Plutarch’s Heroes in the *Moralia*:
a Matter of *Variatio* or Another (More Genuine) Outlook?

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From the 48 extant biographical heroes of Plutarch, 2 (Galba and Otho) are never mentioned in the *Moralia*, and 6 are only cited – and very rarely at that – in essays of a somewhat special nature, such as the *Apophthegmata*, the *Roman Questions*, and the rhetorical pieces *On the Fortune or Virtue of Alexander* and *On the Fortune of the Romans*, where the relevant references are more or less expected.¹ The above essays aside, we shall find 19 heroes being mentioned only once or up to five times in the rest of the *Moralia* corpus, and another 7 being cited from six to ten times.² This arithmetic yields that from the 48 Plutarchean worthies only 14 occur with some frequency in the *Moralia* (48–34 [2+6+19+7] = 14); and that from those 14, Romans are only 3: the two Catos and – rather surprisingly – Pompey.³ As for the heroes more frequently referred to, and leaving out again the special treatises above, the first place clearly belongs to Alexander (about 60 occurrences), and then follow Perikles (27 occurrences), Themistokles, Solon (without reckoning the *Symposium of the Seven Sages*), the elder Cato, Phokion, Demosthenes, Alkibiades, and the rest.

My purpose in this paper is, on the one hand, to examine the context in which some Plutarchean heroes occur in the *Moralia* as well as the reasons for which Plutarch refers to them, and, on the other, to attempt an explanation in cases of varying or even conflicting versions between the *Moralia* and the *Lives*. Hopefully, this investigation may also tell us something about Plutarch’s method of work and literary talent and, further, it may even plausibly suggest the sequence or relative chronology of some of his works.

As I have argued elsewhere,⁴ Plutarch’s narrative in the *Lives* is of necessity influenced by his historical sources. This entails that his true beliefs about the

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¹ Agis (216D, 222A), Coriolanus (318F, 322F), Marcellus (195D–E, 317D, 318D, 322C), Publicola (275B, 285F), Sertorius (204A, 324A). Romulus occurs more frequently, but only in the *Quaest. Rom.* and *De fort. Rom.*
² These seven are: Cicero, Demetrios, Lysander, Nikias, Pelopidas, Sulla, Theseus.
³ This must be due to the abundant subject-matter which P. had at his disposal rather than to any particular ethical problematization connected with this Life; for from the moral viewpoint, *Coriolanus* and *Brutus* were (and are) more interesting.
characters and the events he relates are more safely to be deduced either by passages (mostly of digressive nature) where he plainly expresses his own opinion\(^5\) or by his concluding *Comparisons*, where Plutarch is again on his own, and passes judgements deriving, more or less, from settled convictions rather than from the particular information of his books.\(^6\) By the same token, I shall argue here that the way with which and the reason for which Plutarch recalls a certain hero in a moral essay reveal his opinion about him more truthfully than in the pertinent *Life*.

We scarcely need, of course, the evidence of the *Moralia* in order to know what Plutarch thought of such personages as Aristeides or Phokion or Lykourgos. So, the favourable judgements passed on these men, the praise of their deeds and the complimentary characterizations employed simply confirm and sometimes complete an already well-known biographical picture. But what about some figures remaining in limbo, as it were, the paradoxical paradigms – to use Stadter’s words (p. 41) – of Lysander and Sulla? Or which is the case with such pairs as Nikias and Crassus, Pyrrhos and Marius, and even Coriolanus and Alkibiades? Are we to regard the above heroes as models for imitation or as deterrent examples?\(^7\) More precisely, how did Plutarch want his readers to take them for, which amounts to what did Plutarch himself think of these men?

Take Nikias, for example. In the *Life* Plutarch criticizes Nikias (albeit somewhat indirectly) for his delay to extricate the Athenian army from Sicily in time, owing to his superstitious fears and overscrupulous religiosity (cf. *Nik.* 24); although later in the *Synkrisis* he admits that such a conduct was anyhow more acceptable than Crassus’ complete scorn of divination (*Comp. Nik.–Cr.* 5.3). Nevertheless, in his treatise *On Superstition* Plutarch says (169A) that perhaps it would have been much better for Nikias to commit suicide rather than to be so fearful of a moon eclipse, and thus eventually lead into slaughter or inglorious capture forty thousand Athenians including himself.

