosophy, but also tragic poetry feed his ethical and moral convictions⁵.

In the case of the *Lives* of Demosthenes and of Cicero, in addition to presenting episodes that reflect the closeness between the art of oratory and

³ Cf. P. de LACY, 1952. In spite of maintaining, in my view with some exaggeration, that Plutarch reveals in his writings a reproving attitude toward tragedy, this author affirms that “in the *Demetrius* the allusions to drama are so persistent that the whole structure of the biography appears to be conceived in terms of tragedy.” Also J. M. MOSSMAN, 1988, speaks of a “tragic atmosphere” in *Life of Alexander* and supports the notion that Plutarch “uses tragic coloring to delineate the darker side of Alexander’s character.” See as well P. SERRA, 2002.

⁴ The frequency with which the author employs the terms “tragic”, “dramatic” and “theatrical” in a negative way, in order to censor acts and attitudes of men, does not imply, contrary to what Philip de Lacy thinks, a “condemnation of tragedy”. It seems rather that these expressions would have already taken on common forms for the translation of the hypocrisy of certain human acts, and do not reveal any kind of aesthetic or moral value judgment in relation to tragedy as a form of poetic expression. Indeed, we are dealing with classifications that we still use in the same semantic context without this indicating any kind of condemnation of the theatre.

⁵ Cf. P. CARRARA (2008). Not even in relation to the education of the young does Plutarch reject the pedagogic value of poetry, as we know. In the treatise known as *De audiendis poetis* (1a) the author declares that it is neither possible (δυνατόν) nor advantageous (ὠφέλιμον) to keep the young from reading the poets. Rather he seeks to orient them with this type of reading, defending (37b) the role of poetry as an introduction (προπαιδευθεῖς) to philosophy. On this treatise see J. L. BRANDÃO, 2001.

that of theatre⁶, the author also compares the world of theatre with life itself⁷. And the way in which he narrates the sequence of some important events emphasizes a tragic sense, which cannot be disassociated from the tragedy of the 5th century BC. There is one play in particular which stands out, functioning as a kind of frame of ethical reference for evaluating the behavior of the orators in central moments of their lives and, more generally, as a consideration of the moral order that the author engages in with respect to the attitudes of the powerful vis-à-vis the weaker. I am referring to *Antigone* by Sophocles, cited in the narration of the circumstances surrounding the death of Demosthenes, and in the *Synkrisis*, with respect to Cicero's performance as a statesman⁸. Keeping in mind the respective political and governmental responsibilities that both orators had, in different degrees, during their lifetimes, the connection to a play whose central conflict turns upon questions related to the exercise of power, the application of the law and the possible conflicts between human and divine laws seems natural. Indeed, it is not by chance that nearly all of the occurrences of the word *philanthropia* and its cognates in these *Lives* refer precisely to the field of power and to how whoever exercises it treats his subjects⁹. The fact is that *philanthropia* represents an act of will and of freedom, on the part of a person of superior social and political status who, for this reason, finds himself in an advantageous position in relation to others. Likewise, it is for this reason that *philanthropia* seems to be the human act *par excellence*, since only the reason and the compassion of man are capable of dominating that which by nature is still of an animal order: oppression, rage and the desire for vengeance.

I will begin with an example that clearly illustrates the point, taken from the *Life* of Demosthenes; without referring directly to the play, it nevertheless allows us to establish a correlation between *philanthropia*, power and how best to deal with a dead enemy. It is the passage when Plutarch criticizes the unworthy reaction of the Athenians and of the orator himself to the death of Philip of Macedon. He says the following (22. 2-4):

εὐθὺς οὖν ἔθουον εὐαγγέλια καὶ στεφανοῦν ἐψηφίσαντο Πausανίαν, καὶ προήλθεν ὁ Δημοσοθένης ἔχων λαμπρὸν ἱμάτιον ἔστεφανωμένος, ἐβδόμη ἡμέραν τῆς θυγατρὸς αὐτοῦ τεθνηκυίας, ὡς Αἰσχίνης φησί, λοιδορῶν ἐπὶ τούτῳ καὶ κατηγορῶν αὐτοῦ μισοτεκνίαν (...) ἐγὼ δ' ὡς μὲν ἐπὶ θανάτῳ βασιλέως, ἡμέρωσ οὕτω καὶ φιλανθρώπως ἐν οἷς ευτύχησε χρησαμένου πταίσασιν αὐτοῖς, στεφανηφορεῖν καλῶς εἶχε καὶ θύειν, οὐκ ἂν εἴποιμι· πρὸς γὰρ τῷ νεμεσητῷ καὶ ἀγεννές, ζῶντα μὲν τιμᾶν καὶ ποιεῖσθαι πολίτην, πεσόντος δ' ὑπ' ἑτέρου μὴ φέρειν τὴν χαρὰν μετρίως, ἀλλ' ἐπισικριτᾶν τῷ νεκρῷ καὶ παιωνίζειν, ὥσπερ αὐτοῦς ἀνδραγαθήσαντας.

⁶ Cf. *Demosthenes* 7; *Cicero* 5.

⁷ Cf. *Demosthenes* 22. 5.

⁸ This same play is cited in the *Life of Phocion* (1.5), though it is in order to reject the idea contained in the verses cited.

⁹ The same thing happens for the same reason in the *Lives* of Alexander and Caesar.

At once, then, the Athenians proceeded to make thank-offerings for glad tidings and voted a crown for Pausanias. And Demosthenes came forth in public dressed in a splendid robe and wearing a garland on his head, although his daughter had died only six days before, as Aeschines says, who rails at him for this and denounces him as an unnatural father. (...) For my own part, I cannot say that it was honourable in the Athenians to crown themselves with garlands and offer sacrifices to the gods on the death of a king who, in the midst of his successes, had treated them so mildly and humanely in their reverses; for besides provoking the indignation of the gods, it was also an ignoble thing to honour him while he was alive and make him a citizen of Athens, but when he had fallen by another's hand to set no bounds to their joy, nay, to leap, as it were, upon the dead, and sing paeans of victory, as if they themselves had wrought a deed of valour.¹⁰

In Plutarch's view, Philip had the refinement and the nobility to deal with the defeated with humanity (φιλανθρώπως), while, on the contrary, the Athenians did not react in the same way once they had learned of his death. Yet, since death is the inexorable destiny of all men, it is *the* moment which most calls for a sentiment of moderation and of respect, exposing to divine νέμεσις those who neglect it. This lesson was already to be found in Homer¹¹, but the problem is, as we know, central in Sophocles's *Antigone*.

Let us move on to the references to the tragedy. The first one is found in the *Life* of Demosthenes, inserted into the description of the circumstances of his death. The whole episode is narrated in a way that accentuates the dramatic and even theatrical side of the last moments of his life. Indeed, the orator is presented to us as the protagonist of a miniature play whose secondary characters are completely erased before the force of the principal. Only he has the right to speak in direct discourse, while the author controls, through narration, the cues of the other participants. This little drama even contains irony – typical of Sophoclean tragedy – which is apparent whether in the words of the protagonist, or, mainly, in the reaction of the Macedonian soldiers who, in their ignorance and impiety, laugh at what they consider to be the fear and the cowardliness of their enemy. Let us look at the episode.

In order to avoid the cruelty of the Macedonian Antipater and a humiliating death at the hands of his opponents, Demosthenes had taken refuge as a suppliant in the Temple of Poseidon on Calauria. A leader of the Macedonian soldiers, by the name of Archias, known as φυγαδοθήρας (28. 3) and of whom it was said that he had been an actor of tragedies and teacher of the famous actor Polus, was sent by Antipater to capture him. He tried to persuade the orator to leave the temple, addressing him with affability (φιλάνθρωπα) and promising reconciliation with Antipater. Plutarch tells us that Demosthenes,

¹⁰ English translations are adapted from the Loeb edition of Plutarch's *Lives*.

¹¹ In the *Odyssey* (22. 412) Odysseus censures Eurycleia when she wants to let loose a shout of exaltation at the death of the suitors, saying: οὐχ ὅσηι κταμένοισιν ἐπ' ἀνδράσιν εὐχετάσθαι.

on the night before, had had a dream in which he had competed for a prize against Archias in a theatrical performance¹². The result had not favored the orator because, in spite of captivating the audience, he was beaten due to the poverty of the props and the quality of the set. And because of this he rejects the promises of reconciliation with the Macedonian general with these words (29. 3):

ὦ Ἀρχία, οὐθ' ὑποκρινόμενός με πώποτ' ἔπεισας, οὔτε νῦν πείσεις ἐπαγγελλόμενος.

“O Archias, you did never convince me by your acting, nor will you now convince me by your promises.”

Demosthenes unmasks the *philanthropia* exhibited by his pursuer because it befits neither the situation nor the character of the personage: the truth is that, on the one hand, the moment demanded real feeling, as apposed to contrived feeling, and, on the other, the mask of *philanthropia* did not match the cruel *ethos* of Archias¹³. When Archias, however, reverts to his true character and begins to threaten him, Demosthenes then decides to take up the theatrical game. Now it is he himself who takes on the role of the actor: making it seem that he is writing a letter to his friends, he instead actually swallows the poison that he had hidden in the calamus and remains sitting, his head covered, exactly like a character out of an Aeschylian tragedy. The scene stands out through the detail given by the narration of the movements of Demosthenes, and the way they are described is strengthened by the use of the aorist tense, which emphasizes the sequence of actions (29.4). Seeing him like this, the soldiers call him weak and cowardly, and Archias tries to persuade him once again, to which Demosthenes, already feeling the effects of the poison responds, looking at him (ἀποβλέψας)¹⁴:

οὐκ ἂν φθάνοις ἤδη τὸν ἐκ τῆς τραγωδίας ὑποκρινόμενος Κρέοντα καὶ τὸ σῶμα τουτὶ ρίπτων ἄταφον.

“You cannot be too soon now,” he said, “in playing the part of Creon in the tragedy and casting this body out without burial.”

If previously it was hypocrisy that he had denounced, now it is the sacrilegious character of Archias’s attitude that the orator prefers to underline, evoking the figure of Creon who, in *Antigone*, prohibits the burial of Polynices

¹² The dream is also a recurrent motif in some tragedies which, as in this scene, influences the actions of the *dramatis personae*. About the dreams in Plutarch, see F. E. BRENK, 1975.

¹³ The situation recalls the episode in *Oedipus at Colonus* in which Creon hides his intention to take Oedipus against his will to Thebes by using words of apparent friendship and compassion. Like Oedipus, the blind man whose *logoi* possess the capacity to see everything, Demosthenes, trained in the art of words, easily picks apart such falsity.

¹⁴ The scene is full of dramatic clues like this one.

and condemns the young daughter of Oedipus for disobeying his decree. With this example Demosthenes censures Archias and, by extension, Antipater and the whole Macedonian cause, for having chosen, in the theatre of life, to play the role of Creon, the powerful character, insensible to another's suffering and incapable of dealing in a dignified manner with a fellow human being, even when he is dead, all of which adds up to an act of offence to the gods themselves. In a certain way, is also the figure of Antigone that arises here, adding to the tragedy of the moment. In fact, Demosthenes demonstrates the same capacity for self-determination and a sense of courage equal to the tragic heroine, by escaping, through his own devices, the humiliation of a dishonorable and cruel death. This attitude will be praised by the biographer in the *synkrisis* with which the telling of these *Parallel Lives* concludes.

The tragic framing of this episode seems, then, to have been inspired by what Plutarch knew about the reaction of Demosthenes himself. Knowing Archias's theatrical heritage, from that he takes the ironical opportunity to accuse him of hypocrisy and inhumanity – the exact antithesis of *philanthropia*. But there is no doubt that Plutarch, taking advantage of the parallelism with the Sophoclean play suggested by the orator, develops and exploits it, creating a scenic context of great dramatic force.

The other episode that I refer to above occurs in the *synkrisis* as a way for Plutarch to recall the action of Cicero as a statesman and the way in which he exercised power. This is what he says (52. 2–3):

ὁ δὲ δοκεῖ μάλιστα καὶ λέγεται τρόπον ἀνδρὸς ἐπιδεικνύναι καὶ βασανίζειν, ἔξουσία καὶ ἀρχὴ πᾶν πάθος κινουῦσα καὶ πᾶσαν ἀποκαλύπτουσα κακίαν, Δημοσθένει μὲν οὐχ ὑπῆρξεν ... Κικέρων δὲ ταμίας εἰς Σικελίαν καὶ ἀνθύπατος εἰς Κιλικίαν καὶ Καππαδοκίαν ἀποσταλείς, ... πολλὴν μὲν ἐπίδειξιν ὑπεροψίας χρημάτων ἐποιήσατο, πολλὴν δὲ φιλάνθρωπίας καὶ χρηστότητος.

But what is thought and said most of all to reveal and test the character of a man, namely power and authority, which rouses every passion and uncovers every baseness, this Demosthenes did not have ... whereas Cicero was sent out as quaestor to Sicily, and as pro-consul to Cilicia and Cappadocia ... and gave many proofs of his contempt for wealth, and many of his humanity and goodness.

This is not, of course, a direct reference to the Sophoclean play. Rather we should note that it was a traditional thought attributed variously to some of the Seven Sages¹⁵. We may argue that it was perhaps this proverbial wisdom that Plutarch had in mind, as the verbal forms *δοκεῖ* and *λέγεται* seem to indicate. But the idea that only the exercise of power completely reveals the character of a man is not echoed simply as a short maxim but developed into an extension

¹⁵ Diogenes Laertius (1. 77), for example, attributes the maxim *power shows a man* (ἀρχὴ ἄνδρα δείξει) to Pittacus.

that recalls *Antigone* 175-177. From the reader's point of view and given the previous reference to the tragedy, this is a logical association. In that play the thought is expressed by Creon, a situation that constitutes one of the ironies of the tragedy, since that is the opinion voiced through the character himself to whom that idea justly applies¹⁶. But, taken up at the end of the narration, these words show us the kind of morality that can be extracted from the *Lives* of Demosthenes and of Cicero as they touch upon the practice of politics: the action of governing requires an exemplariness of character which is reflected in the absence of greed, in honesty and in *philanthropia*. Indeed, it is in his capacity to treat the other, the weaker one, with compassion and benevolence that the *ethos* of a powerful man truly manifest itself, or rather, that his humanity emerges freeing itself in this way from the bestiality that would animalize him. Bestiality is precisely the attitude that the biographer denounces in another passage, when he refers to the agreement between Octavius Augustus, Mark Antony and Lepidus that resulted in the death of Cicero. Plutarch's words (46.6) are well aimed and remind us of certain of Thucydides's words with respect to the excesses committed during the Peloponnesian War:

Οὕτως ἐξέπεσον ὑπὸ θυμοῦ καὶ λύσσης τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων λογισμῶν, μᾶλλον δ' ἀπέδειξαν ὡς οὐδὲν ἀνθρώπου θηρίον ἐστὶν ἀγριώτερον ἐξουσίαν πάθει προσλαβόντος.

So far did anger and fury lead them to renounce their human sentiments, or rather, they showed that no wild beast is more savage than man when his passion is supplemented by power.

Philanthropia is, then, the complete antithesis of this: it is a rational attitude that dominates unbridled and selfish passion, the ideal attitude of one who governs, whose power does not manifest itself in the humiliation of the weak, but in benevolence and clemency which are the signs of the nobility of the soul.

But *philanthropia* is also a sense of compassion and of *sympatheia* based on the recognition of a common destiny that affects all men. That is perhaps why, at the end of the *synkrisis*, Plutarch appeals to the reader's humanity by taking up the description of the death of Cicero in summary form. In fact, this is hardly a dignified moment for evaluating the *ethos* of the orator. If in certain traces of his personality, namely those which have to do with the love of wealth, Cicero showed himself to be nobler than Demosthenes, his end contrasts decisively with the dignity that Demosthenes showed before inevitable death. Plutarch summarizes in brief but significant and no less dramatic brush strokes the sequence of events that led to the assassination of Cicero in a context whose tragic tone derives less from the grandeur of the personage than from the weakness of his character, as he ends of suffering

¹⁶ Plutarch knows well this characteristic of Sophocles tragic style, to which he refers in *De audiendis poetis* 27f.

a dishonorable death after various attempts at escape. This image of an old man who desperately tries to escape death, without the courage to accept and confront it is the image of the sum of human misery for which, as in tragedy, Plutarch proposes the best possible response – that of compassion (οἰκτίσαι), which is, in the end, the basis of *philanthropia*.

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AMISTAD, FILANTROPÍA Y EROS EN LA *PAIDEIA* PLUTARQUEA: LA *VIDA DE CATÓN EL VIEJO*¹

VICENTE M. RAMÓN PALERM
Universidad de Zaragoza

Abstract

The present contribution reviews some ethical and emotional criteria that underlie the *Life of Cato the Elder* in order to determine the real meaning of the Plutarchan *paideia*. In that sense, Plutarch shows that friendship, philanthropy and eros constitute (*in praesentia aut in absentia*) a proper manner to describe Cato's personality and education, which must improve as he becomes increasingly familiar with the above-mentioned Greek concepts. Finally, Plutarch seems to maintain that the right use of these concepts has an effect on both the moral and the political education of the statesman.

En el estado actual de la investigación plutarquea, podemos desprender ciertas observaciones sobre el programa educativo del biógrafo. Efectivamente, Plutarco presenta el inventario de categorías éticas al servicio de una planificación didáctica, de una *paideia* político-moral que revierta en beneficio del lector cuya instrucción integral se pretende. Al respecto, Plutarco traza un diseño de morfología retórica que, por expresarlo con términos acuñados en corrientes de hermenéutica literaria, se articula en torno a un triple eje: emisor, mensaje y receptor. De este modo, el emisor (es decir, el biógrafo como autor) exhibe una retórica moral o retórica de la virtud – expresado en palabras del profesor Stadter – fomentada en el bagaje retórico-escolar del propio Plutarco²; el mensaje (o sea, el personaje concretamente implicado) es sometido a una moralización literaria merced a la caracterización que el héroe biografiado experimenta con la educación recibida, con sus acciones y con el ejercicio de la palabra; por último, el receptor (el lector destinatario de la obra) aprehende el legado de una *paideia* eficaz, la cual contribuirá a sellar la personalidad de un ciudadano – futuro mandatario acaso – capaz, discretamente crítico y cómodamente integrado en el sistema político.

A decir verdad, como ha explicado inteligentemente P. Stadter, el biógrafo expone sus posiciones ético-políticas ante un público de relaciones con el poder frecuentemente estrechas³: este factor y la comprometida situación vivida en época de Domiciano reclamaban, con Trajano, unos modos públicos de mesura, la prudencia del posibilismo histórico, un equilibrio en el fondo y en la forma de hacer política. El caso es que los nuevos tiempos exigían nuevas soluciones; y Plutarco, vocacionalmente adepto al platonismo medio, propuso con sagacidad categorías doctrinales que conciliaran su adscripción filosófica y el pragmatismo recabado de la nueva política. Ello explica, a la

¹ El presente artículo se ha beneficiado del Proyecto HUM 2007-64772, financiado por la DGI española.

² P. A. STADTER, 2000.

³ P. A. STADTER, 2000, pp. 493-4.

postre, que el biógrafo sugiera para el gobernante cabal las virtudes cardinales de la ἀνδρεία, la φρόνησις, la σωφροσύνη y la δικαιοσύνη, es decir el valor, la sensatez, la prudencia y la justicia, criterios morales que ha estudiado modélicamente la profesora F. Frazier⁴; y explica también que estas virtudes presenten su correlato en maneras suaves y atemperadas como la πράοτης, la φιλανθρωπία y la ἐπιείκεια, o sea la delicadeza, la filantropía humanitaria y la generosidad práctica. En suma, he aquí la adecuación de la forma y el fondo en las virtudes de los héroes biografiados, un principio axiomático que conforma la educación del buen estadista en la arquitectura de la *paideia* plutarqua y, de paso, prescribe el ennoblecimiento ético-político para el lector amigo⁵.

Por mi parte, no insistiré aquí en el papel, capital sin duda, que Plutarco confiere al sistema educativo en la promoción correcta del individuo⁶. Quiero decir que no procede demorarme en esas virtudes de fondo, por lo demás bien reseñadas, que singularizan (*in praesentia* o *in absentia*) la instrucción y condición moral del mandatario correspondiente. Sin embargo, es momento de atenerme a algunas de las virtudes formales que, bien imbricadas, deben complementar y acompasar a las cardinales en la trayectoria de una personalidad definida y paradigmática, como emulación moral para las nuevas generaciones de políticos. Permítaseme que lo exprese de este modo: si la educación académica y convencional se mueve en tres niveles operativos que, como queda dicho, afectan al emisor-autor, al mensaje-personaje y al receptor-lector, nos las vemos ahora con una educación sentimental y concerniente asimismo a los tres niveles citados. Dicho en términos modernos, la inteligencia emocional que también defiende Plutarco constituye una declaración programática y persuasiva que define al autor, caracteriza al personaje y alecciona al lector sobre las bondades de la misma en un doble sentido: como valor intrínsecamente ético y como instrumento de seducción para el arte de la política. Por lo demás, está escrito que, a juicio de Plutarco, el estadista de envergadura debe serlo, sí, y debe parecerlo en el entramado de sus relaciones sociales o afectivas⁷.

Pues bien, con el propósito de ilustrar el tema que nos ocupa, me ha parecido conveniente traer a colación la figura de M. Catón, cuya *vida* traza Plutarco en una combinación translúcida y sutil de aspectos positivos y negativos sobre la prosopografía del héroe romano. Y es que, dada la técnica compositiva que observamos, esta biografía merece una ponderación exquisita en el quehacer literario de Plutarco⁸. En efecto, una panorámica sobre la estructura de la biografía revela incidencias de interés, ya que la consideración de las categorías ético-emocionales en que nos hemos detenido (la amistad, la filantropía, el *eros*) perfilan con maestría la semblanza de Catón y destilan

⁴ F. FRAZIER, 1996, pp. 177 sqq.

⁵ T. DUFF, 2007/2008, defiende una lectura de las *Vidas* en clave filosófico-moral.

⁶ Cf. algunos trabajos recientes y significativos sobre la cuestión: A. PÉREZ JIMÉNEZ, 2002; T. DUFF, 2005; S.-T. TEODORSSON, 2005.

⁷ Cf. A. PÉREZ JIMÉNEZ, 2002.

⁸ M. BECK, 2000, p. 20 (y n. 28), indica sin ambages: "The life of the elder Cato certainly ranks as one of Plutarch's best".

las admoniciones pertinentes para las enseñanzas político-morales del lector. Se da la circunstancia añadida de que las observaciones sobre la educación sentimental y la ductilidad de las maneras personales en Catón se adecuan perfectamente a los pormenores de su educación convencional. Veámoslo con un ejemplo singular: una tónica del relato plutarqueo consiste en deslizar la interpretación de que Catón (cuya fama era proverbial en la conciencia colectiva del hombre romano) limó las asperezas de su educación gracias a los contactos que experimentó con el mundo y las letras de Grecia. Sobre el particular, resulta atractivo el pasaje en que Plutarco refiere el cambio de orientación intelectual – en un proceso de *mimesis* – que observa nuestro personaje tras su encuentro con el pitagórico Nearco (2, 3-6): “En la época en que Fabio Máximo tomó la ciudad de Tarento, Catón, aún muy joven, se hallaba en la campaña bajo sus órdenes. Allí trabó amistad con un tal Nearco, extranjero de la escuela de los pitagóricos, y se apresuró a participar de sus enseñanzas. Una vez que escuchó a este hombre pronunciarse sobre los temas que ha tratado también Platón, quien califica el placer como el mayor señuelo del mal y el cuerpo como la primera desgracia del alma, cuya liberación y purificación se logran mediante la reflexión, que es lo que más la aleja y la disocia de las sensaciones del cuerpo, sintió aún más la inclinación por la austeridad y la continencia. Por lo demás, se dice que comenzó demasiado tarde a instruirse en la cultura griega, que su edad era ya muy avanzada cuando cogió entre sus manos libros en griego y que para el ejercicio de la retórica sacó algo de provecho de Tucídides, y más de Demóstenes. No obstante, su prosa está bastante salpicada de proverbios e historias de los griegos, y en sus máximas y sentencias hay muchas traducciones literales del griego”⁹. Como puede verificarse, este fragmento es de escogida importancia: Catón, que halló en las enseñanzas de Nearco ese espejo modélico para su código ético, pulió las imperfecciones de su instrucción cultural – ya en edad propecta – merced también a las letras griegas¹⁰. A tenor de lo antedicho, Plutarco contrapone virtudes y defectos en la instrucción cultural de Catón; y

⁹ Φαβίου δὲ Μαξίμου τὴν Ταραντίνων πόλιν ἐλόντος ἔτυχε μὲν ὁ Κάτων στρατευόμενος ὑπ’ αὐτῷ κοιμῆθαι μερᾶκιον ὄν, Νεάρχῳ δὲ τινὶ τῶν Πυθαγορικῶν ξένῳ χρησάμενος ἐσπούδασε τῶν λόγων μεταλαβεῖν. Ἀκούσας δὲ ταῦτα διαλεγομένου τοῦ ἀνδρός, οἷς κέχρηται καὶ Πλάτων, τὴν μὲν ἡδονὴν ἀποκαλῶν μέγιστον κακοῦ δέλεαρ, συμφορὰν δὲ τῆ ψυχῆ τὸ σῶμα πρῶτην, λύσιν δὲ καὶ καθαρμὸν οἷς μάλιστα χωρίζει καὶ ἀφίστησιν αὐτὴν τῶν περὶ τὸ σῶμα παθημάτων λογισμοῖς ἔτι μᾶλλον ἠγάπησε τὸ λιτὸν καὶ τὴν ἐγκράτειαν. Ἄλλως δὲ παιδείας Ἑλληνικῆς ὀψιμαθῆς γενέσθαι λέγεται καὶ πόρρω παντάσῃν ἡλικίας ἐληλακῶς Ἑλληνικὰ βιβλία λαβῶν εἰς χεῖρας βραχέα μὲν ἀπὸ Θεουκυδίδου, πλείονα δ’ ἀπὸ Δημοσθένους εἰς τὸ ῥητορικὸν ὠφελῆθαι. Τὰ μέντοι συγγράμματα καὶ δόγμασιν Ἑλληνικοῖς καὶ ἱστορίαις ἐπιεικῶς διαπεποικιλταὶ καὶ μεθρημηνευμένα πολλὰ κατὰ λέξιν ἐν ταῖς γνωμολογίαις τέτακται. La traducción española de los pasajes oportunos procede de L. CONTI, 2003. El texto griego proviene de R. FLACELIÈRE & E. CHAMBRY, *Plutarque. Vies*, V, Paris, 1969.

¹⁰ Cf. M. BECK, 2000, p. 24. Por lo demás, la aversión por la cultura griega (que Plutarco glosa en el capítulo 23) acompañó a Catón durante buena parte de su vida; por ello, si bien se mira, el pasaje citado redime parcialmente al personaje de su actitud. Para esta anotación y otras implicaciones adicionales del fragmento referido, cf. V. RAMÓN PALERM, “Plutarco y la biografía política en Grecia: aspectos de innovación en el género”, in AA.VV., *La biografía como género literario: de la Antigüedad al Renacimiento, Veleia* (Anejos). (en prensa).

la presencia del legado griego permite corregir ciertos deslices de la educación convencional en el personaje. Pues bien, del mismo modo, Plutarco alterna aspectos positivos y negativos en la educación sentimental de Catón; y dejará entrever – con nitidez oscilante – que la adecuación del gobernante a esas categorías formales, de señalada impronta griega, contribuye a su perfección ética y al provecho de su actividad política. Así ocurre, verbigracia, con los pasajes en que Plutarco muestra (de manera explícita o implícita) las relaciones que establece Catón con la amistad, la filantropía, el *eros*¹¹. Y debo anticipar que, en líneas generales, el resultado es como sigue: la amistad es divisa fundamental y altamente positiva en el talante de Catón; en segundo lugar, Catón parece escasamente proclive a una conducta filantrópica y, cuando Plutarco menciona detalles al respecto, lo hace de una manera críticamente reservada, negativa en puridad; en última instancia, las actitudes eróticas presentan un curso cambiante en Catón y merecen el elogio cierto o la censura severa, respectivamente, de Plutarco. A continuación, expongo los pasajes representativos sobre las categorías correspondientes.

1. De la amistad

– 2,3 (cf. supra): como ha sido observado, la amistad de Nearco proporciona al joven Catón un contacto ennoblecedor en su trayectoria (Νεάρχῳ δέ τινη τῶν Πυθαγορικῶν ξένῳ χρησάμενος ἐσπούδασε τῶν λόγων μεταλαβεῖν). Por añadidura, no debemos soslayar la circunstancia de que el testimonio, el cual transmite Cicerón (*Sobre la vejez* [4, 10; 12, 39]), puede responder a un artificio documental, ideado por Cicerón con intención propagandística y adaptado por Plutarco con un tono moralizante¹². Obviamente el término implicado, φιλία, no consta fehacientemente, pero el contenido amistoso del pasaje resulta incontrovertible. Además, si admitimos que en Plutarco menudea el denominado moralismo *implícito* – común en el relato general de las semblanzas – por oposición al moralismo *explícito* que sobresale en las συγκρίσεις¹³, deberá igualmente aceptarse la expresión de virtudes formales respectivamente *implícitas* o *explícitas*.

– 3, 1-4: “Había un patricio, uno de los romanos más influyentes y poderosos, de sorprendente capacidad para apreciar la virtud en el momento

¹¹En general, sobre la tradición griega de las categorías que manejamos y la acepción genuina de las mismas en Plutarco, cf. S.-T. THEODORSSON, 2007. En todo caso, la utilización de los mencionados conceptos para nuestro trabajo debe entenderse *lato sensu*, razón por la que hemos renunciado a la expresión de los términos en su versión estrictamente griega.

¹²Cf. J. M. GUZMÁN HERMIDA, 2007, p. 68 n. 10. Por otra parte, debe subrayarse que el testimonio sobre enemistad más relevante en esta biografía es relativo a la figura de Escipión el Grande y difiere de otras informaciones histórico-biográficas. Escribe Plutarco (11, 1): “Mientras Catón permanecía todavía en Hispania, Escipión el Grande, que era su enemigo (ἐχθρός) y pretendía contrarrestar sus éxitos y asumir los asuntos de Hispania, consiguió obtener aquella provincia como sucesor suyo”. Sin embargo, como documenta L. CONTI, 2003, p. 108, n. 279), los datos que consignan Tito Livio (34, 43) y Nepote (*Ca.* 2, 2) discrepan del testimonio plutarqueo; de hecho, niegan que Escipión recibiera entonces la Hispania Citerior.

¹³T. DUFF, 2002, especialmente pp. 53 sqq.

que brota y con buena disposición a alimentarla y encaminarla hacia la fama: Valerio Flaco [...]; ...lo convenció con sus consejos (i.e. a Catón) para que se dedicara a la carrera política en Roma. Así, pues, Catón se dirigió allí y enseguida se granjeó admiradores y amigos con sus discursos de defensa; y mucha fue, además, la honra e influencia que Valerio añadió a su persona. El de tribuno militar fue el primer cargo que obtuvo, y más tarde desempeñó el de cuestor. A partir de entonces, gozando ya de luz propia y de popularidad, hizo junto al propio Valerio la carrera hacia las más altas magistraturas y llegó a compartir con él el consulado y, en otra ocasión, la censura¹⁴.

– 10, 1: “Designado cónsul junto con Valerio Flaco, íntimo amigo suyo, recibió la provincia que los romanos llaman Hispania Citerior. Allí, mientras sometía a unos pueblos y se granjeaba la amistad de los otros con su diplomacia, cayó sobre él un gran ejército de los bárbaros y corrió el riesgo de ser expulsado deshonrosamente; por ello buscó atraerse la alianza con los vecinos celtíberos¹⁵.”

Como puede comprobarse, frente a lo que sucede frecuentemente en los *Moralia*, los ejemplos en que la amistad comparece no adquieren ribetes de moralización explícita: son aquí aducidos para caracterizar implícitamente el *ethos* del personaje y manifestar el rendimiento político que el ejercicio de la amistad procura en quienes la cultivan.

2. De la filantropía

– 3, 7: “El caso es que Escipión hizo ver en Roma los preparativos de la guerra como anticipo de la victoria y se mostró como alguien alegre durante el tiempo libre que compartía con sus amigos, pero en modo alguno negligente con los asuntos serios e importantes por llevar una vida muelle, con lo cual pudo hacerse a la mar rumbo a la guerra¹⁶.”

– 5, 5: “Y es que no se debe tratar a los seres animados como sandalias o utensilios, que se tiran cuando están rotos y desgastados por el uso, sino que hay que proponerse ser afable y dulce con ellos, aunque sólo sea por el afán de humanidad¹⁷.”

¹⁴ Ἦν δὲ τις ἀνὴρ εὐπατρίδης μὲν ἐν τοῖς μάλιστα Ῥωμαίων καὶ δυνατός, ἀρετὴν δὲ φουομένην μὲν αἰσθάνεσθαι δεινός, εὐμενὴς δὲ καὶ θρέψαι καὶ προαγαγεῖν εἰς δόξαν, Οὐαλέριος Φλάκκος [...] ...προετρέψατο καὶ συνέπεισεν ἄψασθαι τῆς ἐν Ῥώμῃ πολιτείας. Κατελθὼν οὖν εὐθὺς τοὺς μὲν αὐτὸς ἐκτὰ θαυμαστάς καὶ φίλους διὰ τῶν συνηγοριῶν, πολλὴν δὲ τοῦ Οὐαλερίου τιμὴν καὶ δύναντα ἀὐτῷ προστιθέντος χιλιαρχίας ἔτυχε πρῶτον, εἶτα ἐταμίευσεν. Ἐκ τούτου δὲ λαμπρὸς ὢν ἤδη καὶ περιφανὴς αὐτῷ τῷ Οὐαλερίῳ πρὸς τὰς μεγίστας συνεξέδραμεν ἀρχάς, ὑπατός τε μετ’ ἐκείνου καὶ πάλιν τιμητῆς γενόμενος.

¹⁵ Ὑπατός δὲ μετὰ Φλάκκου Οὐαλερίου τοῦ φίλου καὶ συνήθους ἀποδειχθεὶς ἔλαχε τῶν ἐπαρχιῶν ἦν Ἐντὸς Ἰσπανίαν Ῥωμαῖοι καλοῦσιν. Ἐνταῦθα δ’ αὐτῷ τὰ μὲν καταστρεφόμενα τῶν ἐθνῶν, τὰ δ’ οἰκειομένω διὰ λόγων πολλὴ στρατιὰ τῶν βαρβάρων ἐπέπεσε καὶ κίνδυνος ἦν αἰσχωρῶς ἐκβιασθῆναι· διὸ τῶν ἐγγύς Κελτιβήρων ἐπεκαλεῖτο συμμαχίαν.

¹⁶ Ὁ μὲν οὖν Σκιπίων ἐν τῇ παρασκευῇ τοῦ πολέμου τὴν νίκην ἐπιδειξάμενος καὶ φανεὶς ἡδὺς μὲν ἐπὶ σχολῆς συνεῖναι φίλοις, οὐδαμῇ δὲ τῷ φιλανθρώπῳ τῆς διαίτης εἰς τὰ σπουδαῖα καὶ μεγάλα βράθυμος, ἐξέπλευσεν ἐπὶ τὸν πόλεμον.

¹⁷ Οὐ γὰρ ὡς ὑποδήμασιν ἢ σκεῦει τοῖς ψυχῆν ἔχουσι χρηστέον κοπέντα καὶ κατατριβέντα

– 22, 2: “Al punto, los jóvenes más amantes de las letras acudieron al encuentro de estos hombres (i.e. filósofos), a quienes escuchaban con admiración. Fue sobre todo el carisma de Carnéades, cuya autoridad era enorme y cuya reputación no era menor que su autoridad, el que atrajo grandes auditorios interesados por los asuntos humanos y el que, como un viento, barrió la ciudad con sus ecos”¹⁸.

Los tres pasajes aducidos presentan una importancia nada desdeñable, pese a su aparente y tangencial relación con la figura de Catón¹⁹. En el primero de ellos, se contraponen a la personalidad austera de Catón los modos de Escipión el Grande (rival y enemigo político del héroe biografiado), cuyo talante desprendido y filantrópico con sus íntimos no empuja a la seriedad de la actividad política que despliega. En el segundo fragmento, la sobriedad en exceso cicatera de Catón (quien proponía desechar a los esclavos viejos por inservibles [cf. 4,5; 5,1]) da paso a cierto comentario del queronense sobre la necesidad de ser indulgente con los seres vivos, en términos absolutos, siquiera por razones humanitarias²⁰. En el tercer pasaje, los jóvenes romanos, atraídos por cuestiones de importancia para el ser humano, comparecen con interés a las conferencias de filósofos griegos en Roma; y ello contrasta con el carácter desdeñoso de Catón en relación con la cultura griega y con los efectos de esta sobre las generaciones más jóvenes. En síntesis, da la impresión de que Plutarco confronta las actitudes humanitarias y filantrópicas que personalmente defendía para la comunidad grecorromana²¹ con la indiferencia llamativa de Catón sobre el particular, lo cual parece encerrar una fina crítica implícita al proceder de nuestro personaje mediante una intención que rebasa, seguramente, el puro desliz moral para alcanzar repercusiones de índole política.

3. Del *eros*

– 20, 1-4: “Fue también un buen padre, un marido honrado con su mujer y un administrador no desdeñable [...]. Desposó a una mujer más noble que rica, pues creía que, aunque ambos tipos de mujeres eran serias y sensatas, las de buen linaje se avergonzaban ante lo deshonesto y eran más sumisas a sus maridos en lo que atañe a la virtud. Decía que un hombre que golpeaba a su esposa o a su hijo ponía sus manos sobre los seres más sagrados. Le parecía más

ταῖς ὑπερσεαῖς ἀπορριπτοῦντας, ἀλλ’ εἰ διὰ μηδὲν ἄλλο, μελέτης οὐνεκα τοῦ φιλανθρώπου προεθιστότερον ἑαυτὸν ἐν τούτοις πρᾶον εἶναι καὶ μείλιχον.

¹⁸ Εὐθὺς οὖν οἱ φιλολογῶτατοι τῶν νεανίσκων ἐπὶ τοὺς ἄνδρας ἴεντο καὶ συνῆσαν ἀκροώμενοι καὶ θαυμάζοντες αὐτούς. Μάλιστα δ’ ἡ Καρνεάδου χάρις, ἧς <ἦν> δύναμις τε πλείστη καὶ δόξα τῆς δυνάμεως οὐκ ἀποδέουσα, μεγάλων ἐπιλαβομένη καὶ φιλανθρώπων ἀκροατηρίων ὡς πνεῦμα τὴν πόλιν ἠχῆς ἐνέπλησε.

¹⁹ Para un comentario exhaustivo y provechoso de las implicaciones convenientes sobre los pasajes citados (implicaciones de orientación ético-política), remito al estudio de J. M.^a CANDAU que consta en el presente volumen (“Filantropía en la *Vida de Catón el Viejo*”).

²⁰ Esta circunstancia es asimismo detectable en los escritos *zoopsicológicos* de Plutarco. Cf., en general, la introducción que proporciona G. SANTESE en L. INGLESE & G. SANTESE, 1999.

²¹ Cf. G. D’IPPOLITO, 2005, pp. 180-2.

digno de alabanza ser un buen esposo que un gran senador. En efecto, Catón no admiraba nada del antiguo Sócrates salvo el hecho de que, a pesar de tener una mujer difícil y unos hijos necios, los tratara toda su vida con benevolencia y dulzura. Nacido su hijo, no hubo para él ninguna obligación, salvo las de carácter público, que fuera tan perentoria que le impidiera ayudar a su mujer mientras bañaba y envolvía en pañales a su hijo”²².

– 24, 1: “Es evidente que...Catón no quedó libre de la venganza divina, pues perdió tanto a su esposa como a su hijo. Pero él, que era de constitución robusta y se mantenía fuerte y vigoroso, resistió durante muchísimo tiempo, de modo que, aun siendo ya anciano, tenía con frecuencia contacto sexual con alguna mujer y, en contra de lo que conviene a su edad, contrajo de nuevo matrimonio...”²³.

– 6, 1-3 (σύγκρισις): “El matrimonio del propio Catón, sin embargo, impropio tanto de su honor como de su edad, infundió a este respecto sospechas importantes y serias. En efecto, el que un anciano de tanta edad y con un hijo ya adulto...despose a la hija de un sirviente suyo...no está nada bien. Tanto si lo hizo buscando placer como si fue por vengarse del asunto con la hetera, la acción y su motivo son por igual vergonzosos. El argumento al que acudió con tono irónico ante su hijo no era cierto, pues si hubiera querido traer al mundo hijos tan nobles como éste, debería haber reparado en ello desde un principio y haber contraído matrimonio legal en lugar de contentarse con cohabitar con una mujer ilegítima y compartida mientras pasó inadvertido y, una vez que fue descubierto, hacer suegro suyo a quien era más fácil de convencer, y no a aquel con quien hubiera resultado más honroso crear lazos familiares”²⁴.

Es perceptible que la indicación de los lances erótico-amorosos en la *Vida de Catón* ofrece una perspectiva doble y palmariamente opuesta sobre la actitud del

²² Γέγονε δὲ καὶ πατὴρ ἀγαθὸς καὶ περὶ γυναῖκα χρηστὸς ἀνὴρ καὶ χρηματισμῆς οὐκ εὐκαταφρόνητος [...]. Γυναῖκα μὲν γὰρ εὐγενεσετέραν ἢ πλουσιωτέραν ἔγημεν, ἡγούμενος ὁμοίως μὲν ἀμφοτέρας ἔχειν βῆρος καὶ φρόνημα, τὰς δὲ γενναίας αἰδουμένας τὰ αἰσχρὰ μᾶλλον ἀπηκόους εἶναι πρὸς τὰ κατὰ τοῖς γεγαμηκόσι. Τὸν δὲ πρόποντα γαμετὴν ἢ παιῖδα τοῖς ἀγιωτάτοις ἔλεγεν ἰεροῖς προσφέρειν τὰς χεῖρας. Ἐν ἐπαίνῳ δὲ μείζονα τίθεσθαι τὸ γαμετὴν ἀγαθὸν ἢ τὸ μέγαν εἶναι συγκλητικόν· ἐπεὶ καὶ Σωκράτους οὐδὲν ἄλλο θαυμάζειν τοῦ παλαιοῦ πλὴν ὅτι γυναικὶ χαλεπῇ καὶ παισὶν ἀποπλήκτοις χρώμενος ἐπεικῶς καὶ πράως διετέλεσε. Γενομένου δὲ τοῦ παιδὸς οὐδὲν ἦν ἔργον οὕτως ἀναγκαῖον, εἰ μὴ τὴν δὴμοσίον, ὡς μὴ παρεῖναι τῇ γυναικὶ λουούσῃ τὸ βρέφος καὶ σπαργανούσῃ.

²³ Καί...φαίνεται γεγονῶς οὐκ ἀνεμέσητος καὶ γὰρ τὴν γυναῖκα καὶ τὸν υἱὸν ἀπέβαλεν. Αὐτὸς δὲ τῷ σώματι πρὸς εὐεξίαν καὶ ῥώμην ἀσφαλῶς πεπηγὼς ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ἀντείχετο, ὥστε καὶ γυναικὶ πρεσβύτης ὦν σφόδρα πλησιάζειν καὶ γῆμαι γάμον οὐ καθ’ ἡλικίαν...

²⁴ ...αὐτοῦ δὲ τοῦ Κάτωνος ὁ παρ’ ἀξίαν ἅμα καὶ παρ’ ὥραν γάμος οὐ μικρὰν οὐδὲ φαύλην εἰς τοῦτο διαβολὴν κατεσκεδάσατο. Πρεσβύτην γὰρ ἤδη τοσοῦτον ἐνηλικίω παιδί...ἐπιγῆμαι κόρην ὑπέρτερον...οὐδαμῇ καλόν, ἀλλ’ εἴτε πρὸς ἡδονὴν ταῦτ’ ἐπραξεν εἴτ’ ὀργῇ διὰ τὴν ἐταίραν ἀμυνόμενος τὸν υἱόν, αἰσχύνῃν ἔχει καὶ τὸ ἔργον καὶ ἡ πρόφασις. Ὡς δ’ αὐτὸς ἐχρήσατο λόγῳ κατειρωνευόμενος τὸ μεираκίον, οὐκ ἦν ἀληθὴς. Εἰ γὰρ ἐβούλετο παῖδας ἀγαθοῦς ὁμοίως τεκνῶσαι, γάμον ἔδει λαβεῖν γενναῖον ἐξ ἀρχῆς σκεψάμενον, οὐχ ἕως μὲν ἐλάνθανεν ἀνεγγύω γυναικὶ καὶ κοινῇ συγκοιμώμενος ἀγαπᾶν, ἐπεὶ δ’ ἐφωράθη ποιήσασθαι πενθερὸν ὃν ῥᾶστα πείσειν, οὐχ ᾧ κάλλιστα κηδεύσειν ἔμελλεν.

estadista. Advertimos una caracterización implícita en los dos primeros pasajes que, en la σύγκρισις conclusiva, se resuelve del modo acostumbradamente explícito por cuanto atañe al segundo matrimonio del personaje. En efecto, el primer pasaje muestra a un Catón amante de su esposa y corresponsable en la unidad conyugal, un Catón que comparte las tareas paterno-filiales y observa una reciprocidad cotidiana en el curso de su relación marital. Plutarco se prodiga en elogios sobre la figura de Catón, ya que el matrimonio se conduce a la manera que el de Queronea defiende en su *Erótico*, donde priman la concordia y la responsabilidad doméstica de los esposos prácticamente en pie de igualdad²⁵. No obstante, la opinión de Plutarco se modifica radicalmente en lo concerniente al segundo matrimonio de Catón. Y es que Plutarco censura ahora tanto la ratificación del matrimonio *per se* (considerando la edad avanzada del mandatario) cuanto las razones presuntas del mismo, acaso motivadas por el hecho de que Catón mantenía relaciones sexuales, en su propia casa y de modo indisimulado, con una concubina joven y de moralidad laxa; el caso es que la muchacha paseaba por la casa impudicamente a la vista del propio hijo de Catón, lo cual tensa la convivencia entre el padre, el hijo y la novia de este. Pues bien, Catón resuelve de forma urgente concertar matrimonio con la hija de uno de sus esclavos para zanjar el asunto y tal vez dar un golpe de autoridad paterna²⁶.

Para concluir: la moralización implícita que menudea en la *Vida de Catón* se ve motivada, en buena medida, por la destreza cultural y las virtudes cardinales del personaje merced a su pericia y contactos tardíos con la *paideia* griega. De modo simétrico, Plutarco desliza la concepción de que las virtudes formales, la educación sentimental, la inteligencia emocional de Catón se hallan caracterizadas por la ausencia o presencia respectiva de categorías inherentes, asimismo, al orbe heleno. He aquí una reflexión tamizada con que Plutarco perfila el talante de Catón, claro está; pero se trata también de una reflexión con que el biógrafo trasciende la pura defensa de ciertos valores afectivos-morales, anejos al personaje, para el ennoblecimiento del lector y, en última instancia, para el sustento de una *paideia* henchida de aristas ético-políticas al servicio del estadista incipiente en un mundo civilizador, grecorromano, globalizado.

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²⁵ Cf. las oportunas reflexiones de M. VALVERDE, 2003. Cf. asimismo J. BENEKER, 2008, particularmente p. 698.

²⁶ Cf. 24, 2-7, donde Plutarco refiere los pormenores correspondientes sobre el asunto.

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FILANTROPÍA EN LA *VIDA DE CATÓN EL VIEJO*

JOSÉ M. CANDAU MORÓN
Universidad de Sevilla

Abstract

In the *Life of Cato Maior* Plutarch looks at his main character with an attitude consisting of admiration on one hand, of criticism and blame on the other. The concept of *philanthropia* represents the key that opens the door to the criticism. Catos's lack of *philanthropia* is responsible for his *philotimia*, his deficient *autarkeia* and his want of *sophrosyne*. Even his political activity undergoes the effects of this fundamental failure. This paper tries to explore how the structure of the biography reflects the importance that Plutarch assigns to the central flaw of its protagonist.

Resultaría problemático incluir la *Vida de Catón el Viejo* entre las biografías negativas. El modelo más acabado de biografía negativa es probablemente la *Vida de Demetrio*. Un presupuesto importante de esta obra lo constituye el marco temático que brindan las grandes naturalezas, las naturalezas dotadas tanto para el bien como para el mal que por un error o una serie de elecciones erróneas concluyen en un final desastroso¹. La teatralidad, entendida como despliegue ostentoso y vacío, es otro de los ingredientes de la *Vida de Demetrio*². Y por último la esterilidad, la ausencia de realizaciones o mensajes importantes políticos o humanos, es otro componente que Plutarco subraya y parece considerar definitorio de una existencia como la de Demetrio³. Nada de esto aparece en la *Vida de Catón*. Sin embargo, Plutarco alberga fuertes reservas morales contra su protagonista, hasta tal punto que Catón el Viejo parece situarse en un punto intermedio entre los personajes que en las *Vidas Paralelas* aparecen como modelos a imitar y aquellos otros que destacan ante todo por sus cualidades negativas.

Son dos los pasajes de la biografía que exponen con claridad y con cierto detalle los defectos de la personalidad de Catón. Uno de ellos se sitúa al inicio, en los capítulos 4 y 5. Plutarco comienza aquí hablando de la tendencia a la economía que despliega su protagonista en distintas facetas de su vida: en el vestido, en la comida y la bebida, en las construcciones de su hacienda, en la compra de esclavos. Catón creía, afirma el biógrafo, que cuando los esclavos envejecen hay que venderlos para no gastar alimento en seres inútiles. Aquí Plutarco hace un alto: tratar así a los esclavos, como si fueran animales, es propio de un carácter rígido para el que la utilidad es el único fundamento

¹ Plutarco toca el tema de las grandes naturalezas (sobre el que teoriza en *Ser. num. vind.* 551D-552D) no sólo el proemio a las *Vidas de Demetrio y Antonio* (*Demetr.* 1.7-8) sino también en *Them.* 2.7, *Nic.* 9.1, y *Cor.* 1.3. Se trata de un tema sobre el que disertan tanto Platón (el pasaje canónico es *R.* 491d-492a; véase también *Hp. Mi.* 376a) como Jenofonte (*Mem.* 4.1.4). Tratamientos modernos de la cuestión ofrecen O. ANDREI, 1989 y T. DUFF, 1999.

² Sobre la prominencia de los elementos teatrales en la *Vida de Demetrio* véase O. ANDREI, 1989, pp. 78-82; J. M. CANDAU, 1999, pp. 142-3.

³ Véase *Demetr.* 42.3. Comentario en J. M. CANDAU, 1999, pp. 143-4.

de las relaciones entre los hombres⁴. Nuestros buenos sentimientos, sin embargo se extienden hasta el punto de tratar suave y benévola incluso a los animales. Con este comentario Plutarco abre una digresión en la que diserta sobre un tema reiterado en su obra y representativo de su personalidad literaria, el afecto hacia los animales⁵. Ya al final, después de comentar varios ejemplos ilustrativos observa que no debe usarse a “quienes tienen alma” (τοῖς ψυχὴν ἔχουσι) como si fueran objetos; antes bien se ha de adoptar hacia estos un comportamiento dulce y benigno, si no por otra razón para poner en práctica los preceptos de la filantropía (μελέτης οὐνεκα τοῦ φιλανθρώπου, 5. 5). El concepto de φιλανθρωπία hace aquí una aparición opaca y, digamos, disimulada. En primer lugar se halla envuelto en el interior de una discusión que comienza hablando de la economía y dedica gran espacio al tema del afecto hacia los animales. En segundo lugar solo lo leemos al final, cuando la digresión está tocando a su fin. Se le invoca, además, como último recurso con el que justificar una determinada práctica (εἰ διὰ μηδὲν ἄλλο μελέτης οὐνεκα τοῦ φιλανθρώπου ...).

Plutarco asocia en otras ocasiones la liberalidad económica, la falta de avaricia y de preocupación ante el dinero con la φιλανθρωπία. Solón, de familia noble, gastó la fortuna de su padre en actos de filantropía y en mercedes⁶. Pelópidas, nacido en el seno de una casa opulenta, socorría con sus riquezas a cuantos lo necesitaban, y todos se acogían a su filantropía y liberalidad⁷. Catón es un *homo novus* cuya falta de la liberalidad en lo referente al dinero y la riquezas acentúan diversos pasajes de la biografía, incluido un lugar tan prominente como la sínchris⁸. Ahora bien, al caracterizar esa faceta de su personaje Plutarco, aparentemente, evita el término φιλανθρωπία, término que utiliza de manera diríase que marginal, casi como si lo escondiese.

El segundo de los pasajes que disertan con amplitud sobre los aspectos negativos de Catón aparece en el tramo final de la biografía. El capítulo 22 menciona la famosa embajada a Roma en la que participó el filósofo Carnéades. Ante la expectación que el filósofo despierta entre la población romana, Catón se muestra partidario de hacer que todos los filósofos sean conducidos fuera de la ciudad⁹. Tal reacción se debió ante todo a su hostilidad hacia la filosofía y la cultura griegas. Después de brindar algunos ejemplos de este antihelenismo, Plutarco consigna una predicción de Catón, conforme a la cual el estado romano sería destruido cuando las letras griegas penetrasen en sus ciudadanos. Predicción que el tiempo ha demostrado falsa, pues, comenta el biógrafo, la supremacía de Roma ha coincidido con la implantación en el imperio de los

⁴ *Cat. Ma.* 5.1: μηδὲν ἀνθρώπῳ πρὸς ἄνθρωπον οἰομένου κοινώνημα τῆς χρείας πλέον ὑπάρχειν.

⁵ Sobre el tema puede hallarse información y bibliografía actualizada en J. M. CERVANTES MAURI, 2005 y M. T. CLAVO SEBASTIÁN, 2005.

⁶ *Sol.* 2.1: εἰς φιλανθρωπίας τινάς, ὡς φησιν Ἑρμιππος, καὶ χάριτας.

⁷ *Pel.* 3.3: ἐχρῶντο τῇ πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἐλευθεριότητι καὶ φιλανθρωπία.

⁸ Además del pasaje citado véase *Cat. Ma.* 21; 31 (4).

⁹ *Cat. Ma.* 22.6: ἔγνω μετ’ εὐπρεπείας ἀποδιοπομπήσασθαι τοὺς φιλοσόφους πάντας ἐκ τῆς πόλεως.

conocimientos y la cultura de Grecia. Un posicionamiento ante la cultura griega como el que aquí se describe, constituye para Plutarco una falta mayor. Así los subraya el capítulo 24, cuya frase inicial presenta la muerte de la esposa y el hijo de Catón como un castigo divino (νέμεσις) sobrevenido a consecuencia de la actitud antihelénica del personaje. Los aspectos más desfavorables de su personalidad quedan al descubierto, además, en dos episodios que siguen. Catón, una vez viudo, frecuenta a una prostituta (παίδίσκη) a la que lleva a su casa. Cuando se encuentra con ella la joven esposa de su hijo tiene lugar una situación embarazosa. A continuación Catón contrae su segundo matrimonio con una joven de extracción humilde, hija de uno de sus clientes. Boda bochornosa que, según se dice en la sínclisis, constituye materia para un justificado reproche.

También en este segundo pasaje negativo para el protagonista aparece el término φιλανθρωπία, pero, como sucedía en el pasaje anterior, su presencia es subrepticia, de manera que casi pasa inadvertido. Al principio, cuando Plutarco consigna el éxito que obtuvo Carnéades en Roma, añade que sus conferencias atraían audiencias amplias y llenas de simpatía (μεγάλων [...] καὶ φιλανθρώπων ἀκροατηρίων). El término da la impresión de recoger aquí ese valor general de afecto o empatía emocional con lo humano que estudios recientes le han atribuido, un valor que, por lo demás, resulta característico de la filosofía vital de Plutarco¹⁰. Ahora bien, en el momento histórico en que escribe Plutarco, φιλανθρωπία puede haber sido un concepto cargado de connotaciones políticas. En el panegírico que Plinio dedica a Trajano, el término *humanitas*, la φιλανθρωπία griega, se usa reiteradamente: cualidad propia del hombre, no del dios, la *humanitas* es una de las virtudes que distinguen al *bonus princeps* del *dominus* e incluso es, se ha afirmado, la cualidad que fundamentalmente alaba Plinio en Trajano¹¹. Si se admite que el panegírico de Plinio es exponente de un cambio ideológico que se produce cuando Trajano llega al trono; si se admite asimismo que Plutarco, como Tácito o Dión Crisóstomo, participa plenamente de dicho cambio; si igualmente se acepta, como estudios recientes aseguran, que las *Vidas Paralelas* sólo se pudieron gestar en el ambiente intelectual propiciado por el ascenso de Trajano¹²: si todo ello se admite no puede pensarse que φιλανθρωπία sea para Plutarco una palabra más. Al contrario, debe ser, en principio, un término destacado, portador de un fuerte colorido ideológico.

En la sínclisis Plutarco atribuye el vergonzoso segundo matrimonio de Catón a falta de σωφροσύνη¹³. La parte narrativa que presenta dicho episodio se abre con el tema del antihelenismo del protagonista, un antihelenismo que, al unirse a la hostilidad hacia la filosofía, hacia la medicina griega o hacia

¹⁰ Cf. A. GEORGIADOU, 1997, p. 69; G. D'IPPOLITO, 2005, pp. 180-1; S.-T. TEODORSSON, 2007, pp.189-90.

¹¹ Cf. P. A. STADTER, 2002b, pp. 228-9. La búsqueda del término *humanitas* en el texto electrónico del *Panegírico* proporciona siete entradas (2.7.2; 3.4.4; 4.7.1; 24.2.3; 47.3.2; 49.6.1; 71.5.3).

¹² Véase P. A. STADTER, 2002a, p. 6; M. T. SCHETTINO, 2002, pp. 201-5; G. ZECCHINI, 2002, p. 194.

¹³ *Cat. Ma.* 33 (6).1.

figuras emblemáticas como Sócrates, produce una impresión de rudeza y ausencia de παιδεία muy en sintonía con las circunstancias y motivaciones actuantes en ese segundo matrimonio. Ahora bien, para Plutarco, la cultura, y concretamente la filosofía, son un ingrediente esencial del buen gobernante; baste remitir a determinados pasajes del *ad principem indoctum*¹⁴. La postura antifilosófica e inculta de Catón hace de él, por tanto, un mal gobernante. Plutarco no explicita esta conclusión. Tampoco utiliza la φιλανθρωπία para descalificar de manera directa a su protagonista. Pero la actuación de éste se contrapone a la de aquellas audiencias que escuchaban, llenas de φιλανθρωπία, al filósofo Carnéades. Quizás no carezcan de intención las menciones de dos tiranos, Pisístrato y Dionisio de Siracusa, insertas en el pasaje que relata el segundo matrimonio de Catón¹⁵.

El apego de Catón a las riquezas también aparece en la síncretis, donde se interpreta como el resultado de una deficiente αὐτάρκεια¹⁶. La inclusión en un lugar tan destacada como este delata la importancia que reviste el tema a los ojos del biógrafo. La avaricia, la φιλοπλουτία, constituye para Plutarco un grave defecto, según muestran las observaciones contenidas en el tratado *de cupiditate divitiarum*. Dejando aparte dichas observaciones, que atañen sobre todo a la vida privada, la carga negativa que supone al φιλοπλουτία para el dirigente se indica refleja en dos pasajes de los *precepta gerendae rei publicae*. Uno de ellos presenta la φιλοπλουτία como un rasgo de Cleón, un político muy censurado por Plutarco¹⁷. El otro conecta la φιλοπλουτία y la φιλοχρηματία con los mayores desastres en la vida pública¹⁸. La avaricia, es, igual que la falta de σωφροσύνη, una lacra que colorea muy negativamente la personalidad de Catón como político. Ambos defectos se mencionan en la síncretis, y los pasajes narrativos que los presentan y detallan hacen en ambos casos una mención explícita del concepto de φιλανθρωπία.

Hay una tercera mención explícita del concepto de φιλανθρωπία en la *Vida de Catón*. Durante la segunda guerra púnica Catón fue nombrado cuestor bajo las órdenes de Escipión Africano, cónsul a la sazón. Escipión efectuaba en Sicilia los preparativos necesarios para desembarcar en África y Catón, al observar la prodigalidad con que el cónsul gastaba los fondos públicos y su lujoso tren de vida, presenta una denuncia en Roma. Dos tribunos llegan de Roma para verificar la exactitud de la denuncia. Escipión entonces justifica los gastos con la perspectiva de la victoria y hace ver que si durante los momentos de ocio comparte con sus amigos dulces experiencias, su dedicación a los asuntos serios e importantes no queda mermada por ese régimen de vida “filantrópico”¹⁹. Aparentemente, tampoco aquí se percibe un uso político del

¹⁴ Véase, por ejemplo, 779D; 780A; 781A

¹⁵ Pisístrato: 24.8; Dionisio: 24.11.

¹⁶ *Cat. Ma.* 31 (4).2-4.

