Plutarch and Rhetoric

The Relationship of Rhetoric to Ethics, Politics and Education in the First and Second Centuries AD

Theofanis Tsiampokalos

Leuven University Press

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By

THEOFANIS TSIAMPOKALOS

Leuven University Press

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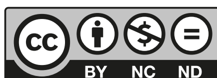

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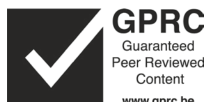

To my wife, Chara

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Acknowledgements

This book presents a new edition of my study on Plutarch and rhetoric, now rendered into English and expanded in several respects from the original Modern Greek version, which itself evolved directly from my doctoral dissertation. This dissertation, which explored how rhetoric is presented and assessed in the works of Plutarch of Chaeronea, was submitted in 2018 to the Department of Classics at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. Since the mid-twentieth century, the field of Plutarch studies has witnessed a remarkable resurgence, characterised by the existence of a flourishing community of scholars who have pioneered novel approaches and addressed long-standing gaps in the scholarship. This book, like its Modern Greek predecessor, seeks to make a contribution to this vibrant area of study by filling a conspicuous void in the existing scholarly discourse about Plutarch's relationship to rhetoric.

My thesis-writing journey, which spanned just over four years, was supported by many remarkable individuals. I owe a profound debt of gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Dimitrios Karadimas, whose invaluable guidance and deep expertise in the intersection between rhetoric and philosophy in Antiquity played an instrumental role in shaping my research. I also wish to express my appreciation for Professors Amphilochios Papathomas and Christos Fakas, who served as members of my advisory committee, as well as Professors Vassileios Vertoudakis, Rena Zamarou, Grammatiki Karla and Sophia Papaioannou. Together with the members of the advisory committee, they formed the seven-member examination committee. In this role, they provided me with further invaluable insights, for which I am profoundly grateful.

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In closing, my deepest gratitude is reserved for my family, whose steadfast moral, practical and financial support has been the cornerstone of my journey. I dedicate this book to Chara, my wife, whose unfailing companionship and encouragement have been my beacon.

Trier, March 2024

Note to the Reader

For all translations quoted throughout the book, from both Greek and Latin, I have used Loeb translations, unless otherwise indicated. Translations from modern languages are my own, unless, again, stated otherwise. All translations of epigraphic texts are also my own.

For the abbreviations of the titles of scientific journals, this book adopts the *Année Philologique* system, for the abbreviations of the names of ancient authors and their titles of works the guide is *Liddell-Scott-Jones* (1940^{9}) for the Greek authors, unless the abbreviations are so elliptical as to be obscure, in which case they are replaced by those in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (2012^{4}), and, for Latin authors, *The Oxford Latin Dictionary* (1968).

There are two exceptions to this rule: Plutarch and Galen. For the abbreviations of Plutarch's work titles, see the table in S. Xenophontos & K. Oikonomopoulou (eds.), *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Plutarch*, Leiden 2019, xi–xvi. The abbreviations of Galen's text titles are modelled on the conventions in the table in P.N. Singer & P.J. van der Eijk (eds.), *Galen. Works on Human Nature*, vol. 1: *Mixtures (De Temperamentis)*, with the assistance of P. Tassinari, Cambridge 2019, 186–199.

For the abbreviations of epigraphic publications, I follow the *GrEpiAbbr – Version 02* (January 2022). For the abbreviations of papyrological publications, I used the current *Checklist*, which is available on the website Papyri.info (https://papyri.info/docs/checklist). The remaining abbreviations are as follows:

AE	*Ἀρχαιολογικὴ ἐφημερίς*, 162 volumes, Athens 1837–.
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, Berlin & New York 1972–.
CAH^{2}	*The Cambridge Ancient History*, vols. I.1–XIV, Cambridge 1970–2005^{2} [some volumes are already available in the 3rd edition].
CMG	*Corpus Medicorum Graecorum* 1908–.
Dind.	W. Dindorf, *Aristides*, vols. I–II, Leipzig 1829.
D-K	H. Diels & W. Kranz (eds.), *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, vol. I, Wiesbaden 1951^{6}; vols. II and III, Wiesbaden 1952^{6} [repr. vol. I, Hildesheim 2004; vols. II and III 2005].

DNP	*Der Neue Pauly. Enzyklopädie der Antike*, vols. I–XV and 4 supplements (Supplementbände), Stuttgart 1996–2007.
F.	J. Felten, *Nicolai Progymnasmata*, Leipzig 1913.
FGrHist	F. Jacoby (ed.), *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, vols. I–IIIc, Berlin/Leiden 1923–1958.
FHS&G	W.W. Fortenbaugh, P.M. Huby, R.W. Sharples & D. Gutas (eds.), *Theophrastus of Eresus*, vols. I–II, Leiden/New York/Cologne 1992.
FPG	F.W.A. Mullach, *Fragmenta philosophorum Graecorum*, vols. I–III, Paris 1860–1881.
GMS AA IV	I. Kant, 'Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten', in *Immanuel Kant. Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by the Prussian Academy of Sciences, vol. IV, Berlin 1911, 385–463.
GG	*Grammatici Graeci recogniti et apparatu critico instructi*, Leipzig 1867–1910.
Hübschner	A. Schopenhauer, *Sämtliche Werke*, edited by A. Hübschner, vols. I–VII, Mannheim 1988^{4}.
Isnardi	M. Isnardi Parente, *Senocrate-Ermodoro: Frammenti. Edizione, traduzione e commento* (La Scuola di Platone 3), Naples 1982.
J.	S. Jebb, *Aelii Aristidis Adrianensis opera omnia*, vols. I–II, Oxford 1722–1730.
K.	C.G. Kühn, *Claudii Galeni opera omnia*, Leipzig 1821–1833.
K-A	R. Kassel & C. Austin (eds.), *Poetae Comici Graeci*, vols. I–VIII, Berlin/New York 1983–2001.
Kühner-Gerth	R. Kühner, Fr. Blass & B. Gerth, *Ausführliche Grammatik der griechischen Sprache*, vols. I.1–II.2, Hanover/Leipzig 1890–1904^{3} [repr. Hanover 1992].
Laumonier	A. Laumonier, 'Incriptions de Carie', *BCH* 58 (1934) 291–380.
L-P	E. Lobel & D. Page, *Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta*, Oxford 1955.
LSJ^{9}	H.G. Liddell, R. Scott & H.S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford 1940^{9}. Supplement revised by P.G.W. Glare & A.A. Thomson, Oxford 1996.

N^{2}	A. Nauck (ed.), *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, Leipzig 1889^{2}.
Neri	C. Neri, *Saffo, testimonianze e frammenti. Introduzione, testo critico, tradizione e commento* (Texte und Kommentare 68), Berlin/Boston 2021.
OCD^{4}	S. Hornblower, A. Spawforth & E. Eidinow (eds.), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, Oxford 2012^{4}.
OED (online)	*The Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford (online version), URL: https://www.oed.com/ (retrieved 12 December 2022).
ORF^{4}	H. Malcovati, *Oratorum Romanorum Fragmenta*, vols. I–III, Turin 1976^{4}.
ParG	E. von Leutsch & F.W. Schneidewin, *Paroemiographi Graeci*, Göttingen 1839–1951.
PIR^{2}	*Prosopographia Imperii Romani*, Berlin 1933^{2}–.
Πολέμων	*Πολέμων. Ἀρχαιολογικὸν περιοδικὸν* 1–8, Athens, 1929–1965/1966.
pr.	proemium.
R.	H. Rabe, *Aphthonii Progymnasmata*, Leipzig 1926; *id.*, *Hermogenis Opera*, Leipzig 1913 [repr. 1969]; *id.*, *Ioannis Sardiani Commentarium in Aphthonii Progymnasmata*, Leipzig 1928; *id.*, *Prolegomenon Sylloge*, Leipzig 1931.
RE	A. Pauly, G. Wissova, W. Kroll & K. Ziegler (eds.), *Real-Encyklopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Stuttgart/Munich 1894–1978.
Sp.	L. Spengel, *Rhetores Graeci*, vols. I–III, Leipzig 1853. Volume I.2 in a reprint by C. Hammer, Leipzig 1894.
SVF	J. von Arnim (ed.), *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, vols. I–IV, Stuttgart 1905 [repr. 1964].
W.	Chr. Walz, *Rhetores Graeci*, vols. I–IX, Stuttgart 1832–1836 [repr. Osnabrück 1968].
Wehrli	Fr. Wehrli, *Die Schule des Aristoteles. Texte und Kommentar*, vols. 1–10 and 2 supplements, Basel/Stuttgart 1967–1969^{2}, 1974.

Introduction

1. Plutarch and Rhetoric

This book examines how rhetoric is presented and assessed in the works of one of the most important writers of the first and early second century AD. The first definition of the term 'rhetoric' given by the *Oxford English Dictionary* is "the art of using language effectively so as to persuade or influence others, esp. the exploitation of figures of speech and other compositional techniques to this end; the study of principles and rules to be followed by a speaker or writer striving for eloquence, esp. as formulated by ancient Greek and Roman writers".[1] And yet, today, one refers not only, for example, to the 'rhetoric' of a government, a political party or even a state, but also to 'musical rhetoric', the 'rhetoric of the Baroque', the 'rhetoric of fiction', the 'rhetoric of labour', even the 'silent rhetoric of a body' or (though somewhat rarely nowadays) the 'rhetoric' of an expressive pair of eyes.[2] In some of these cases it refers to "modes of expression used to produce a desired effect on a viewer, audience, etc." in music or the arts,[3] in others it is "the language or discourse characteristically associated with a particular subject",[4] and in yet others it is "the use of an expressive or persuasive gesture".[5] The elasticity of the term has historical grounds, which can be traced back much earlier than Plutarch's time. Rhetoric has existed for almost two and a half thousand years and, as is to be expected, during its long history its semantic field has undergone shifts in its centre of gravity – shifts which, very schematically, can be understood in terms of a tendency to reduce the field of rhetoric from discourse to style. This movement, in turn, gave rise to countervailing attempts to recover lost ground and expand its scope from style back to discourse.[6] But let us start from the beginning.

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[1] See *OED* (online), *s.v.* 'rhetoric, n.1', 1.a (retrieved 12 December 2022).

[2] For these examples, see *OED* (online), *s.v.* 'rhetoric, n.1', 4.a–c (retrieved 12 December 2022). More specifically, on 'musical rhetoric', see Strunk (1932) 227. For the 'rhetoric of the Baroque', see Summerson (1980²) 63–88. For the 'rhetoric of fiction', see Booth (1983²). For the 'rhetoric of labour', see Joyce (2000) 476. For the 'body's silent rhetoric', see E. McVarish transl. Lichtenstein (1993) 32. On the 'rhetoric' of a pair of eyes, see W. Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost* IV.iii.57, as well as Jephson (1880) 3.68.

[3] See *OED*, *loc. cit.*, 4.b.

[4] See *OED*, *loc. cit.*, 4.c.

[5] See *OED*, *loc. cit.*, 4.a.

[6] For an overview of the topic, see already Müller (2013⁵) 656–657.

The term 'rhetoric' appears at the beginning of the fourth century BC, perhaps for the first time in Alcidamas (*Soph.* 2) and a few years later in Plato (*Grg.* 448D), in the latter as a neologism (cf. καλουμένην).[7] In Plato's *Gorgias*, which contains a first attempt at a definition, rhetoric is presented as a πειθοῦς δημιουργός, a "producer of persuasion" (*Grg.* 453A). Moreover, this is done in a context in which it intersects with questions of politics, education and ethics. More specifically, rhetoric is presented in this dialogue as a new, systematic way of using language, enabling individuals who wish to dominate the political scene to exert influence over the public, especially in a political environment similar to that of Athenian democracy (cf. *Grg.* 452E, 458E–459C, 466B, 468E).[8] Rhetoric is also associated here with the activity of certain figures (e.g. Gorgias, Polus) known as 'sophists' – a term referring to a loosely defined group of itinerant intellectuals who travelled throughout the Greek world and taught the young in various cities.[9] In classical Athens, prior to the end of the fifth century BC, schooling was limited to gymnastics, music, reading and writing, and memorising poetry.[10] However, starting from the

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[7] See Schiappa (1990) 457–470; *id.* (1999) 14–29, cf. also Pernot (2000) 38–41. Alcidamas' text is traditionally dated to 390 BC (see, e.g., Avezzù (1982) ix, 71–72), while Plato's *Gorgias* is dated to 387–385 BC (according to Dodds (1959) 18–30, esp. 24–25). However, both dates are far from decisive. For Plato's works, see also p. 17 note 13 below.

[8] On Plato's general approach to rhetoric in the *Gorgias*, see Dodds (1959) 10; Kennedy (1963) 15–16; *id.* (1980) 45–52; *id.* (1994) 35–39; Yunis (1996) 117–171; Pernot (2000) 69–72; Erler & Tornau (2019) 7; Erler (2019) 321–322; Rapp (2019) 341–343; Pernot (2022) 15–22. On the importance of rhetoric and rhetorical education in the context of Athenian democracy, see, e.g., Ober (1989) 156–191; Yunis (1996) 1–23; Erler & Tornau (2019) 3–4.

[9] The term 'intellectual' is used here anachronistically (see on this point, Baebler (1996) 4 n. 1). Although the term 'sophist' has traditionally been used to describe a highly heterogeneous group of early Greek thinkers who travelled widely throughout Greece giving lectures and engaging in teaching, it is doubtful whether any of these individuals would have used the term to describe themselves (for more, see Dodds (1954) 6–7). For a recent, brief discussion of what a 'sophist' was, accompanied by an overview of the most important forms and themes, see Taylor & Lee (2020). For earlier, more detailed considerations, see, e.g., von Arnim (1898) 7–16; Kerferd (1950) 8–10; Guthrie (1969) 27–54; Classen (1976) 1–18; Kerferd (1981); de Romilly (1988); Bonazzi (2010); McKirahan (2010²) 365–404. On the relationship between 'rhetoric' and 'sophistry' in Plato, cf. *Grg.* 463B.

[10] For a brief overview of elementary education in classical Athens, see Beck & Thomas (2012⁴) 487–488, cf. also Marrou (1956) 36–45 and Beck (1964) 72–141. Needless to say, education, whether elementary or advanced, was something that concerned only a very small part of the total Athenian population. On literacy levels in classical Athens, see in particular Harris (1989) 65–115; earlier estimates were rather optimistic, see, e.g., Harvey (1966) 585–635; Burns (1981) 371–387; Ober (1989) 157–159.

end of the fifth century, when men with more specialised knowledge in certain fields began to arrive in Athens, such as Protagoras, Hippias, Prodicus and Gorgias, it became possible for young Athenians to pursue more specialised forms of education, whose subject matter often included the art of persuasively using language, a discipline Plato referred to as 'rhetoric'. These 'sophists' supposedly taught in a purely mechanical way – at least this is Plato's criticism – while neglecting the moral implications of employing such a powerful tool (see *Grg*. 460A–461A).[11]

This functional conception of rhetoric, which in the *Gorgias* is so closely associated with the critique of the sophists' didactic activities, would subsequently become characteristic of Plato and other philosophers.[12] Some fifteen years after the *Gorgias*,[13] Plato wrote the *Phaedrus*, a more mature dialogue in which he systematically examines the possibility of integrating rhetoric into philosophy.[14] There, he formulates a broader definition of rhetoric as "an art which leads the soul by means of words, not only in law courts and the various other public assemblages, but in private companies as well", which additionally is "the same when concerned with small things as with great, and, properly speaking, no more to be esteemed in important than in trifling matters" (*Phdr*. 261A–B).[15] The scope of rhetoric is much broader here. This is because, in the *Phaedrus*, we have the beginnings of a new tradition in philosoph-

[11] On 'sophistical' education, see, e.g., McKirahan (2010²) 377–378. On the relationship between 'sophists' and rhetoric in particular, see Marrou (1956) 52–54; Kennedy (1963) 61–69, 129–132, 167–173; *id*. (1980) 29–52; *id*. (1994) 17–21; Pernot (2000) 27–38; Karadimas (2008) 8–25; Ueding & Steinbrink (2011⁵) 15–18. On Plato's above-mentioned criticism, see also *Grg*. 454D–455D, 459B–C; cf. Karadimas (1996) 2.

[12] Plato similarly interprets the linguistic word as an instrument that people use to produce speech and name things; see, e.g., *Cra*. 386D–E, alongside the remarks of Ueding & Steinbrink (2011⁵) 19. On the reception of the Platonic view of rhetoric as a means of persuasion, see recently Erler & Tornau (2019) 7.

[13] No definite date can be given for Plato's works, because it is possible that Plato himself may have reissued his dialogues (cf. Dion. Hal. *Comp.* 25.32, alongside Irwin's remarks (2019²) 68–91). For the standard chronology, see, e.g., Erler (2007) 22ff.

[14] The idea of a reconciliation between rhetoric and philosophy is already implied in *Grg*. 503A–B, 504E, 527C, cf. also *Ap.* 17B, 18A. On Plato's rethinking of rhetoric in the *Phaedrus*, see in particular Kennedy (1963) 74–79; *id*. (1980) 66–74; *id*. (1994) 39–43; Yunis (1996) 172–210; Pernot (2000) 74–76; Karadimas (2008) 26–57; Ueding & Steinbrink (2011⁵) 21–23; Erler (2019) 322–324; Rapp (2019) 343. Scholars have noted attempts to apply the conception of rhetoric propagated in the *Phaedrus* in both the *Laws* (see, e.g., Yunis (1996) 217–236; cf. Morrow (1953) 141–142) and the *Timaeus* (see the contribution by Hartmann (2021) 22–48, which is an abridged version of Hartmann (2017)).

[15] Transl. by H.N. Fowler. The passage in the Greek text reads as follows: Ἆρ᾽ οὖν οὐ τὸ μὲν ὅλον ἡ ῥητορικὴ ἂν εἴη τέχνη ψυχαγωγία τις διὰ λόγων, οὐ μόνον ἐν δικαστηρίοις

ical writing, one committed to an understanding of 'true' rhetoric, which is capable of producing a philosophically valid discourse, as opposed to 'formal' rhetoric that even greedy or corrupt politicians can use to satisfy their appetites for power and domination.[16] The distance between the two types of 'rhetoric' is, however, significant: according to the criteria laid down by Socrates here, a true orator must, first, undergo a systematic training in dialectics, so that he knows the truth about the things he discusses, and, second, gain an understanding of the nature of the soul, so that he is able to use the forms of discourse that are best suited to each individual soul. Otherwise it will be impossible to teach or persuade one's audience (*Phdr.* 276E–277C).[17]

But even in this idealised, 'true' version of rhetoric, which subsequently fed a long tradition of philosophical eloquence, in which many elements of so-called 'formal' rhetoric were also applied,[18] the goal is to combine persuasion with teaching, i.e. a special type of persuasion that goes back, of course, to the *Gorgias* (453B–455A). Persuasion is also presented as the aim of rhetoric in other early 'philosophical' definitions: for example, in Aristotle (384–322 BC) rhetoric is defined as "the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever" (*Rh.* 1.2, 1355b 25–26),[19] while in Cicero (106–43 BC) the first and main task of an orator is "to speak in a manner adapted to persuade" (*De or.* 1.138).[20] We need not mention here more examples of such definitions, as they are numerous and can be traced from Antiquity to the

καὶ ὅσοι ἄλλοι δημόσιοι σύλλογοι, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν ἰδίοις, ἡ αὐτὴ σμικρῶν τε καὶ μεγάλων πέρι, καὶ οὐδὲν ἐντιμότερον τό γε ὀρθὸν περὶ σπουδαῖα ἢ περὶ φαῦλα γιγνόμενον.

[16] However, the idea that rhetoric is a 'fake imitation' (εἴδωλον) of another genuine art, and therefore equivalent to a kind of 'flattery' (κολακεία), had already been proposed in *Grg.* 463A–466A.

[17] For this passage, see also Rowe (2016) 85–88.

[18] On philosophical eloquence, see, e.g., Männlein-Robert *et al.* (2016) 12–13, 15–18.

[19] Transl. by J.H. Freese. The definition in the Greek text reads as follows: Ἔστω δὴ ἡ ῥητορικὴ δύναμις περὶ ἕκαστον τοῦ θεωρῆσαι τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον πιθανόν. Cf. Rapp (2002) 134–137, esp. 135 regarding the differences between the Aristotelian and the Platonic definitions. For general treatments of Aristotle's contribution in the context of the history of rhetorical theory, see, e.g., von Arnim (1898) 68–72; Kennedy (1963) 82–113; *id.* (1980) 74–93; *id.* (1994) 51–63; Nehamas (1994) xi–xv; Rorty (1996) 1–34; Pernot (2000) 63–66; Rapp (2011) 154–157; Ueding & Steinbrink (2011[5]) 23–28; Rapp (2019) 344–359; Pernot (2022) 221–229.

[20] Transl. by J.S. Watson. The definition in the Latin text reads as follows: *dicere ad persuadendum accommodate*. For a general overview of both Cicero's rhetorical practice and his views on rhetoric, see Kennedy (1972) 113–110, 149–300; Bonner (1977) 76–89; Kennedy (1994) 117–121, 128–155; *id.* (1999[2]) 101–108, 113–115; Pernot (2000) 142–162; Reinhardt (2000) 536–547; May (2002) 49–70; Ueding & Steinbrink (2011[5]) 33–38; Du-

present day. 'Persuasion' or 'influence' over other people appears as an aim of rhetoric even in the definition in the *Oxford English Dictionary* cited above.

However, this conception of rhetoric is not the only one that exists. With Quintilian (35–after 96 AD), a slightly earlier contemporary of Plutarch, a significant change in the understanding of the term was already underway. Quintilian uses a definition according to which rhetoric is "the art of speaking well", *bene dicendi scientia* (2.14.5).[21] There is a clear evaluative dimension to this definition. Certainly to speak 'well' (*bene*) may mean that one already speaks 'persuasively', but at the same time this definition reflects a hierarchy that is simultaneously moral and social.[22] At the opposite extreme, we find someone who speaks not just 'unconvincingly', but 'badly'. It is not merely a question of the inability to maintain argumentative momentum or even of adherence to certain higher, philosophically valid moral norms, although Plato's earlier criticism of the moral standards of the orator does indeed puzzle Quintilian (cf. 2.15.11, 2.15.31, alongside the remark on the "character of the orator" in 2.15.34); it is also – or even primarily – a question of a lack of proper education (see, e.g., 1.1.4–5). The question of the practical application of art is now secondary – as Quintilian himself puts it in another passage, "the speaker aims at victory, it is true, but if he speaks well, he has lived up to the ideals of his art, even if he is defeated" (2.17.23).[23]

According to Quintilian, an orator's training is multifaceted, encompassing a wide range of approaches and principles familiar to the Roman upper class. The training of a future orator must begin already at the stage of linguistic acquisition (see 1.1.5ff.), continuing with elementary training in grammar (1.4.1ff.) and other preliminary courses (1.10.1ff.), followed by a preparatory course in rhetoric focused on learning the terminology and simple composition exercises (2.2.1ff.), before culminating in 'declamation' (2.6.1ff.). The latter was a form of rhetorical demonstration, imitating either an advisory (*suasoria*) or a forensic (*controversia*) discourse, based, respectively, on either a historical or a fictional case,

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gan (2013) 25–40; Lévy (2016) 221–238; Remer (2017) 1–25; Manuwald (2019) 271–285; Riesenweber (2019) 399–413.

[21] On the importance of Quintilian in the history of rhetoric, see, e.g., Kennedy (1969) *passim*; *id*. (1972) 487–514; *id*. (1980) 115–118; *id*. (1994) 177–186; Pernot (2000) 210–215; Ueding & Steinbrink (2011[5]) 42–47; Kalverkämper (2019) 435–469.

[22] On the prominence of the ethical aspect in Quintilian's conception of the ideal orator, see Winterbottom (1964) 90–97; see also Meraklis (1966) 58 n. 3; Erler & Tornau (2019) 12.

[23] Transl. by H.E. Butler. The passage in the Latin text reads as follows: *tendit quidem ad victoriam qui dicit, sed cum bene dixit, etiamsi non vincat, id quod arte continetur effecit*.

which had originally been conducted in rhetorical schools as an exercise for advanced students. From around the time of Augustus, however, it developed into a form of competitive spectacle that took place in the context of literary gatherings of members of the elite in numerous cities of the empire (cf. Sen. *Con.* 1.pr.12).[24] Apart from its appeal as a performance, however, 'declamation' served a more pragmatic purpose: skills in 'declamation' provided a young man with the prerequisites for a promising career as an orator (cf. Quint. 2.10.2), who would either be employed in the courts or serve in some position in the state administration[25] – in much the same way that, in modern times, knowledge of Latin and of Greek and Roman history conferred the necessary qualifications for a position in the British Empire.[26]

The broader historical and social context is not without significance for this development. Quintilian's educational ideal does not, at least in its main lines, differ significantly from common educational practice in the Hellenistic kingdoms and Rome of the Late Republic.[27] The overall democratic regression that occurred in the Greek world in the wake of Alexander the Great, which led to the gradual weakening of institutions that were

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[24] On 'declamation' (Lat. *declamatio*, Gr. μελέτη), see Bonner (1949) 51–70; Marrou (1956) 284–291; Clarke (1968) 95–99; Bowie (1970) 5–7; Kennedy (1972) 312–330; Bonner (1977) 277–308; Russell (1983) 1–20, 106–128; Kennedy (1994) 166–172; *id.* (1999^2) 44–47; Stroh (2003) 1–34; Pernot (2000) 200–207; Whitmarsh (2005) 3, 24–26; Baier (2019) 260–268; Riesenweber (2019) 413–415.

[25] On the importance of 'declamation' for the rhetoric of everyday political life, see, e.g., Suet. *Gram. et Rhet.* 25.4 (on Pompey practising declamation because he wanted to be prepared for a confrontation with Curio). On the social and economic context of rhetoric at this time, see, e.g., Bowie (1970) 6; Bonner (1977) 309–327; Steel (2001) 226–233; May (2002) 49–70; Liebersohn (2010) 24–25; Erler & Tornau (2019) 4–6.

[26] See, e.g., Vance (1997) 13–14. On familiarity with classical writers as a component of the cultivation of a 'gentleman' by the late nineteenth century in Britain, see Stray (1998) 1–82.

[27] There are many epigraphic and papyrus testimonies for both elementary and advanced education in the Hellenistic period. For rhetorical education in particular, see Marrou (1956) 95–226; Griffin (1994) 689–692; Morgan (1998) 190–239; Cribiore (2001) 220–244; Wisse (2002) 331–374. Although in some cities benefactors paid teachers' salaries, this in itself apparently did not have a substantial impact on the literacy levels of the general population (cf. Harris (1989) 116–146; for the sociological and aesthetic aspects of literacy, see also Johnson (2000) 593–627). Both higher education and scientific research usually took place in urban centres, where one could find *gymnasia*, libraries and lecture halls – see Griffin (1994) 692–696). On Roman education in the Late Empire, see, e.g., Marrou (1956) 242–313; Clarke (1968) 18–22; *id.* (1971) 11–54; Bonner (1977) 163–327. On literacy levels in this period, see Harris (1989) 175–284. For more optimistic views, see Franklin (1991) 77–98 and Woolf (2009) 46–68.

inextricably linked to the exercise of political rhetoric,[28] combined with the fact that eloquence was already a key element of the identity of the social and intellectual elite of the classical period,[29] contributed to rhetoric's coming to be seen over time less as a tool for creating persuasion and more as a kind of theory or general reflection on discourse that was worth studying in its own right.[30] George Kennedy describes this phenomenon as a shift in focus "from persuasion to narration, from civic to personal contexts, and from speech to literature, including poetry", going on to explain that such shifts can be seen in various times and places from Antiquity to the present day.[31] In Europe and America, at least, this phenomenon can

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[28] On the overall democratic regression, see Walbank (1984) 62ff. Traditional democratic institutions such as the *boulē* and the *ekklēsia* continued to exist, but gradually lost their importance (at least in comparison with what was happening in Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries BC). On these institutions as they survived into the Hellenistic period, see Davies (1984) 306–307; Pernot (2000) 104–107; Cribiore (2001) 239. For the imperial period, see Jones (1940) 176–177; *id.* (1964) 722–723; cf. also Sherwin-White (1963) 84–85; Jones (1971) 10, 111; Desideri (1978) 445–447; Lehmann (2020a) 13–14; Hofmann (2020) 235–236; *contra* Magie (1950) 640–641 and Bowie (1970) 6. In regions such as Egypt, where these institutions were probably introduced by the Greek 'colonial' authorities, they must have lost their importance much earlier, since, according to Turner (1984) 145, it seems that neither the councils nor the assemblies still existed when Augustus annexed the country. After Augustus' reign, a debate began among intellectuals about whether eloquence was on the decline, having been deprived of a 'democratic' political context like that of the Late Republic. For more on this debate, see Kennedy (1994) 186–192; Pernot (2000) 171–177; Ueding & Steinbrink (2011⁵) 38–42 (all three with further references to the primary literature).

[29] See, e.g., Hom. *Il.* 9.442–443 (Phoenix addresses Achilles): τοὔνεκά με προέηκε διδασκέμεναι τάδε πάντα, | μύθων τε ῥητῆρ᾽ ἔμεναι πρηκτῆρά τε ἔργων, "For this cause he sent me to instruct you in all these things, to be both a speaker of words and a doer of deeds" (transl. slightly adapted from A.T. Murray), and then also the way in which Isocrates defends the importance of his programme of rhetorical education (which he incidentally calls 'philosophy') in his discourse *Antidosis* (15), especially in the passage 15.261–269. For more on Isocrates' conception of education, see Schiappa (1990) 461; *id.* (1995) 33–60; Halliwell (1997) 107–125; Timmerman (1998) 145–159; Balla (2004) 45–71; Livingstone (2007) 15–34.

[30] See also von Arnim (1898) 112–113.

[31] See Kennedy (1999^2) 3, cf. also 2 regarding the distinction between 'primary' and 'secondary' rhetoric; see also the introductory remarks of De Temmerman (2010) 23–24 and *id.* (2014) 32 n. 207. A similar shift can be observed during the Imperial period in science; cf. Föllinger (2003) 72 (on the so-called 'Literarisierung' of the study of biology) as well as De Brasi & Fronterotta (2022) 2–3. For a brief history of fluctuations in the significance of rhetoric from Antiquity to the present day, see Kennedy (1999^2) 183–300 and Ueding & Steinbrink (2011^5) 48–207, cf. also Müller (2013^5) 656–657.

also be observed in the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and even during the twentieth century with the formalist 'New Criticism' movement and the study of texts as autonomous, 'closed' bodies.[32] Some of the ways in which we understand and use the term 'rhetoric' in our everyday lives are clearly rooted in this tradition. Of course, there have been parallel reactions to many of these shifts, whenever an argument for recovering lost ground and once again broadening the scope of rhetoric from style to discourse has made sense within the context of a particular ideological project. One of the most recent reactions to the above-mentioned understandings of rhetoric, expressing a desire to restore rhetoric to its 'ancient' functional conception, can be seen in early 'poststructuralism'.[33]

Plutarch (L.(?) Mestrius Plutarchus, *c.* 40/45–125 AD) therefore entered the stage at a time when rhetoric, whether understood as a tool of persuasion in politics or other fields, as a fundamental component of an 'elitist' educational programme, or as both at the same time, had already made history. Along with the Stoics Seneca and Epictetus, Plutarch is counted among the most important representatives of philosophical thought in the Early Empire.[34] In 146 BC, the Greek peninsula came under Roman rule and, shortly afterwards under Augustus, became the province of Achaia.[35] Plutarch came from Chaeronea, a small Greek town in Boeotia roughly 115 km away from Athens.[36] Despite the rather humble conditions in his hometown (cf. Plut. *Dem.* 1–2.1), Plutarch managed to benefit from all the advantages that both Greece and Rome had to offer a man from the ranks of the provincial aristocracy, studying in Athens under the Platonic philosopher Ammonius, who had arrived there earlier

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[32] See, e.g., Richards (1936) 273: "Persuasion is only one among the aims of discourse. It poaches on the others – especially on that of exposition", alongside Brown (1992) 218–231; for a general appraisal of the 'New Criticism', see Wenzel (2013⁵) 562–565.

[33] See, e.g., Genette (1972) 21, 23–24, 40. On Genette's view of rhetoric (as a "system of discourse schemas"), see also Harlos (1986) 209–223 and Warminski (2019) 1–19.

[34] *PIR*² P 526. The Roman name is due to his status as a Roman citizen, which was secured for him by L. Mestrius Florus – see p. 26 n. 53 below. General surveys of Plutarch's life and work are offered by Volkmann (1869); Hirzel (1912) 1–73; Hartman (1916); Dodds (1933) 97–107; Stamatakos (1937); Ziegler (1951) 636–692; Meraklis (1966); Barrow (1967); Jones (1971) 3–64; Swain (1996) 135–186; Russell (2001²); Lamberton (2001); Russell (2012) 1165–1166. For a general consideration of his philosophy, see Zeller (1881³) 160–202 [142–182]; Dillon (1996²) 184–230; Frazier (2012) 1096–1185; Ferrari (2018) 565–579. For the standard chronology of his works, see Jones (1966) and (1971) 135–137.

[35] For a historical overview of the province of Achaia up to the time of Plutarch, see, e.g., Daubner (2020) 184–213 (with further references to the bibliography).

[36] For Chaeronea, see, e.g., Hirzel (1912) 1–4; Stamatakos (1937) 1–4; Jones (1971) 3–12 (with further references).

from Egypt.[37] Chaeronea was well connected to the roads traversing the major urban centres of northern and southern mainland Greece, while the incorporation of the entire Eastern Mediterranean into the Roman Empire enabled intellectuals to move with relative ease between major centres, such as Athens and Alexandria.[38] After completing his studies, Plutarch returned to Chaeronea, where he followed family tradition by becoming involved in the local political scene and performing various administrative duties.[39] At the same time, however, as evidenced by his works, he did not leave philosophy aside,[40] but continued to write on ethical and other philosophical topics, as well as to lecture on related subjects.[41]

Plutarch was not an 'eclectic' philosopher, at least in the modern, pejorative sense of the word.[42] Here and there, he may have been open to influences from other traditions,[43] and there is, to be sure, an element of Scepticism in his thought,[44] but he nonetheless appears to be aligned with fundamental positions of the Platonic/Academic tradition, a tradition that

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[37] For Ammonius, see Jones (1967) 205–213; *id.* (1971) 16–18; *id.* (1978) 229. An attempt to reconstruct the basic outline of his philosophical doctrine is made by Dillon (1996²) 189–192. On Plutarch's admission to the 'Academy' while in Athens, see *De E* 387F. On his enrolment in the Leontis tribe, see *Quaest. conv.* 628A.

[38] For the position of Chaeronea in relation to the roads of the period, see especially Jones (1971) 4. On the mobility of intellectuals, see Fron (2021) 22–23 and, especially with regard to sea travel, 56–65.

[39] See, e.g., *Praec. ger. reip.* 816C.

[40] For a philosophical account of this production, see in particular Dillon (1996²) 186–189.

[41] On Plutarch's lecturing, see, e.g., in *Animine an corp.* 501E–F and *De cur*. 522D–E.

[42] For the application of the term to Plutarch, see already Zeller (1881³) 163 [144–145], cf. *op. cit.* 159 [141–142]. Zeller was heavily influenced by Kant's pejorative conception of 'eclecticism'. The use of this term with regard to the philosophers of the early empire is criticised by Donini (1988) 15–33 [= (2011a) 197–209] and more recently by Trapp (2007) 16–18. For a more balanced view, however, see Castelnérac (2007) 135–163.

[43] The most important source of influence was Stoicism. The seminal study is Babut (1969), which should nevertheless be read alongside Hershbell (1992) 3353–3383. For more recent approaches, see Opsomer (2014) 88–103 (with further bibliography). Dillon (1996²) 189, 198 also identifies some influences from the 'Cynic-Stoic' tradition.

[44] See already Hirzel (1895) 2.124 n. 1; *id.* (1912) 8; and Donini (1986) 212; Babut (1991) 9–10; Opsomer (1997) 41–42, 55; *id.* (1998) 127; Donini (1999) 22–23 [= (2011c) 372–373]; Bonazzi (2014) 121, 130; Perkams (2017) 10. As regards Plutarch's basic epistemological principles, I broadly follow Bonazzi (2014) 121–130 (especially his discussion of *De Stoic. rep.* 1037C). Plutarch's conception of 'suspension of judgement' (ἐποχὴ) in this passage is close to the meaning given to the concept by the earlier Sceptical philosophers of the Academy – i.e. in contrast to the Pyrrhonians. Although these philosophers made use of the same term, they regarded it as a method for determining which premises

he sees as beginning with Pythagoras, Socrates and Plato, continuing with Aristotle, passing through the Hellenistic Academy and finally arriving at his own time.[45] There is also evidence to suggest that Plutarch was a member of a philosophical circle in Chaeronea that had distinct traditions and customs, such as the celebration of the birthday of Socrates and Plato every May on two consecutive days.[46] It is reasonable to assume that wherever this circle held its meetings, whether in Plutarch's own house or somewhere else in the area, it also functioned as a kind of school, where young men from Greece and abroad could stay from time to time in order to take advantage of meetings with Plutarch and other colleagues.[47] There is certainly evidence from his writings that he participated in teaching activities (see, e.g., *De E* 385A). Plutarch's pupils must have included young men from the most rarefied social circles and some of them must have later proved successful in various fields, either in politics or philosophy.[48] One example is Favorinus of Arles in Gaul, a

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and conclusions are more plausible than others. See the excellent introduction to the Academic Sceptics by Hossenfelder (1985) 191ff.

[45] On Plutarch's Platonism, see Jones' seminal work (1916). For more recent discussions, see Dillon (1988) 357–364; *id*. (1996²) 184–186; *id*. (2014) 61–72; Meeusen (2021) 57–70; Opsomer (2023) 79–100. For the Platonic/Academic tradition, cf. Nikolaidis (1999) 398, alongside Frede (1999) 771, 776–782. Cf. also Lamprias Catalogue, no. 63: Περὶ τοῦ μίαν εἶναι τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ Πλάτωνος Ἀκαδημίαν. In addition to the material provided in the bibliography cited above, let us also note the passage *De Al. Magn. fort.* 1, 328A–B, where Pythagoras, Socrates and the Academics Arcesilaus and Carneades are presented as the most notable of the philosophers (οἱ δοκιμώτατοι τῶν φιλοσόφων) who happen to have left no writings behind, as well as the passage *Adv. Col.* 1124D, where Parmenides, Socrates, Heracleitus and Plato are depicted as philosophers whose teachings could prevent humanity from descending into a state akin to that of wild beasts, resorting to devouring one another, should laws be miraculously removed from human societies.

[46] See *Quaest. conv.* 717B, cf. Pelling (2005) 106.

[47] On Plutarch's school, see also Hirzel (1895) 176; Ziegler (1951) 663–665; Russell (2001²) 14; Bouffartigue (2012) xix. Regarding the 'family atmosphere' that, according to Russell (2001²) 13, the *De soll. an.* suggests prevailed in Plutarch's school, it should be noted that we can identify earlier literary (i.e. Plato and Glaucon) and institutional models (Speusippus succeeding Plato). See already Hirzel (1895) 176 n. 2. For schools offering accommodation to students and visitors, see Fron (2021) 84–92.

[48] For disciples from Plutarch's circle who later took on roles in politics and local administration, see, e.g., the profile of Aristotimus, one of the two students mentioned in the dialogue *De soll. an.* according to Puech (1992) 4837–4839. As for the students/young people from Plutarch's circle who went on to have a career in philosophy, note that Sextus of Chaeronea (*PIR*² S 488), teacher of Marcus Aurelius (cf. *Ad se ipsum* 1.9), was mentioned in the *Suda* (*σ* 235) as a nephew of Plutarch (according to Adler (1931) 341, this testimony comes from the *Onomatologos* of Hesychius, who is discussed in more detail

man about thirty-five years younger than Plutarch, whom Plutarch seems to have taught or mentored for some time. Favorinus later achieved great success in Rome as a public speaker and philosophical writer who wrote from a similar, Academic perspective.[49]

Alongside his teaching activities, Plutarch wrote prolifically throughout his life, which clearly enhanced his profile as a philosopher, both locally and abroad. A surviving catalogue of his works, the so-called Lamprias Catalogue, dating to between the third and fourth centuries AD, lists 227 titles,[50] while the extant body of texts includes 48 biographies of famous historical figures and a further 78 texts on various topics, not all of which are included in the Lamprias Catalogue. These two groups of works have traditionally been known as the *Parallel Lives* and the *Moralia*, respectively. I will revisit this distinction below. Plutarch's reputation extended far beyond Chaeronea. Since important Greek port cities, such as Athens or Corinth, were crossroads of maritime trade between Rome and the Greek-speaking East, Plutarch himself could, for political or educational purposes, travel relatively easily to Rome and Italy, to Egypt or to Asia Minor. The same must have been true, of course, for his books, as well as for prospective students from Greece and abroad:[51] as we saw earlier, Favorinus came from Gaul. The extent of Plutarch's reputation is demonstrated quite convincingly by his network of foreign friends and acquaintances, insofar as this can be reconstructed on the basis of the historical persons mentioned in his writings, whether as recipients of

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on n. 82 below). Cf. also *Syll.*³ 845 = *IG* II² 3814 (on the sophist Nicagoras claiming descent from both Plutarch and Sextus) alongside the observations of Millar (1969) 16–17.

[49] Concerning Plutarch's relationship with Favorinus (*PIR*² F 123), let us note that Galen (*Opt. doct.* I, 41.11–15 K.) testifies that Favorinus had written a treatise entitled Περὶ τῆς Ἀκαδημαϊκῆς διαθέσεως, 'On Academic disposition', to which he gave the second title Πλούταρχος, 'Plutarch', and a dialogue entitled Πρὸς Ἐπίκτητον, 'Against Epictetus', in which a certain Onesimus, Plutarch's servant, apparently debated with Epictetus. Plutarch, too, had dedicated one – or perhaps two – of his texts to Favorinus: cf. *De prim. frig.* 945F and *Lampr. Cat.* no. 132, from which some extracts survive (frr. 159–171 Sandbach). On Favorinus' relationship with the Academy, see Glucker (1978) 280–285; Ducos (1984) 290–291; Opsomer (1997) 18; *id.* (1998) 221–222. Further discussion of the relationship between Favorinus and Plutarch can be found in Volkmann (1869) 1.110; Ziegler (1951) 675; Jones (1971) 35, 60–61; Puech (1992) 4850; Bowie (1997) 1–15; Opsomer (1997) 18; Bowie (2002) 50–51; van Hoof (2010) 263; Schmitz (2012) 70; Bonazzi (2019) 59–62.

[50] For more on this catalogue, see Treu (1873); Ziegler (1951) 696–702; Barrow (1967) 193–194; Sandbach (1969) 3–29; Irigoin (1986) 318–331; Harrison (1992) 4648–4651.

[51] For Plutarch's travels, see Buckler (1992) 4788–4830. On the 'catchment area' of Athens in Plutarch's time, see Fron (2021) A27–A45. On Roman contacts with Greek intellectuals, see, e.g., Griffin (1994) 696–700.

dedications or as interlocutors in the dialogues.[52] One of these friends, the Roman senator Lucius Mestrius Florus,[53] secured Roman citizenship for Plutarch.[54] Meanwhile in Greece, Plutarch was already a person of some influence. For several years, he held the prestigious office of the one of the two senior priests of Apollo at the Oracle of Delphi (see *An seni* 792F; cf. also 785C as well as *Quaest. conv.* 700E).[55] Plutarch died early in the reign of Hadrian,[56] leaving behind a vast and varied body of philosophical work, evidence both of his great success as a man of letters and of his serious engagement with philosophy.

But let us turn back to the topic of rhetoric. The adoption of the identity of an Academic or Platonic philosopher, as Plutarch seems to have done, would have led his contemporaries to expect a hostile attitude towards rhetoric, an attitude that might have even downplayed the importance of rhetoric in order to promote himself as a philosopher.[57] As mentioned earlier, Plutarch lived in an age in which rhetoric already had a long history. Throughout this history, Plato's moral critique of rheto-

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[52] For a general overview of Plutarch's Roman connections, see Jones (1971) 48–64.

[53] *PIR*² M 531, cf. also Millar (1965) 141.

[54] For Florus' relationship with Plutarch, see Jones (1971) 11, 22, 48–49.

[55] On Plutarch as a priest at Delphi, see, e.g., Flacelière (1943) 72–111; Burkert (1997) 11–28; Stadter (2005) 197–214, esp. 197–199; Casanova (2012) 151–157; Lamberton (2023) 122–123. Plutarch's active period of service at Delphi was beginning each year in late February/early March, corresponding to the Delphic month 'Bysios'. For the identification of this month, see Rzepka (2016) with further references. The seventh day of 'Bysios' was considered to be the day of Apollo's return from the Hyperboreans (cf. also *Quaest. conv.* 717D). According to *Quaest. graec.* 292E–293A, which cites Anaxandridas (*FGrHist* 404 F 3) and Callisthenes (*FGrHist* 124 F 49), in the past, the god's responses were given only on that specific day. However, in later times, due to the oracle's growing popularity, it became possible for visitors to receive responses once every month. For more on this testimony, see, e.g., Rzepka (2009). The period from approximately early November to late February, the winter months, amounts to the time when Apollo was considered to be absent (on this, cf. *De E* 389C). On the days of consulting the oracle, see esp. Parke (1943) 19–22. Serving as 'curator' of the council of the Amphictyony at Delphi, Plutarch once supervised the erection of a statue to Hadrian (*Syll.*³ 829A = *CIG* 1713). Plutarch also describes Delphi (*De def. or.* 410Aff.) as a place where he could meet and converse with learned men travelling from such distant places as Britain, Egypt and the Red Sea. On Delphi at that time, see Scott (2014) 203–222.

[56] For his death, see Artem. *On.* 4.72. For the date of his death, see Ziegler (1951) 640–641; Jones (1966) 66 and (1971) 34. For the inscription on the monument which the inhabitants of Delphi and Chaeronea jointly erected for Plutarch, see *Syll.*³ 843 = *CID* IV 151.

[57] On the hostile attitude of Platonists and Academics towards rhetoric, see Kennedy (1963) 300, 321–330; *id.* (1980) 66; *id.* (1994) 93; Karadimas (1996) 1–3, 224–228; Pernot (2000) 96–97; Brittain (2001) 300; Liebersohn (2010) 36–38.

ric, as expressed mainly in *Gorgias*, had survived and sometimes even provided writers who had reason to be hostile to rhetoric with an important repository of arguments.[58] For example, Quintilian, in a passage in the second book of his work in which he responds to various critics of rhetoric, mentions writers who claimed that major historical cities, such as Sparta and Athens, had banned rhetoric from their territory, on the grounds that it was harmful not only to individuals but also to the city as a whole and to the common good itself (2.16.4). This is an argument that Sextus Empiricus later associates with Critolaus and Charmadas (*M.* 2.20–43).[59] Charmadas was an important representative of the later Hellenistic Academy, the so-called 'Fourth Academy', who, like Plutarch's teacher Ammonius, had also come to Athens from Alexandria.[60] Academic philosophers like Charmadas had every reason to be hostile to rhetoric. Their philosophy was merely one educational offering among many competing on the higher-education market of Hellenistic Athens, and some of their rivals, such as the various rhetoric teachers and the Stoics, included rhetoric in their curricula – we shall come back to this point.[61] Be that as it may, an argument for the uselessness and even harmfulness of rhetoric can already be found in Plato's *Gorgias* (480B–C, 502D–E),[62] a text which, according to Cicero's testimony, Charmadas read in the Academy together with his students (*De or.* 1.47, cf. 1.45).[63] Obviously, arguments of this type, based on Plato's text, were either still in circulation or had been revived in Quintilian's time, prompting him to refer to them in his work. In the second century AD, the orator Aelius Aristides apparently felt a similar need, leading him to compose three long speeches in response to criticism of rhetoric in Plato's *Gorgias*.[64] It is reasonable to assume that Plutarch's readership would have expected a philosopher of an Academic-Platonic persuasion to be willing to defend the opposing position.

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[58] Cf. Reinhardt (2000) 532; Erler & Tornau (2019) 10.

[59] For a detailed analysis of the argument, see Liebersohn (2011) 102, 104–105, 108–113.

[60] On Charmadas, see Glucker (1978) 109–111; Tarrant (1985) 34–40; Görler (1994) 906–908; Brittain (2001) 312–328; Lévy (2005) 60–70; Fleischer (2014) 65–75; *id.* (2023) 418–420. On Charmadas' origins in Alexandria, see Fleisher (2019) 153–165. On his disciples, see Fleisher (2015) 49–53.

[61] See n. 131 below.

[62] See Karadimas (1996) 227.

[63] See Karadimas (1996) 226; cf. Kennedy (1994) 93 and Pernot (2022) 93–113.

[64] The texts are as follows: 1) Πρὸς Πλάτωνα ὑπὲρ ῥητορικῆς (*Or.* 2 = 45 Dind.); 2) Πρὸς Πλάτωνα ὑπὲρ τῶν τεττάρων (*Or.* 3 = 46 Dind.); 3) Πρὸς Καπίτωνα (*Or.* 4 = 47 Dind.). On Aristides' reaction to Plato, with regard to matters of rhetoric, see Kennedy (1972) 584–585; *id.* (1980) 66; *id.* (1994) 240–241; Karadimas (1996) 26–31; Trapp (2020) 85–113.

If we are to judge from Plutarch's surviving writings, however, his attitude towards rhetoric is not especially hostile. Strictly speaking, his position can be described as moderate. Although in his writings Plutarch gives the impression of systematically dismissing those who purport to teach rhetoric and participate in declamation contests, he nowhere adopts an overtly dismissive attitude, even though there are contexts in his works that would allow for such a position – here I look ahead to one of the main arguments of this book.

The most typical case is found in a passage from the work *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae*. This particular passage (801C–D) argues that, in local politics, one must possess both a virtuous character, which in this particular context is shaped by philosophy (cf. 798C, where the philosopher is portrayed as an ideal mentor for the statesman, and 799A, where the purpose of a statesman's action is defined in Platonic terms as 'the good'), and communication skills, for which rhetoric serves as the foundation (801C). In their absence, the statesman, who lacks the ability to persuade and influence, will not be of use to his community (801D).[65] This clearly does not amount to an unreserved endorsement of rhetoric, since Plutarch insists that character must come first as a means of persuasion and rhetoric second – after all, the definition of rhetoric he proposes in this passage is "not the creator of persuasion but certainly its coworker" (μὴ δημιουργὸν ἀλλά τοι συνεργὸν εἶναι πειθοῦς, *Praec. ger. reip.* 801D). However, this does not amount to a rejection either, since the importance of rhetoric as an instrument of persuasion and influence in the political sphere is acknowledged. Moreover, not only does Plutarch's definition of rhetoric subtly revise the one presented by Plato in the *Gorgias*, but nowhere does Plutarch seem to commit himself to any distinct 'philosophical' or 'true' rhetoric that stands in opposition to so-called 'formal' rhetoric, as Plato famously does. The kind of reconciliation between rhetoric and philosophy that Plutarch envisages in this passage is one that, despite subordinating rhetoric to philosophy, accords the former a subsidiary role in the process of generating persuasion.

Another typical example of this hierarchical relationship, one which also reflects a moderate attitude towards rhetoric, is Plutarch's explicit refusal, in the *Lives* of Demosthenes and Cicero, to engage in any critical comparison of their rhetoric (*Dem.* 3.1, cf. *Dem.-Cic.* 1.1), restricting himself to comparing the ways in which the natural dispositions (φύσεις) and characters (διαθέσεις) of these two men were expressed in their actions (πράξεις) and public lives (πολιτεῖαι). The few general comments on the eloquence of Demosthenes and Cicero that Plutarch adds in the comparative section at the end are similarly concerned about the impression their rhetoric could leave on their audiences with respect to their character,

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[65] Cf. Ziegler (1951) 929.

rather than about the more technical aspects of their speeches (*Dem.-Cic.* 1–2). Rudolf Hirzel has argued that this refusal on Plutarch's part should be understood simply as a statement about abstaining from judgement about matters that fall within the scope of rhetoric.[66] However, the technical section of the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae* (802E–804D), which comes just after the passage on the definition of rhetoric, would obviously refute Hirzel's conjecture – we shall examine this technical section in more detail below. Plutarch's refusal could, therefore, simply be the result of anticipating his readers' normal expectations about this particular pair of biographies. Demosthenes and Cicero are, respectively, the most iconic Greek orator and the most iconic Roman orator. Naturally, a reader of this pair of biographies would ask themselves questions such as 'Who is the better of the two?', 'Whose rhetoric is best?', 'Which of them can best serve as a model for composing rhetoric today?' and so on.[67] If this is true, then Plutarch's refusal can be interpreted as a further indication to his readers that rhetoric can be useful not for its own sake but as a means of revealing true character.[68]

However, this picture is still not complete. In Plutarch's surviving works, we find further evidence that raises the question of whether we should not attribute to him an even more positive attitude. Not only was Plutarch himself a writer who was well trained in rhetoric,[69] as evidenced by his ability to use both complex narrative structures[70] and more formal rhetorical elements, such as proems, anecdotes and contrasting antithetical comparisons,[71] not to mention his rhythmic prose, his careful avoid-

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[66] Hirzel (1895) 125.

[67] Cf. Dion. Hal. *Orat. Vet.* 4.2.

[68] On this, see esp. Chrysanthou (2018) 292–293.

[69] As would be expected of any philosopher of the time. See, for example, Männlein-Robert *et al.* (2016) 11. For the influence of school rhetoric on Plutarch's literary production, see esp. Fernández Delgado (2013) 13–44, cf. also Russell (2023) 157f.

[70] See, in this regard, Pelling (1988) 10–18; *id.* (1995) 206–208 [= (2002) 237–239]; Stadter (1997) 65–81 [= (2015) 215–230]; Duff (1999) 52–71; Stadter (2000) 493–510 [= (2015) 231–245]; *id.* (2003/2004) 89–96; Duff (2004) 285–287; Larmour (2005) 43–51; Alexiou (2007b) 275–279; Duff (2007/2008) 3–18; *id.* (2011b) 59–82; Chrysanthou (2018b) 1–25; *id.* (2019) 46.

[71] On proems, see Stadter (1988) 275–295; Rosenmeyer (1992) 205–230; Duff (2011) 218–228; Chrysanthou (2017) 128–153. On anecdotes, cf. Alsup (1981) 15–27; Robbins (1981) 29–52; Beck (1998) *passim*; *id.* (1999) 173–187; *id.* (2003) 169–192; cf. also Meraklis (1966) 67–68 and Stenger (2006) 203–204. For comparisons, see Focke (1923) 327–368; Ziegler (1951) 936–937; Erbse (1956) 348–424; Pelling (1986) 83–96; Larmour (1992) 4154–4200; Martin (1997) 724–729; Duff (1999) 243–286; Russell (2001²) 110–115; Duff (2011) 253–259; Russell (2023) 162. For all this and other related evidence, see also Hirzel (1912) 7–8, 39–46 and Stadter (1987) 251–269; *id.* (2000) 493–510.

ance (or sometimes even tolerance) of hiatus, well-formed periods and ambitious vocabulary,[72] but Plutarch's extant works also include a number of rhetorical showpieces, which point to the tradition of declamation. Opinions vary as to how extensive this group of texts is,[73] but there seems to be a core upon which most scholars are in agreement, including *De fortuna Romanorum* (316D–326D), *De Alexandri Magni fortuna aut virtute* (in two parts, 326D–345C), and *Bellone an pace clariores fuerint Athenienses* (435C–351C). Of these texts, the first discusses the role of luck in Rome's success,[74] the second argues that Alexander's achievements were the result not of good fortune, but of his virtue,[75] while the fi-

[72] On Plutarch's rhythmic prose, see Hein (1914) 32–37; de Groot (1919) *passim*; Sandbach (1939) 194–198; Ziegler (1951) 935–936; Minon (2015) *passim*; Hutchinson (2018) *passim*, especially the comparison with other ancient authors on pp. 19–28. On hiatus, see Benseler (1841) 2.314–548; Sintenis (1845); Schellens (1864); Bernardakis (1888) lxi–lxx; Naber (1900) 97, 102–103, 151, 354, 357; Kallenberg (1912) 12–13; Kronenberg (1934) 167; Stamatakos (1937) 82–83; Ziegler (1951) 932–935; Meraklis (1966) 64–65. On periods in Plutarch's writing, see von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1912³) 243; Ziegler (1951) 937–938; Meraklis (1966) 62–63; see also Yaginuma (2016) 4727–4741. For Plutarch's vocabulary, which has often been described as an example of the intermediate space between 'Koine' and 'Atticism', cf. Schmid (1887) 26; *id*. (1896) 640–643; Norden (1898) 392–394; von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1912³) 242–243; Jeuckens (1907) 55–59 (with exhaustive references also to passages in Plutarch, where 'Atticism' is mentioned); Hein (1914) 51–52, 140–145, 184; Stamatakos (1937) 80; Ziegler (1951) 931–932; Giangrande (1988) 78; Whitmarsh (2005) 42; Schmitz (2012) 78–79; Jażdżewska (2019) 66–70; Vela Tejada (2019) 295–308; Russell (2023) 157–158, 158–160. More on Plutarch's language can be found in Weissenberger (1895) and Torraca (1998) 3487–3510. On further aspects of Plutarch's style, see Russell (2023) 163–175.

[73] See Gréard (1866) 41–43; Hirzel (1895) 126 n. 1–3, 127 n. 2; Nachstädt (1895) 6, 113–114; Mahaffy (1906) 368 n. 1; Krauss (1912) 11; Hartman (1916) 143–160; Ziegler (1951) 706, 716–717; Palm (1959) 34–36; Bowie (1970) 7 n. 8; Jones (1971) 67, 70–71; Stanton (1973) 364 n. 119; Dihle (1989) 210; Gallo (1998) 3525–3526; Russell (2001²) 3; Beck (2003) 169; Russell (2012) 1165 and Russell (2023) 160–161. Dillon (1996²) 189, 198 identifies an alternative subset of Plutarch's writings that touch on ethical issues, which are more rhetorical in character and which he attributes to influence from the Cynic-Stoic tradition.

