PLUTARCH’S
POLITICAL THOUGHT

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I. Plutarch and Politics

Plutarch\(^1\) repeatedly expresses his opinion that politics is a business of utmost importance, of pivotal significance for human life. Politics, that is to say, active involvement in political life, is for him a, or better still, the essential human activity, a fundamental mode of being (βίος) of civilized people.

"For engaging in public affairs is not a special service which is ended when the need ends, but is a way of life of a tamed social animal living in an organized society, intended by nature to live through its allotted time the life of a citizen and in a manner devoted to honour and the welfare of mankind. Therefore it is fitting that men should be engaged, not merely one time have been engaged, in affairs of State."\(^2\)

On the other hand, public life "possesses pleasures most noble and great, those in fact from which the gods themselves, as we may reasonably suppose, derive their only or thier chief enjoyment. These are the pleasures that spring from good deeds and noble actions" (An seni 786 b). In his ethics, the political arête accordingly holds the central place.\(^3\) That is why he exhorts to active involvement in politics (Adv. Colot. 1126 a ff).\(^4\) He deems it a divine mandate\(^5\) and a life task: the politician "is always devoting his cares to the public weal and regards public office as his life and his work, not, like most

1. Translations from Plutarch’s works are adopted from the Loeb Classical Library, with some minor changes. References to the Lives are according to the sections of the Budé edition of R. Flacelière, E. Chambry and M. Juneaux. Praec. refers to the Praecepta gerendae rei publicae. I have made reference to works of Plutarch the authenticity of which is subject to serious doubt, only when the passages in question concur with passages from works that are known to be authentic. I have tried to avoid drawing conclusions only on the basis of passages from works the authenticity of which is doubtful.


4. Cf. also De uniis 826 b. This fragment, however, is very probably spurious (see G.J.D. Aalders, "Plutarch or pseudo-Plutarch? The Authorship of De Uniis in Re Publica Dominatione," Mn iv, 35 (1982), 72 ff. But the possibility may not be ruled out completely, that the author of this work has derived various things from works of Plutarch that have not been preserved.

5. ὃ ἐστὶ τοῦ λογικοῦ καὶ πολιτικοῦ σμήνους ἐπιμελεῖαν ἔχειν ὁ θεός ἔδωκεν, Praec. 823 f. Cp. n. 113.
people, as an interruption to leasure and a compulsory expense’’ (λειτουργία), Praec. 823 c. He consequently considers it mistaken to begin an affair that demands so much knowledge, wisdom, and experience, only when one is old (An seni 784 a-c; 788f ff). Politics is concerned with the highest interests of the community. When it is practised rightly one does not strive to attain wealth or fame; the purpose is to serve the community (An seni 783 f). That is why Plutarch qualifies the political quietism of Epicurus and his school as ἀφιλάνθρωπος (Non posse 1098 d).

In his eyes, political activity is a real sacred contest (An seni 785 c) and he is of the opinion that it is unseemly to abandon this high calling when one is advanced in years (An seni 784 a; 785 c ff.; 788 b). He who would press a Phocion, a Cato, a Pericles to withdraw from the public stage ‘‘is urging the statesman to do what is wrong and unseemly.’’

In his plea for participation in active politics, Plutarch appeals to earlier philosophers (Adv. Colot. 1126 a ff)7 He finds fault with the early Stoics for their abstaining from taking part in political activities (De Stoic. repugn. 1033 bc) and he considers it important for philosophers to maintain contact with leading figures among the politically powerful so that they can exercise a greater influence and can be active to the advantage of many people (Max. c. princ. 776 b ff.). For, those who can influence for good them on whom many are dependent, do much good, just as the opposite is the case with bad counsellors (Max. c. princ. 778 d ff.). It is then not surprising that he finds the disparaging of politics reprehensible (see Quom. adulator 57 d) and strongly opposes the Epicurean device λάθε βιωσάς.8 The political quietism of Epicurus and his school, according to him, in fact amounts to abrogating or abolishing laws and political community (Adv. Col. 1125 c; 1127 d).

But the picture that one gets of Plutarch’s life and work is not that of a man whose life was filled with all kinds of political activity. For sure, he definitely did not refuse to hold public office in the small community in which he lived, but his activities in this area remain limited to Greek local politics. He never held office in the Roman government and (Praec. 814 d) speaks slightly of the lobbying for lucrative posts as procurator and proconsul. The high honors conferred on him by Roman Emperors in his later years were, according to all appearances, honors whose relevant functions were only carried out ‘‘in a nominal capacity.’’9 But his local political activities must also have been of relatively limited scope,10 for Plutarch must have spent the greatest part of his life on his own study and

6. ἄδικα πείθει καὶ ἀχάριστα πράττειν τῶν πολιτικῶν, An seni 789 c.
7. Cf. also Ps.-Plut., De lib. educ. 8 ab: philosophical activity and practical politics must go together.
8. See his work De latenter vivendo and cf. also Non posse 1098 d.
development (the extent of his reading is impressive, even though he apparently does not always make firsthand quotations), on his activities as teacher and discussion leader for a group of philosophically interested people in Chaeronea, and on the preparation and writing of numerous essays which he saw published or which were found in his estate in a more or less advanced stage of completion and, in that form, were published. The preserved written inheritance of Plutarch is one of the most voluminous in non-Christian Greek literature and it is estimated that it forms about only half of the total of that which he has written. One can safely say that the writing of such an extensive set of works, with the necessary preparations and the discussions in his own circle which in many cases formed the foundation of his work, could never have been achieved if Plutarch had devoted a large part of his life to holding public office and to other governing activities.

In the rather sparse information that we have at our disposal concerning the life of Plutarch one certainly is not confronted with the image of a man for whom political activity was the most important pursuit. Also, the entirety of the writings of Plutarchus preserved for us does not give us the image of an author for whom politics held such a central place as is suggested in his statements quoted earlier. Plutarchus’ political tracts represent only a small part of his literary production, not even five percent of his Moralia, the size of which, in proportion to that of the Vitae, is about 7:6. Some of these works on political problems are more general in nature. These are, besides the rather conventionally moralizing De Exilio, particularly Maxime cum principibus philosopho esse disserendum and Ad principem ineruditum, in which Plutarch’s view comes to expression that philosophers must instruct and advise rulers, something which he, different from his famous contemporary Dio of Prusa, appears not to have put into practice himself. Perhaps the Politica, which has not been preserved, was also a work of general nature. Other political discourses are more concerned with the concrete functioning of the statesman in political practice, and for Plutarch that means the politics of the polis, with the limited possibilities for political activity which Roman rule offered the Greek city-state. Belonging to this category are the Praecepta gerendae rei publicae and An seni res publica gerenda

12. See Ziegler, op. cit., 60.
13. According to K. Mittelhaus, De Plutarchi praecptis gerendae rei publicae, Berlin 1911, 1 ff., this work and An seni, which show a remarkable amount of parallel passages, were written in the same period, that of Plutarch’s later years. Likewise H. Bengtson, Kleine Schriften, München 1974, 231 (“eine ausgesprochene Altersschrift’) and 560 and Ziegler, op. cit., 24 and 77. On the other hand, the tract was, according to Th. Renoirte, Les ‘conseils politiques’ de Plutarque, Louvain 1954, 112, written between 102 and 104 or
sit, especially in which works one finds what is closest to Plutarchus' heart regarding politics.\textsuperscript{14} The non-extant political treatises of Plutarchus also, judging from the titles,\textsuperscript{15} dealt primarily with questions related to the actions of the politician in practice, with the possible exception of the \textit{Política}. Furthermore, numerous points of contact exist between the two categories of political writings and the line separating them is fluid: "on ne peut séparer les unes des autres."\textsuperscript{16}

Plutarchus discusses statesmanship in the non-political works in the \textit{Moralia} as well. That is obvious, for he writes, as he says in \textit{De tuenda sanitate} 137 c, for the bearers of culture and those who are dedicated to public affairs (\textit{φιλόλογοι} and \textit{πολιτικοί}) But apart from the fact that this politics has a limited scope and is limited to the local self rule of various \textit{poleis} and at most regional federations of various \textit{poleis}, it is also an activity which does not demand permanent and full attention and which leaves much room for getting involved in philosophical, ethical, religious and scientific problems. And it is such problems which are of central importance in a large number of the writings in the \textit{Moralia}.

Politics in the broader context, national and world politics, is frequently discussed in Plutarch's biographies. The extant \textit{vitae} deal with great statesmen and generals: figures such as Demosthenes and Cicero are primarily treated as politicians in Plutarch's biographies, and not as thinkers or literary figures. To be sure, Plutarch dealt with other persons than statesmen and generals in a number of his non-extant biographies.\textsuperscript{17} But with the exception of Aratus\textsuperscript{18} these are all Boeotian in origin: Hesiod, Pindar, Crates and also Heracles, a figure from heroic legend who was perhaps meant as a Boeotian counterpart of the Athenian Theseus, whose life was described in the \textit{βίοι παράλληλοι}. As we will later see, the local traditions of his native area were close to his heart. But aside from this homage to the great Boeotians, Plutarchus as biographer dealt (almost) exclusively with great statesmen and generals. His aim in this, however, is not to

about 106/7; and it is, according to E. Valgiglio, \textit{Plutarco, Praecepta gerendae rei publicae}, Milano 1976, XX with n. 11, a relatively early work of Plutarch, written about 100, while \textit{An seni} was probably written significantly later. Bengtson, \textit{w. w.}, 560 asks "soll man sie etwa als einen offenen Brief an seine Landsleute auffassen?". Yet the \textit{Praecepta} are not directed to the Greeks in general, but very specifically to the aspiring politicians amongst them, and in so far as their content has more general significance, it does not apply exclusively to Greeks (see p. 27).

\textsuperscript{14} Comp. O. Gréard, \textit{De la morale de Plutarque}, Paris 1874\textsuperscript{2}, 223.
\textsuperscript{15} See Ziegler, \textit{op. cit.}, 67.
\textsuperscript{16} Gréard, \textit{op. cit.}, 207.
\textsuperscript{17} See Ziegler, \textit{op. cit.}, 258.
\textsuperscript{18} At least if this was the poet, as Ziegler, \textit{op. cit.} 61 considers probable, and the catalogue of Lamprias does not mean the \textit{vita} of the statesman Aratus of Sicyon mentioned there earlier, or the work mentioned in the same list, which has not been preserved, \textit{Quaestiones de Arati Signis}. 
extract lessons and to pass them on to contemporary and later political
leaders. This purpose of historical writing, which is what historians like
Thucydides and even Polybius had in mind, had fallen into the background
in the time of the Roman Empire when the political leadership was in-
creasingly determined ultimately by one man. With his biographies—which
he in fact explicitly distinguished from historical writing—Plutarch
attempted to sketch the moral personality of the person he was dealing with,
so that the reader would find examples, cautionary examples as well, for his
own performance and attitude to life. As he says in the praefatio on the vitae
of Timoleon and Aemilius Paullus (1–3):

"I began the writing of my 'Lives' for the sake of others, but I find that I am continuing
the work and delighting in it now for my own sake also, using history as a mirror and
endeavouring in a manner to fashion and adorn my life in conformity with the virtues
therein depicted. For the result is like nothing else than daily living and associating
together, when I receive and welcome each subject of my history in turn as my guest, so
to speak, and observe carefully 'how large he was and of what mien,' and select from
his career what is most important and most beautiful to know.

'And oh! what greater joy than this canst thou obtain,' and more efficacious for moral
improvement.'"

He is convinced that the acquaintance with good examples stimulates
 emulation which achieves more than pure imitation, as he in so many words
 says in his introduction to the life of Pericles (2,4):

"The Good creates a stir of activity towards itself, and implants at once in the spectator
an active impulse; it does not form his character by imitation alone, but through the
investigation of its work it furnishes him with a dominant purpose."

In order to do justice to the deterrent character of the bad examples, he
includes the biographies of Demetrius and Antonius and those of Alciiades
and Coriolanus in his collection βίοι παράλληλοί (see Demetr. 1, 5). Unlike in
the political tracts, his intention in the vitae is not to guide his readers toward
the right political attitude and the right political way of acting. While the
vitae are also full of political actions and events, they are not concerned with
politics as such. Statements and judgements by Plutarch about political
activity are not absent from the vitae, but they are no more than a by-
product of the concern of Plutarch with the moral elevation of the individual
person. Something of the same is the case in the Convivium septem sapientium.
While an important part thereof consists of discussions of political problems,
Plutarch is in this work concerned with something else, that is, with the
wisdom of life of the seven famous wise men. Plutarchus tries to give the
political problems which are discussed therein, the colour of the archaic
period (without fully succeeding, it might be added) in which this
conversation was to have taken place.19 The outspokenly unfavourable
judgement of the tyrant (which otherwise is definitely not limited to this

19. See G.J.D. Aalders, 'Political thought in Plutarch's Convivium Septem Sapientium', Mn IV,
30, 28 ff.
work of Plutarch; see p. 34 f.) is not directly applicable to the contemporary political scene, but can serve to throw light upon the wisdom and the moral greatness of the seven wise men.

However, it would be incorrect to conclude from what has just been said, that Plutarch on the one hand occasionally emphatically concurs with the conception of classical political philosophy (especially of his honored teacher Plato) that politics is the highest form of human activity, the "kingly art," but that this nevertheless received much more modest attention in his daily practice and literary activity. One must guard against seeing the distinction between personal ethics and political actions in Plutarch as too absolute. For him, politics is a part of ethics, as people generally thought in Antiquity: one finds this conception in Plato, Aristotle, the Stoas and others. The ancient political theory has in fact a strong ethical emphasis, and that is not in the last place the case with the arch-moralist that Plutarch really is.

Plutarch's political conceptions flow from, and are rooted in, the political theory of Greece, primarily from the 4th Century B.C., and assume the old Greek ideal of the city-community, of which the citizen forms an inseparable part, and the governing of which was the highest, the kingly art. To be sure, it is in no way Plutarch's pretention, like that of Plato's Socrates in the Gorgias (521 d), that all his philosophical activities and his teaching was the only true art of statesmanship because he was to make the rulers better thereby. But he does not see his political and scholarly (and literary) activities as mutually exclusive. Rather, they complement each other and have a number of common tangents and the same goal: the happiness and moral well-being of people; and insofar as it is not possible to be occupied with both at the same time, they can be pursued alternatively. In the old Greek world it was the custom that important political functions were filled in rotation, and particularly in Greek democracy the continual change of those filling government posts was rather consistently applied. The alternation of the exercising of political functions, and therefore of power, and being a private citizen, ἀρχεῖν καὶ ἄρχεσθαι, was considered as one of the most important characteristics of Greek democracy. The alternation

21. This pair of concepts is often used in the more general sense that one must be both able to rule and to be ruled, e.g. Soph., Ant. 669; Xen., Ages. 2, 16, especially in connection with the military organization, e.g. Pl., Laws 12, 942 c. One finds this also with Plutarch, particularly in connection with Sparta, see Apophth., Lac. 211 c; 212 bc; Ages. 20, 2; Lyc. 30, 3; Amat. 754 d. Likewise one finds the conception, that to be able to give orders or to rule, one must first have learned obedience (cf. Pl., Laws 6, 762, e; Aristot., Pol. 3, 1277 b 8 ff.; 7, 1333 a 2 f., and the aphorism ἄρχει πρῶτον μαθὼν ἄρχεσθαι, ascribed by Diog. Laert. 1, 60 to Solon), with Plutarch, Ages., 1, 4 and Praec. 806 f (where he quotes Pl., Laws 6, 762 e).
22. See G. J. D. Aalders, 'De democratische ideologie en de tegenkrachten', Lamps 6, 1973, 6. Comp. also Pl., Prot. 326 d; ps.-Pl., Epin. 976 d. Plutarch describes this pair of concepts as characteristic for the democracy An seni 783 d; Praec. 816 f.
between a "ruler" and a private citizen left room for non-political activities; and that was especially so in the Roman imperial time wherein the political role of the Greek poleis was severely shrunk. This was the case likewise with the members of the Roman senatorial order with whom Plutarch maintained close contacts. In this way Plutarch could, on the one hand, be in agreement with the old Greek tradition (out of which he lived) wherein politics is viewed as the highest human activity, and, on the other hand, develop extensive pedagogical, literary, philosophical and scientific activities.

We have already noticed how much Plutarch has been influenced in his thinking and feelings by the culture and ideas of the flourishing period of the Greek polis. This is not to say that Plutarch's political notions are bloodless and outdated hand-me-downs from a foregone era. However much Plutarch draws from, and is inwardly related to, a great past, he is not blind to the present or his own place and possibilities therein. Especially because of this, there are occasional, not inconsiderable nuances in Plutarch's extensive works with regard to his political notions. Insofar as these differences do not flow from the context of the statements in which they occur, they may not be explained as coming from a gratuitous following of different sources, although this would be the easier way. One must rather view things from the perspective of the tensions to which Plutarch's political thought is subjected, not only tensions between bonds with the past and political activity in the present, between Greek cultural and national self-consciousness on the one side and complete acceptance of Roman world rule on the other, but also tensions between small-scale, local, or at most regional, politics and the politics of great powers and world empires. Also with regard to Plutarch's political ideal various poles can be found between which his thought oscillates, viz. the ideal of a harmonious polis community which he deems best realized in the Sparta of Lycurgus, which he idealized, the ideal of a state ruled by philosophers, inspired by Plato, and the ideal of an enlightened world ruler. He oscillates equally so with regard to the question of which political system he prefers the most, between a moderate aristocratic republic, the model for which is supplied by the Sparta of Lycurgus, and a philosophically orientated kingdom. In the same way his attitude regarding political practice is dominated, on the one hand, by the fact that he is devoted, heart and soul, to the structure of the polis and, on the other hand, by his complete acceptance of and participation in the Roman Empire.

The arrangement for this study is given in broad lines with the marking of these polarities which were, for Plutarch, more approaches of political problems from differing viewpoints than opposing standpoints.
II. Hellenism and Patriotism

Plutarch lived in a time when Greeks and Romans no longer stood opposed to one another as the conquered, who were bearers of a great culture, and conquerors who were militarily and politically superior. Greeks gradually gained entrance into the Roman governing apparatus and Romans and Greeks came closer socially. Plutarch did not only find broad recognition through his capacity as orator and philosopher in Roman circles; he also maintained excellent relations with Romans in the highest circles. Romans and Greeks are, it is true, definitely not the same for him, but they are of equal worth. He has no desire to argue that the Romans are really Greek in origin, as Dionysius of Halicarnassus did a century earlier. He can fully grant the Romans that they are different from Greeks; he has lavish interest and appreciation for their traditions and habits and thinks that Rome itself is a beautiful city (De soll. anim. 963 c). Plutarchus borrowed a not inconsiderable part of the examples which he abundantly supplies as illustrations of his arguments from Rome and from Roman history; this is the case throughout his writings, and not only in his parallel biographies where this is obvious. He discusses Greeks and Romans in one breath, for example in De coh. ira 458 c, where he mentions Camillus, Metellus, Aristides and Socrates as examples of temperance, generosity and a forgiving disposition. He supplies here, as in many other places, many Greek and Roman examples, without discriminating between them.

While he does not shrink from deriving examples from other peoples and their history, these are apparently viewed by him as exotic. In Amat. 768 b ff. he gives a comprehensive rendition of a Celtic history (see also Mul. virt.

