“If I were not Alexander...”

An Examination of the Political Philosophy of Plutarch’s *Alexander-
Caesar*

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A thesis submitted to Victoria University of Wellington in fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts in Classics

2016

School of Art History, Classics and Religious Studies

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Acknowledgements

Firstly and foremost to my supervisor Jeff Tatum, for his guidance and patience.

Secondly to my office mates James, Julia, Laura, Nikki, and Tim who helped me when I needed it and made research and writing more fun and less productive than it would otherwise have been.

I would also like to thank my parents, Sue and Phil, for their continuous support.

Abstract

This thesis examines Plutarch's *Alexander-Caesar*. Plutarch's depiction of Alexander has been long recognised as encompassing many defects, including an overactive *thumos* and a decline in character as the narrative progresses. In this thesis I examine the way in which Plutarch depicts Alexander's degeneration, and argue that the defects of Alexander form a discussion on the ethics of kingship. I then examine the implications of pairing the *Alexander* with the *Caesar*; I examine how some of the themes of the *Alexander* are reflected in the *Caesar*. I argue that the status of Caesar as both a figure from the Republican past and the man who established the Empire gave the pair a unique immediacy to Plutarch's time. I then examine the argument, made by some, that it is possible to discern in the *Parallel Lives* a statement of cultural resistance to the Roman Empire. I argue that the affirmative Hellenism which pervades the *Lives* reflects not so much a cultural resistance to the Roman Empire, but a concern that the Hellenic values that Plutarch valorised should be dominant within the Roman Empire.

Introduction

Plutarch of Chaeronea was a famous philosopher and biographer of the early Roman Empire. As a philosopher, he wrote widely on a large number of subjects, but is probably most famous for his *Parallel Lives*. This project, which consumed most of his life, set the lives of great Greek statesmen alongside the lives of great Romans, and, in most cases, included a concluding *synkrisis* where Plutarch would explicitly compare his subjects and offer up his own opinion as to their respective virtue.¹ Plutarch also wrote non-*Parallel Lives*, including a *Life* of Aratus and a set of biographies of the Caesars, now mostly lost.² Plutarch was very concerned with politics and ‘political virtue.’ In the *Comparison of Aristides with Marcus Cato* Plutarch writes that “man has no more complete virtue than political virtue” (3.1).³ And Plutarch wrote the *De Gloria Atheniensium*, which argued that statesmen and generals were Classical Greece’s greatest glory, rather than its artists and poets. Plutarch wrote the *Parallel Lives* so that readers could apprehend the virtue of the subjects by examining their deeds, and thereby gain moral improvement themselves. Plutarch was both a patriotic Boeotian Greek and a Roman citizen who mixed with some of the Empire’s most powerful citizens, including the dedicatee of the *Parallel Lives*, Sosius Senecio, who commanded armies under Trajan and was Consul twice.⁴

In this thesis I will examine the *Alexander-Caesar*. This pair is the longest of the *Lives*, coming in at roughly double the length of the average pair, and is one of the most famous. In it, Plutarch places the greatest conqueror of Greek history in comparison alongside the greatest victor of the Romans, who was the progenitor of the Empire under which Plutarch lived. Plutarch had written of Alexander elsewhere; apart from the *Life*, the most extended treatment of Alexander in Plutarch’s corpus is the epideictic essay *De Alexandri Magni Fortuna aut Virtute*. In this essay Plutarch portrays Alexander as a civilising philosopher-king, following Onesicritus’ description of Alexander as a “Philosopher in

¹ Four pairs lack a formal *synkrisis*: *Phocion-Cato Minor*, *Themistocles-Camillus*, *Pyrrhus-Marius*, and *Alexander-Caesar*.

² On the *Lives of the Caesars* see Georgiadou 1988 and Stadter 2014 66ff.

³ See Wardman 1974 49-104 for a discussion of ‘political virtue’ in particular how Plutarch viewed some political activities, such as tyranny and demagoguery, as always wrong.

⁴ Stadter 2014 45ff argues that Plutarch’s *Lives* were aimed at not only Greeks but specifically at powerful Romans.

arms" (FGH 134.17a36–7), and argues that Alexander was a great philosopher king, as he had done in deed what other philosophers had only accomplished in writing. He had expanded Greek culture and established Greek law in barbarian lands, whereas Plato had only accomplished a constitution in writing. In this essay Alexander is a civilised and civilizing philosopher king, a vector of Hellenic culture. The Alexander of the *Life* is a much more complex and nuanced figure. While the early narrative focuses on his Hellenic *paideia*, the latter narrative is dominated by tales of Alexander's excess and despotism. In this thesis I will examine the tension between the "philosopher in arms" and the more negative aspects of Alexander.

In the first chapter I will examine Plutarch's methodology. I will describe the philosophical underpinning of Plutarch's worldview. I will examine the essay *De Virtute Morali*, in which Plutarch outlines his view on character and virtue. I will also examine the proscriptive purpose of the *Parallel Lives*: Plutarch viewed them as tools for readers to apprehend virtue and vice, and thereby gain moral improvement. In this section I will show how Plutarch evaluated his subjects, and the moralism that he brought to bear in his judgements.

In the second chapter I will examine the *Alexander* in detail. The *Alexander* is a long *Life*, so I will examine three main components of Plutarch's depiction. I will first examine a pair of defects which Plutarch connects to Alexander's nature: his *thumos*, or spirit, and his drunkenness. I, along with Tim Whitmarsh and Judith Mossman connect these defects to Plutarch's depiction of Alexander's Dionysian side.⁵ I will then examine the themes of ambition and reputation, which are central in Plutarch's portrayal of Alexander. I will also examine Plutarch's portrayal of Alexander's Hellenic *paideia*, which although not as dominant a theme as it was in the *De Alexandri Magni Fortuna aut Virtute*, is nevertheless prominent, especially in the early narrative. I will next examine the killings of Philotas and Cleitus, which occur around the middle of the *Life*, and the interaction of Alexander with two philosophers, Anaxarchus and Callisthenes. These murders are two of Alexander's most negatively charged acts; and his interaction with Callisthenes and Anaxarchus dramatizes the discussion of kingship ethics which is an implicit theme of the *Life*. I then conclude by examining Alexander's descent into despotism and his final ignominious end. Plutarch's characterisation is rich in detail, and his depiction of Alexander is complex. I hope to show that Plutarch does not only dramatize the fall of a great man, but rather examines the ethics that surround kingship, and

⁵ Mossman 1988; Whitmarsh 2002.

especially worldwide kingship. I argue that there are two Alexanders in the *Life*: the philosophical Alexander and the reigning Alexander. I argue that his decline is largely a result of a failure to reconcile these two Alexanders. This dichotomy is signalled when Alexander says, “if I were not Alexander, I would be Diogenes” (*Alexander* 14.3).⁶

In the third chapter I will examine the implications of Alexander’s ambivalent portrayal; in particular I will examine how this portrayal of Alexander, through the pairing with Caesar, fits in with Plutarch’s view of the Roman Empire. I will first briefly go over the comparison of Caesar and Alexander in general, focusing on the significance of pairing these two figures. I will then briefly examine Plutarch’s depiction of Caesar, and how the themes of ambition and emulation are reflected in the Roman side of the pair. I will then examine Plutarch’s depiction of Caesar’s downfall and death. I will conclude with an extended discussion of Plutarch’s view of the Roman Empire, and examine how Plutarch’s portrayal of Alexander and Caesar fits into this discussion. I will argue that in Plutarch’s depiction of Caesar, the themes of ambition and despotism recur. I will argue that the pair raises the theme of imperial ethics, and that although the theme explores the tensions that arise in worldwide kingship, Plutarch does not express opposition to the Roman Empire. I argue rather that instead of using cultural resistance as a model for Plutarch’s view of the Roman Empire, we should rather see the *Alexander-Caesar* as an exploration of the ethics of such an empire and an honest reflection of the ethical limitations of these great figures.

⁶ Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

Chapter One: Plutarch's Methodology

In this chapter I wish to give a broad outline of the project of the *Parallel Lives*, and the philosophical moralism which is evident in the *Lives*. This discussion will focus on the philosophical background of Plutarch and how that informed his approach to the subjects of his *Lives*. I will examine evidence from the *Moralia* to discuss how Plutarch evaluated his subjects.

Plutarch's views of character are complex and have long philosophical pedigrees; he is reliant not only on Plato, but also on Aristotle and the middle-Platonism that was the dominant form at the time.⁷ To examine Plutarch's views on character, we fortunately have not only the evidence of the *Lives*, we also have the voluminous *Moralia*. These essays, many of which discuss a number of philosophical themes, provide clues to the philosophical worldview which undergirded Plutarch's evaluation of character. One of the most important essays in this context is his *De Virtute Morali*, in which he discusses the components of the soul and the way in which it acquires moral virtue. This essay makes use of Aristotelian concepts and leans heavily on the *Nicomachean Ethics* 2.5-7.⁸ This essay employs Aristotle's division of the soul into a rational (λογιστικόν) and irrational (ἄλογον) part. Plutarch then further outlines the subdivision of the irrational part of the soul into the appetitive part (ἐπιθυμητικόν) and the passionate part (θυμοειδές), along Platonic lines. The division of the soul into rational and irrational components was, as Vander Waerdt notes, the common dichotomy of Greek thought on the soul; Plato's tripartite inclusion of *thumos*, or spirited side, as an equal part of the soul alongside the rational and irrational parts, is a break with tradition.⁹ Plutarch writes that the θυμοειδές, sometimes lends help to the rational and sometimes to the irrational part. The inclusion of the θυμοειδές as a part of the soul is important for the *Alexander* as it is this concept that Plutarch uses to analyse Alexander's thirst for conquest and irascibility and unpredictability. Plutarch further writes that this irrational side is, by nature, desirous of being ruled by the rational part, contrasting it with the perceptive, vegetative, and nutritive parts of the soul. Thus Plutarch collapses Plato's tripartite soul into Aristotle's bipartite division. This elision is not unique to

⁷ See Nikoliadis 1999 for a discussion of Plutarch's relationship to the academy of the time.

⁸ Dillon 1986 219.

⁹ Vander Waerdt 1985 373.

Plutarch: Vander Waerdt notes that “as early as the first generation of the Peripatos, the tripartite psychology of the Republic was re-interpreted in the terms of Aristotelian bipartition.”¹⁰

Plutarch goes on to state in this essay that ἥθος, or character, is well named. The reason for this, he states, is that ἥθος is a ‘quality of the irrational’ and that the irrational “...being formed by reason, acquires this quality and differentiation by habit (ἔθει).” He further writes, again recalling Aristotle, that the soul possesses δύνάμις (potential), πάθος (passion), ἔξις (acquired state). Plutarch writes that “potential is the beginning and raw material of passion, for example irascibility, bashfulness, or boldness. And passion is a movement of potential, for example anger, shame, or courage. And acquired state is the force and condition of the potential of the irrational, being produced by habit, and this passion becomes wickedness if it is educated badly, but virtue if it is educated excellently by reason.” (*De Virtute Morali* 443D) This is a crucial point in Plutarch’s moral universe; Plutarch places himself in an argument between the Peripatetic, Platonic, and Stoic schools of thought. He argues in this essay not for elimination of the passions, the Stoic *apathia*, but rather for the moderation of the passions (*metriopatheia*).¹¹ Plutarch writes, “there is in man something of the irrational, and he has inborn in him the font of emotion, not as an incidental advantage but a necessary part of him, and it should never be destroyed entirely but is in need of nurturing and education” (*De Virtute Morali* 451c). Plutarch argues against the elimination of emotions, but rather argues for the subordination of passion and emotion to reason. This is the fundamental basis of moral virtue: to educate a soul’s passionate side to hearken to its rational side. This fundamental dichotomy of rational and passionate components forms one of the bases of Plutarch’s moral universe in the *Lives*. As Duff writes, “in particular, the extent to which a hero held fast to reason and controlled his passions is a question in which Plutarch is always interested and which carries an implicit moral charge.”¹² *De Virtute Morali* is thus an extremely important and, for us, helpful essay because it is possible from this essay to discern the values and standards which Plutarch employed to adjudicate on the characters of his subjects. It is the essay in which Plutarch gives the clearest and most complete picture of his ethical theory.

¹⁰ Vander Waerdt 1985a 373 in this article and in Vander Waerdt 1985, he outlines the history of this significant reconciliation between Platonic and Peripatetic schemas. See also Karamanolis 2006 85-126 for an introduction to Plutarch’s attitude to the relationship between Plato and Aristotle; see esp. 115ff for a discussion of *De Virtute Morali*.

¹¹ See Dillon 1977 184-230 for a good general introduction to Plutarch’s philosophical outlook.

¹² Duff 1999 76.

It is necessary here to briefly note the distinction that Plutarch observes between nature (*phusis*) and character (*ēthos*): a human being is born with their *phusis*; *ēthos* is the quality of the irrational which is trained by habit. Plutarch regards education as the essential link between great natures and great statesmen. The concept of ‘great-natured men’ is outlined in the *Republic*; here Plato argues that men who have ‘great natures’ are apt to produce great wickedness if they are educated poorly. This is because great natures will produce greatness, whether it be wicked or good, whereas insignificant natures produce nothing of significance (*Republic* 6.491d-e). This idea is affirmed by Plutarch in his *De Sera Numinis Vindicta*; this thrust of this essay is to argue that the apparent sluggishness of God in punishing transgressions is largely in order to let the character of people improve. In support of this he adduces a number of figures from the glorious past (e.g. Miltiades, Cimon, and Themistocles) who all committed various transgressions and indiscretions in their past, but who nevertheless performed great deeds later in their lives. In support of this Plutarch writes:

For great natures produce no small thing, on account of their cleverness, the vehemence and vigour in them [great natures] do not lie idle; rather, they are borne on the sea until they come into their settled character (*De Sera Numinis Vindicta* 552C).

The concept of great-natured men is germane to this thesis because of the greatness of Alexander and Caesar. Greatness and dominance are themes of the *Alexander-Caesar*, and various forms of *mega* recur often in the *Alexander*.¹³ Alexander and Caesar are outstanding examples of great-natured men; and they show both the ability to do great things and the potential to do terrible things.

Plutarch’s *Lives* are close studies of individual statesmen, not so much as the agents of history, but as moral creatures. He hoped, by investigating the deeds and sayings of these great men to examine their character; the purpose of examining their character was to provide moral exemplars for the current generation. Plutarch alludes to his project in writing biographies in the proem of the (non-parallel) *Aratus*; he writes that he hopes to provide examples for Polycrates’ (to whom the proem is addressed) children “...which it befits them to imitate (μιμεῖσθαι), for it is a lover of himself, not a lover of the good, who always thinks himself to be the best” (*Aratus* 1.4). He famously explicates his purpose in the proem to the *Alexander*, where he writes that he is writing “not histories, but lives” (οὔτε ἱστορίας γράφομεν, ἀλλὰ βίους). Plutarch goes on to write that a manifestation of virtue

¹³ Eg. Alexander’s μεγαλόψυχον (4.8); or his μεγαλοπραγμοσύνην (5.3); or his desire to achieve something μέγα καὶ λαμπρόν (5.4).

or vice (ἀρετῆς ἢ κακίας) is not always to be found in the most famous deeds (ἐπιφανεστάταις πράξεσι); rather a small thing like a saying or joke provides a greater revelation of character than battles where thousands die, or the greatest ranks of men, or sieges of cities (*Alexander* 1.2). Thus the methodology of Plutarch, at least with respect to the *Alexander*, may be discerned here; Plutarch is interested in outlining the deeds and sayings of great men, and examining the “manifestations of virtue and vice” to elucidate the characters of his subjects.¹⁴

As I have outlined above, the moral worldview which Plutarch held is complex and is based on a rich philosophical tradition. So while it is perfectly true to call Plutarch a Platonist, it is incorrect to reduce him to a dogmatic follower of every Platonic doctrine; and indeed in Plutarch’s works, he often expresses disagreement with Plato, either implicitly or explicitly, even if these disagreements are usually diplomatically phrased. The area of disagreement with Plato which is most germane to this discussion is his affirmation of the value of poetry. It is worth briefly outlining the view that Plato expresses in the *Republic* on poetry and its utility, because of the way in which Plutarch disagrees and differs from it, not only in his *Moralia*, but also in his *Lives*. Plato criticises poetry because “...it aims at emotional gratification through *mimēsis* of the untrue, rather than at philosophical truth.”¹⁵ Plato argues specifically against the inclusion of moral failings in *mimēsis* because of the danger that false stories of wickedness and vice posed to “thoughtless young people” (*Rep.* 378a). Plato compares examples of poor behaviour to people cultivating a “poisonous pasture” and explains that such people will accumulate “a great evil in their souls” (*Rep.* 401c). This passage about moral turpitude in *mimēsis* perhaps summarises Plato’s aspirations:

But if are in any way likely to persuade them [the young] that no one ever hated his fellow citizen, and that this is not pious, it is rather these sorts of things that ought to be spoken rather more by the old men and women to the young immediately, and continuing as they become older, and we ought to compel the poets to cleave to this when they compose (*Rep.* 378c-d).

Thus Plato views the mimetic representation of evil as dangerously infective, especially for the young. It is better, Plato argues, to cultivate a *mimēsis* which does not admit of the possibility of wickedness; the qualifying “if we are in any way likely” seems to indicate that Plato had some conception of the magnitude of his task. The young soul, Plato argues, should not be exposed to evil: “but it [the soul] must be unacquainted with and unsullied by evil characters while it is young, if it is to be noble and good, and judge the just wisely” (*Rep.* 409a). Thus Plato argues that it is neither necessary nor beneficial for the young to have any acquaintance with wickedness; of particular

¹⁴See my following chapter for a discussion of the significance of this poem.

¹⁵ Whitmarsh 2001 51.

relevance for our purposes is the emphasis here on *krisis* or judgement. For Plato, the act of judgement does not require exposure to evil; for Plutarch, this is not the case.

Plutarch, although a Platonist, is willing to disagree with his favourite philosopher; and he does this with regards to poetry in his essay *Quomodo Adolescens Poetas Audire Debeat*. Plutarch begins by addressing Marcus Sedatus on the subject of poetry, and points out how seductive it is as an art form and how much pleasure is gained from it by the young; he then argues that if the young peruse the “opinions about the soul mingled with mythological tales” then they might gain “inspiration along with pleasure” (*Adolescens* 14e). Plutarch thus believes that the complete elimination of poetry is in the first place impossible, and the second place undesirable, as there are valuable insights to be drawn from it. Plutarch, recognising the futility and undesirability of the elimination of poetry, argues instead that the young ought to be provided with ὀρθῶ τιμι λογισμῶ “a right reasoning”, τὴν κρίσιν, ὅπως μὴ παραφέρηται τῷ τέρποντι πρὸς τὸ βλάπτον, ἀπευθύνωμεν καὶ παραφυλάττωμεν “so that their judgement does not get carried away by pleasure towards harm, and so we might direct and guard their judgement” (*Adolescens* 15d). Thus Plutarch here, as elsewhere, emphasises the importance of education and reasoning. Of interest here is the word *logismos*, the reasoning ability, which was of central importance to Plutarch’s moral worldview.¹⁶ For Plutarch, morality was largely concerned with acquiring a sufficient philosophical education in order to enable the logical part of the soul to direct the passionate side.¹⁷ And in Plutarch’s moral worldview, the extent to which one cleaved to their reason was decisive. Thus one can find here again Plutarch emphasising the importance of an educated soul. The large point of difference in the differing views of Plato and Plutarch is that in Plato the young are largely passive; they are either infected or not infected by the corrupting influence of bad *exempla*. Plutarch emphasises the active role of the reader in discerning the good from the bad; Plutarch enjoins the reader to:

In these passages [where there are unworthy or fantastical thoughts expressed] one must examine them carefully to see whether the poet himself has given any indications against such expressions that he himself is displeased with them (*Adolescens* 19a).¹⁸

And Plutarch makes extensive use of Greek poetry in his *Lives*, especially Homer, but also Pindar, Euripides and the Tragedians, among others. Thus for Plutarch the development of educated and discerning readers is the crucial thing. As Whitmarsh notes, “the implication is that a highly developed interpretative culture (like that of elite Roman Greece) will not encounter the problems

¹⁶ See the section on Plutarch’s view of the subdivision of the soul.

¹⁷ See above section.

¹⁸ See my third chapter for a discussion of the importance of judgement in the *Lives*.

with *mimēsis* that Plato foresaw.”¹⁹ And the entire project of the *Parallel Lives* is dependent upon the mimetic representation of both good and bad moral behaviour.²⁰

The *Parallel Lives* was predicated on the concept of emulation; Plutarch made this point clear in the proem to the *Pericles*. He writes that although people are not able to choose what they see or hear,

Each person, if they choose, is able through his intellect to always turn away and change easily to that which they consider desirable, so that it is necessary to pursue what is best, so that one does not only observe, but so one is educated in the observing (*Pericles* 1.2-3).

Here Plutarch emphasises the intellectual aspect of emulation: the use of the *nous* is the essential element in reading. As Goldhill notes, “reading *Pericles* is meant to make you imitate not so much Pericles as Plutarch.”²¹ In the proem of the *Aemilius Paulus* Plutarch again emphasises the role of the reader in selectively reading the Lives:

I began writing my Lives for the sake of others, but I am continuing it and enjoying my work now for my own sake, using history as a mirror and arranging and assimilating my life with their virtues. And what happens is nothing other than intercourse and living together, when I receive and welcome each subject of my history in their turn and examine carefully how great and what sort of man he was and select from his deeds what is most important and most noble to know (*Aemilius Paulus* 1.1).

This intellectual discernment with regards to imitation and emulation is of vital importance. And Plutarch expected his readers to apply such discrimination in their perusal of his *Lives*: they were expected to be intellectually competent enough to distinguish for themselves what was noble and ignominious. The concept of correct imitation is germane to the *Alexander-Caesar* especially because a number of emperors, including Trajan, engaged in Alexandrian *imitatio*, and Caesar himself engaged in an emulation of Alexander in his *Life*.