[74] On the text in general, see Wyttenbach (1821) 91–106. Further treatments are found in Volkmann (1869) 1.45–52; Lassel (1891) 57–60; Ziegler (1951) 719–721; Wardman (1955) 99–100; Barrow (1967) 122–130; Flacelière (1966) 367–375; Jones (1971) 68–70; Brenk (1977) 157–163; Swain (1989) 504–516; Martin (1997) 719; Frazier (2003) 9–38.

[75] For issues of textual criticism and interpretation, especially concerning factual references, see Wyttenbach (1821) 107–134 and Nachstädt (1895). See the further discussions in Lassel (1891) 60–63; Ziegler (1951) 721–724; Wardman (1955) 97–100; Hamilton (1969) xxiii–xxxiii; Martin (1997) 719; Froidefond (2003) 69–109.

nal one makes a surprising argument for a philosopher,[76] namely that the ancient Athenians owed their fame more to their military achievements than to their intellectual ones.[77]

Although these texts cannot, strictly speaking, be categorised as 'declamations' either of the advisory (*suasoriae*) or of the forensic type (*controversiae*),[78] their rhetorical/'agonistic' context, combined with the fact that they all revolve around historical themes with strong classical undertones, nevertheless suggest their similarity with the texts from this tradition.[79] Although the surviving declamations represent only a small fraction of what was undoubtedly composed, there is a general tendency to use historical themes for texts of an advisory nature (*suasoriae*) and fictional themes for texts of a forensic type (*controversiae*).[80] Among the historical themes of the advisory declamations, those relating to the Persian Wars, classical Athenian history and the campaigns of Philip and Alexander in southern Greece and the East respectively are most common, while at the same time a general tendency to use historical themes and topics related to the history of classical Greece can also be observed in other texts by authors such as Dio Chrysostom and Lucian, who were undoubtedly involved in the practice of declamation.[81] According to the testimony of the *Suda,* which probably comes from the lost *Name-Finder* (Ὀνοματολόγος) of Hesychius of Miletus, Dio Chrysostom had compiled eight books on the *Virtues of Alexander* (*δ* 1240).[82] These books are now lost, but the title suggests a topic similar to the one discussed by Plutarch in one of the texts mentioned above.[83] Such a rhetorical treatment of these topics by Plutarch undoubtedly stands in contrast to the

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[76] See, e.g., Duff (2011) 79–80, cf. Ziegler (1951) 930, 933; Martin (1997) 721; Stadter (2023) 180–181.

[77] For the text in general, see again the comments by Wyttenbach (1821) 135–158. For further considerations, see Ziegler (1951) 726–727; Martin (1997) 718–719; Frazier (2003) 159–184.

[78] See Beck (2003) 170.

[79] See Stadter (2023) 176–177.

[80] See Bowie (1970) 8–9.

[81] See Bowie (1970) 7–10. On the relationship of both of these writers to the practice of declamation, see, e.g., Karadimas (1996) 9–12 and 18–25, respectively (with additional references to the literature).

[82] For Hesychius as the source of this entry in the *Suda*, cf. Adler (1935) 117. Hesychius' work was a kind of history of the ancient pagan literature of Late Antiquity. For what remains of this text, see Müller (1851) and Flach (1880). For more general considerations, see Schamp (1987) 53–68 (with emphasis on the use by Photius) and Treadgold (2007) 273–274. On the method used in the *Suda* with regard to Hesychius' work, see Prandi (1999) 11–14, 26–28. On Hesychius' sources, see Schulz (1913) 1326–1327.

[83] Cf. also Pernot (2022) 384–385.

more serious moral tone typical of his other extant writings.[84] Indeed, the contrast is so stark that several scholars have been led to categorise these works as marginal within the extant Plutarchan corpus. A typical example is Thomas Schmitz, who, in a relatively recent contribution, argues that these texts "are clearly not what he [Plutarch] was most interested in or most proud of; rather, they are by-products of his fertile mind" and that "these declamations show that Plutarch is closer to the world of the Second Sophistic than one would suspect at first blush".[85]

The present book has two main aims. The first is to clarify Plutarch's attitude towards rhetoric, by attempting to give a convincing answer to the question of whether it is critical, moderate or, indeed, well disposed. This question is, in turn, linked to the question of Plutarch's 'orthodoxy' as a Platonist and adherent of the Academy. As we shall see in more detail in the next section, Plutarch's attitude towards rhetoric represents a notorious gap in classical scholarship, one which is mentioned in even the most recent literature.[86] It is precisely this gap that the present book aims to fill. In order to do so, it offers, first, a more sophisticated formulation of the problem and, second, a close re-reading of all the relevant passages that takes into account not only their direct textual background, but also their broader social, cultural and historical context. But that is not all. The book also takes Plutarch's attitude towards rhetoric as a case study for how the traditional conflict between philosophy and rhetoric was received in the first and early second centuries AD. As has perhaps already become apparent, this conflict began in the fourth century BC with Plato and the 'sophists', but the latter were soon supplanted by Isocrates, a renowned contemporary teacher of rhetoric and political thinker who, in his writings, often entered into dialogue with Plato and whose positions Plato himself sometimes addressed.[87] The controversy continued into Hellenistic times and seems to have been reinvigorated in the period this book focuses on.[88]

Moreover, the first and second centuries AD constitute a very important period in the history of both Greek and Latin literature, marking the beginning of the cultural renaissance widely known in classical scholar-

[84] See Ziegler (1951) 716, cf. also Stadter (2023) 177.

[85] Schmitz (2014) 33. In the past, the abnormal frequency of rhetorical elements in Plutarch's texts, such as those mentioned above, was used by scholars as an argument to refute the authenticity of one or another received text; see, e.g., Volkmann (1869) 1.181, *contra* Hirzel (1895) 2.126 n. 3.

[86] See already Xenophontos (2014) 38: "A comprehensive study on Plutarch's attitude towards rhetoric in particular is still needed."

[87] See, e.g., Eucken (1983) 1–4.

[88] A useful general overview of the conflict is provided by Karadimas (1996) 1–4 and more recently by Erler & Tornau (2019) 10–12.

ship as the Second Sophistic. This period, which extends roughly from the end of the first century to the mid-third century AD, was characterised by an increased interest in declamation and, of course, the great success and fame enjoyed by certain individuals throughout the Roman Empire due to their activity as public speakers and participants in declamation competitions.[89] These individuals are referred to in our sources as 'sophists', hence the name 'Second Sophistic', in contrast to the 'Old Sophistic' of Socrates and Plato's time.[90] As we have seen, although Plutarch comes across as consistently dismissive of those who teach rhetoric and take part in rhetorical competitions, some of his writings reveal that he was, in reality, not particularly far removed from their world – or at least not as much as one would expect, based on his attitude towards the sophists. However that may be, Plutarch is not unique in this respect. Other ancient writers from around the same time appear to occupy a similar intermediate position between rhetoric and philosophy, including Dio Chrysostom, Favorinus, the emperor Marcus Aurelius and Lucian.[91] A study that focuses on the arguments Plutarch employs in relation to rhetoric may shed light on similar cases, ultimately improving our understanding of the relationship between rhetoric and philosophy in this important historical period.

2. A 'conversion' from rhetoric to philosophy?

Plutarch's attitude towards rhetoric has attracted attention since the early days of classical scholarship, but these early attempts unfortunately set off in the wrong direction and their influence is still, in some respects, evident today. The traditional approach, as formulated by eminent scholars such as Rudolf Hirzel and Konrat Ziegler, and even, more recently, Christopher Jones, take Plutarch's harsh criticism of the sophists as indicative of his correspondingly low regard for rhetoric.[92] This approach takes for granted that what is said about the sophists in Plutarch's work

89 On the 'Second Sophistic', see Bowersock (1969) 1–16; Kennedy (1972) 553–607; Bowie (1979) 1–10; Anderson (1993) 13–46; Kennedy (1994) 230–256; Swain (1996) 1–13; Schmitz (1997) 9–38; Kennedy (1999²) 47–50; Pernot (2000) 244–254; Whitmarsh (2005) 3–22; *id.* (2017) 11–23; Schramm (2019) 287–311; Fron (2021) 6–13. For the Latin world, cf. Habinek (2017) 25–37.

90 For the term, see Philostr. *VS* 1.481.

91 See Karadimas (1996) 7–25, cf. Lawers (2015) 46–52, 65–72, 83–103; Pernot (2022) 275–287, 317–318, 381–382, 395–404. Philostratus discusses Dio Chrysostom and Favorinus in a separate section (*VS* 1.484–492), which includes the philosophers who as a result of their activity had acquired the reputation of sophists; *VS* 1.486–487 and 1.489–492 respectively.

92 Hirzel (1895) 2.125; Ziegler (1951) 716–717; Jones (1971) 14; see also Radermacher (1897) 419–420 and Krauss (1912) 5.

also applies to rhetoric, a connection that lacks a solid foundation in Plutarch's writings.[93] For Hirzel and other scholars who shared his position, it was convenient to postulate such a connection, since it provided a framework for explaining the existence of 'epideictic' texts within the extant Plutarchan corpus.

Already by the time of Wyttenbach's edition of Plutarch, there was a tendency to regard these texts as juvenalia, as they were thought to be the kind of text more likely to be composed by aspiring young orators in a school environment.[94] However, as Richard Volkmann subsequently pointed out, at least in the text *De fortuna Romanorum,* the extent of Plutarch's knowledge of Roman history and language is suggestive of a more mature stage in the author's life.[95] Nevertheless, by pointing out that Plutarch attacks the sophists in texts that can be safely dated to the mature phase of his writing career and, at the same time, adopting a scheme involving a 'conversion' from rhetoric to philosophy similar to the one proposed by Synesius for Dio Chrysostom (Syn. *Dio* 1), Hirzel has attempted to articulate a more coherent foundation for his view – although it is worth emphasising that he did not go so far as to argue that the 'epideictic' texts in question all necessarily belong to a juvenile period.[96] This is, however, exactly what Fritz Krauss subsequently argued in his doctoral dissertation *Die rhetorischen Schriften Plutarchs und ihre*

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[93] Cf. Karadimas (1996) 9.

[94] Wyttenbach (1821) 91, 108, 135.

[95] Volkmann (1896) 45.

[96] Hirzel (1895) 2.124–127; *id.* (1912) 7–8; see also Croiset (1928) 486. More recent treatments of Dio's supposed conversion are found in Bowersock (1969) 10–11, 110–111; Stanton (1973) 353–354; Whitmarsh (2005) 17–18. In fields associated with historical research, such as classical scholarship, scholars often classify historical works as either 'early' or 'juvenile', and 'late' or 'mature', based on their complexity or lack thereof. This complexity is usually assessed in terms of stylistic elements (such as naive vs. refined style, or derivative vs. original) and literary historical aspects (e.g., the influence of rhetoric vs. that of philosophy), thus leading to various biographical interpretations. However, this approach relies on a notion of progress that should not be taken for granted without further evidence. As Schopenhauer aptly notes, there is no greater error than to believe that the last word spoken is always the more correct one, that every word written later is an improvement on what was written earlier, and that every change is progress; "daher hüte sich, wer über einen Gegenstand sich belehren will, sogleich nur nach den neuesten Büchern darüber zu greifen, in der Voraussetzung, dass die Wissenschaften immer fortschreiten und dass bei Abfassung dieser die ältern benutzt worden seien" (VI, 533f. Hübscher). A relevant case, which can incidentally highlight the subjective nature of the above-mentioned classification criterion, is the Piano Trio No. 1 in B major, *Op.* 8, by Johannes Brahms, which is both Brahms' earliest and latest piano trio, as it exists in two completely different versions from 1854 and 1889 respectively. However, the classification of these versions as a 'juvenile' and a 'mature'

Stellung im Plutarchischen Schriftenkorpus (approved 1911),[97] whose example has since been followed by a number of important scholars,[98] with the result that, at present, the characterisation of the texts in question as 'primitive' or 'juvenile' is accepted by the majority of scholars,[99] even if only by convention.[100] That said, as John Moles has very aptly pointed out, the rationale behind this characterisation is clearly circular.[101]

So far, the only thorough study that has not adopted this perspective is Robert Jeuckens' dissertation, *Plutarch von Chaeronea und die Rhetorik* (approved 1906). This study articulates a systematic critique of the theory of conversion as applied to Plutarch.[102] By means of an extensive and thorough analysis of the relevant passages, Jeuckens shows that although Plutarch appears to disapprove of the activities of the sophists, not only does he nowhere explicitly reject rhetoric as a whole, but even in texts clearly written late in his career, he appears to share the view that rhetoric is a useful tool of persuasion in politics, provided, of course, that it is subordinated to philosophy and reinforces the orator's virtuous character. While there is much to admire in Jeuckens' study, his approach suffers from a serious flaw, namely that his analysis fails to escape from the familiar, artificial, binary scheme, according to which Plato and philosophy stand on one side and the sophists and rhetoric on the other, with the result that Jeuckens views Plutarch's acknowledgement of the usefulness of rhetoric as a conditional recognition of the value of a tool of persuasion that does not normally belong to the realm of philosophy.[103] The use of such a framework leads Jeuckens to present Plutarch's position towards rhetoric as being influenced by Plato's later attitude,[104] which is, of course, not entirely accurate, as a closer look reveals not only similarities but also significant differences between the two philosophers' positions.[105]

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work respectively, whether one is aware of their genesis or not, ultimately depends on the individual listener's perception. I owe these references to Professor Georg Wöhrle.

[97] See in particular Krauss (1912) 12–58.

[98] See Ziegler (1951) 716–717, 931; Meraklis (1966) 42–43; Jones (1966) 70; Hamilton (1969) xii–xxiii; Jones (1971) 14–16, 67, 135; Swain (1989) 503 n. 3; Martin (1997) 719–720; Gallo (1998) 3535; Sirinelli (2000) 75–87; Schramm (2019) 305.

[99] Only the following scholars have expressed scepticism: Russell (1972) 226–227; Moles (1978) 80; Russell (2001²) 3; Frazier (2003) 15–16, 166–167; Froidefond (2003) 106–108; Russell (2012) 1165; *id.* (2023) 162.

[100] See Beck (2003) 170.

[101] See Moles (1978) 80.

[102] See Jeuckens (1907) 7–8.

[103] See Jeuckens (1907) 17.

[104] See Jeuckens (1907) 30, 33–34, 98, cf. Ziegler (1951) 929.

[105] For a similar argument, cf. also Goeken (2017) 279–288, esp. 287–288, where he compares the value of rhetoric within sympotic contexts in Plato and Plutarch respec-

As mentioned earlier, Plutarch does not distinguish between a philosophically valid 'true' rhetoric and a 'formal' one. Jeuckens' account was, in other words, shaped under the influence of Plutarch's own discourse, meaning that here, too, we are deep in the hermeneutical circle. Plutarch may indeed defend a position that, in its broad strokes, appears to be in agreement with that of Plato, but the question is what it means for Plutarch to put forward such a position within the literary, cultural and social context of the first two centuries of our era.

Jeuckens wrote his dissertation at a time when the philosophical-historical framing of an ancient thinker's attitude towards a particular issue was understood mainly in terms of dependence on one or another earlier thinker. Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century classical scholarship relied heavily on a sophisticated method of historical criticism known as 'source study' (Germ. 'Quellenforschung'). The adherents of this methodology used literary and other reference works that survived from later Antiquity, as well as from Byzantine times (e.g. dictionaries, anthologies and doxographies), on the basis of which they tried to reconstruct networks of sources, enabling the origins of certain important opinions, concepts or historical descriptions recorded in them to be traced.[106] The result of this method was monumental collections of 'fragments', such as Hermann Usener's *Epicurea* (1887), Hermann Diels' *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (1903, 1st ed.), Hans von Arnim's *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* (1905) and *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* by Felix Jacoby (1923–1958), each of which also contains numerous accounts of lost texts by earlier writers that are attested in Plutarch.

There is nothing unusual about this. Plutarch was not only a prolific writer, but also one who wrote about an impressively wide range of subjects, from history and philosophy to physics, zoology and even dietetics. Such erudition presupposes periods of extensive research in libraries and other archives, in which Plutarch consulted either original literature or collections and anthologies that were of material of interest to him. Plutarch himself gives us an insight into his scholarly activity when he refers to his 'ὑπομνήματα' (*De tranq. an.* 464F), i.e. his notes, which contained material harvested from various sources that Plutarch then organised in such a way that he could make use of it whenever the

tively; cf. also Gonzáles Julià (2009) 83–84, Fernández Delgado & Pordomingo (2017) 289–295 and Ginestí Rosell (2023) 110–111.

[106] For an overall assessment of 'Quellenforschung' see Most (2016) 933–954 (with references to further literature). On the origins of the method in the field of biblical studies, see Mansfeld & Runia (1997) 87–100. There were, of course, at the same time exceptions to this general trend, i.e. works that attempted to focus on a later author, rather than on the sources on which that author may have depended; see, e.g., von Arnim (1898) 2.

need arose.[107] Naturally, for scholars interested in the reconstruction of lost works of ancient literature, Plutarch was an important writer – not, of course, for his literary skills, but for the wealth of sources he used.[108]

But the situation has changed. On the one hand, scholars who still read writers like Diodorus Siculus, Athenaeus or Plutarch simply out of interest in the material they used from sources that have now been lost are beginning to place increasing emphasis on both the working methods and the ideological and aesthetic programme of these writers, as they come to understand that processes, such as the reception and appropriation of earlier literature, do not work as mechanically as earlier researchers had assumed.[109] On the other hand, poststructural literary criticism has suggested that there is still much to be discussed beyond the intentions of a particular author or his or her influences.[110] One need not necessarily take Barthes' critique of the 'death of the author' to the extreme.[111] The author of a text can be seen simply as the artistic subject of a dis-

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[107] The same practice is also implied in the *De Al. Magn. fort.* 1, 328A. It was a widespread method of organising and managing knowledge in the ancient world, the origins of which can be traced as early as Aristotle and the Peripatetics. More on this can be found in Pfeiffer (1968) 84; Baltussen (2000) 31–56; Wehrli† *et al.* (2004²) 499–505; Wöhrle (2019) 68, 97. On the forms of information management in Antiquity in general, see Blair (2010) 14–22. On Plutarch's 'ὑπομνήματα' in particular, see Ziegler (1951) 787–788; Pelling (1979) 94–95; van Meirvenne (1999) 527–540; van der Stockt (1999a) 127–140; *id.* (1999b) 575–599; van Meirvenne (2001) 284–296; *ead.* (2002) 141–160; van der Stockt (2002) 115–140; *id.* (2004a) 137–149; *id.* (2004b) 331–340; *id.* (2005) 455–464; Verdegem (2010) 141–149, 272–278, 404–405; Xenophontos (2012) 61–91.

[108] Cf. Ziegler (1951) 911–914 (with further references to earlier literature). For a critical treatment of this approach, see Russell (1966) 139–140 [= (1995) 75–76]; Duff (1999) 5–9; van der Stockt (1999b) 575–576; *id.* (2004) 331–335; Alexiou (2007b) 13. A useful overview of some key trends in Plutarch scholarship in the last century is provided by Harrison (1992) 4646–4681.

[109] See, e.g., Schepens (1997) 168. On the change of attitude regarding the study of Diodorus, see Rathmann (2016) 1–11, esp. 10–11; Hau *et al.* (2018) 3–12, esp. 6–7, 10. Cf. Parker (2018) 189–206; Priestley (2018) 207–219; Wozniczka (2018) 221–246; Yarrow (2018) 247–274. Similarly, for Athenaeus, see Lenfant (1999) 103–121; Pelling (2000) 171–190; Carrière (2007) 219–240; Lenfant (2007) 43–72; Maisonneuve (2007) 73–106; Berti *et al.* (2016) 121–139; Olson (2018) 423–450. In Plutarch scholarship, especially research focusing on the *Lives*, there has been a similar shift in perspective from the question of the historicity of Plutarch's narratives to the rhetorical and narrative devices that his texts use to invite their readers to relate to the persons depicted and to make moral judgements about them. See, for example, the bibliography cited in n. 70 above.

[110] See Gumbrecht (2003) 1–8 and Wirth & Bremer (2010) 47 on the identity of (classical) philology in the poststructuralist era.

[111] Cf. Barthes (1968) 61–67.

course that, at any given time, expresses some of the myriad possibilities offered by language in a given historical period.[112] But why does a writer decide to make use of one possibility and not the other? The answer does not always lie solely in his intentions, beliefs, ingenuity or any other such thing. For there are other parameters beyond the individual which influence literary texts like those of Plutarch. One important term here is 'intertextuality', which Julia Kristeva coined on the basis of the concept of 'dialogism' attributed to Mikhail Bakhtin: Bakhtin understood that speech is wholly implicated in a process of communication, the various parts of which cannot be entirely meaningful unless they are seen to exist in relations of dialogical meaning with each other. Hence, even utterances such as single words or sentences cannot be fully understood unless they are seen to depend on other utterances, whether prior or anticipated, whether attributed to an identifiable person, or simply derived from established rules, habits, opinions and so on.[113] Kristeva's intertextuality amounts to a broadening of this concept to include literary texts, since they too can be seen as the "intersection of textual surfaces [...], as a dialogue among several writings: that of the writer, the addressee (or the character) and the contemporary or earlier cultural context".[114]

This means that Plutarch's texts are studied today not simply as an amalgam of sources and influences, but as cultural products of a particular era. As such, they are contrasted and compared with other, similar products, both in terms of their construction and in terms of the particular mechanisms that made them resonate with contemporary readers. In addition, there are a number of theoretical 'models' that have been

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[112] See Barthes (2006) 15; cf. Foucault (1977) 113–138.

[113] See, e.g., Bakhtin (1986) 77–99. On the question of the paternity of several ideals attributed to Bakhtin, including the notion of 'dialogism', see Bronckart & Bota (2011).

[114] Kristeva (1980) 65; see also Aczel (2013[5]) 349–351. The term has since also been used in a narrower, descriptive sense by several scholars (see, e.g., Genette (2015[7]) 10), who understand 'intertextuality' rather as a general term for conventional, often intentional types of reference in texts, such as quotation, allusion, parody, caricature, etc. On this general tendency in the reception of the term, see the reaction by Kristeva (1974) 59–60, where she notes with regret that "this term has often been understood in the banal sense of 'critique of sources'" (*ce terme a été souvent entendu dans le sens banal de 'critique des sources'*). Apart from an early period of distrust, directed mainly against the narrower understanding of intertextuality, which seemed to some classical scholars to bring nothing really new, given that several types of reference to texts were already covered by ancient rhetorical theory, intertextuality has since become widely used in classical scholarship. For a general consideration of the importance of intertextuality for research in Ancient Greek and Latin letters, see Fowler (1997) 13–14. For further theoretical/methodological approaches to the same phenomenon, see Thomas (1986) 171–198, esp. 175–176 (on so-called 'causal reference'); Plett (1999) 313–329; Vamvouri (2020) 1–8.

developed over the last fifty years or so in the fields of sociology and cultural studies, which could also prove helpful in the context of the present discussion: Michel Foucault's recognition of the fundamental relationship between power, scientific truth and discourse,[115] Pierre Bourdieu's description of how positive differentiation and the accumulation of capital – whether material or symbolic – occurs among people operating in the same social fields,[116] as well as Henri Tajfel's theoretical 'model' (subsequently elaborated on and completed by John Turner), which explains how people categorise the world around them and mould distinct identities for themselves.[117] For reasons of space, I will not present each of these contributions here – after all, they have long been considered 'classics' in their respective fields, meaning that the interested reader can easily find references for further study in established reference works. In what follows, I will limit myself to attempting to frame the problem of Plutarch's attitude towards rhetoric in a way that incorporates all these aspects, but does not explicitly mention them each time. The same also holds true of other 'models' that are perhaps better known in the field of classical studies. For instance, no analysis of how Plutarch predicted his readers' expectations is possible without the use of fundamental concepts such as 'horizon of expectation' and 'implied reader', the roots of which can be traced back to the so-called Constance School of reception theory.[118] These too are presupposed in the discussion that follows. Armed with this material, we can move beyond Jeuckens and conceive of Plutarch not merely as a philosopher who accords rhetoric some limited value, but rather as a writer who, when necessary, is able to employ both philosophy and rhetoric, especially when it comes to dealing with a subject as extensively discussed as rhetoric was at the time.

From a socio-historical point of view, both philosophers and rhetoricians were groups of individuals that acted in parallel to accumulate resources within a common field, that of higher education. According to the standard narrative, this competition became even more intense in the second century BC, after young men from Rome and Italy turned to Greek forms of education.[119] The resources up for grabs were either material, such as tuition fees or gifts from individuals who felt indebted to

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[115] See Foucault (1970) and (1972).

[116] See Bourdieu (1984).

[117] See a brief overview in Turner (1996) 1–23.

[118] For the 'horizon of expectation' (Germ. 'Erwartungshorizont'), see Jauß (1970). This is an extended version of his inaugural address at the University of Constance on 13 April 1967. The speech was subsequently printed in Jauß (1967). On the 'implied reader' (Germ. 'implizierter Leser'), see Iser (1994^4) 50–67.

[119] von Arnim (1898) 88; see also Reinhardt (2000) 532 (with references to the primary literature).

the teacher, or symbolic, such as fame, glory, popularity, titles and so on.[120] Those who benefited from the educational offerings of the philosophers and rhetoric teachers were the members of the empire's elite. This was a highly diverse group, which included people from the highest circles, i.e. the imperial family and the senators in Rome, all the way down to the provincial aristocracies of the most far-flung cities and towns of the empire. Of course, some of these individuals were destined for careers in politics and public administration, while for others, such as Quintilian or Plutarch himself, teaching was also an option. This phenomenon was not unique to Plutarch's time. In the Hellenistic period, for example, the Roman disciples of Panaetius included not only members of the Roman aristocracy, such as Scipio Aemilianus or Rutilius Rufus, but also politically insignificant personalities, such as the Samnites Marcius and Nysius and the Roman Piso,[121] who were probably training to become practitioners of philosophy themselves.[122] The same held true in Plutarch's time. As we saw earlier, the second-century Academic philosopher Favorinus of Arles was likely a student of Plutarch, along with young members of the local Boeotian aristocracy. Another probable member of Plutarch's school was his nephew Sextus,[123] who went on to become the teacher of the emperor Marcus Aurelius (see *Med.* 1.9).

While Plutarch himself did not do so, many other educated philosophers of the time apparently found the homes of wealthy Roman politicians an attractive workplace: they could teach their children, work in the library and occasionally join in literary discussions with their employers and their guests.[124] Other philosophers – and here Plutarch and the Stoic teacher

[120] See Dillon (2002) 29–40.

[121] Zaitsev (2022) 85–91 (with further references to the primary literature).

[122] Zaitsev (2022) 92–94, cf. Volk (2021) 31–36.

[123] See n. 48 above.

[124] See, e.g., the case of Lucius Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus, a Roman consul, senator and father-in-law of Caesar. Piso served as the patron of various philosophers and poets, including most likely Philodemus. For more information on the relationship between Piso and Philodemus, as well as speculation that Piso was the owner of the 'Villa of the Papyri' in Herculaneum, see, e.g., Sider (2005) 2–8. Needless to say, a similar situation holds true for rhetoricians as well. One of the most well-known figures in this context is Dionysius of Halicarnassus. In his work *Roman Antiquities*, Dionysius recounts arriving in Italy around the midpoint of the 187th Olympiad (*c.* 30/29 BC), a time marked by Octavian's (later Augustus) resolution of the civil wars (1.7.2). He established his base in Rome for the following 22 years (until around 8/7 BC). There, Dionysius mastered the language, immersed himself in the study of Latin texts chronicling Roman history, consulted with experts in the field, and devoted himself to his scholarly work (1.7.2–1.7.3). Alongside his historical writings, Dionysius taught rhetoric, likely as a tutor for the youth of Rome's elite families. Evidence of this role is highlighted in *On Literary Composition*

Epictetus come to mind – either preferred or were, for some reason, forced to run their own schools in Greece, at which young wealthy men came to study for a time.[125] It is not known whether the schools of rhetoric attracted more students than those of philosophy. While there is some evidence that the lectures given by philosophers for a wider audience were often poorly attended,[126] it would be reasonable to suppose that the study of rhetoric, which at that time culminated in the practice of declamation, must have acquired some additional importance in the era of the Second Sophistic. Hans von Arnim has also pointed out the connection between the Second Sophistic and the ideal of a comprehensive, rhetorically oriented educational programme, similar to that of Quintilian.[127] We know that rhetoric teachers encouraged their students to engage with philosophy before delving into rhetoric,[128] which may suggest that they were not particularly concerned about losing students to the philosophers. Plutarch does write that "often enough a way to flatter a public speaker is to disparage a philosopher" (ἤδη δὲ καὶ ῥήτορος ἔστιν ὅτε κολακεία διασύρει φιλόσοφον*, De ad. et am.* 57D), thus implying that the orator would view philosophy as standing in stark opposition to his own art. In reality, however, the opposite was true. It was the teachers of philosophy who, in their public discourse, attempted either to keep their students away from rhetoric altogether or to find a way to distance 'real' rhetoric from what the teachers of rhetoric practised.[129]

As far as we know, the first thinker to adopt a hostile attitude towards rhetoric was Plato, who, after defining it as a "producer of persuasion" in the *Gorgias* (448D), went on to characterise it as a kind of flattery that has disastrous consequences for the political life of a city (*Grg*. 463C–466A). Among the later philosophers, a similarly hostile attitude was adopted by all those who encouraged their students to engage in politics, although they each framed the question in a way that fit with their particular philosophical position.[130] The Stoics, who held that eloquence can only exist

(*Comp*. 20.130), where he assures the young Metilius Rufus, the recipient of the text, of further explanations on the topic as part of their daily rhetorical exercises. For these, see, e.g., Bonner (1939) 2 and, more recently, de Jonge (2008) 1 n. 3 (with additional references).

125 On Epictetus, who was expelled from Rome during the reign of Domitian and ended up in Nicopolis, where he founded his own school, see, e.g., Millar (1965) 143.

126 See Korenjak (2000) 45, with references to Apul. *Fl.* 9.2 and Them. 33.366C.

127 See von Arnim (1898) 114.

128 See Theon *Prog*. II, 59 Sp. (= I, 145 W.); Quint. 1.pr.9–11, cf. already Isoc. 12.26–28, 15.261; Cic. *De or.* 1.53–73; 3.76–77; *Off.* 1.1–3; see also Men. Rh. III, 392 Sp. (= IX, 253–254 W.) on the use of Plutarch's *Lives* for the purposes of rhetorical composition.

129 Cf. Cic. *De or*. 1.9; Quint. 1.pr.10.

130 See von Arnim (1898) 68; Schofield (1999) 748–756, 769–770. Those who advocated withdrawal from active political activity (and in this context also categorically

as part of a more general universal constitution of the self as a virtuous subject, rejected the form of rhetoric taught in the schools and propounded their own version instead, which had more in common with dialectic than with what most of their contemporaries would have recognised as rhetoric (cf. Cic. *De or.* 3.65–66; *Brut.* 120–121).[131] Critolaus, too, at the head of the Peripatetic school in the middle of the second century BC, adopted a generally hostile attitude towards rhetoric, drawing his arguments not from the Stoics, but from the more closely related Platonic tradition.[132] By the Augustan era, however, the Peripatetics had changed their attitude, albeit not to the point of abandoning the battle altogether. They now sought to present Aristotle and Theophrastus not only as philosophers par excellence, but also as authorities on rhetoric (see Dion. Hal. *Amm.* 1, 1–2; Cic. *De or.* 1.43, 1.55).[133] The Academics adopted a similar attitude. Although in Hellenistic times, they must have taught a form of rhetoric, they hesitated to refer to it as such and to distinguish it explicitly from the subject they called 'dialectic', at least until the time of Philo of Larissa (159/8–84/3 BC).[134] Philo was the last scholarch of the Academy. Subsequently, we find various groups of individual Platonists based in various Mediterranean cities, who are known to historians of philosophy as 'Middle Platonists'. Plutarch is counted among them.[135]

For a philosopher like Plutarch, the hostile attitude of some of these earlier philosophers inevitably imposed significant constraints on his own public discourse about rhetoric. Plutarch would have been neither the first nor the last admirer of Plato to see value in rhetoric or even to

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rejected rhetoric as applied to politics) were the Cynics and Epicureans. In Plutarch's time a similar attitude can be observed in the Stoic philosopher Seneca (cf. Graver (2012) 75–100). On the Cynics in particular, see von Arnim (1898) 37–43; Moles (1995) 129–158. For the Epicureans, see von Arnim (1898) 43–63, 72–77; Hubbell (1920) 251; Brown (2009) 179–196; Erler (2010) 99–109 [= (2010) 23–29]; Liebersohn (2010) 27, 29; Erler (2012) 52–55.

[131] On the Stoics' attitude towards rhetoric, see von Arnim (1898) 77–80; Kennedy (1963) 290–299; Atherton (1988) 392–427; Schenkeveld & Barnes (1999) 217–219; Liebersohn (2010) 29–32. On Seneca in particular, see also Baier (2016) 239–258.

[132] On Critolaus, see Karadimas (1996) 225–226 and Liebersohn (2010) 29–32.

[133] On this, see Wiater (2011) 32–34.

[134] See Cic. *Tusc.* 2.9: *nostra autem memoria Philo, quem nos frequenter audivimus, instituit alio tempore rhetorum praecepta tradere, alio philosophorum*. Cf. also von Arnim (1898) 84–87, 89, 104–105; Kennedy (1963) 323–324; Karadimas (1996) 224–229; Reinhardt (2000) 531; Brittain (2001) 300; Liebersohn (2010) 30, 36–38.

[135] Concerning the term 'Middle Platonism', which is conventionally used in research to cover the period in the history of Platonism from about 80 BC to the third century AD, see Dörrie (1987) 44–45. For an overview of the dominant themes of Platonism in this period, see Dillon (1996^2) 43–51.

try to incorporate rhetoric into his teaching programme. Philo of Larissa and Cicero, for instance, were also clearly interested in both philosophy and rhetoric.[136] But since the Academy in the first and second centuries AD no longer existed as a centre for the study of Platonic philosophy, its head, i.e. the scholarch, was no longer able to determine the 'orthodox' positions of the school. As a result, orthodoxy and unorthodoxy were now understood, as Michael Frede has explained, as, respectively, adherence to or deviation from the positions expressed in the writings of earlier authorities.[137] This meant that Plutarch could not so easily admit in his texts that his attitude towards rhetoric was not what one would expect from a philosopher belonging to this tradition. His competitors in the field of education were not only the various teachers of rhetoric, but also other teachers of philosophy. Platonic/Academic philosophy was but one form of doctrinal philosophy competing against several others. However, as Nicolas Wiater has shown in his book on the classicist ideology of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, drawing on an earlier study by David Sedley, a widespread mechanism used by ancient writers to positively distinguish a product, such as an ideology or a particular narrative, from its competitors was to adhere to a set of positions laid down by earlier thinkers who were presented as authorities in that particular field, so that the product in question could be understood as a continuation of that tradition.[138] Plutarch's depiction of his position as a philosopher at the end of a long tradition beginning with Pythagoras and Plato, which continued through the entire 'sceptical' Hellenistic Academy before reaching him, not to mention his general tactic of systematically seeking out Platonic passages to support his views, shows that he made use of this mechanism.

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[136] On Philo, see von Arnim (1898) 105–112; Brittain (2001). On Cicero, see n. 20 above. The same consideration applies even to Longinus, a 'Middle Platonist' of the third century AD, who shares with Plutarch a similar methodological approach in his critique of Stoic epistemology; Longinus had written texts on the Attic orators from a philological point of view. On the similarities between Plutarch and Longinus, see Männlein-Robert (2001) 88; on Longinus' rhetorical treatises, see Männlein-Robert (2001) 56–58; *ead.* (2017) 161–178.

[137] Frede (1999) 792, cf. already Hadot (1987) 13–34. From the first century BC, philosophical writing in the Platonist tradition is based on a pervasive explanatory-textual approach, which scholars usually attribute to the dissolution of the Academy and the subsequent adherence of philosophers from that tradition to a textual 'canon'. An alternative explanation, put forward by Donini (1994) 5027–5035 [= (2011b) 211–220], appeals to the Platonists' shift from scepticism to dogmatism, which would create the need for new 'unifying' readings of Plato. For further discussion, see, e.g., Ferrari (2017) 39; Perkams (2017) 29; Riedweg (2017) 357–358.

[138] Wiater (2011) 36–40, cf. Sedley (1997) 97–119.

On the other hand, there should be no doubt that he himself sought to promote a form of orthodoxy. After all, through his extensive writing and teaching, Plutarch ultimately proved successful in identifying himself, in the eyes of his contemporaries and posterity, with a distinct philosophical tradition. This is suggested by at least one account of Calvenus Taurus from Berytus, who began his career as a philosopher in Athens some years after Plutarch's death and referred to Plutarch as 'our Plutarch' (Gell. *N A* 1.26.3), just as he referred to Plato as 'our Plato' (Gell. *NA* 7.13.10).[139] This does not mean, of course, that Plutarch was actually in agreement with Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle and the Sceptics on every point. Indeed, this would have been impossible, since these earlier thinkers or groups of thinkers did not agree with each other, meaning that Plutarch could not agree with all of them either. Moreover, their teachings were all transmitted to Plutarch in a mediated form, filtered through intermediary layers of philosophical interpretations and readings, meaning that what Plutarch presented as his tradition was in any case a vague mixture.[140] Nonetheless, by systematically ensuring that he appears to conform to a Platonic/Academic orthodoxy, he manages to paint a more or less coherent doctrinal picture of himself, which a philosopher like Taurus would later find useful in constructing his own Platonic identity.

That said, given Plutarch's explicit commitment to this tradition, advancing a highly favourable view of rhetoric was no simple matter. As we saw earlier, the problem is perhaps not so much the criticism of Plato himself as the reception of Plato's critique in the *Gorgias* by Hellenistic Academic philosophers, such as Charmadas among others. Any move towards an unreservedly positive view of rhetoric could cost Plutarch credibility both with his readers and with his prospective students. It should also not be overlooked that Plutarch lived in a time marked by intense polemics between philosophical schools, which, according to Matthias Perkams, often fostered the development of new philosophical concepts, as debate and questioning from the other side called for the formulation of new answers.[141] As far as rhetoric is concerned, this would mean that every second philosopher, hearing about a favourable judgement of rhetoric by Plutarch, could point to the relevant passages from Plato's *Gorgias* where rhetoric is condemned as a kind of flattery that has damaging consequences for both individuals and whole cities, arguing that a Platonic/Academic philosopher who showed appreciation for the usefulness of rhetoric was close to, or even a supporter of, the Stoics, who argued that (true) rhetoric is a virtue (cf. Cic. *De or.* 3.65). Indeed,

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[139] See Bonazzi (2019) 58. For the chronology of Taurus, see Dillon (1996^2) 237.

[140] On this issue, see Riedweg (2017) 358; see also Perkams (2017) 12.

[141] Perkams (2017) 13. On Plutarch as a polemicist, see recently Dillon & Zadorojnyi (2023) 101–121.

Plutarch was not far removed from Stoic competition. Nicopolis, where Epictetus led his own philosophical school, is not many days journey from Chaeronea. In Arrian's *Discourses of Epictetus* (e.g. 2.20), there are indications that Epictetus may have attacked Plutarch on epistemological grounds.[142] While Plutarch does not mention Epictetus anywhere in his extant writings, Galen refers to certain texts by Favorinus that possibly testify, among other things, to Plutarch's willingness to defend himself against Epictetus.[143]

Building on these observations with a view to advancing the scholarly debate on Plutarch's attitude towards rhetoric, the present book proposes the following hypothesis: Plutarch's seemingly moderate attitude towards rhetoric may not necessarily correspond to his personal position, but may be a consequence of his own efforts to strike a balance in his public discourse between, on the one hand, the historical and ideological constraints he faced in his activity as a philosopher and, on the other hand, his own personal views on rhetoric. As we shall see below, this hypothesis can be substantiated through a re-analysis of the relevant passages from Plutarch's extant writings. Of course, this analysis can only build to some extent on previous works, such as those of Robert Jeuckens, Fritz Krauss, Konrat Ziegler or, more recently, Hubert Martin, which examine issues related to Plutarch's attitude towards rhetoric. In the following pages, I will, however, leave aside the question of Plutarch's alleged 'conversion' from philosophy to rhetoric. As we have seen above, the whole controversy is grounded in circular reasoning, which prevailed in twentieth-century research. To determine whether there was indeed any development in Plutarch's views on rhetoric, it would be necessary to examine a number of texts dealing with this topic, distributed as evenly as possible along the axis of the author's life. Neither of these conditions can be met: the texts that Plutarch is said to have devoted to the subject of rhetoric are now lost,[144] while almost all the other texts that have come into our hands belong to the mature period of his literary production, i.e.

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[142] See Cuvigny (1969) 563–564; Opsomer (1997) 25–28; *id.* (1998) 231–235.

[143] See Gal. *Opt. Doct.* I, 40–41 K.

[144] The following titles from the Lamprias Catalogue may indicate texts either on rhetoric or on related subjects: no. 47: Περὶ ῥητορικῆς βιβλία γ´, 'On Rhetoric, 3 volumes'; no. 86: Εἰ ἀρετὴ ἡ ῥητορική, 'Is Rhetoric a Virtue?'; no. 106: Πῶς δεῖ τοῖς σχολικοῖς γυμνάσμασι χρῆσθαι; 'The proper Use of School Exercises'; no. 164: Εἰ δώσει γνώμην ὁ πολίτης προειδὼς ὅτι οὐ πείσει, 'Should a Citizen give his Advice, knowing it will be rejected?'; no. 173: Περὶ γυμνασμάτων, 'On Exercises'; no. 194: Περὶ χαρακτήρων, 'On Characters (or Styles)'; no. 198: Περὶ τῶν συνηγορούντων, 'On Advocates'; no. 219: Πρὸς τοὺς διὰ τὸ ῥητορεύειν μὴ φιλοσοφοῦντας, 'An Attack on those who do not engage in Philosophy because they practise Rhetoric'.

from around the death of Domitian to Plutarch's own death during the reign of Hadrian.[145]

Nonetheless, before discussing Plutarch's attitude towards rhetoric, we should briefly examine the distinctive characteristics of the texts available to us for the study of this particular topic and consider what kind of approach they suggest for the interpretation and analysis of the relevant passages.

3. The texts at issue and related problems

Of crucial importance for the hermeneutical approach to any Ancient Greek or Latin text is the realisation that 'fragmentation' is a basic characteristic of this form of literature. Despite a handful of exceptional cases of surviving ancient autographs,[146] Ancient Greek and Latin literature has come down to us through copies prepared by a long line of later copyists and scholars, either on scrolls or other similar materials or in medieval manuscripts. Nevertheless, we do not possess all of the texts that were ever produced in Antiquity. The bulk of ancient literature is now lost, probably forever. Fires, volcanic eruptions, the ravages of warfare and the natural deterioration of the materials on which ancient texts were written are to some extent responsible for this loss. At the same time, the very process of transmitting the texts was also responsible for losses. Over the course of many thousands of years, it often happens that human societies that produce and reproduce texts change their way of thinking and begin to view things from a new perspective. The fact that, from ancient comedy, the only complete texts that have survived are by Aristophanes – or that a much smaller number of texts from Hellenistic philosophy have been passed down to us than from the classical period – obviously does not mean that all the other works attested in our sources were destroyed by fire or similar disasters. This was the fate of some, but certainly not all. Many of these texts simply ceased to be read by a public that could have preserved them by making copies. Thus, they

[145] On this point, see Jones (1966) 73–74 and Russell (2023) 162, cf. also Krauss (1912) 3.

[146] The best-known case is that of the poems of Dioscorus of Aphrodito (sixth century AD); see, e.g., Fournet (2015) 221–248; *id*. (2019) 193–216. Another such case is possibly that of *P.Köln* VI 245 (third century BC), which seems to contain part of the draft of a tragedy from Late Antiquity. For the identification of this scroll as an autograph, see Parca (1991) ix, *contra* Hutchinson (1989) 357. For both cases, see also Papathomas (2016³) 94–95 and 132–137 with further literature on Dioscorus. For the question whether Philodemus' hand may be recognised in *P.Herc*. 1021, see recently Fleischer (2023) 104–109 (with further references).

yielded their place to other texts that better met the expectations of the contemporary public. As a result, only a small portion of Ancient Greek and Latin literature is extant today – a mere 'fragment'.

Awareness of the implications of this shift in focus for the transmission of texts is of fundamental importance in literary research, since it entails that, in the texts we study, the relationship between missing and preserved parts is often not one of similarity, but one of difference. This point is also relevant for the present study. There are five main texts that are relevant for an examination of Plutarch's attitude towards rhetoric. Of these, one is extremely dense and contains abundant information, namely the thematic section of the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae* dealing with rhetoric (801C–804D).[147] Here, Plutarch writes extensively about the place that rhetoric should occupy in the activities of a Greek politician. There is nothing comparable anywhere else in his extant works, for which reason this section deserves special attention. Nevertheless, the fact that this is the only one of the author's extant writings that contains such an extensive and thorough treatment of the subject of rhetoric has, at times, led various scholars to assume that this particular text – and here comes the issue of fragmentariness – draws on material from Plutarch's lost writings on rhetoric, the titles of which are documented in the Lamprias Catalogue.[148] As noted above, the latter is a catalogue from Late Antiquity, perhaps the third or fourth century AD, which lists titles of texts attributed to Plutarch.[149] Konrat Ziegler, who was subsequently followed in this by Michael Meraklis, was the first to explicitly consider these five chapters of the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae* to be a condensation of the positions developed by Plutarch in his lost works.[150] This hypothesis has also been accepted by Jean-Claude Carrière.[151] However, judging from the titles of the lost texts, it is reasonable to assume – provided, of course, that the testimony of the Lamprias Catalogue is credible, which is not entirely evident – that these must have been treatises either on rhetoric itself or on the relationship between rhetoric and philosophy. But, as we shall see below, the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae* is, in fact, something else. While the text refers at length to rhetoric, this is not its main subject. As such, we have no grounds for regarding the views expressed there as representative of those found in the lost texts.

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[147] On the text in general, see Wyttenbach (1797) 205–307; Mittelhaus (1911); Frerichs (1929); Tzannetatos (1940); Renoirte (1951); Jones (1971) 110–121; Valgiglio (1976); Desideri (1986); Caiazza (1993); Carrière (2003²) 164; Lehmann (2020a) and (2020b).

[148] See n. 144 above.

[149] See n. 50 above.

[150] Ziegler (1951) 928–929, cf. Meraklis (1966) 60–61.

[151] See Carrière (2003²) 164, cf. also Caiazza (1993) 210.

In the scholarship, the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae* is usually treated either as an 'open letter' expressing Plutarch's concerns about politics or as evidence of the kind of political behaviour that was considered appropriate in that period for members of the Greek-speaking aristocracy that dominated the affairs of many cities in the eastern provinces.[152] According to C.P. Jones, the text was written somewhere between 96 and 114 AD, i.e. during Plutarch's most productive period,[153] when the majority of the *Parallel Lives* were written.[154] By this time, Plutarch was already an established philosopher and writer with connections in Rome and other major urban centres of the empire.[155] In general, the texts he composed and put into circulation were not particularly long, which is also true of the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae*. Although it can never be proven, since the shape and size of the letters can vary considerably from one person's handwriting to another, it is reasonable to wonder whether such a short text could, on its own, fill a standard twenty-sheet scroll of papyrus.[156] No texts of similar length on this subject survive from other writers. Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, with which Plutarch's text shares certain similarities on the level of subject matter,[157] cannot be considered comparable due to its great length. On the other hand, however, it seems unlikely that the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae* was at that time the only comparable text in its category in circulation. One need only consider the great interest members of the provincial elites displayed during the era of the Second Sophistic in distinguishing themselves through demonstrations of their 'education'. The closest surviving parallels to Plutarch's text are the two speeches of Isocrates to Nicocles[158] and the pseudo-Isocratic text *To Demonicus*, texts which, as the extant scrolls attest, remained extremely popular until Late Antiquity.[159] But, again, in contrast to the aforementioned speeches of Isocrates, the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae* displays another key feature, which concerns the relation of this text to philosophy and its relation to the society of the time.

The first indication of this is found in the very title *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae*, Πολιτικὰ παραγγέλματα, which was chosen by Plutarch

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[152] For the former view, see Renoirte (1951) 12. For the latter view, see Jones (1971) 110–121 and Thum (2020) 241–243.

[153] See Jones (1966) 66–70; cf. Carrière (2003) 9–13, who further restricts the range to 99–109 AD.

[154] See Jones (1966) 69.

[155] See Jones (1971) 28–38, 39–47.

[156] For a general discussion of the standard cylinder, its size and cost, see Skeat (1982) 169–175.

[157] See Desideri (1986) 372.

[158] See Caiazza (1993) 210.

[159] See Cribiore (2009) 330.

himself.[160] What does 'precept', παράγγελμα, mean exactly? Writing around one hundred years later, Alexander of Aphrodisias testifies that Theophrastus defined a precept (παράγγελμα) as a saying, formulated in such a way as to achieve the highest degree of generality, universality and simplicity.[161] Such a high degree of abstraction points to specific types of texts.[162] For example, the rules and instructions in technical manuals and other similar texts come to mind. Theophrastus himself is credited with the authorship of a book entitled *Precepts of rhetoric* (Παραγγέλματα ῥητορικῆς).[163] According to William Fortenbaugh, the text probably contained instructions on the various virtues of style or on each of these virtues separately.[164] References to the term 'precept', παράγγελμα, are also found in the writings of Hippocrates, specifically in a passage dealing with the training of physicians,[165] in Sextus Empiricus, who refers to the use of the term in a text by Dionysius Thrax,[166] and in Philo of Alexandria, who uses the same term to refer to the rules contained in the writings of students of grammar and music.[167] Regarding the expressions 'political' and 'forensic precepts' (cf. τῶν πολιτικῶν καὶ τῶν δικανικῶν παραγγελμάτων) in the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* of Anaximenes of Lampsacus, these apparently refer to instructions on the composition of political and forensic rhetoric respectively.[168] Such examples can easily be found in many other extant texts.[169] In all these cases, the term refers to instructional texts that organise their material in a similar way. In each case, the difference lies in the type of information or knowledge conveyed through this mode of organisation.

For Plutarch, the use of the term 'precept' as a title is not unprecedented, as evidenced by the texts *De tuenda sanitate praecepta* (Ὑγιεινὰ παραγγέλματα, 122B–137E) and *Coniungalia praecepta* (Γαμικὰ παραγγέλματα, 138A–146A).[170] From the Hellenistic period onwards,

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[160] See Plut. *De cap. ex inim.* 86C–D, cf. *Praec. ger. reip.* 789B.

[161] See Alex. Aphr. *In Top.* 135, 2–5 (= Thphr. *fr.* 123 FHS&G).

[162] Cf. Reinhardt (2000) 540.

[163] See Diog. Laert. 5.47, 5.231 (= Thphr. *fr.* 666.4 FHS&G). For a similar use, cf. also Ath. Mech. 7.

[164] See Fortenbaugh (2005) 68–69.

[165] See Hp. *Medic.* 2.

[166] See Sext. Emp. *M.* 1.57, cf. also Matthaios (1999) 22.

[167] See Ph. *Leg. alleg.* 1.94.

[168] See Anaximen. Lamps. *Rh. Al.* [17].

[169] See, e.g., Joseph. *Ap.* 1.178 (= Clearch. *fr.* 6 Wehrli); Dion. Hal. *Comp.* 25.41; *Din.* 7, *Amm.* 1, 2 (= Anaximen. Lamps., *FGrHist* 72 T 16) 2.3; Quint. 2.13.1; [Longin.] 2.1; Sext. Emp. *M.* 2.17. Cf. also Anon. *De quattuor partibus orationis* III, 582 W.; *Schol. vet. Aesch. Th.* 662a.

[170] Cf. also Plut. *De se ipsum laud.* 546B.

philosophers were constantly seeking ways to communicate better with the wider public, and these efforts continued to be directed at the literary form of their teaching: Epicurus experimented with the epistolary genre and Diogenes of Oenoanda, a younger contemporary of Plutarch, erected a large inscription summarising the basic principles of Epicurean philosophy (i.e. the philosophy that he himself espoused) on the wall of a *portico* in a central part of his city.[171] In Arrian's text, Epictetus remarks that, in his time, there are philosophers who deliver their speeches like flamboyant orators.[172] The 'precepts' of a philosopher can be seen in precisely this context: the Stoics were perhaps the first to postulate that a form of moral teaching that exhorts its recipients to apply simple rules to everyday life can be more effective than purely doctrinal reflection.[173] Ancient sources attribute to Zeno of Citium several such precepts touching on proper conduct in relation to one's lifestyle.[174] A precedent also exists in Plutarch's own Platonic-Academic tradition. In Stobaeus' account of the tripartite division of Philo of Larissa's moral teaching, we find evidence that Philo argued that because not all men are wise and because many do not even have the time or freedom from other pursuits to follow his teaching in the thorough manner in which it is usually presented, it is sometimes necessary that the content be presented in an abbreviated form involving moral imperatives, which guide the individual safely and correctly towards specific actions and which can be referred to whenever appropriate (2.7.2, 45–54 = Ar. Did., *FPG* II, 55.2–56.1).[175] The term 'precept' (παράγγελμα) is not explicitly used in the Stobaeus passage, but what the text seems to describe as "moral imperatives in an abbreviated form" (ὑποθῆκαι ἐν ἐπιτομαῖς) is, in fact, no different.[176]

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[171] For these cases see also Trapp (2014) 52. On Epicurus in particular, see Heßler (2016) 161–179. On the Diogenes inscription, see the standard edition by Smith (1993), alongside Smith (2003) and (2020) for new finds. On the strategies used in this inscription to attempt to persuade a popular audience, see Hammerstaedt (2016) 259–277.

[172] On this accusation against other philosophers, see Arr. *Epict.* 3.23.22–38 (cf. also Isoc. 1.3–7). On Epictetus' teaching style, see Arr. *Epict.* 1.pr.3–6. For more on this, cf. Trapp (2014) 52.

[173] On this, see Carrière (2003²) 4.

[174] *SVF* I, 233–271 (Hans von Arnim collected all these testimonies under the title *Vitae agendae praecepta*).

[175] Cf. Jordan (1986) 316–317; Brittain (2001) 219, 290–293; Trapp (2014) 52.

[176] Cf. also earlier in the same fragment (Stob. 2.7.2, 1–45 = Ar. Did., *FPG* II, 55.1–55.2): Φίλων ἐγένετο Λαρισαῖος, φιλόσοφος Ἀκαδημιακός, ἀκουστὴς Κλειτομάχου, τῶν ἱκανὴν εἰσενεγκαμένων προκοπὴν ἐν τοῖς λοιποῖς. Οὗτος ὁ Φίλων τά τε ἄλλα πεπραγμάτευται δεξιῶς καὶ διαίρεσιν τοῦ κατὰ φιλοσοφίαν λόγου, ἣν ἐγὼ προχειριοῦμαι περὶ ἧς ὁ λόγος. Ἐοικέναι δή φησι τὸν φιλόσοφον ἰατρῷ. Καθάπερ οὖν ἔργον ἰατροῦ πρῶτον μὲν πεῖσαι τὸν κάμνοντα παραδέξασθαι τὴν θεραπείαν, δεύτερον δὲ τοὺς τῶν ἀντισυμβουλευόντων

Plutarch's *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae* can be interpreted against this backdrop. Indeed, the foundations of such an interpretation have already been laid. Some years ago, Michael Trapp shed light on the philosophical character of this text, although he was less interested in the literary dimension, which is our focus here.[177] Indications in favour of the interpretation presented above can be found only in the first few lines of the text. As is often the case in Plutarch's writings (as well as in other rhetorically elaborate texts), the text begins with a general reflection, which then becomes more and more specific until it precisely delineates its main theme.[178] The following verse from the *Iliad* is quoted at the beginning of the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae* – Nestor is addressing Diomedes (9.55–56):

> No one among the Achaeans will take lightly what you say, nor will they dispute it; yet you have not come to a final conclusion. (transl. slightly adapted from A.T. Murray)
>
> (οὔ τίς τοι τὸν μῦθον ὀνόσσεται ὅσσοι Ἀχαιοί, / οὐδὲ πάλιν ἐρέει· ἀτὰρ οὐ τέλος ἵκεο μύθων.)

Reference to these verses is also made in the text *An seni respublica gerenda sit*, but there the verses are used as an example of how an older and more experienced politician can politely correct a younger one without discouraging him (795A–B). In the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae,*

λόγους ὑφελέσθαι, οὕτως καὶ τοῦ φιλοσόφου. Κεῖται τοίνυν ἑκάτερον τούτων ἐν τῷ προσαγορευομένῳ προτρεπτικῷ […] Ἐπί τε γὰρ τῆς ἰατρικῆς οὐκ ἀρκεῖ τὴν ὑγίειαν ἐμποιῆσαι, χρεία δὲ καὶ τοῦ παρασχεῖν *παραγγέλματα περὶ τῆς ὑγιείας* [emphasis is mine], οἷς προσέχοντες τὸν νοῦν τὴν εὐεξίαν τοῦ σώματος διαφυλάξουσι· καὶ δὴ κἀπὶ τοῦ βίου θεωρημάτων τινῶν ἐστι χρεία, δι' ὧν ἡ φυλακὴ γενήσεται τοῦ τέλους. Διττὸς δὲ καὶ ὁ περὶ βίων λόγος, ὃ μὲν ἴδιος, ὃ δὲ κοινός· ὧν τὸν μὲν ἴδιον ἐπισκοπεῖν δέον ἐστὶ τὰ πρὸς ἕκαστον, οἷον εἰ τῷ νοῦν ἔχοντι πολιτευτέον ἢ τοῖς ἡγεμονικοῖς συμβιωτέον, ἢ γαμητέον τῷ σοφῷ· τὸν δὲ κοινὸν <τὰ> πρὸς ἅπαντας, οἷόν ἐστι· τίς ἀρίστη πολιτεία; εἰ κοινὰς ποιητέον τὰς ἀρχὰς ἢ τιμητάς; Τοῦτον δὲ τὸν κοινὸν προσαγορευτέον μὲν πολιτικόν, τακτέον δὲ καθ' αὑτὸν καίπερ ὄντα μέρος τοῦ περὶ βίων διά τε τὸ μέγεθος καὶ τὴν κοινότητα. Related are the remarks of Reinhardt (2000) 540.