¹⁷ *Praec. ger. rei.* 806F. Sobre la valoración que hace Plutarco de Cleón véase G. J. D. AALDERS, 1982, p. 30.

¹⁸ *Praec. ger. rei.* 819E.

¹⁹ *Cat. Ma.* 3.7 (φανείς ἡδὺς μὲν ἐπὶ σχολῆς συνεῖναι φίλοις, οὐδαμῆ δὲ τῷ φιλανθρώπῳ τῆς διαίτης εἰς τὰ σπουδαῖα καὶ μεγάλα ῥάθυμος). Debe subrayarse que la noticia que aquí

concepto de φιλανθρωπία, concepto que además, como ocurría en la narración de las conferencias de Carnéades, se atribuye al adversario de Catón, pero no se niega a Catón mismo. Plutarco tampoco hace, de momento, comentario alguno sobre este enfrentamiento con Escipión. Pero en la sínclisis el episodio es recordado y utilizado como argumento para una acusación de peso: con su ataque a Escipión Catón perjudica la guerra contra Aníbal²⁰. Una vez más un pasaje marcado por la presencia aparentemente inocua del concepto de φιλανθρωπία da lugar a una condena severa del protagonista.

La *Vida de Catón* no es una biografía negativa. A Plutarco le habría sido muy difícil ennegrecer por completo la figura de este personaje, cuya memoria, adornada con los perfiles de *exemplum* tradicional, había pasado a ser todo un paradigma de las virtudes romanas²¹. Pero determinadas actuaciones del protagonista de la biografía, y especialmente su antihelenismo, constituían una mácula difícil de pasar por alto. De aquí que en su retrato convivan las notas aprobatorias con fuertes reservas. Quizás la expresión más elocuente de esta actitud matizada y ambivalente se da en el capítulo sexto, que comentando el rigor desplegado por Catón como pretor en Cerdeña afirma que la administración romana no fue nunca ni más temida ni más deseada²². Plutarco, en suma, se siente con la libertad suficiente para emitir un juicio distanciado que, sin ser negativo, tampoco ahorra las críticas. En este sentido la *Vida de Catón* parece confirmar aquel punto de vista según el cual la historia de la república se convierte, con el advenimiento de Trajano, en historia antigua, es decir, en un ámbito lo suficientemente lejano como para permitir opiniones ajenas a la disensión política y, por tanto, libres y distanciadas²³: si no había contradicción en presentar como héroes tanto a César como a sus ejecutores, tampoco lo había en admirar a Catón y, al mismo tiempo, desautorizar sus actuaciones.

Esa desautorización actúa, si la tesis aquí propuesta se admite, mediante la incrustación en pasajes clave del término φιλανθρωπία, que marca en el ambiente ideológico donde se encuadran las *Vidas Paralelas* una virtud política imprescindible. Plutarco, por otra parte, emplea el término φιλανθρωπία de manera aparentemente casual, como si se pretendiera restarle importancia. Ello puede atribuirse a la preferencia del biógrafo por una escritura de tono bajo, que evita subrayar los puntos candentes de la actualidad y que busca conferir a sus palabras un manto de intemporalidad²⁴. Cabe también formular tal preferencia con otras palabras. La escritura de Plutarco conforma un texto complejo y polisémico en el que proliferan las alusiones, los guiños al lector,

transmite Plutarco es posiblemente falsa, siendo su fuente de inspiración el conflicto que mantuvieron Escipión y Catón a partir del 180: véase A. A. ASTIN, 1978, pp.14-6.

²⁰ *Cat. Ma.* 32 (5).4.

²¹ Sobre Catón como ejemplo de virtudes romanas véase S. AGACHE, 1980. La misma autora (pp. 95-8) habla de una "leyenda negra" (aunque de matices moderados) sobre Catón en cuyo contexto sitúa la crítica de Plutarco.

²² *Cat. Ma.* 6.4

²³ J. GEIGER, 2002, p. 97

²⁴ Véase P. A. STADTER, 2002b, pp. 236, 238; C. B. R. PELLING, 2002, pp. 215, 222.

los sobreentendidos y las indicaciones oblicuas. Lo que parece casual puede ser, en realidad, determinante, y una observación carente a primera vista de importancia puede ser la clave sobre la que descansa una interpretación cargada de consecuencias. Tal vez deban entenderse bajo esta óptica las apariciones del concepto de φιλανθρωπία en la *Vida de Catón el Viejo*.

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O SENTIDO DE *PHILANTHROPIA* NAS BIOGRAFIAS DE CORIOLANO, CÍCERO E CATÃO DE ÚTICA

JOAQUIM J. S. PINHEIRO
Universidade da Madeira

Abstract

In this paper, we propose to identify the sense and context of *philanthropia*, one of the transversal concepts of Greek culture, in the Roman biographies of Coriolanus, Cicero, and Cato Minor. Our aim is to analyse the actions that Plutarch associates with *philanthropia* and the various values attached to it. In restricting our research to Roman biographies we intend to evaluate the sense of *philanthropia* in Plutarchan *synkriseis* and its cultural implications.

A interpretação do sentido de *philanthropia* nas biografias de Coriolano, Cícero e Catão de Útica tem o objectivo de avaliar o contexto em que Plutarco usa o vocábulo e de verificar se é possível notar alguma diferença semântica por serem heróis romanos. Tanto as *Vidas Paralelas* como os *Tratados Morais* parecem indicar que, em geral, se procede a uma helenização da identidade romana, como acontece, por exemplo, nas *Quaestiones Romanae*¹, ao nível da religião.

A *philanthropia*, juntamente com outros valores, como a *dikaiosyne*, a *praotes*, a *andreia*, a *phronesis*, a *sophrosyne*, é uma manifestação da *paideia*, que remete para a dimensão moral, filosófica ou ética do ser humano. Nessa medida, a fisionomia pode não revelar o *ethos philanthropon*, como Plutarco refere na biografia de Fócion (5.1):

Τῷ δ' ἦθει προσηνέστατος ὦν καὶ φιλανθρωπότατος, ἀπὸ τοῦ προσώπου δυσξύμβολος ἐφαίνετο καὶ σκυθρωπός, ὥστε μὴ ῥαδίως ἄν τινα μόνον ἐντυχεῖν αὐτῷ τῶν ἀσυνήθων.

Embora [Fócio] possuísse um carácter muito afável e humano, pelo semblante parecia ser tão pouco sociável e austero que dificilmente alguém ia ao encontro dele sozinho, a não ser que fosse seu familiar.

Apesar de a *philanthropia* dos heróis se manifestar em várias acções, como adiante veremos, é no íntimo de cada indivíduo e pelo controlo da parte irracional da alma que, numa primeira fase, se consolida este valor. Nesse sentido, a *philanthropia*, a *praotes*, a *epieikeia* ou a *sophrosyne*, por oposição à *kakoetheia*, surgem associadas a uma ideia de equilíbrio, sociabilidade, indulgência, afabilidade e autodomínio². Filopémen, “o último dos Gregos”, tentou imitar a inteligência e a integridade de Epaminondas, mas não conseguiu, nas disputas políticas, ser fiel à *philanthropia*, por causa da cólera (*orge*) e do seu carácter belicoso (*philonikia*)³. Desse modo, tomou duas medidas sintomáticas de uma

¹ E.g. 269A e 274E-F.

² Cf. *Cor.* 21.1.

³ Cf. *Phil.* 3.1-2, 2.2-4, 13.8 e 17.5.

paideia deficiente: a abolição da constituição de Licurgo e a substituição da educação espartana pela aqueia⁴. Também a Coriolano faltava, por um lado, a *paideia* grega e, por outro, a *πραότης* e a *φιλάνθρωπία*, duas virtudes essenciais para a intervenção na vida pública, pois o seu *ethos* fundava-se, em especial, na *ὀργή* e na *φιλοτιμία*, uma vez que desejava superar as suas próprias provas de heroísmo e aumentar a sua fama⁵. Para Plutarco, de facto, a *philanthropia*, tal como outras virtudes, está directamente relacionada com a *paideia*, como se depreende da apresentação sumária de Marcelo (*Marc.* 1.2-3):

ἦν γὰρ τῇ μὲν ἐμπειρία πολεμικός, τῷ δὲ σώματι ῥωμαλέος, τῇ δὲ χειρὶ πλήκτης, τῇ δὲ φύσει φιλοπόλεμος, καὶ τοῦτο δὴ πολὺ τὸ γαῦρον καὶ ἀγέρωχον ἐπιφαίνων ἐν τοῖς ἀγῶσι· τῷ δ' ἄλλῳ τρόπῳ σώφρων, φιλάνθρωπος, Ἑλληνικῆς παιδείας καὶ λόγων ἄχρι τοῦ τιμᾶν καὶ θαυμάζειν τοὺς κατορθοῦντας ἔραστής, αὐτὸς δ' ὑπ' ἀσχολιῶν ἐφ' ὅσον ἦν πρόθυμος ἀσκήσαι καὶ μαθεῖν οὐκ ἐξικόμενος.

Ele tinha, na verdade, experiência na arte guerreira, um corpo vigoroso, mãos lutadoras, uma natureza amante da guerra e, nos combates, demonstrava ser muito autoritário e dominador. Porém, quanto ao resto, era moderado, humano, amante da cultura e das letras gregas, a ponto de honrar e admirar os que se dedicam a elas com êxito, mas ele, por causa das suas ocupações, não as consegue exercitar e estudar tanto quanto desejava.

Desta forma, a *philanthropia* faz parte da *paideia* e confunde-se com ela. Se a *paideia* se sobrepõe às fronteiras espaciais como traço distintivo do homem, também a *philanthropia* surge como uma qualidade que exerce grande influência nas atitudes sociais e no desempenho da actividade política. Plutarco, aliás, no tratado *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae* (823A-C), inclui a *philanthropia* na lista das qualidades do político ideal:

ἀλλὰ πρῶτον μὲν εὐπροσίγορος καὶ κοινὸς ὦν πελάσαι καὶ προσελθεῖν ἅπασιν, οἰκίαν τε παρέχων ἄκλειστον ὡς λιμένα φύξιμον αἰεὶ τοῖς χρίζουσι, καὶ τὸ κηδεμονικὸν καὶ φιλάνθρωπον οὐ χρεῖαις οὐδὲ πράξεισι μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ τῷ συναλγεῖν πταίους καὶ κατορθοῦσι συγχαίρειν ἐπιδεικνύμενος·

Em primeiro lugar, [o homem de Estado] é afável e sociável com todos os que dele se aproximam e o consultam. Tem a casa aberta como um porto sempre pronto a acolher os necessitados e demonstra a sua solicitude e humanidade não apenas nos afazeres e acções mas também ao partilhar a dor com os que fracassam e ao congratular-se com os que alcançam êxito.

⁴ Cf. *Phil.* 16.7-9. Para Políbio (21.32.3), esse foi um estratagema de Filopémen para reduzir o papel da Esparta. Por sua vez, Pausânias (8.51.3) refere que Filopémen destruiu as muralhas de Esparta e que proibiu os jovens espartanos de se exercitarem segundo as leis de Licurgo, mas que o deviam fazer como os jovens aqueus. Seriam os Romanos a ter um papel importante, segundo Plutarco e Pausânias, na readopção da antiga constituição.

⁵ Cf. *Cor.* 4.3 e 15.4.

Temos, assim, um sentido fundamental de *philanthropia*: o relacionamento interpessoal, ou seja, a sociabilidade com outros membros da comunidade ou com as instituições da cidade⁶. É nesse contexto, sobretudo, que encontramos a maioria das ocorrências do vocábulo, como concluiu F. Frazier (1996) ao comparar *philanthropos* com *praos* e *epieikes*, dois adjetivos de sentido similar. Ao longo dos tratados políticos, por exemplo, o Queronense lembra recorrentemente a necessidade de o político tratar os concidadãos com amabilidade e benevolência, mesmo quando não são amigos (816C). Nas *Vitae*, por sua vez, podemos enumerar como exemplo de *philanthropia*: a forma bondosa como Teseu tratou os mais humildes, passando estes a aproveitar o túmulo do herói fundador para local de refúgio (*Ihes.* 36.4); a excessiva severidade usada por Catão Censor com os escravos, levando o biógrafo a aconselhar a prática da *philanthropia* (*Cat. Ma.* 5); o próprio Alcibiades, um dos heróis de carácter mais ambíguo, protagoniza uma série de acções que atenuam os seus defeitos, como a humanidade (*philanthropia*) que evidencia ao criar o filho que teve da relação com uma concubina de Melos⁷. Discernir as virtudes dos heróis nem sempre é uma tarefa fácil, não só por causa do uso no mesmo sintagma de duas ou três palavras quase sinónimas, um recurso estilístico muito frequente em Plutarco⁸, mas também porque as virtudes se manifestam, na prática, de forma complexa, como se refere na introdução da biografia de Fócion, o par grego de Catão de Útica⁹:

τούτων δὲ τῶν ἀνδρῶν αἱ ἀρεταὶ μέχρι τῶν τελευταίων καὶ ἀτόμων διαφορῶν ἓνα χαρακτῆρα καὶ μορφήν καὶ χρῶμα κοινὸν ἦθους ἐγκεκραμένον ἐκφέρουσιν, ὥσπερ ἴσῳ μέτρῳ μειμιγμένου πρὸς τὸ αὐστηρὸν τοῦ φιλανθρώπου, καὶ πρὸς τὸ ἀσφαλὲς τοῦ ἀνδρείου, καὶ τῆς ὑπὲρ ἄλλων μὲν κηδεμονίας, ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν δ' ἀφοβίας, καὶ πρὸς μὲν τὸ αἰσχροὺς εὐλαβείας, πρὸς δὲ τὸ δίκαιον εὐτονίας συνηρμοσμένης ὁμοίως ὥστε λεπτοῦ πάνυ λόγου δεῖσθαι καθάπερ ὀργάνου πρὸς διάκρισιν καὶ ἀνεύρεσιν τῶν διαφερόντων.

As virtudes destes homens [Fócion e Catão de Útica] mostram, até às últimas e inseparáveis diferenças, um só carácter, aspecto e moral, formadas de uma matiz comum, como se tivessem misturado em igual medida a austeridade e a humanidade, a coragem e a prudência, a solicitude pelos outros e a intrepidez por eles próprios, a precaução contra actos vis e o ardor, igualmente harmonioso, pela justiça. Por conseguinte, é necessário usar, como instrumento, um discurso extremamente subtil para separar e descobrir as diferenças.

Quanto à ocorrência dos vocábulos *φιλανθρωπία*, *φιλάνθρωπος* (adj.) e *φιλανθρώπως* (adv.) nas três biografias que servem de base ao nosso estudo, começamos por fazer referência a um elemento quantitativo: nos pares *Fócion-Catão de Útica* e *Demóstenes-Cícero*, é na biografia romana que esses vocábulos

⁶ P. CHANTRAINE, *Dictionnaire Étymologique de la Langue Grecque*, Paris, 1984, s.u. φίλος: considera que mais do que uma relação sentimental exprime a pertença a um grupo social.

⁷ Cf. *Alc.* 16.5; esta acção é analisada em conjunto com o apoio que deu à terrível carnificina contra os Mélios (16.6).

⁸ S.-T. THEODORSSON, 2000.

⁹ *Phoc.* 3.8; cf. *Mul. Virt.* 243C e *Quaest. Conu.* 732B.

se encontram com mais frequência, enquanto no par *Coriolano–Alcibíades* as ocorrências se repartem de forma equitativa (5). Logo, estes elementos parecem confirmar a ideia de que as biografias romanas das *Vidas Paralelas* são essenciais para a análise de conceitos éticos, em especial os que pertencem à tradição cultural helénica, como é o caso da *philanthropia*

A biografia de Coriolano comprova que existe uma relação entre *paideia* e *philanthropia*. O Romano é, segundo Plutarco, “testemunha para os que pensam que a natureza, ainda que seja nobre e boa, se tiver uma educação insuficiente, produz muitos defeitos juntamente com qualidades, tal como acontece na agricultura a um campo fértil que fica sem cultivo” (1.3) e, por este motivo a acção política de Coriolano ficaria marcada por diversos excessos, de tal modo que ao longo da narrativa biográfica nenhuma das suas acções merece ser relacionada com a *philanthropia*. Em 16.2, o adjectivo *philanthropos* surge associado ao preço do trigo: ἐλπίζων ἀγορᾶ τε χρήσεσθαι φιλανθρώπῳ καὶ προῖκα τὰς δωρεὰς νεμηθήσεσθαι ([*o povo*] *esperava comprar no mercado o grão a um preço moderado e receber de forma gratuita o trigo que tinha sido enviado como presente*). Como se vive uma enorme tensão social na *Vrbs*, entre patrícios e plebeus, em dois casos o mesmo adjectivo surge associado à *politeia* (17.7 e 19.3):

(...) ἀλλὰ καιρὸν ἐπισφαλῆ καὶ ὄξυν εὐγνώμονος πολιτείας καὶ φιλανθρώπου δεόμενον.

(...) mas o momento instável e crítico requeria uma política prudente e generosa.

οἱ δὲ πρεσβύτατοι καὶ δημοτικώτατοι τὸναντίον ἠξίουον οὐ χαλεπὸν οὐδὲ βαρύν, ἀλλὰ πρᾶον καὶ φιλάνθρωπον ὑπὸ τῆς ἐξουσίας ἔσεσθαι τὸν δῆμον·

Os senadores mais velhos e com mais sentimento democrático julgavam que o povo, com esta faculdade, não se tornaria violento e severo, mas afável e humano.

Em 30.7, os adjectivos *epieikes* e *philanthropos* (respectivamente, moderação e cortesia) servem para qualificar o *logos*¹⁰ dos embaixadores, enviados para demover Coriolano do ataque a Roma. Pelo contrário, Coriolano, novamente movido pela *orge*, revela-se inflexível, impondo um limite de trinta dias aos Romanos para cederem às pretensões dos Volscos. Passado o momento da trégua, conta Plutarco que é o próprio Coriolano, curiosamente, que aconselha os Romanos a serem mais moderados e benévolos com os Volscos (31.6), notando-se a repetição dos dois adjectivos usados antes para qualificar o discurso dos embaixadores romanos.

Quanto a Cícero, além da curiosidade intelectual e do percurso político, isto é, a harmonização da *paideia* com a *politeia*, Plutarco enfatiza a forma como o orador

¹⁰ Cf. *Aem.* 6.5 e *Pyrrh.* 18.6; em *Phoc.* 27.6, surge associada às condições do acordo.

romano conseguiu ser íntegro e justo¹¹. Refere-se, aliás, que Cícero, relativamente ao processo judicial de Manílio, exigiu que o réu fosse tratado segundo o que a lei permitia, pois ele próprio sempre havia tratado os réus com benevolência (ἐπιεικῶς) e humanidade (φιλανθρωπῶς)¹². É, contudo, na *synkrisis* (3.4) que se encontra talvez o texto mais elucidativo da *philanthropia* de Cícero:

πολλὴν μὲν ἐπίδειξιν ὑπεροφίας χρημάτων ἐποιήσατο, πολλὴν δὲ φιλανθρωπίας καὶ χρηστότητος.

[Cícero] deu, por um lado, muitas provas do seu desprezo pelo dinheiro, e, por outro, muitas da sua humanidade e bondade.

Ao longo da biografia, notamos o facto de a *philanthropia* surgir três vezes associada a César (21.5, 40.5 e 45.3), o que não causa qualquer estranheza, tendo em conta que o mesmo sucede na própria biografia de César (8.1) ou na de Catão de Útica (22.5 e 23.1), quando Plutarco narra os acontecimentos que envolvem Catilina¹³. Associada ao tom de um discurso ou à própria acção de César, a *philanthropia* assume-se como um valioso instrumento de persuasão política (Caes. 13.4). Usando o mesmo recurso, conta Plutarco que Clódio persuade o povo com νόμοις φιλανθρωποῖς (30.1), de forma a colocar em perigo a situação política de Cícero. Resta-nos mencionar o sintagma καταφυγὴν φιλάνθρωπον (47.7), realçando-se o facto de o adjectivo *philanthropos*, com o sentido de “agradável” ou “tranquilo”, qualificar o local de refúgio de Cícero, em Gaeta.

O terceiro herói romano aqui tratado, o Uticense, é descrito, por Plutarco, como um homem ἀρετῆς ἐνθουσιασμός, ὑπὲρ τῶν καλῶν καὶ δικαίων ἀγωνιζομένης (*entusiasmado com a virtude e que luta pelo bem e pela justiça*, 26.5). Apesar dessas qualidades, o Romano não se deixa vencer, como alguns senadores, pela *praotes* e *philanthropia*, após o discurso de César, atrás referido, mas reage com *orge* e *pathos* (23.1), revelando, nesta ocasião, uma atitude contrária à *metriopatheia*. Em três ocasiões a *philanthropia* surge associada à justiça (21.5, 21.10, 29.4), merecendo Catão de Útica, segundo Plutarco, a admiração da maioria dos cidadãos pela sua conduta humana (*philanthropia*) e moderada (*metriotes*) no caso de Metelo, com quem Catão teve diversos confrontos políticos, em particular quando, em 62 a. C., os dois exerceram o cargo de tribunos da plebe. Mais evidente ainda é o elogio feito por Plutarco após o discurso proferido por Catão (60.1):

(...) ἦσαν μὲν οἱ καὶ τοῖς λόγοις ἀγόμενοι πρὸς τὸ θαρρεῖν, οἱ δὲ πλεῖστοι πρὸς τὸ ἀδεῆς καὶ γενναῖον αὐτοῦ καὶ φιλάνθρωπον ὀλίγου δεῖν ἐκλαθόμενοι τῶν παρόντων, ὡς μόνον ὄντα τοῦτον ἀήτητον ἡγεμόνα καὶ πάσης κρείττονα τύχης, ἐδέοντο χρῆσθαι καὶ σώμασιν αὐτῶν καὶ χρήμασι καὶ ὄπλοις (...)

¹¹ Cf. ibidem. 8.2; em 36. 3-5, elogia-se a administração que Cícero fez dos bens.

¹² Cf. ibidem. 9.6.

¹³ Sobre Plutarco e Catilina, vide C. B. R. PELLING, 2002.

(...) com as palavras de Catão, alguns recuperaram a confiança, mas a maior parte, perante a audácia, a nobreza e a humanidade dele, depressa esqueceu o momento presente e, considerando-o o único chefe invencível e mais forte do que todo o tipo de vicissitude, pedia-lhe que usasse os seus corpos, os seus bens e as suas armas (...).

É deste modo que se associa de forma directa a *philanthropia* a uma figura importante da história romana do século I a. C., digno do nome de *philosophos*¹⁴ e que havia sido, como Plutarco, sacerdote de Apolo¹⁵.

Este conjunto de ocorrências prova que a *philanthropia*: primeiro, surge, na maioria das vezes associada à *paideia* e à *politeia*; segundo, não só caracteriza o *ethos* dos heróis, como também, por exemplo, leis ou locais; e terceiro, é um valor acessível ao Romano¹⁶. Plutarco não esconde, no entanto, que a *philanthropia* é uma marca do virtuosismo da Hélade e, em particular, de Atenas, como se pode ler no final da biografia de Aristides¹⁷: ἤς φιλανθρωπίας καὶ χρηστότητος ἔτι πολλὰ καὶ καθ' ἡμᾶς ἡ πόλις ἐκφέρουσα δείγματα θαυμάζεται καὶ ζηλοῦται δικαίως (*Ainda nos nossos dias a cidade de Atenas oferece numerosos exemplos desta humanidade e benevolência, e, por causa disso, é, com razão, admirada e emulada*); ou quando, na biografia de Pelópidas¹⁸, contrapõe à habilidade guerreira e à conduta tirânica dos Espartano a *philanthropia* ancestral dos Atenienses que trataram com respeito os Tebanos¹⁹. Refira-se que, na linha da partilha dos valores, já Dionísio de Halicarnasso (*Ant. Rom.* 1.89.1) afirmara que Roma, a cidade grega, era a mais sociável e humanitária das cidades por ser refúgio para bárbaros, fugitivos e vagabundos.

¹⁴ Cf. *Cat. Ma.* 27.7.

¹⁵ Cf. *Cat. Mi.* 4.1.

¹⁶ Cf. *Mar.* 20.1: Τῶν δὲ Ῥωμαίων τοῖς ἐκτὸς ἀνθρώποις δεινῶν μὲν εἶναι πόλεμον μεταχειρίσασθαι καὶ φοβερῶν εἰς χεῖρας ἐλθεῖν νομιζομένων, εὐγνωμοσύνης δὲ καὶ φιλανθρωπίας καὶ ὅλων πολιτικῆς ἀρετῆς ὑποδείγματα μὴ δεδωκότων, πρῶτος δοκεῖ τότε Μάρκελλος ὑποδειξάτωι τοῖς Ἑλλησι δικαιοτάτους Ῥωμαίους. *Para os estrangeiros, os Romanos eram considerados hábeis na condução da guerra e terríveis na luta, não tendo dado provas de benevolência, de humanidade e, em geral, de virtude política. Marcelo parece ter sido o primeiro a mostrar aos Gregos que os Romanos eram particularmente justos.*

¹⁷ *Arist.* 27.7.

¹⁸ Em *Pel.* 4.5 (Λακεδαιμονίους ἔτι φίλοις καὶ συμμάχοις οὐσι πεμφθείσης ἐκ Θηβῶν βοηθείας), depois de contar o conflito de Mantinea, Plutarco introduz a mudança de atitude entre Lacedemónios e Tebanos; cf. *Mar.* 23.5.

¹⁹ *Ibidem.* 6.2; Vide *Quaest. Conu.* 720C e *De E Delph.* 384D-E, onde Atenas surge como a cidade de maior nível cultural, mas, por aquilo que escreve em *Praec. Ger. Reip.* 799C-D, a *polis* não está isenta de defeitos, embora o texto não deixe de realçar a *philanthropia* dos Atenienses: οἶον ὁ Ἀθηναίων εὐκίνητός ἐστι πρὸς ὀργήν, εὐμετάθετος πρὸς ἔλεον, μᾶλλον ὀξέως ὑπονοεῖν ἢ διδάσκεσθαι καθ' ἡσυχίαν βουλόμενος· ὥσπερ τῶν ἀνδρῶν τοῖς ἀδόξοις καὶ ταπεινοῖς βοηθεῖν προθυμότερος, οὕτω τῶν λόγων τοὺς παιγνιώδεις καὶ γελοίους ἀσπάζεται καὶ προτιμᾷ· τοῖς μὲν ἐπαινοῦσιν αὐτὸν μάλιστα χαίρει, τοῖς δὲ σκώπτουσιν ἥκιστα δυσχεραίνει· φοβερὸς ἐστὶν ἄχρι τῶν ἀρχόντων, εἶτα φιλάνθρωπος ἄχρι τῶν πολεμίων. *Por exemplo, o povo Ateniese tem uma inclinação para a cólera, que facilmente transforma em piedade, pois quer mais conjecturar de imediato do que aprender com tranquilidade. Tal como considera muito benévolo auxiliar os homens desprezados e humildes, também acolhe e prefere as palavras com humor e engraçadas; regozija-se principalmente com aqueles que o louvam, mas pouco se irrita com os que zombam dele; é terrível com os seus governantes, mas revela-se humano até com os inimigos.*

Na verdade, o sentido de *philanthropia* nas biografias espelha a visão poliétnica e a própria sociedade multicultural e cosmopolita da época de Plutarco. Esboçando na estrutura paralela das *Vitae* uma crase cultural, sem apagar as diferenças entre Gregos e Romanos²⁰, Plutarco, em vez de configurar a *philanthropia* como um valor pan-helénico, conforme surge em Isócrates ou Xenofonte, procura tornar o seu sentido universal, abrangendo todos os que são cidadãos do *imperium*, embora seja fundamental os Romanos cultivarem a *paideia* helénica. De fora ficam os Bárbaros pela sua inclinação natural para o vício, a bestialidade ou para a superstição²¹. Deste modo, o *pepaideumenos*, o homem novo da Segunda Sofística, teria de ter capacidade de liderança, ser patriótico, íntegro e justo, lutar pelo bem comum, sem perseguir riquezas pessoais, e ter um carácter enformado por virtudes como a *praotes*, a *epieikeia* e a *philanthropia*²², valores de raiz helénica.

Para Plutarco, a aproximação entre as duas culturas, a grega e a romana, poderia atingir-se mediante uma partilha de competências “naturais”, cabendo, desse modo, à Grécia contribuir com o esplendor e a humanidade da sua *paideia* e à *Vrbs* com a sua capacidade governativa e engenho militar. Esta proposta de compromisso civilizacional²³ pode verificar-se, como vimos, pela forma como a *philanthropia* surge associada aos heróis plutarquianos, tanto Gregos como Romanos, uma vez que ela adquire, ao mesmo tempo, uma dimensão individual e uma dimensão colectiva ou social. Se, por um lado, o homem se deve comprometer com a sua formação com o objectivo de aperfeiçoar a alma, os conhecimentos e o carácter, por outro, terá de ser capaz de transpor para a sociedade ou para a vida pública a *philanthropia*. Assim, a *philanthropia* plutarquiana é muito mais do que um conceito abstracto, uma vez que transmite, com algum pragmatismo, uma ideia de civilidade bastante útil aos destinatários das *Vidas Paralelas* e também aos actuais leitores.

²⁰ Desta opinião partilha S. GOLDHILL, 2002, p. 270: “It’s rather that the boundaries of Greekness and Romanness — as with all myths of cultural origin at the site of cultural conflict — prove all too permeable, all too intertwined. Establishing and preserving the value of Greekness becomes not just the assertion of an identity but a set of questions about cultural self-positioning”. Para P. DESIDERI, 1992, p. 4471: “l’unità della cultura antica nelle sue essenziali e parallele componenti greca e romana è un punto di arriva, e non di partenza, della riflessione plutarchea”; por sua vez, para S.-T. TEODORSSON, 2005a, p. 438: “the coalescence of Greek and Roman culture in the late Imperial period produced a sentiment of cultural unity in the Empire”; vide ainda S.-T. TEODORSSON, 2005b, pp. 659-64.

²¹ Cf. A. G. NIKOLAIDIS, 1986, J. PELEGRÍN CAMPO, 1997 e T. SCHMIDT, 1999.

²² F. FRAZIER, 1996, 231 sqq., na esteira de J. de ROMILY, 1979, classifica esta tríade de virtudes como “les trois vertus ‘douces’ traditionnelles”; vide ainda H. M. MARTIN JR., 1960, pp. 55-70.

²³ H. M. MARTIN JR., 1961 defendeu, apoiando-se na atitude filantrópica de Prometeu, que, desde a sua origem, a *philanthropia* está conotada com a difusão civilizacional entre os Helenos. Por *philanthropia*, Plutarco traduz não só uma atitude que tem implícito um sentido de humanidade, mas também actividades que são reflexo de uma atitude civilizacional, como o banho ou o tratamento do corpo (*Lyc.* 16.12), ou uma qualidade muito importante para o político ganhar a confiança dos seus súbditos ou para enfrentar tempos de crise, como aqueles que a Grécia vivia.

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SECTION 5

Quaestiones Convivales

(Página deixada propositadamente em branco)

EDUCATING THE YOUNG ... OVER WINE? PLUTARCH, CALVENUS TAURUS, AND FAVORINUS AS CONVIVIAL TEACHERS

GEERT ROSKAM
Catholic University of Leuven

Abstract

Already in the Archaic period, the symposion was often connected with educational purposes. Plato elaborated his own alternative (esp. in the first two books of the *Laws*), which in turn influenced later authors. This contribution deals with three such thinkers: Plutarch, Calvenus Taurus, and Favorinus of Arles. All three realised that the context of the symposion yielded interesting opportunities for the education of younger students. I propose to examine their evaluation of their students, their attitude (and, in Plutarch's case, self-characterisation) as a teacher, and their didactic approach. The evidence shows that Plutarch and Taurus basically pursue the same philosophical purposes in their education during dinner, by promoting independent and critical thinking, whereas Favorinus' teaching activities are more in line with the brilliant self-display of the so-called 'Second Sophistic'.

οἶνος, ὦ φίλε παῖ, καὶ ἀλάθεια
Alcaeus, fr. 366

1. Wine and education: a strange alliance?

For most people, the Greek symposion probably does not call forth associations with respectable education on a high level. One rather thinks of bacchic dancing and mimes, *skolia*, relaxed conversation, laughter and friendship, expensive flute-girls¹ who may also have been *hetairai*, clowns, acrobats, and jugglers, and in the first place much wine and drunkenness². Several of these elements were part and parcel of the symposion from the very beginning, and once introduced, most of them remained popular until late antiquity. This is not only confirmed in Old Comedy³ but also in many passages from later symposium literature.

This, however, is only one side of the picture. Very early in the Greek tradition, the banquet was also connected with educational purposes and could be used as a tool for affirming and rehearsing elite values. In both Crete and Sparta, young boys were in the Archaic period allowed to attend the common meals of their fathers and to listen to their discussions of political and military affairs⁴. The *Corpus Theognideum* illustrates the same tendency of teaching young boys like Cynrus in the (pederastic?) context of a symposion⁵, and from Plato on, the educative aspect of the symposion

¹ Cf. C. G. STARR, 1978.

² See in general E. PELLIZER, 1990, and (on the typical character of the ἄκλιτος) B. FEHR, 1990.

³ See E. L. BOWIE, 1995.

⁴ J. N. BREMMER, 1990, pp. 136-7.

⁵ Cf. also W. RÖSLER, 1995, pp. 109-11.

is discussed and justified from a philosophical point of view. It is well known that Plato is usually rather critical of the contemporary practices at drinking-parties⁶, but in the first two books of his last work, the *Laws*, he finally elaborates his own alternative, interpreting symposia as a training in, and a secure test of, temperance (646c-650b) and emphasising the close connection between παιδεία and a well-ordered symposion which is supervised by sober commanders⁷. In a famous passage from a much earlier dialogue, Plato already opposed the symposia of ordinary people to those of cultivated and noble participants (καλοὶ κάγαθοὶ συμπόται καὶ πεπαιδευμένοι), arguing that flute-girls usually attend the former banquets but remain absent from the latter, where the company is able to entertain themselves with their own conversation (*Prt.* 347c-348a). Well in line with this view, Eryximachus proposes, near the beginning of Plato's *Symposium*, to bid farewell to the flute-girls and spend the time together in conversation (176e). In Plutarch's *Quaestiones convivales*, the Stoic Philip of Prusias⁸ perceptively points to the exceptional nature of Agathon's banquet. The company consisted of a small number of learned guests (cf. also 613D), so that "the surprising thing was not that the flute-girl should be expelled from such a company, but that the party was not so entertained and charmed as to forget both food and drink" (710BC; transl. E. L. Minar, slightly modified). The conclusion seems to be that even at more learned banquets some place could be given to popular forms of entertainment, and indeed, Xenophon's *Symposium* also contains both philosophical conversations and interludes during which a Syracusan company diverts the guests with different performances. On the other hand, when Xenophon depicts the banquets in the *Cyropaedia* as remarkably sober and devoid of all customary entertainments, he appears to speak normatively rather than descriptively⁹.

In any case, the Greek tradition of the symposion soon showed a double face. On the one hand, the banquet was a world of heavy drinking and revelry, with all the risks of socially disruptive behaviour. On the other hand, it helped to strengthen social ties and build community (by creating and maintaining friendship and by educating the young towards honourable moral behaviour). My focus on the latter aspect does not necessarily betray my own preferences (which are irrelevant here) but instead illustrates that of the authors who will be discussed. Let us begin, then, with Plutarch.

⁶ See esp. the thorough discussion of M. TECUSAN, 1990. Cf. on Plato's general attitude to wine also P. BOYANCÉ, 1951.

⁷ See *Lg.* 641b-d; 642a; 643a; 645c; 652a; 671a-674c.

⁸ On Philip of Prusias, see B. PUECH, 1992, pp. 4869-70; S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1996, pp. 102-3; cf. also D. BABUT, 1969, pp. 254-60 on the contrast between Philip of Prusias and an anonymous Stoic sophist in *Quaest. conv.* 710B-711D.

⁹ See D. L. GERA, 1993, pp. 150-4.

2. Plutarch of Chaeronea

Plutarch was no heavy drinker indeed¹⁰, and even if he may occasionally have been indulgent with the drinking of several of his heroes¹¹, he usually advocates temperance and moderation¹². This implies that he was by no means a rigid abstainer, and basically the same attitude he adopted towards the customary forms of sympotic entertainment. He deems them pleasant whenever present but refuses to attach great importance to them (cf., e.g., *Quaest. conv.* 629C) and just like Plato prefers to lay full emphasis on another kind of entertainment, viz. that of erudite discussions. It is from such a pastime that Plutarch's cultivated friends derive their highest pleasures. At Plutarch's dinners, the burlesque clown has to give way to refined humour, the flute-girl to lively conversations about music, and in general, sympotic entertainment tends to coincide to an important extent with relaxed philosophical discussions. The topics for conversation should be adapted to the specific context of the symposium¹³, to be sure, and the argumentative style should likewise reflect the sympotic atmosphere¹⁴, but the high intellectual level of the company sufficiently guarantees that the discussion never results in trivial platitudes or vulgar bragging.

It is clear that such a context yields interesting opportunities for the education of younger students. And young men do indeed participate in several banquets which Plutarch describes (646A; 653B; 655EF; 676E; 692B; 704E). On these occasions, the conversations also have an educative character, and in that sense, they contain important information about Plutarch's educative ideals and about his practical approach. We may catch a glimpse of the kind of students Plutarch welcomes at his table and of the way in which he judges them, and we may see different teachers at work, not in their school but in a less formal context.

2.1. The students

In Plutarch's *Quaestiones convivales*, the young men are usually characterised in a fairly negative way. First of all, they are *easily impressionable*. At a banquet which the musician Erato organises in Athens, for instance, the participants use garlands of roses instead of laurel, and when Ammonius begins to criticise this, the young men are much embarrassed and quietly begin to take off their

¹⁰ There is only one passage in the *Quaestiones convivales* where Plutarch mentions that the party risked to degenerate into drunken behaviour (620A), but even in this case, the company soon turned to intellectual discussions; see on the passage P. A. STADTER, 1999, pp. 483-5.

¹¹ Such as Cimon (cf. *Cim.* 4,3 and 15,3) and Cato the Younger (cf. *Cat. Mi.* 6,1-2); see H. G. INGENKAMP, 1999.

¹² See, e.g., S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1999, and A. G. NIKOLAIDIS, 1999.

¹³ Accordingly, Plutarch prefers to deal with familiar and non technical issues (see esp. *Quaest. conv.* 614D-615B), imitating the example of Xenophon (630A).

¹⁴ Here, Plato's *Symposium* is the model, combining as it does an easy argumentation with concrete examples and myths (*Quaest. conv.* 614CD).

garlands (645D-646A). Plutarch immediately makes it clear that such a reaction is unnecessary: Ammonius is just making fun of the company (645D: ἐπέσκωψε) and merely introduces the issue for the sake of exercise and inquiry (646A: γυμνασίας ἔνεκα καὶ ζητήσεως). At a symposium of Plutarch's father, likewise in Athens, the host raises the question of why sweet new wine is least intoxicating (655EF). Again, most students are embarrassed, coming no further than being baffled by what they regard as paradoxical and incredible (655F), although in this case two of them (Hagias and Aristanetus) do their best to provide a plausible explanation (655F-656A). When Lucanius entertains Plutarch's friends in Corinth, finally, the discussion is about the use of the pine as the victor's garland at the Isthmia. An unnamed professor of rhetoric, well-known for his familiarity with literature, points out that the ancients used celery rather than the pine and argues his point by means of a whole series of quotations (676C-E). In this case, too, the young are impressed by the rhetorician's great learning and wide reading (676E) and once again, one of the older, learned participants (here the host himself) has to intervene in order to put things into perspective (676EF).

Secondly, young people are – unsurprisingly – still represented as *insufficiently acquainted with ancient literature*. We already saw how they were impressed by the wealth of quotations adduced by the rhetorician (676E). On another occasion, young men attacked Epicurus for having introduced in his *Symposium* a discussion about the proper time for coition. In their view, Epicurus gave evidence of extreme licentiousness by dealing with such a topic in the presence of young men and at a banquet (653BC). Such a criticism, however, is not merely cheap but even entirely unjustified, being based on utter ignorance of the great literature of the past – both Xenophon's *Symposium* (653C) and Zeno's *Republic* (653E) deal with similar topics – and on a careless interpretation of Epicurus' position. Zopyrus thus undertakes the defence of Epicurus and explains what the great philosopher of the Garden really wanted to say (653C-E). As a result, the young men are reduced to silence and the company goes on to discuss precisely this topic.

Thirdly, the young give evidence of *radicalness*, which may be connected with their fresh enthusiasm for philosophy. When Philinus took some of his students to a banquet of Philo the physician, one of them refused to eat anything but bread (660D). This example is somewhat ambivalent, though, for the student's behaviour is indirectly (and not without humour) attacked by the host and no less indirectly defended by Plutarch and Philinus. The young man's conduct shows a praiseworthy principled consistency, to be sure, but also a rigid inflexibility which hardly suits the sympotic conviviality and may thus be regarded as παρά καιρόν. Elsewhere, such radicalness appears in an even more negative light. At a dinner given by Aristion, the discussion is initiated by Niger. Before reporting the latter's arguments, Plutarch gives a short characterisation of the young man: he happens to have returned from a brief course of instruction under a famous philosopher. The phrase χρόνον οὐ πολὺν (692B) already suggests that Niger's philosophical progress is at

best fairly limited and superficial and thus announces Plutarch's explicit evaluation that the young man has not really comprehended his teacher's doctrines. He has begun, however, to imitate his annoying behaviour by continuously criticising and cross-examining the company. When he launches his attack against the sumptuous preparations which Aristion has made, combining a strongly moralising tone with would-be erudition¹⁵ (692C-E), we already know that his high-principled radicalness lacks any *fundamentum in re*. No wonder, then, that the host easily succeeds in refuting his young guest by correcting his mistakes, showing a much higher level of erudition, and demonstrating that the attack is exaggerated and irrelevant (692E-693E).

Finally, hardly anything is said about *positive qualities*, with one exception, though: the learned company fully appreciates the young men's skill in finding arguments (εὐρησιλογίαν) (656A). Now εὐρησιλογία is an ambiguous term and it has more than once a negative connotation in Plutarch's works. Especially the Stoics are often blamed for their sophistic ingenuities¹⁶. In this context, however, the word is obviously positive¹⁷, for Plutarch goes on to praise the fact that the young men looked for proper solutions instead of falling back on more ready answers (656AB). Even this praise, however, remains somewhat ambivalent, for the reader may easily conclude that the students' εὐρησιλογία was a dire necessity, rooted in their ignorance of well-known traditional solutions.

The following general conclusions can be derived from the evidence discussed so far. In Plutarch's *Quaestiones convivales*, the young men [1] usually remain *passive*. They often undergo the situation and occasionally become themselves the topic of conversation rather than actively contributing to it. [2] They give ample evidence of their *immaturity*, both by their conduct and by their words, and [3] they do *not seem to be full members of the company*. Their sincere interest in philosophy and the intellectual and moral level which they have already reached enables them to attend the conversations of Plutarch's learned friends, to be sure, but they are never on a par with the older participants. Plutarch's attitude towards the young students in the *Quaestiones convivales*, then, shows a curious mix of a condescending depreciation and a prudent appreciation. Plutarch realised very well that his intellectual level, and that of his erudite friends, far surpassed that of the immature and inexperienced νέοι, and in spite of his friendly openness and stimulating remarks, this great distance was never overcome.

It is interesting to compare this characterisation of the young students with that of the προκόπτων ("the man who is making (moral) progress") in

¹⁵ According to D. BABUT, 1969, pp. 252-4, several aspects of Niger's speech show that he went to a Stoic teacher. M. CUVIGNY, 1969, p. 565 suggests the interesting possibility that Niger's teacher was none other than Epictetus.

¹⁶ See *De aud. poet.* 31E; *De comm. not.* 1070E and 1072F; cf. also *De Stoic. rep.* 1033B. In all these passages, the term εὐρησιλογία undoubtedly has a negative connotation.

¹⁷ Cf. also *Quaest. conv.* 625C and 632B.

De profectibus in virtute. In this treatise, Plutarch lists a series of indications of moral progress: the continuity of one's course, mildness (πραότης)¹⁸ and lack of jealousy, authenticity, consistency, untroubled dreams, alleviation of the passions, etc.¹⁹. It is striking that not one of these positive indications returns in the characterisation of the students in the *Quaestiones convivales*. As far as I can see, there are only two interesting parallels. Near the end of *De profectibus in virtute*, Plutarch argues that the presence of a certain self-confidence and self-knowledge can be regarded as a clear token of moral progress. Accordingly, a man who has made such progress will no longer be disturbed when a famous and prudent man suddenly appears, nor conceal or change some personal detail (85BC), but will even in the presence of good men be satisfied with his own condition. Diametrically opposed to such a behaviour is that of the students who at the dinner of Erato were embarrassed by Ammonius' attack against the use of flower-garlands and began to take them off (646A). Their conduct obviously shows that they have made only little progress and is opposed to that of Plutarch himself, who is not confused at all but quietly and appropriately deals with the situation.

Earlier in the treatise, Plutarch suggests that authenticity (τὸ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν) rather than outward display (τὸ πρὸς ἐπίδειξιν) should be considered as an indication of moral progress (80E). Whereas beginners are over-bold, give themselves airs, and have a countenance full of disdain which spares nobody, the προκόπτοντες are less conceited and less concerned with external details, and – what is especially interesting in our context – replace their contempt for other people with biting self-criticism and mildness towards others (81BC). If that is true, Niger can obviously be classified under the group of mere beginners (692B-E), just like the young men who attacked Epicurus (653B). In all of these cases, the students who are introduced in the *Quaestiones convivales* are *negative examples of moral progress*. It is clear, then, that a comparison with *De profectibus in virtute* fully confirms the above conclusions and that the figure of the student in the *Quaestiones convivales* is usually characterised in a fairly negative way.

2.2. The teachers

While the young students all have their own teachers at school, in the context of the symposion, the older participants *de facto* function together as one group of mutually supporting teachers. Each member of the learned company can take the initiative in contributing directly to the instruction of the young. The host frequently plays an important part in this process by raising interesting questions and directing the discussions, but the guests do not refrain from intervening either, adding new perspectives or

¹⁸ On the crucial importance of this virtue in Plutarch's work, see, e.g., H. M. MARTIN JR., 1960, and J. DE ROMILLY, 1979, pp. 275-307. On its limitations, see G. ROSKAM, 2004a.

¹⁹ See G. ROSKAM, 2005, pp. 220-363 for a systematic discussion of the whole treatise.

introducing other problems. In that sense, the whole conversation often has an instructive aspect.

In the sympotic context, then, education turns out to be teamwork, and the stimulating exchange of ideas is a win-win situation for teachers and students alike. But this particular context even yields an additional advantage, in that it enables the students to observe the conduct of their distinguished teachers outside the school, in their private life²⁰. One should recall in this context the paramount importance which Plutarch attaches to the dynamics of μίμησις in the educational process²¹. It is well-known that this is one of the crucial motivations behind the ambitious project of the *Lives*, which offer concrete examples of illustrious men and their honourable accomplishments and thus incite to careful reflection and imitation (see esp. *Per.* 1,3-2,4 and *Aem.* 1,1). In *De profectibus in virtute*, Plutarch likewise argues that active imitation of good examples, even in small details, can be regarded as an indication of moral progress. In this light, the young students who participate in the learned banquets get a unique opportunity. They can watch how their teachers behave in their private life and fashion their own conduct after it. The teachers, on the other hand, appear to function as paradigmatic models, and this aspect of their role in the *Quaestiones convivales* is a telling example of Plutarch's self-assurance as a teacher.

There are two questions which need further examination in this section: the kind of subjects which the teachers bring forward for discussion and their didactic approach. As far as the former question is concerned, the great variety of subjects immediately attracts notice. All kinds of problems are discussed, with a slight preference for unusual questions (cf. 673A: ζητεῖν τι τῶν περιττῶν). Not without reason, the *Quaestiones convivales* have been linked with the genre of προβλήματα²² (a genre which often occurs in the *Corpus Plutarcheum*²³), and – equally important in this context – there can also be established a connection with the genre of ζητήματα²⁴ (as exemplified in the *Quaestiones Platonicae*, which are obviously rooted in Plutarch's teaching activities). These genres interrelate to an important extent, and distinctions are even further blurred by the convivial context, in which education is merely one of the aims (and perhaps not the most important), next to pleasant pastime and creating and maintaining friendship.

The great variety of subjects reflects the broad interests of the company and their accurate observations of details, but also illustrates typical features of the mature philosophical thinking of Plutarch's day, such as the continuous concern to explore and elaborate traditional answers and the sincere attempt

²⁰ That is, in a context in which they show their real selves; cf. *Per.* 7,5 and F. B. TITCHENER, 1999, pp. 496-9.

²¹ See, e.g., L. VAN DER STOCKT, 2005.

²² See, e.g., S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1989, p. 12; cf. also J. MARTIN, 1931, pp. 173-9.

²³ The *Quaestiones Romanae*, the *Quaestiones Graecae* and the *Quaestiones naturales* are still extant. The Lamprias catalogue also mentions a work *Περὶ προβλημάτων* (n. 193); cf. further n. 119, 139, 149, 160, 161, and 167. See also G. W. M. HARRISON, 2000.

²⁴ See esp. J. OPSOMER, 1996, pp. 75-6.

to get a grip on even the most trivial details of reality through a rational explanation of their causes. The company does not merely consist of Platonists such as Plutarch and Ammonius, but also of adherents of the Peripatos (e.g. Lamprias), Pythagoreans (e.g. Lucius), Stoics (e.g. Sarapion and Philip of Prusias), and Epicureans (e.g. Boethus and Zopyrus). This philosophical circle is further completed by physicians, poets, rhetoricians, grammarians, mathematicians, and statesmen. Everyone brings along his own expertise and deals with the questions from his own point of view²⁵. No doubt every member of the company, however erudite he may be, can benefit from such a conversation²⁶. For the students, however, it provides a particularly rich introduction to different domains of the contemporary scientific and philosophical thinking²⁷.

The teachers' didactic approach, on the other hand, is fully adapted to the sympotic context, rather than vice versa. Usually the learned company does not seem to bear in mind that the conversation also serves a pedagogical aim. They just go on to entertain themselves through their discussions. The young men can listen silently and attentively, and thus learn a lot. Occasionally, however, the students are invited to make their own contribution. In such cases – which remain fairly rare after all – their self-motivation and independence is stimulated²⁸ (646A; 656CD; 744C; 746B; cf. also 694D) and they get the opportunity to secure for themselves a more important place in the company. For a while, the education process appears to become a dialogue. Even at such moments, however, the distance between students and teachers remains and the seeds of the dialogue never reach maturity. The reason for this is not so much the teachers' disdain but rather their friendly tact: the learned company fully takes into account the less advanced level of the students. Therefore Ammonius does not refute Trypho's argument (648B) and later on generously promises to refrain from replying to the solutions proposed by the young men (649A). It is clear that such an attitude, while combining kindness with diplomacy, is hardly conducive to real dialogue. Only twice are the students' contributions explicitly praised as clever and plausible products of personal thinking (656A and 719E). *Se non è vero, è ben trovato*. And twice indeed, one may well remain sceptical about the value of their position, for in both cases, the praise is immediately followed by instruction: the students are introduced to traditional solutions which are well-known in the school but which they

²⁵ Only the statesmen cannot take advantage of their political experience, since the subject of politics is usually avoided in the sympotic discussions; cf. S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1995.

²⁶ Passages such like *Quaest. conv.* 628D and 664D make it perfectly clear that the debates are not merely an exercise for the young men alone.

²⁷ It may be added in passing that this approach is also in line with Plutarch's sceptical outlook (on which see J. OPSOMER, 1998). Different views are often praised as plausible and are more than once juxtaposed without clear hierarchy. The members all look for the truth, without claiming to have reached definitive conclusions. Cf. L. VAN DER STOCKT, 2000, pp. 94 and 97-8.

²⁸ See in general G. ROSKAM, 2004b, esp. pp. 101-14.

apparently overlooked or ignored. In that sense, the young men even here fail to become full members of the group.

Similar conclusions, finally, hold for moral topics, which are also discussed. As has been said above, the moral conduct of the company at the banquet serves as a concrete model that is worthy of imitation. Furthermore, the older participants sometimes bear in mind the specific situation and needs of the young. When Olympichus, for instance, advocates complete sexual continence, Soclarus intervenes, pointing to the presence of young married men for whom such an advice is worthless (654C). Finally, if need be, the students are rebuked for their moral shortcomings. When the company occasionally forgets the *decorum* and joins in disgraceful dancing, Lamprias wishes to rebuke the young men but hesitates because he does not wish to appear as a severe schoolmaster (704C-E). When Callistratus adds fuel to the fire, however, he decides to intervene and elaborates on the moral dangers which rhythmical music entails (705B-706C). This is a beautiful piece of parrhesiastic admonition which still remains friendly and tactful: through his indirect and theoretical approach, Lamprias perfectly succeeds in avoiding direct attacks and disturbing the context of convivial friendship, while at the same time managing to get his message across in an unambiguous and clear way²⁹. In this case, too, the same tension between tactful respect and patronising returns.

3. Calvenus Taurus

Basically the same approach returns in our sources about Calvenus Taurus, an influential Platonist in Athens whose *floruit* is placed by Eusebius in 145 A.D. (*Chron.* 2161; p. 202 Helm)³⁰ and whose lessons were attended by Aulus Gellius. Gellius' work contains much interesting information about Taurus' pedagogical convictions and ideals. Several passages from his *Noctes Atticae* show a fairly negative portrait of the students, who in Taurus' view are far inferior to their predecessors (1,9,1-11 and 7,10,1-5). Taurus himself, on the other hand, appears as an erudite teacher who is well acquainted with medicine (12,5,3 and 18,10,1-7), is respected by powerful politicians (2,2,1)³¹, and always welcomes opportunities for intellectual discussions (12,5,5).

In the context of this contribution, however, it is especially important that Taurus used to invite his students to dinner. Gellius tells how the students were expected to bring topics for discussion as their own contribution to the dinner. These contributions were called τραγημάτια or "little sweetmeats" (7,13,12), which may be understood both as a humorous allusion to the second book of

²⁹ A beautiful parallel is to be found in *De ad. et am.* 70E (Ammonius' indirect rebuke of one of his students).

³⁰ Good studies of Taurus' life and philosophy include H. DÖRRIE, 1973; J. DILLON, 1977, pp. 237-47; M.-L. LAKMANN, 1995. An edition of the fragments with commentary can be found in A. GIOÈ, 2002, pp. 221-376.

³¹ Cf. J. DILLON, 2002, pp. 29-30.

Plato's *Republic* (372c and e, on the desserts of the 'healthy' and the 'fevered' state) and as a tacit correction of this passage (replacing as it does even the most simple desserts such as figs or beans with pleasant intellectual discussions³²). However that may be, it is clear that Taurus' symposia (at least those mentioned by Gellius) are much more adapted to the specific intellectual condition of students than Plutarch's. Whereas the young students usually remain silent participants in Plutarch, they apparently play a much more important part at Taurus' table.

We might expect, then, that the characterisation of the students which we find in Gellius is more positive too. This, however, is only partly true. Here as well, the young men occasionally appear as immature, and their easy and unjustified rejection of some subtle problems as empty sophisms (7,13,7) recalls the cheap criticism of the young men against Epicurus in Plutarch's *Quaestiones convivales* (653B)³³. But in general, Taurus seems to have taken their arguments seriously, although an important *caveat* should be added here, viz. the differences of perspective in both sources: Plutarch wrote as a teacher, Gellius as a student, and this, of course, in all likelihood influenced their presentation. We shall never know what Taurus really thought about the contributions of his students nor how he behaved in a context comparable to that of Plutarch's learned symposia.

Taurus' didactic approach is very similar to that of Plutarch. For just like Plutarch, Taurus takes care to stimulate the independence and the self-motivation of his students, and more than Plutarch, he succeeds in turning the educational process into a real dialogue. His invitation to look for intriguing (cf. 7,13,4: ἐνθυμημάτια [...] *florentem vino animum lacessentia*) problems is a particularly interesting and accurate way of arousing wonder, which constitutes the ἀρχή of philosophy, and like Plutarch, he does not hesitate to derive himself topics for discussion from concrete events (17,8,3-9). Under Taurus' supervision, the students as it were learn to philosophise. They are allowed to speak first, whereupon Taurus intervenes in order to confirm their answer³⁴ (17,8,11), to add supplementary information (17,8,11-15) and raise related questions (17,8,16), or to emend their erroneous views by giving the relevant philosophical background (7,13,7-11).

The general conclusion, then, is that Plutarch and Taurus were both conscious of the rich opportunities which a symposion could provide for educative purposes. The students have a more significant role in Taurus' approach, although this is no doubt connected with the specific context (Taurus' symposia, unlike Plutarch's, were specifically organised for students) and perhaps with the judgement of Gellius. But both Plutarch and Taurus

³² Thus following Plato's own ideals of sympotic entertainment; cf. *Prt.* 347cd and *Smp.* 176e.

³³ Cf. also the figure of the garrulous and boastful Stoic student in 1,2,3-6, who may serve as the counterpart of Niger in Plutarch, *Quaest. conv.* 692B-E.

³⁴ Even if he probably disagreed with several aspects of the proposed solution; cf. M.-L. LAKMANN, 1995, p. 158.

try to stimulate basically the same philosophical attitude by encouraging independent thinking³⁵.

4. Favorinus of Arles

A completely different case is that of Favorinus, who knew Plutarch personally³⁶ and participated in at least one symposium where Plutarch was present as well (*Quaest. conv.* 734E-735C). But Favorinus also organised symposia himself, and two of these were attended by Gellius³⁷. During these dinners, so Gellius tells us, a slave usually read a book. On one such occasion, Favorinus makes a critical remark which immediately closes the debate, even before it has begun (3,19,1-5). The other case is even more illustrative. When in a Latin poem the term *Iapyx* occurred, the company asks Favorinus to explain this name and add supplementary information about the names of the other winds (2,22,2). Favorinus replies with a torrent of words, going on and on *ad nauseam*. His speech is a beautiful sample of his encyclopedic erudition³⁸, to be sure, but also shows *ex cathedra* teaching which leaves no place at all for any dialogue. The process is entirely monological, and the students can only remain passive and admire the brilliant speaker in silence. They are never encouraged to think for themselves or adopt an independent and critical position.

It is interesting to note that Favorinus himself seems to realise that his contribution was not entirely *comme il faut*. At the end of his lengthy speech, he admits that “for one to do all the talking at a large dinner-party is neither decent nor becoming” (2,22,26: *in convivio autem frequenti loqui solum unum neque honestum est [...] neque commodum*; transl. J. C. Rolfe). These words most strikingly reveal Favorinus’ principal concern. His avowal is by no means rooted in an educative reflex but in his insight that a dinner is not the appropriate place to give a speech such like that. His intervention is much more in line with the epideictic speeches characteristic of the so-called ‘Second Sophistic’, which require another audience and another context. He does not attempt to stimulate independent thinking but wants to impress the audience through his erudition and through the literary embellishment of his words. In that sense, Gellius’ reference to Favorinus’ *elegantia verborum* and to his beautiful style (2,22,27) is far from pointless. For Taurus, this would have been of minor importance (17,20,5-6), but for Favorinus, it was essential. It is clear, then, that

³⁵ One may well wonder whether Taurus read Plutarch’s *Quaestiones convivales* and drew inspiration from the work for his didactic approach, or whether the similarities should rather be traced back to the Platonic philosophical tradition which they both share. For Taurus’ general appreciation of Plutarch (cf. 1,26,4: *Plutarchus noster, vir doctissimus ac prudentissimus*), see, e.g., J. DILLON, 1977, p. 237; M.-L. LAKMANN, 1995, pp. 227-8.

³⁶ On the philosophical connections between both, see, e.g., J. OPSOMER, 1997.

³⁷ On Gellius’ importance as a source for Favorinus, see M.-L. LAKMANN, 1997; S. M. BEALL, 2001; cf. also B. BALDWIN, 1973 and M. PEZZATI, 1973.

³⁸ Favorinus was the author of a *Παντοδαπή ἱστορία*, a miscellaneous work in 24 books which gives evidence of his encyclopedic interests; see further A. BARIGAZZI, 1993, pp. 568-70 and L. HOLFORD-STREVENSON, 1988, pp. 81-3.

Favorinus' education is aimed at a different ideal. Unlike Plutarch and Taurus, he does not wish to educate mature Platonic philosophers, but self-conscious, erudite, and virtuoso speakers such like himself.

5. Conclusion

The above evidence clearly shows that the symposion did not necessarily coincide with drunken revelry in the intellectual circles of the first and second century A.D. It was especially regarded and appreciated as a pleasant pastime which tightened the bonds of friendship, but at the same time, it yielded rich opportunities for the education of younger men. In the convivial context, these educative purposes sometimes came to the fore (viz. in the banquets which Taurus organised for his students), and sometimes merely played a secondary part in a broader context (as in Plutarch's *Quaestiones convivales*). In all of the above discussed cases, however, the sympotic conduct of both teachers and students gives evidence of the triumphant victory of refined culture over refined wine.

