

STUDIA HELLENISTICA

32

PLUTARCHEA LOVANIENSIA
A MISCELLANY OF ESSAYS ON PLUTARCH

edited by

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LOVANI

1996

THE INFLUENCE OF PLUTARCH'S MIDDLE PLATONISM ON EARLY ARAB INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

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This article attempts to demonstrate two points, both of them limited: first, that the *Timaeus* was the most often read work of Plato's in late antiquity and that its centrality is due in part to Plutarch's appreciation and understanding of the *Timaeus* and, second, that early Moslem scholars writing in Greek were perforce heavily influenced by Plutarch both directly and indirectly. This examination concerns itself with a compilation of philosophical positions by Aëtius, *De placitis philosophorum*, which had once been assigned to Plutarch and continues to be printed among his *spuria* in modern editions⁽¹⁾.

I. PLUTARCH AND THE *TIMAEUS*

With the demise of the fifth (and last) Academy in the generation before Plutarch⁽²⁾, the transmission of Platonism was left to individual thinkers and teachers. It is at this point in the tradition that Plutarch shaped the interpretation of the *Timaeus*. Several essays in the *Moralia* propounded Plutarch's view of the *Timaeus* which asserted the unity of Plato's thought. The *De animae procreatione in Timaeo* addresses this most fundamental (to Plutarch) question, and the *Quaestiones Platonicae* and the *Quaestiones convivales* consider other issues⁽³⁾. Most influential

(1) The main modern text is that of J. MAU in *BT-MV* 2.1 (1971). It is unaccountably absent from the Loeb Plutarch. A very great debt is owed to Professor E. Viketos, University of Athens, with whom I discussed this work in its preliminary stages. Thanks are also due to the participants at the Oxford Congress of the International Plutarch Society for their suggestions and advice.

(2) See esp. J. GLUCKER, *Antiochus and the Late Academy*, Göttingen 1978, pp. 121-158.

(3) Several of Plutarch's lost works would surely have had the *Timaeus* at its center, such as *On the soul*, *On sense*, *Extracts from the Philosophers*, and *On the unity of the Academy*; cp. J. IRIGOIN, *Le catalogue de Lamprias: tradition manuscrite et éditions imprimées*, REG 96 (1986), p. 324.

among the Middle Platonists, Plutarch's view was that accepted by the Neoplatonists and others, or at the very least Plutarch's views were the implicit starting point for further discussion. Even though the *Timaeus* attracted scholarly attention almost immediately from figures as important as Aristotle and Crantor, and was the subject of a later Latin paraphrase by Cicero⁽⁴⁾, it would be fair to say that the centrality of the *Timaeus* among the works of Plato in late antiquity was due at least in part to Plutarch's interest in it.

Most distinctive among Plutarch's doctrines is his belief in dualism and in the non-rational genesis of the soul⁽⁵⁾. Plutarch further viewed the soul as distinct from the intellect, thereby arriving at a *de facto* tripartite division of soul—*nous*—body, which thus fit comfortably with other triads⁽⁶⁾ in Platonic thought, and concomitantly explained the presence of evil in a way which did not weaken other parts of Plato's cosmology⁽⁷⁾. The largest and most concentrated body of quotations from Plato occurs in Plutarch's essays on Plato's *Timaeus* and the *Timaeus* is the work most often quoted by Plutarch⁽⁸⁾.

Even so, the extent of the debt of Neoplatonism to Plutarch remains difficult to trace and controversial. As eminent a scholar as Whittaker has noted with justice that "Proclus was indifferent to the Middle Pla-

(4) So P. MACKENDRICK, *The Philosophical Books of Cicero*, New York 1989, p. 339 n. 8. There remains some debate over the intent and scope of Cicero's work on the *Timaeus*, which survives in fragments. It would not appear to have had the scope, style, relation to practical Roman politics, and relation to other philosophical works that the other essays of Cicero seem to share (although a 'unity of Ciceronian thought' at its best could not approach the 'unity of Platonic thought' that Plutarch promulgated); cf. R. PONCELET, *Cicéron traducteur de Platon*, Paris 1957, who would regard the many variances between Plato's words and Cicero's expression of them as due solely to the inadequacy of the Latin language to express complex Greek concepts.

(5) Cf. J. DILLON, *Plutarch and Platonist Orthodoxy*, *ICS* 13 (1988), p. 361.

(6) One might, for example, arrive at a comparative syllogism such as this, although other paradigms are possible:

soul		οὐσία		archons
intellect		νοητῆς		guardians
body		ὑλης		workers

(7) Such an argument is also apparent in Plutarch's *Adversus Colotem*, which is a defence of Plato's Parmenides, making δόξα an imperfect projection from the sphere of νόησις, itself already flawed; cp. M. ISNARDI PARENTI, *Il Parmenide di Plutarco*, *PP* 43 (1988), pp. 225-236.