[177] Trapp (2004) 189–200.

[178] See Duff (2011a) 219 and Chrysanthou (2017) 134–135 (with further references to earlier literature), cf. also Arist. *Rh.* 3.14, 1414b 19–39; Cic. *Inv.* 1.15.21–1.16.22; Quint. 4.1.28; Anon. Seg. 10–13. On the structure of rhetorically elaborated introductions or prologues, cf. recently Wozniczka (2021) 1–3, regarding the prologues in the historical work of Diodorus Siculus (with further references in the secondary literature). On the method of approaching a topic by moving from the general to the specific, see also Arist. *Ph.* 1.7, 189b 31; *Rh.* 1.3, 1403b 18–19; *Pol.* 1.1, 1447a 12–13.

however, the focus is different.[179] Plutarch argues here that the content of the verses would be fittingly said of philosophers "who exhort" others (τοὺς προτρεπομένους – i.e. towards good deeds), but in the end fail to teach anything, so that they end up resembling those who clean the lamps but then forget to pour oil into them (798A–B).

The expression 'exhort' (προτρέπομαι) evokes a well-known genre of texts belonging to the wider field of didactic literature, namely the 'exhortation' or 'protreptic [speech]'. This is a text which, apart from its didactic and informative character, is also characterised by rhetorical proselytising, as is the case with 'advertising' texts, by means of which, as early as classical times, various thinkers (e.g. Antisthenes, Isocrates, Aristippus of Cyrene) attempted to attract new students.[180] There is no particular reason to think that 'exhortation' here has any exclusive connection with politics.[181] The relevant terms had, by that time, already taken on a fixed, technical meaning,[182] so that, if the focus were, in fact, limited to the field of politics, one would expect this to be indicated in the text.[183] It is also unlikely that the above reference to philosophers 'exhorting' (to good deeds) could be taken as a criticism of such a widespread practice as philosophical 'exhortation'.[184] This rebuke should rather be read as a criticism of the way in which some of Plutarch's peers made use of this literary genre.[185] An educated reader of the time would have understood such a rebuke as simply representing a standard attempt by Plutarch to establish a claim of novelty for a text of his own in the same genre, i.e. that of 'exhortation'.[186]

The text takes the form of an extended letter, which seems to be a response to a request from a young aristocrat, Menemachus of Sardis, who was about to embark on a career in local politics (798A). It is not

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[179] For the hypothesis that the *An seni* is meta-textually linked to the *Praec. ger. reip.*, cf. Xenophontos (2012) 61–91, cf. also 20, where she refers to these verses. See also Pelling (2014) 154 and Thum (2020) 243–246.

[180] See, e.g., Görgemanns (2001) 468–471 (with further references to the literature).

[181] Thus Görgemanns (2001) 470 and Carrière (2003²) 159 n. 3.

[182] See, e.g., *De Stoic. rep.* 1039D.

[183] See, e.g., *De tranq. an.* 466A; *De unius* 826D, cf. also Caiazza (1993) 197 n. 4.

[184] Moreover, the Lamprias Catalogue already attributes to Plutarch two 'exhortations <to philosophy>' (no. 207: Προτρεπτικὸς πρὸς νέον πλούσιον, 'Exhortation addressed to a rich young man'; no. 214: Προτρεπτικὸς εἰς Ἀσκληπιάδην Περγαμηνὸν, 'Exhortation addressed to Asclepiades of Pergamum'), as well as a text entitled (no. 223) Φιλοσόφων παρασκευῶν, 'A book of exercises introductory to philosophy'.

[185] See Caiazza (1993) 197 n. 4; Carrière (2003²) 159 n. 3.

[186] On rebuking one's opponents as a component of a rhetorical proem, see, e.g., [Cic.] *Rh. Herenn.*1.4. Cf. Bracht Branham (1985) 238–243.

known whether Menemachus was a real person,[187] although this question is, on the whole, of marginal importance. At any rate, he is the stated recipient of Plutarch's 'exhortation'. As Jason König observes, the theme of writing on demand is a motif that appears frequently in Ancient Greek and Latin literature, especially in texts that are of a technical or didactic nature.[188] Immediately after the introductory comment on the other philosophers, Plutarch (or rather his persona as the author of the letter) explains to Menemachus why he saw fit not to reject his request (798B–C). Three reasons are given: 1) the young man seems to be preparing to enter politics in a way that is reasonable and appropriate, in line with his family tradition, seeking to embody the Homeric ideal of the man who is "excellent in word and deed" (*Il.* 9.443: μύθων τε ῥητῆρ' ἔμεναι πρηκτῆρά τε ἔργων); 2) Menemachus lacks the time necessary to undertake a structured apprenticeship, enabling him to observe and understand "the life of a philosopher" (ἀνδρὸς φιλοσόφου βίον [...] κατανοῆσαι) in the sphere of public life and political struggles and thus to acquire examples in practice and not in words (ἔργῳ, μὴ λόγῳ); 3) Menemachus has asked Plutarch for a specific kind of text, namely "political precepts" (ἀξιοῖς δὲ παραγγέλματα λαβεῖν πολιτικὰ), which would include a greater variety of examples (παραδείγμασι ποικιλωτέροις).

It has been argued that the reference to a lack of time refers to the proximity of Menemachus' imminent entry into politics as a newcomer.[189] In this particular context, however, it is clear that this statement should be understood to refer even more specifically to a lack of free time that he could devote to a practical education in politics.[190] Menemachus simply does not have this time. The reason given in the text for this is, on the one hand, that he will soon begin his career, and, on the other, that there is a need for a philosopher to serve as a model (cf. ἀνδρὸς φιλοσόφου), whom Menemachus would ideally associate with and observe for a certain period of time. We should also remember that, from a philosophical point of view, politics is not only an art of administration, but also a sphere of ethics, which can offer students of philosophy an opportunity for moral exercise.[191] In other words, Plutarch's text promises to help Menemachus embrace the philosopher's model of politics through 'precepts', since the young man does not have the time to adopt a different approach. It is

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[187] On Menemachus, see Stein (1932) 837–838; Ziegler (1951) 687; Valgiglio (1976) xiii n. 1; Caiazza (1993) 11–13; Carrière (2003²) 29–44. For the identification of Menemachus with the anonymous recipient of the text *De exilio*, see Siefert (1896) 74–75; Mittelhaus (1911) 27 n. 3; Lehmann (2020a) 8–10.

[188] See König (2009) 43, cf. Hofmann (2020) 220.

[189] See, e.g., Pelling (2014) 153; Xenophontos (2016) 128 n. 7.

[190] See Carrière (2003²) 159 n. 5.

[191] See Schofield (1999) 743. See also pp. 103ff. below.

important to note here that the opposition between 'words' and 'actions', which Plutarch invokes in the context of the second reason, is not one of mutually exclusivity. What Plutarch is supposedly sending back to Menemachus with the text in question is obviously 'words' and not 'action'. These two categories can thus, under certain circumstances (e.g. lack of free time), substitute for each other. We are quite close here to the distinctions made in Philo of Larissa's ethical teaching, mentioned above. Those readers who do not have enough time at their disposal to frequent a philosopher and obtain from him the knowledge they need can acquire an education from the appropriate texts. A text, then, which an aspiring politician would consult on a daily basis would be ideal for exhorting him – in a practical, direct and effective way – to act in a philosophically/ethically informed way.

At this point, however, two levels of reading must be distinguished. While Menemachus is the stated recipient of the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae*, as Christopher Pelling observes, he obviously could not be the sole intended reader, for otherwise the text would not have been published.[192] The question, then, is: who was reading Plutarch? Certainly his students in Chaeronea, who may have had similar characteristics to those of Menemachus; certainly friends and acquaintances, who would have been given or themselves requested copies of Plutarch's texts. In several places in his oeuvre, especially in the dedications of the various texts, we come across information that allows us to reconstruct the characteristics of this second audience: a cultured and discerning readership, composed not only of Greeks but also of Romans, who were able to understand the challenges posed to them each time by the author.[193] This is the audience that Plutarch's work generally points towards.[194] We can even assume that this audience was not exclusively male, as some further evidence for this particular period suggests that philosophers' texts, especially those touching on moral issues, were also read by women.[195]

For some of these readers, the daily reading of selected philosophical texts may even have been part of a kind of personal, intellectual exercise.[196] The association of Plutarch's particular text with the genre of the

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[192] See Pelling (2014) 153, and Renoirte (1951) 77–81; Swain (1996) 162–163; Duff (1999) 293 n. 21.

[193] On Plutarch's readers, see Stadter (1988) 292–293; Duff (2004) 285; Chrysanthou (2018b) 1–3.

[194] On the concept of the 'implied reader' (Germ. 'implizieter Leser'), see Iser (1994^4) 50–67.

[195] On women as readers of philosophical texts, see Stob. 3.6.58 (= Epict. *fr.* 15), alongside the remarks of Wöhrle (2002b) 135–143; Cf. also Neuerburg (2021) 167–181.

[196] For the reading of philosophical texts as part of an ethical exercise, see Gal. *Aff. pecc. dig.* V, 5.30 K., alongside the remarks of Riedweg (2007^2) 50–51.

'exhortation' is interesting in another respect: 'exhortations' are not addressed solely to uninitiated readers. As Mark Jordan explains, for some, the use of such texts may also be necessitated by the belief that the fulfilment of the declared goal of these texts is constantly being postponed – the choice of a particular lifestyle is not something that happens once and for all in a person's life, but rather something that must be constantly reaffirmed. This necessity, in turn, constantly pushes introductory texts to the fore, since anyone who wishes to maintain a systematic philosophical attitude towards things must necessarily have assimilated what was taught to him at the beginning of his course. If someone is not absolutely sure of one or the other detail, it is necessary to go back and repeat what he read at the beginning.[197] Nowadays, for example, we keep the same grammar and syntax books at hand that we used in our school days.

In another of Plutarch's texts, it is mentioned that Cornelius Pulcher always kept his copy of *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae* at hand (*De cap. ex inim.* 86C–D). Of course, it is impossible to know whether this statement reflects reality or merely Plutarch's wish. Nevertheless, it is of some significance that Cornelius' traits, insofar as they can be gleaned from other sources, correspond to those of the audience presupposed by most of Plutarch's writings. Cornelius was a historical figure: a scion of an old, aristocratic family, he made a brilliant career in the administration of the Roman state.[198] His interest in philosophy is possibly attested by Arrian. It is possible that in Epictetus' *Dissertationes*, which mention a prefect of Epirus who had once sought Epictetus' advice after an incident in the theatre (Arr. *Epict*. 3.4.1–12), the reference is to Cornelius Pulcher.[199] What could such a man have hoped to obtain from Plutarch? Why would he always have the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae* handy? Surely someone of that calibre would not expect to find advice merely for enhancing the performance of his administrative and political duties. Given his already brilliant career in Roman administration, Cornelius was already well versed in this area – perhaps even more so than Plutarch himself. If Cornelius did indeed return to this text over and over, there could only be one reason: in his daily occupations, having a moral philosopher's perspective on politics was not entirely unimportant to him.[200] Plutarch's text may thus have served as a sort of aid, enabling him to

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[197] On this aspect, see Jordan (1986) 332–333.

[198] See *PIR*² C 1424, cf. Ziegler (1951) 692; Bowersock (1965) 269–270; Jones (1971) 45–46, 110–111; Lehmann (2020a) 7–8.

[199] See Millar (1965) 147.

[200] Cf. Trapp (2004) 195. A papyrus fragment from the late first century AD (*P.Oxy*. 5535), recently edited by Peter J. Parsons (see *id*. (2021) 16–26; cf. also Dellavedova (2023) 67–90), which combines historical exposition focusing on the administrative roles of the *Diadochoi* with moral-ethical evaluation, is perhaps worthy of mention here, as it

check for himself, at any given time, whether he had remained faithful to the moral-philosophical principles he had previously absorbed.

The way in which the individual thematic sections of the text are organised provides support for the hypothesis that it was expected to be read in a fragmentary fashion. If one were to take it as a treatise devoted to supporting a particular political position or ideology, then it would be possible to identify a major flaw in the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae*. Examples of the former type of treatises include *Maxime cum principibus philosopho disserendum esse* (776A–779C), *Ad principem ineruditum* (779D–782F) or *An seni respublica gerenda sit* (783B–797F). All of these are texts in which an attempt is made to defend a particular position relevant to the political sphere. However, *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae* lacks the strong thematic unity that characterises these works. Here, the presentation of the politician's involvement in public affairs is broken down into a series of independent thematic units,[201] which even contradict each other.[202] That said, this loose organisation is not necessarily due to an issue of coherence. While the arrangement of the individual sections does indeed seem to fail to conform to a single, clear logical scheme,[203] this does not mean that the text completely lacks a logical structure.[204] The issue is simply that its structure cannot be compared to the kind of linear arrangement that would characterise, say, a treatise, but rather resembles the organisation of an anthology or a dictionary.[205] In the latter genre, coherence is normally achieved through the sequencing of sections or entries, as in each case a scheme is adopted based on a pre-existing cognitive structure, which it then activates by means of expectations.

If we carefully examine the thematic sections of the *Praecepta*, we will see that here, too, we are dealing with a pre-existing cognitive structure, which, on the one hand, involves a specific sequence of events and, on the other, implies specific hierarchies: the first six sections can be seen to trace the course of an aspiring politician over time, from his decision to become actively involved in politics to his actual entry into the political realm. Beyond this point, i.e. as soon as the axis of diachrony intersects with that of synchrony, the modules are situated not in time but

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might have been suitable for a similar use by contemporary readers. I owe knowledge of this text to Professor Stefan Schorn.

[201] For the identification of the different thematic modules, see Renoirte (1951) 36–40; Valgiglio (1976) xiii–xvii; Carrière (2003²) 5–9; Desideri (1986) 372–373.

[202] Cf. Tsiampokalos (2020) 496–497.

[203] See Caiazza (1993) 16–17; Valgiglio (1976) xiv.

[204] Roskam (2004) 100–101 identifies an element of consistency in the repetition of specific themes. However, see König (2007) 44.

[205] On anthologies, see Hose (2005) 95–96. On dictionaries, see Hüllen (2009) 108–111.

in space, usually in virtue of pairs of oppositions (friends and enemies, domestic and foreign policy, etc.). These modes of hierarchy are not Plutarch's own inventions. On the contrary, they testify to a perspective common to the author and his contemporary readership, common insofar as their perceptions were shared.[206] The fact that the text is explicitly marked for use by a reader who lacks enough 'time' reveals even more clearly the function that all these modes of arrangement must perform. In a culture whose main literary medium was the scroll, it was important for any reader who wanted to have quick access to a text to know where to unroll the scroll in order to find the information he was looking for. A reader who, for example, was interested in the place of rhetoric in politics and who already knew that rhetoric is part of a statesman's education would look for the relevant passages in the first few leaves of the scroll. Indeed, contemporary readers will find the relevant passages on rhetoric in the early sections of the text.

The *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae* is, therefore, a hybrid text, whose optimism and confidence is grounded precisely in its dual nature. The text does not present a static, one-dimensional order of things. What is distinctive about it is the combination of its particular structure with its stated intention to assist, by means of 'precepts', a young man who is entering into politics. It thus places political advice in an eminently dialectical relationship with philosophical 'exhortation'. These are the two central aspects that define the reading experience: one is in the field of philosophy, which Plutarch (or rather his persona as author of the letter) himself represents; the other is in the field of politics, in which Menemachus, the recipient, will soon have to act. Cornelius, the historical (or perhaps even ideal) reader, is equally close to both points. Michael Trapp is right to present the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae*, as a whole, as a text in which the young recipient's enthusiasm and understanding of politics, nourished mainly by the popular performances of contemporary sophists, are gradually belied by the sober realism of an older, more experienced man.[207] Menemachus, like many other young men of the time who attended the lessons of the sophists and other teachers of rhetoric, would have desired to become a successful politician. But how would a philosopher address him? This is where the rhetoric of 'exhortation' comes into play.

The answer to this question does not reveal any groundbreaking innovation. The existence of categorical imperatives, wherever they come from, is always useful in a process of moral education.[208] In this respect, Menemachus could be compared to Kant's 'shopkeeper'. In a

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[206] Cf. also Thum (2020) 243.

[207] See Trapp (2004) 190.

[208] See Burkert (1985) 249.

now-classic example, Kant presents a shopkeeper who serves his customers honestly, but not necessarily because he himself is a truly honest man: he simply wants to ensure a good name for his shop.[209] Similarly, a young man like Menemachus would have sought political success, an enterprise to which certain imperatives apply. The success of the philosophical master depends on his making use of these imperatives to the extent that they correspond to the basic principles of his philosophy. In this respect, *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae* does not differ from many other Plutarchan texts. Similar tactics can also be found in the so-called moral-philosophical treatises that form the core of the *Moralia,* comprising some 22 texts which, on closer analysis, reveal certain discursive practices which Lieve van Hoof described some years ago as "practical ethics".[210] As the reader works his way through the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae*, he is directed towards a political ideal, which, as Trapp observes, simultaneously corresponds to the criteria laid down by philosophy for the good life.[211] This is why a reader like Cornelius Pulcher would have been interested in this text: it proclaims the possibility of the harmonious coexistence of everyday political and administrative reality with philosophical progress. To be sure, readers like Cornelius would also have been quite aware of the tactics adopted in the text. By contrast, a reader like Menemachus should not necessarily be made aware that he is setting off down a path that leads beyond the simple goal of political success, a path he might not even have chosen under other circumstances. We will revisit this dual perspective in subsequent chapters.

The remaining four texts that are important for the study of Plutarch's attitude towards rhetoric contain less information, while the topics they deal with are of rather marginal importance.

The first of these is the treatise *De audiendo* (37B–48B), of which only a handful of paragraphs are particularly relevant to the present study.[212] Written between 80 and 100 AD, the text is addressed to a certain Nicander, a young man who has just come of age and can now wander around the city and attend lectures given by either philosophers or sophists (37B–F).[213] The text contains a discussion of certain issues concerning rhetoric, as well as advice from Plutarch to the young man about how

[209] *GMS* AA IV, 397.19–32.

[210] See van Hoof (2010) 11.

[211] See Trapp (2004) 195, as well as Thum (2020) 239.

[212] On the text in general, see Wyttenbach (1820) 229–322 and Hillyard (1981). Further studies focusing on individual aspects include Korenjak (2000) 170–194; Castelnérac (2008) 429–444; Lauwers (2008/2009) 15–24. For the identification of a meta-textual connection between *De aud. poet.* and *De aud.,* see Xenophontos (2010) 164–185.

[213] On the dating, see Hillyard (1981) xxxiv, if the identification with the Nicander of *De soll. an.* 965C is accepted. Cf. Zadorojnyi (2002) 172.

to absorb what he hears in the various lectures (40F–42E). The reader need not delve too deeply into the text to see that here, too, the main concern is to promote philosophy as the only form of education that can lead a young person to spiritual and intellectual fulfilment (cf., e.g., 37F). The second important text here is *De profectibus in virtute* (75A–86A),[214] which discusses various ways in which individuals engaged in philosophy who are undergoing a slow process of moral education can become aware of their progress, so that they do not become frustrated and give up along the way (78C–79B). Rhetoric is discussed here only to the extent that disengagement from one kind of discourse that displays technical sophistication in favour of engagement with another kind of discourse that expresses the speaker's character can be taken as a sign of progress in virtue. The third text in this series is entitled *De se ipsum citra invidiam laudando* (539A–547F).[215] At issue here are the moral implications that speaking about oneself (περιαυτολογία) can have in public discourse, a question that had also attracted the attention of rhetorical theory early on.[216]

Of particular importance in the context of the present study, however, is the fourth text in the series, mainly because of its literary form, which brings in the theme of rhetoric. This is the dialogue *De sollertia animalium* (959A–985C).[217] The genre of the literary dialogue, i.e. a prose text reproducing a conversation between multiple interlocutors in the form of direct discourse,[218] has been used extensively, both in ancient and modern times, to convey knowledge. More specifically, Sabine Föllinger explains that literary dialogues have four distinctive characteristics when they are used to transmit knowledge: 1) they allow the reader to reconstruct the process of knowledge production; 2) the element

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[214] On the text in general, see Wyttenbach (1820) 438–490 and Grese (1978) 11–31; see also von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1905) 149–151; Krauss (1912) 7–10; Brokate (1913) 31–39; Babut (1969) 47–54; Giangrande (1991) 265–274; Roskam (2205) 220–361; Wright (2008) 136–150.

[215] On the text in general, see Betz (1978) 367–393, see also Radermacher (1897) 419–423; Praechter (1902) 1–3; Pernot (1998) 109–110; Mitchell (2001) 354–371; Smit (2014) 341–359; Chrysanthou (2018a) 281–297.

[216] Cf., e.g., Chrysanthou (2018a) 281 n. 1 and n. 2 (with further references); see also Pernot (2022) 149–169 and Quiroga-Puertas (2022) 343–344.

[217] On the text in general, see Hirzel (1895) 2.171–181 and Schuster (1917); see also Mossman (2005) 141–163, Bouffartigue (2007) 241–258 and Mossman & Zadorojnyi (2023) 290, 291–295. In recent decades, this dialogue has been the subject of growing interest, in particular because of the views it presents on the question of whether animals share in rationality like humans; see, e.g., Sorabji (1993) 179; Newmyer (2006) 30–47; *id.* (2014) 226–231; Pabst (2019) 87–90; Newmyer (2021) 1–19. For a differentiated view, see, e.g., Horky (2017) 103–133.

[218] On this definition, see Görgemanns (1997) 517.

of pedagogical 'asymmetry' – i.e. the cognitive asymmetry between the persons transmitting knowledge (author, narrators) and the persons receiving it (readers, narrators) – can be used more flexibly; 3) the dialogue form makes manifest, on a literary level, the fact that the acquisition of knowledge is usually the result of collaboration; and thus 4) a dialogue individualises not only the dialectic but also the historical process of acquiring knowledge, insofar as the interlocutors represent different views, which in turn can be attributed to specific historical persons.[219]

In this particular Plutarchan dialogue, the central issue is not rhetoric. Most of the text is, however, taken up by a dialectical debate between two students about which animals are more intelligent, those that live on land or those that live in the water (965E–985C). On the one hand, this debate displays similarities with the exercises that were conducted in rhetorical schools at the time.[220] The dialogue is clearly set in a school: if we look to the central figures of the dialogue, notably Autobulus and Soclarus, the setting could even be identified with Plutarch's own school in Chaeronea.[221] On the other hand, the issue the two students are debating was supposedly raised the previous day by a rhetorical eulogy of hunting that they heard (959A–C).[222] The text thus gives us an opportunity to observe what the place of rhetoric is in the kind of education that was likely offered at Plutarch's school.[223]

As may already be clear by now, the present study focuses primarily on texts from the *Moralia,* which, as we have seen, is the term conventionally used to refer to the whole of Plutarch's extant literary output with the exception of Plutarch's biographies. The *Moralia* is a collection of texts of varied philosophical, literary and scientific content, which

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219 See Föllinger (2006) 455–470. Cf. also Lamberton (2023) 123.

220 Cf. already Bouffartigue (2012) viii.

221 For the identification of Autobulus with Plutarch's father, see Muhl (1885) 22–24 and Hartman (1916) 598, cf. also Hirzel (1895) 2.175; Ziegler (1951) 663; Jones (1971) 9; Mossman (2005) 142; Bouffartigue (2012) xiv–xv. Another possibility would be to identify him with Plutarch's oldest son. On this, see Horky (2017) 106–107, 114–115. On Soclarus (T. Flavius Soclarus), see Puech (1981) 186–192; *id.* (1992) 4879–4883. On Plutarch's school, see Hirzel (1985) 2.176; Ziegler (1951) 663; Russell (2001²) 14; Bouffartigue (2012) xix. Regarding the 'family atmosphere' proposed by Russell (*ibid.*), it should be noted that there are earlier literary (Plato and Glaucon) and institutional examples (Speusippus succeeding Plato). On this, see also Hirzel (1895) 2.176 n. 2.

222 In the past, several scholars believed that the text implies here that the eulogy was read by Plutarch himself (Muhl (1885) 24; Hirzel (1895) 2.173; Ziegler (1951) 735, 739; Barrow (1967) 112–113; Babut (1969) 59; Russell (2001²) 13), but this view has since been convincingly refuted (Martin (1970) 99–106, based, however, on Jeuckens (1907) 14–15 and Krauss (1912) 6; see also Mossman (2005) 144–145).

223 See Martin (1997) 710, cf. Bouffartigue (2012) vii–viii.

has its roots in an early edition by the Byzantine scholar Maximus Planudes.[224] That said, in the context of the present study, certain individual passages from the *Lives* are nonetheless of interest. Although there are no texts in the *Lives* that articulate the correct attitude of a philosopher or a politician towards rhetoric, there are nevertheless certain passages which are worth examining in the present context, especially in parallel with other passages from the *Moralia*. The excerpts from the *Lives* that are discussed relate to certain political and military leaders, such as Pericles, Phocion and Cato the Younger, who appear to have been influenced by philosophy. In Plutarch's narrative, however, these figures do not hesitate to make use of persuasion, including explicitly, at least in Pericles' case, rhetoric.

The *Parallel Lives* are not purely historiographical works, as they belong to the genre of biography. The distinction between historiography and biography, which had already been recognised by certain writers in Antiquity, including Plutarch (*Alex.* 1.2) – although terms such as 'history' and 'lives' were used in a rather fluid way – is an extremely complex issue that continues to puzzle scholars.[225] The reason for this is that while the two genres share many similarities, they also differ in important respects, one of the most striking of which is biography's focus on the forces and impulses that shape the lives and actions of individuals, such as love, hate, fear, ambition, sex and so on.[226] As Plutarch himself explains in the preface to *Alexander-Caesar*, it is precisely this opportunity to put the individual historical figure under the microscope, on the basis of an anecdote, a phrase or a witty saying, that interests him most, because this kind of information "often makes a greater revelation of character than battles where thousands fall" (ἔμφασιν ἤθους ἐποίησε μᾶλλον ἢ μάχαι μυριόνεκροι, *Alex.* 1.2). As a result, in recent decades, an increasing number of studies have emphasised both the moralism and the narrative

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[224] For more information, see Geiger (2008) 5–12. On Maximus Planudes, see, e.g., Wilson (1996²) 230–241. For a brief overview of the history and the different stages of publication, see Pérez Martín (2019) 302–305.

[225] For recent approaches to the distinction between history and biography, see, e.g., Salvatore (2004) 187–192; Nasaw (2009) 573–578 (as well as the other articles included in the 'round table' in the same volume, especially Banner (2009) 579–586); Renders *et al.* (2017) 3–12; Caine (2019²) 7–26. For the case of Plutarch, see recently Pelling (2023) 11–28. On the ancient terminology, see esp. Duff (1999) 17–22. For an analysis of how Plutarch uses standard themes, ideas and motifs commonly found in the works of ancient historians to delineate his association with the genre of historiography, see Chrysanthou (2017) 128–153.

[226] Of course, this does not mean that history entirely neglects the individual: see, e.g., Hau (2016) 1–19 regarding the existence of a fundamental ethico-didactic component in classical and Hellenistic historiography.

sophistication of the *Lives*, thus proposing a reading of Plutarch's biographical work that extends beyond the simple question of the narrative's historicity to focus on the rhetorical and narrative devices used in these texts to invite readers to relate to the figures depicted and to formulate moral judgements about them.[227]

Today it is accepted that, in the *Parallel Lives*, Plutarch does not simply offer his readers a series of positive and negative examples, but rather provides them with cases of different mixtures of human personalities to reflect upon, so that they themselves can then form their own moral judgements, both about the lives of the individuals depicted and about their own lives.[228] Needless to say, such an undertaking is relevant to Plutarch's broader moral-philosophical programme, which is most clearly attested in the *Moralia*.[229] The main difference is that, in the *Moralia*, Plutarch's moralism generally appears simple, taking the form of explicit moral appeals like 'do this' or 'don't do that', whereas in the *Lives*, as Christopher Pelling has shown, it is usually expressed through descriptions of moral or ethical implications[230] that flow from the narrative and ideally affect the reader. However, in both cases, there is a process in which the reader is constituted as a moral subject, which Plutarch's writing sets in motion.[231] From this point of view, it is of great interest to see how the themes of persuasion and rhetoric, as they appear in the *Lives*, might encourage Plutarch's readers to engage in moral reflections, as well as to observe what conclusions they would subsequently arrive at.

Finally, it should be noted that Plutarch's so-called 'epideictic' works, namely *De fortuna Romanorum* (316B–326D), *De Alexandri Magni fortuna aut virtute* (in two parts, 326D–345C) and *Bellone an pace clariores fuerint Athenienses* (435C–351C), largely fall outside the scope of the present study. To be sure, they all display a high degree of rhetorical sophistication and erudition, but they do not deal with issues of particular relevance to a discussion of the traditional conflict between rhetoric

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[227] See, e.g., Pelling (1988) 10–18; *id.* (1995) 206–208 [= (2002) 237–239]; Stadter (1997) 65–81 [= (2015) 215–230]; Duff (1999) 52–71; Stadter (2000) 493–510 [= (2015) 231–245]; *id.* (2003/2004) 89–96; Duff (2004) 285–287; Larmour (2005) 43–51; Alexiou (2007b) 275–279; Duff (2007/2008) 3–18; *id.* (2011) 59–82; Chrysanthou (2018b) 1–25; *id.* (2019) 46.

[228] See Duff (1999) 53–65; see also Alexiou (2007b) 36–37, 275–279.

[229] For the unity in Plutarch's work, see, e.g., Nikolaidis (2008) xiii–xviii; for an overview of Plutarch's ethical programme, see Dillon (1996²) 194–198 and Duff (1999) 72–78; see also Tsiampokalos (2021) 210–211. The main source is the treatise *De virt. mor.* (440D–452D).

[230] See, e.g., Pelling (1988) 15–16; *id.* (1995) 208 [= (2002) 239].

[231] See Duff (1999) 49–50. On the reader as a moral subject, see in particular Duff (2011) 59–82 and (2023) 47–78.

and philosophy or of Plutarch's attitude towards rhetoric in particular. Nonetheless, in one of these texts, there is a passage (*De. Al. Magn. fort.* 1, 328C–329A) that contributes to the discussion of the role of persuasion in a philosophical context. This passage will be examined in detail below. Aside from this, however, the texts listed above reveal nothing more than Plutarch's practical familiarity with rhetoric, a familiarity that was expected of any educated person of the time, as Plutarch unquestionably was.[232] It remains, therefore, only to repeat what Robert Jeuckens wrote in the introduction to his dissertation, namely that these texts "bringen gerade […] sehr wenig Material zu unserer Arbeit. Sie sind Kunststückchen, an denen sich nur die praktische Anwendung der τέχνη zeigen soll; naturgemäß wird dabei über die τέχνη selbst kaum geredet".[233]

4. The analytical scope of the present study

The analysis of the texts will be carried out in two main parts. In the first part, consisting of three chapters, Plutarch's attitude towards rhetoric will be examined by tracing the operation of three critical oppositions. These are the opposition between teaching and persuasion (the chapter entitled 'Teaching and Persuasion'), the opposition between speech and character, as two different forms of interaction between the individual and those around him ('Character and Speech'), and, finally, the opposition between rhetoric and beneficence (euergetism), as two methods of imposing power in the field of politics that were current at the time ('Rhetoric and Beneficence). By tracing how Plutarch's discourse is organised in relation to these oppositions, much can be gleaned about the philosopher's attitude towards rhetoric. The second part ('The Philosopher and the Sophists') attempts to position Plutarch's systematic criticism of the sophists on a different basis.

The first chapter of the first part examines specifically to what extent and under what conditions the possibility of the existence of a means of producing persuasion is recognised within Plutarch's philosophical system. This question is significant, because in the context of the traditional conflict between philosophy and rhetoric the same contrast had been used to suggest that philosophy, insofar as it possesses a valid grounding in truth, is of greater value than rhetoric. However, the identification of a position in Plutarch's philosophy according to which a means of persuasion – which could even be rhetoric – seems necessary, sheds light on how Plutarch positions himself, on a more theoretical level, in relation

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[232] On this, see, e.g., Männlein-Robert *et al.* (2016) 11; cf. also Fernández Delgado (2013) 13–44 and Russell (2023) 157f.

[233] Jeuckens (1907) 8.

to the aforementioned conflict. The cases of historical figures from the *Parallel Lives* who 'teach and persuade' are also examined here.

The second chapter of the series examines the contrast between character and speech, with a view to deconstructing Plutarch's position on the issue of rhetoric versus character as a means of persuasion. Needless to say, this is a misleading contrast, since the public image of one's character can also be shaped by rhetoric. However, this contrast appears fundamental to Plutarch's argument in the early sections of the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae.* Nevertheless, the subordinate position Plutarch assigns to rhetoric in this text is interpreted in this chapter within the broader historical and cultural context, particularly in relation to both the expectations of the readers of his work and the ideological constraints to which Plutarch himself must have been subject.

The first half of the chapter examines Plutarch's assumption that the most important means of persuasion in politics is a virtuous character. Situating this mode of prioritisation in relation to the pressure felt by Plutarch to make his teachings attractive to a readership active in politics, I suggest that this 'primary position' should in fact be relativised rather than emphasised. It may, in fact, be part and parcel of a more general tactic used by Plutarch to encourage his readers to engage systematically in a process of ethical formation in which they might not have engaged had they not been provided with the appropriate incentives. For the purposes of this chapter, Plutarch's position is systematically contrasted and compared with the views of a number of other writers, including Polybius, Epictetus and Dio Chrysostom.

The second half of the chapter deals with the issue of the 'secondary position' that Plutarch attributes to rhetoric, in the same text, as a means of persuasion. Given that this view appears in the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae* as a continuation of the passages that emphasise the persuasiveness of a virtuous character, it follows – especially given the rhetorical sophistication of the passages in question – that this particular position need not be taken as a direct expression of Plutarch's own views on rhetoric. Rather, it seems to be the result of his attempt to strike a balance between the dominant role previously assigned to character and a favourable (in principle) view of rhetoric as an indispensable tool of persuasion. Rhetoric was, after all, a difficult subject for a philosopher like Plutarch to handle in his public discourses, since, as noted earlier, questions about orthodoxy could be raised. Thus, the subordinate role that Plutarch assigns to rhetoric allows him to employ it without compromising his status as a representative of a particular philosophical tradition.

The final chapter of this part seeks to identify more evidence of the utility attributed to rhetoric. The contrast considered here is that between beneficence (euergetism) and rhetorical discourse or rhetoric. Plutarch's negative attitude towards beneficence has already been identified in the

research and indeed it has been rightly written that in its day this attitude would have sounded odd to the ears of most readers. Given that beneficence and rhetoric have in common their potential to function as means of asserting power and accumulating symbolic capital, this chapter attempts to read this strange critique as an affirmation of the usefulness of rhetoric in the field of politics. In Plutarch's writings, there are, after all, passages in which rhetoric and beneficence are compared and, in these cases, imposing oneself by speech is clearly preferred to imposing oneself through beneficence. The chapter concludes with observations regarding the question of whether there was any further systematic engagement with rhetoric in the context of the philosophical education provided by Plutarch.

The second part of the book (comprising the chapter on 'The Philosopher and the Sophists') examines Plutarch's criticism of the sophists. The traditional scholarly view is that this criticism reflects a low appreciation of rhetoric. However, as noted earlier, the idea that there is an implicit identification of rhetoric with the sophists lacks textual support and, as such, this view ought to be revised. The basis for this connection is similar to the basis that more recent scholars have identified for the connection between Dio Chrysostom and the sophists: in Plutarch's time, the sophists were so successful that for many of those active in the field of lecturing and higher education, it seemed impossible to describe their own activity without referencing them. Dio is the most striking example of this phenomenon. While it is attested that he was held at the time to be a sophist, in his writings he systematically distances himself from them, emphasising his connection with philosophy. Plutarch never seems to have done anything that would merit his being seen as a sophist, but the fact that he was active in the field of education and addressed the same audience as the sophists is sufficient cause for controversy.

Teaching and Persuasion

1. Introduction

For many people today, the key difference between philosophy and rhetoric is that the former aims to communicate the truth, while the latter merely seeks to persuade an audience that something is true. While commonplace, this view is far from unbiased, nor does it fully reflect the truth of the matter. As Michel Foucault has shown, it is an account that has been constructed by philosophers with the purpose of depriving persuasive discourse, i.e. the object of study of those who teach rhetoric, of its association with the truth.[1]

When, in the fifth century BC, the sophists began to grapple with the possibilities of speech, one of the subjects they investigated and taught was, naturally, how to present reality in a way that was advantageous to the speaker – or, according to Aristotle's most famous formulation, how to make "the weak argument strong" (*Rh.* 2.24, 1402a 23–24). One need not, however, claim that the sophists were indifferent to ethical considerations. As long as we do not assume that truth has some independent ontological underpinning, but instead see it as arising from human interactions in the social realm, the efforts of the sophists can be understood in terms of a shift towards a more functional and dynamic understanding of reality and human relations. Such an approach was also subsequently adopted by the Epicureans (cf. Epicur. *Sent.* 33–34).[2] For Plato, however, who lived in the age of the great sophists and who taught not only that truth is something real, but that only after it is grasped theoretically in the form of knowledge can it be expressed in oral teachings, this position is problematic.[3] The only way for rhetoric to survive under such con-

[1] See Foucault (1972) 227.

[2] See, e.g., Schofield (1999) 754.

[3] Plato's perspectives on truth and the nature of reality, as articulated in his dialogues, notably in the *Republic* (see esp. the allegory of the cave in Pl. *R.* 514A–520A), pivot on the distinction between the transitory, sensory world and an eternal realm of Forms. He posits that the empirical world, accessible through our senses, is merely a shadow of a more profound reality composed of immutable and perfect Forms. These Forms, characterised by their permanence and perfection, stand in contrast to the transient and imperfect objects encountered in sensory experience, so that true knowledge is not derived from sensory perception but from an intellectual apprehension of these Forms, the pursuit of which is identified as philosophy. On Plato's various 'degrees of reality', see the seminal study of Vlastos (1973) 58–75. For a more nuanced perspec-

ditions is, as Foucault explains, to be confined to an intermediate space between the intellectual apprehension of truth and its oral expression.[4] In other words, it must be transformed from a means of manufacturing truths into a tool used either to legitimise a truth one already knows or, if one possesses no truth, to deceive others.

The sophists would have had much to object to in such a conception of rhetoric. Unfortunately, their texts are lost, with the exception of two pieces of Gorgias and some literary fragments preserved in the texts of other writers, usually hostile ones like Plato. The first known systematic challenge to Plato's account thus comes from Isocrates, who ran the greatest school of rhetoric in contemporary Athens and therefore had ample reason to oppose Plato's monopoly on truth.[5] To the 'knowledge' of truth defended by Plato, Isocrates opposes 'opinion', claiming that it is the only form of cognition to which humans have access. For Isocrates, 'philosophy' (as he calls the rhetorical training offered in his school) is the discipline concerned with forming an opinion appropriate to each situation. This is the closest humans can come to what Plato's philosophy defines as the view of truth (Isoc. 10.5; 13.1–8; 15.184–185; 15.270–275).[6] The confrontation between Isocrates and Plato is the first known clash between a representative of philosophy and a master of rhetoric in the long history of conflict between the two disciplines, and it concerns precisely the question of access to knowledge and truth. Many more would follow.

These two ways of thinking about the question of the relationship between reason and truth and between 'opinion' and 'knowledge' are still very much alive today.[7] In his Berkeley seminars and his lectures at the College de France, Foucault contrasted *parrhesia* (a practice closely associated with truth and philosophy)[8] with rhetoric on precisely this

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tive, see Silverman (2014). Related is Plato's criticism of art in *R.* 595A–608B. For a detailed account of this criticism, see the excellent analysis of Halliwell (2002) 37–147, esp. 108–117. Of course, there is also the idea that rhetoric is a 'fake imitation' (εἴδωλον) of another genuine art, and therefore equivalent to a kind of 'flattery' (κολακεία), in Pl. *Grg.* 463A–466A. Related is also the seventh and final division in Pl. *Sph.* 264B–268D, where the Stranger from Elea, along with the young Theaetetus, attempts to define the nature of the sophist. He concludes that the sophist is essentially a mere 'image-maker'.

4 See Foucault (1972) 227.

5 See Steidle (1952) 259; Eucken (1983) 8–12; Böhme (2009) 9–20.

6 See also Steidle (1952) 261–270; Eucken (1983) 32–35; Alexiou (2007a) 2–3, 5–6. On the conception of rhetorical education as 'philosophy' in Isocrates, see, e.g., Halliwell (1997) 107–125.

7 See Karadimas (1996) 2.

8 See a brief overview in Sluiter & Rosen (2004) 4–8. The following works are seminal for the study of *parrhesia* in the Greek and Roman world: Radin (1927) 215–217; Peterson (1929) 283–297 [347–363]; Schlier (1954) 871–886; Scarpat (1964) *passim*; Bar-

basis: he argued that *parrhesia* is characterised by consistency between what one believes and what one says, so it always brings with it the danger of a communicative rupture with the audience, which is, of course, ignorant of the truth. Rhetoric, by contrast, not only makes it possible, but often even actively seeks, to disconnect what an orator says from what he believes. This is done in order to strengthen the communicative bond between the speaker and his audience, even if it means concealing the truth.[9] At first sight, the distinction Foucault seeks to make seems strange, especially when contrasted with his well-known views on the contribution of discourse to the creation of scientific knowledge, which in turn can function as a means of transforming and legitimising power structures. In reality, however, here too we are dealing with a distinction that is intentionally schematic.[10] As Foucault himself explains, he employed it for didactic purposes, precisely as a convenient generalisation that allowed him to quickly and easily draw a line of demarcation between rhetoric and philosophy.

That such an absolute contrast between these two disciplines can scarcely be maintained with regard to the question of truth is shown first of all by the importance which, in their own way, all the great philosophical schools of Antiquity attached to persuasion, irrespective of their official position on rhetoric. They did so precisely in order to avoid the danger indicated in Foucault's distinction above. As Paul Veyne explains:

> the [ancient] philosophical schools did not impose moral imperatives on their members, they merely promised them happiness. An educated man might not freely join a group if he did not aim at some personal benefit. For this reason, Stoicism and Epicurianism represented types of intellectualism: how to make a man heroic, how to free him from anxieties and vain desires? By persuading his intellect. His will would follow, if good reasons were given to it. Hardly, indeed, could a guide of consciences in Antiquity have exercised over his free followers a power beyond that of mere persuasion. Without it there was no chance of their following him.[11]

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telink (1970) 5–57; Raaflaub (1980) 18–23; *id*. (1983) 523–524; *id*. (1985) 277–283 and 325–326 [= (2004) 221–225 and 348]; Sluiter (2000) 7–8, 13; Foucault (2001) and (2011) *passim* (both works published posthumously); Landauer (2012) 185–208; Sacks (2018) 51–62; Aubert-Baillot (2019) 443–464. For the associations of *parrhesia* with philosophy in particular, cf. also van Raalte (2004) 279–312; Mulhern (2004) 313–339; Bell (2021) 63–82.

[9] See Foucault (2001) 20–21; *id*. (2011) 13–14.

[10] See Foucault (2011) 13.

[11] See Veyne (1985) 215 (English translation is mine).

Moreover, neither Plato, Aristotle nor many subsequent Neoplatonists, who in one way or another also conceived of the human mind as a vehicle for approaching the truth, objected to the use of an art of persuasion, as long as it supported their teaching. Usually this art was rhetoric, but it was always employed under specific conditions that reflected the criteria of the philosophical school in question. These philosophers may have had individual disagreements among themselves about how to create persuasion, as well as about the ethical presuppositions of this persuasion, but in general they all agreed on the same thing: since there is a truth to be taught, the existence of a technique for creating persuasion is something useful both for revealing it to others and for defending it against other competing 'truths'. As we shall now see, Plutarch held a similar position.

2. Philosophical teaching: its content and political dimension

For all ancient philosophical schools, the purpose of moral teaching was the acquisition of *eudaimonia*, but for the philosophers of the Platonic tradition, such as Plutarch, *eudaimonia* was further interwoven with the goal of 'becoming like God'.[12] The God to whom Plutarch refers is an entity that is eternal, immortal, indivisible, immaterial, powerful and good, representing unity in nature.[13] According to Platonic mythology, this entity, with its instrument, the *logos*, subordinates and imposes limits on matter, which corresponds to the infinite element, the indefinite duality, the constituent of all formlessness and disorder.[14] The result of this subjugation is the creation of the world, which, because of its affinity with matter, necessarily remains under the constant guardianship of its creator.[15] God is a 'father' figure and, as such, acts in a very specific way with respect to matter and the world: he does not look into the void, but rather, with the help of the *logos*, provides for the world and for human beings.[16] This is where ethics becomes an issue. The human soul is also subject to the same dualism: it is divided into a part in which the application of the divine *logos* is familiar, i.e. in which reason is grounded, and another part in which impulses and emotions predominate.[17] *Eu-*

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[12] See *De Is. et Os.* 351C–D, 355C; *De sera num.* 550D–551C; *Ad princ. iner.* 780F–781A; *fr.* 143. Cf. *Rom.* 28.10; *Num.* 6.2; *De def. or.* 415B. See also Dillon (1996²) 192–193.

[13] See *De Is. et Os.* 373A–B; *De E* 392E–393B, 394C; *Quaest. conv.* 720D; *Arist.* 6.3.

[14] See *De def. or.* 428E–F; *Quaest. conv.* 719C–D; *Quaest. Plat.* 1001B–C.

[15] See *Quaest. conv.* 719E.

[16] See *De def. or.* 426D–E; *Quaest. conv.* 720C. On the concept of 'paternal' with regard to the ancient world, see, e.g., Wöhrle (1999) 18–22.

[17] See *De virt. mor.* 442C–443C; *De Is. et Os.* 371A–B; *Quaest. Plat.* 1001C. On Plutarch's dualism, see recently Demulder (2017) 205–214.

daimonia results from the imposition of order on the whole soul and its consequent transformation, in such a way that the whole comes to obey the commands of reason, as God once did in imposing order on matter and creating the world.

In essence, this involves an authoritarian process of self-mastery, requiring the violent subjugation of the whole soul to a single part of it. Plutarch outlines the basic principles of his moral teaching in a short text entitled *De virtute morali* (440D–452D).[18] What follows is a brief overview of some of its key aspects.

As we have seen, the part of the soul that is not rational, and which therefore must be subdued, is not homogeneous. It is subdivided into two further parts: a part which is completely deaf to reason, i.e. the part which has to do with food and the senses, and another part which can obey reason under certain conditions and which includes the emotions.[19] The constitution of the self as an ethical subject presupposes proper 'handling by the charioteer' – the figure corresponds to the Platonic metaphor of the charioteer (cf. *Phdr*. 245C–254E) who subdues the white horse, which, in order to distinguish itself and acquire a good name, is willing to obey the charioteer, and in this way also controls the black horse, which is completely disobedient and tends perpetually towards excess.[20] Plutarch does not speak of suppressing emotions, as the Stoics do, but of a (Middle) Platonic version of the Peripatetic ideal of the 'mean'.[21] He holds that the soul of every human being contains predispositions for the manifestation of all emotions, but that through the repeated activation of the same predispositions, the soul forms habits with regard to the emotions it manifests.[22] The expression of these habits represents one's character.[23] As long as reason controls the manifestation of emotions, these can be expressed insofar as they are useful.[24] This gives rise to so-called 'moral virtue'. The formation of a virtuous moral character therefore involves a constant effort to exercise restraint in the face of various stimuli: such a man must become accustomed to doing of his own free will what others are compelled to do by law, a point expressed in a quotation from

[18] For an overview of Plutarch's moral programme, see Dillon (1996²) 194–198; Duff (1999) 72–78; Opsomer (2014) 95; Xenophontos (2016) 25.

[19] See *De virt. mor.* 442A–B.

[20] *Ibid*. 445C–D.

[21] *Ibid*. 441F–442A, 444B–445E. Cf. Xenophontos (2016) 25.

[22] See *De virt. mor.* 443D.

[23] *Ibid*. 443C–D. Cf. *De ad. et am.* 56D; *De am. mult.* 97A; *Con. praec.* 138F. See also Jeuckens (1907) 21.

[24] See *De virt. mor.* 451E–452A. Cf. also Dillon (1996²) 195–196; Xenophontos (2016) 26.

a now lost text by Xenocrates, which Plutarch cites more than once in his writings to refer to this situation.[25]

However, a philosopher is not concerned solely with himself. The process of constituting the self as a virtuous subject is indeed a solitary and personal one, but since the philosophical journey is an attempt to imitate the divine, the philosopher has a moral obligation to show the way to others and not merely to focus on his own moral progress. Donald Russell has placed particular emphasis on the importance of virtues such as φιλανθρωπία, 'kind-heartedness', and πραότης, 'mildness', within the framework of Plutarch's philosophy.[26] The acquisition of such virtues is not unrelated to the ideal of 'becoming like God'. In the text *De defectu oraculorum*, the assumption that God possesses the totality of virtues implies that they are all useful, since God's perfect nature prevents him from possessing anything vain or useless. However, virtues like justice and friendship are social virtues – their utility depends on interaction with others (423D). Thus, someone who is consumed with philosophy, even if he initially seeks *eudaimonia* for himself alone, cannot in the end be indifferent to the *eudaimonia* of others, at least so long as God himself is not indifferent to it.[27] The contrast with the Epicureans, who teach that one should spend one's life in obscurity, far from prominence and publicity, is clear: whoever possesses some measure of virtue should not be useless to others, Plutarch writes (*De latenter vivendo* 1128D). He claims that the true philosopher does not remain ensconced in his house or his philosophical school, but instead seeks to engage with the general public[28] and undertake action for the public good either as an advisor to someone powerful or as a politician.[29] He is no recluse, but a worldly actor. Even if the acquisition of virtue as such is a private affair, he does not remain at the margins but is active in the city, placing himself at the centre of social and political life.

In this way, philosophy seems of necessity to enter into fields in which men's actions are dictated by their will to power. Plutarch's readers were also men who, as we have seen, exercised some sort of function in the administrative mechanisms of the state.[30] We have already identified two examples of readers: one the aristocrat Menemachus of Sardis, the other the accomplished public official Cornelius Pulcher. Another of Plutarch's readers must have been Sosius Senecio, to whom the *Parallel*

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25 See *De virt. mor.* 446E (= Xenocr., *fr*. 254 Isnardi). Cf. also *De aud.* 37E and *Adv. Col*. 1124D.

26 See Russell (2001²) 89–90.

27 Cf. *Ad princ. iner*. 780E; *An seni* 786B.

28 See *De aud.* 43E–44A.

29 See *Maxime cum principibus* 776A–E, 777D–779C; *An seni* 786B, 791C.

30 Cf. Stadter (1988) 292–293; Thum (2020) 240.

Lives and the *Quaestiones Convivales* are dedicated,[31] as well as the Athenian politician Euphanes, the recipient of the text *An seni respublica gerenda sit*.[32] All of these figures were members of the Graeco-Roman intellectual, social and political elite. But as with the Homeric heroes, whom contemporary elites were taught from childhood to regard as moral paradigms, the purpose of life was to gain glory and honour through brave deeds, if not on the battlefield, then at least through physical, intellectual, moral and aesthetic excellence, in which one's origin, lifestyle, culture and ability to be useful to the city guaranteed a privileged position.[33] It is no coincidence that beneficence (euergetism) and sophistry flourished in tandem: wealthy men of aristocratic origin sought distinction by financing the construction of large public buildings, covering the costs of organising lavish festivals or stepping out before an audience to demonstrate their oratorical skills, by speaking unprepared on a subject proposed to them on the spot. All of these activities represent ways of imposing power not through physical but rather through "symbolic violence", as Pierre Bourdieu calls it.[34] The same is true of philosophy, whenever it, too, ventures beyond the bounds of the narrow circle of the philosopher and his few devoted disciples.[35]

Philosophy was anyway an occupation for the few. At the time Plutarch was writing, the majority of people, even in large cities, lacked a basic education, and the majority of the empire's inhabitants were unable to read or write.[36] Few actually had the time and the necessary education to attend the philosophers' lectures. It is possible that a festive discourse held on the occasion of a major public event in the city theatre would attract a significant audience from even the less favoured social strata, but this would have certainly been an exception.[37] The accounts of wandering public speakers who supposedly managed to attract even people who did not understand their language, if not outright exaggerations, probably refer to isolated cases.[38] The audiences addressed by sophists and philosophers would not normally have been larger than two or three hundred people, and even that was perhaps uncommon: for Aelius Aristides, an audience of seventeen is embarrassingly small (354 J.), but a little further on in the same text he expresses the dream of speaking before an audience of fifty (356 J.). In one of Arrian's *Epicteti Dissertationes*,

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[31] See Ziegler (1951) 687–689; Stamatakos (1956) 123; Jones (1971) 54–57; Puech (1992) 4883; Hofmann (2020) 219–220.

[32] See Ziegler (1951) 674; Jones (1971) 110 n. 5; Puech (1992) 4849; Hofmann (2020) 221.

[33] See also Lendon (1997) 31–32.

[34] See Bourdieu (1991) 163–170.

[35] See also van Hoof (2010) 263–264.

[36] See Youtie (1975) 201–205, 220–221; Harris (1983); Schmitz (1997) 164–165.

[37] See Korenjak (2000) 45.

[38] See Philostr. *VS* 1.491 and 2.589. Cf. Korenjak (2000) 56–57.

Epictetus refers to an audience of five hundred for a philosophical lecture as excessive (3.23.19).[39]

All of this paints a picture of philosophy's reach in contemporary society. The philosopher's exhortation to virtue may, in principle, have been addressed to everyone regardless of social class, origin and gender, but, in practice, it applied exclusively to those who were already 'more equal' and who were, incidentally, looking for a way to make this clear to everyone else. One need only examine the tombstone inscriptions that survive from that period and the honorary resolutions, where the designation 'philosopher' accompanies various (otherwise unknown) names of 'orators', 'councillors', 'imperial commissioners', 'benefactors', etc.[40]

A text by Plutarch entitled *Animine an corporis affectiones sint peiores* (500B–502A) shows clearly to what extent the character of his teaching was influenced by the fact that, in a class society, access to philosophy and education in general was limited to the few. The text has probably survived in fragmentary form. The part we possess reveals Plutarch lecturing in a city in Asia Minor on the subject of the harm that uncontrolled emotions inflict on the human soul.[41] The text gives no indication as to where the lecture was held, with the exception of a reference to being able to view the city's marketplace. The description matches that given by Lucian in *De Domo*: a specially adapted room with an entrance that remains open throughout the lecture, with several small windows around the perimeter to let in the sunlight (*ibid.* 6). The room may also have been part of the town's gymnasium.[42] Towards the end of the passage, Plutarch gives his audience a dramatic example of the great harm that passions inflict on the human soul: he invites them to look out from the hall and observe the disorderly mob that has gathered in the marketplace around the prefect's seat (501E–F). They have gathered from every corner of the province, since for a period of time the prefect will be conducting court hearings in the city (501F–502A).

Nonetheless, the social origins of these people must not have been too diverse. They were certainly not ordinary provincial villagers, as such people would never have come into contact with the prefect, since they were represented either by their employers or by neighbours who occupied a slightly higher position in the local society.[43] At the same

[39] For general information on audience sizes, see Nesselrath (1998) 18; Korenjak (2000) 45, 53–58; Whitmarsh (2005) 20. The differences in audience size between the sophists and the philosophers is pointed out by Korenjak (2000) 45, who refers to Apul. *Fl.* 9.2 and Them. 33.366C.

[40] See Lendon (1997) 38; Dillon (2002) 38.

[41] See Hofmann (2020) 217–219, with more references to the literature.

[42] On the gymnasium as a lecture space, see, e.g., Fron & Scholz (2019) 116–121.

[43] See Mitchell (1999) 36, 39.

time, the bulk of the crowd must not have been made up of inhabitants of the province with special power and influence either, since, as Ulpian claims, such people were able to surreptitiously jump the queue in one way or another (*Dig*. 1.16.9.4).[44] In other words, those who, driven by uncontrollable emotions in their souls, filled the space between Plutarch's lecture hall and the prefect's seat are those whose social position was insufficient to have their case heard quickly, but who had to patiently wait their turn. By contrast, those who were in a position to obtain priority treatment could perhaps also take the time to attend some or other lecture or performance taking place at that time in the city. This may even have been the reason why Plutarch was giving a lecture in that particular city at that particular time.

3. Persuasion in the service of teaching

As we saw earlier, philosophy reveals the truth that *eudaimonia* is achieved through a constant concern for the conformity of the self to the authority of a higher principle, namely the divine *logos*.[45] This is the 'law' which the philosopher obeys, while at the same time fulfilling the obligation to communicate this message to others. When he sees that his fellow human beings have strayed from the path of self-care, the philosopher ought not to flatter them, but rather to boldly point out the distance he observes.[46] Flattery, Plutarch explains, is diametrically opposed to philosophy, since it obstructs the fulfilment of the Delphic imperative 'know thyself' (*De ad. et am.* 49B, 65F).[47] The imperative does not precisely refer to care of the self – this is a Stoic deduction. In the Platonic tradition, 'know thyself' means awareness of man's mortal nature and his subordinate position vis-à-vis other higher powers.[48] The benefit this brings comes not merely from the process of introspection, but from, in principle, accepting the inferior position that characterises man's mortal nature and striving to conform to the authority of the divine *logos*.

There is, however, a very basic problem here. The fact that all men are equally inferior to God does not mean that all men are equally inferior to each other. Differentiation is, as we have seen, a given due to social stratification. A few people may be in a position to receive the truth directly from the philosopher. For all the rest, however, there is a need to accept the authority of the philosopher as exemplary, not, of course, in the con-

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[44] See also Burton (1975) 101; Lendon (1997) 2.

