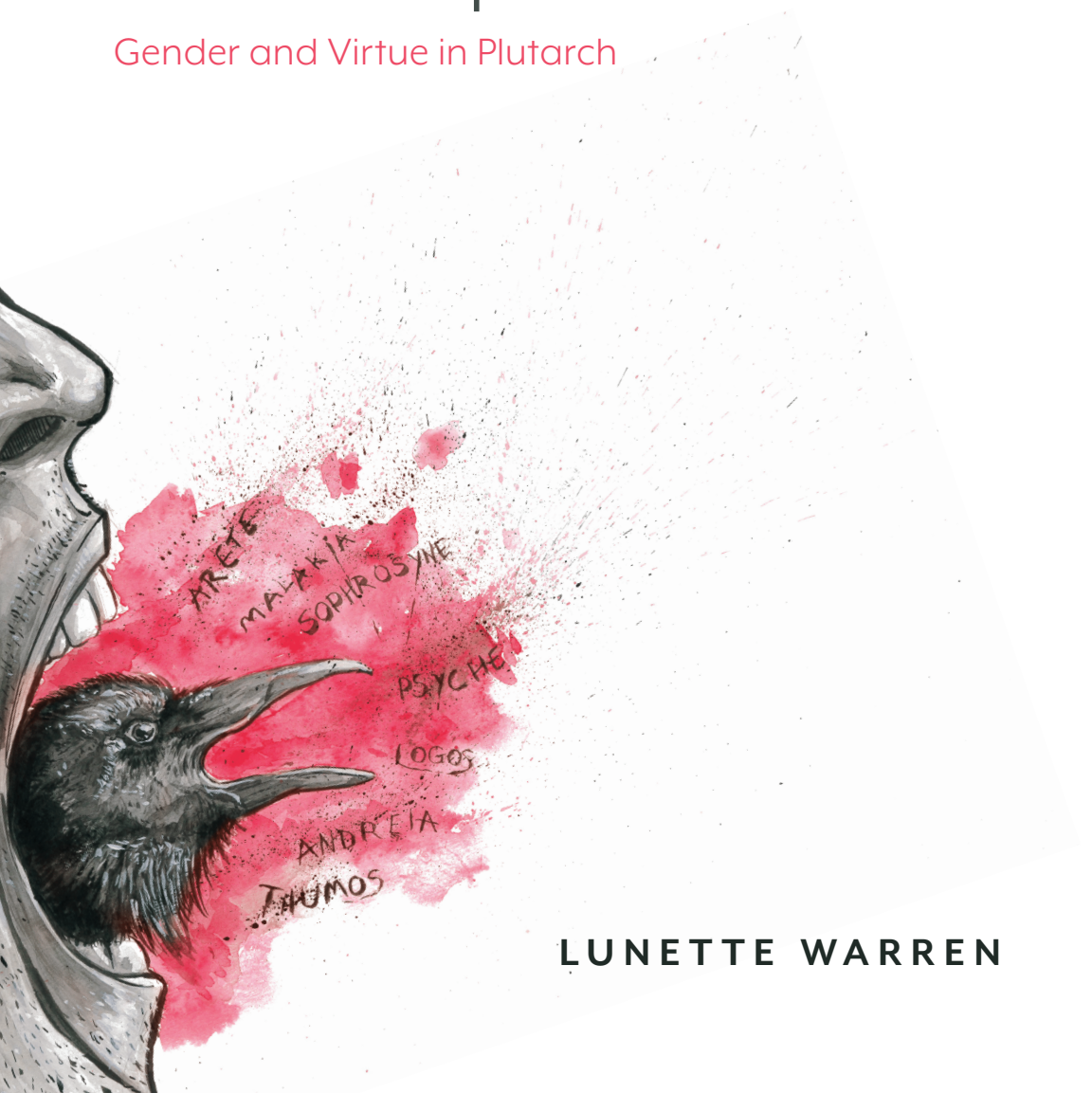


Like a Captive Bird

Gender and Virtue in Plutarch



LUNETTE WARREN



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GENDER AND VIRTUE IN PLUTARCH

Lunette Warren



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Abbreviations

Abbreviations and short titles of Plutarch's works

<u>Latin title</u>	<u>Abbr.</u>	<u>Short title</u>
<i>Ad principem ineruditum</i>	<i>Ad princ. in.</i>	<i>To An Uneducated Ruler</i>
<i>Amatorius</i>	<i>Amat.</i>	<i>On Love</i>
<i>Animine an corporis affectiones sint</i>	<i>Animi. an corp.</i>	<i>Affections of peiores Soul/Body</i>
<i>An seni respublica gerenda sit</i>	<i>An seni</i>	<i>Old Men in Public Affairs</i>
<i>An virtus doceri possit</i>	<i>An virt.</i>	<i>Can Virtue be Taught?</i>
<i>An vitiositas ad infelicitatem sufficiat</i>	<i>An vit.</i>	<i>Can Vice Cause Unhappiness?</i>
<i>Apophthegmata Laconica</i>	<i>Apophth. Lac.</i>	<i>Spartans</i>
<i>Apophthegmata regum</i>	<i>Apophth. reg.</i>	<i>Kings & Commanders</i>
<i>Apophthegmata Romanum</i>	<i>Apophth. Rom. Romans</i>	
<i>Bruta animalia ratione uti</i>	<i>Gryll.</i>	<i>Beasts are Rational</i>

<u>Latin title</u>	<u>Abbr.</u>	<u>Short title</u>
<i>Conjugalia praecepta</i>	<i>Conj. praec.</i>	<i>Advice</i>
<i>Consolatio ad uxorem</i>	<i>Cons. ux.</i>	<i>Consolation</i>
<i>De Alexandri fortuna aut virtute</i>	<i>De Alex. fort. virt.</i>	<i>The Fortune or Virtue of Alexander</i>
<i>De amore prolis</i>	<i>De amor. pro.</i>	<i>Affection for Offspring</i>
<i>De animae procreatione</i>	<i>An. proc.</i>	<i>The Creation of the Soul in Timaeo</i>
<i>De capienda ex inimicis utilitate</i>	<i>De cap. ex inim. ut.</i>	<i>Profiting by One's Enemies</i>
<i>De cohibenda ira</i>	<i>De cohib. ir.</i>	<i>Controlling Anger</i>
<i>De cupiditate divitiarum</i>	<i>De cupid. div.</i>	<i>On Wealth</i>
<i>De curiositate</i>	<i>De curio.</i>	<i>Curiosity</i>
<i>De defectu oraculorum</i>	<i>De def. or.</i>	<i>Obsolescence of Oracles</i>
<i>De E apud Delphos</i>	<i>De E</i>	<i>The E at Delphi</i>
<i>De exilio</i>	<i>De ex.</i>	<i>On Exile</i>
<i>De facie in orbe lunae</i>	<i>De facie</i>	<i>The Face on the Moon</i>
<i>De fortuna Romanorum</i>	<i>De fort. Rom.</i>	<i>The Fortune of the Romans</i>
<i>De garrulitate</i>	<i>De garr.</i>	<i>On Talkativeness</i>
<i>De genio Socratis</i>	<i>De genio</i>	<i>The Daimon of Socrates</i>
<i>De invidia et odio</i>	<i>De invidia</i>	<i>Envy/Hate</i>
<i>De Iside et Osiride</i>	<i>De Iside</i>	<i>On Isis</i>
<i>De malignitate Herodoti</i>	<i>De Herod. malig.</i>	<i>The Malice of Herodotus</i>
<i>De primo frigido</i>	<i>De prim. frig.</i>	<i>On Cold</i>
<i>De profectu in virtute</i>	<i>De prof. virt.</i>	<i>Progress in Virtue</i>
<i>De recta ratione audiendi</i>	<i>De recta</i>	<i>On Listening</i>
<i>De tuenda sanitate praecepta</i>	<i>De tuenda</i>	<i>Keeping Well</i>

<u>Latin title</u>	<u>Abbr.</u>	<u>Short title</u>
<i>De sera numinis vindicta</i>	<i>De sera</i>	<i>Divine Vengeance</i>
<i>De sollertia animalium</i>	<i>De soll. an.</i>	<i>Are Land or Sea Animals Cleverer?</i>
<i>De Stoicorum repugnantiiis</i>	<i>De Stoic. rep.</i>	<i>Stoic Contradictions</i>
<i>De superstitione</i>	<i>De superst.</i>	<i>On Superstition</i>
<i>De tranquillitate animi</i>	<i>De tranq. an.</i>	<i>Tranquility of Mind</i>
<i>De virtute et vitio</i>	<i>De virt. et vit.</i>	<i>Virtue and Vice</i>
<i>Lacaenarum apophthegmata</i>	<i>Lacae. apophth.</i>	<i>Spartan Women</i>
<i>Mulierum virtutes</i>	<i>Mulier. virt.</i>	<i>Virtues</i>
<i>Parallela Minora</i>	<i>P. min.</i>	<i>Parallel Stories</i>
<i>Praecepta gerendae reipublicae</i>	<i>Praec. ger. rei publ.</i>	<i>Statecraft</i>
<i>Quaestiones convivales</i>	<i>Quaest. conv.</i>	<i>Table Talk</i>
<i>Quomodo adulator ab amico internoscatur</i>	<i>Adul. amic.</i>	<i>Flatterer/Friend</i>
<i>Quomodo adulescens poetas audire debeat</i>	<i>Quomodo adul.</i>	<i>Studying Poetry</i>
<i>Septem sapientium convivium</i>	<i>Conv. sept.</i>	<i>Seven Sages</i>
<i>Stoicos absurdiora poetis dicere</i>	<i>Stoic. ab.</i>	<i>Stoic Paradoxes</i>

Preface

Like A Captive Bird started as a PhD project on Plutarch's views on women at Stellenbosch University in 2013. In the time since, it has changed shape again and again. I could have easily spent another eight years refining the arguments I have made here, had I remained in academia. But I must move on. As it stands, this book is a loosely woven tapestry and I encourage you, the reader, to unravel it. I have come to no firm conclusions, except one. Virtue is inseparable from gender, indeed in many ways virtue and vice is gender. At least, I believe that that is true for Plutarch. How one acts and speaks is an expression of gender, but it is also an expression of a moral condition, a relationship between body and soul. What has been most surprising is uncovering the ways in which Plutarch's work not just marginalizes and renders invisible gendered others, but reduces them to utter non-existence, invalidates the very core of their being. The chapter on queer ontology is my favorite, and it is the one I most enjoyed writing for the simple reason that I have become convinced that theorizing a third kind was essential to the validity of Plutarch's psychagogic program. I look forward to seeing what you make of it.

Much that is in this book has been influenced by my engagement with the chaos of the Internet, snippets of theory threaded through

my breakfast, videos and articles I could never find again. Being online is also in a sense a practice of self-formation, and many of the brief thoughts I have come into contact with quite incidentally have occasioned a shift in my sense of self. It would be a lie to say that hasn't also affected the way I have written this book. I do not believe that objectivity is achievable or even desirable, and I make no secret of the fact that my own experience of Plutarch's work has been undeniably shaped by my experience as a queer person out in the world. I sought myself in *Advice to the Bride and Groom*, and found nothing. I sought myself in *Virtues of Women*, and came up empty. I sought any indication of my existence in *The Creation of the Soul*, but there was only unreality. For Plutarch, people like me are the embodiment of disorder. Being queer is a threat to the very existence of the world as we know it. But I have also come to believe that this world must change if we are to survive. Deconstructing Plutarch's views on women and gendered others is my own small contribution to that process.

Those who deserve thanks for pulling me through this project have received their share in person. Allow me to mention only a few without whom this book would never have seen the light. Prof. Johan Thom, who supervised the PhD on which this work is built and introduced me not just to Plutarch, but to the concepts of psychagogy and moral-educational literature, and bravely bore the direction I decided to take. Prof. Annemaré Kotzé, whose work on protreptic and paraenetic literature has been almost as important to me as her mentorship. She is a true example of what academia could be, if it wasn't what it is. The unsung heroes who make scholarship available to researchers without affiliation. Everyone who has ever worked on a project to make ancient texts freely available in a digital format, and those responsible for the Perseus Digital Library especially. Lever Press, for making academic research like this accessible. The National Research Foundation of South Africa, for seeing the value of this project even in its nascent phase, and for backing it during a time when it

was amorphous and indefinite. The DAAD, for funding a research exchange to Humboldt University in Berlin, where I did much of the early research that underpins this work. And finally, most importantly, my cheerleaders. Amy Daniels, Franziska Naether, Michael Okyere Asante, Luiz Ribeiro and Bianca Uys. This book is a small achievement compared to the spoils of your friendship.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

So it is ridiculous to maintain that women have no participation in virtue.

On Love 769c

Plutarch puts these words not in the mouth of an interlocutor, but in that of his own younger self. He would like the reader to regard him as an advocate for equal moral ability, and he confirms himself thus by addressing two essays in which he professes women's virtue to his friend, the Delphic priestess Clea. *Virtues of Women* is similarly unambiguous in its statement of intent: "Regarding the virtues of women, Clea, I do not hold the same opinion as Thucydides," Plutarch declares in the first sentence (242e). He would go on to claim that man's virtue and woman's virtue is the same, before launching into a compendium of exempla meant to prove his point. In *On Isis and Osiris*, he opens with an exposition of the mythology and cult of Isis (352a) in which Osiris is only named much later (353d) and Isis appears as "a goddess exceptionally wise and a lover of wisdom," much like, one might argue, his Clea. His commitment to the project of women's moral education, a project he declares himself fully invested in because he believes that it can

bear fruit, is evident not only in these texts but throughout the *Moralia* and the *Lives*.

Elsewhere, Plutarch writes about marriage (*Advice to the Bride and Groom*) and grief (*Consolation to His Wife*) in ways that both affirm his commitment to moral equality and betray his deep skepticism of women's ability to resist the traps of effeminate vice. So he writes in *Advice*:

It is said that no woman ever produced a child without the cooperation of a man, yet there are misshapen, fleshlike, uterine growths originating in some infection, which develop of themselves and acquire firmness and solidity, and are commonly called "moles." Great care must be taken that this kind of thing does not take place in women's minds. For if they do not receive the seed of good doctrines and share with their husbands in intellectual advancement, they, left to themselves, conceive many untoward ideas and low designs and emotions (146e).¹

On Isis and Virtues contain hints of the same skepticism.² That Plutarch had a particular interest in women and the feminine is undeniable, and yet the exact nature of this interest in and his views on women has remained elusive. Indeed, Plutarch does not make it easy to discern, nor does the breadth and scope of his extant work. The *Lives* abound with exempla of virtuous women—Porcia, Octavia, Cornelia—and some deeply challenging characterizations, like Cleopatra, who is described as a foreign seductress and a witch (*Demetr. et Ant.* 3.3, 4.1), and Aspasia, a politically astute *hetaira* (*Per.* 24.3). There is at all times a certain underlying wariness of the feminine in the *Moralia* which is evident also in the biographies, even when women are not written as main characters—and subsequently not studied as such. But this is not a book about Plutarch's views on women so much as it is a book about what Plutarch's views on women mean for women and gendered others, and this necessarily includes men. I aim to show

here that the narrow definition of “Woman” within the bounds of conjugality is the very same mechanism which produces the gendered other, a process in which virtue is heteronormative and queerness is, by definition, vicious.

The Greek biographer and philosopher of the 1st–2nd centuries CE remains a major source on the historical circumstances of women’s lives in the ancient world;³ less than half of his oeuvre is extant, but even so the body of work is substantial.⁴ Russell has advised against reading Plutarch as a historical source without regard for the goals of the project and the author’s intention.⁵ His presence is palpable throughout his work, though first-person statements in the *Lives* are relatively rare.⁶ Plutarch wished for his readers to know him and trust him with their moral education, and he brings his own values, principles and biases to the text. Thus Karen Blomqvist argues that “it is of no consequence whether the women in question are mythical or historical.”⁷ In her view, Plutarch’s moralistic imposition on the text as artist and author carries far more weight than any historical fact when it comes to his views on women.

Scholars of biography often argue that Plutarch remains removed from his subject material and presents his characters as objectively as possible, leaving moral judgment to his readers instead of imposing it on the text himself.⁸ This is of course not mutually exclusive with the possibility that the *Lives* have a moralistic agenda. Such admissions often come with a caveat that still allows for Plutarch’s relative objectivity despite his moral-educational aims. Tim Duff, for example, distinguishes between the *Moralia* as “works of moral theory” and the *Lives* as “works in which the theory is examined—and questioned—in practice,”⁹ while Jeffrey Beneker sees Plutarch as presenting the material in the *Lives* in a morally neutral way: “[frequently] Plutarch does not apply labels at all when he narrates examples of sexual behavior, preferring to let his readers evaluate actions for themselves, and then to draw conclusions about character and to anticipate the

course of future events.”¹⁰ These studies are generally focused on men, but even those scholars who do take Plutarch’s women into account tend to agree; Walcot also implies that the *Lives* can be considered to be historically accurate and generally free from Plutarch’s moral convictions: “... what does Plutarch isolate in the *Moralia* and confirm by the *Lives* as the particular faults of women?”¹¹

While it is certainly true that there is a historical basis for much of Plutarch’s work, I argue that there is not only a sustained and deliberate focus on women and the feminine in both the *Moralia* and the *Lives*, but that the historical does not preclude Plutarch’s own deep-seated philosophical beliefs. Duff reminds his readers that there was “a common ancient view of literature, which associated the material about which an author, especially an historian, chose to write with that author’s own character.”¹² The same is true for moral philosophers, who were expected to live by example.¹³ Plutarch is well-known to have done just that.¹⁴ This makes him an ideal candidate for a broad study such as this. Not only do we have a substantial number of extant texts across a variety of genres, but it has become ever clearer that there is a significant relationship between works in different genres. As Anastasios Nikolaidis aptly notes, “in Plutarch this connecting thread is always, more or less, discernible in almost all his works whether biographical or philosophical or theological or political or whatever.”¹⁵ It is in his interest in ethics, moral psychology and people in particular that Plutarch reveals parts of himself and his conceptual world to an audience he hopes will thereby consider him authoritative enough to provide moral guidance.¹⁶ It is my aim to show that this moral-educational project is distinctly gendered and enmeshed with other categories of difference, that it aims to manipulate the formation of the ethical self to which it addresses itself, and that it lays its claim to validity on a metaphysical framework borrowed (and then further developed) from Platonism.

Thus far, the full extent of Plutarch's moral educational program remains largely understudied, at least in those aspects thereof pertaining to women and the gendered other. As a result, scholarship on his views on women have differed significantly in their conclusions, with some scholars suggesting that he is overwhelmingly positive towards women and marriage and perhaps even a "precursor to feminism" (Nikolaidis 1997),¹⁷ and others arguing that he was rather negative on the issue (Walcot 1999). Neither of these assessments are wholly accurate, and yet both make compelling arguments. Blomqvist argues that neither "feminist" nor "misogynist" are useful terms for describing Plutarch's views on women, complicated as they are.¹⁸ There are also those who have attempted to capture the complexities of Plutarch's work, both on a small scale and in large studies. In the latter category, France le Corsu's (1981) monograph on women in the *Lives* is a clear outlier; his categorization of women is a useful tool for understanding Plutarch's representations of certain types of women and femininities. Similarly, Blomqvist (1997) examined the ways in which Plutarch's characterization of women in the *Lives* are informed both by his authorial choices and his moralizing purpose. In her analysis Blomqvist highlights in particular the foreignness of certain women (Aspasia, Olympias and Cleopatra) and their correlative characterization as manipulative, licentious and domineering.¹⁹

Bradley Buszard duly notes the limitations of Plutarch scholarship on women, especially those studies that have been broad in scope and as a result lacking in depth of analysis or tending towards sweeping generalizations.²⁰ His own study focuses on the speech of women in the *Lives*, who he argues are depicted as highly intelligent and focused on civic duties. Even so, he shows an awareness of the dangers of imposing a progressive view onto Plutarch and admits that his study includes only women who are elite, who speak not for themselves but for their (mostly male) relatives, and who are mobilized only by the extraordinary

circumstances in which they find themselves.²¹ Buszard's study is valuable as an analysis of the role elite women play in the *Lives*, but it does not attempt to reconcile these views with Plutarch's views elsewhere in the *Moralia*, and it glosses over the crucial point that a large number of the women that make speeches in the *Lives* act as arbiters of peace.

Focused studies such as Buszard's are essential for understanding Plutarch's women on a micro level, while broad studies that span a range of texts in Plutarch's oeuvre are necessary in order to gain a fuller understanding of his philosophy in theory and in practice. In this vein studies such as those of Beneker (2008, 2012, 2014) have been influential. Beneker has argued that Plutarch considers *erōs* a necessary prerequisite for a successful marriage within which *philia* and virtue can flourish. He sees the philosophical groundwork for this argument in *On Love*²² and the practical application in the *Lives*, particularly *Brutus* and *Pompey*. He correctly claims that Plutarch considers a legitimate marriage one that is contracted at the right time between two sensible people, and it is this which allows him to condone the marriage of Ismenodora, a mature widow, and her much younger lover Bacchon in *On Love*.²³ Beneker's research does not consider what these views mean for women, but rather what they mean for men.²⁴ As a result of his broad view of the *Lives* but narrow consideration of the *Moralia*, Beneker rarely touches on *Advice* or the *Consolation* in his analysis of the role of *erōs* in marriage.

Some other studies fill this gap in the scholarship but nevertheless do not offer a wholly satisfactory resolution to questions about gender and virtue in Plutarch. Sarah B. Pomeroy's (1999) edition of *Advice* and *Consolation* has been an important addition to the study of Plutarch's women, and many of the essays contained within the volume are careful and considered. Philip Stadter's essay on Plutarch's view of women is valuable precisely because it takes a broad view of Plutarch's works, including not only some of the popular-philosophical works in the *Moralia*, but

also *On Isis* and some evidence from the *Lives*. As a result, he comes to the rather sensible conclusion that Plutarch expects the wife to apply her philosophical knowledge in the household, and that the couple should act as a unit with the husband as its leader.²⁵ Similarly, Lin Foxhall's examination of structures of power and domination in Roman Greece emphasizes the melding of Roman law with Greek custom and its effect on conjugal practice and the legal status of women. One salient difference is the ability of Roman women to inherit and own property and operate with some measure of independence relative to Greek women. She argues that the meeting of these two cultures expanded Greek women's rights to property ownership and their influence, which in turn caused a certain amount of discomfort for Plutarch, who needed to navigate Greek tradition in a Romanized world. Foxhall concludes that Plutarch distinguishes between the public woman and the autonomous woman, and that his view of feminine virtue allows for women's agency only in the absence of male authority, while in all else promoting subjugation.²⁶

Few other works have attempted to confront Plutarch's women directly,²⁷ preferring instead to include them in studies of themes such as love, marriage and sex, that consider them in relation to men rather than on their own.²⁸ The most common view that persists in these studies is that Plutarch places great emphasis on the conjugal relationship as one of affection and reciprocity. Along these lines, Cynthia Patterson declares that Plutarch pays the "larger social, political, or cosmic purposes" of the marriage very little mind, as he focuses rather on the relationship between the husband and wife itself.²⁹ Lisette Goessler similarly lauds the *Consolation* for revealing "the close emotional union of the couple, the harmony of their marriage, and their shared spiritual life, their perfect unity (*symbiōsis*) in every respect."³⁰ Despite the obvious double standards of some of Plutarch's writings, the major scholarly consensus remains that he "concentrates on the equal status of the conjugal partners, on the positive evaluation of *erōs*

(both physical and spiritual-philosophical), and on the reciprocity and the sharing in the marital relationship.³¹

Many of these studies draw on the work of Michel Foucault, in particular Volume 3 of *The History of Sexuality (The Care of the Self)*, which relies heavily on analysis of some of Plutarch's works, amongst others *Advice* and *On Love*, and which has been quite influential in the renewed interest in Plutarch in recent years. Foucault, however, also failed to really see the women in these texts; when he speaks about marriage, his focus is primarily on the husband. Furthermore, most of these studies do not take into account the ancient practice of psychagogy³²—which aims at leading the student to virtue through the application of therapeutic ethics—in Plutarch's works despite the fact that it loomed large in Foucault's lectures in the years before his death (1981–84). As a result, they never quite catch sight of what Plutarch might hope to achieve through his practical philosophy, or how he might try to support his ultimate moral goals *for women* through his theoretical philosophy and his biographies. Nor, for that matter, did Foucault quite grasp the implications of psychagogy as he defined it for his own history of sexuality. Amy Richlin has launched a searing critique of Foucault's historical methods and conclusions in *The History of Sexuality*, questioning whether a work that seems to deliberately erase women from the historical record except insofar as men relate to them is useful for feminist historians and philosophers at all.³³ I find her critique eminently persuasive, but would argue that Foucault's work is useful precisely *because* it writes around women, a limitation so blindingly obvious to any woman reading Foucault that it seems almost ludicrous. Despite having written much in his earlier work about the relationship between knowledge and structures of power, Foucault had failed to see how he himself was reproducing those very same structures through the exclusion of people who were not elite males.

In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault had exposed the limits of history, of philosophy, of Classics, of thinking about the history

of philosophy through the lens of “classical culture.” Even so, his attempt to offer an account that bridges the gap between Aristotle and early Christianity continues to draw me back to it. I am often more dissatisfied by feminist philosophy and theory not on account of its methods or its conclusions, but its reliance on Plato and Aristotle as benchmarks of ancient attitudes to gender and sexuality, and I often find myself searching for theories that reach beyond these limits and coming up empty-handed. Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* engages with Plato, and to a lesser extent with Plutarch, but both are mentioned quite briefly in the text itself.³⁴ Plutarch appears specifically in the context of a discussion of Foucault, as can be expected. *Bodies That Matter* is much more engaged with ancient philosophy, though again Plato and Aristotle loom large, plus a brief mention of Plotinus, and little from antiquity besides.³⁵ Luce Irigaray too is deeply engaged with Plato and Aristotle to the detriment of a much larger body of ancient evidence.³⁶ The same is true for Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet*, which sticks to Plato and Socrates, and more recently Charlotte Witt’s fascinating theory of gender uniessentialism in *The Metaphysics of Gender*, which relies heavily on Aristotle.³⁷ Perhaps most disappointing is the collection *Feminism and Ancient Philosophy*, in which only two of the eleven essays are not about either Plato or Aristotle, and Plutarch is entirely absent.³⁸

I therefore find myself asking the same question about Plutarch that Richlin had asked about Foucault: what use is he to feminist theory? And why do I keep returning to these authors if they cannot lead me to some new understanding of the world? For me, the answer has been methodological. Foucault, like Simone de Beauvoir and Michèle Le Doeuff,³⁹ offers a way out of the maze that seems so often to come back to familiar territory. Foucault attempted to write a history that moves on from Plato and Aristotle to ancient philosophers who were often more overtly practical and quite influential in their own right. Plutarch is one such philosopher. His views on gender and virtue have demonstrable

roots in Plato and Aristotle, and yet I hope to show that he had made significant alterations to their theories to adapt them to his needs and context, and that have been lost to a feminist philosophy that perhaps did not know where to look for them, or what to look for.⁴⁰ Foucault's project may have fallen short of what it promised to be yet it contains much that is of use for the student of ancient technologies of the self, and this can tell us much about attitudes toward gender and identity in antiquity. It is my aim here to remain true to the source, to say something about the way Plutarch viewed the world and the people in it, and perhaps thereby to say something about the internalization of structures of power and domination along gendered lines, something that is possible to say only because Plutarch makes himself available to the reader in a way that Plato and Aristotle do not. I have therefore called on Plato and Aristotle only when necessary to understand Plutarch.

This book attempts a reconciliation of these varying views on Plutarch's attitudes to women and marriage while paying close attention to his treatment of the feminine and the gendered other in his philosophical work and the *Lives*. A large part of it is dedicated to uncovering the social and theoretical basis for Plutarch's views on women and the feminine in the *Moralia*, with a particular focus on his moralistic aims and the ways in which his theoretical philosophy works to support his psychagogy for women. In Chapter 2, I argue that psychagogy is a practice of philosophy that is concerned with the regulation of power through the production and dissemination of knowledge, and that this knowledge and the rights to it is produced along a gendered axis of power that multiplies and organizes categories of difference. In Chapter 3, I focus on the divergences between real and ideal, arguing that Plutarch's psychagogy often espoused principles contrary to the realities of women's lives because it understood reproductive difference as a signifier and determinant of social

identity. Chapter 4 focuses specifically on the aims and methods of moral philosophy and psychagogic practice as they relate to identity formation, with a focus on the intended outcomes of therapeutic ethics and what that means for the formation of the self as a gendered subject.

Then, in Chapter 5, I turn to Plutarch's theoretical philosophy, arguing that metaphysics is an essential tool in the final phase of psychagogy. I make the point that these works have a sustained interest in the feminine—and thus gender more broadly construed—that is evident especially in the treatment of the question of evil. It is precisely this that simultaneously constructs and negates non-binary identities in Plutarch's work and provides the epistemological and ontological mechanisms for queer erasure and the gendering of virtue and vice in the *Lives* and elsewhere. Plutarch thereby constructs and validates cisheteronormative identity against illegitimate queer identities on the ontological level. Finally, I go back to the beginning in Chapter 6 for a further examination of gendered types in the biographies in light of the ethical implications of the previous chapters. Here I argue that women play a similar role as ethical exempla to that often claimed for men. I argue that the moral character of men in the *Lives* cannot be fully understood outside of its gendered aspects, and therefore that the ethical judgments of men always already imply women and vice versa. Many studies on Plutarch's theoretical or popular philosophy focus solely on aspects of the texts aimed at a male audience, and gloss over or in some cases ignore the possibility of a female audience, even when such an audience is explicit.⁴¹ This is especially the case for the practical philosophy of the biographies, in which men are the main subjects. Plutarch's women thus occupy a liminal space in current scholarship; they have not quite yet become subjects worthy of study as subjects-in-themselves, and yet they are no longer visible solely through their proximity to men.

AUDIENCE

The success of the psychagogic program relies on women accessing the educational material in some way or another. Underlying the claims made in this book is therefore the question of whether or not women would have read Plutarch's work, whether he expected them to do so, and which works ought to be included in this list. Some, like *Advice* and *Virtues*, are directly addressed to women, and thus appear unproblematic in that regard. The problem is whether women would have read those works *not* explicitly aimed at or addressed to them. Recent suggestions on the topic of Plutarch's audience are quite divergent and merit at least some cursory discussion. It may be useful to start from the position of the texts as literary works and thereby deduce that only those with access to both education and the text itself (that is, members of the Greek-speaking male elite and a small group of wealthy women)⁴² can be considered audience members, but this assumption rules out the spirit of popular philosophy, which aims at educating the public through philosophy.⁴³

The scope and the demography of the potential audience expands immediately upon learning that Plutarch often traveled around areas of the Roman empire (and in fact was given Roman citizenship) to deliver public lectures.⁴⁴ Such lectures appear to have been quite popular in the Roman world as a form of entertainment, though we cannot say with certainty what benefit the audience might have gained from listening to them.⁴⁵ On the basis of this, Elaine Fantham has argued that the oral tradition informed and shaped the literary tradition.⁴⁶ Letters appear to have been one of the most popular genres, judging by the number of them that are extant.⁴⁷ Plutarch's *Advice* and *Consolation* are both most likely public letters that were written with a larger audience in mind, or at the very least edited after the initial private correspondence and then disseminated.

As for the audience Plutarch himself had in mind, some of the texts examined here are addressed to women (*Cons. ux.*, *Mulier. virt.*, *De Iside*), some are addressed to men (some *Lives*, *An. proc.*), and some are addressed to either both or to neither sex explicitly (some *Lives*, *Lacae. apophth.*, *Conj. praec.*, *Amat.*). All of the works take interest in women's words and actions, whether big or small, and the effect this has on the men in their lives. This seems to be a central concern for Plutarch, and from this we may deduce that a female audience was envisioned even for those works that were aimed primarily at a male audience. The inclusion of women in male-oriented texts may also serve the purpose stated explicitly in *Advice*:

... for your wife you must collect from every source what is useful ... carrying it within your own self impart it to her, and then discuss it with her, and make the best of these doctrines her favorite and familiar themes (145c).

Plutarch says the husband must be a guide, philosopher, and teacher (*kathēgētēs kai philosophos kai didaskalos*; 145c) for his wife and he provides ample material to choose from in both the *Moralia* and the *Lives*. Annette Bourland Huizenga comes to the same conclusion with regard to the Pythagorean women's letters, stating that while the audience must ultimately be female, since they focus on the regulation of women's behavior, we cannot say that they didn't sometimes reach their target via a male intermediary. Even so, a direct female audience is not completely out of the question. It is possible, for example, that women heard these texts read aloud to them while they were engaged in repetitive domestic activities such as weaving, as women's entertainment after dinner, or as "educational entertainment" at a bridal shower.⁴⁸ Such an expanded audience, freed in some sense from the limitations of

literacy, creates opportunities for speculation on just how far these works may have travelled down the social hierarchy. Teresa Morgan suggests that “popular philosophy” was popular by virtue of being in wide circulation and available to many citizens across the social spectrum. Despite the small audience for literary works in the ancient world, she argues that the texts were disseminated by other means, most notably orally, referring to Homer as a case in point, and deduces that popular philosophical texts with a moral aim had a “mass audience.”⁴⁹

To delineate Plutarch’s audience, where do we then draw the line, if we draw one at all? I would suggest that the texts function on two levels, and that it would be useful to categorize the audience as “primary” and “secondary.” We will call the primary audience the one that Plutarch has in mind when he composes a work, that is, the literate elite and especially those with prior knowledge of philosophy.⁵⁰ Stadter has argued that we can reasonably imagine Plutarch’s intended audience from the friends addressed in his work.⁵¹ Most of these people are men, but it would be a mistake to underestimate the implied female audience represented by women like Clea, Eurydice and Timoxena. They are not the only literate women to appear in his work either. Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi, is praised for her dedication to philosophy and the education of her sons (*TG* 1.4–5, *CG* 19.2), and so too the Cornelia married to Pompey, who was well-versed in literature and geometry and had gained much from listening to discourses on philosophy (*Pomp.* 55.1). The women in Alexander’s family were literate too; his mother frequently wrote to him (*Alex.* 39.4–5) and his sister Cleopatra reportedly wrote letters to Leonnatus promising to marry him (*Eum.* 3.5). Even foreign women are represented as literate on occasion. The case of Aspasia is well-known (*Per.* 24.3), as is that of Cleopatra (*Ant.* 27.3–4), and Plutarch mentions that Pompey found lascivious letters from Monime to Mithridates (*Pomp.* 37.2). The educated woman is in fact a commonplace in Plutarch, therefore, given Plutarch’s dedication of some texts in

the *Moralia* to female addressees, I consider this primary audience to consist of literate and wealthy men *and* women.

In contrast to the literacy, wealth and privilege of the primary audience, the secondary audience is most likely an incidental audience that doesn't directly figure into Plutarch's consideration when he composes the text, although he might be aware of its existence. This audience may gain access to his work through oral performance—perhaps Plutarch's own public lectures or perhaps the performance of the work for entertainment purposes in a private setting—and has little or no prior knowledge of philosophy, especially not technical knowledge. Some of the text's content and aim is therefore likely to be lost on the secondary audience, but we cannot say that they will gain nothing from it. The secondary audience serves as an expansion of the primary audience, but I'm not sure that I agree with Morgan that popular philosophy had a "mass audience" that included enslaved persons and the lowest classes, except in extraordinary circumstances where they came into contact with Plutarch's work through a member or members of a higher class. Even so, the nature of Plutarch's texts and the ease with which many of them can be read does indicate an aim at a larger audience, instead of indicating a lack of skill or shortage of imagination. In fact, most of the texts are highly rhetorical and Plutarch reminds us frequently that he has extensive philosophical knowledge, which we can see him display in *On Love* and *On Isis*. It is probably not by accident that of the texts in the Lamprias Catalogue that are lost, many are those that deal with especially theoretical-philosophical themes, surely an indication that his popular philosophy found a much wider audience.

I would also like to offer a simplified version of this argument: women read. They always have and they always will, just as they have always written. We know of a great many women writers across many genres in antiquity, women like Melissa, Elephantis, Sulpicia, and even Plutarch's own Timoxena.⁵² As Lieve van Hoof notes, "literature implies reading."⁵³ Is it fair, then, to infer that

a female addressee implies a female audience? I should think so. Plutarch encourages Eurydice to engage with philosophy, and his reference to a letter written by his wife Timoxena and addressed to Aristylla (*Conj. praec.* 145a) as well as the nature of the works addressed to Clea indicate more than an idle expectation that women would read these (and presumably also other) works.⁵⁴ Indeed, as far as we can tell, women have been reading and writing for as long as men have, and no amount of pontificating about class and access will change that brute fact. Perhaps it is more problematic to argue that Plutarch wrote intentionally for women, but that too seems to me a fallacy. It is clear that Plutarch expected women to read at least some of his work, acknowledged their ability to engage with philosophy and approved of them doing so. That being the case, it doesn't seem too much of a stretch to suggest that even those works with a primary male audience contain aspects that are useful and intended for women. We will return to this problem throughout this book to reconsider the question of audience and intent.

THE TEXTS

When it comes to the issue of gender, it is Plutarch's theoretical works in particular that pose serious analytic problems. There is no consensus on the nature and status of the feminine in *On Isis*, *The Creation of the Soul in the Timaeus* and *On Love*, nor even that Plutarch demonstrates a definite interest in the feminine in these texts. Indeed, much of the scholarship on these works, with the exception of *On Love*, tends to overlook the feminine altogether. This is perfectly demonstrated by Faiferri's opening to his essay on evil in *On Isis*: "What is the purpose of the essay known as *De Iside et Osiride*? At a first sight, it is not clear why Plutarch bothered himself with writing a work on Egyptian mythology and how this theological treatise could attract our attention."⁵⁵ The purpose, or at least a big part of it, is precisely Plutarch's preoccupation with

the feminine in much of his work. John Dillon has briefly touched on the female principle in *On Isis*,⁵⁶ as has Stadter (1999), and the contribution of John Gwyn Griffiths (1970) has been invaluable. Chapter 5 deals specifically with the problematic nature of these texts and the metaphysics of the feminine that underpins much of Plutarch's ideas about women and gender elsewhere in the *Moralia* and in the *Lives*.

The *Lives* deal primarily with powerful men, while women are often secondary characters who support or hinder them.⁵⁷ In the theoretical- and popular-philosophical works of the *Moralia*, this is not always the case; Ismenodora in *On Love* is a rather curious example of a woman acting independently. In fact, even in the *Lives* women are sometimes so present, so active, as to nearly eclipse the male subject of the biography altogether. This is most evident in *Antony*, where the character of Cleopatra looms large. There are other works in which women are the primary characters as well. *Advice*, a collection of *chreiai* and *gnōmai* intended to guide the young husband and wife through their marriage and towards a virtuous union, has a clear psychagogic aim that is intended mostly for women, though some parts are intended for the husband or for the couple as a unit. The text, written in the form of comparisons, gives practical advice on common problems the couple may face, such as marital disputes, distribution of financial assets, and sex. Similar assertions may be made about the *Consolation*, a published letter from Plutarch to his wife, Timoxena, which focuses specifically on how to deal with grief and the loss of a loved one. Two other texts with less explicit psychagogic aims are *Virtues* and *Sayings of Spartan Women*, both of which present collections of women's deeds and sayings that ought to be considered brave and admirable. These are four works that directly relate to the lives of women and in which women are the main focus of the text, though other popular-philosophical works that are traditionally read as applicable to the male spheres of life can easily be brought in relation with them as texts on general psychagogic practice (for

example, *How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend*, *Virtue and Vice*, *Can Virtue be Taught?* and *On Moral Virtue*).

Two other works from the *Moralia* are pertinent to the study of Plutarch's metaphysics of the feminine: *On Isis* and *The Creation of the Soul*, neither of which can in good conscience be classified as popular-philosophical. Instead, they fall under Plutarch's theoretical-philosophical works. *On Isis* is a complex text that incorporates elements of Egyptian religion as a vehicle through which Platonic metaphysics on the composition of the cosmos can be explained,⁵⁸ while *The Creation of the Soul* is devoted to an exposition of Plato's theory of the soul in the *Timaeus*. In *On Love* Plutarch further expounds on the Platonic theory of love and adds his own philosophical expertise in order to counterbalance the view that Platonic love is homoerotic.⁵⁹ All three works deal (at least in part) with the metaphysics of the feminine. As such they form the metaphysical basis of the psychagogy that is deployed in Plutarch's popular-philosophical works, as well as in the *Lives*, and the image(s) of the feminine that result from it. A close reading of these texts will reveal that they have much more in common than meets the eye; not only are all of them on some level concerned with women, they all consider women's place in the lives of men and how they might exert influence over the circumstances they find themselves in.

We are, however, ultimately also concerned with what psychagogy means for the people it addresses. It is therefore necessary to distinguish between Woman as a theoretical and theoreticized entity and the woman as the individual who exists in the world and experiences herself as a subjective being.⁶⁰ Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz rightly criticized the tendency in classical scholarship to treat "women" as "some pre-existent singular entity."⁶¹ Similarly, ancient philosophical theory often treats woman as an essential being,⁶² and it does not generally allow for differentiation with regards to ethnicity, class, sexuality, and other relevant factors.⁶³ This is not entirely true for Plutarch, who

acknowledged the role of culture, upbringing and environment in the formation of the moral self. Even so, Plutarch's women remain removed from their context, transposed to a philosophical discourse on what it must mean to *be* a woman. As if Plutarch would know. While this approach in gender studies is by no means surprising given the nature of the production, dissemination and preservation of ancient texts, whose processes favored elite men, it is problematic for the historian who hopes to learn from the literary record about the experiences of women in the ancient world. In the same way, while ancient authors did not have the wealth of concepts developed only recently to talk about gender as something distinctive from sex, or about marginalization and oppression, there is ample evidence that even then the binary was troubled and that authors like Plutarch found it necessary to attempt a reconciliation of non-binary gender within their own socio-cultural and philosophical frameworks.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The idea of woman presented in the popular-philosophical works of the *Moralia* is at first glance a contradiction. Plutarch's views on women are peculiar, to say the least. Yes, they are conservative, and at times even seemingly incompatible. In *Advice* he suggests that a woman should be educated and should study philosophy (145c–d), but that she ought not to make any friends of her own (140d). Yet it is hard to doubt that Plutarch was familiar with the philosophical tradition's skepticism of the ability of written material to convey philosophy,⁶⁴ which went as far back as Plato, with whom we know Plutarch was very well acquainted. It was best for the teacher to be a philosopher and a friend with whom the student could converse.⁶⁵ Despite his claim in *Virtues* that he disagrees with Thucydides who says that “a good woman ... ought to be shut up indoors and never go out” (242e), in *Advice* he says

that a good wife ought to “stay in the house and hide herself when [her husband] is away” (139c). There are also various incidents in *Sayings of Spartan Women* and *Virtues* in which women were not only seen in public but seen baring their genitals in order to shame their sons. In the same texts women often act with manly courage or display masculine virtue. These women are not only Spartans and therefore the argument that different rules apply does not stand. These tensions may leave the reader with an incoherent idea of Plutarch’s views on women, and the resulting conclusion may be that Plutarch himself simply did not follow a strict paradigm when it came to his female students. This is not the case.

Recent developments in feminist studies have increasingly laid emphasis on the acknowledgement of difference and the various ways in which the lived experience of women is dependent on the intersection of identity categories encoded in the structures and institutions of human societies. In our contemporary context this emphasis often lies with the triad gender–race–class, though scholars have identified numerous other categories with similar yet markedly different implications. The acknowledgement of these categories of difference relies not on an essentialist understanding of womanhood but on the structural forces that are responsible for certain actions, oppressions and marginalizations.⁶⁶ In recognition of this evolving understanding of structural oppression, feminist legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the phrase “intersectionality” in a 1989 article,⁶⁷ and the theory has since then gained popularity in feminist circles and online communities. Intersectionality implies a decentering of gender as a primary category of historical significance and a shift instead to a focus on gender as one of multiple categories that carry representational value in the matrix of domination. What I am interested in here is the historical mechanisms and educational strategies that enable and encourage the internalization of this matrix into the very structure of the self.

Because we are dealing with a body of literary works, the “problem” of women and the gendered other in Plutarch’s work is fundamentally one of language and representation. The application of intersectionality theory to this problem must then necessarily rely on language itself as a category that carries with it an implicit hierarchy. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1977) described this phenomenon as a form of capital which signifies the cultural relations of its bearer, and whose value is determined by the dominant culture. This is evident in antiquity as well. In his *Phillipics*, Cicero questions the suitability of Antony’s appointed Greek jurors by asking frankly of Cydas of Crete, “the island monster” he clearly disapproves of, “does he know Latin?” (5.5.13). In this instance, knowing Latin confers status within the framework of the dominant culture of Rome. It is not enough to speak different languages, however, as is evident in Plutarch’s characterization of Cleopatra. He describes her as a charming interlocutor who could

readily turn to whatever language she pleased, so that in her interviews with Barbarians she very seldom had need of an interpreter, but made her replies to most of them herself and unassisted, whether they were Ethiopians, Troglodytes, Hebrews, Arabians, Syrians, Medes or Parthians. It is said that she knew the speech of many other peoples also, although the kings of Egypt before her had not even made an effort to learn the native language, and some actually gave up their Macedonian dialect (*Ant.* 27.3–4).

This characterization is deeply complex, because Plutarch is clearly praising Cleopatra’s intellect, but does so in a context that styles her as a flatterer and an overly bold woman too fond of luxury—in short, a barbarian, albeit an educated one. The approach of intersectionality recognizes multilingualism as a form of social capital that is unevenly distributed while simultaneously

acknowledging that various languages carry different symbolic currencies.⁶⁸ This becomes troublesome when language passes through the filter of an author embedded in the dominant culture. Plutarch was a wealthy man, an enslaver, and a prolific author. When he reports the words and actions of women, he reveals his own views and anxieties about shifting power dynamics.

Because we cannot unilaterally apply identity categories from the present to the past, it becomes necessary first and foremost to identify the categories at work in a particular text, an author's oeuvre, a historical period or geographical region. Since we can reliably say that the Greeks and the Romans had prominent social categories for "man" and "woman" corresponding to their reproductive functions, and Plutarch was particularly preoccupied with this distinction, it makes sense for the purpose of the current project to start from this point. I aim to show that gender cannot be separated from other categories of difference; they are interdependent and mutually constitutive. The application of intersectionality to ancient texts is therefore in part a case of categorizing linguistic markers of identity and difference. These categories often carry an implied binary (man–woman, Greek–barbarian, virtuous–not virtuous, beautiful–ugly), but it is possible to demarcate multiple points of identification which exist on a scale between two opposite poles, while in some cases points of identification resist scaling and exist instead only in proximity to the binary—what, for example, are we to say about the eunuch?

The intersection of these points of identification result in a complex characterization that can only be resolved by a thorough understanding of the interaction between them, which ultimately leads to a hierarchization of identity categories that privileges the male in the dominant culture. For example, one might reasonably argue from a normative elite Greek male point of view that it is better to be a man than a woman, a Greek than a barbarian, virtuous than not virtuous. What do we then do with the virtuous barbarian woman? Such women do appear in the work of Plutarch,

and I will argue here that an analysis of characterization within the framework of intersectionality cannot be separated from questions about the source, audience and intent. It will become clear that a complex matrix of domination is at play in Plutarch's writings, and that some categories trump others in the battle for representation. Some types of people may as a result fall by the wayside because they do not fit the binary, are inconceivable to the author or are so far down the ontological hierarchy as to resist representation altogether.

In studying the relation between philosophical and idealizing texts on the one hand and biographical works on the other, we should then be careful not to lump together all of the women Plutarch writes about. Indeed, there are several factors that should at all times be kept in mind. Of these, my primary concern in this book is gender and its expressions, which is closely related to ethnicity, class and social status in the characterization of women in the *Moralia* and the *Lives*. It is likely (and in fact probable) that Plutarch's depiction of women reflects his own views and concerns regarding the proper place and function of different types of women, and that such characterizations are in direct conversation with contemporary social values. Intersectionality theory shows that it is unreasonable (and certainly unfair) to treat women as a monolithic category which can be studied as such. Instead, it suggests an approach that considers women at the intersection of oppression(s) including (but not limited to) gender, class, ethnicity and race, geopolitical circumstance, and sexuality.⁶⁹ Plutarch's role in encoding this matrix of domination into the Greco-Roman consciousness is not insignificant.

Intersectionality is not, however, a methodology so much as a theory of multi-layered structures of social power and domination. For this reason, it must be used in conjunction with a clearly defined methodology, and in fact lends itself to interpretation within the frameworks of different methodologies. This study makes use of close reading, itself a rather open-ended and

malleable methodology. Close reading emphasizes the dependency of literary texts upon their socio-cultural contexts and pays careful attention to the texture of the text, that is, its structure and use of language.⁷⁰ It takes into account various aspects of a text that together form part of the complete work; these aspects cannot stand alone, they interact with one another, and close reading takes this into consideration. One of these aspects that ought to be particularly prominent in the *Moralia* is the “language of morality,” in which certain words are associated with particular actions or characteristics over a sustained period of time and in many instances. Words that often appear in conjunction with other words may be used as synonyms or may indicate a moral condition.⁷¹ The presence or absence of words that have particular moral connotations in Plutarch’s *Moralia* may also serve as indicators of authorial imposition on the text where they appear in the *Lives*.

A significant part of this book is dedicated to the way concepts are related in the matrix of domination. Where terminology applied in the *Moralia* appears in a similar context elsewhere, and in particular in the *Lives*, we are concerned with its gendered implications. To use a tired example, calling someone a “bitch” has specific gendered undertones and is aimed at undermining both the relationship of the individual to their sex and their relationship with others of their kind, that is, humans. Being a bitch is, therefore, a dehumanizing accusation when aimed at women that further becomes emasculating when applied to men. Similar examples appear in Plutarch, who compares an irritable wife to a horse that needs to be broken in (*Conj. praec.* 139b). His use of the distinction between hardness and softness, *andreia* and *malakia*, is particularly enlightening for his understanding of the relationship between sex, virtue and expressions of gender. Given these concept-relations and their gendered implications, the question of intent becomes simultaneously more urgent and more difficult to answer. Are the views on women in the *Moralia* and the *Lives* a deliberate aspect of

Plutarch's psychagogic project, that is to say a *conscious* choice, or do they reveal something more sinister, a deeply held set of beliefs in the margins of every page?

We are looking here for chains of evidence, markers of author-imposed identity that recur frequently enough to betray a pattern. It therefore seems logical to situate this study within the framework of intersectionality theory, through which we can point out and assign certain markers of identity used by the author to categorize people as virtuous or not-virtuous, Greek or barbarian, masculine or feminine, and map the relations between these categories. Such an approach is necessarily removed from the people it purports to study. In the vast majority of cases, these people's voices have been lost and they are left to us only as reflections on the wall of the man-cave of history. I aim to excavate these assigned categories and their relation to one another, and in doing so to reconstruct a viable model of the matrix of domination in Plutarch. Jo Ann McNamara articulates the problem of an approach to women that separates ideal from reality: "An ideal woman was something for men to think *with*."⁷² The performance of this ideal in Plutarch is strongly linked to socio-cultural notions of power and propriety along the axes of sex and gender, virtue, class, culture and ethnicity. In the realm of moral education, the relation between gender and virtue therefore forms part of a complex hierarchy of representation and domination, emphasizing the necessity for Plutarch to think *about* women and their role in household and state. Consequently, the views expressed in his work reveal a significant rift between ideal and reality and are evidence of a continuous attempt to reconcile the two.

The stakes are highest when we turn to the women and the gendered other in the *Lives*, where the ideals of the *Moralia* are reflected onto (pseudo-)historical persons. These women, we shall see, are written with the same moral-philosophical goals in mind as those that can be applied to men. Intersectionality theory is therefore everywhere present in this book as a critical framework,

and though it cannot here tell us much about the lived experience of the people involved it has shaped the way I read Plutarch's work in its context and has revealed much about the author's frame of reference and his understanding of the relations of power that bind and separate people. Some identity categories have long been known and as such offer an entry point for deconstruction. Taking gender as our point of entry, we will continue to work along this axis to isolate further categories of difference. Concept-relations separate and connect types of women and femininities from one another and codify Plutarch's relationship with the text and the people in his world. My goal ultimately is to shed light on the interdependence and fluidity of these categories, and the ways in which they encode the expression of gender into the moral framework of the texts themselves. It is here that the problem of language becomes a tool through which we can excavate that which has been rendered invisible.

CHAPTER TWO

THERAPEUTIC PRINCIPLES

Where the power to raise objections is weakest, the act of submission is easiest.

Cato the Younger 1.4

Plutarch's philosophical project has, on the whole, the goal of improving the state of the individual's soul through the practice of psychagogy—the art of leading the soul to virtue. This connecting thread, the interest in people's moral lives that defines Plutarch and has made him a cornerstone of Middle Platonism, is present to some extent in all of his works regardless of genre. Consequently, scholars have identified aspects of ethics in texts previously considered “unphilosophical,” and this trend has been particularly dominant in recent studies of the *Lives*. Duff's (1999a) landmark study of the representation of virtue and vice in the biographies remains an important addition to this field but it, like many other studies on moral education in Plutarch, focuses on men and what they may expect to gain from engaging with these works.¹ One notable exception is Sophia Xenophontos' *Ethical Education in Plutarch* (2016), which covers a broad range of texts and includes a chapter dedicated to women's education. This chapter explores

the educational strategies deployed by Plutarch in the *Moralia* and the *Lives* with the aim of showing how psychagogy engages with structures of power, the expected outcomes for men and women respectively, and its relation to the formation of the self.

Of the more than seventy works in the *Moralia* that are extant—about half of what the Lamprias Catalogue records—at least six are directly relevant to women’s moral education and philosophical progress, including *Advice to the Bride and Groom*, *Consolation to His Wife*, *Virtues of Women*, and *Sayings of Spartan Women*. *On Love* and *On Isis and Osiris*, as well as the deeply metaphysical work *On the Creation of the Soul in the Timaeus*, present a rather more theoretical-philosophical outlook on similar issues. These works aren’t exclusively applicable to women and often contain material useful for men as well, and indeed at times it seems the separation is rather superficial, since texts aimed at women invariably say something about men and texts aimed at men invariably speak about women. All of these texts, moreover, speak in some sense about gender. *Advice* is a particularly clear example; it’s addressed to Eurydice and Pollianus, a newly married couple, and offers precepts for both of them to follow in order to have a happy and philosophically fulfilling marriage, though the majority of the precepts are aimed at the young bride.² I take the view here that works in the *Moralia* that seemingly have nothing to do with women often carry implicit lessons aimed at improving their conduct in various spheres of life, especially in the support of their husbands, fathers and brothers. It’s more than likely that Plutarch intended these exempla to serve the psychagogic function explicitly stated in *Advice*, where he suggests that the husband should collect “from every source what is useful” and share these doctrines with his wife in discussion, making the best of them her “favorite and familiar themes” (145b). Nor does this suggested practice preclude the woman’s own reading, as is clear from the texts quoted by Plutarch and the manner in which he does so, suggesting that Eurydice is already an avid reader and an experienced listener.³

SOME GENERIC CONSIDERATIONS

The project of ancient philosophy as a whole may be characterized as an attempt to examine the structure of nature, both internal and external to human experience. For many philosophers, this served the final purpose of clarifying how we ought to interact with the world, and how we might ultimately attain *eudaimonia* through the cultivation of *aretē*. It's widely acknowledged that ancient philosophy doesn't concern itself incidentally with the fulfilled life, but in fact is geared towards the attainment of this moral ideal.⁴ Philosophy for the ancient Greeks and Romans is thus as much a way of life as it is an intellectual exercise, and from the early Pythagoreans onwards, we find a tendency towards living life according to certain guidelines that are designed to lead the philosopher on their journey towards fulfillment.⁵ Developing a set of guidelines for achieving *eudaimonia* seems a natural step in a tradition which takes great pride in the education of others, so eventually the practice of leading students to *aretē* developed into a therapeutic system. This practice is sometimes referred to as "psychagogy,"⁶ although some scholars prefer "psychotherapy," the "care of the self" (*epimeleia heautou*), or the "cure of the soul." This kind of philosophy as healing *praxis* has also been compared to Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.⁷ In *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Foucault makes the fine distinction between pedagogy and psychagogy:

Let us call "pedagogical," if you like, the transmission of a truth whose function is to endow any subject whatever with aptitudes, capabilities, knowledges, and so on, that he did not possess before and that he should possess at the end of the pedagogical relationship. If, then, we call "pedagogical" this relationship consisting in endowing any subject whomsoever with a series of abilities defined in advance, we can, I think, call "psychagogical" the transmission of a truth whose function is not to endow any

subject whomsoever with abilities, etcetera, but whose function is to modify the mode of being of the subject to whom we address ourselves.⁸

Inasmuch as ancient philosophy is the “art of life,”⁹ psychagogy is the vehicle through which this art can be taught. It’s a transformational practice of philosophy that is concerned with the care of the self and, by extension, with the care of others. Philosophy in this sense is a therapeutic practice consisting of theoretical principles, practical precepts and technical methods.¹⁰

Ancient philosophy, and ethics in particular, is as much a practical as a theoretical exercise.¹¹ It’s the duty of the philosopher to share the insight gained from theoretical philosophy with his fellow citizens in order to lead them on the path to *eudaimonia* through the practice of virtue. To this end even Epicurus, notorious for his abstention from public life, made exceptions.¹² Philosophy after the Classical period has often been characterized as eclectic, practical, popular and personal, though the distinction is not a clear and well-defined one and often one or more of these terms overlap in the service of a goal. For that reason, rather than describing Plutarch’s philosophy as practical, personal, eclectic, or popular, I have chosen to characterize it as a *psychagogic* practice deployed across multiple genres. Doing so emphasizes those aspects of the philosophy that are concerned with the state of the individual’s soul, their relation to others and their understanding of themselves as an ethical subject. Psychagogy is all these things at once out of necessity; if it is to reach a wide audience, it needs to be adaptable. In the section that follows, I will briefly discuss each of these ways of conceptualizing the philosophical project in order to shed light on the malleability of psychagogic practice.

How, then, is practical ethics different from a personal, eclectic, or popular philosophy? Practical ethics is, after all, an attempt to popularize philosophy for the general public, in effect blurring to the point of completely obscuring the boundary between

practical and popular philosophy. The basis of scholarship on Plutarch's practical ethics lies, according to Lieve van Hoof, in Konrat Ziegler's immensely influential *Realencyclopädie* article (1951), which first made the distinction between Plutarch's technical and biographical works and what Ziegler termed his *Popularphilosophie*.¹³ Christopher Pelling notes the difficulty of categorizing Plutarch's works as either "popular philosophy" or "practical ethics," bringing to light the close association between the two categories.¹⁴ His account of popular philosophy, while far-ranging, is narrow in scope, focusing only on popular philosophy in the sphere of politics. The conclusion that "any 'popular philosophy' or 'wisdom' should not be *that* popular, and certainly not vulgar," since "men engaged in public affairs need to *exploit* the people's superstition and ensure it serves the public good" is therefore problematic, since it implicitly assumes that Plutarch is writing only for men in government and ignores the (aspects of the) texts concerned with domesticity and aimed at a female audience.¹⁵ The point about the exploitation of people's particular weaknesses and insecurities, however, is quite right.

Popular philosophy is aimed at an audience with little technical philosophical knowledge; this audience for Plutarch primarily consists of politicians and educated men (*De tuenda* 122d–e) who need practical advice on a variety of subjects including self-care, relations with friends and family, and professional activities. According to van Hoof, this is not an audience of laymen that includes enslaved persons but rather an elite group of men and women who are not philosophers.¹⁶ Pelling also expands the audience to a larger group of educated men but excludes the general population, especially those who will not take part in politics, thereby implicitly excluding women too. In rare cases, however, some popular-philosophical texts, like *Advice* and *Virtues*, are explicitly aimed at women. Both Huizenga and Morgan argue that a much wider, non-specialized audience could have been exposed to these texts.¹⁷ The problems facing the audience of

popular philosophical texts are real and immediate and the philosopher is considered someone with special skill in proposing practical solutions exactly because of his technical knowledge of philosophy and his ability to deliver this knowledge to a non-specialized audience. The popular philosopher is the one who can take his theoretical philosophical knowledge and transpose it into “common sense” wisdom—the kind of wisdom that someone may struggle to reach on their own because of barriers imposed by flatterers, too much wealth or ambition, or lack of specialized education. It’s the responsibility of the philosopher to help his audience overcome these barriers that stand in the way of their *eudaimonia* and to offer them practical advice on how to do so.

It’s this approach to his practical ethics that makes Plutarch’s popular philosophy seem somewhat eclectic at times. His attempt to lead his audience to a fulfilled life requires that he use references and ideas from various philosophical schools whenever he needs to and in whatever way suits him, much as he suggests Pollianus does when collecting material for Eurydice. The message Plutarch’s practical ethics thus conveys, both consciously and quite successfully, is not that one school or the other may help the reader with their problems, but rather that philosophy as a whole holds some benefits for those that study it.¹⁸ This should not be taken to mean that Plutarch engages with his sources uncritically; in fact, he is very careful to select only what he deems suitable and refute those ideas that strike him as unhelpful. Eclecticism rests on the idea that the philosopher selects the best and most worthwhile doctrines from each school and builds from them a “new” philosophy, rather than dogmatic adherence to doctrine.¹⁹ Often this meant that the philosopher started from the general framework of one philosophical tradition, in Plutarch’s case Platonism, and then incorporated ideas from Stoicism, Skepticism and so forth into the formation of their own philosophy.²⁰ The label “eclectic” may not strictly speaking be applicable to Plutarch, as it is generally applied to philosophers who don’t quite fit snugly into

any philosophical school.²¹ Plutarch is easily identifiable as in the broad sense being a Platonist, but it is useful to keep eclecticism in mind especially when it comes to his ethics.

The application of the concept of eclecticism to philosophies such as Plutarch's has been questioned and attempts have been made to supply more fitting terms for this phenomenon.²² Along this line, Elizabeth Asmis has suggested that what is generally considered "eclectic" philosophy may more accurately be characterized as "personal" philosophy. According to Asmis, a personal philosophy is much like an eclectic philosophy but stands in opposition to the school and to popular philosophy and thereby is inherently private. In forming a personal philosophy, a person must examine the theories and positions of several schools and select from them what fits their own life according to their own judgment.²³ In this way, she says, personal philosophy may be identified in many ways with eclecticism generally, but whereas eclecticism seems impersonal, Asmis lays special emphasis on the aspects of originality and individuality, which she considers central to personal philosophies.

It may be useful to identify Plutarch's ethics as an exercise in building personal philosophies were it not that the practice of psychagogy is centered not only on the care of the self, but also on the care of others. While a personal philosophy thus looks inward and is private, Plutarch's psychagogy functions both in the former sense as well as the latter and as such it is public. Indeed, women's psychagogy often negates the private aspects of the self by suggesting that they consider their moral duty to others, and to their husband and children in particular, central to the formation of their ethical selves. As a result, we may describe it as popular, practical and eclectic, but it cannot be personal. Plutarch does suggest that one section of his audience formulate their own personal philosophies in *Advice* ("Pollianus ... you already possess sufficient maturity to study philosophy ... beautify your character with the aid of discourses which are attended by logical

demonstration and mature deliberation”; 145b), but he cannot formulate these personal philosophies for them. This section of the audience is male, and Plutarch addresses his advice on seeking and evaluating philosophies strictly to the husband. Women are neither expected to nor is it recommended that they form their own personal philosophies. On the contrary, their philosophies are chosen for them by their fathers or husbands: “for your wife you must collect from every source what is useful ... and make the best of these doctrines her favorite and familiar themes” (*Conj. praec.* 145b–c).²⁴ Women’s ethics is therefore personal only to the extent that it is conjugal, concerned not with civic affairs but with domestic duty. Psychagogy by its very nature is a transactional practice of philosophy requiring no fewer than two parties in an asymmetrical power relation, one a philosopher already knowledgeable about the care of the self and the other a student who desires to learn more about achieving personal fulfillment and improving the condition of their soul. It’s also a private and inward-looking practice which is concerned with the student’s understanding of themselves and thus with the way they conceptualize their person as part of a community which comes with its own norms and obligations.

EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES

There is a further aspect of women’s psychagogy that is often overlooked when the focus is placed implicitly on the spiritual guidance of men by men and of wives by husbands.²⁵ While this practice may have originated in spheres dominated by male discourse, it’s not restricted to them. Annette Bourland Huizenga (2013) studied aspects of moral education for women in the Pythagorean and Pastoral letters and has shown that there is sufficient indication that these texts served a psychagogic purpose and that the practice of psychagogy can be applied to either sex. While this may be the case, Huizenga notes that the practice of

philosophy is different for men and women and thus while the same methods may be used for the moral instruction of both, the intended outcome will be different.²⁶ Women's philosophical training aimed at teaching them to run a household, raise children, supervise enslaved persons and be a loving and supportive wife. Emily Hemelrijk argues that girls' education in ancient Rome generally had this moral goal in mind.²⁷ The following section briefly details some educational strategies used in psychagogic therapeutics to reinforce gender difference.

A key feature of Plutarch's work is the use of exempla as moral authorities. The moral *exemplum* is a central feature of psychagogy across all genres. The use of exempla in psychagogic literature was considered one of the most effective methods of spiritual guidance (Quint. *Inst.* 12.2.29–30).²⁸ Generally, they were used to reinforce the will of the student. These examples could be historical or mythical, positive or negative.²⁹ Exempla provided the student with models worthy of imitation as well as lively depictions of the kind of life, character and actions to be avoided.³⁰ Thus Rebecca Langlands argues that exempla have a transformative effect on the audience.³¹ It has long been clear that the *Lives* "provide a repertoire of exempla for public men of Plutarch's own day," but thus far there is no widespread consensus on the parallel role of women in the biographies.³² Yet it seems clear that Plutarch expects his female audience to be widely read, and there is no reason to believe the *Lives* didn't form part of this expectation. The story of Valeria and Cloelia (*Mulier. virt.* 250a–f) is repeated in detail in *Publicola* 19, where Cloelia is honored for her manly spirit (*andrōdēs*) with an equestrian statue on the Via Sacra (*Publ.* 19.5), and the story of Thebe of Pherae, briefly referenced at *Virtues* 256a, is related in detail in *Pelopidas* (28.4–5, 31.4, 5.3). Georgiadou suggests that Plutarch may have fabricated this story; if that were true, it raises an important question regarding his motives for doing so.³³ According to Pauline Schmitt Pantel, the women immortalized as heroines in Plutarch's work are heroines precisely because their actions accord with the

values of his specific socio-cultural context.³⁴ They do not threaten the fabric of society but rather perform exceptional deeds within its structures. It makes sense, then, that Plutarch frames women's actions as responses to and wrought in a world ordered by men.

Xenophontos argues that many of the exempla in the *Virtues* could serve as models for men as well.³⁵ There are, however, limitations to the application of exempla of one sex to guide the behavior of the other. A man cannot be an adequate model and philosophical guide for a woman without additional help from virtuous women for the simple reason that he does not have the lived experience of a woman, and therefore will always be unable to fully participate in the psychagogic process. Seneca already anticipates criticism on this front when he imagines Marcia saying, "You forget that you are giving comfort to a woman; the examples you cite are of men" (*Marc.* 16.1). The philosopher finds it necessary to supplement his exemplary self with others that are more fitting to the context. Seneca gives Marcia four examples of women dealing with grief, "the greatest of your sex and century" (*Marc.* 2.2), and reinforces this with examples of famous men handling their grief well.³⁶ Plutarch follows the same pattern and makes sure that he provides enough suitable exempla for his female audience.

Amy Richlin notes that exempla do not so much present real women as role models, but idealized versions that are often unrealistic and apocryphal.³⁷ Nevertheless, these exempla carried moral weight, and Plutarch was especially fond of presenting his audience with female exempla. *Virtues* may be read as a compendium of exempla in the same vein as *Advice*. In *Advice*, he offers a number of examples of women named and unnamed whose actions are commendable, balancing it with a selection of negative examples, most of whom remain unnamed—perhaps an implicit warning that immorality is not as often rewarded with immortality as is virtue.³⁸ The letter ends with a list of women, many found in the *Lives* or elsewhere in the *Moralia*, that are appropriate role models (*Conj. praec.* 145f). This list includes the Pythagorean philosopher

Theano, Spartan queen Gorgo, Cornelia of the Gracchi, Timocleia, and Plutarch's own wife Timoxena, whose written work he recommends to Eurydice. Plutarch's commendation of Eurydice's philosophical knowledge and prior understanding also implicitly sets her up as an example for the audience of the published work.³⁹ In *Consolation*, Plutarch presents Timoxena as a model of virtue, offering praise for her past actions in order to inspire her (and his audience) to continue to act virtuously (609d–e). The overlap between exempla in the women-oriented works in the *Moralia* and the *Lives* suggest that female characters in the biographies may serve a similar purpose as ethical models.⁴⁰

Jeremy McInerney notes that a large number of the exempla in *Virtues* revolve around women's bodies, and often their virtuous action is a result of shame for what is improper.⁴¹ The women of Miletus take to dying by suicide in worrying numbers for unknown reasons and are only deterred from that course of action when threatened with public indecency: their bodies would be carried naked through the agora to their funerals (249b–d). In the case of men, a female example that displays more moral fortitude than the subject can emasculate him and thus ought to strengthen his resolve to improve, as is the case with Megisto's speech against Aristotimus in *Virtues* (discussed below). In *Flatterer/Friend*, Plutarch highlights the effectiveness of a well-timed example demonstrating the praise- or blameworthiness of actions similar to those of the intended recipient (70b). The use of exempla was considered to be more effective when the student basically agreed on the moral status of the example from the outset.⁴² It was widely believed that examples could have a direct influence on the moral education of a person, because lived experience had a stronger impact than mere words.⁴³

Exempla are not quite as straightforward as positive and negative, and many of them can be judged on a scale. This is part of the overall point, as the philosopher doesn't simply aim to inform his student as to what is good or bad, but to instill the sense of

judgment that allows them to decide on the moral implications of each action in its context for themselves.⁴⁴ Thus Plutarch's note to the reader in *Agis* 2.9, that they will have to exercise their judgment on the events of the narrative, and again the note at *Solon* 19.4 expressing the same sentiment.⁴⁵ This use of exempla is well-known from historical writing, such as that of Tacitus, who is in turn influenced by the Stoic tradition of using exempla for moral education.⁴⁶ Plutarch briefly discusses the use of exempla for judging character in *Demetrius* 1.5–8, where he introduces the comparison of Demetrius and Antony, the only explicitly negative pair of *Lives*. Yet Duff notes that even here the narrative presents moral difficulties, suggesting that any attempt to neatly categorize *Lives* as wholly good or bad is probably misguided.⁴⁷ One might read the *Lives* as extended, practical exempla of famous Greeks and Romans; this approach affords Plutarch the opportunity to highlight the complexity of character in a context broader and more in-depth than what might be possible in works such as *Virtues*, *Advice*, or *Flatterer/Friend*, where many of the same exempla appear again.

Perhaps especially because psychagogy belonged to the realm of philosophy and the philosophers, the practice included a selection of “intellectual” methods through which the student may attain moral fulfillment. The use of exempla was one such intellectual method that necessitated the active involvement of the student. According to Duff, there is a double focus in Plutarch's *Lives* on *imitation* of worthy deeds on the one hand and *contemplation* of deeds and characters on the other hand; virtue is part action, part meditation.⁴⁸ Russell also notes that the *synkriseis* to the *Lives* are “model answers for a rhetorical exercise” in which the reader is encouraged to pass judgment on character.⁴⁹ A number of these comparisons include Plutarch's musings on women or gender, a point to which we will return.⁵⁰ Essentially, imitation is a crucial part of the psychagogic project, but it is worthless if it doesn't also inspire and follow from a proper understanding of the principles

that guide virtuous actions. Where both go together, character is not only improved, it is *transformed*.

A number of intellectual methods have this ultimate goal of self-transformation in mind. Celsus recommended not only exercise and good diet but also reading aloud as a cure for physical ailments and mental disturbances (Cels. 1.8).⁵¹ Training the body is one way of training the soul (cf. *De cohib. ir.* 461b–c). The Stoics placed a double emphasis on reflection and premeditation, with the aim of increasing the student’s endurance and resistance to moral difficulty.⁵² Thus Epictetus’ maxim advising that “men are disturbed not by things, but by their opinions about things” (Arr. *Epict. diss.* 5, cf. Plut. *De ex.* 599d). Other methods included exercises that the philosopher prepared for the student. According to Ilsetraut Hadot, the exercises intended for moral advancement must be undertaken daily in order to maintain a steady rate of progress, and spiritual exercises were designed in such a way as to be suitable for everyday use.⁵³ In this vein, a student may have been taught a selection of maxims or precepts which they had to memorize.⁵⁴ Maxims were considered particularly effective because of their concise nature. It was therefore easy for the student to memorize and recall them when they needed them.⁵⁵ Menander Rhetor considered Plutarch’s *Lives* quite useful for moral education on account of the maxims, proverbs and sayings contained in their narratives (2.392.28–31). The use of maxims is closely related to the use of exempla and in both cases it was expected that the student would study them so that they can be easily brought to mind when necessary.⁵⁶

Plutarch makes liberal use of both *gnōmai* and *chreiai* in his work.⁵⁷ *Virtues of Women* and *Sayings of Spartan Women* contain many *gnōmai* and *chreiai* that illustrate female courage, temperance, chastity and duty. In *Advice*, Plutarch supplies Eurydice and her husband with precepts in the form of maxims and exempla that will help them have a successful marriage; this is the primary aim of the text and its chosen method of delivery. In order to make

the maxims more easily memorable, he makes use of quotations from famous poets, philosophers and other characters. Eurydice would have been expected to memorize some of these sayings as a short cut to the general moral rule itself. Plutarch urges her to remember what Timoxena had written to Aristylla on the love of luxury (*Conj. praec.* 145a)—presumably not much different from his own *Advice*—and tells her to wear instead the “ornaments” of Theano, Gorgo, Cornelia and a number of other wise women (145e–f).⁵⁸ These ornaments—their words and their wisdom—are free and are a token of virtue.

Finally, it was common for the philosopher to suggest that the student refrain from living extravagantly by avoiding all forms of luxury and living in accordance with nature.⁵⁹ By living frugally, they can avoid any temptations that may be a hindrance on the path to *eudaimonia* and can train the body to become less susceptible to desires and suffering.⁶⁰ In fact, this kind of suggestion is made for men and women generally, but specific rules are aimed at regulating women’s lives since luxury is considered an especially effeminate vice. Plutarch’s work presents a rather clear picture of female nature and idealized womanhood. He treats many of the same *topoi* found in literature on women’s moral education, giving women practical advice for everyday problems.

ETHICS AS MEDICINE

As a therapeutic practice, psychagogy is also a medical concept concerned specifically with psychological health. In her widely influential study of Hellenistic ethics, *The Therapy of Desire*, Martha Nussbaum teased out and challenged the analogous connections between therapeutic philosophy and medical practice. Nussbaum sees this “medical model of philosophizing in ethics” as something different from the Platonic approach, which has as its basis a view of eternal and immutable ethical reality (*to ontos*). Medical ethics, by contrast, is primarily concerned with particulars. Its basis is the

people it proposes to cure.⁶¹ These two approaches are by no means exclusive. The analogy of practical ethics as medicine for the soul is one Plutarch, a dedicated Platonist, also frequently makes (*Adul. amic.* 55a–d, 59d–e).⁶² In fact, Plutarch produced much of his work during a period when medicine and philosophy were undergoing a change in emphasis towards recognition of the interdependence between body and soul for psycho-somatic health, exemplified in Galen’s treatise, *That the Capacities of the Soul Follow the Mixtures of the Body*.⁶³ Therapeutic ethics owes much of its claim to validity to the kind of philosophical rigor championed by Plato. What we find in Plutarch is not a practical ethics somehow separate from physics, metaphysics, religion and history, but rather an entirely practical philosophy, one that is concerned not only with understanding the nature of the world but also with regulating it.⁶⁴

While Foucault had seen this therapeutic practice as part of a complex mechanism of self-formation, Nussbaum argued that the same may be true of religion and magic. In her view, what is unique about philosophy’s claim to validity as the only real “art of life” is its systematization of this claim through appeals to rationality, logic and sound argument, and above all a commitment to capital-T Truth. For Nussbaum, ancient philosophy thus understood promises “freedom from the tyranny of custom and convention” and thus a community of beings that are radically self-defining.⁶⁵ In order to reach this goal of self-transformation, philosophers progressively developed a set of guidelines for achieving virtue, transforming the practice of leading the subject on their path to fulfillment into a therapeutic system. Yet this practice is not yet psychagogy—it is simply a practical ethics that aims to provide a certain type of student with peace of mind, indifference to the injustices of the world, or *eudaimonia*. For these students, therapeutic ethics offers tangible practical advice on life as an ethical subject engaged in politics and civic duties.

Psychagogy reaches further than this, proposing to transform the person at the very level of their soul through the study of

philosophy. Plutarch therefore distinguishes moral virtue from philosophical virtue.⁶⁶ In moral virtue, the irrational part of the soul is obedient to reason, it's a practical movement of the soul making value-judgments about things that exist in relation to humans, but philosophical virtue is contemplative, ever reaching towards an understanding of things which are eternal and immutable (*Virt. mor.* 440d, 443c–f). In this context, philosophy includes the natural sciences too and the student who truly wishes to transcend the brute fact of their material existence must also study biology, poetry, medicine, physics, astronomy, geometry and metaphysics.⁶⁷ Seneca advises Lucilius that mere precepts are not sufficient for moral advancement, it's necessary to gain a complete understanding of the principles of philosophy (*Ep.* 94.2–4). Self-transformation relies on a deeper understanding of these fields of study on a theoretical level, for which Langlands argues exempla are quite useful.⁶⁸ This knowledge will free the student from superstition and false belief, provide them with the tools to manage their passions and above all instruct them in the structure of nature and human psychology that will allow them to judge the morality of persons and actions for themselves. As we will soon see, the relationship between the human subject, their body, their soul and first principles is a crucial part of this larger ethical framework and is constructed along gendered lines that permit the subject to identify (with) modalities of sameness and difference.

Transforming the soul of the individual to the extent that it can transcend the signs of the body after death is a fundamental (if often implicit) aspect of psychagogy. For this reason, too, it starts with the body, which is already in the Platonic schema a sign of the moral condition of the soul (cf. *Ti.* 90e). In *Bodies That Matter*, Judith Butler argues that the theory of metempsychosis carries with it an ontological hierarchy, one in which Reason is a masculine sign and the descent into passion and appetite transforms the soul into the signs of its descent: “In a sense woman and beast are the very figures for unmasterable passion.”⁶⁹

A soul thus transformed through vice will be reincarnated in a corresponding body which must be mastered *in accordance with the signs of the body*.⁷⁰ The bodily condition indicates a psychic, that is, a moral condition, which is the primary focus of psychagogy. That Plutarch himself held a version of this view is clear; he discusses his belief in reincarnation—and the forms it takes—in *Consolation* (611e), *On Isis* (363b–c) and *De sera* (565d–566a, 567f). Virtue then appears to be a transfiguration into masculinity through reason without contradicting the fact of the body. Philosophical ethics takes the signs of the body, including and especially its sex, as a starting point for a gendered practice of virtue. First and foremost, the philosopher will advise the student to harmonize the body and the soul by requiring them to adhere to a set of conditions through which the body is brought into accord with metaphysical reality—conditions such as modesty, temperance, chastity and so forth. He will do so through the therapeutic principles associated with philosophy. Medical ethics' emphasis on the particularity of each case is a response to this connection between bodily and psychic health.

