Plutarch in the Religious and Philosophical Discourse of Late Antiquity
Ancient Mediterranean and Medieval Texts and Contexts

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Studies in Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the Platonic Tradition

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This book includes the reworked versions of the papers presented at the XI Congress of the International Plutarch Society (section: Réseau Thématique Plutarque): “Plutarch in the Religious and Philosophical Discourse of Late Antiquity”, which I had the pleasure to organize, together with Dr Israel Muñoz Gallarte, at the University of Groningen’s Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies from June 2–5, 2010. It includes fifteen papers by renowned European scholars: six papers focus on philosophical matters and the other nine on religious issues.

The Department of Jewish, Christian and Islamic Origins, in which I work as senior Lecturer in New Testament and Early Christian Studies, pays special attention to the cultural environment (social, philosophical, religious, political and historical contexts) in which ancient writings were produced and consumed. Given the time span that separates us from the first centuries of late antiquity and our ignorance about numerous aspects of the multicultural society in which writers and readers lived, reconstructing the cultural environment in which and for which texts were composed appears to be an essential part of the development of exegetes’ interpretations. The testimony of insiders and external observers is precious for this reconstruction.

The works of Plutarch, notably his *Moralia* but also his *Lives*, provide us with exceptional evidence, since they cover both perspectives. As to the former, as a priest of Apollo at Delphi he witnessed pagan religion and ancient religious experience; as a Middle Platonist he was also actively involved in the developments of the philosophical school and provided unique testimony for conceptual issues that would only achieve definitive form in Plotinus and Neoplatonism. As to the latter, Plutarch was a sensitive chronicler of events he experienced in a less direct manner and often provided a more detached point of view about the numerous religious practices and currents that permeated the building of ancient pagan religion and the philosophical views of other schools. The conference aimed to take advantage of Plutarch’s privileged position as an observer of the philosophical and religious worlds of late antiquity to assess a number of issues that are relevant for the reconstruction of the cultural atmosphere of the first centuries of the era.
As far as the philosophical world is concerned, the essays in this book assess Plutarch’s testimony to Aristotle’s influence on Middle Platonism (A.P. Bos, Amsterdam), Plutarch’s position within Middle Platonism as viewed through a comparison between his own conceptions of the passions and those of Posidonius and Galen (F. Becchi, Florence) and his testimony regarding the controversy between the Stoa and the Middle Academy (Raúl Caballero, Malaga). Pagan monotheism from the Middle Platonic perspective (F. Brenk, Rome), the relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades in later Platonic tradition (G. Roskam, Leuven) and Michael Psellus’ use of Plutarch’s *Quaestiones naturales* (M. Meeusen, Leuven) complete the section.

As for the religious world, the section opens with an evaluation of Plutarch’s testimony about the procession of Iacchus from Athens to Eleusis, with a view to determining whether the name Iacchus refers to Dionysus or to a different deity (A. Jiménez, Madrid). Plutarch’s idea of god, in turn, is established by an analysis of his views on Herodotus’ religiosity and the Middle Platonic arguments used to assess it (L. Roig Lanzillotta, Groningen). A review of Plutarch’s experience as a priest of Apollo (A. Casanova, Florence) completes the study of his theological views. Popular religiosity is the focus of two studies: Plutarch’s views regarding astral biology (A. Pérez Jiménez, Malaga) and the analysis of ancient beliefs about the evil eye, which N. Valletta called “jettatura” (P. Volpe Cacciatore, Salerno). The relationship between religion and politics as reflected by the Eleusinian Mysteries comes to the fore in Plutarch’s *Life of Alcibiades* (D. Leão, Coimbra), while an analysis of fr. 157 Sandbach argues that the view of a “mystery-like theology” provides a comprehensive vision of physical and metaphysical realities (R. Scannapieco, Salerno). An analysis of the term *pistis* in Plutarch argues that *fideistic* interpretations need to be revised (G. van Kooten, Groningen) and a comparison of the colors of the soul both in Plutarch and the apocryphal *Acts of John* (Israel Muñoz Gallarte, Groningen) closes the book.

This conference would not have been possible without the close collaboration of my friend and colleague Dr Israel Muñoz Gallarte. After our first enthusiastic conversations in Seville, he provided the necessary impetus to our plans in Paris, which ultimately led to their crystallization in Groningen. His role was crucial both in the preliminary contacts with the members of the “Réseau” and in organizing the Groningen meeting.

Many people actively contributed to the organization of this conference. The dean of our faculty, Prof. G. van Kooten, lent his complete support to the organization, and the GUF (*Groninger Universiteits Fonds*) and the Faculty
of Theology and Religious Studies kindly provided the necessary financial support for the event. Special thanks are also owed to M. Wubbolts and Mirjam Buigel, whose help and experience ensured the successful organization of the conference.

