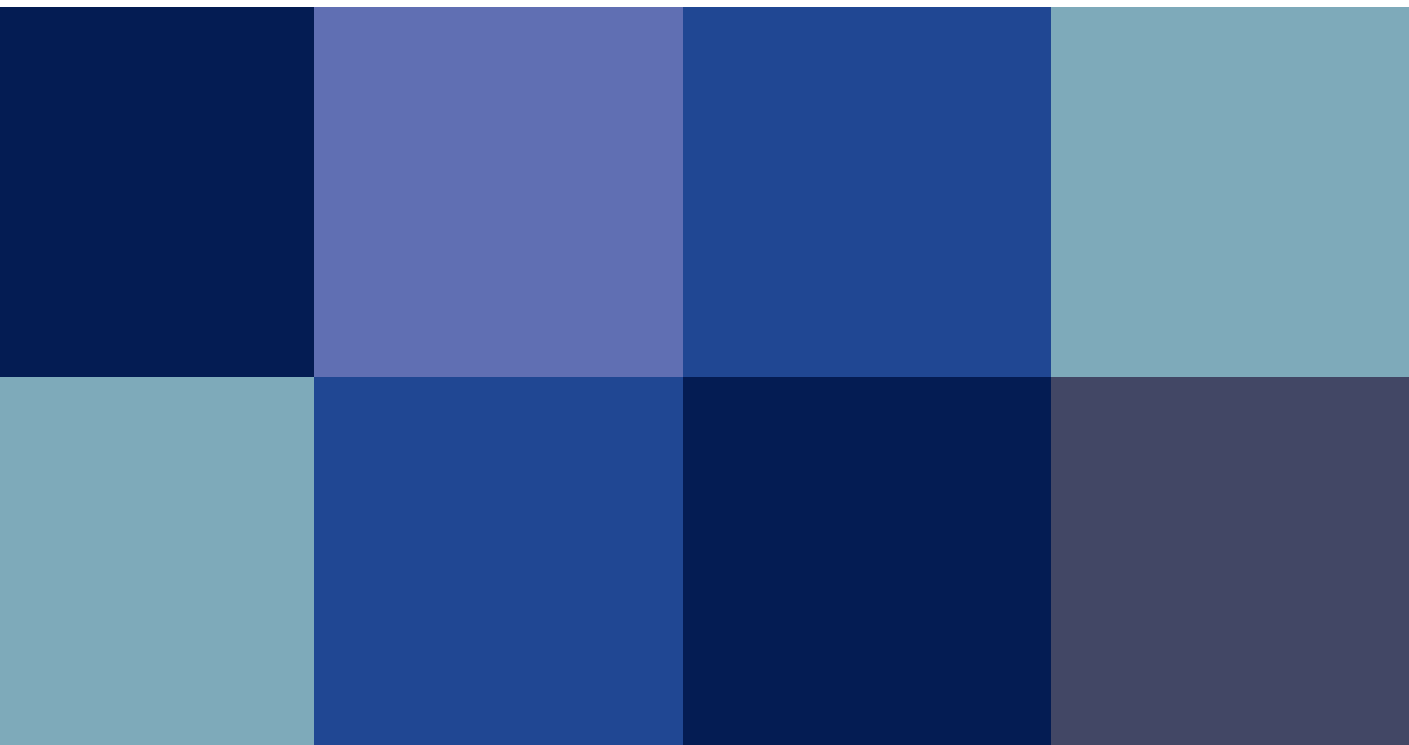


Plutarch's Cosmological Ethics



Bram Demulder



LEUVEN UNIVERSITY PRESS

PLUTARCH'S COSMOLOGICAL ETHICS

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PLUTARCH'S COSMOLOGICAL ETHICS

By

BRAM DEMULDER

Leuven University Press

Published with the support of the KU Leuven Fund for Fair Open Access.

Published in 2022 by Leuven University Press / Presses Universitaires de Louvain /
Universitaire Pers Leuven. Minderbroedersstraat 4, B-3000 Leuven (Belgium).

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ISBN 978 94 6270 329 2 (Hardcover)

ISBN 978 94 6166 451 8 (ePDF)

ISBN 978 94 6166 452 5 (ePUB)

<https://doi.org/10.11116/9789461664518>

D/2022/1869/37

NUR: 617

Layout: Crius Group

Cover design: Joke Klaassen



To my parents, Sabine & Rik

Wenn man, wie einst Hillel die jüdische Lehre, die Lehre der Antike in aller Kürze, auf einem Beine fußend, auszusprechen hätte, der Satz müßte lauten: ‘Denen allein wird die Erde gehören, die aus den Kräften des Kosmos leben.’ Nichts unterscheidet den antiken so vom neueren Menschen, als seine Hingegebenheit an eine kosmische Erfahrung, die der spätere kaum kennt. Ihr Versinken kündigt schon in der Blüte der Astronomie zu Beginn der Neuzeit sich an.

— Walter Benjamin, *Einbahnstraße*, ‘Zum Planetarium’ (1928)

Le ciel même, lui répondait Pythagore. Tu perçois ce qui charme les dieux. Il n’y a point de silence dans l’univers. Un concert de voix éternelles est inséparable du mouvement des corps célestes. [...] L’intelligence, la justice, l’amour, et les autres perfections qui règnent dans la partie sublime de l’univers, se font sensibles ; et ce ravissement que tu éprouves n’est que l’effet d’une divine et rigoureuse analogie...

— Paul Valéry, ‘Variation sur une “pensée”’ (1923)

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Acknowledgements

This book, published with the support of the KU Leuven Fund for Fair Open Access, is a revised version of my PhD thesis, which I wrote with the financial support of the Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO project number 1123115N). The revision was largely done within the framework of Anchoring Innovation, the Gravitation Grant research agenda of the Dutch National Research School in Classical Studies (OIKOS) financially supported by the Dutch ministry of Education, Culture and Science (NWO project number 024.003.012).

As a revised PhD thesis, the book proudly carries with it the many debts of gratitude that I incurred during my PhD years and that I tried to express at the beginning of my thesis. I am honoured to repeat some of them (and then some) in a somewhat more succinct and professional fashion here. I can only hope that the people mentioned or implied know how hard it is to remain succinct and professional when writing this.

I thank my *Doktorvater* Geert Roskam for his at times outrageous trust and his sage guidance; my subsequent supervisors Marc-Antoine Gavray and Ineke Sluiter, who have shown a similar combination of patience and wisdom; Gerd Van Riel, who was an ever-inspiring co-supervisor. If this book is any better than the thesis that forms its basis, this is in large part thanks to my examiners Gábor Betegh, Reinhart Ceulemans, Katarzyna Jażdżewska, and Jan Opsomer, who have since continued to support me far beyond the call of duty.

I thank my teachers in Roeselare and my colleagues in Leuven, Liège, and Leiden. The support of Han Lamers, Johan Leemans, Luc Van der Stockt, Peter Van Deun, Toon Van Hal, Demmy Verbeke, and Joseph Verheyden has been particularly invaluable. I thank my fellow Plutarchists who have flocked to our many conferences over the years, as well as the Cambridge classicists whom I met during a 2016 stay there.

To my dear friends Lawrence, Charlotte, Tom, Heleen, Marieke, and Liesbeth, to my family, and to Xanne, I owe so much more than thanks.

*

Section 2 of chapter 1 uses material from ‘From Chaos to Cosmos (and Back Again). Plato’s *Timaeus* and the Composition of *De animae procreatione* and *De facie in orbe lunae*’, in M. Meeusen and L. Van der Stockt (eds.), *Natural Spectaculars. Aspects of Plutarch’s Philosophy of Nature*, Leuven, 2015. An earlier version of section 3 of chapter 1 was published as ‘The Old Man and the Soul. Plato’s *Laws* 10 in Plutarch’s *De animae*

procreatione', in M. Sanz Morales, R. González Delgado, M. Librán Moreno, and J. Ureña Bracero (eds.), *La (inter)textualidad en Plutarco*, Cáceres – Coimbra, 2017. Chapter 2 is a revised and expanded version of 'Music and Plutarch's Platonic Cosmos', in F. Pelosi and F. M. Petrucci (eds.), *Music and Philosophy in the Roman Empire*, Cambridge, 2021. A part of section 1 of chapter 3 was published in an earlier version as 'Dining with the Demiurge. Cosmic Imagery and Cosmological Ethics in Plutarch's *Quaestiones Convivales* 1.2', in S. Amendola, G. Pace, and P. Volpe Cacciatore (eds.), *Immagini letterarie e iconografia nelle opere di Plutarco*, Madrid, 2017. Section 2.3 of chapter 5 is a thoroughly reworked version of 'Is Dualism a Greek Word? Plutarch's Dualism as a Cultural and Historical Phenomenon', in A. Georgiadou and K. Oikonomopoulou (eds.), *Space, Time and Language in Plutarch*, Berlin, 2017.

Abbreviations, titles, editions

To refer to Plutarch's *Moralia* and *Parallel Lives* (including the *dubia* and *spuria* of the *corpus Plutarcheum*), I use English titles that are generally inspired by the Loeb Classical Library edition. However, I use the abbreviations based on the Latin titles, since most of these are commonly used in scholarship on Plutarch.

De lib. educ.	De liberis educandis / On the Education of Children
De aud. poet.	De audiendis poetis / On Reading the Poets
De aud.	De audiendo / On Listening
De ad. et am.	De adulate et amico / On Flatterers and Friends
De prof. in virt.	De profectibus in virtute / On Progress in Virtue
De cap. ex inim.	De capienda ex inimicis utilitate / On Profiting from Enemies
De am. mult.	De amicorum multitudine / On Having Many Friends
De fortuna	De fortuna / On Chance
De virt. et vit.	De virtute et vitio / On Virtue and Vice
Cons. ad Apoll.	Consolatio ad Apollonium / Consolation to Apollonius
De tuenda	De tuenda sanitate praecepta / Precepts of Health Care
Con. praec.	Coniugalia praecepta / Precepts of Marriage
Sept. sap. conv.	Septem sapientium convivium / Dinner of the Seven Sages
De sup.	De superstitione / On Superstition
Reg. et imp. Apophth.	Regum et imperatorum apophthegmata / Sayings of Kings and Commanders
Apophth. Lac.	Apophthegmata Laconica / Sayings of Spartans
Mul. virt.	Mulierum virtutes / Virtues of Women
Quaest. Rom.	Quaestiones Romanae / Roman Questions
Quaest. Graec.	Quaestiones Graecae / Greek Questions
Parall. Graec. et Rom.	Parallela Graeca et Romana / Greek and Roman Parallel Stories
De fort. Rom.	De fortuna Romanorum / On the Fortune of the Romans
De Al. Magn. fort.	De Alexandri Magni fortuna aut virtute / On the Fortune or the Virtue of Alexander
Bellone an pace	Bellone an pace clariores fuerint Athenienses / On the Glory of the Athenians

De Is. et Os.	De Iside et Osiride / On Isis and Osiris
De E	De E apud Delphos / On the E at Delphi
De Pyth. or.	De Pythiae oraculis / On the Oracles of the Pythia
De def. or.	De defectu oraculorum / On the Decline of Oracles
An. virt. doc.	An virtus doceri possit / Can Virtue Be Taught?
De virt. mor.	De virtute morali / On Moral Virtue
De coh. ira	De cohibenda ira / On the Control of Anger
De tranq. an.	De tranquillitate animi / On Tranquillity of Mind
De frat. am.	De fraterno amore / On Brotherly Love
De am. prol.	De amore prolis / On Affection for Offspring
An vitiositas	An vitiositas ad infelicitatem sufficiat / Is Vice Sufficient to Cause Unhappiness?
Animine an corp.	Animine an corporis affectiones sint peiores / Are the Affections of the Soul Worse Than Those of the Body?
De gar.	De garrulitate / On Talkativeness
De cur.	De curiositate / On Curiosity
De cup. div.	De cupiditate divitiarum / On Love of Wealth
De vit. pud.	De vitioso pudore / On Compliance
De inv. et od.	De invidia et odio / On Envy and Hate
De se ipsum laud.	De se ipsum citra invidiam laudando / On Praising Oneself Inoffensively
De sera num.	De sera numinis vindicta / On God's Slowness to Punish
De fato	On Fate
De genio Socr.	De genio Socratis / On the Sign of Socrates
De exil.	De exilio / On Exile
Cons. ad ux.	Consolatio ad uxorem / Consolation to My Wife
Quaest. conv.	Quaestiones convivales / Symptotic Questions
Amat.	Amatorius / Dialogue on Love
Am. narr.	Amatoriae narrationes / Love Stories
Max. cum princ.	Maxime cum principibus philosopho esse disserendum / That a Philosopher Ought to Converse Especially With Men in Power
Ad princ. iner.	Ad principem ineruditum / To an Uneducated Ruler
An seni	An seni respublica gerenda sit / Should an Old Man Engage in Politics?
Praec. ger. reip.	Praecepta gerendae reipublicae / Precepts of Statecraft
De unius	De unius in republica dominatione, populari statu, et paucorum imperio / On Monarchy, Democracy, and Oligarchy
De vit. aer.	De vitando aere alieno / On the Avoidance of Debt
Dec. or. vit.	Decem oratorum vitae / Lives of the Ten Orators

Comp. Ar. et Men.	Comparationis Aristophanis et Menandri epitome / Summary of a Comparison Between Aristophanes and Menander
De Her. mal.	De Herodoti malignitate / On the Malice of Herodotus
Plac. philos.	Placita philosophorum / Opinions of the Philosophers
Quaest. nat.	Quaestiones naturales / Causes of Natural Phenomena
De facie	De facie quae in orbe lunae apparet / On the Face in the Moon
De prim. frig.	De primo frigido / On the Principle of Cold
Aqua an ignis	Aqua an ignis utilior sit / Is Fire or Water More Useful?
De soll. an.	De sollertia animalium / On the Cleverness of Animals
Gryllus	Bruta animalia ratione uti / Gryllus
De esu	De esu cranium / On Eating Meat
Quaest. Plat.	Quaestiones Platonicae / Platonic Questions
De an. procr.	De animae procreatione in Timaeo / On the Generation of the Soul [in the Timaeus]
De Stoic. rep.	De Stoicorum repugnantibus / On Stoic Self-Contradictions
Stoic. absurd. poet.	Stoicos absurdiora poetis dicere / The Stoics Talk More Paradoxically Than The Poets
De comm. not.	De communibus notitiis adversus Stoicos / On Common Conceptions
Non posse	Non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum / That Epicurus Actually Makes a Pleasant Life Impossible
Adv. Col.	Adversus Colotem / Against Colotes
De lat. viv.	De latenter vivendo / On 'Live Unnoticed'
De mus.	De musica / On Music
Thes.	Theseus
Rom.	Romulus
Comp. Thes. et Rom.	Comparison of Theseus and Romulus
Lyc.	Lycurgus
Num.	Numa
Comp. Lyc. et Num.	Comparison of Lycurgus and Numa
Sol.	Solon
Publ.	Publicola
Comp. Sol. et Publ.	Comparison of Solon and Publicola
Them.	Themistocles
Cam.	Camillus

Arist.	Aristides
Ca. Ma.	Cato Maior
Comp. Arist. et Ca. Ma.	Comparison of Aristides and Cato Maior
Cim.	Cimon
Luc.	Lucullus
Comp. Cim. et Luc.	Comparison of Cimon and Lucullus
Per.	Pericles
Fab.	Fabius Maximus
Comp. Per. et Fab.	Comparison of Pericles and Fabius Maximus
Nic.	Nicias
Crass.	Crassus
Comp. Nic. et Crass.	Comparison of Nicias and Crassus
Alc.	Alcibiades
Cor.	Marcus Coriolanus
Comp. Alc. et Cor.	Comparison of Alcibiades and Coriolanus
Lys.	Lysander
Sull.	Sulla
Comp. Lys. et Sull.	Comparison of Lysander and Sulla
Ages.	Agesilaus
Pomp.	Pompey
Comp. Ages. et Pomp.	Comparison of Agesilaus and Pompey
Pel.	Pelopidas
Marc.	Marcellus
Comp. Pel. et Marc.	Comparison of Pelopidas and Marcellus
Dion	Dion
Brut.	Brutus
Comp. Dion. et Brut.	Comparison of Dion and Brutus
Timol.	Timoleon
Aem.	Aemilius Paullus
Comp. Timol. et Aem.	Comparison of Timoleon and Aemilius Paullus
Dem.	Demosthenes
Cic.	Cicero
Comp. Dem. et Cic.	Comparison of Demosthenes and Cicero
Alex.	Alexander
Caes.	Caesar
Sert.	Sertorius
Eum.	Eumenes
Comp. Sert. et Eum.	Comparison of Sertorius and Eumenes
Phoc.	Phocion
Ca. Mi.	Cato Minor
Demetr.	Demetrius
Ant.	Mark Antony
Comp. Demetr. et Ant.	Comparison of Demetrius and Antony
Pyrrh.	Pyrrhus

Mar.	Caius Marius
Agis	Agis
Cleom.	Cleomenes
TG	Tiberius Gracchus
CG	Caius Gracchus
Comp. Ag., Cleom. et Gracch.	Comparison of Agis, Cleomenes, and the Gracchi
Phil.	Philopoemen
Flam.	Titus Flamininus
Comp. Phil. et Flam.	Comparison of Philopoemen and Flamininus
Arat.	Aratus
Art.	Artaxerxes
Galba	Galba
Oth.	Otho

Other abbreviations usually follow *Année philologique* or *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, with the following additions:

B-S	G. Boys-Stones, <i>Platonist Philosophy 80 BC to AD 250. An Introduction and Collection of Sources in Translation</i> , Cambridge, 2017.
CPM	Edition in the <i>Corpus Plutarchi Moralium</i> , Napoli.
GE	F. Montanari, <i>The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek</i> , Leiden – Boston, 2015.
LS	A. A. Long and D. Sedley, <i>The Hellenistic Philosophers</i> , 2 vols., Cambridge, 1987.
<i>PidA</i>	H. Dörrie, M. Baltes, et al., <i>Der Platonismus in der Antike. Grundlagen – System – Entwicklung</i> , Stuttgart – Bad Cannstatt, 1987 – ...

Unless indicated otherwise, I quote Plutarch from the Bibliotheca Teubneriana edition and the Loeb Classical Library translation. Plato is quoted from the Oxford Classical Texts edition and the translations collected in Cooper 1997. For other authors, I generally refer to the edition included in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* for Greek texts and the Teubner for Latin texts, along with the Loeb translation when available.

Introduction

ἀλλὰ σκοπεῖτε πρῶτον, ὅτι κατὰ Πλάτωνα πάντων καλῶν ὁ θεὸς ἑαυτὸν ἐν μέσῳ παράδειγμα θέμενος τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην ἀρετὴν, ἐξομοίωσιν οὕσαν ἀμωσγέπως πρὸς αὐτόν, ἐνδίδωσι τοῖς ἔπεσθαι θεῷ δυναμένοις. καὶ γὰρ ἡ πάντων φύσις ἄτακτος οὕσα ταύτην ἔσχε τὴν ἀρχὴν τοῦ μεταβαλεῖν καὶ γενέσθαι κόσμος, ὁμοιότητι καὶ μεθέξει τινὶ τῆς περὶ τὸ θεῖον ιδέας καὶ ἀρετῆς. καὶ τὴν ὄψιν αὐτὸς οὗτος ἀνὴρ ἀνάσαι φησὶ τὴν φύσιν ἐν ἡμῖν, ὅπως ὑπὸ θεᾶς τῶν ἐν οὐρανῷ φερομένων καὶ θαύματος ἀσπάζεσθαι καὶ ἀγαπᾶν ἐθιζομένη τὸ εὖσχημον ἢ ψυχὴ καὶ τεταγμένον ἀπεχθάνηται τοῖς ἀναρμόστοις καὶ πλανητοῖς πάθεσι καὶ φεύγη τὸ εἰκῆ καὶ ὡς ἔτυχεν, ὡς κακίας καὶ πλημμελείας ἀπάσης γένεσιν. οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν ὅ τι μείζον ἀνθρώπος ἀπολαύειν θεοῦ πέφυκεν ἢ τὸ μιμήσει καὶ διώξει τῶν ἐν ἐκείνῳ καλῶν καὶ ἀγαθῶν εἰς ἀρετὴν καθίστασθαι. (*De sera num.* 550d–e)

Consider first that God, as Plato says, offers himself to all as a pattern of every excellence, thus rendering human virtue, which is in some sort an assimilation to himself, accessible to all who can ‘follow God.’ Indeed this was the origin of the change whereby universal nature, disordered before, became a ‘cosmos’: it came to resemble after a fashion and participate in the form and excellence of God. The same philosopher says further that nature kindled vision in us so that the soul, beholding the heavenly motions and wondering at the sight, should grow to accept and cherish all that moves in stateliness and order, and thus come to hate discordant and errant passions and to shun the aimless and haphazard as source of all vice and jarring error; for man is fitted to derive from God no greater blessing than to become settled in virtue through copying and aspiring to the beauty and the goodness that are his.

This is the beginning of the first argument that the Platonist Plutarch of Chaeronea (c. 45–120 CE), casting himself as a character, offers in the dialogue *On God’s Slowness to Punish*. The question in this dialogue is why divine justice can (seem to) take a long time to come about. God’s (apparent) slowness to punish wrongdoers was used, as the opening of the dialogue tells us, by some Epicurean fellow to attack providence (*De sera num.* 548a–c). Plutarch’s first point on behalf of providence is that part of the goal of imitating god consists in imitating god’s mildness and delay (μιμουμένους τὴν ἐκείνου πραότητα καὶ μέλλησιν, 550f): what we perceive as divine slowness is in fact a valuable lesson in avoiding

rashness. Many more arguments and complications follow before the dialogue ends with an eschatological myth – we shall have the occasion to return to some of them (p. 313–314) – but for now we should focus on how this passage encapsulates the thesis of this book: Plutarch based his ethics on (his interpretation of Platonic) cosmology.¹

The Platonic ethical goal of assimilation to god (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ) indeed appears in a cosmic guise here.² Several aspects of Plato's main cosmological dialogue, the *Timaeus*, are drawn together: the cosmos is made after an intelligible paradigm (*Tim.* 28a, 29a); the transition from chaos to cosmos happens when god – he is called the demiurge in the *Timaeus* – imposes intelligibility on disordered precosmic nature (*Tim.* 30a, 53b); sight is given to us for the observation of the cosmos (*Tim.* 47a–c; cf. 39b); and the fulfilment of human life consists in tuning our souls to the soul of the cosmos:

τῷ δ' ἐν ἡμῖν θείῳ συγγενεῖς εἰσιν κινήσεις αἱ τοῦ παντὸς διανοήσεις καὶ περιφοραί· ταύταις δὴ συνεπόμενον ἕκαστον δεῖ, τὰς περὶ τὴν γένεσιν ἐν τῇ κεφαλῇ διεφθαρμένας ἡμῶν περιόδους ἐξορθοῦντα διὰ τὸ καταμανθάνειν τὰς τοῦ παντὸς ἀρμονίας τε καὶ περιφοράς, τῷ κατανοουμένῳ τὸ κατανοοῦν ἐξομοιωῖσαι κατὰ τὴν ἀρχαίαν φύσιν,

¹ For an overview of Plutarch's philosophy, see e.g. Dillon 1996: 184–230; Frazier 2012b; Karamanolis 2014; Ferrari 2018. Good general overviews of Plutarch's life and work include Russell 1972; Sirinelli 2000; Lambertson 2001; Roskam 2021, the last one being particularly attentive to Plutarch's philosophical persona. On cosmological ethics throughout Western history, see Brague 1999.

² For the different guises in which this goal came according to Platonists, see Alcinous, *Didasc.* 28 (with Dillon 1993: 171–176); Stobaeus 2 p. 49.17–50.10 Wachsmuth-Hense. For the importance of the *Timaeus* for the pursuit of ὁμοίωσις θεῷ, see Albinus 5.25–27. The most important passages in Plato are *Thet.* 176b; *Tim.* 90b–d; *Resp.* 10.613a–b; cf. also *Symp.* 207c–209e; *Phd.* 82a–b; *Phdr.* 248a–249e, 252c–253c; *Leg.* 4.715e–716d. For a full analysis of *De sera num.* 550d–e and its connections with Plutarch's Platonic cosmology, see Helmig 2005a; cf. also Dörrie 1971: 46–47; Froidefond 1987: 33; Brenk 1987: 258–259; 1992: 52–53; Schoppe 1994: 149–150, 201–203; Ferrari 1995b: 138–140, 238–241; Becchi 1996: 332–335; Dillon 1996: 192–193; 2013: 95–96 (although he misidentifies the speaker); Tarrant 2007: 424; Reydams-Schils 2017b: 155–156. After years of neglect ὁμοίωσις θεῷ in Plato and the Platonic tradition has now rightly become a popular topic. Sedley 1999 (cf. also 2017b) has contributed much to this revival and is the best starting point for the theme in Plato; see also Pradeau 2003; Lavecchia 2006; Van Riel 2013: 19–24. On the reception of ὁμοίωσις θεῷ in the Middle Platonic tradition, see esp. Annas 1999: 13–14, 51–72; Tarrant 2007; Dillon 2013; Linguisti 2015: 360–365; Reydams-Schils 2017b; Torri 2019; cf. also Dillon 1996: 122–123; Lavecchia 2013; Helmig 2013: 245–251 and – especially on the transition to Neoplatonism – Baltzly 2004; Männlein-Robert 2013. Merki 1952 remains a useful collection of material. On ὁμοίωσις θεῷ in Plutarch, see Becchi 1996.

ὁμοιάσαντα δὲ τέλος ἔχειν τοῦ προτεθέντος ἀνθρώποις ὑπὸ θεῶν ἀρίστου βίου πρὸς τε τὸν παρόντα καὶ τὸν ἔπειτα χρόνον. (Pl., *Tim.* 90c–d)

[T]he motions that have an affinity to the divine part within us are the thoughts and revolutions of the universe. These, surely, are the ones which each of us should follow. We should redirect the revolutions in our heads that were thrown off course at our birth, by coming to learn the harmonies and revolutions of the universe, and so bring into conformity with its objects our faculty of understanding, as it was in its original condition. And when this conformity is complete, we shall have achieved our goal: that most excellent life offered to humankind by the gods, both now and forevermore.

A conspicuous difference between Plato's account and Plutarch's reception of it lies in Plutarch's apparent conflation of the demiurge and the intelligible paradigm used by the demiurge to create the cosmos.³ The hesitance between associating and distinguishing the demiurge and the intelligible forms, which make up the paradigm, is a recurring feature of Plutarch's Platonism.⁴ This will not be of great concern in this book because I think, following Opsomer's lead, that we should embrace this hesitance as a deliberate outcome of Plutarch's Academic εὐλάβεια in divine matters (cf. e.g. *De sera num.* 549e, shortly before the passage under discussion) rather than try to solve it.⁵ In the passage from Plutarch, the conflation has the effect of facilitating a cosmological ver-

³ Helmig 2005a: 20.

⁴ See esp. Ferrari 1995b: 231–269 as well as Ferrari 1996b: 128–137, which is a critical discussion of the attempt in Schoppe 1994: 139–181 to explain this hesitance away. Cf. also Michalewski 2014: 69–75; Boys-Stones 2018: 153–154, 167–168, 220–224; Ferrari 2005b: 20–23; 2018: 571–573. On Plutarch's concept of demiurgy within the context of other (Middle) Platonic theories, see esp. Opsomer 2005a.

⁵ Opsomer 2005b: 185–186: 'In the extant writings Plutarch seems to have avoided explicitly to endorse the idea, current at the time, that the Forms are the thoughts of the demiurge, although it could be made to fit his system perfectly. Why did he not express himself more clearly? All that can be ascertained on the basis of the evidence we have, is that demiurge and Forms belong to the same realm, that of indivisible, i.e. intelligible being, and must be related to each other in some way or other. The precise nature of this relationship remains unclear. It is very well possible that Plutarch's reluctance to equate the forms with the thoughts of the divine craftsman had to do with caution concerning the precise structure of the divine, in other words, with an Academic-Platonic awareness of the limits of human understanding. It may also be the case that Plutarch did express his views more clearly in a lost treatise (e.g., *Lampr.* 67: *Where are the Forms?*).' Cf. Donini 1994: 5065–5066; Ferrari 2018: 571–572.

sion of ὁμοίωσις θεῶ: if the cosmos resembles (ὁμοιότητι) god himself rather than a distinct paradigm and human virtue is an imitation of god (ἐξομοίωσιν, μιμήσει), then assimilation to god can be achieved through imitation of the cosmos.

A similar picture emerges from Plutarch's *On the Generation of the Soul*: the demiurge took over precosmic disorder, which was then made 'as like to him as was possible' (πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐξομοίωσιν ὡς δυνατὸν ἦν, *De an. procr.* 1014b; in 1023c and 1026f, on the other hand, demiurge and paradigm are distinguished). This he did on account of his goodness (1015b).⁶ His goodness, then, is present in the cosmos and can be observed by us (1029e–1030c). Plutarch's goal in *On the Generation of the Soul* (1012b) is to provide a definitive account of his consciously controversial interpretation of *Timaeus* 35a–36b, the passage where Plato's *Timaeus* describes how the demiurge created the cosmic soul.⁷ This is how Plutarch quotes the passage at the beginning of his treatise:

τῆς ἀμεροῦς καὶ ἀεὶ κατὰ ταῦτὰ ἐχούσης οὐσίας καὶ τῆς αὖ περὶ τὰ σώματα γιγνομένης μεριστῆς τρίτον ἐξ ἀμφοῖν ἐν μέσῳ συνεκεράσατο οὐσίας εἶδος, τῆς τε ταυτοῦ φύσεως αὖ περὶ καὶ τῆς τοῦ ἐτέρου καὶ κατὰ ταῦτα συνέστησεν ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ τ' ἀμεροῦς αὐτὴν καὶ τοῦ κατὰ τὰ σώματα μεριστοῦ. καὶ τρία λαβὼν αὐτὰ ὄντα συνεκεράσατο εἰς μίαν πάντα ιδέαν, τὴν θατέρου φύσιν δύσμικτον οὔσαν εἰς ταὐτὸ συναρμόττων βία μίγνυς δὲ μετὰ τῆς οὐσίας. καὶ ἐκ τριῶν ποιησάμενος ἐν ἄλλῳ ὅλον τοῦτο μοίρας εἰς ἃς προσῆκε διένειμεν ἐκάστην δὲ τούτων ἕκ τε ταυτοῦ καὶ θατέρου καὶ τῆς οὐσίας μεμιγμένην· ἤρχετο δὲ διαρεῖν ὧδε. (*De an. procr.* 1012b–c [following the interpunction of the Loeb edition], quoting Pl., *Tim.* 35a–b)

Of the indivisible and ever invariable being and of the divisible on the other hand that comes to pass in the case of bodies he blended together out of both a third kind of being in the middle, and in regard to the nature of sameness again and that of difference he also in this

⁶ ὁ δὲ δημιουργὸς ἀγαθὸς καὶ πάντα βουλόμενος αὐτῷ κατὰ δύναμιν ἐξομοιωῖσαι. ('The artificer [was] good and so desirous of making all things resemble himself as far as possible.') Cf. *Tim.* 29a–30b.

⁷ On *De an. procr.*, see esp. Opsomer 2004, whose interpretation of the treatise as a genuine search for Platonic consistency rather than an attempt at textual manipulation (as the Loeb edition, Cherniss 1976: 133–149, would have it) I follow. Other good overviews of the work include Hershbell 1987; Ferrari in Ferrari and Baldi 2002: 7–59; Ferrari 2011. Helmer 1937 and Thévenaz 1938 remain important; cf. also Jones 1916: 68–106; Thévenaz 1939; Froidefond 1987: 189–201; Casadesús Bordoy 1999; Teodorsson 2010. The notes in both the Loeb and the CPM editions amount to fully fledged commentaries and are indispensable aids for the interpretation of this treatise.

way compounded it in the middle of the indivisible and what is divisible among bodies. And he took them, three as they were, and blended them all together into a single entity, forcibly fitting into sameness the nature of difference, which is refractory to mixture, and mixing them together with being. And, when out of three he had made one, he again distributed the whole of this into fractions that were appropriate and each of these a blend of sameness and difference and being; and he began the division in the following way.

As Plutarch understands it – and this is not the controversial part of his interpretation – the cosmic soul consists of four ingredients. First, the demiurge mixed indivisible being and divisible being. Then he used this preliminary mixture as a kind of substrate and added sameness and difference.⁸

The controversy begins when Plutarch points out that, as opposed to other Platonists, he contends that this demiurgic act of creating the cosmic soul actually took place. Other Platonists thought that Plato chose to explain his cosmology as a cosmogony ‘for the sake of examination’ (θεωρίας ἔνεκα, *De an. procr.* 1013a, 1017b): the complexity of the cosmic soul is better explained in a cosmogonic narrative, but in fact Plato considered the cosmos to be sempiternal. Plutarch on the other hand – who, together with Atticus, would become the main representative of this strand in the history of Platonism – held that the creation of the cosmic soul and the cosmic body were actual events (e.g. 1014a–b).⁹ The reason he gives for this is that a sempiternalist reading of the *Timaeus* would conflict with Plato’s conviction, which Plutarch discerns in the tenth book of the *Laws* (896a–c; see p. 43–45), that the cosmic soul is older than the cosmic body. If there was no actual cosmogony, this could not possibly be the case.

As the passage from *On God’s Slowness to Punish*, with which we began, points out, there was no creatio ex nihilo, but the demiurge took over precosmic disorderly stuff (ἡ πάντων φύσις ἄτακτος οὕσα). If we assume, with Plutarch, that this takeover actually happened, then we have to ask what this precosmic stuff actually was, since it cannot have been a theoretical construct. Plutarch is very clear about this:

ἀκοσμία γὰρ ἦν τὰ πρὸ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου γενέσεως· ἀκοσμία δ’ οὐκ ἀσώματος οὐδ’ ἀκίνητος οὐδ’ ἄψυχος ἀλλ’ ἄμορφον μὲν καὶ ἀσύστατον τὸ σωματικὸν ἔμπληκτον δὲ καὶ ἄλογον τὸ κινητικὸν ἔχουσα· τοῦτο δ’ ἦν ἀναρμοστία ψυχῆς οὐκ ἐχούσης λόγον. (*De an. procr.* 1014b)

⁸ On the differences between Plutarch’s text and interpretation and our current understanding of Plato’s text (the *communis opinio* now follows Grube 1932), see Opsomer 2004: 139–142; cf. also Ferrari 1999c; Ferrari in Ferrari and Baldi 2002: 34–37.

⁹ On these two strands of interpretation of Platonic cosmology, see esp. Baltes 1978. Cf. also Bonazzi 2017; Boys-Stones 2018: 184–211.

In fact, what preceded the generation of the universe was disorder, disorder not incorporeal or immobile or inanimate but of corporeality amorphous and incoherent and of motivity demented and irrational, and this was the discord of soul that has not reason.

While, apart from the insistence on taking the precosmic state literally, Plutarch's identification of amorphous corporeality with the 'room' (χώρα) of the *Timaeus* (*De an. procr.* 1014c, e, 1024c) would not have raised many eyebrows (since Aristotle, the identification of χώρα and matter had been quite common¹⁰), his assumption of an irrational precosmic soul must have seemed rather more outlandish. According to Plutarch, this precosmic soul is one of the ingredients that the demiurge uses to forge the cosmic soul: it is what the *Timaeus* calls divisible being (*De an. procr.* 1014d) and ἀνάγκη (1014e). Plutarch also found the precosmic soul in the *Philebus* (as ἀπειρία, 1014d, e), in the *Statesman* (as σύμφυτος ἐπιθυμία, 1015a), and in the tenth book of the *Laws*, on the basis of which he posits the precosmic soul as the cause of evil (1014e, 1015e).¹¹

While precosmic soul and precosmic body were always coexistent (1024c), the assumption of a real cosmogony involving a cosmic soul that actually precedes the cosmic body, salvages the seniority of soul (*De an. procr.* 1016d–1017b; cf. also *Quaest. Plat.* 4.1003a–b). The upshot of this solution is that the cosmic soul contains an element of irrationality: it is a compound of intelligence – the result of the demiurge's attempt to make the cosmos as much like himself as possible (cf. also *Quaest. Plat.* 2.1001b–c) – and of 'soul in itself' (ψυχή καθ' ἑαυτήν, *De an. procr.* 1014e), which as precosmic soul caused disorderly movement and is the source of movement in the cosmic soul (1016c, 1025f).

The human soul similarly combines rationality and irrationality: reason and emotion always occur together in some combination (1025c–d). This connection between human and cosmic soul is brought up again in *On Moral Virtue*, where Plutarch attacks the Stoic belief that irrationality is the perversion of reason and not a self-standing element of the soul (*De virt. mor.* 441c–d). Plutarch opposes this Stoic tenet to Plato's *Timaeus*:¹²

¹⁰ *Phys.* 4.2.209b11–13; *Gen. corr.* 2.1.329a23. The Aristotelian identification of Plato's χώρα (or ὑποδοχή or τιθήνη) with matter seems to have been uncontroversially accepted by Platonists around Plutarch's time, even if they did not all have the same ideas about what matter actually is (*De an. procr.* 1024c and *De Is. et Os.* 372e–f, 374b; see Ferrari 1995b: 80–81; 1996a: 44–45; cf. e.g. Alc., *Didasc.* 8.2 and further B-S 4, esp. B, H, I, and *PidA* 123). Cf. also p. 118.

¹¹ On the precosmic soul and where Plutarch found it in Plato, see Baltes 2005: 79–82; Opsomer 2004: 148–152.

¹² On the connections between *De virt. mor.* and *De an. procr.*, see Opsomer 1994a; 2012; Dillon 1996: 194; Baltes 2005: 84–89; Ferrari 2007. On the anti-Stoicism involved,

ἐμφανῶς μέντοι καὶ βεβαίως καὶ ἀναμφιδόξως Πλάτων συνεῖδεν, ὅτι τούτου τε τοῦ κόσμου τὸ ἔμψυχον οὐχ ἀπλοῦν οὐδ' ἀσύνθετον οὐδὲ μονοειδές ἐστιν, ἀλλ' ἐκ τῆς ταύτου καὶ τῆς τοῦ ἑτέρου μεμιγμένον δυνάμεως πῆ μὲν ἀεὶ κατὰ ταῦτὰ κοσμεῖται καὶ περιπολεῖ μιᾷ τάξει κράτος ἐχούση χρώμενον, πῆ δ' εἷς τε κινήσεις καὶ κύκλους σχιζόμενον ὑπεναντίους καὶ πλανητοὺς ἀρχὴν διαφορᾶς καὶ μεταβολῆς καὶ ἀνομοιότητος ἐνδίδωσι ταῖς περὶ γῆν φθοραῖς καὶ γενέσεσιν, ἢ τ' ἀνθρώπου ψυχῆ μέρος ἢ μίμημα τῆς τοῦ παντὸς οὔσα καὶ συνηρμοσμένη κατὰ λόγους καὶ ἀριθμοὺς ἐοικότας ἐκείνοις οὐχ ἀπλῆ τίς ἐστιν οὐδ' ὁμοιοπαθής, ἀλλ' ἕτερον μὲν ἔχει τὸ νοερὸν καὶ λογιστικόν, ᾧ κρατεῖν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου κατὰ φύσιν καὶ ἄρχειν προσῆκόν ἐστιν, ἕτερον δὲ τὸ παθητικὸν καὶ ἄλογον καὶ πολυπλανές καὶ ἄτακτον ἐξεταστοῦ δεόμενον. (*De virt. mor.* 441d–e)

Plato, however, comprehended clearly, firmly, and without reservation both that the soul of this universe of ours is not simple nor uncompounded nor uniform, but that, being compounded of the potentialities of sameness and otherness, in one part it is ever governed in uniformity and revolves in but one and the same order, which maintains control, yet in another part it is split into movements and circles which go in contrariety to each other and wander about, thus giving rise to the beginnings of differentiation and change and dissimilarity in those things which come into being and pass away on earth; and also that the soul of man, since it is a portion or a copy of the soul of the Universe and is joined together on principles and in proportions corresponding to those which govern the Universe, is not simple nor subject to similar emotions, but has as one part the intelligent and rational, whose natural duty it is to govern and rule the individual, and as another part the passionate and irrational, the variable and disorderly, which has need of a director.

Completely eradicating irrationality, as the Stoics would want, is not only impossible (*De virt. mor.* 451c) but also undesirable (452a–b). This goes both for the macrocosm and for the human microcosm.¹³

This obviously influences how we should approach ὁμοίωσις θεῶ. For all his awesome power, the demiurge's efforts to create cosmos are limited by his having to take into account the irrationality of precosmic soul, which he could only rationalise to a certain extent (ὡς δυνατόν ἦν

see Babut 1969b: 46–47; 1969a: esp. 51–54; Ingenkamp 1999. For Plutarch's views on Stoicism, Babut 1969b remains the standard work; see also Hershbell 1992; Opsomer 2014. Cf. also Castelnérac 2007; Machek 2018.

¹³ Cf. *De facie* 927d–928c for an exploration of the microcosm–macrocosm analogy from the perspective of teleology. See e.g. Wright 1995: 56–74 for a brief overview of Greek thinking about micro- and macrocosm in the context of cosmology.

in *De an. procr.* 1014b). Additionally, given the demiurge's transcendence and our cosmic condition as humans in the sensible realm, our *own* efforts to imitate the demiurge – our efforts to create order and instil good in our own souls and in the world around us – will only ever be κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν (Pl., *Tht.* 176b, which is mirrored by ἀμωσγέπως in *De sera num.* 550d¹⁴). These limitations should be kept in mind when, in chapters 2–4, I discuss ethical domains in which ὁμοίωσις θεῶ consists in striving to be an image of the demiurge by acting like a demiurge on a human level.

At the same time – and this will be most prominent in chapters 1, 5, and 6 – there is a more theoretical aspect of ὁμοίωσις θεῶ, a knowledge that should underlie both these demiurgic actions and our general stance in life. In the introduction to *On Isis and Osiris*, for instance, Plutarch spells out that the pursuit of truth – of truth about the gods in particular – is a ‘longing for the divine’ (θειότητος ὄρεξις, 351e).¹⁵ As the rest of *On Isis and Osiris* shows (cf. p. 344–348), this knowledge amounts to cosmological knowledge. Again, this is a story of both opportunity and limitation. The knowledge of our cosmic condition involves a profound sense of divine providence. On the other hand, it involves the realisation that, tied as we are to an ontological plane that is not of transcendent divinity, our grasp of the intelligible is never unmediated – the search (τὴν ζήτησιν, 351e) is emphasised as much as the truth that is sought – and the adversity that comes with irrationality is part and parcel of our lives. Thanks to the demiurge, we live in the best possible world and any hardships we experience are a relatively small price to pay for that.

Since Plutarch's intertextual engagement with Plato's dialogues is the core of his Platonism and, hence, of his cosmological ethics, chapter 1 will look into Plutarch's exegetical strategies while fine-tuning this introduction's general sketch of his view of the cosmos. When Plutarch interprets Plato, the key is consistency: as Plato was always right, his works are perfectly consistent.¹⁶ Plutarch's interpretation of Plato, as

¹⁴ Helmig 2005a: 16 n. 14.

¹⁵ Cf. *De Is. et Os.* 378c, where this pursuit of knowledge is said to be the surest way to εὐδαιμονία, not unlike cosmological knowledge in *Tim.* 90c.

¹⁶ It is difficult to get a clear view of Plutarch's conception of the Platonic corpus. The spurious works that are not part of the Thrasyllan canon (i.e. the so-called *Appendix Platonica*) seem to be completely absent (Ziegler 1951: col. 751). Giavatto 2010 rightly omits the parallels to these works listed in Helmbold and O'Neil 1959. The one exception he makes, a supposed allusion to *Eryxias* 400b in *Apophth. Lac.* 226c (and *Lyc.* 9.1–2: Giavatto only deals with the *Moralia*), concerns a general reference to the Spartan introduction of iron coins and should have been struck from the record as well. This is not surprising: the authenticity of these works does not seem to have been defended by any Platonist. Plutarch's friend Favorinus, for instance, came up with a certain Leon as the author of the Ps.-Platonic *Halcyon* (fr. 53 Amato; cf. also Athenaeus 11.506c; on Plutarch's friendship

Ferrari and Opsomer have shown, can best be described as a ‘search for consistency’ among different dialogues.¹⁷ I have already mentioned how

with Favorinus, who appears in *Quaest. conv.* 8.10 and to whom he dedicated *De prim. frig.*, see e.g. Bowie 1997: 2–3; cf. also Ziegler 1951: 675; Jones 1971: 61; Puech 1991: 4850). Diogenes Laertius 3.62 gives a list of works that were generally acknowledged to be spurious, including *Demodocus*, *Sisyphus*, *Halcyon*, *Eryxias*, *Axiochus*, some works we do not know, and ἀκέφαλοι (‘headless works’); if this last word designates works such as *On Justice* and *On Virtue* (thus e.g. Joyal 2014: 77), this list of *spuria* would comprise the whole *Appendix Platonica* as we have it, save for the *Definitions* (cf., albeit much later, *Prol. in Plat. phil.* 26.3–6 for a similar list, which includes the *Definitions*). As for the works of doubtful authenticity that are included in Thrasyllus’ canon and were usually accepted as authentic by ancient Platonists, see *Pida* 48 and B-S 2. The *Letters* were pillaged for Plutarch’s *Dion*; see Ziegler 1951: col. 750 with references to the extensive nineteenth-century scholarship on the issue; Porter 1952: xxii–xxvii; Dreher in Dreher, Scardigli, and Fabrini 2000: 98–100; cf. Tarrant 1983; Beneker 2012: 87–102; cf. also e.g. *De aud. poet.* 36c; *De tranq. an.* 474e. The *First Alcibiades* was probably used for Plutarch’s *Alc.* (see Verdegem 2010: 106–107, 137–139) and there are significant philosophical traces of it elsewhere (see esp. Renaud and Tarrant 2015: 125–140). *Clitophon* 407c–d is paraphrased with the explicit mention of Plato’s name (*An virt. doc.* 439c and *De vit. pud.* 534e; cf. Slings 1999: II n. 8) and the same goes for *Minos* 319d–e (*Max. cum princ.* 776e; cf. Roskam 2009b: 158). Plutarch’s extant works do not refer to the *Theages*, but the *Lamprias Catalogue* (70) mentions a work Ὑπὲρ τοῦ Πλάτωνος Θεάγου; see Joyal 1993 and Opsomer 1997a. The other *dubia* are harder to spot, but as a general rule, we cannot infer Plutarch’s judgement on authenticity from the absence of a work. After all, despite Plutarch’s considerable interest in friendship, which far surpasses *De ad. et am.* and *De am. mult.* (see Demulder 2017a: 57–64 with further references at 60 n. 58), there is no clear trace of the uncontestedly authentic *Lysis*. And although Homeric poetry (not only in *De aud. poet.*; see e.g. D’Ippolito 2004; Díaz Lavado 2010) and the theme of (poetic) inspiration (esp. in *De Pyth. or.*; cf. Holzhausen 1993) loom large, Plato’s *Ion* is completely overlooked. It would be rash, then, to say anything about Plutarch’s judgement on the authenticity of the *Greater Hippias*, of which the authenticity was not contested in antiquity (see e.g. Tarrant 2000: 32–33), or of any of the other dialogues that were contested by some (Aelian, *VH* 8.2 questions the authenticity of the *Hipparchus*, Athenaeus 11.506c reports that some ascribed the *Second Alcibiades* to Xenophon, and Diogenes Laertius 9.37 quotes Thrasyllus’ own doubts about the *Rival Lovers*; this interpretation of the passage from Diogenes was contested by Mansfeld 1994: 100 but convincingly defended again by Tarrant 1995: 150–151). A particularly urgent question in a study of Plutarch’s cosmological ethics is whether Plutarch considered the *Epinomis* to be Platonic. I am inclined to think that Plutarch did not know the work or in any case did not consider it authentic; see p. 233 n. 192.

¹⁷ Opsomer 2004 (cf. Helmer 1937: 66–67; Hershbell 1987: 240). Ferrari calls this ‘Platonem ex Platone σαφηνίζειν’: Ferrari 2000a; Ferrari in Ferrari and Baldi 2002: 22–24; Ferrari 2004. On the role of this strategy in the broader Middle Platonic context, see Ferrari 2000b; 2001; 2012; Petrucci 2015b; cf. also Boys-Stones 2018: 62–63.

Plutarch's interpretation of the *Timaeus* was driven by a concern adopted from the tenth book of the *Laws* and how he found evidence for the irrational part of the cosmic soul in several Platonic dialogues. In the first chapter, I will look at three specific issues associated with this search for consistency. First I will argue that Plutarch's interpretation of Plato as a consistent thinker does not preclude him from showing great flexibility in his use of Platonic intertexts (esp. the *Timaeus*) across different works. This flexibility, which Plutarch used for literary and argumentative purposes, was in fact warranted by Plato's own combination of consistency and flexibility. Second, it goes without saying that assuming Plato's perfect consistency excludes a developmentalist approach of Plato's writings. Nonetheless, the fact that Plato was old when he wrote the *Laws* is somehow significant to Plutarch. I will discuss how he combined the significance of this with his unitarian reading of Plato. Finally, Plutarch advocated a literal interpretation of Plato's *Timaeus*. I will argue that his policy of Platonic consistency led him to take a similar literalist approach for the interpretation of the myth from Plato's *Statesman*, which is notoriously hard to reconcile with the *Timaeus*.

As noted, the first chapter will also serve to flesh out Plutarch's view of the cosmos. Offering a comparison of *On the Generation of the Soul* and *On the Face in the Moon*, the first section of chapter 1 will look into the role of the *Timaeus* in general and the providential transition from chaos to cosmos in particular. The second section will touch upon Plutarch's explanation of evil. I will show how theological concerns led Plutarch to take his inspiration from the tenth book of Plato's *Laws* and to postulate a maleficent soul that was once actually precosmic and whose effects can still be felt after the demiurge turned this precosmic soul into cosmic soul. Finally, I will argue that Plutarch's literal interpretation of the *Statesman* myth, while like his interpretation of *Laws* 10 revealing his concerns about theodicy, brings out his optimistic view about the cosmos in which he lived.

Chapters 2–4 will deal with instances in which ethical comportment involves acting like an image of the demiurge. For a Platonist, especially a Platonist who puts the *Timaeus* front and centre, this notion of 'image' amounts to much more than, say, a literary comparison. As Hirsch-Luipold has shown in his study on Plutarch's *Denken in Bildern*, there is a conceptual connection between Plutarch's use of images (εἰκόνες) and the *Timaeus*, in which the cosmos is said to be an εἰκὼν of an intelligible paradigm (*Tim.* 29b–c, 92c):¹⁸

Bilder sind für Plutarch nicht allein eine Darstellungsform von Sprache und Kunst. Die Bedeutung des Bildes ist letztlich in der

¹⁸ Hirsch-Luipold 2002: 36–38, 159–224.

Ontologie begründet. Die Phänomene der Welt können deshalb als Bilder verwendet werden, weil sie *ihrem Wesen nach* Bilder einer höheren Wahrheit und eigentlicheren Welt *sind*. Wenn ein Gedanke in bildhafter Rede oder in einem Kunstwerk Gestalt gewinnen kann, so beruht dies auf dem Bildcharakter der Welt insgesamt.¹⁹

When a human actor, then, is prescribed to be an image of the demiurge, this means that they should reflect the intelligible nature of that model, thus somehow bridging the ontological gap between the sensible and the intelligible. The cosmos plays an important role in achieving that goal: since the cosmos is itself an image of intelligibility, parts of the cosmos (most notably the sun) can also be used in imagery to talk about the intelligible realm. In our striving to become an image of the demiurge, then, we can use cosmic images as guides.

In chapter 2, I will look at the musician as an image of the demiurge and enquire into the similarities and differences between intelligible and sensible harmony. Chapter 3 turns to Plutarch's *Symptotic Questions* to learn about how to organise a symposium. A good symposium resembles the cosmos: the good symposiarch should imitate the Platonic demiurge when throwing a party and all other aspects of the symposium can be cosmologically prescribed starting from that idea. In chapter 4, finally, I turn to cosmological advice for the politician in the *Lives* and in the political treatise *To an Uneducated Ruler*. The politician should imitate both the demiurge and the sun. This combination of images is important to bring out both the possibilities and the limitations of the politician's *ὁμοίωσις θεῶν*.

The last two chapters of this book offer in-depth stand-alone readings of two Plutarchan works on ethics of which a correct interpretation, I argue, depends on paying close attention to cosmological aspects. Again, the notions of intertextuality and imagery, as introduced here and explored in the first four chapters, will play an important role. *On Tranquility of Mind* (chapter 5) is the central work of Plutarch's so-called practical ethics.²⁰ Cosmology will turn out to play a crucial role throughout that work on how to cope with the unwanted effects of *τύχη*. I argue that Plutarch's advice on remembering past events and dealing with adversity needs to be understood within a cosmic framework. The letter-essay ends in an encomiastic description of the cosmos as a temple, which draws on the cosmology of the *Timaeus*. The *Dialogue on Love* (chapter 6) confronts us with a vexed question: how physical can Platonic love get? That it can get quite physical in Plutarch's book is once again due to the

¹⁹ Hirsch-Luipold 2002: 159.

²⁰ On the centrality of this work, see e.g. Gréard 1885: 183; Sirinelli 2000: 139–145; Van Hoof 2014: 138.

influence of cosmology on ethics. After casting the Platonic demiurge in the role of Eros, Plutarch goes on to introduce the sun as an image of the demiurgic god. Building on that image – inspired by the subsequent images of sun, line, and cave in Plato’s *Republic* but rewriting these images to fit the cosmology of the *Timaeus* – he ends up painting the picture of a rainbow: a rainbow is a reflection of the sun in a cloud just like love is a reflection of the intelligible in a sensible body. This teaches how we should love: we should approach and appreciate the bodily as a conduit in which a higher reality is reflected and which is our only hope for getting into contact with that higher reality during our lives.

As this introduction has suggested, I plan to draw on a wide and variegated range of texts to bring out the ubiquitous presence of cosmology in Plutarch’s ethical thought and to emphasise the fundamental unity of this thought. My main concern will be to show what Plutarch is doing (or sometimes even what I think he is trying to do). Hence, my default position will be to apply the principle of charity to Plutarch’s writings.²¹ I am confident that I have done so in good measure – and not with the excessiveness that Plutarch exhibits when reading Plato – but readers who judge otherwise will hopefully find that this does not detract from the book’s main thesis about the fundamental importance of (Plutarch’s reading of Plato’s) cosmology for Plutarch’s ethics.

²¹ For much more thorough and nuanced reflections on this issue, see Opsomer 2016c.

Chapter I

Reading Plato

1. In search of irrational soul

Ferrari has rightly pointed out that, in *On the Generation of the Soul*, Plutarch seems to devote less attention to the rational part of the cosmic soul than to its irrational side.¹ One can think of several reasons for this. Rationality – this is Ferrari’s explanation – may be less of an explanandum for a Platonist than irrationality. Moreover, Plutarch seems to be conscious of the original character of his exegesis of the *Timaeus* (*De an. procr.* 1012b, 1014a), and this originality lies in his treatment of irrationality (i.e. his assumption of an irrational precosmic soul and of an actual precosmic state devoid of rationality) rather than in his treatment of rationality, hence the need for more explanation of the irrational aspect. Finally, there seems to be an almost programmatic hesitance to be precise about the divine provenance of rationality. As we have seen (p. 19), the demiurge and the paradigm to which he turns for his cosmogonic act seem to be, for instance, sometimes distinguished and sometimes conflated. Plutarch’s εὐλάβεια towards the transcendent divine may have left its traces here as well. In this chapter I will give Plutarch’s interests free rein while analysing his intertextual strategies for exploring the irrational part of the cosmic soul as he found it in the *Timaeus*, the tenth book of the *Laws*, and the *Statesman*.²

¹ Ferrari 2011: 30.

² The cosmo-ethical relevance of these three works is suggested by the fact that they take centre stage in two monographs on Plato’s cosmological ethics: Carone 2005; O’Meara 2017. I have not devoted a section to Plutarch’s effort to find the irrational part of the soul in the notion of ἀπειρία in Plato’s *Phlb.* because I do not think that Plutarch gives us much to go on in this case. As opposed to the other Platonic dialogues discussed in this chapter, Plutarch does not quote or use the *Phlb.* in *De an. procr.*, except for stating the equivalence between ἀπειρία and the *Timaeus*’ divisible being (*De an. procr.* 1014d, e). See, however, Caruso 2021, who ingenuously suggests that, by introducing πέρας and ἀπειρία, Plutarch wanted to indicate a distinction between the function of indivisible being (the *Philebus*’ πέρας) and that of the demiurgic cause (the *Philebus*’ αἰτία, which, it should be noted, is not mentioned in *De an. procr.*). This approach, however, is hindered somewhat by Plutarch’s general hesitance to draw a neat distinction between the forms and the demiurge (cf. p. 19). On Plutarch’s use of *Phlb.* in general, see also Laurenti 1996.

2. *Chaos and providence: flexible consistency and the Timaeus*

It has often been pointed out that the *Timaeus* is at the centre of Plutarch's Platonism.³ In this section I want to explore this claim by looking at how the *Timaeus* is used in two works of a very different nature: the exegetical treatise *On the Generation of the Soul* and the dialogue *On the Face in the Moon*.⁴ Plutarch, while approaching Plato as a perfectly consistent philosopher, also allows for significant flexibility in his intertextual engagement with the master. To bring this out clearly, I will take my cue from a useful distinction that was drawn in Brouillette and Giavatto's excellent discussion of Plutarch's use of Plato's dialogues:

De façon générale, il est possible, dans l'œuvre philosophique de Plutarque, d'établir une distinction entre deux types d'écrits: ceux dont l'objectif est de *commenter* directement un dialogue ou une section de dialogue de Platon et ceux qui tentent d'établir une position propre à Plutarque, notamment à l'aide de Platon.⁵

On the Generation of the Soul is assigned – evidently, it would seem – to the first category. The second category is not defined, but we can safely assume that a dialogue such as *On the Face in the Moon* would be a suitable example.⁶ I start with some general observations on the selection, arrangement, and function of the quotations from the *Timaeus* in both Plutarchan works. Next, I turn from the macro level to the micro level for a case study revolving around a quotation from *Timaeus* 53b occurring in both works. I will argue that, for all the versatility exhibited by Plutarch,

³ E.g. Froidefond 1987: 201; Hershbell 1987: 235 (with further references in n. 3); Ferrari 2004: 225–226, 223–235. On the special importance of *Tim.* in Middle Platonism, see e.g. Ferrari 2001; 2005a; 2012; Boys-Stones 2018: 59–60.

⁴ For an extensive introduction to *De facie*, see Donini 2011b: 9–109; cf. also Cherniss in Cherniss and Helmbold 1957: 2–26; Boulogne 2013a.

⁵ Brouillette and Giavatto 2010: 5 (cf. also 9) (original emphasis).

⁶ Brouillette and Giavatto 2010: 7–9 discuss the comparable case of *De def. or.* as an example of the second category. It should be clarified from the outset that I do not want to argue that any position taken in *De facie* – not even that of Plutarch's brother Lamprias, who is a character in the dialogue – entirely coincides with Plutarch's view. Cf. Donini 2011b: 11–12 n. 10; Opsomer 2017a: 87–88 n. 43. More generally speaking I take it to be the main characteristic of the philosophical dialogues falling under the second category distinguished by Brouillette and Giavatto that Plutarch is developing positions *himself* (rather than *his own* positions per se) with the aid of Plato's text. On the philosophy in Plutarch's dialogues, see Ferrari 1995b: 29–34; Opsomer 2005b: 199–200; cf. also Van der Stockt 2000.

there is a fundamental unity to his reading of Plato and to the view of the cosmos emerging from this reading.⁷

2.1. Macro level: selection, arrangement, and function

Looking at both texts globally, one immediately gets the impression that Plutarch adopted different methods of selecting and arranging the *Timaeus* passages he used.⁸ The main issue in *On the Generation of the Soul* is the interpretation of *Timaeus* 35a–b (for the first part) and 35b–36b (for the second part): these two Platonic passages are quoted in their entirety as prefaces to the respective parts of Plutarch's treatise (*De an. procr.* 1012b–c, 1027a–b). What Plutarch offers, then, is a *Spezialkommentar* of sorts on a small section of the *Timaeus*, viz. on the passage concerning the creation of the cosmic soul.⁹ Although numerous other passages from the *Timaeus* are adduced and it is once referred to as a whole (πᾶν τὸ σύγγραμμα, 1017b), Plutarch always keeps an eye on the key passage and the exegetical questions it entails. Never is it Plutarch's intention to comment on the entire scope of the *Timaeus*; the focus is on a single passage that must have been particularly important to Plutarch's thought.¹⁰ At the same time, the project undertaken in *On the Generation of the Soul* goes well beyond the *Timaeus*: several other Platonic dialogues are adduced to show that, when we follow Plutarch's interpretation of the *Timaeus* passage in point, there is no reason to suspect Plato of contradicting himself.

As opposed to the concentric pattern of the *Timaeus* passages in *On the Generation of the Soul* (i.e. centred around *Tim.* 35a–36b), the references in *On the Face in the Moon* constitute a linear pattern, which more or less mirrors the plan of the *Timaeus* itself (see table 1.1). In the *Timaeus*, Plato first discusses the works of reason before tackling the effects of irrational necessity. In *On the Face in the Moon*, Plutarch appears to be reading the *Timaeus* back to front, discussing chaos before cosmos. Enclosing the other *Timaeus* passages are references to two loci (*Tim.* 53b and 31b–32c) that are closely interconnected (notably in *De an. procr.* 1016e–1017a, as we shall see) and mark the general transition from chaos to cosmos. With

⁷ This is not denied – and perhaps it is even suggested – by Brouillette and Giavatto 2010: 9.

⁸ When discussing Platonic quotations in this study, I generally rely on Giavatto 2010; earlier lists of Plutarch's Platonic quotations can be found in Jones 1916; Helmbold and O'Neil 1959. On the (philosophical and other) quotations in *De facie* and how they are assigned to the several characters, see Boulogne 2013b.

⁹ On *De an. procr.* within the tradition of *Spezialkommentare*, see Ferrari in Ferrari and Baldi 2002: 12–16; cf. also Ferrari 2000b.

¹⁰ Cf. *De an. procr.* 1012b and *Quaest. Plat.* 4.1003a, where Plutarch refers to his many (πολλάκις) earlier discussions of his interpretation of this passage.

the last reference, we find ourselves in the eschatological myth that forms the climax of Plutarch's dialogue. This myth is in itself an imitation, even a miniature version of the *Timaeus*, as Hamilton has pointed out.¹¹

In neither of the works is a single reference made to the *Timaeus* before Stephanus page 28 or past page 56. In other words, only slightly more than a third of the *Timaeus* is taken into account. Plutarch does not take into account the introductory conversation, with its *Republic*-style sketch of the ideal state and the teaser for the Atlantis story to be told in full in the *Critias*, the sequel to the *Timaeus*. Nor does he mention Plato's account on the transformations and compounds of the primary bodies, on sensation and the other passions, and on the cooperation of reason and necessity. While other Plutarchan works fill these gaps to some extent,¹² it is safe to say that Plutarch was mainly interested in the *Timaeus*' overall framework, involving the demiurge's work on soul and matter.

Table 1.1: *Timaeus in On the Face in the Moon*

<i>De facie</i>	<i>Tim.</i>	
926f	53b	precosmic state of the universe: four elements in disorder
927c	41b	} bonds of λόγος are stronger than bonds of φύσις/ἀνάγκη
928a	48a	
928b	45b	logical arrangement shows itself in the order of the cosmos: stars = eyes; sun = heart; earth and sea = bowels and bladder ¹³
930c	46b–c	mirror images
937e	40b–c	} purpose of the earth: 'nurse, strict guardian and artificer of night and day'
938e	40b–c	
943f	31b–32c	cosmic state of the universe: proportioning of the four elements

¹¹ Hamilton 1934; cf. Jones 1916: 51–56; Vernière 1977: 96–97; Donini 1988: 128. On the myth in general and its relation to Plutarch's other eschatological myths, see also Vernière 1977: esp. 57–114. On its play with cultural traditions, see Taub 2019. Donini 1988 and 2010 are excellent discussions of how the so-called scientific and mythical parts of the dialogue should be connected with each other and with Plutarch's Platonism.

¹² Cf. e.g. Opsomer 2015.

¹³ Plutarch elegantly supplements Plato, who only talks about the rational structure of the microcosmic (i.e. human) body in this passage of *Tim.*, with macrocosmic parallels.

As for the function of the *Timaeus* quotations, we again find different approaches in *On the Generation of the Soul* and *On the Face in the Moon*, corresponding to the choices made regarding selection and arrangement of the passages. The professed strategy in *On the Generation of the Soul* is to stick to what Plato really meant (*De an. procr.* 1013e, 1014a), without, like earlier interpreters, importing ἴδια δόγματα (1013b). Plato's consistency is the litmus test and sufficient condition for a correct interpretation: Plutarch's interpretation will be successful if it saves Plato's consistency (1014a). While this puts *On the Generation of the Soul* squarely into the category of works in which Plutarch is commenting directly on a Platonic text, it would be wrong to say that Plutarch is not developing his own philosophical position here. Strange as it may seem, this stern commitment to Plato's own words resulting in the complete absence – as he sees it – of ἴδια δόγματα is presented by Plutarch as a feat of great originality (1012b): Plutarch consciously sees himself as the first Platonist to find the correct interpretation of Plato's text and he is aware of the controversial character of his solution (1013f–1014a). Moreover, his unusual interpretation of this particular bit of Plato's *Timaeus* seems to have been one of Plutarch's pet subjects (1012b; cf. *Quaest. Plat.* 4.1003a) and must have been part and parcel of his philosophical outlook.

Conversely, it could be argued on the basis of *On the Face in the Moon* that, in the writings in which Plutarch at first sight seems to be developing positions of his own using Platonic references, he is at the same time trying to increase his readers' affinity with the Platonic dialogues per se. While in *On the Generation of the Soul* the advertised main theme of the *Timaeus* (viz. the visible world, *Tim.* 28b) plays a relatively small and subsidiary role (the cosmic body is only discussed insofar as it explains parallel features of the cosmic soul), it is much more prominent in *On the Face in the Moon*, where issues such as the mechanism of vision, the working of mirrors, probability as a criterion for physics and – obviously – the positions and properties of the planets are discussed at length. Moreover, the combination of science and myth is a characteristic shared by the *Timaeus* and *On the Face in the Moon*, which is entirely absent from *On the Generation of the Soul*.¹⁴ In the case of *On the Face in the Moon*, then, we should keep in mind that the observation that Plutarch is developing philosophical positions of his own does not entail that Plato's own voice is stifled. As both Plutarchan works show, the distinction between commentary and development of personal philosophical positions eventually collapses in the case of a Platonist like Plutarch.

¹⁴ Cf. Taub 2008: 70–76.

2.2. Micro level: Plutarch's interpretation of *Timaeus* 53b

The general observations made in the previous subsection can be further explored in a case study on the use of *Timaeus* 53b in both Plutarchan texts. In *Timaeus* 52d–53c, Plato gives a description of chaos, the state of the universe before the demiurge set about his work. In this precosmic state, the four primary bodies (fire, water, earth, and air) were there, albeit without proportion or measure (ἀλόγως καὶ ἀμέτρως, 53a): ‘They were indeed in the condition one would expect thoroughly god-forsaken things to be in’ (παντάπασί γε μὴν διακείμενα ὥσπερ εἰκὸς ἔχειν ἅπαν ὅταν ἀπῆ τινοῦ θεός, 53b). This last sentence is quoted both in *On the Generation of the Soul* and in *On the Face in the Moon*. The quotations are surrounded by similar material in both cases, yet they seem to receive a slightly different interpretation.

Within the framework of Plutarch's search for a consistent interpretation of Platonic cosmology as it is conducted in *On the Generation of the Soul*, the interpretation of *Timaeus* 53b (quoted at *De an. procr.* 1016e–f) is eminently clear. As Plato notes in this context, these precosmic traces of the primary bodies were in irregular motion (*Tim.* 52e–53a). He has already pointed this out in an earlier sketch of the precosmic situation: the stuff that the demiurge took over was ‘not at rest but in discordant and disorderly motion’ (οὐχ ἡσυχίαν ἄγον, ἀλλὰ κινούμενον πλημμελῶς καὶ ἀτάκτως, *Tim.* 30a, paraphrased at *De an. procr.* 1016c, d). Given Plutarch's strict adherence to the tenet that there can be no motion without soul (Pl., *Leg.* 10.895b and *Phdr.* 245c at *De an. procr.* 1013c, f, 1015e; cf. p. 42), this means that soul must have been present even before the cosmos came into being. Hence, the demiurge not only took over precosmic corporeality but also precosmic soul (e.g. *De an. procr.* 1017a).¹⁵ This resolves Plato's apparent inconsistency between soul being ungenerated in the *Phaedrus* and soul being generated in the *Timaeus*: the first is precosmic soul, while the second is cosmic soul (*De an. procr.* 1016a).

In *On the Face in the Moon*, Plutarch's brother Lamprias attacks the Stoic doctrine of natural motion of the elements (which has been invoked by the Stoic interlocutor in the dialogue at *De facie* 923e–f).¹⁶ He starts by pointing out that the Stoics will have to agree that there are many examples of things that are not in their natural location. Lamprias mentions (1) the fire of Etna, unnaturally located below earth, (2) the air that is confined in skins – one could think of something like a buoy – and is thus prevented from making its natural, upwards motion, (3) the soul,

¹⁵ In his description of precosmic movement, Plutarch does not distinguish between the receptacle and the bodily traces: both are labelled as matter (cf. *De an. procr.* 1013c, 1016d), cf. p.22 n. 10.

¹⁶ See esp. Opsomer 2017a: 86–88.

confined in the body, and (4) the Stoic Zeus, who comes to be everything and thus everywhere after the transformation of his original, fiery nature (926c–d).¹⁷

Lamprias' provocative conclusion is that Stoic philosophy, if it stands by the doctrine of natural location, 'contrive[s] a dissolution of the cosmos' (διάλυσίν τινα κόσμου φιλοσοφῆς, 926d).¹⁸ After all, the Stoics try to separate the four elements and assign to each its natural location. Thereby, they 'bring upon things the Strife of Empedocles' (τὸ νεῖκος ἐπάγης τὸ Ἐμπεδοκλέους τοῖς πράγμασι, 926e).¹⁹ The remark is as clever as it is rude (and we will come across another example of Lamprias' trademark irreverent wit later on; see p. 102–106). Lamprias' suggestion seems to be that Stoic philosophy, if it sticks to the doctrine of natural location, cannot explain the cosmos and is stuck in a precosmic state. The separation of 'all that is heavy and all that is light' (τὸ βαρὺ [...] τὸ κοῦφον, 926e) recalls the situation in *Timaeus* 53a, where chaos is characterised by the phenomenon that 'the heavy, dense material goes one way, while the light, flimsy material goes and settles elsewhere' (τὰ μὲν πυκνὰ καὶ βαρῆα ἄλλη, τὰ δὲ μανὰ καὶ κοῦφα εἰς ἑτέραν ἕξει φερόμενα ἕδραν). It is in his description of Empedocles' νεῖκος that Lamprias mentions 'the state in which, according to Plato, everything is from which God is absent' (οὕτως εἶχον ὡς ἔχει πᾶν οὗ θεὸς ἄπεστι κατὰ Πλάτωνα, 926f). This time, Plutarch's wording differs slightly from Plato's, but the reference to *Timaeus* 53b is unmistakable.

Interestingly, Plutarch adds an explanation right after this paraphrase: the state just described is the state 'in which bodies are when mind and soul are wanting' (τοῦτέστιν ὡς ἔχει τὰ σώματα νοῦ καὶ ψυχῆς ἀπολιπούσης, 926f). The precosmic soul, the pièce de résistance of Plutarch's interpretation of the *Timaeus* as it is introduced in *On the Generation of the Soul*, is missing here. This is all the more striking if we take into account the words just before the reference to the *Timaeus*: Plutarch describes the

¹⁷ On this passage, see esp. Görgemanns 1970: 98–105. Cf. the stylistic analysis in Pérez Jiménez 2015.

¹⁸ Cf. Aristotle's criticism of the doctrine (adhered to by Plutarch) that the cosmos was actually generated; fr. 18 Rose: ἔλεγέ τε, ὡς ἔστιν ἀκούειν, κατακερτομῶν ὅτι πάλαι μὲν ἐδεδῖει περὶ τῆς οἰκίας μὴ βιαίοις πνεύμασιν ἢ χειμῶσιν ἐξαισίοις ἢ χρόνῳ ἢ ῥαθυμία τῆς ἀρμοττούσης ἐπιμελείας ἀνατραπῆ, νυνὶ δὲ φόβον ἐπικεκρεμάσθαι μείζονα πρὸς τῶν τὸν ἅπαντα κόσμον τῷ λόγῳ καθαιρούντων. ('He [i.e. Aristotle] used to say in mockery (we are told) that in the past he had been afraid for his house lest it be destroyed by violent winds or by fierce storms or by time or by lack of proper maintenance, but that now a greater fear hung over him, from those who by an argument were destroying the whole world'; tr. in Barnes 1995.)

¹⁹ On Plutarch's use of Empedocles in this passage, see Santaniello 2005. Cf. p. 296 n. 41.

four elements in their precosmic state as ‘moving with their own peculiar and arbitrary motions’ (φερόμεναι φορὰς ἰδίας καὶ ἀθάρδεις, 926f). The mention of precosmic movement almost begs for the mention of a precosmic soul: without soul, there can be no movement. Is Plutarch giving up on Plato’s consistency here? Is the tenet that soul is the source of all motion, which Plutarch took primarily from the tenth book of the *Laws* and upon which he built his argument for a precosmic soul (cf. *De an. procr.* 1013e–f), not upheld in the *Timaeus*? Does precosmic movement not require precosmic soul after all?²⁰

I submit that we should allow Plutarch the same terminological flexibility as he himself allows Plato.²¹ As Plutarch points out in *On the Generation of the Soul* (1015f–1016c), Plato uses ψυχή to refer to cosmic soul (in the *Timaeus*, where soul is created) as well as to precosmic soul (in the *Phaedrus*, where soul is not created). The point is precisely to deny that this is an inconsistency on Plato’s part. The godforsaken state that is evoked in *Timaeus* 53b is, in that sense, without (cosmic!) soul indeed. That suffices for Plutarch’s purposes in *On the Face in the Moon*, and there was no need for him to make the speaker Lamprias embark upon a digression on the difference between precosmic and cosmic soul. After all, in the preface to *On the Generation of the Soul* (1012b), Plutarch points out that his interpretation of the matter is not easily dealt with en passant. The only point that Lamprias needs to make in *On the Face in the Moon* is that the Stoics destroy providence by reducing the cosmos to merely physical factors – whether the other relevant factors are due to νοῦς or to ψυχή is not of the essence here.²² In *On the Face in the Moon*, *Timaeus* 53b is used in the context of the refutation of a false philosophical view, whereas in *On the Generation of the Soul*, it is used for the development of a correct one. Within this polemical context, the depiction of chaos as a situation from which νοῦς καὶ ψυχή are absent may have seemed eminently fitting, since it establishes a common ground between Platonists and Stoics: the association of natural location with chaos would apply both to those who distinguish intelligence from cosmic soul

²⁰ Cherniss 1976: 206 n. a considers the two passages (i.e. the use of *Tim.* 53b in *De an. procr.* 1016e–f and *De facie* 926f) to be in conflict.

²¹ Plutarch explicitly allows himself such flexibility, which he calls homonymous use (ὁμωνυμία χρώμενος, *De an. procr.* 1022f), in the case of ὕλη: this can be used for corporeal matter devoid of any quality (e.g. 1015d–e) and for divisible being as an ingredient of soul (1013c), although the two are fundamentally different. He was not so keen, however, on extending similar flexibility to his Stoic adversaries (*De Stoic. rep.* 1048a).

²² Cf. Donini 2011b: 275–279 nn. 177 and 225. This does not mean that the Stoic denial of an independent cause of irrationality (Plutarch’s precosmic soul) is not a problem: it is e.g. in *De an. procr.* 1015b–c or *De Stoic. rep.* 1049f–1050d, but it is not the problem under discussion in *De facie*.

(Platonists, a fortiori Plutarch who makes irrationality part and parcel of the cosmic soul) and to those who identify the two (Stoics; cf. e.g. *De Stoic. rep.* 1052b–c). Both sides would have to agree that providence, a cornerstone of both Platonism and Stoicism, cannot exist if the doctrine of natural location is rigourously applied. The flexible consistency that Plutarch exhibits here renders his polemical goal in *On the Face in the Moon* more effective.

Little is left, then, of the apparent contradiction between the use of *Timaeus* 53b in *On the Face in the Moon* and *On the Generation of the Soul*. Both passages (*De facie* 926c–927a; *De an. procr.* 1016c–1017b) offer similar descriptions of chaos, both quoting *Timaeus* 53b but also using language from other parts of the *Timaeus*.²³ Chaos is an unmusical state (πλημμελείαν, *De facie* ~ πλημμελῶς, *De an. procr.* ~ πλημμελῶς, *Tim.* 30a) characterised by disorderly motion (φορᾶς ἰδίας καὶ αὐθάδεις, *De facie* ~ ἀτάκτου φορᾶς, *De an. procr.* ~ ἀτάκτως, *Tim.* 30a) of the uncombined primary bodies. Cosmos comes about when the demiurge fashions (ἀπεργάσεται, *De facie* ~ ἀπεργασάμενος, *De an. procr.* ~ e.g. ἀπεργάζεται, *Tim.* 28a) harmony (ἁρμονία, *De facie* ~ διαρμυσάμενος, *De an. procr.* ~ e.g. συναρμύτων, *Tim.* 35a), which brings friendship

²³ It is possible that, as is often the case in Plutarch's works, the recurrence of similar material traces back to a ὑπόμνημα, a 'rough draft' taking the form of a 'more or less elaborate train of thought, involving material previously gathered and certainly written in full syntactical sentences', as it is defined in Van der Stockt 1999b: 595, the seminal article on the subject of cluster analysis and Plutarch's *hypomnemata*. Cf. Plutarch's mention of these *hypomnemata* in *De tranq. an.* 464f (p. 169). The use of a single *hypomnema* in passages across different works can often account for Plutarch's divergent use of the same material. On the methodology of cluster analysis as a response to *Quellenforschung*, see Van der Stockt 1999b: 575–580, 595–597; 2004b: 331–335, 340; Xenophontos 2012: 61–63. Applications of the method of cluster analysis include, apart from the aforementioned studies, Van Meirvenne 1999; 2001; 2002; Van der Stockt 1999a; 2002; 2004a; 2009; Meeusen 2012; 2016: 138–141, 165–173; Roskam 2013. Cf. also Vicente Sánchez 2008. On the possibilities and limitations of applying this method to the historical works, see Pelling 2002a: 22–24; 2002b: 65–68; Verdegem 2010: e.g. 78–79; Van der Stockt 2014: 226–230. Xenophontos 2012 usefully distinguishes 'clusters' (parallels that, in all likelihood, go back to *hypomnemata*) from 'patterns' (parallels that probably depend on a mental association by Plutarch instead of on a *hypomnema*), while also pointing to the possibility of Plutarch re-using material from an earlier work instead of relying on his *hypomnemata* (cf. already Van der Stockt 1999b: 596–597). For my current purpose it does not really matter whether there is a *hypomnema* underlying the context of the quotation of *Tim.* 53b in *De facie* and *De an. procr.*: regardless of whether the unity behind the two passages existed in Plutarch's head or in writing, it is clear that the seemingly contradictory passages share a conceptual core. The same thing goes for *De def. or.* 430d, where *Tim.* 53b is quoted once again by Lamprias in the context of an anti-Stoic defence of providence.

over strife (φιλότης, *De facie* ~ φιλία, *De an. procr.* quoting *Tim.* 32b–c²⁴). Both accounts end in the triumph of Platonic providence.²⁵ The fact that one evocation of chaos emphasises the presence of (precosmic) soul while the other mentions the absence of (cosmic) soul does not threaten the interpretation of Plato as a consistent thinker, nor does it threaten Plutarch's own consistency that should follow from that.

Both on a macro level and on a micro level, Plutarch's engagement with the *Timaeus* allows for significant flexibility for the sake of philosophical argument or for literary purposes (we should not forget that *Timaeus* 53b is put in the mouth of Lamprias in *On the Face in the Moon* – Plutarch's brother certainly has a knack for clever polemics). At the same time, Plutarch never gives up on his interpretation of Plato as a consistent thinker, with which his flexible engagement with Plato is always compatible.²⁶ The next two sections of this chapter, then, will shift the focus from Plutarch's own consistency to the perceived consistency of Plato.

3. *Moralising the cosmic soul: Plato's 'development' and Laws 10*

The philosopher Arius Didymus, who was an advisor to Augustus, wrote that Plato was πολύφωνος but not πολύδοξος.²⁷ Annas has connected that claim to the Middle Platonic unitarian way of reading Plato's dialogues, which she contrasts with modern developmentalist readings.²⁸ These lat-

²⁴ Whether or not Plato was alluding to Empedoclean φιλία (cf. Taylor 1928: 99; Cornford 1935: 44 n. 4; Hershbell 1974), it is clear from e.g. *De an. procr.* 1026b that Plutarch connected the two.

²⁵ Cf. Opsomer 2017a: esp. 90–91 on *De facie*; cf. also Donini 1992b. On Plutarch's views on Stoic providence in the anti-Stoic treatises, see Algra 2014; cf. also Opsomer 1997b.

²⁶ On contradiction and consistency in Plutarch, see Nikolaidis 1991 and the contributions in Opsomer, Roskam, and Titchener 2016. Another case of Plutarch only apparently abandoning his own views as set out in *De an. procr.* and reverting to a more generally accepted Platonic interpretation, which would differ from Plutarch's consistency-driven reading of *Tim.*, is *Quaest. conv.* 8.2.720b–c; see Opsomer 2004: 149 n. 54 on how this passage is compatible with Plutarch's interpretation after all.

²⁷ Stobaeus 2 p. 50.1, p. 55.6 Wachsmuth-Hense.

²⁸ Annas 1999: 9–30, esp. 12. Annas is interested in unitarianism as a viable alternative to developmentalism in modern scholarship. The unitarian reading of Plato that she suggests, then, allows for 'false starts, different approaches to the same problem, and change of mind on one theme coexisting with unchanged views on another' (12) – elements that any modern reader of Plato will want to recognise. This is sensible, of course, but it creates a latent divergence between her brand of unitarianism and that of the Middle Platonists, who did not allow for the possibility that Plato changed his mind at all. On contemporary developmentalist and unitarian tendencies in interpreting Plato,

ter readings suppose that we can discern a doctrinal development over the course of Plato's writing career, while Middle Platonists tend to approach the dialogues as a consistent whole:

Plato is, for them, the intellectual voice speaking in this corpus of texts – or rather, the intellectual unity in the many voices that we hear from them. Rather than try to embed Plato's texts in a developing history, they responded to them in their own terms, as to a set of ideas.²⁹

To show how Middle Platonists dealt with this polyphonic unity, Annas discusses (1) variety due to pedagogical concerns (Plato wrote differently for different audiences), (2) variety due to the different parts of philosophy (Plato could discuss the same subject from a logical, ethical, or physical perspective), and (3) variety due to aporetic and doctrinal aspects of Plato's writings. Plutarch is a particularly interesting witness for this last aspect, since his brand of Platonism carefully preserves and combines both aporetic and doctrinal elements of Plato's dialogues.³⁰ This aspect of Platonic unity also maps onto Plutarch's conception of the Platonic tradition: on his view, the Platonic Academy is a diachronic unity that also includes the sceptical phases of its history.³¹

In this section I want to build on these ideas about polyphonic unity by considering a neglected tool from the Platonist's toolbox: the development of Plato's own life. For Plutarch, Plato's doctrinal unity did not preclude a form of biographical development, which affected how Plato expressed his ideas in the dialogues. This is important for Plutarch's reception of the *Laws*, the work that Plato was writing when, in the eighty-first year of his life, he famously 'scribens est mortuus'³². Plutarch was aware that Plato had reached old age when he wrote the *Laws* (*De Is. et Os.* 370f; *De an. procr.* 1013e). He uses this as an argument for considering the way in which Plato expressed his ideas in the *Laws* as particularly authoritative. This, in turn, has implications for Plutarch's cosmological

see also e.g. Rowe 2006. On Middle Platonic unitarianism and engagement with Platonic polyphony, see also Boys-Stones 2018: 49–53.

²⁹ Annas 1999: 29.

³⁰ See esp. Opsomer 1998: 127–212, who shows how *Quaest. Plat.* 1 is central to Plutarch's Platonism.

³¹ The *Lamprias Catalogue* mentions a work *On the Unity of the Academy since the Time of Plato* (Περὶ τοῦ μίαν εἶναι ἀπὸ τοῦ Πλάτωνος Ἀκαδημειαν, 63). On this issue, see esp. Opsomer 1998: 171–186; 2005b: 167–175; cf. also e.g. Donini 1986; 1999; 2011a; Nikolaidis 1999b; Bonazzi 2003: 213–240; 2005; Babut 2007.

³² Cicero, *On Old Age* 5.13, cf. 7.23. After Plato's death, the unfinished dialogue was left uncorrected and in disorder until Philip of Opus took up the task of editing it; cf. Anon., *Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy* 24.13–19; Diogenes Laertius 3.37.

ethics, since the tenth book of the *Laws* contains a theological account that stresses, more emphatically than the *Timaeus*, the ethical significance of cosmology. It is in this tenth book that Plutarch found the key exhibit for his take on the cosmic soul: soul that causes evil.³³

The tenth book of the *Laws* is on Plutarch's mind throughout *On the Generation of the Soul*: all eight references to the *Laws* are to that book, which is all but absent from Plutarch's other works.³⁴ As Tarrant notes, Middle Platonic exegesis of the *Laws* seems to have been focused on certain isolated passages, one of which was the theological account of the tenth book.³⁵ Plutarch describes the provenance of one of the references to *Laws* 10 as Plato's ἀγών and λόγος for the gods (*De an. procr.* 1013e). This description certainly fits the book.³⁶ It could, however, be argued that even this is an overly general description of what Plutarch was looking for in Plato. All references to *Laws* 10 are confined to only a few Stephanus pages (892a–898e), in other words only the part of the book in which Plato develops arguments about the soul. This is, indeed, the subject with which Plutarch is most concerned. Let us take a closer look at the references.

³³ *De an. procr.* 1015d–e will be discussed presently. Cf. Ferrari 2011: 26: the *Laws* provide '[il] riferimento più esplicito e diretto'.

³⁴ Giavatto 2010 counts eighty-nine references to the *Laws* in the *Moralia*; Helmbold and O'Neil 1959: 58 note 12 references in the *Lives*, most importantly in the *Lycurgus* (see p. 145–146). Only the voluminous *Quaest. conv.* contain more references to the *Laws* than *De an. procr.* *Quaest. Plat.* 3.1002c (cf. *Leg.* 896a–c) and *De Is. et Os.* 370f (cf. *Leg.* 896d–898a) contain further references to *Laws* 10. In *Quaest. Plat.* 4.1002e–f, Plutarch probably has *Leg.* 896a–897a in mind, although, as *De an. procr.* 1016a–c suggests, he could have been thinking about *Tim.* 34b–35a as well. These three references to *Laws* 10, which all correspond to references to the dialogue in *De an. procr.*, will be discussed in what follows. Finally, Giavatto follows Sandbach (Loeb) by noting a reference to *Leg.* 887e in fr. 213. However, in this case, Plato is certainly not cited by Plutarch: the only link is that both their names occur together in this (doubtful) testimony.

³⁵ Tarrant 2000: 205. However, interest in the *Laws* was certainly not limited to these isolated passages: *Quaest. conv.* 7.2.700c mentions collective reading sessions devoted to Plato (Πλατωνικαῖς συναναγώσεσιν), which sparked questions such as the one on *Laws* 9 discussed at that particular symposium; cf. D'Ippolito 2009: 115.

³⁶ In this book the Athenian Stranger attacks three groups who do not hold correct beliefs about the gods (atheists, deists, and traditional theists, with the first group taking up the main part of the argument). For a general introduction to *Laws* 10, see e.g. Mayhew 2008: 1–10.

3.1. Invisible soul and soul as self-moved motion

After the quotation of *Timaeus* 35a–b (p. 20), the two interpretations of this passage that were prevalent in Plutarch’s time are presented.³⁷ Both interpretations date to the first generations after Plato:

[...] τῶν δοκιμωτάτων ἀνδρῶν τοὺς μὲν Ξενοκράτης προσηγάγετο, τῆς ψυχῆς τὴν οὐσίαν ἀριθμὸν αὐτὸν ὑφ’ ἑαυτοῦ κινούμενον ἀποφηνάμενος, οἱ δὲ Κράντορι τῷ Σολεῖ προσέθεντο, μιγνύοντι τὴν ψυχὴν ἕκ τε τῆς νοητῆς καὶ τῆς περὶ τὰ αἰσθητὰ δοξαστῆς φύσεως [...]. (*De an. procr.* 1012d)

[O]f the men most highly esteemed some were won over by Xenocrates, who declared the soul’s essence to be number itself being moved by itself, and others adhered to Crantor of Soli, who makes the soul a mixture of the intelligible nature and of the opinable nature of perceptible things [...].

What these interpretations have in common, so Plutarch analyses, is that they do not take the generation of the cosmic soul and the cosmic body to have been actual events: the cosmogonic account of the *Timaeus* should not be taken literally, but Plato developed it ‘for the sake of examination’ (θεωρίας ἔνεκα, *De an. procr.* 1013a).

It is in Plutarch’s criticism of these two prevalent interpretations that we encounter the first two references to the *Laws*.³⁸ First, Crantor’s interpretation is discussed (*De an. procr.* 1013b–c). He posited, according to Plutarch, that for soul to be able to recognise both intelligible and perceptible objects, it should be a combination of intelligible and doxastic nature, in other words of form and matter. ‘Like knows like’ is the assumed epistemological principle here. Against this, Plutarch argues that Crantor has given an adequate description of just about every object in the universe (being a combination of form and matter), but not of soul. If Crantor were correct, soul would be, like any combination of form and matter, tangible and visible, which it obviously is not. The ensuing affirmation that ‘soul is beyond the range of all sense perception’ (ἡ ψυχὴ δὲ πᾶσαν αἴσθησιν ἐκπέφευγεν, *De an. procr.* 1013c) refers to *Laws* 10, where soul is said to be ‘completely imperceptible to all bodily sens-

³⁷ On these interpretations and their reception in Plutarch, see Opsomer 2020a.

³⁸ On Plutarch’s criticism of the interpretations of Xenocrates and Crantor, see Thévenaz 1938: 56–61; Ferrari in Ferrari and Baldi 2002: 37–40 (noting that ‘[l]’importanza di queste esegesi [sc. by Xenocrates and Crantor] risiede nella loro valenza paradigmatica’, 37); Ferrari 2011: 20–22. Dillon 2003: 222–223 argues that the distinction between these two interpretations was probably exaggerated by Plutarch.

es' (ἀναίσθητον [sc. τὸ γένος] πάσαις ταῖς τοῦ σώματος αἰσθήσεσι, *Leg.* 898e³⁹). An explicitly attributed version of this reference occurs in the third *Platonic Question*, where Plutarch reminds us that 'the soul is invisible and imperceptible to all the senses, as has been said in the *Laws*' (ἔστι δ' ἀόρατος ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ 'πάσαις ταῖς αἰσθήσεσιν ἀναίσθητος' ὡς ἐν τοῖς Νόμοις εἴρηται, *Quaest. Plat.* 3.1002c).⁴⁰

The interpretation put forward by Xenocrates, on the other hand, is refuted by the remark that 'Plato never called the soul [number]; but he called it motion perpetually self-moved and motion's source and principle' (ἀριθμὸν γε μὴν ὁ Πλάτων οὐδέποτε τὴν ψυχὴν προσεῖπεν, ἀλλὰ κίνησιν αὐτοκίνητον ἀεὶ καὶ 'κινήσεως πηγὴν καὶ ἀρχὴν', *De an. procr.* 1013c). The point is that soul is indeed connected with motion, as Xenocrates stated, but that it is not number *itself*, although it is ordered *according* to number.⁴¹ Cherniss comments on the first definition attributed to Plato (κίνησις αὐτοκίνητος ἀεὶ) that it is 'a formulaic summary of *Phaedrus* 245 C 7–8 and 245 E 2–4 influenced by the phraseology of *Laws* 894 B 9–C 1, 895 B 1–6, and 895 E 10–896 A 5'.⁴² It seems to me, however, that it is the other way around. For this first definition, Plutarch was thinking primarily about the *Laws*, to which he refers in the previous sentence. In *Laws* 10, soul is defined, after an extensive overview of ten kinds of motion, as 'motion capable of moving itself' (τὴν δυναμένην αὐτὴν αὐτὴν κινεῖν κίνησιν, *Leg.* 896a). This covers what Plutarch paraphrases as κίνησις αὐτοκίνητος, and there is no need to search for a further source than the one he had used in the sentence before. After all, the context of the *Laws* fits in much better with Plutarch's argument than that of the *Phaedrus*. Plutarch seems to aim at a kind of definition or at least an explicit description of the soul. This is the case in the *Laws*, where the Athenian Stranger finally pinpoints 'the definition of the thing the name of which is soul' (ὃ δὲ ψυχὴ τοῦνομα, τίς τούτου λόγος, *Leg.* 895e), whereas in the *Phaedrus* the self-moved nature of the soul is a presupposition used in a proof of the immortality of the soul. In the *Laws* the definition of soul is the outcome of an extensive discussion of kinds of motion, which anticipates Plutarch's phrasing at several points, especially by emphasising that self-moved motion is perpetual (ἀεὶ, 894b).

³⁹ For *Laws* 10 I divert from my practice of using the translation included in Cooper 1997, which in this case lacks the accuracy needed for our current purpose, and I quote from Mayhew 2008 instead.

⁴⁰ Cf. Thévenaz 1938: 16 n. 20.

⁴¹ Cf. p. 84 n. 40 on the difference between soul being harmony and soul being harmonious.

⁴² Cherniss 1976: 174 n. b. Similarly, Thévenaz 1938: 16 n. 21 and Ferrari in Ferrari and Baldi 2002: 234 n. 38 ('la definizione [...] può considerarsi derivata da *Phdr.* [...] con la possibile influenza di *leg.* X [...]').

That Plutarch finally *does* turn to the *Phaedrus* for the second definition (κινήσεως πηγή καὶ ἀρχή) is not surprising. Having the *Laws* passage in mind for the first definition, he would have thought of the mention, in the discussion of kinds of motions conducted there, of self-moved motion as ‘source of all motion’ (ἀρχὴν [...] κινήσεων πασῶν, *Leg.* 895b), a turn of phrase that is later repeated (ἀρχὴ κινήσεως, *Leg.* 896b) and is used that second time to describe soul. From there it is a small step to the contextually less relevant but related mention of soul as πηγή καὶ ἀρχὴ κινήσεως in the *Phaedrus* (245c). After all, Plutarch tends to associate the words πηγή and ἀρχή in completely different contexts as well.⁴³ Hence my suggestion to turn Cherniss’ comment around and state that the definition of soul as ‘motion perpetually self-moved and motion’s source and principle’ is not a summary of the *Phaedrus* influenced by the phraseology of the *Laws* but a reference to the *Laws* influenced by the phraseology of the *Phaedrus*.

The first references to *Laws* 10 are important for the refutation of prevalent interpretations of the generation of the cosmic soul (as Plutarch understood them). By referring to the *Laws*, Plutarch has proposed, as a reaction to these faulty interpretations, a first comment on the nature of the soul as an invisible entity (in reaction to Crantor) and as self-moved motion (in reaction to Xenocrates).

3.2. Priority of soul

After refuting Crantor and Xenocrates separately, Plutarch reiterates their common refusal to understand the generation of the cosmic body and its soul as an actual event (*De an. procr.* 1013e). According to Plutarch the consequence of the view that the cosmos does not have an actual moment of generation is disastrous.

εἰ γὰρ ἀγέννητος ὁ κόσμος ἐστίν, οἴχεται τῷ Πλάτωνι τὸ πρεσβυτέραν τοῦ σώματος τὴν ψυχὴν οὖσαν ἐξάρχειν μεταβολῆς καὶ κινήσεως πάσης, ἡγεμόνα καὶ πρωτουργόν, ὡς αὐτὸς εἴρηκεν, ἐγκαθεστῶσαν. (*De an. procr.* 1013e–f)

For, if the universe is ungenerated, there is an end of Plato’s contention that the soul, being senior to the body, initiates all change and motion installed in her position of chief and, as he has said himself, of primary agent.

This time the textual reference to the *Laws* is unmistakable since it is preceded by the general description of (a part of the tenth book of) the

⁴³ Cf. *De ad. et am.* 56b; *De Her. mal.* 856e; *De prim. frig.* 947b.

Laws that I have already mentioned and to which I shall return. Moreover, the argumentative contexts of the passages in Plato and Plutarch are the same: both jump from the soul's function as source of motion (which, as we have seen, was an element from the *Laws* borrowed for the refutation of Xenocrates) to its priority.⁴⁴ Both in *Laws* 10 and in Plutarch's argument the two are intrinsically connected (cf. *Leg.* 896a–c).

Plutarch's phrasing *πρεσβυτέραν τοῦ σώματος τὴν ψυχὴν οὕσαν* echoes Plato's descriptions *οὕσης γ' αὐτῆς* [i.e. *τῆς ψυχῆς*] *πρεσβυτέρας ἢ σώματος* (*Leg.* 892b) and *ψυχὴν [...] πρεσβυτέραν οὕσαν σώματος* (892c). A few pages later, soul is called *τῶν πάντων πρεσβυτάτη* (896b) and, once again, *πρεσβυτέρα σώματος οὕσα* (896c).⁴⁵ Next, it is only in the *Laws* that Plato juxtaposes *μεταβολή* and *κίνησις*: a first time in a description of self-moved motion (894c) and a second time in a description of soul as 'cause of all change and of motion in all things' (*μεταβολῆς τε καὶ κινήσεως ἀπάσης αἰτία*, 896b). The third element of this dense sentence, the characterisation of soul as *ἡγεμών*, is suspiciously absent from the *Laws*, which Plutarch has just revealed to be the inspiration for these words. However, it should be noted that the connection between the priority of the soul and its leading capacity is made there: soul is called *ἀρχούση* on account of its priority (*Leg.* 896c, cf. *ἄρχει*, 892a). For a lexically closer parallel, we should turn to other dialogues: although Plato never explicitly calls soul *ἡγεμών*, there are instances of the verbs *ἡγεμονεύω* or *ἡγεμονέω* in relevant contexts in the *Timaeus* (41c) and in the *Phaedo* (80a, 94c). Nevertheless, I see no reason to doubt that Plutarch still had the *Laws* on his mind while calling soul *ἡγεμών*, given the argumentative parallel (*Leg.* 896c) and his general announcement that he is reproducing an argument from that work. And, indeed, with the mention of soul as *πρωτουργός* he is certainly back on track: before Plutarch, there is only one occurrence of the word *πρωτουργός* in Greek literature and it is in *Laws* 10, where Plato mentions the 'primary-work motions' (*πρωτουργοὶ κινήσεις*) of the soul, as opposed to the 'secondary-work motions of bodies' (*τὰς δευτερουργούς [...] κινήσεις σωμάτων*, *Leg.* 897a).⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Cf. Mason 1998; Carone 2005: 164–170.

⁴⁵ This crucial point is reiterated almost verbatim several times in book twelve of the *Laws* (966d–e, 967b). Cf. *Epin.* 980d–e, 991e.

⁴⁶ The Loeb translation correctly takes the phrase 'as he has said himself' to refer only to the mention of *πρωτουργός* (a close lexical parallel) and not to the word group *ἡγεμόνα καὶ πρωτουργόν* (the first word being a rather loose reference to Plato). Contra Thévenaz 1938: ad loc. ('elle n'aurait plus, selon ses propres termes, son poste de chef et sa priorité d'action'); Ferrari in Ferrari and Baldi 2002: ad loc. ('rappresenta, come lo stesso Platone ha affermato, la guida e l'agente primario').

In one sentence, several references to *Laws* 10 are joined together in an argument for the priority of the soul. Both Plutarch and Plato see this priority as a condition for the cosmic soul's leading capacity. From this, Plutarch draws the conclusion that the creation of the cosmos should have been a real event. For, if that were not true, as the mainstream of Platonism supposed, soul could not be prior nor have its leading function.

3.3. Maleficent soul

After this rebuttal of other interpretations of *Timaeus* 35a–b, particularly those of Xenocrates and Crantor, Plutarch turns to his own interpretation. Continuing from the point that the generation of the cosmic soul and the cosmic body must have been real events, he goes on to specify the nature of what came before this generation. As we have seen (p. 22), Plutarch postulates an amorphous corporeality and an irrational soul, which are ungenerated and thus have always been coexistent with each other (*De an. procr.* 1014b). The demiurge ordered these precosmic entities by endowing matter with form and soul with rationality, thus generating the cosmic body and the cosmic soul (1014b–c). The precosmic substance of the soul, then, is – so Plutarch claims – alluded to by Plato in several dialogues (1014d): it is divisible being and necessity from the *Timaeus*, limitedlessness from the *Philebus*, and – so he adds later (1015a) – congenital desire from the *Statesman*. ‘In the *Laws*, however, he [i.e. Plato] openly called it disorderly and maleficent soul’ (ἐν δὲ τοῖς Νόμοις ἀντικρὺς ψυχὴν ἄτακτον εἶρηκε καὶ κακοποιόν, *De an. procr.* 1014d–e). Later, Plutarch returns to this equation, referring to the sentence just quoted (ὡσπερ εἴρηται) and again stating that he found it ‘in the *Laws*’ (ἐν Νόμοις), although this time he uses different terms: now, the precosmic soul is called ‘soul contrary and adverse to the one that is beneficent’ (ψυχὴν ἐναντίαν καὶ ἀντίπαλον τῇ ἀγαθουργῷ, *De an. procr.* 1015e).

In the *Laws*, the Athenian Stranger states that, since soul is the cause of *all* things, both good and bad, including cosmic events, we should assume that there are ‘no fewer than two [souls]: one that does what is good and one capable of doing the opposite’ (δυσὶν μὲν γέ που ἔλαττον μηδὲν τιθῶμεν, τῆς τε εὐεργέτιδος καὶ τῆς τάναντία δυναμένης ἐξεργάζεσθαι, *Leg.* 896e). Plutarch interprets this not as describing two souls but as two successive states of soul (precosmic and cosmic), whereby the nefarious effects of the former state can still be felt when the latter, better state has been achieved.⁴⁷ This interpretation is not completely incompatible with Plato's text, which is notoriously obscure.⁴⁸ And, on the other hand, a

⁴⁷ Opsomer 2004: 153–154.

⁴⁸ Immediately following his distinction between two souls, the Athenian Stranger suddenly talks about ψυχή (singular), which ‘every time it joins with reason [...] guides

similar obscurity is not entirely absent from Plutarch's work, as is shown by a parallel in the dualistic doxography of *On Isis and Osiris* (370f; cf. p. 217–218), which *does* seem to assume the two coeval souls from *Laws* 10. Again, Plutarch in a way stays closer to Plato than one would assume at first sight. Most of Plutarch's terminology as well can be found scattered throughout this passage from the *Laws*: in the discussion that emerges from the Athenian's mention of two souls, maleficent soul is called τὴν κακὴν (897d ~ κακοποιόν, Plu.), τὴν ἐναντίαν (898c ~ ψυχὴν ἐναντίαν, Plu.), and connected with movement that is ἀτάκτως (897d ~ ἄτακτον, Plu.).

3.4. Consistency and 'development'

I have analysed three groups of references to *Laws* 10. First, contradicting Crantor and Xenocrates separately, Plutarch has argued that soul is invisible and that it is ordered, self-moved motion. Second, refuting his adversaries combined, he has claimed that soul is older than body. Third, developing his own interpretation, he has postulated the existence of a maleficent soul. These references, which all occur when crucial features of the soul are explained, are not made haphazardly but form a structural guideline through Plutarch's argument on the soul by imposing an ascending order of specificity and eccentricity. First, no Platonist would probably disagree with soul being invisible or ordered, self-moved motion, and Crantor and Xenocrates would probably not have agreed that their interpretations violate these Platonic tenets. The situation is different in the second case, where Plutarch's opponents certainly were willing to reject a literal interpretation of the material from the *Laws*: they did not take the priority of the soul to be a chronological matter. With the third group of references, Plutarch introduces the distinction between precosmic soul and cosmic soul, which he sees as a logical consequence of the need to assume a literal interpretation of Plato's cosmogony.

While it is clear that Plutarch had the *Laws* on his mind while writing *On the Generation of the Soul*, the question whether he really *needed* the *Laws* to build his arguments has to be answered in the negative. All aspects discussed here can also be found in the *Timaeus*, the dialogue that is the formal subject of the treatise. In the *Timaeus*, soul is called ἀόρατος twice (36e, 46d), the connection between soul and automotion is made implicitly but undeniably (37b), the priority of soul is emphasised

all things toward what is correct and happy, but when it associates with lack-of-reason [...] produces in all things the opposite of these' (νοῦν μὲν προσλαβοῦσα [...] ὀρθὰ καὶ εὐδαίμονα παιδαγωγεῖ πάντα, ἀνοία δὲ συγγενομένη πάντα αὖ τὰναντία τούτοις ἀπεργάζεται, *Leg.* 897b), only to revert to the distinction between two souls right after that (*Leg.* 897d, cf. 898c).

(34b–c⁴⁹), and Plutarch says that maleficent soul is just another name for divisible being or necessity, which plays an important role in the *Timaeus* (35a, 48a with Plu., *De an. procr.* 1014d). The function of the *Laws* in *On the Generation of the Soul* is to provide confirmation and clarification on crucial topics, not to provide new information.

What the references to the *Laws* clarify, more precisely, are the ethical consequences of Plutarch's interpretation of Plato's cosmic soul. The views of Crantor and Xenocrates, which support the mistaken belief that the cosmogony was not an actual event, are inherently blasphemous because they do not acknowledge the chronological seniority of the soul (*De an. procr.* 1013e–f). Similarly blasphemous would be to deny the existence of a precosmic maleficent soul: since matter is devoid of quality, god would then be the only remaining candidate as a cause of evil (*De an. procr.* 1014f–1015c). The only pious way of understanding Platonic cosmology, then, is to assume with Plutarch and the *Laws* a maleficent soul that was once actually precosmic and whose effects can still be felt after the demiurge turned this precosmic soul into cosmic soul. The *Laws* – Plato's case for the gods – reveal the morally charged character of the cosmic soul. This moral aspect, which is more latently present in the *Timaeus*, lead Plutarch to postulate a cosmic soul that has an inherent element of irrationality.

A correct understanding of the cosmos and the provenance of adversity is ethically relevant. A similar stance, albeit more closely related to the theological context of *Laws* 10, can be found in *On Superstition*. Plutarch contrasts the atheist and the superstitious person: both represent an extreme that should be avoided, and both are guided by a faulty understanding of how good and bad things come about. If things happen against their will, atheists will attribute nothing to providence and everything to τύχη and τὸ αὐτόματον, while superstitious persons will make god responsible for everything (*De sup.* 167f–168b). In *On Isis and Osiris* (369a–b) a similar dichotomy is drawn: whereas the Epicureans will try to attribute everything to ἄψυχα σώματα, the Stoics admit only 'one Reason and one Providence' (ἓνα λόγον καὶ μίαν πρόνοιαν), which is the cause of everything. The former stance precludes anything good and the latter anything bad. In Plutarch's view, a dualistic cosmos guided by a soul that is part rational, part irrational is the only way out. This, in turn, means that the analogy between the cosmic and the human soul is stricter than the *Timaeus* itself warrants (cf. p. 88). Thus, Plutarch inserts *Laws* 10 in his search for Platonic consistency: Plato's latest work does not offer a different truth. At the same time, it does seem to have a spe-

⁴⁹ Cf. also *Quaest. Plat.* 4.1002e–f, where the reference can be, as the Loeb edition indicates, to either *Leg.* or *Tim.*

cial relevance as an account that clarifies the key aspects of the *Timaeus*. What, then, is the reason for the *Laws*' clarifying force?

At this point we should return to Plutarch's awareness that the *Laws* were Plato's latest work. Plutarch had specific expectations of old philosophers. In *Should an Old Man Engage in Politics?* the old philosopher and the old politician receive similar advice: neither one should retire at a fixed age. As Socrates first showed, 'life in all parts and at all times, in all experiences and activities, universally admits philosophy' (τὸν βίον ἅπαντι μέρει καὶ χρόνῳ καὶ πάθεσι καὶ πράγμασιν ἀπλῶς ἅπασι φιλοσοφίαν δεχόμενον, *An seni* 796e [tr. and text modified⁵⁰]). Since both philosophy and politics are matters of the soul, both the philosopher and the politician achieve peak performance in old age, when the body may be deteriorating but the soul is at its best (797e–f). That especially philosophers should be trusted most when they are old is illustrated by the example of the philosopher Aeschines, who claimed to be a pupil of the Academic Carneades. When certain sophists accused him of lying about that, he replied: 'Oh, but I did listen to Carneades at the time when his speech had given up noisy declamation on account of his old age and had reduced itself to what is useful and of common interest' (ἀλλὰ τότε γ' [...] ἐγὼ Καρνεάδου διήκουον, ὅτε τὴν ῥαχίαν καὶ τὸν ψόφον ἀφεικῶς ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ διὰ τὸ γῆρας εἰς τὸ χρήσιμον συνῆκτο καὶ κοινωνικόν, 791a–b). The message is clear: old age shows philosophy in its purest form.

That is precisely what Plutarch thought about the *Laws*. In the aforementioned passage on the maleficent soul from *On Isis and Osiris*, Plutarch gives more information about a subtle difference between the *Timaeus* and the *Laws*.⁵¹ In *On the Generation of the Soul*, Plutarch informs us that the 'divisible being' or 'necessity' from the *Timaeus* – and Plutarch adds that Plato used the latter label 'in many places' (πολλαχοῦ) – was called 'disorderly and maleficent soul' in the *Laws* (*De an. procr.* 1014d–e). That there is more to this than a simple identification is suggested by a μέν–δέ construction, which opposes the *Timaeus* to the *Laws*, as well as by the remark that, in the *Laws*, Plato finally spoke ἄντικρυς (openly, outright). Now, in *On Isis and Osiris* the opposition between the veiled references in the *Timaeus* (and other dialogues) and the outspo-

⁵⁰ I adopt the reading of the Budé edition. The Teubner seems to misreport the manuscripts here.

⁵¹ I am not concerned here with the absolute or relative chronology of these two works. I am inclined to agree with Cherniss 1976: 134 that there is no conclusive evidence for establishing a relative chronology, and I fail to see compelling reasons for assuming, like Deuse 1983: 27–42, a development from *De Is. et Os.* to *De an. procr.* (cf. p. 218 n. 155). Generally, both works are considered to have been written late in Plutarch's life; see e.g. Cherniss 1976: 133 and Ferrari in Ferrari and Baldi 2002: 11–12 for *De an. procr.*; Griffiths 1970: 16–18 and García Valdés 1995: 19–20 for *De Is. et Os.*

kenness of the *Laws* is strengthened. There, Plutarch once again points to the *Timaeus* formulation by exaggerating that Plato used the terminology from the *Timaeus* ‘in many places’ (πολλαχοῦ) (although this time he does not talk about ‘divisible being’ or ‘necessity’, but about the related though more extreme principle of ‘difference’, cf. *De an. procr.* 1025b and p. 218). Again, the *Timaeus* is opposed by way of a μέν-δέ construction to the *Laws*. Here Plutarch adds that, in the *Timaeus*, Plato talks ‘as though obscuring and veiling his opinion’ (οἷον ἐπηλυγαζόμενος καὶ παρακαλυπτόμενος, 370e), whereas ‘in his *Laws*, when he had grown considerably older’, he names names ‘not in circumlocution or symbolically, but in specific words’ (ἐν δὲ τοῖς Νόμοις ἤδη πρεσβύτερος ὢν οὐ δι’ αἰνιγμῶν οὐδὲ συμβολικῶς, ἀλλὰ κυρίως ὀνόμασιν, *De Is. et Os.* 370f). The purity and outspokenness that comes with old age can explain why the *Laws*, while not adding new information, can definitively confirm and clarify matters that may have remained obscure in the *Timaeus*. The *Timaeus* is treated rather derogatorily in *On Isis and Osiris*: a discourse δι’ αἰνιγμῶν may be appropriate for myth or poetry hiding a deeper meaning, but as a judgement of a work of philosophy – and no doubt Plutarch’s favourite work of philosophy – it sounds almost like an insult.⁵² The link between old age and better or at least purer philosophy thus seems to be affirmed by Plutarch, implicitly so in *On the Generation of the Soul* and more explicitly in the parallel passage from *On Isis and Osiris*.

There is, however, a second age-related issue that slightly complicates this picture. As I have mentioned, Plutarch describes (a part of) *Laws* 10 as ‘Plato’s case and argument for the gods, which he admits he made against the atheists with a zeal extreme and in a manner unsuited to his years’ (τὸν περὶ θεῶν ἀγῶνα καὶ λόγον, ᾧ Πλάτων ὁμολογεῖ φιλοτιμότητα καὶ παρ’ ἡλικίαν πρὸς τοὺς ἀθέους κεχρηῆσθαι, *De an. procr.* 1013e [tr. slightly modified]). Indeed, as Plutarch repeatedly states in *Should an Old Man Engage in Politics?*, one of the benefits of old age is that φιλοτιμία has been mitigated, being an unseemly characteristic for old men (790c, 791c, 793e, 795a, 796a). How should we understand, then, Plutarch’s characterisation of Plato’s approach in the *Laws* as φιλοτιμότητα? It is not clear where Plato confirms (ὁμολογεῖ) this, but Cherniss’ claim that this is ‘a somewhat inexact reminiscence of *Laws* 907B10–C5’ makes perfect sense.⁵³ In that passage, the Athenian

⁵² On αἰνίγματα (and related words and concepts such as σύμβολον) in Plutarch, see Hardie 1992: 4744–4745 n. 8; Hirsch-Luipold 2002: 130–138; cf. esp. *De Is. et Os.* 366c–d; *De an. procr.* 1026c. Plutarch’s friend Florus calls Plato αἰνιττόμενος in *Quaest. conv.* 8.2.719a (cf. p. 95–96).

⁵³ Cherniss 1976: 177 n. e. Contra Ferrari in Ferrari and Baldi 2002: 238, where *Prm.* 128e (ὑπὸ πρεσβυτέρου φιλοτιμίας) is suggested as a parallel. Although the explicit mention of φιλοτιμία yields a lexically closer parallel, the context and content of *Prm.* do not

Stranger concludes the religious arguments of book ten and, as Mayhew puts it in his commentary, ‘feels the need to apologize for the vehemence and vigour’ of what has been said.⁵⁴ This he does in the following words: ‘they [scil. the arguments] were perhaps presented rather vehemently, owing to our love of victory over vicious humans’ (εἰρηνταί γέ πως σφοδρότερον διὰ φιλονικίαν τῶν κακῶν ἀνθρώπων) and ‘a zeal [...] has made us speak with youthful vigour’ (προθυμία μὲν δὴ [...] νεωτέρως εἰπεῖν ἡμῖν γέγονεν, *Leg.* 907b–c). Both Plato and Plutarch thus refer to a kind of zeal that is, in principle, unsuited for the age of the speaker.⁵⁵ That Plutarch substitutes φιλοτιμία for φιλονικία cannot come as a real surprise: φιλοτιμία is one of the key concepts in his ethics and it often appears intrinsically connected to the notion of φιλονικία.⁵⁶ Moreover, Plutarch’s φιλοτιμία and Plato’s φιλονικία as used in the *Laws* seem to share a certain axiological ambiguity depending on whether it is a means to an appropriate end.⁵⁷ What seems to be the case here, then, is that the old philosopher’s φιλοτιμία is justified by the outrageousness of his opponent (the atheist, or, more broadly, the one who holds false religious beliefs), just like the old politician’s φιλοτιμία in *Should an Old Man Engage in Politics?* (783b, f, 785f–786a) is justified when it is put in the service of the common good.

In the *Laws*, Plutarch seems to suggest, Plato combined the outspokenness of mature wisdom with the vigour that, especially in the case of old men, should be reserved for matters of exceptional importance. After all, Plutarch emphasises that Plato is talking about ‘matters of the greatest moment’ (τοῖς μεγίστοις, *De an. procr.* 1016e, cf. 1016a) here. As

have any place here. Moreover, in general, Plutarch gives ‘surprisingly little attention to the *Parmenides*’ (Roskam 2015a: 109 n. 8). Giavatto 2010 notes only two references: *De frat. am.* 484f mentions *Prm.* because Plato gave one of his brothers a role in it, and *Quaest. Plat.* 5.1003b seems to refer to the distinction between straight and round in *Prm.* 137d–e, 145b.

⁵⁴ Mayhew 2008: 192.

⁵⁵ By applying the words of the Athenian Stranger to Plato, Plutarch makes it clear that he considers the Stranger as Plato’s mouthpiece. This does not make him an exception; cf. *P.Oxy.* 3219 fr. 2 (= B-S 2G); Diogenes Laertius 3.52 (= B-S 2H); see Tarrant 2000: 27–32; Boys-Stones 2018: 52 for Middle Platonic views on Plato’s mouthpieces. Given Plutarch’s connection between the Athenian Stranger and Plato, it may be relevant to note the great respect for the elderly that can be felt throughout the *Laws*; see Bartels 2012.

⁵⁶ On φιλοτιμία in Plutarch, see e.g. Wardman 1974: 115–124; Frazier 1988; 2014; 2016: 119–120; Duff 1999b: 83–87; Nikolaidis 2012 (and the other contributions in Roskam, De Pourcq, and Van der Stockt 2012); Nikolaidis 2014: 360. For the connection of φιλοτιμία and φιλονικία, see *Fab.* 25.3; *Comp. Phil. et Flam.* 1.4; *Luc.* 11.2; *Lys.* 2.2; *Ages.* 5.3, 23.6, 33.1; *De frat. am.* 487f; *De virt. mor.* 447d; *Praec. ger. reip.* 811d; *De Her. mal.* 856a; cf. also p. 148 n. 55.

⁵⁷ For *Leg.*, see Mayhew 2008: 192.

has been said, a whole world view depends on the right understanding of the nature of the cosmic soul.⁵⁸ However, the age-related comments also have a more functional role within the context of Plutarch's Platonism: they serve to uphold the image of Plato as a perfectly consistent thinker while allowing for polyphony. After all, Plutarch did not think that Plato changed his mind when he grew older. That Plutarch rejected such doctrinal development is suggested by his (implicit but unmistakable) rejection of Theophrastus' report that Plato, 'when he had grown older, repented of having assigned to the earth as not befitting her the midmost space of the sum of things' (τῷ Πλάτωνι πρεσβυτέρῳ γενομένῳ μεταμέλειν, ὡς οὐ προσήκουσαν ἀποδόντι τῇ γῆ τὴν μέσην χώραν τοῦ παντός, *Quaest. Plat.* 8.1006c), as he had done in the *Timaeus*.⁵⁹ If we can speak about development in Plutarch's Plato, then it is only in the sense that, towards the end of his life, Plato revealed truth more openly. This is the main reason why Plato's last work – and more specifically *Laws* 10 – is essential for Plutarch's Platonism in general and his *On the Generation of the Soul* in particular. As it turns out, for Plutarch, exegetical priority is entirely different from ontological priority: whereas soul is best because it is first, Plato's *Laws* are best because they were last.

4. Cosmic cycles: literalness and the Statesman myth

In Plato's *Statesman* (or *Politikus*), an unnamed philosopher from Elea and a young namesake of the great Socrates try to come up with a definition of the statesman by using the method of division. When this discussion hits a rough patch, the Elean Stranger starts telling a myth:⁶⁰

ἀκούοις ἄν. τὸ γὰρ πᾶν τότε μὲν αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς συμποδηγεῖ πορευόμενον καὶ συγκυκλεῖ, τότε δὲ ἀνῆκεν, ὅταν αἱ περίοδοι τοῦ προσήκοντος αὐτῷ μέτρον εἰλήφωσιν ἤδη χρόνου, τὸ δὲ πάλιν αὐτόματον εἰς τὰναντία περιάγεται [...]. (*Plt.* 269c–d)

⁵⁸ It is tempting to apply Plutarch's evaluation of Plato's old-age attitude to his own situation when writing his definitive treatise on this crucial topic (cf. *De an. procr.* 1012b), probably late in his life and at times with a remarkable vehemence towards his adversaries (cf. *De an. procr.* 1013b, 1013d–e, 1016a).

⁵⁹ Opsomer 1994b: 385–390. Cf. also Tarán 1975: 98–99. Gregory 2000: 164 incorrectly assumes that Plutarch accepted Theophrastus' testimony. Cf. *Num.* 11.2.

⁶⁰ As in the case of the Athenian Stranger from *Leg.*, Plutarch regards the Elean Stranger from *Plt.* as Plato's mouthpiece, as do the other sources mentioned in n. 55. He is called ὁ Παρμενίδειος ξένος at *De an. procr.* 1017c; the Stranger is indeed associated with his compatriot Parmenides at the beginning of *Soph.* (216a); cf. Cherubin 1993.

Listen then. This universe the god himself sometimes accompanies, guiding it on its way and helping it move in a circle, while at other times he lets it go, when its circuits have completed the measure of the time allotted to it; then it revolves back in the opposite direction [...].

The addressee within the dialogue, a young philosophy student ominously named Socrates, agrees, after just a few points of clarification, that this is indeed ‘very reasonable’ (μάλα εικότως, 270b). The external addressees, the readers of Plato’s dialogue, will probably want some more information before they jump on board. If these readers are familiar with the *Timaeus*, they might even be baffled and conclude that the two cosmological accounts are plainly in conflict. In the *Timaeus* the demiurge does not periodically abandon the cosmos, causing, as the rest of the myth reveals, massive destruction and a complete reversal of how the cosmos moves and how humans live.

Obviously, this discrepancy between Plato’s works does not have to be a problem for the modern reader.⁶¹ Matters must have been different, however, for ancient Platonists. Baltes lays out the gist of the problem:

Der Mythos des *Politikos* mußte allen Platonikern, die [...] der Ansicht waren, Platon vertrete in allen Dialogen eine einheitliche Lehre, ein Dorn im Auge sein, weil er eine Menge von Berührungen mit dem *Timaios* aufweist, ihm aber in wichtigen Punkten widerspricht, z. B. in der Ansicht über die Bewegungen im Kosmos: Der *Politikos*-mythos spricht von einander abwechselnden Perioden der Anwesenheit und Abwesenheit des göttlichen Weltlenkers; einer jeden Periode entspricht eine Bewegungsrichtung aller Dinge, die der Bewegung der vorangehenden Periode entgegengesetzt ist.⁶²

Platonists, it seems, had to choose between the cosmogony of the *Timaeus* and that of the *Statesman*, that is, between one single cosmogony or a cycle of reversals, destructions, and new beginnings. But how could they keep insisting on a strictly unitarian interpretation of Plato’s dialogues, then?

4.1. Proclus on combining *Timaeus* and *Statesman*: introducing the problem

The work of Proclus can shed some light on how ancient Platonists dealt with this issue. Proclus’ own solution, which is similar to the one adopted by other Platonists and by most modern scholars, is to interpret both

⁶¹ Cf. e.g. Nightingale 1996; Gregory 2000: III–II3.

⁶² Baltes 1978: 49–50.

accounts metaphorically.⁶³ If neither the *Timaeus* nor the *Statesman* myth should be taken literally, the opposition disappears.⁶⁴ Both accounts express the same truth: the cosmos is not entirely rational but is defined by a permanent tension between the intelligible and the material. An alternative solution was proposed, as Proclus reports in his *Commentary on the Timaeus*, by the Middle Platonist Severus,

ὅς φησιν ἀπλῶς μὲν αἰδίων εἶναι τὸν κόσμον, τοῦτον δὲ τὸν νῦν ὄντα καὶ οὕτως κινούμενον γενητόν· ἀνακυκλήσεις γὰρ εἶναι διττάς, ὡς ἔδειξεν ὁ Ἐλεάτης ξένος, τὴν μὲν ἦν νυνὶ περιπορεύεται τὸ πᾶν, τὴν δὲ ἐναντίαν· γενητὸς οὖν ὁ κόσμος καὶ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ἤρξατό τινος ὁ ταύτην τὴν ἀνακύκλῃσιν ἀνακυκλούμενος, ἀπλῶς δὲ οὐ γενητός. (Proclus, *In Tim.* 1.289.7–13 = Severus, fr. 6T Gioè)

who says that in absolute terms the cosmos is everlasting, but that the present one which moves in the way it does is generated. For, [he claims,] there are two cycles, as the Eleatic [i.e. Elean] stranger showed, the one with which the universe now proceeds and its opposite. Therefore the cosmos which began from a particular starting point and revolves with its current revolution is generated, but in absolute terms it is not generated.⁶⁵

⁶³ Dillon 1995 (= Dillon 1997b: chap. XX). See Alcinoüs, *Didasc.* 14.3 (with Dillon 1993: 125–126) for a point of comparison close to Plutarch's time.

⁶⁴ In principle I agree with Petrucci's objections against the use of the term 'literal' (versus 'metaphorical') to label only interpretations of *Tim.* that take the cosmogony to describe an event. He points out that interpretations that argue for the sempiternality of the cosmos, like the interpretation of Taurus, are also literalist in a way. Hence, he proposes to talk about, say, Taurus' sempiternalistic interpretation versus Plutarch's temporal interpretation of *Tim.*; Petrucci 2015a; 2016a; 2018: 26–75; cf. also Boys-Stones 2018: 186–191. However, 'sempiternalistic' versus 'temporal' describes philosophical outcomes rather than exegetical policies and seems less suited for talking about Platonic exegesis across the board (i.e. not confined to *Tim.*), in particular about the options for the interpretation of the *Statesman* myth. In that case, taking the cosmic reversals as real events may go together with either a sempiternalistic view (e.g. Severus, as we shall see now) or a temporal creation view (Plutarch, as I shall argue). As always, when applying modern dichotomies to ancient texts, much depends on how we choose to define and use the terms involved. In this case, I think it is most convenient to keep calling an interpretation 'literal' if it assumes that the text in question describes actual events, thus using 'literal' in a different way than Petrucci does; cf. Opsomer 2004: 146–147 and Sedley 2007: 101 on *Tim.*

⁶⁵ Tr. Runia in Runia and Share 2008.

Severus interpreted the *Statesman* as presenting an infinite series of cosmic cycles.⁶⁶ Proclus criticises this approach by stating that Severus is ‘transferring mythical riddles to natural science in an illegitimate manner’ (τὰ μυθικὰ αἰνίγματα μετάγεις εἰς φυσιολογίαν ὡς οὐκ ἔδει, *In Tim.* 1.289.14–15). According to Proclus, a literal interpretation of the myth is unacceptable because it would make the demiurge subject to change and would postulate absurd causes for the reversed movement of the cosmos (1.289.15–290.3). Unfortunately, we cannot know for sure if or how Severus actively tried to reconcile his interpretation of the *Statesman* myth with the *Timaeus*. Baltes, however, has offered the convincing suggestion that Severus’ γενητὸς οὖν ὁ κόσμος καὶ ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς ἥρξατό τινος echoes *Timaeus* 28b (γέγονεν, ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς τινος ἀρξάμενος) and that his interpretation of the *Statesman* myth was part of his commentary on that bit of the *Timaeus*.⁶⁷ If that is true, Severus interpreted both the *Statesman* and the *Timaeus* literally in a way: while the *Statesman* offers the bigger picture involving an eternal succession of cosmic cycles without absolute cosmogony, the *Timaeus* tells about the actual albeit relative cosmogony of the present cycle. Still, many unclarities and problems remain.⁶⁸ In the *Timaeus* there is no indication of the demiurge eventually allowing disruptions of the cosmic motion resulting in reversals – quite the contrary (e.g. *Tim.* 34a, 37c, 42e). Moreover, it would be strange to rephrase the opposition between the cosmos and the precosmic state, which is described as lack of cosmos (*Tim.* 30a), in terms of opposed cycles that are both cosmic.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ On Severus and his cosmology, see Baltes 1978: 102–105; Dillon 1996: 262–264; Gioè 2002: 406–410. Cf. also Boys-Stones 2018: 230–231. See Boys-Stones 2007: 443 n. 35 for further traces of cosmic cycles in Middle Platonism.

⁶⁷ Baltes 1978: 103. Severus seems to have written a commentary on *Tim.* and quite a bit of that material seems to have made its way into Proclus’ commentary (esp. Procl., *In Tim.* 1.204.17; cf. 1.227.15–17, 1.255.4–6, 2.152.27–28, 2.153.25, 2.170.3–5, 2.171.9, 2.191.1–193.6, 3.212.8). Cf. also, from other sources, fr. 9T and 17F Gioè (= B-S 8N and 8P).

⁶⁸ We should refrain from blaming Severus for these unclarities and problems: we simply do not know enough – imagine if we had only our Neoplatonic and early Christian testimonies to make up our mind on Plutarch! – and what we know seems already enough to conclude with Dillon that we see ‘in Severus evidence of a superior intellect, with the workings of which one would have desired better acquaintance’ (Dillon 1996: 264).