The rhetorical tone of this essay and the vehemence of the attack on superstition, which is here regarded as a worse evil than atheism (165B, 171B–D), seem to point to a youthful Plutarch.\(^8\) But much as this assault is

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6 Occasionally, however, some judgements which P. passes in the *Comparisons*, derive from his manipulation of evidence to the effect of stressing a particular point that suits his argument or of bringing about a balance between his heroes. Cf. Pelling, 131/96/134; Duff 1999, 267 ff.; Nikolaidis 2009, 2 (provisional page) and n. 8 ibid., 13, 17 ff.; id. 1991, 160 and n. 84 ibid., and 2005, 285 and n. 10 ibid.

7 On this matter see Nikolaidis 2005, 307–8, 314–15, 318. For Nikias and Crassus, cf. also id. 1988, 331–33. That Marius is a negative example is also suggested by *De sera* 553A (but perhaps contrast *De fort. Rom.* 317D).

8 Cf. Ziegler, 190; Klaerr, 242; Lozza, 25.
understandable, even on the part of such a pious man as our author, the comparison of Nikias in the above passage with Midas and Aristodemos, who, disturbed and disheartened by strange dreams, portents and personal forebodings, slew themselves, is quite out of place, given the respective historical circumstances. Yet this comparison shows that Plutarch’s opinion of Nikias had been crystalized already in his youth, namely long before he came to write his biography, and it is this opinion, based on such character traits as dilatoriness, irresoluteness, pusillanimity and even cowardice that later informs the *Life of Nikias*, thus making it a negative rather than a positive paradigm, as the pairing with Crassus also suggests. 9

Sulla is another interesting case. Does the notorious dictator pose as a model for imitation or avoidance? Given the relatively early place which *Lysander-Sulla* pair is commonly assigned in the order of the *Parallel Lives*, 10 this question should not normally be asked (because the earlier *Lives* are exemplary, of course), but since several critics have been embarrassed with this pair and have recognized a paradox or an ambiguity in it, 11 not only is this question entirely legitimate and indeed worth of a thorough investigation, but, in my opinion, it is also high time that we removed this pair from the first decade of the series (see n. 10). More on this in my article for Stadter’s *Festschrift* (2005, 307–309, 318). Here I will focus on what Plutarch tells us about Sulla in the *Moralia*.

It cannot be denied that in the *Political precepts* our author approves of Sulla’s readiness to give young men opportunities for public activities (806E); or that in *De laude ipsius* he finds Sulla’s tendency to ascribe all his achievements to fortune a clever means to fight off envy (542F). 12 But, apart from these instances, Sulla in the *Moralia* is mainly presented as: a) a man whom Fortune took from the bosom of a harlot to put him at the helm of the Roman republic; 13 b) a man who almost razed Athens, and certainly drowned the city in the blood of its people, 14 and c) a man who, lacking the kindness and nobility of a Pompey, after capturing Praeneste, indiscriminately

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9 Cf. Nikolaidis 1988, 332; also Piccirilli (see Angeli Bertinelli et al.), XIV: “Nicia è dunque un eroe negativo, un antieroe par eccellenza”.
10 See Nikolaidis 2005, 283.
11 Cf. Stadder, 41; Duff 1997, and more extensively id. 1999, 161–204.
12 It is worth noting, however, that in the *Life* this tendency is not due to modesty (whether pretended or not), but, on the contrary, to Sulla’s boastfulness or vainglory (*Su.* 6.7: εἰτε κόμμυ χρώμενος).
13 Cf. *De fort. Rom.* 318C: Κορνήλιον δὲ Σύλλαν ἐκ τῶν Νικοπόλεως τῆς ἐτάρας ἀναλαβότα καὶ βαστάσασα κόλπων (i. e. Τύχη)...ἐπιτίθησι μοναρχίας καὶ δικτατορίας.
14 Cf. *De garrulitate* 505B: ...καὶ μικρόν μὲν κατέσκαψεν <τὴν πόλιν> ἐνέπλησε δὲ φόνον καὶ νεκρῶν, ὡστε τὸν Κεραιμικὸν αἵματι ῥυήσα. Cf. also *Su.* 14.5.
slaughtered all the population of the city (Præc. ger. reip. 815F–816A). My claim, then, is that the above descriptions, occurring in essays unrelated to the historical sources of Sulla, are based on convictions settled already in Plutarch’s mind, in other words, Sulla’s picture in the Moralia reflects more faithfully his opinion about him.\footnote{Not that the Life yields a very different impression. But owing to the encomiastic element of the biographical genre (let alone P.’s ethical preoccupations; see, e.g., Kim. 2.4–5), Sulla’s picture in the Life is “more positive than it could have been”, as Duff aptly puts it (1999, 203n. 167). Cf. also stadter, 43, 48 ff., Nikolaidis 2005, 307–308, and other references in nn. 92–93 ibid.}

