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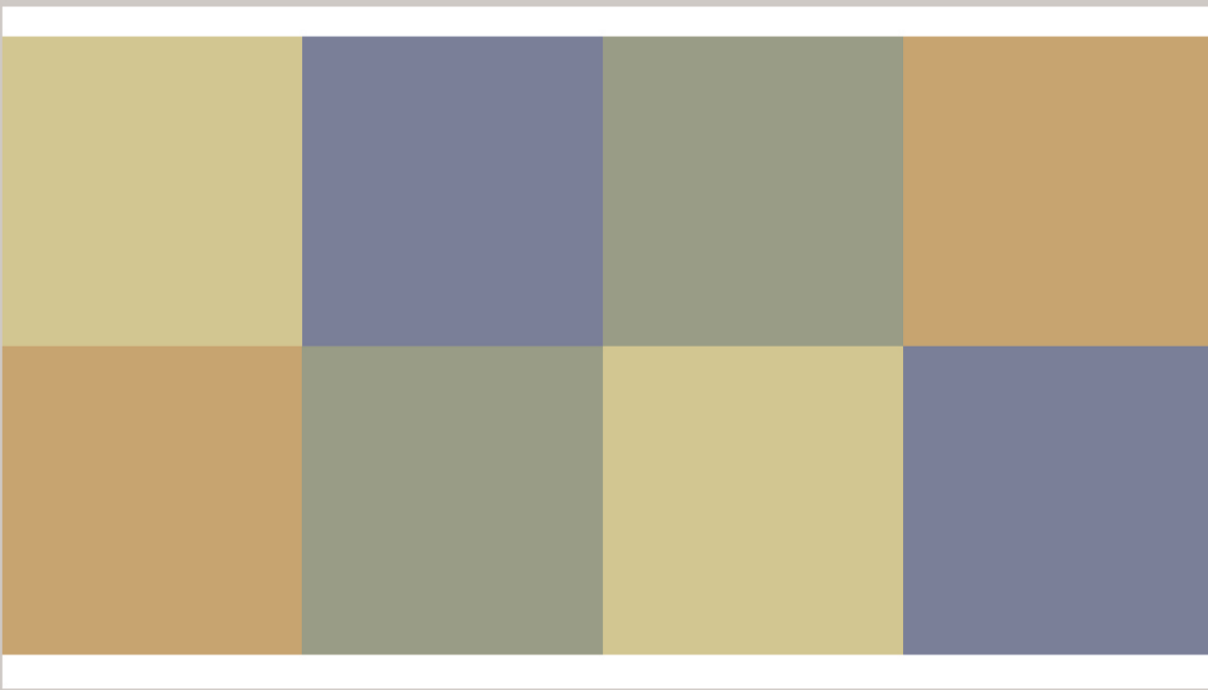
Virtues for the People

Aspects of Plutarchan Ethics

Geert Roskam and Luc Van der Stockt



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Edited by

GEERT ROSKAM and LUC VAN DER STOCKT

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Plutarch's *Lives* and the Critical Reader[1]

T.E. Duff

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

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

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

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

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

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1. The road not taken

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

> γιγνώσκω μὲν οὖν ὅτι ἐν τούτοις οὔτε δαπάνημα οὔτε κίνδυνον οὔτε μηχάνημα ἀξιόλογον οὐδὲν διηγοῦμαι· ἀλλὰ ναὶ μὰ Δία τόδε ἄξιόν μοι δοκεῖ εἶναι ἀνδρὶ ἐννοεῖν, τί ποτε ποιῶν ὁ Τελευτίας οὕτω διέθηκε τοὺς ἀρχομένους. τοῦτο γὰρ ἤδη πολλῶν καὶ χρημάτων καὶ κινδύνων ἀξιολογώτατον ἀνδρὸς ἔργον ἐστίν.
>
> Now I am aware that I am not describing here anything which cost a lot of money or was very dangerous, or any memorable stratagem. But by Zeus, it seems to me well worth a man's while to consider what sort of conduct it was that enabled Teleutias to inspire such feelings in the men he commanded. For this is the achievement of a real man, more worthy of note than large sums of money expended or dangers faced. (*Hell*. V, 1.4)

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

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

> ἐκ μέντοι γε τῶν τοιούτων παθῶν [ὡς] ἐγώ φημι ἀνθρώπους παιδεύεσθαι μάλιστα μὲν οὖν <ὡς> οὐδ' οἰκέτας χρὴ ὀργῇ κολάζειν· πολλάκις γὰρ καὶ δεσπόται ὀργιζόμενοι μείζω κακὰ ἔπαθον ἢ ἐποίησαν· ἀτὰρ ἀντιπάλοις τὸ μετ' ὀργῆς ἀλλὰ μὴ γνώμῃ προσφέρεσθαι ὅλον ἁμάρτημα. ἡ μὲν γὰρ ὀργὴ ἀπρονόητον, ἡ δὲ γνώμη σκοπεῖ οὐδὲν ἧττον μή τι πάθῃ ἢ ὅπως βλάψῃ τι τοὺς πολεμίους.

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

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

2. Telling and showing

I mention these passages not to claim that such authorial interventions are common in Xenophon[4], but rather to show the sort of thing that Plutarch could have done, had he wanted[5]. This makes all the more striking the rarity, in the body of the *Lives*, of explicit statements about what is right or wrong or attempts to guide the readers' conduct explicitly. In order to understand both what Plutarch does and does not do, let us attempt to construct a typology of examples, arranged in what we might call a descending order of explicitness.

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

---

[4] Though cf. also *Hell.* V, 4.1.

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

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Lysander, Plutarch comments on the dangers which 'ambitious natures' can pose to their societies (*Lys*. 23.3; *Ages*. 8.4). This could have been converted to an injunction: "Keep your ambition within check; don't let quarrels with others damage the community". Plutarch himself makes this injunction directly in the *Political Precepts* (809B-810A). Indeed in that text Plutarch uses Agesilaus' snubbing of Lysander as an exemplum of how young men at the start of their careers should not behave to their patrons (809F). But that is not how it is put in the *Life*: the connection between the historical data and the reader's own response is left for the reader to draw out him- or herself[6]. This is a point to which we shall return.