As Nussbaum points out, philosophical treatments have a practical goal and are often value-relative and individualized.⁷¹ They have their basis in an understanding of human psychology that seeks to explain emotions, desires and the ethical value of argument, and which is deeply entrenched in every other science with which that school of philosophy is concerned. Because gender is so fundamental to ancient philosophical conceptions of the world, psychagogy is necessarily also gendered in its goals. Nussbaum acknowledges that her fictional female student Nikidion will have to belong to a social class for whom the pursuit of philosophy is both available and viable, and may even have to disguise herself as a man.⁷² Psychagogy would reject such a deception. As a woman, Nikidion would have been taught to draw a somewhat different set of lessons from her philosophical instruction than her male counterparts, a point not sufficiently stressed in Nussbaum's

analysis of philosophical therapeutics.⁷³ That being the case, her critique of Butler's work on gender is not all that surprising.⁷⁴ Medical ethics for men cannot be unilaterally applied to women because doing so would upset the structures of power that govern ancient philosophy. It is for that very reason that philosophers like Musonius Rufus and Plutarch address the question of female virtue directly, as Plato and Aristotle had addressed the "problem" of virtue in women and enslaved persons centuries before them.⁷⁵

Psychagogy, then, is only partially a moral educational project consisting of defined methods and educational practices shared between the philosopher and his student(s)—a further aspect aimed at spiritual transcendence is contained in theoretical philosophy. Socrates argued that in order to practice the art of *psuchagōgia* the speaker must understand the real nature of things (*to ontos*) or risk being deceived by the similarity and difference in things themselves (*Phdr.* 262b). Those who do not have knowledge of the truth and pursue opinions instead practice a form of speech which is ridiculous and not an art at all (*Phdr.* 262c). Many of these educational strategies for moral improvement could be applied on a textual platform, for which moral epistles were especially popular,⁷⁶ but ideally required also some direct interaction between student and teacher.

Aspects of psychagogy can be found in many ancient philosophers' work and is especially prevalent during the Hellenistic era and the early Roman Empire, as well as in early Christian literature.⁷⁷ Philosophers such as Seneca, Lucretius and Plutarch focus extensively on the moral education of their audience.⁷⁸ The philosopher will in this respect act as the teacher or "spiritual guide"⁷⁹ in charge of his student's moral progress.⁸⁰ In order to achieve their goal, a set of methods and educational strategies was developed over the course of several centuries of philosophical practice. These strategies could often be applied on a textual platform and are especially common in moral epistles,⁸¹ such as Plutarch's *Advice* and *Consolation*, but also involve some

direct interaction between teacher and student. Where direct interaction was not possible, letters were considered a good replacement in the meanwhile.⁸² Plutarch's *Advice and Consolation* may be considered examples of letters with a moral educational purpose, since both offer practical and philosophical advice on how to deal with commonplace matters such as a new marriage or the death of a young child. Other works, such as the collections of sayings (*apophthegmata*) and *Virtues of Women*, collect exempla in the form of *gnōmai* and *chreiai* for moral-educational purposes. There are several works in the *Moralia* that can be characterized as explicit psychagogic literature; in the case of Plutarch, the emphasis on female education is especially pronounced and furthered in theoretical-philosophical texts such as *On Love* and *On Isis*. These educational strategies are bound to notions about gender and power in ways that aim to regulate and reproduce them, ultimately restricting the ways in which the subject can express themselves within the normative structures of society.

PARRHĒSIA AND THE THERAPY OF THE SOUL

The restriction of freedoms and agency is a focal point in psychagogic practice, similar in some ways for any person of any sex or gender and notably different in others. Plutarch is evidently quite concerned with women's moral education, but psychagogy is not simply a matter of teaching a set of principles to live by.⁸³ It is an art that is practiced dialectically through which the soul is brought into a new relation to itself, a relation that seeks to manifest truth through *logos* and rhetoric, and which ultimately discloses the political function of philosophy as a practice of self-formation. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates argues that rhetoric is the art of leading the soul by words (*technē psuchagōgia tis dia logōn*), an art that is practiced as much in private as in the law courts and other public assemblies (261b). Foucault recognized herein the philosopher's *parrhēsia*—"frank speech" or truth-telling—as a rhetorical device

with political and philosophical weight. In *Government of the Self and Others*, he argued that forms of knowledge, relations of power and the self-formation of the subject are constitutive of one another.⁸⁴ Following Socrates, he considered rhetoric opposed to *parrhēsia*; rhetoric is a skill with which the speaker can convince an audience of something they themselves do not believe while speaking truthfully creates a bond of mutual understanding between the speaker and the listener.⁸⁵ In this section, I argue that speech acts are indicative of a moral condition, which is clearest in its treatment of the right to frank speech, or *parrhēsia*, and the right to speak and the kinds of things that can be said are regulated along gendered lines through the application of the principles of therapeutic ethics.

Firstly, a certain type of rhetoric can reflect badly on the speaker and as a result can emasculate them. Some forms of rhetoric also connect the speaker with other modes of difference in ways that multiply otherness. In one case, Plutarch identifies this as the Asiatic style of oratory adopted by Antony and describes it as “swashbuckling and boastful, full of empty exultation and distorted ambition” (*Ant.* 2.5); this connection between the East, excess, and effeminacy recurs throughout his work and is particularly present in *Antony*.⁸⁶ Speech indicates a moral condition which is often reflected on the body. Seneca links an effeminate style of speech with physical signs of moral decay, such as plucking the beard, brightly colored or transparent togas, and excessive attention-seeking, which is the result of evil in the soul (*Ep.* 114.20–21). In contrast, *parrhēsia*, says Foucault, is “a way of being which is akin to virtue, a mode of action.”⁸⁷ Virtue, then, is incorporated into this understanding of modes of being and relations to the self and others, relations that are fundamentally concerned with knowledge and power and which are intimately linked to gender norms.⁸⁸ Psychagogy makes use of philosophical rhetoric to govern the self (in the form of *askēsis*) and others (through *parrhēsia*).⁸⁹ In this way, frank speech simultaneously constitutes a bond between

speaker and hearer and challenges that bond when the truth is hurtful and hard to bear. The politician uses this art to govern people, the philosopher uses it to govern themselves.

We see this relation between truth, power and the self-formation of the subject in the *Lives* and in the *Moralia*. In at least one instance, Plutarch looks back to the *Phaedrus*, when he praises Pericles for employing the art of speaking successfully to bring order to Athens (*Per.* 15.4). This comes shortly after he details the rumors about Pericles' private life in a discussion of his public works program in Athens. As a result of these alleged private iniquities, Pericles became the target of a number of comic poets later quoted in the context of his relationship with Aspasia (*Per.* 24.6). According to the rumors, the sculptor Pheidias arranged meetings with free-born women (*eleutheras gunaikas*) under the guise of private viewings of his art.⁹⁰ The gossip also connected Pericles to the wife of his friend and colleague Menippus, as well as to Ppyrilampes, who is said to have bribed the women with his peacocks (*Per.* 13.9–10). Even Stesimbrotus of Thasos laid an accusation of misconduct against Pericles, publicly charging him for impiety with his own son's wife (*Per.* 13.11),⁹¹ though this rumor may have been spread by Xanthippus himself (*Per.* 36.3). This same woman, who remains unnamed, is said to have been extravagant, causing her husband's annoyance at Pericles' frugality (*Per.* 36.1). Mónica Durán Mañas notes that these anecdotes use the passive specter of women as a mirror for the character of the hero, a view which Plutarch rejects.⁹² He dismisses these rumors as the conduct of wanton (*saturikos*) men driven by envy (*Per.* 13.11–12), thereby absolving Pericles of any doubts about his self-control and ability to lead.

In this context, shortly after the ostracism of Thucydides, Pericles is said to have abandoned the submissive and somewhat effeminate (*malakōs*) approach to leadership he had taken before and started conducting himself like an aristocratic and kingly (*aristokratikēn kai basilikēn*) statesman (*Per.* 15.2).⁹³ Through the

skillful use of rhetoric, Pericles persuaded the Athenians that he had their best interests at heart, and for the most part they followed him willingly. When the citizens of Athens voiced their displeasure, he took a stern approach not unlike a physician treating a complicated disease, who at times uses harmless indulgences and at others caustic and bitter drugs (*Per.* 15.3–4). Plutarch sees this as proof of what Plato had written in the *Phaedrus* (271c): that rhetoric is an art that leads the soul through a careful study of the affects and passions. He says the reason for Pericles' success was due also to his reputation, which engendered confidence in his leadership. The result was that Pericles

brought under his own control Athens and all the issues dependent on the Athenians—tributes, armies, triremes, the islands, the sea, the vast power derived from Hellenes, vast also from Barbarians, and a supremacy that was securely hedged about with subject nations, royal friendships, and dynastic alliances (*Per.* 15.1).

This chapter (*Per.* 15.1–5) and the surrounding contexts encapsulates some of the most important principles of psychagogy (frank speech, living by example, epideictic rhetoric, the ethico-medical analogy, temperance) while also revealing its close connection with issues surrounding domination and submission, class, gender, ethnicity, citizenship and imperialism.⁹⁴

Psychagogy is not, however, simply rhetoric successfully deployed, nor is it an art of persuasion concerned primarily with public assemblies and political maneuvers. Rather, it aims at altering the relation of the self to oneself through a defined set of practices that will ultimately improve the condition of the subject's soul and, if successful, make them virtuous. Insofar as women too could be virtuous, its methods and aims are suitable for their philosophical instruction as well. The relationship between the student and the philosopher is crucial for the success of the psychagogic project. The philosopher occupies the role of a

caretaker and role model whose obligation to the student is one of truth-telling—of *parrhēsia*—while the student has the responsibility of listening and self-care.⁹⁵ Thus, rather paradoxically, truth-telling relegates the student to a position of silence in which listening, obeying and mastering the care of the self is central to their moral progress. Sophia Xenophontos emphasizes the silencing of the wife suggested by Plutarch’s choice of words in *Advice*, noting that several of the precepts in the letter place restrictions on feminine speech.⁹⁶ The anecdote about Pheidias’ sculpture of the Aphrodite of the Eleans demonstrates this principle unapologetically. As Plutarch explains, Aphrodite is represented with one foot on a tortoise to signify women’s staying at home (*oikouria*) and keeping quiet (*siōpē*). A woman should speak to her husband or through her husband, “and she should not feel aggrieved if, like the flute-player, she makes a more impressive sound through a tongue not her own” (I42d).⁹⁷ Two anecdotes directly preceding this precept operate on the same principle. The first suggests that women would (and should) stay at home if they were deprived of luxuries, and the second offers the Pythagorean philosopher Theano as a practical example of modest conduct (I42c–d).⁹⁸ Plutarch uses Theano’s claim that her body is not for the public as an analogy for the restriction of feminine speech, since she reveals something of herself in her words as she does too by (not) baring her arm to the public.

Plutarch often speaks in positive terms about the silence of women. Eumetis briefly becomes the subject of discussion during the symposium in the *Symposium of the Seven Sages* on account of her skill in creating riddles, but cannot rise to defend herself against Cleodorus’ claim that it’s ridiculous for men of sense to take these seriously, even though it appears that she would have liked to do just that. Instead, she resigns herself to blushes and modest restraint (*Conv. sept.* 154b). Despite her reputed *phronēma*, *nous politikos* and *philanthrōpia* (I48d), she fails to gain access to the male arena of philosophical debate. Her riddles are repeated and

defended by a male intermediary, Aesop, who exposes Cleodorus' inability to solve the riddle he had just declared the work of a silly girl (154b–c).⁹⁹ Zoe Stamatopoulou argues that Eumetis and Melissa both function as exempla for women by depicting the proper behavior for a young girl and a married woman in the social context of the symposium, illustrated in particular by their silence and their decision to leave the party just before the serious drinking starts (*Conv. sept.* 155d–e).¹⁰⁰ In *Virtues*, Plutarch praises the women of Melos for their silence, restraint and courage in the face of a dangerous situation (247a). Women were generally considered too talkative, which van Hoof argues connects them to persons of low social status and inferior education, including barbers and enslaved folk.¹⁰¹ Keeping silence thus becomes a marker of difference which separates the virtuous woman from other types of people. Silence and modesty are two sides of the same coin,¹⁰² and ultimately the woman who is serious about moral-philosophical progress must accept her role and bear her silence with grace.

The *Sayings of Spartan Women* seems to contradict this standard, since it's a compendium of women's speech acts and contains a number of examples of women employing *parrhēsia*, often to devastating effect.¹⁰³ A group of six sayings by Gorgo, who is also used as an example of good conduct in *Advice*, demonstrates the use of frank speech as a mechanism that reifies and reproduces hegemonic power structures. Three of the sayings denigrate and feminize foreigners (*xenoi*). The first is about Aristagoras of Miletus, who tries to convince Gorgo's father Cleomenes to join the war against the Persians by promising him vast sums of money. Gorgo warns Cleomenes that the foreigner will ruin him if he doesn't get him out of the house soon (240d). While not explicitly emasculating, the diminutive *xenullion* anticipates the third anecdote in the sequence, also about Aristagoras. There, Gorgo watches a servant put on and lace his shoes for him, exclaiming to her father that the foreigner has no hands (240e). The two anecdotes are interrupted by one that highlights temperance, emphasizing

the excessive wealth and luxury of Aristagoras in contrast with Gorgo's own ascetic ideals (240d). Especially notable about that anecdote is Gorgo's use of *parrhēsia* against her father, who is the king of Sparta. By rebuking him for his interest in good wine, she induces him to shame for promoting intemperance while she, a woman, thinks doing so is a bad idea.

In the fourth anecdote, a foreigner makes advances towards her and is rejected because he "cannot play the part of a woman either" (240e). It's not only his foreignness, but his effeminate (*malakōs*) and leisurely ways that give offense, implying here a link between barbarism, luxury and effeminacy that is already well-established in Plutarch's lifetime.¹⁰⁴ Implicitly, Gorgo is claiming a position of superiority over a man who is less in control of his passions than she herself. In the fifth anecdote, Gorgo answers an Attic woman's question as to why Spartan women are the only women who rule their men by saying that Spartan women are the only ones who are mothers to men (cf. *Lyc.* 14.4). The implication that masculinity is conferred to Spartan men by way of their mothers constitutes a potential threat to gendered social hierarchies even while it confirms the superiority of Sparta; thus the final anecdote in the sequence places the requisite restrictions on female masculinity, which can only be commended if it functions in the service of male domination. It is also the only anecdote that mentions Leonidas. Here, finally, the focus turns to women's role in marriage.¹⁰⁵ In that anecdote, Gorgo is *supportive* of her husband as he leaves for Thermopylae, imploring him to be worthy of Sparta. She *asks* him what she should do in his absence; he tells her to *marry* a good man and *bear good children*. Far from disrupting the hierarchy of domination, Gorgo's speech affirms it, and it is this behavior and her elite status that gives her access to *parrhēsia*.¹⁰⁶

The Spartan women's frankness of speech is in fact an issue of contention in Plutarch. He condemns outright their assumption that they could speak on matters of the utmost importance (*Lyc. et Num.* 3,5), and yet there are instances where their frankness is

portrayed more positively. Often, their right to speak is granted on account of their filial devotion (*philostorgia*). Such a case appears in *Agis*, where Chilonis mediates between her father and her husband, declaring that “both as wife and as daughter I was born to share only the misfortune and dishonor of the men nearest and dearest to me” (17.3).¹⁰⁷ Mossman notes that Chilonis defines herself through her connection with the men in her family. Her *parrhēsia* is a vehicle through which she can measure the respect of other women, provided she is successful, and this success will determine whether she has the right to speak so in future.¹⁰⁸ All of this emphasizes her royal status, and it is through this connection that she asserts her right to speak frankly while her husband remains silent. Ultimately, she attains exile instead of death for her husband, and goes with him instead of staying at the royal court. Her actions are exemplary, so that Plutarch remarks that Cleombrotus was too corrupted by vain ambition to see that exile was a greater blessing for him than kingship, because his wife was beside him again (*Agis* 18.2). Her use of frankness to support her husband elevates the moral status of Chilonis while simultaneously exposing his weakness.

Women’s speech acts must therefore tread a fine line between appropriate and overly bold. Hanna Roisman has shown that a number of Athenian tragedies portray women’s *parrhēsia* in a positive light, although it must be noted that those cases take place in times of distress.¹⁰⁹ Women’s frank speech is best applied against tyrants and cowards, or during war and civil unrest, and can often brand them as unfeminine if used inappropriately. In the right circumstances, however, women’s frank speech can be an indicator of masculine virtue.¹¹⁰ Mallory Catherine notes that women are most visible in those *Lives* where men are represented as (pseudo-)tyrannical, indicating a connection between effeminacy and degenerate rule.¹¹¹ The tyrant is also often connected with excessive luxury and barbarism, representing an other against whom Greek identity and morality is defined.¹¹² In *Virtues*, it is not

women serving as foils for tyrants but rather the other way around. As a result, tyrants are emasculated by women with masculine souls. Such cases appear in the *Lives* also. Theste, whose husband Polyxenus had gone into exile, was brought before the tyrant Dionysius the Elder to defend herself against accusations that she had knowledge of her husband's flight. Her words deserve to be quoted in full:

Do you think me, Dionysius, such a mean (*phaulē*) and cowardly (*anandros*) wife that, had I known beforehand of my husband's flight, I would not have sailed off with him and shared his fortunes? Indeed, I did not know about it; since it would have been well for me to be called the wife of Polyxenus the exile, rather than the sister of Dionysius the tyrant (*Dion* 21.8).

In his remarks on this episode, Plutarch says that Dionysius admired Theste for her frankness (*parrhēsia*), as the Syracusans also admired her virtue (*aretē*), and she continued to enjoy royal honors after the dissolution of the tyranny and was given a public funeral at her death.¹¹³ Unsurprisingly, Diodorus Siculus in turn charges Dionysius with *anandreia* (16.70.2). The relation of *anandros*, *aretē* and *parrhēsia* here shows the right conditions for women's frank speech and the moral conditions that attend it.¹¹⁴ In speaking out against the tyrant, Theste proves she is not a coward and therefore not emasculate, for which she is deemed virtuous. Even so, her right to *parrhēsia* is connected to her royal status and her devotion to her husband.

Foucault considered *parrhēsia* a fundamentally political mode of being, through which the subject constitutes their self by telling the truth about themselves, even if doing so challenges traditional social bonds and institutions.¹¹⁵ Theste's words to Dionysius constitute an act of self-definition in this sense, though it is neither radical nor particularly subversive. For Plutarch, the frank speech of women doesn't (and shouldn't) aim at subverting cultural and political

norms, but rather functions as a means to maintain and reproduce them. Roisman argues that the right to *parrhēsia* was restricted to men because of its envisaged role in maintaining democratic systems and promoting the public good, while women's frankness is generally normative; it's not a radical act of self-expression, but the expression of popular beliefs which others may be afraid to voice. Theste's reply to Dionysius is indicative of this form of frankness. It is disruptive only in the sense that it challenges a sitting ruler, normative in that it expresses the communal desire for the dissolution of his reign.

Thus, according to Plutarch, Lycurgus' laws gave Spartan women too much freedom in the household, giving them license to participate in public debate and frank speech on important matters. He prefers the approach taken by Numa, which preserved the dignity of the women and instilled in them the values of modesty (*aidōs*), silence (*siōpē*) and refraining from meddling (*polupragmosunē*) (*Lyc. et Num.* 3,5).¹¹⁶ Its close connection with modesty serves only to highlight the gendered contradictions of *parrhēsia*, in which according to Xenophontos, "feminine modesty restricts the female agent to silence, whereas male modesty works as an indication of self-restraint and a motivation for the proper application of speech."¹¹⁷ Such restrictions on speech and silence occur also in works traditionally associated with the moral education of men (cf. *De aud.* 39b–c) but the implications are different; for a woman being modest, silent and obedient largely benefits her husband or other citizens, while his silence benefits himself.

Parrhēsia is a right, a responsibility, and a privilege of citizenship which can be damaged by immoral acts, that is to say that vicious actions can undermine one's claim to the right of truth-telling.¹¹⁸ In the pejorative sense, *parrhēsia* can be employed to indicate an undesirable state in which anyone can say anything, as in the case of the Spartan women censured by Plutarch.¹¹⁹ Speaking frankly and truthfully was the province of men, in particular elite citizen

men, and they too could be disqualified from speaking or from being heard. So, for example, men who reject marriage relinquish their right to speak frankly to their illegitimate sons, since in doing so, they have indicated their preference for pleasure (*hēdonē*) over legitimate citizen heirs (*Sol.* 22.4; cf. *Them.* 29.4). Caius Gracchus rebukes a man accused of *malakia* for presuming that he had the right to *parrhēsia* when he is less temperate than Cornelia (CG 4.4). *Parrhēsia* is also a right and a privilege which can be conferred or jealously guarded by persons in positions of power, since the freedom to speak frankly has at the same time the possibility of testing the soul and laying bare its weaknesses.¹²⁰ Thus Aratus, once he had laid aside his command and fallen in with Antigonos, was “no longer the master of anything except his tongue,” and *parrhēsia* had become dangerous for him (*Arat.* 45.3). In *Kings and Commanders*, Plutarch reports that Parysatis¹²¹ warned those who intended to talk frankly with the king to use gentle words (174a), and that a man from Megara who used frank speech towards Lysander was met with the retort “your words need a country to back them” (190d), indicating the danger of disrupting the balance of power through the improper use of frank speech.

In marriage, this position of power belongs to the husband. Plutarch tells Pollianus that he ought to speak frankly with his wife but should refrain from doing so in front of others (*Conj. praec.* 139e); nowhere in *Advice* (or elsewhere) does he suggest that she might speak frankly in turn.¹²² In fact, he suggests that her speech ought to be pleasant, not bitter like aloes or suggestive of a dose of medicine (141f). The use of the medical analogy implies that she is no position to administer verbal correctives or cures to her husband, since medicine is generally an asymmetrical relationship between doctor and patient, and marriage is an asymmetrical relationship between husband and wife.¹²³ Further, Plutarch regards it as an indecent thing to admonish a husband in front of his wife or a teacher in front of his students, to whom he must appear irreproachable if he is to lead by example (*Adul. amic.*

71c, cf. *Apophth. Rom.* 204f). For Pollianus, there is the possibility of ascension from student to philosopher made manifest in his control over his wife (as reason controls passion in the virtuous soul), while she will likely remain in the position of a student—even if an advanced one—to whom *parrhēsia* is unavailable unless granted to her through the privilege of status or the necessity of extraordinary circumstance.¹²⁴ This lack, the obligation of silence to which the non-citizen remains in lifelong service, amounts to a suppression and oppression of dissent and difference.

Parrhēsia was a well-established tactic in ancient psychagogic practice and it was widely believed that frank speech could lead the student to moral improvement. The practice of *parrhēsia* presupposes a relationship between the philosopher and the student that is built on trust.¹²⁵ Lack of trust corrodes the therapeutic value of *parrhēsia* and therefore it's the philosopher's duty to establish the foundation of his motives and to inspire confidence in his ability and authority.¹²⁶ Indeed, one might be more inclined to accept *parrhēsia* and admonishment from a trusted friend who employs it only when they must (*Adul. amic.* 50b, cf. 73b–c). Untimely blame runs the risk of accomplishing little else but cause useless pain and suffering (66b). Quintilian advises the rhetorician to adapt the style of their speech to circumstances and persons, warning that failure to do so can produce the opposite of the desired effect (*Inst.* II.I.2). Foucault therefore considered the use of *parrhēsia* an act of risk-taking which constitutes a challenge to the bond between speaker and listener.¹²⁷ In gendered relationships, as in all power-relations, the right to make such a challenge belongs naturally to the dominant partner. Coupled with the obligations of silence placed on women, *parrhēsia* does not constitute a radical political act of self-definition but a mechanism to regulate social ties.¹²⁸

Improper application of frank speech can brand a woman as emotional and morally corrupt.¹²⁹ Plutarch clearly states the purpose of his letter to Eurydice and Pollianus: “that the harmony which concerns marriage and the household shall be well attuned

through reason, concord, and philosophy” (*Conj. praec.* 138c), and is able to provide this advice because his own marriage is built on the same philosophical foundation, as is evident in *Consolation*. In *Flatterer/Friend*, he warns against flatterers (*hoi kolakes*) who imitate the pleasures of friendship by putting on an air of *parrhēsia* (51c–d). Flattery, he says, is attractive because of our innate love of the self and the attendant desire to see ourselves reflected and validated in the confirmation of others (49a).¹³⁰ Yet those who love themselves excessively will also praise themselves excessively and revel in the flattery of outsiders. Flattery is the enemy of self-knowledge, a deception which breeds ignorance and hinders the transformation of the self into a virtuous person (49b). Indeed, ignorance is the first and greatest vice, since it prevents people from recognizing the disease in their soul (*Animi. an corp.* 50of). In the section that follows, Plutarch advises how to distinguish between a flatterer and a true friend. He compares *parrhēsia* to medicine, which doesn’t damage the patient but has a therapeutic and, ultimately, healing effect.¹³¹

An important aspect of psychagogy, and by extension also of *parrhēsia*, is epideictic rhetoric, in which emphasis is placed on praise and blame. The goal of this strategy is to present on the one hand an idealized vision of the student in order to inspire them to imitate this version of themselves, and on the other hand to induce a sense of shame at their own shortcomings in order to inspire them to become a better person.¹³² The *Lives* have a similar goal, as Plutarch acknowledges: “virtuous deeds ... implant in those who search them out a great and zealous eagerness which leads to imitation” (*Per.* 1.4). Beneker notes that Plutarch here establishes the moral framework for the judgment of the pair *Pericles-Fabius Maximus*, which ought to result in an active impulse to imitate worthy deeds.¹³³ Historiographers often claimed that their work was beneficial because it presented the reader with “examples of every possible type” (*Liv. Praef.* 1.10). Those *Lives* that have a rather less positive character at the helm follow a similar strategy:

The arts ... proceed by the use of reason (*logos*) to the *selection and adoption of what is appropriate*, and to the *avoidance and rejection of what is alien* to themselves ... For instance, the art of healing has incidentally studied the nature of disease, and the art of harmony the nature of discord, in order to produce their opposites; and the most consummate arts of all, namely, temperance (*sōphrosunē*), justice (*dikaiosunē*), and wisdom (*phronesis*), since *their function is to distinguish, not only what is good and just and expedient, but also what is bad and unjust and disgraceful*, have no praises for a guilelessness which plumes itself on its inexperience of evil, nay, they consider it to be foolishness, and ignorance of what ought especially to be known by men who would live aright ... when men have led reckless lives, and have become conspicuous, in the exercise of power or in great undertakings, for badness, perhaps it will not be much amiss for me to introduce a pair or two of them into my biographies, though not that I may merely divert and amuse my readers by giving variety to my writing ... So, I think, ***we also shall be more eager to observe and imitate the better lives if we are not left without narratives of the blameworthy and the bad*** (*Demetr.* 1.2–6; my emphases).

Plutarch introduces here a pair of exempla with an epideictic function; the characters of Demetrius and Antony ought to inspire the reader to careful judgment of the kinds of actions to avoid. It is the only explicitly blameworthy pair of *Lives*, and thus this introduction does much to set the moral tone for the rest of the narrative.¹³⁴ The first-person language draws the reader in and creates a sense of affinity between them and Plutarch who, as Duff notes, in *Aemilius Paulus* (1.1) presents himself as the ideal reader.¹³⁵ It is not coincidental that the distinction between flattery and frank speech is quite pronounced in this pair of *Lives*.

The philosopher will use praise, usually at the same time as blame, as a method of emotional support during the therapeutic process.¹³⁶ Epideictic rhetoric has a direct effect on the disposition

of the soul (*Virt. mor.* 452c–d). Unlike blame, praise gives the philosopher pleasure, though he does not shy away from using blame if need be.¹³⁷ As Plutarch explains in *Flatterer/Friend*, there is a place for commendation and for censure, and both attend friendship. In *Seven Sages*, Thales points out that the affection arising from friendship can be a vehicle for personal and spiritual growth. This must be true for women also, as the subject of discussion is the affectionate way Eumetis treats Anacharsis (*Conv. sept.* 148d). Stamatopoulou notes that the relationship is reciprocal, Eumetis gains knowledge from Anacharsis while she grooms him (a Scythian) to make him more palatable to the Greek guests in attendance.¹³⁸ The link here between the feminine and the foreign can hardly be incidental.

It's not just the application of frank speech that is moderated along gendered lines but also its reception. Philodemus believes that women are less inclined to accept *parrhēsia* graciously, because they are suspicious, oversensitive and too concerned with their reputation (*Lib.* 22a). Even so, women who truly wish to advance morally should receive the same treatment as men.¹³⁹ For Plutarch, the inability to accept censure with grace is a sign of weakness and effeminacy (*truphē kai malakia*, *De recta* 46e). It can also indicate a lack of philosophical training, through which the key virtue *andreia* is cultivated. After describing Timoleon's brother's brief tenure as tyrant of Corinth, forcing the hero to stand by and weep while his brother is murdered (*Tim.* 4.3–4), Plutarch makes a brief detour into the virtues of philosophy and reason, without which men's spirits are "easily carried away by casual praise and blame" when the "fair vision of the Good fades away" (6.2). This is a matter of principles, says Plutarch, without which actions have no conviction (6.1). *Principles* are stable and unchanging, much like the God of Plato's *Timaeus* (*monimos kai ametaptōtos*, *Tim.* 6.2, cf. *Ti.* 29b). He thus alludes to a metaphysical issue underlying Timoleon's excessive reaction to being branded a fratricide and barred from his mother's house. One has to wonder if the mention

of Timaeus the historian at *Timoleon* 10.4 is purely coincidental. Ultimately, the correct use of *parrhēsia* is intimately connected to masculinity-of-soul.

A curious anecdote in *Virtues* which involves a reversal of roles indicates that frank speech from a woman can also emasculate the receiver. In the story, 800 men had escaped Elis and asked the tyrant Aristotimus to send their wives and children to join them in exile.¹⁴⁰ Aristotimus responded by imprisoning the women and children attempting to do so, but not before his guards trample many of them to death in the ensuing tumult at the city gate (251d–e). The imprisoned women chose as their leader Megisto, the wife of another Timoleon, on account of the status of her husband and her own virtue (*aretē*). This combination of social status and perceived virtue grants Megisto the right to employ *parrhēsia* in a time of dire need. In prison, she chastises Aristotimus for talking to women about their husbands instead of sending to the men as to those who have authority over their wives, for trying to deceive the women and thereby induce them to deceive their husbands in turn, and for his cruelty and hubris.

As Megisto speaks, she indicates that these things show that Aristotimus is not a sensible man (*anēr phronimos*). Her words ring true as the tyrant in anger moves to kill her child, only to be stopped by a sympathetic bystander, who warns him that such action is ignoble (*agennēs*) and womanish (*gunaikōdēs*), not that of a manly ruler (*Mulier. virt.* 251c–252e).¹⁴¹ Yet by his attempt to have women exercise control over their husbands, Aristotimus had already shown himself to be unmanly, and Megisto's *parrhēsia* had further emasculated him by exposing the weakness in his own character in full view of the 600 other women in prison with her.¹⁴² That she had done so without questioning her husband's authority corroborates the role of frank speech in maintaining social institutions.¹⁴³ At the same time, the women's silence (*siōpē*) and emotional restraint in the face of a murderous tyrant is an indicator of self-control.

It's worth noting the extreme circumstances within which Megisto exercises her right to free speech. Her husband, Timoleon, is not the same as the subject of the *Life of Timoleon*, though there is reason enough to connect the circumstances of that biography with those in which Megisto finds herself. It's a loose association, sure, but not an idle one.¹⁴⁴ Stadter argues that Plutarch expected his female readers to already be familiar with the deeds of men,¹⁴⁵ perhaps even because they had read his *Lives*. Plutarch describes the state of Syracuse after Dion had driven out the tyrant Dionysius and was promptly killed:

... those who had helped him to free Syracuse were divided among themselves. The city, therefore, was continually exchanging one tyrant for another, and owing to a multitude of ills was almost abandoned, while as for the rest of Sicily, part of it was ruined and already wholly without inhabitants by reason of the wars, and most of the cities were occupied by Barbarians of mixed races and soldiers out of employment (*Tim.* 1.1-2).

From the outset, *Timoleon* is almost entirely concerned with the hero's fight against tyrants and barbarians in Sicily, and indeed the biography, like the anecdote in *Virtues*, is centered around two key virtues: hatred of tyrants (*misoturranos*), and love of one's country (*philopatris*) (*Tim.* 3.2, *Mulier. virt.* 253e).¹⁴⁶ Both too make the connection between tyranny and enslavement (*Tim.* 1.3, *Mulier. virt.* 252d). Timoleon himself is characterized as a man most virtuous (3.2).¹⁴⁷ The most unpleasant aspect of Timoleon's career according to Plutarch was his failure to speak up on behalf of the tyrant Hicetas' wife and daughters who, along with those of his friends, were made to stand public trial and then put to death as payback for his murder of the wife and sister of his former friend Dion (*Tim.* 33.1-2, cf. *Dion* 58.8-10). In this light, Megisto's intervention on behalf of Aristotimus' daughters at the end of the anecdote appears all the more virtuous. By protecting

the girls' dignity in death, Megisto gains respect for her bold speech (*Mulier. virt.* 253c–d).¹⁴⁸

A similar incident is related in the story of Xenocrite, the object of affection of the tyrant Aristodemus, though the frank speech is not hers but that of another—unnamed—woman.¹⁴⁹ That woman modestly covered her face and stepped aside in the presence of the tyrant Aristodemus but not her countrymen.¹⁵⁰ When they jokingly asked why she did so, she replied, “Because among all the people of Cumae Aristodemus is the only man!” In doing so, she emasculated and incited the most noble-minded (*gennaios*) of the men to shame, encouraging them to rebel against the tyranny (*Mulier. virt.* 262b–c). Thus, Plutarch says, one woman incited them to topple the tyrant and another (that is, Xenocrite) assisted them in their endeavor. This anecdote operates on similar principles to that of Megisto, but there is an added aspect of intemperance that is made more explicit. Whereas Aristotimus is primarily described as savage and cruel (251a), Aristodemus is particularly licentious and vicious towards women and free-born youth (*eleutherous paidas*). Plutarch reports that he made the boys wear long hair and golden ornaments, while the girls wore short hair, boys' clothes and short undergarments (261f). Xenocrite condemns his luxury (*truphē*). In this instance, gender norms are already inverted by the tyrant himself, and it is the subversion of the unnamed woman's *parrhēsia* that corrects the course of events.

This, presumably, is at least in part why Plutarch warns Pollianus not to admonish Eurydice in public (*Conj. praec.* 139e), just as he warns against the use of *parrhēsia* in front of a crowd of onlookers in *Flatterer/Friend* (*Adul. amic.* 7of). Weakness should be tackled in private, since epideictic rhetoric invites the student to contemplation, to turn inward to themselves, by presenting them with the virtues they ought to imitate and the vices they ought to avoid.¹⁵¹ Introspection encouraged ethical autonomy through the learning and practice of rational self-control.¹⁵² This relationship

between self and other is moderated along gendered lines. The use of frank speech in public is the reserve of men (and in rare cases women acting in the absence of men) and is meant to dismantle institutions that oppress free men first and foremost.¹⁵³ Megisto's challenge to Aristotimus ultimately leads to his deposition as tyrant of Elis, thereby facilitating the return of the exiled men to the city. Moreover, while Megisto herself doesn't possess *andreia*—indeed she acts in the *absence* thereof¹⁵⁴—her virtues are comparable to those of the more famous Timoleon, and as such she emasculates the tyrant whom she addresses. Xenocrite's unnamed comrade emasculates her countrymen in order to incite them to rise up against an effeminate tyrant. In normal circumstances, such bold speech is not permitted. No matter how wise she may be, and no matter the quality of her counsel as political advisor to her father, Eumetis remains quiet during the *Symposium of the Seven Sages*, not daring to speak up against the man who would make her out as a silly little girl. As a private practice of philosophy aimed at improving the state of the soul and the relation of the subject to themselves, *parrhēsia* ought not be employed in public unless absolutely necessary. Just so, a wife must keep her speech as private as her body and ought not to speak frankly to her husband unless he shows himself deficient in virtue and lacking in trusted friends to set him straight.

Parrhēsia doesn't only consist of speaking the truth, but also of living it.¹⁵⁵ The philosopher must convince his student that by following the advice he gives and the example he sets, they may reach the ultimate goal of psychagogic practice: assimilation to god.¹⁵⁶ The practical aspects of moral education therefore necessarily have a metaphysical component as part of its stated aims. When Plutarch comments on his own use of the *Lives* as educational tools for moral reflection, he uses the analogy of a mirror which reflects the character of great men back at him and whose virtues he strives to imitate.¹⁵⁷ He mentions that this practice has an effect on his soul (*Aem. Paul.* 1). Frank speech is

similarly characterized according to the effect it can have on the listener's soul. Plutarch considers the distinction between a flatterer and a friend akin to the division of the soul, of which one part is rational and a lover of truth and honor, and the other irrational and a lover of falsehood and emotion (*Adul. amic.* 61d).¹⁵⁸ A friend acts as counsel and advocate for the better part of the soul, while the flatterer encourages and inflames the worse.

Along with *parrhēsia*, there are then two other conditions that the philosopher must fulfill in order to be a trustworthy spiritual guide: *eunoia* and *epistēmē*.¹⁵⁹ Without these qualities, frank speech is liable to imitation by flatterers who wish to present an air of friendship by applying *parrhēsia* to trivial matters while ignoring things of great importance (*Adul. amic.* 59b–c).¹⁶⁰ Foucault may be right in his analysis of the radical potential of *parrhēsia* but neglects the gendered power-dynamics that govern frank speech. In a therapeutic practice aimed at improving the condition of the soul, only those who are truth-telling, benevolent and who possess knowledge are suitable to lead the moral education of others and to test the condition of their soul by employing *parrhēsia*, and those people happen to almost always be (elite) men.

Finally, in order to facilitate the self-transformation and care of others, the philosopher must have undergone a transformation of his own; he must be more virtuous than his student.¹⁶¹ Plutarch disapproves of those who presume to admonish or teach others without themselves having advanced knowledge. Frank speech must be backed up by good character if it is to have a healing effect on the soul, and if a man of bad character attempts to speak frankly, it would be reasonable to admonish him for trying to heal others when he himself is still ill (*Adul. amic.* 71f). Even better, then, if the philosopher is frank about his own shortcomings and openly shows his willingness to better himself along with his students (*Adul. amic.* 72a, cf. the first chapter of *Aemilius Paulus*). Thus when Seneca writes his consolation to Helvia, he reasons that he had

delayed doing so because he would be better able to console her if he had first risen above his own grief (*Ad Helv.* 1.1).

While he takes the role of a teacher for his students, Plutarch suggests that the husband play his role in the education of his wife by being her guide, philosopher and teacher, since he is already more educated and therefore further along the path to virtue than she is (*Conj. praec.* 145c). Emily Hemelrijk argues that this was standard practice for Greek and Roman moralists, and that the husband's superior education and moral guidance was thought to act as a deterrent for women's scheming. Even so, it's unclear how widespread this practice was in upper-class circles; in at least one instance, the elder Seneca prevented his wife from furthering her education.¹⁶² It's essential that the philosopher maintain his position of authority by being knowledgeable regarding virtue, and by living according to the precepts that he would have his students follow.¹⁶³ Failure on the part of the philosopher to maintain this standard of virtuous living will result in a loss of trust and authority, which will fundamentally and perhaps irrevocably damage the teacher-student relationship.

As a therapeutic practice of self-formation, psychagogy is therefore ultimately concerned with relationships of power and in particular with the internalization of the matrix of domination. One's place in the hierarchy is determined by a number of factors of which gender is but one; ethnicity, foreignness and wealth further complicate the application of virtue. These factors also determine the kinds of actions that are appropriate in specific circumstances. A woman may speak frankly to a tyrant in prison but may not speak so to her husband in her own home. Clearly, philosophers like Plutarch recognized the potential of *parrhēsia* to destabilize traditional power relations, just as he recognized the relationship between speech acts and other expressions of the self. Ultimately, one's speech is entwined with the ethical state of their soul. At the same time, *parrhēsia* has the ability to modify the mode of being of the addressee, which is the exclusive right

of the dominant party. Psychagogy thus requires an asymmetrical relationship in which one party is subordinate and restricted to silence. This is most often women, but the interaction between categories of difference makes the practice a fluid one which is infinitely adaptable to new and unexpected situations, and which can confer the right to domination on people who usually would not be so privileged.

CHAPTER THREE

TENSION AND RESOLUTION

“All other men rule their wives; we rule all other men, and our wives rule us.”

Marcus Cato 8.2

A significant problem in the application of psychagogic ethics is the interrelated questions of whether women are capable of virtue, what that virtue looks like, and how it differs from that of men, problems closely related to the issue of what exactly the difference between men and women actually is and why that should matter. Only when these questions have been answered can the philosopher fully articulate the goals of their educational program and set it in motion. In this chapter, I will briefly set out and contextualize Plutarch’s perspective on these questions and highlight some of the contradictions that are engendered by the tension between these idealized notions of womanhood and what we know about what women actually did in antiquity. When they did these things is of less importance than the fact that they did them, because in reality women have always done all sorts of things outside of the home and the boundaries of marriage. It is these very contradictions that inspired Plutarch to pay as much attention to women’s moral

education as he did. Let us start first with the issue of the physical difference between men and women, which is understood as a determinant of social difference and thus gender identity.

REPRODUCTIVE DIFFERENCE

At the heart of the tensions between real and ideal lies an understanding of reproductive difference which is biologically deterministic and therefore assumes that social identity is at least in part informed by reproductive function. Ancient Greek and Roman societies were internally organized around the division between male and female with a particular focus on reproductivity within the bounds of conjugality. However, medical explanations for the differences between the sexes and the nature of each could not always account for gender difference. Women were not always domestic, or perhaps had too much power in the home that spilled over into the state; they were not always meek and obedient, and they were quite often ambitious and intelligent. Men regarded them as wild and ungovernable and for this reason sought to keep them confined to the home, from where it was easier to exercise control over them.

Equating the female to a wild animal offers a justification for the supposed naturalness of exercising power over them. In Aristotle's view, wild animals are naturally inferior to tame animals. The latter benefit from being ruled by humans in much the same way as the reasoning part of the soul governs the passive part. Gendered implications abound; we might infer that women are inferior to men but they can be "tamed," and therefore ought to be subject to men (*Pol.* 1254b5–12).¹ This view doesn't necessarily mean that women have no agency or autonomy; Aristotle argues that the free man must govern his wife and children as one does free persons, by adjusting the style of rulership to the individual (*Pol.* 1259a39). Within the family unit, man and woman contributed different but complementary capacities, each having their own particular form of virtue (*Eth. Nic.* 1162a8–20). It is natural for the

husband to leave certain household duties to his wife, whose virtue is suited to household management (*Eth. Nic.* 1160b15–20). Her virtue and her body are therefore closely connected and mutually constitutive expressions of conjugality. Thus for Foucault, the body is political, it is “a set of material elements and techniques that serve as weapons, relays, communication routes and supports for the power and knowledge relations that invest human bodies and subjugate them by turning them into objects of knowledge.”² The categorization of bodies according to type, according to some notion of naturalness and deviation, is itself an exercise of power that seeks to reify and reproduce structures of domination and submission that privilege the male.

We must also keep in mind that when Aristotle wrote that women are capable of some form of reasoning and virtue, it is the Greek woman so described. Enslaved people—whom he argued have no deliberative part in their soul, while women do have it but without full authority (*Pol.* 1260a8–14)—are distinguished both by their class and their sex, creating a particular category for each in accordance with the body and its social positioning.³ Rulership over enslaved persons takes the form of a tyranny of self-interest, while the wife is governed in the manner of an aristocracy (*Eth. Nic.* 1160b15–20). As Beneker notes, this means that the husband doesn’t rule simply because he is more powerful, but because he is better suited to doing so *if he is virtuous and just*.⁴ All of this suggests not a simple dualism between rational and irrational, man and woman, but a scale that is meant to encompass a hierarchy in which men, women, children, enslaved persons and foreigners (“barbarians”) possess varying degrees of rationality and autonomy. Aristotle infamously argued that the female is a deformed male and indeed is the first step in a series of deviations from the norm (that is, the male), ultimately resulting in monstrosity.⁵ In this view, nature aims for the male and sometimes falls short through necessity.

It is now widely acknowledged that Plutarch’s philosophy, and his ethics in particular, has a demonstrable Aristotelian

slant.⁶ However, there is little evidence in Plutarch for any direct reproductive oppositionality between male and female, but instead a focus on complementarity and hierarchical relations of power grounded in metaphysical principles that are expressed in bodies through necessity, a view that has much in common with Aristotle even as it proclaims itself Platonist.⁷ These principles figure male and female as the primary indicators of difference in the abstract sense, but could not so easily be pinned onto individual persons, since each has their own unique set of circumstances, circumstances that could elevate some women above some men and some barbarians above Greeks. In Plutarch's view, then, it is the opposition between virtue and vice that is emphasized and elevated as expressions of the naturalness of sexual difference, and sexual difference is at least in part the result of the ethical state of the soul at the time of reincarnation. But Plutarch was no physician. His views on sexual difference are drawn from his knowledge of medical philosophy and metaphysics and deployed in his ethical system merely as justification for certain fundamental principles. In many cases, it seems that he simply accepts the fact of biological binarism and builds his psychagogy from there. Reproductive roles are central to this understanding of sexual difference.

Medical theories of reproductive difference did little to dispel entrenched notions of inherent female inferiority—nor did they ever explicitly attempt to do so—and in many cases seemed to confirm them. According to ancient physicians, the womb distinguishes female from male, thereby making her inferior to him.⁸ Ancient medicine took many views of women's intrinsic nature, almost all based on this elementary difference, seeking to clarify what the womb was, and how and why it functioned in the female body. That these theories were born from a prior understanding of socio-sexual difference is indisputable, and because ancient doctors for centuries didn't dissect human cadavers, there was little in the way of evidence to counteract ideas about female biological inferiority. According to Thomas Laqueur, whose book *Making Sex* remains influential,

ancient medical writers wrote about men and women as if they were but one sex, though males have external reproductive organs and women's are internal. He argues that biological sexual difference is a fairly recent invention and that everything in antiquity that seems to support these notions of difference are instead social phenomena—in a word, gender.⁹ Helen King has offered a measured critique of Laqueur's work on the basis of textual evidence, noting in particular that there was no male organ easily identified as analogous to the womb and a whole host of other differences to complicate things.¹⁰ In my view, whether or not ancient physicians considered the male and female genitals to be essentially the same matters less than the social fact of its effects on women and gendered others. Putting aside the form and function of the genitals themselves, philosophers and physicians did see a whole range of physical differences between male and female, and it was on this basis that the female was sometimes figured as inferior, as less perfect, as metaphysically incomplete. However flimsy, these perceived differences came to hold far more weight than any obvious similarities.

Not all ancient writers were equally convinced by the oppositionality between male and female, and we will see in Chapter 5 that Plutarch's own view figured the female principle as intermediate between the male and the other. This creates a scale capable of adaptation perfectly encapsulated by Plato's argument that vicious men are reincarnated as women (*Ti.* 91a), a view with which Plutarch likely agreed. Arguing thus was essential for his psychagogic program, which could not function if women weren't thought capable of virtue, for which reason it was essential to distance the female from the cause of evil, itself entwined with the womb. Plutarch did, however, ascribe to a notional theory of reproductive difference and it's clear that he did believe that men and women were, in some ways at least, fundamentally physically different in ways that suggest both oppositionality and complementarity.

The Pythagorean Table of Opposites recorded by Aristotle figured the female as restless and unfulfilled in direct opposition to the male,

who is perfect and unchanging (*Metaph.* 986a21–6).¹¹ Not only does this schema theorize a binary opposition between male and female, it elevates this opposition to metaphysics, geometry, ethics and other philosophical sciences. Doing so grounds sexual difference in supra-human principles, thereby legitimizing the assumed priority of male supremacy. Plutarch himself also refers to the Table of Opposites in *On Isis* (370e), where he notably leaves out the male and female, replacing them with “equal” (*isos*) and “unequal” (*anisos*):

<u>Aristotle</u> (<i>Metaph.</i> 986a21–26)		<u>Plutarch</u> (<i>De Iside</i> 370e)	
Bounded	Unbounded	Determinate	Indeterminate
<i>Odd</i>	Even	Odd	Even
<i>One</i>	Many	Unity	Duality
<i>Right</i>	Left	Right-handed	Left-handed
Male	Female	Equal	Unequal
<i>Resting</i>	Moving	Permanent	Moving
<i>Straight</i>	Crooked	Straight	Curved
<i>Light</i>	Darkness	Bright	Dark
<i>Good</i>	<i>Bad</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Bad</i>
Square	Oblong	Square	Oblong

Plutarch's refusal to explicitly incorporate male and female into the table belies a different view of the organization of the principles as primarily divided between things that are good and things that are bad. This is a necessity of the context of the text which, like *Virtues*, is addressed to Clea and touches on the topic of women's virtue. In fact, when theorizing this binary between good and evil, he tends to place the conjugal female alongside the male on the side of the good (with caveats). What results is a theory of oppositionality that operates on a scale and is mediated by the feminine; indeed, it centers the feminine because of her indeterminacy and the potentiality of her womb while simultaneously figuring queer bodies and queer identities as somehow outside the bounds of the natural and necessary reproductive binary and as such occupying a lower plane of reality. This, however, is far more a metaphysical than a biological theory, concerned with the soul first and the body second. We will return to this problem in Chapter 5. Plutarch was primarily concerned with the ethical condition of the soul and was not fond of speaking about the details of reproduction beyond what was necessary for his argument (cf. *De amor. pro.* 495d).¹² There are however several extant fragments that touch on the issue; in fr. 97, for example, the curious view that the female body can infect men with its effluences is put forth.

A further series of oppositions seemed to confirm what doctors already believed: that women were cold and men hot, that they were wet and men dry, porous rather than impermeable.¹³ As Sophia Connell notes, such a theory of sexual difference admits of degrees and therefore is able to account for intersex persons (even if those individuals were considered functionally singular in reproductive capacity). In Aristotle's *Generation of Animals*, male and female aren't always necessarily mutually exclusive, in effect destabilizing any notion of rigid, dualistic oppositionality.¹⁴ Instead, male and female exist on a scale of degradation which places maleness on the one end and monstrosity on the other; as a degradation of the male form, the female is necessarily intermediate

rather than directly opposite it. In the individual human subject, the male principle and female principle—Form and Matter—are combined and complementary. An understanding of reproduction which assigned the generative power to the male on account of his greater heat, thus making him the active partner and the woman a passive vessel, is only one part of an incredibly complex system of opposition and co-dependence.

On this point, Plutarch appears to hold with common medical views. *Table Talk* 3.4 (65of) is dedicated to the question of body temperature, with Florus concluding that women are colder than men and contribute no active seed to generation (651c, cf. fr.80, fr.105).¹⁵ According to the author of the Hippocratic text *On Regimen*, thinking warms and dries the soul (2.61). Men might therefore be hotter and drier because they think more (or do it better), while women are colder because they don't apply their thought rigorously enough. The converse may also be true; women can't think well because they're too cold. Gilbert Barberà comments on the similar distinction made by Protogenes in *On Love* on the basis of men's presence in the gymnasia, which makes their bodies—and their minds—strong, while women are soft (*malakos*) and so their minds must be too.¹⁶ The principle of cold relates the female to other, more abstract principles that appear oppositional in nature:

Or is coldness rather the negation of warmth, as they say darkness is of light and rest of motion? Cold, indeed, seems to have the quality of being stationary, as heat has that of motion (*De prim. frig.* 945f).

However, Plutarch rejects a firm binary between these principles, arguing that we should consider the difference between hot and cold as the result of privation rather than negation.¹⁷ Notably, he nowhere mentions in any detail the effect of temperature on reproductive capacity, leaving the practical application of

this argument to the reader's imagination. Much like Aristotle, Plutarch is hesitant to draw conclusions about individual women on the basis of medical opinion, perhaps precisely because he was so acutely aware of the tension between body and social identity.

For the most part, theories of reproductive difference treat non-normative bodies like those of eunuchs and intersex folk as anomalous, and as a result give a false impression of binarism. This opposition of male to female which places women on the wrong side of the categorical divide held the imaginations of philosophers for centuries, but it is perhaps Aristotle who gives the most compelling—and enduring—account of female inferiority. In *Generation of Animals*, he describes man as the active life force, while woman is the passive receiver of seed through which life is generated.¹⁸ Aristotle draws this conclusion from the man's ability to produce semen. He argues that this fluid in man and woman is different and therefore conception does not occur from the mixture of two seeds. Male semen is superior because of its ability to create something outside of itself (*Gen. An.* 716a2–18).¹⁹ Because the male is by nature hotter than the female, he has the ability to create sperm, which contains *pneuma*, while women lack this ability and therefore can only contribute raw matter (here meaning menstrual fluid) to conception (729b15–21). Given the constraints on empirical observation in antiquity, along with the fact that the mammalian ovum was only discovered in the 19th century, it's easy to see how simple observation clouded by social bias could lead to this conclusion. Furthermore, this perceived generative inferiority doesn't mean that women's contribution to conception is useless or incidental; indeed, for many ancient physicians, it was essential but different to the contribution of men—or perhaps essential precisely because it was different.²⁰ Plutarch appears to concur with this view when he tells Clea to “cling fast” to the idea that “the seed of woman is not a power (*dunamis*) or origin (*archē*), but only material (*hulē*) and nurture of generation” (*De Iside* 374f, cf. *Quaest. Rom.* 263e).

Women's role in conception was a hotly debated topic in ancient medicine and there were some who contended that they do contribute seed to conception. The debate revolved primarily around the question of which fluid in women corresponds to male semen. Ps.-Aristotle, for example, suggested that twins are born when both the man and the woman emit more seed than is necessary; the second fetus is formed from what remains after the first one is formed, and it forms in a different part of the uterus. He also suggested that women have a tube similar to the penis but inside the body from where the seed is emitted (*Hist. an.* 10.636b15–637b7), while Empedocles posited the seeds of the mother and father as two incomplete pieces that create a whole when put together (frs. 57–65).²¹

Other medico-philosophical literature refers to women as sponge-like and therefore naturally more moist than men:

I say that a woman's flesh is more sponge-like and softer than a man's; since this is so, the woman's body draws moisture both with more speed and in greater quantity from the belly than does the body of a man (*Hippoc. Mul.* 1.1).

Plutarch repeats this view in *Table Talk*, where Sulla says that women are the opposite of old men, they are moist (*hugros*), smooth (*leios*) and soft (*malakos*) (*Quaest. conv.* 650b).²² Matthew Kuefler comments that the distinction between softness and hardness also occurs on the genital level, and as such is closely entwined with notions of sexual difference.²³ Plutarch further makes this distinction for the parts of the soul, where *thumos* is the feminine part responsible for emotion and best suited to submission. This part is both *malakos* and *ametros* (*Virt. mor.* 446b). Its connection with the softness of the body is likely because the abstract feminine principle which becomes *thumos* is the corporeal aspect of nature. This necessarily means that all bodies are potentially feminine or effeminate and simultaneously masculine or manly, and therefore

need regulation and regimen to maintain both its reproductive and moral integrity.

During menstruation, women also expel heat along with excess moisture and this makes her cooler than her male counterpart.²⁴ Expelling excess moisture is good, but the same cannot be said for excess heat, when being hotter is deemed the better of the two conditions. It is, after all, where men gain their generative power from. Lack of heat therefore makes the female less perfect and weaker than the male.²⁵ At the same time, women are said to leak because their flesh is more porous. Unlike men, they “leak” menstrual blood, sexual lubricant, lochial discharge after giving birth, and yeast infections.²⁶ Plato compares the weak, ignorant, irrational soul to this tendency of women to leak:

... the part of the soul where the desires are, the unrestrained and leaky part, he compared to a perforated jar, because it cannot be filled (*Gorg.* 493b).

This constant discharge from the female body, specifically from the womb (though the two can hardly be separated at this point), thus leaves the woman hollow and in need of being filled. The truth of this statement can be no more obvious than in the myth of Pandora’s box, which is in fact a jar, connecting the female to the origin and proliferation of evil among men.²⁷ Some images visualize the womb as an upside-down *pithos*, which was directly connected to the mouth. This idea is reinforced by fertility tests that place a strong scent near the vagina. If it can be smelled on the woman’s breath, she is fertile (*Hippoc. Nat. mul.* 96).²⁸ There is therefore an implicit link between reproductive capacity and psychic tendency which characterizes women as more emotional and the emotional part of the soul as feminine and corruptible, a link that is crucial to Plutarch’s theory of gendered virtue.

These perceived irregularities within the female body, bound up with the womb and placing her in opposition to the male, inevitably

cause problems.²⁹ Because she is restless, imperfect and in need of being filled, the animal that drives her to sex (the uterus)³⁰ starts to wander around the body if she does not conceive within the proper time (cf. Pl. *Ti.* 91a–c). In doing so, the womb prevents her from breathing and causes madness (*hysteria*); the cure is regular intercourse and pregnancy.³¹ According to Aristotle, the failure of the male generative power to master the female material in the womb results in the birth of monstrosities that are more animal than human (*Gen. an.* 769b11–16).³² All of this leads to the crux of the matter: according to the medico-philosophical view, women’s role in society is primarily, though not solely, reproductive, passive and interior. If this is the case, then the best way to deal with a woman, particularly a citizen woman,³³ is to tame her through marriage and cure her of *hysteria* through constant pregnancy. The latter can only be achieved through the former; if one of woman’s central roles is reproductive then she is expected to bear citizen sons and heirs. As a vessel, she thus becomes politicized and keeping her under control is of vital importance, not only for the household, but also for the state.³⁴

While there is evidence that Plutarch did consider the male and female body substantially different in ways that correspond to traditional social roles, the issue is far more subtle than that. When discussing the oracular power of the priestess at Delphi, he notes that the environment is not always the same, and thus the priestess is susceptible to changes, annoyances and disturbances which “lay hold upon her body and filter into her soul” (*De def. or.* 437d). Jill Marshall notes that here Plutarch is likely influenced by medico-philosophical ideas about body porosity.³⁵ As is common in Plutarch, there is some concern over the relationship between body and soul which significantly complicates the issue, though there is evidence elsewhere also that Plutarch considers the male and female body meaningfully different. In Marshall’s view, this difference is evident in Plutarch’s discussion of female prophets; on an abstract level, there is no gender difference in the way body and

soul interact: gender only starts to take shape in individual bodies.³⁶ It is only at the abstract level that sex is represented in its pure form as Form and Matter; when these principles are embodied, their interactions cause variation. On that level, then, difference cannot be represented as a straightforward binary of oppositions. There are not only male and female persons, but Greek and barbarian, young and old, rich and poor, beautiful and ugly, free and enslaved, and a vast number of (entirely subjective) categories in between. Plutarch's sensitivity to the multiplicity of difference gives rise not only to a scaled theory of domination and subordination that privileges certain types of women, but also to a refinement of these identity categories as markers of virtue and vice.³⁷

Ultimately, Plutarch ascribes to the common view that reproductive biology is a determinant of social identity and where that causal link fails, abnormality, deviance, disorder and vice is quite literally *engendered*. This abnormality is either physically apparent in the form of the body or expressed as vicious acts; most often it is both because they are mutually constitutive. In some, like intersex people, eunuchs and even Amazons, the signs of abnormality are bodily. The Platonist sees these signs as the consequences of a previous life or indicators of the next. Bodily signs are easy to read as physically deformed and therefore morally wrong. There are those who showed their "deformity" in more subtle and nefarious ways, women by using their sexuality to gain access to male spaces of power on their own terms, or men by assuming effeminate roles in male political and personal affairs. The signs of their depravity are first and foremost psychic.

The result of this view is that subordination is a natural condition of inferior types of people and domination is the right of superior types; therefore people generally don't dominate others of their same type. Free men don't dominate each other, but can dominate women, children and enslaved persons (cf. Arist. *Rhet.* 1367a33, Plut. *Amat.* 768e). Being dominated already makes a person inferior and more likely to be vicious regardless of circumstance,

and being virtuous is dependent on the particular form of submission or domination that person experiences. Thus we see that for Plutarch, enslavement is a choice made by the enslaved through which they indicate their own inferiority, their *anandreia*. He suggests an etymological link between *deilia* (cowardice) and *doulos* (slave), and so the point that lions are never slaves to lions nor horses to horses, while some people are enslaved by others, allows him to argue that being subordinate must be a natural condition of some people (*Gryll.* 987e). At the same time, however, willing submission can be a sign of nobility and confidence in the goodwill of the other, which implies a certain virtue in submission if it accords with nature (*Art.* 25.3). Nevertheless, the same link between enslavement and *malakia* is made in *Roman Questions* (274d). This inevitably leads to the circular argument that not all people are of the same type and that some people are less human than others, making their subordination natural.

Moreover, animals that allow themselves to be tamed, like men who allow themselves to be dominated and enslaved, are emasculated. Quite literally, the spirited part of their soul is made womanish (*apogunaikōsin tou thumoeidous*), so being dominated and enslaved is effeminate, cowardly and naturally vicious (*Gryll.* 987f). Epaminondas chides the Theban youths for their *anandria*, which had made them slaves to the tyrants of Thebes even though they were clearly physically superior (*Pel.* 7.3).³⁸ Feminine or effeminate persons are naturally subordinate, and that includes all women as a class, as well as some men.³⁹ Indeed, Gryllus tells Odysseus that men have no natural claim to *andreia*, because if they did, women would be just as courageous, and a number of examples “proves” that they are not (988a–b). In Plato’s *Alcibiades I*, cowardice and enslavement are one and the same (122a), and so the link between cowardice, effeminacy and enslavement has endured in Plutarch.⁴⁰

Men, on the other hand, or rather a certain type of man who is a free citizen, are fully human, capable of rational thought and

philosophical enquiry.⁴¹ Cowardice is not natural for them, and thus signifies emasculation. The Pythagorean Table of Opposites enshrines this binary opposition between male and female that identifies women with darkness, aberration and multiplicity, but Plutarch makes subtle changes in his ontology to account both for the necessity of the female and the naturalness of her conjugal submission without denying her the agency to *choose* this mode of being. Laqueur's claim that "sex before the seventeenth century ... was still a sociological and not an ontological category" therefore doesn't hold up to scrutiny in the context of Plutarch's metaphysics, in which reproductive sex is present at every level of the cosmos and *from which gender is derived*.⁴² In this schema, reproductive sex is a primary category that that is entangled with the social value of every other category.

SAME VIRTUES, BUT DIFFERENT STILL

Given the so-called "natural" differences between men and women through which their right to domination and subordination is granted, the question of virtue and the forms it takes becomes all the more urgent. By the early imperial period, discussions on the nature and aims of women's philosophical education had become more common. For this reason, the 1st-century CE Stoic Musonius Rufus felt it necessary to deliver two lectures on the subject and found an audience for the topic. One of the lectures addresses the question whether women should study philosophy and the other whether daughters should receive the same education as sons. In both cases, the answer is a resounding *yes*; in both cases, Musonius starts from the basic principle that men and women have the same philosophical capabilities (fr. 3.1–2, 4.4),⁴³ as well as the same need for education in the art of life, but to different ends. Women's philosophical training prepares them for running a household and teaches them not to be quarrelsome, extravagant, or vain (fr. 3.3). Plutarch himself also wrote a—sadly, now lost—treatise entitled

That a Woman Too Should Be Educated, of which only a few extracts remain (frs. 128–133 Sandbach). The Pythagorean women’s letters deal with similar *topoi* and have special significance because of the claim that a woman philosopher is fulfilling the role of teacher to other women.

We realize then that a significant obstacle for psychagogy for women is that the philosopher is often *not* a woman, with the notable exception of the Pythagorean women’s letters. Those letters, purported to be written by female philosophers in the school of Pythagoras, include a number of widely recognizable names, all of whom espouse the same principles as can be found in similar literature written by men.⁴⁴ Plutarch joins an established tradition of male philosophers who believe themselves fit to attend to the spiritual guidance of women, and takes care to assure Clea that “having a beard and wearing a coarse cloak does not make philosophers” (*De Iside* 352c). Seneca wrote two letters of consolation to women (*To Marcia* and *To Helvia*), counseling them on dealing with grief and using the strategies of therapeutic ethics to achieve his goal. Several fragments of Musonius deal with moral and educational issues pertaining to women. Hierocles, another Stoic active in the 2nd century CE, also covered similar ground in *Elements of Ethics*. This type of educational content aimed at women’s virtue becomes common during the early imperial period, but its roots go as far back as Plato and similar *topoi* are covered in Xenophon’s *Oeconomicus*.

We have seen that, in order to fulfill the conditions of *parrhēsia*, the philosopher must act as a model of the life his student wishes to achieve, and while Plutarch is well-known and often praised for having lived according to his own philosophical teachings,⁴⁵ a male model is not always suitable for emulation by women. The expectations of gendered virtue are directly opposed to such a practice. Men may be able to speak on theoretical problems that touch on practical and everyday issues, and some ethical principles and practical considerations do overlap, but they cannot speak to

women's lived experience. Male virtue and female virtue is different in ways that are analogous to their reproductive roles—that is to say, when we speak of courage in a man and courage in a woman, many ancient philosophers may argue that we actually speak of different virtues, or they might argue that courage is not a virtue properly suitable for a woman, a claim Musonius felt the need to refute in explicit terms (fr. 4.3).⁴⁶ In fact, this problem of women's capacity for virtue occupied philosophers from the very start of the Greek philosophical tradition.

Plato and Aristotle alike held that virtue is not the same in men and women, though both have some form of virtue. For Aristotle, this distinction was important to the question of who ought to be ruler and subject, to which the answer was quite obviously that a man ought to rule over his wife, children and the people he enslaves (*Pol.* 1259a40–1260a11). Thus, while both men and women possess courage, a man's courage is the courage of command, a woman's of subordination (*Pol.* 1260a20–25).⁴⁷ In the *Meno*, the titular character makes a similar argument about women's virtue (71e), to which Socrates responds with an analogy about bees, through which he argues that men and women do in fact have the same virtues (72b–73a),⁴⁸ though it soon turns out that a woman ought to practice those virtues in the household (73b). Likewise, some vices are characteristic of effeminacy. Plato considered cowardice (*deilia*) the result of a life of luxury and softness (*truphē kai malthakia*, *Resp.* 590a–b). These are all effeminate traits visible on the body, and thus women are most often perceived as cowardly and therefore fearful, as are the females of all species, according to Aristotle (*Hist. an.* 8.628a35–b31; cf. *Xen. Oec.* 7.25). Plato agrees:

All those creatures generated as men who proved themselves cowardly (*deilos*) and spent their lives in wrongdoing were transformed at their second incarnation into women (*Ti.* 90e–91a).

For these philosophers, it's unlikely that a woman can be truly courageous at all, since the concept is so bound up with masculinity that only one word is needed to encompass both of these ideas: at its very root, *andreia* signifies the male. Yet Socrates tells Ischomachus that his wife has a masculine (*andrikēn*) intelligence (Xen. *Oec.* 10.1). In Plutarch, then, masculinity becomes problematic precisely because it is clear that some women (like Theste, who is not *anandros*) do possess at least some form of masculinity, and therefore it's necessary to delimit the parameters of female masculinity.⁴⁹ By the 1st century CE, debates about the nature and ability of women had become more critical and in some ways more liberal—the goal was no longer simply to establish *whether* women could be as virtuous as men, but *how* they could be so within the existing socio-political structure that prized male domination above all else.

Plutarch's own treatise on the *Virtues of Women* is no different. It starts with a discussion of exactly how the author views women's virtue from a practical standpoint. He disagrees with Thucydides that women ought not be spoken of at all; he's more inclined to agree with Gorgias that women should be hidden from public view but their virtue should be commemorated appropriately (*Mulier. virt.* 242e–f).⁵⁰ The passage in Thucydides to which Plutarch refers is part of the funerary oration attributed to Pericles, in which he advises widows that a woman's glory is not to be spoken of among men, whether in praise or blame (2.45.2). Blake Tyrrell and Larry Bennett argue that the admonition to widows to remain silent and unseen stands in contradiction to the realities of women's lives in Classical Athens, and the active and necessary roles they played in society at large.⁵¹ This remained true for Plutarch in the early imperial period. For this very reason, his work constantly engages with the problem of women's social and political roles, and he seems to be working out the contradictions between ideal and real on a rolling basis.

Virtues is a snapshot of this process, born of a conversation Plutarch had with the priestess Clea, in which he wanted to argue that men and women have the same virtues. Yet for all its lofty ideals and positive evaluations of female aptitude, *Virtues* confirms that women's political participation is conditional and often carried out surreptitiously.⁵² It quickly becomes clear that when Plutarch says men and women have the same virtues, he means to say that both sexes have access to the same virtues on a metaphysical level, not that they ought to perform these virtues in the same way and in the same spheres of life—such an argument would run contra to the medico-philosophical understanding of reproductive difference. This is evident when he, after explaining to Clea that he will use historical exposition to illustrate women's virtues, makes the argument that

... it is not possible to learn better the similarity and the difference between the virtues of men and of women from any other source than by putting lives beside lives and actions beside actions, like great works of art (*Mulier. virt.* 243c).⁵³

The methodology of the collection is therefore notionally similar to Plutarch's approach to biography,⁵⁴ and indeed several of the anecdotes in *Virtues* appear in the *Lives* as well.

In writing *Virtues*, however, Plutarch is careful to avoid directly equating women's virtue and men's virtue. Instead he poses a question (Q) near the start of the treatise that he answers (A) shortly after:

Q: ... consider[ing] whether the magnificence of Semiramis has the same character and pattern as that of Sesostris, or the intelligence of Tanaquil the same as that of Servius the king, or the high spirit of Porcia the same as that of Brutus, or that of Pelopidas the same as Timoclea's ... (*Mulier. virt.* 243c)

A: ... Achilles was brave in one way and Ajax in another; and the wisdom of Odysseus was not like that of Nestor, nor was Cato a just man in exactly the same way as Agesilaus, nor Eirene fond of her husband in the manner of Alcestis, nor Cornelia high-minded in the manner of Olympias (*Mulier. virt.* 243d)⁵⁵

The question and the answer are interrupted by a reasoning, the conditional statement that people's virtues are different because of varying natures, customs, temperament, nurture and mode of living. The question whether women and men can display the same virtue in the same way is therefore a moot point, since they differ in nature even if in all else they are equal.⁵⁶ According to Kathleen O'Brien Wicker, Plutarch only succeeds in showing that "women can perform deeds traditionally considered masculine."⁵⁷ Moreover, if virtues manifest differently depending on circumstance, it's not at all clear that sex and gender, as a "natural" fact and a codified system of social customs, should be excluded from this matrix. Plutarch expands on this argument of natural difference and roots it in metaphysical reality in three theoretical-philosophical works, *On Love*, *On Isis* and *The Creation of the Soul*. The answer, then, no longer draws the comparison between men and women but shifts to illustrating the difference in virtues between people of the same sex.

As a result, the term *andreia* appears only rarely in *Virtues*, twice in the introduction in the sense of "virtue" (applied to both men and women to indicate that *andreia* is the same in both; 243b, 243d), and once in praise of Eryxo's *sōphrosunē* and *andreia* (indicating that female masculinity is especially linked to temperance; 261d).⁵⁸ In addition, only the women of Argos are described as *andreios* because they took up arms in defense of their city; in that instance their bravery is ascribed to divine inspiration and their actions are directly linked to inverted gender roles through the brief etiology of the festival of the *Hubristika* (245d–f).⁵⁹ We see then why Plutarch finds himself unable to commit to saying that the *phronēma* of

Porcia is the same as that of Brutus; he can only say that they both possess some form of *phronēma*.⁶⁰ What Plutarch means to say is that men and women both have *sōphrosunē*, *dikaia*, *phronēsis* and even in rare cases share *andreia*, not that their expressions of these virtues are or even should be identical. The same is true for Musonius, who does argue that women and men both possess *andreia*, *phronēsis*, *dikaia* and *sōphrosunē*, but never makes the point that their expressions of those virtues are quite the same.⁶¹

Caterine argues that Plutarch sets up a series of tyrants as foils for his heroines and thus that *Virtues* should be considered comparative in this sense. While it is an accurate observation, this form of comparison doesn't compare virtue with virtue but rather sets up men who display especially effeminate vices (as Caterine notes too) against which the virtue of the heroine plays out.⁶² O'Brien Wicker points out that Plutarch does not make the case that men also sometimes demonstrate traditionally feminine characteristics.⁶³ In fact, most of the anecdotes are implicitly comparative, featuring vicious men as foils for virtuous women. As Jeremy McInerney notes, it's one thing to compare men and women's virtues in the abstract, quite another to transfer that argument to particular examples.⁶⁴ Ultimately, what this shows is that women can overcome the vices to which they—as women—are most susceptible, not that the virtues they cultivate in the process are quite the same as those of men.

McInerney also points out that equating men's virtue and women's virtue runs the risk of approving of manly women, a trap Plutarch wants to avoid.⁶⁵ While women can possess *andreia*, it's difficult for them to come by and when they do attain it, it is a psychic condition, not a bodily one. Yet the pseudo-biographical device allows him to maintain his view that women do have access to moral virtue, even philosophical virtue, and that some women are virtuous in different ways than others, much like men are sometimes better statesmen than philosophers.⁶⁶ The only constraint facing women, then, is the necessity of natural

circumstance, which can be transcended—spiritually and perhaps even physically if they work hard enough in this life—through the study of philosophy. Curiously, none of the women named in this introductory section appear as exempla in *Virtues*, with the exception of Timocleia, though many of them appear in the *Lives* or elsewhere in the *Moralia*, suggesting that Clea knew these examples well from prior study. Educated women are therefore not an anomaly in Plutarch’s world, and if the texts addressed to Clea is any indication, these women had questions that demand serious answers.

WHAT IS A WOMAN, ANYWAY?

Plutarch may argue that men and women have the same virtues, but he cannot commit to the notion that they possess these virtues in the same way, since that runs the risk of leveling the playing field. Believing that women *could* do the same things as men doesn’t necessarily mean that they *should*. Like many other ancient philosophers, he makes the distinction between public and private which mirrors the proper place for men and women in the socio-political hierarchy and their reproductive functions, and which has largely been maintained in scholarship about spatial segregation in Classical Athens especially. According to this view, the city-space could in a sense be said to “belong” to a certain sex based on its function. Men spent their time outside and in public, engaging in political and economic activities, moving between the agora and the gymnasium, going to war, or perhaps hunting.⁶⁷ In Xenophon’s *Oeconomicus*, Ischomachus declares that he doesn’t spend any time at home, because his wife “is quite capable of looking after the house by herself” (*Oec.* 7.3). He is concerned as much with the administration of the city as his wife is (and should be) with the running of the household. In contrast, women spent their time at home and in residential areas—in other words, in private.⁶⁸ Even in the private space of the home, a further division was made

between male and female space: women spent their time in the women's quarters (*gynaikōnitis*), usually upstairs and hidden from view, while men spent time downstairs in the *andron*.⁶⁹ Men are considered best suited to a public life, women to a life in private.⁷⁰ David Cohen remarks that scholars too often take the separation of spheres as evidence for seclusion and isolation.⁷¹ While this kind of attitude is evident in Plutarch's psychagogic works that aim to keep women home, it's unlikely that it reflects the reality and lived experience of women in early imperial Rome, or even in Classical Athens for that matter.⁷²

We must take account, therefore, of the difference between the actual lives of women and the way men portray them; men's writings about women are often ideologically charged, perhaps precisely because real, living, breathing women did not always conform to male ideals. In Plutarch, then, we see women take on an almost-mythical exemplarity that initiates a split in the self. Who she really is matters less than who she should be, what her life looks like in its particularity is incidental. One might be able to make an argument that these rules and restrictions are aimed at isolating elite women, but the *Lives* and *Virtues* certainly present a different picture altogether. There are plenty of examples of women (and men, for that matter) doing things in contradiction to the virtuous ideal, which is in my view sufficient to infer that not all women conformed to Plutarch's idea of what a woman essentially is. That he was confronted with this reality is undeniable.

Gabriele Marasco argues that an analysis of the *Moralia* shows that women like Eurydice and Clea aren't exceptional examples of an abstract ideal but rather indicators of the fact that there were many such educated and culturally active women in Plutarch's world. Indeed, there is some evidence that Roman girls attended school alongside boys, although it's not clear how widespread this practice was.⁷³ Roman authors often represent women as active in public spaces such as gladiatorial games (Ovid *Am.* 3.2.1–8, cf. Plut. *Sull.* 35.3) or alternatively lament women's license (Liv. *Ab*

urb. cond. 34.2.14–3.1–2).⁷⁴ In *Consolation*, we see that Timoxena and women like her went out with their husbands to the theater and processions (609a), and the *Symposium of the Seven Sages* is attended by the far-famed Eumetis, a.k.a. Cleobulina (148c–e), and Melissa (150b).⁷⁵ In the latter case, Delfim Leão argues that the presence of the women reflects the social context of the text, in which the presence of intellectual women at symposia had become normal.⁷⁶ Women’s attendance at these semi-public events remained, however, contingent on their silence and decorum (*Quaest. conv.* 613a, 693c).

Examples of women attending banquets and dinners abound, no matter the period. Nymphaeus tells the Carians that it’s not the custom for Greeks to go to dinner without women (*Mulier. virt.* 246e); whether or not this is true reveals less than the fact that it seems plausible within the context of the anecdote and is essential for its resolution. In *Pelopidas*, Phillidas keeps the tyrants Archias and Philip busy with drink and the promise of women (10.2), and it is in the guise of women that Charon and Melon gain access to the symposium at which they were to take back Thebes (11.1–2). The philosopher Hipparchia is also known to have attended symposia with her husband Crates (Diog. Laert. 6.7.97–98)⁷⁷ and Athenaeus describes Straton of Athens dancing with his wife at Caranus’ wedding feast in Macedonia (*Soph.* 130c).⁷⁸ These women are not the typical musician, dancer, or prostitute traditionally associated with those who socialize with men but are “respectable” (elite) women often characterized as both intelligent and virtuous, and indeed a number of scholars have argued that women attending symposia were representative of a spectrum which included elite women.⁷⁹

Women were also very involved in the city’s religious life, through which their opportunities for social interaction were expanded.⁸⁰ Greek women were solely responsible for the organization of the Thesmophoria, which necessitated communal meetings and a range of other duties. Some women went out to

consult soothsayers, participated in funeral processions, visited family members in prison and attended public funeral orations like the one attributed to Pericles (*Per.* 28.4–5).⁸¹ Amy Richlin notes that although women left the home to perform religious rites, the temples to which they traveled were outside of the Roman forum, with the exception of the temple of Vesta.⁸² Such a division of space depoliticizes female activities and legitimizes the male business of governance. Yet despite this ideological construction of the city-space, we have reports of women moving through the forum and using it as a space for their own political activities. Valerius Maximus devoted a short chapter of *Memorable Doings and Sayings* to women who had spoken in the forum and the courts (8.3).⁸³ The first of the three examples, Maesia, successfully pled her case in court and was acquitted. Because of her manly spirit she was called Androgyne, a powerful example of the ways in which female political action threatened to destabilize traditional gender norms. Carfania, because of her constant involvement in lawsuits and her decision to represent herself in court, became synonymous with female litigiousness and her name came to be applied to shameless women. Valerius speaks disdainfully of the long life she lived and calls her a *monstrum* (Val. Max. 8.3.2, cf. 3.8.6).