⁶⁹ Cf. Proclus, *In Tim.* 2.95.29–96.4: οὐκ ἄρα ὀρθῶς ὁ Πλατωνικὸς Σευῆρος – παρρησιασόμεθα γὰρ ἐντεῦθεν πρὸς αὐτόν – τὰς ἀνακυκλήσεις τὰς μυθικὰς προσέμενος καὶ γενητὸν οὕτω ποιῶν καὶ ἀγένητον τὸν κόσμον· τὸ μὲν γὰρ πᾶν κατὰ ταυτὰ φησιν ὁ Πλάτων καὶ ὡσαύτως κινεῖσθαι καὶ καθ’ ἓνα λόγον καὶ μίαν τάξιν· ἡ δὲ ἀνακύκλις οὕτως, ὥσπερ λέγεται, τὴν μίαν ἀναιρεῖ τάξιν τῆς κινήσεως. (‘Therefore the Platonist Severus has just got it wrong – we’ll speak freely against him on this point – when he admits these mythical reversals of the motion of the cosmos, thus making the cosmos both generated and also ungenerated. For Plato says [*Tim.* 34a] that the universe moves

While Proclus criticises Severus' literal interpretation of the *Statesman* myth, he invokes such a literal interpretation for polemical reasons elsewhere, namely in the work (partly) transmitted through extensive quotations in Philoponus' *Against Proclus on the Eternity of the World*. This time, Proclus' criticism is aimed at the Middle Platonist Atticus, who is known to have taken the Timaeian cosmogony literally:

οὐκ ἔδει τοὺς περὶ Ἀττικὸν εἰς τὰ ἐν Τιμαίῳ μόνα βλέπειν τὸν ἀπόντα ποτὲ παρόντα ποιοῦντα, οὗ ἄπῃν, ἀλλὰ καὶ εἰς τὰ ἐν Πολιτικῷ τὸν παρόντα ποτὲ ἀπόντα ποιοῦντα ἐκείνου, ᾧ παρῃν, καὶ ὡς δι' ἐκεῖνα τὴν τάξιν ἀπὸ τῆς ἀταξίας ποιοῦσιν, οὕτω διὰ ταῦτα καὶ μετὰ τὴν τάξιν ἀταξίαν ποιεῖν. (Proclus *ap.* Philoponus, *De aeternitate mundi contra Proclum* 606.16–22)

[T]hose in Atticus' school should not look only at the material in the *Timaeus* which makes Him Who is [originally] absent present at some time to that from which He was absent; rather, they should also look at the material in the *Statesman* which makes Him Who is present absent at some time from that to which He was present; and just as on the basis of the former passage they postulate order after disorder, so too should they on the basis of the latter postulate disorder after order.⁷⁰

Instead of taking aim directly at Atticus' literal interpretation of the *Timaeus*, Proclus criticises Atticus' willingness to interpret one account literally while failing to do the same with the other, either – we should assume – by neglecting it or by interpreting it metaphorically. This is a point about Atticus' exegetical policy rather than about the results of his exegesis: if he chooses to interpret one Platonic dialogue literally, he should, as a rule, do the same for any other Platonic dialogue. If this is combined with the premises that the literal interpretations of the two Platonic dialogues are, as Proclus thinks, mutually exclusive *and* that Plato's thought is perfectly consistent (an assumption endorsed by Proclus as much as it was by Plutarch and other Middle Platonists), then the inevitable conclusion is that both the literal interpretation of the *Timaeus* and the literal interpretation of the *Statesman* should be rejected. The only remaining solution conveniently seems to be the one that Proclus adopts from his teacher Syrianus (*In Tim.* 2.96.5–7). We should interpret the two cosmogonies as cosmologies: there is no question of an actual

uniformly and “always moves according to one ratio and a single order”. But to take this reversal of motion literally does away with the single order of motion’; tr. Baltzly 2007.)

⁷⁰ Tr. Wilberding 2005. A separate translation of and introduction to the Proclus passages cited by Philoponus can be found in Lang and Macro 2001, who argue that, through Philoponus' quotations, we have the whole of Proclus' treatise.

absolute cosmogony nor of actual relative cosmogonies; there are merely two accounts metaphorically explaining the same cosmos.

4.2. *On the Generation of the Soul: facing the problem*

This overview of interpretative options can serve as the background against which to set Plutarch's interpretation. Near the end of the first part of *On the Generation of the Soul*, Plutarch inserts what Dillon has described as 'a striking passage'⁷¹ to illustrate how the dual nature of the cosmic soul, a compound of divine rationality and original irrationality, affects the cosmos:

[...] ἡ περὶ τὸν οὐρανὸν [...] φύσις [...] ἑτερορρεποῦσα νῦν μὲν ὀρθοῦται τῇ ταῦτοῦ περιόδῳ κράτος ἐχούση καὶ διακυβερνᾷ τὸν κόσμον· ἔσται δέ τις χρόνου μοῖρα καὶ γέγονεν ἤδη πολλάκις, ἐν ἧ τὸ μὲν φρόνιμον ἀμβλύνεται καὶ καταδαρθάνει λήθης ἐμπιπλάμενον τοῦ οἰκείου, τὸ δὲ σώματι σύνηθες ἐξ ἀρχῆς καὶ συμπαθὲς ἐφέλκεται καὶ βαρύνει καὶ ἀνελίσσει τὴν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ παντὸς πορείαν ἀναρρῆξαι δ' οὐ δύναται παντάπασιν, ἀλλ' ἀνήνεγκεν αὐθις τὰ βελτίω καὶ ἀνέβλεψε πρὸς τὸ παράδειγμα θεοῦ συνεπιστρέφοντος καὶ συναπευθύνοντος. (*De an. procr.* 1026e–f)

The nature of the heavens [...] inclines this way or that, at present being kept straight by the dominant revolution of sameness and piloting the universe, whereas there will be and often has already been a period of time in which its prudential part becomes dull and falls asleep, filled with forgetfulness of what is proper to it, while the part intimate with body and sensitive to it from the beginning, puts a heavy drag upon the right-hand course of the sum of things and rolls it back without being able, however, to disrupt it entirely, but the better part recovers again and looks up at the pattern when god helps with the turning and guidance.

Dillon comments:

This is obviously inspired by the Myth of Plato's *Politicus* (269c ff.), but it is rather disturbing that Plutarch should introduce it here, as it implies a cyclic sequence of order and disorder in the universe which he does not seem to hold elsewhere.⁷²

Indeed, Plutarch's literal interpretation of the cosmogony in the *Timaeus* seems to preclude a literal reading of the *Statesman* myth. This recalls

⁷¹ Dillon 1996: 205.

⁷² Dillon 1996: 205.

Proclus' criticism of Atticus. After all, the latter is often mentioned together with Plutarch by Proclus when their interpretation of the *Timaeus* is concerned.⁷³ Proclus' criticism of Atticus – or rather of οἱ περὶ Ἄττικον – can safely be taken to pertain to Plutarch as well.⁷⁴ If we can take our cue from Proclus' criticism on the incompatibility of literal interpretations of the *Timaeus* and the *Statesman* and we should understand Plutarch's talk of cycles literally, then this passage involving the *Statesman* myth is certainly 'striking' and 'disturbing'. However, Dillon concludes that Plutarch

is not after all taking this cyclic theory literally. He merely wants to emphasize the continued presence of the Disorderly Soul in the world. [...] Plutarch, having raised the issue of cyclic world phases by introducing the *Politicus* myth, appears now to make nothing of it.

Indeed, Plutarch himself follows his sketch of the *Statesman* myth with the explanation that 'many considerations make it plain to us that the soul is not god's work entirely but that with the portion of evil inherent in her she has been arranged by god' (οὕτως ἐνδείκνυται πολλαχόθεν ἡμῖν τὸ μὴ πᾶν ἔργον εἶναι θεοῦ τὴν ψυχὴν ἀλλὰ σύμφυτον ἔχουσιν ἐν ἑαυτῇ τὴν τοῦ κακοῦ μοῖραν ὑπ' ἐκείνου διακεκοσμηθῆναι, *De an. procr.* 1027a). The *Statesman* myth, it seems, should be understood metaphorically and merely affirms the dual nature of the cosmic soul and its permanent effect on the cosmos as a whole. Ultimately, nothing about this passage turns out to be striking or disturbing.⁷⁵

But we cannot let Plutarch off the hook that easily if we take into account the full force of Proclus' criticism. His point is not just that whoever interprets the *Timaeus* should also integrate some interpretation of the *Statesman* myth. Dillon's explanation of the passage would be a sufficient response to this. Rather, Proclus' point is that those who interpret the *Timaeus* literally – as Atticus and Plutarch do – do not have any reason for not interpreting the *Statesman* myth *in the same way*. This issue is more problematic and more cogent because it also seems to follow from Plutarch's own exegetical policy of presenting Plato as a consistent thinker. Was selective literalism a price Plutarch was willing to pay for Platonic consistency after all? In that case, we would at least desire some explana-

⁷³ Proclus, *In Tim.* 1.276.31, 326.1, 381.26–27, 384.4, 2.153.29. Plutarch and Atticus became the standard bearers for the literal interpretation of *Tim.* (cf. e.g. Baltes 1978: 38). On Proclus' testimony on and interpretation of Plutarch see Opsomer 2001; cf. also Whitaker 1987: 277; Rescigno 1998; Tarrant 2004: esp. 182.

⁷⁴ Lang and Macro 2001: 22–27.

⁷⁵ Cf. also Alt 1993: 20. Thévenaz 1938: 120–123, on the other hand, seems to allow for a literal reading but he does not elaborate on the issue.

tion – as we would desire it from Atticus – of why we should understand the *Timaeus* literally and the *Statesman* metaphorically. If, on the other hand, we should assume that Plutarch took the *Statesman* myth literally, then the complaints levelled against Severus once again spring to mind. Both roads seem to be fraught with peril, and the passage from *On the Generation of the Soul* does not seem to provide much to go on. Nevertheless, I will argue that some elements suggest that Plutarch held a literal interpretation of the *Statesman* myth, which in his mind did not threaten Plato’s consistency.⁷⁶

4.3. Who or what is the cause for cosmic reversal?

When questioning the causes of cosmic reversal in the *Statesman* myth, we should distinguish between who or what causes the obtaining cosmic movement to end and who or what causes the reverse movement itself (cf. Proclus, *In Tim.* 1.289.28–290.2). According to the Elean Stranger, it is god who, at a certain moment, lets go of the cosmos (αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς [...] ἀνήκεν, *Plt.* 269c⁷⁷), leaving it without divine guidance and thus creating an opportunity for another form of guidance. Since god is no longer involved, he cannot possibly be the cause for the reverse movement itself. This backwards movement the cosmos effects ‘of its own accord’ (αὐτόματον, 269c). More specifically, its cause is the ‘allotted and innate desire’ (εἰμαρμένη καὶ σύμφυτος ἐπιθυμία, 272e) of the cosmos. When the cosmos returns to its divinely guided course, on the other hand, god is the cause of both events: due to increasing ‘forgetfulness’ (λήθης, 273c), which brings the cosmos to the verge of destruction, god takes over again. In Plato’s scheme, then, the god who regulates the cosmos is very much present, being responsible for everything but – for evident reasons of theodicy (cf. 269d–270a) – the reverse movement itself.

In Plutarch’s retelling, on the other hand, the demiurge is all but removed from the equation. Plutarch refuses to make god responsible for forsaking the cosmos. The conditions for the cosmic reversal occur because the ‘prudential part [...] [is] filled with forgetfulness of what is proper to it’ (τὸ μὲν φρόνιμον [...] λήθης ἐμπιπλάμενον τοῦ οἰκείου). Plutarch thus changes the function of the λήθη. In Plato’s text, λήθη appears during the course that is not divinely guided, ultimately prompting divine intervention. In Plutarch’s interpretation, however, λήθη is what causes the divinely guided course to end. A similar shift is implied when Plutarch writes that the ‘prudential part becomes dull’ (τὸ μὲν φρόνιμον ἀμβλύνεται): Plato uses the related adjective ἀμβλύτερον to describe the state of the cosmos at the end of a non-divine period (*Plt.* 273b).

⁷⁶ Unfortunately, I followed Dillon in assuming Plutarch’s metaphorical reading of the *Statesman* myth in Demulder 2016.

⁷⁷ Cf. 270a: ἀνεθῆ, ἀφεθέντα; 272e: ἀφέμενος, ἀπέστη; 273c: ἀφέσεως.

What happens during Plutarch's non-divine period, then, is not, as Plato has it, a decrease of cosmic intelligence ending in λήθη after a fairly successful period of independence, but a slow recovery from the disaster caused by λήθη. Moreover, it is not god who saves the cosmos because it is on the verge of complete destruction (διαφθορά, 273d), but total disruption (ἀναρρηξαι [...] παντάπασιν) is avoided because 'the better part recovers again and looks up at the pattern' (ἀνήνεγκεν αὐτίς τὰ βελτίω καὶ ἀνέβλεψε πρὸς τὸ παράδειγμα). At the end, the contribution of the demiurge is mentioned at last, albeit vaguely, as a genitive absolute: 'when god helps with the turning and guidance' (θεοῦ συνεπιστρέφοντος καὶ συναπευθύνοντος), echoing Plato's statement that 'god himself [...] accompanies [the universe], guiding it on its way and helping it move in a circle' (αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς συμποδηγεῖ πορευόμενον καὶ συγκυκλεῖ, *Plt.* 269c). In this case, Plutarch apparently wants to separate the demiurge from the intelligible paradigm (cf. p. 19), as the genitive absolute underlines. This serves his purpose of reducing the demiurge, the κυβερνήτης of Plato's *Statesman* (272e, 273c), to an accessory to the workings of the cosmic cycles: according to Plutarch, the right movement itself is caused – and this amounts to a tautology – by 'the dominant revolution of sameness' (τῇ ταύτου περιόδῳ κράτος ἐχούσῃ) that 'pilots the cosmos' (διακυβερνεῖ τὸν κόσμον). Ultimately, the only thing that Plutarch keeps untouched is the single form of non-divine causation in Plato's account: 'the part intimate with body and sensitive to it from the beginning' (τὸ δὲ σώματι σύνηθες ἐξ ἀρχῆς καὶ συμπαθές), which – this is clear from another passage where Plutarch refers to the *Statesman*⁷⁸ – is identified with what Plato calls 'innate desire' (σύμφυτος ἐπιθυμία,

⁷⁸ *De an. procr.* 1015a–b: ἡ γάρ 'ἀναστρέφουσα' [cf. *Plt.* 272e: ἀνέστρεφεν] τὸν οὐρανόν, ὡσπερ ἐν Πολιτικῷ λέγεται, καὶ ἀνελίπτουσα [cf. *Plt.* 270d: ἀνελίξει] πρὸς τοῦναντίον ἀνάγκη καὶ 'σύμφυτος ἐπιθυμία' [= *Plt.* 272e] καὶ 'τὸ τῆς πάλαι ποτὲ φύσεως σύντροφον πολλῆς μετέχον ἀταξίας, πρὶν εἰς τὸν νῦν κόσμον ἀφικέσθαι' [= *Plt.* 273b: τὸ τῆς πάλαι ποτὲ φύσεως σύντροφον, ὅτι πολλῆς ἦν μετέχον ἀταξίας πρὶν εἰς τὸν νῦν κόσμον ἀφικέσθαι], πόθεν ἐγγέγονε τοῖς πράγμασιν εἰ τὸ μὲν ὑποκείμενον ἄποιος ἦν ὕλη καὶ ἄμοιρον αἰτίας ἀπάσης, ὁ δὲ δημιουργὸς ἀγαθὸς καὶ πάντα βουλόμενος αὐτῷ κατὰ δύναμιν ἐξομοιωσαί, τρίτον δὲ παρὰ ταῦτα μηδέν; ('In fact, the necessity and "congenital desire" whereby the heaven is reversed, as is said in the *Politicus*, and rolled back in the opposite direction and "its ancient nature's inbred character which has a large share of disorder before reaching the state of the present universe," whence did these come to be in things if the substrate was unqualified matter and so void of all causality and the artificer good and so desirous of making all things resemble himself so far as possible and third besides these there was nothing?') For a defence on behalf of Plutarch against the criticism by Cherniss 1976: 139, 191 n. f that Plutarch suppresses Plato's adjective σωματοειδές when he quotes τὸ τῆς πάλαι ποτὲ φύσεως σύντροφον (*Plt.* 273b at *De an. procr.* 1015a) because that adjective would have 'embarrassed his interpretation' (139), see Opsomer 2004: 149–150.

Plt. 272e), in other words, with the irrational part of the cosmic soul (cf. *De an. procr.* 1015a–b and c–d, where the connection between maleficent soul σύμφυτος ἐπιθυμία is made).

4.4. In what period are we now?

Plutarch has made significant changes to the explanation of how cosmic reversals come about. The basic scheme, however, remains in place: there are periods in which god guides the cosmos, and there are opposite periods in which the cosmos is on its own (esp. *Plt.* 270b; cf. ἦν τοίνυν καὶ ἔτι ἔσται, *Plt.* 268e ~ ἔσται δέ τις χρόνου μοῖρα καὶ γέγονεν ἤδη πολλάκις, *Plu.*, *De an. procr.* 1026e). Next, we should ask, as the young Socrates does in the *Statesman* (271c): in what period are we now? On the face of it, the whole point of the *Statesman* myth is to argue that the definition of the statesman should take into account the fact that we are currently *not* under direct divine guidance, which the Elean Stranger associates with the golden age of Cronus. This is stated by the Stranger at the end of the myth (274c–275a), and it can be quite safely deduced from the fact that, nowadays, there is no spontaneous growth (271c–d) nor are people born from the earth (271b–c, 273e). Plutarch, however, ignores this by stating that ‘at present [the nature of the heavens] is being kept straight by the dominant revolution of sameness’ (νῦν μὲν ὀρθοῦται τῇ ταύτου περιόδῳ κράτος ἐχούσῃ), which is the movement associated with divine guidance.

Plutarch is indeed quite the optimist about the contemporary state of the cosmos: his is a time of universal peace and divinely given abundance (see esp. *De Pyth. or.* 408b–c; cf. p. 251–253 on *De fort. Rom.*).⁷⁹ It is not a time, however, in which humans do not need to take care of anything themselves, as is the case in Plato’s depiction of the age of Cronus (*Plt.* 271e–272a). After all, to describe the cosmos as he knew it as a land of milk and honey would obviously have been ludicrous. In the *Precepts of Statecraft* (824c–d) is a depiction of his contemporary, mitigated golden age.⁸⁰ Since he believes the world to be in a state of universal peace, Plutarch can point out that ‘so far as peace is concerned the peoples have no need of statesmanship at present’ (πρὸς μὲν εἰρήνην οὐδὲν οἱ δῆμοι τῶν πολιτικῶν ἔν γε τῷ παρόντι χρόνῳ δέονται, 824c). However, statesmanship should not be entirely absent, as it is from the Platonic age of Cronus, when people ‘had no political constitutions’ (πολιτεῖαί τε οὐκ

⁷⁹ Cf. also e.g. Russell 1972: 1–2 on Plutarch’s optimistic outlook.

⁸⁰ This mitigation can be connected to the parody of a naïve conception of the golden age that Plutarch offers in *Gryllus* – ‘a dismissal of stock expressions of Golden-Age isolationism as intellectual brutishness’ (Herchenroeder 2008: 370).

ἦσαν, *Plt.* 271e).⁸¹ In Plutarch's time of peace and prosperity, the politician's function is 'always to instil concord and friendship' (ὁμόνοια ἐμποιεῖν καὶ φιλίαν ἀεί, *Praec. ger. reip.* 824d).

4.5. What is Plutarch doing?

Plutarch's interventions may seem outrageous to the modern reader. The same reader, however, will become aware of the many ambiguities, inconsistencies, and challenges of the *Statesman* myth when delving into contemporary scholarship, where the interpretation of the myth as offering an account of two opposite cycles is challenged by scholars arguing for an interpretation involving three cycles.⁸² Is Plutarch's reading less legitimate than modern attempts to offer an overall explanation of the myth or – if some brand of unitarianism is adopted – of the place of the myth within Plato's thought? Perhaps not.⁸³ All interpretations – Middle Platonic, Neoplatonic, and modern – are looking for solutions to the same problems caused by a straightforward reading. How is it possible that god lets go of the cosmos? Does he do that of his own accord – and if so, how can that be reconciled with his goodness? – or is he forced in some way, as some passages seem to suggest (*Plt.* 269c, 272e)? But forced by what? And how should we explain that we are apparently in a godless phase while the myth assigns many divine gifts (274c–d) and the rule of Zeus (272b) to the present period? As far as I can see, every pos-

⁸¹ At *Cim.* 10.7 and *Arist.* 24.3 (cf. p. 151 on Aristides' imitation of the divine in politics), Plutarch similarly connects the golden age to political activity. A similar twist is given to the Elean Stranger's statement that, in the time of Cronus, men did not have wives and children (*Plt.* 272a). In Plutarch's mitigated golden age, the gods make sure 'that wives may bear "children like to their sires"' (τίκτειν γυναῖκας ἑοικότα τέκνα γονεῦσι, *Praec. ger. reip.* 824c–d with quotation of Hesiod, *Op.* 322). It may not be a coincidence that Plutarch inserts precisely this verse from Hesiod, thus justifying his divergence from Plato's depiction of the time of Cronus. Cf. also the rather ingenious interpretation by Boulogne 2010b of how Plutarch creates his own Cronus myth in *De facie*: Plutarch uses non-Platonic poetic and religious traditions to replace Plato's alternation of the reigns of Zeus and Cronus with a simultaneous reign of both gods.

⁸² Most importantly Brisson 1995; Rowe 1995; cf. also Carone 2005: 124–161. But see e.g. McCabe 1997; Lane 1998: 99–136; Kahn 2009; Horn 2012; Marquez 2012: 99–176; Gartner and Yau 2020 for defences of the traditional two-cycle interpretation. All these interpretations, moreover, diverge substantially on how we should tie the myth to the rest of the dialogue. Plutarch does not seem to have considered that question, but we can imagine that it would not have caused him any problems: given his redefinition of the current cycle as the cycle guided by the demiurge, he could have reinstated the parallel between the demiurge's macrocosmic rule and the politician's microcosmic rule (cf. p. 140–156).

⁸³ Cf. Annas 1999 for similar musings on ancient and modern interpretations of Plato.

sible interpretation of the *Statesman* myth has to pay a price. What I want to point out is that Plutarch was not prepared to offer up his commitment to literalism as payment.

Throughout *On the Generation of the Soul* Plutarch harmonises the *Statesman* myth with his interpretation of the *Timaeus* (*De an. procr.* 1015a–b, c–d, 1017c, 1026e–f).⁸⁴ He imports the ‘revolution of sameness’ (ἡ ταῦτοῦ περίοδος), which is what he calls the currently dominant revolution, into the *Statesman* myth from the *Timaeus* (36c). According to Plutarch, this revolution (the cosmic soul’s circle of sameness) is not just marked by a particular movement (which is what the *Timaeus* text strictly requires) but also by a specific constitution: sameness, one of the ingredients that the demiurge used to forge the cosmic soul, is predominant in the circle of sameness (*De an. procr.* 1024e).⁸⁵ Hence, the current

⁸⁴ The two passages that have not yet been quoted, which I offer here for the sake of completeness, are *De an. procr.* 1015c–d: ὁ δὲ Πλάτων οὐχ οὕτως, ἀλλὰ τὴν γ’ ὕλην διαφορᾶς ἀπάσης ἀπαλλάττων καὶ τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν τῶν κακῶν αἰτίαν ἀπωτάτω τιθέμενος ταῦτα περὶ τοῦ κόσμου γέγραφεν ἐν τῷ Πολιτικῷ ‘παρὰ μὲν γὰρ τοῦ ξυνθέντος πάντα τὰ καλὰ κέκτηται· παρὰ δὲ τῆς ἔμπροσθεν ἕξεως ὅσα χαλεπὰ καὶ ἄδικα ἐν οὐρανῷ γίνονται, ταῦτ’ ἐξ ἐκείνης αὐτός τε ἔχει καὶ τοῖς ζώοις ἐναπεργάζεται’ [= *Plt.* 273b–c]. καὶ μικρὸν ἔτι προελθὼν ‘προϊόντος δέ’ φησι ‘τοῦ χρόνου καὶ λήθης ἐγγιγνομένης ἐν αὐτῷ, μᾶλλον δυναστεύει τὸ τῆς παλαιᾶς ἀναρμοστίας πάθος’ [= *Plt.* 273c–d; Plato has καὶ after μᾶλλον] καὶ κινδυνεύει ‘διαλυθεὶς εἰς τὸν τῆς ἀνομοιότητος ἄπειρον ὄντα τόπον’ [= *Plt.* 273d–e; the OCT follows Proclus and Simplicius in reading πόντον for τόπον; Plutarch follows the reading of the manuscripts, which is also attested by Plotinus and Eusebius] δῶναι πάλιν. ἀνομοιότης δὲ περὶ τὴν ὕλην, ἄποιον καὶ ἀδιάφορον οὔσαν, οὐκ ἔστιν. (‘This is not Plato’s way, however; but, exempting matter from all differentiation and putting the cause of evils at the farthest remove from god, he has written about the universe as follows in the *Politicus*: “For it has got from him who constructed it all it has that is fair but from its previous state whatever troubles and iniquities occur in the universe – from that source it has these itself and produces them in its living beings.” And a little further on still he says: “But with the passage of time and the setting in of forgetfulness the effect of the ancient discord becomes more potent,” and it is in danger of sinking again “dissolved into the boundless region of dissimilitude”. Dissimilitude, however, is not connected with matter, since matter is without quality or differentiation.’); *De an. procr.* 1017c: ἐν Πολιτικῷ δ’ ὁ Παρμενίδειος ξένος τὸν κόσμον ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ συντεθέντα φησὶ πολλῶν ἀγαθῶν μεταλαβεῖν, εἰ δέ τι φλαυρόν ἐστιν ἢ χαλεπόν, ἐκ τῆς προτέρας ἕξεως ἀναρμόστου καὶ ἀλόγου συμμεμιγμένον ἔχειν. (‘[I]n the *Politicus* the Parmenidean Stranger says that the universe constructed by god partook of much good and that anything defective or troublesome in it is an ingredient retained from its prior discordant and irrational state.’)

⁸⁵ For Plato (cf. also *Tim.* 38c–d, 40a–b) the distinction between the revolution of the same and the revolution of the different seems to lie solely in their movements (as Brisson 1998: 353 succinctly puts it: ‘[t]oute identité entre même et cercle du même, et

revolution of the cosmos is associated with sameness and thereby with rationality (τὸ [...] φρόνιμον, 1026e; cf. 1024c–d). The opposite revolution, then, is the revolution associated with the irrational, maleficent part of the cosmic soul (called σύμφυτος ἐπιθυμία in the *Statesman*).⁸⁶ As I understand it, Plutarch understood the *Statesman* myth literally and conceived of these revolutions as real, diachronic shifts in the working of the cosmic soul.

In the *Statesman* the temporal markers ‘beginning’ (ἀρχή) and ‘now’ (νῦν) are used ambiguously. With the expression ‘in the beginning’ (κατ’ ἀρχάς), the Stranger refers sometimes to the beginning of a cycle (thus indicating one out of many relative cosmogonies: 271b, 273b) and sometimes to an absolute beginning of the cosmos (thus indicating one absolute cosmogony: 269d). Similarly, νῦν can refer either to the current cycle (271e, 272c, 273e), as opposed to the reverse cycle or to the cosmos (including both cycles), as opposed to a precosmic state (273b). This ambiguity is crucial for Plutarch’s interpretation. If, in the *Statesman*, there is a combination of a single beginning and a cycle of beginnings – note that Severus’ interpretation ignored this first kind of beginning – then Plutarch’s project of combining a literal reading of the *Timaeus* with a similar reading of the *Statesman* might just become less problematic. Plutarch actually mimics this ambiguity by using νῦν to refer to a cycle in his retelling of the *Statesman* in our central passage (*De an. procr.* 1026e–f), while quoting a *Statesman* passage where νῦν occurs as a reference to the bi-cyclic cosmos when the *Statesman* is invoked at 1015a–b.

entre autre et cercle de l’autre est donc impossible’), whereas Plutarch supposes that the revolutions of the soul can be distinguished by the predominance of a certain ingredient (sameness for the revolution of the same, difference for the revolution of the different); cf. Cherniss 1976: 236–237 n. d. Cf. also *De virt. mor.* 441e–f.

⁸⁶ This identification of the cycles of *Plt.* and *Tim.* strengthens two of Plutarch’s aims mentioned earlier: it emphasises Plato’s consistency (combining *Tim.* and *Plt.*), and it allows for a theodicy that does not involve god forsaking the cosmos. Although the near removal of the demiurge from the equation seems a manipulation of the text, there is at least some ambiguity in Plato’s text, which opens the door for such an intervention. While emphasising several times that it is the demiurge who lets go of the cosmos of his own accord, the Elean Stranger elsewhere suggests that god has to let go (ἔδει, 272d) after a preset period of time, which he does not control (cf. 269c). In this light, the attenuation of god’s part appears more justified, although Plutarch does not remove all ambiguity: by attributing the slackening of the straight course to the prudential part of the cosmic soul falling asleep (καταδραθάνει, an active verb), he merely shifts the blame from god to the soul part, which is not only god’s work but also a part of god (*Quaest. Plat.* 2.1001c with p. 302 n. 57). How this part can be slackening of its own accord, as is suggested by the active verb, and how this influences his theodicy, however, is not explained.

A similar combination of an absolute beginning and subordinate beginnings, then, can explain Plutarch's interpretation of the *Statesman* myth. In the bulk of the treatise, Plutarch talks about the cosmos in the absolute sense, where the *Statesman's* 'innate desire' (σύμφυτος ἐπιθυμία) is the precosmic soul, which, at the moment of cosmogony, becomes the irrational part of the cosmic soul. After presenting different aspects of his interpretation, Plutarch, at the end of the main part of *On the Generation of the Soul*, turns to the lasting effects of the irrational soul part within the cosmos. First, he discusses the human soul, its passions, its function, and its two-faced constitution (1025c–1026e). Next – and this is the passage on which I have been focusing – he zooms out in order to talk about the cosmos. The combination of the structure of the treatise and the content of our passage suggests that Plutarch is using the *Statesman* this time to sketch the cosmic effects of the dual nature of the cosmic soul. That these effects present themselves in cycles – that is, that the absolute beginning, evoked in the *Timaeus*, has been and will be followed by many subordinate beginnings – is not incompatible with the rest of the treatise.⁸⁷ The careful attention Plutarch pays to the causes for the starting and stopping of the cosmic cycles and the insistence on designating one of the cycles as 'now' add to the suspicion that Plutarch did not intend his interpretation of the *Statesman* to be understood merely metaphorically, as does the insistence that we are now in a divinely guided period.

The question remains how Plutarch conceived of these reverse periods that occurred in the past and will occur in the future. Given his insistence on one single, actual moment of cosmogony, an interpretation à la Severus is excluded, as is the Stoic doctrine of eternal conflagrations that is akin to it (cf. *De facie* 926d; *De comm. not.* 1067a; *De Stoic. rep.* 1052c–d).⁸⁸ A more promising hint is given en passant in *On Isis and Osiris*:

ἔτι τὴν σιδηρῆτιν λίθον ὀστέον ὤρου, Τυφῶνος δὲ τὸν σίδηρον, ὡς ἱστορεῖ Μανεθῶς, καλοῦσιν· ὥσπερ γὰρ ὁ σίδηρος πολλάκις μὲν ἔλκομένῳ καὶ ἐπομένῳ πρὸς τὴν λίθον ὁμοίος ἐστὶ, πολλάκις δ' ἀποστρέφεται καὶ ἀποκρούεται πρὸς τὸναντίον, οὕτως ἡ σωτήριος καὶ ἀγαθὴ καὶ λόγον ἔχουσα τοῦ κόσμου κίνησις ἐπιστρέφει ποτὲ καὶ προσάγεται καὶ μαλακωτέραν ποιεῖ πείθουσα τὴν σκληρὰν ἐκείνην καὶ τυφῶνειον, εἴτ' αὐθις ἀνασχεθεῖσα εἰς ἑαυτὴν ἀνέστρεψε καὶ κατέδυσεν εἰς τὴν ἀπορίαν. (*De Is. et Os.* 376b–c [text modified⁸⁹])

⁸⁷ This combined interpretation of *Tim.* and *Plt.* can be fruitfully compared – though not equated – with certain modern interpretations, cf. esp. Mohr 1978.

⁸⁸ Cf. also *De E* 388e–389c, 393e–394a with Chlup 2000; Dillon 2002a: 224–226 (= Dillon 2012: chap. XII); Opsomer 2006.

⁸⁹ I adopt the Loeb's emendation ἐπιστρέφει ποτέ for the reading of the manuscripts ἐπιστρέφεται τε (or ἐπιστρέφει τότε in one ms.); the Teubner daggers. If one would insist

Moreover, they call the loadstone the bone of Horus, and iron the bone of Typhon, as Manetho records. For, as the iron oftentimes acts as if it were being attracted and drawn toward the stone, and oftentimes is rejected and repelled in the opposite direction, in the same way the salutary and good and rational movement of the world at one time, by persuasion, attracts and draws toward itself and renders more gentle that harsh and Typhonian movement, and then again it gathers itself together and reverses it and plunges it into difficulties.

At several points in *On Isis and Osiris*, Plutarch assumes that the cosmos is periodically affected by Typhonian outbursts when its rational power temporarily (ποτε [...] αὔθις [...]) loses its control over it (cf. *De Is. et Os.* 369c, 373d, 374e). Since these remarks occur in the course of Plutarch's endeavour to reconcile Egyptian religion with his Platonic philosophy in general and the *Timaeus* in particular (cf. *De Is. et Os.* 371a), it is not absurd to think that Plutarch could have thought about such reversals when reading the *Statesman*.

Much, however, remains unclear and perhaps this should not surprise us. Since the cosmic reversals are due to the irrational part of the cosmic soul, we can expect them to be irregular and not part of a system of regular cycles. Perhaps Plutarch decided that he should leave it at that. Equally unclear is whether Plutarch thought that the *Timaeus* offered some evidence for what is described in the *Statesman* myth. Perhaps we should look at the conversation, reported by Critias, between Solon and the Egyptian priest, where there is an allusion to several cosmic disasters (*Tim.* 22c–e). Or perhaps the parallel with the human soul, on which Plutarch seems to insist more than Plato's text strictly requires (p. 88), should be considered. In the human soul, there is, after all, a diachronic evolution: at birth the orbits of the soul are disturbed (*Tim.* 43a–44c), but philosophy can help us to restore them (*Tim.* 47b–d, 90d). Whether Plutarch would have connected his reading of the *Statesman* with that, it has been shown that there are strong indications that Plutarch adopted a literal reading of the *Statesman* myth. This squares with his concern for Plato's consistency. The impact of this concern goes beyond the issue of mere literalness: in his literal interpretation of the periods of the *Statesman* myth, Plutarch makes sure to uphold the inculpability of the demiurge and his optimistic view about the world in which he lived.

on keeping ἐπιστρέφεται, however, that would not change much: ἡ τοῦ κόσμου κίνησις unproblematically moves itself and moves other things. The former aspect, however, does not quite have a role in this context.

5. *Concluding remarks*

Plutarch pressed into service a range of exegetical techniques to distil a coherent view of the cosmos from Plato's *Timaeus* and related dialogues. While assuming Plato's perfect philosophical consistency, Plutarch allowed for some degree of (contextual, rhetorical, ...) flexibility across Platonic dialogues (most notably, the word 'soul' turns out to have different meanings in the *Timaeus* and the *Phaedrus*, pointing to the generated cosmic soul in the former and to ungenerated precosmic soul in the latter). Plutarch's own consistent use of Plato's texts, in turn, could rely on similar flexibilities across his works: differences in literary and argumentative context allowed for differences in selection, presentation, technical precision, and so on. Similarly, while maintaining a strictly unitarian interpretation of Plato, Plutarch accorded some importance to Plato's biographical development, which, again, did not threaten Plato's consistency in Plutarch's mind. Finally, Plutarch was ready to accept the consequences of his literal interpretation of the cosmogony described in Plato's *Timaeus* and, what is more, to maintain exegetical consistency – as opposed to Atticus according to Proclus – by accepting the consequences of a similarly literal interpretation of other dialogues (esp. the *Statesman*).

Applying these techniques to Plato's dialogues – most notably to the *Timaeus* and the *Laws* – Plutarch developed a view of the cosmos that was marked by the providence of a transcendent demiurge and by an inherent element of irrationality, caused by precosmic soul, without which the cosmos would not have been possible. These elements combine, as we have seen when discussing Plutarch's reading of Plato's *Statesman*, into an optimistic view of the cosmos that does not neglect the existence of evil nor blame that existence on the demiurge. As we shall see in the following chapters, and especially in the discussions of *On Tranquillity of Mind* (chapter 5) and *Dialogue on Love* (chapter 6), this balanced view of the cosmos – combining the acknowledgement of divine providence and inextricable adversity – is ethically relevant in that it should guide our goals and expectations in life. First, now that we are acquainted with the demiurge and his cosmos in this chapter, we should turn to how the demiurge is an ethical model in different domains of everyday life (chapters 2–4).

Chapter 2

Music

In Plato's *Timaeus*, the character Timaeus begins by describing the creation of the cosmic body, the cosmic soul, the human soul, and the human body. At this point, he has nearly completed the part of his lecture predominantly devoted to the works of divine νοῦς (*Tim.* 29d–47e). When he comes to discuss the eyes, the first human organs to be designed by the demiurge's helper gods, Timaeus gives us a foretaste of the second part of his speech, which will deal with non-rational causes (47e–69a). This preliminary foray explains sight in terms of the eye's internal fire, which is emitted as a visual stream (45b–46a). Timaeus is quick to point out, however, that this fire is not the intelligent cause of sight. It does not account for its main function.

[...] τῶν νῦν λόγων περὶ τοῦ παντὸς λεγομένων οὐδεὶς ἂν ποτε ἐρρήθη μήτε ἄστρα μήτε ἥλιον μήτε οὐρανὸν ἰδόντων. νῦν δ' ἡμέρα τε καὶ νύξ ὀφθεῖσθαι μῆνές τε καὶ ἐνιαυτῶν περίοδοι καὶ ἰσημερίαί τε καὶ τροπαὶ μεμηχάνηται μὲν ἀριθμῶν, χρόνου δὲ ἔννοιαν περὶ τε τῆς τοῦ παντὸς φύσεως ζήτησιν ἔδοσαν· ἐξ ὧν ἐπορισάμεθα φιλοσοφίας γένος, οὗ μείζον ἀγαθὸν οὔτ' ἦλθεν οὔτε ἤξει ποτὲ τῷ θνητῷ γένει δωρηθὲν ἐκ θεῶν. λέγω δὴ τοῦτο ὀμμάτων μέγιστον ἀγαθόν· (*Tim.* 47a–b)

[N]one of our present statements about the universe could ever have been made if we had never seen any stars, sun or heaven. As it is, however, our ability to see the periods of day-and-night, of months and of years, of equinoxes and solstices, has led to the invention of number, and has given us the idea of time and opened the path to inquiry into the nature of the universe. These pursuits have given us philosophy, a gift from the gods to the mortal race whose value neither has been nor ever will be surpassed. I'm quite prepared to declare this to be the supreme good our eyesight offers us.

In the teleological perspective of the *Timaeus*, the primary cause of sight is not the visual stream but its capacity for cosmology.¹ Timaeus goes on

¹ Cf. Johansen 2004: 160–176. This point is made in *De def. or.* 436d, where a discussion of divine and material causation is offered (435e–436e), which recalls Socrates' famous autobiographical excursus on the subject (*Phd.* 97b–100b); cf. Donini 1992a; Fer-

to connect this to the need to stabilise the errant revolutions of our soul by tuning them to the kindred revolutions of the cosmos – a point that he will repeat at the end of his speech (*Tim.* 90c–d) and that forms the core of Platonic cosmological ethics, as we have already seen (p. 18–19).²

After explaining the ethical purpose of sight, Timaeus adds – and this is the note on which his account on the works of νοῦς ends – that sound and hearing have the same purpose:

λόγος τε γὰρ ἐπ’ αὐτὰ ταῦτα τέτακται, τὴν μεγίστην συμβαλλόμενος εἰς αὐτὰ μοῖραν, ὅσον τ’ αὖ μουσικῆς φωνῆς χρήσιμον πρὸς ἀκοὴν ἔνεκα ἀρμονίας ἐστὶ δοθέν. ἡ δὲ ἀρμονία, συγγενεῖς ἔχουσα φορὰς ταῖς ἐν ἡμῖν τῆς ψυχῆς περιόδοις, τῷ μετὰ νοῦ προσχρωμένῳ Μούσαις οὐκ ἐφ’ ἡδονὴν ἄλογον καθάπερ νῦν εἶναι δοκεῖ χρήσιμος, ἀλλ’ ἐπὶ τὴν γεγонуῖαν ἐν ἡμῖν ἀνάρμοστον ψυχῆς περίοδον εἰς κατακόσμησιν καὶ συμφωνίαν ἑαυτῇ σύμμαχος ὑπὸ Μουσῶν δέδοται· καὶ ῥυθμὸς αὖ διὰ τὴν ἄμετρον ἐν ἡμῖν καὶ χαρίτων ἐπιδεᾶ γιγνομένην ἐν τοῖς πλείστοις ἕξιν ἐπίκουρος ἐπὶ ταῦτα ὑπὸ τῶν αὐτῶν ἐδόθη. (*Tim.* 47d–e [text modified³])

Speech was designed for this very purpose – it plays the greatest part in its achievement. And all such composition as lends itself to making audible musical sound is given in order to express harmony, and so serves this purpose as well. And harmony, whose movements are akin to the orbits within our souls, is a gift of the Muses, if our dealings with them are guided by understanding, not for irrational pleasure, for which people nowadays seem to make use of it, but to serve as an ally in the fight to bring order to any orbit in our souls that has become unharmonized, and make it concordant with itself. Rhythm, too, has likewise been given us by the Muses for the same purpose, to assist us. For with most of us our condition is such that we have lost all sense of measure, and are lacking in grace.

rari 2015; Meeusen 2016: 258–278. Cf. *De fortuna* 98b–c (with a reference to Pl., *Tim.* 67b), where the teleology of sight, hearing, and the other senses is opposed to τύχη. Cf. also e.g. Maximus of Tyre, *Or.* 37.7.

² This train of thought is echoed in the last sentence of *Aqua an ignis* (958e): ‘[T]hrough sight, as Plato says, we are able to conform our souls to the movements of the celestial bodies’ (ἔτι τε, ἧ Πλάτων φησί, δυνάμεθα κατασηματίζειν πρὸς τὰς τῶν ἐν οὐρανῷ κινήσεις τὴν ψυχὴν διὰ τῆς ὄψεως). There is, however, no consensus on the authenticity of this possibly Plutarchan work. See Meeusen 2016: 62 n. 8 on the question of authenticity and his 265–267 on the passage at hand.

³ Following Cornford 1935: 158 n. 4.

Listening to music is like observing the cosmos. If done well, both activities are eminently beneficial and connect us mortals with the intelligible. Musical sounds achieve that effect ‘by their expression of divine harmony in mortal movement’ (διὰ τὴν τῆς θείας ἁρμονίας μίμησιν ἐν θνηταῖς γενομένην φοραῖς, *Tim.* 80b).⁴ A difference with cosmology – and this heightens the ethical significance of music – is that humans cannot only perceive music, but they can also make music themselves: not only can they discover divine harmony by listening, but they can also express divine harmony themselves by being a musician.

How did Plutarch understand these connections between cosmology, the ethical function of observing the cosmos, and the ethical function of listening to and making music? The passage from *On God’s Slowness to Punish* with which I began this book combines the beneficial effects of observing the cosmos with musical language suggesting a connection between chaos and lack of musicality (ἀναρμόστοις, 550d; πλημμελείας, 550e; cf. μετ’ ἐμμελείας, 550f⁵), but does not provide further details. In what follows, I will take my cue from *On the Generation of the Soul* and argue that Plutarch stresses both the potential and the limitations of listening to and making music.⁶ The same thing goes, as we will touch upon in passing, for observing the cosmos. Both activities are, after all, concerned with images of the divine (cf. the sensible cosmos as εἰκόν, *Tim.* 29b, 92c; music as μίμησις, 80b).

1. *The demiurge and the musician*

While the first part of *On the Generation of the Soul*, which was the focus of the previous chapter, discusses how the demiurge created the mixture of the cosmic soul by blending together intermediate being, sameness, and difference (Pl., *Tim.* 35a–b), the second part turns to the

⁴ On the ethical and cosmological value of music in *Tim.*, see e.g. Barker 2000; Pełosi 2010; Lyon 2016.

⁵ Cf. also Helmig 2005a: 17–18 on the potentially musical use of the ἐνδίδωσι (550d) in that passage.

⁶ Smits 1970, written in Dutch, is the only monograph about music in Plutarch. Smits provides an admirably extensive overview of musical theory and practice in Plutarch’s works. Written as a study in the history of musicology, however, it does not engage thoroughly with the philosophical issues I tackle in this chapter. Other, more limited overviews of the subject are García López 2000; Durán Mañas 2005; Araújo da Rocha Júnior 2008; Görgemanns and Hirsch-Luipold 2010. As a collection of Plutarchan passages on music, Weil and Reinach 1900: liii–lxix is still valuable. It should be noted that Weil and Reinach firmly believed that the treatise *On Music* was written by Plutarch, whereas today most scholars consider it to be spurious; see Fera 2011, although D’Ippolito 2011 holds a different view. Cf. also Tassi 2009, an index of Plutarchan passages involving sound.

division of the cosmic soul through the mathematical distribution of that mixture (35b–36b). This mathematical distribution would have readily been recognised as a musical distribution as well: the ratios used by the demiurge correspond to the tone (9/8), the quart (4/3), the fifth (3/2), and the λείμμα (the residue left when two tones are subtracted from the quart, 256/243). The passage with which *On the Generation of the Soul* is concerned, then, puts music on the agenda.⁷ After having discussed the ratios used by the demiurge to distribute the soul mixture as well as the way in which these numbers should be arranged, Plutarch turns to the question of the function (δύναμις) of these numbers. Let us jump right to the last sentence of the treatise:

ὥσπερ οὖν ὁ τοὺς ἐπιτρίτους καὶ ἡμιολίους καὶ διπλασίους λόγους ζητῶν ἐν τῷ ζυγῷ τῆς λύρας καὶ τῇ χελώνῃ καὶ τοῖς κολλάβοις γελοῖός ἐστι (δεῖ μὲν γὰρ ἀμέλει καὶ ταῦτα συμμέτρως γεγονέναι πρὸς ἀλληλα μήκεσι καὶ πάχεσι, τὴν δ' ἁρμονίαν ἐκείνην ἐπὶ τῶν φθόγγων θεωρεῖν), οὕτως εἰκὸς μὲν ἐστὶ καὶ τὰ σώματα τῶν ἀστέρων καὶ τὰ διαστήματα τῶν κύκλων καὶ τὰ τάχη τῶν περιφορῶν ὥσπερ ὄργανα ἐν τεταγμένοις <λόγοις> ἔχειν ἐμμέτρως πρὸς ἀλληλα καὶ πρὸς τὸ ὅλον, εἰ καὶ τὸ ποσὸν ἡμᾶς τοῦ μετρίου διαπέφευγε· τῶν μέντοι λόγων ἐκείνων, οἷς ὁ δημιουργὸς ἐχρήσατο, καὶ τῶν ἀριθμῶν ἔργον ἡγεῖσθαι τὴν αὐτῆς τῆς ψυχῆς ἐμμέλειαν καὶ ἁρμονίαν πρὸς αὐτήν, ὑφ' ἧς καὶ τὸν οὐρανὸν ἐγγενομένη μυρίων ἀγαθῶν ἐμπέπληκε, καὶ τὰ περὶ γῆν ὥραις καὶ μεταβολαῖς μέτρον ἐχούσαις ἄριστα καὶ κάλλιστα πρὸς τε γένεσιν καὶ σωτηρίαν τῶν γιγνομένων διακεκόσμηκεν. (*De an. procr.* 1030b-c)

Just as one is ridiculous, then, who looks for the ratios of 4/3, 3/2, and 2/1 in the yoke and the shell and the pegs of the lyre (for, while of course these too must have been made proportionate to one another in length and thickness, yet it is in the sounds that that concord is to be observed), so is it reasonable to believe that, while the bodies of the stars and the intervals of the circles and the velocities of the revolutions are like instruments commensurate in fixed <ratios> with one another and with the whole though the quantity of the measurement has eluded us, nevertheless the product of those ratios and numbers used by the artificer is the soul's own harmony and concord with herself, whereby she has filled the heaven, into which she has come, with countless goods and has arrayed the terrestrial regions with seasons

⁷ See e.g. Moutsopoulos 1959: 352–375; Lippman 1964: 20–29; Barker 1989: 58–61; Pelosi 2010: 189–195 on how this passage from *Tim.* relates to Plato's views on music. On its connection with Plutarch's views on musical theory, see Smits 1970: 10–25.

and measured changes in the best and fairest way for the generation and preservation of things that come to be. [tr. slightly modified]

Plutarch has devoted most of the section on the δύναμις of the numbers used by the demiurge to interpretations of the division of the soul that are centred on astronomical observations (1028a–1029d). As appears from the comparison just quoted, Plutarch’s criticism of these interpretations is nuanced. On the one hand, they are not completely wrong: the heavenly bodies are indeed harmonious like well-tuned musical instruments. On the other hand, it would be misguided to assume that the heavenly bodies are the reason for which (cf. ἔνεκα τούτων, 1028b) the demiurge forged the cosmic soul. That would be like saying that music exists for the sake of musical instruments.⁸

The comparison of divine ἄρμονία and musical ἄρμονία (I will call this ‘comparison ο’) comprises three aspects: (1) the heavenly bodies are compared to the musical instrument, (2) the cosmic soul is compared to music (φθόγγοι), (3) the demiurge is (implicitly but unmistakably) compared to the musician. In the course of *On the Generation of the Soul*, Plutarch makes three further comparisons that can be paired with the three aspects that I have just enumerated. These further comparisons can help clarify what Plutarch is doing here.

(1) The heavenly bodies can be compared to a musical instrument. The idea that the harmonious cosmic soul is prior to the heavenly bodies and is the cause of the goods present in them and the harmony exhibited by them is fully in line with Plato’s *Timaeus* (34b–c). We should recall, however, that Plutarch understands this priority of cosmic soul over cos-

⁸ The point that it is ridiculous (γελοῖος) to look for the essence of music in the instruments can be compared to the position that Plutarch defends in *Quaest. Plat.* 9 (on which, see Opsomer 2012: 328–330). There, he interprets a passage from *Resp.* (4.443d), ‘where Plato likened excellently well the consonance of the rational and mettlesome and appetitive to a concord of intermediate and topmost and nethermost strings’ (Πλάτωνος τὴν τοῦ λογιστικοῦ καὶ θυμοειδοῦς καὶ ἐπιθυμητικοῦ συμφωνίαν ἄρμονία μέσης καὶ ὑπάτης καὶ νήτης εἰκάσαντος ἄριστα, 1007e). In the course of his interpretation, Plutarch suggests that it is ‘ridiculous to allot to local positions the status of first and intermediate and last, seeing that the topmost itself, while on the lyre it occupies the position further above and first, on the pipes occupies the one underneath and last and that intermediate, moreover, wherever it is located on the lyre, if tuned in the same way, sounds higher than the topmost string and lower than the nethermost’ (ἢ τὸ μὲν τοῖς τόποις ἀπονέμειν τὰ πρῶτα καὶ τὰ μέσα καὶ τὰ τελευταῖα γελοῖόν ἐστιν, αὐτὴν τὴν ὑπάτην ὀρῶντας ἐν μὲν λύρα τὸν ἀνωτάτω καὶ πρῶτον, ἐν δ’ αὐλοῖς τὸν κάτω καὶ τὸν τελευταῖον ἐπέχουσιν, ἔτι δὲ τὴν μέσην ἐν ᾧ τις ἂν χωρίῳ τῆς λύρας θέμενος ὡσαύτως ἀρμόσῃται, φθεγγομένην ὀξύτερον μὲν ὑπάτης βαρύτερον δὲ νήτης, 1008e). For the strings of a lyre used in a moral context, see also *De virt. mor.* 444e–f; *De genio Socr.* 589d–e.

mic body as a chronological and not merely ontological priority: the demiurge forged the soul before he started working on the cosmic body (*De an. procr.* 1013d–f).⁹ If we follow the logic of the comparison, then, the harmony that can be found in φθόγγοι precedes and causes, odd as it may seem, the musical instrument that plays these φθόγγοι.¹⁰

Earlier in *On the Generation of the Soul*, Plutarch tells an anecdote about Zeno of Citium that is interesting in this regard. Zeno made his pupils attend a performance by aulos players ‘to observe what a sound is produced by bits of horn and wood and reed and bone when they partake of ratio and consonance’ (καταμανθάνειν, οἷαν κέρατα καὶ ξύλα καὶ κάλαμοι καὶ ὅστ᾽ ἄλογον μετέχοντα καὶ συμφωνίας φωνὴν ἀφίησι, *De an. procr.* 1029f). This is brought up as a comparison for the demiurge’s work on the precosmic soul (the irrational soul stuff that the demiurge used to forge the cosmic soul). The suggestion is that a musical instrument, in a way, only comes into being when a skilled musician starts playing it. It is the musician who applies the harmony, of which his instrument partakes and by which the φωνή is caused. Hence, the chronological priority of harmony to sound: all the instrument really does is ἀφεῖναι.

Plutarch dishes up the same story in *On Moral Virtue* (443a); only this time, Zeno is sending his pupils to a performance by a kithara singer (κιθαρωδός) instead of to an aulos concert. In that treatise, which shows interesting parallels with *On the Generation of the Soul*, Zeno’s field trip is not brought up in the context of the demiurge’s work on the precosmic soul, but as an illustration of how the body can be made to work together with reason.¹¹ In this version of the story, it becomes even clearer

⁹ Cf. *Quaest. Plat.* 4.1002e–1003b; *De an. procr.* 1016a, d, 1023a–c.

¹⁰ Plutarch, then, would seem to disagree with Simmias in Plato’s *Phd.* (85e–86d), who states that the harmony is obviously destroyed along with the musical instrument and infers from this that the soul, which he thought is a kind of harmony, dies with the body. Although, as Plutarch well knew (see p. 84 n. 40), the thesis that soul is a harmony is eventually rejected, this does not explain why Simmias and Plutarch would have a different take on how harmony relates to the instrument. Rather, they thought of different kinds of harmony. While Simmias meant the attunement of the material instrument, Plutarch refers to music in a more abstract sense, i.e. not tied to a particular instrument. See Rowe 1993: 203 for these two meanings of harmony; cf. also Gottschalk 1971. On the different ways in which Plutarch uses the word ἁρμονία, see Smits 1970: 34–41.

¹¹ On the connections between *De an. procr.* and *De virt. mor.*, see p. 22. On how this anecdote about Zeno (= *SVF* I.299) relates to Stoic views on music, see Scade 2017: 200–201. However, one should be aware that, both in *De an. procr.* and in *De virt. mor.*, the anecdote is used in an anti-Stoic context in which Plutarch argues for the existence and importance of an irrational part of the (cosmic and human) soul. That said, Plutarch is careful not to distort the anecdote by ascribing such a view to Zeno: in both works, he inserts the anecdote in such a way that it can be taken to pertain, strictly speaking, only to

how the source of harmony is the musician rather than the instrument and how, accordingly, harmony precedes the instrument: musical instruments themselves are ‘void of soul’ (ἄψυχα); what they actually do is ‘reproduc[e] the judgements, the experiences, and the morals of those who use them’ (τὰς κρίσεις ἀναφέροντα καὶ τὰ πάθη καὶ τὰ ἥθη τῶν χρωμένων). Once again, it is the musician who, by using λόγοι, causes music to appear in soulless matter, thus turning that matter into a musical instrument.¹²

(2) Plutarch also offers a more complex version of the comparison between music and the cosmic soul:¹³

ὥς δὲ φωνὴ τίς ἐστὶν ἄλογος καὶ ἀσήμαντος λόγος δὲ λέξις ἐν φωνῇ σημαντικῇ διανοίας, ἄρμονία δὲ τὸ ἐκ φθόγγων καὶ διαστημάτων καὶ φθόγγος μὲν ἐν καὶ ταῦτὸν διάστημα δὲ φθόγγων ἐτερότης καὶ διαφορά, μιχθέντων δὲ τούτων ᾠδὴ γίνεταί καὶ μέλος· οὕτως τὸ παθητικὸν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀόριστον ἦν καὶ ἀστάθμητον, εἴθ’ ὠρίσθη πέρατος ἐγγενομένου καὶ εἶδους τῷ μεριστῷ καὶ παντοδαπῷ τῆς κινήσεως. (*De an. procr.* 1026a)

As some sound is not speech and not significant but speech is an utterance in sound that signifies thought, and as concord is what consists of tones and intervals and a tone is one and the same thing, an interval the diversity and difference of tones, and the mixture of these results in song and melody, so the affective part of the soul was indeterminate and unstable and then was bounded when there came to be limit and form in the divisible and omnifarious character of the motion. [tr. modified]

Here, the ingredients of the cosmic soul are linked to the elements constituting music. Interestingly, Plutarch insists on including the human voice as an essential constituent in the comparison. According to Plutarch’s interpretation of *Timaeus* 35a–b, the demiurge created the cosmic soul in two steps. First, he blended divisible and indivisible being. Only after establishing this preliminary mixture was he able to add the two more extreme ingredients, sameness and difference. Plutarch compares

the non-rational and soulless instead of to irrational soul. The context added by Plutarch makes it clear that the anecdote serves to illustrate the harmonising of irrational soul.

¹² In this version of the story, Plutarch hesitantly allows the non-rational products of the soul (τὰ πάθη καὶ τὰ ἥθη) to play a role as causes of music as well. On Plutarch’s hesitance, see Babut 1969a: 145, who also points out that, in this passage, Plutarch is manifestly more tolerant than Plato in his selection of accepted instruments.

¹³ On this passage, see also Opsomer 1994a: 40–41. I shall return to it to discuss the dualistic context in which it appears (p. 212).

the first phase of the soul's creation to the composition of the lyrics to the song, which he calls speech (λόγος). The lyrics are the combination of sound (φωνή) and thought (διάνοια). The second phase is compared to setting the lyrics to music by applying tones (φθόγγοι) and intervals (διαστήματα).

(3) For the comparison of the musician and the demiurge as well, we can turn to a passage earlier in the treatise. As has been noted, Plutarch's interpretation of *Timaeus* is literal. According to his reading of Plato's dialogue, which is opposed to that of most ancient Platonists, there must have been a real beginning of the cosmos. The demiurge did not, however, create the cosmic soul and the cosmic body *ex nihilo*. Rather, he took over and ordered both precosmic soul and precosmic body. In this respect, Plutarch points out, he acted like a musician who 'is expected not to create sound or movement either but to make sound tuneful and movement rhythmical' (ὥσπερ ἁρμονικὸν ἄνδρα καὶ ῥυθμικὸν οὐ φωνὴν ποιεῖν οὐδὲ κίνησιν ἐμμελεῖ δὲ φωνὴν καὶ κίνησιν εὐρυθμον ἀξιοῦμεν, *De an. procr.* 1014c).¹⁴

By now, two things will have become clear that seem to contradict each other. On the one hand, the comparison between music and the cosmos is not made casually: it occurs several times throughout the treatise and, as such, it seems to have been important for Plutarch's understanding of Platonic cosmology. On the other hand, the picture that appears when we piece the several iterations of the comparison together is rather blurry. Several inconsistencies regarding crucial aspects of the exegesis of *Timaeus* can be pointed out. In the comparison with which we started the discussion (comparison 0), the ontological and temporal priority of soul over body (and that of music over the musical instrument) was the whole point. This is hard to square with comparison 3: there, the generation of the cosmic soul *and* the cosmic body is compared to the generation of rhythmical movement *and* tuneful sound (Plutarch does not spell out which corresponds to which, but the structure of the text suggests that φωνή corresponds to body here and it makes philosophical sense to associate movement with soul). It would be hard to conceive of either rhythm or tuneful sound as coming first in a musical performance, which could lead one falsely to suspect the simultaneity of cosmic soul and cosmic body. Moreover, the same comparison insists on including both body and soul in the analogy, whereas comparison 2 compares only the soul to music (φωνή corresponding to indivisible being in the soul there) and the original comparison (0) even distances the body from soul/music by comparing the former to the instrument. This comparison of the body to the instrument, in turn, does not quite fit with comparison 1, where the instrument is compared to the precosmic soul, which is harmonised by

¹⁴ Cf. *De Is. et Os.* 373c–d, where Osiris plays the role of the demiurge.

the demiurge. However, the anecdote about Zeno itself (in comparison 1), if detached from the context, could again suggest that the instrument is soulless. To make matters worse, the instrument from comparison 1 is the aulos in a performance of αὐληταί (*De an. procr.* 1029f): the human voice cannot play a role here, nor does it really in comparisons 0 and 3, while it is essential to comparison 2.

Where does this leave us? Is Plutarch being sloppy and inconsistent? I would rather suggest that the blurry picture is an indication that, while music and the cosmic soul can be compared, their different ontological statuses severely limit the comparison. Plutarch was aware that the demiurge *is not* a musician. This is why, after reporting the ancient practice of ‘put[ting] musical instruments into the hands of the statues of the gods’ (ὄργανα μουσικὰ θεῶν ἐνεχείριζον ἀγάλμασιν), he adds that this does not mean that the gods play ‘the lyre and the aulos but that no work is so like that of gods as concord and consonance’ (οὐθὲν ἔργον [...] θεῶν οἷον ἀρμονίαν εἶναι καὶ συμφωνίαν, *De an. procr.* 1030b [tr. modified]). Similarly, in *On the Principle of Cold*, he wished to avoid confusion after reporting that some call the god harmoniser and musician (ὁ θεὸς ἀρμονικὸς καλεῖται καὶ μουσικός):

[...] οὐ βαρύτητας συναρμόττων καὶ ὀξύτητας οὐδὲ λευκὰ καὶ μέλανα συμφώνως ὁμιλοῦντα παρέχων ἀλλήλοις, ἀλλὰ τὴν τῆς θερμότητος καὶ ψυχρότητος ἐν κόσμῳ κοινωνίαν καὶ διαφορὰν [...]. (*De prim. frig.* 946f)

He does not receive these names for bringing sounds of high and low pitch, or black and white colours, into harmonious fellowship, but because he has authority over the association and disunion of heat and cold in the universe [...]. [tr. modified¹⁵]

By creating harmony on a human level, the musician is certainly doing a good job, which can, to some extent, be compared to the demiurge’s creation of harmony on a divine level. This does not mean, however, that the musician’s job is even close to being on the same level as that of the demiurge. This sounds fairly obvious, but a perfect comparison between the musician and the demiurge could easily obscure this. Rather, the apparent inconsistencies point to different aspects of the general, necessarily imperfect comparison. In Plutarch’s philosophy, for instance, it makes perfect sense to compare the musical instrument both to the heavenly bodies (comparison 0) and to the precosmic soul (comparison

¹⁵ The Loeb translator ironically adds to the confusion by translating ‘he does not receive these names *merely* for bringing [...]’ (emphasis added), which is not warranted by the Greek.

1): the demiurge makes both partake in harmony (cf. *De an. procr.* 1014c), which is the point of comparison 3, where, however, the reference to an instrument is omitted. Similarly, the comparison of φωνή with both body (comparison 3) and divisible being – that is, the irrational being within soul that becomes divisible around bodies (comparison 2) – indicates a certain association between these two principles, although one should be careful not to confuse them (esp. *De an. procr.* 1022f).

The fact that Plutarch chose to couch his reflections on music in comparisons throughout *On the Generation of the Soul* is significant in itself. As we have seen, Plutarch's use of imagery is closely connected with the notion taken from Plato's *Timaeus* that the sensible cosmos is a likeness (εἰκών) of an intelligible model (*Tim.* 29b).¹⁶ If this is taken into account, the original comparison reveals two εἰκών relations. The first is expressed through the content of the comparison: as Plutarch explicitly states earlier, the ratios that we can observe in the visible cosmos are likenesses (εἰκόνες) of the λόγοι of the cosmic soul (*De an. procr.* 1029d–e). The second is suggested by the form of the comparison: music is an image of the cosmic soul.

These two parallel εἰκόνες – the sensible cosmos and music – can be taken to mirror the parallel treatment of sight and hearing as ways of using the sensible realm to learn about the cosmic soul in *Timaeus* 47a–e. A good discourse involving an εἰκών – an εἰκὼς λόγος/μῦθος as Timaeus would call it (*Tim.* 29b–30c) – is indeed valuable as a hermeneutical effort, since it allows us to explore things in our investigation that we could not otherwise explore. At the same time, however, such a discourse is also limited: at best, it can aspire to be likely.¹⁷ Plutarch, therefore, makes sure to introduce his statement about the harmony of the heavenly bodies with the words εἰκὼς ἐστὶ and adds that 'the quantity of the measurement has eluded us' (τὸ ποσὸν ἡμᾶς τοῦ μετρίου διαπέφευγε). There is only so much that observation of the cosmos can accomplish. The same limitations apply when music is considered as an εἰκών of the cosmic soul. We cannot possibly expect the results to be perfect or even fully consistent.¹⁸

¹⁶ Cf. esp. Plutarch, *Adv. Col.* 1115d–1116b; *De Is. et Os.* 372f and the discussion on p. 341–342.

¹⁷ On this much-discussed issue, Burnyeat 2005 is a seminal paper, which has evoked many responses such as Betegh 2010, which has the particular merit of showing how εἰκὼς is at the same time a positive standard and a limitation. For the connection of this notion with Plutarch's thought, see Opsomer 1998: 183–184, 217.

¹⁸ Cf. *Tim.* 29c: ἐὰν οὖν, ὦ Σώκρατες, πολλὰ πολλῶν πέρι, θεῶν καὶ τῆς τοῦ παντὸς γενέσεως, μὴ δυνατοὶ γινώμεθα πάντη πάντως αὐτοῦς ἑαυτοῖς ὁμολογουμένους λόγους καὶ ἀπηκριβωμένους ἀποδοῦναι, μὴ θαυμάσης: ('Don't be surprised then, Socrates, if it turns out repeatedly that we won't be able to produce accounts on a great many subjects –

Plutarch's position on the cosmic significance of music is subtle. There is, to be sure, a connection between the harmony of the cosmic soul and the harmony expressed by music, but this should not lead us to confuse the work of the demiurge and the work of a musician (i.e. someone concerned with music, a sensible phenomenon): although both create harmony, they do so on vastly different levels.¹⁹ The relation between the two is one between paradigm and image. In the next two sections, I explore this relation and the ensuing emphasis on both the potential and the limits of music. First, I will consider the possibility of there being (audible) music in heaven: what did Plutarch make of the so-called music of the spheres?²⁰ Then, I will look at the inverse situation: to what extent does divine harmony influence our music on earth?

2. *Music in heaven? The song of the Muses*

For a Platonist like Plutarch, the Pythagorean notion of the music of the spheres was channelled through Plato's myth of Er (*Republic* 10.614b–621b). From Plato we learn about Sirens standing on the rims of the eight whorls which are parts of the spindle of the universe. Each Siren emits a single tone and the eight tones together form a harmony, which serves as the background to the song of the Fates, a song about the past, the present, and the future (617b–c).

In his own eschatological myths, Plutarch enjoys playing with this motif. The myth that concludes *On God's Slowness to Punish* tells a post-mortem story similar to Plato's myth of Er. In Plutarch's myth, the character who is guided through the cosmos suddenly hears a woman's voice. It turns out to be the Sibyl, who is singing (ᾄδειν) about the future while stationed on the moon (566d–e). Similarly, in *On the Sign of Socrates*, a myth is told about a certain Timarchus, who descended into a crypt and experienced something that he could only describe as the temporary release of his soul. During this release, the heavenly bodies appeared to him like islands:

on gods or the coming to be of the universe – that are completely and perfectly consistent and accurate.)

¹⁹ One could turn this around and argue that the demiurge is the only true musician, in the same fashion as Socrates is Athens' only true politician by abstaining from politics (*Grg.* 521d). This is not, I think, what Plutarch is suggesting. As we have seen, in the only two passages where the demiurge is presented as a musician (*De prim. frig.* 946f and *De an. procr.* 1030a–b), this is a characterisation that Plutarch does not make in his own name but one he ascribes to tradition. Moreover, both times he feels the need to nuance this traditional characterisation by going on to distance the god from music as he understands it (i.e. as a sensible phenomenon).

²⁰ For an introduction to this notion, see e.g. Viltanioti 2015: 1–10 or Pelosi 2017.

[...] οἶεσθαι δὲ ταύταις τὸν αἰθέρα κύκλω φερομέναις ὑπορροίζεῖν <λιγυρῶς>· εἶναι γὰρ ὁμολογουμένην τῇ τῆς κινήσεως λειότητι τὴν πραότητα τῆς φωνῆς ἐκείνης ἐκ πασῶν συνηρμοσμένης. (*De genio Socr.* 566c–d)

[...] and he fancied that their circular movement made a musical whirring in the aether, for the gentleness of the sound resulting from the harmony of all the separate sounds corresponded to the evenness of their motion.

Again, in the myth at the end of *On the Face in the Moon*, we learn that, during a lunar eclipse, the moon accelerates because the good souls inhabiting the moon at that time complain that they cannot hear the ‘harmony of the heaven’ (ἡ περὶ τὸν οὐρανὸν ἁρμονία) as the moon is traversing the earth’s shadow (944a). The consistent presence of the music of the spheres in Plutarch’s three great myths suggests that it has a certain place in his thought.²¹ However, this should also give us pause: a Platonist indulging in myths should never be taken at face value. Indeed, all three myths are preceded by a disclaimer distinguishing them from λόγος (*De sera num.* 561b; *De genio Socr.* 589f; *De facie* 940f).

The music of the spheres from Plato’s myth of Er receives a seemingly less veiled treatment at one of the symposia evoked by Plutarch in his *Sympotic Questions*. The ninth book of this voluminous work (on which, see chapter 3) is aptly dedicated to the nine Muses. In this last book of sympotic questions, we find ourselves in the company of a young ‘Plutarch’.²² The host of the symposium, which exceptionally takes up the entire book, is Plutarch’s teacher Ammonius. We learn that the symposium was held during some festival of the Muses and the subjects are appropriately ‘musical’ in the broad sense of the word, including poetry, language, cosmology, and music proper. Unfortunately, three of the talks about music are lost: only titles remain for the discussions about the division of melodies into diatonic, chromatic, and enharmonic (9.7),

²¹ Cf. Vernière 1977: 175–176.

²² When talking about *Quaest. conv.*, I use ‘Plutarch’ (in inverted commas) to refer to the character and Plutarch (without inverted commas) to refer to the persona of the writer Plutarch. The latter writes the *prooemia* and narrates the discussions, while the former is a participant in these discussions. (Of course, neither of these two coincides with the historical person Plutarch.) The distinction between Plutarch and ‘Plutarch’ is necessary to become aware of some of the *Sympotic Questions*’ most interesting features, such as Plutarch’s play with self-promotion and self-effacement (König 2011; cf. also König 2012: 75–81) and his play with past and present (Klotz 2007; 2011); cf. also Brenk 2009; Xenophontos 2016: 175–179 (on the *prooemia* to the *Quaest. conv.*); Russell 1993 (on this issue in Plutarch in general).

about the difference between consonant intervals (ἔμμελῆ διαστήματα) and melodic intervals (σύμφωνα διαστήματα) (9.8), and about the causes of consonance (συμφώνησις), including the question why the melody, as the Greeks perceived it, goes with the lowest pitch when two notes sound together (9.9). The last question of *Sympotic Questions*, a light-hearted outro, offers a discussion on dance (9.15).²³ When the music of the spheres is mentioned, however, it is in a discussion about music *sensu lato* rather than *sensu stricto*.

After singing Hesiod's verses about the birth of the Muses, Ammonius and his guests begin to ponder how many Muses there actually are (*Quaest. conv.* 9.14).²⁴ In the course of this long discussion, the connection between music and cosmos (specifically referring to the cosmology of the myth of Er) comes up repeatedly and in various forms.²⁵ It is worthwhile to follow the course of the three speeches that touch upon this.

(1) In his first contribution to the discussion, 'Plutarch' starts from the ancient belief that there were three Muses instead of the conventional nine. This is an element he takes over from what his brother Lamprias said earlier (744c–f).²⁶ Lamprias, moreover, criticised traditional accounts that associated the Muses exclusively with music, thus incorrectly limiting their domain of influence. For this mistaken view, he cited some people (ἔνιοι) who believe that the reason for the number of Muses lies in the three types of melody (diatonic, chromatic, and enharmonic). The Delphians, moreover, went wrong in a similar way by naming the Muses after the notes that limit the main intervals of a scale (νήτη, μέση, and ὑπάτη).

'Plutarch' does not approve of his brother's attack on Delphic religion. Although Lamprias was right in pointing out that the Delphians call the Muses Νήτη (or Νεάτη), Μέση, and Ὑπάτη, he mistakenly concluded that this entails an exclusive association with music. Rather, the Muses Νεάτη, Μέση, and Ὑπάτη are named in accordance with the region of the cosmos over which they preside: the fixed stars, the planets,

²³ On music and musical terminology in *Quaest. conv.*, see Smits 1970: 82–88; García López 1999; 2002. On dance in *Quaest. conv.*, see also Martins de Jésus 2009. On *Quaest. conv.* 9.15 specifically, see Schlapbach 2011 (see also Schlapbach 2018: 25–74), who points out that Plutarch prefers a discourse about dancing to a dance performance.

²⁴ As Teodorsson 1996: 345 points out, this unusually long *quaestio* is the culmination point of the whole work. On *Quaest. conv.* 9.14, see also Smits 1970: 78–79; Van der Stockt 2009: 407–410; Klotz 2011: 171–177; Dillon 2014.

²⁵ Earlier in book nine (9.5), Ammonius and his guests discuss another aspect of the myth of Er: the fate of the soul of Ajax (*Resp.* 10.620b).

²⁶ There are, indeed, several attestations of three Muses instead of nine. However, Hesiod, who inspires this sympotic discussion, already mentions nine Muses (*Theog.* 75–79). See Teodorsson 1996: 353 for further references.

and the sublunary region, respectively.²⁷ These three regions are ‘all knit and ordered together in harmonious formulae’ (συνηρτηῖσθαι δὲ πάσας καὶ συντετάχθαι κατὰ λόγους ἑναρμονίους, 745b), but this harmony is not strictly musical. Even when ‘Plutarch’ draws on the myth of Er, the music of the spheres is not mentioned:

ὥς καὶ Πλάτων ἠνίξαστο τοῖς τῶν Μοιρῶν ὀνόμασιν τὴν μὲν Ἄτροπον <τὴν δὲ Κλωθῶ> τὴν δὲ Λάχεσιν προσαγορεύσας· ἐπεὶ ταῖς γε τῶν ὀκτῶ σφαιρῶν περιφοραῖς Σειρήνας οὐ Μούσας ἰσαριθμούς ἐπέστησεν. (*Quaest. conv.* 9.14.745b–c)

Plato, too, put this in a disguised form, calling them [i.e. the Muses] by the names of the Fates, Atropos, <Clotho>, and Lachesis; observe that it was Sirens, not Muses, that he set to preside over the revolutions of the eight spheres, one for each.

(2) Ammonius does not fully agree with his pupil’s interpretation of the myth of Er. According to his own interpretation of the myth and contrary to that of the young ‘Plutarch’, Plato did intend to identify the eight Sirens with the Muses, adding one additional Muse assigned to the earth.²⁸ After connecting the Sirens with the fate of souls in the afterlife, Ammonius describes their influence on our earthly life:²⁹

ἐνταῦθα δὲ πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἀμυδρά τις οἶον ἠχῶ τῆς μουσικῆς ἐκείνης ἐξικνουμένη διὰ λόγων ἐκκαλεῖται καὶ ἀναμιμνήσκει τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν τότε· <τὰ δ’ ὅτα τῶν> μὲν πλείστων περιαλήλιπται καὶ καταπέπλασται σαρκίνοις ἐμφράγμασι καὶ πάθεσιν, οὐ κηρίνοις· ἢ δὲ <δι’> εὐφυῖαν αἰσθάνεται καὶ μνημονεύει, καὶ τῶν ἐμμανεστάτων ἐρώτων οὐδὲν

²⁷ There seems to be a subtle yet significant difference between the two brothers’ takes on the process of name-giving. According to Lamprias’ account (744c; cf. 745a–b, where ‘Plutarch’ reiterates it), the Muses were named after the notes, which could suggest that sensible music precedes its divine overseer and that the latter is an imitation of the former instead of the other way around. In his own interpretation, ‘Plutarch’ seems to be careful to avoid the suggestion that the Muses were named after the cosmic regions (745b).

²⁸ In *Life of Pythagoras* 31, Porphyry, too, places Muses in charge of the cosmic spheres when describing Pythagoras’ experience of cosmic music. His distribution of the Muses is, however, understandably more Pythagorean. Ammonius appears to count, with *Tim.* 36d–38e in mind, the fixed stars and the seven wanderers (Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, Mercury, sun, moon), adding a ninth Muse for the earth. Porphyry, on the other hand, reports that Pythagoras assigned the ninth Muse to the counter-earth. See Boyancé 1946 for the occurrence of this theme in other sources.

²⁹ Cf. Viltanioti 2015: 64–66.

ἀποδεῖ τὸ πάθος αὐτῆς, γλιχομένης καὶ ποθούσης λῦσαί τε μὴ δυναμένης ἑαυτὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος. (*Quaest. conv.* 9.14.745e–f)

Here on earth a kind of faint echo of that music reaches us, and appealing to our souls through the medium of words, reminds them of what they experienced in an earlier existence. The ears of most souls, however, are plastered over and blocked up, not with wax, but with carnal obstructions and affections. But any soul that through innate gifts is aware of this echo, and remembers that other world, suffers what falls in no way short of the very maddest passions of love, longing and yearning to break the tie with the body, but unable to do so.

Here the music of the spheres is finally mentioned and it is couched in the language of Plato's *Phaedrus*.³⁰ In the *Phaedrus* (249d–252b) Plato describes how a small minority – the philosophers – succeed in using earthly beauty as a reminder of true beauty. Whereas Plato emphasises the vision of beauty, Plutarch's Ammonius transmits the experience to the hearing of music by postulating an earthly echo of the Muses' heavenly music. The paradoxical consequence of this adaptation is that the human reception of the Muses' heavenly music does not happen under the aegis of the Muses, who instil their own kind of madness in humans if we follow the *Phaedrus* (245a; 265b). Rather, the receiver of the song of the Muses experiences the madness called love, which in the *Phaedrus* is reserved for the philosopher. Accordingly, the earthly echo is perceived not as music but διὰ λόγων. Although this description remains vague, it seems that Ammonius, unlike others, was not thinking about the music of the spheres as a superior kind of sensible music caused by the mechanics of the heavenly bodies.³¹ The apparent departure from Plato's take on kinds of madness, then, turns out to be an endorsement of Plato's true intention: claiming the Muses for philosophy and establishing philosophy as the only true 'music'.³²

³⁰ Right after this, Ammonius remarks that he does not agree with all these statements (οὐ μὴν ἔγωγε παντάπασιν συμφέρομαι τούτοις, 745f). This should not be taken to refer to the part just quoted, but rather to the statements presented by the young 'Plutarch': Ammonius' distancing remark marks the transition from his defence of 'Plutarch's' interpretation (the Sirens are not inhumane, contrary to what one of the interlocutors objected in 745c–d) to the points where he disagrees (the Sirens are the Muses). On the role of *Phdr.*, see Teodorsson 1996: 364.

³¹ Contrast e.g. Maximus of Tyre, *Or.* 37.5; cf. Porphyry, *Life of Pythagoras* 30; Aristides Quintilianus, *On Music* 3.20. Aristotle, who himself did not believe in the music of the spheres, reports the explanation that we are not aware of the music due to our lifelong familiarity with it (*On the Heavens* 2.9.290b); cf. also Cicero, *Republic* 6.23 Powell.

³² Cf. Plato, *Phd.* 60d–61a with Murray 2002.

(3) Ammonius ends his contribution by emphasising its tentative character and invites the others to respond. This sparks the young ‘Plutarch’s’ second speech (746b–747a), in which he comes up with a third way of locating the Muses in the cosmos. After having expressed his own first impression that the Muses are the three Fates from Plato’s myth and having learned Ammonius’ view that they are the Sirens from the same myth, ‘Plutarch’ now concludes that the majority of the Muses should be assigned to earth, since the earthly realm is most in need of guidance. Therefore, only one Muse, Urania, is placed in the heavens. The eight others are given functions on earth. As in ‘Plutarch’s’ first speech, the work of the Muses is musical in a broad sense: this time, he points out that they correct the earthly *πλημμέλεια* and *ἀναρμοστία*. Music in the strict sense is the domain of only one Muse, Melpomene.³³ Conversely, while only Urania is occupied with the cosmos in the strict sense, the others are described as bringing cosmos in a more abstract sense: they *κοσμοῦσιν*; they bring order to human activities on earth. Melpomene, for instance, takes over the pleasure (*ἡδονή*) of the ears and turns it into enjoyment (*εὐφροσύνη*). Thus, the discussion closes with a wink to Plato’s *Timaeus* (80b), where music is said to bring mere *ἡδονή* to fools but *εὐφροσύνη* to the wise.

The sympotic discussion has followed a remarkable trajectory. In all three answers, the connection between music and the cosmos is confirmed, albeit only to a certain extent. What the answers have in common is that they all warn against excessive appreciation of music (a sensible phenomenon). In his first speech, the character ‘Plutarch’ introduces cosmology to drive a wedge between music and the divine: the names of the Muses do not refer to notes but to regions of the cosmos. Although the young ‘Plutarch’ invokes the myth of Er, he omits any reference to the tones emitted by the Sirens or the song sung by the Fates. Ammonius, then, comes close to embracing the music of the spheres, but he insists that the transference from heavenly harmony to earth does not happen by way of earthly music, but *διὰ λόγων*. His engagement with Plato’s *Phaedrus* suggests that this process points to the practice of philosophy and not to the practice of music. In his second attempt to solve the issue, ‘Plutarch’, as if pointing out the ultimate consequences of his teacher’s view, locates music firmly in the earthly realm.

The reader of Plutarch’s sympotic questions – and the same goes for his dialogues and other writings involving *quaestiones* – understandably feels inclined to pick one of the answers. This, however, is not how these zetetic writings work. Although the last answer usually seems to carry

³³ This may seem an odd choice, since Melpomene became known primarily as the Muse of tragedy, but ‘Plutarch’ is probably thinking about the connection between Melpomene and the verb *μέλω* (‘to sing’). Cf. Cornutus, *Greek Theology* p. 16.6–7 Lang.

the most weight, all answers contribute something valuable to the discussion.³⁴ In this case, the choice of the young ‘Plutarch’ as a character makes it particularly difficult to gauge the different positions. *On the E at Delphi* is another work where the young ‘Plutarch’ and his teacher express different opinions.³⁵ In that case, the author Plutarch appears to side with the teacher rather than with his younger self. The sympotic discussion could be a similar case. On the other hand, the young ‘Plutarch’ does get the last word in the debate about the Muses, whereas in *On the E at Delphi*, the teacher ends by correcting him. Moreover, in the last book of *Sympotic Questions*, Plutarch makes every effort to present his younger self as a star pupil.³⁶ In this regard, we cannot simply subordinate the pupil’s answer to the teacher’s, all the more so since the teacher asked for his contribution to be challenged and Plutarch’s reply points out the ultimate consequences of Ammonius’ general view.

A comparison with *On the Generation of the Soul* (1029c–d) might shed some light on this issue, since that work is supposed to provide us with Plutarch’s definitive views on the matters discussed therein (cf. *De an. procr.* 1012b). There, Plutarch gives an interpretation of the Sirens from Plato’s *Republic* that seems to confirm Ammonius’ take on the matter: both accounts connect Plato’s eight celestial Sirens with the nine Muses, adding one Muse to earth.³⁷ Before deciding that this is Plutarch’s preferred interpretation, however, we should take the context into account. One of the astronomical interpretations of the division of the cosmic soul connects the planets to notes on a musical scale and assigns ‘to earth the position of the *proslambanomenos*’ (γῆ μὲν τὴν τοῦ προσλαμβανομένου χώραν ἀποδιδόντες, *De an. procr.* 1028f), one tone below the *hypatê*, which would in turn correspond to the moon. Plutarch dismisses this interpretation by pointing out that the *proslambanomenos* as an addition to the scale *below* the *hypatê* is a modern invention (1029b–c). The ancients, including Plato, added the *proslambanomenos*

³⁴ See Opsomer 1996 for a discussion of Plutarch’s zetetic method applied to *Quaest. Plat.* The pervasiveness of the zetetic approach in Plutarch’s work can be gleaned from Opsomer 2010; Roskam 2011c; 2013; 2014a; 2017; 2021; Petrucci 2016b; Meeusen 2016: 84–92. Cf. also p. 223.

³⁵ Jones 1967: 206 estimates the dramatic date of *Quaest. conv.* 9 to be near to that of *De E.*

³⁶ König 2007: 52. Klotz 2011: 171–177 offers a discussion of *Quaest. conv.* 9.14 that focuses on his self-presentation as a model student, at the same time respectfully building upon and correcting his teacher’s answer. Cf. p. 78 n. 22 on the tension between self-promotion and self-effacement in *Quaest. conv.*

³⁷ Cf. Vernière 1977: 23–28.

to the *higher* end of the scale instead.³⁸ As Plutarch sees it, the story of the Sirens proves this (1029c–d).

The reason is that, in addition to the Sirens assigned to the seven wandering planets, Plato adds a Siren for the sphere of the fixed stars (corresponding to the higher end) and not for earth (corresponding to the lower end).³⁹ If the moon corresponds to the *hypatê*, Plato's *proslambanomenos* (an addition corresponding to the fixed stars) would indeed be to the higher end of the scale. However, instead of using his interpretation of Plato to correct the cosmic scale, Plutarch suddenly advises against the endeavour as a whole: instead of trying to map the structures of sensible music onto the structure of the physical cosmos, it is better to focus on the imperceptible harmony of the cosmic soul (1029d–e). One can see how, given his literal interpretation of the cosmogony of the *Timaeus*, Plutarch would disagree with the chronology implied by the story of the Sirens. In that story, harmony arises out of the tones chanted by the Sirens, who are carried around by the heavenly spheres (1029c). What Plutarch emphasises instead is that 'concordant ratios' (τοῖς καθ' ἁρμονίαν λόγοις) precede and cause the 'harmonic motions' (ἔμμελείαις καὶ κινήσεσιν) of the cosmic soul, rendering her 'concordant and docile' (σύμφωνον [...] καὶ πειθήνιον) (1029d–e).⁴⁰ The idea that harmony precedes the movements of heaven, then, amounts to a refutation of the interpretation of the story of the Sirens that is presented in *On the Generation of the Soul*.⁴¹ According to this interpretation, the story is an attempt to map musical notions (i.e. the names of the notes) onto the structure of the cosmic soul. Plutarch's criticism of such attempts once again points to the fundamental difference between divine harmony and earthly music and favours an interpretation like the one advocated by the young 'Plutarch' at the end of the sympotic discussion: music is an earthly matter.

Both in the *Sympotic Questions* and in *On the Generation of the Soul*, then, the 'Ammonius-style' interpretation of the story of the Sirens is followed by a critical account that warns against exaggerating the importance of music. Both accounts, moreover, emphasise the need of correction on earth. The young 'Plutarch', as we saw, assigns the majority of

³⁸ See e.g. Barker 2007: 12–18 for a concise introduction to names of scales and notes.

³⁹ Cf. Helmer 1937: 62.

⁴⁰ The idea that the soul *partakes* in harmony (e.g. *Quaest. Plat.* 2.1001c; 4.1003a; *De an. procr.* 1014e; 1016b quoting *Tim.* 36e–37a) without *being* harmony (*De an. procr.* 1013d referring to *Phd.* 92a–95a; cf. 1024e) similarly suggests harmony's priority within the framework of Plutarch's exegesis of *Tim.* Cf. also the discussion of 'comparison 1' in the previous section.

⁴¹ For a somewhat different interpretation of how the story of the Sirens in *Quaest. conv.* relates to the version in *De an. procr.*, see Opsomer 2009b: 139.

the Muses to earth as guides for human endeavours. The rest of the cosmos can make do with only one Muse, since the heavenly bodies ‘do not need much or varied guidance’ (μὴ πολλῆς μηδὲ ποικίλης κυβερνήσεως δεῖσθαι, *Quaest. conv.* 9.14.746b). Similarly, in *On the Generation of the Soul*, Plutarch points out that, while the cosmic soul is not entirely error-free, since it contains a maleficent element in the form of divisible being (1026e–1027a), it is less prone to aberrations than the human soul (1025c–d).

The young ‘Plutarch’s’ suggestion that music and the other works of the Muses are of a corrective, therapeutic nature fits in with Plutarch’s general thought on the role of music. As we have seen in the previous section, music is cosmic only in the context of imagery. Music comes to the rescue, for instance, at a symposium where the conversations are ‘disorderly’ (ἄτακτοι, *Quaest. conv.* 9.1.736e) – a word denoting chaos in the *Timaeus* (30a; 43b; 46e).⁴² Fortunately, someone starts singing to the lyre and the party becomes a cosmos again. Immediately, the music fades to the background and the calmed guests start a λόγος prompted by the appropriateness of the words just sung (736e–737b). As soon as music has done its work, it has to yield to philosophy.

3. *Divine harmony on earth? The limits of inspiration*

In the previous section, we have seen how Plutarch’s teacher Ammonius, channelling Plato’s *Phaedrus*, described his understanding of the harmony of the spheres in terms of the philosopher’s erotic madness instead of appealing to musical madness proper. In this last section, I will briefly consider if any trace remains of this traditional notion of divinely inspired music and how this notion is evaluated by Plutarch.

In the *Dialogue on Love*, Plutarch once again draws on the *Phaedrus* to construct his own classification of kinds of enthusiasm. Faithfully following Plato, Plutarch distinguishes prophetic enthusiasm (attributed to Apollo), mystic enthusiasm (Dionysus), musical or poetic enthusiasm (the Muses), and finally the best kind of enthusiasm, which is connected to Aphrodite and Eros (*Amat.* 758e–759a).⁴³ After giving a brief over-

⁴² Of course, the word ἄτακτος does not necessarily imply a reference to cosmological vocabulary, let alone to *Tim.* However, as I shall argue later (p. 100–120), Plutarch sees the symposium as an image of the Platonic cosmos and, accordingly, often uses cosmological vocabulary to describe it, while consciously making it difficult to distinguish between the cosmological and everyday use of certain words.

⁴³ Interestingly, although it does not pertain to our current purpose, Plutarch adds war-related enthusiasm (attributed to Ares) between musical and erotic madness. The fact that the comparison between Eros and Ares is a recurring theme in *Amat.* (757c–e, 759e, 760d–761e) may have something to do with this addition; cf. Valverde Sánchez 2004.

view of this classification, Plutarch works his way back through the list, giving more details about each kind (759a–b). However, the madness that was said to be responsible for ‘poetic and musical creation’ is suspiciously absent from this otherwise tidy elaboration. Once again, we might be tempted to think that Plutarch was being sloppy. Once again, I would like to suggest a different explanation: Plutarch had his doubts about musical creation being a divinely inspired activity.⁴⁴

To make sense of this, we can turn to Plutarch’s *On the Oracles of the Pythia*. In this dialogue, the discussion about the apparently disappointing literary quality of contemporary oracles contains a more general theory on the nature of artistic inspiration. The difference between the past, when oracles were mostly delivered as poetry and music (ἐν μέτροις καὶ μέλεσι, *De Pyth. or.* 402d; cf. 405d), and the present cannot be explained by referring to Apollo. In other words, the musical aspect of the oracle (or the lack thereof) is not part of the divine inspiration. Whether the oracles are accompanied by music depends on the nature and the education of the Pythia.

It seems obvious that at least some degree of natural talent and musical education are necessary to be able to compose and play music. Still, by pointing this out, Plutarch is going against Plato’s description of musical madness, which seizes ‘a tender virgin soul’ (ἀπαλήν καὶ ἄβατον ψυχὴν, *Phdr.* 245a; also quoted by Plutarch in *Amat.* 758f). It is precisely because she has a ‘virgin soul’ (παρθένος ὡς ἀληθῶς τὴν ψυχὴν) that the Pythia cannot be expected to express the oracles ‘in verse of a grandiloquent and formal style with verbal metaphors and with an aulos to accompany its delivery’ (ἐν μέτρῳ καὶ ὄγκῳ καὶ πλάσματι καὶ μεταφοραῖς ὀνομάτων καὶ μετ’ αὐλοῦ φθεγγομένην, *De Pyth. or.* 405d). For Plutarch, musical composition is a τέχνη (cf. 404f; 405a), not a passive or unconscious experience.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ I would attribute the absence of any justification of these doubts to the fact that this would be out of place in a more or less doxographic enumeration. Moreover, this particular absence has no bearing on the general theme of the work: Plutarch just wants to get to erotic madness.

⁴⁵ After quoting Euripides’ verses ‘Love doth the poet teach, / Even though he know naught of the Muse before’ (ποιητὴν δ’ ἄρα / Ἔρως διδάσκει, κἄν ἄμουσος ἦ τὸ πρὶν), Plutarch explains that ‘Love does not implant in one the poetical or musical faculty, but when it is already existent in one, Love stirs it to activity and makes it fervent, while before it was unnoticed and idle’ (ποιητικὴν καὶ μουσικὴν Ἔρως δύναμιν οὐκ ἐντίθησιν, ἐνυπάρχουσαν δὲ κινεῖ καὶ ἀναθερμαίνει λανθάνουσαν καὶ ἀργοῦσαν, *De Pyth. or.* 405f). *Quaest. conv.* 1.5 is concerned with the interpretation of the same lines; see Smits 1970: 52–54; Roskam 2013. On τέχνη in Plutarch, see Van der Stockt 1992a. An amusing anecdote that suggests that not only composing music but also listening to music is a question of expertise rather than inspiration or feeling appears in *De aud.* 46b: Plutarch tells how a member of a chorus once received a firm talking-to from Euripides. The man had burst into laughter during the rehearsal of a song in the solemn Mixolydian

What happens when Apollo inspires an oracle is the following: the god uses the soul of the Pythia as an instrument (ὄργανον). The Pythia, in turn, uses her voice and her body to express the oracle in a manner suited to her own nature and capabilities, in the form of music or otherwise (*De Pyth. or.* 404b–405d).⁴⁶ As Holzhausen has shown, this ὄργανον theory of inspiration is thoroughly influenced by Plato’s cosmology: the soul of the Pythia serves as the matter, the receptacle which receives the ideas from god.⁴⁷ Now, ‘the virtue of an instrument is to conform as exactly as possible to the purpose of the agent’ (ὄργανου δ’ ἀρετὴ μάλιστα μιμεῖσθαι τὸ χρώμενον, 404b). This process of μίμησις brings with it an unavoidable contamination by the nature of the medium (i.e. matter in the case of the demiurge’s cosmogonic work; the Pythia in the case of the god’s oracular work). Any musical aspect of the Pythia’s oracles is situated in this contaminating layer of the process.

With this, we are back at the comparison between the demiurge and the musician. Like the demiurge, the god who inspires the Pythia’s oracles is compared to someone who plays a musical instrument.⁴⁸ In both cases, however, Plutarch makes it abundantly clear that this comparison should not be taken at face value. A musician is at best an εἰκών of the god: his music is always a contaminated reflection of the divine. Music, then, is not the direct result of enthusiasm. Conversely, it would be foolish to believe that ecstasy evoked by music could forge a *direct* connection with the divine. Ecstasy should, therefore, be avoided. For Plutarch, music is a sensible phenomenon. It is, for better or worse, a μίμησις of divine harmony in mortal movement (*Tim.* 80b), a mediated connection with the divine.

4. Concluding remarks

‘[W]hat truly organizes music in the West is the tension between the inescapable body and the West’s deep-seated need to control or transcend that body through intellectual idealism’.⁴⁹ Plutarch’s thoughts on music are an interesting example of how this tension can be embraced rather than ignored through an exclusive focus on one of the two poles. Plutarch

mode, for which Euripides scolded him for being ‘stupid and ignorant’ (ἀναίσθητος [...] καὶ ἀμαθής). Cf. *De sera num.* 549e; *Quaest. conv.* 7.8.711c.

⁴⁶ The idea that the soul is the instrument of the gods, and the body the instrument of the soul, occurs several times in Plutarch; see Holzhausen 1993: 83 n. 38.

⁴⁷ Holzhausen 1993: 83–91. On the connections between cosmology and divination in Plutarch, see also Simonetti 2017. On the role of φθόγγος in Plutarch’s thoughts on divination, see Crippa 2009.

⁴⁸ Cf. also *De def. or.* 436e–f.

⁴⁹ McClary 1995: 83

does not deny the connection between music and what transcends the body. This connection, however, comes in the form of an εικόν, which entails both potential and limitedness. Music is placed squarely in the sensible realm: divine harmony and music should not be confused. Hence, overemphasising the importance of music, for example, by considering it a divinely inspired activity instead of a mere τέχνη, is as dangerous as neglecting it.⁵⁰ The benefit of this approach is that Plutarch's Platonic philosophy, although it is certainly idealistic in some sense, leaves room for music as it is experienced in tradition and culture.⁵¹ Plutarch's particular brand of Platonism, then, allows him to avoid the 'sacrifice of the sensible component',⁵² which is the ultimate consequence of Plato's view on music as voiced in *Republic* 7. Like observing the cosmos – as the second part of *On the Generation of the Soul* shows time and again – listening to music is fine, but we should remember that, while it gets us on our way, it does not get us to our destination by itself.

By way of conclusion, it is useful briefly to return to the passage from the *Timaeus* (47a–e) with which I started this chapter and to endeavour a more precise explanation of how Plutarch understood it. If we take the *Timaeus* at face value without imposing Plutarch's interpretation, music is received by the *rational* soul, a compound of being, sameness, and difference.⁵³ This rational soul is what the demiurge forged with the ingredients which were left over from his work on the cosmic soul. Having forged rational soul, he handed it over to the younger gods who added irrational soul and mortal body (*Tim.* 41d–42e, 69c–70b).⁵⁴ Plutarch, however, in his search for consistency across Platonic dialogues, ends up with a far stricter parallel between cosmic and human soul: in both cases the element of difference is associated with irrationality (*De virt. mor.* 441e–442a).⁵⁵ This has a consequence for how music, which as a sensible phenomenon is grasped by difference (*Tim.* 37a–c), enters the soul:

⁵⁰ In *Per.* 1.5, Plutarch quotes Antisthenes, who, upon hearing someone being described as an excellent aulos player, responded: 'But he's a worthless man, otherwise he wouldn't be so good a piper' ('ἀλλ' ἄνθρωπος' ἔφη 'μοχθηρός· οὐ γὰρ ἂν οὕτω σπουδαῖος ἦν ἀληθής'). This is followed by an anecdote about Alexander the Great being criticised by his father for playing beautifully: he should not devote himself to such trifles; the Muses should be more than pleased already if he deigns to listen to music. See Bowie 2004: 120. On music in the *Lives*, see also García López 2003; 2005.

⁵¹ Smits 1970 provides many examples of this.

⁵² Pelosi 2010: 112; cf. 114–151.

⁵³ Pelosi 2010: 91–111.

⁵⁴ Cf. e.g. Karfík 2005.

⁵⁵ See Opsomer 2012: 314 for a charitable interpretation of Plutarch's endeavour. Cf. also Helmig 2005a: 21 on the suppression of the role of the younger gods in the account of vision in *De sera num.* 550d–e.

on Plutarch's account it is possible for music to be received primarily by the irrational, although there is always some degree of combination of rational and irrational (cf. *De an. procr.* 1024f–1025a).⁵⁶ This may explain why, in the sympotic discussion about the Muses, the young 'Plutarch' refuses to decide whether the pleasure of music 'belongs mainly to reason or to emotion or is their common property' (*Quaest. conv.* 9.14.746f).

In another sympotic debate, which deals with the appropriateness of 'things heard' (ἀκροάματα) at dinner, a speech by 'Plutarch' gives us some insight into how Plutarch's views on music may have been put into practice (*Quaest. conv.* 7.8).⁵⁷ 'Plutarch' starts by defending the presence of lyre and aulos at the symposium on the grounds of tradition. It quickly becomes clear, however, that there are important restrictions. The lyre should avoid dirges and laments and stick to soothing, innocuous songs (εὐφημα). Similarly, the aulos is welcome as long as it 'keeps due measure, and avoids emotional display, so as not to rouse into ecstasy' (τὸ μέτριον διαφυλάττει μὴ παθαινόμενος μηδ' ἀνασοβῶν καὶ παρεξιστᾶς, *Quaest. conv.* 7.8.713a). It is clear that the ecstasy that 'Plutarch' associates with music has nothing to do with divine inspiration leading to enthusiasm. 'Plutarch' seems to fear the bad influence of music more than is strictly warranted by *Timaeus* 47c–e. As *Timaeus* has it, the effect of the majority's using music for 'irrational pleasure' (ἐφ' ἡδονὴν ἄλογον) is probably just that music falls on deaf ears because it is not understood.⁵⁸ For 'Plutarch', however, the difference between good and bad seems to lie not only in the approach of the listener but also in the nature of the music that is played. This ties in with Plutarch's particular interpretation of how the soul receives sensory information through its irrational part, which can thus easily be targeted.⁵⁹ It also relates to Plutarch's doubts about music as divine inspiration (discussed in section 3 of this chapter): in the case of music, ecstasy should not be trusted.

Instead of rousing into ecstasy, the symposiast 'Plutarch' goes on, aulos and lyre should be used to calm down the part of the soul that 'has no notion of reason and no response to it' (ἀξύνετον λόγου καὶ ἀνήκοον,

⁵⁶ Cf. p. 62 n. 85 on Plutarch's disregard for Plato's distinction between difference as an ingredient of soul and the circle of difference. On the combination of bi- and tripartition of the soul, see Opsomer 2012: 319–325.

⁵⁷ On this *quaestio* and how it relates to the culture of Plutarch's time, see Pernigotti 2009.

⁵⁸ Cf. Pelosi 2010: 95–96.

⁵⁹ Cf. also *De coh. ira* 456b–c; *Quaest. conv.* 3.8.657a. However, as *De vit. pud.* 534e–f shows (cf. also *An virt. doc.* 439c, both quoting *Clitophon* 407c–d, which Plutarch regarded as a genuine Platonic work, cf. p. 24 n. 16), the danger of music should not be overestimated: it is not musical discord that causes conflict but discord (πλημμέλεια) in law and justice. On musical imagery in Plutarch's political thought, see Mosconi 2009.

713b).⁶⁰ On Plutarch's interpretation of the workings of the human soul, it makes perfect sense, indeed, to associate the therapeutic effect of music (discussed in section 2) with the irrational part of the soul. That this is how Plutarch understood *Timaeus* 47c–e, where music is called 'an ally in the fight to bring order to any orbit in our souls that has become unharmonized' (ἐπὶ τὴν γεγυυῖαν ἐν ἡμῖν ἀνάρμοστον ψυχῆς περίοδον εἰς κατακόσμησιν καὶ συμφωνίαν ἑαυτῆι σύμμαχος), is clear from his paraphrase of the passage in *On Superstition* (167b–c), where music is targeted at the 'disturbing and errant' (τὸ παραχῶδες καὶ πεπλανημένον) part of the embodied soul. Elsewhere, for instance in the retellings of the myth of Er, it is the irrational part of the soul that is described in these terms.⁶¹ By understanding musical therapy in this sense, Plutarch goes beyond the *Timaeus*. His interpretation, however, may well be able to recover some Platonic elements that are otherwise hard to reconcile with the *Timaeus*, such as the musical education described in *Republic* 2–3 and *Laws* 2 and 7, which engages to a much greater extent with the non-rational parts of the soul.⁶²

A consequence of this view on musical therapy – and this is a third point made in the sympotic discussion on ἀκροάματα – is that it would be plain wrong to introduce musical entertainment if no therapy is needed, that is, if a symposium is already guided by philosophical discourse (713d–f).⁶³ Even if music is introduced, words should always accompany it. In a consciously controversial statement, 'Plutarch' bans instrumental music from the table.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ A similar calming effect of music is described in *De sup.* 167b–c (with Van der Stockt 2009: 402–407); cf. also *De virt. mor.* 441e on Pythagoras. In *Quaest. conv.* 7.5, on the other hand, a discussion about the dangers of arousing music ensues after an aulos performance has gotten out of hand; see Smits 1970: 54–57; Barker 2016; 2018.

⁶¹ *Quaest. conv.* 9.14.746a; *De an. procr.* 1029d; *De virt. mor.* 444a. Cf. *De an. procr.* 1014c, 1026c. Both *Quaest. conv.* 9.14.746b and *De sup.* 167c quote Pindar, *Pythian Odes* 1.13–14.

⁶² See e.g. Lippman 1964: 45–86; Pelosi 2010: 14–67.

⁶³ On the function of philosophy at the symposium, see esp. *Quaest. conv.* 1.1. Cf. *Con. praec.* 143d, as well as the previous question of *Quaest. conv.* (7.7), where the issue of the aulos player, sent away in Plato's *Symp.* (176e) and belittled in *Prt.* (347c–e), is brought up. The character Plutarch does not take part in this question, which is a discussion between two Stoics.

⁶⁴ With the untranslated particle (οὐ) μήν, with which this passage begins, 'the character-narrator anticipates (and contradicts) the possible conclusions that his addressee(s) may draw from the facts presented earlier' (Wakker 1997: 223; cf. Denniston 1954: 28–30). Aristotle, for one, seems to allow for purely instrumental music (*Pol.* 1339b20–21). Plato's stance is more complicated. In *Leg.* 669d–670a the Athenian warns against instrumental music, not because it lacks the potential of beneficial expression, but because

οὐ μὴν ἀλλ' εἰ <δεῖ> τό γ' ἐμοὶ φαινόμενον εἰπεῖν, οὔτ' ἂν αὐλοῦ ποτε καθ' αὐτὸν οὔτε λύρας μέλει χωρὶς λόγου καὶ ᾠδῆς ἐπιτρέψαιμι τὸ συμπόσιον ὥσπερ ρεύματι φέρειν ὑπολαμβάνοντι· δεῖ γὰρ οὔτως ἐθίζειν καὶ σπουδάζοντας <καὶ παίζοντας>, ὥστε καὶ τὰς ἡδονὰς ἐκ λόγου λαμβάνειν καὶ τὰς διατριβὰς ἐν λόγῳ ποιεῖσθαι, τὸ δὲ μέλος καὶ τὸν ρυθμὸν ὥσπερ ὄψον ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ καὶ μὴ καθ' αὐτὰ προσφέρεσθαι μηδὲ λιχνεύειν. (*Quaest. conv.* 7.8.713b–c)

If I may express my own opinion, I should never commit a party to the music of aulos or lyre by itself without words to be sung, as if it were committed to the whim of a stream on which it floats. We must form the habit, whether working or playing, of enjoying the words and including words in our pastimes. We should regard melody and rhythm as a sauce so to speak, added to the words, rather than use or prize them for their own sake. [tr. slightly modified]

In the end, it does not even seem to matter much whether these words are sung: in whatever form, they should be omnipresent in our lives. These words (λόγος), not the music itself, appeal to ‘our rational part’ (τὸν ἐν ἡμῖν λόγον, 713c). Plato’s *Timaeus* states, indeed, that, as regards the benefits of hearing, speech plays a bigger part (τὴν μεγίστην μοῖραν, *Tim.* 47c) than music itself, but he seems to conceive of these respective benefits as independent from each other. Plutarch, however, sees words as an essential part of music and has little faith in purely instrumental music. Music may be an image of divine harmony, but words are how we learn about that harmony.⁶⁵

In this respect, as in many other respects, Plutarch is fundamentally opposed to the Stoics, who give a much more elevated role to music – in some ways more in line, perhaps, with an isolated reading of *Timaeus* – as a rational phenomenon that ‘can represent the structure of the divine in terms of its underlying ratios, rather than just *describing* that structure in words’.⁶⁶ For Plutarch, who, contrary to the Stoics, insists on a firm distinction between the sensible and the intelligible, giving music such an elevated role would both underestimate the divine and overestimate human capability. However, as usual Plutarch also found himself

this kind of expression is much harder to understand for humans; see Pelosi 2010: 59–62, 197. ‘Plutarch’ seems to have slightly different reasons: he treats instrumental music not as something that is (too) hard to understand, but as something that, by itself, cannot be an object of understanding.

⁶⁵ Cf. *De tuenda* 133f: τὸ περὶ αὐλοῦ τι καὶ λύρας ἀκοῦσαι καὶ εἰπεῖν ἐλαφρότερον ἢ λύρας αὐτῆς φθεγγομένης ἀκούειν καὶ αὐλοῦ. (‘[I]t is less onerous to exchange opinions about an aulos and a lyre than to listen to the sound of the aulos and the aulos itself.’)

⁶⁶ Scade 2017: 209 (original emphasis) on Cleanthes.

in disagreement with the other side of the philosophical spectrum. In the anti-Epicurean dialogue *That Epicurus Actually Makes a Pleasant Life Impossible* (1095c–1096c), the character Theon, an intellectual ally of Plutarch's, criticises Epicurus for banning music from the symposium. On closer inspection, however, what Theon recommends are *discussions* about music instead of music itself.⁶⁷

Plutarch's verdict is clear: once philosophy enters the stage, the orchestra should fall silent. If listening to music is contrasted with debating the real issues of philosophy, as it is in the sympotic question on ἀκροάματα, Plutarch is bent on stressing its limitedness. A similar thing occurs when, in the second part of *On the Generation of the Soul*, he sets observing the cosmos against enquiring into the nature of the cosmic soul. This should not obscure the fact that both activities also have great potential, since they are concerned with εἰκόνες of the divine. The closing statement of *On the Generation of the Soul*, with which I started the analysis of the comparison between the demiurge and the musician (section I of this chapter), elegantly captures both the potential and the limitedness of these activities. Like observing the visible cosmos, listening to music is a first, crucial step towards what lies beyond: music can indirectly point us to divine harmony, which accounts for the beauty and goodness of the cosmos in which we live and offers us a chance to act as imitators of the demiurge by expressing ourselves an image of this harmony.

⁶⁷ *Non posse* 1095c: προβλήμασι [...] μουσικοῖς; μουσικῶν καὶ ποιητικῶν προβλημάτων; 1095e: περὶ συμφωνιῶν διαλεγόμενου; 1096a: κριτικῶν καὶ μουσικῶν λαλιάν; 1095a: οἱ περὶ χορῶν λόγοι καὶ διδασκαλιῶν καὶ τὰ διαύλων προβλήματα καὶ ῥυθμῶν καὶ ἁρμονιῶν; 1095a–c: several examples of such musical topics for discussion); cf. Van der Stockt 2009: 410–413. On Plutarch's criticism of Epicurean disdain for matters of music, see also *Non posse* 1094f–1095a with Jufresa 2001. Cf. n. 23 on *Quaest. conv.* 9.15.

Chapter 3

Symposium

When the learned banqueters, who populate the enormous sympotic work by Athenaeus of Naucratis, are served a pig that is half-roasted and half-stewed, the cook launches into an extensive speech. Since he appears in Athenaeus' Second Sophistic world, nobody bats an eye when the cook launches into an extempore declamation on his novel recipe, spiced with many verses of Greek poetry on cooking and served with philological comments on some of the quotations (9.376c–381e).¹ The guests are as satisfied with the speech as they are with the pig, and the host is relieved that the cook hit the right pitch. After all, having a rhetorical cook could also backfire, as appears from the story he goes on to tell about a fellow citizen:

[...] τοὺς τοῦ θαυμασιωτάτου Πλάτωνος διαλόγους ἠνάγκαζεν ἐκμανθάνοντας τοὺς μαγείρους φέροντάς τε τὰς λοπάδας ἅμα λέγειν, “εἷς, δύο, τρεῖς· ὁ δὲ δὴ τέταρτος ἡμῖν, ὦ φίλε Τίμαιε, ποῦ τῶν χθῆς μὲν δαιτυμόνων, τὰ νῦν δ’ ἐστιατόρων;” ἔπειτ’ ἄλλος ἀπεκρίνατο, “ἀσθένειά τις αὐτῷ ξυνέπεσεν, ὦ Σώκρατες.” διεξήρχοντό τε τοῦ διαλόγου τὰ πολλὰ τὸν τρόπον τοῦτον, ὡς ἄχθεσθαι μὲν τοὺς εὐωχομένους, ὑβρίζεσθαι δὲ τὸν πάνσοφον ἐκεῖνον ἄνθρωπον ὀσημέραι, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πολλοὺς τῶν καθαρείων ἐξόμνυσθαι τὰς παρ’ ἐκείνῳ ἐστιάσεις. (Athenaeus 9.381f–382a)

[H]e used to force his cooks to memorize the dialogues of the marvellous Plato! And when they brought in the casserole-dishes, he would make them say: ‘One, two, three – my good Timaeus, where is our fourth dinner-guest from yesterday, these men who are now our hosts?’ And then another cook would answer: ‘He got sick, Socrates’ [Pl., *Tim.* 17a]. They made their way through much of the dialogue this way, and the result was that the people attending the feast got bored and the brilliant individual responsible was insulted on a daily basis; as a consequence, many sophisticated people swore off attending his banquets.

¹ In his encore (9.382b–383e), the cook himself remarks that ‘[i]t is striking how genuinely devoted to serious research and matters of vocabulary the majority of cooks are’ (περίεργον δ’ ἐστὶν ὡς ἀληθῶς τὸ πολὺ τῶν μαγείρων γένος περὶ τε τὰς ἱστορίας καὶ τὰ ὀνόματα, 9.383b). On the role of cooks in the *Learned Banqueters*, reflecting the traditional comic character of the cook as *ἀλαζών* (cf. Wilkins 2000), see Lukinovich 1990: 267 n. 18.

Apparently, putting on a full *Timaeus* recital was considered bad party behaviour. At least one of Plutarch's friends would seem to disagree. In the discussion about appropriate dinner-time entertainment, with which we concluded the previous chapter, a certain Diogenianus proposes to introduce dramatisations of Platonic dialogues to the symposium (εἰς τὰ συμπόσια, *Quaest. conv.* 7.8.711b).² This, he explains, had become *en vogue* in Rome, but the new fashion had not yet reached Plutarch's rural hometown Chaeronea.³ He adds that the practice has many critics. One of these critics turns out to be present at Plutarch's party: Philip the Stoic⁴ begins a speech against 'those who thought fit to regard Plato as a bibulous pastime' (τῶν ἀξιούντων Πλάτωνα διαγωγὴν ἐν οἴνῳ ποιεῖσθαι, 711d), but he checks himself – as is fit at a Plutarchan symposium – for he fears that his reply might turn into a serious rant instead of a playful rebuttal (μετὰ σπουδῆς τινος οὐ παιδιᾶς, 711d). Diogenianus, a true gentleman, commends Philip for this and changes the subject to defuse the situation. We never hear 'Plutarch's' take on this particular matter, although at the end of the discussion, he unsurprisingly endorses sympotic entertainment through philosophical discourse (διὰ λόγου καὶ φιλοσοφίας ἀλλήλους εὐφραίνειν, 713d), as we have seen.⁵

And indeed, although cooks do not recite Plato's dialogues in the *Sympotic Questions*, Plato's *Timaeus* is prominently present at Plutarch's table.⁶ We have already seen how the discussion on the harmony of the

² See Charalabopoulos 2012: 197–226 for a painstaking discussion of what Athenaeus and Plutarch thought about Platonic theatre. Jacob 2013: 15–18 gives a good impression of the differences between Plutarch's and Athenaeus' symposia; cf. also Romeri 2002; König 2012: esp. 30–39. When discussing *Quaest. conv.*, I will not be concerned with the distinction between the dinner and the symposium, since by Plutarch's time, this distinction had lost its significance; on this evolution, see Lynch 2018.

³ That Plutarch lets the discussion take place in his hometown is clear, since he connects it to the previous question, which he had set in Chaeronea (7.7.710b).

⁴ We know Philip's philosophical allegiance from the previous discussion (*Quaest. conv.* 7.7.710b), where he, although a Stoic himself, opposes an apparently more radical Stoic sophist (σοφιστὴν ἀπὸ τῆς Στοᾶς).

⁵ Contra Jones 1971: 122 ('Plutarch condemns the staging of Plato's dialogues'). See p. 78 n. 22 on the importance of distinguishing between the character 'Plutarch' and the authorial voice Plutarch in *Quaest. conv.*

⁶ Frazier in Frazier and Sirinelli 1996: 177–207 and Sirinelli 2000: 366–393 give good impressions of the richness and the *Sitz im Leben* of *Quaest. conv.* The work has enjoyed due attention in recent scholarship; see esp. Klotz and Oikonomopoulou 2011b and also Romeri 2002; König 2007; 2012; Ferreira et al. 2009; Vamvouri Ruffy 2012; Klotz 2014. Specifically on Plutarch's place (and conscious self-positioning) in the tradition of the literary symposium, see e.g. Klotz and Oikonomopoulou 2011a: 12–18; cf. also Bolkestein 1946: 1–19; Relihan 1992; Teodorsson 2009; Hobden 2013: 229–234. Cf.

spheres in Plato's myth of Er takes a distinctly cosmological turn and ends with a reference to the *Timaeus* (*Quaest. conv.* 9.14; see p. 82). A discussion on chronological coincidences, sparked by two consecutive days of celebration in remembrance of Socrates' and Plato's birthdays, turns into a debate about Plato's allegedly divine birth⁷ and ends with the observation that we should not take Plato's description of the demiurge as 'father and maker of the cosmos and of other created things' (πατέρα καὶ ποιητὴν τοῦ τε κόσμου καὶ τῶν ἄλλων γεννητῶν τὸν ἀγέννητον καὶ αἰδίδιον θεὸν, *Quaest. conv.* 8.1.718a) to refer to a parenthood in the everyday, physical sense.⁸ This reference to *Timaeus* 28c receives a full exegesis in the second *Platonic Question* (see p. 271 n. 284). The discussion on the fate of Ajax in the myth of Er (*Quaest. conv.* 9.5), on the other hand, does not seem to depend on the *Timaeus* specifically, but Plutarch's brother Lamprias claims to find the three causes εἰμαρμένη, τύχη, and ἐφ' ἡμῖν everywhere in Plato, and we will later see how this fits in with the *Timaeus*-based framework of *On Tranquillity of Mind* (p. 191).

Two discussions engage more thoroughly with the cosmology of the *Timaeus*.⁹ (1) A debate on what Plato meant 'when he asserted that God is always doing geometry' (τίνα λαβῶν γνώμην ἀπεφήνατ' <ἀεὶ>

Amato 2005 on Second Sophistic symposia. On the symposium and sympotic literature in general, the literature has become vast, especially since Murray 1990, which is still indispensable (cf. also Murray 2003); Hobden 2013 is an excellent recent account.

⁷ Cf. *Per.* 8.2; *De cap. ex inim.* 90c. Cf. Boys-Stones 2018: 33 for aspects of this in other Middle Platonists.

⁸ Cf. Ferrari 1995a: 130.

⁹ Unfortunately, we only have the titles of two possible further instances: the debate on 'why days named after the planets are arranged in a different order from the planetary positions; also on the position of the sun' (διὰ τί τὰς ὁμωνόμους τοῖς πλάνησιν ἡμέρας οὐ κατὰ τὴν ἐκείνων τάξιν ἀλλ' ἐνηλλαγμένως ἀριθμοῦσιν· ἐν ᾧ καὶ περὶ ἡλίου τάξεως, *Quaest. conv.* 4.7) and the question entitled 'Since the ecliptic periods of sun and moon are equal, why is the moon seen to be eclipsed more frequently than the sun?' (διὰ τί, τῶν ἐκλειπτικῶν περιόδων ἡλίου καὶ σελήνης ἰσαριθμῶν οὐσῶν, ἡ σελήνη φαίνεται πλεονάκις ἐκλείπουσα τοῦ ἡλίου, *Quaest. conv.* 9.10). We should keep in mind that these titles do not trace back to Plutarch; Hubert 1938: 3: 'Tituli in codicibus quaestionibus praescripti et in indicibus singulorum librorum conserti [...] non ab auctore scripti (cf. e.g. 612f, 629d, 645c/d, 660d, 686e) neque omnes ad argumenta accurate accommodati sunt (e.g. I 6, VIII 4. 6) [...]'. Cf. also Hubert 1938: xix; Fuhrmann 1972: xxxiv. Moreover, too much of *Quaest. conv.* 9.12.741c–d is lost to be able to say anything about its possibly cosmological content. According to the title, the question was 'whether it is more plausible that the total number of the stars is even than that it is odd' (Πότερόν ἐστι πιθανώτερον τὸ ἀρτίους εἶναι τοὺς σύμπαντας ἀστέρας ἢ περιττούς).

γεωμετρεῖν τὸν θεόν, *Quaest. conv.* 8.2.718c¹⁰) once again reminds us of the fact that Platonic intertextuality is not a straightforward matter in Plutarch: the dinner guests are aware that Plato never wrote that in so many words (γέγραπται ἐν οὐδενὶ σαφῶς τῶν ἐκείνου βυβλίων), but since the saying has sufficient πίστις and is in keeping with Plato's character (τοῦ Πλατωνικοῦ χαρακτῆρός ἐστιν), they proceed as if Plato actually said it (718c). At the end of the discussion, the character 'Plutarch' subsumes the earlier interventions, which he judges to conform to the criterion of τὸ εἰκός, into an explanation of the three cosmological principles found in the *Timaeus*: god, matter, and form.¹¹ The demiurge's geometry, then, consists of the creation of a proportionate middle term (the cosmos) between the forms and matter, having the quality (οἶον) of the former and the quantity (ὅσον) of the latter (720b). (2) More surprisingly concerned with the cosmology of the *Timaeus* is the discussion on the time-honoured 'problem about the egg and the hen, which of them came first' (πρόβλημα περὶ τοῦ ὠοῦ καὶ τῆς ὄρνιθος, ὁπότερον γένοιτο πρότερον αὐτῶν, *Quaest. conv.* 2.3.636a). The debate confirms the remark, made at the outset by Plutarch's friend Sulla, that a small problem can act as a kind of lever for a much greater problem, in this case 'the creation of the world' (τὸ περὶ τοῦ κόσμου τῆς γενέσεως, 636a). Both sides of the debate draw on the description of matter as mother and wet nurse found in the *Timaeus*.¹²

¹⁰ The title of this question is Πῶς Πλάτων ἔλεγε τὸν θεὸν αἰεὶ γεωμετρεῖν, but see the previous note on these titles.

¹¹ *Quaest. conv.* 720a–b: εἴσεσθε ραδίως [...] ἀναμνήσαντες αὐτοὺς τῆς ἐν Τιμαίῳ διαιρέσεως, ἣ διεῖλε τριχῆ τὰ πρῶθ', ὑφ' ὧν τὴν γένεσιν ὁ κόσμος ἔσχεν, ὧν τὸ μὲν θεὸν τῷ δικαιοτάτῳ τῶν ὀνομάτων τὸ δ' ὕλην τὸ δ' ἰδέαν καλοῦμεν. ('You will easily see the point [...] if you recall the threefold division, in the *Timaeus*, of the first principles from which the cosmos came to birth. One of them we call, by the most appropriate of names, God, one matter, and one form.') In line with Plutarch's zetetic method (p. 83), the value of the earlier responses is not denied by this, since, as Ferrari 2009: 89 points out, 'le risposte avanzate dai partecipanti alla conversazione non sono veramente in conflitto tra di loro, non si escludono cioè a vicenda, ma risultano in qualche modo complementari, e in ogni caso possono venire integrate in un quadro relativamente unitario. Come, per altro, è naturale che sia, trattandosi in tutti i casi di soluzioni conformi allo spirito della filosofia di Platone'; cf. Pieri 2005: 150. On other Middle Platonic presentations of this *Dreiprinzipienlehre*, see *PiDA* 113. On the compatibility of what 'Plutarch' says here with *De an. procr.*, see Opsomer 2004: 149 n. 54. Interpretations of the cosmological issues of this sympotic question are offered in the commentary to *PiDA* 110.1 (with references to further literature) and by Ferrari 2009. Cf. also O'Brien 2015: 106–110, although a somewhat haphazard treatment of Plutarch (and of other thinkers, cf. my p. 273 n. 291) is a price we have to pay for the admirably broad scope of that book.

¹² The egg-before-chicken side adduces that 'matter has the relation of mother or nurse to things which exist, as Plato says' (ἡ γὰρ ὕλη λόγον ἔχει πρὸς τὰ γινόμενα μητρὸς

While engaging explicitly with the cosmology of the *Timaeus*, the chicken-and-egg question also testifies to the more generally observable belief that, as König has put it, ‘processes of universally relevant philosophical enquiry can start from frivolous snatches of conversation’.¹³ This is particularly clear in the many discussions on natural phenomena, which, as Kechagia has argued, depend on the epistemological framework of the *Timaeus*:

With the Platonic *Timaeus* in the background, a work which Plutarch (as all Platonists of his time) took to represent Plato’s world-view, it is not implausible to assume that the scientific/philosophical *zētēseis* in the *Table Talk* [i.e. *Quaest. conv.*] function in a similar way to Plato’s εἰκὼς λόγος: they offer explanatory principles and alternative plausible answers to questions of natural philosophy, but lead to no absolute certainty *because there is no certainty to be reached with respect to the sensible, changing physical world*.¹⁴

Kechagia emphasises the fallibilistic aspect of this εἰκὼς λόγος framework.¹⁵ We should remember, however, that it also comes with a more high-minded feature: the sensible cosmos is only an εἰκὼν of the intelligible model, but as an εἰκὼν of the intelligible model, it guides the way towards philosophy and happiness (*Tim.* 47a–b, 90b–d; see p. 67). As Soury has shown in a brief overview that is still very much worth reading, the *Sympotic Questions* are marked by a world view that as-

ὡς φησι Πλάτων καὶ τιθήνης, *Quaest. conv.* 2.3.636d) in order to argue that the producer (the egg) comes before the thing that it produces (the chicken); cf. *Tim.* 49a, 50d, 51a, 52d, 88d. On the identification of χώρα and ὕλη see p. 22 n. 10. The chicken-before-egg camp, which is represented by the dedicatee of *Quaest. conv.*, makes a more properly Platonic case and, as such, corrects the other side’s use of the ‘matter is mother’ metaphor by hinting at an ulterior principle: as Ferrari 1995a: 129–132 (in a thorough discussion of this *quaestio*) points out by comparing *Quaest. conv.* 2.3 with *Quaest. conv.* 8.1, the chicken-before-egg explanation reflects the causal system that Plutarch found in the *Timaeus*. For a comparison of Plutarch’s *quaestio* with Macrobius’ imitation (*Sat.* 7.16.1–14), see Setaioli 2016.

¹³ König 2007: 46.

¹⁴ Kechagia 2011a: 104 (original emphasis). Cf. Frazier in Frazier and Sirinelli 1996: 199–206 and, more generally, Meeusen 2014.

¹⁵ In this category of discussions on natural phenomena as well we find *quaestiones* that are explicitly concerned with *Tim.*, see esp. *Quaest. conv.* 7.1, which revolves around Plato’s statement that drink passes through the lungs (*Tim.* 70c, 91a) and ends with a reflection on the difference between εἰκὼς and ἀληθές in matters of natural philosophy. This aspect of *Quaest. conv.* is one of the elements that connects the work with *Quaest. nat.*; on this connection, see Meeusen 2016: 92–102, 150–177.

sumes an intimate connection between cosmic and human. This amounts to an ‘indifférenciation du physique et du moral’ that runs throughout the work.¹⁶ In short, it would be an understatement to say that cosmology is not excluded from Plutarch’s symposia.

Cosmology, then, apparently conforms to the criteria for dinner-time philosophy that Plutarch sets out in the first, programmatic sympotic question.¹⁷ There, philosophy is defined as ‘the art of life’ (τέχνην περὶ βίον, *Quaest. conv.* I.I.613b), which suggests that cosmology, since it is included in the work, pertains to ethics. Any such philosophy certainly should be welcomed at the symposium, but it should be the kind of philosophy that is accessible to all the guests: ‘just as the wine must be common to all, so, too, the conversation must be one in which all will share’ (δεῖ γὰρ ὡς τὸν οἶνον κοινὸν εἶναι καὶ τὸν λόγον, οὗ πάντες μεθέξουσιν, 614e). Plutarch cleverly puts the philosophical programme for the rest of the nine books of *Sympotic Questions* into the mouth of the dedicatee Sosius Senecio while at the same time tracing it to Plato’s *Symposium*:¹⁸

ὄρᾳς γὰρ ὅτι καὶ Πλάτων ἐν τῷ Συμποσίῳ περὶ τέλους διαλεγόμενος καὶ τοῦ πρώτου ἀγαθοῦ καὶ ὄλως θεολογῶν οὐκ ἐντείνει τὴν ἀπόδειξιν οὐδ’ ὑποκονίεται, τὴν λαβὴν ὥσπερ εἴωθεν εὔτονον ποιῶν καὶ ἄφυκτον, ἀλλ’ ὑγροτέροις λήμμασι καὶ παραδείγμασι καὶ μυθολογίαις προσάγεται τοὺς ἀνδρας. (*Quaest. conv.* I.I.614c–d)

Indeed, you see that Plato in his *Symposium*, even when he talks about the final cause and the primary good, – in short, when he discourses upon divine matters, – does not labour his proof nor gird himself for a fight and get his customary tight and unbreakable hold, but with

¹⁶ Soury 1949: 323.