(8) See W. HELMBOLD-E. O'NEIL, *Plutarch's Quotations*, Atlanta 1959.

tonists, perhaps even disdainful"⁽⁹⁾. At the very least one can say that the choice of the *Timaeus* by Proclus for a commentary could very well have been influenced by Plutarch's own preference for this Platonic dialogue. One may indicate that some doctrines of Proclus, such as the realm of heroes, and the extent and use of Homeric citation would seem to owe more to Plutarch than to Plato⁽¹⁰⁾. In spite of the posturing of some of the Neoplatonists, there are nevertheless indications that their approach to Plato was filtered through Plutarch. The acceptance of the dichotomy between ἀκριβῆς λόγος and εἰκῶς λόγος is Plutarchan as is the distinction between εἰκῶς λόγος and εἰκῶς μῦθος and the substitution of ὕλη for χόρρα as the material of creation⁽¹¹⁾. In general, one can assert a link between Plutarch's Pythagoreo-Platonic views on the δαίμων of Socrates and the Neoplatonic fascination with demonology⁽¹²⁾. Other essays of the *Moralia*, particularly those on theology and manticism, have left their mark on philosophers of the late Empire living in the Greek East.

Beyond the debates about Plutarch's influence it would seem indisputable that at the very least Plutarch set the syllabus for the Neoplatonists and beyond. His favourite works became theirs and his biases were shared⁽¹³⁾ or, if rejected, his thought became the requisite starting point for all further research. One need, for example, only change γνῶσις to σοφία to see the Plutarchan pedigree behind the Neoplatonic triad of ἀγαθότης—δύναμις—γνῶσις. Likewise, a second triad of ἐφετόν—ἰκανόν—τέλειον has its antecedent in several works by Plutarch, most noticeably

(9) J. WHITTAKER, *Proclus and the Middle Platonists*, in *Proclus. Lecteur et interprète des anciens*, ed. J. Pépin—H.D. Saffrey, Paris 1987, p. 277.

(10) Cf. E.A. RAMOS JURADO, *Lo Platónico en el siglo V p.C.: Proclo*, Sevilla 1981, pp. 35, 40 and passim. So, too, *In Timaeum I* 314.18-19 uses *Iliad VIII* 17-27 in a manner similar to the citation of the same passage in *De Is. et Os.* 371E.

(11) For the Platonic position in the *Timaeus* on these concepts, see Karen GLOY, *Studien zur platonischen Naturphilosophie im 'Timaios'*, Würzburg 1986, pp. 29, 33-43, 82-89. Plutarch departs from Plato principally in his acceptance of Stoic allegory, which altered his perception of εἰκῶς λόγος and μῦθος; on Plutarch's view of allegory in the Myth of Er, cp. F.E. BRENN, *Plutarch's Life of 'Markos Antonios'. A Literary and Cultural Study*, in *ANRW II* 33.6 (1992), pp. 4402-4409.

(12) Cf. E.A. RAMOS JURADO, *op. cit.* (n. 10), pp. 39-56.

(13) So Proclus against the Stoics; cp. Anne SHEPHERD, *Proclus's Philosophical Method of Exegesis. The Use of Aristotle and the Stoics in the Commentary on the 'Cratylus'*, in *Proclus. Lecteur et interprète des anciens* (n. 9), p. 149.

Quaest. conv. 203B-204C, 210A-D and *De Is. et Os.* 374D⁽¹⁴⁾. Thus, Plutarch's direct influence and citation of his works in the Greek East continued at least until AD 529 when a decree of Justinian forbade pagans from teaching and receiving imperial salaries, although it is evident that private instruction in Platonic philosophy continued past that date⁽¹⁵⁾.

2. PLUTARCH IN THE LATIN WEST

On balance, however, it would be fair to say that Plutarch was appreciated more quickly in the Roman West than in the Greek East; one need only mention Gellius, Apuleius (of Madaurus and Carthage), and Macrobius. Through them Plutarch had an indirect but considerable influence. Further, it remains beyond question that the Planudes catalogue⁽¹⁶⁾, collected between AD 1295-1305, was derived from manuscripts in Italy and not from ones within the Byzantine Empire. Even Philostratus, who was not well disposed to Plutarch, was still forced to acknowledge him. The advice of Philostratus to Julia Domna, wife of Septimius Severus, that she try to persuade the now long dead Plutarch to stop assailing the sophists⁽¹⁷⁾ shows how much the Roman world had changed within a century of Plutarch's death yet how great remained his reputation.