As mentioned above, according to Plutarch’s philosophical views the crucial element in creating a moral human being is education, or *paideia*. This concept has no real English analogue, although it is

¹⁹ Whitmarsh 2001 52.

²⁰ The importance of bad examples is made explicit in the proem to the *Demetrius*, in which Plutarch, drawing a link between the ability of sense perception and art to distinguish opposites argues that it is necessary to have bad examples concluding, “so it seems to me that we will be more eager to observe and imitate the better lives if we are not ignorant of those wicked and blameworthy (*Demetrius* 1.6). This proem also affirms the truth of the great-natured man’s ability to produce great vice as well as good.

²¹ Goldhill 2002 259; see Stadter 1989 xxixff for a discussion of this proem; see also Pelling 2002 274ff for a discussion of the importance of the reader in judging the deeds of his protagonists.

usually translated as ‘education’, which conveys the basic meaning. But *paideia* was much more complex than this translation implies, and was a crucial word in world of the Second Sophistic in general and Plutarch in particular. Tim Whitmarsh has focused on the elite element of *paideia*; he has noted its fundamental connection to social status in the world of the Second Sophistic.²² It was also a lifelong process, not merely a process that one went through when young. The salient thing to note here is that for Plutarch, *paideia* is the essential basis of morality. It is profitable here to recall *De Virtute Morali*, where Plutarch states, when discussing πάθος, that “...passion becomes wickedness if it is educated (παιδαγωγηθῇ) badly, but virtue if it is educated excellently by reason” (*De Virtute Morali* 443D). *Paideia* was an essential concept for Plutarch, and this was compounded when it came to Roman heroes; Plutarch’s moral estimation of Roman heroes was especially concerned with the extent to which they appreciated and imbibed Hellenic learning and culture.²³ Plutarch’s morals are Hellenic; he regards the acquisition of Greek learning and culture as the *sine qua non* of a moral individual.

Having sketched a brief outline of Plutarch’s basic ideas on character, it is now necessary to examine the consequences of these beliefs for the *Parallel Lives*. There are a number of general points that may be extracted from the excerpts that I have included above. The first point to note is the fundamental optimism that Plutarch evinces in relation to human character. It has been noted that Plutarch tends to give the subject of his biographies the ‘benefit of the doubt’; Plutarch is, in Duff’s words, “...generally more prepared to commend than to criticize.”²⁴ Duff partly attributes this fact to the ancient tendency to associate the writer’s choice of subject matter with the author’s own character, and partly to what Duff describes as Plutarch’s “...tolerance and understanding for the foibles of human nature”.²⁵ These points are undoubtedly true; but his indulgence is also partly due to Plutarch’s views of human character: Plutarch clearly views moral improvement as always possible and thus is inclined to look with a degree of indulgence at errors. This indulgence may, at first, seem to clash with Plutarch’s well-established reputation as a ‘moralist’.²⁶ Plutarch’s *Lives* focus on the historical deed of great historical figures as a way of apprehending their virtue. Such examination of character inevitably leads to the question of moral judgement; it is generally agreed

²² See Whitmarsh 2001; 2005 for a discussion of *paideia* see also Swain 1996 139-145.

²³ See Swain 1990 126-145.

²⁴ Duff 1999 56.

²⁵ Duff 1999 56.

²⁶ See Duff 1999 52-71 for a good general overview of Plutarch’s moralism; See also Pelling 2002 237-251.

that the standers by which Plutarch judges his subjects are fundamentally 'Greek.' The seminal works of Hubert Martin on the two concepts of φιλανθρωπία and πραότης are illustrative of the Plutarch's value system.²⁷ The basic definition of *prōtēs* is gentleness or mildness, but Martin uses several case studies to tease out associated meanings and implications. Germane to this discussion is his observation that πραότης is associated with the intellect: "*logismos* and *prōtēs* are contrasted with the emotional qualities *orgē* and *baryphrosynē*."²⁸ We may recall here *De Virtute Morali* and Plutarch's division of the soul along Aristotelian lines: Plutarch views the quality of *prōtēs* to be an outward manifestation of a soul which has reason firmly as its director and not subservient to the emotional and passionate part of the soul. Martin further notes that in the *Coriolanus* (15.4) τὸ πρᾶον is a product of *logos* and *paideia*.²⁹ His conclusion is that "...for Plutarch *prōtēs* is essentially a self-restraint which avoids excess of every kind, whether physical or emotional, whether within the individual or in his relations with other people, but which is out of place in circumstances demanding intensity of feeling and severity of action."³⁰ Martin performs a similar investigation of the uses of φιλανθρωπία in Plutarch. He demonstrates that for Plutarch the concept of φιλανθρωπία, the basic meaning of which is "humanity," also has a number of associated meanings. Martin notes its essential association with Hellenic civilisation, concluding "In short, it [φιλανθρωπία] is the virtue *par excellence* of the civilized, educated man."³¹ It is possible, in these two microcosms which Martin investigates, to discern the outline of the nexus of values which composes Plutarch's moral universe. These two terms describe men who are educated and exhibit philosophical self-control; and these qualities are ubiquitous throughout Plutarch's corpus. They form the essential basis for Plutarch's portrayal and moral judgement of his protagonists.

But this merely raises a further question: exactly what kind of moralism does Plutarch's work evince? The importance of this question has been well recognised and a number of authors have essayed answers to it. Christopher Pelling has proposed a broad distinction between what he calls protreptic,

²⁷ Martin 1960 'The Concept of *Praotes* in Plutarch's Lives.' Martin 1961 'The Concept of *Philanthropia* in Plutarch's Lives.'

²⁸ Martin 1960 69.

²⁹ Martin 1960 71 It is possible to also note here that again τὸ πρᾶον is contrasted with the passionate side of the soul. Plutarch writes that ... he indulged most of all the passionate (θυμοειδεῖ) and contentious (φιλονείκῳ) part of his soul, as holding in it something great and high-minded. Note here the use of the term *thumoeides*; this term is lifted straight from philosophical discourse and refers, as noted above, to the passionate part of the soul. Though Martin also notes that Plutarch also writes about Crassus' *phusis* οὐκ ὄντα φιλόνηκον, ἀλλὰ πρᾶον '...not being contentious, but gentle.'

³⁰ Martin 1960 73.

³¹ Martin 1961 174.

expository moralism, and descriptive, exploratory moralism. The former is moralism that carries some explicit or implicit 'guide to conduct'³²; the latter is a moralism that, rather than reducing a life or an incident down to a simple lesson examines and points to eternal truths of human nature.³³ He uses the case study of *Philopoemen and Flamininus*, in which the themes of contentiousness and freedom predominate. He notes that the likely audience would have known that "contentiousness is dangerous and freedom is a delicate possession and bring these assumptions to their reading."³⁴ Christopher Gill touches on this point in the distinction he draws between 'character' and 'personality.' In his *schema*, character is a term of moral judgement: to discuss a person's character necessitates placing them in a moral framework in which they are responsible 'agents', and using their actions as a metric to judge their 'goodness' or 'badness.' Whereas personality is '...empathetic rather than moral'; it involves trying to understand what it means to be that person, rather than judging that person 'from the outside'; he further associates this outlook with psychological passivity, inasmuch as the person is a product of forces, rather than an agent of their own destiny.³⁵ So to discuss a person's character is to assign praise or blame to the person for their actions, whereas to examine their personality is to attempt to *understand* how various forces worked on and through that person, without necessarily attaching implicit or explicit blame or praise. The result is not merely that well-established points are reaffirmed, they are lent nuance and complexity; Plutarch does not reduce his lives to simple gnomic statements (too much contentiousness is bad; freedom ought to be guarded). His moralism provokes questions, rather than providing answers, and resists attempts at reductionism and simplicity.³⁶

To examine the *Alexander* in particular, it is first necessary to examine the purpose of the *Parallel Lives* in general. To do this one need look no further than the proem of the *Alexander*, in which Plutarch, begging the forgiveness of his readers for the fact that he might not describe each famous deed in detail, claims "I am writing lives, not histories." He further goes on to explain that "... in the most famous deeds there is not always a sign of virtue or vice, rather often a small thing like a saying

³² Pelling 2002 239.

³³ Pelling 2002 239.

³⁴ Pelling 2002 242.

³⁵ Gill 1990 2.

³⁶ Pelling 2002 248 Pelling also compares tragedy to Plutarch in this context: tragedy has put audience assumptions under more threat than Plutarch, but he notes that at the end of the play the assumptions remain intact. Duff 1999 69 takes this point further, and questions the appropriateness of the term 'moralism' for what Plutarch is doing, given its sermonizing and protreptic implications. He notes that the Greeks talked rather of character (ἦθος), which had a moral component. Thus, according to Duff, "...to sketch character, even without explicit moral exhortation, or 'praise and blame', would be to invite the kind of ethical interest which Plutarch expects."

or a joke provides a greater revelation of character (*ethos*).” This statement has been generally taken to be paradigmatic for his wider project.³⁷ The question then must turn to the following: what exactly does Plutarch mean by *graphein bios*? I think that Russell is not too far off when he summarises the project in the following way: “Thus to describe the *bios* of a great man was to say ‘what sort of man he was’ (*poios tis ēn*) and to regard him, in a sense, as one of ourselves. One might almost say also that biography stood to history as the comedy of manners stood to tragedy.”³⁸ Thus for Plutarch the purpose of the *Lives* is to elucidate the *character*³⁹ of a great man through examination of his deeds.

³⁷ See my next chapters for a more full interrogation of the proem.

³⁸ Russell 1972 102; see Pelling 1988 263 on how Plutarch views certain character traits and aspects as naturally grouping together.

³⁹ For my use of character here, see the discussion above.

Chapter Two: The *Alexander*

This chapter will examine the *Alexander* in detail. The depiction of Alexander in this *Life* is justly celebrated as one of Plutarch's best. Alexander is a *thumoeides* man, being very affected by the spirited side of his soul (*thumos*).⁴⁰ This defect is recognisable in the *Coriolanus*, where Coriolanus is depicted as a man whose *thumos* is not restrained by *paideia*.⁴¹ Alexander is also ambitious above all, an ambiguous quality in Plutarch.⁴² Plutarch's views on ambition are mixed. While he often describes the ill-effects of excessive *philotimia*, he does not believe that its complete elimination is either possible or desirable. Instead, he argues that young men should aim at desirable things and that men should derive their honour from noble deeds. In opposition to this spiritedness is Plutarch's depiction of Alexander's Hellenic *paideia*, which is emphasised especially in the beginning of the *Life*, though, as we will see, it ultimately loses out to his more spirited side.⁴³ This clear narrative decline is complicated, however, by episodes and remarks early on in the *Life*, which demonstrate that, for Plutarch, Alexander was not simply a great man who underwent a decline in character—there were a number of deficiencies present from the start. Critics have not been blind to the complex and intertextual characterisation Plutarch employs in the *Alexander*. Mossman has argued that Plutarch used tragedy to shade Alexander's character and emphasise the more negative aspects of his character. And both Mossman and Whitmarsh have noted that Alexander's more negative acts are associated with Dionysus, especially his drunkenness.⁴⁴ I want to argue in this chapter that at least two Alexanders are presented in the *Life*, and that the *Life* portrays the struggle between Alexander's multiple selves. As stated above, it has been long known that in the *Alexander* Plutarch depicts Alexander as spirited and Dionysian but Hellenic and philosophical as well. And it is this tension that results in the particular trajectory which Plutarch outlines. Alexander's twin selves are, I shall argue, also depicted as being his philosophical self and his martial self. This is reflected in Alexander's assertion "if I were not Alexander, I would be Diogenes." I will further examine how Alexander's problems are reflective especially of Empire and governing. And that this governing is related to the problems of syncretism and World Empire which arise in Plutarch's *Life*.

⁴⁰ *Alexander* 2.3; 4.4; 13.2; 16.7; 26.7; 51.6.

⁴¹ *Coriolanus* was probably published after the *Alexander-Caesar* see Jones 1962 95-123.

⁴² *Alexander* 4.5; 5.3; 7.5; 16.8; 34.1; 58.1.

⁴³ For *paideia* see esp. *Alexander* 7.

⁴⁴ Mossman 1988; Whitmarsh 2002.

One of the major themes of the *Alexander-Caesar* is the interaction between public and private lives. This theme is highlighted in the proem, when Plutarch entreats the reader, due to the “multitude of deeds which lie before me” he might be forgiven for not going through all of their famous deeds, nor rehearsing each in detail. To explain this plea he outlines a formulation that is probably one of Plutarch’s most quoted excerpts:

For I am not writing history, but biography, and in the most famous deeds (ταῖς ἐπιφανεστάταις πράξεσι) there is not always a manifestation of virtue or vice; rather a small thing, like a comment or joke, often provides a greater presentation of character than battles where tens of thousands die, or the largest armies, or sieges of cities.

This proem has often been taken as a mission statement for the entire *Lives* project, yet this is to underestimate the specificity of this proem to its pair. Pelling raises a quibble with the universal applicability of this proem;⁴⁵ and Stadter notes how in the proem to the *Theseus*, Plutarch stresses the historical quality of his work.⁴⁶ Thus it seems unlikely that Plutarch means this particular generic description to apply universally. Rather, I would argue, Plutarch is using the proem here to foreshadow the primary themes which will be further elucidated in the pair. Pelling argues that the purpose of this is to set up a polarity of small and large things, where for Alexander the little things are where his decline is felt (e.g. the interactions with Cleitus and Callisthenes; his end in Babylon), whereas Caesar only has time for big things.⁴⁷ This is persuasive, but I would also argue that the emphasis on the distinction between famous deeds and ‘small things’ represents the tension in the text between the ambition and greatness of the Alexander and Caesar and their ‘private’ selves. The emphasis on fame (περιβοήτων; ταῖς ἐπιφανεστάταις πράξεσι) is consistent with the thirst of both Caesar and Alexander for *doxa*, or reputation. And in both of these cases their ambition for reputation returns distinctly ambivalent results. This tactic is not unique to the *Alexander-Caesar*; in the *Demosthenes-Cicero* (3.2-3), Plutarch mentions three qualities which they share (τὸ φιλότιμον και φιλελεύθερον ἐν τῇ πολιτείᾳ, πρὸς δὲ κινδύνους καὶ πολέμους ἄτολμον).⁴⁸ While the statement anticipating possible objections to the work is a common proemical function,⁴⁹ the construction of the *Alexander’s* proem is such that Plutarch enables it to serve two purposes: both the generic *captatio benevolentiae* and the more subtle thematic foreshadowing.

⁴⁵ Pelling 2001 259.

⁴⁶ Stadter 1988 284; see also the *Nicias* 1.5, where Plutarch avers that he can provide information which Thucydides has not, which also emphasises his *historical* achievements.

⁴⁷ Pelling 2002 260.

⁴⁸ Hägg 2012 267 notes the centrality of these three concepts in explaining the actions of the protagonists.

⁴⁹ Stadter 1988 289.

Defects of Nature

While the protagonist exhibits a clear ethical decline in the *Alexander*, recent scholarship has emphasised how Plutarch located some of Alexander's defects in his *phusis*. These include his *thumoeides* nature and his "heat."⁵⁰ In the first few chapters Plutarch outlines the characteristics which will determine Alexander's success and, ultimately, his failure. He also outlines Alexander's philosophical self-restraint and decency. Plutarch begins the *Alexander*, conventionally enough, with a description of his subject's parentage and physical appearance. We are informed about his preference for Lysippus' representations of him as best depicting "those things...which his friends and successors later tried to imitate" (4.1).⁵¹ Note here the emphasis on emulation and imitation, an implicit theme in the *Alexander-Caesar*, as Caesar will be found to attempt to emulate Alexander. We are also told that his skin "...exhaled a very sweet smell, and there was a sweet odour around his mouth and all of his flesh, so that his clothes were full of it" (4.2).⁵² Plutarch himself explains this odour as a consequence of the mixture (*krasis*) of his body, which he describes as "...very hot and fiery." The concept of mixing (*krasis*) and harmony are very important for Plutarch's worldview.⁵³ And it is this heat (θερμότης), which Plutarch holds responsible for Alexander's fondness of drinking (ποτικόν) and high spiritedness (θυμοειδῆ).⁵⁴ Both these two qualities figure heavily in Alexander's decline; it is during drinking bouts that Alexander commits many of his negatively-charged acts (e.g. the killing of Cleitus). The use of θυμοειδῆ is likewise very significant for the diagnosis of Alexander's character. As stated in the previous chapter, this term referred to the non-rational part of the soul..

The taming of Bucephalus is very thematically significant, and provides an indication of Alexander's nature. Alexander's taming of the wild and spirited horse provides a metaphor for the taming and

⁵⁰See Sansone 1980 for a discussion of the importance of Plutarch's physiological description of Alexander.

⁵¹ See Tatum 1996 for a discussion of the portrayal of character in the physical subject and the 'regal image' in Plutarch.

⁵² Hamilton 1969 11 notes the association of εὐωδία with divine and superhuman qualities; Wardman 1955 notes the importance of the *thumoeides* in Alexander's constitution.

⁵³ See Duff 1999 89-94. In this section Duff elaborates on the concept of mixing and harmony in Plutarch's lives, noting the importance of a well-mixed soul to the character of many of his heroes. He also traces this concept to its Platonic origin in the *Republic* and the *Timaios* (91).

⁵⁴ Caesar is also described as 'hot' when Plutarch writes that Crassus needed Caesar's ἀκμῆς καὶ θερμότητος (11.1).

educating of Alexander himself.⁵⁵ Bucephalus represents the spirited and wild side of Alexander. As noted in the previous chapter, Plutarch's basic criterion for moral virtue was the taming of the non-rational part of the soul to obey the rational. Plutarch writes that the horse is full of "...spirit and courage" (θυμοῦ καὶ πνεύματος). As stated above, the word *thumos* is philosophically important to Plutarch's worldview; it refers to that section of the soul which is spirited and non-rational, but which may be led to subordinate itself to the rational side when properly educated. This impression is cemented at the beginning of Chapter 7, where Plutarch writes that since Philip saw "...that his son's nature was unyielding and that he resisted compulsion but that he was led easily by reason (ὑπὸ λόγου) to his duty, he always tried to persuade him rather than to command him" (7.1). In 5.4ff, Plutarch discusses the people who made up Alexander's τροφεῖς καὶ παιδαγωγοὶ καὶ διδάσκαλοι "nurturers, trainers, and tutors", singling out Leonidas as "placed over all."⁵⁶ The Bucephalus story concludes, after Alexander's triumph, with Philip uttering the portentous words: "seek out a kingdom equal to yourself; Macedonia has no room for you" (6.5). The taming of Bucephalus, which is a metaphor for Alexander's self-control, is thus linked to Alexander's capacity to conquer a great empire.⁵⁷ Plutarch explicitly links Alexander's Hellenic self-control and his capacity to rule a great empire. Alexander is no normal king, his greatness demands an empire of commensurate greatness. As stated above, this anecdote is followed immediately by a discussion of Alexander's education by Aristotle, his most important tutor. Thus these three chapters form a tight introduction to the thematic and narrative arc of the text. The two forces which will compete in Alexander are delineated: Alexander's natural spiritedness is placed in opposition to his reason and Hellenic *paideia*.

In chapter 16 there is a description of the Battle of the River Granicus, in which Plutarch describes Alexander's bravery and skill in battle. Here his daring is again emphasised, but the less positive aspects of his spiritedness are emphasised. Plutarch described how the Greek mercenaries sued for mercy, but that Alexander "...under the influence of his spirit more than his reason (θυμῷ μᾶλλον ἢ λογισμῷ), charged foremost at them" (16.7). This description is precisely the obverse of the morally virtuous paradigm to which Plutarch subscribed: for Plutarch moral virtue largely consisted of

⁵⁵ Whitmarsh 2002 180 notes that the taming of horses is a recurrent metaphor for the taming of passionate youth and notes the importance of this trope to the chariot metaphor in Plato's *Phaedrus* (246a–57b); Mossman 1988 86 notes that horse-taming is very Homeric; Stadter 2014 228 argues that the taming of the horse sets up a theme of dominance which pervades the pair.

⁵⁶ See Hamilton 1969 14 for the distinction between the social status of these various titles.

⁵⁷ Whitmarsh 2002 181 n.40 notes that equine imagery had already been used to indicate conquest in Aeschylus *Persians*: 176–214.

educating the *thumos* to be subservient to reason. Thus in this action Alexander commits an act which is not reasoned but based on his spirited impulses; and the outcome of this lapse in philosophical harmony is predictably negative. Plutarch writes that of those of Alexander's army who fell, the majority died in this struggle, as a result of Alexander's spirit overcoming his reason. Hamilton writes that Alexander's aim in this slaughter (attested also by Arrian at 1.16.2) was to discourage mercenaries from fighting for the Persians, and concludes that "...Plutarch, characteristically, takes the charitable view that it was not due to policy, but to anger."⁵⁸ But given the moral worldview in which the *Lives* are situated, it is not clear that attributing this misdeed to anger decreases the opprobrium which, at the very least implicitly, attaches to Alexander. Alexander's spirited side propels him forward to accomplish great things, but also produces negative results when his reason cannot control it. This view also does not take into account the specific terminology used and its significance to Plutarch's moral worldview generally, and to Plutarch's depiction of Alexander's character more specifically. The word *thumos* has philosophical meanings associated with it; it refers to the part of the soul which is, in Plutarch's view, non-rational and was defined against the *logiston*.⁵⁹ As stated above, Plutarch had already employed the term to describe Alexander's high-spiritedness (θυμοειδῆ). The use of this terminology is not random; these words contribute to a clear portrayal of Alexander's character. That Alexander is more than usually affected by his "passionate" side is a recurrent point in Plutarch's depiction, and this passage is entirely consistent with this depiction.

In the razing of Thebes, an episode I will return to later, Alexander's *thumos* is again emphasised. Plutarch describes how after he sacked Thebes he took mercy on Athens, which had been allied with them:

But whether his rage (*thumos*) was now sated, just like a lion, or whether he wanted to set a good deed beside one of the most sullen savagery, not only did he rescind all charges from the city, but he even told it to take care for its affairs, since, if anything happened to him, it would rule Greece (13.2).