24. That does not take away the fact that according to Plutarch, Rome was also for a small part from Greek origin (Flamin. 11, 7; the name Rome is Greek, Rom. 1, 1, and earlier in time many Greek words found their way into Latium, Rom. 15, 4; Numa 7, 10; Marc. 8, 7), but he never speaks about a Greek component which goes back in time to Euander (pace Flacelière AC 32, 1963, 33 and Plutarque, Vies V, 188 n. 1) and there is no trace of his being familiar with Virgil’s Aeneis.
25. See, apart from the Quaestiones Romanae, e.g. Praec. coni. 141 a; 143 a; De seips. laud. 540 f; Amat. 768 a; An seni 784 a; Aem. Paull. 5, 2–3.
26. See Cons. ad. Apoll. 119 d; De superst. 170 ef; Mul. virt. 243 cd; De Iside 379 cd; Tranq. An. 467 c; Frat. Am. 492 d; An Vit. 499 bc; De garrul., passim; De vit. pud. 534 c ff.; De seips. laud. 542 a; 542 f; De sera num. vind. 550 b; Qu. Conv. 2, 632 ab; Ad Princ. Inerud. 781 d; An seni 784 c ff.; 789 c; 790 bc; 790 f-791 a; 792 a ff.
157 e ff.) and says (768 e): “Since many such things have happened both here and in foreign parts ...”. Now Plutarchus never calls Romans βάρβαροι and, moreover, he had just before referred to a Roman institution (768 a). “Here” (ναρ’ ημίν) must refer to the civilized world, consisting equally of Greeks as well as Romans, in light of the way in which Plutarchus uses an abundant amount of Greek and Roman examples. One is referred to Cato mai. 23,2 in this connection, where Plutarchus speaks positively about the connection between Roman expansion of power and Greek science and culture. It is noteworthy that the well-known linkage in classical Greek literature of the words “Greek” and “barbarian” as indicating the entire human race, is not a standard formula for Plutarchus, contrary to his contemporary Dio of Prusa.

That Plutarch adduces Roman examples alongside Greek ones, especially in his parallel biographies, is quite natural; for there he time and again compares a prominent Greek figure with a corresponding one from the Roman world. It is very highly questionable whether Plutarch intended to demonstrate the equal value of Greeks and Romans with this juxtaposition, to show that there is no cleavage between them, that in earlier times there had been statesmen and generals amongst the Greeks who were not inferior to their Roman counterparts and, on the other hand, Romans who were not uncultivated barbarians. He not only never says this in his biographies, it is also difficult to reconcile with the way in which he mentions Greeks and Romans in his other writings without making any distinction between them. In my opinion, C.P. Jones has convincingly shown that Plutarch can compare a Greek with a Roman because in his eyes Greeks and Romans are completely equal in value.

Plutarch is heart and soul devoted to the great traditions and to the great past of Greece (comp. e.g. De Herod. malign. 874 ab); he notes with apparent approval that Athens in his day still recalls the great military events from its glorious past (De gloria Ath. 349 e ff.) and he describes the events at the annual commemoration of the Greek victory at Plataeae, whereby the Greeks fought for their freedom against the Persians (Arist. 21, 3 ff.). That Greek literature and Greek culture, Greek institutions and Greek religion, receive by far the most attention from a person such as Plutarch who is Greek in origin and culture is quite natural and in itself does not have to be viewed as proof of his deep bonds with the old Greek tradition. But in this

27. Πολλάν δέ τοιούτων γεγονότων καὶ παρ’ ημίν καὶ παρὰ τοῖς βαρβάροις ...
28. See G.J. Woldinga, Xenophon’s Symposium II, Hilversum 1939, 345; G.J.D. Aalders, Het Derde Boek van Plato’s Leges I, Prolegomena, Amsterdam 1943, 137. Cf. also Xen., Ages. 1, 12; Dem. 8, 6 and 67; 18, 253 and 270; Isocr., ep. 2, 10.
respect, the treatise *Quomodo adulescens poetas audire debeat* is especially enlightening. The numerous poetic quotations in this work stem from older Greek literature in which epic poetry, as was more or less to be expected, occupies a very large place. Of post-classical Greek literature, only the new comedy really plays an important role, moreover two quotations from Timotheus are noteworthy. In broad lines, this corresponds to the image one gets of Plutarch’s literary culture from his other works, at least in the area of poetic art; and in any case, this work gives a clear indication of what Plutarchus viewed as the foremost literary baggage in the area of poetry for an educated Greek youth in his day. It is evident from this work how close to his heart the culture and traditions of pre-Hellenistic Greece were and how strong he was rooted in them.

It is fully explicable that Plutarch’s documentation for older Greek history was concerned predominantly with Sparta and Athens. Not only were these two states the most prominent and dominant of the Greek city-states in the 5th and 4th centuries B.C., but they were also by far the most fully discussed in the historical literature available to Plutarch, on which he was practically entirely dependent. Moreover, Plutarch cherished great admiration for the old Sparta and he had good feelings toward Athens which had such merit with respect to freedom and culture in Greece; Athens was a city in which he himself had studied and with which he maintained good relations. The treatise *De gloria Atheniensium* conceals, apparently behind the façade of the rhetoric declamation, something of genuine admiration for the great deeds of statesmen and generals who made possible the great works of the spirit in Athens. The excessive emphasis on political and military achievements in this work is, if one discounts the rhetorical exaggeration, in line with the fact that in Plutarch’s biographies he only deals with men from the political and military profession.

Besides that, Plutarchus is strongly attached to his own city, Chaeronea, and to the territory in which this is situated, Boeotia. He not only devoted a number of non-extant biographies to local mythological and literary men of importance (see supra p. 8), he opened his series of comparative biographies with the *vitae* of the Theban Epaminondas and of Scipio Africanus maior, which biographies have not survived, and he also included a biography of another Theban, Pelopidas, in this series. That insufficient justice was done to the greatness and merits of Boetia and of the foremost city of that region, Thebes, was something that Plutarchus could not swallow and he therefore dedicated a separate work (*de Herodoti malignitate*) to the way, in which, in his opinion, the father of history had apparently portrayed the role of Thebes and Boetia during the Persian Wars. It goes without saying that what he considered meritorious deeds of the Thebans were emphatically brought to the fore. He therefore praised the attitude of

32. The person to whom this work was dedicated bears the Latin name Marcus Sedatius, but in view of the name of his son Cleander (15 ab) he was probably of Greek descent.
the Thebans toward the Athenians who, in 404 B.C., had taken refuge in that city from the terror of the oligarchy, which was supported by Sparta, as in complete agreement with the deeds of Heracles and Dionysus and as "so Greek and so human" (Lys. 27, 6–7). And he emphasizes that, while Athens and Sparta chummed around with tyrants, the Thebans, under the leadership of Pelopidas, were the only ones who opposed the tyrant Alexander of Pherae (Pelop. 31, 6; cf. Marc. 33, 5). It is worth noting in this connection that in De gloria Ath. 346 e the military exploit of the Athenians against Epaminondas in the battle of Mantinea is glorified. This is certainly not to say that Plutarch was more pro-Athenian than pro-Teban (at least not at the moment when he wrote it), he is too full of local chauvinism for that. Even less can one conclusively explain this as dependence on some other source than elsewhere where Plutarch writes about Epaminondas, for there is no clear evidence for this. But this remarkable glorification of a (partial) victory by the Athenians against the Thebans, led by Epaminondas, who was highly admired by Plutarch, flows from the inflated rhetorical tendency to glorify Athen’s military achievements in De gloria Ath. which, in this case, is lent a hand by the fact that a well-known painting memorialized this military deed. In the same way, Plutarch’s criticism of a fellow-citizen who continuously talked about Epaminondas’ victory at Leuctra33 (De garrul. 514 c) can be fully explained by the context in which the battle concerned is mentioned, and it in no way detracts from Plutarch’s admiration for Epaminondas.

Plutarch was fully aware of the powerlessness and insignificance of his hometown, but he felt closely associated with it and wanted to continue to reside there in order to prevent its becoming even smaller, as he says in Dem. 2, 2 (comp. Mor. F 86). Though the territory of Chaeronea had more than once been the stage for important battles, the town could not boast of a glorious past. Nevertheless, Plutarch presents a detailed account of the battle that Sulla waged near Chaeronea against the troops of Mithradates, where he also relates the vicissitudes of his home town in those days. Elsewhere he mentions a few geographical details (De curios. 515 c; Dem. 19, 2) and names monuments in the city (Qu. Rom. 267 d; De fort. Rom. 318 d; Cim. 2, 2). And the aid that Chaeronea received from Lucullus around the same time when it had serious difficulties, and for which he was honored by the city with a marble statue, remains for Plutarch, about two centuries later, the occasion for inserting this Roman general in the heroes’ gallery of his comparative biographies.

Plutarch undoubtedly drew partly from local tradition for his account of the history of Chaeronea. The same holds with respect to the territory of Boeotia, to which he felt equally attached,34 and about which he naturally

33. The battle at Leuctra and what followed were a favorite subject for the schools of rhetoricians. Compare the five declamations on Leuctra and later in Aelius Aristides.
34. The Lempras catalogue mentions also περὶ τῆς εἰς Τροφονίου καταβασίας (181) and περὶ τῶν ἐν Πλαταιῶν δανάλων (201).
had more to say. From this local tradition stems undoubtedly the information on the basis of which one can presume that the temple of Athena Itonia at Coronea possessed the right of asylum long before this was officially conferred, apparently in 266 B.C., by the Amphictions. One can safely assume, especially in the biography of Pelopidas, that much information that is not found in other sources, or is not reported in the same way, goes back to Boeotian tradition, as, for example, the reading (mentioned in Pelop. 21, 4) regarding the sacrifice which Agesilaus, as a second Agamemnon, brought, prior to his crossing to Asia Minor, in Aulis and which was disrupted by actions of the Boeotians. According to this tradition, Agesilaus failed to fulfill the divine command to sacrifice his daughter which resulted in the failure of his mission. It can be reasonably assumed that not only a number of particulars regarding events in Pelopidas’ life come from local or regional tradition, but that this influenced also the favorable portrayal that Plutarch gives of Pelopidas. That is the case, for example, according to all appearances with the tradition, that Pelopidas attempted to achieve a change from tyrant into king in the person of Alexander of Pherae—which attempt failed because Alexander was apparently too deeply depraved (Pelop. 26, 2–3). Modern historians will—and rightly so—presume more realistic political and less idealistic motives in Pelopidas. On the other hand, one will sooner have to attribute to Plutarch himself the reflections on the death of Pelopidas at the highpoint of his career (34, 5–7), which strongly reminds one of Herodotus’ story about the Athenian Tellus. That is true also for his praise of the sober funeral service of Pelopidas (43, 1–4) wherein the criticizes despotic funeral pageantry. This tirade is undoubtedly motivated by honest admiration for Pelopidas and in conformity with Plutarch’s ideal of sobriety and with his aversion for tyrants and Hellenistic kings; but it gives the appearance that he is rambling on morallistically, for he describes the splendid funeral of another destroyer of tyrants, Timoleon, without a word of criticism (Timol. 39), and also Plato, Plutarchus’ admired teacher, had prescribed a grand funeral for the highest state dignitaries (Laws XII, 947 b ff.).

Something of the same occurs when Plutarch compares the fact that Philopoemen, whom he admired, was inadequate as sea captain because of inexperience (Philop. 14, 2 ff.) with a comparable failure by Epaminondas. The shortcomings of the latter are, however, toned down by mentioning the opinion of “some” (which smacks of school philosophy) that Epaminondas had aborted a maritime expedition to Asia Minor and the islands in the Aegean Sea because he, in the footsteps of Plato, saw no point in the use of maritime power. By mentioning, though not explicitly endorsing, a reading which makes Epaminondas a consistent follower of Plato, whom Plutarch

36. Plutarch, in spite of all his criticism, makes more frequent use of Herodotus than he sometimes admits; see Aalders, Mn. 1977, 35.
admired, at a point where he himself is certainly not in simple and total agreement with Plato—in his descriptions of military events, sea battles are certainly not of lesser value or significance than those on land—he shows Epimantondas in a more favourable light than Philopoemen, whom Plutarch otherwise also admired.

Plutarch was fully aware that the Greeks were militarily and politically inferior to Macedonians and Romans. The last Greeks in his heroes gallery are Aratus and Philopoemen (cf. Philop. 1, 7; Arat. 24, 2; Paus. 8, 52, 1), of whom the latter lived approximately three centuries before Plutarch. The period of the great men of the past, in the area of culture as well (for which Plutarch has evidently only the Greek world in mind) has passed (An seni. 785 a). His Roman hero series continues to the end of the Republic, and he also wrote biographies of Roman emperors until Vespasianus,37 of which those of Galba and Otho have been preserved. It is otherwise noteworthy that such a cultivated Greek of that period, writing about the imperial period, apparently considers only emperors to be figures of sufficient stature to justify a biography. With a moralist as Plutarch that can certainly not be taken to mean that he only considers those holding the office of emperor to be of superior quality. Rather, it flows from his seeing only the emperors as the persons who determined the political direction.

As will be evident below, Plutarch was rather negative toward the rulers of the Hellenistic period, and the only Macedonians whom he dealt with in his biographies are the dominating Alexander the Great, whom Plutarch admired—albeit not unmixed—and Demetrius Poliorcetes, whom he used in his biographies as a warning example; even such an important person as Philippus II is absent from the series of comparative biographies.

That is not to be solely attributed to the fact that Plutarch had an antipathy for the Hellenistic potentates and their life style, but also, and in my opinion primarily, to his devotion to the freedom of Greece, which the Macedonians had put an end to. He considers the freedom of old Greece to be a great good (cf. Reg. et imp. apophth. 186 c (¼ Qu. conv. 1, 620 cd; Praec. 813 de)); 187 e) and sees the fight with the Persians for this freedom as a glorious cause. That is why he also deems the King’s peace as an indignity for Greece and a betrayal of the Greek cause (Artax. 21, 6; cf. Cim. 19, 3–4). He no less bemoans the fact that the Greek had to yield to the Macedonian military superiority; Demosthenes is for him an heroic fighter for Greek freedom. He gives a favourable judgement concerning the liberation of Athens from the power of Cassander by Antigonus and Demetrius Poliorcetes (whom he otherwise very unfavourably assesses) (Demetr. 8, 1 ff.; Ant. 89, 3; Reg. et imp. apophth. 182 e-f) and calls the liberation of Corinth

37. These vitae were probably written relatively early. With those of Galba and Otho, that is almost certainly the case. Presumably, Plutarch did not consider it advisable under the Flavian emperors to write about Vespasian, his opinion of whom is not entirely favourable.
from the Macedonians by Aratus emphatically the last, and one of the
greatest of Greek exploits (Arat. 24, 2). On the other hand, he censures
Aratus for abandoning Corinth to Antigonus Doson in order to obtain the
latter's support against Cleomenes III. He should rather have accepted the
hegemony of the Spartan king, no matter how unjust and tyrannical he
might be; for just because he was a Heraclide and a Spartan, he deserved
preference over a Macedonian (Arat. 38, 5 ff.; Cleom. 16, 1 ff.); for the rest,
he still considered Aratus in many respects a great man, worthy of Greece
(Cleom. 16, 8).

Plutarch gives a detailed account of the enthusiasm resulting from
Flamininus' proclamation of freedom to the Greeks, who had been freed
from the Macedonians (Flam. 10, 4 ff.); the good qualities of Flamininus,
his generosity and liberality, his powers of persuasion and righteousness, made
the Roman rule easier for the Greeks to accept (Flam. 2, 5). Under Roman
supreme authority, the (of course limited) freedom of the Greeks remained a
valuable good in Plutarch's eyes. He even goes so far as to give a more
favourable judgement of Sulla's action against the Athenians whom he had
conquered, and who had received (nominal) freedom and self rule from
him, than of that of Lysander (Syll. 43, 5), a Spartan at that.38 And in the
vision of the underworld of De sera numinis vindicta is related that, when the
soul of Nero, already heavily tormented, stands at the point of being
reincarnated in an adder which comes into the world by eating its way out of
the body of its mother, this is altered by divine command into reincarnation
as a frog because, after the heavy punishment he had undergone, he merited
a favour from the gods, for he had given freedom to the people that was the
best under his subjection, and most loved by the gods.39 That Plutarch does
not give an unmixed favourable judgement about Vespasianus, who
brought an abrupt end to this Greek euphoria, is therefore no surprise.

Not only the freedom, but also the unity of the Greeks was close to
Plutarch's heart, and he considered war between Greeks a highly deplorable
matter (cf. De Pyth. orac. 401 cd; 402 a; 408 bc; Timol. 29, 5; Cim. 19, 3–4;
Fab. 30, 1). The essential consideration underlying according to him the
unrestrained enthusiasm of the Greeks for Flamininus' proclamation of
liberty was that this meant that the Romans brought freedom and peace,
which all the bloody wars waged by the Greeks for this purpose had not been
able to effectuate (Flamin. 11, 3 ff.). In this passage (Flamin. 11, 6) one
reads:

38. If one compares his above-mentioned opinion, that Cleomenes is eventually more
acceptable than a Macedonian king, then there seems to be an inconsistency. But one
may here be allowed to take into account, that Plutarch judges Romans different from
Macedonians and that the Roman dominion is to a lesser degree foreign in his eyes.
39. 567–568 a. The favourable assessment of Nero's decree of Greek freedom appears to
have been quite general with the Greeks of the imperial period. Cf. Paus. 7, 17, 3;
Philostr., V.A. 5, 41.
Men of another race, who were thought to have only slight sparks and insignificant traces of a common remote ancestry, from whom it was astonishing that any helpful word or purpose should be vouchsafed to Greece—these men underwent the greatest perils and hardships in order to rescue Greece and set her free from cruel despots and tyrants.

One can doubt if the enthusiastic crowd in 196 B.C. was so explicitly aware of this, but there is no doubt that this was Plutarch’s own view and that this was the basis for his complete acceptance of Roman rule over Greece. Consequently, the (temporary) end of the Peloponnesian War in 421 B.C. can be qualified by him as a ἐλληνικῶτατον πολίτευμα (Crass. 35, 7). He does homage to the panhellenistic ideology that is found in a number of authors of the 4th Century B.C., particularly in Plato, Xenophon and Isocrates, and he is influenced by those authors (comp. Vita Cimonis, 19, 3–4 and Them. 6, 5). It is noteworthy that because of this Plutarch sees Sparta as an integral part of this Greek unity and thinks that it therefore must not be allowed to perish or, to use the renowned words of Cimon with which he exhorted the Athenians not to desert Sparta, μὴ τὴν Ἑλλάδα χωλήν μὴ τὴν πόλιν ἔτερόξυγα περιμεδεῖν γεγενημένην (Cim. 16, 10). Besides in the life of Cimon, Plutarch’s panhellenism is particularly strongly expressed in his biography of Agesilaus, whom he, notably under the influence of his admirer Xenophon, sees as an outstanding champion of the Greek cause. It would then have been much more preferable to Plutarch if Agesilaus, instead of Alexander the Great, unhindered by wars amongst the Greeks, could have conquered the Persian Empire (cf. Ages. 15, 4); and he consequently hasn’t a good word to say for the King’s peace, as we saw earlier.

Plutarch was a Greek; he was fully conscious of this and he was proud of it, even though the Greece of his day was politically and militarily powerless. But for him moral values carry more weight than pure power or success. In his Moralia (Reg. et imp. Apophth. 186 c; Qu conv. I, 620 cd; Praec. 813 e) he trice quotes the anecdote that Pericles, whenever he accepted the post of strategus, cautioned himself that he exercised power over free people, over Athenians and over Greeks. Not only the freedom and the Athenian civil rights of those who were under Pericles’ authority, but also the fact that he was in command of Greeks, set Pericles to thinking, and that must have

40. I can find no indication in Flamin. 11–12 that Plutarch considers that a complete liberating of Greece by Flamininus would have brought about the unshakable faithfulness of the grateful Greeks. The gratitude of the Greek is not, in my opinion, underestimated in this passage (contra R. Flacelière, AC 32, 1963, 36.).