Gellius attributed a certain mean-spiritedness to Plutarch in his attacks against Epicureans and, to a lesser extent, against Neopythagoreanism, but was in general a reasoned admirer of Plutarch⁽¹⁸⁾. Gellius was often neutral towards Plutarch, but he could also be very complimentary: *vir doctissimus ac prudentissimus* (I 26.4) is put in the mouth of one

⁽¹⁴⁾ Cp. J. WHITTAKER, *op. cit.* (n. 9), p. 288.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Cp. J. GLUCKER, *op. cit.* (n. 2), pp. 322-329. His epilogue on Justinian is in part a reaction to and in part an expansion of A. CAMERON's article *The Last Days of the Academy of Athens*, *PCPhS* 15 (1969), pp. 7-29.

⁽¹⁶⁾ A. GARZYA, *Planude e il testo dei 'Moralia'*, in *Sulla tradizione manoscritta dei 'Moralia' di Plutarco*, ed. A. Garzya - G. Giangrande - M. Manfredini, Salerno 1988, pp. 39-54.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Cp. G. ANDERSON, *Putting Pressure on Plutarch: Philostratus 'Epistle' 73*, *CPh* 72 (1977), p. 43.

⁽¹⁸⁾ B. BALDWIN's "not uncritical admirer" seems overly cautious; cp. *Studies in Aulus Gellius*, Lawrence (KS) 1975, p. 36. To say (p. 89) that "a compiler of the Antonine epoch had to keep glancing back at Pliny and Plutarch" is more fair and has applications well beyond compilers.

of Plutarch's students while *homo in disciplinis gravi auctoritate* (IV 11.11) is in *suo voce*. More to the point, Plutarch is also cited as an authority on the *Timaeus* by Gellius (NA XVII 11). The degree to which Gellius wished to return to an earlier understanding of Platonic doctrines is one meaningful measure of the extent to which Plutarch refined and restated Plato's ideas. Gellius's tutor, Favorinus, was a younger contemporary and friend of Plutarch⁽¹⁹⁾ so one assumes that Gellius's voice speaks with authority on the subject of Plutarch. Citation and adaptation from the *Quaestiones Romanae*, *Quaestiones Graecae* and *Quaestiones convivales* are hardly remarkable since the format of the *Noctes Atticae* is very similar to these miscellanies of Plutarch. One assumes, with proper reservation, that the works of Plutarch cited by Gellius were the ones most often read during the reigns of the Antonines; to these three collections of *quaestiones* one can add *De ira*, *Vita Herculis*, *In Hesiodum commentarius*, *De Homero*, *De anima*, and *De curiositate*.

The last named work, *De curiositate*, was apparently one of great importance to Apuleius in his philosophical works. The influence of *De Iside et Osiride*⁽²⁰⁾ is, of course, crucial to the *Metamorphoses* and permeates it, yet Apuleius's works demonstrate often knowledge and appreciation of *Mulieres virtutes*, *Amatorius*, *De genio Socratis*, and *Coniugalia praecepta*⁽²¹⁾. The compliment of making Lucius, the protagonist of the *Metamorphoses*, a relative of Plutarch's would seemingly be double edged, although Scobie's suggestion that Lucius in human form is the relative of Plutarch but Lucius the ass is the *Doppelgänger* of Apuleius is attractive if still not entirely complimentary⁽²²⁾.

That the *Timaeus* was almost the only work of Plato's read in the Latin West, and that it came to be available for all intents and purposes

⁽¹⁹⁾ See L. HOLFORD-STREVENSON, *Aulus Gellius*, London 1988, pp. 77-84, 200-202, and 209-212. With few exceptions, when the opinions of Plutarch and Favorinus can be compared they are remarkably similar.

⁽²⁰⁾ Cp. J. TATUM, *Apuleius and the 'Golden Ass'*, Ithaca 1979. Plutarch is a major but unacknowledged source in Apuleius's exposition on the function of the *δαίμων* in the Cupid and Psyche episode (pp. 54-56; cf. 119-122), especially since one of the sources is *Timaeus* 90A.

⁽²¹⁾ See esp. P.G. WALSH, *The Rights and Wrongs of Curiosity (Plutarch to Augustine)*, *G&R* 35 (1988), pp. 75-77.

⁽²²⁾ A. SCOBIE, *The Structure of Apuleius' 'Metamorphoses'*, in *Aspects of Apuleius' 'Golden Ass'*, ed. B.L. Hijmans - R.Th. van der Paardt, Groningen 1978, pp. 44 and 55.

only in the translation of Calcidius, a fourth-century Christian writer, is not subject to debate. Plutarch's influence on Calcidius is impossible to assess, but surely it has been demonstrated that Plutarch's ideas and ideals had been absorbed by both pagans and Christians. One need hardly mention that the Latin paraphrases of Plutarch's writings were as important to the Church Fathers as they were to pagan philosophers⁽²³⁾. Augustine surely knew Plato only through translation and only the *Timaeus*⁽²⁴⁾.