Different persons read the manuscript at different stages and enriched it with numerous corrections and suggestions. Especial thanks are due to Louke Boulens, Julia Harvey for her continuous support and to my dear and erudite friend Alasdair A. MacDonald.
ABBREVIATIONS

*Journal Abbreviations*

**AC**  L’Antiquité classique (Bruxelles)

**AClass**  Acta classica: verhandelingen van die Klassieke Vereniging van Suid-Afrika (Pretoria)

**Aevum**  Aevum: rassegna di scienze storiche, linguistiche e filologiche (Milan)

**AJPh**  American Journal of Philology (Baltimore, Md.)

**AncPhil**  Ancient Philosophy (Pittsburgh, Pa.)

**AncSoc**  Ancient Society (Leuven)

**Arete**  Arete: The Undergraduate Philosophy Journal of Rutgers University (New Brunswick, NJ)

**Athenaeum**  Athenaeum: Studi di letteratura e storia dell’antichità (Como)

**BICS**  Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies (London)

**CJ**  The Classical Journal (Ashland, Va.)

**CPh**  Classical Philology: a Journal Devoted to Research in Classical Antiquity (Chicago, Ill.)

**CQ**  Classical Quarterly (Oxford)

**CR**  Classical Review (Oxford)

**DHA**  Dialogues d’histoire ancienne. Besançon: Pr. Universitaires de Franche-Comté (Paris)

**DhG**  Das humanistische Gymnasium: Zeitschrift des deutschen Gymnasialvereins (Heidelberg)

**Didaskalos**  Didaskalos: The Journal of the Joint Association of Classical Teachers (Oxford)

**Elencos**  Elencos: rivista di studi sul pensiero antico (Naples)

**Epoché**  Epoché: A Journal for the History of Philosophy (Charlottesville, Vi.)

**E&W**  East and West: a Quarterly Published by the Istituto Italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente (Rome)

**Glotta**  Zeitschrift für griechische und lateinische Sprache (Göttingen)

**GRBS**  Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies (Durham, N.C.)

**Hermathena**  Hermathena: a Trinity College Dublin Review (Dublin)

**Hermes**  Hermes: Zeitschrift für klassische Philologie (Stuttgart)

**Historia**  Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte (Stuttgart)

**HRel**  Historia religionum. An International Journal (Pisa–Rome)

**HSCPh**  Harvard Studies in Classical Philology (Cambridge, MA.)

**ICS**  Illinois Classical Studies (Champaign, Ill.)

**IPQ**  International Philosophical Quarterly (Bronx, N.Y.)

**JbAC**  Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum (Münster)

**JBL**  Journal of Biblical Literature (Atlanta, Ga.)

**JEA**  The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology (London)

**JECS**  Journal of Early Christian Studies: Journal of the North American Patristics Society (Baltimore, Md.)
JHPh  Journal of the History of Philosophy (Atlanta, Ga.)
JThS  The Journal of Theological Studies (Oxford)
KantStud  Kant-Studien: Philosophische Zeitschrift der Kant-Gesellschaft (Berlin)
LÉC  Les études classiques (Namur)
Lexis  Lexis: poetica, retorica e comunicazione nella tradizione classica (Amsterdam)
MH  Museum Helveticum. Schweizerische Zeitschrift für klassische Altertumswissenschaft (Basel)
Mnemosyne  Mnemosyne: bibliotheca classica Batava (Leiden)
ModSch  The Modern Schoolman: a Quarterly Journal of Philosophy (Saint Louis, Mo.)
Numen  Numen: International Review for the History of Religions (Leiden)
NZThR  Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie (Berlin)
OLP  Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica (Leuven)
OSAPh  Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy (Oxford)
Pallas  Pallas: Revue d’études anciennes (Toulouse)
Philologus  Philologus: Zeitschrift für antike Literatur und ihre Rezeption (Berlin)
PhR  Philosophische Rundschau: eine Zeitschrift für philosophische Kritik (Tübingen)
PhW  Berliner philologische Wochenschrift (Berlin)
Phronesis  Phronesis: a Journal for Ancient Philosophy (Leiden)
REA  Revue des études anciennes (Pessac)
REG  Revue des études grecques (Paris)
RhM  Rheinisches Museum für Philologie (Frankfurt am Main)
RMM  Revue de métaphysique et de morale (Paris)
RPhilos  Revue philosophique de la France et de l’étranger (Paris)
Saeculum  Saeculum: Jahrbuch für Universalgeschichte (Freiburg im Breisgau)
StudPhilon  The Studia Philonica Annual: Studies in Hellenistic Judaism (Atlanta, Ga.)
Talanta  Τάλαντα: Proceedings of the Dutch Archaeological and Historical Society (Amsterdam)
TAPhA  Transactions of the American Philological Association (Baltimore, Md.)
Th&Ph  Theologie und Philosophie (Freiburg im Breisgau)
ThR  Theologische Rundschau (Tübingen)
WS  Wiener Studien: Zeitschrift für Klassische Philologie, Patriistik und lateinische Tradition (Wien)
ZNTW  Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche (Berlin)
ZPE  Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik (Bonn)
**Other Abbreviations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DK</strong></td>
<td>Diels, H. &amp; Kranz, W., <em>Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker griechisch und deutsch</em> (Berlin 1903).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IG</strong></td>
<td>Inscriptiones graecae (Berlin).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>LCL</strong></td>
<td>Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge).</td>
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INTRODUCTION