The most famous of the three women is Hortensia, a skilled rhetorician and daughter of the orator Quintus Hortensius Hortalus.⁸⁴ She spoke before the triumvirs in 42 BCE pleading the case of wealthy women who were unhappy about the tax imposed on them for the running of the state. A particular point of contention was the use to which their money would be put, namely the waging of a civil war. Hortensia argued that such taxation was unfair, since women had no part in military and political affairs. Since no men spoke in defense of the women's interests, Appian reports that the women approached Octavia and Julia (mother of Mark Antony) before being turned away by Fulvia. Thereafter they forced their way to the tribunal to address the triumvirs in person, inciting anger that women dared to speak in public while the men were silent, a

dangerous inversion. Yet when they attempted to have the women driven away from the tribunal, they were met with the cries of the multitude. As a result of this incident, the triumvirs reviewed their proposed measures and made amendments that required taxation of men who possessed more than 100,000 drachmae as well (*B. Civ.* 4.5.32–34).⁸⁵ However disdainful men were towards the political actions of women, it seems impossible to deny their influence. Even in Classical Athens there are reports of women and children appearing before arbitrators or in court as support for their male kin.⁸⁶ Theories of a dichotomous organization of space are therefore problematic, primarily because it's difficult to maintain arguments that a strict gendered division can be upheld in the practice of daily life, where lived experience is much more complex.⁸⁷

Furthermore, women were active, productive and necessary players in ancient economies, working not only in sexual commerce but also in retail, textiles, food production, sale and service, and various other activities often (but not always) related to the domestic sphere.⁸⁸ The nature of these activities and her role in them differed according to the status of the woman, her prior experience and her degree of literacy. Free women often attained commercial success on the back of the labor of enslaved persons.⁸⁹ In his *Life of Philopoemen*, Plutarch writes that women were involved in dyeing soldiers' helmets and plumes and embroidering tunics and cloaks (9.5). There are records of Pompeiian women as landowners and selling or renting properties, as in the case of Julia Felix (*CIL* 4.1136), and female money-lenders (for example, Faustilla; *CIL* 4.8203). Some women acted in managerial roles or outright owned the business or equipment in a wide variety of industries, including construction and imports.⁹⁰ Elite women in the late republican and early imperial periods are also known to have had access to and control over considerable wealth, which in turn gave them a measure of power, while poor, enslaved and low-status women likely weren't subjected to the same kind of scrutiny aimed at keeping them at home as elite women were, since their

economic activity was crucial to the functioning of broader society and they probably didn't have servants to conduct their business for them.⁹¹ The only activities from which women were categorically barred were those in the realm of politics, but even then the reality did not always conform to the ideal.⁹² We are therefore faced with a series of tensions in Plutarch's work, a disconnect between effeminate vice and female virtue, between what people should do and what they actually do, what is necessary and what is ideal.

SOME WOMEN ARE BETTER THAN OTHERS

That the moral education of women had become a particular point of interest for philosophers, driven by the crisis of morality in the late republican and early imperial period, should come as no surprise. Rosa Maria Aguilar considers the originality and extensive interest in women in Plutarch's work as the result of these changed social conditions which extended from Rome to Greece and necessitated a reconsideration of the wife and her role in the home and the family.⁹³ The practice of psychagogy was not limited to any particular school, and much of the extant work on the topic treats the issue of women's roles in society in very similar ways. Middle Platonism had already seen considerable influence from other intellectual traditions by the 1st century CE, which may appear to be "eclecticism," but this label has largely been rejected.⁹⁴ That Plutarch assimilates ideas from Aristotelianism, Stoicism, the Pythagoreans and even at times the Cynics is clear from the wide scope of his work and the way in which his thought is developed. Works such as *Stoic Contradictions*, *Against Colotes* and *Epicurus Makes the Pleasant Life Impossible* engage other philosophical traditions directly and explicitly, and it is a common function of moral educational literature to present and refute the views of competitors. Theoretical texts like *On Isis* and *On Love* show his engagement with beliefs present in his wider social context as well as his own innovations in that regard.

Platonism plays a fundamental role in Plutarch's moral-educational works and his engagement with the philosophical tradition is careful and critical. The philosophical framework within which Plutarch operates often reveals itself unobtrusively, and we find that the only philosophical school that he regularly makes unambiguously positive reference to is Platonism. Despite this, many of his ideas find broad resemblances in other traditions, especially Stoicism.⁹⁵ Giving advice to women had been a feature of popular philosophy from the start of the tradition and Plutarch certainly had an established philosophical basis from which to launch his own psychagogic program. Psychagogy for women often focused on common *topoi*, adapting and expanding the advice within the appropriate philosophical framework. Plutarch is no different, as he uses his Platonic foundations to build his own version of the ideal woman. This philosophical framework is evident in ideas held about the proper application of virtue. John Dillon claims that Plutarch's ethics follows a fairly consistent Peripatetic doctrine, although "his true views are frequently obscured in his more popular ethical treatises, where the tradition that he is following is predominantly Cynic-Stoic."⁹⁶ However, it should not be understood that his popular-philosophical works can be separated from his theoretical-philosophical works on the basis of some methodological or philosophical difference.⁹⁷ The views Plutarch develops in the latter form the basis of the former, while he uses different traditions carefully and judiciously to create his psychagogic program for women. Whatever his sources and influences may be, he presents his doctrines within the framework of Platonism, and the views that result are uniquely Plutarchan.

In both the *Moralia* and the *Lives*, Plutarch develops his conceptual framework for the proper virtue of men. As is often the case, ideas about masculinity tend to reveal equally as much about the author's views on women and the feminine. A successful man in the ancient world must be respectable, and for that he needs a wife who is respectable too. Plutarch therefore finds it necessary to

develop a concept of virtue that encompasses both sexes and their relationship with one another. How should their virtue interact in service of a common goal? How is woman's virtue different to man's? It's nearly impossible for the practical philosopher in the imperial period to subscribe to a strictly Platonic doctrine on women's virtues, not only because of the difficulty of reconciling the different views across Plato's dialogues, but also because the *zeitgeist* simply did not allow for it. The social context had changed dramatically and women had become a formidable force in public life that had to be reckoned with. What we therefore find in Plutarch is an attempt to reconcile his broadly Platonic views with the needs of his audience. Not coincidentally, the development of this doctrine involves a careful hierarchization of types according to "natural" circumstances, such as gender and ethnicity, as well as individual choice. To a certain extent, a woman can choose to be virtuous even if nature has dealt her a bad hand. This also means that she can choose vice, and Plutarch is well aware that many women (and even men) do make that choice. This tension between what nature dictates and what people actually do is a consistent theme throughout his work, and in fact reveals quite a lot about who matters and who doesn't. Characteristics like noble birth, wealth, being Greek or Roman, and motherhood affect the perceived value of a woman.

Unsurprisingly, women who are wealthier than their husbands are a source of unease for Plutarch.⁹⁸ Wealth, like women, overwhelms and overpowers men, drawing them away from the study of philosophy (*De cupid. div.* 526f). In *Advice*, he broaches the issue of commonality, advising the couple that they should consider all things their common property. Plutarch pivots from this romantic notion to an analogy about the mixing of wine that not-so-subtly inverts the principle he just laid out.⁹⁹ Though the larger part of the mixture consists of water, he says, it's still called wine, and so all property should be considered to belong to the husband, even if the wife contributed the larger share (*Conj. praec.*

140e–f, cf. *Amat.* 767d–e). This scenario seems to have been relatively common in the 1st century CE. Stadter notes that Clea, to whom *On Isis* and *Virtues* is addressed, was a wealthy woman herself. In the *Life of Cicero*, Plutarch mentions that Cicero had a small estate but Terentia came with a considerable dowry which allowed him to live a generous yet modest life (*Cic.* 7.3, 8.2). He characterizes Terentia as ambitious (*philotimos*), harsh (*chalepē*) and domineering (*Cic.* 29.3), a common stereotype for wealthy women, since their wealth often translated to power.

In *On Love*, Pisia (a proponent of pederasty and detractor of conjugal *erōs*) warns that Bacchon must beware of Ismenodora's wealth, which along with her perceived desire to dominate him threatens to consume his identity. The analogy of water and wine is used here again in the positive sense of retaining a masculine identity, but Pisia fears that Bacchon's marriage to Ismenodora will erase him in the same way as tin disappears when mixed with copper (*Amat.* 752e–f).¹⁰⁰ Thus Chapman comments that roles are reversed in Ismenodora and Bacchon: she is the active partner and he the passive.¹⁰¹ According to Pisia and Protogenes, Ismenodora's behavior is improper because she has rejected many noble and wealthy suitors in favor of a marriage with a much younger man, which they understand as a desire to dominate (*archein kai kratein*, 752f), risking Bacchon's identity as a free man.

Plutarch, however, disagrees that the mere fact of her wealth and age should disqualify Ismenodora. Of course, one shouldn't choose a wife purely for her wealth (another intertext with *Advice*, esp. 141c), but if she is also virtuous (*aretē*) and noble (*genei*), "it would be ridiculous to shun her" (*Amat.* 754b). Ismenodora possesses not only wealth (*plousia*), but also beauty (*kalos*), youth (*nea*) and nobility (*genneia*). Crucially, Ismenodora is older but she is not old, she can still bear children. And as Beneker rightly notes, the most important quality that Ismenodora possesses is good sense (*nous*, *phronēsis*, *Amat.* 754d), and this overrides Plutarch's concerns regarding her wealth or age, thus allowing him to argue

in favor of the marriage.¹⁰² Her ability to use reason to guide her younger husband while he learns to practice *enkrateia* is for Plutarch the deciding factor that overrides his view in *Advice* that the husband should guide the wife.

Loss of self appears to be one of the major factors in Pisis and Protogenes' rejection of Bacchon's impending marriage. They fear that Ismenodora's wealth and age would give her power over her young husband, but Plutarch disagrees that wealth and class alone indicate a proclivity for domination on the part of women (753d).¹⁰³ If that were true, he says, ought men not to marry women of low birth and status? Yet there are many examples of such women enslaving men:

Samian flute-girls, ballet dancers, women like Aristonica and Oenanthē with her tambourine and Agathoclea had trampled on the crowns of kings. The Syrian Semiramis was the servant of a house-born slave of the king, Ninus the Great, who one day caught sight of her and fell in love. She grew to have such power and contempt for him that she asked to be allowed to direct the affairs of state, crowned and seated on his throne, for one day. He granted this and issued orders for everyone to serve and obey her just as they would himself. At first her commands were moderate while she was making trial of the guards; then, when she saw that there was no opposition or hesitation on their part, she ordered Ninus to be seized, put in chains, and finally put to death. When all this was done, she ruled gloriously over Asia for many years (*Amat.* 753d–e).

Plutarch here offers a taxonomy of types of women that sometimes gain power illegitimately, including musicians and dancers, and of course enslaved women. He also names Belestichē, a barbarian woman (*barbaron gunaion*) to whom the Alexandrians maintain temples and shrines as Aphrodite Belestichē, and alludes to the *hetaira* Phrynē, who is worshipped alongside Eros at Thespieae

(753e–f) and in *The Fortune or Virtue of Alexander* appears as a “monument to Greek *akrasia*” (336d).¹⁰⁴ Kuefler notes that Semiramis was believed to have been the first woman to raise herself to the masculine position of royal rule *and* the first to lower men to the status of eunuch.¹⁰⁵ The connection appears more than coincidental.

In Plutarch’s view, these women were worthless (*phaulē*), they had no wealth with which to subjugate men and yet they did so anyway, and the men who fell prey to their devices did so out of weakness and effeminacy (*astheneia kai malakia*).¹⁰⁶ The connection between softness and inability to dominate echoes the ideas about reproductive difference that theorize sexual difference as a determinant of social role, but it also destabilizes that link in instances of role reversal. The dichotomy between hard and soft permeates all aspects of life. Deborah Lyons identifies an ideological distinction between “male wealth” and “female wealth.” The latter is generally identified with soft consumable goods such as food and textiles, while the former is identified with hard goods such as metals, a distinction that is increasingly blurred during Plutarch’s lifetime. In her analysis of texts from the archaic and Classical periods, Lyons notes the unease over women crossing the boundaries between *being exchanged* and *exchanging*, and the power dynamics that shift along with this transgression of social norms and allows women to become agents of exchange, a role traditionally earmarked for men.¹⁰⁷ Controlling female wealth is one way of controlling women’s access to luxury goods, which are considered soft and feminine and thus can also signify barbarism and vice.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, the use and display of luxuries often denotes power, especially the royal power of the Persian court, where women regularly overpower men. Luxury and greed are particularly barbarian vices often ascribed to people from Asia Minor (cf. *Luc.* 7.1).¹⁰⁹ The assimilation of barbarians and the feminine reveals a double anxiety about the threat of social upheaval.¹¹⁰

While for Plutarch wealth is unproblematic in the case of the virtuous Ismenodora, a woman of lower status and questionable repute receives a rather different evaluation. When Plutarch describes Demetrius' relationship with the *hetaira* Lamia, the way she handled money is a particular point of contention.¹¹¹ Demetrius taxed the Athenians 250 talents, which he then handed over to Lamia and her fellow *hetairai* so they could buy soap, to the great shame of the Athenians. To add insult to injury, Lamia herself on another occasion exacted money from the citizens to fund an extravagant dinner for Demetrius (*Demetr.* 27.1). In this same chapter, Plutarch connects her to the creature of myth who ate children and seduced attractive men.¹¹² This link characterizes her as incorrectly gendered and insatiable, from which it's a short jump to greedy and power-hungry. The key difference between Ismenodora and Lamia is that one yearned for marriage and the other kept a man from his legitimate wives of noble descent.

In Semonides' infamous misogynistic poem detailing the types of women, the woman who revels in luxury, wears perfume and flowers in her hair and bathes twice a day is likened to a mare, beautiful to look at but an evil for the man who marries her (57–70). No doubt the reference to men handling their wealthy wives as if they were horses at *Advice* 139b is a play on this familiar trope.¹¹³ At *Beasts are Rational* 99ob, luxury goods and in particular perfume are described as both effeminate (*korasiōdēs*) and emasculate (*anandros*); it is not only women who fall prey to these vices. References to wealth and luxury often form part of a network of vices linked to effeminacy. This is well-demonstrated by an anecdote about Scipio the Younger, who found his camp saturated with disorder (*ataxia*), licentiousness (*akolasia*), superstition (*deisdaimonia*) and luxury (*truphē*), and so had to drive out the soothsayers, diviners and pimps, and forbade bathing and reclining while eating (*Apophth. Rom.* 201b–c). Musonius reasons that boys brought up in luxury, having been made “womanish in body” and thus spiritually weakened, will have a harder time following

a philosophical argument against pleasure (fr. 1.4). Indulgence in luxury is a choice that indicates the state of the soul written on the body.

This reveals yet another tension between ideal and reality that appears to have been more ideological than practical. If the body is the sign of a moral condition, which it displays in the privacy of the home by assuming a submissive or dominant role in accordance with its type, it must therefore also exhibit these signs outwardly in ways that are legible in social groups. These signs can also denote a hierarchy on the basis of class, for which luxury goods is an obvious marker. For the philosopher, however, this moral code takes the form of moderate asceticism, in which the wealthy elite conspicuously *reject* ostentatious material goods. Plutarch's own wife Timoxena habitually abstained from luxury goods even in public, a testament to both his and her own virtue (*Cons. ux.* 609a). Replacing tangible luxuries and conspicuous consumption—material goods that denote class superiority—with the values of philosophical education has the further advantage of elevating difference through the promise of equality (that is to say, moral equality between elite women and elite men).¹¹⁴ Elite women can simultaneously denote both submission and superiority through asceticism and philosophical knowledge, the latter itself a commodity that is not freely available. Virtuous women who were seen in public with their husbands were expected to portray this image, just as Plutarch praises Timoxena for her simplicity and disdain for extravagance in all things (*Cons. ux.* 609a). He also explicitly rejects a number of luxuries that may be considered feminine and which often denote effeminacy and moral weakness¹¹⁵ in favor of a masculine ontology to which women are now explicitly admitted. Philosophical study allows virtuous women to aspire to a form of intellectual masculinity-of-soul that is superior to effeminate weakness. The bodily signs of these psychic conditions are either asceticism or luxury. The virtuous woman, being thus set apart from other types of people that are morally and socially

inferior on the basis of access to wealth and indulgence in luxury, is increasingly isolated.

Susan Mattern argues that Galen describes his female patients as socially, if not always physically, isolated.¹¹⁶ These women don't have friends, they have midwives and servants (often female). Her husband would likely be present as part of the audience when the doctor administers to her, as might some of his friends. If she were enslaved, her cure would be attended by her enslaver, if she were a child, her father. Where women appeared at public, semi-public, or community gatherings, Plutarch says that their husbands must also be present (*Quaest. conv.* 667b), suggesting that women don't get to socialize without permission and a chaperone. There is plenty of evidence, however, that socializing with friends and neighbors was a standard part of women's lives.¹¹⁷ Cohen makes the excellent point that separation is not the same as seclusion, meaning that women's communities were insular in the gendered sense, but they were communities nonetheless.¹¹⁸ For Plutarch, this insularity itself poses a threat, since husbands have no control over what their wives do when they're not present. This is quite evident in the anecdote about Caesar's wife Pompeia, who was suspected of using the festival of the Bona Dea, from which men were barred by law, as cover for her affair with Clodius (*Caes.* 9.2–10.6). The sense of alienation in Plutarch's work therefore seems almost deliberate. The woman in this position is increasingly socially isolated and at a loss for identity, since what is hers is systematically removed from her until only that which serves her husband remains.

Here another tension reveals itself: women ought to serve their husbands, unless they serve other women, in which case they serve both those women *and* their husbands. Consider the anecdote extolling the virtue of a servant woman named Philotis, or perhaps Tutola,¹¹⁹ in the biographies *Camillus* and *Romulus*.¹²⁰ During the war with the neighboring peoples, the Latins sent a demand that the Romans give them free-born virgins and widows so that they may make peace through intermarriage, as they had done with

the Sabines. The Romans hesitated until Philotis stepped up and suggested that they send herself and a number of other pretty servant girls dressed as free women. When night fell, the women stole the enemy's swords while Philotis climbed a fig tree and gave the signal for attack; the Romans then rushed in and slaughtered most of the enemy soldiers (*Cam.* 33.2–5, *Rom.* 29.4–6). The version in *Parallel Stories* names the enemy as Gauls, labels them barbarians (*barbaroi*) and includes the not-so-minor detail that the men fell asleep after “endless intercourse” with the enslaved women (313a). The contrast between the female servant (*therapainis*) and the free woman (*eleuthera gunē*) animates this story.¹²¹ The value of Philotis' actions is in her preservation of free women's dignity and her alleged willingness to be a sexual commodity. A maxim in *Spartan Women* also highlights this sense of duty and loyalty expected of enslaved persons.¹²² The unnamed woman, who was being sold into enslavement, was asked what she knew how to do and replied, “to be faithful” (242c). By protecting the chastity of free women, enslaved women also serve their husbands, who remain the ultimate authority.

One of Plutarch's favorite virtuous women provides another excellent example of the kind of bias that leads to disregard for some women in favor of others. The story of Timocleia, told again in *Alexander* (12.1–3), starts with a preamble about her brother Theagenes of Thebes (*Mulier. virt.* 259d).¹²³ This is relevant, because when she was later brought to face Alexander, Theagenes' name is what buys her respect and ultimately her freedom. In the telling of the anecdote, Plutarch references the virtue (*aretē*) of the family (259e), her attacker's lack of respect for her ancestry (*genos*) and estate (259f), her composure and gait as an indicator of her rank and nobility and the undeservedness of the experience for her family (260c)—as if her rape might have been permissible were it not for her status. When she appeared before Alexander to tell her story, he let her and her relatives go free, ordering his men to make sure no such insult falls on a noted house again (260d).¹²⁴ But what

of those houses not noted, not noble—were they free game for the rapacious and violent mercenaries in Alexander’s employ? Would a similar experience have been equally undeserved for a woman of low status? That we have no clear answer to these questions serves only to emphasize the privilege of wealth and nobility over poverty and enslavement.¹²⁵

As it turns out, some women are different than others and the same rules don’t apply. When one of Alexander’s soldiers feigned sickness on account of his love for Telesippa, who was departing for the sea, Alexander first asked who he should talk to about her. When he learned that she was not enslaved but a free woman, he told the man that they must attempt to persuade her to stay with promises and presents, “for to coerce her, a free woman, is not within our right” (*Apophth. reg.* 181a). As is evident from the anecdote, told again in *The Fortune of Alexander* (339d) and the *Life of Alexander* (41.5), the appropriate course of action depends on her social status.¹²⁶ Enslaved women and those not eligible to legally marry citizen men are a different type of woman, othered because of their inability to bear citizen children and their lack of freedom.¹²⁷ Their relationships with free men and women are regulated by an alternative set of rules.

We can thus with some confidence identify wealth (*plousios*) and nobility (*eugenēs*) as two of the central characteristics that determine the worth of a free woman. However, nobility is no guarantee of virtue (cf. *Lys. et Sull.* 2.2), it merely makes its acquisition easier for the simple reason that many of the requirements of virtue presuppose liberty, leisure and education. So too being enslaved or being a barbarian does not rule out the possibility of virtue, it simply changes the way such virtue must be expressed. The contrast between Greek and barbarian is accentuated in *The Fortune of Alexander*, where the distinction is one of virtue (*aretē*) and vice (*kakia*). All else, says Plutarch, Alexander made common to all the peoples he conquered (329c–d).¹²⁸ But there are examples of barbarian women of good character. The story of Camma, told

again in *On Love* (768b–d), lists the heroine’s good qualities, her form and beauty (*idea sōmatos kai hora*),¹²⁹ her modesty (*sōphrosunē*), her love for her husband (*philandros*), her intelligence (*sunetē*) and high-mindedness (*megalophrōn*), and finally the kindness and benevolence that endeared her to her inferiors (*Mulier. virt.* 257f).¹³⁰ Virtue, it seems, while not a natural attribute of barbarians, is not de facto unavailable to them but rather more difficult to come by and more easily available to barbarian (men and) women of high birth and beauty, for whom the conditions of virtue are more readily obtained through access to (Greek) education, submission and seclusion.

Anecdotes like the one about Camma reify and reproduce structures of power and domination that can only exist in the presence of a network of presupposed inferiorities, a matrix of domination which gives some women the right to dominate other people provided she subordinates herself to those who rank above her. Such a matrix must be policed if it is to be maintained. If submission is a naturally feminine trait and virtuous women can become masculine-in-soul and so dominate others, the hierarchy of domination is at risk of destabilization. Cornelia was so virtuous, in fact, that her son Caius used her reputation to reproach a man charged with effeminacy (*malakia*, CG 4.4), indicating thereby also her masculinity-of-soul. *Advice* therefore places a high premium on male domination over elite women, and indeed suggests that failure to do so is a sign of weakness (*astheneia*) and effeminacy (*malakia*). Though weakness of the soul may be typical of women, men are not immune.

Excessive display of emotion is a prime example. According to Seneca, women are more likely to succumb to grief than men (*Marc.* 7.3). Excessive mourning was considered a feminine vice and restraint in grief signified a masculine soul.¹³¹ Men who display excessive emotional traits are therefore effeminate. Plutarch praises Demosthenes’ restraint after the death of his daughter while denouncing Aeschines as ignoble and weak (*agennēs kai malakos*)

for expecting a spectacle of lamentation (*Dem.* 22.2). Plutarch commends the manly (*andrōdēs*) spirit that led Demosthenes to leave the weeping to the women (22.4). As Jean-Noël Allard, Pascal Montlahuc and Marian Rothstein note, men who do display emotion often do so in private or take great care to maintain their masculinity when they express emotion in public.¹³² Effeminacy in grief also implies an aspect of otherness and an affinity with barbarians (*Cons. ad Ap.* 113a–b). Castriota points out the wild grief of Xerxes in Aeschylus' *Persians* (909–1076), which assimilates him to the women who join him in lament and so emasculates him in the process.¹³³

As one may expect, the antidote to excessive emotionality is education. Women who are educated, especially those who are educated in philosophy, would learn to be moderate in everything, even in grief (*Muson.* fr. 3; *Sen. Marc.* 3.4; *Plut. Cons. ux.* 609a). The *Life* of Tiberius and Caius Gracchus ends with a note about Cornelia's noble nature and good education, which helped her endure her grief after the loss of her sons with calm assurance (*CG* 19.1–2).¹³⁴ Porcia reproaches her husband for his lack of trust in her, saying that not only is she more than a mere concubine (*Brut.* 13.4), but she has had the good education and companionship required to transcend the natural weakness (*astheneia*) of her sex and bear her pain with moderation (13.5). As Beneker argues, Porcia's appeal to the excellence of her character affirms her right to share her husband's struggles on the basis of their shared virtue.¹³⁵

And yet even so, on the day of Caesar's assassination, she could scarcely bear the weight of the secret entrusted to her, spending the day at home agitated to the extent that she eventually faints (15.3–6). Despite his positive characterization of Porcia, Plutarch seems unwilling or unable to fully commit to the notion of equality. She remains susceptible to overwhelming emotion, even if she bears it well. Plutarch's representation of this episode accentuates their different natures. First, he tells the reader that news of Porcia's death reached Brutus at the senate (15.3), then

Porcia's wild anxiety which caused her to rush about "like women in Bacchic frenzy" (15.4) and her body succumbing to the strain (15.4), and finally Brutus' own stoic reaction to the report of her death (15.5). The failure of Porcia's bodily powers (*hē tou sōmatos dunamis*) further confirms that her mind may have been willing but she didn't have the physical faculties needed to partake in such a great exploit; it is her sex that held her back.

WOMAN QUESTIONS

Plutarch does not treat all women the same across his works, because evidently all women are not the same in his conceptual framework. It's quite clear that a number of factors can affect the way a woman is portrayed and the moral evaluation of her character. For Plutarch, the distinction between male and female is important, but it is not enough to organize society by. A number of other categories intersect with sex to produce gender, ethnicity, wealth and nobility, class, dress, and language or speech acts. Plutarch is a keen student of the ways in which these factors interact, and a sharp theoretician when it comes to assigning ethical value to them. A number of now-lost works listed in the Lamprias Catalogue suggest a far greater interest in women and the feminine than what is already evident in the extant texts. Works such as *Woman Questions* (no. 167), the *Consolation to Bestia* (no. 157), *On Love of Adornment* (no. 113), *The Wetnurse* (no. 114), *Whether Odd or Even Number is the Better* (no. 74), *An Introduction to Psychology* (no. 48), *The Participation of Matter in the Forms* (no. 68), *On Matter* (no. 185) and *That the Soul is Imperishable* (no. 226) would have been a valuable addition to those texts studied here (presuming, of course, that they were authentic). Even so, the anecdotes, precepts, maxims and exempla in the extant texts in the *Moralia* (as also in the *Lives*) form a network of ideals about proper female conduct that is generally consistent, if quite complex. Taken together, it is possible to produce a fairly accurate picture of Plutarch's ideal

woman and his views on feminine vice, and it is unlikely that lost works would have presented a much different picture. What may be lost, however, is some of the subtlety.

It should now be clear that Plutarch's ideal of womanhood is fairly traditional. Gabriele Marasco, arguing that Plutarch's views on women in the *Moralia* are echoed in the biographies, sees the role of women in the Spartan *Lives* as much more positive and detailed, while the women that appear in the Hellenistic *Lives* are much less pronounced and often accompanied by notes of disapproval for dynastic marriages devoid of love. As for the Republican biographies, Plutarch seems unsympathetic to the greater freedoms gained by Roman women during this time, and as a result often (but not always—exceptions do in fact prove the rule) portrays women in this period as adulterous, ambitious and domineering.¹³⁶ Marasco's analysis focuses specifically on the aspects of women's characterization that are tied to marriage and partnership.¹³⁷ Catherine notes, on the basis of the anecdote of Micca and Megisto in *Virtues*, that the virtuous woman is noble, concerned with the fate of her country and the preservation of her modesty. She is also pious, self-controlled and supportive of good men.¹³⁸ Ann Chapman describes female virtue as the "companionable, but subservient wife, the unselfish mother, the passive lover," a woman who has attained "manly" self-mastery yet remains essentially female in the face of male hegemony. For France Le Corsu, she must be submissive, discreet, dignified, agreeable, devoted to her husband, and temperate.¹³⁹ This ideal is as visible in *Advice* and *Virtues* as it is in the *Lives*; as far as ideals go, Plutarch is fairly consistent.

Virtuous women do not however appear out of thin air. They can only be virtuous in comparison to someone else who is *not* virtuous.¹⁴⁰ Plutarch's great contribution is not that he set the scene for feminism, but that he used philosophy to encode difference into the structure of the self, raising some women up while pushing some men down, based on his vision of eternal and immutable reality. Which is, obviously, male and masculine. As

Alain Vezier notes, “the structure that enables differences to be thought is nothing other than Reason.”¹⁴¹ Vice manifests in the absence of reason, and virtue manifests against the backdrop of vice. There are clear indications of the kinds of vices that call a woman’s character into question, and Plutarch supplies no shortage of negative exempla. While *Virtues* does take a generally positive approach to female agency (within narrowly defined conditions), a small number of anecdotes provide female counterexamples that function comparatively.¹⁴² In the story of the women of Phocis, the action is initiated by a group of Thyads, devotees of Dionysos who had wandered the night in Bacchic frenzy and passed out still drunk in the agora of Amphissa. The Phocian women’s virtue lies in their safeguarding of the Thyads’ dignity and chastity by silently protecting the sleeping women from rapacious soldiers, feeding them and escorting them back to the border with the consent of their husbands (*Mulier. virt.* 249e–f). The unsaid elements of this tale contrast the Phocian women with the Thyads. Certain religious practices are contrary to the husband’s wishes because of the forms they take, in this case specifically drunkenness and the lack of self-control that attends it (*Cons. ux.* 609a). References to Bacchic rites are rarely positive. There is also a close connection between these superstitions and the use of *mageia*, *pharmaka*, *philtr*a and *goēteia*, which implies both insubordination and the attending desire to dominate men (*Conj. praec.* 139a, 145c, *De aud. poet.* 20b).¹⁴³ These are traits more appropriate to barbarians than proper Greek wives (*De superst.* 171b), and indeed rumors of superstition and witchcraft can be used to bring a woman’s character into question. In the *Lives*, both Cleopatra and Olympias are the targets of this strategy, and both are represented as barbaric, cruel and lustful (*Alex.* 2.2–2.6). The reader of *Virtues* is subtly encouraged to judge the Thyads for (presumably) acting outside of the bounds of their husbands’ authority, unlike the explicit consent given to “the wives of the men of Amphissa.”¹⁴⁴ The Phocian women act within the bounds of male authority, and it is for this reason that they’re commended.

Two longer stories are much more explicitly comparative, those of Polycrite and Aretaphila. Both problematize female sexuality, which in some cases disrupts and in others affirms or restores the status quo. Polycrite played a decisive role in the war between the Naxians and Milesians, which “came to an end through a woman’s virtue (*aretē*), as it had arisen through a woman’s wickedness (*mochthēria*)” (254c).¹⁴⁵ The wicked woman in question is Neaera, the wife of Hypsicreon of Miletus, who sailed away with Promedon of Naxos after falling in love with him. Neaera was supposedly the instigator of the affair while Promedon merely yielded to her “ardent advances” (254b), as a result of which war broke out. Polycrite was one of the Naxian free women and maidens (*gunaikas eleutheras kai parthenous*) captured by the Milesian side, although her captor, Diognetus, apparently fell in love with her and kept her in the status of a wedded wife. She took advantage of this goodwill to slip her brothers a message advising them on the right time to attack, but she took no active part in the attack itself other than preventing the killing of Diognetus (254d–e). She died before she could enjoy the honors due to her, as if “envious fortune” had taken that privilege away from her (254e). For Schmitt Pantel, this remark registers the limits of male thinking about women, politics and civic values.¹⁴⁶ In another version of the story, Polycrite wasn’t captured but rather wooed by Diognetus, who promised to do whatever she asked and kept his word even when she asked for the stronghold of Delium. In both versions, she was as fundamental to the resolution and peace that follows as Neaera was in its initiation.

The narrative of Aretaphila’s deeds is exceptionally long and most explicitly comparative. From the outset, Plutarch sets her up as the heroine through a brief description of her background and character. Her virtue (*aretē*) was legendary, as was her lineage; both her father and husband were “men of note” (255e). She was beautiful (*kalos*), unusually sensible (*phronein*) and not deficient in political wisdom (*politikēs deinotētos*). The latter two attributes should probably be qualified by the phrase *for a woman*, making explicit what Plutarch leaves implicit. Like Polycrite, Aretaphila

was claimed by a man of power, in this case the despot Nicocrates, who had killed her husband and made her his unwilling wife (255f). Plutarch documents Nicocrates' cruelty, from which Aretaphila alone was spared on account of his love for her. He compares her to Thebe of Pherae, who had killed her husband Alexander with the help of her brothers, thus making him the first tyrant to be killed by his wife.¹⁴⁷ The brief mention of Thebe here suggests that Clea already knows this story, related in detail in *Pelopidas*.

What is most surprising about the tale of Aretaphila's efforts to overthrow Nicocrates is Plutarch's tacit approval of her use of poison (*pharmaka*), which he considers a necessity on account of her isolation (256a).¹⁴⁸ Unfortunately, her plot to rid herself of her abuser was uncovered, at which point enter Calbia, Nicocrates' naturally bloodthirsty (*phonikē*) and inexorable mother, who resolved to kill Aretaphila after having her tortured and whose cruelty was only tempered by her son's affection for his stolen wife (256b).¹⁴⁹ Aretaphila defended herself against the charges by arguing that she had only tried to protect herself from the potions and devices of bad women who were envious of her position, admitting that it was foolish and feminine (*gunaikeia*), and framing her actions as that of a woman who tried to employ love potions (*philtrā*) and magic charms (*goēteia*) out of her desire to be loved (256c). Nevertheless, Nicocrates decided to put her to the torture at Calbia's behest, though she gave nothing away and was eventually set free. At this point, she changed tactic, using her daughter to bait Nicocrates' brother Leander into killing him. This is not the end of her struggles, however, since Leander then became a tyrant in his own right (256e–f). What follows describes Aretaphila's efforts to make away with him as well, ultimately leading to Calbia being burned alive and Leander sewn into a leather sack and dropped into the sea (257d). Aretaphila received fitting honors and was offered a seat in government, but Plutarch praises her for declining and instead withdrawing to the women's quarters (*gunaikōnitis*) to spend the rest of her life at the loom. These positive examples can only function in contrast to

negative examples, like the tyrants Aristotimus and Nicocrates or the licentious Neaera and cruel Calbia.

Both Clea and Eurydice were well-educated, as also was Timoxena and probably a not-insignificant number of other women in Plutarch's life.¹⁵⁰ References to well-known stories indicate that the female audience likely knew the details already and did not need a reminder—this is evident in the anecdotes about Olympias in *Advice*, and I would argue that the brief reference to Thebe in *Virtues* functions on a similar assumption. Plutarch believes that virtue can be taught in much the same way as horse riding, reading, or playing the lyre (*An. virt.* 440a–b).¹⁵¹ In fact, he thought it ridiculous that all other arts could be taught and yet some think that matters of such great importance, that is, how one should get along with their fellow humans, should be left to chance and accident. The vehicle for teaching this art of life is psychagogy, through which the soul of the subject is remade into an ethical self.

Plutarch is not alone in believing that education can cultivate virtue in women as well as men. Stoic attitudes towards women have often been described as fairly egalitarian; they believed that men and women possessed the same virtues and moral capabilities.¹⁵² It is therefore not entirely surprising that Seneca wrote two *Consolations* to women, and that both of them admit by their very nature that women's education is not out of place in the Stoic framework. Yet Seneca seems wary of women's ability and use of their education, accusing them of "wear[ing] out their eloquence in lending it to others" (*Helv.* 14.2) and "womanish weakness of mind" (*Marc.* 1.1). According to him, the great majority of women misuse the education they receive and display it carelessly (*Helv.* 17.4). Thus he tells Marcia that she may be able to overcome her grief *despite* being a woman (*Marc.* 16.1), and one of the things that may help her do so is the study of philosophy (*Helv.* 17.3; *Marc.* 4.2). Plutarch is similarly skeptical of women's intellectual lives in the absence of male guidance (*Conj. praec.* 145d–e).

In order to prevent the potential negative outcomes of education, Plutarch advises the husband to assist his wife in her further education by selecting teachings that are appropriate for her (*Conj. praec.* 145c) and by guiding her in every aspect, including in the bedroom (145a). In fact, the husband takes on a broadly exemplary role as “guide, philosopher and teacher in all that is most lovely and divine” which Plutarch characterizes as that of a father, mother and even a brother (145c). He must be everything to her, so that without him she is nothing. The woman’s education is therefore shaped according to what her husband deems suitable and necessary for her, because her education is primarily a means to an end: the cultivation of the proper female virtues. These virtues are not those that she may deem necessary or beneficial for her attainment of *eudaimonia* but those that her husband considers necessary for her to serve him and their household most effectively, and of which the most important is *sōphrosunē*. Furthermore, collections of *apophthegmata* like the *Sayings* that form part of the *Moralia* could function, according to Richard Hawley, as “tools of moral indoctrination.”¹⁵³ In this regard, psychagogy is the formalization of a set of principles for the formation of an ethical self, a self that is defined on the basis of a matrix of oppositional directives that confer the right to dominate or obligation to submit: *I am this, this I am not*. These oppositions function across a number of categories. I am female, I am not male; I am masculine, not effeminate; I am Greek, I am not a barbarian; I am free, not enslaved; I am rich, I am not poor; I am beautiful, not ugly; I am young, not old; I am virtuous, I am not vicious. The internalization of these principles through philosophical study ought to have the result of fundamentally changing the subject’s mode of being. In the case of women, this transformation is aimed at the formation of a self that is inextricable from its role in the conjugal unit.

CHAPTER FOUR

A VIRTUOUS IDEAL

Whenever two notes are sounded in accord the tune is carried by the bass; and in like manner every activity in a virtuous household is carried on by both parties in agreement, but discloses the husband's leadership and preferences.

Advice 139d

In the previous chapters, I have argued that the practice of psychagogy proposes to alter the student's mode of being through a defined set of therapeutic practices that can be applied to men or to women in similar ways but with different intended outcomes, and that even for women the outcomes are not always the same because not all women fulfill the same roles in society. However, some generalizations can be made. In the case of women, Plutarch's psychagogy proposes a way of life that is restrictive, submissive and often antithetical to the realities of women's lives. The philosopher aims to convince the student that they must *choose* this way of life, they must alter their mode of being accordingly, they must rectify the relation of themselves to themselves and to others, and in doing so they may attain virtue and fulfillment. Geert Roskam notes that this problem is recurrent in Plutarch's work, both in

the *Moralia* and the *Lives*, and that virtue is often revealed through this relation of similarity and difference.¹ Thus the other is a site for the constitution of the self. In this chapter, we turn to the role of moral education in the formation of the self as an ethical subject. I will argue that the demands of virtue are restrictive and paradoxical, that virtue initiates a split between the subject as they perceive themselves and the subject as they are perceived by others, and that gender is produced in this tension between the ethical demand and the impossibility of its fulfillment.

Jo Ann McNamara argues that Plutarch tries to persuade Eurydice to choose subordination knowing full well that domination is an option for her. She comments that moral philosophers in the early imperial age “began to define a different set of gender characteristics” and that “neither Paul nor Plutarch seriously advocated equality for women ... they were seeking readjustments in the gender system that would persuade potentially rebellious women to accept its structures.”² Put another way, these writers sought to redefine masculine virtue to accommodate virtuous women in a way that did not threaten the patriarchal matrix of domination. One way to achieve this goal is to convince some women that they are superior to other women, so superior in fact that they are closer to men than they are to these other women, and therefore they have the right to dominate them in turn. The further removed a woman is from the paradigm of Woman, the more valid is her oppression; the other woman deserves to be dominated because she is a barbarian, or a lesbian, or enslaved, or some *other* other, or maybe all of these at once. This process of differentiation and separation is deployed across a range of genres and is not limited to moral-philosophical works. On this view, psychagogy is the internalization and personalization of a structure of organization and control that aims to regulate gender roles and hierarchies of domination, and virtue itself is a power-relation that privileges the phallus.

CONVERSION AND CONFIRMATION

Inasmuch as psychagogy is a process of self-formation and regulation, it has the double function of conversion and confirmation. The more traditional of Plutarch's views no doubt sat easily with the more traditional of his readers, for whom any change in the status quo poses the most danger. Lieve van Hoof argues that Plutarch's ethics are conservative, uncritical of society and geared towards the individual and the self. It aims not at the subversion of social mechanisms, but at changing the mode of being of individual persons.³ There has been a trend among scholars to consider Plutarch's ethics, especially in the *Lives*, as a subtle and implicit form of moralism, in opposition to the protreptic moralism of the *Moralia*, which attempts to influence the reader to take certain actions.⁴ As van Hoof notes, these two types of moralism aren't mutually exclusive.⁵ Protreptic is generally characterized by the aim at conversion with a focus on persuasive techniques, while paraenetic aims at confirmation of belief.⁶ Protreptic "points beyond itself" as an exhortation to philosophy and the wisdom contained within it, a path which the audience must choose and keep choosing. According to Mark Jordan, protreptic thus understood suggests that all of philosophical pedagogy functions as some form of protreptic that reaches towards an ever-shifting goal which demands the subject's whole self.⁷ Protreptic is often implicit, aimed at a reader who is not yet aware that they are being presented with a choice between competing ideas and who is not deliberately seeking out a new way of life.⁸ This form of discourse thus catches the reader unawares, initiating a split between the subject as they know themselves and the idealized version of their future selves evoked by protreptic rhetoric.

In Plutarch's work, the distinction between protreptic and paraenetic is often difficult to discern; doing so depends on the constitution of the audience and the historian's understanding of readership. According to van Hoof, Plutarch doesn't take a protreptic

approach to his practical ethics (unlike his contemporaries Musonius Rufus and Epictetus) but rather a paraenetic approach: instead of attempting to convince his audience of their folly in pursuing a certain goal, he suggests ways in which the reader may achieve their goals and reach fulfillment.⁹ Describing Plutarch's work in such binary terms is problematic, as it tends to assume that a clear division between intended and actual audience can be made, and as a result often disregards the texts on and for women in their social context. Assigning Plutarch's work to the category of paraenetic assumes only what I have described in the introduction to this book as the "primary audience," that is, that audience of educated elite men and women who have already been trained in philosophy and therefore likely do not need to be convinced of philosophical ideas on gender roles. The language of many of Plutarch's popular-philosophical texts does not support such a narrow categorization. Though they are highly rhetorical, they are often also easily understood, and there is a marked difference between the philosophical language of works such as *On Love* and *The Creation of the Soul* and that of a work like *Advice*, with the former for example containing far more technical philosophical language than the latter. This indicates a wider scope for *Advice*. Christopher Gill notes that protreptic, therapy and advice are all interrelated parts of a larger psychotherapeutic practice, which I characterize here as psychagogy.¹⁰ We must therefore consider the secondary audience, those with non-specialized, non-technical philosophical knowledge (if any at all), and the purpose of the text on this level. When this complex social context is accounted for, it may be that here the text functions as protreptic, an exhortation to engage with philosophy. Plutarch's works may therefore, like many texts, function as both *paraenesis* and *protrepsis*—reinforcing the beliefs of the primary audience while aiming at convincing the secondary audience that philosophy has something useful to offer them.¹¹

The function of the text therefore must extend beyond genre and format and also depend on the circumstance of the individual

reader and their prior understanding of theirself. The audience is in part a determinant of the form that protreptic discourse takes. In Chapter 2, I argued that the *Lives* function in one sense as extended exempla of noteworthy historical figures. Indeed, observing and contemplating exempla can be a first step in the progression towards moral and ultimately philosophical virtue.¹² Characterizing the biographies in this way highlights the ethical dimension of ancient historiography, while also clarifying the relationship between the two stylistically distinct parts of the Plutarchan corpus.¹³ Jordan characterizes protreptic as a “species of epideictic,” linking the use of exempla for praise and blame to the function of protreptic as conversion literature.¹⁴ On this view, the *Lives* is in fact a sub-category within the *Moralia*, functioning as an exhortation to philosophy and a practical application in the exercise of moral judgment.¹⁵ The *Lives* may take a somewhat less direct approach to character formation, but there is no doubt that the ethical principles laid out in the *Moralia* are on full display in the biographies. It is therefore not particularly fruitful to view the *Lives* and the *Moralia* as separate projects; in fact, as studies such as Duff’s (1999a) have shown, they ought to be considered as complementary halves of a larger ethical project. The *Moralia* might in this sense constitute the *theoria* to the *praxis* of the *Lives*, and thus women cannot be de facto excluded from the potential audience of either.

Most of Plutarch’s work is addressed to men, implying a primarily male audience, and as a result many of the studies on his ethics at large neglect to consider a female audience, an oversight I note continually throughout this book. In my view, it’s simply not enough to pay attention to those works explicitly aimed at women, specifically *Advice*, *Virtues* and *Consolation*, to learn about Plutarch’s views on gender. Plutarch’s keen interest in women and the feminine extends well beyond the confines of these works. Indeed, even *On Isis*, which is addressed to a woman, the same woman as *Virtues*, is rarely considered particularly relevant to

Plutarch's larger educational project for women.¹⁶ On the contrary, it is full to the brim of musings on the nature of women and their relationship to others, especially their husbands and children. So too *On Love*. It is hard to see how texts on whether women are capable of virtuous *erōs* can not be relevant to women. Moreover, it should be expected that some women would have read these works, whether they were explicitly addressed to a female audience or not. When Plutarch tells Clea that he will pass over those stories with which she is already familiar (*Mulier. virt.* 243d), we must acknowledge the possibility that she read those tales somewhere else, perhaps even in Plutarch's own *Lives*. In *On Isis*, he also refers to subjects he has treated elsewhere, implying that he expects Clea to have read those works too. In at least one instance, the explicit reference is to *Table Talk*, a work with a decidedly masculine dramatic setting.¹⁷

There is therefore necessarily a double function in Plutarch's corpus as a whole, and the same text may have a radically different outcome depending on the context of the individual reader. These functions are most likely divided between the primary and secondary audience, with the primary audience reading the text as paraenetic and the secondary audience gaining from the protreptic undertones of the work (overlap and exceptions not excluded).¹⁸ Those women who find themselves unproblematically conjugal are included here in the primary audience, while non-normative subjects whose identities are in some way different from Plutarch's conjugal ideal form part of the secondary audience, even if they are elites. The division is one of class but it is also beyond class, beyond sex, beyond literacy. In the case of the addressee, likely a member of the elite, and readers in similar social contexts, the text aims primarily at confirmation and reinforcement of belief. Addressing a collection of precepts on marriage to a couple well-versed in philosophy and so likely already familiar with the basic principles contained therein also presents them as exempla for other readers, and it might be the case that some of those readers—the secondary

audience—are the targets of conversion, and that the text thus removed from its elite context becomes aspirational.¹⁹

In this sense, psychagogy confronts the reader with an ethical demand through which the self is constituted as a power-relation to itself and to others. The broad range of texts in which Plutarch elaborates on this sense of self that is fundamentally conjugal (and in particular the survival of a number of interconnected texts on the topic), as well as the presence of similar *topoi* in the work of other philosophers of that era, confirms that at least some men believed in the viability of a moral program so organized. That belief, unwavering and remarkably consistent for at least 500 years before Plutarch's lifetime, must have been confirmed by the presence of women whose moral selves *were* fundamentally and unproblematically conjugal. We find many such examples—and counterexamples—in the *Lives*, where the characterization of some women furnish both the demand and the approval of particular ethical principles explored in the *Moralia*. Yet the *Lives* are also filled with a great number of characters that demonstrate opposing principles and are consequently characterized as vicious. This fact is what animates Plutarch's moral-philosophical program. His psychagogy exploits gender as a weak point in the constitution of the self, a point from which a change in mode of being is easier to effect on account of the prior understanding of socio-sexual difference. For the secondary audience, the extent of whose interaction with the text is largely unknown to us, Plutarch's work promises a spiritual transcendence that may grant moral equality and a right to dominate moral inferiors on that basis. In return, it demands sustained engagement with the philosophical works of the author.

As van Hoof notes, texts are historically situated not simply as a reflection of their social contexts, but also as a powerful means for constructing reality.²⁰ Theoretical musings and metaphysical theories about existence (*to on*) and non-existence (*to mē on*) form a crucial part of this moral program, as I argue in Chapter 5.

Psychagogy recommends a turn inward to contemplation of the self and increased self-knowledge, not only for the sake of the individual but also for the sake of existence, which is itself constituted as a power-relation.²¹ Moral virtue and its therapeutic systems have at their core practicality and spiritual health, but that alone is not enough to effect the kind of change in the mode of being of the subject that is the aim of psychagogy. The philosopher must convince the student that conjugality and submission is both in her nature and in her best interest. Popular-philosophical works (or practical ethics) are one part of this larger goal, theoretical philosophy another, and the *Lives* yet another. In Plutarch's work, the relation of the self to oneself and to others is continually and mutually co-constituted as essential for the proper functioning of the various structures and institutions that make up human societies, indeed for the orderly continuation of the species. It is in this context that we should read Plutarch's advice to women and his views on their nature and their virtue. These are topics that are pertinent to the everyday life of his primary audience because they pose very real and immediate problems that need to be dealt with.²² Women are a problem in this sense, because they have become too bold, too free, too wealthy, too visible.

It's a difficult task, however, to explain in purely social terms just why women's freedom is a bad thing, especially when it's a woman demanding the explaining, and it must be hard also for a philosopher like Plutarch to justify to himself a set of social regulations that conflict with his social reality. If it's in women's nature to be conjugal and submissive, how does one explain the multitude of "bad" women, and for that matter, *was* it bad if women thought they could act like men, seize power the way men do, lead armies the way men do? And if so, *why*? What difference is there between women and men that is not negated by their many and obvious similarities? The answer lies not just in moral philosophy but in metaphysics, and thus psychagogy demands a deep and sustained engagement with *all* of philosophy. Philosophers make

use of protreptic to persuade the audience that their school of thought can provide the answers by diagnosing and curing the faults in their soul, the incorrect constitution of themselves. Protreptic doesn't aim at blind faith conversion but rather at fostering self-knowledge through the practice of philosophy, of which theory is an integral part. As the moral authority, Plutarch must therefore show himself to be engaged in the same process of self-examination through which vice is recognized and virtue is practiced.²³ The philosopher who presents his philosophy as the key to the fulfilled life, one in which masculine supremacy and the male right to domination is a given, must also ask why this must be so or risk seeming uncritical himself, thus undermining his own credibility.

Therapeutic ethics therefore cannot function alone, nor is physics, metaphysics, geometry, mathematics, history, biology and the other sciences useless for daily life.²⁴ Practical ethics needs this theoretical base to validate its claim to credibility. As Jordan comments, "the argument from nature, while theoretically compelling, is unlikely to persuade one not already philosophical."²⁵ Appeals to nature are often concerned with the constitution and state of the individual's soul, which can be brought into the correct relation to its parts and the whole through a careful study of philosophy. Psychagogy is the culmination of all these fields of study into a single practical and spiritual "art of life."²⁶ It's part of a system—a series of institutions—that promises not only to provide the key to personal fulfillment but also to spiritual transcendence.²⁷ All of these nascent sciences to which the philosopher looks for validation almost unanimously agree that in all things, "the female is weaker than the male" (*Pl. Resp.* 455d). In his metaphysics, the final stage of the psychagogic program, Plutarch explores these issues not just of sexual difference but also of the relationship between body and soul, the origin of evil and the very existence of the non-normative subjects he aims to convert to a philosophical way of life. This entire system aims at the formation of a normative

ethical subject that adheres to a particular set of rules that they are supposed to have chosen for themselves.

SELF-FORMATION AND ABNEGATION

The stated aim of psychagogic practice is not only to make the subject virtuous but to make them virtuous in a way that begins to approach divinity.²⁸ In Plutarch's view, Platonism is the only philosophical school whose principles can faithfully promise assimilation to God, and it is his job to persuade the reader that this claim is true and to show them the way forward.²⁹ Of course, Plutarch's God is a male entity (and a Greek one at that), and thus there is an aspect of virtue that implies assimilation to the demands of masculinity, even when the subject is female, just like it demands assimilation to Greekness, even when the subject is not Greek. This constitutes what Simon Critchley calls an *ethical demand*, a demand that is unfulfillable because the subject is not equal to the demand—one cannot assimilate to God without becoming God, an impossible task—and the ethical relation that results from it is necessarily unequal and asymmetrical. This sense is encapsulated in the medico-ethical analogy, which already implies an asymmetrical relationship between doctor and patient. For women, then, the ethical demand introduces a tension between what is expected of their sex and the requirement of assimilation to masculinity. A similar split may be initiated in the male subject whose self is in contradiction with the restrictive demands of masculine virtue. In the case of Plutarch and the Platonists, the ethical demand bases its claim to validity on the fact of reason, but Critchley sees the ethical demand rather as based on the fact of the other—a heteronomous demand that calls the subject into question and requires a response.³⁰ Through this process, the subject discovers themselves as an object in an ethical relation to an other that always exceeds their comprehension. Thus they are alienated from themselves, divided by the impossibility of the demand.³¹ Ethical

subjectivity arises from this tension between the self-itself and the other-self, the demand and the impossibility of its fulfillment.

Critchley speaks of the “virtuous circularity of the ethical experience,” in which the subject receives a demand to which they give their approval, only to be met with another demand, and so on.³² Ethical demands must continuously be approved or risk invalidation. Critchley explains this circularity as being the result of a demand and an approval that arise at the same time in the ethical experience of the individual moral subject. By affirming the demand, the subject as a moral agent assents to the essential goodness thereof, binds themselves to that good and shapes their subjectivity in relation to it. In this way, the ethical experience furnishes a possible account of moral motivation, that which motivates the subject to act in accordance with their ethical experience (as opposed to inaction or refusal to engage).³³ Female exempla play a crucial role in the formation of idealized ethical subjects by furnishing both the demand and the approval with motivational force, even if the demand does not originate in women’s circles. In the case of Plutarch’s women, the validity of these ethical demands is legitimized by the approval of Plutarch himself as a moral authority, who again passes on the demand to new readers of whom approval—and *action*—is demanded. Critchley considers this approved demand the source of morality, a condition without which morality is empty.

Ancient moral philosophy and the psychagogic practice through which it is taught sought not only to provide the motivational force from which action springs but also the moral framework within which the demand for approval is met. As a practice of (re) definition of the self, psychagogy aims to convince the subject that a particular moral framework can lead to good outcomes, both ethically and metaphysically speaking, and therefore ought to be pursued *actively*.³⁴ Within this schema, the appeal to female exempla has the function of legitimizing the demand as one that has already been approved prior to its being reproduced in its

current form for its current audience. This provides at least part of the motivational force to act morally. The resulting mode of being thus transformed by the practice of philosophy is, in the case of women, fundamentally bound to the marital unit—a conjugal self. But the conjugal self is *a* self, not *the* self, constantly in conflict with what it itself is and is not. For Foucault, marriage itself gradually became a focus of constraint, a relation through which one gives an account of oneself and from which flows a great deal of regulation. Breaking the rules of the marriage contract entails as much censure as does engaging in sexual pleasures outside of these bounds.³⁵ Thus in *On Love*, as Foucault notes, the choice facing the interlocutors is between boys and marriage, “as if it were in the latter that the relationship with women is fulfilled.”³⁶ This ethical experience of conjugality makes claims about the universality of its principles precisely because those principles cannot be proven to be universal; for every self that is conjugal there is another that is not and in relation to which the conjugal self is continuously (re) defined. The subject must therefore be able to recognize individual instances of virtuous actions and have an understanding of the consequences of acting in contradiction to the ethical framework within which they are operating.

As a result, knowledge, both of the self and of philosophical doctrines, plays a central role in psychagogic practice. Psychagogy promises the student of philosophy access to *eudaimonia* or spiritual fulfillment, which can ultimately be attained through *epistēmē*. The philosopher must pass on to and engender in his student this desire for knowledge.³⁷ It is not enough for the student to simply memorize philosophical principles and moral maxims; they must eventually also advance to a deeper understanding of philosophy and the true nature of things. Knowledge will free the student from naïve superstitions and fear of death.³⁸ That this kind of philosophical knowledge and introspection is available to women, at least according to Plutarch, is evident from the theoretical content in *On Love* and *On Isis*. Self-knowledge can only be gained

through critical analysis of the self. It's the philosopher's duty to advise the student to undertake this arduous task. Inasmuch as the philosopher plays the part of a physician who cures the soul of its illnesses, it's necessary to identify the nature of the illness before a cure could be prescribed.³⁹ It's the student's own responsibility to diagnose their faults and acknowledge their shortcomings, be it luxurious living, greed, licentiousness, or whatever.⁴⁰ Self-diagnosis is inherently related to issues of self-control and rationality, both of which are of particular importance in psychagogy for women. Because of preconceived notions that women are naturally less inclined to rational action and temperance, they are thought to be less likely to self-diagnose and more in need of guidance and supervision.

Precisely for this reason, Plutarch recommends that the husband play an active role in his wife's moral advancement by sharing the best philosophical doctrines with her (*Conj. praec.* 145a–e). By doing so, he may be able to avoid that she, having been left to her own devices, hatches immoral plans, naïvely falls for superstitious ideas and loses control of her emotions (*Conj. praec.* 145d–e), typically effeminate vices. The process of self-examination is a meditative act that makes the student fully aware and in control of the present, which means that each ethical action they undertake is wholly conscious, deliberate and voluntary (*De tranq. an.* 470b). Vigilance is a key factor in the spiritual life.⁴¹ Meditation also involves imaginative acts of possible scenarios, especially those that might present moral difficulties, so that the student may be ready should such an event come to pass.⁴² Pythagoras is said to have recommended meditation twice a day, in the morning and in the evening. The purpose of this meditation was to reflect on the events of the day, first on what was planned and later on what was achieved, and always with a focus on the principles that guided the student's actions and reactions.⁴³ The meditative act further served to confirm and validate the student's abstinence from worldly goods and cultivate in them a contempt for these things. Through

meditation, they must come to realize that *eudaimonia* cannot be attained through material things, because like all great men they too must die. The only thing of consequence is therefore the state of their soul.⁴⁴ Self-knowledge is not sufficient for moral progress unless it is dependent on the desire to achieve *eudaimonia*, to be truly virtuous, to become godlike.⁴⁵ Moral progress is ultimately the responsibility of the student, who must participate in the therapeutic process actively. The role of the philosopher in this regard is to advise, reinforce and strengthen the will of the student through the service of friendship by supplying them with the tools they need.⁴⁶ According to Philodemus, the failure of therapy is ultimately not the fault of the philosopher, but that of the student who cannot be cured (*Lib.* 69.1–8); it is a fatal fault in the condition of their soul.

The psychagogic process involves a radical change in the mode of being of the student and as such takes great interest in the student's definition of their identity. This becomes more problematic from the Hellenistic period onwards, as changes in social structure make more complex the status-relationships of individuals to others in society.⁴⁷ Changes in tradition and public function in the Hellenistic, late republican and early imperial periods see marriage diminishing the level of material inequality between two partners, thus threatening to disrupt the balance of power in the conjugal couple.⁴⁸ From the Hellenistic period onwards, the wife gains status as she gains more juridical and economic independence. In this atmosphere of social upheaval, it suddenly seems possible for the woman to radically free herself from traditional constraints, even going so far as to contract a marriage with a man of her choice by herself, as attested in Roman Egypt.⁴⁹ Psychagogy provides a moral framework for the regulation of these social changes.⁵⁰

In these socio-political developments, Foucault saw a marked change in social attitudes towards the conjugal couple, which is mirrored in their private life.⁵¹ Many scholars have, on Foucault's

authority, seen this attitude in Plutarch's work, particularly in the *Consolation*, *Advice* and *On Love*.⁵² Furthermore, changes in the political structure of the Hellenistic and Roman periods, which facilitated the transition from city-states to monarchies and empire, are mirrored in changes in emphases for moral reflection.⁵³ Along with the newly reorganized political life came a problematization of the formation of the self as ethical subject. Foucault thus recognized two ways for the individual to define their identity. The first is by way of a status-relation to others, that is, by signs that affirm their superiority, such as expensive clothing, a well-kept physique, a large and magnificently decorated house, conspicuous consumption, and so forth. This method results in a power-relation over others; by denoting superiority, the individual denotes their right and ability to dominate.⁵⁴

The second method is definition of the self in relation to itself. Herein the individual becomes the ethical subject of their own actions and defines themselves in the sovereignty over their own person.⁵⁵ Foucault argued that the philosophical life prefers the second method, while the first is rejected. In some cases, such as in Epicureanism and Cynicism, public life is therefore rejected in favor of a life in private, but it is not necessarily the case that the two are mutually exclusive. Rather, the man who defines himself in relation to himself thereby sets the conditions for participation in civic life and his relation to others. Foucault drew on Plutarch's *Statecraft* here to argue that the free man doesn't engage in politics because his social status makes it a foregone conclusion, but because he actively chooses the civic life (cf. *Praec. ger. rei publ.* 798d–e). Engaging in the political act is therefore fundamentally a personal act.⁵⁶ As a result, Foucault saw psychagogic practice as encompassing a return to the self in relation only to oneself and no longer in relation to others.

The second method of self-definition is not so much a product of the Hellenistic and Roman forms of government as it is the continuation of a turn inward by philosophical communities.⁵⁷

Certainly, there was already an emphasis on the importance of *enkrateia* in Plato, and Socrates is known for his ascetic lifestyle. Nor is the first method, definition of the self in relation to others, wholly rejected. Rather, psychagogy delineates the parameters of self-definition in relation to others. Within this framework, these status-relations are denoted through conspicuous moderation and the rejection of luxuries, through which one can assert moral superiority over others by asserting first one's moral superiority over oneself.⁵⁸ There's a more radical change that happens during this period that Foucault leaves implicit, and that is the increase in the possibilities of self-definition for women through wealth, literacy and public visibility, and the concomitant increase in concern over the ways in which women relate to themselves and to others. This concern is part of what drives authors like Plutarch to extend the possibilities of participation in philosophical virtue to women and to take an active interest in the ways in which they engage with this philosophy.

Theoretically, the second method of self-definition, that of the self to itself, would be valid for both sexes in a system which values the moral education of women as highly as that of men. Their increased economic activity, public visibility, legal freedom and political prowess threatens to emancipate them from the constraints of the traditional family life of earlier eras. They are no longer simply wives and daughters, they are also benefactors and *stratēgoi*, doctors and mathematicians.⁵⁹ The woman is therefore able to define her identity in the same way as the man, as either a status-relation to others or as a sovereign-relation to herself. In becoming the ethical subject of her own actions, she gains the ability (or rather the right) to define her identity on her own terms and to set the conditions for participation in public life according to her own criteria.

There is, however, a difference in the way Plutarch treats identity and status-relations in women. When he advises Menemachus to remember that the statesman is himself also a subject under

the authority of the emperor and his delegates, he nevertheless strongly disapproves of assuming an attitude of servility. Instead, he counsels Menemachus to assume an appropriate air of authority and not to refer every small matter to his superiors. By doing so, he makes the entire local government powerless and will cause the citizens to lose respect for him (*Praec. ger. rei publ.* 814f–815c). Unlike his advice to Menemachus, which encourages self-definition in relation to himself first and foremost (thereby giving him the *enkrateia* to govern virtuously), Plutarch's psychagogy for a woman doesn't allow much space for her to define her identity in the absence of her husband. Her identity, for Plutarch, is and ought to be first and foremost a status-relation to him. A woman's identity is linked to that of her husband or nearest male relative; Megisto's right to take leadership of the women in Elis derives from her husband's status and her virtue (*Mulier. virt.* 252b), and Timocleia's honor is proven through her family connection to Theagenes (*Mulier. virt.* 259d). Unlike the men to whom Plutarch offers advice, women have no real prerogative to choose a life in civics or politics, their participation in these institutions is peripheral and always regulated through their relation to men. What options are available to women outside of the conjugal relationship reveal either an absence of masculine authority or the presence of a manly desire to dominate.

Through the psychagogic process, the student is expected to arrive at a new understanding of philosophy and therefore of the world and their place in it. Psychagogy, if it is successful, will transform a young woman into a virtuous wife, allowing her to leave all the imperfections of her sex behind. Plutarch's conception of womanhood in the *Moralia* binds her to the conjugal relationship and the well-being of her partner. There is no description of a virtuous woman who is not in some way concerned with the men in her life. There is no option for her to define her identity in relation to herself because her identity is largely dictated by external factors such as her husband's wishes. This sense of self is

inculcated in the subject from an early age; Plutarch speaks with approval of Eurydice's ability to engage with his words in *Advice* because she has been brought up in the atmosphere of philosophy (138c). As Diana Gasparyan puts it, "the self is not the primordial essence of a subject, but something that is produced externally and is introduced to the subject later ... the subject itself is the result of external manipulations."⁶⁰ Just so, Halberstam argues that sexual categories of identification develop over a period of time; "identities do not suddenly emerge from some protean slime at the appropriate time."⁶¹ It is Plutarch's job, his life's work, to help shape these identities for men and for women in ways that affirm rather than endanger the status quo.

Psychagogy, as a systematic practice of philosophy, sets the conditions for women's interaction with the world and with others, it guides the (re)formation of the self, it negates and invalidates non-normative selves. A wife's identity must be defined in the first place as a status-relation to her husband and through him she may assert her right to dominate others. In such a strict limitation of the freedom to define the self, one must ask whether any virtuous act can therefore be a personal act, or whether all virtuous actions on the part of women are by definition conjugal acts.

For Plutarch, the conjugal self stands in a submissive status-relation to the husband, the other from which the ethical demand emanates. As the intermediate guide who must help his wife through her philosophical education, he necessarily occupies a position of power in relation to her; through his masculinity—his *maleness*—he asserts his right to dominate. Because he's not bound by the same rules and is by virtue of his sex superior and able to define his identity for himself by himself, the husband cannot be considered fundamentally bound to the marital unit. His connection to the marital unit is, for Plutarch, necessary and beneficial (cf. *Quaest. Rom.* 263d–f), but even so it is incidental and he may choose not to engage in it in favor of a contemplative life.⁶² Women do not have the same choice. The only legitimate paths

are those that define her in relation to men: either she marries, or she becomes a virgin priestess, or she is a prostitute. In marriage, every act she performs is for the sake of marital harmony, from mollifying her husband to studying the philosophy he chooses for her to grieving moderately. Thus Mariano Valverde Sánchez notes that the harmony produced in marriage is dependent on the submission of the wife to the authority of the husband, who in turn must be a just and benevolent leader of the household.⁶³

In such a restrictive ethics which defines women in relation to men, and specifically in relation to the superiority of her husband, one must ask why anyone would choose to follow this philosophy. Would anyone enthusiastically consent to oppression, willingly accept their inferiority on such questionable grounds? In a belief-system that views enslavement as a choice with moral consequences, it doesn't seem impossible to extend that moral choice to women. Indeed, Plutarch considers the study and knowledge of philosophy to be a freely chosen law (*nomos*) unto the self (*De Stoic. rep.* 1033b); choosing to follow this law is what sets man apart from beasts.⁶⁴ A woman may therefore become virtuous if she chooses to do so and accepts her place in the matrix of domination. Being virtuous has the added benefit of promising her a semblance of equality, provided that she is also Greek or Roman, free and a member of the elite. Choice can also, however, be constrained by social context, and what seems like autonomy and agency can instead be the result of coercion or lack of alternatives.⁶⁵ The idea that certain choices are made for the benefit of the self is in fact an illusion; in some cases, choices are made because the ethical values they support are *required*.

Emily Hemelrijk argues that the extensive treatment of women's capacity for philosophy by Plutarch and Musonius suggests that they were defending their views against opponents of female education.⁶⁶ Rather than suggesting that this focus on female philosophical aptitude is evidence of a progressive agenda, I would argue that these authors did so because they recognized

the value of philosophical education for keeping women in submission. Halberstam argues that gender difference can permit the subject entry to certain privileged masculine contexts that are not liberatory at all; in fact, admittance might depend precisely on the leverage afforded by class and social status and it would therefore be in the subject's interest to *maintain such hierarchies*.⁶⁷ As Vizier comments, "the fact that a process of control presents itself as an enterprise of liberation is nothing new."⁶⁸ The philosopher who knows that his wife spends her days in the company of other women, women who don't necessarily subscribe to the same ideals and don't always belong to the same class or come from the same city as her, is faced with this problem of choice. Her increased autonomy gives her license to make certain choices without the consent of her husband. The possibilities for dissent are very real and very dangerous. Women talk among themselves and if not kept under close supervision might develop all sorts of "low designs and emotions" (*Conj. praec.* 145d). She might even realize that there is some similarity between her and these other women, from which might grow a solidarity he cannot fully control.⁶⁹ Presenting an aura of social progressiveness can create the illusion of choice through the promise of future gain; by suggesting that the choice is between complete submission and incremental advancement towards equality, he can manipulate the outcome. This is essentially Plutarch's tactic in the opening of *Virtues*; he rejects the overt conservatism of Thucydides in favor of the covert flavor put forth by Gorgias (*Mulier. virt.* 242e–f). In his assiduous attention to the lives and intellectual capacity of women, Plutarch constructs his own image as a moral authority who is frank, benevolent and knowledgeable. His solution to the "woman problem" is therefore to accentuate difference, to recommend that she formulate a relation of herself to others that is split between her submission to her husband and a notion of superiority which grants her the right to dominate in turn her moral and social inferiors.⁷⁰

This relation to others is constituted in part outside of the boundaries of gender, it's a relation of class, ethnicity, wealth, beauty, virtue, etc. As Jack Halberstam notes, masculinity in women is received differently on the basis of class; in upper-class women, masculinity can denote higher intelligence and distinction.⁷¹ Foxhall argues that Plutarch may have viewed the destabilization of traditional gender roles in Roman Greece and the possibilities for dissent arising from this new order as a threat to male dominance.⁷² At this juncture, the philosopher is faced with a contradiction between the status-relation of the self and others on the one hand and the sovereign-relation of the self to itself on the other. Virtuous women need to denote both their conjugal submission and their moral superiority in ways that are legible in social groups without compromising one or the other, a fine line to tread.⁷³ Seneca documents a motion in the senate to distinguish enslaved people from free men by their dress. The proposal was rejected on the grounds of the great danger it would pose if the enslaved realized how many of them there actually were (*Clem.* 1.24.1). Michele George notes that this episode reveals the conflicting interests of the elite, since on the one hand there is a desire to denote superiority and inferiority in visible and socially legible ways, and on the other there is a recognition of the dangers inherent in the collective identity that would thereby be created among the enslaved.⁷⁴ So too with women if their relation to others isn't carefully regulated. Within this matrix, virtue is a privileged category that gives a certain type of female subject the right to dominate others by first establishing control over herself and her husband's control over her.⁷⁵

While these structures of power and hierarchies of domination may have already been institutionalized through legal codes, enslavement, unequal land distribution and ever-expanding imperialist enterprises,⁷⁶ psychagogy represented the systematization of a personalized and internalized right to dominate and duty to submit on the basis of set criteria. Page du

Bois criticized Foucault's account of classical culture because it "carries with it assumptions about the original, ubiquitous, and inevitable primacy of masculine subject-formation, of women's subjection and submission."⁷⁷ It turns out that women's submission was not inevitable, ubiquitous, or guaranteed, not even according to Foucault's own criteria, but that philosophy had to produce the epistemic conditions within which it seemed *natural* for (elite) women to continue to be dominated by men and to dominate certain other types of people in turn. Furthermore, du Bois is not convinced that "we have the same mentality, the same categories for social relations, the same "problems" as the ancient Greeks' or that they thought that women might be capable of ethical, philosophical and political subjectivity and self-mastery.⁷⁸ And yet they emphatically did think that, or at least some of them did, and they were continually engaged in producing and reproducing categories of identification and difference through which to secure philosophy's primacy as a masculine discipline at the center of knowledge production. That process did not cease in antiquity despite changes in emphases.

It seems to me, then, that Greek philosophy had harnessed these categories of similarity and difference and turned it into an instrument of power through the control of knowledge production, and that psychagogy was the tool through which these mechanisms of domination and submission could be regulated on the individual level. People have to *want* to be dominated, so the narrative goes. Plutarch provides an anecdote to demonstrate this principle to Eurydice and Pollianus:

The Sun won a victory over the North Wind. For the wind tried by force to rob a man of his cloak, and blew briskly against him, but the man only drew his garment closer, and held it more tightly together. But when the heat of the sun succeeded the wind, the man began to get warm, and later very hot, and ended by stripping

off his shirt as well as his cloak. This is the way most women act. When their husbands try forcibly to remove their luxury and extravagance they keep up a continual fight and are very cross; but if they are convinced with the help of reason, they peaceably put aside these things and practice moderation (*Conj. praec.* 139d–e).

This precept is intended to reinforce the belief that the husband, as his wife's intermediate philosophical guide, must engage with her and persuade her to accept the rules of his house through reason. A therapeutic philosophy so concerned with women's self-definition is not just normative, it's the expression of an ideal whose connection to the real (or rather, to the mundane, since I will soon argue that what is *real* is itself a gendered status-relation) is questionable at best. Insofar as it does make a claim to normativity, it grounds that claim in cosmological signs, a position from which it is much more difficult to argue that the sun is not in fact male, nor the moon female. The philosopher can therefore advance a therapeutic argument emphasizing the dependence of female upon male, the transcendent truth of male domination and deviations caused by excessive feminine faults by pointing to natural signs that seem to confirm his position, signs that are cosmological as much as they are psychic and bodily.

As I have argued in the previous chapter, a large number of the precepts in *Advice* establish a foundation for the constitution of the female self as fundamentally conjugal, passive and harmonizing in contrast to a violent, domineering and sexually unrestrained other. Much of this is centered around the moderation of a relationship of submission and domination. The conjugal self is a mirror, useless if it doesn't show a true likeness. What is reflected, however, is not an image of the wife as she sees herself but her reflection of her husband, as the moon reflects the sun (cf. *De facie* 920f–921b).⁷⁹ These ideas are present already to some extent in Plato; at *Alcibiades* 132e, the mirror is an object in which one can see both it and oneself.⁸⁰ There is a general tendency in moral-educational

literature to present characters as mirrors for the shaping of the subject's own moral self. Plutarch himself makes the analogy in *On Listening*, which directs the attention of the listener inward to contemplate themselves as if in front of a mirror (42a–b). The image in the mirror functions much like an exemplum which invites the student to imitation (cf. Cic. *Rep.* 2.69). Duff points out the double ambiguity in Plutarch's use of this analogy, which in one sense presents the characters as the mirror and in another, the literary work itself.⁸¹

Mirrors do not simply reflect a true image, however; they can distort and reverse the thing reflected. Thus, in mirroring her husband's character and ideals, the wife is not encouraged to imitate him directly, but to present her femininity as a reflection of his masculinity. The reflection of the husband in the actions of the wife constitutes her identity, her sense of self-worth, and so too reifies his own identity as master. Precept 14 of *Advice* is brutal in its negation of the possibility of self-definition for wives:

Just as a mirror, although embellished with gold and precious stones, is *good for nothing* unless it shows a true likeness, so there is no advantage in a rich wife unless she makes her life true to her husband's and her character in accord with his. If the mirror gives back a gloomy image of a glad man, or a cheerful and grinning image of a troubled and gloomy man, it is *a failure and worthless*. So too *a wife is worthless* and lacking in sense of fitness who puts on a gloomy face when her husband is bent on being sportive and gay, and again, when he is serious, is sportive and mirthful. The one smacks of disagreeableness, the other of indifference. Just as lines and surfaces, in mathematical parlance, have no motion of their own but only in conjunction with the bodies *to which they belong*, so *the wife ought to have no feeling of her own*, but she should join with her husband in seriousness and sportiveness and in soberness and laughter (*Conj. praec.* 139f–140a; my emphases).

In Plutarch's psychagogy, then, the feminine self is by definition either conjugal or vicious. Wives are mirrors of their husband's characters, habits and desires, and if they fail in that task they are worthless. Attaining virtue entails a loss of self on the part of women; philosophy demands a psychic transfiguration into masculinity at the expense of what may have been possible were she not a wife or a mother.⁸² For these very same reasons, Pisiais feared that Ismenodora's wealth and age will dominate and ultimately elide Bacchon's sense of self, when the correct relation between husband and wife is precisely the opposite. In this sense, conjugality is a gendered status-relation of inferiority and submission. Through psychagogy, the philosopher defines femininity in response to the ethical demand of masculinity, and thus performing conjugality is adherence to gendered norms of propriety that govern status-relations in private life as also in political life.

BEAUTY, MASCULINITY AND THE SPLIT SELF

Thus far, this chapter has been concerned mostly with binary difference, that relation between male and female that signifies man and woman. But gender is something far greater than that; it cannot be reduced to genitals, and I would argue that Plutarch is on some level aware of this tension despite not having the language to explain it. But there are some tools available to him to denote this difference. Throughout his work, the tension between manliness and masculinity, effeminacy and femininity animates his views on virtue and its relation to the body of the individual. For this, his views on beauty are most elucidating, and it is telling that *Advice* makes this link between beauty, conjugality and virtue. It seems to me that Plutarch is making a rudimentary attempt to define, in some sense, female masculinity, and that an examination of beauty is one way of mapping this view onto the whole self—mind, body and soul altogether. For women, all of these aspects of the self are

animated by the demands of conjugality, which requires of her an inner beauty, virtue reflected outwardly.

At a very basic level, the formation of the conjugal self facilitates the production of the feminine as a status-relation to the masculine, as dependent on the masculine and produced in response to the demands of masculinity. This status relation is one of the soul to the body, as I have argued above and to which I will return in the next chapter. What matters here is that bodies are *sexed* and souls are *gendered*. This schematization makes it possible to have a masculine soul in a female body without contradiction. In fact, it is this very condition that enables the production of femininity as something different from masculinity. At this point, *femininity* and *masculinity* become markers of moral superiority and are split from *manliness* and *effeminacy* as markers of psychic and somatic degeneration.⁸³ Jack Halberstam has argued that masculinity only becomes legible as masculinity when it leaves the male body and is reproduced by women.⁸⁴ I take this to mean that masculinity without women is just the brute fact of maleness. For Halberstam, the psychoanalytic approach put forward by Freud and his followers is far too reliant on prior understandings of a sexual binary and thus is ultimately unhelpful because it assumes that female masculinity mimics male masculinity.⁸⁵ Instead of mimicry, I suggest instead that female masculinity, at least in Plutarch's Platonic schema, is a virtuous mode of being originating in the soul and expressed through a female body as femininity; it is a *reflection* of masculinity in a female body, in the same way as Matter reflects the Forms, the moon the light of the sun, and the wife's actions her husband's preferences. Clearly, gender is something more than the body, even as it cannot escape the fact of the body.

The problem of *On Love* is at least in part concerned with this relationship between soul and body. Ismenodora threatens to destabilize the division between male-masculine and female-feminine made on the basis of sex and enforced through a system of social exclusion.⁸⁶ Her actions are improper because it upsets

the balance of power, where power is understood as a position of *action* in opposition to *passion*,⁸⁷ which is effeminate and weak. Beyond the *act* of seizing control that upsets Plutarch's interlocutors,⁸⁸ Ismenodora is motivated by desire, by her passion for Bacchon, by the thing that decent women cannot have: *erōs*. Plutarch disagrees, stating outright that the body is only a medium and a conductor for the recollection of the Forms, with love as its guide (*Amat.* 765a).⁸⁹ Love works through the body by presenting us with sensible objects, "mortal reflections of the divine, corruptible of the incorruptible, sensible of the intelligible" (765b). Through love, the lover eventually learns to disregard the body of the beloved and contemplate their character; if the beloved has a beautiful soul the lover is enamored and recollection is deepened, if not the lover abandons the beloved for another (765c).⁹⁰ Physical beauty, especially the kind of beauty designated as *kalos*, is thus an instrument of memory, a conduit of Truth. Plutarch argues that it's ridiculous to believe that if the reflection of beauty in boys can induce recollection, the same in women cannot produce the same effect (766e). Human virtue is, in effect, a copy of and aspiration to divine beauty (*kalos*) and goodness (*agathos*) (*De sera* 550e). Put another way, "beauty is the flower of virtue" (*Amat.* 767b). There is virtue that is proper to the body (strength, beauty and health) and virtues appropriate to the soul (justice, self-control, wisdom); since neither one can exist without the other, they are co-constitutive (fr. 144). Thus women's faces carry the signs of their licentiousness (*akolasia*) as much as their chastity and modesty (*sōphrosunē*) adds to their beauty (*Amat.* 767c). It becomes increasingly clear that physical beauty and good character are intimately connected.