This same state of affairs may also be said to apply for the Middle Ages into the beginning of the Renaissance⁽²⁵⁾. Plato's fate in the West was shared by Plutarch: just as the *Timaeus* gave way during the Renaissance to the *Republic* and *Apology* as the most often read works of Plato and the ones held in the highest regard, so too the *Moralia* were eventually eclipsed by the *Lives*. One would, therefore, expect by extrapolation that all references to Plutarch, both direct and indirect, from antiquity would refer to essays in the *Moralia*.

3. PLUTARCH AND *DE PLACITIS PHILOSOPHORUM*

The *De placitis philosophorum* is an epitome in Greek in five books summarising the viewpoint of the main philosophical schools on 133 different issues. For some questions only one or two philosophical opinions are given, for others more, with the result that most of the answers are given in fewer than ten lines, although some are longer than thirty lines. The inclusion of this miscellany among Plutarch's genuine works cannot be dismissed as accidental. The ancient copyists, even if they were given to mistakes, were nonetheless native Greek speakers and had an ear for prose rhythms and nuances well in advance of that of later researchers. The inclusion of this essay in the Planudes catalogue, especially given its absence in the earlier *Lamprias catalogue*, stands as testimony to the regard in which this essay was once held. As late as the fifteenth century,

⁽²³⁾ J. WHITTAKER, *Plutarch, Platonism and Christianity*, in *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought*, ed. H.J. Blumenthal – R.A. Markus, London 1981, pp. 51-59.

⁽²⁴⁾ Cp. R.J. O'CONNELL, *Saint Augustine's Platonism*, Philadelphia 1984, p. 19.

⁽²⁵⁾ Cf. G.R. MORROW in the introduction to Jowett's translation of the *Timaeus* (Indianapolis 1949), p. XXIII. Information on Augustine courtesy of my colleague John Rettig, translator of the tractates of Augustine (Washington [D.C.] 1990 ff.).

Pletho⁽²⁶⁾ assigned the work to Plutarch. Since some of Pletho's excerpts of the *De placitis philosophorum* contain arguably earlier readings, they obviously reflect epitomes which had already been made in the six centuries which separate Pletho from Aëtius. Such a premise is strengthened further by the inclusion of abstracts from *De placitis philosophorum* (§§122-130) by Michael Psellus, an eleventh-century scholar, in his *De omnia doctrina* among citations from the *Quaestiones naturales* (§§92-107) and the *Quaestiones convivales* (§§131-137). Psellus even at his early date⁽²⁷⁾ apparently accepted the *De placitis philosophorum* as genuine, and in fact modeled his own treatise on it⁽²⁸⁾.

A re-assessment of the place and importance of *De placitis philosophorum* in the tradition of ancient philosophy and particularly its relationship to the genuine works of Plutarch would, therefore, seem to be in order. The framework of this essay is in general that of the investigative works, but more specifically the tradition to which this work belongs is that of Cicero's *Tusculanae disputationes* and also the tradition of collections of summaries by Plutarch, which are no longer extant but are known from the Lamprias catalogue, such as, e.g., the 'Ἐκλογὴ φιλοσόφων, βιβλία Β' (L50). Its formal similarity to some genuine works of Plutarch may have helped encourage the spurious identification.

At the outset one must take cognisance of the compression already present in the autograph. The generations just before the birth of Plutarch were ones which produced numerous handbooks, so Valerius Maximus and Florus, and Plutarch apparently relied upon them (or at the very least upon their Greek equivalents) in some places in addition to fuller works. It infers, naturally, that Plutarch's own accounts can already be more than one remove from the original text and that their compactness might be that of Plutarch's source rather than his own. Regardless of cause, the conglomerate nature of many of the essays within the *Moralia* makes it difficult to assess the extent of Plutarch's influence.

The full extent of the debt of the *De placitis philosophorum* to essays in Plutarch's *Moralia* may well be masked further by the processes to

⁽²⁶⁾ *Marc Gr* 517 (= AD 886); M. MANFREDINI *Giorgio Gemisto Pletone e la tradizione manoscritta di Plutarco*, *ASNP* 2 (1972), pp. 569-570.

⁽²⁷⁾ AD 1018-1097; appointed Professor of Philosophy to the Byzantine Court, AD 1079.