There are several points of interest here. While the tenor of this chapter and the previous one is mainly exculpatory, the passage about Alexander's rage being sated like a lion is significant, as is the attribution of this deed to his *thumos*. The motif of Alexander being lion-like recurs throughout the *Alexander*. Philip dreams that he is placing a seal on his wife's womb that has an "image of a lion" (2.2-3), which his seer interprets as predicting a son whose nature will be θυμοειδῆ καὶ λεοντώδη "spirited and lion-like" (2.3). When he thinks that his friends are becoming corrupted by oriental

⁵⁸ Hamilton 1969 41.

⁵⁹ For a discussion of this, see my previous chapter.

luxury, Plutarch writes that Alexander turned himself even more to hunting and military matters; he concludes this passage with a story about a Spartan ambassador that came up to the king while he was killing a lion, and comments “you have indeed struggled nobly with the lion over the kingship” (40.3). And in chapter 73 a lion was killed by a tame ass, which presaged Alexander’s death. In the Thebes passage Alexander’s spirit and rage is emphasised, and his inability to control these urges sits uncomfortably with the earlier representation of Alexander as a model of philosophical restraint. The struggle with the lion is also significant; as it represents the struggle between Alexander’s twin selves. The lion represents Alexander’s more wild and animalistic side, and is another way in which Plutarch depicts Alexander’s *thumoeides* tendencies. This is not unique to Plutarch; leonine metaphors are pervasive throughout Homer. Achilles is repeatedly described as a lion. For example in *Iliad* 18.318-322 when he grieves for Patroclus, he is described as a female lion whose cubs have been killed and subsequently goes to seek to hunt the hunter who killed her cubs.⁶⁰ In *Agamemnon* 716-736, the Chorus describes how when a man reared a lion in his own house, at the start of its life it was tame and a ‘joy’ for the children and elderly (*Agamemnon* 720-722), yet it eventually “showed the nature it received from its parents” (*Agamemnon* 729-730) and wrought great slaughter. In that case the Chorus is comparing the destructiveness of Helen to that of the lion. When Hephaestion dies in chapter 72, Alexander’s mourning for him recalls Achilles mourning for Patroclus. His grief at Hephaestion’s death is beyond what is appropriate, and Plutarch writes that Alexander “made war as a consolation for his grief” (72.3).⁶¹ Thus the portrayal of Alexander as “lion-like” is double edged: while Alexander’s courage and strength is positive, the metaphor also makes Alexander’s more destructive side evident. The example of Achilles is instructive here: Achilles’ mourning is for a death that he had some responsibility for, yet his re-joining the Greek cause and killing of Hector is essential for the success of the Greek cause. Thus Achilles is destructive, yet still fundamentally great and heroic, a dichotomy that is present in Alexander.

Both Tim Whitmarsh and Judith Mossman have noted Alexander’s Dionysian side, and its association with his violent and unethical acts.⁶² As Whitmarsh notes, Plutarch brings up Semele in connection with Alexander’s birth (2.3), and describes Olympias’ engagement in Dionysian rites as “more barbarian’ than other women” (2.7–9).⁶³ Alexander’s drunkenness is also emphasised. Although Plutarch claims that this is exaggerated (23.1-2), as Whitmarsh notes, this is not borne out by the

⁶⁰ See Alden 2005 for a discussion of this simile.

⁶¹ Mossman 1988 91 notes that this recalls Achilles’ human sacrifice.

⁶² Mossman 1988; Whitmarsh 2002.

⁶³ Whitmarsh 2002 186.

narrative, where his drunken acts are (almost) always negative.⁶⁴ And this drunkenness culminates in his own death. As Whitmarsh writes,

Alexander's death in the East from wine is thus presented as the final victory of the Dionysiac stratum over the philosophical *paideia* he has achieved; and, as we have seen, the Dionysiac is assimilated to the non-Hellenic, to all that opposes the order and self-control of the Greek philosophical tradition.⁶⁵

The Dionysian aspect is thus used to emphasise the barbarianism of Alexander, which is present in Alexander from the beginning, but worsens as the *Life* continues. Alexander tells his comrades that the object of conquest is not to become like the conquered, advice that he ought to have paid attention to himself. This process is demonstrated in the anecdotes in the *Alexander*. In chapter 37 Plutarch quotes Demaratus, writing "Those Greeks were deprived of a great pleasure who died before seeing Alexander seated on the throne of Darius" (37.4); in chapter 51 Cleitus says "We count as blessed those who are already dead before they lived to see Macedonians thrashed with Median rods, and begging Persians for an audience of the king" (51.1). In chapter 73 amid the portents of Alexander's death, Alexander beholds Dionysius sitting on his throne, who, Whitmarsh notes, is assimilated to Dionysus.⁶⁶ Dionysius is freed by the god Serapis, who Plutarch associates with Dionysus in *De Iside et Osiride* (362aff); and the freeing from chains is associated with Dionysus and his escape in the *Bacchae* 442-448.⁶⁷ These particular stories deal with whether Alexander conquered the East, or the East conquered Alexander. And the portent with Dionysius in his throne is one example of how, for Plutarch, the Eastern/Dionysian strain ultimately conquered Alexander.

Ambition and Reputation

An important impetus, perhaps the most important impetus, to Alexander's (and Caesar's) actions is his *Philotimia*, a prominent theme in a number of *Lives*. It is a deeply ambivalent quality and, as with

⁶⁴ Whitmarsh 2002 notes the exception of the crowning of the statue of Theodectus: 17.8–9.

⁶⁵ Whitmarsh 2002 197-188.

⁶⁶ Whitmarsh 2002 187 n.78; see also Sansone 1980 73 and Hamilton 1969 204.

⁶⁷ Sansone 1980 73.

many aspects of the Plutarchan moral universe, its utility and consequences are dependent on how well the subject has been educated in Hellenic culture. The ambivalence towards *philotimia* can be found in Plutarch's favourite philosopher, Plato. In the *Republic* 543A-550c, Socrates outlines the benefits and disadvantages of a state based on ambition, which he calls "either a Timocracy or a Timarchy" (*Rep.* 8.545b).⁶⁸ This constitution would incline towards the θυμοειδής τε καὶ ἀπλουστέρους "spirited and simple" type who are "more suited to war than peace" (*Rep.* 8.548a). The type of government will be mixed, but Socrates claims that because of the dominance of the *thumoeides* (ὑπὸ τοῦ θυμοειδοῦς κρατοῦντος) contentiousness and ambition (φιλονικία καὶ φιλοτιμία) will be dominant (*Rep.* 8.548c). Plato then places the logical part of the soul (τὸ λογιστικὸν) in opposition to the passionate and appetitive part (ἐπιθυμητικὸν καὶ τὸ θυμοειδές) and concludes that such a man, torn between these extremes, would turn over his soul to "the intermediate forces of ambition and high spirit" and would become a "high spirited and ambitious man" (ὑψηλόφρων τε καὶ φιλότιμος ἀνὴρ) (*Rep.* 8.550b). In the *De Virtute Morali*, Plutarch writes that young men are often "hasty rash and fiery" (ὀξεῖς καὶ ἱταμοὶ...διάπυροι), in their desires, as a result of the "abundance of heat in their blood" (αἵματος πλήθει καὶ θερμότητι) (*De Virtute Morali* 450ff). In contrast to this, Plutarch writes that "reason (ὁ λόγος) increases more as the passions (τοῦ παθητικοῦ) fade away in the body" (*De Virtute Morali* 450f). Both Alexander and Caesar are described as hot with respect to their bodies. In the Platonic schema which Plutarch (basically)⁶⁹ subscribed to, the spirited sided of the soul, if left unchecked by reason, would rage out of control. Plutarch writes that for a perfect man glory would not be necessary, but the young may be allowed to exalt and preen themselves in glory, providing that the glory is a result of noble deeds (*Agis* 2.1).⁷⁰ Pelling has noted how this is reflected in the *Lives*, in that *philotimia* is more often found in the first half of a Life, and when it occurs later in a Life it is often "off-key."⁷¹ He cites the example of Caesar's competition with himself, and I would cite Alexander's later ambitions, including where he resorts to fallacious tricks to burnish his reputation.⁷² In *De Virtute Morali*, Plutarch describes how legislators try to inculcate the spirit of "ambition and emulation" (φιλοτιμίαν καὶ ζῆλον) in their citizen's relations with each other (452B). As Pelling notes in his article on Roman *philotimia*,

⁶⁸See Zadorojnyi 2006 261-292 for a discussion of the timocratic man in relation to Themistocles.

⁶⁹ See my earlier discussion of *De Virtute Morali* and the synthesis of Plato and Aristotle which Plutarch outlines.

⁷⁰ See also *Agis* 2.2: "but excess is always dangerous, and in those who are politically ambitious it is deadly, for it drives them to madness and open derangement as they seize at great power, when they refuse to consider nobility glorious, and rather regard that which is glorious good."

⁷¹ Pelling 2012 58ff.

⁷² See below for a full discussion of these incidents.

By Plutarch's day, it would surprise no-one that φιλοτιμία could take both positive and negative forms, or—not quite the same thing—that it could have both positive and negative results for the individual or the state.⁷³

Thus ambition for Plutarch is necessary, but it needs to be controlled. Such a nuanced or ambivalent attitude to this complex concept is present throughout Plutarch's works and especially the *Alexander-Caesar*. It is not surprising that in such a successful and significant pair *philotimia* is an important theme; and it is equally unsurprising, given the ambivalence surrounding such a concept, that Plutarch does not opt for a simple negative or positive reading of *philotimia*.

We are told that Alexander's "...ambition (φιλοτιμία) kept his spirit weighty and lofty beyond his years." Plutarch elaborates on Alexander's ambition, writing of his μεγαλοπραγμοσύνην,⁷⁴ and describing Alexander's despondency at hearing of his father's victories, where he despairs that his father "...will leave behind no great or brilliant deed for me to show to the world with you" (5.2). And Plutarch tells us that Alexander prefers ἀρετὴ καὶ δόξα, virtue and reputation, to wealth and pleasure (5.3). We are further told that Alexander desired to receive from Philip not a kingdom which would afford him 'ἀγῶνας καὶ πολέμους καὶ φιλοτιμίας' "struggles, wars, and ambitions" in favour of a reign full of χρήματα...τροφὰς καὶ ἀπολαύσεις "wealth, luxury, and enjoyment" (5.3). These terms are of paramount importance to Alexander. Plutarch seems to refute the Stoic critique of Alexander, which argued that he suffered from delusion.⁷⁵ The description of Alexander's desire for 'virtue and reputation' is likewise significant, as later in the life virtue and reputation will start to conflict with each other.

In another chapter, the conflict between Alexander's ambition and his rule is emphasised. In chapter 42 Plutarch writes,

At first (ἐν ἀρχῇ) when he was trying capital cases he placed his hands over one of his ears when the accuser was speaking, so that he might preserve it clean and immune from calumny for the accused. But later the many accusations he heard made him harsh, and led him to believe the false ones because of the true ones. And most of all when he heard himself abused he was driven from his senses (ἐξίστατο τοῦ φρονεῖν) and became harsh and inexorable, because he esteemed his reputation above his life and kingdom (42.2).

⁷³ Pelling 2012 55.

⁷⁴ Hamilton 1969 14 notes that this word carries some level of ambivalence when applied to Alcibiades (*Alc.* 6.4, 38.6).

⁷⁵ Hamilton 1969 lxviff notes that Plutarch devotes a chapter to refuting the idea that Alexander was deluded by his divinity, and Plutarch concludes that he was οὐδὲ τετυφωμένος "not deluded" (28.3).

Here the tension between Alexander's character and his rule is emphasised. Note first the distinction between Alexander's early reign (ἐν ἀρχῇ) and later (ὕστερόν). This reflects the degeneration of Alexander: his early reign was characterised by good governance; his latter rule is characterised by despotism. Note also that Alexander is driven from his senses, which Hamilton notes is a very strong formulation for Plutarch.⁷⁶ As noted previously, Plutarch's view of ethics was largely conditioned by the concept of the dominance of one's reason. This passage also foreshadows Alexander's ambivalent actions in dealing with Philotas, Parmenio, and Callisthenes; in these cases Alexander shows himself to be harsh. There is also the tension expressed here between adjudicating cases fairly, and the maintenance of reputation, the desire for which is a major theme in the *Alexander*. Here we begin to see the metastasis of Alexander's *philotimia* into something definitely negative. His reputation begins to engulf his being, instead of *philotimia* being restrained by his reason, and within limits. Justice is very important for a ruler, as Plutarch makes clear in his *Ad Principem Ineruditum*, writing "Justice is the end of law, and law is the business of rulers, who is the image of god who orders all things" (*Ad Principem Ineruditum* 780c-d). Alexander's failure in adjudicating fairly and arriving at justice is thus very negative. His only concern is for his glory, and his inability to handle criticism has the disconnecting him from his reason, which for Plutarch is the essential regulating factor for a moral man.

In chapter 62 Plutarch describes how the Macedonians refused to go any further into India and refused to cross the Ganges. The crossing of bodies of waters has a long history in Greek literature as a marker of excess. When the army refuses to continue any further, Plutarch depicts Alexander's Achilles-like sulk in his tent:

Firstly Alexander shut himself in his tent and lay there, struck with despondency and anger, feeling no gratitude for what he had already achieved if he would not cross the Ganges, he considered a retreat an admission of defeat (62.3).

This section is comparable with Caesar's competition with himself at the end of his *Life*, as in both cases Alexander and Caesar disregard their previous achievements and continuously aspire to accomplish greater deeds.⁷⁷ In both cases it is indicative that proper and appropriate ambition has metamorphosed into a perverse form. The conclusion of the passage in the *Alexander* is negative, and again reinforces the theme of Alexander's desire for *doxa*. Plutarch writes that Alexander was shut until "his friends condoled him fittingly, and the soldiers stood around his tent, beseeching him with weeping and cries" (62.3). He then concludes the passage with the comment that Alexander

⁷⁶ Hamilton 1969 111.

⁷⁷ *Caesar* 58.2-5.

broke camp but πολλά πρὸς δόξαν ἀπατηλὰ καὶ σοφιστικὰ μηχανώμενος “contrived many deceitful and fallacious devices for the enhancement of his reputation” (62.3). This is the point where Alexander’s desire for *doxa*, which has been the primary motivating factor of his campaign, becomes absurd; his previous desire for a “great and glorious deed” replaced with tricks and σοφιστικὰ, sophistic contrivances, to enhance his reputation. While the Achilles precedent is not wholly negative, as Achilles had cause for complaint, as arguably does Alexander, his turn to “sophistic devices” for the artificial enhancement of his reputation is bad. Glory should be the result of worthy deeds. His desire for reputation has now become such that the means by which he achieves it is no longer important: there is nothing *lampron* about his tricks now. We have reached the point described in the *Agis* 2.2: Alexander now equates glory with *to kalon*.

Thus Alexander was profoundly spirited and ambitious, two qualities which are not of themselves negative, but can produce negative results. Caesar is ambitious, and his ambition is criticised by Plutarch, but Alexander’s ambition does not get a similar level of direct criticism. Bradley Buszard claims that the difference is that Alexander’s Hellenic *paideia* saves him from the worst excesses of ambition and, consequently, Plutarch’s censure.⁷⁸ There is much to be praised in this reading, and undoubtedly Alexander’s Hellenic *paideia* is prominent in his positive portrayal. But there is the problem that the end of the *Alexander* is probably lost, and it is not till the end of the *Caesar* that we see the most explicit and severe condemnation of Caesar’s ambition. Pelling contends that a Zonaras fragment contains a summary of the end of the *Alexander*, with Alexander trying, and failing to drown himself in the Euphrates and thereby leave behind the rumour that he had “returned to the gods.”⁷⁹ If this is true it would conform to the theme, recurrent in the *Alexander*, of Alexander’s continuous aspirations to divinity and his concern for his reputation. And it would carry a considerable amount of what Pelling calls ‘exploratory morality.’⁸⁰ Indeed Pelling’s division of Plutarch into exploratory and expository morality, or some version of that idea, is a more proximate explanation for the lack of explicit criticism of Alexander’s *philotimia* than Buszard’s.⁸¹ For while Plutarch does not explicitly criticise the ambition of Alexander, he does portray its benefits and, finally, its limits. Alexander’s ambition is positive at the beginning of the *Life*, and achieves many

⁷⁸ Buszard 2008 185-215.

⁷⁹ Pelling 1973; for a further discussion of this fact and its implications, see my next chapter.

⁸⁰ Pelling 2002 237-251.

⁸¹ Pelling himself notes the inadequacy of the dichotomy and points out that the explanatory morality is finally expository ‘by implication.’

great things, like the expansion of Greek culture, but the man doing this expansion is ultimately flawed, and his ambition, like other elements of his character, is ultimately flawed and compromised. Like many other themes in Plutarch's *Lives*, Alexander's ambition is not straightforward, and the tension between its beneficial effects and its excess is one of the themes of the *Life*. If Plutarch does not explicitly criticise Alexander for this, he does demonstrate the consequences, both negative and positive, of his ambition. As I noted above, Alexander's relentless drive to expand his empire culminates in his army refusing to advance, and the Bacchic revel—an episode which does not show Alexander as a great philosopher king which the *Life* promises at the beginning. This and several other episodes discussed above illuminate the negative consequences of Alexander's ambition; that Plutarch does not explicitly criticise Alexander's ambition is not as important as the fact that he includes implicit criticism in the way in which he portrays Alexander.

Hellenic *Paideia*

We are told that Alexander's self-restraint (*sophrosyne*) was demonstrated in the degree to which he abstained from "the pleasures of the body" and indulged in them only "with much *praotes*". His *sophrosyne* is also demonstrated in his φιλάνθρωπα towards the Persian women, and Plutarch describes how Alexander thought "... it was more kingly to master himself than to conquer his enemies" (21.4). And Plutarch writes that Alexander "competed with the beauty of the Persian women with the beauty of his own sobriety and self-control" (21.5). As described in the previous chapter, the concept of *πράοτης* is very important in Plutarch's moral universe; this is, according to Martin's seminal work, one of Plutarch's cardinal virtues.⁸² Hellenic self-restraint is also very important in Plutarch's worldview. Alexander's learned credentials are burnished in chapter 8. We are told that Alexander's love of healing (φιλατρειν) was imparted to him by Aristotle more than any others. We are then told that Alexander not only appreciated the theory of medicine, but that he also engaged in the practice of medicine, prescribing remedies for his friends when they were ill. This is followed by the revelation that Alexander by nature (φύσει) loved learning (φιλόλογος) and reading (φιλαναγνώστης). The connection between statesmen and medicine is a recurring one in Plutarch; the statesman is frequently analogised as a doctor for the state. Indeed, in the *Comparison of Dion and Brutus*, Caesar is described as being appointed "by a daemon itself" as a "...most gentle

⁸² Martin 1960.

doctor” (*Comparison of Dion and Brutus* 2.1). In the *Caesar*, the state is described as being diseased and in need of a monarch to fix its deficiencies, again described as “...the most gentle of doctors” (*Caesar* 28.4) although at this point the doctor being proposed was Pompey, rather than Caesar. The theme of health is prominent in the *Moralia*; in the *De Sera Numinis Vindicta*, the concept of the leader as a cure for a state again recurs, this time as an agent of divine justice and a cure for their states. In this case it is god who plays the role of doctor, and the rulers who are the cures for various ailments of the state. We are told that god “knows the best time for the curing of wickedness” and that “he administers punishment to each as a medicine” (550A). The emphasis on health at the beginning of the *Life* will be inverted as Alexander’s illness-ridden last days are described.⁸³ Here Alexander’s interest in medicine is indicative of his *paideia*, but it also stands as a metaphor for his kingship; and the inability of Alexander to be an effective doctor of the state is emphasised in the latter stages of his *Life*. This is not only indicated by Alexander’s own illness-ridden last days, but also the death of Hephaestion and Alexander’s crucifixion of his doctor (72.2).

Alexander’s *paideia* is also emphasised by Plutarch’s mention of the “Iliad of the Casket” (ἐκ τοῦ νάρθηκος), which was, according to Plutarch, a recension by Aristotle himself;⁸⁴ Plutarch further writes that Alexander slept with this copy under his pillow. The relationship with Aristotle is important for the philosophical shading of Alexander; in 8.3 the relationship is discussed, and we are told that Alexander admired and loved Aristotle “at first” (ἐν ἀρχῇ) more than his father, because

⁸³Pelling 2002 379.