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“VINOUS BABBLING”
THE SYMPOSIUM IN PLUTARCH’S *TABLE TALK* VII, 9 – VIII,
PROEM (714A – 717A) AND MAXIMUS OF TYRE’S *ORATION XXII*

JEROEN LAUWERS
Research Foundation – Flanders
Catholic University of Leuven

Abstract

In his *Table-Talk* (VII, 714A – VIII, 717A), Plutarch introduces a theme which also occurs in Maximus of Tyre’s *Oration XXII ‘On proper entertainment’*, viz. the Persian habit to discuss important subjects over wine. Both authors consider this matter in the context of a wider moral-philosophical reflection on the appropriate way of dealing with deliberation, drinking and drunkenness, but each of them comes to a different appreciation, which seems quite indicative for their position throughout their wider oeuvre: whereas Plutarch seems to attribute high value to the custom of the symposium and even uses it as an inspiring setting for his *Table Talk*, Maximus often associates it with flattery and immoderate drunkenness, which entails a real threat for the virtuous man. By comparing these two authors’ opinion on the symposium, this paper enlarges the understanding of the Plutarchan symposium within its Greek and Roman context, and highlights the philosophically and socially distinctive position of both authors *vis-à-vis* their contemporary audience.

0. The status of the symposium in Plutarch’s *Table Talk* and elsewhere in his oeuvre still provokes fruitful scholarly discussion. Was the Plutarchan symposium the description of an actual social ritual in the élite society of his day or merely a literary fiction?¹ To what extent should his banquets be read as a normative example? How is the philosophical tradition interwoven with Plutarch’s view on symposia? How much independence did he allow himself (or did his public allow him) in his dialogue with this authorized tradition?

Of course, Plutarch’s *Table Talk* and his other works are but one source for a reconstruction of the actual ritual of the symposium in the Roman Empire, and they might contain some rather misleading information, for it cannot be taken for granted that Plutarch aimed at presenting an objective image of a drinking party in his day. A confrontation with other authors might help to gain a better understanding of the symposium in and outside Plutarch’s *milieu*. This paper will compare the connotations of the word ‘symposium’ in Plutarch’s oeuvre and in that of Maximus of Tyre², a philosophical orator of the second

¹ See e.g. J. MARTIN, 1931, pp. 177 sqq. (Plutarch’s συμποσιακά as a fictional literary framework); J. C. RELIHAN, 1992, p. 232: “Plutarch blurs the line between artificially constructed symposia and actual drinking parties not only by referring to the symposia of Xenophon and Plato as if they actually happened, but by literary rendering actual entertainments”; M. VETTA, 2000, passim, esp. p. 225 (Plutarch’s symposium as a mainly antiquarian summary of philosophical and symposiastic themes) and F. PORDOMINGO PARDO, 1999 (the historicity of some symposiastic aspects in Plutarch’s *Table Talk*).

² Since a more stylistic comparison between Plutarch and Maximus has already been made by P. VOLPE CACCIATORE, 2000, I will focus on a thematic comparison and only analyse Plutarch’s and Maximus’ rhetorical strategies if they underline a thematic point of view.

century AD, who probably delivered his speeches in Rome as an introduction to philosophy for young students³. Maximus did not write as extensively on symposia as Plutarch did, but that does not mean that his description of the symposium does not present an authentic testimony on drinking parties in the Imperial era. On the contrary, since Maximus seemed to have less interest in the philosophical, elevated value of the drinking parties (cf. *infra*), the symposia described in his texts might be closer to the actual drinking parties of his contemporaries.

1. In the fourth paragraph of his twenty-second *Oration 'On Proper Entertainment'*, Maximus expresses his disgust at the symposiastic behaviour of the Aenianes, whose banquets are characterized by a burlesque form of role-playing, including even simulated fighting scenes. Maximus, commenting that this is a highly unconvivial spectacle, far prefers the Persian symposium, where important subjects are usually discussed over a moderate amount of wine, as described in Herodotus' *Histories*⁴. The main reason for Maximus' approval is the fact that the Persians had a "rule restraining drunkenness", which "simultaneously roused their virtues", because it withheld the participants from "inflaming [their contentiousness] beyond what was needed" (22, 4, e; translation: M. B. Trapp). That Maximus is opposed to heavy drinking and drunkenness during the discussion of important matters also appears from the comparison between drunkards and sober demagogues in the Athenian assembly, who have an unrestrained (and, to Maximus, pernicious) license of speech. Here is another major element to be encountered in Maximus' appreciation of the symposium, his rejection of free speech which is provoked by a certain amount of wine. These two aspects, the abhorrence of unrestrained drinking and the rejection of *parrhesia*, are of major importance for the understanding of Maximus' position in contrast to Plutarch's.

Plutarch, for his part, introduces the topic of the Persian symposium in a different context. In his *Table Talk*, Glaucias, one of the dinner guests, tries to prove that discussing important matters over wine was no less a Persian than a Greek custom (VII, 9; 714A-C). This conclusion provokes the question

³ See G. L. KONIARIS, 1982, pp. 113-114 and M. B. TRAPP, 1997, pp. xx-xxii.

⁴ Hdt. I, 133.3. It is very likely that Maximus also had some passages (esp. 2.2.1-2.3.1 and 8.8.10) of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* in mind while referring to this custom (just as Plutarch probably did). It is in fact noteworthy in this context that the most outstanding feature of the *Cyropaedia*'s parties is their unusual sobriety (see D. L. GERA, 1993, pp. 132-91, esp. p. 150). This, however, does not mean that Maximus is not advancing his own opinion about symposia in this passage as well as in other parts of his work, since the same can be said about Maximus as D. L. GERA, 1993, p. 154 suggests about Xenophon: "... the omissions and restrictions of the *Cyropaedia*'s symposia, as well as their uniformity in tone, must have been deliberately planned by Xenophon, for he was acquainted with very different types of symposia, both actual and literary." Just like Xenophon, Maximus knew a large corpus of practices and canonical texts from which he could pick the most appropriate ones to bring his own point of view home. Besides, he explicitly affirms his own approval of the Persian practice, without any literal reference to a traditional authority. Therefore, I think, it can hardly be doubted that Maximus is communicating his own opinion on symposia to his audience here.

whether it was a good custom to discuss such matters at a drinking-party (VII, 10; 714D-716C). In answer to that, a brother of Plutarch's, although warning against possible excesses at table, utters a positive appreciation of typical symposiastic activities. He leans particularly on the argument that the drinking of wine at a party elicits free speech, and, combined with that, truthful discussions among the participants (715F)⁵. In the Proem to Book VIII of his *Table Talk* (716D-717A), Plutarch continues to reflect on this subject, arguing that especially philosophical⁶ topics should be dealt with over wine, for otherwise a party ends in an unstructured stream of 'vinous babbling'. Using the Persian example as a starting point then, and placing philosophical discussion at the centre of the symposium, Plutarch creates a normative example of a proper drinking-party, which he situates in the context of the Greco-Roman symposium.

This first comparison has already brought to light an important difference between the two philosophers. Maximus, on the one hand, makes no particular effort to promote the symposium, and minimizes its privileged position in moral and philosophical instruction. To his mind, the symposium can be a justified institution only if the core elements which are characteristic for a symposiastic party – the abundant food tables, the heavy drinking, cheap entertainment, etcetera – are banned or restrained. Since there is no rule limiting the use of alcohol in the Greco-Roman world, Maximus chooses his example in Persia without, however, wanting to extend this example to real prescriptions for Greek and Roman symposiasts. One may well wonder whether Maximus does not consider the symposia of his time rather redundant happenings which provide no additive educational contribution for his students in philosophy. Plutarch, on the other hand, does not only point at the possible excesses which occur at symposia, but also actualizes the Persian custom described by Herodotus to his own contemporary drinking groups which he introduces as exemplary for other convivial companies.

2. When I now relate these opinions on Greek symposia to the more general views of the two authors, a remarkable consistency in both opinions and agendas comes to the surface. Maximus tends to associate symposia with flattery⁷, wrong decision-making⁸, silly enjoyment of pleasure⁹, misplaced

⁵ On *parrhesia* in the context of the (Greek) symposia, see W. RÖSLER, 1995, esp. pp. 108-9.

⁶ As S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1995 and 1999, p. 68 convincingly suggests, the political aspect in Plutarch's *Table Talk* as well as in other symposiastic works seems quite absent in favour of the philosophical discussion. Also the passages under consideration here "sono piuttosto temi conviviali, 'simpotici'" (1995, p. 343).

⁷ Max., *Or.*, 14, 7, f on the flatterers of a certain Callias, who was ridiculed by Eupolis at the theatre.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 3, 7, d offers a comparison between the accusers of Socrates and drunken symposiasts.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 25, 6, a.

luxury¹⁰, and unacceptable behaviour¹¹. The only place where he considers the symposium as a possibly virtuous institution is the aforementioned passage where he talks about the Persian custom. In any other case, he implicitly advises his students against attending convivial activities, which entail a real threat for the virtuous man. This latter aspect appears clearly in this simile between the symposium and the stimuli of the senses:

Ὡσπερ οὖν ἐν συμποσίῳ μεστῶ κνίσης πολλῆς, καὶ οἴνου χεομένου, καὶ αὐλῶν ἤξου, καὶ συρίγγων, καὶ ψαλμάτων, καὶ θυμιαμάτων, τανδρὸς ἂν εἴη καρτεροῦ συναγείραντος καὶ συστείλαντος καὶ τὰς αἰσθήσεις ἀποστρέφοντος, νηφάλιον καὶ κόσμιον¹²: οὕτως ἀμέλει καὶ ἐν τῇ τῶν αἰσθήσεων πολυφωνίᾳ χαλεπὸν εὐρεῖν νήφοντα νοῦν, καὶ δυνάμενον προσβλέπειν τοῖς αὐτοῦ θεάμασιν. (Max., *Or.* 11. 7g)

Therefore, just as at a symposium, as rich savours fill the air, and the wine is poured, and flutes and pipes and lyres play, and incense burns, it would take a strong-willed man to stay sober and disciplined – a man capable of taking a grip on himself and chastening himself and diverting his own proper objects. (Transl. M.B. Trapp)

In this passage, the virtuous man receives no moral instruction to deal with a symposium. He must simply be armed against its vices by his own mental strength, and it is his own responsibility to stay sober in the face of all these malicious seductions. As the potential optative clause suggests, the appearance of a virtuous man at a drinking-party is just a fictitious illustrative supposition. This utterance implicitly advises the students who truly want to become wise and virtuous to stay away from, rather than to indulge in, such gatherings as the symposia. Maximus' own position on the symposiastic environment is further illustrated by the following passage:

Καὶ τις ἤδη ἰατρὸς εὐμήχανος ἀνεκέρασεν βραχεῖαν ἡδονὴν τῷ ἀλγεινῷ τῆς ἰάσεως· ποριστῆς δὲ ἡδονῆς, καὶ παντοίας ἡδονῆς, οὔτε ὁ Ἄσκληπιός, οὔτε οἱ Ἄσκληπιάδαι, ἀλλ' ὀψοποιῶν τὸ ἔργον. (...) Ἀλλὰ τοὺς μὲν ὀψοποιούς τούτους τοῖς συμποσίοις ἐῷμεν, καὶ γαστρὸς καὶ ἀκοῆς ὑπηρέτας πονηρούς· ἡμῖν δὲ δεῖ λόγου ὀρθοῦ καὶ διανεστηκότος. (Max., *Or.*, 25. 5h–6a)

Many a resourceful doctor has before now tempered the bitterness of his cure with a small admixture of something sweeter; but neither Asclepius nor the Asclepiadae are indiscriminate purveyors of pleasure – that is the work of caterers. (...) *Let us leave these contenders to their symposia*, like the miserable servants of belly and ear that they are. *What we need* is a style of utterance that stands straight and tall. (Transl. M.B. Trapp)

¹⁰ Max., *Or.* 30, 3, e on king †Aeetes†.

¹¹ Ibid., 39, 4, a on Alcibiades.

¹² This passage is indeed a *locus desperatus*, but the general content seems clear.

Through his use of the μέν-δέ-construction, Maximus opposes himself and his pupils to cooks who provide 'idle' food at the symposia (this combined with the negative 'idle' connotation of ὀψοποιία in Plato's *Gorgias*¹³). By this statement, Maximus leaves no doubt that his educational program must be organized away from the burlesque symposia, where mere care for the stomach prevails over philosophical discussion and knowledge.

The same admonitory statements occur in Plutarch's oeuvre as well, but with a different undertone. Like Maximus, Plutarch also warns about moral vices at symposia like (pseudo-philosophical) talkativeness¹⁴, but he does not aim as much at keeping people away from these parties as he tries to show the right conduct that must be displayed when one enters a convivial gathering. Plutarch's attitude is characterized by a tension between a realistic, sometimes excessive image of convivial parties and a highly normative portrayal which fits his own agenda. Even if most of the people at a party behave badly, the virtuous man does not need to stay away from it. He must rather face this gathering in a morally elevated way:

Οἷον ἐν συμποσίῳ φίλου κιθαρωδὸς αἶδει κακῶς ἢ πολλοῦ κωμωδὸς ἔωνημένος ἐπιτρίβει Μένανδρον, οἱ δὲ πολλοὶ κροτοῦσι καὶ θαυμάζουσιν· οὐδὲν οἶμαι χαλεπὸν οὐδὲ δύσκολον ἀκούειν σιωπῆ καὶ μὴ παρὰ τὸ φαινόμενον ἀνελευθέρως ἐπαίνειν. (Plu., *De vit. pud.* 531B-C)

Thus at a friend's banquet a citharode sings badly or a comic actor got for a great price murders Menander, and the crowd applauds and admires. Here I think it no hard or grievous matter to listen in silence and refrain from insincere and unmanly applause. (Transl. The Loeb Classical Library)

The very fact that Plutarch prescribes what one should or should not do at a drinking-party illustrates that he does not consider the symposium as a morally indifferent and hedonistic gathering where anything goes, but as an institution where one can train one's moral and mental strength. In Plutarch's view, the occurrence of vicious persons at a drinking-party does not exclude guidelines for the right symposiastic conduct, as is the case in Maximus' oeuvre. Besides the portrayal of some excesses, which indicates that Plutarch is not blind to the dangers which the attendance of a symposium might imply, the positive value of the symposiastic institution is often highlighted as well, not only evidently in Plutarch's so-called symposiastic works (the *Table Talk* and the *Dinner of the Seven Sages*), but also in the rest of his oeuvre. Ample illustrations can be found of Plutarch's benevolent appreciation of the symposium, which is distinguished alternately by its appropriateness¹⁵, its philosophical and poetical value¹⁶, and its capability to illustrate a man's modesty¹⁷. Plutarch thus confirms a virtuous

¹³ Pl., *Grg.*, 462 sqq.; 521d-522a for ὀψοποιία as a form of κολακεία. Cf. M. B. TRAPP, 1997, p. 211 n. 17.

¹⁴ Plu., *De prof. in virt.*, 80A; *De gar.*, 502F; 514C.

¹⁵ IDEM, *Lyc.*, 25, 2; *Aem.*, 28, 5; *Reg. et imp. apophth.*, 198B.

¹⁶ IDEM, *De ad. et am.*, 68B; *De Pyth. or.*, 405F; *Non posse*, 1095C-E.

¹⁷ IDEM, *Dion.*, 13, 2; *De cup. div.*, 527B; *De coh. ira*, 461D.

man's ability to surmount the vicious kind of behaviour at drinking-parties, and makes the symposium a fruitful place where one can give evidence of one's exemplary character and enjoy moral and philosophical instruction.

3. After this brief survey of the connotations of the symposium in Maximus' and Plutarch's works, I return to the passage in the *Table Talk* in which Plutarch discusses the appropriate way of dealing with deliberation, drinking, and drunkenness at a symposium. In his introduction to the eighth Book, he makes the following statement:

Τὴν γοῦν μέθην οἱ λοιδοροῦντες φιλόσοφοι λήρησιν πάροιον ἀποκαλοῦσιν· τὸ δὲ ληρεῖν οὐδὲν ἐστὶν ἀλλ' ἢ λόγῳ κενῶ χρησθαι καὶ φλυαροῦν· λαλιᾶς δ' ἀτάκτου καὶ φλυαρίας εἰς ἄκρατον ἐμπεσοῦσης ὕβρις καὶ παροινία τέλος ἀμουστότατον καὶ ἀχαριστότατον. (Plu., *Quaest. conv.*, 716F)

At any rate, those philosophers who wish to give indulgence in wine a bad name define it as “vinous babbling,” and babbling means, precisely, engaging in empty and frivolous conversation. The outcome of undisciplined chatter and frivolity, when it reaches the extreme of intemperance, is violence and drunken behaviour – an outcome wholly inconsistent with culture and refinement. (Transl. The Loeb Classical Library)

One of this type of mentioned philosophers who adopt a radically hostile position towards the symposium seems to be Maximus of Tyre. Since, according to Maximus, the outcome of such a gathering is nothing but immoral behaviour, a true philosopher should ban the attendance of symposia from his life, following only the so-called non-excessive and philosophical way to real knowledge and understanding. Plutarch, however, chooses another approach:

... λόγῳ τε δεῖ χρησθαι παρὰ πότον θεωρίαν τινὰ καὶ μοῦσαν ἔχοντι καὶ λόγου τοιούτου τῇ μέθῃ παρόντος ἀποκρύπτεται τὸ ἄγριον καὶ μανικόν, ὑπὸ τῶν Μουσῶν εὐμενῶς κατεχόμενον. (Plu., *Quaest. conv.*, 717A)

... when drinking we ought to engage in conversation that has something speculative, some instruction in it, and that when conversation like this accompanies indulgence in wine the wild and manic element is hidden away, benevolently restrained by the Muses. (Transl. The Loeb Classical Library)

As is indicated in the passage, Plutarch, using a generally imperative tone (cf. δεῖ χρησθαι), focuses not on symposiastic vices here, but on the normative and exemplary function which a symposium should fulfil.

4. Besides the philosophical aspirations of these two authors, there is also the question of the social embedding of their discourses. How should Maximus' and Plutarch's appreciation of the symposium be understood against

the social background of the Imperial era? Drinking, after all, is in many societies primarily a social practice¹⁸.

Celebrating parties and consuming alcohol can be a means for consolidating social power, as was the case in the aristocratic origin of the Greek symposium¹⁹, but they can also constitute a value scale on their own, which does not necessarily correspond to the 'natural' hierarchy in society²⁰. It was, in other words, of major importance for the upper class not to let their drinking habits undermine their distinctive position *vis-à-vis* the lower classes²¹. Therefore, apart from their philosophical concerns, both Plutarch's and Maximus' texts can be read as a societal response to this potential threat to the élite dominance over other social groups.

Ingenkamp has proposed the interesting hypothesis that Plutarch's attitude towards drinking and getting drunk was heavily influenced by the social practice of his élite society²². To my mind, Plutarch must indeed have felt the pressure of his contemporary audience, who might have enjoyed rather abundant symposia, but he reacted against this tendency by morally elevating the institution of the symposium through an explicitly normative discourse. A socio-anthropological reading of Plutarch's texts would reveal that, by introducing philosophy as the main aspect of his symposia, the Chaeronian made sure that his élite public would still distinguish itself from the mob, even while celebrating drinking parties. The Tyrian, for his part, considered it safer for the élites to avoid the abundant symposia – unless, of course, the abundance was restrained, as was the case among the Persians –, for these symposia might not only corrupt the moral virtues of his listeners, but also blur their social distinction as élites towards 'inferior' people.

5. Does Plutarch's *Table Talk* then offer a realistic portrait of the symposium, or is it merely a literary utopia? Some passages in Plutarch and the comparison with Maximus' *Oration*s in any case show that, for Greek and Roman people, there was no evident link between symposiastic activities and morally high-standard behaviour²³. If Plutarch's image of the symposium in his *Table Talk* as

¹⁸ M. DOUGLAS, 1987, p. 4.

¹⁹ For the 'ritual' function of the symposium and its role in the creation of a social order, see O. MURRAY, 1990, pp. 3 sqq.; cf. A. M. SCARCELLA, 1999, pp. 7-13.

²⁰ See O. MURRAY, 1995, pp. 4 sqq. Cf. M. DOUGLAS, 1987, p. 8: "Drinks also act as markers of personal identity and of boundaries of inclusion and exclusion." Here she is referring to a study of G. MARS, 1987, which defiles the social power of drinking for working men on the docks in Newfoundland, Canada, where a man's transition from outsider to insider depends more heavily on his drinking habits and 'skills' than on his commitment to and talent for his job.

²¹ On the importance for a member of the élite to distinguish himself from the ordinary people on various (cultural) levels, see P. BOURDIEU, 1979. On the idea of equality among the participants in a *convivium* in the Early Empire, see J. D'ARMS, 1990, esp. p. 313 for Plutarch's *Table Talk*. One should however bear in mind that the drinking companions at the Plutarchan symposium are already members of the social élite, which obviously influences our interpretation of the argument in favour of *ἰσότης* among the participants.

²² H. G. INGENKAMP, 1999.

²³ This conclusion corresponds well with A. G. NIKOLAIDIS, 1999, pp. 342-3: "Perhaps, all

well as in other works does in fact correspond to real customs among the Greeks, it was, I think, at the very most a rare and idealizing interpretation by small groups of cultivated men, who were inspired by the great tradition of symposia as described by canonical philosophers, in the first place Plato and Xenophon²⁴.

To conclude then, it seems fair to state that Maximus and Plutarch both serve their own philosophical and social agendas. Both testify to the possible dangers interwoven with the symposia, but each of them comes to a different appreciation. Whereas Maximus turns his back on these so-called pernicious kinds of gatherings, Plutarch, on the other hand, by situating philosophical discussion at the very heart of the symposium, wants to revalue this institution and make it an outstanding place where the virtuous man can give evidence of his qualities and enjoy an elevated status.

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would agree with Plutarch that every self-respecting and orderly man should avoid getting drunk. Yet, judging once more from the extant literary symposia, from Plato and Xenophon to Athenaeus and Lucian, to say nothing about sympotic representations in art, few people in antiquity, I think, would attend a banquet in order to seek instructions or moral edification".

²⁴ See M. VETTA, 2000, p. 223: "La scuola filosofica ha un proprio modello di simposio, differente da quello del resto degli uomini, non edonistico ma creativo." One should, however, not underestimate the time-gap between Plutarch's time and that of Plato. On the relation between Plutarch's symposium and the tradition, A. M. SCARCELLA, 1999, p. 127 argues that "il simposio plutarcheo ha le sue regole, ma sono diverse da quelle che valevano nell'età classica: esse rispecchiano il cambiamento delle convinzioni e delle coscienze, ora più aperte e tolleranti, ora più intransigenti ed austere."

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THE ROLE OF REALITY IN PLUTARCH'S *QUAESTIONES CONVIVALES*

FRANCES B. TITCHENER
Utah State University, Logan

Abstract

In his *Quaestiones Convivales*, Plutarch is, if not the first, one of the first to fuse the genres of problem-collection with more traditional symposiastic literature. Later works like Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae* and parts of Aulus Gellius' *Noctes Atticae* show that the hybrid remained a popular one. This is surely at least partially a function of the lively nature of the *Quaestiones* themselves. Is another part of the attraction the opportunity to look through a window at Plutarch, his private life, and family? If so, does it matter whether or not these dinner parties actually took place? Yes and no, depending on the reader's viewpoint. The literal reality of the dinner parties is a tactic, part of the arsenal of techniques with which Plutarch will lead us to a greater reality that is much more meaningful.

The *QC* open with an address to Sossius Senecio, in which Plutarch tells us what he means to do in these essays, and why he has written them, or written them down:

“...to consign to utter oblivion all that occurs at a drinking-party is not only opposed to what we call the friend-making character of the dining-table, but also has the most famous of the philosophers to bear witness against it, – Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle, Speusippus, Epicurus, Prytanis, Hieronymus, and Dio of the Academy, who all considered the recording of conversations held at table a task worth some effort,– and since, moreover, you thought that I ought to collect such talk as suits our purpose from among the learned discussions in which I have often participated in various places both at home in your company and among us in Greece, with table and goblet before us, I have applied myself to the task and now send you three of the books, each containing ten questions which we have discussed” (*Mor.* 612E).

Of the authors Plutarch lists above, we have only the symposia by Plato and Xenophon to which we can compare the *QC*. There are obviously many similarities, including the use of historical figures for the participants, and the philosophic nature of the debate, but the *QC* are much more varied in content and setting. Symposiastic authors after Plutarch, notably Athenaeus and Aulus Gellius, continue Plutarch's general format of miscellaneous and learned discussion over the dinner-table, but confine the conversation to one night's dinner. Since he wrote only a century after Plutarch, and since he cites over 1,000 different authors, it seems odd that Athenaeus cites Plutarch of Chaeronea only once, in a passage about a doctor who avoided intoxication by consuming bitter almonds before a symposium (II 52). The fact that there is no other specific mention of Chaeronean Plutarch has led to the suggestion

that this passage was not by Athenaeus, but interpolated (Olson, vol. 1, x-xi). It may be that the Plutarch of Alexandria who is one of the dinner guests is, in fact, a reference, or even compliment, to Plutarch of Chaeronea. This kind of correlation may be true of other Deipnosophists also, like Ulpian (for the jurist Ulpian of Tyre), Philadelphus of Ptolemais (for the Egyptian king Ptolemy Philadelphus), or the philosopher Democritus of Nicomedia (for the philosopher Democritus of Abdera). Since either, neither, or both of those things could be true, it is sufficient here to establish the generic link between some writings of Plutarch and Athenaeus.

Aulus Gellius, writing in the latter third of the second c. CE, was quite familiar with Plutarch's works. He cites Plutarch numerous times, referring to at least four different works, including the *QC*. In fact, his very first essay discusses a lost Plutarchan treatise "on the mental and physical endowment and achievements of Hercules while he was among men" (*NA* 1.1.) In his introduction, Gellius makes it clear that he is using a similar system to Plutarch's own notebooks, or hypomnemata¹, and in fact this is how he explains the character of the *Attic Nights* and where they got their name: "For whenever I had taken in hand any Greek or Latin book, or had heard anything worth remembering I used to jot down whatever took my fancy, of any and every kind, without any definite plan or order; and such notes I would lay away as an aid to my memory, like a kind of literary storehouse, so that when the need arose of a word or a subject which I chanced for the moment to have forgotten, and the books from which I had taken it were not at hand, I could readily find and procure it... And since, as I have said, I began to amuse myself by assembling these notes during the long winter nights which I spent on a country-place in the land of Attica, I have therefore given them the title of *Attic Nights*" (Praef. 4). So in fact, Gellius has a lot more in common with Plutarch in terms of methodology than their mutual authorship of symposiastic literature.

Their very nature makes the *QC* challenging to describe, or categorize any further than this. Once past the basic "nine books, ten questions" format Plutarch himself describes, there is no obvious pattern. All nine books contain some dialogues that are linked dramatically². Some books begin with very long questions, the longest in the book (I, II, IV), but others' longest question is #7 (V) or #6 (VII). The books themselves are of different lengths (IV and IX are missing questions #4 and 5, respectively). Yet it is clear there must be some kind of structure. Plutarch goes to so much trouble to describe the well-made dinner party as something that has little obvious, but much concealed structure³ that it is counterintuitive to assume that there is NOT a similar structure to this work. We do not have to agree with Gellius' statement that symposiastic or convivial literature authors valued quantity above quality (*solam copiam*, praef.

¹ On Plutarch's notebooks, see *De Tranq. An* (*Mor.* 464F with VAN DER STOCKT, 575-79).

² I 2-3; II 4-5, 8-9; III 1-2, 3-5, 7-9; IV 4-6; V 5-6, 8-9; VII 7-8, 9-10; VIII 1-2, 7-8; all of Book IX).

³ *Mor.* 614A: "the height of sagacity is to talk philosophy without seeming to do so..."

11), accumulating material indiscriminately (*sine cura discriminis*) to observe that whatever this structure might be, it is not easily detected.

Harrison has suggested that in the *QC*, Plutarch is not only experimenting with superimposition of the symposiastic form, but in some places is constructing an actual parody, and that an underlying armature, or structure, is in place: "Beyond expanding its scope so that it could encompass all the different genres of *quaestiones*, Plutarch brought an episodic structure to the symposium, which allowed the reader to take up and put down his convivial reminiscences at will and browse through them rather like a collection of poems or fables instead of a work whose argument had to be followed sequentially" (197). Gellius, at any rate, would not agree, rather observing that reading such works brings on fatigue before the reader actually encounters anything worth reading (*NA Praef.* 11). True or not, it would be very difficult to prove such a theory, but it is easy to agree with the suspicion that the *QC* are unlikely to be organized completely randomly, even though the subject matter is wide-ranging and unpredictable.

For it certainly is both. Many essays deal with every-day, human behavior, and have an almost medical cast. "Why Old Men Read Best at a Distance" (*QC* 1.8⁴), for instance, is evidently a problem of very long standing. "Why Women Do Not Eat the Middle Part of Lettuce" (*QC* 4.10) is less of a concern these days. "Why Noises Are Better Heard in the Night than the Day" (*QC* 8.3), "Why in Autumn Men Have Better Stomachs than in Other Seasons of the Year" (*QC* 2.2), and "Which Is the Fittest Time for a Man to Know His Wife?" (*QC* 3.6) are other examples. Some essays are flat-out invitations to debate, such as "What Is Plato's Meaning, When He Says That God Always Plays the Geometer?" (*QC* 8.2), "Whether the Sea or Land Affords Better Food?" (*QC* 4.4), "Which of Venus's Hands Diomedes Wounded?" (*QC* 9.4), or "Whether the Jews Abstained from Swine's Flesh Because They Worshiped That Creature, or Because They Had an Antipathy Against It?" (*QC* 4.5). Other essays, predictably, cover party management. "That one should guard especially against the pleasures derived from degenerate music, and how to do so", which describes with horror a situation where "music can inebriate, more effectively than any wine, those who drink it in as it comes, with no restraint. For the guests were no longer content to shout and clap from their places, but finally most of them leapt up and joined in the dancing with movements disgraceful for a gentleman, though quite in keeping with that kind of rhythm and melody" (*QC* 7.4). There is quite a lot about dancing in the *QC*, as one would expect, as well as much valuable information about parties in general—seating, discussion topics, wine and its effects. Some problems appear to be common to all times: "Concerning Those Guests That Are Called Shadows, and Whether Being Invited by Some to Go to Another's House, They Ought to Go; and When, and to Whom" (*QC* 7.6); others less so, i.e. "Whether it Is Fitting to Wear Chaplets of Flowers at Table" (*QC* 3.1) or "Whether Flute-girls Are to Be

⁴ References to the *QC* henceforth will take the form of book and question number.

Allowed at a Feast” (*QC* 7.7). And there are many scientific questions, such as “Why Fresh Water Washes Clothes Better than Salt?” (*QC* 1.9), “Which Was First the Bird or the Egg?” (*QC* 2.3), “Whether Ivy Is of a Hot or Cold Nature?” (*QC* 3.2), and “What Is the Reason That Hunger Is Allayed by Drinking, but Thirst Increased by Eating?” (*QC* 6.3).

The difficulty in discerning an over-arching structure and the disparity among the various essays may be one reason why an important aspect of scholarly discussion about Plutarch’s *QC* has centered on “authenticity,” that is whether or not something is or is not literally true⁵. This debate assumes that whether or not these dinners took place where, when, and with whom Plutarch describes is crucial to understanding the *QC*: as Teodorsson puts it, “Whether his model works were symposiac dialogues or not, Plutarch’s contribution to the symposiac genre is obvious. This is due specifically to the element of authenticity... This element is essential to the work⁶”. To be fair, Teodorsson does not suggest that Plutarch staged these dinner parties in order to mine the party chatter, nor that he had these dinner-talks recorded, but rather that as he wrote later in life, he remembered them, sometimes even the particular themes. In fact, this is what Plutarch tells us himself:

that he wrote these conversations down sporadically, as each came to mind, evidently expecting readers to view these conversations as invented saying “Nor must my readers be surprised, if though addressing myself to you, I have introduced some of your own past conversation also; for indeed if the getting of knowledge does not insure that one remembers it, frequently the same end is attained by recollection as by learning” (*QC* 2. Intro).

But focusing on the literal reality of the banquets, possibly, is to miss a much larger point. Early in the *QC*, the *grammatikos* Marcus invites debate on Neanthes’ *Sagas of the State*. Fellow banqueter Milo wants to establish the truth of a particular anecdote in the work before commencing discussion. Philopappus says the veracity of the anecdote is not an issue “because the discussion will provide occasion for practice, even if it provides nothing else useful” (*QC* 1.10). The reality described by Plutarch at the dinner parties is just as real for his purposes as a video recording. To insist on “authenticity” or truth as an important lens through which to view the *QC* is to fail to distinguish the subtle differences between and among history, biography, and autobiography. What the *QC* present us with is something a little in between: what at least conveys the texture of what MIGHT have happened, COULD have happened, and periodically HAD in fact happened. For Plutarch’s purposes, this is really all the same thing. He seems to refer to this in *Solon* (27.1):

“That Solon should discourse with Croesus, some think not agreeable with chronology; but I cannot reject so famous and well-attested a narrative, and,

⁵ S.-T. TEODORSSON, vol. 1, 12-13 a good background to this discussion.

⁶ S.-T. TEODORSSON, vol. I, 13.

what is more, so agreeable to Solon's temper, and so worthy his wisdom and greatness of mind, because, forsooth, it does not agree with some chronological canons, which thousands have endeavoured to regulate, and yet, to this day, could never bring their differing opinions to any agreement”.

But Pelling is surely right not to put too much weight on this⁷: “It is simply that the boundary between truth and falsehood was less important than that between acceptable and unacceptable fabrication, between things which were ‘true enough’ and things which were not. Acceptable rewriting will not mislead the reader seriously, indeed readers will grasp more of the important reality if they accept what Plutarch writes than if they do not. Truth matters; but it can sometimes be bent a little” (156).

As far as we know, we do not see flat-out fantasy in the *QC*, and clearly Plutarch cannot stray too far from reality, particularly in terms of the other symposiasts. Philopappus, for instance, was a Roman consul during Trajan's reign. L. Mestrius Florus, the man who obtained Plutarch's Roman citizenship for him, and Sossius Senecio, another Roman consular to whom some of the *Parallel Lives* and *Moralia* are dedicated⁸, also make appearances in the *QC*. We hear about and from many of Plutarch's relatives, like his father, sons, and father-in-law⁹. Some of the banquets take place in Rome, but many are hosted in Chaeronea, providing opportunity for local details on politics, landmarks, and religious festivals. However, in this process, it is dangerous to draw too many or too firm conclusions about Plutarch himself, or his life and family, despite their frequent participation in this essay. Too much inter, or meta, or subtextuality can lead to overreading.

One example of the sort of problem that can arise from mining Plutarch's work for autobiographical elements centers on the answer to the question of why Plutarch resided in Chaeronea, instead of Rome, or at least Athens. At first glance this is straightforward: Plutarch says he chose to stay there because it was such a small town that even one absent citizen would be noticed (*Dem.* 2). Although this is a charming sentiment, it is a little disingenuous to be accepted at face value. Perhaps first and second century CE Athens was a little too Roman for Plutarch, whether that meant expensive, bureaucratic, crowded, impersonal, dangerous, or a combination of the above. Plutarch may not have liked big cities, Rome in particular; he believed that living in a big city was not necessary for living a virtuous and happy life; he did not wish to compete in the international arena any more than was unavoidable through his local political work and his friendship with Roman officials, perhaps because of a kind of apprehensive caution that should not be called by as strong a term as fear. In light of his lack of confidence in his Latin, he could not make use of the library and intellectual resources that would make the expense and stress of life in Rome “worthwhile”. Perhaps his natural diplomacy preferred

⁷ C. B. PELLING, 1990, pp. 143-44, pp. 156-162.

⁸ *Theseus, Demosthenes, Dion; Quomodo quis suos in virtute sentiat profectus.*

⁹ See JONES and PUECH on the various historical personages in Plutarch's writings.

to accentuate the positive aspect of life in Chaeronea rather than deplore the negative aspects of hyperurban life. It is therefore inadequate to accept Plutarch's own descriptions of people and events without further scrutiny, and dangerous to construct evidentiary houses on sand¹⁰.

Yet the characterizations of Plutarch's relatives are vivid, and imply a certain familiarity on the part of his readers, a familiarity confirmed by details. Lamprias, Plutarch's brother or uncle, is said to have spoken up in his "customarily loud voice" (*QC* 1.2); his grandfather Lamprias "was his most ingenious and eloquent self when drinking, and it was his habit to say that, much as incense is volatilized by heat, so was he by wine" (*QC* 1.5). Later one Xenocles of Delphi "as usual" began to tease Plutarch's brother (*QC* 2.2). He refers to the festival Pithoigia, where the new wine is dedicated, saying that "My father had celebrated the ritual, as was his custom" (*QC* 3.7). Plutarch definitely emphasizes the repetitive and familiar, lulling us into participating as invited eavesdroppers. Are these relatives real? Yes. Is their speech and behavior in the *QC* typical? Yes. Did the dinner party conversation happen as reported? Maybe.

And in the end, does authenticity matter? If the characters of Plutarch's *QC* were anonymous, and the banquets declared to be fabrications, we would be dealing with Plutarch's candidly stated own thoughts and ideas, not a free-flowing, evolving, democratically-shaped discussion. But that is not the case. The *QC* are populated by known personages, and Plutarch's statement to Sossius Senecio that he is responding to Sossius' own suggestion in collecting the conversations cannot be complete invention. Plutarch certainly wants us to respond to real people and their real thoughts. To that extent, it matters that banquets certainly took place, and the symposiasts surely at times were together. But as intermediary, Plutarch himself is as much a part of the *QC* as the banquets and conversations spare from which they originated. His choice, organization, and presentation of anecdotes, individuals, and language, as well as some kind of very subtle structure, give us a greater, or enhanced reality than that of the actual banquets. He is in a way the editor of our experience of these banquets, and indispensable to that experience. The *QC* do not need to be authentic to be real and true.

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¹⁰ F. B. TITCHENER, 2002, pp. 140-41; see now ZADOROJNYI, A: "It will emerge from the argument that what we tend to look upon as staple facts about Plutarch's writing career are guarded moves in the game of identity-negotiation" (103).

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DANCING WITH PLUTARCH DANCE AND DANCE THEORY IN PLUTARCH'S *TABLE TALK*

CARLOS A. MARTINS DE JESUS
University of Coimbra

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyze Plutarch's discussion of the different kinds of ancient dance and their meaning in the *Table Talk*. Besides a large section from Book 9 (question 15), all of it concerning the parts of dance and their relation to poetry, we focus on those other moments where different rhythms of dance are discussed. Looking beyond the Plutarchan material, we search for the implications of this subject in terms of *philanthropia* and moderation, concepts extremely important in all nine books of the *Table Talk*.

The ancient symposium was a strictly staged social event at which members of the male elite drank, talked and enjoyed themselves, in a variety of ways. As for this last element, the convivial one, the various semiotic sources that have been preserved – mostly literature and painting¹ – are clear on the importance given to many other elements besides eating and drinking. Music and poetry, inseparable arts, were a constant presence in ancient banquets, and the same should apply to dance.

As far as literature is concerned, there are many fragments from poems composed to be performed at banquets, at least from the middle of the seventh century BC onwards². It is in the *Odyssey* (8.72-95) that we find what is probably the oldest western description of an aristocratic symposium, given by Alcinoos to Odysseus upon the latter's arrival³. In this passage we are presented with an *oidos* singing the very beginnings of the Trojan War, which moves Odysseus to tears. But it is perhaps Herodotus (6.129.6-19) who gives us the first proof that banqueters not only enjoyed the dancer's art but also danced themselves, inspired by the wine and the artists' constant encouragement.

προϊούσης δὲ τῆς πόσιος κατέχων πολλὸν τοὺς ἄλλους ὁ Ἴπποκλείδης ἐκέλευσέν οἱ τὸν αὐλητὴν αὐλῆσαι ἐμμελείαν· πειθομένου δὲ τοῦ αὐλητέω ὀρχήσατο. καὶ κως ἔωυτῶ μὲν ἀρεστῶς ὀρχέετο, ὁ Κλεισθένης δὲ ὀρέων ὄλον τὸ πρῆγμα ὑπόπτει. μετὰ δὲ ἐπισχῶν ὁ Ἴπποκλείδης χρόνον ἐκέλευσέ τινα τράπεζαν ἐσενεῖκαι, ἐσελθούσης δὲ τῆς τραπέζης πρῶτα μὲν ἐπ' αὐτῆς ὀρχήσατο Λακωνικὰ σχημάτια, μετὰ δὲ ἄλλα Ἀττικά, τὸ τρίτον δὲ τὴν κεφαλὴν ἐρείσας ἐπὶ τὴν τράπεζαν τοῖσι σκέλεσιν ἐχειρονόμησε. Κλεισθένης δὲ τὰ μὲν πρῶτα καὶ τὰ δευτέρα ὀρχεομένου ἀποστρυγέων γαμβρὸν ἄν οἱ ἔτι

¹ W. J. HENDERSON, 2000, p. 6 defines and analyzes three different groups of testimony about the Greek symposium: sympotic poetry, vase-painting and archaeological remains from the banquet rooms themselves.

² On sympotic lyric, see W. J. HENDERSON, 1997. E. L. BOWIE, 1986, p. 34 views the symposium as a privileged space for elegiac recitation, taking it as the beginning of the festive event itself.

³ Nevertheless, the word used for banquet in this text is δαίς, not συμπόσιον.

γενέσθαι Ἴπποκλείδεια διὰ τὴν τε ὄρχησιν καὶ τὴν ἀναιδεῖην κατεῖχεν ἑωυτόν, οὐ βουλόμενος ἐκραγῆναι ἐς αὐτόν⁴

As they sat late drinking, Hippoclidēs, now far outdoing the rest, bade the flute-player play him music, and when the flute-player so did, he began to dance; and he pleased himself marvellous well with this dancing; but Cleisthenes saw the whole business with much disfavour. After a while, Hippoclidēs bade a table be brought; when it came he danced on it Laconian first and then Attic figures; last of all he rested his head on the table and made gestures with his legs in the air. Now Cleisthenes at the first and the second bout of dancing could no more bear to think of Hippoclidēs as his son-in-law, for his dancing and his shamelessness; yet he had held himself in check, not willing to vent his wrath on Hippoclidēs⁵.

In this passage, we read about the wedding-banquet offered by Cleisthenes to those who want to marry his daughter. One of them, Hippoclidēs, asks a flute-player girl to join him in a tragic dance (ἐμμέλεια) and, as a table is brought into the room, he dances on it some warrior-style Laconic steps and poses followed by (more comic) Attic ones. What is more, the sort of dance preferred at banquets is already the pantomimic one, as it will be in Plutarch's *Table Talk*. Also, in Herodotus' view, moderation is a priceless value to be taken into consideration at banquets. At the very last, Cleisthenes therefore refuses Hippoclidēs as a candidate for his daughter's hand, for he had been excessive in his performance. Relating to an earlier form of social arrangement – an aristocratic one – both examples may be no more than ancestors of the kind of symposium we find in Plutarch's *Table Talk*, still being an example of spaces of *convivium* in which poetry, music and dance also played an important role. In other words, they are not supposed to be wise-men reunions, since the beginning thought to be a space of scientific and philosophical discussion, even if they actually enrich the elite banqueters with the gift of wisdom.

Before looking at sympotic poetry in more detail, let us point to yet another literary banquet, namely the one described in Xenophon's *Symposium* (2. 15-23). At some point, a boy begins to dance (ἐκ τούτου ὁ παῖς ὄρχήσατο) and the banqueters, including Socrates, try to imitate him in a humorous scene. In this text – which Plutarch should have known very well – dance is only taken as an exercise (καλῶς γυμνάζει καὶ τὰ ἐμὰ ὄρχήματα) rather than as the object of deeper philosophical discussion, if only because Socrates admits that he is not a skilful dancer himself.

Beyond this, several poems from the *Anacreontea*, an anthology put together from the second century BC to the seventh AD, express perfectly the space given to dance in the post-meal program of the banquet. For instance, poem 43 is a fine illustration of the joyful environment that should be usual at banquets:

⁴ H. B. Rosén, *Herodoti Historiae*, vol. II. Leipzig, 1997.

⁵ All translations are those of the Loeb Classical Library.

Στεφάνους μὲν κροτάφοισι
 ῥοδίνους συναρμόσαντες
 μεθύωμεν ἄβρα γελῶντες.
 ὑπὸ βαρβίτῳ δὲ κούρα
 κατακίσσοισι βρέμοντας
 πλοκάμοις φέρουσα θύρσους
 χλιδανόσφυρος χορεύει·
 ἄβροχαίτας δ' ἅμα κούρος
 στομάτων ἀδὺ πνεόντων
 κατὰ πηκτίδων ἀθύρει
 προχέων λίγειαν ὄμφαν.
 ὁ δ' Ἔρως ὁ χρυσοχαίτας
 μετὰ τοῦ καλοῦ Λυαίου
 καὶ τῆς καλῆς Κυθήρης
 τὸν ἐπήρατον γεραιοῖς
 κῶμον μέτεισι χαίρων⁶.

Let us fasten garlands of roses on our brows and get drunk, laughing gently. Let a gorgeous-ankled girl dance to the lyre carrying the thyrsus with its rich ivy tresses. With her let a boy, soft-haired and with sweet-smelling mouth, play the lyre, pouring forth a clear song. And golden-haired Love with beautiful Lyaeus and beautiful Cythere will join happily in the revel that old men find delightful.

No concern is shown here for moderation or good behavior. In fact, this idea is absent from the entire Anacreontic collection. Nevertheless, thanks to his own art and that of his imitators, Anacreon has become a real symbol of sympotic poetry; for the banquet is the special context of most of these poems, a space where Eros, wine, music and dance among drinking men with garlands around their heads are very important elements.

Equally rich testimony is given by Greek vase-painting. Besides their frequent use at the banquet, they usually show sympotic scenes, both mythological ones and episodes from daily life⁷. Moreover, the physical rooms where the event took place were often decorated with sympotic motifs. The most widely known one is probably the so-called Swimmer Tomb Room in Paestum, which was indeed a dining room. On its four walls we see the guests, servants and even a *komos* with a flute-player girl and other artists that could in fact perform some dance steps⁸.

The relevance of this evidence on the Greek symposium to Plutarch is that all the sympotic descriptions that he created (or recreated, we cannot be

⁶ To quote the *Anacreontea*, we use the text of M. L. WEST, *Carmina Anacreontea*, Leipzig, 1984. Numbers 2, 15, 38, 40, 42, 47 and 59 of the collection also mention dance in a sympotic environment.

⁷ For three examples, clearly related to banquets, see L. B. LAWLER, 1964, pp. 119-20.

⁸ In the Roman period, too, the walls of banquet rooms were painted with sympotic motifs, as in the case of the Triclinium House in Pompeii. See K. M. D. DUNBABIN, 2003, pp. 52-60 and plates I-III.

sure) in the nine books of his *Table Talk* are consciously Greek. Inspired by the banquets of wise men portrayed by Plato, Xenophon and others that have not come down to us – yet very different from those archaic *symposia* we find in the Homeric poems –, the Plutarchan *convivium* is designed to imitate Greek ways of drinking, eating and enjoying entertainment. In a joyful party environment, where philosophy is mixed with more trivial issues, singing and dancing would have been part of the post-meal program. Nevertheless, nowhere in the book do we find any detailed description of a dance performance, except maybe the allusion to a dance contest in Book 9 (question 15), to which we shall soon return. Just like the rest of the speakers, Plutarch is more interested in discussing which dance styles are more appropriate to the wise men's banquets, recurring all the time to the opinion of those Greek authors who dealt with the subject, most notably Plato and Xenophon.

The subject of dance appears first in Book 1 of the *Table Talk* (614D-E), at a moment when the discussion focuses on the philosophic argumentation most suitable to a banquet. The dance is then used in the following metaphor:

ὡσπερ γὰρ τὰ σώματα πινόντων δι' ὀρχήσεως καὶ χορείας νερόμισται σαλεύειν, ἂν δ' ὀπλομαχεῖν ἀναστάντας ἢ δισκεύειν ἀναγκάζωμεν αὐτούς, οὐ μόνον ἀτερπὲς ἀλλὰ καὶ βλαβερὸν ἔσται τὸ συμπόσιον, οὕτω τὰς ψυχὰς αἱ μὲν ἑλαφραὶ ζητήσεις ἐμμελῶς καὶ ὠφελίμως κινουῦσιν [...]⁹.

For just as the bodies of men who are drinking are accustomed to sway in time with pantomimic and choral dancing, but if we compel them to get up and exercise in heavy armour or throw the discus, they will find the party not only unpleasant but even harmful, just so their spirits are harmoniously and profitably stirred by subjects of inquiry that are easy to handle...

The metaphor serves to prove how frequently dance was a part of banquets, because it is only this frequency that allows it to be used as an example of something common. Going one step further, we may see how moderation, in relation to dance, is Plutarch's major concern. It must not be allowed to confuse or even distract the company from the path of reason, thus preventing the event from becoming “not only unpleasant but even harmful” (οὐ μόνον ἀτερπὲς ἀλλὰ καὶ βλαβερὸν), just like philosophy, which is not supposed to compromise the good mood, by being too serious or too deep.

Further on in Book 7 (705A), in a discussion of good and bad music, dance is again a subject of conversation. It is cited as a parallel when Calistratus distinguishes between pleasures of the body and those of the soul:

οὐδὲν οὖν ὀρῶ τὰς τοιαύτας ἡδονὰς ἴδιον ἐχούσας, <ἢ> ὅτι μόναι τῆς ψυχῆς εἰσιν, αἱ δ' ἄλλαι τοῦ σώματος καὶ περὶ τὸ σῶμα καταλήγουσιν· μέλος δὲ καὶ ῥυθμὸς καὶ ὄρχησις καὶ ὧδῃ παραμειψάμεναι τὴν αἴσθησιν ἐν τῷ χαίροντι τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπερείδονται τὸ ἐπιτερπὲς καὶ γαργαλίζον. ὅθεν οὐδεμία τῶν

⁹ For the Greek text of the *Table Talk*, we use C. HUBERT, *Plutarchus. Moralia*, IV, Leipzig, 1971.

τοιούτων ἡδονῶν ἀπόκρυφός ἐστιν οὐδὲ σκότους δεομένη καὶ τῶν τοίχων 'περιθεόντων', ὡς οἱ Κυρηναῖκοι λέγουσιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ στάδια ταύταις καὶ θέατρα ποιεῖται, καὶ τὸ μετὰ πολλῶν θεάσασθαι τι καὶ ἀκοῦσαι ἐπιτερπέστερόν ἐστι καὶ σεμνότερον, οὐκ ἀκρασίας δῆπου καὶ ἡδυπαθείας ἀλλ' ἐλευθερίου διατριβῆς καὶ ἀστείας μάρτυρας ἡμῶν ὅτι πλείστους λαμβανόντων.

I do not see that pleasures of this sort have anything special about them, except that they alone have to do with the mind, whereas the rest are pleasures of the body and reach and end in the body. Melody, however, and rhythm and dance and song go on past sense-perception and find a basis for their pleasing and enticing quality in the mind's faculty of enjoyment. Thus none of the pleasures of this kind is secret or requires darkness or walls 'running round' (as the Cyrenaics say), but stadia are even built for them, and theatres; and to witness a spectacle of sight or sound in a large company is considered more enjoyable and more impressive because we are associating as many persons as possible with ourselves, surely not in incontinence and sensuality, but in a liberal and civilized pastime.

While the so-called bodily pleasures are given by the sensory organs of perception, the pleasures of the soul are given by sight and hearing, being far beyond the sensual stage of knowledge, as well as free from excess. This is why dance and music are included in this last group. Lamprias does not agree, thinking that the pleasures of the soul have a truly charming power that undermines both reason and good judgment, leading a man to excess (ἀκρασία) and loss of reason (ἄγνοια).

Having proved the need for a moderate enjoyment of pleasures, in banquets as in all human life, in the eight question of Book 7 (711E-F), Plutarch goes on to discuss precisely what kind of amusement is welcome at a banquet. With this issue, we enter the straight field of συμποτικά (discussion about the banquet itself), which is different from συμποσιακά (discussion about several subjects, only in the context of a banquet), an expression that gives the title to the entire work.

πρώτην <τὴν> τραγωδίαν, ὡς οὐ πάνυ τι συμποτικὸν ἀλλὰ σεμνότερον βοῶσαν καὶ σκευωρουμένην πραγμάτων ὑποκρίσεις πάθος ἐχόντων καὶ οἶκτον. ἀποπέμπω δὲ τῆς ὀρχήσεως τὴν Πυλάδειον, ὀγκώδη καὶ παθητικὴν καὶ πολυπρόσωπον οὖσαν· αἰδοῖ δὲ τῶν ἐγκωμίων ἐκείνων, ἃ Σωκράτης περὶ ὀρχήσεως διῆλθε, δέχομαι τὴν Βαθύλλειον αὐτόθεν πέζαν τοῦ κόρδακος ἀπτομένην, Ἥχοῦς ἢ τινος Πανὸς ἢ Σατύρου σὺν Ἐρωτι κωμάζοντος ὑπόρχημά τι διατιθεμένην.

First of all, tragedy: it is not at all appropriate to a party, with its majestic elocution and its elaborated representation of events that are moving and sorrowful. As for dances, I should disqualify the Pylladic, as pretentious and emotional and requiring a large cast; but out of respect for Socrates' well-known praise of the dance, I will accept the Bathyllic. It is a straightforward unaccompanied dance, verging on the *kordax*, and presents a danced interpretation of Echo or some Pan or Satyr reveling with Eros.

Diogenianus intends to exclude tragic performances from the banquet for not being suitable to it (οὐ πάνυ τι συμποτικόν), which is to say, for not being convenient to the good mood of the event – the same point that had been made about philosophy before. This is a strongly Platonic way of thinking¹⁰, which is also present elsewhere in Plutarch's works¹¹. Talking about dance, he then excludes the so-called Pylladic dance, yet accepts the Bathyllic one, a local rhythm which he describes as being very similar to the Greek *kordax*. As for Pylades (1st century BC), we know that he was from Cilicia and that he introduced important changes to tragic pantomime, making it more exuberant and emotional by means of a sophisticated choreography and a larger number of characters¹². Suetonius (*Aug.* 45. 4) actually says that Pylades, along with Bathyllus, gave a new shape to Roman pantomime, with both men becoming the founders of the so-called "Italic dance"¹³. Athenaeus (20d-e), the richest and most comprehensive source we have about both artists' style, talks about Pylladic dance in a strikingly similar way. Thus, we may conclude that he and Plutarch followed the same sources, perhaps Seleucus and Aristonicus, who are the ones identified by Athenaeus himself. As for Bathyllic dance, it is described as being very similar to the Greek *kordax*, as it is in Plutarch, but mixed with satirical elements:

τῆς δὲ κατὰ τοῦτον ὀρχήσεως τῆς τραγικῆς καλουμένης πρώτος εἰσηγητῆς γέγονε Βάθυλλος ὁ Ἀλεξανδρεὺς, ὃν φησι παντομίμους ὀρχήσασθαι Σέλευκος. τοῦτον τὸν Βάθυλλον φησὶν Ἀριστόνικος καὶ Πυλάδην, οὗ ἔστι καὶ σύγγραμμα περὶ ὀρχήσεως, τὴν Ἰταλικὴν ὀρχησιν συστήσασθαι ἐκ τῆς κωμικῆς, ἣ ἔκαλεῖτο κόρδαξ, καὶ τῆς τραγικῆς, ἣ ἔκαλεῖτο ἐμμέλεια, καὶ τῆς σατυρικῆς, ἣ ἐλέγετο σίκιννις (διὸ καὶ οἱ σάτυροι σικιννισταί), ἧς εὐρετῆς Σίκιννός τις βάρβαρος. οἱ δὲ φασὶν ὅτι Κρής ἦν ὁ Σίκιννος. ἦν δὲ ἡ Πυλάδου ὀρχησις ὀγκώδης παθητικὴ τε καὶ πολυπρόσωπος, ἣ δὲ Βαθύλλειος ἰλαρωτέρα· καὶ γὰρ ὑπόρχημά τι τοῦτον διατίθεσθαι.¹⁴

Now the first to introduce this "tragic dancing", as it was called, was Bathyllus of Alexandria, who, as Seleucus says, danced in pantomime. Aristonicus says that this Bathyllus, together with Pylades, who wrote a treatise on dancing, developed the Italian style of dance out of the comic fling called the *cordax*, the tragic measures called *emmeleia*, and the satyr rout called *sicinis* (whence the satyrs are also called *sicinnistae*), the inventor of which was a barbarian named Sicinnus. But others say Sicinnus was a Cretan. Now Pylades' dancing was solemn, expressing passion and variety of character, whereas Bathyllus' was more jolly; in fact he composed a kind of *hyporcheme*.

¹⁰ See Pl., *Cra.* 408c; *Grg.* 502b; *Smp.* 194b; *Lg.* 659 a-c, 700d – 701b, 876f.

¹¹ *Quaest. conv.* 724D; *De facie* 926C; *De aud.* 41f.

¹² Two epigrams from the *Greek Anthology* are very encomiastic about Pylades' art: 9. 248 and 16. 290.

¹³ On this issue, see E. J. JORY, 1981.

¹⁴ The Athenaeus' text is quoted from C. B. GULICK, *Athenaeus. The Deipnosophists*, 7 vols., Cambridge, Mass., 1927-1941.

Athenaeus makes a clear distinction between both artists' style, especially in relation to their tone –the first more pathetic, the second more joyful –, and that is also the reason why Plutarch seems to distinguish them, rejecting one and accepting the other. The explanation for this is perhaps to be found in Athenaeus' text when he says that Bathyllus' dance is ἰλαρωτέρα (“more jolly”) – a quality that must be taken into consideration, according to Plutarch's morality, along with at least two others, decency and moderation. In fact, we know that Pylades became famous for the mimic adaptation of mythical-tragic histories¹⁵, and it should not be forgotten that Diogenianus himself, earlier in the text, had already excluded tragedy from banquets (771E). Moreover, the very same Diogenianus is clear about the fact that he only accepts the Bathyllic dance “out of respect for Socrates' well-known praise of the dance”. This seems to be an obvious reference to Xenophon's text (*Smp.* 2. 16-19), where, nevertheless, only the good effects of the dance on the body, as a physical exercise, are at issue, whereas no reference at all is made to the moral implications that are Plutarch's almost exclusive concern.

It seems certain at any rate that, when we talk about dance in the *Table Talk*, we are actually talking about pantomime, that dramatic way of expression without words, where only body movements, poses and the characters' outlook, along with music and maybe some non-verbal sounds, are the means to perform mythological or daily-life episodes¹⁶. Significantly, it is the same art that is deeply analyzed in Book 9, in the very last question of the work, which is all dedicated to the parts of the dance and its relation to poetry. The context that provokes the discussion is simple: a dance performance of the Pyrrhic offered to the guests after dinner, in which Lamprias, Plutarch's brother, was appointed, along with the trainer, to be the judge, on the strength of his past record of excellence as a dancer¹⁷. It is important to observe that this style also fits into the pantomimic group of dances, which has been discussed at length. In fact, it was originally the mimic dance representation of a fight, performed by armed dancers, which was in itself a good form of entertainment and exercise for the soldiers¹⁸. A fragment from Aristoxenus of Tarentum (4th century BC), a Peripatetic philosopher who wrote about music and rhythm, defines how the Pyrrhic must have been in its origins (fr. 103 Wehrli = cit. Athen. 630c):

¹⁵ Take, for example, his performance of *Hercules Furens*, as reported by Macrobius (*Sat.* 2. 7. 12-19). On the subjects of pantomimic representation see E. J. Jory 2008, pp. 157-168.

¹⁶ From the wealth of recent scholarly work on pantomime, see I. LADA-RICHARDS, 2007, R. WEBB, 2008 and E. HALL & R. WYLES, 2008.

¹⁷ The text is clear about the fact that it was a competition for boys (τοῖς παισὶ νικητήριον ὀρχήσεως). According to some scholars, this forces us to conclude that Lamprias, too, at the aforementioned banquet, must have been a boy (perhaps even a young boy). For this reason, S.-T. THEODORSSON, 1989, 3, p. 375, thinks that this sympotic reunion must have taken place in AD 66/67. Nevertheless, we still think it is a forced conclusion to assume that, being appointed as judge, Lamprias should be a παῖς or a μειράκιον at the time of the banquet.

¹⁸ X., *An.* 6.1.5-13 alludes to this function of the Pyrrhic dance.