¹⁷ This is probably the most often discussed question of the work; see e.g. Klotz 2007: 656–659; 2011: 167–171; Kechagia 2011a: 87–91; König 2011: 194; Pelling 2011b: 211–213; Klotz 2014: 210–214; Xenophontos 2016: 179–181.

¹⁸ Cf. also *Quaest. conv.* 6.686a–d, where a similar stance is described and connected to the Socratic symposium of Plato (and Xenophon). On the literary influence of Plato’s (and Xenophon’s) *Symp.* on *Quaest. conv.*, see esp. Roskam 2010. The remark by Teodorsson 1989: 53 that sympotic philosophy is a ‘simplified kind of philosophy designed for entertainment rather than the search for the truth’ is so off the mark that it borders on the outrageous. The whole point of sympotic philosophy – and Plutarch does not limit this to sympotic philosophy alone (e.g. *De coh. ira* 464b–c) – is to combine σπουδή and παιδιά, not to substitute the latter for the former (or the results of the latter for the results of the former); cf. *Quaest. conv.* I.I.614a; I.4.620d, 621d–e; 6.I.686d; 7.6.708d; 7.7.710e–711a; 7.8.712b, 713b–c; 9.14.746c–474a. On the role of Sosius in the *Quaest. conv.*, see Klotz 2014: 209–211; cf. Ziegler 1951: 688–689; Jones 1971: 54–57; Wardman 1974: 37–39; Puech 1991: 4883. See also n. 73.

simple and easy premises, with examples, and with mythical legends he brings the company into agreement with him.

As we shall see later, cosmology is not at all absent from Plato's *Symposium* either, and Plutarch offers a cosmological interpretation of Diotima's story about the birth of Eros (p. 283). Moreover, it has become clear by now that the exclusion of passages where Plato labours his proof does not entail the exclusion of the *Timaeus* and its cosmology.¹⁹ The mention of examples, however, provides an important clue as to how the *Timaeus* plays its role at the table. Although we have seen many references to the *Timaeus* by now, we have not encountered cosmology for the sake of cosmology. In the chicken-and-egg debate, both sides discuss the issue in terms of imagery and imitation (εἰκόν and μίμημα, *Quaest. conv.* 2.3.636e; cf. the quote from Plato's *Menexenus* 238a at 638a) and in terms of what is εἰκός (636a, c; 638a). Similarly concerned with cosmic imagery rather than with direct cosmology are the aforementioned discussions about music (9.14), Plato's divine birth (8.1), the lot of Ajax (9.5), and the figure of the geometer (8.2).²⁰ In some respects, these debates resemble the discussions about natural phenomena, which are εἰκότες λόγοι and deal as such with the visible cosmos as an εἰκόν of the intelligible.²¹

My main concern in this chapter, however, is not with this manifold presence of cosmic imagery at Plutarch's symposia. Instead, I want to show how several images that are scattered throughout the *Symptotic Questions* can be pieced together into a sustained and coherent comparison of the symposium to the cosmos. A good symposium, Plutarch maintains, is an image of the cosmos. To show this I turn to the role of cosmology, not in the συμποσιακά (topics suitable for the symposium) in general but in the subgroup of συμποτικά (topics regarding the symposium itself; Plutarch explains this terminology at *Quaest. conv.* 2.629d).²²

Before embarking upon this endeavour, a caveat is in order. That a symposium should be cosmic could, at first sight, be understood com-

¹⁹ The sympotic character of *Tim.* might be more pronounced than one would expect: there is a strong case to be made for regarding the whole 'banquet of speeches' (τὴν τῶν λόγων ἐστίασιν, *Tim.* 27b; cf. Athenaeus 8.354d), of which *Tim.* depicts the first part, as a kind of symposium; cf. Schoos 1998; Slaveva-Griffin 2005.

²⁰ Possible exceptions, i.e. questions involving direct cosmology, are *Quaest. conv.* 9.10 (completely lost) and 9.12 (largely lost). The lost *Quaest. conv.* 4.7 probably also took an indirect approach to cosmology (viz. through the names of the days). See n. 9.

²¹ For an interpretation of *Tim.* that pays much attention to these issues, see Gerson 1996.

²² Cf. e.g. Stadter 2015c: 106, who points to the importance of *Quaest. conv.* as 'a kind of handbook and guide to what a symposium should be'.

pletely non-cosmological: κόσμος can, of course, mean ‘order’ without any cosmological connotation. In the introduction to the eighth book of *Sympotic Questions*, for instance, Plutarch says that if ἀμαθία and ἀμουσία are combined with wine, a party cannot possibly be κόσμιος (*Quaest. conv.* 8.716d–e; cf. τεταγμένως, 716e). Similarly, when the opposite of an orderly party is described as springing from chatter that is ἄτακτος (716f), it does not seem necessary to point to cosmological language, although in Plato’s *Timaeus* the cause that produces order is opposed to the one that is ἀτάκτως (*Tim.* 30a, 43b, 69b) and produces τὸ ἄτακτον (46e). We will have to find stronger clues in other sympotic conversations, then, before we can conclude that there is, in Plutarch’s mind, a close connection between the organisation of a symposium and the organisation of the cosmos, which might lead us to read seemingly non-cosmological passages such as the one discussed just now in a different light.

1. *God and the symposiarch: Sympotic Questions 1.2 and 7.6*

In the second question of the first book of *Sympotic Questions*, Plutarch’s brother Timon is the host of the party. His policy was, apparently, to let the guests choose their places themselves, instead of assigning appropriate places. This time around, things go horribly wrong. When most guests are seated a foreigner appears but decides to leave again: ‘he said he saw no place left worthy of him’ (οὐκ ἔφη τὸν ἄξιον ἑαυτοῦ τόπον ὄρᾶν λειπόμενον, *Quaest. conv.* 1.2.615d). This sparks a discussion between Plutarch’s brother and his father on whether the places of the guests should be assigned by the organiser of the symposium. They decide to appoint ‘Plutarch’ as the judge in the debate.²³

Plutarch’s father begins his plea for assigned places with language similar to that found in the introduction to book eight. He indicates the risk of ‘disorderliness’ (ἀταξία) and adds that such ἀταξία would have been criticised by the Roman censor Aemilius Paullus, who was known for his symposia characterised by order (κόσμῳ, τάξει) and whom the father describes, with a verse from the *Iliad*, as being skilled ‘in marshalling horses and shield-bearing men’ (κοσμῆσαι ἵππους τε καὶ ἀνέρας

²³ The foreigner efficiently combines the *topoi* of the uninvited guest (Martin 1931: 64–79; cf. *Sept. sap. conv.* 148b; *Quaest. conv.* 7.6 will be discussed presently), the late guest (Martin 1931: 92–97; cf. *Sept. sap. conv.* 160c; *Quaest. conv.* 8.6), and the guest who leaves insulted (Martin 1931: 101–106; cf. *Sept. sap. conv.* 148e–f; *Quaest. conv.* 7.7). This is not without importance, since it means that the discussion caused by this incident concerns (what is presented as) a prototypical sympotic situation and as such gets to the heart of sympotic ethics.

ἀσπιδιώτας, 615e = Hom., *Il.* 2.554).²⁴ The opposition of ἀταξία and the act of κοσμεῖν would probably ring a bell with the avid reader of the *Timaeus* (cf. 30a for a cosmological use of ἀταξία). However, taking our earlier caveat into account, we have to say that this alone remains too vague to count as cosmological imagery.²⁵ Plutarch's father continues his plea, and after another Homeric reference to the typical characterisation of leaders as 'marshals of the people' (κοσμήτορας λαῶν, 615f; cf. Hom., *Il.* 1.16, 375; 3.236; *Od.* 18.152),²⁶ he finally and unmistakably brings in the demiurge from Plato's *Timaeus*:²⁷

καὶ τὸν μέγαν θεὸν ὑμεῖς ποῦ φατε τὴν ἀκοσμίαν εὐταξία μεταβαλεῖν εἰς κόσμον οὔτ' ἀφελόντα τῶν ὄντων οὐδὲν οὔτε προσθέντα, τῷ δ' ἕκαστον ἐπὶ τὴν προσήκουσαν χώραν καταστήσαι τὸ κάλλιστον ἐξ ἀμορφοτάτου σχῆμα περὶ τὴν φύσιν ἀπεργασάμενον. ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν τὰ σεμνότερα καὶ μείζονα παρ' ὑμῶν μανθάνομεν· αὐτοὶ δὲ καὶ

²⁴ Teodorsson 1989: 66 wrongly concludes that the Homeric line is 'strikingly out of place' because Plutarch 'uses this line here about the guest [...] instead of the host'. This is simply not true: from what follows it is perfectly clear that Aemilius is not imagined here as a guest but as the exemplary host.

²⁵ The Homeric verse, however, should at least raise doubts. Is it merely literary embellishment that Plutarch makes his father choose this verse with the verb κοσμήσαι instead of a direct reference to Aemilius Paullus' own saying about the organisation of the symposium, which is not recorded with this verb? Cf. *Apophth. Rom.* 198b: ἔλεγε τῆς αὐτῆς ἐμπειρίας εἶναι στράτευμα φοβερώτατον πολεμίοις καὶ συμπόσιον ἥδιστον φίλοις παρασχεῖν ('[he said] that it was a part of the same proficiency to provide an army most terrifying to an enemy and a party most agreeable to friends'); *Aem.* 28.9: ἔλεγε τῆς αὐτῆς εἶναι ψυχῆς παρατάξεώς τε προστῆναι καλῶς καὶ συμποσίου, τῆς μὲν, ὅπως φοβερωτάτη τοῖς πολεμίοις, τοῦ δ', ὡς εὐχαριστότατον ἢ τοῖς συνοῦσιν ('[he said] that the same spirit was required both in marshalling a line of battle and in presiding at a banquet well, the object being, in the one case, to cause most terror in the enemy, in the other, to give most pleasure to the company'). Cf. also Livy 45.32.11 with Frazier 2012a: 236. I do not want to suggest that Homer used κόσμος and its cognates in a cosmological sense; see Macé 2019 on Homer's use and the potential for 'cosmologising' Homeric usage.

²⁶ Cf. Scarcella 1998: 284 n. III: 'La nuova citazione omerica si giustifica con l'uso del termine, che rimanda a κοσμέω e poi ad ἀκοσμία, κόσμον.'

²⁷ Teodorsson 1989: 67 is right to call this a climax. Fuhrmann 1972: 11 notes the importance of *Tim.* for the first book of the sympotic questions (see 1.6.624d with *Tim.* 65b–66c on the mechanism of taste and 1.8.626c–e with *Tim.* 45b–46a on the mechanism of vision; cf. p. 333 n. 140), but exaggerates when he concludes that 'nous sommes en presence de reminiscences dues à une lecture récente du *Timée*' – Plutarch would most certainly not have to reread *Tim.* to know what was in it – and links this alleged rereading of *Tim.* to the composition of *De an. procr.* thus hoping that '[n]ous aurions donc là une indication pour la date de composition de ce traité [i.e. *De an. procr.*]' (n. 6).

τὴν περὶ τὰ δεῖπνα δαπάνην ὀρῶμεν οὐδὲν ἔχουσιν ἐπιτερπέες οὐδ' ἔλευθέριον, εἰ μὴ τάξεως μετὰσχοι. (*Quaest. conv.* 1.2.615f–616a)

Moreover, you philosophers, I suppose, admit that it was by good organization that the great god changed chaos into order, neither taking anything from what existed nor adding anything, but working the fairest form in nature out of the most shapeless by settling each element into its fitting place. However, in these very solemn and important matters we are your pupils, but we see for ourselves that extravagant dinners are not pleasant or munificent without organization.

Plutarch's father makes every effort to distance himself from the philosophers, but his point is eminently philosophical: a good symposiarch should behave like a Platonic demiurge, turning chaos into order.²⁸ In the remainder of his speech, he opposes this call for τάξις (the word occurs twice more), which is marked by harmony (ἀρμόττουσαν), to an organisation that proceeds 'haphazardly and by chance' (εἰκῆ καὶ ὡς ἔτυχεν, 616b; cf. *Quaest. conv.* 9.5.740c with p. 191 for the cosmological significance of these terms). Plutarch's brother Timon – the accused in this dispute – responds by stressing that assigning places according to the guests' status would turn a pleasant evening into an undemocratic vanity fair (616c–f). 'Plutarch', the judge of this debate, gives his brother some leeway at first: assigning places may not be necessary if the guests are youngsters, fellow citizens, or good friends. However, the matter is different when the company consists of foreigners, politicians, or older men (616f–617a). Although all this seems quite diplomatic, the bulk of 'Plutarch's' speech (617a–e) is devoted to the endorsement of his father's plea: a symposium should be an example of κόσμος.²⁹

At this point the discussion seems to have reached its end, but the most interesting part is yet to come. In his own matchlessly delightful way, Plutarch's other brother Lamprias breaks into the conversation and starts yelling from afar that 'Plutarch' is talking nonsense.³⁰ It is impor-

²⁸ On μέγας θεός as a designation for the highest god see Babut 1969b: 450 n. 2. Ziegler 1951: cols. 642–645 gives a good overview of Plutarch's depiction of his father in this sympotic question and elsewhere; cf. also Lambertson 2001: 7–10.

²⁹ Contra Teodorsson 1989: 74 and Vamvouri Ruffy 2012: 210 who have 'Plutarch' taking the middle road between the two opposed views.

³⁰ From the characterisation of Lamprias here (and from the parallel with *De facie*, which I will discuss presently), it is clear that Plutarch is talking about his brother, not his grandfather Lamprias, who is identified as πάππος when he features in the *Quaest. conv.* (5.5–6, 5.8–9; cf. 1.5.622e, 4.4.669c, 9.2.738b; on grandfather Lamprias, see Ziegler 1951: col. 642; Sirinelli 2000: 28–29); thus e.g. Bolkestein 1946: 67; Ziegler 1951: col. 645; Fuhrmann 1972: 5–6; Teodorsson 1989: 78; Scarcella 1998: 293 n. 156. The interpreta-

tant to note that Lamprias immediately stresses that something is *philosophically* wrong with ‘Plutarch’s’ judgement:

τίς δ’ ἂν [...] φείσαιτο φιλοσόφου γένεσι καὶ πλούτοις καὶ ἀρχαῖς ὥσπερ θέαν ἐν συμποσίῳ κατανέμοντος ἢ προεδρίας ψηφισμάτων ἀμφικτυονικῶν διδόντος, ὅπως μηδ’ ἐν οἴνῳ τὸν τῦφον ἀποφύγωμεν; οὔτε γὰρ πρὸς τὸ ἐνδοξὸν ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸ ἡδὺ δεῖ ποιεῖσθαι τὰς κατακλίσεις, οὔτε τὴν ἐνὸς ἐκάστου σκοπεῖν ἀξίαν ἀλλὰ τὴν ἐτέρου πρὸς ἕτερον σχέσιν καὶ ἀρμονίαν, ὥσπερ ἄλλων τινῶν εἰς μίαν κοινωνίαν παραλαμβανομένων. (*Quaest. conv.* 1.2.617f–618a)

But who could [...] show mercy to a philosopher who assigns places at a dinner-party to family, wealth, and official position as one would assign seats at a show, a philosopher who grants honours of precedence after the fashion of amphictyonic decrees, so that not even when we sit over wine may we flee conceit? For it is not prestige, but pleasure which must determine the placing of guests; it is not the rank of each which must be considered, but the affinity and suitability of each to each, as is done when other things are associated for a common purpose.

Lamprias seems to oppose the cosmic view defended by ‘Plutarch’ and his father. Nevertheless, as his appeal to ἀρμονία foreshadows, his main argument turns out to be cosmological as well. After giving examples of how builders, painters, and shipwrights achieve harmony (618a–b), he concludes:

καὶ τὸν θεὸν ὀρᾶς, ὃν ‘ἀριστοτέχναν’ ἡμῶν ὁ Πίνδαρος προσεῖπεν, οὐ πανταχοῦ τὸ πῦρ ἄνω τάττοντα καὶ κάτω τὴν γῆν, ἀλλ’ ὡς ἂν αἱ χρεῖαι τῶν σωμάτων ἀπαιτῶσιν·

τοῦτο μὲν ἐν κόγχαισι θαλασσονόμοις βαρυνώτοις,
ναὶ μὴν κηρύκων τε λιθορρίνων χελύων τε, φησὶν Ἐμπεδοκλῆς,
ἐνθ’ ὄψει χθόνα χρωτὸς ὑπέρτατα ναιετάουσαν

οὐχ ἦν ἡ φύσις δίδωσι χώραν, ἀλλ’ ἦν ἡ πρὸς τὸ κοινὸν ἔργον ποθεῖ σύνταξις, ταύτην ἔχουσαν. πανταχοῦ μὲν οὖν ἀταξία πονηρόν, ἐν

tion of *Quaest. conv.* 1.2 by Xenophontos 2016: 182–185 hinges on Lamprias being the grandfather (an assumption for which no arguments are offered) and is therefore not particularly helpful. More problematically, much of her general interpretation of *Quaest. conv.* (Xenophontos 2016: 173–194) seems to emerge from this confusion (e.g. at 186–187: “Plutarch’s” only “opponents” seem to be his grandfather and his teacher, the only two interlocutors given some sort of authority in the discussions. [...] “Plutarch’s” self-characterisation in the *Table Talk* depends on the presence of older models in his life”).

δ' ἄνθρωποις, καὶ ταῦτα πίνουσιν, ἐγγινομένη μάλιστα τὴν αὐτῆς ἀναδείκνυσι μοχθηρίαν ὕβρει καὶ κακοῖς ἄλλοις ἀμυθήτοις, ἃ προΐδέσθαι καὶ φυλάσασθαι τακτικοῦ καὶ ἁρμονικοῦ ἀνδρός ἐστίν. (*Quaest. conv.* 1.2.618b–c)

And you yourself see that god, whom Pindar named the ‘master artisan’ [fr 57.2 Maehler], does not in all cases place fire above and earth below, but disposes them as the needs of bodies require. Empedocles says:

In heavy-backed sea-mussels this is found
And turtles stony skinned and herald-fish
Where you will see the earth-material
At rest upon the highest parts of flesh, [fr. 76 DK]

that is, not occupying the position which nature allots, but the position which the functional order of the organism demands. Now disorder is everywhere a mischievous thing, but when it occurs among men, and that too when they are drinking, then especially it reveals its viciousness by the insolence and other unspeakable evils it engenders; to foresee these and guard against them is the duty of a man with any pretension to being an organiser and an arranger.

After seemingly scolding the defenders of the cosmic symposium, Lamprias now uses the same argument that they did. It is clear, indeed, that Plutarch makes Lamprias refer to the demiurge here, Pindar’s ἀριστοτέχνας being a semantically sound synonym of δημιουργός: Plutarch uses the two words in conjunction several times.³¹ Both the character ‘Plutarch’ and the commentator Teodorsson are at a loss here. ‘Plutarch’ explicitly admits the truth of Lamprias’ statement and asks, befuddled: ‘So why grudge us our organisers and arrangers?’ (τί δὴ φθονεῖς τῶν τακτικῶν ἡμῖν καὶ ἁρμονικῶν; 618c). Similarly, Teodorsson remarks that ‘Lamprias’ statement is rather puzzling, considered that Plut[arch] also had pleaded for order’. His solution is that Lamprias ‘presents his particular opinions of εὐταξία’, as opposed to the εὐταξία defended by Plutarch and his father.³²

Although Teodorsson’s remark goes in the right direction, it needs to be refined. Lamprias is not so much presenting his particular opinions

³¹ *De sera num.* 550a; *De facie* 927a (to which I will turn presently); *De comm. not.* 1065e–f; cf. *Praec. ger. reip.* 807c, where the conjunction is applied to the statesman (who should imitate the demiurge, as we shall see in chapter 4). Plutarch’s use of Pindar’s epithet ἀριστοτέχνας has been analysed by Van der Stockt 2002: 117–125 Frazier 2012a: 237–240; Lather 2017: 334–344.

³² Teodorsson 1989: 81.

of εὐταξία as he is correcting the cosmological views expressed so far. The key to the understanding of this passage is a parallel in *On the Face in the Moon*, which has been discussed earlier (926c–928d; p. 35).³³ The formal connection between the two passages is obvious: again Lamprias is speaking, the demiurge is designated by the Pindarian ἀριστοτέχνας, and the same Empedocles fragment is quoted. The connection is philosophical as well. In *On the Face in the Moon* Lamprias argues against the Stoic conception of the universe.³⁴ As we have seen, he attacks the Stoic doctrine of natural location of the elements, which assigns to each element its proper location and holds that the natural location of fire is above earth. Drawing on Empedocles and Plato's *Timaeus*, he shows that a separation of elements is characteristic of the precosmic, chaotic state of the universe, which lacks demiurgic πρόνοια. Pindar's ἀριστοτέχνας and Empedocles fr. 76 DK are adduced to reiterate the point that cosmos is not separation but intermingling and rational arrangement. In the sympotic discussion as well, Lamprias refutes the doctrine of natural location (which places 'fire above and earth below' and according to which elements are 'occupying the position which nature allots') and, by linking it to disorder, opposes it to the work of the ἀριστοτέχνας and that of the man who is τακτικός and ἁρμονικός and thus capable of providence (προϊδέσθαι). The mention of τακτικός finally connects the notion of demiurgy with the military tactics with which Plutarch's father opened the discussion – a connection that is made more explicitly in the passage from *On the Face in the Moon* (927b).

As in *On the Face in the Moon*, the writer Plutarch gives us a glimpse of Lamprias' talent for being philosophically subtle and cheerfully insulting at the same time, although this time the talent is used at the expense of the character 'Plutarch'. What Lamprias is saying is that the cosmic demiurgy defended by 'Plutarch' and his father actually amounts to – *horribile dictu* – a Stoic conception of the universe, which could only be described as chaos by a true Platonist. In other words, the author Plutarch represents the character 'Plutarch' as basically being called a Stoic and,

³³ Abramowiczówna 1960: 48–49 notes this parallel and acknowledges its importance, showing how the *De facie* makes it clear how the example of fire and earth ties together with the Empedocles fragment. However, given the nature of her work, she is not concerned with using it for the interpretation of the context; cf. Teodorsson 1989: 80, who merely notes the parallel occurrence of the Empedocles fragment. (To my mind, Abramowiczówna's suggestion that the fact that *De facie* presents a more complete version of Lamprias' argument points to an earlier date of composition is unconvincing.) Scarcella 1998: 297 n. 168 mistakenly claims that '[l]a citazione di Empedocle (fr. B 76 Diels – Kranz) ha in questo passo di Pl[utarco] la sua unica fonte'.

³⁴ Teodorsson 1989: 80 mistakenly has Lamprias arguing against atomism.

as the character's subsequent response shows, not even realising it. Here we encounter Plutarch at his most self-effacing.³⁵

What Lamprias voices is a justified Platonic rectification of what has been said. Lamprias' correction of the cosmic image has real consequences for the symposium. All earlier speakers, Plutarch's father, Plutarch's brother Timon, and 'Plutarch' himself, have to yield to Lamprias' correct, Platonic interpretation of the cosmic image and – since in philosophy accordance of ἔργα with λόγοι is paramount – the party is rearranged, or rather recosmified (μετακοσμοῦντι τὸ συμπόσιον, 618c). Instead of the material, mechanical, Stoic arrangement of like sitting together with like – according to honour, age, official function, etc. – the intelligent, providential, Platonic intermingling of elements is applied. Lamprias goes on to practise what he preaches and brings in his brand of harmony: 'I supply what suits him to the man who lacks it' (τῷ δεομένῳ τὸ οἰκεῖον προσαρμόττων, 618e). Thus, the party is saved from being a Stoic cosmos by a symposiarch who behaves like a true Platonic demiurge.³⁶

The effects of this cosmological sympotic ethics, which is introduced right after the programmatic first *quaestio*, are not confined to this single discussion. While in the third *quaestio*, which is presented as a continuation of the second, the guests go on to discuss a special case of a designated place at the table (the so-called consul's place), the fourth question returns to the issue of the symposiarch.³⁷ Here, the self-effacement of the second *quaestio* gives way to Plutarchan self-promotion: when the threat of disruptive drunkenness (παροινίας, *Quaest. conv.* 1.4.620a) looms large, 'Plutarch' is appointed as symposiarch and goes on to order a discussion on the qualities, the objectives, and the methods of a good symposiarch. There is no insistence on cosmological language in this case, but the presentation of the discussion as being about the διακόσμησις of the symposium (620a) and the description of the symposiarch as a ἁρμονικός (620f) should sound familiar to the readers who have just read the second *quaestio*.

³⁵ On this terminology of self-effacement and self-promotion, see König 2011; cf. p. 78 n. 22.

³⁶ Abramowiczówna 1960: 51, 234 rightly points out that there is a good deal of inebriated jest in Lamprias' suggestion; similarly, see Fuhrmann 1972: 28 n. 2. However, we should once again recall that jest and earnest are never to be separated at the symposium (see n. 18) and that there is a great deal more to Lamprias' intervention than just jest.

³⁷ Stadter 2015c; 2015d offers discussions of *Quaest. conv.* 1.4. Cf. also Vamvouri Ruffy 2011: 144–146, 151–153. On the function of symposiarch, see, apart from this sympotic discussion, e.g. Xen., *Symp.* 2.1; Pl., *Symp.* 176a; Ath. 11.486f–487b; cf. Davidson 1997: 322 n. 12; Catoni 2010: 94–106. It may be interesting to note that Eryximachus, who takes on the role of the symposiarch in Plato's *Symp.*, also gives the most explicitly cosmological speech (see p. 284).

I want to focus briefly, however, on the remark that the good symposiarch will not allow the symposium to become an ἐκκλησία δημοκρατική (621b). He will avoid this by fostering friendship through a mixture (μίξις, μεμιγμένη) of σπουδή and παιδιά (621d; cf. n. 18). The mixture that the symposiarch creates, then, is not a democratic mixture. This recalls Timon's plea for a democratic symposium (*Quaest. conv.* 1.2.616f), which is again rejected here.³⁸ However, neither does the mixture achieved by the good symposiarch resemble the strategy of placing like with like as it was defended by Plutarch's father and endorsed by 'Plutarch'. The symposiarch should make sure that 'men of playful dispositions' (οἱ [...] παίζοντες) are confronted with some degree of seriousness and that 'serious men' (οἱ σπουδάζοντες) are met with some jest. This emphasis on the right mixture pursued by the symposiarch makes clear why, in the second question, it was Lamprias and not 'Plutarch' (as some interpreters suggest, n. 29) who represented a compromise between Plutarch's brother Timon and their father by advocating intelligent mingling instead of radical separation (Plutarch's father and 'Plutarch') or radical mingling (Timon). This rejection of the democratic symposium may seem to contrast with the *Dinner of the Seven Sages*, where one of the guests points out that both wine and sympotic conversation should be distributed 'as in a democracy' (ἐν δημοκρατία, 154d) and goes on to request the guests' opinion about democracy. As it turns out, however, all the guests endorse the preference for 'a democracy which [is] most like an aristocracy' (δημοκρατίαν τὴν ὁμοιοτάτην ἀριστοκρατία, 154f). A similar endorsement of a mixture of the democratic and aristocratic³⁹ symposium underpins the depiction of the good symposiarch. We will be reminded of this when we turn to the statesman's imitation of the demiurge (p. 142).

The demiurgic symposiarch appears once again in the ninth and last book of the *Sympotic Questions*. In the first *quaestio* of that book is the clearest example of a symposium threatened by chaos. Plutarch's teacher Ammonius hosts a symposium to which he has invited several professors of rhetoric. Instead of friendship the result is conversation marked by 'disorderly confusion' (ἄκριτοι καὶ ἄτακτοι, *Quaest. conv.* 9.1.736e).⁴⁰ Fortunately, Ammonius is an excellent symposiarch. While fully aware that it is customary at the festival of the Muses, during which all sympotic discussions collected in the ninth book take place, to let the conversations be directed by the drawing of lots, he decides to dispense with this habit (*Quaest. conv.* 9.2.737d–e). To put this within the framework of

³⁸ Abramowiczówna 1960: 44 connects these two passages.

³⁹ Cf. *Quaest. conv.* 7.9.714b–c for emphasis on the aristocratic aspect and *Quaest. conv.* 8.6.726a–b for emphasis on the democratic aspect.

⁴⁰ Cf. Eshleman 2013 on the urgent need to keep grammarians and the like in line at the Plutarchan symposium.

the second question of the first book: Ammonius departs from Timon's advice to let the symposium be guided by τύχη (the connection between τύχη and the drawing of lots is made in *Quaest. conv.* 9.5.740c–d; cf. p. 191). At the same time, he ignores the preference of 'Plutarch' and his father: instead of placing like with like, he consciously aims at the very opposite of this in order to avoid any further antagonism between 'professors of the same subject' (τῶν ὁμοτέχνων, 737d). Once more, the good symposiarch turns out to be the one sketched by Lamprias – the one modelled on Plato's demiurge.

Taking our next step in the construction of the sympotic cosmos, we can blissfully stay in the divine realm for another while, although we have to substitute Aristotle's god for Plato's. The sixth discussion of the seventh book of *Sympotic Questions* deals with so-called 'shadows' (σκιαί), persons who are not invited by the organiser of the symposium but who, like Socrates in Plato's *Symposium*, come along with an invited guest. After the son-in-law of Plutarch's dear Roman friend Mestrius Florus has condemned the practice of bringing and allowing 'shadows' (*Quaest. conv.* 7.6.707c–708a), Florus himself starts defending it in cases where a dinner is organised for a foreign guest, 'for it is neither polite to invite him without his friends, nor easy to discover who is with him' (οὔτε γὰρ ἄνευ φίλων ἐστὶ δὴ ἐπιεικὲς οὔτε γινώσκειν οὐς ἔχων ἤκει ῥάδιον, 708a).⁴¹ Florus has barely started speaking when 'Plutarch' takes over to back him up. In the course of an elaborate defence of the practice of 'shadows' (708a–710a), 'Plutarch' launches into a simile inspired by Aristotelian cosmology:

ἐπεὶ δ', ὥσπερ οἱ Περιπατητικοὶ λέγουσι τὸ μὲν πρῶτον φύσει κινουῦν μὴ κινούμενον δ' εἶναι τὸ δ' ἔσχατον κινούμενον μηδὲ ἐν δὲ κινουῦν μεταξὺ δ' ἀμφοῖν τὸ καὶ κινουῦν ἕτερα καὶ κινούμενον ὑφ' ἑτέρων, οὕτως, ἔφην, περὶ ὧν ὁ λόγος τριῶν ὄντων, ὁ μὲν καλῶν μόνον ὁ δὲ καλούμενος ὁ δὲ καὶ καλῶν καὶ καλούμενός ἐστιν. (*Quaest. conv.* 7.6.708e)

Just as, according to the Peripatetic philosophy [...] there is in nature a first mover which is not moved, and a last moved which does not move anything, and between these two the kind of mover which moves some things and is moved by others, so our discussion has three subjects, the man who invites only, the man who is invited only, and the man who both invites and is invited.

⁴¹ It was through this consular figure and close associate of Vespasian that Plutarch obtained Roman citizenship, thus becoming L. Mestrius Plutarchus. Plutarch counted Florus among his συνήθεις (*Quaest. conv.* 3.3.650a). See further Ziegler 1951: cols. 687–688; Jones 1971: 48–49; Puech 1991: 4860.

Why is ‘Plutarch’ opting for the Peripatetic first mover as the model for the symposiarch instead of calling the Platonic demiurge back on stage? With some effort, he surely could have done the latter by considering the demiurge once again as the model for the symposiarch who only invites, passive matter as the equivalent of the shadow, and some intermediate entity – demons or the cosmic soul could perhaps have fitted the bill here – as the equivalent of the guest who is invited but also invites himself. The appeal to the Peripatetic notion of the unmoved mover is, after all, not without problems. The unmoved mover of *Metaphysics* Λ is unlike the person who extends an invitation. He moves by being an object of desire, not by reaching out in any way. Such an engagement with what he moves would undermine his being a self-contemplating intellect. These aspects of the unmoved mover, which would undercut Plutarch’s comparison if they were taken into account, are precisely the aspects that Plutarch seems to have considered as problematic in Aristotle’s theology.⁴² What we get here through the suppression of these aspects is an unmoved mover who is adapted to Plutarch’s Platonic needs.

But this does not answer the initial question. Why does Plutarch go through all this trouble instead of just sticking with the demiurge? The main reason for the presence of the Peripatetic unmoved mover here is, I think, sympotic. When interpreting the *Sympotic Questions*, we should ourselves behave like guests at the symposium and, more than anything else, show consideration for the other guests.⁴³ In this case, ‘Plutarch’ is coming to the aid of Florus, who is the only character in the *Sympotic Questions* about whom Plutarch explicitly mentions that he has been reading a copy of an Aristotelian work (*Quaest. conv.* 8.10.734c–d; cf. also 3.3.650a for his particular interest in Aristotle).⁴⁴ The unmoved mov-

⁴² On the incompatibility of Plutarch’s interpretation of the providential Platonic demiurge and Aristotle’s self-contemplating unmoved mover (for which *De def. or.* 426d–e is the prize exhibit), see Ferrari 1999a; 2010; Opsomer 2007b: esp. 302–303. Karamanolis 2006: 105–108, who is generally rather optimistic about the compatibility of Plutarch and Aristotle, discusses this issue in terms of constructive criticism on Plutarch’s part rather than incompatibility. The same approach could be taken in the case of the sympotic question under discussion, although I would refrain from deriving conclusions about Plutarch’s appreciation of Aristotle from it. Plutarch’s stance can be contrasted with that of Alcinous, *Didasc.* 10.2–3, who envisages a synthesis of the Platonic demiurge and the Aristotelian unmoved mover.

⁴³ On the connections between friendship and interpretative pluralism in *Quaest. conv.*, cf. König 2007: 52–56.

⁴⁴ See Oikonomopoulou 2011 on Peripatetic knowledge in *Quaest. conv.* in general and Florus’ reading in particular (at 109–111). Florus’ predilection for Aristotle can be contrasted with e.g. the more critical attitudes of Plutarch’s father in *Quaest. conv.* 3.8.656c.

er that ‘Plutarch’ presents here, then, is compatible with both ‘Plutarch’s’ and Florus’ philosophical interests: while the former sets high demands on providential demiurgy, the latter can reasonably be expected to think of Aristotle as largely compatible with Plato.⁴⁵ The important thing is that, through the intervention of a symposiarch who imitates a divine model, the selection of the guests is not left to chance (οὐ τοὺς τυχόντας, *Quaest. conv.* 7.6.708d). Although, then, Plutarch at least nominatim replaces Plato with Aristotle here, the result is the same as in the second question of the first book: the symposiarch is once again compared to the highest god in the cosmos.⁴⁶

2. *The cosmos and the symposium: Sympotic Questions 7.4 and 2.10*

Merely guests, no matter how considerately they were invited and how well-arranged they are seated, do not make a party. Let us turn to the physical attributes of the symposium: the lamps, the tables, the food, and the wine. In the fourth question of the seventh book, we meet Florus again.⁴⁷ He is called φιλόρχαιος and is said to observe the Roman *mos maiorum* that during a dinner a lamp should not be extinguished and a table should never be removed empty but always with some food left on it. A discussion ensues on the origin and significance of these customs. In the *Roman Questions*, more condensed versions of the solutions presented in this sympotic discussion are offered, which suggests that Plutarch really thought of these customs as authentically Roman.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ This does not mean that Plutarch presents Florus as a Peripatetic: his commitment to Platonism is suggested in *Quaest. conv.* 7.1.698e and 8.1.717d. On Florus’ role in the *Quaest. conv.*, see also Schwabl 2000: 407–420; on the Greco-Roman dynamics at play in this particular discussion, see Jones 1971: 123.

⁴⁶ Sirinelli in Frazier and Sirinelli 1996: 43 n. 146 and Teodorsson 1989: 83, however, indicate a strong contrast between *Quaest. conv.* 7.6 (esp. 709a–b) and *Quaest. conv.* 1.2: in the former the like-mindedness of the guests is important, while in the latter their differences are foregrounded. This is only an apparent contradiction: both discussions are concerned with completely different aspects of the organisation of the symposium. *Quaest. conv.* 7.6 takes an external perspective (which guests should be invited to the symposium?) while *Quaest. conv.* 1.2 takes an internal perspective (how should the guests at the symposium be arranged?).

⁴⁷ The seventh book, from which we previously discussed the sixth question, is particularly concerned with συμποτικά: seven of the ten discussions are about sympotic practices (*Quaest. conv.* 7.4–10), as Sirinelli in Frazier and Sirinelli 1996: 4–5 points out.

⁴⁸ See *Quaest. Rom.* 64.279e for the table and 75.281e on the lamps. For in-depth comparison of the accounts in *Quaest. Rom.* and *Quaest. conv.*, see Schwabl 2000: esp. 402–407; cf. also Rose 1924: 197, 200. More generally on ancestral customs sparking explanatory debates, see Meeusen 2014: 316, 320–321; cf. also p. 291–301 on πάτριος πίστις.

Lucius, Florus' son (this is appropriate: a family tradition is at stake), tackles both sympotic problems in a cosmological fashion. He agrees with an earlier answer to the lamp question, which has pointed to the kinship between the fire of the lamp and 'the unquenchable sacred fire' (τὸ ἄσβεστον καὶ ἱερὸν πῦρ, *Quaest. conv.* 7.4.702e) in the temple of Vesta. He adds, however, that the care for the Vestal fire is a σύμβολον (703a) of the reverent attitude one should have towards *all* fire:

οὐδὲν γὰρ ἄλλο μᾶλλον ἐμψύχῳ προσέοικεν ἢ πῦρ, κινούμενον τε καὶ τρεφόμενον δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ τῇ λαμπρότητι δηλοῦν, ὥσπερ ἡ ψυχὴ, καὶ σαφηνίζον ἅπαντα· μάλιστα δὲ ταῖς σβέσεσιν αὐτοῦ καὶ φθοραῖς ἐμφαίνεται δύναμις οὐκ ἀμοιροῦσα ζωτικῆς ἀρχῆς· βοᾷ γὰρ καὶ φθέγγεται καὶ ἀμύνεται, καθάπερ ἔμψυχον ἀποθνήσκον βία καὶ φονευόμενον· (*Quaest. conv.* 7.4.703a)

For there is nothing else [...] that is more like a living being than fire. It is self-moved and finds its own food, and by its radiance, like the soul, reveals and clarifies everything. Especially in its extinction or destruction a force is vaguely seen that is not utterly devoid of elemental life. It protests and speaks up and resists like a living creature that is slain by a violent and murderous death. [tr. modified]

If we apply Plutarch's cosmological outlook to this statement, Lucius not only *compares* fire to soul, but even goes as far as to *identify* the two when he attributes self-motion (κινούμενον [...]) δι' αὐτοῦ) and life (ζωτικῆς ἀρχῆς) to it: neither self-motion (e.g. *De an. procr.* 1015e with Pl., *Tim.* 37b) nor life (e.g. *Quaest. Plat.* 3.1002c with Pl., *Tim.* 36e) are possible without soul. A similar explanation, connecting fire not just with soul as Lucius does but more specifically with the cosmic soul, is found in the *Camillus*. The Vestal fire is said to be honoured by Numa, in a Pythagorean fashion, 'as an image of the ever-living force which orders the universe' (ἐν εἰκόνι τῆς τὰ πάντα κοσμοῦσης αἰδίου δυνάμεως, *Cam.* 20.5 [tr. modified]).⁴⁹

How does 'Plutarch' react to Lucius' identification of soul with fire, which, in view of his philosophical profile, must have seemed to him primitively materialistic and not unlike the Stoic doctrine?⁵⁰ Surprisingly, he expresses agreement (οὐδὲν [...] τῶν εἰρημένων αἰτιῶμαι). As in the case of the Peripatetic unmoved mover, however, we should

⁴⁹ Cf. Philolaus fr. A16–17, B7 DK. For Numa's Pythagoreanism, cf. *Num.* 1.2–3, 8.4–10, 11.1, 14.2–3, 22.3–4.

⁵⁰ Cf. *De Stoic. rep.* 1053b–c; *De comm. not.* 1084e; for the distinction between fire and soul, see e.g. *De an. procr.* 1025a with e.g. Pl., *Tim.* 46d; fire also appears as one of the four elements and not as soul or ensouled in e.g. *Quaest. conv.* 6.1.686e–f, 6.9.696b–c.

be aware of the sympotic dynamics at play here. Once again ‘Plutarch’ shows respectful awareness of the philosophical stance of his interlocutor – Plutarch the symposiast is not Plutarch the polemicist – while subtly insisting on his own convictions. He goes on to broaden the symbolic scope of fire: it does not merely, as Lucius posited, point to all fire, but to φιλανθρωπία. After mentioning examples of archaic reverence towards oaks, figs, and olives, ‘Plutarch’ explains:

ταῦτα γὰρ οὐ ποιεῖ πρὸς δεισιδαιμονίαν ἐπιφόρους, ὡς ἔνιοί φασιν, ἀλλὰ προσεθίζει τὸ εὐχάριστον ἡμῶν καὶ κοινωνικὸν ἐν τοῖς ἀναισθήτοις καὶ ἀψύχοις πρὸς ἀλλήλους. (*Quaest. conv.* 7.4.703c–d)

The effect of these observances is not to make us prone to superstition, as some say, but to make gratitude and sociability habitual, through practice with things without sensation and soul, for use in our relations with each other. [tr. modified⁵¹]

Although ‘Plutarch’, as a considerate symposiast, refrains from signaling it, the contribution that he presents as an afterthought actually corrects Lucius’ conclusion: fire is actually ἄψυχος.⁵²

The respect that we should show for soulless fire is symbolic. It points towards the respect that we should extend to each other. Lucius was on the right track. He rightly called the Vestal fire a σύμβολον and an εἰκὼν (703a). However, he misconstrued the symbolic connection by thinking that this fire is a σύμβολον/εἰκὼν of fire in general. That this is short-sighted is indicated by his take on Egyptian animal worship: according to Lucius the respect shown for one dog, crocodile, or wolf simply points to the respect for all dogs, crocodiles, and wolves (703a). From *On Isis and Osiris*, we know that this is not the right interpretation of symbolic animal worship: the συμβολικόν (*De Is. et Os.* 38of), the ὁμοιότης (381d) at play in correct animal worship is that the animals, much like statues, point towards the divine without being divine themselves (382a–b; cf. p. 216, p. 266 n. 266). ‘Plutarch’s’ congenial sidenote, in a similar way, fundamentally yet tactfully corrects Lucius’ view, which failed to transcend the physical.⁵³ The symbolic function of fire (including the fire of the lamp at the symposium) is not merely to extend the range of respect from a tiny portion of fire to all fire. Instead, it involves

⁵¹ After the remarks in Teodorsson 1996: 60.

⁵² Perhaps ἀναισθητος was needed to include the earlier examples of revered trees, which could not be called soulless tout court.

⁵³ On the tactfulness of sympotic teaching, see Roskam 2009a: 376–377; cf. Xenophon 2016: 189.

a greater shift: the soulless points towards a higher ontological level (i.e. the ensouled human).⁵⁴

Does this change anything for how the issue of the table is subsequently treated? Again, ‘Plutarch’ focuses on the philanthropic while Lucius attempts a cosmological explanation. This time, however, ‘Plutarch’ speaks before Lucius, who has the honour of closing the discussion. This fact alone should raise our hopes for him this time around. According to ‘Plutarch’ some food should remain on the table because this leaves something for the future and it is an exercise in restraining the appetite. Lucius then comes with an explanation, which he attributes to his grandmother – a reference to the Mestrius family thus both opens and closes this sympotic discussion:

ὕπολαβὼν δ’ ὁ Λεύκιος ἔφη τῆς μάμμης ἀκηκοὼς μνημονεύειν, ὡς ἱερὸν μὲν ἢ τράπεζα, δεῖ δὲ τῶν ἱερῶν μηδὲν εἶναι κενόν. ‘ἐμοὶ δ’ εἶπεν ‘ἔδόκει καὶ μίμημα τῆς γῆς ἢ τράπεζ’ εἶναι· πρὸς γὰρ τῷ τρέφειν ἡμᾶς καὶ στρογγύλη καὶ μόνιμός ἐστι καὶ καλῶς ὑπ’ ἐνίων ‘ἔστία’ καλεῖται. καθάπερ γὰρ τὴν γῆν αἰεὶ τι χρήσιμον ἔχειν καὶ φέρειν ἡμῖν ἀξιούμεν, οὕτως οὐδὲ τὴν τράπεζαν οἴομεθα δεῖν κενὴν ὄραν καὶ ἀνερμάτιστον ἀπολειπομένην.’ (*Quaest. conv.* 7.4.703b)

Lucius, in reply, said he recalled hearing from his grandmother that the table is sacred and that nothing sacred should be empty. ‘I have entertained the idea’, he went on, ‘that the table is in fact copied from the earth. For besides nourishing us, it is both round and stable, and by some it is properly given the name of “hearth”. Just as we expect the earth always to have and produce something useful for us, so we do not think a table should be seen, when it is abandoned, bare and carrying no load of luck.’

Lucius repeats the previous debate’s dynamics of responding to an ancestral custom by giving an explanation. While the grandmotherly lore finds a parallel in the corresponding section of the *Roman Questions* (64.279e), Lucius’ own explanation seems consciously original, as is encouraged at the symposium.⁵⁵ However, he once again draws inspiration from Numa’s take on Vesta:⁵⁶ Numa built the temple of Vesta, which

⁵⁴ Cf. the discussion on Pythagorean σύμβολα in *Quaest. conv.* 8.7, where ‘Plutarch’s’ speech points out that their interpretation involves noting ‘reflections, as it were, of one thing in another’ (ἀνακλάσαντας ὡσπερ ἐμφάσεις ἐτέρων ἐν ἐτέροις, 728a); cf. *De Is. et Os.* 381f (on the Pythagoreans) and 358f–359a (on the notion of ἔμφασις at play here see p. 345).

⁵⁵ Oikonomopoulou 2011: esp. 119–122, 127.

⁵⁶ Teodorsson 1996: 55.

housed the fire that was adduced in Lucius' first speech, 'of a circular form, not in imitation of the shape of the earth, believing Vesta to be the earth, but of the entire universe' (ἐγκύκλιον [...] ἀπομιμούμενος οὐ τὸ σχῆμα τῆς γῆς ὡς Ἑστίας οὔσης, ἀλλὰ τοῦ σύμπαντος κόσμου, *Num.* II.1). We shall have to return to this when discussing the comparison of cosmos and temple, which is crucial to *On Tranquillity of Mind* (p. 238).⁵⁷ Unlike Numa, Lucius does not extend the symbolism from the earth to the whole cosmos, but he is making progress if we compare his explanation of the table to how he handled the question of the lamps. The table not only points to the fact that the earth yields food – this would resemble his previous attempt of having the lamp point to fire tout court – but besides that (πρὸς [...] τῷ τρέφειν) also to its roundness and stability.⁵⁸ Again importing Plutarch's cosmology, we can note that these characteristics again point to soul, more specifically to the intervention of the demiurge through the cosmic soul (*Quaest. Plat.* 5.1004b–c; 8.1006e). This time, however, Lucius' statements do not betray crude physicalism but allow for a metaphysical perspective like Plutarch's.⁵⁹ At the end of the discussion, then, Lucius seems to have learned at least something about the symbolic connection between aspects of the symposium (lamps and tables) and aspects of the cosmos (fire and earth). Moreover, the Roman ancestral lore has been enhanced by Greek philosophy, thus conforming to Plutarch's typical combination of patriotism and cosmopolitanism (p. 250).⁶⁰ The subtle sympotic instruction of 'Plutarch' has paid off.

Before asking ourselves what this discussion of the lamps and the tables as cosmic symbols means for the organisation of the symposium, we should take a look at the tenth question of the second book, which discusses food at the symposium.⁶¹ The question is whether the food at the symposium should be served in portions for each guest or as a common supply. The protest against the portion banquets, which Plutarch apparently used to host, is voiced by a certain Hagias and actually turns out to be a complaint against 'the distribution of equal portions to men who are actually unequal in their capacities' (τῷ ἴσῳ [sc. μέτρῳ] πρὸς ἀνίσους, *Quaest. conv.* 2.10.643b). He explains this unjust application of equality regardless of capacity as the use of 'an arithmetical instead of a geometrical determination' (ἀριθμητικῶς οὐ γεωμετρικῶς ὀρίζων, 643c).

⁵⁷ Cf. also fr. 48 (from the *Commentary on Hesiod's Works and Days*).

⁵⁸ By mentioning the earth being μόνιμος, Lucius improves (at least from a Platonic viewpoint) Numa's Pythagoreanism, which did not allow for a stable earth.

⁵⁹ Cf. the architecture of *De Is. et Os.* (with the interpretation of Roskam 2017), where a purely physical allegory is superseded by a metaphysical allegory.

⁶⁰ Cf. König 2007: 62–68; 2008: 87–90; 2012: 64–66.

⁶¹ Cf. Vamvouri Ruffy 2011: 148–150.

Plutarch's brother Lamprias, on the other hand, comes down in favour of allotting portions equal in weight:

ἐπεὶ μηδὲ στέφανον ἀξίου διανέμειν ἡμῖν ἐκάστω τὸν ἐστιῶντα μηδὲ κλισίας καὶ χώρας, ἀλλὰ κἂν ἐρωμένην τις ἢ ψάλτριαν ἤκη κομίζων, ‘κοινὰ τὰ φίλων,’ ἴν’ ‘ὁμοῦ πάντα χρήματα’ γίνηται κατὰ τὸν Ἀναξαγόραν. εἰ δ’ οὐδὲν ἢ τούτων ιδίωσις ἐπιταράττει τὴν κοινωνίαν τῶ τὰ μέγιστα καὶ πλείστης ἄξια σπουδῆς εἶναι κοινά, λόγους, προπόσεις, φιλοφροσύνας, παυσώμεθα τὰς Μοίρας ἀτιμάζοντες καὶ ‘τὸν τῆς τύχης παῖδα κληρον’ ὡς Εὐριπίδης φησίν, ὃς οὔτε πλούτῳ νέμων οὔτε δόξῃ τὸ πρωτεῖον, ἀλλ’ ὅπως ἔτυχεν ἄλλως ἄλλοτε συμφερόμενος τὸν μὲν πένητα καὶ ταπεινὸν ἐπιγαυροῖ καὶ συνεξαίρει γευόμενόν τινος αὐτονομίας, τὸν δὲ πλούσιον καὶ μέγαν ἐθίζων ἰσότητι μὴ δυσκολαίνειν ἀλύπως σωφρονίζει. (*Quaest. conv.* 2.10.644c–d)

Well, then [i.e. as a consequence of rejecting any and all private property] don't count it right for the host to assign us each a crown, couches, and places. No, even if someone come bringing his mistress or a harp-girl to the party, ‘all possessions of friends should be in common’, in order that ‘community of everything’ may prevail, as Anaxagoras [fr. B1 DK] had it. Private possession in such matters does not disturb the general fellowship, and this is due to the fact that the most important characteristics of a gathering and those worth most serious attention are in fact common, namely, conversation, toasts, and good fellowship; and so let us stop dishonouring the goddesses of Portion, and ‘Lot, child of Luck’ as Euripides [fr. 989 *TrGF*] calls him, for he gives pre-eminence neither to wealth nor to glory, but, as he chances to fall, now this way, now that, he makes proud the poor and humble man. [tr. modified]

Lamprias distinguishes between what is common (and most important: τὰ μέγιστα καὶ πλείστης ἄξια σπουδῆς) and what is privately held (and therefore less important). The absence of any private ownership is compared to the Anaxagorean plenum, which we will soon find describing the acosmic symposium (*Quaest. conv.* 5.5.678f–679a). Within the category of privately owned things there seems to be a further distinction. Lamprias emphasises that the (arithmetical) distribution of the food at the portion banquet is done by irrational τύχη (probably in the sense that, while the portions will be equal in weight, they inevitably will not be equal in quality), while this can certainly not be said of the other examples that he gives (the crowns, couches, and places carefully and rationally assigned by the demiurge-like symposiarch). This is particularly clear for the matter of places, in which we already saw him being opposed to Timon's plea for τύχη in the second question of the first book.

The goal of this emphatic connection of the distribution of food to *τύχη* is, I believe, to diminish the importance of food at the symposium. This is the main difference between the accounts of Lamprias and Hagias who, despite how the question was initially framed, both defend a certain way of distributing the food among guests.⁶² While Hagias argues for the use of a rational geometrical proportion, Lamprias urges respecting irrational *τύχη*. Both sides, then, adduce cosmological arguments to make their point. We find the same arguments in more explicitly cosmological contexts elsewhere in the *Sympotic Questions*. Hagias' geometrical proportion is used by the demiurge according to one of the answers in the debate on god doing geometry (*Quaest. conv.* 8.2.719a–b). It occurs in the context of god's judgement of human actions, but it is picked up again in 'Plutarch's' more strictly cosmological account, when the demiurge is said to use proportion to create the cosmos between form (sharing its quality) and matter (sharing its quantity) (720b).⁶³ Lamprias, in turn, connects *τύχη* with the Fates (Μοῖραι, 644a, 644d), playing on the Greek word for portion (μοῖρα, 643e) and more specifically with Lachesis, who is the Fate most involved in *τύχη* and matters of the earth, as we learn from *On the Face in the Moon* (945c).⁶⁴ The Fates also receive a cosmological interpretation in the penultimate discussion of the *Sympotic Questions* (9.14.745b–c; p. 80), and Lamprias points out the cosmic role of *τύχη* in the debate on Ajax' lot in the myth of Er (*Quaest. conv.* 9.5.740c–f; p. 191).

Although both speakers claim to put conviviality before culinary delight (e.g. 643a–b, 643f–644a), Hagias, by insisting on the sole use of a geometrical proportion, betrays that he attaches too much importance to food. Lamprias convivially points this out at the start of his speech by joking that Hagias has the girth of a gourmand so that it is no wonder that he would prefer the use of a geometrical proportion. His mistake is ultimately cosmological: he forgot to take *τύχη* into account, as Lamprias points out, while this should have a place at the symposium alongside the things fully controlled by the symposiarch (such as the places of the guests), just like it has and should have a place in the cosmos alongside the things fully controlled by the demiurge. Lamprias' solution to let

⁶² Cf. Teodorsson 1989: 275 on the similarity between Hagias' and Lamprias' positions, although I do not think that there is a shift in Lamprias' stance. It should be added that Plutarch seems to indicate himself that the two speakers are closer to each other than the framing suggests by mentioning that everyone praised Hagias' remarks and that Lamprias had to be urged by the other guests to offer a critical response rather than giving such a response of his own initiative (*Quaest. conv.* 2.10.643e).

⁶³ Cf. also *Tim.* 31c–32c, where the geometrical proportion is used by the demiurge to put together the four primary bodies; see esp. Cornford 1935: 45–52. *Grg.* 508a evokes intimate connections between geometry, cosmology, and ethical behaviour.

⁶⁴ Cf. also *De genio Socr.* 591b with Pl., *Leg.* 12.960c.

τύχη take care of the food solves this, while revealing the food as something of limited importance at the symposium.⁶⁵ The same thing could be argued for the wine. The ninth question of the third book starts with several possibilities of mixing wine using the musical ratios that are used by the demiurge to divide the cosmic soul.⁶⁶ When the speaker is offered a cup of wine mixed according to his preferred ratio, he declines it, wittily stating that he is ‘a theorist of music, not a performer’ (τῶν λογικῶν εἶναι περὶ μουσικὴν οὐ τῶν ὀργανικῶν, *Quaest. conv.* 3.9.657e). The bit about the ratios, then, had been merely for the sake of conversation and not for the sake of the actual wine.

This limited value attached to food and wine in favour of conversation is a key feature of the Plutarchan symposium, as Romeri has extensively argued: *les mots* are infinitely more important than *les mets*.⁶⁷ This is particularly clear in the *prooemia* that open each book of the *Sympotic Questions* and allow us to put the material aspects of the symposium discussed so far in this section (the lamps, the tables, the food, and the wine) in the right perspective. Plutarch begins the eighth book by saying that ‘[p]eople who would banish philosophy from the symposium [...] are even more at fault than one who would take away the lights’ (οἱ φιλοσοφίαν [...] ἐκ τῶν συμποσίων ἐκβάλλοντες οὐ ταῦτ’ οὐ ποιοῦσι τοῖς τὸ φῶς ἀναιροῦσιν, ἀλλὰ χειρόν, *Quaest. conv.* 8.716d).⁶⁸ The absence of lamps will not make the behaviour of the philosophically spirited any worse, while, without philosophy, no lamp can make the symposium orderly (κόσμιον, 716e). The same proem stresses that the quality of the conversation is much more defining for the symposium than the quality of food and drink (719e–f; cf. *Quaest. conv.* 2.629c–d for the comparison of the practicalities of the symposium with sympotic conversation). The proem to the seventh book confirms this: the social aspect of the symposium is the true seasoning (ἐφηδύνουσαν, ἡδυσμάτων, ἡδυσμα, *Quaest. conv.* 7.697c–d). In the proem to book five, the same thing is argued

⁶⁵ Plutarch (*Quaest. conv.* 8.2.719a–b; *De frat. am.* 484b) associates arithmetical distribution with (excessive) democracy and geometrical distribution with more rational forms of government; see further Aalders 1982: 44 n. 159; Centrone 2000: 580–581. Cf. Pl., *Leg.* 6.757b–d, *Resp.* 8.558c. As we have seen earlier, the symposium should be a mixture of democracy and aristocracy. Hence, arithmetical distribution should have its place, although it is inferior to geometrical distribution: Lamprias’ solution to reserve arithmetical distribution for less important elements is thus in keeping with the political orientation of Plutarch’s symposium.

⁶⁶ Cf. Catoni 2010: 89–94; Vamvouri Ruffy 2012: 147–149. See also p. 70.

⁶⁷ Romeri 2002: 107–189. Cf. also e.g. González Julià 2009; Goeken 2013. On the metaphorical connection between wine and words in the sympotic context more generally, see Catoni 2010: 26–33.

⁶⁸ Cf. Kechagia 2011a: 87.

through a contrast before it is once again put in a comparison: the pleasures of the body are different from the pleasures of the soul (*Quaest. conv.* 5.672c–d) and that is why wise people ‘hurry at once after dinner to ideas as if to dessert’ (εὐθὺς μετὰ τὸ δεῖπνον ἐπὶ τοὺς λόγους ὥσπερ δευτέρας τραπέζας φερόμενοι, 672e).⁶⁹ Conversation controls consumption both at the Platonic (*Quaest. conv.* 6.686b) and the Plutarchan (*Quaest. conv.* 4.660b–c) symposium (cf. *Quaest. conv.* 3.645a–c). The most important function of the table, then, is not to carry food but to be friend-making (τῷ φιλοποιῷ λεγομένῳ [...] τῆς τραπέζης, *Quaest. conv.* 1.612d). Accordingly, the cosmic imagery that Plutarch applies to the material elements of the symposium (lamps, tables, food, and wine) correctly brings out the materiality and the symbolism of these elements. The true value of the symposium, and this recalls what was said about music at the symposium in the previous chapter, is immaterial. However, this does not mean that its material aspects can just be wished away.⁷⁰ In this respect, too, the Plutarchan symposium should imitate the Platonic cosmos.

3. *The χώρα and the venue: Sympotic Questions 5.5*

For our symposium as a cosmic image, we have found a demiurge and a cosmos of which the immaterial soul is more important than the material body. Our sympotic cosmos, however, is not yet complete: we still need a place to sit down and relax. Here we encounter the concept that perhaps most obviously connects the Plutarchan symposium and the Platonic cosmos: χώρα, which ‘provides a fixed state for all things that come to be’ (ἔδραν δὲ παρέχον ὅσα ἔχει γένεσιν πᾶσιν, *Tim.* 52a–b); τόπος seems to be used as a valid synonym (52b). Like most Platonists of his time, Plutarch identified χώρα and ὕλη (*De an. procr.* 1024b–c; see p. 22 n. 10). Unlike most Platonists of his time, however, he took literally Plato’s statement that χώρα existed *before* the cosmos. Any reader somewhat acquainted with Plutarch’s thought or with Platonism in general will probably have been reminded of all this when reading how Plutarch’s grandfather Lamprias speaks about those who invite too many guests to dinner:

εὐδοκιμεῖ δὲ θαυμαστῶς καὶ Ἡσίοδος εἰπὼν ‘ἦτοι μὲν πρότιστα χάος γένηται’· χώραν γὰρ ἔδει καὶ τόπον προὔποκεῖσθαι τοῖς γινομένοις, οὐχ ὡς χθὲς οὐμὸς νιός [...] τὸ Ἀναξαγόρειον ‘ἦν ὁμοῦ πάντα χρήματα’ τὸ σύνδειπνον ἐποίησεν. (*Quaest. conv.* 5.5.678f–679a)

⁶⁹ Cf. Kechagia 2011a: 84–85.

⁷⁰ Wine, for instance, is an essential part of the symposium (e.g. *Quaest. conv.* 1.4.621c); cf. e.g. Teodorsson 1999, who focuses on the need for moderation. Nikolaidis 1999a paints Plutarch as critical to the use of wine but largely forgoes the distinction between the right and the wrong use of wine.

Incidentally, this line of Hesiod [*Theog.* 116] is amazingly popular: ‘Before all else in the world, void came into existence’, simply because room and place were prerequisite to all subsequent creation. Contrast that with the way in which my son yesterday converted the banquet into the famous Anaxagorean plenum: ‘All things were one solid mass’ [fr. B1 DK].

The identification of the Hesiodic chaos with the Platonic *χώρα* is made more explicitly in *On Isis and Osiris*, where Plutarch interprets *Theogony* 116–122 and suggests that Hesiod ‘seems to place Chaos at the bottom as a sort of region that serves as a resting-place for the universe’ (τὸ γὰρ Χάος δοκεῖ χώραν τινὰ καὶ τόπον τοῦ παντὸς ὑποτίθεσθαι, *De Is. et Os.* 374c at p. 283; cf. also Arist, *Phys.* 1.1.208b27–209a2) – an interpretation that is still tenable today.⁷¹

Lamprias’ link between the precosmic *χώρα* as a prerequisite for the genesis of the cosmos and the everyday *χώρα* as a prerequisite for the genesis of the symposium ties together several of the previous aspects of our discussion of the symposium as an image of the cosmos. The dictum summarising Anaxagoras’ cosmology was used by Lamprias in the question of portioning in order to sketch the dangers of a total absence of division, which turns out to preclude any kind of cosmogony. The reprimand of the son, on the other hand, recalls the discussion on the symposiarch, where that same son (Plutarch’s father) held a plea for a cosmic symposiarch but was ultimately corrected by Lamprias. Here he is once again found lacking as a cosmic symposiarch.⁷² That the issue of the *χώρα* connects with the issue of the symposiarch is also suggested by the next discussion, which continues the present one. The question there is why people are crammed together at the beginning of a dinner while there is ample space later in the evening. After reasonable suggestions involving the couches and cushions, grandfather Lamprias playfully (παίζων, *Quaest. conv.* 5.6.680a) adds that, as the evening progresses, Dionysus takes charge. Dionysus is an ‘excellent general’ (ἄριστον [...])

⁷¹ Cf. e.g. Sedley 2007: 3. I do not think that Plutarch would have seen it as a problem that here, in the interpretation of Hesiod, he connects Hesiod’s Chaos with *χώρα* and Hesiod’s Gaia with Isis, while elsewhere he calls Isis *χώρα* (*De Is. et Os.* 372f, 373e, 374f): while Chaos is precosmic, unqualified matter, Isis is cosmic matter qualified by Osiris and Typhon. In a way, cosmogony involves Isis–*χώρα* literally taking the place of Chaos–*χώρα*.

⁷² This reference to the views on symposiarchy expressed in *Quaest. conv.* 1.2 suffices as a connection between *Quaest. conv.* 5.5 and 1.2. There is no need to follow Teodorsson 1990: 187, who insists that the reference should be to the actual organiser of the symposium in *Quaest. conv.* 1.2 (i.e. Timon) and proposes reading ὕδοῦς (grandson) instead of ὑιός in *Quaest. conv.* 5.5.679a.

στρατηγόν) who manages to turn the symposium into ‘a cheerful and sociable co-ordination’ (ἐἰς τάξιν ἰλαρὰν καὶ φιλόανθρωπον, 680b). Is this cosmological or just military jargon? We are back at the question that we asked when encountering Aemilius Paullus as a symposiarch. After tracing several instances of the cosmic symposium, the answer that it could be both has perhaps gained probability. In any case Plutarch saw the good symposium as an image of the Platonic cosmos. This is not merely an abstract notion: it impacts the course of the symposium in a concrete way. Organising a cosmic symposium is no picnic.

4. Concluding remarks

To show what this analysis of cosmic imagery in the *Sympotic Questions* has yielded, I offer two observations: the first concerns the vexed issue of reading the *Sympotic Questions* as a whole, while the second regards the role of cosmic imagery in Plutarch’s cosmological ethics.

First, I have tried to show how the notion that the good symposium is an image of the Platonic cosmos pervades the *Sympotic Questions*. The imagery steers the discussions in which it appears and the occurrence of several aspects of it, across various seemingly unconnected questions, results in a fairly coherent and complete image of the sympotic cosmos. The imagery should be taken philosophically seriously – though not without losing sight of the παιδιὰ, which is also necessary at the table and when reading Plutarch tout court – and its occurrence should not be dismissed, as scholars have done for some of the passages discussed here, as merely a ‘boutade’ or a sign of ‘pedantic humour’.⁷³ My attempt

⁷³ Scarcella 1998: 297 n. 170 calls Lamprias’ use of cosmological language in *Quaest. conv.* 1.2 ‘francamente una *boutade*’; Frazier 2012a: 236 is more nuanced when commenting on the cosmological endeavours of Plutarch’s father in the same *quaestio* but still points out that ‘il faut prendre ici le paradigme [sc. cosmologique] *cum grano salis*’; Sirinelli in Frazier and Sirinelli 1996: 230 n. 139 on *Quaest. conv.* 7.6: ‘Il y a un humour un peu pedant à évoquer le schéma aristotélicien fondamental du premier moteur à propos d’une question de savoir-vivre’. One could do away with this whole chapter by objecting that Plutarch’s imagery in this case is not meant seriously, but I think that ‘serious’ vs. ‘not serious’ is a particularly unhelpful distinction to apply when interpreting Plutarch’s works in general and *Quaest. conv.*, where a mixture of σπουδή and παιδιὰ is the goal (e.g. *Quaest. conv.* 1.4.621d, 7.6.708d) – a goal that Plutarch also found in Plato (*Quaest. conv.* 2.1.634f, 6.1.686d). In terms of philosophical technicality, works like *Quaest. conv.* and *De an. procr.* belong to two different worlds. That they are closer to each other than they might seem at first sight, not only in terms of content (as this chapter has shown) but also in terms of literary composition, might be suggested by comparing the last sentence of the dedicatory introduction to the *Quaest. conv.* (1.612d–e) to the opening sentence of *De an. procr.* (1012b): the two sentences reveal remarkable parallels in terms

to collect pieces of imagery from various questions in no particular order and to piece them together is sanctioned, I think, by the nature of the *Sympotic Questions*. I fully endorse the description of that nature in König's excellent study on fragmentation and coherence in this work:

The *Sympotic questions* prompts us to read actively – in other words to respond creatively and philosophically for ourselves to the many different questions under discussion, and to stay alert to the recurring themes and patterns of the texts. Plutarch also shows us his fellow dinner-guests learning that style of active response for themselves, using the topics they discuss as springboards for personal response, as stepping-stones in their philosophical lives. [...] The *Sympotic questions* aspires to unity only through its attention to the specific, which we must put into shape for ourselves. But it does, I suggest, frequently gesture towards thematic connections and progressions between its different parts, as if to give us a faint and preliminary glimpse of the kind of coherence we can expect to emerge from our own readings of Plutarch's work, and of the world, if we are only willing to put the effort in.⁷⁴

of both style and content. (1) Plutarch presents both writings as responses to specific requests (cf. Sirinelli 2000: 134, 138, 141–143 on this Plutarchan habit): Sosius Senecio requested the *Sympotic Questions* (ὥθηθης τε δεῖν ἡμᾶς [...] συναγαγεῖν), and Plutarch's sons Autobulus and Plutarch requested a treatise on *Timaeus* 35b–36b (οἴεσθε δεῖν εἰς ἐν συναχθῆναι). (2) Both sentences combine a long ἐπεὶ clause, which puts the focus on the addressee, with a much shorter main clause, which has Plutarch as its subject. (3) Both writings comprise material that Plutarch has entertained many times on earlier occasions (σποράδην πολλάκις ~ πολλάκις [...] σποράδην), which he brings together (συναγαγεῖν ~ συναχθῆναι) in a treatise (ἀναγραφῆς ~ ἀναγράψασθαι). (4) In both introductory sentences, Plutarch consciously positions himself within an earlier tradition. In *De an. procr.*, he immediately announces his disagreement with earlier Platonists. In *Quaest. conv.*, he may seem to take on a more modest attitude, but we should not forget the unprecedented (as far as we can tell) scope and length of the work, which is announced in the first sentence through the mention of several symposia taking place both in Greece and in Rome, as well as the announcement of the books yet to come. Here, too, Plutarch may be implying that he is not only continuing but also improving upon the tradition. Both sentences reveal Plutarch's careful balancing act between self-promotion and self-effacement, which König 2011 spotted specifically in *Quaest. conv.* but which can be found throughout Plutarch's writings – even a technical work like *De an. procr.* contains this rhetorical technique (cf. also, e.g. a dialogue like *De E*, where Plutarch plays with self-promotion and self-effacement by introducing his younger self as a character).

⁷⁴ König 2007: 45–46 (first passage), 61 (second passage). Cf. Klotz and Oikonomopoulou 2011a: 27: 'The text's [i.e. *Quaest. conv.*] unity is not formal, but hermeneutic.' For a similar (and, to my mind, fruitful) take on Athenaeus' *Learned Banquetters*, see

I hope to have shown, through an exercise in active reading, that the scattered presence of the cosmos as a model for the symposium is one of these gestures.⁷⁵ As such, my analysis may contribute something to our interpretation of the *Sympotic Questions* as a whole. In an important and wide-ranging monograph, Vamvouri Ruffy has shown how Plutarch uses medical and political vocabulary to evoke the ideal symposium.⁷⁶ My analysis of cosmological themes both completes and underpins her analysis: while medical language considers the symposium at the level of the individual and political language raises it to the higher level of the community, cosmological language brings it to the highest level, of which the lower levels are images. The symposiarch is like not only the doctor and the politician but also the demiurge.⁷⁷

Second, did Plutarch come up with this idea of using the Platonic cosmos as the model for the symposium? Yes and no – and even that unsatisfying answer will have to remain tentative and vague. I submit that, by constructing a Platonic sympotic cosmos, Plutarch forged new imagery as a kind of Platonic reflex response to ideas already present in the Greek mind. Let me offer some traces of both directions of the imagery; in other words: (a) the notion that the cosmos is like a symposium (the cosmos being a sympotic macrocosm) and (b) the notion that the symposium is like the cosmos (the symposium being a sympotic microcosm).

(a) The image of life in the cosmos as a sympotic experience is developed most extensively by Dio Chrysostom in his *Charidemus* (*Or.* 30.28–44), to which I shall return in the chapter on *On Tranquillity of Mind* when discussing the broader image of life as a cosmic festival (p. 260).⁷⁸ The cosmos is like a house (28) in which humans are received as banqueters (29). Sun and moon are the lamps (29), and the land and sea, which bring us food, are the tables (30), which are waited upon by

Paulas 2012. For more on Plutarchan active reading, see Mossman 2016 (on Dionysus in *Quaest. conv.*); Konstan 2004 (on *De aud. poet.*); Duff 2011a (on the *Lives*); Meeusen 2016: 219–225 (on *Quaest. nat.*); Trego 2016 (on *Praec. ger. reip.*). Cf. more generally, Konstan 2006; 2009a.

⁷⁵ König 2007: 44 names ‘recurring images’ as one of the possible gestures towards coherence.

⁷⁶ Vamvouri Ruffy 2012. Cf. also Vamvouri Ruffy 2011, which summarises the main tenets of the monograph, and Stadter 2015d.

⁷⁷ As we shall see (p. 142), the politician should also aspire to be an image of the demiurge. In *De sera num.*, Plutarch establishes a sustained comparison of demiurge and doctor, as Hirsch-Luipold 2002: 225–281 has shown. Cf. Tieleman 2013 on the connections between Platonic demiurgy and medicine in Galen.

⁷⁸ For the comparison between life and symposium, albeit without cosmological connotations, see e.g. Bion of Borysthenes, fr. 68, with further parallels in Kindstrand 1976: 281–282.

the seasons (31). In the cosmos as at the symposium, we should act moderately before leaving cheerfully. In Athenaeus' *Learned Banqueters*, it is Plutarch of Alexandria – a character behind whom Plutarch of Chaeronea hides⁷⁹ – who associates the symposium with a comic evocation of the festival of life (Ath. II.463c–d quoting Alexis fr. 222 *PCG*).⁸⁰ This idea should perhaps be traced back to sympotic scenes from mythology: as Hobden has shown, references to the disruptive effect of wine point towards 'convival power play' in Greek and Near Eastern mythology.⁸¹ Not only Homer and the tragedians are important in this regard but also Plato's *Symposium* (203b–c), where the birth of Eros is a cosmic disruption following from Poros' excessive drinking.⁸² A similar sense of the sympotic macrocosm pervades Greek poetry. Gagné has studied how the wine vessel (ἔκπωμα) becomes a poetic metaphor for the description of the cosmos, thus giving rise to 'a whole geography of sympotic landscapes'.⁸³ Moving beyond poetry, Gagné points out that one of these macrocosmic sympotic landscapes is painted by Plutarch in the myth of *On God's Slowness to Punish*, where Thespesius sees 'a large crater with streams pouring into it' (κρατήρα μέγαν, εἰς δὲ τοῦτον ἐμβάλλοντα ῥεύματα, *De sera num.* 566b).⁸⁴ This turns out to be a playful reference to the Orphic Κράτηρ (566b–c), which was in turn connected by some Platonists to the crater in which the demiurge mixed the cosmic and human souls (*Tim.* 41d; cf. Proclus, *In Tim.* 3.246.29–250.28).⁸⁵ The notion of a sympotic macrocosm, then, was hardly a novelty in Plutarch's time.

(b) The same thing can be said of the notion of a sympotic microcosm. The idea 'that the symposium for the period of its duration, symbolical-

⁷⁹ E.g. Douglas Olsen 2006: xi. See further Berra 2005.

⁸⁰ *Quaest. conv.* also show a close connection between the symposium and the festival. This is particularly clear in but not limited to the whole of the ninth book, which takes place during a festival of the Muses. König 2007: 64–67 notes that '[a]pproximately 25 per cent of the *Sympotic questions*' conversations are explicitly set at specified festival occasions' (at 64). Cf. Schmitt-Pantel 1992b: 471–482; König 2008: 88–89; 2012: 81–88. The symposium and the festival are even more explicitly connected in Dio Chrysostom's *Or.* 27.

⁸¹ Hobden 2013: 159–170.

⁸² Hobden 2013: 161–162. It takes a bit of interpretation to regard this part of *Symp.* as a 'cosmology', as Hobden does without really arguing the point. However, from *De Is. et Os.* 374c–d, it is clear that this is exactly how Plutarch interpreted this passage.

⁸³ Gagné 2016: quote from 213–214.

⁸⁴ Cf. also Taufer 2010: 179–187; Gagné 2015: 322; see both these works for further references to literature about the myth of *De sera num.* For Plutarch's views on Orphism, see esp. Bernabé 1996; cf. also Pinnoy 1990; Boulogne 2001.

⁸⁵ See, however, Brisson 1998: 36–41 for the point that the imagery is metallurgic instead of sympotic.

ly constituted the world' must have been widespread.⁸⁶ This could go terribly wrong. The world could become, for instance, a ship tossed in a heavy storm. This is what happened to some inebriated symposiasts in Agrigentum, as the historian Timaeus reports: they started throwing all the furniture out of the windows to lighten their ship.⁸⁷ As König aptly puts it, the symposium was 'an institution for sanctioned flirtation with disorder'.⁸⁸ From early on, for instance in Xenophanes' descriptive and prescriptive account of the symposium (fr. 1 West), the symposium was an event that required conscious ordering. For Theognis sympotic singing should be εὐκόσμως (242), and his prescriptions for the symposium show an obsession with τὸ μέτρον (467–496). Similarly, Solon imagines a disastrous symposium at which the guests cannot order (κοσμεῖν) their festive spirit (fr. 4.10 West).⁸⁹ It is a small step (but a step nonetheless) from here to cosmology. This step, too, was made long before Plutarch's time. The grammarian Asclepiades of Myrlea (2nd – 1st century BCE) read a cosmologically informed symposium into Homer's description of Nestor's drinking cup, which was set with golden studs (χρυσεῖοις ἥλοισι πεπαρμένον, *Il.* II.633):

ἐγὼ δέ, φησὶν ὁ Μυρλεανός, τάδε λέγω περὶ τοῦ ποτηρίου. οἱ παλαιοὶ καὶ τὰ περὶ τὴν ἡμέρον τροφήν πρῶτοι διαταξάμενοι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, πειθόμενοι τὸν κόσμον εἶναι σφαιροειδῆ, λαμβάνοντες ἔκ τε τοῦ ἡλίου καὶ τῆς σελήνης σχήματος ἐναργεῖς τὰς φαντασίας, καὶ τὰ περὶ τὴν ἰδίον τροφήν τῷ περιέχοντι κατὰ τὴν ἰδέαν τοῦ σχήματος ἀφομοιοῦν εἶναι δίκαιον ἐνόμιζον. διὸ τὴν τράπεζαν κυκλοειδῆ κατεσκευάσαντο καὶ τοὺς τρίποδας τοὺς τοῖς θεοῖς καθαγιζομένους, φθόεις κυκλοτερεῖς καὶ ἀστέρας ἔχοντας, οὓς καὶ καλοῦσι σελήνας. καὶ τὸν ἄρτον δ' ἐκάλεσαν ὅτι τῶν σχημάτων ὁ κύκλος ἀπῆρτισται καὶ ἔστι τέλειος. καὶ τὸ ποτήριον οὖν τὸ δεχόμενον τὴν ὑγρὰν τροφήν κυκλοτερές ἐποίησαν κατὰ μίμημα τοῦ κόσμου. τὸ δὲ τοῦ Νέστορος καὶ ἰδιαίτερόν ἐστιν. ἔχει γὰρ καὶ ἀστέρας, οὓς ἥλοις ὁ ποιητὴς ἀπεικάζει διὰ τὸ τοὺς ἀστέρας περιφερεῖς εἶναι τοῖς ἥλοις ὁμοίως καὶ ὡς περ ἐμπεπηγένοι τῷ οὐρανῷ, καθὼς καὶ Ἄρατος φησὶν ἐπ' αὐτῶν 'οὐρανῷ αἰὲν ἄρηρεν ἀγάλματα νυκτὸς ἰούσης'.

⁸⁶ Davidson 1997: 44.

⁸⁷ Timaeus fr. 149 *FGrH* (= Ath. 2.37b–d). See e.g. Corner 2010 with further references at 352 n. 2. In his *Lexiphanes* and *Symposium*, Lucian offers satirical descriptions of sympotic chaos.

⁸⁸ König 2008: 97. His wide-ranging monograph on the symposium, König 2012, is structured accordingly: the first part deals with sympotic order, and the second with sympotic disorder. Cf. also e.g. Schmitt-Pantel 1992a.

⁸⁹ Both Theognis and Solon tie their prescription for an orderly symposium to concerns about order in the polis; see Levine 1985: 185–186.

περιπτῶς δὲ καὶ τοῦτ' ἔφρασεν ὁ ποιητής, τοὺς χρυσοῦς ἥλους παρατιθεῖς τῇ τοῦ ἀργυροῦ ἐκπώματος φύσει, τὴν τῶν ἀστέρων καὶ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἐκτυπῶν κατὰ τὴν ἰδέαν τῆς χροῶς οὐσίαν· ὁ μὲν γὰρ οὐρανὸς ἀργύρῳ προσέοικεν, οἱ δὲ ἀστέρες χρυσῶ δια τὸ πυρῶδες. (Ath. II.489c–e)

But I for my part, says the Myrlean, have the following to say about the cup. The ancients were the first to organize a civilized style of dining for human beings, and because they believed that the kosmos was shaped like a sphere, given that they got their clearest impression of its form from the sun and the moon, they thought it right to make everything associated with their own dining style resemble what the world that surrounded them looked like. They accordingly made their tables and the tripods they dedicated to the gods round, and made their pastries circular and decorated them with stars (which they refer to as *selēnai*). They also adopted the term *artos* ('loaf of bread'), because its circular shape is regular (*apērtistai*) and perfect; and they made the cup that held their liquid nourishment round, to imitate the shape of the kosmos. Nestor's cup, however, is rather unusual, since it has stars, which the poet compares to studs on account of the fact that stars are round, just as studs are, and seem to have been stuck into the sky, just as Aratus [*Phaen.* 453] says in regard to them: 'always fixed in the sky, as ornaments of the passing night'. Homer was very careful about how he described this, contrasting the gold studs to the rest of the vessel, which was made of silver, and creating an impression of the stars and the sky that matches what can be seen of their actual color; because the sky resembles silver, while the fiery nature of the stars makes them look like gold.

This is barely the beginning of Asclepiades' cosmological interpretation of Nestor's cup.⁹⁰ The jump from sympotic order (*διαταξάμενοι*) to sympotic cosmology (*τὸν κόσμον*), which results in the idea that everything at the symposium should imitate the cosmos (*κατὰ μίμημα τοῦ κόσμου*), also feeds into Asclepiades' interpretation of the pair of doves (*δοιαὶ δὲ πελειάδες*, *Il.* II.634) that were featured on the cup: these are connected with the Pleiades and submitted to an astrological reading (Ath. II.489e–492a). The fact that it is Athenaeus who transmits this piece of Homeric allegory already shows that ideas such as these were not forgotten by Plutarch's time. The long excerpt from Asclepiades is folded into a debilitatingly long alphabetical overview of dozens of kinds of drinking

⁹⁰ See Pagani 2004: 357–361, 365; 2007: 160–179 on Asclepiades, his cosmic imagery, and its possible sources.

cups and is put into the mouth of the character ‘Plutarch’.⁹¹ A similar but more tangible effort to map the cosmos onto the symposium could be found in first-century Rome: Suetonius writes that in Nero’s *Domus aurea* the main banquet hall was round and revolved like the cosmos (‘praecipua cenationum rotunda, quae perpetuo diebus ac noctibus vice mundi circumageretur’, *Ner.* 31.2).⁹² This puzzling yet awe-inspiring description was archaeologically confirmed in a 2009 excavation.⁹³

What this brief overview of sympotic micro- and macrocosms shows is that these ideas were voiced early on in terms of ‘order’ and that cosmology was later retrojected into these early testimonies. Plutarch seems to have been particularly bent on emphasising the archaic character of his sympotic cosmos. In the programmatically archaising *Dinner of the Seven Sages*, the idea that the table is an imitation of the world was attributed to Thales (158c), who figures among the guests, but then this idea is criticised, in line with what we encountered in the *Sympotic Questions*, because it puts food above conviviality (159d–e).⁹⁴ In the *Sympotic Questions*, the cosmic explanation of the lamps and the tables is tied to an ancient Roman belief, the *χώρα* is found in Hesiod, and the defence of portion banquets is presented as a return to Homeric and ancient Lacedaemonian practices (*Quaest. conv.* 2.10.644a–b). Similarly, when ‘Plutarch’ is appointed as symposiarch, this is called the revival of an ancient custom (*Quaest. conv.* 1.4.620a).

Even so, Plutarch’s sympotic cosmos is new in the sense that Plutarch pieced together a distinctly Platonic sympotic cosmos by considering demiurgy, the distinction between materiality and immateriality (both valuable, but the latter much more so than the former), and the *χώρα*. As the coherent, extended, and carefully embedded cosmic imagery of the *Sympotic Questions* shows, the cosmology of the *Timaeus* informs Plutarch’s sympotic ethics. Even a half-decent party planner simply had to know this cosmology and had to imitate the demiurge. The Platonic cosmo-ethical ideal of *ὁμοίωσις θεῷ* should always guide us, not least when we are drinking. After all, there ain’t no party like a Platonic party.

⁹¹ This is clear from Ath. 11.503f.

⁹² I thank Henry Tang for pointing me in this direction.

⁹³ Villedieu 2012. The building was finished at the latest by 70 CE, and it was probably shortly afterwards that the young Plutarch first came to Rome. Of course, there is no way of telling whether he heard about it, let alone whether it left a lasting impression – lasting long enough, that is, to inspire the *Quaest. conv.* written some thirty or forty years later. See Jones 1971: 135–137 for the dating of these events in Plutarch’s life.

⁹⁴ On sympotic aspects of *Sept. sap. conv.*, see Klotz 2014: 218–220; for the work in general, see esp. Mossman 1997.

Chapter 4

Politics

The *Phocion – Cato Minor* is one of the few pairs of biographies that Plutarch does not conclude with a formal comparison (σύγκρισις) between the Greek and the Roman protagonist.¹ In this particular case, it has been argued time and again that Plutarch decided to move the comparison to the introduction of the pair.² The introduction indeed announces the overarching concern that connects the biographies of Phocion and Cato Minor. In these lives, as Duff describes it,

Plutarch confronts the issue of whether there is, in the reality of political life, such a thing as absolute good and absolute evil. [...] Plutarch seems to allow the possibility that it may be appropriate for a statesman to compromise his values.³

The passage that signals this theme most explicitly has not received due attention:⁴

ὥσπερ οὖν τὸν ἥλιον οἱ μαθηματικοὶ λέγουσι μήτε τὴν αὐτὴν τῶ οὐρανῶ φερόμενον φορᾶν, μήτ' ἀντικρυς ἐναντίαν καὶ ἀντιβατικὴν, ἀλλὰ λοξῶ καὶ παρεγκεκλιμένῳ πορείας σχήματι χρώμενον, ὑγράν

¹ The other pairs lacking a formal σύγκρισις are *Them. – Cam.*, *Pyrrh. – Mar.*, and *Alex. – Caes.* The question has not been settled whether the comparisons for these pairs are lost or were never written; see Duff 1999b: 253–256; 2011b: 258–259; Pelling 2002f: 377; Larmour 2014: 410–411; Chrysanthou 2018: 201; Erbsse 1956 lies at the basis of this debate. It is generally admitted now that syncretic elements in Plutarch's works are not limited to these formal comparisons: the lack of a formal σύγκρισις does not imply a lack of parallelism between the paired heroes; see e.g. Larmour 1991: 4154–4174; 2014; Swain 1992; Duff 1999b: 243–286; Pelling 2002e. On the function of the prologues, see Stadter 1988; Duff 2008; 2011b: 216–224; 2014; cf. also Duff 1999b: 13–51.

² Bearzot 1985: 17; Tritle 1992: 4267; Alcalde Martín 1999: 160; Trapp 1999: 488; Pelling 2002f: 377; Lamberton 2003: 10; Leão 2010: 189; Fialho 2010: 196, 199; Duff 2014: 338–339.

³ Duff 1999b: 131.

⁴ The passage is sometimes mentioned or paraphrased in passing (e.g. Wardman 1974: 55, 58; Tritle 1988: 9; 1992: 4267; Duff 1999b: 139–140), but to my knowledge, it has not received a thorough interpretation and has not been deemed important for the interpretation of the broader context or the work as a whole.

καὶ εὐκαμπῆ καὶ περιελιττομένην⁵ ἔλικα ποιεῖν, ἧ σφύζεται πάντα καὶ λαμβάνει τὴν ἀρίστην κρᾶσιν, οὕτως ἄρα τῆς πολιτείας ὁ μὲν ὄρθιος ἄγαν καὶ πρὸς ἅπαντα τοῖς δημοτικοῖς ἀντιβαίνων τόνος ἀπηνῆς καὶ σκληρός, ὥσπερ αὖ πάλιν ἐπισφαλὲς καὶ κάταντες τὸ συνεφελκόμενον οἷς ἀμαρτάνουσιν οἱ πολλοὶ καὶ ἡ δ' ἀνθυπείκουσα πειθόμενοις καὶ διδοῦσα τὸ πρὸς χάριν, εἴτ' ἀπαιτοῦσα τὸ συμφέρον ἐπιστασία καὶ κυβέρνησις ἀνθρώπων, πολλὰ πράως καὶ χρησίμως ὑπουργούντων, εἰ μὴ πάντα δεσποτικῶς καὶ βιαίως ἄγοιντο, σωτήριος, ἐργώδης δὲ καὶ χαλεπὴ καὶ τὸ σεμνὸν ἔχουσα τῷ ἐπιεικεῖ δύσμεικτον· ἐὰν δὲ μειχθῆ, τοῦτ' ἔστιν ἡ πάντων μὲν ῥυθμῶν, πασῶν δ' ἁρμονιῶν ἐμμελεστάτη καὶ μουσικωτάτη κρᾶσις, ἧ καὶ τὸν κόσμον ὁ θεὸς λέγεται διοικεῖν, οὐ βιαζόμενος, ἀλλὰ πειθοῖ καὶ λόγῳ παράγων τὴν ἀνάγκην. (*Phoc.* 2. 6–9)

Now, the sun, as mathematicians tell us, has neither the same motion as the heavens, nor one that is directly opposite and contrary, but takes a slanting course with a slight inclination, and describes a winding spiral of soft and gentle curves, thus preserving all things and giving them the best temperature. And so in the administration of a city, the course which is too straight, and opposed in all things to the popular desires, is harsh and cruel, just as, on the other hand, it is highly dangerous to tolerate or yield perforce to the mistakes of the populace. But that wise guidance and government of men which yields to them in return for their obedience and grants them what will please them, and then demands from them in payment what will advantage the state,— and men will give docile and profitable service in many ways, provided they are not treated despotically and harshly all the time,— conduces to safety, although it is laborious and difficult and must have that mixture of austerity and reasonableness which is so hard to attain. But if the mixture be attained, that is the most concordant and musical blending of all rhythms and all harmonies; and this is the way, we are told in which God regulates the universe, not using compulsion, but diverting necessity by way of persuasion and reason. [tr. modified⁶]

⁵ Although the Teubner edition prints Ziegler's conjecture *παρελιττομένην*, Gärtner's revision of Ziegler's Teubner rightly expresses a preference for the reading of the manuscripts in the addenda. See Erbse 1957: 274 n. 7 contra Ziegler 1932: 51.

⁶ For reasons that will become clear, I do not take *πειθοῖ καὶ λόγῳ παράγων τὴν ἀνάγκην* to mean 'making persuasion and reason introduce that which must be' (Loeb translation), nor do I think that Plutarch meant to say that the demiurge averts *ἀνάγκη* (LSJ s.v. *παράγω* cites *Phoc.* as sole evidence for the meaning 'avert', which should be scrapped altogether). The translation in Scott-Kilvert and Duff 2011 ('introducing his ultimate purpose not by force but by reason and persuasion') strays rather far from the Greek. For *παράγω* in the sense of diverting, as I understand it here, see e.g. *Cam.* 4.6 (literally) and *De aud. poet.* 21c (metaphorically).

In this elaborate period, three elements are compared – the first two most extensively: (1) the movement of the sun, (2) political rule, and (3) the blend created by the god who regulates the κόσμος (i.e. the demiurge). For the first two elements, two contrasting options are rejected before the preferred option, the middle course, is introduced. We are told that the sun neither (A: μήτε) follows the heavenly motion nor (B: μήτε) opposes it, but (C: ἀλλά) takes a slanting course, which turns out to be the best. Similarly (οὕτως, answering ὅσπερ, which introduced the first clause), political rule should neither (A') be too rigid nor (B': αὖ) too yielding, but (C: καί [...] δέ⁷) it is most beneficial when it is marked by mutual compromise. This compromise is then described in musical terms (ἡ πάντων μὲν ῥυθμῶν, πασῶν δ' ἁρμονιῶν ἐμμελεστάτη καὶ μουσικωτάτη κρᾶσις) and identified with the demiurge's means for governing the cosmos.⁸ Several echoes interconnect the three parts of the comparison. Sun and political rule combine contrary movements (ἀντιβατικήν, ἀντιβαίνων⁹) to achieve preservation (σώζεται, σωτήριος) in the form of κρᾶσις, which is also used by the demiurge. The demiurge and the government share an approach that is not marked by force (βιαίως, βιαζόμενος) but relies on persuasion (πειθομένοις, πειθοῖ). In this chapter I continue the discussion of the imagery included in this long sentence by connecting it to Plutarch's interpretation of the *Timaeus* (section 1). Then I explore the comparison of the ruler to the demiurge (section 2) and the sun (section 3) – the former being the ruler of the intelligible world, the latter of the sensible world (cf. Plutarch's interpretation of Plato's *Republic*, p. 327) – in other Plutarchan works.¹⁰

⁷ This καί... δέ answers the μὲν, which introduced the two rejected options; see Denniston 1954: 203.

⁸ See chapter 2.1 on the comparison of demiurge and musician. It is possible that τόνοϛ is meant to announce this musical aspect. The context makes it clear that the primary meaning of the word is 'course' (LSJ s.v. τόνοϛ III; Pind., *Ol.* 10.64 is a clear example), but in *Dem.* 13.4, Plutarch speaks about political τόνοϛ in musical terms, i.e. in the sense of 'pitch' (LSJ s.v. τόνοϛ II; cf. the use of διάγραμμα, 'scale', in the same sentence).

⁹ As the analysis of the imagery will show, Plutarch does not designate the same movement as contrary in both cases. In the case of the sun, ἀντιβατικήν refers to the movement that opposes the rational movement (the movement of heaven), while in the case of political rule, ἀντιβαίνων is said of the movement that opposes the irrational movement (the movement of the people).

¹⁰ For an overview of Plutarch's political thought, see esp. Aalders 1982. Other important and wide-ranging discussions include Weber 1959; Aalders and de Blois 1992; Centrone 2000: 576–583; Roskam 2009b: 31–65; Desmond 2011: 61–86; Pelling 2014. Plutarch's own political career was richly filled but mainly devoted to the local community of Chaeronea, where he once held the eponymous archonship (*Quaest. conv.* 2.10.642f, 6.8.693f), and the larger Boeotian region. It is possible, however, that near the

1. *The Timaeus in the Phocion*

The passage quoted above is important for the assessment of the central issue of political compromise in the *Phocion – Cato Minor*. Keeping in mind such passages as *On God's Slowness to Punish* 550d–e (p. 17), which recommends imitating both the demiurge and the visible cosmos, the comparison should be taken as a strong cosmological justification: if both the sun and the demiurge achieve the best possible result by compromising, we have every reason to try to imitate them in this regard. I want to suggest that, although Plato's name does not come up here, both the description of the sun's movement and that of the demiurge's ordering of the cosmos echo the *Timaeus*.

The description of the sun's movement, which Plutarch attributes to οἱ μαθηματικοί, would hardly have counted as cutting-edge mathematical astronomy in Plutarch's day.¹¹ There is no mention of Eudoxus' concentric three-sphere model of the sun's movement, let alone of the later explanations involving epicycles or eccentric motions, which could account for the unequal lengths of the seasons. The two-sphere explanation with which Plutarch credits οἱ μαθηματικοί is the explanation introduced in the *Timaeus*, which was soon after superseded by refinements of Plato's theory.¹² It is not that Plutarch did not know about these later innovations nor that he denied their accuracy. In *On the Generation of the Soul* 1028a–b, for instance, Plutarch criticises the attempt to explain epicycles by reference to Plato's division of the cosmic soul. Plutarch's scientific knowledge was sufficient for him to know that the phenomena of the visible cosmos do not completely dovetail with Plato's cosmology.¹³ What he concluded from this knowledge, however, was not that we should throw away or even emend Plato's cosmology, which rightly places the invisible soul front and centre. Rather, we should keep in mind that, although the motions of the heavenly bodies are harmonious due to their being moved by the cosmic soul, 'the quantity of the measurement has eluded us' (τὸ ποσὸν ἡμᾶς τοῦ μέτρου διαπέφευγε, *De an. procr.* 1030c; cf. p. 76). Observation of the heavenly movements, then, is help-

end of his life, he received the *ornamenta consularia* from Trajan and that Hadrian made him procurator of Greece. On this and other aspects of Plutarch's political career, see esp. Jones 1971: 13–38; cf. Roskam 2009b: 17–19 for a concise overview. On the political aspects of his tenure as a priest in Delphi, see Stadter 2015a.

¹¹ For οἱ μαθηματικοί denoting astronomers, see Pérez Jiménez 1992: 272; cf. also *De soll. an.* 947f; *De facie* 921a; *De Is. et Os.* 358f–359a.

¹² On these developments and how they relate to the model presented in *Tim.*, cf. e.g. Lloyd 1970: 80–98; 1973: 53–74; Gregory 2000: esp. 101–158; 2003.

¹³ For Plutarch's knowledge of astronomy, see Pérez Jiménez 1992; Torraca 1992; cf. also Delattre 2013.

ful, but we should not allow their intricacies to detract from the primacy of the invisible soul (cf. *De an. procr.* 1028a–b). By adopting this stance, Plutarch could regard the basic truths of Plato’s cosmology as immune to post-Platonic developments in astronomy. What Plutarch really cares about, both in the *Phocion* passage and in more technical works, is the connection between heavenly movement and the presence or absence of rationality. What he cares about – and this will not come as a surprise even regarding a passage where this is completely implicit – is invisible soul rather than visible body.

Let us backtrack a bit to substantiate this claim. According to the *Ti-maeus* the movements of the planets, including the sun, are defined by two distinct motions of the cosmic soul, which consists of two circles joined together at an angle (i.e. the angle formed by the celestial equator and the ecliptic) and moving in opposite directions. While the circle of the same moves from left to right, the circle of the different goes from right to left (*Tim.* 36c–d). The circle of the same carries the heaven as a whole; this can be observed in the daily motion of the fixed stars from east to west (40b–d).¹⁴ The planets, on the other hand, are placed on the inner circle of the different, which is itself divided into seven unequal circles – one for each planet (38c–39b; cf. also *De an. procr.* 1028b; *De exil.* 604a–b with p. 244). The consequence is that the sun, for instance, is characterised not only by a daily motion from east to west due to the movement of the same, but also by an oblique motion from west to east:

ἐπειδὴ δὲ οὖν εἰς τὴν ἑαυτῷ πρέπουσαν ἕκαστον ἀφίκετο φορὰν τῶν ὅσα ἔδει συναπεργάζεσθαι χρόνον, δεσμοῖς τε ἐμψύχοις σώματα δεθέντα ζῶα ἐγεννήθη τό τε προσταχθὲν ἔμαθεν, κατὰ δὴ τὴν θατέρου φορὰν πλαγίαν οὔσαν, διὰ τῆς ταυτοῦ φορᾶς ἰούσαν τε καὶ κρατουμένην, τὸ μὲν μείζονα αὐτῶν, τὸ δ’ ἐλάττω κύκλον ἰόν, θᾶττον μὲν τὰ τὸν ἐλάττω, τὰ δὲ τὸν μείζω βραδύτερον περιήειν. τῇ δὲ ταυτοῦ φορᾷ τὰ τάχιστα περιούonta ὑπὸ τῶν βραδύτερον ἰόντων ἐφαίνετο καταλαμβάνοντα καταλαμβάνεσθαι· πάντας γὰρ τοὺς κύκλους αὐτῶν στρέφουσα ἔλικά διὰ τὸ διχῆ κατὰ τὰ ἐναντία ἅμα προῖέναι τὸ βραδύτατα ἀπὸν ἀφ’ αὐτῆς οὔσης ταχίστης ἐγγύτατα ἀπέφαινε. (Pl., *Tim.* 38e–39b [text modified¹⁵])

Now when each of the bodies that were to cooperate in producing time [i.e. the planets] had come into the movement prepared for carrying

¹⁴ Cf. Dicks 1970: 119–120 for the correspondence of left to east and right to west here.

¹⁵ At 39a Burnet, from whose OCT edition I normally quote, follows the primary manuscripts and prints ἰούσης τε καὶ κρατουμένης. The *recentiores* read ἰούσαν τε καὶ κρατουμένην and this has been generally accepted since Cornford 1935: 112 n. 2.

it and when, bound by bonds of soul, these bodies had been begotten with life and learned their assigned tasks, they began to revolve along the movement of the Different, which is oblique and which goes through the movement of the Same, by which it is also dominated. Some bodies would move in a larger circle, others in a smaller one, the latter moving more quickly and the former more slowly. Indeed, because of the movement of the Same, the ones that go around most quickly appeared to be overtaken by those going more slowly, even though in fact they were overtaking them. For as it revolves, this movement gives to all these circles a spiral twist, because they are moving forward in two contrary directions at once. As a result, it makes that body which departs most slowly from it – and it is the fastest of the movements – appear closest to it.

As this passage implies, it is the combined motion of the circle of the same and the circle of the different that leads to the existence of seasons: while the movement of the same accounts for the sun's production of day and night, the movement of the different accounts for its variations throughout the year.¹⁶ Plato describes the yearly course of the planets between the tropics as an ἔλιξις, and Plutarch does the same specifically for the sun in the *Phocion*.¹⁷

At this point we should recall two peculiarities of Plutarch's interpretation of the *Timaeus*, which cause the movement of the different, as he understands it, to be marked by irrationality. Plutarch associates difference with irrationality, whereas for Plato difference seems to be part of the rational soul (cf. p. 88). Moreover, he again moves beyond Plato's text by conceiving of the two movements of the cosmic soul as being differently constituted: while the ingredient of sameness is predominant in the circle of the same, which moves the fixed stars, the ingredient of difference is predominant in the circle of the different, which moves the planets (p. 62 n. 85). The result of Plutarch's interpretation, then, is that the movement of the different is irrational. This is, I think, also implied in the *Phocion*, where the movement of the same (described here as the movement of the heaven, cf. Pl., *Tim.* 40a), which goes against the movement of the different, is compared to the straight (ὄρθιος) political course, which goes against popular movement (πρὸς ἅπαντα τοῖς

¹⁶ See e.g. Gregory 2000: 128–131.

¹⁷ Martin 1841: 75–78 is still a helpful elucidation of Plato's notion of ἔλιξις. Cf. also e.g. Taylor 1928: 204–212; Cornford 1935: 114; Dicks 1970: 129. Cf. e.g. Calcidius, *In Tim.* § 116. Plato's ἔλιξις (a result of the combined movement of the circle of the same and the circle of the different) corresponds perfectly to Plutarch's use of ἔλιξις in *Phoc.* and there is no reason to draw in Eudoxus' third concentric sphere, contra Torraca 1992: 238.

δημοτικοῖς ἀντιβαίνων).¹⁸ As we shall see, the biographies of Phocion and Cato pitch their protagonists' rationality against the irrationality of the mob. This connection between, on the one hand, straight and opposed movement and, on the other hand, rationality and irrationality is essential to the comparison and depends specifically on Plutarch's interpretation of the *Timaeus*.

This inclusion of irrational movement is not detrimental. On the contrary, it is more beneficial than either of the two movements would be in isolation. This is brought out by the notion of κρᾶσις, which I take to be something of a play on words here: the context and the later repetition of the word suggest that Plutarch is not only referring to the optimum temperature but also to the mixture of the two movements, which causes the sun to generate that optimum temperature.¹⁹ At the end of *On the Generation of the Soul*, Plutarch also mentions these beneficial seasonal changes (cf. also p. 243):

[εἰκὸς ἐστὶ, 1030b] τῶν μέντοι λόγων ἐκείνων, οἷς ὁ δημιουργὸς ἐχρήσατο, καὶ τῶν ἀριθμῶν ἔργον ἡγεῖσθαι τὴν αὐτῆς τῆς ψυχῆς ἐμμέλειαν καὶ ἀρμονίαν πρὸς αὐτήν, ὑφ' ἧς καὶ τὸν οὐρανὸν ἐγγενομένη μυρίων ἀγαθῶν ἐμπέπληκε, καὶ τὰ περὶ γῆν ὥραις καὶ μεταβολαῖς μέτρον ἐχούσαις ἄριστα καὶ κάλλιστα πρὸς τε γένεσιν καὶ σωτηρίαν τῶν γιγνομένων διακεκόσμηκεν. (*De an. procr.* 1030c)

[It is reasonable to believe that] the product of those ratios and numbers used by the artificer is the soul's own harmony and concord with herself, whereby she has filled the heaven, into which she has come, with countless goods and has arrayed the terrestrial regions with seasons and measured changes in the best and fairest way for the generation and preservation of things that come to be.

As in the *Phocion*, Plutarch connects the seasons caused by the solar movement to preservation (σωτηρίαν τῶν γιγνομένων, *De an. procr.* ~ σφύζεται πάντα, *Phoc.*). Here, however, it is clear that the cause of these beneficent effects is strictly speaking the cosmic soul, which accounts for the sun's movement, and not the body of the sun. Such a distinction would complicate the comparison of the *Phocion* even further. This does

¹⁸ For Plutarch's frequent and Platonically inspired connection of politicians with the rational and of the δῆμος with the irrational, see Saïd 2005: 13–18; cf. also Opsomer 2016b: 123.

¹⁹ On Plutarch's frequent use of the image of κρᾶσις in a variety of contexts, see Boulogne 2002; 2006, who rightly regards the mixture of the cosmic soul in *Tim.* as crucially inspiring Plutarch's interest in this image. Duff 1999b: 89–94 makes a similar point with a focus on the *Lives*.

not mean, however, that it was not on Plutarch's mind, and it further explains how he came to associate the movement of the sun with a combination of rationality and irrationality.

The more precise account from *On the Generation of the Soul* also reveals the connection between the two *comparantia* of the *Phocion* passage. The cosmic preservation, of which the seasons are an aspect, is the result of the workings of the cosmic soul, which is in turn the result of the demiurge's act of forging it harmonically (τὴν αὐτῆς τῆς ψυχῆς ἐμμέλειαν καὶ ἁρμονίαν πρὸς αὐτήν, *De an. procr.* ~ πάντων μὲν ῥυθμῶν, πασῶν δ' ἁρμονιῶν ἐμμελεστάτη καὶ μουσικωτάτη κρᾶσις, *Phoc.*). This connection between the sun and the demiurge is suggested only implicitly in the *Phocion* passage through the repetition of κρᾶσις: while the demiurge uses κρᾶσις to order the whole cosmos, the sun is obviously part of that cosmos and imparts itself a κρᾶσις which is intra-cosmic. Equally implicit is the connection that is insinuated by the application of both images to the same *comparandum*, the ruler's actions (ἐπιστασία καὶ κυβέρνησις) sharing their preserving effect with the sun's movement (σωτήριος ~ σφύζεται) and their persuasive aspect with the demiurge's activity (πειθομένοις ~ πειθοῖ). We will have to wait for the more philosophy-heavy *To an Uneducated Ruler* to say more about how these apparently connected images work together in a political context.

I have shown how the comparison involving the sun in the *Phocion* seems to assume Plutarch's particular interpretation of the *Timaeus* involving an irrational cycle. A similar case is the allusion to the demiurge, who is said to persuade necessity (πειθοῖ καὶ λόγῳ παράγων τὴν ἀνάγκην). Once again this points to the *Timaeus*:

μεμειγμένη γὰρ οὖν ἡ τοῦδε τοῦ κόσμου γένεσις ἐξ ἀνάγκης τε καὶ νοῦ συστάσεως ἐγεννήθη· νοῦ δὲ ἀνάγκης ἄρχοντος τῷ πείθειν αὐτὴν τῶν γιγνομένων τὰ πλεῖστα ἐπὶ τὸ βέλτιστον ἄγειν, ταύτη κατὰ ταῦτά τε δι' ἀνάγκης ἡττωμένης ὑπὸ πειθοῦς ἔμφορος οὕτω κατ' ἀρχὰς συνίστατο τόδε τὸ πᾶν. (*Tim.* 47e–48a)

For this ordered world is of mixed birth: it is the offspring of a union of Necessity and Intellect. Intellect prevailed over Necessity by persuading it to direct most of the things that come to be toward what is best, and the result of this subjugation of Necessity to wise persuasion was the initial formation of this universe.

Once again, Plutarch's particular interpretation of this passage from the *Timaeus* in *On the Generation of the Soul* gives insight into what he is doing in the *Phocion*. In *On the Generation of the Soul*, the life of the cosmos is described as 'reason guiding necessity that has been mingled by way of persuasion' (λόγος ἄγων πειθοῖ μεμειγμένην ἀνάγκην,

De an. procr. 1026b; cf. 1029d–e).²⁰ This duality involving rationality and irrational *ἀνάγκη* exhibited by the cosmic soul (cf. *De an. procr.* 1014d–1015a) is then further explained by a doxography of dualistic doctrines, which will be discussed later in this book (p. 209). Like the demiurge when forging the cosmic soul, the statesman should mix things that are hard to mix (*δύσμεικτον*). Before Plutarch, the adjective *δύσμεικτος* (or *δύσμηκτος*) occurs only in Plato's description of the creation of the cosmic soul in *Timaeus* 35a (cf. *De an. procr.* 1025b–c for Plutarch's interpretation of this adjective) and in Pseudo-Timaeus' paraphrase of that passage (208.17 Thesleff). That it announces a comparison with the demiurge's work on the cosmic soul, then, is not too surprising.

At the same time, Plutarch runs into trouble here. His identification of *ἀνάγκη* with the irrational part of the cosmic soul makes it possible for him to connect Plato's passage involving the demiurge's persuasion with the creation of a harmonic cosmic soul, but there is a price to pay for this. By emphasising the importance of persuasion in the cosmic process and opposing it to the use of *βία* in the *Phocion*, Plutarch obscures the fact that, according to Plato, the forging of the cosmic soul from elements that were difficult to mix did involve *βία* after all (*Tim.* 35a, quoted in *Plu.*, *De an. procr.* 1012c). In this way the *Phocion* hides a problem that is also circumvented in *On the Generation of the Soul*. In any case, the connection between the demiurge's act of persuading *ἀνάγκη* and his forging the harmonic soul makes it clear that, in the *Phocion*, Plutarch is thinking specifically about his own, consciously original and even controversial (*De an. procr.* 1012b) interpretation of the *Timaeus*.²¹ The demiurge creates the cosmic soul by persuading a pre-existing irrational force. It is precisely this combination of rationality and irrationality that makes the cosmos possible (there would be no movement without irrationality nor order without rationality; *De an. procr.* 1025e with p. 257) and harmonic (as evidenced by the seasons).

The *Timaeus* – and, more specifically, Plutarch's own interpretation of the *Timaeus* – informs the comparison involving the sun, the demiurge, and rulership. Plutarch probably did not expect every reader of the *Lives* to disentangle these implicit references. After all, understanding the gist of the message that Plutarch wants to bring across – the sun and the demiurge are adduced to advocate for a compromise between rationality and irrationality – does not demand much in the way of phil-

²⁰ See Demulder forthcoming a on *De an. procr.* 1026b. Babut 1969b: 362 n. 1 notes both *Tim.* 48a and *De an. procr.* 1026b as parallels to *Phoc.* 2.7.

²¹ Of course persuasion, compulsion, and the relation between the two also constitute a crucial theme in Plato's political thought, most importantly in *Resp.* and *Leg.*; cf. e.g. Morrow 1953b. This may have facilitated the link between cosmology and political ethics here.

osophical technicalities. Moreover, Plutarch shows no great concern with philosophical preciseness here, perhaps judging that that would be superfluous or even misguided in this biographical context.²² For instance, the ruler is compared both to the sun (undergoing the combined movement of sameness and difference) and to the demiurge (making a mixture by persuading necessity) and there is no further explanation of how we should understand the connection between the two *comparantia*. However, the subtle references show, more fundamentally perhaps, how Plutarch's reading of the *Timaeus* shapes his thinking about the cosmos and hence legitimises his ethics. Even the gist of the comparison – the demiurge and the sun illustrating how rationality and irrationality can be combined – is underpinned by the *Timaeus* as it is read on Plutarch's terms.

It remains to be seen now how Phocion and Cato Minor relate to the cosmic imagery. From the outset it is clear that we are dealing with two eminently virtuous men who are up against adverse τύχη (*Phoc.* 1.4–6 focusing on Phocion; 3.1–5 focusing on Cato; 3.6–9 comparing the two; the cosmological passage at 2.6–9 concludes a series of general remarks on the subject, which come between the focus on Phocion and the focus on Cato). By the end of the prologue, there is no question that both are 'good men and devoted to the state' (ἀγαθῶν καὶ πολιτικῶν ἀνδρῶν, *Phoc.* 3.6) with a similar and commendable set of virtues:

τούτων δὲ τῶν ἀνδρῶν αἱ ἀρεταὶ μέχρι τῶν τελευταίων καὶ ἀτόμων διαφορῶν ἓνα χαρακτῆρα καὶ μορφήν καὶ χρῶμα κοινὸν ἦθους ἐγκεκραμένον ἐκφέρουσιν, ὥσπερ ἴσῳ μέτρῳ μεμειγμένου πρὸς τὸ αὐστηρὸν τοῦ φιλανθρώπου, καὶ πρὸς τὸ ἀσφαλὲς τοῦ ἀνδρείου, καὶ τῆς ὑπὲρ ἄλλων μὲν κηδεμονίας, ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν δ' ἀφοβίας, καὶ πρὸς μὲν τὸ αἰσχροὺς εὐλαβείας, πρὸς δὲ τὸ δίκαιον εὐτονίας συνηρμοσμένης ὁμοίως· (*Phoc.* 3.8–9)

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

The virtues of Phocion and Cato, as they are introduced here, correspond to the cosmic image in the sense that they are a mixture (ἐγκεκραμένον, μεμειγμένου, συνηρμοσμένης). The first instance of what is mixed – τὸ αὐστηρὸν and τὸ φιλάνθρωπον – recalls the need for a compromise be-

²² Cf. *Quaest. conv.* 1.1.615a–b on misplaced philosophical technicity.

tween the statesman's own rationality and the irrationality of the mob (cf. τὸ σεμνὸν ἔχουσα τῷ ἐπεικεῖ δὺσμεικτον, 2.9).²³ The cosmic model for statesmanship sanctions this compromising stance. In that sense it differs from the ideal of the philosopher king that Plato expresses in the *Republic*. This is suggested when Plutarch introduces Cato Minor by translating Cicero:

καὶ γὰρ οὗτος οὐ πιθανὸν ἔσχεν οὐδὲ προσφιλὲς ὄχλῳ τὸ ἦθος, οὐδ' ἤνθησεν ἐν τῇ πολιτείᾳ πρὸς χάριν. ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν Κικέρων φησὶν αὐτὸν ὡσπερ ἐν τῇ Πλάτωνος πολιτείᾳ καὶ οὐκ ἐν τῇ Ῥωμύλου πολιτευόμενον ὑποστάθμη τῆς ὑπατείας ἐκπεσεῖν· ἐμοὶ δὲ ταῦτο δοκεῖ παθεῖν τοῖς μὴ καθ' ὥραν ἐκφανεῖσι καρποῖς. ὡς γὰρ ἐκείνους ἡδέως ὀρῶντες καὶ θαυμάζοντες οὐ χρῶνται, οὕτως ἡ Κάτωνος ἀρχαιοτροπία, διὰ χρόνων πολλῶν ἐπιγενομένη βίῳ διεφθορόσι καὶ πονηροῖς ἔθεσι, δόξαν μὲν εἶχε μεγάλην καὶ κλέος, οὐκ ἐνήρμοσε δὲ ταῖς χρεῖαις διὰ βάρος καὶ μέγεθος τῆς ἀρετῆς ἀσύμμετρον τοῖς καθεστῶσι καιροῖς. (*Phoc.* 3.1–3)

For his [i.e. Cato's] manners were not winning, nor pleasing to the populace, nor was he eminent in his public career for popularity. Indeed, Cicero [*Ad Att.* 2.1.8²⁴] says it was because he acted as if he lived in Plato's commonwealth, and not among the dregs of Romulus, that he was defeated when he stood for the consulship; but I think he fared just as fruits do which make their appearance out of season. For, as we look upon these with delight and admiration, but do not use them, so the old-fashioned character of Cato, which, after a long lapse of time, made its appearance among lives that were corrupted and customs that were debased, enjoyed great repute and fame, but was not suited to the needs of men because of the weight and grandeur of its virtue, which were out of all proportion to the immediate times.

The fact that this passage comes between the cosmic image and the introduction of Phocion and Cato as compromisers is informatively puzzling. The cosmic model and its application to the virtuous natures of the protagonists of the pair seem to be contradicted as soon as they are announced. By not being persuasive (οὐ πιθανόν), well-disposed towards the mob (προσφιλὲς ὄχλῳ), or concerned with pleasing them to gain pop-

²³ Roskam 2014b has shown how in Plutarch the opposed principles of austerity and philanthropy are often combined in various brands of euergetism. At 525 he connects *Phoc.* 2.7–9 and 3.8.

²⁴ 'Nam Catonem nostrum non tu amas plus quam ego; sed tamen ille optimo animo utens et summa fide nocet interdum rei publicae; dicit enim tamquam in Platonis πολιτείᾳ, non tamquam in Romuli faece, sententiam.'

ularity (πρὸς χάριν), Cato was going against the recommendations of the comparison (cf. ἀνθυπείκουσα πειθομένοις καὶ διδοῦσα τὸ πρὸς χάριν, 2.8) rather than illustrating them. His approach lacked harmony (οὐκ ἐνήρμοσε, ἀσύμμετρον) and shows that the correct compromise is incredibly hard to achieve, particularly in a polis marked by adverse τύχη (πόλις ἐν τύχαις ἀβουλήτοις γενομένη, 2.4): such a community ‘brings to ruin with herself the man who speaks but to win her favour, and she brings to ruin before herself the man who will not court her favour’ (συναπόλλυσι γὰρ τὸν πρὸς χάριν λέγοντα, καὶ προαπόλλυσι τὸν μὴ χαριζόμενον, 2.5).

The *Cato Minor* largely confirms this picture of Cato not quite living up to the demands of the cosmic model after all. From the outset Plutarch emphasises Cato’s rigidity: even as a child, Cato was ‘inflexible, imperturbable, and altogether steadfast’ (ἄτρεπτον καὶ ἀπαθὲς καὶ βέβαιον, *Ca. Mi.* 1.3). These traits were obviously strengthened when he came into contact with Stoicism, which inspired him to delight in ‘that form of goodness which consists in rigid justice that will not bend to clemency or favour’ (τοῦ καλοῦ τὸ περὶ τὴν δικαιοσύνην ἀτενὲς καὶ ἄκαμπτον εἰς ἐπιείκειαν ἢ χάριν, 4.2). This lofty Stoic ideal contrasts with the Platonic cosmological comparison of the introduction, where Plutarch recommended the imitation of the well-bent (εὐκαμπτής) spiral of the sun through an approach to politics that does not ban ἐπιείκεια nor neglect χάρις.

A good example of how Cato’s rigidity could be detrimental is his handling of Pompey’s triumphant return to Rome in 62 BCE after a successful campaign in the East. After relating how Cato rebuffed Pompey’s attempts to forge an alliance by marrying one of Cato’s nieces, Plutarch jumps in to offer his own judgement. Cato had made an error (ἔοικεν ὁ Κάτων ἀμαρτεῖν, 30.9), which ironically was rooted in his radical aversion to errors: Cato was ‘so afraid of the slight transgressions of Pompey as to allow him to commit the greatest of all’ (τὰ μικρὰ τοῦ Πομπηίου φοβηθεὶς ἀμαρτήματα τὸ μέγιστον περιεῖδεν, 30.10). Pompey was then driven into the arms of Caesar, and their alliance would eventually lead to the end of the republic. Once again Cato falls short of the cosmic compromise model.

This focus on Cato’s austerity, however, is only one part of the story. We also learn how Cato’s oratorical χάρις compensated for his moral rigidity (*Ca. Mi.* 5.3), about his mourning for his dear brother, which reveals ‘how much tenderness and affection was present in the man’s inflexibility and firmness’ (ὅσον ἐν τῷ [...] ἀγνάμπτῳ καὶ στερρῷ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς τὸ ἡμέρον ἐνήν καὶ φιλόστοργον, 11.4 [tr. modified]), and even about his observance of the ἐπιείκεια, which he rejected on (Stoic) principle (53.6; cf. 4.2 for the rejection).²⁵ In reaction to Caesar’s rabble-rousing politics, Cato allowed for concessions, which calmed the ὄχλος and

²⁵ On Plutarch’s Platonic endorsement of ἐπιείκεια, which goes against the Stoics, see Calvo Martinez 1999. Cf. also Frazier 2016: 318–322.

were perceived as ‘an act of humanity and kindness’ (τῆ φιλοανθρωπία ταύτη καὶ χάριτι, 26.1). Immediately after this, however, he was attacked by an opponent, whom he had tried to placate as well, for being ‘yielding and timorous’ (ἐνδιδόντος αὐτοῦ καὶ πτήσσοντος, 26.4), and he reverted to his austere stance.²⁶

In short, Cato is neither a perfect illustration of the cosmic image nor a caricatural foil for it. The same thing goes for Phocion, although his divergence from the model is less outspoken and somewhat less problematic.²⁷ Plutarch’s *Lives* are seldom black-and-white moralism, which involves the simple application of some model.²⁸ Plutarch knew that life is messy, that human virtue is never perfect, and that the example of the cosmos should be followed but will never be attained, even if its inbuilt irrationality is taken into account. The cosmic image that opens the book about Phocion and Cato is not Plutarch’s big answer. It is his big question. The reader has to do most of the rest of the work.²⁹

One of the more specific questions prompted by the cosmic image, I think, is if and how this model can possibly square with Cato’s Stoicism, which accounts for his generally uncompromising austerity.³⁰ As a Stoic, Cato would probably not have endorsed the cosmology behind the image: Stoicism simply did not allow for irrationality to be part of the cosmic make-up (cf. p. 274). At the end of his life, Cato is depicted by Plutarch as obsessively reading Plato’s *Phaedo* (*Ca. Mi.* 68.2; 70.2) before committing a rather messy and pathetic suicide, which compares

²⁶ Cf. e.g. Swain 1990: 197–200; Duff 1999b: 147–155 for more examples and further discussion along these lines.

²⁷ Compare e.g. *Phoc.* 8.2 (Phocion’s austerity, disregard for χάρις, and opposition of the mob) with 10.5–7 (Phocion was successfully ἡδύς and ἀσθηρός at the same time). Pelling 2002e: 357 points out that the first life is often the more straightforward of the pair; ‘the first Life [sc. of a pair] often reflects an important *normal* pattern, the second Life exploits it with an interesting variation’ (original emphasis). Cf. also Stadter 2015g: 243–245. See Swain 1990: 200 for the suggestion that this also applies to *Phoc.* – *Ca. Mi.*

²⁸ See esp. Duff 1999b: esp. 66–71; Pelling 2002c. Cf. also e.g. Stadter 2015f.

²⁹ Plutarch invites his readers to make up their own minds at *Comp. Ag., Cleom. et Gracch.* 5.7; cf. *Agis* 2.9 (ταῦτα μὲν οὖν ἐπικρινεῖς αὐτὸς ἐκ τῆς διηγήσεως). Cf. Duff 2011a.

³⁰ Duff 1999b: 155–158 convincingly argues that Stoicism plays an important albeit not blatantly obvious role in Plutarch’s characterisation of Cato. Cf. also Babut 1969b: 170–175; Swain 1990: 199–201 for similarly nuanced views and Alexiou 1998: esp. 386 on ἀπάθεια in *Ca. Mi.* and other *Lives* (cf. also Dillon 2016: esp. 14–15, who independently reaches similar general conclusions; on Plutarch’s views on Stoic ἀπάθεια and his preference for μετριοπάθεια, see also Dillon 1983: 511–515 [= Dillon 1990: chap. VIII]; Becchi 2005).

unfavourably to its Socratic model (and to Phocion's more successfully Socratic death).³¹ In a pair of *Lives* steeped in Platonism, it may be legitimate to ask whether the Stoic Cato misread the *Timaeus* just like he misread the *Phaedo*.³²

2. *The ruler and the demiurge in the historical works*

We have already seen that Plutarch cites Cicero's criticism of Cato Minor, who behaved as if he was living in Plato's ideal πολιτεία (*Phoc.* 3.2): his excessive austerity stood in the way of persuasiveness (cf. οὐ πιθανόν, 3.1). Commenting on that reference, Plutarch connects this with his model of harmonic compromise. According to that model, Cato's incredibly virtuous conduct sometimes failed due to its unharmonic uselessness (οὐκ ἐνήρμοσε [...] ταῖς χρείαις, 3.3). A similar criticism of the austerity of the *Republic* can be found in the first epideictic oration *On the Fortune or the Virtue of Alexander*. In the encomiastic spirit of the speech, Alexander's philosophical nature even trumps that of Plato or Socrates: they lacked persuasiveness (πολλοὺς οὐκ ἔπεισαν, 328c) and many of their pupils went astray, while Alexander successfully educated even hordes of barbarians through philosophy (328c–d).³³ Plato's *Republic* receives a harsh verdict here: 'Plato wrote a book on the One Ideal Constitution, but because of its forbidding character he could not persuade anyone to adopt it' (Πλάτων μὲν γὰρ μίαν γράψας πολιτείαν οὐδένα πέπεικεν αὐτῇ χρῆσθαι διὰ τὸ αὐστηρόν, 328d–e). As an alterna-

³¹ See esp. Trapp 1999 and Zadorojnyi 2007; cf. also Geiger 1979: 63–64; Swain 1990: 198; Geiger 1999: 357–360; Alcalde Martín 1999: 167–170; Duff 1999b: 141–145; Pelling 2002f: 377; Roskam 2015a: 127–128; Rauh 2018: 66–71.

³² Apart from using *Phd.* as an important intertext (see previous note), Plutarch compares Cato's friendship with Marcus Favonius to that of Socrates with his sympotic companion Apollodorus (*Ca. Mi.* 46.1), and several other echoes of *Symp.* have been detected (Duff 1999b: 143; cf. also Trapp 1999: 490). Moreover, Zadorojnyi 2007: 225–226 has connected *Ca. Mi.* to Plato's critique of writing in *Phdr.* 274b–278b. On the other hand, I do not think, contra Leão 2010: 187 n. 17, that there are echoes of Plato's *Plt.* in the first paragraph of *Phoc.*: the ship of state metaphor is far too widespread (see e.g. Brock 2013: 53–67) and Plutarch's use of it here far too general to allow for that conclusion. I have similar concerns regarding the rather vague allusions to *Gorgias* 515b–519d that Trapp 1999: 488 detects in *Phoc.* 2 (see e.g. Brock 2013: 69–82 for medical imagery in political thought, which is the main issue here). Alcalde Martín 1999 notes further parallels that point to general Socratic tendencies (cf. Duff 2011a: 141–145; Beck 2014: 470–473 on the Socratic paradigm in this pair of *Lives*).

³³ Muccioli 1995: 280 and Boys-Stones 2018: 510–511 rightly emphasise the rhetorical force of this argument.

tive to this Cato-like approach of excessive austerity and lack of persuasion, Alexander adopted a different course:

ἀλλὰ κοινὸς ἦκειν θεόθεν ἄρμωστής καὶ διαλλακτῆς τῶν ὅλων νομίζων, οὓς τῷ λόγῳ μὴ συνῆγε τοῖς ὅπλοις βιαζόμενος <καὶ> εἰς ταῦτὸ συνενεγκῶν τὰ πανταχόθεν, ὥσπερ ἐν κρατήρι φιλοτησίῳ μίξας τοὺς βίους καὶ τὰ ἦθη καὶ τοὺς γάμους καὶ <τὰς> διαίτας, πατρίδα μὲν τὴν οἰκουμένην προσέταξεν ἡγεῖσθαι πάντα [...]. (*De Al. Magn. fort.* 329c)

But, as he believed that he came as a heaven-sent governor to all, and as a mediator for the whole world, those whom he could not persuade to unite with him, he conquered by force of arms, and he brought together into one body all men everywhere, uniting and mixing in one great loving-cup, as it were, men's lives, their characters, their marriages, their very habits of life. He bade them all consider as their fatherland the whole inhabited earth [...].

As we shall see, Plutarch's presentation of Alexander in this work ties in with his general conception of a cosmopolitanism that combines Greek patriotism with openness to barbarian practices (p. 253). The role of the ἄρμωστής who imposes sameness on difference (εἰς ταῦτὸ συνενεγκῶν τὰ πανταχόθεν) by making a cosmic mixture is eminently suited to this conception.³⁴ The image of the κρατὴρ φιλοτήσιος elegantly illustrates Alexander's endeavour. Plutarch transforms the sympotic κύλιξ φιλοτησία, the cup used for toasts of friendship,³⁵ into a κρατήρ, which was used to mix the wine. He may have been inspired by one or more episodes from the biographical tradition on Alexander and by general ideas on political concord,³⁶ but the κρατήρ may also point to demiurgy. After

³⁴ Cf. also, as Froidefond in Frazier and Froidefond 1990: 120 n. 3 points out, Plutarch's description of Osiris' civilising mission in *De Is. et. Os.* 356a–b.