⁸⁴The connection of this recension to Aristotle does not appear other sources cf Strabo 13.1.27 where the recension is done by Alexander in concert with Callisthenes and Anaxarchus; see also Pliny *NH* 7.108; *Dio. Chr.* Or.2; *Ath* 12.537d. For a brief discussion of this issue, see Hamilton 1969 20. In Plutarch the *Iliad* is a τῆς πολεμικῆς ἀρετῆς ἐφόδιον. As Hamilton also notes (20), this episode is given a slightly different emphasis in the *De Alexandri Magni Fortuna aut Virtute*. Plutarch concedes that Alexander did say that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* accompanied him as ἐφόδιον for his campaign, but contends that these works accompanied him as “...a consolation after toil and a pastime for sweet leisure” and that “his true ἐφόδιον was philosophical dialogue and the works on fearlessness, bravery, courage and greatness of the soul” (*De Alex.* 1.4). The distinction between the intellectual interests of Alexander—between military education and philosophical education—reflects the primary difference between Alexander as presented in Plutarch’s two representations: between Alexander the conqueror and Alexander the philosopher. In the *De Alexandri Magni Fortuna aut Virtute* the conquests of Alexander are justified and supported as a civilising mission; Alexander expands Greek laws and customs and is a vector of Hellenic civilisation. In the *Alexander* his portrayal is much more complex, as befits the more nuanced genre of biography. While the interest in philosophy is constant, as noted above, the emphasis is different and his focus is more on ambition and his μεγαλοπραγμοσύνην (eagerness to do great things). This difference is emphasised here in his choice of literature: in the *Alexander* he chose the work which contained πολεμικῆς ἀρετῆς; in the *De Alexandri Magni Fortuna aut Virtute* philosophy sustains him, rather than military instruction. This is illustrative of a deeper difference: in the *De Alexandri Magni Fortuna aut Virtute* the conquests are a mean to advance Hellenic civilisation; in the *Alexander* they are a means of furthering Alexander’s ambition. But these two portrayals are not entirely separable; in the *Alexander* the interest in philosophy is still emphasised, but, as stated above, qualified.

while his father had given him life, Aristotle had taught him to live nobly (καλῶς ζῆν). Plutarch writes that “later he held him in more suspicion, not so that he did any harm, but his kindly disposition lacked its former vehemence and affection, and this was proof of his estrangement from him” (8.3). Thus here again we can see the degeneration of Alexander, and the distance that grows between Alexander and his philosophical roots. But this apparently negative anecdote is followed immediately by the assertion that the “...eagerness and longing for philosophy did not subside from his soul” (8.4). Thus the theme of *paideia* is prominent in the Alexander. In the beginning chapter Plutarch sketches the outlines of Alexander’s character, emphasising a number of elements which are extremely positive in Plutarch’s worldview. The first and most important point is that Plutarch portrays Alexander as having the Hellenic *paideia* that Plutarch views as the *sine qua non* of a moral man. Alexander has the requisite interest in philosophy that will sustain his moral quality. This interest in learning is also specifically related to medicine, which is consistent with the medical portrayal of statesmanship in Plutarch’s corpus. Alexander exhibits *praotes* and *philanthropia*, which Hubert Martin showed to be very important to Plutarch’s moral system.⁸⁵ These qualities together combine to portray a kind of well-educated, humane king. Alexander has the promise to be a philosopher king, an ideal Plutarch constantly aspired to.

Alexander’s early Kingship

The early reign of Alexander is positive overall, but, as we shall see, there are some troubling episodes. Chapter Nine deals with Alexander’s first forays into warfare and governance, describing Alexander’s assumption of the title of regent in his father’s absence and the role he played in the Battle of Chaeronea. In 9.3 Plutarch, describing Philip’s pleasure at the success of his son in the art of kingship, writes that he rejoiced to hear the Macedonians call “Alexander their king, and Philip their general” (9.3). This antithesis represents a tension present in the text: the tension between leading an army of conquest and ruling over a population. This tension will make itself felt more keenly when the army forces Alexander to turn back. This comparison with his father also has a possible

⁸⁵ See my previous chapter.

negative imputation: Philip's early drunken tendencies presage Alexander's latter drunkenness;⁸⁶ and Alexander's later drunkenness and excess indicate that he is no longer the ideal king of the early *Life*.

In chapter 11 Alexander confirms his reign. When the various subject kingdoms begin to revolt after the death of Philip, the kingdom is described as being beset by φθόνους μεγάλους καὶ δεινὰ μίση καὶ κινδύνους πανταχόθεν ἔχουσιν “great jealousies, and terrible hatreds, and dangers on all sides” (11.1). This kingdom, riven with strife and discord, is consistent with the kingdom which Plutarch claimed Alexander wished to inherit. A question that the *Life* proposes is whether Alexander is able to fix these issues, whether he will be an effective doctor for the state” while he is successful to begin with, the empire, and his men, will again revolt towards the end of his *Life*, and it will become clear that he is not an ideal statesman. Plutarch presents an interesting opposition between the course of action advised by Alexander's Macedonian advisors and Alexander's actions. His advisors urged him to release the Greek kingdoms and not to compel them at all and to deal with the barbarians gently (πρῶως), and to attend to the beginnings of the revolutions. But Alexander “...set himself out from opposing principles (ἀπ’ ἐναντίων λογισμῶν) to win security and safety for his reign through courage and greatness of mind (τόλμη καὶ μεγαλοφροσύνη), sure that if he were to relax even a little from his dignity, all would set upon him” (11.2). Hamilton argues that here Plutarch is keen to emphasise “Alexander's boldness and strategic grasp.”⁸⁷ The words here “daring and great mindedness” are also prominent in Plutarch's depiction; these words are echoed in chapter 58, when Plutarch describes Alexander in the following way:

He strove to conquer fortune by daring and force by courage, and thought nothing unconquerable for the brave and nothing secure for the cowardly (58.1).

Thus the daring Alexander is able to accomplish much, as Caesar will be able to, but his daring will and natural greatness will ultimately prove to have limits.

In Chapter 14.1 Plutarch describes an “assembly of the Greeks” in which they vote to begin an expedition against Persia and proclaim Alexander as leader (ἡγεμῶν).⁸⁸ Plutarch then describes the

⁸⁶ Philip's drunken attack on Alexander, prevented only because Philip tripped διὰ τὸν θυμὸν καὶ τὸν οἶνον “because of his anger and drunkenness” (9.5) foreshadows Alexander's attack on Cleitus.

⁸⁷ Hamilton 1969 29.

⁸⁸ Hamilton 1969 33 writes that Plutarch is using ἡγεμῶν in a “non-technical sense” here as this was a term which denoted the “federal general elected for life by the delegates of the Greek states” as opposed to the στρατηγὸς αὐτοκράτωρ, the ἡγεμῶν appointed for a specific campaign.

famous story of Diogenes' meeting with Alexander; in this encounter, Alexander arrives with a retinue and asks if there is anything Diogenes needs, to which Diogenes requests that Alexander "move a little out of the sun" (14.3). Plutarch reports that Alexander is very impressed by this, while his companions mocked Diogenes. Alexander is reported to have said, "If I were not Alexander, I would be Diogenes" (14.3). Plutarch refers to this anecdote several times in the *Moralia*. In the *De Alexandri Magni Fortuna aut Virtute* (331f ff.) the point of the anecdote is that if Alexander did not have to civilise the uncivilised places and spread Hellenic culture over barbarian lands, then he would have lived the ascetic life of Diogenes. In *Ad Principem Ineruditum* (782A ff.) he gently criticises Alexander for the implication that the lives of philosopher and king were incompatible, and instead writes that the number and size of the king's burdens means that he required philosophy even more. The point of the anecdote is flexible, and Plutarch uses it according to his thematic needs; here it serves a double purpose—its ostensible meaning is to emphasise Alexander's philosophical credentials, but it also serves to foreshadow a tension between Alexander's two selves. Alexander's philosophical self, his Diogenes, is implicitly placed in opposition to his martial and ruling self.⁸⁹ The relationship between Diogenes and Alexander is also used by Dio Chrysostom in his *Forth Kingship Oration*, where he stages a conversation between Alexander and Diogenes and portrays Alexander, and indeed imperial policies, negatively.⁹⁰ This relationship between philosophy and kingship is a major theme of the *Alexander*: many of his failings are philosophically coloured and mediated. At this point in the Life Alexander's comment is a reflection of his current Hellenic *paideia*, yet the tension is expressed here as well—Alexander's rejection of Diogenes here foreshadows the despotism that will arise from Alexander's distancing from his Hellenic *paideia*.

In chapter 23, there is an interesting piece of criticism from Plutarch, who writes that although he was in other respects "the most pleasant of kings", sometimes "his boasting made him odious and very much like a common soldier" (23.4). Not only would he himself boast, but Plutarch writes that he "allowed himself to be ridden by his flatterers" (23.4). Here, importantly, Plutarch discusses the effect that this has on his followers:

⁸⁹ A version of this formulation is used again in chapter 29, when Darius sends to Alexander to offer him lucrative terms of surrender, Parmenio states that he would take them if he were Alexander, and Alexander replies "and so would I, if I were Parmenio" (29.4).

⁹⁰ See Moles 1983 pp. 251-278 for a discussion of this *Oration*. See Swain 1996 192ff and Whitmarsh 2001 186ff for a discussion of the *Orations* in general.

These were a cause of distress to the more graceful people there, who neither wished to compete with the flatterers nor be left behind in praising him, the former seemed disgraceful, the latter carried danger (23.4).

This passage is significant. The flatterer is a character familiar from Greek literature and philosophy; he appears in Theophrastus' catalogue of characters. Plutarch himself had devoted an essay to the subject of *How to tell a flatterer from a friend*; in this essay Plutarch draw attention especially to the dangers of flattery to those in power:

Thus we can see that flattery does not follow poor, obscure, or powerless men, but is rather a slip-up and plague for great houses and great matters, and often overturns kingdoms and dynasties (*Adulator* 1.2)

And Dio Chrysostom's second *Kingship Oration* deals specifically with the problem of flattery for the king. Schmidt notes that Plutarch regards the presences of flatters, along with lack of free speech to be indicative of barbarian despotism.⁹¹ Note also the tinge of violence here: not flattering the king brought "danger." This tendency, although apparently minor, is indicative or a darker side of Alexander. The discussion of Alexander's susceptibility to flatters here indicates that his kingship is in danger of turning into despotism. Flatterers will also figure negatively in the reign of Caesar, as the excessive honours which make him odious to people are proposed by his flatterers and enemies.

The chapter dealing with the destruction of Thebes is significant for a number of reasons, but primarily because it complicates the idea of a linear decline in Alexander's character. Plutarch here emphasises that Alexander's army is Macedonian (ἔτρεψε τοὺς Μακεδόνας πρὸς πόλεμον) and puts the Macedonian cause in opposition to the Theban cause, which is (at least in the rhetoric of the rebellious Thebans) the cause of "those who wished to set Greece free" (11.4). Plutarch also conspicuously praises the Thebans writing that "the Thebans fought with a courage and spirit beyond their power" (11.5). Now it is possible that Plutarch's Boeotian nationalism is coming to the fore here, but it is still significant that Plutarch chooses to include this episode, and include at such length and with such censure for Alexander. For Plutarch writes that while the destruction of Thebes was done mainly to set an example for other Greek cities, there were also other, less practical motives. Plutarch writes "apart from that [the pacification of other Greek cities] he adorned himself by gratifying the complaints of his allies" (11.5). This chapter concludes with Plutarch reciting the number of those sold into slavery (more than thirty thousand) and those who were killed (more than six thousand). This chapter is followed by a chapter which describes Alexander setting free Timocleia. This razing of Thebes complicates his depiction as an exponent of Hellenic *paideia*, and

⁹¹ Schmidt 2004 229.

puts him more in the category of other Macedonians in Plutarch's corpus, who are depicted as foreign oppressors of Greece. Perhaps this destruction could also bring to mind the Persian destruction of Athens, which Alexander's invasion was ostensibly to avenge.

Plutarch also outlines Alexander's attempts to unite the empire which he had conquered. In chapter 45 Plutarch writes that Alexander first "put on barbarian dress, either wishing to adapt himself to local customs, believing that a joining of race and custom aided greatly towards the civilising of men, or this was an attempt to introduce *proskynesis* amongst the Macedonians." (45.1). Plutarch writes that Alexander at first wore this dress only amongst the barbarians, but then gradually began to introduce it amongst the Macedonians; Plutarch reports that this distressed the Macedonians, but that they admired his virtue, and thought that they ought to yield to him in matters which contributed to his "pleasure or his fame" (45.3). In chapter 47 Plutarch again discusses Alexander's attempts at cultural syncretism. Plutarch reports that Alexander "adapted his way of life even more to the locals and tried to bring these in concert with Macedonian customs" (47.3). Plutarch then enumerates Alexander's other syncretic policies: the training of the 30 000 Persian boys and the marriage to Roxanna. In this same chapter Plutarch describes the quarrel between Hephaestion and Craterus, two favourites who Alexander used in connection with the barbarians and the Macedonians and Greeks respectively. Plutarch writes that Alexander ended this quarrel. Yet the larger point is that Plutarch is here depicting the tensions and conflicts that arise in the world empire which Alexander has created. The training of the Macedonian boys will create conflict with his Macedonian soldiers in chapter 71.⁹² Thus the depiction of Alexander's early kingship, although mainly positive, also contains a number of episodes which complicate the positive portrayal. These early indications foreshadow the despotic Alexander of the end of the *Life*.

Philotas, Cleitus, Callisthenes and Anaxarchus

Having discussed how Plutarch characterised Alexander, I now wish to examine a number of episodes which show how these qualities—his *thumos*, his *paideia*, and his *archē*—are depicted as being in tension in the text. These episodes depict the ethics of kingship and dramatize the tensions

⁹² Mossman 1988 is right to note that the failure of the Macedonians to adapt to foreign ways is a major theme in the *Life*, and points to the transportation, with limited success, of Greek plants to Babylon by Harpalus at 35.1.

in Alexander's relationship with his subjects—both Greek (and Macedonian) and Persian—and the relationship between Alexander's selves.

In chapters 48-49, Plutarch describes the affair with Philotas. Philotas is described as holding a high position among the Macedonians, because he seemed "courageous and enduring...and fond of his comrades" but that he was too prideful and wealthy for a "private man" (48.1-2). Plutarch writes that Philotas had been calumniated for a long time due to the things that Philotas would, when he was drinking, say to Antigone, a slave girl. Plutarch describes these things as φιλότιμα καὶ στρατιωτικὰ "vaunting and boastful" (48.4); he describes Philotas' boasting as the type of things men say to their women when drinking.⁹³ Here Plutarch seems to indicate that although Parmenio was boastful and arrogant, his bragging to his slave girl was more due to a character defect than a malicious plot. Plutarch describes Alexander as receiving evidence against Philotas, but doing nothing, either due to his confidence in Parmenio, or his fear of the "reputation and power" of the father and son (49.2). But then Philotas gets caught up in the assassination plot of Limnus, because he refused entry to people who wish to report the plot to Alexander. Plutarch writes here explicitly that "it is not clear" why Parmenio did not admit those who wanted to report the plot. Because Alexander was angry with Philotas, Plutarch writes, "he drew to himself those who had long hated him [Philotas]" (49.5). Again, Plutarch emphasises that those who accused Parmenio already hated him, and were not trustworthy accusers. These figures now openly abused Philotas and he was subsequently tortured and put to death, along with his father Parmenio, and Parmenio's surviving son. Hammond notes that Plutarch does not outline the trial at all, or interrogate his guilt or innocence, rightly concluding that Plutarch was in this section not particularly interested in these aspects of the story, but was concerned to depict Alexander's degeneration.⁹⁴ Plutarch's inclusion of Alexander hiding behind a curtain while Philotas was tortured and Alexander's taunting of Philotas does not appear in the other sources.⁹⁵ These actions made Alexander "fearful to many of his friends" (49.8), and resulted in Antipater, who was regent in Macedonia, making a secret alliance with the Aetolians (49.8). Alexander's fearfulness to his friends is evidence of his despotism, and later on, when Alexander meets the gymnosophists, we will see how Alexander has fallen from the ideal of philosophical kingship. Here again, we can see how Plutarch demonstrates the combination of factors which explain Alexander's less positive actions. Alexander's anger is definitely part of the

⁹³ Hamilton 1969 133 notes that στρατιωτικὰ is the same word as was used to describe Alexander's bragging in 23.7.

⁹⁴ Hammond 1993 84-89.

⁹⁵ Hammond 1993 88.

problem, but Alexander was also influenced by the various hateful and envious accusers. Plutarch does not at any point explicitly state that Parmenio is innocent, but seems to indicate that there are alternative explanations for Parmenio's actions. Plutarch explicitly criticises Parmenio and indicates that his conduct and boasting contributed to his downfall, but these transgressions are not capital crimes, after all, Alexander was boastful too. Also note the way in which Alexander's harshness here drives his friends to a secret alliance; this is a negative portent for the stability of Alexander's empire.

This incident is immediately followed by the incident with Cleitus, which Plutarch writes might seem more savage than the Philotas affair, but which Plutarch insists happened not due to any purpose, but because of some ill-fortune (δυστυχία τινί) of the king, whose "anger and drunkenness" (ὀργήν καὶ μέθην) provided an occasion for Cleitus' daemon (50.1). This passage is ostensibly exculpatory, but does contain a number of criticisms which were signalled earlier in the *Life*—both the drunkenness and anger were signposted at the beginning of the *Life*, and which are associated with his darker, Dionysian side. The event is preceded by portents, as often in the *Alexander*.⁹⁶ The complaint of Cleitus deals with the question of identify and syncretism;⁹⁷ Cleitus complains when Alexander allows a poet to continue reciting verses which make fun of generals who were defeated by barbarians. When Alexander indirectly accuses him of cowardice, Cleitus says:

It was this cowardice indeed, that saved you, born from the gods, when you were turning your back on the spear of Spithridates, and it was by the blood of the Macedonians and by these wounds that you made yourself so great as to repudiate Philip and make yourself a son of Ammon (50.6).

Here Cleitus directly accused Alexander of betraying not only his father, but the people over whom he rules. Cleitus is saying that Alexander has abandoned his Macedonian roots for barbarian power and divinity. What is interesting here is how the complaint that Cleitus enunciates is one which inheres in empire-building. A consistent theme throughout the *Alexander* is the way in which Alexander tries, and ultimately fails, to reconcile the various constituents of the empire he builds. There is a constant tension between not only Greeks and barbarians, but between Greek and barbarian impulses. Cleitus says "We count as blessed those who are already dead before they lived to see Macedonians thrashed with Median rods, and begging Persians for an audience of the king" (51.1). This passage inverts the formulation that Demaratus expresses in Chapter 37, when he says

⁹⁶ See Bossman 2011 for a discussion of the inclusion of the supernatural in the *Alexander*. He argues that the supernatural is used to emphasise key themes.

⁹⁷ Carney 1981 provides an analysis of the major sources for the Cleitus episode, and emphasises the tensions in Alexander's court in this episode.

that “Those Greeks were deprived of a great pleasure who died before seeing Alexander seated on the throne of Darius” (37.4).⁹⁸

These passages are obviously connected, and are both statements which refer to Alexander’s ability to engage in ‘nation-building’. The philosophical failings of Alexander are clear in the Cleitus passage; Alexander cannot hold his anger any more (οὐκέτι φέρων τὴν ὀργήν) and throws an apple and begins to look for his sword (51.3). Yet what is less often noted is the fact that this conflict, while undoubtedly made worse by alcohol, is more complex than a simple drunken argument. It begins with a distaste for the flattering poets, then an argument over the courage of Cleitus, and finally an argument over the cultural constitution of the empire that Alexander has built. This is indicated not only by the passage above, but also when Alexander asks two guests from Greece “do the Greeks not seem to you to walk among the Macedonians as demigods amongst beasts?” (51.2). Whitmarsh also notes that Alexander breaks into Macedonian when he shouts out for his guards.⁹⁹ This passage depicts Alexander’s despotic tendencies, which is also depicted using the Greek-barbarian paradigm. Greek *elutheria* is counterpoised with Oriental despotism; and the originally positive idea of a Greek conquering Persia is inverted to depict Persians whipping Macedonians, an image of servitude.

Plutarch then outlines how despondent Alexander is at his actions. Plutarch writes that as soon as Cleitus dies, Alexander’s anger (*thumos*) departs immediately, and that he would have killed himself if he were not prevented from doing so (51.6). Thus his spiritedness is responsible for the murder, and when it departs he “comes to himself” and is despondent. Plutarch writes that he spent the night and the next day in lamentation (52.1). Here it is possible to see how Alexander’s *thumos* occupied him and was responsible for Cleitus’ murder; there is a clear distinction between Alexander’s two selves. The following chapter deals with Alexander’s philosophical self, and the relationship between philosophy and the king. The passage about how Anaxarchus consoles Alexander is concerned explicitly with the problems of World Empire and ethical kingship. Anaxarchus says that Alexander is “He who the whole world is looking at” (52.3). This point is significant, as the specifically worldwide nature of his empire is emphasized here; this point is also noted in chapter 27, when Alexander is foretold to be “lord of all mankind” (27). Anaxarchus describes Alexander as “being in fear of censure and law” (52.3); Alexander should “be the law and a measure of justice to them [those whose censure he fears]” (52.3); Anaxarchus criticises Alexander’s

⁹⁸Demaratus is also the person who convinced Philip to reconcile with Alexander. As I discuss in my next chapter, Plutarch disapproves of this statement explicitly in *Agesilaus* 15.3.

⁹⁹ Whitmarsh 2002 183 notes that this signals the crack in his “Hellenic façade.”

fear of “empty opinion” (52.3). He further argues that as Zeus has justice and right sat beside him everything done by the ruler of the world is just and right by definition (52.4).¹⁰⁰ Alexander is earlier said to have been impressed by Psammon the philosopher, who argued that “all men are under the kingship of god: because in each case he who rules is divine” (27.6). By these consolations, Plutarch writes, Anaxarchus comforted Alexander but also τὸ δὲ ἥθος εἰς πολλὰ χαυνότερον καὶ παρανομώτερον ἐποίησεν “he made his character more frivolous and lawless” (52.4).¹⁰¹ This advice is directly opposed to Plutarch’s own views on the proper relationship between a ruler and law: in *Ad Principem Ineruditum* Plutarch writes that a ruler should be constrained by law, not the law of statue, but of reason, , and explicitly criticises Anaxarchus’ advice in this same essay.¹⁰² Note also that Anaxarchus uses as his justification the fact that the whole world is looking at Alexander. Alexander is not even the ordinary ruler of a *polis*, but the ruler of the inhabited world; thus, Anaxarchus reasons, he ought not to be concerned with breaking trifling taboos, such as killing someone in anger, as he is the measure of justice and right. These views are in direct conflict with Plutarch’s own, and help to depict Alexander as more and more tyrannical. And, crucially, this passage is one which will resonate with citizens of the Roman Empire—for who else but the emperor does the whole world look to?¹⁰³ And how terrible the consequences are when he follows Anaxarchus’ advice and relies on no measure of justice or law but his own caprice. It is notable that Callisthenes, whose downfall immediately follows this chapter, attempts to comfort Alexander “ethically...and gently” (52.4). Whitmarsh notes how positively charged these terms are for Plutarch, and emphasises how this episode “...develops the theme of the interplay between philosophy and kingship, and its centrality to an investigation of the ethics of monarchical power.”¹⁰⁴ Plutarch also writes that Anaxarchus’ ingratiating himself into Alexander’s favour brought the interaction of Callisthenes, which was already not popular due to his austerity (τὸ αὐστηρὸν), into disfavour (52.4), linking the killing of Cleitus with the estrangement from Callisthenes.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Mossman 1988 notes that justice sitting beside Zeus can be found in Pindar (*Olympian Ode* 8.21ff) and Sophocles (*Oedipus at Colonus* 1381 ff) but notes that the next stage in this logic—that the king’s actions are consequentially right—can be found in Creon in the *Antigone* (666-7) and in Herodotus when discussing the king of Persia’s desire to marry his sister (3.31)—not encouraging precedents.