⁽²⁸⁾ A. GARZYA, *La tradizione manoscritta dei 'Moralia': linee generali*, in *Sulla tradizione manoscritta dei 'Moralia' di Plutarco* (n. 16), p. 18.

which his text was exposed in the centuries intervening between Plutarch and Aëtius. A closer link to Plutarch than can now be positively asserted is surely possible, for other works of Plutarch were liable to the same multiple levels of corruption proposed by Sandbach⁽²⁹⁾ in regard to the *De unius in re publica dominatione*. Sandbach argued persuasively that the *De unius* was an authentic work but one which was excerpted at a later date and confounded further by the later interpolations of a scholiast⁽³⁰⁾. Furthermore, the survival of additional *αἰτίαι* in the (e.g.) *Quaestiones naturales* indicates that at least that work had also been excerpted one or more times, and also raises the possibility that later authors could have appended extra *αἰτίαι* of their own under the authority of Plutarch or added further explanations reflecting their own viewpoint to an individual *quaestio*. Also, the varying order of the *Moralia* in the manuscripts⁽³¹⁾ is enough to ensure that the collections themselves were selective, further exacerbating the process.

The work of interpolators, both pre- and post-Aëtius, is everywhere present throughout all classes of *quaestiones*. Sometimes it is abundantly clear that the first alternative answer, the one which generally was introduced by *πότεραν*, has been dropped, such as in, for instance, *Quaest. nat.* 914B (Q 8), 914C (Q 9), 914E (Q 11), and 915C (Q 14). In all of these instances it is beyond doubt that a later commentator or copyist decided to preserve only his own preference among the answers. In addition, the text can be defective at several points; for example, the third speaker in *Quaest. conv.* 615F (Q III 5) never appears. Material which once influenced later ancient writers and was at one time present in extant essays may no longer be available.

The *De placitis philosophorum* as a whole is suffused with a knowledge of Plutarch and would seem to be demonstrably indebted to him. In

(²⁹) F. SANDBACH, *Rhythm and Authenticity in Plutarch's 'Moralia'*, *CQ* 33 (1939), pp. 194-203.

(³⁰) G.J.D. AALDERS and Rita SCUDERI, however, remain unconvinced; cf. *Plutarch or Pseudo-Plutarch? The Authorship of the 'De unius in re publica dominatione'*, *Mnemosyne* 35 (1982), pp. 76 and 79, and *Alcuni riferimenti alla vita politica di Roma nelle 'Quaestiones Romanae' di Plutarco*, in *Studi di storia e storiografia antiche*, ed. E. Gabba, Pavia 1988, p. 141.

(³¹) M. MANFREDINI, *Codici plutarchei di umanisti italiani*, *ASNP* 17 (1987), pp. 1001-1043. Reference in Manfredini is by the number in the Planudes inventory and not by either Lamprias catalogue or Stephanus number; cf. J. IRIGOIN, *La formation d'un corpus*, *RHT* 12-13 (1982-1983), pp. 1-11.

spite of the limitations of Plutarch's text and that of Aëtius, it nonetheless appears inherently probable and provable that at least some of the core of *De placitis philosophorum* was abstracted directly from Plutarch particularly in regard to the kinds of questions which Plutarch had examined in his own works, to which additional opinions and further questions were appended by Aëtius according to his own interests and private researches. One should stress that the relationship of *De placitis philosophorum* to essays in the *Moralia* is markedly different from the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius which imitates closely one specific work of Plutarch, and the school notebooks / diaries of Gellius, which refute or refine implicitly (cp., e.g., *NA* II 2 — *Quaest. conv.* 615C; *NA* XV 2 — *Quaest. conv.* 714D) and explicitly (*NA* II 8, II 9, XVII 11) numerous of the tenets of Plutarch.

First-century features are identifiable such as an interest in the Nile (IV 1 // *Quaest. conv.* 725A-E [Q VIII 5]). So, too, Britain was topical in the first and late third centuries, much less so than at other times (cp. 911B [Q V 30]). Since most of Aëtius's doctors and philosophers have an eastern origin, his information about Britain, and Europe in general, originated elsewhere. The poets chosen for citation are clearly Plutarch's favourites and a deep interest in Neopythagoreanism ties threads of this work firmly to Plutarch and the younger Seneca.

The organisation of *De placitis philosophorum* also owes much to Plutarch. Book I contains thirty questions, book II contains thirty-two questions, but the last twelve are an integral group examining the sun and the moon. Almost as if by compensation, book III contains eighteen questions. Book IV contains twenty-three questions, while the fifth book contains thirty. Like Plutarch's decades, groups of ten to twelve questions are often built around inter-related themes, but there is no rigid consistency on this, either in Plutarch or in Aëtius. The order within individual questions in Aëtius is quixotic: 891E-F (Q II 29) states the opinions consecutively of Anaximander, Berosus, Heracleitus, Pythagoreans, Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, while 897B-C (Q III 17) has Aristotle, Heracleides, Pytheas of Marseille, Timaeus, and Seleucus.