Concerning the Life of Alkibiades, Ziegler is categorical: “Das zweite Paar der schlechten Beispiele bilden ohne Zweifel Coriolan und Alkibiades” (col. 265/900). Most scholars would concur, I think, and indeed Alkibiades’ biography bears out, if with some qualifications, Ziegler’s verdict. But when we come to the Moralia, we may be surprised to discover that from the 35 or so references to Alkibiades,\footnote{For a conspectus of these references one may now consult O’ Neil’s Index (p. 23).} only one is derogatory, semi-derogatory, to be precise; for in the Political precepts, on the one hand, it is acknowledged that Alkibiades was most efficient as public man and undefeated as general and, on the other, it is clearly stated that he was ruined by his audacious, extravagant and dissolute way of living (which, moreover, deprived Athens from the benefit of his other good qualities. – cf. 800D). Most of the other references contain no characterizations, and are either factual or morally neutral, while some might even be regarded as complimentary.\footnote{See, for example, 69F and 804E–F. Also complimentary are 3 references in the De gloria Ath. (345D, 349D, 351B) but, due to the epideictic nature of this essay, their significance is less weighty.} Yet the following one from the De sera is of particular importance. Plutarch argues there that the delay of divine punishment is sometimes deliberate so that broader interests and greater advantages may be secured. If, for instance, someone had killed Miltiades when he was tyrant in Thrace, or had prosecuted and convicted Kimon for incest with his sister, or had indicted Themistokles for his youthful insolent revellings in the agora and driven him out of Athens, as was later done to Alkibiades, we would have had no Marathon, no Euremedon, no Artemision.

\[\text{Cf. 552B: } εἰ δὲ τὴν ἔτραφαν ἀπέκτεινε Μιλτιάδην...πρῶτον ἡ Κύωνα...διώξας ἐλευθέρως...ὁ Θεομακρός...ἀφελετο τὴν πόλιν, ὡς ὑπερήφανον Ἀλκιβιάδον γραμμάτας, ἃρ’ οὐκ ἣν ἀπωλεῖσθαι ἤμιν ὅσι Μαραθόνες, οἱ Εὐρυμένοιτες, τὸ καλὸν Ἀρτεμίσιον...; It is surprising that Themistokles is linked with Artemision and not with Salamis in the above passage. A possible explanation is that Plutarch wants to quote, as he actually does in the immediate sequel, the lines of his compatriot Pindar, which refer to the Artemision sea-battle (ὁ πτερός Ἀθηναίων ἐβάλοντο φαεννάν/κρητικὸς ἐλευθερίας). On the other hand, Yvonne Vernière, noticing that the same lines are also quoted at 350B and 867C (let me add Them. 8.2 too)}
remarks that “Le nom d’ Artemision déclenche à chaque fois le mécanisme de mémoire” (p. 201 n. 3).

The mention of Alkibiades in the above context clearly shows, I believe, that, in Plutarch’s mind, the prosecution and subsequent conviction of Alkibiades was to the detriment not only of Athens, but of Greece as a whole. So, it would not be an exaggeration, perhaps, to say that, besides the contemporary Athenians (and not only the Athenians), including also Socrates, even Plutarch the moralist, five centuries later, succumbed to the spell of the notorious enfant gâté of Athens; for in the Life too, despite the unequivocal condemnation of Alkibiades’ various faults and transgressions, it is his talents – political astuteness, military capabilities, generous character, graceful manners etc. – that more often and more vividly come to the fore. Alkibiades was a traitor, of course, and his treason was far more harmful to Athens than that of Coriolanus to Rome, while, as regards their respective moral status, the Roman was by far more honest and decent than the Athenian. Yet, according to Plutarch’s overall assessment of the two men in the final Synkrisis, it is Alkibiades who apparently emerges superior or less bad, if you prefer, than Coriolanus.