¹⁰¹ For a discussion of character change in Plutarch see Swain 1989c.

¹⁰² See Zecchini 2004 191-200 for a discussion of this essay.

¹⁰³ Cf. Dio Chrysostom ἀνδρὶ καρτερῷ, πλείστης ἄρχοντι χώρας καὶ ἀνθρώπων “a powerful man, who rules over many lands and people” (1.56).

¹⁰⁴ Whitmarsh 2002 183.

¹⁰⁵ Αὐστηρὸν is the word that Plutarch uses to describe and criticise Plato’s constitution in *De Alexandri Magni Fortuna aut Virtute* 328DE, contrasting Plato’s achievement as only in word (*logon*), as due to its “austerity” no one would follow it, with Alexander’s achievements in deed (*ergon*).

The next chapter deals with the fall of Callisthenes and the Pages Conspiracy. Plutarch writes that the “other sophists and flatterers” (53.1) were envious of the high reputation Callisthenes was held among the young and old, the former because of his eloquence, the latter because of his manner of living. Note here again the corrosive presence of flatterers. But Plutarch writes φθονούμενος δὲ διὰ τὴν δόξαν ἔστιν ἃ καὶ καθ’ αὐτοῦ τοῖς διαβάλλουσι παρεῖχε “as well as being envied for his reputation, he himself provided material for his detractors” (53.2). He follows this with a description of how Callisthenes was able to provide a denunciation of the Macedonians as easily as he was able to praise them. This gave the Macedonians a πικρὸν καὶ βαρὺ “sharp and stern” hatred of him (53.4). Indeed, Plutarch does note Aristotle’s criticism of Callisthenes, that he λόγῳ μὲν ἦν δυνατὸς καὶ μέγας, νοῦν δὲ οὐκ εἶχεν “is a talented speaker but had no sense” (53.1). Thus Plutarch is cognisant of the fact that Callisthenes was not entirely blameless in the episode; he writes that Callisthenes αὐτὸν δὲ ἀπώλεσεν, ἐκβιάσασθαι δοκῶν μᾶλλον ἢ πείσαι τὸν βασιλέα “...destroyed himself, thinking he could compel rather than persuade the king” (54.2). But Plutarch praises him for resisting “sturdily and like a philosopher” (ἰσχυρῶς ἀπωσάμενος καὶ φιλοσόφως) the practice of *proskynesis*; what is more, Plutarch writes that Callisthenes, in rehearsing the best of the arguments against this practice, was vocalising what the “oldest and the best of the Macedonians” were thinking. Plutarch further commends Callisthenes for saving the Greeks from a great disgrace, and Alexander from a greater one. Plutarch writes that Lysimachus and Hagnon accused Callisthenes of going about ὡς ἐπὶ καταλύσει τυραννίδος μέγα φρονοῦντα “...with lofty thoughts as if he were removing a tyranny” (55.1). And that young men were attracted to him ὡς μόνον ἐλεύθερον ἐν τοσαύταις μυριάσι “as if he were the only free man amongst so many thousands” (55.1). Here the ascetic Callisthenes represents Greek ideals of freedom, and recalls Alexander’s earlier interaction with Diogenes. In that interaction, Alexander claimed he would be Diogenes if he were not Alexander; this chapter demonstrates his failure to successfully integrate philosophy into his rule, and thus his failure to form an ethical reign. While Callisthenes had failed to deal with Alexander as his office befitted, this incident dramatizes the tension in Alexander’s rule. He is separated from the Hellenic *paideia* which was represented by his early admiration of Aristotle and Diogenes, but as the narrative (and Alexander’s conquest) continues, he is increasingly separated from and antagonistic with his earlier *paideia*.

Kingship to despotism

The *Alexander* is very concerned with the ethics of kingship. And in this section I want to examine how the text examines Alexander's kingship and its degeneration into despotism, and how Alexander's character interacts with his kingship.

Chapter 65 contains the episode with Calanus and the hide. Plutarch writes that it was Calanus who "set the paradigm of empire before Alexander" (65.3).¹⁰⁶

For throwing down a dry and shrivelled hide he stepped on the edge, and the hide was pressed down in one place but was raised in others. And going round the circle he showed that this happened each time he stepped down, until he stood in the middle and it was held firm and still. He wanted to show, by this demonstration, that Alexander should press down most of all in the centre of his empire and not to stray far from it (55.4).

Alexander's interaction with the *gymnosophists* and the encounter with Calanus in particular also recalls Alexander's earlier interaction with Diogenes. It is part of a whole series of interactions that Alexander has with philosophers, and is one of the ways in which Alexander's degeneration is depicted. In the first encounter, when Alexander asks if Diogenes wants anything of him, Diogenes asks him to stand out of his sun; Alexander's response to this is to state that if he were not Alexander, he would be Diogenes. The episode with Calanus is set within the wider context of Alexander's interaction with the *gymnosophists*, the naked eastern philosophers who had incited Sabbas to revolt, and with whom he engages in a series of questions, declaring that the one who answers worst would be put to death first and the next one in the same way and so on. This question and answer session is also reflective of the ethics of Kingship. For example when Alexander asks the sixth *gymnosophist* how one might be best loved, he replies "if he is most powerful, he said, yet he does not inspire fear" (64.4). Alexander being increasingly fearful to and fearful of his friends is evidence of his increasing despotism. This episode is just one among many in the latter part of the *Life* in which Alexander is negotiating, with varying degrees of success, the relations between the Macedonian/Greek conquerors and the barbarian conquered. Whitmarsh emphasises both the intercultural exchange and the violence and conquest which are present in this episode: the threat to their lives pervades the *gymnosophists'* chapter.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, the emphasis on fear in the question quoted above is striking. This strain of episodes, from the preferment of Anaxarchus over Callisthenes, to the interaction with the *gymnosophists*, dramatize the relationship between Alexander's philosophical *paideia* and his increasing despotism, barbarianism, and spiritedness. And

¹⁰⁶Hamilton 1969 181 notes that Aelius Aristides in the *Roman Oration* makes use of a similar paradigm when the seer Oebaras advises Cyrus. This anecdote is introduced by a *legetai* clause; Cook 2001 329-360 esp. 343ff argues that Plutarch uses *legetai* clauses to "...introduce traditional material with which he illustrates key themes" (329). Duff 1999 186 n.106, Hammond 1993 6 argue that he uses these clauses to indicate doubt.

¹⁰⁷ Whitmarsh 2002 185-186.

Alexander's increasingly violent relationship with philosophy is a reflection of the disconnection from his Hellenic *paideia*.

In chapter 68 the force of Calanus' metaphor is realized. Alexander desires to circumnavigate Africa and enter the Mediterranean by way of the pillars of Heracles. This is the chapter when politics really comes to the fore, Plutarch writes:

But the difficulty of his march back, his wounds among the Malli, and the many losses reported in his army led people to doubt his safety and inclined his subjects to revolt, and produced much injustice, arrogance, and insolence in his generals and satraps, in short, restlessness and revolt spread everywhere (68.2).

This passage recalls chapter 11, where Plutarch writes that Philip left the affairs of Greece πολὺν σάλον ἔχοντα καὶ κίνησιν "in much restlessness and revolt" (11.1). This also refers back to Alexander's desire, expressed in chapter five, to inherit a realm that would afford ἀγῶνας καὶ πολέμους καὶ φιλοτιμίας. Thus the instability and impermanence of Alexander's empire is emphasised. Alexander's nature is fiery; his disposition is such that he desires and produces not a settled empire, but a fractious one. Alexander has not followed Calanus' advice, he has expanded too far and his empire has consequently revolted. Here again we can see the theme of governance recurring—Alexander is a great conqueror but his rule is never secure; he is constantly looking for new areas to conquer instead of staying in the middle. His desire to circumnavigate Arabia and Africa was finally prevented by the requirements of ruling his empire. The fragmenting empire is also a reflection of Alexander's ethical degeneration. This anecdote illustrates his failure to be an effective statesman; he is finally proven to be not a doctor who can cure the ills of his state, and this political illness will be reflected in Alexander's last, illness-ridden days.

Alexander's death is preceded by a number of chapters which demonstrate Alexander's degeneration. One of the most striking episodes in his portrayal is the Dionysian *kommos* that Alexander leads in chapter 67. The other time in the narrative that Alexander leads a *kommos* is when he burns down the palace at Persepolis (38), another negatively charged act. Plutarch writes that Alexander "feasted with his comrades on a platform built on a high and conspicuous oblong scaffolding" (67.1). Plutarch writes that in his army there were not weapons present, but that there were drinking bowls everywhere, so that everyone was drinking and toasting each other. Plutarch further reports "and accompanying the disordered and wandering procession were games of Bacchic *hubris*" (67.3). Note the fact that the games are described as *hubristic*; hubris is one of the oldest signals of a downfall in Greek literature. This consummates the portrayal of Alexander as Dionysius,

which is associated with his negative side. These last few chapters also emphasise Alexander's negative points, and demonstrate that his spirited side has conquered his Hellenic self-restraint.

In chapter 69 Alexander's connection with the Persian king Cyrus is made. He distributes money "just like their kings were accustomed to" (69.1). When he finds out that Cyrus' tomb has been desecrated he executes the perpetrator, who is Macedonian, and orders the inscription be transcribed into Greek below the original. The inscription reads,

Man, whoever you are and wherever you have come from, for I know that you will come, I am Cyrus, and I won for the Persians their empire, so do not begrudge me this earth which covers my body. These words greatly affected Alexander, bringing uncertainty and change to his mind (69.2-3).

This act of syncretism is significant for a number of reasons. Alexander's kingship is assimilated to the oriental despotism of the Persian Empire; and Alexander is assimilated to Cyrus, who also won an empire. The significance of the writing in Greek is clear: Greek language is central to Greek identity, and here Alexander inscribes his own identity and association with Cyrus. Alexander does not look to the future and who will rule, with hope for a settled and permanent empire; he looks backward to a barbarian king whose empire also crumbled. Yet the inscription also emphasises the tension present throughout the text, between Alexander's achievements and his limits. For by inscribing this message in Greek, in the heart of Persia, he inscribes his greatest achievement: he has expanded Greek culture, bringing to mind the 'philosopher-in-arms' of the *De Alexandri Magni Fortuna aut Virtute*. Thus here, as elsewhere in the *Life*, Plutarch does not simply portray Alexander the spirited drunk, or Alexander the armed philosopher, but both. And the distance between these two Alexanders is the fundamental tension in the text.

Chapters 70-72 portray Alexander's degeneration; he is described as instigating a drinking contest of neat wine. In chapter 72 Plutarch also describes the plan to carve a likeness of Alexander into Mount Athos, which Alexander turned down; but Plutarch writes that Alexander was consulting on projects "more strange and lavish" (72.4). In chapter 74 Plutarch depicts Alexander being in fear of his comrades, especially Antipater and his sons.¹⁰⁸ Iolas, one of Antipater's sons, when he saw some barbarians performing *proskynesis*, laughed because of "his Greek rearing" and Alexander dashed his head against the wall (74.1). Furthermore, after Alexander threatens Cassander, another son of

¹⁰⁸ Note the point from *Ad Principem Ineruditum* 781E: "kings fear for their subjects, but tyrants fear their subjects."

Antipater, Plutarch writes that Cassander was terrified of Alexander throughout his life, even up to the time when he was King of Macedonia. This fear is indicative of the despotism into which his kingship has devolved. In chapter 75 Plutarch writes how Alexander was superstitious, and given over to excessive fear of portents and gave himself over to drinking.¹⁰⁹

Thus in the *Life* the ethics of kingship are a major theme; and, interestingly, Alexander acts as both a good and a bad king. At the start of the *Life*, Alexander is a good king, and is contrasted with Darius, the barbarian despot. Alexander's *sophrosyne* and *philanthropia* demonstrate his ethical kingship, as Plutarch writes that Alexander "...considered the mastery of himself a more kingly thing than the conquest of his enemies" (21.7). When Alexander first saw the luxury of Darius he says "this, it seems, is what it is to be king" (20.8). Schmidt notes that the clear implication of this sentiment, especially taken in concert with Alexander's other censorious sentiments about luxury (*truphē*), is that this is what is for Darius to be king.¹¹⁰ Thus Alexander's paradigm of kingship is put in opposition to the barbarian despotism of Darius. Yet the narrative will collapse these two categories, as Alexander's good kingship will devolve into tyranny. This complex portrayal is consistent with Plutarch's complex moralism.¹¹¹

Conclusion

The idea of the type of person who was driven to conquer the world is raised in the *Antony*, in the context of dealing with the accusation that Antony had caused Caesar to invade Italy and therefore ignited the civil war. Plutarch writes that this was not so, that Antony's treatment by the Senate and Cato was only an excuse so that Caesar could do what he wanted to do all along. Plutarch concludes by writing that:

An insupportable lust for power and a mad desire to be the first and the greatest drove him to war against all humanity, as it had driven Alexander before and Cyrus long ago: he could not achieve this if Pompey were not destroyed (*Antony* 6.3).

¹⁰⁹ Pelling 2002 379 notes the hypochondriac nature of Alexander's end, and contrasts it with the emphasis on the health of the early *Life*.

¹¹⁰ Schmidt 2004.

¹¹¹ See for example Pelling 2002 237-251; Duff 1999 52ff and my previous chapter.

Lamberton writes that “To Plutarch the ethical thinker, there was clearly an underlying pathology that constituted the common thread of their several existences [the conquerors].”¹¹² There is, in Plutarch’s view, a specific type of person which tends to do this. As Pelling writes, when discussing the way in which Plutarch characterises his subjects, “One could even talk meaningfully of ‘a sort of person like’ Antony, or Alexander, or even Alcibiades: one might not meet that ‘sort of person’ very often, but at least their qualities group together so naturally that they could conceivably recur again in the same blend in another human being.”¹¹³ Alexander and Caesar were preeminent examples of a certain type of person; and this type of person recurs throughout history. This type of person has traits, including a natural spiritedness and an overweening ambition to conquer and accomplish great things and to always be first. This ambition has a long pedigree and is traceable to the *Iliad*, in which Peleus is alleged to have told Achilles “always to be the best and to be preeminent above all others” (*Iliad* 11.784). Plutarch’s concern, following on from Plato, is that such people be properly educated so as to enable them to direct their ambition towards proper aims (*De Virtute Morali*).¹¹⁴ Alexander’s particular nature led him to conquer and ‘do great things.’ The point about Alexander being so great, and being he whom ‘the whole world is looking at’ brings to mind the emperors. This not only because they fit this description, but also because Alexander is paired with Caesar, who is traditionally considered to be the first emperor.¹¹⁵ A number of Roman figures, including Trajan, used Alexander as a model and undertook Alexandrian *imitatio*.¹¹⁶ There is a clear narrative decline in the *Life*: Alexander starts out as an exponent of Hellenic *paideia* and with the possibility of being a philosopher king, which Plato had first desired, yet the narrative of Alexander’s *Life* refutes this early promise. The model of kingship evinced by the early Alexander gives way to a model which is assimilated to Cyrus’ reign, as another barbarian despot. Thus the model of the Alexander for a world king is placed in danger by the text—no ancient reader could feel completely at ease with Alexander being a model for latter emperors.

In this chapter I have focused on Alexander’s defects, as these are key to the points I have been making, but Plutarch does not portray Alexander as unequivocally negative. As I have stated above, Alexander’s *paideia* is prominent in his early portrayal, and there is a distinct resemblance between the early Alexander and the Alexander of the *De Alexandri Magni Fortuna aut Virtute*. In this essay Alexander is a vector of Greek culture; this is indicative of the fact that Alexander, for all the faults I

¹¹² Lamberton 2001 114.

¹¹³ Pelling 2002 287.

¹¹⁴ See my previous chapter for a discussion of Plutarch’s moral and political worldview.

¹¹⁵ See Green 1978 1-26 for a discussion of the relationship between Caesar and Alexander.

¹¹⁶ Pelling 2011 26.

have outlined above, still expanded Greek culture, and prefigured the type of reign that Plutarch would have approved of. Yet this project was undermined by his character flaws; here again we see the tension between the big things and the small things. Alexander's project and big aspirations are noble, as exemplified by Demaratus' statement about Alexander sitting on the throne of Darius, yet the flaws in Alexander—the small things—ultimately compromise that noble aspiration. The polarity signalled at the start—between public and private personas—ultimately proves to be untenable given the greatness of the protagonist: the private life will ultimately collapse the public life. This does not mean that Plutarch did not appreciate Alexander's talents and achievements: he was aware of Alexander's natural talents and the fact that Alexander's conquests expanded the remit of Greek culture. Alexander the 'philosopher-in-arms' is not completely omitted in the Alexander—the early Alexander bears a resemblance to the idealized Alexander of the *De Alexandri Magni Fortuna aut Virtute*. He has is educated by Aristotle and has a "longing" for philosophy which does not subside from his soul. Yet this ideal is set against and compromised by the spirited and Dionysian Alexander, which is present from the beginning, but becomes dominant by the end of the *Life*. Thus two models of kingship—ideal and compromised—are proposed and explored. And this tension is consistent with the broad purpose of the *Lives*: to depict the virtues and vices of great men *in action and under pressure*, not as theoretical paradigms in recondite treatises. Stadter has argued that Plutarch was writing a genre of moral biography which was "...based on a tension between his choice of statesmen famous for their political and military accomplishments and the presentation of them as moral actors" arguing that this new genre arose out of the abstraction of the Hellenistic philosophers and the necessity for a more practical moralism.¹¹⁷ This is in line with Van Hoof's argument that Plutarch's "practical ethics" were designed for his elite audience in order for them to rule in a more philosophical manner.¹¹⁸ Alexander was a great figure, and his capacity to expand the remit of Greek culture—a project Plutarch greatly approved of—was imperilled and compromised, not only by defects in his nature, but also in the crucible of great power. The resulting tension forms the essence of Plutarch's project.

¹¹⁷ Stadter 2014 215ff.

¹¹⁸ Van Hoof 2010 19ff.

Chapter Three: Alexander and Caesar

This chapter will examine the implications of Alexander's portrayal for Plutarch's view of the Roman Empire. I will first examine the comparison of Alexander and Caesar in general; then I will discuss the themes of ambition and emulation, which are of paramount importance to the pair; and finally I will discuss the evidence for Plutarch's view of the Roman Empire, making use of recent scholarship on the subject and discussing how Alexander and Caesar fit into this picture.

Alexander and Caesar

In this section I want to look at the actual comparison of Alexander and Caesar. The idea of comparing these two figures is not unique to Plutarch, Appian writes

Both were men of the greatest ambition, both were most skilled in the art of war, most rapid in executing their decisions, most reckless of danger, least sparing of themselves, and relying as much on audacity and luck as on military skill (*BC* 2.149).¹¹⁹

It has been argued that Plutarch wanted Alexander to establish the empire which Rome actually achieved. So for example Flaceliere writes, "Plutarque, au fond de son coeur, regrettait qu'Alexandre n'eût pas eu le temps de s'emparer de l'Italie et d'établir au profit d'une dynastie hellénisée cet empire universel que Rome devait fonder."¹²⁰ This view has not won universal assent: Aalders and Swain, for example, argue that this statement is not justified.¹²¹ But this issue is inevitably raised given the fact that Plutarch pairs these two particular *Lives*. As Pelling notes, the figure of Alexander loomed large in both Greek and Roman thought, and a number of Roman figures, both before and after Caesar, engaged in Alexandrian *imitatio*.¹²² One of the most notable of these was Pompey, and Jeffrey Beneker has argued that it is possible to discern in the *Pompey* and the *Caesar* not only Caesar overthrowing Pompey, as Plutarch notes in his proem, but Caesar displacing

¹¹⁹ See also Livy 9.16.9-19.17; Strabo 13.1.27.

¹²⁰ Flaceliere 1963 31.

¹²¹ Aalders 1982 21 & Swain 1989a 515.

¹²² Pelling 2011 26 notes that Roman emulation of Alexander dates from Scipio Africanus up to and including Trajan.

Pompey as the proper heir of Alexander.¹²³ Pelling calls Alexander and Caesar the two “great victors of Greek and Roman history.”¹²⁴ Lamberton writes that Alexander represented “the moment in history when the balance of power just might have tipped the other way.”¹²⁵ As I note below, Plutarch’s *De Fortuna Romanorum* was predicated on a deterministic philosophical-historical view that the world naturally moved towards unity. This essay is commonly paired with the *De Alexandri Magni Fortuna aut Virtute* as a kind of diptych. They both deal with similar themes and Wardman has claimed that the effect of these two essays is to imply that Plutarch viewed “the whole of history as a trend towards world unity. Unity was accomplished by Rome, but—this seems to be the implication—was also the object of Greek history and of Alexander’s campaigns.”¹²⁶ Hamilton rightly urges caution, and warns against taking Plutarch’s epideictic (and youthful) speeches too seriously.¹²⁷ This criticism is persuasive, and the difference between the Alexander portrayed in the *De Alex.* and the *Life* is evidence for the epideictic nature of the speech and the more considered judgement of the *Life*. Yet the pairing of the *Alexander* and *Caesar* does raise this question, at least implicitly. Pairing the two great conquerors from Greece and Rome in a fundamentally agonistic context means that the question is unavoidable. Indeed, it was unavoidable for the ancients. Livy, devotes two chapters of his *Ab Urbe Condita* to a counter-factual rumination on whether or not Alexander would have defeated Rome. Livy asserts that Alexander would have faced a number of extraordinary Roman generals, and that he was barbarized by success, writing *Dareo magis similis quam Alexandro in Italiam venisset* “he would have entered Italy more similar to Darius than Alexander” (*Ab Urbe Condita* 9.18.3). Livy writes that “the most trivial of Greeks” (*levissimi ex Graecis*) argue that Rome would have ended up submitting to Alexander. Livy’s defensive tone here demonstrates the contentiousness of the subject; and Plutarch’s pairing the two seems to push that question to the fore. But there are issues with this Greek-Roman dichotomy.