Similar are Plutarch's comments on the behaviour of kings in *Demetr*. 42.8-11, which begin "For nothing is so befitting for a king as the work of justice". Plutarch goes on to cite in confirmation various statements from Homer and other poets which associate kingship or godhead with justice, before criticising Demetrius for priding himself rather on the name 'Besieger'. The immediate reference is thus to Demetrius, but the present tense might encourage us to take this as a statement with more general reference[7]. Similar might be said of the comment at *Demetr*. 30, also phrased in the present tense, on how "the most worthless proof of goodwill in a mob towards kings and dynasts is the extravagant bestowal of honours". But in both cases the sense of present-day applicability is muted; although kings and dynasts still existed in Plutarch's day (Plutarch himself dedicates several works to Philopappus of Commagene), the days of the Hellenistic monarchies were over and talking here of kings[8] rather than merely rulers

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

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

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

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or those in authority would serve to distance most readers from the point being made[9].

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

Such rare authorial comments, as well as guiding the audience, also serve to construct for Plutarch a particular authorial persona[12]. This is perhaps clearer in those cases where he defends rather than

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

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

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

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

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

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

In all the cases we have mentioned so far narratorial intervention makes a very clear moral point, though the reader is not addressed directly and there is no attempt to convert the moral point into advice or injunction. However, a reader primed to think 'morally' could easily convert Plutarch's comments into injunctions and see ways that those injunctions might be applicable to his or her own life. Not, of course, one assumes, that many readers would find themselves tempted to consort with ladies of ill-repute on the acropolis of Athens (or of any other *polis*); and few might be in a position to agree upon a list of political opponents to be murdered. But more widely applicable lessons could easily be abstracted from the specific historical situation. We saw Xenophon doing this explicitly for his readers when commenting on the dangers of anger as shown by Teleutias' death. But we should note that the moral lesson in all these examples is so uncontroversial ('don't be unjust in authority', 'don't commit sacrilege', 'don't be faithless', 'don't betray your friends'), that, as Pelling has emphasised, the authorial comment merely strengthens what one may assume to have been the reaction of most readers anyway[15].

Such instances of direct judgemental comment on specific actions are, however, rare[16]. More common are passages of character-analysis

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

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

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

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

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(that is, where Plutarch describes or discusses a subject's character directly). Here too a clear narratorial, moral position can be discerned. The link between character-analysis and morality or judgement rests on the fact that for Plutarch, as for ancient writers more generally, character was itself conceived of in essentially moral terms; character-analysis thus often consists of an enumeration of virtues and vices[17]. Plutarch himself, in his famous statement at the start of the *Alexander – Caesar*, in which he declares a focus on material that will reveal character (ἦθος), glosses character in terms of "virtues and vices" (ἀρετῆς καὶ κακίας) (*Alex*. 1.2). Direct characterisation, then, usually implies a moral judgement and invites a moral reading, and Plutarch regularly uses the language of virtue and vice to describe what we might call character-traits[18]. Thus, for example, when Plutarch ascribes Camillus' success in a bitterly divided Rome to his moderation (μετριότης) and shrewdness (φρόνησις) (*Cam*. 1.4), or states that Aemilius is said to have surpassed his contemporaries in "manliness, trustworthiness, and good faith" (*Aem*. 2.6), he invokes well-known virtues[19]. In such cases it would be clear to an ancient reader, steeped in the language of virtue and vice, praise and blame, that virtues are admirable and to be imitated and vices despicable and to be both deplored and avoided[20]. Plutarch himself makes that point in several prologues, though he never says so explicitly in the body of the *Lives*. That is a step the reader is left to make for him- or herself.

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

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

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

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

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

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character or judgements of his actions are sometimes fully or partly focalised through onlookers or minor characters: we are presented with the subject in action and with judgments on that action made by those who witness it, in what Pelling has called "characterisation by reaction"[21]. As a result of this technique, an interest in morality often seems to emerge directly out of the story rather than to be imposed on it from outside. Thus, when Alexander is pressing eastwards on horseback in pursuit of Bessus, Plutarch describes how he refused water offered to him, as there was not enough for his parched men to drink. Plutarch concludes, "When his cavalry saw his self-control and high-mindedness (τὴν ἐγκράτειαν αὐτοῦ καὶ μεγαλοψυχίαν), they began shouting out for him to lead them forward with confidence and they whipped on their horses, declaring that they did not regard themselves as tired or thirsty or even as mortal as long as they had such a king" (*Alex*. 42.6-10). It is not wholly clear here to what extent the focalisation is to be taken as the narrator's or merely that of Alexander's men. But in fact there is no conflict: it is plain not only from the terms with which Alexander's behaviour is described, but also because a general's sharing in the hardships of his men was itself a stock virtue[22], that the reader is expected to consider this a virtuous act. The reactions of a group of onlookers, like a chorus in a play, guide or model the reader's reaction. And though this is not stated, most readers will feel confident that the narrator's viewpoint coincides with that of such onlookers, and that they are expected to share both[23].

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

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

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

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

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rich from being poor and very powerful from being powerless, he did not know how to set a bound to his good fortune" (*Mar*. 34.6). Similar is *Ant.* 9, where Antony's behaviour in suppressing Dolabella causes the multitude to hate him, but the good and prudent (τοῖς…χρηστοῖς καὶ σώφροσι) are said to dislike not this but his general manner of life: "they loathed his ill-timed drunkenness, his heavy expenditures, his cavorting with women…" (*Ant*. 9.2); the passage continues with a list of Antony's debaucheries, still presented as the thoughts of sensible observers[24]. As Antony's behaviour is mapped onto an uncontroversial set of stock vices, most readers would presumably identify with the good and prudent and share their disapproval. But such cases of multiple internal focalisations encourage the reader to enter into the act of judging the behaviour of the subjects themselves, even though the conclusion to which they are steered is never really in doubt[25]. They also, perhaps, serve to broaden the reader's moral perspective. Although one interpretation is privileged, many readers might not feel that the other is wholly worthless: perhaps, a reader might muse, there *was* something mildly admirable about Marius' exertions in old age, despite the fact that they revealed his inner discontent and greed, and perhaps Antony's suppression of Dolabella was distasteful, even if it was necessary. We shall have more to say about the way the *Lives* encourage the reader to *think* in the next section.