41. In that connection, Plutarch also used the well-known qualification of Plato and Isocrates of the barbarians as φόσει πολέμωι (Aristid. 16, 3; Cim. 18, 1). It is very probable that he has allowed himself to be influenced by his sources here. Comp. De fort. Al. 329 c: συγγενεῖς δὲ τούς ἄγαθους, ἀλλοφούλος δὲ τούς πονηρούς. Comp. D. Babut, Plutarque et le stoïcisme, Paris 1969, 358; see also infra 21 f.

42. Cf. Praec. 803 a: μὴ ποιήσῃ ἑτερόφθαλμον τὴν Ἑλλάδα, a warning which Aristotle Rhet. III, 1411 a 5 f. ascribes to Leptines.
appealed to Plutarch. Plutarch particularly valued the Greek virtues of sobriety and the dislike of excess (comp. Luc. 41, 2), intelligence and humanity (cf. Crass. 8, 3). Plutarchus’ ideal of Greek society is that of education, cultural refinement, moderation and generosity. If the extreme callousness of the Spartans against the helots did stem from Lycurgus, then, according to Plutarchus (Num. 23, 10) Numa would be a much more “Greek” legislator than Lycurgus.

In this connection, Plutarchus uses the qualification “Greek” in a Praising sense (comp. also Quom. adul. 30 c; Lys. 27, 7; De sera num. vind. 558 a). From the lectures of the poets, the young man will learn to know the superior demeanor of the Greeks in the war (Quom. adul. 29 f; 30 c). This superiority does not reside so much in the way in which weapons are wielded, as in prudence, acting with judgement, and in pressing the attack, without entreating or surrendering, until victory or death.

Although here and elsewhere, the contrast between Greeks and non-Greeks, “barbarians,” is explicitly mentioned (comp. also Qu. conv. III. 649 e) Plutarchus never contrasts Romans and Greeks in this way. In his account of what moved the enthusiastic Greeks in 196 B.C., he carefully avoids this term and speaks of foreigners, with vague traces of affinity in a distant past (Flamin. 11, 7). In De superstitione Plutarchus finds fault with superstitious practices of the Jews (169 c), of Celts, Scythians and Carthaginians (171 bc), of Persians and Egyptians (171 de), but the Romans do not appear in his examples of barbarian superstition. In Marc. 3, 6, he says that the Romans never practiced barbarian or foreign rites, but that they conformed as much as possible to the Greek conceptions and were humane (νρφιως) in the practising of their religion.

That is not to say that Plutarchus was without criticism of the Romans and their society. He mentions excessive luxury as an unfavourable phenomenon in them which contrasts with his otherwise approving judgement of old Roman frugality. His criticism of Roman greed and militarism cuts deeper. In his comparison of Lycurgus and Numa (Num. 26, 12 f.) he says that the legislative work of Numa, as opposed to that of Lycurgus, did not survive because it was not founded on an educational system.

43. Which he also values highly in the old Romans; see R. Flacelière, Plutarque, Vies VII, Paris 1971, 195.
44. Cf. Num. 23, 10 ff.: Marc. 1, 3; 3, 6; Lys. 27, 7; Flamin. 5, 7, Non posse 1099 b; De sera num. vind. 558 a: συντος Ελληνικως και αφελως. See H. Martin jr., “The Concept of Philanthropia in Plutarch’s lives”, AJP 82, 1961, 167: “These three concepts—philanthropia, civilization, Hellenism—seem almost inseparable for Plutarch.”
45. See Jones, op. cit., 107.
46. Cf. Public. 15, 3–6, more particularly directed against the luxurious temple building of Domitian, and Luc. 39, 1 ff., especially with regard to the luxurious extravagances of Lucullus.
47 δε δη και το συνδετικον ην αυτη την παιδειαν ουκ έχουσα, Num. 26, 12.
possible objection that Rome has nevertheless become great by means of its military achievements, he answers by distinguishing people who seek the good in wealth, affluence and political power, from those who seek it in safety, generosity and frugality coupled with justice.\textsuperscript{48} It is clear that Plutarch unquestionably sides with the latter and that military successes, notwithstanding how much Plutarch is able to appreciate them, and although he sometimes treats his readers to an elaborate and fascinating account of military operations in his biographies,\textsuperscript{49} are no standard for the evaluation of a state. He does say, \textit{De fort. Rom} 326 a ff., that the fate (\textit{Tύχη}) was well-disposed to Rome and later he will formulate it in such a way as to say that Rome’s world dominion did not come about without divine assistance (see \textit{infra} 59), but that does not mean that he also had a positive regard for the militarism and the military violence with which it is coupled. Even less may one, with Flacelière,\textsuperscript{50} infer that Plutarch deplored the course of events, simply from the fact that he, in the passage cited a moment ago, calls the premature death of Alexander the Great—which averted a military confrontation between this extremely successful conqueror and the Romans—a sign of Tyche’s goodwill toward Rome. The question of how a war between Alexander and the Romans would have turned out was a much-discussed topic in the beginning of the imperial period,\textsuperscript{51} and the fact that Plutarch also comments on it in a strongly rhetorical work in his youth, that abruptly breaks off, does not give us the right to such an assumption, especially since Plutarch after all sees Alexander always as a Macedonian, and Rome was, in his eyes, no “barbarian” city that had to get acquainted with the blessings of Greek civilization; and Macedonia had subjugated the freedom of the Greeks; Rome had restored this (within certain limits).

An aspect of Roman society for which the humane Plutarch apparently has little appreciation, was the gladiator games,\textsuperscript{52} although he admits that Greek or Greek-influenced gladiators could give a less cruel or barbarian character to these exhibitions (\textit{Non posse} 1099 b).

The praising qualification “Greek” is for Plutarch not per se reserved for born Greeks; Romans can also be equal to Greeks in spirit and culture (cf. \textit{Num.} 23, 10; \textit{Flamin.} 5, 2; \textit{Marc.} 1, 3; 3, 6) and that holds even for a figure


49. E.g. about the operations of Marius against the Cimbri and Teutons and about the campaigns of Lucullus in Asia.

50. \textit{AC} 32, 1963, 31: “Peut-être Plutarque regrettait-il, au fond de son coeur, que ce Macédonien hellénisé n’eût pas eu le temps de s’emparer de l’Italie et d’établir à partir de la Grèce cet empire universel que Rome devait fonder.”


such as Spartacus (Crass. 8, 3). Alexander the Great brought the blessings of civilization to the inland of Asia and introduced there the worship of Greek gods (de Al. fort. 328 c) and in his early and strongly rhetorical work de Alexandri fortuna (328 d; 332 a), Plutarch speaks in high-flying terms about the blessings of the hellenization of that continent. 53

Plutarch is convinced, however, that it is worthwhile to preserve the purity of the Greek cultural inheritance (cf. Qu. conv. III, 649 e) and to keep alive the old Greek traditions and the memory of Greece’s own past (cf. De sera num. vind. 558 ab). While Plutarch does not view a pure Greek origin as an essential requirement, 54 he does attach substantial value to educating the younger generations in the old Greek traditions. 55 Fully emphasizing human shortcomings does not fit in this educational ideal (cf. Cim. 2, 3 ff.), though one certainly does not have to conceal them completely. It is for this reason that the Boeotian Plutarch sharply criticizes the way in which Herodotus writes about the attitude of Thebes, and Boeotia in general, during the Persian Wars. 56 It is also partly for just this reason that Plutarch, in spite of his outspoken preference for pre-Hellenistic Greek literature, did not have so very much esteem for the old Attic comedy, and much more preferred the new comedy of Menander c.s. 57 One is more likely there than in Aristophanes cum suis to find examples worth imitating, and one is in any case travelling in a civilized and humane atmosphere.

For the rest, the Hellenistic period is definitely not Plutarch’s favourite. His opinion of Philippus II is very unfavourable (Pelop. 26, 8), he does not have an especially high opinion of the successors of Alexander the Great and he thinks even less of their successors. 58 He takes a negative view of the pretensions and achievements of the Hellenistic rulers that are directed more to power than to areté (Arist. 6, 1–2; 6, 5) and he views the προσενεξία, which is essentially ἐπιμοδός (Pyrrh. 9, 6) as an inborn defect of the Hellenistic dynasties (Pyrrh. 7, 3; 12, 3 ff.). Plutarch is especially bothered by the exaggerated homage that the Hellenistic rulers demanded for themselves (cf. Praec. 801 d), and which was displayed in their showy surnames (Arist. 6, 2; Demetr. 25, 7; cf. also De seips. laud. 543 e). It is primarily at this homage for Hellenistic kings that Ad princ. inerud. 779 ff. is

53. Comp. also the treatise De liberis educandis (which is certainly not written by Plutarch), 14 b on the Illyrian Eurydice, who, with an eye on the education of her sons, made the Greek language and culture her own late in life.
54. Like was sometimes done, cf. De curios. 516 b.
55. Comp. De lib. educ. 3 e: nurses must be Greek in disposition; 4a: the slaves in the environment of a child must not be barbarians; they must be Greek and speak pure Greek.
58. Cf. De Al. fort. II, 336 f-337 a; 341 a; De sera num. vind. 559 de; 562 f; Demetr. 1, 7 ff.; 17, 2; 18, 6–7; 30, 5–7; Arat. 25, 8; Cato mai. 8, 12–14; Pyrrh. 12, 12.
directed, in which passage Plutarch says that they "seem by heaviness of voice, harshness of expression, truculence of manner, and unsociability in their way of living to be imitating the dignity and majesty of the princely station," although one can not rule out the possibility that this also includes an implicit criticism of (some) Roman emperors; the same holds true for Plutarch's criticism of the royal court (Præc. 800 a). Plutarch is particularly opposed to the divine homage that many Hellenistic kings desired. While his criticism of the use of divine attributes, such as thunder and lightning, by rulers (Tranq. an. 470 b; Ad princ. inerud. 780 f) could very well be partly dictated by criticism of extravagances which some emperors, especially Caligula, had indulged in, he apparently did not reject the Roman imperial cult as such. He tended to have his own ideas about it and did not see it as anything more than "an extravagant compliment to a man whose virtue or understanding had some share in the divine." Plutarch's general negative opinion of the princes of the Hellenistic period can be partially accounted for from his love for Greek freedom. That is apparent from his statement concerning Aratus, indicated earlier (17 f.). Even a Cassander can get a word of praise because of the rebuilding of Thebes (De sera num. vind. 552 f), a city close to the heart of Plutarch, just as Nero, because of his proclamation of freedom for the Greeks. In spite of all criticism, Demetrius Poliorcetes is praised for the freeing of Greece (Demetr. 8, 1 ff.; Ant. 89, 3: Reg. et imp. apophth 182 ef). His opinion of Antigonus Gonatas is much more favourable than of the other Hellenistic kings (De sera num. vind. 562 f; Reg. et imp. apophth. 182 c), presumably due to his interest in, and support of, philosophy. For Plutarch, the figure of Alexander the Great is on another niveau than that of the successors and their followers. One can not base his opinion of Alexander on the very rhetorical declamation De Alexandri fortuna, which by the nature of the genre demanded the unreserved glorification of Alexander, except insofar as from the answer that is given in these declamation to the question of whether Alexander's success was due to his luck or to his qualities (aretē), it is evident that the young Plutarch had a considerably positive picture of Alexander. That coincides with the picture that he later gives of Alexander's personality and actions in his biography in which, besides admiration, criticism of the shadowy side of Alexander's behavior is not neglected, especially in his last years of rule. One gets the same picture of Alexander from incidental

59. "Imitate," ἴμιται, is significant.
60. Cf. Reg. et Imp. Apophth. 180 de; 182 c; 187 e; Apophth. Lac. 210 d; 213 a; 219 e; De Al. fort. II, 338 a; De Iside 360 cd; Ad princ. inerud. 780 a; Cleom. 16, 7; Al. 28, 6; Demetr. 10, 3 ff.
comments in other works: on the one hand, positive appreciation, on the basis of which Alexander’s actions are worthy of imitation, an attempt also to excuse his reprehensible behaviour: he was not a drunkard, and the divine worship of his person was for him merely a means to be obeyed more easily (Al. 28, 6). On the other hand, there is also an occasional critical comment (cf. De amic. mult. 96 c; De tuenda sanit. 124 c; Qu. conv. I, 623 d ff) and although Plutarch still has much admiration for Alexander’s attitude toward Greeks (cf. Al. 13), for his work as city founder (cf. De Al. fort. 328 e ff.) and for his hellenizing of Asia, in the final analysis Alexander is for him also a Macedonian who had the Greeks under subjection; he would have preferred that Agesilaus had already conquered the Persian Empire (Ages. 15, 4). What Plutarch thought of Alexander the Great is best represented in the words which he puts in the mouth of one of the people in dialogue in de sera numinis vindicta (557 b): ‘Not even the greatest admirers of Alexander, among whom I count myself, approve his wiping out the city of Branchidae and his general massacre of young and old because their great-grandfathers had betrayed the temple near Miletus.’

In a remarkable passage (Crass. 37, 3–4) Plutarch says that a war of conquest and the injustice which this brings only makes sense if the goal striven for is worthwhile; in other words, if such a war is waged on a large scale and for a great purpose; and that it would be an injustice to judge the military expedition of Crassus against the Parthians differently from the campaign of Alexander the Great against the Persians on the ground that Crassus’ ended differently. At first glance one could get the impression that the peace-loving Plutarch reveals that in his heart he condemns every war of conquest, even those of Alexander the Great. This is also the opinion of Flacelière: ‘Plutarque est évidemment tiraillé entre son sincère amour de la paix et l’admiration qu’il nourrit pour l’āperēguerrière des fondateurs d’empires.’ In this connection, the passage in the life of Pompeius deserves to be mentioned wherein Plutarch, when he has arrived at the beginning of the battle of Pharsalus, takes a moment to meditate on how horrible this brotherly feud is and then (70, 3–4) comments that there was still enough room remaining for the Roman rulers to realize their ambitions elsewhere under the specious motive of the pacification and civilization of barbarian territory. He clearly emphasizes here the military ambitions of Caesar and Pompeius, which he qualifies as πλεονεξία, an unfavourable trait which he

64. Cf. Reg. et Imp. Apophth. 179 d ff.; De tuenda sanit. 127 b; Tranq. an. 471 c; Non posse 1099 cd.
65. De Al. fort. 337 f; Al. 23. One does read elsewhere in Plutarch that Alexander was a very heavy drinker. The one does not necessarily exclude the other, as Hamilton, op. cit., 58 seems to think: ‘Plutarch’s views on Alexander’s drinking habits vary with his sources,’ but it is acceptable, that Hamilton is correct to the extent that the emphasis that Plutarch gives, is influenced by the source which he has before him, or which he remembers, at that moment.
deplores in the Hellenistic kings as well (see p. 22). He later qualifies the accompanying effect of the civilization as an in itself respectable motivation (πρόφασις ὁκ ἄδοξος) after the event. It is significant at this point to take into account the fact that the passage which concerns Crassus is found in the comparatio of Nicias ad Crassus, and that Crassus is not compared to Alexander the Great here—in the comparative biographies, Caesar, not Crassus, is the Roman counterpart of Alexander—and that Alexander the Great is only discussed here because of the magnitude of his military expedition: the range of Crassus' military plans in Asia was comparable in nature and therefore has grandeur. This does not really prove that Plutarch viewed Alexander's expedition of conquest as unjustified. Plutarch, who was, as we have said, an admirer of Alexander the Great, not only viewed the conquest of the Persian Empire as a boon for Asia (see p. 22); he did not attribute Alexander's expedition to his πλεονεξία, but describes this as the carrying out of an historical mission of Greece, as the fulfilling of a task which Agesilaus was not able to carry out because of the inner discord of the Greeks (Ages. 15, 4).

The predominantly favourable image of Alexander the Great in Plutarch is a clear indication that he, with all his solidarity with the city-state and Greek tradition, also had a positive opinion of a world dominion by a wise, humane and capable absolute monarch. It is now necessary to examine how these two forms of political and governmental life are related in the world of Plutarch's ideas.
III. Politics in Polis and world state

Plutarch was himself fully aware that local politics, to which the governmental activities in the Greek city-states in his time were limited, dealt with small issues (cf. *An seni* 784 f), as was reflected in the consulting of the oracles (*De Pyth. or.* 408 bc). But even in this small-scale activity, the political passions could blaze fiercely and the discord which was typical of the Greek polis was not lacking. There was often much quarrelling and jealousy and many lawsuits were carried on. Plutarch deplored (*Animine an corporis* 501 f-502 a) the rage of the Greeks (especially those from Asia Minor) for litigations which sometimes led to the need for appealing to another city for arbitration or for the supply of judges (*De amore prolis* 493 ab).

Plutarch viewed this local and small-scale politics as important and it is his judgement that high moral standards are demanded for, and in, these activities (*De vit. pud.* 534 f ff.; *Praec.* 823 d). Even a small political community offers room for the display of aretē. In that respect, it is not essentially different from large political organizations (*Demosth.* c. 1). That is why Plutarchus served his hometown on a broad scale as ambassador and magistrate, undoubtedly also as member of the council, as priest, as member of law courts, held (other) posts in the region in which his hometown was situated, and fulfilled priestly tasks on behalf of the Apollo shrine at Delphi, that was close to his heart.67 That Plutarchus (who, as we saw earlier, deemed political activities to be of central importance) devoted an important part of his time and attention to these functions on the local level shows how much significance he attributed to these functions and to political activity on the local and regional level. This was also true for the holding of small jobs on behalf of the community which were, at first glance, less important (*Praec.* 811 bc; cf. 813 d). It was his opinion that one must not eschew the holding of public functions, even if one was already advanced in years (*An seni* 784 a; 785 c ff.; 788 ab; 789 bc).

On the other hand, the Greek world of Plutarch was part of the Roman Empire into which the Greeks, both those from the motherland and those from the Greek cities in Asia Minor, in his time became integrated to an ever increasing degree. Greeks and Romans are, as we saw, in principle of equal value for Plutarch and when he deals with a number of Roman customs and institutions in his *Quaestiones Romanae*, he often compares68

67. Comp., e.g., *De Pyth. or.* 409 bc; *An seni* 785 c; 792 f; *Praec.* 816 d. See further Ziegler, *op. cit.* 21 ff.
68. Not exclusively: In 279 a, the people of Tyre and other peoples present material for comparison.
these with customs and institutions in the Greek world and thereby signalizes quite a number of points of agreement, such as, for example, with respect to certain prohibitions pertaining to the flamen Dialis (274 bc; 275 d); in this way he also employs the term αὐνοικίαμος for Rome (280 e).

This connection and comparability of Greek and Roman also applied for Plutarch with regard to political life. In both worlds, phenomena manifest themselves which occur in every political organization, such as emulation, jealousy and rivalry (De cap. ex inim. ut. 86 c). The counsels of a work as the Praecepta, however much it is attuned to the relationships in a small Greek city-state in the second century of the Roman imperial period, have general validity for Plutarch, at least in the civilized world, that is to say, for the Romans as much as for the Greeks. Plutarch does not think it strange that a Roman functionary in high office regularly consults them (De cap. ex. inim. ut. 86 cd), and Plutarch appeals to the same dignitary with a discourse from which he may profit in exercising his function. That is one of the reasons why the great political leaders of Greece and Rome are comparable for Plutarch.