PLUTARCH AT THE CROSSROADS OF RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta

Plutarch of Chaeronea, who was born to a wealthy family in 45 CE, received the best education at home and abroad. He frequently traveled to Rome, Alexandria and Athens; while in Athens he probably attended the lectures of Ammonius, who influenced his adoption of Platonism. However, he spent most of his life in his hometown of Chaeronea, where he later founded a sort of philosophical school or academy in which family, friends and pupils could meet and discuss philosophical issues. Due to his social provenance and education, he developed a rich political career and social life in which he was acquainted with most of the prominent political and cultural figures of the period. He is therefore a first-rate witness to the cultural life of late antiquity.

2 K. Ziegler, “Plutarchos”, RE, XXI (1951) 636–962 at 653–657 in his overview of Plutarch’s travels, he points out (653) that his testimony is essential for our knowledge of the history and topography of ancient Athens.
4 However, Plutarch seems to have left the Academy rather early, which H. Dörrie, “Der Platonismus in der Kultur- und Geistesgeschichte der frühen Kaiserzeit”, in Platonica minora (Munich 1976) 166–210 at 183, traces back to Plutarch’s fundamental disagreement with some of the main tenets of Platonism, such as his literal reading of the Timaeus which implied his view that the cosmos was created after time, on which C. Froidefrond commented, “Plutarque et le Platonisme”, ANRW II 36.1 (1987) 184–243 at 189–197. See further Dörrie, “Die Stellung Plutarchs”, 36–56.
1. Plutarch and the Philosophical Discourse

Plutarch's testimony is essential to reconstructing and understanding the philosophical and religious worlds of late antiquity. Even if he is not always cherished as a philosopher by his readers,\(^7\) Plutarch plays a key role in the history of ancient philosophy, both as an active part of the philosophical discussion taking place in his time and as a more detached observer of other important events. In fact, he is credited as the most important Middle Platonist author,\(^8\) not only for the bulk of his philosophical production—more than half of his recorded works in the Catalogue of Lamprias are devoted to philosophical matters—but also for the extensive influence he exerted on both Middle and Neoplatonic authors. The copious quotes or allusions to his person and work in antiquity bear witness to his central importance in the philosophical map of antiquity: Neopythagoreans, Middle Platonists, Neoplatonists and Christians alike frequently appealed to his authority.\(^9\)

Plutarch's works are enormously important to the history of ancient philosophy. First, his testimony is essential to understanding the development of Platonism in the first centuries of the era. Indeed, his relationship with the Academy, his version of Platonism, his role in Middle Platonism, his contribution to or his evidence regarding the formation of the typically Middle

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\(^7\) This is valid for both his ancient and modern readers. Thus, for example, Neoplatonists such as Proclus who were scandalized by his view of the origins of the cosmos, mostly viewed Plutarch as an historian, and in this line, Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* describes him as “a litterateur and antiquarian”. See contra, F. Brenk, “An Imperial Heritage: The Religious Spirit of Plutarch”, *ANRW* II.36.1 (1987) 248–349; and Froidefond, “Plutarque et le Platonisme”, 233. A middle point may be found in Dörrie, “Der Platonismus”, 184, which distinguishes the ancient from the modern perception of the sense in which Plutarch’s work may be called “philosophical”. While from a modern perspective only the treatises against Epicureans and Stoics are philosophical, from an ancient perspective almost every work of his literary production might be considered philosophical: “Im antiken Sinne ist freilich alles philosophisch, was Plutarch aufzeichnete—philosophisch darum, weil aus den zahlreichen einzelnen Beobachtungen, die sich auf Phänomene der Natur und der Literatur beziehen, wieder und wieder Schlüsse auf das hinter ihnen Verborgene gezogen werden, etc”. See in this volume the chapter by G. Roskam, 85–100, esp. 98–99.