Occasionally, the evidence from the Moralia may also reveal Plutarch’s sentiment in cases where his position is not explicitly stated in the relevant Life. In Per. 31–32, for example, Plutarch enumerates all principal motives behind Perikles’ decision to cause the Peloponnesian war (Aspasia had been indicted for impiety, Pheidias was in prison because he had irreverently – as the charge went – depicted himself and Perikles on the shield of Athena, and Perikles himself was impeached, because of his intimacy with Anaxagoras, who was accused of promoting atheism), but concludes his enumeration thus: “these are the alleged reasons for which Perikles did not allow the demos to yield to the Lacedaemonians; but the truth is not clear.” Not so unclear, though, in the Synkrisis, where it is reasonable for one to presume that Plutarch expresses his settled opinion on the matter. And this opinion is that the war was brought on by Perikles’ contention that no concession should be made to Sparta (λέγεται γὰρ ἐπακτὸς ὑπ’ ἕκείνου γενέσθαι, Λακεδαιμονίοις ἑρίσαντος μὴ ἐνδοῦναι). True,
λέγεται cannot prima facie be taken to denote Plutarch’s opinion, but what follows clearly suggests that this was the case all the same; for Plutarch himself now says that “neither would Fabius have made any concessions to Carthage, but would also have nobly undergone the peril that supremacy required.” (δοκῶ δὲ μηδ’ ἂν Φάβιον Μάξιμον ἐνδούναι τι Κορχηδόνιοι, ἀλλ’ εὐγενῶς ὑποστήναι τὸν ὑπὲρ τῆς ἔγχευσεις κίνδυνον). By using the adverb “nobly” (εὐγενῶς) in a similar, hypothetically, case, Plutarch evidently admits Perikles’ responsibility for the war, but, at the same time, regards his firmness of purpose as a noble policy and justifies him (Comp. Per.–Fab. 3.1). As for the other reasons alleged, in De Herodoti malignitate our author flatly rejects the accusations involving Aspasia and Pheidias, and espouses the philotimia and philonikia motives instead;21

Let us now move to the Quaestiones convivales and try to see what the relationship of this work with the Lives may disclose. Less reserved than Teodorsson, who holds that Plutarch’s Table Talks are authentic only to a certain extent (vol. I, pp. 8 and 13–14), I will also argue that these talks are mostly authentic.

To find Plutarch, as interlocutor in a Table Talk, saying something which we also find in another treatise of the Moralia or in the Lives is completely natural, of course. To find another interlocutor saying the same thing in front of Plutarch who also participates in the discussion, may seem a bit odd, but, if this something is common knowledge, we should not really be surprised. For every well-read man of the time (and most of the guests in the Quaestiones convivales were more than simply well-read) must have heard, for instance, of the notorious profanation of the Eleusinian mysteries on the part of Alkibiades; so, when Plutarch’s friend Theon recalls this event, which Plutarch treats in much more detail in his Alkibiades, we do not need to infer that this particular Table Talk (621B–C) is of necessity made up. Similarly, Plutarch’s grandfather Lamprias, as well as the other members of his family and

21 Cf. 855F–856A: Ἐτι τοίνυν ἐπὶ τῶν ὁμολογουμένων πεπράξθαι, τὴν δ’ αἰτίαν ἂφ’ ἢς πέπρακται καὶ τὴν διάνοιαν ἔχονταν ἄδηλον, ὅ πρός τὸ χεῖρον εἰκάζων δυσμενῆς ἔστι καὶ κακοήθης: ὡσπερ οἱ κωμικοὶ τὸν πόλεμον ὑπὸ τὸ Περικλέους ἐκκεκαίηθει δὴ Ἀσπασίαν ἢ διὰ Φειδίου ἀποφαίνοντες, οὐ φιλοτιμία τινὶ καὶ φιλονικία μᾶλλον στορέσθαι τὸ φρόνημα Πελοποννησιῶν καὶ μηδενὸς ψφείσθαι Λακεδαιμονίως ἐξελιγμένος. Cf. also Per. 29.8 (…)παροξύνος τὸν δήμον ἐμείναι τῇ πρὸς τοὺς Μεγαραίς φιλονικία, μόνος ἔσχε τοῦ πολέμου τὴν αἰτίαν) and 31.1 (οἱ μὲν ἐκ φρονήματος μεγάλου μετά γνώμης κατὰ τὸ βέλτιστον ἀπισχυρίσθαι φασιν αὐτὸν…οἱ δὲ μᾶλλον συναδείει τινὶ καὶ φιλονικία πρὸς ἐνθείην ἴχνη περιφρονήσας Λακεδαιμονίως). In the Life, where P.’s dependence on his sources is more direct, Perikles acts out of arrogance and contentiousness, whereas in the Synkrisis and De Herod. malign., where P. speaks for himself, Perikles acts nobly and out of love for honour. As I argued in my unpublished doctoral thesis, philonikia stems from philotimia, and is its main negative aspect. For more recent discussion on these qualities see the references in my 2005 article, p. 301n. 63.
some Boeotian friends, must have been versed in matters of local history. Thus, when Lamprias refers in one Table Talk (680B) to a military achievement of Epameinondas, which is also mentioned in Plutarch’s An seni (797A–B), I see no reason to dispute that he speaks on his own behalf and assume instead that he acts as Plutarch’s mouthpiece. By the same token, when the brother Lamprias says something commonly (or locally) known, we need not doubt that he speaks for himself; however, when he expounds a philosophical theory or idea, we could indeed reasonably suppose that he speaks on Plutarch’s behalf, especially in cases where Plutarch simply reports and does not take actual part in the discussion. It follows then that it is only, or mostly, in cases where Plutarch is simply the narrator that we might possibly speak of partly made up Table Talks.