[45] Cf. *Ad princ. iner.* 780C.

[46] See *De ad. et am*. 51C–D, 59D, 60B. Cf. *Dem.* 14.3; *De frat. am.* 483A–B.

[47] On flattery, cf. also *Publ*. 10.4; *De ad. et am*. 56B.

[48] See *De aud. poet.* 36A; *De cap. ex inim.* 89A; *De E* 392A, 394C; *Adv. Col*. 1118C–F, and the observations of Opsomer (2009) 93–94.

text of a philosophical lecture, which they could not attend anyway, but in spheres where people coming from different classes can interact. Politics is, for Plutarch, one such sphere. Plutarch characteristically writes in the *Life* of Aemilius Paulus (11.3–4) that when the Roman people chose Paulus as their general, who was clever and spoke to them sincerely instead of with flattery, they became a slave to virtue and moral goodness so that they could thus dominate and prove themselves stronger than the others (οὕτως ἐπὶ τῷ κρατεῖν καὶ μέγιστος εἶναι τῶν ἄλλων ἀρετῆς καὶ τοῦ καλοῦ δοῦλος ἦν ὁ Ῥωμαίων δῆμος). The multitude's submission to a man of culture or a philosopher in the realm of politics is thus supposed to be recompensed for both parties in the ethical-political sphere.

At the same time, however, it becomes clear that, under such conditions, philosophical teaching cannot always operate without persuasion. We are quite distant here from the society of magical-religious discourse, as Marcel Detienne writes, where the truth of the seer, the king and the poet, linked to their contemporary social functions, was accepted by all without objection.[49] The subsequent experience of new forms of social and political organisation placed truth in the 'middle' once and for all: truth came to be defined by historical criteria, as the truth of a given member of society that, as such, must be documented and demonstrated to others.[50] It is to this 'regime of the polis', as Detienne defines it, that the philosopher must subject himself or remain confined to the margins of social life.[51]

It is therefore unsurprising that Plutarch complains in several passages that the philosophers' sincerity is not appreciated by the general public. Most people, he claims, enjoy listening to philosophers speaking in a general way on various subjects, but when the philosopher leaves the others aside and addresses each person individually and frankly on matters of importance, they resent him and take him for an indiscreet person (*De audiendo* 43E). The disturbance triggered by the honesty of a man who counsels others is compared to the disturbance caused in weak eyes by bright light: just as an inflamed eye should not be brought close to bright lights, so too can an inflamed soul not receive honesty and admonition in an unadulterated form (*De ad. et am.* 72B–C).[52] Earlier in the same text, Plutarch notes that certain people treat anyone who dares to speak to them honestly about their faults as if they were a legal adversary, while they embrace and treat as a friend and confidant anyone who praises them and approves unreservedly of all their actions (*De ad. et am.* 56A).[53]

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[49] See Detienne (2006³) 111.

[50] See Detienne (2006³) 152–183.

[51] See Detienne (2006³) 234.

[52] Cf. *De aud.* 46D–E.

[53] Cf. *Cam.* 11.1–3; *De aud.* 39A.

The roots of this phenomenon lie in the inherent inability of reason to impose itself on uncontrollable emotions in the soul. Although it is generally accepted that when faced with the truth human reason naturally chooses it and rejects falsehood (*De virt. mor.* 448A), it is nevertheless argued that the situation is, in reality, more complicated, since the soul often tries to grasp things that are dissimilar in the same way (*De virt. mor.* 447D). This is especially true when the question of the most advantageous decision arises (*De virt. mor.* 447C–D). Plato had likened pleasure and pain to nails that keep the soul riveted to the body and explained that, in this way, something of the nature of the body is transmitted to the soul, so that it treats any information it receives from the body as true (*Phd.* 83D).[54] However, while one can quickly and easily perceive a bodily injury, one is nevertheless unable to conceive of a correlate to such a thing at the level of the soul. Plutarch argues that since reason, too, is a part of the soul 'nailed' to the body, it is unable to see things clearly, with the result that it becomes diseased along with the whole soul (*Animine an corp.* 550E–F). Thus, while someone who has been physically injured can easily become aware of his condition and consult a doctor, those who suffer in their soul, unaware that they are suffering, flee the philosopher whose admonitions reflect an attempt to heal them (*Animine an corp.* 501B–F).[55]

Unlike the Stoics, however, who, motivated by their belief in the mutual dependence of all virtues, proclaim that persuasion arises exclusively by means of logical proof,[56] Plutarch has in mind a method of persuasion that involves a controlled engagement with the non-rational part of the soul, a method which he himself identifies as having been used from the very beginnings of the Platonic tradition.

In *De virtute morali*, Plutarch argues that Pythagoras was unaware neither of the bipartite nature of the soul nor of the need to subordinate the non-rational part of the soul to the rational one. Proof of this can be found in his interest in music: since he grasped that the soul is not, as a whole, obedient to education and lessons and cannot be transformed from a state of evil only by means of reason, he perceived the need for a different kind of persuasion (ἀλλά τινος ἑτέρας πειθοῦς συνεργοῦ) that could be used in support of philosophical teaching (441D–E). Later accounts have Pythagoras establishing empirically that different musical modes exert different effects on the human soul and subsequently developing

[54] Cf. *Quaest. conv.* 718D.

[55] For the simile of the doctor and the patient, see again Philo of Larissa's testimony transmitted by Stob. 2.7.2, 1–45 (= Ar. Did., *FPG* II, 55.1–55.2).

[56] See Quint. 5.1.1, cf. also 4.5.6. See also Kennedy (1963) 292–293; Liebersohn (2010) 33. For the belief in the mutual dependence of the virtues (ἀντακολουθία), see esp. Clem. Al. *Strom.* 8.9.30.1–3 (= Chrysipp., *SVF* II, 349).

a method of 'psychotherapy' based on the selection of the appropriate harmony for each case, with the aim of either stimulating or pacifying the soul in question.[57] The details of this method are unknown, nor is it easy to distinguish between the earlier and later elements in the evidence at our disposal. The same is generally true of the similar views attributed to Damon,[58] another ancient thinker from the circle of the Pythagoreans, whose teachings are presented already in Plato as linking the influence of musical modes on the human soul with the government of the city.[59] What is significant in Plutarch's case is, however, that in the context of a reference to Pythagoras' teachings on the soul – as the ancient thinker with whom the tradition which Plutarch himself supposedly represents begins – he mentions a method of persuasion which seems to solve precisely the problem of the general public's reception of philosophical teaching that is highlighted in other passages of his works. The method concerns a supportive form of persuasion, which aims at pacifying the non-rational part of the soul, so that, at the same time, the persuasion that the rational part tries to exercise is facilitated.

Although the passage in question clearly refers to music, the concern it expresses is not unrelated to rhetoric, at least from a historical point of view. The connection between rhetoric and rhetorical discourse and the discussion of the two types of persuasion mentioned above has been going on since the time of the Sophists and Plato. In the wake of Charles Segal's excellent analysis, it is now widely accepted that behind the *Helenae encomium* (= Gorg., 82 B 11 D-K) by the sophist Gorgias lies a psychological theory according to which eloquent speech conquers the human soul, which naturally seeks pleasure, with the help of persuasion.[60] People are not always able to discern whether what is presented to them is the truth or a falsehood dressed up as the truth, and therefore the course they follow is that of 'opinion' (11). This weakness is exploited by skilful discourse, which charms, convinces and forces the soul to change course (8). It is on this basis that Gorgias attempts in this text to exonerate Helen from the charge of adultery: Helen need not accept the blame for leaving her house, since, given the power of speech, her submission was to be expected (12–14): she was forced to leave for Troy by Paris' "bad persuasion" (πειθοῖ τινι κακῆι).[61]

It is important to note, however, that Gorgias probably does not understand 'opinion' in the same way as Isocrates, i.e. as the only cognitive

[57] See, e.g., Cic. *Consil.*, *fr.* 3 Müller; Sext. Emp. *M.* 6.8; Iamb. *VP* 25, 112.

[58] Cf. Gal. *PHP* 5.6.21 (= V, 673 K.; = *CMG* V.4.1.2, 330; = Damon, 37 A 8 D-K). On Damon, see the detailed account provided by Wallace (2015) 3–106.

[59] See Pl. *R.* 424C (= Damon, 37 B 10 D-K).

[60] See Segal (1962) *passim*, cf. also Karadimas (2008) 25.

[61] See Segal (1962) 112, 116. See also Karadimas (2008) 11, 23–24.

category to which man can have access. Gorgias' ideas become more comprehensible when viewed against the backdrop of early Greek thinkers like Parmenides, who also explored various levels of cognition.[62] At the transition from the first to the second main section of Parmenides' poem (Parmen., 28 B 8, 50–61 D-K), the goddess reveals her shift away from discussing "the argument worthy of belief" (πιστὸν λόγον), an expression of truth. Instead, her subsequent description of the sensory world will be based on "mortal opinions" (δόξας βροτείας), which lack true knowledge (cf. νύκτ᾽ ἀδαῆ), although, as Jonas Grethlein has recently noted, they are still adequate to provide a cosmological explanation.[63] A similar conception of 'opinion' may be traced in Gorgias as well, since it appears that, despite clear differences, Gorgias, too, much like Parmenides, regards 'opinion' as a rather subordinate cognitive category. Leaving aside the problematic text *On Non-Being*,[64] Gorgias seems, in his other extant writings, to recognise not only the existence of truth, but also the possibility of revealing it to others through speech (see *Hel. enc.* 1 as well as *Palam. ap.* 33 = Gorg., 82 B 11a, 33 D-K).[65] Gorgias' nuanced conception of the poetic 'deception' (ἀπάτη) also carries significant weight in this context, given its positive ethical dimensions and implications, as most notably exemplified in the famous fragment Gorg., 82 B 23 D-K about the Greek tragedy (taken from Plut. *Bellone an pace* 348C, cf. also *De aud. poet.* 15D): "he who deceives is more honest than he who does not deceive, and he who is deceived is wiser than he who

[62] For a recent discussion, see Grethlein (2021) 22–25.

[63] See Grethlein (2021) 22. As regards the question of the relationship between 'opinion' (δόξα) and 'truth' in Parmenides, I broadly follow Cosgrove (2014) 1–31, esp. 26: "The Doxa thus has a double life. It has no philosophical status of its own, from Parmenides' point of view, but it does have a philosophical purpose, or what Owen called a 'dialectical' one, in service of the goddess's teaching, and that is to exhibit how the most fully realised and, to mortals, most acceptable cosmology devisable nevertheless fails the tests of Truth, wavering ineluctably between 'is' and 'is not'. On the other hand, it serves Parmenides' pragmatic interests in offering astronomical and other innovations of fascinating and dynamic import and of great everyday value – so long as they are not presumed to rank or compete with Truth".

[64] What we know of this text comes from summaries and references in the works of later authors, notably Sextus Empiricus and the pseudo-Aristotelian treatise *De Melisso, Xenophane, Gorgia* (see *M.* 7.65–87 and *MXG* 5–6, 979a 11–980b 21 respectively = Gorg., 82 B 2 D-K). The content of this text can be summarised by three main propositions that Gorgias purportedly defended: 1) nothing exists; 2) even if something exists, it cannot be known; 3) even if it could be known, it cannot be communicated. The interpretation of this text among scholars is varied. For a brief overview of the main trends, see, e.g., Narcy (1998) 1151–1152.

[65] Cf. Segal (1962) 102, 108; Karadimas (2008) 24.

is not deceived".[66] In other words, there is not only 'bad deception', but also 'good deception'; there is not only 'bad persuasion', but also 'good persuasion'. Besides, as Segal has observed, there is nothing in these passages that prevents us from seeing Gorgias differently from how Plato presents him in the first part of the eponymous dialogue, i.e. as a master of rhetoric who argues that his art is good because it can be used, for example, to persuade patients who are otherwise unwilling to follow the doctor's instructions.[67]

We find the same conception of rhetoric in Plato, even though he declares himself to be operating within a different discipline than Gorgias.[68] In the first part of Plato's *Gorgias*, Socrates observes that rhetoric cannot be defined solely with reference to persuasion, since there are other arts, such as arithmetic, by means of which people seek to convince others of the validity of various statements. He thus proposes a distinction between a form of persuasion that produces knowledge through a process of learning, and a form of persuasion that generates mere belief without knowledge of right and wrong (*Grg*. 453B–455A). Plato for the most part holds that knowledge is acquaintance with things and, to a greater or lesser extent, that it has already taken place before the soul became trapped in the body: to know a thing generally means for Plato to succeed in remembering its true substance, which has been forgotten as a result of the soul's having become trapped in a body.[69]

'Belief without knowledge' is therefore no different from 'opinion'.[70] As was the case with Gorgias, in Platonic philosophy 'opinion' is seen as a subordinate category of recognition: if 'knowledge' is brought about through dialectic and results in the recognition of things that, as Michael Erler has observed, are unambiguous and have only a single meaning, 'opinion', even if it requires some degree of logical abstraction, ultimately allows for a recognition that, while not necessarily false, is likely to be false because it concerns things that are not univocally determined.[71] However, as the historical Gorgias shows (*supra*), it is normally 'opinion' and not 'knowledge' upon which people rely. Plato does not fundamentally disagree. He would even add that this is because it is not only the processes in the mind and the desire for distinction and a good name

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[66] The passage in the Greek text of Plutarch reads as follows: ἥν ὅ τ' ἀπατήσας δικαιότερος τοῦ μὴ ἀπατήσαντος, καὶ ὁ ἀπατηθεὶς σοφώτερος τοῦ μὴ ἀπατηθέντος. For Gorgias' conception of ἀπάτη, see esp. Verdenius (1981) 116–128 and Grethlein (2021) 12–13, 21–22, 28–29, 32.

[67] See Segal (1962) 108.

[68] Cf. also Grethlein (2021) 4, 97–98.

[69] See *Phdr*. 247C–250C; *R*. 518B–C.

[70] See Dodds (1959) 206.

[71] See Erler (2007) 354–355.

that determine people's motives, but also the innate tendency towards physical gratification that everyone possesses. This is the black horse of the soul chariot, which is not easy to control (*Phdr.* 237D).

The fact that the persuasion created by rhetoric involves 'opinion' and not 'knowledge' is one of the main reasons why, in the *Gorgias*, Socrates refers to 'formal' rhetoric, only to reject it as flattery. Although Gorgias at one point indicates the organic character of this persuasion (*Grg*. 456C–457C), Socrates repeatedly reminds his interlocutors of the danger of this tool falling into the wrong hands.[72] It is precisely on this basis that Socrates disavows 'formal' rhetoric (*Grg*. 462B–466A), although he ultimately leaves open the possibility of a nobler form of rhetoric that could serve justice (*Grg*. 503A–B, 504E, 527C).[73] Several years later, in the *Phaedrus*, Plato revisited this 'true' art of persuasion, describing it as an art of persuasion that starts from knowledge and serves truth (*Phdr*. 258D, 259E–260E), an "art which leads the soul by means of words" (ψυχαγωγία τις διὰ λόγων), whose scope is no longer limited to courts and other public gatherings, but extends to private meetings of all sorts, and which has as its object not only matters of great and general interest, but also minor, everyday ones (261A–B). However, in this context, a 'true' orator cannot be someone like Gorgias, but only the philosopher who, by means of the dialectical method, has come to know (or remember) the truth and is able to construct discourses to 'guide the souls' of others, not because he wants to win the favour of his audience, but because without this particular art he is in no position to speak "either for purposes of instruction or of persuasion" (*Phdr*. 277C: οὔτε τι πρὸς τὸ διδάξαι οὔτε τι πρὸς τὸ πεῖσαι).

4. Examples of individuals who persuade and teach

It is now time to turn back to Plutarch. Although, as we have seen, he does indeed adopt this conception of persuasion as serving an auxiliary function in relation to teaching, he does not seem to draw a rigid distinction between 'formal' rhetoric and 'true' rhetoric. This section focuses for the most part on the *Lives*, in which we find concrete examples of individuals 'persuading' and 'teaching' crowds, notably those of the ideal politician in the proem of *Phocion*, Cato the Younger and Pericles. A passage about Alexander taken from the *Moralia* is also examined at the end. In all four cases, the possibility of blending 'teaching' and 'persuasion' is highlighted with regard to areas that are absolutely relevant to the use of rhetoric.

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[72] See Dodds (1959) 8–10; Segal (1962) 103.

[73] Cf. *Ap.* 17B, 18A.

The central theme of the proem to *Phocion* is the proper way of exercising political power in times of crisis.[74] The passage begins with the observation that the masses are accustomed to viewing those who excel morally as antagonists, not only in times of prosperity but even more so in times of adversity: tribulations embitter the spirit, such that whenever the masses are criticised for their faults, they feel they are being belittled, and whenever they are addressed with confidence, they think that they are being underestimated (2.1–2). The cause of this is attributed to the nature of the human soul, which is gratified by that part of it which gives rise to pleasure – no one wants to hear unpleasant things, much less in unpleasant circumstances. This means that complete honesty is doomed to failure: speeches which convey truth and reason, if they are not sweet and submissive, will irritate and rile up those who are in error (2.3). The analogy of the inflamed eye appears again here, but this time with reference not to the soul convulsed by uncontrollable emotions but to the city that lacks the courage to hear an unpleasant truth: just as the sick eye does not tolerate bright and vivid colours, but prefers those that are dull and dark, so too does the city that has fallen into a lamentable condition become faint-hearted and soft, unable to tolerate honesty (2.4). The situation is no less dangerous for someone who speaks the whole truth than it is for the flatterer: the city may drag the latter down with it to destruction, but by then it will have already destroyed the person who refused to say what it wanted to hear (2.5). The politician is therefore forced to follow another, less extreme path if he is to be effective.

The solution that is presented in a positive light in the text lies between flattery and honesty. The politician's approach to communicating with the masses is described via an analogy with the direction of the sun's motion: according to mathematicians, the movement of the sun does not align with the direction of the sky, but it does not completely go against it either (2.6). Similarly, a politician who attempts to exercise power over his fellow citizens must not align himself with their choices and desires, but neither must he completely oppose them (2.7). Just as the sun traces a path that is pliable and flexible (2.6), so too is the best form of government one that rewards the citizens with indulgence for their obedience and does not hesitate to please them, before requesting what is in the city's best interest in return (2.8). The peculiar motion of the sun ensures the preservation of the life of all creatures, while enabling them to enjoy the best temperatures (2.6). Similarly, the statesman guarantees the safety of his fellow citizens and, if he further succeeds in mixing high principles (τὸ σεμνὸν) with reasonableness (τὸ ἐπιεικὲς), which is difficult, as Plutarch writes, the result is a composite that is more melodious and refined than any rhythm or harmony. This is the

[74] See Stadter (1988) 285.

very same composite that God produces, directing the world without violence by moulding necessity through persuasion and reason (2.9: ἀλλὰ πειθοῖ καὶ λόγῳ παράγων τὴν ἀνάγκην). Here too it is evident that reason goes hand in hand with persuasion, in which pure honesty is tempered by being mixed with elements that stimulate the part of the soul that gives rise to pleasure. The feeling of satisfaction thus evoked in the citizens allows them to be manipulated so that they behave in line with the prescriptions of reason.

The use of metaphors from the world of music and astronomy is certainly not accidental. An educated reader of Plutarch would immediately understand the Pythagorean-Platonic background, in which harmony in music and in the movements of the cosmos correspond to political order, while political order corresponds to the three parts of the soul. The original meaning of the word 'harmony' (ἁρμονία) is the union of structural elements brought about by placing a binding material in the joints between them.[75] In the Pythagoreans, however, the word seems to acquire – for the first time – as Warren Anderson suggests, a metaphorical and mystical meaning.[76] Philolaus is said to have defined harmony as the force that connects the material elements out of which the universe is constructed and the world ordered.[77] Order is associated with God. According to another Platonic writer of Plutarch's time, the Pythagoreans see in God the one who 'harmonises' (συναρμοστὴς) those who disagree, making friends of enemies in the manner of a musician or a physician (Theon Sm. *De util. mathem.* 12, 15–17).

In his text, Theon of Smyrna (early second century AD) paints a picture of a Pythagorean-Platonic theory that is very closely related to music, but extends in parallel to other fields. The Pythagoreans and Plato, Theon affirms, held that music is the connection and union of many things that are opposed to each other and that it brings together not only rhythms and melodies, but everything that can be organised into a system (12, 10–17).[78] At the core of this theory is 'unanimity' (ὁμόνοια) or, as it is otherwise called, 'aristocracy', which, depending on where it is manifested, is referred to in an appropriate way. Thus, 'unanimity/aristocracy' is referred to as 'harmony' on the cosmic level, as 'lawfulness' in the political sphere and as 'temperance' in private life (12, 18–25).[79] The same concept is found throughout Plutarch's text. Both in the ideal version of politics and in the mathematicians' theories of the movement of the sun, as well as in the commentary on the God, the state sought by the union

[75] See *LSJ*[9], *ἁρμονία* I.2.

[76] See Anderson (1966) 37.

[77] Cf. Anderson (1966) 38.

[78] Cf. Anderson (1966) 37.

[79] Cf. Anderson (1966) 240–241.

of different elements is a state of 'unanimity/aristocracy', in Theon's terminology. What the sun achieves by orbiting is to mix together cold and warm air, so that all creatures may continue to live. The goal that the politician aspires to achieve by mixing high principles and reasonableness is to activate all of the productive forces present in his city by means of persuasion and reason, without resorting to physical force.

The next example is found in *Pericles*. Pericles is a paradigm of a cultured politician, but one who does not hesitate to give the masses what they want in order to mobilise them to serve what he deems to be the general interest. About halfway through the text, Plutarch describes the shift from Pericles' 'demagogic' phase to a 'kingly' and 'aristocratic' form of government (15.1). In his commentary on Thucydides, Arnold Gomme tried to explain this change as an attempt by Plutarch to reconcile the two conflicting accounts of Pericles by Thucydides and Plato respectively, showing how each of them corresponds to a different phase of the Athenian statesman's activity.[80] A closer reading of the text, however, shows that this is not entirely accurate. The main weakness of Gomme's interpretation was identified by Philip Stadter, who explained that everything Plutarch mentions at the beginning of the biography about Pericles' ancestry (3.1–5), the intellectual influences of the Presocratics Damon – a thinker whom tradition associates, as we saw earlier, with music and the Pythagoreans[81] – and Anaxagoras (4.1–6),[82] and, finally, the significant influence that Anaxagoras had on Pericles' overall moral and intellectual formation (5.1–6.5) form a frame of reference that then forces the reader to see Pericles, even when he is cajoling the demos, as a purely 'aristocratic' leader whose ultimate goal is to benefit his city. In other words, there is no conversion but merely an occasional shift from one policy to another, depending on how necessary the politician deems it in each case to tighten or loosen the leash of the demos.[83]

Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that persuasion is an integral part of the politician's action at every stage of governance. From the moment, he 'strikes the chord' of aristocratic and monarchical government, Pericles guides the demos for the most part by his own will by 'persuading' and 'teaching' it (15.1). The fact that Pericles was not only able to propose a plan of action to the demos, but also to 'teach' it (12.3), is indirectly related in the text to the influence of Anaxagoras (4.6–6.1).[84] When it comes to his ability to 'persuade', however, the association of Pericles

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[80] See Gomme (1945) 65–67.

[81] On Damon, see esp. the detailed introduction of Wallace (2015) 3–106. On his relation to Pericles, see also Stadter (1991) 116–119.

[82] On the relationship between Pericles and Anaxagoras, see Stadter (1991) 120–122.

[83] See Stadter (1987) 251–265; *id.* (1989) xxxviii–xliv.

[84] Cf. Pl. *Phdr*. 270A.

with the Pythagorean Damon at the beginning of the biography is of particular importance. Damon is described by Plutarch as Pericles' music teacher, a sophist par excellence, a 'coach' and 'teacher' of the Athenian leader in politics (4.1–2). In the scholarship, it is claimed that this reference to Damon is connected solely to the 'demagogic' phase or phases of Pericles' rule.[85] However, as already noted, such a rigid distinction is somewhat misleading. Pericles' actions as a whole are characterised by the combined influence of Damon and Anaxagoras, as is, moreover, suggested by the analogy between Pericles' political activity and the profession of a doctor, which occurs in the text immediately after the passage mentioning the beginning of the 'aristocratic' phase of government: just as the physician, when called upon to treat a complex and long-lasting illness, sometimes offers the patient harmless pleasure and, at others, painful operations and life-saving medicines, so too did Pericles, in order to govern a mob in possession of so great an empire and within which all sorts of emotions arose, sometimes exploit the crowd's fears and rein in its audacity, while other times appealing to hope in order to comfort it and drive away its discontent (15.1–2).[86] As long as the crowd is not completely in agreement with what Pericles attempts to 'teach' them, he resorts to a controlled engagement with their emotions.

It is worth dwelling a little more on this particular passage from *Pericles*, because of the reference it contains to rhetoric. In the text, Plutarch goes on to describe more clearly how Pericles imposed his authority on the Athenians. The main tool he used was rhetoric. By combining the power of rhetoric with the reputation and confidence he had gained from his lifestyle, he was eventually able to demonstrate not only that "rhetoric […] is, to use Plato's words, 'an enchantment of the soul'" (ἔδειξε τὴν ῥητορικὴν κατὰ Πλάτωνα ψυχαγωγίαν οὖσαν),[87] but also that its greatest achievement is that it provides a method of managing men's characters and emotions. Characters and emotions are likened in the text to musical tones and phonemes of the soul in need of harmonious handling and manipulation (15.2–3). The philosophical context within which rhetoric is situated thus becomes clear. Moreover, earlier in the text, Plutarch mentions that Pericles' public discourse was appropriate both to his way of life and the magnitude of his conviction, and that in this discourse he largely "echoed" (παρενέτεινε), as with a musical instrument, what he had learned from Anaxagoras, thus mixing rhetoric with natural philosophy (8.1–2).

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[85] See Alexiou (2007b) 180.

[86] Cf. also Pl. *Grg*. 505B and 521E–522A. For the simile of the doctor and the patient, see again Philo of Larissa's testimony transmitted by Stob. 2.7.2, 1–45 (= Ar. Did., *FPG* II, 55.1–55.2).

[87] Transl. by B. Perrin.

There are two prerequisites for the usefulness of rhetoric in a philosophical context. In Pericles' case these were, on the one hand, systematic familiarity with the teachings of philosophy and, on the other hand, care for the formation of the appropriate character, elements of which the orator can use to embellish his speech in order to appear convincing. I will return to this aspect below, as the question of character is dealt with in another chapter. For the moment, it should be emphasised that the example of Pericles gives a picture of rhetoric in the context of a philosophically oriented version of politics, but this rhetoric is not necessarily defined as 'true' in opposition to a 'formal' one, as in Plato. Certainly, in the text, Pericles' use of rhetoric is supposed to corroborate that it is "an enchantment of the soul" (ψυχαγωγία) as Plato had said. The reference is to Plato's *Phaedrus* (261A–B). In this particular dialogue, however, the conditions established for this kind of rhetoric are: 1) the orator possessing a systematic training in dialectics, so that he knows the truth about the things he is going to discuss; 2) an understanding of the nature of the soul, so that the orator can also use the kinds of discourse best suited to each soul – otherwise he can neither teach nor persuade his audience (*Phdr*. 276E–277C). Plutarch does not, however, attribute any of this knowledge to Pericles. The decisive point in Plutarch's text is instead the degree of his (mainly moral) cultivation, which is expressed in his rhetoric and positively received by his audience. Although the image is Platonic, it lacks the rigour and precision characteristic of the Platonic conception of 'true' rhetoric. Nevertheless, Pericles' propensity to philosophy has been previously established in the text, which explains, if not justifies, why Pericles responds to the Platonic paradigm of the philosopher-statesman.

This account of Pericles displays similarities with that of Cato the Younger. Plutarch's *Life of Cato* is the parallel biography of Phocion, hence the general reflections on the way a politician should exercise power in times of crisis that we discussed above (as stated explicitly in *Phoc*. 3.1). Here, Cato is treated by Plutarch as a politician who combines a public political engagement with the cultivation of philosophy.[88] The passage that interests us deals with the issues surrounding how Cato commanded the soldiers serving under his command in Macedonia. In Plutarch's account, Macedonia marks the beginning of Cato's political career, preceded only by his participation in the suppression of the

[88] See *Ca. Ma.* 27.7; *Brut*. 2.1; *Pomp*. 40.1; *Phoc*. 3.2; *Cat. Mi*. 4.1–3, 5.6–8, 6.3, 6.5–6 (appearance of a philosopher), 10.1–3, 16.1, 20.2, 44.1, 54.8, 57.4, 68.1–70.2; *Maxime cum principibus* 776F–777A. Cf. also Swain (1990) 193, 197–201; Aalders & de Blois (1992) 3400–3401. However, on the whole, Plutarch does not portray Cato as a model politician, although certain aspects of his activity are presented in positive light. For a detailed account, see recently Jacobs (2018) 367–415, esp. 413–414.

Spartacus rebellion. As regards the latter incident, however, Cato merely volunteered for his brother's sake (8.1–2). It is in Macedonia that his persistent moral cultivation, which is presented at length in the first part of the text (see 1.3–7.3), comes to fruition for the first time, in conjunction with his practice of rhetoric (4.3–4).

Upon arriving in the camp, Cato decides not to demonstrate his virtue to the soldiers, but instead to see to it that they become as virtuous as he is (9.5). His tactics are familiar, given what we have seen so far. Cato is neither too hard nor too soft: he does not exploit the fear that the office of chiliarch evokes, but supplements it with reason. As a result of his always resorting to 'persuading' and 'teaching' (πείθων περὶ ἑκάστου καὶ διδάσκων) and imposing rewards and punishments accordingly, it ultimately became difficult to say whether he made his men more peaceable or more warlike, more ardent or more just, as they appeared frightening to enemies and peaceful to allies, fearful of committing injustice and willing to do anything that would bring them praise (9.5–7).[89] At the same time, by making sure that the image that the soldiers formed of him was that of an officer who, on the one hand, was not inferior in any skill to his superiors and, on the other hand, was always willing to share in the labours of even ordinary soldiers, Cato managed to win favour and esteem, causing his soldiers to admire his virtue and want to imitate it (9.8–10). Cato exercised authority with the aim of educating the soldiers morally. The intention to educate is, however, on its own insufficient to achieve this goal. Without the support of a method of persuasion, which, on the one hand, could play on the soldier's fear of punishment and hope of reward, and, on the other, could be reinforced by admiration and appreciation for the 'teacher', Cato would not have achieved the results he did.

The last example is found in a passage from *De Alexandri Magni fortuna aut virtute,* which belongs to Plutarch's group of epideictic texts. In this passage, it is argued, with rhetorical hyperbole, that Alexander was the greatest philosopher because he managed to improve the way of life of countless people in the countries he conquered (1, 329A, cf. 1, 327F–328B). This is the familiar rhetorical locus of the advanced superpower civilising conquered peoples[90] and its appearance in an epideictic text is not accidental: such tricks were often used to forge a closer bond between the author/speaker and his audience by recognising elements of the present in the past.[91] Alexander's empire may be gone, but the Roman empire still exists and makes similar claims. It is to this context that the familiar combination of 'persuasion' and 'teaching' is responding. In

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[89] Cf. *Ad princ. iner.* 781D.

[90] See Str. 2.5.26; Ph. *Leg. ad Gaium* 147. Cf. Jones (1940) 60; Strasburger (1965) 44–47; Meyer-Zwiffelhoffer (2002) 9.

[91] Cf. Schmitz (1997) 168–169.

Plutarch's text, the education promoted by the 'philosopher' Alexander is seen first of all in the changing habits of the conquered peoples of Asia: Alexander taught the Hyrcanians to marry, showed the Arachosians how to cultivate the land, persuaded the Sogdians to care for their fathers instead of murdering them and convinced the Persians to love their mothers but not to take them as wives (1, 328C). Apart from the contrasting style, what is striking about the passage are the verbs used: 'educated' (ἐπαίδευσε), 'taught' (ἐδίδαξεν) and 'persuaded' (ἔπεισε). Persuasion functions in these examples as complementary to teaching and learning. Alexander employs 'education' and 'teaching' in situations where the new habits he introduced did not conflict with the old habits of the conquered populations. But in cases where the new habits did directly conflict with the older ones, Alexander used 'persuasion' to impose the Greek way of doing things.

Later in the passage, Alexander, having forced the conquered peoples to live in the new cities he built and installed Greek authorities in them to enforce his laws, managed to prevail, so that behind the walls of the new cities the 'savage' element in the people's way of life was finally extinguished, while the 'worse' element was changed by becoming habituated to the 'better' (1, 328E–329A). Pericles 'taught' and 'persuaded' his fellow citizens, because, in addition to the renown he has acquired for his own way of life, he manages their fears and hopes in an appropriate way. Likewise, just as Cato 'taught' and 'persuaded' his soldiers by gaining their esteem, while imposing a system of justified punishments and rewards, Alexander does something similar in Plutarch's narrative. What is different is that Alexander's teaching is conveyed by the laws he imposes, which, on the one hand, emanate from his power as a conqueror and, on the other, impose new habits on the inhabitants of the cities. That said, these two aspects are not directly connected. Moreover, there are also the officials who interact with the peoples subject to the laws. They represent the 'human face' of Alexander's legal system and have a supporting function.

Plutarch provides no further details in the text. However, since the connection between the positive historical examples in the narrative and the perceptions of the audience (consisting of members of not only the intellectual and social but also the political elite) would occur naturally as they received it, the content of this interaction could be interpreted against the backdrop of the usual means of imposing power, which both Plutarch and his audience would have had in mind: violent repression, beneficence, rhetoric and so on.

5. *Parrhesia* and trust

In all the examples presented above, the exploitation of both natural fears of impending disaster or punishment and hopes of a future benefit plays a key role in the successful manipulation of groups of people. However, if we place too much emphasis on this aspect, we risk overlooking another important dimension of how the politician communicates with his audience, which is also evident in the examples above. The various references to musical modes, which in ancient theory correspond to specific moral values,[92] to Pericles' reputation and trust that the Athenians had in him, to the office of chiliarch held by Cato, which itself instilled fear in his soldiers, alongside the image of morality that he took care to cultivate, and, finally, to the symbolic role played by the officials who applied the law of Alexander raise the question of 'modality' in the expression of truth, i.e. the way in which all of these figures appear to be committed to the truth of what they say.

The subject of a speech or behaviour whose function is to 'persuade' and 'teach' is not merely a socio-pragmatic factor, although the way in which the individual commits himself to the truth of his words and behaviours in each case has much to do with their broader contextual framework. Marcel Detienne has observed that even in archaic societies dominated by a magical-religious discourse, where the words of the righteous king, the seer and the poet were supposed to be unquestioningly accepted as truths, it was also the case that these individuals were considered capable of telling not only the truth but also lies mistaken for truths.[93] In this, we already see a first distinction between the person expressing the truth and the subject of the true speech. This idea was further developed by Michel Foucault in the last years of his lectures at the Collège de France.[94] Like Detienne, Foucault spoke of four figures who were considered to be truth-holders and truth-tellers in the ancient world: the *parrhesiast*,[95] the prophet, the sage and the master artisan.

[92] In Ancient Greek music, a 'mode' is a melody produced by a specific scale of notes, which is characterised as a *harmony* and takes its name from a particular Greek or non-Greek ethnic group, whose character was considered to correspond to the emotional character expressed by the particular melody/harmony (e.g. Lydian, Phrygian, Dorian). On these, see, e.g., Anderson (1966) 34–35.

[93] See Detienne (2006³) 140–141. Cf. the claim of the Muses in Hes. *Th*. 27–28: ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα, ἴδμεν δ’ εὖτ’ ἐθέλωμεν ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι (“we know how to speak many false things as though they were true; but we know, when we will, to utter true things”). For the *topos* of the poets that lie found in Greek literature after Hesiod, see recently Grethlein (2021) 21 n. 55 (with further references).

[94] See Foucault (2011) 14–25.

[95] For the notion of *parrhesia*, see n. 8 above.

However, unlike Detienne, Foucault was not primarily interested in the corresponding institutional functions of these four figures, but rather in their symbolic dimension. More specifically, Foucault sought to identify to what extent the substantiation of truthfulness in a discourse is achieved through the awareness of the presence of the person in question as its subject. Only then did he observe that often, in order to express a truthful statement, was it necessary for these individuals to engage with forms of discourse, types of institutions and social characters.[96]

In Plutarch, as we have already seen, *parrhesia* is both necessary for and an obstacle to persuasion. It is a necessity, because *parrhesia* is linked to truth and, by extension, to teaching. At the same time, it is an obstacle, because it brings with it the danger of a communicative rupture with the audience and thus can undermine persuasion.[97] The above examples suggest, however, that this obstacle could be overcome if *parrhesia* were to be transformed from an act to a part of a situation, from an action to a possibility (visibly) present in the speaker. The fear of punishment and the hope of benefit still have a role to play, of course, not in themselves but rather as individual elements within a web of connotations whose unity is ensured by the way in which the philosopher (or the philosophically informed politician) presents his aims to his audience on each occasion. Foucault calls the phenomenon the "modality of truth-telling".[98] The term 'modality' is modern. The corresponding technical term in Ancient Greek would be ἔγκλισις (lit. 'inclination'; metaph. also 'modulation', 'mood', etc.), which is used in the fields of grammar and music.[99] However, in the field we are interested in, other terms exist to describe the way in which a person is committed to what he or she expresses: the most common term is ἦθος (*ethos*). In philosophical contexts, *ethos* marks an internalised psychological process of habituation, but it presupposes the existence of a commitment to a particular goal, *prohairesis*.[100] Another term is 'trust' or 'trustworthiness' (πίστις, Lat. *fides*), which in later times also appears in contracts with reference to the legal commitments of the parties.[101]

The relationship between proper morality and the success of *parrhesia* is a central theme in the last part of *De adulatore et amico*.[102] The

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[96] See Foucault (2011) 26.

[97] On this, cf. also the analysis of Ober (2002) 244–245 and 262–263.

[98] *Ibid*. (2011) 2.

[99] See Dion. Hal. *Comp.* 6.7; Dion. Thrax, *GG* 1/1, 1.1.47; Dio Chr. 32.49.

[100] See Arist. *Po*. 6, 1450a 5–6; 6,1450b 8–11; 15, 1454a 17–1454b 18; *Rh*. 1.8, 1366a 15–16; 2.21, 1395b 13–17.

[101] See Detienne (2006³) 126–127; see also Fraenkel (1916) 192–193 and Schmitz (1964) *passim*.

[102] On *parrhesia* in Plutarch, see also Francis (2013) 122–137, esp. 123–125.

text is addressed to C. Julius Antiochus Epiphanes Philopappus,[103] whom Plutarch attempts to teach how to distinguish in his everyday life between flatterers and true friends, so as to avoid the former and embrace the latter (48E–51E). 'Flattery' and 'friendship' had already been a subject of philosophical reflection in the past: in Aristotle, for instance, 'friendship' is defined as the ideal mean between the extremes 'flattery' and 'harshness' (*EN* 2.7, 1108a 26–30). But flattery is not merely a moral problem that represents a danger in one's private interactions with others. Just as friendship can extend from the sphere of private life to that of public life, flattery can also be seen in a broader social, political or institutional context, where it constitutes a problem that affects not only individuals but even entire cities or states.[104]

Philopappus is a typical example of an extremely wealthy and politically powerful man of that era. Following the annexation of the kingdom of Commagene to the Roman province of Syria in 72 AD, Philopappus' family – the former royal family of Commagene – joined the upper echelons of the Roman elite and was able to retain its great wealth.[105] In this context, there were obviously people who competed with each other to secure a privileged position among the powerful family's 'friends', from where they would be able to exert even greater influence over it. When Plutarch explains how Philopappus can distinguish between those who are merely seeking his favour and those who actually wish to benefit him, he seems to have in mind a sequence of events in which various people first approach Philopappus, asking to speak to him and advise him, and only then, having listened to them, does Philopappus choose some of them to be his friends. Although it is not explicitly stated that only the philosopher can be a true friend, this is made clear not only by means of the positive examples of friendship that are given (Plato's friendship with Dion and Dionysius, the tyrant of Syracuse), but also through the definition of a friend, who is supposed to be someone who strengthens the rational part of the souls of others, rather than the irrational components (61D).[106]

Shortly before the end of the text, the focus shifts, however, when the question of the form of discourse to be used in approaching a powerful man is raised (66C–74E). The advice Plutarch gives here, although still ostensibly addressed to Philopappus, in reality seems to be more relevant

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[103] See *PIR*² J 151.

[104] See, e.g., Tac. *Ann.* 14.52; cf. also van Meirvenne (2002) 141–143; Opsomer (2009) 92–93; Nerdahl (2011) 301–303, 304.

[105] Cf. *Quaest. conv.* 628A–B; Ziegler (1951) 668; Jones (1971) 59, 76; Sullivan (1977) 758–798; van Meirvenne (2002) 141.

[106] See van Meirvenne (2002) 143. Cf. See also Opsomer (2009) 100–101.

to people seeking to approach such a man than to someone seeking to distinguish flatterers from true friends.[107]

The characteristics listed here correspond to a kind of didactic discourse that seeks to manipulate the recipient on the psychological level, while simultaneously demonstrating the character and credibility of the speaker. In order to serve the truth, the friend must present himself as a man of honour who intends not to harm but to help: his *parrhesia* must therefore be tempered with ethics and reason, removing the elements of excess and absoluteness (66A–B). A friend must not raise the suspicion in his interlocutor that there are personal reasons for his rebuke, but rather must make his good intentions clear (66E). He must not appear base or uncultivated, and there must be no mockery, sarcasm, ridicule or vulgarity in his speech; if he says something amusing, it should be clever and witty (τὸ ἐπιδέξιον καὶ τὸ ἀστεῖον), terms that refer to intelligence and elegance in the use of speech (67E–F). A friend's *parrhesia* should be directed primarily at those who are doing well, not those who are experiencing difficulties in their lives: a friend will not help anyone by inflicting additional pain (69A–B).

A friend expresses his opinion on the right occasion and does not seek to expose anyone's faults in front of others (70F). He also observes himself what he points out to others (71E–F). If he is not elderly and does not hold a special office, then he ought to use the first-person plural, thus gaining favour and confidence, as he seems to attempt to correct the faults of others in exactly the way he seeks to correct the same faults in himself (71F–72B). Sometimes his *parrhesia* must be mixed with praise for the person he is addressing in order to provide encouragement, by showing that, although there are still things to be corrected, the addressee has already made progress (72B–E). By means of these techniques, all of which are grounded in the honest man's character, as that of a friend, sincerity can be more easily received, since, as the text characteristically states, the pain inflicted is salutary and beneficial and, like honey, cauterises and disinfects wounds.[108] As a result, the *parrhesia* becomes not only beneficial but even sweet (59D). The similarity with what is said in the proem to *Phocion* (see, e.g., 2.3) is obvious.

The *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae*, in particular the first section after the proem, provides a parallel. As we saw earlier, in this text Plutarch places his addressee, Menemachus of Sardis, before a process of moral formation. Already from the first hints given to him by the philosopher, it becomes clear that what is required is for the young man to conform to

[107] This topic is already announced in *De ad. et am.* 59D. However, van Meirvenne (2002) 153–155 maintains that this section deals with the relationships that people like Philopappus enter into with the crowd. Cf. also Opsomer (2009) 94–95, 98.

[108] On the antibacterial power of honey, see Diosc. 2.82.1–3.

a model of a political leader whose action is distinguished by a serious concern for both himself and others. While Menemachus' involvement in public affairs may have been expected because of his social position, before he enters politics he must, as the text emphasises, make clear in his own mind why he wishes to engage in it. His decision must not be taken on account of vanity or quarrelsomeness or simply because he has nothing better to do in his life. On the contrary, the decision must be grounded in judgement and reason (798C). The text uses the technical term *prohairesis* for this, which comes from Aristotelian philosophy and conveys the commitment that a person engaged in a systematic process of moral formation must show with respect to his initial decision to undertake that process.[109]

Thus, Menemachus's choice must be shaped by the desire to give, the desire to be useful – in the first instance to himself and subsequently to others. The text characteristically points out that the young man should not descend precipitously into the political arena, but quietly and following much preparation and thought. He should then engage in politics with moderation, taking into account that the end of every act is *the* beautiful itself (τὸ καλὸν αὐτὸ) and nothing beyond it (799A). The adjective 'beautiful' (καλόν) indicates the kind of action that is described as 'honourable', 'dignified', etc.[110] In this particular context, however, it could at the same time take on the meaning of 'beneficial', since in Plato 'beautiful' (καλόν) is also one of the attributes of the 'good' (ἀγαθόν).[111] The whole picture of the descent into politics, as described in Plutarch, can also be juxtaposed with the return to the cave in Platonic allegory.[112] The same philosophical intention is alluded to in the reference to political action involving 'measure'. This is action of the kind described in the proem to *Phocion*. Menemachus is encouraged to constitute himself along the lines of a philosopher who, having himself realised the need to rein in his soul, then attempts to show others the way he has discovered.

The element of persuasion is, however, immediately introduced into the discussion. In the following passage, Plutarch clarifies that moulding the character of the multitude and improving its nature is difficult, dangerous and time-consuming (799B). For this reason, the politician must first acquire a kind of power, deriving from his reputation and the trust placed in him by the citizens (799B–C: ἕως ἂν ἰσχὺν ἀγωγὸν ἐκ δόξης καὶ πίστεως κατασκευάσηται). The interconnection between the concepts of reputation (δόξα) and trust (πίστις) must be understood in terms of the relationship between cause and effect: reputation should be

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109 See Chamberlain (1984) 145–157.

110 Cf. Dover (1994^2) 70–72.

111 See Pl. *Tim*. 29D–30B.

112 See Lehmann (2020b) 145 n. 8. For the allegory of the cave, see Pl. *R*. 514A–520A.

conceived of as the driving force behind the establishment of trust.[113] The assumption of personal commitment on the part of Menemachus does not imply that political action is disengaged from the current social, economic and political context: fame, distinction and even wealth are not, of course, goods forbidden to the young man. It may well be that it is above all conventional politicians who pursue them (798C–D, 798E–F, 799A), but nowhere does Plutarch claim that a politician must be indifferent to all these things. His position is simply that they should not be the motives for political action. Since everything Menemachus does is done with the 'beautiful' in mind, all of the things listed above are perfectly legitimate means, insofar as they correspond to and serve this general purpose of action. The same is true of persuasion. The need for a method aimed at pacifying the multitude is recognised, but its application is considered legitimate only on the condition that the politician employs it with a view to a higher, ultimate purpose.

Plutarch has in mind a method of persuasion that shares some of the characteristics of Plato's method of rhetoric as 'guidance of the soul' (ψυχαγωγία). As already noted, Socrates affirms to Phaedrus that the philosopher who is to model 'true' rhetoric must possess two basic characteristics: 1) he must have been trained in dialectic, so that he can approach the truth of things, and 2) he must have learned everything about the constitution of the soul, so that he is able to employ in practice the kinds of discourse best suited to each kind of soul (277B–C). In Plutarch's text, the emphasis is on the practical side of this teaching: the politician's first step after determining the right preference is to turn to understanding the collective character of the citizens (*Praec. ger. reip.* 799B).[114] The process is compared to drinking: the effect of wine on a sober person is initially inhibited by their character, but this resistance weakens as the drinking continues and the body of the drinker becomes increasingly warm (799C). The politician is like wine: in order to act upon the collective character of the crowd and improve it, he must first know which stimuli delight and stimulate the crowd; then he must adapt to the public's character and be able to divine its reactions (799C). In contrast to what we find in Plato, dialectic is not mentioned at all. Of course, the politician must acquire some knowledge of the constitution of the crowd's soul in order to determine what kinds of persuasion are best suited to it, but the text suggests that even this kind of investigation, involving questions of psychological pedagogy, is to be carried out in a rather empirical way.

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[113] Cf. Kühner-Gerth II, 247, as well as Verdenius (1954) 38.

[114] On 'collective characters', see Hp. *Aër.* 12–24; Thuc. 1.70.1–9; Arist. *Pol.* 7.7, 1327b 18–36; Plb. 6.51.1–6.52.11; Str. 2.5.26.

Nevertheless, neither the silence about dialectic nor the absence of a teaching on the composition of the soul[115] detracts from the general Platonic-philosophical orientation of the text, given that, in Plato, dialectic and philosophy end up being identical. Let us also not forget that the text is addressed to someone who does not have enough time to pursue a more systematic education closer to that of a philosopher. The method of persuasion outlined above is legitimised, on a philosophical level, by the fact that, before turning to it (τρέπεσθαι), the young person ought to have established in himself the right 'predilection' and made it 'unbending' and 'difficult to change' (ἄτρεπτον καὶ δυσμετάθετον, 799B). The repetition of the same root in both the adjective and the infinitive (ἄτρεπτον/τρέπεσθαι) emphasises precisely this need for solid ground as a precondition for the politician's flexibility. Adapting to the characteristics of others simultaneously requires that one make an effort to display moral intransigence and integrity. Whatever gap exists in Menemachus' theoretical background will be filled empirically. Moreover, there is a further relevant clue in the text: shortly after the importance of understanding the common collective character is pointed out, a brief comparison between two collective characters is made, that of the Athenians and that of the Carthaginians (799C–D). The use of the present indicative tense in the text, along with the fact that, at the time of writing, the Carthaginians no longer existed, suggests that these examples were commonplace.[116] The comparison is thus not presented to the young man as ready knowledge, but as an analytical example that Menemachus can make use of when, following Plutarch's suggestion, he begins to engage systematically in the study of the character and psychological reactions of his audience.[117] The only condition is that the young man should not cease to demonstrate the necessary vigour, so that throughout this process he remains faithful to his original commitment, i.e. the fulfilment of the 'beautiful' alone.

Moreover, if there were no such perspective lying behind the method of persuasion proposed here, Plutarch would not show any concern for the philosophical correctness of his words. This is evident from the following passage in the text. According to Plato, the adaptation of the words of an orator – even one who practises 'true' rhetoric – to the particular characteristics of the audience on any given occasion also has its limits.

In the *Republic*, sophists are those who listen to the preferences of the crowd and, through application of their knowledge, try to manipulate it. They are therefore compared to beast-tamers and they end up doing what corresponds to the crowd's views, is pleasing to it, but not what is neces-

[115] Cf. Jeuckens (1907) 31.

[116] See Carrière (2003²) 78 n. 1, cf. also Lehmann (2020b) 145 n. 11.

[117] Cf. Xenophontos (2016) 133.

sarily beneficial or useful to it (*R*. 493A–D). Plutarch knows this particular Platonic passage. The metaphor he uses in the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae* is not, however, that of beast-tamers, but that of bird-hunters, who are familiar with the calls of their prey and use them for the purpose of deceiving them. These hunters are likened to court toadies, who imitate the voice of their 'victims' and equate themselves with them, gaining favour and support (*Praec. ger. reip.* 800A).[118] But Plutarch further explains that the politician knows and uses against the multitude whenever necessary the means by which it can be conquered. However, this should not be regarded as deception, but as a necessity imposed for practical reasons, since ignorance of character leads to misjudgements and failures both in the public affairs of cities and in relations with kings (800A). Invoking the trust of the crowd is a way to reduce the risk of failure that is inherent in attempts to exert moral and psychological influence on others. There are certainly common features between persuasion, as Plutarch uses the term here, and flattery – enough at least for Plutarch to feel pressured to provide an explanation. However, what distinguishes this method from flattery is – at least on the level of Plutarch's rhetoric – the politician's intention. This ensures that the politician's aim is not flattery, but the performance of 'beneficial' acts.

6. Conclusion

The preceding analysis has shown not only that, in Plutarch's oeuvre, philosophical teaching, when addressed to a broad audience, needs to be supplemented by a method of persuasion, but also that this role could, under certain conditions, be played by rhetoric. Plutarch teaches that *eudaimonia* comes from the submission of the self to the authority of reason. But if, for Plutarch and his disciples, this process involves the exercise of submitting the emotions to the control of reason, for everyone else this process involves merely the quiet acceptance of the moral and intellectual superiority of philosophers or philosophically oriented statesmen as exemplary. The fact that Plutarch's immediate audience consisted of members of the economic, social and political elite shows that this goal happens to also have a political dimension. It is unsurprising that Plutarch complains that the philosopher's truth is not entirely accepted by the general public: the accumulated collective experience connected to social and political developments requires that the truth taught by the philosopher be validated, which can be the case only after people are convinced of its correctness.

This is the field in which a method of persuasion, such as rhetoric, can facilitate the work of a philosophical teacher. From among the exam-

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[118] See also *De ad. et am.* 51E–52B.

ples of figures in Plutarch's writings who appear to 'persuade' and at the same time 'teach' the multitude, the most useful for the purposes of the present discussion is certainly that of Pericles. But this is only one side of the coin, since through the analysis of the same passages, a third dimension can be identified, which cuts vertically across the contrast between teaching and persuasion. Persuasion is not solely achieved through arguments and techniques involving the controlled stimulation of emotions in the soul of listeners. Also of significance is the character and credibility that the speaker must possess and express through his speech. What this means specifically for speech and rhetoric will be examined in the next chapter.

Character and Speech

1. Introduction

Although we have seen that Plutarch appears to acknowledge the necessity for the philosopher or the cultured politician to use persuasion in communication with those around him, what is not yet clear is to what extent rhetoric can function as this means of persuasion. The example of Pericles certainly supports such an identification and several other examples can be found in the *Lives*. At the beginning of his biography, Cato the Younger practises rhetoric, because he believes that in a large city rhetoric can provide support for a philosopher's political engagement (4.3).[1] Cicero, too, in his biography, is supposed to show his fellow citizens through his actions how precisely rhetorical discourse, by means of the pleasure it elicits in the audience, can reinforce a just proposition and make it invincible (13.1). Things are not so simple, however. In addition to speech, Plutarch also refers in similar contexts to the value of a virtuous character when it comes to bringing about persuasion – indeed, in some cases he appears to explicitly privilege character over rhetoric or rhetorical discourse. In *De audiendo,* it is stated that, although the listeners of lectures by philosophers and sophists should not be influenced by the opinion they have previously formed about the speaker, but should only be persuaded if the arguments they hear are convincing, in politics the exact opposite holds true, i.e. the citizens should be persuaded by the character of politicians rather than by their arguments (41A–B). The same attitude is also expressed in the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae*, and there, too, specifically in relation to rhetoric: the section dealing with the moral constitution of the politician concludes with the claim that, in politics, the preeminent persuasive factor is the character of a man who constantly demonstrates restraint in his life, while rhetoric has a secondary role, as an 'accomplice' and not as a "producer of persuasion" (800A–801C).

Traditionally, scholars have treated this ranking as indicative of the low esteem in which Plutarch held rhetoric. Ludwig Radermacher saw in Plutarch's contrast between character and rhetoric a contrast between content and form, in which Plutarch favours character over form.[2] Similarly, Robert Jeuckens argued that rhetoric is, for Plutarch, a lesser means of persuasion than character: the politician must persuade his fellow citizens with his character, whereas rhetoric is useful only insofar as it is a

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1 Cf. *Ca. Mi.* 54.8–9.

2 See Radermacher (1897) 420.

means of expressing his character.[3] Konrat Ziegler integrated these two views into another position: character is the 'producer' of persuasion, as it corresponds to the substance and content of speech, while discourse is the 'accomplice', as it is the means of expressing the content.[4] Ziegler was followed also by Michael Meraklis.[5]

Certain more recent interpreters have adopted a similar position, for instance George Kennedy, who also claims that, for Plutarch, the character of the speaker is more important for 'true persuasion',[6] and Gerhard Aalders, who observes that for Plutarch it is not the politician's eloquence that persuades the citizens but his character, his moral quality, which places eloquence under his authority as an instrument.[7] More convincing is the position of Philip Stadter, who argues that, for Plutarch, rhetoric functions in support of character, which, properly expressed through speech, is the fundamental factor in persuasion.[8] However, even here, the interpretation of the relationship between character and discourse as a relationship between something that can be seen as substance or content and something else that can be seen as the expression of that substance or its form is quite simplistic and does not help us to understand exactly what the significance of this particular mode of prioritisation is.[9] Caution is needed, as the relationship between character and discourse is one that can easily mislead us, since in certain contexts character may be opposed to discourse, while in others it may be part of it.

But let us start at the beginning. The public impact that a speaker's character can have was of concern to orators from early on. The texts of Attic rhetoric often show orators in the Assembly or litigants in the courts attempting to draw the attention of their audience to issues relating either to their own lives or to the lives of their opponents. Aeschines' speech *Against Timarchus* captures this situation to its full extent. The climax occurs about halfway through the discourse, when Aeschines, while accusing Timarchus of fornication and mentioning rumours about his various lovers, suddenly admits that he himself has maintained and continues to maintain relations with other men and that it has also hap-

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[3] See Jeuckens (1907) 9, 18–19.

[4] See Ziegler (1951) 817, 929.

[5] See Meraklis (1966) 61. Cf. also Russell (2023) 157 (posthumously published): "As a good philosopher, Plutarch thought content infinitely more important than style".

[6] See Kennedy (1972) 555.

[7] See Aalders (1982) 48.

[8] See Stadter (1987) 251–252, 266, cf. also Pelling (2014) 155.

[9] An exception in the more recent literature is Martin (1997) 729, who stresses the importance of the wider contextual framework of what Plutarch says about rhetoric. He does so, however, in an introductory presentation of Plutarch's relationship with rhetoric, whose aim is to raise the relevant issues, rather than resolve them.

pened that he has been jealous and quarrelled over love affairs and that he has even composed love poems. However, he claims that the difference, in his own case, lies in the fact that these expressions of love for men of beauty and good sense are marks of a refined and wise soul, while selling one's body for money, of which he accuses Timarchus, is the work of a licentious and uncultivated man (1.136–137). A similar interest in character appears in parallel in the field of rhetorical theory. Writing at about the same time, Aristotle states that we believe those who show understanding more easily and more quickly (*Rh.* 1.2, 1356a 6–7). Isocrates makes roughly the same argument, when he claims that speeches given by reputable men come across as truer than those given by disreputable men and that evidence taken from life is more persuasive than evidence constructed by speech, concluding that whoever seeks to persuade should not neglect virtue and concentrate his attention on how to gain the esteem of his fellow citizens (15.278).[10] Similarly, Anaximenes of Lampsacus believes that the public sees orators' speeches as a reflection of their moral character, and therefore in his textbook he suggests some techniques to help his readers improve their moral reputation through speech (*Rh. Al.* 35.17–18).