(...) τρεῖς δ' εἰσὶ τῆς σκηνικῆς ποιήσεως ὀρχήσεις, τραγικὴ κωμικὴ σατυρική. ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τῆς λυρικῆς ποιήσεως τρεῖς, πυρρική γυμνοπαιδικὴ ὑπορχηματικὴ. καὶ ἐστὶν ὁμοία ἢ μὲν πυρρική τῇ σατυρικῇ, ἀμφοτέραι γὰρ διὰ τάχους, πολεμικὴ δὲ δοκεῖ εἶναι ἢ πυρρική. ἔνοπλοι γὰρ αὐτῶν παῖδες ὀρχοῦνται. τάχους δὲ δεῖ τῷ πολέμῳ εἰς τὸ διώκειν καὶ εἰς τὸ ἠττωμένους “φεύγειν μηδὲ μένειν μηδ' αἰδεῖσθαι κακούς εἶναι...”

... three are the dances of scenic poetry: tragic, comic and satirical. Also three are the lyric ones: pyrrhic, gymnastic and that of hyporchemae. Just like the Pyrrhic is the satirical, they are both based on basic steps. In fact, boys dance it armed. In war it is necessary to be fast in pursuit but also, for those who are defeated, to run and never stop or feel ashamed for being cowards.

Apparently, the dance gradually lost its warrior meaning. This seems to be implicit in the paragraph from the *Table Talk* we are discussing, where the winners are even given a cake as a prize. Nevertheless, it would still be an important part of the athletes' training in fight schools, especially at Sparta. As for the rest of the Greek world, however, it should have become mostly a Dionysiac dance. This is suggested by Athenaeus 631a-b, perhaps the best testimony we have about what dance must have been like in Plutarch's times:

ἡ δὲ πυρρική παρὰ μὲν τοῖς ἄλλοις Ἑλλησιν οὐκ ἔτι παραμένει· ἐκλιπούσης δὲ αὐτῆς συμβέβηκε καὶ τοὺς πολέμους καταλυθῆναι. παρὰ μόνοις δὲ Λακεδαιμονίοις διαμένει προγύμνασμα οὐσα τοῦ πολέμου· ἐκμανθάνουσί τε πάντες ἐν τῇ Σπάρτῃ ἀπὸ πέντε ἐτῶν πυρρικήζουσιν. ἡ δὲ καθ' ἡμᾶς πυρρική Διονυσιακὴ τις εἶναι δοκεῖ, ἐπιεικεστέρα οὐσα τῆς ἀρχαίας. ἔχουσι γὰρ οἱ ὀρχοῦμενοι θύρσους ἀντὶ δοράτων, προίενται δὲ ἐπ' ἀλλήλους καὶ νάρθηκας καὶ λαμπάδας φέρουσιν ὀρχοῦνταί τε τὰ περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον καὶ [τὰ περὶ] τοὺς Ἰνδοῦς ἔτι τε τὰ περὶ τὸν Πενθέα.

The *pyrriché*, however, no longer survives among other Greeks, and coincidentally with its decline the wars stopped. But among the Spartans alone it still persists as a preparatory drill for war; further, all males in Sparta, from five years of age on, learn thoroughly how to dance the *pyrriché*. The *pyrriché* of our times is rather Dionysiac in character and is more respectable than the ancient kind. For the dancers carry Bacchic wands in place of spears, they hurl also at one another stalks of fennel, they carry torches, and dance the story of Dionysus and India, or again the story of Pentheus.

Athenaeus' text proves that the Pyrrhic was still a mimic dance, representing at that time not the battles of men, but rather the histories of the gods, especially those related to the Dionysiac cult. And it was in this new disguise – which is only thematic – that the Romans received it.

Ammonius, whose intersemiotic theory of dance occupies the remainder of the book, advocates its analysis in three different but still complementary stages, which prove once more that the issue under discussion is pantomime.

They are φορά, σχῆμα and δεῖξις, tentatively to be translated as “phrase” (“movement”, or even “coordination”), “figure” (or “pose”) and “indication” (747B-C)¹⁹:

Ἐφη δὲ τρεῖς εἶναι, τὴν φορὰν καὶ τὸ σχῆμα καὶ τὴν δεῖξιν. ἡ γὰρ ὄρχησις ἔκ τε κινήσεων καὶ σχέσεων συνέστηκεν, ὡς τὸ μέλος τῶν φθόγγων καὶ τῶν διαστημάτων· ἐνταῦθα δ' αἱ μοναὶ πέρατα τῶν κινήσεων εἰσιν. φορὰς μὲν οὖν τὰς κινήσεις ὀνομάζουσι, σχήματα δὲ <τὰς> σχέσεις καὶ διαθέσεις, εἰς ἃς φερόμεναι τελευτῶσιν αἱ κινήσεις, ὅταν Ἀπόλλωνος ἢ Πανὸς ἢ τινος Βάκχης σχῆμα διαθέντες ἐπὶ τοῦ σώματος γραφικῶς τοῖς εἶδεσιν ἐπιμένωσι. τὸ δὲ τρίτον, ἡ δεῖξις, οὐ μιμητικόν ἐστιν, ἀλλὰ δηλωτικὸν ἀληθῶς τῶν ὑποκειμένων·

[which] he said were three in number: the phrase, the pose, and pointing. “Dancing”, he explained, “consists of movements and positions, as melody of its notes and intervals. In the case of dancing the rests are the terminating points of the movements. Now they call the movements ‘phrases’, while ‘poses’ is the same of the representational positions to which the movements lead and in which they end, as when dancers compose their bodies in the attitude of Apollo or Pan or a Bacchant, and then retain that aspect like figures in a picture. The third element, pointing, is something that does not copy the subject-matter, but actually shows it to us.

Just like the poet uses onomatopoeia and metaphors to represent reality, the dancer may use *movement* and *pose* to mime any situation or even narrative. As for δεῖξις, which is said to be a non-mimetic concept of dance (οὐ μιμητικόν ἐστιν), some additional considerations are called for. Indeed, Plato did not distinguish between movement and pose, always taking dance as the art of representing speech visually (*Lg.* 816), as did Aristotle (*Poet.* 1447a 24). As L. B. Lawer (1954, pp. 155-157) pointed out, when studying the uses of δεῖξις and other words of the same root, they always have some mimetic sense. This leads us to agree with S.-T. Teodorsson (1983, 3, p. 379), when he says that “Plutarch’s source may have been a treatise written by a musician or a rhetorician of Peripatetic outlook, who tried to describe dancing as an expressive for parallel to speech and analysable into basically the same elements as speech, as well as those of music”.

Still, one may ask how we are to read δεῖξις in this very special context. It seems that Ammonius views dancing as a way either to imitate things, by means of a static pose or movements, or simply to point at them, by indicating them to the spectator, the latter corresponding to the aforementioned non-mimetic concept of dance. Let us give an example: a dancer can imitate the pose or the movements of an animal – let us say, a swan – or simply point at a statue of the very same creature close to him.

Bearing this in mind, one can now understand that the discussion is focused entirely on Pyrrhic dance, only in its non-warrior version, rather

¹⁹ A thorough study of these concepts is made by L. B. LAWER, 1954.

the later Dionysiac one. Moreover, the initial reference to the Pyrrhic dance performed by Lamprias no longer appears to be a simple digression, as some scholars have argued²⁰.

Indeed, that triple comparison between dance, poetry and painting is what moves Ammonius to quote one of the most famous of Simonides' ancient *apophthegmata* (6th century BC), according to which that poet would have been the first to establish the parallel between poetry and music. In the following words Plutarch quotes that detail of the poet's tradition (*De glor. Athen.* 346F)²¹:

πλὴν ὁ Σιμωνίδης τὴν μὲν ζωγραφίαν ποίησιν σιωπῶσαν προσαγορεύει, τὴν δὲ ποίησιν ζωγραφίαν λαλοῦσαν. ἄς γὰρ οἱ ζωγράφοι πράξεις ὡς γινομένας δεικνύουσι, ταύτας οἱ λόγοι γεγενημένας διηγούνται καὶ συγγράφουσιν.

Simonides, however, calls painting inarticulate poetry and poetry articulate painting: for the action which painters portray as taking place at the moment literature narrates and records after they have taken place.

And here is how Ammonius intends to deny it in the *Table Talk* (748A-B):

καὶ ὅλως ἔφη ἑμεταθετέον τὸ Σιμωνίδειον ἀπὸ τῆς ζωγραφίας ἐπὶ τὴν ὄρχησιν· <ταύτην γὰρ ὀρθῶς ἔστι λέγειν ποίησιν> σιωπῶσαν, καὶ φθεγγομένην ὄρχησιν [δὲ] πάλιν τὴν ποίησιν· † ὅθεν εἶπεν οὔτε γραφικὴν εἶναι ποιητικῆς οὔτε ποιητικὴν γραφικῆς, οὐδὲ χρῶνται τὸ παράπαν ἀλλήλαις· ὄρχηστικῇ δὲ καὶ ποιητικῇ κοινωνία πᾶσα καὶ μέθεξις ἀλλήλων ἐστί, καὶ μάλιστα [μιμούμεναι] περὶ <τὸ> τῶν ὑπορχημάτων γένος ἐν ἔργον ἀμφοτέροι τὴν διὰ τῶν σχημάτων καὶ τῶν ὀνομάτων μίμησιν ἀποτελοῦσι.

In short, one can transfer Simonides' saying from painting to dancing, <rightly calling dance> silent poetry and poetry articulate dance. There seems to be nothing of painting in poetry or of poetry in painting, nor does either art make any use whatsoever of the other, whereas dancing and poetry are fully associated and the one involves the other. Particularly it is so when they combine in that type of composition called *hyporchema*, in which the two arts taken together effect a single work, a representation by means of poses and words.

Poetry and dance are indeed a kind of imitation of reality. The very best poetical genre to accomplish this is the *hyporchema*, a performance based on the songs and dances of a chorus that, according to its ancient characterization, should have gathered around some god's altar, at the time when the victims were sacrificed²². The dance figures (σχήματα) stand for the words (or names,

²⁰ According to S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1989, 3, p. 374, for example, "at the beginning of the talk the pyrrhic dance is mentioned as an introduction, while the subsequent speech delivered by Ammonius (...) concerns above all the contemporary pantomime."

²¹ The same *apophthegma* is mentioned in *De aud.* 17F and *De ad. et am.* 58B.

²² On the *hyporchema* see A. M. DALE, 1950.

ὀνόματα) in poetry, similar elements from two different semiotic codes serving the same purpose – μίμησις βίου.

Some conclusions may finally be drawn from this analysis of dance in the *Table Talk*. First of all, it was a regular part in both private and social banquets, which Plutarch represents – at least in a literary sense – in the Greek way. Then, as it is impossible to trace exactly which were Plutarch's sources on this issue – in which he seems to be far from Plato and Aristotle –, the discussion focused mostly on pantomime, the most famous style in those days. It is in fact this style that allows us to conduct an intersemiotic study in the *Table Talk*, taking in parallel dance, poetry and painting and looking at what they have in common – the fact that they all are μίμησις βίου or, to use Aristotle's words, μίμησις πράξεως. The dance conceived by Plutarch must be understood in a dramatic sense, being close to the performance of a play; and that is why Aristotle's theories on tragedy are so important to understand his point of view. Above all this, as a guiding idea, stands the supreme ideal of moderation, which does not allow excesses or deviations, a pregnant concept in all the banquets (re)created by Plutarch.

One question is still worth asking: why does Plutarch choose to end an entire philosophical work like the *Table Talk* on such a frivolous issue as is dance theory²³? Maybe because it is not a frivolous issue at all, as it may seem at first sight. It appears that dance is an intermediate discipline, a kind of study and practice not for actual philosophers or philosophy students, but still capable of providing a discussion mostly based on Plato's theories on body and soul, besides being an issue perfectly suitable to the sympotic environment. On this, one should remember Plutarch's own words in *Coniugalia Praecepta* (145C):

ἀίσχυνθήσεται γὰρ ὀρχεῖσθαι γυνὴ γεωμετρῆϊν μανθάνουσα, καὶ φαρμάκων ἐπωδὰς οὐ προσδέξεται τοῖς Πλάτωνος ἐπαδομένη λόγοις καὶ τοῖς Ξενοφώντος.

For a woman studying geometry will be ashamed to be a dancer, and she will not swallow any beliefs in magic charms while she is under the charm of Plato's or Xenophon's words.

If dancing is not a deep philosophical issue, dance theory can certainly be one, based as it is mostly on ethics and morality²⁴. Although Plutarch seems to refuse to give his *Table Talk* a very complex end, he chooses to give it one that is still capable of launching the discussion of deep philosophical questions that are traceable through the entire work.

²³ We would like to thank Professor Philip Stadter, who posed us this very same question after the presentation of this paper.

²⁴ I. LADA-RICHARDS, 2008, pp. 285–313 focuses on the ethical and moral role of pantomime, asking – in the very title of her paper – “Was pantomime ‘good to think with’ in the ancient world?”.

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THE OMNIPRESENCE OF PHILOSOPHY IN PLUTARCH'S *QUAESTIONES CONVIVALES*¹

RODOLFO LOPES
University of Coimbra

Abstract

In the following paper I attempt to clarify in which way philosophy is present in the *Quaestiones Convivales*. I leave aside the role that this work plays as an anthology of Ancient Philosophy and focus on two other aspects that seem to be decisive for an understanding of its architecture: philosophy as a discussion subject, and, more important, as a structural force in this collection of talks. Taking into account the traditional division of Ancient Philosophy in three branches – logic, ethics and physics –, I try to show that there are very clear connections between them and those two vectors of analysis: philosophy as a subject of discussing is strictly related with physics, and philosophy as a structural force depends on ethics and logic.

1. Philosophy in the Symposium

As a code of rituals and symbols of interaction, commensality is a practice that follows Man from time immemorial. Initially found in military, religious and political contexts, and later simply practised as a form of social conduct, human interaction around a table was governed by certain rules and procedures that determined the gathering's development². Even in Homer one can find examples of this kind of reunion, which did not have the specific structure that we know from the archaic and classical periods (namely the division between *deipnon* and *symposion*), like the Achaean embassy to Achilles in *Iliad* Book 9 or Odysseus' arrival at the palace of Alcinous in *Odyssey* Book 7. In both of them, as in other examples of the same type, the conversation focuses on the intentions of the man who arrives from outside the gathering³, and for that reason can be seen to be strictly related to hospitality rituals. After this phase, the sympotic descriptions left by the archaic poets show us an atmosphere of feasting and amusement, in which a primary role was given to the cultivation and dissemination of sung poetry and other forms of music, to ethnographic narratives, and to praise or blame. Briefly, the symposium was a space of amusement, cultural dissemination and remembrance of an heroic past⁴. Still in a context of fun, but already in the classical period, one of the most complete descriptions of a symposium is offered by Aristophanes in his *Wasps*, in which there are many conversations, but all of them in a jesting context (vv. 1175-1206), culminating in mutual insults and several acts of violence by the drunken symposiasts (vv. 1300-1325).

In all of the above-mentioned examples, the importance of λόγος in the symposium is obvious. However, this λόγος has a sense of “conversation”

¹ I wish to thank Manuel Tröster for his precious help with the English version of this paper and also for his suggestions that helped me to improve it.

² Apud O. MURRAY, 1990, p. 6.

³ Cf. E. L. BOWIE, 1993, p. 357.

⁴ Apud W. RÖSLER, 1990, pp. 231-2 (Cf. E. L. BOWIE, 1993, pp. 358-66).

and not yet of “dialogue”; it refers to “speaking” and not “discussing”, far less, following Plato, “discussing dialectically”; for the main goal of those gatherings was amusement, and not investigation.

It is not very clear how the transition between the λόγος of “speaking” and the λόγος of “discussing” occurred, or, in other words, how the philosophical symposium came into being, because the works that seem to have been the first of this kind did not survive⁵. According to a fragment from Aristotle (fr. 72 Rose), the first author of a philosophical *Symposium* was Alexamenos of Styra or Teos, and Diogenes Laertius (3.48) says that the first were Zeno and Protagoras. So it is safer to say that was Plato who initiated the philosophical symposium tradition. It is true that we can not determine whether Plato’s *Symposium* was written before Xenophon’s, but, even if it was not, Xenophon says in the beginning of his work that it is a collection of amusing conversations (1.1) and not of philosophical discussions. Besides that, Plato’s role in the establishment of the philosophical symposium is not confined to his *Symposium*: he talks about the rules and requirements of this kind of work in other dialogues too. In the *Protagoras*, Socrates clearly distinguishes two kinds of symposia: those of common and vulgar men (φαύλοι καὶ ἀγοραῖοι), where the sounds of the flute-girl rules, and those of the καλοὶ κἀγαθοί, during which everyone talks and listens in an organized way, even if they drink too much wine (347c-e). Likewise, in Plato’s *Symposium*, the decision to dismiss the flute-girl in order that the gathering may be given over to discussion indicates that the symposium should be taken up with λόγοι instead of jokes and amusements, and become a philosophical symposium – a feast of speeches, as Plato says many times (e.g. *Grg.* 447a; *R.* 352b, 354a-b; *Ti.* 20c). As for the purpose of those discussions, Socrates makes himself quite clear: it is to make trial of the truth and of the speakers themselves (*Prt.* 348a).

2. The *Quaestiones Convivales*⁶ as a philosophical symposium

Thus, we must raise the following question concerning the set of symposia that Plutarch presents in the *QC*: is it like that of Aristophanes’ *Wasps* or is it closer to Plato’s conception? As we shall see, the answer is quite obvious, because, besides the fact that the *QC* are almost universally recognised to be a philosophical symposium⁷ – or a set of symposia –, the text itself gives us much evidence that validates this conclusion.

In the very beginning of this work, Plutarch frames the set of symposia that he is about to present to Sosius in a tradition of other authors that did the same before him, like, among others, Plato and Xenophon (612E)⁸. Thus, he assumes from the start that the *QC* belong to a group of works with a philosophical orientation; besides that, the very first question is precisely about

⁵ On the origins of the philosophical symposium, see M. VETTA, 2000, pp. 219-22.

⁶ From now on, the *Quaestiones Convivales* will be referred as *QC*.

⁷ See F. KLOTZ, 2007, pp. 650, 653; L. ROMERI, 2002, p. 109.

⁸ Although vast, the list remains incomplete. On this problem, see M. VETTA, 2000, p. 222; S.-T. THEODORSSON, 1989, p. 12.

the presence of philosophy in the symposia. Thus, by noting so clearly this affiliation with such a tradition, the reader will obviously expect to find in the following pages a set of conversations about serious – even philosophical – matters and not a collection of jokes or other amusing activities, as in the archaic symposia or the one described in the *Wasps*. Later, in the *Prooemium* to Book VI, Plutarch confirms this affiliation by insisting on the necessity of writing down all that was said during the banquet, leaving aside everything related to its material side, like the dishes or drinks that were consumed, just like Xenophon and Plato had done (686 D).

On the other hand, these conversations, in order to follow their philosophical legacy, will have to be governed by the rules of proper conversation held by educated people; otherwise it would become the record of a symposium of the φαύλοι καὶ ἀγοραῖοι. But we must ask ourselves what kind of λόγος this is: the “saying” one, or the “discussing” one? When, in the Proemium to Book I, Plutarch makes use of the examples of other authors of symposia and says that the task of writing down the conversations held while one drinks is worthy and that, on the other hand, it is wise to forget the improprieties (612D4: τῶν πλημμεληθέντων) committed during the gathering, he is not very explicit about the content of those talks. But, to say that what is improper must be forgotten and, at the same time, assuming that something must be written down implies that the things that deserve to be remembered should be something proper.

According to L. Van der Stockt, the *QC* follow a model of conversation among polite and moderate men based on the ethical criteria of φιλία, φιλανθρωπία, εὐνοία, and κοινωνία⁹. For this reason, it is very rare to find someone exceeding the limits imposed by these values¹⁰. Hence, we must infer that these parts of the symposia that Plutarch wanted to transmit to posterity through writing have some kind of normative codification as far as concerns the conversation rules. Besides, the main goal of the symposium itself was to cultivate those criteria which govern conversation and, even though there is some room left for certain useful amusements (711A), it is quite clear that there is a supremacy of λόγος to the disadvantage of the spirit of fun that we find in archaic symposia; for the pleasures generated during the symposium will be taken from conversation (713C1: τὰς ἡδονὰς ἐκ λόγου λαμβάνειν). In truth, throughout the *QC* there are few references to other ludic activities; for this work is, in a general way, a set of conversations that occurred during symposia, and the meaning of a symposium is to share not only meat and drink but also conversations, which leads to friendship (660B).

Returning to the distinction established by Plato in the *Protagoras* between the symposium of the φαύλοι καὶ ἀγοραῖοι and that of the καλοὶ κάγαθοί, it is very curious to note that, in the *Septem Sapientium Convivium*, Mnesiphilus says that the character of the men Periander had gathered exempted wine

⁹ L. VAN DER STOCKT, 2000, p. 94.

¹⁰ See L. VAN DER STOCKT, 2000, pp. 93-4; F. MARTÍN GARCÍA, 1987, pp. 11-2.

from the symposium on the grounds that conversation, the highest pleasure of a symposium as it combines earnestness and amusement, was already there like in a κρατήρ which all of them could share (156D10-12: καθάπερ κρατήρα νηφάλιον ἐν μέσῳ προθέμεναι τὸν λόγον, ᾧ πλεῖστον ἡδονῆς ἅμα καὶ παιδιᾶς καὶ σπουδῆς ἔνεστιν). But in the *QC*, the character of the symposiasts is much more diversified, since they gather philosophers, doctors or even farmers at the same table¹¹, and, consequently, conversation must be introduced by some means. Maintaining the κρατήρ metaphor, Plutarch establishes a connection between wine and conversation, conceiving them as ingredients of a sort of blend that will raise or increase the main ethical criteria that govern the symposium: as Dionysus is the Loosener, for he unleashes the tongue (613C1-2: ὁ Διόνυσος λύσιός ἐστι καὶ Λυαῖος, μάλιστα δὲ τῆς γλώττης ἀφαιρεῖται), wine must circulate in the body through conversation and, blended with it, will take it from the body to the soul (660B11-12: ἐπὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ἐκ τοῦ σώματος ἐποχετεύει), rousing man's rational part, giving birth to φιλανθρωπία, and tying the bonds of friendship. But, on the other hand, if wine circulates throughout the body without any mediation, it will not produce anything but repletion (660C1-2: εἰ δὲ μὴ, πλανώμενος ἐν τῷ σώματι πλησμονῆς οὐδὲν σπουδαιότερον παρέσχευεν). The same is to say that wine must be ruled by λόγος and, conversely, wine will generate λόγος. Because of this strict correlation and interdependence between wine and conversation, whose equilibrium will determine the symposium's course, both of them must stand at the same level; in order to maintain the convivial spirit in harmony, conversation, like wine, must be within one's reach, as if it were in a κρατήρ.

But, more than vain and pointless talk, the concept of conversation in the *QC* is very close to philosophical discussion: Plutarch says that, instead of bringing into the symposium activities that would turn themselves into obstacles to entertainment more than into entertainment itself, they should amuse themselves with philosophy and conversation (713D5: διὰ λόγου καὶ φιλοσοφίας). By putting both at the same level (even syntactically they are strictly connected), it is obvious that the conversations will necessarily be philosophical. Consequently, one may expect that the symposiasts will define themselves as philosophers and their activity as performative philosophy¹². In certain sections this is quite evident, particularly when Plutarch refers to some young men as symposiasts that were "philosophizing" with them (655F1: τοῖς φιλοσοφοῦσι μειρακίοις μεθ' ἡμῶν), or, even more clearly, when he says that the conversations held in the days before were philosophical questions and discourses (686C4-5: προβλημάτων δὲ καὶ λόγων φιλοσόφων).

The very first question of the *QC* introduces the discussion on the use of philosophy during the symposium (Εἰ δεῖ φιλοσοφεῖν παρὰ πότον). We may surely say that its position is not accidental; for it represents a sort of general guideline according to which the conversations will be held and, at a narrative level, they will be displayed in writing. At the same time, it establishes

¹¹ On the diversity of the participants of the *QC*, see F. Klotz, 2007, p. 653.

¹² See F. Klotz, 2007, pp. 659-ff.

the set of principles which philosophy must obey whenever it is a subject of conversation. Unlike the Persians, who, according to Plutarch, used to keep philosophy far away from the symposium and preferred instead activities more compatible with drinking like dances or mimes (613A), they will accept it in their symposium, but with some restrictions.

As regards the kind of problems to be dealt with, in order to keep intact the main ethical criteria that govern the symposium, the investigations must be relaxed and the questions must be familiar (614D5-6: εἶναι δὲ δεῖ καὶ αὐτὰς τὰς ζητήσεις ὑγροτέρας καὶ γνώριμα τὰ προβλήματα), and as for the method of pursuing those questions, the discussion must be driven by persuasive discourse rather than by the violence of demonstrations (614C8-9: διὰ τοῦ πιθανοῦ μᾶλλον ἢ βιαστικοῦ τῶν ἀποδείξεων ἄγουσι τὸν λόγον).

2.1 Philosophy as a conversation subject (physics)

Many of the questions in the *QC* are designed to solve philosophical issues. Nevertheless, the range of the investigations is generally restricted to natural philosophy; for the diversity of the participants does not allow the discussion of complicated problems, and, for that reason, the emphasis is mainly on physics. Human nature is one of the most recurrent topics, to which Plutarch dedicates several questions, particularly as far as concerns psychology (*Problēmata* 3.6; 8.10), physiology (*Problēmata* 2.2; 4.10; 7.1; 8.8; 9.10), the origins or causes of illnesses (*Problēmata* 6.8; 8.9) and the way human beings deal with sensations and affections (*Problēmata* 1.8; 3.4; 5.1; 6.1-3; 7.3,5; 8.3). On the other hand, since wine is a very important element in the organization of a symposium and since the *QC* also deal with questions related to this matter, there are also many questions that focus on the relation between man and wine, most notably its effects (*Problēmata* 1.6-7; 3.3, 7-9; 3.5). Apart from human nature, there are also discussions about other dimensions of the natural world, particularly questions related to animals (*Problēmata* 2.3, 7-9; 3.10; 4.4; 6.10; 8.8), plants (*Problēmata* 2.6; 3.2; 4.2; 5.9; 6.10), the elements (*Problēmata* 1.9; 6.4-6), and also to astronomy (*Problēmata* 4.7; 9.9). As for the sources that the participants use to develop their argumentation, although there are dozens of quotations of the principal Aristotelian scientific doctrines, mainly from the *Problēmata*, which at that time were attributed to him, and, generally, from the Peripatetic tradition, one must be cautious in saying that Plutarch follows them in the *QC* for two major reasons. First, there are very few situations in which the conclusion of the discussion matches the Aristotelian axiom (659D; 696D; 702B), for the most part these 'quotations' are used either to get a discussion started (650A; 652A; 656B-D; 690C,F; 704F; 720D; 734E; 735C), or, less frequently, they are simply refuted (627A-D; 694D; 724D). Second, in some respects Plutarch clearly follows the Platonic tradition, as in the aforementioned characterization of the human affections and sensations, which is strictly connected with the theories established by Plato in the *Timaeus* (43c-ff.; 78e-ff).

In a general way, the preponderance of physical aspects as a conversation subject establishes the *QC* as a piece of philosophical investigation by means of encyclopaedic knowledge – a sort of πολυμάθεια¹³. On the other hand, the observations on natural philosophy are designed to deny some common-sense beliefs, and put forward theories based on scientific knowledge: the cause of problems in navigation is not the fish called remora, but the deterioration of the ship's keel (*Problêma* 2.7); truffles are not generated by thunderbolts that penetrate the soil, but by the nature of the water that falls with them (*Problêma* 4.2)¹⁴; Mithridates was called Dionysus not for drinking too much wine, but because he too had been hit by lightning when he was a child (*Problêma* 1.6).

2.2 Philosophy as a structural force (ethics and logic)

As I pointed out before, Plutarch refers to some participants as young symposiasts that are philosophizing with them. Thus, besides discussing philosophy, the organizers of the symposium also seek to initiate the younger participants into these arts of investigating the truth of things. This clearly shows, on the one hand, the pedagogical purpose of the symposium, a matrix also present in the Platonic conception of the symposium¹⁵, and, on the other hand, a particular concern about the integration of those younger members in the dynamics of the symposium and, hence, in the philosophical method.

However, conceiving that the conversations held in the *QC* have a philosophical foundation and accepting as a structural principle that those conversations must be within the range of every participant raises an inevitable ἀπορία. Among so many speakers with so many distinct characters, there will always be some that do not share the same passion for philosophical questions or that simply do not have the capacity to follow the investigations. Blending these two aspects may put at stake some of the primary ethical criteria that regulate the symposium. How does Plutarch solve this problem? The answer is quite simple. He takes advantage of the heterogeneity of the convivial set to create a sort of unity through difference, just like in a symphony, where many instruments coexist in perfect harmony, each one with a different sound and a different nature. In Plutarch's own words, coexistence in the symposium will be like human language, which, although it is composed of dissonant sounds – mute consonants and sonant vowels –, is natural and spontaneously harmonious (613E2-4: ὡσπερ ἄφωνα γράμματα φωνηέντων (...) οὐ παντελῶς ἀνάρθρου καὶ συνέσεως κοινωνήσουσιν). And, so that he can fulfil that difficult task of tuning in the differences among the speakers, Plutarch proposes to eliminate conversations of “wranglers” and “thimble-riggers” (614E2-4: ἔριδαντέων δὲ κατὰ Δημόκριτον καὶ ἱμαντελικτέων λόγους ἀφετέον), and to prevent the gathering from being carried away to a contest proper to sophists or similar to those that occur in the streets (713F2-4: ἀγῶνα σοφιστικὸν ἐκφερομένης

¹³ Apud G. SOURY, 1949, p. 321.

¹⁴ On this particular issue, see in this volume the contribution by A. ΣΕΤΑΙΟΛΙ.

¹⁵ See Pl., *Lg.* 671a.

ἐπιλαμβάνεσθαι καὶ † πρὸς ἀγῶνας ἐκκλησιαστικούς καὶ ἀγοραίους). This is to say that they must investigate accessible and worthy problems and that they must not waste their time with useless riddles, that may embarrass some of those present. Likewise, the rhetorical level must be simple, so that everyone can understand what people are talking about. This is absolutely synchronized with Plutarch's rhetorical conception, which favours a simple form of speech; for the main concern is that the message can be understood¹⁶. For this reason, they should follow Plato's example, embracing men with *exempla* and mythical narratives (614D4: παραδείγμασι καὶ μυθολογίαις προσάγεται τοὺς ἄνδρας) instead of driving them through pure demonstrations.

By proposing a lighter version of philosophy to occupy the symposium, Plutarch seems to pull it down to a lower rank, so that it may be accessible even to those that are not καλοὶ κἀγαθοί. However, conceiving it in purely Stoic terms as an art of life (613B5: τέχνην περὶ βίον), he shows that his primary purpose is to use it in a very pragmatic way, which is a far cry from the metaphysical exercises of his master Plato. Closer to Socrates, whose philosophical system depended upon the set of actions he performed, yet connected to the Stoic ideal, Plutarch detaches philosophy from its metaphysical pedestal and brings it to the real world, so that it may reproduce at a praxiological level what it establishes theoretically, revealing its ability to confirm in actions what it teaches in words (613C7-8: φιλοσοφίαν ὡς ἔργῳ βεβαιοῦν ἃ διδάσκει λόγῳ μὴ δυναμένην). Bearing in mind that this definition is put forward precisely in the same sentence in which it is said that wine unleashes the tongue, and with both notions being clearly connected, we may easily conclude that, on the one hand, it is wine that allows that λόγος turn into ἔργον, and, on the other hand, it is that same philosophical λόγος that rules the consumption of wine, thus keeping the ethical criteria of φιλία, φιλανθρωπία, εὐνοία, and κοινωνία. Here and elsewhere in the *Moralia*, philosophy is a medicine for the soul and its cultivation erases stupidity (ἄνοια), derangement (παραφροσύνη) and lack of education (ἀπαιδευσία)¹⁷, which contaminate the ideal state of the symposium.

Thus, drawn nearer to the καλοὶ κἀγαθοί through wine, the symposiasts will then be able to handle the kind of questions that those καλοὶ κἀγαθοί handled in their symposia: philosophical questions. This does not mean that the *QC* are a work of pure philosophy (like a treatise), but, as we shall see, the goal to which they aspire is purely philosophical. The very denomination of each book section – πρόβλημα – shows that the main challenge that the symposiasts are willing to take up is to surpass each one of those obstacles by means of logical reasoning, each one of them demanding an investigation method that will solve the puzzle and, consequently, find its cause. As Plutarch says, it is at the point where the explanation of a cause fails that one begins to be puzzled, or, in other words, to philosophize (680C9-D2: ὅπου γὰρ ὁ τῆς αἰτίας ἐπιλείπει λόγος, ἐκεῖθεν ἄρχεται τὸ ἀπορεῖν, τουτέστι τὸ φιλοσοφεῖν). Consequently, the purpose of the conversations held in the *QC*, whether or not their subject matter

¹⁶ Apud G. MATINO, 1991, pp. 295-6, 313.

¹⁷ Apud F. ВЕСЧИ, 1999, p. 27.

is philosophy (physics, as we have seen), is to determine the causes (αἰτίαι) of a certain problem by means of an investigation (ζήτησις)¹⁸ – in truth, there are, throughout the *QC*, dozens of occurrences of the words ζήτησις¹⁹ and αἰτία²⁰; many times, the latter is part of a πρόβλημα title (*Problēmata* 5.3, 6, 9; 6.1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10; 9.2, 7, 9); besides that, most of these titles begin with similar expressions like διὰ τί or εἰ, presenting a condition that needs confirmation). This clearly shows the omnipresence of this spirit of philosophical search.

Of course, this does not mean that a unanimous conclusion must result from every discussion; on the contrary, the purpose is to have conversations, about philosophical questions or otherwise, that allow the symposiasts to exercise the faculty of thinking in a group setting, of discussing dialectically. When, at a certain point, the participants take into consideration the veracity of certain questions, more precisely, whether they ought to discuss what may not be true (628B), Marcus, the grammarian, relates the story of Democritus, who, even when he realized that, after all, the cucumber that he was eating was sweet because his maid had left it inside a honey pot, even so he decided to investigate the cause of that sweetness as if it was related to the place where it had grown, as he had thought in the first place (628C-D). Like Democritus, they should assume that the conclusion itself must not determine their investigation, for the discussion, if nothing more useful, will allow them to practise (628D4-5: ἐγγυμνάσασθαι γάρ, εἰ μηδὲν ἄλλο χρήσιμον, ὁ λόγος παρέξει). In its general insight, the *QC* display a scientific spirit very similar to the one that pervaded Plato's Academy²¹; on this particular issue, that relation is quite obvious. According to a fragment of Epicrates (fr. 11 Edmonds), Plato gathered his new students in the gymnasium of the Academy to observe and define every element of the natural world; but, when they tried to define a pumpkin, many problems arose, since this object belonged to more than one category. In spite of that, Plato told them to try again, because the purpose was to practice the method of defining an object, more than to establish a definition itself.

3. Conclusions

Concluding this brief investigation, we now may ask: in what way is philosophy omnipresent in the *QC*? I think the answer depends on three different factors.

First, the structure of this work is framed according to the three branches of

¹⁸ Apud L. VAN DER STOCKT, 2000, p. 96.

¹⁹ 612E13; 614D6, E1; 619B2; 628B10, D1; 636A7; 646A8; 651A2; 664D6; 667E1; 673C9; 675E10; 683C2; 700C3, E4, F5; 701A4; 713F2; 714D5; 725A3; 726C9; 747B6.

²⁰ 617E9; 618D4; 619B9; 624A8; 625A7, F5; 626F3; 627A4; 628B9, C6, D1; 635B4, D4, F3; 639D8; 640C3; 641C7, 10, D10; 642A5; 649D4, E5; 650A5, 10; 656C5, D4; 657F4; 658C12; 664C7, D7, 12; 665D3, E1, 8; 666A5, D9, E4; 670A6, B5; 673C9; 676A11; 677C3; 678F1; 679C7; 680C5, 9, F2-3; 682F3; 689C8, E10; 690F5; 691C8; 693B9; 694B11; 696E8, F4; 699E4; 700C9, D4, 11; 701A3, E6; 702B10; 704E12; 722D2; 725A3, B5; 728E7; 729A10, E5; 730B7; 731A2, D2, 6; 732A2; 733D3; 734E4; 737E4; 740B2, D8; 741B10; 744C4; 745D3.

²¹ Apud L. VAN DER STOCKT, 2000, pp. 97-8.

ancient philosophy²². Physics constitutes a major percentage of the conversation subjects treated in the *Problēmata*. Analyzing it from a global perspective, the aprioristic system that Plutarch proposes tries to display the main aspects of the human being and its relation with the sensible world while, at the same time, denying common-sense opinions about these questions. After all, this is the major concern of a work about natural philosophy. Ethics allows the participants to talk about many questions (philosophical or otherwise) according to a model of a regulated relationship, which, on the one hand, enables every symposiast to participate in the discussion and, on the other hand, generates and augments the main ethical criteria of the symposium. As for logic, it provides the instruments to discuss the various matters proposed throughout the *Problēmata*, allowing the investigations to be ruled by a dialectical metastructure that puts the argumentative level of the conversation very near to that one of the Academy. Consequently, those who are learning may interact with those who know philosophy and thereby learn the means of achieving the truth more than the truth itself – for instance, Plutarch's brother Lamprias deduced Hieronymus' theory of vision, even though he did not know his book (626A).

Second, this omnipresence gains even more consistency through the unitary correlation that the three branches achieve together; for they are strictly connected and depend upon one another. It would not be possible to discuss questions of natural philosophy without the means provided by argumentative logic; nor would it be possible to talk about any philosophical question whatsoever if the ethical code had not been established. Instead of separating three branches of philosophy, the structure of the *QC* is thus framed according to their interconnection and interdependence.

Third, if we ought to consider the symposia that Plutarch describes as a sample of human interaction, as I think we should, the definition of philosophy as a τέχνη περὶ βίον acquires a deeper sense. In other words, if life, considered as human performance, is, or must be, regulated, guided and understood through philosophy, the symposium, being a sample of life, will consequently display the same relation with philosophy.

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²² This tripartition is also adopted in the *QC* (744D9-10: ἐν δὲ τῷ φιλοσόφῳ τὸ λογικὸν καὶ τὸ ἠθικὸν καὶ τὸ φυσικόν).

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“AND WHO DID NOT ATTEND THE BANQUET?” EVOCATIVE CONTEXTS OF WOMEN IN PLUTARCH’S *QUAESTIONES CONVIVALES*¹

ÁLIA ROSA C. RODRIGUES
University of Coimbra

Abstract

Goddesses, women poets, *matronae*, lascivious flautists or concubines, those are Plutarch’s women. The references to women in Plutarch’s *Quaestiones Convivales* are spread all over the work and occur in a variety of contexts: mythical justification, intimate hygiene, support of men, the role of mother or simply that of woman. Thus, in this vast gallery presented by the scholar from Chaeronea, the trivial humane figures will be highlighted with the aim to unveil the importance of women and their place in the social sphere. Therefore, the image of the female projected in the *Quaestiones* will be crossed with the dominant view in Graeco-Roman society.

The space that Plutarch devotes to women and to all things related to them – education, social behaviour, the functioning of their body – in the whole of his work is unusual². Moreover, it is remarkable how the scholar from Chaeronea stands up in their defence, not only as human beings, but also as women, not reducing them to weak and useless beings, but exalting them as a natural and cultural force, like noble people that should be dignified from a social and individual point of view, as long as they remain in an inferior sphere.

In fact, the sheer number of works in the *Moralia* dedicated to the situation of women shows Plutarch’s interest in this subject, a real testimony to the history of the female condition: in the *Consolatio ad uxorem*, the author tries to attenuate his wife’s pain for the loss of her daughter; the works *Mulierum Virtutes* and *De Iside et Osiride* are dedicated to Clea, a Delphic priestess and cultured women with whom Plutarch discusses religious and philosophical issues³; we also have a lot to learn from the *Lacaenarum apophthegmata*, as from *Amatorius* and *Coniugalia Praecepta*, where Plutarch accords to marriage an erotic and sacred dimension⁴.

¹ I am grateful to Professor J. Ribeiro Ferreira for commenting on an earlier version of this paper, and to Professor Manuel Tröster, who helped to improve the English text.

² For an exhaustive study on Plutarch’s attitude to women and marriage see A. G. NIKOLAIDIS, 1997. See also F. LE CORSU, 1981 for an analysis of the descriptions of women in the *Vitae*.

³ Cf. F. FACQ, 2006/2007, p. 51. This is how Plutarch opens the work *Bravery of Women* (242E-F): “Regarding the virtues of women, Clea, I do not hold the same opinion as Thucydides. For he declares that the best woman is she about whom there is the least talk among persons outside regarding either censure or commendation, (...). But to my mind Gorgias appears to display better taste in advising that not the form but the fame of a woman should be known to many.” In the treatise *Coniugalia Praecepta*, Plutarch mentions the female education issue and its potential impact on the future of young girls, a precept that is most relevant to the present (see *Moralia* 145C sqq). As F. FACQ, 2006/2007, p. 56 concluded: “Si à l’époque classique, il nous donne peu d’anecdotes montrant des filles (...), cela n’est plus le cas lors de la période de la domination romaine sur le monde méditerranéen où l’auteur décrit des scènes de la vie quotidienne représentant des fillettes, soit que cela lui tienne particulièrement à cœur, soit qu’un changement ait effectivement eu lieu dans la société.”

⁴ Cf. *Moralia* 139C-D, 142D-E, 754D, 767D-E, 769F-770A.

However, even if the recreated banquets in *Quaestiones Coniuvales* did not accept the presence of women, it is a recurrent subject in several contexts, as we will see. This is what we will try to do in this paper: analyse specifically the treatment of women in *Quaestiones Coniuvales* in their various evocative contexts.

A. Nikolaidis (1997, p. 97), following in the footsteps of Vernière⁵, views Plutarch as the precursor of “feminism”, as a believer in women’s innate abilities, both defending and praising the benefits of female education, the most precious of her jewels. Plutarch himself was an example of this conviction, since he admitted women to his own school in Chaeronea⁶:

For a woman studying geometry will be ashamed to be a dancer, and she will not swallow any beliefs in magic charms while she is under the charm of Plato’s or Xenophon’s words. And if anybody professes power to pull down the moon from the sky, she will laugh at the ignorance and stupidity of women who believe these things (...) (145c-sqq)⁷

In the *Banquet of Seven Sages*, Plutarch allows the presence of Cleobulina, a twelve-year-old girl, and Melissa, Periandro’s wife. They were indeed present during the meal (148CD, 150D, 154B) but left when the men started drinking more (155 E), and therefore they did not take part in the discussion⁸. However, this would not happen again in the dialogue, at least under the same conditions,

⁵ See Y. VERNIÈRE, “Plutarque et les femmes”, *Anc. W.* 25 (1994), p. 165 apud A. G. NIKOLAIDIS, 1997, p. 88, a feminist point of view also shared by R. FLACELIÈRE, a theoretician of feminism in antiquity. See idem, *L’Amour en Grèce*, Paris, 1971, passim; *Le Féminisme dans l’ancienne Athènes*, Paris, 1971, passim. The exhaustive study of F. LE CORSU, 1981, as well as the studies by P. SCHMITT PANTEL and G. SISSA, 1991 (apud K. BLOMQUIST, 1997, p. 73) and K. BLOMQUIST, 1997 contested this feminist interpretation, thinking that Plutarch conserves the ideal of female inferiority: “Accepting her supposedly natural inferiority, a woman was herself accepted as morally equal and allowed to give proof of virtue and magnanimity” (idem, p. 90).

⁶ Cf. *Moralia* 138C. Nevertheless, Plutarch’s attention to the woman’s philosophic education is not new. This subject had been already proposed by Plato in his *Republic* (451–457) and refused by Aristotle in *Politics* (1264b). In the Hellenistic period, some philosophical schools granted access to women, like Epicureanism, Cynism and Neo-Pythagorism. The Roman Musonius Rufus, following in the footsteps of Stoic tradition, accepts the natural equality between man and woman and holds that anyone should have different privileges (frgs. 3 e 4 Hense). However, in spite of defending equal access to education, he never admits the same in politics (fig. 4). See F. de OLIVEIRA, 1992, p. 97, 100. As I. RODRÍGUEZ MORENO, 2005 says: “En definitiva, todas estas mujeres, con Hipatia a la cabeza, supieron ganarse un lugar destacado en el pensamiento griego, donde aportaron su grano de arena, aunque, en ocasiones, sólo conoczamos sus nombres y apenas nada de sus doctrinas, salvo por algunas breves referencias de sus discípulos.” (p. 122). The Cynic movement (about IV BC-V AD) had a famous member, Hipparchia (fl. 336–333 BC), a woman scholar from Thrace that was a pupil of Crates of Thebes, besides being her husband and having followed him everywhere.

⁷ All translations are those of the Loeb Classical Library.

⁸ With regard to this complex figure, D. F. LEÃO, 2002 concluded: “Por último, Cleobulina contribui, também, para transformar o espaço do banquete numa cosmópolis dos vários tipos de sapiência: ela representaria, assim, uma sabedoria mais simples, permeada de intuição política e de humanidade, conforme se depreende as palavras que Tales profere a respeito dela.” (p. 91).

since the women that took part in the banquet were only flute-players or *hetairai*, branded women in a moral sense⁹. Nevertheless, this episode shows, as F. Facq (2006/2007, p. 44) notes, that young Greek girls were not resigned to gynoeceium but had contact with the male sphere: “chez Plutarque, les filles sont importantes aux yeux de leur père mais elles revêtent aussi un caractère particulier pour les étrangers qui connaissent cet attachement: elles ont même un rôle” (p. 46)¹⁰.

The access of women to this kind of male private events was different in Greek and Roman culture¹¹, as well as the meaning of the banquet itself, named *comissatio* in Rome¹². The cultural difference becomes more manifest in the Imperial period, when it became common to see Roman women reclined with men¹³. E. Fantham and M. Roller¹⁴ mention this kind of behaviour, characteristic of the new conscience of gender roles, motivated by equally new social and moral dynamics¹⁵. On the other hand, the Greek banquet did not accept the access of women to this space, a cultural aspect witnessed by Cornelius Nepos¹⁶:

Many actions are seemly according to our code which the Greeks look upon as shameful. For instance, what Roman would blush to take his wife to a dinner-

⁹ Cf. F. LE CORSU, 1981, pp. 149-65.

¹⁰ Cf. *Moralia* (198A) and F. LE CORSU, 1981, pp. 85-95.

¹¹ On the legal, social and family condition of Athenian women see: F. LE CORSU, 1981, pp. 11-5; A. CAMERON & A. KUHRT, 1993; D. COHEN, 1989; R. OLMOS ROMERA, 1986?; S. POMEROY, 1975; J. P. GOULD, 1980. With regard to the situation of Roman women, see F. LE CORSU, 1981, pp. 21-5; K. M. D. DUNBABIN, 2003, pp. 22-3.

¹² See R. CORTES TOVAR, 2005; A. DEL CASTILLO, 1986?; M. ROLLER, 2003; O. MURRAY, 1990. As a matter of fact – as noted by K. M. D. DUNBABIN, 2003, p. 20 – the *comissatio* did not have the same relevance for the Romans that the Greek *symposion* had for Plutarch's people.

¹³ As M. ROLLER, 2003, p. 400 noted: “Representations of women's conviviality become more plentiful in Augustan and imperial texts. These representations confirm that a woman's dining posture – at least in elite male company- expresses her sexuality, but they show considerable ambivalence about the consequences of such expression”. See also in the same study, 2003, p. 402 (n. 58) and p. 403, who mentions some situations that reveal the licentiousness that characterize the *conuiuia*. Cf. Plu., *Mor.* 759F-60, Suet., *Aug.* 69.1 and *Cal.* 25.1, 36.2, Sen., *Const.* 18.2.

¹⁴ See E. FANTHAM ET AL., 1995, pp. 280-93 and M. ROLLER, 2003, p. 400.

¹⁵ Note that the parties organized exclusively for women would be characterized by the very same kind of activities that men had in banquets, like the festival of Demeter, for example. See J. BURTON, 1998 whose study offers a new look at female sociability, which was not restricted to the gynoeceium but rather created a large number of contexts in which women could interact with men: “The evidence makes it clear that women were active in commensal activities, both inside classical Athens and certainly outside. This survey of the variety of Greek women's drinking and dining activities emphasizes the need to include women more centrally in histories of commensality and sociality in the ancient Greek world.” (p. 161).

¹⁶ See *Vitae*, Praef. 6-7: Contra ea pleraque nostris moribus sunt decora, quae apud illos turpia putantur. Quem enim Romanorum pudet uxorem ducere in conuiuuium? Aut cuius non mater familias primum locum tenet aedium atque in celebritate uersatur? Quod multo fit aliter in Graecia. Nam neque in conuiuuium adhibetur nisi propinquo, neque sedet nisi in interiore parte aedium, quae gynaecionis appellatur; quo nemo accedit nisi propinqua cognatione coniunctus. On the literary and iconographic representation of Roman woman in the first century see the chapter of E. FANTHAM's study, 1995, pp. 280-93: “The “New Woman”: representation and reality.”

party? ... But it is very different in Greece; for there a woman is not admitted to a dinner-party, unless relatives only are present and she keeps to the more retired part of the house called “the women’s apartment” to which no man has access (...)

Cicero too (*In Verrem* 2.1.26.66) quotes an episode which took place in an *ut Graeco more biberetur* (“drunk in the Greek way”) banquet, when Rubrius asked Philodamus, a Greek himself, to invite his daughter to the banquet¹⁷:

“Tell me, Philodamus, why not send for your daughter to come in and see us?” The respectable and elderly father received the rascal’s suggestion with astonished silence. As Rubrius persisted, he replied, in order to say something, that it was not the Greek custom for women to be present at a men’s dinner-party.

As a matter of fact, it is Plutarch who ascribes to Cato the Elder (8. 4) the saying that “all other men rule their wives; we rule all other men, and our wives rule us” (*Them.* 18.7). Roman women enjoyed a superior social condition when compared to the Greek world¹⁸, where the life of women was associated with the gynoeceum and the preservation of their own *oikos*, being therefore far from male activity. As a Greek, Plutarch does not allow women to join these banquets, a position well expressed in Book I (*Quaest. Conv.* 613A), when the guests discuss whether it is convenient to have philosophical discussions at the table once the wine makes serious argumentation impossible:

<ἐγώ> δ’ εἶπον ἄλλα γὰρ εἰσίν, ὧ ἑταῖρε, καὶ πάννυ γε σεμνῶς κατειρωνευόμενοι λέγουσι μὴ δεῖν ὡσπερ οἰκοδέσποιναν ἐν οἴνῳ φθέγγεσθαι φιλοσοφίαν, καὶ τοὺς Πέρσας ὀρθῶς φασὶ μὴ ταῖς γαμεταῖς ἀλλὰ ταῖς παλλακίσσι συμμεθύσκεσθαι καὶ συνορχεῖσθαι· ταῦτό δὴ καὶ ἡμᾶς ἀξιοῦσι ποιεῖν εἰς τὰ συμπόσια τὴν μουσικὴν καὶ τὴν ὑποκριτικὴν ἐπιεισάγοντας φιλοσοφίαν δὲ μὴ κινουῦντας (...)¹⁹

And I replied, “Certainly there are, my friend, and the pretext they very solemnly employ is that philosophy should no more have a part in conversation over wine than should the matron of the house. They commend the Persians for

¹⁷ Note that iconography does not always confirm this vision. There are, in fact, Greek monuments with representations of respectable women participating in mixed banquets. However, as K. M. D. DUNBABIN, 2003, p. 22 noted, this kind of representation corresponds to an older iconography where the figures are identified as heroes or gods. There are also funerary representations where the woman appears sitting in the chair or at the end of the bed where the man, the husband, is reclined. This kind of iconography has a more conservative character due to its funerary specificity. See also M. ROLLER, 2003.

¹⁸ In regard to women’s place in Rome, see A. DEL CASTILLO, 1986?. As R. CORTÉS TOVAR, 2005, observes: “Podríamos decir gráficamente que, en términos generales, los espacios de poder que las mujeres ocupan en Roma son una prolongación del ámbito familiar y privado (...)” (p. 125). Cf. n. 10. See also K. BLOMQUIST, 1997.

¹⁹ For the Greek text of the *Table-Talks*, we use C. HUBERT, *Plutarchus. Moralia*, IV, Leipzig, 1971.

doing their drinking and dancing with their mistresses rather than with their wives; this they think we ought to imitate by introducing music and theatricals into our drinking-parties, and not disturb philosophy.

The οἰκοδέσποιναν mentioned in the text should be some kind of housekeeper, maybe a slave for taking care of the house and the children; that is why the host's wife was not supposed to take a seat in the *symposium*, always eating with the youngest ones²⁰. It is still interesting that Plutarch ascribes to the barbarians what we all know to be also a Greek custom: the participation of concubines and *hetairai* – both slaves and even young foreign girls –, along with music and pantomime²¹.

The very same issue is discussed in Book VII of *Quaestiones Convivales* (710B) by a sophist, who dismissed the flute-player girls that animated the banquet, judging that their presence compromised the κοινωνία τῶν λόγων by absorbing all men's attention:

Περὶ ἀκροαμάτων ἐν Χαιρωνείᾳ λόγοι παρὰ πότον ἐγένοντο Διογενιανοῦ τοῦ Περγαμηνοῦ παρόντος, καὶ πράγματ' εἶχομεν ἀμυνόμενοι βαθυπώγωνα <σοφιστήν> ἀπὸ τῆς Στοᾶς, ὃς ἐπήγαγεν τὸν Πλάτωνα²² κατηγοροῦντα τῶν ἀύλητρίσι χρωμένων παρ' οἶνον, ἀλλήλοις δὲ συγγίνεσθαι διὰ λόγου μὴ δυναμένων.

When I gave a dinner party, in Chaeronea, for Diogenianus of Pergamum, there was some discussion of types of entertainment, and we had considerable difficulty in beating off the attack of a long-bearded sophist of the Stoic persuasion, who brought up Plato's indictment of people who listen to flute-girls over their wine because they are unable to entertain themselves by conversation.

The “woman dressing up for the banquet” had some moral characteristics and a *sui generis* style: “gold brooches”, “finely wrought earrings” and “Aphrodite's magic band”, a symbol of seduction. All these separated her from the married woman, who was forced to follow a distinct model (*Quaest. Conv.* 693C):

μέχρι τούτων ἐπιμέλεια [καὶ] καθαριότητός ἐστιν· ὅταν δὲ τὰς χρυσαῖς περόνας ἀναλαμβάνῃ καὶ τὰ διηκριβωμένα τέχνη ἑλλόβια καὶ τελευτώσα τῆς περὶ τὸν κεστὸν ἄπτηται γοητείας, περιεργία τὸ χρῆμα καὶ λαμυρία μὴ πρέπουσα γαμετῇ γέγονεν. οὐκοῦν καὶ τὸν οἶνον οἱ μὲν ἀλόαις χρωτίζοντες ἢ κινναμώμοις καὶ κρόκοις ἐφηδύνοντες ὥσπερ γυναῖκα καλλωπίζουσιν εἰς τὰ συμποσία καὶ προαγωγέουσιν·

So far she is showing concern for cleanliness, but when she picks up those gold brooches and finely wrought earrings, and, lastly turns to the witchery of

²⁰ See F. MARTÍN GARCÍA, 1987, p.49 n.11.

²¹ Plutarch refers to the same custom with regard to the Persian kings in *Coniugalium Praecepta* 140 b. See more about “music and theatricals” in *Quaestiones Convivales* 711E-F, 747C.

²² See *Prot.* 347 c and *Mor.* 176e.

Aphrodite's magic band²³, it is plainly a case of overdoing things and a wanton conduct unbecoming to a wife. Even so, those who color wine with aloes or sweeten it with cinnamon or saffron are adorning it like a woman's face in preparation for a gay party, and are acting as a kind of pander;

Excessive luxury and female style of dress were, as we all know, a very polemical issue, being actually legally prohibited in Syracuse²⁴. It may be interesting to note that Lucian of Samosata (125-180 AD), in his work *De domo* (7-15) also presents an ideal female decency very similar to the one outlined by Ariston, Plutarch's guest:

but only in such degree as would suffice a modest and beautiful woman to set off her beauty – a delicate chain round her neck, a light ring on her finger, pendants in her ears, a buckle, a band that confines the luxuriance of her hair and adds as much to her good looks as purple border adds to a gown.

Being a social educator and caring for the preservation of traditional values, Plutarch stands for a noble image of the woman and for family values. In Book I of *Quaestiones Coniuviales* (619D), when discussing “Why the place at banquets called the consul's acquired honor”, he draws the model of a consul's political presentation; he is not valuable only by himself, but also on account of those who are related to him, both paying him social respect and giving him the guarantee of his own status, at least during the banquet.

τῶν <δὲ> συνέγγιστα τόπων ὁ μὲν [γὰρ] ὑπ' αὐτὸν ἢ γυναικὸς ἢ παίδων ἐστίν, ὁ δ' ὑπὲρ αὐτὸν εἰκότως τῷ μάλιστα τιμωμένῳ τῶν κεκλημένων ἀπέδόθη, ἵν' ἐγγὺς ἦ τοῦ ἐστιῶντος.

And of the places nearest him the one which is below him belongs either to his wife or his children, while the one above him was given properly enough to the guest of honor in order that he might be near his host.

On the other hand, if a governor's political dignity requires the presence of his family, as a symbol of individual and social stability, the same is demanded of women, who are not supposed to take a seat in public meals without their husbands, where both men and women are present:

ἔτι πολλὰ τῶν γαμικῶν ἢ τὰ πλεῖστα δρᾶται διὰ γυναικῶν ὅπου δὲ γυναῖκες πάρεισι, καὶ τοὺς ἄνδρας ἀναγκαῖόν ἐστιπαραλαμβάνεσθαι.

Besides, many or most of the activities relating to a wedding are in the hands of women, and where women are present it is necessary that their husbands also should be included. (667B)²⁵

²³ It corresponds to the magic band that Aphrodite offered to Hera (*II*. 14. 214).

²⁴ Phylarchus apud Athen. 512 B. Plutarch also emphasizes this censure in *Moralia* 142B.

²⁵ The scholar from Chaeronea gives the same advice to Eurydice in *Coniugalia Praecepta* 139D: τὴν δὲ σώφρονα γυναῖκα δεῖ τούναντίον ὀρᾶσθαι μάλιστα μετὰ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς οὔσαν,

Nevertheless, Plutarch goes even further. Indeed, besides establishing a family stereotype for appearances in public²⁶, he also interferes with the private sphere. Here is an example: if a man comes more sexually inspired from a banquet, “bringing a garland and his own body perfumed” (654E), he is supposed to lie down with his own wife and not with any concubine²⁷. However, he must do it during the night, because it would be very uncomfortable to take his wife out of the gynoeceum just to fulfil his wants ἀλεκτρονόος (“like a cock”). That is to say that the male spaces are different from the female ones, but respect must be reciprocal²⁸. The scholar from Chaeronea treats this theme at greater length in the *Coniugalia Praecepta*, a wedding present to his married friends Eurydice and Pollianus, a treatise that M. Foucault (1984, p.192) considered a key text of a new morality of marriage²⁹. This attitude may have emerged around the first century AD and manifests a change of the view of marriage due to the new status of women, as we will see further on:

Τῶν σωμάτων οἱ φιλόσοφοι τὰ μὲν ἐκ διεστῶτων λέγουσιν εἶναι καθάπερ στόλον καὶ στρατόπεδον, τὰ δ' ἐκ συναπτομένων ὡς οἰκίαν καὶ ναῦν, τὰ δ' ἠνωμένα καὶ συμφυῆ καθάπερ ἐστὶ τῶν ζώων ἕκαστον. σχεδὸν οὖν καὶ γάμος ὁ μὲν τῶν ἐρώντων ἠνωμένος καὶ συμφυῆς ἐστὶν (...). (*Mor.* 142F)

οἰκουρεῖν δὲ καὶ κρύπτεσθαι μὴ παρόντος, “a virtuous woman ought to be most visible in her husband’s company, and to stay in the house and hide herself when he is away”.

²⁶ Note the well-known image used by the Stoic Antipater of Tarsus (frg. 3.63.11.16 von Arnim), as expressed in *Amatorius* 769F: “The same is true for lovers; (...) for this truly is what is called ‘integral amalgamation’ [ὅλων κρᾶσις] that of a married couple who love each other”. K. BLOMQUIST, 1997, pp. 73-4 commented this passage, noting that the complete union suggested by this metaphor is illusory, since the mixture between wine and water is always called “wine”, showing that a hierarchy within the marriage still persists. Cf. *Mor.* 142F. See “Plutarch on marriage: the element of communality” and “Plutarch on marriage: reciprocity, the secret for a happy wedlock” in A. G. NIKOLAIDIS, 1997, pp. 51-7, 63-76, as well as F. LE CORSU, 1981, pp. 25-38.

²⁷ We can find the very same advice in Plato’s *Leges* (VIII, 839a-b): “That was precisely the reason why I stated that in reference to his law I know of a device for making a natural use of reproductive intercourse and, on the other hand, by abstaining from every female field in which you would not desire the seed to spring up. (...) For, in the first place, it follows the dictates of nature, and it serves to keep men from sexual rage and frenzy and all kinds of fornication, and from all excess in meats and drinks, and it ensures in husbands fondness for their own wives”.