\(^9\) R. Hirzel, *Plutarch* (Leipzig 1912) is still the best study on Plutarch’s reception; Ziegler, “Plutarchos”, 947–962; for the influence of his ethical and theological writings on early Christianity, see H.D. Betz (ed.), *Plutarch’s Theological Writings and Early Christian Literature* (Leiden 1975) and idem (ed.), *Plutarch’s Ethical Writings and Early Christian Literature* (Leiden 1978).
Platonic lore as a prelude to Neoplatonism and his participation from a Platonic perspective in the interschool philosophical polemics of the time are all precious elements both for the reconstruction of Middle Platonism as such and for the assessment of its relationship with the other philosophical schools. The marked religious character of his approach to philosophy, which he shares with numerous Middle Platonists, has also helped scholars to better understand the characteristic confluence of religion and philosophy in the first centuries of the era.

But his philosophical interests went far beyond the strict borders of his school; he observed many other philosophical groups. As is also the case with other Middle Platonists, Aristotle enjoys a special status in the work of Plutarch, who also addressed the Presocratics, Socrates, Cyrenaecans, Stoa and Epicureanism, usually providing exceptional or unique echoes

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12 Eus., *PE* 1.8.1–12, attributes Plutarch a *florilegium* of philosophers, from which he extracts his overview of Presocratics such as Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Xenophanes, Democritus, Parmenides, Zeno of Elea and others. See Ziegler, “Plutarchos”, 768.


14 Plutarch wrote, according to Ziegler, “Plutarchos”, 753–761, eight or nine specific treatises against the Stoics, of which two are preserved completely (De Stoic. repugn. and Adv. Stoic.), although criticism against the Stoa can be found *passim*. See J.P. Hershbell, “Plutarch and Stoicism”, *ANRW* II.36.5 (1992) 3336–3352.

15 Also, Plutarch seems to have written eight treatises against Epicureans, of which only three are preserved (*Adv. Col., Non poss., An recte dictum*); Ziegler, “Plutarchos”, 761–767; See Hershbell, “Plutarch and Epicureanism”, 3353–3383.
of theories and viewpoints. His testimony has been essential for the transmission of innumerable fragments from the Stoics and Epicurus.\textsuperscript{16}

Take for example the character, development and influence of Aristotelian philosophy in antiquity. On the level of detail and anecdote, for example, Plutarch’s \textit{Life of Sulla}\textsuperscript{17} includes the probably legendary story,\textsuperscript{18} also recorded in slightly different terms by Strabo,\textsuperscript{19} of how the manuscripts of the \textit{Corpus Aristotelicum} ended up in a cellar in the city of Scepsis. For centuries, this story provided a plausible explanation for the decline of the Lyceum after Aristotle’s death, which was already noticed in antiquity.\textsuperscript{20}

According to this story, the books were first inherited by Theophrastus and then bequeathed to Neleus of Scepsis, who took them from Athens to Scepsis when he returned to his native city. The books were gravely damaged in Scepsis because Neleus’ descendants—careless and illiterate people, according to Plutarch—apparently hid them in a cellar to keep them from being taken to Pergamum Library, and they remained there for around two centuries.

Even if apocryphal, for centuries this story also explained the revival of Aristotelianism in the first centuries CE. Plutarch described how Sulla, who arrived at Piraeus in 86 BC, seized the library of the recently dead Apellicon of Teos\textsuperscript{21}—who had since acquired the \textit{Corpus Aristotelicum}—and took it to Rome. It is here that the renowned grammarian Tyrannion of Amisus finally repaired and edited the books and apparently provided copies to Andronicos of Rhodos, on the basis of which this philosopher prepared an edition of Aristotle’s works around 60 BC.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{16} A quick look to the major editions of both Stoics and Epicurus immediately reveals that Plutarch’s writings were a major source for the fragments of the philosophers.

\textsuperscript{17} Plu., \textit{Sulla} 26.

\textsuperscript{18} See H.B. Gottschalk, “Notes on the Wills of the Peripatetic Scholarchs”, \textit{Hermes} 100 (1972) 314–342.

\textsuperscript{19} See Str. 13.68.

\textsuperscript{20} As commented upon by Cic., \textit{De Fin.} 5.5.13; \textit{Tusc.} 4.5.9.


\textsuperscript{22} On this issue, see the thorough analysis of Moraux, \textit{Der Aristotelismus} I, 1–94, who compares the testimonies of Strabo and Plutarch and critically analyzes the contents of their information and, more recently, Gottschalk, “Aristotelian Philosophy”, 1083–1097.
On a more fundamental level, however, Plutarch’s oeuvre as a whole is especially valuable for the assessment of the general character of Aristotelian philosophy in antiquity and for particular inquiries about some of the numerous aspects of Aristotle’s thought that remain obscure. As has been pointed out, the fact that Plutarch was deeply interested in Aristotle is obvious because up to four titles of his works in the Catalogue of Lamprias are concerned with Aristotelian philosophy. However, as in the cases of the Stoics and Epicureans, not only specific works but the whole Plutarchean corpus provides testimony of this interest. Admittedly, the last quarter of the twentieth century saw some attempts to qualify Plutarch’s knowledge of Aristotle as “indirect”. Since, excluding some exoteric works, Plutarch rarely quotes the philosopher, some scholars affirmed that he may have only known Aristotle through intermediate works. Recent years have seen a renewed assessment of Plutarch’s wide and direct knowledge of Aristotle’s exoteric and esoteric works.

