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TIPPING HIS HAND: PLUTARCH'S PREFERENCES
IN THE *QUAESTIONES NATURALES*

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The several groups of *quaestiones* written by Plutarch embrace not just those essays whose Greek titles are αἰτίαι and ζητήματα, but also his essays given a symposiac setting. Apart from their value to students of philosophy and natural history, they offer endless delight to the literary critic since they are so well written and so deeply infused with the warmth of Plutarch's personality. As much artistry and energy thus seems to have been expended on the *quaestiones* as on Plutarch's other essays and *Vitae*, and the primacy of Plato's *Timaeus*, Plutarch's talisman and beacon, is as apparent in the *quaestiones* as in his other works.

1. *Literary Conventions of Αἰτίαι*

The *Quaestiones naturales*¹ (Lamprias 218, Planudes 50)² offer a coherent and manageable collection for an investigation of Plutarch's style of composition and literary techniques within all of the *quaestiones*: thirty-one *quaestiones* are preserved in two manuscripts dating back to the tenth and eleventh centuries, from which the 1295 manuscript of Maximus Planudes was copied. To these thirty-one *quaestiones* must be added eight known from a 1542 Latin version by Gybertus Longolius and a further two from the *De omnifaria doctrina* of Michael Psellus, a scholar of the eleventh century. The text has been wrested back from wholesale Renaissance emendation by the superlative ministrations of Hubert³ and thus presents few difficulties. Scholiasts throughout the centuries have identified with precision the sources for most of

¹ I should wish to acknowledge with delight and the deepest gratitude all of the courtesies extended by Luc Van der Stockt and his colleagues. Their genial hospitality set a gracious tone and was most greatly appreciated.

² Unfortunately the Φυσικὴ ἐπιτομή (Lamprias 183) and the Μελετῶν φυσικῶν καὶ πανηγυρικῶν (Lamprias 200a), which would surely have contained much comparative information, are no longer extant.

³ *Plutarchi 'Moralia'*, volume V, 3: ΑΙΤΙΑ ΦΥΣΙΚΑ. Edited by C. HUBERT, Leipzig, 1960.

the views presented by Plutarch and have also listed similar passages in other ancient authors, both Greek and Latin.

The template for the organisation of the material within an individual inquiry within the *Quaestiones naturales* is fairly obvious:

- a question begun with Διὰ τί, is followed
- by several alternatives, or *causae*,
- the first of which is normally Πότερον ὅτι,
- and the others are most often ἢ <ὅτι> or <τοῦτο>
- usually followed by ἢ μᾶλλον <ὅτι> if there is a
- third alternative, beyond which there is no definable pattern.

There are, of course, variations but this is clearly the pattern for the *Quaestiones naturales* which, within reason, applies as well *in decreasing order of consistency* to the *Quaestiones Romanae*, to the *Quaestiones Graecae*, to the *Quaestiones Platonicae*, to the *Quaestionum convivalium libri IX*, and perhaps with some generous imagination even to sections of the *Septem sapientium convivium*.⁴ The source is not hard to find, as Plutarch's organisation is that of Aristotle's Προβλήματα, with considerable elaboration on Plutarch's part.

1a. Formal Structure

Since this template seems to have been Plutarch's primary unit of organisation, it would be useful to know whether any of the alternatives consistently aligns with the position of any specific group. Here the *Quaestiones naturales* provides a most fertile hunting ground, even if the evidence is incomplete and not as decisive as one might wish: twelve questions, for example, are without πότερον⁵, ten of which have preserved only one *causa*.⁶ Within these limits one might nonetheless observe that the πότερον *causa* seems to have been reserved for current

⁴ Other essays which might have had this structure are Αἰτίαι βαρβαρικά (Lamprias 139), Αἰτίαι τῶν περιφερομένων Στωικῶν (Lamprias 149), Αἰτίαι καὶ τόποι (Lamprias 160), Αἰτίαι ἀλλαγῶν (Lamprias 161), Αἰτίαι γυναικῶν (Lamprias 167), and Περὶ προβλήματα (Lamprias 193). The fragments of the Αἰτίαι τῶν Ἀράτου Διοσημεϊῶν (Lamprias 119) are not sufficient to allow any conclusions.