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

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

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

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the royal lands or revenues to his companions, though some, such as Perdiccas, refused to accept them; Plutarch quotes the latter's declaration that he would rather share Alexander's hopes for the future. It is clear that one of the points of this story is to indicate Alexander's generosity to his friends, a stock virtue in kings, and the way it won their devotion in return, as well as his single-minded ambition. Indeed anecdotes in Plutarch, and in ancient literature in general, tend to function in this way: that is, they tend to suggest, illustrate, confirm or amplify character traits. So it would be natural for an ancient reader to read such stories with an eye to the moral import – that is, to see them as having at their heart, as Plutarch puts it, "the revelation of virtue and vice" (*Alex.* 1.2)[26]. We might make similar comments about Plutarch's words in *Phoc.* 7 on Phocion's behaviour to Chabrias, the man who had promoted and supported him as a young man. While Chabrias was alive, Plutarch says, Phocion continued to honour and pay him respect, and after his death he took care of Chabrias' relatives, especially his wayward son, who caused him considerable trouble. Few ancient readers would have failed to see this as admirable behaviour towards a patron. Conversely, when Plutarch talks of the slaughter which Sulla wrought on Athens, so great that the blood stains were visible two hundred years later (*Sull.* 14.5-7), or of the money-grubbing of Themistocles (*Them.* 5.1-2), few readers will have failed to see both as reprehensible. But Plutarch does not say so, and leaves to the reader the work both of extracting the general moral from the particular incident and of considering how, if at all, that lesson might be relevant or applicable in their own lives[27].

3. Multivalence

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

[26] See, e.g., Stadter (1996).

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

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

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

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

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

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she is manhandled, "You are invincible, my son!". The anecdote thus points forward to Alexander's victories, though it is left unclear whether the priestess's words are to be taken as having some supernatural force (do they predict his greatness, or somehow bring it about?) or whether they merely provide a revealing comment on Alexander's character, and in so doing explain his successes. Her words also serve to characterise Alexander by bringing out his decisiveness and his refusal to take no for an answer[29]. But would all readers have seen the anecdote as redounding so simply to Alexander's credit? This incident, placed shortly after the narration of the sack of Thebes (*Alex*. 11-13), might suggest also a violent character, and a disregard for the gods[30]; it might bring to mind not only his later violence to both enemies and friends but also his demands to be treated as a god. Similar might be said of the later episode at Gordion, where Alexander, with similar violent decisiveness, cuts through the famous knot with his sword and takes upon himself the prophecy that he would become lord of Asia. To reduce anecdotes like these either to a simple, univocal message about Alexander's character, let alone to an injunction to the reader ("don't take no for an answer", perhaps?) would be to miss their wealth of significance and their potentially disturbing or destabilising aspects.

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

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

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

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

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or fear[32]. Furthermore, the claim that the Getae (Thracian or Dacian tribes) would come to Antony's aid, or that this would make much difference, must be considered doubtful at best[33]. Thus it is not entirely clear that the reader should, after all, side with Canidius. But this is presumably at least part of the point. Plutarch could have closed off any doubt by making an authorial pronouncement about what the true situation was and what Antony should have done; but by presenting the case for retreat in such a weak way, and by hinting that it may have been motivated by panic or fear rather than strict reasoning, Plutarch instead draws the reader into the dilemma faced by Antony: to stand and fight bravely or to risk accusations of cowardice by casting his hopes on an uncertain future?

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

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

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

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has *all* the Athenians fearing Alcibiades; Plutarch has thus chosen to introduce a split-focalisation and with it an element of uncertainty[34]. Finally, Plutarch himself will later distinguish objective reality from the viewpoint of the leading citizens on exactly the point made here: Alcibiades' tyrannical ambitions. They feared after his return from exile that he wanted to make himself tyrant, but, declares Plutarch, "what attitude he himself had concerning tyranny is unclear" (35.1). Plutarch thus avoids guiding the reader about how to evaluate Alcibiades. But that is presumably the point: the reader is faced with the same difficulty which faced the Athenians. And in considering that problem, the engaged reader will think about what exactly makes a good leader, what are the temptations and dangers offered to the man who embraces the *demos*, to what extent crises demand leaders who might in normal times be considered distasteful or dangerous[35].

4. Compare and contrast

This need for the reader's active involvement in weighing-up competing alternatives or priorities is in fact reinforced by the distinctive, paired structure of the *Parallel Lives*. Readers only ever approach a single *Life* as part of a book, alongside another *Life* coupled with it. The juxtaposition of two *Lives* makes differences between them particularly clear, and this double presentation encourages the readers' critical involvement, as they look at two men similar enough to be comparable, but different in both character and in the environment, culture and period in which they lived. Seeing the two men side by side encourages the reader to examine their different moral choices, the different ways they acted in the same situation or the way in which different circumstances brought the same actions to very different results[36].

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

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

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

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

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even from the start several less attractive features seem to undermine this very positive presentation, suggesting that he was extreme and over-rigid. Furthermore, while many of Cato's actions, taken one by one, seem virtuous and praiseworthy, his life as a whole seems less so. This applies even more if one looks at the results of his life within the context of the particular society in which he lived and the particular problems he faced. Indeed, the prologue to the *Phocion – Cato* invites the reader to think of this very thing: Plutarch quotes Cicero's dictum on Cato "acting as though he was a politician in Plato's Republic not among the dregs of Romulus" and declares that, like fruit that appears out of season, "Cato's old-fashioned nature, which came along after many years among corrupt lives and debased habits, had great glory and fame, but did not fit what was necessary because of the weight and size of his virtue, which were out of proportion to the immediate times" (*Phoc*. 3.2-3)[37]. Right from the prologue, then, we are encouraged to wonder whether Cato's virtue was not unsuited to the realities of political life in the late Republic. Might not Phocion's willingness to compromise his private principles for the common good, the reader is invited to ponder, have been the better course? But Phocion has no monopoly on virtue or political good-sense; he ended up murdered by the *demos* which he had spent his life trying to guide and curb. At any rate, by juxtaposing these two *Lives*, Plutarch invites the alert reader to engage in the job of weighing up their contrasting political choices[38].