However, political life as such is not only essentially the same for Greeks and Romans, in Plutarch’s eyes; political activity is also essentially the same in nature in the small communities and in a world empire. So according to Praecepta 800 a, for example, a politician in a republic who conforms to the τρόπος of the people acts the same as a courtier who conforms to the behaviour of his king. The examples from the Praecepta, which predominantly focus on the functioning of the politician in the small community of the city-state, are for the most part derived from “big-time politics.” Conversely, Plutarch sees the party conflicts in Rome in the categories and value-patterns of the Greek polis and he pays too little attention to the differences between the Greek and the Roman view of the state. Small-scale politics and large-scale politics are essentially the same for him. That is why he has been called a “Kleinstädter mit Leib und Seele,” who fails to perceive larger relations and who saw in Rome “eigentlich nur ein vergrößertes Chaeronea”; his political views were dispatched with the words “in politicis ein etwas spiessbürgerlicher Ideologe.” An extremely unfair judgement about a man who sees no essential difference between small- and large-scale politics.

69. Cf. 277 bc; 279 f; 279 d; 280 bc; 281 a; 282 e; 285 c; 286 a; 286 d; 288 d.
71. e.g. in respect of the party strife in the late Roman republic, see Volkmann, op. cit., II, 228.
72. Volkmann, op. cit., II, 228.
73. Volkmann, op. cit., II, 229. Comp. also Babut, op. cit., 359: “Plutarque n’a pas la tête politique.”
74. With which I in no sense deny Plutarch’s shortcomings, particularly with regard to his vision of the history of Rome. Yet this is rather to be explained from the fact that he approached Rome too much from his own Greek presuppositions, than from the idea that he could only think in the categories of a small country town.
IV. Forms of Government

We have no direct evidence of the way Plutarch categorized the forms of government which were the same for both Greeks and Romans because of the essential equality of political life. It is not impossible, but it is by no means certain, that he used the division into six political systems which was frequently employed since the fourth century B.C.: the good and bad forms of, respectively, kingship, aristocracy and democracy. This view is also found in the surviving fragment De unius in re publica dominatione (826 ef) which incorrectly bears his name. But is is by no means certain that Plutarch shared this view. For, while Plutarch clearly distinguishes between kingship and tyranny, and between aristocracy and oligarchy, it does not appear that he distinguishes between a good and a bad form of democracy.

Plutarch's evaluation of democracy as a form of government is generally unfavourable. However, there are differences, which must not be overlooked, in the way in which he uses δημοκρατία and related terms and in his appreciation of democracy. This requires further clarification. One must bear in mind that Plutarch does not always use these terms in the same situation and in the same context. Furthermore, one should take into account that he, at least in the writings which have been preserved for us, has nowhere given a systematic exposition of the various forms of government. And finally, one should not assume that he always expressed his views about political systems in exactly the same way at different times and in various situations.

Plutarch is certainly not hostile to the people and he is definitely not opposed to a certain popular influence. He views the suppression of the people as fundamentally wrong and he stands opposed to a hard and strict regime, against tyranny as much as against an oligarchical government that will not hear of concessions, such as that of Coriolanus. The word δημοτικός is for him not only the equivalent for the Latin popularis, it frequently has the sense of "volksfreundlich," democratic, ordinary, jovial, easily

75. A survey by Aalders, Mn. 1982, 76 f.
76. The term ἰχλοκρατία, which is used in a number of classifications of forms of government for the bad form of democracy, does not appear in Plutarch.
77. It is not impossible that he gave such a classification in his lost Politica.
78. Public. 11, 4; 12, 1; 25, 5; Ant. 5, 1.
79. Nic. 1, 6; Pomp. 23, 5; 58, 4; Lyc. 7, 3; Dem. 8, 6; Dio 48, 5;
approachable, popular, *civilis* and even that of ordinary, plain, sober. In this connection it is important to note that he also uses *δημοκρατικός* in the sense of “volksfreundlich” (*Luc.* 44, 5).

Plutarch can thus use the term “democracy” in the general and neutral sense (cf. *An seni* 790 c); he relates, without a word of criticism, that Aristides, after the battle of Plataeae, consented to the wish of the Athenian people for more political influence—and he even mentions democracy in one breath with justice (*Qu.* conv. III, 657 b). Yet in most cases where Plutarch speaks about democracy in obviously favourable terms, he means a republican polity as opposed to a (oppressive) monarchy, for example *An seni* 783 d, where a *πολιτεία δημοκρατική καὶ νόμιμος* is contrasted with a monarchy. He uses the term in that sense *Thes.* 24, 2 in connection with the terminating and vacating of the kingship by Theseus.

Whenever Plutarch describes a specific constitution or political movement as a democracy, however, he does not especially have a moderated democratic polity in mind, as, for example, the democracy of shepherds and farmers described by Aristotle, the Athenian democracy prior to 462 B.C. or the rather moderated democracy of the Achaean League which was highly praised by Polybius. Nor does he use the term then in the empty and toned-down sense of a moderate republican government that had become more and more customary in his time. When Plutarch speaks about democracy as a political system, he does so generally in the proper sense of a government by the people and he means a genuine rule by the people, a radical-democratic administration. What is more, it is obvious that he, living in a time where there was little room for a consistent democracy, directed his attention strongly to the past and had the radical democracy of Athens particularly in mind. It is equally so that he stood opposed to it and to its leaders. He relates approvingly that Theseus prevented a radical democracy from arising in his days (*Thes.* 25, 2) and that Cimon and

80. *Lys.* 19, 2; *Ages.* 1, 5; 7, 3; *Demetr.* 42, 4; *Galba* 11, 2; *Nic.* 11, 2; *Otho* 6, 6; *Qu.* conv. VIII, 726 b.

81. *C. Gracch.* 12, 1; *Crass.* 3, 2; *Cato Ut.* 35, 5; *Ant.* 21, 2.

82. *Arist.* 22, 1. The historicity of this information is more than doubtful, but that is of little importance for a study of Plutarch’s ideas. The same applies for a number of other cases, not the least, of course, with regard to Theseus and Romulus.

83. *δημοκρατικός* in the sense of republican: *Galba* 22, 12; cp. also *Qu.* conv. III, 657 b.

84. See also *Thes.* 24, 2; *Public.* 1, 2; 10, 7; 25, 1; *Dio* 28, 4.

85. *Thes.* c. 24–25. This sort of measures and plans of Romulus for Alba and Rome are recorded by Plutarch, *Rom.* 27, 1.


88. *Qu.* Pl. 1011 b; *Comm. not.* 1065 c; *Arist.* 26, 2; *Dio* 53, 4 (quoting Plato, *Rep.* 8, 557 d); *Pyrrh.* 13, 7; *Eum.* 13, 11. In this he does by no means stand alone in his time; cf. *Dio* Prus. 4, 124 on the democratic public assembly and 4, 131 f. on the “demagogues.” See also Max. *Tyr.* 16, 4 1.
Aristides opposed the radical-democratic plans of Themistocles and Ephialtes (Cim. 10, 8; 15, 2–3). It is noteworthy that when he mentions Thucydides’ characterization of the rule of Pericles (who was as much admired by Thucydides as by Plutarch), the term “democracy” can not fail to turn up (Per. 9, 1), but that Per. 15, 1 this is omitted from his own characterization of the government of this statesman. 89

His objection to the radical democracy which he, nevertheless, always preferred above tyranny (just as Plato and Dio, cf. Dio 12, 3), is that the people therein are not led by the wise and experienced statesman, but that the political leaders allow themselves to be dependent on the shortsighted, selfish masses. For he definitely does not have a high view of the masses. 90 In his rejection of democracy, he especially 91 opposes the demagogues 92 and the democratic public meetings wherein the masses run the show (Qu. conv. I, 261 b; cf. C. Gracch. 5, 4). He also used the term demagogue for Roman leaders of the people, from which it is once more apparent that for him there was no essential difference between the political life of the Greeks and that of the Romans. We need not be surprised, then, that Plutarch thinks very unfavourably about a figure like Cleon,93 whom he contrasts with Pericles. In Plutarch’s eyes, a demagogue is not only a disaster for the state, but he can even degenerate into a tyrant, such as seems to have been the case with Pyrrhus on Sicily (Pyrrh. 23, 3).

Furthermore, it is also true with respect to δημαγωγός and related words that Plutarch’s use of words concerning political concepts is not uniform and consistent. He uses δημαγωγός and the like time and again in a more general and neutral sense of leaders of the people who try to win the people to themselves, without there being any question of a pejorative connotation. 94 And in Cato mai. 16, 8 he even uses the term for great political leaders like the elder Cato.

89. See H. Martin jr., AJP 82, 1961, 165.

90. An seni 796 e; Prac. 800 c; 801 e; 821 f; 822 c; Reg. et Imp. Apophth. 187 f; 188 a (= Phoc. 8, 5) Non posse 1090 e; Cato mai. 12, 3; Thes. 35, 4; Num. 4, 12; Coriol. 20, 3; Them. 19, 5; Cam. 31, 2; 36, 3; Coriol. 12, 5.

91. But not exclusively; compare the critical undertone of the remark about the candid garrulity of the Athenian slaves, De garrul. 511 e.

92. Unfavourable comments about the “demagogues” (including δημαγωγία, δημαγωγεύω etc.) are quite numerous: An seni 788 cd; 796 e; Prac. 798 e; 802 d; 821 f; Thes. 32, 1; Rom. 31, 3; Coriol. 13, 1; 14, 5; 16, 4; 40, 4; Cam. 31, 2; 36, 3 and 5; Aem. Paull. 31, 10; 38, 6; Arist. 24, 5; Sull. 12, 12; Cim. 10, 8; 19, 3; Luc. 7, 3; 24, 3; 31, 1; 5, 3; 54, 2; Nic. 12, 6; Eum. 13, 11; 15, 4; Ages. 15, 1 and 8; Phoc. 8, 3; 32, 3; Cato Ut. 31, 1–2; Agis 1, 3; C. Grach. 1, 6; 2, 4; 9, 7; 11, 5; Dem. 8, 4; Cic. 12, 2; 25, 3; Demetr. 34, 6; Ant. 4, 5; Dio 32, 5; 39, 2; 44, 2; 48, 7; Brut. 22, 3; 30, 2; Arat. 2, 1; Galba 11, 3; 20, 7.

93. Cf. Prac. 805 d; 807 a; Comm. not. 1065 c. Plutarch was otherwise herein also dependent on the sources which were available to him with regard to Cleon.

94. An seni 790 e; Prac. 802 c; Cato mai. 28, 2–3; Philop. 17, 2; Mar. 7, 6; Otho 4, 1; Luc. 23, 1; Nic. 2, 4; 3, 1; 4, 1; 28, 1; Sert. 14, 2; Ages. 5, 3; Pompe. 2, 1; 10, 11; Caes. 5, 5; 20, 2; 35, 7; Agis 2, 9; Cleom. 13, 3; C. Grach. 6, 5; Dem. 12, 7; 23, 4; 25, 6.
In Plutarch’s judgement, and his own position and experience play a role therein, political leadership should emanate from the expert and experienced political leaders; and he wants to keep authority (ἀρχή) quite high. The rulers must lead the people and not be dependent on the wishes and moods of the masses who are incompetent to govern (cf. Rom. 31; Lyc. 2, 4–5). Still, they must govern with gentleness and by means of persuasion.

“The wolf, they say, cannot be held by the ears; but one must lead a people or a State chiefly by the ears, not, as some do who have no practice in speaking and seek uncultured and inartistic holds upon the people, pulling them by the belly by means of banquets or gifts of money or arranging ballet-dances or gladiatorial shows, by which they lead the common people or rather curry favour with them. For leadership of a people is leadership of those who are persuaded by speech; but enticing the mob by such means as have just been mentioned is exactly like catching and herding irrational beasts” (Præc. 802 d–e).

If, however, the people have been thoroughly corrupted by the demagogues, then they want to be coddled rather than that they silently do what they are instructed to do (Thes. 35, 4).

Plutarch makes explicit statements about “the rule of the few” less frequently than about democracy. It is obvious that he does not view every rule by an elite as good, that he, on the contrary, distinguishes between a good and a bad form, between aristocracy and oligarchy. Aside from a technical, neutral use of the adjective ὀλιγαρχικὸς and of the adverb formed from it, both ὀλιγαρχία and ὀλιγαρχικὸς always have a negative sense or are at least related to a grouping that does not enjoy Plutarch’s sympathy. Plutarch considers the Ionic oligarchies which cooperated with Lysander, and which were driven by πλεονεξία (Lys. 5, 6; 7, 5; 13, 7; 19, 1 ff.) to be one of the worst forms of degenerate oligarchy. Their regime resulted in πλεονεξία ὀνειρετεία and pure tyranny (Lys. 19, 2; Sull. 40, 6; cf. Ages. 33, 4).

Antithetic to this corrupt administration is the appearance of the pure Doric-aristocratic Callicratidas (Lys. 7, 5). For according to Plutarch, the

95. Sol. 13, 2; Them. 32, 4; Per. 10, 8; Demetr. 10, 2; Dio 53, 4. When he, Qu. Conv. VIII, 719 B, qualifies the geometric equality as ὀλιγαρχία σῶφρον καὶ βασιλεία νομιμῆ πρέπουσαν the favourable opinion is determined by σῶφρον and ὀλιγαρχία is used in the neutral sense.

96. Numa 3, 1; Them. 19, 6; Alcib. 25, 6; 26, 1–2; 38, 5; Lys 21, 3.

97. Qu. conv. VIII, 726 b; Præc. 805 d; Alcib. 21, 2; Coriol. 1, 4; 40, 3; Pelop. 5, 2; Nic. 11, 2; Phoc. 34, 6; C. Graccch. 11, 4; 14, 2; Dem. 8, 6; Cic. 9, 7; cp. also Arist. 18, 7 (ὁλιγαρχεῖσθαι).

98. τῶν ὀλίγων τοῖς δραστησάτοις (Lys. 13, 9).

99. Cp. De genio Socr. 578 d: τῶν ἀνθυμόν καὶ ἀνοικετικῶν δύναστε捂. For a discussion of δύναστε捂 in Aristotle and Plutarch, see Aalders, Mn. 1982, 78. That δύναστε捂 is close to tyranny also appears from De genio Socr. 578 d.
government of an elite can be substantially good, and he then speaks of an aristocratic polity. The best example of this is the Sparta of Lycurgus,\textsuperscript{100} highly admired by Plutarch; yet he also valued the pure Doric-aristocratic life-style of old Sicyon.\textsuperscript{101}

Whenever Plutarch uses \textit{dristokratia}\textsuperscript{102} and \textit{dristokraticos}\textsuperscript{103} without an implicit judgement it is usually to refer to a political standpoint or to a political group.\textsuperscript{104} But whenever a judgement is implicitly or explicitly involved in the use of \textit{dristokratia}\textsuperscript{105} or \textit{dristokraticos}\textsuperscript{106}, this is, without exception, favourable. This much is clear, that for Plutarch an aristocratic government, and that is by definition a good and temperate government, deserves preference over a democratic polity, and that he abhors an aristocracy that has degenerated into an oligarchy (cf. \textit{Dio} 12, 3).

Two aspects deserve our attention in this context: the vagueness of the criteria according to which Plutarch describes constitutional concepts, and the non-exclusive character of good political systems in Plutarch’s thought. The difference between aristocracy and oligarchy does not reside for him in the difference in the institutions or organizations, but in the difference in the moral quality of the rulers, and a difference in the way in which those governed are treated. Oligarchical implies hard and haughty, if not selfish; aristocracy is characterized by grandeur, liberality and concern for the interest of the governed. On this basis, Plutarch can say—when he cites Thucydides’ famous characterization of the government of Pericles as formally a democracy, but in fact the rule of the top man in the state (2, 65, 9)—that Thucydides describes this government as a sort of aristocracy (\textit{dristokraticin tina politeian}, \textit{Per.} 9, 1). The moderate character of the aristocracy implies that the concerns and desires of the people are taken into account, and that it is sooner led by persuasion than by force. An aristocratic government strives for cooperation with the governed. In ancient

\textsuperscript{100} Although Plutarch, in the life of Lycurgus, describes the Spartan constitution, following Plato and Aristotle, as a mixed constitution, the aristocratic element is dominant therein. According to Plutarch, Sparta maintained its aristocratic character also after the death of Lycurgus. The ephorate, however democratic is was in outward appearance, meant only a reinforcement of the aristocracy (\textit{Lyc.} 29, 11). Compare also \textit{An seni} 789\textsuperscript{e} on the gerousia: τὴν μὲν ἐν Λακεδαιμονὶ παραζευχθέναι \textit{dristokratian} τὸι βασιλεύων.

\textsuperscript{101} \textit{Arat.} 2, 1; comp. also his judgement of Callicratidas (\textit{Lys.} 7, 5) and his admiration for Dio, who had strong sympathy for the Doric world (comp. G.J.D. Aalders, ‘Dion on \textit{Zacynthis}’, in: \textit{Archaeologien en historie}, Festschrift H. Brunsting, Bussum 1973, 143).

\textsuperscript{102} \textit{Lyc.} 29, 11; \textit{Cam.} 42, 2; \textit{Coriol.} 7, 4; \textit{Caes.} 13, 5; \textit{C. Gracch.} 5, 4.

\textsuperscript{103} \textit{Per.} 7, 4; 11, 1 and 3; \textit{Coriol.} 15, 3; \textit{Mar.} 28, 6; \textit{Pomp.} 30, 3; \textit{Caes.} 14, 6; \textit{Cic.} 33, 2; \textit{Ant.} 5, 1; \textit{Arophth. Rom.} 203\textsuperscript{f}.

\textsuperscript{104} Like \textit{diligrarchikos}. The word choice of Plutarch in these cases may be influenced by that of his sources.

\textsuperscript{105} \textit{An seni} 789\textsuperscript{e}; \textit{Dio} 12, 3; 53, 4; \textit{Luc.} 38, 2; \textit{Coriol.} 16, 4; \textit{Cim.} 15, 3.

\textsuperscript{106} \textit{Fab.} 30, 2; \textit{Dem.} 14, 5; \textit{Sull.} 30, 6 (in one breath with \textit{dymiophelis}); \textit{Qu. conv.} VII, 714\textsuperscript{b}; \textit{Aem. Paull.} 38, 2 and 6; \textit{Arist.} 2, 1; \textit{Cim.} 10, 8; \textit{Cato Ut.} 26, 4; \textit{Cic.} 22, 2.
Rome Plutarch thinks an ideal balance can be detected between the preeminently aristocratic body, the senate,107 and the people (Rom. 13, 7 f).108 In the same way, the two kings of Sparta are included in the gerousia (An seni 789 e).

All the same, Plutarch more than once says straightforwardly that he views the kingship as the best constitution,109 телεωτάτη πασῶν οὖσα καὶ μεγίστη τῶν πολιτείων (An seni 790 a). He calls as the highest human goods (Amat. 759 d) аретè and kingship “the most divine” (θειότατα). He was, undoubtedly, like his compatriot Polybius before him,110 not entirely insensitive to the splendor of the kingship and the impressive achievements of really great kings, such as Alexander the Great—kingly, βασιλικός, is for him a complimentary predicate111—and his acceptance of the reality of the Roman emperorship was probably not untainted by this opinion. And finally, the Platonic ideal of the kingship of the philosophers was influential in the background. This now seems difficult to reconcile with his unlimited admiration for the constitution of Lycurgus, his Greek ideal of freedom, and also with his judgement of the rise of the Principate: during the anarchy of the late Roman Republic, the sensible people looked upon a monarchical polity as the least objectionable solution (Caes. 28, 5; cf. Brut. 55, 2). This problem, and that of Plutarch’s political ideals, will be dealt with further in a later chapter. It is sufficient here to indicate that these ideals are ultimately aimed at the moral quality of those governing, and that, for Plutarch, it is not the political system, but the quality of the ruler and the way in which he exercises his rule that is of decisive importance. That is not only so with regard to an aristocratic government, but also to a monarchy. For Plutarch is convinced that people are formed by those who rule them.