⁵ Numbers 8, 9, 11, 14, 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24, 29, and 30. *Causa 1* of 32L [=Longolius] begins with *utrum* (=πότερον); all of the others begin with *an* or *quod*. Psellus (*quaestiones* 40 and 41) offers a paraphrase and so cannot be used to inquire after details of composition.

⁶ Numbers 8, 9, 11, 14, 15, 18, 22, 24, 29, and 30. *Quaestio* 23 has πότερον but no other *causa*.

received opinion on the subject. Ὡς οἱ ἔνιοι, πολλοί and πλεῖστοι⁷ when they occur in the *Quaestiones naturales*, are typically found in the *πότερον causa*, and would seem to be an equivalent expression for λήϊτος,⁸ “the people” or here “popular opinion”. The collectives some, many, and most, when they occur in other *causae* generally are accompanied by a genitive of specification of philosophical school or other group.⁹

Of the thirty-one *quaestiones* preserved in the Planudean tradition, only nine¹⁰ do not have recognisable references to passages within surviving works of Aristotle and Theophrastus. Where more than one *causa* is given, the view of either Aristotle or Theophrastus is almost without exception¹¹ the second one given, unless their positions had already been enunciated in the *πότερον causa*. There is little that can be said to characterise the third and subsequent *causae*, when they occur, except that they are as likely to contain other Peripatetic views, but never those of Stoics.

1b. *Indications of Intermittent Composition*

From this one might begin to glimpse Plutarch's working method for the *Quaestiones naturales*, and to do so one returns profitably to what Van der Stockt has written about the *Quaestiones Romanae* (as Giesen

⁷ Numbers 3 and 20; similarly Ἔνιοι δὲ φασιν (20, *causa* 2). This pattern is more prevalent in the *Quaestiones Romanae* and *Quaestiones Graecae* than in the *Quaestiones naturales*; cf. *Quaest. Rom.* numbers 6, 12, 21, 25, 26, 28, 31, 41, 42, 43, 45, 51, 54, 56, 67, 68, 69, 81, 90, 97, 98, 101, 103, and 111.

⁸ Although λήϊτος does not occur in extant Greek literature, λήϊτον (=βουλευτήριον) is attested in Herodotus and Plutarch. Λαός for men gathered in assembly has a Homeric pedigree and parallels in Plutarch, and was the formulaic beginning of proclamations. Bowersock's identification of Ofellius Laetus, a Platonic philosopher from Ephesus, remains problematic on the basis of (1) lingering questions concerning chronology, (2) Plutarch's lack of citation of near contemporaries, (3) his preference for the continuous imperfect (ἔλεγε in both *quaestiones* 2 and 6) over the iterative imperfect, and (4) the citation of peripatetic views within the same sentence in which λήϊτος occurs; cf. G.W. BOWERSOCK, *Plutarch and the Sublime Hymn of Ofellius Laetus*, *GRBS* 23 (1982) p. 275-279. An easier hypothesis would theorise that Plutarch wrote λήϊτος or λαός, which was changed to the name of a known Platonic philosopher by the time of U, the earliest preserved manuscript, whose copyist realised that ὧς in Plutarch is normally followed by personal names but did not recognise λήϊτος/λαός as a collective equivalent to πολλοί.

⁹ This is unexampled in the *Quaestiones naturales*, but is a persistent feature of the *Quaestiones Romanae* and *Quaestiones Graecae*; cf., e.g., *Quaest. Rom.* 12, 51, 61, 67, 69, and 106.

¹⁰ Numbers 3, 10, 11, 14, 17, 18, 20, 25, and 28; even so, at least 3 and 10 have a *causa* which is consistent with Peripatetic views.