Surely one could not possibly allege that the views of the schools have been set out in order of preference with the last being Aëtius's choice such as is observable for Plutarch. Sometimes the ordering seems to be chronological by foundation of school, other times the more major figures are cited first and then the philosophers of lesser influence and

renown. Nowhere does language, adverbs, voice, tense, or mood allow one to posit with any credence that a specific alternative reflected the actual belief of Aëtius. About all that might be advanced is that *quaestiones* with longer explanations (as opposed to more), such as 903D-904B (Q IV 22), are perhaps areas in which Aëtius had a deep personal interest. Barring interpolations and additions by later copyists, his working method would seem to be merely setting down the precepts of the various philosophers and schools of philosophies in the order in which they came to hand.

Stoics, other than Zeno and Cleanthes, are just a mass: οἱ μὲν ἀπὸ τῆς Στωῆς (879A [Q I 5]) occurs often, as does οἱ Στωϊκοί (882C [Q I 9]) and οἱ πλείους τῶν Στωϊκῶν (884A [Q I 19]). Plutarch, similarly, showed little knowledge of, or taste for, the more moderate middle Stoa, choosing instead to excoriate the early Stoics. There is a preponderance in general of early authors, comparable to Plutarch's preference; Poseidonius (885B) is the most recent philosopher cited in the entire *De placitis philosophorum*, an indication that Aëtius's sources were early imperial. Similarly, Plutarch is more interested in early Roman cult and custom.

Neither Plutarch nor Aëtius normally cite more than one opinion within a philosophical school. Exceptions are rare enough to be more likely the work of interpolators. There are only a few genuine instances where opposing tenets within a school are cited, both in regard to the Pythagoreans. The first on the Milky Way (892F [Q III 1]) starts with τῶν Πυθαγορείων οἱ μὲν ἔφασαν ... οἱ δὲ τὸν ἡλιακόν while the other question (Περὶ κομητῶν καὶ διαπτόντων καὶ δοκίδων, 893B [Q III 2]) also starts with the opposing views of the Pythagoreans: τῶν ἀπὸ Πυθαγόρου τινὲς μὲν ἀστέρα φασίν ... ἄλλοι δ' ἀνάγκασιν.

The phrases just quoted show that Aëtius, like Plutarch, varied his expressions, and also sometimes used his tenses indiscriminately. In 899C a view shared by Pythagoras and Plato on the theorem Περὶ ἀφθαρσίας ψυχῆς (Q IV 7) is cited twice. The *De vita et poesi Homeri*, a work intermediate between Plutarch and Aëtius, also lumped Pythagoras and Plato together (II 122), and it would not be unfair to say that tendencies which are present in the *De vita et poesi Homeri* in embryonic form become more pronounced in the *De placitis philosophorum*; another example is the imprecise assignation of tenets to a particular school with the phrase "οἱ ἐκ" or "οἱ ἀπὸ". Aëtius likewise chose a limited range of philosophers and topics, and focused all of his attention on them. Rarely

are more than five opinions cited per proposition. If Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, or the Stoics had said something quotable on the question under examination, their views tend to be included. Empedocles, Epicurus, Democritus, and the pre-Socratics generally are incorporated in default of credible statements by the major schools. It is perhaps only in this regard that the work of Aëtius might be considered selective or critical.

The poets and tragedians quoted are also Plutarch's favourites, and sometimes the same quotation is used in similar enough contexts to suggest strongly a dependence upon Plutarch by Aëtius. In discussing the proposition *Περὶ τῶν ἀρχῶν τί εἰσιν* (875E-F [Q I 3]) Aëtius quoted *Iliad* XIV 246-247, which also is cited in a discussion of elemental creation in *De facie quae in orbe lunae apparet* 938D. In the same question Aëtius investigated the impact of increasing numbers (877C). The text is unfortunately mutilated at this point but his choice of example for "three times" is the same example Plutarch used in a similar parenthetical disquisition in the *De Is. et Os.* 365C: *τρὶς μάκαρες Δαναοὶ καὶ τετράκις, οὐ τότ' ἔλογοντο* (Homer, *Odyssey* V 306)⁽³²⁾. Such repetitions from literary works although they are few in number must be considered significant since Plutarch rarely repeated a reference within his genuine works: of the 818 passages cited from Homer only 73 occur in more than one place. The corresponding numbers for Euripides are 261/68, for Hesiod 156/38, Sophocles 102/17, and Pindar 85/27. These are his five favourite poets; ratios for other literary figures are comparable. Not surprisingly Plutarch wrote commentaries on Homer, Hesiod, and Euripides, none of which survive, and Pindar was a fellow Boeotian⁽³³⁾. Quotations from the poets are much more numerous in the *Moralia* than in the *Lives*.