³⁵ Of course this cup is extensively discussed in Athenaeus' list of sympotic cups (epitome addition to II.502b; cf. p. 125). At II.503f, the character 'Plutarch' uses a φιλοτησία to propose such a toast.

³⁶ As D'Angelo 1998: 207 n. 17 rightly points out – and despite what *Quellenforschung* assumed – the image of the κρατὴρ φιλοτήσιος 'è senza dubbio opera di Plut[arco] e non trova riscontro nel passo di Eratostene [*apud* Strabo I.4.9], che in qualche modo è sotteso alla composizione di questo capitolo [i.e. *De Al. Magn. fort.* § 6]; cf. already Badian 1958: 432–440. Plutarch may have been thinking about Alexander's banquet in Opis (Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexander* 7.11.8–9) or about marriage rites uniting Persian women with Greek and Macedonian men at Susa (*De Alex. Magn. fort.* 329d–f; *Alex.* 70.3); see the discussion of earlier scholarship in Daverio Rocchi 2013: 458–461, who convincingly concludes that 'il contesto non consente nessun aggancio a momenti storicamente docu-

all, a κρατήρ was used by the demiurge to mix the cosmic soul (*Tim.* 41d) and, although Plato seems to be thinking about a metallurgic rather than a sympotic context (cf. p. 123 n. 85), connecting this with Alexander's demiurge-like approach is not far-fetched and neither is, as we have seen (p. 106), connecting demiurgy and the sympotic sphere.

This does not necessarily mean that the *Republic* is thrown out of the window. After all, the *Republic's* philosopher king is also engaged in making a mixture (συμμειγνύντες τε καὶ κεραννύντες, *Resp.* 6.501b), and the law of the ideal city serves to bring 'the citizens into harmony with each other through persuasion or compulsion' (συναρμόττων τοὺς πολίτας πειθοῖ τε καὶ ἀνάγκη, 7.519e).³⁷ The philosopher king certainly has some demiurgic aspects.³⁸ On the other hand, the mixture advocated in the *Republic* can hardly be called a compromise: the mixture associated with compromise is criticised as being the hallmark of the timocratic constitution, the 'best' inferior constitution of the *Republic* and thus falling short of the aristocratic ideal (8.547b, 548c). Moreover, the philosopher king starts from a clean slate (6.501a), while Alexander, like the demiurge, works with what is at hand. According to the *Republic*, then, a compromise model is at least theoretically not the best option. Plutarch's reaction to this discrepancy between the austerity of the *Republic* and a compromise model, I suggest, is to save the philosopher king by rethinking what kind of harmonic mixture we should look for in politics. The answer, of course, lies with the demiurgic model of the *Timaeus*.

It is significant in this regard that, along with his Roman counterpart Numa, Lycurgus is Plutarch's clearest and most explicitly announced instance of a philosopher king (esp. *Num.* 20.6–8; *Lyc.* 31.1–3).³⁹ The Spartan constitution that Lycurgus installed is Plato's epitome of the timocratic regime (*Resp.* 8.545a). Lycurgus – and the same thing goes for

mentabili. L'immagine del cratere *philotesios* è stata adattata da Plutarco ad Alessandro senza fare riferimento a specifiche e concrete libagioni del sovrano'.

³⁷ In this passage from *Resp.* as well as in *De Al. Magn. fort.* 329c, compulsion and persuasion are both presented as viable options. Strictly speaking the same is the case in Plato's account of the creation of the cosmic soul as Plutarch interpreted it, but this is never made explicit, and the cosmic comparison in the *Phoc.* even seems to deny it.

³⁸ Desmond 2011: 28 connects the conception of the philosopher king as a demiurge of virtue (*Resp.* 6.500c–d) with *Tim.* It should be noted, on the other hand, that the recap of the *Resp.* that opens *Tim.* does not speak of the philosopher king at all. Schofield 1999a notes this and suggests that the philosopher king is eventually revived through the character Timaeus and the political constellation that the *Critias* starts to describe before it breaks off.

³⁹ Cf. also *Comp. Dem. et Cic.* 3.4. Cf. Wardman 1974: 50, 203, 207–209; Aalders 1982: 41–42; Hershbell 1995: 214–215; Muccioli 1995: esp. 281; Desmond 2011: 61–86; Pelling 2014: 149.

Numa – may be called a philosopher king but he does not fit the *Republic*'s bill, as Boulet has shown: while the philosophically fanatical Numa ultimately remains too detached to be an excellent statesman according to the criteria of the *Republic*, Plutarch's Lycurgus errs on the other side.⁴⁰

In any case the explanation for this less than wholehearted adoption of the philosopher king model is not that, in the *Lycurgus* – *Numa* as well as in the *Lives* in general, Plutarch suddenly ceases to be a Platonist, as Liebert claims.⁴¹ This is obvious, for instance, when Plutarch invokes demiurgy near the end of Lycurgus' *Life*. The political reform has been completed and Lycurgus intends to leave Sparta:

κατειλημμένων δὲ τοῖς ἔθισμοῖς ἤδη τῶν κυριωτάτων ὑπ' αὐτοῦ, καὶ τῆς πολιτείας ἐκτεθραμμένης ἱκανῶς καὶ δυναμένης φέρειν ἑαυτὴν καὶ σώζειν δι' ἑαυτῆς, ὥσπερ ὁ Πλάτων φησὶν ἐπὶ τῷ κόσμῳ γενομένῳ καὶ κινηθέντι τὴν πρώτην κίνησιν εὐφρανθῆναι τὸν θεόν, οὕτως ἀγασθεὶς καὶ ἀγαπήσας τὸ τῆς νομοθεσίας κάλλος καὶ μέγεθος ἐν ἔργῳ γενομένης καὶ ὁδῷ βαδίζουσης, ἐπεθύμησεν, ὡς ἀνυστὸν ἐξ ἀνθρωπίνης προνοίας, ἀθάνατον αὐτὴν ἀπολιπεῖν καὶ ἀκίνητον εἰς τὸ μέλλον. (*Lyc.* 29.1)

When his principal institutions were at last firmly fixed in the customs of the people, and his civil polity had sufficient growth and strength to support and preserve itself, just as Plato says that Deity was rejoiced to see His universe come into being and make its first motion, so Lycurgus was filled with joyful satisfaction in the magnitude and beauty of his system of laws, now that it was in operation and moving along its pathway. He therefore ardently desired, so far as human forethought could accomplish the task, to make it immortal, and let it go down unchanged to future ages.

Plutarch declares his dependence on Plato. The parallel with the *Timaeus* (37c) is unmistakable indeed.⁴² Lycurgus is like the demiurge who has set the cosmos in motion (κινηθέν, Pl. ~ κινηθέντι, Plu.): he rejoices at his accomplishment (ἠγάσθη τε καὶ εὐφρανθείς, Pl. ~ εὐφρανθῆναι

⁴⁰ Boulet 2005; 2014: 449–452.

⁴¹ Liebert 2009; cf. Liebert 2016: 109–110 n. 56. On the Platonic aspects of the *Lives*, see e.g. Wardman 1974: 203–211; Duff 1999b: 72–98; Opsomer 2016b; cf. also Opsomer 2011a; Beneker 2012: esp. 58–102.

⁴² It is of course chronologically absurd to say that Lycurgus adopted Plato's political model. In the narrative of the *Lycurgus*, it is the other way around: Plato and other philosophers adopted Lycurgus' model (*Lyc.* 31.3); cf. *Quaest. conv.* 8.2.719a.

τὸν θεόν, οὕτως ἀγασθεὶς καὶ ἀγαπήσας, Plu.⁴³), but he is not yet fully satisfied. Lycurgus' joy inspires him to try to make his moving creation (βαδιζούσης) as much like something immovable (ἀκίνητον) as possible. Similarly, in the *Timaeus*, the demiurge's joy is the cause of his attempt to make the moving cosmos (κινηθέν, 37c; κινητόν, 37d) more like its intelligible model, which is immovable (ἀκινήτως, 38a). While the demiurge achieves this by creating everlasting time as the moving image of eternity (cf. p. 197), Lycurgus puts measures in place to ensure the diachronic stability of his political cosmos.⁴⁴ Rather elegantly, Plutarch points out that this political eternity can never be fully achieved due to human providential deficiency (ὡς ἀνυστὸν ἐξ ἀνθρωπίνης προνοίας). He knows, of course, that the reasons for the imperfect cosmic eternity are different: that imperfection is not due to demiurgic providential deficiency but because the cosmos is sensible (*Tim.* 37d). While Lycurgus, then, is compared to the demiurge, Plutarch makes sure to indicate the differences as well.

What kind of political cosmos did Lycurgus create, and how did that Spartan κόσμος – which is how Herodotus (1.65.4) calls Lycurgus' creation⁴⁵ – fare? In the *Phocion – Cato Minor*, the demiurgic model served to emphasise the need for harmonic mingling. The same emphasis can be found in the *Lycurgus*:

οὕτω τὸ πολίτευμα τοῦ Λυκούργου μείξαντος, ὅμως ἄκρατον ἔτι τὴν ὀλιγαρχίαν καὶ ἰσχυρὰν οἱ μετ' αὐτὸν ὀρῶντες σπαργῶσαν καὶ θυμουμένην, ὡς φησὶν ὁ Πλάτων, οἷον ψάλιον ἐμβάλλουσιν αὐτῇ τὴν τῶν ἐφόρων δύναμιν, ἔτεσί που μάλιστα τριάκοντα καὶ ἑκατὸν μετὰ Λυκούργου πρώτων τῶν περὶ Ἑλλάτον ἐφόρων κατασταθέντων ἐπὶ Θεοπόμπου βασιλεύοντος· (*Lyc.* 7.1)

⁴³ Lycurgus' achievement is marked by κάλλος καὶ μέγεθος, just like the demiurge's: at *Tim.* 92c the cosmos is called μέγιστος and κάλλιστος.

⁴⁴ According to Liebert 2016: 124, 144, 201 the function of this passage is to express the self-sufficiency of Sparta, 'a city entirely transparent within itself but entirely removed from the vision of outsiders' (124). On this reading, interest in the political cosmos is opposed to instead of fostered by interest in the natural cosmos (the latter interest being prominent in *Num.* and absent from *Lyc.*) (201; cf. also 151–152). However, apart from the fact that this interpretation would be hard to square with Plutarch's general thought on (political) ethics and cosmology, I fail to see textual reasons to adopt it: Plutarch's concern here (and Plato's concern in the corresponding passage from *Tim.*) is with durability rather than isolation.

⁴⁵ Cf. Cartledge 1998: 2. On the possible connections between the political and the natural cosmos in Spartan thought, see Ferrari 2008.

Although Lycurgus thus tempered his civil polity, nevertheless the oligarchical element in it was still unmixed and dominant, and his successors, seeing it ‘swelling and foaming’, as Plato [*Leg.* 3.692a] says, ‘imposed as it were a curb upon it, namely, the power of the ephors’. It was about a hundred and thirty years after Lycurgus that the first ephors, Elatus and his colleagues, were appointed, in the reign of Theopompus.

This Theopompus, Plutarch continues, was criticised by his wife for relinquishing part of his power, but he defended himself by claiming that by sharing his power with the ephors, he made his power ‘greater, in that it will last longer’ (‘μείζω μὲν οὖν,’ εἶπεῖν, ‘ὄσῳ χρονιωτέραν’, *Lyc.* 7.2).⁴⁶ Lycurgus’ earlier attempt at creating a mixture had consisted in creating a senate to mediate between the tyrannical tendencies of the kings and the democratic tendencies of the mob (5.10–14). The later development of the ephorate, then, is presented by Plutarch as being in line with and even as emerging from Lycurgus’ approach, whose ‘wisdom and foresight’ (σοφίαν καὶ πρόνοιαν, 7.5) ensured the mindset that accepted such a change towards an even better mixture. Plutarch points this out by comparing Sparta, which had Lycurgus as its political harmoniser and mingler (ὁ τὴν πολιτείαν ἀρμολογῶν καὶ κεράσας), to its neighbours Messenia and Argos, where political chaos (συνταράξαντες) was caused by the disastrous combination of the kings’ hybris and the people’s unwillingness to be persuaded (ὑβρεῖ μὲν τῶν βασιλέων, οὐκ εὐπειθεία δὲ τῶν ὄχλων, 7.5 [text modified⁴⁷]).

Sparta receives better (yet not uncritical) press in Plato’s *Laws* than in the *Republic*.⁴⁸ The former dialogue, then, is the obvious Platonic backbone of the *Lycurgus*.⁴⁹ The *Laws*’ overall benevolent presentation of the

⁴⁶ By attributing the institution of the ephorate to Theopompus instead of Lycurgus, Plutarch is following the tradition represented by Aristotle (*Pol.* 1313a26); there was an alternative tradition (*Xen., Lac.* 8), which did include the ephorate among Lycurgus’ institutions.

⁴⁷ I follow the reading of the manuscripts, as in the Loeb and Budé; the Teubner adopts van Herwerden’s conjecture [οὐκ] ἀπειθεία, which yields more or less the same sense but is unnecessary.

⁴⁸ On Plato’s ideas on Sparta, see the efficient account of Lévy 2005 and the much more extensive treatment by De Brasi 2013; cf. also e.g. Morrow 1960: esp. 40–63; Powell 1994.

⁴⁹ Helmbold and O’Neil 1959: 58, in a rare interpretative comment accompanying their list of quotations and references, note that ‘one begins to feel certain that Plut. had been reading the *Leges* while working on the *Lycurgus*’. On Platonism and Platonic references in the *Lyc.*, see also Schneeweiss 1979; de Blois and Bons 1995; de Blois 2005a; 2005b; Lane 2013. Stadter 1999 focuses on *Resp.* and the connection with Plutarch’s

Spartan mixed constitution squares quite well, as Morrow has suggested, with the *Timaeus*' take on demiurgy and the mixture of the cosmic soul.⁵⁰ Plutarch nowhere explicitly makes this connection but it is compatible with what he is doing in the *Lycurgus*.⁵¹ In any case, the *Lycurgus* shows that Plutarch's philosopher king resembles the demiurge and that the harmonic mixture that he creates recalls the *Timaeus*-like compromise from the *Phocion* rather than the harmony of the *Republic*.⁵²

Fast-forward to the fourth century BCE. Lycurgus' cosmos, whose stability had been confirmed rather than threatened by the introduction of the ephorate, finally falters under the kingship of Agesilaus.⁵³ His warlike conduct eventually leads to the defeat of the Spartans at Leuctra in 371 BCE, followed by almost a decade of Theban reign in Sparta. After beginning his *Agesilaus* by explaining how Agesilaus became king against all odds (*Ages.* 1–3), Plutarch reminds us of the Lycurgan legacy, which ensured a mixture in which the kings were at variance with the ephors and the senate (4.3–4). Agesilaus did not respect this tradition of beneficent διαφορά but instead cosied up to the ephors and senators (4.5) and allowed both friends and enemies to get away with anything (5.1–2). Although he meant well, he unwittingly increased his own power beyond bounds (4.6, 5.3–4). Plutarch then inserts an authorial comment in the form of a cosmological observation:

καθάπερ γὰρ οἱ φυσικοὶ τὸ νεῖκος οἴονται καὶ τὴν ἔριν, εἰ τῶν ὄλων ἐξαιρεθείη, στήναι μὲν ἂν τὰ οὐράνια, παύσασθαι δὲ πάντων τὴν γένεσιν καὶ κίνησιν ὑπὸ τῆς πρὸς πάντα πάντων ἁρμονίας, οὕτως

Ages. On *Lyc.* – *Num.* and Plutarch's Sparta, see also Liebert 2016: 77–218, although I am not quite convinced by his central claim that Lycurgus is 'Plutarch's literary alter ego' (8). For Plutarch's views on the large-scale history of Sparta, see further esp. Tigerstedt 1974: 226–264 and cf. Aalders 1982: 38–41; Muccioli 1995: 281; Lucchesi 2014.

⁵⁰ Morrow 1953a argues that *Leg.* is Plato's attempt to introduce the demiurgic model in politics; cf. also Morrow 1960: 521–543 on Plato's presentation of the mixed constitution and its similarities to the account on the cosmic soul in *Tim.*

⁵¹ Cf. chapter 1.3 on Plutarch's combined reading of *Tim.* and *Leg.* On Plutarch's ideas on the mixed constitution, see Aalders 1982: 36. Cf. O'Meara 2013: 288–289 on the mixed constitution in Middle Platonic political philosophy.

⁵² This could have been a way out for Futter 2012, whose struggle to reconcile the Platonic ideals of *Resp.* with the Spartan mixed constitution ends in aporia.

⁵³ Cf. Shipley 1997: 24–26; Stadter 1999; but see Liebert 2016: 116 n. 82, 125 (and Lucchesi 2014: 74–100 goes more or less in the same direction) for a slightly different view, which depends on φιλοτιμία as the single positive driving force of Lycurgus' regime according to Plutarch; on my reading, which continues along the lines of the other previously cited studies, Lycurgus' regime represents a balance between φιλία and φιλοτιμία, which is disrupted during Agesilaus' reign.

ἔοικεν ὁ Λακωνικὸς νομοθέτης ὑπέκκαυμα τῆς ἀρετῆς ἐμβαλεῖν εἰς τὴν πολιτείαν τὸ φιλόνηκον καὶ φιλότιμον, ἀεὶ τινα τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς διαφορὰν καὶ ἄμιλλαν εἶναι πρὸς ἀλλήλους βουλόμενος· τὴν γὰρ ἀνθυπεῖκουσαν τῷ ἀνελέγκτῳ χάριν, ἀργὴν καὶ ἀναγώνιστον οὔσαν οὐκ ὀρθῶς ὁμόνοιαν λέγεσθαι. (*Ages.* 5.5)

Natural philosophers are of the opinion that, if strife and discord should be banished from the universe, the heavenly bodies would stand still, and all generation and motion would cease in consequence of the general harmony. And so the Spartan lawgiver seems to have introduced the spirit of ambition and contention into his civil polity as an incentive to virtue, desiring that good citizens should always be somewhat at variance and in conflict with one another, and deeming that complaisance which weakly yields without debate, which knows no effort and no struggle, to be wrongly called concord.

As with the μαθηματικοί of the *Phocion*, the label φυσικοί actually points to a specific figure: Lycurgan demiurgy is connected here with an Empedoclean cosmos in which friendship and strife both play an essential role and should be in balance.⁵⁴ This is, indeed, how Plutarch interpreted Empedocles: he equates Empedocles' friendship and strife with the rational and irrational parts of the cosmic soul respectively (*De an. procr.* 1026b; *De Is. et Os.* 370e; cf. p. 211). Both complete strife (*De facie* 926e) and complete absence of strife (*De an. procr.* 1025f–1026a; *De Is. et Os.* 370d) would make cosmos impossible. And, indeed, while Plutarch has invoked the Empedoclean cosmos to warn against Agesilaus' removal of all strife through excessive and one-sided friendship, he ends the cosmological reflection by pointing out that '[t]his principle, however, must not be accepted without some reservations; for excessive rivalries are injurious to states, and productive of great perils' (ταῦτα

⁵⁴ Contra Shipley 1997: 110, who interprets the term as a general reference to Presocratic philosophers. Bos 1947: 48 (cf. also Flacelière and Chambry 1973: 100 n. 4) is, in a way, right to point out that, although the language refers to Empedocles, the thought also seems to include Heraclitus (Luppino Manes in Luppino Manes, Marcone, and Ghilli 1996: 155 n. 27, however, mistakenly points exclusively to Heraclitus). In this regard it is useful to compare *De Is. et Os.* 370d (cf. p. 211 for the dualistic context): Heraclitus declares war to be the father of all things (fr. B53 DK) and thus opposes Homer, who wished that strife would vanish (*Il.* 18.107). This comes close to the beginning of this passage from *Ages.* In *De Is. et Os.*, Plutarch goes on to point out that this is one-sided, since Heraclitus mentions only one pole of the dualistic spectrum here (Plutarch finds the other pole in fr. B94 DK). He subsequently turns to Empedocles, whose friendship and strife account for both poles. Both poles are also implicitly present in the passage from *Ages.*

μὲν οὖν οὐκ ἂν οὕτως τις ἀπλῶς συγχωρήσειεν· αἱ γὰρ ὑπερβολαὶ τῶν φιλονικιῶν χαλεπαὶ ταῖς πόλεσι καὶ μεγάλους κινδύνους ἔχουσι, 5.7): in a πολιτεία as in the cosmos φιλία and νεῖκος, rest and motion, should both be present and in balance.

This last remark announces Agesilaus' veering from Scylla to Charibdis: in the rest of the biography is little about excessive friendship and a lot about excessive strife. The reference to Empedoclean cosmology thus underpins Plutarch's exploration of excessive φιλον(ε)ικία and φιλοτιμία, which is a major theme in the *Agesilaus – Pompey* pair.⁵⁵ Shortly after the cosmological reflection, for instance, Plutarch relates how Agesilaus became increasingly annoyed by the popularity and influence of his former lover Lysander. To curb Lysander's power, Agesilaus demoted him to royal meat carver. Lysander understandably held a grudge after that but he died before he could act on it. If not, 'he would have brought about a great disturbance [literally: motion] in consequence of this quarrel' (μεγάλην ἂν ἀπεργάσασθαι κίνησιν ἐκ ταύτης τῆς διαφορᾶς, *Ages.* 8.4; cf. *Lys.* 23).⁵⁶

⁵⁵ See Hillman 1994: esp. 272–279; Shipley 1997: 12–13; Bearzot 2005; Trego 2013; Nevin 2014: esp. 46–49. On φιλονικία and φιλονεικία (and the difficulty and general uselessness of distinguishing between the two), see Shipley 1997: 71–72; Duff 1999b: 83; Pelling 2002d: 341, 345 n. 24; Stadter 2015i: 271–273; Lucchesi 2014: 64 n. 2. On φιλοτιμία, see p. 50. For *Ages.* 5.5 quoted above, I have followed the Teubner, which prefers τὸ φιλότικον καὶ φιλότικον over the *varia lectio* τὸ φιλότικον καὶ φιλότικον. Duff 1999b: 83 n. 38 prefers the latter alternative here (while rightly pointing out that it matters very little); this is plausible since Plutarch is clearly playing with the connection between νεῖκος and φιλον(ε)ικία. On the other hand, τὸ φιλότικον καὶ φιλότικον could be an echo of what Plato says about timocracy in *Resp.* 8.548c (φιλονικίαι καὶ φιλοτιμίαι).

⁵⁶ In the other half of the *Ages.* – *Pomp.* pair, the establishment of the First Triumvirate provides an elegant element of σύγκρισις, which suggests the relevance of the Empedoclean model for the entire two-life book. *Pomp.* 47.3: ἡ γὰρ ὥσπερ ἐν σκάφει τὰς ἀποκλίσεις ἐπανισοῦσα τῆς πόλεως ἰσχὺς εἰς ἓν συνελθοῦσα καὶ γενομένη μία τὴν πάντα πράγματα καταστασιάσασαν καὶ καταβαλοῦσαν ἀνανταγώνιστον ῥοπήν ἐποίησεν. ὁ γοῦν Κάτων τοὺς λέγοντας ὑπὸ τῆς ὕστερον γενομένης πρὸς Καίσαρα Πομπηΐω διαφορᾶς ἀνατραπῆναι τὴν πόλιν ἀμαρτάνειν ἔλεγεν αἰτιωμένους τὸ τελευταῖον· οὐ γὰρ τὴν στάσιν οὐδὲ τὴν ἔχθραν, ἀλλὰ τὴν σύστασιν καὶ τὴν ὁμόνοιαν αὐτῶν τῇ πόλει κακὸν πρῶτον γενέσθαι καὶ μέγιστον. ('For those opposing forces which, as in a vessel, prevented the city from rocking to and fro, were united into one, thereby giving to faction an irresistible momentum that overpowered and overthrew everything. At all events, Cato, when men said that the state had been overturned by the quarrel which afterwards arose between Caesar and Pompey, declared that they wrongly laid the blame on what had merely happened last; for it was not their discord nor yet their enmity, but their concord and harmony which was the first and greatest evil to befall the city.') On the corrupting influence of Lysander on the Spartan regime and the connection with *Lys.*, see Hamilton

Another life yields another example of how the Empedoclean model can serve to explain strife getting out of hand. The Hellenistic ruler Demetrius Poliorcetes, the son of the *diadochos* Antigonos, and his Roman counterpart Mark Antony have the dubious honour of being the only protagonists in the *Lives* who are explicitly introduced as negative examples (*Demetr.* 1).⁵⁷ Plutarch starts his sketch of the geopolitical context in which Demetrius operated with a description of what happened after the death of Alexander, whom we encountered earlier as a demiurgic figure:

ἐπεὶ δ', ὥσπερ ἐν τοῖς Ἐμπεδοκλέους στοιχείοις διὰ τὸ νεῖκος ἔνεστι διαφορὰ πρὸς ἄλληλα καὶ πόλεμος, μᾶλλον δὲ τοῖς ἀλλήλων ἀπτομένοις καὶ πελάζουσιν, οὕτω τὸν πᾶσι τοῖς Ἀλεξάνδρου διαδόχοις πρὸς ἀλλήλους ὄντα συνεχῆ πόλεμον αἱ τῶν πραγμάτων καὶ τῶν τόπων συνάφειαι πρὸς ἐνίους ἐποιοῦν ἐπιφανέστερον καὶ μᾶλλον ἐξέκαον, ὥσπερ Ἀντιγόνῳ τότε πρὸς Πτολεμαῖον [...]. (*Demetr.* 5.1)

But just as among the elements of the universe, according to Empedocles, strife produces mutual dissension and war, particularly among those elements which touch or lie near one another, so the continuous wars which the successors of Alexander waged against one another were aggravated and more inflamed in some cases by the close proximity of interests and territories, as at this time in the case of Antigonos and Ptolemy. [tr. modified⁵⁸]

Demetrius is drawn into his father's conflict with Ptolemy and, more generally speaking, into an atmosphere that is all νεῖκος and no φιλία: there is a lack of cosmic balance. This at least raises the question of how much of Demetrius' badness is due to his milieu. Like Antony, he was what Plato called a great nature (*Resp.* 6.491d–e): both men 'bore most ample testimony to the truth of Plato's saying that great natures exhibit great vices also, as well as great virtues' (μάλιστα δὴ τῷ Πλάτωνι μαρτυρησάντων, ὅτι καὶ κακίας μεγάλας ὥσπερ ἀρετὰς αἱ μεγάλαι φύσεις

1992: 4215–4218, focusing on the episode under discussion; cf. also, more generally, Duff 1997; Mossé 1999; Bearzot 2005; Lucchesi 2014: 101–115; Trego 2014; Stadter 2015h.

⁵⁷ See Duff 1999b: 45–49, 53–65, 115; cf. Wardman 1974: 32–36, 49–78; Candau Morón 1999a; Duff 2004.

⁵⁸ The Loeb text and translation follow two manuscripts that suggest (the one *in margine*, the other as a correction) reading διὰ τὸ νεῖκος καὶ τὴν φιλίαν. This is obviously the work of a reader who spotted the Empedoclean reference but missed the Plutarchan point, which is precisely that there was only νεῖκος/πόλεμος in this post-Alexandrian environment. On the connection between Empedocles' νεῖκος and Heraclitus' πόλεμος, see *De Is. et Os.* 370d–e.

ἐκφέρουσι, *Demetr.* 1.7).⁵⁹ As Duff argues, Plutarch seems to think that Demetrius' εὐφυΐα (*Demetr.* 4.5, 20.2) has 'been perverted through a bad environment'.⁶⁰

Agesilaus, however, seemed to create and foster this bad environment rather than to undergo it. The third act of Plutarch's Spartan story, subsequently, tells of a desperate attempt to turn the corrupted Spartan society back in the direction of Lycurgus' constitution. The Spartan rulers Agis and Cleomenes, who are joined by Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus in an atypical, four-life book of *Parallel Lives*,⁶¹ are presented as conscious imitators of Lycurgus (*Agis* 6.2, 19.7; *Cleom.* 10.2; *Comp. Ag., Cleom. et Gracch.* 5.3; cf. *Cleom.* 18.2 for Cleomenes' imitation of Lycurgus and Solon).⁶² However, Plutarch comments, 'with Lycurgus no other Greek is worthy to be compared' (ἀλλὰ Λυκούργῳ μὲν οὐδ' ἄλλος τις Ἑλλήνων παραβλητὸς οὐδεὶς, *Comp. Ag., Cleom. et Gracch.* 5.4; cf. *Lyc.* 31.3). The question remains where Agis and Cleomenes went wrong. Perhaps they were, as Pelling suggests, 'over-inspired by a grand idea',⁶³ thus almost ironically failing the demiurgic compromise model by trying too hard to achieve it.

Another statesman who at least tried to compare to Lycurgus can be encountered on the side of Athens in the heat of the Persian wars. Aristides, who 'admired and emulated, above all other statesmen, Lycurgus the Lacedaemonian' (ζηλώσας δὲ καὶ θαυμάσας μάλιστα τῶν πολιτικῶν ἀνδρῶν Λυκοῦργον τὸν Λακεδαιμόνιον, *Arist.* 2.1), was called 'the Just' (τὸν Δίκαιον, 6.2).⁶⁴ This most kingly name, Plutarch adds, was not popular among kings:

ὁ τῶν βασιλέων καὶ τυράννων οὐδεὶς ἐζήλωσεν, ἀλλὰ Πολιορκηταὶ καὶ Κεραυνοὶ καὶ Νικάτορες, ἔνιοι δ' Ἄετοὶ καὶ Ἰέρακες ἔχαιρον προσαγορευόμενοι, τὴν ἀπὸ τῆς βίας καὶ τῆς δυνάμεως ὡς ἔοικε μᾶλλον ἢ τὴν ἀπὸ τῆς ἀρετῆς δόξαν ἀγαπῶντες. καίτοι τὸ θεῖον, ᾧ γλίσχονται συνοικειοῦν καὶ συναφομοιοῦν ἑαυτούς, τρισὶ δοκεῖ διαφέρειν, ἀφθαρσία καὶ δυνάμει καὶ ἀρετῇ. ὧν καὶ σεμνότατον ἢ ἀρετῇ καὶ θειότατόν ἐστιν. (*Arist.* 6.2–3)

⁵⁹ On Plutarch's interpretation of Plato's take on great natures, see Bucher-Isler 1972: 80–81; Duff 1999a; 1999b: 49, 207–208.

⁶⁰ Duff 1999b: 49.

⁶¹ See Roskam 2011b.

⁶² Cleomenes' imitation of Lycurgus may be seen as partly channelled through Agis, whom he also imitated (*Cleom.* 1.3, 3.2–4).

⁶³ Pelling 2004: 91 (original emphasis).

⁶⁴ Aristides, in turn, is one of the statesmen imitated by Phocion (*Phoc.* 7.5–6).

This no kings or tyrants ever coveted, nay, they rejoiced to be sur-named ‘Besiegers’, or ‘Thunderbolts’, or ‘Conquerors’, and some ‘Eagles’, or ‘Hawks’, cultivating the reputation which is based on violence and power, as it seems, rather than on virtue. And yet divinity, to which such men are eager to adapt and conform themselves, is believed to have three elements of superiority,—incorruption, power, and virtue; and the most reverend, the divinest of these, is virtue.

The other two elements of superiority – ἀφθαρσία and δύναμις – are both beneath and above human capability. The purely physical world partakes of these aspects: vacuum and the four elements are indestructible, while natural disasters exhibit power (6.3). They are not available, however, to humans (6.5). We should distinguish, then, between a good and a misguided brand of ὁμοίωσις θεῶ: the good kind imitates divine virtue, while the misguided kind tries to imitate divine power and immortality. The introduction to *On Isis and Osiris* provides a more theoretical analogue of this argument: human longing for god (θειότητος ὄρεξις, *De Is. et Os.* 351e) should consist in trying to imitate knowledge, since it is god’s knowledge, not his powerful thunder and lightning (351d) nor his immortality (351e) that makes him blessed.⁶⁵

As a staunch aristocrat, however, Aristides apparently did not imitate Lycurgus’ enthusiasm for the mixed constitution. This aspect of his portrayal pitches him against the democratic Themistocles (cf. *Arist.* 2.1).⁶⁶ The demiurgic model, then, is absent from the *Aristides*. In the *Dion – Brutus*, however, we do find it combined with ὁμοίωσις θεῶ. In a way the *Dion – Brutus* is the most obviously Platonic pair of lives, as Plutarch announces right from the start:⁶⁷

[...] ὁ μὲν αὐτῷ Πλάτωνι πλησιάσας, ὁ δὲ τοῖς λόγοις ἐντραφεὶς τοῖς Πλάτωνος, ὥσπερ ἐκ μιᾶς ὄρμησαν ἀμφοτέροι παλαιστρας ἐπὶ τοὺς μεγίστους ἀγῶνας. καὶ τὸ μὲν ὅμοια πολλὰ καὶ ἀδελφὰ πράξαντας μαρτυρῆσαι τῷ καθηγεμόνι τῆς ἀρετῆς, ὅτι δεῖ φρονήσει καὶ δικαιοσύνη δύναμιν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ τύχην συνελθεῖν, ἵνα κάλλος ἅμα καὶ μέγεθος αἱ πολιτικαὶ πράξεις λάβωσιν, οὐ θαυμαστόν ἐστιν. (*Dion* 1.2–3)

Dion was an immediate disciple of Plato, while Brutus was nourished on the doctrines of Plato. Both therefore set out from one training-school, as it were, to engage in the greatest struggles. And we

⁶⁵ On political ὁμοίωσις θεῶ, cf. Centrone 2000: 578–580; O’Meara 2013: 285–287. Cf. also Van der Stockt 2012.

⁶⁶ Cf. Marincola 2012: 93 n. 9.

⁶⁷ For a philosophically attentive reading of the pair, see Dillon 2010.

need not wonder that, in the performance of actions that were often kindred and alike, they bore witness to the doctrine of their teacher in virtue, that wisdom and justice must be united with power and good fortune if public careers are to take on beauty as well as grandeur.

The two protagonists' close association with Platonism⁶⁸ leads to, as Dillon puts it, 'an adaptation to the "real world"' of Plato's philosopher king.⁶⁹ The demiurgic model is announced by Plutarch's suggestion that the gist of Plato's teaching is that rationality should not suppress the non-rational but should join forces with it to yield a good result.⁷⁰ The demiurge makes his real entrance when we read about Dion's attempt to instil this Platonic political doctrine in the son of the Sicilian tyrant Dionysius I:⁷¹

τὸν δ' υἱὸν αὐτοῦ καθάπερ εἴρηται διαλελωβημένον ἀπαιδευσία καὶ συντετριμμένον τὸ ἦθος ὁ Δίων ὄρων, παρεκάλει πρὸς παιδείαν τραπέσθαι καὶ δεηθῆναι τοῦ πρώτου τῶν φιλοσόφων πᾶσαν δέησιν, ἔλθειν εἰς Σικελίαν, ἐλθόντι δὲ παρασχεῖν αὐτόν, ὅπως διακοσμηθεῖς τὸ ἦθος εἰς ἀρετὴν λόγῳ, καὶ πρὸς τὸ θεϊότατον ἀφομοιωθεῖς παράδειγμα τῶν ὄντων καὶ κάλλιστον, ᾧ τὸ πᾶν ἡγουμένῳ πειθόμενον ἐξ ἀκοσμίας κόσμος ἐστί, πολλὴν μὲν εὐδαιμονίαν ἑαυτῷ μηχανήσεται, πολλὴν δὲ τοῖς πολίταις, ὅσα νῦν ἐν ἀθυμίᾳ διοικοῦσι πρὸς ἀνάγκην τῆς ἀρχῆς, ταῦτα σωφροσύνη καὶ δικαιοσύνη μετ' εὐμενείας πατρονομουμένοις παρασχών, καὶ γενόμενος βασιλεὺς ἐκ τυράννου. (*Dion* 10.1–3)

This tyrant's son, as I have said, Dion saw to be dwarfed and deformed in character from his lack of education, and therefore exhorted him to apply himself to study, and to use every entreaty with the first of philosophers to come to Sicily, and, when he came, to become his disciple, in order that his character might be regulated by the principles of virtue, and that he might be conformed to that divinest and

⁶⁸ Cf. Wardman 1974: 213–214; Swain 1990: 201–203; Beneker 2012: 89–90. Cf. also Sedley 1997 on how (Plutarch's presentation of) Brutus' Platonic ethics (as distinguished from the Stoicism that is sometimes attributed to him) squares with his decision to kill Caesar.

⁶⁹ Dillon 2010: 90

⁷⁰ Cf. Opsomer 2011a: 159–168, who discusses Plutarch's views on virtue and fortune in the *Dion* and shows how these fit into the framework of *De virt. mor.*

⁷¹ On the historiographical and biographical aspects of Plutarch's treatment of Dion's Platonism and Plato's involvement in Syracusan politics, see Porter 1952: 70–78; Muccioli 1995: 277–279, 283–284; de Blois 1997; 1999; Candau Morón 1999b; Dreher in Dreher, Scardigli, and Fabrini 2000: 88–115; Mossé 2006. Cf. also *Max. cum princ.* 777a; *Non posse* 1097b; *De lat. viv.* 1129c; *Adv. Col.* 1126b–d; *Timol.* 1.1.

most beautiful model of all being, in obedience to whose direction the universe issues from disorder into order; in this way he would procure great happiness for himself, and great happiness for his people, and that obedience which they now rendered dejectedly and under the compulsion of his authority, this his moderation and justice would base upon goodwill and a filial spirit, and he would become a king instead of a tyrant.

This take on ὁμοίωσις θεῶν recalls the passage from *On God's Slowness to Punish* (550d–e) at the beginning of this book. There, too, Plutarch opts to conflate the demiurge and the paradigm: together they constitute the intelligible realm that accounts for the transition from chaos to cosmos.⁷² Through ὁμοίωσις θεῶν the ruler can become a demiurge himself and create cosmos both in his own soul and in the state.⁷³ In this way, the ruler can be seen as a cosmic middleman: by assimilating himself to the divine paradigm that creates cosmos, he becomes himself a cosmos-creating paradigm of sorts.

The utter failure of Dion's attempt to make Dionysius II adopt a demiurgic model draws attention to a problem that was often on Plutarch's mind when he thought about the political reality of his own time.⁷⁴ Unlike Plato, he was aware of the possibility that the philosopher and the ruler might not be the same person and that philosopher kingship might have to be a kind of team effort, with the philosopher in an advisory role.⁷⁵ While it is obvious that the ruler Dionysius II had a blameworthy, unwieldy tyrannical nature,⁷⁶ at least part of the failure lay with his philosophical advisor Dion. While the plan to let the ruler imitate the cosmos-inducing persuasiveness of the demiurge was theoretically sound, Dion mistakenly believed that Dionysius would be persuaded by philosophy in the first place. Taking his inspiration from the Platonic

⁷² The general reference to *Tim.* in *Dion* 10.1–3 is noted by e.g. Porter 1952: 57. Flacelière and Chambry 1978: 27 n. 1 (cf. Muccioli in Dreher, Scardigli, and Fabrini 2000: 178 n. 75) also point to the form of the good from *Resp.* Plutarch would no doubt agree with this equivalence (cf. p. 327), but the cosmogonic aspect of the passage makes it clear that *Tim.* is the main intertext here.

⁷³ The combination of happiness for the philosophically inspired ruler and happiness for his people possibly echoes Pl. [?], *Ep.* 7.327c.

⁷⁴ For an analysis of Dion's failure, see Pelling 2004: 91–97. The rejection of the demiurgic model in particular may be gleaned from Dionysius' growing aversion, after a brief stint of excessive enthusiasm (*Dion* 13.4), for geometry (14.3); cf. Opsomer 2011a: 165–166.

⁷⁵ Cf. Bonazzi 2012: 154 on the *Dion* and Roskam 2002 on the centrality of the issue in Plutarch's political thought.

⁷⁶ Cf. Beneker 2012: 87–102.

Letters – Plutarch had no doubts about their authenticity (cf. p. 24 n. 16) – Plutarch makes us wonder about the reasons for Dion’s failure. Most obviously, Dion picked the wrong person to turn into a philosopher king: the *Seventh Letter* (351c–e) leaves no doubt about that (cf. *Max. cum princ.* 779b–c). However, Plutarch also refers to the admonition to Dion which comes at the end of the *Fourth Letter*:

ἐνθυμοῦ δὲ καὶ ὅτι δοκεῖς τισιν ἐνδεεστέρως τοῦ προσήκοντος
θεραπευτικὸς εἶναι· μὴ οὖν λανθανέτω σε ὅτι διὰ τοῦ ἀρέσκειν τοῖς
ἀνθρώποις καὶ τὸ πράττειν ἐστίν, ἢ δ’ ἀθάρδεια ἐρημία σύννοκος.
εὐτύχει. (Pl. [?], *Ep.* 4.321b–c)

Remember that some persons think you are not sufficiently obliging; don’t forget that one must please men if one would do anything with them, whereas self-will is fit only for solitude. Good luck!

Plutarch realises that this admonition must have been voiced at a time when Dion had relinquished his role as advisor and had taken matters into his own hands: he appropriately quotes it when dealing with that phase of Dion’s life at *Dion* 52.5. However, he also refers to it *before* discussing Dion’s advisory role (8.4; cf. 17.3).⁷⁷ Throughout his life, Dion was not at all concerned with what is ἡδύ (8.1), and his character was marked by conceit and harshness (ὄγκον [...] καὶ τραχύτητα, 8.2⁷⁸). His seriousness repelled the mob and drove them into the arms of a politician who, as opposed to Dion, did know that he had to take χάρις into account to be πιθανός (32.4).

Near the end of the *Life*, Dion, who once tried to turn a tyrant into a king (10.3), tries to turn democracy into a mixed constitution after Spartan (and Cretan) model (53.4). Did he, by combining democracy and kingship, finally become a successful political demiurge? We will never know. Soon after taking this new course, Dion, who had a knack for making bad friends (*Comp. Dion. et Brut.* 4.7–8), was betrayed by his trustees and murdered (*Dion* 57.1–4).

Brutus’ eventual downfall was different. On the whole, his high-mindedness is presented as more pleasing to the mob than Dion’s (cf. *Brut.* 1.3, 29.3).⁷⁹ His endeavour to save Roman democracy, however, was mis-

⁷⁷ Cf. *Cor.* 15.4; *Comp. Alc. et Cor.* 3.3; *Praec. ger. reip.* 808d.

⁷⁸ For ὄγκος and its negative connotations (which often distinguish it from σεμνότης) in the *Lives*, see Wardman 1974: 63–64; Roskam 2014b: esp. 518. Similarly negative is ἀθάρδεια, which Plutarch also quotes from the Platonic letter (*Dion* 52.6; cf. 8.1, 8.4, 15.2); cf. e.g. *Praec. ger. reip.* 823a.

⁷⁹ Cf. Moles 2017: 1: ‘Brutus’ philosophy was not dour and implacable, but rather tempered by humanity and grace: in P[lutarch]’s portrayal of Brutus-φιλόσοφος there are

guided and went against the cosmic plan. Brutus failed because some crucial information about a battle that his troops had won did not come through:

ἀλλὰ τῶν πραγμάτων ὡς ἔοικεν οὐκέτι πολλοῖς ὄντων καθεκτῶν, ἀλλὰ μοναρχίας δεομένων, ὁ θεὸς ἐξ<αγ>αγεῖν καὶ μεταστῆσαι τὸν μόνον ἐμποδῶν ὄντα τῷ κρατεῖν δυναμένῳ βουλόμενος, ἀπέκοψε τὴν τύχην ἐκείνην, καίπερ ἐγγυτάτω τοῦ μὴ λαθεῖν τὸν Βροῦτον ἀφικομένην. (*Brut.* 47.7)

But since, as it would seem, the government of Rome could no longer be a democracy, and a monarchy was necessary, Heaven, wishing to remove from the scene the only man who stood in the way of him who was able to be sole master, cut off from Brutus the knowledge of that good fortune, although it very nearly reached him in time.

Terms such as θεός, δαίμων, and τύχη are generally used rather loosely in the *Lives* (cf. p. 180 n. 48). Nevertheless, this seems to be one of those large-scale developments – starting with the providential emergence of Caesar (*Comp. Dion. et Brut.* 2.2) – that Plutarch decidedly attributes to providence and not to chance.⁸⁰ Even the statesman who is an excellent imitator of the demiurge does not always know what is best for the cosmos. That is reserved for the real demiurge.

We have encountered several statesmen who imitated or were compared to the demiurge. All of them fell short of this demiurgic model. Even Lycurgus' cosmos left room for improvement and did not turn out to be eminently stable. That is not necessarily criticism on Plutarch's part as much as a philosophical necessity. Assimilation to god is always incomplete. It is always ἀμωσγέπως (*De sera num.* 550d), always κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν (Pl., *Thet.* 176b). A perfectly executed mixture is the work of a god, not of a human. Plutarch, accordingly, gives his failing demiurges the praise they deserve. He writes his *Lives* 'tenderly defending human nature for producing no character which is absolutely good and indisputably set towards virtue' (αἰδουμένους ὑπὲρ τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως, εἰ καλὸν οὐδὲν εἰλικρινὲς οὐδ' ἀναμφισβήτητον εἰς ἀρετὴν ἦθος γεγονὸς ἀποδίδωσιν, *Cim.* 2.5; cf. *De an. procr.* 1026c). After all, all humans, even

few of the reservations or signs of alienation so well documented in the *Cato minor* by Babut 167–89 [i.e. Babut 1969b], and evident also in the parallel to the *Brutus*, the rather scrappy and unsatisfactory *Dion*'; a tad more cynically but to the same effect, Swain 1990: 197: 'In *Brutus* Plutarch seems to avoid tracing the unfortunate consequences of Brutus' insistence on principle in politics, as he does not in *Cato Minor*, partly because Brutus is an adherent of the Academy rather than the Stoa.'

⁸⁰ Swain 1989b: 291.

the most awesome demiurgic statesmen, are themselves the products of a demiurgic compromise – the compromise of divine rationality with pre-existing irrationality that made the cosmos possible.

3. *The ruler and the sun: To an Uneducated Ruler*

In the *Phocion*, the ruler was compared both to the demiurge and to the sun. The same thing goes for Alexander the Great. Shortly after the allusion to demiurgy in *On the Fortune or the Virtue of Alexander*, which I discussed in the previous section, Plutarch turns to sun imagery:⁸¹

εἰ δὲ μὴ ταχέως ὁ δεῦρο καταπέμψας τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρου ψυχὴν ἀνεκαλέσατο δαίμων, εἷς ἂν νόμος ἅπαντας ἀνθρώπους διωκεῖτο καὶ πρὸς ἓν δίκαιον ὡς πρὸς κοινὸν ἐπέβλεπον φῶς. νῦν δὲ τῆς γῆς ἀνήλιον μέρος ἔμεινεν, ὅσον Ἀλέξανδρον οὐκ εἶδεν. (*De Alex. Magn. fort.* 330d–e)

But if the deity that sent down Alexander's soul into this world of ours had not recalled him quickly, one law would govern all mankind, and they all would look toward one rule of justice as though toward a common source of light. But as it is, that part of the world which has not looked upon Alexander has remained without sunlight.

Once again, however, Plutarch does not spell out the precise connection between the sun imagery and the demiurgic imagery. For that we can turn to the incomplete treatise *To an Uneducated Ruler*, in which Plutarch does not, despite what the title says, address a specific uneducated ruler but argues generally that a ruler should be philosophically educated.⁸² More specifically, one of the questions at the centre of Plutarch's attention is: who or what should the good ruler imitate?

⁸¹ Cf. also *De Alex. Magn. fort.* 333e: καρπῶν μὲν γὰρ εὐφορίαν εὐκρασία ποιεῖ καὶ λεπτότης τοῦ περιέχοντος ἀέρος, τεχνῶν δὲ καὶ φύσεων ἀγαθῶν αὐξήσιν εὐμένεια καὶ τιμὴ καὶ φιλάνθρωπία βασιλέως ἐκκαλεῖται. ('For a good climate and a lightness of the surrounding air produces a bountiful harvest; and likewise the favour, esteem, and benignity shown by a king evokes a rich increase in the arts and in men of talent.')

⁸² Hartman 1916: 472: 'Hic vero titulus [i.e. *Ad principem ineruditum*], quamvis minus sit verbosus multo est ineptior [sc. compared to *Max. cum princ.*]; tam parum enim argumento quod tractatur respondet ut ab ipso Plutarcho ipso libello nomen inditum esse vix sit credibile. Nam nihil aliud demonstratur quam hoc: principem philosophum esse debere.' Cf. also Hartman 1912: 65; Cuvigny 1984: 27. This does not mean that lack of education is not a topic in the treatise: the dangers of lack of education are duly noted (*Ad princ. iner.* 780a, 782e; cf. Cuvigny 1984: 29).

The first two paragraphs of the work set out two preliminary points, which, taken together, will provide the key to answering that question. In the first paragraph, Plutarch points out that the good ruler deliberately limits his own power: rulers (ἄρχοντες) should ‘accept reason as a ruler’ (τὸν γὰρ λόγον ὥσπερ ἄρχοντα παραδέξασθαι, *Ad princ. iner.* 779e).⁸³ The Loeb translation actually adds a few more words: ‘accept reason as a ruler over them’ (emphasis added). I think, however, that Plutarch deliberately does not specify whether reason rules the ruler or functions as a co-ruler at this point, which is further suggested by his calling reason πάρεδρος καὶ φύλαξ to the ruler (779f) – again both possibilities are accounted for.⁸⁴ This ambiguity will be important later in the treatise.

The second paragraph introduces different facets of imitation and once again we have to recognise an ambiguity that will turn out to be eminently fitting. First, Plutarch points out that foolish rulers imitate (μιμοῦνται) unskilful sculptors who think that their colossi are successful if they give them a fierce and muscled exterior (779f). Immediately after this, these foolish rulers are said to be ‘not at all different from colossal statues which have a heroic and godlike form on the outside, but inside are full of clay, stone, and lead’ (οὐδ’ ὅτιοῦν τῶν κολοσσικῶν διαφέροντες ἀνδριάντων, οἱ τὴν ἔξωθεν ἥρωικὴν καὶ θεοπρεπῆ μορφήν ἔχοντες ἐντὸς εἰσι γῆς μεστοὶ καὶ λίθου καὶ μολίβδου, 780a), the only difference being that the rulers are less stable than the colossi (780a–b).⁸⁵ Plutarch has abruptly shifted from comparing ruler and sculptor to comparing ruler and sculpture. This makes sense when we are told that the ruler ‘must regulate his own soul and establish his own character’ (κατευθύναντα τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ καταστησάμενον τὸ ἦθος, 780b): the ruler can be compared both to the sculptor and to the sculpture because he is effectively sculpting himself.

This comparison of ruling and sculpting is the first level of imitation at play in this paragraph (the ruler should not imitate the unskilful sculptor / bad sculpture). Since the sculpting of cult statues itself involves an act of imitation, there is also an imitation on the level of the *tertium comparationis* (the unskilful sculptor / bad sculpture imitates x, hence the ruler should not imitate x). What we learn about this is that, as unskilled sculptors deem themselves successful if they craft a ‘heroic and godlike’ (ἥρωικὴν καὶ θεοπρεπῆ) exterior, foolish rulers think that they

⁸³ An anecdote involving the Spartan king Theopompus is told both here (*Ad princ. iner.* 779e) and in *Lyc.* 7.2.

⁸⁴ For the combination πάρεδρος καὶ φύλαξ, cf. *Lyc.* 3.3; *Per.* 22.2; *De Pyth. or.* 402d.

⁸⁵ See Meyer 1996 on the kind of statues invoked in this passage. Cf. *Praec. ger. reip.* 82of for another go at the comparison between rulers and statues in terms of stability. Stability has already been mentioned as a key element of good rule in *Ad princ. iner.* 779e.

are imitating the loftiness and solemnity of rulership (ὄγκον ἡγεμονίας καὶ σεμνότητα μιμεῖσθαι, 780a⁸⁶) through intimidating fierceness. That ἡγεμονία should be understood here first and foremost (though not exclusively) as *divine* rulership is suggested by the reference to heroes and gods and the mention of imitation (the ruler would not need to *imitate* aspects of human rulership). Rather, divine rulership is what both the sculptor and the ruler are trying to imitate.

This self-sculpting is a necessary condition for good rulership: the ruler has to establish ἀρχή in himself to be able to ‘make his subjects fit his pattern’ (συναρμόττειν τὸ ὑπήκοον, 780b). This introduces yet another level of imitation with which we will have to reckon when reading the rest of the work: sculpting both himself and others, the ruler should also be a paradigm for others to imitate. In this sense, the ruler is like a rule (κανών), which, by being straight, straightens things ‘when they are fitted to it and laid alongside it’ (τῇ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐφαρμογῇ καὶ παραθέσει συνεξομοῶν, 780b). After briefly employing this new image of the κανών, which more readily explains the level of imitation at hand, Plutarch connects this to the image of stable statues and drives his point home: ‘one who is falling cannot hold others up, nor can one who is ignorant teach, nor the uncultivated impart culture, nor the disorderly make order, nor can he rule who is under no rule’ (οὔτε γὰρ πίπτοντός ἐστιν ὀρθοῦν οὔτε διδάσκειν ἀγνοοῦντος οὔτε κοσμεῖν ἀκοσμοῦντος ἢ τάττειν ἀτακτοῦντος ἢ ἀρχεῖν μὴ ἀρχομένου, 780b).

The first two paragraphs of *To an Uneducated Ruler* have conveyed (1) that the ruler should establish λόγος as (co-)ruler and (2) that the ruler should not imitate the unskilful sculptor and the colossus by only imitating (and providing a paradigm for further imitation of) divinity through externals. The third paragraph brings these two issues together and places them within a cosmological framework.⁸⁷ The three intact paragraphs that follow (§ 4–6) place more specific political issues within that framework. The last paragraph (§ 7), which makes the point that having political power makes it impossible to conceal vice, does not make the connection with the framework but this may be due to our text breaking off before the point is fully made.⁸⁸

The third paragraph shows that, as the first paragraph suggested, we should not choose between λόγος ruling the ruler and λόγος being a

⁸⁶ On ὄγκος see p. 154 n. 78.

⁸⁷ Contra Frerichs 1929: 45–46, who finds the repetition of the images involving statues and the sun rather clumsy. As Cuvigny 1984: 28–29 rightly points out, repetition serves to reaffirm an important idea.

⁸⁸ The point made in that incomplete paragraph would square perfectly, for instance, with the image of the sun being unable to hide. This image is connected to rulership by e.g. Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 3.11; Seneca, *De clem.* 1.8.4–5.

co-ruler: since the ruler is ruled by an ἔμψυχος ὢν ἐν αὐτῷ λόγος (780c). This λόγος is both living together with him and guarding him (συνουικῶν καὶ παραφυλάττων, 780c ~ πάρεδρος καὶ φύλαξ, 779f). It is λόγος that incites the ruler to carry out the wishes of god and to administer his gifts (780c–d).

ὄρᾳς τὸν ὑψοῦ τόνδ' ἄπειρον αἰθέρα,
καὶ γῆν πέριξ ἔχονθ' ὑγραῖς ἐν ἀγκάλαις;

ὁ μὲν καθίησιν ἀρχὰς σπερμάτων προσηκόντων γῆ δ' ἀναδίδωσιν, αὔξεται δὲ τὰ μὲν ὄμβροις τὰ δ' ἀνέμοις τὰ δ' ἄστροις ἐπιθαλπόμενα καὶ σελήνη, κοσμεῖ δ' ἥλιος ἅπαντα καὶ πᾶσι τοῦτο δὴ τὸ παρ' αὐτοῦ φίλτρον ἐγκεράννυσιν. ἀλλὰ τῶν τοιούτων καὶ τηλικούτων ἂ θεοὶ χαρίζονται δώρων καὶ ἀγαθῶν οὐκ ἔστιν ἀπόλαυσις οὐδὲ χρῆσις ὀρθῆ δίκη νόμου καὶ δίκης καὶ ἄρχοντος. δίκη μὲν οὖν νόμου τέλος ἐστί, νόμος δ' ἄρχοντος ἔργον, ἄρχων δ' εἰκὼν θεοῦ τοῦ πάντα κοσμοῦντος, οὐ Φειδίου δεόμενος πλάττοντος οὐδὲ Πολυκλείτου καὶ Μύρωνος, ἀλλ' αὐτὸς αὐτὸν εἰς ὁμοιότητα θεῶ δι' ἀρετῆς καθιστὰς καὶ δημιουργῶν ἀγαλμάτων τὸ ἥδιστον ὀφθῆναι καὶ θεοπρεπέστατον. οἷον δ' ἥλιον ἐν οὐρανῷ περικαλλὲς εἶδωλον ἑαυτοῦ καὶ σελήνην ὁ θεὸς ἐνίδρυσε, τοιοῦτον ἐν πόλεσι μίμημα καὶ φέγγος ἄρχων 'ὅστε θεουδῆς εὐδικίας ἀνέχησι', τουτέστι θεοῦ λόγον ἔχων, διάνοιαν, οὐ σκηπτὸν οὐδὲ κεραυνὸν οὐδὲ τρίαιναν, ὡς ἔνιοι πλάττουσιν ἑαυτοὺς καὶ γράφουσι τῷ ἀνεφίκτῳ ποιοῦντες ἐπίφθονον τὸ ἀνόητον· νεμεσᾶ γὰρ ὁ θεὸς τοῖς ἀπομιμουμένοις βροντὰς καὶ κεραυνοὺς καὶ ἀκτινοβολίας, τοὺς δὲ τὴν ἀρετὴν ζηλοῦντας αὐτοῦ καὶ πρὸς τὸ καλὸν καὶ φιλόανθρωπον ἀφομοιοῦντας ἑαυτοὺς ἠδόμενος αὔξει καὶ μεταδίδωσι τῆς περὶ αὐτὸν εὐνομίας καὶ δίκης καὶ ἀληθείας καὶ πραότητος· ὢν θεϊότερον οὐ πῦρ ἐστὶν οὐ φῶς οὐχ ἡλίου δρόμος οὐκ ἀνατολαὶ καὶ δύσεις ἄστρον οὐ τὸ αἶδιον καὶ ἀθάνατον. οὐ γὰρ χρόνον ζωῆς ὁ θεὸς εὐδαίμων ἀλλὰ τῆς ἀρετῆς τῷ ἄρχοντι· τοῦτο γὰρ θεῖόν ἐστι, καλὸν δ' αὐτῆς καὶ τὸ ἀρχόμενον. (*Ad princ. iner.* 780d–781a [text modified])

Dost thou behold this lofty, boundless sky
Which holds the earth enwrapped in soft embrace? [Eur. fr. 941.I–2 *TrGF*]

The sky sends down the beginnings of the appropriate seeds, and the earth causes them to sprout up; some are made to grow by showers and some by winds, and some by the warmth of stars and moon; but it is the sun which adorns all things and mingles in all things what men call the 'love charm' which is derived from himself. But these gifts and blessings, so excellent and so great, which the gods bestow

cannot be rightly enjoyed nor used without law and justice and a ruler. Now justice is the aim and end of law, but law is the work of the ruler, and the ruler is the image of God who orders all things. Such a ruler needs no Pheidias nor Polycleitus nor Myron to model him, but by his virtue he forms himself in the likeness of God and thus creates a statue most delightful of all to behold and most worthy of divinity. Now just as in the heavens God has established as a most beautiful image of himself the sun and the moon, such an image and luminary in states is a ruler ‘who in God’s likeness Righteous decisions upholds’ [Hom., *Od.* 19.109, 111], that is to say, one who possesses god’s wisdom, namely reasoning, not a lightning strike or thunderbolt or trident, with which attributes some rulers represent themselves in sculpture and painting, thus causing their folly to arouse hostile feelings, because they claim what they cannot attain. For God visits his wrath upon those who imitate his thunders, lightnings, and sunbeams, but with those who emulate his virtue and make themselves like unto his goodness and mercy he is well pleased and therefore causes them to prosper and gives them a share of his own equity, justice, truth, and gentleness, than which nothing is more divine,—nor fire, nor light, nor the course of the sun, nor the risings and settings of the stars, nor eternity and immortality. For God enjoys felicity, not through the length of his life, but through the ruling quality of his virtue; for this is divine; and excellent also is that part of virtue which submits to rule. [tr. modified⁸⁹]

The ruler and the sun are both images of the demiurge (εἰκὼν θεοῦ τοῦ πάντα κοσμοῦντος, 781e; εἰδῶλον ἑαυτοῦ, 781f).⁹⁰ Both receive and distribute divine gifts. The presentation of ὁμοίωσις θεῶ in this passage (εἰς ὁμοιότητα θεῶ, πρὸς τὸ καλὸν καὶ φιλόανθρωπον ἀφομοιοῦντας) recalls the discussion of the *Lives*. As in the *Dion*, the ruler – a cosmic middleman – does not only make himself better by imitating god, but also makes others better through his imparted demiurgic activity. As in the *Aristides*, moreover, there is a distinction between good and misguided ὁμοίωσις θεῶ. To apply the categories distinguished in the *Aristides*: not god’s attributes of power or his immortality should (nor could) be imitated, but his virtue.⁹¹ Both aspects – imitating god to make others better and imitating god in the correct way – have been prepared in the first two paragraphs of the work: the first aspect is the outcome of the reflections

⁸⁹ See Demulder forthcoming a for my reading and interpretation of this text.

⁹⁰ For rulership as a divine mandate cf. *Num.* 6.2; *Praec. ger. reip.* 823f.

⁹¹ For the argument that god’s happiness does not lie in his immortality, cf. *De Is. et Os.* 351e (with p. 277 n. 306) – a passage that is also concerned with ὁμοίωσις θεῶ; cf. Roskam 2014a: 219 on the parallel.

on self-sculpting (cf. δημιουργῶν ἀγαλμάτων τὸ ἥδιστον ὀφθῆναι καὶ θεοπρεπέστατον), while the second is the result of the focus on λόγος (cf. θεοῦ λόγον ἔχων) instead of external aspects.

The fourth paragraph makes it clear that assimilation to god is not identification with god. The argument takes its cue from an anecdote narrated more fully in the *Alexander* (52.4–7). Alexander the Great, after killing his commander Cleitus in a drunken rage at a symposium, was in agony. In an attempt to console him, the philosopher Anaxarchus said that ‘the reason why Justice and Right are seated by the side of Zeus is that men may consider every act of a king as righteous and just’ (καὶ τῷ Διὶ τὴν Δίκην εἶναι καὶ τὴν Θέμιν παρέδρους, ἵνα πᾶν πραττόμενον ὑπὸ βασιλέως θεμιτὸν δοκῇ καὶ δίκαιον, 781b).⁹² Plutarch, of course, disagrees. While Zeus always has justice and right on his side or – and Plutarch builds in due caution here – is even justice and right himself, a ruler ‘should have more fear of doing than of suffering evil’ (φοβεῖσθαι δὲ δεῖ τὸν ἄρχοντα τοῦ παθεῖν κακῶς μᾶλλον τὸ ποιῆσαι, 781c). Assimilation to god does not entail omnipotence. In Plutarch’s mind, it always implies subordination to god. The ruler, who makes law (νόμος δ’ ἄρχοντος ἔργον, 780e) is also subjected to law (τίς οὖν ἄρξει τοῦ ἄρχοντος; ὁ νόμος, 780c).

The fifth paragraph elaborates on the image relationship between god and ruler and starts by opposing the Stoic and the Platonic conceptions of god:

οὐ γὰρ εἰκὸς οὐδὲ πρέπον, ὥσπερ ἔνιοι φιλόσοφοι λέγουσι, τὸν θεὸν ἐν ὕλῃ πάντα πασχούσῃ καὶ πράγμασι μυρίας δεχομένοις ἀνάγκας καὶ τύχας καὶ μεταβολὰς ὑπάρχειν ἀναμειγμένον· ἀλλ’ ὁ μὲν ἄνω που περὶ τὴν αἰὲ κατὰ ταῦτὰ ὡσαύτως φύσιν ἔχουσιν ἰδρυμένοις ἐν βάθροις ἀγίοις, ἧ̃ φησι Πλάτων, ‘εὐθεία περαίνει κατὰ φύσιν περιπορευόμενος’· οἷον δ’ ἥλιος ἐν οὐρανῷ μίμημα τὸ περικαλλές αὐτοῦ δι’ ἐσόπτρου εἰδωλὸν ἀναφαίνεται τοῖς ἐκεῖνον ἐνορᾶν δι’ αὐτοῦ δυνατοῖς, οὕτω τὸ ἐν πόλεσι φέγγος εὐδικίας καὶ λόγου τοῦ περὶ αὐτὸν ὥσπερ εἰκόνα κατέστησεν, ἦν οἱ μακάριοι καὶ σώφρονες ἐκ φιλοσοφίας ἀπογράφονται πρὸς τὸ κάλλιστον τῶν πραγμάτων πλάττοντες ἑαυτούς. (*Ad princ. iner.* 781f-782a [text modified⁹³])

For it is neither probable nor fitting that god is, as some philosophers say, mingled with matter, which is altogether passive, and with things,

⁹² Cf. Brunschwig 1993: 69–70 for an interpretation of this anecdote in the context of a brilliant treatment of the elusive figure Anaxarchus, whom we will encounter again when discussing *De tranq. an.* (p. 187).

⁹³ The Teubner intervenes, unnecessarily to my mind, by adding a καὶ after δι’ ἐσόπτρου and omitting the καὶ of εὐδικίας καὶ λόγου.

which are subject to countless necessities, chances, and changes. On the contrary, somewhere up above in contact with that nature which, in accordance with the same principles, remains always as it is, established, as Plato [*Phdr.* 254b] says, upon pedestals of holiness, proceeding in accordance with nature in his straight course, he reaches his goal [Pl., *Leg.* 4.716a]. And as the sun, his most beautiful image, appears in the heavens as his mirrored likeness to those who are able to see him in it, just so he has established in states the light of justice and of knowledge of himself as an image which the blessed and the wise copy with the help of philosophy, modelling themselves after the most beautiful of all things.

The gist is familiar from the third paragraph: there is an image of god both in the heavens (the sun) and in the polis. The figure of the ruler, however, has suddenly faded to the background here. The divine image in the polis is no longer the ruler as λόγος ἔμψυχος but the light of justice and of knowledge of god. The ruler does not possess this *d'office*: he has to be taught by a philosopher (782a). As in the *Dion*, Plutarch is thinking about the philosopher-advisor as much as about the statesman.⁹⁴ Another feature added to the imagery of the third paragraph is that, as in other Plutarchan descriptions of ὁμοίωσις θεῶ (p. 19 and 153), the demiurge and the paradigm seem to be conflated (cf. τὸ κάλλιστον τῶν πραγμάτων). The most important point, however, is once again that god and his images are fundamentally different, although the Stoics (ἔνιοι φιλόσοφοι) did not recognise that difference by rejecting divine transcendence.

The sixth (and last complete) paragraph points out that wickedness is worse when it is accompanied by power. The ruler has to be more aware of this than anyone, since the smallest bit of wickedness on his part is immediately enlarged due to his power and, hence, is utterly manifest to all people (this is explored further in the seventh paragraph). The only option to avoid swift prosecution and incessant slander is for the ruler to tread extremely carefully – that is, rationally. The ruler will not be able to hold his ground

[...] ἂν μὴ βάρος ἔχων <ὁ> λογισμὸς ἐπιθλίβῃ καὶ πιέζῃ τὴν ἐξουσίαν, μιμουμένου τὸν ἥλιον τοῦ ἄρχοντος, ὃς ὅταν ὕψωμα λάβῃ μέγιστον ἐξαρθεῖς ἐν τοῖς βορείοις, ἐλάχιστα κινεῖται, τῷ σχολαιοτέρῳ τὸν δρόμον εἰς ἀσφαλὲς καθιστάμενος. (*Ad princ. iner.* 782d–e)

⁹⁴ As Roskam 2009b: 66 notes, *Ad princ. iner.* forms ‘a kind of diptych’ with *Max. cum princ.*, which is devoted to the role of the philosopher-advisor.

[...] unless the weight of reason presses upon power and holds it down, and the ruler imitates the sun, which, when it mounts up in the northern sky and reaches its greatest altitude, has the least motion, thus by greater slowness ensuring the safety of its course.

Plutarch is talking about the movement of the sun at the moment of its greatest northern exaltation; that is, at the time of the northern solstice (the summer solstice in the northern hemisphere), when – in Platonic terms – the movement of the different has brought the sun to its most northern tropic. At this moment – the height of the summer where Plutarch was living – the sun would appear at its most powerful and at its slowest. In *On the Generation of the Soul*, Plutarch once again points out this connection: ‘the sun has his minimal movement at the solstices and his maximal movement at the equinox’ (τοῦ δὲ ἡλίου περὶ τὰς τροπὰς ἐλάχιστα καὶ μέγιστα περὶ τὴν ἰσημερίαν ἔχοντος κινήματα, *De an. procr.* 1028e).⁹⁵ This is, I think, nothing more than a logical inference (made by Plutarch or some source) from the cosmology of the *Timaeus*. As we have seen when discussing the *Phocion*, the seasons are created by the sun’s spiralling movement. At the moment of the solstice, the diameter of the helix would be at its smallest (and at the moment of the equinox it would be at its largest), since the distance between the sun and the earth does not change during the year according to Plutarch (only the angle of inclination does). This means that, since the combined length of day and night also stays the same during the year, the sun moves slower at the moment of the solstice (completing a smaller distance in the same time). The ruler, apparently, should take his inspiration from that by also observing an inverse proportion between power and speed. At his most powerful, he should be most careful.

The picture that emerges from *To an Uneducated Ruler* is consistent, and I disagree with Babut who concludes that ‘il ne semble pas prudent, en effet, de chercher dans ces quelques notes, qui n’ont peut-être jamais été mises au point en vue d’une publication, la véritable pensée de Plutarque’.⁹⁶ On the contrary, I think the work provides us with the general framework of Plutarch’s thoughts about cosmology and politics. It shows us how and why Plutarch compares the ruler both to the demiurge and to the sun. The upshot – and this should sound familiar by now – is that Plutarch, in comparing the ruler to the demiurge, stresses both important

⁹⁵ The parallel is indicated by Cuvigny 1984: ad loc. On the passage from *De an. procr.*, see Neugebauer 1983, who rightly points out that the attempt made there to connect the observation about the slowness of the sun to the unequal length of the seasons is nonsensical. This, however, need not concern us here, nor is it obvious that Plutarch intends to endorse it (cf. p. 130 on the astronomical observations in *De an. procr.*).

⁹⁶ Babut 1969b: 85.

similarities and crucial differences. As an image of god, the ruler should try to assimilate himself to god (§ 3) without thinking that he, like god, is on the same level as justice (§ 4) or that he, as an immanent image, matches god's transcendence (§ 5). The sun helps to enforce this point: like the ruler, it is an image of god (§ 3) and thus it shares the ruler's immanence (§ 5) while also providing inspiration as a fellow image (§ 6).

The ruler, then, can be compared both to the demiurge (his paradigm) and to the sun (his fellow image).⁹⁷ Hence, the ruler should imitate both the demiurge and the sun. This advice to imitate an imitation (i.e. the sun) would sound terrible to any champion of the tenth book of Plato's *Republic* (595a–607a). Although Plutarch would not disagree per se with the decreasing status of increasing imitations, he is first and foremost a champion of the *Timaeus*, where the notion of εἰκῶν receives a much more positive treatment. As Hirsh-Luipold has argued, Plutarch's imagery is less concerned with hierarchies of paradigm and imitations than one would perhaps expect from a Platonist.⁹⁸ In Plutarch's view, there is nothing wrong with imitating an imitation, as long as we keep in mind that it is an imitation.

This framework is, I think, distinctly Plutarchan. He himself distinguishes his concern for divine transcendence from the Stoic approach (*Ad princ. iner.* 781f–782a). That this does not only pertain to Stoic theology but also to Stoic political thought can be gleaned from a comparison of Plutarch's treatise with Dio Chrysostom's *Third Kingship Oration* (*Or.* 3).⁹⁹ This oration shares with Plutarch's treatise the comparison of the ruler to both the highest god (*Or.* 3.50–72) and to the sun (73–85).¹⁰⁰ For Dio, however, these two coincide: the sun is not an image of god but it is 'inferior to none of the gods' (τὸν ἥλιον οὐδενὸς ἐλάττω τῶν θεῶν

⁹⁷ The comparison of the ruler and the sun is made most emphatically in § 6 (did it move to the foreground in the remainder of the treatise?), but it is prepared by the use of the word φέγγος to indicate rulership (780f, 781f).

⁹⁸ Hirsch-Luipold 2002: 10.

⁹⁹ On that oration, see esp. Moles 1990: 357–358. On Dio and his Stoicising thought, see p. 259 n. 246, where another instance of discrepancy between Plutarch's Platonism and Dio's Stoicism is discussed. On the similarity of the political contexts in which Plutarch and Dio developed their political thought, see Jones 1971: 117–119. Catanzaro 2017 also offers a comparison between *Ad princ. iner.* and Dio's *Or.* 3, but, while he focuses on similarities (the main difference between Plutarch and Dio 'lies in the emphasis exclusively laid by Dio on the *princeps*, whereas Plutarch's view seems related to other figures as well', 328; '[t]here are evident differences in detail: Dio's description appears richer than Plutarch's', 329), I am more interested in the differences here, which I think are more fundamental than has been recognised.

¹⁰⁰ For Dio's political ὁμοίωσις θεῶν, cf. also *Or.* 1.37–48; *Or.* 36.32; *Or.* 53.11.

ὄντα οὐκ ἀχθόμενον, 57¹⁰¹) and ‘a god, the fairest and most conspicuous of all’ (θεὸς ὁ πάντων κάλλιστος καὶ φανερώτατος, 82). Dio’s focus is on the industriousness that the ruler (in Dio’s case this is undoubtedly Trajan¹⁰²), the sun, and the highest god share. Plutarch could not possibly agree with this Stoic attack on divine transcendence: god’s philanthropy and providence does not involve him slaving away.¹⁰³ This is indeed what lies behind the fifth paragraph, which contrasts Stoic immanence with Platonic transcendence before invoking god’s concern for justice as it is described in the *Laws*. By pressing the images of the demiurge and the sun into service to insist simultaneously on the connection and the gap between ruler and god Plutarch found a way to emphasise both ὁμοίωσις θεῷ and the essential caveat that this ὁμοίωσις θεῷ is always only κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν.¹⁰⁴

4. Concluding remarks

Although only a few hints have been given here, they may have been enough to suggest that approaching Plutarch’s political thought with the *Timaeus* in mind is worthwhile. Wardman, I think, was too rash when he assumed that Plutarch’s ‘interpretation of the *Timaeus* is of great interest to the historian of Platonism, but is hardly relevant to an account of the biographer’.¹⁰⁵ For all the obvious differences between, say, *On*

¹⁰¹ Von Arnim’s edition (*TLG*) omits this bit, which all the manuscripts have, and assumes a transposition of *Or.* 3.58–61; the Loeb edition correctly keeps the reading of the manuscripts.

¹⁰² If *Ad princ. iner.* should also be connected somehow to Trajan’s rule (cf. Jones 1971: 30; Cuvigny 1984: 33; Zecchini 2002) and if there was a Trajanic solar cult, of which Dio’s *Or.* 3 would be a witness (cf. Moles 1990: 357), then there might be a concrete political statement behind Plutarch’s emphatic subordination of the sun to the demiurge. These are, however, two big ifs and I am not at all inclined to make them smaller. See Beaujeu 1955: 99–101 for a cautious account of Trajanic solar cult, which strikes me as sensible. Cf. Halsberghe 1974; Lane Fox 1986: 593 for the later tradition and its antecedents.

¹⁰³ Cf. Pl., *Tim.* 42e. See *De def. or.* 416e–417b (demonology saves both divine transcendence and concern for human affairs; the thought seems quite Plutarchan to me, although we should remain careful since Cleombrotus is speaking) with Bénatouil 2009b: 25 n. 9. Cf. also *An seni* 793c–d, where Plutarch compares the Stoic Zeus to the politician who wants to be involved in everything (which sets a negative example).

¹⁰⁴ A similar point regarding Plutarch’s opposition of the ruler’s immanence to divine transcendence as a distinctive trait of his political thought could be made by comparing Plutarch to pseudo-Pythagorean political treatises; cf. Centrone 2000; Bonazzi 2012: 151.

¹⁰⁵ Wardman 1974: 197. Conversely, Tigerstedt 1974: 262 too quickly concludes that the reference to the demiurge in *Ad princ. iner.* 780e–f reveals ‘a very un-Lycurgan attitude’ – Plutarch, as we have seen in this chapter, would not have thought so.

the Generation of the Soul and the *Lives*, there is no reason to think that Plutarch wrote the one exclusively for Platonists and the other solely for biography buffs.

Should the politician know cosmology, then? And should the cosmologist know politics? Plato and Plutarch would probably have answered both questions in the affirmative. Plato's *Timaeus* is given his role in the eponymous dialogue on account of his expertise in both fields (*Tim.* 19e–20a, 27a). Plutarch repeatedly connects a lack of cosmological knowledge to a superstitious attitude, which has negative political consequences when talking about eclipses. Pericles calmed down his troops, who were panic-stricken when an eclipse occurred, which they believed to be an omen, by pointing to the natural cause of the phenomenon (*Per.* 35.2).¹⁰⁶ Dion was similarly unimpressed by the portents associated with eclipses (*Dion* 24.1) and Aemilius Paullus combined knowledge about the natural causes of eclipses with a religious attitude (*Aem.* 17.9). Nicias, on the other hand, whose fear for eclipses is contrasted with Dion's attitude (*Nic.* 23.6), made a bad political decision upon the occurrence of an eclipse because he was ignorant or superstitious (ὕπ' ἀπειρίας ἢ δεισιδαιμονίας, 23.1).¹⁰⁷ Plutarch adds an excursus on how Anaxagoras was the first to point out the cause of eclipses (*Nic.* 23.3–6) and, indeed, Pericles' association with Anaxagoras explains his non-superstitious attitude in such matters (*Per.* 6.1).

In that same excursus, Plutarch adds that Anaxagoras was regarded with suspicion since he and other φυσικοί 'reduced the divine agency down to irrational causes, blind forces, and necessary incidents' (εἰς αἰτίας ἀλόγους καὶ δυνάμεις ἀπρονοήτους καὶ κατηναγκασμένα πάθη διατρίβοντας τὸ θεῖον, *Nic.* 23.4). It was Plato who made philosophy widely accepted 'because of the life the man led, and because he subjected the compulsions of the physical world to divine and more sovereign principles' (διὰ τὸν βίον τοῦ ἀνδρός, καὶ ὅτι ταῖς θεῖαις καὶ κυριωτέραις ἀρχαῖς ὑπέταξε τὰς φυσικὰς ἀνάγκας, 23.5).¹⁰⁸

While the lower causes are enough to safeguard the politician from mistaking eclipses for portents, he will need knowledge of the higher causes to conduct his political life more generally. Numa showed awareness of this, for instance, in his efforts to make Rome more religious by

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Wardman 1974: 216.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. also *Sol.* 3.6–8 with Wardman 1974: 198–199; Leão 2015 on Solon's simplicity concerning cosmology.

¹⁰⁸ This distinction between higher and lower causes recalls *De def. or.* 435e–436e as well as Socrates' speech on his own intellectual development (*Phd.* 97b–100b); cf. p. 67 n. 1. Plutarch remarks here that Socrates, although he had nothing to do with those who only recognised the lower causes, died because he was associated with them by proxy (*Nic.* 23.5).

establishing the temple of Vesta as an imitation of the cosmos (*Num.* II.1; cf. *Cam.* 20.3).¹⁰⁹ The most pervasive and arguably most important influence of cosmology on politics, however, lies in the politician's goal of ὁμοίωσις θεῶ: the imitation of the demiurge, ruler in the intelligible realm, and the sun, which as his image rules the sensible realm. Plutarch's departure from the radical solutions of Plato's *Republic* is not only a sign of the times,¹¹⁰ but it is also philosophically sanctioned: the demiurgic model underlies Plutarch's politics of compromise. By imitating the demiurge, and the sun which is his image, the politician achieves the best possible result. By doing this, he does not only acquire virtue for himself but he also benefits others.¹¹¹ True ὁμοίωσις θεῶ does not end with creating κόσμος in our own soul: it goes on to create κόσμος in the world around us and includes, as does the passage from *On God's Slowness to Punish* with which this book opened, imitation of divine πραότης.

¹⁰⁹ On (the philosophical aspects of) *Num.* see e.g. de Blois and Bons 1995.

¹¹⁰ Pohlenz in Hubert and Drexler 1960: v: 'Plutarchus [...] in Academia sua politicas quaestiones tractavit, non ut Platonis exemplum secutus perfectam rei publicae speciem proponeret, sed ut *suae aetatis* Graecis maximeque iuvenibus quos secum collegerat ostenderet quomodo *etiam sub imperio Romanorum* vitam proavis liberis dignam degere patriaeque servire et possent et vellent' (emphasis added). Similarly, Harrison 1995; Hershbell 1995: 213; Centrone 2000: 560, 577, 583. Cf. also Carrière 1977 on the political pragmatism of *Praec. ger. reip.*

¹¹¹ The same thing goes for the political philosopher who associates with a ruler and thus benefits πολλοὺς δι' ἐνός (*Max. cum princ.* 777a, 778e; cf. Roskam 2009b: 126–127, 162–163).

Chapter 5

On Tranquillity of Mind

ὄψέ σου τὴν ἐπιστολὴν ἐκομισάμην, ἐν ᾗ παρεκάλεις περὶ εὐθυμίας σοί τι γραφῆναι καὶ περὶ τῶν ἐν Τιμαίῳ δεομένων ἐπιμελεστέρας ἐξηγήσεως. (*De tranq. an.* 464e)

It was only very recently that I received your letter in which you urged me to write you something on tranquillity of mind, and also something on those subjects in the *Timaeus* which require more careful elucidation.

Plutarch's work on tranquillity does not begin tranquilly. We find the author pressed for time to comply with a request made by his Roman friend Paccius.¹ Haste is contagious. Plutarch has caught it from another friend Eros, who himself had been infected by senator Fundanus, who was chronically hastened (οἴος ἐκεῖνος, 464e). Plutarch is on a deadline because Eros is to deliver Plutarch's work to their mutual friend Paccius and Fundanus has ordered Eros to return to Rome post-haste. Plutarch's work thus has to be ready before Eros' departure. Otherwise, Paccius might be disappointed upon hearing that Eros, whom he also counts as a friend, has come back without Plutarch's answer.² To deal with both his friend's request and the lack of time, Plutarch has turned to his personal notebooks (ὑπομνήματα): from these, he has gathered relevant material on εὐθυμία (ἀνελεξάμην περὶ εὐθυμίας ἐκ τῶν ὑπομνημάτων ὧν ἐμαυτῷ πεπονημένος ἐτύγχανον, 464f).³

¹ Plutarch's haste is aptly reflected in the style of the introduction (see Van der Stockt 1996: 265–266) and he admits that he is not aiming for καλλιγραφία ('elegance of style'). This aspect of Plutarch's self-presentation (whether it is a rhetorical topos, a real consequence of the circumstances in which the work was composed, or both) makes it rather risky to rely on this work to make general claims about Plutarch's style, which is what Yaginuma 1992 often does (although he notes himself the atypically high average sentence length in this work: see Yaginuma 1992: 4728; cf. Sandbach 1939: 198 on the atypically low occurrence of Plutarch's favoured *clausulae*).

² For prosopographical details on the persons involved here, see Ziegler 1951: 674, 691–693; Jones 1971: 58–60; Puech 1991: 4847, 4861, 4865.

³ As Van der Stockt 1999b: 578 has pointed out in his seminal study of this so-called 'hypomnemata statement', Plutarch 'does not say that the actual theme of these hypo-

The request for elucidation of Plato's *Timaeus* seems to be ignored. Why, then, did Plutarch choose to mention it anyway? Van Hoof offers three reasons for the reference to the *Timaeus*.⁴ First, it evokes the balance of power between Plutarch and Paccius. By mentioning the request for help with the *Timaeus* yet refusing to comply with it, Plutarch shows that he is the one in charge: although he is in a position to be consulted as a philosophical authority on exegetical matters, he is also in a position to decide that this is not what Paccius needs. Second, what Paccius needs is 'practical help (cf. *χρείας βοηθητικῆς* [465a]), not intricate discussions of the Demiurge and the Cosmos'.⁵ Third, the reference to the *Timaeus* 'draw[s] attention to the work's Platonic slant'.⁶ This function is aimed primarily at 'philosophers overreading Plutarch's text' (i.e. not belonging to the primary target audience).⁷ On Van Hoof's reading, then, the role of the *Timaeus* in *On Tranquillity of Mind* is largely e contrario: while offering a tip of the hat to the connoisseur, who is not the primary target audience of this work, Plutarch uses the *Timaeus* to signal to Paccius and us what *On Tranquillity of Mind* is not.

My main reason for taking issue with Van Hoof's explanation stems from her own, eminently justified methodological claim that, when interpreting Plutarch's practical ethics, it is important to keep the target audience in mind. To steer the response of his readers, Plutarch includes 'role models' in his texts.⁸ The addressee of a letter serves as such a role model. Granted, we do not know much about Paccius, the addressee of *On Tranquillity of Mind*,⁹ but one of the first and few things we learn about him is that he was a reader of Plato's *Timaeus* – and not a casual reader at that: he was in a position to bother Plutarch for *ἐπιμελέστεραι ἐξηγήσεις*. Plutarch uses the word *ἐξηγήσεις* only three times. The other two instances (*Quaest. Plat.* 1006f; *De an. procr.* 1014a) occur in the context of technical exegesis of Plato's *Timaeus*. There is no reason to assume that Paccius' request for *ἐξηγήσεις* should be understood differently. After all, the addition of the word *ἐπιμελέστεραι* suggests some

mnemata was "tranquillity", as opposed to what most translations and interpretations suggest (cf. Van der Stockt 1999b: 578 n. 16). On Plutarch's *hypomnemata* and Van der Stockt's method of cluster analysis, see p. 172.

⁴ Van Hoof 2010: 113–115.

⁵ Van Hoof 2010: 114. Similarly, see Pelling 2011a: 57.

⁶ Van Hoof 2010: 115.

⁷ Van Hoof 2010: 115. Van Hoof 2010: 79 borrows the concept of 'overreader' from Oliensis 1998: 6, who defines it as 'an unnamed but otherwise specified other who may be imagined as reading over the addressee's shoulder'.

⁸ Van Hoof 2010: 42–47. Cf. also Van Hoof 2005 and already Jones 1971: 44; Russell 1972: 9–11.

⁹ Cf. Ziegler 1951: 692–693; Puech 1991: 4865.

previous acquaintance with ἐξηγήσεις of the *Timaeus*, either provided by Plutarch in earlier correspondence or acquired by Paccius in a different way.¹⁰

This consideration places the addressee of *On Tranquillity of Mind*, and hence its model reader and its general intention, in a different light: the mention of the *Timaeus* in the first sentence of the work justifies being on the lookout for connections with Plato's cosmological dialogue when reading Plutarch's letter on ethics. Paccius' request for exegesis is redirected rather than straightforwardly ignored and no sharp contrast should exist between Paccius' need for practical help and his demand for intricate cosmological discussions. In this chapter I will submit that the cosmology of the *Timaeus* forms the core of this work of practical ethics and that awareness of this cosmological dimension is crucial for a correct interpretation of the work.¹¹

The suggestion to read *On Tranquillity of Mind* as a Platonic work might sound odd in light of earlier scholarship on the work, which has been dominated by a tradition primarily concerned with the search for an author's sources. This *Quellenforschung* has appeared eminently tailored to the analysis of *On Tranquillity of Mind*: Plutarch's mention of his ὑπομνήματα at the beginning of the work has often been understood as a 'declaration of dependence', as Van der Stockt aptly puts it.¹² Accordingly, Plutarch's *On Tranquillity of Mind* has been seen as copying

¹⁰ Paccius' request for ἐπιμελέστεραι ἐξηγήσεις can perhaps be compared, then, to the situation that led to *De an. procr.* That work, which also takes the form of a letter, is addressed to Plutarch's sons Autobulus and Plutarch, who had specifically asked for elucidations on *Tim.* (1012b). Plutarch assumes that his sons have a thorough knowledge of earlier interpretations (1012d). It would go too far, however, to state that *De an. procr.* should be seen as the missing response to Paccius (thus Dumortier and Defradas 1975: 98 n. 2, who suggest that Plutarch addressed *De an. procr.* to his sons because Paccius had died in the meantime; Van Hoof 2010: 116 n. 76, who claims that the fact that Plutarch addressed *De an. procr.* to his sons exacerbates his already conspicuous refusal to comply with Paccius' request; cf. also Ziegler 1951: 693).

¹¹ On the label 'practical ethics', see esp. Van Hoof 2010: 257–261 (including a list of works to which this label can be attached); cf. Sirinelli 2000: 143, who sees *De tranq. an.* as a model for a group of works 'de morale pratique'. On the problems with earlier labels, esp. that of 'popularphilosophisch-ethische Schriften' (Ziegler 1951: cols. 637, 702–704) see also Gallo 2000: 14; Roskam and Van der Stockt 2011: 8–9; Van der Stockt 2011: 19–21; Pelling 2011a. More generally on the problems surrounding the classification of Plutarch's works, see e.g. Flacelière 1987: ccxvi–ccxxii; Gallo 1998; Donini 2000.

¹² Van der Stockt 2004b: 353.

the work of Democritus,¹³ some Epicurean,¹⁴ Ariston of Chios,¹⁵ or Panaetius.¹⁶

It goes without saying that this vigorous *Quellenforschung* has not fostered an appreciation for *On Tranquillity of Mind* as a philosophical work in its own right.¹⁷ This can be felt when the work is routinely described as eclectic.¹⁸ In an important study on ‘peace of mind and being yourself’, for instance, Gill describes Plutarch’s philosophical approach in *On Tranquillity of Mind* as follows:

Plutarch’s approach seems to be deliberately synthesizing and non-doctrinal. [...] More precisely, I think it would be fair to say that the bulk of the work is broadly Democritean-Epicurean in approach (in so far as *euthumia* is taken as the explicit goal of self-management); but that in the later stages (chs. 16–19) the work takes on a more Stoic colour. [...] The overall impression, then, is that one can define a broadly ‘philosophical’ approach to *euthumia*, which has appeal to Stoics and Epicureans alike, couched in terms which are as much Platonic or Peripatetic as Stoic or Epicurean, and supported by illustrative comments from a wide selection of philosophical and poetic texts.¹⁹

More recent scholarly developments have done much to reinstate Plutarch as an author rather than a mere collector. Van der Stockt has shown how the ὑπομνήματα to which Plutarch refers are his own intellectual prop-

¹³ Hirzel 1879; Hershbell 1982: 84–89; Ziegler 1951: cols. 787–788. Fowler 1890 and Siefert 1908 detect Democritean influences, but they do not make it clear whether these are direct or mediated (cf. Ziegler 1951: col. 787).

¹⁴ Pohlenz 1905. Cf. also Heinze 1890: 507.

¹⁵ Heinze 1890; Hense 1890: esp. 550–552; Giesecke 1891: 59–62.

¹⁶ van Lynden 1802; Hirzel 1879; Siefert 1908; Ziegler 1951: 787–788; Broecker 1954; Barigazzi 1962; Grilli 2002: 126–138. Pohlenz also came to accept Paenaetian influence (in Paton, Pohlenz, and Sieveking 1929: 187).

¹⁷ Cf. Most 2016: 953: ‘The effect of *Quellenforschung* was all too often to make the text we actually possess seem not more interesting than we had thought beforehand but much less interesting.’

¹⁸ Sirinelli 2000: 145: ‘On discutera encore à l’infini sur la coexistence dans ce traité, comme dans quelques autres, d’éléments hétérogènes – stoïciens, épicuriens et platoniciens.’ Cf. Russell 1972: 25: *De tranq. an.* ‘is original only in selection and presentation’; Kidd in Kidd and Waterfield 1992: 203: ‘Plutarch’s essay at some points favours attitudes congruent with Epicureanism but opposed to Stoicism, at others Stoic-coloured views alien to Epicureans. As usual, Plutarch has taken from his palette all the colours available to him, mixed them up and painted his own picture’; similarly at 209.

¹⁹ Gill 1994: 4624.

erty: they combined reading notes with original thoughts, and Plutarch's use of them allows for much more creativity than the method of *Quellenforschung* can show.²⁰ Abel has convincingly argued that the endeavour to reconstruct Panaetius' work through an analysis of Plutarch's is doomed to be fruitless and that Plutarch is very much his own (Platonic-Aristotelian) man.²¹ These developments have cleared the way for the Platonic interpretation of the work that will be proposed in this chapter.

The scholarship on this work has been marked by not only the hunt for sources but also – and often related to the *Quellenfrage*²² – the hunt for the structure of *On Tranquillity of Mind*. It has proved tempting to attribute the (lack of) structure to Plutarch's source or to his own rudimentary treatment of it.²³ Another alluring option is to take Plutarch's admission that the work was rushed as a reason to call off the hunt prematurely: we cannot expect to find a clear structure here.²⁴ Contrary to these tendencies, I submit two considerations that, taken together, may explain

²⁰ See esp. Van der Stockt 1999b; 2004b and p. 37 n. 23. Van der Stockt has discussed several clusters that appear in *De tranq. an.* and that might trace back to Plutarch's ὑπομνήματα: on self-love, from an anti-Stoic perspective (*De tranq. an.* 471d–472b ~ *De ad. et am.* 58b–59a; Van der Stockt 1999b); on a similar theme yet inspired by Aristotle this time (*De tran. an.* 472d–e ~ *De se ipsum laud.* 545a–546a ~ *De prof. in virt.* 78c–e); on the unexpected, inspired by Anaxagoras (*De tranq. an.* 468b and 474c–f ~ *De coh. ira* 463a–f; in an unpublished conference paper by L. Van der Stockt and B. Van Meirvenne, 'My Wife is a Woman. Plutarch on the Unexpected', *Interpreting Composition in Plutarch*, Leuven, 2001).

²¹ Abel 1987. Cf. van Straaten 1962: vii; Babut 1969b: 97–102; Dumortier and Defradas 1975: 96.

²² Thus, explicitly, Pohlenz 1905: 275. Cf. also the approaches of Heinze 1890 and Siefert 1896: 57–74, criticised by Broecker 1954: 18: 'Siefert enim non minus quam Heinze hanc priorem quaestionis partem [i.e. the question of the structure] nimis spectavit ex posteriore quae eo pertinet, quo Plu[tarchus] fonte usus sit.'

²³ Siefert 1908: 4 attributes the lack of structure ('kein logisch streng gegliedertes Gefüge subtiler ethischer Spitzfindigkeiten, sondern eine zwanglose Reihe praktischer Lebensregeln') to what he takes to have been Plutarch's (single) *Vorlage*.

²⁴ Dumortier and Defradas 1975: 94: 'Il n'est point possible de retrouver le plan suivi par Plutarque dans ce traité et il faut se borner à indiquer les principales idées émises par l'auteur. Après la formule de salutation, Plutarque s'excuse d'envoyer à son ami non un véritable traité, mais de simples notes tirées de ses lectures. Nous ne pouvons donc nous attendre de sa part à une composition rigoureuse, qui n'est d'ailleurs pas dans ses habitudes.' Cf. similarly Sirinelli 2000: 145. Van der Stockt 1999a: 135 notes that *De tranq. an.* is a good place to look for material closely following the original *hypomnemata*, 'since, given the fact that *Tranq. an.* falls into several rather independent units, there is no large context requiring major adaptation'. Betz 1978: 201, on the other hand, notes that '[t]he composition of the essay is fairly clear'. However, I am unconvinced by his claim that

the overall structure of *On Tranquillity of Mind*. First, like other works under the heading of ‘practical ethics’, *On Tranquillity of Mind* is divided into a diagnostic part (κρίσις) and a remedial part prescribing training (ἄσκησις). Second, the ἄσκησις part contains a shift in argumentative strategy based on Plutarch’s view of the cosmos. More specifically, the ἄσκησις first prescribes dealing with adversity by mentally focusing on the good rather than on the bad. I will call this goal an internal synthesis in which good outweighs bad: the positive balance that leads to tranquillity of mind lies purely within the subject. Once this is established, Plutarch goes on to show that, corresponding to this internal synthesis, there is an external synthesis: the structure of the Platonic cosmos effectively guarantees that good objectively outweighs bad. In what follows, I will show how Plutarch structures his work around these elements of κρίσις and ἄσκησις to bring out his Platonic view on εὐθυμία.

Table 5.1: Overview of On Tranquillity of Mind

1–5 κρίσις: we need to find a way to live with volatile τύχη
1: Introduction
2: An apolitical life is no guarantee for tranquillity
3: There is not one kind of life that guarantees tranquillity
4–5: λογισμός guarantees tranquillity in each kind of life
6–18 ἄσκησις
6–13: Make an internal synthesis in which good outweighs bad
6: Imitate famous good examples in adverse circumstances
[7: Avoid infection with others’ faults (marked as digression at 468f)]
8: Make an internal synthesis in which good outweighs bad
9: Imagine (even trivial) present goods to be absent
10: Observe people who are less fortuitous
11: See the disagreeable in the lives of those whom we admire
12: Do not aim at things too great
13: Some pursuits are naturally incompatible
14–15: Shift from internal synthesis to external synthesis

it ‘follows the traditional structure of rhetoric’, especially since there are no markers of such a structure in the text.

16–18: Understand that there is an external synthesis in which good outweighs bad

16: We can expect the loss caused by τύχη

17: Suffering depends on our composite nature (body and soul)

18: Fear of death is caused by a misunderstanding of the nature of the soul

19–20 Conclusion

1. Κρίσις (§ 1–5): how to deal with τύχη?

In his seminal study on Plutarch's psychotherapeutic writings, Ingenkamp points out that these works share the same basic structure based on the two steps of therapy.²⁵ First, readers need to be convinced that they have a problem. Only then can they start training themselves to get rid of said problems.²⁶ Accordingly, Plutarch's works on *Seelenheilung* tend to deal with diagnosis (κρίσις) first, before turning to training (ἄσκησις). The training can be further divided into reflections (ἐπιλογισμοί) and exercises (ἐθισμοί). Ingenkamp discovers this pattern in *On the Control of Anger*, *On Talkativeness*, *On Being a Busybody*, *On Compliance*, and *On Praising Oneself Inoffensively*.²⁷ In her discussion of Ingenkamp's work, Van Hoof adds that a 'similar pattern can [...] be found through-

²⁵ Ingenkamp 1971. See also Rabbow 1954.

²⁶ Cf. Plutarch, *De gar.* 510c–d: ταῦτα δ' οὐ κατηγορίαν ἡγητέον ἀλλ' ἰατροίαν τῆς ἀδολεσχίας· τῶν γὰρ παθῶν κρίσει καὶ ἀσκήσει περιγινόμεθα, προτέρα δ' ἡ κρίσις ἐστίν. οὐδεὶς γὰρ ἐθίζεται φεύγειν καὶ ἀποτρίβεσθαι τῆς ψυχῆς ὃ μὴ δυσχεραίνει· δυσχεραίνομεν δὲ τὰ πάθη, ὅταν τὰς βλάβας καὶ τὰς αἰσχύνας τὰς ἀπ' αὐτῶν τῷ λόγῳ κατανοήσωμεν. ('But these remarks are not to be regarded as an accusation against garrulity, but an attempt to cure it; for we get well by the diagnosis and treatment of our ailments, but the diagnosis must come first; since no one can become habituated to shun or to eradicate from his soul what does not distress him, and we only grow distressed with our ailments when we have perceived, by the exercise of reason, the injuries and shame which result from them.')

²⁷ Cf. also Ingenkamp 2000. It should be noted that, particularly in this more recent contribution, Ingenkamp conceives of Plutarch's *Seelenheilung* as a rhetorical and – postulating an opposition between philosophy and rhetoric – non-philosophical endeavour (see, however, Ingenkamp 1971: 87–99 on the underlying Platonic-Peripatetic psychology aimed at μετριοπάθεια). In an unpublished conference paper ('Οὐκ ἀηδῶς δεῦρο μετενεγκεῖν. Sprungbrett-Argumente bei Plutarch', *Interpreting Composition in Plutarch*, Leuven, 2001), he discusses *De tranq. an.* as a work that is merely concerned with rhetorical flourishes and not at all with philosophical content. He adds that the same thing goes for *Amat.* (cf. also Ingenkamp 2006). It will be clear from this book that I disagree about both works and about the general usefulness of approaching Plutarch's work through an opposition of philosophy and rhetoric

out Plutarch's practical ethics', citing *On Listening to Lectures*, *Whether an Old Man Should Engage in Public Affairs*, and *On Having Many Friends*. In these cases, however, κρίσις and ἄσκησις 'are not present as distinct sections of these texts, and the balance between both varies considerably'.²⁸ Then again, Ingenkamp himself already points out that, even in the works he includes in his discussion, there are significant variations in how Plutarch demarcates and balances the sections.²⁹ Allowing for these variations, *On Tranquillity of Mind* can certainly be added to the works in which κρίσις and ἄσκησις are present as distinct sections. After the introduction (464e–f), κρίσις takes up the first five paragraphs (465a–467c).³⁰ The rest of the work, until the conclusion (476d–477f), is devoted to ἄσκησις, which consists almost entirely of ἐπιλογισμοί (467c–476d, cf. the use of this technical term at 471c and 476b).³¹

1.1. What is the problem?

What is Paccius' problem? The answer to this question is far less obvious than one would expect in a work that takes its cue from an urgent cry for help.³² By way of introduction to the κρίσις of *On Tranquillity of Mind*, I consider three reasons for this: (1) Paccius' progress in virtue, (2) Plutarch's focus, (3) and the general nature of the problem.

(1) Paccius seems to be in a different plight than Serenus, the character who asks Seneca for advice on *tranquillitas animi*.³³ At the beginning

²⁸ Van Hoof 2010: 48.

²⁹ Ingenkamp 1971: 111–115. Cf. also the analysis of *De prof. in virt.* in Roskam 2005b: esp. 245–246.

³⁰ Pohlenz 1905: 276 also regards § 1–5 as introductory. Contra e.g. Heinze 1890: 498 (§ 1–6 as a unit); Abel 1987: 132 and passim (§ 2–4, § 5–11, and § 12–18 as main units, but this disregards the fact that § 5 opens with γάρ).

³¹ But see, on aspects of ἐθισμός in *De tranq. an.*, Barigazzi 1962: 121–122. On ἐπιλογισμός in Plutarch, see also Erler 2013: 277–281.

³² Cf. Pohlenz 1905: 282–284; Ziegler 1951: 693; Abel 1987: 129–130.

³³ Cf. Gréard 1885: 190. On Serenus as a literary persona, see Griffin 1976: 353–355. By comparing Seneca's *De tranq. an.* to Plutarch's treatise I do not want to imply that there was any influence of the former on the latter. I merely want to consider the two works as dealing with the same topic within a few decades of each other: Seneca's work was written around 60 CE (Mutschler 2014: 153), and Plutarch's about forty or fifty years later (I argue for a date around 110 CE in Demulder 2021). For a similar approach, see Blänsdorf 1997 (although I disagree with his effort to dumb down Plutarch in order to exalt Seneca) and Van Hoof 2007 (comparing Plutarch's *De coh. ira* with Seneca's work on the same issue). For comparisons of Plutarch's and Seneca's *De tranq. an.* in the interest of *Quellenforschung*, see Hirzel 1879: 354–382; Heinze 1890: 501–502. Further aspects of comparison between the two works can be found in e.g. Barigazzi 1962; Gill 1994: 4616–

of the Stoic's *On Tranquillity of Mind*, we immediately get an intimate insight into Seneca's agitated soul. We can almost feel his despair.³⁴ The poor fellow really does not know what to do with himself. He succeeds in living thriftily, yet he cannot rid himself of the temptations of luxury, which makes him miserable (Sen., *De tranq. an.* 1.5–9). Unfortunately, we do not have Paccius' cry for help, which might partly explain why he seems to be better off. Nevertheless, it is striking that the first thing Plutarch does after explaining the circumstances in which the work was written is to *congratulate* Paccius because, although he has influential friends and a good reputation, he does not think that he is immune to physical suffering (τῶν φυσικῶν παθῶν):

[...] συνηδόμενος, ὅτι καὶ φιλίας ἔχων ἡγεμονικὰς καὶ δόξαν οὐδενὸς ἐλάττονα τῶν ἐν ἀγορᾷ λεγόντων τὸ τοῦ τραγικοῦ Μέρωπος οὐ πέπονθας, οὐδ' ὡς ἐκεῖνον 'εὐδαιμονίζων σ' ὄχλος ἐξέπληξε' τῶν φυσικῶν παθῶν, ἀλλὰ πολλάκις ἀκηκοὼς μνημονεύεις ὡς οὔτε ποδάγρας ἀπαλλάττει κάλτιος οὔτε δακτύλιος πολυτελῆς παρωνυχίας οὐδὲ διάδημα κεφαλαλγίας. πόθεν γε δὴ πρὸς ἀλυσίαν ψυχῆς καὶ βίον ἀκύμονα χρημάτων ὄφελος ἢ δόξης ἢ δυνάμεως ἐν αὐλαῖς, ἂν μὴ τὸ χρώμενον εὐχάριστον ἦ τοῖς ἔχουσι καὶ τὸ τῶν ἀπόντων μὴ δεόμενον ἀεὶ παρακολουθῆ; (*De tranq. an.* 465a–b)

[...] I congratulate you because, though you have commanders as your friends and a reputation second to none of the forensic speakers of our day, your experience has not been that of Merops in the play,

463I. Plutarch knew a few anecdotes about Seneca (*Galba* 20.1; *De coh. ira* 461f–462a), but there are no indications that he knew, let alone read, Seneca's *De tranq. an.* or any of his other works (cf. Van Hoof 2010: 91 n. 34). As Stadter 2015e: 133–137 points out, from Plutarch's modesty about his knowledge of Latin (*Dem.* 2.2), we cannot conclude that his reading level was too low to read philosophical works in Latin (see Stadter 2015e: 133 n. 13 for earlier scholarship on Plutarch's Latin). The question is, however, whether he would have been interested in reading the work of a philosopher writing in Latin (cf. Ziegler 1951: col. 927: 'Es ist charakterisch, daß P. bei aller seiner Wertschätzung römischen Wesens doch nicht geglaubt hat, für philosophische Dinge bei einem Römer etwas profitieren zu können'), let alone in the work of a Roman Stoic. What about the presence of Seneca's work on the other end of the (real or imagined) correspondence between Plutarch and Paccius? Van Hoof 2010: 88–89, 91 points out that it is probable that Paccius had access to Seneca's *De tranq. an.* (as well as to Democritus' work on εὐθυμία) in Rome and suggests that Paccius' request might have sprung from his dissatisfaction with the existing work on the subject. Although I am sure that Plutarch's recipe for εὐθυμία is fundamentally different from the solutions proposed in earlier work on the subject, I think this difference is the result of Plutarch's different world view rather than of Paccius' dissatisfaction.

³⁴ Cf. Inwood 2005: 350.

and because it cannot be said of you, as of him, that ‘The plaudits of the mob have driven you’ [Eur., *Phaethon* fr. 783a *TrGF*] from those natural experiences;³⁵ but you continue to remember what you have often heard, that an aristocratic shoe does not rid us of the gout, nor an expensive ring of a hangnail, nor a diadem of a headache. For what power is there in money or fame or influence at court to help us to gain ease of soul or an untroubled life, if it is not true that the use of them is pleasant to us when we have them and that we never miss them when we have them not? [tr. modified]

As opposed to Seneca’s Serenus, Paccius seems to be doing quite well, all things considered. After all, he is not taking his first steps on the path to virtue. The words *πολλάκις ἀκηκοὺς μνημονεύεις* suggest that this is not his first bout of *Seelenheilung*. In *On Talkativeness* (510d–e), the stage of *ἐπιλογισμός* is explicitly described as ‘always hearing and remembering’ (*ἀκούοντας ἀεὶ καὶ μεμνημένους*) what has been learned.³⁶ Paccius has been there, and as an advancing student in Platonic *Seelenheilung*, he is already far less miserable than when he started.³⁷ He is also far less miserable than your typical Stoic *proficiens*, who cannot count on there being a middle ground between vice and virtue, between utter misery and happiness. In the life of the Stoic *proficiens*, as Plutarch sees it, ‘vice constantly besets all progress, and with countervailing weight drags him down’ (*De prof. in virt.* 75b: ἴσῳ σταθμῷ πᾶσιν ἢ κακία περικειμένη).³⁸ To make matters even worse, the Stoic minimum for happiness is nigh impossible to attain, which renders their standards quite ridiculous in Plutarch’s eyes – something he does not hesitate to point out in this very treatise (*De tranq. an.* 472a). No wonder, then, that Serenus is tormented. Paccius’ progress and Plutarch’s general view of moral progress, on the

³⁵ The examples that follow make it clear that Plutarch is not thinking about, as the Loeb translation has it, ‘emotions given us by nature’ specifically (as in *Cons. ad ux.* 609e and *Ca. Ma.* 18.5). For φυσικὰ πάθη used, like here, in the broader sense of ‘natural experiences’ see *Adv. Col.* 1115b; cf. also the use of πάθη at *De tranq. an.* 476a. There is no reason to assume, as Hartman 1916: 225 does, that τῶν φυσικῶν παθῶν is a gloss and should be deleted.

³⁶ See Ingenkamp 1971: 40. Cf. also *De aud.* 48d.

³⁷ Contra Pelling 2011a: 44–45, commenting on *De tranq. an.* 465a: ‘Who knows, perhaps this prominent Roman Paccius was indeed an exception to the rule; or perhaps this is the familiar protreptic trope whereby one congratulates someone on achieving already what it is one’s purpose to encourage. (One notes that Paccius will remember often “hearing” that wealth is not the answer to everything; not often “saying”).’

³⁸ On Seneca’s orthodox Stoic stance on progress in virtue, which is also reflected in his *De tranq. an.*, see Roskam 2005b: 60–98.

other hand, help to explain why Paccius' problem is not immediately obvious. It might also be a clue as to why Paccius feels ready to embark upon ἐπιμελέστεραι ἐξηγήσεις of Plato's *Timaeus*.

(2) The passage quoted above reveals another conspicuous difference between Seneca's Serenus and Plutarch's Paccius. The former does not succeed in wholeheartedly running away from luxury, and the latter is not even expected to try.³⁹ For Plutarch, wealth, fame, and power are not obstacles for tranquillity, but potential aids towards (πρός) acquiring it. There is, however, one complication, which reveals the main topic of *On Tranquillity of Mind*: Paccius should learn to use and enjoy these external goods without getting attached to them. Plutarch devises this as the next step in the curriculum of his *proficiens*. Paccius has already learned (πολλάκις ἀκηκοὼς μνημονεύεις) that power (φιλίας [...] ἡγεμονικὰς), fame (δόξαν), and luxuries (κάλλιος [...] δακτύλιος [...] διάδημα) do not guarantee a healthy *body*. Now the time has come for him to realise that, a fortiori (γε δὴ⁴⁰), the same things (now listed in reverse order: χρημάτων ὄφελος ἢ δόξης ἢ δυνάμεως) do not ensure a healthy *soul*.⁴¹

Plutarch's stance on external goods – and in this at least it does not differ from Plato's – cannot easily be associated with either one of the extreme poles in the debate on whether virtue is sufficient for happiness.⁴² He seems to disagree with the Stoic version of the sufficiency thesis, which has it that contingencies do not have *any* bearing on happiness.⁴³ At the same time, however, he probably found the Aristotelian version, which admitted that some external goods were *needed* along with virtue

³⁹ Cf. Van Hoof 2010: 20 on this attitude in Plutarch's practical ethics in general and Wardman 1974: 79–86; Roskam 2014b on the positive aspects of wealth in the *Lives*.

⁴⁰ Denniston 1954: 246.

⁴¹ Similar juxtapositions of body and soul occur in the next two paragraphs. (1) For the body, stupor is a detrimental way of producing freedom from pain (465d: καίτοι κακὸν μὲν ἀναισθησία σώματι φάρμακον ἀπονίας, rejecting the emendations of the Loeb edition); a similar φάρμακον should be avoided in the case of the soul as well. (2) Changing ships does not relieve seasickness; similarly, changing modes of life does not relieve the soul (466b–c). The triad of power, fame, and luxury reoccurs later in the treatise as well (most clearly at 471b: καὶ πλοῦτῳ καὶ δόξῃ καὶ βασιλείᾳ; cf. also 474c, 477a).

⁴² For the disagreement between Stoics (virtue is sufficient for happiness) and Peripatetics (virtue is necessary but not sufficient for happiness) on this point, see e.g. Cicero, *De fin.* 3.41–44. For Plato's position, see e.g. the overview in Sauv -Meyer 2008: 38–41.

⁴³ See esp. *De comm. not.* 1061d. If Irwin 1995: 199 is right (as I think he is), *De Stoic. rep.* 1040d goes in the same direction by opposing the Stoic sufficiency thesis to Plato's stance, but see Casevitz and Babut 2004: 172 n. 192 for a different interpretation. Cf. also Trapp 2007: 32–34.

for a human being to be happy, a tad too weak.⁴⁴ The long and short of it is that, according to Plutarch, τύχη, which escapes the control of reason, is part of the human condition. The Stoic denial of this must have struck him as naïve. In *On Moral Virtue*, Plutarch is very clear on this point: τύχη is a reality in the sensible realm and the ethical human being will simply have to deal with that.⁴⁵

As the passage quoted earlier had it, dealing with external circumstances amounts to putting them to good, virtuous use without depending on them (cf. τὸ χρώμενον εὐχάριστον ἢ τοῖς ἔχουσι καὶ τὸ τῶν ἀπόντων μὴ δεόμενον). In *On Reading the Poets* is the same advice. This time it comes with a slightly more developed framework in which to situate τὰ τυχηρά, ‘such as wealth, marriage, office, and, in a word, all outward things the possession of which is unprofitable to those who cannot make good use of them’ (πλούτους καὶ γάμους καὶ ἀρχὰς καὶ πάνθ’ ὅλως τὰ ἐκτός, ὧν ἡ κτήσις ἀνόνητός ἐστι τοῖς χρῆσθαι καλῶς μὴ δυναμένοις, *De aud. poet.* 23f).⁴⁶ Plutarch warns that the poets often confuse events caused by τύχη with events caused by Zeus. The former, however, are caused by an irregular and indeterminate cause (τῆς ἀτάκτως καὶ ἀορίστως περιφερομένης αἰτίας, 24a) – the same two adjectives are used in *On the Generation of the Soul* to describe the movement of precosmic soul.⁴⁷ Τύχη is the totality of ‘those phases of causation which baffle our logic, and are, in a word, beyond us’ (τὸ ἀσυλλόγιστον ἡμῖν τῆς αἰτίας [...] καὶ ὅλως οὐ καθ’ ἡμᾶς) and, as such, opposed to reason and god (24b).⁴⁸ In terms of Plutarch’s cosmo-

⁴⁴ See esp. *An vitiositas* 499c–d, although even in this rhetorical work there is room for nuance: οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ Τύχη κακοδαμονίας τελεσιουργός. (‘Fortune is not a producer of perfect unhappiness.’)

⁴⁵ *De virt. mor.* 443f–444a with Opsomer 2011a: 156–159. On the anti-Stoic character of *De virt. mor.*, see p. 22 n. 12.

⁴⁶ Cf. *De fortuna* 100a.

⁴⁷ *De an. procr.* 1014d: τὴν ἄτακτον καὶ ἀορίστον αὐτοκίνητον δὲ καὶ κινητικὴν ἀρχὴν ἐκείνην. Cf. also 1015d; *De prof. in virt.* 76b; *De Is. et Os.* 372a.

⁴⁸ Cf. also e.g. *De aud. poet.* 24c–25b; *De genio Socr.* 575c. In practice, of course, it is not always easy or even possible to separate τύχη from rational causation. It should not be surprising, then, that especially in the *Lives*, τύχη exhibits a wider array of meanings; see esp. Brenk 1977: 145–183; Swain 1989b (cf. also Swain 1989c; Ingenkamp 1997; Tatum 2010 – all three on τύχη in the *Timol. – Aem.* – and Wardman 1974: 179–189; Stadter 2014: 23–24; Titchener 2014). On the many faces of Plutarch’s notion of τύχη, see also Torraca 1996 (and already Lassell 1891), although it is too easy to posit that these many faces come together in ‘un facile eclettismo che accoglie le più significative voci delle varie scuole’, shifting from work to work, and that there is a development in Plutarch’s thought on the matter (at 135). (I fail to see how these two characteristics – ad hoc eclecticism and development – can be sensibly distinguished together anyway.) See,

logy, then, τύχη is what is caused by the irrational part of the cosmic soul.⁴⁹

As an answer to his request for help, then, Paccius will receive advice on how to deal with τύχη. However, it is unclear that this is what Paccius has asked for. To understand Plutarch's focus, we have to sneak a peek at the ἄσκησις part of the work. I have marked the seventh paragraph of *On Tranquillity of Mind* as a digression in the table above.⁵⁰ In that digression we finally get some information about what exactly is bugging Paccius personally. The paragraph begins with the observation that most people are frustrated by the faults of others, not only of their friends, but of their enemies as well. Plutarch uses several techniques to make it clear that this observation, more than anything else that has been said so far, pertains to Paccius personally.⁵¹ Only in this paragraph (apart from the formulaic greeting) is Paccius addressed by name (φίλε Πάκκιε, 468e). Throughout the work, Plutarch usually gives his advice in the first person plural ('let us...' ⁵²), in general terms (e.g. δεῖ... ⁵³), or as an apostrophe to a character appearing in an example.⁵⁴ Only occasionally is the advice aimed at Paccius more directly and personally.⁵⁵ This is predominantly the case in this paragraph (468c: μὴ νόμιζε σὸν

however, Opsomer 2011a, who focuses on the *Dion* to argue that Plutarch's understanding of τύχη and ἀρετή in the *Lives* is not in contradiction with his philosophical framework (as presented in *De virt. mor.*); cf. also Becchi 2000 for a more or less unitary reading of Plutarch's τύχη and Eckholdt 2019 for a painstaking typology that does not deny an underlying unity.

⁴⁹ Cf. *De sera num.* 550d–e on p. 17; *De an. procr.* 1024b with Pl., *Tim.* 69b. The latter passage explains how τύχη, while caused by irrationality, includes not only bad luck but also good luck: even before the generation of the cosmic soul, irrational precosmic soul could through chance movement hit upon the good.

⁵⁰ Cf. already Heinze 1890: 499 (followed by Siefert 1896: 58; Pohlenz 1905: 276, 282), who, however, does not consider this 'Einschiebsel' in the context of the rest of Plutarch's treatise, but believes that it is prompted by the preceding anecdote about Stilpo.

⁵¹ Pohlenz 1905: 282 rightly points out that § 7 is '[g]anz auf Paccius berechnet'.

⁵² 467a: ἐκκαθαίρωμεν, 467b: ἡμέτερον ἔργον ἐστίν, ἂν εὖ φρονῶμεν, 468e: μὴ λανθάνομεν, 468f: ἀναλάβομεν; 469a: παυσόμεθα, 469e: εὐθυμήσομεν, 470f: ἡμεῖς [...] ἔξεστιν εἰπεῖν, 476e: ἔχομεν εἰπεῖν.

⁵³ 465b, 466a, 467a, c, 469e, f, 472c, 473a, f, 474a, 475d, 476c. Cf. 469a: ἀγαθὸν [...] πρὸς εὐθυμίαν, 470a, 476e: μέγα πρὸς εὐθυμίαν, 471c, 474d: ἔξεστιν, 475b: οὐκ ἀχρηστόν ἐστι, 470d, 474c: ὁ νοῦν ἔχων (and many similar expressions elsewhere; on the constant contrast between the mindless and the mindful person as a structuring element in the work, see Broecker 1954: 23–26).

⁵⁴ 467d–f, 469b. Of course, apostrophe is not necessary to give an advisory function to an example. On the many examples in *De tranq. an.*, see Morgan 2007: 290–294.

⁵⁵ Imperatives in 470e (θέασαι, ἴδε) and 471a (ᾄρα, γενοῦ).

ἔργον εἶναι, 468c⁵⁶; σκόπει πῶς, 468d; ἀλλ' ὄρα, 468e). Finally, not only the advice but also the situation described in this paragraph is tailored to Paccius: Plutarch is explicitly referring to Paccius' day-to-day affairs when he mentions 'the execution of matters committed to your personal care' (ἃ γὰρ πράττεις πράγματα πεπιστευμένος, 468c; cf. μοι δοκεῖς καὶ αὐτὸς ἐπιταραπτόμενος, 468b).

In § 7 Plutarch cleverly frames Paccius' problem so that it comes to fit his desired focus on τύχη. His frustration with other people's faults, so Plutarch reveals, is not a philosophically sound aversion to wickedness in general (τὸ καθόλου τῆς μοχθηρίας, 468e). Rather, it is an aversion to wickedness that affects us personally (τὸ πρὸς ἡμᾶς). As such, this aversion amounts to self-love (φιλαυτία), not hate of evil (μισοπονηρία).⁵⁷ More precisely, Paccius' aversion is towards people 'who were, we think, the cause of our being deprived of some desirable things and of our encountering others which are unpleasant' (ὕφ' ὧν τὰ μὲν [i.e. ἐφέσεις and διώξεις] ἀποστερεῖσθαι τοῖς δὲ [i.e. ἀποστροφαί and διαβολαί] περιπίπτειν δοκοῦμεν). The desirable opposite of φιλαυτία, then, consists not only in self-knowledge⁵⁸ or φιλανθρωπία⁵⁹ but also in an adequate knowledge of the workings of τύχη. And, indeed, the digression is brought to a close and the focus immediately shifts back to πράγματα, which were associated with the workings of τύχη in the previous paragraphs, as we shall see.⁶⁰

ὁ δὲ τοῖς πράγμασιν ἐθισθεὶς ἐλαφρῶς συμπεριφέρεσθαι καὶ μετρίως εὐκολώτατος ἀνθρώποις ὁμιλεῖν γίνεταί καὶ πραότατος. ὅθεν ἐκεῖνον αὐθις τὸν περὶ τῶν πραγμάτων λόγον ἀναλάβωμεν. (468e–f)

[I]t is the man who has become accustomed to adapt himself to circumstances⁶¹ easily and with self-control who becomes the most gra-

⁵⁶ Cf. 468c: ἄν [...] ἥπιος φαίνη καὶ μέτριος ἐκ τῶν ἐνδεχομένων, εὐφρανεῖ τῇ σῆ διαθέσει μᾶλλον ἢ λυπήσει ταῖς ἐτέρων ἀηδίας καὶ μοχθηρίας.

⁵⁷ The topic of φιλαυτία is taken up again later in *De tranq. an.* (471d–e); cf. Siefert 1908: 15 n. 6; Van der Stockt 1999b: 586–587, 594–595; Van Hoof 2010: 99–104. On the centrality of φιλαυτία in Plutarch's practical ethics, see Inenkamp 1971: 131–132; cf. also Van Hoof 2010: 35; 2014: 142. On φιλαυτία in Plutarch in general, see Roskam 2004: 251.

⁵⁸ Esp. in the opening of *De ad. et am.* (48e–49b); see Opsomer 1998: 151–155; 2009a: 103–108. Cf. also Van Hoof 2010: 12, 13, 35, 99, 173; 2014: 142.

⁵⁹ E.g. *Comp. Thes. et Rom.* 2.2. Cf. Hirzel 1912: 26; Inenkamp 1971: 131; Roskam 2004: 251.

⁶⁰ The beginning of § 8 (τὰ αὐτὰ προσδεχομένου) recalls § 6 (ὕπὸ τῶν αὐτῶν πεπόνθασιν), thus forging a connection that bridges the digression.

⁶¹ Not, as the Loeb translation has it, 'public affairs' (similarly in the previous sentence).

cious and gentle in his dealings with his fellows. [§ 8] Therefore let us resume our discussion of circumstances. [tr. modified]

Is this what Paccius asked for, then? Probably not, but, according to Plutarch, it is what he should have asked for: his personal unrest will disappear when he learns about *τύχη*, and his ethical problem will be solved when he learns about cosmology. Thankfully, the *ψυχῆς ἰατρός* (465d⁶²) has diagnosed a crucial aspect of his disease and can now proceed to cure it.

To get a better sense of how, in Plutarch's mind, tranquillity of mind is connected to dealing with both good and bad *τύχη*, we can briefly turn to the *Pyrrhus – Marius*. As Duff has observed, this pair of biographies shares several general concerns and more specific elements with *On Tranquillity of Mind*.⁶³ A particularly interesting parallel occurs at the end of the *Marius*, which also concludes the pair as a whole since it lacks a formal comparison. We find Marius – aged seventy, the first man to have become a seventh-time consul, and extremely wealthy – lamenting his fortune (*ὠδύρετο τὴν ἑαυτοῦ τύχην*) because he is dying from an illness without having satisfied all his desires (*Mar.* 45.12). Plutarch adds an extensive philosophical comment:

Πλάτων μὲν οὖν, ἤδη πρὸς τῷ τελευτᾶν γενόμενος, ὕμνει τὸν αὐτοῦ δαίμονα καὶ τὴν τύχην, ὅτι πρῶτον μὲν ἄνθρωπος, οὐκ ἄλογον τῆ φύσει θηρίον, εἴθ' Ἑλλήν, οὐ βάρβαρος γένοιτο, πρὸς δὲ τούτοις ὅτι τοῖς Σωκράτους χρόνοις ἀπήνησεν ἢ γένεσις αὐτοῦ. καὶ νῆ Δία τὸν Ταρσέα λέγουσιν Ἀντίπατρον ὡσαύτως ὑπὸ τὴν τελευτὴν ἀναλογιζόμενον ὦν τύχοι μακαρίων, μηδὲ τῆς εἰς Ἀθήνας οἰκοθεν εὐπλοίας ἐπιλαθῆσθαι, καθάπερ φιλοχρήστου τῆς τύχης ἅπασαν δόσιν εἰς μεγάλην χάριν τιθέμενον καὶ σφύζοντα τῆ μνήμη διὰ τέλους, ἧς οὐδὲν ἐστὶν ἀνθρώπῳ ταμειῖον ἀγαθῶν βεβαιότερον. τοὺς δ' ἀμνήμονας καὶ ἀνοήτους ὑπεκρεῖ τὰ γινόμενα μετὰ τοῦ χρόνου· διὸ μηθὲν στέγοντες μηδὲ διατηροῦντες, αἰεὶ κενοὶ μὲν ἀγαθῶν, πλήρεις δ' ἐλπίδων, πρὸς τὸ μέλλον ἀποβλέπουσι, τὸ παρὸν προΐεμενοι. καίτοι

⁶² Fittingly, § 7 contains two medical comparisons (468b; 468c) that suggest that, at the time of writing, Paccius is doing quite poorly as a 'doctor' by letting himself be affected. The misdiagnosis of his own ailment, then, does not come as a surprise. Plutarch compares his 'psychiatry' to medicine most explicitly in *De cup. div.* 524a–e. On Plutarch as a *ψυχῆς ἰατρός*, see Ingenkamp 1971: 118–124 and *passim* (cf. also Vamvouri Ruffly 2012: 29–161 on *Quaest. conv.*; Zucchelli 1965: 224–225 on *De vit. pud.*); conversely, on *εὐθυμία* in the medical tradition, see Pigeaud 1981: 441–521. See more generally also Lain Entralgo 1970: esp. 139–170; Simon 1978; and more specifically on *De tranq. an.*, Broecker 1954: 55.

⁶³ Duff 1999b: 105–108, 116. On *τύχη* in *Mar.*, see Stadter 2019.

τὸ μὲν ἂν ἡ τύχη κωλύσαι δύναίτο, τὸ δ' ἀναφαίρετόν ἐστιν· ἀλλ' ὁμῶς τοῦτο τῆς ψυχῆς ὡς ἀλλότριον ἐκβάλλοντες, ἐκεῖνο τὸ ἄδηλον ὀνειρώττουσιν, εἰκότα πάσχοντες. πρὶν γὰρ ἐκ λόγου καὶ παιδείας ἔδραν ὑποβαλέσθαι καὶ κρηπίδα τοῖς ἔξωθεν ἀγαθοῖς, συνάγοντες αὐτὰ καὶ συμφοροῦντες, ἐμπλήσαι τῆς ψυχῆς οὐ δύνανται τὸ ἀκόρεστον. (*Mar.* 46.1–5)

Plato, however, when he was now at the point of death, lauded his guardian genius and Fortune because, to begin with, he had been born a man and not an irrational animal; again, because he was a Greek and not a Barbarian; and still again, because his birth had fallen in the times of Socrates. And indeed they say that Antipater of Tarsus, when he was in like manner near his end and was enumerating the blessings of his life, did not forget to mention his prosperous voyage from home to Athens, just as though he thought that every gift of a benevolent Fortune called for great gratitude, and kept it to the last in his memory, which is the most secure storehouse of blessings for a man. Unmindful and thoughtless persons, on the contrary, let all that happens to them slip away as time goes on; therefore, since they do not hold or keep anything, they are always empty of blessings, but full of hopes, and are looking away to the future while they neglect the present. And yet the future may be prevented by Fortune, while the present cannot be taken away; nevertheless these men cast aside the present gift of Fortune as something alien to them, while they dream of the future and its uncertainties. And this is natural. For they assemble and heap together the external blessings of life before reason and education have enabled them to build any foundation and basement for these things, and therefore they cannot satisfy the insatiable appetite of their souls.