Nonetheless, the distinction between morality and speech is not equally clear in all these cases. Although Anaximenes refers to rhetorical practices that can affect the public image of an orator, by 'character' he does not mean something different from 'psychological' character, i.e. a character that corresponds to the actual psychological state of a person. In Isocrates, this is even more evident. The same is not true of Aristotle, however. Here we already see a different meaning. Aristotle explains that an individual does not need to actually possess the necessary moral weight to convince those around him. He does not need to demonstrate actual understanding; it is enough to show by his speech that he possesses these moral qualities (*Rh.* 1.2, 1356a 8–10). Later in the passage, Aristotle uses the term 'character of the speaker' (ἦθος τοῦ λέγοντος) to convey precisely this image of psychological character that orators construct for themselves exclusively by means of speech. This image is not necessarily related to the actual state of the orator's soul, nor does it exclusively obey the rules of ethics (cf. *Rh.* 1.2, 1356a 10–13). Although it engages with things and situations that are theoretically outside of and prior to speech, in reality it, too, belongs to the order of speech. It amounts to a kind of 'modality'. It is a 'character' created by speech for a particular purpose, and as such it is naturally counted as an element of rhetoric. Psychological character is something else.

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[10] Cf. Alexiou (2007a) 1–13; Too (2008) 226–227.

By the end of the Hellenistic era, this Aristotelian metonymy[11] had become firmly entrenched in the technical terminology of rhetoric. Although the words 'character' (ἦθος) and 'character formation' (ἠθοποιία) continue to occur in a variety of contexts in their literal meaning – respectively, psychological character and the formation of such a character[12] – in the technical jargon of writers such as Dionysius of Halicarnassus, the figurative meaning is standard.[13] In Dionysius, rhetorical 'character' is understood as an element of speech, as something essentially indistinguishable from style (*Lys*. 7–8). We see something similar in Aelius Theon: when, in the introduction to his *Progymnasmata*, Theon argues that the teaching of didactic anecdotes (χρεῖαι) not only enhances the students' speaking abilities, but also helps in the proper formation of their character, he is, of course, referring to psychological character. By contrast, everything that has to do with so-called 'rhetorical character', such as matters relating to *prosopopoeia* (προσωποποιία), is regarded as an element of speech and discussed later in the text (II, 60 Sp. = I, 148 W.). Something similar can be observed in the case of the anonymous author of a rhetorical manual from a slightly later period, which was erroneously attributed to Dionysius of Halicarnassus.[14] When the moment comes to analyse character in his text, the anonymous author immediately clarifies that he will not speak about the character that 'concerns everyone' (κοινόν) and that is of interest to philosophers, as it is formed through an attempt to pursue virtue and avoid evil, but rather about 'our' (ἴδιον) rhetorical 'character' ([Dion. Hal.] *Rh.* 11.2),[15] by which he obviously means the Aristotelian 'character of the speaker', which is said to be 'ours' (ἴδιον), because it falls within the scope of the activity of authors of rhetorical manuals.[16]

Finally, the same attitude can be observed in Plutarch. In *De Herodoti malignitate*, Plutarch criticises Herodotus for knowingly including many inaccuracies in his writings, which, thanks to his seemingly simple and unpretentious style, are presented in such a way that they appear to

[11] On the characterisation of this 'character' as 'metonymy', and not as 'metaphor', cf. the remarks of De Temmerman (2010) 28–30 and *id*. (2014) 30–31.

[12] Cf., e.g., Clem. Al. *Paed.* 1.1.2.1; Stob. 2.7.1, 5–6 (= Ar. Did., *FPG* II, 54.4–6).

[13] For ἠθοποιία in rhetorical theory, see esp. De Temmerman (2010) 34–38 and *id*. (2014) 37–39 (with further references). Something similar can be observed in the case of term πρόσωπον, which, even within rhetorical theory, can refer to either fictional or non-fictional characters. On this, see once again De Temmerman (2010) 27 n. 22.

[14] For more on this, see Russell (1979) 115–1117; Heath (2003) 81–82; de Jonge (2008) 23.

[15] See Russell (1983) 72.

[16] For a comprehensive study of the way rhetorical techniques of characterisation were used in imperial and late antique literature, see De Temmerman (2014) *passim*.

be true (854E–F).[17] The reference to Herodotus's "malicious character" (κακοήθεια) in the title relates, like all other references to his character in the text (854E, 854F, 856D), to his psychological character. Conversely, what we defined above as 'rhetorical character' is considered in Plutarch's text either in relation to 'style' or in relation to what he defines as 'speech' in which "there is a certain grace, force, and elegancy" (874B; cf. 854F).

2. Character as a means of persuasion

The fact that, in certain contexts, Plutarch connects persuasion to the psychological character of the politician should not be surprising. For many philosophers of the first and second centuries AD, the question of political success was intertwined with that of self-care. As Michel Foucault has observed, political thought in Antiquity was frequently concerned with the question of the virtue of rulers, which was not viewed exclusively as a condition for the well-being of the city, but rather embedded in an ethical reflection encompassing the processes that make both the individual and the city virtuous.[18] The basic idea is that the structure of the character of a moral subject resembles the structure of a political regime. As a result, the imposition of reason on emotions within an individual can be described in the same terms that are used in political contexts to describe the imposition of one social order on another.[19] Since the individual can govern himself in much the same way as he would exercise power in a political community, Foucault writes, it follows that the development of individual virtues and, in particular, of temperance, is essentially no different from the process through which one acquires power and imposes it on one's fellow citizens.[20] A man prepares himself for the exercise of power in the same way as he makes himself capable of acquiring virtue.

In early imperial times, we find numerous examples of this mentality. The most typical ones have already been examined by Foucault, but it is worth presenting them briefly here. The first two examples are taken from the *Epicteti Dissertationes* published by Arrian. In one of these *Dissertationes*, Epictetus appears to be in conversation with the Procurator of Epirus,[21] who is seeking the philosopher's advice because earlier

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[17] For the criticism of Herodotus, see Jeuckens (1907) 68–71; Ziegler (1951) 871; Homeyer (1967) 181–187; Hershbell (1993) 143–163; Chrysanthou (2018b) 159–160.

[18] Foucault (1984a) 109–110, cf. also Schofield (1999) 743.

[19] Foucault (1984b) 79–84, 88.

[20] Foucault (1984b) 88.

[21] This is probably Gn. Cornelius Pulcher, a reader of the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae*. On this identification, see Millar (1965) 147.

he had been mocked by the crowd at the theatre, when they saw him cheering and bouncing while watching a comic actor (3.4.1). Epictetus' philosophy seeks to liberate the individual from the power of extreme emotions.[22] The basic method for achieving this goal is the application of the 'canon' – the 'canon' (literally meaning 'measuring rod') is a dividing line, which must mentally be applied in order to distinguish those things in relation to which one has a choice from those in relation to which one does not: the former category includes everything that relates to the self, over which the individual may have absolute control, while the latter includes everything that relates to the outside world and others, over which the individual has no control.[23] The application of the canon enables an individual to understand which actions they must take in order to no longer be burdened by occupations and situations that are futile and whose impact on the soul lies beyond their control, allowing them respect their original commitment to achieve liberation from the passions.[24]

The Procurator of Epirus did the same thing that anyone would probably have done in such a situation: he expressed his delight in and enthusiasm at an actor's performance. From Epictetus' perspective, however, he should have shown restraint, as this would have prevented the crowd from getting riled up. Epictetus explains that, by nature, people always imitate those who excel (3.4.3). When the crowd sees Caesar's commissioner cheering, they cheer too; when they see him jumping, they jump too; when they see his men also cheering, they cheer even more (3.4.4–5). Epictetus' advice is that the political ruler, while under the gaze of those in power, ought not to get carried away, not only because, in so doing, he does himself harm, but, above all, because from the position of power in which he finds himself, he is himself a 'canon' and 'example' for others (3.4.3–6). When citizens see a politician maintain his composure in the theatre, while they cheer for one actor or another, they are confronted with a behaviour that helps them to understand that, for them too, licentiousness must have its limits. In other words, there exists a form of moral contract between the politician and the crowd, which determines the role that each social group plays in the political game. As Epictetus ironically says to the Procurator (3.4.11–12):

> Stage as many contests as you will in your own house, and proclaim him victor in the Nemean, Pythian, Isthmian, and Olympic games; but out in public do not arrogate to yourself more than your due, and

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[22] See the concise presentation in Wöhrle (2002a) 13–89. See also Gretenkord (1981) *passim*; Hershbell (1996) 184–198 and Wehner (2000) 11–13 with further references to the secondary literature.

[23] Cf. Hijmans (1959) 78–91.

[24] Cf. Hijmans (1959) 19–20, 78.

> do not filch away a public privilege. Otherwise you must put up with being reviled; because, when you do the same things that the people do, you are putting yourself on their level. (transl. by W.A. Oldfather)
>
> (Ἐν οἴκῳ ὅσους θέλεις ἀγῶνας ἄγων ἀνακήρυξον αὐτὸν Νέμεα, Πύθια, Ἴσθμια, Ὀλύμπια· ἐν φανερῷ δὲ μὴ πλεονέκτει μηδ' ὑφάρπαζε τὸ κοινόν. εἰ δὲ μή, ἀνέχου λοιδορούμενος· ὡς, ὅταν ταὐτὰ ποιῇς τοῖς πολλοῖς, εἰς ἴσον ἐκείνοις καθιστᾷς σαυτόν.)

In essence, the Procurator's decision to start cheering in the theatre broke his contract with the crowd. His intervention in a space that was not under his jurisdiction not only disturbed his own soul, but also caused others to trespass into a space that was not theirs either. Because of the Procurator's behaviour, the citizens were forced to resort to the only means available to them at the time, namely mockery. The cause of the Procurator's perversion of his authority over others is his failure to take care of himself first.

In another much-discussed passage from another *Dissertatio*, Epictetus appears to be in conversation with an imperial *corrector provinciae*, who on the occasion of his presence in the region and motivated by his interest in philosophy, has found an opportunity to visit the school of Nicopolis (3.7.1).[25] Shortly before the end of the text, however, the discussion turns to the question of how to exercise power. The official makes a show of power, claiming that he can have anyone thrown into prison or beaten (3.7.32).[26] Epictetus counters that this is not real power over people (3.7.33–36):

> Govern us as rational beings by pointing out to us what is profitable, and we will follow you; point out what is unprofitable, and we will turn away from it. Bring us to admire and emulate you, as Socrates brought men to admire and emulate him. He was the one person who governed people as men, in that he brought them to subject to him their desire, their aversion, their choice, their refusal. "Do this; do not do this; otherwise I will throw you into prison." Say that, and yours ceases to be a government as over rational beings. Nay, rather, say, "As Zeus has ordained, do this; if you do not do so, you will be punished, you will suffer injury." What kind of injury? No injury but

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[25] For the office of *corrector* (Gr. διορθωτής, ἐπανορθωτὴς) see von Premerstein (1901) 1646–1651; Lo Cascio (2005) 167–168.

[26] This is reminiscent of the parable of the 'Lunatic with the Knife' at Pl. *Grg*. 469C–E (on this, see esp. Dodds (1959) 238–239), as well as of Callicles' assertions about the natural right of the stronger at Pl. *Grg*. 483A–484B and 491A–492C.

> that of not doing what you ought; you will destroy the man of fidelity in you, the man of honour, the man of decent behaviour. You need not look for greater injuries than these. (transl. by W.A. Oldfather)
>
> (ὡς λογικῶν ἡμῶν ἄρξον δεικνὺς ἡμῖν τὰ συμφέροντα καὶ ἀκολουθήσομεν· δείκνυε τὰ ἀσύμφορα καὶ ἀποστραφησόμεθα. ζηλωτὰς ἡμᾶς κατασκεύασον σεαυτοῦ ὡς Σωκράτης ἑαυτοῦ. ἐκεῖνος ἦν ὁ ὡς ἀνθρώπων ἄρχων, ὁ κατεσκευακὼς ὑποτεταχότας αὑτῷ τὴν ὄρεξιν τὴν αὑτῶν, τὴν ἔκκλισιν, τὴν ὁρμήν, τὴν ἀφορμήν. 'τοῦτο ποίησον, τοῦτο μὴ ποιήσῃς· εἰ δὲ μή, εἰς φυλακήν σε βαλῶ.' οὐκέτι ὡς λογικῶν ἡ ἀρχὴ γίνεται. ἀλλ' 'ὡς ὁ Ζεὺς διέταξεν, τοῦτο ποίησον· ἂν δὲ μὴ ποιήσῃς, ζημιωθήσῃ, βλαβήσῃ'. ποίαν βλάβην; ἄλλην οὐδεμίαν, ἀλλὰ τὸ μὴ ποιῆσαι ἃ δεῖ· ἀπολέσεις τὸν πιστόν, τὸν αἰδήμονα, τὸν κόσμιον. τούτων ἄλλας βλάβας μείζονας μὴ ζήτει.)

The argument here focuses on the restoration of a moral hierarchy. Since humans are rational beings, they should not be governed by force, but in a way that engages their reason. Although in Epictetus' time, there were laws protecting Roman citizens from arbitrary acts by state officials, in practice power was enforced through physical violence. For example, in the *Acts of the Apostles,* Paul is publicly beaten at Philippi and imprisoned, before he manages to explain that he is a Roman citizen (*Ac.* 16.19–38).[27] Epictetus argues that imposing authority in this way is a non-philosophical mode of political action.[28] For Epictetus, political action must be such that it harms neither the individual's relationship with himself nor his relationship with others. Socrates is depicted in the text as a model of a man who dominates others and who shows his fellow citizens, through both his words and his actions (3.7.16–18, 3.7.21–24), what is beneficial to them and what is harmful.[29] They, for their part, understand as intelligent beings that they must pursue the one and turn away from the other. Governing citizens thus becomes a process of education, a philosophical teaching, the model of which is found in the politician's attempt to make himself first and foremost a moral subject, that is, another Socrates. The approach to exercising power that Epictetus endorses thus presupposes a process of constituting the politician as an ethical model. Otherwise, his authority will remain precarious.

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[27] See also MacMullen (1990) 208–209; Saller (1994) 136–137, 140–141.

[28] See also Foucault (1984a) 112.

[29] Cf. Socrates' self-depiction as one of the few true statesmen in Athens at Pl. *Grg.* 521D–522E.

A similar approach is taken by Dio Chrysostom in *On Kingship and Tyranny*,[30] another of the texts that Foucault has commented on.[31] Here, Dio pays homage to the emperor, while at the same time defining the traits of a good monarch. The main trait that is emphasised here is temperance (62.1):

> And yet, if someone is unable to rule over a single man, even one who is very close to him, with whom he is, in reality, one, and if he still cannot guide a single soul, his own, how could he reign, as you do, over countless myriads of people scattered everywhere to the ends of the earth, most of whom he has not seen, and will never see, and whose language he does not understand? (transl. is mine)
>
> (Καὶ μὴν εἴ τις ἑνὸς ἀνδρὸς οὐχ οἷός τε ἄρχειν ἐστί, καὶ τούτου σφόδρα ἐγγὺς ὄντος, ᾧ δὴ ξύνεστιν, οὐδὲ αὖ μίαν ψυχὴν κατευθύνειν τὴν αὑτοῦ, πῶς ἂν δύναιτο βασιλεύειν μυριάδων ἀναριθμήτων πανταχοῦ διεσπαρμένων, ὥσπερ σύ, καὶ πολλῶν γε οἰκούντων ἐπὶ πέρασι γῆς, ὧν οὐδὲ ἑώρακε τοὺς πλείστους οὐδ’ ἂν ἴδοι ποτὲ οὐδὲ τῆς φωνῆς ξυνήσει;)

The question is rhetorical. Authority over oneself and the consequent guidance of the soul are presented as the necessary condition for the governance of others (cf. 62.3, 62.7). It is noteworthy here that authority over oneself is not understood as authority over an ontologically alien element, but rather as control over an autonomous entity that also belongs to the self – another human being who is so close to us that they essentially become one with us. It has already been pointed out that this problem involves familiar notions of the bipartite or tripartite division of the soul.[32] The part of the soul that must be subdued is compared to the countless myriads of people who inhabit the empire and who must be ruled by the same man, the emperor. The comparison implies a difference of scale, which, on the one hand, has its basis in the experience of ruling one’s own self and, on the other hand, can be extended to a complex system of ruling others. The complexity of the system implies, however, the impossibility of knowing all its parameters: the emperor has never seen, nor will he ever be able to see, most of his subjects or understand the languages they speak. How, then, can he rule over them? Dio’s answer is that this can only be achieved by turning to the self, since mastery over

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[30] Crosby (1951) 23 argues that it is either part of a now-lost fifth royal speech or an adaptation of part of one of the other four adapted for delivery before a wider audience. Cf. Dio Chr. 57.10–12.

[31] Foucault (1984b) 79–80.

[32] See Foucault (1984b) 79–80.

the self, as an internal process of controlling the forces that constitute the irrational part of the soul, constitutes an experience of governing another entity, within a structure that is nevertheless under the absolute control of a single individual.[33]

Having examined Dio's position, we can now turn back to Plutarch, since the same way of thinking is reflected in his own writings. Typical in this respect is an equally well-known passage from the fragmentary *Ad principem ineruditum*. Although, as its title indicates, the text is addressed to a ruler, the use of the second-person plural in one place (781E) also points at a broader readership, probably consisting of people who, in one way or another, participated in the administration of the state and exercise power.[34] The theme of the passage is the need for the right ruler to not let his soul be dominated by extreme emotions.[35] Plutarch also compares the ruler to the 'canon' (literally meaning 'measurement rod', such as the 'ruddled line used by masons or carpenters' or the 'ruler'):[36] just as a 'canon' must be straight and unbending in order to serve its purpose, as a standard of alignment, so too must the ruler first have established what is relevant to himself, in order to then regulate others (780B). A necessary condition for this is once again temperance, which provides the ruler with the knowledge that will enable him to manage a larger and more complex system. The ruler experiences his own constitution as a moral subject through the hierarchy of the parts of the soul under the authority of the *logos*: the *logos* imposes itself upon the whole of the soul and 'corrects' it, creating the conditions for the formation of a corresponding character (780C). Through this process, knowledge is produced that the ruler will then use to govern others, since, as the text notes, one must first learn to avoid stumbling before helping others to remain upright, one must first banish one's own ignorance in order to be able to teach others and so on (780C). Here again, the city's prosperity is directly proportional to the moral progress of the individual who exercises authority.

That said, the politician's recourse to the familiar and secure environment of the self as a response to the need to exercise power in an extremely complex system is not always brought up in connection with the acquisition of virtue, nor is it discussed only by philosophers. The more complex a system, the greater the demands it imposes on the people who must act within it – and the greater the demands, the more likely the possibility of failure. Temperance is once again the solution to this problem, but no longer in the sense of a prerequisite for a process of con-

[33] Cf. Dio Chr. 62.4.

[34] See Jones (1971) 30.

[35] See Cuvigny (2003^2) 29.

[36] See *LSJ*^{9} *s.v.* κανὼν, esp. 1–3.

stituting oneself as a virtuous subject, but rather as a means of avoiding dangerous situations by conforming to accepted standards of behaviour.[37] What underlies this second view is not a theory of temperance as an end in itself, but rather the practical necessity of finding an effective means to successfully deal with difficult situations.

A typical example of this is found in Polybius, who, with reference to the art of strategy, writes that the first thing to which a general ought to pay attention is silence: he should not allow any of the emotions he feels to cause him to reveal his plans to anyone else. Instead, he should only reveal them to his closest associates, and only when the situation requires it (9.13.2–4).[38] Polybius thus also refers to a form of mental restraint, one whose primary goal is, however, not to make the general into a virtuous subject, but rather to avoid dangerous situations.[39] To an outside observer, this person may appear virtuous or sane and he may even be praised for this attitude, but in situations such as those we are now considering, this can hardly mean more than that the individual in question – together with all the associated roles and offices he may hold – is simply behaving as he sees fit in the circumstances, in order to avoid disaster. As we briefly mentioned earlier, in relation to Kant's well-known example of the 'shopkeeper',[40] the key difference is between acts which are consciously performed by a person in accordance with a moral maxim – and which therefore have moral value – and acts which simply happen to be performed in accordance with the same moral maxim, even though the person performing them may have a different inclination (*GMS* AA IV, 397.19–32).

Elsewhere in his writings, Polybius mentions an anecdote about Scipio, according to which some of his young subordinates once decided to offer him a beautiful girl as a gift, since they knew that he liked women (10.19.3). Although Scipio was surprised at the sight of the girl and admired her beauty, he ultimately refused the gift: if he had been a private citizen, he replied to the young men, nothing would have pleased him more than to accept it, but, as a general, nothing pleases him less (10.19.4). Polybius observes that, with his decision, Scipio wanted to show that sometimes in the lives of men, namely in times of rest and relaxation, such things provide the sweetest pleasures and activities, while in times of action, these same things become the greatest physical and mental obstacles for those who indulge in them (10.19.5). Scipio forgave the young men and, after asking them to summon the girl's father, sent her back home with him (10.19.6). Polybius' assessment of the episode

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37 See Lendon (1997) 42; Trapp (2007) 234–235.

38 See Chaniotis (2009) 134–135.

39 Cf. Plb. 3.81.1–12.

40 See pp. 57–58 above.

does not end here, however. Having demonstrated his temperance and moderate lifestyle, Polybius writes, Scipio won the deep approval of his soldiers (10.19.7). Scipio's refusal to sleep with the young girl is portrayed as an attempt to avoid a situation that might have endangered himself and his soldiers. The soldiers, however, took their general's attitude to be a product of his restraint and temperance, which drew their favour. What must be emphasised at this point, however, is that Scipio's temperance was not part of a sustained and systematic effort at self-care: on Polybius' view, Scipio does not wish to stop desiring women, as he claims that, under other circumstances, he would have gladly accepted the company of a girl.

Further examples of this second conception of temperance can be found in the collection of Hellenistic funerary reliefs assembled by Ernst Pfuhl and Hans Möbius from the eastern regions of the Greek world, which also includes a number of reliefs of political figures, in which, as has already been pointed out in the scholarship, the abstinence of those depicted is emphasised above all. This particular series of reliefs is also known as 'Mantelstatuen', as it depicts men dressed in simple, carefully folded garments, with their gaze either lowered or turned away, as in the portraits of Alexander, and their hands either completely hidden under their garments or entangled in such a way as to impede their freedom of movement.[41]

Researchers have observed that such an image combines vigour and energy with self-control and restraint.[42] Clothing is, as we know, a system, a structure, whose elements never possess absolute value, but are only significant to the extent that they are linked to collective norms.[43] As with statues erected in honour of a living person, the function of these funerary reliefs was to recognise the services rendered to the city by a distinguished citizen.[44] A monument of this type was commissioned by the family of the deceased, because the monument, along with everything else associated with the worship of the deceased, was an expression of family identity: the taste for a particular image of temperance, with its folded robes and lowered gaze, reflected the way in which a family publicly positioned itself in the social space.[45] As Paul Zanker explains, the

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41 On their description, see Lewerentz (1993) 18–149; Zanker (1995a) 254–258, 259; Chaniotis (2009) 97–98.

42 See Zanker (1995a) 255, 259, cf. also Graf (1991) 44–46 and Chaniotis (2009) 98–99.

43 See Barthes (1993) 741–742, 745.

44 See Zanker (1995a) 252; Chaniotis (2009) 100.

45 Cf. Burkert (1985) 194. See also Saller (1994) 98–99 and Zanker (1995a) 253. In cases where it appears that the demos erected the monument, this may mean that the members of the local aristocracy representing the demos had made the decision – although we should not forget that often the memorials that were supposedly erected by the demos

image of the 'Mantelstatuen' reflects established notions about the posture an orator ought to adopt before his audience.[46] If those who incurred the expense of erecting the monument chose this particular image to depict their family, it was obviously not necessarily because the dead person had actually been temperate and virtuous while they were alive. The image could only be imposed in light of the knowledge that temperance entailed a presumption of honesty in society and, as such, was positively perceived.[47]

So far we have identified two different conceptions of temperance: one linked to the acquisition of virtue and discussed by philosophers as a precondition for political success, the other relating to established and generally accepted social behaviours, which people adopted as means of coping with their duties and obligations. While the ultimate outcome may be the same in both cases, they each involve a distinct process of production. The same actions have moral value in one case, but not in the other. This difference is of importance, and all the more so for Plutarch, who, as we have seen, identifies virtuous character in certain passages as the only worthwhile means of persuasion. Plutarch was a philosopher and, as such, was active in the field of education, specifically promoting an education that aimed at the moral edification of the individual. Michael Trapp observes that unlike other forms of education, which seek primarily to provide the individual with the skills needed to pursue a successful political career, the philosophical formation of the self is an internal process: it, too, aims to shape the individual's public image, of course, but it seeks to do so by moulding the inner world first. It is a process that presupposes the lifelong supervision and exercise of the soul. In this form of education, the cultivation of dispositions that guarantee conformity to established social requirements is only a "small part of a much larger" and longer-term project, a project which, naturally, plumbs greater depth and shapes the whole of the individual's character.[48] While Trapp's analysis is generally correct, the rigid distinction he draws between the two processes is open to question. In my opinion, the internal process he refers to may, in fact, presuppose the external process and even be based on it to a fairly significant extent.

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were paid for by the person honoured or his family. On these, see Raeck (1995) 237, cf. Duncan-Jones (1990) 183–184.

[46] See Zanker (1995a) 255–256; *id.* (1995b) 48–66. See also Xen. *Lac*. 3.4; Aeschin. 1.25–26, 1.132 (regarding Demosthenes' feminine clothing); Dio. Chr. 36.7; Gal. *Hipp. Off. Med*., XVIIIb, 692–693 K.; Lib. *Or*. 27(1).12, cf. Plut. *Con. praec.* 142C–D.

[47] See Zanker (1995a) 253, cf. also Lewerentz (1993) 176–184; Saller (1994) 16.

[48] See Trapp (2007) 236.

In order to grasp this issue more clearly, we must revisit the perspective of the philosophers we discussed at the beginning of the chapter. Since they argue that the development of temperance is fundamental to the process of constituting the self as a virtuous subject, urging their readers to adopt such attitudes, it is to be expected that the appearance of temperance in established types of social or political behaviour could be a catalyst for the reception of their teachings. There are, in fact, many paths to political success, some of which are potentially much easier and shorter than the one advocated by the philosophers. How does a politician systematically engage in self-care? He must first accept as self-evident and indisputable the causal relationship between the acquisition of moral virtue and political success. How can the philosopher convince him of this? Philosophers do not, of course, have the power to punish politicians who do not demonstrate restraint. If there is to be a punishment, it will likely come from the system itself. A good example is that of the infamous Procurator of Epirus in the theatre. Given the opportunity, the philosopher can play on the politician's knowledge of what might happen if he allows himself to become carried away by his emotions and shows a lack of restraint (cf. also Arr. *Epict.* 3.7.36 above: ἀλλὰ τὸ μὴ ποιῆσαι ἃ δεῖ· ἀπολέσεις τὸν πιστόν, τὸν αἰδήμονα, τὸν κόσμιον. τούτων ἄλλας βλάβας μείζονας μὴ ζήτει). The fear that this scenario instils in him, together with the philosopher's assurance that, in the absence of temperance, failure is certain, is just what is needed for the established moral imperative of restraint to be internalised as a necessity. But in lieu of a philosophical form of education, which aims to influence the public image of the individual by first shaping his inner world, we encounter precisely the opposite, namely a philosophical form of education that seeks to shape one's inner world by first focusing on one's external public image.[49]

[49] This process also displays similarities with the psychological mechanisms through which the followers of a religion internalise established rituals. According to Walter Burkert, as early as the Archaic period the external dimension of a ritual was connected to a corresponding internal dimension. The examples he cites (see Burkert (1985) 77) are entirely typical. For instance, Hesiod argues that the gods will punish anyone who crosses a river "with hands unwashed of wickedness" (Hes. *Op.* 740), Plato writes that "the wicked man" is whoever "is unclean of soul" (*Lg.* 716E), while Demosthenes declares that a priest must not remain "pure for a prescribed number of days only", but "his whole life" (22.78). All of this is connected to ethics. Ritual is, moreover, not a simple formula, since those who usually participate in it, as Burkert (1985) 77 explains, believe that they ought to possess the corresponding moral constitution. Indeed, referring to the belief that the gods punish the wicked, he notes that "if the formation of a super-ego through education is a fundamental process in the development of the individual, then religion acts as a decisive factor in that process: that there are unconditional categorical duties

To return to the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae*, it is precisely this pre-emptive strategy that makes it necessary to recognise ethics as the primary means of persuasion in this text. The relevant section in the text begins with a comparison of public life to a dramatic role: just as an actor on stage is exposed to the gaze of the spectators who will judge his acting after the show, so too is the politician, when moving in the sphere of public life, constantly exposed to the eyes of his fellow citizens (800A–B). In order to gain power and confidence, the politician must exercise and put his own character in order: if he cannot completely rid his soul of evil, he must at least suppress those faults of his that are obvious and that come to the surface (800B). The text cites by way of example Themistocles and Pericles. In both cases, political success is causally connected to restraint and devotion to the good of the city: Themistocles explains to his friends that the cause of his insomnia, his abstention from drinking and amusement, and his constant anxiety was his fierce desire to win renown by offering his city a victory equal to that of Miltiades. By contrast, Pericles' reserved and irreproachable behaviour in the streets of Athens – his hands always in his robe and his gaze lowered – is traced along the well-worn route from the politician's house to the orators' platform and the Assembly and back again (800B–C). The choice of words in the latter example even corresponds to the iconography of public figures from the period, as preserved in the reliefs of the Pfuhl and Möbius

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is presupposed as something absolute; no morality without authority. In Greek popular morality this appears as the basic code: honour the gods and honour one's parents. The one supports the other; both together guarantee the continuity of the group, which is defined by its rules of conduct" (Burkert (1985) 249). A similar mechanism has already been identified in Plutarch. Lieve van Hoof observes that, in a significant number of texts from the *Moralia,* Plutarch's choice of themes seems to be tailored to the elites of the Roman Empire: Plutarch's "practical ethics", as van Hoof dubs it, addresses problems which, as she explains, arise simultaneously from the expectations that society has in relation to its elites and from the ambitions that the social elites cultivate for themselves. According to van Hoof (2010) 11, Plutarch does not seek "to resolve these problems by downplaying social pressure, rejecting ambitions, or defying expectations. Instead, he presents philosophy as a resource to meet these more effectively and thus to function better within society. Far from trying to 'sell' his readers a different, philosophical life, Plutarch offers them practical help to avoid, or deal with, the failures, rejections, and frustrations they will experience as a result of their position within society". In offering this help to his readers, Plutarch is, of course, attempting to promote a different, philosophical way of life, a life characterised by a constant and systematic effort at temperance. However, he does not do this directly. In order to promote this other life, he presents it as a solution to everyday problems faced by his audience. This is a tactic: as a result of caring about various other issues in their daily lives, his readers will be led to systematically care for themselves. On this, cf. also Thum (2020) 239.

collection. However, the process Plutarch describes here is not, for the politician, merely a means. As already shown by the comparison with an actor who is constantly exposed to the criticism of his audience, the process Plutarch describes exhibits the traits of systematicity and continuity that also characterise the process of curing the soul.

Of course, both procedures have their risks. The relationship between the appearance and reality of public figures is, in principle, a dialectical one. In an age in which, as we saw earlier, the apostle Paul was publicly beaten and imprisoned, because of his 'exotic' appearance, without even being given the chance to explain that he is a Roman citizen, it was important for the politician, if he was to be accepted by the crowd, to adopt an appropriate appearance and behaviour in various aspects of his life. Details from the private lives of a political ruler can be used to damage his moral authority before the citizen body, before a court, before the Roman governor of the region, etc., with serious political and legal consequences. Various writers, including Pliny the Younger, who served as imperial governor of Bithynia-Pontus, speak of the so-called *delatores*,[50] 'professional' informers and informants, who acted as facilitators in this. After all, news is easily circulated in the form of gossip. In the small towns of the empire, such as Plutarch's hometown of Chaeronea, or the neighbouring cities of Tithorea and Acraephia, the elite was small anyway, often representing a single family whose members held multiple administrative offices.[51] Gossip about their private lives would not have been difficult to spread around town. But even in large cities, such as Sardis, where Menemachus was supposed to have come from and in which the relationships between the various social networks would have been more complex, the members of the elite must have all more or less known each other. They would have attended the same gymnasium, the same lectures and the same plays at the theatre. News of their personal lives would still find a way to leak out, potentially damaging their public image.

Plutarch makes use of this scenario to motivate Menemachus to engage in self-care. We have seen above that the politician who seeks to gain the power to change the character of the multitude must first rid his own soul of wickedness or constantly repress and conceal his own faults, so that they will not be seen. Plutarch returns to the idea of perpetual repression: if the politician fails to subdue the multitude in order to protect it, i.e. as implied by the oxymoron "salutary conquest" (σωτήριος ἅλωσις) that occurs in the text here, he must at least achieve a state of

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[50] For *delatores* (Gr. προδόται or συκοφάνται) see Kleinfeller (1901) 2427–2428; Winterbottom (1964) 90–94; Veyne (1985) 152–153; Rutledge (2001) 71–82 (with more references in the primary literature); Pernot (2005) 268–269; Reinhardt & Winterbottom (2006) xxxiv–xxxv; Fournier (2010) 370–372, cf. also Plut. *Cim.* 2.1.

[51] See Fossey (1979) 582; Daubner (2020) 203–204.

precarious normality in which the multitude will accept his rule, even if, like a dangerous and unpredictable beast, it shows no fear of what it sees and hears (800C).[52] In order to do this, however, Menemachus must first succeed in subjugating his own soul, as pointed out later in the text (800C–D):

> Since, then, the statesman must not treat even these matters carelessly, ought he to neglect the things which affect his life and character, that they may be clear of blame and ill report of every kind? (transl. by H.N. Fowler)
>
> (ᾧ τοίνυν οὐδὲ τούτων ἐπιμελητέον ἐστὶ παρέργως, ἦπου τῶν περὶ τὸν βίον καὶ τὸ ἦθος ἀμελητέον ὅπως ᾖ ψόγου καθαρὰ καὶ διαβολῆς ἁπάσης;)

A politician cannot control what is said about him, but he can focus on what he has absolute control over, i.e. his self. The more the politician wishes to bring the crowd – or the 'beast' – under his control, the more care he must take to never give anyone the opportunity to question his moral integrity.

Fear of gossip thus becomes a moral consideration. Plutarch then affirms to Menemachus that individuals involved in politics are 'accountable' (εὐθύνας διδόασιν) for what they say and do not only in public, but also in private, since the various dinners they host, their bedroom antics, their relationship with their wives and everything else they do in their leisure time, whether in a carefree manner or in earnest (800D), attract curiosity. The term 'accountable' (εὐθύνας διδόασιν) refers to the examination of accounts (εὔθυνα) to which every public official in classical Athens was typically subjected at the end of his term of office.[53] Similar procedures carried out by the citizens' assembly and the courts are attested in the public administration of Greek cities until the first century BC.[54] By Plutarch's time, however, all these procedures had probably been simplified, since the Roman governor was ultimately responsible

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[52] The subjugation of the beast evokes the web of connotations that the word 'beast' in general can assume, the aforementioned causal relationship linking the domination of oneself with the domination of others: the description of the multitude as beast is not only an accepted Platonic metaphor (cf., e.g., already Jones (1971) 111 n. 10 and Trapp (2004) 197), but at the same time the image of the beast that must be subdued is a well-known Homeric metaphor for the soul (see North (1966) 380–381, cf. also Fantham (1973) 132).

[53] Cf. Caiazza (1993) 206. On the process of 'accountability' (εὔθυνα), cf. Boerner (1907) 1515–1517; Harrison (1971) 208–211; MacDowell (1978) 170–172.

[54] See McLean (2002) 304 n. 5; Fournier (2010) 123–124 (on *IG* II² 1028, l. 89–91), 150–151 (on *IG* II² 1023, l. 56–60), 158.

for maintaining law and order in his province, while the role of the local authorities and other stakeholders was simply to notify him of any criminal activity taking place in the area,[55] including any public official suspected of corruption. Nevertheless, the reference to the process of 'accountability' (εὔθυνα) in this passage, together with the observation that the inhabitants of a city were also concerned about certain aspects of politicians' private lives, may be a reference to another contemporary phenomenon mentioned earlier, namely the *delatores*.[56] The everyday life of the politician, whether in the public or the private sphere, is thus presented as a source of gossip, which could potentially become destructive for him, either for his reputation or legally. Even if someone thinks that he will be able to conceal some perverse secret concerning his private life, he will sooner or later be exposed, since the crowd is able to ferret out even secrets that are very well hidden (800F–801A). The solution to this problem is, of course, the one Plutarch already mentioned: the politician should demonstrate proper conduct not merely in public life, but also in private life. Of course, constantly demonstrating restraint, even when the politician cannot be seen by his fellow citizens, is ultimately a process of constituting the self as a virtuous subject.

Menemachus should have no doubts about the effectiveness of the proposed method. He must persuade himself that, unless he takes an interest in himself, disaster is not merely possible, but altogether certain. Plutarch obviously cannot ignore the existence of political libertines, but he points out that the demos makes opportunistic use of them, either because they are useful in some perverse situation in which the multitude has found itself or because no better politicians are available. As evidence, Plutarch cites the fact that in classical times the very demos who had raised such politicians up were those who later rejoiced to see them mocked in the theatre (801A–B).[57] The argument is, of course, not valid

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[55] See Fournier (2010) 368–369.

[56] See n. 50 above.

[57] In Plutarch's time, the genre of Old Comedy was probably accessible to the elite exclusively by means of reading, as there is no evidence of performances in the theatre. On this respect, see Nervegna (2007) 19; Le Guen (2014) 369. Cf. *Comp. Ar. et Men*. 854A–B. Regarding the reference to a separate prize for 'Ancient Comedy' (ἀρχαία κωμῳδία) in the list of prizes to be awarded at the Lysimacheia of 181 AD (*CIG* 2759 = *MAMA* VIII 420), the adjective is probably used instead of 'Old' (παλαιὰ), i.e. it refers to the genre of Hellenistic New Comedy, which was already old at this time. On this, see Jones (1993) 47; Nervegna (2007) 23. For the few passages in texts of the New Comedy in which there seems to be mockery of political figures, see Scardino & Sorrentino (2015) 213–221, 226.

from a political and historical point of view.[58] The political satire of Old Comedy was normally directed at sitting politicians, not politicians whose term of office had expired and now languished in obscurity. The idea of the masses mocking politicians whom they themselves raised to prominence is reminiscent of the allegory of the demos and its slaves in Aristophanes' *The Knights* (*Eq*. 1100–1263), although Plutarch does not quote from this work in support of his position, but rather verses from Plato Comicus (see 801B, where verses from Pl. Com. *fr*. 201 K-A = *fr.* 185 Kock are quoted). The three verses quoted, which include the words of the personified Athenian Demos, who mocks the politicians Agyrrhius, Mantias and Cephalus,[59] show that in Plato's text we find the same personification of the Demos as in Aristophanes.[60] At the same time, however, there was, it seems, an important difference, insofar as, in Plato, the mockery of politicians seems not to occur solely through the politicians' own actions, with the Demos being kept in the dark (*Eq*. 1123–1124), but rather it is the Demos itself that mocks them. This is significant for Plutarch's argument, since his general position could otherwise be easily refuted by the example of successful but nefarious politicians. In Plato Comicus, however, the Demos is the judge of the moral conduct of politicians, identifying in the process which politicians deserve its contempt. The implication is that successful but dissolute politicians are isolated cases, which, as such, do not undermine the point that Plutarch is making here.

This brings us to the question of persuasion. The section that examines the moral constitution of the politician is accompanied by two pseudo-historical examples, in which the constitution of a politician is presented as the dominant factor in persuasion. The first example is not known from any other source. The incident in question, although described as if it were a historical event, belongs rather to the category of anecdotal accounts about perjury and its consequences.[61] This case concerns Carbo,[62] who supposedly once made a promise to the citizens of Rome, accompanied by an oath and a curse should he fail to honour his promise. However, the citizens, for their part, "took a counter-oath that they did not trust him" (801B). The character of the example is comical:[63]

[58] It reminds, however, the reader of Pl. *Grg*. 515C–516E, where the Athenian public is said to have ultimately destroyed the four great politicians in Athenian history (Miltiades, Themistocles, Cimon and Pericles) who deceived it.

[59] On this, cf. Mancuso (2012) 142–151.

[60] See also Olson (2007) 220.

[61] More on this in Bayliss (2014) 248–256.

[62] On his identification, see Carrière (2003²) 163–164; Caiazza (1993) 209; Lehmann (2020b) 148 n. 29. Perhaps it is C. Papirius Carbo (*ORF*⁴ 152–153).

[63] Cf., e.g., Eur. *Cyc*. 253–272; Ar. *Ach*. 148–152 and *Nu*. 1214–1241.

Carbo makes the oath because he fears that his fellow citizens will not believe him,[64] while the citizens validate Carbo's fear by all taking an opposing oath together. In Antiquity, an oath was an affirmation of the truth of one's words before higher powers, which were invoked by the oath-taker.[65] To break an oath or to take one without the intention of fulfilling it demonstrated dishonesty and contempt for the power of the gods.[66] However, Carbo's inability to convince his fellow citizens, even by means of an oath, was due to the opinion they had already formed of him, namely that he was a shameless and godless man, whose promises should be seen as lies. There is thus a direct connection between persuasion and the moral constitution of the politician.

The second example that Plutarch cites is adapted from an incident related in Aeschines' discourse *Against Timarchus*. Towards the end of this text, Aeschines recounts how the citizens of Sparta were at one point ready to ratify the proposal of a vile but highly verbally skilled orator. Then one of the members of the Council of the Elders (γερουσία), the institution in which the Spartans were supposed to place the most virtuous of their fellow citizens, intervened, demanding that the same speech be delivered by another citizen, who, though not eloquent, was nevertheless famous for his martial exploits and, moreover, distinguished for his justice and temperance (1.180–181).[67] On Aeschines' account, the licentious Spartan represents his opponents, Timarchus and Demosthenes (1.181). Plutarch, however, modifies the example and adapts it to the needs of his own argument. The most important difference in Plutarch's version is that the licentious Spartan's proposal is rejected by the citizens themselves. The civic authorities, however, knowing that, given Spartan mores, rejection is a foregone conclusion, delegate the reading of the speech to a member of the Council of the Elders. The reason for this is not that they wish to prevent the citizens from being persuaded by the words of an immoral orator, as is the case in Aeschines' version. On the contrary, their goal is to get this particular motion passed, and they know that if the motion were presented by an immoral orator, it will be voted down by the citizens (801B–C). In Plutarch's version, the Spartans already know what, in Aeschines' version, they are taught by the counsellor, namely that only advice coming from an orator with an appropriate moral constitution has weight. The example – and with it the section – ends with the conclusion that, in a polity, the trustworthiness to which ethical behaviour gives rise is given great importance (801C).

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[64] Cf. Kozak & Sommerstein (2014) 61–75.

[65] See Sommerstein (2014a) 2–5, cf. Burkert (1985) 250–254.

[66] See Latte (1931) 346–347; Bayliss (2014) 244–247; Torrance & Konstantinidou (2014) 303–314.

[67] Cf. *De aud.* 41B; *Apophth. Lac.* 233F; Gel. *NA* 18.3.1–8.

The message for Menemachus is clear: if he wishes to assume a position from which he can gain the trust of his fellow citizens, the best thing he can do is to begin to systematically demonstrate restraint in his daily life, both public and private, and thus cultivate the proper moral character. But is this, on its own, really enough?

3. The subsidiary role of rhetoric

The claim that the trustworthiness and moral character that a virtuous politician projects is of great importance marks the transition from the section dealing with the moral constitution of the politician to the section dealing with rhetoric. If Plutarch has so far systematically attempted to show that character is the preeminent agent of persuasion, with the introduction of the new section, in which rhetoric comes to the fore and becomes the dominant subject, this position is qualified somewhat. Although up to this point he has attributed everything to virtue, Plutarch now admits that rhetoric does have a role to play (801C). What is of interest is the mental operation at work here, right at the intersection of the two thematic sections. This operation is not one of juxtaposition or opposition, but of concession. Plutarch does not claim, for example, that after character there is rhetoric, which plays a corresponding role, or that some use character to persuade and others use speech. Rather, his view is that although character is the main agent of persuasion, rhetoric can nevertheless retain its value, albeit not in an autonomous position, but only when it serves good character. Thus, the definition of rhetoric as a 'persuader' is replaced by the definition of it as an 'accomplice of persuasion' (μὴ δημιουργὸν ἀλλά τοι συνεργὸν εἶναι πειθοῦς, 801C).

There is no doubt that the concession is made because it seems appropriate to attribute to rhetoric a place in the philosophical version of politics described by Plutarch to Menemachus. After all, this is precisely what is discussed in the first lines of the new section, namely the conditions under which rhetoric can sustain the appeal that a virtuous politician has for his audience (801C–E). What is not clear from the way the concession is expressed, however, is whether the second-place position that the philosopher reserves for rhetoric is to be seen as positive or negative. Is rhetoric something that Menemachus should by no means neglect? And does Plutarch refer to this requirement in a restrained way because he has reason not to want to show a more favourable attitude? Or is rhetoric something that Plutarch himself could not, at this point, omit from his text, with the result that he is obliged to award it second place, in order to show that it is not, in fact, as significant as character?

Although a large part of the scholarship to date seems to lean towards the second view, it is my opinion that we should take up the first one.[68]

Even if we knew for certain that Plutarch was an enthusiastic advocate of rhetoric and wished to speak openly about it, this would still not be sufficient reason for us to expect – in the context of the hierarchy presented in the text – rhetoric to be awarded first place, i.e. to be placed before character. If we observe what happens in other writers of the period, even in writers who represent rhetoric professionally, we find exactly the same order that we see in Plutarch. In a famous statement at the beginning of his first book, Quintilian claims that his work aims at creating the perfect orator, who is, above all, a good man, since for an orator to be perfect, it is not enough to excel in speech, but it is also necessary to possess all the ethical virtues (1.pr.9). Aelius Theon begins his *Progymnasmata* with the remark that the older and more eminent orators held that one should not turn to rhetoric before first acquiring a familiarity with philosophy and the magnanimity that flows from it (II, 59 Sp. = I, 145 W.). We find a similar appeal in Cicero (*Off.* 1.1–3).

That character is more important than speech seems to have been uncontroversial at the time: the Ephesians attracted to their city the sophist Soteros by offering him a very generous salary first of all "for the virtue of his life" and then "for the skill of his speech" (*I.Ephesos* 1548).[69] In Lucian's *Eunuchus*, Lycinus relates that the two philosophers who were quarrelling over the recently vacant chair of Peripatetic philosophy in Athens, after having proven that they were both well acquainted with the doctrines of the school, continued their battle on the level of their lifestyles. Lycinus' interlocutor replies (*Eun.* 5.7–11):

> Naturally, Lycinus; and the greater part, certainly, of their discussion ought rather to have centred upon that. For my own part, if I had chanced to be a judge, I should have dwelt most, I think, upon that sort of thing, trying to ascertain which led the better life rather than which was the better prepared in the tenets (λόγοις) themselves, and deeming him more suitable to win. (transl. by A.M. Harmon)
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> (Εἰκότως, ὦ Λυκῖνε· καὶ τὰ πλείω γε τοῦ λόγου περὶ τούτου μᾶλλον ἐχρῆν εἶναι αὐτοῖς· ὡς ἔγωγε, εἰ δικάζων ἐτύγχανον, ἐπὶ τῷ τοιούτῳ τὸ πλεῖον διατρῖψαι ἄν μοι δοκῶ, τὸν ἄμεινον βιοῦντα μᾶλλον ἢ τὸν ἐν τοῖς λόγοις αὐτοῖς προχειρότερον ζητῶν καὶ οἰκειότερον τῇ νίκῃ νομίζων.)

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[68] See also Tsiampokalos (2020) 495–510.

[69] See Schmitz (1997) 142; Eshleman (2008) 409; Jones (2008) 155–116.

Furthermore, Iulius Pollux, in the dedication to Commodus, states that wisdom consists of two parts: the first is found in the virtue of the soul, which Commodus can find in his father, while the second consists of eloquence, in which he will help the young emperor with his lexicon, since his father does not have the necessary time (1.1–2). The only exception to this trend is Aelius Aristides, who in his polemic against Plato places rhetoric above everything else. But even he holds that all the virtues are brought together in rhetoric and that the genesis and function of rhetoric in society is the result of its intrinsic relation to them (2.382 = 54 J; 96 J.).[70] Plutarch's awarding rhetoric second place, after character, does not therefore have any particular interpretative value in itself. If not even those who teach rhetoric explicitly place it above a concern for moral formation, at least in their public discourse, why should we expect Plutarch to do so? He is simply following a hierarchy that was widely prevalent in his day.

So far, we have seen that, in Plutarch's time, it was common to discuss character before speech or rhetoric, and not the other way around. But was it possible in this context and given this hierarchy to talk only about character and to disregard speech altogether? The answer is that not only was it possible, but for a philosopher like Plutarch it was entirely expected. According to an established historical narrative, in the second half of the second century BC, when wealthy young men from Rome and Italy had begun to come en masse to Greece to undertake advanced studies, rhetoric gained the upper hand over the education offered by the philosophers. In response, several philosophers, seeking a larger share of the 'market' of wealthy Romans, decided to openly attack rhetoric in their public discourse.[71] Many arguments were made in this context, some of which were clearly aimed at showing the broader public that philosophical education on its own could achieve equivalent, if not better, results to those promised by rhetoric. According to Charles Brittain, this latter view most strongly characterised the position of the Academics, and in particular of Charmadas.[72]

The main evidence comes from Cicero's *De oratore*. Here, we find Antonius recounting that during a discussion in Athens "upon the office and art of an orator" (1.82, transl. J.S. Watson), Charmadas expressed the opinion that "the principal business of an orator", namely to "appear to those to whom he spoke to be such as he would wish to appear", is achieved by "a life of good reputation, on which those teachers of rhet-

[70] Cf. Karadimas (1996) 102–103.

[71] See, e.g., von Arnim (1898) 87–88; Karadimas (1996) 1–2; Brittain (2001) 300–312; Liebersohn (2010) 24–28. Cf. also Dillon (2002) 34–35, 39 n. 20. For an earlier version of the analysis that follows, see Tsiampokalos (2020) 449–510.

[72] See Brittain (2001) 299–302, cf. Tarrant (1985) 36; Liebersohn (2010) 56–57.

oric had laid down nothing in their precepts" (1.87, transl. J.S. Watson). According to Charmadas, the reason for this is that answering questions bearing on topics such as the constitution of a respectable life requires knowledge hidden away in "the profoundest doctrines of philosophy, which these rhetoricians had not touched even with the extremity of their lips" (1.87, transl. J.S. Watson).[73] Beyond any similarities between individual elements of this argument and views that seek to integrate rhetoric into philosophy, such as those concerning the 'psychagogic' rhetoric of Plato's *Phaedrus*,[74] for Charmadas the important point is not to demonstrate the need to couple rhetoric with some higher form of philosophical education, but to prove that, since true eloquence is achieved exclusively through philosophy, what the teachers of rhetoric pretend to teach is simply a waste of time.[75]

The sceptics of the Academy, among whose ranks Charmadas belongs, were no doubt fierce opponents of rhetoric, although it seems that they themselves were not indifferent to many of the elements and issues involved in this field. Although Sextus Empiricus testifies that Charmadas, Clitomachus and other Academics argued that rhetoric is useless or indeed even harmful, both to the orators themselves and to their cities, and that all well-governed cities preferred to expel rhetoric from their territory (*M.* 2.20–43),[76] it is also known that Carneades, Charmadas and Metrodorus possessed a reputation not only as excellent dialecticians, but also as formidable public speakers.[77] Even Arcesilaus, who introduced scepticism in the Academy as well as the practice of examining every subject from two diametrically opposed perspectives, is said to have begun his career close to Theophrastus, whom, according to the testimony of Diogenes Laërtius, he had originally approached precisely with a view to being taught rhetoric (4.28–29).[78] While the veracity of

[73] Cf. Cic. *De or*. 1.12; *Brut*. 120–121. Cf. also Isoc. 15.278–280.

[74] Cf., e.g., Tarrant (1985) 37, 38–39; Brittain (2001) 325.

[75] Cf. also Cic. *De or.* 1.84. For a slightly different, more positive interpretation, cf. Reinhardt (2000) 532–533: "Cicero, has Charmadas, an Academic of the generation before Philo, also say that there could be no worthwhile oratory which can be divorced from philosophy and the 'findings' of the philosophers. If this does not mean that the only rhetoric there is philosophy, the door is opened for an alternative philosophical rhetoric; an Academic could have referred to Plato also for this, as a comparable, less hostile position is taken in the *Phaedrus*". Cf. also Brittain (2001) 319–328.

[76] See Karadimas (1996) 224–229; Brittain (2001) 300.

[77] Carneades: Cic. *De or.* 1.45; Plut. *De gar.* 513C; *Cat. Ma*. 22.1–7; Diog. Laert. 4.62–63; Gell. *NA* 6.14.8–10; Philostr. *VS* 1.486. Charmadas: Cic. *Orat.* 51; *Ac*. 2.16; *De or.* 1.84. Metrodorus: Cic. *De or.* 3.75; Str. 13.1.55.

[78] See also Cic. *Tusc.* 2.9: *Itaque mihi semper Peripateticorum Academiae que consuetudo de omnibus rebus in contrarias partis disserendi non ob eam causam solum*

such testimonies is far from certain, their content may give an indication of the expectations that the public of the Hellenistic and imperial periods had with regard to this particular philosophical school.

If there is a kernel of truth in these accounts, then we should probably assume that the aforementioned competition between philosophers and rhetoric teachers had forced many of the Academics, at least in their official position, to be less than forthcoming about this aspect of their interests. It is, however, certain – at least on the basis of Cicero's testimony – that the Academics also maintained that their philosophy was the only kind of higher education that could provide young people with all the moral values and practical skills they needed in both private and public life (Cic. *De or.* 1.84, 1.92–95). Yosef Liebersohn believes that, despite this, they themselves regularly taught rhetoric in their school, merely refraining from calling it by its name and using the more philosophical term 'dialectic' instead.[79] If this is true, then this attitude lasted until the time of Philo of Larissa, since he incorporated rhetoric into the Academy's programme and distinguished it from dialectic (Cic. *Tusc.* 2.9).[80] That said, many of the arguments employed by Charmadas, Clitomachus and other Academic critics of rhetoric were not forgotten, as echoes of them are found in Philodemus (*Rh.* I, 14–15, 16, 359–360; II 65, 100 Sudhaus) and Quintilian (2.16.4), and later in the polemics of Sextus Empiricus against the 'dogmatic' teachers.[81]

Plutarch's choice to talk about rhetoric in his text and assign it secondary value must be seen in the context of this more general situation. It would have been possible for him to avoid speaking of it at all. Alternatively, like Charmadas, he could have tried to show that rhetoric is useless compared to philosophy. But he does not do so. Moreover, the very fact that, by including rhetoric in the thematic axis of his text, Plutarch ends up bumping up against Charmadas' position is not without significance.

Plutarch was not a sceptical philosopher, but a Platonist, and indeed an adherent of the dogmatic version of Platonism that was connected with the developments that in the previous century had probably led to

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placuit, quod aliter non posset, quid in quaque re veri simile esset, inveniri, sed etiam quod esset ea maxuma dicendi exercitatio. qua princeps usus est Aristoteles, deinde eum qui secuti sunt.

79 See Liebersohn (2010) 36, but also Brittain (2001) 312–328. For more on the common ground between rhetorical training and Academic dialectic, see esp. Reinhardt (2000) 531–532, 533, 535–547. Cf. also Lévy (2010). 95–106.

80 The passage in the Latin text reads as follows: *nostra autem memoria Philo, quem nos frequenter audivimus, instituit alio tempore rhetorum praecepta tradere, alio philosophorum.* Cf. Brittain (2001) 298–299, 328–342; Liebersohn (2010) 38.

81 See Karadimas (1996) 225.

the weakening of Academic scepticism in Athens.[82] In his case, however, there is an important peculiarity. Plutarch was not one of those Platonists who thought that the turn to scepticism that characterised the Hellenistic Academy represent a gap in the tradition. On the contrary, he seems to have been of the opinion that the sceptical Academy was an intermediate phase in the great unified tradition of the Academy from the time of Plato and his early successors to the sceptics and then Plutarch's own era.[83] As noted in the introduction, he did not live in the time of the great scholarchs, who had the power to determine what the direction of the school would be at any given time: the Academy in which he studied was probably limited to a single circle of Platonists around Ammonius in Athens, like other similar circles which existed in that period in Alexandria, Asia Minor and elsewhere, whose members seem to have been united by nothing more than a common devotion to the study and teaching of Plato's philosophy.[84] Under these circumstances, it is natural that the notion of orthodoxy would become increasingly important in the formation of a distinct philosophical identity, since without a scholarch the only thing that could legitimise a distinct philosophical position was thorough knowledge of the doctrines.[85] If the designation 'Platonist' or 'Academic' meant nothing more than that a given philosopher was expected to be a proponent of beliefs that had been articulated by Plato and his successors in the Academy, then Plutarch, as a Platonist, certainly had good reason not to view rhetoric favourably. If he were nevertheless to present rhetoric in a positive light, then one would expect him to give a convincing explanation before proceeding to a more detailed exposition of the subject. As we shall see, this is exactly what he does.