Plutarch and Aëtius share some unusual choices and preferences for citation. Asclepiades medicus is cited by Plutarch (*Quaest. conv.* 731A [Q VIII 9]) as source authority for the first appearance of the inflammation elephantitis. Aëtius noted the opinion of Asclepiades that the soul resides in the training of experiences (898C [Q IV 2]), and also on ques-

⁽³²⁾ The other parallel, between 331C, citing Alexander's favourite line from the *Iliad* (III 179), and 881D, on *τίς ὁ Θεός* (Q I 7), do not share similar contexts.

⁽³³⁾ One might add parenthetically that the *Quaestiones convivales* and commentaries on Homer and Hesiod had already established a reputation for themselves in the generation after Plutarch's death. These three works account for almost all of Gellius's citations of Plutarch.

tions of breathing (903E [Q IV 22]), the causes of twins and triplets (906B [Q V 10]), at what point life forms in the womb (fourth month; 909B [Q V 21]), and on health, sickness, and the onset of old age (911B [Q V 30]). His opinion that the onset of old age can be as late as 120 years old among the Britains is the last preserved remark in the *De placitis philosophorum*. Similar remarks might be made about Dicaearchus, and a number of other doctors and philosophers.

More to the point is Plutarch's importance to early Moslem intellectualism. Jürgen Mau, in the *apparatus criticus* to *De placitis philosophorum* 878B in the Teubner, assigns the triad of elements primordial to creation as *θεόν, ύλη,* and *ιδέα* to the Neoplatonists, since Plato in *Timaeus* 48E defined the three as *παράδειγμα, μίμημα,* and *ύποδοχή*. This revision of Platonic theology, however, belongs to Plutarch's *Quaest. conv.* 720A (Q VIII 2), and the discussion in Aëtius owes much to Question VIII 2 and also contains parallels with *De vita et poesi Homeri* II 114. The adlocution of Plato, *Timaeus* 31A, in *De placitis philosophorum* 879A-B, on the unity and immortality of the universe, also patently uses the intermediate source, *Quaest. conv.* 720A-C (Q VIII 2), rather than the original in Plato.

It might also be said of other references to Plato that while the concept was Plato's, the language was Plutarch's. In partial reply to the question *τίς ό θεός* (I 7), Aëtius purported to quote directly Plato's view "*ό θεός έπλασε τόν κόσμον πρός έαυτόν ύπόδειγμα*". Such a quote occurs nowhere in Plato, but is consistent with Plutarch's exegesis of *Timaeus* 27B-30B in *Quaest. Plat* 1000E-1001C (Q 2) on why Plato called god the *πατέρα τών πάντων και ποιητήν*, a proposition also considered in *Quaest. conv.* 718B-720C (Q VIII 2). *Πρός έαυτόν ύπόδειγμα* is not a Platonic expression, *παράδειγμα* is his preferred noun, and *παρά* + dative is more consistently Platonic whereas one normally finds *πρός* + accusative in Plutarch. Plato's closest approximation to the sentiment comes in *Timaeus* 29E (*γενέσθαι παραπηγήσια έαυτῶ*), at a point where the context of the discussion has changed from "what is god" to looking for purpose and order in creation.

Plutarch's *Quaest. Plat* 1002E-1003B (Q IV) and 1006B-1007E (Q VIII) and his long essay *De animae procreatione in Timaeo* 1012B-1030C are fertile hunting grounds for source material used in Aëtius's eight theses on the soul in Book IV. Unfortunately, some of the answers as they now exist are so abbreviated that any comparison with Plato and Plutarch would lack validity. Some enticing possibilities of reference to Plutarch are unmistakable, so 898C (Q IV 2) makes use of material in *Timaeus*

43A which is also examined in *De def. or.* 411C while an investigation of the sensate capacity of the soul might derive from *De def. or.* 414C. The Platonic answers to questions of in what part of the body the soul resides, the kinetics of the soul, and the immortality of the soul would all seem to be based upon the *Timaeus* and Plutarch could easily be the intermediate source. The three questions on *σπέριμα* and others on generation and death in Book V also need not have gone any further back than Plutarch's discussion. Beyond Plato, Plutarch's essay on the *Timaeus* also paraphrases succinctly the Pythagorean view on the soul, and is wholly consonant with Pythagorean material in Aëtius. The Plutarchan discussion on sleep, especially in *De superstitione*, seems implicit in Aëtius's comments in 909D-F (πῶς ὕπνος γίνεται καὶ θάνατος). The syncretism of Platonic and Stoic beliefs is consistent with Plutarch's eclecticism as is the strongly negative view of sleep. Sleep, for Plutarch, could never be a beneficial activity nor a source of manticism, rather it was more likely to serve as the potential genesis of false dreams.