Yet the 6th Table Talk of the first book (623D), concerning Alexander’s drinking habits, is more problematic. Philinus, a close friend of Plutarch, ironically dismisses the view that Alexander did not drink excessively but simply spent much time on drinking and conversing with his friends; those who hold this view are talking nonsense, Philinus asserts, because: a) there are many entries in the royal diaries, the ephemerides, bearing witness to the very opposite (see n. 26 below); b) excessive drinking would explain Alexander’s laziness towards sex, despite his hot temperament, and c) this was also one of the reasons that alienated Kallisthenes, who would not endure to dine with Alexander on account of his heavy drinking (623F). By contrast, in the epideictic essay De Alexandri fortuna aut virtute Plutarch denies, as expected, that Alexander was a drunkard (337F); but the same denial, followed by evidence of Alexander’s sobriety, diligence, fortitude and military as well as political efficiency, is also to be found in the Life, where Plutarch draws on Aristobulus’ favourable portrait of Alexander. Yet, towards the end of the same chapter he tells us, whether unwittingly or due to some jumbling of his sources, that, after drinking, Alexander would take a bath and often sleep until the following

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22 See, for instance, 642F, 653B, 667C, 679E, 723A, 736D.
23 623E: διὸ καὶ πρὸς τὰς συνουσίας ἄργοτέρως ἢν, ὅξυς δὲ καὶ θυμοειδὴς ἀπέρ ἐστί σωματικῆς ἀρωμάτητος. Cf. also Alex. 4.8 (ἐν ταῖς ἡδουαίς ταῖς περὶ τὸ σῶμα δυσκίνητον εἶναι), n. 27 below., Athen. 434F–435A, and Fuhrmann, 163n. 4.
24 Cf. also De cohib. ira 454D–E, Athen. 434D, and Macurdy, 294 ff.
25 Alex. 23.1: Ἄν δὲ καὶ πρὸς οὐν ἦττον ἢ ἐδόκει κατασφερῆς, ἦδοξε δὲ διὰ τὸν χρόνον, ὃν οὐ πίνων μᾶλλον ἢ λαλῶν εἰκεῖν, ἢφ’ ἐκάστης κύλικος ἀεὶ μακρὸν τίνα λόγον δία τιθέμενος (cf. also 23.6, and for his other good qualities see 23.3–9). The similarity with the wording of the Table Talk above is remarkable (623D–E: λόγος ἢν περὶ Ἀλεξάνδρου τοῦ βασιλέως ὡς οὐ πολὺ πίνοντος ἄλλα πολὺ χρόνον ἐν τῷ πίνει καὶ διαλέγεσθαι τοῖς φίλοις ἐλκυόντος). Cf. also Alex. 75.6, and see Hamilton, LV and 58 (cf. esp. Arrian 7.29.4).
midday or, occasionally, through the entire day; in other words, he recounts, but without naming his source, Philinus’ information from the *ephemerides*.\(^{26}\)

What are we to make out of all this? What did Plutarch really think of Alexander’s drinking habits? Was he or was he not a hard drinker? Here is our data (without considering at all the epideictic essay): a) Earlier in the *Life* it is admitted that Alexander’s hot temperament made him prone to drink and irascible,\(^{27}\) which apparently contradicts the evidence at *Alex.* 23.1 (n. 25); b) Philinus’ opinion in *Table Talk* 1.6 above also contradicts *Alex.* 23.1, although Philinus (a townsman, close friend and admirer of Plutarch), as interlocutor in the *Quaestiones convivales*, expresses views which, on the whole, second those of Plutarch;\(^{28}\) c) two *Moralia* passages, i.e. writings where Plutarch speaks his mind rather than echoes a historical source, suggest that our author had accepted the traditional picture of an Alexander who would drink excessively;\(^{29}\) d) with the exception of Aristobulus, all other sources seem to affirm that Alexander was addicted to wine.\(^{30}\) In view of the foregoing, and given that Plutarch’s inclusion among the interlocutors ridiculed by Philinus (623E: \(\text{αντεδείκνυεν} \text{δ’ οὕτως φλασφοῦντος}\) is rather improbable,\(^{31}\) I would infer that our author’s true opinion about Alexander’s drinking habits must, in all
likelihood, coincide with that of Philinus in the *Quaestiones convivales*; a work that is not influenced, as most of Plutarch's moral treatises, by the immediacy of a historical source and is not suspect of either serving a special purpose (as the epideictic essay) or conforming to a special convention (as the biographical encomium).