The first element that indicates Plutarch's intention to put the issues concerning rhetoric in their proper place is the interest that he expresses in the proper definition of rhetoric. At the time, the definition was already an accepted rhetorical-dialectical locus, and its use, especially at the beginning of a section, was a way of arguing about any topic.[86] Sev-

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[82] See Dillon (1996²) 184–185; Nikolaidis (1999) 398, cf. Frede (1999) 771, 776–782.

[83] See the following titles in the Lamprias Catalogue: 1) no. 63: Περὶ τοῦ μίαν εἶναι ἀπὸ τοῦ Πλάτωνος Ἀκαδήμειαν, and 2) no. 64: Περὶ τῆς διαφορᾶς τῶν Πυρρωνείων καὶ Ακαδημαϊκῶν. Cf. also Donini (2002) 247–273 [= (2011d) 375–402]; Bonazzi (2012) 271–298. On Plutarch's relationship to Academic Scepticism, see Schröter (1911) 5–41; DeLacy (1953) 79–85; Babut (1969) 277–284; Ioppolo (1993) 186; Boys-Stones (1997) 41–43, 55; Opsomer (1997) 17; Nikolaidis (1999) 399–340; Brittain (2001) 225–236; Bonazzi (2014) 121–130.

[84] See esp. Nikolaidis (1999) 402–403 and Dillon (1996²) 184.

[85] Frede (1999) 792, cf. Wiater (2011) 36–37.

[86] On definition, see Arist. *Rh.* 2.23, 1398a 16–28; *Top.* 1.15, 107a 36–39; 2.2, 109b 7–12; 2.2, 110a 14–22; Cic. *Top.* 26–34; *Off.* 1.7; Quint. 5.10.55–64. See also Kennedy

eral examples of this can be found in texts composed with the intention of either defending or attacking rhetoric. In Quintilian, at the point where the long digression on the definition of rhetoric begins, we find an examination of all known definitions, enabling him to choose the one that best fits his own approach, while rejecting all the others as inadequate (2.14.1–2.15.38).[87] Similarly, at the beginning of critique of the teachers of rhetoric, Sextus Empiricus also contrasts several well-known definitions with a Stoic definition of art that was widely accepted at the time, in order to show that rhetoric does not meet the criteria necessary to be considered an art (*M*. 2.1–12).[88] In a *Prolegomenon* for the teaching of rhetoric from around the same time, the anonymous author, dividing his material into ten parts in accordance with a typical scheme, places the definition of rhetoric at the centre, in the fifth part, immediately after the introductory sections dealing with the 'archaeology' of rhetoric and just before the more substantive and controversial parts dealing with the purpose and object of rhetoric (XIV, 18 R. = VI, 16–20 W.).[89] The first definition given there (XIV, 28–33 R. = VI, 16–20 W.) is a variant of the Aristotelian definition of rhetoric (cf. *Rh*. 1.2, 1355b 25–26), which the author finds incomplete, however, and replaces it with a similar definition taken from Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Imit*., *fr.* 26).

In Plutarch's text, the first definition mentioned is that of a "producer of persuasion" (δημιουργὸς πειθοῦς, *Praec. ger. reip.* 801C), a term that is, of course, intertextually loaded. He quotes from the first part of Plato's *Gorgias* (452A–453A), where the definition is given by Socrates and, after being subsequently accepted by the sophist Gorgias as a definition that accurately describes his profession, is used by Socrates to construct his critique of rhetoric.[90] The central position of the definition within the argument of the Plato's text has, however, affected its reception. Already in Antiquity, there were many writers who saw in this definition not merely a description of the object of Gorgias' activity, but also an indicator of the way in which Plato argues against this object. The tendency towards the systematisation of Platonic philosophy that characterised developments in the early phase of the Academy and that probably included the practice of excerpting from Plato's writings in order to compile collections of definitions may have played a role in this: the evidence given by Sextus Empiricus that Xenocrates used the same defi-

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(1980) 46, 82–85; Reinhard (2000) 534; *id*. (2003) 200–202, 256–262. Cf. Robinson (1953²) 49–60.

[87] See Reinhardt & Winterbottom (2006) xxiii, xxxiv–l.

[88] See Karadimas (1996) 26–33, 54, 120, 164–166; Liebersohn (2010) 57.

[89] See Patillon (2008) 4–9. For the scheme underlying the divisions, see Mansfeld (1994) 23–24.

[90] Cf. Mutschmann (1918) 440–443; Dodds (1959) 203; Liebersohn (2010) 151.

nition for rhetoric may indicate such an orientation (*M.* 2.61 = Xenocr., *fr.* 91 Isnardi).[91] Sextus himself (*M.* 2.2), like the anonymous author of another *Prolegomenon*, has no doubt, however, that the definition is Plato's, and the latter even appears to openly assert that Plato deliberately attributed it to Gorgias, because it cannot withstand criticism (XIV, 191 R. = VII.1, 7 W.).

What this anonymous author means can be better understood in light of what Quintilian has to say about this definition. Quintilian explains that the identification of persuasion as the exclusive purpose of rhetoric leaves it exposed to ethical critiques, since it is easy to argue that persuasion can also be produced by immoral or corrupt orators (2.15.2–3).[92] It is not unlikely that Quintilian had the Academics in mind here. A little further on in the text, he links those who exploit the implications of this definition in their critiques with arguments that Sextus later attributes to Critolaus and Charmadas (2.16.1–11). There is further evidence for this connection: in Cicero's *De oratore* Crassus calls Plato the 'discoverer' and 'pioneer' of everything that Charmadas, Clitomachus, Aeschines, Metrodorus and so on ascribed to rhetoric. We are also told that Charmadas carefully read the *Gorgias* together with others (1.47).[93]

Quintilian broadly endorses the unity of philosophy and rhetoric, and therefore cannot accept Plato's critical view of the latter.[94] He therefore adopts the following tactic: at the beginning of the section dealing with the definitions of rhetoric, Quintilian claims that, although this popular definition does indeed occur in the Platonic text, Plato did not want his readers to take it as representative of his own views, but only of those of Gorgias (2.15.4–5).[95] This is precisely what the anonymous author we mentioned above also argues. Moreover, Quintilian explicitly states that he reads the *Gorgias* as a dialogue whose purpose is to refute opponents, meaning that what is said does not concern rhetoric *per se*, but only the way in which rhetoric is used by Gorgias and his supporters (2.15.26–28).[96] In this way, Quintilian manages to evade the attacks of those critics of rhetoric who, relying on the authority of Plato as expressed in the *Gorgias*, treat rhetoric as flattery, pleasure and so on (2.15.24–25).[97]

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[91] On the systematisation of Platonic philosophy in Xenocrates' time, see Dillon (1996^{2}) 23–29. On early collections of Platonic definitions, see Irgenkamp (1967) 111–114; Krämer (2004^{2}) 109–110, along with the remarks of Reinhardt & Winterbottom (2006) 236.

[92] Cf. Quint. 2.16.11–12.

[93] Cf. Karadimas (1996) 205, 226–227.

[94] Cf. Quint. 2.15.27.

[95] See Reinhardt & Winterbottom (2006) 238.

[96] For this specific way of reading the Platonic dialogue, see Tarrant (1985) 26–28; Mansfeld (1994) 58–107; Reinhardt & Winterbottom (2006) 259–260.

[97] See Reinhardt & Winterbottom (2006) 259–260.

Plutarch's approach is substantially the same. Yosef Liebersohn observes that the purpose of rhetoric is not merely one of its many aspects, but rather that it is that aspect which to a large extent determines the character of rhetoric, so that any change in our conception of its purpose entails a change in our conception of rhetoric in general.[98] In his text, Plutarch proposes replacing the definition 'producer of persuasion' with the definition 'accomplice to persuasion' (μὴ δημιουργὸν ἀλλά τοι συνεργὸν εἶναι πειθοῦς, *Praec. ger. reip.* 801C). This term (συνεργὸς) is also found in other Plutarchan texts, where it is used to designate various animate agents or inanimate instruments that are under the absolute control of their users and that make a necessary contribution to the corresponding action being accomplished as effectively as possible.[99] Another way of expressing the same meaning would be to use the noun 'instrument' (ὄργανον) or the adjective 'instrumental' (ὀργανικός), which Plutarch employs in other passages with reference to either rhetoric or rhetorical discourse.[100] However, while an 'instrument' can be morally neutral or indifferent, the use of the term 'accomplice' (συνεργὸς) establishes an extremely close relationship between rhetoric and the expression of a respectable and reliable character. By demonstrating that rhetoric functions properly only when it is used by those who lead an honourable life, Plutarch succeeds in distancing himself from the early Platonic portrayal of rhetoric as an instrument by means of which depraved politicians satisfy their morbid appetites.[101] The disagreement with Charmadas, and the branch of the Platonic tradition he represents, is thus papered over, but that does not mean that it does not exist.

Plutarch concludes his commentary on the proper definition of rhetoric by quoting Menander's verse "The speaker's *character* (τρόπος), not his *speech* (λόγος), persuades", before immediately correcting him, saying that "both his *character* (τρόπος) and his *speech* (λόγος) do so" (801C).[102] The choice of this quotation is far from random. Although

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98 See Liebersohn (2010) 132.

99 Cf. *LSJ*⁹ *s.v.* συνεργός, όν: "working together, joining or helping in work, and as a Subst., ὁ, ἡ, helper". See also *Lys.* 23.3; *Crass.* 6.3; *Eum.* 12.2; *Ant.* 82.4; *Dion-Brut.* 1.4; [*De lib. educ.*] 5C; *De fort. Rom.* 325B; *De virt. mor.* 441D–E; *De frat. am.* 485B; *De exilio* 605C; *Quaest. conv.* 660A, 689D, 715D; *Amatorius* 752A; *An seni* 789D; *Praec. ger. reip.* 819C; *De prim. frig.* 951D; *Quaest. Plat.* 1007E; *De Stoic. rep.* 1036A; *De comm. not.* 1066C–D, 1072D.

100 See *Per.* 8.1; *Fab.* 1.7; *Ca. Ma.* 1.5; *Arist.-Ca. Ma.* 2.5; *Ca. Mi.* 4.3; *Cic.* 4.4, 32.6; *De aud. poet.* 33F; *Maxime cum principibus* 777B–C; *Praec. ger. reip.* 802B. Cf. Luraghi (1989) 305.

101 See Pelling (2014) 155. Cf. Trapp (2004) 198–199, as well as Quint. 2.15.1–2.

102 Such revisions of literary texts were also a rhetorical training exercise. On this, see Theon II, 64–65 Sp. (= I, 157–158 W.) and Quint. 2.4.18–19.

there is evidence that Plutarch was familiar with Menander's work,[103] he appears to misinterpret this particular verse, taking it as a straightforward statement that the speaker's character alone is a sufficient means of persuasion. If we take a closer look at the context of the verse, as preserved by Stobaeus, it becomes clear that the contrast Menander draws is between a speaker who is good both in words and in character and another who is verbally skilled, but lacks the corresponding character. The whole passage reads as follows (3.37.17 = Men. *fr.* 362 K-A = *fr.* 472 Kock):

> By Athena, kindness to every human being is undoubtedly happiness and an enviable asset in life. Having talked with him for some time, I am now favourably disposed. 'Speech is a persuasive thing,' one of the wise might surely object. Why then am I disgusted with others when they speak well? It is the character (τρόπος) of the speaker that persuades, not the speech (λόγος). (transl. is mine)
>
> (νὴ τὴν Ἀθηνᾶν, μακάριόν γ' ἡ χρηστότης πρὸς πάντα καὶ θαυμαστὸν ἐφόδιον βίῳ. τούτῳ λαλήσας ἡμέρας σμικρὸν μέρος εὔνους ἐγὼ νῦν εἰμι. 'πειστικὸν λόγος' πρὸς τοῦτ' ἂν εἴποι τις μάλιστα τῶν σοφῶν. τί οὖν ἑτέρους λαλοῦντας εὖ βδελύττομαι; Τρόπος ἔσθ' ὁ πείθων τοῦ λέγοντος, οὐ λόγος.)

A kind character is indeed considered a catalyst for persuasion. However, this does not necessarily mean that the same person's arguments cannot be equally persuasive. After all, as Bruno Keil has observed, this verse is nothing more than a variation on the well-known proverb "as is the character, so is the speech" (οἷος ὁ τρόπος τοιοῦτος καὶ ὁ λόγος).[104] We see, then, that Menander is not saying anything different from what Plutarch is also trying to say, namely that only the orator who has managed not only to polish his speech, but also to take care of the formation of his character is convincing. If Plutarch takes advantage of the contrast in Menander's verse, interpreting it as a statement about the exclusive role of character in the creation of persuasion, this is probably because he prefers to refute a comic poet in this way, rather than giving the impression that he is, in fact, refuting philosophers like Charmadas or Plato in the *Gorgias*.

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[103] See *Quaest. conv.* 712B, cf. *Comp. Ar. et Men.* 854B–C. For more on the recruitment of Menander by Plutarch, see Görler (1963) 89–90; Liapis (2002) 72–73; Nervegna (2013) 1–3.

[104] See Jeuckens (1907) 18 n. 1, where his oral conversation with Bruno Keil is mentioned. See also Pl. *R.* 400D; Ter. *Hau.* 384; Sen. *Ep.* 114.1; Quint. 11.1.30; Aristid. 99 J.; Clem. Al. *Strom.* 7.16.100.3; Stob. 3.37.33. Cf. also Norden (1898) 11 n. 2; Mittelhaus (1911) 56; Schmitz (1997) 157; Carrière (2003^2) 164; Morgan (2007) 105.

The misreading of the Menander verse is not the only rhetorical trick to be found in this passage. Alan Sommerstein, in a study on the presence of oaths in the texts of Attic oratory, speaks of the motif of the 'imaginary objector', since this is usually accompanied by an oath to Zeus. Sommerstein observes that in public debates:

> it was a commonplace for a speaker to anticipate, and refute in advance, a point that might be raised by his opponents – usually, of course, presenting that point in a highly tendentious way, setting up a straw man that would be easy to demolish. […] In actual oratory, the "anticipated objection" was at first signaled by a phrase like *eipoi tis an* "someone may say".[105]

Returning to the Plutarch passage, we can observe that exactly the same trick is used here, in the statement "both his character and his speech do so" (καὶ γὰρ ὁ τρόπος καὶ ὁ λόγος), which concludes the correction of Menander's verse, the following objection is added (801C–D):

> unless, indeed, one is to affirm that just as the helmsman, not the tiller, steers the ship, and the rider, not the rein, turns the horse, so political virtue, employing, not speech, but the speaker's character as tiller or rein, sways a State, laying hold of it and directing it, as it were, from the stern, which is, in fact, as Plato says, the easiest way of turning an animal about. (transl. by H.N. Fowler)

> (Εἰ μὴ νὴ Δία φήσει τις, ὡς τὸν κυβερνήτην ἄγειν τὸ πλοῖον, οὐ τὸ πηδάλιον, καὶ τὸν ἱππέα στρέφειν τὸν ἵππον, οὐ τὸν χαλινόν, οὕτως πόλιν πείθειν οὐ λόγῳ ἀλλὰ τρόπῳ χρωμένην ὥσπερ οἴακι καὶ χαλινῷ τὴν πολιτικὴν ἀρετήν, ὅθεν εὐστροφώτατον ζῷον, ὥς φησι Πλάτων, οἷον ἐκ πρύμνης ἁπτομένην καὶ κατευθύνουσαν.)

The objection raised by the 'imaginary objector' here is based on the reasoning that, since an 'accomplice of persuasion' is hierarchically placed in a subordinate position to the 'creator', it follows that the contribution of the former is contained in the work attributed to the latter.[106] In one respect, the content of the objection could be compared to the 'hypocritical' attitude of the Academics above, who, Liebersohn believes, probably taught rhetoric under the name of dialectic. The fact that Plutarch swears by Zeus shows that he treats the objection in good faith,[107] yet an educated reader would understand that it is an objection raised only to

[105] See Sommerstein (2014b) 233.

[106] Cf. *De genio Socr*. 582C.

[107] See Sommerstein (2014b) 234.

be refuted in the next sentence.[108] One can already imagine how this will happen. At this point, it has not been a question of rhetoric, but (very cleverly) of *logos*. It is possible to decouple rhetoric from virtue in the context of an argument, but *logos* is more difficult, since *logos*, as oral speech, is morphologically the same word as *logos*, as thought residing in the mind, as logic, from whose dominance over the emotions virtue arises.[109] In the earlier *De audiendis poetis*, we find a useful parallel passage, in which Plutarch, while correcting the same verse from Menander in almost the same way, nevertheless does not attempt to prioritise character over *logos*, but clearly states that the *logos* that persuades is the most philanthropic and congenial instrument of virtue (33F).

In the context of the refutation of the position of the 'imaginary objector', the reference to Plato mentioned above acquires particular significance. Plutarch refers by means of it to the myth at the beginning of *Critias*, which recounts how when the gods were creating human communities, they chose not to guide men by means of physical force, as shepherds do with their animals, but instead to direct them on the level of their intentions, taking hold of their souls by means of persuasion, in the same way that captains use the wheel to steer their ship (*Criti.* 109B–C). In Plato's analogy, the soul occupies the place of the steering wheel. This image of a steering wheel, which due to the force of the water gives direction to the ship, raises the question of the suitability of the instrument in relation to the particularities of the work for which it is used. Commenting on this passage, Christopher Gill observes that the ability of the gods to persuade men to conform to their own divine intentions suggests a proximity between them, a tendency towards equality that distinguishes their relationship with each other, as well as the shared possession of reason which makes this relationship possible.[110]

Not all instruments are suitable for all tasks. In the case of the men in the Platonic myth, the soul is suitable, because it contains a rational element. By contrast, in Plutarch's text, character (τρόπος) cannot, in itself, be the most suitable instrument to address the reason of men, since it is conceived by the 'objector' as standing in complete opposition to

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[108] Carrière (2003²) 164–165, speaks of irony. The discriminating attitude of the 'imaginary objector' is also apparent in the double simile 'as tiller or rein'. Various editors and commentators point out that these two words in conjunction allude to Sophocles' proverbial verse "it is at once the work of many reins and many tillers" (πολλῶν χαλινῶν ἔργον οἰάκων θ' ἅμα), which occurs elsewhere in Plutarch, in passages where he describes processes whose completion requires the utmost effort and care. On this verse, see Soph. *fr.* 869 Radt (= *fr.* 785 N²). The passages in Plutarch are as follows: *Alex.* 7.2; *De Is. et Os.* 369C; *Amatorius* 767E.

[109] Cf., e.g., *De soll. an.* 962A.

[110] See Gill (1979) 157.

logos. The latter, with its commonplace twofold nature as 'thought residing in one's mind' and 'thought uttered to other people', that is 'oral speech', would surely be a more appropriate choice given the situation described in the passage from Plato.[111] It is this need that the reference to the passage in question serves. Although Plato does not further specify in his text by what means the gods create persuasion in the souls of men, and although he depicts the soul as the main instrument of persuasion, it would nevertheless be difficult, in this context, for the cultivated reader of Plutarch to recall the *Critias* passage without thinking of rhetoric as *psychagogia*. The 'imaginary objector' has undermined his own argument by his own words.

The ground is now ready for the final reconstruction. Plutarch refutes the objection of the 'imaginary objector' by arguing *a fortiori* that, since even the great kings of the past, who were able to impose themselves by force on the masses, did not overlook the power and grace of speech, how could a modern politician who is in no way like them neglect it (801D)? The question is rhetorical. The poetic quotations from Homer (*Il.* 9.443 and 9.441) and Hesiod (*Theog.* 80) which are used here as evidence of the kings' relationship to rhetoric were not chosen at random, as they all represent well-known passages on rhetoric: in Plato's *Gorgias*, Callicles alludes to the second of the Homeric passages cited above in an attempt to show that political activity is more important than philosophy (485D). Crassus does the same in the third book of Cicero's *De oratore*, when he argues for the unity of rhetoric and philosophy (3.57). The first Homeric verse appears alongside the verse from Hesiod in Dio Chrysostom's second oration *On Kingship*, in which the young Alexander explains to his father that both Homer and Hesiod knew that true rhetoric is one of the things with which a king may concern himself (2.19–24).[112] Finally, all of these verses are cited in a passage from Aelius Aristides, who uses them to defend rhetoric from the criticisms of Plato's *Gorgias*, the Cynics and perhaps even certain of his contemporaries Platonists (97–98 J.).[113] There is thus no doubt that Plutarch is arguing in favour of rhetoric. However, looking at all the thematic and structural rhetorical *topoi* identified above, we can conclude that he probably felt that, under the circumstances in which he was writing, it was not easy to argue for rhetoric without making use of it himself.

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[111] For this widespread distinction between two forms of *logos*, see, e.g., Babut (1969) 72–74. This connection is implied by Plutarch's designation of 'συγγενές' in *De aud. poet.* 33F. Also see *Praec. ger. reip.* 801E–F, but also *Maxime cum principibus* 777B–C, together with the remarks of Roskam (2009) 96–119.

[112] Cf. Kindstrand (1973) 127–128.

[113] Cf. Kindstrand (1973) 203. On the philosophers Aristides has in mind, see Karadimas (1996) 31.

4. Conclusion

An individual's psychological character cannot normally be compared with rhetoric. Nevertheless, in the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae* just such a comparison is made and one is placed in an inferior position to the other. The preceding analysis has shown, however, that this has to do with the general contextual and pragmatic framework within which Plutarch is operating in this text with regard to these two elements.

As far as character is concerned, the fact that it is presented as a predominantly persuasive element is the result of the broadly pro-ethical rhetoric adopted in this text. It has nothing to do with the value Plutarch attributed to rhetoric, but rather with an approach to political action as an ethical exercise and, subsequently, with the attempt to make this approach attractive to those concerned. For Plutarch, as for other contemporary philosophers, knowledge about the effective exercise of power is acquired through the process of constituting the self as a virtuous subject. In this process, temperance occupies a central place. Temperance is not, however, a virtue taught only by philosophers. In other fields where there is an interest in the question of political success – albeit without the pressure to transmit a systematic moral teaching – temperance is also presented as a precondition for political success. A close reading that underlines the rhetoric employed in the relevant passages shows that Plutarch takes advantage of this situation, as he tries to create the right conditions so that various behaviours, which the politicians of the time largely adopted, can be assigned moral value and provide the opportunity for a systematic process of moral education. In order for the project to succeed, however, it is essential that the recipient of the text (as well as those readers who possess similar characteristics) believe that there is no other way of gaining the trust and respect of citizens than through the moral constitution of the self. This is made clear by means of examples in which the moral character of politicians is presented as the sole condition of persuasion. However, this elevation of character, an elevation which has, to date, weighed heavily on scholars who have studied Plutarch's attitude towards rhetoric, testifies to nothing more than Plutarch's own rhetoric, which aims to encourage his reader to engage in a process of self-care.

Of course, the text was not only read by young people like Menemachus. Writing is a process through which the writer is exposed to an audience that already has knowledge and expectations; success depends on the ease with which he meets these expectations. When, in describing the philosopher's mode of action in politics, Plutarch decided to give rhetoric a place as well, he surely knew that he could not prevent his readers from recalling earlier reading experiences and assigning to the text the corresponding meaning. Rhetoric had long been a part of elite education,

but not necessarily a part of the education that philosophers themselves provided to the elite. If some of Plutarch's readers were familiar with the old Academic attitude towards rhetoric, they could easily conclude that a Platonist and advocate of the unity of the Academic tradition could not have a favourable attitude toward rhetoric, especially if earlier in the text he had argued, like Charmadas, that in politics the most decisive means of persuasion is the politician's own character. All Plutarch could do, under these circumstances, to defend the place of rhetoric in the Platonic-Academic tradition and, at the same time, to protect himself from charges of unorthodoxy was to make use of common thematic and structural *topoi*, such as the debate over the proper definition of rhetoric, the refutation of a supposed opposing view in a quotation from Menander, the cliché of the 'imaginary objector', the reference to a Platonic passage relating to *psychagogia* and, finally, the common rhetorical *topoi* from Homer and Hesiod.

Rhetoric and Beneficence

1. Introduction

Having established that the 'second-place' position that Plutarch assigns to rhetoric does not reflect an evaluation of rhetoric as a means of persuasion, but rather must be understood in terms of the need, in specific contexts, to emphasise the possibility of acquiring credibility through the process of the moral constitution of the self, it remains to be seen how Plutarch positions rhetoric in relation to other means of imposing and legitimising power in the field of politics. Is rhetoric still considered a secondary means of persuasion, even when it is no longer being compared with ethics but rather with other established means of enforcing power, such as beneficence (euergetism)? In the following pages, I show that Plutarch, having placed rhetoric in the realm of ethics – albeit as an 'accomplice' – assigns it an even higher position in the realm of politics. Towards the end of the chapter, I will argue that this repositioning could be interpreted in terms of the desire of a philosophical teacher to make himself competitive in his field. This field is, of course, the broader field of higher education, which catered to elite youths who were, in one way or another, to become involved in both politics and beneficence. As we shall see, however, in the form of education offered by Plutarch, casual involvement with rhetoric is not ruled out.

2. Other means of exercising power

The elite public to whom Plutarch addresses his texts was under constant pressure in the political realm to legitimise its power. The new era that began with the ascension of Augustus opened new opportunities for people from the local elites of the eastern cities. At the same time, however, some of the older obligations did not cease to apply to them. The era of the Pax Romana was an era of economic prosperity. After the end of the civil wars, life regained the rhythm it had lost. Historians estimate that, in that period, the amount of arable land was restored to the level it had been at before the crisis of the late Hellenistic period and agricultural production increased both in the provinces and in Italy itself. Trade and the movement of people also increased, with the result that local landowning elites were once again able to accumulate wealth and power in the affairs of their cities.[1]

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[1] On the improvement of the economy in the wake of the civil wars, see, e.g., Garnsey (2000) 693–701; Zuiderhoek (2009) 53–54.

There was, however, a price to pay. Rome had placed on the shoulders of the local aristocrats the responsibility for administering their cities, as well as (in unfree cities) collecting taxes.[2] In most cities, there existed no institutionalised police force to maintain order, but only small paramilitary groups of citizens that the authorities primarily used to protect against raids by bandits in the surrounding areas.[3] Not only were the garrisons, where they existed, insufficient to help, but it seems to have been the policy of the emperors not to allow soldiers to be used meet the needs of the administration.[4] Under these circumstances, the imposition of order and the legitimation of power at the local level were expected to be carried out by the elites using the means at their disposal.[5] This task was not merely difficult but also dangerous. Failure could lead to death – not, in the first instance, a death imposed by Rome, but rather by one's disgruntled fellow citizens. Contemporary witnesses sometimes refer to this danger. Dio Chrysostom confesses that once a rioting crowd of his fellow citizens almost burned him alive in his house (46.12–13) and Philostratus relates an incident involving a local ruler who had taken refuge in the statue of Tiberius, when a rioting crowd, on the occasion of the distribution of wheat in the city, tried to burn him alive (*VA* 1.15).[6]

For a political ruler, the esteem and trust of his fellow citizens is essential. If, as we have seen, Plutarch promotes temperance as an obligation in order to bolster his readers' commitment to a particular *prohairesis*, this is also because temperance, like the other virtues associated with it – e.g. justice, prudence, dignity, decency, generosity, providence and kind-heartedness – are values that society admires and esteems to such an extent that their acquisition is considered synonymous with success. This is what Bourdieu described as 'symbolic capital': a set of attributes that conform with the prevailing moral order and whose appropriation gives the person who acquires them a reputation for competence and the ability to project an image of goodness and honesty (i.e. a symbolic weight), which, in turn, enhances the recognition and legitimacy of the position that the person occupies in society.[7] It is not necessary for the individual to actually possess these virtues, as long as he or she is able to demonstrate

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[2] See Liebeschhuetz (1972) 161–166; Lendon (1997) 6; Zuiderhoek (2009) 46–46.

[3] On enforcement of law and order and policing in provincial cities, see Rostovtzeff (1957²) 488, 717 n. 31; Jones (1964) 724; MacMullen (1966) 165–166; Liebeschhuetz (1972) 119, 122–126; Harrauer (1983) 11–12; Nippel (1983) 117; Lendon (1997) 4–5; Cornell (2012) 1169–1170.

[4] See Plin. *Ep.* 10.20–22, along with the remarks of Lendon (1997) 4–5.

[5] Cf. Lewis (1983) 47.

[6] Cf. also Philostr. *VS* 1.526–527. For the two cases above see also Lendon (1997) 7 and Zuiderhoek (2009) 67–68.

[7] See Bourdieu (1984) 291.

them when necessary. We have already seen in the passage from Polybius to what extent the soldiers of Scipio appreciated his decision not to sleep with the young girl while on campaign (10.19.7). Similarly, numerous epigraphic texts containing honorary decrees have survived from that period. These documents were issued by the cities to collectively recognise the deeds of powerful citizens, by inscribing them in a system of honours.

In the texts of these decrees, it is easy to discern that the best way for a political ruler to strengthen his power is to take actions that confer on them value in society. In the text of an honorary decree from the Alabanda of the Augustan period (Laumonier, 300–303), we see the demos honouring a certain Aristogenes, son of Meniscus, a high priest and local benefactor, acknowledging that he was "a man of great wisdom, distinguished for his piety and justice" (ἄνδρα μεγαλόφρονα καὶ ἐσεβήᾳ [*sic*] καὶ δικαιοσύνῃ διαφέροντα). In another, similar text from Magnesia on the Maeander (*I.Magnesia* 179 from AD 7), the assembly and the *demos* honour a certain Apollonius, who had served as "clerk of the market" (ἀγορανόμος) in his city and had also offered various benefits. The decree notes "his character and his decent intercourse with other citizens" (διά τε τὸ ἦθος καὶ τὴν ἰς [*sic*] τὴν πόλιν αὐτοῦ κόσμιον ἀναστροφὴν). In a somewhat older inscription from Mylasa (*I.Mylasa* 631 from the late second or early first century BC), the assembly and the demos honour, following the end of his term of office, a foreign judge from Tralles, acknowledging that he was "a benevolent man distinguished for his reliability and prudence" (ἄνδρα καλὸν καὶ ἀγαθὸν καὶ πίστει καὶ συνέσει διαφέροντα) and stressing that he stayed for as long as he needed in their city "with all propriety and modesty" (μετὰ πάσης εὐκοσμίας καὶ εὐσχημοσύνης) and that "all the arguments that were made before him he judged and decided on them with impartiality and justice" (καὶ τάς τε ῥηθείσας ἐπ' αὐτὸν δίκας πάσας ἐδίκασεν καὶ διέκρινεν ἴσως καὶ δικαίως).

Even the inclusion of the emperor in this system of honours was important. In 43/44 AD the prefect of Asia, Paulus Fabius Persicus[8] ordered the return of money to the temple of Artemis in Ephesus and appointed new priests and staff. On the occasion of this act, which benefited the great temple of the city, the prefect found it appropriate to point out in the text of the relevant decree (*I.Ephesos* 18a, 5–17) that the concern which he, as well as other officials like him, ought to show for the enduring and long-lasting interest not only of the whole province but also of each city separately, is reflected in the manner of the "mighty and truly perfectly just ruler, who has taken all mankind under his special guardianship as one of the supreme and most loving of all philanthropists" (τῷ ὑποδείγματι τοῦ κρατίστου καὶ ἀληθῶς δικαιοτάτου ἡγεμόνος, ὃς πᾶν τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένος εἰς τὴν ἰδίαν ἀναδεδειγμένος κειδεμονίαν ἐν τοῖς

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[8] See *PIR*² F 51.

πρώτοις καὶ πᾶσιν ἡδίστοις φιλανθρώποις).[9] All these examples make clear that the recognition of the authority of local rulers and state officials presupposes, as John Lendon has put it, the treatment of all these people first and foremost as moral agents and not directly as organs of a higher authority, even though they themselves were actively trying to impose this authority on their societies, since that was the job the state assigned to them.[10]

That said, what is immediately striking is that the individuals honoured in the above inscriptions are those who offered benefits to their communities. 'Beneficence' or 'euergetism', as it is also called in literature, are the terms used for all the charitable actions spontaneously undertaken by elites of the time, which represented the most common means available to a politician to legitimise his power. There were many forms of beneficence at many different levels. Common to all of them was the intention to exchange surplus economic capital for symbolic capital.[11] In order to serve as a public official, it was necessary to have enough money, since for a whole year one would have to meet the requirements of the position "for love of honours and by one's own means", as is stated in numerous inscriptions.[12] In the eastern provinces, the gymnasiarch would himself pay for the oil needed for a whole year at the gymnasium (see, e.g., *Πολέμων* 1929/1, 126, 423 from the second or first century BC),[13] while the person in charge of the city's grain reserves would supplement them from his own pocket in the event of a shortfall in local production (see, e.g., *I.Histria* 180 from the second century AD).[14] Benefactions such as the erection of public buildings or the organisation of shows were usually carried out in a complementary manner: during his term of office it is likely that a gymnasiarch would decide to renovate the gymnasium facilities (*IG* IX.2 31)[15] or perhaps, as a mayor did in an Italian city, celebrate his taking office by presenting, in the course of his term, thirty pairs of gladiators and a hunt for African beasts (*CIL* IX 2350 from the late first or early second century AD).[16] These were all symbolic means

[9] See also Meyer-Zwiffelhoffer (2002) 178. For the inclusion of the emperor in the same system of honours, see also Lendon (1997) 108–172 and Zuiderhoek (2009) 111–112.

[10] See Lendon (1997) 18.

[11] See Zuiderhoek (2009) 6–12.

[12] See, e.g., *IG* VII 2519; *IG* VII 2712; *IG* VIII 98. Cf. Lewis (1983) 45–48.

[13] The high level of expenditure is pointed out by Zuiderhoek (2009) 39 n. 3.

[14] See Zuiderhoek (2009) 6–12.

[15] Cf. *IG* VII 2235.

[16] Cf. Cass. Dio 59.7 and 59.13, where Caligula similarly presents a hunt involving four hundred bears and an equal number of African beasts and gladiatorial games respectively; see also the remarks of Cass. Dio. 68.10 and 68.15 concerning the lavish spectacles that were staged in the context of Trajan's triumphs.

of legitimising power and wealth. Local political rulers and state officials saw in these practices an opportunity to show the whole world that the reason that they, rather than others, were exercising power was because only they could guarantee that the benefits of power and wealth would be generously returned to the entire city in perpetuity.[17]

However, the fact that such means of imposing power existed does not necessarily entail that rhetoric was unnecessary. The existence of political rhetoric in imperial times has been a controversial topic in research, as it is inextricably linked to the question of citizen participation in decision-making, and more specifically to the existence of institutions that would allow for such participation. In other words, in the absence of a citizens' assembly that would convene to take important decisions, why would there be political rhetoric? However, scholars such as Louis Robert and, more recently, Laurent Pernot have shown that both the institution of the assembly and political rhetoric survived into Hellenistic times,[18] and the same is certainly true of the early centuries of the imperial era. Hugo Jones' view that the masses flocked to city assemblies to ratify decisions already made by the *boulē* and to cheer the candidates that the *boulē* chose has been misunderstood by researchers. This claim refers mainly to the period after the fourth century;[19] with reference to the period up to that time, Jones speaks instead of a slow and gradual weakening of assemblies, all while recognising that the further back we go, the more likely it is not only that assemblies existed, but also that there was an important place in them for rhetoric.[20] This picture is, in any case, substantiated by literary texts of the period, including those of Plutarch, which clearly refer to citizens assemblies.[21]

In addition to literary texts, we also have epigraphic sources, in which we can see that not only did citizens' assemblies still exist in various cities, which were convened at regular intervals, but also that the decisions taken concerned weighty civic issues. In Ephesus, at the beginning of the second century AD, the assembly met twelve times a month in the theatre; it was attended by the demos and members of the *boulē* (and perhaps also by representatives of other city institutions). The issues it decided on concerned, among other things, the management of critical resources for

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[17] See also Zuiderhoek (2009) 71–112 and Trapp (2004) 195–196.

[18] See Pernot (2005) 126–129; Cribiore (2001) 239.

[19] See Jones (1940) 111.

[20] See Jones (1940) 176–177; *id.* (1964) 722–723. Cf. Sherwin-White (1963) 84–85; Jones (1971) 10, 111; Desideri (1978) 445–447; Lehmann (2020a) 13–14; Hofmann (2020) 235–236. For a contrary view, see, e.g., Magie (1950) 640–641 and Bowie (1970) 6.

[21] See *De prof. in virt*. 80C–D; *Quaest. conv.* 713F, 714A; *An seni* 794C, 796C; *Praec. ger. reip.* 799D, 810D, 813B, 815A, 823B. Cf. Jones (1940) 177.

the city (*I.Ephesos* 27a).[22] In a third-century inscription from Chalcis, we see again that the *boulē* decided to grant control of the temple of the patron goddess to a certain Aurelius Hermodorus. However, the assembly first had to be persuaded: its members, having heard from a general about the many benefits that Aurelius Hermodorus had conferred on the temple, voted by show of hands and ratified the proposal (*IG* XII.9 906). If the decision had been foreordained, then the general would have had no need to remind his fellow citizens of the candidate's munificence. As in the previous case from Ephesus, we see here the *boulē* acting rather as a committee of the assembly, which had to be convinced of the rightness of the proposals before it would ratify them. Rhetoric, sometimes acting as a complement to beneficence, would have represented a means of achieving this end in such cases.[23]

Until the fourth century AD, however, the institution of the citizens' assembly was an integral part of the city's experience. In an inscription from Orcistus, a small town in Asia Minor, petitioning Constantine the Great to allow the city to become independent from neighbouring Nakoleia, the citizens claim that they assemble in droves in the marketplace and that the crowd is so large that all the seats are immediately taken (*MAMA* VII 305, 26–29).[24] Literary texts also attest that by the third century AD, local political rulers were expected to speak in the city assembly. An indirect but typical example can be found, for instance, in Philostratus. In an attempt to defend the memory of the sophist Antiochus, who was supposedly afraid to address the city assembly, Philostratus lists the benefits Antiochus had given to his fellow citizens (*VS* 2.568). This appeal to beneficence (euergetism) thus serves in Philostratus' text as a 'counterweight' to Antiochus' reluctance to expose himself publicly before his fellow citizens as an orator.

3. Rhetoric in place of beneficence

Plutarch examines the issue of beneficence in the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae,* even placing it in a context that enables it to be compared with the attitude he himself expresses in this text with regard to rhetoric.

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[22] See Rogers (1992) 224–228; Vujčić (2009) 159–160.

[23] Prior to the fourth century AD, it is not self-evident that the members of the local *boulē* of a city held their position for life or that there are no cities in which the election of councillors was carried out by democratic procedures. In *IG* XII.9 11 we see that, in Ephesus in Hadrian's time, councillors were elected by lot by the assembly, and, as Jones observes, this may have been the case throughout the whole province of Asia. For these, see Jones (1940) 171, 175, 176, 183. Cf. Vujčić (2009) 162. On the situation in the cities of Italy and Sicily, see Duncan-Jones (1990) 160.

[24] See Mitchell (1999) 33.

Beneficence was an integral part of political life in the first centuries of our era, resulting from expectations that the elite should earn the esteem of the multitude. However, as we shall briefly see, Plutarch disagrees strongly with this practice. The main reason put forward in the text for this rejection concerns the perception and manner of acquiring the 'honour' implied by beneficence. A local benefactor would have expected that, for any beneficial deed he performed, he would receive from his fellow citizens an honour of equal value to the money he spent. If he had spent significant amounts of money on the construction of a public building, he would have wanted his fellow citizens to acknowledge this, in some way, not only through their trust in him, but possibly in the form of an honorific resolution, a statue or something of the sort.[25] For Plutarch, however, honour does not involve reciprocation; it is a 'symbol', as he puts it, that can be preserved for longer (820E). The primary meaning of the word 'symbol' is a piece of an object that the parties to an agreement break in two, with each party then taking a fragment as evidence of his identity under that agreement.[26] Plutarch's position is that whether one has spent much money or a little, or whether the city has rewarded him with a statue or a crown or an honorific inscription, should not matter, since the honour, as a 'symbol', is incommensurable with the money or effort the politician expends to obtain it (820B).

Michael Trapp observes that such views deviate from the usual practice of the period.[27] There can be no doubt about this, given that beneficence was booming at the time. But beneficence was also an economic burden – a point we will revisit in more detail below. We see this in a passage from the somewhat later historian Cassius Dio (*c.* 165–*c.* 235), in which Maecenas advises Augustus about various issues, pointing out among others – and apparently anachronistically – the economic excesses of beneficence (52.35–36).[28] While Plutarch's position may not be in keeping with contemporary practice, it clearly resonates with the expectations and needs of his readers, reminding them of an everyday problem to which philosophy will present itself as the solution.

The emergence of 'symbolism' as the main characteristic of honour is an abstraction. Thus, an attempt is made to re-categorise all known forms of distinction: "true honour and grace" (ἀληθινὴ τιμὴ καὶ χάρις)[29]

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[25] See Trapp (2004) 197; Zuiderhoek (2009) 41–42.

[26] See, e.g., Hdt. 6.86. More in Stamatakos (1956) 227; Bickermann (1931) 1085–1088; Gauthier (1972) 65–73; Dover (1980) 118. On the connection between the concept of 'symbol' and that of 'identity', see von Möllendorff (2009) 91–94.

[27] See Trapp (2004) 195–196. See also Zuiderhoek (2009) 93; Roskam (2014) 517.

[28] Cf. Duncan-Jones (1990) 170.

[29] With the term 'grace' (χάρις), Plutarch also refers to a kind of honorary resolution on behalf of the city. On this, see Kokkinia (2003) 197–213 and Hofmann (2020) 227.

is understood as a kind of generalised distinction, which no longer possesses material substance, but is based on people's memory of someone who deserves their goodwill and favour (820F).[30] Such a person is said to not be indifferent to the impression he leaves on those around him and does not neglect to be pleasant in interactions (821A).[31] Plutarch makes an argument *a fortiori*: the most effective way to make domestic animals loyal and obedient is not through physical violence, but through caresses and care, which calms them and, in the long run, shapes their mental disposition (821A–B). The same applies to the inhabitants of a city, who must also be 'domesticated' without violence.[32] The example he gives is that of tyranny: since resistance to tyranny takes refuge in the soul, specifically in that place from which trust arises, the use of physical violence is futile. The focus must be on conquering precisely the part of the soul that gives rise to trust (821B). The proof is that citizens follow those politicians who are able to provide tangible proof of their good intentions (πίστις εὐνοίας)[33] and give the impression that they are honest and just men (καὶ καλοκαγαθίας δόξα καὶ δικαιοσύνης). Without this symbolic heft, politicians are unable to gain the trust of those around them, implement their plans or protect themselves from being slandered by their opponents (821B).

But 'conventional' beneficence offers little help here. The honours deriving from theatres, financial expenditures or gladiatorial combats do not have any real value, but are mere flattery from the masses, who anyways smile at anyone who gives them money and favour him with a kind of ephemeral and precarious glory (821F). If one attempts to buy a good name at great expense, this only succeeds in making the masses strong and insolent, as it creates the belief that they decide everything (822A). Some forms of beneficence may, of course, be accepted in exceptional circumstances. If the politician is unable to impose himself on the crowd that demands benefactions, then he must at least be careful about the kind he makes: only those benefactions are acceptable that are made on a decent and beneficial occasion, for example those connected with the

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[30] The influence of Isocrates is identified here by de Blois & Bons (1992) 159–188; *id.* (1995) 99–106; Alexiou (2008) 365–386.

[31] Cf. also Dio Chr. 44.2–3, along with the remarks of Carrière (2003²) 203.

[32] Cf. also *Maxime cum principibus* 776C as well as p. 92ff. above.

[33] For the rendering 'proof of good intentions' (πίστις εὐνοίας) see Anon. *Ep. Brut.* 32; Joseph. *AJ* 4.135; Hdn. 2.3.5, cf. also Plut. *TG, CG* 31.1 and *Ag., Cleom.* 54.7, as well as Carrière (2003²) 50 n. 2. Valgiglio (1976) 69 (*che nasce dalla benevolenza*), Caiazza (1993) 171, 274–275 (*la fiducia nata dalla benevolenza*), Roskam (2004) 99 (*confidence of goodwill*) and Lehmann (2020b) 125 (*das Vertrauen in sein Wohlwollen*) all understand the phrase differently.

worship of the gods and that make the citizens more pious (822A–B). But that is all.

Plutarch employs additional arguments taken from Plato to undermine the value of beneficence, writing that he had urged that Lydian and Ionian harmonies be kept out of the education of young people: the former because it stimulates the mournful element in the soul and the latter because it increases our inclination towards pleasure and debauchery (822B–C). Similarly, the politician must drive away from the city those types of beneficence that irritate and breed the murderous and animal element or the uncouth and licentious one (822C). When it comes to money, his thoughts must always be practical and measured; they must have as their object either that which is morally beautiful or, if this is not possible, that which is necessary or, if this is not possible either, then the pleasurable and pleasant, provided, however, that no harm or depravity follows from it (822C). Of course, the question then arises of what, apart from religious festivals, could be financed under these conditions. The boundaries are drawn very narrowly indeed.

Michael Trapp considers that this hierarchy of forms of beneficence would not have met the expectations of Plutarch's readers.[34] The criticism of gladiatorial games and dancing is made from a position of moral and intellectual superiority, as we see frequently in other writers of the period,[35] and, as such, obviously deviates from everyday practice. At the same time, the fact that Plutarch nonetheless leaves some space for beneficence, however limited, in the context of ideal political action, reflects an attempt to enter into dialogue with his readers' expectations. As we saw earlier, this text encourages readers to form and maintain a philosophical identity. The formation of a discrete identity requires, however, that one or more of its building blocks offer some satisfaction to the individual who is called upon to adopt it. Just because beneficence is an effective and widespread means of legitimising power does not entail that those who resort to it take pleasure in doing so.

Let us take the case of those acts of beneficence of which Plutarch most frequently speaks, namely spectacles. The theatre is an area of public life which is closely intertwined, on the symbolic level, with the marketplace and other such locations.[36] The spectators who gather in

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[34] See Trapp (2007) 237–238.

[35] See, e.g., Tac. *Dial*. 29; Sen. *Ep*. 7.2; Luc. *Salt.* 1–4; Lib. 64.60–61; August. *Conf.* 6.8; cf. also Lada-Richards (2007) 104–108, 120–126, and Lehmann (2020b) 150–151 n. 41.

[36] On the connection between the theatre and other areas of public life, see Chronopoulos (2016) 77–73. For later periods, see also MacMullen (1966) 171. On the spectacles shown in the theatre, see also Jory (1986) 537–539; Dodge (1999) 233–234.

the theatre remain conscious of their political identity,[37] even though they are simultaneously well aware that the reason they have entered this space is not in order to make decisions about their city, but simply to have fun. That said, if it is already difficult to maintain order in the city's assembly, where citizens are shouting slogans in favour of one politician or another, it is much more difficult to do so in a crowded theatre with spectators shouting and bouncing up and down in support of one actor or gladiator or another.[38] Moreover, memories of the massacre in the amphitheatre of Pompeii in 59 AD were still fresh. Plutarch's readers may have been aware that, in the wake of the incident, the Roman Senate forbade any public gathering in Pompeii for the next ten years, demanded the dissolution of the professional associations in the city, and sent into exile the public official who organised the games (Tac. *Ann.* 14.17).[39] Trapp is surely right to ask whether the average citizen of the time would have been receptive to the possibility of replacing gladiatorial shows and horse races with a series of religious festivals.[40] But Plutarch is not addressing this audience.[41] After having been reminded of the consequences that the diversions of such spectacles might bring for the organisers and local political life, Plutarch's audience may well have seen funding a religious festival as the more tempting option.

Moreover, beneficence and service to the community were moral obligations for members of the elite, which became more and more difficult to fulfil from generation to generation.[42] After the death of a benefactor, all the honours he had received during his lifetime would be included on a tombstone inscription that served as a seal and explicit testimony of a life of service to the community, accomplishments that reflected on his descendants.[43] These descendants, in turn, also had to live up to the obligation, but political honour does not come cheap. Not everyone can afford to 'buy' it. Differences in property holdings existed not only between benefactors and non-benefactors, but also among the benefactors themselves. For example, in the province of Africa from 98 to 224 AD, a mere twenty-nine local benefactors – that is, 14% of the total number of

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[37] For the architecture of the theatre, which also projected the established social and political hierarchy, see Hopkins (1983) 14–20; Zanker (2006) 199–206; Chaniotis (2009) 41–62.

[38] See, e.g., Arr. *Epict.* 3.4.1–12; Luc. *Salt.* 5.

[39] Cf. MacMullen (1966) 169.

[40] See Trapp (2007) 238. Cf. *ibid.* (2004) 197. That religious celebrations were less popular than races is also confirmed by Zuiderhoek (2009) 88.

[41] Cf. Thum (2020) 263–265.

[42] See Hopkins (1983) 12–13; Veyne (1985) 116; Dodge (1999) 225.

[43] See, e.g., Dio Chr. 44.3–4. Cf. Burkert (1985) 194; Veyne (1985) 115–116, 170–171; Zuiderhoek (2009) 62–63.

local benefactors attested in the region during this period – were responsible for the construction of more than 75% of all public buildings, and, of these twenty-nine, eleven (a little more than 5% of the total number of benefactors) were responsible for more than 50% of the total number of such buildings.[44] The situation was comparable in other regions of the empire during that period: in a sample of eighty-five benefactions from Asia Minor, more than half of them seem to have come from 5–6% of the benefactors, that is, four out of sixty-eight.[45] For the remainder, who had less financial power, the pressure they were under at the local level to offer something worthy of the city must have been daunting.

If a wealthy family was to survive and benefit subsequent generations, it was in constant need of new resources to guarantee a certain standard of living. At the time, the foundation of all economic activity was landed property: every farmer supported himself, a few others and the owner of the field on which he toiled. If the owner needed not food but money, he had to sell the farmer's surplus agricultural production at a mark-up.[46] But if the money thus obtained by one generation of landowners sufficed to enable its members to live luxuriously and be munificent, it was not self-evident that the same would hold true for the next or even the generation after that. In a much-discussed passage from Seneca, it is stated that the duty of the son who inherited his father's estate is to pass it on intact to his own heirs (*Dial.* 6.26.2).[47] As Richard Saller has shown, however, since – given the high rate of infant mortality – the inheritance strategies of the wealthy of the time aimed at providing security to one's immediate descendants by dividing the property into equal shares, the wealth of a family would fragment from generation to generation.[48] Thus, as Arjan Zuiderhoek observes, in certain cities, a handful of local families are constantly named as benefactors in inscriptions.[49] Only a few families were able to meet the obligation of beneficence over multiple generations.[50] The remaining families either failed and vanished from history or, as Plutarch explains to us elsewhere (*Praec. ger. reip.* 822D–E; *De vit. aer.* 830D), were forced to borrow funds to finance shows and other acts of beneficence.[51]

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[44] See Duncan-Jones (1963) 165.

[45] See Zuiderhoek (2009) 29.

[46] See Veyne (1985) 153–154; Garnsey (2000) 679, 708–709.

[47] See also Veyne (1985) 142; Saller (1994) 86.

[48] See Saller (1994) 155–180, 231, cf. also Duncan-Jones (1990) 126; Saller (2000) 866, 871.

[49] See Zuiderhoek (2009) 63.

[50] Cf. also Duncan-Jones (1990) 170, 171.

[51] Cf. Jones (1940) 180–181.

Plutarch rhetorically exploits this aspect of beneficence, which was unpleasant for elites, and it is in this context that the topic of rhetoric is raised anew. To begin with, Plutarch claims that politicians who "by reason of their virtue enjoy freedom of speech (παρρησία ἀπ' ἀρετῆς) and public confidence (πίστις)" are in no way less powerful than those who organise grand dinners and bestow sponsorships (822F). There is no shame in admitting that one is in financial difficulties and in stopping competing in theatres and at dinners with those who are richer, since one can compete better with them in that field where politicians (822F–823A)

> try always to lead the State on the strength of virtue and wisdom, combined with *speech* (λόγος), for in such are found not only nobility and dignity but also the power to win and attract the people, a thing "more desirable than gold coins of Croesus". (transl. slightly adapted from H.N. Fowler)
>
> (ἀλλ' ἀπ' ἀρετῆς καὶ φρονήματος ἀεὶ μετὰ λόγου πειρωμένοις ἄγειν τὴν πόλιν, οἷς οὐ μόνον τὸ καλὸν καὶ τὸ σεμνὸν ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ κεχαρισμένον καὶ ἀγωγὸν ἔνεστι, «Κροισείων ἐρατώτερον στατήρων»)

There are obvious similarities with the passages in *Phocion* (9.1, 30.5) we examined above, in which an ideal approach to politics is discussed.[52] The mention of 'speech' (λόγος) as the companion of virtue and wisdom in governing the city also refers to the conception of rhetoric as 'the accomplice of persuasion'. Thus, by means of this 'speech', the politician can win the favour of the crowd without spending money, which is certainly good news for anyone engaged in politics and struggling to meet the financial requirements of beneficence.

At this point, three more passages from the broader Plutarchan corpus must be mentioned, in which 'speech' (λόγος) is presented as the appropriate means of persuasion for cultured politicians or philosophers in the political arena.

The first of these is found in *De laude ipsius,* which belongs to Plutarch's so-called ethico-philosophical treatises, although it also touches on issues relating to political life. Plutarch argues in one passage that, in the political sphere, the esteem (δόξα) of the citizens should not be sought as a reward or encouragement to virtue. On the contrary, it should be sought because inspiring confidence and giving others the impression that one is a good person gives an individual reason to accomplish ever more beautiful deeds, since it is more pleasant and easier for a person to benefit people who trust and love him (539D). The choice of words here corresponds strikingly with what was said a little above about "true hon-

[52] Cf. Roskam (2014) 525.

our and grace". Here, however, beneficence is not even mentioned. The issue is the moral implications to which the propensity to speak about oneself (περιαυτολογία, 539E) – a scenario that, incidentally, had attracted the attention of rhetorical theory from an early stage – can give rise to in public discourse.[53]

The second passage is found in *Maxime cum principibus philosopho esse disserendum*. The text addresses the contacts that philosophers have with powerful men, not necessarily with kings or the emperor, but also officials and governors who may exercise considerable power and influence at the local level.[54] Through this text, Plutarch seeks to respond to the reproach that the function of such contacts was to satisfy the ambition of certain philosophers (776A–B, 778A). The source of this reproach is unknown, although it possibly originated in rival philosophical circles.[55] Plutarch answers this criticism by presenting the cultivation of such connections as a moral obligation on the part of philosophers, since through their dealings with the powerful they simultaneously benefit all those who are subject to their authority.[56] In this context, the question of 'speech' (λόγος) is once again introduced, as the contact that philosophers have with the powerful falls within the realm of verbal communication.

The passage begins with the accepted distinction of *logos* into internal and external, i.e. into *logos* as thought residing in the mind, and *logos* as oral speech. Hermes gave people these two kinds of speech for the purpose of 'love' (φιλία): 'internal' *logos* for the purpose of 'self-love', and 'external' *logos* for the purpose of 'love of the other' (777C). The first form of discourse is concerned with philosophy and the acquisition of virtue (777C–D). However, Plutarch is mainly concerned with the second kind here.[57] The 'external' *logos* that characterises the relationship of philosophers to the powerful is contrasted with a second kind of 'external' *logos*, which aims at profit or reward, but without cultivation and love of the beautiful (777D). Plutarch prefers the first kind, because it is connected to the achievement of 'love': it is wrong, he writes, to consider the acquisition of esteem (τὸ ἔνδοξον) as the purpose of speech (λόγος). Rather its purpose is 'love', of which esteem is only the beginning and the seed (777D–E). For the philosopher, it is also wrong to equate esteem with favour (εὔνοια), on the grounds that people praise only those they

[53] Cf., e.g., Chrysanthou (2018a) 281 n. 1 and n. 2 (with further references); see also Pernot (2022) 149–169 and Quiroga-Puertas (2022) 343–344.

[54] See Roskam (2009) 136–137.

[55] For attempts at identification, see Roskam (2009) 76–83. Barigazzi (1981) 199–201 narrows the field considerably by claiming that Plutarch is referring only to the Epicureans.

[56] See *Maxime cum principibus* 776C–777B, 778E–779C. Cf. also Roskam (2009) 71–96.

[57] Cf. Roskam (2009) 105.

love. This is simply not true. Anyone who understands and has experience in public life, he writes, asks of others only as much esteem as he needs in order to receive the trust that will make action possible, since it is neither pleasant nor easy to attempt to benefit people who do not want to be benefited (777E). The choice of words here is the same as in the previous passage. Eliciting the trust of others is also presented as one of the cornerstones of successful, philosophically oriented verbal communication. The philosopher who occupies himself with public affairs, Plutarch continues, will not be annoyed if he happens to enter into a relationship with a powerful man, but, on the contrary, he will actively seek it out. As soon as he catches sight of a powerful man, he will run towards him with outstretched arms, welcoming him, conversing with him, teaching him and willingly remaining close to him, because he knows well that if he is able to influence him, many others will benefit (778D).

The third passage is found in the section on rhetoric in the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae*. Having clarified its definition, Plutarch immediately proceeds to compare the politician with a craftsman, presenting another argument in favour of the view that rhetoric ought to have a place in the politician's professional activity. The craftsman has no need of speech, since he can complete and defend his work against various criticisms without it, by merely showing those around him what he has made (802A). The politician cannot do the same, however. He who represents 'Athena of the City' and 'Themis of Counsel' uses speech as his sole instrument, employing it to give form to things and put them together (πλάττων καὶ συναρμόττων), to smooth over and reshape (μαλάσσων καὶ καταλεαίνων) anything that hinders his work – like knots in wood or scratches on an iron surface (ὥσπερ ὄζους τινὰς ἐν ξύλῳ καὶ διπλόας ἐν σιδήρῳ) – thus imposing order on the city (802B). The purpose of the comparison in the passage is to show how essential rhetoric is to the work of the politician – and not just any politician, but a philosophically informed politician. The comparison recalls the well-known Platonic conceptualisation of the law: in the *Republic*, the law on which the philosopher-kings base their rule of the state is not concerned with the happiness of any particular class, but, by means of necessity and persuasion, it tries to fit the citizens together (συναρμόττων τοὺς πολίτας πειθοῖ τε καὶ ἀνάγκῃ) in such a way that they all share in the benefits (*R.* 519E–520A). Furthermore, the comparison between overcoming opposition to the politician's work and the grinding of iron takes up a comment made by Plato about music, which softens the impetuous souls it touches and thus makes useful what was previously useless and savage (*R.* 411A–B: ὥσπερ σίδηρον ἐμάλαξεν καὶ χρήσιμον ἐξ ἀχρήστου καὶ σκληροῦ ἐποίησεν). The conclusion follows naturally that, in the realm of politics, inducing persuasion through speech is the main means available to a cultivated politician to impose himself on others and to govern.

