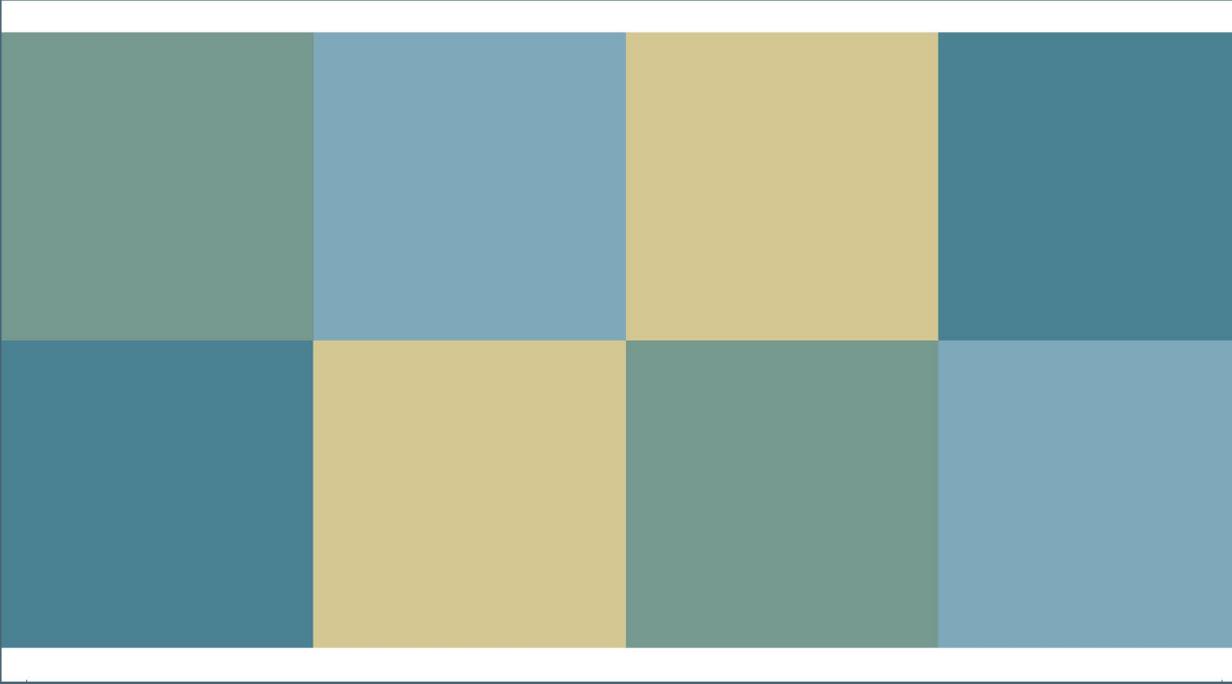


# A Versatile Gentleman

## Consistency in Plutarch's Writing



Jan Opsomer, Geert Roskam,  
Frances B. Titchener (eds)



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# A VERSATILE GENTLEMAN

## CONSISTENCY IN PLUTARCH'S WRITING

STUDIES OFFERED TO LUC VAN DER STOCKT  
ON THE OCCASION OF HIS RETIREMENT

Edited by

J. OPSOMER – G. ROSKAM – F.B. TITCHENER

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## Contents

Introduction F.B. TITCHENER	I
<i>I. Plutarch's Versatile Philosophy</i>	
Plutarch the Philosopher and Plutarch the Historian on <i>Apatheia</i> JOHN DILLON	9
The Dividing Line: Theological/Religious Arguments in Plutarch's Anti-Stoic Polemics RAINER HIRSCH-LUIPOLD	17
The Cruel Consistency of <i>De sera numinis vindicta</i> JAN OPSOMER	37
<i>Psychē</i> in Plutarch's Works PAOLA VOLPE CACCIATORE	57
<i>II. Literary Versatility</i>	
Plutarch's Simonides: A Versatile Gentleman? EWEN BOWIE	71
Plutarch's Flawed Characters: The <i>Personae</i> of the Dialogues FREDERICK E. BRENK	89
Dionysus and the Structure of Plutarch's <i>Table Talk</i> JUDITH MOSSMAN	101
Tragic Colouring in Plutarch CHRISTOPHER PELLING	113
<i>III. The Versatile World of the Lives</i>	
The Serio-Comic <i>Life of Antony</i> MARK BECK	137