Besides Plutarch's tendency to see his heroes in a favourable light (cf. for instance, *Kim. 2.4–5*, *De Herod. malign. 855E*), it is also the encomiastic element expected in a biography that obliges, as it were, Plutarch to try to absolve Alexander from the charge of hard drinking (*Alex. 23.1–2*). All the more so, since, irrespective of his hero's reputed or actual failings, Plutarch greatly admired Alexander, as a statement in a quite neutral context of the *De sera* manifests (*557B: Καὶ τὸν Ἀλέξανδρον οὐδ’ οἱ πάνω φιλότυτες, ὡς ἐσμεν καὶ ἡμεῖς, ἑπισημνοῦσι...*). Owing to this admiration perhaps (at least partly), he tries to rebut the picture of a drunkard king and military commander, by appealing to Alexander's conduct in the middle of affairs as well as to the amount and magnitude of his exploits during such a brief life.

As to the chronological relationship between *Alexander* and this *Table Talk*, I believe that the latter is either a simultaneous by-product of the *Life* or postdates it. The verbal similarities between Philinus' arguments and what Plutarch writes in the *Alexander* are so great that it seems almost certain that one

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32 On the contrary, Abramowiczówna and Teodorsson seem to believe that P.'s conviction on this matter is expressed at *Alex. 23.1–2*, and so Philinus charges also P. with talking nonsense at *Quaest. conv. 623E*. To explain away this oddity, Abramowiczówna posits that the particular *Table Talk* was written before *Alexander*, which Teodorsson finds "completely speculative" (vol. I, 117). For the chronological relationship between the two works see below.

33 Similarly, Alexander's susceptibility to flattery is absent from *De Alex. fort. aut. virt.* and rather discreetly touched in the *Life* (cf. *23.7*). By contrast, in *De adulator et amico*, P. is more outspoken: Ἀλέξανδρος...ἀφείδος ἐνέδωκεν ἑαυτόν (to his flatterers) ὑποσκελίζεσθαι [cf. *Alex. 23.7:* καὶ τοῖς κόλαξιν ἑαυτὸν ἀνεικὸς ἰππάσμενον], προσκυνοῦμεν καὶ κατασταλιζόμενον καὶ ἀναπλαττόμενον ὡσπέρ ἀγάλμα βαρβαρικόν ὑπ’ οὐτὸν (65D). Cf. also Sirinelli, 289n. 4 s.f.

34 True, this statement is made by P.'s brother Timon, but the way with which P. speaks of his brother (cf. *De frat. am. 487D*), and the role of Timon in the *De sera* and *De anima* (cf. Ziegler, 10/646 and Sandbach 1969, 306–309) suggest that the two brothers were mostly of the same mind. For Timon in connection with P. see also Vernière, 97–98. And for another indication of P.'s admiration for Alexander (outside the *Life* and the epideictic essay), cf. also *Praec. ger. reip. 818B–C*.

35 Cf. *Alex. 23.2*: ἐπι τρός γε τού πράξει οὐκ οἶνον ἐκεῖνον, οὐχ ὑπνός, οὐ παιδία τοῖς, οὐ γάμος, οὐ δράμ, καθάπερ ἄλλους στρατηγούς, ἐπίσχε: δηλοὶ ὁ βίος, ὁν βίωσις βραχαν παντάπασι πλείστων καὶ μεγίστων πράξεων ἑνίπλησης. See also Hamilton, who recognizes “much force in Plutarch’s contention here and at *Mor. 337F.*” (p. 59). Aelian also seems to have questioned the information that Alexander spent most of his time on drinking and sleeping. Cf. *VH 3.23*: δυσίων οὖν ὅπερ τότε, ἢ Ἀλέξανδρος...ἐκαυτὸν ἦμιοι διὰ τὸν οἶνον ἢ οἱ ταύτα ἀναγράφαντες ψεῦδονται.
work draws on the other. This agreed, it is reasonable to suppose that Plutarch first came to know these details about the hot nature of Alexander’s body etc. while he was working on his biography.

Similarly, Table Talk 2.10 (642F) must be a by-product of Lysander and Agesilaos which were written, more or less, simultaneously (cf. my 2005 article, p. 307 and n. 87). For, in all likelihood, it was through Plutarch that Lamprias came to know that Agesilaos had once appointed Lysander as his κρεοδαίτης (carver of meats) in order to degrade him. Yet in the above Table Talk (a talk which Plutarch simply narrates, without participating in the discussion), Lamprias misses or overlooks the depreciation point, and speaks of kreonaites in terms of a rather honourable office (644B).