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

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

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

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resisted Roman domination of Greece, the *Flamininus* (paired with the *Philopoemen*) those who brought that conquest. In fact, the whole collection of *Parallel Lives* can be regarded as a fabric of overlapping narratives, each presenting history from a slightly different angle: the late Republican *Lives* of Lucullus, Cicero, Pompey, Crassus, Cato the Younger, Caesar, Brutus and Mark Antony all cover roughly the same ground, but each gives slightly different emphases and each focalises the narrative through a different figure[39]; similarly with, e.g., *Themistocles* and *Aristides*, or *Nicias* and *Alcibiades*. The notion that the *Lives* give us a series of overlapping narratives, distinguished by their differing focalisations, takes us back to the point we made earlier about the tendency within individual *Lives* for some of the moral judgements to be focalised through observers rather than stated as authorial comment. In all cases, a discerning, critical reader is presupposed.

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

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

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ways of evaluating the subjects of the two *Lives* which have preceded, which the reader is left to evaluate[40].

In most *synkriseis*, furthermore, there is no resolution, no final decision about which man should be considered more admirable, or which of their virtues should be imitated. Of those five *synkriseis* which do conclude with a closing judgement, four invite the reader to judge for themselves whether they agree or disagree. For example, the *synkrisis* to the *Agis/Cleomenes – Gracchi* ends: "You yourself can see [συνορᾷς μὲν οὖν καὶ αὐτός] the difference [between them] from what has been said. But if it is necessary to set forth a decision about each one, I vote [τίθημι][41] that Tiberius was first of all of them in virtue…" (*Comp. Ag., Cleom. et Gracch.* 5.7)[42]. These cases make explicit what is implicit in the other *synkriseis*, that is, the invitation to the reader to participate in the act of judging. In all cases the point is not that readers come down in favour of one man or the other but that, by thinking for themselves and weighing the two men against each other, they gain greater insights into both and become practised in the art of moral thought. Similar can be said for the one case of a *synkrisis* which ends with a strident closing judgement without any hedging or address to the reader, the *Coriolanus – Alcibiades*. Here the *synkrisis* argues consistently for the superiority of Alcibiades, a judgement which seems not inconsistent with the two *Lives* themselves. But the final lines contain an unexpected reversal: "These are the things about which one might accuse the man [Coriolanus]. But all the rest are brilliant. For temperance and financial self-control it is right to compare him with the best and purest of the Greeks, not with Alcibiades, who, by Zeus, became in these matters the most audacious of men and who most despised what is good" (*Comp. Cor. et Alc*. 5.2). The very inconsistency of this judgement compared with what went before invites the readers to play their own parts in assessing the two men[43].

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

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

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

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

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5. *The critical reader in the* Moralia

One might argue that talking of critical, sophisticated readers is merely to mount a rather desperate defence of, or to try to put as good a face as possible on, passages or texts which might otherwise seem confusing and inconsistent[44]. Is there any other evidence that Plutarch expected the kind of sophisticated readers whom we have imagined or indeed that ancient texts were ever read in this way?

First, the prologues to several pairs of *Lives* refer to or invite the reader's active participation. The prologue to the *Aemilius – Timoleon* presents history as a mirror in which Plutarch, and by implications his reader, "adorns" his life and attempts "to make it like their virtues" (*Aem.* 1.1): the image of the mirror suggests a complex process of observation, comparison and self-criticism[45]. At the start of the *Demetrius – Antony* Plutarch argues that discrimination or, as he puts it, "the power to make distinctions" (τὴν περὶ τὰς κρίσεις…δύναμιν, *Demetr.* 1.1), is what marks out our rational capacity; the senses, Plutarch argues, must passively receive all stimuli, but we can direct our minds where we will. It is this power of discrimination, he continues, which enables us to benefit from examples of bad conduct as much as good, as we can judge the correct response to each (1.1-5). In making this argument Plutarch sets up a contrast between casual readers, who read merely for pleasure, and serious readers who self-consciously choose material that will benefit them, and are able to distinguish what behaviour to avoid and what to imitate[46]. The prologue to the *Pericles – Fabius* makes a similar point about our ability to focus attention on what we choose, claiming that the object of our attention should be virtuous deeds, from which we may learn morally. Towards the end of that

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

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

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

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

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prologue Plutarch talks of how the study of the virtuous deeds of the past "forms the spectator's character not through imitation but through the investigation of the deed [τῇ ἱστορίᾳ τοῦ ἔργου]". What Plutarch calls ἱστορία here probably refers both to the author's research and narrative and to the reader's own thoughtful analysis and reflection[47]. This sense of the reader's active involvement in a mutual investigation, in which he or she does the work of assessing and judging the moral character of the subjects and responds actively to the text through which these subjects are presented, recurs in the very final words of that prologue. After running through briefly some of the similarities in character between Pericles and Fabius, Plutarch concludes by inviting the reader's own participation: "But whether we aim correctly at what we should it is possible [*sc*. for you] to judge [κρίνειν] from my account" (*Per*. 2.5). Several other prologues end with an explicit or implied invitation to the reader to play an active part in assessing the *Lives* of the two men which follow[48].

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

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

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

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

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

Furthermore, many ancient readers will have been familiar with texts which present them with conflicting positions or arguments that demanded the reader to make a judgement: *agones* in tragedy, for example, or paired speeches in history, the dialogue form in philosophy, or that staple of Greek rhetorical education, the declamation[51]. Declamations often took key moments in history, or counter-factuals drawn from history, and presented the reader with knotty problems or dilemmas. For example, the fourth-century AD orator Sopater suggests topics such as, "A prize is available for the best generals, and Eurybiades and Themistocles dispute it" (5.92.28 Walz) or "The enemy put up a statue of Pericles, and he is tried for treachery" (5.55.2). Declamations cast audiences as judges of the speeches given before them, often in pairs arguing opposing cases, which they were expected to weigh critically. One of the most ambitious sets of such declamations is Aelius Aristides' second-century AD 'Leuctrian' orations: not two, but five speeches, imagined as delivered in the Athenian assembly in 370 BC, in which the first and third argue in favour of Athens' allying with Sparta against Thebes, the second and fourth in favour of her allying with Thebes against Sparta, and the fifth in favour of neutrality (*Or.* 11-15)[52]. The audience here plays the part of the assembly, which after listening to the speeches, will, in this sophisticated role-play, decide the issue.