The contrast between the wise and the thoughtless, which structures this passage, is also a structuring element throughout *On Tranquillity of Mind*.⁶⁴ The anecdote about Antipater occurs in both works (*De tranq. an.* 469d), as does the comparison of blessings that should be stored in memory to liquids that should be kept in a storeroom lest they flow away (473b–e).⁶⁵ The wise rely on the present and their remembrance of the past, whereas the thoughtless are obsessed with hopes for the future.⁶⁶ It

⁶⁴ Broecker 1954: 23–26.

⁶⁵ *Mar.* 46.3: ταμειῖον ~ *De tranq. an.* 473b: ταμειῖα; *Mar.* 46.3: ὑπεκρεῖ ~ *De tranq. an.* 473d: ὑπεκρεῖν; *Mar.* 46.3: μηθὲν στέγοντες ~ *De tranq. an.* 473d: μὴ στέγοντες.

⁶⁶ *Mar.* 46.3: τοὺς δ' ἀμνήμονας καὶ ἀνοήτους ~ *De tranq. an.* 473b: οἱ [...] ἀνόητοι, 473c: οἱ δὲ φρόνιμοι καὶ τὰ μηκέτ' ὄντα τῷ μνημονεύειν ἐναργῶς ὄντα ποιοῦσιν ἑαυτοῖς, 473c: τοῖς ἀνοήτοις, 473c: λήθη, 473d: τῷ ἀμνημονεύτῳ, 473d: τῇ μῆμη; *Mar.* 46.3:

is necessary, then, to build a stable foundation in which we give external blessing a prominent place in order not to get stuck in past and present misfortunes or vain hopes. This is the diagnosis with which the *Marius* ends and *On Tranquillity of Mind* begins. All the same it is not a self-diagnosis by Paccius: he needs Plutarch to point it out to him. Hence, it is not surprising that Paccius' problem is not glaringly obvious from the outset. The way in which Plutarch connects his specific focus on τύχη with Paccius' lack of εὐθυμία, however, connects Paccius' particular problem with the philosophical core of the work.⁶⁷

(3) A final reason why Paccius' problem might at first elude the reader is that the problem is of a very general nature. The question tackled in *On Tranquillity of Mind* is not how to avoid being a chatterbox, how to praise oneself without offending others, how to keep curiosity within bounds, or any of the other specific issues treated in Plutarch's practical ethics. The question at hand is how to live. Although the work falls under the heading of practical ethics or *Seelenheilung*, it also encompasses the rest of the works in this group. The broadness of the problem may explain why it is not immediately clear. Moreover, it may also account for the prominence of ἐπιλογισμοί over ἔθισμοί: practising life is somewhat less definable (and inevitably more tied up with ἐπιλογισμοί) than, say, practising to shut up at the right moment.

Paccius' problem, then, is life and how to live it. But this may sound too dramatic, since he is, after all, quite far along in solving his problem. He is not an unhappy wretch – or at least not anymore. What he lacks, and this is Plutarch's diagnosis rather than Paccius' request, is an adequate way of dealing with τύχη – or, in cosmological terms, of dealing with the effects of the irrational part of the cosmic soul.

1.2. How is the problem presented?

Now that we have a general idea of what Paccius' real problem is, let us take a fresh start and have a look at how this problem is presented in the first five paragraphs of *On Tranquillity of Mind* and how it is connected to the practice of *Seelenheilung*. As we saw earlier, Plutarch starts

κενοί ~ *De tranq. an.* 473d: κενούς; *Mar.* 46.3-4: πρὸς τὸ μέλλον ἀποβλέπουσι, τὸ παρὸν προίεμενοι ~ *De tranq. an.* 473b-c: παρόντα τὰ χρηστὰ παρορῶσι καὶ ἀμελοῦσιν ὑπὸ τοῦ συντετάσθαι πρὸς τὸ μέλλον αἰεὶ ταῖς φροντίσιν; *Mar.* 46.4: τοῦτο [sc. τὸ παρὸν] τῆς ψυχῆς ὡς ἀλλότριον ἐκβάλλοντες ~ *De tranq. an.* 473c: τὸ γὰρ παρὸν [...] οὐκέτι δοκεῖ πρὸς ἡμᾶς οὐδ' ἡμέτερον εἶναι.

⁶⁷ Cf. Brenk 1977: 147: 'The whole theme of *De tranquillitate* is that fortune is constantly ebbing and flowing, or in more Greek terms, that one constantly encounters good and evil *tyche*; the best advice that the wise man can give is to encourage mortals to keep a cool head whether good or evil *tyche* should at a particular time be one's lot.'

by pointing out that it is of paramount importance that we use external goods (riches, reputation, and power) when we have them and that we do not miss them when we do not have them (τὸ χρώμενον εὐχάριστον ἢ τοῖς ἔχουσι καὶ τὸ τῶν ἀπόντων μὴ δεόμενον, 465a–b). Immediately after this, the method of Platonic *Seelenheilung* is announced:

τί δὲ τοῦτ' ἐστὶν ἄλλο ἢ λόγος εἰθισμένος καὶ μεμελετηκῶς τοῦ παθητικοῦ καὶ ἀλόγου τῆς ψυχῆς ἐξισταμένου πολλάκις ἐπιλαμβάνεσθαι ταχὺ καὶ μὴ περιορᾶν ἀπορρέον καὶ καταφερόμενον ἀπὸ τῶν παρόντων; (465b)

And how else can this be achieved except through reason, which has been carefully trained quickly to hold back the passionate and irrational part of the soul when it breaks bounds, as it often does, and not to allow it to flow away and be swept downstream, away from what is present? [tr. modified]

The ἄσκησις (cf. λόγος εἰθισμένος καὶ μεμελετηκῶς) depends on the awareness that the human soul consists of a rational and an irrational part and that the former should control the latter. This general principle of Plutarch's Platonic ethics is applied to the theme of *On Tranquillity of Mind*: the rational part should ensure that the irrational part sticks to τὰ παρόντα and does not miss τὰ ἀπόντα. The rest of the first paragraph develops both the λόγος-πάθος relation and the importance of ἄσκησις (ἐπιμελεῖσθαι, παρασκευασμένοι, 465b; λόγοι [...] οἰκεῖοι καὶ συνήθεις, 465c).

The second and third paragraphs sketch two well-worn yet unsuccessful treatments for lack of εὐθυμία. First, the 'Democritean' creed is criticised for advising a life of inactivity.⁶⁸ Next, Plutarch turns to 'those who believe that one quite special kind of life is free from pain' (τοὺς [...] ἀφορισμένως ἓνα βίον ἄλυπον νομίζοντας, 466a), citing proponents of the lives of farmers, bachelors, and kings. It is worthwhile to note, in the light of my suggestion that this belongs to the κρίσις part of the work, that the main problem with these two famous treatments is not that they do not work. Their problem is more fundamental: they are based on wrong diagnoses. The 'Democritean' solution is a failure (cf. ψευδός,

⁶⁸ Plutarch starts the paragraph with a reference to Democritus (fr. B3 DK), but the advice to lead an inactive life cannot possibly be attributed to Democritus. Hence the inverted commas around 'Democritean'. On Plutarch's use of Democritus here, see Siefert 1908: 9–10 (followed and developed further by Broecker 1954: 45–52; Hershbell 1982: 85–86); Barigazzi 1962: esp. 124–126; Roskam 2007b: 22–23, all three offering different ways of interpreting this passage without assuming that Plutarch simply misunderstood or blatantly misrepresented Democritus (as, respectively, Helmbold 1939: 170 n. a and Kidd in Kidd and Waterfield 1992: 204–205).

465d) because it measures activity quantitatively (in terms of *πλήθος* and *ὀλιγότης*) instead of qualitatively (in terms of *τὸ καλόν* and *τὸ αἰσχρόν*, 466a).⁶⁹ The ‘prescribed life’ solution, in turn, fails to acknowledge that the problem is located in the soul:

[...] αἱ τῶν βίων ἀντιμεταλήψεις οὐκ ἐξαιροῦσι τῆς ψυχῆς τὰ λυποῦντα καὶ ταραττοντα· ταῦτα δ’ ἐστὶν ἀπειρία πραγμάτων, ἀλογιστία, τὸ μὴ δύνασθαι μηδ’ ἐπίστασθαι χρῆσθαι τοῖς παροῦσιν ὀρθῶς. (466c)

[T]he exchange of one mode of life for another does not relieve the soul of those things which cause it grief and distress: these are inexperience in affairs, unreasonableness, the want of ability or knowledge to make the right use of present conditions.

Both the ‘Democritean’ and the ‘prescribed life’ solution treat the symptoms instead of the disease.⁷⁰ Once this has been pointed out, Plutarch states his own – correct – diagnosis, which he has sketched somewhat vaguely in the first paragraph, in clear terms: lack of *εὐθυμία* is caused by not being able to use *λόγος* in dealing with *πράγματα*.

The fourth paragraph illustrates this ailment through three pairs of anecdotes.⁷¹ (1) Alexander the Great, upon learning from Anaxarchus that there are an infinite number of *κόσμοι*, wept because he could not even conquer a single one of these *κόσμοι*.⁷² (1’) Crates, on the other hand, did not possess much (i.e. the opposite of a whole *κόσμος*), yet he lived his life as if at a festival (*ὥσπερ ἐν ἑορτῇ*). (2) Agamemnon was lord over many men. Still, he felt burdened by the responsibilities that Zeus sent him. (2’) Diogenes, on the other hand, was being sold as a slave (i.e. the

⁶⁹ Both a politically disengaged life (*ἀπραγμόνως*) and a life engaged in politics (*ἐν πράγμασιν*) can be preferable depending on circumstances (465d) or personality (472b). Cf. 472e.

⁷⁰ Plutarch emphasises the connection between the two unsuccessful treatments by illustrating each one with a quotation from the same scene from Euripides’ *Orestes*: Electra addresses Orestes, who is bedridden and suffering from a mental breakdown after killing his mother (*Or.* 258 at *De tranq. an.* 465c illustrating the inactivity treatment, *Or.* 232 at *De tranq. an.* 466c illustrating the prescribed life treatment); both quotations fit with Plutarch’s comparison of physical and mental health. Cf. Barigazzi 1962: 117–118, who aptly speaks about ‘due pregiudizi’.

⁷¹ Russell 1972: 23–29 quotes and discusses this passage (*De tranq. an.* 466d–467c) at length, considering it ‘a typical passage of moral advice’ (23) indicative of Plutarch’s style through its use of examples, quotations, and imagery. Unfortunately, Russell’s judgement on the work as a whole is that it lacks originality of content (cf. n. 18).

⁷² See Demulder 2021.

opposite of a βασιλεύς). Still, he kept joking. (3⁷³) Even when he was in prison, Socrates found a way to philosophise with his friends. (3) Phaethon, on the other hand, made it all the way to heaven (i.e. the opposite of prison), as he wished. Nonetheless, he still found a reason for discontent and kept nagging about the fact that he had met with some resistance.⁷⁴ These anecdotes are connected not only by their similar structure and their diatribic flavour but also by their cosmic touch.⁷⁵ The unhappiness of the three negative examples is somehow connected with how they view the cosmos and their place in it: Alexander was crushed upon learning that he would never become the ruler of the whole cosmos, Agamemnon was convinced that his misfortunes were caused by Zeus, and Phaethon thought he could replace a god.⁷⁶ What we do not learn here, however, is what the correct picture of the cosmos and the place of humans might be. In the κρίσις part of the work, Plutarch mainly describes recipes for disaster, not yet recipes for success.⁷⁷ The cosmic perspective is announced but not yet pressed into service.

The three pairs of anecdotes are introduced by the remark that reasoning (λογισμός) creates contentment (εὐκολίαν) towards every life (πρὸς ἕκαστον βίον, 466d), and they are followed by the similar conclusion that our dispositions (διαθέσεις) define how our life is (466f). To illustrate the point that we should use wisdom (τὸ φρονεῖν, 466f) to deal with external things (τὰ ἐκτός, 467a), Plutarch ends the fourth paragraph with a quotation from Euripides' *Bellerophon*:

τοῖς πράγμασιν γὰρ οὐχὶ θυμοῦσθαι χρεῶν·
 μέλει γὰρ αὐτοῖς οὐδέν· ἀλλ' οὐντυγχάνων
 τὰ πράγματ' ὀρθῶς ἂν τιθῆ, πράξει καλῶς (*De tranq. an.* 467a = Eur.,
 fr. 287 *TrGF*)

⁷³ Plutarch reverses the order here: of the third pair, the positive example is presented first.

⁷⁴ See Demulder forthcoming a.

⁷⁵ Crates, Diogenes, and Socrates are popular models in diatribes, as Broecker 1954: 68 points out. Cf. Tsekourakis 1983: 94–95, who discusses these three anecdotes in his study on the influence of the diatribe on Plutarch's popular philosophical writings (cf. also Heinze 1890: 507–511; Seidel 1906: 32–45 on diatribic elements in *De tranq. an.*). For the connection between these three figures from a modern scholarly perspective, see Long 1999: 631.

⁷⁶ As Warren 2004: 356–357 points out, this Plutarchan passage is a rare instance of ancient atomistic cosmology being adduced in an ethical context.

⁷⁷ The delirious Orestes (465c), women (465d), Laertes (465e), Achilles (465e–f), people who are wealthy yet miserable (466a–b), men who seek advancement at court yet soon grow tired of it (466c–d).

It does no good to rage at circumstance;
 Events will take their course with no regard
 For us. But he who makes the best of those
 Events he lights upon will not fare ill.

Here, the connection between πράγματα and τύχη is suggested through the verb τυγχάνω. This becomes more explicit in the fifth paragraph, which is closely connected to the previous one (through the particle γάρ) and gives us Plutarch's interpretation of the lines just quoted.⁷⁸ Plutarch recalls that Plato compared life to a game of κυβεία: we need a good throw, but we also have to make good use of the throw.⁷⁹ The throw itself is a matter of luck (οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν, 467a; παρὰ τῆς τύχης, 467b), while how we deal with the throw is up to us (ἡμέτερον ἔργον, 467b). The use of ἐπιτυγχάνω in the description of the players who are faced with a certain throw links the κυβεία comparison to the Euripides fragment (τοὺς ἐπιτυγχάνοντα, 467b ~ οὐντυγχάνων, 467a), as does the general distinction between luck and what we can control.

The verb τιθῆ may have been what made Plutarch jump from Euripides to a gaming metaphor in general and to Plato's comparison in particular, since it often means 'to place as skilfully as possible the pieces which have been assigned to one by the luck of the dice' (LSJ s.v. τίθημι VII.2).⁸⁰ Plato uses it in this sense in the passage to which Plutarch alludes:

⁷⁸ Contra Barigazzi 1962: 116, who sees an important break between § 4 and § 5. Broecker 1954: 24, 67 correctly connects these two paragraphs, although I disagree with his inclusion of the beginning of § 6 in this unit.

⁷⁹ This comparison was important in Plutarch's thought, at least if we can trust the *Lamprias Catalogue* (105), which mentions a work Περὶ βίων and adds that another copy of this work bore the title Περὶ τοῦ τὸν βίον εὐκείναι κυβεία (cf. also Stobaeus 4 p. 1133.14 Wachsmuth-Hense for the attribution to Socrates of the comparison of life to a game of πεττεία; see Lamer 1927: 1967–1968 on cases where κυβεία and πεττεία are synonymous and 1939–1940 for the meaning of ψῆφος in that passage). In *Pyrrh.* 26.2, we find an application of this comparison attributed to Antigonos II Gonatas, whom Plutarch says that he used to liken Pyrrhus 'to a player with dice who makes many fine throws but does not understand how to use them when they are made' (ἀπείκαζεν αὐτὸν ὁ Ἀντίγονος κυβευτῆ πολλὰ βάλλοντι καὶ καλά, χρῆσθαι δ' οὐκ ἐπισταμένῳ τοῖς πεσοῦσι). Given Plutarch's fondness for the image and, as we have seen (p. 183–185), the close connection between *Pyrrh.* – *Mar.* and *De tranq. an.* and their mutual interest in the theme of τύχη, I think it is safe to suspect that it is Plutarch talking here rather than the historical Antigonos. At the very least, the quote cannot be attributed to Antigonos uncritically (as in e.g. Gabbert 1997: 31). There are no parallels for Antigonos' comparison (cf. Nederlof 1940: 184–186).

⁸⁰ On Plutarch's habit of 'jumping' from one thing to another, see Ingenkamp 2011: 223–226, who defines 'Sprungbrett-argumente' as 'Einleitungen in einen Gedanken [...], die oft in einem Zitat, einem Vergleich oder einer Anekdote bestehen und bei

τῷ βουλευέσθαι, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, περὶ τὸ γεγονὸς καὶ ὥσπερ ἐν πτώσει κύβων πρὸς τὰ πεπτωκότα τίθεσθαι τὰ αὐτοῦ πράγματα, ὅπη ὁ λόγος αἰρεῖ βέλτιστ' ἂν ἔχειν [...]. (Pl., *Resp.* 10.604c)

Deliberation. We must accept what has happened as we would the fall of the dice, and then arrange our affairs in whatever way reason determines to be best.

This makes it clear that the *κυβεία* about which Plutarch was thinking involves dice (*κύβοι*) – this is not always the case⁸¹ – but it is not a ‘game of dice’, as the Loeb translation has it.⁸² A game of dice depends on nothing but luck, and Plutarch severely condemns this kind of game in *On Compliance* (530f).⁸³ In *On Tranquillity of Mind* and in Plato’s *Republic*, we are dealing with a game in which a throw of the dice is followed by a move of a piece on the board. This move is limited by the throw, yet it is sufficiently free to allow for our own strategy to unfold.⁸⁴ Similarly, the events that *τύχη* throws at us may limit our free choice, but they do not obliterate it.

There is, however, something worrisome about the way in which Plutarch uses Plato here. In the *Republic* the comparison is adduced to show how we should deal with negative circumstances. Plutarch, on the other hand, may similarly imply such a narrow perspective, but he does not indicate this: as far as we can tell, the combination of *τύχη* and *τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν* is meant to describe the totality of human experience.⁸⁵ I think

näherem Hinsehen nicht recht oder nur oberflächlich zu diesem Gedanken passen’. (My analysis will hopefully make it clear that I do not agree with the second part of this definition: the connections that Plutarch makes are rarely unrelated or merely superficially related to the course of thought.) As Ingenkamp points out, Plutarch announces this technique in *De tranq. an.* 469b: *τό γε πρὸς τὸν πολυπράγμονα λελεγμένον οὐκ ἀηδῶς δεῦρ' ἔστι μετενεγκεῖν* (‘one might adapt here not inaptly the remark addressed to the meddlesome man’), after which a quotation follows. Ingenkamp discusses some of the *Sprungbrett-Argumente* of *De tranq. an.* in an unpublished conference paper (see n. 27).

⁸¹ See Kidd 2017.

⁸² Also in Kidd and Waterfield 1992 and similarly in the Budé edition (‘une partie de dés’).

⁸³ Cf. Lamer 1927: cols. 1966–1967. See Cioccolo 1999 for more Plutarchan criticism of games.

⁸⁴ Lamer 1927: cols. 1970–1985 gives several examples of such games in his detailed study of board games in antiquity. As for the game alluded to by Plutarch and Plato, he points out we cannot deduce any further specifics (at 1970). A general description of such games is given at 1931.

⁸⁵ Cf. Fuhrmann 1964: 260 on Plutarch’s allusion to Pl., *Resp.* 10.604c: ‘La pensée de Platon est cependant déformée: celui-ci voulait signifier uniquement qu’il faut réagir sagement contre les coups de sort.’

that, through this discrepancy with the Platonic source text, Plutarch is consciously and even teasingly hiding something that will be crucial to the solution of the problem. We can see what is missing by glancing at a discussion involving τύχη that Plutarch included in his *Symptotic Questions* (9.5).⁸⁶ In the course of this discussion, which centres around the interpretation of a passage in Plato's myth of Er (*Resp.* 10.620b), Plutarch's brother Lamprias points out that

ἀεὶ μὲν γὰρ ἄπτεται τῶν τριῶν αἰτιῶν, ἅτε δὴ πρῶτος ἢ μάλιστα συνιδῶν, ὅπη τὸ καθ' εἰμαρμένην τῶ κατὰ τύχην αὐθίς τε τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἑκατέρῳ καὶ συναμφοτέροις ἐπιμίγνυσθαι καὶ συμπλέκεσθαι πέφυκε. (*Quaest. conv.* 9.5.740c)

Plato constantly touches on the three causes, as is natural enough for the man who first or most particularly observed how in the course of nature the operation of destiny mingles and interweaves with that of luck, while our free-will in its turn combines with one or other of them or with both simultaneously.

We recognise τύχη and τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν from *On Tranquillity of Mind*. Lamprias, however, also factors in εἰμαρμένη. He goes on to apply this tripartition of causes to the myth of Er and ultimately identifies εἰμαρμένη with πρόνοια.⁸⁷ As it turns out, there are more things in heaven and earth than what heaven randomly throws at us and what we decide to do with it on earth. Why, then, does Plutarch stay silent about πρόνοια at this point in *On Tranquillity of Mind*? It brings him in line with Plato, whose κυβεία comparison could not have involved divine providence, since it only pertained to negative experiences. But Plutarch could have achieved this in a less obscure fashion by just pointing out the more narrow perspective. The deeper reason, I think, is that, as in the previous paragraph,

⁸⁶ Cf. Babut 1969b: 308–309; Brenk 1977: 155–156; Opsomer 1997b: 346–347; Dillon 1996: 209.

⁸⁷ For the connection between εἰμαρμένη and πρόνοια, see *De def. or.* 425e, 426a, where Lamprias speaks as well. We should, however, keep in mind that the passage is concerned with anti-Stoic polemics, so it might be the case that Lamprias is borrowing the Stoic identification of εἰμαρμένη and πρόνοια to beat them at their own game (cf. *De Stoic. rep.* 1035b, 1050b; *De comm. not.* 1055d, 1075b). For an anti-Stoic conception of providence put into the mouth of Lamprias, see also *De facie* 927a–d (cf. p. 35). For our current purpose, it suffices to note that Lamprias, in an anti-Stoic fashion (cf. Babut 1969b: 307–316 for the general framework), distinguishes providence, with whatever name he further may designate it, from τύχη; cf. also e.g. *De fort. Rom.* 316e (with p. 251); *De def. or.* 423c; and especially Lamprias' speech on Platonic dual causality at the end of that work (435e–436e with p. 166 n. 108).

which merely adumbrated the need for a correct cosmic perspective, the present paragraph should make us aware of the need for a framework that includes divine πρόνοια to counteract the workings of irrational τύχη within the cosmic soul.

At the end of the κρίσις – and that is exactly what κρίσις is supposed to achieve⁸⁸ – we have more reason than ever to be worried and we seem further away from εὐθυμία than at the beginning.⁸⁹ The illness – an inadequate capacity to deal with τύχη – has been diagnosed but earlier solutions have been rejected, a correct cosmic perspective has not revealed itself, and divine providence is suspiciously absent. Thankfully, we are now ready to turn to the ἄσκησις.

2. A shift in the ἄσκησις (§ 14–15): from internal to external synthesis

2.1. Beginning the ἄσκησις (§ 6–13): internal synthesis

In the first paragraphs devoted to ἄσκησις (§ 6–13), Plutarch presents a series of meditations aimed at an internal synthesis of the totality of our experiences. This kind of synthesis is achieved by our actively putting our experiences in a favourable perspective:

ἀγαθὸν τοίνυν ἐν τοῖς ἀβουλήτοις συμπτώμασι πρὸς εὐθυμίαν καὶ τὸ μὴ παρορᾶν ὅσα προσφιλεῖ καὶ ἀστεῖα πάρεστιν ἡμῖν, ἀλλὰ μιγνύντας ἐξαμαυροῦν τὰ χείρονα τοῖς βελτίοσι. (*De tranq. an.* 469a)

[I]t is conducive to tranquillity of mind, in the midst of happenings which are contrary to our wishes, not to overlook whatever we have that is pleasant and attractive, but, mingling good with bad, cause the better to outshine the worse.

By proceeding in this way, we can take matters into our own hands and subjectively alter the position of τύχη away from the unwanted experiences (μεθιστάναι τὴν τύχην ἐκ τῶν ἀβουλήτων, 467c). This is remarkable, not only because we just heard that τύχη and τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν are two very different things but also because a Greek probably expected to hear that it is τύχη itself that is doing the μεθιστάναι.⁹⁰ These first paragraphs devoted to ἄσκησις, then, contain advice along the still popular lines of viewing the world with rose-tinted glasses and making lemonade if life

⁸⁸ Cf. Ingenkamp 1971: 74–86.

⁸⁹ Cf. *Non posse* 1106c, where the lack of an eschatological perspective is said to obstruct τὸ εὐθυμον.

⁹⁰ Cf. Herodotus 1.118; Ps.(?)-Plu., *Cons. ad Ap.* 103f. Similarly, in Euripides, *Heracl.* 935, the subject is δαίμων.

gives you nothing but lemons. We should imitate men who cheerfully receive the same things that disturb us (§ 6), come to appreciate even our most trivial blessings by imagining them to be absent (§ 9), observe people who are less fortuitous than we are (§ 10), realise that even people whom we admire have their problems (§ 11), and avoid having ambitions that are too great (§ 12) or incompatible with what we have achieved already (§ 13).

At the beginning of § 14, Plutarch appears to continue this line of argument:

ὅτι δ' ἕκαστος ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὰ τῆς εὐθυμίας καὶ δυσθυμίας ἔχει ταμειᾶ, καὶ τοὺς τῶν ἀγαθῶν καὶ κακῶν πίθους οὐκ ἐν Διὸς οὔδει κατακειμένους' ἀλλ' ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ κειμένους αἱ διαφοραὶ τῶν παθῶν δηλοῦσιν. (*De tranq. an.* 473b)

But that every man has within himself the storerooms of tranquillity and discontent, and that the jars containing blessings and evils are not stored 'on the threshold of Zeus' [Homer, *Il.* 24.527], but are in the soul, is made plain by the differences in men's passions.

From what we have heard so far, we can expect the point to be once again that tranquillity of mind is an exclusively internal, subjective affair. The advice that follows is compatible with this: we should take into account past benefits (§ 14) without dwelling on past misfortunes (§ 15). This advice can lead one to suspect Plutarch of advising us to make up and believe a false or at least distorted narrative of our own life. In his rich and wide-ranging study about selfhood, Sorabji finds fault with Plutarch's concept of the self for this reason and points to the 'danger of self-serving falsification' through 'wrong inclusion and exclusion of data'.⁹¹ I will argue instead that Plutarch avoids this danger by shifting the focus from an internal to an external synthesis of experiences – locating the positive balance in which good outweighs bad not (only) in the self but (also) in the cosmos – and that he does this by relying on the notions of time and becoming as they are used in Platonic cosmology.

2.2. Time and the self: memory (§ 14)

As we saw in the comparison with the *Marius*, *On Tranquillity of Mind* calls out the foolish (οἱ ἀνόητοι) for being obsessed with the future and thus neglecting present benefits. For the wise (οἱ φρόνιμοι), on the other hand, even past blessings contribute to tranquillity of mind. The differ-

⁹¹ Sorabji 2006: 176. *De tranq. an.* is discussed at 172–180. Cf. also Gill 1994: 4625–4626; Strawson 2004: 429.

ence between these two groups is how they conceive of time. The foolish conception of time is one of extreme fragmentation. On this view, the discrete moments of time (such as yesterday, today, and tomorrow) do not have any connection with each other.⁹² The result is that, except for the instant in which we are living, nothing pertains to us or even happens to us (i.e. the self that we are in this infinitesimal present moment). This includes even the present good, which escapes us as soon as it becomes present.⁹³ To put it in a Heraclitean way, you cannot delight in the same benefit twice. Both the experience and the self are utterly ephemeral.

The connection with Heraclitean physics is made at the end of § 14:

οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἐν ταῖς σχολαῖς τὰς ἀυξήσεις ἀναιροῦντες, ὡς τῆς οὐσίας ἐνδελεχῶς ῥεούσης, λόγῳ ποιοῦσιν ἡμῶν ἕκαστον ἄλλον ἑαυτοῦ καὶ ἄλλον, οἱ δὲ τῇ μνήμῃ τὰ πρότερον μὴ στέγοντες μηδ' ἀναλαμβάνοντες ἀλλ' ὑπεκρεῖν ἑῶντες ἔργῳ ποιοῦσιν ἑαυτοὺς καθ' ἡμέραν ἀποδεεῖς καὶ κενοὺς καὶ τῆς αὔριον ἐκκρεμαμένους, ὡς τῶν πέρυσι καὶ πρόην καὶ χθὲς οὐ πρὸς αὐτοὺς ὄντων οὐδ' ὅλως αὐτοῖς γενομένων. (*De tranq. an.* 473d–e)

For those who in the Schools do away with growth and increase on the ground that Being is in a continual flux, in theory make each of us a series of persons different from oneself; so those who do not preserve or recall by memory former events, but allow them to flow away, actually make themselves deficient and empty each day and dependent upon the morrow, as though what had happened last year and yesterday and the day before had no relation to them nor had happened to them at all.

The foolish unwittingly follow a practice that is generally commended by Plutarch: putting philosophy into practice by applying what is said (λόγῳ) to what is done (ἔργῳ).⁹⁴ The problem, then, must be discernible

⁹² 473d: ὡςπερ ἕτερον τὸν ἐχθὲς ὄντα τοῦ σήμερον καὶ τὸν αὔριον ὁμοίως οὐ τὸν αὐτὸν τῷ σήμερον διαιροῦσα ('separating yesterday, as though it were different, from to-day and to-morrow likewise, as though it were not the same as to-day').

⁹³ 473c: τὸ γὰρ παρὸν τῷ ἐλαχίστῳ τοῦ χρόνου μορίῳ θιγεῖν παρασχὸν εἶτα τὴν αἴσθησιν ἐκφυγὸν οὐκέτι δοκεῖ πρὸς ἡμᾶς οὐδ' ἡμέτερον εἶναι τοῖς ἀνοήτοις. ('For the present good, which allows us to touch it but for the smallest portion of time and then eludes our perception, seems to fools to have no further reference to us or to belong to us at all.')

⁹⁴ See e.g. *De prof. in virt.* 84b. Cf. Roskam 2009b: 65–69. There is probably a touch of irony here: the foolish do not really base their ἔργα on well-considered λόγοι; they just *happen* to act in accordance with the aforementioned doctrine (cf. the οἱ μὲν – οἱ δέ construction).

in the theory that seems to support the practice. The flux doctrine and the ensuing conclusion that we constantly become different persons cannot be correct. The behaviour of the wise proves this: while foolish forgetfulness turns everything that has happened into something that has not happened, the wise use their memory to ensure the diachronic stability of the self.⁹⁵

This interpretation may appear sound if *On Tranquillity of Mind* is considered in isolation. However, there is a problem: the foolish understanding of the human condition is defended elsewhere by someone who, in Plutarch's book, is the opposite of an ἀνόητος. In *On the E at Delphi* (392a–c), Plutarch's teacher Ammonius approves of the Heraclitean dictum that it is 'impossible to step twice in the same river' (ποταμῷ γὰρ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐμβῆναι δις τῷ αὐτῷ, 392b = fr. B91 DK⁹⁶). As soon as something mortal comes into existence, it is already passing away. Ammonius compares this to water slipping (διαρρέον) through our fingers when we try to grasp it (392b ~ *De tranq. an.* 473d: ῥεούσης, ὑπεκρεῖν). The notions of selfhood (392c–e) and time (392e–393a) attached to this flux doctrine are akin to the notions attributed to the foolish in *On Tranquillity of Mind*.⁹⁷ The self turns out to be an illusion: we 'become many persons' (γινόμεθα πολλοί, 392d ~ *De tranq. an.* 473d: ποιοῦσιν ἡμῶν ἕκαστον ἄλλον ἑαυτοῦ καὶ ἄλλον), since we are constantly coming into existence and passing away. This happens in time, which is also ever flowing (ῥέον) without preserving anything (μὴ στέγον, 392e ~ *De tranq. an.* 473d: μὴ στέγοντες).

Does this mean that there is a blatant inconsistency between *On Tranquillity of Mind* and *On the E at Delphi*, as Sorabji assumes?⁹⁸ I think, on the contrary, that both passages are eminently compatible, since the accounts rejected in *On Tranquillity of Mind* and ascribed to Plutarch's teacher in *On the E at Delphi* are not quite the same. Although their

⁹⁵ The foolish approach at 473d: [sc. ἡ λήθη] πᾶν τὸ γινόμενον εὐθὺς εἰς τὸ ἀγένητον τῷ ἀμνημονεύτῳ καθίστησιν ('forgetfulness straightway makes every event to have never happened because it is never recalled'); the wise approach at 473c: οἱ δὲ φρόνιμοι καὶ τὰ μηκέτ' ὄντα τῷ μνημονεύειν ἐναργῶς ὄντα ποιοῦσιν ἑαυτοῖς ('the wise by remembrance make even those benefits that are no longer at hand to be vividly existent for themselves').

⁹⁶ Cf. also *De sera num.* 559c (with p. 205) and *Quaest. nat.* 912a with Hershbell 1977: 184–185, 194–196.

⁹⁷ On the connection between the notion of time that Ammonius expresses here and Aristotle's puzzles on time (*Phys.* 4.10), see Sorabji 1983: 27. On the views on time and eternity ascribed to Ammonius in *De E* and their connection to Plutarch's eighth *Quaest. Plat.* and Plato's *Tim.* (37c–38c) – an issue to which I will turn presently – see Thum 2013: 290–296; cf. also Whittaker 1969; Opsomer 2009b: 149–158.

⁹⁸ Sorabji 2006: 39–40. Cf. also Sorabji 2000: 162 and 248; 2008: 21.

depictions of the self in time are identical, there is a difference between the underlying physical flux described by Ammonius and the one associated with the foolish in *On Tranquillity of Mind*. According to the foolish approach, what is in flux can be described both as being (τῆς οὐσίας ἐνδεδελεχῶς ῥεούσης) and as becoming (τὸ γιγνόμενον εὐθὺς εἰς τὸ ἀγένητον, 473d).⁹⁹ For Ammonius, on the other hand, only becoming is in flux, and, as such, it is diametrically opposed to timeless, changeless being (*De E* 392e).

This has consequences for the conceptions of selfhood in both accounts. Since, for the foolish, there is no distinction between being and becoming, there truly is no transcending the present moment. Ammonius' distinction between being and becoming opens up a different way of thinking about self and time. In that case, the question is whether the self attains any continuity through some connection with stable being. The bulk of Ammonius' contribution to *On the E at Delphi* suggests that the answer is no: 'we really have no part nor parcel in being' (ἡμῶν μὲν γὰρ ὄντως τοῦ εἶναι μέτεστιν οὐδέν, 392a). Near the end of his speech, however, Ammonius broaches the possibility of an alternative to this Heraclitus-style view by considering a stabilising presence of the divine in the cosmos (393e–f). I think that there are good reasons to believe that Ammonius' modified stance is what Plutarch eventually wishes to endorse, but for our current purpose, it suffices to note that Ammonius, as a character in the dialogue, comes to consider his early statements on time and the self as somewhat one-sided in the sense that they did not allow for any connection between the intelligible (the realm of being) and the sensible (the realm of becoming).

If this possibility of a connection between the fleeting realm of becoming and the stable realm of being is granted, the apparent inconsistency between *On Tranquillity of Mind* and *On the E at Delphi* disappears. We can now roughly distinguish three different positions at play: (1) both being and becoming are marked by flux (= the foolish people from *On Tranquillity of Mind*); (2) becoming is marked by flux, being is not, and both time and the self are completely isolated from being (= Ammonius' early statements); (3) becoming is marked by flux, being is not, but there is some connection between being and becoming that guarantees diachronic stability (= Ammonius' later statements). Plutarch embraces the third option, at least in *On Tranquillity of Mind*.¹⁰⁰ This will become clear when we come to the last paragraph of the treatise. Now,

⁹⁹ Cf. also the title of the unfortunately lost *Quaest. conv.* 9.11: περὶ τοῦ μὴ τοῦς αὐτοῦς διαμένειν ἡμᾶς, ἀεὶ τῆς οὐσίας ῥεούσης ('On the subject of our having no permanent identity, since our substance is always in flux').

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Bonazzi 2014: 127 invoking *Adv. Col* 1123f.

our question should be how the connection between being and becoming pertains to time and the self. This is where Plato's *Timaeus* comes in.

Plutarch presents his views on time in the eighth *Platonic Question*, which revolves around the passage in the *Timaeus* where the demiurge sows the souls in the earth, in the moon, and in various other instruments of time (*Tim.* 42d).¹⁰¹ The question is divided into two parts. The first part explains how Plato could state that the earth is an instrument of time while also holding that it is placed motionless at the centre of the cosmos (cf. p. 51). The second part asks whether it was not derogatory to call the sun merely an instrument of time, especially given the elevated status that Plato gave it elsewhere. The dignity of the sun is rescued by a correct understanding of the dignity of time. Time is utterly misjudged – that is, undervalued – in the philosophies of Aristotle, Speusippus, and at least some Stoics (*Quaest. Plat.* 8.1007a–b).

οὐ γὰρ πάθος οὐδὲ συμβεβηκὸς ἦς ἔτυχε κινήσεως ὁ χρόνος ἐστίν, αἰτία δὲ καὶ δύναμις καὶ ἀρχὴ τῆς πάντα συνεχούσης τὰ γιγνόμενα συμμετρίας καὶ τάξεως, ἦν ἡ τοῦ ὅλου φύσις ἔμψυχος οὔσα κινεῖται· μᾶλλον δὲ κινήσις οὔσα καὶ τάξις αὐτῆ καὶ συμμετρία χρόνος καλεῖται (*Quaest. Plat.* 8.1007b–c)

For time is not an attribute or accident of any chance motion but cause and potency and principle of that which holds together all the things that come to be, of the symmetry and order in which the nature of the whole universe, being animate, is in motion; or rather, being motion and order itself and symmetry, it is called time.

Whereas Ammonius, in his early statements, described time as unable to retain anything (μὴ στέγον, *De E* 392e) and the foolish are similarly unable to retain any memories since their experiences are immediately swept away by the river of time (μὴ στέγοντες, *De tranq. an.* 473d), time is presented here – in a first attempt at definition – as the cause by which all things that come to be are held together (συνεχούσης). The second, more precise definition even strengthens the ties between time and diachronic stability. This is confirmed by what follows. Time – mo-

¹⁰¹ On Plutarch's concept of time in *Quaest. Plat.* 8, see Brague 1982: 19–21 and Opsomer 1994b: 373–416. Leisegang 1913: 6–10 should be consulted with caution, since he presents Plutarch as an eclectic. Levi 1952: 174–176 merely paraphrases *Quaest. Plat.* 8.1007a–d and *De comm. not.* 1081c–1082d. On the latter passage, see Sorabji 1983: 379–380. A brisk overview of Greek philosophical views on time can be found in Lloyd 1976; on time in ancient cosmology, see e.g. Wright 1995: 126–162.

tion endowed with *περίοδοι* by providence¹⁰² – came into being as the activity of the cosmic soul. Like the cosmos, it comes ‘from god’ (τοῦ θεοῦ): time comes from his eternity (τῆς [...] ἀιδιότητος) and is a god in movement (<θεὸς> [...] ἐν κινήσει); the cosmos comes from his being (τῆς [...] οὐσίας) and is a god in becoming (ἐν γενέσει θεός, 1007c–d).¹⁰³ While the cosmos accounts for synchronic stability, time accounts for diachronic stability in the sensible realm. This tallies perfectly with how Plutarch would have read Plato’s *Timaeus* (cf. *Tim.* 37c–38c, 92c).¹⁰⁴

At the same time, however, one could argue that this identification of time with the activity of the cosmic soul¹⁰⁵ makes time much more important and – as is the intention of the *Platonic Question* – venerable than Plato’s *Timaeus* strictly requires. This becomes particularly clear if we take a look at the earlier definitions that Plutarch rejects:

ῥητέον οὖν τοὺς ὑπὸ τούτων ταραττομένους δι’ ἄγνοιαν οἶεσθαι τὸν χρόνον ‘μέτρον εἶναι κινήσεως καὶ ἀριθμὸν κατὰ <τὸ> πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον’ ὡς Ἀριστοτέλης εἶπεν, ἢ ‘τὸ ἐν κινήσει ποσόν’ ὡς Σπεύσιππος, ἢ ‘διάστημα κινήσεως’ ἄλλο δ’ οὐδὲν ὡς ἔνιοι τῶν Στωικῶν ἀπὸ συμβεβηκότος ὀριζόμενοι [...]. (*Quaest. Plat.* 8.1007a–b)

It must be stated, then, that because of ignorance those who are disturbed by these considerations [sc. that calling the sun an ‘instrument of time’ might defame it] think time to be a measure of motion according to antecedent and subsequent, as Aristotle [cf. *Phys.* 219b–221b] said, or what in motion is quantitative, as Speusippus [fr. 60 Tarán] did, or extension of motion and nothing else, as did some of the Stoics [*SVF* 2.515], defining it by an accident [...].

There is no reason to think that Speusippus would have found himself in disagreement with Plato’s take on time in the *Timaeus*. That the other two definitions also would have been acceptable by at least some Platonists is borne out by Alcinous’ understanding of time as ‘the interval of the

¹⁰² 1007c: <πρόνοια> [...] καταλαβοῦσα [...] τὴν δὲ κίνησιν περιόδοις (text according to the Loeb edition); 1007d: κίνησις ἐν τάξει μέτρον ἐχούση καὶ πέρατα καὶ περιόδους.

¹⁰³ There is more than one problem with the textual transmission here, although none of the problems obscures the general sense; see esp. the thorough discussion in Opsomer 1994b: 405–409, whose solutions I adopt, as well as Bury 1951: 31; Brague 1982: 19–20.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. also *De def. or.* 422b–c, where χρόνος is an ἀπορροή from αἰών, although this part of *De def. or.* should certainly not be taken at face value.

¹⁰⁵ Cherniss 1976: 86 n. a. Cf. Thévenaz 1938: 96–97; Opsomer 1994b: 404. This identification of time and the activity of the cosmic soul can perhaps explain why Plutarch offers two definitions of time: soul, too, can be described both as motion and as source of motion (*De an. procr.* 1013c, relying on Plato’s *Leg.* 10.895b–896b; cf. p. 42–43).

motion of the world, as an image of eternity, which is the measure of the stability of the eternal world' (τῆς κινήσεως τοῦ κόσμου διάστημα, ὡς ἂν εἰκόνα τοῦ αἰῶνος, ὅς ἐστι μέτρον τοῦ αἰωνίου κόσμου τῆς μονῆς, *Didasc.* 14.6).¹⁰⁶ Alcinous equates the Stoic and the Platonic definitions.¹⁰⁷ The description of eternity, of which time is an image, as μέτρον τῆς μονῆς is compatible with and perhaps even an inference from Aristotle's time as μέτρον κινήσεως.¹⁰⁸ The definitions that Plutarch rejects, then, would not have been rejected by all readers of Plato's *Timaeus*.

For Alcinous, time is an effect of the creation of the planets, which 'serve for the generation of number and time' (εἰς γένεσιν ἀριθμοῦ καὶ χρόνου, *Didasc.* 14.6) and whose motions create measures by which we, as humans, can measure and come to understand the cosmos.¹⁰⁹ In Plutarch's view, on the other hand, time is not a result of the heavenly motions but it is the psychic motion that *causes* these motions. Plutarch, then, expects more from time than just the cosmic clock that Alcinous – and arguably Plato himself – makes of it.¹¹⁰ Plutarch expects time to be a synectic cause: time brings about the diachronic stability of sensibles (cf. πάντα συνεχούσης τὰ γινόμενα). This is indeed exactly what the cosmic soul does. Alcinous would not have argued with that last sentence *in se*: the cosmic soul 'binds and holds it [sc. the whole cosmos] together' (αὐτὸν συνδεῖν τε καὶ συνέχειν, *Didasc.* 14.4).¹¹¹ For Alcinous, however, this function comes before and is separate from the generation of time.

¹⁰⁶ Throughout this book I use the translation of Alcinous in Dillon 1993.

¹⁰⁷ Alcinous is not alone in this: Ps.-Plu., *Plac. philos.* 884b attributes the Stoic definition to Plato and Stobaeus 1 p. 109.1 Wachsmuth-Hense even adds that it is ἐκ τοῦ Τιμαίου. Cf. Philo, *On the Making of the World* 26; *On the Eternity of the World* 52, 54.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Ps.-Pl., *Def.* 411b: time is μέτρον φορᾶς. See Dillon 1993: 129–130 on Alcinous' notion of eternity and its possible influence.

¹⁰⁹ The moon creates the measure of the month, the sun creates the measure of the year, and the other planets create more specific measures (see *Didasc.* 14.6: καὶ σελήνη μὲν μηνὸς μέτρον ποιεῖ [...] ἥλιος δὲ ἐνιαυτῷ [...] οἳ τε ἄλλοι καθ' ἓνα ἕκαστον περιόδοις ἰδίαις κέχρηται, αἵτινες θεωρηταὶ οὐ τοῖς τυχοῦσιν εἰσὶν, ἀλλὰ τοῖς πεπαιδευμένοις). Both (1) the existence of planets as a prerequisite for the existence of time and (2) the generation of μέτρον from the planetary cycles for the benefit of humans can be found in the *Timaeus*: (1) the heavenly bodies are created 'for the begetting of time' (ἵνα γεννηθῆι χρόνος, 37c) and (2) the light of the sun was kindled 'so that there might be a conspicuous measure' (ἵνα δ' εἴη μέτρον ἐναργές τι, 39b) of the movement of the planets. A similar understanding of time and measurement emerges from the account in Apuleius' handbook (*De Plat.* 1.10).

¹¹⁰ For the comparison of Plato's notion of time to a clock, see esp. Mohr 1986.

¹¹¹ Cf. Pl., *Phd.* 99c for a Platonic adumbration of what could be called the synectic cause, which is a Stoic technical term (e.g. LS 55F-I and Plu., *De Stoic. rep.* 1055c, *De comm. not.* 1085d). Cf. also e.g. Atticus fr. 8.3.

According to Plutarch, the heavenly bodies do not create the measure that is time. On the contrary, they are measured by time. In fact the whole cosmic body is measured by it, since cosmic soul and cosmic body are woven together (Pl., *Tim.* 36e; Plu., *De an. procr.* 1023a). What this means becomes clear if we return to Ammonius' early stance in *On the E at Delphi*. From his conviction that that which measures (τῷ μετροῦντι, i.e. time) is in absolute flux, Ammonius infers that the thing that is measured (ἡ μετρούμενη φύσις) is similarly in absolute flux (*De E* 393a).¹¹² A similar inference from fragmented time to fragmented being was made by the foolish in *On Tranquillity of Mind* (473d–e). Now, if the eighth *Platonic Question* has yielded a conception of time that is not in flux, this should be good news for the diachronic stability of nature. We can now start to see how time – orderly measuring as the activity of the cosmic soul – can be thought of as a synectic cause: its act of measuring imposes its properties on that which it measures (i.e. πάντα τὰ γινόμενα). If time is stable, then nature will have a share in that stability. There is one further complication: like any act of temporal measuring, the act of measuring conducted by the cosmic soul by definition involves a comparison between that which is discerned at time T₁ and that which is discerned at time T₂.¹¹³ When that which measures discerns something at T₂, it should still have access to that which it has discerned at T₁. This is the point where the role of memory should be folded into the discussion to complete Plutarch's interpretation of Platonic time.

Let us therefore ask what the cosmic soul, whose activity was identified with time in the *Platonic Questions*, does exactly. In *On the Generation of the Soul*, Plutarch tells us that the cosmic soul has two primary activities: motivity and discernment (1024e).¹¹⁴ Both activities depend on the combination of sameness and difference, which occurs for the first time in the cosmic soul (1024d–e). As for motivity – for which Plutarch takes his cue from *Timaeus* 36c–d – difference in sameness can be witnessed in the revolution of the fixed stars, while sameness in difference accounts for the regular motion of the planets (1024e).¹¹⁵ The discerning

¹¹² Cf. Opsomer 2009b: 152 commenting on this passage: 'What we have found to be the case about time can now be applied to what is *in* time, i.e. to the world of generation.'

¹¹³ Note that T₂ should not merely be regarded as T₁ plus a next moment; it should be regarded as T₁ plus a fraction of a cyclical movement on the cosmic clock. Cf. Goldin 1998: 133.

¹¹⁴ On *De an. procr.* 1024e–1025a, which concerns us here, see, apart from Cherniss 1976 and Ferrari and Baldi 2002 ad loc., Helmer 1937: 40–47; Schoppe 1994: 103–109.

¹¹⁵ On the difference between Plato's and Plutarch's take on the constitution of the circles that account for these movements, see p. 62 n. 85.

activity of the cosmic soul, which is also a kind of movement,¹¹⁶ works as follows:

ἡ δὲ κρίσις ἀρχὰς μὲν ἔχει δύο, τὸν τε νοῦν ἀπὸ τοῦ ταυτοῦ πρὸς τὰ καθόλου καὶ τὴν αἴσθησιν ἀπὸ τοῦ ἑτέρου πρὸς τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα. μέμικται δὲ λόγος ἐξ ἀμφοῖν, νόησις ἐν τοῖς νοητοῖς καὶ δόξα γιγνόμενος ἐν τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς· ὀργάνοις τε μεταξὺ φαντασίαις τε καὶ μνήμαις χρώμενος, ὧν τὰ μὲν ἐν τῷ ταυτῷ τὸ ἕτερον τὰ δ' ἐν τῷ ἑτέρῳ ποιεῖ τὸ ταυτόν. ἔστι γὰρ ἡ μὲν νόησις κίνησις τοῦ νοοῦντος περὶ τὸ μένον, ἡ δὲ δόξα μονὴ τοῦ αἰσθανομένου περὶ τὸ κινούμενον· φαντασίαν δὲ συμπλοκὴν δόξης πρὸς αἴσθησιν οὔσαν ἴστησιν ἐν μνήμῃ τὸ ταυτόν· τὸ δὲ θάτερον κινεῖ πάλιν ἐν διαφορᾷ τοῦ πρόσθεν καὶ νῦν, ἑτερότητος ἅμα καὶ ταυτότητος ἐφαπτομένην. (*De an. procr.* 1024e–1025a)

Discernment, however, has two principles, intelligence proceeding from sameness to universals and sense–perception from difference to particulars and reason is a blend of both, becoming intellection in the case of the intelligibles and opinion in the case of the perceptibles and employing between them mental images and memories as instruments, of which the former are produced by difference in sameness and the latter by sameness in difference. For intellection is motion of what is cognizing about what remains fixed, and opinion fixity of what is perceiving about what is in motion; but mental imagining, which is a combination of opinion with sense–perception, is brought to a stop in memory by sameness and by difference again set moving in the distinction of past and present, as it is in contact with diversity and identity at once.

Plutarch gives a sophisticated interpretation of Plato's description of cosmic discernment in *Timaeus* 37a–c.¹¹⁷ Plato does indeed mention a λόγος, which is equally true whether it concerns intelligibles or sensibles. What Plato does not explain is in what sense the λόγος involving intelligibles (and produced by the revolution of sameness) and the λόγος involving sensibles (and produced by the revolution of difference) come together to form one single λόγος, in other words, how the two sides are interconnected. Like modern scholars, Plutarch must have regarded this as

¹¹⁶ Cf. Brisson 1998: 333 ('la fonction motrice, condition *sine qua non* de la fonction cognitive, qui n'en est qu'un avatar', cf. also 340, 347, 349, 352); Fronterotta 2007: § 2 ('a moving function from which a cognitive function also derives'). For Plutarch, however, movement is not primary to discernment: they are interdependent (see p. 277 n. 305).

¹¹⁷ Cf. also *De an. procr.* 1023e–f, where Plutarch quotes this passage with some modifications.

an invitation to fill in the blanks.¹¹⁸ This is why he introduces μνήμη as a feature of the cosmic soul that bridges the gap between the discernment of intelligibles and that of sensibles. What happens is that μνήμη is an activity of sameness that fixes the discernment of sensibles (ἴσθησιν ἐν μνήμη τὸ ταῦτόν).¹¹⁹ The counterpart of memory is the lapse of time, the activity of the different that activates that which has been stored in sameness (τὸ δὲ θάτερον κινεῖ πάλιν ἐν διαφορᾷ τοῦ πρόσθεν καὶ νῦν). The faculty of memory turns φαντασίαι into μνήμαι (cf. ἐν τῷ ἑτέρῳ ποιεῖ τὸ ταῦτόν), while the lapse of time turns μνήμαι back into φαντασίαι (cf. ἐν τῷ ταῦτῳ [sc. ποιεῖ] τὸ ἕτερον).¹²⁰

The cosmic soul moves the cosmos but also discerns it while moving. I suggest that Plutarch's view of time involves both aspects: if the former is the cause of the cosmic clock (the clock that others, mentioned in the eighth *Platonic Question*, falsely mistook for time itself), then the latter is the activity of using that clock to monitor the cosmos.¹²¹ Only the total activity of the cosmic soul is the sought-after concept of time that can guarantee the stability of the sensibles. This activity results in what Plato calls the 'ceaseless and rational life' of the cosmos (ἀπαύστου καὶ ἔμφορον βίου, Pl., *Tim.* 36e quoted by Plu., *De an. procr.* 1016b; cf. ζωὴ [...] ἔμφορον, 1026b). Plato adds – although Plutarch does not include this in his quote – that this cosmic life is 'for all time' (πρὸς τὸν σύμπαντα χρόνον). At this point in the *Timaeus*, Plato has not yet intro-

¹¹⁸ See e.g. Fronterotta 2007 for a modern solution. It should be noted that Plutarch again (n. 115) interprets the revolutions of sameness and difference as distinctly constituted rather than merely distinguished by their movement.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Pl., *Cra.* 437b.

¹²⁰ As I read this admittedly confusing bit, the same word (μνήμη) is used for memory as a capacity of the soul (in 1025a) and for that which is stored in memory (in 1024f), which is just as common in Greek as it is in English (cf. LSJ s.v. μνήμη I.1 and I.2). Time, memory, and φαντασία are also intricately connected in Aristotle's *On Memory and Recollection* (time and memory esp. 449b9–30; memory and φαντασία esp. 449b31–450b11, e.g. 450a12–13: ἡ δὲ μνήμη, καὶ ἡ τῶν νοητῶν, οὐκ ἄνευ φαντάσματός ἐστιν). Plutarch seems to have relied on Aristotle here to fill in the gaps left by Plato, although Plato is preferred where the Aristotelian solution is incompatible (cf. the understanding of δόξα as in Plato, *Sophist* 264b as against Aristotle, *On the Soul* 428a25–26; see Cherniss 1976: 239 n. g).

¹²¹ That the eighth *Quaest. Plat.* is somewhat one-sided in this respect – Plutarch does not elaborate the aspect of discernment, perhaps because it is not relevant in a discussion of the dignity of time – can be gleaned from the endorsement of the definition of soul as 'number itself moving itself' (ἀριθμὸς [...] αὐτὸς ἑαυτὸν κινῶν, 1007c) – a definition attributed to the ancients here but to Xenocrates in *De an. procr.* (1012d–f; cf. p. 42). In the latter treatise, Plutarch criticises this definition because it cannot fully account for the discerning faculty of soul (1023d–f). Cf. Schoppe 1994: 109.

duced his understanding of time as a philosophical concept (i.e. time as a structural cosmic feature marked by periodicity). Here, as sometimes in the *Timaeus*, time is used in a colloquial sense (i.e. time we experience as a unidirectional lapse of moments).¹²² The life with which the cosmic soul endows the cosmos is not only time (philosophically speaking) but it is also in time (colloquially speaking).¹²³ It is only in this latter sense that time is in flux, being *διαφορὰ τοῦ πρόσθεν καὶ νῦν*, which needs to be countered by memory to ensure the diachronic stability of cosmic life.

The same process occurs with regard to human life. In *On the Decline of Oracles* (432a–b), Plutarch's brother Lamprias is both the speaker and the narrator, and in a work that perhaps bore the title *Is Foreknowledge of Future Events Useful?* (fr. 23), Plutarch discusses memory as the complement of prophecy: memory is to the past as prophecy is to the future.¹²⁴ Both accounts of memory can be seen as microcosmic versions of the memory of the cosmic soul. The flux of time (*ῥεῦμα*, *De def. or.* 432a; *παρρηεῖν*, fr. 23) implies, as we have seen, the flux of becoming and threatens to leave us empty-handed (*τῶν γὰρ γεγονότων οὐδὲν ἔστιν οὐδ' ὑφέστηκεν, ἀλλ' ἅμα γίγνεται πάντα καὶ φθείρεται* and *ἕκαστα παραφέροντος*, 432a–b; *εἰς τὸ ἄπειρον [...] καὶ ἀνύπαρκτον καὶ ἄγνωστον* and *τῶν πραγμάτων [...] φερομένων*, fr. 23).¹²⁵ Memory, however, literally and metaphorically saves the day by grasping the past (including the present, which immediately flows into past) (*σφάζειν [...] καὶ φυλάττειν* and *ἀντιλαμβανομένη*, 432a–b; *ἀντιλαμβάνεται [...] καὶ φυλάττει*, fr. 23). This is described in terms that recall the memory of the cosmic soul: the memory of the human soul halts the flux of becoming (*ἴστησι*, fr. 23 ~ *ἴστησιν ἐν μνήμη τὸ ταῦτόν*, *De an. procr.* 1025a) and the result of this is that there can now be a stable *φαντασία* of the past (*τοῖς μὴ παροῦσι φαντασίαν [...] περιτίθησιν*, *De def. or.* 432b ~ *φαντασίαις τε καὶ μνήμαις χρώμενος*, *De an. procr.* 1024f). The stability that is achieved seems to be, although these Platonic intricacies are not elaborated in these

¹²² Thein 2001: esp. 222–238 pays much attention to this ambiguity in *Tim.*

¹²³ Plotinus, whose definition of time as the 'life of the soul' (*ψυχῆς [...] ζωὴν*, 3.7.II.44) is similar to Plutarch's to a certain extent, tries to disentangle these two senses of time (see Smith 1996: 210). His solution, however, depends on a system that is obviously not Plutarch's. An important aspect of Plotinus' interpretation is that the soul, whose life is time, is not in time itself. Therefore, the soul has no need of memory (4.4.15). For Plutarch, on the other hand, memory is essential to soul because it is itself in time.

¹²⁴ The title *Is Foreknowledge of Future Events Useful?* (*εἰ ἢ τῶν μελλόντων πρόγνωσις ὠφέλιμος;*) is given by Stobaeus for the excerpts fr. 21–23; see Sandbach 1959: 96–97.

¹²⁵ Cf. also *Sept. sap. conv.* 146b: lapse of time brings forgetfulness, which – and that is the purpose of the dialogue introduced by this observation – can be remedied by remembrance.

fairly non-technical passages, an approximation of the way in which the cosmic soul deals with the lapse of moments by constituting time in the philosophical sense: the process of making the past available to the present is described as making a circle (κύκλον ποιεῖ, fr. 21) and the φαντασία that becomes available is called οὐσία (*De def. or.* 432b).

These passages, then, show how, in the human soul as in the cosmic soul, memory is an integral part of Plutarch's understanding of time, which depends on the total activity of soul. Without memory the required diachronic stability simply cannot be achieved and time would not be a moving image of eternity.¹²⁶ It has taken a long detour, but the answer to the foolish people from *On Tranquillity of Mind* has presented itself. The diachronic stability of the cosmos is ensured by the cosmic soul. The diachronic stability of our own human selves is ensured by our own soul, which imitates the workings of the cosmic soul by using memory to hold the living being together and stop its bodily flux (τὰ ζῶα συνέχει καὶ ῥεῖν οὐκ ἔῃ τὸν ὄγκον, *Quaest. conv.* 5.10.685c). The very notion of (cosmic and human) soul, as Plutarch understands it, goes against the possibility of presentism. The wise from *On Tranquillity of Mind* are right to conceive of their lives as diachronic unities and to allow for memories to play a role. This is not a matter of mere subjectivity or even 'self-serving falsification'. Their view is ultimately anchored in Plutarch's interpretation of Platonic cosmology.

This cosmologically backed defence of the unity of life is no mere fancy. It is paramount to Plutarch's ethics in general and to *On Tranquillity of Mind* in particular. I briefly mention two examples that are particularly relevant to the work under discussion.

(I) Memory is essential to moral progress. This has been clear since the beginning of *On Tranquillity of Mind*, when Plutarch called on Paccius' memory of what he had learned earlier (πολλάκις ἀκηκοὼς μνημονεύεις, 465a). What Plutarch says here is not that Paccius, as if in a pop quiz, manages to recollect some arcane piece of information that he had once committed to memory. What makes memory an asset to moral progress is the continuous retention and constant application of the memory.¹²⁷ Moral progress is by definition something that happens to a continuous self (cf. ἑαυτοῦ βελτιουμένου πρὸς ἀρετήν, 75b) and awareness of moral progress, which is the explanandum of *On Progress in Virtue*, implies the

¹²⁶ This cosmic role that Plutarch attributes to memory can be contrasted, for instance, to the purely epistemological role played by memory in Alcinous, *Didasc.* 4.5. An overview of ancient philosophical views on memory can be found in Nikulin 2015.

¹²⁷ Cf. *De prof. in virt.* 77c, 83b.

possibility of comparing the self at the present moment with the self at a previous moment.¹²⁸

(2) Moral responsibility similarly depends on diachronic stability. In *On Tranquillity of Mind*, this will come to the fore near the end, when Plutarch points out that past good deeds continue to yield joy while past mischief continues to ail the soul (476e–477c). This latter aspect is explored in a more baroque fashion in the eschatological myths of *On the Sign of Socrates*, *On God's Slowness to Punish*, and *On the Face in the Moon*.¹²⁹ Regardless of how we should interpret these myths, they rely on a continuous self.¹³⁰ In the argumentative part of *On God's Slowness to Punish*, this notion of continuity is opposed to the flux doctrine. More precisely, Plutarch justifies the punishment of entire cities by transposing the continuity of the self to the continuity of the city: both are ἐν [...] καὶ συνεχές (559a). This diachronic stability is regarded as a condition for praise and punishment (559a–b). If we do not admit this diachronic stability of the self and the city, ‘we have unawares cast the whole of existence into the river of Heraclitus’ (ἢ λήσομεν εἰς τὸν Ἡρακλείτειον ἅπαντα πράγματα ποταμὸν ἐμβαλόντες 559c). Now, whatever Plutarch's degree of commitment to the argument in favour of collective punishment,¹³¹ it is clear that, in Plutarch's eyes, the submission of the self to absolute flux would cancel out any sensible notion of moral responsibility.

2.3. Becoming and the self: dualism (§ 15)

Even if the importance for εὐθυμία of a cosmologically founded notion of memory is acknowledged, a problem remains. The risk still exists that we will remember mostly bad experiences while not allowing good memories. The alternative to this brooding sounds familiar to the reader at this point in the work:

¹²⁸ Cf. Roskam 2005b: 247 on *De prof. in virt.* 76c–78a: ‘[A] gradual growth implies necessarily a certain continuity, so that, if one steadily proceeds towards the better without intermissions, one can indeed *by definition* be certain that one is making progress’ (original emphasis). More generally, this pertains to how Plutarch thinks about character as something stable which at the same time allows for development; see Gill 1983; Swain 1989a.

¹²⁹ Cf. e.g. Vernière 1977: 153–215.

¹³⁰ Ingenkamp 2001: 133 aptly speaks of ‘a personal biography that extends beyond the borders of life’.

¹³¹ Cf. e.g. Saunders 1993: 81; Helmig 2005b: 328; Opsomer 2016a: 52–53.

δεῖ δ' ὥσπερ ἐν πινακίῳ χρωμάτων ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ τῶν πραγμάτων τὰ λαμπρὰ καὶ φαιδρὰ προβάλλοντας ἀποκρύπτειν τὰ σκυθρωπὰ καὶ πιέζειν. (*De tranq. an.* 473f)

[L]ike colours in a painting, so in the soul it is right that we should place in the foreground bright and cheerful experiences and conceal and suppress the gloomy.

Plutarch seems to have made the same point earlier (§ 8) when he came up with the possibility of making a favourable internal synthesis of what happens to us. No matter what happens, we have the possibility of undergoing adverse circumstances in a cheerful way: we can, 'mingling good with bad, cause the better to outshine the worse' (μιγνύοντας ἐξάμαυροῦν τὰ χείρονα τοῖς βελτίοσι, 469a). In this earlier passage, too, colours are used as a comparison, although the gloomy colours were not bad but the colours that are excessively bright (τῶν ἄγαν λαμπρῶν) and hurt the eyes when they are wounded. Moreover, the notion of mingling was subsequently dropped in favour of turning away the eyes (ἀποστρέφοντες) from these excessively bright colours. This is how the comparison appears several times in Plutarch's works.¹³² When he revisits the comparison in § 15, however, the subjective perspectivism implied in the earlier passage is tempered at least to some extent. The discrepancy between mingling (μιγνύοντας) and turning away (ἀποστρέφοντες) is removed in favour of the former. The association of τὰ λαμπρὰ with the good, moreover, sets us up for a more objective, Platonic treatment of the good.¹³³

So maybe the point made in § 15 is not exactly the same after all. Still, Plutarch seems to be talking about an internal synthesis ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ. What follows both confirms and complicates this:

ἐξαλειψαὶ γὰρ οὐκ ἔστι παντάπασιν οὐδ' ἀπαλλαγῆναι· 'παλίντροπος γὰρ ἀρμονίη κόσμου, ὅκωσπερ λύρης καὶ τόξου' καὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων καθαρὸν οὐδὲν οὐδ' ἀμιγές. ἀλλ' ὥσπερ ἐν μουσικῇ βαρεῖς φθόγγοι καὶ ὀξεῖς ἐν δὲ γραμματικῇ φωνήεντα καὶ ἄφωνα γράμματα, μουσικὸς δὲ καὶ γραμματικὸς οὐχ ὁ θάτερα δυσχεραίνων καὶ ὑποφεύγων ἀλλ' ὁ πᾶσι χρῆσθαι καὶ μίγνυμαι πρὸς τὸ οἰκεῖον ἐπιστάμενος, οὕτω καὶ τῶν πραγμάτων ἀντιστοιχίας ἐχόντων (ἐπεὶ κατὰ τὸν Εὐριπίδην

‘οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο χωρὶς ἐσθλὰ καὶ κακά,
ἀλλ' ἔστι τις σύγκρασις, ὥστ' ἔχειν καλῶς’),

¹³² *Dem.* 22.6, *De frat. am.* 490c–d, *Comp. Ar. et Men.* 854b–c. Cf. *De ad. et am.* 64a. On Plutarch's comparisons involving painting, see Fuhrmann 1964: 47. On the special case of *De exil.* 599f–600a, see p. 241.

¹³³ On the Platonic connection between light (the sun) and the good, see p. 327.

οὐ δεῖ τοῖς ἐτέροις ἐξαθυμεῖν οὐδ' ἀπαγορεύειν, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ
 ἁρμονικοὺς ἀμβλύνοντας ἀεὶ τοῖς κρείττοσι τὰ χεῖρονα καὶ τὰ φαῦλα
 τοῖς χρηστοῖς ἐμπεριλαμβάνοντας ἐμμελὲς τὸ τοῦ βίου μῖγμα ποιεῖν
 καὶ οἰκεῖον αὐτοῖς. οὐ γάρ, ὡς ὁ Μένανδρός φησιν,

‘ἅπαντι δαίμων ἀνδρὶ συμπαρίσταται
 εὐθύς γενομένῳ, μυσταγωγὸς τοῦ βίου ἀγαθός,’

ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον, ὡς Ἐμπεδοκλῆς, διτταί τινες ἕκαστον ἡμῶν γινόμενον
 παραλαμβάνουσι καὶ κατάρχονται μοῖραι καὶ δαίμονες·

‘ἔνθ' ἦσαν Χθονίη τε καὶ Ἥλιόπη ταναῶπις,
 Δῆρις θ' αἰματόεσσα καὶ Ἀρμονίη θεμερῶπις,
 Καλλιστώ τ' Αἴσχηρ τε Θόωσά τε Δηναίη τε,
 Νημερτής τ' ἐρόεσσα μελάγκαρπός τ' Ἀσάφεια.’ (*De tranq. an.*
 473f–474c)

For to wipe them [i.e. the adverse circumstances] out and be rid of them altogether is impossible. ‘For the harmony of the universe, like that of a lyre or a bow, is by alternatives,’ [Heraclitus, fr. B51 DK] and in mortal affairs there is nothing pure and unmixed. But as in music there are low notes and high notes, and in grammar there are vowels and consonants, yet a musician or a grammarian is not the man who dislikes and avoids the one or the other, but rather the man who knows how to use all and to blend them properly, so also in human affairs, which contain the principles of opposition to each other (since, as Euripides has it,

‘The good and bad cannot be kept apart,
 But there’s some blending, so that all is well’ [*Aeolus* fr. 21 *TrGF*])

we should not be disheartened or despondent in adversity, but like musicians who achieve harmony by consistently deadening bad music with better and encompassing the bad with the good, we should make the blending of our life harmonious and conformable to our own nature. For it is not true, as Menander says, that

‘By every man at birth a Spirit stands,
 A guide of virtue for life’s mysteries’; [fr. 500 *PCG*]

but rather, as Empedocles affirms, two Fates, as it were, or Spirits, receive in their care each one of us at birth and consecrate us:

‘Chthonia was there and far-seeing Heliopê,
And bloody Deris, grave-eyed Harmonia,
Callisto, Aeschra, Thoösa, and Denaea,
Lovely Nemertes, dark-eyed Asapheia’ [fr. B122 DK].

Plutarch is indeed elaborating on the internal synthesis ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ: we learn that we should actively harmonise the mixture of our life (ἐμμελές τὸ τοῦ βίου μῖγμα ποιεῖν) and bring it into conformity with our own nature (οἰκεῖον [sc. ποιεῖν] αὐτοῖς; cf. πᾶσι χρῆσθαι καὶ μειγνύναι πρὸς τὸ οἰκεῖον). However, the mention of πράγματα and the many quotations in this passage make it clear that Plutarch is no longer solely talking about a subjective, perspectivistic internal synthesis. The synthesis should conform to the inevitably dual character of the human condition: the internal should be a reflection of the external.

Dillon finds Plutarch’s use of Empedocles here ‘disquieting’ because the passage can be taken to suggest that man has both a good and an evil guardian demon.¹³⁴ I do not think that the disquiet is fully warranted. Elsewhere, the good demon can refer to the νοῦς as it exists in the embodied human (*De genio Socr.* 591c–e with Pl., *Tim.* 90a).¹³⁵ Nothing prevents us from understanding the reference to demons in *On Tranquillity of Mind* in the same way. In that case, we do not need to look for Plutarch’s evil guardian in the ‘lower reaches of Middle Platonism’, as Dillon suggests: the second demon would just be the irrational part of the human soul.¹³⁶ This is fully in line with Plutarch’s use of Empedocles elsewhere.¹³⁷

This interpretation allows us to make sense of the rather enigmatic advice to make the mixture of life οἰκεῖος to ourselves. We get a glimpse here of Plutarch’s brand of what the Stoics famously called οἰκειώσις: the ‘recognition and appreciation of something as belonging to one’.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ Dillon 1996: 221.

¹³⁵ Cf. Dillon 1996: 212–213.

¹³⁶ I see no reason for following Brenk 1973: 9; 1977: 146–147 in assuming that δαίμων in the subsequent quotations from Menander and Empedocles can be straightforwardly identified with τύχη.

¹³⁷ In *De Is. et Os.* 370e the Empedoclean demons from fr. B122 DK are connected with the more general principles of φιλότης and νεῖκος. These latter notions, in turn, are used to refer to the rational and irrational part of the cosmic soul in *De an. procr.* 1026b. It should not surprise us, then, to find the demons in a sketch of the human soul as well.

¹³⁸ Striker 1996: 281. Cf. Plutarch’s definition at *De Stoic. rep.* 1038c: ἡ γὰρ οἰκειώσις αἴσθησις ἔοικε τοῦ οἰκεῖου καὶ ἀντίληψις εἶναι (‘congeniality seems to be sensation

After several earlier injunctions to regard adverse external circumstances as οἰκεῖα (*De tranq. an.* 467a–c), we now finally learn what this means and how it differs significantly from how a Stoic would understand it: by coming to understand, as the quotation from Empedocles helps us to do, that the human condition is characterised by duality, we can see that the mixture of good and bad that is life is actually in conformity with human nature.

Plutarch sanctions the practice of making an internal synthesis of good and bad by referring to the existence of an external synthesis of good and bad, as it is sketched by Heraclitus and Euripides. The result is that the internal synthesis is not, as the first part of *On Tranquillity of Mind* has led us to believe, a matter of perspectivism. Rather, the internal synthesis conforms to human nature, which in turn, through the parallelism between human and cosmic soul, conforms to the external synthesis that is the nature of the cosmos.¹³⁹ It is too soon to conclude that it is legitimate to allow the good to outweigh the bad in the internal synthesis because the good outweighs the bad in the external synthesis, but this is where Plutarch will lead us in the end. For now, what should concern us is the rather rigidly dualistic picture that Plutarch paints here. To put it bluntly, should it not worry us that, according to Plutarch, an evil principle diametrically opposed to the good is ineradicably present in both humans and the cosmos? Apart from answering this question, looking further into the dualism of *On Tranquillity of Mind* will show why I think, as with the previous paragraph on time and memory, that Plutarch puts Plato front and centre here without naming him.

To understand the presentation of dualism in *On Tranquillity of Mind*, we should connect it to two other treatises. In *On the Generation of the Soul* and in *On Isis and Osiris*, we find dualistic passages that share enough material with the work at hand to suspect that Plutarch based all three accounts on the same source or ὑπόμνημα (table 5.2).¹⁴⁰ Mansfeld has studied the historical presentation of dualism in *On Isis and Osiris* and has concluded that Plutarch based it on a doxographical source

or perception of what is congenial'). We have no way of knowing whether this was Plutarch's own working definition (Striker 1996: 281 n.1) or a definition taken from a Stoic source (Long and Sedley 1987: 351). Cf. Caballero 1999a; 1999b; Boys-Stones 2014.

¹³⁹ Contra, *eheu*, Demulder 2017b: 207, where I found this passage perplexing and concluded that Plutarch simply was not interested in the distinction between internal and external here. I still think that the passage is confusing, but now I think that it is *meant* to confuse to some extent. To bring out the parallel between the internal human and the external cosmic condition is precisely the point. Blurring the lines between the two conditions somewhat might have seemed just the way to do that.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Broecker 1954: 149–151.

tinged by neopythagoreanism.¹⁴¹ This is an important, well-made point, but it does not relieve us of the task to investigate Plutarch's authorial adaptation of the material. Quite the contrary – as the table shows, Plutarch freely adapted the selection and disposition of the doxography to the context in which he inserted it. This is not just a matter of style. Consider, for instance, the function of Heraclitus fr. B51 DK in the three works. In *On Tranquillity of Mind* and *On Isis and Osiris*, the fragment is coupled with a quotation from Euripides *Aeolus* (fr. 21 *TrGF*), which causes the emphasis of the Heraclitean fragment to lie on the *harmony* of the opposed elements. In *On the Generation of the Soul*, on the other hand, the emphasis is on Heraclitus as one of several thinkers who discerned an *opposition* in the harmony of the cosmos. The function of the same material can change depending on the context.¹⁴²

Not only the function of Heraclitus fr. B51 DK pits *On Tranquillity of Mind* and *On Isis and Osiris* against *On the Generation of the Soul*. The function of the fragment, placed near the beginning of the doxographical material in all three works, corresponds to the general development of the passages: while, in *On the Generation of the Soul*, there is a shift from opposition to harmony in the presentation of historical material, the shift in *On Isis and Osiris* and *On Tranquillity of Mind* is the other way around. This in turn goes together with a generally more radical dualism in the latter two treatises, while the dualism of *On the Generation of the Soul* is more nuanced. Plutarch's so-called dualism, then, comes in different guises. When it comes up in the context of Platonic exegesis, as in *On the Generation of the Soul*, it is altogether mitigated. When it is presented more radically, as in *On Tranquillity of Mind* and *On Isis and Osiris*, this must have a reason. It will be worthwhile to dwell on this dualistic diversity, since it may explain how Plato is relevant for this passage of *On Tranquillity of Mind*, and, at the same time, why the du-

¹⁴¹ Mansfeld 1992: 274–290. Cf. also Donini 1994: 5075–5082, who points to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.

¹⁴² Both in *De Is. et Os.* and in *De an. procr.* the particular function of fr. B51 DK (*De Is. et Os.* 369b; *De an. procr.* 1026b) is balanced out later on by reference to other Heraclitean fragments: fr. B53 DK supplies the compensatory focus on opposition at *De Is. et Os.* 370d (Ἡράκλειτος μὲν γὰρ ἄντικρυς 'πόλεμον' ὀνομάζει 'πατέρα καὶ βασιλέα καὶ κύριον πάντων'); fr. B54 DK accounts for the harmonious side at *De an. procr.* 1026c ('ἁρμονίη γὰρ ἀφανῆς φανερῆς κρείττων' καθ' Ἡράκλειτον). If we can rely on the manuscript tradition, Plutarch wrote *παλίντονος* when quoting fr. B51 DK in *De Is. et Os.*, but *παλίντροπος* in *De an. procr.* and *De tranq. an.* Kirk 1954: 211 suggests that '[t]he divergence in texts of Plutarch may have been due to uncertainty by Plutarch himself'; cf. also Hershbell 1977: 185–186, 189 n. 42, 195–197.

alism is more radical than Plutarch's reading of Plato strictly allows.¹⁴³ I will briefly return to the musical comparison in *On Tranquillity of Mind* (474a–b) and *On the Generation of the Soul* (1026a) discussed earlier (p. 73–74) before turning to Plutarch's presentation of doxographical material in these two works and in *On Isis and Osiris*.

Table 5.2: Plutarch's histories of dualism

<i>De tranq. an.</i> § 15	<i>De Is. et Os.</i> § 45–48	<i>De an. procr.</i> § 27
A. Heraclitus, fr. B51 DK	A. Heraclitus, fr. B51 DK	B. comparison: music
B. comparison: music (and language)	C. Euripides, <i>Aeolus</i> fr. 21 <i>TrGF</i>	± Plato, <i>Tim.</i> 36e, 47e–48a
C. Euripides, <i>Aeolus</i> fr. 21 <i>TrGF</i>	contra Homer, <i>Iliad</i> 24.527–528 (<i>ap.</i> Plato, <i>Resp.</i> 379d)	contra οἱ πολλοί (εἰμαρμένη)
contra Menander, fr. 500 <i>PCG</i>	± contra Zoroaster	(D.) Empedocles
D. Empedocles, fr. B122 DK	Chaldeans	A. Heraclitus, fr. B51 DK
	traditional Greek pantheon	Parmenides
	Heraclitus, fr. B53, B94 DK	Anaxagoras
	D. Empedocles, fr. B18, B17, B122 DK	Zoroaster
	Pythagoreans	contra Euripides, <i>Troïades</i> 886
	Anaxagoras	contra Egyptian mythology (Horus)
	Aristotle	Heraclitus, fr. B54 DK
	Plato, <i>Tim.</i> 35a; <i>Leg.</i> 896d	

¹⁴³ On the diversity of Plutarch's dualism, see esp. Almagor 2013, although I am more inclined than he is to see a coherent substratum underneath the various presentations, as the following discussion will bring out.

As we saw earlier, the musical comparison in *On the Generation of the Soul* carefully mirrors the elements that constitute a song and the elements that constitute (human or cosmic) soul. Divisible and indivisible being correspond to sound (φώνη) and thought (διάνοια), while the elements involved in the second stage of the soul's generation – sameness and difference – are compared to the second stage of composing a song: setting the lyrics to music by applying tones (φθόγγοι) and intervals (διαστήματα). That we are dealing with a mitigated dualism here is immediately clear from the inclusion of an intermediary element (a mixture of divisible and indivisible being) between the two extreme poles (sameness and difference). The comparison suggests that the intermediate term has a nature that differs from that of the poles: the lyrics of the song cannot possibly be said to derive from tones and intervals. The question is whether the same thing can go for the two kinds of being that are ingredients of soul: they are certainly different from sameness and difference (Xenocrates is criticised for failing to see this, *De an. procr.* 1013d), but elsewhere Plutarch notes that indivisible being is akin to sameness and divisible being to difference (1025b). In the end, it seems hard to evade the conclusion that the two kinds of being ultimately derive from the extreme poles.¹⁴⁴ This is not at all brought out by the comparison, which overemphasises the fact that the dualism of *On the Generation of the Soul* is, paradoxically, a dualism with a tertium quid: as Plutarch says shortly before launching into this comparison, the combination of sameness and difference themselves ‘has no fruitful result’ (οὐδὲν [...] ποιεῖ γόνιμον), but ‘a third term is required’ (δεῖται τρίτης τινός, *De an. procr.* 1025f). A second aspect that mitigates the dualism here, if we follow the comparison, is that it would be too simple to equate the extreme terms with good and bad. Interval is needed for song – something good – to come about. Similarly, difference is needed for the cosmos – something good – to come about: without difference, sameness would be utterly immobile (1025f).¹⁴⁵

If we turn to the parallel comparison in *On Tranquillity of Mind*, it quickly becomes clear that it is not perfectly analogous after all. This version of the comparison does not feature a middle term, and as such it already reflects a stricter dualism than the comparison in *On the Generation of the Soul*. Moreover, the extreme terms with which the musician is dealing are, in this case, clearly marked as good and bad (τοῖς κρείττοσι

¹⁴⁴ In *De an. procr.* 1024b–d, Plutarch seems to suggest a system that has sameness and indivisible being derive from the one and difference and divisible being from the dyad. See Opsomer 2007c: 381–382. Again the view expressed here is slightly different from that in Demulder 2017b: 208.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Opsomer 2007c: 383.

τὰ χείρονα καὶ τὰ φαῦλα τοῖς χρηστοῖς). We can see Plutarch struggling somewhat to achieve this simplified version of the comparison. The middle term is cut out immediately: there is no mention of the lyrics of the song, which constituted the middle term in the more refined version. Instead, the functions of music and language are mentioned side by side: the μουσικός and the γραμματικός each have to deal with their own mixing challenge. At first, the terms are only implicitly, if at all, linked with good and bad.¹⁴⁶ This changes when the comparison is picked up again after the quotation from Euripides. At that point, the extreme terms used by the musician unambiguously acquire the values of good and bad, but this is to the detriment of the comparison itself: it is, after all, unconvincing that a musician would need (or would inevitably have to deal with) bad music in order to achieve harmony. Moreover, the grammarian is entirely left out from the second part of the comparison.

Since the two musical comparisons show that the dualism of *On Tranquillity of Mind* is significantly more radical than that of *On the Generation of the Soul*, the question is whether Plutarch considered the more radical version to be Platonic at all. After all, Plato is not mentioned in the passage from *On Tranquillity of Mind*, although it is a parallel to two passages where he does play an important role: in *On Isis and Osiris*, the history of dualism culminates in Plato's *Laws* and *Timaeus*, and in *On the Generation of the Soul*, the exegesis of the *Timaeus* is the very subject of the work. Is Plutarch's Platonic take on dualism, then, relevant to or even compatible with what we find on *On Tranquillity of Mind*? I will address this problem by turning to the doxographical material to show how Plutarch conceived of the history of dualism.

¹⁴⁶ In Greek music, the lowest tones, which formed the melody of the song, are the most likely candidate for the good term. The lowest tone in a scale is, after all, called 'highest' (ὕψατη) because of its position as the highest string on the lyre. This adjective is generally used to describe markedly good things such as Zeus. This is the case in *Quaest. Plat.* 9.1007e–f, where the possibility is raised that Plato compared the rational part of the soul to the ὕψατη in *Resp.* 4.443d. In the same *quaestio*, Plutarch compares the three parts of the soul to vowels, semivowels, and consonants. The vowels probably represent the rational part here, since Plutarch seems to be aiming at a connection between ἄφωνος (consonant) and ἄλογος; cf. *Quaest. conv.* 1.1.613e, where the presence of a few uneducated men at a symposium of erudites is compared to the presence of a few consonants among vowels. This may not have been a peculiarity of Plutarch's: at *Quaest. conv.* 9.2.737e, an eventually rejected explanation of the position of the letter alpha at the beginning of the alphabet uses the argument that the alpha is better than most other letters because it is a vowel; see Roskam 2020: 288–292 on the traditional background of this explanation.

First, let us distinguish three groups that play a role in the dualistic accounts: (1) the people, (2) the poets, and (3) the barbarians. We may at first have high hopes for the contribution of these groups: in *On Isis and Osiris* (369b), Plutarch presents dualism as an opinion that has been transmitted by ποιηταί and νομοθέται and that can be found among Greeks and barbarians (βαρβάρους καὶ Ἕλλησι). However, it turns out that all three groups are disappointingly unreliable and that we will have to rely instead on the other people mentioned in the same passage of *On Isis and Osiris*: the philosophers.

(1) In *On Isis and Osiris* (370c), the ‘beliefs of the Greeks’ (τὰ Ἑλλήνων) are included among the correct, dualistic doctrines by reference to the opposition of Zeus and Hades. Moreover, the opposition of Aphrodite and Ares gave rise to harmony. In *On the Generation of the Soul* (1026b), however, οἱ πολλοί are criticised for describing the totality of the cosmic soul as εἰμαρμένη.¹⁴⁷ In other words, they do not recognise the inherent duality of the cosmic soul. The dualistic doxography that follows proves them wrong.

(2) The fragment from Euripides’ *Aeolus*, which says that good and bad cannot be separated but that it is a good thing that they are commingled, is used by Plutarch as a succinct testimony in favour of dualism in *On Tranquillity of Mind* (474a) and *On Isis and Osiris* (369b). However, by way of a different quotation, Euripides is criticised for not endorsing dualism in *On the Generation of the Soul* (1026b–c). Moreover, the other two accounts also contain criticism of the poets (Menander in *On Tranquillity of Mind* and Homer in *On Isis and Osiris*). It is clear, then, that the poets are rather unreliable guides on the matter.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ This may simultaneously be a dig at the Stoics, who held a similar view (cf. *De def. or.* 425e or e.g. Cicero, *De nat. deor.* 1.55). The Stoic doctrine of monism, then, is brought down to the level of folk wisdom. Cf. p. 35. For my reading of *De an. procr.* 1026b, see p. 134–135.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Van der Stockt 1992b: 164 on the connection of tragedy with falsehood in Plutarch and contra Opsomer 2020b: 296–297 who maintains that there is no ‘serious criticism’ of Euripides involved here. Another example of the unreliability of the poets in matters of dualism is Plutarch’s use of Homer, *Iliad* 24.527–528, which says that there are two urns on Zeus’ doorstep: one with good things and one with evils. These verses, which Plutarch viewed through the lense of Plato’s rebuttal of them (*Resp.* 2.379d; see *De aud. poet.* 24b), are criticised in *De Is. et Os.* 369c because they fail to state that there are two antagonistic forces rather than one force with two urns at his disposal. This criticism actually follows the line of Plato’s rebuttal: evil cannot be attributed to Zeus, who only fosters good things. In *De tranq. an.* 473b and *De exil.* 600c, the verses are criticised for a different reason: they see the antagonism between good and bad as something external, while it is an internal matter within the human soul. This view is, as we have seen, subsequently nuanced in *De tranq. an.* and develops into a view that does allow for external

(3) The case of the barbarians is more complicated. In *On the Generation of the Soul* (1026b–c), there is a contrast between Zoroastrian and Egyptian religion. Zoroaster is quite matter-of-factly lumped together with the Greek philosophers Empedocles, Heraclitus, Parmenides, and Anaxagoras. He is acknowledged for having built a dualistic system around the opposition between the god Oromasdes and the demon Areimanius. The Egyptians, on the other hand, are brought in as an example of dualism done the wrong way:

Αἰγύπτιοι μὲν οὖν μυθολογοῦντες αἰνίττονται, τοῦ Ὁρου δίκην ὀφλόντος τῷ μὲν πατρὶ τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὸ αἷμα τῇ δὲ μητρὶ τὴν σάρκα καὶ τὴν πιμελὴν προσνεμηθῆναι. τῆς δὲ ψυχῆς οὐδὲν μὲν εἰλικρινές οὐδ' ἄκρατον οὐδὲ χωρὶς ἀπολείπεται τῶν ἄλλων. (*De an. procr.* 1026c)

Now, the Egyptians in a mythical account say enigmatically that, when Horus was convicted, the breath and blood were assigned to his father and the flesh and fat to his mother. Of the soul, however, nothing remains pure or unmixed or separate from the rest [...].

The association of their contribution with μῦθος and αἴνιγμα, although the terms certainly do not always spell untruth in Plutarch, do not predict a reliable account.¹⁴⁹ The μέν-δέ structure opposes the dualistic story of the dismemberment of Horus to the proper Platonic-Plutarchan view on the soul.¹⁵⁰ The opposition makes it clear that the essence of Plutarch's dualism – and this is the conclusion of the historical overview in *On the Generation of the Soul* – is that all elements get thoroughly mixed and little dualism remains after the intervention of the demiurge, whereas the Egyptians are presented as reversing the cosmic order by first assuming unity, which later gets disrupted. Compared to the Platonic har-

dualism. On this view, as I have just mentioned, the verses are subject to the first criticism. Whatever philosophical perspective one chooses to endorse, then, Homer turns out to be wrong. Cf. the attempt by Maximus of Tyre (*Or.* 34.3), who is much more devoted to Homer (see n. 294), to interpret these verses. That the two criticisms were connected in Plutarch's mind might be indicated by the fact that the Homeric verses occur both in the dualistic doxography of *De Is. et Os.* and shortly before the dualistic part of *De tranq. an.* I have not indicated the occurrence of the verses in *De tranq. an.* in table 5.2, but given Plutarch's habit of 'introducing an element of a cluster before the cluster itself is produced' (Van der Stockt 2004a: 148; see Van der Stockt 1999b: 585), it could have been included with some plausibility. This would emphasise the close connection between § 14 (which has the Homeric verses at the beginning) and § 15 (the dualistic section).

¹⁴⁹ See Hardie 1992: 4743–4739.

¹⁵⁰ On Plutarch's use of this episode from the Horus myth, see Hani 1976: 102–104.

mony (evoked by Heraclitus, fr. B54 DK) in which – so Plutarch writes just after mentioning the Egyptians – ‘god, making the mixture, sank and concealed the differences and the diversities’ (τὰς διαφορὰς καὶ τὰς ἑτερότητας ὁ μινύων θεὸς ἔκρυψε καὶ κατέδυσεν, 1026c), Egyptian dualism remains too extreme for Plutarch’s taste, as it does not allow for any mixture.

The impression that *On the Generation of the Soul* leaves of this particular episode of Egyptian mythology is confirmed when we look for the same story in Plutarch’s main account on Egyptian culture, *On Isis and Osiris*: the story of the dismemberment of Horus is explicitly excluded, and Plutarch calls it one of the ‘most outrageous’ (τῶν δυσφημοτάτων, 358e) of tales. However, we should not reject Egyptian religion as an important predecessor in the dualistic doctrine just yet. The picture that emerges from the dualistic doxography in *On Isis and Osiris* is, after all, the opposite of what *On the Generation of the Soul* has led us to believe: the Egyptians are rehabilitated and the Zoroastrians are criticised. The rehabilitation of the Egyptians is hardly a surprise if the purpose of *On Isis and Osiris* is taken into account. In this work, Plutarch develops a philosophical interpretation of the Egyptian myth of Isis and Osiris, and he concludes his overview of the history of dualism by expressing his commitment to ‘the endeavour to reconcile the religious beliefs of the Egyptians with this [i.e. Platonic] philosophy’ (τοῦ λόγου τὴν Αἰγυπτίων θεολογίαν μάλιστα ταύτη τῇ φιλοσοφίᾳ συνοικειοῦντος, 371a). The opposition between the good Osiris and the evil Typhon, with Isis as a mediating figure, is certainly the kind of dualism that Plutarch could appreciate.

Zoroaster’s doctrine involving Oromasdes and Areimanius, which was briefly yet positively acknowledged in *On the Generation of the Soul*, receives much more attention in *On Isis and Osiris* (369e–370c). Dillon has commented on this passage that Plutarch ‘bestows high praise on the Zoroastrian theology’¹⁵¹ and, indeed, its inclusion among the dualistic doctrines means that Zoroaster should be counted among ‘the great majority and the wisest of men’ (τοῖς πλείστοις καὶ σοφωτάτοις, 369d). However, this is not the whole story. The mention of, for instance, the Zoroastrian practice of apotropaic offerings to the negative divine force and their superstitions about plants and animals are not followed by a reference to a philosophical interpretation of these habits, as is the case with the Egyptian material.¹⁵² While Egyptian rituals and beliefs – somewhat paradoxically – contain nothing ‘fabulous’ (μυθῶδες, 353e), the Zoroastrian material is presented as containing ‘many fabulous stories’ (πολλὰ

¹⁵¹ Dillon 1996: 203. Cf. Dillon 2019.

¹⁵² On the similarities of Egyptian and Zoroastrian myths and rituals in *De Is. et Os.*, see Brout 2004: 73–79. Cf. also Hani 1964 for Plutarch’s views on Zoroastrian dualism.

μυθώδη, 369e).¹⁵³ The long excursus on Zoroastrianism serves as an indirect reminder of what is at the heart of *On Isis and Osiris*: rituals and myths are in need of such philosophical explanation (e.g. 355b–d, 378a). While in *On the Generation of the Soul* Zoroaster was mixed in with the Greek philosophers, he is now separated from the group that is labelled as φιλόσοφοι (370d).

The people, the poets, and the barbarians, then, all turn out to be ambivalent champions of dualism: what Plutarch makes them say in one writing in favour of a correct conception of dualism can be contrasted with their testimony elsewhere. This unphilosophic instability at least suggests that, although dualism is presented as a transhistorical and transcultural phenomenon, only the Greek philosophers got it right. There is, of course, one Greek philosopher who stands out. In *On the Generation of the Soul*, the ancient testimonies are brought in to illustrate how the Platonic construction of the cosmic soul, which has indivisible being, divisible being, sameness, and difference as its ingredients according to Plutarch's reading of the *Timaeus*, causes the duality of cosmic life. In *On Isis and Osiris*, Plato is adduced as the climax of the dualistic doxography, but the picture is somewhat different compared to *On the Generation of the Soul*:

[...] Πλάτων δὲ πολλαχοῦ μὲν οἷον ἐπηλυγαζόμενος καὶ παρακαλυπτόμενος τῶν ἐναντίων ἀρχῶν τὴν μὲν ταῦτὸν ὀνομάζει, τὴν δὲ θάτερον· ἐν δὲ τοῖς Νόμοις ἤδη πρεσβύτερος ὢν οὐ δι' αἰνιγμῶν οὐδὲ συμβολικῶς, ἀλλὰ κυρίοις ὀνόμασιν οὐ μὲν ψυχῆ φησι κινεῖσθαι τὸν κόσμον, ἀλλὰ πλείοσιν ἴσως δυεῖν δὲ πάντως οὐκ ἐλάττωσιν· ὢν τὴν μὲν ἀγαθουργὸν εἶναι, τὴν δ' ἐναντίαν ταύτη καὶ τῶν ἐναντίων δημιουργόν· ἀπολείπει δὲ καὶ τρίτην τινὰ μεταξὺ φύσιν οὐκ ἄψυχον οὐδ' ἄλογον οὐδ' ἀκίνητον ἐξ αὐτῆς, ὥσπερ ἔνιοι νομίζουσιν, ἀλλ' ἀνακειμένην ἀμοφοῖν ἐκείναις, ἐφιεμένην δὲ τῆς ἀμείνονος ἀεὶ καὶ ποθοῦσαν καὶ διώκουσαν [...] (*De Is. et Os.* 370e–371a)

[...] Plato, in many passages [esp. *Tim.* 35a], as though obscuring and veiling his opinion, names the one of the opposing principles 'Identity' and the other 'Difference'; but in his *Laws* [10.896d–897d], when he had grown considerably older, he asserts, not in circumlocution or symbolically, but in specific words, that the movement of the Universe is actuated not by one soul, but perhaps by several, and certainly by not less than two, and of these the one is beneficent, and the other is opposed to it and the artificer of things opposed. Between these he leaves a certain third nature, not inanimate nor irrational nor without

¹⁵³ Cf. 376e, but see 365d for a more neutral use of the term. See also e.g. *De Pyth. or.* 406e.

the power to move of itself, as some think, but with dependence on both those others, and desiring the better always and yearning after it and pursuing it [...].

If we take *On the Generation of the Soul* to be the definitive account, as Plutarch himself indicates we should (1012b), we are faced with a few problems when reading this passage from *On Isis and Osiris* (cf. p. 46). (1) In *On Isis and Osiris*, Plutarch equates the principles of sameness and difference from the *Timaeus* with the beneficent soul and its opposite from the *Laws*. By doing this, he conflates entities that he painstakingly distinguishes in *On the Generation of the Soul*. There, Plutarch spells out that the ‘disorderly and maleficent soul’ (ψυχὴν ἄτακτον [...] καὶ κακόποιον, 1014e; similarly 1015e) is divisible being, not difference. What is called the beneficent soul in the *Laws* – the opposite of the maleficent soul – is not really soul but indivisible being, in other words intellect that turns the precosmic soul stuff into the cosmic soul.¹⁵⁴ (2) In *On Isis and Osiris*, Plutarch treats the souls from the *Laws* as two separate, simultaneously active cosmic souls, whereas according to *On the Generation of the Soul* (e.g. 1015e–f), the maleficent soul is, as I have just mentioned, precosmic soul that is the basis for the cosmic soul forged by the demiurge. (3) As in *On the Generation of the Soul*, Plutarch mitigates the dualism that he attributes to Plato by adding a mediating entity between the two extreme poles. This distinguishes Plato from the other dualistic philosophers. However, in *On Isis and Osiris*, the mediator and the extreme poles are, as the previous point already suggested, separately active in the cosmos, whereas in *On the Generation of the Soul*, the result is a mixture, which includes sameness, difference, and the mediating basis consisting of indivisible and divisible being. (4) As we have seen in the discussion of the musical comparison, the entities of sameness and difference as they appear in *On the Generation of the Soul* cannot be unambiguously equated with goodness and badness. This is different in *On Isis and Osiris*, where sameness causes the good and difference the bad.

What all these issues have in common is that they facilitate Plutarch’s respectful interpretation of the Egyptian myth without shaking the foundations of his Platonism.¹⁵⁵ In *On Isis and Osiris*, the presentation of

¹⁵⁴ Opsomer 2007c: 385; in *De Is. et Os.*, ‘Plutarch cites Plato at the end of a dualistic doxography and treats sameness and difference as equivalent with the two souls of the *Laws*. He does not care to explain that sameness and difference are the higher principles from which the irrational soul (unlimitedness) and the intellective soul, or more precisely, the intellect of the soul (indivisible being, limit) derive’.

¹⁵⁵ Opsomer 2007c: 384 n. 20: ‘[W]hat differences there are [sc. between the dualism of *De Is. et Os.* and that of other Plutarchan works, including *De an. procr.*] can be explained by the exigencies of the Egyptian myths to be explained’; cf. Ferrari 1995b: 75–

Platonic dualism renders a clear-cut scheme of opposition between good and bad in which the Egyptian deities Osiris and Typhon fit more easily than in the scheme of *On the Generation of the Soul*.¹⁵⁶ The description of the separate middle entity allows for a philosophical interpretation of the figure of Isis, who combines features of matter and soul. And this is indeed what follows in the remainder of the work, which is devoted, as Plutarch announces, to ‘the endeavour to reconcile the religious beliefs of the Egyptians with this philosophy’ (τοῦ λόγου τὴν Αἰγυπτίωv θεολογίαν μάλιστα ταύτη τῆ φιλοσοφία συνοικειοῦντος, 371a).

What the discussion of Plutarch’s presentations of the history of dualism in *On the Generation of the Soul* and *On Isis and Osiris* has shown is that, according to Plutarch, Platonic dualism allows for a spectrum of correct presentations. Popular, poetic, and barbarian sources can be adduced as valid illustrations of the phenomenon, although they remain ambiguous and depend on the possibility of Greek philosophical interpretation.¹⁵⁷ At the same time, the presentation of Plato’s take on dualism turns out to be adaptable in the interest of conforming it to the non-Platonic material. In *On Isis and Osiris*, where Egyptian religion is at least formally the main concern, we find a more radical Platonic dualism because this facilitates the philosophical interpretation of Osiris, Isis, and Typhon.¹⁵⁸

76. Griffiths 1970 and Hani 1976 generally point out Plutarch’s truthful presentation of the Egyptian material. For an interpretation that contrasts the dualisms in *De an. procr.* and *De Is. et Os.* more than I do, see Alt 1993: 16–29. Cf. also Deuse 1983: 27–42, who sees a development from *De Is. et Os.* to *De an. procr.* On the cosmological aspects of *De Is. et Os.*, see also e.g. Thévenaz 1938: 113–114; Ferrari 1995b: 69–113; 1996a; Dillon 1996: 200–206; 2002a: 229–234. By focusing on powers rather than cosmological entities, Petrucci 2016c convincingly shows how the identification of Isis with matter and cosmic soul can be explained, but see Deuse 1983: 27–37; Ferrari 1995b: 85–86; 1996a: 50 for some problems with this identification within the context of Plutarch’s take on matter.

¹⁵⁶ On the dualism of *De Is. et Os.* as ‘radical’, see Bianchi 1987: 354.

¹⁵⁷ Isis, for instance, gets dragged to the middle perhaps more than she should be and, in any case, more than she was in the demonological part of the treatise; cf. Griffiths 1970: 26–27 and 58.

¹⁵⁸ My interpretation provides, I think, a way of reconciling two interpretative strands that only appear to be mutually exclusive. On the one hand, it has been noted that *De Is. et Os.* is marked by genuine ‘Egyptomania’ on Plutarch’s part (esp. Brenk 1999; cf. Ries 1982; Bianchi 1986; 1987); on the other hand, the work has been considered as an example of Hellenocentric (and, more specifically, ‘Platonocentric’) cultural appropriation (esp. Richter 2001, cf. Richter 2011: 207–229, who seems to have largely convinced Brenk 2017). I submit that Plutarch’s account of dualism in *De Is. et Os.* combines active processes of cultural extroversion and introversion. This combination goes hand in hand with what Boys-Stones has described as the essence of the development of dogmatic Platonism: the exploration of ancient wisdom, which contained basic truths from which

What does this mean for the dualism in *On Tranquillity of Mind*? We have seen that the musical comparison in *On Tranquillity of Mind* suggests a more radical dualism than the parallel comparison in *On the Generation of the Soul*, which is supposed to back Plutarch's technical exegesis of Plato's *Timaeus*. This could possibly indicate that the more radical dualism is not properly Platonic. However, the confrontation of the doxographical accounts in *On Isis and Osiris* and *On the Generation of the Soul* has shown that Plato, too, is a somewhat adaptable source of dualism. I think, then, that the dualism of *On Tranquillity of Mind* is certainly Platonic, although Plato is not explicitly mentioned at this point in the work. The parallel passages from *On the Generation of the Soul* and *On Isis and Osiris* – Plato certainly plays a key role in both – are a strong indication of this. We should keep in mind, however, that the dualism of *On Tranquillity of Mind* appears in the same, rather radical guise as that of *On Isis and Osiris*. The similarity between the dualisms in the two works was already suggested at the beginning when we saw that the accounts of *On Tranquillity of Mind* and *On Isis and Osiris* showed a similar development from unity to division, opposite to the development of the passage from *On the Generation of the Soul*. *On Isis and Osiris* contains a more radical version of Platonic dualism to allow for its fusion with the Egyptian material. Similarly, *On Tranquillity of Mind* contains a more radical version of Platonic dualism to make it fit the practical and ethical character of the work: it concerns dealing with bad luck by connecting the human condition to the cosmic condition and understanding both prosperity and adversity within a cosmic framework. That this is not painstakingly technical exegesis of Plato's *Timaeus* certainly does not mean that the cosmology of the *Timaeus* is absent.¹⁵⁹

non-Platonic philosophers had deviated and of which myths and rituals still preserved traces (Boys-Stones 2001: 99–122). The most complete reconstruction of this ancient wisdom is to be found in Plato, at least according to the Platonists. An exploration of traditions like the Egyptians' was a way to prove Plato right, to universalise his relevance, and to deepen the understanding of his thought. Accordingly, in his interpretation of the Egyptian tradition, Plutarch creates room for Plato, but also leaves room for Egypt. Dualism, then, is at the same time 'a Greek word' (Ελληνικόν, 351f), as Plutarch says about Isis at the beginning of *De Is. et Os.*, and 'a very ancient opinion', in circulation 'among barbarians and Greeks alike' (παμπάλαιος [...] δόξα [...] βαρβάροις καὶ Ἕλλησι πολλαχοῦ περιφερομένη, 369b), and it is precisely this combination that makes it so valuable for Plutarch's Platonism. Cf. Van Nuffelen 2011: 48–71, defending a similar position from a different angle.

¹⁵⁹ It will be clear that my interpretation of this paragraph is diametrically opposed to that of Kidd in Kidd and Waterfield 1992: 207, who comments: Plutarch 'now reaches a position which engaged concentrated professional debate in the philosophical Schools: the ethical status of misfortune and its relation to happiness. But Plutarch must remain on

2.4. Looking back (§ 8) and continuing the ἄσκησις (§ 16–18): external synthesis

In the previous sections, we have seen how Plutarch, in § 14 and § 15 of *On Tranquillity of Mind*, subtly introduces key elements of his Platonic world view in order to point out the crucial importance of memory as part of the activity of both the human and the cosmic soul as well as the inevitability of the dual character of both the human and the cosmic condition. Let us now look back to see what this changes. In the first part of the ἄσκησις (§ 8), Plutarch had adduced Socrates' pupil Aristippus of Cyrene as a positive example.

ὁ δ' Ἀρίστιππος οὐ τοιοῦτος, ἀλλ' ἀγαθὸς ὥσπερ ἐπὶ ζυγοῦ πρὸς τὰ βελτίονα τῶν ὑποκειμένων ἐξαναφέρειν καὶ ἀνακουφίζειν αὐτόν· (*De tranq. an.* 469a)

Aristippus, however, was not like that, but he was good at raising himself up in the direction of better circumstances than the actual ones and making himself lighter, as if he were on a scale. [my translation¹⁶⁰]

Furthermore, Aristippus realised that 'it is the act of a madman to be distressed at what is lost and not rejoice at what is saved' (μανικὸν γάρ ἐστι τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις ἀνιᾶσθαι μὴ χαίρειν δὲ τοῖς σωζομένοις, 469d). Both aspects show that Aristippus' stance, which is recommended at this point in *On Tranquillity of Mind*, is characterised by perspectivism and presentism and thus amounts to a subjective, internal synthesis of experiences.¹⁶¹

his own level'. Behind the dualism of § 15 lies a careful consideration of the 'professional debate', but Plutarch's reason for not being overly technical here has nothing to do with 'his own level'.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Giannantoni 1958: 224; Kidd and Waterfield 1992: 220. Similar comparisons can be found at *De prof. in virt.* 75c and *De exil.* 599c–d.

¹⁶¹ Both perspectivism and presentism were building blocks of the teachings of the Cyrenaic school, which, in one way or another, grew out of Aristippus' philosophy: on their subjectivism, see Tsouna 1998 (and Plu., *Adv. Col.* 1120f–1121e with Warren 2013); on their 'hedonic presentism', see Sedley 2017a, cf. also Graver 2002a: 165–166 (this is also the view behind Plu., *Non posse* 1089a–b). Cf. Tsouna 2016: 121–125 on Plutarch's view of the Cyrenaics in general. Plutarch, however, does not seem to have connected Aristippus with the Cyrenaics. As far as we can tell – if he really wrote a book *On the Cyrenaic Philosophers* (*Lamprias Catalogue* 188), it is a pity that we do not have it – Plutarch saw Aristippus first and foremost as a Socratic (*De fort. Alex.* 330c; *De cur.* 516c; cf. fr. 42), and his moral advice is generally appreciated (*De prof. in virt.* 80c; *An virt. doc.* 439e; *De*

These aspects are not idiosyncrasies of Plutarch's presentation, so we can expect informed readers to be aware of them without Plutarch's overly stressing them. In the heyday of the Second Sophistic, Aelian cites Aristippus' advice to focus exclusively on the present moment, disregarding both the past and the future. Interestingly, he implies that Aristippus' advice was rooted in a form of the flux doctrine.¹⁶²

μόνον γὰρ ἔφασκεν ἡμέτερον εἶναι τὸ παρόν, μήτε δὲ τὸ φθάνον μήτε τὸ προσδοκώμενον· τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἀπολωλέναι, τὸ δὲ ἄδηλον εἶναι εἶπερ ἔσται. (Aelian, *VH* 14.6 = *SSR* 4A174)

Only the present, he [i.e. Aristippus] said, belongs to us, not the past nor what is anticipated. The former has ceased to exist, and it is uncertain if the latter will exist.

Roughly around the same time, Diogenes Laertius writes that Aristippus 'could always turn the situation to good account' (ἀεὶ τὸ προσπεσὸν εὖ διατιθέμενος, 2.66). Both the presentism and the perspectivism, then, must have been part and parcel of the prevailing image of Aristippus.

Plutarch's focus on memory and dualism in § 14–15 amounts to an attack on these two aspects, which were earlier approvingly attributed to Aristippus.¹⁶³ Both the past and the bad should have a place in the life of whoever wants to attain εὐθυμία, contra, respectively, Aristippean presentism and perspectivism. This shift in the ἄσκησις is sanctioned, as we have seen, by Plutarch's interpretation of Plato's cosmology. But why did we need the first part of the ἄσκησις then? I think that, as befits

coh. ira 462d–e; *De cup. div.* 524a–b; cf. *De lib. ed.* 4f–5a). At *Amat.* 750d–e, however, he is adduced as a rather misogynistic critic of heterosexual love, thus representing a view with which Plutarch would not have agreed (cf. p. 287). At *Dion* 19 he mocks Plato for refusing the tyrant Dionysius' money, and he ridicules – if I understand the passage correctly – the interest that Plato and his friends had in cosmology, a subject that Aristippus regarded as irrelevant to ethics (e.g. *Ps.-Plu.*, fr. 179.9 = Aristippus, fr. 1B19 Giannantoni; cf. Guthrie 1971: 177): when one of Plato's associates was praised for predicting an eclipse, Aristippus mockingly replied that he had a prediction of his own, namely that Plato and Dionysius would soon become enemies. I take the element of mockery (παίζων, *Dion* 19.7) to be that, according to Aristippus, competence in matters of cosmology does not have anything to do with competence in matters of ethics and politics. As will be clear by now, this, too, is a position that Plutarch is unlikely to have endorsed.

¹⁶² Cf. also Athenaeus 544a–b. D.L. 2.89–90 discusses the same connection for the later Cyrenaic school.

¹⁶³ Contra Gill 1994: 4625 (cf. also Pohlenz 1905: 287–288, 296; Broecker 1954: 93–96, 136–139) who claims that the argument in § 8 is basically the same as that in § 14–15 and that both passages are 'Democritean-Epicurean'.

his general zetetic approach (p. 82–83), Plutarch is first introducing a tentative, imperfect answer, perhaps starting from expectations that are defined by earlier Stoic or Epicurean treatments of the topic of εὐθυμία. This preliminary answer is not without value. It can draw the reader in and it is later subsumed in the more advanced answer. This is also the case here: with the introduction of the Platonic perspective, the need for an internal synthesis does not disappear; it is, however, qualified by the need to conform it to the external synthesis. Moreover, we can suspect that the first answer has some value in itself as a lower-level answer: persons who, for whatever reason, cannot accept the Platonic world view that underlies the second part of the ἄσκησις are at least helped by the first part. One could even argue that this part, like the earlier answers in a Plutarchan ζήτημα, has a limited stand-alone value that is not fully incorporated in the final answers: even a seasoned Platonist who has hit upon particularly hard times could perhaps use some presentism and perspectivism as a temporary coping mechanism. The ideal reader in an ideal situation, however, will make the shift towards Platonism and away from Aristippus.¹⁶⁴

In Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, a conversation between Aristippus and Socrates is recounted. Aristippus states that he wants 'a life of the greatest ease and pleasure that can be had' (ἡ ῥᾶστά τε καὶ ἥδιστα βιοτεύειν, 2.1.9, echoed by Socrates at 2.1.23). In light of this, I submit that Plutarch was thinking about Aristippus again – and more specifically about this passage from Xenophon¹⁶⁵ – near the end of *On Tranquillity of Mind*, that is, after the shift in the ἄσκησις. Plutarch criticises the 'self-indulgence of the soul which ever occupies itself with the easiest way, and retreats from the undesirable to what is most pleasant' (ἡ περὶ τὸ ῥᾶστον ἀεὶ διατρίβουσα καὶ πρὸς τὸ ἥδιστον ἐκ τῶν ἀβουλήτων ἀναχωροῦσα γλυκυθυμία τῆς ψυχῆς, 476d). The criticism of the combined pursuit of

¹⁶⁴ A different way of looking at such a shift is in terms of *Urteilsmodifikation*: Ingenkamp 1971: 70 detects this in many of the works on *Seelenheilung*. I find this approach less helpful for the interpretation of a Plutarchan work as a whole. It does not explain why the earlier answer is included, unless we should expect Plutarch to make things up and change his mind as he goes along.

¹⁶⁵ Plutarch, mentioning Xenophon's name, cites a passage from the same story elsewhere (*De se ipsum laud.* 539d; *An seni* 786e) and thus probably knew this part of Xenophon's *Memorabilia*. Although the aforementioned citations concern a phrase that might have been prone to being excerpted, we should not be too hesitant to attribute to Plutarch a thorough knowledge of Xenophon's works; see Stadter 2012. Whether or not Plutarch was right to claim that reading Xenophon is better than having sex with the most beautiful woman (*Non posse* 1093c) – probably a matter of preference rather than debate, although the debate would undoubtedly be interesting (see Zadorojnyi 2013 for inspiration) – the claim clearly shows his knowledge and appreciation.

τὸ ῥᾶστον and τὸ ἡδιστόν could be a rebuke tailored specifically to Aristippus. In any case, it rejects his general stance. More generally, it questions the gist of the first part of the ἄσκησις, which was aimed from the very beginning at achieving an internal synthesis that allowed us to turn away from the undesirable (ἐκ τῶν ἀβουλήτων, 467c). Now, this retreat from the undesirable (ἐκ τῶν ἀβουλήτων, 476d) is criticised.

More precisely, the retreat is no longer necessary for the soul that has completed the ἄσκησις: it is no longer ἀγύμναστος. Through exercise (μελετώσα) and reasoning (τῷ λογισμῷ), it has practised dealing with adverse circumstances and has learned what they really are (476d). In other words, those who succeed in following Plutarch's programme all the way to the end of *On Tranquillity of Mind* can be expected to say goodbye to Aristippus.¹⁶⁶ They no longer need to live exclusively in the present moment. Nor do they need to escape from adverse circumstances by positively distorting their perspective. When they have made the shift in the ἄσκησις, they have effectively avoided the 'danger of self-serving falsification' through 'wrong inclusion and exclusion of data', which Sorabji feared in *On Tranquillity of Mind*. At last they can experience things as they really are: their internal synthesis mirrors the external synthesis of the cosmos.

This is what the second part of the ἄσκησις (§ 16–19) aims at in three cumulative steps, which deal consecutively with loss, suffering, and death. The increase in the adversity of the circumstances goes together with an increase in Platonic colouring. First (§ 16), we learn – now openly eschewing perspectivism and presentism – how to expect misfortunes by pitting λογισμός against τύχη, thus putting to use the distinction between τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν and τύχη, which was connected with Plato at the end of the κρίσις part. Then (§ 17), we are made aware, among other things through a reference to Plato's *Apology* (30c–d quoted at 475e), that human nature is composite: the soul and the body are distinct parts, and only the body is subject to τύχη. Finally (§ 18), anyone who understands the nature of the soul – that is, anyone who accepts the Platonic take on the nature of the soul – will be rid of fear of death, since they will realise that the true self, which is the soul, is immortal.¹⁶⁷ This build-up of Platonism,

¹⁶⁶ Contra Heinze 1890: 517, who regards Aristippean ethics as an influence on Plutarch's stance.

¹⁶⁷ Gill 1994: 4627–4628 sees this part of Plutarch's treatise as Stoic and argues that '[t]he claim is [...] not quite that the ψυχή (or its rational part) is invulnerable to fortune because it is immortal; it is rather that the knowledge that the loss of the body brings nothing worse [...] enables us to confront any adversity, even those that involve the risk of death'. This is not quite what Plutarch claims: the main claim is that death will bring a change 'for the better' (εἰς τὸ βέλτιον). This forceful claim is subsequently attenuated indeed: in any case the change will at least not be 'for the worse' (ἢ μὴθὲν κάκιον, *De*

initiated in § 14–15, eventually culminates in § 19–20, which will put the connection between Platonic cosmology and εὐθυμία front and centre.

2.5. Interlude: time and becoming in *Consolation to My Wife*

Before launching into the Platonic climax of *On Tranquillity of Mind*, I want to turn briefly to Plutarch's *Consolation to My Wife*, by way of general sketch of the world view that has emerged after the shift in the ἄσκησις of *On Tranquillity of Mind*. The *Consolation to My Wife* is, like *On Tranquillity of Mind*, a work of practical ethics in the form of a letter.¹⁶⁸ Plutarch writes to his wife upon learning of the death of their two-year-old daughter. Here, then, the addressee was in more obviously dire straits than our Paccius. The writer, moreover, was understandably less in a position to detach himself from the situation and to rise above the circumstances as a teacher of tranquillity. Evidently, Plutarch was away from home when she passed away, and the news took some time to reach him: by the time he writes his letter, he supposes that the funeral has

tranq. an. 476b). This attenuation, however, seems to be a case of Academic caution rather than of sudden onset Stoicism; cf. also Pl., *Apol.* 40b–41a. Even if it were true that the immortality of the soul does not contribute to the argument here, one cannot just wish it away: whether or not it contributes to it, Plutarch used it as part of his argument.

¹⁶⁸ Van Hoof 2010: 258 includes this work in her list of works of practical ethics; cf. Ziegler 1951: cols. 792–792, who discusses it under the heading of *popularphilosophisch-ethische Schriften* (see n. 11 on the problems with Ziegler's categories). On *Cons. ad ux.* as a letter, see Van Hoof 2010: 69–70; cf. also Martin and Philips 1978: 399–401 for *Cons. ad ux.* within the context of ancient epistolary consolation in general. On *Cons. ad ux.* in general the secondary literature is vast; see esp. Pomeroy 1999 and Baltussen 2009; cf. also Claassen 2004 (focusing on the text as a public memento). Harvey 1999: 206–210 provides an excellent bibliography; more recent studies on particular aspects of the work include Calderón Dorda 2005 (funerary lexicon); Skountakis 2006 (Plutarch's criticism of rituals and customs, including comparison with epigraphy; cf. also Strubbe 1998); Soares 2008 (comparison with the *Lives*); Schorn 2009 (sociocultural context, specifically on crying); Roskam 2011a (scarcity of literary quotations); Xenophontos 2016: 47–48 (Plutarch's ideas on childhood), 56–59 (on motherhood), 114–116 (on marriage). For an overview of the ancient consolatory tradition, see Scourfield 1993: 15–27; cf. also Graver 2002b: 187–194; Baltussen 2009: 70–76; the contributions in Alonso del Real 2001 and Baltussen 2013; the foundational studies by Buresch 1886, Kassel 1958, and Johann 1968. On (traces of) other Plutarchan consolations, see Grilli 2000 and Hani 1980: 179–180 (the latter defends the authenticity of *Cons. ad Ap.*, cf. Hani 1972: 27–43 and, more concisely, Hani in Defradas, Hani, and Klaerr 1985: 3–12, but contra e.g. Babut 1975: 215–219; I remain agnostic and I do not rely on *Cons. ad Ap.* for the construction of my arguments in this study; the fruitfulness of such agnosticism in the approach of this work emerges from Boys-Stones 2013).

already taken place.¹⁶⁹ In her discussion of this work, Pomeroy points out that, to the consolatory ideas found in the religious and philosophical tradition, ‘Plutarch adds a personal element, reminding his wife of their years together and of other catastrophes they have endured’.¹⁷⁰

Indeed, both relying on memory and achieving a correct balance of good and bad play a role in this letter, which connects it to *On Tranquillity of Mind*. A first remark on memory occurs early on, right after the introductory practicalities (608b) and the general advice – both to his wife and to himself – to keep emotions within bounds while acknowledging the significant loss (608c). Plutarch illustrates the latter point by evoking a fond memory (608c–d) and adds that there is no reason

διὰ τί ταῦτα καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα ζώσης μὲν ἔτερπεν ἡμᾶς νυνὶ δ’ ἀνιάσει καὶ συνταράξει λαμβάνοντας ἐπίνοιαν αὐτῶν. ἀλλὰ καὶ δέδια πάλιν, μὴ συνεκβάλωμεν τῷ λυποῦντι τὴν μνήμην [...]. (*Cons. ad. ux.* 608d)

why these things and the like, after delighting us while she lived, should now distress and dismay us as we take thought of them. Rather I fear on the contrary that while we banish painful thoughts we banish memory as well [...].

This advice simultaneously stresses the importance of memory and the importance of focusing on the good while giving a place to the bad. Evoked as it was by the commemorative vignette, this is only a hint at the therapeutic importance of memory, of which the more detailed treatment is postponed. First, Plutarch returns to the practice of mourning in order to praise his wife’s exemplary handling of the situation (608f–609c), resulting from her general decorum and emotional stability (609c–e), which contrasts with the excessive and harmful grief exhibited by others (609e–610d).

When he returns to the issue of memory, Plutarch proposes a thought experiment: imagine the time before the child was born. We did not blame τύχη for her absence back then,¹⁷¹ so why would we complain now that the same set of circumstances has reoccurred? Immediately, however,

¹⁶⁹ *Cons. ad. ux.* 608b. Many interesting questions surround the circumstances of composition and publication of this work, but none of these matter for my current purpose. For discussion, see Ziegler 1951: col. 793; De Lacy and Einarson 1959: 576; Martin and Philips 1978: 394–395; Hani 1980: 178–179; Cannatà Fera 1991: 318–319; Impara and Manfredini 1991: 8–11; Kidd and Waterfield 1992: 359–361; Russell 1993: 499–430; Pomeroy 1999: 75–77; Baltussen 2009: 76, 86–87.

¹⁷⁰ Pomeroy 1999: 78. On the topical material, see e.g. Ziegler 1951: 648; Hani 1980: 181–182.

¹⁷¹ 610d: ἔγκλημα πρὸς τὴν τύχην; cf. 610f: μεμφομένοις τὴν τύχην.

Plutarch rejects the ultimate consequences of this experiment: it would entail forgetting about the two joyful years of their daughter's life.

τὴν δ' ἐν μέσῳ διετίαν ἐξαιρεῖν μὲν οὐ δεῖ τῆς μνήμης, ὡς δὲ χάριν καὶ ἀπόλαυσιν παρασχοῦσαν ἐν ἡδονῇ τίθεσθαι καὶ μὴ τὸ μικρὸν ἀγαθὸν μέγα νομίζειν κακόν, μηδ' ὅτι τὸ ἐλπιζόμενον οὐ προσέθηκεν ἢ τύχη, καὶ περὶ τοῦ δοθέντος ἀχαριστεῖν. ἀεὶ μὲν γὰρ ἢ περὶ τὸ θεῖον εὐφημία καὶ τὸ πρὸς τὴν τύχην ἴλεων καὶ ἀμεμφές καλὸν καὶ ἡδὺν ἀποδίδωσι καρπὸν, ἐν δὲ τοῖς τοιούτοις ὁ μάλιστα τῇ μνήμῃ τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἀπαρυστόμενος καὶ τοῦ βίου πρὸς τὰ φωτεινὰ καὶ λαμπρὰ μεταστρέφων καὶ μεταφέρων ἐκ τῶν σκοτεινῶν καὶ ταρακτικῶν τὴν διάνοιαν ἢ παντάπασιν ἔσβεσε τὸ λυποῦν ἢ τῇ πρὸς τοῦναντίον μίξει μικρὸν καὶ ἀμαυρὸν ἐποίησεν. (*Cons. ad ux.* 610e–f)

Yet we must not obliterate the intervening two years from our memory; rather, since they afforded us delight and enjoyment of her, we should credit them to the account of pleasure; and we should not consider the small good a great evil, nor, because Fortune did not add what we hoped for, be ungrateful for what was given. For reverent language toward the Deity and a serene and uncomplaining attitude toward Fortune never fail to yield an excellent and pleasant return; while in circumstances like these he who in greatest measure draws upon his memory of past blessings and turns his thought toward the bright and radiant part of his life, averting it from the dark and disturbing part, either extinguishes his pain entirely, or by thus combining it with its opposite, renders it slight and faint.

This concise passage packs almost the entire range of issues tackled in *On Tranquillity of Mind*: how to remain cheerful (ἴλεως¹⁷²) in the face of adverse τύχη, how to behave towards the divine (τὸ θεῖον), how to deal with hopes, and how to involve memory in the approach of life's good and bad aspects, which are described in terms of a mixture of light and darkness.¹⁷³

¹⁷² Cf. *De tranq. an.* 477f (see p. 279). It is hard to imagine that a Platonist, writing or reading ἴλεως in connection with death, would not have thought of Socrates' last moments, when he received the poison 'quite cheerfully' (μάλα ἴλεως, *Phd.* 117b). Cf. also Roskam 2015a: 128 n. 48.

¹⁷³ As opposed to what he says in *De tranq. an.*, Plutarch does seem to consider for a moment the possibility of wiping out the hurtful (παντάπασιν ἔσβεσε τὸ λυποῦν, contrast *De tranq. an.* 473f: ἐξαλειψαὶ γὰρ οὐκ ἔστι παντάπασιν οὐδ' ἀπαλλαγῆναι), only to add the more realistic prospect of weakening the pain by mixing it (ἢ τῇ πρὸς τοῦναντίον μίξει μικρὸν καὶ ἀμαυρὸν ἐποίησεν, cf. *De tranq. an.* 469a: μιγνύοντας ἐξαμαυροῦν τὰ χεῖρονα τοῖς βελτίοσι). The slight difference of emphasis is readily explained by the

Baltussen has rightly emphasised that the philosophical aspect of the letter should not be underestimated.¹⁷⁴ I take issue, however, with his characterisation of Plutarch's overall approach as 'a combination of Platonist, Epicurean, as well as Stoic origin'¹⁷⁵ – a characterisation that reminds of judgements such as Gill's about *On Tranquillity of Mind*. Along with this detection of eclecticism comes the conclusion that 'a demand for consistency is inappropriate'. I think, on the other hand, that the philosophical position taken in the work is consistent and that Stoic and Epicurean techniques are adopted only insofar as they can be subsumed into the Platonic framework. The passage quoted above may serve as an indication of that, especially if it is read in light of what has been said so far about *On Tranquillity of Mind*.

Considering the case of memory specifically, Baltussen – and he could have cited Johann as a precursor for this point – states that Plutarch appeals here to an 'Epicurean argument'.¹⁷⁶ I think Plutarch would have begged to differ. The Epicurean technique of focusing on good memories to turn the mind away from present misfortunes amounts to denial rather than to mitigation of these misfortunes.¹⁷⁷ Plutarch does not seem to have

different situation: consolation might call for more circumspection than more general moral advice, so one can see why Plutarch would at least mention the more optimistic possibility, if only to ease into his more realistic view (cf. my earlier remark on even a seasoned Platonist in need of an Aristippean coping mechanism, of which the situation in *Cons. ad ux.* could be an example; p. 223).

¹⁷⁴ Baltussen 2009. Cf. also Roskam 2011a: 122.

¹⁷⁵ Baltussen 2009: 90. Cf. also Fernández Vallejo 2001 who similarly discusses the philosophical approach of the work in terms of eclecticism; her analysis of the rhetorical structure of the work, however, is valuable. See, on the other hand, Impara and Manfredini 1991: 11–17, who pay due attention to the broadly Platonic stance that underlies the notions of body and soul in this work.

¹⁷⁶ Baltussen 2009: 89–90. Johann 1968: 91: at *Cons. ad. ux.* 610e–611a 'wird innerhalb eines genuine epikureischen Beweisganges die Dankbarkeit gegenüber der Tyche mit der Auffassung begründet, daß fromme Gesinnung gegenüber der göttlichen Macht "süßen Gewinn bringt"'. In the corresponding footnote, Johann even seems surprised to learn that the passage from Plutarch is not included in Usener's collection of Epicurean fragments. Cf. Roskam 2011a: 122: Plutarch's 'advice to turn one's attention to more pleasant memories (610EF and 611CD) is well in line with the Epicurean technique of *avocatio*'. Pohlenz 1905: 295–298 uses the allegedly Epicurean character of *Cons. ad ux.* in combination with its parallels with *De tranq. an.* as an argument in favour of an Epicurean source for *De tranq. an.*

¹⁷⁷ Cic., *Tusc. disp.* 3.33: 'vetat igitur ratio intueri molestias'. Cf. Graver 2002a: 170–177. We should be aware – and the same thing goes for n. 179 – that Cicero's testimony on the Epicureans is probably not very charitable; see Striker 2002, but see Graver 2002b: 195–201 on Cicero's reasons for wanting to be carefully truthful here. In this case,

been too impressed by this technique. In *That Epicurus Actually Makes a Pleasant Life Impossible* (1099e), he has Theon mocking it for not being credible: expecting a good memory just to wipe away even the worst bodily affliction is simply not realistic.¹⁷⁸ Equally impossible is the Epicurean advice to forget misfortunes of the past while retaining the good memories:¹⁷⁹ for Plutarch, filtering out the painful things would amount to throwing away the whole memory (συνεκβάλωμεν τῷ λυποῦντι τὴν μνήμην, 608d).