An inconsistency observed between Table Talk 5.3 (676D) and the Life of Timoleon offers a similar chronological indication. In the Life (ch. 26) we read that, while the Corinthians were marching against the Carthaginians, they saw some mules laden with celery. This sight, given that celery would decorate the tombs of the dead, was immediately regarded as a bad omen. Timoleon, however, removed this superstitious fear by reminding his soldiers that celery chaplets also crowned the victors at the Isthmian games. For indeed, Plutarch continues, at that time the Corinthians would crown the Isthmian victors with celery garlands, considering celery to be traditionally sacred in their country (Tim. 26.3: ίππον καὶ πάτριον); and it was only recently that celery had been replaced by the pine into this use. Somewhat surprisingly, this is exactly what an anonymous interlocutor at Table Talk 5.3 also maintains, whereas in the same Talk Plutarch himself argues in favour of those who affirm that the pine was the traditional victorious chaplet at the Isthmia. How are we to explain this discrepancy? I would assume that, in relating the mules episode in Timoleon, Plutarch simply reproduced his source, the historian Timaeus; but when he came to put down his reminiscences from Table Talk 5.3, which investigated a specific topic, namely, the nature of the victorious crowns at the Isthmian games, he must have made some particular research, and so it is again

36 Compare Alex. 4.4–6 (οτι δ’ ου του χρωτος ήδιστον άπτεναι και το στόμα κατείχεν εύωδια και την σάρκα πάσαν, οστε πληρούσαι τους χιτωνισκους...αιτία δ’ ίσως ή του σώματος κράσις, πολύθερμος ούσα και πυρώδης: ή γάρ εύωδια γίνεται πέφει τῶν ύγρῶν υπό θερμότητος, ώς οίεται Θεόφραστος. δειν οι ξηροι και διάπυροι τόποι τῆς οἰκουμένης τά πλείστα καὶ κάλλιστα τῶν ἁρωμάτων φέρουσιν) with Quaest. conv. 623E (λέγεται δὲ και τού χρωτος ήδιστον άπτοτενει οστε καταστημάται τους χιτωνισκους εύωδιας ἁρωματιζόντας, δ δοκει και αυτό θερμότητος εἶναι: δι και τῆς οἰκουμένης οι ξηρότατοι και θερμότατοι τύποι τῆν τε κασίαν καὶ τὸν λίβανον ἐκφέρουσιν πέφει γάρ τιν τῶν ύγρῶν ὁ Θεόφραστος φησιν επιγίνεσθαι τὴν εὐωδίαν). Cf. also the passages in nn. 23, 25–27 above.

37 Cf. Ages. 8.1 and Lys. 23.11, and note the almost identical wording of these passages.

38 For Timaeus as the principal source of P.’s Timoleon see conveniently Flacelière, 6–7. Cf. also our Table Talk (676D: ἵστορεῖ δὲ καὶ Τίμαιος ὁ συγγραφέως...).
reasonable for one to suppose that it is *Table Talk* 5.3 that reflects his true opinion on this matter, and that, in all likelihood, the publication of this *Talk* postdates at least the composition (if not also the publication) of *Timoleon*. 39

A saying of Alexander occurring in three different works of Plutarch (but somewhat surprisingly missing from both the *Apophthegmata* and *De Alexandri fortuna aut virtute*) receives three varying interpretations. In *De adulator et amico* Alexander is reported to have said that in the main two things made him disbelieve his flatterers who proclaimed him a god: sleeping and having sex; for it was in these matters, according to the first interpretation, that he mostly revealed the more ignoble and more passive and passionate side of himself. 40 In the *Life* it is sleep and sex again that, more than anything else, made Alexander realize that he was mortal; for both fatigue and pleasure, Plutarch elaborates on his behalf, arise from one and the same physical weakness. 41 Finally, at *Table Talk* 8.1 a Platonist interlocutor recalls Alexander’s dictum, adding by way of explanation that sleep is a kind of yielding due to weakness, whereas all generation (which is naturally linked with sex) is a kind of destruction and transformation of something of one’s own into something different; thus, one becomes aware of his mortality. 42 These three instances constitute very good examples of how Plutarch adjusts his material, of how he employs the same quotation in our case to make it suit the run and the context of the argument at hand (cf. also n. 6 above). In *De adulator* the dictum is presented as an example of resistance to flattery; in the *Life* it is employed in a context aiming to manifest and exalt Alexander’s self-control (*sophrosyne*: cf. *Alex*. 21.7–22.5); finally, in the *Quaestiones convivales* the same dictum is used in a philosophical/metaphysical context, where man as generator is shown to be something different from god as generator: for, unlike man, who has his semen destroyed or transformed into something else, when a god begets, nothing of his suffers destruction or transformation into something else. 43

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39 For the time distance between composition and publication see Nikolaidis 2005, 284.