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

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

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

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

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who deprive animals of reason and intelligence" (985C). The frame is important in making clear how the whole is expected to work: the reader is presented with an unresolved conflict between opposing arguments, but the result is to reinforce a notion common to both. This provides a good indication of the purpose of the unresolved questions in the *Lives* or their *synkriseis*: the reader's moral sensibilities are deepened by being exposed to conflicting viewpoints and drawn into the work of assessing or resolving them. But the broader context of moral thought is never in doubt[53].

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

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

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their artistic or literary achievements. Few readers can have read this without considering in their own minds the opposite case[54].

Finally, in his *How the young man should listen to poems* Plutarch himself argues for the kind of active reader which we have imagined[55]. In this text, Plutarch accepts that there is much in poetry that may be harmful to the young reader but does not counsel that poetry should be kept from the young, just as Plato had wished to expel poetry from his ideal state. Instead, he advises that the young should be taught to read carefully and critically. They should recognise that not everything the poet says is true (16A-17F), and that the poet's representing of bad behaviour does not imply that he approves of it (17F-18F). When they come across bad behaviour, they should pay attention to the 'hints' (ἐμφάσεις) that the poet gives as to its correct evaluation (19A). They should look for contradictions (20C-21D) and consider what they read in the light of the words of the philosophers (21D-22A). They should realise that heroes or gods do not always do the right thing, and be ready to recognise when they do not (25E ff). "One should be habituated", Plutarch advises, "to shouting out boldly 'wrong' and 'badly done' as much as 'right' and 'well done'" (26B).

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

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

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

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

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> interpretive skills. To be sure, students are expected to evaluate each episode according to a set of high-minded ethical criteria, to which Plutarch himself no doubt subscribed. But the moral standard serves in practice as a stimulus to ingenuity… The way to make poetry safe is to create a sophisticated and questioning audience for it[56].

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

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

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[56] Konstan (2004), 20.

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

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ποιητικῆς ἐπὶ φιλοσοφίαν προπέμπηται]" (37B)[58]. In the *Lives*, Plutarch expects more mature readers who, by applying their critical faculties, are able to read history philosophically, that is, to see in the *Lives* of the great men of the past a stimulus to their own critical reflection[59]. As Plutarch once puts it in another context, they are to use "history as material for philosophy"[60].

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

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

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

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List of abbreviations

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BT *Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana*
CCAG *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum*
CPM *Corpus Plutarchi Moralium*
CUF *Collection des Universités de France*
DK H. Diels – W. Kranz (eds.), *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Dublin – Zurich, 1966-1967.
HCT A.W. Gomme – A. Andrewes – K.J. Dover, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides* i-v, Oxford, 1945-1981.
KG R. Kühner – B. Gerth, *Ausführliche Grammatik der griechischen Sprache. Zweiter Teil: Satzlehre*, Hannover, 1966 [= Hannover – Leipzig, 1898-1904].
LCL *Loeb Classical Library*
LSJ H.G. Liddell – R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th edn., rev. H. Stuart Jones, with a revised supplement, Oxford, 1996.
OCD *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*
PG *Patrologia graeca*
RE G. Wissowa (and others) (ed.), *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, München – Stuttgart, 1893-1980.
SR G. Giannantoni, *Socratis et Socraticorum reliquiae*, Napoli, 1990.
SVF J. von Arnim (ed.), *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* [indices by M. Adler], Leipzig, 1903-1924.
TrGF B. Snell – R. Kannicht – S. Radt (eds.), *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, Göttingen, 1977-2004.

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Abstracts

1. *Virtues for the people*

L. Van der Stockt, *Semper duo, numquam tres*? Plutarch's *Popularphilosophie* on friendship and virtue in *On Having Many Friends*

De amicorum multitudine (On Having Many Friends) is a short text that starts 'playfully' with a witty anecdote, treats the practical problem of the role of friendship in daily life, and ends with a clear-cut summary of the communicated instruction. K. Ziegler classified Plutarch's *On Having Many Friends* as 'Popularphilosophie' for good reasons.

The contribution at hand first sketches the goals and procedures of eighteenth-century German 'Popularphilosophie', and then explores the interaction of philosophical tenets with rhetorical invasiveness in this particular Plutarchan 'lecture'. It makes it clear that Plutarch's rhetorical techniques (as they are also discernible in his *hypomnemata*) as well as his partial representation of traditional philosophical tenets (especially Aristotle) create a positive and stimulating pedagogy. More than Themistius' *On Friendship* (*Or*. 22), the lecture seems to address a youthful audience, appealing to its self-esteem; more than Maximus' *Friendship and Virtue* (*Or*. 35), it testifies to the confidence that the (idealized) friendship is within reach.

Chr. Pelling, What is popular about Plutarch's 'popular philosophy'?

This paper addresses two questions: *what* is popular philosophy, that is, does Plutarch conceive of it as different from other sorts of ethics, and, if so, *whom* is this philosophy for? It approaches these issues obliquely through the *Lives*, and concentrates particularly on questions of politics. Some passages, especially the encounter of Solon and Croesus, suggest that there are particular occupational hazards which the rich and famous face; Plutarch's adaptation of Herodotus there highlights a sort of wisdom that is 'reasonable' and 'popular' (*metrios* and *demotikos*). However, there is no idealisation of 'simple things', no suggestion that ordinary people have an instinctive understanding which their leaders may lack, and 'popular wisdom' certainly does not involve doing whatever the *demos* wants. The *demos* needs leadership, in *Solon-Publicola* as, for instance, in *Pericles, Nicias*, and the *Praecepta Rei Publicae Gerendae.* So the ethics of leadership may be different from those of the people themselves; the people's prejudices and lack of insight may have to be manipulated and exploited, and that may even mean that different behaviour is right for politicians in different cities. Where the *demos* is praised, as in its reaction to the disaster of Cannae in *Fabius*, it is for responding to the right lead. Proper *paideia* is necessary for such leadership, but the philosophical face occupational hazards too, and men like Dion, Cato, and Thales may lose contact with the need for compromise that lesser intellects may grasp; it may also be part of Plutarch's own self-characterisation that he projects his ability to strike different notes at different times and in different works. Such 'popular philosophy' is certainly open to the good and great, who may be helped to avoid occupational hazards; but the

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more regular target audience is probably, as so often in literature of this period, the elite *pepaideumenos*, who himself has to prepare to give the leadership that ordinary people require.