“For men will not consent to obey those who have not the ability to rule, but obedience is a lesson to be learned from a commander. For a good leader makes good followers, and just as the final attainment of the art of horsemanship is to make a horse gentle and tractable, so it is the task of the science of government to implant obedience in men.”112

Consequently, he does not express an opinion about the Roman emperorship as such, but has various opinions about the various Roman emperors

107. He sometimes calls this body xερούσα (An seni 789 e; Rom. 13, 3; 27, 3), what recalls to mind the Spartan Council of Elders, but he frequently uses the more current σύγκλητος (e.g. Rom. 13, 6; C. Gracch. 5, 4).
108. It can be the case that that came from Polybius, but in itself it is also possible that Plutarch arrived independently at this rather obvious characterization.
110. Cf. 4, 77, 3; 5, 12, 1; 8, 10, 7 ff; 10, 40, 5–6 and 9; 11, 39, 16. See K.-W. Welwei. Könige und Königtum im Urteil des Polybios, Herbede 1963.
111. Cp. Sull. 12, 11; Cato Ut. 9, 5; Cleom. 13, 9; 24, 3; Pomp. 2, 1; Demetr. 2, 2; 20, 5; 32, 2; 44, 7; Arat. 3, 2; adv. Colot. 1107 e; An seni 784 d, Artax. 23, 4 (cp. 23, 2); Num. 20, 12; Dio 10, 5.
112. Lyc. 30, 4; cp. also Numa 6, 2; 20, 11–12.
That is also why only one king appears in his biographies who completely lived up to his ideal of the kingship, and that is the rather shadowy figure of Numa.

In Plutarch's eyes, kingship is not only the highest form of political activity; it is also a heavy task, with which "the most cares, labors and occupations" are connected (An seni 790 a). It is a high duty, even a service of divinity, of whom the (perfect) king is an image. Yet the king himself is no god, and the Hellenistic theory of the king as law incarnate, νόμος ἑυμνωκος, is not explicitly proclaimed by Plutarch, although he knows it and a few times alludes to it. His notion of the (good) king is found in the most elaborate form in his life of Numa (6, 2-4 and c. 20): he is morally high-principled, just, generous and peace-loving. He shall devote himself fully to his subjects (cf. Ad. princ. inerud. 781 c and e) and do them justice.

The kingship is not only a heavy burden, it also demands great ability, especially to lead people (Lyc. 30, 4). The king must uphold his function and simultaneously guard against too much severity and tenacity, and against too much indulgence, so that he does not deteriorate into a tyrant or a demagogue (Rom. 31, 2-3). The changing attitude of the Spartan kings prior to the appearance of Lycurgus, he tells his readers, lead to anarchy (Lyc. 2, 5), and the Doric kingship in Messenia and Argos collapsed through the rigid inflexibility of the kings toward the people (Lyc. 7, 3). The gerousia at Sparta evidently had a very useful function as intermediary in the relations between kings and people (Lyc. 5, 11). One might wonder if Plutarch carried this line through to the Roman senate of the imperial time. However, there is no trace of that in the statements of Plutarch referring to that time which we have at our disposal. Perhaps Plutarch was too well aware of the role the senate fulfilled in his days, and that was certainly not that of a body that represented the interests of the people before the emperor.

The king also had his degenerate counterpart, the tyrant, whose role is the worst possible. Plutarch condemns the tyrant sharply and without reservations. He paints the tyrant in the darkest colors, in the same spirit,
and frequently with the use of the same *topoi* that are found in the Greek literature of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.,\textsuperscript{119} such as the hatred of the tyrant in the citizens (cf. *De superst.* 170 e), the continual fear in which he lives,\textsuperscript{120} the reason for his trying to keep the citizens working (*Mul. virt.* 262 b), and his cruelty (cf. *An. vitios.* 498 d). For these reasons he also considers the assassination of a tyrant as a praiseworthy business (cf. *De fato* 570 d).

Now, tyranny is, according to Plutarch, who followed the conception that had already been promulgated in the fourth century B.C. by such authors as Xenophon and Isocrates, not so much a political form of organization as the concentration of all conceivable evil in the person of an absolute monarch. That is why he consequently calls Hellenistic monarchs like Antipater (*Phoc.* 29, 3) and Pyrrus (*Pyrrh.* 23, 3) tyrants, and equally so the members of the oligarchical cliques called into being by Lysander (*Sulla* 40, 6). Tyrannical tendencies are also ascribed to Lysander himself (*Lys.* 8, 5). Plutarch applies this qualification to Roman relations as well; for he sees no essential difference in the political functioning of Greeks and Romans. Tyrannical actions are attributed to men as Marius, Cinna, Carbo and Sulla and they are qualified as tyrants.\textsuperscript{121} The dictatorship which people wanted Pompey to hold is (*Pomp.* 54, 5) called tyranny, and in *Luc.* 38, 2 one reads that the great position of power of Pompey was viewed by the senators as tyranny. Tyrannical tendencies are also ascribed to Crassus (*Crass.* 35, 4) and Caesar's dictatorship for life is called a straightforward tyranny (*Caes.* 57, 1).

All the same, Plutarch does not shut his eyes to the possibility that something good can be brought about by a tyrant (*De sera num. vind.* 552 ef), even apart from the fact that the deity can sometimes use an evil tyrant as instrument in order to realize something good (cf. *De sera num vind.* 553 ab). He does not want to go so far as to exclude Cleobulus and Periander completely from the circle of the Seven Wise men\textsuperscript{122} and even deems it possible to change a tyrant for the better and to transform him into a king.\textsuperscript{123} Pelopidas' attempt to effectuate that in Alexander of Pherae failed because the latter was too deeply corrupt (*Pelop.* 26, 2–3), but of Augustus, who, understandably, was not directly qualified as a tyrant, says Plutarch *An seni* 784 d, that his later governing deeds were much more kingly and much more in the interest of the people than his earlier deeds.

In summary, one can say that for Plutarch it is not so much the form of

\textsuperscript{119} Cp. *Quom. adul.* 37 a; *De tuaenda sanit.* 125 de; *Conv. VII Sap.* 147 b ff.

\textsuperscript{120} *Ad princ. inerud.* 781 d ff. (= *Arat.* 25, 8 ff.); *An seni* 783 d.

\textsuperscript{121} *De sera num. vind.* 553 a; *Mar.* 46, 6; 41, 2; *Sulla* 30, 5; 39, 7; 41, 1; *Cato Ut.* 17, 7; *Brut.* 29, 6; *Pomp.* 5, 4–5; 11, 1; *Sert.* 5, 7. *Sert.* 9, 1 also refers to this.

\textsuperscript{122} Cp. *De E ap. Delph.* 385 ef; 391 f and *Conv. VII Sap.* , where tyranny is indeed discussed and is rejected, yet Cleobulus belongs to the Seven Wise Men and Periander is, to be sure, replaced by Anacharsis, but still acts as host to the wise men.

\textsuperscript{123} Cp. *Dio* 10; *De sera num. vind.* 551 f.
government that is important as the qualities of the rulers, that he wants the
ruler(s) to maintain authority and to give leadership to the people, but to do
this in the interest of the people and to take their wishes and feelings into
account. One seeks in vain in Plutarch for the rather common qualification
of the king as ἄνυπευθύνος ἀρχων. The word ἄνυπευθύνος is used by Plutarch
for the Roman dictatorship and for great commanders with special
authority, but for the rest, exclusively in the unfavourable sense of an
absolute and oppressive mastery,\(^{124}\) such as, for example, De genio Socr. 578
d: τῶν ἀνόμων καὶ ἄνυπευθύνων δυναστείων. He evidently does not view
ἄνυπευθύνος as a characteristic that by definition belonged to the monarchy,
but as one which was incompatible with his ideal of the kingship, especially
as he describes it in the life of Numa.

Plutarch stands for a liberal and temperate government. He unconditionally rejects overexertion of monarchical government, as much as a consistent democratic government or overexertion of the aristocratic (oligarchical) system (cf. Coriol. 16–17). He considered the last-mentioned even as more objectionable than a government of demagogues.\(^{125}\) Nevertheless the conception of a mixed constitution plays only a marginal role in Plutarch.\(^{126}\) Aside from a few incidental comments (cf. also Sol. 13, 2) which praisefully mention constitutions from the Greek past, the conception of a mixed constitution only plays a role for Plutarch in his life of Lycurgus. It is an admirable thing from a long-gone past, which could only be realized under very special circumstances and which, after the conquest of Sparta by Philopoemen, could be restored only very partially (Philop. 16, 9). Plutarch was apparently very well aware that there was no place for such a constitution in his time, not in the Roman Empire and not in the Greek poleis.

\(^{124}\) See Aalders, Mn 1982, 80.

\(^{125}\) Coriol. 40, 4; Οὐδετέραν μὲν οὖν ἐπαινετέον ὅ δὲ δημαγογῶν καὶ χαριζόμενος τῶν ὅπως οὐ
dόξουσι δημαγωγεῖν προπηλακιζόντων τοὺς πολλοὺς ἀμεμπτότερος ἀληθῶν μὲν γὰρ τὸ
kολακεύειν δήμον ἐπὶ τῷ δύνασθαι, τὸ δὲ σχέδειν ἐκ τοῦ φοβερῶν εἶναι καὶ κακὸν καὶ πιέζειν
πρὸς τῷ ἀληθῶ καὶ δικὸν ἐστίν.

\(^{126}\) See Aalders, Theorie der gem. Verf. 124 ff; Mn 1982, 81.
V. Political Ideals

However much Plutarch was conscious of the reality of the Roman Empire and however much he unreservedly accepted this reality, his culture and his ideas were Greek and his political models and ideals were rooted in the Greek world and in the old Greek tradition. His personal interests were primarily directed towards the self-governing Greek polis. Whenever Plutarch speaks about state and statecraft, the image of such a polis is foremost in his eyes, even when he deals with Roman history. Numerous older Greek conceptions and ideas, predominantly coming from, or influenced by, the literature of the fourth century B.C. which was already classical for Plutarch, live on in his work. Thus, for him agricultural occupations are by far to be preferred (Philop. 4, 5), and this fully accords with older Greek conceptions. The fatherland has, so he says, still greater rights than someone’s parents. And it is the state which instructs its citizens by means of the laws, so that he can say of an excellent man from Thebes “that he is naturally guided to noble conduct by the laws.” His views with regard to the politician in a polis also closely concur with the old Greek traditions of the polis; he deems it desirable that whoever is involved in state government enjoys a certain modest standard of living which makes it possible for him to hold—intermittently—public posts.

Plutarch’s conception of the state is not only primarily that of the old Greek polis, but also that of a certain sort of polis and of a certain sort of politicians. Although for obvious reasons Athens and prominent Athenian statesmen are discussed rather frequently in Plutarch’s works, his most favourite examples from the Greek world are taken from Sparta. One only has to open the collection of striking statements Regum et imperatorum apophtegmata to see how much significance Plutarch attached to the example of Lycurgus and of other Spartans. Besides that, one sees a notable interest for the Athenians Solon, as representative of a moderate middle course (cf. Public. 25, 6), Aristides and Phocion, and, what is not astonishing, for the Boeotian Epaminondas. Amongst the Romans mentioned by him as examples, the elder Cato takes a prominent place.

130. Cp., amongst others, De tuenda sanit. 127 f-128 a; 131 e; Fr. 49 and 50.
in the *Quomodo adulescens* (14 e; 29 e) which deals with Greek poetic art; but that the grim old man expelled someone from the senate who kissed his wife in the presence of his daughter is too extreme even for his admirer Plutarch (*Praec. coni.* 139 e).

Sparta thus enjoyed Plutarch’s personal preference.\(^{131}\) That seems obvious, for example, in *Arist.* 2, 1, where it is said that Aristides, the Athenian, who, along with Phocion, was admired the most by Plutarch, was a follower of Lycurgus.\(^{132}\) It is the old Sparta of Lycurgus that Plutarch greatly admires and idealizes, primarily for its moral and pedagogical leadership (cf. *Lyc.* 30, 5), a state that performed like a trained wise man, comparable to Heracles (interpreted in the fashion of the Cynics, *Lyc.* 30,2) and whose admirable *eîdoula* was of a notable permanence (cf. *Lyc.* 29, 10). The educational system was of essential importance in this Sparta: the state taught its system of values and norms to its citizens. The thing that Plutarch disapproves of the most in Philopoemen’s actions against Sparta is that he made an end to the *agogè*, the educational system dating back to Lycurgus (*Philop.* 16, 8–9).

Plutarch cherished great admiration for Lycurgus whom he idealizes, whose gentleness and humanity he emphatically points out. Lycurgus is for him the best example of a lawmaker (*De lat. viv.* 1128 f). While he does view Solon as a lawmaker of large stature, Solon was not in the position to accomplish as much as Lycurgus (*Sol.* 16, 1–2). There is not the like of Lycurgus amongst the Greek statesman (*Lyc.* 31, 3–4; *C. Gracchus* 24, 4), and even less amongst the Romans, for in the *comparatio* of Lycurgus and Numa, Lycurgus is eventually more highly valued than the second king of Rome. But Plutarch is aware that Sparta was a unique phenomenon in the Greek world and he calls the civil ordering of Lycurgus *nolitènàv òûîççtov* (*Lyc.* 31, 3), possible in an especially favourable situation (*Sol.* 16, 2), and which therefore could be only very partially restored after the conquest of Sparta by Philopoemen.\(^{133}\) Nevertheless, Plutarch believes that there is much to learn and to assimilate from this constitution, even in his time, the same as Aristides had already done. He thus holds up, *An sent* 795d ff., the authoritative position of and respect for old age in Sparta as exemplary.

Lycurgus had had the possibility to carry through a number of far-reaching radical measures, not the least of which were in the sphere of the equality of possessions. In Plutarch’s eyes extreme differences in possessions will not exist in a good political system. This rules out both poverty and greed.\(^{134}\) Numa failed in this respect (*Num.* 24, 8–9). Lycurgus, on the other

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132. Cp. on the other hand *Isocr.* 12, 153, according to whom Lycurgus had followed the excellent old constitution of Athens.
133. *Philop.* 16, 9. Cp. *Inst. Lac.* 240 b: at this time the Spartans are not different from the other Greeks.
134. Cp. *Conv. VII Sap.* 154 e; 157 a; *Qu. conv.* II, 644 cd; *Num.* 24, 8–9; *Lyc.* 8, 3; *Arat.* 14, 1.
hand, was able to achieve an extensive equality of possessions among the Spartans through the banning of gold and silver currency (cf. *Lyc.* 9, 2; *Lys.* 17, 6; *Cato mai.* 30, 1), by imposing a sober communal way of life for all, which prevented wealth from becoming desirable (*Lyc.* 10) and primarily by the distribution of landed property into equal portions, something that Plutarch sees as essentially significant, ἐδραν καὶ κρηπίδα τῆς πολιτείας (*Num.* 24, 11). That the Spartans were later allowed free disposal of their landed property during their lifetime and in their testaments, caused the demise of the best settlement (*τὴν ἄριστην κατάστασιν, Ἄγις 5, 4)*

In this Lycurgan Sparta, the whole state pursued wisdom, says Plutarch, *Lyc.* 31, 3, ἐπιδείξας δὴν τὴν πόλιν φιλοσοφῶσαν, a statement about which one cannot help smiling, and which, also in the light of what Plutarch knew of Sparta, gives the impression of being slightly exaggerated. Notable in his eyes is the durability of this system, something for which Greek thinkers, beginning with Thucydides (1, 18, 1), have entertained admiration (cf. *Lyc.* 29, 10). Plutarch, like Plato and Aristotle, does not attribute the institution of the ephors to Lycurgus, but views it as a later development and sees no essential change therein: thereby *de facto* only the aristocratic stamp of the Spartan state community (and as we saw earlier, that is a good cause in Plutarch’s eyes) and the durability of the policy were reinforced (*Lyc.* 29, 11).

Now it is, of course, not the case that Plutarch was totally blind to, or totally ignorant of, a number of sides of the Spartan society and of Sparta’s actions in the Greek world which were least of all in agreement with his own moral principles. But in his eyes these were changes that appeared later, such as the free disposal of possessions, the allowing of gold and silver coinage and the resultant πλεονεξία and corruptibility (cf. *Inst. Lac.* 239 f), and the installment of extreme oligarchical decarchies by Lysander. The κρυπτεία, about which Plutarch (*Lyc.* 28, 2 ff) expresses his disapproval, is also dated later, after the great earthquake of 465 B.C. (*Lyc.* 28, 12). The same applies, according to him, to the Spartan practice of getting the helots drunk and then having them make fools of themselves at the symposia. However much he considers it in principle correct to hold up bad examples to young Spartans, he considers it not humane and not sensible to do it in this way. Plutarch does not present any historical arguments for his statement that such practices first became the fashion after Lycurgus. He


136. Here he does not follow Plato, whom he esteemed, who views this institution, *Laws* I, 633 bc, as a form of bodily and spiritual training, a sort of super-scouting.

137. Dissaprovingly mentioned *Lyc.* 28, 8 ff.; *Demetr.* 1, 5; without evaluation *Inst. Lac.* 239 a; *De coh. ira* 455 e.

138. *Demetr.* 1, 5; ἡμεῖς δὲ τὴν μὲν ἐκ διαστροφῆς ἐτέρων ἐπανόρθωσιν οὐ πάνιν φιλάνθρωπον οὐδὲ πολιτικὴν ἡγούμεθα.
does not really need them, for he considers such practices incompatible with 
the character of Lycurgus and of his legislation. 139

Yet, however much corruption had crept into Sparta’s system of 
government, it remained in many respects true to itself, even when 
Epaminondas had broken the backbone of Sparta’s power. Plutarch had 
forthright admiration for the figure of Agesilaus. Many of the statements of 
Spartan men and women recorded or collected by him deal with that later 
period of Sparta’s history. Praising words are said, Inst. Lac. 240 ab, about 
the proud attitude of the Spartans, “who kept alive only some feeble sparks 
of the laws of Lycurgus” against Macedonia; and in Pyrrh. 27–29 the grim 
resistance of the Spartans against Pyrrhus is described in detail. In the third 
century B.C., Sparta fell into deep moral decay, mostly as a result of in-
equality of possessions140 and lust for gold (Agis 3, 1; 5, 1 ff). The attempts of 
Agis IV and Cleomenes III to restore the constitution of Lycurgus have 
Plutarch’s sympathy and enjoy his admiration. 141 He thus says of the 
Spartans from the time of Cleomenes III (Cleom. 18, 4):

“But now only a little time had elapsed, and they had as yet barely resumed their 
native customs and re-entered the track of their famous discipline, when, as if before 
the very eyes of Lycurgus and with his cooperation, they gave abundant proof of valour 
and obedience to authority, by recovering the leadership of Hellas for Sparta and 
making all Peloponnesus their own again.”

Now Plutarch is naturally very much dependent on his authorities for the 
history of Agis and Cleomenes. 142 But due to his admiration for the Sparta 
of Lycurgus, he, in this case, probably gave preference to Phylarchus 
because the latter’s vision strongly concurs with his own conceptions, and 
not to Polybius, for example, according to whom Cleomenes degenerated 
and became a tyrant. 143 And that in spite of his admiration for Aratus and 
Philopoemen, who were bitter enemies of Sparta. One remembers his

139. Lyc. 28, 13: Οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἔργοις προσθείην Λυκούργῳ μιαρόν ύπό τὸ τῆς κρυπτείας ἔργον, 
ἅπτες ἄλλας αὐτῶν προάστης καὶ δικαιοσύνης τεκμαρώμενος τὸν τρόπον, ὦ καὶ τὸ 
δαιμόνιον ἐπεμαρτύρησα. According to C.B.R. Pelling, ‘Plutarch’s Method of Work in 
the Roman Lives’, JHS 99, 1979, 79 and ‘Plutarch’s Adaptation of his Source-
Material’, JHS 100, 1980, 127 ff., there is sometimes in Plutarch a tendency to mould 
his evidence.