Even if Plutarch assigns to rhetoric a position of secondary importance relative to cultivated character when it comes the production of persuasion, the passages above make clear that, in contexts where the comparison between rhetoric and character is no longer in the foreground, Plutarch's attitude towards it appears to be the opposite of his attitude towards beneficence, as seen in other passages of his work. There is a further passage in the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae* that provides evidence for it. This is the example of Pericles, which comes shortly after the discussion of the definition of rhetoric.

Plutarch argues in this passage that Thucydides' well-known statement that the rule of Pericles was "nominally a democracy", but in practice "government by the first citizen" (Thuc. 2.65.9) refers to the power of the Pericles' speech (802B–C). It was thanks to this power that he stood out from the other politicians of his time, surpassing even Cimon, Ephialtes and Thucydides, the son of Melesias, thanks to his eloquence (802C). Thucydides, the son of Melesias, even said that if he were to defeat Pericles in combat, Pericles would manage to convince the spectators that he had won (802C). The emphasis here is not so much on the deception as on the ultimate goal it serves. Plutarch explains that even if Pericles sometimes used his eloquence to deceive his audience, what ultimately mattered was that he benefited not only himself by winning glory, but also his city, which, under his authority, managed to ensure its preservation (σωτηρία) in times of war (802C). So far, so good: when the opposition is between character and speech, as is the case with the opposition between Pericles and the three politicians mentioned above, the usefulness of speech lies in the fact that character alone cannot manipulate the multitude as effectively. But what happens when the contrast is between speech and other instruments of power?

The attribution to Pericles of the status of 'saviour' (σωτὴρ) of his city is perhaps not accidental, since the term refers to contemporary practices in Plutarch's era. It is a typical designation found in honorary resolutions for benefactors.[58] It is on this basis that the final comparison, that between Pericles and Nicias, is made. Of Cimon, Ephialtes and Thucydides, Plutarch writes merely that they were good. When it comes to Nicias, however, nothing specific is mentioned except that, although he had the same 'intention' (τὴν αὐτὴν προαίρεσιν ἔχων) as Pericles, Nicias used speech like a 'loose rein' – a reminder of what is mentioned in the passage where rhetoric is defined – and thus failed to impose himself on his fellow citizens, which led to the disaster in Sicily (802C–D). But by what means was Nicias trying to impose himself? In *Nicias*, it is said that he lacked the true virtue that Pericles possessed, as well as his way with words, but as he was wealthier he tried to engage in demagoguery, win-

[58] See Touloumakos (1988) 304–324.

ning over the demos by paying for choruses, funding the gymnasia and other such things, as no one could rival him when it came to the luxury and splendour of his munificence (*Nic*. 3.2; *Nic*.-*Cras*. 1.4).[59] If Pericles, then, is presented as surpassing Cimon, Ephialtes and Thucydides, the son of Melesias, because in addition to virtue he possesses eloquence, he likely surpasses Nicias because eloquence is more effective than the other, usual means of attaining distinction.[60]

The comparison between Pericles and Nicias ends now with an explicit juxtaposition of rhetorical discourse with beneficence. This image concludes the line of argumentation that began with the debate about the proper definition of rhetoric. It is also found in a passage which marks the transition to another lengthy section, which presents detailed instructions for composing political oratory. Here, Plutarch implies that human beings, precisely because they are capable of submitting the irrational part of the soul to the power of reason, must be manipulated in a way that appeals to their rationality. Established forms of benevolence, such as the organisation of festivals, conferring financial benefits and funding performances with dancers and gladiatorial contests, are likened to the hunting and herding of irrational beasts and associated with the activity of the *demokópos* (δημοκόπος).[61] The *demokópos* represents a morally inferior class of politician,[62] a politician who is unprincipled in speech and who attempts to manipulate rational beings by means that are crude and appeal to base desires. At the opposite extreme is the model of the 'demagogue' (δημαγωγός), a term which is meant positively here.[63] This is the politician who leads his fellow citizens by means of speech.

This contrast organically links rhetoric to a refined version of politics, in which the benefit of citizens is sought. The modification at the end of the passage of the well-known proverb "I grab the wolf by the ears" (τὸν λύκον τῶν ὤτων ἔχειν) to "the wolf, they say, cannot be held by the ears; but one must lead a people or a State" (τὸν μὲν οὖν λύκον οὔ φασι τῶν

[59] Cf. Roskam (2014) 521–522.

[60] Similar lists of ancient politicians using rhetoric are found in the following texts: Phld. *Rh*. II Sudhaus, 212–213; Cic. *De or*. 3.138–139; Dio Chr. 22.1–2.

[61] On the critique of such spectacles from an ethical point of view, cf. also Ter. *Hec.* 4–7, 39–43; Hor. *Ep*. 2.1.182–216; Dio Chr. 32.1–5. Cf. Habinek (1998) 98–100; Hunter (2002) 191, 200–201; Lada-Richards (2004) 55–82; *ead*. (2007) 120–125; Lehmann (2020b) 150–151 n. 41.

[62] Cf. Lehmann (2020a) 16.

[63] Cf. *Rom*. 27.1; *Arist.-Ca. Ma.* 1.2; *Per*. 39.3; *Alc*. 6.4; *Arat*. 14.3; *De vit. pud*. 534F; *An seni* 785A. Negative connotations are, however, found in the following passages: *Thes.-Rom.* 2.3; *Cim.* 19.3; *Cor*. 16.4; *Alc.-Cor*. 1.4; *De ad. et am*. 52E; *Mul. virt*. 261F.

ὤτων κρατεῖν, δῆμον δὲ καὶ πόλιν) points precisely to this dimension.[64] The terms 'ears' has a special meaning: apart from the fact that, along with the other organs, they are regarded as receptive to pleasure (*De soll. an.* 961D), elsewhere in Plutarch the ears have the peculiarity of being the organ par excellence through which virtue penetrates the soul (*De aud.* 38B). Although it is not explicitly stated in the text, everything indicates that we are in the domain of politicians who 'persuade' and 'teach' the multitude. What separates the true politician from the bad kinds is respect for a hierarchy of tools in which the multitude is not guided by a means that appeals to its basest instincts, as with beneficence, but by a means that activates the potentialities concealed in the soul, namely rhetorical discourse.[65]

4. Why rhetoric?

The privileging of rhetoric over beneficence that Plutarch defends in the relevant passages may serve an additional purpose, which is worth examining in the context of the present study. The absolute and ahistorical way in which this distinction is made is striking: in practice, a politician could not ignore beneficence. As we have already seen, beneficence and rhetoric are complementary means of imposing power. Why then does Plutarch contrast them in such a schematic and ahistorical way?

The truth is that there are points of convergence between rhetoric and philosophy that do not exist between philosophy and beneficence. Both philosophy and rhetoric deal with speech and arguments, which makes the devotees of both subjects competent users of language. Jonathan Powell has pointed out that, as early as Hellenistic times, the Athenians systematically sent philosophers on diplomatic missions, not only because of their general reputation for being temperate and unflappable, but also because their systematic training in dialectics made them masters in the art of argumentation.[66] Dio Chrysostom also mentions the public presence of philosophers as orators in the assembly of his city. At the beginning of one of his advisory speeches, Dio has an 'imaginary objector' ask why, while so many have been active in politics in the city – natives and foreigners, orators and philosophers, old and young – none had ever found the courage to give the advice that Dio is about to give

[64] The proverb also means being trapped in a situation that will certainly lead to disaster. On the proverb, see *ParG*. II, 220, 44. Cf. also Ter. *Ph.* 506–507; Plb. 30.20.9; Suet. *Tib.* 25; Caiazza (1993) 213.

[65] Cf. *Quaest. conv.* 712B.

[66] See Powell (2013) 222–225.

them (38.4).[67] In another text, Dio explains that there are many kinds of work and action that are common to philosophers and orators – not, of course, those base orators who make their living from their art and aim to profit from the litigations of private individuals, but rather those who have a claim to advise publicly and legislate (22.1). The fact that forensic orators are treated by Dio as a subordinate class of rhetoricians does not obscure the fact that, here too, public deliberative rhetoric, along with its legislative counterpart, is considered to be common to both philosophers and orators. But how were philosophers trained for this kind of intervention? How did they maintain their skills?

Although Plutarch does not seem to have taught rhetoric, there are some indications in his writings that the philosophical education he represents involved rhetoric.

The first clue is found in a passage in *De profectibus in virtute*. As noted in the introduction, the text discusses various ways in which people engaged in philosophy who are in a slow process of moral formation can become aware of their progress, so that they do not become disillusioned and give up along the way (78C–79B). In the passage we are now considering, Plutarch argues that progress in virtue is also reflected on the level of linguistic expression. Those who take up philosophy, he writes, are indeed at first more interested in the kinds of discourse that can quickly bring them distinction: some are thus drawn towards the discourses bearing on nature; others, who find satisfaction in disputes and controversies, are drawn towards the discourses that fall within the broader field of argumentation (disputes, knotty problems, quibbles); many others first show an interest in dialectic, as through it they prepare themselves for sophistry; and, finally, yet others spend their lives compiling collections of historical and didactic examples (78E–F). However, the rewards one receives from philosophy with regard to the cultivation of discourse are supposed to be greater – the kind of discourse that corresponds to progress in virtue is typically defined in the text through a parallel with the Aesop's fable of the fox before the lion's den (no. 139 Perry). The discourse "whose footprints [...] are turned toward us rather than away from us" (79A–B: εἴσω μᾶλλον ἢ ἔξω τὰ ἴχνη τέτραπται) is, if we consider the analogy with the lion's den, the discourse that turns the listener into 'prey' without giving the impression of doing so.

In order to develop this kind of discourse, however, a man's 'judgement' (κρίσις) must first be made healthy and he must begin to seek out those discourses that "are productive of character and breadth of mind" (79A).[68] The whole process is compared with the process through which

[67] Cf. Dio Chr. 44.10.

[68] Cf. also Quintilian's reference, in 5.14.28, to the task of judgement (*pars iudicandi*) known (among philosophers?) as κριτική, alongside the remarks of Reinhardt (2000)

Sophocles supposedly developed his distinctive poetic style. According to one account, Sophocles once declared that it was only after having played around with the 'turgidity' (ὄγκον) of Aeschylus and studied "his harshness and artificiality in composition" (τὸ πικρὸν καὶ κατάτεχνον τῆς αὐτοῦ κατασκευῆς) that he was able to develop his own distinctive style, which "has the most to do with moral character and goodness" (ὅπερ ἠθικώτατόν ἐστι καὶ βέλτιστον) (79B).[69] In this, Plutarch is following the assessment of Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Imit.*, *fr.* 31.2.10–11), according to which the style of Sophocles is the ideal mean between the grandeur of Aeschylus and the triviality of Euripides. Like Sophocles, Plutarch writes, students of philosophy, as they progress in virtue, turn away from speeches like those delivered at festivals, which are characterised by fastidiousness in the application of the rules of art, and instead compose speeches centred on character and emotions (79B: ἐκ τῶν πανηγυρικῶν καὶ κατατέχνων εἰς τὸν ἁπτόμενον ἤθους καὶ πάθους λόγον μεταβῶσιν).[70]

In the introduction to his dissertation *Die rhetorischen Schriften Plutarchs und ihre Stellung im Plutarchischen Schriftenkorpus*, Fritz Krauss sees this passage as describing a two-stage process of moral progress. In the context of their education, young people are initially concerned with subjects or objects that correspond more closely to a school-oriented rhetorical education. Then, with the help of philosophy, they acquire the maturity needed to develop a more personal mode of expression that reflects the moral education that has taken place in the meantime.[71] This interpretation does, however, present some difficulties. The discourses on nature, disputes, knotty problems and quibbles, as well as the collections of historical and didactic examples, which for Krauss correspond to a school-oriented rhetorical education, are not described in the text as an 'initial stage'. On the contrary, these are forms of engagement with discourse that are situated in autonomous domains outside the philosophical realm represented by Plutarch and which can be enhanced by engagement with philosophy.[72]

The wording also suggests a form of movement outside the 'right' course: some "descend" like birds (καταίροντες) towards the splendour and grandeur of the words of natural philosophy, others "retreat" (χωροῦσι) towards disputes, knotty problems and quibbles, while yet others use dialectic to "stock themselves up for the practice of sophist-

545–546 concerning Cicero and Philo of Larissa.

[69] On Sophocles' statement, see Bowra (1940) 385–401; Pinnoy (1984) 159–164.

[70] Cf. *Per*. 15.2: ἔδειξε τὴν ῥητορικὴν κατὰ Πλάτωνα ψυχαγωγίαν οὖσαν καὶ μέγιστον ἔργον αὐτῆς τὴν περὶ τὰ ἤθη καὶ πάθη μέθοδον.

[71] See Krauss (1912) 10–11.

[72] Cf. also Anon. Epic. *fr.* 5, col. XXV 1–3 Vogliano; Clem. Al. *Strom*. 7.16.101.4.

ry" (ἐπισιτίζονται πρὸς σοφιστείαν), which is obviously a different field from that of philosophy. Finally, those who are preoccupied with collections of examples perfect themselves (περιίασιν) in this task, that is they remain attached to a field or sphere in which there seems to be no substantive progress and which is thus to be fundamentally distinguished from the body of philosophical education positively projected in the text. From the perspective of Krauss' thesis that certain texts in the Plutarchan corpus which display a greater degree of rhetorical sophistication belong to a youthful period in Plutarch's literary production, it was important to classify the forms of engagement with discourse listed above into two temporal phases.[73] But the chronological sequence suggested by the text is, in fact, the opposite of what Krauss claims: young people are initially directed towards philosophy, with the goal of acquiring from it skills that will be useful for some other form of engagement with discourse. Particularly telling is the reference to those who prepare for sophistical demonstrations by studying dialectic.

Plutarch's position is that if they all show patience and stick with philosophy, they will benefit more in the long run. Progress in virtue contributes to the creation of a form of discourse that is superior by both moral and practical standards: natural-philosophical discourses are, moreover, characterised at the very beginning of the passage by 'flightiness' (κουφότης) and 'ambition' (φιλοτιμία) (79E), while argumentative ones are characterised (79E–F, cf. Pl. *R*. 539B) as being produced by people who look "like puppies, delighting in pulling and tearing" (ὥσπερ τὰ σκυλάκια, [...] τῷ ἕλκειν καὶ σπαράττειν χαίροντες). As far as establishing collections of examples is concerned, the contrast is outlined in terms of 'utility'. The contrast between, on the one hand, festive discourses that are characterised by the application of rules and, on the other hand, discourse that is only concerned with characters and emotions goes in the same direction. Here, the hierarchy is grounded in the opposition between 'artificial' and 'natural'.

The obvious interpretation of the downplaying of certain forms of engagement with discourse observed in this text is that Plutarch is reacting to the loss of students to other disciplines in which philosophical education is perceived as a preparatory stage. At least one of these other disciplines is associated with rhetoric, as suggested by the reference to sophistry, for which some are said to be equipped through the study of dialectic. It is well known that teachers of rhetoric encouraged their students to take courses in philosophy as well, so that they might simultaneously acquire the theoretical and moral tools necessary to become either

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[73] See Krauss (1912) 4.

orators or men of letters more generally (Theon II, 59 Sp. = I, 145 W.).[74] Moreover, in the context of rhetorical education, teachers often made use of material with which their pupils were familiar either from their earlier education or from other readings: ready-made didactic examples or maxims from poetic texts consistently found a place in the rhetorical compositions of young people (see, e.g., Quint. 1.1.35–36, 10.5.4–11); texts of historians and philosophers were consulted in order to identify and collect anecdotes and other relevant material, which could be used to embellish and confer authority on a new rhetorical composition: Menander Rhetor, in the late third century AD, suggested that his readers should comb through Plutarch's *Lives* for this very purpose, in order to cull from them historical examples, apopthegms, proverbs and didactic stories (III, 392 Sp. = IX, 253–254 W.).

Obviously a philosopher active in higher education could not accept his teachings being used in such an instrumental way, regardless of his own views on rhetoric. In Plutarch, this tension is addressed by appealing to the need to subordinate rhetorical prowess to an ethical hierarchy that privileges 'judgement'. It is wrong, Plutarch argues, to ransack the texts of the philosophers for sophisticated Attic words rather than seeking lessons for improving one's character (79B–D).[75] Those who study the texts of the philosophers with the sole intention of finding in them the one or other impressive word are compared in the text to 'apothecaries' who sell medicine without knowing how to cure the ill, and thus are presented as 'sophists' (for the connotations of this term, see the next chapter), who are in the habit of offering their students knowledge in such a way that the students are unable to make any real use of it (80A). The polemical mood of the passage makes it abundantly clear that the problem is the view of philosophy as an opportunistic pursuit. It is worth noting, however, that, in contrast to the opposition drawn in the text, the utility of philosophical education does not appear to relate to a field other

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[74] See Isoc. 12.26–28; Cic. *De or.* 1.53–69; 3.76–77; *Off.* 1.1–3; Quint. 1.pr.9. Cf. also Lausberg (1990³) 44.

[75] On Plutarch's attitude towards Atticism, see, e.g., Norden (1898) 1.361, 1.380; Jeuckens (1907) 55–58; Ziegler (1951) 932; Hamilton (1969) lxvi–lxvii; Whitmarsh (2005) 42; Schmitz (2012) 78–79; Jażdżewska (2019) 66–70; Vela Tejada (2019) 299–301. The relevant passages from the philosopher's work are as follows: *Nic.* 1.4; *De aud.* 42D; *De prof. in virt.* 79D; *Quaest. Plat.* 1009F–1010D; *fr.* 186 (= Isid. Pel. *Ep.* 2.42). Cf. also *Ant.* 2.5–8 on Asianism. Plutarch's attitude towards Atticism is, in general, the same moderate attitude that we find in other writers of the period, who are not prepared to let the content be compromised by the search for sophisticated words and formal elaboration. Galen, for example, expresses a similar attitude in *Alim. Fac.*, VI, 579 K. (= *CMG* V 4.2, 279); VI, 584 K. (= *CMG* V 4.2, 282) and in *Symp. Diff.*, VII, 45 K., as does Dioscorides (1.pr.2–6). Cf. also the remarks of Matthaios (2013) 70–76.

than the one in which the competitors are themselves active. Plutarch also promises to cultivate eloquence. He merely argues that eloquence is best acquired when the study of discourses does not undermine other, more central aspects of his teaching.

A more thorough account of the engagement of philosophy with rhetoric in Plutarch's school can perhaps be gleaned from the dialogue *De sollertia animalium*. Most of the text is taken up by a dialectical debate between two students over the question of whether terrestrial or aquatic animals are smarter.

As is often the case in philosophical dialogues, the primary narrator, 'Plutarch', is suppressed.[76] Events are presented through the conversations of the various *dramatis personae*. These include Autobulus, Soclarus, the disciples Aristotimus and Phaedimus, Optatus and Heracleon of Megara. Soclarus is known from other of Plutarch's texts as his close friend.[77] Autobulus, who appears in the text as an elderly man (already in 959B) and, moreover, has the same name as one of Plutarch's sons (see, e.g., *Quaest. conv.* 666D), has been identified in the scholarship as Plutarch's father: later in the text, he mentions that his son is a Platonic philosopher and close friend of Soclarus (964D).[78] Both men are presented in the text as educated, able to quote passages from classical writers and well informed about the various philosophical controversies of the day.[79] Optatus is likewise depicted as an elderly (965C) and cultured man: his first words in the text include a passing reference to Solon's laws, and he is immediately introduced by Autobulus as an expert on Aristotle's zoological works (965D). Heracleon is known from the dialogue *De defectu oraculorum*, probably as an associate of Plutarch's brother Lamprias (see, e.g., *De def. or.* 413C–D, 418E–F).[80] The disciples Aristotimus and Phaedimus are presented as studious young men (963B–C), who are additionally interested in hunting and fishing for sport (959B,

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[76] For the terminology, see, e.g., de Jong (2014) 34.

[77] For Soclarus (T. Flavius Soclarus) from Tithorea, see Bowersock (1965) 267–268; Jones (1971) 41–42; *id.* (1972) 264; Puech (1981) 186–192; *id.* (1992) 4879–4883.

[78] This identification, which was originally proposed (separately) by Muhl (1885) 23–24 and Hartman (1916) 568, is now taken for granted by the majority of scholars. See, e.g., Hirzel (1895) 2.175; Ziegler (1951) 643–644; Jones (1971) 9; Mossman (2005) 142; Bouffartigue (2012) xiv–xv. For the identification of this man with Plutarch's oldest son, see Horky (2017) 106–107, 114–115.

[79] See quotations from classical authors: 959B, 959C–D, 959E, 961A–B, 964D–C, 964F, 965C, 985C. See also Mossman (2005) 143 on the allusive reference to Phaedra from Euripides' *Hippolytus* at the beginning of the dialogue. References to the tenets of various philosophical schools are found at: 959F, 960B, 960D, 960E, 961A, 961C–F, 962A, 963F–964A, 964C, 964D, 964E–F, 965B, 965D–E.

[80] See also Mossman (2005) 143 n. 3.

960A, 975D). There are also a number of other people who are supposedly present, but who remain mute throughout. The only trace of their existence in the text is the passage in which Autobulus sees them arrive at the place where the dispute is to take place and greets them (965B–C), as well as Autobulus' address "O friends" (ὦ φίλοι) at the beginning of the dialogue (959B), which implies their presence.[81]

The events described might have seemed realistic to ancient readers. The dialogue's characters and didactic setting suggest that the events must be understood to be taking place in Plutarch's philosophical school in Boeotia, however idealised the image of the school that is given. While Plutarch does not intervene directly in the events, Autobulus and Soclarus are closely associated with him.[82] A reference by Aristotimus to Athens, as a place where 'our fathers' (οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν) had studied (969E), indicates a circle of friends who, like Plutarch, had previously studied in Athens and were now sharing their experiences with the younger generation.[83] Indeed, Plutarch's contemporary readers might have been able to identify more of the individuals mentioned in the dialogue.[84] However that may be, the fact that most of them come from different parts of Greece indicates that they are present as guests.[85] In other words, there was the possibility to be lodged either at the site of the debate or somewhere nearby, as was customary at the time in regions that had schools with broader renown.[86]

The events recounted in the dialogue cover a day at the school. Some events that happened the previous day, as well as an incident that supposedly took place early in the morning on the same day, are incorporated into the narrative by means of analepses.[87] The dialogue begins with a conversation between Autobulus and Soclarus about a rhetorical encomium of hunting that had been read the previous day at a symposium, which had probably been organised at the same place where the meeting is now taking place and which both men had listened to, in the presence of a group of young people (959A–C).[88] In the past, numerous scholars had assumed that the text implies that the encomium was read

81 See Hirzel (1895) 2.174 n. 3.

82 Cf. Hirzel (1895) 2.180.

83 On this, see Hirzel (1895) 2.173–174 n. 2.

84 Cf. Russell (2001²) 14.

85 See Bouffartigue (2012) xviii. See also Hirzel (1895) 2.174 n. 1.

86 See Fron (2021) 84–92.

87 The dramatic date must be placed after 79 AD, i.e. after Vespasian's death (Russell (2001²) 14), or, according to Cherniss & Helmbold (1957) 314 either around AD 70 or after AD 81, i.e. the date of the death of Titus (cf. also Jones (1966) 71), depending on the interpretation given to the reference to the "old Vespasian" (ὁ γέρων Οὐεσπασιανὸς) at 974A.

88 For the location, see Hirzel (1895) 2.174 n. 2, cf. Bouffartigue (2012) xviii.

by Plutarch himself,[89] but this position has long since been convincingly refuted.[90] With this eulogy in mind, the two men begin to discuss certain moral issues related to animals: Is it right for humans to hunt animals? Is killing animals as unjust as killing humans? Are animals as amenable to reason and as capable of virtue as humans? (959D–965B)[91]

However, as the discussion proceeds, they suddenly remember that, after having listened to the encomium the day before, they had put forward the view that all animals in one way or another participate in 'reason' and 'calculation' and propose, with reference to this thesis, to hold a competition: Aristotimus and Phaedimus, two disciples who had also listened to the encomium, are invited to debate the question of whether terrestrial or aquatic animals are more intelligent (960A–B, 962D).[92] Soclarus reports that, as he was heading to his meeting with Autobulus earlier that morning, he saw the two young men preparing themselves for the contest, meaning that they are about to appear at any minute (960B). Autobulus and Soclarus continue their discussion around the question of animal intelligence – in quite technical terms – until Aristotimus, Phaedimus and the others who are to attend the debate arrive (965B–C).

Aristotimus speaks first in favour of the view that land animals are smarter (965E–975C). He is followed by Phaedimus, who speaks in favour of the position that aquatic animals are smarter (975C–985C). As soon as Phaedimus concludes his speech, Aristotimus asks the audience to announce the winner (985C). However, Soclarus intervenes, explaining that the two young men must now synthesise into a common whole what they had previously said against each other (ἃ πρὸς ἀλλήλους εἰρήκατε, συνθέντες εἰς ταὐτὸν) and together fight against those who deprive animals of 'reason' and 'understanding' (985C).

It need not be assumed – as has been done in the scholarship – that just because its ending seems abrupt, the dialogue has been preserved in fragmentary form.[93] The struggle between the two young people takes the form of an *antilogia*, i.e. a pair of speeches, which approach a topic from two diametrically opposed perspectives. As a teaching method, *antilogia* has its roots in the age of the ancient sophists. Protagoras is

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[89] See Hirzel (1895) 2.173; Muhl (1885) 24; Ziegler (1951) 735, 739; Barrow (1967) 112–113; Babut (1969) 59 and (albeit with reservations) Russell (2001²) 13.

[90] See Martin (1970) 99–106, who nevertheless relies on Jeuckens (1907) 14–15 and Krauss (1912) 6. See also Mossman (2005) 144–145.

[91] A summary of the arguments is found in Newmyer (2014) 226–230.

[92] Cf. Hirzel (1895) 2.178.

[93] See Cherniss & Helmbold (1957) 479 n. *c*. The abrupt ending of the dialogue (without a winner being declared) has been considered suspicious by some scholars, although, as William Helmbold (*ibid.*) explains, there is no particular reason to assume that the dialogue continued on and that the actual ending has been lost. Cf. Mossman (2005) 147 n. 16.

credited with a work entitled *Antilogiai* (Diog. Laert. 3.38 (= Protag., 80 B 5 D-K), 3.57 (= Protag., 80 B 5 D-K)), while Aristophanes parodied this aspect of the sophists' teaching in his *Clouds* (see *Nu*. 883–1104). The *antilogia* later found its place also in the context of declamation, which we find from Hellenistic times onwards in both Greek- and Latin-speaking schools of rhetoric.[94]

Nevertheless, it is known that *antilogia* is not exclusively about rhetorical education. The Academic sceptics were also interested in this method. From Arcesilaus to Philo of Larissa, the philosophers of the Academy, who challenged any doctrinal claim that particular impressions can always be considered true, when faced with a dilemma about whether one or the other proposition is true or false, preferred to postpone any judgement (ἐποχή). Nevertheless, unlike the Pyrrhonian Sceptics, who used the same term, the Academic Sceptics acknowledged the preceding process, i.e. the process of examining this or that proposition as simultaneously true and false, as a method by which one can ascertain which propositions are, if not true, at least more probable than others.[95] One is reminded here of Carneades, who, as a number of ancient sources attest, once gave two speeches in Rome on successive days, one for and the other against justice. The same interest in this method is found in the later Academics. At the beginning of his treatise *De optima doctrina,* Galen attacks the sophist and philosopher Favorinus of Arles,[96] who – according to Galen's testimony – proclaimed that the Academic practice of examining subjects from diametrically opposed points of view (εἰς ἑκάτερον ἐπιχείρησις) is the best method of teaching (*Opt. doct.* I, 40.3–5 K.) and defended this method in a series of books, one of which bore the title *On the Academic Disposition or Plutarch* and another entitled *Against Epictetus*, which was a dialogue in which a slave of Plutarch, a certain Onesimus, appeared to exchange arguments with the Stoic philosopher Epictetus (*Opt. doct.* I, 41.11–15 K.).

Nevertheless, there should be no doubt that in this Plutarchan dialogue – and this is of primary interest in the context of the present discussion – the emphasis is placed mainly on the relevance of this method to rhetoric. At the beginning of the dialogue (959C), Soclarus notes that "the reader [or 'that speech', depending on the interpretation one gives to the word ἐκεῖνος] yesterday seems to have roused his rhetoric from its long disuse to gratify the young men and share their vernal mood" (καὶ

[94] See, e.g., Bouffartigue (2012) viii.

[95] An excellent introduction to the philosophy of the Academic Sceptics can be found in Hossenfelder (1985) 191ff.

[96] See *PIR*² F 123. On Favorinus as an Academic philosopher, see Glucker (1978) 280–285; Ducos (1984) 290–291; Opsomer (1997) 18. On the relationship between Favorinus and Plutarch, see p. 25 n. 49.

γὰρ ἐκεῖνος ἔδοξέ μοι τὸ ῥητορικὸν ἐγεῖραι διὰ χρόνου, χαριζόμενος καὶ συνεαρίζων τοῖς μειρακίοις).[97] It was in this atmosphere that Autobulus and Soclarus proposed holding the contest. The association with rhetoric is striking from the beginning of the debate. Several metaphors taken from the domain of forensic rhetoric can be found in this part of the text, conveying to viewers and readers a courtroom atmosphere and the image of actual court battle (see, e.g., 960A–B, 965B, 965E, 975C, 985C).[98] The second speaker, Phaedimus, also appears in his speech to seize on points made by the previous speaker and respond to them,[99] as a litigant would do in court. After Phaedimus' speech, Aristotimus addresses (985C) the audience with the words: "so, gentlemen of the jury, you may now cast your votes" (Ἔξεστιν οὖν ὑμῖν, ὦ ἄνδρες δικασταί, τὴν ψῆφον φέρειν).

The question of why the contest ends without a winner need not concern us now. In my opinion, this aspect can be interpreted in light of the Academic notion of 'refusal to pass judgement' (ἐποχή) and the practice of looking at issues from diametrically opposed perspectives.[100] What is significant in the context of this discussion is that the struggle, which, as we have seen, is depicted as a rhetorical struggle, takes place in the context of a philosophical debate within a school environment. The question of whether or not animals possess reason is a serious philosophical issue with implications for the field of ethics, since it also raises the question of how humans ought to behave both towards animals and towards other human beings (see esp. 959D–960A).[101] But rhetoric, it seems, has a role to play in this context as well.

In the entire extant Plutarchan corpus, there is only one relatively brief passage that refers to rhetorical teaching. These are the four of the five sections in the *Praecepta gerendae reipulicae* that deal with rhetoric: the first section, as we have seen, discusses the definition of rhetoric and concludes with the example of Pericles and the emphasis on the superiority of speech over beneficence as a means of political manipulation (801C–802E). The remaining four sections describe exactly what the politician's speech should be like (802E–804C). Although Plutarch tries at

[97] For the interpretation of the phrase, see Martin (1970) 106; Mossman (2005) 144–145. The word συνεαρίζω (from ἔαρ, 'spring') is a *hapax*. Bouffartigue (2012) 3 (ad loc.) notes the conjectures συννεαρίζων by Reiske and συννεάζων by Madvig.

[98] On the legal imagery, see Hirzel (1895) 2.176 n. 4; Mossman (2005) 146, 156.

[99] See Mossman (2005) 158–159.

[100] On this, see my more detailed analysis in Tsiampokalos (2024) 110–124.

[101] The view towards which Autobulus and Soclarus lean in the first part of the dialogue, namely that animals partake of reason – as obvious as it sounds today – was marginal at the time. Most thinkers, including Aristotle and the Peripatetics, as well as the Stoics (cf. 963F), argued that reason is precisely what distinguishes human beings from other animals. On this see, e.g., Sorabji (1993) 1–28, 107–133; Newmyer (2014) 225–226.

various points in his writings to take some distance from the model of an 'artful' and sophistical type of rhetoric, which, according to him, is not appropriate for the field of politics, in reality what he offers in these sections is nothing other than a small-scale, self-contained technical manual for the composition of political oratory.

The layout of the material is indicative of this. As is often the case in technical texts, the material here follows – albeit somewhat more loosely – familiar divisions of the rhetorical art. The section begins with a formal comparison of political/deliberative speech with the other two classical branches of rhetoric: the epideictic speech and the judicial speech. Political speech (ὁ λόγος τοῦ πολιτικοῦ) is distinguished from the former both by its unaffectedness and by the character it expresses, the character of the person seeking to benefit his fellow-citizens (802E–803A), while it differs from the latter in the extent to which it admits of the use of maxims, historical and mythological examples and metaphors, as well as of grandiosity and high expression more generally (803A–D).[102] The topics of teasing one's political opponents, ridicule and brevity that are discussed immediately afterwards are – even if they are not exclusively connected with judicial oratory – at any rate topics that appear frequently in rhetorical textbooks (803B–E).[103] After the discussion of 'brevity', however, it becomes clear that the categorisation based on the three branches of oratory has given way to another classical categorisation, that of the five parts of rhetoric. Such shifts are not uncommon in technical texts

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[102] Cf. Arist. *Rh.* 1.3, 1358a 36; 1.3 1359a 29; Anaxim. Lamps. *Rh. Al.*, *passim*; Dion. Hal. *Lys.* 16; Phld. *Rh.* I, 212–214 Sudhaus; Theon II, 60–61 Sp. (= I, 149–151 W.); III, 1–2 Sp. (= IX, 331–333 W.). On 'loftiness' (μέγεθος) and 'grandeur of style' (ὄγκος), which together also with 'dignity' (ἀξίωμα) constitute one of the seven great stylistic categories (ἰδέαι) of Hermogenes, see *id.*, VI, 241–242 R. (= III, 217–218 W. = II, 286–287 Sp.). At this point, it is important to highlight the distinction between the 'political speech' or, more precisely, 'the politician's speech' (ὁ λόγος τοῦ πολιτικοῦ) discussed by Plutarch here and the so-called 'civic speeches' (πολιτικοὶ λόγοι) referenced by authors, such as Dionysius of Halicarnassus (see, e.g., *Orat. Vet.* 1.1). In the case of the latter, it is not merely about speeches composed for political rhetoric. Rather, it is about a type of oratory that one is able to produce due to one's educational background, a background which was intended to equip an individual to adeptly navigate both private and public life, especially within the civic context of the *polis*. In essence, it pertains to any form of speech that can be delivered in a city, demonstrating the *paideia* of a person. For more on this term and its connection to the educational tradition of Isocrates, see esp. Hidber (1996) 97–100.

[103] On 'teasing' (σκῶμμα) and the element of 'ridicule' (γελοῖον), see Arist. *Rh.* 3.18, 1419b 3–11; Thphr. *frr.* 710–711 FHS&G; [Demetr.] *Eloc.* 163–172; [Cic.] *Rh. Herenn.*1.10; Cic. *De or.* 2.231–290; Quint. 6.3.1–112. On 'brevity' (βραχυλογία, also βραχύτης) see Anaxim. Lamps. *Rh. Al.* 22.5; [Cic.] *Rh. Herenn.*4.68; [Demetr.] *Eloc.* 242–243; Tryph. *Trop.* 2.7 (= III 202 Sp. = VIII, 752 W.); Quint. 8.3.81–82, 9.3.50.

on rhetoric.[104] This last section includes advice related to memorising speeches (803E–804B)[105] and voice (804B–C), which is known to be an element of the performative aspect.[106]

Throughout this whole section, Plutarch's language also shows a clear tendency towards the technical jargon of Dionysius of Halicarnassus: the vocabulary used to contrast the ideal political speech with the sophisticated and 'theatrical' genre of epideictic oratory (802E–F) evokes the terminology used by Dionysius to contrast the two extreme types of composition – the 'austere' and the 'smooth' (cf. *Comp.* 22.6, 22.35, 23.7, 23.23).[107] In addition, the section also concludes in a manner typical of a technical manual: the paratextual comment "on the subject, then, of the preparation of one's speech and the way to use it these remarks are enough for one who has the ability to go on and discover the conclusions to be drawn from them" (804C: περὶ μὲν οὖν τῆς τοῦ λόγου παρασκευῆς καὶ χρείας ἱκανὰ ταῦτα τῷ δυναμένῳ τὸ ἀκόλουθον προσεξευρίσκειν) is found almost the same in other texts of the period that either involve or merely refer to a form of instruction, which is distinguished by the fact that it aims to transmit a finite and relatively concise body of knowledge, but structured in such a way as to allow, through its use, a much larger or even infinite number of things to be decoded.[108]

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[104] An example is [Cic.] *Rh. Herenn.*, where the distribution based on the three branches of oratory, judicial (1.1–2.27), deliberative (3.1–10) and epideictic (3.11–15), is merged with the distribution based on the five parts of rhetoric, 'invention' (2.1–47), 'arrangement' (3.16–18), 'delivery' (3.19–27), 'memory' (3.28–40) and 'style' (4.1–69), while in describing each of the types of rhetoric, the author also adopts parallel divisions based on the parts of speech itself: exordium (1.5–11, 3.7, 3.11–13), narration (1.12–13, 3.7, 3.13), division (1.17, 3.7, 3.8–9, 3.13–14), proof (2.1–31, 3.9, 3.15), refutation (2.32–46, 3.9, 3.15) and peroration (1.47, 3.9, 3.15).

[105] Cf. [Cic.] *Rh. Herenn.* 3.39–40.

[106] Cf. [Cic.] *Rh. Herenn.* 3.19–27; Cic. *De or.* 3.213–219; 3.224–227; *Orat.* 55–60; Quint. 11.3.14–65.

[107] Of particular relevance here are the metaphors of theatre and performance, as well as those of flowers and blooming, used by both authors in their respective contexts. Carrière (2003²) 166, points out the 'theatrical' character of the 'Asian' rhetoric in Dio. Hal. *Orat. Vet.* 1.2–4; the same terminology is also used in *De aud.* 41F. Cf. [Demetr.] *Eloc.* 36; see also van der Stockt (2006) 1038–1039 and Lehmann (2020b) 151 n. 44. For Dionysius' three types of composition (the 'austere', the 'smooth' and the 'well-balanced'), see de Jonge (2008) 204–213 (with further references).

[108] The English translation above is by H.N. Fowler. For parallel passages, see esp. Pollux 4.1 (Ἰούλιος Πολυδεύκης Κομμόδῳ Καίσαρι χαίρειν. οἶμαι καὶ σέ, εἰ καὶ νέος εἶ, πολλὰ προσεξευρήσειν οἷς ἔγραψα), cf. also Hp. *VM* 4; [Cic.] *Rh. Herenn.* 3.40; Diod. Sic. 5.74.6–5.75.1; Philo *De aetern. mundi* 16–17; Clem. Al. *Strom.* 7.16.103.6–7; Artem.

All of this is kept coherent by the possibility of expressing a specific moral and aesthetic charge. At the beginning of the section, the kind of rhetoric discussed is defined through the familiar analogy with music: just as musicians teach that the striking of the strings should reveal the character and not the technical skill of the player, so too a politician's speech should not be characterised by childishness, theatricality, 'delicate' and 'flowery' words, formal perfection, rigid adherence to the rules of rhetoric and so on. On the contrary, he must display an "unaffected character" (ἤθους ἀπλάστου),[109] "true high-mindedness" (φρονήματος ἀληθινοῦ),[110] a "father's frankness" (παρρησίας πατρικῆς),[111] and finally intellectual skills, such as "foresight" (προνοίας) and "thoughtful concern for others" (συνέσεως κηδομένης) (802F–803A). Each of these traits also alludes to a form of symbolic capital: most of them, after all, recur frequently in the texts of honorary inscriptions of the time. On the other hand, however, the same traits also cumulatively express the character of the politician who is committed to benefiting his city, as we saw in the first sections of the text. The emphasis on the absence of affectation implies that the aim of rhetoric is not to conceal, but to project a truth that exists behind the speech, within the politician himself. The text, moreover, ascribes to both this and the other traits discussed here, as a whole, the quality of "beauty" (ἐπὶ τῷ καλῷ, 803A). The "stately diction" (σεμνῶν ὀνομάτων) and the "appropriate and persuasive thoughts" (νοημάτων ἰδίων καὶ πιθανῶν),[112] elements that are connected less with the content of the discourse than with the form, express the quality of 'grace' and are included only secondarily (ἐπὶ τῷ καλῷ τὸ κεχαρισμένον ἔχων, 803A).

It would certainly not be wrong to see the general features of political discourse mentioned here as simply reflecting values that contemporary society esteemed and admired. However, this might lead to a misunderstanding about the relationship of these features to the main axes of the

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On. 4.65; Gal. *Comp. med. gen.*, XIII, 503.5–6 K.; *id. Crises*, IX 739.7–13 K.; Marcell. *Puls*. 55–58; Lucian *Salt*. 61; Basil *Ep*. 150.4.

[109] For a detailed account of the rhetorical technique involving the representation of one's discourse as ἀφελὴς ('simple', 'artless', 'unsophisticated', etc.), see De Temmerman (2014) 118–151.

[110] Cf. the combination of ἄπλαστον καὶ ἀληθινὸν φρόνημα in *Aem*. 37.1–2. Both are characteristics that imply sincerity, the former on the level of character, the latter on the level of intellect. See also Ph. *Quod omnis probus liber sit* 155; *De sacrificiis Abelis et Caini* 26.

[111] On the fatherly authority, see also *Rom*. 13.3–4 and *Aem*. 39.8–9. Cf. also Touloumakos (1988) 321–323; Lendon (1997) 21; Zuiderhoek (2009) 112.

[112] On νόημα, see also Dion. Hal. *Comp*. 3.3–4; *Imit. fr.* 31.2.5; [Longin.] 12.1; [Aristid.] *Rh*. 1.2.1–2. For the technical meaning of the term, cf. Quint. 8.5.12–14.

philosophy advanced in this text, as well as in Plutarch's broader philosophical programme. A politician's speech is indeed persuasive speech, but it must also come from a man undergoing a process of moral education.

The same picture is conveyed by the other individual elements marked out in specific passages of the text. They all seem to have been chosen in order to express the same moral and aesthetic force. Maxims as well as historical and mythological examples, which are evidentiary devices used not only to reinforce the orator's claims, but also to express moral intent, have a clear and unquestioned place among the tools that the politician is called upon to employ (803A).[113] However, the use of metaphors, which seem to be understood here as operating exclusively at the emotional level (cf. καὶ μεταφοράς, αἷς μάλιστα κινοῦσιν οἱ χρώμενοι), can be restricted (803A–B).[114] Magnificence and grandiloquence are appropriate to political discourse only in "general terms" (καθόλου […] μᾶλλον ἁρμόττει) – specific examples from classical literature are given in the text. The positive models are the *Philippics* of Demosthenes and the speeches from Thucydides, in particular those of Sthenelaïdas in Sparta (Th. 1.86.1–3), Archidamus at Plataea (Th. 2.72.1) and, finally, Pericles after the outbreak of the plague in Athens (Th. 2.60.1–64.6). What is to be avoided is the exuberance of the so-called representatives of Hellenistic rhetorical historiography, Ephorus of Cyme, and Theopompus of Chios (both of whom were students of Isocrates), as well as Anaximenes of Lampsacus (803B). When it comes to the use of teasing (σκῶμμα) and ridicule (γελοῖον), the criterion is once again the need to express the appropriate character (803B–E).[115]

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[113] On maxims (γνῶμαι) and their application in rhetoric (γνωμολογία), cf. Pl. *Phdr.* 267C; Arist. *Rh.* 2.21, 1395b 1–17; Theon II, 96–97 Sp. (= I, 201–202 W.); Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 712B; Dio Chr. 18.7; Quint. 8.5.8; VI, 8 R. (= I, 24 W. = II, 7 Sp.); VI, 7 R. (= I, 67 W. = II, 25 Sp.); XI, 25 F. Cf. also Horna (1935) 76–79; Liapis (2002) 42–46; Papathomas (2006) 244–255; Stenger (2006) 206–208; Morgan (2007) 5–8; Papathomas (2007) 865–877; De Temmerman (2010) 37. On historical examples (ἱστορίαι, χρεῖαι, παραδείγματα, Lat. *exempla*) and myths (μῦθοι, αἶνοι, λόγοι, Lat. *fabulae*, *apologi*, *apologationes*) cf. also Theon II, 60 Sp. (= I, 148 W.), II, 73–74 Sp. (= I, 174–175 W.); Hermog. *Prog.* VI, 1 R. (= I, 9 W. = II, 3 Sp.); VI 6 R. (= I, 19 W. = II, 5 Sp.); Aphth. VI, 1–2 R. (= I, 59 W. = II, 21 Sp.); VI, 4 R. (= I, 62–63 W. = II, 23 Sp.); Nicol. *Prog.* XI, 8 F.; XI, 10 F.; XI, 17 F.; XI, 20 F.; see also Stenger (2006) 212–215; De Temmerman (2010) 37–38 and *id.* (2014) 38–39.

[114] Moderate use of metaphors is also preferred by Quint. 8.6.4–6; 8.6.14–18; [Longin.] 32.1; see the remarks of De Temmerman (2014) 143–148. On metaphors, cf. also Plut. *Dem.* 2.4; *Cic.* 40.2–3; *De aud. poet.* 16A–C; 25A–B; *Bellone an pace* 347F; *De Pyth. or.* 405D; 407A–B; 409C–D; *Quaest. conv.* 700C; 747C–D.

[115] Cf. also Anaximen. Lamps. *Rh. Al.* 35.17; Arist. *Rh.* 3.7, 1408a 1–36; Cic. *De or.* 2.236–237; Quint. 6.3.1; 6.3.35; 6.3.83. See also Chronopoulos (2016) 47–53.

The same considerations apply to brevity (βραχυλογία). It is, moreover, favoured, because it presupposes a mental deductive process designed to achieve the best possible economy of speech (cf. πλεῖστον γὰρ αὐτοῦ [*sc*. Φωκίωνος] τὸν λόγον ἐν λέξει βραχυτάτῃ νοῦν περιέχειν), thus demonstrating intellectual superiority (803E).[116] The ability to focus on the topic of discussion and to respond to occasions and issues raised at the right time, which we read about in the discussion regarding memorisation at the end, are two different ways of talking about a productive commitment to the content of a speech (vs. form or style), on the axis of space and time respectively.[117] Perhaps only the comment on voice at the end is there merely to set a dramatic tone just before the conclusion of the section, reminding readers that political discourse is not merely a matter of reading, but part of an act (804B–C).

Beyond this final directive, however, stand all the others, because, taken together, they correspond to the image of a man going through a systematic and substantive process of moral formation of the self. This does not mean, however, that these instructions are not also instructions for rhetorical composition.[118] One could use them to create such an image of oneself, without necessarily going through the corresponding process of character formation, on the condition that one's existing reputation does not contradict the image one is trying to construct in speech. As we saw in the previous section, an orator's 'psychological character' is one thing, his 'rhetorical character' another. The former is the subject of philosophy, the latter of rhetoric. Of course, Plutarch's thesis is that one cannot practise rhetoric while neglecting ethics, but this does not mean that one must be indifferent to rhetoric. The instructions in this text, which are relatively extensive in comparison to other topics, testify, if anything, to the fact that in this particular field Plutarch obviously had something to say.

5. Conclusion

Immediately after granting rhetoric a place next to the character of the politician in the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae*, Plutarch focuses on the persuasion produced by rhetorical speech in order to positively differentiate the model politician who is practised in speech from other politicians. This issue is addressed not only in the section dealing with rhetoric, but also in the section dealing with beneficence. The approach is the same in both cases – they just have different starting points. Plutarch

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[116] Cf. also *Phoc*. 5.1–9; *Dem*. 10.3–5. Related are the remarks concerning the brevity of the Delphic oracles in *De Pyth. or*. 408D–E and *De gar.* 511B. For the relationship of brevity to higher education, cf. also De Temmerman (2014) 234.

[117] Cf. also [Cic.] *Rh. Herenn.* 3.30, as well as Plut. *Alc*. 10.4 and *Praec. ger. reip.* 804A.

[118] See also van der Stockt (2006) 1038.

contrasts, as far as possible, two distinct forms of imposing power, one that is carried out exclusively through beneficence and another that simultaneously draws on the politician's character and discourse. Of these two forms, the second is consistently preferred. In both of the relevant sections, Plutarch shows that of all the means of manipulation available to the politician, rhetorical discourse reveals itself to be not only the most effective, but also the best from a moral perspective. The contrast is, on some level, surprising, since in practice rhetoric and beneficence have tended to complement each other, but there is an explanation for this. In this particular text, Plutarch is not merely giving advice on how a politician can succeed in his administrative duties, but also attempting to construct for his readers a distinctive and alluring identity, one which is directly related to the subject he teaches. Rhetorical discourse is a means of persuasion in which philosophy can have some grounding. Between Plutarch's teaching and the teaching of rhetoric there is a kind of entanglement, as is indicated at various points in the Plutarchan corpus.

That said, Plutarch was not the only one of his contemporaries whose teaching engaged with rhetoric and rhetorical discourse. There were also the professionals in the field, the so-called 'sophists'.

The Philosopher and the Sophists

1. Introduction

Plutarch's hostile attitude towards the sophists has often been taken as indicative of his views on rhetoric. As we saw in the introduction, this interpretation has its origin in the work of scholars who, in their attempt to date certain epideictic texts that survive under Plutarch's name, have postulated that he underwent a curious conversion from rhetoric to philosophy. A similar theory had been adopted by scholars of Dio Chrysostom.[1] In the case of Dio, the problem was that although, in his day, he probably had the reputation of being a sophist,[2] in his writings he systematically referred to the sophists in a critical way.[3] Until recently the dominant view in research has followed the testimony of Synesius of Cyrene (Syn. *Dio* 1), who held that if Dio had ever adopted the practices of the sophists, it must have been before he was sent into exile by Domitian, since he subsequently clearly identifies himself as a philosopher.[4] Nowadays, however, we have a better understanding that such statements by writers like Dio putting distance between themselves and sophistry may be less an indication of their personal views than a tactic which they consciously employ in order to give themselves a superior position within a common sphere of action.[5] A similar tactic is used by Aelius Aristides, who often attacks the sophists, albeit while assigning himself the status not of a philosopher but of an orator,[6] and, of course, in the fourth century AD, by Himerius and Themistius, who, though sophists themselves, seek in their speeches to identify themselves with Socrates, thus distinguishing themselves from rival sophists.[7]

The aim of the present chapter is to show that it is in this framework that Plutarch's hostile attitude towards the sophists can best be understood. It should be noted that I am not necessarily claiming that Plutarch himself could have been as easily characterised as sophist as Dio, Aelius

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[1] See Russell (1972) 227; Moles (1978) 80.

[2] See Philostr. *VS* 1.486–488, cf. Arr. *Epict.* 3.23.17.

[3] See Stanton (1973) 354.

[4] See also Bowersock (1969) 10–11, 110–111; Stanton (1973) 353–354; Whitmarsh (2005) 17–18.

[5] See Whitmarsh (2005) 15–19. On the topic of authorial self-presentation, see, e.g., the introductory remarks of Gavrielatos (2017) vii–xii.

[6] See Whitmarsh (2005) 18–19. Cf. Stanton (1973) 355.

[7] See Cribiore (2007) 56, with references to the relevant texts.

Aristides, Himerius or Themistius were. Since it is nowhere attested that he had participated in declamation contests,[8] we need not pursue this hypothesis here. It could well be argued, however, that the promise of eloquence, which, as we saw in the previous chapter, is made by Plutarch in the context of a teaching that at least occasionally grants some place to rhetoric, allows him to be placed, to some extent, in the same competitive field as the sophists. Once there is a common field of action there is also a motivation for confrontation. On this point, the contribution of Thomas Schmitz is particularly helpful, who has suggested in a relatively recent article that Plutarch's accusation that the sophists have an excessive love of distinction should be read as an outgrowth of his attempt to distinguish himself positively in the face of competing forms of social and cultural activity:

> However, when we look at the social mechanisms underlying his own way of philosophical interaction, the deep structure of these two models of social interaction turns out surprisingly similar. Both produce social cohesiveness by defining a common ground for discussion; both are socially exclusive and restrict access to this playing field to members of the social and cultural élite.[9]

My proposal, which builds on Schmitz's thesis, is to see, in Plutarch's case, the function of exclusion that characterises the philosophical model of social interaction as being operative primarily in the field of higher education, and not directly in the whole social space. What I will attempt to show in the following is that Plutarch does not necessarily criticise the sophists with the aim of attacking their claim to *paideia* in general, but rather with the aim of excluding them from the field of higher education, not because he considers rhetoric useless, but because the subject matter that they teach overlaps to a degree with the content of Plutarch's own teaching.

2. The critique of the sophists

The precise meaning of the term 'sophist', as it appears in passages of classical literature, is to this day a subject of scholarly debate, one which may never be resolved, as this term is very elastic. In Archaic Greece,

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[8] For the possibility that Plutarch's surviving epideictic speeches may constitute the written version of speeches that had previously been delivered before a public audience under conditions similar to those under which the speeches of the sophists were delivered, see Hirzel (1895) 2.126 n. 1; Palm (1959) 36; Jones (1971) 68; Russell (2001^2) 31 and Russell (2023) 162.

[9] See Schmitz (2012) 84.

the word generally described a person who, within his community, possessed a certain kind of knowledge, which he could pass on to others.[10] The scope of this knowledge was not yet strictly defined. In Pindar, it is, for example, poetry (*I.* 5.28).[11] But as the fifth century progressed, the field was progressively restricted. W.K.C. Guthrie observes that, by the time of Socrates, the sophist wrote or taught because he had a special skill or knowledge to impart, but, at the same time, the wisdom he possessed now seemed to be of a practical nature, either in the field of behaviour and politics or in the practical arts.[12] By the fourth century BC, the field of sophistry had become limited to rhetoric. In subsequent years, up to the time of Plutarch, it became increasingly clear that a sophist was a skilled orator who was also able to teach rhetoric, write about it, compose it on demand, and participate in public demonstrations of his art, involving displays of his skill designed to attract new students.[13] In his lexicon written in the second century AD, Pollux identifies sophistry with rhetoric and describes the sophist as the kind of orator who, for a fee, teaches his art to others (cf. 4.16–17 and 4.42–47).

The problem is that the word is not always used in a neutral way. The fact that the field of education was a competitive one, in which each competitor tried to distinguish himself from his rivals by promoting his own teaching as different from and better than the offerings of his competitors, has contributed to the word 'sophist' being frequently used either metaphorically (i.e. as a pejorative designation for a false wise man, fraud, charlatan, etc.)[14] or to designate an identifiable group of people from whom various writers collectively attempted to distance themselves.[15] However, these uses of the term in no way alter the fact that the initial meaning of the word was 'master teacher of rhetoric'. Tim Whitmarsh is clear that, throughout the period of interest to us, the word never had or implied a pejorative designation in general.[16] The same is true in the immediately following centuries. In the fourth century AD, for a young man studying in a large and organised school, like that of Libanius, the teacher who taught rhetoric to the introductory classes was called the 'rhetor', while the head of the school, who also took on the

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[10] See Kerferd (1950) 8.

[11] See Guthrie (2003^3) 49.

[12] See Guthrie (2003^3) 50.

[13] See Bowersock (1969) 1–2, 13–14; Karadimas (1996) 6; Whitmarsh (2005) 15; Papanikolaou (2009) 64–65; Wyss (2017) 185–186.

[14] See Winter (1997) 91–94; Whitmarsh (2005) 15–16; Wyss (2012) 89–104; *ead.* (2017) 181–204; *ead.* (2018) 503–527.

[15] See Stanton (1973) 358.

[16] See Whitmarsh (2005) 18.

demanding course of rhetorical exercises for advanced students, was the 'sophist'.[17]

As far as Plutarch is concerned, one thing is certain: he lives in an era in which sophistical activity is gaining in popularity. The cause of this phenomenon is the ever-increasing interest on the part of the cultured public of the period in advanced rhetorical exercises as a form of public spectacle. As Whitmarsh once again notes, during the first three centuries AD, in every city worthy of the name in both the Greek- and Latin-speaking regions of the empire, members of the male-dominated elite regularly gathered to watch other members of their community perform rhetorical exercises.[18] While we do not have a clear picture of the intellectual situation in Chaeronea, Plutarch's hometown, we do have one for Athens, the city in which Plutarch had studied and which he often visited afterwards.[19] Throughout this period, Athens continued to be an intellectual centre, to which rich young people from every corner of the empire flocked to study.[20] The intellectual dynamism, including the performances of the sophists, was great. In the late second century AD, Julius Pollux wrote to Commodus that the only thing that distracted him from compiling his dictionary was the daily obligation to give a lecture and perform a rhetorical exercise (8.1). Pollux, who held the official chair of rhetoric in Athens,[21] is certainly only the tip of the iceberg. Other orators and sophists were active in the city at the same time. Flavius Philostratus mentions, for example, Proclus of Naucratis, who, thanks to his sophistical activity, had acquired a large fortune in Athens at around the same time (*VS* 2.603). Interest in the kind of performance, known as 'declamation', and in the kind of education connected to it, must have been significant, since by the fourth century AD the number of official chairs of rhetoric in the city had increased from one to three.[22] Nor was Athens an exception in the empire. The picture that Philostratus gives is that the sophistical movement was similarly popular in all the major urban centres of the eastern Mediterranean basin, and probably in the western basin as well.[23]

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[17] See Cribiore (2001) 56–57 and (2007) 37–41 (with further references), cf. also Bowie (1970) 5 and Stanton (1973) 358.