While Alexander is obviously included as the Greeks half of this pair, it is not quite as simple as that, both within this pair and throughout Plutarch’s corpus. As has been noted, while Plutarch views Alexander as a positive example of Hellenism in many ways, patriotism cannot be adduced to bolster Flaceliere’s claim; Alexander was a Macedonian, and for Plutarch it is often the case that

¹²³ Beneker 2004; Pelling 2011 27.

¹²⁴ Pelling 2011 27.

¹²⁵ Lamberton 2001 97.

¹²⁶ Wardman 1955 100.

¹²⁷ Hamilton 1969 xxxvi; Wardman 1974 255 n. 41 accepts this criticism, but still argues that Plutarch would be unlikely to write something entirely for its form. And Aalders 1982 43 notes that the idea that it was pure rhetoric is unlikely given how positively Alexander is portrayed in the early *Life*.

Macedonians are not true Greeks. At times he even equates them with barbarians. For example, Plutarch reserves his most severe criticism of Aratus for his decision to invite Phillip V into Greece and “make the Peloponnesus barbarian again with Macedonian garrisons” (*Aratus* 38.4). Aratus preferred the Macedonian Philip over the Spartan Cleomenes. Plutarch writes that even if Cleomenes had proven to be “tyrannical and lawless” nevertheless, “the *Heracleidae* were his ancestors and Sparta his fatherland” (38.5). The reason that *Flamininus* is regarded as a liberator of Greece, and not another invader, is that Flamininus frees Greece from Macedonian domination.¹²⁸ So while Alexander may have represented in many ways the ‘great victor’ from Greek history, Plutarch’s worldview is more complex than this simple dichotomy permits. And if Plutarch wished to present an Alexander who would establish a Greek world empire in preference to the empire actually established by the Romans, the Alexander of the *Life* is not best placed to make that point. As I have noted above, the Alexander in the *Life* is flawed in a number of ways which make him increasingly unsuited to govern the empire which he acquires. And his end is distinctly un-Hellenic; the drunken and superstitious Alexander from the end of the *Life* is hardly a candidate for an ideal ruler. Thus the idea that a Hellenistic world empire with the descendants of Alexander in charge instead of the heirs of Caesar is not validated. That is not to imply that Caesar is portrayed as an ideal ruler; Plutarch also depicts Caesar’s failures, some of which I will discuss below. I think that it is not profitable to examine the *Alexander-Caesar* with this sort of simplistic dichotomy in mind, as Tatum argues when discussing Plutarch’s general attitude towards the Roman Empire.¹²⁹ Rather, I think that the themes and issues which are explored in the *Alexander-Caesar* are not so much about approval or resistance to the establishment of the *Roman* Empire, but related to the issues and tension inherent in such an empire. As I have noted in my previous chapter, Alexander is repeatedly described as a worldwide ruler in the *Life*, as something more than the average king or ruler of a *polis*. I think, along with Pelling, that there is evidence that Plutarch had a wider view of history in his *Lives*; by this I mean that the pairs were not only self-contained texts, but that there were broader historical themes that recurred across pairs.¹³⁰ Pelling has argued that in the *Caesar*, the importance of his subject has transformed a biography into a history: to write about Caesar is, *ipso facto*, to write history.¹³¹ Whether this argument is completely valid, I think that the transformative nature of Alexander and Caesar and their relationship to the current emperors is an implicit theme in the pair. Both Alexander and Caesar are extraordinary men, who are driven by extraordinary ambition, to accomplish great things. Pelling has noted that one distinction between Alexander and Caesar is that

¹²⁸ *Flamininus* 5.6.

¹²⁹ Tatum 2010 16-18.

¹³⁰ Pelling 2006; Pelling 2011 32ff.

¹³¹ Pelling 2006.

while Alexander did constantly aspire to divinity, Caesar, at least in his death, actually achieved it.¹³² His ‘great guardian spirit’ avenged him, and Plutarch emphasises the failure of the plotters to abolish the tyranny. To take a deterministic view of history, this divine inequity could be seen as evidence that the divine was taking a hand in establishing the Principate and ending the Republic.¹³³ While I agree with Pelling in being cautious about drawing reductive conclusions from this, providence taking interest in the establishment of the Principate is consistent with Plutarch’s view of history.¹³⁴ While Caesar had, along with Alexander, been portrayed negatively at the end of the *Life*, Caesar’s transformation of Rome into an “acknowledged tyranny” was divinely ordained and was appropriate given the *kakapoliteia* of Rome at the time (*Caesar* 28.3).

Ambition and Emulation

Ambition is a key theme in the *Caesar*, as it is in the *Alexander*. Caesar is repeatedly described as being ambitious (3.1; 6.3; 7.2; 11.2; 17.2; 54.2; 58.2) Caesar is consumed by an *eros* for kingship, which pervades his *Life* and ultimately proves his undoing.¹³⁵ As noted above, Plutarch’s attitude to *philotimia* is complex; ambition must be appropriate. Yet it is arguable that it is exactly this discernment that Caesar lacks in his desires. In chapter 11 Plutarch deals with Caesar’s ambition. When he arrives at a small village Caesar’s friends ask in jest “can it be that here there are ambitions for office, struggles for primacy, and envies of powerful men with each other?” (*Caesar* 11.2). Caesar replies to them “I would rather be first here than second at home” (11.2). Caesar’s ambition reflects the ambition of Alexander; Plutarch foregrounds Alexander’s ambition right at the beginning of the work, describing how Alexander is despondent at the idea that his father will accomplish too many things and leave no great deed for him to accomplish (*Alexander* 5.2). This despondency is reflected in the Caesar side of the pairing in the story of Caesar breaking into tears when reading about the accomplishments of Alexander the Great. When Caesar’s friends enquire at the cause of his grief, he replies “Does it not seem to be worthy of grief that Alexander, when he was of a like age to me,

¹³² Pelling 2002 380ff.

¹³³ See Swain 1989 272-302 for a discussion of Plutarch’s views on the influence of the divine on history and esp.292ff for a discussion of the aims of providence in the affairs of Greece and Rome.

¹³⁴ Pelling 2002 381.

¹³⁵ *Caesar* 60.1; See Pelling 2011.

already ruled over so many peoples, yet I have achieved no brilliant deed?” (11.3). These twin passages establish their shared character traits of *philotimia*. The use of the verb ἐβασίλευεν is also consistent with the theme of Caesar’s *eros* for kingship that pervades the *Life*.¹³⁶ Plutarch’s depiction here is complex: Caesar’s ambition is all-consuming, and he is driven by desire (*eros*) to emulate Alexander and to “be king over many peoples.”

This anecdote also demonstrates the degree to which Caesar is afflicted by this desire to achieve something *lampron*. Caesar’s desire to emulate Alexander is recurrent throughout the life; another example of Alexandrian tendencies can be found in *Caesar* 58, where Plutarch discusses Caesar’s further plans to conquer the Parthians: “...and so to complete this circuit of his empire, which would then be bounded on all sides by the ocean” (58.3).¹³⁷ Pelling notes that Plutarch may have altered the order of events here so as to emphasise an Alexandrian grand circle.¹³⁸ Caesar’s continuing ambition and competition is referred to in chapter 58:

But Caesar’s many successes did not turn his natural ambition and desire to perform great deeds to the enjoyment of what he had laboured to achieve, but rather served as a fuel and incentive for his future deeds, and implanted plans of greater deeds in him and a desire for new glory, as though he had used up his present glory. His passion was, therefore, nothing else but a rivalry with himself, as though he were someone else, a rivalry between what he had already accomplished and what he was planning to do (58.2).

This passage presents numerous points of interest. Pelling notes that the desire to compete with oneself was an established trope by Plutarch’s time, and therefore its inclusion is not necessarily significant.¹³⁹ In the *Coriolanus* also, Plutarch writes that Coriolanus “vied with himself in manly virtue” (4.2).¹⁴⁰ But in a work so obsessed with the very issue of ambition, Plutarch’s expression here seems an active one and not a mere banality, and the desire to continue to conquer and achieve new feats is one which Alexander and Caesar share. Alexander is turned back by the revolt of his men, and the passage describing his wrath at the army’s refusal to advance beyond the Ganges is very similar thematically to the description of Caesar’s emulation of himself. In this passage Plutarch

¹³⁶ See for example *Caesar* 60: τὸ δὲ ἐμφανὲς μάλιστα μῖσος καὶ θανατηφόρον ἐπ’ αὐτὸν ὁ τῆς βασιλείας ἔρωσ ἐξεργάσατο. Pelling 2011 445-446.

¹³⁷ Caesar’s purpose would have been to avenge Crassus’ murder by the Parthians.

¹³⁸ Pelling 2011 436-7.

¹³⁹ Pelling 2011 436.

¹⁴⁰ Perez Jimenez 2002 107 connects this imitation to Coriolanus’ pathē and concludes “The passage serves a literary function in expressing the arrogance of Coriolanus, who knows no better model of behaviour than himself. At the same time, the artificiality of the notice indicates that imitation is a commonplace in Plutarch’s biography.” See also Russell 1963 27 and Nikolaidis 2012 44ff who discusses in more depth the implications of Coriolanus’ ambition.

writes of Alexander that he felt “...no gratitude for what he had already achieved if he would not cross the Ganges” (*Alexander* 62.3). Pelling notes the use of *Eros* to describe Caesar’s desire for *doxa*. The use of erotic language is significant in the *Caesar*, and Caesar’s *eros* for kingship is a recurrent theme and instrumental in his downfall. Caesar’s points of emulation are constantly off-base; he desires to be king of many peoples, like Alexander, and later contends with himself. And the outcome of this ambition will be pronounced to be worthless at the end of the *Caesar*, but more on this below.

This rejection of learning in favour of military and political power recalls Alexander’s statement that he would “be Diogenes” if he were not Alexander. Alexander’s tutor is Aristotle, while Caesar’s is Apollonius.¹⁴¹ Pelling notes the emphasis in this passage on the character of the rhetorician, not merely his skill at oratory.¹⁴² This emphasises the close connection between education and morality in Plutarch’s worldview. Bradley Buszard, in his article on Caesar’s ambition, argues that this chapter foreshadows Caesar’s crossing of the Rubicon in 32.¹⁴³ He argues that the use of the verb συνδιαπορέω to describe Caesar’s uncertainty about crossing the Rubicon is philosophically important, and indicated the state of Socratic *aporia*, which denotes the state of ignorance which ought to prompt men to do something for themselves which is fundamentally rational.¹⁴⁴ Thus Caesar should have reflected and made a rational decision, instead he “with passion” (μετὰ θυμοῦ) he “threw himself out of reason” (ἐκ τοῦ λογισμοῦ) and into “desperate chances” (*Caesar* 32.6).¹⁴⁵ This throwing out of reason recalls Alexander’s being “driven from reason” (*Alexander* 42.2) when his reputation is imperilled. Buszard concludes by noting that Caesar’s interest in Greek philosophy, attested in other sources, is suppressed in Plutarch, and connects that to Caesar’s problematic ambition. As noted above, I have issues with this argument, mainly due to the fact that Alexander’s ambition is portrayed ambivalently, and that Plutarch does not criticise it explicitly is not as important as his depiction of its consequences. Also, while the *paideia* is not prominent in the *Caesar*, Caesar is still very well educated. But in both cases, there is a tension: Alexander becomes estranged from Aristotle; Caesar repudiates the excellence in oratory to which he is suited.¹⁴⁶ It is the

¹⁴¹ Pelling 2002 339ff for a discussion of the relationship between rhetoric and *paideia*.

¹⁴² Pelling 2011 142.

¹⁴³ Buszard 2008 194ff.

¹⁴⁴ Buszard 2008 195.

¹⁴⁵ Buszard 2008 195.

¹⁴⁶ Pelling 2011 422 notes that Caesar’s early rejection of rhetoric comes back to harm him when Cicero, the consummate orator, attacks him successfully a number of times (58.3; 59.6).

tension signalled in the proem again, the tension between great things and small things, and Caesar's pursuit of the great things exclusively is evidence of his inharmonious priorities.

Caesar's daring (5.1; 6.2; 19.3; 20.5 *et passim*) and heat (11.1) are two traits that he shares with Alexander, and like Alexander (27), his military skills are undoubtable. In *Caesar* 15, Plutarch rehearses a list of possible Roman comparisons for Caesar as a "warrior and general" and concludes that Caesar is superior to each of them. Plutarch does not leave it there, however, continuing in this rather troubling vein he writes that in his ten years waging war in Gaul, Caesar "...took more than 800 cities by storm, conquered 300 nations, fought battles with three million men, killing one million and taking as many prisoner" (*Caesar* 15). It is doubtful that Plutarch meant us to view such a sanguinary passage with unqualified admiration.¹⁴⁷ Plutarch, although not a pacifist, did not value military virtue for its own sake. He makes this point clear in his evaluation of Marcus Coriolanus, writing that at the time in which Coriolanus lived "Rome esteemed that part of virtue concerning warlike and military achievements, and the fact that virtue is called by them bravery bears out this point. They made bravery, which in reality is its own form of virtue, the common name of virtue" (*Coriolanus* 1.4). Here Roman bellicosity is emphasised; and the focus on military virtue over other areas of interest is a bad sign.¹⁴⁸

Downfall to Death

The tyrannical nature of Caesar's regime is emphasised in chapter 35, which also reprises themes from the *Alexander*. Plutarch writes that when Caesar was prevented by the tribune Metellus from withdrawing funds from the treasury, as it was in violation of the law, Caesar replied that "there was a time for laws and a time for weapons."¹⁴⁹ He further claims, after ordering Metellus to stand aside, that παρρησίας γὰρ οὐ δεῖται πόλεμος "wars do not need free speech" (35.3). Note here the

¹⁴⁷ Pliny the Elder *HN* 7.92 describes Caesar's death toll in Gaul as an "outrage to the human race."

¹⁴⁸ This is not only a Roman trait, see *Philopoemen* 3-4.

¹⁴⁹ Pelling (trans.) 2011 104.

recurrence of the word *παρρησίας*; in the *Alexander*, Callisthenes was described as speaking “long and boldly” (πολλὰ παρρησιάσασθαι) in his denunciation of the Macedonians (*Alexander* 53.4).¹⁵⁰ Here the concept of free speech, valorised as an indicator of freedom, is being lost under both tyrannical rulers.¹⁵¹ In both these incidents the figure tries to hold on to an old custom or law (Callisthenes protests against *proskynesis*, although this occurs later in the episode; Metellus makes legal objections to Caesar’s desire for the treasury’s riches).¹⁵² Caesar goes on to say, emphasising his tyrannical tendencies, “for you are mine, you and all of those whom I captured who opposed me” (*Caesar* 35.3).¹⁵³

Pelling has noted the symmetry of Caesar’s rise: he cultivates the people (4.4; 5.8); he is supported by the troops (16-17; 29; 37; 38; 39; 42; 44); and he is supported by his friends (17).¹⁵⁴ The fact that Caesar becomes a tyrant is confirmed by the statement of at 57.1, where Plutarch describes the reign of Caesar as an “acknowledged tyranny”, and Pelling has shown how the narrative of Caesar’s rise to power follows the narrative of the Platonic tyrant.¹⁵⁵ The end of Caesar is preceded by a number of chapters which deal with his deficiencies. The forces which raised him up—his friends, his soldiers, and the people—all begin to work against him. In chapter 51 Plutarch writes that Caesar’s soldiers, and his friends Antony, Dolabella, Amantius, and Corfinius all raised anger at Rome. But Plutarch writes,

On account of these matters, the Romans were displeased. And Caesar was not ignorant of these matters and did not approve of them, but due to the political situation he was compelled to make use of these allies (51.3).

The *hybris* of Caesar in celebrating a triumph over Pompey’s sons, who came from an illustrious family, “grieved the Roman’s like nothing else” (56.4). Plutarch makes it clear this is excess which Caesar would heretofore not have engaged in, as before Caesar had made no mention of his victories in civil wars, ἀλλ’ ἀπωσάμενον αἰσχύνῃ τὴν δόξαν “rejecting the reputation arising from these deeds out of decency” (56.4). Note here the emphasis on *doxa*, a prominent theme in the pair; here Caesar’s excessive desire for *doxa* means that he now desires glory which arises from inglorious deeds. And much of the following narrative deals with the obnoxious consequences of Caesar’s

¹⁵⁰ See my previous chapter.

¹⁵¹ Although this word can mean licence as well.

¹⁵² This violence is also reflected in Alexander’s desire to visit an oracle on an inauspicious day, when the oracle refuses, “citing the law” he goes down and threatens to use force (14.4).

¹⁵³ Pelling 2002 104 notes the significance of this episode for the portrayal of Caesar as a tyrant.

¹⁵⁴ Pelling 2011 21ff.

¹⁵⁵ Pelling 2011 421 notes that this recalls the “acknowledged tyranny” of the end of Plato’s *Republic* 8 (596b), and how the career of Caesar recalls that of a Platonic tyrant—the demagogue who aims at power and then using the people achieves power; see also Pelling 2011 21ff; Pelling 2002 103ff and Duff 1999 303.

desire for honour and office. Plutarch writes that while Cicero first proposed reasonable honours for Caesar in the Senate,

Others added excessive honours and competed with each other in proposing them, and these made the man offensive and grievous to even the most mild-mannered citizens, because of the bombast and absurdity of the honours proposed (57.2).

And this excess is attributed no less to “Caesar’s enemies than his flatters” (57.2), as his enemies hoped to make Caesar odious. As I have written in my previous chapter, Plutarch wrote that the presence of flatterers was a cause of grief for Alexander’s Macedonian friends; and Caesar’s failure to rise to greet the senate in *Caesar* 60 is attributed to an exhortation given to Caesar by Cornelius Balbus, whom Plutarch describes as “one of his friends, or rather, one of his flatterers” (60.5). Plutarch writes how “this distressed not only the Senate, but the people also” (60.3). Thus in the *Caesar*, as in the *Alexander*, the presence of flatterers corrodes the relationship between the ruler and his people, and the fraught relationship between the protagonists and their friends is a prominent theme. Caesar’s friends originally help him but end up being a liability; Alexander’s relationship with his friends is troubled. The presence of flatters is evidence of despotism, and the enemies are the product of his envy-producing desire for power and reputation. Plutarch writes that τὸ δὲ ἐμφανὲς μάλιστα μῖσος καὶ θανατηφόρον ἐπ’ αὐτὸν ὁ τῆς βασιλείας ἔρωις ἐξεργάσατο “the most open and deadly hatred of him was caused by his desire for kingship” (60.1). This is consistent with the theme of ambition which pervades the pair; Caesar’s desire for kingship, more than any other factor, ultimately undoes him. With Caesar alienating the people thus, Plutarch write that “the multitude turned to Brutus” (62.1). Thus the narrative of Caesar is clear: making use of the people, his friends, and the army Caesar realises his desire for kingship, but this desire and the methods he uses to attain sole rule ultimately produce his death.

I now want to compare the ends of the *Alexander* and the *Caesar*. As stated above, Pelling has argued that a Zonaras fragment is from the (presumably missing) end of the *Alexander*; ¹⁵⁶in it Plutarch again stresses the divine:

It is said that, as Alexander realized his life was departing, he wanted to drown himself secretly in the Euphrates: his object was to disappear and leave behind the story that he had now returned to the gods, just as he had come from them. But Roxane realized what was in his mind, so they say, and stopped the plan; Alexander said to her with a groan, ‘so you envied me, wife, the fame of apotheosis and immortality’. ¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ Pelling 1973 342-344.

¹⁵⁷ Pelling 2002 (trans.) 380.

Pelling notes the symmetry of the endings: Alexander exaggerates and inflates the significance of divine portents; Caesar is less concerned than he needs to be.¹⁵⁸ He jokes (προσπαίξει) to the Seer that the Ides of March have already come (*Caesar* 63.3); and the seer replies menacingly that the Ides have not yet passed. While Caesar is reported to be in some “suspicion and fear” (63.7), he is, as Pelling notes, primarily concerned with Calpurnia’s reaction to these portents.¹⁵⁹ And Pelling further notes the fundamentally *political* reasons which compel Caesar to disregard his wife’s (and his own) fears.¹⁶⁰ Decimus Brutus, a co-conspirator with Brutus and Cassius, argued that Caesar would bring “slanders and accusations” (64.2) by the Senate because they were meeting at the whim of Calpurnia’s dreams, and he concludes by telling Caesar that no one would listen to his friends’ defences that this was not “slavery and tyranny” (64.3). Note also that Caesar is lured by Decimus’ promise that the Senate were willing to vote that “he should be proclaimed king of all provinces outside of Italy, and be able to wear a diadem when he travelled elsewhere by land or sea” (64.2-3). Thus his *eros* for kingship finally proves to be his undoing, as he is lured to his death by the promise of a crown, denied to him in *Caesar* 61.3ff.