T.E. Duff, Plutarch's *Lives* and the critical reader

This paper analyses the kind of reader constructed in the *Lives* and the response expected of that reader. It begins by attempting a typology of moralising in the *Lives*. Plutarch does sometimes make general 'gnomic' statements about right and wrong, and occasionally passes explicit judgement on a subject's behaviour. In addition, the language with which Plutarch describes character is inherently moralistic; and even when he does not pass explicit judgement, Plutarch can rely on a common set of notions about what makes behaviour virtuous or vicious.

The application of any moral lessons, however, is left to the reader's own judgement. Furthermore, Plutarch's use of multiple focalisations means that the reader is sometimes presented with varying ways of looking at the same individual or the same historical situation. In addition, many incidents or anecdotes are marked by 'multivalence'; that is, they resist reduction to a single moral message or lesson. In such cases, the reader is encouraged to exercise his or her own critical faculties. Indeed, the prologues which precede many pairs of *Lives* and the *synkriseis* which follow them sometimes explicitly invite the reader's participation in the work of judging. The syncritic structure of the *Parallel Lives* also invites the reader's participation, as do the varying perspectives provided by a corpus of overlapping *Lives*.

In fact, the presence of a critical, engaged reader is presupposed by the agonistic nature of much of Greek literature, and of several texts in the *Moralia* which stage opposing viewpoints or arguments. Plutarch himself argues for such a reader in his *How the Young Man Should Listen to Poems.*

P. Desideri, Greek *poleis* and the Roman Empire: nature and features of political virtues in an autocratic system

This contribution aims at assessing the particular features which mark Plutarch's idea of the perfect statesman: better said, of the perfect Greek statesman in a situation of autocratic external control of the city-state, *i.e.*, in the context of the Roman imperial age in which Plutarch himself lived. Plutarch is well aware of the great differences which exist between contemporary and past conditions of political life in Greece, and strongly recommends his readers not to forget them. The main point, as one can easily recollect from the author's *Praecepta rei publicae gerendae*, is that there is no foreign political activity any longer to be carried out by the Greek *poleis* of present times; as a consequence, the politician's job is confined just to finding the best way to ensure his community's loyalty to the Roman Empire, guaranteeing its internal order and safety. This is not to say that this is an easy job. First of all, the modern Greek statesman cannot be allowed to emphasise, in order to strengthen the political feelings of his community, or, incidentally, to promote his own career, the great military accomplishments and virtues of the glorious Greek past; on the contrary, he will carefully stress episodes of friendly behaviour inside the *polis* and among different *poleis*: much less exciting models, indeed, to be proposed to the masses. In these conditions it is difficult to emerge suddenly as a great leader, and it is much safer to grow slowly, prefer-

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ably in the shadow of some successful politician of a former generation, which means, uncomfortably, to arrive at the most important political positions in old age. But apart from anything else, governing Greek *poleis* at that time implied steady confrontation with the symbols of the Roman central government in one's region: that is, with the Roman governors who in fixed times followed one another in the single provinces of the Empire, supervising the correct working of the Roman administrative system therein. The problems which came out of this situation are keenly felt by Plutarch, as well as by other Greek political writers of the period (such as Dio). Plutarch strongly underlines that the Greek statesman must absolutely reaffirm his own and his *polis*' dignity in any circumstance, but at the same time he is fully convinced that only concord among the well-to-do can really be a good solution for such problems.

J.C. Capriglione, Del satiro che voleva baciare il fuoco (o *Come trarre vantaggio dai nemici*)

Plutarch was himself thoroughly familiar with political praxis as well as with so many politicians whose experience he took into account when addressing various writings to them. The little pamphlet *How to profit from one's enemies* explores and promotes the art of taking advantage of the wickedness and the malevolence of our enemies. Those enemies offer the best possible motive for leading an irreproachable life, a life guided by *sophrosynè*, that makes the other virtues instrumental. Indeed, Plutarch's pragmatic advice is not only about our control over our own passions, but also about controlling our enemies, about making them silent and impotent. Plutarch's advice is thus ethical and at the same time social: he has in mind an *ethos* that makes us moral subjects capable of assessing the margins of transgression in the varying circumstances, and of moving into the direction of what is best in a given situation. It is not so much an abstract Idea of the Good that inspires Plutarch's advice, but an uncertain code that is always *in fieri*.

L. Van Hoof, Plutarch's 'Diet-ethics'. *Precepts of Healthcare* between diet and ethics

In antiquity, the question of what constitutes a healthy regimen was the object of a fierce debate among doctors, athletic trainers, and philosophers. When writing his *Precepts of Healthcare* (*De tuenda sanitate praecepta*), Plutarch's authority was therefore far from self-evident. As the opening dialogue of the text makes clear, the author not only reveals himself to be acutely aware of this challenge, but also eager to take it up. This article examines the nature of Plutarch's healthcare programme, and analyses some important strategies used in order to promote this 'diet-*ethical*' advice in dialogue with competing views on healthcare.

2. Some theoretical questions on ethical praxis

H.M. Martin, Plutarchan morality: *arete, tyche*, and non-consequentialism

This essay begins with an examination of *Demosthenes* 12.7-13.6, where Plutarch extols Demosthenes for consistently advocating in his public policy the principle that Athens should do what is right (*to kalon*), regardless of the consequences.

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This moral position is then contrasted with consequentialism, 'the view that all actions are right or wrong in virtue of the value of their consequences'. Various passages in the *Lives* and the *Moralia* are successively analysed in order to present the Platonic essence of the morality extolled in the *Demosthenes* and to emphasise the non-consequentialism of such morality: *Pericles* 1-2, *De Iside et Osiride* 351CD, *De sollertia animalium* 960A-965B, *De facie* 942F-945D, *De sera numinis vindicta* 550DE, *Phocion* 1.4-6, *Dion* 1.1-2. Special attention is paid to *to kalon* as the term and concept that stands at the heart of Plutarch's moral thought and links it inextricably to Plato's. The essay then shifts to an array of passages in the *Lives* in which Plutarch assumes a consequentialist position, in that he advocates or approves the notion that expediency (*to sympheron*) must have precedence over what is right (*to dikaion*) when the welfare of one's country is at stake: *Phocion* 32.1-9, *Theseus-Romulus* 6.1-5, *Themistocles* 3.5-4.4, *Aristides* 13.2 and 25.1-3, *Cimon* 2.5, *Nicias-Crassus* 4.3-4. Finally, this inconsistency in Plutarch's moral thought is explained as the expression of something that is actually a common feature of human experience, and as a reflection of his unguarded reaction to the moral dilemmas he personally faced when he gazed into the mirror of history and evaluated the conduct of the subjects of the *Lives*.