One of these scholars is A.P. Bos, whose study in the present volume, “Plutarch on the Sleeping Soul and the Waking Intellect and Aristotle’s Double Entelechy Concept”, affirms that Plutarch’s corpus allows us to assess the extensive influence of Aristotle’s published and unpublished writings. In this study and in other previous works, Bos also asserts that Plutarch’s

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24 The titles of these works are Lecture on the Ten Categories (n. 192), Aristotle’s Topics (n. 56), On the Fifth Substance (n. 44) and On Theophrastus’ Πρός τούς καρδιώς πολιτικά (n. 52–53). However, the existence of the second and third treatises has been challenged by E. Zeller, Die Philosophie der Griechen, III 2, 180 note i; F.H. Sandbach, Plutarch’s Moralia, XV (London–Cambridge 1969), 6–12; idem, “Plutarch and Aristotle”, ICS 7 (1982) 207–232 at 212. See, on this issue, Gottschalk, “Aristotelian Philosophy”, 1146–1147.


26 See Karamanolis, Plato and Aristotle, chapter 2.

27 See below, this volume, 25–42. See also C. Santaniello, “Traces of the Lost Aristotle in Plutarch”, in A. Pérez Jiménez et al., Plutarco, Platón y Aristóteles (Madrid 1999), 629–641. Also see the studies by A.P. Bos mentioned in notes 28 and 29.

testimony is essential to disproving the developmental view of Aristotle’s thought that reigned in the twentieth century due to the influence of W. Jaeger and F.J.C.J. Nuyens. As a matter of fact, Plutarch affirms the fundamental unity of Aristotle’s published and unpublished works, showing that there was no contradiction or opposition between the views Aristotle explored in dialogues such as the Eudemus, Protrepticos or On Philosophy and the theories he more systematically exposed in the lectures contained in the corpus. The analysis of particular Aristotelian echoes in the works of Plutarch provides enough material to support this view.

This is particularly the case in Bos’ revision and redefinition of Aristotle’s definition of the soul. Taking the myth of a “dreaming Kronos” at the end of Plutarch’s De facie as a starting point, Bos engages in a far-reaching analysis of Aristotle’s view of the soul as a double entelechy. After reviewing Aristotle’s famous definition of the soul as the “first entelechy of a natural body which potentially possesses life and is organikon”, Bos shows that the “natural body” is nothing but the vital heat, which Aristotle frequently referred to in a variety of ways, and that it serves the soul as an instrument for its typical psychical functions. The term organikon in the quoted definition should therefore not be translated as “equipped with organs” but rather as “serving as an instrument”, a translation for which an interesting passage of Plutarch’s Platonic Questions also provides good support.

In order to explain in which way the soul is the entelechy of this natural body, Bos launches a full analysis of the double sense with which “entelechy” is used in On the Soul 2.1, which shows that Aristotle conceived of the soul as an entelechy in a double way: when described as “asleep” the soul is seen as forming a unity with its instrumental natural body; when the intellect is referred to as “waking entelechy” it is because it is free of any bodily covering. This is the reason why it can be compared to the sailor who, after arriving in a safe harbor, no longer needs his ship. These Aristotelian views, which are generally traceable in Middle Platonic authors such as Philo

29 On the developmental interpretation due to both scholars, see A.P. Bos, The Soul and its Instrumental Body. A Reinterpretation of Aristotle’s Philosophy of Living Nature (Leiden 2003) 13–17 and 17–20, respectively.
30 Karamanolis, Plato and Aristotle, 92 n. 27, rightly affirms that Plutarch’s distinction between esoteric and exoteric works in Vita Alexandri 6 does testify to his knowledge of Aristotle’s work as a whole.
31 Plu., De fac. 94F.
34 See Plu., Qu. Plat. 8, 1006D, with Bos, “Plutarch’s Testimony”, 536.
or Alcinous,\textsuperscript{35} are notably present in Plutarch and influenced his double theology, his view of a twofold death, the pneumatic vehicle of the soul and, especially, the notion of the Sleeping (World) Soul,\textsuperscript{36} which clearly echoes the conception of a sleeping and waking soul.\textsuperscript{37}

Plutarch also interacted with the Stoa, especially about ethics, one of his beloved subjects.\textsuperscript{38} A quick look at the works included in \textit{Moralia} clearly shows that of all the philosophical disciplines, ethics was the most cherished by Plutarch\textsuperscript{39} and the name of the \textit{corpus} already points to its mainly ethical character. However, scholars have recently stressed the importance of ethics in the \textit{Lives} as well.\textsuperscript{40} Despite the centrality of ethics in Plutarch's oeuvre, it is only after K. Ziegler's study\textsuperscript{41} that it began to receive special attention.\textsuperscript{42} Indeed, the last years have seen a renewed interest in his ethical works.\textsuperscript{43}


\textsuperscript{36} Plu., \textit{De fac.} 940F; \textit{De an. proc.} 1026E–F.