What this suggests on the individual level is that physical form is almost as important as psychic structure in the determination of virtue.⁹¹ On the other hand, some forms of beauty are merely physical reflections of the idea of Beauty and it is only that kind of capital-B Beauty, eternal and immutable as it is, that can truly be equated with virtue.⁹² Just as it is ridiculous to believe literally the

story of Caeneus, who was transformed from a woman into a man after Poseidon raped them, believing that an ugly and vicious person could suddenly become beautiful and virtuous is like believing that one whose soul is weak (*asthenēs*), soft (*hapalos*) and unmanly (*anandros*) could become intelligent, prudent, godlike and virtuous in the space of a single day (*De Stoic. rep.* 1058b–c, cf. 1057d).⁹³ Yet at the same time Plutarch seems to believe that physical appearance could reveal the signs of virtue or vice (cf. *Amat.* 767b), probably in the sense defined in *Advice* as abstention from luxurious clothing and ornaments (141e) and good physical care (142a–b).⁹⁴ As Maurice Sartre argues, exercise is an integral part of the beautification of the body. It was also, however, primarily a masculine occupation and privilege; with the exception of Spartan women, Greek women did not spend their time in the gymnasium and palaestra, where male nudity reigned supreme. For the Greeks, then, this kind of beauty is also closely entwined with masculinity.⁹⁵ While it must therefore be the case that physical beauty and virtue are somehow correlated—and indeed this is Plutarch’s view in *Advice* also—it is not simply that virtue makes one physically beautiful or vice versa.

George Boys-Stones advances a version of this argument when he claims that the beauty of the soul is manifested through the body, “so that a virtuous person actually is, quite literally, better looking.”⁹⁶ The key here is that beauty is both the trigger and the *telos* in the philosopher’s ascent, while love is the vehicle for this activity. As Diotima explains through Socrates in the *Symposium*, a beautiful body inspires contemplation, which in turn leads to the recognition of beauty as a principle present in bodies more generally. The lover of beautiful things then turns inward and contemplates the beauty of the beloved’s soul—their character—and finally is induced to contemplation of the *principle* of beauty (210a–211d).⁹⁷ According to Boys-Stones, the lover doesn’t contemplate the beloved’s soul as something distinct and separate from the body but rather recognizes the body as the physical manifestation of psychic virtue through habit and custom.⁹⁸ It is therefore not the

case that virtue effects a physical change that makes an individual literally more beautiful by transforming the shape of their nose or eyes. Instead, virtuous actions are to be understood as the signs by which the body signifies its beautiful soul, so that virtue (and beauty) is ultimately performative.

Beauty is also, however, at least in part a natural attribute of some people, often because of the nobility of their birth or because of their youth.⁹⁹ This individual physical beauty can serve as the catalyst for contemplation and if it is lacking, character must fill the void.¹⁰⁰ In *Advice*, Plutarch relays an anecdote in which Socrates advises ugly (*aischros*) youths to make up for their defect with virtue (*aretē*), and the beautiful (*kalos*) not to disgrace their form (*to eidos*) with vice (*kakia*) (141d). *Kalos* here indicates not just physical beauty but moral virtue (LSJ), in other words the kind of beauty that attends a virtuous character.¹⁰¹ Some people are born with a natural aptitude for virtue, which manifests in the body as *kalos*. In this sense, a beautiful body may indicate the virtue of the soul in their previous life. Beautiful women who are vicious or morally ambiguous are therefore not often described as *kalos* but rather as *euprepēs*, with some exceptions for women of noble birth (*eugeneia*). Plutarch employs the same concepts to indicate the nobility—the essential goodness—of the course of action he will recommend to the bride.

Returning to the mirror-self he had addressed a few brief paragraphs before, Plutarch now advises the bride to apply this principle to her own self when she holds the mirror in her hands. If she is ugly, she ought to ask herself “what if I am not virtuous (*sōphrōn*)?” and if she is beautiful (*kalos*), “what if I am virtuous as well?” Rather than suggesting that the wife see herself in the mirror, this advice suggests that she see herself as others would see her.¹⁰² The precept ends with a platitude about inner beauty that suggests that good character is valued higher than good looks, yet it cannot escape the trap it had set for itself. In suggesting that the ugly wife take extra care to be virtuous, he suggests that the

beautiful wife is already physically there, that beauty is itself a marker of moral superiority. There is another question left implicit here that deserves consideration: if the beautiful woman is virtuous as well, what physical form will she take in the next life? Will the virtuous-but-ugly woman be physically beautiful in her next life? At what point (if ever) is virtue sufficient for transcendence, for reincarnation in a male body? And does this not render gender unintelligible?

The relationship between beauty and virtue is a complex one, to which Plato dedicated much of the discussion in the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, and which Plutarch treats extensively in *On Love*.¹⁰³ The lost treatise *On Beauty* would likely have refined and expanded on ideas already present in other extant works. At the very start of *On Love*, both Ismenodora and Bacchon are introduced through a brief characterization of their persons that ties the signs of their bodies and their habits to their moral state.¹⁰⁴ Bacchon is a *kalos* youth with many noble (*gennaios*) suitors. Ismenodora is a wealthy (*ploutos*) widow of good birth (*genos*) who had up until that point been conspicuous for her orderly (*eutaktos*) lifestyle; she is still young (*nea*) and attractive (*to eidos*), and her intentions are not dishonorable (*agenes*) (749d–e). The longer description of Ismenodora here suggests that the criteria for virtue through which her worth is judged are much more demanding than it is for men, and much more closely entwined with the signs of her body. Furthermore, by describing her beauty as *to eidos*, Plutarch already implies the possibility of the philosopher's ascent through the beauty of women, which will culminate in his argument that women are capable of both love and masculine virtue.

Centuries earlier, Plato had connected love and beauty to ethics by arguing that *erōs* is the love of the beautiful that inspires moral reflection in the form of *anamnēsis*, or the recollection of forgotten Truths (cf. *Phdr.* 244a). Love is not simply the love of the beautiful person (although it certainly can be that too), it is the love of the idea of Beauty that is reflected in the beloved.¹⁰⁵ Plutarch makes

this same connection in *On Love*, most explicitly at 764e (*ho erōs anamnēsis estin*), but significantly moves the dialogue away from a singular focus on pederasty towards conjugality.¹⁰⁶ For Plutarch, love that is both true and real is best expressed within the bounds of marriage. Outside of it, love leans towards falsehood and non-existence. Despite his not condemning pederasty outright, the opponents to the marriage are outraged at the suggestion that love between a man and a woman can inspire moral goodness. Protogenes argues that conjugal love does not occur between men and women beyond the need to procreate, and in fact refuses to recognize this need and the attendant physical desire as *erōs* rather than desire (*epithumia*) for pleasure (*hēdonē*). Love, he says,

attaches itself to a young and talented soul and through friendship (*philia*) brings it to a state of virtue; but the appetite for women ... has for net gain only an accrual of pleasure in the enjoyment of a ripe physical beauty (*hōras sōmatos*) (*Amat.* 750d).

In Protogenes' view, the object of love is a virtuous soul, which he seems to believe is simply impossible in women, while the object of desire is a beautiful body. He heaps abuse upon women, characterizing them as "evil and unloving" (*mochthēra kai astorgos*). He considers the love of women effeminate (*thēlus*) and bastardly (*nothos*), a love that exercises in the women's quarters instead of the gymnasium, full of desire and softness (*Amat.* 750f–751a). True love—capital-L Love—is the love of boys, which can be found in the schools of philosophy, the gymnasium and the palaestra. It is a love of the mind, not of the body, and thus we are led to believe that pederasty is not a sexual act at all.¹⁰⁷

Protogenes does much here to distinguish effeminate things from masculine; the love of women is drenched in perfume, it is lax (*hugron*)¹⁰⁸ and housebound, it spends its time in the bosoms and beds of women pursuing a soft (*malthaka*) life, it is enervated on account of its close association with the kind of pleasure devoid

of manliness (*anandria*), friendship and inspiration (*Amat.* 751a–b, cf. 758b–c).¹⁰⁹ Gilbert Barberà argues that Plutarch through the words of his opposition here “illustrates perfectly well a centuries-old Western intellectual vice: the sexualization—that is, masculinization—of ethics.”¹¹⁰ Softness (*malakia*) is a particular attribute of women (exemplified in the softness of their breasts, as Barberà notes), in contrast to the hardness engendered in male bodies through constant exercise in the gymnasium.¹¹¹ When Theseus assembles his crew to face the Minotaur in Crete, he selects youths with girlish (*theluphanēs*) faces but manly (*andrōdes*) spirits (*Thes.* 23.2). In order to pass them off as maidens, he gives them warm baths and keeps them out of the sun, arranges their hair, and beautifies their faces and skin with unguents. On top of this they adapt their speech, their dress and their gait to imitate women. Their souls are masculine, but their bodies and their habits are softened to the point where they can pass for women.

Masculinity is therefore more than a physical trait of male bodies, it is a characteristic of the soul, and both masculinity and femininity are defined through the correct relationship between body and soul. When this relation is skewed, the individual becomes manly or effeminate. On this view, masculinity is negatively constructed as the not-effeminate, and the gymnasium is one arena in which masculinity is constructed as a competitive mode of being similar to war but with lower stakes and correspondingly lower honors.¹¹² Crucial to this difference is the understanding of male exteriority and female interiority and the distinction between active and passive—that is, the proper place for men and women based on the appearance of their genitalia, around which much of the discussion in *On Love* revolves.¹¹³ Before Daphnaeus cuts his rant short, Protogenes appeals to the example of Solon, who regulated pederastic love by forbidding enslaved men to participate in it but permitting them to have sex with women (*Sol.* 1.3). This, he says, proves that the love of women, like having sex with slaves, is base and unworthy of a free man.

At this point, Daphnaeus seizes the opportunity to turn Protogenes' arguments about the benefits of *erōs* (friendship, virtue) against him by arguing that if these benefits can be gained from "unnatural" (*para phusin*) unions between males it must also be present in the "natural" love between men and women.¹¹⁴ Daphnaeus' argument relies on an appeal to physicality and the interior-exterior distinction. Moreover, the appeal to physicality lays the crucial groundwork for Plutarch's later argument about women's virtue.¹¹⁵ As a result, Daphnaeus advances a conception of love that is reproductive and physical, and therefore "natural." Sex between men is unnatural because it involves some form of role reversal:

But to consort with males (whether without consent, in which case it involves violence and brigandage; or if with consent, there is still weakness (*malakia*) and effeminacy (*thēlutēs*) on the part of those who, contrary to nature, allow themselves in Plato's words to be "covered and mounted like cattle")—this is a completely ill-favored favor, indecent, an unlovely affront to Aphrodite (*Amat.* 751d–e).

Daphnaeus assumes the naturalness of being male and penetrator (and the unnaturalness of men being penetrated), characterizing the penetrated partner as beastly and womanish. Plutarch himself makes a similar argument later on, saying that in homosexual unions those men who enjoy the passive part exhibit the lowest form of vice, the submission of free men to their equals (768e), and this kind of submission is *anandros* (cf. *Alc.* 4.3).¹¹⁶ Protogenes likens the love of women to a mere appetite, while Plutarch will later elevate it to an emotional response to internal stimuli which, when correctly applied, flowers into virtue.¹¹⁷ This line of argumentation assumes that being penetrated and passive is a condition of the female on account of her reproductive interiority and therefore engaging in passive sexual acts shows a lack of masculinity in men that threatens their place in the ethical hierarchy.

Foucault questions whether the progressive categorization of sexual identities had as its goal the object to exclude them from reality, as if only those relationships which produce children within the bounds of conjugality are “natural” and thus real. But it is this very categorization that affirms the ultimate reality of the persons thus labeled. Butler argues that Irigaray mimes the Platonic discourse which excludes the feminine to show that it necessarily includes the feminine in its attempt at exclusion. So too, any attempt to invalidate queer identities invariably serves only to make them more real and more immediate. Thus Foucault notes that the institutionalization of marriage as a practice of the self has also caused the proliferation of alternative modes of being, “a distribution of points of power, hierarchized and placed opposite to one another.”¹¹⁸ He sees this process of codification as an exercise of power that takes many forms: legal, pedagogical, corrective discourse, surveillance, and so forth, and which ties the whole self to its exercise of sexuality, an identification that is legible on the body and in the psyche. In acts “contrary to nature,” masculinity and femininity are inverted at the very level of the self, what Foucault calls “a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul.”¹¹⁹ It is precisely this form of inversion that Plutarch negates by distinguishing the divine *erōs* from foreign and barbaric superstitions, and false gods worshipped by hermaphrodites (*androgunēs*) and women, “like certain Attises and Adonises” (756c). This is an inferior sort of love, incorrect because it is “unnatural” and subversive, and in contrast to the “natural” relation of reproductivity and conjugality.

Of course, there is no need to imply male supremacy in front of this crowd. Daphnaeus’ argument highlights instead the conditions of male inferiority, those cases in which free men choose submission, are dominated and therefore emasculated. In the process, the claim to the noble benefits that can be gained from pederastic love is revealed as a pretext for approaching beautiful boys and a defense against the shame of being outed as lustful.¹²⁰

Protopogenes had refused to acknowledge the physical relationship implied in pederasty, characterizing it rather as psychic, while Daphnaeus argues that Love cannot be understood outside of its physical aspects (752a–b). There is bodily love (*aphroditē*) and psychic love (*erōs*) and virtue can only be cultivated in the friendship that results from the presence of both (cf. 756e).¹²¹

Having thus transposed the conversation from love to sex, Daphnaeus gives the floor to Piasias, who can barely contain his anger. Again we find a reference to the bestiality of heterosexual sex (“they are locked like dogs by their sexual parts to the female”)¹²² and the contrast between masculine exteriority and feminine interiority is extended. Pederasty lives free in the gymnasia and the parks full of fresh air and sun, while the love of women is confined to brothels filled with vanity cases, potions (*pharmaka*) and charms (*mageuma*), and licentious (*akolastos*) women (752c). Piasias argues that virtuous (*sōphrōn*) women cannot receive or bestow passionate love without resorting to improper behavior. This is reminiscent of Plutarch’s view in *Advice* (138f, 139c), where he suggests that the wife follow her husband’s lead in the bedroom without being overtly sexual herself, and a reminder that the sexuality of women remains a source of anxiety for men who want to ensure the fidelity of their partners and the paternity of their heirs.¹²³ For Plutarch, the cultivation of virtue in women is a means to ease this anxiety through “taming” the passions.

Ultimately, Plutarch will argue that love not only produces children from the joining of bodies but virtue through the joining of souls (767e), a view likely influenced by his own experience of marriage, as Valverde Sánchez notes.¹²⁴ Therefore, conjugal love is superior to pederastic love since it can produce both. Beneker argues that Plutarch’s understanding of *philia* here has much in common with that advanced by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1156a6–1156b25).¹²⁵ The most noble form of love is based not on pleasure or utility, but on virtue, and it is on this basis that he makes the argument for women’s ability to love and to be virtuous.

Good character (and compatibility in that regard) is therefore essential for love to flourish and endure.

At the same time, however, Plutarch is keenly aware of the double-edged sword of beauty, which is as much of an advantage to the dissolute (*akolastos*) woman seeking pleasure as it is to the chaste (*sōphrōn*) woman seeking the goodwill and friendship of her husband (*Amat.* 769c).¹²⁶ Physical beauty can unite two people initially, but Love is that which grows from this union into friendship through the aid of reason (769a).¹²⁷ Given that women can provide men with this kind of friendship, as Plutarch had argued at length, it is ridiculous to argue that they cannot also be virtuous (769b).¹²⁸ At this very moment Plutarch equates women's virtue with masculinity:

What need is there to discuss their prudence (*sōphrosunē*) and intelligence (*sunesis*), or their loyalty (*pistis*) and justice (*dikaiousunē*), when many women have exhibited a daring (*tharraleon*) and great-hearted (*megalopsuchon*) courage which is truly masculine (*andreion*)?

Evidently, *andreia*, beauty and virtue are intimately entwined, but that becomes problematic in female bodies that are not generally involved in the physical business of war. What, then, is the *andreia* of women really? Is it, as Aristotle suggested, the courage to choose subordination (*Pol.* 1260a20–25)? At its root, *andreia* implies the *male*, signified through muscular strength and capable of extreme violence, especially on the battlefield and in the gymnasium.¹²⁹ It also, however, denotes a measure of order and discipline in the body and the control of a spirit that both enables and threatens its masculinity.¹³⁰ Accordingly, Maurice Sartre argues that “*andreia* consists of the combination of true courage and obedience.” For boys and men, this is expressed as obedience to law and custom in the exercise of their civic duty.¹³¹

For women, *andreia* cannot be that kind of bravery exercised in war, except in extreme circumstances. Indeed, women “have no part at all in Ares” (*Amat.* 761e), but are inspired to courageous actions by Love. Roller sees two possible ways to interpret the ascription of *andreia* to Cloelia: either it is an implication of a specific womanly form of *virtus* or it is an admission that women’s virtue is no different to men’s and thus women must act like men to be virtuous. In the first case, the use of terms denoting manliness “alter[s] the content of the moral category “manly”.” He argues that both possibilities are manifested in the use of Cloelia as an *exemplum*, but that there is also a fluid spectrum between the two that reveal how manliness or masculinity manifest in female bodies.¹³² Karen Bassi argues that in some cases where women claim *andreia* for themselves, or when it is applied to them by a man, the use indicates “the absence of masculinity in its traditional or normative form and the emergence of a manliness that is no longer *anēr* specific.”¹³³ This use of *andreia* is equivalent to Plutarch’s application of the term to women, and he makes a deliberate attempt to divest the concept from its military context and its association with the male. Thus in *Coriolanus*, he comments that

in those days Rome held in highest honor that phase of virtue (*aretē*) which concerns itself with warlike and military achievements, and evidence of this may be found in the only Latin word for virtue [*virtus*], which signifies really manly valor (*andreia*); they made valor, a specific form of virtue, stand for virtue in general (*Cor.* I.4).

This is a direct commentary on Coriolanus’ nature, who was “exceedingly fond of warlike feats,” while neglecting to practice moderation in his dealings with others. Coriolanus has misunderstood the ethical demand of masculinity, exercising his virtue in the things that men typically do; his virtue may be manly, but it is not quite masculine.

Donald Russell argued that the pair *Coriolanus-Alcibiades* is intended as a deterrent example much like *Demetrius-Antony*.¹³⁴ Both pairs represent a failure of masculinity in some sense or another.¹³⁵ Coriolanus' virtue is expressed in the hardness of his body and his physical endurance, he is an excellent soldier and wears his scars as a badge of honor (1.3–2.1, 15.1, cf. *Cor. et Alc.* 1.1). But his failure to cultivate the virtues of a true statesman while letting the spirited part of his soul (*thumoeides*) rule him is evidence of weakness and effeminacy (*astheneia kai malakia*), *andreia* of the body, not the soul (*Cor.* 15.4).¹³⁶ So too both Pelopidas and Marcellus sacrificed all other virtues to *andreia*, which made them rash in battle (*Pel. et Marc.* 3.5).¹³⁷ Soluchana Asirvatham notes that *andreia* is not unambiguously positive in Plutarch's corpus, and indeed sometimes is used quite ironically.¹³⁸ The word may therefore imply the male, but it doesn't necessarily also imply virtue; there are rare cases in which *andreia* invokes the wrongful assumption that *manliness* is virtue.¹³⁹ Such is the case with Coriolanus, who believes that his prowess in matters of war is equivalent to the virtue required of a statesman.¹⁴⁰

Asirvatham further argues that Plutarch dissociates *andreia* from the militaristic context, transposing it to the realm of the philosopher and describing its application specifically in the domestic context.¹⁴¹ One such case, in which Pittacus remains unmoved by his wife's anger on account of his *andreia* (*De tranq. an.* 471b), reveals the connections between masculinity, self-control and domination. Moreover, *andreia* in the philosophical sense is not an individual but a civic virtue, and it is this sense that Plutarch prefers. In *Dion*, he refers to a discussion held in Syracuse on the occasion of Plato's visit to the court of the tyrant Dionysius. Despite his acculturation in an atmosphere of submission to a tyrant and a life of luxury and excessive pleasure, Dion from the outset had a good character marked by magnanimity and manliness (*andrōdēs*), which his association with Plato only increased (*Dion* 4.1). In a discussion on men's virtue (*andros aretēs*), *andreia* then comes to

signify an opposition to tyranny in the same sense as it appears in *Virtues*, indicating that in its true form *andreia* is a psychic virtue (*Dion* 5.1). It is this condition which allows Theste to claim *andreia* for herself by arguing that she is not *anandros* because she would have followed her husband into exile if she had the choice, rather than be associated with a tyrant (*Dion* 21.5). In the case of women, *andreia* signifies a form of self-control and temperance that is comparable to that of men but particular to their sex, exemplified in their loyalty to their husbands. For men, the emphasis is on the domination of reason over passion; for women, it's the submission of passion to reason. In this sense, *andreia* comes to mean a form of virtue that is truly masculine, and as such is a condition of divine *aretē*.

When Plutarch speaks of militaristic manliness, which is the province of Ares, he sometimes uses *andrōdēs* instead of *andreia*, and links it to the spirited part of the soul (*Amat.* 757c).¹⁴² He argues that excessive anger—a result of uncontrolled *thumos* in the soul—is neither noble (*eugenēs*) nor manly (*andrōdēs*) nor indicative of a great mind (*phronēma*) (*De cohib. ir.* 456). In *The Fortune of the Romans*, Plutarch again assigns to the Romans a warlike nature, but here it is *andrōdēs* instead of *andreia* (426c). This is exemplified in the character of Marius who, like Coriolanus, is naturally *andrōdēs* and fond of war, and his military education made him unable to control his *thumos* (*Mar.* 2.1).¹⁴³ In contrast, Alexander's list of virtues includes manliness (*andrōdēs*) as a result of mildness, but his *andreia* is linked rather to *enkrateia* and *philanthrōpia* as expressions of virtue more generally, and he has *sōphrosunē* to seal the deal (*De Alex. fort. virt.* 326e, 332c–d). Agesilaus declares outright that *andreia*, here in the militaristic sense, is of no use unless it is accompanied by justice (*dikaiosunē*), and if all men were just there would be no need for *andreia* (*Ages.* 23.5, cf. *Apophth. reg.* 19of). Dion is manly at the outset, but his association with Plato is what properly gives him *andreia*, while Coriolanus' contested *andreia* is the result of the Roman misunderstanding of the true nature

of virtue. In some cases, the use of *andrōdēs* seems to imply that manliness is the absence of cowardice (*deilia*), which makes it liable to association with other virtues, like *megalopsuchia* (*De tranq. an.* 475e) and temperance (*sōphrosunē*) (*De adul. amic.* 74c).¹⁴⁴ Men's manliness appears then as a condition of their masculinity; a man cannot be emasculate and possess *andreia*.

The same is not true for women, who cannot be manly and yet possess *andreia*. Perhaps most telling is Plutarch's description of Hypsicrateia, the *pallakē* of Mithridates, who fled alongside him with Pompey in hot pursuit. In contrast to Plutarch, Valerius Maximus says Hypsicrateia was Mithridates' wife (6.6).¹⁴⁵ Russell notes that Plutarch was almost certainly aware of Valerius' work, and indeed he refers to it directly in *Brutus* (53.4).¹⁴⁶ Plutarch's decision to refer to Hypsicrateia as a *pallakē* therefore must have been deliberate, and so reveals much about his view of female masculinity and the particular conditions for its cultivation. He ascribes to her no *andreia*, but she was both *andrōdēs* and *paratolmos* (this latter indicating lack of moderation), fighting on a horse in Persian dress, for which reason Mithridates sometimes called her Hypsicates (*Pomp.* 32.8).¹⁴⁷ This description also reflects negatively on Mithridates, whose own manhood is thus brought into question, and recalls the effeminacy often ascribed to "barbarians," among whom the women are sometimes more manly than the men.

Then there is the case of the Spartans. Sartre makes extensive use of Plutarch's *Lycurgus* to advance his argument on the Spartan form of virility, noting that Spartan girls received a similar education to that of boys, though of course to different ends: "the objective of motherhood was substituted for that of war."¹⁴⁸ Bassi notes that the Spartan form of *andreia*, at least according to Pericles' funeral oration, is an external condition written on the body, while the Athenian form is an internal disposition cultivated through habit and custom.¹⁴⁹ Predictably, when Plutarch describes Lycurgus' reforms, his tone is circumspect. Recognizing the impossibility of taming (*sōphronizein*) the Spartan women, who had immense power

and wealth on account of their husbands' frequent absences at war, Lycurgus made changes to their education, first of all by making them partake in physical activities such as running, wrestling and other traditionally male athletic sports. Such exercise was thought to prepare them to deal more easily with the pain of childbirth. The meager Spartan diet and women's exercise during pregnancy is supposed to have led to strong bodies and healthy babies (*Lyc.* 17.4–5). With these reforms, Lycurgus freed the women from softness, delicacy and effeminacy (*thēlutes*) (14.1–2). Plutarch recognizes that Lycurgus couldn't bring the Spartan women to submission and so did the next best thing: he treated them almost like men.¹⁵⁰ Even so, he clearly prefers the “feminine decorum” instilled in young women by Numa. He thinks the reforms, which prized *andreia* above all else, made the Spartan women unfeminine (*athēlus*) and overly bold, so that they were manly (*andrōdēs*) even in the presence of their husbands (*Lyc. et Num.* 2.1, 3.3–5).¹⁵¹ It is telling that here the manliness of the women is indicated both by their dress and by their speech, or rather their lack of silence on matters of the greatest importance.

There is therefore a subtle but marked difference between manliness and masculinity, the former being first of all a condition of the body that reflects the state of the soul and the latter a disposition of the soul reflected on the body. Masculinity in the sense of *andreia* is now available to men and women both, provided their souls and their bodies are in harmony. Plutarch often places *andreia* in opposition to *malakia*, that same softness of which Pisis and Protogenes accuse women, as well as to cowardice (*deilia*), weakness (*astheneia*) and luxury (*truphē*). In at least one instance, *malakia* is an indicator of *anandria*, unmanliness (*Fab.* 8.4), and it consistently indicates that sexual passivity, cowardice and weakness appropriate to women (BDAG).¹⁵² When *malakia* is used of women, it usually indicates feminine softness, a condition of the body, while its application to men often indicates a moral fault. Aristotle groups *akrasia*, *malakia* and *truphē* as vices opposed

to *enkrateia* (*Eth. Nic.* 1145a35–36). These are particularly effeminate vices directly opposed to *andreia*, and so men charged with *malakia* are considered effeminate, since women are softer and more fearful than men.¹⁵³ Cowardice (*deilia*) is a sure sign of *malakia*, since it arises out of excessive fearfulness (1116a14–15). *Malakia* is also a natural feature of foreigners, who are too relaxed in luxury and averse to pain, which makes them cowards (*Eth. Nic.* 1150b4–6). Both *malakia* and *andreia* are therefore concepts that link gender with virtue, both can be attributed to either men or women, and they are mutually exclusive.

Women are not often explicitly described as *andreios*, but when they are their *andreia*, like that of men, tends to indicate the presence of other virtues, most important of which is *sōphrosunē*.¹⁵⁴ Such is the case with Porcia, who is also *eugeneia* and more generally virtuous in the sense of *aretē* (*Cat. Min.* 73.4).¹⁵⁵ Both Camma and Empona are inspired by *erōs* and loyalty to their husbands (*Amat.* 768b–d, 770d–771c), and from the context it is fair to say that Plutarch considered these two exempla as indicators of *andreia*.¹⁵⁶ Indeed, *andreia* often appears in the same contexts as other forms of *aretē*, including justice (*dikaiosunē*), wisdom (*sophia*, *phronēsis*) and greatness of soul (*megalopsuchia*).¹⁵⁷ Pittacus is not only *andreios*, he also possesses *sophia* and *dikaiosunē*. In cases like these, *andreia* also implies self-control, the *enkrateia* through which virtue is cultivated.¹⁵⁸ Thus for Plato, *andreia* is engendered through the balance between emotion and reason (*Resp.* 440d–442d), and Aristotle divided the soul into a part that rules and a part that is ruled (*Pol.* 1260a5–10); *andreia* is cultivated when emotion is controlled by reason.

Plutarch represents these parts of the soul as Isis and Osiris, the feminine and masculine aspects of the soul.¹⁵⁹ This explicit anthropomorphism of the parts of the soul within the context of a marriage is a necessary result of what Gilbert Barberà calls the “masculinization of ethics,” an ethics which privileges the male and forces women to adjust their nature in accordance, in other words, to become masculine-in-soul if they are to be taken seriously.¹⁶⁰ As

in *On Love*, *On Isis* makes it quite clear that women have the ability to become virtuous in the context of conjugality, which implies a submissive status-relation of the wife to the husband. Even in the soul, the control of the masculine over the feminine is crucial to the cultivation of virtue, and we must understand women's *andreia* as an expression of this condition of their soul that is enacted through the body in ways that are particular to their sex.

In *On Love*, Plutarch therefore argues that it's not necessary to speak of women's numerous virtues because some women are obviously *andreios* (*Amat.* 769b). For women, then, *andreia* may indicate the *courage to choose* virtue over vice, submission over domination, heteroconjugality over its absence. Women who possess *andreia* alongside other virtues can therefore most accurately be described as masculine-in-soul. That does not, however, make them *manly*. On the contrary, masculine women exercise their masculinity in specifically feminine ways or contexts, acting in supporting roles and in the home. Having *andreia* is the quality that ultimately confers the right of domination to women because they have chosen subordination to the *idea of the masculine*, Reason, within the bounds of marriage. It is this condition too that gives women the permission to take part in affairs of the state, most clearly in the case of Porcia, who demands that Brutus share his struggles with her, but less overtly also in characters like Octavia and Cornelia.¹⁶¹ When Pisis exclaims that Ismenodora's bold action has emasculated the city (*Amat.* 755b–c), we might be justified in detecting a hint of irony here. Perhaps Plutarch wants the reader to infer that the city isn't emasculated when women take part in its affairs, provided that those women are virtuous, or perhaps the irony is that men can emasculate a city just as effectively through vice and tyranny. That seems to be a central concern of *Virtues*. Plutarch implies here a complicated hierarchy of submission and domination, in which the virtuous wife becomes masculine-in-soul and the vicious, submissive man becomes effeminate.¹⁶² In this schema, the masculine woman

submits to the masculine man but can dominate the effeminate man because of her moral superiority, provided she does so within established social structures.

Women with masculine souls exhibit their masculinity in socially legible ways that is reproduced as femininity, that particular form of virtuous masculinity when it is manifested in a female body. Femininity is thus as performative as masculinity, both being forms of virtue in sexed bodies. This schema preserves male supremacy by framing virtue as a transfiguration into masculinity-of-soul. It also provides a framework for the domination of some women over others and even in rare cases over (free) men. As it turns out, the issue at stake is not simply whether women are capable of Love but whether they are entitled to domination and in which circumstances. Ismenodora is only able to be her younger lover's guide because of her manifest virtue; she is only eligible to marry him because of her ability to reproduce. In this way, as Valverde Sánchez notes, Plutarch emphasizes the moral dimension of sex within marriage.¹⁶³ On this view, conjugality is an ethical relation concerned with the wife's relationship to her husband, who is the focal point of the formation of her ethical self. Plutarch ends *Advice* (146a) with a quote from Sappho, who thought her skill in poetry justified her writing the following verse to a rich woman:

Dead in the tomb you will lie,
Nor shall there be thought of you there,
For in the roses of Pierian fields
You have no share¹⁶⁴

He tells Eurydice that as a woman of philosophy she has even more reason to feel justified in entertaining "high and splendid thoughts" about herself. Yet underneath this seemingly favorable comparison to Sappho lies a warning: live viciously and die anonymously.

Femininity, then, is a virtuous mode of being appropriate to women on the basis of their reproductive function. As a mode of being, it consists of a collection of habits and customs, many of which I had covered in Chapter 3 and which I will only briefly

repeat here. The feminine woman is silent except in times of need; she may be wealthy but will not indulge in luxury; her temperance will be an outward token of her virtue; she might be noble but she doesn't take her nobility or wealth as license to reduce men to submission; she never takes the lead in the bedroom; she always works in service of harmony and peace; she takes no part in mystery religions, superstitious rituals, magic, charms and potions, and she studies philosophy alongside her husband. Virtue, then, consists of good actions on the part of the wife, actions that are identified in advance and that define her relationship to her husband as a submissive status-relation. Being male and being a husband is not without its duties and restrictions, but its concerns, as Foucault had shown, are decidedly different. Marriage, however, unites man and woman, husband and wife, in the common purpose of a shared life and shared intellectual pursuits.¹⁶⁵ One of those pursuits is (or *ought to be*) the study of philosophy, through which one can become virtuous and transcend the signs of the body. The ultimate form of virtue in women is manifested in their love for their children and their loyalty to their husbands. Most importantly, the virtuous woman does all of these things to please her husband. Her identity, her entire sense of self, is conjugal, subsumed into the image of her husband, as water disappears when mixed with wine, and tin with copper (*Conj. praec.* 140e–f, cf. *Amat.* 767d–e).¹⁶⁶ Let us return, then, to the mirror-self and Plutarch's advice to the ugly woman.

When Plutarch advises the bride to contemplate herself in the mirror, he is not asking her to see herself; he is asking her to see herself as others would see her, to stand outside of herself and consider the value of her person for others. The demands of Beauty as an indicator of virtue creates the conditions within which the wife is, in the words of Heather Widdows, "encouraged to imagine [she is] on display."¹⁶⁷ More specifically, she ought to consider her husband's view of her before anything else. As Widdows argues, beauty is not just an ideal, it is a moral duty, an ethical demand.¹⁶⁸ In her view of the contemporary beauty ideal, she sees a significant

change in our understanding of the self, which now is “embedded in, suffused through, and written on our bodies.”¹⁶⁹ It seems to me, however, that this understanding of the self is nothing new. It has always been intimately entwined with the body, and I have argued here that Plutarch held a version of this view as well. In particular, I have argued that psychagogy—the vehicle through which power is regulated, distributed and personalized—is a process of internalization, a change in the subject’s mode of being, much like Widdows argues that the beauty ideal internalizes power and encourages self-policing.¹⁷⁰ Plutarch’s views subject love and beauty to a politics of power that is closely related to a reproductive conception of difference. This understanding of the body, however, sheds little light on gender as a category of identification and difference separate from biological sex. It is also clear that biological sex is a poor indicator of individual identities, some of whom absolutely conform to the understanding of reproductive virtue that assigns to certain women a privileged place in the hierarchy of domination and allows them to express their femininity as a masculine status-relation, and some of whom don’t.

If the ability to be virtuous is defined as a physical and reproductive status-relation, it is difficult to account for people who do not express themselves in accordance with the signs of their bodies. One of the defining characteristics of Plutarch’s work is his acknowledgment of different natures and their varying modes of being. In the *Lives*, he examines the character of such people in order to construct an ideal of what personhood should be—how to be *virtuous*—and what not. Gender in this sense is not just an aspect of virtue, it is virtue or vice. As we’ll see in the next chapter, Plutarch elevates these problems to a metaphysical reality that again takes reproductivity as its starting point. In that way, he aims to render an account of first principles that validates masculinity-of-soul as the superior mode of being, while also invalidating identities that deviate from this ethical norm. The theory relies

on a reproductive conception of difference and the assumption that reason is masculine and passion is feminine. For Plutarch, biological sex is and ought to be the primary determinant of social relations and individual identities, which are then compounded by other factors that signify difference. These other factors, however, make complex the expression of gender in individual persons and thus psychagogy is intended to rectify the relationship between the self as a sexed being and the self as a social being by bringing them into a harmonious whole in accordance with the signs of the body.

Geert Roskam notes that Plutarch's attitude towards Romans and barbarians is markedly more positive in cases where they assimilate to his own Greek ideals.¹⁷¹ In the case of women, virtue requires an assimilation not just to Greekness but also to masculinity, a double burden that makes them all the more unlikely to attain his ideal. As a result, the self "is constitutively split between itself and a demand it cannot meet."¹⁷² In fact, it is that very demand that enables the expression of abnormative identities.¹⁷³ I understand this split to be between the subject's internal experience of theirself and the ethical demand placed on the sexed subject, a split between soul and body. Gender arises in this tension between sex and the self, where "sex" denotes the biological sex of the subject and the demands placed on them by virtue of their being that sex, and the "self" that psychic mode of being through which the self is constituted either through the approval of an ethical demand or the willful disapproval of that very same demand. The conjugal self therefore arises as a status-relation between a female body and a masculine soul and is reproduced as femininity, while the status-relation between a male body and a masculine soul is reproduced as masculinity.

Butler comments that Irigaray's claim for the primacy of sexual difference suggests that "other forms of difference might be derived from sexual difference."¹⁷⁴ She goes beyond this assumption of the primacy of sexual difference to argue that categories converge at points where they are mutually constituted. I think that this is the

case for Plutarch, whose ontology contains the other as a non-designated category which can produce any form of difference. The assumption that underlies this is the primacy of the Greek male, whose whole self is reason; the other is effeminate, the effeminate is other. In *On Isis* and *The Generation of the Soul*, Plutarch therefore provides for a third type that lies beyond and is encompassed by the binary relation between Matter and Form, a type that represents change, chaos and decay, and as such is a necessary component of nature. In fact, it is the element that animates the entirety of existence even as it continually struggles to affirm the reality of its becoming. It even animates the movements of the mind from which belief and opinion originate. Gender exists in this space between what is and what could be, it both is and is not, and because of this liminality it constitutes a threat to traditional sexual norms and roles that have intimately entwined the experience of the body as a social being and the experience of the body as a sexual being.

For Plutarch, people who understand gender to mean sex, who understand gender on an intrinsic level as a reproductive relation between two bodies with matching parts that can produce something outside of itself (that is, a child), constitute their self in accordance with the signs of their body—that is, the signs both physical and performative that indicate their reproductive role and availability. For many, even today, this relationship between the sexual and the social is unproblematic. We will see this obsession with genitalia, heteroconjugality and offspring theorized again in *On Isis*. Selves thus constructed are oppositional in nature, in part because of the oppositional desire of heterosexual reproductive relations. In this model, the body is prior to the mind and it informs and shapes our interpretations of the world around us, including our social identities, but the soul is prior to the body and determines its shape.

It seems entirely plausible then to expect differences in expression in the human type, and indeed such examples are abundant in Plutarch. At the same time, though gender expression

is varied in the *Moralia* and the *Lives*, there are few examples of physical difference, with the exception of eunuchs, most of whom were not born intersex but castrated during life. Intersexuality and other types that defy the sexual binary are sidelined and relegated to the sphere of non-being in Plutarch's work. This is likely precisely because one was supposed to be able to make firm predictions about character based on their type, as Russell argues, and intersex folk and eunuchs are hard to categorize.¹⁷⁵ Plutarch prefers to remain within the boundaries of sexual difference long established in the medico-philosophical tradition.

Within this framework, the demands of beauty, nebulous as they are, can produce gender difference. And despite its close association with virtue and masculinity, beauty can be deceptive, much like success in war can be deceptive; neither are wholly accurate predictions of philosophical virtue. The beautiful woman and the manly man may both turn out to be quite vicious. Physical beauty is therefore at best an indication of the state of the soul at the moment of reincarnation and of its proclivity for virtue. True beauty—capital-B Beauty—is on the inside, and that kind of beauty is directly linked to virtue. But virtue is prescriptive; it both limits what one can do and who one can be. Virtue demands the whole self. It demands adherence to the regiment of body and soul. It demands submission to the criteria of masculinity, and where that criteria cannot be met, manliness and effeminacy proliferate. Thus a split between the demand and the (im)possibility of its fulfillment is initiated at the level of the self—how does the ugly wife display her virtue in a body that already suggests its absence? Halberstam argues that multiple modes of gender variance can be found in contemporary society, that it is sometimes measured by a woman's marital status, and is measured on the body.¹⁷⁶ This is true for Plutarch also, who conceives of gender as a relation of soul to body which is measured in the activity of the body, both in its expression of lawful reproductive capacity and availability and its character and habits. Plutarch attempts to solve the problem

of discontinuity between body and soul by moving the discourse beyond what seems inherently and essentially true and towards a personalized ideology of gender essentialism centered on the practice of virtue and vice. The theories and methods associated with psychagogy provide the tools with which one can regulate the expression of gender by tying it to notions of good and evil.

In order for the psychagogic program to work, the self must therefore be defined as a rational aspect that is separate from the body and its desires and emotions, and thus able to control it the way a charioteer controls his horses. Plutarch makes this claim to the rationality of the self quite explicit, when he says that “the self of each of us is not anger or fear or desire just as it is not bits of flesh or fluids either but is that with which we reason and understand” (*De facie* 944f–945a).¹⁷⁷ The true self, the only *valid* self, is one that is completely guided by reason, one in which body and soul have been subjugated to the rational principle. It is this subjugation that facilitates the production of virtue as an expression of gender; virtue is reason ruling the body in accordance with its sex. Any deviation, whether in the direction of manliness or effeminacy, excess or defect, is therefore vicious. Plutarch attempts to ground this theory in the fact of reason through an appeal to nature, but truthfully it is always produced in relation to an other. The other whose soul is ruled by appetite and desire therefore appears not as a third gender but rather as the absence, perversion and deformity of any stable category of gender identification. On this view, gender is not simply a truth about the self but a mode of being that must be legible in social contexts, and when it cannot be read on the body tends towards non-existence.

CHAPTER FIVE

A QUEER ONTOLOGY

First, therefore, I shall set down what I think about these matters, confirming and vindicating as far as may be by probability what is unusual and paradoxical about my account ...

On the Generation of the Soul in the Timaeus 1014a

In the previous chapter, I argued that Plutarch's psychagogy for women encourages the formation of a self which is at its core conjugal and concerned primarily with the woman's role in the home and the marriage. The subordination of female to male is ever-present in this schema, and it is this same ethical demand that produces gender difference. There is already a basis for these views in Plato and Aristotle, as well as in the ancient physicians. Plutarch agrees with such a patriarchal social organization, but popular-philosophical texts alone cannot effect the desired change in the subject's mode of being; psychagogy requires deep engagement with philosophy and those sciences by way of which masculine supremacy is vindicated. It is a transformation of the self at the most fundamental level: that of the soul. Theoretical philosophy can also, however, be opaque, lending itself to interpretation rather than straightforward moralizing. What I present here is

one possible interpretation of Plutarch's metaphysics that aims specifically at reconciling those ideas with his views on the nature and virtue of women in the more practical and popular texts discussed in the previous chapters. Here, I focus primarily on two theoretical texts in which the feminine and the relationship between male and female is explored: *The Creation of the Soul* and *On Isis*.

Radek Chlup has argued that Plutarch's primary interest is ethical, for which metaphysics is only a support and a guide.¹ However, metaphysics also offers an explanation for ethical dilemmas not so easily supported otherwise, of which the naturalness of women's submission is just one, albeit an important one for Plutarch.² *On Isis* opens on an ethical note which links wisdom and virtue, with mention of a number of virtuous acts that aid the search for knowledge.³ These include abstention from all things that are superfluous, certain foods, wine except for when the time is right, the curtailment of lust and licentiousness, submission to a stern regimen, avoidance of superstition and luxury, and moderation in all things (351f–353e). It's hardly necessary to note the similarities with the precepts in *Advice*. Plutarch emphasizes that the Egyptian religious rites connected to the cult of Isis are devoid of anything irrational or superstitious, but they contain things that have moral and practical value (353e). The metaphysical turn comes only later and gradually, offering explanations for and interpretations of ethical principles that reinforce the importance of conjugality for the cultivation of virtue and resistance to evil.

Theories about the origin of evil appear to have been unsatisfactory to our philosopher, or perhaps to his female addressee—who never says a word herself—since they tended to suggest that evil is closely entwined with or even inherent in the feminine. Such a theory has serious implications for women's ability to be truly virtuous, and if virtue is always already impossible for women, what's the use in trying?⁴ Clearly, then, it is necessary to make adjustments. Plutarch's theory of the origin of evil can be

read as a critical expansion to his arguments for women's ability to attain both moral and philosophical virtue, and as such offers an explanation of gender difference.⁵ The problem at hand for Plutarch is therefore not simply proving again to his audience that the male is superior, but rather supplying the proof in such a way as to further the view that women are fully capable of masculine virtue without destabilizing the matrix of domination. Part of this theory relies on a reproductive conception of gender, in which the role of the male and female in generation is made to correspond to their social identities, while also reinforcing the importance of marriage in his ethics. Yet there are many people in Plutarch's work for whom a conjugal sexual identity is neither inevitable nor particularly cogent, and that is without accounting for the existence of eunuchs and intersex persons.

Plutarch's metaphysics of gender is far more sophisticated than scholars tend to acknowledge. Jill Harries describes him as "a communicator rather than an analyst, [who] preferred to regurgitate received ideas rather than to engage with the higher ... reaches of philosophical speculation." John Dillon also characterized him as "by no means a great original philosopher."⁶ On the contrary, his engagement with ideas from the philosophical tradition is critical and his synthesis of those ideas is often as subtle as his views on women. A theory of natural oppositionality is evident throughout his work, but it doesn't necessarily translate to a firm gender binary. He regards the view that people are made of a composite of two things to be quite wrong (*De facie* 943a). Instead, he operates within a schema of threes, in which two principles are opposed to one another and are harmonized by a third intermediate principle:

Nor is it reasonable to suppose that Nature has placed side by side destroyer and victim, as though she were the author of strife and dissension, not of union and harmony. She does, indeed, make use

of opposites to constitute the universe, yet she does not employ them without a tempering element ... (*De prim. frig.* 951d)

What is particularly curious about Plutarch's metaphysics is that his opposing principles aren't male and female but male and other, while the female becomes the intermediate principle, the tempering element which fosters harmony and unity.⁷ This is evident also from his version of the Pythagorean Table of Opposites, in which he replaces the pair *male–female* with *equal–unequal* (*De Iside* 370e). In fact, the action in *On Isis* is reliant not just on the harmonious relationship between Isis and Osiris, but the antagonism of Typhon. These three deities are personifications of the first principles, but how exactly that's supposed to work can only be understood by analyzing *On Isis* alongside *The Creation of the Soul*.⁸ For such an analysis to be productive, we must reckon with the difference in context and aim of each text. *The Creation of the Soul*, dedicated to Plutarch's sons, is concerned primarily with these principles in the abstract sense as they appear in the *Timaeus*, the way they interacted in the acosmos,⁹ and the ways in which the demiurge regulated them to form the World Soul and the cosmos. As such, it necessarily touches on the problem of evil and the feminine at the highest ontological level. *On Isis*, on the other hand, is a localized and anthropomorphized cultural allegory of the way these principles interact in the generated universe, and is addressed to his friend Clea. Isis is a focal point of the treatise, and as a result the issue of female virtue arises again and again in Plutarch's analysis of the Egyptian myth.¹⁰ A further treatise, *On Moral Virtue*, places emphasis on the parts of the individual human soul that are derived from the first principles, making it a useful companion for understanding these two complex works.

Plutarch acknowledges that his analysis of Plato's views on the soul needs vindication because of its "opposition to most of the Platonists" (*An. proc.* 1012b). His account of Plato's psychogony is, in his own words, "unusual and paradoxical" (1014a).¹¹ Indeed,

he is unique among the Middle Platonists for attempting a unitary interpretation of Plato's work and the interpretations thereof, and for addressing his arguments to a wider audience outside of the bounds of academic philosophy.¹² Taking as his starting point the rational supremacy of the male principle and the materiality of the feminine principle, he argues that a simple mixture of intelligible and perceptible being can generate anything whatsoever, but this generation cannot be called "soul." The reason for this view is relatively simple. According to Plato, "matter is said always to be amorphous and shapeless and devoid of all quality and potency of its own," while *logos* is by nature perfect, stable and unchanging (Plut. *An. proc.* 1014f, cf. Pl. *Ti.* 50b). The question, then, is how evil came to be:

... if the substrate was unqualified matter (*hulē*) and so void of all causality, and the artificer (*dēmiourgos*) good and so desirous of making all things resemble himself as far as possible, and third besides these there was nothing ... since of things that do exist neither what is good nor what is without quality is likely to have occasioned evil's coming to be (*An. proc.* 1015a–b, cf. *De Iside* 369b).

On this view, if these two principles (*logos* and Matter) are the basis of everything that exists in the universe, it's almost impossible to account for difference, change and decay, since a corporeal principle that has no quality of its own must surely either copy the Forms faithfully or in fact have some unidentified quality peculiar to itself, and the Forms are by nature stable and eternal. Plutarch therefore claims that Matter is neither the origin of difference nor responsible for the existence of evil, since Matter "is without quality or differentiation" (1015d, cf. *De Iside* 369a). The problem of *The Creation of the Soul* is exactly this issue with the feminine principle, which Plato calls "mother" and "nurse" (*An. proc.* 1015d, Pl. *Ti.* 49a, 50d, 51a), and which subsequent Platonists have, in Plutarch's view wrongly, taken to be the origin of evil.¹³

A significant portion of Plutarch's metaphysics therefore explicitly aims to rehabilitate the feminine principle by shifting the origin of evil onto a third kind, which he identifies as the source of motion. This third kind is closely entwined with the feminine principle—Matter or *hulē*—and thus guarantees the ethical subordination of the feminine even as it absolves her of the origin of evil. It can also account for the origin of difference in the sublunary sphere, including gender difference in human bodies, though of course Plutarch did not think of the problem in these terms. Furthermore, it neatly encapsulates the tripartite soul within a dualistic ontology without contradiction by incorporating Matter and Motion into a single principle, the Indefinite Dyad. We will see, then, that Plutarch attempts a unifying account of Plato's cosmogony which incorporates *logos*, Matter and Motion into the first principles. In doing so, he clarifies the role of the Receptacle as the substrate for the mixture of antagonistic forces, and subordinates a further series of metaphysical principles as either properties or the result of this mixture, in effect relegating them to the lower levels of being. A particular difficulty of Platonic metaphysics is the relation of the soul to the body,¹⁴ and it is difficult to explain how a dualistic system can account for the tripartite soul. Plutarch's interpretation of the creation of the soul offers a novel solution to this problem.

MOTHER, FATHER, OFFSPRING

Plutarch was in many ways a traditionalist. As we have seen, *Advice* takes a prescriptive approach to conjugality in which the husband is the leader of the household (139a, 139d). Much of the text rests on the premise that submission is woman's natural mode of being and that harmony in the household is achieved through male domination. Here, as elsewhere, Plutarch connects the proper functioning of the home and the roles of husband and wife in it with sexed first principles. Victoria Wohl argues that while *Advice*

is focused on the couple, it does not do away with the (barely) implicit hierarchy which identifies the female with corporeality and the male with reason.¹⁵ Plutarch himself could not have made it more explicit:

So is it with women also; if they subordinate themselves to their husbands, they are commended, but if they want to have control, they cut a sorrier figure than the subjects of their control. And control ought to be exercised by the man over the woman (*kratein de dei ton andra tēs gunaikos*), not as the owner has control of a piece of property, but as the soul controls the body (*hōs psuchēn sōmatos*) ... (*Conj. praec.* 142e; my emphases)¹⁶

In *On Isis* and *The Creation of the Soul* a similar gendering of principles occurs.¹⁷ Matter is referred to as “mother” and “nurse”,¹⁸ while *logos* is “father” and “creator”.¹⁹ Osiris was the first of Rhea’s children to be born and the festival of the Pamyliia “which resembles the phallic processions” is celebrated in his honor (*De Iside* 355e–f, 365b), therefore Osiris is the “First, the Lord of All, the Ideal One” (352a).²⁰ Isis is the feminine principle of nature (372e), as Osiris is the masculine (372a). Plutarch also incorporates Plato’s account of the myth of Poverty and Plenty in the *Symposium* (203b) to further the reproductive metaphor which figures the male as perfect and self-sufficient (*patēr, agathos, sophos, autarkēs, teleios*) and the female as helpless and dependent (*mētēr, amēchanos, aporos*); to this he adds that “the seed of Woman is not a power or origin, but only material and nurture of generation” (374c–d, f). In *On Isis*, this relation of principles is made to account for reproductive difference, which in one sense is concerned with the sex of individual bodies and the ways in which they interact, and in another with the regulation of those interactions through an appeal to divinity. It also emphasizes the dependence of the female upon the male in a context that makes her virtue contingent on her recognition of that very same dependence.

The relationship between Intellect and Matter is akin to that between husband and wife.²¹ This is most clear in *On Isis*. The work is not traditionally associated with Plutarch's work on women beyond its (supposedly marginal) focus on conjugality. Ann Chapman states the case most directly in *The Female Principle in Plutarch's Moralia*: "At first glance," she writes, "the text might appear to have little relevance to Plutarch's views on women."²² In my view, the text is at first glance deeply concerned with women, addressed as it is to Clea, the addressee also of *Virtues*. Could such a thing be coincidental? According to Blomqvist, this along with the focus on female passivity, submission and conjugality must be intentional.²³ Chapman notes this too, but considers this aspect of the text secondary to the religious, philosophical and metaphysical content. She continues, "*Isis and Osiris* is not a work concerned with either gender or the relationship between male and female ..." but comments that Plutarch emphasizes the significance of the female role for his purpose, which she sees as an allegory for marriage.²⁴ This is the view of Stadter as well.²⁵ These analyses are limited by their failure to account for Typhon, an enigmatic and positively evil force against which Isis' actions are measured as good and just.

In fact, no work on women in Plutarch's *Moralia*, feminist or not, is complete without a careful enquiry into *On Isis*, which I maintain is deeply concerned with the female and feminine virtue at every step of the way; indeed this is one of the primary concerns of the text. When he describes Isis as the "female principle of nature," he prefaces the statement by indicating that he is returning "to the proper subject of [their] discussion" (372e). As such, it's the perfect companion text to *The Creation of the Soul* and *On Love*, not because these texts together offer a completely consistent "ideology of the female," but because they all represent attempts to make ideal and reality cohere—an exceedingly difficult task in early imperial Rome with its liberated matrons, educated brides and wealthy widows.²⁶ *On Isis* approaches the problem from

various perspectives, of which the most persistent is its engagement with divinity, specifically the sort of divinity that is intermediate between humans and capital-G God, the ever-similar One. I do not consider this to be incidental. The text lays emphasis on Isis acting in support of Osiris, her brother-husband, identifying the former with materiality (365c) and the latter with reason (352a, 373f). When Plutarch identifies these deities with heavenly bodies, his choice of language invokes reproduction and sexual duality: some say Osiris is the moon with whom Isis associates, but the moon is the mother of the world and by nature both male and female, she is receptive and made pregnant by the sun and in turn disseminates generative principles into the air (*De Iside* 368c–d). Indeed, the cosmos came to be through Affection, Aphrodite and Eros, linking the creation of the universe with the first instance of love (*De facie* 927a, cf. *Amat.* 770a).²⁷ The moon's movement is the result of her love for the sun (*De facie* 944e). The conjunction of sun and moon was the first marriage and therefore these calendar days are best for celebrating such occasions (fr. 105). All mortal things have their origin in the sun and moon (fr. 101, cf. fr. 103). Therefore, it's proper to identify Osiris with the sun, upon whom the moon depends.²⁸

This identification of the feminine with the moon, and the continuation of the reproductive metaphor in *The Face on the Moon* reveals the conditions for female masculinity in the rational conjugal self. It is through love of the image in the sun that the mind is ultimately separated from the soul and transcends beyond the sublunary sphere (*De facie* 944e). In Plutarch's retelling of the myth of Isis and Osiris, the feminine continually strives toward masculinity, is defined by her proximity and submission to it, and is helpless without it (cf. *De Iside* 374d). She takes on the role of a loving wife, the materiality unto which the rational male principle imparts the Forms. His is the mind in which concepts are assembled, in which rational thinking finds its origin, and hers is the body moved by him (*De Iside* 374f–375a).²⁹ Early on in the treatise, Plutarch tells Clea that Isis is a lover of wisdom (351f). She is not

knowledge and truth herself, but a conduit for these. But she is not inert or inactive (370f, 375c–d, 376b), she is moved by her *erōs*, her search for *his reason*, her desire *for existence*. Because the alternative is no existence at all.³⁰

The relationship between body and mind haunts the margins of this text. How exactly Plutarch conceptualizes the individual ensouled human as a reflection of these divine principles remains elusive, and I can offer here only a tentative interpretation. The problem is especially complex because I believe that for Plutarch, gender originates on the psychic plane; the body is quite literally *engendered*. This means that for Plutarch, there are only two real (“natural”) genders—man and woman—and everything else is an imperfect copy disrupted by the disorderly principle of the cosmos, including eunuchs and intersex people. On the individual level, deviations are caused by vice in the soul. The conjugal female appears as an innate basic principle of nature without which nothing can exist. It is at the point where reproductive *sex* becomes the determinant of social identity that *gender* becomes a moral issue. Expressing one’s gender correctly is a matter of the soul. The vicious get “downgraded,” to the bodies of women, of pigs, of asses.³¹ Virtue, however, promises transcendence, as too does *On Isis* (361e). Implicit in this theory is a serious problem: what are the conditions for a woman to be reincarnated as a man? Is such a thing even possible?

Elizabeth Spelman argued that philosophers’ conceptions of the soul/body distinction has consequences throughout much of their work.³² This is especially true in Plutarch, where women are more visible than in most other ancient philosophers. It’s nearly impossible to remove from Plutarch his interest in conjugality and read only what’s left: he considered the (heterosexual) married couple the most sacred and beneficial union (*Amat.* 750c). The myth of Isis and Osiris is therefore reconstructed within the framework of Platonic first principles to represent a loving and virtuous conjugal union.³³ The relationship between Isis and Osiris

recalls that between soul and intellect at *The Creation of the Soul* 1024c–d, where Plutarch describes the effect of *logos* upon entering the soul as turning it towards the Good. Osiris, he tells us, is only accessible as a dim vision or through contemplation (*De Iside* 382c–f). Isis, in her role as distributor of the Forms, is enamored with the (capital-B) Beauty of the Good and always pursues it (383a; cf. Pl. *Resp.* 440e). Even so, the feminine principle is unstable and susceptible to evil. Here too the reproductive metaphor is useful for his purposes:

Isis is, in fact, the female principle of Nature (*to tēs phuseōs thēlu*), and is receptive of every form of generation, in accord with which she is called by Plato the gentle nurse and the all-receptive (*tithēnē kai pandechēs*) ... since, because of the force of Reason, she turns herself to this thing or that and is receptive of all manner of shapes and forms. She has an innate love for the first and most dominant of all things, which is identical with the good, and this she yearns for and pursues; but the portion which comes from evil she tries to avoid and to reject, for she serves them both as a place and means of growth (*amphoin men ousa chōra kai hulē*), but inclines always towards the better and offers to it opportunity to create from her and to impregnate her with effluxes and likenesses in which she rejoices and is glad that she is made pregnant and teeming with these creations. For creation is the image of being in matter, and the thing created is a picture of reality (*De Iside* 372e, cf. *De E* 393a–b).

The use of *chōra* and *hulē* here identifies Isis with Matter and Receptacle, as does her reconstruction of Osiris' lost penis (*De Iside* 373a, 359a). In this metaphysical schema, the mother becomes the paradigm for the female, *mothering* is the quintessential function of the feminine.³⁴ For Irigaray, this separation of matter and form amounts to an obfuscation of the female in favor of the pre-existent authority of the male.³⁵ She is reduced to her reproductive function,

barely existent without it and yet necessary for the figuration of the masculine, which contains the reproductive power.

As a maternal figure, Isis cares for the child Osiris fathers with her sister Nephthys (*De Iside* 368e; cf. 375b).³⁶ From this union is born Anubis, whom Nephthys abandons out of fear for the wrath of Typhon, her brother-husband. Isis searches for the child and rears him as her own (368e), after which he becomes her guardian and attendant. Isis herself is mother to three other children fathered by Osiris: Apollo (also called Arueris or the Elder Horus), Harpocrates and Horus (356a, 358e, 373c, 377c).³⁷ The better and more divine nature of the cosmos consists of a triad made from the intelligible (*nous*), the material (*hulē*) and that which is formed from the union of these two, the world (373e–f). This divine triad is none other than Osiris, Isis and Horus; Osiris is Reason and Form, Isis is Matter and Horus is their offspring, the physical world (368d, 373a). Plutarch repeats here Plato's terminology; the intelligible is father and idea, the material is mother or nurse—"the seat and place (*chōra*) of generation"—and the result of this union is the offspring or generation (373f). He describes Osiris as the origin (*archē*), Isis the recipient (*hupodochē*) and Horus the perfected result.³⁸

The continual reference to reproductivity serves to emphasize the importance of conjugality as the vehicle for the legitimate and orderly continuation of the species.³⁹ Thus Plutarch says Isis bore Horus in lawful wedlock, but Nephthys bore Anubis clandestinely (366a). Osiris is also allegorically identified with the Nile and moisture, and Isis with the fertile earth surrounding the great river (366a).⁴⁰ This is made to refer to the ideal conditions for generation, which is ascribed to the reproductive relationship between a heterosexual married couple. Nephthys is the mountainous region bordering on the sea and the river, and therefore the flooding of the Nile into these parts represents the adulterous union of Osiris and Nephthys (366b). Typhon is the power of drought which dissipates moisture (366c). From him no generation can spring, as

is clear when Plutarch tells Clea that “Nephtys, after her marriage to Typhon, was at first barren,” by which is intimated “the utter barrenness and unproductivity resulting from a hard-baked soil” (366d). Plutarch says little else about Nephtys, but Typhon is a constant force throughout the text. As a result, while Isis and Osiris are easily identifiable as personifications of the first principles of Matter and Form, it’s rather more difficult to account for the power of Typhon and to identify him with a cosmic force or a part of the soul. There are suggestions of his role in the cosmos throughout *On Isis*, though those only really start to make sense when read in conjunction with *The Creation of the Soul*, where Plutarch tackles the problem of evil.

In *On Isis*, Plutarch describes the divine triad consisting of Isis, Osiris and Horus as the “better” part of nature, implying that there is a worse part not included in this triad.⁴¹ We also see him argue, in *The Creation of the Soul*, that nothing ensouled could have been generated from Form and Matter alone, since the former is perfectly good and the latter without any quality. There must therefore be a third kind which is neither divine nor unchanging, but the cause of destruction and decay. Within this framework *logos* is unproblematic, since it is always figured in the same way as a male principle which carries reason within itself and imparts it to the World Soul and the terrestrial world by ordering Matter. Leaving Intellect aside for now, let us try to account for the origin of evil.

THE THIRD KIND

At the highest ontological level, Platonism is understood as dualistic, as a tension between two antagonistic first principles, one good and one bad. These principles are sometimes identified with *logos*, the male principle through which the cosmos is ordered, and *hulē*, the material out of which the demiurge created the world. Middle Platonist philosophers typically recognize two principles

at the highest level of existence, the Monad and the Dyad (or unity and multiplicity, or Form and Matter).⁴² Of these, the Monad is the rational principle and the Dyad the corporeal, and the latter of these is made to account for the existence of irrationality and evil in the sublunary sphere. From the mixture of these two principles, the demiurge created the World Soul and the cosmos.

Plutarch's dualism is well-known but its subtleties remain elusive, so scholars tend to ascribe to him a measure of inconsistency. Chlup has argued that Plutarch does theorize two opposing powers, one an irrational soul and the other Intellect. He goes on to say that the irrational is only found in the sublunary sphere and the metaphysical schema of *The Creation of the Soul* and *On Isis* therefore fails to clarify the relation of the irrational principle to the highest ontological level.⁴³ Opsomer also sees two originating principles in Plutarch, indivisible being and divisible being, which he terms the "cognitive" and the "motive" forces. He argues that divisible being is both material and Soul-in-Itself, but it is also a "non-material" substrate which only becomes tangible Matter after the creation of the cosmos.⁴⁴ Indivisible being is *to on*, identified with God, the really existent. Divisible being, on the other hand, is rather more problematic, because for Plutarch Matter and Motion are not divisible in the same way; Motion is *the being that becomes divisible in the case of bodies* (*An. proc.* 1022f) while Matter is *body divided into particularity* (1023a). As a result, he deliberately separates Matter from (its) Motion; while acknowledging that they are functionally inseparable, he argues that they are not the same.

Plutarch never assigns to Matter itself a cause of disorder except insofar as it is in contact with disorderly Motion. He argues that attributing the cause of evil to Matter is a misapprehension of Plato shared even by Eudemus (1015d). The disordered movement of the Receptacle, described as a "shaking" of the elements in the *Timaeus* (52e–53a, cf. 57c), therefore presents a real problem, since it's not quite clear whether the movement is that of the

Receptacle itself. Dillon understands the Receptacle to be a source of disorderly motion but not positively evil, “a system exhibiting all the whole spectrum of possible varieties of being,” while Giovanni Ferrari considers the motion of Matter the result of an irrational acosmic⁴⁵ soul which Plutarch identified with the maleficent soul of *Laws* 10.⁴⁶ Gregory Vlastos identified disorderly Motion as the cause of evil but denied that there is in Plato an acosmic “evil” soul akin to that found in Plutarch’s metaphysics. Instead, he considered evil the result of soul’s partnership with body, which causes irrational corporeal motions.⁴⁷ Gabriela Carone suggests that natural disorder is the incidental result of “random corporeal motions”; her phrasing captures the inextricable relationship of Matter and Motion quite well.⁴⁸

I have already noted that Plutarch seems to posit a third kind, quite explicitly in fact. Arguing against the Stoics, he denies that evil could have arisen from either Matter or God since the former is without quality and the latter is the Good, and if there was nothing besides, evil would not have come to be. There must therefore be a third principle and potency (*tritēn archēn kai dunamin*), as Plato himself had recognized (*An. proc.* 1015b, cf. 1026a). This principle, which is soul in the sense of *psuchē kath’ heautēn*, is at the farthest remove from god. It is essential to this theory that Soul-in-Itself is not the feminine:

In fact, while Plato calls matter mother and nurse (*mētera men kai tithēnēn*), what he calls the cause of evil (*aitian de kakou*) is the motion that moves matter (*tēn kinētikēn tēs hulēs*) and becomes divisible in the case of bodies, the disorderly and irrational but not inanimate motion, which in the *Laws*, as has been said, he called soul contrary and adverse to the one that is beneficent. For soul is cause and principle of motion (*aitia kinēseōs kai archē*), but intelligence of order and consonance in motion; and the fact is that god did not arouse matter from torpor but put a stop to its being disturbed by the mindless cause (*An. proc.* 1015d–e).

This theory is influenced by his reading of the *Laws*:

... but in his *Laws*, when he had grown considerably older, he asserts, not in circumlocution or symbolically, but in specific words, that the movement of the Universe is actuated not by one soul, but perhaps by several, and certainly by *not less than two*, and of these the one is beneficent, and the other is opposed to it and the artificer of things opposed. Between these he leaves a certain *third nature*, not inanimate nor irrational nor without the power to move of itself, as some think, but with *dependence on both those others*, and desiring the better always and yearning after it and pursuing it ... (*De Iside* 371f; my emphases).

The third nature here described must be Matter, since it is dependent on two further principles that stand in opposition to one another: a rational mind and an irrational soul.⁴⁹ Of these two, the former provides Matter with Form, the latter provides her Motion. This much is clear also from the passage at *On Isis* 372e quoted above, in which Isis leans towards the good but remains susceptible to evil; she is intermediate between the two and can be affected by both.

Plutarch also links Isis to Mithras, described just before as mediator between good and evil. He tells Clea that the wisest men believe that “there are two gods, rivals as it were, the one the artificer of good (*agathos*), the other of evil (*phaulos*)” (*De Iside* 369d, cf. *Pl. Leg.* 644c). Some call the better of the two a god and the other a daemon. One such wise man was Zoroaster, who called the good god Oromasdes and the daemon Areimanius. Oromasdes is akin to light (*phōs*), Areimanius to darkness and ignorance (*skotos kai agnoia*), and between the two stands Mithras, the mediator (369e).⁵⁰ Oromasdes is the creator of six gods governing good thought (*eunoia*), truth (*alētheia*), order (*eunomia*), wisdom (*sophia*), wealth (*ploutos*) and pleasure in what is honorable (*hedus tois kalois*), while Areimanius is the creator of their rivals. These two gods are

constantly at war with one another (370a). Both created a further 24 gods each, and by their warring is represented the mixture of good and evil (370b). What results is an extended and extremely complicated allegory in which the first principles are engaged in a cosmic battle on different ontological levels, thus also connecting them with the turbulence of the individual human soul.

The reference to Zoroaster appears also in *The Creation of the Soul* in a similar context.⁵¹ In both instances, Plutarch is giving a brief overview of wise men's opinions on the opposing powers that guide the cosmos. He recalls that Parmenides called these powers "light" and "darkness" (*phōs* and *skotos*), Anaxagoras called them "intellect" and "infinite" (*nous* and *apeiria*) and Zoroaster referred to them as "god" and "spirit" (*theos* and *daimōn*) or "Oromasdes" and "Areimanius" (*An. proc.* 1026b). In *On Isis*, Plutarch presents a short survey of other wise men who hold similar opinions about the opposing powers in the universe, among whom are the adherents of Pythagoras and their Table of Opposites (reproduced in Chapter 3), Anaxagoras, Aristotle and Plato. Isis cannot be the bad *daimōn* referred to here, since Plutarch explicitly says that both she and Osiris for their virtue were transformed from good daemons into gods while Typhon remained a daemon (361e). Near the end of the treatise, Plutarch refers to Typhon explicitly as the "evil spirit" (*kakos daimōn*, 380c). His name indicates ignorance and conceit (351f), and the overpowering and undoing of all that is Good (371b–c).

In this framework, Osiris is the creative element, Typhon the destructive element, and Isis the nurturing element of nature that harmonizes the two opposing forces (374d–375a; cf. *Pl. Resp.* 442a). Plutarch connects these principles with the Pythagorean numbers, where one is Apollo, two is Strife, and three is Justice, which, "by reason of its equality intervenes between the two" (381f; cf. *Arist. Metaph.* 986a21–6). Mediation is a particular function of women, who are often responsible for harmony in the home and the state. Earlier in the treatise, he says that Isis is Justice because of her

wisdom and her role as guardian of and guide to the Realm of Truth (352b). This view of a divine triad stems from his reading of Plato's dialogues, in particular the *Laws*. As also at *Laws* 906a–b, the struggle for order is framed as a cosmic battle, here between Osiris and Typhon with Isis as the mediating principle.

Bram Demulder has highlighted the prominence of *Laws* 10, especially 892a–898e, in *The Creation of the Soul*.⁵² There, Plutarch describes the Dyad as a single principle divided into two kinds. Doing so is essential for his arguments that women are capable of masculine virtue. Neither God nor Matter can account for the source of Motion and change, at least not in the way Plutarch describes them, nor can they adequately account for the tripartite soul in humans. Furthermore, Plutarch manifestly disagrees that Matter is the cause of evil, and therefore the Dyad cannot simply be pure, undifferentiated Matter. Dillon argues that the Dyad “manifests itself at every level of Plutarch’s universe, as disorderly, irrational soul, and as matter, but it is plainly something more than either of these.”⁵³ Boys-Stones holds the view that Matter is for Plutarch “raw mobility,” that Motion is inherent to Matter and that this movement of Matter indicates that for Plutarch Matter is the source of evil.⁵⁴ This view has far-ranging negative implications for Plutarch’s views on the feminine and therefore is ultimately unsustainable in the greater context of his work. The formulation at *The Creation of the Soul* 1015d, where he explicitly states that the feminine (“mother and nurse”) cannot be the cause of evil, thus functions as a commentary on the inherent nature of women, who he argues elsewhere are fully capable of masculine virtue.⁵⁵ Thus, while he believes that nature contains “two opposed principles and two antagonistic forces,” one of which is good and the other evil (*De Iside* 369a), he also states categorically that Isis is not opposed to Osiris but inclined toward him (375a); together they form a harmonious conjugal unit.

To solve this problem of the origin of evil, Plutarch posits an acosmic motive cause which is distinct from Matter, though

closely entwined with it; these two kinds together comprise the Indefinite Dyad. The inextricable interaction of these two kinds continues in the sublunary sphere. Motion is an opinionative and imaginative faculty sensitive to the perceptible precisely because it was in constant contact with Matter in the acosmos; Matter was in motion and dispersion while Motion was divisible and erratic because of its contact with Matter (*An. proc.* 1023d, 1024a). Before the intervention of the demiurge, the perceptible was amorphous and indefinite (*amorphon kai aoriston*) and the faculty stationed about it had neither articulate opinions nor orderly motions (*An. proc.* 1024b). Motion was actively *disturbing corporeality* in this state.

Plutarch argues that this distinction is already present in Plato, but is clearly influenced by Aristotle's *Metaphysics* as well. The notion that this *aoristia* might in fact be two principles originates in the testimony of Aristotle. He wrote that the Dyad is for Plato a duality of the "Great and Small," which is a material principle (*Metaph.* 987b21ff).⁵⁶ Plutarch, like others before him, adopts the term *aoristos duas* as well as the use of *hulē* for Matter, all the while referring back to Plato himself.⁵⁷ He is clearly trying to draw disparate threads in Plato together.⁵⁸ Dillon rejects the notion of two separate principles composing the Indefinite Dyad in Plato's metaphysics, arguing instead that it is a principle that ranges between two opposing poles. For him, the Indefinite Dyad is higher on the ontological scale than Matter but both are feminine, as is the World Soul. John Rist too considers Aristotle's view that the Dyad is two things an error, because the plurality opposed to the One must have been meant by Plato as the "potentiality of plurality," not a *plurality of principles*.⁵⁹ Plutarch, however, may have seen enough evidence in Plato to connect the Dyad with the potentiality of Motion's divisive activity in Matter, which thus causes plurality. Without this interaction, the generated universe would be perfect—if Matter truly is devoid of quality except that which it gains by its reflection of the Forms, there is no satisfactory explanation for the varying and imperfect copies it produces.⁶⁰

A principle of Motion and change must act as the catalyst for the differentiation in generated bodies.

Separating the Dyad into two interconnected kinds solves another problem. In Plutarch's view, the generation of soul cannot be a simple mixture of intelligible and perceptible being (that is, Form and Matter), since in that way one might generate anything whatsoever (*An. proc.* 1013b–c). As Aristotle argues in the *Metaphysics*, a non-corporeal motive cause is necessary to explain the cosmos fully:

All those who regard the universe as a unity, and assume as its matter (*hulē*) some one nature, and that corporeal (*sōmatikos*) and extended, are clearly mistaken in many respects. They only assume elements of corporeal things, and not of incorporeal (*asōmatōn*) ones, which also exist. They attempt to state the causes of generation and destruction, and investigate the nature of everything; and at the same time do away with the cause of motion (*to tēs kinēseōs aition*) (*Metaph.* 988b23–29, cf. 987b20ff, 988b2–9).⁶¹

Aristotle criticized philosophers who ignored the cause of motion and change because without it there can be no generation or destruction (*Metaph.* 990a9–13, 1080a5), and he ascribed to Plato and Leucippus the view that Motion is eternal (*Metaph.* 1071b, cf. *Leg.* 894b). Vlastos noted that acosmic disorderly motion is therefore also atemporal, since time is a cyclical motion.⁶² This understanding of Motion as non-corporeal and ungenerated is an important part of Plutarch's metaphysics.

When he begins his own exposition of the *Timaeus* at *The Creation of the Soul* 1014a, Plutarch notes that the substance out of which the universe came to be was already available for the demiurge (1014b). The elements were unmixed and unamiable in their acosmic state, moving with their own motions (*De facie* 926f). Plutarch calls this condition *disorder* (*akosmia*), the state of things from which god is absent.⁶³ Before the intervention of

the demiurge, there exists already a bodily and a motive force, albeit in a chaotic and unproductive state; there is no cohesion in Body and no reason in Motion (*An. proc.* 1014b). Furthermore, this acosmic state is psychic in some sense, hence god did not make the incorporeal into Body nor did he make the inanimate into Soul (1014b–c; cf. *De Iside* 369a). Plutarch thereby sets up an opposition between corporeality and soul but doesn't quite yet explain what he means by "soul."

Following Demulder, acosmic being consists of amorphous corporeality and unreasoning soul, both of which are ungenerated and have always coexisted.⁶⁴ God did not create the tangibility and resistance of Body or the imagination and motivity of Soul,⁶⁵ but he took over *both* (*amphotera*) the principles, the former vague and obscure (*amudra kai skoteinē*) and the latter disordered and irrational (*tarachōdē kai anoēton*, *An. proc.* 1014b–c, cf. 1027a).⁶⁶ Immediately following this passage, Plutarch defines the substance of Body and the substance of Soul. Body is what Plato called the omnirecipient (*pandechēs*) nature, abode and nurse of all things (1014c, cf. *De Iside* 372e), while Soul is

... that disorderly and indeterminate but self-moved and motive principle (*ataktion kai aoriston autokinētikon de kai kinētikēn archēn*) which in many places he has called necessity (*anangkē*) but in the *Laws* has openly called disorderly and maleficent soul. This, in fact, was soul in itself (*psuchē kath' heautēn*) ... (*An. proc.* 1014d).

From the outset, then, it appears that Plutarch intends to separate Matter from (its) Motion, thereby making Motion the antagonist to Reason. Both of these kinds, Body and Soul (or corporeality and motivity), were indefinite (*aoristos*) in their acosmic state (*An. proc.* 1014c). In the acosmos, Motion and Matter acted on one another in a disorderly and unproductive way. While Matter doesn't by nature have any quality proper to itself, its share in disorder arising from the interaction of Matter and Motion in the acosmos causes bodies

to tend towards disorder and irrationality if they don't seek the Good.⁶⁷ Hence god did not arouse Matter from idleness but put a stop to the disturbance caused in it by disorderly Motion, nor did he impart the origin of change to it, since he is by nature at rest, indestructible and unchangeable, but he removed the indefinitude (*aoristia*) and discordant Motion (*plēmmeleia*) through harmony and concord and number (*An. proc.* 1015e, cf. *Quaest. conv.* 615f–616a).⁶⁸ In this manner, he created the World Soul.

We see then that Plutarch posits two opposing souls on the basis of *Laws* 10, Soul-in-Itself and the World Soul, but is quite clear that they are different souls that exist on different ontological levels, and that neither the good nor the maleficent soul can be equated with the feminine principle. Soul-in-Itself is, to borrow a phrase, raw mobility, an acosmic soul that is itself ungenerated and irrational and the motive cause of all things generated. He argues that acosmic soul

... neither was brought in to being by god nor is the soul of the universe (*kosmou psuchē*) but is a certain self-moved and so perpetually activated potency of imaginative and opinionative but irrational (*alogos*) and disorderly (*ataktos*) transport and impulse ... [while the World Soul] was regulated by god himself (*An. proc.* 1017a–b).⁶⁹

Chlup takes a similar view, arguing that Soul-in-Itself is “an unborn and everlasting source of motion, but its movements are irrational and blind.”⁷⁰ Soul-in-Itself is an essential component of the World Soul, because without it there is no Motion, but without God's intervention, it causes chaos.