¹¹ The exceptions are 12, 13, 19, 21, and 31.

had similarly for the *Quaestiones Graecae*).¹² In two of the three different paradigms he proposed, Van der Stockt considered that Plutarch found the subject of a question in an author and then formulated that question. That author for the *Quaestiones naturales* is almost without exception either Aristotle or Theophrastus, whose thought, however, is normally cited in the second *causa* and not the first as one might have expected.

This reversal would seem to imply intermittent composition for at least the *Quaestiones naturales*, in which, like someone who solves cross word or jig saw puzzles over a number of days, Plutarch picked up and put down and came back to a series of questions that had begun to excite his curiosity on the basis of a re-reading of other philosophers. On a sheet of papyrus or vellum, he formulated the question, left space for *communis opinio*, and then paraphrased the passage which had begun his train of thought. The sheer volume of his preserved works and those known by title or from fragments makes it certain that Plutarch was researching and writing several works simultaneously. While engaged on other projects, as he had further thoughts, Plutarch made additions to each of the *quaestiones* just as trains may add on cars at various stops but always in a determined sequence. In instances where Plutarch disdained even to entertain current popular opinion, Aristotle or Theophrastus was moved up from *causa 2* to the *πότερον causa*. The only *quaestio* which does not conform to this reconstruction is number 16 in which Theophrastus is cited in the third *causa*.

This format also has the virtue of explaining a series of inconsistencies in preservation and cross-reference. Roughly two-thirds of the *causae* begin with *πότερον*, a very strong indication of Plutarch's intent, yet the more than one-third which do not are too many to be explained by the vagaries of survival, or loss. One must consider the possibility that the twelve *quaestiones* whose first *causa* does not start with *πότερον* were intended to do so. *Quaestiones* 20 and 29, for example, start respectively with *αἰτία δὲ* and *οὐ γάρ*. Such non-formulaic expressions mark third or subsequent *causae* such as also numbers 2 (*Ἄρ' οὖν*), 3 (*Σκόπει δὲ μή*), 5 (*Οὕτως δὲ τούτων*), 19 (*Ἄρ' οὖν*), and 28 (*Οὐδενὸς δ' ἦτον*).

The ten other *quaestiones* all begin with the Greek letter H. The only coherent pattern in them is that Duebner without exception has given them an acute accent, thereby, conjecturing that they are indeed the disjunctive conjunction, while Hubert assigns them all the circumflex of the

¹² L. VAN DER STOCKT, *Plutarch's Use of Literature: Sources and citations in the 'Quaestiones Romanae'*, *Ancient Society* 18 (1987), p. 281-292.

interrogative adverb for single alternative questions. *Quaestio* 21 advances four *causae* and so the H with accent acute must be meant¹³. All of the others are ones in which only a single *causa* is given. *Quaestio* 24, however, opens with Ἡ διὰ τὴν εἰρημένην αἰτίαν; The perfect participle of εἶρω (*dico*) must refer to an argument which has just been made and so presumes a *πότερον*¹⁴. Conversely, *Quaestio* 23 preserves the *πότερον*, but has lost the alternative *causa* or *causae*. Economy of hypothesis and comparison would suggest that all of the others¹⁵, all of which cite Aristotle or Theophrastus, were written down in anticipation of a *πότερον causa*.

A third possible indication of intermittent composition is the length of the questions. One of the great joys of Plutarch is his incisiveness and concision, and this is apparent in twenty-eight questions which are put in between seven and twenty-seven words. Three are so much longer¹⁶ that one is inclined to believe that Plutarch was still working on a final formulation of the question even as he was collecting material for the *causae* and putting final touches to some of the other *quaestiones*¹⁷.