\textsuperscript{38} See an overview in Ziegler, “Plutarchos”, 768–803. In any case, 74 of the 227 works of the Lamprias catalogue are concerned with ethical issues.


\textsuperscript{43} Van Hoof, \textit{Plutarch's Practical Ethics}; See, in general, the whole volume published by Roskam and Van der Stock, \textit{Virtues for the People}, but especially the introduction by
In ethics, Plutarch’s point of departure is clearly Platonic-Aristotelian. To begin with, he generally endorsed Plato’s view of the soul, exposed in the Republic and the Timaeus as consisting of rational, spirited and passionate parts. However, Plutarch more closely followed Aristotle’s philosophy in allotting the two latter parts to an irrational part that resulted in the bipartition into rational and irrational halves. His view of the passions, consequently, was also clearly Platonic-Aristotelian, since he conceived of them as arising in the irrational part of the soul when rationality appears to have lost control of the soul complex. On Moral Virtue, for example, he even distinguishes between practical and theoretical virtue on the basis that the former exclusively deals with the irrational part of the soul and with taming emotions. This, of course, implies his view of the passions as important contributors to the tonus of the soul and of metriopatheia as the only way to deal with passions in a proper way. In On Moral Virtue, Plutarch frequently referred to Aristotle’s Nichomachean Ethics in order to assess his view of virtue as a mesotes.

Admittedly, his position is sometimes far from clear, often due to Plutarch’s active involvement in the philosophical discussions of his time: sometimes Plutarch purposefully used Stoic terminology to turn it polemically against them; other times, the lack of clarity results from the tradition he is following, be it Stoic, Cynic or other. It is precisely this difficulty that Angelo Becchi’s article on Plutarchean ethics, “The Doctrine of the Passions: Plutarch, Posidonius and Galen”, intends to tackle. As a scholar with a profound knowledge of Plutarch’s ethics, to which he has devoted numerous studies, Becchi attempts to determine Plutarch’s position on ethics more

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44 Plu., Qu. Plat. 9, 1007E; De virt. mor. 442A.
45 Plu., De virt. mor. 451B.
clearly. As he affirms, Plutarch’s ethical affiliation was mainly that of a Platonist and as such he regularly adopted a clear anti-Stoic attitude. Despite this, it is possible to find the influence of Stoic doctrines in his work, an issue which, as Becchi rightly claims, still needs a satisfying explanation.

This is especially noteworthy in regard to the passions, where we find strictly Platonic positions beside notions of a clear Stoic matrix: even as he openly criticized Chrysippus’ view of passion as a mistake, Plutarch nevertheless appears to have combined a Platonic view of affections with the Stoic doctrine of διαστροφή, which explained how due to weakness (ἀσθενεία) of the mind, passions may appear to drive people to vice. Indeed, Plutarch attacked his contemporaries for being in a state of ‘mental poverty’ (πενησυχία) brought about by their false opinions; allowing first for bad habits, this state forms at the end a second nature that prevents people from being free from error. According to Becchi, Plutarch did not actually contradict himself: in line with Posidonius but anticipating Galen, Plutarch asserted that ignorance and bad habits may sometimes incline to passions even those people who lack violent passionate impulses and have a sound rational part of the soul. Becchi’s analysis of numerous passages from Moralia and Lives provides an overview of Plutarch’s view of passions as “affections causing pain and fear in men not prepared by reason to bear bad luck”. In fact, lack of philosophical training may cause inconsistencies and anomalies both in people with good natural qualities and in great characters. Wisdom should therefore be revered as most important and perfect art, as the culmination of both good reputation and all human endeavors.

The influence of the external world on the individual’s soul also plays an important role in Raúl Caballero’s chapter on the “Adventitious Motions of the Soul (Plu., De Stoic. repugn. 23, 1045B–F) and the Controversy between Aristo of Chios and the Middle Academy”. Incidentally, it also places us at a general level in front of the inherent hermeneutic difficulties related to Plutarch’s testimony of the philosophical discussion and interschool

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48 See below, this volume, 43–53 and F. Becchi, “Plutarco tra platonismo e aristotelismo: la filosofia come paideia dell’anima”, in Pérez Jiménez et al., Plutarco, Platón y Aristóteles, 25–43.