[18] See Whitmarsh (2005) 3.

[19] See *Them.* 32.5; *De E* 387E; *Quaest. conv.* 612E; 645D; 673C; 720C; 736C. Cf. also Jones (1971) 13–14; Russell (2001²) 4–5.

[20] Cf. Geagan (1979) 387.

[21] See Philostr. *VS* 2.593. On the chairs of rhetoric in Athens, see, e.g., Kennedy (1972) 565–566.

[22] See Lib. 1.24–25; 2.14.

[23] On sophists in Gaul (besides those mentioned by Philostratus, i.e. Nicetes and Favorinus), cf. also Str. 4.1.5, 67–73.

In his work *The Lives of the Sophists*, Flavius Philostratus opens a window into this fascinating world. Nonetheless, care is needed. Although most scholars today accept the veracity of the world Philostratus describes,[24] his description should by no means be taken as entirely representative of the phenomenon. Philostratus' list is far from complete and does not include all the successful sophists of the period; it only presents a portion of a complex network of teachers, students, competitors and friends, at the centre of which stood Herodes Atticus.[25] Philostratus calls the activity connected to the people involved in this network 'Second Sophistic', in order to link it to the 'Ancient Sophistic' of Socrates' time (*VS* 1.481). Of course, the connection is far from solid. The most important difference concerns the very content of the term 'sophist' *(VS* 1.480–481). The ancient sophists were thinkers who challenged established institutions and opened up new avenues for thought. The sophists of imperial times were, by contrast, aristocrats whose rhetorical activity contributed to strengthening social institutions. They used their eloquence to consolidate the prevailing order of things, in which education was clearly marked out as the privilege of the few. For Philostratus, however, this difference is unproblematic, since theoretical reflection is not his main concern. Philostratus is himself a sophist, and what he attempts to do in his biographical work is to identify a 'canonical' network of sophists to which he himself belongs.[26] Theoretical reflection and philosophy interest him only insofar as they are overshadowed by the activities of people in his network, some of whom – as we have seen in the case of Dio Chrysostom – had also acquired a reputation as a sophist (*VS* 1.484–491).

Plutarch was no mere spectator to this phenomenon. Although he represented a different educational tradition and promoted a different conception of rhetoric, the space in which he operated brought him into contact with sophists and even led him to establish relations with them.[27] The temporal and geographical distance that separates him from the hard core of Philostratus' network is not as great as it is sometimes made out to be in the scholarship.[28] When Plutarch died in Chaeronea or Delphi, Herodes Atticus was already thirty years old in Athens, and they had at least one family connection. The orator Herodes of the *Quaes-*

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[24] *Contra* Brunt (1994) 25–52.

[25] See esp. Eshleman (2008) 399.

[26] See Bowie (1970) 5; Eshleman (2008) 395–396; Schmitz (2012) 69–70.

[27] See also Stanton (1973) 364; Martin (1997) 718–719; van Hoof (2010) 261–265; Whitmarsh (2005) 78; Karadimas (2014) 21. For the opposite view, see Dodds (1933) 97–98; Harrison (1987) 272; Russell (2001^2) 3, 7; Schmitz (2014) 32–41, and, with less acuity, Bowersock (1969) 112; Jones (1971) 37–38; Xenophontos (2016) 185–188, 202.

[28] See, e.g., Russell (2001^2) 2, cf. Schmitz (2012) 70; *id*. (2014) 32.

tiones Convivales (723B, 743C–E) is probably the father of the sophist.[29] Plutarch was also associated with Favorinus of Arles, who, according to Philostratus, was Herodes Atticus' teacher and one of the philosophers whose eloquence earned him the reputation of a sophist (*VS* 1.490).[30] Furthermore, two titles in the Lamprias Catalogue may also indicate a connection between Plutarch and Dio Chrysostom, with whom Favorinus is also said to have been associated (Philostr. *VS* 1.490), namely *The Reply to Dio delivered at Olympia* (no. 204) and *A Discourse in Reply to Dio* (no. 227).[31] Christopher Jones has similarly expressed the view that Plutarch may also have attended talks by the sophist Nicetes of Smyrna – who, according to Philostratus, was the first substantial representative of the 'Second Sophistic' (*VS* 1.511–512) – since Plutarch seems to have had contacts with the elites of Smyrna, as well as with Iulius Secundus, the nephew of the distinguished sophist Iulius Florus from Burdigala in Gaul and a disciple of Nicetes.[32]

Despite his connections with the world of the sophists, Plutarch comes across in his writings as unreservedly critical of them. Except when used figuratively to denote one who devises tricks and deceptions[33] or in its archaic sense to denote the Seven Sages,[34] the term 'sophist' normally refers to an orator or teacher of rhetoric whose behaviour lacks temperance. A sophist is thus an individual who is excessively fond of fame and distinction. An illustrative anecdote is found in the *De tuenda sanitate praecepta* about the sophist Nigrus of Chaeronea, who died during an event in Gaul as the result of a fishbone piercing his throat when, in order not to let a rival speak first, he began to deliver his speech with the last

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[29] See *PIR*² C 801. See also Bowie (2002) 42–43. That this is the same sophist Herodes has been assumed by Volkmann (1869) 1.58 and Winter (1997) 138, 142–143.

[30] See *Quaest. Rom.* 271C; *Quaest. conv.* 734D–F; *De prim. frig.* 945F. Cf. also *PIR*² F 123 and then Volkmann (1869) 1.110; Ziegler (1951) 675; Jones (1971) 35, 60–61; Puech (1992) 4850; Bowie (1997) 1–15; Opsomer (1997) 18; Bowie (2002) 50–51; van Hoof (2010) 263; Schmitz (2012) 70; Bonazzi (2019) 59–62; Pernot (2022) 381–382. In the Lamprias Catalogue, we also find the title *A letter to Favorinus about Friendship* or *On the Use to be made of Friends* (no. 132). Favorinus had, in turn, given the title *On Academic Disposition or Plutarch* to one of his philosophical texts, and in the dialogue *Against Epictetus* he had presented a certain Onesimus, a servant of Plutarch, refuting arguments of Epictetus (see Gal., *Opt. doct.* I, 41.11–15 K.).

[31] See also Volkmann (1869) 1.110; Ziegler (1951) 657; Bowersock (1969) 110–112; Jones (1971) 34–35; Russell (2001²) 7; Pernot (2007) 103–122; van Hoof (2010) 263; Hofmann (2020) 223 n. 54; Pernot (2022) 380–381.

[32] See *PIR*² I 559; Jones (1971) 15; Puech (1992) 4855.

[33] See *Pel.* 23.4; *Lys.* 7.3; *Sert.* 10.3–4; *Alex.* 62.6–7; *Apophth. Lac.* 229A; *Quaest. conv.* 710B.

[34] See *De frat. am.* 478B–C. Cf. *De E* 385D; *De Her. mal.* 857F.

morsel of fish still in his mouth (130E–131B). This ambition is usually accompanied by arrogance, boasting and a perpetual desire to flaunt one's abilities and knowledge.[35] The specialty of the sophist is fastidiousness and meticulousness in the application of the rules of his art.[36] Indifferent to matters of real importance,[37] the sophist is constantly on the lookout to discover and publicly expose trivial errors and mistakes, because in this way he polishes his image even more in the eyes of those around him.[38]

The sophist scrutinises everyone's speech, looking for something to lie about.[39] An exuberant man, he does not limit himself to what is necessary, useful or beneficial in word or deed, but always seeks more, looking for something that will impress and provoke admiration in others.[40] He does not hesitate to fervently endorse a lie, exaggeration or absurdity – or even to flatter his audience, if he stands to gain favour, fame or anything else of value to him.[41] The picture of the sophist that emerges from Plutarch's writings is that of a man who, at every moment driven by his efforts to impress and win the favour of his audience, knows no boundaries and becomes a danger both to himself and to others.

However vivid this description may seem, the reader should not be misled into seeing it as anything other than a rhetorical tactic. The contrast between one kind of public action that aims at the benefit of others and another kind of action that merely provides pleasure and enjoyment, without concern for or the ability to secure the good of others, appears quite early in the public discourse of the Greeks.

Aristophanes already gives us two early versions of this trope. The first is found in passages from the *Clouds* portraying the debate between the Strong and the Weak argument: the former represents a strict, conservative mentality about how young people should behave; the latter advocates for a supposedly progressive and radical reaction against the old mentality, presenting itself as willing to exchange traditional prudence and discipline for hot baths, sophistical arguments that twist the truth and

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[35] See *Luc.* 7.4; *Brut.* 33.6; *De tuenda* 123B; 129D; 133E; *De se ipsum laud.* 547E; *De genio Socr.* 580D; *Quaest. conv.* 709B.

[36] See *Dem.-Cic.* 1.3; *Bellone an pace* 351A; *De E* 387E; *De virt. mor.* 449A–B; *Praec. ger. reip.* 802E; *Gryllus* 988F–989B.

[37] See *Dem.-Cic.* 2.1*; De aud.* 43F; *De Al. Magn. fort.* 1, 328B; *De Pyth. or.* 408C–D; *Praec. ger. reip.* 813A.

[38] See *De ad. et am.* 71A; *Col.* 1124C.

[39] See *Nic.* 1.1–4; *De ad. et am.* 71A; *De def. or.* 413A–B; *Amatorius* 756D.

[40] See *Nic.-Crass.* 2.6–7; *De aud.* 41D; 48D; *De prof. in virt.* 78F; 80A; *Apophth. Lac.* 223E; *De se ipsum laud.* 543E; cf. *Luc.* 21.1.

[41] See *Alex.* 53.1; *T.G., G.G.* 7.6; *Dem.* 9.1–2; *De aud.* 46E; *De ad. et am.* 65C; *Reg. et imp. apophth.* 176C; 217D (= *Apophth. Lac.* 219C); *De vit. pud.* 536A; *De Her. mal.* 855E–F.

unbridled erotic pleasures (*Nu.* 889–1111).[42] The same tactics can be seen in the *Frogs*, in the dispute between Aeschylus and Euripides: the former more skilfully combines technique with moral admonition and stands out for his wisdom, while the latter is less instructive, but gives Dionysus greater pleasure, because his technique is more sophisticated and his subjects more refined (*Ra.* 1006–1481).[43] In both cases, the contrast is, of course, somewhat lacking in sharpness. The conflicts depicted by Aristophanes do not invite the spectator to side with one party or the other, but are rather balanced and subordinated to the dramaturgical purpose of the respective scenes. The situation becomes clearer and more similar to the one found in Plutarch when we move from the realm of poetry to that of oratory.

The opposition in question is expressed most clearly in one of the speeches in Thucydides, namely the passage in which Cleon accuses the Athenians of having become accustomed, through the sophists' demonstrations, to succumbing to the pleasure of listening, such that in the Assembly they now believe the orator who uses the most impressive arguments as if they were watching some kind of performance, even though they are making decisions that will directly affect their lives (3.38.1–7). In Cleon's discourse, we see an attempt to draw a sharp distinction at the level of rhetoric – and even at the point where politics, education and performance converge – between a kind of activity that aims at communicating the truth and that benefits the city, and another kind that aims exclusively at pleasure, has no impact on reality and is associated with the sophists.[44] The lesson that emerges from Cleon's speech is straightforward: in the Assembly, anyone who wants to benefit from the rhetoric he hears must stop taking pleasure as the main criterion when interpreting the words and events around him. Before deciding on a course of action, the Athenians are urged by Cleon to observe that the benefit derived from the expression of truth and the pleasure derived from listening to a discourse are two separate things. The rhetorical dimension of Cleon's observation is not difficult to discern: scholars have already pointed out that the rhetoric-laden section of the text in which Cleon speaks shows, ironically, that he is not far from the model of the politician he opposes.[45]

The opposition between utility and pleasure operates in the context of such debates. And philosophical debates are no exception, as we see in Plato. The *Apology* presents Socrates as arguing that philosophy is a way of life that places at its heart a sustained and systematic concern

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[42] See Halliwell (2015) 13–16, cf. Dover (1968) lvii–lxvi.

[43] See Dover (1993) 10–24.

[44] For the interpretation of this passage, see also Gomme (1956) 304–305; Yunis (1996) 90–92; Chronopoulos (2016) 50–51.

[45] See MacLeod (1978) 71.

for the moral constitution of the self, both of the individual and of others (28E, 29D–30B). For the Athenian public, however, this way of life is not generally accepted. Socrates argues that many of his fellow citizens would disagree with him, as they are accustomed to worrying about money, honour and fame, thinking that they will benefit more from these than they will from caring for themselves (29D, 30B). However, the task which Apollo has imposed on Socrates involves delivering his fellow citizens from precisely this delusion: Socrates must show them that they will not benefit from such pleasures, but rather from truth and virtue (30A, 30C–31A). It is this mission that informs Socrates' discourse, and as such it contrasts with that of his contemporaries.

Earlier in the text, a contrast was made between the discourse of the orators, which is beautifully expressed and adorned with choice words and phrases but also largely false, and Socrates' simple speech, which may employ everyday words chosen at random, but is the bearer of truth (17B–C). For Socrates, the revelation of truth and encouragement to pursue virtue is the 'benefit' he offers his city, and for this reason he proposes that the judges 'condemn' him to free meals in the *prytaneum* (36B–37A). Instead, they sentence him to death. The conclusion to which Plato leads the reader is that the Athenians ultimately chose not what was beneficial, but rather what seemed pleasant to them.

The same problem is presented in Plato's *Gorgias*. In the first part of the dialogue, Socrates and Gorgias agree that, in the Assembly, a speaker who is skilled in the art of discourse, but lacks knowledge of the subject under discussion, often has a better chance of success than an expert who is not as skilful with words (456A–C). The reason given for this is that rhetoric is not a true art, but a kind of knack, the purpose of which is merely to procure pleasure and enjoyment (462C–D). As a result, it is usually used to flatter and deceive the masses, rather than for their benefit (462D–466A). Callicles objects to Socrates' remark that this claim is borne out by the state of Athenian politics (502D–503A). However, when Socrates asks him to name specific politicians who have benefited the city, Callicles can only think to name the four great politicians in Athenian history: Miltiades, Themistocles, Cimon and Pericles (503A–C).

Socrates retorts that Callicles would be right if they had defined virtue as the satisfaction of the desires of oneself and others (503C–D). But since in the context of the dialogue, virtue is sought in temperance and not in wealth and power (503D–515B), it follows that Pericles not only failed to benefit his fellow citizens, but actually harmed them, turning them away from the right path with the wealth he secured for them. In practice, the situation with the other three politicians was the same, the proof of which is that the Athenians themselves ultimately destroyed them (515C–516E). Socrates concludes that the only man in Athens who practises the true political art is himself, precisely because he speaks to

his fellow citizens with the aim of benefiting them rather than pleasing them (521D–E). The contrast is clear: on the one side stands the philosopher, the 'true' politician, who through his words and deeds seeks to benefit his fellow citizens. On the other side, we find the orators, who, having learned from the sophist the art of manufacturing persuasion, know only how to flatter and deceive their audience with fleeting pleasures.

Plutarch's attitude towards the sophists must be understood against the backdrop of this type of argumentation. A first indication of this connection is found in the first of the *Quaestiones Platonicae*, a text that represents a popular literary genre of the period.[46] Its intention is to provide answers to common questions raised by Plato's readers. Taking up various passages in Plato's works, Plutarch explains what Plato meant by a specific word or phrase.

The passage that interests us here (999C) refers to Socrates' claim in the *Theaetetus* that God forced him to 'deliver' the truth as a midwife, but prevented him from 'giving birth' to it himself (*Tht.* 150C). Central to Plutarch's response is the contrast between, on the one hand, the beneficial and useful philosophy of Socrates and, on the other, sophistical teachings oriented towards mere ephemeral glory. God prevented Socrates from 'producing' truth (i.e. explaining his own views in a positive way) so that he would be able to engage in the kind of philosophy that liberates people from "humbug", "error", "pretentiousness" and "being burdensome first to themselves and then to their companions also" (*Quaest. Plat.* 999D–E).[47] At the time when Socrates was preparing to devote himself to this philosophy, Greece happened – seemingly miraculously, as Plutarch writes – to be filled with sophists (999E). The rich, young men gave the sophists whole fortunes in order to be taken on as their students, but all they received in return was a "self-conceit" and "sham-wisdom", accompanied by a burning desire to "discuss arguments" and occupy themselves with "disputations futile in wranglings and ambitious rivalries",[48] through which they did indeed win glory, but acquired nothing beautiful or useful (999E). Bringing the divine plan to fulfilment, Socrates neutralised the sophists with his 'elenctic', which he used, like a purifying drug, to refute the views of others, while claiming to know nothing himself. Thus, he came across as trustworthy and 'touched' those he refuted, as he seemed to seek the truth alongside them rather than merely propounding his own views (999E–F).

Some elements of this narrative are taken from Plato's *Sophist* (231B), while the overall contrast is the same as the one found in the passages cited above from the *Apology* and *Gorgias*. Of particular interest is

[46] On this, see Dörrie (1959) 1–6.

[47] Transl. by H. Cherniss.

[48] Transl. by H. Cherniss.

the description of Socrates' didactic discourse as antagonistic to that of the sophists. As early as the time of Cicero, Socrates' conflict with the sophists was cited as the reason for the original schism between rhetoric and philosophy, with the result that the philosophers and the sophists clashed for many generations, as if they were representatives of two different subjects (*De or.* 3.60).[49] However, by drawing a rigid dividing line between the activity of the philosopher and that of the sophists, in light of the ideal unity between the search for truth and persuasion seen in Socrates, Plutarch shows philosophical eloquence to be superior to sophistry, while at the same time attributing to it an ethical significance. Socrates was superior to the sophists because his elenctic discourse more easily won the trust of the young, and hence his philosophical teaching eventually yielded returns. As we shall see in the following pages, Plutarch's own conflict with the sophists played out in similar terms.

3. The direct confrontation in the lecture hall

In Plutarch's time, the experience of confrontation with the sophists was perhaps nowhere as painful for philosophers as in the lecture hall. It is well known that lectures were not the exclusive redoubt of philosophers. Lectures may have been given by figures such as Plutarch or Maximus of Tyre, whose public discourse dealt with issues of self-care, but they were also held by various other speakers, such as the sophists of Philostratus' Second Sophistic, Lucian, and later Choricius of Gaza,[50] to name just a few. In the case of the sophists, the lectures were also known as λαλιαί. They were either speeches in their own right or speeches of an introductory nature (προλαλιά, πρόλογος, προάγων) which could be delivered before the main speech, in which case they were shorter.[51] There was a small, but important, difference when it came to the participation of philosophers in this type of performance. Because it had to justify a particular identity, the public discourse of philosophers was expected to be framed around temperance. A typical example is that of Epictetus (Arr. *Epict.* 3.23.1–38), as well as various texts by Plutarch, in which it is pointed out that the philosopher never bickers while discussing paradoxes, but always chooses topics of discussion that allow him to speak in a benign and friendly atmosphere (*De def. or.* 412E),[52] or that, when he examines

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[49] Cf. Quint. 1.pr.13.

[50] Cf. Korenjak (2000) 171–172. On Lucian, see Mras (1949) 74; Bracht Branham (1985) 237–243; Whitmarsh (2005) 22, 64–65. On Choricius, see Penella (2009) 26–58.

[51] For general information on the genre, see Men. Rh. III, 388–394 Sp. (= IX, 247–257 W.). See also Mras (1949) 71–81; Russell (1983) 77–79; Trapp (1997) xl–xlv; Korenjak (2000) 23; Whitmarsh (2005) 21–22.

[52] Cf. Schmitz (2012) 77.

the arguments of others, he does not deliberately present them in a way that makes them appear weak, but suppresses his desire for victory and grants his interlocutors' arguments the weight they truly deserve (*De Stoic. rep.* 1036A–B),[53] and so on.

In *De audiendo,* we find evidence of Plutarch's unease with the success of sophistical lectures in this context. The text gives instructions to young people on how they should take in the lectures they hear, so as to benefit as much as possible (37C–39B). Plutarch does not deny that the sophists' lectures successfully play on the aesthetics of the time. The symbolism used to describe the sophists' activities in *De audiendo* is marked by metaphors of pleasure: women weaving wreaths of fragrant, blossoming flowers, meadows full of violets, roses and hyacinths, the thyme upon which the bees rest, the theatre, the music-hall (41F–42A). However, Plutarch's interest in determining the proper way to listen to lectures clearly shows the pressure he is under. This advice constitutes an attempt to intervene and influence the listeners, reshaping their expectations in relation to this type of performance.[54] Benevolence is merely the justification for this change. In reality, if Plutarch's discourse asks to be more widely seen as useful, beneficial and so on, this is because it is taken for granted that it cannot evoke the same pleasure as the discourses of his competitors.

The first issue addressed in the text in light of this contrast is the form of the speeches given by public speakers. In order to benefit from a speech, one must be able to focus on the logical correctness of the content as one listens (41A–C). However, sophistical rhetoric by definition hinders the listener in this effort. For Plutarch, there is something deceptive about the style of sophistical rhetoric: just like many errors made by singers escape the attention of listeners when the song is accompanied by a flute, so too does an exaggerated and pompous style (περιττὴ καὶ σοβαρὰ λέξις) dazzle the listener and obscure the content of the discourse (41C).[55] In the previous chapter, we saw that the precondition for a higher form of eloquence is the development of 'judgement' (κρίσις), which – in contrast to the exuberant activity of the sophists – allows for the use and handling of information, converting it into useful knowledge. Here, Plutarch argues that the exuberance of sophistical rhetoric is not only futile, but dangerous: stylistic excess does not make it easy for the listener to concentrate on the substance of the discourse. The exuberance of expression dazzles and deceives him, preventing him from seeing the errors in the content. Thus, even if the content were useful, the form of this rhetoric would conceal it from the listener, working against his own interest.

The same principle applies to the melody. In addition to the usual rhythmic endings, many sophists and orators rendered parts of their

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[53] Cf. Schmitz (2012) 78.

[54] Cf. Korenjak (2000) 170, 172, 173.

[55] See Korenjak (2000) 177–178.

speeches in song.[56] That this practice met with great success with the public of the time can be inferred from Lucian's remark in the *Rhetorum praeceptor* regarding melody, which is referred to as one of the elements favoured by the uneducated crowd when listening to speeches (20). Little attention need be paid to the class dimension of this commentary: once we know that the sophists' audience was normally a cultivated one,[57] it becomes clear that this hierarchy also conceals an intention to differentiate oneself within a shared competitive field. The real issue is not the background of the people who like melodious speech, since, as Dionysius of Halicarnassus notes, all men are by nature prone to do so (*Comp.* 11.8), but rather what a sophist or orator says in order to distinguish himself positively from his rivals.

Plutarch (*De aud.* 41D) does not exactly follow Lucian's lead, but rather revisits the question of utility: the lectures and demonstrations of the various sophists employ words like a cloak to conceal not only their meaning, but also their voice. After "seasoning" (ἐφηδύνοντες) their voices with "harmonious modulations" (ἐμμελείαις), "softenings" (μαλακότησι) and "rhythmic cadences" (παρισώσεσιν), these speakers draw their hearers into a form of ecstasy by offering them empty pleasures (κενὴν ἡδονὴν διδόντες) in exchange for even emptier renown (κενοτέραν δόξαν ἀντιλαμβάνοντες). The point emphasised here is that the pleasure offered by sophistical rhetoric deprives listeners of the possibility of self-improvement. The argument rests on a principle of retribution. The listeners praise the speakers without actually having acquired anything of substance from them. Only after this pleasure is exhausted do they realise that they have received no benefit, punishing the speakers by taking back the reputation they had previously given them (41E). This argument alludes to the passage in Plato's *Gorgias* (515C–516E), where the Athenian public itself ultimately destroys the politicians who deceive it.

The battle also takes place at the level of content. It is well known that the topics of both philosophical and sophistical lectures were normally proposed on the spot by the audience: when it was a speaker's turn, he would take his seat on the platform and ask the audience to put to him a question or a problem to be addressed.[58] Here, the sophists probably had the upper hand. The evidence about the popularity of the sophists shows that their speeches responded well to the demands of their audiences. Plutarch's reaction to this situation can be discerned from his argument that the public should not propose any topic for a lecture that is not useful or necessary (*De aud.* 42F: χρήσιμόν τι δεῖ [*sc.* τὸν λέγοντα] καὶ ἀναγκαῖον ἀεὶ προβάλλοντα φαίνεσθαι). Such topics, he goes on to explain, are, in

[56] See Norden (1898) 294–295, 375–379; Korenjak (2000) 210–213; Cribiore (2007) 55–56.

[57] Cf. pp. 73ff. above.

[58] See, e.g., Max. Tyr. 1.5–7. Cf. Korenjak (2000) 116–120.

the first instance, those that are of importance to the people who hear them and that are not raised only to make a good impression (43A–B).

In this way, Plutarch tries to deprive the sophists of an advantage they have over the philosophers, namely the flexibility with which they can address issues without being restricted to a particular subject matter, while at the same time giving the audience the opportunity to participate in the performance from their own perspective.[59] Moreover, symbolic capital is acquired not only by the speaker, who demonstrates that his education enables him to deal with any topic that is put to him, but also by the listener, who is able to propose a sophisticated topic, a topic that testifies to specialised knowledge and reading experience.[60] According to Plutarch's position here, such topics – cf., e.g., Xenophon's desire to die at the same time as Socrates, which Philostratus mentions (*VS* 1.542) – would be immediately excluded from discussion. What should be chosen instead? Matters of universal importance, which best fit with the image of a philosopher, matters of self-care.

It is clear that philosophical public rhetoric is not a performance in the same sense as sophistical rhetoric. A philosopher who gives a lecture at the local gymnasium or another similar venue normally intends to have an impact on the lives of his audience. In contrast, the intention of a sophist, lecturing in the same context, is to temporarily delight and entertain his audience. This is a very important difference, but one which ultimately allows Plutarch to frame the opposition of pleasure to utility with reference to another classical opposition, the opposition between the real and the dramatic, between life and theatre.

A little further on in the text, expanding on his criticism of the content of sophistical lectures, Plutarch claims that only a listener who is afflicted by uncontrollable emotions in his soul is entitled to propose a topic, provided, of course, that it relates to the problems he himself is facing (43D–E). The possibility of expanding the scope of philosophy from the lecture hall to real life is emphasised in the text through the juxtaposition of the philosopher and the actor: the grandeur surrounding the actor on stage dissipates at the end of the performance, when he becomes an ordinary man again. This should not happen with the philosopher. Because of the knowledge of specific subjects that he possesses, he is superior to most people both inside and outside of the school (43F). Sophists, by contrast, are like actors: once they get up from their seats and put aside their books and notes, their real-life actions seem trivial and they come across as inferior to most people (43F). In this way, Plutarch obtains a pseudo-advantage. The sophists' lack of knowledge equivalent to that possessed by the philosopher limits their success to the realm of performance, which is, however, regarded as inferior to real life.

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[59] Cf. Korenjak (2000) 186–187.

[60] Cf. Korenjak (2000) 187.

Both in this passage and elsewhere, Plutarch appears to make an unfair comparison, arguing that the relevance of philosophical rhetoric extends to a much wider field than that of sophistical rhetoric. Of course, he simultaneously neglects to mention that improving the lives of his listeners is the goal of philosophical and not sophistical activity.

4. The indirect confrontation in the political arena

If there is one reason why the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae* is known to the wider scholarly community, it is because of a passage describing how Rome was supposedly involved in the affairs of Greek cities at the time. The subject of the section in which this passage is found is public offices in Greek cities. The first thing that strikes the reader here is the crude realism of Plutarch's narrative, a realism that would have been seen as provocative by a Greek reader of the period. In the Greek-speaking world of the eastern provinces, this era was characterised by a general attachment to the classical past, which, on the one hand, manifested itself on many levels, from literary standards and artistic taste to tourism, and, on the other hand, complemented the identities that people were then forming within the context of a politically unified world ruled by Rome.[61] In this passage, however, Plutarch reminds his reader of almost everything that could make this attachment to the past troublesome. The classical past was generally described as a glorious one: a past marked by the wars against the Persians, a past characterised by the hegemony of a small Greek city, Athens, over a wide area of the eastern Mediterranean, a past that had been the theatre of bloody struggles for freedom and independence. The present described by Plutarch in his discussion of public offices is a very different.

Let us take a closer look at the relevant passages. The politician who assumes public office must, Plutarch writes, be constantly aware that he is not the only one who exercises power over his fellow citizens, since both he and the entire city are ultimately under the authority of the Romans (813D). Through a figure of *priamel* Plutarch attacks the patriotic feelings of the young recipient of his text, Menemachus of Sardis: the local armies no longer exist, nor does the ancient city of Sardis, nor does the old power of Lydia (813E). Plutarch refers to the economic and military prosperity of Lydia in the time of the Mermnadae, as attested, for example, in the poetry of Sappho and Alcaeus.[62] The politician, whether

[61] See Bowie (1970) 3–41; Veyne (2005) 205–207; Daubner (2020) 207; Hofmann (2020) 215–216.

[62] See also Carrière (2003^2) 185–186; Lehmann (2020b) 164–165 n. 134. On the economic and military power of the Lydians and their relationship with the Archaic Greek world see Sapph. *fr.* 16, 17–20 Neri; *fr*. 39.2–3 Neri; *fr.* 96, 6–7 Neri; 98a, 11–12 Neri; *fr*.

in Sardis or in any other city of the Greek world, must therefore know the limits of his freedom. The age of great feats is past: the general's cloak must be gathered, his sphere of action shifted from the headquarters to the platform (of the proconsul? of the orators?),[63] and the value of the honorary crown not taken seriously, as the Roman boot is poised over everyone's head (813E).

The appropriate behaviour is compared to that of an actor subject to the instructions of the prompter: like the actor, the politician must express emotions, moral character and decorum in front of the public. Transgressing the established boundaries can lead to punishment. In the case of the actor, the punishment may merely take the form of disapproval from the audience, but in the case of the politician it can even lead to death (813E–F). Plutarch mentions here the execution of a certain Pardalas who some time previously had sparked a general revolt of the citizens in Sardis.[64] This story reinforces the claim that, in the political affairs of the Greek cities, Rome now has the last word. Plutarch describes the situation as he sees it, painting a picture of a suffocating political and historical context, within which the politician must set aside illusions of greatness associated with a glorious historical past and come to terms with an ugly reality.

However, this picture is incomplete. While Rome did not treat its subjects in a tyrannical manner, this does not mean that violence did not have its place among the mechanisms that emperors and local civil servants used to enforce order. When a city found it difficult to send supplies to the Roman army, either ordinary soldiers or special units would take it upon themselves to collect these supplies on the spot, often by force.[65] Wherever rioters appeared, the Roman commanders made sure to crucify them, burn them alive and feed them to snakes or other wild beasts.[66] All these were common scenes of everyday life.[67] Sometimes even the emperor himself was treated to such displays: just consider two reliefs from the Sebasteion in Aphrodisias, which depict Claudius and Nero, respectively, abusing two half-naked women, personifications of Britain and Armenia.[68] Some of the most impressive buildings in Rome

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132, 3 Neri; Alc. *fr.* 69 L-P; *fr.* 306(1) L-P, 18–21, together with the relevant remarks of Page (1955) 228–233 and Neri (2021) 581, 632, 746, 810 (with additional references).

[63] It is not entirely clear which 'platform' exactly imposed restrictions on the power of local political leaders. See, however, the remarks of Lehmann (2020b) 165 n. 136.

[64] Cf. *De exilio* 600A; 601B.

[65] See Beck (2004) 105–114, cf. Hassall (2000) 341–342 and Lehmann (2020a) 20.

[66] See MacMullen (1990) 4; Lendon (1997) 4.

[67] Cf. Artem. *On*. 2.52–54. On these, see Pack (1955) 283; Lendon (1997) 4.

[68] See Erim (1982) 277–281; Smith (1987) 115–117 and 117–120. Cf. Harris (2016) 125–126, 156.

were erected by the Flavians to commemorate the fall of Jerusalem at the end of the First Jewish–Roman War.[69] There is no doubt about that the Romans had the last word and did not play games with those who dared to stand up to them.

However, in reality they often did not live up to their reputation, especially in Greece and Asia Minor. Plutarch is exaggerating.[70] In the provinces that remained under the jurisdiction of the Senate, there were not substantial numbers of troops in camps.[71] In these areas, the Romans attempted to impose order by symbolic means (e.g. through benevolence).[72] Meanwhile, the civil uprisings attested in the first and second centuries AD were mainly reactions against abuses by local officials[73] – the only exception is perhaps indicated by a vague reference in Lucian to a rebellion in Elis.[74] It is legitimate to assume that if there were still rebellions against local officials, the Romans would have suppressed them. But there is an important difference: they would not have done so on their own, as the local officials would first have had to call in help from afar.[75] Such was most likely the case with Pardalas, which is nevertheless cited in the text as a typical example of Roman oppression. In another passage a little further on, Plutarch mentions that the rebellion began as the result of a private dispute between Pardalas and a certain Tyrrhenus (a man coming from Italy?), which quickly developed into a declaration of independence of the whole city from the Romans.[76] The Romans then

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69 See Alföldy (1995) 195–226; Bravi (2006) 453–461.

70 See Levick (2000) 617; Edmondson (2006) 278; Madsen (2006) 56.

71 See Mommsen (1887) 163–265; Ritterling (1927) 28; Sherk (1957) 52–53; Oliver (1953) 958 n. 27; Jones (1971) 132; Millar (1981) 67; Harris (2016) 144–147, 153, 158, 163. Cf. also Plin. *Ep.* 10.20–22, along with the remarks of Lendon (1997) 4–5.

72 See Harris (2016) 154.

73 See Joseph. *BJ* 1.531; Dio Chr. 46.12–13; Philostr. *VS* 1.526–527. Cf. Tac. *Ann.* 2.54; 16.23 (= Plut. *Praec. ger. reip.* 815D); *id. Hist.* 3.47–48. In addition, cf. Oliver (1953) 953–958; MacMullen (1990) 188–189, 349 n. 29; Pekáry (1987) 133–150 (although his claim that many citizen revolts were revolutions against Rome is a generalisation); Lendon (1997) 7.

74 See Luc. *Peregr.* 19; *AE* 1929.21; Hist. Aug. *Pius* 5.4–5. Cf. also Jones (1971) 108; Harris (2016) 162; Lehmann (2020b) 166 n. 141. With regard to the following cases, which are sometimes discussed in the research as examples of the Greeks' readiness to take up arms against the Romans, it is not possible to form a clear picture of the events; Tac. *Ann.* 4.36; Plin. *Ep.* 10.34; Dio Chr. 34.14; Suet. *Tib.* 37; *Cl.* 25; Cass. Dio 57.24; 60.17; 60.24; Philostr. *VS* 1.531. Cf. also MacMullen (1990) 348 n. 28.

75 Cf. Hofmann (2020) 230–233.

76 There must have been political unrest in that city at that time. See Ap. Ty. *Ep.* 38–41; 56, 75–76. Cf. also von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1927) 296; Jones (1971) 117; Lehmann (2020b) 166 n. 139; Hofmann (2020) 229–235.

arrived in Sardis and condemned Pardalas to death, but did not destroy the city – although Plutarch explicitly states that they came close to doing so. This information is important. In reality, it may not have been a general insurrection, as the Romans would certainly have been interested in setting an example, as they did with the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem around the same time.[77] Plutarch only mentions the execution of Pardalas, but no other deaths or destruction in the city.

Plutarch may have had reason to exaggerate here. There is a connection between the cultural memory of the Greeks and the sophists, whom Plutarch does not mention directly, but who belong to the broader context. The sophists, whom Plutarch systematically criticises, were teachers of rhetoric. However, one consequence of the education they provided was, as Donald Russell astutely puts it, "the preservation of a sense of pride in the Hellenic heritage, a sort of Hellenic patriotism, distinct from, but not necessarily in conflict with, loyalty to the institutions of imperial Rome".[78] The Greeks of Plutarch's time possessed a strong cultural memory, in which the classical past was idealised and may have been contrasted with the present, which, if not ugly, was at least different – certainly not as glorious as their imagined past.[79] Within this framework, there were several opportunities for Greeks to hear of or read about the glorious exploits of their ancestors, one of which was the practice of sophistical declamation. As with lectures, the topics that the sophists dealt with in their speeches were proposed on the spot by the audience. Favourite topics included the Persian Wars, the invasion of Philip in cities of southern Greece and Alexander's expedition to Asia.[80] Along with the listeners' self-perception as the heirs of the Greeks of classical Antiquity,[81] these declamations also reinforced their cultural identity and boosted their self-esteem.

Plutarch himself had no direct connection with this activity. Although rhetoric was not excluded from his teaching programme, the latter was supposed to aim at the moral formation of his pupils. But since, as we have seen, he tries to open up space in this text for a moral formation of this kind in the field of politics as well, the whole issue can be seen from a broader perspective. Politics and education are two social spaces in close proximity to each other. The sophists who taught rhetoric did not do it for purely academic reasons; political success of their pupils was also a fundamental goal. In the cities of mainland Greece and Asia Minor, citizen assemblies still existed, which made decisions on vital issues

77 Cf. Harris (2016) 145–147.

78 See Russell (1983) 107–108. Cf. also MacMullen (1990) 189–190 and Veyne (2005) 212.

79 See Swain (1996) 2; Thum (2020) 240.

80 See Whitmarsh (2005) 66.

81 Cf. Daubner (2020) 208–209; Hofmann (2020) 216.

at the local level.[82] The tendency to recall important historical events and contrast them with a glorious Greek past was evident there as well. We see this in the example of *The Rhodian Oration* (= *Or*. 31) of Dio Chrysostom.[83] Under certain circumstances, this tendency could even be understood as a reaction against the Romans. The Roman Empire was, after all, likened to the Achaemenid Empire in the eastern provinces, where Roman governors were often informally referred to as 'satraps'.[84] Plutarch certainly knew all this.[85] In the case of the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae*, however, the whole question must be framed in such a way that the political advice is placed in a dialectical relationship to philosophical exhortation.

It makes sense, then, that Plutarch's attempt to stir up the reader's fear of Roman power should not be exclusively interpreted in political terms, but rather as bearing on a field at the intersection of politics and education. This interpretation finds support in the text. Immediately after the reference to the execution of Pardalas, there is talk of the distance between the present situation and the glorious achievements of the past, which some orators are in the habit of reminding their listeners of. These orators are compared to young children, who provoke laughter whenever they put on their fathers' military boots and place wreaths on their heads (814A). The common element in the comparison is exaggeration, that is, trying to identify the self with something incomparable.[86] The philosopher is immediately placed on the side of moderation. While the use of historical examples is not ruled out,[87] these examples must call on people to engage in a kind of imitation, which, on the one hand, promotes the formation of character and, on the other, contributes to the suppression of uncontrolled emotions in the soul of citizens (814A–B). The text lists five examples, all taken from the history of classical Athens (814B). Brad Cook's study of these five examples in their original context has shown that they all teach that political harmony is achieved through temperance and a lifestyle that accords with moderation, both on the individual and

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[82] See *I.Ephesos* 27a, together with the remarks of Rogers (1992) 224–228. Assemblies of citizens are attested by Plutarch himself: *De prof. in virt.* 80C–D; *Quaest. conv.* 713F; 714A; *An seni* 794C; 796C; *Praec. ger. reip.* 799D; 810D; 813B; 815A; 823B. Cf. also Jones (1940) 176–177; Sherwin-White (1963) 84–85; Jones (1964) 722–723; *id.* (1971) 10, 111; Desideri (1978) 445–447; Lehmann (2020a) 13–14; Hofmann (2020) 235–236.

[83] On this, see esp. Veyne (2005) 166–171, 215–243.

[84] See Dio Chr. 7.66, 7.93, 33.14, 50.6; Philostr. *VS* 1.524; see also Bowie (1970) 33 n. 95; Jones (1971) 115 n. 27; Swain (1996) 176–177; Duff (1999) 296; Almagor (2023) 269.

[85] Cf. Almagor (2023) 269–270.

[86] See also Swain (1996) 166.

[87] See Swain (1996) 166–167; Goldhill (2001) 8.

collective levels.[88] This is a view that not only fits with the fundamental principles of Plutarch's moral philosophy, but that can also be used – in the context of the political situation at the time – against those who, in their public discourse, willingly don the mantle of the fiery patriot, putting both their cities and themselves at risk.[89]

But the opposition should not, as we said, be eliminated only on one level. In reality, Plutarch not only criticises these orators, but presents five examples of his own, which – in light of the preceding description of Roman power – now appear less dangerous. It is not surprising that, in this context, Plutarch does not, as Simon Swain points out, touch at all on practices that fall within the realm of beneficence.[90] Would these not also arouse patriotic feelings in the multitude? When compared to beneficence, however, rhetoric is, as we have seen, more intimately connected with Plutarch's teachings. This connection, in turn, places him under pressure to positively differentiate himself from the proponents of other teachings, with which rhetoric may be even more intimately connected.

The passage concludes with a reference to the sophists: through the imitation of these acts (i.e. the acts described in the above-mentioned historical examples) it is indeed possible for the Greeks to come to resemble their ancestors, but Marathon, Eurymedon and Plataea, as well as all other examples which "make the common folk vainly to swell with pride and kick up their heels", are abandoned to "the schools of the sophists" (814B–C).[91] The restriction of these historical examples to the schools of the sophists once again suggests the adoption of a hierarchy within which Plutarch, with his own benign examples, is entitled to occupy a more privileged position in the education of politicians. Whether the danger he describes was actually present at the time is something that cannot be verified. The chances are rather slim. From the present point of view, however, it would likely have been enough for Plutarch to have presented his readers with one or two isolated instances that would have prevented his position from being easily refuted.[92]

5. The reception of the confrontation in subsequent generations

That Plutarch's attacks on the sophists have their source in his desire to stake out even more space for himself in a shared field of action seems to have been perceived already in Antiquity. About a century after Plutarch's death, Philostratus, the author of the *Lives of the Sophists*, in a

[88] See Cook (2004) 210. Cf. also Stadter (2023) 185.

[89] Cf. also Lehmann (2020a) 16; Thum (2020) 251–252.

[90] See Swain (1996) 168.

[91] Transl. by H.N. Fowler.

[92] Cf. also Thum (2020) 262.

literary epistle to Julia Domna, the second wife of the emperor Septimius Severus, refers to Plutarch.[93] At the end of the letter Philostratus, a sophist, asks the queen to persuade the long-dead Plutarch, who is described as "the most audacious of Greece" (τὸν θαρσαλεώτερον τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ), not to resent the sophists and to refrain from slandering Gorgias. Otherwise a characterisation will be attributed to him, which Philostratus already seems to have in mind, but which he is not yet disposed to reveal (Philostr. *Ep.* 73, 21–26 = Plut. *fr.* 192). This is all a game.[94] Philostratus either has some insulting characterisation in mind for Plutarch,[95] or, if we accept the suggestion of Damoen and Praet, who see here a reference to the end of Plato's *Phaedrus* (esp. 278B–E), he is hinting at the label 'writer of texts' (λόγων συγγραφεὺς) as opposed to 'philosopher'.[96]

But Philostratus was not only one of the most successful sophists of his time. He was also a sophist who was not adverse to admitting that there was common ground between philosophy and sophistry. This is, moreover, the theme of this letter to Julia Domna, in which he argues that Plato actually admired Gorgias and his rhetorical tradition.[97] As we have seen, many representatives of rhetoric saw philosophy as a preparation for rhetoric. The problem of recognising the existence of a common field of action was more normally faced by philosophers. This is suggested by Plutarch's description of himself as "the most audacious of Greece". In such contexts, the term 'Greek' is not understood in geographical or ethnic terms, but rather denotes someone who systematically engages in *paideia* – and not just any *paideia*, but the *paideia* upon which sophists like Philostratus based their superior social and professional status.[98] The conclusion follows naturally: from very early on, people like Philostratus, who saw themselves as representatives of a sophistical tradition, thought that Plutarch was hostile to them, not merely because Plutarch happened to be a philosopher, but because he was critical of the rhetorical tradition of Gorgias and the sophists, despite all the common ground he had with them.[99]

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[93] The authenticity of the letter has been questioned by Volkmann (1869) 2.viii–x, and more recently by Bowersock (1969) 104–105. The text is considered authentic by Norden (1898) 380–381; Jeuckens (1907) 58; Gelzer (1971) 273; Jones (1971) 131–132; Anderson (1977) 43–45; Penella (1979) 163–164; Anderson (1986) 4, 276–277; Damoen & Praet (2012) 437.

[94] Cf. also Jażdżewska (2019) 75.

[95] Cf. Bowersock (1969) 104.

[96] See Damoen & Praet (2012) 438–439.

[97] See also Penella (1979) 165.

[98] See also Russell (1983) 84 n. 51; Trapp (1997) xliii; Whitmarsh (2005) 13–15; Schmitz (2012) 70–71, 83.

[99] Cf. also Jażdżewska (2019) 75–76.

Several scholars have linked the passage in Philostratus' letter with a passage from a lost work of Plutarch that is possibly preserved by Isidore of Pelusium.[100] It is not entirely certain, however, that Isidore is referring to Plutarch of Chaeronea, since there is also a later Neoplatonic philosopher from Athens of the same name.[101] The identification with Plutarch of Chaeronea is, however, now widely accepted in the literature. In his letter, Isidore states that Plutarch was of the opinion that genuine Atticism (γνήσιον Ἀττικισμὸν) is characterised by clarity and simplicity (τὸ σαφὲς καὶ λιτὸν), as these virtues marked the speeches of the 'orators' (ῥήτορες), which obviously means the Attic orators. But then came Gorgias of Leontini, who introduced into public discourse an elevated style and figurative language (τὸ ὑψηλὸν καὶ τροπικὸν), forsaking clarity, a 'disease' (τὴν νόσον ταύτην) that offended even Plato (Isid. Pel. *Ep.* 2.42 = Plut., *fr.* 186 Sandbach). Isidore's source for this passage is unknown. The reference to public discourse does indicate an awareness that the matter relates to rhetoric. The reference to 'genuine Atticism', which seems to be a moderate Atticism that does not sacrifice clarity on the altar of grandiloquence and figurative excess, shows that Plutarch is making use of categorisations that had been current in the field of rhetorical theory and criticism since the first century BC. The mention of Plato's 'Gorgianism' is perhaps a reference to Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Dem.* 5.6 = *Pomp.* 2.6).[102]

That said, the most important thing to note here is that although Plutarch attacks Gorgias, describing his rhetorical tradition as a 'disease' (νόσος),[103] we find no trace of a general bias against rhetoric as such. This passage clearly hints at the existence in the past of a territory of 'genuine' Attic discourse, one that was still untainted by Gorgias' 'disease' and whose main characteristics are the virtues of clarity and brevity. If the passage is indeed to be attributed to Plutarch, then he once again appears to draw certain lines of demarcation within a field in which philosophers and sophists are both active. A similar attempt can be observed in other texts. What is said is not about rhetoric as such, but about the people who practise it.

6. Conclusion

The importance of the role played by rhetoric in Plutarch's self-promotion within the field of education, as outlined in the preceding chapter on 'Rhetoric and Beneficence', also requires a re-evaluation of the criticism that he systematically levels against the sophists in his writings. For too

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[100] See, e.g., Norden (1898) 380; Bowersock (1969) 104; Jones (1971) 131; Penella (1979) 163 n. 16; Damoen & Praet (2012) 437; Jażdżewska (2019) 75.

[101] See Volkmann (1869) 2.viii–ix.

[102] Cf. also Phld. *Ind. Acad.*, Col. 1, 4–5, alongside the remarks of Fleischer (2023) 286.

[103] Cf. *De aud.* 42D.

long, Plutarch's hostility towards the sophists was interpreted as indicative of his views on rhetoric, since rhetoric was the main object of their activity. This approach is, however, bound up with the earlier attempt by certain scholars to give an early date to certain epideictic texts attributed to Plutarch, thus constructing a scheme involving Plutarch's conversion from rhetoric to philosophy similar to the one created by Synesius for Dio Chrysostom. However, a fresh examination of these passages, free of this bias, shows that Plutarch's harsh – and to a large extent also unfair – criticism of the sophists is not an indication that he looks down on rhetoric.

Plutarch undoubtedly describes the sophist as a teacher and public speaker who represents a model that is diametrically opposed to that of the philosopher: the philosopher is distinguished by his restraint, the sophist by his lack of any measure; the philosopher possesses knowledge that makes him useful to himself and others, the sophist possesses nothing but the ability to bring about pleasure. We should not, however, lose sight of the fact that this is a carefully constructed rhetorical opposition that adheres to patterns that can be traced to a quite early stage in the body of extant Ancient Greek literature. This is especially true of cases in which an orator or philosopher attempts, from a disadvantaged position, to gain ground at the expense of his opponents by shifting the whole debate to the level of ethics. The analysis of examples from two different Plutarchan texts has shown that this interpretation has a solid foundation. Plutarch shows that, despite the success of the sophists and the fact that his teaching programme may not fully align with the priorities of the public, it is nevertheless a model of teaching that aims to confer a substantial benefit on the individual both at the level of the relationship with the self and at the level of the relationship of the self with others. In this context, rhetoric is just another field in which the conflict between the philosopher and sophist can unfold. At other times, the focus is limited to the sophists' rhetoric, which is contrasted with philosophy, while at yet other times, rhetoric is presented as a shared space within which philosophy and sophistry find common ground.

That said, nowhere is rhetoric as a whole identified with the sophists. Plutarch's critique of their activities thus has an opportunistic character. Moreover, his attitude towards the sophists provoked a reaction on their part only a few decades after his death, since it amounts to a rhetorical tactic.

Conclusion

In the preceding analysis, the question of Plutarch's attitude towards rhetoric was addressed on the basis of the hypothesis that in trying to strike a balance between the need to comply with certain rules governing philosophers' endeavours in the field of education and a favourable view of rhetoric as a useful tool for communicating with others in various social spaces, Plutarch's public discourse ends up in an awkward position. In his writings, rhetoric seems to be so important that, for example, someone who is about to make his entry into politics should not be indifferent to it, but, at the same time, it is treated as less important than – or even almost insignificant in comparison to – the persuasion that arises from a virtuous character. Earlier studies treated this position as an expression of a moderate attitude towards rhetoric, but such an interpretation raises a number of other problems. One difficulty is that it fails to explain the existence among Plutarch's extant texts of a group of epideictic treatises in which the presence of rhetoric is more pronounced than in other texts. The earlier hypothesis according to which these epideictic texts belong to an early period of Plutarch's literary activity, before he turned to philosophy and adopted a more hostile attitude towards rhetoric, cannot be substantiated. It is a mere conjecture based on circular reasoning. A hostile attitude towards rhetoric *per se* cannot be found in Plutarch. Rather, we find (in specific contexts) the elevation of a virtuous character over rhetoric when it comes to persuading others, as well as criticism of the sophists.

The hypothesis pursued in the present study introduces for the first time an important parameter, namely the broader literary and cultural contexts that influence and restrict the scope of Plutarch's message. His intentions (insofar as they can be identified), the expectations of contemporary audiences, the general antagonism that is found in shared fields of action, the various textual conventions and so on have not yet been systematically taken into account in research on this topic. And yet, if we attempt to consider these elements as well, a picture begins to emerge that differs from the one found in earlier studies, namely a picture of a philosopher who does not necessarily see rhetoric as a subordinate means of persuasion, but who finds it difficult to state this position openly in his public discourse. An analysis of various texts from the Plutarchan corpus provides support for this view. Most of them belong to the collection of the so-called *Moralia*. At the same time, however, material preserved in

the *Lives* was also taken into account. The picture formed on the basis of the study of these texts is as follows.[1]

In the version of Platonic philosophy taught by Plutarch, persuasion was not just a legitimate objective to pursue, but a goal whose achievement was considered necessary, especially in the context of communicating with the wider public. Plutarch's teaching has as its ultimate aim 'to become like God', and he invites his audience to attempt to mould the self in light of the virtuous divine model. The focus is on the human soul, but this soul is dual: it consists of a part dominated by reason (i.e. which conforms to the order of the divine *logos*) and of another part in which desires and emotions are grounded. The latter opposes the authority of the former. While it can be subdued, this subjugation is neither easy nor quick. In contrast to the Stoics, Plutarch holds that the moral constitution of the self cannot be achieved via a teaching that appeals exclusively to reason, since there are areas in the soul in which reason cannot gain a foothold.

This is not an insurmountable obstacle, however. What is needed is a means of persuasion that motivates the emotional element to at least comply with the commands of reason, thus bringing the desires along with it and thus helping to bring the whole soul into line. The image alludes to the Platonic metaphor of the chariot. Both the problem of how to teach what reason enjoins and the solution to this problem involving persuasion are frequently pointed out in Plutarch's writings – not so much with regard to the philosopher's communication with his immediate circle of students or listeners in a lecture setting, but with regard to the presence of philosophy in fields where interaction with the public takes place on a much larger scale. Typical examples in Plutarch's work of various political and military leaders, such as the ideal politician described in the proem to *Phocion*, Pericles, Cato the Younger and Alexander the Great, are also inspired by philosophical ideals and, under different circumstances, appear to 'persuade and teach' a wide range of people.

There is no doubt, however, that when Plutarch compares the persuasion produced by rhetoric with the persuasion produced by a virtuous character, he relegates rhetoric to a secondary supporting role, while the dominant role is attributed to character. Nonetheless, there are good reasons to think that this supposedly moderate attitude should not necessarily be regarded as his own view of the matter, as was often done in earlier studies. The text in which this hierarchy is discussed at length, the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae*, is a clearly 'exhortatory' text, with an addressee whom Plutarch attempts to initiate into a philosophical way of life via advice about politics. The particular emphasis placed on the persuasive power of the virtuous character meets the needs of 'exhortation'.

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[1] For a summary of the main findings of my research in German, see Tsiampokalos (2021).

Placing ethics in a superior position to rhetoric is, in this context, the most effective thing a philosopher can say to a young person to prevent him from neglecting his self-care as a result of his political activity. This intention is quite clear in many passages of the text. Given these circumstances, however, it becomes apparent that the position Plutarch reserves for rhetoric may in fact be more favourable than he claims.

In this particular text, Plutarch could certainly have given rhetoric a worse position. Although in his more mature works Plato had accepted that rhetoric could serve as a useful tool of persuasion within the field of philosophy, his successors in the Academy, motivated by professional rivalry with the schools of rhetoric, on the one hand, and with the Stoics, who also taught a form of rhetoric, on the other, tried to roll back this concession. The most fervent exponent of this tendency was probably Charmadas who, according to Cicero's testimony, argued that persuasion cannot originate in textbooks of rhetoric or the rules taught by rhetoricians to their students, but only from the conduct of an honest life, the secrets of which are naturally known only to philosophers. Plutarch could not ignore such a stance on the part of an older Academic philosopher, given that he himself was also an Academic philosopher. Moreover, in Plutarch's age, the Academy no longer existed as an institution and there was no scholarch to serve as an arbiter of orthodoxy. As a result, orthodoxy and heterodoxy came to be defined in terms of continuity with respect to the views of earlier philosophers within the same tradition. Openly acknowledging the value of rhetoric could therefore have jeopardised Plutarch's reputation, especially since only a little earlier in his essay, he argued that the preeminent persuasive factor in politics is a virtuous character. Despite this, he does take the risk of acknowledging some value to rhetoric as well.

This subordination of rhetoric to character is, however, the only place in Plutarch's public discourse where we find a less positive assessment of rhetoric. In all other discussions of rhetoric, his attitude is, in principle, favourable. Even in those passages of the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae* where rhetoric is not discussed in connection with ethics, the persuasiveness of rhetorical discourse is emphasised at the expense of other ways of influencing citizens. It is on this basis that Plutarch juxtaposes rhetoric and beneficence. Although, from a historical point of view, such a juxtaposition is certainly not valid, since the two practices were in reality complementary, comparing these two ways of imposing power allows Plutarch to construct for his readers a distinctive and enticing identity, which fits with the general philosophical message of the text. After all, philosophy, the subject Plutarch teaches, is rooted more firmly in a preoccupation with discourse than in beneficence. Moreover, in various passages in Plutarch's writings, we also find evidence of an at least occasional engagement with rhetoric. Since the engagement with

rhetoric and rhetorical discourse is accompanied by a constant pressure for the parallel formation of virtuous character, the coexistence of rhetoric and philosophy seems natural to Plutarch – so natural, in fact, that when, in contexts where the contrast between character and discourse as means of persuasion no longer exists, persuasion through discourse is treated as a key feature of the politician's activity of seeking to exert a beneficial moral influence on others and thus contrasted with the 'costly' persuasion obtained by means of beneficence.

Plutarch's involvement with the teaching of rhetoric also raises the question of the criticism he systematically levels against the sophists. Until recently, this criticism has been taken as indicative of Plutarch's own views on rhetoric. This interpretation was proposed by earlier scholars, who, in their attempt to date a small number of surviving epideictic texts to an early phase of Plutarch's literary activity, ended up proposing a scheme involving a conversion from rhetoric to philosophy similar to the one sketched by Synesius for Dio Chrysostom. Criticism of the sophists does not, however, necessarily imply criticism of rhetoric. Rather, it can be primarily explained in terms of a philosophical teacher's need to distinguish himself in a positive way within the field of higher education. In Plutarch's writings, the sophist is generally described as being diametrically opposed to the philosopher: one is distinguished for his restraint, the other for his lack of all moderation; one possesses knowledge that makes him useful to his fellow men, the other possesses nothing but the ability to cause pleasure.

This contrast between one model of interaction, characterised by truth, moderation and the possibility of benefiting others, and another model, characterised by distance from reality, ignorance of what truly matters, exuberance and boundless pleasure, does not appear for the first time in Plutarch. It is a familiar rhetorical tactic, which aims at gaining a moral advantage from a disadvantaged position. Despite the success of the sophists, the philosopher can thus show that, although his own model of teaching is unlikely to fully correspond to the public's priorities, it is nevertheless a model that aims to confer a substantial benefit with respect to an individual's relationship both to himself and to others. Since this model does not exclude rhetoric, but, given the opportunity, leaves space for it, Plutarch has every right to lay claim to a privileged position within the broader field of higher education.

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