Perhaps more revealing than length or formulation of the question, is the addition of a further *causa* after one in which Plutarch has clearly signaled his own opinion. Michael Psellus was so bothered by the third *causa* to *Quaestio* 12 that he re-wrote it. The problem may not be so much the content or syntax as its mere presence. It would seem quite natural that an investigator would set up the rival theories first before concluding with his own. Conversely but in confirmation, *Quaestio* 5 carries several clear indications of Plutarch's views in *causae* 3 and 4, one apparently an extrapolation from the other. A further reference to a different part of Plato's *corpus* in *causa* 5 would seem to be the later addition of a supplemental proof.

¹³ The present subjunctive does not occur in the opening of any *causae* in all of the *Quaestiones naturales*, and so ἥ = present subjunctive is not possible; all of the *causae* are given in the present indicative.

¹⁴ Cf. *Quaest. Rom.* 55, which also does not have *πότερον*; cf. *Quaest. Rom.* 84 where διὰ τὰς εἰρημένας ἀλογίας refers to a possible explanation which has just been dismissed.

¹⁵ Numbers 8, 9, 11, 14, 15, 18, 22, and 30.

¹⁶ <i>Quaestio</i>	words <i>quaestio</i>	number of <i>causae</i>	words <i>causae</i>
5	75	3	206
21	42	4	158
26	74	2	162

¹⁷ For *Quaestio* 5, at least, on why 'salty' is the only one of eight tastes not to come from a fruit or seed, one might be willing to see the hand of a *glossator* who felt compelled to furnish the other tastes.

Due to the labours of Pelling and Stadter and many others, there is coming to be an increasing consensus on the sequence of composition for most if not all of the *Lives*. The time may have arrived for a series of collaborators to begin to work out the comparative chronology of the *Moralia* and then tie this to the *Lives*. Sandbach¹⁸ has made a start in establishing the sequence of composition for several essays, viz:

De sollertia animalium >>>
Quaestiones naturales, 19 >>>
De amicorum multitudine

It would also seem on stylistic and formal grounds that at least parts of the *Quaestiones naturales* must have been written before the *Quaestiones Romanae* and *Quaestiones Graecae*. Among other indications are the use of the present almost to the exclusion of other tenses in the first eighteen questions, while the rest of the *Quaestiones naturales* shows a mix of present, aorist, and perfect, a practice closer to the *Quaestiones Romanae* and *Quaestiones Graecae*. The incorporation of literary quotations is nowhere as extensive in the *Quaestiones naturales* as in the *Quaestiones Romanae* and *Quaestiones Graecae*, which is perhaps a sign of later composition but could equally reflect further revision. It should be noted, however, that literary quotation and similes are far more common in *Quaestiones* nineteen through thirty-one than in one through eighteen. The amount of material shared in common with the *Quaestiones convivales*, Plutarch's longest extant work, would want to argue that their composition is more or less simultaneous with all of the *Quaestiones naturales*.

One might thus elaborate Sandbach's surmise, as follows:

De sollertia animalium >>>
Quaestiones naturales 1-18 >>>
Quaestiones naturales 19-31
 [*Quaestiones convivales*] >>>
De amicorum multitudine
Quaestiones Romanae
Quaestiones Graecae

As for the *Lives*, Boulogne¹⁹ cites and discusses the two statements made by Plutarch which demonstrate that the *Life of Romulus* and the *Life of Camillus* were both written subsequently to the *Quaestiones*

¹⁸ Plutarch's 'Moralia', volume 11. Edited by F.H. SANDBACH (LCL), Cambridge, Mass., 1970, p. 136-137.

¹⁹ J. BOULOGNE, *Plutarque: Un aristocrate grec sous l'occupation romaine*, Lille, 1994, p. 75-77.

Romanae. As similar statements from Plutarch are collected and internal evidence gathered and analysed, it becomes clear (1) that the *Quaestiones* in general will be found to belong to the second half of Plutarch's career, (2) that the evidence will become compelling that the *Quaestiones naturales* had a long and intermittent composition, and (3) that, therefore, much of the *Moralia* could not have been published notebooks of material gathered for the *Vitae*.