J. Opsomer, Virtue, fortune, and happiness in theory and practice

This contribution explores the relations between (good and bad) luck, character, and happiness, primarily in the *Life of Dion*, but also in other works. In order to examine this issue, it is possible to make abstraction of theological and cosmological issues, though they were important to Plutarch. The question whether virtue is conducive to, or even sufficient for, happiness was of great concern to ancient philosophers. As a Platonist, Plutarch is committed to the view that virtue, which consists in the rule of reason over the passions so that the latter are moderated (*metriopatheia*), is strongly conducive to happiness. He is even attracted by the view that virtue constitutes a sufficient condition to that end. Yet he distances himself from the view that luck plays no role at all towards happiness. In *De virtute morali* Plutarch takes into account the role of luck when he is discussing prudence, an intellectual virtue that is exercised in the realm of contingency. The relationship between virtue and luck is central to the *Life of Dion*. Upbringing and education, but also our individual innate nature, are a matter of constitutive moral luck. Dion had a good nature, grew up under adverse circumstances, and was lucky to meet Plato. Dionysius the Younger also met Plato, but, unfortunately for him, he did not have an equally good innate predisposition toward virtue. Once virtue is achieved, it is its own reward, although it does not guarantee worldly success. Even a rather virtuous person such as Dion has to worry about contingencies. Adversity is also a test for character. In the *Life of Sertorius* Plutarch comes close to the Stoic view that virtue cannot be lost due to ill-fortune. Yet he allows for less than perfect forms of virtue, which are not incorruptible. In the *Life of Solon* he claims that a virtuous disposition can be destroyed by drugs or disease. I argue there is no inconsistency between these claims. Plutarch accepts the existence and moral relevance of pure luck, for this is where practical virtues and prudence become relevant. He also accepts constitutive moral luck as a given.

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G. Roskam, Plutarch against Epicurus on affection for offspring. A reading of *De amore prolis*

This paper contains a full discussion of Plutarch's *De amore prolis* (Περὶ τῆς εἰς τὰ ἔγγονα φιλοστοργίας), a fairly brief but problematic text about the natural character of love for one's children. A correct understanding of Plutarch's position presupposes a good insight in the previous philosophical tradition about the concept of φιλοστοργία in general, and particularly about the previous debate between Stoics and Epicureans on the issue of parental love for children. A concise survey of this rich tradition is then followed by a systematic interpretation of Plutarch's argument in *De amore prolis*, which throws a new light on the argumentative, cumulative structure of the work and points to several interesting parallels from other Plutarchan works and from the works of other authors. This analysis also shows that the text should be understood as an anti-Epicurean polemic and that overemphasising the importance of the topic of animal psychology or family ethics risks misrepresenting the true scope of the work.

3. Virtues and vices

A.G. Nikolaidis, Plutarch's 'minor' ethics: some remarks on *De garrulitate, De curiositate*, and *De vitioso pudore*

This paper discusses the manner with which Plutarch treats the minor foibles of ἀδολεσχία (garrulity), πολυπραγμοσύνη (indiscreet curiosity, meddlesomeness) and δυσωπία (excessive shyness, compliancy), which he regards as affections (*pathē*) or diseases (*nosēmata*) of the soul. The relevant essays comprise three distinct parts: definition and main features of the foible, examples illustrating the behaviour of the character concerned, and advice for therapy. Plutarch's treatment of *polypragmosynē* and *dysōpia* makes it easy for one to understand why these foibles are described as affections and maladies of the soul, but for *adoleschia* this is not so clear and the reasons offered are hardly satisfactory or convincing. This paper attempts to give an explanation for this and proceeds to suggest some reasons. The worst of the three foibles is *polypragmosynē*, since it springs from a malicious nature, whereas *dysōpia*, irrespective of the disastrous consequences it often entails, is a blemish of good nature. In fact, what makes *dysōpia* an undesirable character trait is the element of excess it involves. As for *adoleschia*, its treatment is at the same time a eulogy of silence and reticence. Despite certain exaggerations, unfortunate comparisons, and far-fetched assertions, Plutarch's treatises are well organized: his argumentation is clear and coherent, most of his observations judicious and on the mark, and some of his psychological insights perceptive and remarkable. Finally, the common denominator among the three essays is that the suggested therapy is effected with the aid of reason, which will not only help us to perceive both the cause and their catastrophic results of our failings, but will also dictate the proper measures (acquirement of certain habits and practices) by means of which we may minimize and ultimately get rid of them.

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H.G. Ingenkamp, Plutarchs Schrift gegen das Borgen (Περὶ τοῦ μὴ δεῖν δανείζεσθαι): Adressaten, Lehrziele und Genos

Plutarch's treatise forms a group with (at least) two other essays, *De cupiditate divitiarum* and *De tranquillitate animi*. The theoretical base of this section of Plutarch's writings is *De cup. div.*, ch. 3f. Plutarch says there that the person whom the essay is going to help needs an explanation why she or he is sick (and not a therapy via ἄσκησις that consists of meditation and practice). Plutarch, in this essay, is not a psychotherapist, but an educator. More specifically, (1) he writes for a group of cultured people. This may be inferred from some 'springboard arguments'. Springboard-arguments begin with a quotation, a metaphor, an anecdote, or a simple statement, only to lead the reader in a different direction afterwards. Springboards are lost on an audience that is too uneducated to discover the joke lying in the gap. This essay (2) teaches αὐτάρκεια or ἐλευθερία. According to the treatise, a person disposes of αὐτάρκεια or ἐλευθερία, if she or he is in the state of σχολή while being ready to live on what she or he already possesses (χρῆσθαι τοῖς παροῦσιν). It is this concept of σχολή that is remarkable here. Plutarch says, on the one hand, that in order to avoid the money lender's harsh command 'ἀποδός', we should try to make friends with powerful (and rich) people. This, of course, is quite in tune with what the Greek upper class thought, whose σχολή had its base in prosperity. But, on the other hand, Plutarch also suggests earning one's living as a teacher, or a paedagogus or a baker or a doorkeeper or a sailor or a sailing merchant's clerk. Thus we may conclude that the notion of σχολή in Plutarch's text can be taken as a purely mental attitude. His audience may have been educated, as has been said, *and, at least partly, poor*. It seems to resemble that of the sermons on the same subject of Basilius (who depends on Plutarch), Gregory of Nyssa (who depends on Basilius), and John Chrysostomus.