²⁸ Note that Plutarch (*Coniugalia Praecepta* 144C-D) advises, however, the woman to accept that the man can choose to have sexual relations with a slave woman, because that would be a mark of respect for his wedded wife: “If therefore a man in private life, who is incontinent and dissolute in regard to his pleasures, commits some peccadillo with a paramour or a maid-servant, his wedded wife ought not to be indignant or angry, but she should reason that it is respect for her which leads him to share his debauchery, licentiousness, and wantonness with another woman.” Plutarch also refers to the example of the Persians kings mentioned in note 21 above.

²⁹ For an analysis of Foucault’s view of Plutarch’s *Coniugalia Praecepta*, see C. PATTERSON, 1992.

Philosophers³⁰ say of bodies that some are composed of separate elements, as a fleet or an army, others of elements joined together, as a house or a ship, and still others form together an intimate union as is the case with every living creature. In about the same way, the marriage of a couple in love with each other is an intimate union.

Actually, we also find this new marital morality in other contemporary Stoic texts, for example, Antipater's *Peri Gamou* (Stobaeus, IV), some passages of Musonius Rufus (Stobaeus III, 6.23, IV. 22.20) and Hierocles (Stobaeus IV. 22. 21)³¹ about this subject. However, as Cynthia Patterson (1992, p. 4714) noted, although this attitude may sound new, it may also reflect the popular discourse about marriage: "(...) it seems to me that Plutarch's advice is grounded in and reflects traditional, popular and pragmatic marital concern, and would strike a common chord in readers both Roman and Greek".

Elaborating on the subject of female ethics in the social and private spheres, the philosopher discusses the constitution of the woman's body, which is, from our point of view, actually a reflection of the idealistic social construction of the female and female psychology. In order to confirm this, we may look at the adjectives used by Plutarch in order to describe the woman's body functions when comparing both the elders' and the women's bodies: while the former is "dry", "rough" and "hard", the latter is "moist", "smooth" and "soft", qualities that go far beyond the physiological assumption and somehow reflect a gender construction, a female stereotype³² (*Quaest. Conv.* 650 A-B):

ἔφη τοίνυν ὁ <Σύλλας> θατέρῳ θάτερον ἐμφαίνεσθαι κἂν εἰ περὶ τῶν γυναικῶν ὀρθῶς τὴν αἰτίαν λάβοιμεν, οὐκ ἔτι πολλοῦ λόγου δεήσεσθαι περὶ τῶν γερόντων· ἐναντίας γὰρ εἶναι μάλιστα τὰς φύσεις τῇ θ' ὑγρότητι καὶ ξηρότητι <καὶ λειότητι> καὶ τραχύτητι καὶ μαλακότητι καὶ σκληρότητι. 'καὶ τοῦτ' ἔφη 'λαμβάνω κατὰ τῶν γυναικῶν πρῶτον, ὅτι τὴν κρᾶσιν ὑγρὰν ἔχουσιν, ἢ καὶ τὴν ἀπαλότητα τῆς σαρκὸς ἐμμεμιγμένη παρέχει καὶ τὸ στίλβον ἐπὶ λειότητι καὶ τὰς καθάρσεις·

Sulla replied that one part of the problem threw light upon the other. If we should rightly determine the cause where women are concerned, there would be no further need of much speculation where old men are concerned, for their natures are very emphatically opposites: moist and dry, smooth and rough, soft

³⁰ Plutarch is referring to Stoic philosophers, see *De Defectu Oraculorum* 426a.

³¹ See M. FOUCAULT, 1982, p.174 and his analysis of Stoic texts about marriage in the same study, pp. 177-216. The same author also refers to Seneca, Epictectus and some Pythagoric texts.

³² Actually, this comparison is also found in Aristotle (fr. 107 Rose), according to Athen. 429 C and *Geop.* VII 34.2. Moreover, we find the same characterisation at Ps-Arist. *Probl.* 880a 13. There are two main sources in Greek Literature that make explicit reference to female anatomy or physiology: the Hippocratic Corpus and Aristotle's *History of Animals, Parts of Animals* and *Generation of Animals*. See L. DEAN-JONES, 1991, pp. 111-37. On this subject see also S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1989, p. 327.

and hard. “The first thing about women”, he continued, “I take to be this, that they possess a moist temperament which, being a component of the female, is responsible for her delicate, sleek, smooth flesh, and for her menses.

Plutarch discusses another subject related to female physiology again in Book III (650 F): “Whether women are colder in temperament than men or hotter”. Only earth is “moist” (ὕγρότητι) as women, both being promises of life and the support of mankind, as is said by Plato about all rational or animal female beings (*Quaest. Conv.* 638 A):

οὐ γὰρ γῆ' φησὶν ὁ Πλάτων 'γυναῖκα, γῆν δὲ γυνὴ μιμεῖται' καὶ τῶν ἄλλων θηλέων ἕκαστον.

‘For earth does not imitate woman,’ says Plato (*Mx.* 238 A), ‘but woman earth,’ as indeed does each of the other females.

Indeed, as Plato insists, “earth does not imitate woman, but woman earth”, meaning that both are able to reproduce. A linguistic sign of this theory is the adjective θήλυς; for it may be translated as either “female” or “fertile”, being anyway usually more related to the female gender (*Il.* 8.7; 19.97; *Hdt.* 3.109, *X. Mem.* 2.1.4). Let us attend to the following quotation from Book II (640 E-F):

μὴ κρατεῖσθαι μηδὲ μεταβάλλειν. ἔτι δ' εἶπεν 'οὐκ ἄδηλον ὅτι δεῖ πρὸς τὸ ἐμφυτευόμενον χώρας λόγον ἔχειν τὸ δεξόμενον· τὴν δὲ χώραν δεῖ θήλειαν ἔχειν καὶ γόνιμον· ὅθεν τὰ πολυκαρπώτατα τῶν φυτῶν ... ἐκλεγόμενοι παραπηγνύουσιν, ὡσπερ γυναιξὶν <πολυ>γαλακτούσαις ἕτερα <βρέφη> προσβάλλοντες.

“Further”, he continued, “it is quite clear that the stock to be grafted fulfils the function of soil for the scion; soil and stock must be fertile and productive³³, and so they select the most fruitful of plants and insert the scions in them, much like putting infants out to nurse with women who have abundant milk.

Their similar qualities are proved in the text, for πολυκαρπώτατα (“the most fruitful of plants”) are compared to γυναιξὶν <πολυ>γαλακτούσαις (“women who have abundant milk”). Again we may confirm the Platonic theory of women as an imitation of earth.

As A. G. Nikolaidis (1997, p. 28) suggests, this Plutarchan “feminism” must have been strongly inspired by the Roman *matrona*'s status, far superior to that of the Greek woman³⁴; and the same should have

³³ Lac. 4-7 T: ἐμβολάσιον Hubert, “for grafts”, or the like προσελεγόμενα Bernardakis.

³⁴ K. BLOMQUIST, 1997, p. 90 draws the same conclusion: “In this area, as so often, Plutarch adopts a Roman ideal; his heroines are essentially Roman matrons, strong and virtuous, even

happened in the social and family spheres, where women “enjoyed a dignity and independence at least equal if not superior to those claimed by contemporary feminists”³⁵.

The truth is that the analysis of the woman’s evocations in *Quaestiones Coniuvales* comes to justify Plutarch’s *avantgarde* thoughts in relation to the female place in the family, an institution to be preserved in society. As a matter of fact, as noted by J. Burton (1998, p. 149), a new horizon of opportunities for women had begun to develop as early as the Hellenistic period, given the questioning of the ideal of the citizen-soldier after the gradual disintegration of the polis, which had mostly determined the erased image of the Greek woman. The marriage contracts change – protecting also the woman –, the chance of having property and being elected to political office, along with increasing economic power, all together came to build a new gender conscience, as S. Blundell points out³⁶:

But in general it can be said that there was an erosion of the asymmetry between the sexes during the Hellenistic Age, and a consequent improvement in the status of women. In the political arena, the most spectacular advance was made by the women of the Hellenistic royal families. (1999, p. 199)

In relation to literary tradition, Plutarch is therefore actually an innovator, not accepting an old misogynic tradition supported by Hesiod (*Tb.* 590-612), Homer (*Od.* 11. 426-34), Semonides or Euripides, excluding only Socrates, Plato, the Cynic philosophers³⁷ and the Stoics – including the Roman Musonius Rufus – who admitted the equality of both genders³⁸. As for Plutarch, he builds the image of a woman full of ethical and intellectual

when dressed in the traditional Greek *peplos*.”

³⁵ Vide J. CARCOPINO, 1956, p. 98.

³⁶ The same scholar also refers to a papyrus from Egypt that reveals that, during this period, women could buy and sell, such as happened in Greek cities, where inscriptions refer to women as having property and owning slaves. In Sparta, moreover, there are many cases of women that accumulate great riches. See IDEM, 1999, p. 199. On the female condition in the Hellenistic period see the chapter “The Hellenistic Period: women in a cosmopolitan world” in E. FANTHAM ET AL. (eds.), 1995, pp. 136-81. See also L. FOXHALL, 1989, p. 31 on women’s property in Classical Athens and, for a most extensive treatment of the subject, D. SCHAPS, 1979.

³⁷ Cf. n. 5 and L. PAQUET, 1975, p. 24. See Diogenes Laërtius (6, 12) on Antisthenes, an early Cynic, and on his pupil Diogenes (6, 72), as well as the passages on Crates (Plut., *Mor.* 141 E) and his wife Hipparchia (D. L., 6, 96). Apud L. PAQUET, 1975, pp. 40, 91, 113, 116.

³⁸ See A. G. NIKOLAIDIS, 1997, p. 29; C. PATTERSON, 1989, p. 4720 has come to a similar conclusion about the *Coniugalia Praecepta*: “But what is unusual (within at least the Greek literary tradition) is his enunciation of the ideals of marriage in an essentially positive form”. Note the famous passage of *Politics* (1260a 6), where Aristotle compares the woman to a slave on account of her weak nature, condemned to obey to a male, who is distinguished by intellectual skills: “for the soul by nature contains a part that rules and a part that is ruled, to which we assign different virtues, that is, the virtue of the rational and that of the irrational. It is clear then the case is the same also with the other instances of ruler and ruled. Hence there are by nature various classes of rulers and ruled. For the free rules the slave, the male the female (...)”. See also 54b 13, 59a 39, 60a 9.

arete, still not allowed to access the masculine circles of power – as K. Blomquist, 1997 showed³⁹ – or conviviality, as we can conclude from his attitude of keeping women away from the *symposion* and philosophical discussions.

In fact, he does not completely avoid the former popular tradition of the image of women in the private and social circle saying, for example, that “where [women] are present it is necessary that their husbands also should be included” (*Quaest. Conv.* 667B). Thus, if in the texts on marital ethics⁴⁰, conjugal intimacy and feminine education Plutarch actually follows the Stoic and Cynic traditions, admitting the equality of women, he does not abandon the norm of traditionalist behavior in the public sphere.

As for the banquets, the presence of women is still not allowed – for these reunions are made (or described) in the Greek way, because Greek is also his point of view.

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³⁹ Blomquist analyses some cases of Plutarch’s women that were very close to politics, either by supporting men – Octavia, Aretaphila, Pompeia Plotina – or by manipulating them – Aspasia, Cleopatra, and Olympias – and concluded: “Women are not wicked or morally depraved unless they transgress the rules of their sex and strive to achieve privileges reserved for men. Women are capable of courageous defiance of tyrants and external enemies – but after their exploits, they are to renounce all power.”(p. 89)

⁴⁰ Cf. n. 25.

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TRUFFLES AND THUNDERBOLTS (PLU., *QUAEST. CONV.* 4.2, 1-2)

ALDO SETAIOLI
University of Perugia

Abstract

In the first part of a chapter of his *Quaestiones convivales* (4.2,1-2) Plutarch seeks to explain the popular belief according to which truffles are produced through the agency of thunder by linking their appearance with the physical phenomena accompanying thunder and lightning. This can be regarded as an example of the attempt – common in Hellenistic and Roman times – to save popular beliefs through scientific, philosophical, or allegorical interpretations, as the Stoics had done in the case of divination.

In the second problem of the fourth book of the *Συμποσιακά*, or *Quaestiones convivales*, Plutarch treats two different matters concerning lightning and thunderbolts, the first of which is paralleled in several ancient writers¹ and will be the object of the present inquiry – namely, the belief connecting the appearance and growth of truffles with thundering. The title of the problem, as formulated by Plutarch, shows that he is more concerned with explaining the reason for the rise of this popular belief than with establishing the real connection, if any, between truffles and thunderbolts: “Why truffles *seem* to be born through the agency of thunder”: διὰ τί τὰ ὕδνα τῆ βροντῆ δοκεῖ γίνεσθαι².

The location of the banquet during which the question was raised is particularly apt: the city of Elis, where Agemachos, the host, served his guests truffles of extraordinary size³. That Elis, in the Peloponnese, was renowned for its truffles is indeed confirmed by Theophrastus and Pliny⁴.

The appearance of the truffles at the banquet is greeted by one of the diners with an ironical allusion, duly underlined by Plutarch, to the popular belief connecting truffles and thunder: “someone said with a smile: ‘these truffles are indeed worthy of the thundering we recently had’, thus scorning those who connect the birth of truffles with thundering”⁵.

This already poses a problem, because according to both Theophrastus and Pliny⁶ truffles were believed to owe their origin to the autumn thunderstorms,

¹ Thphr., *Fr.* 400A Fortenbaugh (= Athen. 62A-C); Plin., *Nat.* 19.37 (clearly drawing on Theophrastus); cf. Apollon. *Mir.* 47, p. 140, 258-259 Giannini. For Theophrastus cf. O. REGENBOGEN, 1940, col. 1444. At Thphr., *HP* 1.6.5 the correction κεραύνιον was proposed for the transmitted κράνιον (which, however, must probably be corrected to γεράνιον).

² The second question is similarly introduced in the title: καὶ διὰ τί τοὺς καθεύδοντας οἴονται μὴ κεραυνοῦσθαι.

³ Plu., *Quaest. conv.* 4.2,1, 664B ὕδνα παμμεγέθη δειπνοῦσιν ἡμῖν Ἀγέμαχος παρέθηκεν ἐν Ἥλιδι.

⁴ Cf. Plin., *Nat.* 19.37 *Asiae nobilissima circa Lampsacum et Alopeconnesum, Graeciae vero circa Elim*, derived from Thphr. *Fr.* 400A (= Athen. 62C).

⁵ Plu., *Quaest. conv.* 4.2,1, 664B ἔφη τις ὑπομειδιάσας ‘ἄξιά γε τῶν βροντῶν τῶν ἔναγχος γενομένων’, ὡς δὴ καταγελῶν τῶν λεγόντων τὰ ὕδνα τὴν γένεσιν ἐκ βροντῆς λαμβάνειν. A. STEIER, 1950, col. 1383, wrongly attributes this remark to Agemachos himself.

⁶ Thphr., *Fr.* 400A (= Athen. 62B) ὅταν ὕδατα μετοπωρινὰ καὶ βρονταὶ γίνωνται σκληραὶ

but both writers, as well as Discorides, concur in stating that the best time for the gathering and consumption of truffles is spring⁷. The words Plutarch attributes to this guest, however, clearly show that the way he refers to this belief makes no provision for an interval between the birth of the truffle and its readiness for consumption, since he mentions *recent* thunderstorms (ἐναγχος γενομένων). This may remind us of a detail connected with the paradoxical nature of truffles, as reported by Pliny, who declares himself to be in doubt whether they grow or attain their size immediately at birth⁸; and Theophrastus, as quoted by Athenaeus, even seems to take it for granted that truffles, like other things created in the earth, are produced instantaneously at their full size⁹ – a statement that appears to be at odds with their alleged birth in autumn and readiness for consumption in spring. Unfortunately the season during which Agemachos' banquet took place is not specified, but a parallel to the way the popular belief is alluded to by this character of Plutarch's is found in Juvenal, who places in spring both the thundering originating truffles and the consumption of the latter as a delicacy¹⁰. This, however, might be a simplification due to the desire to give particular emphasis to the striking connection popular belief posited between thunder and the appearance of truffles.

A second opinion is then reported by Plutarch in *oratio obliqua*, but it is presumably to be understood as put forward at the time by some other guests of Agemachos', as shown by the tense employed: "there *were* some who said" etc.¹¹. According to them thunder produces clefts in the earth, thus guiding truffle seekers – which gave rise to the belief that thunder creates truffles, rather than simply revealing them. This opinion is itself in line with the title of the problem, which, as we saw, is mainly concerned with the origin of the popular belief, but it unambiguously stresses that the latter is mistaken, and its supporters appear to be overly careful to distinguish themselves from the uneducated mass: οἱ πολλοί¹².

It is then Agemachos' turn to express his opinion; he defends the popular belief by referring to the numerous inexplicable phenomena connected with lightning and thunderbolts – aptly described by him as *διοσημίαι* – and urging his hearers not to dismiss as impossible what merely appears paradoxical. In this attitude of the host we recognize the spirit of the principle later stated by Mestrius Florus in the Συμποσιακά: one should not lightly reject traditional

τότε γίνεσθαι, καὶ μᾶλλον ὅταν αἱ βρονταὶ ~ Plin., *Nat.* 19.37 *cum fuerint imbres autumnales et tonitrua crebra tunc nasci et maxime tonitribus.*

⁷ Thphr., *Fr.* 400A (=Athen.62B) τὴν δὲ χρεῖαν καὶ τὴν ἀκμὴν ἔχειν τοῦ ἥρος; Plin., *Nat.* 19. 37 *tenerrima autem verno esse*; Dsc. 2.145 ἔαρος ὀρυττομένη.

⁸ Plin., *Nat.* 19.34 *crescant anne vitium id terrae... ea protinus globetur magnitudine, qua futurum est... non facile arbitror intellegi posse.*

⁹ Thphr., *Fr.* 400A (=Athen. 62A) ἢ τῶν ἐγγεοτόκων τούτων γένεσις ἅμα καὶ φύσις.

¹⁰ Juv., 5.116-118 *tradentur tubera, si ver / tunc erit et facient optata tonitrua cenas / maiores.*

¹¹ Plu., *Quaest. conv.* 4.2,1, 664B ἦσαν οὖν οἱ φάσκοντες κτλ. If this referred generically to a current idea, we would probably have the present tense: *τινές φασι*, or something similar.

¹² Plu., *Quaest. conv.* 4.2,1, 664BC ἐκ δὲ τούτων δόξαν ἐγγενέσθαι τοῖς πολλοῖς ὅτι τὸ ὕδρον αἱ βρονταὶ γεννῶσι, οὐ δεικνύουσι.

views when we are not able to ascertain the causes of inexplicable phenomena, though these are to be sought by resorting to logic¹³. On the other hand, Agemachos is playing his role as a host, in that, as he says at the end of his speech, his goal is to spur the discussion, as a polite way to have his guests contribute their share to the delicacy they are being served¹⁴, and thus ensure the success of the banquet.

Finally, Plutarch himself enters the discussion. His position favors an explanation reconciling the popular belief with more scientific views, but nevertheless, as he remarks himself, it is closely connected with Agemachos' speech¹⁵. The latter had in fact hinted at the fertilizing power attributed by farmers to rain accompanied by thunderstorms¹⁶. It should not escape us, however, that Agemachos had simply referred to the farmers' empirical recognition of the fact, whereas Plutarch endeavors to give it a scientific foundation.

The way he does so is of the highest interest. He starts by stating that the fertilizing power of thunderstorm rain is due to the presence of heat in the rain-water¹⁷. He goes immediately on to say, however, that the purest and most violent portion of the fire present in the rain clouds is released in the form of lightning, whereas the heavier and steamier portion warms up the cloud¹⁸. What we should emphasize here is the fact that Plutarch presents thunder and lightning as mere signs of the appearance of truffles, not as agents in any way. It is in fact the fertilizing heat produced in thunderstorm rain by the heavier particles of fire remaining in the clouds that is responsible for the growth of truffles, whereas lightning is merely the fire which is immediately released, and has no role in the process. The latter, however, can only take place when particles of fire are present in the clouds, and is therefore regularly accompanied by thunder and lightning.

Plutarch continues his speech by stressing the paradoxical nature of the truffle, with remarks paralleled in other writers. Truffles are a sort of disease of the earth in the form of sickly outgrowths¹⁹; they have no roots²⁰; they cannot be born without water²¹. The latter is of course a common observation

¹³ Cf. Plu., *Quaest. conv.* 5.7,1, 680CD; also *Conv. sept. sap.* 20, 163D.

¹⁴ Plu., *Quaest. conv.* 4.2,1, 664D ταῦτα...ἀδολεσχῶ παρακαλῶν ὑμᾶς ἐπὶ τὴν ζήτησιν τῆς αἰτίας, ἵνα μὴ πικρὸς γένωμαι συμβολὰς τῶν ὕδνων πρασσομένους.

¹⁵ Plu., *Quaest. conv.* 4.2,2, 664D αὐτὸν οὖν ἔφην τρόπον τινὰ τῷ λόγῳ δεξιὰν ὀρέγειν τὸν Ἀγάμαχον.

¹⁶ Plu., *Quaest. conv.* 4.2,1, 664D τὰ δ' ἀστραπαῖα τῶν ὑδάτων εὐαλδῆ καλοῦσιν οἱ γεωργοὶ καὶ νομίζουσιν.

¹⁷ Plu., *Quaest. conv.* 4.2,2, 664D αἰτία δ' ἡ τῆς θερμότητος ἀνάμιξις.

¹⁸ Plu., *Quaest. conv.* 4.2,2, 664DE τὸ μὲν γὰρ ὄξυ καὶ καθαρὸν τοῦ πυρὸς ἄπεισιν ἀστραπὴ γενόμενος, τὸ δ' ἐμβριθεὲς καὶ πνευματώδες ἐνειλούμενον τῷ νέφει καὶ συµμεταβάλλον ἐξαιρεῖ τὴν ψυχρότητα.

¹⁹ Plu., *Quaest. conv.* 4.2,2, 664F; 665A τῆς γῆς ... παθούσης τι καὶ μεταβαλλούσης. Cf. Plin., *Nat.* 19.34 *vitium... terrae*; 19.33 *terrae callum*.

²⁰ Plu., *Quaest. conv.* 4.2.2, 665A ἄρριζον; cf. Plin., *Nat.* 19.33. According to Dsc. 2.145, by contrast, the truffle itself is a root.

²¹ Plu., *Quaest. conv.* 4.2,2, 664F οὐδ' ἄνευ ὕδατος ἔχει τὴν γένεσιν; cf. Thphr., *Fr.* 400A (=

referring to all mushrooms²², and Theophrastus and Pliny emphasize this detail in connection with truffles by coupling rain and thunder as their producing factors²³. For this reason several scholars have maintained that the *horti tuber* created by water (*quod creavit unda*) in a poem in Petronius' *Satyrica*²⁴ should be taken to refer to a truffle. The word *tuber* does refer very often to the truffle in Latin, in particular when it is accompanied by the genitive *terrae*. The Italian word for truffle, "tartufo", descends from a Latin rustic form, **territufer*, equivalent to the classic *terrae tuber*. But *tuber* can refer to other underground bulbs and also to visible outgrowths as well. I have argued elsewhere²⁵ that in Petronius' poem, in which the *tuber* is actually *created* by water, it does not refer to a truffle, but to a gourd, which, according to Gargilius Martialis, is nothing but curdled water: *aqua coagulata*²⁶.

Plutarch ends his speech with a further reference to Agemachos' words, by emphasizing the godly and often inexplicable nature of the phenomena connected with thunder and lightning, which his host, as we have seen, had described as διοσημίαι²⁷.

If we now keep in mind that Plutarch's explanation makes provision both for thunder and lightning as a *sign* of the phenomenon under discussion and for the physical *agency* of the heat remaining in thunderstorm rain after the purest particles of fire have been released in the form of lightning, we may conclude that his speech is a fine specimen of the general attempt – common in Hellenistic and Roman times – to save popular beliefs through scientific, philosophical, or allegorical interpretations.

Stoicism, for example, considered many forms of folkloric tradition to reflect the original, authentic imprint of the universal *logos*, which became adulterated in later times and/or in social strata more exposed to the debasing influence of a civilization that increasingly moved away from nature and reason, as the Stoics understood them. As far as language is concerned, for example, even such a bitter opponent of archaism, at the literary level, as Seneca must recognize that the most authentic form of expression is found either in ancient authors or in turns of the spoken language handed down even among the uneducated, independently of the mainstream cultural and literary tradition. I have treated these matters in detail elsewhere, and there is no need to dwell on them here²⁸.

Athen. 62B); Plin., *Nat.* 19.37.

²² Cf. e.g. Pl., *St.* 773; Plin., *Nat.* 22.100.

²³ Cf. above, note 6.

²⁴ Petr. 109.10.3- 4 *rotundo / horti tubere quod creavit unda*.

²⁵ A. SETAIOLI, 2006.

²⁶ Garg. Mart. *med. ex oler. et pom.* 6, p. 140, 6-9 Rose = 6.1-3, p. 9 Maire *veteres medici de cucurbita ita senserunt, ut eam aquam dicerent coagulata. Galenus umidae putat virtutis et frigidae, idque ex eo probat quod in cibo sumpta... bibendi desideria non excitat.*

²⁷ Plu., *Quaest. conv.* 4.2, 2, 665A διὸ καὶ μάλιστα τοῖς πάθεσι τούτοις δόξα θεϊότητος πρόσεστι.

²⁸ For the original closeness of language to reality and its gradual adulteration cf. A. SETAIOLI, 1988, pp. 25-32, 37-43; for Seneca's recognition of the closeness of ancient authors and popular

Another area of folkloric tradition in which the Stoics – or most of them – recognized the original imprint of their all-pervading *logos* were the myths concerning the gods, handed down from the remotest antiquity and transmitted, though often adulterated, by poetry. This idea is easily recognizable in the handbook bearing the title *Summary of Greek Theology* written in the I century A.D. by Annaeus Cornutus, who was probably a freedman of Seneca's brother Annaeus Mela, though Seneca himself did not share his attitude. This matter too has been analyzed in detail elsewhere, and needs only a brief reference here²⁹.

But the area in which the Stoics tried hardest to reconcile popular traditions with their own philosophy was of course divination. This form of prediction of the future was theoretically founded on the doctrine of συμπάθεια, the mutual connection and reciprocal influence of all natural phenomena, stemming from the basic ideas of πρόνοια (“providence”) and εἰμαρμένη (“fate”, conceived as an uninterrupted chain of causes), but the need to save the pre-philosophical folkloric traditions connected with divination forced the Stoics to assume a link between the facts traditionally considered as signs and the ensuing phenomena considered to be announced by them – which restricted them to an empirical observation admitting of no experimental test or rational ascertainment of causal sequences. Already Zeno, and later Chrysippus and Posidonius, had to found divination (μαντική) on empirical events or results (διὰ τινὰς ἐκβάσεις)³⁰.

In the orthodox Stoic conception there were of course no fortuitous events: as Quintus, Cicero's brother, makes it clear in the latter's *De divinatione*, man is reduced to the observation of signs only because he cannot grasp the complete chain of the εἰμαρμένη³¹. Reconciling this dogmatic position with the empirical procedure just outlined was no easy task. Posidonius, however, tried at least to shift the problem by allocating to divination the task to inquire, if not the causes of an event, at least the signs of the causes³². This brings us back to Plutarch's explanation of the relationship linking truffles and thunderbolts, with the latter – as we have seen – playing the role of signs of the real cause; but it also places us on a level different from divination, and rather belonging to the realm of conjectural science. Posidonius, however, made a gallant, if ill-fated, attempt to reconcile the latter with divination.

In Cicero's *De divinatione*³³ Quintus, at the beginning of his speech and of the first book, quotes no less than five times his brother's *Prognostica*³⁴, the

spoken language to reality and reason cf. A. SETAIOLI, 2000, pp. 228-31.

²⁹ Cf., among the most recent scholarship, G. W. MOST, 1989; F. BELLANDI, 2003; P. CUGUSI, 2003; C. TORRE, 2003; and the commentary of I. RAMELLI, 2003. These works, as well as several others, have been discussed, and new approaches attempted, in A. SETAIOLI, 2003-2004, pp. 341-67.

³⁰ D. L. 7.149 (cf. *SVF* I 174; II 1191; Posid. F 7 + 27 E.-K.; 258; 371a Th.).

³¹ Cic., *Div.* 1.127; cf. 1.9 *earum rerum quae fortuitae putantur*.

³² Cic., *Div.* 1.127 *etsi causas ipsas non cernunt, signa tamen causarum et notas cernunt*.

³³ I have treated the matter touched on here in A. SETAIOLI, 2005, also discussing, among others, the interpretations given by A. S. PEASE, 1973, S. TIMPANARO, 2001⁶, and J. KANY-TURPIN, 2004.

³⁴ Cic., *Div.* 1.13; 1.14; 1.15 (thrice).

translation in Latin hexameters of the final part of Aratos' poem, dealing with weather forecasts, that is with a conjectural science basing its predictions on rational and reasonable deductions founded on signs physically homogeneous with the results expected: meteorology; and medicine is also mentioned in the same context³⁵. The sixth quotation, closely following upon the previous five, however, comes from a different poem by Cicero, the *De consulatu*, and amounts to a shift from meteorological to divinatory signs: the omens portending Catilina's conspiracy, as listed by the Muse Urania in a long speech³⁶. Quintus can do so because he posits an affinity between divination and conjectural sciences, even though he recognizes them as different: *age ea, quae quamquam ex alio genere sunt, tamen divinationi sunt similiora, videamus*³⁷. At the end of the book and of Quintus' speech, though more conjectural arts and sciences – namely politics, medicine again, navigation, and agriculture – have been mentioned as distinct from divination³⁸, the difference between the two appears to be as good as obliterated; and it is exactly at this point that Posidonius' name occurs³⁹.

In the following book, in which Cicero takes up the discussion in order to explode the very idea of divination, he roundly denies the affinity between the latter and conjectural sciences posited by his brother: *dissimile totum* are his peremptory words⁴⁰. Conjectural arts and sciences differ from divination in that they are based on regular sequences between homogeneous phenomena, rather than on relationships arbitrarily established or taken for granted between disparate events linked by no rationally recognizable causal bonds, as is the case with divination.

But though the evidence provided by Cicero's *De divinatione* clearly shows that Posidonius did posit an affinity between conjectural arts and sciences and divination, an interesting testimony overlooked by both Edelstein-Kidd and Theiler⁴¹ enables us to sketch a more nuanced picture of his position. I am referring to a chapter in Iamblichus' *De mysteriis*⁴² whose contacts with Cicero's *De divinatione* are absolutely evident, down to close verbal parallels, while the Posidonian imprint, and even such Stoic terms as *συμπαθής* and *πρόνοια*, are still clearly recognizable beneath the radically different conception of divination promoted by Iamblichus⁴³. We learn from this text that Posidonius considered the conjectural arts and sciences (navigation and medicine are mentioned) to provide conditional predictions based on signs that are

³⁵ Cic., *Div.* 1.13.

³⁶ Cic., *Div.* 1.17-22 (= *de consul. fr.* II Soubiran).

³⁷ Cic., *Div.* 1.13.

³⁸ Cic., *Div.* 1.111-112.

³⁹ Cic., *Div.* 1.130. Cf. Posidon. F 110 E.-K.; 378 Th.

⁴⁰ Cic., *Div.* 2.47. Here Posidonius is also mentioned, but in reference to his natural researches, not to his theories on divination.

⁴¹ Theiler does refer to this text (Iamb. *Myst.* 3.26) in his commentary (W. THEILER, 1982, pp. 297-9; cf. W. THEILER, 1930, pp. 136-9), but does not include it in Posidonius' fragments.

⁴² Iamb. *Myst.* 3.26, pp. 135-6 Des Places.

⁴³ Cf. note 33, A. SETAIOLI, 2005, pp. 256-8.

reasonable and probable, but not absolutely certain, whereas those offered by divination possess unconditional validity; but we also find the confirmation of the affinity posited between the former and the latter by Quintus in Cicero's *De divinatione*⁴⁴.

It should not escape us that in this connection Posidonius includes in the conjectural arts and sciences any insight drawn from natural phenomena concerning any aspect of reality (εἴ τινα ἐκ φύσεως ἐπιβολὴν εἰς τὰ ὄντα παρειλήφαμεν) – which perfectly fits the connection established by Plutarch between lightning as perceptible sign and a phenomenon otherwise concealed: the growth of truffles, though these are actually produced by a different, if related, cause. Shortly before⁴⁵ Posidonius had proposed two different explanations of the relationship established between the behavior of some animals and impending meteorological changes: the first posited a direct consentaneity between these animals and parts or aspects of the cosmos as a whole – συμπάθεια in the most general sense; the second assumed that they were endowed with a special sharpness of perception – in other words, it appealed to a causal link that could be rationally grasped and to a physical affinity between the sign and the event, which could provide a reasonable foundation for this type of meteorological lore. Plutarch's explanation of the relationship between truffles and thunderbolts, while refusing to discredit the folkloric tradition, shows a similar effort to account for it in a rational and reasonable way. He differs from Posidonius in that he does not aim to endorse the popular belief as such, but rather to explain its origin. The meaning of the title we have hinted at in the beginning is now absolutely clear: "Why truffles seem to be born through the agency of thunder". And of course Plutarch would not, as the Stoics did, extend this attitude to all the traditional superstitions connected with divination.

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⁴⁴ Iamb. *Myst.* 3.26, p. 136 Des Places οὐ δεῖ, εἴ τινα ἐκ φύσεως ἐπιβολὴν εἰς τὰ ὄντα παρειλήφαμεν ἢ τοῦ μέλλοντος ἐπαφήν, ἐγκρίνειν ταύτην ὡς μαντικὴν πρόγνωσησιν· ἀλλ' ὁμοία μὲν ἐστὶ μαντικῇ. (cf. Cic., *Div.* 1.13, quoted above, in the text).

⁴⁵ Iamb. *Myst.* 3.26, p. 136 Des Places.

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ASTROMETEOROLOGÍA E INFLUENCIA LUNAR EN LAS *QUAESTIONES CONVIVALES* DE PLUTARCO

AURELIO PÉREZ JIMÉNEZ
Universidad de Málaga

Abstract

Among the scarce references to ancient astrology in Plutarch's works, we must pay attention to questions of astrometeorology. Such references, limited to the Sun and the Moon, concern popular beliefs on the influence of both stars on plants and animals. In this paper I analyse some passages from the *Quaestiones convivales* where Plutarch echoes those beliefs concerning the effects of the Moon and the Sun on the nature and physiology of the beings of this world. Similar astrometeorological prescriptions are also found in astrological texts, such as *lunaria* from late antiquity and the Middle Ages.

1

Aunque no hay datos seguros sobre la actitud particular de Plutarco frente a la astrología y la proporcionalmente escasa atención que presta en sus obras conservadas apunta a que tenía especial interés por ella, contamos con algunas evidencias de que no era del todo ajeno a estas prácticas adivinatorias. Sin duda los aciertos de algunos astrólogos famosos, sobre todo de aquellos vinculados con las altas esferas de la sociedad romana, favoreció en él cierta curiosidad respetuosa por sus métodos, que a veces incluso da pie a una sorpresiva admiración ante sus resultados. Ésa es la razón y el tenor de la digresión de Plutarco en la *Vida de Rómulo* sobre Tarrucio, el amigo de Varrón, y su determinación astrológica de la fecha de la fundación de Roma; o, si es cierta nuestra reciente propuesta de un fragmento de la *Vida de Tiberio* en Malalas¹, debió atraerle la personalidad de Trasilo, el famoso astrólogo de Tiberio. Por otra parte, en la noticia del encuentro de Sila con los caldeos y las predicciones de éstos sobre su futuro hay curiosidad, pero no el escepticismo que esperaríamos de un platónico a propósito de esas predicciones². En otros casos, la actitud negativa hacia la astrología u otras creencias astrales ha de entenderse más como indignación del moralista político por el comportamiento irracional de los grandes responsables de la historia (como el general de Sila Octavio o el propio Nicías) ante estas supersticiones, que como un rechazo radical contra los métodos de la que pudiéramos llamar “astrología científica”; o, como en *Crass.* 29.4, para marcar algún rasgo del personaje; aquí se trata de Casio que responde a los guías, cuando le aconsejan esperar antes de partir a Siria que la luna abandone Escorpio, que más teme a Sagitario. En algunos pasajes Plutarco alude a dogmas o doctrinas propias de la astrología, como la clasificación moral de los planetas (*De Iside* 370D), la referencia a las exaltaciones y depresiones de éstos y sus consecuencias astrológicas (en *Sept. sap. conv.* 149A) o la referencia

¹ A. PÉREZ JIMÉNEZ, 2007/2008, pp. 91-8.

² *Sull.* 5.5 y 37.6.

a la interpretación alegórica de la conjunción Marte-Venus (en *De poetis audiendis* 4.19E-F) sin que haya ningún posicionamiento especial por parte del Queronense ante estas doctrinas (en el último caso su ironía va más contra el método, que contra el tipo de alegoría en cuestión)³.

Por otra parte, en cambio, en las obras de Plutarco se encuentran alusiones a otras cuestiones no tan estrictamente astrológicas, pero que conciernen a la influencia de los astros y evidencian la curiosidad entre científica y complaciente de Plutarco por los efectos astrometeorológicos del sol y sobre todo de la luna y su incidencia en los procesos físicos, biológicos e incluso psicológicos de los seres que habitan el mundo sublunar. Se trata de ese tipo de influencias, entre explicables y materia de superstición, que Tolomeo esgrimirá en su *Tetrabiblos* para defender la posibilidad científica de la astrología⁴. Plutarco se interesa por estas cuestiones, como hemos dicho siempre en relación con el Sol y la Luna, en diversas obras; algunas son muy especializadas, de carácter científico o de historia de las ideas religiosas, como *De facie in orbe Lunae* y *De Iside et Osiride*; pero en otras la explicación astrometeorológica está al servicio de los personajes de sus diálogos. Así, en las *Quaestiones Convivales*, entre seriedad, ironía y desenfado, Plutarco deja ver sus posiciones no del todo críticas sobre supersticiones que él mismo trata de integrar en el pensamiento científico de su época; algunas de ellas cuentan ya con una tradición previa en los autores de cuestiones naturales y otras sirven como material para distintas obras plutarqueas, como el *Comentario a los Trabajos y Días*, las *Quaestiones Romanae* y las *Quaestiones Naturales*⁵.

2

En cuanto a las *Quaestiones Convivales* que ahora centran nuestra atención, lamentablemente no se han conservado algunos diálogos donde, a juzgar por los títulos, se afrontaban problemas astronómicos (por ejemplo, la IX 10, sobre la duración de los eclipses) o relacionados con el calendario y con sus implicaciones astrológicas (como la IV 7, sobre la semana planetaria).

Tan sólo en dos pasajes se mencionan con cierto detalle o se discuten estos temas en clave de astrometeorología; una es la cuestión IV 5, donde, para explicar por qué los judíos no comen cerdo, Calístrato recuerda las asociaciones egipcias del topo con la luna y del león con el sol; la otra es la cuestión III 10, en que el propio Plutarco se posiciona ante la evidente influencia de la Luna en nuestro mundo.

El tema de este diálogo es el de la putrefacción de la carne a la luz de la luna, planteado por Eutidemo de Sunion, anfitrión del banquete; confiesa con

³ Para la compatibilidad de algunos conceptos astrológicos con la curiosidad intelectual de Plutarco, remito a mi artículo, 1992 y P. VOLPE CACCIATORE, 2005.

⁴ Ptol., *Tetr.* 1.2.

⁵ Por ejemplo, *Quaest. nat.* 24, 917F-918A, sobre la humedad que deja caer sobre la tierra la luna como causa de que los cazadores encuentren con mayor dificultad las huellas cuando hay plenilunio.

jactancia a sus invitados que disponía de un jabalí mayor que el que ahora sirve como mesa, pero que se echó a perder a causa de la luz de la luna. Este hecho sirve para que los comensales, en particular el médico Mosquión y Plutarco, reflexionen sobre los motivos de ese efecto producido por la luna. Mosquión lo atribuye al calor suave de nuestro satélite, ya que “si es suave y tranquilo, remueve las partes húmedas e impide (la conservación), mientras que si es ardiente, ocurre lo contrario, que reseca las carnes”⁶. Plutarco no comparte esta explicación en su totalidad, pues en verano se pudren las carnes más que en invierno y el calor del sol es más suave en éste que en aquél. Por ello, la razón no está en el grado del calor, sino en su cualidad, que sea seco o húmedo. La constatación de que la luz o el calor procedente de la luna son distintos de los que vienen del sol (658E) y que esa diferencia está en su humedad, permitirá a Plutarco someter a los aparentes principios de la ciencia una serie de creencias populares sobre la acción lunar en la tierra cuyo fundamento pertenece al ámbito de la experiencia, la religión y las supersticiones.

En primer lugar y según leemos en los tratados médicos, poco sospechosos de irracionalidad, la naturaleza húmeda de la luna explica efectos negativos y positivos sobre la naturaleza humana.

Positiva es la relación que se establece entre el astro y la fisiología femenina. En el diálogo que comentamos, en concreto, Plutarco asume el efecto favorable para los partos de la luna llena: “se dice que también ayuda a un buen parto, cuando es llena, pues por la relajación de los líquidos hace más suaves los dolores”⁷. La literatura filosófica y médica se hace eco también de esta influencia, que atribuye al principio de simpatía (relación de los procesos de crecimiento y decrecimiento con las fases de la luna), o, como Plutarco en este pasaje, a la naturaleza física del astro, que propicia la fecundidad⁸; nuestro exégeta señala el reflejo literario de esa creencia llevado de su curiosidad mítico-religiosa y de su afición a las etimologías. De modo que, para ilustrar con la literatura los argumentos de la ciencia y de la razón, recurre a asociaciones simbólicas complementarias y teológicas, como la identificación de la Luna con Hera/Juno, Lucina, que le hace ejercer las mismas funciones de estas diosas⁹ (*Quaest. Rom.* 282C: καὶ νομίζουσιν ἐν ταῖς λοχεΐαις καὶ ὠδίσι βοηθεῖν, ὡς περ καὶ σελήνην, διὰ κυάνεον πόλον ἄστρον διὰ τ’ ὠκυτόκιο σελάνας; εὐτοκεῖν γὰρ ἐν ταῖς πανσελήνοις μάλιστα δοκοῦσι); o con Ártemis-Locheia e Ilitia: ὅθεν οἴμαι καὶ τὴν Ἄρτεμιν Λοχεΐαν καὶ Εἰλείθυιαν, οὐκ οὔσαν ἑτέραν ἢ τὴν σελήνην, ὠνομάσθαι. Τιμόθεος δ’ ἀντικρὺς φησιν ‘διὰ κυάνεον πόλον ἄστρον, / διὰ τ’ ὠκυτόκιο σελάνας (658F-659A)¹⁰. En este sentido merece

⁶ *Quaest. conv.* 658B: θερμασίαν δὲ πᾶσαν, ἂν μὲν ἦ μαλακὴ καὶ πραεῖα, κινεῖν τὰ ὑγρὰ καὶ τ’ κωλύειν, ἂν δ’ ἢ πυρώδης, τοῦναντίον ἀπισχναίνειν τὰς σάρκας.

⁷ *Quaest. conv.* 658F: λέγεται δὲ καὶ πρὸς εὐτοκίαν συνεργεῖν, ὅταν ἦ διχόμηρος, ἀνέσει τῶν ὑγρῶν μαλακωτέρας παρέχουσα τὰς ὠδῖνας.

⁸ La relación entre la luna y el embarazo y el parto cuenta con el aval en la literatura greco-romana de autores como Aristóteles, Crisipo, Ciceron, Varrón y Séneca (para los textos, cf. C. PRÉAUX, 1973, pp. 89-91).

⁹ Sobre el tema en la literatura romana, véase S. LUNAIS, 1979, pp. 167-74.

¹⁰ También en *Quaest. Rom.* 282C, con la misma cita de Timoteo. Sobre la identificación

señalarse el gusto de Plutarco por repetir (aquí, en *De facie* y en *Quaest. nat.* 24. 918A) el verso de Alcman en que hace al rocío (Ἔρσα) hijo de Zeus y de la divina Selene, una asociación que πανταχόθεν μαρτυρεῖται τὸ τῆς σελήνης φῶς ἀνυγραντικὴν <ἔχον> καὶ μαλακτικὴν δύναμιν.

Constatamos con la curiosidad que suscita el gusto socrático de Plutarco por bajar al terreno de la vida cotidiana y aprovechar sus tópicos para acercar sus argumentos a los contertulios, que, en los demás ejemplos de este diálogo, Plutarco somete a razón actitudes supersticiosas ante la luna de diferentes profesiones. En 658E se trata de las nodrizas. El texto, tal como lo han transmitido los manuscritos (διὸ τὰ μὲν νήπια παντάπασιν αἰ τίτθαι δεικνύναι τὴν σελήνην φυλάττονται· πλήρη γὰρ ὑγρότητος ὄντα, καθάπερ τὰ χλωρὰ τῶν ξύλων, σπᾶται καὶ διαστρέφεται), no se ha entendido por los editores que, desde la edición de Basilea, corrigen el complemento τὴν σελήνην del verbo δεικνύναι. Esa edición, en efecto, lo hace añadiendo delante del acusativo la preposición πρὸς (adicción aceptada por Hubert, en la edición teubneriana), mientras que Teodorsson en su comentario¹¹ y Chirico en su edición del *Corpus Plutarchi Moraliū*¹² prefieren la corrección de Turnebus τῇ σελήνῃ, menos problemática desde el punto de vista paleográfico. En cuanto al sentido, las dos modificaciones coinciden en que las nodrizas evitan exponer los niños a la luz de la luna. En esa dirección va también en parte – sólo en parte – la adaptación del texto plutarqueo por Macrobio en *Saturnalia* 7.16, 24, donde dice así:

hinc et nutrices pueros fellantes operimentis obtegunt, cum sub luna praeterunt, ne plenos per aetatem naturalis umoris amplius lunare lumen umectet et sicut ligna adhuc virore umida accepto calore curvantur, ita et illorum membra contorqueat umoris adiecto.

Pero lo cierto es que el texto de Macrobio, en su primera parte, que es la problemática, tampoco sigue el que proponen los editores de Plutarco con la literalidad acostumbrada en el resto de su adaptación. No vemos en él ningún verbo “*indicare*” (que traduzca δεικνύναι) y añade otros detalles que no encontramos en Plutarco, como, por ejemplo, el adjetivo *fellantes*, o la actitud de cubrir a los niños para evitar que les llegue la luz de la luna, *operimentis obtegunt*, o la precisión del momento en que tiene lugar el riesgo de esa exposición, *cum sub luna praeterunt*. Con estas alteraciones el texto de Macrobio no es nada ambiguo y su sentido es el mismo que en el texto modificado de Plutarco, si es que traducimos δεικνύναι por “exponer”; pero este sentido del verbo como régimen de la luna es más extraño que si lo fuera de personas, como, por ejemplo, en otro pasaje de Plutarco (682B: ὥστε μὴ δεικνύναι τὰς γυναῖκας αὐτοῖς τὰ παιδία μηδὲ πολὺν ἔαν χρόνον ὑπὸ τῶν τοιοῦτων καταβλέπεσθαι); es fácil pensar que, aunque el texto de Plutarco presentara un acusativo, un autor latino como Macrobio pudo por error o *lapsus* entenderlo como dativo;

Ἄρτεμις-Ιλιτία, véase Fr. 157.5 (Περὶ τῶν ἐν πλαταίαις δαιδάλων).

¹¹ S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1989, pp. 386-7.

¹² I. CHIRICO, 2001, p. 192.

y también que, para eliminar el carácter general de ese comportamiento de las nodrizas, lo contextualizara, refiriéndose a situaciones en que éstas debían andar de noche con los niños.

Pero, si mantenemos la lectura de T, cabe la posibilidad, y ésta es ahora nuestra propuesta, de entender que Plutarco lo que hace es buscar una explicación científica para un gesto habitual y supersticioso de las nodrizas del que, por desgracia, no hemos encontrado ejemplos paralelos en el mundo antiguo, aunque sí en otros contextos culturales. Interpretando τὰ νήπια como sujeto de δεικνύναι el sentido podría ser que “las nodrizas no dejan de ningún modo que los niños señalen la luna”. En efecto, en algunos lugares se impide a los niños (o evitan los adultos) mirar o señalar (con el dedo) la luna creciente y la luna llena¹³, bien porque ello trae mala suerte¹⁴, produce enfermedades de la vista¹⁵, o (en el caso de las mujeres embarazadas y los bebés¹⁶) para evitar (por el principio de simpatía imitativa) que los niños tengan “cara de luna”; en otros, el acto de señalar con el dedo la luna es parte de rituales mágicos.

En cualquier caso, la explicación que da Plutarco es el efecto de la humedad de la luz lunar que produce espasmos en los niños por la disolución de sus humores¹⁷. El ejemplo se presenta como un hecho de experiencia popular (avalado por el comportamiento de las nodrizas), en los mismos términos en que ya se había referido a ello antes Aristóteles, que lo refiere a la luna llena¹⁸. Fruto de la experiencia popular es de igual modo el conocimiento de los efectos que produce la luz de la luna en quienes se quedan dormidos a la intemperie por la noche: τοὺς δὲ κατακοιμηθέντας ἐν αὐγῇ σελήνης μόλις ἐξανισταμένους οἷον ἐμπλήκτους ταῖς αἰσθήσεσι καὶ ναρκώδεις ὀρώμεν· ἢ γὰρ ὑγρότης ὑπὸ τῆς σελήνης διαχεομένη βαρύνει τὰ σώματα (*Quaest. conv.* 658F). Ese embotamiento de los sentidos, semejante al del vino, y los espasmos que produce en las personas así expuestas, se ha puesto en relación y acertadamente con los procesos epilépticos, frecuentes durante el sueño¹⁹.

¹³ Cf. H. BÄCHTOLD-STÄUBLI, “Finger”, *Handwörterbuch der deutschen Aberglauben* (= *HAD*), Berlin, 1927 (repr. 2000), II, col. 1483.

¹⁴ Cf. H. HEPDING, “Beißen, Biß”, *HDA*, Berlin, 1927 (repr. 2000), I, col. 1020.

¹⁵ Cf. S. SELIGMAN, “Augenkrankheiten”, *HDA*, Berlin, 1927 (repr. 2000), I, col. 715, y F. ECKSTEIN, “Branntwein”, *Idem*, col. 1501.

¹⁶ De hecho, en Plin., *Nat.* 7,42, leemos que la luna es peligrosa para embarazadas y niños. Cf. B. KUMMER, “Kind”, *HDA*, Berlin, 1927 (repr. 2000), IV, cols. 1318, 1320.

¹⁷ La tendencia a la disolución de los humores corporales por causa de la humedad de la luna en los dos primeros cuartos, un principio que utilizará Plutarco en sus explicaciones relativas a la carne y las plantas, se contempla también en los consejos de los astrólogos a propósito de la influencia de este astro. Así lo vemos, por ejemplo, en el *Fructus* atribuido a Tolomeo, cuya máxima 56 dice así: Ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ τῆς σελήνης τετραγώνῳ ἐκρέουσιν οἱ ὑγρότητες τῶν σωμάτων μέχρι τοῦ δευτέρου, ἐν δὲ τοῖς λοιποῖς ἐλαττοῦνται.

¹⁸ *HA* 7.12, 588a: Εἴωθε δὲ τὰ παιδία τὰ πλεῖστα σπασμοὺς ἐπιλαμβάνειν, καὶ μᾶλλον τὰ εὐτραφέστερα καὶ γάλακτι χρώμενα πλείοις ἢ παχύτερῳ καὶ τίτθαι εὐσάρκοις. ... Καὶ ἐν ταῖς πανσελήνοις δὲ μᾶλλον πονοῦσιν. Ἐπικίνδυνον δὲ καὶ ὄσους τῶν παιδίων οἱ σπασμοὶ ἐκ τοῦ νότου ἄρχονται. Cf. C. PRÉAUX, 1970, pp. 132-3.

¹⁹ *Idem*, pp. 387-8. Que la humedad embota los sentidos (vista y oído) se dice en *De def. orac.* 432F. Sobre el efecto de pesadez producido en el alma por la humedad, cf. *De ser. num. vind.* 566A.

Pues bien, que la Luna causa la epilepsia era una idea generalizada en el mundo antiguo y en concreto en los estratos populares, que defendían de esas influencias a los niños con amuletos lunares. La superstición ha entrado en los textos astrológicos y médicos, que consideran efectivamente la epilepsia y los procesos espasmódicos una mala influencia de la luna²⁰.

La relación de la luna con los partos es otra creencia popular, arraigada por la experiencia, que tiene que ver con la asociación entre la fisiología femenina (los ciclos menstruales) y el mes lunar y que se mantuvo en la literatura médica hasta Sorano. La humedad como explicación para la procreación de varones y hembras en el plenilunio que leemos en otros lugares²¹ y para el curso de los embarazos y la facilidad en el parto²², le viene a Plutarco sin duda de esos ámbitos científicos y de la filosofía. En el texto que comentamos, con una terminología muy próxima a la de los estoicos, está convencido de que la humedad relaja los flujos de la mujer y hace los partos más suaves. Como aquí (λέγεται δὲ καὶ πρὸς εὐτοκίαν συνεργεῖν) también en *De facie* 25 (939F) atribuye a la luna todas aquellas influencias que se deben a la humedad y no a la sequedad, incluyendo entre ellas las εὐτοκίαι γυναικῶν. La identificación de la luna con Ártemis Locheia y con Ilitía viene, pues, al caso; pero no debe ser casual que también en este caso tengamos un eco del mismo tópico en *De facie*, donde la identificación concreta sus funciones como integradora (*Ilitía* = ἡ συντίθησι) y disgregadora (*Ártemis* = ἡ διαίρει). A la simpatía imitativa pertenece en cambio la relación que Calístrato establece en *Quaest. conv.* 4.5 (670B) entre el nacimiento del topo y la luna nueva y entre el decrecimiento de su hígado y el menguante, un tema éste de la influencia de la luna sobre los animales que estaba presente en la paradoxografía y que no es ajeno a nuestro autor, pues vuelve a él en *De Iside*, siempre con referencia a los egipcios.

Por último, veamos los efectos sobre los seres inanimados. Aquí la influencia astrometeorológica es doctrina más asentada por la tradición grecorromana. De hecho, es la relación entre la madera y la fase lunar en que se corta la que sirve de fundamento para explicar el problema planteado

²⁰ Cf. S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1989, p. 387, con citas de Retorio, Manetón, Galeno, Plauto. Añadimos Heph. Astrol., II 16.3 y el anónimo *De planetarum patrociniis* (CCAG, VII, p. 99: σημαίνει δὲ τὰς ἐπιληψίας καὶ τὰ ὄμοια πάθη). Véase sobre los testimonios griegos C. PRÉAUX, *o. c.*, pp. 91-4, que apuesta por una vinculación entre la luna y la enfermedad a partir de la época helenística, como consecuencia lunar precisamente de la entrada de la astrología. (p. 91). De ahí los términos σεληνιαῖζοντες, *lunatici* para designar a los epilépticos. Más referencias en el artículo del Pauly Wissowa, “Selene”, col. 1139.

²¹ Fr. 105. El escoliasta hace verdaderos equilibrios para explicar por qué el dieciséis es bueno para engendrar varones y no hembras (Hesíodo no habla de “engendrar”, sino de “parir”), cuando se dice que el viento del norte (seco) es bueno para engendrar varones, mientras que el del sur (húmedo) lo es para las mujeres. *Vide* sobre la realidad de estas creencias en el mundo griego, C. PRÉAUX, *o. c.*, pp. 88-9 y en el romano, S. LUNAIS, *o. c.*, pp. 76 sqq.

²² La humedad de la naturaleza de las mujeres, los niños y los jóvenes, frente a los hombres y los viejos es algo asumido científicamente por Plutarco. En *Quaest. conv.* 650C se explica por ello la mayor facilidad de emborracharse los viejos (frio y seco) que las mujeres, cuya humedad resta efecto al vino.

por Eutidemo²³. En efecto, como de nuevo en *De facie* donde se atribuyen a la luna las μαλακότητες ξύλων, también aquí la humedad de su luz explica que la madera se pudra si es cortada en creciente o plenilunio; un hecho constatado ya por autores anteriores, como Teofrasto (*H.P.* 5.1, 3: κελεύουσι δὲ καὶ δεδουκυίας τῆς σελήνης τέμνειν ὡς σκληροτέρων καὶ ἀσαπεστέρων γινομένων. ἐπεὶ δὲ αἱ πέψεις τῶν καρπῶν παραλλάττουσι, δῆλον ὅτι καὶ αἱ ἀκμαὶ πρὸς τὴν τομὴν παραλλάττουσιν), Catón (37.3) y Cicerón, que extiende la prohibición a la luna menguante (*De div.* II 33-34)²⁴. Plutarco se hace eco de estas opiniones tanto en el *Comentario a los Días*²⁵ como en *Quaest. conv.* donde ahora lo hace recurriendo a otro campo profesional, el de los carpinteros, cuando habla de que éstos rechazan la madera cortada bajo esas condiciones: γίνεται δὲ καὶ περὶ τὰ ἄψυχα τῶν σωμάτων ἐπίδηλος ἡ τῆς σελήνης δύναμις· τῶν τε γὰρ ξύλων τὰ τεμνόμενα ταῖς πανσελήνοις ἀποβάλλουσιν οἱ τέκτονες ὡς ἀπαλὰ καὶ μυδῶντα ταχέως δι' ὑγρότητα,... (659A). La creencia no es inusual en Plutarco, pues estaba muy arraigada (y aún lo sigue estando) entre los campesinos. Columela coincide en esta apreciación cuando dice que el menguante es el mejor momento para cortar la madera destinada a la construcción, así como para otros usos y concreta como época más recomendable los días del veinte al treinta²⁶. Esta prescripción se ha incorporado a las listas de los lunarios de la antigüedad tardía y de la Edad Media. Así en uno medieval, que debe mucho a Melampo, se prescribe que el día 15 (luna llena) no es bueno para cortar madera²⁷. También la alusión al efecto de la luna en la harina (que al fermentar se hincha) es objeto de una explicación científica para otra creencia profesional (en este caso el de los panaderos o pasteleros) posiblemente fundamentada en el principio de simpatía imitativa (la masa del pan crece con la luna llena); de nuevo aquí se atribuye el fenómeno a la humedad, que favorece la fermentación, entendida

²³ Véase, a propósito de este pasaje, A. CASANOVA, 2005, pp. 67-74.

²⁴ Vide S.-T. THEODORSSON, 1989, pp. 388-9. La influencia negativa del plenilunio (o del creciente según Macrobio) en la madera tiene otros testimonios posteriores como Athen., 7, 276DE y Macr., *Sat.* 7.16.15-34, utilizados para clarificar la comprensión del texto plutarqueo por A. CASANOVA, *a.c.*, pp. 70 sqq.

²⁵ Fr. 61.

²⁶ *Agr.* XI, 2, 11 : *Sed utraque melius fiunt luna decrescente ab vicesima usque in tricesimam, quoniam omnis materia sic caesa iudicatur carie non infestari.* Para otros testimonios (Plinio, Catón, Varrón) en los que se recomienda cortar los árboles en fase menguante o nueva, vid. C. PRÉAUX, *a.c.*, pp. 131-2 y S. LUNAIS, *a.c.*, pp. 55-8. Cf. Plu., *Fr.* 109: ἡ γὰρ αὐτὴ τῆς ὥρας εὐκαιρος καὶ μὴνὸς ἡ ἑπτακαϊδεκάτη χρήσιμος, ὅτε τὸ μὲν φῶς τῆς σελήνης πρόσθεσιν οὐκέτ' ἔχει πανσελήνου γεγονυίας, ἔνικμα δὲ πῶς ἐστὶ τὰ ξύλα καὶ διὰ ἐλαττώσεως τοῦ φωτὸς ἐλαττοῦται τὸ ὑγρὸν ἀφ' οὗ συμβαίνειν εἴωθεν ἡ σήψις. Que la humedad pudre la madera es evidente y se expresa en muchos lugares: *Quaest. conv.* 636D (aparición de gusanos por la pudredumbre de la humedad).

²⁷ *CCAG*, XI1 (1932), p. 141: Αὕτη ἡ ἡμέρα εἰς πάντα παρατηρήσιμος· μὴ... ξύλα κόπτειν, ξύλα δὲ ἐπιτήδεια πρὸς οἰκίαν μὴ θέσης. El mismo día en *CCAG* IV (1903), p. 143: ὁ κόπτων ξύλα κινδυνεύσει. Como Columela, Plinio, *NH* 18.321, aconseja las labores de corte, entre otras, en luna menguante: *Omnia, quae caeduntur, carpuntur, tondentur, innocentius decrescente luna quam crescente fiunt.*

como putrefacción de la harina²⁸; por último, de la vida profesional de los campesinos recoge la prescripción de retirar el trigo de la era antes de que vuelva a aparecer la creciente (659A); pues el grano que se retira durante el plenilunio (ἀκμῆ τῆς σελήνης) no se seca bien y se rompe durante la molienda, como aclara Angelo Casanova²⁹.