1c. *Indications of Plutarch's Concurrence*

Sandbach²⁰, citing Rose on F. Leo, has stated that the phrase σκόπει δὲ μή marks Plutarch's own suggestion and has added that the *causa* which has a semi-synonymous pair is the one which contains Plutarch's own material. Beyond that, Sandbach was otherwise skeptical that Plutarch ever gave an indication of his preference. Nonetheless, it would seem apparent that the first *causa*, since Plutarch generally dismissed popular opinion, and the second *causa*, since it most often embodied Peripatetic views, should normally not contain his own views. There is also the possibility that Plutarch did indeed find additional ways to signal his concurrence.

(a) Σκόπει δὲ μή [Rose following F. Leo]
Quaestiones 3, 12, 19

'Why do herdsmen put down salt?' is asked in *Quaestio* 3. The first *causa* has πολλοί and the final one starts Σκόπει δὲ μή containing material repeated in the *Quaestionum convivalium* II. IX. In *quaestio* 12 σκόπει δὲ μή occurs in the third of four *causae*, accompanied by three semi-synonymous pairs. *Quaestio* 19 is the longest of the *quaestiones* and has long been a favourite. The subject is why the octopus changes its colour and begins with the explanation of Theophrastus. A second *causa*, also short, seems to reflect popular opinion (λέγουσιν)²¹ supported by quotes from Pindar and Theognis. Then Plutarch launched upon his own views, taking more than two-thirds of the entire length of the *quaestio*²².

(b) ἦ δεῖ μή
Quaestio 25

Similar to σκόπει δὲ μή, for example, is ἦ δεῖ μή which occurs once in *Quaestio* 25 which considers the ill-effects dew has on hunting. The

²⁰ F.H. SANDBACH, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

²¹ Cf. also διὰ τὰς λεγομένας αἰτίας of popular opinion; *Quaest. Rom.* 95.

²² Comparable to this is Ὅρα δὲ μή, such as in *Quaest. Rom.* 24, 74, 78, and 101.

πότερον *causa* predictably has φασίν and the second *causa* starts with ἢ δεῖ μή and includes a semi-synonymous pair. Sandbach expressed reservations about the sense of the question and the soundness of the text. More troubling is κινεῖν, repeated three times within one sentence. Such a flagrant solecism from Plutarch is extremely rare and might be taken to indicate that the text rather than being unsound was still in a preliminary phase²³.

(c) Μαρτυρέω, τεκμαίρομαι, αἰτία
Quaestiones 6, 15, 19, 20

Αἰτία occurs only once in the *Quaestiones naturales* (20) and it starts the only *causa* which is couched as a statement. Unusually Plutarch gave his reason first and placed ἔνιοι δέ φασιν second. Plutarch was similarly chary of words for proof and evidence, and they are given in evidence of fact in the present indicative rather than furnish indications for a hypothesis rejected later. Thus τεκμήριον δὲ τῆς αἰτίας underscores the σκόπει δὴ in *quaestio* 19. *Quaestio* 15 on different soils for barley and wheat is perhaps the best example, since it comes just after a semi-synonymous pair and is supported by δὲ τῷ λόγῳ τούτῳ.²⁴ *Quaestio* 6, on the effects of mildew on the skin, is particularly charming. The first *causa* is attributed to Λήϊτος and the second reflects the thinking of Theophrastus. The picture is of people walking through low plants shedding dew and the vocabulary fairly frolics with bouncy light syllables and assonance, particularly nouns formed in composition with ἀνα-, which is quite a feat given Plutarch's well known aversion to hiatus. A third, very short (19 words) statement follows, anchored by μαρτυρεῖ, which gives the information that overweight people, believing that the morning dew helps shed excess weight, soak their cloaks in it.