The end of the *Caesar* is one of the most celebrated of Plutarch’s endings. Since the ending is of such importance, and its qualities are so important, I will quote it in full here:

When he died, Caesar was fully 56 years old, but he had survived Pompey by not much more than four years, and the power and dominion which he had sought all his life and for which he had undergone such dangers he barely achieved. And he received nothing from this, apart from a name alone and a reputation which inspired envy among his fellow citizens. His great *daimōn*, which he had all throughout his life, followed him when he died and continued to avenge his murder, driving and pursuing his murderers over every land and sea, until not one of them was left, but rather anyone whatever who took part in the deed either in fact or in conception was punished. The most remarkable human event concerned Cassius, who after his defeat at Philippi killed himself with the very dagger he had used against Caesar. As for the supernatural, there was the great comet that shone brilliantly for seven nights after Caesar’s death, then disappeared; and also the dimming of the sun’s rays. For that entire year the sun rose pale, with no radiation, and its heat came to earth only faintly and ineffectually, so that the air hung dark and thick on the earth because of the lack of radiance to penetrate it. The crops consequently never matured, but shrivelled and withered away when they were only half-ripe because of the coldness of the air. More than anything else, it was the phantom that appeared to Brutus which gave a particularly clear sign that Caesar’s killing had been unwelcome to the gods. It happened like this. Brutus was about to transport the army from Abudus to the other continent: it was night time, and he was resting as usual in his tent. He was not asleep, but deep in thought about the future. They say that this man needed less sleep than any other general in history, and spent many hours awake and alone. He thought he heard a noise by the door, and looked

¹⁵⁸ Pelling 2002 380.; see also Harris 1970 193-197 who points out the symmetry of Τύχη acting in the *Alexander*, and δαίμων acting in the *Caesar*.

¹⁵⁹ Pelling 2002 380.

¹⁶⁰ Pelling 2002 380.

toward the lamp, which was already burning low. He saw a terrifying apparition of a man, a giant in size and menacing to look at. At first he was frightened, but then he saw that the apparition was doing and saying nothing, but just standing silently by the bed. Brutus asked him who he was. The phantom replied: 'Your evil genius, Brutus. You will meet me at Philippi.' For the moment Brutus calmly replied 'I will meet you there', and the phantom immediately went away. In the following months Brutus faced Antony and the young Caesar in battle at Philippi. In the first battle he defeated and forced back the detachment stationed opposite himself, and drove on to destroy Caesar's camp. When he was about to fight the second battle the phantom visited him again at night. It said nothing, but Brutus recognised his fate, and plunged into danger in the battle. Yet he did not die fighting. After the rout he took refuge on a rock prominence, and forced his breast against his naked sword, with a friend, they say, adding weight to the blow. So he met his death. (*Caesar* 69)¹⁶¹

Pelling interprets the ending as an implicit comparison with Alexander, and notes the recurrence of divine portents during both figures' last days; he also emphasises the political nature of this *Life*.¹⁶² As I have outlined above, this is a recurrent theme of the *Caesar*; and, as Pelling notes, the factors which cause Caesar's rise and downfall—the people, soldiers, friends—are fundamentally *historical* factors.¹⁶³ Indeed this *Life* seems to be in direct contradiction to the proem of the *Alexander*, in which Plutarch promises to focus on the small things, rather than the great matters.¹⁶⁴ In an article comparing the treatment of Caesar in Cassius Dio, Appian, and Plutarch, Pelling argues that the 'greatness' of Caesar caused Appian, who set out to write history, to shape his history around the life of Caesar.¹⁶⁵ With Plutarch's treatment, Pelling argues, the obverse is the case: Plutarch is compelled by Caesar's enormous historical significance to write history.¹⁶⁶ Pelling further argues that the death of Caesar refers back to the *Romulus*; he notes the recurrence of several themes: both Romulus (26.1) and Caesar (56.7) finish their last war just before their fall; and the rest of the *Romulus* is concerned with the concerned with the kingly nature of Romulus (his purple robes, his throne, his bodyguard), which have their analogues in the *Caesar*.¹⁶⁷ As Pelling notes, this has an interesting implication; if Plutarch is drawing thematic correspondences between Romulus and Caesar, then he is "...constructing his whole series to go together. Rome begins with kingship, with the dangers of regal mentality, and with the suspicions and hostilities which that mentality and that showiness excite. It ends the same way."¹⁶⁸ The presence of the supernatural emphasises that the death of Caesar is only a brief impediment in the divinely-ordained establishment of the

¹⁶¹ Pelling 2002 trans. 378-379.

¹⁶² Pelling 2002 380-381; see also Pelling 2011 58-64.

¹⁶³ Pelling 2011 22.

¹⁶⁴ Pelling 2011 21; Duff 1999 21 though Duff's insistence that the meaning of the proem was restricted to the *Alexander* is, I think, somewhat excessive see Pelling 2006 266-270 and my previous discussion. While it would be unwise to expand this formulation into a *modus operandi* for Plutarch in general, I would argue that it has a thematic significance across the *Alexander-Caesar* pair.

¹⁶⁵ Pelling 2006 262-266.

¹⁶⁶ Pelling 2006 266-269.

¹⁶⁷ Pelling 2006 269.

¹⁶⁸ Pelling 2006 269.

Principate.¹⁶⁹ Plutarch certainly was aware of tendencies of societies and cultures to exhibit particular issues. Pelling has noted that *philotimia* is included disproportionately in Spartan Lives¹⁷⁰, and, as Simon Swain has shown, the lack of *paideia* in early Rome was a concern throughout his Roman Lives.¹⁷¹ This argument is interesting, and would be consistent with the general tendency of scholarship, which has moved from considering individual *Lives*, to considering pairs as a whole, to more recent attempts to draw thematic links among multiple pairs.¹⁷² And it would carry an implication for the *Caesar*: perhaps we can see *Caesar* as a kind of bridging *Life*; he is both a republican and an imperial figure. Thus we could see the *Alexander-Caesar* in a sort of category of its own; while all the figures Plutarch used had good lessons, the lessons in the *Alexander-Caesar* were of more immediate significance to the reader.¹⁷³ In *Caesar* there is both a figure from the Republican past and the progenitor of the Imperial present. His connection with and emulation of Alexander is part of the discourse on the power of kingship and its relationship with philosophy and ethics, and his connection with the current Imperial system gives this *Life* an especial immediacy.

Caesar's life was essentially a search for ἀρχὴ καὶ δυναστεία "power and dominion"; and the only benefits he accrued from this search were τοῦνομα μόνον καὶ τὴν ἐπίφθονον... δόξαν "...a name only and a reputation which inspired envy." This ending picks up the themes which are expressed in the proem: once again the grand matters "power and dominion" are counterpoised against the personal. The ambivalent ends of Alexander and Caesar demonstrate the ambivalent consequences of an obsession with ambition and reputation. We might at this point recall the end of the *Marius* (*Marius* 46), where, as Stadter notes, Plutarch reflects on the unhappiness of Marius, who had won

¹⁶⁹ Cf. *Comparison of Dion and Brutus* 2.1 where the Caesar is proclaimed to be πρότατος ὥσπερ ἰατρός to fix the *kakapoliteia* of Rome.

¹⁷⁰ Pelling 2012.

¹⁷¹ Swain 1990. In *Marius* 2 Plutarch emphasises the failure of Marius to engage with Greek education, and writes "if someone could persuade Marius to sacrifice to the Greek Muses and Graces, he would not have laid a most disgraceful ending to a most distinguished military and political career, he would not have been driven by passion, untimely ambition, and insatiable greed to a most savage and wild old age." In the *Coriolanus*, Plutarch regards Coriolanus' excesses as likewise due to an absence of Hellenic education. Aalders 1982 22 also notes that he view *pleonexia* as inhering in the Hellenistic dynasties and that the Hellenistic rulers are attracted more to power than virtue (*Aristides* 6.1-2; 6.5). See also Teodorsson 2005 436 for a discussion of the Roman failings of luxury and wealth.

¹⁷² To take a recent sample: Harrison 1995 91-104 has argued for the importance of the *Alexander-Caesar* to other post-classical pairs such as the *Agésilas-Pompey*; this argument is affirmed and expanded by Sonya Nevin 2014, who argues for the importance of Agamemnon as a *comparatio*; see also Pelling 2005 who argues for the importance of Socrates in the *Phocion-Cato Minor*. More germane to this thesis, Bradly Buszard 2008 has advanced a combined reading of the *Alexander-Caesar* and the *Pyrrhus-Marius*; and Judith Mossman 1992 has drawn parallels between the *Lives* of *Alexander* and *Pyrrhus*.

¹⁷³ Pelling 2011 2-3 also notes the ability of Caesar to look both forwards and backwards.

seven consulships but is ultimately betrayed by fortune.¹⁷⁴ And, I think that the ambivalence of Caesar's ending is significant for another reason. Caesar's point of emulation is Alexander; he reads about Alexander's deeds and is brought to tears that he does not rule as many peoples as Alexander did. Imitation of Alexander is signalled in *Alexander* (4), when Plutarch brings up the way in which the Diadochi used to imitate Alexander's statues.¹⁷⁵ It is interesting, as Pelling has noted, that Plutarch elects to change the story so that Caesar is reading accounts of Alexander's exploits, rather than the more traditional story which has Caesar gazing at a statue.¹⁷⁶ This anecdote is consonant with the theme of ambition which runs through the pair. Yet it also is significant for the emperors who would take Alexander as a model, which, as I stated above, was an imperial tendency. Caesar does take Alexander as a model;¹⁷⁷ he reads about his deeds and, like Alexander, wants to complete a grand circle, so that he would have an empire bounded by Ocean. The emphasis on rule and power, and the devaluing of reputation as being empty and envy-producing is condemnatory of the overweening desire of both Alexander and Caesar. But I would argue that the emphasis on the emptiness of reputation and name is indicative of a concern for *correct* emulation. Caesar, a paradigmatic emperor,¹⁷⁸ looked at Alexander as a model, but he looked only to Alexander's great achievements; in the words of the proem, he looked to Alexander's "most famous deeds" without paying sufficient attention to the "signs of character." He focuses only on Alexander "being king over so many people", and that fierce longing for kingship will end up producing the enmity that brings him down. Caesar's focus on Alexander only with respect to his great achievements meant that he could only emulate his great achievements. And he did accomplish great things, and this is not underemphasised. He possesses a similar nature to Alexander, being also 'hot', and daring, and having the military and political skill to achieve this. And he, like Alexander, has many good qualities, especially military skill, but also generosity (*Alexander* 39; *Caesar* 12; 15; 17; 57.3ff) Yet Caesar's monomaniacal desire for kingship and reputation produced envy, which ended up killing him. And his failure to emulate Alexander's early "longing" for philosophy is implicit in the *Life*. Caesar's murder was thus not entirely conditioned by external factors, as Mossman has argued, but also by his own decisions.¹⁷⁹ He succeeded in his quest for power and dominion, but he did not understand that power without *paideia* will end poorly. His failings are not the same as Alexander; he does not

¹⁷⁴ Stadter 2014 169ff.

¹⁷⁵ Aalders 1982 22-23 notes that Plutarch disapproved of the Hellenistic kings.

¹⁷⁶ Pelling 2002 257.

¹⁷⁷ See Green 1978 1-26 for a discussion of the relationship between Caesar and Alexander.

¹⁷⁸ Although this assertion must be qualified, as stated above, Caesar is both of the end of the Republic and progenitor of the Imperial present. See also Henderson 2014 81-110 esp.108ff who argues that Caesar in Suetonius is both a "Caesar" and not a "Caesar."

¹⁷⁹ Mossman 1988 92: "for Plutarch, external factors destroyed Caesar, whereas internal forces worked on Alexander"; Whitmarsh 2002 177 n.18 notes that her formulation might be in need of revision.

suffer from the internal problems of drinking or overactive anger. Yet he ends up with the same defects of government: his ambition aims solely at power and he is troubled by flatterers and issues with his friends and his troops.

Resistance to the Roman Empire in Plutarch?

There are a number of scholars who view Plutarch as expressing a general resistance to the Roman Empire. Tim Whitmarsh, noting the paradoxical description of Numa as being, “a more Hellenic lawgiver” than the Spartan Lycurgus, emphasises the ambiguity and conflict inherent in this microcosm:

Greek ethics cannot completely overwrite Greek ethnics. Plutarch’s ‘universalizing’ concept of Hellenic *paideia* sits in tension with his strong awareness of cultural differences, and of the significance of the term Hellen as a marker of epichoric identity. It cannot be coincidence, however, that the Hellenizing capacities of *paideia* are most clearly visible when they are applied to those who are ethnically non-Greeks. Cultural identity is most heavily contested and policed at its borders, where grey areas are most likely to occur...and Plutarch’s *Lives* repeatedly test the degree to which Roman history can be appropriated in to Greek intellectual theory.¹⁸⁰

Whitmarsh emphasises the importance of cultural identity and liminality in his analysis of the *Alexander*, emphasising the cultural conflicts inherent in that text.¹⁸¹ Tim Duff has also argued that the *Lives* represent a resistant attitude to the Roman Empire:

Plutarch does not in the *Parallel Lives* preach a message of Greco-Roman cultural unity or reconciliation. Rather, he explores the meaning of Hellenism and Romanness. If his work has a cultural message, it lies in the imposition, helped along by the device of *synkrisis*, of a Greek perspective onto Roman history. To this extent, the *Parallel Lives* can be seen as a Greek response to Roman power, a statement of resistance. Plutarch’s refusal to preach, to declare an authorial view on Greek or Roman superiority or equality, is characteristic of his stance in general. This book has emphasized throughout ways in which Plutarch’s texts resist simplistic univocal presentations of the past, but are complex, exploratory, and challenging: they invite the reader to challenge and to ponder.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ Whitmarsh 2001 118.

¹⁸¹ Whitmarsh 2002.

¹⁸² Duff 1999 309.

Now this formulation is also very instructive; it denies simplistic antagonism or conciliation narratives, but emphasizes the ambiguous nature of Plutarch's representations of the past. But both Whitmarsh and Duff, in different ways, argue that Plutarch's *Lives* represent a kind of cultural resistance the current realities of Roman power. Here the identification of Roman power versus Greek culture is a prominent trope, and the idea that the Second Sophistic was a cultural phenomenon that arose as a response to the political and military domination of Rome.¹⁸³ The interaction between Greek culture and political power is a central concern of the *Alexander-Caesar*, and indeed of the *Lives* in general. There are a number of problems with this formulation. The most obvious is the problem of defining culture against power; Tim Whitmarsh notes that culture, in the Second Sophistic, was one of the ways in which power was constructed and demarcated, and that even in the confines of the Roman Empire, Greek *pepaideumenoi* were some of the most powerful individuals.¹⁸⁴ He also notes the "increased latitude" in Foucault's view of the "scope of power."¹⁸⁵ Yet Whitmarsh, having caveated and qualified this polarity, ultimately accepts it, at least as a model that the ancients created and would have understood, if not as a representation of historical reality.¹⁸⁶ Simon Swain has also noted the difficulty of viewing culture as distinct from power, writing that this distinction is too innocent:

It is wrong to categorize it as a 'cultural phenomenon' and leave it at that, for 'cultural' is far too innocent and passive a word. Rather, we must certainly read it in political-ideological terms too, while shying away from connotations of 'political' that are too active. The Greeks were well aware that particular political acts of the past were not going to be repeated to day in the Roman peace.¹⁸⁷

Swain concludes, along with Duff and Whitmarsh, that the second sophistic was a distancing and resistant phenomenon, writing:

For since Greek identity could not be grounded in the real political world, it had to assert itself in the cultural domain and do so as loudly as possible. The result of this is that, however close individuals got to Rome, overall we notice a certain distance, a resistance to integration, that may surprise anyone used to the modern view that the second sophistic is a facet of Roman history rather than Greek.¹⁸⁸

Thus these three authors, emphasising different things and making different points, nevertheless still view the Second Sophistic as a cultural response to Roman power, a reanimation of the past in order to reify 'Greekness' in implicit opposition to Roman power. This modern view is admirably nuanced; Duff, Whitmarsh, and Swain all eschew reductive interpretations of this phenomenon, and caution

¹⁸³ See e.g. Bowie 1974.

¹⁸⁴ Whitmarsh 2001 18.

¹⁸⁵ Whitmarsh 2001 18.

¹⁸⁶ Whitmarsh 2001 20.

¹⁸⁷ Swain 1996 88.

¹⁸⁸ Swain 1996 89.

against taking the concept too far.¹⁸⁹ Yet there is perhaps still too much emphasis on resistance in their analyses. To focus on Plutarch, it is obviously and inescapably true that Plutarch's moral worldview was defined and delimited using Greek ethics; as I have written above, Plutarch's view of morality was based of the Greek intellectual tradition. For Plutarch, these canonical writers had provided to posterity the ability to live well; and, as a corollary to this, it was impossible to live well if one had not been sufficiently exposed to and educated in these canonical texts. Rebecca Preston has probably phrased Plutarch's attitude to *paideia* best, in her excellent analysis of Plutarch's *Quaestiones Romanae* and *Quaestiones Graecae*. In these texts Plutarch uses a question and answer format to explain the *aitia* for Greek and Roman customs. In her analysis Preston argues that while Plutarch might be seen as evincing the "cultural confidence", which has been identified as a central characteristic of the second sophistic, emphasising the importance of Greek *paideia* in the Roman Empire, such confidence is undermined by the way in which Plutarch depicts "the separateness and Otherness of Roman culture."¹⁹⁰ Preston emphasises the naturalness of Greek culture to Plutarch, writing "Greek culture is not, therefore, cultural at all, since that would imply human agency, it is simply the natural order of things."¹⁹¹ Yet it is just that apparently exclusive point that demonstrates Plutarch's fundamental inclusivity: Hellenism was ethical and philosophical, it was not ethnic; and although, as Simon Swain has demonstrated, Plutarch is more concerned with the Hellenic education of his Roman heroes because their Hellenic education cannot be assumed,¹⁹² Plutarch can approve of Romans who had been educated in and appreciated Greek culture. Whitmarsh, and those cited above, argue that Plutarch's universalizing ethics are nevertheless in conflict with his affirmative Hellenism. He was certainly cognizant of the negative potential in Romans, and the fact that their Hellenic education could not be taken for granted, but he still affirmed their ability to become 'more Hellenic' than a Hellene. And it is this point that I think is crucial in discerning the worldview which emerges from Plutarch's writing. Tatum has argued that, even taking in to account the qualified nature of the general argument for resistance, the resistance versus reconciliation dichotomy is not helpful for analysing Plutarch's attitude to the Roman Empire. Instead, in his discussion of parallelism in the *Lives*, he emphasises the Romanness of the parallel form, and notes that the presence of Greekness within Rome is entirely natural. Thus the presence of Greek values is not, paradoxically, un-Roman. He further argues that the Hellenism is thus expressed in a safely Roman

¹⁸⁹ Ando 2004 has a good rebuttal of the general claim of Hellenism as resistance in this period.

¹⁹⁰ Preston 2001 117.

¹⁹¹ Preston 2001 106.

¹⁹² Swain 1990 126-145.

context, and argues that this is a reasonably good analogue for what the Roman Empire could potentially become.¹⁹³

This argument seems to be to be the closest approximation to the worldview that Plutarch expresses in the *Parallel Lives*. He is affirmatively and exclusively Hellenic, but holds out the hope and possibility of a settled government under which Hellenic culture can become regnant and thrive. Plutarch is well aware of the contentiousness of the Greeks and praises Flamininus for freeing the Greeks, connecting it with Nero's later proclamation of the freedom of the Greeks (12.8). Furthermore, he writes that Flamininus "travelled amongst the cities, instituting order, justice, much concord and friendliness towards each other, and he put an end to their factions and restored the exiles" (12.3).¹⁹⁴ In the *Agesilaus* Plutarch writes, against the view that "those Greeks who did not live to see Alexander on the throne of Darius were deprived of a great pleasure",

I think that such might well have shed tears when they reflected that this triumph was left to Alexander and Macedonians by those who now squandered the lives of Greek generals on the fields of Leuctra, Coroneia, and Corinth, and in Arcadia" (*Agesilaus* 15.3).

And in the *Flamininus*, Plutarch writes,

If we leave out the action at Marathon, the sea-fight at Salamis, Plataea, Thermopylae, and the achievements of Cimon at the Eurymedon and around Cyprus, Greece has fought all its battles to bring slavery upon itself, and all its trophies stand for its own disaster and disgrace, since it fell mainly due to the wickedness and contentiousness of its leaders (*Flamininus* 11.3).¹⁹⁵

This acknowledgement of the Greek tendency to contentiousness is also emphasised in the *Praecepta Gerendae Reipublicae*. In this text, where Plutarch gives advice to an aspiring politician, Plutarch emphasises the realities of being a Greek politician in the Roman Empire. He urges the politician always remember that he rules while still being ruled (ἀρχόμενος ἄρχεις), and to remember that he is constantly subject to a Roman proconsul. This inescapable fact is softened by Plutarch's conclusion to the essay in which he writes:

Note that, of the greatest goods that cities may possess—peace, freedom, prosperity, an abundance of men, concord—with respect to peace, the people have no need of statesmen at present, for all war, both Greek and barbarian, has been driven out and has disappeared, and as for freedom, the people have as much as their rulers dispense, and more would perhaps not be better (824c).

¹⁹³Tatum 2010 16-18.

¹⁹⁴ See Bremer 257-267 esp. 264ff who argues that Plutarch appreciated that Flamininus and Aemilius Paulus freed Greece from civil strife; see also Swain 1988 335-347 and Stadter 2014 282ff.

¹⁹⁵ Duff 1999 134 notes that this pair shows the ability of Plutarch to appreciate two sides of a problem, as Plutarch shows an affinity for both a Roman conquer and a commander who fought him. But it is clear that in both the *Lives* Plutarch thought the conquest of Greece was divinely ordained. See also Swain 1989 284-5.

The possibly rueful tone of the ‘perhaps’ in that last sentence makes it possible to discern a number of views from this passage, as Goldhill notes.¹⁹⁶ Yet Plutarch is consistent in attributing these benefits, especially the banishment of factionalism, to the Roman Empire. For example in his dialogue *De Pythiae Oraculis*, the character Theon, presumably ventriloquizing Plutarch,¹⁹⁷ says

For my part, I am pleased with and welcome matters as they are currently, about which people ask the god. For there is considerable peace and tranquillity, war has ceased, and there are no wanderings nor tyrannies, no other ills and grievous afflictions in Greece such as would require powerful or extraordinary remedies (*De Pythiae Oraculis* 408b-c).