40 Cf. 65F: Ἀλέξανδρος...ἀπιστεῖν ἐφι τούς Θεού αὐτών ἀναγορεύουσιν ἐν τῷ καθεύδειν μάλιστα καὶ ἀφροδισίαζειν, ὡς ἄγεννέστερος περὶ ταῦτα καὶ παθητικώτερος αὐτοῦ γιγνόμενος. In saying so, Alexander clearly has the god of the philosophers in mind and not the Homeric one, as, e.g., in *Alex*. 28.3. For Alexander’s claims to divinity see *Alex*. 27.9–28.

41 Cf. *Alex*. 22.6: ἔλεγε δὲ μάλιστα συνίειν θνητόν ὡς ἐκ τοῦ καθεύδειν καὶ συνουσιάζειν, ὡς ἀπὸ μίας ἔγγυλέως ἀσθενείας τῇ φύσει καὶ τῷ πονοῦ καὶ τῷ ἢδου.  42 Cf. 717F: ...ἐπτών (sc. Alexander) μάλιστα θνητόν καὶ φθαρτόν ἐπιγινώσκειν ἑαυτόν ἐν τῷ συγγίνεσθαι γυναικὶ καὶ καθεύδειν, ὡς τὸν μὲν ὑπὸν ἐνδύησε γιγνόμενον ὑπ’ ἀσθενείας, γένεσιν δὲ πᾶσαν οἰκείου τυχός εἰς ἔτερον ἔκστασιν καὶ φθοράν οὖσαν.

43 The exponent of the philosophical problem above is the Lacedaemonian Platonist Tyndares, but P. had also occupied himself with this problem. Cf. *Numa* 4 and the second *Platonic question* (1000E–1001C). Cf. also Teodorsson’s relevant observations (vol. III, 156–160).
I will close my presentation with one more example of how observations of this kind might suggest solutions to the problem of the chronological sequence of (some of) Plutarch’s works. True, Jones’ chronology has been widely accepted, although it includes only the works that are datable on external (and therefore objective) criteria. “The evidence of style or subject-matter has not been admitted” (p. 70/115). Doubtless, this a solid approach, but a critic who wants to trace Plutarch’s method of work, explore the development of his thought, and correlate the products of his literary output, gets little help, I think, from knowing that a certain essay was written between 68 and 116 or even between 96 and 116. To say nothing of the works missing altogether from Jones’ list, although most of us feel fairly sure about the period of Plutarch’s activity to which they must belong. According to Jones’ table, *De garrulitate*, for instance, appears to be one of the earliest essays; for at one point Plutarch gives the example of the Roman conspirator, whose loquacity (thoughtlessness and inability to keep his mouth shut, as a matter of fact) in the very eve of Nero’s planned assassination betrayed the conspiracy, and thus thwarted both Nero’s fall and Rome’s freedom (505C–D). This piece of evidence indeed demonstrates that *De garrulitate* was written after 68, the year of Nero’s death, but not at all necessarily close to this date, as Jones seems to imply by putting this work in the very beginning of his list (p. 70/115). Once Plutarch had been told or read about that incident, he could refer to it any time in the future, and there is some indication suggesting that this reference was perhaps made much later; for in the same essay Plutarch also mentions a trickery of Eumenes, thanks to which the Thracian commander managed to prevent his soldiers from deserting him and going over to his Macedonian adversary (506D–E). However, it is unlikely that Plutarch could have known this detail before occupying himself with the *Life of Eumenes*, and since this *Life* is one of the latest, the composition of *De garrulitate* may accordingly be transferred to a later period of Plutarch’s literary activity. A reference to Sulla’s capture of Athens a bit earlier (505B; cf. n. 14) seems to invigorate this possibility. The answer, then, to the question of the title of my paper is this: When the treatment of a character or the account of an event in the *Moralia* is different from the respective treatment or account in the *Lives*, this difference sometimes betrays Plutarch’s genuine and settled beliefs on the matter concerned, and sometimes is due to adaptations of his material, so as to serve the context or the objectives of the essay at hand.

44 On the lateness of the *Sert-Eum.* pair almost all critics agree (see Nikolaidis 2005, 316). As for the *De garrulitate*, Dumortier (p.224) and Pettine (p. 28–29) place it in the Trajan period.

Bibliography


3. *Moralia in Vitis*