(d) Genitive Absolute
Quaestio 5

There is one *questio*, number 5, within the *Quaestiones naturales*, in which a genitive absolute might, like the Latin *quae cum ita sunt*, be used to endorse the probability of the prior statement. *Quaestio* 5 begins with the received opinion on why 'salty' alone of the eight

²³ Cf. *Quaest. Rom.* 7 (ἢ μᾶλλον ὅτι δεῖ), 62, 80 (ἢ καὶ τόπον ἔδει) and 95 (ἢ μᾶλλον ὅτι δεῖ); cf. *Quaest. Rom.* 24 where οὐ δεῖ δέ indicates categorical rejection.

²⁴ Cf. *Quaest. Rom.* 19, 42, 70, 84, 95, 107, and 111.

tastes does not come from a fruit or seed and the second offered possibility is a summation from Aristotle which is also cited in the *Quaestionum convivalium libri IX* (627B-C). The third *causa* cites Plato by name, and the fourth, which seems to offer further confirming evidence, begins Οὕτως δὲ τούτων ἐχόντων followed immediately by εἰκός ἐστι, clear evidence that Plutarch had fastened upon an answer.

(e) Πιθανόν
Quaestio 26

Like εἰκός, πιθανόν οὖν ἐστι, marks out what is probable and begins a sentence couched as a statement rather than as a question. The second *causa* in *quaestio* 26 gives Plutarch's opinion on why sick animals seek out medicinal plants. The answer incorporates material also to be found at *Quaestionum convivalium libri IX* 688A and concludes with a set of semi-synonymous pairs. Εἰκός and πιθανόν begin and sum up sections, respectively; contrarily δῆλόν ἐστι in *Quaestio* 7 provides information within a *causa* rather than stating its theme.

(f) Citation of Plato or Socrates
Quaestiones 1, 5, 16

Van der Stockt²⁵, writing about the *Quaestiones Romanae*, has stated that Plutarch read Latin authors for information and not for illustration or confirmation. Although such citation is observable within the *Quaestiones naturales*, Plutarch's practice of using his authorities in helping him formulate the questions and frame alternative answers would seem to point towards an earlier date of composition for the *Quaestiones naturales* and also indicate how he could *ipso facto* use source citation as signals of his own views. The convergence of Platonic language and concepts, for example, even if a reference to a specific dialogue cannot be detected, is probably more likely in a *causa* which Plutarch credits than one with which he disagrees.

It might thus be reasonable to posit that certain writers tend to congregate in alternatives which Plutarch rejects and others are normally found in ones which Plutarch condones. For the former, a case has been outlined for public opinion and the Peripatetics; for the latter, it would seem illogical that Plutarch would cite Plato and Socrates only to

²⁵ L. VAN DER STOCKT, *op. cit.*, p. 291.

dismiss the topic for which their authority had been sought. *Quaestio* 5 has already been discussed in this regard. *Quaestio* 1 cites οἱ περὶ Πλάτωνα in the πότερον *causa* as well as the followers of Anaxagoras and Democritus as agreeing that plants are animals fixed on earth. This *causa* is completed by three semi-synonymous pairs and a sentiment paralleled at *Quaestionum convivalium libri IX* 627B.

Uniquely, Plutarch cited himself as his own authority in *Quaestio* 16. The πότερον *causa* is exceptionally short and contains the phrase ὡς εἰρήκαμεν referring to the argument Plutarch had made about differing absorption rates by barley and wheat in *Quaestio* 15. That argument would seem to have been Plutarch's own on the basis of μαρτυρεῖ δὲ τῷ λόγῳ τούτῳ and thus he should be granted ownership here.

(g) Citation of Homer or Hesiod
Quaestiones 5, 19, 20, 21

So, too, Homer and Hesiod are figures of such immense prestige that one again expects that citation from their works would be more likely to appear within a *causa* which contains Plutarch's choice of alternative. *Quaestio* 5 in the fifth *causa* quotes *Odyssey* V 322-23 in support of saltiness as a sub-taste to bitter. *Quaestio* 20 cites *Odyssey* XIX 446 on the fire in a boar's eyes to help explain why carnivore tears are salty but those of herbivores are sweet.