Dillon takes Plutarch's views on the irrational soul to mean that he sees the World Soul as essentially irrational.⁷¹ Like the Indefinite Dyad, the World Soul, Isis and Matter, Dillon sees the “evil” soul as a feminine principle.⁷² Paola Volpe Cacciatore takes the same

view, identifying acosmic soul with the cause of evil, and this cause with the feminine.⁷³ Yet it seems that Plutarch considers the World Soul itself to be the rational soul, and there is little indication that there is more than one World Soul (cf. *De def. or.* 424c–d). He notes the inconsistency between the *Timaeus*, where soul is generated, and the *Phaedrus*, where soul is ungenerated (1016a). To solve this difficulty, he makes a distinction between two *kinds of soul*:

For unsubject to generation is said of the soul that before the generation of the universe keeps all things in disorderly and jangling motion (*plēmmelōs panta kai ataktōs kinousan*),⁷⁴ but come to be and so subject to generation is said on the other hand of soul that god installed as chief of the sum of things when out of this soul here and that abiding and most excellent being yonder he had produced a rational and orderly one and from himself had provided intellectuality and orderliness as form for her perceptivity and motivity (*An. proc.* 1016c–d).

Demulder accurately describes this as “two successive states of soul rather than two souls.”⁷⁵ The influence of the *Laws* is clear here; 892d–896c argues for the priority of Soul over Body by positing Soul as a prime cause of motion and change much like that of the *Phaedrus* (245d), where that which moves itself is the source of all motion. The worse of the two souls is responsible for the irrational motions in the cosmos (*Leg.* 898b). In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates claims that bodies that derive motion from others are soulless, but those that derive motion from within by definition have souls, since motivity is the fundamental nature of the soul (*Phdr.* 246d–e). On this basis, Carone argues that Plato speaks of soul in different senses in the *Laws*, though he never explicitly says so. One *kind of soul* is soul in the abstract sense and another is the more concrete kind that governs the universe, that is, the World Soul. Carone further argues that

Plato calls Motion soul, specifically the motion able to move both itself and other things and which is thus the potentiality of change in corporeal things.⁷⁶ This primary motion is the cause of all secondary motions (*Leg.* 897a–b, *Ti.* 46c–e, 68e). Soul in this sense—abstract and noncorporeal—is not the same as the World Soul, but only a necessary constituent of it.

Plutarch therefore identifies unregulated acosmic soul with necessity, which in the *Timaeus* is something separate from the Intellect, devoid of intellect altogether, and which produces accidental and irregular effects (*Ti.* 46e). Soul in this sense—not Matter—is the cause of evil:

Those, however, who attribute to matter (*hulē*) and not to the soul what in the *Timaeus* is called necessity (*anangkēn*) and in the *Philebus* measurelessness and infinitude (*ametrian kai apeirian*) in the varying degrees of deficiency and excess, what will they make of the fact that by Plato matter is said always to be amorphous and shapeless and devoid of all quality and potency of its own ... For what is without quality and of itself inert and without propensity Plato cannot suppose to be cause and principle of evil (*aitian kakou kai archēn*) and call ugly and maleficent infinitude and again necessity which is largely refractory and recalcitrant to god (*An. proc.* 1014e–1015a).⁷⁷

This passage includes an important detail: acosmic Matter is inert, it has no motion of its own, nor is it *apeiron* or *anangkē* (cf. *Pl. Ti.* 50e).⁷⁸ Those properties belong instead to a third kind, which is here simply called *psuchē*—soul (cf. *Pl. Ti.* 47e).⁷⁹ In *The Creation of the Soul*, necessity (*anangkē*) and unlimitedness (*apeiria*) thus appear as properties of the divisible motive cause rather than separate principles.⁸⁰ Plutarch criticizes philosophers who would attribute necessity to Matter.⁸¹ Necessity is that which is measureless and infinite, that is, soul:

As for the substance of soul, in the *Philebus* he has called it infinitude (*apeirian*) as being privation of number and ratio and having in itself no limit or measure of deficiency and excess and difference and dissimilitude; and in the *Timaeus* that which is blended together with the indivisible nature and is said to become divisible in the case of bodies must be held to mean neither multiplicity in the form of units and points nor lengths and breadths, which are appropriate to bodies and belong to bodies rather than to soul, but that disorderly and indeterminate but self-moved and motive principle which in many cases he called necessity but in the *Laws* has openly called disorderly and maleficent soul (*An. proc.* 1014d).

Thus the cause of evil is soul, specifically the kind of soul characterized as *psuchē kath' heautēn*. Soul-in-Itself is the first cause of Motion, since it is self-impelled and is thus the necessary first principle of all motion in the cosmos, including the motions of the soul, but it is disorderly without the Intellect.

Plutarch's acosmic soul is not evil as such but a source of chaotic and disorderly Motion, and these disorderly movements cause evil, change and decay in the sublunary sphere because it's impossible to eliminate them completely from the created universe. More specifically, once Matter becomes tangible, it is entangled with Motion and from this interaction arises false opinion, appetite and sensation (*An. proc.* 1023f–1024a, cf. *Ti.* 28a). Presumably, Motion is nothing without this constant interaction, that is, without *something* to move about Motion does not exist.⁸² Necessity is a unique property of the motive cause, since without it there can be no soul and yet it causes disorder. With reference to the *Statesman*, Plutarch argues that it is necessity that is responsible for the periodic reversal of the heavens (*An. proc.* 1015a). When the demiurge withdraws from guiding its revolutions, the reverse motion of the universe is a self-motion, causing destruction and change in the body (*Pl. Pol.* 269d–270c). This passage seems to attribute the reverse motion to the Body, but

the Stranger clarifies that the deterioration attributed to the Body is due to its being infected by disorder (*ataxia*) in its acosmic state (273b).⁸³ Thus Richard Rohr takes the cause of the reverse motion of the cosmos to be disorderly Motion.⁸⁴ Plutarch characterizes this reversal as forgetfulness, during which “the part intimate with Body and sensitive to it from the beginning” periodically disrupts the harmonious movement of the World Soul (*An. proc.* 1026e–f). The “part” referred to here must be Soul-in-Itself, which has always co-existed with Matter. For Wood, then, Body is not in itself evil but rather morally passive. The body cannot experience sensation without Soul and distracting and destabilizing sensation is the cause of bodily disorder.⁸⁵ Disorder is therefore *psychic* in cause and *somatic* in expression.

From his reading of the *Timaeus* and the *Laws*, Plutarch identifies three kinds at the level of first principles: real existence, space, and becoming (*An. proc.* 1024c). This phrase, *on te kai chōran kai genesin*, is a direct quote of *Timaeus* 52d.⁸⁶ In the *Timaeus*, the really existent being (*to on*) is the paradigm, that “wherefrom” the becoming is copied (*Ti.* 50b) and the origin of reason (28a) in the soul. This principle is masculine, the father of creation, indivisible (35a) and ungenerated (52a). Space (*chōra*) is the Receptacle (*hupodochē*), the nurse and mother of all becoming (*Ti.* 49a, 50d) and the place “wherein” it becomes (50b). This feminine principle is invisible, unshaped, indestructible (51a, 52b) and without any quality proper to itself, but rather moved by others (50b). The third kind, *genesin*, is an irrational principle (*alogos*, *Ti.* 28a), described as a motion in time (28a) and opinion (38a). Plutarch’s reading of the relation between these three kinds is set out at *The Creation of the Soul* 1024c: *chōra* is Matter (*hulē*), which Plato sometimes calls the abode (*hedra*) or the Receptacle (*hupodochē*), *to on* is the intelligible (*to noētos*) and *genesin* is the being involved in changes and motions (*kinēseis*). Plutarch thus seems to understand *genesin* as that acosmic disorderly Motion which is ordered by the demiurge,

and which becomes the principle responsible for change—and ultimately evil—in the sublunary sphere.

TRICKLE-DOWN ONTOLOGY

We see then that Plutarch identifies three kinds at the highest ontological level, that of the acosmos, and with relative consistency characterizes them in certain ways. That which comes from the demiurge is the Intellect, responsible for order, harmony and reason in the soul. The material principle is devoid of quality, a Receptacle for antagonistic forces and the mother of all creation. Finally, the principle of Motion is acosmic soul, which was in a disorderly and unlimited state before the demiurge regulated it by creating the World Soul and the cosmos. These principles appear also in *On Isis*, where they are anthropomorphized and fitted into an extended allegory for the cosmic battle between good and evil, a battle which is fought also at the level of the individual human soul.⁸⁷ Plutarch is careful to note, however, that he is hesitant about sharing his interpretation of the myth, “lest this be the moving of things immovable” and that by “degrading things divine to the human level,” he will unknowingly give license to men who would use it to spread atheism (359f). From this point on, the metaphysical interpretation gains in prominence, and it ultimately turns out to be the preferred analysis of the Egyptian myth.

The use of the reproductive metaphor identifies Osiris as the rational, masculine principle, Isis as the material, feminine principle, and Horus as the generated universe. Osiris, like the rational principle, is described with terms referring to cognitive abilities such as *nous*, *logos*, *phronēsis* and *sophia*, as well as being characterized as the Good (*agathos*), father (*patēr*) and real existence (*to on*). Besides being a civilizing force (356b), he is also characterized in ways that affirm his masculinity (*andreaia*), especially in the numerous references to the *phallos* and his generative power (*gonimon*, *spermatikon*). As his companion, Isis

is described in feminine terms as mother and nurse, but also as receptive (*pandechēs*) and material (*hulē*). Two further terms applied to Isis, *andreia* and *sophia*, indicate female virtue and masculinity-of-soul, that is, a soul in which the male principle dominates—to this we will return. Typhon is characterized in ways that highlight his opposition to Osiris and further the identification with the disorderly motive principle: he is *ataktos*, *apeiron*, *alogos* and *kakos*. To Typhon, “there attaches nothing bright or of a conserving nature, no order (*taxis*) nor generation (*genesis*) nor movement possessed of moderation or reason (*kinesis metron kai logon*), but everything the reverse” (*De Iside* 372a). In this context, Plutarch ties him explicitly to the “principle of the disorderly and unlimited power” (*archē ataktou kai aristou dunameōs*), by which he must mean the disorderly motive principle of *The Creation of the Soul*.

Chlup considers Plutarch’s distinction between the *daimōn* Typhon and the god Osiris as proof that the principle of evil exists only in the sublunary sphere, making nothing of the fact that like Osiris, Isis too transcends from spirit to divinity—both were good daemons to start with (*De Iside* 361e).⁸⁸ In my view, Plutarch is here simply representing the principles in one of the many forms they take on the ontological scale. Everything that exists is derived from these three principles, and so they must be present at every level of being. It seems rather more likely that this apotheosis is meant to signify the sanctity of marriage, represented by the conjugal harmony between Isis, Osiris and Horus (*De Iside* 373e–f), and the conditions for transcendence through virtue if the lowest part of the soul is effectively subdued. Typhon remaining a *daimōn* doesn’t relegate the irrational to the sublunary sphere—doing so would fail to account for its existence at all—but reminds Clea that viciousness and difference is a barrier to transcendence. On the whole, *On Isis* describes the condition of each of the principles *after* the cosmos has been created and the principles have been mixed together in the Receptacle; in this state, the material principle has become perceptible and tangible Body, while the motive cause

has for the most part become orderly and subdued, though it still causes problems. Because of this mixture, the principles have at times taken on properties of each other.

One example will suffice. In *The Creation of the Soul*, Matter is described as of itself inert (*An. proc.* 1014e–1015a). This presents a problem for Plutarch’s personification of Isis as the material principle, since characterizing Matter as inert and inactive is in effect a denial of feminine agency and therefore contradicts the core aim of *On Isis*. It is essential that the feminine has the agency to *choose* the Good. When he describes Isis as self-impelled motion (*autokinēsis*, 376b) and an intelligent and ensouled movement (*kinesin empsuchon kai phronimon*, 375c), he must then be referring to the state of Matter after the intervention of the demiurge, so that the intellect received from him and the motivity received from soul is orderly and productive within the body.⁸⁹ This structure implies that true feminine agency can only be found within the bounds of lawful marriage, that submission is a choice with moral weight. It’s for this reason also that the “third nature” at *On Isis* 371b is dependent on both the beneficent and the maleficent souls—the former provides bodies with Form while the latter provides their Motion. Isis is therefore not just an abstract material principle, but the personification of ordered Matter which has the source of Motion as an integral part of itself; she is the intelligent, ensouled body. When Plutarch describes Isis as a self-impelled and ensouled movement, I take this to mean not that acosmic Matter has the source of movement within itself, but rather that the movement of Matter is orderly after the generation of the universe and that its contact with Intellect allows it to control its (e)motions—to some extent, at least. In that state, the good and rational movement of the World Soul renders the “harsh and Typhonian movement” gentle, while at other times it is overwhelmed and plunged into confusion (376b–c). Because of the inextricability of Matter and Motion, it’s impossible to eradicate the bad entirely, since it’s innate in the body and the soul.

This much is evident from Plutarch's account of the cosmic battle between Osiris and Typhon.⁹⁰ Plutarch continually emphasizes that Isis is not opposed to Osiris but in love with him, and because of that Typhon is her enemy. He "tears to pieces and scatters to the winds the sacred writings" which Isis collects and distributes (351f). As a keeper and seeker of knowledge, Isis imparts wisdom through her cult by encouraging the practice of self-control, abstinence from excess and lust, and a strict regimen which includes dietary requirements. The knowledge that can thus be gained serves as a vaccine against superstition (352a–b). By the sacred writings is meant the body of Osiris, most explicitly at 354a, where Typhon finds Osiris' coffin and tears his body to pieces.⁹¹ Typhon periodically dismembers Osiris' body, but his soul is indestructible and imperishable because it is really existent (*to on*) and so superior to destruction and change (*phthora kai metabolē*) (373a). There are two ontological levels at play here, one in which reason is embodied and another in which it has transcended the body; the latter is obviously the superior because it is pure and uncontaminated.⁹²

Freed from his flesh prison, Osiris comes to Horus from the afterlife to train him for the battle against Typhon. When he asks Horus what is the most noble thing of all, Horus replies that it is to avenge the evil (*kakōs*) done to his parents (358b–c), without a doubt referring to the actions of Typhon. As the mutable image of reality and an allegory for an aspect of the body, Horus fights against Typhon and wins, taking away his power and strength, and thus proving his virtue (362e, 373c). Typhon remains a daemon, while Isis' apotheosis endorses the possibility of female virtue—and perhaps even transcendence—if psychic disorder is subdued. After Horus defeats Typhon and brings him before Isis, she refuses to annihilate him completely, instead allowing Horus to subdue him and then setting him free again.⁹³ Isis doesn't erase Typhon because it is quite simply impossible; if there were no evil in the

world, there would also be no good—they are what they are in relation to one another. Plutarch alludes to this theory in *Agesilaus*:

Natural philosophers are of the opinion that, if strife and discord should be banished from the universe, the heavenly bodies would stand still, and all generation and motion would cease in consequence of the general harmony (*Ages.* 5.3).

The power of Typhon, then, is necessary for the movement of the universe even though it causes adverse effects and disrupts harmony. But as long as Isis remains vigilant and alert, Typhon is powerless (*De Iside* 356b). Typhon needs the cooperation of the female principle to effect any kind of revolutionary change; in Plutarch's myth, his co-conspirator is a queen of Ethiopia.⁹⁴ So too in the human soul; if passion submits to reason, the result is virtue, but if passion chooses instead to cooperate with appetite, the whole order of nature is inverted in the individual and the result is vice.

I would like to briefly take up again here Chlup's argument that the irrational is only found in the sublunary sphere and Plutarch therefore fails to clarify the relation of the irrational principle to the highest ontological level. His focus on the dualistic nature of Plutarch's account of the cosmogony has the unfortunate result of neglecting the corporeal principle in favor of its erratic movement, in effect conflating the two.⁹⁵ Chlup seems unsure of the ontological status of Osiris, and does not even begin to guess at that of Isis. He notes that "sometimes Osiris is being spoken of as existing on the same level as Typhon, yet at other times he appears to be clearly ontologically superior."⁹⁶ Chlup resolves this issue by taking literally the distinction between god and daemon. What is lost here is the issue of the transcendence of virtuous souls, which Plutarch makes clear when he says that *both* Isis and Osiris were translated from good daemons into gods *on account of their virtues* (361e, 362e).⁹⁷ It is for this reason that I suggest a reading

here according to which Plutarch unifies the various principles at different ontological levels, and as a result they are separable only in name.⁹⁸ This would help explain how Osiris can be the first principle and father of creation and yet have a father of his own, and how Isis can be *chōra* and yet be born from Rhea's womb.

Each female deity in *On Isis* therefore appears to be material in some way. Rhea is the Receptacle, or rather her womb is the space from which all creation is born, the potentiality of corporeality which is realized in the birth of her children (cf. *De def. or.* 429f).⁹⁹ But Isis is also space and Nephthys is also Matter, because Rhea and Isis are technically one and the same; Rhea is the space within which a cosmic Matter potentially exists, Isis is the Matter that exists in space and becomes tangible after generation has taken place. Nephthys is the Matter at the furthest remove from and most resistant to god, the last-born of Rhea's children and the least resistant to Typhon's embrace.¹⁰⁰ We might identify her with the "purulent matter" that "lies outside the confines of the world" and is not a part of it but a "corrupt and pestilential residuum of a foreign nature" (353e). Thus at 375b, Plutarch says that Nephthys is the outermost parts of Matter which is controlled mostly by the destructive power, Typhon, except for the parts preserved and nourished by Isis.

Even Osiris doesn't occupy the top tier of existence; he is fathered by Cronus, who is himself apparently subject to the sun (355d).¹⁰¹ In this schema, God-proper is unknowable to humans and so barely present in the text as more than an initiator of sorts, while Osiris is the embodiment of Reason. Osiris is the representation of his ideas, appearing in a demiurgic role imparting his *logos* to Matter through the reproductive metaphor.¹⁰² Therefore Cronus and Osiris technically are one and the same, and Osiris is identified also with Dionysos, Heracles, Hermes and Oromasdes (356b). Osiris is also represented as a literal, mundane king who spread civilization among the Egyptians and later the whole world (356a–b).¹⁰³ They are all *representations* of the same thing on different

ontological levels or in different religious traditions. This is the greatest contribution of *On Isis* to the ontology of gender. The principles appear now in the womb, now in the heavens, now on earth and in the sea. They are everywhere, all at once. Like the inescapable sex of the body, the gender of the soul is with us all the way. For Plutarch, a world without the female and the feminine is quite literally *inconceivable*, a world without the other is stagnant and undifferentiated.

Just as Isis could be seen as an ensouled materiality, Typhon could be considered an embodied psychic force, specifically in its negative aspect as an agent of chaos and disorder, and thus the cause of irrationality in humans. Plutarch explicitly identifies Osiris with reason and intelligence in the soul and order and health in the body. Typhon, however, is that part of the soul which is “impressionable, impulsive, irrational and truculent” and of the bodily part “the destructible, diseased and disorderly” (371a–b). Rather than confirming the role of Matter as the origin of evil, this passage makes a distinction between Matter-as-such and the disorder that infects Matter. Dillon has identified Typhon with a sort of material principle on the basis that Matter is traditionally the origin of evil,¹⁰⁴ but the materiality of Typhon is distinct from that of Isis, who is explicitly a feminine principle. Yet more recently, Dillon has argued that Isis represents the World Soul and Typhon represents Matter and the Receptacle as a principle of disorder.¹⁰⁵ I agree with Dillon that the principle of disorder is a “positively disruptive force,” but equating Typhon with the corporeal principle rests on some questionable assumptions, not least of which is that Matter must somehow be the principle of evil, since that is how it traditionally goes. I can find only one sure reference to the materiality of Typhon, and that passage (371a–b, quoted above) links him also to the irrational soul.¹⁰⁶ I can see no other solution for this dilemma than to connect Typhon to the disorderly motive cause of *The Creation of the Soul*, with the caveat that the two texts have very different approaches and aims.¹⁰⁷ In

On Isis, Typhon appears most prominently as that disruptive force that can be identified with the lowest part of the tripartite soul. As a work with a female addressee, the priestess Clea, it would not be far-fetched to expect some focus on female virtue in *On Isis*, as also in *Virtues of Women*. And indeed, Isis is described near the start of the treatise as a goddess of wisdom (351e–f), while Typhon is reincarnated into animals that represent his stupidity and malevolence, for example, the ass and the pig (363a–c).¹⁰⁸ Moreover, while both Isis and Osiris are identified with Greek deities, their names etymologized to symbolize Greek principles, Typhon receives no such treatment.¹⁰⁹ He is the abject other, the originator of difference, and so whatever is barbaric in nature is due to him.

Thus far, all indications are that Plutarch believed women to be as capable of rational thought and moral virtue as men, inferior only because of their bodily form. I believe that it is fair to say that our author was particularly concerned with proving this point both ethically and metaphysically, and that he had done so by positing a third kind as the origin of evil. Doing so preserves the sanctity of the heterosexual couple within a prescribed matrix of domination and submission and might have appeased female readers, like his Clea, unhappy with the traditional interpretations of Plato's cosmogony that figured them as inherently evil.

A further problem arises out of the personification of Typhon that we ought now to consider. In *The Creation of the Soul* (as in *On Isis*), Intellect and Matter are gendered in the traditional way: Intellect is a masculine principle while Matter is feminine. Motion, on the other hand, is not gendered at all. It's only in *On Isis* that the anthropomorphized principle of disorder takes on a gender, and there it is in the form of Typhon, a male principle. Plutarch continually warns Clea not to take these myths literally:

It is not right to believe that water or the sun or the earth or the sky is Osiris or Isis; or again that fire or drought or the sea

is Typhon, but simply if we attribute to Typhon whatever there is in these that is immoderate (*ametron*) and disordered (*atakton*) by reason of excesses or defects; and if we revere what is orderly (*kekosmēmenon*) and good (*agathon*) and beneficial (*ōphelimōn*) as the work of Isis and as the image (*eikōna*) and reflection (*mimēma*) and reason (*logon*) of Osiris, we shall not be wrong (376f–377a, cf. 355b–d).

I have no doubt that Plutarch is here indicating how exactly Clea ought to understand the myth and its associated rituals. The battle between Horus and Typhon must then be taken to mean the terrestrial (or embodied) fight against evil and disorder. Yet how could the chaotic principle of the universe be male without endangering the supremacy of the male and the masculine?¹¹⁰ There are some indications of this in *On Isis*, but the solution becomes clearer when this text is read alongside *On Moral Virtue*, where Plutarch speaks on the parts of the individual human soul. We ought, then, to turn to the soul of the ethical subject, which is made out of the same basic materials as the cosmos, and whose soul is derivative of the World Soul.¹¹¹ It is here that sexual difference becomes gender.

In *Moral Virtue*, Plutarch divides the soul into two primary parts, one rational and one irrational (441d). The intelligent and rational (*noeron kai logistikōn*) part is responsible for governing the individual, while the passionate and irrational (*pathētikon kai alogon*) part is variable and disorderly (*atakton*) and needs guidance.¹¹² Plutarch then subdivides the irrational part of the soul:

This second part is again subdivided into two parts, one of which, by nature ever willing to consort with the body and to serve the body, is called the appetitive (*epithumētikon*); the other, which sometimes joins forces with this part and sometimes lends strength and vigor to reason, is called the spirited part (*thumoeides*) (442a).

The tripartite division of the soul is a well-known feature of Platonic philosophy, and Plutarch here also looks back to Plato.¹¹³ In the *Republic* he divides the soul into three parts: the spirited (*thumoeides*), the rational (*logistikon*) and the appetitive (*epithumētikon*) (*Resp.* 435b–436a). The appetitive part of the soul is purely irrational, it responds to bodily stimuli and basic instincts, while the spirited part is responsible for emotional responses, in particular to wrong done to the individual. The rational part is essentially the human share of divine reason. In the virtuous soul, these three parts are harmonized through the agency of the spirited part, specifically in its *choosing* to obey the rational part of the soul rather than the appetitive and in so doing subduing the lowest part of the soul (*Resp.* 440b–d).¹¹⁴ This description attributes the ultimate deciding factor in human virtue to the spirited part of the soul, which is said to lean towards reason (*Resp.* 440e–441a). These three parts are present in every human soul, but some peoples are more inclined to be ruled by one or another. Thracians, Scythians and other northerners are typically spirited, Greeks are more likely to be rational, and Phoenicians and Egyptians tend to be *philochrēmaton*, concerned with acquisition for the sake of pleasure.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, these parts of the soul correspond to the three classes in the ideal state: rational rulers, spirited auxiliaries and appetitive artisans (*Pl. Resp.* 435b–436a). In the *Phaedrus*, this division of the soul is likened to a charioteer guiding two horses. In human souls, one of the horses is noble and easily guided and the other quite the opposite (*Phdr.* 246a–b).¹¹⁶ Plutarch relates this simile to the continuous struggle in the soul for self-control (*enkrateia*) over the body (*Virt. mor.* 445c), which results in *sōphrosunē*—if successful.

Plutarch goes even further in his allegorical interpretation of the Egyptian myth, gendering these parts of the soul within the framework of heteroconjugality. The triad Osiris–Isis–Typhon, as personifications of the same principles out of which the human soul is constituted, can therefore be loosely identified with the

parts of the human soul in its tripartite form; indeed, Plutarch himself argues that to understand the division of the soul fully one must return to first principles (*Virt. mor.* 443e). In *On Isis*, he explicitly assigns Osiris to reason and Typhon to unreason (*De Iside* 371a–b). Two other names by which Typhon is known, Seth and Bebon, denote the overpowering and the restraint of reason (371b–c), recalling the way vice is said to crush and overthrow the soul, causing grief, lamentation, dejection and remorse (*An vit.* 498d).¹¹⁷ This chaotic force is present especially in the body (*De Iside* 371a). The spirited part is Isis, giving the feminine principle a great deal of agency in the individual soul.¹¹⁸ For Plutarch, moral virtue “has as its material (*hulē*) the emotions of the soul and as its form reason (*logos*)” (*Virt. mor.* 440d). Passion needs reason to keep it within moderate bounds (444b). Women, of course, are more susceptible to emotional excess than men because it is in their nature. Just so, Isis devolves into an emotional mess in Osiris’ absence.¹¹⁹ While searching for him, she sits down by a spring, full of dejection and tears because Osiris is lost to her (*De Iside* 357a). When she finds his coffin embedded in a trunk of heather (now a column in the house of the king), she turns into a swallow and flits around the pillar which contains the coffin with a wailing lament (357c). When she finally recovers the coffin, she throws herself upon it with such a dreadful wailing that the younger of the king’s sons dies right then and there. When facing adversity, she grows so angry that she dries up the stream of the Phaedrus river, and she kills the king’s elder son with a single look (357e).¹²⁰

Just as Isis is intermediate between two opposing principles, the spirited part of the soul (*thumoeides*) is caught between the *logistikon* and the *epithumētikon* (cf. *Resp.* 439e–440e; *Virt. mor.* 442a).¹²¹ In the just soul she sides with reason, while in the unjust soul she sides with appetite. In *On Isis*, the titular heroine is continually represented as leaning towards the good, seeking her lover and fighting off their brother; Isis fears that if Typhon wins the battle against Horus he will destroy Osiris completely (358b).

It must be then that the virtue here presented is one of conjugal harmony, in which the feminine chooses subordination to the rational male and so becomes virtuous.¹²² Indeed, the spirited part is “by nature fitted to heed the rational and intelligent part, to turn toward it, to yield to it, to conform itself thereto, if it’s not corrupted by foolish pleasure and a life of no restraint” (*Virt. mor.* 442c, 443c). As David Rees notes, the spirited part of the soul is responsible for the mediation between reason and appetite.¹²³ As a result, virtue and vice are contingent on the movement of this part; when spirit obeys reason, the soul is virtuous, when it sides with the appetites, the soul is vicious (*Virt. mor.* 451d).¹²⁴ Thus for Plutarch, *metriopatheia*, the harmonization of the parts of the soul, is a relation of submission and domination akin to the social structure of the home, and likewise can be linked to the stability of the state more broadly. The submission of *thumos* to *logos* results in relative stability of character, a stability which is threatened by the overpowering force of excessive emotion and uncontrolled appetite.¹²⁵ The link between first principles and parts of the soul therefore reveals the conditions for the embodiment of gender and the production of masculinity, femininity, manliness and effeminacy as expressions of virtue or vice.

PSYCHO-SOMATIC DEGRADATION AND THE THREAT OF NON-EXISTENCE

On the view I have put forth thus far, gender and virtue are inextricable from one another. It is not just that virtue is gendered in the sense that there is a separate virtue for men and for women. In fact, at the abstract level, virtue is the same no matter one’s gender; all virtuous persons must have *dikaiosunē*, *sōphrosunē*, *phronesis* and so on, at least to some degree. It is at the level of the individual that virtue attains its singularity, and it is there that it attains gender. Virtue is living in accordance

with nature, and nature contains the seeds of gender at its very core just as the body is a reflection of that higher reality, so that the expression of gender in the body is an expression of virtue or vice.¹²⁶ Virtue is the result of the correct relation of the parts of the soul expressed in accordance with the signs of the body, which is read on the body as conjugality and reproductivity. Vice, then, as the representation of defect, must also consist of reproductive defect, the same defect which causes monstrosity and constitutes a threat to human existence.

Two statements in *On Isis* touch on this problem. The first is the statement about the barrenness of Nephthys after her marriage to Typhon (366c), which along with her eventual conception when Osiris mistakenly sleeps with her (368e), suggests that Typhon is infertile.¹²⁷ Griffiths also notes the connection between Typhon and sexual excess and homosexuality in other sources, though it is not present in *On Isis*.¹²⁸ Then there is the bit at 375c:

The creative and conserving element of Nature moves toward him and toward existence while the annihilating and destructive moves away from him towards non-existence.

The “creative and conserving” element here is no doubt to be identified with Isis and the “annihilating and destructive” with Typhon, while “him” is Osiris as the representative of *to on*, real existence. This much is clear from the surrounding contexts and indeed the work as a whole.¹²⁹ Throughout the text, it becomes evident that Typhon’s power is ultimately un(re)productive. This seems a rather dangerous statement to make in the context of a text, indeed a whole corpus, which rationalizes and justifies the male right to domination at least in part on the basis of his reproductive power. It may be the case that Typhon is male because that is what the sources say, but I suggest that Plutarch’s interpretation goes further than that, incorporating Typhon into a psychic schematic

which explains the emasculation of men as well as the manliness of women.

How exactly Plutarch understands the process of abstract principles becoming sexed bodies in practice remains somewhat unclear. On the Aristotelian view, bodies become female through a wholly natural and teleologically positive process of degradation in which Matter overpowers Form (*Gen. an.* 766a). It is only when the process moves beyond these bounds, resulting in anomalous bodies, that generation is defective.¹³⁰ In the Platonic-Aristotelian schema followed by Plutarch, this means that Matter overpowers Intellect, which is just another way of saying the male principle is dominated by the female principle, resulting in a “lesser” (though necessary, at least in the case of the female) form. This interaction happens at the level of the soul and is imprinted on the body at birth. In the *Timaeus*, human nature is said to be twofold, referring not to the parts of the soul but to reproductive sex, hence the superior of these two natures is designated “man” (42a, cf. *Virt. mor.* 441d–f). All souls in their first incarnation live as men, while those that fail to live a just life are reincarnated as women and thereafter as beasts, in accordance with their particular moral failings (42b–c).¹³¹ Plutarch shares this belief, using it to console his wife (*Cons. ux.* 611d, cf. *Amat.* 764e) and to explain Egyptian animal sacrifice (*De Iside* 363b–c). In *On Isis*, however, the destructive force of nature appears as a male power, unlike the motive force in *The Creation of the Soul* which is not gendered. Reason and Matter, on the other hand, are consistently masculine and feminine in both texts.¹³² Somewhere between the Soul-in-Itself and its embodiment something happens that differentiates this lower part of the soul also, and in so doing produces deviations from the male-female binary. What, then, does the maleness of Typhon say about gender?

At *The Face on the Moon* 943a, Lamprias argues that soul, body and mind are three distinct things. Here, it seems that the connection of soul and body increases the power of Soul-in-Itself, which explains why the affective part of the soul has so much power

over humans. This is in keeping with the view in *The Creation of the Soul* that the Indefinite Dyad gains power in mortal bodies (1025c–d, cf. 1026e). On this view, the *pathētikon* is a psychic force embodied and it is embodiment itself that gives it power. On a somewhat literal interpretation, if we agree that the affective part is the embodiment of the disorderly motive force which Plutarch calls necessity, we can identify it with the nutritive part of the soul so described in *Moral Virtue* (442b).¹³³ Thus when the irrational part is mixed with reason through necessity (*anangkē*) (441e), its attachment to the body results in the appetites through which the body is kept alive, those physical urges that drive us to eat, drink and reproduce. But it is also prone to excess if not subdued by the partnership between reason and spirit (442c–f). Chad Jorgenson thus points out the connection between physical defect and appetite in the *Timaeus*.¹³⁴ Bodily form may therefore be determined by a number of factors, including the state of the soul before birth or in a previous life, and it in turn has an effect on moral disposition.

A further section in *The Face on the Moon* gives a clue as to how bodies might become sexed.¹³⁵ This section deals with death and reincarnation. At death, the soul is ripped from the body and dwells in the region below the moon (*De facie* 943b). This first death separates virtuous souls from vicious, with only the virtuous transcending because in life they subjugated the irrational and affective part of the soul to reason (943d). A second death separates mind from soul and sends it on its way to transcendence. Unjust and licentious (*adikos kai akolastos*) souls, on the other hand, remain polluted by their contact with the body and so dwell in this region below the moon for a longer time. Some of these souls manage to purge themselves of the bodily element and ascend, the rest however sink back to earth, where they are once again confined to bodies. These are the souls that have, even as spirits, committed evil deeds (944d). At this point, Sulla says that “the soul receives the impression of its shape through being molded by the mind and molding in turn and enfolding the body on all sides”

(945a). Thus the mind imparts the shape of the body to the soul, which it then passes on to the body, but a vicious soul distorts this image.

Whether the shape intended by the mind is male is doubtful, though given the masculinity of the sun and the fact that the mind is an aspect of the sun, it is perhaps not too far-fetched. On the other hand, Plutarch's lack of engagement with any notion of female transcendence to a male form suggests to me that we should understand such a process as both impossible and unnecessary—the female is the complete form of her type, and transcendence beyond that would likely entail the soul's liberation from the body entirely. The ultimate shape intended by the mind, then, is not male but *masculine*, and souls that do not already have this property are, presumably, the ones that end up in female, barbarian, enslaved, disabled, or queer bodies. In *The Divine Vengeance*, souls that are bound for rebirth are forcibly reshaped by daemons to adapt them to the lives they are about to lead (567e–f). Unlike the virtuous souls transcending the sublunary sphere, who dart straight upwards to a pure region where they are joyful and friendly, the tumultuous souls are caught in a “complex and disordered spiral” of “dissimilar motions,” aimless and inarticulate (564a–b). Here Nero is very nearly cast into the body of a viper, but by the grace of god becomes instead a frog.¹³⁶

Gendering the lower part of the soul as both male and female through the personifications of Typhon and Isis therefore affords Plutarch an opportunity to explore the nature of non-binary gender and to assign an ethical value to such expressions of gender. After all, men and women have the same souls,¹³⁷ though women possess the weaker, the second-hand souls, embodied as not-quite-men. In this matrix, female masculinity becomes a signifier of virtue, but it also poses the danger of legitimizing manly women and so necessitates delimitation of the parameters of virtuous *masculinity* and unvirtuous *manliness*, virtuous *femininity* and unvirtuous *effeminacy*. It is in the split between the two parts of the irrational soul that difference

and change is engendered (*Virt. mor.* 441f). To give, then, a rough schematization of the psycho-somatic degradation of the relationship between Body and Soul, let's start from the top down.

At its first incarnation, a soul is embodied as a male. If reason manages to dominate spirit and subdue the appetites despite (or with the help of) the particular customs, temperament, nurture and mode of living of this incarnation (cf. *Mulier. virt.* 243c–d, *De sera* 551d, 562b), the soul is masculine and the man virtuous. This soul may transcend after death. If, however, spirit overpowers reason, the man is effeminate in this life and reincarnated as a woman in the next. When Gryllus says that tamed animals and enslaved men have been “emasculated in their fighting spirit,” (*apogunaikōsin tou thumoeidous*) this is an emotional/spiritual emasculation which implies a moral failure, such men are *anandros* (*Gryll.* 987e–f, cf. *Aesch.* 2.179). If spirit continues to dominate reason in the female body, resulting in improper ambition (*philotimia*) and “the impulse to dominate and conquer,”¹³⁸ the woman is vicious and manly, but if she manages to submit her spirit to reason her soul is masculinized. She attains *andreia* by expressing this submission to reason as femininity and conjugality, thus Isis is described as having *andreia* and *sophia* specifically after having “quenched and suppressed the madness and fury of Typhon” in an act of loyalty to her husband (*De Iside* 361d).¹³⁹ This soul may also transcend after death, if the apotheosis of Isis and Osiris is any indication (361e, 362e). I suppose that it would then be the case that if appetite attains dominance in any of these forms, the degree of difference will only increase, ultimately resulting in the birth of a eunuch or intersex person or complete degradation to monstrosity and animalism,¹⁴⁰ although this is pure conjecture, since Plutarch himself did not approach the problem from this angle, at least not explicitly.

We see then that the body is not just the corporeal container for the soul, it is the containment, the limiting of the indefinite and unlimited.¹⁴¹ Virtue arises in adherence to limit, including the limits of the body. The soul achieves virtue by conforming as

closely as possible to the form of its type, whether male or female. Accordingly, it's not differentiation as such that poses a problem, because it could also be seen as the cause of sexual difference, which is necessary for reproduction.¹⁴² Differentiation becomes a problem when it engenders a deviation so excessive or deficient that it fails to produce an object recognizable according to its type. Thus for Robert Bury, differentiation is a measure of the relation of all things to all other things, which produces a degree of sameness or difference. In his words,

insofar as its own qualification or quantification exceeds or falls short of this *normal* Form, just insofar is the individual member *evil* and *untrue*. The ultimate meaning of *unreality*, evil, falsehood is just *abnormality*, or departure from the type (my emphases).¹⁴³

Bury was almost certainly not thinking of gender when he wrote these words, but the problem of gender—as is often the case—lurks beneath the surface.

A system that is reliant on a sort of biological determinism to regulate sexual roles is ill-equipped to deal with the active female and the passive male, that is, the manly woman and the effeminate man, and even more so in cases where that distinction is increasingly blurred, as is the case in eunuchs and intersex folk. Thus for Butler, the inversion and reversion of activity and passivity pose serious risks to Plato's metaphysical hierarchy of gender.¹⁴⁴ Plutarch addresses the destabilization of gender by locating the site of its conflict in the soul. Doing so preserves the sexed body and its reproductive functions and assigns its expressions to a moral psychology of gender. McLnerney's analysis of *Virtues* shows that women's virtue, their *masculinity*, can only be commended when it functions in service of eliminating a threat to social order, thus maintaining and reproducing it.¹⁴⁵ Similarly, Halberstam argues that the fluidity of gender is precisely what allows its reification

in a binary system.¹⁴⁶ For Plutarch, then, gender functions within a matrix of domination reproduced in *On Isis* which attempts to stabilize the signification of “masculine” and “feminine” in relation to “male” and “female” within the framework of heteroconjugality. In the cosmic hierarchy, the virtuous woman now comes to occupy a position of privilege in relation to the unvirtuous man—the man who is not *man enough* because he cannot control the feminine part of his soul.

Plutarch’s theory of the soul seems to me an attempt to address this difficulty by defining more precisely the psycho-somatic conditions for both male and female virtue. In the just soul, *logos* reigns supreme, supported by the spirited part (Pl. *Resp.* 442a–b). In *On Isis*, Plutarch uses the Egyptian myth as an allegory for the just soul, in which Isis as the spirited part moves towards the Good, represented by Osiris (370f, 375a, 383a). Together they force the appetites/Typhon into submission, thereby creating a harmonious soul. Being virtuous requires that the soul deny the lowest part of itself (Pl. *Grg.* 505a–b). As a result, virtue amounts to a masculinization of the soul through the subordination of passion to reason without contradicting the signs of the body.¹⁴⁷ This movement of the feminine towards reason at the level of human soul represents the actions of a virtuous person; the union of Isis and Osiris in their roles as passion and reason therefore produces a masculine soul with a positive ethical value. The relation of this masculine soul to the body is one of normative gender, exemplified in its ability to produce *legitimate* offspring (Horus; cf. *Is. et Os.* 366a–c) capable of defeating Typhon.¹⁴⁸ For Plutarch, this virtue is ideally attained within the bounds of cisheteroconjugality, which is itself the vehicle for the interpretation and stabilization of the signs of the body. Any deviation from this norm results in deficiency, specifically the kind of deficiency which presents a threat to social order, as we will see in the case of Antony and Cleopatra below.

Plutarch's metaphysics thus appears as part of the continued creation and reification of a sort of binary that is not binary at all but multiply gendered and reproduced through acts of passivity and activity, *logos* and *pathos*, masculinity and femininity that are neither stable nor wholly "natural" categories of identification and difference. Within this matrix of domination, the ontological status of the other is at risk. Recall now that Motion is non-existent without its interaction with Matter. Plutarch claims that neither Motion nor Matter is the origin of difference, just as sameness is not rest; sameness is derived from the One and difference from the Dyad (*An. proc.* 1024d, cf. 1015d).¹⁴⁹ He describes the Dyad as the indeterminate beginning of difference, a "doubling" which shifts from unity to plurality, though the meaning of this passage at *On Talkativeness* 507a is somewhat obscure. One might reasonably conclude—as I have done—that the Dyad is neither Matter nor Motion, but the interactivity and entanglement of these two interwoven kinds which thus produces difference. Difference institutes change, and from this change deviation from the Forms is engendered in particulars. The further the individual is from the form of their type, the less "real" they are.

Plutarch might be thinking of the *Sophist's* argument that not-being (*to mē on*) exists because of its participation in being, much like Motion exists because of its connection with Matter. In the *Sophist*, *to mē on* is ultimately identified as Motion, which is something other than being; it both is being and is not-being, and not-being is therefore that which is inevitable (*anangkē*, *Soph.* 256d). In *Against Colotes* too, not-being denotes a measure of difference, of deviation from the pattern in particulars, because it is a process of becoming to which *to on*, real existence, is not subject (III5d–e).¹⁵⁰ In the *Timaeus*, the distinction between *to on* and *genesin* is a distinction between what exists and what only seems to exist, or has the potential to exist (28a). *The E at Delphi* describes not-being as a motion in time, a process of change and destruction that admits of no permanence in being (392e–f). Vlastos saw *genesin* as

the raw material which causes change and destruction and which without the ordering of the demiurge would be “nothing at all.”¹⁵¹ Becoming then never really gains existence, but is always in a process of generation and destruction. This process is dependent on Matter, which provides the substrate for visible and tangible bodies. The demiurge is the source of the Forms these bodies copy, becoming the cause of their irregularity. James Wood therefore identified the cause of evil with the not-being and difference of the *Sophist* and the unlimitedness of the *Philebus*. He calls this cause a “principle of disorder and negativity,” that is, evil and unreality have no positive content beyond the measure of their relation to really existent being.¹⁵² So too the other is defined by its relation to the same; barbarians are identified by their being non-Greeks, women are identified as not-men, and so on. The converse is true as well. Men are defined by their similarity to one another as much as by their difference from women.

The emasculation of Typhon now starts to make sense. He doesn't father any offspring with Nephthys but she has a child by Osiris, thus the problem must lie with him (*De Iside* 366c), and when he is defeated by Horus he is quite literally unmanned (373c).¹⁵³ For Butler, then, “the threat of a collapse of the masculine into the abjected feminine threatens to dissolve the heterosexual axis of desire.”¹⁵⁴ Typhon might be male, but he is also the embodiment of the absence of masculinity. Just so, a soul ruled by its appetites cannot, in Plutarch's view, produce anything of positive value, it tends towards non-existence (375c). Gender difference is one category through which this threat of annihilation is represented, and it is compounded by other factors such as foreignness. Plutarch's *Life of Antony* is an excellent demonstration of this principle. Bridget Ford Russell had noted some aspects of gender difference in the text, particularly in the statements that attribute Antony's emasculation to the domination of his wives, and Mark Beck has noted the continued references to enslavement and dress in the biography, another method of emasculation and othering

that emphasizes his failure to dominate.¹⁵⁵ I have previously made an attempt to situate this text within Plutarch's theory of the soul and hierarchies of domination,¹⁵⁶ but did not note in any detail the treat to non-existence that underlies the palpable anxiety about gender deviance evident throughout the text, and so I will focus primarily on that here.

In *Antony*, gender continually appears as a site of contention and (mis)identification. Like *On Isis*, it was probably created during the latter part of Plutarch's career, though the order is not certain,¹⁵⁷ and like *On Isis*, the majority of the text is structured as a triadic struggle for power, with Cleopatra on one end as a foreign threat, Octavia(n) on the other as the champion(s) of Rome, and Antony caught in the middle.¹⁵⁸ Platonic allusions to the soul elevate this push-and-pull of power to the level of moral-psychological failing and metaphysical struggle.¹⁵⁹ References to mythological figures that unsettle the gender binary strengthen this meta-narrative of psychic domination and submission.¹⁶⁰ In doing so, Plutarch highlights the changeability of human nature. He's often concerned with the soul of his subjects.¹⁶¹ Beneker suggests framing the progression of Antony's *Life* within the constraints of his conjugal status, each period representing the progressive "psychological struggle between reason and *erōs* in his soul."¹⁶² That Plutarch considered Antony's marriage to Cleopatra disgraceful is not in doubt, indeed he says just that in the *synkrisis* to the *Lives* of Demetrius and Antony (1.3). Nor is Russell mistaken when she points out that Antony's masculinity degenerates throughout the course of the biography, and that it is often tied to his relationship with Cleopatra or his assimilation into foreign cultures.¹⁶³

It is through the lens of conjugality that we can most clearly discern the dangers of abnormative gender. Osiris' legitimate partner is Isis (*De Iside* 356a, 366c), as Antony's legitimate partner is Octavia (*Demetr. et Ant.* 4.1), and yet he chooses Cleopatra despite his better judgment. In this "love triangle," as Frederick Brenk has it, each player is ruled by a different part of the soul,

Antony by passion, Cleopatra by appetite and Octavia by reason.¹⁶⁴ Consequently, the Egyptian queen appears as a chaotic force which “destroyed and dissipated whatever good and saving qualities in him still offered resistance.” His passion for Cleopatra is the final evil Antony must face (*Ant.* 25.1) and from which he cannot escape; he was taken captive (28.1).¹⁶⁵ Plutarch refers to Antony as “dragged along” by Cleopatra, with whom he had become incorporate (66.4; cf. 62.1). The reference here to the soul of the lover and unity in marriage recalls one of the precepts from *Advice*, which suggests that a couple in love form an intimate union in which they share all things in common, though the husband must remain the leader of the household (I42f–I43a).¹⁶⁶ In the case of Antony and Cleopatra, this situation is inverted, and not in the virtuous way suggested by the characterization of Ismenodora in *On Love*.

Ultimately, Cleopatra would become “the woman who had already ruined him and would make his ruin still more complete” (*Ant.* 66.5). Her position of power almost necessarily emasculates the men around her, so that resisting her, as Octavian does after the defeat at Actium, becomes a mark of strength of character (*Flor.* 2.10; *Prop.* 3.11). The men who serve her are enervated, they’re eunuchs (*Ant.* 60.1; *Luc. B. Civ.* 10.133) and perverted men (*turpium morbo virorum*; *Hor. Carm.* 37.5–12). With her, Antony degenerates into passivity; she feminizes him (*ton anthrōpon exetēxan kai apethēlusan*, *Ant.* 53.6).¹⁶⁷ In contrast to Cleopatra, Octavia fulfills the role of a loving mother and loyal wife. She is more beautiful than Cleopatra, because true beauty is not confined to the body but is a matter of the soul (*Ant.* 27.2, 31.2, 57.3).¹⁶⁸ She’s obedient even while her husband’s actions are detrimental to her (53.1–3, 57.3), and she cares for all of Antony’s children including those he had with Fulvia and Cleopatra, marrying them into noble families after his death (54.2, 87.1). Octavia is the very picture of the ideal woman, Cleopatra her opposite—and indeed Cleopatra perceives their respective relationships with Antony as a struggle for control over his passions.

In the final chapter of *Antony* (87), Plutarch gives a brief overview of the fate of Antony's descendants down to Nero. Of his children by Cleopatra he says very little except that the younger Cleopatra was married off to Juba. Antonia, his daughter by Octavia, was married to Drusus and bore two sons, Germanicus and Claudius. Germanicus' son Caius reigned well, but for a short period only and then was murdered. Claudius married Agrippina (the daughter of Germanicus, herself an unpopular woman) and adopted her son, giving him the name of Nero. The *Life* ends:

This Nero came to the throne in my time. He killed his mother, and by his folly and madness came near subverting the Roman empire. He was the fifth in descent from Antony (87.4).¹⁶⁹

Nero, who was reincarnated as a frog. Nero, who very nearly became a viper, doomed to eat their way out of their pregnant mother as punishment for murdering Agrippina and then to suffer the same death (*De sera* 567f, cf. Tac. *Ann.* 14.8–9; Cassius Dio 62.14). Elsewhere, Plutarch likens the state of affairs in Rome after Nero's death to a body which no longer obeys its reason and instead follows its impulses, and indirectly calls Nero a tyrant, immoderate (*ametria*) and extravagant (*poluteleia*) (*Galb.* 1.1–3, 4.4, 16.1; cf. Suet. *Nero* 26.1). Nero himself is connected with instances of gender perversion, most notably in his treatment of the youth Sporus, whom he had castrated and took to wife under the name Poppaea, and appeared in public as a musician and tragic actor.¹⁷⁰ Antony too was fond of spending his time with actresses and mimes (*Ant.* 9.4–6; cf. 24.3–4). The parallels are clear, as is the implication that Nero's madness can be directly linked to Antony's vices.

Donald Russell has noted Plutarch's interest in heredity which leads him to assign some of Antony's vices, as too his virtues, to the simple fact of his birth.¹⁷¹ In *The Divine Vengeance*, itself a work with psychagogic characteristics,¹⁷² one of the central questions is why the descendants of vicious men are sometimes punished for the

crimes of their ancestors (556e–557e). Plutarch says that souls have an inborn proclivity for virtue or vice, and that wickedness can be a congenital characteristic (558c). Referring to the theory of great natures (552b), he argues that some souls are capable of great deeds, both virtuous and vicious—and it’s this same theory with which he introduces and justifies the comparison between Demetrius and Antony in the *Parallel Lives* (*Demetr.* 1.7).¹⁷³ Furthermore, family members who share a common ancestor are connected to those predecessors in a concrete, physical way, as Robbert van den Berg points out.¹⁷⁴ The result is a theory of psycho-somatic inheritance in which, as Marcus Folch argues, the fate of Nero is not incidental but rather reveals Plutarch’s historical sensibilities.¹⁷⁵

Vicious temperaments are passed on by parents to their children and such a temperament is more likely to be an inherited condition of the soul:

...certain dispositions, afflictions, and corrections are transmitted not only to one part through another, but also to one soul through another, and indeed more readily than to the body through the body (*De sera* 560a; cf. 559d).

The part that predominates in the child is that same part which had authority in the parent (559e). Thus, according to van den Berg, “the more they are like their criminal ancestor, the more they deserve punishment (and the more likely they are to get it).”¹⁷⁶ The inheritance of vicious characteristics is therefore the result of a degenerative power tied to the soul, and so punishment is meted out to souls after death. Seeing the harm brought upon their descendants is supposed to act as a corrective for the vicious soul (561a).¹⁷⁷ The medico-ethical analogy is at play here too, with Plutarch arguing that delayed punishment aims to prevent these inherited vicious traits from arising (550a, 561c).¹⁷⁸

Nero, then, not only inherited a moral debt going as far back as Antony, but the divine corrective measures had failed to prevent

or cure his soul of this inherent vice. Nero shares Antony's weaknesses. According to Prudence Jones, Plutarch viewed Nero as an "essentially good [character] corrupted by flattery."¹⁷⁹ Flattery, of course, was Cleopatra's weapon of choice against Antony, along with her reliance on her ability to rouse his passions (*Ant.* 53.3–5; cf. *Adul. amic.* 61b). Plutarch makes the same link between Antony's and Nero's vices and the near-ruin of the Roman empire in *Flatterer/Friend*. Moreover, Antony is here specifically used as an example of vice masquerading as virtue, so that his *truphē*, *akolasia* and *panēgurismos* appeared to some as *philanthrōpia*, liberality and playfulness (56e–f), and it is precisely these souls that receive the harshest punishments in the course of their refashioning (*De sera* 567b).¹⁸⁰ It is in that context too that Nero's reincarnation appears. Thespesius had just seen the most piteous souls, those whose punishment had passed over to their descendants and children, when he spotted Nero, whose soul was in the process of being reshaped (567d–f). The last emperor in the Julio-Claudian line is a perfect example of "disorder reproduc[ing] the traits of its ancestry" (*De sera* 562f),¹⁸¹ and he is the perfect example of the way such disorder tends towards non-existence. His only daughter, Claudia, died shortly after birth (*Tac. Ann.* 15.32). While the bloodline did not entirely disappear, within the five generations between Antony and Nero it had lost a great deal of political power and was reduced to run-of-the-mill aristocracy. Not much a frog can do to bring ruin to Rome.

Most likely on account of his philhellenism, Nero receives leniency from the disembodied voice of the deity.¹⁸² For Folch, Nero's appearance in *The Divine Vengeance* vindicates Plutarch's long-standing opposition to hedonism and signifies the inherent goodness of the cosmos, which works to eradicate the bad wherever possible.¹⁸³ There is, however, a fate even worse than rebirth in an ignoble body. The first stop on Thespesius' guided tour of the hereafter is the punishment meted out to souls under the watchful eye of Adrasteia. As Folch notes, these corrective measures are

undertaken within a tripartite schema.¹⁸⁴ Souls that have already received their punishment before death are dealt with swiftly and gently by Poinē, those that are harder to heal are taken up by Dikē, while the final group, whose disorder is past healing, are given over to the cruelest minister, Erinys. These vicious souls, beyond all hope of help, are imprisoned in the Nameless and Unseen (*arrhēton kai aoraton*) (*De sera* 564e–f). We hear some more detail about Poinē and Dikē’s methods, but Erinys and her charges are swiftly forgotten, rendered as non-existent in the text as in life.

Commenting on the naturalness and necessity of reproduction, which thus favors heteroconjugal relationships, Foucault notes the promise of immortality inherent in the claim that “through the process of succession, we can live forever.”¹⁸⁵ But this succession must be lawful and legitimate, and it must be virtuous. Vice, understood as a form of gender deviance which destabilizes conjugal norms, risks bringing down divine retribution, indeed it risks the very existence of the soul altogether. Typhon, as the absence of masculinity, the sterile male, is more than a personification of the destructive power of the cosmos, he ties this chaotic force to the expression of gender. It is true that his maleness may be entirely incidental, a mere byproduct of the Egyptian mythology from which Plutarch fashions his allegory of the soul. On the other hand, there is no shortage of men in Plutarch’s work who are emasculated by luxury, greed and softness, and an abundance of women whose actions are virtuous, even *andreios*. Such women, like Ismenodora, gain a moral right to dominate others, even when those others are elite men.¹⁸⁶ The emasculation of Typhon is an emasculation of the soul, a condition as likely to happen to men as to women. Unexpectedly, Plutarch has brought the male down a peg.

CHAPTER SIX

PARALLEL LIVES

For it is not Histories that I am writing, but Lives; and in the most illustrious deeds there is not always a manifestation of virtue or vice, nay, a slight thing like a phrase or a jest often makes a greater revelation of character than battles where thousands fall, or the greatest armaments, or sieges of cities.

Alexander 1.2

The ontology of gender in Plutarch's metaphysics is often opaque and lends itself to interpretation. As such, it is the last step in the psychagogic process. The student who has reached this point is ready to learn the Truth about reality. No doubt of the many students that enter the program some are in it unconsciously or unwillingly, as I have argued in Chapter 4, and many drop out before advancing to the higher levels of philosophy if they find no use in it. Moreover, it's no easy task to convince the student that this particular path will lead to *eudaimonia* when there are several available to them. Thus Jordan argues that philosophers compete against each other for audiences, and "each author confronts a hearer whose choice is the target of many other persuasions."¹ James Henderson Collins refers to this process as the legitimization

of and distinction between philosophical schools competing in the marketplace of ideas.² The use of protreptic is aimed at convincing readers that philosophy can help them attain a good life. In order to attain this goal, the author must reach the student at the point where they are most comfortable and draw them out. The *Lives* can be understood to function in this sense, as the educational entertainment meant to hook readers.³ What better way to popularize a philosophy grounded in an ancient—even by Plutarch’s standards—ontology than to write massively popular biographies extolling the virtues of philosophy as a practical field of study with very real and immediate benefits for the discerning reader?

Scholars agree that Plutarch’s biographical project as a whole was grounded in ethical and moral-philosophical goals, and that his belief that philosophy should be practical in its effect on the lives of others was a pervasive aspect in his work.⁴ Yet despite this emphasis on philosophy, he wrote no biographies of great philosophers, at least not as part of the *Parallel Lives*. Both Duff and Jan Opsomer have advanced theories on why this might be; Duff argues that Plutarch may have thought that “the stress of great events and crises provided a better arena for the analysis of character,” while Opsomer simply states that “the fact of the matter is that Plutarch’s *Lives* are not about philosophers, but about statesmen.”⁵ These theories are not without merit, so I will only venture to add to them the further reasoning that Plutarch’s project was aimed at convincing readers that the study of philosophy will be to their benefit even and perhaps especially if they have no inclination to actually become a philosopher, and for this reason biographies of statesmen are better suited. This is most evident in the pair *Dion-Brutus*, both men of politics who were familiar with the doctrines of Plato and whose virtues reflected that (*Dion* 1.1).⁶ Their philosophical education is evident in their character and even reflects on the women around them.

Parallel Lives are presented in pairs to facilitate moral reflection, while a number of other biographies appear as separate works or as part of another series, the *Lives of the Caesars*.⁷ There is also consensus on the importance of marriage and partnership in Plutarch's work, which implies at least some level of concern with the role and position of the wife.⁸ Within each *Life*, we find a number of relationships, primarily those of kinship ties and especially the bond between husband and wife, but also a series of power-relations that function on the basis of and are maintained by gender, class, ethnicity and a number of other factors. At the level of sex, the interactions between men and women reveal aspects of character that tie their virtue or their vice to their gender. Some *Lives*, like *Alexander* and *Antony*, are practically bursting at the seams with women while others barely mention them at all, as is the case with *Nicias* and *Eumenes*. Then too there are *Lives* in which gender itself is a factor at play, most obviously in *Alcibiades* and *Antony* and to an extent also *Coriolanus*. Russell had called Coriolanus a "primitive barbarian," emphasizing the othering inherent in Plutarch's characterization of some of his heroes.⁹ *Artaxerxes* is a special case not only because it is the only biography of a Persian but also because both women and eunuchs loom large in the narrative. No doubt this reflects a combination of source-material and Plutarch's own views on the nature of virtue, which is often closely connected to gender and other forms of difference.

The central rhetorical device of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* is its emphasis on comparison. That is also its greatest innovation; by proposing that character can best be studied and understood in comparison with others, Plutarch highlights the humanity of any historical project, which cannot have value if it approaches events without taking stock of the people involved and which, when it does focus on people, cannot be value free. It also emphasizes the relativity of character, which is judged by its connection to people and events. In the introduction to the edited collection *The*

Unity of Plutarch's Work, Anastasios Nikolaidis comments that the underlying factor in all of Plutarch's writings is "unmistakeably one and the same: a profound interest in people and ethical matters in general, and in man's moral character and human behaviour in particular."¹⁰ Though seemingly innocuous, the use of "man" here reveals much about the way scholars tend to think about Plutarch's work and about the *Lives* especially, as works concerned first and foremost with the ethical education and evaluation of men and in which women for the most part play a necessary but marginal role.¹¹ And indeed, that assumption is borne out by the scholarship; the collection consists of nine sections and 55 essays, of which but a single section is dedicated to "Women, *Eros*, Marriage and Parenthood in Plutarch." Out of the five essays that make up this section only two are concerned specifically with women,¹² two more with love and marriage and one with parenthood,¹³ which suggests that women's value as historical subjects resides primarily within these contexts. The outlook is even worse for the edited collection *Virtues for the People*.¹⁴ Evidently, "the people" does not include women, since not a single essay in that collection deals with Plutarch's female-oriented ethical works or even women more broadly speaking. Perhaps most egregiously, Beck's 2014 *Companion to Plutarch* (which features essays by many of the same core group of scholars) also doesn't contain a chapter on women or gender, though it does contain one on "Love and Marriage"¹⁵ and one on "Sex, Eroticism and Politics,"¹⁶ so there's that.

Moreover, if the presence and role of women in the *Lives* is still a niche interest, what hope is there for queer folk? How can a person who has already been reduced to non-existence in the primary source hope to find representation in contemporary scholarship that still regularly diminishes the role and significance of women in the historical record? To date, academics have managed to agree that Plutarch had a high opinion of women, and that he believed that they could achieve a form of masculine reason.¹⁷ Frankly, Plutarch himself couldn't make that more obvious if he tried.¹⁸ This

leaves large gaps in the scholarship on anyone who is not a great man or a chaste woman, with the obvious exception of certain people who simply cannot be ignored despite their vices—women like Cleopatra, Aspasia and Olympias, and men like Alcibiades and Antony.¹⁹ Spartan women are also a particular topic of interest.²⁰ Some scholars working on gender in antiquity have made attempts at breaking through this ideological barrier.²¹ Pomeroy's collected essays on *Advice and Consolation* (1999) is an indispensable resource, but when it is cited the contribution of Philip Stadter is most visible.²² While excellent in its assessment of the contradictions in Plutarch's thought on women and subsequent synthesis of those views in the *Moralia* and the *Lives*, the essay's success has often come at the expense of other great contributions to the collection. One essay in particular that has not found a dedicated audience in "mainstream" Plutarch scholarship is Lin Foxhall's critical take on discourses of domination in his work. Foxhall (1999) argues that changes in Greek tradition during Roman occupation resulted in a series of tensions around the proper place for women, and that the gradual extension of Roman law into the Greek provinces provided more opportunities for women to claim autonomy.²³ It is this cultural shift during Plutarch's lifetime that, at least in part, caused the contradictions that Stadter attempted to synthesize into a coherent ideology.

It's tempting to fall back on categories of identification like mother, wife and daughter as an organizational principle.²⁴ In Plutarch, those categories do have specific gendered connotations that indicate moral status, but the problem also goes beyond that. Two concept-groups that link gender and virtue can provide some insight. The first is *andreia*, including the negative *anandria*, and the second is *malakia*. These words indicate the presence or absence of masculinity, and when used in the company of other concepts that indicate virtue or vice (*truphē*, *deilia*, *sōphrosunē*, *dikaia*, etc.) they signify those traits as expressions of gender.²⁵ Moreover, in Plutarch they often indicate a condition of the soul,

which is then written on the body and expressed through it.²⁶ For example, Plutarch argues that virtuous men cannot be laid low by poverty, enslavement, or death by poison or fire; such things affect the vicious, who are unmanly (*anandros*), irrational (*alogistos*), and have become soft (*malakos*) in their souls (*An vit.* 499d–e). Without virtue men become petty, soft (*malakos*), superstitious (*deisidaimōn*), cowardly and licentious (*De Alex. fort. virt.* 337c). Dion possesses not only *andreia*, but also *sōphrosunē* and *aretē*, qualities that stand in contrast to effeminacy (*thruptō*) (17.3).²⁷ Alexander chides Philotas that he is too *malakos* and too *anandros* to have attempted something so daring as an attempt on his life (*Alex.* 49.7), and Caesar dismisses soldiers who think his campaign in Gaul is an opportunity to enrich themselves because their pursuit of luxury (*truphē*) is unmanly and effeminate (*anandrōs kai malakōs*) (*Caes.* 19.2). When Perseus begged Aemilius Paulus not to be led in his triumphal procession, he was mocked for his *anandria* because he had the option to choose death (by suicide) but was too much of a coward (*deilaios*), having been made soft (*apomalakistheis*) by his hopes of reprieve (*Aem.* 34.3). These concepts occur frequently in Plutarch's work, and are often (but not always) indicative of a moral condition in the soul.²⁸ It is those uses that concern me here. Before turning to that analysis, however, it is necessary to situate this study of the *Lives* and give an account of the presence of women in them.

ENDINGS AND DIGRESSIONS

It would be futile to attempt to center women in the narratives of the *Lives* by simply pointing out just how many women appear throughout; doing so would only reinforce the notion that women belong in the margins as meters of men's actions. After all, if they mattered so much to Plutarch, why didn't he write a *Life* of a woman? Pauline Schmitt Pantel reasons that to do so would have been non-sensical given the fact that the *Lives* are often focused on

politics, a sphere from which women are de facto excluded except in extraordinary circumstances.²⁹ It is true that the biographical corpus is male-facing in its stated intent; all of the *Lives* are centered around a single male, Greek or Roman statesman, with the exception of *Artaxerxes*. The project is dedicated at least in part to Plutarch's patron and friend, Sosius Senecio.³⁰ Even so, Durán Mañas notes the striking prominence of women in some *Lives* while they are practically non-existent in others. She argues that women are devices through which the character of the hero is framed, and in that way their characterization reveals the sensibilities of the author.³¹

Much research has already been done on the technical aspects of Plutarch's work, including the structure of the individual texts and the project as a whole. According to Tim Duff, "the composition of the audience, that is, the context in which the past is evoked, is obviously vital."³² The appearance of "minor" characters, then, should tell us something about the constitution of the audience. We ought to read each person that appears in the biographies with this in mind, not just the main character, since according to Plutarch's own testimony, small things might reveal more about character than big events (*Alex.* 1.2).³³ We must assume that this is true of Plutarch himself as well and expect that his views and aims will be as evident in the description of minor persons as in major characters.

There are a number of features that commonly appear in the prologue to each biography (where such a prologue is present, otherwise in the opening chapters), including family, character, education and appearance.³⁴ Within the first five chapters, there is usually mention of the women in the family, though admittedly the level of engagement with this topic is uneven.³⁵ Some open with a description of the relationship between the hero and his mother, which often predicts the course of his future relationships with other women or the origin of certain virtues and vices. Sophia Xenophontos argues that the mother-son relationship in

the *Lives* emphasizes Plutarch's ethical concerns in the *Moralia*, noting the apparent contradiction between the silent women of the *Moralia* and the vocal women of the *Lives*.³⁶ She also argues that politically active wives act in the presence of male inaction, frailty, or deficiency.³⁷ There is necessarily a gendered aspect to such characterizations.

Descriptions of women in the initial chapters of the *Lives* therefore do tend to frame women through their relationships to men but serves the double function of also defining men through their relationships with women. This is particularly evident in the *Life of Pompey*, where Plutarch briefly mentions his intimacy with the *hetaira* Flora and his ungracious treatment of the freedman Demetrius' wife (*Pomp.* 2.2–4) in order to emphasize his temperate lifestyle (1.3, cf. 53.2).³⁸ For her part, Flora is said to have been deeply in love with Pompey and to have grieved him when he moved on (2.3). The same is true for Pericles, whose relationship with Aspasia caused him a great deal of political trouble, though Plutarch never legitimizes the rumors that accused him of intemperance, suggesting instead that Aspasia's hold over him was both erotic and political. *Caesar* also begins with detail about his wife Cornelia and his aunt Julia (1.1), which goes some way to explaining his relationships with Sulla and Marius, since much of the tension there exists on account of the women in Caesar's life.

It would be a mistake to claim that the presence of women in the early chapters of the *Lives* is extraordinary or somehow particularly meaningful for women, instead of the tacit acknowledgment of the centrality of the maternal figure in early life.³⁹ We see this, for example, in *Cicero*, where the opening sentence juxtaposes the nobility (*kalōs*) of his mother Helvia with the unknowability of his father, whose lineage is unconfirmed and who remains unnamed (1.1). Cicero's birth is said to have been a painless and unlaborious process for his mother, while his nurse claimed that an apparition told her that the boy would be a great blessing to Rome (2.1). Similarly, Pericles' mother Agariste, who was the granddaughter of

the noble democrat Cleisthenes, dreamt that she had given birth to a lion shortly before Pericles was born (*Per.* 3.2).⁴⁰ Plutarch considers maternal lineage a matter of importance as much for its significance for social status as for the afterlife of the hero.⁴¹ He traces Pyrrhus' lineage as far back as the ancient kings of Epirus, mentioning the women whose names are known to him along the way. Thus we know that his mother's name was Phthia and his sister Deïdameia, one of the wives of Demetrius, and his grandmother was a woman named Troas (*Pyrrh.* 1.1–4).⁴² The measure of Alcibiades' reputation is the memory of his mother's name (Deinomache) and even the name of his Spartan nurse, Amycla, and this differentiates him from illustrious men like Demosthenes and Nicias for whom the names of their mothers are unknown (*Alc.* 1.1–2). In *Demosthenes*, Plutarch records his uncertainty surrounding Demosthenes' mother, who Aeschines says was the daughter of an exile and a rich Scythian woman (3.171–2). Plutarch reserves judgment on this issue, but we must assume that the woman “of little stature and without beauty” mentioned in the prologue (1.1) refers to this barbarian woman (*barbaros gunaikos*; *Dem.* 4.1), whence the necessity of showing that virtue takes root wherever there is a generous nature and willing soul (1.2).⁴³

Several *Lives* emphasize the effect of mother on son, though not all do so in exactly the same way. The *Lives* of the Gracchi are laced with the influence of their mother Cornelia, who exemplifies the values of ideal motherhood: *sōphrōsunē*, *philoteknia* and *megalopsuchia* (*TG* 1.4). Plutarch credits the virtue of her sons Tiberius and Caius to the education she provided them and to her own virtue (*TG* 1.5, cf. *CG* 19.3). Cornelia continued to influence her sons' political careers as adults (*TG* 8.7), and their *Lives* end with a note about her virtue.⁴⁴ It's not always the case that a good mother rears a good son, or that a bad mother rears a bad one; the issue is far more complex than that. Plutarch sometimes makes this quite explicit, as when he says that the loss of a father—and thus being reared by the mother—doesn't prevent a boy from becoming an

excellent man. This statement reflects directly on Coriolanus, who is an example of lack of *paideia* producing much that is bad along with the good, and on Volumnia, who cannot be blamed for her son's failings (*Cor.* 1.2).⁴⁵

Manly excellence can be passed on to boys by their mothers, just as certain vices find their origin in the early relationship between parent and child. Such an example can be found in *Antony*, who is initially characterized through the relationship between his parents, foreshadowing the way women like Fulvia and Cleopatra will control him later in life (*Ant.* 1.2–2.2).⁴⁶ So too Lucullus, whose mother Caecilia had a bad reputation for not being *sōphrōn*, a catch-all term indicating a state of virtue that is especially temperate and submissive (*Luc.* 1.1). At the end of the *Life*, Plutarch increasingly identifies him with the other, once when the Stoic Tubero called him “Xerxes in a toga” (39.3) and once when he organized an expensive dinner for Cicero and Pompey (41.4–6). As a result, his willingness to form a partnership with Praecia, a *hetaira* with powerful political connections (6.2–3), his later marriages to Clodia and Servilia, both of whom were licentious (*aselgēs*, *akolastos*) and worthless (*ponēra*) as wives (38.1), and his slow descent into luxury and softness (*malakos*, *Luc.* 38.2, cf. 39.1, *Cim. et Luc.* 1.4), appears as the natural consequence of being reared by a mother like Caecilia, whose lifestyle must have appeared normal to a young, impressionable boy.⁴⁷

In the case of Coriolanus, the early description of the high regard he had for his mother Volumnia (*Cor.* 4.3–4.4) explains the grounds for the women's appeal to her and the lengthy speeches with which she convinced him to relinquish his war against the Romans (34.1–36.5).⁴⁸ Buszard notes that Volumnia's speech is the longest of any kind in the *Lives*.⁴⁹ According to Susan Jacobs, the speech shows that Coriolanus acted not out of duty to Rome but out of devotion to his mother, and Plutarch voices his disapproval of Coriolanus' skewed priorities in the *synkrisis* (*Cor. et. Alc.* 4.2–4, cf. *Cor.* 4.3).⁵⁰ Sophia Xenophontos argues that this episode, in which Coriolanus

is silent while Volumnia speaks at length, highlights his moral weakness against the strength of character of his mother, who continued to dominate him well into adulthood.⁵¹ It is Volumnia who points out how dishonorable the course Coriolanus had chosen, and it is to the women that the Romans' salvation is credited and at whose request a temple to Women's Fortune is erected (*Cor.* 37.1–3). Plutarch attributes the intervention of the women to divine inspiration (32.4–6, 33.2).⁵² He dedicates five chapters (33–37) to this sequence of events, ending with the public honors voted to the women. Coriolanus dies an ignoble death shortly after (39.4–5), and one is left with the impression that the true heroes may be the women who had momentarily helped him correct his course and so saved the Romans.

Alexander provides a great example of the complex relationship between the hero and his mother. Elizabeth Carney argues that Alexander's masculinity is framed through his interactions with women, noting that his temperance declined towards the end of his life.⁵³ Early on in the *Life*, Plutarch describes the relationship between Olympias and Philip and offers a brief but detailed account of Olympias' religious practice through which she's characterized as overly zealous to the point of barbarism (2.4–6), anticipating Alexander's own descent into superstition near the end of his life (75.1–2, cf. *Pel.* 34.2).⁵⁴ Alexander's gradual orientalization accords with the increased effect women have on his actions and afterlife, which he valiantly attempted to resist; the burning of Persepolis is said to have happened at the instigation of Thaïs, and the fate of Philotas is due to Antigone (*Alex.* 38.1–2, 48.2–5).⁵⁵ The biography concludes with some speculation over the cause of his death, which may have been poison (77.1–3). Plutarch is not convinced on this point but notes that it offered a pretext for Olympias to put many men to death (77.1). As for his legacy, Roxana, who at this time was pregnant, killed Stateira along with her sister out of jealousy (77.4), and Plutarch speculates that Olympias had poisoned Arrhidaeus, Philip's son by Philinna, thereby rendering

him incapable of ruling Macedonia (77.5). It seems that the early mention of Olympias' potential use of drugs against Philip (2.4) has come full circle, with Alexander leaving behind a foreign wife just as ruthless as his mother.⁵⁶

A number of *Lives* end with a reflection on the afterlife of the hero, which is often framed through women, as in *Alexander*.⁵⁷ This is the case in *Antony*, which continues for ten chapters after the death of Antony and concludes only after the death of Cleopatra with a note about Octavia's efforts to secure both Antony's and Octavian's lineage (*Ant.* 87).⁵⁸ The *Life* of Pelopidas concludes with an extraordinary account of the death of the tyrant Alexander of Pherae at the hands of his wife Thebe. This final event reflects on the legacy of the hero, who had spent some time in prison conversing with her. Alexander is characterized as beastly (*thēriōdēs*) and savage (*ōmos*), full of licentiousness (*aselgeia*) and greed (*pleonexia*) (*Pel.* 26.2).⁵⁹ Though Thebe had heard of Pelopidas' courage and nobility, she (being a mere woman) could not at first recognize the greatness of a man so cast down, and judging him instead by his appearance she burst into tears (28.4). When she tells Pelopidas that she pities his wife, he responds by saying that he pities her, because she is free and yet endures Alexander. This exchange initiates a transformation in Thebe, who recognizes then that her husband's savagery, hubris and licentiousness is oppressive both of herself and her younger brother, who had been made his lover (28.5).⁶⁰ Over the course of an untold number of visits to Pelopidas in prison, her spirit is inflamed to the point where she conspires to kill her husband. Pelopidas' death precedes Alexander's, but he had taught Thebe "not to fear the outward splendor and array of Alexander, since these depended wholly on his armed guards" (35.3). Indirectly, then, Alexander's death is credited to Pelopidas' intervention.⁶¹ As also in the case of Telesilla in *Virtues* (245d), Plutarch ascribes Thebe's actions to divine inspiration, effectively robbing her of agency (35.2). The biography ends with the claim that Thebe became the first wife of a tyrant to kill her husband.

In *Virtues*, Plutarch reminds Clea of this anecdote but doesn't repeat it, saying simply that Aretaphila had undertaken her deeds in emulation of Thebe, which suggests that Clea was familiar with the story (*Mulier. virt.* 256a). The reference is repeated in *The Malice of Herodotus* (856a–b), where Thebe's actions are ascribed to her noble spirit (*megalonoia*) and hatred of evil (*misoponēria*), and Plutarch explicitly denies that it was an act of “womanly passion.”

If Thebe is an example of a woman gaining in virtue because of her association with the hero, Timandra is a final reminder of how far he has fallen. At the time of his death Alcibiades was living in Phrygia with the *hetaira*, who appeared in a dream shortly before he died in which he saw himself in her garments while she cradled his head in her arms and adorned his face like a woman's (*Alc.* 39.1–2).⁶² Duff has commented on Alcibiades' association with the feminine, a theme established at the outset through the description of his appearance (1.4–8) and the accusation that he bites like women (2.2).⁶³ Wohl argues that he transgresses traditional political and sexual boundaries and as such poses a significant challenge to Athenian masculinity, and she notes the connections between passivity, effeminacy, tyranny and foreignness that coalesce in the character of Alcibiades.⁶⁴ Beck does not see the characterization of Alcibiades as particularly effeminate, given other passages in which he is decidedly manly, but rather as “attributes of the *thumoeidic* individual.”⁶⁵ However, *thumos* (and especially its excess) is the essence of the feminine in the soul, and it is exactly this aspect which troubles the gender binary in the person of Alcibiades.⁶⁶ He is beautiful at every stage of life (1.3), and even his lisp is charming (1.4). When he is accused of biting like a woman, he responds that he bites like a lion (2.2). His vices are especially effeminate (*thelutētas*), he indulged in luxury (*truphē*) and extravagance (*poluteleia*), insisted on a soft (*malakos*) bed on the ships he commanded and had a golden shield made for himself (16.1). The purple robes trailing behind him in the agora recalls Plutarch's detailed list of effeminate luxuries in *Advice* (144e, cf.

Cons. ux. 609b) which includes purple and scarlet, pearls and gold, and the excessive luxury of the Persians.⁶⁷

Despite these identifications with the feminine, Alcibiades is also aggressively manly at times. In Sparta, he seduces Timaiia, the wife of king Agis,⁶⁸ and practices his charms on the populace by assuming their mode of life; they respond as if they were bewitched (*katagoēteue*) by him (23.3–8). There is a hint of irony and a dash of comedy here when Plutarch describes Alcibiades assuming the mean Spartan ways, living with unkempt hair and eating coarse bread as if he had never met a perfumer and had never employed a cook. In pretending to throw off his effeminate habits, Alcibiades takes to practicing the effeminate arts of witchcraft, deceit and seduction.⁶⁹ His imitation of virtue is itself a vice, one which he apparently mastered (23.4–5). Plutarch's response to this chameleon-like transformative power is to quote Electra: "Tis the self-same woman still!"⁷⁰ Beyond the irony there is also an anxiety about the stability of character, indeed of the self, as Alcibiades changes and exchanges one mode of being for another (cf. 16.6). Mossman argues that the changes are external and so paradoxically suggest internal constancy, an unchanging deceptiveness (cf. 23.5).⁷¹ This appears as the natural consequence of his effeminacy, which is merely the bodily reflection of the state of his soul, itself emasculated by passion and struggling against its appetites; if reason is the true self, the failure of masculinity in the person of Alcibiades represents a loss which is transferred to the political arena, a loss for Athens, and ultimately a loss of self in the arms of a *hetaira*, who completes his transformation (perhaps even signifying his rebirth) by burying him in her own clothing.