140. Caused by the law of Epitadeus, which allowed the possessor to dispose of his 
possessions during his lifetime or through his last testament. This law is usually dated 
around the end of the Peloponnesian War, yet Plutarch seems to have thought that the 
concentration of landed property and wealth in the hands of the few came about rapidly 
(rαξο, Agis 5, 5) and he has a relatively favourable view of the Sparta of the fourth 
century B.C. That is why one gets the impression that he envisages a later date for the 
proclamation of the law of Epitadeus.

141. See Tigerstedt, op. cit. II, 259.


143. 2, 47, 3; 9, 23, 3; cp. 9, 29, 8; 9, 36, 4.
statement that Aratus should have submitted to the hegemony of the Sparta of Cleomenes III over the Peloponnesus, rather than resorting to an alliance with the king of Macedonia.

In addition to being an admirer of Sparta, Plutarch was an admirer and disciple of Plato, and Plato’s ideal of a state ruled by philosophers was his as well. J.J. Hartman, who was an outstanding authority on Plutarch, nevertheless incorrectly claims that Plutarch never explicitly refers to the central thesis of the Politeia, that the philosophers should govern the state; he twice refers explicitly to this. But Plutarch used neither the Politeia nor the Nomoi as guide for political practice; he was undoubtedly aware that this was too far-removed from an ideal situation, wherein the Platonic ideal could be realized. He also departs more than once from the views proclaimed by Plato. In De fort. Al. (328 de; cf. 328 bc) he says that Plato’s ideal state has had no practical results because of its all too “forbidding” (αὐστηρὸν) character. As we have seen, he ignores Plato’s view of the kruptēia. He disassociates himself from his unfavourable opinion of the sea power and the achievements of the Athenian navy. He also explicitly rejects, De vit. pud. 534 ef, Plato’s view that the degeneration of music leads to moral and political corruption and is opposed to the barring of the poets from the education of the young (Quom. adul. 15 f-16 a). Yet the central thesis of the Politeia, that the philosophers should rule, is the basis of Plutarch’s conception that philosophers should act as advisors to rulers (Max. cum princ.). He appreciates the fact that Platonic philosophy and political activity go hand in hand in Dio and Brutus (Dio 1, 3) and in


146. Hartman thinks that Plutarch perhaps found this statement too presumptuous for himself and in his situation, op. cit. 2, 287 f. = 192; likewise in his De Plutarcho scriptore et philosopho, Leiden 1916, 484.

147. Numa 20, 9; Cic. 52, 4. The words κακῶν παύλα are literally quoted from Resp. V, 473 d and VI, 501 e, ἐκ τινὸς τόχης θείας is to be compared with Resp. VI, 499 bc and IX, 592 a.

148. Them. 4, 4–6, especially par. 5; El μὲν δὴ τὴν ἀκριβείαν καὶ τὸ καθαρόν τοῦ πολιτείματος ἐβλαψεν ἢ μὴ ταῦτα πράξας, ἢ ἐν φιλοσοφώτερον ἐκκοπηθῆ ὁ δὲ τότε σωφρία τοῦς Ἐλλήνων ἐκ τῆς θαλάττης ὑπήρξε καὶ τὴν Ἀθηναίων πόλιν αὖθις ἀνέστησαν αἱ τρῆρες ἐκεῖναι, τὰ τ’ ἀλλὰ καὶ Σέρβης αὐτὸς ἐμαρτύρησε; cp. also Philop. 14, 3.

149. On the other hand, ps.-Plut., de musica digresses on the moral influence of music: 1140 b ff.; 1141 ef; 1143 b ff.; 1145 e ff.

150. “This is Plutarch’s way of putting the Platonic case that states will have no respite from their troubles until philosophers become kings”, A.E. Wardman, Plutarch’s Lives, London 1974, 50.
We saw how, in his opinion, his idol Lycurgus was able to have the whole of Sparta study philosophy. He discusses this joining of philosophy and state government most explicitly in his life of Numa (20, 8–12):

"On the contrary, either fear of the gods, who seemed to have him in their especial care, or reverence for his virtue, or a marvellous felicity, which in his days kept life free from the taint of every vice, and pure, made him a manifest illustration and confirmation of the saying which Plato, many generations later, ventured to utter regarding government, namely, that human ills would only then cease and disappear when, by some divine felicity, the power of a king should be united in one person with the insight of a philosopher, thereby establishing virtue in control and mastery over vice. ‘Blessed,’ indeed, is such a wise man ‘in himself, and blessed too, are those who hear the words of wisdom issuing from his lips.’ For possibly there is no need of any compulsion or menace in dealing with the multitude, but when they see with their own eyes a conspicuous and shining example of virtue in the life of their ruler, they will of their own accord walk in wisdom’s ways, and unite with him in conforming themselves to a blameless and blessed life of friendship and mutual concord, attended by righteousness and temperance. Such a life is the noblest end of all government, and he is most a king who can inculcate such a life and such a disposition in his subjects. This, then, as it appears, Numa was preeminent in discerning."

It is apparently no accident that the ideal of the republic of the wise or the kingship of the philosophers comes most pronouncedly to the fore in the lives of Lycurgus and Numa and that Plutarch considers that this ideal was realized in old Sparta and ancient Rome. For him, the great example, the ideal for political science, resides in the past, in the best traditions of Greece and Rome; it was formulated by Plato, but not devised by him. Plutarch thus thinks, completely in the spirit of Plato, that the realization of his political ideals is possible both in a monarchy and in a republic. That he, in spite of the fact that he a few times calls the kingship the best form of government, in fact seems to have a slight preference for a republican system is not surprising for a man who is so bound to, and lives from the traditions of the Greek poleis. Yet this does not mean that Plutarch considered a republican system advisable for a city-state, and monarchy for a world empire, for he sees, as we saw, no difference between politics on a

151. Philop. 1, 5; Cic. 52, 4; Ad princt. inerud. 782 a. Cp. Wardman, op. cit., 206 f.
152. It makes little difference for the Platonic ideal of the rule by philosophers whether there is only one, or there are more, philosophical rulers. Cp. Pl., Resp. VII, 540 d: δειν οί ως ἄριστοι φιλόσοφοι δυνάσται, ἡ πλείους ἡ εἷς εν πόλει γενόμενος. See further J. Adam, The Republic of Plato (by D. A. Rees, Cambridge 1963) on Resp. IV, 445 d. In this respect as well, Plutarch is a faithful follower of Plato.
153. The significance of these passages for the understanding of Plutarch’s political views has already been indicated by Volkmann, op. cit. II, 222.
154. It is emphatically said, Numa 20, 8, that Plato lived considerably later than Numa. In Lyc. 31, 2 as well, it is said that Plato was a follower of Lycurgus (cp. also Qu. conv. VIII, 719 a).
155. Otherwise one should realize that the statement that in principle a republican constitution deserves preference might evoke mistrust in the Roman authorities, and that Plutarch may have realized that.
156. He eventually values Lycurgus more highly than Numa. Cp. also Rom. 27, 1.
small and on a large scale. But because he is of the opinion that his political ideals could be realized in a monarchy and, moreover, fully accepted the reality of the Roman Empire, the consequence must be that he accepts the possibility of a philosophical world ruler.\(^{157}\) He brings this out clearly in his strongly rhetorical and probably rather early treatise *De Alexandri fortuna* 329 b ff.; 342 a), proceeding from his admiration for Alexander the Great as philosophical civilizer (329 a). That this is not pure rhetoric is evident from the predominantly favorable image he gives in his riper years of Alexander's life in his biography. This conception must also be the basis for his comments wherein the king is represented as the image (στάντις) and vicar of god (see note 111) and his rule as ἕπιτυπον θεοῦ (see note 113).

Yet, as was mentioned earlier, Plutarch refrains from entitling any individual Roman emperor as the ideal world monarch. He knows too well that the quality of a government is dependent on the moral qualities of the ruler and he labels only Numa as the ideal king. What he thought of Trajan and Hadrian in this regard, we do not know, but in his surviving works he does not speak as their advisor, like Dio of Prusa. He sings even less the praise of an emperorship founded on the adoption of the best. Perhaps Plutarch was too much a realist for that, perhaps he, as a Greek, still kept his distance from Rome. And he certainly had more interest for the small world in which he lived, and in which he felt at home, than for the politics of the empire. There is no evidence for Flacelière's statement: "Au fond, le rêve politique de Plutarque serait une association, un *condominium* de Rome et de la Grèce pour le gouvernement du monde alors connu."\(^{158}\)

Thus, because Numa's kingship did not endure, the Sparta of Lycurgus, which had great durability because of its institutions, remains in the foreground as embodiment of Plutarch's political ideal. But the significance of this ideal is not limited to the world of the Greek polis. It can be of worldwide significance because Plutarch sees no fundamental difference between politics on a small and on a large scale. The political ideal of Plutarch can take form elsewhere than in his idealized Sparta of Lycurgus, such as is the case in the Rome of Numa, for it is not based first and foremost on political and social institutions, however important these might be in a given case, but on the moral quality of the rulers, and not primarily on the ability of the rulers, however much that is required, but on the moral values which bear this ideal. And it can exist because it also gives a certain amount of latitude to those governed, such as was the case in the unique situation of Sparta owing to the mixed character of the constitution. The efficacious principle of

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157. Also the concept of cosmopolitanism is not unknown to him (*De fort. Al.* 329 b; *De exilio* 601 f), but it plays no meaningful role for him; in *De exilio* it is a more or less traditional argument. Cp. Babut, *op. cit.* 355, according to whom these comments "n'impliquent aucune adhésion profonde à l'idéal internationaliste diffusé par la philosophie du Portique".

158. *AC* 32 (1963), 36.
a good state is not an unlimited monarchical exercise of power (ἀνωποθυνός ἀρχή), and even less a government by the people, but rather—and that is a principle that retains its value even in the polis of Plutarch’s own time—geometric equality, on the strength of which power and privileges are distributed in proportion to the capacities and merits of the individuals. This conception is (moderate) aristocratic in principle and in origin; it is said of Solon, Frat. Am. 484 b, that he went too far in the direction of arithmetic equality which confers equal rights and privileges to everyone. There is a place in this conception for the supreme ruler who stands far above his subjects in capacities and qualities. This idea of the geometric equality, according to Qu. conv. VIII, 719 ab, goes back to Lycurgus, who was presumably followed by Plato in this respect. Plutarch prefers this form of equality (which could also be called an inequality), not because it is politically efficient, and not because he is a conservative (although he is that), but because he considers this a just principle which answers to divine justice. He expresses this most explicitly in Qu. conv. VIII 719 bc:

"It does not mix everything together, but has within it a clear principle of distinction between good and bad; people receive their due not as the balance or the lot directs, but always by the distinction of good and bad in them. This is the proportion that God applies in the judgement of our actions. It is given the name of justice and retribution, and teaches us to consider justice fair (ίσον) but not to consider equality justice. The equality which the mass (ολοκληρω) seeks, which is in reality the greatest injustice of all, God roots out, as far as is feasible; and he maintains distinction by worth (κατ’ αξίαν), setting the proportionate relation, in geometrical fashion, as the standard of lawfulness."

This has essential significance for Plutarch. For his political ideal is not based on a particular form of government or on a particular institution, but in the first place on moral values, on justice and humanity.


160. Cp. Qu. conv. VIII, 719 b: δυναρχία σώφρον καὶ βασιλεία νομίμη πρέπουσαν. Notice that here also moderate oligarchy (aristocracy) and kingship are mentioned in the same breath.
VI. Political Leadership

In the *Politeia* of Plato the model of the ideal state emanates from the search for justice in the human community. That is a state whose model is found "in heaven" (IX, 592 b). Likewise, according to Plutarch the Platonist, the state should answer to a transcendental norm, justice, which comes from God, which is pre-eminently a divine characteristic, as he formulates it in *ad princ. inerud.* 781 b:

"But if a guess about this matter is proper, I should say that Zeus does not have Justice to sit beside him, but is himself Justice and Right and the most perfect of laws; but the ancients state it in that way in their writings and teachings, to imply that without Justice not even Zeus can rule well."

It is the high vocation of the statesman to realize this Justice—which is of divine origin—in the human community. And that, in Plutarch's opinion, does not come about so much through laws or institutions, which are man-made, as through the personality and the qualities of the rulers. They must be able to convey the moral values which sustain their policy, to those they rule.161 In this the role of those ruled is not purely passive: the acceptance of the authority of the rulers is of moral quality, is a form of areté.162

The significance of the personality of the ruler for the conveyance of moral values and the realization of Justice in the state has the consequence that the ruler, who is the guide-line for the attitude and behaviour of other people, has to put his own inner affairs in order (*Ad princ. inerud.* 780 b; *Praec.* 800 b). The moral standard of the rulers determines the moral value of their regime. For long before Lord Acton, Plutarch knew that power corrupts,163 while he knew, on the other hand, that whoever is placed in a position of power should realize that in such a position small shortcomings are noticed and elicit criticism (*Ad princ. inerud.* 782 f), and that imprudence and ignorance come to light especially in people in high positions (*ibid.* 782 e). He who rules others must himself possess knowledge (cf. *Praec*, 798 c); he must be schooled in philosophy or be advised by wise men. Imprudence

becomes really dangerous when it arises in persons in power, and evil becomes really dangerous when it is coupled with power. A very dangerous form of ignorance and wickedness (there is no essential difference between these two for the Platonist Plutarch) is the πλεονεξία, which Plutarch especially deplores in the Hellenistic kings (see p. 22). He considers a sober existence, but one sufficient to be able to devote oneself to affairs of state, the most preferable. He considers excessive ambition as fundamentally evil as excessive desire for material goods (Cato mai. 32, 4; Philop. 1, 3; Coriol. 15, 4; Agis 2, 3).

In Plutarch’s eyes, however, statesmanship must not only be based on knowledge, on philosophical principles; whoever practice politics must also be good persons, temperate, and, above all, humane and generous, φιλάνθρωποι and πράοι. “These three concepts—philanthropia, civilization, Hellenism—seem almost inseparable for Plutarch.” He mentions πράος, which is close to φιλάνθρωπος in meaning, as one of the most prominent characteristics of great men. It is not surprising that he qualifies Numa (Num. 20, 4) and Lycurgus (Lyc. 11, 6; 28, 13) with this term; he was even able to relate that Lycurgus did not avenge himself on him who had knocked out his eye, but even managed to win him over (Lyc. 11, 2 ff.; cf. Sol. 16, 2). Furthermore, he uses this qualification for others as well, for instance when he praises Aristides’ πράγος in political affairs (Cato mai 32, 4). And he considers it imprudent (οὗ πολιτικῶν) and inhumane (οὗ πάνω φιλάνθρωπον) to get the helots drunk (Demetr. 1, 5). It is not the task of the statesman to exercise power over others, but to serve the interests of the community.

That means that one who is in that position stands up especially for the weaker people (cf. Praec. 805 b); that implies that one acknowledges the intrinsic value of other people, for, he says in Nic. 2, 6: “The multitude can have no greater honour shown them by their superiors than not to be despised” (cf. also Praec. 821 c). That is why in his eyes demagoguery is always less serious than a repressive regime (Coriol. 40, 4; cf. Rom. 31, 3).

The Greek polis was strongly rooted in the religion and the state cult played a large role in public life. Although he does not as a rule say very much about this, it is an obvious concern for a religious person and a Greek
traditionalist like Plutarch (cf. Adv. Colot. 1125 d-f). And in his polemic with the Epicureans, he views religion as the protection and the foundation that holds all communities and legislation together.\textsuperscript{170} He accordingly considers the exercise of priestly duties to be a state interest of the first order, and he sees laxity therein as a great danger to the state (Aem. Paull. 3, 4–5; cf. Numa 14, 4–5).

\textsuperscript{170} τὸ συνεκτικὸν ἀπάσης κοινωνίας καὶ νομοθεσίας ἐρείσμα καὶ βάθρον (1125 e). Note that, 1125 d, besides the mythical figures of Io and Deucalion, Lycurgus and Numa are mentioned as examples for the religious founding of the state.
VII. Political Practice

That Plutarch attached great value to the dignity of the *dφxη*, to the office, has already cropped up in what has preceded. He says in *Rom*. 31, 2: "For the ruler must preserve first of all the realm itself, and this is preserved no less by refraining from what is unbecoming than by cleaving to what is becoming." Whoever fails therein transforms from a king or leader into a tyrant or demagogue, and becomes hated or scorned by the governed (*ibid.*, par. 3). That is why a statesman, says Plutarch, should not only be humane, but also *διηρφνής* (he also uses *βαθός* in the same sense), dignified and serious, a *vir gravis*.\(^{171}\) He must also be scrupulous about details in the exercise of his function, as Aemilius Paullus in the early part of his brilliant career (*Aem. Paull*. 3, 4): "For no man begins at once with a great deed of lawlessness to disturb the civil polity, but those who remit their strictness in small matters break down also the guard that has been set over greater matters" (*ibid.*, par. 5).

Reason must be the foundation of political activity (*Praec.* 798 c), something for which those in power often have an aversion; they accept advice reluctantly because they fear that reason will dominate them and curtail their power (*Ad princ. inerud.* 779 e). Nevertheless, the *aretē* of those ruling is the guarantee of a good government. It is not their eloquence that convinces, but their character, their moral quality, which wields their eloquence as an instrument (*Praec.* 801 cd). The statesman may let himself be influenced no more by personal advantage than by the approval, or criticism, of the crowd (comp. the criticism of Nicias, *Nic*. 2, 4–6). He must not follow the people, but lead them, yet properly take account of the unique nature of that people (*Praec*. 800 ab). In all this, his primary concern must be the interests of the community, of the state.\(^{172}\)

In Plutarch's own time and surroundings, the task of the statesman was limited in scope, not only because of the limited autonomy of the Greek communities, but also because the legislation, on account of which Plutarch admired so much the great figures of Lycurgus, Numa and Solon, no longer had much significance in his situation. The task of the local Greek politician in Plutarch's time, therefore, resided more in making good practical use of the limited possibilities available to him. This demands much leadership

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171. Cp. *Coriol*. 15, 4; *Brut*. 1, 3; 6, 8; *Philop*. 3, 1.
172. Plutarch commended the fact that Galba always let the interests of state prevail over his own interests (*Galba* 21, 2).
and expertise in his relations with the people and with his rivals in his own city, as well as with the Roman authorities. 173 This regime will have to be carried out carefully and must have a temperate character, 174 thereby being in harmony with the divine world government (Phoc. 2, 9). All excess therein is evil, especially excessive political ambition (cf. Agis 2, 3). Every overextension of a given system can have disastrous effects and must be avoided. An excess of criticism is also to be avoided. We saw how the unbridled parrhésia of the old Attic comedy went too far for Plutarch. Likewise, he would have viewed the in and out of season criticisms that Timagenes of Alexandria (with whose work he was acquainted) had of Augustus, merely as senseless boldness.

The statesman should thus follow a moderate course. 175 He will have to take circumstances into account. 176 He will also have to take fully into account human nature, which, as Plutarch, in line with Aristotle, says, is not divine and not animal. 177 Absolute moral perfection has not been given to man (cf. Timol. 6, 7) and that is why Plutarch rejects the intransigent attitude of the ethics and the political ideals of the Stoa. 178 So he says about Cato Uticensis (Phoc. 3, 3):

"The old-fashioned character of Cato, which, after a long lapse of time, made its appearance among lives that were debased, enjoyed a great repute and fame, but was not suited to the needs of men because of the weight and grandeur of virtue, which were out of all proportion to the immediate times."