49 See, for example, Plu., De tranq. an. 468D; for the Stoic view, see Posid., fr. 169,77–117 E.-K.
polemics in which he took an active part and which, as we already noted, often appeared to be “deformed” due to the context of the tradition in which his discussion took place. Caballero’s article provides a good example of Plutarch’s combination of an anti-Stoic attitude with his rhetorical strategies to attack them.

In De Stoicorum repugnantii 23, Plutarch referred to Chrysippus’ criticism of some philosophers who advocated the “adventitious faculty or motion of the soul” (ἡ ἐπελευστικὴ δύναμις / κίνησις τῆς ψυχῆς), a kind of motion taking place in the commanding part of the soul that has the power to release impulses from external causes. Of the three current interpretations of “these philosophers” (Stoic, Epicurean and Academic), Caballero regards the third as the most consistent since it fits with what is known about the criteria of action described by Arcesilaus and his disciples (Middle Academy) in their controversy with Zeno and his disciples of the early Stoa. Building upon previous work, Caballero argues that Chrysippus was not attacking Aristo of Chios and his disciples, who introduced the idea of ἐπελεύσεις (occurrentia), but Arcesilaus and/or his followers of the Middle Academy, who probably adopted their terminology for dialectical purposes, which was a usual Academic method in their debates with the Stoics.

With Brenk’s article on “Plutarch and ‘Pagan Monotheism’”, we move to a cardinal subject in Plutarch’s work, namely his philosophical monotheism, a theme on which Plutarch has had an enormous lasting influence. The first decade of the twenty-first century produced a large number of important publications: aside from traditional studies focusing on Jewish-Christian monotheism alone and the way in which Christianity did or did not inherit Jewish monotheism—showing an interest at the most in Near-Eastern precedents—numerous recent investigations claim the need to


52 Thus the volume edited by B. Pongratz-Leisten (ed.), Reconsidering the Concept of Revolutionary Monotheism (Winona Lake 2011).
widen the scope of research\textsuperscript{53} to include all late antique monotheistic manifestations\textsuperscript{54} and thus provide a sound context in which the success of Jewish-Christian monotheism may be plausibly explained. And indeed, ever since the publication of the collection of articles prepared by P. Athanassiadis and M. Frede, \textit{Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity},\textsuperscript{55} research into paganism has received growing attention.\textsuperscript{56}

This is the approach we find in the article by Brenk, a specialist on Plutarch’s monotheistic traits. This issue has received important attention in recent years and studies have underlined both the Platonic context in which Plutarch’s view of God should be placed\textsuperscript{57} and the characteristic way in which his monotheistic inclinations are presented.\textsuperscript{58} More specifically, scholars have focused on the characteristics of this divinity,\textsuperscript{59} namely his unity and personality.\textsuperscript{60} In line with Plutarch’s view that philosophical truth transcends ethnic boundaries,\textsuperscript{61} Brenk reconstructs the monotheistic soil on which Christianity was going to develop, taking Akhenaten’s monotheistic enterprise in the second half of the second millennium BC as a starting point. After briefly reviewing \textit{On Isis and Osiris}, the text in which Plutarch reduced the divine to one God, Brenk surveys those Plutarchean texts that may have exerted a major influence on Christian monotheism. \textit{On the Generation of the Soul in the Timaeus} is one of these texts, since it describes the activity of a divinity crafting the world in a technomorphic cosmogonical model similar to that of Christianity.\textsuperscript{62} \textit{The E at Delphi}, however, is the text in which

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  \item \textsuperscript{53} D. Staudt, \textit{Der eine und einzige Gott: monotheistische Formeln im Urchristentum und ihre Vorgeschichte bei Griechen und Juden} (Göttingen 2012).
  \item \textsuperscript{54} See, for example, E. Bons & T. Legrand, \textit{Le monothéisme biblique: évolution, contextes et perspectives} (Paris 2011).
  \item \textsuperscript{55} P. Athanassiadi & M. Frede (eds), \textit{Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity} (Oxford–New York 1999).
  \item \textsuperscript{56} See, for example, R.G. Kratz & H. Spieckermann (eds), \textit{Götterbilder, Gottesbilder, Weltbilder: Polytheismus und Monotheismus in der Welt der Antike} (Tübingen 2006); S. Mitchell & P. van Nuffelen, \textit{One God: Pagan Monotheism in the Roman Empire} (Cambridge 2010).
  \item \textsuperscript{58} Especially interesting in this line is the study by Hirsch-Luipold, “Der eine Gott bei Philo von Alexandrien und Plutarch”, in idem, \textit{Gott und die Götter}, 141–168.
  \item \textsuperscript{59} Hirsch-Luipold, “Der eine Gott”, 152–161.
  \item \textsuperscript{60} See previous note and notably D. Massaro, “To theion o e theos in Plutarco”, in Gallo, \textit{Plutarco e la religione}, 337–355.
  \item \textsuperscript{61} Brenk, “Plutarch and Pagan Monotheism”, 73–84 at 73–74.
  \item \textsuperscript{62} The distinction between the technomorphic vs the biomorphic cosmogonical models
Plutarch elevated the figure of Apollo above the pantheon—provided that the author is not echoing Ammonius’ position rather than stating his own—in describing him in the famous fashion as *a-polus or a-polla* ‘not many’.