This is not to say that only authors cited by Plutarch were mined by Aëtius, or that only Plutarch's interpretations were of value to Aëtius. Plutarch never identifiably garnered information from Alcmaeon, Berosus, Diocles, Epigenes, Euthymenes, Leucippus, Metrodorus Chius, Oenopides, Polybus, and Pytheas Massaleotes. Further, Aëtius used Anaxagoras, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Diogenes Apolloniates, Herophilus, Philolaus, Pytheas Atheniensis, Thales, and Xenophanes much more extensively than Plutarch. This surely means that Aëtius had access to other commentaries and preferred them over Plutarch for the simplified statement of the philosophies they represented. Almost all of these doctors and philosophers share an eastern origin, are later Pythagoreans, and are specialists in areas for which no genuine essay of Plutarch survives.

Some questions, such as "εἰ ἐν τῷ πᾶν" (I 5) seem decidedly Neoplatonic. So, too, *δαίμων* (I 7) appears in its late Greek sense, one greatly divorced from that apparent in Plutarch's *De superstitione* and *De genio Socratis*. Similarly, *μαθηματικοί* (889C [Q II 17]) has a decidedly late feel. Substantives in *-οτης* had become common since Neoplatonic literature with terms such as *ἀγαθότης*, *θειότης*, and *οὐσιότης* and are easy to find in the *De placitis philosophorum*⁽³⁴⁾. Contrary to late Greek, alpha privative is almost non-existent, except in technical terms. Aëtius sought to

(34) J. WHITTAKER, *op. cit.* (n. 9), p. 289.

make a positive statement of the views of the philosophical schools. In this he was largely successful. Perhaps one factor is that the *De placitis philosophorum* is clearly meant to be read to one's self and thus can eschew the oratorical rhythms and flourishes of Plutarch.

An excerptor, or several of them, has been at work since some of the propositions have had parts of them so severely pared away that they no longer make sense. In 884C (Q I 13) the position of Aristotle is given in two non-grammatically related words. Interpolators as well as excerptors have left their tracks: one doctor, Hipponikos, is identified as Hermogenes in another part of the collection. At another place (884F [Q I 16]) two different opinions of Plato, the first and last options, are cited in regard to the substance of necessity. Surely the second was added by a later copyist.

The format of the *De placitis philosophorum* clearly wishes to be that of the other types of investigative essays, but cannot rise to the occasion. Nearly all of the sections are concerned in one way or another with the Arab interests in medicine and navigation, and this work was being compiled at precisely the time of the invention of the astrolabe, the premier navigational aid until the compass. Even so, his debt to Plutarch, however, is direct and undeniable — his doctors, like his poets, are Plutarch's favourites and their prosopography is nearly identical. Plutarch is never mentioned by name within the *De placitis philosophorum*, which is consistent on the whole with his own genuine work.

The working methods of Aëtius become explicable: he apparently had a series of commentaries and handbooks, rather than original works, in front of himself which he consulted for the various philosophers and philosophies. For Plato and Pythagoreanism, it seems beyond doubt that the chosen, but unnamed author at Aëtius's disposal was Plutarch, and that the statement of the views of these schools on the questions Aëtius chose to examine are quotes taken directly from Plutarch or summaries. Köbert⁽³⁵⁾, among others, has made a convincing case for the transmission and preservation of Plutarch in the Syrian–Semitic East in the late Empire. Whereas Plutarch was an able scholar who could and did rewrite and re-interpret his sources, Aëtius was on the whole an uncritical col-

⁽³⁵⁾ R. KÖBERT, *Bemerkungen zu den syrischen Zitaten aus Homer und Platon im 5. Buch der Rhetorik des Anton von Tagrit und zum syrischen Περί ἀστρονομίας angeblich von Plutarch*, *Orientalia* 40 (1971), pp. 445–447.

lector, taking over entire what he found in the commentaries within his reach. This tendency, however, makes it easier to trace the influence and insertion of Plutarch throughout his text. Plutarch's personal definition of philosophy (τέχνην περὶ βίου οὔσαν) given in the preface to his *Quaest. conv.* (612E) and stated as the justification for the holding and memorialising of his *symposia*, also describes exactly the aims and concerns of Aëtius. The *De placitis philosophorum*, to borrow a phrase from Chiapporé⁽³⁶⁾, is certainly not 'de Plutarque' but at least in part 'du Plutarque'. Plutarch was the most influential adherent of the position that the *Timaeus* should be interpreted literally. His essays insured that the *Timaeus* remained the most often read and most influential dialogue by Plato, and indeed the degree of reference to the *Timaeus* in *De placitis philosophorum* is witness to the continued vitality of Plutarch's intellect more than 600 years after his death.

⁽³⁶⁾ M. CHIAPPORÉ, *Note sur un passage difficile du 'De vita et poesi Homeri'*, in *Mélanges offerts à Léopold Sédar Senghor*, Dakar 1977, p. 93.