One could get the impression from these words, that there was formerly a possibility for politics in the spirit of Cato; but in Plutarch’s eyes, people were never perfectly good (or perfectly bad), and such an ideal situation appears in none of Plutarch’s numerous biographies; at most, it is approached in a distant past—in the lives of Lycurgus and Numa.

What the situation demands is a pragmatic rule; hence Plutarch’s interest in a non-surviving work of Theophrastus, Πολιτικά πρὸς τοὺς καύρος (see below p. 64), which he apparently used extensively in his Praecepta. The pragmatic character of his political advice is not surprising for a man who, in spite of his great appreciation for conjugal fidelity, advocates a lenient attitude toward the indiscretions of a sensual man. 179 A statesman should guard against an undue rigidity of mind, like that of the young Cato (cf.

173. See for this the following chapter.
174. Cp. Rom. c. 31; Lyc. 2, 4–5; Public. 25, 6 (Solon); Coriol. 17. 7; Phoc. 2, 7–9; 3, 8. See also Galba 27, 4, where Galba is called a ἄρχων κόσμος.
176. Like Solon did, τοὺς πράγματα τοὺς νόμους μᾶλλον ἢ τὰ πράγματα τοῖς νόμοις προσαρμόζον (Sol. 22, 3).
177. Public. 6, 5; cp. Babut, op. cit., 364.
Galo Ul. 26, 5; 30, 9 f.). His “Rechthaberei” had driven Caesar and Pompey into each other’s arms (Cato Ut. 31, 2 ff.). It was likewise unwise of Galba that he wanted to govern the soldiers in the time after Nero with old-republican severity (Galba 29, 4). Therefore a politician should sometimes keep silent and tolerate the actions of those who exercise power.\(^{180}\) In this connection, there is evidence that one of Plutarch’s lost works had the title of \(El \ δώσει \ γνώμην \ ό \ πόλεις προειδώς \ ήτα \ ού \ πείσει\) (Lamprias catalogue no. 164). Also, for the sake of his own well-being, he should not become unnecessarily busy and he should avoid unnecessary competition in the municipal politics (De tuenda sanit. 135 de). If an appeal may be made here to De exilio, Plutarch considers the many obligations that an active and prosperous citizen in a polis has, as a heavy burden,\(^{181}\) a burden, though, which Plutarch took upon himself without complaining. That he, however, did not view all these burdens as necessary, is evident from his statements concerning embassies, which he also De exilio 602 c mentions: although these are, in his eyes, sometimes needed, useful and important,\(^{182}\) they are often, in his eyes, neither necessary nor valuable, and are merely expressions of pure flattery.\(^{183}\) Such useless embassies, as much as needless lawsuits and litigations, must be avoided, certainly when one is later on in years. Even less should one, especially in later life, attempt to fill all possible public functions\(^{184}\), for the sake of one’s physical well-being and in order to allow others, especially the youth, room for development (An seni 796 b; Prae. 812 c). Plutarch is pragmatic also in his view that it can be desirable to exploit the crowd’s superstitiousness in dealing with them (De genio Socr. 580 a).

\(^{180}\) De exilio 606 ab. Though one could reasonably wonder if Plutarch really is thinking of the situation of his own time (cp., e.g. his talking about sycophants, 603 f; 606 a) and does not, rather, work up the old standard conceptions on the subject in this tract. De exilio is indeed a work that very much savours of the school of philosophers and the tenor of this work, that one must not make too much of banishment, is difficult to reconcile with the value that Plutarch ascribes to political functioning and with his devotion to his native town (see Volkmann, op. cit. II, 246 f.). His criticism of the attitude of Cicero during his banishment (Cic. 32, 5) concerns the way in which he bore his lot, and in no way says that that banishment could have been worse.

\(^{181}\) De exilio 602 c en f; 603 f; 605 b: ἡσυχίαν, ἢς οὐ πάνυ μέτεστι οἶκοι τοῖς ἡντιναοῦν δόξαν ἦ δύναμιν ἔχουσι; 605 c.

\(^{182}\) Prae. 805 ab; 808 bc; 815 d; 816 d.

\(^{183}\) An seni 794 a; Prae. 819 a. There was a va-et-vient of emissaries of cities from the eastern half of the empire to governors and emperors; see D. Kienast, Presbeia. Griechisches Gesandtschaftswesen (RE, Suppl. XIII, Sonderdruck, München 1974), 514; 520; F. Millar, The Emperor in the Roman World, London 1977, 218 f. and passim. That involved a heavy financial burden for the cities. Roman emperors tried to set limits to the size of the travels of ambassadors. Vespasian limited the size of an embassy to a maximum of three members (Dig. 50, 7, 5, 6) and Antoninus Pius bound such embassies to strict rules (see W. William, ‘Antoninus Pius and the Control of Provincial Embassies’, Hist. 16, 1967, 470 ff.). Trajan also tried to limit the number of ambassadors (Plin., Ep. 10, 44).

\(^{184}\) An Seni 793 c ff; 796 b; Prae. 812 c.
Offices and honors were fiercely desired in the Greek cities of the imperial time, and the ambitions of the citizens were the cause of much quarreling and dissension. In the stasis in the Greek cities, political and social disharmony do not play such a large role as in earlier times; internal discord proceeds primarily from personal ambition and jealousy. That is why Plutarch can call jealousy the greatest evil in the political life of the Greek cities of his time (An seni 787 c; cp. 788 e). His practical suggestions to future politicians are to a large degree aimed at giving as little occasion as is possible for jealousy. That is not to say that it is Plutarch’s opinion that in important matters one may shrink back from making a just decision out of fear for criticism and envy. In such a case one must dare to take a strong line, and firm dealings are just what can awaken confidence (Praec. 805 b). He deplors it in Nicias, that he fell short in this respect (Nic. 2, 4–6; Grass. 36, 5): who acts in this way, who shirks his duty in this way, “betrays not only his own reputation, but the security and safety of his own country” (Grass. 36, 5). So a city magistrate must do his best to prevent exhibitions and manifestations that awaken undesired feelings in the masses and oppose them himself if this is required (Praec. 822 c).

One should, however, avoid giving unnecessary offence. Plutarch recommends a modest attitude. One should shun excessive ambition (Cato mai. 32, 4; Agis 2, 3) and avoid appearing arrogant (Coriol. 15, 4). He also considers sobriety of life style—something on which Plutarch places great value—advisable for a politician, something that he considered realized by Lycurgus in Sparta by means of the equality of possessions, the uniformity of life style in the syssitia and the prohibition of gold and silver coins. The less prosperous must also be able to participate in the political life (cf. Praec. 822 d ff.).

Politics demands ability and experience (An seni 784 c ff.; 789 d), and younger people can develop these by observing how others, particularly older people, do things (An seni 790 e ff.). For this reason as well, it is incorrect to wait until one’s later years before entering into politics. (An seni 784 a-c; 788 f ff.). And the Sparta of Lycurgus is for Plutarch a particularly good example to follow for the acknowledgement and appreciation of the wisdom and experience of the older generation. Nevertheless, the reputation that a politician has does not rest on his knowledge and experience alone, but also on the impression which his personal life makes (Praec. 800 b ff.). After he has given a number of examples of the significance of the personal way of living of a statesman for the success of his political performance, he says in Praec. 801 c: “So great is the importance, in political life, of confidence or lack of confidence in a man’s character.” For the honest and constant favorable disposition of the citizens is the best protection for a ruler (Arat. 25, 7). He, whose behaviour gives offence, easily

185. Cato mai. 31, 2–3; cp. Praec. 823 a ff.; Qu. conv. II, 644 bc.
186. Besides, of course, the Homeric poems (Nestor!).
fails through unpopularity with the masses or through defamation with a ruler, in this case the Roman governor.\textsuperscript{187} It is therefore necessary, without purchasing the favour of the multitude with popular measures—Plutarch is absolutely opposed to such demagogy—to win the masses to oneself, "a thing more desirable than the gold coins of Croesus" (\textit{Praec.} 823 a). A good reputation evokes trust in a statesman, and that makes it easier for him to deal more effectively. It is difficult to do good to unwilling people, but if the people have confidence in a statesman, they are prepared to follow willingly his leading. One sees how much Plutarch agrees in this with Xenophon's conception that the leading of a good general or ruler consists of \textit{εξάντων ἀρχεῖον}, the acquiring and maintaining of the confidence and cooperation of his soldiers or of his subordinates.\textsuperscript{188}

Also under the aegis of Rome there was not always peace and quiet in the Greek city-states and, often, not between the Greek city states either. Just as Plutarch deemed the mutual struggle of the Greeks in the past as deplorable, so he deems the rivalry and dissension between the Greeks in his time as evil. He rarely speaks about dissension between Greek cities, which existed in his time, except in the beginning of his life of Cimon. There he gives a lengthy narration of the murder of a Roman in Chaeronea in 88/7 B.C. by irresponsible elements, and the condemnation of it by the city council, followed by the murder of the magistrates of the city. Lucullus decided that the city was not guilty and that it had even become the victim of criminal practices. Nevertheless, the neighboring Orchomenians, who were at variance with Chaeronea (\textit{διάφοροι δυνατοί}, 2, 1) brought the affair before the governor of Macedonia and engaged a Roman prosecutor (\textit{συνοράνεν}) for that purpose. But by appealing to the testimony of Lucullus, the city escaped a heavy punishment. Plutarch, as well, apparently had to defend the interests of his home town against competing or envious neighbors, in the role of envoy or magistrate. But with a view to his own time, he primarily talks about dissension within the polis, about \textit{stasis}. Although under the \textit{pax Romana} this did not tend to get so intense as in the time of the independent poleis, at least not so intense that it led to violence, Plutarch is not less apprehensive and not less disapproving of it than the Greeks of the classical period were. In \textit{De tuenda sanit.} 135 de, he expresses his disapproval of the unnecessary bustle and quarrelling in the municipal politics, which makes no sense and leads to nothing good. Frequently, says Plutarch, \textit{stasis} arises through private quarrels, which lead to great turmoil in a city-state (\textit{Praec.} 824 ff.), such as in Syracuse where a love affair eventually led to the

\textsuperscript{187} Cp. \textit{De superst.} 168 bc: the superstitious attribute this to a higher power.

fall of an excellent constitution. In *De frat. am.* 487 f-488 a, he deprecates the disputes of Greeks from his own time, which led to the intervention of "the tyrant," the last-mentioned probably referring to Domitianus. In *Animine an corp.* 501 f-502 a, he deplores the rage for litigations of the Anatolian Greeks. Internal dissension, quarrelling, *stasis* is (also) for Plutarch something that must be avoided and he forcefully urges to strive for φιλία (Praec. 824 cd) and views it as the best and most beautiful achievement of the art of politics to see to it that no *stasis* arises (824 c). Here lies an important task for the statesman; like Solon in former times, he must promote the attainment of φιλία between rival groups. Therefore one must not stand off from political turmoil when *stasis* arises: Solon correctly forbade the Athenian citizens to remain neutral in cases of *stasis*. One must rather, in the manner of Theramenes, "converse with both parties and join neither." The best remedy against *stasis* is an ample admixture of healthy elements that have not been tainted with the ailment (Praec. 824 a).

That a religious person as Plutarch also dealt with public worship in his political reflections, need not cause surprise. The religion, i.e. the official state cult, was a public affair and the religious basis of the polis was not a problematic issue for a Greek traditionalist like Plutarch. But he considered religious excesses undesirable in a polis, such as is apparent from his *De superstitione*; the highpoint of superstition for him is the attitude of the Sabbath-keeping Jews, who did not raise a hand during a siege of Jerusalem on the Sabbath (169 c). Out of fear for religious excesses, Plutarch even wants to prohibit women from the often exotic cults for women only (Praec. coni. 140 d). On the other hand, he considers it, as we saw, permissible under certain circumstances that a politician makes use of the superstitions of the people.

189. *Praec.* 825 cd; cp. Aristot., *Pol.* 5, 1303 b 20 ff. For a similar event in Delphi (*Praec.* 825 bc) Plutarch offers more details than Aristotle (*Pol.* 5, 1303 b 37 ff.; cp. also Ael., *v. h.* 11, 5), probably from Delphic tradition. According to Valgiglio, *op. cit.* XIX, Plutarch took these examples from Theophrastus because he was not familiar with Aristotle’s *Politic*. The dogma that Plutarch was not familiar with Aristotle’s *Politic* is, however, not so certain as Valgiglio believes; see Aalders, *Mn* 1977, 36 ff. and 39.

190. It seems probable that these leading Greek politicians came from various cities and that rivalry between poleis played a role here as well.


VIII. Greek Politics under Roman Rule

Plutarch was aware that the Greeks failed through their dissension and mutual wars and that they were already powerless for centuries with regard to politics and military matters. That they were nevertheless in a relatively favourable situation is thanks to the Romans, who created order in a chaotic world (cf. *De fort. Rom.* 317 bc) and who earned the gratitude of the Greeks, and of many other sovereigns and peoples (*Flamin.* 12, 8–10). Peace reigns throughout the world, there are no wars, no staseis, no rule by tyrants (*Pyth.* or. 408 bc), and peace and prosperity reign everywhere. Plutarch is satisfied with this situation and opposes an assertion, put in the mouth of a Cynic philosopher, that the oracles had declined because of the evil of the times (*Def.* or. 413 a ff.). He is happy with the blessings of the *pax Romana* and with the relative freedom which the Romans give to the Greeks, to which he adds with a touch of resignation: "perhaps more would not be better for them" (*Prach.* 824 c). He speaks praiseingly concerning the benevolent imperial assistance regarding the efforts of the Greek home rule (*Pyth.* or. 409 c). But in this situation without complications, there is no need for involved and hidden oracles in verse form (*Pyth.* or. 408 c).

With all his appreciation for the existing situation and for the *pax Romana*, Plutarch does not lose sight of the real power relationships. The Greek magistrate has to be aware that he does not administer a fully independent state with its own military power, that he is subject to the power of the Roman governors. He must adopt a modest and careful attitude toward them; when he speaks, he must be aware of the Roman footwear above him; from the office of the strategi (municipal magistrates) he must keep in view

193. Concerning the decrease of the population of (European) Greece see *Def.* or 414 a; cp. the 7th oration (*Euboeicus*) of Dio of Prusa. See Th. Mommsen, *Römische Geschichte* V, Berlin 1933, 246.

194. Of course, in these comments Plutarch has primarily in mind the Greek world. For the rest, the periodical fighting activities on the borders of the Roman Empire were probably little more than a marginal phenomenon in the eyes of the inhabitants of the provinces which lay in the heart of the Empire.

195. See also *De tranq. an.* 469 e; *Prach.* 824 c; cp. J. Palm, Rom, *Römertum und Imperium in der griechischen Literatur der Kaiserzeit*, Lund 1959, 31 ff. This view of the situation is found in other Greek authors of the same period; see, e.g., W.C. van Unnik, 'Irenaeus en de *pax Romana*', in: *Kerk en vrede* (Feestbundel J. de Graaf), Baarn 1976, 210.

196. *Pyth.* or. 408 b; *De tranq. an.* 469 e; cp. *Pyth.* or. 408 f ff.
the podium on which the Roman governor is seated. Like a stage actor, in his performance he may permit his own feelings to come to the fore, his own character and reputation, but he should strictly follow the instructions of the stage prompter (Praec. 813 ef). The freedom that one enjoys is a gift of the rulers (Praec. 284 c) and thus a precarious possession. An advantage or position of power that has been attained can, by one stroke of the pen of the Roman governor, be nullified or given to another person; and even if that is not the case, the significance of it is very limited (Praec. 824 ef). He who is exiled must realize that he is relieved of the obligation of paying his respects to the governor, says Plutarch (De exilio 604 b), and that he is not dependent on his whims.

One should especially avoid needless quarreling, for that inevitably invites intervention by the Roman authorities. And by all means one must be on one’s guard against having the Roman governor decide in all matters about which there is a difference of opinion. That gives him more power than he himself wants and reduces the independence of the municipality (πολιτεία) de facto to nil (Praec. 814 e ff.). One must also refrain from disturbing the masses by an excessive and senseless reminder of the great Greek past as an example to be followed (Praec. 814 a ff.), while at the same time one should as much as possible prevent manifestations which evoke undesirable feelings in the masses (Praec. 822 c).

Considering the weak position of the Greek magistrate, it is good for him to insure the cooperation and the favour of the Roman rulers in his province (Praec. 814 c ff.), and that not for his own interests and advantage, but for that of his polis (ibid. 814 de). But then he must act in a conscious and dignified way and avoid all flattery and obsequiousness and not act like people who “when the leg has been fettered, go on and subject the neck to the yoke” (Praec. 814 ef; cf. Qu. conv. VII, 710 a). It may be necessary for him to take a firm line against the governors and even the emperor in the

197. The conjecture of Kaltwasser, who, instead of ἀνὴρ τοῦ στρατηγίου πρὸς το βῆμα wants to read ἀνὴρ τοῦ βῆματος πρὸς το στράτηγιον (a reading that one already de facto finds in younger offshoots of the manuscript tradition) has found much approval. It is, however, unnecessary and has, in any case, against it the fact that the Roman governors of Achaia had no military command and that κάλτος (caleus) means footwear, but not soldiers boots (cp. Am. Paull. 5, 3 and see also C.P. Jones, op. cit. 133). The defense of the tradition in the Teubner-edition (C. Hubert-M. Pohlenz-H. Drexler, Plutarchi Moralia V, 1, Leipzig 19602), who suggest the possibility “a superiore loco, στρατ. praetoris Romani, animo respicientem ad exilem suam potestatem, quid haec valeat, recte aestimare” seems rather forced. The interpretation given here is also that of C.P. Jones, op. cit. 133; Valigilio considers it the most probable.

198. Cp. Qu. Rom. 282 b; subjects must submit to their rulers and derive their honor and power from them. Perhaps Plutarch had his own situation in mind with this; compare the shift in terminology: βασιλευόμενος—ηγεμόνι.

defense of the interests of his city; and that is something where a politician can make a contribution and achieve great prestige (Praec. 805 ab).

Although Plutarch is generally satisfied with the situation in Greece and the position of the Greeks under the regime of Trajan and Hadrian, he is also aware that the inhabitants of the provinces to a strong degree are dependent on the personality and the quality of the emperor and on that of his higher representatives in the province. Not all emperors were good emperors and there is no guarantee that good emperors will be succeeded by other good emperors. There is even less guarantee that the governors and procurators under a good emperor will be benevolent, gentle and meek. On the contrary, there are governors whom Plutarch straightforwardly calls depraved and intractable (Def. or. 434 d), and a Greek magistrate, according to him, has to take the whims and fancies of his governor too much into account (De exilio 604 b).

The Roman monarchs also were not all of the same cast, says Plutarch. There is reason to suppose that he had a favourable view of Nerva, Trajan and Hadrian (cf. Pyth. or. 409 c). His view of Caesar is divided. The latter was driven by the lust for power and the craving to be first, but he was certainly not a tyrant and his performance is given a relatively favourable judgement (Ant. 6, 7; Brut. 55, 1–2). In connection with the terror they excercised, Tiberius and Nero are mentioned in one breath with Alexander the Great and Dionysius II (Amic. mult. 96 c). That Plutarch’s opinion of Caligula is unfavourable need not be a surprise: the entire ancient tradition, on which Plutarch was naturally dependent in this case, has a very unfavourable view of this emperor. Plutarch (Ant, 87, 8) points out the striking character of his rule: he ruled ἐπιφανως. While it appears that Plutarch values Nero’s decree concerning the freedom of the Greeks, his view of this emperor is for the rest very unfavourable, as can be made out from a number of passages in the biographies of Galba and Otho. Nero was a disaster for his empire, comparable with such figures as Ptolemaeus Auletes and Antonius (Quom. adul. 56 ef); through his insane imaginations he brought the Roman Empire near to ruin (Ant. 87, 9). Galba is given a mixed evaluation, a man with respectable principles but with insufficient insight into the situation of his time and for the real possibilities, and further too weak toward his favorites (who were lacking in integrity). What can be said of Otho’s earlier life—it was not a hair better than that of Nero (Oth. 18, 3)—this was offset by his choosing to die, whereby Otho prevented further bloodshed.