There are exceptions: in *Quaestio* 19, *Iliad* XIII 279 on how the coward changes his colour supports the belief of Theophrastus, one which is rejected later. *Causa* 4 of *Quaestio* 21 is merely an etymological note in which Plutarch demonstrated how Aristotle made use of Homer, here *Iliad* IX 539 on why boars have only one testicle. Aside from Homer and Hesiod, literary quotations would seem to be an indication of a passage approaching final polish. None of the citations from the poets are in a *causa* which can be said to reflect Plutarch's beliefs; so Alcman (*Quaestio* 24), Euripides (*Quaestiones* 21 and 29), Pindar (*Quaestio* 19), and Theognis (*Quaestio* 19).

(h) Semi-Synonymous Pairs

Anyone who has read even the smallest amount of Plutarch realises that he relished and enjoyed using near and almost synonymous pairs of adjectives or nouns, less often verbs and adverbs. Sandbach long ago noted that the pairs were not evenly distributed over the whole of

the *Quaestiones naturales* and he thus concluded that the presence of pairs “may provide a clue by which some at least of Plutarch’s contributions may be identified²⁶.” One might usefully specify further that semi-synonymous pairs can be shown (1) to expose Plutarch’s own contribution to postulates which he rejects as well as (2) add more evidence when some other grammatical indication of concurrence is already present. Caution should thus be counselled against considering blithely that semi-synonymous pairs in and of themselves identify Plutarch’s choice. It is likewise observable that (3) some pairs can be equivalent to genitives of specification without any further implication, that is, hendiadys, and (4) many pairs when they are distributed throughout the *causae* within an individual *quaestio* probably indicate that that *quaestio* was approaching its final form.²⁷

The eleven *Quaestiones*²⁸ for which one might reasonably be able to identify Plutarch’s choice are indicative of the whole. *Quaestiones* 6 and 20 are unadorned, while *Quaestio* 5 has a single pair (γεῶδες γὰρ καὶ παχυμερές) within a *causa* which also has ὡς Πλάτων εἶπεν. The only pair in *Quaestio* 15 (λεπτῆς καὶ ἐλαφρᾶς) is within a single preserved *causa*, but one which also has μαρτυρεῖ δε τῷ λόγῳ τούτῳ. The first *causa* of *Quaestio* 25 contains φασίν, and the second *causa* has Ἡ δεῖ μὴ along with the single pair λυόμενα καὶ χαλώμενα, which can be construed as an indication of Plutarch’s consent. The *Quaestio*, however, is so ineptly written — κινεῖν occurs three times within one sentence — that one must consider it a first, cursory draft.

Six *Quaestiones* (1, 3, 12, 16, 19, and 26) have pairs in more than one *causa*:²⁹

²⁶ *Op. cit.*, p 136. Sandbach specified *Quaestiones* 2, 6, 10, 13, 16, 19, 21, 23, 24, and 26.

²⁷ Similarly literary devices such as alliteration, chiasmus, similes and metaphors would seem to be indications of that part of the text approaching its final polish.

²⁸ Only the main thirty-one *Quaestiones* are considered in this section since it is not always possible to discern confidently the Greek behind Longolius’s Latin and since equally Psellus’s Greek condensations have deprived one more of Plutarch’s style than of his thought.

²⁹ One remains very much aware that a stricter definition of ‘semi-synonymous’ would greatly change this tabular summation. Similarly, the two categories, ‘contributes to choice rejected’ and ‘final polish’ are not as distinctive or mutually exclusive as one might wish.