Sometimes, the fate of the hero turns on his family, so that his death leads to the death of his wife, mother, and even children. Plutarch does not conclude *Agis* merely with a description of his death but continues with the noble deaths of his mother Agesistrata and her mother Archidamia (20.2–5) before ending with a short chapter on the grief felt at their loss. So too Cleomenes, whose

death (*Cleom.* 37.7) is followed by the grief of Cratesicleia (38.1). Ptolemy orders that his children, mother and all the women with her should be put to death as well (38.2). There is a tone of disapproval throughout this chapter, with Plutarch emphasizing the nobility (*gennaia*) of Cratesicleia and the exceeding nobility and beauty (*kallistē kai gennaiotatē*) of Panteus' wife, who held Cratesicleia's robe for her and died silently after caring for the bodies of those who had died before her. Plutarch also remarks with some disapproval on Hicetas' betrayal of Dion's memory by the murder of Andromache and Arete. Hicetas was thought to have been a friend to Dion but was convinced by Dion's enemies to send them to their deaths. There are varying accounts of this event, one in which the women's throats were cut before they were thrown into the sea and another in which they're cast overboard alive alongside Dion's young son (*Dion* 58.4–5, cf. *Athen.* 541b–e). Porcia's death also closes out the *Lives* of Brutus and Cato the Younger, with Plutarch offering two possible scenarios in *Brutus*.⁷²

At least two biographies are bookended with notes about women. *Aristides* opens with the death of the hero in poverty, leaving behind him two daughters who struggled to secure marriages because of their lack of dowries (1.1). At the end of the biography, Plutarch returns to this topic, adding that Aristides' daughters were married at public expense, having been provided a dowry and three thousand drachmae by the city (27.1). One of Aristides' granddaughters, Polycrite, was also voted a public maintenance, while the other, Myrto, lived with Socrates despite his already having a wife, since she was too poor to remarry (27.2). As for his grandson Lysimachus, Demetrius provided a pension (27.3). Finally, the city also provided for the granddaughter of Aristogeiton, who had been living in poverty in Lemnos, giving her in marriage to a nobleman and an estate in Potamus as dowry (27.4). No doubt the bulk of the narrative provided the context for the provisions made for these women, of which Plutarch approves as evidence of the humanity and benevolence of Athens. Plutarch

provides a similar account of Lysander's poverty and the status of his daughters. An anecdote appearing quite early in the *Life* and again in *Advice* shows Lysander rejecting Dionysius' offer of luxurious garments for his daughters (*Lys.* 2.5, *Conj. praec.* 141e). The biography thus ends with his daughters as well, whose poverty prematurely ended their engagements and for which the suitors were punished (*Lys.* 30.5).

Finally, there are digressions dedicated to women in several of the *Lives*, some of which span an entire chapter or more. Geert Roskam and Simon Verdegem argue that digressions generally, whether marked as such by Plutarch or not, can have a function and constitute an important part of the larger moral-educational project.⁷³ Digressions take a number of forms in the *Lives*: they can be philosophical, etiological, etymological, ethnographic, moral, or historical.⁷⁴ They are sometimes marked, but not always. According to Roskam and Verdegem, digressions can also reveal Plutarch's expectations and intentions for his audience.⁷⁵ In *Coriolanus*, a short digression on Valeria (33.1) introduces the chapters dedicated to the women's entreaties to Coriolanus (discussed above).⁷⁶ Plutarch reminds the reader that Valeria is the sister of Publicola, and that she enjoyed repute and honor in Rome on account of that filial connection. This Valeria is the same young woman who escaped from Porsena's camp with Cloelia, an anecdote told in *Virtues* (250a–f) and in *Publicola* 19, where the majority of the chapter is dedicated to it, indicating a similar expectation from readers of *Virtues* and (at the very least) these *Lives*. *Dion* 21, which reports the anecdote about Theste's *andreia*, concerns Dionysius the Younger's treatment of women, starting with his giving Dion's wife Arete in marriage to Timocrates against her and Dion's wishes (21.1–3).⁷⁷ Plutarch contrasts this behavior with the more reasonable Dionysius the Elder's reaction to Theste's *parrhēsia*; her virtue (*aretē*) earned both his and the people's admiration (21.4–6).⁷⁸ Plutarch ends the chapter by claiming "this is a digression, it is true, but not a useless one." The chapter has a double function, in the

first place as a reflection on the character of the tyrant as revealed through his treatment of his sister, and in the second place as a reminder of women's role in opposing tyranny, a prominent theme in *Virtues*.

The *Life* of Cato the Younger contains a digression of a different sort. Plutarch states outright that this section, which he starts off by recounting the anecdote about Servilia's lewd note to Caesar in the senate (*Cat. min.* 24.1, cf. *Brut.* 5.2), concerns the soul, though he never quite clarifies what he means by that.⁷⁹ This leads him into a digression on the women in Cato's household. Servilia, his sister, was licentious (*akolastos*), and the other Servilia (also his sister, this one married to Lucullus) even worse.⁸⁰ To add to the disgrace, Cato's wife Atilia was accused of similar transgressions, so that he eventually divorced her (24.3). After that he married Marcia, a reputedly excellent woman, who he then gave to Hortensius upon his request. Hortensius had first asked for Porcia, who at the time was married to Bibulus, but Cato denied him (25.2–5). Plutarch ends the chapter with the words "This incident occurred at a later time, it is true, but since I had taken up the topic of the women of Cato's household I decided to anticipate it" (25.5).⁸¹ The relationship between men and women is clearly of some concern. There is an air of disapproval here from Plutarch, who describes the transactional nature of Roman marriage quite negatively.⁸² By linking these two topics, he suggests that it is precisely this passing to-and-fro of women that led to their intemperance.

When he returns to the topic later, Cato remarries Marcia (who had in the meantime inherited a great deal of wealth from Hortensius) because he needed someone to look after his household and his daughters (52.3). For this marriage Caesar accused him of avarice, but Plutarch thinks this is as ridiculous as accusing Heracles of cowardice (52.4–5). Even so, he leaves the question on the propriety of the marriage open, chiefly because Cato marries Marcia and then immediately sets off in pursuit of Pompey. There are some parallels here with his account of Cato the Elder's last

marriage, of which he certainly disapproves (*Arist. et Marc. Cat.* 6.1–2), and from which Cato the Younger is descended. To this topic the majority of chapter 24 of *Marcus Cato* is devoted, and follows directly after a section on Cato’s hatred of Greek philosophy and medicine (23.1–4). Accordingly, the death of his wife and son is ascribed to his aversion to Greek doctors, and the accusation that he indulged his voracious sexual appetite as an old man implies a lack of Greek *paideia* (24.1).⁸³ In any case, Plutarch says he was well past the proper age for marrying when he took his last wife. This marriage seems to have been the result of his son’s reaction to learning that he was sleeping with an enslaved girl (24.2). Even the father of the young bride is at first surprised because Cato is too old for marriage (24.4). The reference to Peisistratus implies the sort of immoderate appetites characteristic of tyrants, but Plutarch notes that Cato was not so dissolute in his old age as Lucullus (24.5–7). Nevertheless, both Catos made marriages late in life for which they were censured, a parallel that demonstrates Plutarch’s interest in heredity, albeit quite implicitly.⁸⁴

Two other digressions mark chapters dedicated to the *hetairai* Aspasia and Lamia. *Pericles* 24 is dedicated to a portrait of Aspasia, with Plutarch claiming that as he is remembering these things as he writes, it would be unnatural to pass them by (24.7). In *Demetrius*, a chapter and then some is dedicated to the hero’s relationship with Lamia, whom he is said to have loved more than anyone else despite the fact that she was “past her prime” (16.3–4). Chapter 27 characterizes Demetrius through his relationship with Lamia (27.1) and then reflects on the woman herself (27.2). There is much in the characterization of Lamia that recalls Cleopatra, in particular the expensive dinner she organized for Antony (*Ant.* 26.4, *Demetr.* 27.2).⁸⁵ Neither are particularly beautiful compared to their legitimate rivals (*Ant.* 57.3, *Demetr.* 16.3). Plutarch’s description of Lamia emphasizes her age not once but several times (*Demetr.* 16.3–4, 27.4), creating a contrast between her and Phila, who was also older than Demetrius, but his lawful wife and still able to bear

children (14.2).⁸⁶ Pat Wheatley and Charlotte Dunn argue that his marriages to the widows Phila and Eurydice might have resulted in a preference for older women, and that Lamia can properly be described as “the love of his life.”⁸⁷ The final anecdote is revealing of Plutarch’s own view of her, which throughout the chapter portrays her as greedy:

And there is on record also Lamia’s comment on the famous judgment of Bocchoris. There was, namely, a certain Egyptian who was in love with Thonis the courtesan, and was asked a great sum of money for her favors; then he dreamed that he enjoyed those favors, and ceased from his desires. Thereupon Thonis brought an action against him for payment due, and Bocchoris, on hearing the case, ordered the man to bring into court in its coffer the sum total demanded of him, and to move it hither and thither with his hand, and the courtesan was to grasp its shadow, since the thing imagined is a shadow of the reality. This judgment Lamia thought to be unjust; for though the dream put an end to the young man’s passion, the shadow of the money did not set the courtesan free from her desire for it. So much, then, for Lamia (*Demetr.* 27.5–6).

At 28.1, Plutarch returns to his proper topic, leaving the comic elements behind to focus again on the tragic. There are a number of other anecdotes throughout the *Life* that take this comic approach to Demetrius’ relationship with Lamia, including the anecdote at 19.4, where Plutarch says that Lamia so completely dominated (*krateō*) him that kissing his father conjured up her image.⁸⁸ For Plutarch, Lamia is the trigger for Demetrius’ deterioration.⁸⁹ Like *Antony*, the biography ends with a note about succession, continuing down to Perseus, who reigned in Macedonia when it was colonized by the Romans and who was the last of the Antigonid kings, just as Nero was the last of the Julio-Claudean emperors. It

was this same Perseus who begged Aemilius Paulus not to lead him in the triumph (*Aem.* 34.3), but was too soft and unmanly to take his own life to prevent the humiliation. Demetrius' daughter by Lamia is not mentioned at all.⁹⁰

COMPARISONS AND CONJUGALITY

In recent years there has been renewed emphasis on the parallelism of the *Lives*, and the importance of reading the biographies in pairs as intended by Plutarch. Such readings have been shown to elucidate more clearly the themes running throughout each pair. Duff has argued that parallelism has important cultural and political implications, since the past can be deployed as a site for the construction of culture. He sees this playing out in the choice to set the lives of prominent Greeks and Romans beside one another, through which Plutarch asserts a Greek military identity equal to (though not contemporary with) that of the Romans.⁹¹ The *synkriseis* that conclude each pair form an important part of the overall moral project, and as Duff argues, also play a role in moral characterization in both the *Lives* and the *Moralia*.⁹² A number of internal comparisons within each *Life* also contribute to the moral texture.⁹³ The technique is intended to explore issues and raise questions of ethics and morality which the reader is then encouraged to contemplate.⁹⁴ Duff notes that there is no (extant) explicit justification for Plutarch's decision to write *Lives* in parallel, except for the statement about the similarities and differences between men and women's virtues in the work addressed to Clea, *Virtues of Women* (243b–d).⁹⁵ As should be clear by now, the *Parallel Lives* are not a simple comparison between great men, but contain a network of identifications and comparisons that emphasize the judgment of moral action on the fact of the other; there can be no character in a void because character is measured by action upon and interaction with other people, and women are people too.

In keeping with Plutarch's interest in conjugality, the comparisons sometimes focus on marriage as a locus of moral judgment, which has the double effect of reflecting on the character of the hero and the people around him. In some cases, the *synkrisis* devotes whole sections to the topic. In *Numa-Lycurgus*, for example, Plutarch evaluates the heroes' respective positions on community in marriage and parentage, which removed selfish jealousy from husbands (3.1). He highlights the differences between the Spartan and Roman customs, concluding that passing on his wife in marriage to another man is an admission of the unsupportability of community of marriage, while the Spartan manner of simply lending her out as a childbearer professes a degree of indifference to wives (3.2). Ultimately, Plutarch voices an implicit disapproval of both, likely because of his own views on marriage, which favored long-term monogamy. The chapter continues with the education of young girls; here Plutarch clearly prefers the Roman laws, which instilled feminine decorum (*to thēlu kai kosmion*) and silence (*siōpē*) in the young women, while Lycurgus of necessity treated them like men and as a result made them manly (*andrōdes*) and bold (3.3–5).⁹⁶

Plutarch ends the chapter by claiming that Numa's laws made women gentle and ready to obey, so that the first divorce was only recorded 250 years after the founding of Rome, and the first woman to quarrel with her mother-in-law is recorded in the reign of Tarquin the Proud. Both women are named, the wife as Thalea and the mother-in-law as Gegania (3.7). Finally, at 4.1–2, he concludes the topic with a comparison between the Roman and Spartan marriage customs and the education of girls, noting again the differences. Lycurgus regarded nature as more important, and it is for this reason that he made the girls exercise and had them marry later, that is, so that they could bear strong children, while Numa paid more attention to character by marrying the girls as young as twelve when both their bodies (*sōma*) and character (*ēthos*) were still pure, in order that they may be shaped by their husbands. Ultimately, Plutarch sides with Numa on the matter

of the treatment and education of girls and women because it maintains the traditional status quo.

The same theme recurs in the final chapter of the *synkrisis* to *Theseus-Romulus*, written after *Lycurgus-Numa* (*Thes.* 1.2), where there is a double emphasis on how the men's actions affected women and by way of that, the state. There, Plutarch excuses the rape of the Sabine women on the grounds that their abductors treated them with much respect, which he contrasts with Theseus' inexcusable treatment of women (*Thes. et Rom.* 6.1).⁹⁷ His account of Theseus' treatment of Ariadne is sensitive, offering different versions of Ariadne's fate.⁹⁸ In one version, Plutarch says, she hung herself because Theseus abandoned her; in another she went to live on Naxos after being abandoned for another woman (*Thes.* 20.1). A somewhat more generous version focuses on her loneliness and despair after Theseus—perhaps through no fault of his own—leaves her pregnant on the shore in Cyprus and her subsequent death in childbirth (20.3–4). Ultimately, however, Plutarch returns to the tragic version, which he appears to favor (20.5, 29.2). Plutarch's views on marriage are evident here also, because it is clear that much of his disapproval stems from the fact that Theseus “carried off” far too many women without a lawful claim to them, and abandoned them when he was done with them. He names Ariadne, Antiope,⁹⁹ Anaxo, and finally Helen, who was taken at a time when she wasn't even ready for marriage yet and Theseus was past the time for legitimate marriage.¹⁰⁰

Theseus did these things out of lust (*hēdonē*), while Romulus abducted 800 women¹⁰¹ out of necessity and a desire for political partnership, and moreover kept only one, Hersilia, for himself (*Thes. et Rom.* 6.2, cf. *Rom.* 14.1–7). Even so, the act was one of injustice (*adikia*) and violence (*bia*) which can only be excused because of its outcome.¹⁰² It is essential, then, that the women advocate in favor of the Romans in order to end the ensuing war (*Rom.* 19.1–7). The long speech attributed to Hersilia here, like that attributed to Volumnia in *Coriolanus*, is paradigmatic in its call

for peace, often a feminine preoccupation.¹⁰³ Furthermore, the ensuing marriages were characterized by their modesty (*aidōs*) and tenderness, so that—repeating the claim in *Numa-Lycurgus*—no divorce was made for 250 years thence.¹⁰⁴ Thus while Romulus' rape of the Sabine women resulted in peace (notwithstanding the dash of war that immediately followed it), Theseus gained nothing for Athens by his treatment of women, and even harmed his mother (*Thes. et Rom.* 6.4–5). In both cases, the heroes' character is reflected in their treatment of the women around them, and Plutarch favors a gentler approach because it makes women more likely to submit.

Marriage, or rather intemperance in matters of love, is also a predominant theme in the comparison of Demetrius and Antony.¹⁰⁵ Plutarch focuses in part on the lawfulness of their marriages, laying blame on Antony for marrying two wives, contrary to the Roman custom, and for abandoning his legitimate (*dikaios*) Roman wife in favor of a foreigner (*xenos*). Demetrius, on the other hand, married a number of women but did so legally, as was the Macedonian custom, and treated all of his wives with honor (*Demetr. et Ant.* 4.1), though he says the exact opposite in the *Life of Demetrius* (14.2–3). At any rate, Plutarch's real issue is Lamia, to whom Demetrius is not married and for whom he neglects his lawful wives. In both cases, he claims that women had control over them, Lamia over Demetrius and Cleopatra over Antony, but whereas Demetrius only indulged his pleasures in times of peace, Antony was so far under the spell of Cleopatra that he neglected his duties and ultimately even went to war for her and gave up the victory at Actium to flee with her (*Demetr. et Ant.* 3.1–3). Thus for Demetrius, marriage brought no harm, but it was the greatest evil for Antony (*Ant.* 25.1). As much as the *synkrisis* reflects on their characters, Plutarch emphasizes Cleopatra's as well, reminding the reader of her witchcraft (*Demetr. et Ant.* 3.3, *Ant.* 25.4), which implies the same effeminate deviousness with which Alcibiades tricked the Spartans.

For Pompey too, marriage was more of a burden than a boon. Plutarch says the chief reason why he joined in the wrongs wrought by Caesar and Scipio is the family connection (*Ages. et Pomp.* 1.3).¹⁰⁶ Indeed, the *Life of Pompey* abounds with examples of marriage exchanges in order to foster political alliances, all of which were geared toward the accrual of power rather than the good of the state.¹⁰⁷ So Pompey divorced his first wife Antistia to marry Aemilia, Sulla's stepdaughter, who was already married and pregnant at the time. In true tragic fashion, Aemilia died in childbirth soon after, and tragedy would continue to follow Pompey's marriages (9.1–3). He married Mucia and went off to wage war against Mithridates; in his absence she found other lovers and thus upon his return he divorced her (42.7). After this, his attempt at establishing an alliance with Cato the Younger failed despite Cato's wife and sister advocating for it, although Cato is eventually proven right for not accepting the proposal and getting his family implicated in Pompey's bribes (44.3–4, cf. *Cat. min.* 30.2–5). In *Cato Minor*, however, Plutarch says that ultimately the result shows that Cato should have accepted Pompey's proposal to prevent him from forming an alliance with Caesar (*Cat. min.* 30.6).

It is in particular the marriage-relation to Caesar and his exceeding love for Julia that wrought Pompey the most harm, since he relinquished his duty to Rome out of consideration for his alliance (*Ages. et Pomp.* 3.4).¹⁰⁸ His love for Julia weakened (*malassō*) him and led him to neglect affairs of the state at a most crucial time in favor of spending time with her in gardens and villas (*Pomp.* 48.5, 53.1). Her subsequent death in childbirth ends the alliance (53.4) and marks a downward spiral from which Pompey never quite recovers. His flight from Caesar and his ill-advised military stratagems against him is the mark of a youthful commander who still has an excuse for such cowardice and weakness (*malakia kai deilia*), not of an experienced general (*Ages. et Pomp.* 4.2–3). No such accusations follow Agesilaus, whose *Life* is populated with male lovers, his wife scarcely present at all. Even so, his treatment

of those lovers, and Lysander in particular, is censured (1.3) while he is commended for his self-control in the presence of beautiful boys (*Ages.* 11.2–7). Moreover, while Pompey was laid low by his deference to marriage relations, Agesilaus made unjust decisions to gratify his son (*Ages. et Pomp.* 1.5) and his own resentment. Overall, it is in the treatment of others that character is revealed, and the treatment of women (and boy-lovers) is, for Plutarch at least, an integral part of such characterizations.

IDENTIFICATIONS AND INSTABILITY: *ARTAXERXES*

Aside from the *Parallel Lives*, little of Plutarch's biographical work remains. Only two of the *Lives of the Caesars* are extant, those of Galba and Otho, and two stand-alone biographies, *Aratus* and *Artaxerxes*. The latter is particularly distinct because it is the only biography of a Persian, and though Plutarch had not paired it with another *Life*, it abounds with internal comparisons on a smaller scale, and it is the work in which eunuchs play the most decisive role. Why Plutarch decided to write a biography of Artaxerxes is not known, and it is unclear when he composed it. Eran Almagor suggests that Plutarch may have been inspired by the anecdote about Stateira's murder at the hands of Parysatis in Cornelius Nepos (*De reg. ex. gent.* 1.4).¹⁰⁹ Among Plutarch's *Lives*, *Artaxerxes* is one of the least popular, perhaps precisely because it is the only biography of a "barbarian," as Almagor suggests.¹¹⁰ Thematically it can be compared to *Demetrius-Antony*, at least as far as the hero's relationships with women is concerned, and it can probably be dated to a late stage of productivity.¹¹¹ The prominence of women and eunuchs makes sense in this regard, since Plutarch's most penetrating works on women and the feminine, those dedicated to Clea and *On Love*, belong to this stage of his life as well. Moreover, *Artaxerxes* shows the entanglement of gender and other forms of difference; the focus on barbarian otherness cannot be separated

from the focus on effeminate vice without compromising the moral texture of the work.

Plutarch, in accordance with the Greek tradition which figured Persia as the perennial enemy against which Greek civilization guarded, often relied on stereotypes to characterize barbarians as dissolved in luxury and/or savage and cruel. Two terms in particular exemplify this attitude: *thumos* and *malakia*. These characteristics are also peculiar to women, and thus the figure of the passionate barbarian is necessarily emasculate.¹¹² The Persians are characterized both as bold and uninhibited as well as submissive and slavish.¹¹³ Persians are often foils against whom the moral character of the hero comes into sharp relief.¹¹⁴ All of these themes are present to some extent in *Artaxerxes*, where Parysatis especially is described with *thumos*-compounds (*baruthumos*, *thumosophos*) and Artaxerxes' masculinity is questioned through the (mis)application of *malakia*-phrases. Submission to women is another common theme that looms large in the biography (cf. *Ad princ. in.* 780c). Carmen Soares argues that the characterization of Artaxerxes is based on his relationship with his close relatives, in particular Parysatis, Stateira and Cyrus.¹¹⁵ None of the principal actors in the narrative initially appear to be typical subjects. We have two Persian princes contending for the throne, two barbarian women in direct conflict, and a number of eunuchs acting on both sides. These are not isolated themes in Plutarchan biography, but they do appear in a unique context in this *Life*. Ultimately, *Artaxerxes* appears as an examination of the particular ways in which virtue and vice are dependent not just on the relation of the self to itself, but also to others. Gendered characterizations are crucial to the moral texture of the biography.

Artaxerxes does not, however, simply portray the Persian king in a negative light as a paradigm of barbarian vice, nor is he an unequivocally positive paradigm of Hellenic virtue. Instead, Plutarch presents the reader with a series of contrasts that

illuminate the peculiar ways in which virtue and vice are revealed and concealed depending on circumstance, highlighting the perils of ignorance along the way.¹¹⁶ What is especially threatening about Artaxerxes is his instability, the drastic change he undergoes as a ruler which threatens to (and at times does) subvert the natural order of things.¹¹⁷ Pelling has argued that there is a regular pattern to the moralization in the *Parallel Lives*, the variations are due to individual natures.¹¹⁸ Despite these differences, however, virtue often appears to be very similar when abstracted—justice, wisdom and temperance are universals that differ only on account of context.¹¹⁹ Kostas Vlassopoulos argues that the figure of the Persian can be used to explore issues about the universality of some experiences, like war, courage, death and family, as well as questions about morality and identity.¹²⁰ The polarity between Greek and Persian encompasses a whole range of modes of being which are often fluid.

Artaxerxes plays on this notion of the unity of virtue by emphasizing its dependence on culture, context and upbringing. The context here is decidedly oriental, but the biography also intersects with a number of other biographies, so that the broad comparison between Greek and Persian is subtly embedded within the whole network of *Lives*. Plutarch's account of Themistocles' meeting with Artaxerxes emphasizes this cultural difference and exchange (*Them.* 27–29).¹²¹ Sometimes contact with barbarians initiate a change in character, as in the case of Timagoras and more broadly in the *Life* of Alexander.¹²² Other Greeks that appear in the narrative further complicate the picture; Clearchus is more concerned for his safety than Cyrus' success (8.3), the Peace of Antalcidas and the allegiance of Conon is treachery against the Greeks (21.1–22.3, cf. *Ages.* 23.1, *Pel.* 30.4), the restraint of Pelopidas directly contrasts with the submissiveness of Ismenias and the orientalization of Timagoras (*Art.* 22.4–6, cf. *Pel.* 30.3–7). Almagor argues that these associations raise issues of activity and passivity

in which Artaxerxes comes off the worse.¹²³ Yet the Greeks do not all appear blameless either, and the contradictions in the text are left to the reader to resolve.

Artaxerxes II Memnon was one of four sons born to Darius II and Parysatis (*Art.* 1.1) and much of the action in the early chapters of the biography is framed through his conflict for the kingship with his younger brother Cyrus, who was favored by their mother (2.2).¹²⁴ It is in contrast to the violent (*sphodros, entonos*) disposition of Cyrus that Artaxerxes is at first characterized as being gentler (*praos, malakōteros*) by nature. Parysatis' attempts to have Cyrus succeed to the throne failed and Artaxerxes became king after Darius' death (2.3). His wife, says Plutarch, was a beautiful (*kalos*) and excellent (*agathos*) woman whom he married to please his parents and to whom he remained married despite their wishes. Darius had killed her brother and wanted to put her to death as well, but Artaxerxes threw himself at his mother's feet begging for his wife's life (2.1–2). Yazdan Safaee notes that the slew of killings of Stateira's family is often attributed to the cruelty of Parysatis, but that a political rationale for removing threats to Darius' rule is also possible.¹²⁵ Neither scenario is mutually exclusive with the other. At the end of the second chapter we have been introduced to the four major players in the biography, all of them named except for the wife of Artaxerxes, who nevertheless is given the most flattering characterization. When she reenters the narrative at 5.3, it is as a beloved of the common folk. Finally given a name, Plutarch says that Stateira's carriage always had its curtains drawn up so that the women could approach and greet her as their queen.¹²⁶

Eran Almagor argues that Plutarch tells more than one story simultaneously in *Artaxerxes*.¹²⁷ These narratives weave in and out of one another as characters come and go and as circumstances change. The result is a stress on the interconnectedness of persons and the effect of their actions and characters on one another. Plutarch emphasizes Parysatis' dedication to Cyrus by describing

her efforts to save his life after he was accused of plotting to kill Artaxerxes:

But now, as he was about to be put to death, his mother clasped him in her arms, twined her tresses about him, pressed his neck against her own, and by much lamentation and entreaty prevailed upon the king to spare him, and sent him back to the sea-coast. Here he was not satisfied with the office assigned to him, nor mindful of his release, but only of his arrest; and his anger made him more eager than before to secure the kingdom (*Art.* 3.5).¹²⁸

At first, Cyrus and Parysatis are characterized in tandem, giving the reader the impression that they are co-dependent and co-conspirators in a plot that is only beginning to unfold. Next, we are told that Cyrus may have revolted because his allowance was too low for his daily meals, which Plutarch thinks is absurd, since he had full access to his mother's wealth, and besides that he had enough money to assemble groups of mercenaries in preparation to take on his brother (4.1).¹²⁹

At court, Parysatis worked to ease Artaxerxes' suspicions while Cyrus himself pretended to submit to his rule, and Artaxerxes was prone to procrastination and took no action at first.¹³⁰ Safaee is correct in commenting that Plutarch presents the Persian court as under the control of Parysatis and Stateira.¹³¹ Indeed, the initial mildness of Artaxerxes increasingly reveals itself to be weakness and inaction. Throughout the *Life*, it is not at all clear who is in control of affairs, though the impression is one of female domination and male submission, which has a destabilizing effect on Artaxerxes' character. The biography abounds with misidentifications and blurred lines that subtly shift the categories of identification within the framework of Plutarch's ethics. We have, then, two barbarian princes, one a king and the other his jealous brother, two barbarian queens, one stereotypically cruel and overbearing and the other

virtuous, and a number of named eunuchs carrying out the orders of members of the royal court.

Brothers

In the first part of the biography, Artaxerxes and Cyrus are characterized as two very different men. In his dealings with others, at least in the beginning, Artaxerxes was kind, generous and agreeable (4.2–3). Several anecdotes in chapter 5 demonstrate his goodwill towards others. One, in which he gives his torn coat to Teribazus but forbids him to wear it is almost comical in its resolution, because of course the man can't resist. Not only did he put on the coat, he added to it "golden necklaces and women's ornaments of royal splendor," and the king jokingly gave him permission to wear his trinkets as a woman and the coat as a madman (5.2). Because of this gentleness, some men thought Artaxerxes didn't have the *phronēma* and *philotimia* needed to run the state's affairs, and that Cyrus would be able to manage it better (6.1).¹³² Plutarch himself doesn't dispute this claim, he merely offers it to the reader for their consideration. Accordingly, Cyrus recruited the Spartans to his cause by characterizing himself as a philosopher and ruler while denouncing Artaxerxes as cowardly and effeminate (*deilia kai malakia*) (6.3).¹³³ Artaxerxes would later make the same charge of *deilia kai malakia* against a Mede who had defected to Cyrus during the battle and returned after he fell. As punishment, the man was ordered to carry a naked prostitute on his shoulders through the agora for a full day (14.2), revealing the emasculation and humiliation inherent in the accusation of *malakia*.

We are soon launched into the thick of the decisive battle at Cunaxa between Cyrus and Artaxerxes (*Art.* 7.1ff). Plutarch declines to relate the details of the battle itself, since Xenophon had already given a vivid account of it,¹³⁴ and spends some time speculating on the cause of the outcome of the battle and how it might have been different. This is yet another device through which to characterize

Cyrus, who had against his better judgment allowed Clearchus to array his Greek mercenaries where he would be safe and not where they would most benefit Cyrus' cause (8.7).¹³⁵ In the midst of the battle, Cyrus faces the Cadusian commander Artagerses, who reproaches him for disgracing the name of the great Cyrus who was his grandfather. He calls Cyrus the most unjust (*adikos*) and senseless (*aphrōn*) of men pursuing an evil cause against his own brother, who has a million servants that are better men than him (9.2). These servants will have a role of their own to play as the narrative progresses, but at this point it is worth noting that Cyrus is very much the antagonist. The references to the spiritedness (*thumos*) of his horse(s), which he cannot control (9.1, 11.2), can be read as a reference to the state of his soul in light of his temper, which is what ultimately causes his downfall; Cyrus dispatches of Artagerses quickly but remains incensed, recklessly charging towards Artaxerxes, who hits him with a spear (10.1–2).¹³⁶ In an alternative version, he injures Artaxerxes and exalts in his victory only to be laid low by a bystander named Mithridates (11.3–4). As he tries to recover from a blow to the temple with the help of a group of eunuchs in his service, he is hit from behind by a poor (*kakobios*, *aporos*) Cadusian man who recognized him by his purple robes; Artaxerxes wore white (11.5). And just like that, Cyrus is dead.

The charge of effeminate cowardice with which Cyrus tried to delegitimize Artaxerxes, and Artaxerxes in turn the unnamed Mede, comes back to haunt the victor in his final expedition against the Cadusians, a warlike and courageous (*thumoeides*) people (24.1). This comes after Artaxerxes' marriage to his daughter, at which point he had utterly lost control of his passions (23.2–3). The episode marks the return of Teribazus, whose fortunes often changed but who nonetheless possessed *andragathia* (24.2, 27.5). This man—who had been emasculated by luxury earlier in the *Life*, but whose character now appears excellent in contrast with the king—saves the Persians from a terrible plight in a hostile country by negotiating a peace with the Cadusian kings (24.3). Like Antony,

who had out of necessity given up his luxurious way of life on the Parthian expedition (*Ant.* 45.5), Artaxerxes gives up the royal banquet and endures the toils and hardship of the march “like an ordinary soldier” (*Art.* 24.6).¹³⁷ Indeed, Antony had compared himself with the Persian kings at the outset of that expedition (*Ant.* 37.1). Here we see that emasculation is not simply a condition of the body, but a state of mind:

And the king now made it plain that cowardice and effeminacy (*deilia kai malakia*) are not always due to luxury (*truphē*) and extravagance (*poluteleia*), as most people suppose, but to a base (*mochthēras*) and ignoble (*aggenos*) nature under the sway of evil doctrines (*Art.* 24.5, cf. *Ant.* 17.3).

Plutarch is never explicit about the evil doctrines that caused Artaxerxes’ descent, although it’s worth noting that at this point he was completely under the influence of his mother, as Antony had submitted to his passion for Cleopatra (*Ant.* 37.4). When he arrives home, he immediately starts executing some of his highest officials on the suspicion that they were plotting against him. Earlier, of course, that suspicion was proven right by Cyrus’ attempt to overthrow him with the help of Parysatis. The *praos* assigned to him at the start of the life has dissipated and he is finally revealed as a coward (*deilos*) and a tyrant ruled by anger and fear (25.3).¹³⁸ His mildness now appears as an aversion to conflict, a fatal weakness for a king, which ultimately makes way for the cruel and paranoid nature that lies beneath the surface. Moreover, Artaxerxes’ greatest flaw is his ignorance (*agnoia*) of what the women in his court are doing; he doesn’t suspect that his daughter might be plotting against him to raise his son Ochus to the throne (26.2, cf. *Ant.* 24.6, 43.3), just as he hadn’t suspected his mother would help Cyrus rally against him or murder his wife. His aversion to conflict makes him blind to the politics that surrounds him, while the women take control of the affairs of the court.

Queens

Running in parallel to and succeeding the conflict between Cyrus and Artaxerxes is the animosity between Parysatis and Stateira. Of the latter we hear very little at first, apart from a brief note about her excellence; *kalos* and *agathos* are unambiguously positive terms. Parysatis, on the other hand, has a firm presence from the outset on account of her relationship with Cyrus, and after his death she continues to play a role at the royal court. Plutarch characterizes her as naturally clever (*thumosophos*), devious and power hungry:

... she frequently played at dice with the king before the war, and after the war was over and she had been reconciled with him, she did not try to avoid his friendly overtures, but actually joined in his diversions, and took part in his amours by her cooperation and presence, and, in a word, left very little of the king for Stateira's use and society. For she hated Stateira above all others, and wished to have the chief influence herself (*Art.* 17.2, cf. *Ant.* 53.3).¹³⁹

According to Soares, the relationship between the two women is an example of failed expectations; one might expect Parysatis to be positively inclined towards Stateira given that she had saved her life early in the narrative, but that turns out to be false.¹⁴⁰ The contrast between Parysatis and Stateira recalls that between Cleopatra and Octavia in *Antony*, although the dynamics are different. While Artaxerxes is caught between mother and wife, Antony is caught between a Roman wife and an Egyptian one.¹⁴¹ The war between the brothers is blamed on Parysatis (6.4), who was annoyed at Stateira's distress, and for questioning why she had broken the promises she made when she begged for Cyrus' life (*Art.* 6.5). Like Stateira, Octavia lamented the war between Antony and Octavian because she feared she might be seen as one of the causes, as Helen was the cause of the Trojan War (*Ant.* 57.3).¹⁴² But of course, it is Cleopatra who is to blame for the animosity

between Antony and Octavian (*Ant.* 58.2, 60.1). *Artaxerxes* recalls the common trope that virtuous women, like Volumnia, Hersilia, Octavia and Stateira, play the role of peacekeepers, while others, like Parysatis, Cleopatra, Olympias and Aspasia (*Per.* 24.1) instead come across as instigators. The women in the latter category are more often than not foreigners, although the distinction is not absolute, and indeed in *Artaxerxes* is moot. It is this fluidity in the categories of identification that encourages assimilation and reifies the moral values of the text.

Plutarch states more than once that Parysatis hated Stateira, being naturally harsh (*baruthumos*) and savage (*barbaros*), and plotted to kill her (*Art.* 6.5–6, 17.2, 19.1). Like Parysatis, Cleopatra is identified with the other in multiple ways—the sly accusations of witchcraft, her knowledge of barbarian languages, her luxurious lifestyle (*Ant.* 25.4, 26.1–4, 27.2). As a result, Octavian declared war not on Antony but on her and the enslaved people around her, Charmion and the hairdresser (*koureutria*) Iras, and the eunuchs Mardion and Pothinus, whose authority exceeded even that of Antony (*Ant.* 60.1). Both *Antony* and *Artaxerxes* problematize the hero's relationship with women and others in ways that destabilize the boundaries of identification, and the influence those others have over political matters often propels the narrative forward. Parysatis, like Cleopatra, therefore appears as a woman who is unduly interested in exercising authority and willing to manipulate men to whom she should be subject in order to get her way. In keeping with her characterization in the *Life*, Plutarch adds her to his list of kings and commanders along with Semiramis (*Apophth. reg.* 174a).¹⁴³ They are the only two women included in this collection, which furthers the impression that their power was a peculiar characteristic of barbarian women.

Parysatis is also characterized as stereotypically cruel, a trait often assigned to Persians (cf. *Ages.* 14.2, *Mulier. virt.* 263a–b), and at least once also to Cleopatra, who tested her poisons on prisoners and watched the trials herself (*Ant.* 71.4).¹⁴⁴ The Carian

man who boasts that he killed Cyrus is condemned to death by Artaxerxes and handed over to Parysatis at her request. She has the executioners rack him on the wheel for ten days, gouge out his eyes, and finally drop molten brass in his ears until he died (*Art.* 14.5). This is the first, but not the last, instance of torture at Parysatis' hands.¹⁴⁵ According to Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, royal women were responsible for meting out punishment to eunuchs, the king rarely did so himself.¹⁴⁶ The death of Mithridates, while technically ordered by Artaxerxes, is twice assigned to Parysatis' need for vengeance against the killers of her beloved Cyrus. In the first place it is *her* eunuch, Sparamizes, who relays Mithridates' boast about killing Cyrus to her, and she then reports it to the king, who orders his death by the torture of the boats. Plutarch gives a detailed account of what this entails (16.2–4), and it is truly horrifying. Suffice to say it took a full 17 days for Mithridates to expire.

With this done, says Plutarch, only one mark remained for the vengeance of Parysatis, the eunuch Masabates, who had cut off the head and right hand of Cyrus in accordance with Persian custom (13.2, 17.1). Almagor notes that this episode represents a turning point for Artaxerxes, whose character continues to deteriorate from this point onwards.¹⁴⁷ For Plutarch, his mother's interference and the loss of his wife is a crucial factor in this transformation. Artaxerxes appears here as the passive subject of his mother's agency, which Almagor sees as a representation of several "what ifs," an effective representation of multiple different possibilities.¹⁴⁸ That may be true, and it certainly is an attractive hypothesis. It is not, however, mutually exclusive with the possibility that Plutarch presented these different versions of events as reflections on the character of Artaxerxes, around whom the distinction between Greek and barbarian, man and woman, active and passive congeals and dissipates.

The final mark for the vengeance of Parysatis is the object of a devious scheme, since Masabates was Artaxerxes' eunuch and

therefore out of her reach (*Art.* 17.1). Plutarch represents her as carrying out her plot with cunning, by intentionally losing a game of dice against the king and then pretending to want a second go at it. In the first round they play for money, which she happily pays upon her loss. In the second round, however, she raises the stakes by suggesting they play for a eunuch, to which Artaxerxes agrees. Both got to exempt five of their most trusted men, but the rest were fair game. Masabates was unlucky enough not to be among those chosen for exemption, and so was handed over to Parysatis upon her victory (17.3–4). Artaxerxes, ignorant as ever of the plot surrounding him, had not even so much as suspected what she had planned until she handed Masabates over to the executioners to be flayed alive. In response to his anger, she laughs mockingly and calls him a simpleton (*hēdus*), a word coincidentally also applied to Antony specifically in the context of his susceptibility to Cleopatra's charms (*Ant.* 25.2, cf. 24.6). In both cases Plutarch implies a level of naivety unsuited to kings and generals which makes them vulnerable to female domination.

This episode illustrates yet again just how weak the character of Artaxerxes was, so that the stronger personalities of the women at court overshadow him. After his defeat on account of Parysatis' scheme, he submits to the will of his mother and keeps quiet, while Stateira openly opposes her and voices her anger that she was savagely and lawlessly (*ōmōs kai paranomōs*) putting to death eunuchs and other men who were faithful to the king (*Art.* 17.6).¹⁴⁹ Artaxerxes is pulled to and fro between his wife and his mother; he kills Tissaphernes because his mother condoned it (23.1) and at one point, Parysatis persuaded him not to put Clearchus (who had fought beside Cyrus) to death, only for Stateira to convince him otherwise, leading to the execution of all but one of the generals (18.3). Plutarch presents this as one possible reason why Parysatis wanted to kill Stateira, though he thinks it unlikely that she would have killed the king's lawful wife and the mother of his children for the sake of Clearchus. Instead, he considers the murder of Stateira

the result of jealousy, the cause of which he describes in *Advice*, where the hostile attitude of the groom's mother to her daughter-in-law is considered the natural consequence of her motherly love:

In Leptis, a city of Africa, it is an inherited custom for the bride, on the day after her marriage, to send to the mother of the bridegroom and ask for a pot. The latter does not give it, and also declares that she has none, her purpose being that the bride may from the outset realize the stepmother's attitude in her mother-in-law, and, in the event of some harsher incident later on, may not feel indignant or resentful. A wife ought to take cognizance of this hostility, and try to cure the cause of it, which is the mother's jealousy of the bride as the object of her son's affection. The one way to cure this trouble is to create an affection for herself personally on the part of her husband, and at the same time not to divert or lessen his affection for his mother (*Conj. praec.* 143a–b).¹⁵⁰

This passage may as well be directly applicable to Stateira and Parysatis, and if read that way diverts some of the blame to Stateira, who had not, at least according to Plutarch's account, made any attempts to appease her mother-in-law. Safaee notes that Stateira had her own reputation for cruelty and vengeance, though there is very little of this in Plutarch's *Artaxerxes*.¹⁵¹ It is unlikely that Plutarch was unaware of this view of Stateira, since he relied on Ctesias as one of his sources while writing the biography. His portrait of Artaxerxes' wife may therefore be muted out of the necessity to provide a counterbalance for the cruelty and ambition of his mother. As for Parysatis, she

saw that her own influence with the king was based on feelings of respect and honor, while that of Stateira was grounded fast and strong in love and confidence; she therefore plotted against her life and played for what she thought the highest stake (*Art.* 19.1, cf. *Ant.* 57.1).

Accordingly, there was a great deal of mistrust between the two women, though they eventually resumed meeting and dining together. On account of their fear and caution, they always ate from the same dishes. Even so, Parysatis somehow managed to poison Stateira without damaging herself. Her death is characteristically painful, and Artaxerxes suspects his mother's hand in it because he knew what kind of person she was (19.2–4).¹⁵² With Stateira gone, the way is cleared for Parysatis to exercise her authority over her son.

Parysatis' exile in Babylon for the murder of Stateira (19.6) doesn't last long before Artaxerxes summons her back to court (23.1). Here, she is described as possessing *nous* and *phronēma*, but crucially, Plutarch attributes this evaluation to Artaxerxes, who as we know by now knows nothing. We might, then, on the grounds that Artaxerxes himself was an unreliable judge of character, especially when it comes to his mother, conclude that his assessment of her ability and motives was not entirely accurate. For her part, Parysatis managed to achieve all of her goals by manipulating the king. Because of the influence she now had with him, with nobody to challenge her, she convinced Artaxerxes to marry his daughter Atossa, with whom he was desperately in love (*erōntos erōta deinon*), by showing her more affection than before and praising her beauty and her character (23.2–3). Plutarch clearly disapproves of this marriage on the grounds that it was against the laws of the Greeks, made as if Artaxerxes himself was the divine arbitrator between good and evil, and by it indicates that Artaxerxes had finally lost the battle against his passions (*pathos*).¹⁵³ For this reason, Plutarch is willing to entertain the rumors that he married another of his daughters, Amestris, as well (27.4). True to stereotype, Atossa eventually conspires with her brother to overthrow Artaxerxes, and though there is not much else said about her character, it is easy to read yet another domineering woman between the lines.

Eunuchs and others

Plutarch had employed a number of devices to lower Cyrus to servility, from the speech by Artagerses to the help of eunuchs and finally the fatal blow by a man of low status. This view of Persian royalty is common in his work, which, as Almagor notes, often depicts them as “pawns in the hands of eunuchs.”¹⁵⁴ Henceforth, Artaxerxes has to contend not with his brother, but his mother and her servants. Eunuchs and enslaved persons come to the fore as paradigms of servility, playing the role designated for them by their masters and even dying in their stead if necessary, or as ambitious and treacherous conspirators. Kuefler comments that the distinction between virtue and vice which is based on sexual difference is destabilized in the figure of the eunuch, as it is also in this *Life* in the figure of the barbarian.¹⁵⁵ Their virtue is dependent on their fulfillment of their social role, their servitude a necessary result of their bodily form. And yet it appears that the fact of their bodies itself is multiple—some eunuchs are born intersex, others are castrated later—and often contradicts the actions they take, so that it is difficult to draw a causal link between body and submission. Eunuchs are more often than not active political players, and as such are treated as dangerous aberrations in Plutarch’s work.

Eunuchs, like other enslaved persons, are sometimes used as currency, as in the case of Masabates (*Art.* 17) and the gifts bestowed on a poor man by Mithridates after his daughter became the king’s concubine (*Pomp.* 36.4). In other *Lives*, a similar view of the enslaved person is evident. In *Demetrius*, Lysimachus considers being compared to a eunuch an insult (25.5). In *Antony*, the eunuchs Mardion and Pothinus are portrayed as controlling the Egyptian government (60.1). Pothinus in particular is characterized as scheming behind the scenes; he may be the same man who was responsible for the death of Pompey (*Pomp.* 77.2). Before Cleopatra, he also controlled her brother Ptolemy, at one point also plotting against Caesar (*Caes.* 48.3–5). This, however, may have been a

different eunuch by the same name, since Caesar is said to have put him to death after a loyal enslaved man informed him of the plot (*Caes.* 49.2–3, *Pomp.* 80.5). Loyalty is a key characteristic of the enslaved; Iras and Charmion die with Cleopatra, making sure she looks dignified in death and dies like a queen with her crown on her head (*Ant.* 85.3–4). Having just declared himself inferior to Cleopatra, Antony is further emasculated by the actions of his servant Eros, who kills himself rather than smiting his master (76.3–4). Brutus, on the other hand, makes away with himself and does it properly, unlike Antony's botched job (*Brut.* 52.4–5).¹⁵⁶ The band of enslaved bodyguards surrounding Marius, slaughtering everyone in their way, is contrasted with the loyalty of Cornutus' enslaved servants, who disguised a nearby corpse as him and so helped him escape Marius' wrath (*Mar.* 43.3–6). Plutarch praises their conduct as an act of loyalty. The characterization of enslaved persons therefore tends to go one of two ways, they are either loyal servants or treacherous and ambitious beyond their means.

As Plutarch points out in *The Fortune or Virtue of Alexander*, even a woman or a child can transfer the gifts of power, wealth and kingship, but it takes a virtuous man to sustain his authority (337e, cf. *De cap. ex inim. ut.* 92e). Power can pass through such persons, but it must devolve on a ("real") man to maintain legitimacy. As a result, eunuchs are often content to raise kings as pawns instead of seizing power for themselves; their inability to produce heirs is a significant obstacle to any claim to power. Artaxerxes' successor, Ochus, raised to the throne by Atossa, was a cruel and savage king, and as a result was poisoned by the eunuch Bagoas, who bestowed the kingship on his half-brother Oarses (*Art.* 26.1, *De Alex. fort. virt.* 337e).¹⁵⁷ According to Diodorus, Bagoas himself was quite violent and ambitious and had removed Ochus so that he may have control over the young king Oarses. This didn't work out well for him, and so he poisoned Oarses and his children as well and placed Darius III on the throne, hoping that he would be able to control him. This too didn't go as planned, and Diodorus points

out the moral of the fact that Bagoas attempted to poison Darius but was outsmarted and died of his own medicine (Diod. 17.5.3–6, cf. Arr. *Anab.* 2.14.5–6).¹⁵⁸ Eunuchs may act as the gatekeepers and referrals of power, but cannot keep that power themselves. Most of them are attached to the Persians or the Egyptians, and in fact Plutarch rarely mentions them in other contexts (cf. *De ex.* 599e). His friend Favorinus of Arles, one of the most famous eunuchs in antiquity, is not identified as such anywhere in his extant work, though Favorinus himself made much of his intersexuality and his detractors used it to delegitimize him.¹⁵⁹ It might be that it simply didn't matter to Plutarch, but more likely the fact that Favorinus of Arles was a eunuch would have complicated and perhaps jeopardized the role he takes on in those works where he does appear.

Alexander provides another example of the typical role of eunuchs. Alexander had shortly before captured Darius' wife, mother and daughters, and had treated them with all due respect (21.1–4). Darius' wife Stateira died in childbirth not long afterwards, and a eunuch who had been captured with them, Tereios, escaped Alexander's camp to bring the news to Darius (30.1). In the first place, Alexander is characterized as kind and humane through his treatment of the women (21.2–3), and their presence is a test of his *enkrateia* and *sōphrosunē* which he passes with flying colors (21.4–5). Tereios relays all these things to Darius, speaking of Alexander's *sōphrosunē*, *enkrateia*, *megalospsuchia* and *andreia*, and encouraging him to consider himself lucky that he had been conquered by a man so far superior to human nature (*anthrōpinos phusis*) (30.5–6). When Mithridates was fleeing from the chaos in his camp after his defeat at the hands of the Romans under Lucullus, the eunuch Ptolemaeus gave him his horse (*Luc.* 17.4), and he sent the eunuch Bacchides to kill his sisters and wives, rather than have them fall into the hands of the enemy (18.2). The role of the eunuch as messenger is also quite common in Plutarch, and more often than not these eunuchs are named.¹⁶⁰

No eunuchs appear in the narrative before the death of Cyrus, but they are abundant in the latter part of *Artaxerxes*, where they appear as agents for the opposing sides. Of this first group of eunuchs mourning over Cyrus' body, only Pariscas is named (12.1). Shortly afterwards, another eunuch, Satibarzanes, appears on the scene seeking out water for the wounded Artaxerxes, finding only the vile water carried by a man who was in the same group of poor men who had killed Cyrus (12.3). Artaxerxes drank the dirty water without complaint, and vowed to find the man who supplied it (12.4). He did, and raised him up to a position of honor and wealth (14.1). At first, then, he appears as a man of honor, but that is short-lived. Because Artaxerxes wanted everyone to believe he himself had killed Cyrus, he tried to persuade Mithridates and the Carian man by his gifts not to claim Cyrus' death for themselves. The Carian man, who will remain unnamed, must have been corrupted by his sudden good fortune to believe that he had been robbed of glory, and so went about telling everyone that it was he who had killed Cyrus (14.4). For his efforts, he would have lost his head, had Parysatis not intervened to give him a far worse fate.

Mithridates at first had the good sense to keep to himself, content with being the man who had brought Cyrus' horse's saddle to Artaxerxes, until he was invited to a banquet where Artaxerxes' and Parysatis' eunuchs were present, to which he went decked out in the gold and clothing he had received as gifts for his silence. Sparamizes, Parysatis' main man, who is characterized as a sly sort of fellow, remarked on the splendor of these luxuries, to which Mithridates, being somewhat drunk, replied that he ought to have received more for his services on the day of the battle where Cyrus fell. Of course, Sparamizes—already in the know—asked him to explain what was so great about finding a horse's trappings, knowing full well that “there is truth in wine” and wanting to expose Mithridates in full view of everyone present. At this, Mithridates lost all self-control and declared to everyone that it was he who had given Cyrus the fatal blow (15.1–4). By the guests'

reaction, Plutarch indicates that he, like the Carian man, will not have a happy ending, and of course Sparamizes reports the whole thing to Parysatis.

A number of other enslaved persons appear throughout *Artaxerxes*. Plutarch appears particularly sensitive to the role of such people in the grand drama of the royal court. When he describes Parysatis' plot to murder Stateira, he mentions that she had help from a maid named Gigis, who had great influence with her and assisted her in preparing the poison. He also records the diverging testimony of Ctesias, who said the maid knew of the plot but was involved against her will. The man who administered the poison—no doubt also enslaved—was named Melantas, or perhaps Belitaras (*Art.* 19.2). When Artaxerxes sets out to discover the truth behind his wife's death, it's Parysatis' attendants that are arrested and tortured. Even Gigis, who is under her protection, is eventually caught and executed. The description of her death highlights again the cruelty of the Persians and concurrently the weakness of the king—indeed the cruelty here *is* his weakness—who refused to harm his mother and instead sent her off to Babylon (19.5–6). Llewellyn-Jones describes Artaxerxes' revenge on his mother and her servants for the murder of Stateira as “typically masculine.”¹⁶¹ However, these actions evince a lack of wisdom in Artaxerxes which emasculates him; he cannot properly punish the one person most at fault for the death of his wife, and shortly afterwards submits to her authority, which is *exactly* what Parysatis had intended.

At the same time, Plutarch blurs the line between Greek and barbarian by making vice universal. The Greeks that appear in *Artaxerxes* are susceptible to the luxury of the Persians, and those that resist, like Agesilaus and Pelopidas, have *Lives* dedicated to their individual moral strengths and weaknesses. The description of Timagoras, who was executed by the Athenians for taking bribes, is particularly elucidating. Plutarch not only lists the luxuries bestowed on him by the Persian king, related also in *Pelopidas* 30.6, but adds the detail that he was carried down to the coast

by bearers because he was *malakōs*—weak, or as the implication could be read, effeminate and effeminized by his contact with the Persians (*Art.* 22.5–6).¹⁶² *Truphē* and *malakia* may be an especially Persian trait, but it can infect Greeks and Romans just as easily. The *Life* of Artaxerxes not only demonstrates barbarian vices, but the fluidity of categories of identification which are problematized by their connections to one another. This is exemplified in the character of Teribazus, who “was at no time of a stable disposition, but uneven and precipitate” (*Art.* 27.5).¹⁶³ Artaxerxes himself is also an unstable character, as capable of mildness as of extreme cruelty and paranoia.

It appears, then, that Plutarch is making a point about humans’ essential similarity which is crucial for his psychagogic program. In his exposition of the myth of Isis and Osiris, he reminds Clea that these ancient ideas which have much in common with the Platonic view he himself puts forth, have circulated among barbarians and Greeks (369b).¹⁶⁴ Thus Judith Mossman argues that Plutarch sometimes inverts expectations about Greeks and barbarians (or Romans) in his work, problematizing the moral status of both.¹⁶⁵ A basic, actionable understanding of human nature is not a purely Greek phenomenon; it is only that the Greeks have perfected their interpretation and application thereof. All people have the capacity for virtue or vice in their souls, differentiated only by external factors that are physical, geographical and cultural. Virtue acquires its texture on account of the varying natures, customs, temperament, nurture and mode of living of particular persons (*Mulier. virt.* 243c, cf. *De sera* 551d). Some of these characteristics are inborn and unchanging while others are not. Domineering women are not always barbarians, but being domineering is characteristic of barbarian women, and even barbarian women (like Stateira) can be virtuous. At least in Plutarch’s world, women do not suddenly become men (cf. *De Stoic. rep.* 1058b–c) and one does not simply change one’s ethnicity, but a good Greek education can be had by anyone who can afford a good tutor and any person

can choose to live modestly and refrain from excess.¹⁶⁶ Choosing to follow a philosophical mode of life can, in fact, negate those other immutable facts of life, at least to some extent and only at the level of soul if it is in harmony with the body. In essence, then, virtue is exercised by submitting to one's role in society, and from that point of view, anyone can achieve it. Plutarch viewed character as largely predetermined, as Russell had argued, even as something that can be inherited, but not as a fixed and unchanging aspect of the self.¹⁶⁷ In fact, Duff notes that the *Lives* ought to instill a desire for imitation in the reader, and in this way can effect a change in their character.¹⁶⁸ A proper philosophical education can bring out natural character traits, but it can also change the mode of being of persons despite their natural weaknesses; this is especially the case for women. Were this not the case, the psychagogic program would be quite pointless. Elsewhere in the *Lives*, then, we can observe the parallels between expressions of gender and virtue or vice extended beyond this dichotomy, so that the Greek appears barbarian, the man effeminate, the woman masculine and the matrix of domination fully destabilized.

SOFT BOYS: GENDER AND VICE

Duff has argued that Plutarch rarely intervenes in the narratives of the *Lives* with his own editorial comments, and often leaves moral judgment implicit, encouraging the reader to come to their own conclusions.¹⁶⁹ The use of certain vocabulary often serves to guide the reader's response. This is true also of Plutarch's use of gendered concepts, which in conjunction with moral terms often suggest an ethical judgment meant to guide the reader. Such moral concepts do not add any information about the factual basis of a statement, but rather voices the speaker's/author's moral approval or disapproval. Ethical statements are thus first and foremost emotive responses to actions. A.J. Ayer argued that ethical statements are not only emotive, but also hortatory: in one sense they express

feeling about an action, and in another sense they arouse feeling in others about that action. In doing so, the author lets others know that they approve or disapprove of an action, and would like to encourage them to act accordingly.¹⁷⁰ In Plutarch's work, certain groups of concepts form a referential network that links expressions of vice with expressions of gender, thereby acting as a corrective. The clearest example is the network of terms connected to *malakia*, which is often translated as "effeminacy," though there are cases where it signifies instead gentleness or softness in the positive sense. These cases are rarer than the pejorative use and more often applied to inanimate objects and abstract concepts than to people.¹⁷¹ When used of persons in the positive sense, Plutarch tends to use the comparative *malakōteros*, which then functions as an indication of moderation.

Malakia suggests a certain softness of the body and the soul which is womanly, and its application to men is as a result emasculating. This is most explicit at *Fabius Maximus* 8.3, where Fabius' reluctance to attack Hannibal is measured against Minucius' success and brands him as both *malakos* and *anandros* in the eyes of his countrymen (cf. 25.3), and in *Galba*, where the *malakia* and effeminacy (*thēlutēta*) of Otho's body stands in contrast with the boldness of his spirit (25.1).¹⁷² Sertorius leaves Rome for Spain because the opposition to Sulla's advance upon Rome is unsuccessful, partly through the *malakia* and *anandria* of their generals and partly through the treachery of soldiers, who were corrupted by Sulla's own through deceit (*goēteia*), flattery (*kolakeia*) and the promise of money (*Sert.* 6.1–2, *Sull.* 28.2).¹⁷³ These are conditions especially of the spirited part of the soul, which in *Moral Virtue* is explicitly *malakos* and *ametros* (446b).¹⁷⁴ Thus, unlike Cyrus, who cannot control the *thumos* of his horse in battle (*Art.* 9.1, 11.2), Alexander gains Bucephalas because the other men through *apeiria* and *malakia* fail to manage him (*Alex.* 6.2).¹⁷⁵

Other instances of the term indicate a similar moral coloring. Most often, *malakia* is used with *deilia*, *astheneia* and *truphē*, or

with concepts that indicate ignorance and thoughtlessness.¹⁷⁶ Frequently, it creates an opposition between men and women, barbarians and Greeks or Romans, or is linked to tyranny (itself an emasculate form of government) or being a traitor to one's country. In fact, these concepts rarely occur in isolation. The Persians, with their fancy clothing and golden ornaments, have soft (*malakos*) bodies and emasculate (*anandros*) souls on account of their losses, while the Greeks are emboldened by their victories at Marathon and Salamis (*Arist.* 16.4). In barbarians, categories of identification are blurred and gender is revealed as not quite so stable as one might think. Surena, the Parthian commander responsible for Crassus' defeat, has a reputation for *andreia* that contrasts with his effeminate beauty (*tēn thēlutēta tou kallous*), which he compounds by dressing like a Persian, painting his face and parting his hair (*Crass.* 24.2). The resulting attack rips through the Roman ranks, tearing apart their armor and clothing no matter its hardness or softness (*malakia*). In contrast, the Gauls facing Camillus carry swords of inferior metal, so soft that they bend under the onslaught of Roman javelins (*Cam.* 41.4). Earlier, Camillus had returned to military life because the Gauls had taken the Capitol and marched on Ardea, where he was living in exile. Their success not as a result of their own *andreia* but because the Ardean generals were inexperienced (*apeiria*) and effeminate (*malakia*) (22.2–3). The figure of the barbarian is deployed as a site for the problematization of gendered identities; the masculinity of the Romans is unstable and dislocated in the figure of the enemy.

We see, then, that the use of *malakia* occurs within a network of vices that are effeminate, because these are the same faults to which women are thought to be more susceptible. In *Studying Poetry*, Plutarch connects *akolasia*, *anandria*, *truphē*, *malakia* and *gunaikokratia*, comparing them to women's use of potions and magic (*pharmaka kai goēteias*) and creating a contrast with men of sense, who possess *phronimos* and *nous* (20a–c, cf. 33a, 33f, *De adul. amic.* 66c, 69b). Indeed, failure to dominate one's wife

or mistress is a sign of *astheneia* and *malakia* (*Amat.* 753f, *Conj. praec.* 139b)—again with references to being able to control a horse. In *Profiting By One's Enemies*, Plutarch also connects *malakia* with *akolasia*, *truphē* and *thēlutēta* (89e), and in *Keeping Well* with *akrasia* (127f). In *Divine Vengeance*, a number of further vices are linked to effeminacy:

For wickedness is not confident or clear-headed or constant and steadfast in its chosen course—unless, by Heaven, we are to call evildoers wise men of a sort—but wherever the frantic pursuit of wealth (*philoploutia*) and pleasure (*philēdonia*), and wherever unmitigated envy (*phthonos*), in the company of ill will or malice (*dusmeneias ē kakoētheias*), take up their abode, there, on closer view, you will discover superstition (*deisidaimonian*) lurking, with shrinking from effort (*malakian*), cowardice (*deilian*) in the face of death, sudden shifting of purpose, and an empty conceit of the opinion of the world that springs from swollen vanity (*De sera* 556b).

The same connections are made in a number of *Lives*. Of Alcibiades, who is guilty of *truphē*, *poluteleia*, *hubris*, *thēlutēta* and *malakia*, we have already spoken (*Alc.* 16.1). Solon regards the reaction of the people to Peisistratus as ignorant and fearful (*apodeiliōntas*), in contrast with which he considers himself wiser (*sophōteros*) and braver (*andreioteros*). He blames the rise of the tyrant on the thoughtlessness and weakness (*malakia*) of the multitude (*Sol.* 30.3–4).¹⁷⁷ Lucullus' virtues—*andreia*, *epimeleia*, *sunesis* and *dikaiosunē*—makes him great, so that his victories are due to his own ability and not due to the *aphrosunē* and *malakia* of the barbarians in the east (*Luc.* 36.5–7). Indeed, the Parthians managed to lay Crassus low, which is all the more testament to the greatness of Lucullus.

Descent into luxury and effeminacy is a common thread in the *Lives* of the heroes of the Roman republic, some of whom manage to successfully resist the trap and some of whom don't. Coriolanus'

anger is a sign of effeminate weakness (*astheneia kai malakia*) (*Cor.* 15.4), and excessive anger is often the result of *malakia* and *truphē* alongside selfishness (*De cohib. ir.* 461a). Caius Gracchus enters politics because of his aversion to *malakia*, which is here linked to idleness, drinking (wine) and greed (*CG* 1.2). At one point, he would use his mother's temperance, specifically in the sexual sense, as a rebuke against a man accused of *malakia* (*CG* 4.4).¹⁷⁸ This is not the only instance of pederasty being linked to effeminacy, Plutarch makes the same connection in *On Love* (751d) and twice in reference to Cicero (*Cic.* 7.6, *Apophth. Rom.* 204f). Cato the Younger, whose opposition to Sulla is framed as an opposition to the enslavement of Rome, is even more moderate than his brother Caepio, who himself says that compared to Cato he is no better than the men celebrated in Rome for their *truphē* and *malakia* (*Cat. min.* 3.3–6).¹⁷⁹ Here, Cato's *sōphrosunē* is demonstrated by his refusal to wear perfume. Later, his *eutaxia* and *enkrateia* would stand in direct contrast to the *truphē* and *malakia* of his comrades in the war against Spartacus (*Cat. min.* 8.1), who is noted for his Hellenic *phronēma*, *sunesis* and *praos* in the *Life* of Crassus, where the war is related in detail (*Crass.* 8.2). Plutarch makes much of the difficulty the Romans had in this war against Gauls and Thracians and the great losses they suffered before they managed to defeat Spartacus and his army.

What is especially curious about the network of vices linked to *malakia* is the frequency with which these faults are ascribed to men. In fact, while most of these vices are particular faults of women, it is rarely women who are described as *malakos*. Instead, they are characterized as such by way of men who fall into *malakia* and are then compared to women. When women are soft, their bodies are the locus of attention as a natural fact that makes them more susceptible to vice, but when men are soft, it's first and foremost a condition of the soul, a failure to dominate the effeminate and indeterminate parts. Thus the old man who retires from the affairs of the state and lives a life of *apraxia*, *deilia* and

malakia lives like a woman among women (*An seni* 784a, cf. 791d). So too when Marius refuses to engage the Gauls in battle, choosing rather to secure the safety of Italy. His soldiers cannot control their *thumos* and their desire for battle; they grow restless and start wondering whether Marius keeps them locked up in their camp like women because he had discovered in them some cowardice (*anandria*), and finally resolve to take the matter to him directly in a manner befitting free men (*andrōn eleutherōn*) (*Mar.* 16.1–4).

In many of these cases, there is a complexity implied in the relationship between body and soul which is destabilizing—is it that the body softens the soul, or is the soul so corrupt that it softens the body? It appears that the solution goes both ways. Perhaps precisely because all souls are created equal, with the same parts and the same capacities, only to find themselves in unequal bodies with unequal parts, and perhaps precisely because the boundaries between men and women, Greeks, Romans and barbarians, free and enslaved were destabilized during Plutarch's lifetime, there is no simple straightforward divide between the categories that identify people with one another and so too differentiate them. Among all the categories of identification, gender is only one and mutually constitutive of other forms of difference. The *Lives* provide a subtle examination of the way these categories interact with one another and how gendered expression is necessarily an expression of virtue or vice, the goal of which is to draw the reader into an ethical demand and to provide the moral motivation for the approval of that demand. They may be about men on the surface, but they are essentially concerned with the relationships between people, which necessarily includes women and gendered others. The biographies are therefore not just about the virtue or vice of great men, but about an entire underlying ethics of domination and submission that regulates and reifies existing social structures.

CONCLUSION

What man is great in the exercise of power, if folly and wickedness attend him? Take away virtue from the fortunate man and in everything he is petty; in acts of generosity, through parsimony; in hard tasks, through softness; in religion, through superstition; towards the good, through envy; among men, through cowardice; among women, through wantonness.

The Fortune of Alexander 337c

In the previous chapters, I have argued for an understanding of Plutarch's ethical work as a moral-educational program that aims to transform the student's whole self at the level of the soul. This is as evident in his writings on women as it is in the work explicitly aimed at men, and while the goals may be similar, there are marked differences in the expression of virtue for women and men, organized around the fact of their reproductive roles. Moreover, this ethical system necessarily figures the gendered other as vicious. Plutarch's historical sensibilities and traditional values must have made the vast social and cultural differences between the Classical past and the present appear all the more brutal. The submission of women which had seemed so natural to Plato and Aristotle was no longer guaranteed (if indeed it ever had been), and Plutarch often found himself in conversations with women who could challenge him even on the most theoretical aspects of his philosophy. We

know of Clea, but it is not impossible that there were others. Plutarch's views are irreducible to a simple binary. He is a complex thinker who challenges both himself and his readers to deeper understanding. Despite the sexist views evident throughout his work, he clearly also had great respect for these women and their intellectual abilities, a realization which no doubt occasioned a shift in his understanding of the relationship between the sexes. At some point, it might have struck him that the cooperation of women was essential for maintaining the status quo and the best way to attain that is by extending to them only as much privilege as would appease them. His psychagogy is an effort to make his ideal and his reality accord with one another.

For women, the sense of self produced by Plutarch's psychagogy is at its core conjugal and submissive. At its heart, the problem of gender in Plutarch's work is a problem of power in cisheteroconjugal relationships. He assumes that social identity is largely determined by reproductive function, which is itself determined by the state of the soul at the moment of reincarnation and therefore in the Platonic schema necessarily a signifier of proclivity for virtue or vice. Gender, then, is only in part a signification of sex. The instability of the signs of the body poses a significant problem to any theory of direct causation between reproductive difference and gender expressions that can only be resolved if sex is a physical fact and gender a psychic condition tied to the signs of the body. In this framework, gender is the result of the soul's interaction with the body, but these interactions are fluid and sometimes indeterminate. It is the duty of the student to stabilize the relationship between body and soul by working towards achieving virtue, by doing the things that virtuous people do.

Much of Plutarch's work is therefore a response to Plato, who had evidently failed to answer satisfactorily the complex questions about the relationship of the first principles to the soul to the body, about unity in multiplicity, about sameness in difference. Philosophy doesn't offer the subject the tools with which to

conceive of their own difference, it can only provide the tools through which they may perceive similarity of Form and through which the difference of the other is always already constituted as abnormative, as a deviation from what is Real and True. As a solution to this collection of problems, the biological signs of sex are transferred to the soul and anthropomorphized in *On Isis*, while aberrations in physical type and expressions of gender are assigned to a third category of limited validity and contested existence. Within this matrix, masculinity and femininity are mutually constitutive expressions of virtue in constant tension with deviant manliness and effeminacy. These are conditions of the soul that are enacted through the body; the ethical program lays emphasis on the harmony between body and soul, the domination of the masculine and the threat of the gendered other.

Elements of psychagogy can be found in some form or another in every text that I have discussed here, and its core principle—that virtue entails a masculinization of the soul in accordance with the form of the body and is best achieved within the confines of marriage—is everywhere present. Any good Platonist philosophy is grounded in the principles of Truth and Reason, and therefore any good psychagogy needs a theoretical basis from which to argue for the legitimacy of its principles. Plutarch's theoretical enterprise does just that, and in doing so legitimizes the conjugal self and delegitimizes selves that are guided by irreconcilably different moral demands, by figuring the other in terms of oppositionality that designate for it the realms of non-being, instability and change, and viciousness. As a result, the traditional faults of women are universalized; it is not just women who are vicious, and not just men who are virtuous. Instead, gender itself is moralized and imbued with an ethics that encompasses and is encompassed by social status, class, geographical place of origin, language and so forth. The result is a complex matrix of domination reified and reproduced by the fluidity of categories of identification.

While metaphysics provides a religious, ontological and teleological basis for the formation of the self as an ethical subject in opposition to an abstracted other which is somehow both gendered and the absolute absence of gender, the *Lives* provide a concrete form for this abstracted, vicious other—or rather a multiplicity of forms that are unlimited and unlimitable, constantly changing and becoming something else. The gendered other is now barbarian, now Roman, sometimes even Greek, even male, even free. In contrast, the virtuous self (the conjugal self) is stable and relatively unchanging—examples of virtuous women (and to some extent men) in the *Lives* follow a relatively predictable pattern even when allowing for individual natures and the pressures of particular situations,¹ whereas the negative exempla occupy a whole range of positions in society and are embodied and expressed in ways that are often abnormative and non-binary.

For this ethics to be viable, it must be capable of inclusion by virtue of exclusion, it must be *adaptable* in response to the fluidity of gendered identities. This means that an ethics so configured must of necessity must keep admitting *some* others into the fold and continually redefine non-being so as to maintain its epistemological hegemony and exclude threats to the matrix of domination. Assimilation is encouraged. Indeed, Plutarch views the slow march of time as a process of assimilation:

A destined time shall come when it is decreed that Areimanius, engaged in bringing on pestilence and famine, shall ... be utterly annihilated and shall disappear; then shall the earth become a level plain, and there shall be one manner of life and one government for a blessed people who shall all speak one tongue (*De Iside* 370b).

Plutarch's psychagogy promises a practical route to assimilation to the divine, a divinity that is essentially Greek and masculine and merely reflected in the religions and philosophies of other cultures.

Truth is universal, but only the Greeks have properly discerned the nature of reality. He makes this point abundantly clear in his Hellenizing interpretation of Egyptian mythology in *On Isis*. Not only is the divine Greek, it is patriarchal, and for that reason assimilation functions along an axis of submission and domination that privileges the penis and yet is reliant on the womb. It is exactly in this way that Plutarch's women came to be admitted to the hallowed halls of masculine virtue; virtue requires assimilation to the ideal and assent to its ethical demands. Plato's women could sort-of be virtuous, but it was never clear that they could reach the type of masculine virtue which was the *telos* of philosophical inquiry and a requirement for transcendence. This is not true for Plutarch.

The normative expression of gender is therefore also a representation of power and one's place in the matrix of domination. Similarity holds a privileged place in this schema. There's a point at which difference just becomes barely distinguishable difference, where the character is so dissimilar to the audience (that is, the writer, Plutarch) that they can no longer see them as people. At least, not people like them, who are powerful and wealthy and aristocratic and educated and Greco-Roman and in control of "half the known world," by virtue of which they *must* be the norm. I think that point is about three levels of difference down: a privation of reason, of emotion, and finally of appetite. Each point of identification further removes the person from the axes of power until ultimately they are powerless because they are unreal. Their very existence is invalidated. It's not that the audience can't tell exactly why someone is different past this point—although sometimes they might find it very hard to explain what exactly that difference is—it's that at some point they simply no longer (have to) care and just assume that the object is evil because it's different and different because it's evil. It is exactly at this point that categories of identification start to merge into some monolithic other which can be represented

as effeminate and barbarian and ugly and vicious, even if those terms do not represent actual identity or even reality. But there is also danger in the sameness of difference at this level. If you're a foreign/barbarian woman with an immense amount of power (or wealth) over a powerful man you must be vicious, but you're also vicious *because* you're a woman, a barbarian, enslaved. Being gender-different is not simply being vicious—though it certainly is that to a large extent—it is also a threat to society, to existence, a cause of moral and physical decay, a movement towards non-existence.