201. Although the dictatorship for life Caes. 57, 1 is straightforwardly called tyranny; according to C.B.R. Pelling, JHS 100 (1980), 136 f. Caesar became a tyrant.
202. “de façon voyante” (Flacelière). “Berucht” (G.J. de Vries) is too explicit.
203. Cp. also Amic. mult. 96 c.
That Plutarch does not judge so favourably concerning Vespasian (*Amat.* 771 c) is understandable; this emperor withdrew the freedom that Nero had extended to (some of) the Greeks. Plutarch appears to have judged the philhellenic Titus more favourably, but his judgement of Domitian is decidedly unfavourable.\(^{204}\) In this he is in agreement with the judgement of the senatorial circles with whom he maintained good contacts and with the official opinion of the time of Nerva and Trajan. Very probably Domitian is also the emperor who, *Frat. am.* 488 a, is qualified as a tyrant.

Everything considered, the preserved statements of Plutarch give us a picture of the Roman emperors that is not very surprising. Disappointing as it may be in itself that the only surviving biographies of Roman emperors written by Plutarch are the not especially thorough biographies of Galba and Otho, written in the beginning of his career, the chance that, with the possible exception of the biography of Augustus, the lost lives would be able to offer a new view of the first emperors of Rome is not great.

The lives of the Flavian emperors, which could have offered interesting information coming from a contemporary and a cultivated inhabitant of the provinces, were not written by Plutarch, perhaps out of caution, nor those of Nerva and Trajan.

\(^{204}\) *Cp.* *de curios.* 522 de; *Public.* 15, 3–6 (critique of the excessive luxury of his buildings).
IX. Politics and Historical Developments

In Plutarch’s early rhetorical declamatio De fort. Rom. 326 a ff. he says that fate was well-disposed toward Rome, and that because of the premature death of Alexander the Great, Rome did not have to wage the perilous war against this great conqueror. Although Plutarch speaks of τὐχή here, for this deeply-religious man, fate is not a blind and arbitrary power, but guidance, divine leading, in which Plutarch does not in the least rule out human decisions and actions. The divinity rules the world, in his view, and can even use bad and depraved rulers for the good of mankind (De sera numin. vind. 553 a). So the power of Rome would not have been possible without a divine origin (Rom. 8, 9) and the unparalleled expansion of Rome’s power, in the Greek world as well, has come about through the assistance of the divinity (Philop. 17, 2; Flamin. 12, 10). In De fortuna Romanorum Plutarch emphasizes not only that Rome has been favoured by fate, but also that this fate has not been favourably-disposed toward Rome for only one specific area and for a specific time, but that fate has been consistently favourable toward Rome until the present day.205

In later works this constant favour of fate toward Rome, and at the same time the durability of the Roman world dominion, is no longer so explicitly mentioned. That was not needed. It was evident in Plutarch’s days that the world dominion of Rome had lasted longer than any Hellenistic kingdom had been a world power, and the political situation was so stable, that there was no appearance of change in sight. With this situation, with the peace and rest (absence of stasis, amongst other things) brought and ensured by Rome, Plutarch was completely satisfied. And he undoubtedly had as much positive appreciation for the durability of the order imposed by Rome (although he might have given preference to another development of the historical events) as for the durability of the constitution of Lycurgus in Sparta.

Plutarch not only accepted the Roman Empire, he also has esteem and sympathy for it, although he never calls himself a Roman and never speaks about the Romans in the first person. The performance of Antonius had almost led to the demise of the unique character of Roman society206 and Nero almost ruined Rome with his insane ideas (Ant. 87, 9). In view of

206. ἀντί Περματον θην, Quom. adul. 56 e.
Plutarch’s unfavourable opinion of Antonius and Nero and the horror of the struggle for power after the fall of Nero, in view, also, of his appreciation for the existing situation and the *pax Romana*, I tend to agree with B. Forte, when she, with reference to the last-mentioned passage, says: “a statement which reflects his own concern for the empire’s safety.” 207 The security of the Roman Empire was undoubtedly close to Plutarch’s heart because its ruination would have disastrous consequences for the Greeks in the empire and for the Greek culture. That Plutarch was greatly concerned with Rome for its own sake is, however, not shown by such a statement.

Yet Plutarch accepted the political situation of his day as something that has come about through divine guidance. Plutarch believes in a divine guidance on behalf of the good of mankind. 208 He also believes that Rome did not achieve its position of power without divine mediation (see p. 58) and also suggests that the monarchy of Caesar was divinely ordained. 209 He more than once praising speaks about the blessings of the *pax Romana* and he disagrees with the assertion that there are no longer any oracles given because of the corruption of the world of his day (*Def. or. 413 a ff*).

What Plutarch does not say in all this, is that his own time has realized the best conceivable or possible situation, that one lives in an ideal political situation. Particularly from his political tracts it is clear that this is definitely not his view. Yet, nowhere does he say that the political situation would be amenable to further improvements in the future, nor does he speak apprehensively about future changes in an unfavourable direction. It seems that the possibility of a future that will be different from the present lies outside the scope of Plutarch and, apparently, many of his contemporaries, 210 although the fact that the Greek Plutarch never speaks of an *imperium sine fine* or of *Roma aeterna*, deserves attention. His orientation, insofar as it is not connected with the present, is totally to the past, an attitude which is characteristic for the Greeks. 211 However, this is in my opinion not the only reason why Plutarch makes no mention of political changes in the distant or near future.

Since Augustus, the conviction has grown stronger that the Roman Empire had just about reached its maximum size—conquests such as that of Trajan were, certainly in the eyes of the inhabitants of the provinces, partial and ephemeral—and that this empire was permanent. A pessimistic author like Tacitus, critical about his own time and surroundings and emotionally

207. *Rome and the Romans as the Greeks saw them* (Am. Acad. in Rome, Papers and Monographs 24, 1972), 233.
208. *Cp. Def. or. 413 c: ——τὴν πρόνοιαν ὅσπερ εὐγνώμονα μητέρα καὶ χρηστὴν πάντα ποιοῦσαν ἡμῖν καὶ φυλάττουσαν——.*
209. *Brut. 55, 2: δεομένως ἐδοξε τοῖς πράγμασι μοναρχίας ὅσπερ πρατήτους ἱματός ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ τοῦ δαίμονος δέδοσθαι.*
211. *See B.A. van Groningen, In the Grip of the Past, Leiden 1953.*
more involved with the Empire and its surroundings than Plutarch, who remained essentially Greek, might then be filled with concern about the moral decay of Roman society and about the movements of the Germans in the world; for Plutarch, optimistic as he is, the existing situation is lasting and, although he does not idealize it, acceptable in every way. He does not expect an heaven on earth; he expects no revolutionary developments. In other words, one searches in Plutarch in vain for a historical vision. History has, for him, a function as teacher of ethics and practical political activity, but for him it does not give directions toward the future. Because Plutarch does not believe in a cyclical repetition of the historical process, the meaning of history remains for him, like for the most non-Christian historians of Antiquity, limited to functioning as exemplum.

Of course great changes in the political system are not a priori impossible in Plutarch’s vision. The Roman Empire could fall or disintegrate in a great catastrophe as the result of the actions of a very bad emperor, such as almost occurred after the fall of Nero. But in Plutarch’s time that still seemed to be a very improbable development, and due to his trust in divine guidance, such a thing was inconceivable for him. But he was also realistic enough not to dream of the restoration of independence for the Greeks or of the re-enactment of the constitution of Lycurgus. Plutarch was thus a moderate and pragmatic politician, who looked to the past for the realization of his political ideals.
In the last decades scholars have come to the general consensus that the view, that Plutarch derived practically all of the information and quotations in his biographies from one Hellenistic source, a view which has had the great Eduard Meyer as its most prominent representative, must be abandoned. There can not only be no doubt that Plutarch was well acquainted with the great poets and historians of Greece; there is also no reason to deny the credibility of his own testimony. It can be considered established that Plutarch used a large number of sources of varying nature for his biographies, and E. Badian says correctly: “There is no reason whatever to believe—as hypercriticism has sometimes alleged—that Plutarch’s quotations are never at first hand and his claim to erudition is an imposture.”

That is not to say that Plutarch had first-hand knowledge of all the authors he mentions. There were limits to what he could do, even if only because he did not have every book at this disposal; this was the case for the archaic period in particular, from which he only had the works of a few poets, including Solon, and some philosophers at his disposal. The acquaintance of Plutarch, who only later acquired a limited knowledge of Latin, with the Latin literature, hardly went beyond those authors who were important for him as historical sources. His acquaintance with the Latin


poetry is very limited; such a widely-known poet as Virgil is not once mentioned by him.\textsuperscript{218}

It is natural that special attention has been given to the biographies for insight regarding Plutarch’s sources. Because of the scarcity of source material, Plutarch is an important source, sometimes the most important source, for the modern historian of the Antiquity. It is therefore of great importance to know what value may be ascribed to the testimony of Plutarch in a given case, and for that reason it is necessary to ascertain (as much as possible) the sources from which Plutarch drew his information. That not only applies to the biographies, and also not only to the political and military history; that applies, among others, also to his political views and his philosophical and religious ideas.

When one wants to trace the origins of Plutarch’s political views, one must first of all realize that that is impossible in many cases or that one can go not further than a vague indication. One must also realize that, in a number of cases, Plutarch was himself hardly aware of the source of his ideas. His preference for, and involvement with, the polis flows from his origins and his cultural background. That he considers political affairs in a polis to be essentially of the same nature as that in a world empire, flows from the notions concerning the polis which he learned in his surroundings from the cradle. We can see this as something remarkable, but according to all appearances, Plutarch took this for granted. And the strongly moralizing character of Plutarch’s political views may be so conspicuous to us that we consider it worthy of separate mention; but, apart from the fact that Plutarch is simply a convinced moralist, it was the view accepted by practically all philosophical schools, with the exception of that of Epicurus, that politics belonged to the domain of ethics. This was especially the case with the schools that influenced Plutarch’s views in the area of politics the most; i.e., those of Plato and Aristotle.

But Plutarch’s political views, and the material that he adduces for the construction or illustration of his ideas, originate from, or are influenced by, sources of various nature, especially philosophical and historical works. It is often not possible to uncover exactly who the spokesman is from whom Plutarch derives a particular thought. Apart from the generalities mentioned in the preceding paragraph, some tendencies regarding the sources of Plutarch’s political ideas—and this applies in particular to his political tracts—can be indicated.

In the \textit{Convivium VII Sapientium} the political views and statements for the most part go back to the Greek literature of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.\textsuperscript{219} in spite of Plutarch’s attempt to give this work an archaic tint: the strong moralistic rejection of the tyrant, the distinction between tyrant and king, and the putting forward of the possibility that a tyrant becomes a king.

\textsuperscript{218} See Jones, \textit{op. cit.}, 81 ff.

\textsuperscript{219} See Aalders, \textit{Mn.} 1977, 32 ff.
The "democracy" which is advocated in the *Convivium* is in fact a moderate aristocracy (or democracy) with no great differences in possessions, which functions in conformity to *aretè* and in which people obey the laws.

This is substantially the same picture that we get from other writings: an outspoken preference for a regime that carries on a pan-Hellenistic policy toward the outer world, that is opposed to tyranny and that has a moderate character, so much so, that the changeable Theramenes serves as an example for him of the politician of a polis in the second century of the imperial period. 220

Plutarch appears to be an advocate of a moderate regime, an opponent of radical democracy and a supporter of geometrical equality. These ideas coincide the most with those of Aristotle and his school, even in so far as to judge Theramenes favourably. And because Plutarch was well-acquainted with the works of Aristotle, Theophrastus and other Peripatetics in this field, 221 one can safely assume that Plutarch's political ideas were influenced considerably by them. The influence of Plato is also unmistakable. One would indeed look in vain for a direct imitation of the state of the *Republic* or of the *Laws*, although there are points of agreement with certain passages in these works. 222 Yet the central idea of the *Republic*, that the wise should rule, is not absent in his thought, and the idea derived from this, that the philosophers should at least try to influence the rulers, plays a large role for him. He sees the most adequate realization of the Platonic idea to be in the Sparta of Lycurgus, from which Plato himself is said to have derived his central thesis.

With Sparta we come to the third important source for Plutarch's political ideas. This Sparta is the idealized Sparta of Lycurgus, where equality of possessions is present and geometrical equality is in force. That is not the Sparta of the *Política* of Aristotle, who is much more detached and critical toward Sparta 222a. His view of Sparta is also not derived from Plato, although it is evident in his life of Lycurgus, that he was aware of what Plato wrote about the earliest history of Sparta and quotes, in *Lyc.* 7, 1, what Plato says in the third book of his *Laws* about the institution of the ephorate. But for Plato Sparta is not a realization of the ideal state and, moreover, Plutarch's information about the history and institutions of Sparta is much more detailed than the few remarks that one finds in Plato. The latter applies also to Xenophon, whose esteem for Sparta was shared by Plutarch, as well as his view that the Sparta of the fourth century B.C. began to show signs of decay through deviations from the constitution of Lycurgus;

220. *Praec.* 824 b ἀλλ' ἔντασθα δεὶ μᾶλλον τὸν Ἐθραμένου κόσμον υποδούμενον ἄμφωτέροις ὡμελείν καὶ μηδέτεροις προστίθεισθαι.
222. Harvey, *Class. et Med.* 1965, 122 f. points out the correspondence of Pl., *Laws* 6, 757 b, where the geometric equality is called Διὸς κρίας, with Plut., *Qu. conv.* VIII, 719 b, where Plutarch says about it: ταύτην ὁ θεὸς ἐπάγει τὴν ἀναλογίαν τοῖς πράγμασι.
222a. But he knew and used Aristotle's lost *Αἰκαδαμονίων Πολιτεία.*
Plutarch also shared Xenophon’s esteem for Agesilaus. However much Plutarch is of one mind with Xenophon in his esteem for Sparta, he had much more information at his disposal concerning Spartan institutions than one finds in the slender *Res publica Lacedaemoniorum* of Xenophon. Plutarch thus drew from many sources. Which ones these were can not be ascertained. One might think of a later Peripatetic—Dicaearchus, for example—but that is only a possibility.

However, it is not totally a shot in the dark to presume that Plutarch’s information concerning Sparta is derived from writings of Peripatetics. Plutarch knew their works and he devoted a special discourse to one of Theophrastus’ tracts, that deals with political problems, *Πολιτικά πρὸς τοὺς καιροὺς* (Lamprias-catalogus no. 53), which has not been preserved. Plutarch’s *Praecepta gerendae rei publicae*, in particular, is probably influenced by this work of Theophrastus, the tenor of which, judging form the title, shows striking resemblance to the attitude which Plutarch himself so often recommends. In addition to Theophrastus, whose non-preserved works in the area of political theory and state institutions have been very significant and whose influence upon Plutarch may not be underestimated, Plutarch knew and used other Peripatetics as well, such as the widely known Demetrius of Phalerum and Dicaearchus of Messene, who (although he by no means was the only Peripatetic who did so) devoted a treatise to the constitution of Sparta. In his treatise *An seni sit gerenda res publica*, Plutarch polemizes against authors who want to exclude aged people from the government; and (however much the subject fits the aged author like a glove and how much he also draws from personal experience) in doing so he makes apparently use of the tract *περὶ γῆρως* by the Peripatetic Aristo of Keos.

Plutarch was well-acquainted with the philosophy of the Stoics and undoubtedly knew the Stoic works in the area of political theory and was

223. His familiarity with the works of Xenophon extended, for the rest, much further than Sparta. He was well-acquainted with the *Hellenica*. Compare also *Prae. 823 de*, with an allusion to Xenophon’s *Symposium* and reporting of the lavish Spartan Lichas (see also *Cim. 10, 6*), whom Xenophon, *Mem. 1, 2*, 61, mentions for the same reason; see Valgiglio, *op. cit. XIX*; Flacelière, *Plutarque. Vies VII*, 28 n. 1. In the place mentioned, Plutarch misjudges the important role that Lichas played in the diplomatic and foreign politics of Sparta during the Decelean War; cp. *Thuc. 5, 22, 2; 5, 76, 3; 8, 39, 2; 8, 43, 3; 8, 52; 8, 84, 5* (for an incident in Olympia, where Lichas was involved, see *Thuc. 5, 50, 4*; *Xen., Hell. 3, 2, 21*; *Paus. 6, 2, 1–2*).


225. See Ziegler, *op. cit. 182*; Valgiglio, *op. cit.*, XIX.


probably influenced by them. In De fort. Al. 329 a, he speaks about the Politeia of Zeno.\textsuperscript{228}

We have already seen that Plutarch was apparently not unmoved by the Hellenistic view regarding the kingship whenever he speaks about the world ruler who is influenced by philosophy. He expresses himself most explicitly concerning this in De fort. Al. 329 a ff., following Eratosthenes, at least partly.\textsuperscript{229}

It is conspicuous, however, that Plutarch does not often make statements about an ideal world kingdom and that, if we leave Alexander the Great out of consideration, with him the features of the ideal ruler are derived rather from Plato and Aristotle than from the Hellenistic ideals of a king. Something of the same can be observed with regard to a pair of political catchwords which, especially since the Hellenistic period, have been used very often and which occur frequently with Plutarch, ἰδιόνοια\textsuperscript{230} and φιλάνθρωπος\textsuperscript{231}. Yet these concepts are found already in the Greek literature of the fourth century B.C., and φιλάνθρωπος is used by Plutarch exclusively in the original sense of charitable, humane.

The political ideas of Plutarch are derived from the older Greek literature. Lycurgus is closer to him than Alexander the Great. That corresponds with Plutarch’s literary interests and cultural background, which lie primarily in pre-Hellenistic Greece. His political ideal of a philosophical kingship comes from Plato, his pragmatic and moderate ideas about political practice are strongly influenced by Aristotle and his school and are especially relevant for the functioning of the politician in a polis. That coincides with his own political activities; he was, above all, a politician of a polis. And as such, as a man who is politically active in a small city with limited freedom and a limited self-government, he appears in his writings as well: not rapturous and passionate, not possessed by some great vision of the future, but a convinced patriot and a thoughtful, temperate and pragmatic statesman, who embraced civilization and humanity; and those he governed could not have wished for a better politician in a time of peace.

\textsuperscript{228} Cp. also Qu. conv. III, 653 e; Stoic. repugn. 1033 b; 1034 e; cf. Babut, \textit{op. cit.}, 220; 223 f.
\textsuperscript{229} See Aalders, \textit{Hellenistic Political Thought}, Amsterdam 1975, 90. E. Badian, \textit{op. cit.} (n. 198) 432 ff. (=Griffith, \textit{op. cit.} 294 ff.) and in \textit{Alexandre le Grand. Image et réalité} (Entretiens sur l’Antiquité classique 22, Vandœuvres-Genève 1976), 268 warns against ascribing too much in this strongly rhetorical passage to Eratosthenes. See also Tigerstedt, \textit{op. cit.} II, 321 n. 283 with further literature.
\textsuperscript{231} See n. 166.
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