CONCURRENCE DETECTABLE									
	1	3	5	12	15	16	19	25	26
<i>signals choice:</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
<i>contributes to choice rejected:</i>	✓	✓		✓		✓			
<i>hendiadys:</i>	✓		✓	✓					
<i>final polish:</i>		✓				✓	✓		✓
	<i>No Semi-synonymous Pairs: 6, 20</i>								

Such a distribution raises the further question whether it is possible to differentiate tone and intent within a *quaestio* which has semi-synonymous pairs in more than one *causa*, since such nuances would be crucial to determining which sets of pairs signal Plutarch's agreement. One need go no further than *Quaestio* 1 for definitive proof. The first *causa* begins with δι' ἣν αἰτίαν and stipulates οἱ περὶ Πλάτωνα as propagators of the opinion given. The same *causa* has one pair which can be considered hendiadys (ἐμβριθὲς ἐστὶ καὶ γεῶδες) and a second which helps signal his choice, ἀνέχειν καὶ ὑπερείδειν. The other three *causae* furnish Peripatetic views, the last one of which names Aristotle and says parching heat ἐξίστησι καὶ φθείρει drinking water. This pair not only contributes to the choice rejected, but the second element of the pair specifies the change cited in the first element.

Quaestio 26, which queries why sick animals seek out medicinal herbs, provides confirmation of Plutarch's simultaneous use of semi-synonymous pairs in different ways. Even the main question has a semi-synonymous pair, but a fairly banal one — ζητεῖ καὶ διώκει. Bland similarly describes κινεῖ καὶ προσάγεται, the pair in the first *causa*. Within Plutarch's choice, however, there are three pairs, rather than one, and the word choice is more suggestive. Contrarily, the second *causa* in 'Why do herdsmen put down salt?' (*Quaestio* 3) has three pairs, εὐμαρῶς καὶ ῥαδίως, κολλῶσα καὶ συνδέουσα, and λεπτή καὶ ἀσθενής, and presumably encapsulates Peripatetic views, although a precise source has yet to be identified. The third *causa*, which begins σκόπει δὲ μή, is clearly Plutarch's choice yet it contains only a single pair of semi-synonymous comparatives: γονιμότερα καὶ προθυμότερα.

Quaestio 12, on why oil calms the sea, produces the most evidence: Aristotle's opinion is left unadorned, and the *communis opinio* is cited on light and vision underwater (φέγγος ἴσχειν καὶ δίωψιν), a pair undermined by the intervening infinitive, while following σκόπει δὲ μή

five pairs. The source of the sentiment expressed in *causa* 2 to *Quaestio* 16 is unknown but would not seem to be Plato or any of his known followers, while that in *causa* 4 can be attributed to Theophrastus. Its pairs thus probably illuminate the choices rejected, but would also seem to show a high degree of polish since the first pair (μαλαττόμενος και χαλώμενος) which emphasises softness and flimsiness seems to be purposely contrasted by a later pair of heaviness, δυσβάστακτοι γάρ εισι και δυσπαρακόμιστοι.

Easily the longest *causa* in any of the *Quaestiones* is the third one to *Quaestio* 19. Its 212 words have σκόπει near its beginning and τεκμήριον δὲ τῆς αἰτίας at its conclusion. It is thus not surprising to find the pair βεῖν αἰεὶ τι και φέρεσθαι within this *causa*. Another pair, πανουργία και δεινότητι, in the second *causa* adds polish and final lustre coming just after quotations from Pindar and Theognis.

Ten of the remaining twenty *Quaestiones*, that is, those where it is not possible to predict which might have been Plutarch's choice, also have semi-synonymous pairs:

IMPOSSIBLE TO DISCERN										
	2	8	10	11	13	14	21	23	24	27
<i>contributes to choice rejected:</i>										
<i>hendiadys:</i>		✓	✓							
<i>final polish:</i>	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>No Semi-synonymous pairs: 4, 7, 9, 17, 18, 22, 28, 29, 30, 31</i>										

The pattern detectable within these pairs would seem to confirm that semi-synonymous pairs as used by Plutarch can serve one or more functions.

Beyond issues of concurrence, and perhaps as intriguing and informative, is the glimpse Plutarch's use of the language of consent offers into his study. The organisation of the *Quaestiones naturales* is mirrored in several of his other essays, overtly so in his other *Quaestiones*, but also is present in general in his philosophical essays. Whether this language animates as well other parts of his rich and enormous *corpus* would be worth knowing.