If, as Duff claims, “morality—virtue and vice—is central to the *Lives*, and must be central to a reading of them,” there can be no justification for the continued marginalization of women as incidental bystanders and minor supporters of great men in Plutarch's biographical work.² It must be acknowledged that Plutarch's interest in women's ethical education in the *Moralia* is reflected in the *Lives*, that women have a similar exemplary function as men, and that their narrative marginality is not just incidental, it is central to that moralistic aim. These women lived parallel lives of their own alongside the men whose deeds Plutarch so vividly narrates. The perspective of the texts is undeniably masculine, focused on the business of war and politics. Women only rarely appear as leaders in these contexts, and when they do, it rarely goes well. But being in the war room is not necessarily a prerequisite for having influence. Many women appear in stereotypical roles as wives or mothers, but their impact on the characterization of the hero (or anti-hero, as the case may be) can be significant. When a woman appears in a *Life*, it's usually because her actions had consequences for the events of the narrative and the characterization of the subject, because the interaction between them was morally significant. It is in these interactions that gender and sex diverge and intersect with other categories of difference to produce the moral texture of the text. The fluidity of categories is the very mechanism

which psychagogy exploits to draw in women and exclude those who cannot or will not approve its ethical demands. Being different is therefore inherently vicious, and this moral condition is an aberration of the soul reflected on the body. In this sense, performing virtue is an expression of gender, and thus gender itself is an ethical demand requiring the approval of the subject.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

- 1 Translations are taken from the Loeb editions of Classical texts unless otherwise noted.
- 2 Plutarch reminds Clea, clearly a well-educated woman, not to take the Egyptian myth related in *On Isis* literally (355b–d). The admonition reads as somewhat patronizing.
- 3 For example, Pomeroy 1975: 181 and 246n108, 155 and 246n17; Brulé 2003: 140; Fantham et al. 1994: 74, 390, 144
- 4 Hägg (2012: 239) notes that the *Moralia* fills 16 Loeb volumes, and there are nearly fifty extant *Lives*.
- 5 Russell 1966a: 139. Richlin (2014: 43 and *passim*) notes the difficulty of reading Plutarch as a historical source.
- 6 See Duff (1999a: 61) on first-person statements in the *Lives*.
- 7 Blomqvist 1997: 74
- 8 Cf. Goessler 1962: 12; Duff 1999a: 5; Whitmarsh 2001: 34; Hägg 2012: 249, and van Hoof 2010: 10. Russell's (1966a) article on Plutarch's moral aims in the *Lives* is excellent and insightful, yet still leaves the impression that Plutarch at a fundamental level did not judge his subjects.
- 9 Duff 1999a: 5
- 10 Beneker 2014: 507
- 11 Walcot 1999: 167
- 12 Duff 1999a: 56
- 13 I. Hadot 1986: 447–49; Glad 1995: 53–54
- 14 Cf. *Adul. amic.* 71f–72b

- 15 Nikolaidis 2008: xii
- 16 Malherbe 1986, 34–40; 1992, 286. Plutarch also frequently refers to *Leg.* 729c (for example, at *Mor.* 14b, 71b and 272c), which says that the most effective way to train the youth is to “practice what you preach.” Plutarch typically uses the passage to stress the importance of living publicly according to the advice one would have others follow.
- 17 See Vernière 1994: 165; Flacelière 1971a, 1971b; Gilibert Barberà 2000: 37. Brenk (1988: 461n15) also gives a bibliography of scholarship on Plutarch’s “feminism.” Antoniou (2020: 67) goes so far as to claim that Plutarch “fought ... against discrimination and injustice,” making him a “proponent of marginalized beings.”
- 18 Blomqvist 1997: 88
- 19 Blomqvist 1997: 78–80 and esp. 82.
- 20 Buszard (2010: 83n3), who also gives a good overview of some of the recent scholarship on Plutarch’s women.
- 21 Buzsard 2010: 112
- 22 Cf. Rist 2001.
- 23 Beneker 2008: 697–689; 2012: 32
- 24 Cf. Beneker 2014.
- 25 Stadter 1999: 173–182, esp. 182
- 26 Foxhall 1999: 143, 145, 150
- 27 Beneker (2008: 689) sums up this tendency quite well: “Some scholars have studied the societal aspect of marriage in Plutarch’s works, raising questions about women’s role in the household, in the community, and especially in their interactions with men... .” For studies of Plutarch’s women, see also Blomqvist 1997; Castellani 2002; Håland 2011; Le Corsu 1981, and McLnerney 2003.
- 28 Cf. Rabinowitz’s (1993: 11) criticism of this tendency in Classical scholarship in general. On love in Plutarch, see Rist 2001; Beneker 2008; Tsouvala 2014; on marriage, see Goessler 1962, 1999; Beneker 2008; Tsouvala 2014, and on sex, see Walcot 1998; Beneker 2014.
- 29 Patterson 1999: 129
- 30 Goessler 1999: 115
- 31 Tsouvala 2014: 191
- 32 Psychagogy aims at leading the student to *eudaimonia* through the practice of philosophy. The concept is also commonly known in German as *Seelenführung* (Rabbow 1954) or *Seelenleitung* (I. Hadot 1969). It is discussed in depth in Chapter 2.
- 33 Richlin 1998: 163–169

- 34 Butler 1990: 124, 138
- 35 Butler 1993
- 36 Irigaray 1974, 1984
- 37 Sedgwick 1990, Witt 2011
- 38 Ward 1996
- 39 In particular *The Second Sex* (de Beauvoir 1949) and *Hipparchia's Choice* (Le Doeuff 1989) offer models for broad engagement with antiquity within feminist frameworks.
- 40 According to Blomqvist (1995: 189), Plutarch adapted Plato's teachings only to the extent that it was necessary and suited his goals. Bonazzi (2012: 139) comments on the crisis in the early imperial period arising from incompatible images and interpretations of Plato which resulted in a massive production of philosophical work, much of which is now lost.
- 41 Cf. Dillon 2002, 2014; Hadot 1995; Hägg 2012; Malherbe 1986; Nussbaum 1994; Opsomer 2007a, 2007b; Pelling 2011; Rabbow 1954; Rist 2001; Roskam & van der Stockt 2011; Russell 1973; Trapp 2014, and van Hoof 2010, 2014.
- 42 Cf. van Hoof 2014: 142; Thom 2012: 284–285.
- 43 Cf. Mattern (2008: 14–21, 84–85), who discusses Galen's audience. Though his treatises were addressed to friends and companions, he seems to have been aware that they might spread beyond their intended circle, as of course they did (*Anat. admin* 5.6).
- 44 Beck 2014a: 6; Perrin 1914: 1. Galen gave public demonstrations of his dissections. Some of his extant works were written as memoranda of the dissection at the request of an attendee (Mattern 2008: 17).
- 45 Huizenga 2013: 52
- 46 Fantham 1996: 214
- 47 Huizenga 2013: 53
- 48 Huizenga 2013: 54–55
- 49 Morgan 2007: 1–4. van Hoof (2010: 265) makes some observations on the extent of Plutarch's audience, noting that some texts had a wider scope than others.
- 50 Mattern (2008: 19, 90) notes that the intended audience of Galen's work is ideally educated in history, geometry, logic, astronomy and music “and might read Herodotus for pleasure.” His addressees are high-ranking men, but he expects and sometimes laments that his work will reach another, less educated audience. At least one elite woman, Annia Faustina, is thought to have been familiar with Galen's work and perhaps a friend in the same

- company as his male addressees. He describes her as an “intellectual and philosophical woman” (Mattern 2008: 112).
- 51 Stadter 2015: 232, cf. p. 9.
- 52 Cf. Plant 2004.
- 53 van Hoof 2010: 19, and see Plant 2004.
- 54 Blomqvist (1995: 177) argues that Timoxena’s writing suggests more than just bare literacy but rather extensive knowledge on the topic at hand (in this case the use of ornamentation).
- 55 Faiferri 2012: 6
- 56 Dillon 1985: 119–120
- 57 Cf. Buszard’s (2010) study on the speeches of women in the *Lives*, which raises some important points: 1) the women who speak are all from elite families; and 2) they only speak when given no other option, or when their men fail to act appropriately (2010: 112).
- 58 Richter (2001: 191–192) discusses the reception of the text by scholars.
- 59 Cf. Rist 2001.
- 60 Theirself: I chose to use “theirself” throughout to indicate that the relationship between the subject as an embodied individual and their identity, their “self,” is fragmented and sometimes incongruent and unsettled, rather than “themselves,” which suggests that this identity is innate and inalienable.
- 61 Rabinowitz 1993: 8. In recent scholarship, especially that of feminist classicists, much work has been done to abolish this idea and move towards a more complex understanding of women in the ancient world. Even so, studies of homoeroticism tend to focus on male homosexuality and especially pederasty, while similar studies of lesbianism are in short supply; Rabinowitz (1993: 11) argues that feminist classicists have turned to gender studies, because “it is safer; by never studying women without men, such studies avoid the specter of lesbianism.”
- 62 It should not be assumed that Man is exempt from this essentialist treatment; see Chapter 5.
- 63 The acknowledgment of the complexity of identity formation and structures of oppression has been an important tool for feminist criticism. According to the theory of intersectionality, the experience of a woman (or any person whatsoever, in fact) is fundamentally shaped by the intersections of her experiences with the power structures of race, class, sexuality, nationality, etc. (see Nash 2008: 2–4; Garry 2011: 827).
- 64 Hadot 1986: 448
- 65 Hadot 1986: 445; Glad 1995: 60
- 66 Lutz et al. 2011: 2–4

- 67 Crenshaw 1989: 139–167; see also Crenshaw 1991: 1241–1299. The theory however pre-dates Crenshaw’s analysis and the term “intersectionality”; the Combahee River Collective published a statement in 1977 in which they argued that “the major systems of oppression are interlocking.” See Hancock 2016.
- 68 Lutz et al. 2011: 6
- 69 Crenshaw 1989; 1991. Intersectionality theory has been slow to make its way into ancient studies in a formal way, although several recent publications have made use of intersectionality as a theoretical framework. See, for example, Kartzow 2012; Garcia-Ventura 2016: 174–192; Aasgard 2016: 318–331; Aasgard & Horn 2017.
- 70 Whitmarsh 2004: 7; van Hoof 2010: 8–9; Nussbaum 1994: 7
- 71 Morgan 2007: 191–206
- 72 McNamara 1999: 151

THERAPEUTIC PRINCIPLES

- 1 See also Opsomer 2016a.
- 2 Blomqvist 1995: 174, Chapman 2011: 14–15. On women’s education, see also Deslauriers 2012.
- 3 Stadter (1999: 174) notes that Clea, the addressee of *Virtues* and *On Isis* and possibly the mother of Pollianus, must have been educated at least to the same standard as the average male reader. Plutarch is also reported as the author of a work entitled *That a Woman, Too, Should be Educated* (frs. 128–133). None of the surviving fragments (frs. 128–133) actually discuss women’s education. Diogenes Laertius reports that Cleobulus, father of Eumetis and character in Plutarch’s *Seven Sages* (see below), advised husbands to educate their wives (1.6.91). Juvenal, on the other hand, had no time for educated women who presume to speak on literary subjects over dinner, “thirsting to be deemed wise and eloquent” (*Sat.* 6.434–456).
- 4 I. Hadot 1986: 444; P. Hadot 1995: 83; Vegge 2008: 49; Thom 2012: 281
- 5 Foucault (1982a: 316) also draws the link between practical and theoretical knowledge, both of which are equally necessary for philosophical training aimed at attaining virtue.
- 6 Cf. Rabbow 1954: 17 and 301n1 on the origin of the term in modern scholarship.
- 7 Gill 1985: 321 & Gill 2013: 339; Maier 1994: 719; Foucault 1982a, 1982b, 1984c; Kolbet 2010; Overholser 2010.
- 8 Foucault 1982a: 407
- 9 See I. Hadot 1986: 444; P. Hadot 1995: 83; Vegge 2008: 49; Thom 2012: 281.

- 10 Foucault 1982b: 222. On being asked whether theory or practice is more important, the Stoic Musonius Rufus answered that theory precedes practice and enables one to speak on a subject, but practice is more important since it leads to actions (fr. 5), and in another lecture he argued the point that virtue is a combination of theoretical knowledge and practical application (fr. 6). Cf. the medical analogy in Musonius (fr. 1). According to Plutarch, the soul is both practical and contemplative (*Proc. an.* 1025d). Cf. Arr. *Epict. diss.* 1.15
- 11 Trapp 2014: 43, cf. Chlup 2000: 155. Boys-Stones (2018b: 479) characterizes practical ethics as an empirical science.
- 12 Roskam & van der Stockt 2011: 7
- 13 van Hoof 2014: 136. The term *Popularphilosophie* emerged from the philosophical project of a group of German philosophers during the Enlightenment, whose aim was the moral education and spiritual growth of the general public. They saw themselves as directly in opposition to the rationalism and sense of social seclusion that dominated German academic philosophy at the time; van der Stockt 2011: 19–20. *Popularphilosophie* had, both in methodology and aim, much in common with ancient popular philosophy and eclecticism. Cf. Ziegler (1951: 768–825), who subdivided the *Moralia* into categories according to the content of the work. His re-categorization was influential and immensely valuable, but by no means faultless.
- 14 Pelling 2011: 41
- 15 Pelling 2011: 41–50
- 16 van Hoof 2014: 138, 142; cf. Thom 2012: 284–285, Roskam & van der Stockt 2011: 8
- 17 Pelling 2011: 57, Huizenga 2013: 55, Morgan 2007: 4
- 18 van Hoof 2014: 143
- 19 Beneker 2012: 7. It is this feature of eclecticism and *Popularphilosophie* which gave it the reputation of unsystematic and non-rigorous philosophy, and by the late 18th century caused it to be discarded by the most influential thinkers of the time, including Kant (Ruth 2015). For a thorough overview of the history and development of the concept of ‘eclecticism’ from antiquity onwards, see Donini (1988a: 15–33). Cf. Marks (2017: 5) on eclecticism and interdisciplinarity in contemporary psychotherapy.
- 20 Thom 2012: 282
- 21 Asmis 2014: 127
- 22 Frede 2015, Thom 2012: 282
- 23 Asmis 2014: 128–129

- 24 As Blomqvist (1995: 175) argues with regard to Eurydice's education, "there is no question of her independently browsing through the archives and reading herself what she likes, but it is up to her husband to be her guide."
- 25 Cf. Vegge 2008, P. Hadot 1995. It is especially telling that Pierre Hadot mentions the use of psychagogic methods in Plutarch, and goes on to mention specific texts in which these practices may be observed, but neglects to include *Advice* or the *Consolation*, two important moral philosophical texts that operate on clear psychagogic principles. What is even more puzzling about the omission of *Advice* is that it is aimed at both the husband and the wife. Hadot takes a similar view on Seneca and omits the *Consolation to Marcia* (1995: 86). Ilsetraut Hadot (1969: 157) does place brief focus on Seneca's psychagogy for women and concludes that he sees a fundamental inferiority in them which is directly opposed to Stoic doctrine. According to Stadter (1999: 182), 'Plutarch expects men to learn from other men, and women, like Porcia, from their fathers and husbands.'
- 26 Huizenga 2013: 3
- 27 Huizenga 2013: 44, cf. Hemelrijk 2004: 58–60 with particular reference to Musonius Rufus and Plutarch.
- 28 Malherbe 1992: 282, cf. Russell 1968: 142, Sen. *Ep.* 6.5.
- 29 I. Hadot 1986: 452; Vegge 2008: 114–115, Diod. Sic. 9.1.4
- 30 Roller 2018: 1, Langlands 2018: 86–87. Cf. *De tranq. an.* 467d.
- 31 Langlands 2018: 2
- 32 Russell 1966a: 141
- 33 Georgiadou 1997: 199–200. Duff (2007: 9) argues that Plutarch often assumes knowledge on behalf of his readers and avoids repeating familiar material. See also Roller (2004: 28–50) on Cloelia as Roman exemplum. Roller (2018: 79) notes the paradox of ascribing manliness to a maiden.
- 34 Schmitt Pantel 2009: 55
- 35 Xenophontos 2016: 117
- 36 Cf. Sen. *Ep.* 1.52.23.
- 37 Richlin 2014: 49–50
- 38 Bremmer (1981: 425–426) has noted Plutarch's devotion to recording the names of women, which is evident in the *Lives* and the *Moralia*.
- 39 Cf. van Hoof (2010: 43–45) on the role of dramatic personae in Plutarch's work.
- 40 Plutarch comments explicitly on his own use of the characters in the *Lives* as ethical models for reflection (*Aem. Paul.* 1). Durán Mañas (2010: 144) argues that the presence of women in the *Lives* is filtered through Plutarch's own opinions about them.

- 41 McNerney 2003: 328. Håland (2011: 12) focuses on the contradicting attitudes towards bodily exposure in the *Moralia*, noting the tension between the ideal of concealment exemplified in Theano (*Conj. praec.* 142c–d) and the power of genital exposure (for example, *Mulier. virt.* 246a). She argues that Plutarch espouses a personalized ideology of honor and shame, which she relates to similar values in contemporary Greek culture.
- 42 Vegge 2008: 115–117; cf. Langlands 2011: 104
- 43 Vegge 2008: 114, cf. O’Brien Wicker 1978: 112
- 44 Duff (1999a: 54) calls this implicit moralism, which is generally free of direct editorial comment. He sees this as particularly common in ancient historiographical work such as Plutarch’s *Lives* (with the exception of the *synkriseis*).
- 45 Cf. Sartre 2011: 6–7 on the connection between education, judgment and the production of *andreaia*.
- 46 Turpin 2008: 360, Gillespie 2015, 2019; cf. Tac. *Hist.* 1.3.
- 47 Duff 1999a: 56
- 48 Duff 1999a: 38–39, cf. van Hoof 2011: 10. Langlands (2018: 86–87) argues that exempla work in three basic stages: admiration, comparison, and emulation, to which she adds three further stages which incite a deeper form of learning: modelling, cognition and discernment. The later stages of Langlands’ exemplarity quite accurately describe the role of psychagogy in the formation of the self as an ethical subject.
- 49 Russell 1973: 110
- 50 But consider the *synkriseis* to *Lycurgus-Numa* and *Demetrius-Antony*. See also Chapter 6.
- 51 Gill (2013: 340) notes the mutual dependence of preventive medicine in the form of exercise, diet and choice of environment, and therapy. Plutarch’s *Keeping Well* sits comfortably in this tradition, not as a separate mode of therapeutics but an aspect of psychagogy at large.
- 52 White et al. 2020: 732, cf. van Hoof 2010: 57–58. Galen also suggests imaginative exercises as a preventive measure, in particular against grief (*Ind.* 52–53).
- 53 I. Hadot 1986: 452–453
- 54 I. Hadot 1986: 451
- 55 Thom 2012: 284; I. Hadot 1986: 451
- 56 Cf. van Hoof 2010: 58, Xen. *Oec.* 14.4–6.
- 57 Stadter (1988: 290) notes that Plutarch is especially fond of using *chreiai* in the proems to the *Lives*. *Gnōmai* do not refer to a specific person, but are easily generalizable according to the situation, while *chreiai* refer to specific

- examples and situations; Malherbe 1986: 109, 111; Lardinois 2000: 642. Hawley (2007: 168) notes their use in rhetorical training, emphasizing that collections that contain *apophthegmata* can in that way contribute to the reproduction of traditional gender norms.
- 58 Cf. *Cons. ux.* 609c, where Plutarch praises Timoxena for her simplicity. The reference to Timoxena's letter to Aristylla further indicates that both women were educated and literate.
- 59 I. Hadot 1986: 451; P. Hadot 1995: 83. Foucault (1982a: 317) sees *askēsis*, the "exercise" of philosophy, as a "practice of truth" which does not subject the self to law or custom. Through renunciation of elements outside the self, the subject constitutes and affirms the self by way of *askēsis* (1982a: 320). Cf. Ingenkamp (1971) for a thorough treatment of this aspect of Plutarch's *Seelenheilungführung*.
- 60 I. Hadot 1986: 451
- 61 Nussbaum 1994: 16–19. For this reason, the practice relied on verbal communication. In cases where that was impossible, published letters implied an aspect of personalization from which students could draw what suited their needs; cf. White et al. 2020: 731.
- 62 Cf. Plato, *Charmides* 156bc. Plutarch also makes the analogy in *Can Virtue Be Taught?* (440a), *On Listening* (46e–f), *Platonic Questions* (999e) and *Tranquillity of Mind* (465d). At *The Divine Vengeance* 550a "the cure of the soul ... is the greatest of all arts," and at *On Love* 764f "the soul is persuaded that beauty and value exist nowhere but here, unless it secures divine, chaste Love to be its physician, its savior, its guide." In his letter to Helvia, Seneca also compares his approach to consolation to the healing effects of medicine (*Ad Helv.* 1.2). Polito (2016) covers the debate over the origin and proper treatment of diseases of the body and diseases of the soul in medical and philosophical practice. Cf. Thumiger 2020: 741
- 63 Galen's work is exemplary in its emphasis on the interplay between mental and bodily health. Cf. White et al. 2020: 732, Thumiger 2020: 746–747.
- 64 Cf. Bonazzi (2012: 148), who notes that Plutarch recognizes no distinction between practical and theoretical knowledge. In his analysis of the Isis cult, Plutarch argues that Egyptian rites contain "some things that have moral and practical values" (*De Iside* 353e). Cf. Trapp 2014: 43. The duty of the philosopher is to share the insight gained from theoretical philosophy with his fellow citizens in order to lead them on the path to a better life. As Nussbaum also notes, the results of empirical study and ethical theorizing must also in some way cohere with the philosopher's theories in other fields of enquiry (1994: 22). White et al. (2020: 731) note the liminality of

- ancient psychotherapies that sit at the intersection of religion, medicine and philosophy.
- 65 Nussbaum 1994: 5
- 66 On Plutarch's use of Aristotelian concepts in this regard, see Beneker 2012: 20–21.
- 67 Cf. *De sera* 550b. The teacher often used poetry for moral purposes, as it was seen as a good way to introduce students to the study of philosophy and a good way to practice moral judgment. Malherbe 1986: 115, cf. *Adol. poet. aud.* 15e–16a.
- 68 Langlands 2018: 88
- 69 Butler 1993: 17. Cf., for example, *Gorg.* 493a and *Crat.* 400b–c, both of which refer to the Orphic doctrine of $\sigma\tilde{\omega}\mu\alpha$ $\sigma\tilde{\eta}\mu\alpha$, and *Phaed.* 70a–72d, which argues that souls are immortal but bodies perishable. *Timaeus* 91a states that vicious men are reincarnated as women.
- 70 Thus McInerney (2003: 328) notes that many of the anecdotes in *Virtues* are centered around women's bodies and notions of shame that are inextricable from conceptions about virtue. Cf. Arr. *Epict. diss.* 1.16 on facial hair and voice as bodily signs.
- 71 Nussbaum 1994: 46
- 72 Nussbaum 1994: 44–45, 54–55. Thumiger (2020: 748) also notes that therapeutic practices often required “robust reasoning capacities, philosophical attitudes and intellectual refinement, as well as quite some time for leisure.”
- 73 Nussbaum (1994: 74) argues that a degree of independence, not subservience, would have been expected of her student.
- 74 Nussbaum 1999
- 75 Flacelière (1963: 47) considered Musonius Rufus an exemplar of ancient feminism. Hemelrijk (2004: 59) disagrees, and for good reason.
- 76 Malherbe 1992: 283–84. Blomqvist (1995: 181) notes that the restrictions on female speech restricts also the extent of their participation in philosophy, since advanced lessons often took the form of a debate between teacher and student. For women, the husband filled that role.
- 77 See, for example, the extensive work done on the topic by Gaden 2002; Glad 1995; I. Hadot 1969, 1986; P. Hadot 1995; Huizenga 2013; Kloppenborg 2010; Malherbe 1986, 1992; Thom 2012, and Vegge 2008.
- 78 Thom 2012: 281; cf. I. Hadot 1969 and P. Hadot 1995.
- 79 I. Hadot 1986: 445
- 80 Vegge 2008: 54
- 81 Malherbe 1992: 283–284
- 82 Malherbe 1986: 79

- 83 On the education of women in Plutarch, see Blomqvist 1995. I take it as a given here that Plutarch's numerous references to educated women, especially at *Advice* 145a, indicate a large number of highly educated women in his social circles. His interest in women and the feminine seems to have developed especially in the later years of his life; *Virtues* and *On Isis*, both dedicated to the priestess Clea, were probably written around 115 CE, making them some of his latest works, and certainly much later than *Advice* and *Consolation*. On chronology, see Jones 1966.
- 84 Foucault 1984a: 9
- 85 Consider Athenaeus' account of Caranus' wedding feast in Macedonia, which he offers for amusement and *psuchagōgia* and in which he details excessive luxury (4.128c–130d). Diodorus Siculus uses *psuchagōgia* in a negative sense, considering it an effect of rhetoric meant to persuade and deceive as well as an effect of sensationalist written histories (1.69.7, 1.76.2). Plutarch himself considers the presentation of exempla to be psychagogic as well as persuasive and even entertaining (*Mulier. virt.* 243b). Thus rhetoric is not psychagogy, and psychagogy is not rhetoric, but their processes inform one another and mutually constitute their outcomes. Cf. Tanga 2019: 84.
- 86 Swain (1990: 152) notes that this also indicates that Antony didn't have a proper Greek education.
- 87 Foucault 1984a: 13–14
- 88 Cf. Foucault (1975: 25–28) on the relationship between knowledge, power, and the body of the subject as a politicized space.
- 89 See the comment at *Pericles* 16.6: "But the life of a speculative philosopher is not the same thing, I think, as that of a statesman. The one exercises his intellect without the aid of instruments and independent of external matters for noble ends; whereas the other, inasmuch as he brings his superior excellence into close contact with the common needs of mankind, must sometimes find wealth not merely one of the necessities of life, but also one of its noble things, as was actually the case with Pericles, who gave aid to many poor men."
- 90 As Schaps (1998: 162–163) notes, not being enslaved and not being barbarian puts a free Athenian woman on the right side of two out of three dichotomies: *human-male-free* : *beast-female-enslaved*.
- 91 On this passage, cf. Stadter 1989: 178.
- 92 Durán Mañas 2010: 147.
- 93 Shortly before, Plutarch reports that the opposition had compared the transfer of money from Delos to Athens and the subsequent beautification of the city under Pericles' command to tyranny and the vanity of a woman

- (*Per.* 12.1–3). In his personal capacity, however, Plutarch reports that Pericles lived so frugally that his sons and wives took umbrage (16.3–4). Durán Mañas (2010: 149) comments that the latter anecdote relies on the same stereotype of the spendthrift woman as the former, and that it works to Pericles' credit that he did not consent to the indulgence.
- 94 Richlin (2003: 203) has argued that rhetoric produces manhood through the socialization of boys in, and exclusion of girls from, rhetorical schools.
- 95 Cf. Foucault 1982a: 334, 408; 1982b: 222; Thumiger 2020: 748. Walzer (2013: 3) criticizes Foucault's analysis of *parrhēsia* as oppositional to rhetoric, arguing that frank speech has wider rhetorical functions and finer nuances than the philosopher boldly speaking truth to power on which he places his focus. As a practice, *parrhēsia* is commonly associated with the Cynics, though the Epicurean Philodemus wrote the only extant treatise dedicated to the topic; on this, cf. Tsouna 2007: 91.
- 96 Xenophontos 2016: III. Cf. *Virtues* 247a, where Plutarch praises the combination of silence and courage of the women of Melos. Benefiel (2004: 16) notes that this gnomic statement is the first such instance of editorial comment on the anecdotes.
- 97 Plutarch makes the same inference from the work of Pheidias in *On Isis*: "... maidens need watching, and ... [for married women staying at home and silence is becoming]" (381e–f). In contrast, he reports that Themistocles, after being exiled from Greece and going to the Persian king, declined to speak until he had time to learn the Persian tongue, so that he might conduct his interview through his own self and not through another (*Apophth. reg.* 185f).
- 98 Of Theano, Diogenes Laertius says that she was the author of several texts (8.1.43). Compare the story of Xenocrite in *Virtues* (262a–262d). Her use of *parrhēsia* is dependent on her display of modesty; she covered her face with her garment in the presence of the despot Aristodemus but not in the presence of her fellow countrymen, and when asked why replied that she did so because he was the only man present. By these words, she shamed the men into taking action to regain control of Cumae. McInerney (2003: 330) notes that she doesn't take any action herself, but by using Aristodemus' desire for her against him gains access to the palace for the men.
- 99 Stamatopoulou (2019: 227) notes that Aesop is the appropriate vehicle for the repetition of Eumetis' riddles because they both represent a different, and perhaps lesser, form of wisdom than that of the seven sages; cf. Leão 2008: 488, *Conv. sept.* 157a–b, Plin. *Ep.* 1.16.6. Mossman (1997: 125) describes Aesop as "rescuing" her from the embarrassment. Diogenes Laertius reports that Cratinus had named one of his plays *Cleobulinae* after her (1.6.89).

- 100 Stamatopoulou 2019: 210, cf. Chapman 2011: 32, 39–40. Plutarch also suggests in *Advice* that this is the right way for women to be involved in symposia (*Conj. praec.* 140a–b). Delfim Leão (2008: 484–485) notes that the presence of women in *Seven Sages* sets Plutarch’s work apart from other sympotic literature and suggests that Cleobulus’ presence may be due to the need for Eumetis to be accompanied.
- 101 van Hoof 2010: 160–161 and n30
- 102 Richlin (2003: 206) notes that while speech is the province of men, chastity calls for silence, and this contradiction poses a dilemma for men.
- 103 Hawley (2007: 167) argues that collections of women’s sayings in antiquity were not only intended to serve as entertainment but to facilitate moral education.
- 104 Hall (1989: 96, 126–129) covers a variety of Asiatic customs that form part of the stereotype of the effeminate and luxurious barbarian. These tropes are often used in connection with descriptions of barbarian cruelty and tyranny. Cf. Vlassopoulos 2013: 162, 171, 192, 224.
- 105 Cf. briefly Chapman (2011: 48–49) on the moralism in the sayings of Gorgo. Ideologically, women are vessels through which property can be transferred from one (male) generation to the next, cf. Henry & James 2012: 87, Levick 2012: 100. It is from this that the daughter in Athens gains the name *epiklēros* (Pomeroy 1975: 61). See also “Reproductive difference” in Chapter 3.
- 106 Cf. Buszard (2010: 112), who notes that only certain women have the right to speak in certain situations.
- 107 Xenophontos (2016: 120–121) notes that Chilonis takes the case of the man who is in the weaker position, first her father in his exile, then her husband. Cf. Marasco 2008: 667–668.
- 108 Mossman 2017: 493–494
- 109 Roisman 2004: 98. Caterine (2019: 196) also notes that political and social upheaval offer opportunities for women to display their virtue publicly precisely because free men are oppressed in these circumstances and tyrants’ households offer women an unusual amount of power.
- 110 Examples of women’s frank speech in *Virtues* occur in the stories of the Chian women (245a) and the Persian women (246a), which chastise men for cowardice or incite them to courageous action. Megisto (251c–252e), who chastises the tyrant Aristotimus, is discussed below.
- 111 Caterine 2019: 194–195, cf. Schmitt Pantel 2009: 50–51.
- 112 Vlassopoulos 2013: 162
- 113 Halberstam (1998: 69) notes that social status can function as a barrier to the ‘disgrace of female masculinity.’

- 114 Xenophon (2016: 123) argues that These functions as an exemplum of conjugal fidelity.
- 115 Foucault 1984a: 8. This, of course, is only applicable to the men in Foucault's analysis.
- 116 Asirvatham (2019: 170) notes the reference to inappropriate manliness (*andrōdēs*) here.
- 117 Xenophon (2016: 113; cf. Richlin 2003: 206, *Soph. Aj.* 293).
- 118 Foucault 1982b: 224. Sartre (2011: 29) also notes that "any free man who prostitutes himself loses the right to speak in the assembly."
- 119 Cf. Foucault 1984a: 10. Roisman (2004: 107) argues that women's frank speech is portrayed negatively in cases where it serves little or no political purpose in opposing tyranny and effects no change for the better. Epictetus argued that the speech of uneducated and weak men is dangerous (*Arr. Epict. diss.* 1.8).
- 120 Thus Artaxerxes gives Themistocles permission to employ *parrhēsia* in his presence (*Them.* 29.2), which incurs the jealousy of others at court (29.4), and Clytaemnestra gives Electra permission to speak freely (*Eur. El.* 1049–1050); cf. *De sera* 556c, Roisman 2004: 108–109, Foucault 1984a: 58.
- 121 Mother of Cyrus and Artaxerxes, who plays a significant role in the events of the *Life of Artaxerxes*.
- 122 And indeed, *parrhēsia* ought not to be met with *parrhēsia* in turn, as it is liable to cause enmity and is a sign of the person who is unable to tolerate frankness (*Adul. amic.* 72e–f). Xenophon points out that the wife's duty to soothe her husband with words of comfort when he's silently seething with anger (*Conj. praec.* 143c) emphasizes the gentleness of the approach recommended rather than suggesting that she admonish him (2016: 111).
- 123 Cf. Nussbaum 1994: 74.
- 124 Instances of women guiding the moral education of other women are exceptionally rare. The Pythagorean women's letters are a notable example discussed briefly below and extensively in Huizenga (2013). Cases of women leading the moral/philosophical education of men are even rarer, thus the infamy of Diotima's role as teacher to Socrates in Plato's *Symposium*. Plutarch's Ismenodora is another rare case of a woman being put in a position to lead her much younger husband.
- 125 Tsouna 2007: 94. The relationship between therapist and client remains an important aspect of current psychotherapeutic practices (White et al. 2020: 728, 731).
- 126 Malherbe (1992: 285) refers to Seneca's frequent usage of himself as an example of virtuous behavior. The efficacy of this tactic is fundamentally

- based on the authority of the philosopher. Tacitus too claims himself as an authority (*Hist.* 3.51).
- 127 Foucault 1984a: 11
- 128 Thus at *Flatterer/Friend* 66e, Plutarch advises that frank speech is the mean between two extremes, flattery on the one hand and immoderate free speech on the other. Falling into one or the other is a vicious act that belies a weakness in the soul. *Malakia* used here indicates a sort of weakness that is unmanly or effeminate and thus also expected of women in particular.
- 129 Roisman 2004: 91, 101, 112
- 130 Cf. Foucault (1984a: 58ff), who sees frank speech as a radical political mode of being exercised most effectively in the relationship between the tyrant and his advisor(s), presumably because of the close relationship thus engendered.
- 131 *Adul. amic.* 55a–d, 59d–e, cf. 66b, 74d; *Virt. mor.* 452c. Cf. Joseph. *AJ* 17.3.3.
- 132 Collins 2015: 22, Ingenkamp 1971: 76, Vegge 2008: 56–59; cf. *Per.* 2.2, where Plutarch says that those who perform virtuous deeds inspire others to emulate them. On the value of human examples (as a medium between human and divine), *De sera* 551a–b. Cf. Quint. *Inst.* 3.4.8–14.
- 133 Beneker 2012: 44, cf. Duff 1999a: 34.
- 134 Nikolaidis (2008) provides a thoughtful discussion on the use of characters from the *Lives* as exempla in the *Moralia*. See also Brenk 2008.
- 135 Duff 1999a: 36
- 136 *Adul. amic.* 72c–d; Plutarch argues that mixing blame with light praise will mitigate the harshness of the censure and arouse in a man a desire to better himself. Ischomachus tells Socrates that he trains people to be obedient the same way one would train an animal to be obedient: by rewarding them for good behavior and punishing them for bad behavior (*Xen. Oec.* 13.6–12). Celsus also highlights the usefulness of praise and blame, stressing the gradual change in character that takes place when such methods are effectively applied (3.18.9–12).
- 137 Tsouna 2007: 98, 111–113; cf. *Adul. amic.* 73e. Duff (1999a: 56) notes that Plutarch prefers to commend rather than criticize.
- 138 Stamatopoulou 2019: 222, cf. Blomqvist 1995: 178. Leão (2008: 487) suggests that Eumetis’ grooming Hellenizes the barbarian’s “rustic appearance.”
- 139 Tsouna 2007: 109
- 140 Approx. 272 BCE; for a full account of what is known about Aristotimus, see Gomez Espelousin 1991. Stadter (1965: 84) argues that the position of this anecdote in the text (in the middle, as a bridge between group acts and individual acts of virtue) indicates that Plutarch considered it the most interesting.

- 141 Catherine (2019: 199–200) sees this anecdote as evidence that Plutarch considered men and women morally equal. I agree with this view in theory, but in practice it is hard not to note the very different ways in which men and women are expected to display that virtue.
- 142 Cf. McInerney (2003: 325), who notes that women’s *andreia* can feminize men.
- 143 Thus Chapman (2011: 114) says that “every word [Megisto] speaks reinforces the supremacy of patriarchal concern and confirms women’s perception of the irrelevance of their own lives and sufferings.”
- 144 Plutarch is our only source for the story of Megisto, and while it is possible that her husband was indeed named Timoleon, it is also not too far-fetched to conjecture an implicit reference to the *Life of Timoleon*. Women are scarce in that biography but Plutarch refers back to *Dion*, whose events immediately precede those of *Timoleon*, more than once. Women are quite conspicuous in *Dion*, including the example of Theste using *parrhēsia* to chastise her brother, the tyrant Dionysius. That episode is discussed above.
- 145 Stadter 1965: 10
- 146 Megisto prays that the exiled men put their country above the safety of their wives and children (*Mulier. virt.* 252c).
- 147 *Misoturannos* appears only nine times in Plutarch’s corpus, of which twice in *Timoleon* and once in *Virtues*. Timoleon possesses the key virtues: *aretē*, *kalōs*, *sunesis*, *andreia*, *megalopsuchia*, and in addition he is *misoturannos* and *misoponēros* (a “hater of tyrants and base men,” *Tim.* 3.2–3). It is perhaps possible that the connection between Megisto and *Timoleon* is intended as an illustration of the equality between men and women’s virtue. This argument is external to the text, however, and relies on the further reading of the audience, implied in Plutarch’s comment that the anecdotes he relates are lesser-known, since Clea is already well-read (243d). Cf. Benefiel 2004.
- 148 Tanga (2019: 166) notes the similarity between this episode and the actions of Agesistrata in *Agis* 20 and *Cleomenes* 37–38.
- 149 Chapman (2011: 128) calls Xenocrite the “unwilling concubine” of Aristodemus.
- 150 As McInerney (2003: 330) comments, this anecdote combines notions of shame and concealment with bold speech.
- 151 Duffy 1983: 85; cf. Pl. *Menex.* 236a–237e. Duff (1999a: 13–14) stresses the emphasis on character as a collection of deeds that can be critically evaluated. While this holds for Plutarch’s characterization of the heroes in the *Lives*, the psychagogic process has a wider scope and so does emphasize also a turn inward to the contemplation of the moral self.
- 152 White et al. 2020: 731

- 153 Benefiel (2004: 17) notes that Plutarch's interest in etiologies in *Virtues* serve to emphasize the lasting consequences of women's actions.
- 154 Cf. Chapman 2011: 114–115.
- 155 Plutarch stresses this point in *Stoic Contradictions*, where he criticizes philosophers who do the theoretical work without engaging it in practice (1033a–b). Bonazzi (2012) gives a thoughtful account of Plutarch's aims in this text. See also Foucault 1982a: 405–407 on the relationship between speaking the truth and living it.
- 156 Bonazzi 2012: 149–50, Roskam 2014: 217–218, Reydams-Schils 2017: 155, *De Iside* 351c–d, *Pl. Th.* 172c–177b. Cf. *Sen. Ep.* 95.50: “Would you win over the gods? Then be a good man. Whoever imitates them, is worshipping them sufficiently.” Epictetus similarly equates virtue with a mode of being approximating the divine (*Arr. Epict. diss.* 1.13). Musonius Rufus advises the philosopher to pay attention to the individual needs of each student and to live according to the principles he believes are true (*fr.* 1).
- 157 Duff (1999a: 36–37) comments that Plutarch's strategy is to suggest that “his work is the virtue of his subjects,” thus encouraging the reader's imitation of great characters rather than just admiration or observation. Duff further argues that in doing so Plutarch assimilates his work to the Platonic form of the Good. Doing so has the added benefit of legitimizing Plutarch as a moral authority.
- 158 Cf. *De ex.* 599b–c.
- 159 Benevolence and knowledge; Foucault identifies these characteristics from *Gorgias* 486d–487a (1982b: 229).
- 160 Walzer (2013: 8) notes that the exchange between Socrates and Callicles in the *Gorgias* from which Foucault identifies these conditions of truth-telling could also be read as ironic and would thus comprise a challenge to Foucault's analysis of *parrhēsia*. Whereas Foucault sees *parrhēsia* as a radical political act of truth-telling, Walzer argues that frank speech, which adheres to rhetorical convention and honors propriety, is not incommensurable with this understanding of the practice and may therefore not necessarily pose a threat to social dynamics.
- 161 *Adul. amic.* 72b, cf. *Sen. Ep.* 94.1, *Gal. Aff. Pecc. Dig.* 3. See also I. Hadot 1986: 447–449; Glad 1995: 53–54.
- 162 Hemelrijk 2004: 204
- 163 Malherbe 1986: 34–40; 1992: 286. Cf. Plutarch's frequent reference to *Leg.* 729c (for example, at *Mor.* 14b, 71b and 272c), which says that the most effective way to train the youth is to “practice what you preach.” Plutarch uses the passage

to stress the importance of living publicly according to the advice one would have others follow.

TENSION AND RESOLUTION

- 1 I take this to mean that a woman “tamed” in accordance with Greek social and cultural norms is superior to other women who, because they do not abide by these rules and regulations, are “wild.” Thus Alexander is said to have “tamed” and Hellenized barbarians, amongst which were the Hyrcanians, whom he taught to marry (*De Alex. fort. virt.* 328a–d), and Demetrius allowed himself to be tamed in captivity, a fact on which Plutarch reflects negatively (*Demetr. et Ant.* 6.3–4).
- 2 Foucault 1975: 28
- 3 Dillon (2004: 130–131) comments that Aristotle’s arguments here dehumanize enslaved people by assimilating them as closely as possible to animals. So too with women. On female intellectual inferiority, see Val. Max. 9.1.3. Allard, Montlahuc & Rothstein (2018: 32) note that women’s physical weakness is connected to their mental and emotional weakness. Nielsen (2015) also makes a convincing case for reading Aristotle’s statements on women’s psychology as a biological theory based on assumptions about nature, rather than as a theory of social convention.
- 4 Beneker 2012: 22. Russell (1966a: 143) comments that Plutarch prefers aristocracy over other forms of government, and often demonizes the *demos*.
- 5 Plese 2008: 773–774, cf. Arist. *Gen. an.* 767b6–8
- 6 Gill 2006: 230, Fulkerson, 2012: 53, Becchi 2014: 73–74, Nikolaidis 2014: 351. Plese (2008: 776) notes that Plutarch was familiar with this theory of degradation in Aristotle, citing *Publicola* 21.1 as an example of Aristotelian influence.
- 7 And on complementarity according to the Stoics, see Asmis 1996: 79–81.
- 8 Cf. Stolberg 2003: 289.
- 9 Laqueur 1990: 8, 58, 62
- 10 King 2013: 36, cf. also Connell’s (2016: 265ff) critique of the one-sex model.
- 11 Cf. Lloyd 1993: 2–3.
- 12 Durling (1995: 311) notes that most of the medical references in Plutarch’s work are scattered throughout the texts with the exception of *Keeping Well*. Plutarch does however show some degree of fascination with the production of breast milk (*De amor. pro.* 495d–496a). He finds newborn babies quite gross: “there is nothing so imperfect, so helpless, so naked, so shapeless, so foul, as man observed at birth” (496b).

- 13 Cf. Harries 1998: 185.
- 14 Connell 2016: 24–25
- 15 Shortly before, attempting to explain why women are less susceptible to intoxication, Sulla had argued that women are more moist than men and drink their wine faster. As a result, the wine is either taken up by the moisture or expelled as quickly as imbibed, thereby leaving women less affected (*Quaest. conv.* 650a–b).
- 16 Gilabert Barberà 2000: 39
- 17 Cf. *Quaest. Rom.* 263e–f. Sophia Connell (2016: 22–23) argues that in Aristotle male and female are only rarely opposed in this sense, namely that the female represents the privation of the male form, but far more often the female is a complementary opposition that is both natural and necessary.
- 18 This distinction between male activity and female passivity has become a standard formulation in classical scholarship; cf. Karras 2000.
- 19 Cf. Connell 2016: 93–107.
- 20 Cf. Connell 2016: 94.
- 21 Cf. Gal. *De sem.* 2.5, Hipp. *De gen.* 7. Many of these theories take the rather problematic stance that female pleasure is necessary for conception. Aristotle puts forth the contradictory view that the woman who derives no pleasure from sex will not conceive because she has no nourishment for the *dynamis* to draw on, but the woman who does have pleasure will also not conceive because the “menstrual liquid” will wash the semen away. Instead, he suggests that she conceive only “after the evacuation is over” (*Gen. an.* 716a, 727b, 739a); cf. Connell 2016: 112–114. The stance, though at first glance beneficial for women’s sexuality, is not without its problems. Parker (2012: 116–17) briefly mentions the implications of the need for pleasure in conception in the case of rape, but does not elaborate. The impact of this theory can still be seen in contemporary discourse surrounding rape, most egregiously in American politician Todd Akin’s statements that in cases of “legitimate rape,” “female body has ways to try to shut the whole thing down” (Moore 2012, Alter 2014).
- 22 Rodrigues (2009: 432) notes that this links physiological assumptions with gender stereotypes. This moistness connects the female with the moon, most explicitly at *De facie* 939f: “no influence of dryness comes to us from [the moon] but much of moistness and femininity.” As the sun’s contrary, the moon has a softening (*malassō*) effect (940b). Cf. Nielsen (2015) on Aristotle’s arguments for women’s softness.
- 23 Kuefler 2001: 21
- 24 Parker 2012: 110; cited with censure.

- 25 Galen, *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body* 14.11.296, Arist. *Gen. an.* 726b33, Hippoc. *Regimen*, 1.34
- 26 Parker 2012: 111
- 27 Parker 2012: 112; cf. Hes. *Op.* 94
- 28 Cf. Parker 2012: 112 for more ancient fertility tests.
- 29 According to the Hippocratics, the womb is the cause of all “womanly” (*gunaikeia*) diseases (*Loc. hom.* 47). See also *Nat. mul.*, which treats the diseases caused by the womb extensively throughout the text.
- 30 In Plato’s account, there is a cognate animal in men’s bodies, but it causes little or no trouble (*Ti.* 91a). History soon forgets this animal in favor of the more troublesome female animal.
- 31 Hippoc. *Mul.* 1.7; *Nat. mul.* 3, 8, 44; Ps.-Arist. *Hist. an.* 582b23–5.
- 32 McInerney (2003: 326) comments that these medical theories also attempted to explain the cause of gender in terms that suggest the (inversion of) domination of male over female.
- 33 The citizen woman should not be confused or conflated with the citizen man; in the citizen woman, the rights of the citizen are not conferred to the woman but through the woman. Cf. Henry & James 2012: 85 and Chatelard 2016: 32 on the legal rights of citizen women.
- 34 Despite the rather dreary picture of women’s biology, it’s certainly not all as black and white as that. Philosophical work such as that of Aristotle takes a largely negative view of the female body and how this influences her well-being and social position in relation to men. However, there is ample evidence in the practical medical texts (even those with a philosophical basis) themselves that women were considered knowledgeable where their own bodies are concerned; several practical medical texts state a shared belief that women knew almost instantly if they had become pregnant (Ps.-Arist. *Hist. an.* 582b10–12; Hippoc. *Nat. puer.* 490; Gal. *Nat. fac.* 3.3.150). In some cases, the doctor was required to “defer to women’s superior knowledge.” Cf. King 1995: 141. Parker (2012: 122–123) briefly discusses the aim of ancient medical texts on women, identifies in them genuine concern for the well-being of the female patient, and deduces that woman is not seen simply as a tool for reproduction. He also writes that women were frequently well-respected medical practitioners themselves, so much so, in fact, that statues were erected in their honor.
- 35 Marshall 2019: 215
- 36 Marshall 2019: 221
- 37 Cf. *De facie* 940b.

- 38 Ingenkamp (2008: 263) considers Epameinondas a paradigmatic example of true *andreia*.
- 39 Allen (1975: 136) argues that Plato considers guardian women above worker men, even though a guardian man would still be superior to a guardian woman. Buchan (1999: 123) argues that Plato's guardian women are chosen for their breeding prospects and little more, and that ultimately his position radically disempowers women by denying them their femininity and sexuality and consigning them to the role of glorified child-bearers. Cf. Annas 1996: 3–12.
- 40 Cf. *Pl. Resp.* 388a.
- 41 Seneca the Younger writes that most men who would rather have been born a Regulus than a Maecenas, and those men that indicate that they would rather be a Maecenas are in actual fact saying that they would rather have been born a Terentia. Regulus is a figure worthy of emulation on account of his virtue, Maecenas the effeminate counterpoint who revels in the pleasures of life, and his wife Terentia is the embodiment of the feminine vices that plague Maecenas (*Prov.* 3.9–11).
- 42 Laqueur 1990: 8, see “Trickle-down ontology” in Chapter 5.
- 43 As in Lutz 1947.
- 44 For an overview of Pythagorean women and disputes about the authenticity of the letters, see Pomeroy 2013: 1–18. Iamblichus mentions by name 17 famous Pythagorean women (*VP* 36.267).
- 45 Baltes 2007: 417
- 46 Stadter (1965: 3–5) summarizes views on women's virtue from Socrates to Musonius Rufus; though brief, his short overview excellently captures the unsolved tensions and contradictions between theory and practice that will ultimately occupy Plutarch.
- 47 Aristotle also reasons that a man who is only as courageous as a manly woman is a coward (*Pol.* 1277b20). Epictetus considers it shameful to be more cowardly than a fugitive slave (*Arr. Epict. diss.* 3.26). Plutarch avoids a more precise definition of different virtues, choosing instead to treat all examples of virtue under the assertion that they are examples of *aretē* (*Mulier. virt.* 243d); cf. McInerney 2003: 322.
- 48 A view attributed also to Antisthenes (*Diog. Laert.* 6.1.12).
- 49 This issue is especially apparent in *On Love*, where Plutarch argues that there are many instances of women having displayed masculine (*andreion*) daring and courage, therefore they should not be excluded from displaying (presumably also masculine) friendship (769c). See “Beauty, masculinity, and the split self” in Chapter 4.

- 50 Cf. Tanga 2019: 76.
- 51 Tyrrell & Bennett 1999: 41.
- 52 Thus Plutarch also reports that Cornelia (may have) supported her son Caius Gracchus by secretly hiring foreign men to help him (CG 13.2).
- 53 According to Duff (1999a: 247–248), this is the only programmatic statement that justifies Plutarch’s use of parallelism; indeed, no such statement appears in the *Lives*. Duff also notes the allusion here to Plato’s *Meno*, discussed above. Stadter (1965: 10) also comments on the similarities between *Virtues* and the *Lives*.
- 54 Duff (1999a: 23) points out that Plutarch’s self-representation is the same in the opening to *Demosthenes* as it is in *Virtues*, in particular in his claim that he will present the reader with lesser-known exempla. Cf. also briefly Maria Aguilar 2007: 321–322.
- 55 Compare the similar remark at *Phocion* 3.4.
- 56 Marshall (2019: 211) notes that Plutarch doesn’t directly answer the question posed at the start of the treatise, and furthermore offers a different and much more complex assessment of the effect of gender on prophecy in the Delphic dialogues. Chapman (2011: 93ff) similarly points out the failures of Plutarch’s argumentation in supporting his stated aim, in particular his neglect of male virtues offered in comparison and the lack of *synkrisis*. McInerney (2003: 323) also points out the lack of *synkrisis* and dearth of male virtues to serve as counterpoints. Cf. Tanga 2019: xii, lxvii, Asirvatham 2019: 169. On female nature, cf. Pl. *Resp.* 453e, Plut. *De Iside* 368c, *De Pyth. orac.* 402d–e, *Amat.* 764d. See also “Reproductive difference” below in this chapter.
- 57 O’Brien Wicker 1978: 107
- 58 Asirvatham (2019: 168) notes that Eryxo is described as *andreios* by a barbarian, the Egyptian pharaoh Amasis, thus distancing Plutarch from the comment. On women’s *andreia*, see “Beauty, masculinity, and the split self” below.
- 59 Benefiel (2004: 12) argues that Plutarch’s use of etiology is central to his argument for the moral equality between men and women.
- 60 Similar to the conclusion of *Are Land or Sea Animals Cleverer?* Which shows that all animals have some sort of intelligence, though not all the same. Cf. Duff 1999a: 246.
- 61 On this, see Hemelrijk 2004: 58.
- 62 Caterine 2019: 199–200, cf. Chapman 2011: 115. Schmitt Pantel (2009: 47) also argues that the women in *Virtues* display exemplary loyalty and concern for their families and communities.
- 63 O’Brien Wicker 1978: 107

- 64 McNerney 2003: 320–321
- 65 McNerney 2003: 321; his assertion, however, that ascribing *andreia* to women implicitly approves of manly women, is problematic, since here a distinction must be made between body and soul. According to Tsouvala (2014: 192), Plutarch believed that women could display masculine virtue, which I would describe as masculinity-of-soul. There is thus a need to distinguish between *manly* women and *masculine* women which is discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.
- 66 Compare therefore the statement at *Phoc.* 3.4, which bears some similarities to *Mulier. virt.* 243c–d.
- 67 Brulé 2003: 159. Dean-Jones (2003: 184–185) notes the link between conceptions of anatomical difference and sexual roles in the *polis/oikos*.
- 68 Pomeroy 1975: 79, cf. Oikonopoulou 2017: 110. Richlin (2003: 204–205) emphasizes the ways in which this division of space produced and reproduced the cultural meaning of gender. This view is reflected in Xenophon’s *Oeconomicus* (cf. 7.2–3). Lysias complains that his nieces, “whose lives have been so well-ordered that they are ashamed to be seen even by their kinsmen,” were scandalized by the nocturnal arrival of a drunken Simon (3.6). Stadter (1965: 9) notes the reflection of this view in *Virtues*.
- 69 Pomeroy 1975: 82; cf. Nevett 2002: 82–83
- 70 “Public” is defined as any space where a person comes into contact with other members of society outside of their domestic group (that is, family and enslaved persons), while “private” is defined as those spheres where a person is alone or in contact with close relatives or enslaved people. Cf. Trümper (2012: 291) on the problems of defining “public” and “private” in contemporary scholarship, and Nevett (2010: 6) on the dangers of assuming the universality of these concepts. Some scholars prefer the use of terms such as “civic” and “domestic” instead of the dichotomy suggested by public-private/male-female (for example, Boatwright 2011: 108); however, women were not excluded de facto from civic life in the 1st century CE, therefore the term does not apply in this case.
- 71 Cohen 1989: 3–4
- 72 Cohen (1989: 3, 6) argues that while women in Classical Athens may not have operated in public and political contexts in the same way as men did, “it does not necessarily follow that they did not have public, social, and economic spheres of their own.” Cf. Hemelrijk 2016: 896.
- 73 Marasco 2008: 665, Hemelrijk 2004: 19, Tanga 2019: 73
- 74 Marius’ wife attended the gladiatorial games with the Syrian seer Martha at her feet (*Mar.* 17.2–3). Sulla met his wife Valeria (who was according to Plutarch quite chaste) at the gladiatorial games, in the days before men and

- women's seats were segregated (*Sull.* 35.3–5). Cf. Juvenal, *Satires* 6.457 on educated women. See also Milnor (2005: 158–185) on the unease with which the male ruling class approached female liberty and publicity.
- 75 Lin Foxhall (1999) gives a short but thorough account of the changes in local custom during Plutarch's time, focusing especially on the differences in the role and status of women in Greek and Roman law and society. Foxhall argues that these disparities caused some tension in the way authors like Plutarch thought about women. Stamatopoulou (2019: 212) argues that both Eumetis and Melissa function as exempla of female virtue in the context of the symposium, exemplified by their complete silence and their withdrawal from the festivities at the appropriate time. Clark (1981: 201) mentions that Roman women, though somewhat domestically bound, had the ability to move around in order to work and to visit friends, festivals and the circus. Cf. Rodrigues 2009: 434, Chapman 2011: 144.
- 76 Leão 2008: 486, cf. Tanga 2019: 79.
- 77 Epictetus describes her as “another Crates” (*Arr. Epict. diss.* 3.22). Cf. Kennedy 1999.
- 78 Hyp. 1.3, Isae. 8.18, both of which indicate that women talked with men at weddings. Cf. *Table Talk* 4.3, where a discussion about the great number of guests invited to weddings ends thus: “many or most of the activities relating to a wedding are in the hands of women, and where women are present it is necessary that their husbands also should be included” (667b). In Plato's *Laws*, the Athenian argues that men and women ought to eat together at public messes, both before and after marriage (780a–b), though this is not quite the same thing as attending a symposium together. In the *Symposium*, Diotima is quite present, even if not physically.
- 79 Cf. Hom. *Od.* 4.219–264 and 7.136–143, Burton 1998, Georgiadou 2011: 77, Neils 2012: 161, Kennedy 2015: 66–67, Silver 2017: 92ff, Stamatopoulou 2019: 210–211. Unfortunately, the material evidence for women's participation in symposia often focus on *hetairai*, but we do have some evidence of women as musicians on vases (Pipili 1998: 90), and inscriptions celebrating their fame as musicians and not as courtesans (for example, Polygnota at Delphi in the 2nd century BCE, Pomeroy 1977: 54). Rebecca Futo Kennedy (2015: 71–72) argues that the development of the *hetaira* in Classical Athens associates elite women who socialize with men, have bad reputations and the wealth to indulge in luxuries with women who are sexually available and/or foreign. *Hetairai* may therefore not be prostitutes as such, but wealthy women characterized as prostitutes because of their refusal to abide by the social and moral codes that dictate their behavior (Kennedy 2015: 71–72).

- 80 Pratt 2000: 51, Holland 2012: 212, Stehle 2012, Vivante 2007: 46, Finley 2002: 154. Cf. Aristoph. *Lys.* 327.
- 81 Cohen 1989: 8. According to Plato, it was Aspasia who composed Pericles' famous funeral oration (*Menex.* 249c), though Gruen (2011: 237) notes the elements of irony in the text.
- 82 Richlin 2003: 205. Other religious practices in Rome also require a virgin to complete certain rituals, such as the worship of Juno Sospita at Latium and rituals in honor of Diana (Holland 2012: 210). Both of these goddesses have surprisingly male characteristics and are depicted in military gear; it has been suggested that this could signify *virtus*, not just in the sense of "virtue," but specifically the male qualities of courage and bravery (D'Ambra 2007: 248).
- 83 Epictetus makes the oblique reference to "powerful friends in Rome both men and women" (*Arr. Epict. diss.* 3.7). Cf. Chatelard 2016: 31
- 84 Quintilian reflects favorably on the speech as an example of the value of women's education (*Inst.* 1.1.6–7).
- 85 Curiously, Plutarch doesn't mention this incident in *Antony*.
- 86 Aeschin. 2.148 & 152, Aristoph. *Vesp.* 568–575, Dem. 40.1, 19.310, 21.99
- 87 Trümper 2012: 290; Nevett 2010: 49; cf. Löw 2008. Löw's argument refers to the "institutionalization of spaces," that is, that similarity between space that generalizes the space and its function based on the repetitive action associated with it (2008: 37). However, she questions the assumption that all institutionalized spaces are approached in the same manner by all people (2008: 36–38). In Pompeii, inscriptions abound in which a woman, a husband and his wife, or a wife and her husband exhort passersby to vote for the candidate of their choice for office. These women can often be identified by name as enslaved- or freedwomen working as waitresses or in bakeries, and were thus most likely of the lower classes. Cf. *CIL* 4.913, 171, 1083, 3291, 3403 and 3527.
- 88 Cf. Cohen 1989: 7–8. Becker (2016) discusses the various occupations available to Roman women of differing status; she notes that hairdressing was an especially popular job among women. Other occupations include masseuse, personal attendant, doctor, pharmacist, nurse, midwife, singer, dancer and gladiator. Women were excluded from positions of power, especially in civic and political office. It has been argued that women's economic dealings in Classical Greece were generally limited to the value of a bushel of barley, though their ability to make economic transactions and control property increased as their wealth increased during the Hellenistic era and onwards; Lane Fox 2006: 181, cf. Biemann 2012. The so-called "law of the medimnus" is however only attested in two sources: Isaeus 10.10 and Aristophanes' *Eccl.*

- 1024–1025, and has been the subject of some scholarly concern; Hunter 1994: 22.
- 89 Cohen 2016: 714, cf. Ramsey 2016, Hemelrijk 2016: 899–900.
- 90 Becker 2016: 924
- 91 Cohen 2016: 716. Nikolaidis (1997: 28) argues that the higher position and more public role of the Roman matron compared to that of the Classical Athenian woman had a significant impact on the way Plutarch viewed women. Martin (1990: 11–15) gives an overview of the kind of work done by enslaved people, which is much the same as the work done by people from other classes. Many of these jobs required being out and about in public spaces, for example, fetching water or washing clothing (Aristoph. *Lys.* 327–331, Eur. *El.* 109–111). Gaius noted the disconnect between perceptions of women’s weakness and their active participation in the economy (*Inst.* 1.190–199).
- 92 Chatelard 2016: 30
- 93 Maria Aguilar 2007: 323
- 94 Dillon 2014: 61, see “Some generic considerations” in Chapter 2. Russell 1968: 131 notes similarities in theme between Plutarch, Cicero and Seneca.
- 95 Cf. Tanga 2019: xix–xxi on philosophical influence in *Virtues*.
- 96 Dillon 2014: 63, cf. Gill 2013: 345
- 97 Cf. Bonazzi (2012: 140), who argues that Plutarch throughout his works stressed the importance of a combination of *theoria* and *praxis*, and did not believe that either one or the other should be afforded philosophical primacy. For Plutarch, *theoria* and *praxis* cannot function separately and are in fact ultimately an epistemic unity. It is this notion that distinguishes him from the Peripatetics, who regarded things and activities as either *theoria* or *praxis* (Bonazzi 2012: 147).
- 98 He’s not alone; Juvenal all but spits venom when he says “there is nothing more intolerable than a wealthy woman” (*Sat.* 6.460). Women had gained immense wealth after the Second Punic War left the male population severely diminished. Cf. Akinboye & Efodzi 2017: 304.
- 99 A Stoic metaphor originating with Antipater of Tarsus, who uses it to demonstrate that marriage should be a complete union between husband and wife (*SVF* 3.255.14–16). Cf. Maria Aguilar 2007: 318.
- 100 Note the connotation to physical beauty, which is expressed in one form as a tanned complexion, denoting the physical activity of spending time outdoors. As Sartre (2011: 21) notes, this is the color of “well-mixed bronze, in which copper and tin are in the right proportions,” while women are lighter-skinned because they spend their time indoors.
- 101 Chapman 2011: 64–65

- 102 Beneker 2012: 34, cf. Maria Aguilar 2007: 309.
- 103 Plutarch repeats the trope of the *sōphrōn* woman who is disagreeable and always angry with her husband, which in *Advice* serves as justification for a husband's infidelity. Cf. Arr. *Epict. diss.* 4.1.
- 104 Cf. 759f, where Plutarch again mentions Phrynē alongside Laïs and Gnathaenion, indicating that sex work is the providence of Aphrodite, that is, physical instead of spiritual and therefore incapable of inspiring virtue. Brenk (1988: 470) considered this depiction of Semiramis to be positive, but later (Brenk 2008: 246–247) noted the problematic nature of this series of exempla. In *The Fortune of Virtue of Alexander*, Semiramis is superior to Sardanapalus because she mounted great expeditions despite being a woman, while he spent his days at home carding purple wool (336d). Compare the anecdote about Stratonice at *Pompey* 36.3. Cf. Diod. 2.20.3–5, Tanga 2019: 85, 88.
- 105 Kuefler 2001: 62
- 106 Cf. Brenk 2008: 247, Chapman 2011: 73–74.
- 107 Lyons 2003: 93–95. Women as commodities and political tools is a recurring theme in Plutarch's work also. A short maxim in *Sayings of Kings and Commanders*, in which Poltys attempts to make peace between the Greeks and the Trojans by offering an exchange of beautiful women (174c), succinctly demonstrates the potential usefulness of women as objects of exchange. Cf. *Apophth. reg.* 184b, 192a.
- 108 Pisiás argues that wealth makes women “frivolous, haughty, inconstant and vain” (*Amat.* 752f). Cf. Arr. *Epict. diss.* 3.1 & 4.9 on the effeminacy of adornment. Prodicus of Ceos is said to have written a fable in which virtue and vice appear to Herakles in the guise of women, the former in plain attire and the latter richly adorned (Philostr. *VS* 482). Cf. Gruen 2011: 63–64.
- 109 Hall 1989: 79–80, Kim 2013: 26, Vlassopoulos 2013: 8, 43
- 110 Castriota 2005: 93, cf. Joshel & Murnaghan 2001: 8
- 111 Plutarch hesitates to call Lamia a prostitute outright, but characterizes the women surrounding her as *pornai* (*Demetr.* 24.1) and *hetairai* (27.1). He does have Lysimachus call her a *pornē* (25.6) and says that she had complete control over Demetrius (29.4). Diogenes Laertius says Lamia was a citizen of noble family (5.5.76); Athenaeus calls her an *aulētris*, flute-player (577e–f, cf. 128b); Plutarch also says she was initially a gifted flute-player but afterward gained renown for her prowess in love (*Demetr.* 16.3–4). Cf. Wheatley & Dunn 2020: 428–430.
- 112 Lamia appears as a hermaphrodite in Aristophanes' *Wasps* (1035) and was connected also with sharks and Scylla (Athen. 306d), implying an aspect of monstrosity. According to Plutarch, the mythical Lamia sleeps

- with her eyes stored in a jar (*De curio*. 515f–516a). Crates is said to have written a play entitled *Lamia* (Athenaeus 418c). Diodorus Siculus reports that she was initially an exceptionally beautiful queen, but the loss of her children turned her heart savage and so disfigured her face (20.41.3). Cf. Hor. *Ars Poet.* 340, Walcot 1998: 176. Susan Jacobs (2017: 337n28) notes the similarities between Plutarch’s characterizations of Lamia in *Demetrius* and Cleopatra in *Antony*.
- 113 Cf. Castriota 2005: 96 and the connection between horses, the color purple, gold and silver, and barbarians at *Artaxerxes* 23.5.
- 114 Eurydice and Clea both were evidently highly educated women; cf. *Conj. praec.* 138b–c, 145c–d. van Hoof (2010: 27) comments on the value of education and culture as “symbolic capital.”
- 115 In *Advice*, Plutarch supplies Eurydice with a rather specific and quite extensive list of luxuries she ought to avoid: gold, emeralds and scarlet (141e), gold-embroidered shoes, bracelets, anklets, purple and pearls (142c), silk (145f) and perfume (*Cons. ux.* 609c).
- 116 Mattern 2008: 91, 130. Berg (2019: 8–10) notes that women and enslaved persons were othered in similar ways, both physically and intellectually. It is therefore necessary for social philosophers like Plutarch to accentuate their differences in order to avoid any sort of solidarity growing between them.
- 117 Cohen 1989: 8–9
- 118 Cohen 1989: 9
- 119 Perhaps a rather unsubtle nod to the guardianship of women, *tutela mulierum*.
- 120 A shortened version of the anecdote appears in the *Parallel Stories*, in which the woman is called Rhetana (313a).
- 121 As also the allegations against Pericles (*Per.* 13.9–10). Enslaved persons are frequently characterized in gendered language that implies a natural weakness and it is through this weakness that they are subordinated (cf. *Pel.* 3.1). Plutarch reports with disapproval how Lysimachus had surrendered his army on account of thirst and upon taking that first drink of cold water lamented that he had made himself a slave for such a brief pleasure (*Apophth. reg.* 183e, *De tuenda* 126e–f, *De sera* 555d). His soul had yielded to the demands of his body and his inability to resist this onslaught directly led to his surrender.
- 122 Tacitus lauds “slaves whose fidelity defied even torture” (*Hist.* 1.3).
- 123 Also noted by Chapman (2011: 125). In *Alexander*, Timocleia is described as *sophron*, which Carney (2019: 147) notes here probably refers to sexual moderation.

- 124 Cf. Chapman 2011: 126. Caterine (2019: 203–207) considers the juxtaposition between the king Alexander and the rapacious mercenary (also an Alexander) central to Plutarch’s exposition of Timocleia’s virtue, which she argues is equal to that of Alexander. She does not, however, note the role of either gender or class difference in the expression of virtue. Carney (2019: 148) notes that Timocleia is granted clemency on account of her bravery and nobility, and thus that the resolution may have been different were it not for those factors.
- 125 Consider the anecdote related by Valerius Maximus in which a loyal slave takes the place of his enslaver Urbinius Panapio by putting on his dress and his ring. The unnamed man is then killed in the place of Panapio, an act described by Valerius as *admirabilis fides* (6.8.6). This entire chapter is dedicated to servile loyalty.
- 126 In all three versions the name of the woman is reported as Telesippa, but the lover is either Antigenes or Eurylochus.
- 127 Thus Richlin (2014: 37) notes that lower-class women couldn’t be prosecuted for adultery, “as if such women had no honor.” Roskam (2004: 270–271) argues that Plutarch’s position of mildness towards enslaved people (for example, in *Cat. maj.* 5 & *Crass.* 2.5–7) was not the result of respect for their humanity, which is irreconcilable with slavery, but the desire for the slaver to be virtuous.
- 128 Cf. Asirvatham (2005) on the entanglement of Greek and Roman identities in Plutarch’s portrait of Alexander. She argues (2005: 111) that Alexander’s “*philosophia* is a civilizing power.” See also Roskam (2004: 259–264) who notes that attaining virtue Hellenizes the barbarian so that they cease being barbarian as far as is possible.
- 129 ὄρα is suggestive of the beauty of youth, thus Camma is also a *parthenos*.
- 130 O’Brien Wicker (1978: 155) comments on the traditionally feminine qualities for which Plutarch praises Camma.
- 131 Thus also Plutarch at *Controlling Anger* 457a–b, cf. *An vit.* 498d–e. See also Nikolaidis 1986: 230, Blomqvist 1995: 176n4, Chapman 2011: 150–153, Thumiger 2020: 746.
- 132 Allard, Montlahuc & Rothstein 2018: 33
- 133 Castriota 2005: 99, cf. Gruen 2011: 12–13.
- 134 Cf. Val. Max. 4.4 on Cornelia’s love for her children. Women could gain freedom from tutelage by bearing three or more children (Berg 2019: 8). Dixon (2007: 11) discusses Cornelia’s posthumous honors, including her statue, and the way she honored the memory of her sons after their deaths.
- 135 Beneker 2012: 43. He does not mention the succeeding scene in chapter 15 of *Brutus*. He does, however, make excellent points about the exemplarity of

- the relationship between Porcia and Brutus and its connection to themes present in *On Love* (2012: 40–41). Cf. Maria Aguilar 2007: 322–323, Buszard 2010: 87–88.
- 136 Marasco 2008: 673
- 137 Marasco 2008: 671
- 138 Caterine (2019: 201) adds that the virtuous woman also “speaks well and frankly” and is “an advocate for other women.” I do not consider either of these traits central to the definition of female virtue, in the first place because women’s *parrhēsia* is highly regulated, and in the second place because there is not sufficient evidence in Plutarch to support the notion of female advocacy as a virtue in the broad sense.
- 139 Chapman 2011: 5, Le Corsu 1981: 274; cf. O’Brien Wicker 1978: 109, Schmitt Pantel 2009: 47 who notes that women are most often concerned with the collective good, and Jazdzewska 2015: 425 who identifies three central virtues of the wife in *De soll. an.*: love for her husband (*philandria*), love for her children (*philostorgia/philoteknia*) and care for the household.
- 140 Thus according to Duff (1999b: 314), “the practice of virtue ... is to be aided by an understanding of vice.”
- 141 Vizier 1998: 79
- 142 O’Brien Wicker (1978: 115) argues that only two negative female exempla appear in *Virtues*.
- 143 Cf. Maria Aguilar (2008) for a survey of the uses and meaning(s) of *pharmakon* in Plutarch’s work. She notes especially (2008: 762, 765) that the combination of *pharmaka* and magic (*mageia*) is negative, as in the case of Olympias at *Alex. 2.4*. Cleopatra is also connected with *pharmaka* in the sense of drugs in *Antony*, as well as potions (*philtrā*) and spells (*goēteia*), and trickery (*magganeuma*), cf. *Ant. 25.4, 37.4, 60.1, 71.4*. The combination of two or more of these terms suggest a negative moral judgment. Pisis makes the negative connection between women’s sexuality, luxury and use of drugs in *On Love* as well (752c).
- 144 So too in the case of Pieria and her mother Iapygia, who only travel to the festival of Artemis with the permission of Pythes (*Mulier. virt. 254a*). Cf. McNerney 2003: 338.
- 145 Cf. Tanga 2019: 172.
- 146 Schmitt Pantel 2009: 53
- 147 Plutarch relates this story in some detail in *Pelopidas*; see *Parallel Lives*. Cf. Georgiadou 1997: 226, Tanga 2019: 204–205, 223.
- 148 Blomqvist (1997: 86) comments that Aretaphila is a rather exceptional case of a woman using the methods commonly attributed to vicious women to achieve her goals, the difference being that she doesn’t act out of self-interest

but out of love for her fellow citizens, cf. Chapman 2011: 119, Tanga 2019: 184–185. According to McNerney (2003: 339), this anecdote indicates that women’s virtuous actions are often also morally ambiguous. The same may be said of those anecdotes in which women weaponize their bodies and/or sexuality. Cf. Maria Aguilar 2008: 765.

- 149 On Plutarch’s characterization of Calbia, see Tanga 2019: lxx.
- 150 Plutarch assumes a broad range of knowledge from Eurydice on topics that include Plato (*Conj. praec.* 140e, 142a, 144f), the Stoics (142f) and the Pythagoreans (142d, 145f), mythology (139a, 141a, 141f, 142d, 144b), history (139e, 141a, 141b–c, 141e, 142c, 143a, 143c, 144a, 144f), mathematics (140a) and literature (139c, 139e, 141d, 141e, 143d, 143e, 143f, 144b, 144c, 145c, 145d, 146a).
- 151 Cf. Opsomer 2007a: 154–155.
- 152 Nussbaum 1994: 322–324, Engel 2003: 269. Cf. the contrasting view of Philodemus, who appears to deem women weaker than men, though it is unclear whether he considers this a natural or cultural vice (*Lib.* 22a, Tsouna 2007: 109).
- 153 Hawley 2007: 168

A VIRTUOUS IDEAL

- 1 Roskam 2004: 247, 249
- 2 McNamara 1999: 152–3, 160. On marriage as a locus of healing the soul from the irrationality peculiar to women, see Becker 2010.
- 3 van Hoof 2010: 30–31, cf. Collins 2015: 39–40.
- 4 Thus Pelling 1988a: 10–18, Duff 1999a: 68–70. Cf. Duff 2007: 5–7, Durán Mañas 2008: 636 and Russell 1968: 136–138, who argues that philosophers like Plutarch “preached” to their audience.
- 5 van Hoof 2010: 23, 64–65. Stevenson (1944: 22) argues that the implicitness of moral statements has the benefit of modifying the behavior of others instead of creating an immediate awareness of the inability to obey an explicit command.
- 6 Kotzé 2011: 5–6, Collins 2015: 1. Jordan (1986: 309–312) calls protreptic an “exhortation to philosophy,” but notes that the practice of writing protreptics is not limited to philosophy. Collins (2015: 17–18) identifies four key elements of protreptic: (1) it is *dialogic* and engages the voices of its competition, (2) it is *agonistic* in that it competes for the audience’s attention in the “marketplace of ideas,” (3) it is *situational*, bound by context and the expectations of the audience, and (4) it is *rhetorical* and aims at persuasion.
- 7 Jordan 1986: 332–333, cf. briefly Maria Aguilar 2007: 318 on this function in *Advice*.

- 8 Collins 2015: 36–37
- 9 van Hoof 2014: 142. Plutarch's *Lives* have also been characterized in similar terms; see Duff 1999a: 68–69.
- 10 Gill 2013: 342–343, cf. Bonazzi 2012: 140
- 11 cf. Kotzé 2011: 7.
- 12 *De cohib. ir.* 455e–f
- 13 Cf. Opsomer (2016a).
- 14 Jordan 1986: 312–317. He also connects protreptic to the use of *gnōmai* and comments on its connection with the analogy between the philosopher and the physician.
- 15 I therefore view Ziegler's (1951: 768–825) categorization of Plutarch's works as helpful, but also fundamentally flawed. Ziegler subdivided the *Moralia* into categories according to the content of the work. His re-categorization was influential and immensely valuable, but by no means faultless. The distinction between popular philosophy and theoretical philosophy in particular is superficial, given the fact that the two “genres” are mutually supportive.
- 16 For example, in Maria Aguilar 2007: 307–308 and Chapman 2011: 6–7, see Chapter 5.
- 17 At *On Isis* 352f, Plutarch briefly suggests reasons why Egyptian priests wear linen (it doesn't easily breed lice) before telling Clea that the topic is treated elsewhere. The reference is to *Table Talk* 2.9 (642c–e), where the question of why sheep bitten by wolves produce wool that breeds lice is raised.
- 18 See *Audience* above. Jordan (1986: 309) notes that protreptic takes different forms depending on a number of criteria, including each particular philosophical school's conception of the *telos* of philosophy.
- 19 *Advice* is not the only work addressed to person(s) who have already demonstrated their ability to heed the advice contained therein; *On Brotherly Love* takes a similar approach, as argued by van Hoof (2010: 45–46). Jordan (1986: 313) notes the connections and overlap between protreptic and paraenetic.
- 20 van Hoof 2010: 8–9
- 21 Cf. Beneker (2016) and “Psycho-somatic degradation and the threat of non-existence” in Chapter 5.
- 22 van Hoof 2010: 38
- 23 Cf. Collins 2015: 24.
- 24 Cf. Muccioli (2008). Marasco (2008: 664) comments on the importance of broad study for the ethical development of women, Chlup (2000: 154) on the use of metaphysics for practical decision-making. Reydam-Schils (1999: 41)

- notes that it was the Stoics who first turned philosophy as a unified discipline into a way of life.
- 25 Jordan 1986: 323
- 26 Thus Collins (2015: 5) argues that protreptic demands that the convert accept the intellectual argument and engage it actively by adopting the lifestyle associated with it.
- 27 Hence Adeimantus' demand in Book 5 of the *Republic* that Socrates elaborate on his views on the community of property, including women and children (*Resp.* 423e–424a), since “it has an important bearing on whether a state has been constituted correctly or wrongly” (449c–d). On philosophy's relation to structures of power, cf. briefly Vizier (1998).
- 28 Dillon 2014: 62, who notes that this is a common feature of Middle Platonism. Cf. *De sera* 550d and the very first sentence of *On Isis* (351c): “All good things, my dear Clea, sensible men must ask from the gods; and especially do we pray that from those mighty gods we may, in our quest, gain a knowledge of themselves, so far as such a thing is attainable by men”; and a little further (351e): “Therefore the effort to arrive at the Truth, and especially the truth about the gods, is a longing for the divine.”
- 29 Bonazzi 2012: 144–146, cf. *Adv. Col.* 1126b–d, *De sera* 550d
- 30 Critchley 2007: 53–57, cf. van Hoof (2010: 53–54) on Plutarch's strategies for creating this sense of opposition, the “us” and “them” which animates moral growth.
- 31 Critchley 2007: 62
- 32 Ethical demands are therefore constantly being tested for approval, which at least in part explains how ethical principles are bound to their context and can be modified by it.
- 33 Critchley 2007: 17–18
- 34 Cf. van Hoof (2010: 49) on convincing the reader to change their mode of being by actively involving them in the drama of the text, and Plutarch's strategies for doing so, which includes the use of positive and negative exempla.
- 35 Foucault 1978: 37–38
- 36 Foucault 1984c: 195
- 37 Vegge 2008: 53
- 38 I. Hadot 1986: 445, 452–453; Tsouna 2007: 84–85
- 39 On vice as a disease of the soul and God as the divine physician, see *De sera* 551d.
- 40 I. Hadot 1986: 453, cf. Stadter 2015: 240, who notes that moral growth depends on the recognition of one's weakness and a desire to improve, *Animi. an corp.*

- 50of–501a on the (im)possibility of self-diagnosis and 501b for the view that philosophers are doctors for the sicknesses of the soul.
- 41 Rabbow 1954: 23–25, P. Hadot 1995: 84–85, cf. Stadter 2015: 240.
- 42 P. Hadot 1995: 85, van Hoof 2010: 57
- 43 I. Hadot 1986: 453–54, P. Hadot 1995: 85
- 44 Rabbow 1954: 25, 43, a theme also at work in *De sera*.
- 45 I. Hadot 1969: 163
- 46 I. Hadot 1969: 165–166. Rabbow (1954) also pays special attention to the role of the student in their own moral education.
- 47 Cf. Foxhall 1999: 138, Valverde Sánchez 2003: 444, O’Brien Wicker 1978: 114.
- 48 According to Foxhall (1999: 145), Plutarch’s discomfort around women and their actions stemmed not from their public visibility but from their increased ability to act autonomously. Brenk (1988: 460–461) notes that *On Love* can only be properly understood against the complex social changes in women’s social roles in the early empire. His comment that “such a vast subject ... requires great competence, and risks betrayal in male hands” is wonderfully self-aware.
- 49 Esther Ng (2008) gives a thorough overview of laws governing women’s activities in various parts of the Roman empire.
- 50 Cf. Vizio 1998: 64–65, 69, who describes Foucault’s understanding of sexuality as “the invention of a regulation of relations of the self to the self.”
- 51 Foucault 1984c: 76
- 52 See, for example, Stadter 1999: 182; Patterson 1999: 129; Goessler 1999: 115; Tsouvala 2014: 191.
- 53 Foucault 1984c: 83
- 54 Cf. *On Wealth* 528b, where Plutarch argues that holding lavish banquets is an admission by the host “that their wealth is for others.” George (2002: 51) argues that the power of the slave disguise relied on the indistinguishability of enslaved persons, who couldn’t use their dress to assert their identities in the same way as Roman elites could. So too their social identity was intricately bound up with that of their enslavers.
- 55 Foucault 1984c: 85
- 56 Foucault 1984c: 86–87
- 57 Cf. Foucault 1984c: 88–90. In *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Foucault makes the distinction between the Platonic practice of self-knowledge as the recognition of participation in divine reason and the later, Stoic and Christian practice of self-knowledge as the recognition of oneself (1982a: 422).
- 58 Some modern personas engage in the same type of image-building, in particular the character of the tech bro as relatable nerd. One might also

- consider the conspicuous moderation of Warren Buffet as an exercise in characterization through which his obscene wealth becomes less offensive on account of his relatability. But that's not what this book is about.
- 59 Coins from the early imperial period show women in the Greek provinces who attained some of the highest offices; Ulpia Carminia Claudiana is commemorated as *stephanephoros* at Attuda in Turkey (CIG 2782), Secunda was *prytaneus* of Cymae, Flavia Asclepia became *strategos* of Germe, Marcia Aurelia Glauca was *grammateus* of Tralles, and Menodora of Pamphylia was gymnasiarch and *demiourgos* amongst other titles; MacMullen 1980: 213–14. See *IGRom* 3.800–802 on Menodora and her family's wealth and influence. These women who became public figures were often also known for their generosity as benefactors to the city; Biemann 2012: 239.
- 60 Gasparyan 2014: 2, cf. Butler 1990: 42, Vizier 1998: 80–81.
- 61 Halberstam 1998: 87
- 62 Cf. Roskam 2004: 245 and Bonazzi 2012: 142–143, who also notes that Plutarch considers a purely contemplative life to be akin to hedonism. Still, while he doesn't necessarily approve of it, he does recognize it as a choice available to men (cf. Maria Aguilar 2007: 312). Thus he describes Epaminondas, a man whose poverty was hereditary and who chose to live a philosophical life, in positive terms despite his choosing not to marry (*Pel.* 3.3, 4.3, 26.4).
- 63 Valverde Sánchez 2003: 453
- 64 Cf. Hes. *Op.* 274–280. Duff (1999a: 39–40) notes that Plutarch's work gives the reader characters that ought to help him make good moral choices. That, of course, does not mean that Plutarch doesn't also have an idea of what the "good" or "correct" choice might be and try to guide his reader to make that choice.
- 65 Thus Widdows 2018: 199–201. So too Roskam (2004: 253) notes that *philanthrōpia* in Plutarch is ultimately self-serving, even manipulative, and "one can even force the other to serve one's own conception of the 'common good.'"
- 66 Hemelrijk 2004: 67. Plutarch was the author of a now-lost work entitled *That a Woman Too Should Be Educated* (fr. 128).
- 67 Halberstam 1998: 93–94, 109, 143
- 68 Vizier 1998: 69
- 69 Cf. Berg 2019: 5.
- 70 In Xenophon's *Ischomachus* telling his wife that proving herself better than he is she would make him her servant (*Oec.* 7.42), there lies the implication that the virtuous wife could dominate her vicious husband. Ismenodora's guiding role in her marriage to Bacchon carries a similar implication. This aspect often remains unspoken. Cf. Beneker 2012: 36–37.