Ph.A. Stadter, Competition and its costs: φιλονικία in Plutarch's society and heroes

In his *Moralia* and *Parallel Lives*, Plutarch explores the positive and negative aspects of competitiveness, *philonikia* (literally, 'love of victory'). After establishing that the correct form and derivation of the stem is from *nik-* ('victory'), not *neik-* ('strife'), this paper examines Plutarch's use of words formed from the *philonik-* stem. Like classical authors, notably Plato and Aristotle, he recognizes both good and bad aspects of competition. *Philonikia* is a passion that can be directed positively or negatively. In the *Moralia*, on the one hand, Plutarch adopts a hortatory position, warning against the dangers of competitiveness within the family (*On Brotherly Love*), among friends (*Table Talks*), and in politics (*Rules for Politicians, Old Men in Politics*). In effect, the *philonikia* described is always undesirable. In the *Parallel Lives*, on the other hand, he recognizes that competition can on occasion spur a political figure to greatness, but can also be destructive, as is shown by an analysis of four pairs of *Lives* (*Lycurgus-Numa, Agesilaus-Pompey, Aristides-Cato the Elder, Philopoemen-Flamininus*). Lycurgus encouraged competitiveness among the Spartan youth, whereas Numa sought to soothe the Romans' martial spirit. Agesilaus carried competitiveness too far, and Sparta suffered for it; likewise, Pompey's insistence on being first led to Rome's civil war and his own death. For both, *philonikia* was a passion they could not control. In the latter two pairs, *philonikia* shows a more positive aspect. Plutarch's philosophy of civic harmony has no real place for

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competition, but pragmatically he recognises its usefulness when directed towards what is just and profitable for the state, as in Aristides' case. Therefore he regularly praises his protagonists' self-control in managing their *philonikia*, and urges it for his contemporaries.

4. 'Popular philosophy' in context

A. Pérez Jiménez, Astrometeorología y creencias sobre los astros en Plutarco

This contribution shows that Plutarch, who was highly interested in contemporary religious and scientific issues, was familiar with certain popular beliefs about the stars. This concern is evident in the titles of some lost works, in some *Table Talks* of which only the titles remain, and in several passages of the *Lives* where Plutarch echoes the activity of the astrologers. In this contribution I pay attention to Plutarch's beliefs on astral mysticism as they appear in *De Iside*, as well as to his interpretation of astrometeorological phenomena concerning the behaviour of animals and plants under the influence of the sun and moon. Sufficient information about this theme can be found in the above mentioned *De Iside*, in the *Comment on Hesiod's Works and Days*, and in the *Table Talks*. A closer analysis also shows that Plutarch's beliefs concerning this influence are in line with other literary testimonies of Imperial times and, in particular, with some prescriptions in astrological lunar calendars of late antiquity.

J. Mossman – F. Titchener, Bitch is not a four-letter word. Animal reason and human passion in Plutarch

It is no surprise to the authors that a humane, compassionate, tolerant, and wise human like Plutarch wrote several essays specifically about animals, notably *Terrestriane an aquatilia animalia sint callidiora* (*De sollertia animalium*), *Bruta animalia ratione uti*, and *De esu carnium orationes ii*. These essays were used by philosophers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as early evidence of the so-called 'theriophilic paradox, the notion that while the human being occupies a higher rung in the universal hierarchy than the beast, as indicated by human power over the animal world, human behaviour justifies the claim that human morality is on a lower level than that of the beasts'. In modern times, classical scholarship has tended to use these essays as ammunition for an animal rights movement, which of course can be seen as an extension of the Enlightenment interest in theriophily.

Yet although these 'animal' essays are grouped with Plutarch's other 'scientific' essays in Loeb vol. xii (*De facie, De primo frigido, Aquane an ignis sit utilior*), our interest in Plutarch's animals is not particularly scientific – rather, we are focusing on rhetoric. We hope that analysis of *De sollertia animalium* (and, to a lesser extent, *Bruta animalia ratione uti*) will provide insight into Plutarch's own attitudes about virtues, arguing that the use of animals provides a kind of surrogacy or a place for Plutarch to argue his points at a safe remove. We also hope to show that there is more to these charming dialogues in terms of rhetorical skill and subtlety than may immediately be apparent, or has traditionally been assumed.

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F. Frazier, Autour du miroir. Les miroitements d'une image dans l'œuvre de Plutarque

This paper aims at an exhaustive reconsideration of the simile of the mirror in Plutarch's works. Generally speaking, the comparison enables drawing nearer something that is far away (e.g., knowledge or virtue) and shows what deserves to be sought or imitated. More precisely, the vast range of uses of this 'mirror' may be classified under two headings, ontology (with its epistemological sequel) and ethics. In the epistemological field, the mirror imagery appears in relation to mathematics – especially geometry – and reminds us of the necessity for human knowledge to lean on sensible images that only reflect intelligible beings and may be deceptive as well as initiatory, as is shown by the ambiguous action of the sun. In the ethical field, Plutarch insists on self-knowledge and emulation of the glorious models of the past, but he also takes into account the demands of particular circumstances. In everyday life friends can contribute to moral improvement, but Plutarch does not use the simile of the mirror for them – as the Stoics, Seneca, or Epictetus do for the philosophers. Instead, only wives or flatterers are called 'mirrors', denoting either conjugal harmony or contemptible servility. The analysis finally raises the (still open) question of the respective roles which interiority and the example of other people have in moral life.

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