Como vemos, Plutarco reduce al mismo principio explicativo, la humedad que viene de la luna, supersticiones de distintos estratos sociales. Y, dado que la luna nueva no tiene efectos humectantes, así queda también justificada la recomendación hesiódica de que se abra el vino cuando hay luna nueva³⁰; aunque, en este caso (y permítasenos la licencia de apartarnos del marco de las *Quaestiones Convivales*) otra vez Plutarco hace extensivo su código físico de explicaciones a una creencia popular que obedece a razones de otro tipo. Sabemos, en efecto, que entre los campesinos se aconsejaba tener cuidado de que, al abrir los cántaros de vino, no le llegara la luz, ni del sol ni de la luna, ya que se podía agriar. Es por ese motivo y no por la humedad del plenilunio por lo que se recomendaba abrirlos con luna nueva³¹.

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²⁸ *Quaest. conv.* 659D: λέγουσι δὲ καὶ τᾶλευρον ἐν ταῖς πανσελήνοις ζυμοῦσθαι βέλτιον· ἢ γὰρ ζύμωσις ὀλίγον ἀποδεῖ σῆψις εἶναι· κἂν ἀποβάλῃ τὸ μέτρον, ἐπὶ τὴν αὐτὴν φθορὰν ἀραιοῦσα καὶ λεπτόνουσα τὸ φύραμα προήγαγεν.

²⁹ A. c., pp. 72-3.

³⁰ Fr. 111: καὶ τὸ περὶ τὴν ἀνοιξιν δὲ τοῦ πίθου φυσικῶς εἶρηκε. Μάλιστα γὰρ φασι περὶ τὰς πανσελήνους ἐξίστασθαι τὸν οἶνον διὰ τὴν ἀπὸ τῆς σελήνης ὑγρὰν θέρμην, ὥστ’ εἰκότως ὅταν ἦκιστα τοῦτο προβάλλῃ κελεῖται τὸν πίθον ἀνοίγειν καὶ τοῦ οἴνου πείραν λαμβάνειν.

³¹ *Geop.* 7.5, recomendación atribuida a Zoroastro (cf. J. BIDEZ & F. CUMONT, 1973 (1ª ed. 1938), p. 189 y C. PRÉAUX, *o.c.* I, p. 102): Χρὴ ἀνοίγειν τοὺς πίθους, παραφυλαττομένους τὴν τῶν ἄστρων ἐπιτολήν· τότε γὰρ κίνησις γίνεται τοῦ οἴνου, καὶ οὐ χρὴ τὸν οἶνον ψηλαρᾶν. ...3 εἰ δὲ ἐν νυκτί, τῆς χρείας πολλακίς καλούσης, ἀνοίγειν μέλλεις τὸν πίθον, ἐπισκοπεῖν χρὴ τῷ φωτὶ τῆς σελήνης.

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SECTION 6

Convivium Septem Sapientium

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EL BANQUETE DE LOS SIETE SABIOS DE PLUTARCO Y LOS TEMAS DE SABIDURÍA PRÁCTICA¹

JOSÉ VELA TEJADA
Universidad de Zaragoza

Abstract

The aim of this article is to study why Plutarch makes use of the literary tradition of *symposia* to place the legend of the Seven Sages. Instead of that we should expect, given the hold of Plato over his work, Plutarch relegates philosophical argument to a type of dialogue focusing on aspects of practical wisdom. In our opinion, the explanation of this apparent contrast must be analyzed from a double and complementary perspective: first, by considering the protagonists of that fictitious meeting, the Seven Wise Men, the paradigm of archaic wisdom, which combined both practical and intellectual learning; second, as a result, the suitability of form and content to a symposiac framework deeply rooted in the literary tradition, just as it is attested by the early patterns of the fourth century BC: Xenophon and Plato.

1. Plutarco sitúa la leyenda de los Siete Sabios dentro de la tradición de *Banquetes*². Sin embargo, en contra lo que cabría esperar, dado el ascendiente del maestro Platón sobre el de Queronea³, en dicho encuentro legendario nuestro autor subordina la argumentación filosófica a un tipo de diálogo en el que predomina la atención a aspectos de sabiduría práctica⁴. En efecto, aunque se enmarca dentro del género literario del *symposion*⁵, el contenido de la obra parece acercarse más a la colección de saberes y conocimientos de la versión de Jenofonte o de los *Deipnosofistas* de Ateneo, que a la discusión filosófica de Platón⁶. Ello, unido a otras particularidades de la obra, como que la lista de los Sabios no se corresponda con la del diálogo *Sobre la E de Delfos*, llevó a la crítica dieciochesca y decimonónica a dudar de su adscripción a Plutarco, filiación generalmente admitida desde la *auctoritas* de Wilamowitz⁷. Y es que,

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² Al respecto, fueron canónicos los trabajos de U. von WILAMOWITZ, 1890, G. HAUCK, 1893, en particular, pp. 4-24, y el más reciente B. SNELL, 1966, pp. 115-8.

³ Sin embargo, para J. MOSSMAN, 1997, p. 121, "Given such Platonic authority, it is hardly surprising that Plutarch decided to attempt a variation on the theme, and the result is the *Dinner of the Seven Wise Men*".

⁴ Como se desprende, en particular, de su comparación con las *Quaestiones Convivales* (para J. MOSSMAN, 1997, p. 120, junto a Ateneo, ejemplos de "prescriptive *symposion* literature"). Mas, con F. RODRÍGUEZ ÁDRADOS, 1996, p. 137, las vemos más próximas a los *Problémata syssytiká* de Aristóteles y no en relación directa con los *Banquetes*, pues carecen de una "intención dramática". Como indica Gallardo, 1972, p. 188, en nuestra pieza asistimos a un tipo literario muy afín al clásico. Para más información vid. S.-T. TEODORSSON, 1996, en particular, pp. 39-47, y la revisión plutarquéa de E. SUÁREZ DE LA TORRE, 2005.

⁵ Al respecto, cf. C. MORALES OTAL & J. GARCÍA LÓPEZ, 1986, p. 209 sqq., con referencias a las propuestas de J. DEFRADAS, 1985, pp. 7-35, y D. E. AUNE, 1972, pp. 51-60.

⁶ Sobre esta cuestión vid. nuestra revisión en J. VELA TEJADA, 2007, pp. 29-47.

⁷ U. von WILAMOWITZ, 1890, 196-7. Sobre la autoría véase la revisión de C. MORALES OTAL

como ya pudimos apreciar en el anterior Simposio plutarqueo⁸ en la *synkrisis* del tratamiento de la figura de Solón en el *Bios* y en el *Banquete*, el tipo de forma y contenidos literarios escogido por el de Queronea determinan el uso de la tradición⁹.

En nuestra opinión, la explicación a este aparente contraste ha de buscarse desde una perspectiva complementaria: los propios protagonistas del ficticio encuentro, los Siete Sabios, paradigma del ideal arcaico de sabiduría, que combina sabiduría práctica e intelectual¹⁰; en segundo lugar, y como consecuencia, la adecuación de contenido y forma a un marco simposiaco de honda raigambre en la tradición literaria¹¹.

2. En la misma línea apuntada sobre las dudas de la autenticidad, se ha insistido en las dificultades estructurales de interpretación de la pieza¹², las

& J. GARCÍA LÓPEZ, 1986, pp. 210-2.

⁸ Cf. J. VELA TEJADA, 2008, pp. 501-14.

⁹ Para M.-L. PALADINI, 1956, p. 409, Plutarco “sembri considerare il lato pratico ed operante della sapienza dei Savi. Ciò è indizio dell’uso di una fonte peripatetica”, que podría ser Dicearco, quien en su *Bíoi φιλοσόφων* habría fijado el perfil de los Sabios como expertos en la práctica política (según la información de D. L. I 40, Dicearco definió a los sabios no como *sofoí* ni *filósofoi* sino *synetoí* y *nomothetikoí*). Más adelante (pp. 410-1), añade la impronta de Hermipo y su *Περὶ τῶν σοφῶν* en la elaboración de material didáctico con fines retóricos. En la misma línea se pronuncia G. J. D. AALDERS, 1977, p. 28: “Plutarch will have known (a substantial part of) this literature; he will also have been influenced by it, and have made use of it, when he decide to describe a symposium of the Seven Wise Men”.

¹⁰ Así, R. P. MARTIN, 1993, p. 119, define a los Sabios como “practical men, political advisers or tyrants”, y A. BUSINE, 2002, p. 94, cataloga el opúsculo como “une sorte d’apologie de la sagesse grecque”.

¹¹ En efecto, aunque ya en el siglo V a.C. tenemos referencias a través de los sofistas (Critias F 4 D elogia el simposio espartano), el género simposiaco como tal conoce los primeros antecedentes en el siglo IV. No cabe duda de la influencia de Platón (cf. J. MOSSMAN, 1997, p. 120: “a very well-established genre, dominated by Plato’s *Symposium*”). Sin embargo, el testimonio de Jenofonte resulta aquí imprescindible para comprender la adaptación de una amplia tradición de dichos en nuevas formas conversacionales en el ámbito de la prosa de instrucción: en *Memorables* (cf. V. J. GRAY, 1998, pp. 159-77, cap. IX, “The tradition of instructional literature”), en la tradición de anécdotas de hombres sabios del *Hierón* (V. J. GRAY, 1986, p. 115 sqq.), con Simónides como el primero de ellos, y en el *Banquete* de corte socrático, obra que tiene su origen, en palabras de V. J. GRAY, 1992, p. 74, “as a literary genre in the adaptation, development and transformation of a wider collection of stories about what the wise men of old said and did at their symposia”. En este sentido, D. L. GERA, 1993, pp. 132-91, estudiando “The Symposia of the *Cyropaedia*”, demuestra el perfecto conocimiento del autor del marco literario simposiaco, adaptado al mundo persa (vid., asimismo, M.-P. NOËL, 2006, p. 144). No sorprende, por tanto, como apreciara G. J. D. AALDERS, 1977, p. 32 y 1982, p. 62, la familiaridad de Plutarco con el *Banquete* de Jenofonte (cf. *Praec.* 823).

¹² Así, por ejemplo, J. MOSSMAN, 1997, p. 122, atribuye su diversidad al carácter conversacional: “the structure is very delicately hinged together and takes some time to perceive”. Sin embargo, ya J. DEFRADAS, 1985, p. 178, observaba que “tout le plan du Banquet répond au schéma suivi par Platon: le préambule dramatique, la première partie morcelée en un dialogue fait de courtes répliques, la seconde partie, constituée d’exposés plus substantiels, cette conclusion abrupte enfin, qui donne l’impression que bien des questions restent en suspens et que l’auteur fuit devant une conclusion”. Sugerente, también, resulta la idea de F. RODRÍGUEZ ADRADOS, 1996, p. 129, quien observa una estructura en anillo delimitada por la tradición antitiránica expuesta por Tales del comienzo y la intervención final de Anacarsis desplazando a Periandro por haber

cuales, en nuestra opinión, no resuelve la propuesta de Aune¹³, con frecuencia citada. Así, el diálogo, siguiendo en ello el modelo platónico, comienza súbitamente, en medio de una conversación entre Diocles y Nicarco¹⁴. Un diálogo epistolar que nos avisa de un carácter pedagógico-moralizante¹⁵ imprescindible para la comprensión de la obra, en el que Plutarco, a través de Diocles, adopta, desde el principio, como el viejo y sabio maestro, el papel de intermediario entre los sabios y su propio discípulo Nicarco¹⁶: “ἐπεὶ σχολή τε πάρεστι πολλή καὶ τὸ γῆρας οὐκ ἀξιόπιστον ἐγγυήσασθαι τὴν ἀναβολὴν τοῦ λόγου, προθυμούμενοις ὑμῖν ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς ἅπαντα διηγῆσομαι” (146C). A continuación, el relato del paseo del narrador Diocles con Tales, que nos retrotrae al de los participantes del *Banquete* de Jenofonte o al de Sócrates y Fedro en el diálogo homónimo de Platón, da comienzo a la acción argumental ya encaminada.

2.1. Los siguientes pasajes, que coinciden con los momentos iniciales del banquete¹⁷, dan ya la pauta temática de la obra, jalonada por anécdotas que ponen de relieve la competencia de los Sabios en toda suerte de saberes prácticos (p. ej. la medición de la pirámide por Tales, citada en 147A). Dichas habilidades se hacen patentes mediante el relato de anécdotas con un tono de buen humor¹⁸, propio de todo banquete, como cuando Diocles (147C)

ejercido la tiranía.

¹³ D. E. AUNE, 1972, pp. 56-8, divide la pieza en: I. “Prooímion” histórico (cap. 1); II. Composición narrativa introductoria (caps. 2-5); III. El “sympósion”: conversación principal (caps. 6-21). Tal esquema nos parece insuficiente para una comprensión global en el marco del género al que pertenece.

¹⁴ Al margen de posibles resonancias (cf. J. DEFRADAS, 1985, p. 179), son nombres ficticios, muy habituales en la época: M. D. GALLARDO, 1972, p. 182. Más provechoso nos parece detectar el posible *alterego* del autor en la figura de Diocles.

¹⁵ En este sentido, A. BUSINE, 2002, p. 101, habla de una obra “relativement scolaire”, si bien, con E. SUÁREZ DE LA TORRE, 2005, p. 474, no compartimos el juicio que añade de que el autor “ne s’est pas particulièrement illustré dans la reprise et l’adaptation des éléments traditionnels de la syllogè”.

¹⁶ El diálogo-simposio y su función al servicio de la *paideia*, previsto por el fundador de la Academia, seguían vigentes: cf. E. SUÁREZ DE LA TORRE, 2005, pp. 480-1.

¹⁷ A través de Tales (147D-148B), Plutarco ilustra su concepto simposial – cf. *Quaest. Conv.* 686D –, basado en 3 principios: 1. adecuada preparación – de los nobles a los que se dirige la “carta” de Nicarco – para el banquete, porque “es más difícil encontrar el adorno conveniente al carácter, que el adorno superfluo e inútil para el cuerpo”. Introduce comparaciones alusivas al mal comensal que “es capaz de destruir y estropear” el mejor vino, comida o canto, considerando las consecuencias negativas de “cuando la insolencia o el enfado han surgido por causa del vino”. 2. “el aceptar compartir el banquete con unos comensales elegidos al azar es propio de un hombre poco inteligente”, y, por ello, Quilón no aceptó la invitación hasta conocer los nombres de cada uno de los invitados. 3. la costumbre egipcia de colocar una momia junto a los comensales (citada por Hdt. II 78), que “aporta alguna ventaja, si impulsa a los comensales no a la bebida y al placer, sino a la amistad y al afecto mutuo y los exhorta a no hacer una vida, que es muy corta por el tiempo, larga por sus malas acciones”, es el cierre paradigmático de su concepto de simposio. De hecho, Plutarco sigue el modelo jenofonteo en el que las etapas del banquete real marcan la pauta de la conversación (cf. J. MARTIN, 1931, p. 259, n. 2; J. MOSSMAN, 1997, p. 129).

¹⁸ Ciertamente, la combinación de un tono serio con otro cómico es la atmósfera característica desde Jenofonte (cf. J. MARTIN, 1931, pp. 1-32; J. MOSSMAN, 1997, p. 122). Así, D. L. GERA,

recuerda la anécdota del muchacho que tiraba piedras a un perro y, habiéndole dado a la suegra, exclamó “Tampoco así está mal” (cf. *De tranq. anim.* 467C), en el fondo, una alegoría del buen gobernante que sabe cambiar el paso: διὸ καὶ Σόλωνα σοφώτατον ἡγήσάμην οὐ δεξάμενον τυραννεῖν (149C-D). Muy divertida también es la que narra el prodigio de una cría de yegua, mitad humana y mitad équido, presagio de la ruina de la familia de Periandro, y que Tales interpreta menospreciando los ritos purificadores de Diocles: “mi consejo es que no emplees a hombres tan jóvenes para guardar a los caballos, o proporcionales mujeres” (149E).

En 148D aparece en escena – pues mucho hay de teatro en los banquetes literarios – Eumetis o Cleobulina¹⁹, por ser hija de Cleóbulo de Lindos, pero también por su proverbial “sagacidad para los enigmas y su sabiduría”. Junto a ella²⁰, otro invitado especial a tan selecto grupo es Esopo, paradigma de la sabiduría popular²¹, cuyas fábulas serán el contrapunto a las intervenciones de los Sabios.

El banquete ya está en marcha con los personajes precisos, mientras los Sabios σοφῶν κάγαθῶν ἀνδρῶν (150C) hacen gala de una moderación muy del gusto de nuestro sacerdote de Apolo, y que está en consonancia con el buen gobierno sobre el que se va a conversar tras terminar la comida (1ª fase del banquete).

2.2. Entre los capítulos 6-12 se aborda el tema del gobierno del Estado, recordando al legendario faraón Amasis, no a través de acciones concretas sino de su capacidad para resolver enigmas, como cuando pide ayuda a Bías para resolver la prueba del rey etíope (151B-E), que le prometió que, si se bebía todo el mar, se quedaría con la isla Elefantina, a lo que Bías le aconseja responder que primero “contuviera los ríos que van a parar al océano”. La conclusión es que las enseñanzas de los Sabios forman al buen gobernante. Tras la intervención de Solón (cap. 7, 151F-D), conoceremos la prueba a la que, a modo de réplica (152E), somete Amasis al rey etíope, y cuyo “mensaje

1993, p. 136, identifica el σπουδαιόγελιον como un principio propio del género, “in fact, particularly associated with Socratic symposia in ancient times”.

¹⁹ Con D. F. LEÃO, 2005, p. 349, podemos entrever también una propuesta didáctica en la inclusión de este personaje femenino, un tanto sorprendente en el ambiente masculino de la tradición simposiaca: “Cleobulina contribui, também, para transformar o espaço do banquete numa cosmópolis dos vários tipos de sapiência: ela representaria, assim, uma sabedoria mais simples, permeada de intuição política e humanidade”. J. MOSSMAN, 1997, p. 134, apunta que la escena “it provides a healthy diet of philosophical and political thought leavened with lively characterization and picturesque setting which the conversation, sometimes with undertones of irony and sadness, brings vividly to life”.

²⁰ La presencia simultánea de Cleobulina y Esopo no es casual. Así, cuando Cleodoro siente ofendida su virilidad por la presencia de ésta (153E-154C), Esopo defiende su asistencia. Vid. la interpretación de D. F. LEÃO, 2005, p. 349: “ao colocar-se ao lado de Cleobulina, está também a defender a mesma sabedoria popular que ele próprio representa”.

²¹ J. MARTIN, 1931, p. 58, compara el papel de Esopo con el de Aristófanes en el *Banquete* de Platón, en su condición de representantes de una cultura más popular que otros participantes. Por su parte, S. JEDRKIEWICZ, 1997, pp. 49-52, observa que el autor se sirve del personaje de Esopo para introducir a través de sus fábulas las respuestas que le interesaban de los Sabios.

lamentable” (sic, ἀχνυμένη σκυτάλη; cf. Archil. 185 W) corrige Tales²², siguiendo su juego de preguntas y respuestas que culmina en: “Τί ῥᾶστον;” “τὸ κατὰ φύσιν, ἐπεὶ πρὸς ἡδονάς γε πολλάκις ἀπαγορεύουσιν” (153C-D). Frente al aparente alejamiento del *Banquete* del maestro Platón visto por algunos, el eco de su pensamiento comienza a atisbarse en esta declaración de principios plutarqueos.

Sin embargo, esta suerte de recopilación de saberes no estaría completa sin contar con Hesíodo²³, a quien Plutarco introduce (cap. 10) en certamen con Lesques, autor de la *Pequeña Iliada*, y no con Homero, obteniendo el de Ascrea el trípode de la victoria en los funerales de Anfidamante. La autoridad de sus poemas se equipara a la de los enigmas que se plantean en la conversación.

2.3. Agotado el tema del gobierno del Estado, Diocles introduce el del gobierno de la casa (cap. 12): “βασιλείας μὲν γὰρ καὶ πόλεις ὀλίγοι κυβερνῶσιν, ἐστίας δὲ πᾶσιν ἡμῖν καὶ οἴκου μέτεστι” (154F). De la secuencia de respuestas de los presentes²⁴, destacamos la de Quilón, a través del cual el autor conecta el gobierno de la casa con el político. Éste ilustra su faceta política con la respuesta que dio Licurgo a alguien que le aconsejaba establecer una democracia en su ciudad y al que contestó “primero establece en tu casa una democracia”.

El final del turno de respuestas sirve a Plutarco para retardar la narración e introducir el tema de la bebida²⁵ en el banquete (cap. 13), que deja clara su

²² La coincidencia con la *Vida de Tales* de D. L. I 35 demuestra, para A. BUSINE, 2002, p. 96, la gran dependencia de este relato de las fuentes antiguas, especialmente en lo referente a sentencias y apotegmas. Sin embargo, con C. MORALES OTAL & J. GARCÍA LÓPEZ, 1986, p. 241 n. 96, quizás no sean palabras reales de Tales sino un reflejo del pensamiento platónico y neoplatónico.

²³ Ciertamente, como apunta V. J. GRAY, 1998, p. 160 – siguiendo a M. L. WEST, 1978 –, *Trabajos y días* debe ser considerada el primer testimonio de una tradición de “wisdom literature”, de honda raigambre oriental, en la que se instalará la tradición sapiencial de los Sabios. Posteriormente, la propia poesía de sus representantes constituye el vehículo de propagación de su ideario (J. VELA TEJADA, 2008, p. 506), hasta llegar al siglo IV en el que la escuela socrática – A. BUSINE, 2002, p. 99, habla de “reprise du genre littéraire du *logos oikonomikos*”– habría jugado un papel destacado en el paso al ámbito de la prosa del pensamiento práctico (como las *χρηῖται* de Aristipo, contemporáneo de Sócrates, citado por D. L. 2.48 y 86). Esta larga tradición gnomológica queda configurada definitivamente en época helenística, a partir de sentencias y apotegmas atribuidos a los Sabios, de los que es deudor el polígrafo de Queronea (cf. A. BUSINE, 2002, p. 102: “le matériel gnomologique et apophtegmatique utilisé par Plutarque constituerait même, pour ainsi dire, l’armature du dialogue”). En definitiva, como propone R. P. MARTIN, 1993, p. 123, “The ‘symptotic’ strain in the stories of the Seven Sages (as in the tale of their banqueting together) would not, then, be a recent invention, but a relic of a much older context”, por lo que el *Banquete* plutarqueo sería “an expression of a continuing tradition, not just Plutarch’s innovation”, sin menoscabo de su aportación personal.

²⁴ Cada uno de los contertulios responde de acuerdo con su perfil: Esopo con la fábula de la zorra y la pantera que ilustra la belleza interior “de los que habitan una casa honrada y feliz”; Solón propugna que la adquisición de riquezas sea sin mediar injusticia y que sean gastadas con mesura; Bías habla del respeto a las leyes dentro y fuera de casa; Tales prefiere la casa que permite disfrutar del mayor descanso; Cleóbulo alaba al dueño que tiene más gente que lo quiera que lo tema; y para Pítaco la ideal es la que no necesita nada superfluo ni carece de lo necesario.

²⁵ Las consecuencias de la ingesta excesiva de vino es un tema recurrente en la tradición: en el *Banquete* de Jenofonte, con el personaje del bufón Filipo (1.11-16), y en el de Platón, al que

voluntad de adscripción al género al marcar el tiempo interno del banquete (cf. cap. 5). Los consejos al respecto de Hesíodo y Homero vuelven a convertir a la épica en fuente de sabiduría.

Tras este paréntesis, entre los caps. 14 y 16, se retoma en detalle la discusión sobre el gobierno de la casa²⁶. Los temas se suceden perfectamente engarzados: abre Quersias (157A) planteando la cuestión de la medida de la propiedad adecuada para cada individuo, ideal imposible para Cleóbulo, quien, en conversación con el médico Cleodoro, lo compara con la dosis de los medicamentos: “También tú [...] a tus enfermos no les recetas lo mismo a todos, sino a cada uno lo que le conviene”. Ello sirve para introducir el tema de la dieta, para el cual Solón alude como autoridad a la “dieta de Epiménides”, si bien finalmente prefiere a Hesíodo, presente a lo largo de todo el tratado, pero con un protagonismo especial en estos párrafos en los que es reconocida su competencia *ὡς δῆλός ἐστιν οὐκ ἀμελῶς οὐδ’ ἀπίερωσ περι διαίτης*²⁷. Es éste un pasaje decisivo para entender este tratado, tan extraño para algunos críticos, porque nos está ofreciendo las claves del pensamiento de Plutarco, aquí más délfico que nunca. Establecida la primacía de Hesíodo, Cleodoro inviste a Esopo, el *octavo Sabio*, como discípulo de aquél “con más derecho que Epiménides”²⁸, y se atribuye al fabulista “el origen de esa hermosa y variada sabiduría” (158B), lo que demuestra la conciencia de una tradición sapiencial por parte del autor.

No obstante, a lo largo de los capítulos 15 y 16, el tema del régimen de vida va a adquirir una nueva dimensión que pone de relieve la clara conexión

concorre Alcibiades en lamentable estado (212b sqq.). Cf. J. VELA TEJADA, 2007, p. 33.

²⁶ Como indica A. BUSINE, 2002, p. 99, “Le thème de l’oikonomia permet ainsi à Plutarque d’évoquer le rapport entre gouvernement de la cité et gestion domestique”. No obstante, la presencia de estos contenidos adquiere una especial relevancia desde el punto de vista literario, pues se atribuye a la tradición socrática la atención a estos temas: cf. F. ROSCALLA, 1990. Ello reforzaría la idea de quienes, como D. MUSTI, 2001, p. 89, intuyen el influjo socrático sobre el simposio: “Il ruolo del socratismo nel ripensamento globale della vita è decisivo. E poiché il socratismo segna la nascita della filosofia in senso stretto, in quanto riflessione sistematica sui principi dell’essere, del conoscere e del dover essere (perciò, della realtà, della conoscenza e della morale), è chiaro che proprio la riflessione dell’ambiente socratico decide il destino di una pratica sociale che al socratismo certo preesisteva, ma che quella cultura filosofica ha scelto come luogo privilegiato di comunicazione”. Los últimos años del siglo V y primeras décadas del IV serían los de la maduración de la consideración filosófica de esta práctica social. A este respecto J. MARTIN, 1931, p. 124, relativiza la influencia de Sócrates, quien “provides a sort of endpoint”. Pese a admitir el modelo socrático en la vinculación del diálogo a Delfos, en su temática política y en la presencia de fábulas esópicas, concluye que éstas fueron marginales dentro de su actividad.

²⁷ Y es que, en efecto, en Hesíodo, se encuentra ya una detallada guía, aquí reproducida (158A-B), sobre el régimen de comidas (*Trabajos* 559 sqq.), la mezcla del vino (*Trabajos* 592-5), el valor del agua (*Trabajos* 735-741), del baño (*Trabajos* 753), sobre las mujeres (*Trabajos* 373-5 y 699-705), el tiempo propicio para la relación sexual (*Trabajos* 735-6 y 812) y el modo como se han de sentar los recién nacidos (*Trabajos* 750-2). Cf. C. MORALES OTAL & J. GARCÍA LÓPEZ, 1986, p. 257.

²⁸ La común utilización por parte de Esopo (4 y 4a PERRY) de la fábula del halcón y el ruiseñor, que relatara Hesíodo (*Trabajos* 203 sqq.), es para Cleodoro el argumento de peso a favor del fabulista.

para Plutarco entre sociedad e individuo, destinatario de su παιδεία. Inquirido Solón por Cleodoro sobre su modelo, y respondiendo aquél que “de los bienes mayores y más importantes, el segundo es necesitar muy poco alimento” y, el primero, “τὸ μὴδ’ ὄλως τροφῆς δεῖσθαι”, la réplica casi airada del médico introduce principios propios del estoicismo²⁹ sobre la condición humana, cuya vida “se consume en una serie de trabajos”, la mayoría de los cuales los provoca “ἡ τῆς τροφῆς χρεία καὶ παρασκευὴ τὰς πλείστας παρακαλεῖ” (158D-E). Mas la necesidad constituye el principio de nuestra civilización: el hambre nos llevó a la invención de la agricultura, ésta a las artes y oficios, de éstos se pasó a las honras a los dioses y el respeto a los dioses nos llevó a practicar los placeres de Afrodita en la intimidad de la noche y no al aire libre como bestias. En suma, “el que no necesita alimento tampoco necesita el cuerpo y eso sería no tener necesidad de sí mismo” (159A). La respuesta de Solón³⁰, que ocupa todo el cap. 16, frente a la defensa de las τέχναι que ha llevado a cabo el *iatros* Cleodoro, sirve a Plutarco para realizar una declaración de principios religioso-filosófica, que se apoya en el prestigio de Solón³¹, quien ocupa el primer asiento por saber y edad³². En efecto, comenzando con planteamientos órficos, que postulan la impureza de la carne y, por ende, la prohibición de su ingesta, Solón considera la alimentación como un signo de esclavitud del ser humano: la única salida es llegar a ser αὐτάρκη καὶ ἀπροσδεῶ (159C). En consecuencia, enlazando con un pensamiento neoplatónico, el alma esta encerrada siempre en el cuerpo, ὡσπερ ἐν μυλῶνι τῷ σώματι τὴν ψυχὴν ἐγκεκαλυμμένην αἰεὶ περὶ τὴν τῆς τροφῆς χρείαν κυκλοῦσαν (159D).

A partir de aquí, Plutarco hace patente su casi devota fidelidad al pensamiento de Platón, como cuando Solón prosigue diciendo “por falta de conocimiento de las cosas bellas, nos contentamos con una vida basada en las obligaciones” (160C), lo cual, sin duda, desdice a quienes quisieron ver un alejamiento del *Banquete* de Platón³³. En definitiva, concluye el primero de

²⁹ Cf. C. MORALES OTAL & J. GARCÍA LÓPEZ, 1986, p. 259 n. 164.

³⁰ M. D. GALLARDO, 1972, p. 186, considera que el discurso de Solón está inspirado en el de Sócrates en el *Fedón* 64a-67b de Platón.

³¹ En dicha consideración sigue la opinión de su venerado maestro Platón, quien a través de Critias (*Ti.* 20d), había calificado a Solón como “el más sabio de los Siete”: cf. J. VELA TEJADA, 2008, p. 505. G. J. D. AALDERS, 1977, p. 29, empero, se sorprende de que Plutarco “father his platonizing ideas on the Seven Sages, especially on Solon, who as a rule were considered to be the prominent representatives of a more practical and pedestrian wisdom”.

³² Así lo relata en 151E, cuando Quilón dice “que era justo que Solón comenzara la disertación, no sólo porque aventajaba a todos por la edad y estaba casualmente sentado el primero, sino porque ejercía el poder más elevado y perfecto por haberles dado a los atenienses sus leyes”: vid. J. VELA TEJADA, 2008, p. 512.

³³ No cabe duda de que las palabras de Solón nos traen resonancias de la intervención de la enigmática Diótima (209e-212a) en el *Banquete* platónico, en uno de los episodios más renombrados en el que se describen los pasos necesarios para alcanzar el ideal de perfección de belleza, τὸ καλόν - τὰ καλὰ γινῶ αὐτὸ τελευτῶν ὃ ἔστι καλόν (211c) - y, a través de él, la excelencia verdadera - τεκόντι δὲ ἀρετὴν ἀληθῆ (212a). Es cierto que ya no cabe, como en aquél, el elogio del amor homosexual como modelo de perfección, pero es que el de Queronea no hace sino seguir algo que ya se había anticipado en la obra homónima de Jenofonte (una comparación entre ambos testimonios puede encontrarse en J. VELA TEJADA, 2007, pp. 35 sqq.), en la que los

los Sabios, el alma alimenta el cuerpo con esfuerzo y dedicación pero, si fuera liberada de esta servidumbre, viviría “εἰς αὐτήν ὀρώσα καὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν, οὐδενὸς περισπῶντος οὐδ’ ἀπάγοντος.” (160C), concepto que es la base del pensamiento de Platón³⁴. No obstante, por si nos cabe alguna duda de su sentido último, Diocles-Plutarco vuelve al eje argumental: “Τὰ μὲν οὖν ῥηθέντα περὶ τροφῆς, ᾧ Νίκαρχε, ταῦτ’ ἦν”.

2.4. Como el Alcibíades del *Banquete* de Platón o el empresario siracusano que llega con su compañía de actores en el de Jenofonte, la irrupción súbita de Gorgo³⁵, el hermano de Periandro que entra “cuando todavía estaba hablando Solón”, rompe el hilo argumental y, a través de una larga intervención (caps. 17-20), a caballo entre el relato verídico y el mito³⁶ (como el del antropoide en Platón o el mimo sobre los amores de Dioniso y Ariadna representado en el de Jenofonte), introduce la leyenda etiológica del músico Arión³⁷, que ilustra los principios de la Providencia divina que rigen el gobierno del Universo³⁸, principios que nuestro autor resume en la máxima délfica por excelencia³⁹, “nada en demasía”, puesta en boca de Quilón. Esta máxima da pie, en el capítulo final, a una animada discusión en la que se entremezcla la devoción a Delfos⁴⁰,

misterios del amor que conducen a la perfección, se realizan a través del amor heterosexual y conyugal (1.10). Esta es, de hecho, la tesis principal del trabajo de J. MOSSMAN, 1997, pp. 126-34: “its deliberate omission of homosexual themes and its substitution of heterosexuality into the traditional *symposion* context” (p. 134).

³⁴ Cf. A. BUSINE, 2002, pp. 98-9.

³⁵ J. MOSSMAN, 1997, p. 131, subraya que “the arrival of Gorgos structurally resembles de arrival of Alcibiades in Plato in that it changes the direction of discussion”. La del empresario siracusano que va a representar el mimo de Dioniso y Ariadna en el de Jenofonte tiene la misma función estructural, lo cual implica un rasgo de género y no una mera imitación: cf. J. VELA TEJADA, 2007, p. 35.

³⁶ M. D. GALLARDO, 1972, p. 186, habla de “las páginas más elevadas de toda la obra” y subraya que Plutarco sigue “la técnica platónica del diálogo, según la cual se introduce un mito lleno de belleza y poesía y de él se sacan conclusiones fundamentales”. Y no sólo en el de Platón. Debe destacarse que hay una adecuación argumental al contexto simposiaco: a Arión se atribuye la invención del ditirambo, asociado al culto dionisiaco, y el mimo representado en el jenofonteo versa sobre los amores de Dioniso y Ariadna.

³⁷ Sobre el mito de Arión, J. MOSSMAN, 1997, p. 131, opina que “not arbitrary chosen, but sum up some of the most important themes of the dialogue, including the theme of love”. En nuestra opinión, la tendencia de su estudio a reducir al tema amoroso el significado de la obra, con ser importante, hace que se le escape el profundo sentido délfico de un mito que, con A. BUSINE, 2002, p. 101, “devait faire parties du patrimoine delphique à la disposition de Plutarque”.

³⁸ Como apunta M. D. GALLARDO, 1972, p. 187, la afirmación de Anacarsis, ψυχῆς γὰρ ὄργανον τὸ σῶμα, θεοῦ δ’ ἡ ψυχή (163E), es la culminación de toda la filosofía platónica. Cf. F. RODRÍGUEZ ADRADOS, 1996, p. 129: “en definitiva, lo que se hace es pasar del gobierno de los hombres al gobierno de Dios: todo está calculado”.

³⁹ En este sentido, seguimos a A. BUSINE, 2002, p. 97, cuando afirma que “Il n’y a pas de grande surprise à ce que la prête d’Apollon eut recours aux maximes delphiques”, que una larga tradición había asociado a los Siete Sabios (cf. Demetrio, *FGrHist* 228 F 114; Diodoro IX 10.1-4).

⁴⁰ Suscribimos las palabras de E. SUÁREZ DE LA TORRE, 2005, p. 474, para quien la tradición de los Siete Sabios tiene una indiscutible impronta délfica – que también explicaría la presencia de Esopo –, “aunque luego se ha convertido en un bien “mostrenco” de las sucesivas etapas de

el significado de sus máximas, la autoridad sapiencial de los Sabios ligados a ellas y el vínculo de las fábulas de Esopo con esta tradición(164B), culminando la narración en el destino al que el autor nos quería llevar: la renacida autoridad del santuario de Apolo. En este contexto, los juegos literarios sobre otras máximas y anécdotas délficas llevan a los comensales a la noche, referencia temporal que confirma la atención al canon simposiaco, aquí (164D) a través de la cita erudita del verso homérico⁴¹:

νῦξ δ' ἤδη τελέθει· ἀγαθὸν καὶ νυκτὶ πιθέσθαι.
(*Il.* 7.282 y 293)

3. Llegados al final de la obra, es, pues, el momento de establecer las conclusiones a las que el propio autor nos ha llevado:

– La obra no es una recopilación inconexa de anécdotas sino que muestra un esquema claro en el que los temas de sabiduría práctica, propios de los protagonistas, actúan como elemento aglutinador. Así, se pasa del buen gobierno⁴² del Estado al buen gobierno de la casa, de éste al buen gobierno/cuidado del cuerpo, del cuerpo al alma y de esta a Dios, con su sede en Delfos y sus principios apolíneos resumidos en la máxima: nada en demasía⁴³. En consecuencia, dado el carácter práctico de las máximas délficas, el *Banquete de los Siete Sabios* no podía seguir al pie de la letra el modelo de Platón y sí otros referentes más cercanos a la tradición sapiencial.

– Del mismo modo, con mayor claridad que en cualquier otra de sus obras dialógicas o de temática socrático-platónica, el *Banquete* plutarqueo se enmarca claramente en el esquema de dicho género literario⁴⁴. El diálogo simposiaco,

la cultura griega”. Por ello, no comparte la idea de A. BUSINE, 2002, p. 102), de que la leyenda esté desprovista de su sentido inicial, “sino que más bien lo veo recuperado, en cuanto a la reivindicación apolínea y religiosa que preside esta obra, sobre todo a partir de la entrada en escena de Gorgo, el hijo de Periandro, y el relato del rescate de Arión”.

⁴¹ La idea de prevenir una deriva “indeseada” une los *Banquetes* jenofonteo y plutarqueo: vid. J. VELA TEJADA, 2007, p. 35. Así, J. MOSSMAN, 1997, p. 134, señala que “Solon’s bringing the dialogue to an abrupt end, we feel, prevents the conversation straying further on to dangerous ground, as the irony of Periander’s disastrous marriage break-up threatens to re-emerge”.

⁴² Vid. A. BUSINE, 2002, p. 94: “l’objectif caché de Plutarque fut de décrire un banquet exemplaire pour ses contemporains dont le thème central, récurrent dans la littérature de cette époque, était l’οἰκονομία des États, des maisons et du Cosmos”.

⁴³ Un simposio délfico de principio – cuando Plutarco se nos disfraza de Diocles, sacerdote purificador – a fin, por ser Delfos sede de la sabiduría máxima que todo joven bien instruido debe seguir para alcanzar las máximas metas. Así, J. SIRINELLI, 2000, p. 205, pone de relieve que el *Banquete* fue escrito poco después de que Plutarco fuera nombrado sacerdote en Delfos. En una línea similar, A. BUSINE, 2002, p. 94 subraya “la volonté de Plutarque de sauver de l’oubli et de réactualiser le capital culturel de Delphes”.

⁴⁴ No compartimos la afirmación de J. SIRINELLI, 2000, p. 160, de que “est une imitation directe de Platon”, aunque sí coincidimos en que Plutarco percibiera “les possibilités que lui offrait le dialogue pour exposer les idées qui par ailleurs faisaient l’objet de son enseignement”. Tampoco nos parece, como añade, que se viera obligado a abandonar una tradición para la que no estaba dotado como Luciano: “semble avoir quelque peu hésité dans la conception même du banquet et avoir cédé à des sollicitations divergentes; l’une plutôt pédagogique, visant à donner

desde la tradición socrática, reemplaza a la poesía como marco sapiencial y cada autor adopta libremente los temas de discusión, lo que explica las lógicas “desviaciones” del referente de Platón. Por otra parte, la introducción de temas de carácter práctico y la preeminencia del *eros* heterosexual y conyugal – frente al homoerotismo platónico – está perfectamente atestiguado desde los comienzos del género en prosa en la obra de Jenofonte.

– En definitiva, nos hallamos ante un ejemplar de carácter didáctico, con pinceladas del género epistolar en su forma, dirigido a los jóvenes aristócratas, futuros gobernantes del Imperio romano, cuyo paradigma de conducta se encuentra en las máximas de los Sabios – la mayoría de los cuales habían ejercido el poder –, como cuando Tales afirma que “Un tirano que prefiera gobernar a esclavos más que a hombres libres en nada se diferencia de un agricultor que prefiera recolectar cizaña y malas hierbas en lugar de trigo y cebada.” (147C). Los ideales que emanan de este banquete délfico son el buen gobierno y la filantropía, como en las ya citadas cualidades encarnadas por Cleobulina (148D): νοῦς [...] πολιτικὸς καὶ φιλόανθρωπον ἦθος.

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dans un panorama de la philosophie quelques lumières sur les diverses origines de la sagesse hellénique, l’autre, plutôt esthétique, visant à composer un nouveau type de banquet; les deux objectifs ne se marient pas avec bonheur, l’un embarrassant l’autre” (p. 162). No parece que esta obra entusiasme a la escuela francesa, porque también dice A. BUSINE, 2002, p. 93: “Malgré le déploiement de grands efforts pour esquisser une scène pittoresque, le prêtre de Delphes ne s’est malheureusement pas illustré pour son habileté dans l’écriture du dialogue légendaire”. En una línea más productiva, F. RODRÍGUEZ ADRADOS, 1996, p. 136, admite la cercanía al género del banquete socrático-platónico, pero partiendo de una tradición helenística escrita. No compartimos, empero, la influencia de los modelos cínicos más allá de la inclusión, como sabio, del cínico Anacarsis, que reemplaza a Periandro en el grupo por su condición de tirano: “Estos *Banquetes* cínicos de los Siete Sabios han sido la base, sin duda, del *Banquete* de Plutarco, que los ha reelaborado, sin renunciar, sin duda, a introducir más material de los mismos orígenes” (p. 139). Estos hipotéticos *Banquetes* estaban relacionados con el de Menipo, del que poco sabemos (cf. J. MARTIN, 1931, p. 211 sqq.), que influyó en el de Plutarco y en los de Meleagro, Lucilio, Varrón, Horacio, Petronio, Luciano y los julianos. No lo tiene tan claro D. F. LEÃO, 2005, p. 345: “Menos evidente se afigura, no entanto, a hipótese de existir uma ou várias obras de premeio”. En suma, aunque, en su forma, derivaba lógicamente de “viejas tradiciones”, es plenamente original en su contenido.

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EL BANQUETE DE LOS SIETE SABIOS COMO TOUR DE FORCE ESCOLAR

RODOLFO GONZÁLEZ EQUIHUA
Universidad de Salamanca

Abstract

The main issue of this contribution is to point out the genre of anecdote (χρεία) that Plutarch relates to the symposiac sphere according to the classification specified in progymnastic manuals, and to show how this rhetorical device works in the dialogization process of the symposium as a literary genre.

TOUR DE FORCE: exercice qui exige de la force.
– PAR EXT. Action difficile accomplie avec une habilité remarquable. 2. Action ou moyen d'action qui suppose de l'adresse, de l'habileté, de la malice, de la ruse.

Le Nouveau Petit Robert (2004)

1. En 1928 Frank C. Babbitt calificó esta obra como un *tour de force* literario¹. El empeño de Plutarco, desde plena época imperial, por recrear a un grupo legendario de legisladores y gobernantes de época arcaica en un género de época clásica ya sancionado por Platón y Jenofonte, exigía de su autor una gran energía (ἐνέργεια) y habilidad (δεινότης). Debía resolver ante todo dos operaciones difíciles: la construcción escénica y revestir las conversaciones de sus personajes de naturalidad y encanto.

J. J. Reiske en el siglo XVIII y R. Volkmann² en el XIX, con vistas al resultado y no a la intención, lamentan el abuso de anacronismos y la ausencia de un plan de conjunto, incluso el primero se permite afirmar que Tales de Mileto y los Sabios, por razones cronológicas, no habrían podido coincidir espacialmente³. Según esta objeción, a Plutarco el versátil escritor de las diversas formas literarias que conforman los *Moralia*, lo desacredita Plutarco el grave historiador de las programáticas *Vidas paralelas*. Quienes ejercieron la crítica interna del tratado⁴ concluyeron que nos encontrábamos ante un trabajo

¹ F. C. BABBITT, 1956, p. 346. La edición utilizada para este trabajo es la de J. DEFRADAS, *Plutarque. Le Banquet des Septs Sages* in J. DEFRADAS ET AL. (eds.), 1985. La traducción citada es la de C. MORALES OTAL & J. GARCÍA LÓPEZ, *Plutarco. Obras Morales y de Costumbres*, II, Madrid, 1986.

² R. VOLKMANN, 1967.

³ En D. A. WYTTENBACH, 1821, p. 201 encontramos citado el curioso reparo de Reiske: “*Non valde congruit historiae, quod hunc ficto nomine Niloxenum dictum Naucratis facit. Nam Thaletis aetate, qui Cyro et Croeso aequalis uixit, Naucratis nondum erat, condita sub Inaro in Aegypto regnante et Artaxerxe in Perside circa Olymp. 90. teste Strabone p. 1153. Etiam aetates sapientium haud satis apte congruunt. Periander Solone est antiquior: mitto alium*”. De ahí que WYTTENBACH exclamara a continuación: “*Hoc mihi est iudicium docti hominis! si iudicium dici potest temerarium dictum propeperanter scribentis.*”

⁴ C. MEINERS en su *Geschichte des Ursprungs, Fortgangs und Verfalls der Wissenschaften in*

escolar⁵ escrito por un sofista contemporáneo. Aquí escolar y sofisticado, desde luego, son dos atributos negativos: censuran y limitan el alcance del *Banquete* plutarqueo. Señalan la falta de inventiva, el estigma de lo inacabado y el exceso de licencias literarias, de artificio.

Mi objetivo, no obstante, es analizar este tratado precisamente a través de su manifiesto carácter escolar y la luz que arroja en el periodo de formación de su autor, acaso el más arduo y laborioso, aquel en que se escogen y ensayan varios caminos y también aquel en que se descubren los territorios y vados que tan sólo conviene mirar desde las orillas. Sobre todo, si aceptamos que la fecha asignada a esta obra en la carrera de Plutarco apunta aún a su etapa de formación⁶. Clasificando esta obra como un ejercicio escolar apreciaríamos mejor y seríamos más condescendientes con su temeraria invención y con el deliberado anacronismo que la permea, al tiempo que nos entregaría los trazos inestables de todo empeño por adquirir un estilo propio.

2. Cuando se habla de ejercicio escolar hemos de referirnos obligadamente a uno de los métodos más productivos en la época imperial para el aprendizaje gradual de la retórica y de sus formas discursivas fundamentales: los *progymnasmata* o ejercicios de preparación, cuya formulación, esquematización e incluso ejemplificación nos legaron Teón de Alejandría, Hermógenes de Tarso, Aftonio de Antioquía y Nicolás de Mira⁷, por mencionar tan sólo los manuales griegos que nos han sobrevivido y que datan del siglo I al V d.C.⁸. Que Plutarco se aplicara a su estudio y laboriosa asimilación nos explica en parte que dos ejercicios constituyan las líneas directrices de su trabajo literario: por una parte, la *synkrisis* vertebrada el plan biográfico de las *Vidas paralelas*, así como por la otra la profusa producción “chreica”⁹ recorre sus *Ensayos misceláneos* y *cartas*, como quería Babbitt que tituláramos sus tratados morales¹⁰.

Apoyándonos tan sólo en el vínculo temporal, que haría factible el textual

Griechenland, Lemgo, 1781, I, p. 135 sqq., seguido por R. VOLKMANN, 1967, posturas finalmente adoptadas por las historias de la literatura griega de W. CHRIST, 1889 y M. CROISET, 1928.

⁵ Según la síntesis de las posturas críticas ante el tratado que, en su edición, hace J. DEFRADES, 1985, p. 171: “Ce recueil de platitudes ne pourrait être l’œuvre de l’auteur des *Moralia*: ce ne serait qu’un travail scolaire écrit par un sophiste contemporain”.

⁶ J. SIRINELLI, 2000, p. 160: “On peut discuter à l’infini sur la date du *Banquet*. Aucun argument n’est déterminant, les allusions à la démocratie pas plus que les autres. On doit songer plutôt à un exercice un peu artificiel des années d’enseignement, entre 80 et 90 ou même 95”.

⁷ Cf. M. PATILLON & G. BOLOGNESI, 1997; G. A. KENNEDY, 2003. La traducción de los *progymnasmata* citada en este trabajo es la de M. D. RECHE MARTÍNEZ, 1991.

⁸ Sobre la versión latina de los *progymnasmata* cf. S. F. BONNER, 1977, pp. 250-76. Para la época bizantina cf. H. HUNGER, 1978, pp. 92-120. Análisis de la obra de Plutarco a la luz de la teoría progimnasmática han sido llevados también a cabo por J. A. FERNÁNDEZ DELGADO, 2000; y por Á. VICENTE, 2005; y, eadem, en este mismo volumen, pp. 75-85.

⁹ P. HIRZEL, 1963, p. 142 afirma que la intención de Plutarco era hacer una colección de *chreiai* en forma de banquete: “Man hat den Eindruck, dass es ihm hauptsächlich darauf ankam eine Chriensammlung in die Form eines Symposions zu bringen (vgl. o.S. 115,1) und dann mit allen Farben der Rhetorik auszumalen”.

¹⁰ F. C. BABBITT, 1949, p. xiii: “Certainly a better descriptive title would be “Miscellaneous Essays and Letters”, for the *Moralia* cover many fields, and show an astounding learning and a wide range of interests”.

e incluso el espacial –la historia literaria hace converger a ambos autores en el siglo I d.C. –, y ante el desconocimiento del rétor que marcó la actividad libresca del Queronense¹¹, conjeturemos una posible relación magisterial entre Teón de Alejandría y Plutarco, y veamos cómo llegó a reflejarse en la obra que nos ocupa.

3. No hay nada equiparable, nos dice Jean Sirinelli¹², a excepción del *Gryllos*, en el corpus plutarqueo, en lo que respecta a la introducción de personajes abierta y totalmente ficticios, al *Septem sapientium convivium*. ¿Por qué Plutarco optó por hacer un simposio y por qué escogió entre los comensales al oscilante grupo de los Siete Sabios?

Tal vez en principio asumió la exigencia subrayada por Teón de no acercarse a ninguna modalidad oratoria sin antes adentrarse en el estudio de la filosofía so pena de perder amplitud de pensamiento¹³. A aquella se suma el deber de ejercitarse en las sentencias de los sabios (τοις τῶν σοφῶν ἀποφθέγμασιν) y recopilarlas de las obras antiguas para adquirir, a fuerza de interiorizarlas, un carácter virtuoso¹⁴. De ahí que el Queronense se esmerara en la compilación y confección de apotegmas, *hypomnemata*, *chreiai*, proverbios y sentencias a las que posteriormente recurrirá para aderezar sus escritos. Baste leer la justificación de sus *Regum et imperatorum apophthegmata* (172d-e):

En las *Vidas*, las manifestaciones de los hombres se sitúan junto a sus hechos y aguardan el placer de una lectura sosegada. Aquí, pienso que sus palabras, coleccionadas por separado como ejemplo y semilla de sus vidas (δείγματα τῶν βίων καὶ σπέρματα), no te harán malgastar el tiempo y podrás pasar revista con brevedad a muchos hombres dignos de recuerdo¹⁵.

O baste recordar las líneas donde afirma: “Hice una colección de aquellos apuntes (ἐκ τῶν ὑπομνημάτων) sobre la paz del alma que tenía a mano preparados para mí mismo”¹⁶. Huelgue citar las palabras donde declara este conveniente hábito: “Por esto intento siempre reunir y releer no ya solamente estos dichos de los filósofos [...] sino más bien los de los reyes y tiranos”¹⁷, donde vemos declarada la predilección plutarquea por la sabiduría práctica más que por el conocimiento teórico. No nos extrañe entonces la atención que le merecieron los Siete Sabios, a quienes los griegos pusieron en el origen de

¹¹ J. M. DÍAZ LAVADO, 1999, p. 58. En todo caso, de la teoría progimnasmática hay indicios anteriores a Teón, su primer codificador conocido.

¹² J. SIRINELLI, 2000, p. 161. “...il n’y a guère dans toute l’oeuvre de Plutarque de textes du même ordre; il y a des traités, des dialogues fictifs ou réels entre des personnages réels de l’entourage de Plutarque, des biographies, mais nous n’avons que deux dialogues entre des personnages ouvertement et totalment fictifs, ce sont le *Gryllos* et le *Banquet des sept sages*.”

¹³ Theon 1,1-4.

¹⁴ Theon 2,16-19.

¹⁵ Trad. M. LÓPEZ SALVÁ & M. A. MEDEL, *Plutarco. Obras Morales y de Costumbres*, III, Madrid, 1987.

¹⁶ Cf. *De tranquillitate animi* (Mor. 464F) Trad. R. M.^a AGUILAR, *Plutarco. Obras Morales y de Costumbres (Moralía)*, VII, Madrid, 1995.

¹⁷ Cf. *De cobibenda ira* (Mor. 457D-E). Trad. R. M.^a AGUILAR, 1995.

su historia de la filosofía y de los cuales Heródoto nos ofrece algunos ejemplos de su agudeza política¹⁸: “hombres prácticos, de acción –nos dice B. Snell–, que en su mayoría, participaban en la vida del Estado como legisladores, soberanos o consejeros”¹⁹.

Por lo tanto, Plutarco debió en principio de someterse a la tarea de recoger un corpus de sentencias y consejos *útiles* comenzando por las inscripciones delficas: “conócete a ti mismo” y “nada en demasía”. En el curso de la encuesta se enfrentaría a la falta de acuerdo tanto en la atribución de las sentencias como en el número de los Sabios²⁰, hecho que reflejará y solucionará en la introducción de su *Simposio* al multiplicar el número de comensales. Importaba más, en cambio, la pervivencia del conocimiento acumulado, que todas las sentencias se acomodasen muy bien a la definición de la *chreia* del rétor alejandrino; en suma, que fueran declaraciones o acciones breves atribuidas a un personaje determinado y que fueran útiles (*chreiai*) para la vida²¹. Habría también seguido con atención el ejemplo de *chreia* verbal de respuesta interrogativa y su alusión a Pítaco de Mitilene²².

4. El siguiente paso era encontrar qué tipo de discurso hacer con su acopio de sentencias: ¿cuál era la mejor forma de realizar el exhaustivo programa que Teón presenta para ejercitarse en la *chreia*, el cual comprende tres géneros²³, cinco tipos²⁴, seis subespecies²⁵ y doce categorías formales²⁶? Plutarco debió de pensar en el recurso de pregunta y respuesta que la primera sofística encontrara²⁷ al transitar por el terreno de las antinomias y perfeccionar el arte de hacer prevalecer la opinión personal, cuyo desarrollo culminaría en el diálogo platónico. Esta fase intermedia podemos encontrarla en las respuestas que el rey etíope, referidas por Nilóxeno de Náucratis, da a las preguntas ¿Qué es lo más viejo, lo más hermoso, lo más grande, lo más sabio, lo más común, lo más útil, lo más perjudicial, lo más poderoso y lo más fácil? (*Mor.* 152E-

¹⁸ Cf. Hdt. I 27, 29, 59, 74 y 170.

¹⁹ *El descubrimiento del espíritu* (*Die Entdeckung des Geistes*, trad. J. FONTUBERTA), Barcelona, 2007 (1ª ed. Hamburgo, 1963), p. 504.

²⁰ D. L. 40-41.

²¹ Theon 18, 9-14.

²² Cf. Theon 20, 3-6: “Habiéndole sido preguntado a Pítaco de Mitilene si la mala conducta pasa desapercibida a los dioses, respondió: ‘No, ni aún pretendiéndolo.’”

²³ *Chreiai* verbales (λογικαί), de hechos (πρακτικαί) y mixtas (μικταί).

²⁴ *Chreiai* enunciativas (ἀποφαντικόν), de respuesta (ἀποκριτικόν), dobles (διπλή), activas (ἐνεργητικαί) y pasivas (παθητικαί).

²⁵ De enunciación voluntaria (καθ' ἐκούσιον ἀπόφασιν), de enunciación circunstancial (κατὰ περίστασιν), interrogativas (καθ' ἐρώτησιν), indagativas (κατὰ πύσμα), causales interrogativas (καθ' ἐρώτησιν αἰτιώδεις), de respuesta propiamente dicha (ἀποκριτικόν).

²⁶ De sentencia (αἰ γνωμολογικῶς), demostrativa (αἰ ἀποδεικτικῶς), graciosa (αἰ κατὰ χαριεντισμόν), de silogismo (αἰ κατὰ συλλογισμόν), de argumentación conclusiva o entimema (αἰ κατὰ ἐνθύνημα), de ejemplo (αἰ κατὰ παράδειγμα), de súplica (αἰ κατ' εὐχὴν), simbólica (αἰ συμβολικῶς), figurada (αἰ τροπικῶς), con ambigüedad (αἰ κατὰ ἀμφιβολίαν), con metalepsis (αἰ κατὰ μετάληψιν), compuesta mediante combinación de varios modos (ὁ δὲ συνεζευγμένος τρόπος). Cf. M. A. BELLU, 2005.

²⁷ D. L. 9 53-55 nos dice que Protágoras fue el primero en suscitar el modo de dialogar que llamamos socrático (οὗτος καὶ τὸ Σωκρατικόν εἶδος τῶν λόγων πρῶτος ἐκίνησε) y registra entre sus libros una *Técnica de controversias* (τέχνη ἐριστικῶν).

153A), preguntas *ipso facto* refutadas por Tales de Mileto (*Mor.* 153B-C), en una escena que refleja muy bien el juego sofístico de hacer preguntas que expresasen el grado máximo de una cualidad o de una circunstancia.

La elección de esta forma literaria parecía ineluctable. Unos supuestos *Septem sapientium logoi* debían aspirar a ocupar un lugar junto a los *logoi* socráticos del autor que llevara este género a la perfección y a quien Teón recurría constantemente como modelo ya no sólo del *progimnasma* de la *chreia* sino de otros más: de la fábula, el relato mítico²⁸, la descripción²⁹, la caracterización³⁰ y el encomio³¹. A Plutarco quizá lo animó el hecho de que sólo Jenofonte, otro escritor ecléctico, hubiera tratado de emular los diálogos platónicos sin transigir en la caricatura. Después de todo, a pesar de que los *Memorabilia* fueron redactados transcurridos casi sesenta años después de la muerte de Sócrates, existe la tesis, sustentada por O. Gigon³², de que Jenofonte se había remontado a una extensa literatura socrática, no dependiente de la de Platón y más antigua, de mentalidad más simple.

Plutarco había remontado no años sino épocas enteras para espigar una literatura igual de extensa y hacerse con un catálogo de las sentencias de los sabios. Tenía la forma en que debía integrarlas, el diálogo simposiaco, y con ésta resolvía la construcción escénica y la inserción de cuadros ricos en polémicas. El Queronense, no apartándose del patrón platónico, hace contar a uno, Diocles, a manera de refutación de una apócrifa versión en boga, lo narrado por un tercero ausente y traslada la escena a un pasado remoto. Tenía a los personajes. Quedaba por revestir las conversaciones de sus personajes de naturalidad y encanto, dotarlas de animación.

Para tal empresa recurrió al *progimnasma* de la caracterización o prosopopeya. Teón la había definido como “la introducción de un personaje que pronuncia discursos indiscutiblemente apropiados a su propia persona y a las circunstancias en que se encuentra”³³. En este caso Plutarco ya sabía qué diría cada personaje, sólo restaba concebir las circunstancias. Más allá de la general, el banquete organizado por Periandro en la fiesta sacrificial en honor de Afrodita (*Mor.* 146C-D), hacía falta la pauta para que las sentencias aparecieran con cierta espontaneidad en el texto.

Jean Defradas ha señalado que el desorden de la composición es el defecto

²⁸ Theon 10, 2-7: “De narración serían ejemplos hermosísimos, de las míticas, la de Platón en el libro segundo de la *República* sobre el anillo de Giges y en el *Banquete* sobre el nacimiento del amor, así como las relativas a los temas del Hades presentes en el *Fedón* y en el libro décimo de la *República*.”

²⁹ Theon 12, 8-13: “Muchas descripciones han sido realizadas por los antiguos, como en Tucídides, en el libro segundo, la peste y, en el tercero, el cerco de Platea y, en otra parte, un combate naval y un combate a caballo; y en Platón, en el *Timeo*, lo relacionado con Sais...”.

³⁰ Theon 12, 23-26: “De prosopopeya ¿qué ejemplo habría más hermoso que la poesía de Homero, los diálogos de Platón y de los demás socráticos, y los dramas de Menandro?”.