The Epicurean eradication of both present and past misfortunes is, to recall once more the worry of Sorabji, subject to the ‘danger of self-serving falsification’ through ‘wrong inclusion and exclusion of data’ – at least in Plutarch’s eyes. While Sorabji detected these problems in Plutarch’s *On Tranquillity of Mind*, the discussion on memory and dualism has made it clear that that is not what Plutarch is after: memory, as a key aspect of the activity of the human and cosmic soul, should give a place to bad things, which are part and parcel of the human and cosmic condition. The same thing can be said for the *Consolation to My Wife*: for Plutarch, good and bad memories are a package deal. We can be sure, however, that the memory brings with it ‘joy in greater measure, nay in many times greater measure, than it brings sorrow’ (πλέον ἔχουσιν μᾶλλον δὲ πολλαπλάσιον τὸ εὐφραϊνον ἢ τὸ λυποῦν, 608e–f). Right after this, Plutarch adds that this plea for remembrance is a piece of advice that he has often given to others (οὓς πολλάκις εἰρήκαμεν πρὸς ἑτέρους, 608f) and now should follow himself. It would be odd if Plutarch conceived of this advice, which he proudly presents as often delivered by him, as Epicurean.¹⁸⁰

The Epicurean take on memory, then, does not quite fit Plutarch’s perspective in the end.¹⁸¹ The same thing goes for the Stoic take on memory.

a potential hostility might be an advantage rather than a problem: we can reasonably expect Plutarch to have adopted a similarly uncharitable interpretation of the Epicurean tenet.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Plu., *Non posse* 1091b–d (including Epicur., fr. 138 Usener, cf. also D.L. 10.22), 1105e. On both passages, see Graver 2002a: 175 n. 42.

¹⁷⁹ Cic., *De fin.* 1.57: ‘est autem situm in nobis ut et adversa quasi perpetua oblivione obruamus’; cf. *De fin.* 2.104–105.

¹⁸⁰ As far as I know, the only other philosophical argument that Plutarch explicitly claims to have often rehearsed is his interpretation of the generation of the cosmic soul (τὸ πολλάκις ὑφ’ ἡμῖν λεγόμενον, *Quaest. Plat.* 4.1003a; τὰ πολλάκις εἰρημένα καὶ γεγραμμένα, *De an. procr.* 1012b).

¹⁸¹ This also pertains to § 14 of *De tranq. an.*, where Epicurean influence has been posited by Pohlenz 1905: 287–288; Abel 1987: 136, 143–144, 146–147. Cf. also the rather far-fetched attempt by Németh 2017: 117–118 to view Epicurus’ conception of animal selves through the lens of *De tranq. an.* § 14.

Seneca's understanding of memory is similar to Plutarch's in that it sustains a notion of selfhood in the midst of the flux of elapsing moments.¹⁸² At the same time, however, it recalls the perspectivism of Aristippus and the Epicureans: we should control our memories, choose the best ones, and abolish or manipulate the bad ones.¹⁸³ Both the Epicurean and the Stoic accounts, moreover, although they are certainly not presentist in the strict sense, resemble Aristippus' presentism in the sense that they locate the happy life fully in the present instant: memories are not part of a time-differentiated narrative of life, as in the case of Plutarch. Rather, they collapse into the now and time does not change anything to the present happiness.¹⁸⁴ The contrast of Plutarch's notion of memory with Epicureanism and Stoicism does not mean that Plutarch's is the obvious Platonic answer. Plotinus (1.5), for instance, has a completely different perspective: according to him, time and memory do not play any role in happiness because happiness depends on the contemplation of the intelligible.¹⁸⁵ In a way, he rejects the importance of time to the same effect as the presentist Aristippus or the champions of the flux doctrine would do. At the same time, although Plotinus' take is certainly not perspectivistic, it resembles Aristippus' perspectivism in the sense that it relies on a purely internal, self-reflexive notion of happiness.¹⁸⁶ Plutarch's stance is very different from both the Epicurean-Stoic and the Plotinian ones. Eschewing both presentism and perspectivism, Plutarch's εὐθυμία entails both

¹⁸² E.g. Sen., *Ep.* 121.16 with Montiglio 2008: 173–175; also 177–178 for a comparison with Plutarch.

¹⁸³ E.g. Sen., *Ep.* 78.14–15; cf. *Ep.* 63.3–4, 99.23–24 for the connection with grief. See Montiglio 2008 for a full discussion. Cf. also Armisen-Marchetti 1995.

¹⁸⁴ E.g. Plu., *De comm. not.* 1061f for the Stoics and Epicurus, *Key Doctrines* 19–20 (= D.L. 10.145). See Emilsson 2015: 229–234, 238; Montiglio 2008: 178. Cf. also Goldschmidt 1953: esp. 47–49, 200–210; Hadot 1995. This can be connected to Plutarch's criticism of the Stoic notion of moral progress in which time does not play a role, since the acquisition of wisdom happens in its totality in one single instant (e.g. *De prof. in virt.* 75c–d; cf. p. 204–205).

¹⁸⁵ Sen 1994 offers a useful comparison of Plotinus 1.5 and Plutarch's *De tranq. an.* I disagree, however, with the upshot of this comparison. Sen wrongly concludes that '[u]nlike Plotinus, Plutarch does not see such a close affiliation between the state of tranquillity and an experience of the forms; the forms in fact are nowhere mentioned in the essay on tranquillity' (19; in n. 31 he goes on to criticise Plutarch for this). As we shall see in a moment, the forms do play some role in *De tranq. an.* The difference between Plutarch and Plotinus on this matter is, rather, that, for Plutarch, the intelligible and the sensible are inevitably mixed in cosmic and human life: during our lives, we have no way of experiencing the forms completely separately from what is in time. For that reason, memory is an important part both of cosmic and human life. Cf. also Plotinus 1.4 with Emilsson 2011.

¹⁸⁶ Sen 1994: 18 incorrectly sees this as something that Plotinus shares with Plutarch.

having memories and making sure that these memories mirror reality, which is a combination of good and bad things.

The last two paragraphs of the *Consolation to My Wife* leave little doubt about the overall Platonic perspective.¹⁸⁷ Plutarch opposes Epicurus' conception of death as a complete dissolution to 'the teaching of our fathers and [...] the mystic formulas of the Dionysiac rites' (ὁ πατριος λόγος καὶ τὰ μυστικὰ σύμβολα τῶν περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον ὀργιασμῶν, 611d) and invokes the immortality of the soul instead.¹⁸⁸ The last two paragraphs of *On Tranquillity of Mind* form a Platonic climax as well. It is to these paragraphs that I now turn.

3. 'The cosmos is a temple' (§ 19–20)

In the discussion of the κρίσις, I have pointed out how Plutarch touches upon the notions of τύχη and ἐφ' ἡμῖν while remaining suspiciously silent about providence. In the discussion of the ἄσκησις, I have shown how a focus on a merely subjective, internal synthesis between good and bad gives way to a focus on an external synthesis that should objectively be mirrored in the internal synthesis: instead of indulging in presentism and perspectivism and thus denying the nature of both the human and the cosmic soul, we had better face reality. In the last two paragraphs of the work, these two issues come together and receive their ultimate resolution. While § 19 shows how we should conceive of the internal synthesis after the introduction of the Platonic outlook presented in § 14–15, § 20 connects this to a sweeping description of the external world.¹⁸⁹

First, we should accept instead of smooth over the influence of τύχη. Only by realising and accepting that we can *never* say 'I shall not suffer this' (τοῦτ' οὐ πείσομαι, 476d = Menander, fr. 256.4 *PCG*) can we look at τύχη with eyes wide open (πρὸς τὴν τύχην ἀνεωρόσι τοῖς ὄμμασιν ἀντιβλέπειν). The kind of synthesis that we should *not* create in ourselves

¹⁸⁷ I do not quite understand why Baltussen 2009: 89 regards the Epicurean argument that death is the dissolution of the body as an indication of Plutarch's eclecticism and even inconsistency: the argument is mentioned at 611d, but there is no doubt that it is forcefully rejected (Plutarch explicitly states that he knows that his wife does not believe it).

¹⁸⁸ On the connection between mystery cults and Plutarch's philosophy, see Roskam 2001; cf. also Van Nuffelen 2011: 27–98; Bremmer 2017: 101–108. On the contribution of the πατριος λόγος, see p. 291–303.

¹⁸⁹ Abel 1987: 132 similarly regards § 19–20 as 'Epilog'. However, it will have become clear by now that I disagree with his general interpretation of the structure of the work, which he considers to be built around the antithesis between the subject and the external world. On my interpretation, the relevant antithesis is between the rational (both in the subject and in the external world) and the non-rational (both in the subject and in the external world).

(μὴ ποιεῖν ἐν αὐτῷ) is one where φαντασῖαι are fed by false hopes (476d–e). We should, in other words, get real and exercise (μελετᾶν, 476d) the confrontation with reality. What we *can* say, however, is ‘I shall not *do* this’ (τοῦτ’ οὐ ποιήσω): that is ἐφ’ ἡμῖν (476e). This distinction is then repeated and further specified: while pain caused by τυχηρά assails the soul from outside (ἔξωθεν) and can be alleviated by λόγος, pain following upon our own bad deeds (i.e. regret) is caused by λόγος and thus comes from within (ἔνδοθεν) (476e–477a). This is why – and with this we are referred back to the beginning of the work (cf. p. 179) – the triad of power, fame, and luxury cannot contribute as much (τοσαύτην – Plutarch does not say that they do not contribute anything) to tranquillity as a soul unburdened by bad deeds and intentions (477a).¹⁹⁰

Plutarch then connects this to the view that every day is a festival, a view already anticipated in the κρίσις. There it was attributed to Crates (466e); now, it is put into the mouth of one of the other good examples from back then: Crates’ fellow Cynic Diogenes.

ἄγαμαι δὲ τοῦ Διογένοϋς, ὃς τὸν ἐν Λακεδαίμονι ξένον ὄρων παρασκευαζόμενον εἰς ἑορτήν τινα καὶ φιλοτιμούμενον ‘ἀνὴρ δ’ εἶπεν ‘ἀγαθὸς οὐ πᾶσαν ἡμέραν ἑορτὴν ἠγεῖται;’ καὶ πάνυ γε λαμπράν, εἰ σωφρονοῦμεν. ἱερὸν μὲν γὰρ ἀγιώτατον ὁ κόσμος ἐστὶ καὶ θεοπρεπέστατον· εἰς δὲ τοῦτον ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἰσάγεται διὰ τῆς γενέσεως οὐ χειροκμήτων οὐδ’ ἀκινήτων ἀγαλμάτων θεατῆς, ἀλλ’ οἷα νοῦς θεῖος αἰσθητὰ μιμήματα νοητῶν, φησὶν ὁ Πλάτων, ἔμφυτον ἀρχὴν ζωῆς ἔχοντα καὶ κινήσεως ἔφηνεν, ἥλιον καὶ σελήνην καὶ ἄστρα καὶ ποταμοὺς νέον ὕδωρ ἐξιέντας ἀεὶ καὶ γῆν φυτοῖς τε καὶ ζώοις τροφὰς ἀναπέμπουσιν. ὧν τὸν βίον μύησιν ὄντα καὶ τελετὴν τελειοτάτην εὐθυμίας δεῖ μεστὸν εἶναι καὶ γήθους· (*De tranq. an.* 477c–d)

And I am delighted with Diogenes, who, when he saw his host in Sparta preparing with much ado for a certain festival, said, ‘Does not a good man consider every day a festival?’ And a very splendid one, to be sure, if we are sound of mind. For the universe is a most holy temple and most worthy of a god; into it man is introduced through birth as a spectator, not of hand-made or immovable images, but of those sensible representations of knowable things that the divine mind, says Plato, has revealed, representations which have innate within themselves the beginnings of life and motion, sun and moon and stars, rivers which ever discharge fresh water, and earth which sends forth nourishment for plants and animals. Since life is a most perfect initiation into these things and a ritual celebration of them, it should be full of tranquillity and joy [...].

¹⁹⁰ This paragraph of *De tranq. an.* can be fruitfully compared to *Timol.* 6.

The third good example from the κρίσις part, Socrates, is not mentioned here, unless we should say that he is represented by Plato. All the same, Plutarch finally fills in the blanks that were left open back then, when he was pointing to wrong conceptions of the cosmos that were detrimental to εὐθυμία. Now, conversely, Plutarch reveals what conception of the cosmos ensures εὐθυμία. Before turning to a discussion of the imagery in this passage, we have to ask what Plutarch means exactly when he states that ‘Plato says’ (φησὶν ὁ Πλάτων) what he is made to say here.

3.1. Intertextuality

Plutarch is certainly not quoting directly from Plato. Two candidates have been suggested for Platonic intertextuality in this passage: the *Epinomis* and the *Timaeus*, the former being the more likely candidate if we are looking for verbal echoes; the latter having the better odds if we use Plutarch’s philosophical profile as a yardstick.¹⁹¹ The cosmic religion of the *Epinomis* would make it a crucial source for a Platonic cosmological ethics. Nevertheless, it seems to me that Plutarch did not know the work or at least did not regard it as written by Plato.¹⁹² However, given the

¹⁹¹ Broecker 1954: 198: ‘Tim. 92c; Epinom. 984a; quibus locis Plu. maxime usus est’. Cf. also Paton, Pohlenz, and Sieveking 1929: ad loc.; Helmbold 1939: ad loc.; Helmbold and O’Neil 1959: 57, 63; Dumortier and Defradas 1975: ad loc.; Giavatto 2010: 134. Joyal 1993: 98 n. 29 mentions only *Epin.* 984a; Jones 1916: 110 and Abel 1987: 135 only *Tim.* 92c.

¹⁹² Contra e.g. Roskam 2009b: 50–51 n. 162: ‘Plutarch knew the little work [i.e. *Epin.*] but hardly used it’. Diogenes Laertius (3.37) reports that authorship of this work is attributed to Plato’s secretary Philip of Opus (cf. also *Prol. in Plat. Phil.* 24.13–19) and this is generally accepted today: Tarán 1975: 3–47 has put most of the discussion about the authorship of the work to rest; cf. Dillon 2003: 179; Aronadio, Tulli, and Petrucci 2013: 173–178. See, however, Brisson 2005 (considering the work to be spurious yet not written by Philip of Opus) and Altman 2012 (defending Plato’s authorship in a rather eccentric fashion by relying on a more or less Straussian reading of the dialogue: the Athenian Stranger in no way reflects Plato’s own views and must be thought of as an anti-Platonist). That Plutarch did not know (or did not recognise the authenticity) of *Epin.* can of course only be argued e silentio. The absence of *Epin.* can be felt, I think, in Plutarch’s treatment of two subjects that loom large in this pseudo-Platonic work. (1) As Brenk 1986: 2087 has argued, the demonology of *Epin.* was rather influential in Platonism, but there is no trace of it in Plutarch’s many utterings about demons. (2) Plutarch never considers Plato to have recognised a fifth element. The absence of *Epin.* in this regard is particularly blatant in *De E* 390a, where the character Plutarch, as part of his encomium on the number five, offers a brisk doxography of earlier thinkers who recognised a fifth element. Here, *Epin.* would have offered Plutarch the opportunity – if he knew it and thought of it as genuinely Platonic – to find a fifth element in Plato, which would have merited, if not acceptance, at least inclusion in the miniature doxography.

scholarly insistence on the influence of the *Epinomis* on Plutarch in the passage at hand, we have to consider this possibility before turning once again to Plutarch's golden book, the *Timaeus*.

In the *Epinomis*, the interlocutors of the *Laws* reconvene to discuss the educational programme of Magnesia, the city constituted by their earlier legislative efforts. They quickly reach the conclusion that education should be entirely devoted to astronomy, which is the gift bestowed upon us by 'Uranus (i.e. the heaven), the god whom above all others it is most just to pray to and to honour, as all the other divinities and gods do' (Οὐρανόν, ὄν καὶ δικαιοτάτον, ὡς ζύμπαντες ἄλλοι δαίμονες ἅμα καὶ θεοί, τιμᾶν τε καὶ εὐχεσθαι διαφερόντως αὐτῷ, *Epin.* 977a). As Tarán points out, in the *Epinomis* (983e–984b) is 'the earliest instance in extant Greek literature of the notion of the cosmos as the temple of the gods, a notion destined to have a lasting influence on subsequent thought':¹⁹³

εἰ δ' οὖν δεῖ νικᾶν τοὺς περὶ ἀπάντων τῶν τοιούτων λόγους καὶ πιστῶς θεῖα φαίνεσθαι γεγονέναι τὰ τοιαῦτα ζύμπαντα, δυοῖν τοι θάτερα θετέον αὐτά· ἢ γὰρ θεοὺς αὐτοὺς ταῦτα ὑμνητέον ὀρθότατα, ἢ θεῶν εἰκόνας ὡς ἀγάλματα ὑπολαβεῖν γεγονέναι, θεῶν αὐτῶν ἐργασαμένων· οὐ γὰρ ἀνοήτων γε οὐδὲ βραχέος ἀξίων, ἀλλ' ὅπερ εἰρήκαμεν, τούτων ἡμῖν θάτερα θετέα, τὰ δὲ τεθέντα τιμητέον πάντων ἀγαλμάτων διαφερόντως· οὐ γὰρ μήποτε φανῆ καλλίω καὶ κοινότερα ζυμπάντων ἀνθρώπων ἀγάλματα, οὐδ' ἐν διαφέρουσιν τόποις ἰδρυμένα, καθαριότητι καὶ σεμνότητι καὶ ζυμπάσῃ ζωῇ διαφέροντα ἢ ταύτη ὡς πάντη ταύτη γεγένηται. (Ps.-Plato, *Epin.* 983e–984b)

If our theories about all the celestial beings are to win out, and if it is to appear convincing that they are all divine, we must suppose them to be one of two things. Either they are themselves gods and it is perfectly correct to celebrate them in hymns, or we must suppose them to be likenesses of gods, something like images of them, made by the gods themselves, for their creators were not unintelligent or of little worth. As we have declared, we must suppose them to be one of these two things, and once we do this, we must honor them above all images. Assuredly no other image will ever appear more beautiful or more widely shared by all humans than these, let alone established in better locations or surpassing them in purity, awe, and their whole manner of life, since they have been made superior in all these ways.

The *Epinomis* appears to offer two options: either the heavenly bodies are gods, or they are εἰκόνες or ἀγάλματα of the gods, which are made by these gods themselves. The second option may seem an interesting

¹⁹³ Tarán 1975: 88, 278.

candidate for Plutarch's intertextual engagement here. A first problem, however, is that the ἀγάλματα option of the *Epinomis* is at odds with and thus implicitly rejected by the rest of the work,¹⁹⁴ which is otherwise consistent in viewing the cosmos as the first god. In the *Epinomis*, the only demiurgic figure is the cosmos itself, transcendent forms are eschewed, and astronomy is the nec plus ultra of science.¹⁹⁵ These are positions with which Plutarch manifestly disagreed. Plutarch's cosmological ethics is not a cosmic religion: for him studying the cosmos is a necessary condition for achieving happiness, whereas in the *Epinomis* it is the sufficient condition.¹⁹⁶ Using the passage on ἀγάλματα from the *Epinomis* as an intertext in *On Tranquillity of Mind*, then, would have come at the cost of decontextualising the passage. This might have been a price Plutarch was willing to pay to insert the *Epinomis* into his overall picture of Plato's thought, but I doubt that there are good reasons for assuming that he did.

After all, the ἀγάλματα of the *Epinomis* are the heavenly bodies. Plutarch, on the other hand, includes more under that heading: rivers and earth are mentioned, and the list does not seem to be exhaustive. Moreover, even if the ἀγάλματα option is granted, there is no trace of a transcendent demiurge. There is no god who, as Plutarch has it, makes ἀγάλματα of intelligibles. Rather, the gods themselves make the heavenly bodies as their images. As Tarán points out, the result of the ἀγάλματα option would be the same as the alternative (regarding the heavenly bodies as gods themselves) in the sense that both options are supposed to support the conclusion that the heavenly bodies – either as gods or as ἀγάλματα – are the objects of worship.¹⁹⁷ This is not Plutarch's way, as we shall see again when his thoughts on statues of gods come up (p. 265): we should not worship ἀγάλματα, but we should use them to worship what they represent (esp. *De Is. et Os.* 379c–d, 382b–c).

I have mentioned that, within the theology of the *Epinomis*, the ἀγάλματα option is something of a *Fremdkörper*. Tarán suggests that it

¹⁹⁴ Tarán 1975: 88.

¹⁹⁵ Tarán 1975: 24–36, 79–110.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Festugière 1949: 198–218; Nightingale 2004: 180–186.

¹⁹⁷ The author of *Epin.* leaves the status of the gods, who make the ἀγάλματα of themselves, unclear, but there is no sign of transcendence. Perhaps we should assume that these gods inhabit the ἀγάλματα they made (i.e. the heavenly bodies), in the same way as popular belief had it that the divinity inhabits its statue. On such an interpretation, we can see how the two options presented in the *Epin.* passage can lead to more or less the same conclusion and why the author does not feel compelled to elaborate it further or make an explicit distinction. If this is how we should interpret this bit of *Epin.*, it contrasts with Plutarch's rejection of the popular belief that gods inhabit their statues (*De Is et Os.* 382b; *De Pyth. Or.* 398a–c; cf. also *Cor.* 37.5–38.7 and *Cam.* 6 with Graf 2005: 255–257 and Meeusen 2017).

was inserted by the author to comply to some extent with *Timaeus* 37c.¹⁹⁸ I think that it is the common reliance on this part of the *Timaeus* that has made it look like Plutarch used the *Epinomis* here. Timaeus describes the cosmos as ‘a shrine for the everlasting gods’ (τῶν αἰδίων θεῶν γεγονὸς ἄγαλμα, 37c). I follow Cornford and Zeyl, whose translation I quote, by understanding ἄγαλμα as ‘shrine’ rather than ‘statue’ here.¹⁹⁹ At this point in Timaeus’ discourse, the heavenly bodies have not been created yet. More precisely, this passage is building up to their creation: the heavenly bodies, which are visible gods, will be enshrined in the ἄγαλμα in the sense that they will be placed on the circles of the cosmic soul. The author of the *Epinomis*, however, seems to have interpreted ἄγαλμα differently, not as a shrine but as a statue, as the use of εἰκῶν as a synonym makes clear. He was not the only one: if we jump to the other end of ancient Platonism, we find Proclus interpreting τῶν αἰδίων θεῶν [...] ἄγαλμα as τῶν νοητῶν θεῶν [...] ἄγαλμα (*In Tim.* 3.4.23, cf. 3.6.8, 3.4I.3I): an image of intelligible gods, not a shrine for visible gods.²⁰⁰ Unlike the *Epinomis* author, Proclus conceives of the ἄγαλμα as being the whole cosmos (not just the heavenly bodies) (3.4.26–30) and as pointing to the intelligible, which remains transcendent (3.4.19–25, 3.4.3I–5.4).²⁰¹

I take it that Plutarch interpreted the *Timaeus* passage in a similar way and that he refers to it here in *On Tranquillity of Mind*. As in the case of his interpretation of the demiurgic creation of time to which the passage at hand leads (cf. *Quaest. Plat.* 8.1007c–d with p. 197), he seems to have combined *Timaeus* 37c with 92c to paint the familiar picture of the cosmos as a sensible image of the intelligible. This combination of passages makes it clear how Plutarch could have jumped from Plato’s τῶν αἰδίων θεῶν γεγονὸς ἄγαλμα to his attribution to Plato of ἀγάλματα, which are αἰσθητὰ μιμήματα νοητῶν.

Timaeus 37c also allows us to make sense of how the sensible imitations of the intelligibles ‘have innate within themselves the beginnings of life and motion’ (ἔμφυτον ἀρχὴν ζωῆς ἔχοντα καὶ κινήσεως, 477c). For Plutarch, life and motion presume soul. I take it that the ἔμφυτος ἀρχὴ ζωῆς καὶ κινήσεως refers to the single cosmic soul and not to individual

¹⁹⁸ Tarán 1975: 86.

¹⁹⁹ See esp. Cornford 1935: 99–102.

²⁰⁰ Cf. Brisson 1998: 34 and 129; Nightingale 2004: 171–173 for interpretations along these lines.

²⁰¹ I disagree with the attempt by Cornford 1935: 101 to draw Proclus near the interpretation of ἄγαλμα as shrine: Proclus’ identification of the αἰδιοὶ θεοὶ with the intelligible gods (cf. also Plotinus, 2.9.8) instead of the visible gods (on the shrine interpretation Plato has to intend the latter, cf. *Tim.* 40b) blocks this attempt: the intelligible gods cannot possibly be enshrined within the cosmos like the visible gods can; cf. Taylor 1928: 184–185.

souls. The sun, the moon, and the stars move because of their placement on the circles into which the cosmic soul was divided (Pl., *Tim.* 38c–40a; cf. *Quaest. Plat.* 8.1007a). It is reasonable to think that we should take the emission of new water by rivers and the emission of nourishment for plants and animals by earth to be caused by the cosmic soul as well.²⁰² Both can be seen by a Platonist as cases of providential ordering and reordering of elements (cf. *De facie* 927a–b with p. 35). The *Timaeus* also connects the cosmic ἄγαλμα to the workings of the cosmic soul: the ἄγαλμα is ‘set in motion and alive’ (κίνηθ' ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ ζῶν, 37c ~ ζῶντος ἔχοντα καὶ κινήσεως, *De tranq. an.* 477c) by the cosmic soul, which has just been created by the demiurge.

Plutarch’s intertextual engagement in § 20 of *On Tranquillity of Mind*, then, is with Plato’s *Timaeus* and not with the *Epinomis*. Given Plutarch’s philosophical profile, this is hardly a surprising conclusion, but it has taken some analysis before this conclusion could be reached. This shows once again that an analysis of Plutarch’s intertextuality as part of his Platonism has to go beyond citing parallels. Φησὶν ὁ Πλάτων is anything but a straightforward expression, and it often involves the inclusion of Plutarch’s interpretative stance. As far as the interpretation of *On Tranquillity of Mind* is concerned, the upshot is that the forms and the demiurge are brought in from the *Timaeus* to argue in favour of εὐθυμία: if the cosmos is an ἄγαλμα, then it invites joy per definition (cf. ἀγάλλομαι, ‘glory, exult’ [LSJ]) and the demiurge sets the example by being delighted (ἠγάσθη, εὐφρανθείς, *Tim.* 37c) by the sight of it.²⁰³ This completes the shift towards an internal synthesis that mirrors the external synthesis: we can now rest assured that the good dominates the external synthesis and that the same, then, should go for the internal one.

3.2. Imagery

I now want to take the analysis of the imagery itself one step further by pointing to the two-way character of Plutarch’s cosmic imagery. If *On*

²⁰² It is clear that Plutarch is *not* talking about (1) the movement of rivers themselves (this is caused by purely mechanical ἀντιπερίστασις; see *Quaest. plat.* 7.1005d–1006e on Pl., *Tim.* 79e–80c with Opsomer 1999) and (2) the sprouting of plants themselves (these do have their own souls, cf. e.g. *Quaest. nat.* 1.911c with Pl., *Tim.* 77a–b). I take him to be referring instead to (1) the emission of new water (νέον ὕδωρ) in the river, i.e. by the spring (on how springs work, see *Aem.* 14) and (2) the natural occurrence of elements such as minerals, which contribute to the nourishment of both plants and animals.

²⁰³ Cf. Brisson 1998: 34–35, who points out that ἄγαλμα and ἠγάσθη share the same root (see Beekes 2010: s.v. ἀγα-). Cf. also the use of ἄγαλμα in Pl., *Phdr.* 230b, 251a, 252d with e.g. Nightingale 2004: 157–168. On the joy of the demiurge, cf. p 143.

Tranquillity of Mind teaches that the cosmos is a temple, the *Numa* turns this around:

Νομᾶς δὲ λέγεται καὶ τὸ τῆς Ἑστίας ἱερὸν ἐγκύκλιον περιβαλέσθαι τῷ ἀσβέστῳ πυρὶ φρουράν, ἀπομιμούμενος οὐ τὸ σχῆμα τῆς γῆς ὡς Ἑστίας οὔσης, ἀλλὰ τοῦ σύμπαντος κόσμου, οὗ μέσον οἱ Πυθαγορικοὶ τὸ πῦρ ἰδρῦσθαι νομίζουσι, καὶ τοῦτο Ἑστίαν καλοῦσι καὶ μονάδα· (*Num.* II.I)

[I]t is said that Numa built the temple of Vesta, where the perpetual fire was kept, of a circular form, not in imitation of the shape of the earth, believing Vesta to be the earth, but of the entire universe, at the centre of which the Pythagoreans place the element of fire, and call it Vesta and Unit.

Plutarch adds a testimony that has the old Plato adopting this non-geocentric Pythagorean view. As we have seen earlier (p. 51 on *Quaest. Plat.* 8.1006c), Plutarch did not believe this testimony, but here in the *Numa*, it is allowed to stand without criticism. It seems, then, that Plutarch gave some credit at least to the effort of establishing religious practices by imitating the cosmos.

I think that this two-way application of the comparison between cosmos and temple is behind the somewhat unexpected criticism of festivals, which follows after the description of the cosmos as a temple:

οὐχ ὥσπερ οἱ πολλοὶ Κρόνια καὶ Διονύσια καὶ Παναθήναια καὶ τοιαύτας ἄλλας ἡμέρας περιμένουσιν, ἵν' ἡσθῶσι καὶ ἀναπνεύσωσιν, ὠνητὸν <γελῶντες> γέλωτα μίμοις καὶ ὄρχησταῖς μισθοὺς τελέσαντες. εἴτ' ἐκεῖ μὲν εὐφημοὶ καθήμεθα κοσμίως (οὐδεὶς γὰρ ὀδύρεται μνούμενος οὐδὲ θρηνεῖ Πύθια θεώμενος ἢ πίνων ἐν Κρονίοις), ἅς δ' ὁ θεὸς ἡμῖν ἑορτὰς χορηγεῖ καὶ μυσταγωγεῖ κατασχύνουσιν, ἐν ὀδυρμοῖς τὰ πολλὰ καὶ βαρυθυμίαις καὶ μερίμναις ἐπιπόνους διατρίβοντες. (*De tranq. an.* 477d–e [text modified²⁰⁴])

[Life should not be conducted] in the manner of the vulgar, who wait for the Saturnalia and the Dionysia and the Panathenaea and other days of the kind, at which to enjoy and refresh themselves, having a bought laugh with the mimes and paying the wages of the dancers. It is true that we sit there on those occasions decorously in reverent silence, for no one wails while he is being initiated or laments as he watches the Pythian games or as he drinks at the festival of Cronus; but by spending the greater part of life in lamentation and heaviness

²⁰⁴ See Demulder forthcoming a.

of heart and carking cares men shame the festivals with which the god supplies us and in which he initiates us. [tr. modified]

What distinguishes οἱ πολλοί from the wise is not their conduct at religious festivals as such: both groups enjoy themselves, as they should.²⁰⁵ Plutarch's problem is that most people think that there is a contrast between everyday life and festival life. This must have been a common thought indeed, and perhaps the solace of festival days was as common an argument in advice on εὐθυμία as it is today ('almost weekend!'). An example of it can be found at the end of Seneca's *On Tranquillity of Mind*, where Serenus is exhorted to call his mind away ('mens [...] devocanda') from its everyday state towards amusement (*De tranq. an.* 17.4): this is what public holidays ('festos [...] dies') are for (17.7).

The right attitude, however, is to regard life as a whole as a festival experience. Does this mean that festivals should be abolished altogether? That would be odd advice coming from a Delphic priest, who will now come to the fore in this guise.²⁰⁶ Rather, the solution is for people to grasp the symbolic function of the festival. They should understand that the festival is an image of the cosmos, as the *Numa* suggests. Festivals are like statues of the gods: they contribute to religiosity if people grasp their symbolic function. When this function is not recognised, however, they lead to blasphemy. The people who disconnect the festival from the cosmos dishonour (καταισχύνουσιν) the divine.

This problem is brought front and centre in *On Isis and Osiris*. Plutarch, speaking from his experience as a priest in Delphi, points out that σύμβολα only contribute to piety if they are approached with philosophical reasoning acting as a mystagogue (λόγον ἐκ φιλοσοφίας μυσταγωγόν, 378a).

οὐδὲν γὰρ ὧν ἄνθρωπος ἔχειν πέφυκε θειότερον λόγου καὶ μάλιστα τοῦ περὶ θεῶν οὐδὲ μείζονα ῥοπήν ἔχει πρὸς εὐδαιμονίαν. διὸ τῶ μὲν εἰς τὸ χρηστήριον ἐνταῦθα κατιόντι παρεγγυῶμεν ὅσια φρονεῖν, εὐφημαλέγειν· οἱ δὲ πολλοὶ γελοῖα δρῶσιν ἐν ταῖς πομπαῖς καὶ ταῖς ἑορταῖς εὐφημίαν προκηρύττοντες, εἶτα περὶ τῶν θεῶν αὐτῶν τὰ δυσφημότατα καὶ λέγοντες καὶ διανοοῦμενοι. (*De Is. et Os.* 378c–d)

The fact is that nothing of man's usual possessions is more divine than reasoning, especially reasoning about the gods; and nothing has

²⁰⁵ That a religious experience should be accompanied by joy was not entirely self-evident: two opposed stances, superstition and lack of belief in providence, could inhibit it. Plutarch insists on the joyfulness of religious experiences arguing against these two stances; see *De sup.* 169d and *Non posse* 1100e–1104a, respectively.

²⁰⁶ Contra Heinze 1890: 505.

a greater influence toward happiness. For this reason we give instructions to anyone who comes down to the oracle here to think holy thoughts and to speak words of good omen. But the mass of mankind act ridiculously: in processions and festivals they proclaim the use of words of good omen, but later they both say and think the most unhal- lowed thoughts about the very gods. [tr. modified²⁰⁷]

Again, we find the festival behaviour of οἱ πολλοί contrasted with their conduct outside of a strictly religious context. This contrast goes against the correct reasoning about the gods, which is a central concern of the work.²⁰⁸ What follows in the remainder of the work (*De Is. et Os.* 378d–384c) are examples of how Egyptian religious practices should be interpreted in light of the *Timaeus*-inspired cosmology, which has established Osiris and Isis as powers of the good in the cosmos (369a–377b).²⁰⁹ In *On Isis and Osiris*, then, as in *On Tranquillity of Mind*, happiness depends on piety, and piety depends on a correct understanding of the cosmos.

Life in the cosmos and life at the festival should be two sides of the same coin: both should be enjoyed cheerfully, since both are cosmic. The festival is an imitation of the cosmic order (indeed, people sit κοσμίως there – this is one of the instances where it is impossible to tell if Plutarch intended the word to have a cosmological ring; cf. p. 100). Conversely, the cosmos is the model of the festival – god is the chorus leader and mystagogue of the cosmic festival (ὁ θεὸς ἡμῖν ἑορτὰς χορηγεῖ καὶ μυσταγωγεῖ) – and it should be experienced accordingly. Life is a festival, even outside of the weekend.

3.3. Contrasting images and intertexts? *On Exile* and Plutarch's 'cosmopolitanism'

The image of the cosmos as a temple seems to be relatively unproblematic. The way Plutarch introduces it, however, should give us pause. The image functions as an alternative to a contrasting image, erroneously conceived by 'those who bewail and abuse life as a land of calamities or a place of exile appointed here for our soul' (τῶν ὀδυρομένων

²⁰⁷ The Loeb translator constructs the last sentence slightly differently: 'But the mass of mankind act ridiculously in their processions and festivals in that they proclaim at the outset the use of words of good omen, but later they both say and think the most unhal- lowed thoughts about the very gods.'

²⁰⁸ See esp. the programmatic introduction (*De Is. et Os.* 351c–355d) with Roskam 2014a.

²⁰⁹ On the intertwining of epistemological and cosmological issues in *De Is. et Os.*, see Hirsch-Luipold 2002: 191–203. Cf. also p. 344–348.

καὶ λοιδορούντων τὸν βίον, ὡς τινα κακῶν χώραν ἢ φυγαδικὸν τόπον ἐνταῦθα ταῖς ψυχαῖς ἀποδεδειγμένον, *De tranq. an.* 477b–c). The notion that the realm in which we live our lives is a φυγαδικὸς τόπος, while being forcefully rejected in *On Tranquillity of Mind*, is offered as the ultimate consolation at the end of *On Exile*, another work of practical ethics that shows affinities with *On Tranquillity of Mind*.²¹⁰ Since arguments involving cosmological ethics are not limited to the end of *On Exile*, it is necessary to take a step back and consider the work as a whole before attempting to explain the seemingly contrasting imagery.

At the outset of his treatise on exile, Plutarch hedges his bets and does not decide whether exile is a real or an imagined evil – a distinction familiar from *On Tranquillity of Mind*²¹¹ – although he does not hide his preference for the second option (*De exile.* 599b–f). If it is a real evil, then we should apply the equally familiar technique of mingling good and bad like colours in a painting (599f–600e).²¹² However, it is much more likely that exile is an imagined evil. The reason for this is simple: ‘by nature there is no such thing as a native land’ (φύσει γὰρ οὐκ ἔστι πατρίς, 600e). If there is no such a thing as a native land, then there cannot possibly

²¹⁰ As Whitmarsh 2001a: 270 n. 8 notes, Plutarch’s *De exile.* distinguishes itself from contemporary works on exile (notably by Musonius Rufus, Dio Chrysostom, and Favorinus) by its ‘more metaphysical concerns’. On Hellenistic and post-Hellenistic philosophical works on exile, see also Nesselrath 2007. Babut 1969b: 102 and Opsomer 2002 offer good discussions of how Stoic borrowings are superseded by Plutarch’s Platonic outlook. On the cosmopolitanism of *De exile.*, see also Vamvouri Ruffy 2017. More general discussions include Barigazzi 1966; Hani 1980: 133–142; Viansino in Caballero and Viansino 1995: 7–20; Van Hoof 2010: 116–150. Giesecke 1891: 32–100 and Siefert 1896: 74–89 stand firmly in the tradition of *Quellenforschung*, but like most works in that tradition, they have many observations that are still valuable, particularly on the parallels with *De tranq. an.* On the consolatory character of *De exile.*, see Grilli 2000: 231–236. This character connects *De exile.* not only to *Consol. ad ux.* but also, albeit more loosely, to *De tranq. an.*; cf. Siefert 1908: 21–24 for these three works as a group. On exile in the *Lives*, see Nerdahl 2012.

²¹¹ Real and imagined evil: *De exile.* 599c–d ~ *De tranq. an.* 475b–c, both quoting Menander, fr. 179 CAF. Cf. Barigazzi 1962: 118

²¹² Mingling good and bad like colours in a painting: *De exile.* 599f–600a ~ *De tranq. an.* 469a, 473f. Two further parallels drive this point home: we should not apply the medical practice of cupping glasses, which are supposed to extract harmful humours from the body, to the care of the soul: *De tranq. an.* 469b–c ~ *De exile.* 600b–c; we should realise that the urns of good and evil (Homer, *Il.* 24.527–528 ap. Plato, *Resp.* 379d) are in ourselves: *De tranq. an.* 473b ~ *De exile.* 600c–d (see p. 214 n. 148).

be such a thing as exile. Plutarch finds the roots for this idea in Plato's *Timaeus*:²¹³

ὁ γὰρ ἄνθρωπος, ἧ φησιν ὁ Πλάτων ‘φυτὸν οὐκ ἔγγειον’ οὐδ’ ἀκίνητον ‘ἀλλ’ οὐράνιον’ ἐστίν, ὥσπερ ἐκ ρίζης τὸ σῶμα τῆς κεφαλῆς ὀρθὸν ἰστάσης πρὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνεστραμμένον. (*De exil.* 600f)

For man, as Plato says, is ‘no earthly’ or immovable ‘plant’, but a ‘celestial’ one, – the head, like a root, keeping the body erect – inverted to point to heaven.

Socrates’ alleged presentation of himself as a ‘Cosmian’ (Κόσμιος) is brought in to support this (600f–601a), and then the argument takes a more explicitly cosmological turn (601a–b).²¹⁴

Plutarch adduces four sets of factors that lead to the conclusion that the cosmos is our true native country (τῆς πατρίδος ἡμῶν) and that, consequently, there is no such thing as exile within that cosmos (οὐδεὶς οὔτε φυγὰς ἐν τούτοις οὔτε ξένος οὔτε ἀλλοδαπός, 601a). After the plant comparison, it will be no surprise to the reader that the four sets correspond to highlights from *Timaeus*. Plutarch orders them from physical to theological (601a–b).²¹⁵ (1) The same elements (fire, water, and air – earth is not listed, but its inclusion is obvious) occur everywhere in the cosmos (cf. esp. *Tim.* 32b–c). (2) The same planets (Sun, Moon, and Venus – again the list is non-exhaustive) serve as ‘magistrates and procurators and councillors’ (ἄρχοντες [...] καὶ διοικηταὶ καὶ πρυτάνεις) (cf. *Tim.* 38c, where the planets are said to be created ‘in order to set limits to

²¹³ *Tim.* 90a–b: τὸ δὲ δὴ περὶ τοῦ κυριωτάτου παρ’ ἡμῖν ψυχῆς εἶδους διανοεῖσθαι δεῖ τῆδε, ὡς ἄρα αὐτὸ δαίμονα θεὸς ἐκάστῳ δέδωκεν, τοῦτο ὃ δὴ φαμεν οἰκεῖν μὲν ἡμῶν ἐπ’ ἄκρῳ τῷ σώματι, πρὸς δὲ τὴν ἐν οὐρανῷ συγγένειαν ἀπὸ γῆς ἡμᾶς αἶρειν ὡς ὄντας φυτὸν οὐκ ἔγγειον ἀλλὰ οὐράνιον, ὀρθότατα λέγοντες· ἐκεῖθεν γάρ, ὅθεν ἡ πρώτη τῆς ψυχῆς γένεσις ἔφυ, τὸ θεῖον τὴν κεφαλὴν καὶ ρίζαν ἡμῶν ἀνακρεμαννὺν ὀρθοῖ πάν τὸ σῶμα. (‘Now we ought to think of the most sovereign part of our soul as god’s gift to us, given to be our guiding spirit. This, of course, is the type of soul that, as we maintain, resides in the top part of our bodies. It raises us up away from the earth and toward what is akin to us in heaven, as though we are plants grown not from the earth but from heaven. In saying this, we speak absolutely correctly. For it is from heaven, the place from which our souls were originally born, that the divine part suspends our head, i.e., our root, and so keeps our whole body erect.’) The image of the celestial plant is also briefly touched upon in an anti-Stoic context in *De Pyth. or.* 400b. Cf. *De genio Socr.* 591e for a similar image.

²¹⁴ See esp. Brown 2000 on this aspect of the Socratic tradition. Cf. also Babut 1969b: 106 n. 4.

²¹⁵ Cf. the disposition of references to *Tim.* in *De facie* (table 1.1).

and stand guard over the numbers of time' [εἰς διορισμὸν καὶ φυλακὴν ἀριθμῶν χρόνου]).²¹⁶ (3) The same laws (νόμοι) apply to all: 'the summer solstice, the winter solstice, the equinox, the Pleiades, Arcturus, the seasons of sowing, the seasons of planting' (τροπαὶ βόρειοι τροπαὶ νότιοι ἰσημερία Πλειὰς Ἀρκτοῦρος ὥραι σπόρων ὥραι φυτειῶν). This is an interesting broadening of the benefits of cosmology. In the *Timaeus*, our observational knowledge of 'the periods of day-and-night, of months and of years, of equinoxes and solstices' (ἡμέρα τε καὶ νύξ [...] μῆνες τε καὶ ἐνιαυτῶν περίοδοι καὶ ἰσημερία καὶ τροπαὶ, *Tim.* 47a) ultimately leads – through the discovery of number, time, and cosmology – to philosophy (see p. 67). Plutarch, however, takes a more practical turn here by shifting the focus to farming.²¹⁷ (4) The enumeration appropriately culminates with the demiurge:

εἷς δὲ βασιλεὺς καὶ ἄρχων· 'θεὸς ἀρχὴν τε καὶ μέσα καὶ τελευτὴν ἔχων τοῦ παντὸς εὐθεία περαίνει κατὰ φύσιν περιπορευόμενος· τῷ δ' ἔπεται Δίκη τῶν ἀπολειπομένων τοῦ θεοῦ νόμου τιμωρός', ἣ χρώμεθα πάντες ἄνθρωποι φύσει πρὸς πάντας ἀνθρώπους ὡσπερ πολίτας. (*De exil.* 601b)

[H]ere one king and ruler, 'God, holding the beginning, middle, and end of the universe, proceeds directly, as is his nature, in his circuit; upon him follows Justice, who visits with punishment those that fall short of the divine law' [Pl., *Leg.* 4.715e–716a], the justice which all of us by nature observe toward all men as our fellow-citizens.

The cosmological force of this bit is clarified in *To an Uneducated Ruler* (781f), where Plutarch quotes from the same passage of the *Laws*.²¹⁸ There, Plutarch emphasises the transcendence of the highest god, who dwells among the intelligibles. This transcendence does not exclude providence, however, since the god has established two images (μίμημα, εἶδωλον, εἰκόνα) of himself: the sun is his image in heaven; the ruler who incorporates justice is his image in the polis (see chapter 4.3).

²¹⁶ On the compatibility of this passage with *De comm. not.* 1076f, see Babut 1969b: 106. Cf. also *De Is. et Os.* 377f; *Quaest. Plat.* 8.1006d–e

²¹⁷ Perhaps a passage like Xen., *Mem.* 4.3.5–10 could have provided the inspiration for this (*De cur.* 517b has a reference to nearby *Mem.* 4.3.14); cf. e.g. Festugière 1949: 75–91; Sedley 2007: 78–86 on Xenophon's brand of cosmic teleology. On Plutarch's reading of Xenophon, see p. 223 n. 165.

²¹⁸ Plutarch quotes from the same *Leg.* passage in *De prof. in virt.* 81e, *De Is. et Os.* 360c, and *Adv. Col.* 1124f. Van der Stockt 2004a shows how these five parallels go far beyond just the shared quotation from Plato.

Through this depiction of the cosmos in political terms, we can start to see the contours of Plutarch's brand of cosmopolitanism: the fact that every human is our fellow citizen in a cosmic sense (πάντας ἀνθρώπους ὡσπερ πολίτας) does not amount to the abolition of the local polis filled with fellow citizens *sensu stricto* (just like, in *On Tranquillity of Mind*, enjoyment of the cosmos does not cancel out enjoyment of the festival). Rather, the polis is an image of the cosmos: while the latter is ruled by the demiurge, the former is ruled by the just politician. At this point, it should no longer surprise us nor should it invite allegations of inconsistency that Plutarch, within a range of just a few sentences, can say that the cosmos is our πατρίς (601a) and that, although we do not have a πατρίς by nature (600e), every polis can become our πατρίς (601f). Once again, we can observe the two-way character of Plutarch's cosmic imagery: since the polis is an image of the cosmos, the cosmos can be described in terms related to the polis.

In what follows Plutarch explores both directions of the image. First, he considers the cosmos (instead of an earthly polis) as the true polis to the effect that, since an earthly polis is insignificant when compared to the cosmos, exile from such a polis seems insignificant as well. Within a cosmic perspective, the earth is very small, so even banishment to the most distant place does not take us very far (601c). If we learn that the whole cosmos, rather than a single earthly polis, is ours (οἰκεῖα τὰ πάντα, 601c), we will be adequately consoled in the case of exile: the moon, earth, sea, air, sky, and water are the same everywhere (601c–d). Next, on the other hand, Plutarch approves of making a certain earthly polis one's acquired πατρίς and explores the other direction of the image: polis life should imitate cosmic life. In this guise, cosmopolitanism becomes, somewhat surprisingly, a plea for a stable life within the confines of the polis:

ὁ δὲ τοὺς περιτρέχοντας ἔξω καὶ τοῦ βίου τὸ πλεῖστον ἐν πανδοκείοις καὶ πορθμείοις ἀναλίσκοντας εὐδαιμονίζων ὁμοίος ἐστὶ τῷ τοὺς πλάνητας οἰομένῳ τῶν ἀπλανῶν ἀστέρων πράττειν ἄμεινον. καίτοι τῶν πλανήτων ἕκαστος ἐν μιᾷ σφαίρᾳ καθάπερ ἐν νήσῳ περιπολῶν διαφυλάττει τὴν τάξιν· ἥλιος γὰρ οὐχ ὑπερβήσεται μέτρα' φησὶν ὁ Ἡράκλειτος· 'εἰ δὲ μή, Ἐρινύες μιν Δίκης ἐπίκουροι ἐξευρήσουσιν.' (*De exil.* 604a–b)

He that calls those persons happy who run about in the world outside and use up most of their lives at inns and ferry-stations is like the man who fancies that the planets enjoy greater felicity than the fixed stars. And yet each planet, revolving in a single sphere, as on an island, preserves its station; for 'the Sun will not transgress his bounds,' says Heracleitus [fr. B94 DK]; 'else the Erinyes, ministers of Justice, will find him out'.

As the *Timaeus* (40a–d) teaches us, both the fixed stars and the planets exhibit a high degree of stability. The former are more stable than the latter, to be sure, since they only experience the movement of the circle of sameness. Still, even the planets, undergoing the combined motions of the circle of sameness and the circle of difference, are characterised by regularity.

After further, rather topical arguments and examples involving the leisure that comes with exile (604b–d), the popularity of voluntary exile (604d–605d), and the rebuttal of false prejudices – that exile excludes fame (605d–f) and freedom of speech (605f–607a) or that it is a term of reproach (607a–c) – we reach the final part of the work and the argument that ‘all of us [...] are sojourners here and strangers and exiles’ (πάντας [...] μετανάστας ἐνταῦθα καὶ ξένους καὶ φυγάδας ἡμᾶς ὄντας, 607d). In this light, earthly exile becomes completely insignificant. The argument is attributed to Empedocles (*De exil.* 607c–d quotes verses from fr. B115 DK), and it concerns, more specifically, the fact that the soul has come from elsewhere (τῆς δὲ ψυχῆς ἀλλαχόθεν ἠκούσης δεῦρο, 607d). It is, then, fairly akin to the opinion, fiercely rejected in *On Tranquillity of Mind*, that life is ‘a land of calamities or a place of exile appointed here for our soul’ (τινα κακῶν χώραν ἢ φυγαδικὸν τόπον ἐνταῦθα ταῖς ψυχαῖς ἀποδεδειγμένον, *De tranq. an.* 477b–c).

I will argue that this is only an apparent inconsistency: Plutarch does not endorse the argument that he attributes to Empedocles in *On Exile*.²¹⁹ Two clues for this can be found in how Plato is connected to what Plutarch alleges to be Empedocles’ argument:

τὸ δ’ ἀληθέστατον, φεύγει καὶ πλανᾶται θείοις ἐλαυνομένη δόγμασι καὶ νόμοις, εἴθ’ ὥσπερ ἐν νήσῳ σάλον ἐχούση πολὺν, καθάπερ φησὶν ὁ Πλάτων, ‘ὄστρέου τρόπον’ ἐνδεδεμένη τῷ σώματι διὰ τὸ μὴ ἀναφέρειν μηδὲ μνημονεύειν ‘ἐξ οἷς τιμῆς τε καὶ ὄσσου μήκεος ὄλβου’ μεθέστηκεν, οὐ Σάρδεων Ἀθήνας οὐδὲ Κορίνθου Λῆμον ἢ Σκῦρον ἀλλ’ οὐρανοῦ καὶ σελήνης γῆν ἀμειψαμένη καὶ τὸν ἐπὶ γῆς βίον, ἂν μικρὸν ἐνταῦθα τόπον ἐκ τόπου παραλλάξῃ, δυσανασχετεῖ καὶ ξενοπαθεῖ καθάπερ φυτὸν ἀγεννὲς ἀπομαραιομένη. (*De exil.* 607d–e)

But it is truest to say that the soul is an exile and a wanderer, driven forth by divine decrees and laws; and then, as on an island buffeted

²¹⁹ Contra Barigazzi 1966: 255, cf. 261–262, who regards the view that ‘siamo tutti pellegrini sulla terra’ as being endorsed in *De exil.* and goes on to connect rather than contrast this with the ‘profondi pensieri platonici’ at the end of *De tranq. an.* Babut 1969b: 107 similarly reads the reference to Empedocles’ notion of cosmic exile as an endorsement. Cf. also e.g. Ziegler 1951: 820; Vernière 1977: 155–157.

by the seas, imprisoned within the body ‘like an oyster in its shell’, as Plato [*Phdr.* 250c] says, because it does not remember or recall ‘what honour and what high felicity’ [Empedocles, fr. B119.1 DK] it has left, not leaving Sardis for Athens or Corinth for Lemnos or Scyros, but Heaven and the Moon for earth and life on earth, if it shifts but a short distance here from one spot to another, it is resentful and feels strange, drooping like a base-born plant.

The quote from the *Phaedrus* seems straightforward enough, and Plutarch surely would agree that the soul enters the body from elsewhere. More specifically, the notion that the soul comes from heaven and the moon ties in with the myth at the end of *On the Face in the Moon* (e.g. 943a, 945c; cf. *Amat.* 766b; *De genio Socr.* 591b–c). But can this be called a banishment? In the argument developed in *On Exile*, the apparently affirmative answer to this question depends on the soul’s lack of memory of its higher provenance (διὰ τὸ μὴ ἀναφέρειν μηδὲ μνημονεύειν). Now, if we look at the quote from the *Phaedrus* in its original context, we cannot but observe that it occurs in a passage that argues the opposite: although the soul is locked up in the body like an oyster in its shell, it still has access to memories of the intelligible realm where it used to roam (*Phdr.* 250c–e; cf. Plu., *Quaest. Plat.* 6; *Amat.* 764e, 765b with p. 336). Moreover, when human life is compared to that of a withering φυτόν ἀγεννές, the reader is probably expected to note the contrast with the earlier characterisation, taken from the *Timaeus*, of the human being as an upright φυτόν οὐράνιον that connects heaven and earth. The Platonic winks here seem to undermine rather than support the argument attributed to Empedocles.

There is another indication of this. The argument attributed to Empedocles is offered together with a verse from Aeschylus, which alludes to Apollo’s exile from heaven (*Supp.* 214 at *De exil.* 607c). Plutarch comments on this verse by quoting the Herodotean injunction ‘let my lips be sealed’ (εὔστομά μοι κείσθω, Hdt. 2.171). This injunction would seem to affirm the mystical truth of what has preceded. However, the other two instances where Plutarch uses this phrase should warn us against this premature conclusion. In *Sympotic Questions* 2.3 (636e), one of Plutarch’s relatives laughingly (γελάσας, 636d) quotes these words to conclude a jumbled discourse invoking Orphic arguments in favour of the position that the egg came before the chicken and is actually the first principle of the cosmos. His position is rebutted in the rest of the discussion and there is certainly a lot of light-hearted humour here.²²⁰ In *On the Decline of Oracles* (417c), the Herodotean phrase is quoted by Cleombrotus, who

²²⁰ See Van Nuffelen 2007: 11–13 for a more extensive analysis of the humour and rhetoric here. On this *quaestio*, cf. also p. 96–97.

nevertheless goes on to reveal mystic truth (422c) and, to add insult to injury, is exposed as a plagiarist by Plutarch's brother Lamprias (422d–e).²²¹ When Plutarch uses this particular quote from Herodotus, then, alarm bells should start going off. Even without the parallels from the *Symptotic Questions* and *On the Decline of Oracles*, it is hard to believe that Plutarch would endorse the view that Apollo was exiled. Such an experience would mean that he is at best a demon, while for Plutarch, Apollo is, regardless of the various ways in which he is presented, a god; it is on this argument that the verse from Aeschylus involving Apollo's exile is criticised in *On the Decline of Oracles* (417f).²²²

It has become clear by now that Plutarch gives us subtle yet strong indications that the testimonies of Aeschylus and Empedocles in *On Exile* should be taken with a grain of salt. This is confirmed by what follows after Plutarch's interpretation of Empedocles' verses:

καίτοι φυτῶ μὲν ἔστι τις χώρα μᾶλλον ἑτέρας ἑτέρα πρόσφορος, ἐν ἣ τρέφεται καὶ βλαστάνει βέλτιον, ἀνθρώπου δ' οὐδεὶς ἀφαιρεῖται τόπος εὐδαιμονίαν, ὥσπερ οὐδ' ἀρετὴν οὐδὲ φρόνησιν. ἀλλ' Ἀναξαγόρας μὲν ἐν τῷ δεσμοτηρίῳ τὸν τοῦ κύκλου τετραγωνισμόν ἔγραφε, Σωκράτης δὲ φάρμακον πίνων ἐφιλοσόφει καὶ παρεκάλει φιλοσοφεῖν τοὺς συνήθεις εὐδαιμονιζόμενος ὑπ' αὐτῶν· τὸν δὲ Φαέθοντα καὶ τὸν Τάνταλον εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀναβάντας οἱ ποιηταὶ λέγουσι ταῖς μεγίσταις συμφοραῖς περιπεσεῖν διὰ τὴν ἀφροσύνην. (*De exil.* 607e–f)

And yet for a plant one region is more favourable than another for thriving and growth, but from a man no place can take away happiness, as none can take away virtue or wisdom; nay, Anaxagoras in prison was busied with squaring the circle, and Socrates, when he drank the hemlock, engaged in philosophy and invited his companions to do the same, and was by them deemed happy; whereas Phaethon and Tantalus, as poets tell, when they had ascended to heaven, met with the most grievous disasters through their folly.

The examples, which establish another parallel with *On Tranquillity of Mind* (466d–f), show that happiness is neither excluded by being on

²²¹ See Dörrie 1983; cf. also Van Nuffelen 2007: 20.

²²² On demons and exile, see *De def. or.* 417e–419a. Again, the proviso should be added that Cleombrotus is the source of this point. His general characterisation of demons, however, is accepted and confirmed by other interlocutors. On Plutarch's conception of Apollo, see Boulet 2008; Stadter 2015b. I cannot do justice here to the complexities of *De def. or.* and Plutarch's demonology; see e.g. Soury 1942b; Brenk 1973; 1977; 1986; 1987; Vernière 1977: esp. 249–262; Froidefond 1987; Babut 1994a; Dillon 1996: 216–219; Timotin 2012; Brouillette 2014: 150–168; Simonetti 2017: 82–91.

earth (Anaxagoras and Socrates) nor guaranteed by ascending to heaven (Phaethon and Tantalus).

In the end, the argument attributed to Empedocles that human life is the exile of the soul does not have much purchase on the message of *On Exile*. Actually, this treatise ends on the same note as *On Tranquillity of Mind*: while the difference between the sensible and the intelligible should be acknowledged, the focus should be on the connection between the two realms that is apparent in the cosmos. This connection is explored in mathematics (Anaxagoras) and philosophy (Socrates) and ignored by ἀφροσύνη (Phaethon and Tantalus). In the *Timaeus*, ἀφροσύνη is what prevents imitation of the divine (80b) and results in a life that is literally lived away from heaven and close to the ground (92a). Human beings, then, are not banned from heaven during their lives on earth: this rather gloomy outlook does not have a place in Plutarch's Platonism.²²³ They are plants with celestial roots and earthly blossoms.²²⁴

However, this image of the celestial plant (φυτὸν οὐράνιον), which Plutarch borrows from the *Timaeus*, comes with its own problem. So far, I have argued in this subsection that Plutarch does not endorse Empedocles' image of human existence as a banishment, thus smoothing over an apparent contradiction with *On Tranquillity of Mind* where this banishment image was squarely rejected in favour of the image of the cosmic temple, which Plutarch read into the *Timaeus*. The new problem is that Hani and Vamvouri Ruffy have argued that Plutarch modifies Plato's plant image to the effect that, in Plutarch's version, the human plant has its roots in the earth after all.²²⁵ Is Plutarch moving away from the *Timaeus*-

²²³ Plutarch can be contrasted with Plotinus on this point: the latter, by quoting Homer, advises us to 'fly to our dear country' (φεύγωμεν δὴ φίλην ἐς πατρίδα, I.6.8; cf. *Il.* 2.140) – our πατρίς being the intelligible realm – by turning away from the sensible. That Plutarch considered Empedocles' view on the kind of exile found in fr. B115 DK to be gloomy is borne out by his use of the same fragment in *De Is. et Os.* 361c and *De vit. aer.* 830e–f.

²²⁴ Plutarch's references to Plato's celestial plant (*De Pyth. or.* 400b; *De exil.* 600f) should not be confused with his use of the image of the human being developing like a growing plant (following a tradition that goes back beyond Plato; e.g. Pindar, *Nemean Ode* 8.40–42; cf. Nussbaum 2001: 422 n. 3 and passim). The latter is used at *Amat.* 757e; as 757f–758a shows, this image has the human plant growing in the direction of virtue (εἰς ἀρετήν). This focus on development does not fit with the image of the celestial plant, which has its roots in the place where the ideal is situated. The two images look at different levels of rootedness: the celestial plant regards the primary, heavenly roots, while the growing plant pertains to the secondary, earthly roots; cf. also *Dem.* 1.3. Contra e.g. Minar, Sandbach, and Helmbold 1961: 357 n. d; Simonetti 2017: 55 n. 158. On Plutarch's plant imagery in general, see Fuhrmann 1964: 120–121.

²²⁵ (1) Hani 1980: 152 n. 5: 'Plutarque modifie un peu la pensée de Platon pour l'adapter à son propos. Chez Platon, ἄγειον est opposé à οὐράνιον. Par les mots οὐδ' ἀκίνητον

us here, and is there a contradiction between *On Exile* and *On Tranquillity of Mind* after all?

This interpretation seems to receive support from what Plutarch says shortly after the introduction of the cosmic plant (600f): when he says that, as we have seen, every polis can become a πατρίς, Plutarch adds that this is because humans can take root anywhere on earth (πατρίς δὲ γίνεται πᾶσα πόλις εὐθὺς ἀνθρώπων χρῆσθαι μεμαθηκότι καὶ ῥίζας ἔχοντι πανταχοῦ ζῆν τε καὶ τρέφεσθαι καὶ παντὶ τόπῳ προσφύεσθαι δυναμένως, 601f). It is true that Plutarch states here that humans have roots on earth, but, unlike Hani and Vamouri Ruffy, I do not think that this implies a modification of the Platonic image of the celestially rooted plant, nor am I convinced that it is exactly this image that is continued here. As in the case of the word πατρίς, we should be aware that Plutarch's image of the root functions on two different ontological levels. First and foremost, the human being is considered as a celestial plant that has its roots in heaven and not on earth: Plutarch uses this image, as we have seen, at 600f and it is a faithful, unmodified version of Plato's image in *Timaeus* 90a–b. On a secondary level, the human being is a plant that takes root on earth (*De exil.* 601f). By distinguishing these two levels, Plutarch follows the imagery of the *Timaeus* itself. Plato, after all, not only considers the human being a celestial plant rooted in heaven, but he also describes how the

qu'il ajoute, Plutarque fait dire au texte plus qu'il ne dit en réalité: ces mots donnent à entendre que la plante "adhère à la terre". [...] On a un prolongement de l'image platonicienne au ch. 7 et au ch. 17, appliquée cette fois à l'enracinement de l'homme dans un pays.' Hani's paraphrase of this passage elsewhere makes clear what would be the implications of this modification: 'La patrie de l'homme ce n'est pas son lieu de naissance, qui est le fait du hasard, mais la terre et le ciel' (Hani 1980: 136). Hani suggests, in other words, that the addition of οὐδ' ἀκίνητον cancels out or at least mitigates the opposition between ἔγγειον and οὐράνιον: human beings are rooted in the totality of heaven and earth as opposed to one specific location – they are free to roam about. I think, however, that we should refrain from reading too much into οὐδ' ἀκίνητον: Plutarch might just have been thinking about the description of plants at *Tim.* 77a–c, where lack of movement distinguishes plants from other living things (or about some other, possibly Peripatetic account – the idea in itself is hardly baffling). Plutarch's addition of οὐδ' ἀκίνητον, then, does not modify the opposition between ἔγγειον and οὐράνιον but just serves to explain οὐκ ἔγγειον; cf. *Quaest. nat.* 1.911c, where a plant is called ἔγγαιον to distinguish it from a land animal: in this context, ἔγγαιον is almost a synonym of ἀκίνητον. (2) Vamvouri Ruffy 2017: 245 n. 31: 'It is interesting that here Plutarch slightly changes *Pl. Ti.* 90A, since man is presented as a plant that contemplates the sky but at the same time sticks to the earth. For Plato, the plant is suspended, with the higher parts up and the lower parts down. This difference could be explained by the fact that Plutarch does not completely condemn the facts of taking roots in a place. After all, he was so attached to Chaeronea that he never abandoned it, so that his city-state would not become empty.'

souls are *sown* into the earth, the moon, and the other planets (σπείρας, *Tim.* 41c; ἔσπειρεν, 42d) – a passage that was the subject of Plutarch’s eighth *Platonic Question* (p. 197). If we put these two pieces from the *Timaeus* together, it is not absurd to state that humans are primarily rooted in heaven and secondarily rooted on earth.²²⁶ Plutarch, then, did not have to tweak Plato’s imagery of the celestial plant to be able to account for earthly roots as Hani and Vamvouri Ruffly suggested. Rather, he is following Plato by allowing for two levels of rootedness, just like he allows for two levels of πατρίς in *On Exile* and two levels of festival in *On Tranquillity of Mind*. In none of those cases do these two levels cancel each other out. On the contrary, through the use of imagery, our knowledge of one level informs our knowledge of the other.

I think it is important to keep this in mind when tackling the subject of Plutarch’s cosmopolitanism, which allows for quite some diversity. This two-level thinking, justified by Plutarch’s Platonic cosmology, allows for the combination of patriotism and cosmopolitanism in a way that was not accessible to Cynics and Stoics.²²⁷ If a polis is an image of the cosmos, as Plutarch’s notions of πατρίς and rootedness suggest, then the goodness of that polis can be measured by its likeness to the cosmic ideal. The clearest illustration of this, although it does not concern a polis

²²⁶ From *Tim.* 42b, it is clear that the sowing of the souls by the demiurge should be considered secondary: the reward for a good life is, after all, the return to the personal companion star in the sphere of the fixed stars. Cf. Zeyl 2000: lii n. 112. A coeval engagement with the Timaeian sowing and planting of human soul can be found in Numenius, fr. 13 (= B-S 6W), which can be compared to Plutarch’s take on the matter only to a limited extent, given that Numenius’ account is tinged by his trademark distinction between the first god and the demiurge; on Numenius’ engagement with *Tim.* 41d–42d here, see esp. Tarrant 1979.

²²⁷ While the Cynics and early Stoics denied run-of-the-mill patriotism (see Moles 1996; on early Stoic cosmopolitanism specifically, see e.g. Obbink 1999; Schofield 1999b; Vogt 2008; Richter 2011: 57–66), later Stoics found a way to explain it through οἰκείωσις: see Richter 2011: 80–86. Here and throughout his excellent book (see esp. 18 and 246), Richter connects ancient cosmopolitanism with Appiah’s plea for a rooted cosmopolitanism (Appiah 2006; cf. Ackerman 1994). This may seem to be a fitting label for what I have been saying about Plutarch’s cosmopolitanism as well. However, I think it is not. Nor do I think, contra Richter, that it is helpful as a parallel to ancient cosmopolitanism in general. Appiah’s notion of rooted cosmopolitanism depends on a positive valuation of otherness. Appiah’s rooted cosmopolitan thinks of the other as valuable precisely because it is different from what she is, has, knows, and so on. I find this a precious thought, but it is not one that I detect in ancient cosmopolitanism or in Plutarch’s thought. On this issue in Plutarch, see Roskam 2004.

strictly speaking, can be found in *On the Fortune of the Romans*.²²⁸ In the introduction of this epideictic speech, Plutarch announces that he will pit ἀρετή against τύχη to determine which one can take the credit for the hegemony of the Roman empire. He foreshadows the cosmic perspective by pointing out that the question he is asking about Rome is also asked about ‘earth and sea, heaven and stars’ (ὕπερ γῆς καὶ θαλάσσης καὶ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ἄστρων, 316e). The following three sentences, which form a kind of *tricolon crescens* (they count 6, 14, and 24 lines in the Teubner edition), constitute a crescendo of cosmic considerations as well.

(1) Rome gained its dominance when the opposites ἀρετή and τύχη, which are normally at war, came together and formed ‘the most beautiful of human works’ (συναπεργάσασθαι τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων ἔργων τὸ κάλλιστον, 316e). Taking into account the context and the intertextual reference that follows in the next sentence, I submit that Plutarch hints at the *Timaeus* here: the demiurge creates the cosmos by putting intelligence in soul and soul in body ‘to produce a piece of work that would be as excellent and supreme as its nature would allow’ (ὅπως ὄτι κάλλιστον εἶη κατὰ φύσιν ἄριστόν τε ἔργον ἀπειργασμένος, *Tim.* 30b; cf. *Plu., De an. procr.* 1014a–b, c). While the cosmos is the best of demiurgic works, Rome as its image is the best of human works.

(2) In the second consideration, the Platonic reference is explicitly announced (Πλάτων φησίν, 316e) and comes in a comparison. Just like, in the cosmogony, water and air were placed between the opposed extremities earth and fire (*Tim.* 31b–32c), so, in the establishment of Rome’s hegemony, divinely guided time (χρόνος μετὰ θεοῦ) served as the substrate (ὑποβαλόμενος) for the combination of ἀρετή and τύχη (*De fort. Rom.* 316f). This divinely guided time seems to appear here, as the analogy with the combination of the elements suggests (cf. *De an. procr.* 1025a), as the combination of divisible (cf. χρόνος) and indivisible (cf. μετὰ θεοῦ) being, which were combined in the first stage of the cosmic soul’s creation. After the discussion of time as the activity of the cosmic soul (p. 198), this will not come as a surprise. The more extreme principles ἀρετή and τύχη, then, can be compared to the more extreme principles sameness and difference. What is important to note here is that the hegemony of Rome is no longer merely an ἀνθρώπινον ἔργον: an element of divine providence is brought front and centre. Rome is not only an image of the cosmos (as in 1) but also part of the cosmic plan.

(3) The third consideration uses atomistic language to paint a picture of precosmic chaos and the ensuing cosmogony: earth somehow (πῶς,

²²⁸ This speech has long been considered (and often disparaged) as a youthful work but this might not be the case; see Pelling 2002a: 1 n. 5; 2002b: 84 n. 63. On *De fort. Rom.*, see esp. Swain 1989d and further Flacelière 1966; Jones 1971: 67–70; Frazier in Frazier and Froidefond 1990: 9–26; Stadter 2014: 83–84.

317b) came into being through a lumping together of swerving elements (317a–b). Similarly, before Rome achieved its supreme power, there was merely haphazard and continuous strife between equivalent powers (317b–c). Surprisingly, the establishment of Rome adds two things that the establishment of the cosmos seems to be lacking here: ἀρετή and permanence.²²⁹ Although Rome needed τύχη as well, its ἀρετή is what distinguished it from the other powers, which were merely driven by τύχη. This heralds what Dillon has called, borrowing Fukuyama’s notorious terminology, ‘the end of history’: the Roman empire is marked by a peaceful order and a single, uninterrupted cycle (εἰς κόσμον εἰρήνης καὶ ἓνα κύκλον [...] ἄπταιστον).²³⁰ If Plutarch’s listeners were not stunned by the excessive length of this sentence, they would at least have been awestruck by its content. Rome, as it turns out, is not only part of the cosmos (as in 2, although there seems to be no cosmic plan in 3, given the atomistic colouring), but it even improves upon the cosmic process by adding stability and ἀρετή to τύχη (an improvement that is only possible because there seems to be no cosmic plan here).

Of course, all this is in the interest of epideictic rhetoric. Particularly the third sentence presents a physicalistic cosmogony with which Plutarch would otherwise firmly disagree, since his Platonic cosmos is not marked by τύχη alone.²³¹ When discussing Plutarch’s interpretation of Plato’s *Statesman*, moreover, we found Plutarch the philosopher curbing the enthusiasm of Plutarch the encomiast by denying the possibility of the end of history (p. 64). This does not change the fact that *On the Fortune of the Romans* shows how Plutarch conceived of the polis (and other forms of societal organisation) as an image of the cosmos. While

²²⁹ I do not think that the Loeb translator is fully correct in translating ἰδρυθῆναι (said of the earth at 317b) with ‘came to be *permanently* abiding’ (emphasis added): there is no indication of such permanence on the cosmological side of the comparison. Of course, permanence (and the same goes for ἀρετή) is part of the cosmological picture here inasmuch it is endowed to Rome, and Rome belongs to the cosmos. The encomium (intentionally?) veers into the paradoxical at this point.

²³⁰ Dillon 1997a (= Dillon 1997b: chap. VII); cf. also Aalders 1982: 58–60; Barigazzi 1994. Similar views on the peace provided by the Roman hegemony are expressed in *De Pyth or.* 408b–c and *Praec. ger. reip.* 824c–d. Plutarch’s general views on Rome are much more nuanced; important studies on the subject include Jones 1971; Boulogne 1994; Swain 1996: 135–186; Preston 2001; see also Aalders 1982: 54–57; Duff 1999b: 287–308; Stadter 2014.

²³¹ The purely physical cosmogonic sketch of *De fort. Rom.* can be compared to the Epicurean cosmology of Lucretius 5.417–431, as the Teubner edition indicates. Cf. also *De facie* 926e–f (with p. 35), where purely physical causation, absence of intermingling of elements, and strife (with a reference to Empedocles) also serve to describe precosmic chaos, this time in an anti-Stoic context. Cf. Van Nuffelen 2011: 159.

in the *laus Romae* there is seemingly little difference between patriotism and cosmopolitanism – Rome is such an excellent image of the cosmos that the two seem to coincide – this is not always the case. I have already mentioned how in *On Isis and Osiris* the cosmopolitan interest in barbaric religion does not seamlessly integrate with the patriotic primacy of Greekness (p. 219). Similarly, the two orations *On the Fortune and Virtue of Alexander* reveal a tension between Alexander’s cosmopolitan openness towards barbaric practices and his patriotic correction of such practices.²³² Both in *On Isis and Osiris* and *On the Fortune and Virtue of Alexander*, this Greekness amounts to rationality. Within the explanatory framework established in the previous pages, then, one could say, although this is not explicitly stated in these works, that Greek patriotism, since it represents a better (that is, more rational) albeit by definition imperfect image of the cosmos, is entitled to correct barbaric aberrations while remaining open to their possible positive contributions. In *On the Malice of Herodotus*, finally, we find Plutarch at his most patriotic at the expense of the φιλοβάρβαρος Herodotus: cosmopolitanism has disappeared entirely from the radar here.²³³ Plutarch’s variegated cosmopolitanism, then, certainly warrants an in-depth study.²³⁴ In this section I hope to have elucidated the Platonic rationale behind it. This has made clear that the cosmopolitan images used in *On Tranquillity of Mind*, *On Exile*, and Plato’s *Timaeus* do not contradict each other.

²³² Compare e.g. *De Al. Magn. fort.* 329a–330e with 328c–e; cf. also 327d, 342a. See Konstan 2009b: 479–480 on the tension here; cf. also Schmidt 1999: 272–299. Plutarch mentions the Stoic cosmopolitanism of Zeno’s *Republic* at 329a–b, but, as Babut 1969b: 85 points out, this apparent Stoic influence is corrected in due course: ‘[D]ans les dernières lignes du premier texte [i.e. the first oration of *De Al. Magn. fort.*], le cosmopolitisme emprunté à Zénon a soudain pris le forme du nationalisme panhellénique qui s’exprime si souvent chez Plutarque’. On the similar projects behind both *De fort. Rom.* and *De Alex. Magn. fort.*, see esp. Desideri 2005. On *De Al. Magn. fort.*, see also p. 140, 156, and further Hamilton 1969: xxiii–xxxiii; Froidefond in Frazier and Froidefond 1990: 69–109; D’Angelo 1998; Cammarota 1998; Whitmarsh 2002.

²³³ See e.g. Richter 2011: 226–229, although I detect more difference in emphasis between *De Her. mal.* and *De Is. et Os.* than he does (on Richter’s interpretation of *De Is. et Os.* in terms of cultural appropriation, see p. 219 n. 158).

²³⁴ Important groundwork for this has been done by Schmidt 1999, who analyses Plutarch’s views on barbarians. Cf. also the remarks on small- and large-scale politics in Aalders 1982: 26–27, 43.

3.4. Similar images and intertexts? Θεωρία and Second Sophistic cosmic festivals

As we have seen in the discussion of Plato's *Epinomis*, the comparison of the cosmos with a temple is not Plutarch's invention. The same goes for its concomitant, the comparison of life with a festival. As a matter of fact, this comparison was an important tool in the development of philosophy as a cultural practice in the fourth century BCE, if not earlier. Festival θεωρία – the practice of travelling to another polis to witness a religious event – became a model for philosophy and was developed as such by Plato and Aristotle.²³⁵ The philosopher watches life like the θεωρός watches the festival at which he is a visitor.

The particular role of the philosopher as θεωρός at the festival of life endows philosophy with certain connotations of detachment. Two famous examples of the festival image can show how this came about and how Plutarch's view relates to this.²³⁶ As Heraclides of Pontus, an early student of Plato's Academy, had it, Pythagoras coined the term 'philosopher' by comparing life to a Panhellenic festival at which some are looking for applause, others are trying to make money, and others still are there just to watch.²³⁷ The latter are akin to the philosophers. They are, at the same time, the rarest ('raros [...] quosdam') and the best ('quoddam genus eorum idque vel maxime ingenuum') (Cic., *Tusc. disp.* 5.3). Plutarch's version of the image does in a way affirm this philosophical elitism. As we have seen, the stance of the philosopher contrasts with the conduct of οἱ πολλοί, who wait for festival days to be happy for a short while. Their failure to see the analogy between religious festivals and the cosmic festival separates them from the philosophical 'good man' (ἀνὴρ [...] ἀγαθός) who considers every day a festival. However, this separation is built around the *acceptance* of the image: the philosopher accepts it while the multitude does not. Within the image, the philosophers do not appear as a separate class: truly, all humans are initiates at the cosmic festival. The error of the multitude and the cause of their unhappiness is just that they fail to see the compellingness of the image. Within the image, they are not excluded. This is significantly different from Heraclides' version, in which the philosopher performs a special task and, as such, is marked off from the other visitors at the festival.

Aristotle's *Protrepticus* (fr. B44 Düring) contains a version similar to that of Heraclides. In Aristotle's version, the emphasis is on the use-

²³⁵ See esp. Nightingale 2004 and also Rausch 1982; Nightingale 2001; 2005; Grilli 2002: 26–39; Rutherford 2013: 324–338.

²³⁶ On these two examples, see Nightingale 2004: 18–19; 2005: 153–154.

²³⁷ This is related by Cicero, *Tusc. disp.* 5.3. Cf. Iamblichus, *Vit. Pyth.* 58 for a similar use of the image.

lessness of θεωρία. When going on a θεωρία to the Olympian festival or to the Dionysia, one finds it normal to pay a fee in order to witness the spectacle (θεά) and one does not expect to gain anything. Similarly, when attending the festival of life as a spectator, one should not expect to make a profit. Aristotle is, I take it, playing on the similarity between χρήσιμος (useful) and χρήματα (money) – both terms occur twice in the fragment – to build up to the conclusion that we should ‘not think it right to view without payment the nature and reality of things’ (τὴν δὲ τῶν ὄντων φύσιν καὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν οὐκ οἶσθαι δεῖν θεωρεῖν ἀμισθί). In Plutarch’s account, on the other hand, the element of payment is mentioned rather derogatorily, as part of the attitude of the people who need paid entertainment to be happy. He does not take it up as part of the parallel between religious festivals and life, nor does he insist on the uselessness of θεωρία. Quite the contrary, the whole point of *On Tranquillity of Mind* is to show how, by adopting the philosophical attitude that the festival image is supposed to describe, we can render events caused by τύχη, whether they be good or bad, useful to us (χρήσιμον, 467c²³⁸).

Plutarch’s take on the festival image, then, does away to a certain extent with the detachment of the philosophically minded person from the rest of society and from the things that the rest of society cares about. Of course, the requirements of the treatise probably account in large part for Plutarch’s emphasis. The intended readers of *On Tranquillity of Mind* – people like Paccius – would not have been well served by the message that philosophy necessarily implies detachment.²³⁹ However, this does not render irrelevant the fact that Plutarch decided to insert the festival imagery as the grand finale of this particular work and thus chose to engage with the way in which philosophers used this image to communicate their purpose. More generally, Plutarch rejects the contrast between θεωρία and πρᾶξις – not only in *On Tranquillity of Mind*. Bonazzi has shown the pervasive consequences of this union of *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa* for Plutarch’s adversity to Stoicism and Epicureanism and for his views on politics.²⁴⁰

I would like to build on Bonazzi’s observations by adding that this union leads once again to (Plutarch’s interpretation of) Plato’s *Timaeus*.

²³⁸ Cf. 466c, 467a, 469c, 470a, 471d, 473b, 474a, b, d. Contrast also the positive use of ὠφελέω at 465c and 467b with the negative use in the fragment from Aristotle’s *Protrepticus* (μηδ’ ὠφέλιμος, οὐ γὰρ ὠφέλιμον).

²³⁹ As we have seen (p. 186), ἀπραγμοσύνη is rejected as a formula for εὐθυμία (*De tranq. an.* 465c–466a). This is a central concern of the interpretation of *De tranq. an.* in Van Hoof 2010: 83–115.

²⁴⁰ Bonazzi 2012. Cf. also Georgiadou 1995; Roskam 2009b: 87–96; Demulder 2017a: 57–63.

In *On the Generation of the Soul*, the combination of θεωρία and πράξις is explained as follows:

καὶ μὴν θεωρητικῆς γε τῆς ψυχῆς οὔσης ἅμα καὶ πρακτικῆς, καὶ θεωρούσης <μὲν τὰ καθόλου πραττούσης δὲ²⁴¹> τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα, καὶ νοεῖν μὲν ἐκεῖνα ταῦτα δ' αἰσθάνεσθαι δοκούσης, ὁ κοινὸς λόγος ἀεὶ περὶ τε ταῦτὸν ἐντυγγάνων τῷ θατέρῳ καὶ ταῦτῳ περὶ θάτερον ἐπιχειρεῖ μὲν ὅροις καὶ διαιρέσεσι χωρίζειν τὸ ἐν καὶ τὰ πολλὰ καὶ τὸ ἀμερὲς καὶ τὸ μεριστόν, οὐ δύναται δὲ καθαρῶς ἐν οὐδετέρῳ γενέσθαι διὰ τὸ καὶ τὰς ἀρχὰς ἐναλλάξ ἐμπεπλέχθαι καὶ καταμεμῖχθαι δι' ἀλλήλων. καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τῆς οὐσίας τὴν ἐκ τῆς ἀμερίστου καὶ τῆς μεριστῆς ὁ θεὸς ὑποδοχὴν τῷ ταῦτῳ καὶ τῷ θατέρῳ συνέστησεν, ἵν' ἐν διαφορᾷ τάξις γένηται· τοῦτο γὰρ ἦν γενέσθαι. ἐπεὶ χωρὶς τούτων τὸ μὲν ταῦτὸν οὐκ εἶχε διαφορὰν ὥστ' οὐδὲ κίνησιν οὐδὲ γένεσιν, τὸ θάτερον δὲ τάξιν οὐκ εἶχεν ὥστ' οὐδὲ σύστασιν οὐδὲ γένεσιν. (*De an. procr.* 1025d–f)

Now, as the soul is at once contemplative and practical and contemplates the universals but acts upon the particulars and apparently cognizes the former but perceives the latter, the reason common to both, as it is continually coming upon difference in sameness and upon sameness in difference, tries with definitions and divisions to separate the one and the many, that is the indivisible and the divisible, but cannot arrive at either exclusively, because the very principles have been alternately intertwined and thoroughly intermixed with each other. It was just for this reason that god made from being the compound of the indivisible and the divisible as a receptacle for sameness and difference, that order might come to be in differentiation; in fact, 'come to be' amounted to this, since without these sameness had no differentiation so that it had no motion either and so no coming to be and difference had no order so that it had no coherence either and so no coming to be.

This passage needs some disentangling. Why are θεωρία (engagement with universals associated with νοεῖν) and πράξις (engagement with particulars associated with αἰσθάνεσθαι) never completely separated? At first, the answer may seem to lie with the *objects* of θεωρία and πράξις: the κοινὸς λόγος (i.e. the combined activity of cognition and perception) finds its objects (ταῦτὸν, τὸ ἐν, τὸ ἀμερὲς on the one hand; θάτερον, τὰ

²⁴¹ The emendation occurs in the margin of two manuscripts. The parallel at 1024e, connecting νοεῖν with τὰ καθόλου, makes it compelling; cf. also 1026d. On the Aristotelian terminology in these passages, see Helmer 1937: 51–53 and the apparatus and notes in Ferrari and Baldi 2002.

πολλά, τὸ μεριστόν on the other hand) ever intermingled. This is true: in the realm of becoming, the objects of θεωρία and πρᾶξις are always mixed (e.g. 1024e; for the association of sameness and indivisible being with universals, which are the objects of θεωρία, and of difference and divisible being with particulars, which are the objects of πρᾶξις, see 1026d). However, that cannot be the reason for the combination of θεωρία and πρᾶξις themselves: a perfect faculty of discernment would be able to achieve its goal of separating (χωρίζειν, 1025e) sameness and difference no matter to what degree they are mixed in the objects of discernment. The true reason is that not only the objects but also the constituents of the soul (καὶ τὰς ἀρχὰς, 1025e; for ἀρχή indicating a principle of the soul see e.g. 1024d) are mixed.

The new question then becomes: Why is that the case? The reason is that the human soul has the same faculties and constituents as the cosmic soul (1025c–d; cf. p. 88). We have already seen how the cosmic soul combines cognition and perception in a λόγος ἐξ ἀμφοῖν (1024f; cf. p. 201). As such, the combination of θεωρία and πρᾶξις in the κοινὸς λόγος of the human soul reflects the construction of the cosmic soul.²⁴² The combination of sameness and difference in the objects of discernment is a consequence and not the cause of this (cf. 1024c). In other words, both the combination of sameness and difference in the objects of discernment and the combination of θεωρία and πρᾶξις in the human faculty of discernment follow from the construction of the cosmic soul.

But – and this is the third and final question of concern here – why is the cosmic soul constructed like that? The demiurge constructed it in this way so ‘that order might come to be in differentiation’ (ἵν’ ἐν διαφορᾷ τάξις γένηται, 1025e–f; I take the διὰ τοῦτο at the beginning of this sentence to announce this final clause). Indeed, the demiurge wanted to make everything as similar to himself as possible (1014b, 1015b; cf. p. 20). This was the reason for the cosmogony to begin with. The cosmos is the result of the demiurge’s endeavour to make disorderly moving, precosmic soul as much like himself as possible by endowing it with order (cf. τοῦτο γὰρ ἦν γενέσθαι, 1025f: both movement and order are necessary for the cosmos to come about). As it turns out, then, the combination of θεωρία and πρᾶξις in human life is part of the human condition because it is part of the cosmic condition. But this is not a question of necessity. From the teleological framework of (Plutarch’s interpretation of) the *Timaeus*, it follows that the combination of θεωρία and πρᾶξις is preferable to its separation: it is cosmologically the best option.

This is a bold and consequential position to take. It can be contrasted, for instance, with that of Alcinous (*Didasc.* 2). The difference be-

²⁴² Cf. Helmer 1937: 53; Ferrari and Baldi 2002: 312 n. 194. Contra Thévenaz 1938: 31 n. 159.

tween the two accounts starts out as a difference of emphasis. Alcinous notes that contemplation has the intelligibles as its object, while action involves the body: contemplation tops the hierarchy (2.2). There is no reason to think that Plutarch would have disagreed with this, although he places less emphasis on the priority of contemplation. We have seen how he makes a similar distinction of objects, and it is obvious that he takes the part of the soul that is concerned with intellection to be the superior part.

The crucial difference is that Alcinous thinks that the practical life can be switched on and off: the philosopher will assume a practical life *whenever* (ὅποτεν, 2.3) this is necessitated by the bad conduct of others who have made a mess of things.²⁴³ Then, and only then, will he *go to* the practical life *as well* (καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν πρακτικὸν χωρεῖν βίον, 2.3), taking it on in addition to his contemplative life. In other words, while the philosopher never abandons the theoretical, he can and should abandon the practical whenever circumstances allow for this. The default occupation of the philosopher is with contemplation of intelligibles without any intermingling of the bodily. For Plutarch, this is an occupation that is only possible after death (p. 334). As Sedley has shown, Alcinous' confident take on the capabilities of philosophy during life, which allows for direct contemplation of the forms, is fed by the central books of the *Republic* and particularly by the allegory of the cave.²⁴⁴ This part of the *Republic* did not sit well with Plutarch. As we shall see when discussing the *Dialogue on Love* (p. 324–341), Plutarch rewrites the imagery of the *Republic* to make it fit the view, crucially informed by the cosmology of the *Timaeus*, that I have sketched here.

With these considerations about θεωρία and πράξις in mind, let us return to Plutarch's imagery in *On Tranquillity of Mind*. To explore further how Plutarch, through the image of the cosmic festival, plays with the traditional notion of philosophical θεωρία, I want to compare Plutarch's version of the image to the versions of two Second Sophistic intellectuals who are in several aspects close to Plutarch and to each other: Dio Chrysostom and Maximus of Tyre.²⁴⁵ Dio, who identified as a Stoic but whose

²⁴³ Cf. 2.2: ἡ μὲντοι πράξις καὶ τὸ πρακτικὸν [...] πράττειτο ἂν ἀπαιτούντων τῶν πραγμάτων. ('Action, on the other hand, and the active life [...] would be engaged in when circumstances demand.')

²⁴⁴ Sedley 2012: esp. 166. On θεωρία and πράξις in Alcinous, see also Bénatouïl 2009a; O'Meara 2013: 286–287; Torri 2017.

²⁴⁵ (1) Jones 1971: 34 (and again at 117) has a point when he considers Plutarch's contemporaries and calls Dio '[t]he most similar' to Plutarch. The *Lamprias Catalogue* mentions two Plutarchan orations (204, 227) addressed to Dio, but the question remains whether these works were really by Plutarch and whether the Dio to which they were addressed was indeed Dio Chrysostom; Brancacci 1985: 32–35, Pernot 2007: 107, and

favourite philosophical book was Plato's *Phaedo*, is closer in time: he was a nearly exact contemporary of Plutarch's.²⁴⁶ Maximus, who was probably born around the time of Plutarch's death,²⁴⁷ is closer in philosophical allegiance, presenting himself as a Platonist.²⁴⁸ All three authors reject the picture of the detached philosopher and advocate a combination of *θεωρία* and *πρᾶξις*.²⁴⁹ I will argue, however, that Plutarch's views

Schamp 2009: 263–264 connect the allegedly Plutarchan work Ὁ πρὸς Δίωνα ῥηθείς ἐν Ὀλυμπίᾳ (204) with Dio's *Olympic Oration*, which I will discuss shortly. They are right to point out that the general theme, god as the ruler of the cosmos, would have interested Plutarch, but the rest remains speculation. What is certain, however, is that both Plutarch and Dio knew Favorinus quite well, but, again, this is not proof of the two knowing each other; cf. Pernot 2007: 108. On the other hand, it is proof that they shared an intellectual milieu to some extent. Comparing common themes in Plutarch and Dio, Pernot 2007 prudently concludes that '[n]on ci sono influenze dimostrabili dell'uno sull'altro, ma probabili relazioni personali e indiscutibili affinità culturali e intellettuali'. References to other comparative studies can be found in Pernot 2007: 105 n. 1, to which Billault 2005 can be added. (2) The same picture emerges when we consider the possibility of Plutarchan influence on Maximus of Tyre: there is much affinity (Lauwers 2008; 2009a; Van der Stockt 2011: 37–38; Demulder 2017a: 57–65) but no proof of influence (contra Volpe Cacciatore 2000). (3) Finally, Brancacci 1985: 58–60 insists on the influence of Dio on Maximus in general and the influence of Dio's *Or.* 6 on Maximus' *Or.* 36 in particular. However, once again, we cannot be sure, and the parallels might well go back to a common source (Trapp 1997b: 282; cf. Puiggali 1982). On Plutarch and the Second Sophistic, see Schmitz 2014, who stresses differences rather than similarities (cf. also Jones 1971: 37–38); Van Hoof 2010, on the other hand, is more sympathetic to a reading of Plutarch as an early Second Sophistic intellectual (cf. also Lauwers 2015: 53–59).

²⁴⁶ For Dio's self-presentation as a Stoic, see *Or.* 36.30 with Moles 1978: 94; cf. also Russell 1992: 6. Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists* 488 mentions that Dio took the *Phaedo* as well as Demosthenes' *On the False Embassy* with him during his exile; cf. also *Or.* 36.26. On Plato in Dio, see esp. Trapp 2000a. On Dio and Middle Platonism, see Moreschini 2016: Dio was certainly not a Platonist, but he is part of the same intellectual sphere as the Middle Platonists and thus shares with them certain ideas that were in the air. For a quick biography, see e.g. Jackson 2017: 217–220 or Russell 1992: 3–7; Jones 1978 is the classic prosopographical study on the subject; the same *annus mirabilis* for Dionian studies also yielded Desideri 1978 and Moles 1978, which further enhance the picture.

²⁴⁷ Trapp 1997b: xi–xii is about as far as we can get with the reconstruction of Maximus' biography. Cf. also Trapp 1994: lv–lviii and Koniaris 1995: liv for the *testimonia*.

²⁴⁸ On Maximus' philosophical stance, and particularly his interpretation of Plato, see e.g. Trapp 1997b: xvi–xxxii; Fauquier 2016 (as well as the other contributions in Fauquier and Pérez-Jean 2016b). *Or.* 11 is probably the most 'Platonic' of the speeches.

²⁴⁹ (1) On the importance of the combination of the theoretical and the practical for Dio's self-presentation as a philosopher, see Lauwers 2015: 46–52: 'Throughout his work, Dio appears to have constructed an autobiographical narration that smoothly blended

on cosmology account for fundamental differences between his account and those of Dio and Maximus.

In Dio's dialogue *Charidemus* (*Or.* 30), three candidates are presented for the meaning of life.²⁵⁰ The context is a variation on familiar consolation literature that, despite the circumstances, is rather witty: the deceased himself consoles the writer.²⁵¹ From his deathbed Charidemus, a promising youth who passed away too soon, dictated a consolation (παράκλησιν, 6), which Charidemus' father reads to the unnamed character who is implicitly identified with Dio.²⁵² What Dio wants to know, so he says before the father starts reading, is whether Charidemus was in a state of tranquillity of mind (εὐθύμως, 7) when he died – a significant detail, since the root εὐθυμ- only occurs twice in Dio's extensive oeuvre (here and *Or.* 38.50, where it does not have philosophical purchase).²⁵³ With the consideration of human life in the context of εὐθυμία and consolation, then, we seem to be roughly on the same terrain as in *On Tranquillity of Mind* and *Consolation to My Wife*.

The first consolatory argument proceeds from the 'worst-case scenario':²⁵⁴ life is explained as a punishment and the cosmos – although on this explanation it can hardly be called κόσμος, as Dio seems to imply – as a murky prison built by the gods (εἶναι δὲ τὸν μὲν τόπον τοῦτον, ὃν κόσμον ὀνομάζομεν, δεσμοτήριον ὑπὸ τῶν θεῶν κατεσκευασμένον

together the active life of an elite member of his first-century Prusean society and the outsider role of the thoughtful and counselling philosopher' (46). On Dio's self-presentation as a philosopher, see esp. the contributions in Nesselrath 2009. (2) Maximus devoted *Or.* 15 to the defence of the active life and *Or.* 16 to the defence of the contemplative life. Eventually, he seems to come down in favour of the contemplative life (*Or.* 16.5–6), but, as Lauwers and Roskam 2012 show, the ultimate picture of the contemplative life incorporates crucial features from the practical life as well and thus virtually amounts to the mixed life.

²⁵⁰ Today the Dionian authorship of the *Charidemus* is generally accepted, and I see no reason to disagree. For overviews of the scholarship on the issue, see most extensively Menchelli 1999: 29–37; also Moles 2000: 187 n. 2; Jażdżewska 2014: 67 n. 1. These three works offer excellent discussions of the work in general. See also Jażdżewska 2015.

²⁵¹ On the *Charidemus* as a *consolatio*, see Giner Soria 1991; Menchelli 1999: 57–59; cf. also Kassel 1958: 48. Moles 2000: 204–209 argues that the *Charidemus* is Dio's response to the death of his own son; cf. also Bowie 1985: 51.

²⁵² Moles 2000: 188, 192, 207. I am rather convinced by Moles' points that 'such "namelessness" is the norm in Dio' and that there are enough puns on the name 'Dio' at play in the piece to warrant identification. But see Jażdżewska 2014: 68 n. 3 for some pertinent doubts.

²⁵³ The importance of εὐθυμία in the face of death is already pointed out in Ps.-Plato, *Axiochus* 365b.

²⁵⁴ Moles 2000: 190.

χαλεπόν τε καὶ δυσάερον, 11). This explanation is attributed to a grumpy man (ἄνῆρ δυσάρεστος); it is untrue and is not fitting of the gods (25). Even if it were true – and that is why Charidemus includes it – his death would not be cause for distress: it would mean that his punishment was completed (10) and that he would have, perhaps, a chance of becoming a coadjutor of the gods on account of his virtue (24). The second explanation of human life is somewhat better (βελτίων, 25): earth is a colony (ἀποικία) established by the gods. This colony is inferior to the land of the gods but basically shares the same just laws (26). This is a story of decline: at a certain point in time, the gods stopped visiting us and vice kicked in (27).

Rather abruptly, a third explanation is introduced and attributed to the same source as the second one.²⁵⁵ On this explanation, which is probably the one Charidemus prefers, ‘the universe is a house very beautiful and divine, constructed by the gods’ (κόσμος οἶκός ἐστι πάνυ καλός τε καὶ θεῖος ὑπὸ θεῶν [τε] κατεσκευασμένος, 28).²⁵⁶ We often see houses that are beautifully constructed and decorated.

ὁμοίως γεγονέναι τὸν κόσμον εἰς ὑποδοχὴν τε καὶ εὐφροσύνην ἀνθρώπων, εὐειδῆ καὶ ποικίλον ἄστροις τε καὶ ἡλίῳ καὶ σελήνῃ καὶ γῆ καὶ θαλάττῃ καὶ φυτοῖς, ἃ δὴ τοῦ θεῶν πλούτου καὶ τέχνης τῆς ἐκείνων ἐστίν. παραγίγνεσθαι δὲ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους εἰς αὐτὸν ἑορτάσσοντας, ὑπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως τῶν θεῶν κεκλημένους ἐπ’ εὐωχίαν τινὰ καὶ θοίνην λαμπράν, ἀπάντων ἀπολαύσσοντας τῶν ἀγαθῶν. (*Or.* 30.28–29)

²⁵⁵ The fact that the third explanation is introduced as the ‘second monody’ (ἑτέραν ᾠδὴν) makes one wonder if this is a wink to Socrates’ *παλινοῦδία* in *Phdr.* (243b, 257a). This would clarify the relative value of the two answers offered by the same source; see also the remarks by Jażdżewska 2014: 77 on the possible influence of Plato’s *Critias*. On Dio’s general use of *Phdr.*, see Trapp 1990: 141–155.

²⁵⁶ For Charidemus’ preference for this account, see Moles 2000: 193. Jażdżewska 2014: esp. 77–80, however, adds significant nuance to this by tracing the ambiguities that run through this dialogue. I am not entirely convinced, however, by her interpretation of the transition from the ‘cosmos as colony’ explanation to the ‘cosmos as house’ explanation as continuing the story of the degeneration of humankind that was begun in the ‘cosmos as colony’ explanation. It is true that, on the former explanation, humans are colonists, while on the latter explanation, they are merely guests. However, one could also stress that on the latter explanation, humans inhabit a cosmos that was especially designed for them by the gods (*Or.* 30.28), while on the former explanation, they are dropped on earth, which the gods found empty when they gained control of everything (*Or.* 30.26). Without contesting that there are several ambiguities at play, I would tentatively agree with Moles that the ‘cosmos as house’ explanation is the most optimistic.

[I]n the same way the universe has been made to give entertainment and good cheer to mankind, beauteous and bespangled with stars, sun, moon, land, sea, and plants, all these being, indeed, portions of the wealth of the gods and specimens of their handiwork. Into this universe comes mankind to hold high festival, having been invited by the king of the gods to a most splendid feast and banquet that they may enjoy all blessings.

What follows is a description of life in the cosmos as a dinner in a majestic dining hall, which recalls our earlier discussion of the symposium as an image of the cosmos (p. 122). What should interest us at this point is that one of the main features of Dio's cosmic festival (cf. *εορτάσσοντας*) is the distinction between different groups. Most of the guests are intemperate in one way or another (33–40). These people 'disgrace and insult the bounty of the gods' (*καταισχύνουσι καὶ ὑβρίζουσι τὴν χάριν τῶν θεῶν*, 41) by eating, drinking, and indulging in conventional pleasures. The focus of the remaining group is on the interior of the dining hall, which is the source of their own kind of pleasure (*τέρπεται*, 41; *μετὰ νοῦ τῆς ἡδονῆς ἐμμελῶς μετέχοντες*, 42):

ὀρῶσι δὲ τᾶνδον ὅπως ἔχει, καὶ τὸν τε ἀνδρῶνα, ἐν ᾧ κατὰκείται, θαυμάζουσί τε καὶ ζητοῦσιν ὅπως γέγονε, καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ πάντα ὥσπερ γραφάς τινας εὐειδεῖς καὶ καλὰς κατανοοῦσι, καὶ τὴν ἄλλην οἰκονομίαν τε καὶ τάξιν καὶ τὰς ὥρας, ὡς εὖ τε καὶ ἐπισταμένως ἅπαντα πράττουσι, καὶ προσέχουσιν αὐτοῖς, καὶ μόνοι δὴ τοῦ κάλλους αἰσθάνονται. (*Or.* 30.41)

[They] look at the state of the things within, admire the banqueting hall in which they are reclining, try to learn how it was made, and observe everything that is in it, just as they would some fair and beautiful paintings; and they notice the management also and its orderly system, and the Seasons too, observing how well and intelligently they do everything; they observe attentively all these things and alone perceive their beauty.

This separation of a group of people who are disinterestedly watching rather than participating recalls the image of the philosopher as *θεωρός*, which Heraclides of Pontus and Aristotle developed.

However, as I have mentioned, Dio fiercely believed in the combination of *θεωρία* and *πρᾶξις*. Upon closer inspection, then, it becomes clear that Dio is playing with the established *θεωρία* imagery rather than copying it. The standard that Dio is imposing upon his performers of *θεωρία* is not one of theoretical philosophy but one of common decency: they are 'temperate and reasonable' (*μέτριοι τε καὶ ἐπιεικεῖς*), and their use of

conventional pleasures is marked by moderation and timely breaks (τῆ μὲν ἡδονῇ πρῶτως χρῶνται καὶ διὰ χρόνου, 41). Dio is not so much asking us to theorise as much as to, quite simply, behave. This Dionian ideal of ἐπιείκεια and πραότης, which Menchelli has identified as the key to the *Charidemus*,²⁵⁷ seems to be close to the Plutarchan ideal expressed in *On Tranquillity of Mind*: only by not letting himself be dragged down by people who are not ἐπιεικεῖς (468d) will Paccius become πραότατος (468f).²⁵⁸

Unfortunately, the *Charidemus* does not tell us much about the precise relation between the god(s) and the cosmos. Moles comments that ‘[t]he general conception of a beauteous and harmonious creation is acceptably Stoic’,²⁵⁹ but there is very little here that makes the cosmic view distinctly Stoic – that is, very little that distinguishes it from Plutarch’s Platonic cosmos, which is similarly beauteous and harmonious. (It is the view on the temporary survival of the soul rather than the depiction of the cosmos that gives the end of the work a distinctly Stoic ring.²⁶⁰) Of course, it is not like Dio to get technical or strictly cosmological anyway,²⁶¹ but we can advance just a bit further by turning to the *Olympic Oration* (*Or.* 12). As in the case of the *Charidemus*, the context again raises our expectations of finding a good point of comparison to the finale of *On Tranquillity of Mind*. The speech was delivered at the Olympian festival. After a long preamble, Dio promises to talk about the φύσις and δύναμις of ‘the god at whose temple we are now’ (τοῦδε τοῦ θεοῦ, παρ’ ᾧ νῦν ἐσμεν, 21–22). This topic ultimately leads to the legitimacy of Phidias’ famous statue of Zeus, which stood in that very temple. By discussing three passages from this long oration, I argue that both issues – the conception of Zeus and the vindication of Phidias’ statue – tie together to form an image of a cosmic festival that is markedly different from Plutarch’s.

²⁵⁷ Menchelli 1997; 1999: 37–47.

²⁵⁸ See De Romilly 1979: 275–305 for the importance of these concepts in Plutarch’s thought, esp. 298 on *De tranq. an.*: ‘C’est donc bien la *praotès* du sage, reconnue par Platon; mais elle s’est, entre temps, humanisée; elle est devenue proche, sociable, souriante; et elle mêle désormais les grâces de la courtoisie à la noblesse des fins suprêmes.’ Cf. also Martin 1960; 1961; Aalders 1982: 46; and the seven case studies on Plutarchan φιλανθρωπία in Ferreira et al. 2009: 263–295, 333–366.

²⁵⁹ Moles 2000: 193.

²⁶⁰ *Or.* 30.43–44 depicts, similarly to Epict., *Ench.* 15, how some of the well-behaved will be selected by the gods to be their companions. As for the cosmology, one could even say that *Or.* 30.44 removes the *Charidemus* from Stoic immanentism by implying that god does not live in the house where the humans have their dinner.

²⁶¹ The *Suda* (δ.1240 Adler) has it that Dio wrote a work Εἰ φθαρτὸς ὁ κόσμος;, but that is hardly conclusive evidence of the existence of such a work, let alone of it being a technical work; cf. Swain 2000: 45 n. 104.

(I) Dio imagines the cosmic experience of primitive humans, who stood closer to nature and were not yet corrupted by vice. Through observation of the heavenly bodies and the world around them, they inevitably realised that the cosmos was administered by a providential god (27–28). Like Plutarch, Dio compares this cosmic experience to an initiation:

σχεδὸν οὖν ὅμοιον ὥσπερ εἴ τις ἄνδρα Ἕλληνα ἢ βάρβαρον μυσίῃ παραδοὺς εἰς μυστικόν τινα οἶκον ὑπερφυῆ κάλλει καὶ μεγέθει, πολλὰ μὲν ὀρῶντα μυστικά θεάματα, πολλῶν δὲ ἀκούοντα τοιούτων φωνῶν, σκότους τε καὶ φωτὸς ἐναλλάξ αὐτῷ φαινομένων, ἄλλων τε μυρίων γιγνομένων [...]. (*Or.* 12.33)

So it is very much the same as if anyone were to place a man, a Greek or a barbarian, in some mystic shrine of extraordinary beauty and size to be initiated, where he would see many mystic sights and hear many mystic voices, where light and darkness would appear to him alternately, and a thousand other things would occur [...].

Dio's model for the further elaboration of this image is the rite called 'enthronement' (θρονισμός or θρόνωσις), which was part of the initiation into the corybantic mysteries.²⁶² In this rite, there were several priests who performed a whirling, dervish-style dance around the initiate (κύκλω περιχορεύειν, 33). The initiation of the whole of humankind (κοινῇ δὲ ξύμπαν τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένος τὴν ὀλόκληρον καὶ τῷ ὄντι τελείαν τελετὴν μυσούμενον), which takes place not in a small temple but in the cosmos (ἐν τῷδε τῷ κόσμῳ), is not performed by those dancing priests but by 'immortal gods who are, [...] if we may dare to use the term, literally dancing around them' (ἀλλὰ θεῶν ἀθανάτων θνητοῦς τελούντων, [...] εἰ θέμις εἰπεῖν, ἀτεχνῶς περιχορευόντων ἀεί, 34). By adopting the corybantic rite as his model, Dio thus turns the heavenly bodies themselves into priests. This contrasts with Plutarch's version, in which the heavenly bodies were ἀγάλματα – sensible imitations of intelligible realities that the demiurge had procured. Dio's imagery rather recalls the dancing stars of the *Epinomis* (982e²⁶³) and implies an immanentist, Stoicising cosmology with which Plutarch would have felt rather uncomfortable.

²⁶² See e.g. Bremmer 2014: 51–52. Cf. esp. the description of this rite in Pl., *Euthyd.* 277d–e.

²⁶³ Russell 1992: 184 indicates this parallel. Cf. also Lucian, *The Dance* 7. *Tim.* 40c (cf. Apul., *De Plat.* 1.10.201) also mentions a χορεία of the heavenly bodies. As opposed to the *Epin.* author and Dio, Plato makes it abundantly clear that this χορεία is caused by the intelligible, transcendent demiurge.

(2) This is important to keep in mind when Dio turns to impersonating Phidias, who defends the anthropomorphism of his statue of Zeus (55–83). Making an artistic representation of the heavenly bodies was not an option for Phidias because ‘mind and intelligence *in and of themselves* no statuary or painter will ever be able to present’ (νοῦν γὰρ καὶ φρόνησιν αὐτὴν μὲν καθ’ αὐτὴν οὔτε τις πλάστης οὔτε τις γραφεὺς εἰκάσαι δυνατὸς ἔσται, 59). A viable alternative was to represent ‘that *in which* this intelligence manifests itself’ (τὸ δὲ ἐν ᾧ τοῦτο γιγνόμενόν ἐστιν, 59), in other words, the human body. Dio, then, draws a thick line between the heavenly bodies and the human body, insofar as the former resist representation. This is a line that Plutarch did not have to draw. Not that he rejected the divinity of the heavenly bodies, but, for him, they were sensible copies of intelligible realities (*De tranq. an.* 477c). Plutarch’s line runs between the intelligible and the sensible (including the heavenly bodies and the human body). In Dio’s account, there is no trace of transcendent, intelligible realities. Again, it shows that his account is guided by Stoic immanentism and is different from Plutarch’s Platonic transcendentism.

Granted, Plutarch and Dio both have their concerns about anthropomorphism. Both are worried about the risk of people not recognising the symbolic function of the statue.²⁶⁴ This risk is the basis of the trial of Phidias which Dio stages: Phidias has to explain that he is using ‘the function of a symbol’ (συμβόλου δυνάμει, 59). Plutarch is less enthusiastic about anthropomorphic statues: he never defends the practice (although fr. 46 could be an exception), but it would be strange to ascribe a ban on statues to a Delphic priest.²⁶⁵ Plutarch’s concern is that people, when they encounter a statue, call it ‘a god’ instead of ‘a statue of a god’, and they end up confusing the two (*De Is. et Os.* 379c–d; *De sup.* 167d–e). Again, it is paramount to be aware of the statue as σύμβολον (*De Is. et Os.* 381f). Despite the insistence of both writers on the symbolic, their understanding of the symbolic function is very different. According to Dio, the statue of the god is a symbol pointing to the heavenly bodies (*Or.* 12.60). For Plutarch it ultimately points to the intelligible realm (*De Is. et Os.* 382a–c). From this angle, too, the issue of anthropomorphism

²⁶⁴ On the symbolic function of Plutarch’s statues, and on the ensuing idea that it is more important to interpret a statue than to describe it, see Mossman 1991. On Dio’s notion of symbol in *Or.* 12 and its connection to Stoicism, see Stenger 2009; cf. also, more broadly, Gangloff 2010. Clerc 1915: 110–114, 176–188, 194–229 collects the Plutarchan and Dionian material on statues of gods.

²⁶⁵ Contra Hirsch-Luipold 2002: 173–174. Brenk 1977: 28–48 convincingly argues that Plutarch was ‘a reluctant iconodulist’ (47) rather than an iconoclast. See also Graf 2005.

points to the difference between Dio's immanentism and Plutarch's transcendentism.²⁶⁶

(3) At the end of Phidias' imagined speech – also near the end of Dio's elaborate oration – the two previous perspectives come together:

οὗτος γὰρ δὴ πρῶτος καὶ τελειότατος δημιουργός, χορηγὸν λαβὼν τῆς αὐτοῦ τέχνης οὐ τὴν Ἡλείων πόλιν, ἀλλὰ τὴν πᾶσαν τοῦ παντὸς ὕλην. Φειδίαν δὲ ἢ Πολύκλειτον οὐκ ἂν εἰκότως ἀπαιτοῖτε πλέον οὐδέν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ταῦτα μείζω καὶ σεμνότερα τῆς ἡμετέρας χειρωναξίας. (*Or.* 12.82)

For he [i.e. Zeus] is indeed the first and most perfect artificer, who has taken as his coadjutor in his art, not the city of Elis, but the entire material of the entire universe. But of a Pheidias or of a Polycleitus you could not reasonably demand more than they have done; nay, even what they essayed is too great and august for our handiwork.

What Phidias is *not* saying is that he cannot represent Zeus because the god is insufficiently knowable to humans due to his invisibility: intelligent humans only have to look up to heaven to gain a clear conception of the divine (*Or.* 12.60). What impedes Phidias is not Academic εὐλάβεια towards the intelligible in the Plutarchan sense,²⁶⁷ but what amounts to a practical limitation: there is simply no way for him to work with pure air, fire, or water (ἀέρα γὰρ ἢ πῦρ ἐργάσασθαι καὶ τὴν ἄφθονον πηγὴν ὕδατος), no way to mould 'the essential substance, tough all through and heavy' (τὴν πᾶσαν ἰσχυρὰν καὶ βαρεῖαν οὐσίαν, *Or.* 12.81). The limitation does not lie in Phidias' knowledge of the divine but in the possibilities of representation. This thought appears again in the passage quoted above: Phidias' representation of Zeus cannot comprise all matter of the whole universe (τὴν πᾶσαν τοῦ παντὸς ὕλην).

This is where Phidias' demiurgy lags behind Zeus'. Zeus, who was earlier introduced as the κορυφαῖος (34), now appoints all matter as his χορηγός.²⁶⁸ This intimate cooperation of Zeus and matter – these are the

²⁶⁶ Another aspect that might point to a difference between Plutarch's Platonism and Dio's Stoicism is their take on animal worship. Dio regards it as inferior to the worship of statues, since statues at least take the form of a rational human (*Or.* 12.59). Plutarch, on the other hand, shows a remarkable tolerance towards Egyptian animal worship on the grounds that animals, as opposed to statues, are ensouled (*De Is. et Os.* 382a–b). This difference would be compatible with Plutarch's view that animals are rational, which he develops in opposition to the Stoic view in *De soll. an.* (cf. the adumbration of the Stoic view in Dio, *Or.* 12.50–51, the beginning of Phidias' fictitious trial).

²⁶⁷ Contra Hertz 2016: 208–214.

²⁶⁸ On the intimate association of these two theatrical roles, see Wilson 2000: 130–136.

only two cosmic principles mentioned in the oration – again points to a Stoic, immanentist model of the cosmos.²⁶⁹ It certainly contrasts with Plutarch’s depiction, where the demiurge appears as the χορηγός (ὁ θεὸς [...] χορηγεῖ, *De tranq. an.* 477d–e) while such a role would never be assigned to matter: sensible things are ἀγάλματα of the intelligibles.²⁷⁰ Now, if we put this together with Phidias’ remarks on his limited possibilities of representation, the conclusion presents itself that a perfect representation of Zeus would consist in a ‘statue’ comprising the whole of matter (τὴν πᾶσαν τοῦ παντὸς ὕλην) in which Zeus is immanent. Phidias’ demiurgy would then be equivalent to Zeus’. This is logically absurd, but it is, as I have mentioned, not so because this ‘statue’ would involve a different ontological level than the level on which Phidias is operating. All these considerations squarely point to the conclusion that – here and in general, I find myself diametrically opposed to Hertz’s interpretation²⁷¹ – the theology of the *Olympic Oration*, and hence Dio’s version of the cosmic festival, is Stoic, not Platonic.

I now turn to Maximus of Tyre, whose self-presentation as a champion of Plato raises the expectation that we will find here a more Platonic version of the cosmic festival than in Dio’s works. In his first oration, which is regarded as a programmatic introduction to the whole series,

²⁶⁹ In *Or.* 40.35–41, Dio similarly presents a Stoic cosmology for ethical purposes. Cf. e.g. D.L. 7.134, *SVF* 1.85–88, *SVF* 1.537 (= Cleanthes, *Hymn to Zeus*). Cf. also LS 44.

²⁷⁰ To a Platonist the attribution of the title κορυφαῖος to the demiurge would have been appropriate as well. Cf. Onatas, *On God and the Divine* p. 139.21 Thesleff, which appears in a quotation from an unknown (Middle?) Platonist; see Dillon 2002b: 241 (= Dillon 2012: chap. XVII).

²⁷¹ Hertz 2016 (cf. also my n. 267) argues that Platonism, not Stoicism, is the philosophical inspiration behind the *Olympic Oration*. Her whole case, however, rests on a premise that cannot be granted: she considers the notion of demiurgy to be incompatible with Stoicism. Using demiurgy, which is indeed present in the oration (*Or.* 12.34, 82–83), as a litmus test for Platonism, she denies the Stoic character of the work. I do not need to remake the case for the importance of demiurgy in Stoic thought here: since Reydam-Schils 1999 and Sedley 2002, much work has been done on the subject; e.g. Betegh 2003; Gourinat 2009; Long 2010; O’Brien 2012; Powers 2013. I think the passages from *Or.* 12 that I have discussed are enough to show that the demiurgy that Dio endorses here is of an immanentist brand that is eminently compatible with Stoicism. The Stoic character of the oration is convincingly demonstrated from a different angle in Algra 2009: 243–247, who fruitfully compares Dio’s reference to Phidias with that of Epictetus, *Diss.* 2.8.25–27. Cf. also Klauck and Bäbler 2000: 192–196. This does not mean, of course, that *Or.* 12 is completely devoid of touches inspired by Plato; see Trapp 2000a: 227.

Maximus tries to convince his audience that he is well worth listening to.²⁷² This turns out to be fairly obvious. Philosophy will ‘offer consolation in sad times and [...] enhance the celebrations in times of joy’ (πεπαίνων μὲν τὰ σκυθρωπά, συνευφημῶν δὲ τοῖς φαιδροτέροις, *Or.* 1.2).²⁷³ The audience that puts in the effort to listen to philosophical speeches will find its toils ‘blessed with good fortune, victory, and success’ (ἐπιτυχῆς καὶ τελεσιουργὸς καὶ νικηφόρος, 1.5). Maximus, of course, is the man who can teach them (and us) this eminently beneficial philosophy. So who would not lend him their ears?

Throughout this oration, Maximus uses three images: drama, music, and athletic contest. This has been noted,²⁷⁴ but little attention has been paid to how these three images interconnect and how they relate to the theme and the goal of the oration. The three images show, I claim, how Maximus plays with the conception of philosophy as θεωρία at the festival that is life. Opening his speech (1.1) with the image of life as a dramatic performance, he immediately remarks that life is not a drama written ‘for a single festival performance’ (πρὸς ἓνα ἑορτῆς καιρόν). It is a truthful, continuous performance ‘composed by no lesser a dramatist than God himself’ (διδασκόμενον δὲ ὑπὸ ποιητῆ τῷ θεῷ²⁷⁵), and man is the ‘chorus’ protagonist’ (πρωταγωνιστὴν τοῦ χοροῦ). More examples of theatric vocabulary in this first paragraph could be added, but all in all, this is not really stunning: the comparison of life to a stage play is hardly Shakespeare’s invention and has been common enough since the heyday of Greek drama.²⁷⁶ The addition of music (at the end of 1.1) and athletic contest (in 1.4), however, may suggest that this is not the only thing that Maximus is after. Together, the three images seem to create a general festival atmosphere: a ἑορτή would be the real-life occasion where drama, music, and athletic contest would typically occur together.²⁷⁷

²⁷² On the reasons for going against the manuscript tradition and placing this oration at the beginning of the series (as both recent editions do: Trapp 1994; Koniaris 1995; cf. also Hobein 1910), see esp. Koniaris 1982: 88–102; also Trapp 1997b: lix–lx. On this oration as a programme for the speeches that follow, see Hobein 1911; Koniaris 1983; Puiggali 1983: 49–52; Trapp 1997a: 1950–1951; Campos Daroca and López Cruces 2006: 93–102; Pérez-Jean 2016: 52–53. Cf. also Szarmach 1985: 21–24.

²⁷³ Throughout this book, I use the translation of Maximus’ *Orations* in Trapp 1997b.

²⁷⁴ Cf. Trapp 1997b: 3–4; Lauwers 2009b: 596–604; Pérez-Jean and Fauquier 2014: 31.

²⁷⁵ Cf. *Or.* 1.1: δραματουργεῖ ὁ θεός.

²⁷⁶ Kokolakis 1960 gives an extensive overview. For Maximus, see 48–50. Maximus does not use the image of life as a stage play sceptically to suggest illusion; on that strain of the tradition, see Burnyeat 2017.

²⁷⁷ To give but one example from around Maximus’ time: the Demostheneia in Oinoanda were founded in 125 CE in honour of Hadrian and combined musical and dramatic performances with athletic contests. See Wörrle 1988 on this festival; cf. also the

What we need to act in the drama, to play the music, or to perform in the athletic contest of life is the philosophical λόγος, which is able to adapt itself to all changing circumstances that are part and parcel of life. Maximus' multifaceted version of the festival image serves to defend the different guises of his philosophy. While festival imagery was originally used to define and demarcate the role of the philosopher, Maximus now subverts it to point out that the philosopher is not always easily recognised due to the adaptability of philosophical teaching. The true philosopher may not be the one who looks the part, since the part is continuously changing. The true philosopher may not be the one who you would think. The true philosopher may well unexpectedly be... Maximus, of course. This is the point Maximus drives home at the end of the speech by opposing the true philosopher to the sophist. The sophist is easy to spot (I.8), while the philosopher wears 'the different costumes that Fortune assigns them' (ἄλλον ἄλλῳ σχήματι ὑπὸ τῆς τύχης περιβεβλημένον, I.10). However, just like 'the beauty of the poetry is one and the same' (τὸ μὲν γὰρ τῶν ποιημάτων κάλλος ἓν καὶ ταῦτόν) regardless of the character in the drama, so the 'beauty of philosophical teaching is not multiple or diverse either, but single and coherent' (κὰν τοῖς τῶν φιλοσόφων λόγοις, τὸ μὲν καλὸν οὐκ εἶναι παντοδαπὸν οὐδὲ διαπεφορημένον, ἀλλ' ἓν καὶ αὐτὸ αὐτῷ παραπλήσιον, I.10). Maximus' philosophy pertains to every aspect of life. As such, it is, as Arius Didymus said about Plato's, πολύφωνος but not πολύδοξος.²⁷⁸

When Maximus turns to unpacking the image of life as an athletic contest, two further adaptations of the traditional conception of philosophical θεωρία can be distinguished, which also serve to undermine the conception of philosophy as a detached affair. The athletic contest of life, in which the prize is virtue, differs from the athletic contest of the stadium because no one goes to watch the latter 'with the intention of imitating or competing in what they watch' (σπουδῇ οὐδένα τῶν θεατῶν ὡς τὸ θέαμα ζηλώσοντα ἢ μιμησόμενον, I.4). This is different in life: 'no one present in his right mind could fail to pray to abandon his role as spectator and become a competitor instead' (οὐδεὶς τῶν παρόντων νοῦν ἔχων οὐκ ἂν εὔξαιτο ἀποθέμενος τὸν θεατὴν ἀγωνιστῆς γενέσθαι, I.4). Another difference is that almost everyone is suited to participate in these contests for virtue: '[i]t is only a tiny proportion of the human race, one almost never encountered, that is not naturally endowed for them' (ὀλίγον γὰρ καὶ σπάνιον ἐν τῷ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένει τὸ μὴ πεφυκός, I.5).

discussion of the Demostheneia in Graf 2015: 30–31, noting that it 'inscribes itself into the phenomenology of many other imperial festivals' (30).

²⁷⁸ *Ap. Stobaeus* 2 p. 50.1, p. 55.6 Wachsmuth-Hense. See p. 38. Cf. also Brandão 2016 and Pérez-Jean 2016 on the broader relevance of polyphony in Maximus' philosophy.

When ‘philosophic spirits flock to the spectacles’ that Maximus describes (ταυτὶ τὰ θέατρα οἱ φιλοσοφοῦντες ἀθροίζουσιν, 1.5) – at the end of the paragraph, Maximus switches back to the image of the theatre and thus emphasises the connections between the different images – they do so in a way different from the philosophic θεωροί that Heraclides Ponticus and Aristotle described. Maximus’ conception of philosophy is not one for a select group of disinterested viewers, but for an inclusive group of participants who can expect to draw benefits from their endeavours.²⁷⁹

The rhetorical situation of this speech creates an interesting contrast that is also reflected in the festival imagery. The philosophy Maximus offers to his audience is inclusive, but the philosophy he represents as a teacher is exclusive. This contrast is visible in the festival imagery. The inclusive image of philosophy, in which everyone is a participant, is an athletic contest adapted to be, unlike athletic contests in the stadium, a non-zero-sum game in which every participant is a winner, and the true victory is getting other people to join the contest (*Or.* 1.6). When presenting himself as a teacher (1.7–10), by contrast, Maximus assumes the standard Second Sophistic stance of the performer as a participant in a zero-sum game:²⁸⁰ he aims to acquire honour at the expense of others (esp. the sophists). With this switch to an exclusive image of philosophy, in which it is implied that only Maximus is the true philosopher, comes the strict division between dramatic actors and spectators (μακάριοι μὲν τῶν δραμάτων οἱ ὑποκριταί, μακάριοι δὲ τῶν ἀκουσμάτων οἱ θεαταί) and the quest for ‘a poet and a performer’ (ποιητῆς καὶ ἀγωνιστήs, 1.10).²⁸¹ The aspects of the festival imagery, then, perform different functions: while the athletic contest marks the inclusive nature of the philosophy to which the audience is invited, dramatic and musical performance emphasise the exclusive nature of the philosophy that is mastered by the teacher.²⁸²

²⁷⁹ Of course, I do not mean to claim that Maximus’ speeches were not aimed at the elite: they certainly were (Lauwers 2015: 139–143), but not qua invitation to philosophy.

²⁸⁰ Cf. Whitmarsh 2001b: 189 n. 37.

²⁸¹ As Trapp 1997b: 15 n. 41 laconically puts it: ‘On the surface, this conclusion [sc. of *Or.* 1] exhorts the audience to be on the look-out for a true philosophical teacher in the future. However, it also leaves them free to acclaim Maximus himself as that teacher, if they so choose.’

²⁸² I think my reading of the speech adds an important aspect to the interpretation of Lauwers 2009b (also Lauwers 2015: 144–147): he explains the remarkable combination of narcissism and pedagogical concern by referring to Maximus’ invitation to imitate him. This explains the pedagogy, but it only accounts for the narcissism to a certain extent. Narcissists will appreciate the admiration that is implied by imitation, but they will not consider the possibility that the other may become as good as they are, which would nevertheless be the logical outcome of successful imitation. By distinguishing, then, be-

The discussion of the first oration has shown that Maximus, like Plutarch and Dio, plays with the traditional notion of philosophical θεωρία by imagining life as a festival.²⁸³ We have not yet seen, however, a cosmic conception of that festival. For this, we can turn to the last speech of the series, which deals with the origins of evil (*Or.* 41). Here, Maximus imagines a scene in which public envoys (θεωροί) are sent to an oracle on behalf of their cities. He and his audience will imitate these θεωροί by enquiring with Zeus about the provenance of the human good (41.2). In this scene, he describes Zeus as τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων ἀγαθῶν πατήρ καὶ χορηγός, thus elegantly adapting a Platonic evergreen – Timaeus’ description of the demiurge as ποιητής καὶ πατήρ (*Tim.* 28c) – by substituting a festival-related term.²⁸⁴ As soon as Maximus has invited his audience to embark upon this θεωρία, however, the endeavour is dismissed:

ἢ τούτων μὲν περὶ οὐθὲν δεῖ τὸν θεὸν ἐνοχλεῖν, αἰσθανομένους τῆς χορηγίας καὶ ὀρῶντας τὴν αἰτίαν καὶ συνιέντας τὴν πηγὴν καὶ τὸν πατέρα καὶ ποιητὴν εἰδότας, τὸν οὐρανοῦ ἄρμοστήν, τὸν ἡλίου καὶ σελήνης ἀγωγέα, τὸν κορυφαῖον τῆς τῶν ἄστρον περιφορᾶς καὶ δινησεως καὶ χορείας καὶ δρόμου, τὸν ὠρῶν ταμίαν, τὸν πνευμάτων οἰκονόμον, τὸν ποιητὴν θαλάττης, τὸν δημιουργὸν γῆς, τὸν ποταμῶν

tween an inclusive philosophy offered to the audience and an exclusive philosophy that he incorporates himself, Maximus limits the extent of the possible imitation. Hence, he can be a good pedagogue in a way that does not threaten his narcissistic persona.