- 71 Halberstam 1998: 78
- 72 Foxhall 1999: 147
- 73 George (2002: 46–47) documents the bodily signs of enslavement in Roman society, many of which were indicative of ethnicity and moral inferiority. She notes that beauty was a double-edged sword for enslaved persons, who might thereby gain a position as a domestic servant, but also be more vulnerable to sexual exploitation by slavers. For the same reason enslaved boys were often circumcised to prevent their maturing.
- 74 George 2002: 44
- 75 Vizier (1998: 71) describes this aspect of Foucault’s enterprise in *The History of Sexuality* with remarkable insight (though divorced still from the female subject), noting in particular the production of sexuality as a mode of being through which one can “exert control over somebody else by first establishing it over oneself.” Cf. Foucault 1984c: 31. In *Spartan Women*, Plutarch reports on a woman who had been approached by a man who intended to seduce her; her response to the proposition points out her obedience to her father first, which had been transferred to her husband in marriage (242b).
- 76 In the *Life of Solon*, Plutarch writes that Solon had created a law that forbade enslaved people to practice gymnastics and pederasty, which had the double effect of elevating these to the status of honorable (*kalōn*) and dignified (*semnōn*) practices and further entrenching class difference by branding certain people as unworthy (*Sol.* 1.3).
- 77 du Bois 1998: 86, cf. Richlin (1998) in the same volume.
- 78 du Bois 1998: 89–90
- 79 And perhaps also as animals reflect aspects of divinity (*De Iside* 355b, 382a).
- 80 Excellently phrased by Allard, Montlahuc & Rothstein (2018: 33): “Women, at least the legitimate wives of citizens, provided a mirror image of their husbands, based on social expectations.” Compare the image of the lover at *Phaedrus* 255d, where the beloved sees an image of himself in the eyes of the lover as in a mirror but does not recognize it.
- 81 Duff 1999a: 32–33, cf. Duff 2007: 12, Maria Aguilar 2007: 313, Stadter 2015: 241.
- 82 Consider McInerney’s (2003: 321) comment on the martyrdom of Perpetua through which she becomes masculine.
- 83 I have chosen these concepts to represent the problem in contemporary terms, not to suggest that Plutarch explicitly makes this precise distinction in the Greek text.
- 84 Halberstam 1998: 2, 72
- 85 Halberstam 1998: 77
- 86 See Becker (2016: 922–924) on the restrictions on Roman women’s daily lives.

- 87 Effeminate men were considered both passive and passionate, qualities that were more properly assigned to women (Edwards 1993: 81). On the similarity between Ismenodora and Isis, particularly in name but also with reference to her activity, see Brenk (1988), who also connects Bacchon with Dionysos/Osiris (esp. 469).
- 88 Pisia condemns Ismenodora on the grounds that she has rejected many viable suitors and settled on young Bacchon out of a desire to command and to dominate (*Amat.* 752f).
- 89 See Valverde Sánchez (2003: 441–442) for a brief overview of the tradition within which *On Love* is situated. Widdows (2018: 17ff) details some of the ways the connection between beauty and virtue manifests in contemporary society.
- 90 Cf. *Pl. Char.* 154d–e, Arist. *EN* 1157a6–12
- 91 Sartre (2011: 20) makes this connection between beauty, virtue and education.
- 92 On this point see Epictetus, *Discourses* 3.1, who argues that all the finery and adornment in the world cannot make the unjust, immoderate and intemperate person beautiful. Cf. Beneker 2012: 37.
- 93 The text is outright polemical and should not be read as a faithful representation of Stoic ideas; cf. Bonazzi 2012: 141–142. Gilbert Barberà (2007: 127) briefly comments on Plutarch’s engagement with Stoic theories on love and beauty.
- 94 Jorgenson (2018: 56) notes that in Plato’s *Timaeus* already the idea that physical form and character are connected. Cf. van Hoof (2010: 60) on the importance of habituation for curbing and training the irrational part of the soul.
- 95 Sartre 2011: 21
- 96 Boys-Stones 2018a: 111–112
- 97 Carnes (1998: 110) comments that this schema amounts to an erasure of the object of desire, cf. Maria Aguilar 2007: 313. See also Valverde Sánchez (2003) and Rist (2001) on the influence of Plato evident in *On Love*. Brown (1988) argues that Plato subverts the traditional masculine discourse of the *polis* by making the entire philosophical endeavor feminine, but does not elaborate on how she sees Plato’s characterization of philosophy as being female, nor does she explain why she thinks that it is female souls that finally gain access to the forms; one assumes that this case rests on the gender of the nouns ἡ φέειόφι(and ἡ ψυχῆ. Dillon (1985: 107–108) warns against reading too much into grammatical femininity, since it does not always translate into what he calls “functional femininity.”
- 98 Boys-Stones 2018a: 115–116, cf. also briefly Duff 1999a: 38 and Swain 1989: 62–63 on the relationship between character and habituation, and *De sera* 551e–f.

- Sartre (2011: 21) notes that for the Greeks, beauty is “the translation of less ephemeral virtues, or at least should be accompanied by such virtues.” Cf. Martin de Jesus (2012: 96).
- 99 Blomqvist (1997: 83) notes that Plutarch often refrains from describing unvirtuous women as “beautiful,” preferring to characterize them as possessing allure or erotic appeal. Cf. Le Corsu 1981: 271.
- 100 Platonically speaking. It is my view that this innate connection between moral depravity and physical deformity is part of a system that discriminates in a multitude of ways and props up ableism too. See, for example, *An seni* 791d–e, where Plutarch argues that men should be discouraged from engaging in public affairs not because they are old, but because they are sick and disabled, and to summon instead those who are competent to serve regardless of age. A similar comment which casts obesity in a negative light is made at *On Isis* 353a, where the body is an encasement of the soul and as such any excess flesh supposedly hinders the search for knowledge and the cultivation of virtue. Thus the praise for lean bodies at *Lycurgus* 17.4–5.
- 101 Cf. Ingenkamp 1971: 75.
- 102 van Hoof (2010: 54–55) notes this aspect of Plutarch’s practical ethics, which turns on the fact of the other through which the self is constituted. Cf. Jorgenson 2018: 15–16.
- 103 Rist (2001), Maria Aguilar (2007: 313) and Gilibert Barberà (2007) consider *On Love* a development of the Platonic theory of Love. Cf. Opsomer 2007a: 160–161 for a discussion of the arguments in *On Love* in relation to Plutarch’s moral psychology.
- 104 See Georgiadou (2011) on Platonic intertexts and irony in *On Love*. Foucault (1984c: 195–196) comments that the traits ascribed to Ismenodora are significant because they are the same traits that characterize the pederast in the traditional model.
- 105 Nehamas 2007: 2, cf. Valverde Sánchez 2003: 445.
- 106 See Gilibert Barberà (2007: 127) on love as *anamnēsis* in *On Love*. Martin de Jesus (2012: 94) argues that *On Love* aims to legitimize conjugal love both ethically and philosophically.
- 107 Hence Foucault (1984c: 192) notes that reflection on pederasty started out as a reflection on pleasure, but by the time of Plutarch, its decline will be marked by engagement with the exact same question. Cf. Chapman 2011: 88–89.
- 108 Referring to the common medical opinion at the time that women are wetter and colder than men; see Chapter 3.
- 109 On the negative stereotypes attached to Ismenodora throughout the dialogue, see Georgiadou 2011: 77–78.

- 110 Gilabert Barberà 2007: 124
- 111 Cf. Kuefler (2001: 21) on Roman notions of sexual difference with reference to the Latin equivalent for *malakia*, *mollitia*.
- 112 Cf. Sartre 2011: 23, Gilabert Barberà 2000: 39.
- 113 Halperin 1990: 30, Sartre 2011: 25, Krenkel 2006: 472, Brisson 2002: 41, 61. See Dover (1989: 103–105) on the assimilation of the passive partner to the role of a woman or a foreigner, which in effect denies his citizenship. Valverde Sánchez (2003: 443) notes the syncretic nature of this section of the text, in which pederastic and conjugal love are examined comparatively.
- 114 Maria Aguilar (2007: 314) notes that Daphnaeus also turns the appeal to Solon on its head here.
- 115 Gilabert Barberà (2000: 38) comments that Protogenes makes pederastic love out to be spiritual, opposing it to the somatic love of women. Plutarch will then later combine the two in his argument for the sanctity of heteroconjugal love. Cf. Foucault 1984c: 198.
- 116 Here also the question of consent is broached. Plutarch argues, though briefly, that lack of consent turns young men vicious, who have been forced to yield, leading them down a path of hate, distrust and vengeance, cf. Cole (1984). Aristotle links passion and passivity in men to deformity in the genitals (such as that found in eunuchs), which is only a small step away from becoming female ([Arist.] *Pr.* 4.26, cf. *Gen. an.* 775a). According to Maria Aguilar (2007: 308), Daphnaeus is an alter-ego for Plutarch. Cf. Dover 1994: III.
- 117 Cf. Foucault 1984c: 199–200.
- 118 Butler 1993: 18, Foucault 1978: 45, see also Chapter 5.
- 119 Foucault 1978: 41–43
- 120 Valverde Sánchez (2003: 448–449) comments on this aspect of the text.
- 121 Jazdzewska (2015: 430) notes that Plutarch's anthropomorphism of the kingfisher, which exemplifies uxorial virtue, emphasizes the conjugal bond beyond its procreational function.
- 122 Cf. Sartre 2011: 39.
- 123 Cf. Valverde Sánchez 2003: 450.
- 124 Valverde Sánchez 2003: 444, cf. Maria Aguilar 2007: 315, Tsouvala 2008: 713–714, Foucault 1984c: 205.
- 125 Beneker 2012: 18, 23, cf. Maria Aguilar 2007: 314–315. Aristotle did not exclude the marital relationship from his analysis of virtuous *philia*, provided that each partner is morally good according to their particular virtue (*EN* 1162a24–27).
- 126 Cf. Maria Aguilar 2007: 315, Duff (2008: 198–199) also notes that beauty is problematized in *Alcibiades*, where the hero's body and soul are not equally beautiful.

- 127 Cf. *Conj. praec.* 138e–f, *Virt. mor.* 448d–f. Beneker (2012: 27) also notes that *erōs* is usually considered an appetite, but Plutarch seems to treat it as an emotion.
- 128 Cf. Maria Aguilar 2007: 312 and Plutarch’s comment about Ariadne as a lover of virtue at *Thes. et Rom.* 1.5.
- 129 Bassi 2003: 25
- 130 Sartre 2011: 2–3, cf. Richlin (2003), Duff 1999a: 211. On *andreia* as a military virtue, see Asirvatham 2019: 158–162. Cf. *Ages.* 1.2.
- 131 Sartre 2011: 9, 33
- 132 Roller 2018: 79, 94
- 133 Bassi 2003: 42
- 134 Russell 1973: 108 (cf. 1966a: 143), who also notes that both pairs are among the later works in the series. Roskam & Verdegem (2016: 170) argue that *Controlling Anger* provides the theoretical background for *Coriolanus*. Cf. Russell 1968: 142–143, Pelling 1988b: 260, Duff 1999a: 212–213, Verdegem 2010: 88–96, Stadter 2015: 237–238, Opsomer 2016a: 116.
- 135 For *Antony*, see “Psycho-somatic degradation and the threat of non-existence” in Chapter 5, for *Alcibiades*, “Endings and digressions” in Chapter 6.
- 136 Cf. *Virt. mor.* 451d–e
- 137 Cf. Ingenkamp 2008: 267. Georgiadou (1997: 46) argues that bravery is a prominent theme in both *Lives*. *Andreia* is also a physical quality at *Alex.* 71.1
- 138 Asirvatham 2019: 162–163, thus Bassi (2003: 44, 46) also argues that the use of *andreia* can indicate emasculation. Cf. *Alc.* 13.3.
- 139 Cf. Kuefler 2001: 19–20 on the destabilization of this idea in the figure of the eunuch.
- 140 Cf. *Cor. et Alc.* 3.3.
- 141 Asirvatham 2019: 164, see also *Parallel Lives*.
- 142 Also at *De soll. an 970e* and *De adul. amic.* 74c.
- 143 Cf. Russell 1966a: 145, who connects these characteristics and particularly the lack of Greek *paideia* with Marius’ cruelty and ambition later in his life.
- 144 For Aristotle, *andreia* is the mean between *deilia* and *thrasteia* (*Eth. Nic.* III6a4–12).
- 145 Valerius’ description of Hypsicrateia is similar to Plutarch’s, but he adds that she cut her hair short as well (6.6).
- 146 Russell 1973: 109
- 147 Roller (2018: 90) also notes the implication of manliness in the equestrian statue of Cloelia.
- 148 Sartre 2011: 9, cf. *Lyc.* 27.1–2.
- 149 Bassi 2003: 47–48, cf. Thuc. *Hist.* 2.39.4.

- 150 It is in this context that the only reference to female homoeroticism in Plutarch (to the best of my knowledge) occurs. Having become masculine in ways that prepare them for the specific conditions of womanhood, with particular attention to childbearing, the girls too found lovers among the good and noble (*kalos kai agathos*) women (18.4). The statement is rather neutral, equating this practice with pederasty and accentuating its psychagogic function as an exercise in the cultivation of virtue. Cf. *Ages.* 20.6.
- 151 Cf. Chapman 2011: 46–50.
- 152 Bauer and Danker 2000 (BDAG). Cf. *Apophth. Lac.* 2.19, *Cor.* 15.4–5, and the distinction between hard and soft things at *Demetr.* 1.2. In some instances, excessive emotion also indicates *malakia*, see, for example, *De cohib. ir.* 461a and the example of Coriolanus. Wohl (1999: 361–365) argues that *malakia* appears as an internal othering, a potential that resides within the self and which represents a failure to adhere to the demands of masculinity.
- 153 Cf. Nielsen 2015: 578.
- 154 Cf. McInerney (2003: 321–322), who argues that Plutarch treats all virtue as one and the same in order to avoid an implicit approval of manly women. He also argues that male *andreia* results in direct action, while female *andreia* results in covert and concealed action (2003: 333). Musonius Rufus explicitly says that women must also possess *andreia* so that they may be free from cowardice and fear—specifically so that they would be able to repel shameful attacks (that is, sexual assault), because if they don’t, they cannot be characterized as *sōphrōn* (fr. 4 Lutz). Thus here too the link between *andreia* and temperance persists.
- 155 Cloelia was also honored for her *andreia* (*Pub.* 19.5), cf. Asirvatham 2019: 170.
- 156 But see also Brenk 2008: 247–250 and Chapman 2011: 76–77, who notes that Empona’s bravery turns to rashness after her husband’s death.
- 157 Ingenkamp 2008: 64. See also *Gryll.* 986f, 988a, *TG* 2.1, *Lys.* 7.1.
- 158 Thus Tiberius Gracchus is an exemplar of orderliness (*eutaxia*) and *andreia* (*TG* 4.4). Cf. Sartre 2011: 33, Maria Aguilar 2007: 311.
- 159 See Chapter 5, “A Queer Ontology.”
- 160 Gilabert Barberà 2000: 39
- 161 Cf. Blomqvist 1997.
- 162 I (Warren 2019) have argued that this hierarchization is especially clear in the Plutarch’s *Antony*, where Antony is emasculated through his submission to his wives, see also Russell (1998). Aristoula Georgiadou (2011: 73) notes that Plutarch “scorns the womanliness of men, but flirts with the manliness of women.”
- 163 Valverde Sánchez 2003: 448

164 The poem does not end here, though Plutarch quotes only this part. From Anne Carson's translation, the poem in its entirety (2003: 115, fr. 55):

Dead you will lie and never memory of you
will there be nor desire into the aftertime—for you do not
share in the roses
of Pieria, but invisible too in Hades' house
you will go your way among dim shapes. Having been breathed out.

165 Sidonius writes to Hesperius that he must not be diverted from his intellectual pursuits by the knowledge that he will soon be happily married, but instead must remember the wives who “held candles and candlesticks for their husbands whilst they read or composed” (*Epist.* 2.10.5). Instead, marriage can offer literary men opportunity for study in common with their wives (2.10.6). The point is illustrated with a number of exempla of women who had contributed to their husbands' intellectual work.

166 Cf. Maria Aguilar 2007: 12.

167 Widdows 2018: 48. Recall Plutarch's praise of Timoxena's moderation in the company of their friends in *Consolation*.

168 Widdows 2018: 19

169 Widdows 2018: 43

170 Widdows 2018: 47

171 Roskam 2004: 258, 260

172 Critchley 2007: 62

173 Cf. Butler 1990: 143–144

174 Butler 1993: 122–123

175 Russell 1966a: 144

176 Halberstam 1998: 59

177 Cacciatore (2016: 59) discusses some changes in the understanding of the soul in the 5th century BCE that brought about a radical change in the understanding of the self, henceforth ever more connected with the soul. van den Berg (2014: 244) also briefly discusses the Platonic idea that the self is determined by the father, and the complex relation between body and soul thus resulting.

A QUEER ONTOLOGY

1 Chlup 2000: 155.

2 As Bonazzi (2012: 140) notes, the object of philosophy was, for Plutarch, to attain balance between *theoria* and *praxis*. Gretchen Reydams-Schils (2017: 154) argues with reference to Alcinous that *theoria* is an activity

of the mind while *praxis* is the expression of that activity through the body. On the role of dualism in Plutarch's practical ethics, see Demulder 2017b: 206–209.

- 3 Cf. Roskam (2014) on the opening chapters of *On Isis*.
- 4 Thus for example, according to Dillon (1996: 17, 373), Speusippus and Numenius.
- 5 Nikolaidis (1997) has argued that Plutarch was a proto-feminist; see also Gilibert Barberà 2007: 123–132, Stadter 1999: 173–182. Similar views have been put forth of Plato, for example, Lucas 1973: 161, 1990: 223, Vlastos 1989: 277, 1994: 11, Rosenthal 1973: 32, but compare Annas 1996: 3, Taylor 2012: 83. On Plutarch's interest in the feminine, see Valverde Sánchez 2003: 442.
- 6 Harries 1998: 184, Dillon 1996: 185. According to Russell (1968: 131), Plutarch is “nothing like so clever as Cicero.” Bonazzi (2012), on the other hand, considers Plutarch's contributions to the Platonic tradition quite original.
- 7 Thus fr. 107 claims that the moon is intermediate between earth and sun. This fragment identifies Typhon with the earth; the moon is typically feminine and the sun masculine. Dillon (1996: 45) has argued that this intermediate tempering element is the World Soul; in my view, however, the World Soul is the *result* of the tempering.
- 8 On similarities and differences between *The Creation of the Soul* and *On Isis*, see Demulder 2017b: 210–211.
- 9 See note 45.
- 10 On Plutarch and Egypt, see Gruen 2011: 111–114.
- 11 Plutarch explicitly refutes both the theories of Xenocrates and Crantor; the latter (according to Plutarch's testimony) held that the mixture of divisible and indivisible being was the generation of number, which he called the Indefinite Dyad, though he denied that this mixture is soul since it lacks motivity (*An. proc.* 1012e). Instead, Plutarch argues that soul is not number, it is “motion perpetually self-moved and motion's source and principle” (1013c). On Plutarch's Platonism and his relationship to the Stoics, cf. Dillon 2002: 223–224.
- 12 Along with the anonymous commentator on the *Theaetetus*, as Bonazzi (2012: 140) notes.
- 13 See also *On Isis* 375a. In *Female Masculinity*, Jack Halberstam (1998: 13ff) examined the notion that masculinity is a product of maleness and suggested that contemporary models of masculinity “depend on the prior production of masculinity by and through women as well as men” (1998: 46).
- 14 In *On Isis*, Plutarch says that the body is an encasement for the soul (353a).
- 15 Wohl 1997: 171, cf. Maria Aguilar 2007: 315.

- 16 Cf. *Quaest. Plat.* 1001b–c on the two constituent parts of the universe, Body and Soul, and the former’s submission to the latter.
- 17 For Ann Chapman (2011: 7), *De Iside* is primarily concerned with the establishment of a principle of domination and subordination (see below). The establishment of such a principle necessarily concerns male-female relationships and must therefore be incorporate with the text, as the focus on the relationship between Isis and Osiris throughout shows. Wohl (1997: 171) also suggested that *Conjugalia praecepta* is fundamentally based on domination and male hegemony, and Lin Foxhall (1999: 139) argued that discourses of domination are ubiquitous in Plutarch’s work, especially those aimed at regulating women’s behavior in marriage.
- 18 *An. proc.* 1015d; *De Iside* 364d, 373f, 374b; cf. *Pl. Ti.* 51a.
- 19 *An. proc.* 1017a; *De Iside* 373f
- 20 Cf. Griffiths 1970: 297.
- 21 Dillon (2002: 229) mistakenly refers to Isis as Osiris’ mother.
- 22 Chapman 2011: 6, cf. Maria Aguilar 2007: 307–308 and consider Roskam (2014), who considers the importance of the introductory chapters of *On Isis* with a note about audience, but does not conclude that there is a particular focus on women and the feminine.
- 23 Blomqvist 1995: 181
- 24 Chapman 2011: 7–9
- 25 Stadter 1999: 177, cf. Brenk (1988).
- 26 *On Isis* belongs to a period of late maturity, as does *Virtues*, and is likely among the last of his written work, while *On Love* and *The Creation of the Soul* were probably composed somewhat before that (Jones 1966: 72–73). On chronology also O’Brien Wicker 1978: 106 and Tanga 2019: xxiv, who situates *Virtues* in a period of late maturity for Plutarch, composed around the same time as *On Isis*.
- 27 Cf. Brenk 1992: 162.
- 28 *De Iside* 372a–f, *De facie* 929a–b, cf. *Quaest. Plat.* 1006f, Brenk 1988: 468, and Gilabert Barberà’s (2007: 125–127) comments on *Amat.* 764d, which emphasizes the harmony produced by *erōs* as the only viable route to transcendence.
- 29 This conception of the male-female relationship is hardly ancient, see, for example, Perl’s dedication in *Thinking Being, Introduction to Metaphysics in the Classical Tradition* (2014): “To Christine, In spousal togetherness, being to my thinking”—the persistence of the body-mind distinction between the sexes has serious implications for our understanding of gender in the 21st century.
- 30 See “Psycho-somatic degradation and the threat of non-existence” below.

- 31 *De Iside* 363a–c, *De sera* 567f, *Pl. Phdr.* 248c–248e, *Leg.* 944e, *Ti.* 42b–c, 76e, 91a
32 Spelman 1982: 110
- 33 Brenk 1988: 465, Stadter 1999: 176; cf. *De Iside* 374f–375a.
- 34 Irigaray 1984: 16. Cf. Brisson (2002: 41), who notes the connection between active and passive sexual roles and their gendered expressions, which assigns to women the role of wife and mother, while men are warriors.
- 35 Irigaray 1984: 307
- 36 Osiris is said to have slept with Nephthys out of ignorance, believing her to be Isis (*De Iside* 356f).
- 37 Arueris was born from the union between Isis and Osiris in the womb of their mother, while Harpocrates was born from their union after Osiris died and lost his body (but not his soul); neither are wholly complete. From this I infer that the most legitimate union is that from which Horus, the perfected world, was born, a representation of virtuous conjugality in which both husband and wife are guided by reason.
- 38 See also *Pl. Rep.* 546a–e, to which Plutarch refers at *De Iside* 374a (cf. 374b).
- 39 Hence Gilibert Barberà (2000: 38) notes that Protogenes' argument against conjugal love is so vehement that it almost seems to suggest that heterosexual love ought to be against the law; the necessity of reproduction is the only thing preventing this final step.
- 40 Lamprias, the main speaker in *De facie*, argues that the moon is at the very least earth-like because of the way it reflects the light of the sun (935c). Cf. Griffiths 1970: 446, Huffman 2019: 882.
- 41 In the universe, the rational principle is in control, and in everything, "the better has control of the necessary" (*De facie* 928b–d).
- 42 Dillon 1996: 45. Some posit a further causal principle, the One, above this, as in the view of Moderatus and Eudorus; Boys-Stones 2018a: 104–105. Cf. Sextus Empiricus *Math.* 5.8, who ascribes to the Pythagoreans the view that the Monad is masculine and the Dyad feminine and thus that all odd numbers are male and all even numbers are female. Posidonius accepted the Stoic version in which God is active and Matter passive; Dillon 1996: 108. Xenocrates considered both the Monad and the Dyad divine, with the former being a male principle and the latter female and the principle of soul (fr. 15 Heinze). Also in Plutarch, *Quaest. Rom.* 288d–e, who adds the further qualification that the man "should be four-square, eminent, and perfect; but a woman, like a cube, should be stable, domestic, and difficult to remove from her place." Thus even numbers are imperfect, incomplete and indeterminate and odd numbers are the opposite (270b). Cf. Chlup 2000: 153.

- 43 Chlup 2000: 149, 155. Demulder (2017b) highlights some of the complexities of Plutarch's dualism.
- 44 Opsomer 2004: 142–143
- 45 This state is often described as “pre-cosmic,” although as Rist (1962: 99) and Wood (2009: 373n90) point out, it is strictly speaking incorrect, since the state of things before the generation of the universe should not be taken literally—speaking of it as *before* is a necessity of language, but it is technically extemporal; I have therefore chosen to characterize this state rather as “acosmic,” which, in any case, is closer to Plutarch's use of ἀκοσμία.
- 46 Dillon 2007: 39, Ferrari 1996: 47. Cf. Demulder 2017b: 209, who suggests that we should rather speak of a dualistic spectrum.
- 47 Vlastos 1939: 80–82
- 48 Carone 1994: 295, cf. *Ti.* 43b, where evil in humans is caused by the disorderly (*ataktōs*) and irrational (*alogōs*) movements of the soul.
- 49 Evidently, both Matter and Motion are at times described as the third kind; I take this as an indication of the aims of the text, not inconsistency on Plutarch's part. He is quite consistent in arguing that there are *three kinds*, two opposing and one intermediate.
- 50 Almagor (2018: 80, 89) notes Plutarch's appreciation of this aspect of Persian religion, but makes the common mistake of reducing his views to a metaphysical dualism in which Mithras does not figure. Jones (1971: 124–125) has argued that Plutarch rarely observes the old distinction between Greek and barbarian, but instead operates within a threefold one: Greeks, Romans and barbarians. This, along with his emphasis on the divine reproductive triad, could account for the shift in emphasis from strict dualism to a scaled dualism.
- 51 Here there is no mention of Mithras, though why not is a matter of conjecture. My best guess is that the texts have significantly different aims, and that the inclusion of Mithras in *On Isis* emphasizes for Clea the role of the feminine in maintaining harmony.
- 52 Demulder 2017a: 147, cf. 2017b: 212. Gretchen Reydam-Schils (2017: 147) notes the importance of both the *Laws* and the *Timaeus* for Middle Platonist interpretations of Plato.
- 53 Dillon 2014: 63, cf. Dillon 2002: 234–235.
- 54 Boys-Stones 2018b: 107–109
- 55 *Amat.* 769b–c, *Mulier. virt.* 242f–243a
- 56 A common belief; Numenius ascribed to Pythagoras the view that the Dyad is Matter (Laks R69), also recorded by Diogenes Laertius on the authority of

- Alexander Polyhistor (8.1.25) and Sextus Empiricus (*Math.* 10.277). For Philo, the Dyad is Matter “passive and divisible” (*De spec. Leg.* 3.32).
- 57 Ferrari 1996: 44–45. Becchi (2014: 73–87) provides a short but useful overview on Aristotelian influences in Plutarch.
- 58 According to Opsomer (2004: 147), Plutarch is attempting to work out inconsistencies and contradictions in Plato’s work, cf. Cacciatore 2016: 65. On Plutarch’s unitary interpretation, see Bonazzi (2012: 140), who states that he was among the few Platonists to attempt such a unification and is especially notable for his accounts of some of the more challenging aspects of Platonist philosophy. On Plutarch’s originality, see Ferrari (1996: 44), who considered Plutarch’s cosmology especially distinctive.
- 59 Dillon 1985: 109–110, Dillon 2003: 18n33, Rist 1962: 100, cf. *Metaph.* 1085b, 1092b.
- 60 According to the testimony of Iamblicus, Speusippus seems to have faced the same problem (*DCMS IV*, as quoted in Dillon 1985: 114).
- 61 See also Arist. *Cael.* 300b, where he argues that there must be a first cause of “natural” motion, because if everything is moved by something else, there would be an infinite regress of forced motion.
- 62 Vlastos 1939: 76
- 63 *An. proc.* 1016f, *De facie* 926f, *De def. or.* 430d, cf. *Pl. Ti.* 53b.
- 64 Demulder 2017a: 146
- 65 For Aristotle, imagination is a motion generated by perception and an activity of that which is imperfect (*De anima* 429a1–2, 431a6–7).
- 66 Not so according to Eudorus, who made God the causal principle of Matter; Dillon 1996: 127.
- 67 Wood 2009: 366
- 68 Cf. *Ti.* 30a and *An. proc.* 1016c, where *plēmellōs* is used of discordant motivity. Chlup (2000: 157) also notes that cosmic Intellect and its derivative human reason has no motion of its own.
- 69 *An. proc.* 1016c, cf. *De Iside* 369e, *Virt. mor.* 451b
- 70 Chlup 2000: 139
- 71 Vlastos 1939: 77–78; Rohr 1981: 200; Dillon 1985: 111–112, 119; Dillon 1996: 206. Dillon argued that Xenocrates equated the Dyad with the World Soul, which is essentially disorderly and irrational, yet it is not clear that the soul spoken of here (fr. 15 Heinze) is specifically the World Soul and not what Plutarch would term “Soul-in-Itself”; Dillon 1996: 26. Phillips (2002: 233) gives a succinct version of Plutarch’s cosmogony which bears many similarities to that presented in this chapter, most notably in his recognition of three principles roughly analogous to the Intellect, Matter and Motion discussed

- here. He too sees an evil World Soul in Plutarch, which he equates with Soul-in-Itself.
- 72 Dillon 1985: 112, cf. Dillon 2002: 232–233.
- 73 Cacciatore 2016: 67–68
- 74 This phrase recalls the acosmic *kinoumenon plēmellōs kai ataktōs* at *Timaeus* 30a.
- 75 Demulder 2017a: 146. Opsomer (2004: 143) agrees that speaking of two World Souls rather than two stages of soul in Plutarch is misleading. Cf. Chlup 2000: 139, Cacciatore 2016: 59.
- 76 Carone 1994: 277–278, 286–287. Cf. *Pl. Leg.* 895b–896a.
- 77 Cf. *De Iside* 369e, *Virt. mor.* 451b.
- 78 At *Quaest. Plat.* 1001d, Body is unlimited and indefinite when it is pure Matter.
- 79 In *The E at Delphi*, with reference to both the *Philebus* and the *Sophist*, *apeiria* is identified as Motion and contrasted with limit (*peras*), which is at rest (391bc, cf. *De facie.* 925f, *An. proc.* 1026a).
- 80 Plutarch's use of *aitia* and *archē* is not consistent. I make this distinction between properties, kinds and principles for clarity.
- 81 Cf. Cicero *Acad.* 1.27–28; Philo considers the Dyad impure and the source of infinity in Matter (*Quaest. in Ge.* 2.12), empty and divided (*Quaest. in Ge.* 4.30), yet also a female principle similar to the Receptacle in the *Timaeus* which he calls *Sophia*; see Dillon 1996: 163–164. As Ferrari (1996: 47) pointed out, Plutarch divides the Timaeian Receptacle into two separate aspects, one kinetic and psychic and the other passive and receptive.
- 82 Carone (1994: 279) picks up on this when she notes that all motion takes place *in space* and therefore in the Matter that is distributed within space (cf. *Ti.* 51b). On whether or not Motion exists, see also Sextus Empiricus *Math.* 10.37ff. Aristotle reports that, for Parmenides, becoming is a process of emerging out of non-existence (*Phys.* 192a1–2).
- 83 Literally, “having a share in” (*metechon*) disorder (*Pol.* 273b). Wood (2009: 365–366) points out that the “evil” associated with the body is not evil but disorder, and disorder is not bodily but a lack of measure.
- 84 Rohr 1981: 201–202. *Ataxia* is a consistent property of the motive cause in Plutarch's metaphysics.
- 85 Wood 2009: 361–362
- 86 The full phrase reads “real existence, space and becoming were three and distinct even before heaven came to be” (cf. *Ti.* 50d). Sallis has given a subtle account of the significance of the number three in the *Timaeus*, which indeed begins with a counting: *eis, duo, treis* (Sallis 1999: 7–12). Cf. *Ti.* 17a.

- 87 See Jorgenson (2018: 13) on the struggle between spirit and appetite in Plato's *Republic*.
- 88 Chlup 2000: 151. On divinity at varying ontological levels of being in *De E*, see also Dillon 2002: 225–227, and on this passage and sublunary evil, see Dillon 2002: 229–231.
- 89 Compare Connell's (2016: 151–156) argument against a static understanding of female as Matter; she advocates instead for a theory of different types (or levels) of Matter, each of which is appropriate to its form.
- 90 Cf. Petrucci 2016: 234–235.
- 91 As also at 358a, where he stumbles upon the body of Osiris and tears it into 14 pieces. Dillon (2002: 232) notes this extraordinary distinction between the soul and the body of Osiris.
- 92 Thus Typhon unsuccessfully brings a charge of illegitimacy against Horus because he is “contaminated in his substance because of the corporeal element” (*De Iside* 373b). Cf. Griffiths 1970: 504.
- 93 *De Iside* 358d, 362e, 368f, 373c, cf. 371a, *Virt. mor.* 443c–d, 452b.
- 94 And shortly before his battle with Horus, which he loses, his concubine (*pallakē*) Thueris abandons him in favor of Horus (358c–d).
- 95 See, for example, his discussion of acosmic disorder as Plato describes it at *Timaeus* 52d–e. That section describes the “shaking” of the Receptacle and the elements, and indeed does not suggest that Matter and its movement must necessarily be separate kinds. To suggest, however, as Chlup does, that Plutarch takes the shaking of the Receptacle as a description of irrational Soul-in-Itself requires setting aside the many statements in which he deliberately argues for the separation of Matter and Motion. Chlup (2000: 143, 151, 154–155) seems aware of this when he notes that the irrational soul of *The Creation of the Soul* is a response to the need to formulate a cause of evil, since it cannot be attributed either to Matter or to Intellect.
- 96 Chlup 2000: 151, 155
- 97 Cf. *Pel.* 16.5, where Plutarch says Heracles and Dionysos were deified on account of their virtues, enabling them to “cast off mortality and suffering.”
- 98 A view that, despite Plutarch's anti-Stoic polemicism, has much in common with the Stoic interpretation of Plato; cf. Reydams-Schils 1999: 41–83. Petrucci (2015: 340–342) quite accurately captures the difficulty of the passage at *De Iside* 371a when he notes that Osiris and Typhon represent complex entities that could be identified with several cosmic principles in the *Timaeus* and *De animae procreatione*. Neither are therefore individual entities but rather comprehensive instantiations of Platonic cosmological functions, Osiris as positive and Typhon as negative.

- 99 Griffiths (1970: 309) notes also the identification of Isis with Demeter, both as goddesses of fertility and agriculture, as well as bringers of peace; see also Griffiths 1970: 291–292, Gruen 2011: 95–97.
- 100 Cf. Plese 2008: 778, who characterizes Isis as the “various aspects of ‘matter’.”
- 101 Plutarch mentions another version in which Osiris and Arueris are fathered by the sun, Isis by Hermes and Nephthys and Typhon by Cronus.
- 102 Cf. Brenk 1992: 162.
- 103 Cf. 368e on the identification of Cronus with Anubis also. Griffiths (1970: 505) comments on Osiris and Hermes as *logos* in different senses, (1970: 309) on the identification with Dionysos.
- 104 Dillon 1985: 118. See, for example, Iamblichus *De anima* 23 (Finamore & Dillon 2002). Philo considers the Dyad to be the origin of evil (*Quaest. in Ge* 2.12).
- 105 Dillon 2014: 64–65. Dillon (2002: 231–233) also considers the irrational soul not only passively material but actively disruptive, though this disruptive force represented by Typhon in *On Isis* is not identical with Matter.
- 106 According to Opsomer (2007a: 154), the irrational part of the (human) soul is the acosmic soul devoid of reason.
- 107 Petrucci (2016: 227ff) argues for the fundamental Platonic nature of the text, which is given priority over Egyptian theology—the latter is a medium through which Platonic philosophy can be understood.
- 108 Discussing sacrifices to Typhon, Plutarch says that the Egyptians do not sacrifice animals if they have a single black or white hair because of their belief that “unholy and unrighteous men” are reincarnated only into suitable animals. Apparently, because of his “red” coloring, Typhon would only be incarnated into red animals, particularly the ass and cattle. The ass apparently deserves to be sacrificed not only because of his resemblance in color to the god, but also because of his behavior (*De Iside* 363a–c). As the evil principle of the World Soul, mortals desire to get rid of Typhon by sacrificing his incarnation.
- 109 See Griffiths 1970: 572ff for a list of divine equations.
- 110 Dillon (1985: 118–119) attempts to solve this problem by arguing that Isis and Typhon are aspects of the *same* corporeal female principle, though he notes that Plutarch assigns the origin of evil to Typhon, a male entity.
- 111 See *Virt. mor.* 441f–442a: “the soul of man ... is a portion or a copy of the soul of the Universe and is joined together on principles and in proportions corresponding to those which govern the Universe ...”; cf. *Ti.* 41d, 69c. Gretchen Reydam-Schils (1999: 23) notes that the same is true for the human

- body, which is compositionally equivalent to the World Body. Cf. Opsomer 2005: 180, 2007a: 153, 2012: 311 and *An. proc.* 1025a.
- 112 The bipartite division between the rational (*logistikon*) and passionate (*pathētikon*) parts of the soul adopted in *Moral Virtue* is decidedly Aristotelian, as noted by Beneker (2012: 10–14), who also gives an overview on the scholarship on Plutarch's relationship to Aristotle to which I refer the reader. Cf. Opsomer 2007a: 387, 2012: 321, Gill 2006: 230–231, *Virt. mor.* 441f–442a, 444e–445a, *Adul. amic.* 61b, *Quaest. Plat.* 1008e; cf. *Pl. Ti.* 35a.
- 113 On Plutarch's incorporation of both Platonic and Aristotelian concepts into his own theory of the soul, see Beneker 2012: 17.
- 114 Cf. *Adul. amic.* 61d, which also divides the soul into two parts, placing the spirited part with the irrational element. Gill (2006: 233) notes the emphasis on the moderation of emotion as a motivational force in Plutarch's *Moral Virtue*.
- 115 For the view that Thracians are not Greeks, see *Plut. Crass.* 8.2.
- 116 Plutarch uses this metaphor to indicate the difference between *sōphrosunē* and *enkrateia*: the former is a state of the soul when reason guides the passions, the latter a subduing of the passion through force (*Virt. mor.* 445b–c). *Sōphrosunē* is therefore a virtue in and of itself, while *enkrateia* is a mixture between virtue and vice.
- 117 Cf. *De Is. et Os.* 376b.
- 118 Cf. *Quaest. Plat.* 1007e–1008e which argues that the *thumoeides* occupies the space (*chōra*) midway between the *logistikon* and the *epithumētikon*.
- 119 I am well aware that this implies a corporeal aspect to the soul; cf. *De facie* 934d–e, 945a–b and Donini's (1988b: 140–143) comments on these passages. As with most emotions, women are more likely to be immoderate in their expression of anger, often to the point of madness (Allard, Montlahuc & Rothstein 2018: 33). Cf. Jorgenson (2018: 18–19) on the relationship between *thumos* and emotion.
- 120 Cf. *Resp.* 440c: when a noble man believes himself to have been wronged, his spirit grows angry and seething.
- 121 In *Quaest. Plat.* 1008b, Plutarch makes the further point that the mediating principle, that is, passion, must be intermediate between reason and appetite because it is natural for it to be ruled by and obedient to reason and to chastise appetite when it disobeys reason. This is the role filled by Isis in *De Iside* when Horus defeats Typhon but she refuses to destroy him, desiring rather cosmic (or: psychic) harmony (358d, 373c–d). Cf. Jorgenson (2018: 6–38) on the intermediacy of *thumos* in Plato.

- 122 On virtue as the harmonization of emotion through reason, cf. Gill 2006: 235–236.
- 123 Rees 1957: 112, 114, Jorgenson 2018: 9
- 124 Duff 1999a: 75
- 125 On stability and the parts of the soul, see Gill 2006: 231–233, 412ff.
- 126 Cf. Reydams-Schils 2017: 148: “[V]irtue is living in accordance with nature, both the nature of oneself and of the whole.”
- 127 Griffiths (1970: 447) attributes the sterility to Nephthys.
- 128 Griffiths 1970: 417–418
- 129 Cf. Griffiths 1970: 515.
- 130 Cf. Connell 2016: 267–291. Plese (2008: 775–777) argues that Aristotle’s theory of degradation is present also in *On Isis*. In this schema Osiris is Form, Isis is Matter striving for Form, and Typhon is the privation of Form.
- 131 Thus Lloyd (1993: 5) also notes that women’s souls are reincarnations of those souls of men in which reason failed to master passion. This makes the female form naturally more passionate and less rational than the male. One barely needs to be reminded of Aristotle’s view that “we should look upon the female state as being as it were a deformity, though one which occurs in the ordinary course of nature” (*Gen. an.* 775a15–16). Cf. *Phaedrus* 248c–248e, which gives a somewhat different taxonomy of reincarnation from which women are excluded.
- 132 Warren 2020: 391
- 133 Thus at *Virt. mor.* 442b, the lower part of the soul is not wholly irrational, only the perceptive and nutritive part, that is, the appetites. At *An. proc.* 1026e, Plutarch implies that the affective part of the (human) soul derives from Soul-in-Itself. Cf. also *De genio* 591d–e. Jorgenson (2018: 11) notes that the separation of spirit from appetite in the *Republic* relies on a “sophisticated analysis of the structure of motion.”
- 134 Jorgenson 2018: 56
- 135 See Donini (1988b) on Stoic and Aristotelian influences in *De facie*.
- 136 On this passage, see Brenk 1977: 138. There is some debate around what animal is meant by the “vocal creature, frequenter of marshes and lakes”; cf. Folch 2018: 230–233.
- 137 Plutarch shares Plato’s view on the immortality of the soul; in the *Cons. ux.* he tells Timoxena that the soul is “imperishable,” and “affected like a captive bird, if it has long been reared in the body and has become tamed to this life by many activities and long familiarity,” it becomes “entangled in the passions and fortunes of this world through repeated births” (611e; cf. *Amat.* 764e, *De sera* 554d, 560b–d). See *Grg.* 493a and *Cra.* 400b–c, both of which refer to the

- Orphic doctrine of $\sigma\tilde{\omega}\mu\alpha$ $\sigma\tilde{\eta}\mu\alpha$, and *Phd.* 70a–72d, which argues that souls are immortal but bodies perishable. Unvirtuous men are reincarnated into the bodies of women or brutes (*Leg.* 944e, *Ti.* 42b–c, 76e, 91a; cf. *De Is. et Os.* 363b).
- 138 Jorgenson 2018: 24, cf. Roskam (2011), Frazier (2014), Stadter 2015: 197, 199ff, *De tranq. an.* 465d. *Philotimia* is a condition not exclusive to women but with different implications for men, because domination and conquering is to a degree natural for them. Consider Plutarch’s description of Antony’s rhetorical style, drawn from the oratorical conventions of Asia, which was “swashbuckling and boastful, full of empty exultation and distorted ambition” (*Ant.* 2.5). He also describes Archias, Leontidas and Philip as rich men with immoderate ambition (*Pel.* 5.2). Cf. Roskam (2011). Cacciatore (2016: 60) notes that ambition is a feeling arising in the irrational part of the soul, and Jorgenson (2018: 22–23) notes that the *thumoeides* of the *Republic* (581a–b) is characterized as *philotimos*.
- 139 Cf. *Virt. mor.* 446d: “by reason the violent, raging, and furious movements of the desires (*epithumiōn*) had been quenched and those movements which nature absolutely requires had been made sympathetic, submissive, friendly, and ... willing to co-operate.”
- 140 Consider *Virt. mor.* 446a: the lower part of the soul, responsible for desire and appetite, is “loose and soft” (*malakia*).
- 141 Thus Roskam (2004: 267–269) comments that Plutarch’s attitude towards women is positive only insofar as she “succeeds in matching the accomplishments of men” with the caveat that even so “she ought to be conscious of her own limits as a woman.” Cf. *Virt. mor.* 444e.
- 142 Wood (2009: 375) noted that difference operates at various levels in the cosmos. In one sense, it is simply the faculty which distinguishes particulars from one another, while in particulars it is the cause of variability.
- 143 Bury 1897: xliv, my emphasis. Cf. Pears (2015: 102–103), who notes that in Plato there is no positive principle of evil since only the Good is really existent.
- 144 Butler 1993: 22–24
- 145 McInerney 2003: 339–343
- 146 Halberstam 1998: 20, 27
- 147 On the natural submission of passion to reason, see *Pl. Resp.* 441e.
- 148 Plutarch affirms the legitimacy of Horus’ birth in terms that recall the participation of Matter in the Forms, thereby also reaffirming to the reader that the work is dealing with metaphysical principles by way of religious study: “Therefore it is said that [Horus] is brought to trial by Typhon on the charge of illegitimacy, as not being pure nor un-contaminated like his father,

- reason unalloyed and unaffected of itself (*logos autos kath' heauton amigēs kai apathēs*), but contaminated in his substance because of the corporeal element (*nenotheumenos tē hulē dia to sōmatikon*)” (373b; cf. 358d).
- 149 This might seem at odds with the statement at *De Iside* 370f, that the opposing principles are Sameness and Difference, although a reference to the *Laws* immediately following seems to negate this statement to an extent by including a “certain third nature.” Identifying sameness with the One and difference with the Dyad offers some resolution to this inconsistency. Speusippus also considered the Dyad the origin of differentiation (Dillon 1996: 12). Wood (2009: 367) argued that difference manifests in becoming as the possibility for generated being, while being is the manifestation of particular reflections of the paradigm.
- 150 In Opsomer’s (2007b: 379–381) structure, indivisible being is *to on*, while divisible being is what Plutarch calls Soul-in-Itself, and to the mixture of these is added sameness and difference. He considers these principles to be derivatives of two ultimate principles, the Monad and the Dyad, arguing that the “compound of divisible and indivisible being then serves as a receptacle for the admixture of the entirely antagonistic principles of sameness and difference.” However, the Receptacle is ungenerated and everlasting (cf. *Ti.* 52b); it is not itself a mixture but rather the substrate for the mixture, the space in which the demiurge combines the principles. In fact, the Receptacle is a *kind of Matter*, which gains substance when God bounds the Indefinite Dyad and imparts to it limit and measure and harmony (*An. proc.* 1026a, 1027a).
- 151 Vlastos 1939: 76
- 152 Wood 2009: 350, 357
- 153 Cf. Griffiths 1970: 506–507.
- 154 Butler 1993: 155
- 155 Russell (1998), Beck 2016: 141–146
- 156 Warren (2019)
- 157 Brenk 1992: 162, cf. Jones 1966: 73.
- 158 Gruen (2011: 108–109) documents several primary sources that used Egypt as a trope from which to delegitimize and demonize Cleopatra’s relationship with Antony, noting that this image of Egypt as foreign and monstrous is quite particular to this time and context, rather than a general othering of Egyptians. Given the respect afforded Egyptian customs and religion in *On Isis*, it might be that in the case of Antony and Cleopatra, Egypt offers a convenient layer of differentiation that serves to style their degradation as

- un-Greek. This demonstrates the fluidity of these categories of identification, noted also by Gruen (2011: 76).
- 159 The reference at *Antony* 36.1 to the “stubborn and unmanageable beast of the soul, of which Plato speaks” (cf. Pl. *Phdr.* 246a, 254a) suggests that at least here Plutarch is considering the soul in its tripartite form (cf. Pl. *Resp.* 435c). For this metaphor in Plato, see *Resp.* 439d. Duff (1999a: 72–80) has shown that Platonic psychology is fundamental to understanding the *Lives*, as has Beneker (2012) and Swain (1999: 86). The more recent consensus—exemplified in Nikolaidis’ (2008) collection *The Unity of Plutarch’s Work*—that the *Lives* and the *Moralia* are mutually reinforcing has opened new avenues for the exploration of gendered discourse in Plutarch’s work. See also van Nuffelen (2012: 50) on the unity of philosophy and religion in Plutarch.
- 160 For example, in the identification of Antony with Heracles and Dionysos, more fully discussed in Warren (2019). Cf. Loraux 1990: 22, Burkert 2011: 249–251; Krenkel 2006: 465–466, *Quaest. Gr.* 304c–d.
- 161 Duff (1999a: 60–62) points out that the *Antony* does not contain a simple moral lesson, but rather hinges on an exploration of Platonic “great natures” present in the *Moralia* as well. Duff (1999a: 72–82) also provides an excellent analysis of the Platonic conception of the soul in Plutarch’s work, its functioning in the *Lives* and the role of education within this moral framework.
- 162 Beneker 2012: 171–173; cf. Duff 1999a: 75.
- 163 Russell 1998: 122–125, cf. Russell 1973: 136–142.
- 164 Brenk 1992: 164; see Warren (2019) on the parts of the soul ruling each of the actors in this part of the biography.
- 165 See Pelling (1988a: 193), who notes the connotations to war and violence the language here evokes.
- 166 Cf. Beneker (2012: 153–194) and Duff (1999a: 78–80) on the failure of Antony to control his passions, and Jones (1971: 74) on Cleopatra as Antony’s “evil genius.”
- 167 On Antony’s submission, see also Jacobs 2017: 350–351.
- 168 Beneker (2012: 186) notes the similarities between Octavia and Ismenodora, in particular in the terminology used. Cf. *Amat.* 766a–c; cf. *Quaest. Plat.* 1002e, Pl. *Symp.* 221a, see also *A Virtuous Ideal*.
- 169 On Plutarch’s connections to Nero, see Jones 1971: 14–19, 24, Russell 1973: 2–3. Ash (2008: 558) notes the visibility of Nero in Plutarch’s work.
- 170 Cf. *Galb.* 9.3, 14.2, Suet. *Nero* 7.1, 28.1, Dio *Or.* 21.10. Hägg (2012: 228–229) notes the supposed connections between Nero’s physical appearance and his moral state. Cf. Harrison 1995: 97, Griffin 2001: 169, 180, Woods (2009),

- Charles (2014), Gillespie (2015). Folch (2018: 224–227) comments on the theatrical elements of *De sera*, arguing that Plutarch’s audience is invited to view history as a cosmic play that proceeds along predictable patterns.
- 171 Russell 1973: 136, cf. Opsomer 2016b: 52, *Arist. et Cat. Maj.* 1.1.
- 172 Dörrie 1977: 77 (cited by Opsomer 2016b: 40), van den Berg 2014: 246–249.
- 173 Duff (1999b) discusses Plutarch’s use of “great natures” with reference to this passage in *De sera*. Cf. Jacobs 2017: 348–349.
- 174 van den Berg 2014: 242, cf. Folch 2018: 234–235.
- 175 Folch 2018: 220
- 176 van den Berg 2014: 243
- 177 Opsomer (2016b: 42) notes that there was already a basis in Greek literature for the view that moral traits can be inherited. Cf. van den Berg 2014: 239.
- 178 Cf. Pl. *Leg.* 862c–e, Folch 2016: 220–221, and finally Opsomer (2016b), who discusses Plutarch’s arguments in *De sera* in detail. On the medico-ethical analogy, see Chapter 2.
- 179 Jones 1971: 19
- 180 On Antony’s susceptibility to flattery, cf. Jacobs 2017: 53, 347.
- 181 Here Plutarch uses Demetrius as an example of a good man born from bad, thus “Antigonus paid no penalty for Demetrius” on account of his own virtue (*De sera* 562f–563a).
- 182 According to Jones (1971: 18–19), Nero’s philhellenism was likely the cause of Plutarch’s leniency here, though his view of Nero generally “could not be a simple one.” So too Russell (1973: 3, 115), who notes that Plutarch combined the views of Nero as monster and Nero as liberator. Plutarch says pretty much exactly that at *De sera* 567f.
- 183 Folch 2018: 230
- 184 Folch 2018: 222
- 185 Foucault 1984c: 214
- 186 Thus Beneker (2016: 150) argues that Plutarch uncouples virtue and status with the view to creating an ethical program focused on the individual.

PARALLEL LIVES

- 1 Jordan 1986: 330
- 2 Collins 2015: 1–2
- 3 Jones (1966) has dated the *Parallel Lives* to the last two decades or so of Plutarch’s productive life, long after he had first conceived of and started executing his psychagogic program. According to Stadter (2015: 232), the *Lives* successfully employs a “rhetoric of persuasion.” He argues that the

- Lives* were a response to a need for case studies in practical ethics (2015: 236). Duff (2007: 4) argues that Plutarch assumes a network of shared values in his readers. Cf. *Apophth. reg.* 172e: "... the *Lives* ... must wait for the time when one has the desire to read in a leisurely way"
- 4 Russell 1968: 135, Hartmann 2008: 427, Roskam & van der Stockt 2011: 8, Fulkerson 2012: 51–52, Roskam 2014: 216, Nikolaidis 2014: 354, Beck 2016: 137, Roskam & Verdegem 2016: 190, Mossman 2017: 502, De Pourq & Roskam 2017: 164–165, and of course Duff (1999a)
 - 5 Duff 1999a: 66, Opsomer 2016a: 104, but Hägg (2012: 24) notes that there is testimony for lost *Lives* of the poets Hesiod and Pindar and the Cynic Crates.
 - 6 Cf. Dillon (2008), Opsomer (2011).
 - 7 See Stadter 2015: 56ff.
 - 8 See Goessler 1962, Tsouvala 2008, 2014, Chapman 2011, Beneker 2012.
 - 9 Russell 1966a: 142, cf. Nikolaidis 1986: 233, who notes that rashness is a barbarian attribute.
 - 10 Nikolaidis 2008: xii, cf. Beck 2016: 137.
 - 11 Cf. Stadter 1988: 292–293, 2008: 54–55, Harrison 1995: 103, Duff 2007: 8. Almagor (2013: 154) at least makes the cursory suggestion that a female audience can be expected for the *Lives*, as did Stadter more recently (2015: 232).
 - 12 Marasco (2008), Romero González (2008)
 - 13 Tsouvala (2008), Beneker (2008), Soares (2008)
 - 14 Roskam & van der Stockt (2011)
 - 15 Tsouvala (2014)
 - 16 Beneker (2014)
 - 17 For example, Le Corsu (1981), Nikolaidis (1997), Stadter (1999), Tsouvala (2014), Tanga (2019).
 - 18 See, for example, the opening quote to this book (*Amat.* 769c).
 - 19 For example, Blomqvist 1997; Marasco 2008.
 - 20 Marasco 2008: 667–669; Romero González (2008)
 - 21 Russell (1998), McNamara (1999)
 - 22 Stadter (1999); Quite egregiously, Fabio Tanga (2019) cites Philip Stadter several times but neither Lin Foxhall nor Jo Ann McNamara in the same volume.
 - 23 Foxhall (1999)
 - 24 As in Le Corsu (1981).
 - 25 Karen Bassi (2003: 30–31) argues that the use of *andreia* reflects on other words and phrases in the same context. See "Beauty, masculinity and the split self" in Chapter 4.
 - 26 Cf. Bassi 2003: 34–35.

- 27 And the ghost of Romulus tells Julius Proculus that the Romans will reach the height of human power if they cultivate both *andreia* and *sōphrosunē* (*Rom.* 28.2). Cf. Opsomer 2011: 166.
- 28 For example, *anandria* occurs 14 times, *anandros* 27 times, *andreios* 195 times, *malakia* 79 times, *malakos* 142 times, and *malassō* 49 times (according to the TLG).
- 29 Schmitt Pantel 2009: 47. Plutarch certainly would not have been the first to do so; Charon of Carthage had already produced a work entitled *Biographies of Famous Women* in the early Hellenistic period and similar works were produced by Sopatros of Apamea, Apollonius the Stoic, and Artemon of Magnesia (McInerney 2003: 326). Cf. Stadter 1965: 7–8.
- 30 *Thes.* 1.1, *Dem.* 1.1, *Dion* 1.1. Cf. Duff 2014: 334. Sosius Senecio is also the addressee of *Table Talk* and *Progress in Virtue*. Some *Lives* are dedicated to other persons, such as Polycrates in *Aratus* (1.1).
- 31 Durán Mañas 2010: 158–159, cf. Schmitt Pantel 2009: 44. Soares (2014: 377) briefly notes that women and girls are mentioned infrequently in the *Lives*, which is not the case at all.
- 32 Duff 1999a: 295, cf. Duff (2008). Stadter (1988: 275) has argued the proems to the paired *Lives* shape and reveal the expectations and assumptions of the reader. He also argues that the proems implicitly reveal the nature of the audience.
- 33 Mossman (2017: 502) argues that Plutarch endows at least some female characters with moral agency and importance in such a way as to make the reader dwell on their roles.
- 34 Duff 2008: 188–189, cf. Russell 1966a: 149, Pelling (1988b), Stadter (1988), Beck 2017: 30. On the interconnectedness of *Lives*, Harrison (1995).
- 35 Thus, for example, *Ages.* 1.1, *Alex.* 2.1–6, *Arat.* 2.3, *Cor.* 4.3–4, *Cic.* 1–2, *Cim.* 4, *Crass.* 1.1–2, *Demetr.* 2–3.1, *Dem.* 1.2, 3.3, 4.2–3, *Dion* 3, *Eum.* 1.3, *Sert.* 1.4, 2.1, *Luc.* 1.1, *Lyc.* 1.4, *Lys.* 2.5, *Numa* 3.7, *Pel.* 3.4, *Per.* 3.1–2, *Pomp.* 2.3–5, 4.2–5, *Pub.* 1.3, *Pyrrh.* 1.2, 1.4, 2.2, 3.2–3, 4.2, 4.4, *Rom.* 1.2–5.4, *Them.* 1.1–2.
- 36 Xenophontos 2016: 61
- 37 Xenophontos 2016: 119
- 38 Beneker 2014: 511
- 39 Cf. Duff 1999a: 206.
- 40 A similar story is told of Olympias (*Alex.* 2.2–3).
- 41 At *Pericles* 1.1, Plutarch speaks disapprovingly of foreign women in Rome who carry around monkeys or puppies, lavishing on them the love that is due to men. He reports that Augustus was also unimpressed with this habit, asking whether the women of those countries do not bear children.

- 42 Cf. *Pyrrh.* 4.2, 7.2 and *Demetr.* 25.2, 30.2 on Deïdameia. Plutarch also recounts in some detail the lineage and various legends surrounding the birth of Romulus (*Rom.* 2.1–6).
- 43 Consider the remark at *Nicias* 2.1 that Theramenes was a lesser man than Nicias and Thucydides in part because he was of inferior parentage as a foreigner (*xenos*) from Ceos.
- 44 Roller (2018: 197ff) includes an extensive discussion on Cornelia as an exemplum of motherhood, with ample reference to Plutarch. Cf. Xenophontos 2016: 67–68. Stadter (1999: 179) notes that the events in *Agis & Cleomenes* and the *Gracchi* are “curiously framed by accounts of women.”
- 45 Cf. Stadter 1988: 289.
- 46 Russell (1998), Xenophontos 2016: 112, Beck 2017: 31, Warren (2019), see also “Psycho-somatic degradation and the threat of non-existence” in Chapter 5.
- 47 Cf. Walcot 1998: 170, Soares 2014: 381–382.
- 48 Plutarch’s main source for this *Life* was Dionysius of Halicarnassus, from which he appears to have confused the names of Coriolanus’ wife and mother (Russell 1963: 22). In Dionysius’ account, Volumnia is his wife and Veturia his mother. I have maintained Plutarch’s error here for the sake of clarity.
- 49 Buszard 2010: 84–85, 110–111, cf. Russell 1963: 26.
- 50 Jacobs 2017: 189. Cf. Soares 2008: 723–724, and Xenophontos (2016: 62–63) on the importance of the relationship between Coriolanus and Volumnia for the ethical texture of the *Life*.
- 51 Xenophontos 2016: 64–66
- 52 Cf. Roskam & Verdegem 2016: 175–176 on the digression that precedes the women’s action.
- 53 Carney 2019: 151
- 54 Gill (2006: 419) notes the complexity of Plutarch’s portrait of Alexander, which figures him as increasingly unstable in adulthood and negatively influenced, especially also by his contact with barbarians in the east.
- 55 Cf. Safaee 2017: 115.
- 56 On Roxana as the harmonizer between the forces of Alexander and Bactria, and other marriages made with Persians and Bactrians for political ends, see Gruen 2011: 69–73, Roskam 2004: 263, cf. Tsouvala (2008: 713–714) on marriage as a tool for social harmonization. Carney (2019: 151) comments that Alexander’s marriage to Roxana is a testament to his *sōphrosunē*.
- 57 If indeed what is extant is the end of Alexander, and some part of it is not lost, as suggested by Duff (1999a: 255). See also the second-last chapter of *Phocion*, in which his wife erects a cenotaph, pours libations for him and sneaks his bones back into the city to bury at the hearth (37.3). He is later

- given a public burial (38.1). So too in the case of Pompey, whose wife Cornelia had witnessed his death (*Pomp.* 79.3). In the final sentence of the *Life*, she receives his remains and buries them at his Alban villa (80.6).
- 58 Jacobs (2017: 363n78) notes the parallel between Antony and Cleopatra, and Paris and Helen, which is made explicit in the *synkrisis* (*Demetr. et Ant.* 3.3–4).
- 59 Cf. Val. Max. 9.13.3, Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.35.
- 60 Cf. Georgiadou 1997: 199 on the narrative suspension here, which heightens the dramatic tension and serves as justification for Pelopidas' and Thebe's rage. In *On Love*, the brother, Pytholaus, is the one who kills Alexander, specifically because of the sexual violence he had been subjected to (768f). In *Pelopidas*, he is one of three brothers who help Thebe in her plot to kill her husband (35.3). Cicero (*De off.* 2.25) ascribes Alexander's murder at the hands of Thebe to her suspicion of infidelity; Pelopidas has nothing to do with it. Cf. Diod. 16.14.1, Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.35–36.
- 61 Thus also Ingenkamp 2008: 266, Pelling 2008: 544–545.
- 62 Cf. Wohl 1999: 369 on the symbolism in Plutarch's account of the death of Alcibiades with reference to the mutilation of the Herms. Duff (1999a: 240) sees Timandra's burial of Alcibiades as according to him in death the honor he sought in life. Compare the anecdote about the woman from Pergamum at *Virtues* 259a–d.
- 63 Duff 1999a: 236–237, cf. Duff 2008: 198–200, who also notes that both *Alcibiades* and *Alexander* emphasize upbringing as a factor in the formation of character and morality. On Plutarch's characterization of Alcibiades, see also Russell (1966b), Verdegem 2010: esp. 122–125.
- 64 Wohl 1999: 352, 354, 366, cf. *Alc.* 34.7.
- 65 Beck 2014b: 467
- 66 On the inconsistency of Alcibiades' character, see also Gill 2006: 418–419.
- 67 This juxtaposition is excellently made at *Ages.* 14.1–2, where Agesilaus' *sōphrosunē* puts the luxury (*truphē*) of the Persians to shame (cf. 36.6). Agesilaus returns home unaffected by the foreign customs to which so many other men have succumbed (19.4). Cf. Pl. *Alc.* 122b–e.
- 68 Also related at *Ages.* 3.1–2, cf. *Lys.* 22.3–4. The boy, Leotychides, is eventually recognized as legitimate by Agis, but through the machinations of Lysander and Agesilaus does not come to the throne. On this episode, see Verdegem 2010: 279–283.
- 69 Cleopatra is also accused of using witchcraft in *Antony*, as is Olympias in *Alexander*.
- 70 Eur. *Orest.* 129

- 71 Mossman 2017: 488, but compare Verdegem 2010: 119–121, 270 with reference to *De sera* 551c–552d and *Thes. et Rom.* 2.1. I note that if Plutarch did not think that character change was possible, the entire psychagogic project would be moot. Cf. Swain (1989), Stadter 2015: 239, Xenophontos 2016: 32.
- 72 Cf. *Brut.* 53. 6–7, *Cat. Min.* 73.4; the last section of *Cato Minor*, where Plutarch also briefly mentions Porcia’s death, focuses on her nobility (*eugeneia*) and virtue (*aretē*) before referring the reader to the *Life of Brutus*.
- 73 Roskam & Verdegem 2016: 162, 190, Russell (1966a: 149, 153) sees digressions as an essential component of a characteristically Plutarchan work but not necessarily particularly relevant to the narrative. Nikolaidis (1997: 36–38) notes Plutarch’s interest in and the extent of his representation of the characters of women in the *Lives* in digressions and passages that do not shed light on the character of his heroes, but doesn’t make the inference that women are intended as exempla.
- 74 Cf. Russell 1963: 21, Almagor (2013), Roskam & Verdegem 2016: 164–165, 184–185, 190–194.
- 75 Roskam & Verdegem 2016: 194
- 76 On this digression, see Roskam & Verdegem 2016: 177. Almagor (2013: 157–158) notes the comparative nature of ethnographic digressions, which often characterize the hero in contrast with the other. Cf. Tanga 2019: 155.
- 77 Theste is discussed in “Parrhēsia and the therapy of the soul” in Chapter 2.
- 78 See Roskam & Verdegem 2016: 162, Xenophontos 2016: 123. Plutarch draws a similar contrast between father and son in *Sayings of Kings and Commanders* 175e.
- 79 Cf. Geiger 1971: 226–227, who sees this as one of few straightforward statements on the aims of Plutarch’s biographical project.
- 80 This latter Servilia is redeemed when she follows Cato into Asia, submitting to his guardianship and assuming his way of life of her own accord (*Cat. min.* 54.1). Geiger (1971: 230–231) argues that she was probably Cato’s niece.
- 81 Beck (2017: 32–33) notes the general tendency in Plutarch’s *Lives* to bring anecdotes together thematically even if it disrupts the chronological structure.
- 82 Cf. Goessler 1962: 75, Russell 1966b: 41, Geiger 1971: 334–335. Chapman (2011: 29) argues that Plutarch is especially concerned with the phenomenon of women initiating divorce.
- 83 Cf. Pugh Ginn 2017: 128, Beck 2014b: 474.
- 84 Almagor (2014a: 279) notes that the *Life of Aratus* also appears to be intended as a paradigm over several generations, since it is dedicated to his descendants.

- 85 Also noted by Wheatley & Dunn 2020: 436, who note that Plutarch distinguishes between “the significance of legitimate wives on the one hand, and whores on the other.” Cf. Jacobs 2017: 337n28.
- 86 Wheatley & Dunn (2020: 94) argue that Phila was probably around 35 years old and twice-widowed, while Demetrius may have been about 16 or 17.
- 87 Wheatley & Dunn 2020: 428
- 88 Cf. Marasco 2008: 671.
- 89 Cf. Wheatley & Dunn 2020: 439.
- 90 Wheatley & Dunn (2020: 434) find this strange considering the mention of his son by “an Illyrian woman.” The elision may have been a deliberate choice, given Plutarch’s distaste for children born outside of legitimate marriages and especially from women like Lamia and Cleopatra, who have a reputation for interfering with the business of men.
- 91 Duff 1999a: 287–288
- 92 Cf. Duff 1999a: esp. 243ff, Pelling 1988a: 18ff, Harrison 1995: 91–92, 103, Stadter 2015: 243–245, and the edited collection *Plutarch’s Lives: Parallelism and Purpose* (Humble 2010).
- 93 Mossman (2014: 593) considers the comparison between Octavia and Cleopatra one such an example; indeed it is the one of the most famous and perhaps also the most explicit. De Pourq & Roskam (2017: 169) also notes that internal comparison of the hero and his enemies function in the same way. Cf. Russell 1996a: 150–151, Beck (2002), Larmour 2014: 405.
- 94 Larmour 2014: 408
- 95 Duff 1999a: 247–248, cf. Larmour 2014: 408–409, De Pourq & Roskam 2017: 165.
- 96 See “Beauty, masculinity, and the split self” in Chapter 4.
- 97 As Jacobs (2017: 110) comments, motive is an important criterion in the judgment here.
- 98 Compare the account of his treatment of and subsequent battle against the Amazons (*Thes.* 26–27).
- 99 Plutarch notes the dispute over which Amazon exactly was taken by Theseus, that it was perhaps Hippolyta, the same woman who bartered the peace between the Amazons and Theseus (*Thes.* 27.4).
- 100 Ariadne at *Thes.* 19.1–20.5, Antiope at 26.1–3, Helen at 31.1–4, Phaedra at 28.1, and a whole host of other women, including Anaxo, Periboea and Iope, in chapter 29. Cf. Almagor 2013: 161–162, Vamvouri Ruffly 2017: 244.
- 101 Plutarch notes the debate on the exact number of women at *Rom.* 14.6.
- 102 Cf. Martin 2011: 147.
- 103 Buszard 2010: 101

- 104 The first case is notable because the man, Spurius Carvilius, divorced his wife on account of barrenness (*Thes. et Rom.* 6.3).
- 105 Cf. Harrison 1995: 95–99 on common themes in the *synkrisis* to *Demetrius-Antony* and *Agessilaus-Pompey*.
- 106 Harrison (1995: 101) notes that this is the chief reason for Pompey’s downfall.
- 107 Cf. Jacobs 2017: 263–264.
- 108 On Pompey’s wives Julia and Cornelia, see Beneker 2014: 512.
- 109 Almagor 2018: 94–95
- 110 Almagor 2014a: 282. Plutarch also wrote a work entitled *Barbarian Questions* (Lamprias Catalogue no. 139) that is no longer extant.
- 111 Almagor 2014a: 282, 2018: 86
- 112 On the network of identifications linking women, barbarians, animals and intersex folk, see Barton 1994: 115–128. Cf. Nikolaidis (1986), Vlassopoulos 2013: 192.
- 113 Almagor 2018: 77, 87–88, cf. *Art.* 20.1, 20.4, 23.5, *Ages.* 15.6, *Pel.* 30.6, *De fort. Alex.* 326e–f and the *persikon chrusion* at 327d, *Xen. Cyr.* 8.8, who also accuses them of *malakia*.
- 114 Thus Almagor (2018: 90) notes Artaxerxes I for Themistocles, Pharnabazus for Lysander and Agessilaus, and Tissaphernes for Alcibiades. Cf. Duff 1999a: 243–250.
- 115 Soares 2007: 93. Hartmann (2008: 427–428) argues that Plutarch fails to fully develop “barbarian” characters as individuals but instead treats them as the opponent to Rome.
- 116 Cf. Schmidt 1999: 318–324, Gill 2006: 413–414.
- 117 See thus also Gill 2006: 417, who comments that stability of character is a mark of virtue. This accords well with Plutarch’s view of motion as the origin of change and instability which ultimately causes evil; see Chapter 5.
- 118 Pelling 1988a: 22–24
- 119 Swain (1989: 63–64) notes the importance of context for individual characters. Cf. Stadter 2015: 241.
- 120 Vlassopoulos 2013: 191–193, 199–200
- 121 Note that Artaxerxes prays to Areimanius that the Greeks will continue to drive away their best men and deliver them to him (*Them.* 28.4). Cf. Swain (1990), Vlassopoulos 2013: 162.
- 122 Cf. Gill 2006: 419.
- 123 Almagor 2009: 12
- 124 Cf. *Xen. Anab.* 1.1.1, 1.1.4.
- 125 Safaee 2017: 112

- 126 Cf. *Apophth. reg.* 173f, where Plutarch reports that Artaxerxes encouraged Stateira to do so. Llwellyn-Jones (2013: 105) argues that Parysatis may have disliked Stateira for this practice, since it breached court protocols that restricted female visibility.
- 127 Almagor 2016: 70
- 128 Cf. Xen. *Anab.* 1.1.3, who simply says Parysatis interceded for Cyrus.
- 129 On the money Cyrus spent to gather and maintain armies, see Xen. *Anab.* 1.1.9–10, who also says that some of the villages in which his forces encamped on the march belonged to Parysatis (1.4.9, cf. 2.4.27). Almagor 2018: 75 rightly comments that Plutarch saw moral significance in oriental court decadence. Cf. Schmidt 1999: 110–120 on *truphē* and *ploutos* amongst the Persians and Llwellyn-Jones 2013: 111–112 on the wealth of the Persian royal women.
- 130 According to Xenophon, Artaxerxes did not at first realize there was a plot against him (*Anab.* 1.1.8).
- 131 Safaee 2017: 113
- 132 Almagor (2009: 10) argues that this episode presents Artaxerxes as oblivious to the dangers surrounding him. Cf. Soares 2007: 94.
- 133 Cf. Pl. *Phdr.* 254c. Compare also the boast reported at *Apophth. reg.* 173e–f. Almagor (2014b: 6) notes Cyrus' use of horse imagery to denigrate Artaxerxes.
- 134 *Anabasis* 1
- 135 Clearchus was a Spartan exile when he joined Cyrus' cause; according to Xenophon, he was banished for disobedience (*Anab.* 2.6.4).
- 136 Almagor (2014b) notes the use of horse-imagery throughout the biography, arguing that through it neither Artaxerxes nor Cyrus are represented as particularly suitable for the kingship. He also comments on the horses given to Atossa after her marriage to her father, noting the implication of unbridled passion the image carries (*Art.* 23).
- 137 Plutarch also reports a saying along this vein: *Apophth. reg.* 174a.
- 138 Soares (2007: 94) notes that the image of Artaxerxes gradually changes throughout the *Life*. Almagor (2009: 10, 17–18, cf. 2014b: 10) argues that Plutarch gradually reveals the initial impression of Artaxerxes as a virtuous ruler to be a façade or perhaps a drastic change in his character. Cf. *Sull.* 30.4–5, *Sert.* 10.3–4 for similar revelations of character.
- 139 Binder (2008: 228ff) comments on Parysatis' role at this point in the *Life*, focusing mostly on sources and historical data.
- 140 Soares 2007: 95
- 141 Cf. Llwellyn-Jones 2013: 120 on power struggles amongst the women in the Persian court, with a note about similarities in Greece and Macedonia.

- 142 Cf. Jacobs 2017: 363n78. Safaee (2017: 104) notes that Parysatis is a paradigmatic example of the vengeful and disloyal woman in the Persian court, and that such women are often the instigators of strife.
- 143 Llewellyn-Jones (2013: 148) comments that Parysatis fascinated the Greeks and eventually came to be the image of a “second Semiramis.”
- 144 On the stereotype of the cruel and vengeful barbarian queen, see Soares 2007: 95–98. Cf. also Binder 2008: 235–237 and Nikolaidis 1986: 239.
- 145 According to Diodorus, Parysatis was also granted permission to have Tissaphernes executed for betraying Cyrus (Diod. 14.80.6).
- 146 Llewellyn-Jones 2013: 139–140, who also argues that grief was a catalyst for Parysatis’ vengeance.
- 147 Almagor 2014a: 284, who also notes the theme of character transformation in *Aratus*.
- 148 Almagor 2016: 71–72
- 149 Cf. Llewellyn-Jones 2013: 141, Binder 2008: 254–259, 268–270 on the power-struggle between Parysatis and Stateira.
- 150 Compare also the next precept (36 at *Conj. praec.* 143b–c), on why mothers love their sons more and fathers their daughters.
- 151 Safaee 2017: 112–113
- 152 Cf. Llewellyn-Jones 2013: 142.
- 153 Cf. *Quaest. conv.* 736f, Hartmann 2008: 443–444.
- 154 Almagor 2018: 77
- 155 Kuefler 2001: 19. Cf. Stevenson (1995), who argues that eunuchs were increasingly prominent in the Roman empire from the 1st century CE onward.
- 156 Compare Cleomenes’ response to the suggestion that he should die by suicide: “he who in the face of toils and hardships, or of the censorious judgments of men, gives up the fight, is vanquished by his own weakness (*malakia*). For a self-inflicted death ought to be, not flight from action, but an action in itself. For it is shameful to die, as well as to live, for one’s self alone” (*Cleom.* 31.5).
- 157 Bagoas is said to have been quite wealthy; Alexander bestowed his house in Susa on Parmenio (*Alex.* 39.6, cf. Diod. 16.51). Cf. Beck 2002: 468–469 on the internal comparison between Artaxerxes and Ochus. Brief reference is made to the identification of Ochus with the ass and the ass with Typhon at *On Isis* 363c.
- 158 Cf. Safaee 2017: 114 on Bagoas and the role of eunuchs at the Persian court.
- 159 Philostratus described him as *androthēlus* (*VS* 489). Polemo described him degenerately effeminate (fr. 160.6–162.7). See also Luc. *Demon.* 12–13, *Eun.*

7. Favorinus is an interlocutor in *On Cold* and *Table Talk* 8.10, and is briefly mentioned in *Roman Questions* (271c). Cf. Retief & Cilliers (2003).
- 160 Cf. also *Arist.* 9.4, *Them.* 16.3 on the eunuch Arnaces.
- 161 Llewellyn-Jones 2013: 142
- 162 Cf. *Athen.* 2.31.
- 163 Mossman (2005: 514–515) points out a similar issue of characteristic inconsistency in the pair *Pyrrhus-Marius*.
- 164 Cf. Russell 1968: 134, Demulder 2017b: 213.
- 165 Mossman 2005: 502–503, cf. Roskam 2017: 161.
- 166 Hence the great interest in education pointed out by Pelling (1988b: 257). Cf. *Cat. min.* 1.3 on the value of putting effort into learning: “this is generally the way of nature: those who are well endowed are more apt to recall things to mind, but those retain things in their memory who acquire them with toil and trouble; for everything they learn becomes branded, as it were, upon their minds.”
- 167 Russell 1966a: 144–147
- 168 Duff 1999a: 39
- 169 Duff 1999a: 54–55
- 170 Ayer 1936: 107–108, cf. Rorty 1991: 28–29, Duff 2007: 5.
- 171 See, for example, *Rom.* 2.2, *Lyc.* 22.2, *Num.* 8.1, *Cam.* 41.1, 42.3, *Per.* 39.3, *Fab.* 15.2, *Cor.* 32.2, *Flam.* 8.1, *Alex.* 57.5.
- 172 Cf. the same link between *malakia* and *thēlutēta* at *On Love* 751d and again the contrast made by Agesilaus between *andreia* and *malakia* (*Apophth. Lac.* 210a).
- 173 On Sertorius as an *exemplum* in Plutarch, see Roller 2018: 60.
- 174 Epicycles has a soft (*malakos*) soul and is open to bribes (*Them.* 6.1).
- 175 Cf. *Apophth. Rom.* 197f.
- 176 Cf. *De fort. Alex.* 337c.
- 177 Thus Diodorus writes that Solon freed the city from luxury and effeminacy by making the accustomed to practicing virtue and to emulate the deeds of virile (*andreiōn*) folk (9.1.4).
- 178 See Roller 2018: 209–211.
- 179 Cf. *Philopoemen* 9.7. The link between *malakia* and enslavement is also made in *Roman Questions* 274d.

CONCLUSION

- 1 What Critchley (2007: 42–43) calls “situated universality,” in which a demand arises from a particular situation and yet exceeds that situation by virtue of its universalizability.
- 2 Duff 1999a: 65

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- I have been unable to access the following books (i.a) since March 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions on ILLs (among other barriers to access)**
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