³¹ Theon 12, 26-13,1 “Tenemos también los encomios de Isócrates, los epitafios de Platón...”

³² O. Gigon, *Sokrates: sein Bild in Dichtung und Geschichte*, 1947, p. 525.

³³ Theon 70,1-3. Los otros manuales designan de ordinario a este ejercicio con el término *epitopeya*.

principal de este banquete y que todo intento por encontrarle una unidad resulta vano³⁴. Sin caer en la excesiva generalización con que E. David fijó el tema central: “la vida social en su aspecto más general y más particular”³⁵, bien podemos desdoblarlo un poco y establecerlo de la siguiente manera: un examen del vicio y la virtud a partir de los cuatro ámbitos característicos de acción humana: el simposiaco, el doméstico, el político y el religioso³⁶. Semejantes ámbitos servirían a Plutarco para articular sus catálogos *chreicos* con las virtudes y vicios típicos de cada uno de ellos.

Plutarco y Teón comparten el mismo interés en la formación moral sin por ello descartar en su exposición y pedagogía los casos escabrosos: “Es necesario –nos dice Teón– cuidar no menos el decoro, de manera que no pongamos al descubierto lo vergonzoso directamente, sino que lo expongamos mediante circunloquios”³⁷. Con esta pauta vemos cómo el rétor alejandrino³⁸ transcribe un ejemplo de *chreia* lleno de picardía sacado de la *República* 329b-c:

–Sófocles, ¿qué tal estás para los placeres del amor?

–¡Calla la boca –responde [Sófocles] –, pues yo con la mayor alegría huí de ellos como si escapase de un amo furioso y cruel.

Con esta misma pauta vemos cómo el polígrafo queronense hace que Tales aligere el funesto presagio del nacimiento de un centauro, calificado por Periandro como una infamia y una impureza, y que el de Mileto zanja con una *chreia* verbal graciosa (κατὰ χαριεντισμόν), presente dentro de las categorías formales del ejercicio: “No emplees a hombres tan jóvenes para cuidar tus caballos, o proporcionales mujeres” (*Mor.* 149E). La pulla va dirigida contra Diocles, nuestro cronista del *Banquete*, adivino de la corte de Periandro, y según David E. Aune³⁹, pseudónimo bajo el que se agazapa Plutarco. Asentimos si pensamos que la alusión a unos aparentemente absurdos ritos de purificación va dirigida al *pepaideumenos*, al lector familiarizado con Heródoto o con la noticia que él registra, de que el presagio de querrela y discordia tuvo repercusiones más graves que la simple negativa de Alexídemo a comer con los Sabios⁴⁰. Pero si esta *chreia* presenta algo gracioso⁴¹ sin que aporte ninguna utilidad vital, vayamos ahora como quiere Teón a las sentencias que se refieren a las cosas útiles para la vida⁴² y demostremos con más ejemplos concretos cuán

³⁴ J. DEFRADAS, 1985, p. 173.

³⁵ E. DAVID, 1936.

³⁶ En la actualidad, el filósofo holandés R. RIEMEN dirá, de la mano de Thomas Mann, que el arte, la moral y la política conforman la totalidad de la vida humana. Cf. R. RIEMEN, 2008.

³⁷ Theon 16, 25-26; 17,1

³⁸ Theon 9, 13-20.

³⁹ In H. BETZ (ed.), 1978, p. 51.

⁴⁰ Hdt. III 50-53.

⁴¹ En todo caso, el humor es un componente importante del material progimnasmático. Cf. J. A. FERNÁNDEZ DELGADO, 1996.

⁴² Theon 19, 5-8: Se le llama *chría* por excelencia porque en muchos aspectos es más útil para la vida que las otras formas [sentencia, *apomnemeuma*].

meticulosamente las categorías formales del rétor se reflejan en el *Banquete* de acuerdo con los grupos temáticos antes mencionados.

5. Limitemos nuestra investigación, ajustándonos al título de este congreso, al núcleo de acción simposiaca. ¿Qué es lo apropiado a personas que se dirigen al banquete? Tales refiere la anécdota, a manera de ejemplo (κατὰ παράδειγμα) que posteriormente refutará a partir del argumento ético de la inconveniencia (ἐκ τοῦ ἀσυμφόρου), de los sibaritas y su muelle y exquisita costumbre de invitar a sus mujeres “con un año de antelación, a fin de que tuvieran tiempo de preparar sus vestidos y adornos para ir al banquete” (*Mor.* 147E). A Tales, por el contrario, le parece poco tiempo si se trata de adornar el carácter (ἦθει τὸν πρέποντα κόσμον). El que es inteligente (ὁ νοῦν ἔχων), véase la siguiente *chreia* simbólica (συμβολικῶς), continúa Tales, no se encamina al banquete como si fuera un vaso vacío dispuesto a ser llenado, imagen que enriquecerá más tarde en sus *Quaestiones convivales* (*Mor.* 660A-C). Incluye después una *chreia* demostrativa (ἀποδεικτικῶς) para ilustrar el sentimiento de antipatía (δυσάρεστον) que produce el comensal, a quien compara con un vino de mala calidad, insolente y grosero en el banquete (*Mor.* 147F-148A). Más adelante, ahondando en la misma idea, Tales concuerda con el parecer del lacedemonio Quilón, quien rehusaba asistir a un banquete si desconocía la lista de convidados, y le atribuye la siguiente *chreia* de silogismo (κατὰ συλλογισμόν): “los que están obligados a navegar o hacer la guerra tienen que soportar al compañero de navegación o de campaña insensato; pero es propio de un hombre poco inteligente aceptar compartir el banquete con unos comensales elegidos al azar” (*Mor.* 148A). Para finalizar el primer cerco de *chreias* circunscritas al ámbito simposiaco, Tales nos presenta una de argumentación, naturalmente, conclusiva (κατὰ ἐνθύνημα) que nos exhorta a la virtud mayor de todo banquete (*Mor.* 148B): la filantropía, implícita en el προτρέπεται πρὸς φιλίαν καὶ ἀγάπησιν ἀλλήλων, curiosamente a través de la tremebunda costumbre egipcia, a caballo entre el *respice finem* y el *carpe diem*, de sentar a la muerte en la mesa. Nos dice Plutarco por boca de Tales:

La momia, que los egipcios solían, con buen juicio, colocar y mostrar a los comensales en los banquetes para recordarles que pronto ellos serían como ella, a pesar de que llega como un invitado desagradable e intempestivo, sin embargo aporta alguna ventaja si impulsa a los comensales no a la bebida y al placer, sino a la amistad y al afecto mutuo y los exhorta a no hacer una vida, que es muy corta por el tiempo, larga por sus malas acciones.

(*Mor.* 148A-B)

El siguiente cuadro continúa no sólo con la lograda caracterización del personaje de Tales sino con la exploración mediante *chreias*, de otros aspectos morales relativos al simposio. Vemos la animada escena donde el milesio Alexímene sale furioso del banquete a causa del lugar deshonesto que le asignó Periandro. Nos encontramos ante la versión grecolatina del asunto protocolario de los primeros puestos. Pensemos que la versión judeocristiana, el *Evangelio*

de *Lucas* (14, 7-11), se adentra en el mismo asunto también a través de una *chreia* para amonestar a los invitados que escogen los lugares principales⁴³. En nuestra obra, Tales rememora la regia y elegante postura que asumiera Agesilao, otra *chreia* de argumentación conclusiva (κατὰ ἐνθύνημα), cuando lo relegaron al último lugar del coro y respondiera: “Muy bien, has encontrado cómo convertir este lugar en un sitio honroso” (*Mor.* 149A). Aderezada con la mención de un ejemplo astrológico y cerrándola con la exigencia de mantener, sea cual sea el lugar que ocupemos, una actitud filantrópica; es decir, buscando un comienzo y una coyuntura para la amistad (ἀρχὴν καὶ λαβὴν φιλίας). En la siguiente escena, Tales de Mileto cumplirá con hechos sus palabras, ocupando de buen grado el lugar que despreciara Alexídemo junto al flautista Árdalo de Trecén (*Mor.* 149F).

Con estos breves ejemplos espero haber demostrado en parte el rigor con que Plutarco ensayó los distintos tipos de *chreia* pacientemente esquematizados por Teón, y cómo encontró en la forma del diálogo la manera más eficaz de inyectarles vida y llevar a buen término este auténtico *tour de force* escolar.

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⁴³ “Porque todo el que se eleva será rebajado y el que se rebaja será ensalzado” (ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ὑψῶν ἑαυτὸν ταπεινωθήσεται καὶ ὁ ταπεινῶν ἑαυτὸν ὑψωθήσεται).

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HISTORICAL FICTION, BRACHYLOGY, AND PLUTARCH'S *BANQUET OF THE SEVEN SAGES*

LAWRENCE KIM
University of Texas, Austin

Abstract

In this paper I examine the ways in which the weaknesses and strengths of Plutarch's *Banquet of the Seven Sages* are tied to Plutarch's attempt to recreate the world of the sixth century BCE in fictional form. The awkwardness of the first half of the dialogue stems from the incommensurability between the symposiastic genre of the *Banquet* and the Sages' role as 'performers of wisdom' and their noted brevity of speech, or *brachylogia*. It is only when Plutarch stops trying to historicize in the second half of the dialogue (and shifts his focus away from the Sages altogether) that it becomes more readable, literary, and Plutarchan. This disparity reflects a broader tension between archaic *brachylogia*, and the less definitive, ambivalent, and voluble style of discourse Plutarch favored, and I suggest that the *Banquet* stages its own internal dialogue between alternative modes of representing the past.

Introduction

The *Banquet of the Seven Sages* is something of an anomaly in Plutarch's works. As its title suggests, the work belongs to the genre of literary symposia, linked to the seminal texts of Plato and Xenophon as well as Plutarch's own *Table Talk* and other Imperial examples such as Lucian's parodic *Symposium*, or the *Lapiths* and Athenaeus' *Deipnosophists*¹. But the *Banquet* can also be classed more broadly as a dialogue, a form particularly favored by Plutarch, and within this category it stands out as one of only two "historical" dialogues in the Plutarchan corpus; the other is *On Socrates' Daimonion*². Both combine a narrative of a well-known event from the distant past—in one, the legendary dinner of the Sages at the home of Periander, tyrant of Corinth, and in the other, the liberation of Thebes in 379—with the sort of philosophical discussion familiar from Plutarch's other dialogues.

While several of Plutarch's biographies, most notably *Solon* and *Pelopidas*, cover analogous time periods, the composition of a fictional dialogue set at a particular place and moment in historical time presents somewhat different challenges relating to literary and dramatic composition. It seems that the early sixth-century BCE milieu of the *Banquet*, less well-documented and perhaps more alien in worldview to Plutarch than the Plato-inflected fourth-century setting of *On Socrates' Daimonion*, was the more difficult period to recreate

¹ On the symposiastic genre in Plutarch, see M. VETTA, 2000, and L. ROMERI, 2002, for Imperial literary symposia in general.

² One could arguably include *Gryllus*, a dialogue between Odysseus and one of Circe's man-animals, but its heroic setting places it somewhat apart from the historical dialogues. On Plutarchan dialogue, see R. HIRZEL, 1895, pp. 124-237, I. GALLO, 1998, L. VAN DER STOCKT, 2000, and R. LAMBERTON, 2001, pp. 146-87. Some of the dialogues of Heraclides Ponticus were similarly set in the distant past; cf. R. HIRZEL, 1895, p. 138.

successfully. Certainly *On Socrates' Daimonion* is widely considered to be one of Plutarch's best and most original literary works³, while the *Banquet* has not been judged as kindly by posterity⁴. My purpose here is to take a closer look at the *Banquet* as an experiment in writing historical fiction about the archaic period, focusing on the particular problems involved in incorporating the Seven Sages tradition and their celebrated brevity of discourse, or, *brachulogia*, into a symposiastic setting.

It might help to start with a brief sketch of the text. Like many of Plutarch's dialogues, the *Banquet* is framed as a retrospective narrative (1; 146B-C), here told by a certain Diocles, an expert in divination who was actually present at the dinner, to an equally unknown Nicarchus and a group of his friends. It opens with Diocles and one of the Sages, Thales of Miletus, making their way to Periander's home; they are joined by Niloxenus, a messenger conveying a letter from the Egyptian king Amasis to Bias of Priene (2; 146D-148B). Upon their arrival, they meet Periander, their host, and the other six sages — Bias, Chilon, Cleobulus, Solon, Pittacus and Anacharsis (a fairly traditional list) — but also several other guests — Cleobulus' daughter Cleobulina, known for her riddles, Aesop, Periander's wife Melissa, Solon's companion and disciple Mnesiphilus, the doctor Cleodorus, the poet Chersias and an otherwise unknown Ardalus (3-4; 146B-150D). Once the eating is done and the flute-girls have performed, the symposium proper begins. The first half features the Sages answering questions and offering advice, generally of a political nature, in a manner marked by brevity and rapidity (5-12; 150D-155D); the second half, signaled by the withdrawal of the women, Cleobulina and Melissa, features more extended speeches on loftier topics (13-21; 155E-164D). This part of the symposium is interrupted by the arrival of Periander's brother who tells the wondrous story of an event he has just witnessed: the arrival at Taenarum of Arion, conveyed by dolphins. After an ensuing discussion of dolphin-lore, the dinner comes to an abrupt conclusion, returning perfunctorily (the last sentence) to the framing narrative of Diocles⁵.

One of the most striking characteristics of the *Banquet* is the considerable disparity, in style and content, between the two halves of the text (1-12; 13-21). The Sages dominate the first half of the dialogue; the conversation is rapid, consisting of short, sententious opinions, and the topics broached relate to human activity, such as politics and the household. In the second half, however, the non-Sages come to the fore, expounding long speeches on subjects of a more divine and cosmic significance familiar from Plutarch's other dialogues.⁶

³ On this text, see, e.g., D. BABUT, 1984, A. BARIGAZZI, 1988, and R. LAMBERTON, 2001, pp. 179-87.

⁴ U. von WILAMOWITZ-MOELLENDORFF, 1890, p. 196 is the most incisive condemnation. For a long time many scholars were convinced that the *Banquet* was not by Plutarch at all, or, at least, could be dismissed as a youthful indiscretion. Few now doubt the work's authenticity—J. DEFRADAS, 1954, conclusively demonstrated the unmistakably Plutarchan nature of the Platonically-influenced ideas expressed in the second part of the *Banquet*.

⁵ D. E. AUNE, 1978, pp. 56-8 provides a convenient outline summary of the text.

⁶ L. VAN DER STOCKT, 2000, p. 113.

Each portion has occasioned negative appraisals: if the first half's sprinkling of the Sages' sayings has been criticized as "une sorte de recueil assez froid de maximes sur divers sujets"⁷, the second raises charges of gross anachronism — Solon and Cleobulus become virtually indistinguishable from Plutarch's relatives Lamprias or Soclaros in other dialogues⁸. Coming to grips with this stark split in subject matter *and* style is thus essential for fully evaluating and understanding the *Banquet*,⁹ and the failure to do so hampers recent attempts to recuperate the text by locating a unifying theme underlying the apparent convivial chaos — e.g., *oikonomia*, politics, love, a Platonic insistence on the power of the divine over the material. Even the best reading of the text, by Judith Mossman, who elegantly and persuasively argues that "the *Dinner* is a richly and allusively written piece whose dramatic context and narrative are inextricably entwined with its content..."¹⁰, concentrates on the introduction and the second half of the dialogue, which have been recognized as possessing considerable literary merit¹¹, and elides the 'difficult' first half of the dinner.

In what follows, I examine the two halves of the dialogue as embodying different approaches on the part of Plutarch toward the problem of writing historical fiction set in a period embodying ideas and an aesthetic radically different from his own. In the first part of the *Banquet*, Plutarch's attempts to incorporate the traditional lore about the Sages into a symposiastic framework — that is, to be 'historically' faithful to the Sages' tradition — runs into serious difficulties; it is only when he abandons this historicizing goal in the second part, that the dialogue can take flight. But the two halves are also characterized by their contrasting discursive styles, and Plutarch, wittingly or no, reveals the tensions that exist between the *brachulogia* characteristic of the 'historical' Sages, and by extension the archaic period, and the less definitive, ambivalent, and voluble style of discourse he himself favored. In this sense, the *Banquet* stages its own internal dialogue between alternative modes of representing the past.

Historicizing the Seven Sages

Throughout the dialogue, but especially in its first half, Plutarch attempts to incorporate as much of the legendary tradition about the Sages as possible into his text in order to lend it the proper historicizing flavor and some semblance

⁷ J. DEFRADES, 1954, p. 13, referring to chs. 5-12. Cf. R. HIRZEL, 1895, pp. 139-40.

⁸ U. VON WILAMOWITZ-MÖLLENDORFF, 1890, p. 196. Other anachronisms (Croesus, Periander, and Amasis as contemporaries; the presence of women (Eumetis and Melissa) at an archaic symposium (on this see J. M. MOSSMAN, 1997, pp. 124-5; p. 137 n. 28)) were probably not of great concern to Plutarch, since the very idea of a dinner of the Seven Sages is difficult to square with chronology. J. DEFRADES, 1954, pp. 7-12 succinctly summarizes the debate; cf. 30 on questions of date.

⁹ *Oikonomia*: D. E. AUNE, 1978, pp. 52-3; politics: G. J. D. AALDERS, 1977; love: J. M. MOSSMAN, 1997; Platonic: J. DEFRADES, 1954, p. 15.

¹⁰ J. M. MOSSMAN, 1997, p. 122.

¹¹ E.g., by J. DEFRADES, 1954, pp. 14-5.

of authenticity¹². The premise of the *Banquet* draws on a longstanding tradition that all of the Sages had gathered together at a symposium; the location varied, but Corinth is attested as one possibility¹³. Periander was often included in lists of the Seven Sages, but his credentials were also questioned, given his rather un-Sage-like portrayal in Herodotus. Plutarch's decision to have him host the banquet allows him to participate in the conversation without concerns about eligibility. The extensive guest list is an indication that Plutarch has tried to include as many familiar faces from the archaic period as possible; and in fact, reference is made during the conversation to many other well known figures of the time, such as Hesiod, Epimenides, Thrasybulus of Miletus, and Croesus. As the choice of characters suggests, the *Banquet's* evocation of the archaic world has, perhaps inevitably, a considerable Herodotean flavor. In fact, the text cannot help but exploit the temporal fixity of his symposium by activating readers' knowledge of the *Histories*; Mossman shows how the *Banquet* is suffused with "a good deal of underlying sadness and irony" when one considers the often tragic future in store for the guests: Periander's murder of Melissa, Solon's sad last days in Athens, Anacharsis' brutal death in Scythia, and Aesop's ignoble execution at Samos¹⁴.

The two pivotal episodes in each half of the dialogue—the reading and response of the letter from the Egyptian king Amasis, and the story of Arion and the dolphin — are inspired by Herodotus as well. The Arion tale is a marvelous rewriting of one of the most famous Herodotean narratives, which I discuss at the end of this article. The letter from Amasis to Bias is not from the *Histories*, but fits snugly into a Herodotean milieu. The use of letters by non-Greek monarchs is a well-known feature of Herodotus' world, and Amasis' epistolary correspondence with the tyrant Polycrates of Samos (3.40-43) would be familiar to any reader of the *Histories*. Moreover, Amasis' request to Bias for help is an example of another Herodotean *topos*, in which a monarch or tyrant receives advice from a 'wise man' or sage. Further thematic connections are brought out by a brief anecdote Thales tells Diocles en route to Periander's, about a previous 'epistolary' exchange between Bias and Amasis (146F). Amasis had sent Bias an animal for sacrifice asking him to send back the best and worst portion of the meat. Bias responded to both requests by sending back only one body part — the tongue — an act of wisdom that gained him Amasis' respect and esteem¹⁵. The story is linked both to the Herodotean fondness for depicting symbolic, non-verbal communication (e.g., Thrasybulus

¹² The specific sources are less important here than the fact that Plutarch makes a conscientious attempt to include sayings that were well-known in the Sages tradition.

¹³ Plutarch refers to a banquet of the Sages at Periander's at *Solon* 4.1. D. L. I 40-44 mentions the Panionion, Corinth, and Delphi as attested locations, and remarks that Archetimus of Syracuse also set it in Corinth, at the court of Cypselus (Periander's father) while Ephorus moved it to Croesus' court. For the tradition, see B. SNELL, 1954.

¹⁴ J. M. MOSSMAN, 1997, p. 126, and L. INGLESE, 2002, pp. 66-7. Occasionally there is a pointed allusion: Thales' remark that Periander is making a good recovery from despotism (147C) concludes with an ominous "at least up till now", pointing to the disasters to come.

¹⁵ On this story and its antecedents, see I. M. KONSTANTAKOS, 2004, pp. 97-119.

and Periander: Hdt. 1.22) and the folktale motif, also found in his work, in which a ruler first tests an advisor before asking more important questions (Croesus' testing of the Greek oracles before selecting Delphi: Hdt. 1.46-48). In addition, Amasis' request falls into the category of the so-called 'riddle of the superlative', which consists of asking "what thing or person possesses a certain quality to the highest degree" and seems to have been a favorite device employed by monarchs in legend — the most famous example being Croesus' request to Solon to name the "most fortunate" man (Hdt. 1.29)¹⁶.

Problems with Performance

If the letter fits well with Plutarch's historicizing project by contributing to the archaic Herodotean atmosphere with which he imbues the *Banquet*, it comes across as somewhat unusual when considered against the symposiastic setting of the piece¹⁷. The symposium is traditionally a space for oral, improvisatory performance and public conversation, while a letter is written, planned, premeditated, and mute — a private communication between two individuals. Moreover, it would seem *a priori* difficult to incorporate a letter, which presupposes separation in time and space between writer and addressee, into the literary symposium's relatively restricted temporal and geographical frame¹⁸. This tension, however, is symptomatic of a wider problem that Plutarch had to grapple with when incorporating the historically attested stories about the Sages into a symposiastic milieu. On the face of it, the Sages would seem to fit extremely well into the spontaneous and face-to-face world of the symposium, especially since the well-known anecdotes and legends about the Sages depict them primarily as skilled performers of oral improvisatory wisdom. As Richard Martin has suggested, the Sages are often depicted as 'performing' wisdom, that is, giving advice or criticism, usually about political matters, in the form of 'public enactments' before an audience, generally a tyrant or other important man¹⁹. We can recall the well-known episodes involving the Sages in the first book of Herodotus: Solon's encounter with Croesus (1.29-33), Bias' quip to the same ruler about shipbuilding and horses (1.27), Chilon's advising Peisistratus' father not to have a son (1.59)²⁰. Such stories spotlight the Sages' fame for their ability to "shoot a brief, concise, and unforgettable remark, just like a skilled javelin thrower, that makes the person he's speaking

¹⁶ On the 'riddles of the superlative', see I. M. KONSTANTAKOS, 2005, pp. 20-2 with extensive bibliography; quote from idem, 2004, p. 126.

¹⁷ Cf. Lucian's *Symposium* 21-27, in which a letter from an absent angry philosopher disrupts the proceedings.

¹⁸ L. DEMARAIS, 2005, p. 90 comments on this aspect of the letter from Amasis, and her article compares the *Banquet* with the *Letter of Aristaetus*.

¹⁹ R. MARTIN, 1993, pp. 115-16: "The sages are *poets*, they are *politicians* and they are *performers*...by performance, I mean a public enactment, about important matters, in word or gesture, employing conventions and open to scrutiny and criticism, especially criticism of style."

²⁰ On the individual Sages in Herodotus, see A. BUSINE, 2002, pp. 17-27.

to seem no better than a child.”²¹ The quotation is from Plato’s *Protagoras*, in which Socrates claims more generally that the Sages’ preference for terse, pithy opinions — their “laconic brevity” (*brachulogia tis Lakônike*) — was “the characteristic style (*tropos*) of ancient philosophy (*tôn palaiôn tês philosophias*)” (343a-b). Plutarch knows this passage and the sentiment it expresses well and is committed to dramatizing this archaic *brachulogia* in his text.

But a closer consideration reveals some difficulties, and it is worth exploring them before turning to the letter itself. In Herodotus the effect of the Sages’ *bons mots* arises from their appropriateness to a particular situation and addressee, and once the Sage utters his clever, incisive comment the anecdote abruptly comes to an end. In a biography, such as the *Life of Solon*, or those of individual Sages in Diogenes Laertius, these anecdotes can be linked as a series of encounters that occur at various points in a Sage’s life, relatively unconnected in space and time. In a symposiastic dialogue, however, it is difficult to ‘stage’ these momentous scenes between Sage and ruler, not only because of the restrictions of the temporal and spatial setting, but also because the somewhat antagonistic nature of the anecdotes is not well-suited to the conviviality of a symposium.

The problem facing Plutarch then was how to include more than just a few of these ‘performances’, for which the Sages were famous, in a setting that was so unsuited to them. One solution is to insert famous quotes or anecdotes about a given Sage into the mouth of another character in the text: e.g., the story discussed above concerning Amasis, Bias, and the tongue is told by Thales. Another instance from the opening of the dialogue is when Niloxenus informs Diocles and Thales of Amasis’ admiration for Thales’ wisdom by relating two anecdotes illustrating this wisdom: Thales’ method of measuring the pyramids and his quip that “a tyrant that lived to be old” was the most paradoxical thing he had ever seen²². So at the dinner proper, we find, to take only a few examples, Aesop quoting Solon and Eumetis (152D; 150E-F, 154B), Cleodorus quoting Pittacus (153E), and at one very odd moment Bias almost ‘becomes’ Thales, answering on his behalf with Thales’ own sayings (160E). On one level, this is a tidy way out of the difficulty identified above; Plutarch can regale (or remind) his audience of the witty aphorisms of the Sages and include many more ‘performance’ stories than otherwise. One could also argue that the retrospective narration of the Sages’ activities by their peers gives the impression both of the fame enjoyed by all of the Sages and their general familiarity with each other.

In a way though, this is also the problem. By having the Sages ‘remind’ the gathered company of their fellows’ *past* activities, Plutarch characterizes these stories as already traditional at the time of the *Banquet*. The sense one gets within the narrative, however, is that they are not well-known at all, since

²¹ Pl. *Protag.* 342e; quoted by Plutarch at *De garrul.* 17; 510E.

²² 147A-B. Cf. the slightly different versions of the pyramid-measuring story in D. L. 1.27 and Plin., *Nat.* 36.82. Plutarch himself attributes the tyrant remark to Bias at *De adul. et am.* 61c; cf. the much longer version at *De gen. Socr.* 578d.

they are told in their entirety rather than just referred to in passing. Niloxenus, for example, insists on retelling the wisdom-stories about Thales in full, even though one of his addressees is the very person, Thales, that originally performed them²³. Indeed, the presence of the Sages as audience to the telling of their own deeds and the quoting of their own words contributes considerably to the forced and artificial conversation that dominates the first half of the dialogue²⁴. A more serious difficulty is that such a method fails to take advantage of the *Banquet's* setting and the presence of the Sages; we do not witness the Sages performing the improvised wisdom for which they are known, but only hear about things they have already done.

The Letter of Amasis

Plutarch's major task then is to engineer situations in which we can see the Sages in action, despite the incongruity of their performance style to the symposiastic milieu. One example occurs before the dinner begins: upon their arrival at Periander's Diocles and Thales are shown a baby centaur born in Periander's stables and after some speculation on the meaning of such a portent, Thales remarks to Periander that he should either avoid having young men take care of his horses, or else provide wives for them. Periander bursts out laughing, embraces Thales, and then the three enter the dining room; Thales' 'performance' concludes the episode. But during the dinner itself, once the guests have all settled in their places, such encounters become more difficult to choreograph. In what follows, I want to examine Plutarch's interesting, but ultimately fruitless, attempt to represent the *oral* improvisatory performance of the Sages by means of the introduction of a *written* letter into the symposium.

After the meal itself has been completed, the post-dinner discussion begins with Niloxenus' reading of Amasis' letter to Bias. In it, Amasis explains that the Ethiopian king and he are involved in a "contest of wisdom" (*sophias hamilla*) with each other, and that the Ethiopian has demanded that Amasis "drink the ocean" (*ekpiein tēn thalattan*). If Amasis fails to solve this riddle, he will have to withdraw from the villages around Elephantine; if he solves it, he can lay claim to more Ethiopian territory. After a moment's thought, and some consultation with Cleobulus (who had a reputation as a riddle-master), Bias answers triumphantly: Amasis should offer to drink the ocean only after the Ethiopian king has stopped up the rivers flowing into it, since the agreement was to drink the ocean that exists now, and not in the future²⁵. "As soon as Bias

²³ The effect is mitigated slightly by Thales' response, which is to correct Niloxenus' attribution to Thales — the tyrant quip was actually said by Pittacus of Mitylene — and add his own improvisatory variation.

²⁴ Compare the different effect in the second part of the dialogue when stories are told about famous figures who are *not* at the banquet, such as Epimenides or Hesiod.

²⁵ On this category of riddle, known as the *adynaton* — an impossible situation or request that is often answered, as here, by proposing "an equally impossible counter-task... that logically precedes that of the propounder's *adynaton*", see I. M. KONSTANTAKOS, 2004, pp. 121–6 (quote

had said these words, Niloxenus, hastened to embrace and kiss him out of joy and the rest of the company also commended the answer and expressed their satisfaction with it" (151D).

As we mentioned above, the monarchical letter to a wise advisor evokes Herodotus and the archaic period; the further epistolary relation referred to within the letter — the suggestion that in the old days Eastern monarchs conducted epistolary contests of wits with each other — was also ingrained in the popular tradition, and most likely derived from Egyptian and Near Eastern tales. The best example comes from the *Aesop Romance*, where Aesop becomes the special riddle advisor to the Babylonian king Lycurgus. The narrator explains: "In those days it was customary for kings to collect tribute from one another by means of contests in wit. They did not face one another in wars and battles, but sent philosophical conundrums by letter, and the one who couldn't find the answer paid tribute to the sender" (101). In the *Banquet*, however, Plutarch employs the letter to transform the standard face-to-face performance of advice between Sage and ruler into a display of wisdom before an audience of his peers. Unlike the above-mentioned references to past displays, Bias' performs his wisdom in the present, at the symposium itself; the reader too can witness the Sage in action. Normally in stories of this type, the sage's wisdom impresses either the king to whom he gives the advice, or the king whose riddle is defeated, but here neither Amasis nor the Ethiopian king is present. Rather it is Amasis' proxy Niloxenus and the dinner guests who provide the marveling response required by such stories. The letter has thus enabled an act of performative wisdom.

Once Bias has offered his successful riposte, however, another problem emerges. The conclusiveness of Bias' sententious solution to the Ethiopian king's riddle leaves the narrative at an impasse. In other depictions of Sages, such as in Herodotus, or the *Life of Solon*, the author can simply move on to another anecdote, another situation for the Sage to show off his aphoristic wisdom. In the *Banquet*, however, that is not possible; the cast of characters remain in place, and there is thus no natural way to continue the dinner conversation. The letter's strength, which was its ability to introduce by way of proxy a distant monarch into the symposium, is also its weakness — the absent Amasis cannot respond to the Sage's intervention.

Plutarch's solution to this dilemma is to have the Sages nevertheless act *as if* Amasis were present. The silence following Bias' answer is broken by Periander, who suggests that each Sage in turn advise Amasis as to "how he could render his kingship drinkable and sweet to his subjects." Starting with Solon, each sage offers a pithy response: e.g., "If only he is thoughtful" (Anacharsis); "If he trust none of his associates" (Cleobulus); "If he should make his subjects fear, not him, but for him." (Pittacus). This rotation of wisdom' is repeated two more times during the first half of the dinner—regarding the best kind of democracy (154D) and the best managed household (154F-

from 123). Cf. D. E. AUNE, 1978, p. 94.

155D) — with equally banal results²⁶. The practice, of course, has good sympotic precedent in both Plato and Xenophon²⁷, and is a way to have every Sage, and not just Bias, contribute some wisdom, but the traditional brevity of the Sages' responses turns the exercise into a listing of platitudes addressed to a figure, Amasis, who is not even present at the dinner. Each aphorism thus loses the power that it might have possessed in a particular performative context. Furthermore, while juxtaposing the Sages' responses in this fashion allows greater participation, it also emphasizes their interchangeability²⁸. No quote is particularly tailored to any one Sage; any quote could be re-attributed to another sage with little trouble, and in fact many of the Sages' maxims *were* interchangeable in the tradition²⁹. Plutarch himself often ascribes them to different sages: the story about Bias and the tongue, for instance, is told of Pittacus in *On Listening to Lectures* (38C) and *On Talkativeness* (506C). This virtual identity of thought on the part of the Sages contrasts strongly with the diversity of opinions, philosophical allegiances, and professions that regularly feature at such gatherings, from Plato's *Symposium* to Plutarch's *Table-Talk*. In fact, the monotony of the Sages' responses can be contrasted with that of Periander, who, though not officially a Sage in this text, usually offers an eighth opinion in these roundabouts, reflective of his status as a tyrant, and hence individualized and somewhat opposed to those of the generally anti-tyrannical Sages.

The "rotation of wisdom" has hardly succeeded as a means of giving life to Plutarch's fictional Sages, and in fact leaves matters right where it took them up: the brevity and conclusiveness of the Sages' aphorisms have ended rather than initiated further discussion. Plutarch falls back on his previous ploy; Niloxenus reveals that the letter from Amasis has a second part. In addition to the riddle posed to him by the Ethiopian king, Amasis had also received his opponent's replies to a set of questions that *he* had posed (What is the oldest thing? Time. The greatest? The *kosmos*. The wisest? Truth, etc.), and now was

²⁶ On Plutarch's use of these "tours de parole", see L. DEMARAI, 2005, pp. 82-6, who views them in a more sympathetic light.

²⁷ Pl. *Smp.*; Xen. *Smp.* 3-4.

²⁸ The lack of differentiation among the Sages is also suggested by Amasis' instructions to Niloxenus: "if Bias should give up trying to solve it, he should show the letter to the wisest men among the Greeks" (146E). The epithet "wisest of the Greeks" recalls the best-known story about the Sages, told in multiple versions, about the tripod or cup of Bathycles that is meant for 'the wisest' (Plutarch has Aesop jokingly allude to the legend in passing at 155E and tells his own version at *Solon* 4.2-7). The story goes that the object was sent first to one of the Sages, usually Thales or Bias, who then sent it to another, until the object had passed through the hands of all of them, and is either kept by Thales again, or dedicated to Delphi. The constant circulation of the tripod can be taken to highlight the humility of the sages and their respect for each other, but on another level it underlines their sameness and interchangeability. In this context the letter of Amasis is very much a stand-in for the tripod (which Plutarch almost ostentatiously fails to mention). For an overview of the entire tradition of the cup/tripod, see A. BUSINE, 2002, pp. 56-64.

²⁹ E.g., Thales' saying about animals, tyrants, and flatterers is attributed to Bias by Plutarch in *Adul. et am.* 61C; see above the other Thales and Bias stories told by Niloxenus.

requesting an assessment of the responses³⁰. This time the spokesman is Thales, who criticizes the Ethiopian's answers as incorrect and offers his own solutions instead: e.g., "God is oldest, for God is something that has no beginning." Thales' answers match ideas attributed to him by Diogenes Laertius (I 35), and a comparison with that text demonstrates how Plutarch has managed to take the bare skeleton of Thales' maxims and worked them into a context where he can be seen performing them. But the problem that arose with Bias' response is even more apparent here; Thales' Sage-like propensity for brevity results in a catalog of maxims or *gnomai* that brings an end to, rather than starts, discussion of the issue at hand. Even when the Sages do enact their wisdom onstage, as it were, their celebrated concision, or *brachulogia*, and the suddenness with which their responses get at the "truth", are ill suited to the extended conversation required by their presence together at a dinner. Plutarch tries to import some of the Sages' often antagonistic advice to rulers into the more harmonious rhythms of the symposium by directing Thales' criticisms to a king who is absent from the symposium. But the physical absence of that king significantly diminishes the effect of Thales' performance.

To conclude this section, it seems that the Sages, despite the fact that their associations with orality, performance, improvisation, and wisdom appear to qualify them as ideal candidates for depicting in a symposium, are actually quite unsuited to a symposiastic context; their tendency toward brevity, their status as contextualized performers, and their interchangeability all militate against the kind of dialogue that Plutarch was accustomed to writing.

Arion, Anachronism, and Brachulogia

The *Banquet*, however, changes dramatically in the second part of the dinner, beginning with the speech of Mnesiphilus, Solon's protégé, at 156B; from then on, not only does the conversation turn away from the political to matters of proper diet, the care of the body and finally religion, but the guests speak at length, represent a diversity of opinions, and espouse beliefs that are hard to imagine as conceivable in the sixth century BCE. We should note, however, that this criticism is valid only for this second half of the dinner; in fact, it is precisely when Plutarch *stops* trying to historicize, that is, when he stops trying to include the Sages' sayings and witticisms from the gnomological tradition, that the dialogue becomes more readable, more literary, more Plutarchan. Indeed he shifts his focus away from the Sages altogether; the non-Sages, who are individualized by their professions — the doctor Cleodorus, the diviner Diocles, and the poet Chersias — become more prominent as speakers, and when a famous contemporary figure is discussed, it tends to be one who is *not* present at the dinner, such as Epimenides, rather than one of the Sages themselves. And when a Sage does speak (e.g., Solon), he no longer does so in brief sound bites, but in the long elaborate speeches more characteristic of other Plutarchan dialogues.

³⁰ On the second part of the letter, see I. M. KONSTANTAKOS, 2005, pp. 36-44.

It is instructive to compare the sections surrounding the letter from Amasis with the parallel 'Herodotean' episode in the second half of the dinner — the beautifully crafted retelling of the story of Arion and the dolphin³¹. The tale is told to the banqueters by Periander's brother Gorgus, who functions as the 'unexpected guest' familiar from other literary symposia and interrupts the banquet with news of the fabulous event he has just witnessed: a device that is also reminiscent of the way that exciting news arrives in the midst of Plutarch's 'dramatic dialogues' like *Amatorius* and *On Socrates' Daimonion*³². Technically, the story is another retrospective narrative, but the immediacy of the event, combined with its description by an eyewitness who has interrupted the dinner in order to bring the news, enables the fantasy of "being there" as "history" is made — much as the letter of Amasis allowed Plutarch, somewhat less successfully, to show the Sages in action.

In his presentation, Plutarch lays great emphasis on the wonder and religious mystery that the episode evokes. Arion's arrival is described from Gorgus' innocent perspective; during a moonlight sacrifice on the beach at Taenarum, a ripple is seen suddenly in the otherwise calm sea, surrounded by foam and noise, and begins moving rapidly toward the shore. All of those nearby raced down to the water, struck with wonder (*thaumasantas*); they saw a band of dolphins carrying a man's body, which, when deposited on the shore, was recognized as the citharode Arion. Arion himself tells Gorgus the familiar story of his near-death experience at the hands of pirates, but the whole episode, which Herodotus centers on the 'brave gesture' of Arion's leap and the punishment of his would-be murderers (the latter omitted by Plutarch), is reconceived as a religious epiphany:

Observing that the sky was dotted with stars, and that the moon was rising bright and clear, while the sea everywhere was without a wave as if a path were being opened for their course, [Arion] thought to himself that the eye of Justice is not a single eye only, but through all these eyes of hers God watches in every direction the deeds that are done on land and on the sea. (161E-F)

This elegant reworking of the marvelous as an instance of the divine revealing itself to the human world recalls the Delphic Dialogues, where similarly haunting tales, such as the Death of Pan, are told (*De def. orac.* 419A-E). And the speech Anacharsis gives in the *Banquet* to explain the behavior of the dolphins employs the same argument about the divine, the body, and the soul offered in *On the Pythian Oracles* (404B)³³. Needless to say, the philosophical underpinning of Plutarch's recasting of the Arion story is completely alien to archaic thought, but it is at this moment, when he is the most unabashedly anachronistic, that he manages to best draw his audience

³¹ On this episode, see J. M. MOSSMAN, 1997, pp. 131-3; and the detailed comparison of L. INGLESE, 2002.

³² On the 'dialogo drammatico', see A. BARIGAZZI, 1988.

³³ J. DEFRADAS, 1954, p. 15; 111-2 n. 187 sees this idea as central to the *Banquet*.

directly into the world of Archaic Greece and convey the sense of immediacy and wonder might have had for the people of that long ago time. Rather than stay faithful to his archaic ‘sources’, Plutarch chooses to portray the event from his own perspective and interests, and those of the members of his circle. The rewriting of the Arion episode is an excellent example of how Plutarch views an archaic narrative through his own Imperial and Platonizing lens, skillfully re-arranging its structure and re-focusing its thematic significance. Ironically in a work seemingly dedicated to bringing the world of the Sages to life, Plutarch has achieved his most vivid success with a story that has nothing to do with them—Arion’s only connection to the guests is through Periander. The Sages, instead of serving as the main attraction, have become, along with the reader, the audience for a far more compelling narrative.

The length and leisurely pace of Gorgus’ narrative, thick with description of the scene and Arion’s thoughts, contrast strongly with the repartee and *bons mots* that make up the episode concerning the letter from Amasis. Moreover, whereas the Sages’ pithy replies to the letter from Amasis ground the conversation to a halt, Gorgus’ story of Arion engenders further discussion—aside from Anacharsis’ philosophical musings, the banqueters recall a series of dolphin stories that continue to dwell on the themes suggested by Gorgus’ tale and carry the reader to the conclusion of the dialogue. The disparity is symptomatic of that between the two parts of the dialogue in general; the length and detail of the speeches in this last section are as characteristic of the second part of the dinner as the concise utterances are of the first. And as Laetitia Demarais has proposed, this inconsistency between the *brachulogia* of the opening of the symposium and the *makrologia* of its conclusion is so conspicuous that it must be the result of a deliberate move on Plutarch’s part³⁴. For Demarais, the difference is primarily due to content; while Plutarch’s motive in the first part is to “show that brachylogy does not exclude profundity”, he acknowledges in the second part that for certain, more metaphysical topics, “only macrology is relevant”³⁵.

Although I think that some of the awkwardness in the first half of the *Banquet* is the *unintentional* result of Plutarch’s failed struggle to smoothly incorporate traditional Sage-lore into a symposiastic context³⁶, I agree that the shift between the first and the second half is so radical to suggest a more subtle design. But I see the juxtaposition of two halves, so different in form and content, as a sign of an underlying tension in Plutarch’s thought between the kind of conversation, style, and philosophizing characteristic of the Sages (and by extension the Archaic period), and those on display in his other, contemporary, dialogues. After all, a certain ambivalence in Plutarch’s view of the Sages can occasionally be glimpsed elsewhere in his corpus: the Sages’ (predominantly democratic) political attitudes do not always accord well with

³⁴ L. DEMARAIS, 2005, pp. 96-7.

³⁵ L. DEMARAIS, 2005: quotes from p. 96.

³⁶ M. VETTA, 2000, p. 226 suggests that Plutarch might have intended to return to the text to revise and refine it.

Plutarch's own, and in the *Life of Solon*, for example, he expresses some disdain for the Sages' primitive scientific knowledge (3.5) as well as moral disapproval of their opinions (7 on Thales' views on marriage and 20, 23 on Solon's laws).

Most importantly perhaps, while Plutarch shows great respect for concision and brevity of speech in *On Talkativeness* (17.511A-B), *Lycurgus* (19-20), and specifically for the Sages' *apophthegmata* in *On the Pythian Oracles*³⁷, these qualities are entirely antithetical to Plutarch's own stylistic choices. The passage from *On the Pythian Oracles*, however, also testifies to Plutarch's vacillations on the relative virtues of brief and extended speech: the speaker, Theon, comparing the Delphic maxims attributed to the Sages to the straightforward prose of the present-day Pythia, points out that brevity can lead to obscurity rather than enlightenment. The Sages' maxims may be concise, but "if you were to examine what has been written and spoken about them by those wishing to learn what each one means, you would hardly find any discourses *longer* (*logous makroterous*) than these" (29.408E). And indeed while Theon praises concision and directness of speech, his own argument hardly displays these qualities, extending for pages and pages³⁸. In the sort of ideal symposiastic or dialogic setting that Plutarch prefers to depict, concise sayings and maxims are meant to be unpacked and explored, their meanings and appropriateness discussed at length, and not simply stated and left alone.

The *Banquet* can be seen as a Plutarchan experiment in historical fiction, one that asks: is it better to historicize and portray the Sages as accurately as possible, to incorporate the evidence of the tradition into the dialogue, in an attempt to capture a sense of 'authenticity'? Or should one instead describe that past, the events and figures of that time, in a way more amenable to Plutarch and his Imperial audience, discussing ideas and topics of current interest in an anachronistic, but less alienating manner? It also poses the broader question of whether the style of discourse characteristic of the Sages and the archaic period is as appropriate for a properly philosophical and symposiastic conversation as the more expansive style adopted by Plutarch. By depicting each half of the *Banquet* in such discordant ways, Plutarch lets us make that choice for ourselves, but I suspect that many readers would agree that the aesthetic qualities and philosophical expressions of the dialogue's second half suggest that, to Plutarch at least, the archaic mode leaves something to be desired³⁹.

³⁷ *De Pyth. orac.* 29.408E-F. E.g., "...he can accept and marvel at the maxims of the Sages..., because of their concision, as encompassing in a small size a compact and firmly-forged idea..."

³⁸ The dialogue as a whole is structured as a debate on the clarity and ordinariness of simple unadorned prose and the elevated, yet obscurity and pretentiousness of poetic verse; the former is explicitly privileged, but one senses an uneasiness within the dialogue concerning that conclusion.

³⁹ As Mark Beck has pointed out to me, there surely must be a strong allusion to the discussion involving the Sages and *brachylogy* in Plato's *Protagoras*, as well as the more central debate in that dialogue between the relative efficacy of Protagoras' long speeches (*makrologia*) and Socrates' *elenchus*.

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ANIMAL PHILANTHROPIA IN THE *CONVIVIUM SEPTEM SAPIENTIUM*

STEPHEN T. NEWMYER
Duquesne University, Pittsburgh

Abstract

The *Convivium Septem Sapientium* contains a series of references to human-animal relationships which, when read in the order of their appearance, move from a position in which animals are seen as subservient to humans to one in which animals are presumed to be capable of morally-significant behavior, illustrated in the rescue of the singer Arion by dolphins. Plutarch's references to animals in the dialogue closely mirror his pronouncements on animal intellect and behavior in his animal-related treatises. Viewed in the light of the civilized and elevated debates that constitute the subject matter of the *Convivium*, the references to animals potentially capable of rational and ethical behavior add a thought-provoking parallel narrative to the dialogue.

While nineteenth-century scholarship on the *Convivium Septem Sapientium* concentrated heavily on questions relating to its authorship and its faithfulness to history¹, scholars in recent decades have begun to examine the intellectual content of the work, giving particular attention to its political and religious themes². Although some have called attention to the extended retelling of the famous anecdote of Arion's rescue by dolphins (160E-162B) and to the other dolphin stories that follow, the discussions of dolphins form in fact the culmination of a surprising number of references in the treatise to various aspects of the human-animal relationship. These references, which constitute a sort of "parallel narrative" in the treatise, exhibit a progression of thought, leading from situations in which humans exert dominance over animals, in sacrifice, through fables in which potential intellectual endowments in animals are referenced, and concluding with human-animal interactions of a sort that suggests rationality and moral agency in animals, manifested in particular in striking examples of φιλάνθρωπία in animals that Plutarch details in the rescue of Arion and in his subsequent dolphin stories.

While it would be an exaggeration to claim that the sometimes fleeting allusions to animals in the *Convivium* constitute more than a secondary theme, their arrangement in the treatise clearly portrays human-animal interactions in an increasingly complex light, as Plutarch gradually draws animals closer to human beings in their intellectual capacities and finally hints at the possibility of an ethical relationship between species, when he depicts animals displaying concern for and kindness toward humans. The present study traces the development of this animal theme in the *Convivium*, giving particular attention

¹ U. VON WILAMOWITZ-MOELLENDORFF, 1890, p. 196, for example, criticizes Plutarch for an inability to write in a historically convincing manner, while G. HAUCK, 1893, pp. 1-26, defends Plutarch's authorship on stylistic grounds and on the similarity of ideas presented in the treatise to those seen elsewhere in Plutarch, including his conviction that animals have a share of rationality, a view developed in his animal-related treatises.

² Studies that emphasize the political and religious themes prominent in the *Convivium* include G. J. D. AALDERS, 1977; J. M. MOSSMAN, 1977; and L. VAN DER STOCKT, 2005.

to the order in which references to human-animal relations are presented, and will suggest that earlier manifestations of the theme both prepare the way for the portrait of animal φιλανθρωπία in the latter portions of the dialogue and mirror Plutarch's pronouncements in his animal-related treatises.

The participation in the *Convivium* of the legendary fabulist Aesop, who was not reckoned among the Seven Sages in any ancient enumeration, greatly facilitates the introduction of animal themes into the dialogue, as he poses riddles, replies to questions, and is teased by the other interlocutors³. His function in the dialogue has been the subject of some speculation. In his annotated edition of the work, Jean Defradas notes that the portrait of Aesop offered in the *Convivium* is in line with those of Herodotus and Aristotle in emphasizing his "sagesse pratique"⁴, while Judith Mossman, in her study, "Plutarch's *Dinner of the Seven Wise Men* and Its Place in *Symposion* Literature," concludes that his participation allows the dialogue to "... tend toward a lighter tone"⁵, and George Harrison, in his study, "Problems with the Genre of *Problems*: Plutarch's Literary Innovations," admits that Aesop's presence at an evening full of riddles should "seem appropriate, not superfluous," although he does not elaborate on his observation⁶. It can be argued, however, that Aesop's presence in the dialogue is rather more functional and integral than incidental or merely comical, since many of the more casual and passing references to animals in the earlier chapters of the work involve him, while the more substantial discussions of animal themes toward the end of the work are introduced by or commented on by members of the Seven.

Aesop does not figure in the dialogue's first anecdote involving animals (146F), in which Thales recounts that on one occasion a sacrificial animal (ἱερεῖον) was sent to Bias by a king with the command that he send back the best and worst parts of the animal. Bias sent the tongue and thereby earned a reputation for cleverness. It is significant that animals make their first appearance in the work in that role, as sacrificial victims, that was reckoned most proper to them and essential to the functioning of the ancient state. Moreover, the anecdote reminds the reader of a fundamental assumption that underlay much of classical speculation on human-animal relations, namely, that humans are different from and superior to other species⁷. In her recent study "Beastly Spectacle in the Ancient Mediterranean World," Jo-Ann Shelton observes, "Sacrifice was a practice that emphasized the possibility of communication between humans and gods, while, at the same time, it

³ Plu., *Quaest. conviv.* 614A-B, comments on the pedagogical, ethical and philosophical usefulness of riddles, stories and anecdotal material, the sorts of contributions that Aesop naturally makes, to convivial discourse.

⁴ J. DEFRAZAS, 1954, p. 23.

⁵ J. M. MOSSMAN, 1997, p. 124.

⁶ G. W. M. HARRISON, 2000, p. 196.

⁷ On ancient attitudes toward the superiority of human beings to other animal species, see R. SORABJI, 1993, pp. 1-16 and 122-57; G. STEINER, 2005, pp. 1-92 and 223-51; and S. T. NEWMYER, 2006, pp. 1-65.

underscored the distinction between humans and animals”⁸. In Plutarch’s first anecdote, animal sacrifice appears as part of a game, but the assumption of human domination and animal subjugation is evident.

In the second appearance of an animal in the treatise (149C-E), the distinction between human and animal is blurred. A young herdsman brings in a piece of leather containing a creature whose neck and arms are human but the rest of whose body is that of a horse. Although the term is not used in the text, the creature is obviously a centaur. The character Niloxenus turns away in pious horror, but Thales makes light of the portent. This peculiar incident has intrigued scholars. Defradas speculates that it may be intended as a presentiment of the spirit that infuses the later dolphin anecdotes⁹, while Mossman calls it “an excellent example of the σπουδαιογέλοιον” that is characteristic of symposium literature¹⁰. When one recalls, however, that at least some centaurs, including Pholus and in particular Chiron, teacher of heroes and scholar of medicine, were exceptions to the rule that their kind were violent and uncivilized, one glimpses the ambivalent nature of the ancient attitude toward this creature that straddles two worlds, joining the wildness of the animal with the intellect of the human.

Plutarch effects a transition from the bizarre tale of the centaur to the series of fables involving Aesop, first mentioned as present at the banquet at 150A, by continuing his exploration of creatures that are, as Judith Mossman puts it, “half-and-half things”¹¹. He portrays Aesop as alluding in a fable to the bastard status of Thrasybulus’ son Alexidemus, who refuses to dine with the others since he feels that his dignity as the son of Thrasybulus has been slighted. Aesop recounts a tale in which a mule acts like a horse when he sees his image in a river and is impressed with his own size and handsome appearance, until he “becomes aware, takes note” (συμφορονήσας, 150A) that he is the offspring of an ass and abandons his conceit. While it would be unwise to press the vocabulary of fables too closely, it is interesting to note that in each of Aesop’s contributions, we find technical terms or illustrative examples frequently employed in ancient philosophical discussions of animal mentality.

Aristotle devoted considerable attention to the question of the content of animal intellect in relation to its human counterpart. At *Nicomachean Ethics* 1140b20-21, for example, he calls φρόνησις, the intellectual capacity to which Aesop alludes in the above anecdote, a sort of “practical wisdom” that entails “a truth-attaining rational quality that concerns things good for human beings”¹². This definition suggests that here at least he denies practical wisdom to non-humans. At *Metaphysics* 980b22, however, he declares that animals possessing memory are φρονιμώτερα, “wiser, more intelligent,” than other animals. In

⁸ J.-A. SHELTON, 2007, p. 111.

⁹ J. DEFRAZAS, 1954, p. 13.

¹⁰ J. M. MOSSMAN, 1997, p. 128.

¹¹ J. M. MOSSMAN, 1997, p. 129.

¹² Arist., *EN* 1140b20-21: ἀνάγκη τὴν φρόνησιν ἕξιν εἶναι μετὰ λόγου ἀληθῆ περὶ τὰ ἀνθρώπινα ἀγαθὰ πρακτικῆν.

his own defense of animal rationality, *De sollertia animalium*, Plutarch allows his interlocutor Autobulus to suggest that we should consider animal intellect to be less acute than that of humans rather than claiming that animals are devoid of intellect and practical wisdom altogether¹³.

Shortly after the anecdote of the vain mule, Solon jokingly establishes Aesop's credentials as an expert on animals by calling him "clever at understanding ravens and jackdaws" (σὺ δὲ δεινὸς εἶ κοράκων ἐπαίειν καὶ κολοιῶν, 152D), a passing allusion to ancient speculation on the linguistic capacities of birds. In Stoic theory, meaningful language was denied to animals because the "governing principle," or ἡγεμονικόν, in the animal soul remained irrational so that animal utterances are meaningless¹⁴. In contrast, Plutarch tells of a "remarkable jay" (θαυμαστόν τι χρῆμα ... κίττης, *De sollertia animalium* 973C) that meditated upon the sounds of a trumpet that it had heard and repeated only certain of its notes in its own song, suggesting that the self-taught bird possessed more reason than would have been evident in one that had learned from others¹⁵.

In the next anecdote involving animals, Anacharsis, one of the Seven Wise Men, chastises Aesop for supposing that a home is mere mortar and wood, when even an anthill or a bird's nest can be a happy home if the beasts who inhabit it "possess mind and discretion" (νοῦν ἔχουσι καὶ σωφρονοῦσι, 155C). Ants and some bird species figure prominently in ancient literature as animals endowed with impressive intellectual capacities. In his article "Some Stock Illustrations of Animal Intelligence in Greek Psychology," Sherwood Dickerman observed that in classical sources, "four animals appear with a regularity so great as to challenge attention—the ant, the bee, the spider, the swallow (now and then the birds in general)"¹⁶. Plutarch (*De sollertia animalium* 967E) maintains that the behavior of ants suggests that they have the classical virtues of courage, prudence, practical wisdom (φρονήσεως) and justice. Here Anacharsis reiterates that claim.

The final allusion to human-animal relations preceding the dolphin anecdotes has been variously interpreted. At 159B-C, Solon laments the fact that the diet of humans by necessity entails injustice because it involves the ingestion of other living things, be they plant or animal, and, perhaps with a nod to *Phaedo* 66b, he asserts that the need for food weighs down the human soul and renders it gross and impure. G. J. D. Aalders remarks of this lament, "Solon's ideas about the soul and the desirability of restricting one's diet to a minimum (158bff.) can hardly stem from the historical Solon and are not even found in Plutarch's Life of Solon"¹⁷. Yet if Solon's comments are viewed

¹³ Plu., *De soll. anim.* 973B: μηδὲ τὰ θηρία λέγωμεν ... μὴ διανοεῖσθαι μηδὲ φρονεῖν ἕλως.

¹⁴ On the Stoic doctrine of the ἡγεμονικόν, see S. T. NEWMYER, 1999 and S. T. NEWMYER, 2006, p. 46.

¹⁵ Plu., *De soll. anim.* 973E: ὥστε, ὅπερ ἔφην, τῆς εὐμαθείας λογικωτέραν εἶναι τὴν αὐτομάθειαν ἐν αὐτοῖς.

¹⁶ S. O. DICKERMAN, 1911, p. 123.

¹⁷ G. J. D. AALDERS, 1977, p. 29.

in the context of Plutarch's theme of human-animal relations developed in the *Convivium*, his reservations concerning human injustice toward animals seem less problematic, especially if one recalls strikingly similar pronouncements in *De esu carniū*, Plutarch's argument for vegetarianism, wherein he claims (994E) that animals at the point of slaughter, whose remarkable intelligence (περιττὸν ἐν συνέσει) humans ignore, demand justice from their slayers¹⁸. Already in 1893, Georg Hauck had noted the similarity in Plutarch's argumentation here in the *Convivium* to those passages from his *Gryllus* and *De sollertia animalium* where he argues for rationality in animals, a connection which Aalders does not note¹⁹.

Whether Solon's scruples here are his own or reflect Plutarch's views as stated in the animal treatises, it is noteworthy that the anecdotes of Arion's rescue by dolphins and of the recovery of Hesiod's body by dolphins follow closely upon Solon's expression of concern that human behavior toward other species might have ethical ramifications. Most scholars have judged the dolphin anecdotes to be fundamental to some overarching theme in the *Convivium*, although the animals have regularly been viewed as *instruments* rather than as *actors* in the drama. Defradas, for example, sees the dolphins as agents of justice carrying out the will of the gods on earth²⁰, a view which indeed finds textual support both in Arion's conclusion (161F) that his rescue illustrates how god watches over all deeds on land and sea and in Anacharsis' observation concerning the recovery of Hesiod's body (163E-F) that god uses every creature as his instrument (ὄργανον, 163E).

Even Luc van der Stockt, who displays greater affection for Plutarch's dolphins as animals than do other scholars, concluded that the animals are "part of a world in which god, man and animals take care of each other"²¹. In van der Stockt's understanding of Plutarch's dolphin anecdotes, god governs the cosmos in such a way that animals serve to unite god and man, and are symbolic of god's sympathy for the universe. Here too, the animals are viewed *instrumentally*. It can be argued, however, that Plutarch's dolphins are more than passive tools of divine will, and that the dolphin anecdotes form the culmination to the human-animal theme in the *Convivium*: having raised the possibility, in Solon's comments, that humans might have obligations to act justly toward animals, Plutarch now raises the possibility that some animals may be moved to act justly toward humans, who thereby benefit from actions which, if performed by humans, might be considered instances of φιλανθρωπία.

In his study of Plutarchan φιλανθρωπία, Rudolf Hirzel argued that Plutarch understood that term in several senses, ranging from the conviviality of a dinner party, to guest-friendship, to ordinary politeness, to a belief in a

¹⁸ On the concept of justice toward animals, see S. T. NEWMYER, 1992 and S. T. NEWMYER, 2006, pp. 48-65.

¹⁹ G. HAUCK, 1893, p. 48.

²⁰ J. DEFRADAS, 1954, p. 14.

²¹ L. VAN DER STOCKT, 2005, p. 19.

connection between man and man in which one is benefactor to the other²². He points out Plutarch's conviction, influenced by Pythagoras and given voice at *De sollertia animalium* 959F²³, that kindness to animals inspires φιλάνθρωπία toward fellow-humans. He does not suggest that Plutarch believed that a human might practice τὸ φιλάνθρωπον toward animals, much less that animals might be so inclined toward humans. Yet it is the possibility of this ethical relationship that especially distinguishes Plutarch's accounts of dolphin behaviors from the others.

Classicists are familiar with Herodotus' charming account of the rescue of the poet Arion (I. 23–24), and may know the versions of Pliny (*NH* IX. 28) and the post-Plutarchan Aelian (*NA* XII. 45). In Plutarch's retelling of the tale, two narrative details are added which are absent from earlier versions: the rescue is effected in Plutarch by more than one animal working as a team, and this teamwork inspires human witnesses to suspect ethical motivations in the animals' actions. Pliny (*NH* IX. 24) calls the dolphin "an animal friendly to man" (*homini ... amicum animal*), but he does not ascribe any motivation to the animal's behavior. Similarly, in Herodotus, Arion is rescued by one animal whose motivations are not specified.