In the author’s view a comparison between Plutarch’s monotheistic traits and Christian monotheism shows interesting similarities since they both constructed an idea of a supreme God by combining ethnographic studies to achieve a “true concept” of God and a philosophical well-defined view of God.

As already stated, Plutarch’s influence on posterity has been extensive. Aside his views on ethics, his echo of the interschool polemics and the development of his philosophical monotheism, his testimony has also been crucial to the understanding of numerous famous figures of antiquity, notably Alcibiades, whose noxious attitude towards his native city was used in later tradition to attack the value and integrity of Platonic philosophy. Geert Roskam’s article on “Socrates and Alcibiades: a Notorious σκάνδαλον in the Later Platonist Tradition”, approaches their famous relationship from a political and an ethical perspective. As to the former, it briefly surveys the favorable and negative approaches to Socrates’ double indictment for impiety and for corrupting the youth, evaluating the extent to which the second charge may not be alluding (even if indirectly) to the philosopher’s association with influential statesmen such as Critias and Alcibiades. The ethical aspect comes to the fore when considering Socrates’ influence on Alcibiades. Indeed Socrates’ view that no one willingly goes wrong and the effectiveness of his educative and philosophical enterprise seemed to be blatantly refuted in the person of Alcibiades: if he was brilliant himself and had in Socrates the best possible teacher, how is it possible that his behavior deviated so much from the expected norm and caused so much harm to his native city?

This issue, of course, raised interesting philosophical questions that were amply dealt with in an early period of antiquity (e.g. Plato, Xenophon, is due to Burkert, *apud* J.N. Bremmer, “Canonical and Alternative Creation Myths in Ancient Greece”, in G. van Kooten (ed.), *The Creation of Heaven and Earth: Re-interpretations of Genesis I in the Context of Judaism, Ancient Philosophy, Christianity, and Modern Physics* (Leiden 2005) 73–96. On Plutarch’s *De animae procr.*, see L. Baldi, *Plutarco. La generazione dell’anima nel Timeo* (Naples 2002).

Aeschines of Sphettus or Polycrates the Sophist) and continued to be relevant at a later time. As Roskam shows, Plutarch and Proclus provided testimony to the interest of later Platonists and the similarities between their approaches to the topic shows the extent to which Plutarch was read in antiquity. The differences in their approaches, however, make clear that Proclus mainly viewed Plutarch as a historian, which seems to be supported by the fact that he never quoted him by name.64

The last chapter of the philosophical section, “Salt in the Holy Water: Plutarch’s Quaestiones Naturales in Michael Psellus’ De omnifaria doctrina” by Michiel Meeusen, explores medieval Platonic scholar Psellus’ reaction to Plutarch. In his work De omnifaria doctrina, Psellus addressed scientific problems from Plutarch’s Quaestiones Naturales, notably those concerning physics and physiology. Meeusen focuses on the (mainly Platonic) sources of the first redaction of this work, with a view to focusing on the problems taken from Plutarch’s Quaestiones Naturales. He stresses the importance of a detailed study of the work even from a purely textual perspective, since Psellus’ interventions not only allow us to understand his working methods, but also provide insight into how he understood and dealt with Quaestiones Naturales.

2. Plutarch and the Religious Discourse

Plutarch’s role in the history of ancient religiosity is as central as the one he plays in the history of ancient philosophy. One may even contest the separation of philosophy and religion in his work, claiming that such a distinction reveals itself to be artificial.65 This idea may perhaps also be extrapolated to the whole historical period of late antiquity, in which the confluence between philosophy and religion or religion and philosophy marks off spirituality. In his comparative study of Philo and Plutarch’s ideas of god, Rainer Hirsch-Luipold suggestively affirms that the comparison between both Platonists reveals a complete blend of religion and philosophy that is characterized by three distinctive elements:


65 On Plutarch’s comingling of religion and philosophy, see in general the volume edited by Gallo, Plutarco e la religione and particularly the articles by W. Burkert, “Plutarco: Religiosità personale e teologia filosofica”, in Gallo, Plutarco e la religione, 11–28 and Moreschini, “Religione e filosofia in Plutarco”, ibid. 29–48.