²⁸³ Unlike Plutarch and Dio, Maximus does not insist here on the connection between festivals and mysteries, but he does so elsewhere (*Or.* 24.5; 32.10). Although the words θεωρία or θεωρός do not occur in this oration, the conception of philosophy as θεωρία may be present through the reference to Pythagoras’ coinage of the term philosophy (*Or.* 1.2).

²⁸⁴ Cf., besides the next sentence of *Or.* 41.2, also *Or.* 33.6: all gods together are called ‘fathers and creators of earth and sea’ (πατέρες καὶ ποιηταὶ γῆς καὶ θαλάττης). Like Maximus, Plutarch tends to reverse the word order (i.e. πατήρ καὶ ποιητής instead of ποιητής καὶ πατήρ) when alluding to this formula: *Quaest. Plat.* 2.1000e; *Quaest. conv.* 8.1.718a (but see *De facie* 927a for the original word order); I do not see why the inversion should be attributed to some source used by Plutarch, as Ferrari 2014: 60 suspects. For Philo of Alexandria, to whom this formula was particularly dear, the word order does not seem to have mattered: he uses the two options indiscriminately (twenty-one times Plato’s word order, twenty times the inverted order); see Runia 1986: 108–III. Cf. also Whittaker in Whittaker and Louis 1990: xix on Alcinous. For Numenius, on the other hand, the precedence of πατήρ must have been paramount: from this formula, he distils two gods, a πατήρ and a ποιητής, the first being the superior deity (fr. 21). On Plutarch’s second *Quaest. Plat.*, which is devoted to this formula, see e.g. Opsomer 1994b: 265–289; Ferrari 1996c; 2014: 65–68; Vorwerk 2010: 80–86. On these and other Middle Platonic interpretations of ποιητής καὶ πατήρ, see Vorwerk 2010; Ferrari 2014. The related formula πατήρ καὶ δημιουργός (*Tim.* 41a) is used by Maximus in *Or.* 2.10 and 11.12 (cf. Plutarch, *Quaest. conv.* 8.2.720c and *De an. procr.* 1017a).

χορηγόν, τὸν καρπῶν τροφέα, τὸν ζῳῶν γεννητήν, τὸν γενέθλιον, τὸν ὑέτιον, τὸν ἐπικάρπιον, τὸν πατρῶον, τὸν φυτάλιον, οὗ ὁ νοῦς ἀρραγῆς ὢν καὶ ἄτρυτος καὶ ἐπὶ πάσας ἐξικνούμενος φύσει ἀμηγάνω τάχει, ὡς προσβολὴ ὄψεως, πᾶν κοσμεῖ ὅτου ἂν ἐπαφήσηται, καθάπερ καὶ αἱ παρ' ἡλίου ἀκτῖνες προσπεσοῦσαι τῇ γῆ λαμπρύνουσιν αὐτῆς τὸ καταληφθὲν πᾶν. (*Or.* 41.2)

Or do we in fact have no need to bother the god over this matter, since we are well aware of this provision, and see its origins, and understand the source, and know the Father and Creator for ourselves, the governor of the heavens, the director of the sun and the moon, the leader of the swiftly whirling orbits of the dance of the stars, the steward of the seasons, the regulator of the winds, the creator of the sea, the maker of the earth, the provider of rivers, the nurturer of crops, the begetter of living things, the god of the family, the god of rain, the god of fruitfulness, the paternal god, the fostering god, whose mind, adamant and unwearying, pervading the whole of creation with extraordinary speed, like the glance of an eye, brings order and beauty to all that it touches, just as the rays of the sun when they fall on the earth illuminate every part of it that they reach.

It has been pointed out that Maximus' list of epithets for Zeus resembles similar lists found in other authors.²⁸⁵ What none of these parallels share, however, is Maximus' insistence on theatrical terms (χορηγός, χορηγία, κορυφαῖος, χορεία, χορηγός again).²⁸⁶ The use of κορυφαῖος in particular makes it clear that Maximus is once again pushing the comparison between god and the dramatist. Maximus' contemporary Pausanias gives the same epithet as a translation for Jupiter's Latin epithet Capitolinus.²⁸⁷ Other literary evidence, along with coins and inscriptions, indeed shows that the epithet κορυφαῖος was mainly used in the context of the mountain cults of Zeus.²⁸⁸ It is probably also in this sense that it appears in a list of epithets given by Maximus' contemporary Aelius Aristides.²⁸⁹ Maximus

²⁸⁵ Ps.-Aristotle, *On the Cosmos* 401a–b; Dio, *Or.* 1.39; *Or.* 12.75–76; Aristides, *Or.* 43.29–30; Themistius, *Or.* 6.79d; Cornutus, *On Greek Theology* 9. Cf. Soury 1942a: 60; Trapp 1997b: 324 n. 10.

²⁸⁶ However, Dio, as we have seen, picks this up at other places in *Or.* 12. It is also present in Ps.-Aristotle, *On the Cosmos* 391b, 399a, 400b; see Betegh and Gregoric 2014: 580–581.

²⁸⁷ Pausanias 2.4.5.

²⁸⁸ Cook 1925: 869 n. 1.

²⁸⁹ In *Or.* 43, the epithet κορυφαῖος occurs in a series outlining the domains of Zeus (30). Just before that, Aristides has already pointed out that these domains include the mountain tops (τοῦτον οὐκ ὄρων ἐκφεύγουσι κορυφαί, 27).

keeps the traditional epithet but makes it clear that, in his list, κορυφαῖος should be taken in the sense of ‘leader of the chorus’ by adding a genitive modifier. The sense in which he uses κορυφαῖος, then, brings him closer to Dio (*Or.* 12.34) than to the traditional lists of epithets. However, this terminology in itself does not alienate Maximus from Platonism in general or Plutarch in particular.

So the question remains as to what kind of cosmic festival Zeus is organising exactly. Trapp has noted that there is a tension in this oration between a Platonic and a Stoic concept of god.²⁹⁰ O’Brien and Reydam-Schils have elaborated this point, and there is no need for me to remake it now.²⁹¹ Maximus’ stance results in a cosmic festival that is closer to Dio’s than to Plutarch’s. Zeus’ νοῦς pervades every last bit of nature (ἐπὶ πάσας ἐξικνούμενος φύσεις) and orders everything by only lightly touching it (πᾶν κοσμεῖ ὅτου ἂν ἐπαφήσεται). Maximus’ brand of demiurgy, like Dio’s and unlike Plutarch’s, has no need for transcendent forms or a mediating soul.²⁹²

Moreover – and this is an aspect that was only implicitly present in Dio – this pervasive take on demiurgy means that there can be no real evil. This is where Maximus consciously runs into trouble. To enquire about the good, we did not need to imitate the θεωροί: the answer was right there before our eyes (αἰσθανομένους, ὁρῶντας), and we could be certain in our knowledge of the demiurge (συνιέντας, εἰδότας). But where does evil come from? Maximus distinguishes two causes. The second, which Maximus is still discussing when our text of the speech breaks off, is the liberty of the human soul to choose vice over virtue (*Or.* 41.5). The first cause of evil is more problematic from a Platonic perspective: the demiurge’s work has some inevitable side effects. Maximus is bent on maintaining that the demiurge is not to blame for these inconveniences:

ἡγητέον [...] εἶναι δὲ ταῦτα τῆς τοῦ ὄλου δημιουργίας ὥσπερ τινὰς ἀναγκαίας καὶ ἐπομένας φύσεις. ἃ δὲ ἡμεῖς καλοῦμεν κακὰ καὶ φθοράς, καὶ ἐφ’ οἷς ὀδυρόμεθα, ταῦτα ὁ τεχνίτης καλεῖ σωτηρίαν τοῦ

²⁹⁰ Trapp 1997b: 322. Cf. already Hobein 1895: 29; Soury 1942a: 57–76. Szarmach 1985: 60–62, as usual, denies the philosophical value of this oration (cf. similarly Puiggali 1983: 309); I agree with the criticism of her general approach in Lauwers 2015: 132.

²⁹¹ O’Brien 2015: 120–124; Reydam-Schils 2017a. I am more sympathetic to Reydam-Schils’ approach, which acknowledges Maximus’ creativity, while O’Brien embraces the traditional picture of Maximus as a superficial *Halbphilosoph* (cf. Szarmach 1983; 1985: 13–44) and finds him useful just because he lacks originality. Regardless, their conclusions are compatible.

²⁹² In general, Plato’s theory of forms plays a small role in Maximus’ Platonism; see Trapp 1997b: xxvii.

ὄλου· μέλει γὰρ αὐτῷ τοῦ ὄλου, τὸ δὲ μέρος ἀνάγκη κακοῦσθαι ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὄλου. (*Or.* 41.4)

[W]e must believe [...] that those effects are so to speak the necessary and natural consequences of the crafting of the whole. What we call evil and ruin, the things we lament over, the craftsman calls the preservation of the whole. His concern is precisely for the whole, and it is necessary for the part to suffer in the interests of that whole.

Cosmic evil, which should be distinguished from moral evil, turns out not to be really evil at all. Rather, it is a concomitant of the providential concern for the whole.²⁹³ All this has at the very least a Stoic whiff (cf. *De comm. not.* 1065a–1066d for Plutarch’s criticism), although much of that can in turn be traced back to a Stoicising interpretation of the *Timaeus*.²⁹⁴ What should interest us here is how incompatible Maximus’ view is with Plutarch’s interpretation of the *Timaeus*. According to Plutarch, one simply cannot explain the existence of evil by only assuming a blameless demiurge and matter without quality (*De an. procr.* 1015b).²⁹⁵ This is why he brings in the irrational soul. For Maximus this was not an option, since his cosmic festival has an all-pervasive demiurge. Although, then, Maximus is certainly more Platonic than Dio, the conclusion is the same for both Second Sophistic versions of the cosmic festival: they are to some extent coloured by Stoic tendencies, and as such they differ from Plutarch’s version.²⁹⁶

²⁹³ *Or.* 5, however, seems to offer a different solution to the problem of evil; see Soury 1942a: 15–38; Van der Horst 1996; Timotin 2016; cf. also *Or.* 13.5, 8–9.

²⁹⁴ Cf. e.g. LS 54Q–U with Algra 2003: 170–172. On Maximus’ use of *Tim.*, see O’Brien 2015: 118: Maximus ‘mainly expounds the metaphysics of the *Timaeus* in an engaging literary fashion, rather than developing the philosophical issues involved’; Fauquier and Pérez-Jean 2016a: 17: ‘[L]a référence au *Timée* reste toujours en filigrane, comme chez nombre de platoniciens de cette époque, derrière cette représentation cosmologique et guide aussi les interprétations allégoriques d’Homère’ (cf. Fauquier 2016: 145). For this last point, the paramount importance of Homer for Maximus’ philosophy and his assimilation of Homeric and Platonic thought, see esp. *Or.* 4, 17, and 26; cf. Kindstrand 1973: 45–71, 163–186; Szarmach 1985: 45–51; Campos Daroca and López Cruces 2006; Lauwers 2015: 202–212; Saudelli 2016; Daouti 2016.

²⁹⁵ Cf. the anti-Stoic criticism of Numenius fr. 52.44–64 (= B-S 4R). We have seen earlier (p. 133) how σωτηρία of the whole, which Maximus invokes, involves an explanation of evil that is separate from the demiurge.

²⁹⁶ Maximus, however, exhibits a more strictly Platonic cosmology, especially in *Or.* 11 (see Soury 1942a: 57–76; Fauquier 2016); cf. also *Or.* 2.10 (which can be fruitfully compared to Dio’s *Or.* 12); *Or.* 10.9. Dio, on the other hand, can be found sketching an even more strictly Stoic cosmology in *Or.* 36.

4. Concluding remarks

Let us, by way of conclusion, retrace our steps through this chapter and tie it together by connecting the cosmic festivals of Plutarch, Maximus, and Dio with what had preceded. By comparing the cosmos to a temple and life to a festival, Plutarch bought into an image that had a long history and a great appeal across various schools. Epicureans, obviously, did not want a piece of it. The Epicurean in Cicero's *On the Nature of the Gods* (1.22), for instance, even ridicules the idea of having god decorating the heavens like an aedile adorning the city before a festival. For the Stoics, on the other hand, it was understandably a favourite. Staying with *On the Nature of the Gods* (2.104, 140, 155), we find the Stoic interlocutor more than once boasting the *spectaculum* of the heavenly bodies.²⁹⁷ This long history and great appeal did not turn the image into a dead metaphor. In fact, it became an adaptable way of communicating how specific cosmological views relate to life and how to live it.

I have tried to bring out the specificity of Plutarch's version of the cosmic festival by introducing Dio Chrysostom and Maximus of Tyre as foils. There are important similarities between these accounts. First and foremost, the general acceptance of the image of the cosmic festival lumps the three intellectuals together against, most notably, the Epicureans. Moreover, they all use festival imagery to advocate a more or less inclusive and worldly brand of philosophy, in which *θεωρία* and *πρᾶξις* are combined – necessarily so, according to Plutarch, given the human and cosmic condition. These similarities, however, should not obscure the fundamental difference between Plutarch and these other intellectuals: Plutarch's insistence on the transcendence of the intelligible.²⁹⁸ By giving the heavenly bodies the function of symbolic cult statues rather than comparing them to priests in the initiatory ritual (Dio), Plutarch expresses the view, which he explicitly attributes to Plato, that sensibles are imitations of intelligibles (*αἰσθητὰ μιμήματα νοητῶν*, *De tranq. an.* 477c).

The most important advantage of this view is that Plutarch can cheerfully accept the existence of evil. And that is what *On Tranquillity of Mind* is all about. Plutarch's explanation of evil becomes possible by distancing the sensibles from the demiurge more than Dio and Maximus are prepared to do. How exactly evil can creep in through that crack is not really explained in *On Tranquillity of Mind*, although the paragraph

²⁹⁷ See Festugière 1949: 233–238; Follieri 1997; De Nicola 2006 for further selections of material.

²⁹⁸ I do not detect, unlike Kidd in Kidd and Waterfield 1992: 209, the 'strong odour of Stoicism' in Plutarch's version of the cosmic temple. On anti-Stoic elements in *De tranq. an.* in general, and especially in § 15, see Babut 1969b: 97–102.

on dualism (§ 15) offers a rudimentary account of what Plutarch explains in a more technical fashion elsewhere. The evil-causing principle that is brought up there ultimately points to the irrational part of the soul, which is a necessary part of the cosmos, since without it, there would be no movement, as we have seen when tying the combination of θεωρία and πρᾶξις to the cosmic condition (*De an. procr.* 1025f). This irrational soul, then, is tacitly present even in the optimistic finale of *On Tranquillity of Mind*, where the ἀγάλματα are said to have an innate principle of motion (ἔμφυτον ἀρχὴν ζωῆς [...] καὶ κινήσεως, 477c). In Plutarch's view, this principle cannot be traced back to the intelligible model, but it must point to irrational soul.²⁹⁹

Plutarch's dualism, then – and on this point, I disagree with Hirsch-Luipold³⁰⁰ – does not contrast with the optimistic view that the festival imagery expresses. On the contrary, the comparison with Dio and Maximus has suggested that dualism is the key to this optimistic view by allowing for the existence of evil without accusing god of being the source of it. The end of the *Charidemus* might show where a Platonist like Plutarch might have found the Stoics running into trouble.³⁰¹ After Charidemus' magnificent and highly optimistic cosmic festival, the character Dio's first word is παπαῖ. He confesses not to be able to console either Charidemus' family or even himself (*Or.* 30.45). The *Charidemus* does not end in triumph. The cosmic festival has not proved to be an effective consolation. Perhaps this is partly because evil has not been explained, while Charidemus' death puts it front and centre. We do not know how Maximus' oration on evil (*Or.* 41) ends, but he does admit that evil is much

²⁹⁹ Cf. *De an. procr.* 1026d, where the irrational part of the human soul is called, with a reference to Pl., *Phdr.* 237d (cf. *Quaest. conv.* 9.14.746d), 'an innate desire for pleasures' (ἐπιθυμίαν ἔμφυτον ἡδονῶν), while the rational part is said to come from the superior, intelligible principle; cf. the σύμφυτος ἐπιθυμία from *Plt.* 272e (*De an. procr.* 1015a; see chapter 1.4).

³⁰⁰ Hirsch-Luipold 2002: 171 n. 37: 'Merkwürdigerweise wurde gerade diese Schrift [i.e. *De tranq. an.*] verschiedentlich als Beleg für den Dualismus Plutarchs angeführt. Die gesamte Pointe der Schrift liegt aber, wie dies die [...] Schlußpassage besonders klar erkennen läßt, in einer ausgesprochen bejahenden Welsicht, die mit dem dualistischen Sicht der Welt al seiner gefallenen Schöpfung, wie sie in der hermetischen Literatur vorherrscht, nicht übereingehet'; cf. also Heinze 1890: 500–501, who argues that the dualistic part of *De tranq. an.* is a misfit, and Pohlenz 1905: 284, who considers the dualistic passage as proof that Plutarch's source 'kann nicht die Überzeugung zum Dogma gehabt haben, daß es ein absolut wertvolles Gut gebe' and goes on to identify this source as Epicurean (rejecting the then-prevailing identifications of the source as Stoic). I do not claim that Plutarch's dualism is the same as the dualism of Hermetism. My point is that the final paragraph of *De tranq. an.* does not contrast with Plutarch's brand of dualism.

³⁰¹ Cf. Moles 2000: 196, 208.

harder to explain than good. One might say – and a Stoic or Stoicising Platonist probably would say – that Plutarch took the easy way out by adopting a dualistic world view. But since he endorsed the premises that (1) the demiurge is good, (2) matter is without quality, and (3) evil is real and not somehow imagined, this seemed logically the only way out (cf. *De an. procr.* 1015b–c).³⁰² The Stoicising version of the cosmic festival set a high bar to clear. I imagine that Plutarch would have regarded it as naïve at best (cf. *De an. procr.* 1015b) and blasphemous at worst (cf. *De Stoic. rep.* 1049f–1051a; *De comm. not.* 1065e–1066a).³⁰³

By looking back at the dualistic passage (§ 15) from the vantage point of the finale (§ 20), which finally allows us to throw the intelligible realm into the mix, we can thus clarify its relevance to the cosmological ethics of *On Tranquillity of Mind*. The same goes for the passage on memory (§ 14). I pointed out earlier that both human and cosmic life include memory of the sensibles, which is part of the faculty of discernment that depends on the faculty of movement. Although this moves beyond the scope of *On Tranquillity of Mind*, we can ask now what role memory of the intelligible forms plays in human and cosmic life.³⁰⁴ Again there is a correspondence between the two levels. The life of the cosmos does not only depend on the memory of sensibles, but also on the memory of its model. This becomes clear when, in *On the Generation of the Soul* (1026e–f; cf. 1015d), Plutarch draws on the myth of Plato's *Statesman* (273c) to point out that there were and will be moments in history when the cosmic soul is affected by 'forgetfulness of what is proper to it' (λήθης [...] τοῦ οἰκείου, 1026e; see p. 58). This forgetfulness disrupts the cosmic movement, which is only recovered when the cosmic soul looks up at the παράδειγμα (1026f).³⁰⁵ A similar risk occurs in human life, as Plutarch stresses particularly in the *Dialogue on Love*, where the sensible can 'dazzle our memory' (ἐκπλήττειν [...] τὴν μνήμην, 764e–f) while the intelligible can rekindle it through ἀνάμνησις (765b).³⁰⁶ This ἀνάμνησις,

³⁰² Eventually, the Neoplatonist Proclus will come up with a new solution; cf. Opsomer and Steel 2003: 10–31.

³⁰³ Cf. Babut 1969b: 363 who aptly points out the contrast 'entre le pessimisme moral des Stoïciens, associé à un optimisme métaphysique, et l'optimisme de Plutarque sur l'homme, qui se conjugue avec le pessimisme de sa vision du monde'.

³⁰⁴ Cf. Pl., *Phlb.* 34b for the distinction between memory of perception and memory of a piece of knowledge (μνήμην εἴτ' αἰσθήσεως εἴτ' μαθήματος).

³⁰⁵ Plutarch thus differs from modern interpreters of *Tim.* (p. 201 n. 116) by regarding discernment and motivity both as primary faculties of the cosmic soul. Discernment depends on movement, as modern interpreters stress, but movement also depends on discernment.

³⁰⁶ Knowledge of the intelligibles is also a central feature of the βίος of the highest god: '[I]f His knowledge and meditation on the nature of Existence should be taken

indeed, depends on the picture painted at the end of *On Tranquillity of Mind*, which presents sensibles as images of the intelligibles.

Memory and dualism turned out to be important assets in the human struggle against τύχη. The reference to the intelligible realm at the end of *On Tranquillity of Mind* only heightens the value of these assets. We have seen how the world view of *On Tranquillity of Mind* also underlies the *Consolation to My Wife* and *On Exile*. The same goes for other Plutarchan works of practical ethics as well as rhetorical works. Dualistic elements occur, albeit rather lightheartedly, in works such as *On Talkativeness* (506f–507a) and *On Flatterers and Friends* (61d–e). In the short rhetorical works *On Chance, Is Vice Sufficient to Cause Unhappiness?*, *On Virtue and Vice, Can Virtue Be Taught?*, and *Are the Affections of the Soul Worse Than Those of the Body?*, Plutarch is obsessed with τύχη, and he consistently contrasts it with virtue.³⁰⁷

Although *On Tranquillity of Mind* – and this is even more the case for the other works I have just mentioned – contains little technical philosophy, I hope to have shown in this chapter that the world view that emerges from this work can be backed up by Plutarch's more theoretical endeavours and that this world view has real practical consequences.

away, then, to my mind, His immortality is not living, but a mere lapse of time' (τοῦ δὲ γινώσκειν τὰ ὄντα καὶ φρονεῖν ἀφαιρεθέντος, οὐ βίον ἀλλὰ χρόνον εἶναι τὴν ἀθανασίαν, *De Is. et Os.* 351e; cf. *Ad princ. iner.* 781a). On this passage from *De Is. et Os.*, and particularly on the problematic bit that comes right before the sentence to which I refer, see Roskam 2015b. 'Lapse of time' is an appropriate translation, since χρόνος seems to be used in that colloquial sense here. Humans are given a share in knowledge of the intelligible (351d) and should thus also be expected to pursue this in order to have a βίος and not merely experience lapse of time (for a similar opposition of χρόνος and βίος, albeit within a different ontological framework, see Arist., *EN* 1.11.1101a14–19 with Horn 2009: 123–124). For humans and the cosmos, as we have seen, both memory of the intelligibles and memory of the sensibles contribute to turning mere lapse of time into βίος. Does the same thing go for the highest god? This is not likely. The idea expressed by Ammonius in *De E* that god is κατ' οὐδένα χρόνον (393a; cf. Whittaker 1969) is unescapable in Plutarch's world view. Unlike human βίος, transcendent βίος is not in time. While human life should be *not merely* lapse of time, transcendent life is *not* lapse of time. Speaking of memory in the case of the transcendent, then, would be meaningless.

³⁰⁷ On the parallels in these works with *De tranq. an.*, see Siefert 1896: 89–119. I do not want to claim, of course, that Plutarch's use of rhetoric is limited to what I call here his rhetorical works. Martin 2001 gives a good impression of the pervasiveness of rhetoric in Plutarch's works (cf. also Wardman 1974: 221–224), and I would even go a step further than he is willing to go by contesting his characterisation of works such as *De an. procr.* as 'non-rhetorical': one only has to read the carefully constructed first sentence of *De an. procr.* (1012b) to see that rhetorical techniques are anything but absent there (cf. p. 120 n. 73).

The reader of *On Tranquillity of Mind* will, ideally, come to realise that we do not need rose-tinted glasses to view the world, since the world is already rose (or whatever colour we would prefer the world to be). And life does not give us lemons, so we do not need to make lemonade to get by. Rather, life turns out to be like a box of chocolates: we never know what we are going to get, but we can be sure that most of it is going to be pretty good.

Now that we have learned about the correct world view at the end of *On Tranquillity of Mind*, we can see what was wrong with the faulty world views of Alexander, Agamemnon, and Phaethon, which were presented in the κρίσις. Positing an infinite number of worlds, as Alexander did following his teacher, is flat out incompatible with Platonic providence (cf. also e.g. *De def. or.* 423c). Thinking that bad things are caused by Zeus, as Agamemnon did, is blasphemous and effectively rejected by dualism (cf. also e.g. *De aud. poet.* 23d–24c; *De sup.* 168a–b). Attempting to become a god, as Phaethon did, disregards the human condition and, more generally, the distinction between the sensible and the intelligible, through a completely mistaken view of ὁμοίωσις θεῶ (cf. also e.g. *De sera num.* 550d–e). What does Plutarch's *On Tranquillity of Mind* have to offer? A decent view of the cosmos that will not allow these threats to εὐθυμία to present themselves. Only within that framework can humans truly 'acquiesce in the present without fault-finding, remember the past with thankfulness, and meet the future without fear or suspicion, with their hopes cheerful and bright' (καὶ τοῖς παροῦσιν ἀμέμπτως συνοίσονται καὶ τῶν γεγονότων εὐχαρίστως μνημονεύσουσι καὶ πρὸς τὸ λοιπὸν ἴλεω τὴν ἐλπίδα καὶ φαιδρὰν ἔχοντες ἀδεῶς καὶ ἀνυπόπτως προσάξουσιν, *De tranq. an.* 477f). With these words, which recall the themes of the external synthesis, memory, and dualism, the work ends. Once he has followed the advice from *On Tranquillity of Mind* all the way through to the end – and has grasped the ethical framework of Platonic cosmology – Paccius will be ready for what he had prematurely asked of Plutarch: detailed exegesis of Plato's *Timaeus*.

Chapter 6

Dialogue on Love

In his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846), Kierkegaard – or rather Kierkegaard wearing the mask of Johannes Climacus, the name under which the work was published – discusses the relation between thinker and truth. This relation is a problematic one for Kierkegaard, who stresses the thinker’s subjectivity. The thinker is existing, that is, they are constantly coming to be. The thinker’s stance towards unchanging truth must be one of constant striving – a stance, indeed, of love:¹

This feature of existence calls to mind the Greek conception of Eros that we find in the *Symposium*, and which Plutarch correctly explains in his work on Isis and Osiris (§ 57 [i.e. 374c–e]). The parallel between Isis, Osiris and Typhon does not concern me, but when Plutarch reminds us that Hesiod took Chaos, Earth, Tartarus and Love to be cosmic principles, to recall Plato in this connection is very apt. For love here evidently means existence, or that by virtue of which life in its entirety is the life that synthesizes the infinite and the finite. According to Plato, Poverty and Wealth begot Eros, whose nature was made of both. But what is existence? Existence is that child born of the infinite and the finite, the eternal and the temporal, and is therefore constantly striving. This was how Socrates saw it: that is why love is constantly striving, i.e., the thinking subject is existing.²

The distance in space, time, and thought between a nineteenth-century Christian subjectivist from Denmark and a second-century Platonist from

¹ Throughout this chapter, I will use the terms ‘love’, ‘Love’, ‘eros’, and ‘Eros’ interchangeably. Similarly, in Greek, I am programmatically uninterested in the difference between ἔρωσ and Ἔρωσ. I concur with the many scholars who have pointed out that ‘love’ is not an adequate translation of the word ἔρωσ (e.g. Vlastos 1981: 4 n. 4; Sheffield 2012: 122–123), but for want of a better translation and for the sake of readability and convenience, I sometimes stick to it. As for the capitalisation, which is usually the way of distinguishing between the divinity (Eros) and the human passion (eros), I prefer to leave Plutarch and other Greek authors, who in their writing simply did not have the distinction between lower and upper case, on the playing field created by this non-distinction and deal with it through interpretation rather than through writing convention.

² Tr. Hannay 2009: 78

Chaeronea is vast, to be sure.³ Nevertheless, this chapter will be, in a way, a comment on the issues raised in this passage. First of all, it should give us pause that Kierkegaard chose to mention Plutarch's *On Isis and Osiris*.⁴ As he admits himself, the Egyptian parallels that form the topic of that treatise are not what he is after. Why, then, does he not cite Plato's *Symposium* directly?⁵ In the end, all he needs for his argument is Socrates' (or Diotima's) conception of Eros as the child of Poverty and Wealth. Eros' position between infinite and finite accounts for the plight of the existing, subjective, constantly striving thinker. Apparently, then, grasping the reference to the *Symposium* does not exhaust the meaning of this passage.⁶ The detour via Plutarch is certainly a challenge for our understanding of Kierkegaard, since it adds the conception of love as a cosmic principle, thus drawing in an objective, universal dimension that Kierkegaard generally tries to avoid and jeopardising, it seems, genuine love between individuals. In ancient thought, the connection between cosmic principles and what Kierkegaard calls existence does not present itself in the guise of objectivism versus subjectivism, but it presents itself nonetheless. How should we understand this connection?

³ Irina 2010 stresses the importance of Plutarch for Kierkegaard and offers a wealth of material, but deals mainly (though not exclusively) with the *Lives*. Tellingly, the editors of the volume in which the study appeared include the Plutarch chapter under 'poets, dramatists, and historians' instead of under 'Greek philosophers'.

⁴ For the works of Plutarch in Kierkegaard's library, see Rohde 1967 entries 1172–1200 (and appendix II.51): Kierkegaard possessed the Tauchnitz editions of the *Lives* and the *Moralia*, the first five (out of nine) volumes of Kaltwasser's German translation of the *Moralia*, five volumes of the translation of Plutarch's works that appeared in the series *Griechische Prosaiker in neuen Uebersetzung*, and two partial Danish translations of the *Lives*. Kierkegaard's direct acquaintance with Plutarch's *De Is. et Os.* is also clear from another passage in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (Hannay 2009: 93), where Kierkegaard elegantly sneaks a reference to Plutarch's treatise into a discussion of his contemporary and anti-Hegelian ally Trendelenburg.

⁵ Kierkegaard was thoroughly acquainted with and influenced by *Symp.* (see Furtak 2010a for an excellent discussion), even to the extent of imitating it in the first part of *Stages on Life's Way*, so the detour is certainly not due to lack of knowledge of Plato's work. Kierkegaard possessed, apart from several translations of separate dialogues, a copy of Ast's Greek edition of Plato's works, in which he made annotations, as well as Schleiermacher's German translation, and Heise's Danish translation of selected dialogues, including *Symp.* See entries 1144–1171 (and appendix I.174–181) in Rohde 1967 for Plato's works in Kierkegaard's library.

⁶ Contra Carlisle 2010: 184 and Howland 2010: 126, who, in their comments on this passage, rightly point to the importance of *Symp.* but do not even mention that *Symp.* figures within a reference to Plutarch in this case.

Let us start by going to the source, that is, to Plutarch and his association of Hesiod's *Theogony* and Plato's *Symposium* in *On Isis and Osiris*:

δόξειε δ' ἂν ἴσως καὶ ὁ Ἡσίοδος τὰ πρῶτα πάντων Χάος καὶ Γῆν καὶ Τάρταρον καὶ Ἔρωτα ποιῶν οὐχ ἑτέρας λαμβάνειν ἀρχάς, ἀλλὰ ταύτας· <εἶ> γε δὴ τῶν ὀνομάτων τῇ μὲν Ἴσιδι τὸ τῆς Γῆς, τῷ δ' Ὀσίριδι τὸ τοῦ Ἐρωτος, τῷ δὲ Τυφῶνι τὸ τοῦ Ταρτάρου μεταλαμβάνοντες πῶς ἀποδίδομεν· τὸ γὰρ Χάος δοκεῖ χώραν τινὰ καὶ τόπον τοῦ παντὸς ὑποτίθεσθαι. προσκαλεῖται δὲ καὶ τὸν Πλάτωνος ἀμωσγέπως τὰ πράγματα μῦθον, ὃν Σωκράτης ἐν Συμποσίῳ περὶ τῆς τοῦ Ἐρωτος γενέσεως διῆλθε, τὴν Πενίαν λέγων τέκνων δεομένην τῷ Πόρῳ καθεύδοντι παρακληθῆναι καὶ κηῖσασαν ἐξ αὐτοῦ τεκεῖν τὸν Ἔρωτα φύσει μικτὸν ὄντα καὶ παντοδαπὸν, ἅτε δὴ πατὴρ μὲν ἀγαθοῦ καὶ σοφοῦ καὶ πᾶσιν αὐτάρκους, μητὴρ δ' ἀμηγάνου καὶ ἀπόρου καὶ δι' ἔνδειαν ἀεὶ γλιχομένης ἑτέρου καὶ περὶ ἕτερον λιπαρούσης γεγεννημένον. ὁ γὰρ Πόρος οὐχ ἕτερός ἐστι τοῦ πρώτως ἐρατοῦ καὶ ἐφετοῦ καὶ τελείου καὶ αὐτάρκους· Πενίαν δὲ τὴν ὕλην προσεῖπεν ἐνδεᾶ μὲν οὔσαν αὐτὴν καθ' ἑαυτὴν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, πληρουμένην δ' ὑπ' αὐτοῦ καὶ ποθοῦσαν ἀεὶ καὶ μεταλαμβάνουσαν. ὁ δὲ γενόμενος ἐκ τούτων κόσμος καὶ Ὄρος οὐκ ἀίδιος οὐδ' ἀπαθὴς οὐδ' ἄφθαρτος, ἀλλ' ἀειγενὴς ὢν μηχανᾶται ταῖς τῶν παθῶν μεταβολαῖς καὶ περιόδοις ἀεὶ νέος καὶ μηδέποτε φθαρσόμενος διαμένειν. (*De Is. et Os.* 374c–e)

It might appear that Hesiod, in making the very first things of all to be Chaos and Earth and Tartarus and Love, did not accept any other origins but only these, if we transfer the names somewhat and assign to Isis the name of Earth and to Osiris the name of Love and to Typhon the name of Tartarus; for the poet seems to place Chaos at the bottom as a sort of region that serves as a resting-place for the Universe. This subject seems in some wise to call up the myth of Plato, which Socrates in the *Symposium* gives at some length in regard to the birth of Love, saying that Poverty, wishing for children, insinuated herself beside Plenty while he was asleep, and having become pregnant by him, gave birth to Love, who is of a mixed and utterly variable nature, inasmuch as he is the son of a father who is good and wise and self-sufficient in all things, but of a mother who is helpless and without means and because of want always clinging close to another and always importunate over another. For Plenty is none other than the first beloved and desired, the perfect and self-sufficient; and Plato calls raw material Poverty, utterly lacking of herself in the Good, but being filled from him and always yearning for him and sharing with him. The World, or Horus, which is born of these, is not eternal nor unaffected nor imperishable, but, being ever reborn, contrives to remain always young and never subject to destruction in the changes and cycles of events.

As it turns out, this passage is not only problematic from Kierkegaard's perspective. Plutarch, too, runs into trouble. How can Eros be Osiris and his son Horus at the same time? How can Eros be one of τὰ πρῶτα πάντων if what follows is a story περὶ τῆς τοῦ Ἐρωτος γενέσεως? How can the Eros praised by Socrates in the *Symposium* be compared to the cosmic Eros from Hesiod's *Theogony*? It is true enough that, with Phaedrus, the first of the speakers in Plato's *Symposium*, the praise of Eros begins in a Hesiodic vein: Phaedrus quotes the verses in which Hesiod places Eros at the very beginning of all things (*Theog.* 116–120 omitting 118). As far as he is concerned, the fact that 'the parents of Love have no place in poetry or legend' (γονῆς γὰρ Ἐρωτος οὔτ' εἰσὶν οὔτε λέγονται ὑπ' οὐδενὸς οὔτε ἰδιώτου οὔτε ποιητοῦ) accounts for his supreme greatness (*Symp.* 178a–b). The next two speakers pick up this theme of cosmic love. Pausanias starts from the culturally accepted observation that there are two Aphrodites (the one the daughter of Uranus, the other the daughter of Zeus and Dione)⁷ to postulate two corresponding Erotes: Common Eros (Ἐρως Πάνδημος) and Heavenly Eros (Ἐρως Οὐράνιος) (180d–e). Eryximachus in turn draws on his expertise in Hippocratic medicine to develop Pausanias' notion of Heavenly Eros. He adds that love is not merely a human matter but that it pervades and steers the whole cosmos by fostering harmony (*Symp.* 186a–b; 188a–d). In short, Hesiod's cosmic love seems well served by the first three speeches of the *Symposium*. However, when, after two more speeches, Socrates adds his contribution, he criticises the earlier speeches for not caring about truth (198d–199a). His own speech portrays Eros as the ugly, needy child of Poros and Penia. Where, then, does Plutarch get the nerve to draw Hesiod's Eros, mighty and parentless as he is, back in?

In this chapter, I turn to Plutarch's *Dialogue on Love* in search of answers to these questions. I argue that Plutarch uses cosmic imagery to develop an interpretation of Platonic love that attaches a surprisingly significant and persistent importance to the bodily. The first section serves as a further clarification of what is at stake here. By focusing on the first major part of the dialogue, I point to a challenge that the advocate of Platonic love has to face when engaging, as Plutarch does, with rival philosophical viewpoints: what value, if any, can the Platonist attach to the bodily aspects of love? Can Platonic love include something like Platonic sex? This issue will be explored through a discussion of three passages in the dialogue that draw on cosmology. The first (755e–757a) boils down to a miniature doxography of the cosmic function of the god Eros, which can be contrasted with the erotic chaos evoked by Plutarch's references to Euripides' *Hippolytus*. Then I turn to the comparison between Eros and the sun (764a–766b). As opposed to earlier interpretations, I

⁷ Cf. Xenophon, *Symp.* 8.9–10; Pausanias 8.32; 9.16.

argue that Plutarch does not reject this comparison but that he uses it to develop an ethics of human love that critically refers to Plato's image of the cave. The final passage (770a–b) brings the cosmic and the human perspective together and affirms the importance of cosmic imagery for understanding human love.

1. *The Platonist and the body*

ψυχῆς γὰρ ἔρωτα πλάττονται [sc. οἱ Σωκρατικοί] καὶ τὸ τοῦ σώματος εὖμορφον αἰδούμενοι φιλεῖν ἀρετῆς καλοῦσιν αὐτοὺς ἐραστάς. ἐφ' οἷς μοι πολλάκις καγχάζειν ἐπέρχεται. (Pseudo-Lucian, *Affairs of the Heart* 23)

For they [i.e. the disciples of Socrates] affect a love for the soul and, being ashamed to pay court to bodily beauty, call themselves lovers of virtue. This often tempts me to cackle with laughter.

In the Pseudo-Lucianic dialogue *Affairs of the Heart*, the report of a heated discussion between a proponent of heterosexual love and a defender of homosexual love,⁸ Socrates' pupils – and Plato is addressed as the main proponent (24) – receive a scolding from the former. The followers of Socrates claim to love the soul just because they are ashamed to admit that what they really love is the *body* of a boy.⁹ At the beginning of Plutarch's *Dialogue on Love*, the same argument is made in a similar context. In this work, Plutarch casts his son Autobulus as the reporter of events that happened before his birth, shortly after Plutarch's marriage.¹⁰ At the time, Plutarch and his new bride found themselves in Thespieae to

⁸ This one-line summary should be nuanced and put in the context of ancient sexuality. See, e.g. Jope 2011. I use the terms 'heterosexual love/sex' and 'homosexual love/sex' in a strictly etymological sense to indicate love/sex between members of different sexes and love/sex between two members of the same sex respectively; it should be kept in mind, however, that there are vast differences between our modern-day concepts of heterosexuality and homosexuality and the Ancient Greek 'equivalents' (if they can be called even that); see esp. Halperin 1990.

⁹ Lucian ridicules Socratic philosophy in a similar way in his *Philosophies for Sale* (15). Asked after his specialty, the Socratic philosopher for sale promptly mentions matters of love (τὰ ἐρωτικά). When the prospective buyer is not quite convinced that this specialty has merit in an educational context, the philosopher clarifies: καὶ γὰρ οὐ τῶν σωμάτων ἐραστής εἰμι, τὴν ψυχὴν δὲ ἠγοῦμαι καλήν ('It is not the body I love, it is the soul that I hold beautiful'). The buyer does not buy this.

¹⁰ Discussions of this dialogue in general include Brenk 1989; Goldhill 1995: 144–161; Rist 2001; Frazier 2005a; Gørgemanns 2011a. Cf. also Foucault 1984: 220–242.

sacrifice to Eros, whose festival the locals were celebrating. The talk of the town was a love affair between the young Bacchon and Ismenodora, a widow. Plutarch, hanging out with friends on the Helicon, soon became involved in a discussion between supporters and opponents of a marriage between the two. The first turn this discussion takes is a comparison of the merits of homosexual and heterosexual love. In the same vein as the Pseudo-Lucianic version, Daphnaeus replies to Protogenes' rejection of heterosexual love in favour of homosexual love by stating that

οὗτος [sc. ὁ παιδικὸς ἔρωσ] δ' ἀρνεῖται τὴν ἡδονήν; αἰσχύνεται γὰρ καὶ φοβεῖται· δεῖ δέ τινος εὐπρεπείας ἀπτομένῳ καλῶν καὶ ὠραίων· πρόφασις οὖν φιλία καὶ ἀρετή. κονίεται δὴ καὶ ψυχρολουτεῖ καὶ τὰς ὀφρῦς αἶρει καὶ φιλοσοφεῖν φησι καὶ σωφρονεῖν ἔξω διὰ τὸν νόμον· εἶτα νύκτωρ καὶ καθ' ἡσυχίαν 'γλυκεῖ' ὀπώρα φύλακος ἐκλελοιπότος'. (*Amat.* 752a)

Boy-love denies pleasure; that is because it is ashamed and afraid. It needs a fair pretext for approaching the young and beautiful, so it pretends friendship and virtue. It covers itself with the sand of the wrestling-floor, it takes cold baths, it plays the highbrow and publicly proclaims that it is a philosopher and disciplined on the outside – because of the law. But when night comes and all is quiet 'sweet is the harvest when the guard's away' [*TrGF* ad. fr. 403].

Both Pseudo-Lucian's character and Plutarch's Daphnaeus assume that the philosopher is a hypocrite in erotic matters: their love for the virtuous soul is an excuse (*πλάττονται, εὐπρεπείας, πρόφασις*) rooted in shame (*αἰδούμενοι, αἰσχύνεται, φοβεῖται*) for bodily desire. The point is not that philosophers should live up to their belief that bodily desires should not be part of love. Quite the contrary, as far as the Pseudo-Lucianic speaker is concerned.¹¹ Daphnaeus, for his part, goes on to say that, if there is *really* no sexual aspect in the homosexual relation (that is, if the philosopher unexpectedly turns out not to be a hypocrite after all), it is even more outrageous. He presents us with a dichotomy that, although it seems unsound,¹² will be important for the interpretation of the dialogue:

εἰ δ', ὡς φησι Πρωτογένης, οὐκ ἔστιν ἀφροδισίων † παιδικῶν κοινωνία, πῶς Ἔρωσ ἔστιν Ἀφροδίτης μὴ παρουσίας, ἣν εἵληχε θεραπεύειν ἐκ θεῶν καὶ περιέπειν, τιμῆς τε μετέχειν καὶ δυνάμεως ὅσον ἐκείνη δίδωσιν; εἰ δ' ἔστι τις Ἔρωσ χωρὶς Ἀφροδίτης, ὥσπερ

¹¹ The rather raunchy remainder of his speech (25), on the pleasures of having sex with a woman, bears this out.

¹² Thus Brenk 2000: 54.

μέθη χωρὶς οἴνου πρὸς σύκινον πόμα καὶ κρίθινον, ἄκαρπον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀτελεῖς τὸ παρακτικόν ἐστι καὶ πλήσιμιον καὶ ἀψίκορον. (*Amat.* 752a–b)

If, on the one hand, as Protogenes maintains, there is no sexual partnership in paederasty, how can there be any Eros without Aphrodite, whom it is his god-given function to serve and wait upon, as well as to receive such portion of honour and power as she bestows? But if, on the other, there is an Eros without Aphrodite, then it is like drunkenness without wine, brought on by a brew of figs and barley. No fruit, no fulfilment comes of the passion; it is cloying and quickly wearied.

If philosophical types like Protogenes are not lying about abstaining from sex in paederastic relations, there are two options: (1) there is no love, since Eros (love) is always accompanied by Aphrodite (sex),¹³ or (2) there is some kind (τις) of sexless love, which can only be described as pseudonymous and is clearly not endorsed by Daphnaeus.¹⁴ No matter the outcome, love without a sexual component is scorned.

The character Plutarch will soon join forces with Daphnaeus to defend heterosexual, more specifically conjugal love. His speeches later in the dialogue will revisit several of the points touched upon in this first defence: the connection between love (Eros) and sex (Aphrodite) (cf. 756e; 759e–f; 768e), the relation of these concepts to their namesake divinities, and the distinction between love done right and love done wrong. That Plutarch turns out to be a σύνδικος (752c) of Daphnaeus will not come as a surprise for the reader who knows him as the loving husband from the *Consolation to My Wife*. Nevertheless, there is a philosophical problem here. In his rebuttal of body-shy philosophers, Daphnaeus does not men-

¹³ Whether Eros or Aphrodite takes precedence will be the subject of further discussion (756e). Brenk 2000: 54 unnecessarily complicates the argument by assuming a ‘mythological pun’ in the distinction between Ἔρωσ (the god) and ἔρωσ (which he incorrectly takes to refer to sex).

¹⁴ The first εἰ δ’ opposes the dichotomy to the previous assumption about Protogenes’ stance; the second εἰ δ’ introduces the second leg of the dichotomy. The structure is as follows: (A) Protogenes is lying about abstaining from sex, or (B) Protogenes is not lying, in which case there is either (B.1) no ἔρωσ or (B.2) a kind of pseudonymous ἔρωσ. Goldhill 1995: 149 and Rist 2001: 562; 566 oversimplify this set of distinctions. Protogenes has already referred to the possibility of a kind of love, which is called ἔρωσ but is not really ἔρωσ (Ἐρωτα [...] νόθον, 750f; ἀληθινοῦ [...] Ἐρωτος, 750c; Ἐρωσ γνήσιος, 751a – the last two examples imply by their adjectives that there is also a different kind). Protogenes’ understanding of this pseudonymous love is different from that of Daphnaeus. Whereas Daphnaeus’ pseudonymous love is love without sex, Protogenes’ is exactly the opposite: ‘such a love is mere copulation’ (συνουσία γὰρ οὗτος ὁ ἔρωσ, 751b).

tion Socrates' pupils, as does the rather more irreverent Pseudo-Lucianic character, but the issue remains: How will a Platonist defend sexuality while remaining a Platonist? Laughing off the problem might be an option in a (Pseudo-)Lucianic world; in Plutarch's rather more philosophical world, it is not.

This tension between textbook Platonic love for the soul and interest in the body is not just a Lucianic joke or a conceit of our all-too-modern view: it must have been very real for intellectuals like Plutarch.¹⁵ Behind all the *topoi* of Maximus of Tyre's orations on Socratic love (*Or.* 18–21),¹⁶ for instance, a genuine concern lurks:

οὐδὲν γὰρ αὐτὸς αὐτῷ ὅμοιος ὁ Σωκράτης ἐρῶν τῷ σωφρονοῦντι καὶ ὁ ἐκπληττόμενος τοὺς καλοὺς τῷ ἐλέγχοντι τοὺς ἄφρονας, ὁ Λυσίου τῶν ἐρωτικῶν ἀντίτεχνος, ὁ Κριτοβούλου ἀπτόμενος, ὁ ἀπὸ κυνηγεσίου τῆς Ἀλκιβιάδου ὥρας παραγινόμενος, ὁ Χαρμίδην τεθηπῶς. πῶς γὰρ ὅμοια ταῦτα φιλοσόφῳ βίῳ; (*Or.* 18.5)

There seems to be no comparison between Socrates when he is in love and Socrates when he is being chaste, between the Socrates who is bowled over by beautiful boys and the Socrates whose questioning shows up fools, the Socrates who rivals Lysias in erotic skills, who battens on to Critobulus, who turns up fresh from hunting the beautiful Alcibiades, who is electrified by Charmides. How is all this consistent with the life of philosophy?

Maximus, of course, does not leave it at that, determined as he is to defend Socrates (18.6). Masurius, the know-it-all Roman jurist from Athenaeus' *Learned Banquetters*, is less committed to such a defence when talking about the *Charmides*:

¹⁵ Nor, on the hand, is the uneasiness caused by this tension limited to antiquity, as Reeser 2016 shows when discussing the reception of Platonic love in the Renaissance.

¹⁶ Szarmach 1982 (also in Szarmach 1985: 71–82) focuses on the overly topical character of these four ἐρωτικοὶ λόγοι (cf. also Puiggali 1983: 392–399, who is even more severe in judging the value of Maximus' own contribution). Lauwers 2015: 217, who is, in general, rightly critical of Szarmach's approach (Lauwers 2015: 5; 132), seems to agree for once: 'Maximus merely argues that Socrates' love is fully compatible with philosophy, as he felt love for the good virtuous nature of the boys rather than for their bodies. While this point is quite evident and easy to make, Maximus' extensive discussion, spread out over four orations, indicates that [...] he seizes the opportunity to embellish his discourse with numerous poetic and philosophical commonplaces that divert him somewhat from the strict nature of Socrates' love, and towards love in general.' See, however, Trapp 1990: 161–164 for a more charitable reading of these orations.

τὰ δ' ἐν τῷ Χαρμίδῃ ἐναντιώματα ἐξ αὐτοῦ τοῦ διαλόγου ὁ βουλόμενος εἴσεται. ποιεῖ γὰρ αὐτὸν ἀσυμφώνως ποτὲ μὲν σκοτοδινῶντα καὶ μεθυσκόμενον τῷ τοῦ παιδὸς ἔρωτι καὶ γινόμενον ἔξεδρον καὶ καθάπερ νεβρὸν ὑποπεπτωκότα λέοντος ἀλκῆ, ἅμα δὲ καταφρονεῖν φησι τῆς ὄρας αὐτοῦ. (Athenaeus 5.187e–f)

[A]nyone who wants to can detect the contradictions in the *Charmides* from the dialogue itself; because he represents Socrates inconsistently, sometimes as dizzy and drunk with his love for the boy, and as out of his mind and like a fawn overcome by a powerful lion, while he claims at the same time that he felt contempt for the boy's beauty.

Whereas Maximus is drawn to Plato, the passage from Athenaeus has an anti-Platonic tinge.¹⁷ Both authors agree, however, about the tension between Socrates' interest in physical beauty and the Platonic party line that sex should not be part of the erotic equation.

Given this intellectual context, how should we understand Plutarch's conviction that a loving relationship develops from a sexual experience (*Amat.* 751c–d) of which the function is not primarily procreational (769a–b) and that this bond is unlikely to hold if the sexual component is taken away (752c–d)? An important part of the explanation is that Plutarch, as so often, locates his own, Platonic position midway between the extreme poles of Stoicism and Epicureanism.¹⁸ Daphnaeus' rebuttal of Protogenes' praise of philosophical homosexuality, which claimed to be asexual, shows some similarities with Diadumenus' criticism of the Stoic take on love in *On Common Conceptions* (1072f–1073c), as Babut has pointed out.¹⁹ Diadumenus criticises the Stoics for giving the name 'love' to a passionless experience, while 'one <ought> to call "love" what all men and women understand and call by the name' (ἔρωτα δ' ἔδει καλεῖν ὃν πάντες ἄνθρωποι καὶ πᾶσαι νοοῦσι καὶ ὀνομάζουσιν, *De*

¹⁷ At several points in his soliloquy, the character Masurius refers to Herodicus of Babylon, who wrote *Against the Admirer of Socrates* (Πρὸς τὸν φιλοσωκράτην) and *On Symposia* (Περὶ συμποσίων). The latter work argued in favour of Homeric symposia and criticised philosophical symposia such as Plato's (but also Epicurus'). The passage on the *Charmides* is taken from a part of the speech where Athenaeus seems to be drawing heavily from this work on symposia. See Murray 2015: 35 on the structure of the fifth book; Trapp 2000b: 358–359 on the anti-Platonism in the context of this passage; Romeri 2003 on Athenaeus' anti-Platonism more generally (arguing against Düring 1941, who posited that this anti-Platonism was unoriginal and entirely derived from Athenaeus' sources).

¹⁸ See Opsomer 2014: 90 on this strategy. Unfortunately, the part of *Amat.* that probably dealt most explicitly with Stoic and Epicureans views is heavily mutilated (*Amat.* 766e–767b).

¹⁹ Babut 1969b: 110–111.

comm. not. 1073c).²⁰ A quotation from Homer (*Od.* 1.366 = 18.213) makes it clear that this includes the desire to be together in the bridal bed. The Stoic Eros without Aphrodite turns out to be pseudonymous at best. In Plutarch's dialogue, then, the Lucianic scolding of the Socratics is levelled against the Stoics instead.²¹

The opposite, Aphrodite without Eros – that is, sex without love – is what the Epicurean camp stands for in Plutarch's eyes. In the *Dialogue on Love*, Epicureans are characterised as ἀνέραστοι (767c): they reject love, since it is, in their view, 'an uncontrolled desire which force[s] the soul into debauchery' (ἐπιθυμία τὸν Ἔρωτα ταὐτὸ ποιῶν ἀκαταστάτω καὶ πρὸς τὸ ἀκόλαστον ἐκφερούση τὴν ψυχὴν, 767c).²² The other side of their stance, their endorsement of loveless sex, is not explicitly present in the *Dialogue on Love*, although Barigazzi has spotted several veiled references.²³ Nevertheless, this endorsement is well documented in other sources,²⁴ and it is clear that Plutarch stands in general opposition to their take on eros.

In sum, Plutarch wanted to steer clear of Stoic Scylla and Epicurean Charybdis by establishing a philosophy of love that did acknowledge the bodily (and, more specifically, sexual) aspect without discarding the intellectual side.²⁵ I will argue that he found this combination of body and intellect in the cosmology of Plato's *Timaeus*.

²⁰ Babut 1963: 62, commenting on this passage, gives a summary of the Stoic view on love, which allows for further nuance but gives a good impression of how a critic like Plutarch may have viewed it: 'On conçoit donc que le Portique ait pu, sans la moindre difficulté, prescrire au sage cet "amour" désintéressé des jeunes gens, [...] duquel tout élément sexuel, ou même simplement érotique et passionnel, est totalement exclu, en même temps qu'il prescrivait le mariage et la fondation d'une famille. Il faut d'ailleurs ajouter que la conception stoïcienne du mariage n'accorde pas plus de place à ce que nous appelons l'amour. Car les raisons qu'a le sage de prendre femme ne relèvent pas du sentiment ou de la passion, elles ne sont jamais d'ordre personnel mais social.'

²¹ A similar criticism of the Stoics can be found in Athenaeus 13.563d–f, where the Stoics are charged with hypocrisy for engaging in sex with boys while 'talk[ing] nonsense about how we should not love bodies, but the soul' (θρυλεῖτε γὰρ ὅτι δεῖ μὴ τῶν σωμάτων ἀλλὰ τῆς ψυχῆς ἐρᾶν).

²² See Flacelière 1954: 71–75; Barigazzi 1988a: 96; 100.

²³ Barigazzi 1988a: 96–97; 99; 100 on *Amat.* 765b; 756e; 759e, respectively.

²⁴ See Flacelière 1954: 72–75; Barigazzi 1988a: 91–93.

²⁵ I do not want to suggest that it is impossible to conceive of bodily love without a sexual component. Plotinus (3.5.1), for instance, suggests that love for the body only amounts to ἁμαρτία if sex is involved, and *Phdr.* (e.g. 249d–e) and *Symp.* (e.g. 210a) could certainly be interpreted in accordance with such a view. Plutarch, however, does not seem to consider such a distinction.

2. *Eros and Aphrodite as cosmic gods (755e–757a)*

2.1. A doxography of cosmic love

We left Plutarch and his friends on the Helicon while Daphnaeus and Protogenes were discussing the merits of heterosexuality and homosexuality (or, given the male focalisation of the discussion: of woman-love and boy-love), with Plutarch joining the cause of the former (750a–754e). The discussion is interrupted by a friend bringing the news that Bacchion has been kidnapped by Ismenodora (754e–755c). We rejoin the group after the main proponents of homosexuality have left in reaction to this. Pemptides, one of Plutarch's Boeotian acquaintances appearing in this crowded dialogue, sees fit to broaden the discussion in light of these events. Observing that both parties of the preceding discussion insisted on Eros' divinity, Pemptides asks sceptically 'what criterion those who first declared Eros to be a god had in mind when they made the statement' (πρὸς τί βλέψαντες ἀπεφήναντο τὸν Ἔρωτα θεὸν οἱ πρῶτοι τοῦτο λέξαντες, 756a). According to him, love is an unjustly divinised πάθος (755e–f), which is comparable to the disease that is falsely called 'sacred' (νόσος ἔστιν, ἣν ἱερὰν καλοῦσιν, 755e).²⁶

We would expect Plutarch to criticise the strange notion, implied in Pemptides' question, that the existence of the god somehow depends on his being declared a god at some point (οἱ πρῶτοι τοῦτο λέξαντες). Or we would anticipate that he would denounce the search of a specific criterion for divinity (πρὸς τί βλέψαντες). However, his approach is more subtle and reveals itself in a puzzle involving the word τεκμήριον:²⁷ Plutarch simultaneously supplies and refuses to supply a τεκμήριον. The τεκμήριον demanded by Pemptides but refused by Plutarch is a τεκμήριον about Eros specifically, in isolation of the rest of the pantheon (περὶ ἐκάστου τεκμήριον ἀπαιτῆς, 756d; cf. περὶ ἐκάστου λόγον ἀπαιτῶν καὶ ἀπόδειξιν, 756b). The τεκμήριον that is supplied instead is what Plutarch calls ἡ πάτριος καὶ παλαιὰ πίστις (ἀρκεῖ γὰρ ἡ πάτριος καὶ παλαιὰ πίστις, ἥς οὐκ ἔστιν εἰπεῖν οὐδ' ἀνευρεῖν τεκμήριον ἐναργέστερον, 756b). This corrected way of thinking about τεκμήρια for divinity defuses the potentially harming aspects of Pemptides' question: the search for a first declaration of divinity and the demand for a concrete proof are both answered and replaced by the πάτριος πίστις.

²⁶ The challenge that Pemptides presents by connecting a rational explanation of the sacred disease with a rational explanation of the disease he considers love to be can be compared to Galen, *Commentary on Hippocrates' Prognostikon* 18.2 p. 18 Kühn.

²⁷ Before Plutarch responds, Anthemion, who argued the case for heterosexual love alongside Daphnaeus, leaves as well. Of the initial partisans, only Daphnaeus remains. See Frazier 2005a: 66 n. 13 on the function of this development.

But what is this *πάτριος πίστις*? The only thing we know so far is that it serves as a *τεκμήριον* for the whole of Greek religion. It does not work *περὶ ἐκάστου*: if the existence of one single god is questioned, the whole pantheon falls like a row of dominoes (756b; 756d).²⁸ Rather, the *πάτριος πίστις* is ‘a basis, as it were, a common foundation of religion’ (*ἔδρα τις αὕτη καὶ βάσις ὑφεστῶσα κοινὴ πρὸς εὐσέβειαν*, 756b), and questioning Eros is not different from questioning Zeus or Athena (756c). Without further ado, Plutarch begins his plea on behalf of Eros. The next short section of Plutarch’s speech (756c–f), haphazardly constructed as it may seem, is a careful demonstration of how the *πάτριος πίστις* can serve as a *τεκμήριον*.

To approach this passage adequately, we have to import a schema introduced later in the dialogue. This interpretative conceit might not be unwarranted, since Plutarch announces the schema as ‘something that might better have been stated at the beginning’ (*ὁ τοίνυν ἐν ἀρχῇ καιρὸν εἶχε ῥηθῆναι μᾶλλον*, 763b).

ἴσως μὲν γάρ, ὦ ἑταῖρε, καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀπάντων, ὅσα μὴ δι’ αἰσθήσεως ἡμῖν εἰς ἔννοιαν ἦκει, τὰ μὲν μῦθω τὰ δὲ νόμῳ τὰ δὲ λόγῳ πίστιν ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἔσχηκε· τῆς δ’ οὖν περὶ θεῶν δόξης καὶ παντάπασιν ἡγεμόνες καὶ διδάσκαλοι γεγονασιν ἡμῖν οἳ τε ποιηταὶ καὶ οἱ νομοθέται καὶ τρίτον οἱ φιλόσοφοι, [...]. (*Amat.* 763b–c)

Perhaps, my friend, our belief in all our notions, except those derived from the senses, comes from three sources: myth, law, and rational explanation; so it is undoubtedly the poets, the legislators, and thirdly the philosophers who have been our guides and teachers in what we think about the gods.

The sources of theological *δόξα* are threefold: *μῦθος*, *νόμος*, and *λόγος*. Plutarch here uses a widespread but elusive model, which is dubbed *theologia tripertita* in modern scholarship.²⁹ What is meant by *μῦθος* and *νόμος* is more or less clear, but the *λόγος* represented by the philosophers is somewhat problematic, both as far as the other sources on the *theo-*

²⁸ Görgemanns 2005: 169–173 shows how Eros appears in *Amat.* as ‘Gott unter Göttern’ rather than as isolated divinity.

²⁹ The locus classicus is Augustine’s report of Varro’s views on the subject (*De civ. D.* 6.5). Lieberg 1984 (= Lieberg 1982) gives an overview of the evidence and confirms that the model of the *theologia tripertita* is ‘common property’ in antiquity: it cannot be traced back to a specific school. See also Lieberg 1973, which reviews earlier scholarship on the subject.

logia tripertita and Plutarch's use of the model are concerned.³⁰ In the Pseudo-Plutarchan *Opinions of the Philosophers* (I.6), for instance, the source joining myths and laws is τὸ φυσικόν instead of λόγος.³¹ Similarly, Plutarch substitutes οἱ φυσικοί and φύσις for οἱ φιλόσοφοι and λόγος when, later in the *Dialogue on Love*, he invokes the *theologia tripertita* once again (770a). This hesitation between φύσις and λόγος as source for theology is easily explained when the twofold task of philosophy in Plutarch's *theologia tripertita* is taken into account. On the one hand, his interest in the origins of theological speculation leads him to the origins of philosophy, which is the age of the Presocratic φυσικοί.³² On the other hand, it does not come as a surprise that he elects Plato as the main proponent of the philosophical branch of the *theologia tripertita*, with Solon and Hesiod as the representatives of the legal and poetic branches, respectively (763e). The association of the philosophers one time with φύσις and another time with more abstract λόγος³³ is not due to carelessness: just as the three branches of the *theologia tripertita* are in exceptional agreement on the primacy of Eros (763e–f), the physical and the abstract ends of the philosophical spectrum join forces for the sake of love.

Taking our cue from the character Plutarch and applying the *theologia tripertita* to the beginning of his earlier speech, we are now better equipped to return to the πάτριος πίστις demonstration. The first point Plutarch makes is that Eros is not a recently introduced, imported god:

οὐ γὰρ νῦν αἰτεῖ πρῶτον βωμὸν ὁ Ἔρως καὶ θυσίαν οὐδ' ἔπηλυσ ἕκτινος βαρβαρικῆς δεισιδαιμονίας, ὥσπερ Ἄτται τινὲς καὶ Ἄδωναῖοι λεγόμενοι, δι' ἀνδρογύνων καὶ γυναικῶν παραδύεται [καὶ] κρύφα τιμὰς οὐ προσηκούσας καρπούμενος, ὥστε παρεγγραφῆς δίκη φεύγειν καὶ νοθείας τῆς ἐν θεοῖς. (*Amat.* 756c–d [text modified³⁴])

³⁰ Klauck 2007, discussing Dio Chrysostom's *Or.* 12 (cf. p. 263–267), shows how the *theologia tripertita* is not set in stone: an author can fit the model to their rhetorical and argumentative needs. See also Lieberg 1984: 114.

³¹ Similarly, Varro distinguished the *mythicon*, the *civile*, and the *physicon*, attributing the latter to the *philosophi* (*ap.* Augustine, *De civ. D.* 6.5; cf. 6.12, where the same tripartition is mentioned).

³² On Presocratic natural theology, see e.g. Gerson 1990: 1–32 or Trépanier 2010.

³³ That Plutarch thought about a more abstract brand of philosophy than φυσιολογία is clear when he sketches the subject matter of the philosophers who teach the λόγος part of the *tripertita theologia*: 'the philosophers put forth as gods certain patterns and numbers, monads and spirits' (φιλοσόφων ιδέας τινὰς καὶ ἀριθμοὺς μονάδας τε καὶ πνεύματα θεοῦ ποιουμένων, 763d).

³⁴ Reading παρεγγραφῆς instead of the manuscripts' and editions' παρεισγραφῆς; see Demulder forthcoming c.

Love is not now requesting his first altar and sacrifice. He is no alien intruder from some barbaric superstition like certain Attises and Adonises, as they are called. He does not, assisted by hermaphrodites and women, smuggle himself in to reap a harvest of honours to which he has no right, which would make him liable to indictment for illegal registration as a god, and bastardy.

That Plutarch speaks as a defender of civic religion and draws on the νόμος branch of the *theologia tripertita* here is suggested by the concern with altars, sacrifices, and honours. The application of legal terminology (παρεγγραφή, νοθεία) to a theological question confirms this. The νόμος, then, is the first part of the τεκμήριον, which is to take away Pemptides' worries about the origin and the criterion of Eros' divinity: the statement that he is not an imported god of questionable origin intends to answer both issues.³⁵

After covering the νόμος branch of theology, Plutarch turns to philosophy. Empedocles is said to confirm the statement just made about civic religion, namely, that Eros is not an immigrant god:

ἀλλ' ὅταν Ἐμπεδοκλέους ἀκούσης λέγοντος, ὦ ἑταῖρε,

καὶ Φιλότης ἐν τοῖσιν ἴση μῆκός τε πλάτος τε,
τὴν σὺ νόῳ δέρκου, μῆδ' ὄμμασιν ἦσο τεθιπῶς,

ταῦτ' οἶεσθαι χρὴ λέγεσθαι περὶ Ἐρωτος· οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ὀρατός, ἀλλὰ
δοξαστός ἡμῖν ὁ θεὸς οὗτος ἐν τοῖς πάνυ παλαιοῖς· (*Amat.* 756d [text
modified³⁶])

On the contrary, my friend, when you hear Empedocles declaring,

³⁵ On the historical and philosophical background of the motif of divine bastardy and illegal registration and on the apparent contrast between the intolerance towards foreign gods in this passage and Plutarch's general, more welcoming attitude (as shown esp. in *De Is. et Os.*, but see also *Quaest. conv.* 4.5.671b–c on Adonis), see Demulder forthcoming c.

³⁶ The Teubner edition adopts Wilamowitz' conjecture <καὶ> περὶ Ἐρωτος; the Loeb and the Budé do not print this but both translate it nonetheless ('his verses apply also to Eros'; 'ces vers s'appliquent aussi à l'Amour'). On this issue, see Martin 1969a: 58–63, with whom I agree on this point: Plutarch's intention is to identify Φιλότης and Ἐρως; Wilamowitz' conjecture obscures this and is unnecessary. Cf. the dualistic doxographies at *De Is. et Os.* 370e and *De an. procr.* 1026e (with p. 211), where the Empedoclean principle φιλότης (in *De Is. et Os.*) / φιλία (in *De an. procr.*) is invoked and seems to be identified with the highest beneficial divinities of Greek and other cultures, such as Ormasdes, Osiris, and Zeus.

Among them Love is equal, far and wide;
Use the mind's eye; sit not with staring gaze – [fr. 17.20–21 DK]

you must suppose that this is said about Eros; for though he is not visibly among the most ancient divinities, he is there conceptually.
[tr. modified]

Again, the two elements of Pemptides' question are playfully undermined and answered at the same time. There is no need to ask about the origin of Eros' divinity, since Eros is at the very origin alongside the most ancient divinities. As for the demand for an ἀπόδειξις, a straightforward visual proof of Eros is out of the question (μηδ' ὄμμασιν), but the mind (νόῳ) can help us out.

The opposition of ὀρατός and δοξαστός, which Plutarch goes on to make following this last point, may seem puzzling. In a Platonic framework, we would rather expect the two adjectives to be joined and opposed to νοητός.³⁷ Indeed, later in the *Dialogue on Love*, Plutarch opposes Eros and the sun by pointing out that the former is νοητός and the latter ὀρατός (*Amat.* 764d, which will be discussed in the next section). Should we read Plutarch's comment on the Empedocles verses as a prelude to this development, taking our cue from Empedocles' use of νοῦς, and regard δοξαστός as a philosophically clumsy way of saying νοητός?³⁸ Or should we detect in the *Dialogue on Love* a separation of two conceptions of Eros: the Eros of traditional faith (being δοξαστός) and the Platonic Eros (being νοητός)?³⁹

Rather, the opposition fits into the *theologia tripertita* framework, where theological δόξα is contrasted with what can be learned δι' αἰσθήσεως (763c). This does not mean, however, that philosophy as source for theology is entirely divorced from the sensible. Instead, we should read δόξαστος as providing a correct explanation of Empedoclean

³⁷ Cf. *De an. procr.* 1024e–f: ἡ δὲ κρίσις ἀρχὰς μὲν ἔχει δύο, τὸν τε νοῦν ἀπὸ τοῦ ταυτοῦ πρὸς τὰ καθόλου καὶ τὴν αἴσθησιν ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐτέρου πρὸς τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα. μέμικται δὲ λόγος ἐξ ἀμφοῖν, νόησις ἐν τοῖς νοητοῖς καὶ δόξα γινόμενος ἐν τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς [...]. ('Discernment, however, has two principles, intelligence proceeding from sameness to universals and sense-perception from difference to particulars and reason is a blend of both, becoming intellection in the case of the intelligibles and opinion in the case of the perceptibles [...].') This reflects the fundamental distinction in Pl., *Tim.* 28b; cf. p. 201. Another Platonic locus where this distinction is made particularly clear is the simile of the divided line (*Resp.* 6.509d–511e), on which see Plutarch's *Quaest. Plat.* 3 and p. 329. Cf. also *Adv. Col.* 1114c–d.

³⁸ This is what the Loeb translator, quoted here, seems to suggest by translating 'conceptually'; cf. also Martin 1969a: 63.

³⁹ Frazier 1999: 352–354; 2007; 2008. Cf. also Babut 1994b: 580.

νοῦς (i.e. δοξαστός explains νόω, like ὀρατός explains ὄμμασιν). Obviously, Plutarch interprets the Empedocles quotation in view of his own argument here, as he will do for Parmenides and Hesiod later.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, the fact that he tailors Empedocles to his own needs does not take away from his thorough acquaintance with Empedocles' work.⁴¹ Now, what Empedocles means by the statement that Φιλότης cannot be seen is that we should 'infer its presence and power in general from its effects in the human sphere'.⁴² Accordingly, this process of inference is what δοξαστός and νόω refer to.

This thinking from and beyond sensible effects is also described in Plutarch's next quotation, with which he moves from philosophy to the contribution of the poets, while also introducing the comparison of Eros and Aphrodite:

πόρρω γὰρ οὐκ ἄπειμι

τὴν δ' Ἀφροδίτην οὐχ ὀραῖς ὅση θεός;
ἥδ' ἐστὶν ἢ σπείρουσα καὶ διδοῦσ' ἔρον,
οὗ πάντες ἐσμὲν οἱ κατὰ χθόν' ἔκγονοι. (*Amat.* 756d)

I do not go far

Do you not see how mighty is the goddess Aphrodite? [Eur., fr. 898.1 *TrGF*]
She sows and gives that love

⁴⁰ Empedocles associates Φιλότης with Aphrodite rather than with Eros (fr. 17.24; fr. 22; fr. 98; fr. 128 DK), and it is not clear to what extent we can assimilate the four Empedoclean roots, among which Love's presence is proclaimed here, with the most ancient divinities (although fr. 6 DK points in that direction; cf. also fr. 98 DK).

⁴¹ Whether or not Plutarch has written ten books of *Notes on Empedocles*, as the *Lamprias Catalogue* (43) mentions, his interest in the enigmatic sage of Acragas is hard to deny. See Hershbell 1971, who focuses on the value of Plutarch as a source for the study of Empedocles but has much to say about Plutarch's own interpretation as well.

⁴² Kirk, Raven, and Schofield 1983: 290. This is suggested by other Empedocles passages, including some verses found in the same context from which Plutarch quotes. Fr. 3, v. 9–13 DK connects the senses and the process of νοῖσσαι; fr. 21 DK shows how empirical evidence from our environment confirms the metaphysical theory of love. The new Empedocles material found in *P. Strasb. gr. Inv.* 1665–1666 continues fr. 17, which Plutarch quotes partly; there, too, Empedocles makes it clear that insight in his metaphysics of Love and Strife starts from a person's surroundings (ἀμφὶς ἐόντα, a(ii)22) and from empirical evidence ([δεῖ]ξω σοι καὶ ἂν' ὄσσ(ε), a(ii)23 ed. Martin and Primavesi 1999). On Empedocles' concept of νοῦς, see von Fritz 1974.

From which all we upon this earth are born [Eur., *Hipp.* 449–450]. [tr. modified⁴³]

In this combination of two Euripides quotations, to which we will return in the next subsection, ὁρᾶς should not be taken purely metaphorically: the greatness of Aphrodite can be deduced from sensible data on earth (κατὰ χθόνα). However, the poet fails to grasp the essence of the reality that Plutarch reveals here. Euripides wrongly subordinates Eros to Aphrodite, love to sex: Aphrodite is ἡ σπείρουσα καὶ διδοῦσ' ἔρον, the one who produces Eros.

A further clarification of the connection between love and sex – already touched upon by Daphnaeus, as we saw earlier – is in order. Daphnaeus compared Eros without Aphrodite to drunkenness without wine: brought on as it is by figs and barley drink, it may be filling (πλήσιμος), but it remains ultimately unfulfilling (ἀτελής). Similarly, Plutarch now compares sex without love to hunger and thirst (πεῖνα καὶ δίψα): one can fill the void they create (πλησιμονὴν ἔχουσα), but this never leads to a noble end (πέρας εἰς οὐθὲν ἐξικνεῖται καλόν, 756e). Taken in isolation, both sex and love fill without really leading somewhere. There is, however, a difference between the two. Daphnaeus called the perverse brand of drunkenness he was describing – which represented Eros without Aphrodite – quickly sated (ἀψίκορον). Conversely, Plutarch now states that Eros' achievement is to attenuate the satiety (τὸν κόρον) of the pleasure brought on by Aphrodite and to turn the carnal experience into φιλότης and σύγκρασις. Earlier, we described how Plutarch joined forces with Daphnaeus. Now, it appears that their views differ ever so slightly: both agree that love and sex go together, but whereas Daphnaeus chose to emphasise the sexual dimension, Plutarch gives priority to love, which takes away the risk of sexual excess and accounts for the noble end in the love-sex combination.

The same correction that Plutarch subtly – through a similar comparison and the use of related words – applies to Daphnaeus' view should be applied to Euripides' view as well. Like Daphnaeus, Euripides correctly takes Aphrodite and Eros together but incorrectly subordinates the latter to the former.⁴⁴ The correction – Eros should be placed above Aphrodite – is confirmed by two quotations that, as a μέν-δέ structure indicates,

⁴³ See Demulder 2018: 21–22.

⁴⁴ Euripides' description of Aphrodite as ἡ σπείρουσα καὶ διδοῦσ' ἔρον can be compared to Daphnaeus' description of Aphrodite as ἦν εἵληχε θεραπεύειν ἐκ θεῶν καὶ περιέπειν, τιμῆς τε μετέχειν καὶ δυνάμεως ὅσον ἐκείνη δίδωσιν ('whom it is his [i.e. Eros'] god-given function to serve and wait upon, as well as to receive such portion of honour and power as she bestows', 752b).

should be taken together and form the climax of Plutarch's τεκμήριον involving the poetry branch of the tripartite theology:

διὸ Παρμενίδης μὲν ἀποφαίνει τὸν Ἔρωτα τῶν Ἀφροδίτης ἔργων
πρεσβύτατον ἐν τῇ κοσμογονίᾳ γράφων

πρώτιστον μὲν Ἔρωτα θεῶν μητίσατο πάντων·

Ἡσίοδος δὲ φυσικώτερον ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ ποιεῖν Ἔρωτα πάντων
προγενέστατον, ἵνα πάντα δι' ἐκεῖνον μετάσχη γενέσεως. ἂν οὖν τὸν
Ἔρωτα τῶν νενομισμένων τιμῶν ἐκβάλλωμεν, οὐδ' αἱ τῆς Ἀφροδίτης
κατὰ χώραν μενοῦσιν. (*Amat.* 756e–757a)

This is the reason why Parmenides declares that Eros is the most ancient work of Aphrodite; his words in the *Cosmogony*⁴⁵ are

And first of all the gods she framed was Love. [fr. 13 DK]

But Hesiod, in my opinion, was more scientific when he depicted Eros as the first-born of them all, in order to make him indispensable for the generation of all things [cf. *Theogony* 116–122]. If, then, we strip from Love any of his customary honours, even those given to Aphroditê will not remain undisturbed.

It is odd to encounter the φυσικός Parmenides in the poetry branch of the *theologia tripartita*. This becomes less surprising when we consider the passage from Plato's *Symposium* – an obvious intertext in Plutarch's dialogue⁴⁶ – where Phaedrus quotes the same Parmenides fragment as well as the Hesiod passage to which Plutarch is referring (*Symp.* 178b⁴⁷). Phaedrus' speech has been described as 'a literary collage packed with

⁴⁵ It is unclear whether Plutarch intended κοσμογονία as a general description or as the title of (part of) Parmenides' poem; the former option is the most probable. See Her-
shbell 1972: 201 n. 41.

⁴⁶ See Giavatto 2010: 135 for citations and allusions and Rist 2001 for a general as-
sessment.

⁴⁷ ἀλλ' Ἡσίοδος πρῶτον μὲν Χάος φησὶ γενέσθαι – αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα / Γαῖ' εὐρύστερνος,
πάντων ἔδος ἀσφαλὲς αἰεὶ, / ἢ δ' Ἔρος' Ἡσίοδῳ δὲ καὶ Ἀκουσίλεως σύμφησιν μετὰ
τὸ Χάος δύο τούτω γενέσθαι, Γῆν τε καὶ Ἔρωτα. Παρμενίδης δὲ τὴν γένεσιν λέγει –
'πρώτιστον μὲν Ἔρωτα θεῶν μητίσατο πάντων'. ('According to Hesiod, the first to be
born was Chaos [cf. *Theog.* 116a], "...but then came / Earth, broad-chested, a seat for all,
forever safe, / and Love" [*Theog.* 116b–117; 120a]. And Acusilaus agrees with Hesiod: af-
ter Chaos came Earth and Love, these two. And Parmenides tells of this beginning: "The
very first god [she] designed was Love" [fr. B13 DK].')

allusions to the great poets⁴⁸ and Parmenides is indeed counted among the poets here.⁴⁹ Plutarch's apparent break from the tripartition is not only a playful allusion to the *Symposium* but also a functional adaptation. By switching the order of Phaedrus' authorities (Phaedrus quotes Hesiod before Parmenides), Plutarch associates Parmenides' testimony with that of Euripides (and – by association – that of Daphnaeus): he rightly sees the connection between Aphrodite and Eros, but wrongly assumes the superiority of the former. Whereas Phaedrus incorrectly quotes both Hesiod and Parmenides to prove the point that Eros is parentless, Plutarch points out that there is a considerable difference between the two on this issue.⁵⁰ Parmenides – or at least Plutarch's interpretation of Parmenides⁵¹ – figures as a negative example, since he regards Eros as the

⁴⁸ Sheffield 2012: 17.

⁴⁹ Hesiod and Parmenides serve as examples of a more general group of prose writers and poets who do not name the parents of Eros (γονῆς γὰρ Ἐρωτος οὔτ' εἰσὶν οὔτε λέγονται ὑπ' οὐδενός οὔτε ιδιώτου οὔτε ποιητοῦ, *Symp.* 178b). Of course, Plutarch himself was well aware of the difference between poetry and Parmenides' verses (*De aud. poet.* 16c; cf. Aristotle, *Poetics* 1447a–b; similarly *De aud.* 45a–b and *De Pyth. or.* 402f; see Hershbell 1972: 195–198).

⁵⁰ In *Symp.* itself, I take it, Phaedrus' account is meant to be read as self-defeating: as opposed to Phaedrus' claim, several pre-Platonic sources, including poets, do name parents for Eros (see Bury 1932: 22) – and, being a poetry buff, Phaedrus is supposed to know that. Moreover, the Parmenides fragment by itself shows that Eros is strictly not without parent, identified or not, since he is the object of μητίσατο. By correcting Phaedrus, one could say, Plutarch is merely following Plato's subtle instructions.

⁵¹ The subject of Parmenides' verb μητίσατο is a matter of debate, for which the sources are Plato, Plutarch, and Simplicius. (1) According to some scholars, Plato intended a personified Γένεσις to be the logical subject when he quotes the Parmenides passage in Phaedrus' speech (*Symp.* 178b) (e.g. Bury 1932: 23, who cites some predecessors; a recent example is Coxon 2009: 356; other scholars advocating this option are cited by Untersteiner 1958: 161 and Tarán 1965: 250 n. 56, who themselves disagree); others take Plato's words τὴν γένεσιν to refer to Eros' birth and do not read it as the logical subject of μητίσατο (e.g. Dover 1980: 91). Although the former suggestion has been particularly welcomed by Parmenides scholars looking for information about the subject of the fragment in question, this precise identification of a parent of Eros seems in all too blatant contradiction with Phaedrus' preceding statement that the parents of Eros are not identified by prose writers or poets (thus Tarán 1965: 250 n. 56; see, however, the previous note: even without identification of the subject of μητίσατο Phaedrus' statement does not withstand scrutiny). (2) At first sight, naming Aphrodite as the subject of μητίσατο looks like Plutarch filling in the blanks by gratuitously using the Parmenides quote for his own purposes. (3) The testimony of Simplicius (*Commentary on Aristotle's Physics* p. 39.18 CAG 9–10) is the least problematic: he makes the female δαίμων ἢ πάντα κυβερνᾷ from fr. 12.3 DK (= p. 39.16 in Simplicius) the subject. Plutarch's account is not in contradiction

work of Aphrodite. He is countered by Hesiod, who asserts the priority of Eros. The counterpart of the inclusion of Parmenides among the poets is the characterisation of Hesiod: he turns out to be φυσικώτερος than the φυσικός. As Parmenides' message is similar to Euripides', so is Hesiod's to Empedocles'.⁵²

with this third testimony: it could be that Plutarch saw reasons to identify Parmenides' female δαίμων with Aphrodite (for a defence of Plutarch's interpretation from the perspective of Parmenides scholarship, see Cerri 2011: 88; Martin 1969b: 190 and Hershbell 1972: 205–206 are also moderately benevolent towards Plutarch's exegesis).

⁵² Martin 1969b has offered an extensive discussion of Plutarch's citation of Parmenides and Hesiod in this passage. His take on the matter differs from mine in two ways. (1) Martin claims that 'Parmenides gives weight to Plutarch's explanation of the relation between Eros and Aphrodite' (184; again at 192–193, 196, 198) and that Hesiod is not invoked as an authority on that issue (193); my discussion, however, suggests the exact opposite: although Parmenides is right that Eros and Aphrodite belong together, he gets the hierarchy wrong, while Hesiod is correct. (2) Martin insists that Plutarch combines two sources here: not only Pl., *Symp.* is alluded to but also Arist., *Metaph.* 1.4.984b. Martin gives four arguments for the influence of Aristotle: (a) both Aristotle and Plutarch introduce Empedocles along with Hesiod and Parmenides, whereas Plato does not (see also Martin 1969a); (b) Plutarch places Parmenides before Hesiod and not, as in Plato's account, the other way around; (c) Plutarch omits Acusilaus, who is mentioned by Plato; (d) Plutarch considers Hesiod's Eros as a generative force in nature, in line with Aristotle's reference to Hesiod's Eros in the context of his discussion of the efficient cause. Neither of these arguments is conclusive and, to my mind, none of them is convincing. As far as the introduction of Empedocles is concerned (argument a), it should be noted that Plutarch has no verbal parallels pointing specifically to Aristotle and that the argumentative contexts are unrelated. What is more, Plutarch and Aristotle invoke Empedocles for opposite reasons. Aristotle lumps Hesiod and Parmenides together as monists and sets them against Empedocles' dualism, which Plutarch knew (see esp. *De an. procr.* 1026b; *De Is. et Os.* 370e with p. 213–219), but this is completely absent here. It is more probable, then, that Plutarch introduced the Empedocles reference independently, especially since he files it under a different category of the *theologia tripertita*. It should be noted that there is an odd discrepancy between Martin's firm belief in Plutarch's thorough knowledge of Aristotle (Martin 1969b: 185; Martin 1969a: 64) and his severe scepticism towards Plutarch's basic familiarity with Empedocles (Martin 1969a: 68–69). For arguments b and c, it is obvious that even a writer with rather less philosophical acumen than Plutarch could have made these changes without help from Aristotle: the placement of Parmenides before Hesiod serves Plutarch's purpose, as we have seen; the omission of Acusilaus, a marginal figure who is merely name-dropped in Plato's account, is even less surprising. (That Acusilaus is intended to be perceived as a marginal figure by Plato is clear from Agathon's reaction to Phaedrus' speech at *Symp.* 195c: he, too, only refers to Hesiod and Parmenides and leaves Acusilaus out.) As for argument d, the interpretation of Hesiod's Eros as a generative force in nature emerges easily from a reading

By the time Plutarch concludes his τεκμήριον by returning to the νόμος and the honours of civic religion (τῶν νενομισμένων τιμῶν), it has emerged that the πάτριος πίστις transmitted in the *theologia tripertita* is a trustworthy touchstone against which to test any theological interpretation and, at the same time, a construction resulting itself from an interpretation. In the quotations Plutarch provides, there is an equipollence of Aphrodite's priority (Parmenides the philosopher and Euripides the poet) and Eros' priority (Empedocles the philosopher and Hesiod the poet). As Rudhardt has shown, both opinions were firmly rooted in Greek traditional thinking on myth and cosmology.⁵³ We start to see why Plutarch presented it as a τεκμήριον for which no further τεκμήριον should be sought: the τεκμήριον starts to look like a self-fulfilling prophecy, to put it uncharitably. Putting it like this, however, would be to misjudge Plutarch's endeavour. Plutarch's method of providing a τεκμήριον is rooted in a firm belief in the consistency of the divine realm (hence the refusal to consider gods in isolation), which is reflected in the πάτριος πίστις and should thus transfer to our approach of this πάτριος πίστις.⁵⁴

Let us consider, in this regard, how Plutarch treated the two sources in the wrong, Parmenides and Euripides. Parmenides, in a way, just mis-spoke: he placed Aphrodite at the top of the hierarchy, but he actually meant Eros. Plutarch resolves this issue in another passage on cosmic love. In *On the Face in the Moon*, Plutarch's brother Lamprias attacks the Stoic doctrine of natural location of the elements, as we have seen (p. 35). This doctrine, he points out, utterly defies providence, on which the existence of the cosmos depends, according to both the Platonists and the Stoics themselves. With his characteristic sense for mischief and drama, Lamprias accuses the Stoics of 'contriv[ing] a dissolution of the

of Hesiod's text itself; cf. e.g. Rudhardt 1986: 9–17 or Most 2013. See Pérez Jiménez 2004: 42–43 for similar criticism of Martin's approach of the Hesiod reference. It should be noted that Martin's assumption that Aristotle borrows from Plato here (194) is not without problems: there are good reasons to think that both Plato and Aristotle draw independently on a doxographical work by Hippias. See Classen 1965: 174–178, corroborated, from different angles, by Mansfeld 1986: 13, 24 (also in Mansfeld 1990) and Patzer 1986: 43–48; cf. also Notomi 2013: 63–64; 2016: 126.

⁵³ Rudhardt 1986.

⁵⁴ In a way, then, Plutarch's approach towards religion resembles his approach towards Plato: there, too, consistency is assumed a priori and, as a τεκμήριον (*De an. procr.* 1017b; see Demulder forthcoming a), consists in bringing out this consistency. The difference is that, while Plato's texts are a perfect expression of consistency, sources expressing the πάτριος πίστις sometimes (in this case Euripides) need correction. Cf. Hardie 1992: 4752. On the importance of religious coherence in Plutarch and how this ties in with πάτριος πίστις, cf. Boulogne 2004.

cosmos' (διάλυσίν τινα κόσμου φιλοσοφῆς, 926d). The proper explanation of the cosmos comes in Platonic terms:

οὕτως εἶχον [sc. αἱ τῶν ὅλων ἀρχαί] ὡς ἔχει πᾶν οὗ θεὸς ἄπεστι κατὰ Πλάτωνα, τουτέστιν, ὡς ἔχει τὰ σώματα νοῦ καὶ ψυχῆς ἀπολιπούσης, ἄχρις οὗ τὸ ἰμερτὸν ἦκεν ἐπὶ τὴν φύσιν ἐκ προνοίας, Φιλότητος ἐγγενομένης καὶ Ἀφροδίτης καὶ Ἔρωτος, ὡς Ἐμπεδοκλῆς λέγει καὶ Παρμενίδης καὶ Ἡσίοδος (*De fac.* 926f–927a)

[T]hey [i.e. the principles of all things] were in the state in which, according to Plato [*Tim.* 53b], everything is from which God is absent, that is to say in which bodies are when mind or soul is wanting. So they were until a lovely quality came over nature providentially, after Affection had entered it or Aphrodite or Eros, as Empedocles says and Parmenides and Hesiod [...]. [tr. modified⁵⁵]

This blend of Empedoclean and Platonic cosmogony allots a demiurgic role to love:⁵⁶ by entering nature, the demiurge brings about the harmony that gives the cosmos its lovely quality; the presence of Philotes, Aphrodite, and Eros is opposed to the absence of the Platonic demiurge (θεὸς ἄπεστι κατὰ Πλάτωνα).⁵⁷ In this case, the primary deities of Empedocles, Parmenides, and Hesiod are equated. His error, which Plutarch exposed in the *Dialogue on Love* by setting him against Empedocles and Hesiod, is covered up here, and the three are joined together against the Stoics. After all, Parmenides only runs into trouble when the investigation turns to the relation between Eros and Aphrodite; for Lamprias, it suffices that,

⁵⁵ Cf. Lernould 2013: ad loc. In the Loeb edition, Cherniss translates τὸ ἰμερτόν as 'desire' and seems to equate it with Affection, Aphrodite, or Eros; similarly, see Donini 2011b: 157; Görgemanns 1970: 100. However, τὸ ἰμερτόν is passive, indicating the quality of being 'longed for, desired, lovely' (LSJ). As such, it is the outcome, the effect of the arrival of Affection, Aphrodite, or Eros (note the aorist participle after the imperfect ἦκεν).

⁵⁶ On Eros as a demiurgic figure in the broader tradition, see e.g. Rudhardt 1986; Calame 1999: 177–191.

⁵⁷ Although he uses some shortcuts, Lamprias' take on Platonic cosmogony basically corresponds to the *Timaeus* as it was understood by Plutarch. Obviously, the demiurge entering (ἐγγενομένης) matter should not be confused with immanentism. It is, however, crucial in the *Timaeus* that mind enters soul and that soul enters body, that this is due to πρόνοια, and that this causes the cosmos to be beautiful. See esp. *Tim.* 30b–c. Plutarch describes both the entering of mind in soul (*De an. procr.* 1024c–d; 1026e; cf. 1024e; 1026a) and the entering of soul in body (*De an. procr.* 1030c) with the verb ἐγγίγνομαι. In a way, this process amounts to the demiurge entering nature, since the rational soul contains a part of god (*Quaest. Plat.* 2.1001c; cf. *De an. procr.* 1016c; *De sera num.* 559d).

by Aphrodite, Parmenides actually means Eros, as does Empedocles when he is talking about Philotes.

2.2. Euripides' *Hippolytus*: a threat to the erotic cosmos

Euripides is a different story. In Plutarch's *Dialogue on Love*, he is the elephant in the room. The elephant would have been easily recognised by the reader familiar with the outlines of the tragedy from which Plutarch took the two last verses for his Euripides quotation discussed in the previous subsection – and surely that would have been virtually every reader.⁵⁸ *Hippolytus* is hardly a commercial for romance. Hippolytus, a follower of Artemis, spurns Aphrodite by abstaining from any sexual relationship. Angered at that, Aphrodite makes Phaedra, Hippolytus' stepmother, fall in love with him. Upon being rejected, Phaedra commits suicide, but not without leaving a note in which she falsely accuses her stepson of raping her. Theseus, father and husband caught in the middle of all this, curses his son, who dies after an intervention of Poseidon.

The human misery is spread thick to be sure. Nevertheless, the basis of the tragedy of *Hippolytus* is cosmological. More specifically, the audience is confronted with a pessimistic cosmology. Dodds contrasts this cosmology with the Platonic world view:

The Platonic contemplative is at home in the universe, because he sees the universe as penetrated through and through by a divine reason, and therefore penetrable to human reason also. But for Euripides Man is the slave, not the favourite child, of the gods; and the name of the 'ageless order' is Necessity. [...] Mythologise the force which made the tragedy of Phaedra – turn Kypris into a person – and you get not a goddess but a petty fiend, whose motives are the meanest personal jealousies. [...] But from behind this transparent satire on the Olympians there emerges a deeper conception of Kypris and Artemis as eternal cosmic powers: the very point of the satire is to show that they must be interpreted as principles, not as persons. [...] [T]he human 'ought' has no meaning for cosmic principles. There is indeed an immanent 'Justice' in the universe – Euripides throughout his life asserted that – it is no paternal government by the father of gods and men. [...] This is the religion of Euripides – pessimistic and irrationalist, as his ethics and cosmology are pessimistic and irrationalist.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Pausanias 1.22.1 remarks that even a barbarian who learned a few words of Greek knows the story about Phaedra and Hippolytus.

⁵⁹ Dodds 1929: 101–103.

Although this view does not dominate every Euripidean tragedy and it should not be so readily attributed to Euripides himself, it certainly applies to *Hippolytus*.⁶⁰ In *Hippolytus* the cosmos is the stage where the misfit between gods and humans is revealed and where love spotlights this misfit. This should worry anyone, a Platonist in particular. What was Plutarch thinking when he chose to contaminate his defence of love with this tale about love as the cause of suicide, curse, and death – a tale, moreover, that he thought was anything but a fiction?⁶¹

Let us start our search for an answer by recalling the passage quoted earlier:

πόρρω γὰρ οὐκ ἄπειμι

τὴν δ' Ἀφροδίτην οὐχ ὀρᾶς ὅση θεός;

⁶⁰ For similar interpretations, pointing to the importance of the cosmological level in *Hipp.* and its clash with the human level, see Knox 1968: III–II4 (= Knox 1952); Segal 1965; Roisman 1999: 170–172; Cyrino 2015. On the problem with applying this interpretation to Euripides' work as a whole or even Euripides himself, see Michelini 1987: 315–320: the prominently negative role of the gods in *Hipp.* is exceptional for Euripides and only mirrored by *Bacchae* and *Heracles*. Conacher 1967: 48, while agreeing with Dodds' interpretation of the gods in *Hipp.* as cosmic forces, rightly points out that Dodds went too far by proclaiming that the mythological framework of Euripides' play is expendable. (Ford 2005: 90–91 is insightful on the *Sitz im Leben* of interpretations such as Dodds', which hinge on the opposition of rationalism and irrationalism; cf. also Wagner 1984.) On the double role of the gods in *Hipp.* as mythological gods and as cosmic principles, the observation of Winnington-Ingram 2003: 215 (= Winnington-Ingram 1960) is pertinent: 'Gods play many roles – different roles in different kinds of play; and different kinds of gods play different kinds of role. And it is no accident, in my view, that in what many regard as the two greatest plays of Euripides – *Hipp.* and *Bacch.* – the gods who appear in them and work in them are also forces which are manifestly seen to be moulding human life. Whether Euripides believed in the objective existence of Dionysus and Aphrodite apart from the manifestations of their power I do not know and I do not suppose that anyone will ever know. And I do not greatly care. Enough that they are real, that they are powerful, that they are superhuman, and that they involve man in tragedy. It is by the tragedy that we understand the gods, not by the gods that we understand the tragedy.' Cf. also Knox 1968: III; Grube 1968: 48–49 (= Grube 1941).

⁶¹ According to Plutarch, *Hipp.* was about historical events. *Thes.* 28.3: τὰς δὲ περὶ ταύτην καὶ τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ δυστυχίας, ἐπεὶ μηδὲν ἀντιπίπτει παρὰ τῶν ἱστορικῶν τοῖς τραγικοῖς, οὕτως ἔχειν θετέον ὡς ἐκεῖνοι πεποιήκασιν ἅπαντες. ('As for the calamities which befell Phaedra and the son of Theseus by Antiope [i.e. Hippolytus], since there is no conflict here between historians and tragic poets, we must suppose that they happened as represented by the poets uniformly.') Cf. *Thes.* 3.2, where *Hipp.* II is quoted as evidence for the reputation of Theseus' grandfather Pittheus.

ἧδ' ἐστὶν ἡ σπεύρουσα καὶ διδοῦσα ἔρον,
οὗ πάντες ἐσμὲν οἱ κατὰ χθόν' ἔκγονοι. (*Amat.* 756d)

I do not go far

Do you not see how mighty is the goddess Aphrodite? [Eur., fr. 898.1 *TrGF*]
She sows and gives that love
From which all we upon this earth are born [Eur., *Hipp.* 449–450].

A quotation from Euripides' *Hippolytus* is combined with a quotation from a fragment, taken, perhaps, from Euripides' lost first attempt to write a *Hippolytus* or from another tragedy that Plutarch chose to connect with *Hippolytus* here.⁶² Composite citations such as this are relatively scarce in Plutarch's work, as Ehorn's study on the subject has shown.⁶³ For a long time, they were attributed to faulty memory on Plutarch's part or to some other kind of accident.⁶⁴ In this case, Aguilar resorts to the faulty memory hypothesis and Mitchell, on the basis of the proximity of other literary quotations about Aphrodite and Eros, assumes that Plutarch found the Euripides citation in its composite form in an anthology on

⁶² That fr. 898 belongs to Euripides' other, lost *Hipp.*, the 'Ἰππόλυτος Καλυπτόμενος and that Plutarch is combining verses from Euripides' two tragedies on the same subject, has often been assumed. (For the fragments attributed to the lost *Hipp.*, see Barret 1964: 10–11, 15–45; Halleran 1995: 25–37; Collard and Cropp 2008: 472–489. Collard and Cropp 2008: 466–471 give a good overview of the *status quaestionis*; see also Luppe 2013.) The problem is that the main argument for connecting fr. 898 with the first *Hipp.* is precisely its occurrence along with two *Hipp.* verses in this Plutarch passage (Kannicht 2004: 909: 'coll. *Hipp.* 443 sqq. [...] et test. Plut. *Amat.* 13 [...] *Hippolyto I* tribuit Matthiae probantibus non nullis'; see also Jouan and Van Looy 2003: 23 and Angiò 2007 for further discussion and bibliography). Since Plutarch's composite citations include not only compositions from the same work but also from different works by the same author and even from different authors (see the examples in Ehorn 2015), this argument does not have much purchase. To the existing lack of evidence I only want to add that *if* the composite citation indeed consists of verses from the two *Hipp.* tragedies, this would be a playful nod towards the anecdote told by the character Plutarch a few lines earlier: Plutarch mentions to Pemptides that Euripides made two versions of his *Melanippe*, famously changing the original, potentially blasphemous opening verse in the second version of the play (*Amat.* 756b–c). Whether fr. 898 belongs to the lost *Hipp.* is not terribly important here: it suffices that Plutarch chose to connect the two.

⁶³ Ehorn 2015.

⁶⁴ Ehorn 2015: 40. See, e.g. Mitchell 1968: III–III2, convincingly refuted by Ehorn 2015: 46–47. Cf. also Di Gregorio 1979: 13.

love.⁶⁵ Ehorn, however, has shown that Plutarch often composes citations for narrative, rhetorical, or argumentative purposes. This goes also for the present instance, although Ehorn does not discuss it.

The verse from fr. 898 and the two verses from *Hippolytus* each have their function both in the immediate context of Plutarch's response to Pemptides' challenge of Eros' divinity and in the broader context of the dialogue. The line from the fragment offers one element that the context of the *Hippolytus* verses does not: by asking the rhetorical question οὐχ ὀραῖς;, it draws attention to the visible effects of Aphrodite's work. It thereby continues along the lines of the Empedocles fragment as I discussed it earlier, while shifting the focus from Eros to Aphrodite.⁶⁶ Why, then, doesn't Plutarch just continue with the fragment, which, taken as a whole, has the same gist as the verses subsequently quoted from *Hippolytus*?⁶⁷ The direct relevance of the *Hippolytus* verses is that they explicitly invite the comparison between Aphrodite and Eros by mentioning the latter (ἦδ' ἐστὶν ἡ σπεύρουσα καὶ διδοῦσ' ἔρον) while Eros

⁶⁵ Aguilar 2005: 27; Mitchell 1968: 181. As far as Mitchell's hypothesis is concerned, the preceding pages have shown already that the mere presence of several citations on love in a work on that very subject seems too thin to attribute the conflation to an anthologist and that Plutarch is doing much more than copying an anthology here. Nevertheless, it should be noted that there are examples of such 'inherited [composite] citations' in Plutarch's works (see Ehorn 2015: 42–43).

⁶⁶ One could say that another addition of the fragment, lacking in the vicinity of the *Hipp.* verses, is the explicit reference to the name Aphrodite: *Hipp.* talks about Κύπρις here (448). However, the reference to Aphrodite would be obvious to any reader, so I do not consider this a real addition (cf. *Amat.* 757a, where Sophocles fr. 855 *TrGF*, which refers to Aphrodite by Κύπρις, is quoted). See Segal 1965: 118–119 on the predominance of the name Κύπρις in *Hipp.*

⁶⁷ The whole fragment as we have it reads: τὴν Ἀφροδίτην οὐχ ὀραῖς ὅση θεός; / ἦν οὐδ' ἄν εἴποις οὐδὲ μετρήσειας ἄν / ὅση πέφυκε κάφ' ὅσον διέρχεται. / αὕτη τρέφει σὲ κάμῃ καὶ πάντας βροτούς. / τεκμήριον δέ, μὴ λόγῳ μόνον μάθῃς / [ἔργῳ δὲ δείξω τὸ σθένος τὸ τῆς θεοῦ:] / ἐρᾶ μὲν ὄμβρου γαῖ', ὅταν ξηρὸν πέδον / ἄκαρπον αὐχμῶ νοτίδος ἐνδεῶς ἔχη / ἐρᾶ δ' ὁ σεμνὸς οὐρανὸς πληρούμενος / ὄμβρου πεσεῖν εἰς γαῖαν Ἀφροδίτης ὕπο· / ὅταν δὲ συμμιχθῆτον ἐς ταῦτόν δύο, / φύουσιν ἡμῖν πάντα καὶ τρέφουσ' ἅμα, / δι' ὧν βρότειον ζῆ τε καὶ θάλλει γένος. ('Do you not see how great a goddess Aphrodite is? You could neither tell nor measure how great she is, and how far her power extends. She nurtures you and me and all mankind. Here is an indication, so you may learn it not just through words [but I may show you the goddess' power in action]: through Aphrodite's influence the earth yearns for rain when her parched surface, infertile through drought, stands in need of moisture, and in turn the majestic sky, filled with rain, yearns to fall upon the earth; and when these two come together and commingle, they generate and nurture all the things for us through which the human race lives and thrives.'))

is not present in fr. 898; this comparison is what Plutarch is after in the section that starts with this fragment.⁶⁸

Besides this function in the immediate context of the reply to Pemp-tides, both parts of the composite citation bear upon the broader context as well. The fragment, which introduces the cosmological investigation into Aphrodite and Eros, is continued near the end of the dialogue (770a). In other words, it appears both at the beginning and at the conclusion of the investigation that it introduced, which forms what I consider the core of the dialogue. In the fifth section, I will briefly return to the implications of this. Now, we should look at the implications of Plutarch's seemingly disturbing yet sustained use of *Hippolytus*, which is quoted four times in the *Dialogue on Love*, all quotations appearing within the boundaries of the two fr. 898 quotations.⁶⁹ I argue that Plutarch thoroughly engages with *Hippolytus* in his *Dialogue on Love* and that this serves to contrast his own cosmic view of love with the anti-erotic, chaotic world view of the tragedy.

We have seen how Plutarch corrects the subordination of Eros to Aphrodite as it appears in *Hippolytus*: for Plutarch, Eros is the primary god. This does not mean, of course, that he denies the procreative cosmic power of Aphrodite that Euripides extols. However, if we look at the context of the verses quoted from *Hippolytus*, a fundamental incompati-

⁶⁸ The section runs from the γάρ, which immediately precedes the Euripides quotation (756d), until the οὖν, which comes right after the Hesiod quotation (756f).

⁶⁹ Rinaldi 2011 signals the importance of *Hipp.* for *Amat.* His take on the matter is diametrically opposed to mine. Although he concludes that the four quotations have the effect of recalling the whole tragedy, he does not take the plot of *Hipp.* into account and, offering little more than paraphrases of the relevant passages, seems to assume that Plutarch adduced the quotations in support of his own view. Cf. also Hunter 2012: 221–222. Hunter 2012: 222 sees a further allusion to *Hipp.* in the dialogue: the denunciation of people who try to extinguish eros by ‘fill[ing] themselves with the smoke of humbug and passion’ (καπνοῦ καὶ παραχῆς ἐνέπλησαν ἑαυτοῦς, *Amat.* 765b) could refer to Theseus’ denunciation of Hippolytus’ ‘honoring many vaporous writings’ (πολλῶν γραμμάτων τιμῶν καπνούς, *Hipp.* 954) and, simultaneously, to Pl., *Resp.* 8.581d, where the honour lover is said to regard learning as ‘smoke and nonsense’ (καπνὸν καὶ φλυαρίαν) if it does not bring him honour. This would constitute a criticism of those who try to suppress ἔρωσ with philosophical or religious arguments. However, the use of καπνός as an indication of worthlessness might be too common to constitute the basis of a parallel (cf. LSJ s.v. καπνός I). Moreover, Plutarch adds the idea of confusion, which is absent from Euripides (and Plato). As Görgemanns 2011b: 179 n. 325 points out, the metaphorical use of καπνός and παραχή also occurs in *De coh. ira* 453f, and Plutarch might be reusing a familiar metaphor in condensed form without thinking about the passage from Euripides (or Plato). Since I remain undecided about whether this passage is intended as a reference to *Hipp.*, I will not include it in the discussion.

bility between Plutarch's world view and the view expressed by Euripides' tragedy emerges. In *Hippolytus*, the words are spoken by Phaedra's nurse, who describes Aphrodite's power in order to convince Phaedra to act on her desires for her stepson. From what follows, it becomes clear that the power she describes can hardly be called cosmic in the Platonic sense of the word. Although Aphrodite rules every realm of the cosmos – air, sea, and earth are covered (*Hippolytus* 447–450) – she does not foster harmony. Even gods falling in love are 'conquered by misfortune' (ξυμφορᾷ νικώμενοι, *Hipp.* 458), and humans are led away from doing good while Aphrodite forces them to lie and deceive (*Hipp.* 461–472). This picture is anything but pretty, and it shows how the difference between Plutarch and *Hippolytus* is about more than just the hierarchical ranks of Eros and Aphrodite: more fundamentally, it is about the difference between love as a true cosmic power and love as a great yet amoral – or even immoral – force. Not surprisingly, Plutarch's move away from the world view of *Hippolytus* puts him on the side of Plato's *Phaedrus*, where the basis of Socrates' second speech is the conviction that 'if Love is a god or something divine – which he is – he can't be bad in any way' (εἰ δ' ἔστιν, ὥσπερ οὖν ἔστι, θεὸς ἢ τι θεῖον ὁ Ἔρως, οὐδὲν ἄν κακὸν εἴη, *Phdr.* 242e).⁷⁰

When Plutarch quotes *Hippolytus* for the second time, he is still combatting Pemptides' conviction that love is just a falsely divinised πάθος. Instead of denying that love *is* a πάθος, Plutarch insists that the φιλάνθρωπία of the gods ensures that they guide us in all aspects of our lives, including the πάθη (757c–759d). It is in the context of this argument that he draws in Plato's treatment of μανία (cf. p. 85–86). Erotic μανία distinguishes itself from the other kinds of divinely guided μανία as follows:

τὴν δ' ἐρωτικὴν μανίαν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καθαψαμένην ἀληθῶς καὶ διακαύσασαν οὐ μοῦσά τις οὐκ ἐπωδὴ θελκτῆριος οὐ τόπου μεταβολὴ καθίστησιν· ἀλλὰ καὶ παρόντες ἐρῶσι καὶ ἀπόντες ποθοῦσι καὶ μεθ' ἡμέραν διώκουσι καὶ νύκτωρ θυραυλοῦσι καὶ νήφοντες καλοῦσι τοὺς καλοὺς καὶ πίνοντες ἄδουσι. (*Amat.* 759b)

In erotic madness [...] when once it has really seized upon a man and set him on fire, there is no reading of literature, no 'magic incantation' [Eur., *Hipp.* 478], no change of environment, that restores him to calm. He loves when present and longs when absent, pursues by day

⁷⁰ It should be noted, however, that Eros appears as the son of Aphrodite in Pl. *Phdr.* 242d, which would suggest that he is her subordinate. Plutarch departs from *Phdr.* on this point.

and haunts the door by night, summons his lad when sober and sings his praises while he drinks.

That there is *no* ἐπωδὴ θελκτήριος apparently contradicts what Phaedra's nurse – in the speech from which the first quotation was also taken – says in *Hippolytus*:

νοσοῦσα δ' εὖ πως τὴν νόσον καταστρέφου.
εἰσὶν δ' ἐπωιδαι καὶ λόγοι θελκτήριοι·
φανήσεται τι τῆσδε φάρμακον νόσου. (*Hipp.* 477–479)

And even though you are sick, in some good way bring an end to your sickness. There are incantations and bewitching words; some drug for this sickness will appear.⁷¹

The correction Plutarch applies when quoting Euripides here is not as straightforward as the addition of a mere negative.⁷² True enough, Plutarch thought there is no remedy for love. But it is not because love is incurable that there is no remedy – this would be the plain inversion of the nurse's claim that there is a cure – but because love is not a disease. The conception of love as a disease, which can or cannot be cured, is a leitmotif of *Hippolytus*. Even before Phaedra can speak her first words to bewail her physical condition (198–202), she has already been defined by Aphrodite (40), the chorus (131), and the nurse (176) in terms of νόσος, and this continues to be the code word to describe Phaedra's state of love until the moment she succumbs to it.⁷³ Accordingly, the search for a cure is at the centre of the nurse's concerns (478–479; 509–512), while Phaedra remains sceptical about the existence of such a cure (486–489; 518).⁷⁴ According to her, the only effective cure is death (716). As such,

⁷¹ For *Hipp.*, I use the translation in Halleran 1995.

⁷² See Xenophon 2016: 89–90 on correction (ἐπανόρθωσις) as an exegetical technique and on its connection with ethical ἐπανόρθωσις (on which, see her 38–40). Cf. Demulder 2015: 211 for an example of interpretative correction of Euripides (*Trojan Women* 886) in *De an. procr.* 1026c.

⁷³ Forms of νόσος, νοσερός, and νοσέω are used twenty-one times before; at 776, Phaedra is pronounced dead (Segal 1965: 165 n. 39 has missed verses 131, 176, 179). This contrasts with the second half of the tragedy, where νόσος is used only twice. At 1306 Artemis recapitulates Phaedra's story for Theseus' benefit and appropriately uses the word which had dominated it. At 933, surprisingly, Hippolytus applies it to himself. As Halleran 1995: 229 remarks, this is the formal fulfilment of Phaedra's death wish to contaminate Hippolytus (730–731). See also Segal 1965: 138.

⁷⁴ While Phaedra is still thinking about an ointment or a potion (516), the audience begins to suspect that the nurse is thinking about a rather less magical cure: Phaedra

both sides of the debate on whether there is a remedy for the disease called love are represented in *Hippolytus*. Plutarch does not take sides in this debate, but he shows that the view underlying the tragic discussion is wrong: as soon as we start talking about remedies, we assume that love is a disease.⁷⁵ In the *Dialogue on Love*, as in *Hippolytus* (214, 248, 1274), love is a *μανία* caused by god, but of a fundamentally different kind. Plutarch opposes erotic *μανία* to the kind of *μανία* associated with disease (*νοσώδης*, *Amat.* 758d). After all, Pemptides had compared the *πάθος* of love to a disease (*νόσος*, 755e):⁷⁶ by criticising the tragic world view, Plutarch also criticises Pemptides.

By shifting the debate from *Hippolytus*' question whether there is a cure for love to whether love is a disease, Plutarch once again moves towards Plato's *Phaedrus*, which is also the source of the theory of *μανία* that Plutarch discusses here. Both Phaedrus (reciting Lysias' speech) and Socrates (in his first speech) describe love as a disease (*Phdr.* 231d, 236b, 238c). In Socrates' second speech, all this is retracted and love turns out to be a kind of *μανία* that is divinely inspired. This kind of *μανία* is opposed to the *μανία* produced by disease (265b); it is akin to the madness that *cures* diseases (244d). As signalled already – and this quotation makes this general suspicion more specific – Plutarch's engagement with *Hippolytus* is not one of endorsement or simple correction. Rather, by referring to the tragedy, Plutarch reveals that the tragic world view is utterly incompatible with his. Unlike the characters in *Hippolytus*, Plutarch

should just get it over with and have sex with Hippolytus (490–491). On this ambiguity, see Conacher 1961; Barrett 1964: 252–253; Segal 1965: 128–129. Cf. also Apicella 1994. Closer to Plutarch's time, sex appears again – and more explicitly this time – as the cure to the disease called love in Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe* (2.7).

⁷⁵ On the connection between viewing love as a disease and the interest in love magic (including spells and potions), see Faraone 1999: 43–55. Cf. also Winkler 1990: 71–98. Plutarch advises against a different kind of *φάρμακα* in *Con. praec.* 139a: there, love-inducing rather than love-averting potions are the subject (cf. also *Ant.* 37.4). It should be noted that the view that love – and in particular sexual urge – is a disease that needs to be suppressed by a *φάρμακον* is not absent from Plato (*Phdr.* 252a–b; *Leg.* 8.836b). As far as I know, Plutarch does not engage with these problematic passages. On Plato's rationalisation of magical concepts, see Lain Entralgo 1970: 108–138.

⁷⁶ Two further passages show Plutarch's opposition to the association between love and disease. (1) A fragment from Menander (fr. 791 *PCG*), which calls love a *νόσος*, is quoted and rejected (*Amat.* 763b). This comic fragment is quoted again in Plutarch's fr. 134. That it is not rejected there should not be a problem, since the context is clearly an analysis of the concept of love as it appears in Menander's plays. (2) The gods assist humans both when it is 'necessary' (*ἀναγκαιότερον*) and when it is 'decorous' (*κάλλιον*); assistance in disease belongs to the former category, and assistance in matters of love to the latter (*Amat.* 758a–b).

is – to recall Dodds’ words – a Platonist at home in the universe. The other references to *Hippolytus* serve as further examples of this incompatibility.

The third reference to *Hippolytus* occurs in the part of the dialogue that concerns us in the next section: the comparison between love and the sun. After mentioning a few similarities between the two, Plutarch goes on to emphasise the differences. More precisely, Plutarch establishes a strong dichotomy between the sensible, represented by the sun, and the intelligible, represented by love. The Platonic doctrine of recollection (ἀνάμνησις) of the forms, which our souls have contemplated in the intelligible realm before birth, is the *via regia* that leads away from the sensible towards the intelligible:

δυσέρωτες δὴ φαινόμεθ’ ὄντες
<τοῦδ’, ὅ τι τοῦτο στίλβει> κατὰ γῆν,

ὡς Εὐριπίδης φησί

δι’ ἀπειροσύνην ἄλλου βίτου,
μᾶλλον δὲ λήθην ὧν ὁ Ἔρωσ ἀνάμνησις ἐστίν. (*Amat.* 764e)

It’s clear that we unwisely love
The dazzling gleam we see on earth,

as Euripides says,

Because we have not known another life – [Eur., *Hipp.* 193–195]

or rather because of our forgetfulness of the realities of which Love is a recollection.

Again, Plutarch is not just correcting the opinion voiced in *Hippolytus* but also the world view underlying the tragic deliberation. As in the previous passage, the nurse is speaking. She urges herself not to pin her hopes on this other life: although she suspects it will be better than the burdensome life on earth (191), it is shrouded in vague, untrustworthy tales (197). As Kovacs puts it succinctly: ‘In her worldly view, human beings must “take the cash and let the credit go.” Goods that cannot be seen had better not be relied on’⁷⁷. Using the language of the mysteries,⁷⁸ the nurse recommends discarding these same mysteries: in life, what you see is what you get. A Platonist, on the other hand, has an epistemological answer to the all narrow limits of earthly knowledge: ἀνάμνησις.

But that is not the most fundamental opposition between the nurse and the Platonist. Regardless of the epistemological situation, the nurse

⁷⁷ Kovacs 1987: 40.

⁷⁸ Kovacs 1987: 39.

assumes that the other life will be radically different from life as she knows it. Life on earth is miserable; the afterlife represents her hope for something better. In Plutarch's *Dialogue on Love* and – again – in Plato's *Phaedrus* (249c–d), recollection starts from the sensible world. What is recollected is mirrored in some way in everyday life. Of course, there is a difference between everyday beauty and the true beauty that can be recollected, but this difference is not an opposition. In the Platonic cosmos, Eros has left traces of true beauty. In the nurse's cosmos, vengeful Aphrodite fills life with anguish and toil.⁷⁹

The fourth and final intertextual engagement with *Hippolytus* comes directly after the literary and cosmic climax of the dialogue and makes the transition from the sun comparison to a series of examples of how Eros, who has been extolled for his divine goodness since the beginning of Plutarch's speech (756a), can also be severe:

ὃ δ' Ἔρωτι καὶ τοῦτο καθάπερ τοῖς ἄλλοις θεοῖς ἔνεστιν ὡς Εὐριπίδης φησί 'τιμωμένῳ χαίρειν ἀνθρώπων ὑπο' καὶ τοῦναντίον· εὐμενέστατος γὰρ ἐστὶ τοῖς δεχομένοις ἐμμελῶς αὐτὸν βαρὺς δὲ τοῖς ἀπαυθαδισαμένοις. (*Amat.* 766c)

Love, like the other gods, as Euripides [*Hipp.* 7] says, 'can be pleased by honours given him by men'; but he can also be displeased: he is most gracious to those who receive him as they should and severe with those who have stubbornly rejected him.

This is a puzzling passage. Plutarch seems to endorse the view of divine revenge that runs through the tragedy. How does this square with the rest of the dialogue and with Plutarch's theological views in general? Unfortunately, solving this puzzle with certainty is made next to impossible because, shortly after this quotation, there is an abrupt break and a significant stretch of text has presumably been lost (766d).⁸⁰ However, from

⁷⁹ The contrast at play here between Euripides and Plutarch is thus not, as Brenk 1989: 457–458 has it, 'the contrast between the drag down, symbolized by Phaidra's sexual drive, and the pull up – in Platonic philosophy the positive evaluation of Eros which leads to the Beautiful in Itself'. Rather, the passage from *Hipp.* and the context of *Amat.* in which this passage is embedded voice different opinions on what we can learn about what Brenk calls 'the pull up' during our earthly life and how the two relate to each other.

⁸⁰ The text breaks off in the middle of the story about Gorgo and Asander, which has the function of clarifying Plutarch's thoughts on the matter of Eros' revenge. Unfortunately, there is no trace of the story elsewhere, and it is not clear from the beginning where it is headed. Ingenkamp 2006: 187 is surely wrong when he considers the outcome of the story to be obvious (and the gap to be a sign of the hypomnematic state of a badly redacted text). He supposes that Gorgo is turned to stone, which the reader can infer both

the remaining pieces of the puzzle, we can again suspect that Plutarch is simultaneously correcting *Hippolytus* and questioning the world view underlying it.

Once again, Plutarch makes a straightforward correction. Plutarch is talking about Eros, whereas Euripides puts the quoted words in the mouth of Aphrodite. In *Hippolytus* (531–532, 1269–1281), Eros appears as Aphrodite's subordinate and hardly plays a role. Plutarch, as we have seen, considers this option but concludes that Eros is the superior deity, with Aphrodite as his subordinate. Euripides was simply mistaken in presenting Aphrodite as superior by giving her pride of place in the play. But the tragic world cannot be fixed just by substituting Eros for Aphrodite. The more fundamental incompatibility in this case is that Plutarch's Eros cannot be pettily and unjustly vengeful like Euripides' Aphrodite. For Plutarch, gods – and Eros in particular – are characterised by their love for humanity (*Amat.* 758a). But how should we understand, then, Plutarch's remark that Eros is severe to those who reject him?⁸¹

Brenk has observed that Plutarch's thought on divine retribution 'oscillates considerably between the two poles of vice bringing its own

from her name, which she shares with the mythological creature, and from the preceding reference to the story of Paracypousa (*Amat.* 766c–d), who was indeed turned to stone (cf. Antoninus Liberalis, *Metamorphoses* 39; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 14.698–761). However, Plutarch indicates that Gorgo's story is much like Paracypousa's, *except for the punishment*: 'Perhaps you haven't heard the punishment of the Cretan Gorgo, who was treated very much like Paracypousa, except that the latter was turned to stone at the moment when she peeped out of the window to watch the funeral procession of her lover' (ἀλλὰ τὴν Γοργοῦς ἴσως ποινήν οὐκ ἀκηκόατε τῆς Κρήσσης, παραπλήσια τῇ Παρακυπτούσῃ παθούσης πλὴν ἐκεῖνη μὲν ἀπελιθώθη παρακύψασα τὸν ἐραστὴν ἰδεῖν ἐκκομιζόμενον, 766c–d). If anything, we are led to believe that Gorgo was most certainly *not* turned to stone (thus Rohde 1974: 86 n. 1). Plutarch's story of Gorgo has been connected to the title of a poem by Simias of Rhodos (Sternbach 1886: 113–114; Rohde 1974: 86–87; Powell 1925: 112; cf. also Di Gregorio 2008: 118–119), but, even if this were convincing (but see Susemihl 1891: 180 n. 34), this would yield nothing useful as far as the content of the story is concerned.

⁸¹ On the basis of this passage, Görgemanns 2005: 186–188 has concluded that, although Plutarch does not speak about Eros as a δαίμων, this would have been more accurate; cf. Flacelière in Flacelière and Cuvigny 1980: 29–31. As he points out, in *De coh. ira* 458b Plutarch notes that punishment is effected by demons, not by gods. However, there are other passages that obfuscate this distinction (cf. *De sera num.* 552f–553a), and in *Amat.*, Plutarch does not insist on the distinction between gods and demons (cf. *Amat.* 771c, where gods and demons are mentioned together in the context of punishment; cf. also 757e–f).

punishment, and vice punished through supernatural intercession'.⁸² *On God's Slowness to Punish*, which tackles the theme most extensively and explicitly, is mainly devoted to the latter pole but also contains traces of the former (esp. 554c–556e). Moreover, as far as divine interference is concerned, Plutarch is not clear whether this is intercession of (a) god or intercession of a demon (e.g. 552f–553a, where he shifts inadvertently from τὸ δαιμόνιον to ὁ θεός). As a consequence, Plutarch's theory of divine retribution in general and his essay devoted to the subject in particular have been regarded as being inconsistent to some degree.⁸³

Plutarch's versatility in talking about divine retribution can be better understood when *That Epicurus Actually Makes a Pleasant Life Impossible* is taken into account.⁸⁴ In the second part of that work (1100e–1107a), the discussion turns to theology at the request of Zeuxippus, who, as

⁸² Brenk 1977: 256. His 256–275 offer an overview of the material in the entire *corpus Plutarcheum*.

⁸³ Brenk 1977: 258 argues that Plutarch 'never really made up his mind'; Helmig 2005b attributes the inconsistencies of *De sera num.* to the polemical character of the work; Opsomer 2016a focuses on the general consistency of the philosophical position underlying the same work, but he does not deny the occurrence of several inconsistencies in the essay.

⁸⁴ My reliance on this work is complicated but not invalidated by (1) its polemical character and (2) the fact that Aristodemus and Theon are speaking instead of Plutarch himself. (1) There has been discussion as to the relative importance of internal and external criticism in this work, with Roskam 2005a: 360–362 emphasising internal criticism, and Warren 2011 emphasising external criticism. While Roskam is the better judge of Plutarch's intention, self-presentation, and general methodology, Warren is right in pointing out that Plutarch's own philosophical position plays in the background – almost inevitably so, I would say. This does not mean that the criticism is not internal. Rather, Warren's use of 'dialectical' and 'partisan polemic' as synonyms of internal and external criticism respectively reveals too narrow a view on both kinds of criticism. The Loeb editors accurately describe the kind of internal criticism Plutarch is offering here: 'The argument is not that the Platonic or Stoic views are true; it is that the Platonic or Stoic view yields greater pleasure than the Epicurean'. In other words, the Epicureans' own criterium is applied. That the context is polemical does not mean that the arguments used do not reveal anything about Plutarch's position. (2) The same goes for the fact that Aristodemus and Theon are speaking. In *Adv. Col.*, Plutarch describes Aristodemus as 'no mere thyrsus-bearer of Academic doctrine, but a most fervent devotee of Plato' (ἐξ Ἀκαδημείας οὐ ναρθηκοφόρον ἀλλ' ἐμμανέστατον ὀργιαστὴν Πλάτωνος, 1107e); this endorsement makes it unlikely that he would be used to defend views opposite to Plutarch's. For Theon, this is even more so the case. As Puech 1991: 4886 points out: 'Partout, Théon apparaît comme une sorte de double de Plutarque.' In the last section of the dialogue (1104a–1107c), moreover, Theon responds to Plutarch's demand to repeat arguments Plutarch himself had produced the other day (*Non posse* 1103f–1104a).

we will see, plays an important role in the *Dialogue on Love* as well. In the ensuing discussions, which centre around providence (1101a–1104a) and the afterlife (1104a–1107a), the topic of punishment is brought up several times, and again we are confronted with the oscillation noted by Brenk. This time, however, punishment by divine intercession and vice being its own punishment are mentioned with different groups of people in mind. Divine intercession is emphasised when the discussion focuses on wicked people. For them, superstitious fear of the gods (δεισιδαιμονία) is a good thing: if they believe the myths about Hades and fear divine punishment, they will commit fewer crimes and will be better off (1101c–d, 1104a–b). Such superstition should not just be tolerated; it should be encouraged (1104b)!⁸⁵ Good people, on the contrary, realise that, ‘[b]ecause it *is* God’s nature to bestow favour and lend aid, it is not his nature to be angry and do harm’ (ὅτι χαρίζεσθαι καὶ βοηθεῖν πέφυκεν, ὀργίζεσθαι καὶ κακῶς ποιεῖν οὐ πέφυκεν, 1102e). They know that, since vice is its own punishment, divine interference is neither necessary nor fitting (1102f–1103a).⁸⁶ Most people are neither really bad nor really good.⁸⁷ They share elements of both aforementioned groups. Their attitude towards the gods contains a trace of superstitious fear and trembling (1101d; 1102c), and some of them believe the gruesome tales about Hades (1105a–b), but all this is outweighed by the rightful joy and hope they find in religious experiences (1101d–1102a; 1105b–c).⁸⁸

⁸⁵ That this view is absent from *De sup.*, where atheism appears to be in some ways better than superstition can be explained by the different intentions of both works; cf. Van Nuffelen 2011: 171. Cf. also Adam 1974: 49–52; Brenk 1977: 9–15.

⁸⁶ This does not mean that there is no post-mortem punishment. I get the impression that Plutarch does not care about the difference between life and death when talking about punishment. And, from a Platonic standpoint, this makes perfect sense: since crime and punishment are matters of the soul and the soul is immortal, the difference between punishment during life and punishment after death does not really exist. Whether ante- or post-mortem, vice is always a torture of the soul. When Theon tells how seeing the punishment of the wicked in the afterlife is a treat to good people (1105c), he does not mention the interference of (a) god(s). Plutarch could have been thinking here of a penology and eschatology close to what Plato offers in *Tim.* and *Leg.* 10. There, as Saunders 1973 has shown, Plato develops a theory of punishment that moves away from personal divine interference towards a more scientific, self-regulating system of punishment in the afterlife (cf. also Stalley 1996, who fine-tunes Saunders’ interpretation without rejecting it). Given the general influence of *Tim.* (and *Leg.* 10) on Plutarch’s thought, it would not be surprising if the core of his penology could be found there.

⁸⁷ The division into wicked, majority, and good is inspired by Plato (e.g. *Phd.* 89e–90a); see Adam 1974: 48; 52 n. 19.

⁸⁸ In the discussion of the majority and their expectations of the afterlife, Plutarch again turns to *Hipp.* 193–194 for the nurse’s quote about love of life (*Non posse* 1105b).