Thus it is possible to see a consistent opinion emerge. The most extended expression of this sentiment is to be found in the *De Fortuna Romanorum*, the work which attributes the rise of Rome largely to Fortune. Plutarch asserts that while Fortune and Virtue often struggle against each other, they joined together to accomplish “this most noble of human achievements” (*De Fortuna Romanorum* 316e). Plutarch writes that the Roman Empire is a ‘common hearth’, and an “...anchorage from the swell and drift” (*De Fortuna Romanorum* 317a). John Dillon has argued that for Plutarch the Roman Empire represented an analogous situation to the ‘End of History’ which Francis Fukuyama argued the triumph of Western Liberalism represented in his famous essay.¹⁹⁸ According to Dillon, Plutarch viewed the Roman Empire not merely as bringing practical benefits that Plutarch enumerates a number of times: freedom from contentiousness and factionalism, peace, and limited freedom, but also as being a natural growth, analogous to the order of the cosmos.¹⁹⁹ There is a kind of reverse entropy occurring: things have moved from disorder to order. So the various states and peoples take the place of Democritean atoms, colliding with each other until they eventually coalesce into the order of the Roman Empire.²⁰⁰ Dillon notes that while there were those authors, such as Pliny and Aelius Aristides, whose opinions on the Roman Empire were broadly similar to Plutarch’s, the philosophical theory which underpinned Plutarch’s view was unique to him.²⁰¹ The idea of the permanence of the Roman Empire as being essential is consistent with Plutarch’s judgement of Numa. Numa was, for Plutarch, an approximation of a Platonic philosopher king (*Numa* 20.6-7).²⁰² Interestingly, Stadter has argued that Plutarch depicts Numa as a prototypical

¹⁹⁶ Goldhill 2002 252.

¹⁹⁷ Dillon 1997 237.

¹⁹⁸ Dillon 1997.

¹⁹⁹ Dillon 1997.

²⁰⁰ Dillon 1997 236.

²⁰¹ Dillon 1997 238.

²⁰² In this chapter Plutarch emphasises the way in which Numa brought peace and freedom from factionalism. Preston 2001 104 points out how Plutarch is reluctant to take a definitive position on the debate about whether Numa was acquainted with Pythagoras, and thereby whether his positive portrayal can be attributed to the civilising influence of Greek *paideia*. I do not think that this question is fundamental to the overall attitude of Plutarch to Rome. Whether Numa acquired his philosophy from a Hellenic influence, or whether he acquired it as Plutarch writes in the *Numa*, by the aid of some divinity, he was nevertheless Plutarch’s ideal of

Princeps, noting his emphasis on the assumption of *pontifex maximus*, for example.²⁰³ But Numa's system, praised by Plutarch, fails "because it did not have the bond of education" (*Comparison of Lycurgus and Numa* 4.6). Rome had not yet been civilized with Greek culture, and Numa made no attempts to instate an educational programme which would maintain the peace and good government he had established. The belief of the god-directed nature of the Roman Empire is consonant with the tendency of Plutarch to attribute the agency of god in some historical events. In the *Demosthenes* Plutarch writes, "There was, as it seems, some divinely-ordered fortune in the revolution of affairs which at that time ended the freedom of the Greeks" (*Dem.* 19.1).²⁰⁴ Swain further adduces *Phocion* 1-3 and the discussion of Phocion and Cato as virtuous agents fighting against fortune, ultimately vainly, as support for this view of a divinely-directed providence.²⁰⁵ The interference of providence with history recurs throughout history; and the agency of providence is adduced by Plutarch a number of times to explain historical phenomena.²⁰⁶ Plutarch specifically notes that the death of Caesar was divinely disapproved of, writing "the phantom of Caesar, appearing to Brutus, most of all showed that his murder was not pleasing to the gods" (*Caesar* 69.5).

Plutarch was writing in a time when, as Aalders notes,

...Greeks and Romans no longer stood opposed to one another as the conquered, who were bearers of a great culture, and conquerors who were militarily and politically superior. Greeks gradually gained entrance into the Roman governing apparatus and Romans and Greeks came closer socially."²⁰⁷

Greeks were incorporated into the Roman Empire's governance; and Plutarch's success was transcultural.²⁰⁸ Those writers who see Plutarch as resisting the Roman Empire nevertheless see in Plutarch and the Second Sophistic in general a non-political resistance to this empire. While the equation of Hellenism with virtue in Plutarch might seem like a resistant tendency, I would argue that this is slightly reductive. The success of Plutarch, and thereby his ethical programme, amongst both Greeks and Romans is consistent with Plutarch's ethical views; Plutarch views Platonic *paideia* as truly universal. This is not to imply that Plutarch had a naïve view of the Romans and the Roman

a philosopher-king. See also Boulet 2004 245-256 who argues that Numa is a philosopher king, but is realistically, rather than idealistically, depicted. See also de Blois, L. de and Bons, J.A. 1992 who note the combination of Platonic and Isocratean influences in the *Numa*, in particular the Isocratean concept of *eunoia*.

²⁰³ Stadter 2014 176ff; see also Swain 1996 141.

²⁰⁴ Swain 1989 272-302; see also Swain 1996 151-161.

²⁰⁵ Swain 1989 282.

²⁰⁶ Swain 1989; See also Swain 1989b for a discussion of how Fortune operates in the *Aemilius-Timoleon*; note especially 315 on how *τύχη* means chance in the *Moralia* but can mean divine Fortune in the *Lives*.

²⁰⁷ Aalders 1981 12.

²⁰⁸ Stadter 2014 231ff argues that Plutarch employed a "rhetoric of persuasion" (232) directly aimed at his contemporaries, who included powerful members of the Roman ruling elite.

Empire, indeed, as I have stated above, Plutarch had a deep concern with the extent to which his Roman heroes had assimilated Hellenic culture. He also was very aware of the depredations visited upon Athens by Sulla in his *Life* (12²⁰⁹; 14), and the sufferings which Greece underwent during the struggles of Antony and Octavian in *Antony* 68. And he did not attempt, as Dionysius of Halicarnassus did, to demonstrate that the Romans were actually Greek. He is aware of Roman history and culture, and is appropriately wary of their capacity for barbarism and their general bellicosity.²¹⁰ In both the *Coriolanus* and the *Marius* Plutarch explicitly attributes the failings of the heroes to their lack of Hellenic education. Yet the fact remained that Roman heroes could acquire Hellenic culture, and, as shown by the example of Numa, they could play the role of philosopher-king. And it is this latter point that is more significant, because, as we have seen, Plutarch does not shrink to point out the failings of the Greeks, and is particularly critical of their tendency to contentiousness and factionalism. It seems that for Plutarch the Roman Empire was a fact, probably divinely ordained, and bringing with it many beneficent things, most notably peace and freedom from factionalism.

Whitmarsh notes that in the reign of Trajan prominent authors such as Tacitus, Suetonius and notably Dio Chrysostom became interested in what Whitmarsh calls 'kingship theory.'²¹¹ This is not surprising; the unprecedented power that the Roman emperors had gained combined with the seeming permanence of their reign made this subject of paramount importance. Plutarch's essays, *Maxime cum Principibus Philosopho Esse Diserendum* and *Ad Principem Ineruditum* are two of his most important contributions to this subject. In this diptych Plutarch argues—from the point of the ruler and the philosopher—for the admixture of philosophy and governance.²¹² In *Ad Principem Ineruditum*, Plutarch writes

But many people foolishly think that the first advantage of ruling is freedom from being ruled. And indeed the King of the Persians used to think that everyone was a slave except his wife, whose master he most of all should be. So who will rule the ruler? The Law, king of all, both mortals and immortals, as Pindar says - not law inscribed outside him in books or on wooden tablets, but reason living within him, always living with him and watching over him and never leaving his soul without its leadership (*Ad Principem Ineruditum* 780c).

²⁰⁹In *Sulla* 12.6, Plutarch compares Sulla negatively to Flamininus, Aemilius Paulus, and Manius Acilius, who did not only not loot the sanctuaries of the Greeks, but "...added gifts and to them and greatly increased their honour and dignity" (12.6).

²¹⁰ *Coriolanus* 1-2; *Numa* 8.1.

²¹¹ Whitmarsh 2001 184; see also Wallace-Hadrill 1981 esp. 305ff who notes the Hellenistic origin of the Imperial virtues; for Tacitus see Hammond 1963 93-113.

²¹² Whitmarsh 2001 184 notes the combination of "...the Platonic *Republic*, *Laws*, and *Epistles*, grafted onto the Isocratean conception of the philosopher's relationship to the empowered."

For Plutarch the philosopherking is an *eikon*, or image, of god “an image of god, who rules all things” (*Ad Principem Ineruditum* 780e).²¹³ He achieves, through his superior virtue, an intermediary status between man and god.²¹⁴ This is as good a summary as any for Plutarch’s general attitude towards kingship theory. And it stands as a metaphor for Plutarch’s view of the Roman Empire—as Whitmarsh notes, “Rome may rule Greece politically, but to do so well necessitates submission to Greek learning.”²¹⁵ And yet is this really *submission*? Is it not rather a beneficent amalgam? If the naturalness of Greek culture is so emphasised, then it is not evident that this relationship is necessarily antagonistic. The natural and predetermined growth of the Roman Empire is emphasised in the *De Fortuna Romanorum* and in several *Lives*. The fact that this ruler could be Roman is evident given Plutarch’s evaluation of Numa; and his disapproval of the tendencies of numerous Greek leaders, not least Alexander, is evidence of his realistic appraisal of Greece and its deficiencies. Plutarch was aware of the absoluteness of Roman power, and of its drawbacks and beneficence, but he was also aware of the potency of the Greek intellectual tradition. The assimilation of philosophy to power was the ideal that Plutarch aspired to, and the Roman Empire provided that *in potentia*, if not yet perfectly in reality. This is not to fall back on the old argument of the conciliatory purpose of the *Lives*—I do not think either conciliation or resistance explains the project of the *Lives*.²¹⁶ Rather I think that the parallel study of figures from either culture is a reflection of the current reality and a proscriptive morality for the future: the figures in both histories are ethically significant in the emerging melting pot of the Roman Empire. The *Parallel Lives* compared the past figures of both cultures, in order to establish what is similar and dissimilar in the subjects’ virtues and vices.²¹⁷ And while Plutarch can depict Romans as having negative tendencies, such as bellicosity, and write condescendingly of how inadequate Rome was before the advent of Greek culture, he regards their history as useful, in the same way Greek history is useful—as a mirror.²¹⁸ For while a Fourth-Century Greek BC could look solely into a ‘Greek mirror’, a first or Second-Century AD figure required a two-sided mirror, because of their own more complex reflection.

²¹³ See Zecchini 2004 191-200 for a discussion of this essay.

²¹⁴ Dillon 1977 44 notes the importance of ‘likeness to god’ in the middle Platonism of the period.

²¹⁵ Whitmarsh 2001 186.

²¹⁶ See Jones 1971 103-109 for an argument against the conciliatory model.

²¹⁷ See *Mulierum Virtutes* 243b-d for Plutarch’s discussion of how placing virtues alongside one another helps establish what is similar and what is different; see Duff 1999 247-8 who connects this passage to Plato’s *Meno*; see also Stadter 1965. For *synkrisis* in general see e.g. Pelling 2002 349-363; Duff 1999 esp. 243-286; Larmour 1991 4154-4200; Swain 1992.

²¹⁸ *Aemilius Paulus* 1.

It has been noted that Plutarch tended to Hellenize Roman politics. As De. Blois notes, he tended to reduce the Roman Civil wars to a contest between the *Demos* and the *Ologoi*, which would have been understandable to his Greek readers.²¹⁹ This is a reflection of Plutarch's tendency to focus on broad and non-specific themes which are, as Pelling notes "...more transcultural: themes like the perennial clash of 'few' and 'many'; or the search of the powerful individual for tyranny; or the failures of the military man to adapt to the intricacies and subtleties of political life."²²⁰ Thus the imposition of a Greek ethical *schema* on Roman Lives is complemented by a Greek historiographical imposition: Roman historical trends are assimilated to Greek ones. And both these tendencies are a reflection of Plutarch's view of the naturalness of Greek culture. The triumph of Greek culture within the security of the Roman Empire is Plutarch's ideal; and as Tatum notes, this ideal is reflected in the dominance of Greek culture within the Roman form of Parallelism.²²¹ It would be unjustified to assume that Plutarch believed that Plato's ideal of the coming together of philosophy and kingship was currently realised in the Roman Empire, but that was the aspiration that is implicit in his *Lives*. The fact that no Plutarchan Life is empty of criticism demonstrates Plutarch's three-dimensional view of human character; and the criticism Alexander and Caesar, the two great imperialists of each culture, shows Plutarch's appreciation of the danger inherent in this new absolute kingship. But this does not mean that he opposed it *per se*. The *Lives* are proscriptive: the readers are meant to learn from them. And the ambiguous portrayal of Alexander and Caesar does not mean that Plutarch thought *hybris* and excess were inevitable in the emperors; it is an affirmation of the need for more of the *paideia* which would enable a closer approximation of the Platonic ideal. The narrative decline of the *Alexander* demonstrates the complexities and difficulties with World Empire; Alexander fails to establish a Hellenic empire, by the end his kingship is assimilated to oriental despotism. Caesar does have exactly the same failings; he does establish the Principate and his murder is only an interruption in the establishment of that system, as the end of the *Caesar* makes clear. Yet his ambivalent end provides a warning—when you emulate Alexander, you must be careful what you emulate.

R. Bruce Hitchner, in his article arguing that the model of globalization ought to be applied to the Roman Empire, makes the following observation:

By the second and early third centuries, we can begin to observe the emergence of a common yet mutually contradictory set of meanings regarding the nature of the shared enterprise of empire

²¹⁹ de Blois 1992 2570; see also Pelling 1995 319-353 who notes that Plutarch does not seem to comprehend the intricacies of Roman politics.

²²⁰ Pelling 2002 261.

²²¹ Tatum 2010 18-20.

compressing the political, cultural and ideological space between Romans and non-Romans. The Greek literature of the second century suggests, for example, that part of this new set of meanings is generally envisioned as a reassertion of Greek identity in the face of Roman power. But seen from the perspective of globalization in which local identity is renegotiated in the wake of its exposure to the wider world, this reassertion reads more like an expansion and complexification of local Hellenic identity against the backdrop of something larger... This is nothing if not a narrowing of the gap between Roman power and those subjected to it. Distant emperors, despite their role as rulers of “most of the world and most people” (Dio Chrysostom, *On Kingship* 1.56) could now be evaluated, educated and even challenged on their responsibilities as just rulers of men, much like those of classical Greece.²²²

Thus the polarity of power and culture is collapsing. The emperor is not only the face of alien power, but a figure whose ethics were a central concern to all the peoples over whom he ruled and who could be judged by the universalizing ethics of Hellenism. This is the aspiration which emerges from the *Parallel Lives* in general, and the *Alexander-Caesar* in particular. The ambivalent portrayal of Alexander and Caesar is not a resigned note of despair on the tendency of great rulers to engage in *hybris* and descend into despotism, but a nuanced reflection on the ethics and issues that such a reign presents. And the distance between the grandness and goodness of their projects—Alexander’s expansion of Greek culture and Caesar’s establishment of the Principate—and the (at times) baseness of their characters is established in the proem, and forms a fundamental tension in the text. Stadter has argued that Plutarch aimed his *Lives* at the heart of Imperial power.²²³ Alexander’s complex portrayal, the fraught, almost schizophrenic tension between his philosophical self and his spirited self provides an especially significant mirror for someone who holds the kind of power which the emperor and his powerful administrators had.

This is why the concept of ‘kingship ethics’ is so prominent a theme in the *Alexander*. The ambiguous portrayal of Alexander is a reflection on the ethics of kingship; and the emulation of Alexander by other Romans, particularly Caesar and Trajan affirms Plutarch’s project in the *Lives*. And Caesar’s ability to project forwards into the imperial present while still being of the republican past is vital to this project; his liminality offers Plutarch a unique opportunity to connect his backward-looking *Parallel Lives* to the current regime. This is not to imply that Plutarch was aiming this pair at any one particular emperor, rather that the *Alexander-Caesar* was aimed at the Imperial government in

²²² Hitchner 2008 7.

²²³ Stadter 2014 45ff. In 46ff he notes that while Plutarch does advise against aiming for employment in the Roman administration in the *Praecepta Gerendae Reipublicae*, this is aimed at a young man starting his career, rather than the more mature audience which Stadter argued the *Lives* were aimed at.

general.²²⁴ The tensions in the *Lives* of Alexander and Caesar should give the prospective reader pause; but even more so it should inform the powerful Romans who were part of Plutarch's audience. It is not that Alexander should not form a model, it is that one must emulate with discernment and intellect. The imperial lives thus form a discussion and contribution to the subject of kingship ethics. Alexander has a desire for philosophy, but he also has a spirited side, and it is the spirited and eastern side of him which triumphs at the end; he begins his life claiming that he would be another Diogenes, yet his increasingly fraught relationship with philosophers is indicative of his distancing from his earlier Hellenic *paideia*. The polarity of small things and great things, or between the public and private lives of the protagonists, is collapsed by the narratives. Alexander's *thumoeides* character devolves his noble project into despotism; Caesar's pursuit of "great things" like power and reputation likewise result in a tyranny, and an unsatisfactory one. These *Lives* form a rumination on the ethics of worldwide kingship, and the issues outlined above seem to indicate that Plutarch was entirely aware of the tensions that such a regime presented. Yet there is not a repudiation of such an empire in the *Alexander-Caesar*, rather a proscription for future rulers—power itself cannot be the end and aim of the career, because power, if not educated properly, will collapse under internal or external pressures.

²²⁴ See Pelling 2002 253-265 for a discussion of how Plutarch does not make use of Trajanic themes, even when the material would allow him to do so.

Conclusion

The portrayal of Alexander in the *Life* is complex, and resists easy conclusions. In this thesis I have focused on the negative aspects and actions of Alexander and Caesar, but Plutarch included much that was positive about their character, noting especially their courage, generosity, and daring. So it would be reductive to conclude that these are ‘negative examples.’²²⁵ Rather, it is more appropriate to examine how Alexander and Caesar are portrayed negatively. I have argued that Alexander’s degeneration is philosophically mediated; I have argued that his downfall is a reflection on the ethics of kingship and the relationship of the king to philosophy and philosophers. And I have argued that Alexander’s increasing distance from his early Hellenic *paideia* is how his degeneration is depicted. There are two versions of Alexander: the philosophical Alexander and the ruling, martial Alexander. In his interaction with Diogenes at the beginning of the *Life*, Alexander proclaims the irreconcilability of these two selves; and in the proem Plutarch highlights the distinction between the “most illustrious deeds” and the private life. Yet the *Alexander-Caesar* collapses this dichotomy, and pronounces the separation untenable. Alexander’s ‘private’ life compromises his great ‘public’ achievements; Caesar’s monomaniacal thirst for great achievements is ultimately unsatisfactory, and has tyrannical tendencies. These two great figures cannot keep these components separate, just as Plutarch cannot avoid outlining all their great deeds, Alexander’s, and Caesar’s inability to reconcile their private and public lives is decisive. This tension, which is present throughout the pair, is of fundamental concern for Plutarch. This tension is also the fundamental basis for his contribution to kingship ethics: for Plutarch was concerned with the moral character of his rulers above all. His Platonic background strongly influenced him and his desire for the Platonic philosopher king is affirmed a number of times in the *Lives*.²²⁶

Some critics have argued that the *Parallel Lives* can be seen as a ‘statement of resistance’ to the Roman Empire, an imposition of Hellenism on Roman history.²²⁷ Yet I have argued that resistance is not a useful model with which to look at the *Parallel Lives*. It is true that Plutarch imposes a Hellenic ethical and historiographical paradigm onto Roman history, judging Romans by the extent to which

²²⁵ Even in the two explicitly negative *Lives*—the *Demetrius-Antony*—Plutarch still outlines his subjects’ good qualities.

²²⁶ *Numa* 20.6-7; *Comparison of Demosthenes and Cicero* 3.4.

²²⁷ Duff 1999 309.

they were educated in and appreciated Greek culture. Yet this imposition is fundamentally inclusive: while the basis on which Plutarch judges people is exclusively Greek, there is no ethnic bias in the application of these ethics. Plutarch was perfectly aware of the contentiousness of the Greek states before the arrival of Rome, and is properly appreciative of the benefits of the *pax romana*. I have argued that rather than seeing the *Parallel Lives* as statement of cultural resistance, it better to see them as an aspirational work, which aims to provide the rulers of that empire with the appropriate education so that they might more closely approximate the ideal of philosophy mixed with power. Plutarch's concern to the absoluteness of Roman power was not so much to express resistance but with the proper education of the powerful.

I have argued that this pair allowed Plutarch to look both backward and forward. Alexander was a figure from the past, a Greek conqueror whose early reign promised the ideal of the Platonic philosopher king, but whose ultimate end was dominated more by excess and despotism. Caesar was also a figure of the past, one of the last great figures of Republican Rome, he allowed Plutarch to examine the downfall and degeneration of that society, which he succinctly defined as *kakapoliteia*. But Caesar also looks forward, because he not only kills the Republic, he also creates the Empire. Plutarch clearly acknowledged the accomplishments of both Alexander and Caesar: the former had expanded Greek culture; and the latter established the Empire which Plutarch repeatedly praised. Yet he does not allow himself to engage in hagiography; he uses the unique actions and statuses of Alexander and Caesar to probe the ethics of kingship and the tensions that arise when great men encounter imperial power. And this evaluation of Alexander and Caesar is especially relevant, as Alexander was prominent in the paradigms for the emperors, and Caesar was the direct progenitor of the Imperial government under which Plutarch lived, and which he esteemed highly. We can see the *Alexander-Caesar* as a rumination on the ethics of Imperial power, and Alexander's and Caesar's defects form a contribution to the subject of kingship ethics. The distance between the greatness of their achievements and the defects in their character is indicated in the proem, and it is this distance which Plutarch is concerned to bridge, or at least to play a role in bridging.

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