In Plutarch's account of the rescue, Gorgus, brother of Periander, tyrant of Corinth who hosts the *convivium* and at whose court the tale of Arion was set in Herodotus as well, reports witnessing a group of dolphins bearing ashore a man whom the onlookers recognized as the famous Arion (161A). The singer recounted that at the moment when he was about to drown, dolphins gathered around him "in a manner kindly-disposed" (εὐμενῶς, 161D), and passed him on to one another, "relieving each other as if this were a duty necessary and incumbent upon them all" (διαδεχομένους ὡς ἀναγκαῖον ἐν μέρει λειτούργημα καὶ προσῆκον πᾶσιν, 161D). Shortly after this, Solon relates that the body of the drowned poet Hesiod was recovered by dolphins who acted, in his view, in a "kindred and human-loving manner" (οἰκείως καὶ φιλάνθρώπως, 162F). The juxtaposition here of the adverbs οἰκείως and φιλάνθρώπως offers critical insight into Plutarch's view of animal intellect and behavior toward human beings, including instances of what might be termed "animal φιλάνθρωπία".

In Stoic ethical theory, οἰκείωσις was the recognition of kinship, attachment or belonging that one group naturally feels to another that it senses to be akin to itself²⁴. Humans experience this toward other humans, and animals toward other animals, but no οἰκείωσις exists between humans and animals because animals are fundamentally unlike humans, being, in Stoic teaching, forever irrational²⁵. At *De finibus* III. 67, Cicero states that the natural consequence of

²² R. HIRZEL, 1912, p. 24.

²³ Plu., *De soll. anim.* 959F: ὡσπερ αἰὲν πάλιν οἱ Πυθαγορικοὶ τὴν εἰς τὰ θηρία πραότητα μελέτην ἐποιήσαντο πρὸς τὸ φιλάνθρωπον καὶ φιλοῖκτιρμον.

²⁴ The Stoic concept of οἰκείωσις has inspired an extensive body of scholarship. Particularly illuminating are C. O. BRINK, 1955–1956; G. STRIKER, 1983; and G. REYDAMS-SCHILS, 2003.

²⁵ Cicero, *Off.* I. 50, offers the classic formulation of the Stoic position on the lack of

this lack of natural kinship, in the view of the Stoics, was that humans could have no bonds of justice with animals: *sed quomodo hominum inter homines esse vincula putant, sic homini nihil iuris cum bestiis*.

In *De sollertia animalium*, Plutarch argued, against the Stoics, that all animals in fact partake of reason to some degree²⁶. In Plutarch's view, rationality in animal species differs *quantitatively* rather than *qualitatively* from rationality in human beings²⁷. Consequently animals must be judged akin (οἰκεῖοι) to human beings after all. Not only are they therefore owed justice, but Plutarch's use of the ethically-charged terms ἀναγκάϊον, λειτούργημα and προσήκον in his account of the rescue of Arion in the *Convivium* (161D) suggests that he considered them to be capable of disinterested and intentional aiding actions that had moral overtones²⁸. At *De sollertia animalium* 984D, one speaker asserts that the dolphin, alone of animals, practices the ideal of the philosophers: friendship without advantage (τῷ δὲ δελφῖνι ... μόνῳ ... τὸ φιλεῖν ἄνευ χρείας ὑπάρχει). Perhaps a greater degree of rationality allowed the dolphins to exercise that friendship in a "kindred and human-loving manner" in rescuing Arion and recovering the body of Hesiod, and perhaps too it was a recognition that dolphins were "kindred" (οἰκεῖοι) that led to the unwritten law to which Solon alludes (163A), that no human might harm or hunt them.

While the animal theme traceable in the *Convivium* is overshadowed by the debate on the form of government proper to human societies and on the role of god in human life, the ideas advanced concerning animals in this dialogue are, as the present study has endeavored to show, entirely in keeping with Plutarch's views as these are set forth at length in his animal treatises. The theme of just and "human-loving" behavior in animals who are hinted to possess, at least to a degree, some of the better intellectual and ethical qualities of human beings adds an intriguing counterpoint to a dialogue devoted to rational discourse on high-minded themes carried on by the Sages of Greece.

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kinship between humans and irrational animals: *Sed quae naturae principia sint communitatis et societatis humanae repetendum videtur altius; est enim primum, quod cernitur in universi generis humani societate. Eius autem vinculum est ratio et oratio, quae docendo, discendo, communicando, disceptando, iudicando conciliat inter se homines coniungitque naturali quadam societate; neque ulla re longius absumus a natura ferarum, in quibus inesse fortitudinem saepe dicimus, ut in equis, in leonibus, iustitiam aequitatem, bonitatem non dicimus; sunt enim rationis et orationis expertes.*

²⁶ Plu., *De soll. anim.* 960A: ἀποφηνάμενοι γὰρ ἐχθές, ὡς οἶσθα, μετέχειν ἀμωσγέπως πάντα τὰ ζῶα διανοίας καὶ λογισμοῦ ...

²⁷ On Plutarch's doctrine of quantitative differences in rationality between species, see S. NEWMYER, 2006, p. 40, which provides citations from Plutarch's animal treatises.

²⁸ For a detailed discussion of Plutarch's ideas on altruistic, cooperative and philanthropic behaviors in non-human animals, see S. NEWMYER, 2006, pp. 76-84.

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MUSIC AND SYMPOSIUM IN PLUTARCH'S *CONVIVIUM SEPTEM SAPIENTIUM*: A BRIEF NOTE

ROOSEVELT ARAÚJO DA ROCHA JÚNIOR
Federal University of Paraná

Abstract

In a *symposion*, music played an important role. It was through music that the traditions were perpetuated and the young men were educated. We see this in several ancient Greek texts, from Homer to Athenaeus. Music also has a significant role in Plutarch's *Convivium Septem Sapientium*. In this brief paper, my aim is to examine the use that Plutarch makes of musical themes in that dialogue. In the end, I intend to show that music marks Plutarch's way of thinking and style.

In ancient Greek culture, the banquet and the *symposion* were the most important occasions in the social life of an adult male. In a *symposion* friendship relations were created or reinforced, political decisions were discussed and influenced and a great part of poetical and musical culture was perpetuated and transmitted. So, there could never be a banquet without food, and after the banquet, a *symposion* without wine and especially music, and when we say 'music' in ancient Greece, we are talking about a complex of arts that involved what we nowadays call music, poetry and dance.

We can see this determinant role played by music in the banquet and in the *symposion* already in the Homeric poems. In the *Iliad* (1, 603-604), Apollo plays his lyre and sings with the Muses in the banquet of the gods on Olympus. In the *Odyssey* Homer says many times¹ that 'music is a banquet's ornament'. This not to mention the noteworthy presence of Demodocus in book VIII and the interventions of Phemius in book I of the *Odyssey*. But maybe the strongest demonstration that there could never be a banquet without music is in 9.3-11, when, praising the orderly and peaceful atmosphere that reigns in Alcinoos' palace, Odysseus remembers that the *aidos* is an essential element for the maintenance of the peace-loving and happy model of existence that prevails in the Phaeacians' Island.

We find other references to music's role in banquets and *symposia* in, for example, Xenophanes (fr. 1W) and in many fragments of Alcaeus and Anacreon. In this kind of poetry, that was composed to be performed in a banquet or in a *symposion*, there are many references to music in its practical aspect, that is, references to instruments, to the presence of a musician or to the kind of music he or she was playing. Later, after the second half of the fifth century, when another form of literature develops and a specific literary genre, the *Symposion*, flourishes, the performance of music will be reduced to give place to a new kind of 'musical' exercise: the discussion of different subjects in a dialogue among wise men. This is what we read in Plato's and Xenophon's *Symposia*, in Plutarch's *Quaestiones Conviviales* and in Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistai*, to mention just some texts².

¹ 1, 152-155; 1, 370 and 421; 21, 430.

² On the *symposion*, see W. J. HENDERSON, 2000; and F. FRAZIER, 2000.

So music, as one of the most influential elements in Greek culture, could not be absent from a Plutarchean work set in a *symposion*, namely the *Convivium Septem Sapientium*. I intend to show, on the one hand, that discussions of musical themes were usual in ancient Greek banquets and, on the other, that Plutarch was familiar with and very fond of this kind of subject. Plutarch is famous because of his large knowledge of all ancient disciplines, and music was an art in which he was no beginner when he wrote this work: far from it. It is important to understand the reason why Plutarch often chooses examples taken from music to explain or illustrate some theme. And I think this is an aspect of his work and style still underestimated.

In the *Convivium*, we find important allusions to musical subjects. In 147F, dealing with the guest's behaviour, Plutarch says, through Thales' voice, that, if someone who was invited to a dinner does not behave properly, this person can make unpleasant the best wines, the most delicious foods and the performances of the most talented musicians. In making this remark, Thales indirectly is telling us about the basic components indispensable to any *symposion*.

Further on, in 149A, trying to calm a guest down, Thrasybulus' son Alexidemus of Miletus, who was not satisfied with the place of little honour that Periander gave him next to Aeolians and men from other islands, Thales gives an example of how a guest must behave in a dinner by telling a little story about a Spartan who was put by the director in the last place of a chorus, but was not discontented, and exclaimed that by doing that the director had discovered a way of making that position a place of honor. Then Thales himself, in 149F-150A, gives an example of proper behavior by sitting next to Ardalus of Troezen³, an *aulōidos* and "a priest of the Ardalian Muses whose worship his forefather, Ardalus of Troezen, had established"⁴. In this passage, we can see irony in Thales' words when he says that he would pay to share the table with Ardalus. To understand the irony we must remember that, many times in ancient Greek literature, the musicians and most of all the ones that had some relation to the *aulos*, the *aulētai* and the *aulōidoi*, were not considered people worthy of respect⁵. So, Thales, by doing so, is showing that it doesn't matter where and next to whom the guest is placed in the table, but the most important thing is try to learn as much as possible from whoever is sitting next to us and trying to start a new friendship whenever we can.

After the dinner, the guests make a libation accompanied by an *aulētris*, a girl that plays the *aulos*, and, inspired by her presence, Ardalus asks Anacharsis if the Scythians had *aulētrides* (150D-E). Anacharsis answers that the Scythians don't have *aulētrides* or grape-vines, but they have gods, though they don't "believe that the gods have more pleasure by listening to the sounds produced by bits of bone and wood", as the Greeks do. And this leads us to a remark by the character Aesop (150F) about the good melody produced by *auloi* made of

³ This character will appear again in 150D-E, 155E, 157D and 157F.

⁴ All the translations are taken from BABBITT's edition for the Loeb Classical Library.

⁵ About the situation of *aulētai*, see A. BARKER, 2002.

asses' bones: the ass is an unmelodious animal, but the most beautiful melodies are played with his bones. In the sequence Neiloxenus makes a commentary about a complaint that the citizens of Busiris have against the people of Naucratis because they use asses' bones to make *auloi*. For the Busirians to hear even a *salpinx*, a trumpet, was a sin, because it sounded like an ass bray and the ass was associated with Set, a malignant god sometimes represented by the features of this animal. So one can notice that a simple remark or little story leads to another one and on and on and on, like a sequence of echoes that virtually has no end, as we would expect in an idealised talk among the wisest men of Greece.

Some paragraphs later (156C), Plutarch, through the words of his character Mnesiphilus, commenting on Solon's opinion "that the task of every art and faculty, both human and divine, is the thing that is produced rather than the means employed in its production, and the end itself rather than the means that contribute to that end", tells us what he believes must be music's role because "the Muses would most assuredly feel aggrieved, if we should regard as their task a lyre or *auloi*, and not the development of the characters and the soothing of the emotions of those who make use of songs and melodies". As a follower of Platonic ideas, Plutarch would endorse Damonian ethical theory of music, according to which music has the power to transform the soul and to mould the character⁶.

At the end of the *Convivium* (160C-D), Gorgus, Periander's brother, arrives and takes part in the talk. Returning from a voyage to Taenarum, Gorgus has an amazing story to tell his brother first and then to everybody there. Before Gorgus starts telling what he saw, Periander warns his friends about the extraordinary fact that Gorgus is about to report. But Bias recalls that Thales said that we must believe in our friends' words, even if they sound absurd. And besides, Bias says that Gorgus should tell his story at least "to compete with those newly invented dithyramb" (160E). This seems to be a covert reference to Arion as the inventor of the dithyramb, according to Babbitt, in note to this passage. But I think there is more to be said about this comment of Bias. There is a latent irony in these words. It sounds as if Plutarch was making a remark about the strangeness that characterizes the dithyramb in his own time or as if he was reproducing some other author's words, maybe those of Plato or Aristoxenus, because these thinkers made this kind of comment about the degeneration of the dithyramb earlier and also influenced Plutarch's ideas in a decisive way. We know that this dialogue has a strong fictional character, but it is worth mentioning that it is an anachronism⁷ told by a historical character that lived in the sixth century, when the dithyramb was still getting its 'classical' shape⁸. I think it is interesting to note that, in another work ascribed in the tradition to

⁶ On ethical theories about music's power, see M. L. WEST, 1992, pp. 246-53.

⁷ On anachronism in Plutarch's *Convivium*, see G. J. D. AALDERS, 1997 and A. BILLAULT, 2008, pp. 584-5.

⁸ About this question, see G. A. PRIVITERA, 1979 and A. D'ANGOUR, 1997.

Plutarch, the *De Musica*, we find many references to the alleged decadence of the dithyramb, especially at the end of the fifth and first half of the fourth century B. C.⁹. Be that as it may, this comment by Bias prepares the reader to what will follow: the story of Arion (160E-162B).

Gorgus tells that after he had sacrificed to Poseidon, when the moon was shining over the sea, he saw dolphins leaving a man on the shore. This man was Arion, the *kitharōidos*. He gave his name and was easily recognizable because he was wearing his ceremonial robes, i.e. his special clothes for the occasions when he sang and played his *kithara*. Arion told that he was coming from Italy to Corinth, after receiving a letter from Periander. Because of this he took a Corinthian merchant vessel. After three days, Arion sensed that the sailors were planning to do something against him. Then, inspired perhaps by a divine impulse, he put on his ceremonial garments and started to sing his swan song, the *nomos Pythicos* to Apollo. When he was in the middle of his song, the sailors advanced to murder him. But Arion threw himself into the sea and was saved by dolphins. He strongly believed that he was a man beloved by the gods¹⁰.

After Gorgus told the story of Arion, the other participants start a discussion and some report other stories about dolphins rescuing humans. Solon, in particular, tells how Hesiod's body, after he was dead, was taken by dolphins and finishes his words saying that these animals like music so much and delight themselves with the sound of *auloi* and songs (162F). This fact could explain why they help humans, specially poets and musicians like Arion and Hesiod.

To end this brief comment about the 'musical' passages of the *Convivium Septem Sapientium*, it is worth reporting some words put in the mouth of Anacharsis by Plutarch (163E-F): just as living beings depend on God's power, serve Him and are responsive to His movements, so the Scythians are responsive to bows and the Greeks are very fond of lyres and *auloi*. This remark serves to distinguish the barbarian Scythians from the civilized Greeks, but it also makes evident the love that the Hellenic people dedicated to music, love that is shown many times in this dialogue.

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⁹ See chapters 3, 4, 6, 12, 29 and specifically 30, where Plutarch quotes the famous fragment from the comedy entitled *Chiron*, by Pherecrates (fr. 155 Kassel-Austin). On the authorship of the *De Musica* cf. R. ROCHA, 2007, pp. 15-31.

¹⁰ In Herodotus, 1, 24, we find another version of this story.

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THE TYRANNOS AS A SOPHOS IN THE SEPTEM SAPIENTIUM CONVIVIUM

DELFIN LEÃO
University of Coimbra

Abstract

The group of the Seven Sages in the *Septem Sapientium Convivium* includes a number of figures whose presence is problematic due to their association with autocratic power. Although the invitation to the meeting was sent out by the tyrant Periander, he is nevertheless eliminated from the central core of the Sages. This decision may be justified, in the first place, by the fact that he is a tyrant and that there is a deep animosity towards this form of government in the *Convivium*. Nevertheless, Periander was expected to fulfil a more important function in his capacity as host, but, contrary to this scenario, his presence begins to recede, especially once the eulogy of the democratic system starts, to the point that the honour of closing the banquet falls to Solon. Even so, Pittacus has ruled over the destinies of Mytilene as an *asymmetes* and continues to figure among the *sophoi*, and the same can be said of Cleoboulus, the autocrat of Lindos. Taking these factors into account, I propose to discuss in this paper the reason why Pittacus and Cleoboulus were able to remain as *sophoi*, while Periander ended up being relegated to a secondary place.

In my earlier work, I argued that the *Septem Sapientium Convivium* represents, in a certain way, a kind of cosmopolis of different sorts of wisdom¹. Among the *sophoi*, the dominant profile corresponds, as should be expected, to the masculine, aristocratic and Greek sensibility, as shown in the characters of Solon, Thales, Bias, Cleoboulus, Pittacus and Chilon. The seventh figure of the gallery is occupied by the Scythian Anacharsis, a personality that a long-lasting tradition² used to consider under the double perspective either of a sort of martyr of Greek culture or of a “*bon sauvage*” still uncorrupted by the vices of civilization and, because of that, apt to deprecate those same vices without being subject to the compromises of social convenience. Besides that, Anacharsis also adds a note of eccentricity to the group of *sapientes*, as he too ends up representing the nomadic oddness of the northern barbarians.³

The group of the *sophoi* as a whole is not, nevertheless, the object of the approach I intend to present, which rather deals with the image of the *tyrannos* as a *sophos* in the banquet of the Seven Wise Men. Solon, Thales, Bias and Chilon are usually present in the stable nucleus of the Seven but do not correspond to the *tyrannos/sophos* profile. Accordingly, their example is

¹ The results of these several studies were gathered in a single global analysis, published in D. F. LEÃO, 2006. See also D. F. LEÃO, 2008. I would like to express my gratitude to Manuel Tröster, who read an earlier version of this paper and improved a lot on the English.

² Present already in Herodotus, 4.76-77.

³ To this relatively exotic ambience contributes as well Neiloxenos, Amasis' envoy to the court of Periander, who can be considered, to a certain point, an example of Egyptian sophistication, although he does not belong to the restricted circle of the Seven Wise Men. I shall later return to him and to other secondary figures like the young Cleoboulus (or Eumetis), who, along with Aesop, represents a more intuitive knowledge.

adduced only to strengthen the contrast with other personalities present in the *Convivium*: Pittacus and Cleoboulus, in their role of *sapientes*, and Periander in the quality of the meeting's host. What these three figures have in common is the fact that they all represent autocratic regimes. There are, nevertheless, important differences of detail that might help to understand the dissimilar way in which Plutarch characterized them. Besides, this happens not only in the *Convivium* but is also detectable elsewhere in his oeuvre, for instance in the *De E apud Delphos* (385d-e), where the author reduces the number of *sapientes* to only five (Chilon, Thales, Solon, Bias and Pittacus), expressly excluding the tyrants Cleoboulus and Periander. This clearly shows that Plutarch is somehow reluctant to include *tyrannoi* among the group of *sophoi*. Such a perspective is hardly surprising, because even in earlier representations of tyranny (dating especially back to the fifth and fourth centuries) the concept of autocratic rule in general was closely connected with the idea of illegitimacy, the use of mercenary troops, personal abuse and contempt for the laws of the city⁴. Nevertheless, it should also be taken into account, as I shall argue, that a positive tradition related with the tyrants is also found in the sources, probably owing its formation to an oral tradition that goes back to the time when some of these more ancient figures lived (the sixth century). It is very important to be aware of this in order to understand and solve the apparent contradiction of Plutarch's portrayal of these characters in the *Septem Sapientium Convivium*, where a certain tension can be detected in their treatment, as well as a positive appraisal. In discussing the question, I shall start by evoking some fundamental traits of each personality in the literary tradition. However, this should not be seen as a mere exercise of *Quellenforschung*, but as a preliminary step towards understanding Plutarch's options when he decided to describe a *symposion* with the Seven Sages.

Pittacus of Mytilene

Pittacus was an aristocrat of Lesbos who involved himself directly, as did the poet Alcaeus, in the political struggles that affected the island during the VII and VI centuries. In an initial phase of his active life, he joined Alcaeus and Antimenides (the poet's brother) in order to depose the tyrant Melanchrus, whose government would be substituted by that of Myrsilus, with whom Pittacus then aligned himself, to the bitter resentment of his former allies, who had to go into exile. Myrsilus' death was celebrated in Alcaeus' verses with enormous elation⁵, and it was in a context of great political and social instability that Pittacus rose to power, at the turn of the VI century (around 590/89), ruling over the destinies of Mytilene over ten years. Although they had worked together in the past, Pittacus' government is repeatedly criticized by Alcaeus, who considers his rise to power an act of madness by the Mytileneans

⁴ See C. Mossé, 2006, 189, in discussing Plato and Plutarch on the Sicilian tyrants.

⁵ Cf. frg. 332 Voigt.

and a consecration of tyranny⁶. This opposition from exile represents a clear sign that Pittacus was progressively moving away from the aristocrats who started by giving him their support, and that this evolution in behaviour had, as counterpart, the effect of drawing him closer to the popular classes. In this respect, Pittacus' political career is not different from that of other autocratic leaders. However, there are two aspects that turn his experience of government into something strikingly singular: first, Pittacus rose to power not by force, but in the quality of a sovereign elected by the people (*aisymnetes*); second, the sources sustain that, once he managed to calm the atmosphere of civil dissension, he abandoned the government of his own free will and died around ten years later (possibly c. 570).

These are precisely the aspects that deserve a deeper analysis now, because they will provide, with great probability, the explanation for the fact that, although being a *tyrannos*, Pittacus managed to be considered one of the Seven Wise Men and retained that same position in Plutarch's *Convivium*. It is therefore worthwhile to ponder more carefully the passage where Aristotle mentions the way Pittacus rose to power (*Pol.* 3.1285a29-1285b3):

δύο μὲν οὖν εἶδη ταῦτα μοναρχίας, ἕτερον δ' ὅπερ ἦν ἐν τοῖς ἀρχαίοις Ἑλλησιν, οὓς καλοῦσιν αἰσυμνήτας. ἔστι δὲ τοῦθ' ὡς ἀπλῶς εἰπεῖν αἰρετὴ τυραννίς, διαφέρουσα δὲ τῆς βαρβαρικῆς οὐ τῶ μὴ κατὰ νόμον ἀλλὰ τῶ μὴ πάτριος εἶναι μόνον. ἤρχον δ' οἱ μὲν διὰ βίου τὴν ἀρχὴν ταύτην, οἱ δὲ μέχρι τινῶν ὠρισμένων χρόνων ἢ πράξεων, οἷον εἶλοντό ποτε Μυτιληναῖοι Πιττακὸν πρὸς τοὺς φυγάδας ὧν προειστήκεσαν Ἀντιμενίδης καὶ Ἀλκαῖος ὁ ποιητής. δηλοῖ δ' Ἀλκαῖος ὅτι τύραννον εἶλοντο τὸν Πιττακὸν ἐν τινὶ τῶν σκολιῶν μελῶν· ἐπιτιμᾶ γὰρ ὅτι “τὸν κακοπάτριδα Πίττακον πόλιος τὰς ἀχόλω καὶ βαρυδαίμονος ἐστάσαντο τύραννον μέγ' ἐπαίνεντες ἀλλεες”. αὐταὶ μὲν οὖν εἰσὶ τε καὶ ἦσαν διὰ μὲν τὸ δεσποτικαὶ εἶναι τυραννικαί, διὰ δὲ τὸ αἰρεταὶ καὶ ἐκόντων βασιλικάι.

Although Alcaeus' testimony, referred to in this passage, shows that at least some of Pittacus' contemporaries considered him to be a tyrant (ἐστάσαντο τύραννον), Aristotle classifies him as *aisymnetes*, explaining this designation with the fact that he was elected autocrat by the people of Mytilene. Accordingly, Aristotle attributes to *aisymneteia* a position between tyranny and hereditary monarchy, taking more into account the way Pittacus rose to power than the manner in which he may have ruled. However, later authors like Strabo (13.2.3) and Diogenes Laertius (1.75) record that Pittacus abandoned tyranny of his own will, and it is perhaps not illegitimate to conclude from these testimonies that he exerted autocratic power in a positive manner and mainly with the goal of calming the atmosphere of civil dissension that may have justified his appointment as tyrant⁷.

⁶ Frgs. 75 and 348 Voigt (cf. infra commentary to *Pol.* 3.1285a29-1285b3). In other poems (frgs. 69, 70 and 72 Voigt), the poet continues to attack Pittacus in other ways, citing, for example, his physical looks, his opportunism and tendency towards violent behaviour.

⁷ The testimony of Diodorus (9.11.1) is particularly elucidative by the way it synthesizes

Although the question is controversial, it is not improbable that the term *aisymnetes* was used in Pittacus' time to describe his government and that Aristotle may therefore have adopted from Pittacus' ruling experience the same expression to refer to this political category, an hypothesis that finds support in the fact that Pittacus' case is precisely the sole example of an *aisymnetes* that Aristotle provides⁸. This term, however, is used already by Homer to define someone engaged in activities appropriate for a 'judge' or informal 'evaluator'⁹. The confluence of these several aspects must have contributed to create a quite favourable image of Pittacus, to the point of him being considered one of the Seven Wise Men.

Up to a certain point, it is also appealing to compare Pittacus' role as *aisymnetes* with the position of *diallaktes* ('arbiter') that Solon held in Athens¹⁰. Both seem to have enjoyed strong support from the people who had put the government of the city into their hands, in the expectation that they might bring to an end the ambience of enormous instability felt by then in Mytilene and in Athens. Both were equally well succeeded in these functions, notwithstanding the opposition they also met, and both also chose not to remain in power as tyrants. Moreover, both of them acted as lawgivers, although at this level Solon's activity is much more notorious and influential — a clear sign of this is given by the fact that Aristotle says that Pittacus was responsible for the creation of new laws, but not of a new constitution (ἐγένετο δὲ καὶ Πιττακὸς νόμων δημιουργὸς ἀλλ' οὐ πολιτείας)¹¹. There is still another important difference to add in considering the two statesmen: although Pittacus was a tyrant *aisymnetes*, this does not necessarily imply that such a political position was regular; Solon, on the contrary, had on his side the supplementary legitimacy of occupying a legal office (the archonship), reinforced by the concession of exceptional powers.

At any rate, and even taking into account these limitations, Pittacus' situation was sufficiently special to allow him to keep deserving the post of

Pittacus' political action: καὶ τὴν πατρίδα τριῶν τῶν μεγίστων συμφορῶν ἀπέλυσε, τυραννίδος, στάσεως, πολέμου.

⁸ The fragment of Alcaeus quoted by Aristotle shows that the word *tyrannos* could have a pejorative connotation as early as the turn of the VII to the VI century, although in this particular case the negative overtone should also be understood as an expression of the poet's own animosity towards the former political ally. In fact, in the *Septem Sapientium Convivium* (157d-e), Plutarch records a popular song from Lesbos which mentions Pittacus as a *basileus*; if the testimony is genuine, it will contribute to show that, before the time of Thucydides, the concepts of *tyrannos* and *basileus* were not necessarily opposites. On this matter, see the pertinent observations of V. PARKER, 1998, pp. 156-7 and 170-1, n. 130.

⁹ In the sense that the *aisymnetes* was not a regular official. Cf. *Il.* 24.347; *Od.* 8. 258. See also J. F. MCGLEW, 1993, pp. 79-81; K.-J. HÖLKEKAMP, 1999, pp. 219-26.

¹⁰ Cf. [Aristotle], *Ath.* 5.2; Plutarch, *Sol.* 14.3.

¹¹ *Pol.* 2.1274b18. This commentary is made when Aristotle is about to mention the best-known law of Pittacus: the one that defines harsher penalties for crimes committed under the influence of wine. This tradition also left traces in the *Septem Sapientium Convivium* (155f). On the remnants of other pieces of legislation implemented by Pittacus, see K.-J. HÖLKEKAMP, 1999, pp. 221-3.

sapiens in a period during which animosity towards autocratic rulers was well established, even within the tradition of the Seven Wise Men. On the other hand, the ethical and political resemblances between him and Solon must also have helped to confirm the legitimacy of his presence in the *symposium*, because the Athenian legislator (together with Thales) played an undisputed central role both in the Seven Sages tradition and in Plutarch's *Convivium*.

Cleoboulus of Lindos

Cleoboulus, son of Evagoras, was tyrant of Lindos during around forty years, until the middle of the VI century. Even so, the information given by the sources about this figure is much less expressive than in the case of Pittacus and, because of that, maybe the justification for his presence in the *Septem Sapientium Convivium* should be sought not in his own credits but rather in a kind of homage that Plutarch would like to pay to Cleobouline/Eumetis. The young girl is presented as the daughter of the autocrat Cleoboulus, but one of the first objections to ponder in this context has to do precisely with the historical existence of Cleobouline. In fact, we have the record of a comedy from Cratinus called *Kleoboulinai*, and because of this it has already been argued that her name may simply be a personification of the riddles invented by Cleoboulus¹². Elsewhere Plutarch states (*De Pythiae oraculis*, 401b) that her real name was Eumetis, although it was superseded by the nickname Cleobouline, given after her father. Anyway, more significant than this detail is the fact that Eumetis is a name that speaks for itself: it means 'prudent' or 'wise', and this is in accord with the characterization of the young girl in the *Convivium* and with the positive effect that she exerts upon her father – which is the aspect that is most relevant to the subsequent analysis.

In fact, the presence of Cleoboulus is quite discreet throughout the *Septem Sapientium Convivium*. Bias discusses some ideas apart with him before giving his response to the enigmatic questions advanced in Amasis' missive (151c). However, this procedure may be justified simply by the fact that Cleoboulus is reclined close to Bias, thereby not implying any special deference towards the tyrant of Lindos. Cleoboulus is also responsible for some short observations on political regimes and on the government of the house, suggesting by these interventions to have a moderate nature. His major contribution has to do with the way he explores the concept of μέτρον (157a-c), but even this may be understood as an explanatory development of the sentence μέτρον ἄριστον, which was traditionally attributed to him¹³. This second-rate position of

¹² Cf. Diogenes Laertius, 1.89: γενέσθαι τε αὐτῷ θυγατέρα Κλεοβουλίνην, αἰνιγμάτων ἑξαμέτρων ποιήτριαν, ἧς μέμνηται καὶ Κρατῖνος ἐν τῷ ὁμωνύμῳ δράματι, πληθυντικῶς ἐπιγράψας (Kock, 1 39). In fact, in the same passage Diogenes credits Cleoboulus as being the author of around three thousand verses characterized by their enigmatic nature. Nevertheless, Diogenes seems to believe in the historical existence of Cleobouline, a perspective which is in fact preferable. On this see D. FEHLING, 1985, pp. 48-9; A. BERNABÉ PAJARES & H. RODRÍGUEZ SOMOLINOS, 1994, pp. 128-9.

¹³ Cf. Diogenes Laertius, 1.93.5.

Cleoboulus is again stressed by Plutarch in the *De E apud Delphos* (385d-e), a passage already commented on in the introduction, where he expressly eliminates the tyrant of Lindos from the core of Sages. Accordingly, it would have been easy for Plutarch to choose a character different from that of Cleoboulus, among the many other candidates recorded by the tradition of the Seven Wise Men¹⁴. Consequently, the justification for the presence of the tyrant Cleoboulus within the circle of the *sophoi* should perhaps be sought not so much in the inherent qualities of the autocrat (as happened with Pittacus) but in the opportunity to make Cleoboulus appear in the convivial space¹⁵.

In fact, although the young girl does not voice a single word, it is particularly impressive to see the way she is presented for the first time in the *Septem Sapientium Convivium* in the act of combing the dishevelled hair of Anacharsis (148d-e). The symbolic importance of this scene is underlined during the conversation between Neiloxenos and Thales when it is said that both the Greek girl and the Scythian *sophos* derived benefits from that mutual proximity. Neiloxenos also pays her a compliment by recognizing that her riddles were renowned as far as Egypt. This is a very interesting statement because, apart from the obvious flattering remark, it may also provide an historical hint at the way personalities and events connected with the Seven Sages spread throughout the Hellenized world.¹⁶ Particularly significant is also the comment made by Thales when he emphatically mentions the natural good character of Eumetis to the foreigner of Naucratis and at the same time states the positive effect that she exerts on her father (148d):

καὶ ὁ Νειλόξενος “ἤ που τὴν περὶ τὰ αἰνίγματα δεινότητα καὶ σοφίαν” ἔφη “τῆς κόρης ἐπαινεῖς· καὶ γὰρ εἰς Αἴγυπτον ἔνια τῶν προβαλλομένων ὑπ’ αὐτῆς δῖκται.”
 “οὐκ ἔγωγ” εἶπεν ὁ Θαλῆς· “τούτοις γὰρ ὡσπερ ἀστραγάλοις, ὅταν τύχη, παίζουσα χρῆται καὶ διαβάλλεται πρὸς τοὺς ἐντυχόντας, ἀλλὰ καὶ φρόνημα θαυμαστὸν καὶ νοῦς ἔνεστι πολιτικὸς καὶ φιλόανθρωπον ἦθος, καὶ τὸν πατέρα τοῖς πολίταις πραότερον ἄρχοντα παρέχει καὶ δημοτικώτερον.

According to him, the natural qualities of Cleoboulus — where intelligence, political sensibility and a generous character are particularly evident (φρόνημα θαυμαστὸν καὶ νοῦς ἔνεστι πολιτικὸς καὶ φιλόανθρωπον ἦθος) — project over her father and help to make his government become ‘sweeter’ (πραότερον) and ‘closer to democracy’ (δημοτικώτερον). Through Eumetis, Plutarch manages to attenuate the negative traits of Cleoboulus and

¹⁴ See the elucidative testimony of Diogenes Laertius (1.41-42) on the number of personalities that could play the role of *sophos*.

¹⁵ Thus contributing to innovate within the Greek tradition in what concerns the presence of ‘serious’ women in the banquet, which was an ambience clearly marked by masculine *Weltanschauung*. For more on this, see D. F. LEÃO, 2008, pp. 486-7.

¹⁶ A. BUSINE, 2002, pp. 65-71, too, calls attention to this issue, when analysing the work of Demetrius of Phalerum and Callimachus of Cyrene in Alexandria. However, the author does not discuss this particular case of Cleoboulus.

dilutes the fact that he is tyrant of Lindos, thus making it easier to accept his inclusion in the restricted group of the Seven Wise Men. To put it in a nutshell: Plutarch allows Cleoboulus to be considered one of the Sages this time in order to have the opportunity of presenting in the *Convivium* the young Eumetis, in whom one can detect special traits of feminine sensibility and of the positive effect they produce within the masculine space of the *symposion*.

Periander of Corinth

In the analysis of Pittacus' and Cleoboulus' characters, I have not adduced an argument that could have carried some weight in Plutarch's choices: the fact that his core of *sophoi* is very similar to the list presented in Plato's *Protagoras* (343a). In fact, although Plato has Anacharsis replaced by Myson, he also includes the names of Pittacus and Cleoboulus, leaving Periander equally aside¹⁷. This mistrust towards tyranny is found in other parts of Plato's work, the best-known passage being the one in the *Republic* (335e-336a) where, to the wisdom of figures like Simonides, Bias and Pittacus, he opposes the image of personalities inebriated by wealth, in a group headed precisely by Periander, but where Perdiccas, Xerxes and Ismenias of Thebes are also present. One of the important things about this passage of the *Protagoras* is that it provides the first complete list of the Seven Wise Men. A clear sign that Plato was innovating in supplying the full *sylloge* in writing is given by the fact that the philosopher presents «l'intégralité des sept noms et leurs ethniques respectifs»¹⁸. If this was not the case, it would be more natural to refer to the Sages by simply using the expression οἱ ἑπτὰ σοφοί, which would later become the usual designation¹⁹. Solon is the only *sophos* of whom the ethnonym is not given; rather he is designated by Socrates as Σόλων ὁ ἡμέτερος. This suggests that, from the very beginning, Solon was a polarizing personality among the Sages and that Athenian influence played an important role in establishing their political and ethical idiosyncrasy.²⁰ This is still clearly visible in Plutarch's *Convivium*, as shown by the importance attributed to the old legislator and to the democratic regime in terms of political discussion.

The elimination of Periander from the core of Sages is thus justified, in the first place, by the fact that he was a tyrant and that there is a deep animosity towards this form of government in the *Convivium*, inherited from

¹⁷ Possibly following Ephorus; by contrast, Demetrius of Phalerum admitted the presence of Periander. See the aforementioned testimony of Diogenes Laertius, 1.41-42.

¹⁸ A. BUSINE, 2002, pp. 33-4, who also calls attention to the fact that Plato presented already in the *Hippias Major* (281c) what could be considered a "proto-list" of the *sapientes* (pp. 31-2).

¹⁹ This does not imply, of course, that Plato was himself creating the legend of the Seven Wise Men, because, as said before, it should already have been present in the oral tradition.

²⁰ A reality confirmed by Plato himself (*Ti.* 20d: ὁ τῶν ἑπτὰ σοφώτατος Σόλων). If one takes into consideration that this dialogue was written after the *Protagoras*, then it becomes significant that, this time, Plato felt that it was no longer necessary to provide the whole *sylloge*. On this see A. BUSINE, 2002, p. 36.

Plato and echoed equally by Plutarch at several points of his work²¹. Periander admittedly fulfils an important function in his capacity as host, although his presence starts to vanish especially when the guests begin the eulogy of the democratic regime, to the extent that the honour of closing the banquet falls to Solon and not to the host (164c-d). In order to reach a better understanding of the more specific reasons that may lie behind this treatment, it will be useful to recall some further information concerning the life of the tyrant of Corinth.

Periander, son of Cypselus, was in power for about forty years (c. 627 to 587 BC). Under his government, Corinth reached a notable development at the economic, military and cultural levels, as can be seen by the foundation of several colonies, by important military campaigns, and by the tyrant's capacity to attract to his court poets and other artists²². This image of a successful ruler and protector of the arts, common in fact to several other tyrants of ancient Greece, should have been the reason why he was sometimes placed among the group of *sapientes*²³. On the other hand, Periander also has the image of a person given to excesses, a tradition that Plutarch could not afford to ignore, as shown by the allusions made to them in the *Convivium*. This is what happens, for example, with the practice of incest with his mother, a hideous crime that led her to commit suicide²⁴; the future uxoricide of Melissa²⁵; or even a crime as repulsive as the practice of necrophilia with his wife's corpse²⁶. This latter transgression was reinforced by other forms of equally shocking intemperance: still according to the same passage in Herodotus, Periander ordered the women of Corinth to gather in the temple of Hera, with the goal of having them stripped and all their clothes burned in order to appease the spirit of Melissa — significantly not to obtain her pardon, but to feed his continuous thirst for wealth. Although in the *Septem Sapientium Convivium* there is no tension between the two (Melissa does not even speak), Plutarch's readers were already aware of Periander's subsequent excesses and therefore knew what was going to happen to him²⁷. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that even in Herodotus there are also a few positive hints concerning Periander,

²¹ Even with notable animosity. Cf. *Dio* 9.3-8; *Arat.* 26.1-5.

²² Like Chersias of Orchomenus, known precisely from his participation in the *Septem Sapientium Convivium*.

²³ Note that, according to Diogenes Laertius (1.122), a few authors also considered Peisistratus, tyrant of Athens, one of the *sophoi*.

²⁴ Cf. *Septem Sapientium Convivium*, 146d. The incestuous relation of Periander with his mother is attributed by Diogenes Laertius (1.96) to Aristippus. Parthenius (*Erotika Pathemata* 17) presents a more romanticising version of the account, which bears some similarities to Apuleius' *Cupid and Psyche*.

²⁵ Cf. Herodotus, 3.50; Diogenes Laertius, 1.94.

²⁶ Herodotus, 5.92.η. 1-4.

²⁷ Something similar occurs, for example, with the indication that Aesop participated in the banquet as Croesus' envoy after the latter had sent him to the court of Periander and to the oracle of Delphi (150a). In a certain way, this detail throws a shadow of discomfort over his participation, since, according to the legend, Aesop would suffer a violent death in Delphi for having disrespected the priests of the oracle and the inhabitants of the region by accusing them of simple parasitism.

like the story of Arion and the dolphins (1.23–24), which is recovered and developed in Plutarch's *Convivium* (160e–162b). And even episodes like banishing or putting to death the most influential citizens, and burning the clothes of the Corinthian women, were sometimes interpreted as reflecting a positive motivation: to promote social balance and implement sumptuary legislation²⁸. In fact, in the *Convivium* Plutarch does not forget to mention the detail that the tyrant told his wife to dress in a simple manner for the dinner with de Seven Wise Men (150d). This conflicting evidence suggests that there were two different traditions concerning Periander: one mainly hostile to the tyrant, which is widely detected in Herodotus, and another pervaded with more positive traits, possibly Corinthian in origin²⁹.

If one takes all these aspects into consideration, it will become quite clear that, despite the fact that Periander played an important role as host of the *Convivium*, Plutarch had to put him at a level different from the one occupied by the Seven Wise Men. At any rate, the relationship with the *sapientes* helped Periander — who inherited the tyranny as if it was a disease (147c) — to exercise power in a more moderate fashion, at least in the initial phase of his government³⁰. Although Plutarch concedes him some deference along with the interventions he makes during the *symposion*, the tyrant of Corinth thus fails to exhibit the serenity characteristic of someone who is at peace with his conscience, certainly because of the excesses already perpetrated, which constitute a clear sign that he will continue to reveal in the future the same propensity to immoderation. As such, he keeps living in fear of the deity he knows he has offended (146d) and this leads him to anxiety and superstitious terror, visible at the moment a shepherd carries a new-born centaur to the gardens of the palace (149c–e). Even if Thales' rationalism helps him to dispel, at least temporarily, the shadow of apprehension, it is a matter of fact that the qualms manifested by Diocles will find their confirmation in the time to come³¹. Periander also tries to overcome, with apotropaic rituals directed to

²⁸ See J. B. SALMON, 1997, pp. 46–65. Aristotle (*Pol.* 5.1311a20–22; 5.1313a40) tells the story of 'lopping off the heads' (an advice that according to him was given by Periander and not by Thrasybulus, as sustained by Herodotus) in a context where he seeks to exemplify the excesses characteristic of tyranny. The episode is also recorded by Plutarch in the *Septem Sapientium Convivium* (147c–d). In another study, J. B. SALMON, 1984, p. 206 e n. 80, points out that, according to Diogenes Laertius (1.100) and Theodorus Metochites (p. 668 Müller), Periander was an *aisymnetes*, similar to Pittacus, but the scholar rightly considers neither of these testimonies to be trustworthy.

²⁹ See A. BUSINE, 2002, pp. 21–2, who also states (p. 73) that Ephorus was one of the authors responsible for partially rehabilitating Periander as politician.

³⁰ V. PARKER, 1998, pp. 166–7, calls attention to the fact that, when considering the different ways of reaching tyranny, Aristotle does not discuss the case of those (Periander of Corinth, Pindarus of Ephesus, Hippias of Athens and Polycrates of Samos) who inherited power from their fathers, a factor that would make their political position closer, in a certain way, to the status of *basileus*.

³¹ Diocles advised the tyrant to make purifications in order to appease the deity (Aphrodite) that once again manifested herself because of the incestuous relations of Periander with his mother. As remarked above, the tyrant will end up killing his wife and losing all his children

Aphrodite and Poseidon (146d, 160d), the fear generated by the warnings he keeps receiving through dreams and oracles, but that will not be enough to dry up the seeds of disgrace that are still feeding from his acts and shall, sooner or later, fructify.

To conclude: Plutarch seems to have been sensitive to the position Periander held in the tradition of the Seven Wise Men and, because of that, he decided to characterize him as someone close to the *sophoi*, by giving him the role of host in the meeting of the *sapientes*, at an early stage of his government. Nevertheless, the author's reservations about tyranny (inherited from Plato) and the awareness of the fact that Periander carried along with him the image of deeply shocking excesses must have led Plutarch to the decision that the tyrant was not suitable to be part of the core of Sages, contrary to what happened with Pittacus and Cleoboulus, due to the reasons discussed above.

At any rate, the presence in the group of *sophoi* of several figures connected with autocratic regimes must represent a sign of the antiquity of this tradition. In fact, the animosity towards tyranny as such was certainly not present at the earlier stages of the legend³². The odious character of the term is mainly a consequence of the Thirty Tyrants' oppressive and violent behaviour when they ruled over Athens in 404. Plato already records this growing acrimony that was to be transmitted to later tradition and finds a clear expression in Plutarch's *Convivium*. However, two of these figures were able to fulfil enough conditions to keep being considered part of the group, either owing to personal merits (Pittacus) or due to the positive influence of a close relative (Cleoboulus). In Periander's case, however, the shadow of domestic excesses severely dimmed the light of his political, military and cultural achievements, to the extent that Plutarch was no longer able to recognize in him the entire dignity of a fully-fledged *sophos*.

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(both legitimate and illegitimate), to the point of being forced to leave the throne to his nephew, Psammetichus. Psammetichus would then take the name Cypselus II, meeting his death only three years after having reached power, thus putting an end to the dynasty of the Cypselids. Cf. Herodotus, 3.50-53.

³² In the first occurrence of the term (frg. 19 WEST of Archilochus), tyranny is considered to be 'powerful' 'great' (μεγάλη), and even in the second half of the V century the words *tyrannos* and *tyrannis* are still used with the meaning of 'king' 'sovereign' 'wealth' 'power', although the negative tones are also detectable already in an early phase (frg. 33 West of Solon). On this see V. PARKER, 1998.

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LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

ALDO SETAIOLI is professor emeritus at the University of Perugia. His scholarly activity centers on Latin literature but he also devotes constant attention to Greek literature. He has devoted books and papers on Seneca, Virgil, Servius, Petronius, as well as to many other authors and problems.

ÁLIA ROSA C. RODRIGUES translated the seventh book of the *Quaestiones Coniuvales* and assists the scholars working on the Portuguese *Plutarch Project*. Moreover, she is preparing a translation of the *Life of Fabius Maximus*. At the moment, she is working on her master's thesis on *Poetics and Hermeneutics* and is also a collaborator on the *Ancient Women's Dictionary*. She is about to start her PhD thesis on Plutarch's *Lives of Lycurgus and Numa*.

ANA VICENTE SÁNCHEZ is Assistant Professor of Greek Philology at the University of Zaragoza (Spain) and has done research on Greek epistolography, the history of the Greek language and late antique literature.

ANASTASIOS G. NIKOLAIDIS, Ph.D (London, King's College) is Professor of Classics at the University of Crete, Greece. His research interests and publications comprise Plutarch (mostly), Greek and Roman historiography (Herodotos, Thukydidēs, Sallust, Tacitus), Greek and Roman ethics (Platon, Aristoteles, Seneca), and Latin love elegy (Ovid).

ANTONIO IGNACIO MOLINA MARÍN is Doctor of Ancient History at Murcia University, Spain. He has done research on the history of ancient Macedonia (Alexander the Great) and Greek geography.

AURELIO PÉREZ JIMÉNEZ is Professor of Greek Philology at the University of Málaga, Spain. He has been president of the Spanish Plutarch Society ever since its foundation in 1987, and presided over the International Plutarch Society from 2002 to 2005. Among his works on Plutarch are Spanish translations of fourteen Lives (1985, 1996, 2006) and the edition of the *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate* (2008) for the *Corpus Plutarchi Moraliū*.

CARLOS A. MARTINS DE JESUS is a PhD student at the University of Coimbra and fellow of the Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia (FCT). He is currently working on Greek literature and myths, while preparing his PhD thesis on Bacchylides. Among other things, he is the author of several books and papers on Greek archaic poetry. He has also translated into Portuguese Archilochus' fragments, Aristophanes' *Wasps* and Epictetus' *Encheiridion*. As for Plutarch, besides some papers in national and international conferences, he has translated books 4 and 6 of *Table Talk*, *Amatorius* and *Amatoriae Narrationes*, and is now working on a Portuguese version of the *Life of Themistocles*.

DÁMARIS ROMERO GONZÁLEZ is a postdoctoral researcher at the Institute for Textual Scholarship and Electronic Editing at Birmingham University, England. Her research fields are Plutarch, women in antiquity and the semantics of the New Testament.

DELFIN LEÃO is professor of Classics at the University of Coimbra. He has a deep interest in law, politics and the constitutional history of ancient Greece, as well as in theatrical practice and the Roman novel. He is one of the editors (together with E. M. Harris and P. J. Rhodes) of *Law and Drama in Ancient Greece* (Duckworth, forthcoming).

ERAN ALMAGOR is a post-doctoral scholar based at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel. His PhD dissertation (2007) was a historical and literary commentary on Plutarch's *Life of Artaxerxes*. He is interested in Achaemenid history, ancient ethnography, narratology in Plutarch and perceptions of the "other" in ancient Classical and Jewish literature.

FRANCES B. TITCHENER is Professor of History and Classics at Utah State University, USA. She has published research on the development of biography and autobiography, as well as the works of Plutarch. She serves as International Coordinator of the International Plutarch Society and co-editor of its journal, *Ploutarchos*.

FRANCESCA MESTRE has been Tenured Lecturer of Greek Philology at the University of Barcelona since 1988. Her main fields of study are Greek Literature in the Roman Empire, the Second Sophistic, authors such as Lucian, Plutarch and Philostratus, historiography, and Hellenism. Since 2001 she has led the research group "Graecia Capta" on Greek culture under the Roman Empire.

FRANCESCO BECCHI is professor of Greek Language and Literature at Florence University ("G. Pasquali" Dept. of Ancient Classics), Italy. He studied ethical literature in its historical development from the classical to imperial age (Theophrastus, Stoics, Posidonius, Middle Platonism, Alcinous, Peripatetics, Aspasius, Neopythagoreans, Plutarch of Chaeronea, Alexander of Aphrodisias, Galenus). Among his works on Plutarch, he has published a critical edition with introduction, translation and commentary of the *De virtute morali* and of the *De fortuna*.

FRANCO FERRARI is full professor of the history of ancient philosophy at the University of Salerno. He has a PhD in Philosophy (University of Torino: 1993) and in History (University of San Marino: 1997). He was Alexander-von-Humboldt Fellow at the University of Münster in Germany (1997-1999), where he worked on the project "Der Platonismus in der Antike" directed by Matthias Baltes. Since 1999 he has been teaching at the University of Salerno.

He is member of the Editorial Board of the International Plato Society and of the Academia Platonica.

FREDERICK E. BRENK is Emeritus Professor of the Greek and Roman Background of the Old and New Testament at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome. He has written many articles on Plutarch, in particular on the *Moralia*, and several monographs treating Plutarch, along with Greek and Roman literature, religion, and philosophy, especially during the first century.

GEERT ROSKAM is research professor at K.U. Leuven. He has published extensively on Hellenistic and Middle Platonist philosophy, including *On the Path to Virtue. The Stoic Doctrine of Moral Progress and its Reception in (Middle-) Platonism* (2005), *Lathe biôsas. On the Vicissitudes of an Epicurean Doctrine* (2007), *A Commentary on Plutarch's De latenter vivendo* (2007), and *Plutarch's Maxime cum principibus philosopho esse disserendum. An Interpretation with Commentary* (2009).

GENNARO D'IPPOLITO teaches Greek literature at the Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia of the University of Palermo. He has published widely on poetry (Homer and the minor poets, Mimnermus, Euripides, Callimachus, Pantaleon, Gregory of Nazianzus, Synesius, Tryphiodorus, Nonnus, Kavafis, Seferis, Elytis) and, in the area of prose writing, on the novel and especially on Plutarch. He has participated in 15 conferences on Plutarch and is a Council member of the Italian section of the IPS. Moreover, he is co-director of the *Corpus Plutarchi Moraliūm*, which is being published at Naples.

ISRAEL MUÑOZ GALLARTE is PhD Researcher of Greek Religion at Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, The Netherlands. He has done research on semantic of New Testament Greek and on Plutarch, esp. on historical and religious topics.

JAMES T. CHLUP is Assistant Professor of Ancient History at the University of Manitoba. In addition to Plutarch, his research interests include Greek and Latin historiography and the Roman Middle East. He has written articles on Thucydides and Livy, and is currently working on a commentary on Plutarch's *Life of Crassus*.

JEFFREY BENEKER is assistant professor of Classics at the University of Wisconsin in Madison.

JEROEN LAUWERS is currently preparing his PhD as a research assistant of the Research Foundation Flanders. His research revolves around authorial self-representation and the use of authority in Imperial Greek Literature (the era of the so-called 'Second Sophistic'), with a particular interest in Maximus of Tyre.

JOAQUIM J. S. PINHEIRO is Assistant Professor of Classics and Humanistic Studies at Madeira University, Portugal. In 2007 he finished his PhD thesis on *Time and Space of Paideia in Plutarch's Lives*. Presently he is member of the Project *Plutarch and the Founding of an European Identity* and he also conducts research in Greek literature and culture, especially on political thought, education and rhetoric.

JOSÉ ANTONIO FERNÁNDEZ DELGADO is Professor of Greek Philology at the University of Salamanca (Spain). He has been the head of nine research projects financed by the Spanish Ministry and the Government of Castilla and León, by which his research team has been recognised as Group of Excellence. He has supervised ten Ph. D. Theses, has participated in more than 30 International Congresses, and has occupied important posts in the University Government. He has done research mainly on Hesiod and Archaic and Classical poetry, on different texts about Greek education, on school influence on Greek literature, and on Plutarch from this and other points of view.

JOSEFA FERNÁNDEZ ZAMBUDIO works on the web page <http://interclassica.um.es>, which is concerned with the study and diffusion of the ancient Greek and Roman worlds. She has done research on ancient biography, especially the *Lives* of Homer and Alexander the Great, and is currently working on the influence of ancient mythology in Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz.

JOSÉ MARÍA CANDAU MORÓN is Professor of Greek Philology at Seville University, Spain. He has done research on Greek historiography, Plutarch and Julian the Apostate and has published translations into Spanish of Zosimus, Cassius Dio and Polybius.

JOSÉ VELA TEJADA is Permanent Professor of Greek Philology at the University of Zaragoza, Spain. He has done research on the history of the Greek language (koiné and atticism), Greek historiography, especially Xenophon, and on Plutarch by attending five conferences of the IPS, contributing to the Studies in honour of Prof. Stadter and editing the Proceedings of the 5th Spanish Conference of the IPS.

LAWRENCE KIM is Assistant Professor of Classics at the University of Texas at Austin. His research focuses on Greek literature under the Roman Empire and his publications include articles on the ancient novel, Strabo, Dio Chrysostom, and Atticism. His book, *Homer between History and Fiction in Imperial Greece* is forthcoming from Cambridge University Press.

LLUÍS GONZÀLEZ JULIÀ is preparing his PhD thesis at the University of Barcelona, Spain, on Lucian's declamations. He conducts research on ancient education, rhetoric, and declamation.

LUKAS DE BLOIS has been since 1980 professor of ancient history at the Radboud University of Nijmegen in The Netherlands. He published books and articles on the history of the Roman Empire in the third century A.D., the history of the Late Roman Republic, ancient historiography (Sallust, Tacitus, Cassius Dio), Plutarch's works, and Greek Sicily in the fourth century B.C. He has also published a manual, together with R.J. van der Spek (English ed.: L. de Blois & R.J. van der Spek, *Introduction to the Ancient World*, Routledge, London/ New York, 2nd ed. 2008, 1st ed. 1997). He is a member of the editorial board of the international network Impact of Empire (Roman Empire, 200 B.C. – A. D. 476).

MANUEL TRÖSTER studied History and Politics at Trier, London, and Cambridge, writing his doctoral thesis on *Themes, Character, and Politics in Plutarch's Life of Lucullus* (Stuttgart, 2008). He currently holds a postdoctoral fellowship funded by the DAAD at Coimbra University. His principal fields of research are Roman Republican history, Plutarch's *Lives*, and foreign relations in the ancient and modern worlds.

MARIA LEONOR SANTA BÁRBARA is professor of Greek and Greek Literature at the Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas of the Universidade Nova de Lisboa. She is also responsible for the research group of Studies on Antiquity, at the Centro de História da Cultura of the same University. She has been working mainly on the Hellenistic age, namely on the *Greek Anthology*.

MARK BECK is Assistant Professor of Classics at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, South Carolina, USA. He has published numerous articles on Plutarch and is currently working on a monograph *Distinguishing the Individual: Ideology and Individuality in Ancient Greek Biography* and is editor of the forthcoming *Blackwell Companion to Plutarch*.

MARTA ISABEL DE OLIVEIRA VÁRZEAS is professor of Classical Studies at the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Oporto. Her area of research covers Greek Literature, Rhetoric and Poetics.

NUNO SIMÕES RODRIGUES has a PhD in Classical History and is Professor of Classical History at the University of Lisbon. He has published *Mitos e Lendas da Roma Antiga* (Lisboa, 2005) and *Iudaei in Vrbe. Os Judeus em Roma do tempo de Pompeio ao tempo dos Flávios* (Lisboa, 2007).

PAOLA VOLPE CACCIATORE is Professor of Greek at Salerno University, Italy. She has done research on Byzantine philology, Attic theater, Plutarch and humanistic translations from Greek texts. At present, she is engaged in the critical edition of Aeschylus' *Persae*. She is President of the Italian section of the International Plutarch Society.

PHILIP A. STADTER is Professor of Classics Emeritus at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He has published extensively on Greek historical authors, especially Plutarch, including *A Commentary on Plutarch's Pericles* (Chapel Hill, 1989), *Plutarch and the Historical Tradition* (London, 1992) and introductions and notes to *Plutarch, Nine Greek Lives* (Oxford, 1998) and *Plutarch, Eight Roman Lives* (Oxford, 1999).

PILAR GÓMEZ has been Tenured Lecturer of Greek Philology at the University of Barcelona since 1988. She has published on the Greek fable and Aesop, as well as on Plutarch, Lucian and the Second Sophistic. She is a member of the research group “Graecia Capta”.

RODOLFO GONZÁLEZ EQUIHUA is currently studying for his Ph.D. degree at the University of Salamanca. He is working on the reception of the full progymnasmata in Heliodoros.

RODOLFO LOPES is a researcher in the Centro de Estudos Clássicos e Humanísticos at the University of Coimbra. He is currently preparing a doctoral thesis on the myths of Plato.

ROOSEVELT ARAÚJO ROCHA JÚNIOR is Professor of Greek at the Universidade Federal do Paraná, in Curitiba (Paraná – Brazil). For his Ph.D. thesis, he made a translation into Portuguese of the Plutarchean work *De musica*, together with notes and a study of important aspects of this work. He is researching on ancient Greek music and archaic Greek poetry (lyric, elegy and iambus), and working on translations into Portuguese of authors such as Aristoxenus and some lyric poets (Stesichorus, Alcman, Alcaeus, etc.).

ROSARIO SCANNAPIECO has achieved a “PhD” in Classical Philology at the Università degli Studi di Salerno; his studies concern Greek prose of the Imperial period, especially Dio Chrysostom's and Plutarch's, in both its contents and textual aspects.

SIMONE BETA is currently Research Assistant of Classical Philology in the Department of Classical Studies at the University of Siena (Italy). His research interests include classical theatre (mainly Greek comedy and its reception), Greek epigrams and novels, rhetoric, wine, and symposium. He is the author of *Il linguaggio nelle commedie di Aristofane* (Rome, 2004); he has also published *Vino e poesia. Centocinquanta epigrammi greci sul vino*, an anthology of Greek epigrams on wine (Milan, 2006), and *I comici greci*, an anthology of Greek comic fragments (Milan, 2009).

STEPHEN T. NEWMYER is Professor of Classics and Chairman of the Department of Classics at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA. He is author of a number of studies of Plutarch's attitudes toward animals, viewed

both in their ancient context and in their relation to modern animal rights philosophy.

SVEN-TAGE TEODORSSON is Professor of Greek at Göteborg University, Sweden. He has done research on the history of the Greek language (phonology), Anaxagoras' theory of matter, and on Plutarch, especially a Commentary on his Table Talks.

TIMOTHY E. DUFF is Reader in Classics at the University of Reading. His publications include *Plutarch's Lives: Exploring Virtue and Vice* (Oxford University Press 1999).

TONI BADNALL is a University Teacher in Greek Literature at the University of Nottingham, where she finished her PhD in 2008. Her research interests focus on gender in Greek literature, and her thesis examined the function of the wedding song in Greek literature and culture. This has inspired her interest in ἔρως and gender relations in later Greek prose, and her project will explore the construction of gender in Plutarch.

VALERIY ALIKIN, born in Kemerovo, Russia, is currently a PhD researcher of the Faculty of Humanities at Leiden University, Netherlands. He does research in the area of early Christianity and the Graeco-Roman world. He has several forthcoming publications on the history of early Christian gatherings and Church History.

VICENTE RAMÓN PALERM is Associate Professor (Profesor Titular) of Greek Philology at Zaragoza University, Spain. He is currently working on Greek historiography and Greek literature of the classical period. His main focus is on Plutarch. He is presently Secretary of the Spanish Section of the I.P.S.

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