Add to this Plutarch's Academic conviction that what is said about divine punishment cannot possibly attain certainty (*De sera num.* 549e–550c, 558d), and the apparent inconsistency of his theory can be explained as a sensible tactic: by allowing the hypothesis of divine punishment to stand next to the hypothesis of vice being its own punishment, Plutarch covers all bases and appeals to every person (good, bad, or in between) in every situation. This resembles the zetetic strategy involving different solutions in *On Tranquillity of Mind* (p. 223). What does this mean for *Dialogue on Love* in general and the passage about Eros' revenge with the lacuna in particular?

Near the end of the dialogue are two amorous revenge tales to which we can apply Plutarch's tactic.⁸⁹ In the first story (768b–d), an influential man falls in love with the Galatian woman Camma, a happily married priestess of Artemis.⁹⁰ The man does not hesitate to kill her husband and promptly proposes to the conveniently widowed woman. When he insists, she does not dare to refuse. At the wedding, however, she prepares a cup of milk and honey mixed with poison and proposes a toast. The bride and the groom both drink half of the cup. Camma stays alive just long enough to hear about the death of her hated suitor and dies contented. It is clear that, in this telling of the story, revenge has nothing to do with divine intervention. What is more, if we look at the other occurrence of this story in Plutarch's works, it seems like Plutarch wanted to downplay the role of the gods here. In *Dialogue on Love*, Camma addresses her dead husband and dedicates her ruse to him. In *Bravery of Women* (257e–258a), on the other hand, Camma addresses Artemis, in whose

As in *Amat.*, the quote from Euripides is corrected implicitly: in Plutarch the painfulness of (the prospect of) losing life is assuaged by faith in a joyful afterlife; in Euripides the lack of real faith in such a joyful afterlife makes (the prospect of) losing life, although it is miserable, even more painful.

⁸⁹ On the exempla in *Amat.*, see esp. Valverde Sánchez 2007; Brenk 2008: 246–249. Cf. also Brenk 2000: 55–59 (on Semiramis, *Amat.* 753d–e); Stramiglia 2000: 97–103 (on Camma, although mainly on the version in *Mul. virt.* 257e–258c); Stramiglia 2000: 147–154 (on Empona).

⁹⁰ Brenk 2005: 100–106 connects Camma's Artemis with the Celtic horse goddess Epona and her in turn with Empona, the other Celtic heroine whose story is told at *Amat.* 770c–771c. Evidence for this is thin, and there is no sign that Plutarch wanted to suggest these connections. Strobel 2009: 134 identifies Camma's Artemis with the Celtic Great Goddess (and this would indeed be more in line with the exceptional importance that Camma's Artemis has according to Plutarch, *Mul. virt.* 257f; cf. also Schmidt 1994: 27), whereas Ellis 1998: 89 proposes Brigantu without giving arguments, and Görgemanns 2011b: 189 n. 391 reports Ramsey's suggestion that Camma's Artemis is actually Ma, who is called Bellona in Latin. Whatever may be the correct solution, I do not think this matter was on Plutarch's mind when he wrote this passage (cf. Lampinen 2013: 12 n. 12).

temple the whole ordeal takes place. Stadter has described this address as ‘a prayer of thanksgiving [...] that she had been allowed to avenge her husband’s murder’.⁹¹ Although this is not made explicit – Camma does not thank the goddess as much as she calls her to witness – it is true that, in *Bravery of Women*, Artemis plays *some* role in the revenge, which she does not in *Dialogue on Love*.⁹² The fact that Camma addresses her as δαίμων and not as θεός might be a further indication of this role.⁹³

The second story is about the Gaulish woman Empona (770c–771c).⁹⁴ Her husband has to go into hiding due to his involvement in a failed Gaulic revolt. While the world believes the man to be dead, Empona regularly visits him in the cave where he has gone into hiding. Eventually, they are found out and put to death by Vespasian. In this tale, Plutarch plays *up* the divine involvement in the punishment, which is reserved for Vespasian:

ἀποκτείνει μὲν οὖν αὐτὴν ὁ Καῖσαρ· ἀποκτείνας δὲ δίδωσι δίκην, ἐν ὀλίγῳ χρόνῳ τοῦ γένους παντὸς ἄρδην ἀναιρεθέντος· οὐδὲν γὰρ ἤνεγκεν ἢ τόθ’ ἡγεμονία σκυθρωπότερον οὐδὲ μᾶλλον ἑτέραν εἰκὸς ἦν καὶ θεοὺς καὶ δαίμονας ὄψιν ἀποστραφῆναι. (*Amat.* 771c)

Though Caesar put her to death, yet he paid the penalty for this murder when his family was totally extinguished in a short time. No act of his principate was more grim and no other gave the gods and the spirits such good reason to avert their faces.

⁹¹ Stadter 1965: 104.

⁹² Stadter 1965: 105 notes the significant difference between the two ‘prayers’. His explanation for the discrepancy is different from, though not incompatible with, mine: according to Stadter, Plutarch wanted to emphasise the element of marital faithfulness in *Amat.* For a comparison of the two accounts of Camma’s story, see also Frazier 2005c: 198–203.

⁹³ The tale of Camma is also told by Polyaeus (*Stratagems of War* 8. 39). Here, the role of Artemis stands beyond doubt: Camma explicitly thanks (χάριν οἶδά σοι) Artemis because the goddess allowed her (μοι παρέσχες) to have her revenge. However, this more explicit version does not have the value of an independent witness: it merely offers an interpretation – a correct one, to my mind – of Plutarch’s version of the story. On *Mul. virt.* as a direct source for Polyaeus, see Stadter 1965: 13–29.

⁹⁴ The two stories are linked ethnically, in a way: Plutarch uses the word Γαλατία to refer to Gaul (cf. *GE* s.v. Γαλατία), thus indicating the Celtic identity of both women. The story of Empona is not paralleled in *Mul. virt.* (Brenk 2000: 55 is mistaken); the other sources for the story are Tacitus, *Histories* 4.67, and Dio Cassius 66.3; 66.16. Empona is called Πεπονίλα by Dio Cassius and Epponina by Tacitus; cf. *PIR*² E81.

The execution of a woman who was, after all, aiding and abetting an enemy of the state, caused the downfall of the Flavian dynasty. It is hard not to think that Plutarch is exaggerating here, especially since some time elapsed between Vespasian's death (79 CE) and the death of his son Domitian, the last of the Flavians (96 CE).⁹⁵ Moreover, Plutarch elsewhere emphasises the good fortune (εὐποτυμία) Vespasian had in all his endeavours. His death, too, was marked by good luck (εὐτυχία), since he died just before the destruction of the temple that he had built on the Capitoline Hill: he did not have to live to see that moment (*Publicola* 15.2). The contrasting account in *Dialogue on Love*, which states that the gods and demons decided to look away from Vespasian's reign, reads like an attempt to add an element of divine punishment (or at least divine criminal negligence) to the story.⁹⁶

Both revenge stories, then, are marked by a particular brand of punishment: in the story of Camma, the human element is emphasised and the divine involvement is downplayed; in the story of Empona, it is the other way around.⁹⁷ What we do not get is a tale about vice being its own punishment. The message is rather that divine punishment jumps in when human revenge is impossible, as in the case of Empona. Applying all this, at last, to the quotation from *Hippolytus* about Eros' revenge, the result might seem to be only a negative conclusion: in his attempt to cover all bases and appeal to any kind of audience (recall the Plutarchan strategy deduced from *That Epicurus Actually Makes a Pleasant Life Impossible*), Plutarch does not try to purge *Dialogue on Love* of divine punishment.⁹⁸ In other words, this cannot be his fundamental problem with the tragic view.

⁹⁵ On rhetorical exaggeration in *Amat.*, see Brenk 2000. On Plutarch's negative view of the Flavians, see Flacelière 1963: 40–44; Jones 1971: 20–27 (esp. 25).

⁹⁶ Plutarch rejects divine negligence (ὀλιγωρία) as an Epicurean view in *Adv. Col.* 1119e. This negligence stands in stark contrast to the emphasis on divine φιλανθρωπία in all aspects of life at *Amat.* 758a–b. According to Cichorius 1922: 410–411 (followed by Görgemanns 2011b: 195 n. 443), the harsh treatment of Vespasian is due to the fact that Plutarch heard the story about Empona directly from her (obviously biased) son (as is suggested by *Amat.* 771c). This may well be, but Plutarch surely did not need this testimony to be harsh towards the emperor who revoked Greece's liberty; cf. Jones 1971: 18, 25. Moreover, he obviously did not have to follow the son's version: he certainly knew enough about Vespasian to make up his own mind.

⁹⁷ Although in neither story the particular brand of punishment is articulated in its most extreme form: Artemis is not totally absent from Camma's revenge, since it takes place in her temple, and the gods and demons punish by negligence rather than direct intervention to fulfil Empona's revenge.

⁹⁸ Cf. Brenk 2000: 60 who points out that, in *Amat.*, Plutarch is 'drawing on all the cultural resources shared in common, in order to convince his audience'.

We seem to be back to square one, but with this negative conclusion in mind, we can return to the revenge stories of Camma and Empona and have a closer look at the exact circumstances of the divine revenge. Since it has become clear by now that Plutarch wanted his readers constantly to think about *Hippolytus*, and since, throughout the dialogue, Plutarch is playing with the genre of tragedy, I suggest reading the two stories themselves as corrected versions of *Hippolytus*.⁹⁹ Camma is a priestess of Artemis, Hippolytus' goddess of choice. Although her devotion to the goddess is official, she does not reflect the extremism of the dilettante Hippolytus. Whereas Hippolytus' devotion to Artemis made every engagement with Aphrodite a priori impossible, the priestess of Artemis becomes an example of good behaviour in the sphere of Eros and as such corrects Hippolytus' distorted view of religion.¹⁰⁰ Although Camma's story is a tragedy, it is a tragedy that acknowledges the Plutarchan *πάτριος πίστις*, according to which the divine realm is harmonious.

Empona shares a different characteristic with Hippolytus: like him, she is destructively arrogant. This arrogance (*τὸ θαρραλέον αὐτῆς καὶ μεγαλήγορον*, 771c) is pointed out by Plutarch in an unexpected coda, which follows directly upon the passage about Vespasian's punishment. It causes Empona to lose sympathy among the audience and drives Vespasian into a rage. Realising this, she decides to add fuel to the flames by pondering about changing lives with Vespasian: without a doubt, her life in the cave has been happier than his life on the throne. Once again, the discrepancy with a different version of the story may suggest the significance of Plutarch's choice to foreground Empona's arrogance: in Cassius Dio (66.16) she is supplicatory instead of arrogant, and she moves both Vespasian and the rest of the audience to tears. In Euripides' play, Hippolytus is criticised for his arrogance by Aphrodite (6), Phaedra (730), and finally Theseus (950).¹⁰¹ Plutarch may be alluding especially to this last instance. The confrontation between Empona and Vespasian and the confrontation between Hippolytus and Theseus are similar in more than one way: a ruler is making a decision about the life or death of a subordinate who is in dire straits because of love. Not only the arrogance is a recurring element but also the surprising unwillingness of the subordinate to change lives with the ruler (*Hipp.* 1013–1020). As in the case of

⁹⁹ Autobulus, before launching into the dialogue proper, notes that the drama of Bacchon and Ismenodora only needs a chorus and a scene to accommodate its performance (*Amat.* 749a). Scholars disagree on how exactly the genre of tragedy influenced Plutarch here, but all of them agree that it did to some extent; see Barigazzi 1988b: 199–211; Pasqual 1997; Frazier 2005b. For the influence of comedy, see also Georgiadou 2011.

¹⁰⁰ As Kokkini 2013: 75–81 shows, Hippolytus' devotion to Artemis is a severe distortion of contemporary religion.

¹⁰¹ Cf. also *Hipp.* 445: the nurse says that Aphrodite punishes arrogant people.

Camma, Plutarch is correcting *Hippolytus* by writing his own tragedy: Hippolytus dies because he rejects love in an arrogant and extreme fashion, while Empona dies because she pursues love in an arrogant and extreme fashion.

Of course these examples are as extreme as tragedies tend to be. It is hard to imagine that Plutarch would really recommend poisoning unwanted suitors or mouthing off to emperors in the face of death. Nevertheless, the stories show how divine revenge should be understood and how, even for those who follow the beneficially superstitious path of believing in a vengeful Eros, the world view of *Hippolytus* is fundamentally flawed. In *Hippolytus*, revenge is exacted on a character whose proud devotion to a goddess automatically causes the wrath of another goddess. Cosmic justice is never a possibility in Euripides' tragedy: where Aphrodite wins, Artemis loses and vice versa.¹⁰² As Irwin remarks: 'Aphrodite and Artemis in the *Hippolytus* [...] are not just; they do not guarantee a rational order in the universe as a whole'.¹⁰³ Plutarch's tragic heroines show some similarities to Hippolytus, but instead of incurring vengeance, they get their revenge. The difference is that their opinion about Eros is correct: Camma does not consider love and Artemis to be mutually exclusive, and Empona maintains, until the bitter end, that love is more important than anything.

The importance of having a correct opinion about Eros is important throughout the dialogue, as we have seen in the case of the comparison between Eros and Aphrodite. The quote from Euripides about the revenge of the god of love should be interpreted with that concern in mind. Here, Plutarch calls Eros τῶν ἀπαιδευτῶν καὶ ὑπερηφάνων κολαστής (766c). Arrogance, which is central to *Hippolytus*, is paired with lack of education. Hippolytus' scorn for Aphrodite is not due to general impiety but to his conviction that service to Aphrodite and Artemis are mutually exclusive.¹⁰⁴ This is the conviction that Plutarch challenges, thus opposing his world view to that from tragedy: Platonic παιδεία fosters an understanding of Eros as a god who ensures harmony and cosmos, and, without this παιδεία, one will surely run into trouble. Whether Eros is a κολαστής in the literal sense or the immanent punishment that comes from having an erroneous world view does not matter a great deal in the end.

This importance of παιδεία to avert the revenge of Eros brings us back once again – this will not be a surprise by now – to Plato's *Phaedrus*. After his first speech, which has argued that a young man should favour

¹⁰² This becomes particularly clear when, at the end of the play, Artemis promises Hippolytus to revenge him by destroying Aphrodite's favourite devotee (*Hipp.* 1416–1422).

¹⁰³ Irwin 1983: 196.

¹⁰⁴ This conviction, moreover, is not the result of any παιδεία: Hippolytus prides himself on the fact that, to him, 'nothing is taught' (διδασκτὸν μηδέν, *Hipp.* 79).

a man who is not in love with him rather than a lover, Socrates' famous δαιμόνιον prevents him from leaving (242b–d). He now realises that he was utterly mistaken: his speech did not reflect the divinity of love. The second speech will be a palinode devoted to Eros as a god. Socrates compares his plight to that of Homer and Stesichorus: both told false stories about the divine and both were punished with blindness. Contrary to Homer, Stesichorus was smart enough to retract his lies (thus regaining his sight), and this is what Socrates will be doing lest he be punished by Eros (243a–b). This second speech is concluded with a prayer to Eros: 'be kind and gracious toward my expertise at love, which is your own gift to me: do not, out of anger, take it away or disable it' (εὐμενῆς καὶ ἴλεως τὴν ἐρωτικὴν μοι τέχνην ἣν ἔδωκας μήτε ἀφέλη μήτε πηρώσης δι' ὀργήν, 257a). Both for Plato and for Plutarch the difference between evoking Eros' anger and enjoying his kindness (Plutarch's εὐμενέστατος may echo Plato's εὐμενής¹⁰⁵) is decided by philosophy, by a correct understanding of Eros.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, Socrates prays that Eros may convert Lysias, the author of the speech recited by Phaedrus and the inspiration for Socrates' first speech, to philosophy (ἐπὶ φιλοσοφίαν [...] τρέψον, 257b). Socrates' palinode was intended to avert the wrath of Eros by understanding the god through philosophy. This is also Plutarch's strategy in *Dialogue on Love*, and it is, I think, his main concern when talking about the wrath of Eros.

Plutarch's references to *Hippolytus* are deeply embedded in *Dialogue on Love*, and they pertain to the most crucial philosophical issues raised in the text.¹⁰⁷ With each reference, Plutarch not only corrects Euripides, he also indicates the fundamental incompatibility of his world view, which is supported by Plato's *Phaedrus*, with that expressed in *Hippolytus*. This constant yet subtle effort to turn Phaedra into Phaedrus is hinted at in the opening of the dialogue, when Flavian asks Plutarch's son Autobulus to tell the story that will occupy the rest of the work:

ἄφελε τοῦ λόγου τὸ νῦν ἔχον ἐποποιῶν τε λειμῶνας καὶ σκιὰς καὶ ἅμα κιττοῦ τε καὶ σμιλάκων διαδρομάς καὶ ὅσ' ἄλλα τοιούτων τόπων ἐπιλαβόμενοι γλίσχονται τὸν Πλάτωνος Ἴλισσὸν καὶ τὸν ἄγρον ἐκεῖνον

¹⁰⁵ At the end of the dialogue, when the marriage of Bacchon and Ismenodora is announced, the character Plutarch concludes that Eros shows himself εὐμενῆς. Hunter 2012: 197 sees this as a reference to *Phdr.* 257a–b.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Griswold 1986: 136–137 for the connection in *Phdr.* 257a–b between speaking ill about Eros and faring ill in matters of Eros.

¹⁰⁷ Contra Martin 1984: 86, who describes the reference to *Hipp.* 193–195 as 'a fine example of the Plutarchean manner' in the sense that the quotation, 'brought in for stylistic embellishment, serves as a formal, non-substantive springboard to move Plutarch into a short, but substantive, summation of the Platonic doctrine he then elaborates in some detail'.

καὶ τὴν ἡρέμα προσάντη πόαν πεφυκυῖαν προθυμότερον ἢ κάλλιον ἐπιγράφεσθαι. (*Amat.* 749a)

Discard for the moment from your recital the meadows and shady nooks of the poets, the gadding growth of ivy and smilax, and all the other commonplaces on which writers seize, as they endeavour with more enthusiasm than success to endorse their work with Plato's Ilissus, his famous *agnus castus* and the gentle grass-grown slope.

This passage has been regarded as an ironic declaration of dependence on *Phaedrus* and rightly so.¹⁰⁸ Apart from the explicit reference to Plato's Ilissus, the river, which forms an eye-catching element of the setting of *Phaedrus* (229a–b), the shade (229b, 230b), the *agnus castus* (230b), and the gentle grass-grown slope (230c: τῆς πόας [...] ἐν ἡρέμα προσάντει) come straight out of Plato's dialogue. However, the remaining words, which are not to be found in *Phaedrus*, tell an additional story. Ivy and smilax have the scent of tragedy: they serve as crowns for the followers of Dionysus (Euripides, *Bacchae* 703–4; cf. 106–108).¹⁰⁹ In a discussion about garlands one of Plutarch's friends, the doctor Trypho, connects the healing powers of ivy with the Dionysus cult (*Quaest. conv.* 3.1.647a).¹¹⁰ A more specific reference to tragedy is λειμών. The meadow is where Hippolytus haughtily honours Artemis (*Hipp.* 73–87) and where Phaedra, delirious as she is, hopes to find relief of the illness which is her love (208–211).¹¹¹ In Plato's *locus amoenus*, there is no meadow:¹¹² from the outset, *Hippolytus* creeps in as an intertext.

¹⁰⁸ Trapp 1990: 158–159. Cf. Trapp 1990: 161: 'Plutarch's *recusatio* at the beginning of the *Amatorius*, turns out to be a rejection only of slavish and unimaginative use of the *Phaedrus*; it is certainly not a rejection of the work itself as a proper object of imitation. The whole dialogue is structured on Phaedran lines, its central doctrines are from the *Phaedrus* and are given in Phaedran language, and a host of other details of conception and expression have been included too, creatively adapted and blended with a wide range of other Platonic and non-Platonic material.' Hunter 2012: 185–222 offers a brilliantly subtle discussion of the intertextuality between Plutarch's *Amat.* and Plato's *Phdr.* The opening scene of *Phdr.* has become the locus classicus for the *locus amoenus* and is an object of study on its own. A good place to start is Ferrari 1987: 1–36.

¹⁰⁹ On these plants, see Forster 1952: 62.

¹¹⁰ Smilax, he adds, is just as powerful, albeit in the negative sense: it kills whomever falls asleep in its shadow (647f). Cf. also *Quaest. conv.* 3.2 on the coldness of ivy.

¹¹¹ On the important function of the meadow in *Hipp.* and its connections with eros and mysteries, see esp. Bremer 1975. Cf. also Segal 1965; Cairns 1997.

¹¹² Although in *Phdr.* 248c, the plain of truth is described as a meadow (cf. *Amat.* 766b, which will be discussed in the next section). This does not play here, since the reference is clearly to the *locus amoenus* and to the elements of *Phaedrus* that should

And thus, Plutarch's *Dialogue on Love* is not only a new *Phaedrus*, exploring the ways in which Eros can lift us up and allows us to take part in the divine cosmic procession (*Phdr.* 246e–248e). It is also an anti-*Hippolytus*, a response to the tragedy about the utter failure of cosmic love.¹¹³ In his response, Plutarch casts a character for the role of antagonist to Hippolytus ('Whose Horses Are Unyoked'): Zeuxippus ('Who Yokes Horses').¹¹⁴ In *That Epicurus Actually Makes a Pleasant Life Impossible*, Zeuxippus is the pupil who requests the discussion (1086d–e), asks critical questions (1088d), and demands further clarifications (1100e, 1103f). In *Dialogue on Love*, he plays a similar role: he is the one who needs to be convinced of Plutarch's views on love. At a crucial point in the discussion, his assent is asked (758c–d) and he brings in the Epicurean doctrine of desire so that it can be refuted (766d–767c¹¹⁵). Near the end of the dialogue, he is addressed as the one most urgently needing the *Bildung* provided here: 'Do not, my dear Zeuxippus, be afraid of that sharp pain which comes at the beginning of marriage' (τὸ δ' ἐμπαθὲς ἐν ἀρχῇ καὶ δάκνον, ὦ μακάριε Ζεύξιππε, μὴ φοβηθῆς, 769e). It is a *Bildung* that Hippolytus tragically lacked.¹¹⁶ When, at the very end, the marriage of

be discarded: the plain of truth, which forms the metaphysical climax of *Phaedrus*, is obviously not one of those elements.

¹¹³ A subject I have evaded is the likely yet subtle influence of Euripides' *Hipp.* on Plato's *Phdr.*; see Castrucci 2015. Although Plutarch does not allude to this, it may of course be in the back of his mind. This would point further in the direction of the triangle that I have been trying to draw using Plutarch's *Amat.*, Plato's *Phdr.*, and Euripides' *Hipp.* as the three points.

¹¹⁴ On names with Ἴππο- or -ιππος see Dubois 2000. Cf. the use of the stem ζ(ε)υγ- to describe a relationship at *Amat.* 750c, 752c, 770c.

¹¹⁵ On the basis of this passage, Rist 2001: 564 has called Zeuxippus 'an Epicurean' (cf. his 568–575), adding that he also appears as 'an Epicurean sympathizer' in *Non posse* (568). In the latter work, however, Zeuxippus most certainly appears as a pupil of Plutarch's school who complains that an earlier rebuttal of the Euripidean Colotos lacked *παρησία* (*Non posse* 1086e), so it is hard to understand where Rist got this idea. As far as *Amat.* is concerned, there is no reason to doubt Plutarch's statement that Zeuxippus sketched the Epicurean doctrine without being convinced by it (*Amat.* 767c). Zeuxippus' endeavour can be compared to that of Glauco in the second book of Pl., *Resp.* (358c): he argues against justice, not because he is convinced of this position, but because he wants to hear a good philosophical rebuttal of it. This important difference between voicing a position and committing to it also invalidates the attempt made by Ingenkamp 2006: 188–190 to identify Zeuxippus with Pemptides (and to attribute the occurrence of two names to careless redaction of the text): Zeuxippus' position is in fact opposed to that of Pemptides, since the latter does commit to the rejection of Eros.

¹¹⁶ On this aspect of *Hipp.*, see esp. Kokkini 2013: Hippolytus' 'deliberate failure to pass from the stage of the adolescent to that of a man shows that he chooses to abstain

Bacchon and Ismenodora is announced, Zeuxippus is the one to put the beneficiality of marriage to the final test by asking whether any residual animosity remains. Only when the messenger ensures him that everyone has made peace can the dialogue end and the wedding take place.

Plutarch's *Dialogue on Love* ends with a wedding, Euripides' *Hippolytus* ends in death, but also in forgiveness granted by Hippolytus to his father. This forgiveness is one last reminder of the world view of the tragedy: only humans are capable of repentance and forgiveness; gods are not.¹¹⁷ They do not care, as Phaedra experiences when she is killed as innocent collateral damage of Aphrodite's wrath. Gods are powerful, to be sure, yet they are capricious, petty, and opposed to each other. Aphrodite rules the cosmos, but she is not a force of good. Rather, she spreads the disease of love that makes life a burden. When Plutarch wants to instate Eros as the foremost god, characterised by *φιλανθρωπία* and ordering the Platonic cosmos, *Hippolytus* is what he is up against.¹¹⁸

3. *Eros, the sun, and the cave: rewriting Plato's Republic (764a–766b)*

In the course of his discussion of the god Eros, Plutarch suggests that there is some similarity between Platonic and Egyptian notions of Eros (762a; cf. 763f), which recalls *On Isis and Osiris* in general and the passage from that work with which we began this chapter in particular. However, Plutarch leaves this suggestion to the side as soon as he has voiced it – thus perhaps suggesting to us and his interlocutors that this is where the really important message can be found.¹¹⁹ It is Plutarch's dear friend Soclarus who eventually rises to the bait and begs Plutarch to elaborate on his vague intimation that Platonic and Egyptian thought about love should be connected. This is where the passage starts that will occupy us in this section (764a–766d).¹²⁰

from accepting the full rights and responsibilities of an adult male, by rendering himself incapable of expressing his sexuality and consequently fulfilling his duty towards his *oikos*' (74). Cf. also Cairns 1997.

¹¹⁷ See Knox 1968: 113–114; Segal 1965: 152–156.

¹¹⁸ The picture of Plutarch's reception of Euripides that has emerged from this section is different from that in Opsomer 2020b, who argues that Euripides held a high epistemic authority in Plutarch's works.

¹¹⁹ Cf. also 770b. See Van Nuffelen 2007 on this rhetorical function of silence in Plutarch.

¹²⁰ Flacelière in Flacelière and Cuvigny 1980: 6 calls this passage 'un appendice' to the speech about Eros, but Frazier 1999: esp. 349 has rightly pointed out that it is actually the climax.

Plutarch reveals that the Egyptians, like the Greeks, distinguish between Heavenly and Common Eros. However, they also have a third Eros: the sun (Αἰγύπτιοι δύο μὲν Ἑλλησι παραπλησίως Ἔρωτας, τὸν τε πάνδημον καὶ τὸν οὐράνιον, ἴσασι, τρίτον δὲ νομίζουσιν Ἔρωτα τὸν ἥλιον, 764b). The distinction between Heavenly and Common Eros is thoroughly Platonic (*Symp.* 180d–181d, where, as we have seen, the character Phaedrus distinguishes Heavenly and Common forms of both Eros and Aphrodite).¹²¹ Here I will focus on the third Eros, the sun. From the outset Plutarch shifts from the (Egyptian) *identification* of Eros and the sun to the *similarity* (ὁμοιότητα, 764b; cf. εἰκέναι, 764d) between Eros and the sun, and it is this similarity that will be the subject of Plutarch's speech. The strict identification is not further considered.

Frazier has argued that even the comparison between Eros and the sun is eventually rejected by Plutarch.¹²² There are, indeed, good reasons to think this at a certain point in the speech, as we shall see. I want to argue, however, that Plutarch eventually rehabilitates the comparison between Eros and the sun and that his last words on the matter imply a confirmation and not a rejection of the imagery. More precisely, I submit that we should approach *Dialogue on Love* 764a–766d as a triptych of images that both imitates and critically rewrites Plato's famous sun-line-cave development in the *Republic* (6.506d–7.517a). While Plutarch's imitation of the sun (764b–765a) and the line (765a–d) have been spotted in earlier scholarship, I add that we should connect Plutarch's rainbow imagery (765d–766b) with Plato's cave and that this latter image once again affirms the comparison between Eros and the sun.

Several times throughout his works, Plutarch compares the sun (as the summit of the sensible world) to god (as the summit of the intelligible world). His thought on the matter is overall consistent, as Roskam has shown in an important article that discusses all the relevant material.¹²³ Plutarch firmly insists on the distinction between the sensible sun and

¹²¹ Cf. p. 284. For the later literary and philosophical tradition, see e.g. Alcinous, *Didasc.* 33.3; Philo, *De vit. cont.* 59–60; Achilles Tatius 2.36–37; Plotinus 3.5; 6.9.9. See also Thesleff 1994.

¹²² Esp. Frazier 2005a: 72: '[S']ouvre alors une séquence (19-20.766 B) à tonalité mystique, ou même mystérique, qui développe, en s'appuyant sur l'opposition du soleil et d'Éros et en multipliant les images (nuages; opposition du rêve et de la veille; arc-en-ciel), l'itinéraire de l'âme amoureuse, guidée par Éros mystagogue jusqu'à la beauté divine et intelligible' (emphasis added); similarly Frazier 1999: 354.

¹²³ Roskam 2006; cf. also Roskam 2007a: 144–150. The most important passages are *De E* 386b, 393c–d; *De Pyth. or.* 400d; *De def. or.* 413c, 433d–e; *De Is. et Os.* 372a; *Ad princ. iner.* 780e–f, 781f (see p. 158–162); *De facie* 944e; *De lat. viv.* 1130a. Cf. also Babut 1993: 219–221; Hirsch-Luipold 2002: 165–168; Brouillette 2014: 113–125 (a revised version of Brouillette 2010).

the intelligible god, but not without counterbalancing this by pointing to the symbolic connection between the two: the sun is an εἰκών or εἶδωλον of the god. It is wrong to say that the sun and the intelligible god are the same, since the sun obviously belongs to the sensible realm, but it is equally wrong to state that they share no connection whatsoever.

Not only in the context of Plutarch's works but also in the context of Middle Platonism more generally, the comparison between the god Eros and the sun cannot have seemed as revealing and exotic as Plutarch presents it in the *Dialogue on Love*. In Plato's *Republic* (6.506e–509c), Socrates explains how the sun is

[...] τὸν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἔκγονον, ὃν τὰγαθὸν ἐγέννησεν ἀνάλογον ἑαυτῷ, ὅτιπερ αὐτὸ ἐν τῷ νοητῷ τόπῳ πρὸς τε νοῦν καὶ τὰ νοούμενα, τοῦτο τοῦτον ἐν τῷ ὀρατῷ πρὸς τε ὄψιν καὶ τὰ ὀρώμενα. (Pl., *Resp.* 6.508b–c)

[...] the offspring of the good, which the good begot as its analogue. What the good itself is in the intelligible realm, in relation to understanding and intelligible things, the sun is in the visible realm, in relation to sight and visible things.

That the *Republic* contributed to Plutarch's understanding of the connection between the sun and the intelligible is clear from the eighth *Platonic Question*, where Plutarch offers a paraphrase of Plato's account:

καὶ γὰρ ἄλλως μέγα τοῦ ἡλίου τὸ ἀξίωμα καὶ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ Πλάτωνος ἐν Πολιτείᾳ βασιλεὺς ἀνηγόρευται παντὸς τοῦ αἰσθητοῦ καὶ κύριος, ὡσπερ τοῦ νοητοῦ τὸ ἀγαθόν· ἐκείνου γὰρ ἔκγονος λέγεται, παρέχων τοῖς ὀρατοῖς μετὰ τοῦ φαίνεσθαι τὸ γίνεσθαι, καθάπερ ἀπ' ἐκείνου τὸ εἶναι καὶ τὸ γινώσκεισθαι τοῖς νοητοῖς ὑπάρχει. (*Quaest. Plat.* 8.1006f–1007a [text modified¹²⁴])

For the sun is generally rated high in dignity and especially by Plato who himself in the *Republic* has proclaimed him king and sovereign of all that is perceptible just as the good is of the intelligible, for of that good he is said to be the offspring, affording to things visible with their coming to light their coming to be even as that good is for things intelligible the source of their being and of being known.

¹²⁴ The Teubner edition follows the manuscripts that have ἔγγονος, while the Loeb follows the manuscripts that read ἔκγονος. This does not matter a great deal, but it is clear from *De def. or.* 433e that Plutarch knew that Plato used the term ἔκγονος in the passage to which he is referring here. Cf. Brouillette 2014: 122–124.

An excellent example of how Plutarch uses this Platonic notion can be found in *On the E at Delphi*. Plutarch's teacher Ammonius is speaking:

τοὺς δ' Ἀπόλλωνα καὶ ἥλιον ἡγουμένους τὸν αὐτὸν ἀσπάζεσθαι μὲν ἄξιόν ἐστι καὶ φιλεῖν δι' εὐφυΐαν, ὃ μάλιστα τιμῶσιν ὧν ἴσασι καὶ ποθοῦσιν, εἰς τοῦτο τιθέντας τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν ἐπίνοιαν· ὡς δὲ νῦν ἐν τῷ καλλίστῳ τῶν ἐνυπνίων τὸν θεὸν ὄνειροπολοῦντας ἐγείρωμεν καὶ παρακαλῶμεν ἀνωτέρω προάγειν καὶ θεάσασθαι τὸ ὕπαρ αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν, τιμᾶν δὲ καὶ τὴν εἰκόνα τήνδε καὶ σέβεσθαι τὸ περὶ αὐτὴν γόνιμον ὡς ἀνυστόν ἐστιν αἰσθητῶ νοητοῦ καὶ φερομένῳ μένοντος ἐμφάσεις τινὰς καὶ εἶδωλα διαλάμπουσιν ἀμωσγέπως τῆς περὶ ἐκεῖνον εὐμενείας καὶ μακαριότητος. (*De E* 393c–d)

Those who hold that Apollo and the sun are the same, it is right and proper that we welcome and love for their goodness of heart in placing their concept of the god in that thing which they honour most of all the things that they know and yearn for. But, as though they were now having a sleepy vision of the god amid the loveliest of dreams, let us wake them and urge them to proceed to loftier heights and to contemplate the waking vision of him, and what he truly is, but to pay honour also to this imagery of him in the sun and to revere the creative power associated with it, in so far as it is possible by what is perceived through the senses to gain an image of what is conceived in the mind, and by that which is ever in motion an image of that which moves not, an image that in some way or other transmits some gleams reflecting and mirroring his kindness and blessedness.

Compared to (Plutarch's direct paraphrase of) Plato's account, there are a few apparent differences here, but they should not worry us. Plato's form of the good is identified with Apollo, who is cast in the role of the demiurgic god (cf. *De E* 393f).¹²⁵ This is as common for Plutarch (*De Is. et Os.* 372e–f; *De def. or.* 423d) as it is for Middle Platonists in general (e.g. Alcinous 27.1).¹²⁶ There is no mention, moreover, of the good's function as leader over the other intelligibles. This is in line with Plutarch's tendency to collapse the whole intelligible realm into the demiurge (cf. e.g. *De sera num.* 550d with p. 19).

All in all, it is quite clear what we can expect in the *Dialogue on Love* after the comparison between Eros, who takes on the role of demiurge here (as the discussion of 755e–757a in the previous section has shown), and the sun: while the Egyptian *identification* of Eros and the sun will

¹²⁵ On the traditional identification (rather than comparison) of Apollo and the sun, see e.g. Boyancé 1966.

¹²⁶ Cf. Dillon 1993: xxii; Ferrari 2005b: 16; Boys-Stones 2018: 149.

be criticised, the value of the *comparison* will be admitted. This would be in line with Plutarch's general thought on the sun and with the earlier announcement that Egyptian mythology contains 'dim, faint effluvia of the truth' (λεπταί τινες ἀπόρροιαί καὶ ἀμυδραὶ τῆς ἀληθείας) and that one 'needs a keen wit to track them down, one which can draw important conclusions from tiny scraps of evidence' (ἰχνηλάτου δεινοῦ δέοντα καὶ μεγάλα μικροῖς ἐλεῖν δυναμένου, 762a). This is similar to Plutarch's stance in *On Isis and Osiris*: there we find, as expected, the nuanced judgement on the comparison of the sun and Osiris (*De Is. et Os.* 368c–d, 372a, d–e), who turns out to be the same as Eros in his demiurgic capacity (374c).

In the *Dialogue on Love*, however, the case is surprisingly different. After some consideration, the comparison between Eros and the sun is rejected with unusual vehemence:

εἰ δὲ μὴ δόξει πικρότερον λέγεσθαι, καὶ τὰναντία φαίη τις ἄν ἥλιον Ἔρωτι ποιεῖν· ἀποστρέφει γὰρ ἀπὸ τῶν νοητῶν ἐπὶ τὰ αἰσθητὰ τὴν διάνοιαν, χάριτι καὶ λαμπρότητι τῆς ὄψεως γοητεύων καὶ ἀναπέιθων ἐν ἑαυτῷ καὶ περὶ αὐτὸν αἰτεῖσθαι τὰ τ' ἄλλα καὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν, ἐτέρωθι δὲ μηθὲν· (*Amat.* 764e [text modified¹²⁷])

One might even say, if the statement is not too unpalatable, that the sun's activities are directly opposed to those of Love. For it is the sun that turns our attention from intelligibles to sensibles, bewitching it by the charm and brilliance of vision, and urging it to seek truth and everything else in her or in her realm, and not in any other place. [tr. modified]

As Roskam and Brouillette point out, this is an anomaly.¹²⁸ In a similar case in *On the Oracles of the Pythia*, the stark opposition of the sun and the intelligible god can be easily explained by the polemical, anti-Stoic context.¹²⁹ The case of *Dialogue on Love* seems more difficult to account for and seems to confirm Frazier's interpretation that the comparison of Eros and the sun is eventually rejected by Plutarch. Roskam's suggestion that Plutarch is attenuating the opposition by expressing hesitation (εἰ δὲ μὴ δόξει πικρότερον λέγεσθαι) goes a long way in explaining this exception. As we shall see, however, the key is the fact that this is not Plutarch's last word on the matter.

¹²⁷ Demulder 2018: 23–24.

¹²⁸ Roskam 2006: 200; Brouillette 2014: 113 n. 5. Cf. also Babut 1969b: 447; Dillon 1996: 200; Hirsch-Luipold 2002: 166.

¹²⁹ Roskam 2006: 200. Cf. Babut 1969b: 447; 1993: 219–220.

By the time Plato's Socrates is done with his image of the sun, the young interlocutor of the *Republic* is understandably befuddled. In an attempt to clarify matters, Socrates introduces a second image: the divided line. Plutarch's interpretation of this Platonic image is spelled out in the third *Platonic Question*.¹³⁰ With the discussion of a geometric image as part of Plutarch's technical discussions of problematic passages in Plato, we seem to have strayed rather far from *Dialogue on Love*. At the end of the *Platonic Question*, however, Plutarch connects the divided line with Plato's *Symposium*.¹³¹

τὸ δὲ μέγιστον αὐτὸς ἐν Συμποσίῳ διδάσκων, πῶς δεῖ τοῖς ἐρωτικοῖς χρῆσθαι, μετάγοντα τὴν ψυχὴν ἀπὸ τῶν αἰσθητῶν καλῶν ἐπὶ τὰ νοητά, παρεγγυᾷ μήτε σώματός τινος μήτ' ἐπιτηδεύματος μήτ' ἐπιστήμης κάλλει μιᾶς ὑποτετάχθαι καὶ δουλεύειν, ἀλλ' ἀποστάντα τῆς περὶ ταῦτα μικρολογίας 'ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ τοῦ καλοῦ πέλαγος τρέπεσθαι'. (*Quaest. Plat.* 3.1002e)

The most important point, however, is that, when in the *Symposium* Plato explains how one must manage the matter of love by diverting the soul from the beautiful objects that are perceptible to those that are intelligible, his own injunction is not to subjugate oneself and play the slave to the beauty of a particular body or practice or of a single science but to desist from petty concern about these things and turn to the vast sea of the beautiful [*Symp.* 210d].

This connection between the divided line and τὰ ἐρωτικά returns subtly in *Dialogue on Love* (765a–d). There, immediately after the apparent rejection of Plato's first image (the sun), the second image (the divided line) is offered as an alternative, as Opsomer has observed.¹³² Like Plato (*Resp.* 510c), Plutarch gives the example of geometry students who are not yet (οὐπω) ready to approach their subject in a purely intelligible fashion: they rely on 'tangible and visible copies of spheres and cubes and dodecahedrons' (ἀπτὰ καὶ ὄρατὰ μιμήματα σφαιρῶν καὶ κύβων καὶ δωδεκαέδρων) presented to them by their teachers (*Amat.* 765a). Eros, Plutarch explains, works in a similar way: by presenting us with visible bodies, he kindles our memory of the intelligible.

So far, we have seen echoes of Plato's subsequent images of the sun and the divided line in Plutarch's *Dialogue on Love*. Both echoes have

¹³⁰ See Napolitano Valditara 1992; Opsomer 1994b: 418–487; 1996: 79–82; Schoppe 1994: 13–40; Ferrari 1995b: 202–212; 1999b.

¹³¹ The first and fifth *Quaest. Plat.* also deal with the connection between knowledge and erotics; cf. Opsomer 2007a: 165–166.

¹³² Opsomer 2011b: 244 n. 138.

been noted by scholars, and the intertextual aspect seems fairly certain, although it is a purely thematic intertextuality: there are no clear textual echoes. The same thing goes for my suggestion that, after subsequently echoing the sun and the line, Plutarch keeps following the path of Plato's *Republic*: in the next passage, which has received far less attention than the previous two, he was thinking about the cave.

First, I should contextualise my hypothesis about Plutarch's critical rewriting of Plato's cave image by pointing to the surprising near absence from Plutarch's works of 'the most famous metaphor in the history of philosophy – the resonant allegory that everyone remembers, and that even people with minimal exposure to philosophy itself have probably heard of'.¹³³ Only once, at the end of *How the Young Man Should Study Poetry*, do we find a clear intertextual reference to the cave:¹³⁴

οἷς ἀντίφωνα τὰ τῶν φιλοσόφων ἀκούοντας αὐτοὺς τὸ πρῶτον ἔκπληξις ἴσχει καὶ ταραχὴ καὶ θάμβος, οὐ προσιεμένους οὐδ' ὑπομένοντας, ἂν μὴ καθάπερ ἐκ σκότους πολλοῦ μέλλοντες ἥλιον ὄραν ἐθισθῶσιν οἷον ἐν νόθῳ φωτὶ κεκραμένης μύθοις ἀληθείας αὐγὴν ἔχοντι μαλακὴν ἀλύπως διαβλέπειν τὰ τοιαῦτα καὶ μὴ φεύγειν. (*De aud. poet.* 36e)

But when they hear the precepts of the philosophers, which go counter to such opinions, at first astonishment and confusion and amazement take hold of them, since they cannot accept or tolerate any such teaching, unless, just as if they were now to look upon the sun after having been in utter darkness, they have been made accustomed, in a reflected light, as it were, in which the dazzling rays of truth are softened by combining truth with fable, to face facts of this sort without being distressed, and not to try to get away from them.

Plutarch is pointing out that, through the correct reading of good poetry, youth can prepare themselves for the dazzling insights of true philosophy. The transition from the ignorance of everyday opinion (~ the cave) to the knowledge of philosophy (~ the sun) is made easier by the intermediary stage of poetry (~ the sun seen through reflection).

Plutarch's use of the image here resembles Plato's in that it makes a point about education. As opposed to Plato (*Resp.* 7.517b–c), however,

¹³³ Blackburn 2006: 101. Similarly e.g. Brunschwig 2004: 145; Williams 2006: 23. On the reception of the cave allegory, see Gaiser 1985; 2004. On the reception of Pl., *Resp.* more generally, see Vegetti and Abbate 1999; Sheppard 2013. On (traces of) Middle Platonic commentaries on *Resp.*, see *PidA* 80.

¹³⁴ Cf. Zadorojnyi 2002: 311 n. 28; Hunter 2009: 169–170; Hunter and Russell 2011: 206–207; Lather 2017: 329.

Plutarch does not connect the educational metaphor with the ontological distinction between the sensible and the intelligible realm. Moreover, Plutarch simplifies the ascent, which in Plato's version has two stages. First, the prisoner in the cave is released from his shackles and is made to see the cave (~ the sensible world) for what it is. In a second stage, the prisoner is dragged outside the cave (~ into the intelligible world). Plutarch conflates these two stages, drawing from Plato's description of each stage indiscriminately. Plato mentions the desire to flee (φεύγειν, 515e) from the truth, echoed by Plutarch, in the first stage. The possibility of smoothing the transition by looking first at reflections, which Plutarch mentions as well, is described in the second stage (ἐν τοῖς ὕδασι τὰ [...] εἶδωλα, 516a). What we get here, in other words, is a simplified cave with a one-stage ascent and a limited scope. We are left with the impression that, even if this rare rewriting is taken into account, Plutarch was not too invested in what would become 'the most famous metaphor in the history of philosophy'.

Admittedly, there is no sign that in Middle Platonism the cave enjoyed anything close to its modern-day prestige. Still, as we shall see, the allegory was important enough to be included in Alcinous' concise *Handbook of Platonism* and popular enough to be used by Maximus of Tyre (although both, like Plutarch, seem to do away with Plato's two stages). Therefore, its near absence from Plutarch cannot be attributed entirely to the different accents placed by ancient Platonists when reading the *Republic* or, more generally, the Platonic corpus.¹³⁵

As has been mentioned, Plutarch introduces the rainbow in the *Dialogue on Love* where, in the sequence of images, we would have expected the cave. He segues into this new image by quoting Alcaeus' take on the birth of Eros:¹³⁶

δεινότατον θεῶν
 <τὸν> γέννατ' εὐπέδιλλος Ἴρις
 χρυσοκόμα Ζεφύρω μίγαισα· (*Amat.* 765e = Alcaeus, fr. 327 Voigt)

Most fearful of the gods
 Whom fair-sandalled Iris bore
 To Zephyr of the golden hair.

¹³⁵ On the general differences between modern and ancient readings of *Resp.*, see Annas 1999: 72–116.

¹³⁶ See Breitenberger 2007: 166–168 for discussion.

These poetic verses should, of course, not be taken literally.¹³⁷ The doxography on cosmic love has, after all, established that Hesiod was right to postulate the absolute priority of Eros and this is right up Plutarch's street: the demiurge was obviously not born. Alcaeus' verses should be interpreted as follows:¹³⁸

ἀνάκλασις δὴ που τὸ περὶ τὴν ἴριν ἐστὶ τῆς ὄψεως πάθος, ὅταν ἡσυχῆ νοτερῶ λείψ δὲ καὶ μέτριον πάχος ἔχοντι προσπεσοῦσα νέφει τοῦ ἡλίου ψαύση κατ' ἀνάκλασιν καὶ τὴν περὶ ἐκεῖνον αὐγὴν ὀρῶσα καὶ τὸ φῶς δόξαν ἡμῖν ἐνεργάσῃ τοῦ φαντάσματος ὡς ἐν τῷ νέφει ὄντος. ταῦτ' οὖν δὴ τὸ ἐρωτικὸν μηχανήμα καὶ σόφισμα περὶ τὰς εὐφυεῖς καὶ φιλοκάλους ψυχάς· ἀνάκλασιν ποιεῖ τῆς μνήμης ἀπὸ τῶν ἐνταῦθα φαινομένων καὶ προσαγορευομένων καλῶν εἰς τὸ θεῖον καὶ ἐράσμιον καὶ μακάριον ὡς ἀληθῶς ἐκεῖνο καὶ θαυμάσιον καλόν. (*Amat.* 765e–f)

What happens to our vision when we see a rainbow is, of course, refraction, which occurs whenever the sight encounters a slightly moist, but smooth and moderately thick cloud and has contact with the sun by refraction. Seeing the radiance in this way produces in us the illusion that the thing we see is in the cloud. Now the erotic contrivance and sophism applied to noble souls who love beauty is of the very same kind: it refracts their memories from the phenomena of this world, which are called beautiful, to the marvellous Beauty of that other world, that divine and blessed entity which is the real object of love. [tr. modified]

The rainbow, Plutarch continues, can be approached in two ways, neatly presented in a μέν-δέ structure and both paralleled by other occurrences of the rainbow image in Plutarch's works. One can be childishly impressed by the mere illusion and believe that the object worthy of admiration really *is* in the cloud (cf. *De Pyth. or.* 409c–d; *Quaest. nat.* 29.919b).¹³⁹ Applied to matters of love, this describes the plight of οἱ πολλοί who 'pursue in boys and women merely the mirrored image of Beauty' (ἐν παισὶ καὶ γυναῖξιν ὥσπερ ἐν κατόπτροις εἶδωλον αὐτοῦ φανταζόμενον διώκοντες, *Amat.* 765f). All they get from that is unstable 'pleasure mixed with pain' (ἡδονῆς μεμιγμένης λύπη, 766a), which is how Plato describes irrational erotic passion, both in the *Republic* (9.586b) and in the *Timaeus* (42a) (cf.

¹³⁷ Alcaeus' verses are classified as εἰκασία; see Hirsch-Luipold 2002: 122–124 for Plutarch's use of that term.

¹³⁸ There is a nice touch of irony in the fact that Plutarch is addressing his explanation of the true meaning of Alcaeus' verses to Daphnaeus, the poetry expert among the interlocutors (cf. *Amat.* 763d).

¹³⁹ Cf. Hardie 1992: 4747–4748; Meeusen 2015; 2016: 225–228.

De an. procr. 1026d). The correct approach is to trace the reflection back to its source (cf. *De Is. et Os.* 358f–359a; *De facie* 921a): ‘[T]he noble and self-controlled lover has a different bent. His regard is refracted to the other world, to Beauty divine and intelligible’ (εὐφροῦς δ’ ἐραστοῦ καὶ σώφρονος ἄλλος τρόπος· ἐκεῖ γὰρ ἀνακλᾶται πρὸς τὸ θεῖον καὶ νοητὸν καλόν, 766a).

Let us put together the pieces of this image. We should approach love like we should approach the rainbow. We should realise that the rainbow is a reflection of the sun: a rainbow appears in a cloud because our visual ray is reflected by the cloud towards the sun, which is the true cause of the rainbow’s beauty.¹⁴⁰ Similarly, we should realise that the sensible beauty with which we fall in love is a reflection of intelligible beauty. With the rainbow image, Plutarch reintroduces the sun, which was rejected in the first image and was not mentioned at all in the second. Here, the sun becomes the cause of the rainbow and simultaneously the true goal of the rainbow’s observer, just like the intelligible god Eros is both the cause and the goal of love as it appears in the sensible realm. This is in line with Plutarch’s identification of the highest god and the form of the good. At the end of Plutarch’s sequence of images, then, the comparison between Eros and the sun is confirmed after all.

Into his application of the image of the rainbow to the phenomenon of love, Plutarch weaves two thoughts that blur the lines between the *comparans* (approaching the rainbow as a reflection of the sun) and the *comparandum* (loving sensible beauty as a reflection of intelligible beauty). The wrong approach is illustrated by Ixion: he was in love with Hera and ended up groping a cloud that was only an image of Hera because he believed that the object of his affection was really in the cloud. The sketch of the correct approach, on the other hand, ends with an eschatological perspective:

ὁ γὰρ ὡς ἀληθῶς ἐρωτικὸς ἐκεῖ γενόμενος καὶ τοῖς καλοῖς ὁμιλήσας, ἧ θέμις, ἐπτέρωται καὶ κατωργίασται καὶ διατελεῖ περὶ τὸν αὐτοῦ θεὸν ἄνω χορεύων καὶ συμπεριπολῶν, ἄχρις οὗ πάλιν εἰς τοὺς Σελήνης καὶ Ἀφροδίτης λειμῶνας ἐλθὼν καὶ καταδαρθὼν ἐτέρας ἄρχηται γενέσεως. (*Amat.* 766b)

The true lover, when he has reached the other world and has consorted with true beauty in the holy way, grows wings and joins in the continual celebration of his god’s mysteries, escorting him in the celestial

¹⁴⁰ For Plutarch’s Platonic (*Tim.* 45b–46a; 67c–68d) notion of vision, which involves a ray being emitted by the eye and accompanied by daylight encountering an object, see esp. *Quaest. conv.* 626c–e, as well as *De E* 390b; *De def. or.* 436d. For Plato, Remes 2014 provides a good introduction; for Plutarch, see Lernould 2005.

dance until it is time for him to go again to the meadows of the Moon and Aphrodite and fall asleep before he begins another existence in this world.

Plutarch has transcended the scope of the rainbow imagery, which describes how humans should love during their earthly lives. Nevertheless, this eschatological coda, which draws on Socrates' great speech in the *Phaedrus* (246b–257b) to describe the soul's sprouting wings and joining the divine procession (cf. *Quaest. Plat.* 5), again ties the *comparans* to the *comparandum*: through the mention of Aphrodite and the moon, Plutarch ends his sequence of images by returning to the Egyptian identification of Eros and the sun, which he connected to the association of Aphrodite with the moon back then (*Amat.* 764d). The eschatological touch recalls the myth of *On the Face in the Moon*, where it is revealed that humans die two deaths: while the body is left behind on earth, the soul is left behind on the moon (*De facie* 943a). Only the νοῦς proceeds to its final destination, the sun (944b):

ἀποκρίνεται δ' ἔρωτι τῆς περὶ τὸν ἥλιον εἰκόνοσ, δι' ἧς ἐπιλάμπει τὸ ἔφετὸν καὶ καλὸν καὶ θεῖον καὶ μακάριον, οὗ πᾶσα φύσις, ἄλλη δ' ἄλλωσ ὀρέγεται. καὶ γὰρ αὐτὴν τὴν σελήνην ἔρωτι τοῦ ἡλίου περιπολεῖν ἀεὶ καὶ συγγίνεσθαι ὀρεγομένην ἀπ' αὐτοῦ τὸν γονιμώτατον. (*De facie* 944e)

It [i.e. mind] is separated [sc. from soul] by love for the image in the sun through which shines forth manifest the desirable and fair and divine and blessed towards which all nature in one way or another yearns, for it must be out of love for the sun that the moon herself goes her rounds and gets into conjunction with him in her yearning <to receive> from him what is most fructifying.

After a while, νοῦς travels back in the opposite direction – and this is what the *Dialogue on Love* alludes to as well – taking on soul on the moon and body on earth (945b–c). The sun, then, is an image of the ultimate goal of human and cosmic love.

While several elements make it clear that Plutarch's third image – the rainbow – reinstates the analogy between Eros and the sun, it may not be clear why I insist on reading this rainbow imagery as Plutarch's response to Plato's cave. Like the cave, Plutarch's rainbow is the third image in a *concatenatio*. The development is similar in both cases. Plato's first image (the sun) recognises the sun as offspring of the good, but is mostly concerned, like Plutarch's opening image, with the distinction between the sensible and the intelligible realm: we get very little on how the two are actually connected. The second image (the line) has much more to

say about that and reveals the epistemological potential of the sensible as a reflection of the intelligible and that is also what Plutarch's second image involving the geometry students does. Like the rainbow, finally, the cave combines and balances these two aspects.

While the sun plays an obvious role in Plato's first image, it disappears in the second only to return in the third. The same thing happens in Plutarch. A particular similarity between Plato's cave and Plutarch's rainbow is that, in both images, the sun is moved up an ontological rung between the first and the third image. While, in the first image of both Plato and Plutarch, the sun should be understood literally – in other words, as a force in the everyday, sensible realm – matters are different for both philosophers in their third image. In Plato's cave, the sun stands for the intelligible idea of the good, while the fire burning near the exit of the cave is what we know as the sun, which illuminates the sensible realm. Similarly, in Plutarch's rainbow image, the sun represents the summit of the intelligible realm, while the rainbow is what transmits light to the sensible realm, thus corresponding to what we know as the sun in everyday life. Just like, for Plato, the fire burning outside the cave is an image of the sun, Plutarch's rainbow is an image of the sun.

However, Plutarch's rainbow is not merely a variation on Plato's cave. It constitutes a critical response to it. Plutarch's insistence on the epistemic potential of the sensible reflection of the intelligible both recalls and contrasts with the role of reflections in the cave. The cave imagery emphasises how we should turn away from reflections – first from the reflections of the puppets on the wall of the cave, second from the reflections of the sun in the water outside the cave. Although the subsequent reflections are used, they are mainly used to get rid of them. In Plutarch's image, the epistemic potential of the sensible reflection is not discarded in time. This contrasts both with Plato's cave and with Plutarch's previous comparison involving the geometry students, which kept close to Plato's divided line in this regard. These students were said to use sensible models as long as they were *not yet* (οὐπω) capable of studying the purely intelligible.¹⁴¹ In the rainbow image, the definitive shift away from the sensible occurs only after death (μετὰ τὴν τελευτήν, *Amat.* 766b; cf. *De Is. et Os.* 382f–383a), but this does not preclude us from observing reflections of the intelligible during our lives.

¹⁴¹ This epistemological shift towards a more persistent valuation of the sensible goes together with a shift in how love is presented. The sensible images used by the lovers compared to the aspiring geometrists are bodies of νέοι, young boys. The sensible images used by the lovers as rainbow-gazers are associated with νεόγαμοι, newly-weds. Plutarch is pushing his ideal of heterosexual marriage; cf. *Con. praec.* with e.g. Goessler 1962; Patterson 1991; Nikolaidis 1997; Boulogne 2010a; Tsouvala 2014: 200–203.

This significant yet limited value of the sensible as a reflection of the intelligible elucidates the behaviour of the good lover:

ὄρατοῦ δὲ σώματος ἐντυχὼν κάλλει καὶ χρώμενος οἷον ὄργάνῳ τινὶ τῆς μνήμης ἀσπάζεται καὶ ἀγαπᾷ, καὶ συνῶν καὶ γεγηθῶς ἔτι μᾶλλον ἐκφλέγεται τὴν διάνοιαν. καὶ οὔτε μετὰ σωμάτων ὄντες ἐνταῦθα τουτὶ τὸ φῶς ἐπιποθοῦντες κάθηνται καὶ θαυμάζοντες, οὔτ' ἐκεῖ γινόμενοι μετὰ τὴν τελευτὴν δεῦρο πάλιν στρεφόμενοι καὶ δραπετεύοντες ἐν θύραις νεογάμων καὶ δωματίοις κυλινδοῦνται, δυσόνειρα φαντασμάτια φιληδόνων καὶ φιλοσωμάτων ἀνδρῶν καὶ γυναικῶν οὐ δικαίως ἐρωτικῶν προσαγορευομένων. (*Amat.* 766a–b)

When he encounters beauty in a visible body, he treats it as an instrument to memory. He welcomes and delights in it, yet the pleasure of its company only serves the more to inflame his spirit. While he is in this world and involved with bodies, he is not content to confine his activity to a wonder-struck yearning for the illumination of visible beauty; nor when he comes to the other world after death does he attempt to wrench himself away and run back for an erotic wallow at the chamber doors of the newly wed—those ill-omened dreams of men and women in love with the pleasures of the body: it is very wrong to call them lovers.

With the theme of erotic ἀνάμνησις, the *Phaedrus* once again looms large here.¹⁴² Plutarch does not mirror Plato's philosophical elitism (*Phdr.* 250a–b) nor the overall negative attitude towards sexuality that comes at the end of Socrates' speech (253d–256e), but all things considered, the *Phaedrus* must have seemed like a good alternative to the cave, since

¹⁴² For Plutarch's thoughts about ἀνάμνησις, see Opsomer 1998: 193–212; cf. also Ferrari 1995b: 213–216. The earlier images of the sun and the geometry students also provide hints to the erotic ἀνάμνησις of *Phdr.*, which can be said to prepare the rainbow imagery. (1) As we have seen, Plutarch quotes Euripides' *Hipp.* (193–195) as part of the image of the sun in order to contrast the sun's effect with the ἀνάμνησις, which Eros provides according to the *Phdr.* (*Amat.* 764e). This leads to an eschatological passage that depicts the plain of truth of *Phdr.* 248b (*Amat.* 765a). (2) The comparison involving the geometry students also hinges on the anamnestic force of beauty (*Amat.* 765b) and ends by pointing to the possibility of recovering emanations (ἀπορροήν) of divine beauty in sensible things, which may be Plutarch interpreting *Phdr.* 251b, the only instance where Plato uses the word ἀπορροή; cf. Dörrie 1976. On the other hand, Plutarch's use of rainbow imagery here also contrasts in a way with *Phdr.*, where love and mirror imagery are connected at 255d–e: while Plutarch's rainbow is a reflected image of the intelligible, Plato's mirror involves the lover seeing *himself* in his partner; cf. also the Platonic *First Alcibiades* 132e–133c with Dillon 1994 (= Dillon 1997b: chap. II).

it offers a way of connecting the sensible and the intelligible in a more direct way than Plato does in the *Republic*. I have already mentioned that the eschatological element of the *Phaedrus* plays a role here, and I think that this element accounts for the main difference between Plutarch's sequence of images and that of the *Republic*. According to Plutarch, we cannot expect to go outside the cave during our lifetime. We get a similar view, for instance, in *On Isis and Osiris*: Osiris, whose image is the sun (*De Is. et Os.* 368d; cf. 371f–372a), can only be fully reached after death (382f–383a). From the perspective of the *Republic* in general and the cave in particular, this would seem pessimistic: during our lives, we are confined to reflections and we will never be able to see the sun. For Plutarch this was no reason for pessimism, since true philosophers/lovers can use the reflections as adequate representations of the forms. That Plutarch's optimistic scepticism is hard to reconcile with a straightforward reading of Plato's cave imagery can be shown by briefly considering the image of the cave as it is used by two other Middle Platonists: Alcinous and Maximus of Tyre.

In Alcinous' retelling of the image of the cave, the emphasis is on the rejection by the escapees of what they have left behind: they 'tend to reject what they previously saw and to despise themselves for having been deceived' (καταγνώσεσθαι τῶν τότε φανέντων καὶ πολὺ πρόσθεν αὐτῶν ὡς ἐξηπατημένων). Similarly, 'those who advance from the murk of everyday existence to what is truly divine and noble tend to look with contempt on all they had previously admired' (οὕτω δὴ καὶ τοὺς ἀπὸ τοῦ βιωτικοῦ ζόφου μεταβαίνοντας ἐπὶ τὰ κατ' ἀλήθειαν θεῖα καὶ καλὰ τῶν μὲν πάλαι θαυμασθέντων αὐτοῖς καταφρονῆσαι, *Didasc.* 27.4). For Plutarch, on the other hand, admiration for sensible beauty does not go away when one realises that it is a reflection of an intelligible, much more admirable beauty. The sensible should not be rejected on the condition that one does not stop at the sensible, but uses it to learn about the intelligible. Alcinous introduces the cave imagery at the beginning of his discussion of Platonic ethics to stress the worthlessness of commonly accepted goods as opposed to true virtue. Similarly, Maximus (36.4) contrasts the pure lifestyle of the Cynic with the cave life of earthly pleasure mixed with pain. Elsewhere (7.5) he uses the cave to explain that we only get to see the sun once the soul is without the body, that is, after death.¹⁴³ This seems to be in agreement with what we have said about Plutarch's

¹⁴³ This second passage shows that Gaiser 1985: 37, who only takes *Or.* 36.4 into account, is wrong to conclude that Maximus' use of the cave is purely moral and that '[i]l suo interesse non è rivolto alla comprensione dell'ordine cosmico nella sua totalità o alla conoscenza di una realtà trascendentale'. The two perspectives, moral and epistemological, are tied together. This is also true in the case of Plutarch, but the difference is Plutarch's higher regard for the sensible world.

position. Maximus, however, uses the image to stress the worthlessness of the bodily: we should be happy to be rid of it.

I am not suggesting that Plutarch would fundamentally disagree with the ethics and eschatology implied by the cave imagery as it is used by Alcinous or Maximus. He would indeed agree that virtue should be chosen above earthly goods and that death is something to welcome rather than to fear. The difference lies in the positive value that he assigns to the sensible realm, that is, to what is subordinate to perfect virtue and perfect truth. By substituting the rainbow for the cave imagery, Plutarch is able to emphasise the connection between the sensible and the intelligible in a way that is in full accordance with his *Timaeus*-inspired conviction that the cosmos is an εἰκὼν of an intelligible paradigm. By exploring this notion in terms of reflection, Plutarch can point out that the true philosopher is the one who sees the image and recognises it *as an image*, that is, as pointing to a higher reality, whereas the non-philosopher is the one who sees the image and stops there.

The latter is, as we have seen, like Ixion. This most unfortunate mythological lover returns at the beginning of Plutarch's *Agis*. There, Ixion serves as a comparison for the lover of glory (the φιλόδοξος), that is, the one who does not realise that glory is what 'we may call an image of virtue' (τῆς ἀρετῆς ὡσπερ εἰδώλω, *Agis* 1.2). Plutarch is not saying that δόξα should be rejected, but that this image of virtue should be recognised *as an image* and should be used accordingly. If this is the case, it does have, like other things in the sensible realm, great potential. This potential of reflection is also emphasised in the one case where Plutarch clearly does use the cave imagery: the young man should not discard poetry, nor should he consider it to be an end in itself; rather, he should realise that poetry can present philosophy 'in a reflected light' (ἐν νόθῳ φωτὶ).¹⁴⁴ The passage on the sun from *On the E at Delphi*, where ἔμφασις is also the key, could similarly be read as an echo of the cave, as Brouillette has argued.¹⁴⁵

The notion of reflection is the main thing that Plutarch considers worth keeping from Plato's image of the cave: the intelligible is reflected in sensible objects. This fits the cosmology of the *Timaeus*, according

¹⁴⁴ In this case, the emphasis on the potential of reflection can of course be explained by the nature of the work: since Plutarch is writing on poetry, the emphasis will be on poetry. This explanation, however, can also be turned around: it is telling that Plutarch chose to devote a work to poetry, a mere reflection of philosophy.

¹⁴⁵ Brouillette 2014: 117, who points to the escape from the cave suggested by ἀνωτέρω προάγειν. I would add that ἀνωτέρω προάγειν also recalls the image of the line (cf. ἀνωτέρω ἐκβαίνειν, *Resp.* 6.511a). It could be argued, then, that, like *Amat.*, *De E* puts Plato's three images together while emphasising the importance of the image of the sun and of reflection.

to which the visible cosmos is an image of the intelligible model.¹⁴⁶ Our lives should be devoted to recognising images of the intelligible *as images*, in the knowledge that only after death will we reach unreflected intelligibility. This is how we should understand the dichotomy (οὔτε... οὔτ') drawn up in *Amat.* 766a–b (quoted above). The second part of the dichotomy is clear: after death (ἐκεῖ γινόμενοι μετὰ τὴν τελευτὴν) the lover should not try to return to the sensible realm (δεῦρο) – this scenario is evoked by a reference to the zombie-like souls of *Phaedo* 81c–d. The first part describes the situation during our lives (μετὰ σωμάτων ὄντες ἐνταῦθα) and is a tad more enigmatic: we should not sit wondering and yearning for the light (τουτὶ τὸ φῶς ἐπιποθοῦντες κάθηται καὶ θαυμάζοντες). I take it we should connect this to what has been said about approaching Eros by Empedocles in Plutarch's doxography on cosmic love: 'sit not with staring gaze' (μηδ' ὄμμασιν ἦσο τεθηπώς, fr. 17.21 DK at *Amat.* 756d). As I have pointed out, this approach, which is summarised by Plutarch calling Eros δοξαστός, suggests starting in the sensible realm without stopping there.¹⁴⁷ We should think through the sensible reflection. This is, indeed, the anamnestic approach that we should take during our lifetime.¹⁴⁸

At the end of Plutarch's sequence of images, we are far removed from the initial opposition of Eros (representing the intelligible level) and the sun (representing the sensible level). The reprisal of the sun imagery has revealed how the two realms can be connected through ἀνάμνησις. This contradicts earlier scholarship on the dialogue in two ways. (1) In the end the image of the sun is not rejected in *Dialogue on Love*, and its use here does not constitute an anomaly within Plutarch's general use of sun imagery. (2) Moreover, there is no incompatibility between the Eros of the πάτριος πίστις (Empedocles' Ἔρως δοξαστός) discussed in the pre-

¹⁴⁶ The cosmology of *Tim.* fits Plutarch's one-stage ascent from the cave (p. 331) better than Plato's two-stage original. In Plato's version, there are two light sources (the sun and the fire) and two sets of objects (outside and inside the cave), while Plutarch only retains one light source and one set of objects. This drastically reduces the levels of imitation (and thus ontological devaluation) at play. This does not mean, however, that a one-stage version automatically leads to a world view in which sensible objects are valued as they are by Plutarch: the versions of Maximus of Tyre and Alcinous bear this out.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. also e.g. *Per.* 1.2 with Duff 1999b: 41.

¹⁴⁸ In this regard it might be relevant that the dichotomy also pertains to movement: during our lifetime we should not sit still (κάθηται), while we should not be bent on movement after death (στρεφόμενοι καὶ δραπετεύοντες [...] κυλινοῦνται). This could be interpreted as follows: while pure contemplation is not possible during life, it becomes possible after death. For the association of sitting with excessive and misguided contemplativeness, see e.g. *Praec. ger. reip.* 824a–b; cf. also Demulder 2017a.

vious section and the Platonic Eros discussed here: both are accessible through mediation between the sensible and the intelligible. The belief that we should try to turn away from the sensible and that we can reach the intelligible during our lives was simply not realistic in Plutarch's book. Hence his criticism of the image of the cave. This attitude, which is rooted in his cosmology, goes a long way in explaining his approach of the bodily aspects of love.

As we have seen in chapter four (p. 140), Plutarch considered the political views expressed in the *Republic* to be too radical. A concrete case of this is how love is politicised in Plato's communist Callipolis. Shortly after the sequence of images we have discussed, Plutarch sketches the ideal marriage by referring to the *Republic*:

ὃ δ' ἂν Ἔρως ἐπισκήψη ... καὶ ἐπιπνεύση, πρῶτον μὲν ἐκ τῆς Πλατωνικῆς πόλεως 'τὸ ἐμὸν' ἔξει καὶ 'τὸ οὐκ ἐμὸν'.

The man whom Love strikes and inspires will first of all come to understand 'mine' and 'not mine' as these terms are used in Plato's city. (*Amat.* 767d)

This apparent endorsement of Plato's *Republic* (5.462c, 464c) is striking: the use of 'mine' and 'not mine' that Plutarch advocates is precisely *not* how these terms are used in Plato's city.¹⁴⁹ Plutarch recommends extending the use of 'mine' to both partners in a marriage (cf. *Con. praec.* 140d–e), whereas Plato wants to extend 'mine' to the whole polis in which wives are shared, parents do not know who their own offspring is, and marriage as Plutarch cherishes it does not exist. In the *Lives*, Plutarch describes how Lycurgus tried to realise the Platonic ideal of sharing wives (*Lyc.* 15) and judges that the marriage policy of Numa, the protagonist of the other *Life* in the pair, was smarter, since he realised that 'community of wives is really insupportable' (τὸ δυσκαρτέρητον [...] τῆς κοινωνίας, *Comp. Lyc. et Num.* 3.2).¹⁵⁰

The sequence of images in the *Dialogue on Love* provides an interesting case of how a devoted Platonist could reform Platonic imagery while remaining thoroughly Platonic. The rainbow image that replaces Plato's cave surely has a touch of Plutarchan originality, but it also recalls the erotic ἀνάμνησις of the *Phaedrus* and the general cosmological framework of the *Timaeus*.¹⁵¹ Non-Platonists had their own ways of reforming

¹⁴⁹ Contra Rist 2001: 566 n. 25.

¹⁵⁰ See Pelling 2014: 151. Cf. Ludwig 2007: 212–213 on how Plato's extension of 'mine' relates to Spartan politics.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Trapp 1990: 160 on the rainbow image in *Amat.*: 'Plutarch is also willing and able to add evocative images of his own. [...] Plutarch here builds on Plato's "flow of beauty"'

the image of the cave in order to raise the status of the sensible: the Stoic spokesperson in Cicero's *On the Nature of the Gods* gives us Aristotle's version of the cave (2.95), in which the escape from the cave consists in leaving the familiar behind and turning to the observation of the cosmos. This was, of course, not an option for Plutarch, who would have wanted to keep the intelligible forms at the top of the hierarchy. Adopting the image of the rainbow together with an eschatological perspective was an elegant solution to bring out the idea that, during our lives, we are all in the cave, but some of us are looking at the sun.¹⁵²

4. *Interlude: reflecting the intelligible*

The idea of describing the sensible world as a reflection of the intelligible appealed to Plutarch. It is, of course, an idea germane to the cosmology of the *Timaeus*, where the visible cosmos is an εἰκὼν of its intelligible model. Plutarch most succinctly voices this thought in *On Isis and Osiris*: 'For creation is the image of being in matter, and the thing created is a picture of reality' (εἰκὼν γὰρ ἐστὶν οὐσίας <ἧ> ἐν ὕλῃ γένεσις καὶ μίμημα τοῦ ὄντος τὸ γινόμενον, 372f). This image comes about by reflection: the good things in the cosmos are 'the efflux of Osiris and his reflected image' (Ὀσίριδος ἀπορροὴ καὶ εἰκὼν ἐμφανομένη, 371b).¹⁵³ Before turning to Plutarch's elusive treatment of this theme in *On Isis and Osiris*, we should start on somewhat safer ground by looking at how reflection of the intelligible comes up in *Against Colotes* and *On the Oracles of the Pythia*.

In *Against Colotes*, Plutarch defends Plato's theory of forms against the criticism that Plato denied the existence of the sensible world.¹⁵⁴ Plutarch points out that identifying an intelligible cause does not entail abolishing the sensible realm. Similarly, someone who says that the moon is not the sun but realises that the sun illuminates the moon does not deny the existence of the moon (*Adv. Col.* IIII6a). Here, reflection is

in *Phdr.* 255B–D, and produces an image that is eminently Platonic in feel, with its sparkle and its emphasis on the lover's vision of the transcendent in the material; but it is his own creation.' In some respects Plutarch's endeavour to draw *Resp.* closer to *Tim.* resembles what Johansen 2013: esp. 102–104 is doing; cf. also Barney 2008 for an attempt to resolve the remarkable absence of philosophical erotics in Plato's cave imagery. For a similar Middle Platonic project, albeit with very different results, see Bonazzi 2004 on Numenius.

¹⁵² Cf. Favorinus fr. 21 Barigazzi, who, speaking about Eros, expresses the wish to transcend the bodily, fully knowing that this is not possible (εἰ γὰρ θέμις ἦν τὸ σῶμα ὑπερβῆναι).

¹⁵³ In modern scholarship the receptacle of *Tim.* has often been explained in terms involving mirrors and reflections; see Merker 2006 for a critical discussion.

¹⁵⁴ See Kechagia 2011b: 213–250.

associated with the moonlight instead of the rainbow from the *Dialogue on Love*. This makes for a slightly different scheme that is less precise. While the rainbow image makes it possible to distinguish between the source of the light (the sun), the reflector of the light (the cloud), and the ensuing reflection (the rainbow) – applied to the situation in the *Dialogue on Love* that would be intelligible beauty, the visible body, the sensible beauty that appears in the visible body – the image of the moon makes it harder to distinguish between the reflector (the moon) and the ensuing reflection (the moonlight). When he presents the image in *Against Colotes*, then, Plutarch understandably switches from σελήνη to φῶς (in a quotation from Parmenides, fr. B14 DK) and back to σελήνη. This is not a fatal problem in this particular context, since the intention is merely to insist on the existence of the sensible (~ the moon and its light) alongside the intelligible (~ the sun) .

Next to this primarily ontological application of imagery involving reflection, we can set the epistemological use of such imagery in *On the Oracles of the Pythia*, although in both cases ontology and epistemology are of course connected. As we have seen (p. 87), the oracles of the Pythia have two causes: the one external (i.e. the part that is truly divine communication and accounts for the content), the other internal (i.e. the part that depends on the Pythia and accounts for aspects of diction) (*De Pyth. or.* 404b–406b). In the dialogue, Plutarch’s close friend and associate Theon describes this kind of ἐνθουσιασμός as the divine creation of φαντασίαι and a ‘light in the soul’ (φῶς ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ, 397c).¹⁵⁵ He combines these notions of appearance (φαίνειν) and light by explaining divination in terms of reflection:¹⁵⁶

τὸν ἐνταῦθα θεὸν χρώμενον τῇ Πυθίᾳ πρὸς ἀκοήν, καθὼς ἥλιος χρῆται σελήνῃ πρὸς ὄψιν· δείκνυσι μὲν γὰρ καὶ ἀναφαίνει τὰς αὐτοῦ νοήσεις, μεμιγμένας δὲ δείκνυσι διὰ σώματος θνητοῦ καὶ ψυχῆς [...].
(*De Pyth. or.* 404e)

[...] the god of this place [i.e. Delphi] employs the prophetic priestess for men’s ears just as the sun employs the moon for men’s eyes. For he makes known and reveals his own thoughts, but he makes them known through the associated medium of a mortal body and a soul [...].

Theon introduces this theory to make the point that the Pythia transmits but also distorts the god’s message (in our earlier discussion of this pas-

¹⁵⁵ On the close connection between these two passages (397b–d and 404b–406b), see Holzhausen 1993, convincingly arguing against Schröder 1990.

¹⁵⁶ This step is prepared by explanatory comparisons involving mirrors (404c–d) and the moon (404d). Cf. Schröder 1990: 155; Brouillette 2014: 209.

sage, music turned out to be a result of the latter). More specifically, he uses it as the framework for his answer to the central question of the dialogue: Why are oracles no longer given in verse? According to Theon, this is because the god now uses Pythiae with a different nature, which causes less distortion. The former, more heavily distorted oracles had their use, since they were delivered in an era that was less tolerant towards free speech. At that time,

[ὁ θεὸς] ἀφανίζεῖν μὲν οὐ θέλων τὸ ἀληθές, παρατρέπων δὲ τὴν δῆλωσιν αὐτοῦ καθάπερ αὐγὴν ἐν τῇ ποιητικῇ πολλὰς ἀνακλάσεις λαμβάνουσιν καὶ πολλαχοῦ περισχίζομένην [...]. (*De Pyth. or.* 407e)

[the god was] not willing to keep the truth unrevealed, but he caused the manifestation of it to be deflected, like a ray of light, in the medium of poetry, where it submits to many reflections and undergoes subdivisions [...].

Now, however, times are simpler and more peaceful, and the god can deliver messages through less distortive media. This is a change that should be welcomed, not deplored as some do. Plutarch ends the dialogue by turning the god's change regarding the nature of oracular revelation itself into a kind of revelation that must be interpreted correctly:¹⁵⁷

καὶ γὰρ οἱ παῖδες ἴριδας μᾶλλον καὶ ἄλως καὶ κομήτας ἢ σελήνην καὶ ἥλιον ὀρῶντες γεγήθασιν καὶ ἀγαπῶσιν, καὶ οὗτοι τὰ αἰνίγματα καὶ τὰς ἀλληγορίας <καὶ> τὰς μεταφορὰς τῆς μαντικῆς ἀνακλάσεις οὕσας πρὸς τὸ θνητὸν καὶ φανταστικὸν ἐπιποθοῦσιν· κἂν τὴν αἰτίαν μὴ ἰκανῶς πύθωνται τῆς μεταβολῆς, ἀπίασιν τοῦ θεοῦ καταγρόντες, οὐχ ἡμῶν οὐδ' αὐτῶν ὡς ἀδυνάτων ὄντων ἐξικνεῖσθαι τῷ λογισμῷ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ διάνοιαν. (*De Pyth. or.* 409c–d)

It is a fact that children take more delight and satisfaction in seeing rainbows, haloes, and comets than in seeing moon and sun; and so these persons yearn for the riddles, allegories, and metaphors of the prophetic art which are reflections against the mortal and imaginative. And if they cannot ascertain to their satisfaction the reason for the change, they go away, after pronouncing judgement against the god, but not against us nor against themselves for being unable by reasoning to attain to a comprehension of the god's purpose. [tr. modified¹⁵⁸]

¹⁵⁷ Simonetti 2017: 23.

¹⁵⁸ Against the Loeb translation (but following the Loeb text, which puts a comma after τὰς μεταφορὰς), I take τῆς μαντικῆς together with ἀνακλάσεις instead of with τὰς μεταφορὰς (contra Schröder 1990: 448–450).

In this peroration, Theon might be getting carried away a bit by suggesting that the new brand of divination provides unmediated access to the divine, while the childish people (not unlike the foolish lovers from the *Dialogue on Love*) cannot see beyond the reflection and wrongly infer that any and all divine communication is lost because the distortion added by the medium is gone. Unmediated access to the divine is not humanly possible, as he has explained earlier himself: the work of divine thought (τὸ ἔργον αὐτοῦ νοήματος, 404b–c) ‘cannot be seen by us in its pure form, and when it is made manifest in another guise and through another medium, it becomes contaminated with the nature of this medium’ (καθ’ ἑαυτὸ γὰρ ἄδηλον ἡμῖν, ἐν ἑτέρῳ δὲ καὶ δι’ ἑτέρου φαινόμενον ἀναπίπλονται τῆς ἐκείνου φύσεως, 404c [tr. modified]).

An oracle can be compared to a reflection of the sun in the sense that god emits thoughts like the sun emits light. This happens (if we forget the hyperbolic omission of the medium in Theon’s last words) through a medium that shows both potential and limitedness, since it both communicates and distorts these thoughts. As with the rainbow imagery in the *Dialogue on Love*, the important thing is to distinguish between the source and the contribution of the medium. This is where the difference is made between childishness and true religiosity, which are both possibilities offered by the reflected images, just like the *Dialogue on Love* pointed to a good and a bad way of engaging with the rainbow. The essence of this ambiguity is well expressed, as Theon points out, in Heraclitus’ dictum that the Delphic god ‘neither tells nor conceals, but indicates’ (οὔτε λέγει οὔτε κρύπτει ἀλλὰ σημαίνει, *De Pyth. or.* 404d = Heraclitus fr. B93DK). This is first and foremost an epistemological issue, but, as I have mentioned in my earlier discussion of *On the Oracles of the Pythia*, Holzhausen and Simonetti have shown how the Pythia ontologically resembles the receptacle of Plato’s *Timaeus*.¹⁵⁹

It is in *On Isis and Osiris* that the epistemological and ontological aspects of reflection are most closely connected. The key to this can be found after Plutarch has given us the most important points of the Isis and Osiris myth and before he embarks upon his philosophical interpretation of that myth:

καὶ καθάπερ οἱ μαθηματικοὶ τὴν ἴριον ἔμφασιν εἶναι τοῦ ἡλίου λέγουσι ποικιλλομένην τῇ πρὸς τὸ νέφος ἀναχωρήσει τῆς ὄψεως, οὕτως ὁ

¹⁵⁹ Holzhausen 1993: 83–91; Simonetti 2017: esp. 203–209. Theon varies in how he characterises the receptacle of god’s thought, but in each case the reference is to the Pythia: first he mentions the compound of body and soul (404e), then the poetry that is composed by the Pythia (407c), and finally the irrational part of the soul (τὸ θνητὸν καὶ φανταστικὸν), which is, indeed (cf. Pl., *Tim.* 71c–72d), the part of the soul capable of divination (409c–d).

μῦθος ἐνταῦθα λόγου τινὸς ἔμφασις ἐστὶν ἀνακλῶντος ἐπ’ ἄλλα τὴν διάνοιαν [...]. (*De Is. et Os.* 358f–359a)

Just as the rainbow, according to the account of the mathematicians, is a reflection of the sun which owes its many hues to the withdrawal of our gaze from the sun and our fixing it on the cloud, so the myth here is a reflection of some account which causes its meaning to reflect against other things [tr. modified¹⁶⁰].

The λόγος (~ the sun) emits a διάνοια (~ the rays of the sun [not explicitly mentioned in the comparison]), which, through reflection against ἄλλα (~ a cloud), appears as a μῦθος (~ a rainbow, an ἔμφασις). On the surface, this comparison explains in what sense the myth of Isis and Osiris is both limited and valuable as a source of knowledge: limited in that it is a reflection, valuable in that it points to a λόγος. At this point in the treatise, however, it has already become clear that a deeper, theological point is made here: the myth is a divine revelation of knowledge that is only accessible through careful interpretation (the first sentence already points this out, *De Is. et Os.* 351c–d).¹⁶¹ What the passage describes, then, is akin to the revelation that happens in the case of an oracle: divine truth can be reached because god installs an image of this intelligible truth (an oracle in *De Pyth. or.*, a myth in *De Is. et Os.*) in a sensible receptacle (the Pythia in *De Pyth. or.*, ‘other things’, which turn out to be various elements of religious practice in the next sentence, in *De Is. et Os.*), just like the sun, which installs a rainbow in a cloud. Our job as humans is to see past the mere reflection and use the myth – as we should use oracles (*De Pyth. or.*) or, indeed, bodily beauty (*Amat.*) – as a way to see the divine indirectly. As we have seen in *Dialogue on Love*, Plutarch tends to conflate the goal (divine truth or beauty) and its cause (god) – the form of the good and the demiurge – thus connecting epistemology to ontology. Similarly, for *On Isis and Osiris*, I suggest that we can associate the sun (~ the λόγος) with Osiris, the cloud (~ the ‘other things’ which receive the λόγος) with Isis, and the rainbow (~ the myth) with Horus, in other words, the cosmos. To substantiate this interpretation of how Plutarch conceives of the sensible reflecting the intelligible, we should first trace the epistemological and ontological roles of Isis and Osiris.

Plutarch introduces Isis as ‘a goddess exceptionally wise and a lover of wisdom’ (ἐξαιρέτως σοφὴν καὶ φιλόσοφον οὔσαν, 351e) and points

¹⁶⁰ See Demulder forthcoming b on the interpretation of this passage and its role within the context of *De Is. et Os.*

¹⁶¹ See also 382d–f. Cf. Hirsch-Luipold 2002: 199 on this dual movement of divine revelation and human scrutiny. On the programmatic introduction to *De Is. et Os.*, see Roskam 2014a.

out that her name is actually Greek, apparently connecting it with the verb οἶδα. In her role as goddess of wisdom, Isis is opposed to Typhon, who tears up and destroys the *ιερός λόγος* (*διασπῶν καὶ ἀφανίζων τὸν ἱερὸν λόγον*, 351f), which Isis ‘collects and puts together’ (*συνάγει καὶ συντίθησι*, 351f). This is Plutarch’s interpretation of the mythical episode in which Typhon scatters Osiris’ body, which Isis in turn recovers (357f–358b, 373a). The *λόγος*, then, represents Osiris.¹⁶² After recovering the *λόγος*, Isis ‘gives <it> into the keeping of those that are initiated into the holy rites’ (*καὶ παραδίδωσι τοῖς τελουμένοις*, 351f). More specifically, she ‘discloses the divine mysteries to those who truly and justly have the name of “bearers of the sacred vessels” and “wearers of the sacred robes”’ (*δεικνύουσαν τὰ θεῖα τοῖς ἀληθῶς καὶ δικαίως ἱεραφόροις καὶ ἱεροστόλοις προσσαγορευομένοις*, 352b).

These two names are then explained. The initiates are *ἱεραφόροι* because they have stored the *ιερός λόγος* in their soul after receiving it from Isis (352b). In their turn, they give ‘intimations, some dark and shadowy, some clear and bright, of their concepts about the gods’ (*τὰ μὲν μέλανα καὶ σκιώδη τὰ δὲ φανερά καὶ λαμπρὰ τῆς περὶ θεῶν ὑποδηλοῦντες οἰήσεως*, 352b). The character of these intimations, Plutarch explains rather enigmatically, is evidenced by their robes. Both *ὑποδηλοῦντες* and the ambiguous combination of light and darkness also anticipate the examples of religious practices that follow upon the rainbow comparison (359a). The priests, in other words, function like the *ἄλλα* (~ the cloud) in the rainbow passage by receiving and transmitting the *διάνοια* (~ the light of the sun) emitted by the *λόγος* (~ the sun) (352c). Pursuing the ideal of *ὁμοίωσις θεῶ*, the priests imitate Isis’ role as receptacle and her work of collection and revelation.

We have to wait until the end of the work to learn more about these robes:

στολαὶ δ’ αἰ μὲν Ἴσιδος ποικίλαι ταῖς βαφαῖς (περὶ γὰρ ὕλην ἢ δύναμις αὐτῆς πάντα γινομένην καὶ δεχομένην, φῶς σκότος, ἡμέραν νύκτα, πῦρ ὕδωρ, ζῶην θάνατον, ἀρχὴν τελευτήν)· ἡ δ’ Ὀσίριδος οὐκ ἔχει σκιὰν οὐδὲ ποικιλμόν, ἀλλ’ ἐν ἀπλοῦν τὸ φωτοειδές· ἄκρατον γὰρ ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ ἀμιγῆς τὸ πρῶτον καὶ νοητόν. (*De Is. et Os.* 382c)

As for the robes, those of Isis are variegated in their colours; for her power is concerned with matter which becomes everything and receives everything, light and darkness, day and night, fire and water,

¹⁶² Cf. Helmbold 1957: 104; Hardie 1992: 4761 n. 73. Griffiths 1970: 260 is more sceptical about the connection between Osiris and *λόγος* in 351f, but he can only be so by proposing to emend *λόγον* to *νέκρον*. Plutarch uses *λόγος* to describe Osiris at 371a; cf. also 372e.

life and death, beginning and end. But the robe of Osiris has no shading or variety in its colour, but only one single colour like to light. For the beginning is combined with nothing else, and that which is primary and conceptual is without admixture.

As it turns out, the robes are not only a symbol of the disclosure of the λόγος. They also serve as a cosmological symbol.¹⁶³ The ποικιλία associated with Isis denotes the sensible realm, while the light associated with Osiris, whose association with the sun (368d, 371f–372e) is recalled here, points to the intelligible realm. This is in line with Plutarch's Platonic interpretation of the interactions between Isis and Osiris:

ἡ γὰρ Ἴσις ἐστὶ μὲν τὸ τῆς φύσεως θῆλυ καὶ δεκτικὸν ἀπάσης γενέσεως, καθὸ τιθήνη καὶ πανδεχῆς ὑπὸ τοῦ Πλάτωνος, ὑπὸ δὲ τῶν πολλῶν μυριώνυμος κέκληται διὰ τὸ πάσας ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου τρεπομένη μορφὰς δέχεσθαι καὶ ιδέας. ἔχει δὲ σύμφυτον ἔρωτα τοῦ πρώτου καὶ κυριωτάτου πάντων, ὃ τὰγαθῶν ταυτὸν ἐστὶ, κἀκεῖνο ποθεῖ καὶ διώκει· τὴν δ' ἐκ τοῦ κακοῦ φεύγει καὶ διωθεῖται μοῖραν, ἀμφοῖν μὲν οὔσα χώρα καὶ ὕλη, ῥέπουσα δ' αἰεὶ πρὸς τὸ βέλτιον καὶ παρέχουσα γεννᾶν ἐξ ἑαυτῆς ἐκείνῳ καὶ κατασπείρειν εἰς ἑαυτὴν ἀπορροᾶς καὶ ὁμοιότητος, αἷς χαίρει καὶ γέγηθε κυσκομένη καὶ ὑποπιπλαμένη τῶν γενέσεων. εἰκὼν γὰρ ἐστὶν οὐσίας <ἡ> ἐν ὕλῃ γένεσις καὶ μίμημα τοῦ ὄντος τὸ γινόμενον. (372e–f)

Isis is, in fact, the female principle of Nature, and is receptive of every form of generation, in accord with which she is called by Plato the gentle nurse and the all-receptive, and by most people has been called by countless names, since, because of the force of Reason, she turns herself to this thing or that and is receptive of all manner of shapes and forms. She has an innate love for the first and most dominant of all things, which is identical with the good, and this she yearns for and pursues; but the portion which comes from evil she tries to avoid and to reject, for she serves them both as a place and means of growth, but inclines always towards the better and offers to it opportunity to create from her and to impregnate her with effluxes and likenesses in which she rejoices and is glad that she is made pregnant and teeming with these creations. For creation is the image of being in matter, and the thing created is a picture of reality.

¹⁶³ On the connections between epistemology and cosmology in *De Is. et Os.*, see Hirsch-Luipold 2002: 191–203. On the cosmological aspects of *De Is. et Os.*, see also p. 218.

Isis, then, is not only a goddess of wisdom with an epistemic function but also a goddess of nature with a cosmic function.¹⁶⁴ In this cosmological respect, too, she serves as a mediator. Plutarch explicitly associates her – as he implicitly associates the Pythia in *On the Oracles of the Pythia* – with Plato’s notion of receptacle (*Tim.* 49a, 50d–52d). Generation happens when Osiris’ ἀπορροαί are sown into, received, and distributed by Isis, who is again associated with plurality through her epithet μυριώνυμος.¹⁶⁵ The εἰκών of Osiris (οὐσία), who is again described as λόγος, appears in Isis (ὕλη) and is their son Horus, an ‘image of the intelligible world’ (εἰκόνα τοῦ νοητοῦ κόσμου, 373b [tr. modified¹⁶⁶]), ‘the work of Isis and the image and reflection and reason of Osiris’, in other words, the cosmos (373e–374e; cf. 377a: Ἴσιδος μὲν ἔργον εἰκόνα δὲ καὶ μίμημα καὶ λόγον Ὀσίριδος). Like the epistemological side of the Isis myth, this cosmological side is connected with the episode of Osiris’ dismemberment (375a–b).

Both the epistemological and the cosmological aspects of *On Isis and Osiris* thus present hints of the process described by the rainbow comparison: the emission of the λόγος appears as an image in a mediating receptacle. In other words, not only the myth but also the cosmos is akin to the rainbow. This image is eminently fitting if we consider Plutarch’s philosophical stance, which combines the centrality of Plato’s *Timaeus* with tendencies of Academic scepticism. As *Timaeus* has it, the cosmos is an εἰκών, a likeness, of the intelligible, and, therefore, any account about the cosmos is bound to be an εἰκῶς λόγος or μῦθος, a likely story (*Tim.* 29c–d; cf. p. 76).

There is one problematic aspect of associating the elements from the rainbow passage with Osiris (~ sun/λόγος), Isis (~ cloud/receptacle), and Horus (~ rainbow/cosmos) that should be addressed. While the connection between Osiris and the sun is explicitly confirmed in *On Isis and Osiris*, the association of Isis and the cloud seems to be unwarranted. After all, Isis’ cosmological association is with the moon, which serves

¹⁶⁴ This dual function of Isis is rightly emphasised by Torhoudt 1942: 2–6, 59, 91, III.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. 377a–b: τὸν μὲν διδόντα τὰς ἀρχάς, τὴν δ’ ὑποδεχομένην καὶ διανέμουσαν. (‘Osiris contributes the origins, and Isis receives them and distributes them.’) For Osiris’ ἀπορροαί, see also 365b, 366a, 371b, 375b–c, 382b. Here (and in *Amat.* 765d; cf. also *Quaest. Plat.* 2.1001a where the term ἀπόσπασμα is used), Plutarch uses ἀπορροή in a very different, much more exalted sense than he normally does (which I connected with *Phdr.* earlier, p. 336). Usually, ἀπορροή denotes a purely physical cause, especially in *Quaest. conv.* (e.g. 5.7.680f–681a) and *Quaest. nat.* (e.g. 19.916c–f quoting Empedocles fr. B89 DK); see Meeusen 2016: 309–310 for these two works and Dörrie 1976: 82–83 for a more general view.

¹⁶⁶ For reasons passing understanding, the Loeb translator often translates νοητός to ‘perceptible’.

as a receptacle for the sun (368c–d; 372d–e). However, the connection between the moon and the cloud in which a rainbow appears is not as far-fetched as it may seem. Both the light of the moon and the rainbow are reflections of the sun. This must have been important to Plutarch, since reflection is a leitmotif in the dialogue *On the Face in the Moon*.

In that work, reflection first comes up as the explanation of the rainbow (*De facie* 920f–921b). This explanation is given as a comparison to the theory that the face in the moon is due to the reflection of earth's outer ocean. This theory is subsequently criticised (921b–921f), but not the notion that the light of the moon, in which the face can be discerned, is caused by reflection. The comparison between the moon and the cloud, then, remains valid and is picked up again much later: the double rainbow is used to explain why a reflection is weaker when the reflecting surface is far away, which is the case for the moon (937a–b).¹⁶⁷ As the so-called scientific part of *On the Face in the Moon* concludes, providing reflections might well be the very purpose of the moon (938e–f).¹⁶⁸ Although the myth, which forms the second part of the dialogue, suggests a different purpose, reflection is also important in this more metaphysical section: the moon is associated with Kore 'because that is what we call the part of the eye in which is reflected the likeness of him who looks into it as the light of the sun is seen in the moon' (ὅτι καὶ τοῦ ὄμματος, ἐν ᾧ τὸ εἶδωλον ἀντιλάμπει τοῦ βλέποντος, ὥσπερ τὸ ἡλίου φέγγος ἐνορᾶται τῇ σελήνῃ, κόρην προσαγορεύομεν, 942d).¹⁶⁹

Why, then, did Plutarch forego the more obvious receptacle (the moon) and replace it with another (the cloud in which the rainbow appears)? A tentative answer is that moon imagery is helpful to point to the difference between the ultimate cause (the sun) and the receptacle (the moon) – and in that respect, it was fitting for use in *Against Colotes* – but less useful to distinguish between the receptacle and the resulting reflection. Although the moon is a receptacle for the light of the sun, this process of reflection does not result in an ἔμφρασις. This is discussed in detail in *On the Face in the Moon* (936b–937c) and must have appeared

¹⁶⁷ The connection between the initial mention of the rainbow, illustrating a theory that is rejected, and the eventual explanation of the light of the moon as a reflection of the sun is also subtly acknowledged by the participants in the dialogue. The mathematician Apollonides, who was quite pleased with the explanation involving the reflection of the outer ocean (921b), apparently still endorses it later in the dialogue, when he comments on some objections that they are common (κοινά) to both the theory he prefers and the theory that has the moon reflecting the light of the sun (936d): both theories, then, depend on the understanding of how reflection works.

¹⁶⁸ Other references to the moon as reflecting the sun's light: 928c, 929a–930e, 935c, 936b–937e.

¹⁶⁹ The reference to the Platonic *First Alcibiades* 133a is unmistakable.

to Plutarch as an important difference between rainbow and moonlight. Moon imagery would have made it much more difficult than rainbow imagery to distinguish precisely between the receptacle (Isis) and the resulting ἔμφασις (Horus, the cosmos).

Something similar seems to happen in the *Dialogue on Love*, where we have a shift from imagery involving the sun (~ Eros, the intelligible) and the moon (~ Aphrodite, the bodily) (764d) to imagery involving the rainbow as a sensible image of the intelligible that appears in a body (cf. *Non posse* 1105d; *De def. or.* 431f for the comparison of the body with a cloud) (765e–766b). This shift is abruptly aborted when Plutarch reverts to moon imagery to bring out the eschatological aspect at the end of the imagery sequence (766b). As this overview shows, the notion of the sensible as a reflection of the intelligible appears in different guises in Plutarch's thought. Rainbow and moonlight are both images that evoke this notion, and this may explain the shift in the sequence of images in the *Dialogue on Love*. This brand of 'metaphorical catoptrics'¹⁷⁰ includes both epistemological and ontological aspects, as we have seen in the case of *On Isis and Osiris*. For Plutarch, then, the myth of Isis and Osiris functioned not only as a myth about how the sensible realm and the intelligible realm are connected but also as a myth about the interpretation of myth. While the sequence of images in the *Dialogue of Love* was mainly concerned with the epistemological side, we shall now see how Plutarch uses the sun imagery again while returning to the ontological perspective of his earlier doxography of cosmic love.

5. *Cosmic and human love (770a–b)*

In *On Isis and Osiris*, as the previous section has shown, Osiris appears as a demiurgic figure, and the sun is his image. He can also be called Eros if we try to fit him into the framework of Hesiod's *Theogony* (*De Is. et Os.* 374c). This is the passage that Kierkegaard quoted, as I mentioned

¹⁷⁰ McCarty 1989. A catoptric metaphor related to the one I traced in *De Is. et Os.* may well be hidden in Apuleius' interpretation of Isis in the *Golden Ass*, if Libby 2011 is correct. Other explorations of metaphorical catoptrics include Frontisi-Ducroux and Vernant 1997; Lada-Richards 2005; Ypsilanti 2006; Bartsch 2006: 15–114. Mirror imagery is an important aspect of Plutarch's thought; see Fuhrmann 1964: 98 n. 2; Duff 1999b: 30–34; Stadter 2003; 2015g: 237–243; Zadorojnyi 2010; Frazier 2011. Rainbow imagery (as well as moon imagery) can be seen as a case of mirror imagery, which takes on special significance because it is grounded in cosmology. In *De Is. et Os.* 381a, another catoptric metaphor is introduced when Plutarch compares the images of the divine, which appear in certain sacred animals, to the images of the sun, which appear in drops of water. Again, at 382b he speaks of these animals as mirrors through which we can honour the divine; cf. p. 112, p. 266 n. 266.

at the beginning of this chapter. Having come to the end, we should now be better equipped to understand the juxtaposition in this passage of Eros as primary cosmic principle and Eros as the offspring of this primary cosmic principle. The cosmology of *On Isis and Osiris*, as it has been discussed in the previous section, would suggest that the answer should be sought in the dynamics of reflection: insofar as Horus (the cosmos) is the reflection of Osiris (the demiurge/form of the good) in Isis (the receptacle/matter), he can indeed be called Eros, since he is an image, having a mixed nature (φύσει μικτὸν, 374c), of intelligible Eros. Like the Platonic cosmos, Horus combines intelligible and sensible being (cf. *De an. procr.* 1013b–c). The birth of Horus is, as is the birth of Eros in Plato's *Symposium*, itself a love story of sorts:¹⁷¹ Osiris (the demiurge/form of the good) and Isis (the receptacle/matter) love each other (Ἴσιν δὲ καὶ Ὅσιριν ἐρῶντας ἀλλήλων, 356a), and Horus (the cosmos) is the result. What *On Isis and Osiris* adds to Plato's *Symposium* is a cosmic story that shows how love somehow bridges the gap between the intelligible and the sensible. This, albeit adjusted to his own philosophical framework, might have been what Kierkegaard was after when choosing to make the detour via Plutarch's work to explain Plato's symposium: more so than the *Symposium*, *On Isis and Osiris* shows how love, as a synthesis of 'the infinite and the finite', pertains not merely to ethics but to 'existence'. One could even go as far as to suggest that this connection between existence and ethics was what Kierkegaard sought in Greek philosophy in general and what he found lacking in the philosophy of his own time.¹⁷²

The bulk of the cosmic love story that is *On Isis and Osiris* mostly emphasises the love of Isis for Osiris rather than the reciprocity (372e, 374f, 383a). The emphasis is different but the story is the same when, in the *Dialogue on Love*, Plutarch finally connects the demiurgic Eros of his doxography of cosmic love (section 2) with the sun imagery (section 3). Within the context of an encomium on marriage (769f–770a), which emphasises the need for reciprocity, he returns to the Euripides passage (fr. 898 *TrGF*) from which he has quoted earlier (*Amat.* 756d):

καὶ γὰρ ὁ νόμος βοηθεῖ καὶ γεννήσεως κοινῆς <οὔσης> καὶ τοὺς θεοὺς Ἔρωτος ἢ φύσις ἀποδείκνυσι δεομένους. οὕτω γὰρ ἔρᾶν μὲν ὄμβρου γαῖαν οἱ ποιηταὶ λέγουσι καὶ γῆς οὐρανόν, ἐρᾶν δ' ἥλιον σελήνης οἱ φυσικοὶ καὶ συγγίνεσθαι καὶ κυεῖσθαι· καὶ γῆν δ' ἀνθρώπων μητέρα καὶ ζώων καὶ φυτῶν ἀπάντων γένεσιν οὐκ ἀναγκαῖον ἀπολέσθαι ποτὲ καὶ σβεσθῆναι παντάπασι, ὅταν ὁ δεινὸς ἔρωτος ἢ μέρος τοῦ θεοῦ

¹⁷¹ See Chiodi 1986.

¹⁷² Cf. Furtak 2010b: 88–89.

τὴν ὕλην ἀπολίπη καὶ παύσεται ποθοῦσα καὶ διώκουσα τὴν ἐκεῖθεν ἀρχὴν καὶ κίνησιν; (*Amat.* 770a–b [text modified¹⁷³])

The law, in fact, assists since procreation too is a shared undertaking; and nature shows that the gods need love. It is in this sense, then, that the poets say that ‘the earth loves rain’ [Eur., fr. 898.7 *TrGF*] and that heaven loves earth; and in this sense, too, natural philosophers assert that the sun loves the moon and that they unite and that she conceives. And since earth is the mother of all men and a source of generation for all beasts and plants, will she not be destined to perish at some time or other and be completely extinguished if ever the mighty love or a part of the god abandons matter and if ever she stops longing for and pursuing the principle of her motion which derives from that source? [tr. modified]

This passage is supposed to illustrate (γάρ) the beneficial character of a marriage based on mutual love. The three branches of the *theologia tripertita* are pressed into service once again to sanction this reciprocity. Just like the law encourages the sexual reciprocity of male and female, the poets explain how earth (female) loves rain (male) and how heaven (male) loves earth (female); the natural philosophers explain how the sun (male) loves the moon (female), how they mutually get together, and how this results in the pregnancy of the female; they also point out that earth (female) would perish if Eros (male) left her and, conversely, if earth (female) would stop pursuing Eros (male). The whole passage is carefully constructed to bring out the importance of reciprocity across the board, starting on the human level and working up to the level of the demiurgic Eros.¹⁷⁴

The natural philosophers’ take on the matter recalls the story of Isis and Osiris and places sex within a cosmological framework. Like the moon, Penia, who can be associated with Isis and thus with the moon, gets pregnant (κῆσασαν, *De Is. et Os.* 374c; κυῖσκομένη, 368c and 372f ~ κνεῖσθαι, *Amat.*) by Poros/Osiris/sun. Their sexual encounter (συνεῖναι, *De Is. et Os.* 368c; συνοῦσαν 374f; ~ συγγίνεσθαι, *Amat.*), which springs from genuine love (ἔρωτι, 374f), is a model for human sexuality (374f–375a).¹⁷⁵ Isis, who like Penia serves as cosmic, generative mother (368c, 373e) and can be identified with Hesiod’s γῆ (374b–c), loves and

¹⁷³ See Demulder 2018: 24–26 on this passage.

¹⁷⁴ Right before this passage, Plutarch once again invokes the notion of κρᾶσις to stress this pervasive reciprocity (cf. *Con. praec.* 142f–143a); on the cosmological aspect of this notion, which, given the context, is probably present here, see p. 133.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. *De facie* 929c, 944e for sexual language in the description of the rapport between moon and sun.

pursues Osiris (ποθεῖ καὶ διώκει, 372e¹⁷⁶ ~ ποθοῦσα καὶ διώκουσα, *Amat.*).¹⁷⁷ As χώρα καὶ ὕλη (372f), she both receives and yearns for intelligible Osiris and it is this constant process that ensures stability of Horus, the cosmos, which is not ἄφθαρτος but ἀειγενής (374d).¹⁷⁸ In the passage from the *Dialogue on Love*, the same thought is expressed negatively: the cosmos would perish if the rapport between Eros and the cosmic mother disappeared.

Plutarch's connection of Euripides' verse on earth and rain with human love can be contrasted with how Aristotle uses the same verse at the beginning of his discussion of φιλία in the *Nicomachean Ethics*:

διαμφισβητεῖται δὲ περὶ αὐτῆς οὐκ ὀλίγα. οἱ μὲν γὰρ ὁμοιότητά τινα τιθέασιν αὐτὴν καὶ τοὺς ὁμοίους φίλους, ὅθεν τὸν ὁμοίον φασιν ὡς τὸν ὁμοίον, καὶ κολοῖον ποτὶ κολοῖον, καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα· οἱ δ' ἐξ ἐναντίας κεραμεῖς πάντας τοὺς τοιούτους ἀλλήλοις φασὶν εἶναι. καὶ περὶ αὐτῶν τούτων ἀνώτερον ἐπιζητοῦσι καὶ φυσικώτερον, Εὐριπίδης μὲν φάσκων ἐρᾶν μὲν ὄμβρου γαῖαν ξηρανθεῖσαν, ἐρᾶν δὲ σεμνὸν οὐρανὸν πληρούμενον ὄμβρου πεσεῖν ἐς γαῖαν, καὶ Ἡράκλειτος τὸ ἀντίξουν συμφέρον καὶ ἐκ τῶν διαφερόντων καλλίστην ἁρμονίαν καὶ πάντα κατ' ἔριν γίνεσθαι· ἐξ ἐναντίας δὲ τούτοις ἄλλοι τε καὶ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς· τὸ γὰρ ὁμοίον τοῦ ὁμοίου ἐφίεσθαι. τὰ μὲν οὖν φυσικὰ τῶν ἀπορημάτων ἀφείσθω (οὐ γὰρ οἰκεῖα τῆς παρούσης σκέψεως)· ὅσα δ' ἐστὶν ἀνθρωπικὰ καὶ ἀνήκει εἰς τὰ ἦθη καὶ τὰ πάθη, ταῦτ' ἐπισκεψώμεθα, οἷον [...]. (*EN* 8.1155a32–b10)

But there are not a few disputes about the subject [i.e. friendship]. Some people suppose that it is a kind of likeness, and that those that

¹⁷⁶ Cf. *De Is. et Os.* 374d (ποθοῦσαν), 375a (ποθεῖν), 383a (διώκουσαν).

¹⁷⁷ The identification of Isis with γένεσις and γῆ, which is echoed in the passage from *Amat.* under discussion as I understand it, should not be understood physically but metaphysically (see *De Is. et Os.* 376f–377a). See Roskam 2017 on physical and metaphysical allegory – and the zetetic process in which these modes of explanation are voiced – in *De Is. et Os.*

¹⁷⁸ As opposed to Osiris, who is principally ἄφθαρτος (373a); cf. Pl., *Tim.* 37d on the relation between the cosmos and its model. Parallel with the passage from *Amat.* (ὁ δεινὸς ἔρωσ ἢ μέρος τοῦ θεοῦ), the fact that Isis is indeed filled by Osiris (πληρουμένην δ' ὑπ' αὐτοῦ, 374d) can also be phrased as her being filled with the most dominant and purest *parts* (ἀναμιπλαμένην τοῖς κυριωτάτοις μέρεσι καὶ καθαρωτάτοις, 375a). I take Plutarch to have been thinking along the lines of *Quaest. Plat.* 2.1001c when searching to find a way of talking about divine presence in matter without giving in to immanentism: the cosmic soul can indeed be said to be a μέρος of the demiurge; cf. p. 302 n. 57, as well as Demulder 2018: 26–27 where I defend the reading μέρος in *Amat.* 770b, which has been consistently emended since the earliest editions of Plutarch.

are alike are friends, which is the source of sayings such as ‘Like tends to like’, and ‘Jackdaw to jackdaw’, and so on, whereas others take the contrary position and say that like to like is always a matter of the proverbial potters. And in relation to these same things they pursue the question further, taking it to a more general and scientific level – Euripides claiming that ‘Ever lusts the earth for rain’ when it has become dry, ‘Lusts too the mighty heaven, filling full with rain | To fall on earth’, Heraclitus talking of hostility bringing together, the divergent making finest harmony and of all things coming to be through strife; but taking a view contrary to these there is Empedocles, for one, who says that like seeks like. Now those problems that come from natural science we may set to one side, since they are not germane to the present inquiry; let us look further into those that belong to the human sphere and relate to characters and affective states, e.g. [...].¹⁷⁹

Aristotle gives quite a few testimonies on cosmic love, including the verse from Euripides, but then denies the relevance of these considerations: they belong to physics (φυσικά, φυσικώτερον) and Aristotle’s current interest is in ethics (ἀνθρωπικά και ἀνήκει εἰς τὰ ἥθη και τὰ πάθη).¹⁸⁰ It is not entirely clear if Aristotle’s intention here is to criticise thinkers who investigate ethical phenomena by having recourse to physical theories. On the one hand, he just seems to consider the two domains to be different, not incompatible: investigating the physical side is ἀνώτερον ἐπιζητεῖν.¹⁸¹ On the other hand, Aristotle seems to consider the use of these physical arguments useless for his present enquiry (ἀφείσθω), so criticism of those using them is at least implicit. Moreover, starting from physical arguments means getting off on the wrong foot: as Aristotle presents it, arguments like these are bound to end up in dispute (διαμφοισβητεῖται). Aristotle is more explicit about all this in the parallel passage of the *Eudemian Ethics* (7.1235a4–31), where our Euripides fr. 898 *TrGF* is quoted as well: the physical views are ‘overly general and so greatly opposed to each other’ (λίαν τε καθόλου <καὶ> κεχωρισμένα τοσοῦτον), whereas ethical arguments are ‘obviously more relevant and

¹⁷⁹ Tr. Rowe in Rowe and Broadie 2002.

¹⁸⁰ At *EN* 8.1159b21–24 Aristotle briefly slips into a comparison with physics before repeating that such considerations do not have a place in an ethical discussion: they are ἀλλοτριώτερα.

¹⁸¹ Dirlmeier 1979: 511: ‘Der Ausdruck enthält an sich keine Kritik, also nicht: manche holen die Argumente (allzu) weit her, indem sie von einer F[reundschaft] unter den Elementen sprechen. Die Ethik entstand eben erst sozusagen unter den Händen des Ar[istoteles]; da war eine methodische Abgrenzung durchaus am Platz [...]’. See also Stewart 1892: 268 on the notion of φυσικῶς ἐπιζητεῖν.

germane to the appearances' (ἤδη ἐγγυτέρω καὶ οἰκεῖται τῶν φαινομένων).¹⁸² Plutarch does not insist on such a distinction. Throughout the *Dialogue on Love*, the cosmic perspective informs the ethical content.

6. Concluding remarks

In his *Dialogue on Love*, Plutarch offers an unexpected brand of Platonic love (section 1). Drawing on traditions of (pre-Platonic) civic, philosophical (esp. Empedocles), and poetic (esp. Hesiod) theology, he identifies Eros with the Platonic demiurge and posits a loving and lovable cosmos that contrasts with that depicted in Euripides' *Hippolytus* (section 2 on *Amat.* 755e–757a). Through a rewrite of Plato's image of the cave adapted to the insights of the *Timaeus*, he goes on to show how we have to rely on sensible, bodily love to make mediated contact with this supreme, intelligible good which is Eros (section 3 on *Amat.* 764a–766b). After all, the sensible is a reflection of the intelligible, as the love story of Isis and Osiris in particular shows (section 4). The cosmic and the human perspective are brought together when the importance of reciprocal sexuality on all cosmic levels is evoked (section 5 on *Amat.* 770a–b).

But is this cosmological ethics successful? The proof of the wedding cake is in the eating: shortly after the passage that exalts reciprocal love in the whole cosmos, the dialogue ends with the marriage of Ismenodora and Bacchon. At the same time, this ending warns us against hasty conclusions.¹⁸³ By their names alone, Ismenodora and Bacchon recall Isis and Osiris (cf. *De Is. et Os.* 364e for the connection between Osiris and Dionysus/Bacchus). In this sense, they seem to be perfect representatives of cosmic love. It is surprising, however, as both the events (749d–e, 754e–755b, 771d–e) and the discussion (752e–754e) in the *Dialogue on Love* make clear, that Ismenodora plays the active role while Bacchon is altogether passive. In this respect they do not mirror their quasi-namesakes: in this relationship the woman takes on the role of the active, male cosmic principle and vice versa.

The discussion between the proponents and the critics of the marriage between Ismenodora and Bacchon can shed some light on this. Pisias, arguing against the marriage, regards it as a crime against nature if a woman takes charge (ἡ γὰρ φύσις παρανομεῖται γυναικοκρατούμενη, 755c). The character Plutarch, however, takes a different stance:

εἰ δ' ἄρχει βρέφους μὲν ἢ τίτθη καὶ παιδὸς ὁ διδάσκαλος ἐφήβου δὲ γυμνασίαρχος ἐραστῆς δὲ μειρακίου γενομένου δ' ἐν ἡλικίᾳ νόμος

¹⁸² Tr. Inwood and Woolf 2013.

¹⁸³ Goldhill 1995: 144–161 is particularly brilliant on the tensions between the philosophical discussion and the events involving Ismenodora and Bacchon in this dialogue.

καὶ στρατηγὸς οὐδεὶς δ' ἄναρκτος οὐδ' αὐτοτελής, τί δεινὸν εἰ γυνὴ
νοῦν ἔχουσα πρεσβυτέρα κυβερνήσει νέου βίον ἀνδρός, ὠφέλιμος
μὲν οὐσα τῷ φρονεῖν μᾶλλον ἢδεῖα δὲ τῷ φιλεῖν καὶ προσηνής;
(*Amat.* 754d)

The nurse rules the infant, the teacher the boy, the gymnasiarch the youth, his admirer the young man who, when he comes of age, is ruled by law and his commanding general. No one is his own master, no one is unrestricted. Since this is so, what is there dreadful about a sensible older woman piloting the life of a young man? She will be useful because of her superior intelligence; she will be sweet and affectionate because she loves him.

The criterion for ruling is – as we have seen in chapter 4 – the rationality that is exhibited by the demiurge and the movement of the sun. Ismenodora excels in intelligence (φρονεῖν) and, hence, in virtue (754a). In the discussion on heterosexuality versus homosexuality, both camps indeed assume both the conformity to φύσις *and* the virtuousness of their brand of love while denying both aspects for the opposing brand (750c–752a). This connection between conformity to φύσις and virtue is maintained once, later in the dialogue, Eros has been introduced as the demiurge (757f–758a, 758c, 759d). From this new perspective, it is important for the character Plutarch to emphasise that women can be virtuous (767b, 769b). At the same time, there is no escaping that the yardstick for virtue in women is markedly male throughout Plutarch's works.¹⁸⁴ Here, too, when Ismenodora is said to take the lead on account of virtue, we should understand that this includes her having more courage, or simply masculinity (τὸ ἀνδρεῖον, 769b), than Bacchon.¹⁸⁵ Despite her name, Ismenodora taking up the leading role involves her assimilating herself to male Osiris and not to female Isis: like Osiris with regard to Isis, her role is to impart rationality to her partner, as the character Plutarch indicates from the outset in the passage quoted above (754d).

Through the influence of Platonic cosmology, the sexual relation between an active male and a passive female becomes the gold standard in Plutarch's Platonism (the misogynistic *Precepts of Marriage* make this abundantly clear), but relations in which the woman takes on the active role can be subsumed under this model.¹⁸⁶ The same goes for homosexual

¹⁸⁴ Roskam 2004: 264–269.

¹⁸⁵ The importance of this is brought out by the story of Empona, which concludes the discussion of *Amat.*; cf. p. 317–318.

¹⁸⁶ It should be clear, then, that I am far from painting Plutarch as a (proto-)feminist here, as some have tried to do, most patronisingly so Flacelière 1979: 269: 'Si, d'aventure, un jour ou l'autre, le M. L. F., Mouvement de Libération de la Femme, voulait se

relations.¹⁸⁷ As we have seen earlier, most notably in the cases of music (chapter 2) and the symposium (chapter 3), cosmological ethics is not an ethics of mere physicality in the modern sense of the word: conformity to φύσις – and this is where the Stoics went wrong – is first and foremost conformity to a higher nature, to rationality.¹⁸⁸ The sensible realm is crucial in this process, but it is not the ultimate criterion or goal. This should serve as a reminder of what cosmic love – and cosmological ethics in general – is about in Plutarch's eyes: the only criterion is whether we succeed in bridging the gap between the sensible and the intelligible.

choisir un patron, il pourrait, il devrait, à mon avis, songer à Plutarque de Chéronée [...]; cf. Vernière 1994; Nikolaidis 1997. I think Chapman 2011: 3 hits the mark when describing Plutarch as a 'benevolent chauvinist'.

¹⁸⁷ Their aberration from the gold standard can explain why the character Plutarch, while stating that there is no difference between loving male or female beauty and thus suggesting a concept of love that embraces both homosexuality and heterosexuality (*Amat.* 767a–b, although the state of the text makes it hard to judge the rhetorics at play in this passage), is subsequently dismissive of homoerotic sex (768e) only to conclude that a commendable, durable erotic relationship between males (which, by definition, should include sex, as we have seen: p. 289) is not impossible but only rare (ὀλίγας, 770c) – not unlike, presumably, relationships in which the woman takes on the leading role. Daphnaeus, the main proponent of heterosexuality in the opening discussion, similarly dismisses homosexuality (751d), only to come to a unitary view, indicating that the earlier dismissive statement was made for the sake of argument (φιλονεικῶν, 751f).

¹⁸⁸ Cf. e.g. *De virt. mor.* 450e; *Ad princ. iner.* 781d; *Gryllus* 991f–992a.

Concluding remarks

Plato's *Timaeus* led to very different interpretations in Antiquity, as is well known. That these interpretations led to different ethical stances has received far less attention. As this book has shown, both Plutarch's general ethical theory and many practical aspects deriving from this theory should be explained by pointing to the *Timaeus* and, more specifically, by keeping in mind Plutarch's particular interpretation of the *Timaeus*. In Plutarch's thought, exegesis and ethics are intrinsically connected.

Chapter I showed this by tying Plutarch's exegetical strategies when reading Plato to the Platonic world view that he distilled from this reading. Plutarch had different techniques to present the polyphonous Plato as a perfectly consistent thinker: he applied a degree of flexibility in both Plato's use of concepts and his own use of Plato that did not threaten the fundamental consistency; his unitarian approach of Plato's works allowed for the acknowledgement of certain biographical developments (in this case changes in attitude due to Plato's growing older); he avoided combining literal and non-literal interpretations of Platonic dialogues, thus maintaining the exegetical consistency of his literal reading of the cosmogony of the *Timaeus* that he adopted on theological grounds. From this creative approach to Plato's consistency, an optimistic view of the cosmos emerged that combines the providence of a transcendent demiurge with a pious dualism according to which irrationality, although it is the cause of adversity, is an inextricable part of the cosmos and thus a necessary contribution to the good that is the cosmos.

The cosmological ethics that Plutarch built on this cosmology has turned out to be markedly different from the kind of ethics found in Stoicism, the school most readily associated with cosmological ethics.¹ As Betegh has shown, early Stoic cosmological ethics also traces back to a specific interpretation of Plato's *Timaeus*.² This Stoic reading, however, denies both the transcendence of the demiurge and the inherent irrationality in the cosmos: aspects that have come up time and again in the course of this book as crucial to Plutarch's ethical thought. Accordingly, in each chapter I have brought out how, with regard to transcendence and

¹ Plutarch is a witness of this: *De Stoic. rep.* 1035a–f, 1049f–1050c; *De comm. not.* 1076e–1077a. The second book of Cicero's *On the Nature of the Gods* (esp. 2.153) gives a lively impression of how the Stoics connected ethics and cosmology; cf. also e.g. Boeri 2009; Holmes 2014. On Plutarch's criticism of Stoicism as a deviation from Platonism, see Boys-Stones 1997; Opsomer 2017b: 312–320.

² Betegh 2003.

irrationality, Plutarchan cosmological ethics contrasts significantly with more Stoic-minded approaches to the themes under discussion. While it is true, then, to state that Plutarch's ethics is based on the cosmology of Plato's *Timaeus*, it is more accurate to state that it is based on Plutarch's particular interpretation of the cosmology of Plato's *Timaeus*.

While the human musician, for instance, could be compared to the transcendent demiurge to a certain extent, since both are creators of harmony, Plutarch made it abundantly clear that this comparison is nuanced by insisting on the sensible character of music (chapter 2): while the demiurge harmonises an imperceptible cosmic soul (and there is no such thing as a harmony of the spheres that can be heard), the musician's harmony is the object of perception (and is not the result of divine inspiration). Divine transcendence is key when interpreting this image: the musician cannot be a god and god cannot be a musician; they function in different ontological realms. At the same time, both the demiurge and the musician have to take into account irrationality. In this regard, Plutarch goes beyond what is warranted by Plato's *Timaeus*. Unlike Plato, Plutarch conceives of cosmic and human soul as perfect parallels: both consist of rational and irrational parts. If anything, this heightens the relevance of cosmology for ethics in Plutarch's work, since, in this model, cosmological statements can be more directly applied to human behaviour and human acts can be more readily confronted with the cosmic model.

The other case studies in this book have confirmed this combined attention to divine transcendence and ever-present irrationality. At the symposium (chapter 3), where the symposiarch should act like the Platonic demiurge and organise his party like the cosmos, concerns about purely sensible matters such as food and wine are important yet ultimately subordinate to higher philosophical pursuits. In politics (chapter 4), the statesman should imitate the demiurge, although Plutarch makes sure to emphasise the differences between the human politician and the transcendent god as well. The demiurge-like politician has to hold a compromising attitude towards irrational elements. Indeed, like the sun – and again Plutarch's reading of the *Timaeus* is hard to square with Plato's text here, as he associates the cosmic circle of difference with the psychic ingredient of difference and this again with irrationality – the politician's course is defined by both rationality and irrationality. In *On Tranquillity of Mind* (chapter 5), εὐθυμία is shown to depend on a correct approach of τύχη, caused by the irrationality present in the cosmic soul. This approach consists in (a) an awareness of a diachronically stable self, which the human soul inherits from the cosmic soul, (b) an awareness of cosmic dualism, which leads to the acceptance of adversity, and (c) an awareness that the cosmos consists of sensible images of a divine, intelligible reality, which allows us to see that the good by far outweighs the bad. While *On Tranquillity of Mind* started from a concern with adversity before

celebrating cheerfulness, the *Dialogue on Love* (chapter 6) is altogether more cheerful from the outset. Love in the sensible realm gives us a way to reach intelligible Eros, who is identified with Plato's demiurge and form of the good. For Plutarch, Platonic love even includes Platonic sex. Nonetheless, restrictions apply once again: as long as we are alive, the pursuit of the transcendent always happens in a mediated, indirect way.

This notion that the sensible has a limited yet crucial value as an image of intelligibility is germane to Plato's *Timaeus*. In this regard, Plutarch's use of imagery, like his intertextual engagement with Plato, has come up repeatedly throughout this study as a creative tool with which he developed his cosmological ethics. While the musician as an image of the demiurge does not seem like a giant leap from the *Timaeus*, given its statements on both celestial and musical harmony, the demiurgic symposiarch – and the whole ensuing sympotic cosmos – shows Plutarch inventing new Platonic images (or at least thoroughly Platonising existing cultural images). In the case of the politician, who could be the image of both the intelligible demiurge and the sensible sun, we have seen how Platonic imagery is connected across different ontological levels and can be combined: like the politician, the sun is itself an image of the demiurge, but it can serve as a model for an image (the politician) as well. Similarly, in *On Tranquillity of Mind*, both everyday life and the religious festival contain images of intelligibility, and it would be a mistake to recognise only one of these as pointing towards the divine while rejecting the other. Hence, one can call the cosmos a temple and understand a temple as an image of the cosmos, thus defining one image in terms of another and stressing the parallels between macro- and microcosm. In the course of the book, similar two-way images have come up: the polis can be seen as a cosmos and the cosmos as a polis and the same goes for the symposium. At the same time, Plutarch is careful not to extend this two-way street into the intelligible realm: he is careful not to call the demiurge a musician, a symposiarch, or a politician. In the *Dialogue on Love*, finally, Plutarch invokes the sun as an image of the demiurge, familiar from (Middle Platonic interpretations of) Plato's *Republic*. Eventually, however, he substitutes his own, *Timaeus*-inspired image of the rainbow for Plato's image of the cave to, once again, drive home a point about our place in the cosmos: while we are tied to the sensible, we can and should pursue the intelligible through images.

This book has brought out the pervasiveness of Plutarch's cosmological ethics, the importance of which is not limited to strictly philosophical themes or technical works. The symposium as it is presented in the *Sympotic Questions*, for instance, turned out to be regulated through a complete system of cosmic images. Several of the *Lives* were discussed as well as encomiastic works on Rome (*De fort. Rom.*) and Alexander the Great (*De Al. Magn. fort.*). Plutarch's practical ethics were also folded

into the discussion – not only the general framework provided in *On Tranquillity of Mind* but also more specific works such as *Consolation to My Wife* and *On Exile*. In the cases of *On Tranquillity of Mind* and *Dialogue on Love* in particular, I have shown how awareness of cosmological ethics is important for an overall interpretation of the structure and content of these works. This wide range of works under consideration makes it safe to conclude that Plutarch's cosmological ethics shows a fundamental conceptual unity.

All in all, cosmological ethics turns out to be hard work. It is not just a matter of lying in the grass, looking up at the stars, and being filled with wholesomeness. It is a matter of always falling short of the transcendent ideal and always being confronted with adversity stemming from irrationality. At the same time, knowledge about the cosmos should instil in us realistic hopes and faithful optimism: our efforts to imitate the demiurge can create cosmos in several areas of our life and that of others. This is what constitutes the ethical τέλος of ὁμοίωσις θεῶ, and humans are, to recall for the last time the passage with which this book opened, 'fitted to derive from God no greater blessing than to become settled in virtue through copying and aspiring to the beauty and the goodness that are his' (οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν ὅ τι μείζον ἄνθρωπος ἀπολαύειν θεοῦ πέφυκεν ἢ τὸ μιμήσει καὶ διώξει τῶν ἐν ἐκείνῳ καλῶν καὶ ἀγαθῶν εἰς ἀρετὴν καθίστασθαι, *De sera num.* 550e).

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