VI	CONTENTS	
	The Nature of Virtue and the Need for Self-Knowledge in Plutarch's <i>Demosthenes-Cicero</i> JEFFREY BENEKER	147
	“This Topic Belongs to Another Kind of Writing”: The Digressions in Plutarch's <i>Life of Coriolanus</i> G. ROSKAM – S. VERDEGEM	161
	Sulla's Three-Thousand-νοῦμοι Apartment: Plutarch's Problematic Code-Switching PHILIP A. STADTER	197
	IV. <i>A Versatile Paideia</i>	
	Who Was Eucles? Plutarch and His Sources on the Legendary Marathon-Runner ( <i>De gloria Atheniensium</i> 347CD) LUCIA ATHANASSAKI	213
	De Plutarchi Malignitate HEINZ GERD INGENKAMP	229
	Consistency and Criticism in Plutarch's Writings Concerning the Laws of Solon DELFIN F. LEÃO	243
	Selenographic Description: Critical Annotations to Plutarch, <i>De facie</i> 944C AURELIO PÉREZ-JIMÉNEZ	255
	Bibliography	267
	Index locorum	287

# The Dividing Line Theological/Religious Arguments in Plutarch's Anti-Stoic Polemics<sup>1</sup>

RAINER HIRSCH-LUIPOLD

This contribution focuses on Plutarch's philosophical arguments with the champions of the Stoic tradition and their contemporary followers in the context of ongoing discussions about the dynamics of reappropriation and reinterpretation at work in early Imperial Times in the history of philosophy between Stoics and Platonists. Plutarch exemplifies a development that Troels Engberg-Pedersen addressed in the introduction to a collective volume on "Stoicism in Early Christianity": "... the Platonists [...] wrote explicitly against Stoicism while also adopting Stoic ideas in a number of places. How is that apparent paradox to be understood and explained? Can we find a way of understanding the character of philosophy itself in our period that will also explain and dissolve the paradox?"<sup>2</sup> The character of philosophy may indeed be the key to a better understanding of the development that is happening in the first century AD. While Engberg-Pedersen sees a *transition* in early Imperial times from one (Stoicism) to the other (Platonism), Plutarch as one of our prime witnesses rather seems to indicate a *transformation* of the very concept of philosophy in that period: namely a turn towards what has been called "popular philosophy"<sup>3</sup>, but may in my view be more accurately termed "religious philosophy". The transformation is marked not only by a more didactic style and a less systematic exposition of philosophy in texts like

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<sup>1</sup> For Plutarch's stance vis-à-vis the Stoic tradition, cf. esp. Babut (1969); building on Reydams-Schils, Opsomer (2014) shows how Platonism and Stoicism share the same historical roots in order to explain the many similarities.

<sup>2</sup> Engberg-Pedersen (2010b) 5. An earlier version of the current paper was delivered at a conference held at the Carlsberg Academy of Sciences in Copenhagen in August 2014 which discussed the thesis by Engberg-Pedersen. I am grateful especially to Philip Stadter and Zlatko Pleše at UNC Chapel Hill for their extremely valuable observations and suggestions.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. recently Thom (2012).

Ps.-Arist. *On the kosmos*, the *Hymn of Cleanthes*<sup>4</sup> or even the *Tablet of Cebes*, but also by the appearance of Jewish and later Christian Platonists and – related to this development – the integration of arguments based on the interpretation of religious tradition (symbolism, law, ritual) into philosophical discourse. The latter development, however, which affects the very concept of philosophy can be witnessed not only in Jewish and Christian texts, but also in a contemporary pagan-religious writer like Plutarch, followed later by Numenius, Apuleius, Maximus of Tyre among others. Because he represents a pagan example of this evolving strand of religious philosophy, Plutarch, the professed Platonist and priest of Apollo at Delphi<sup>5</sup> seems to me a key figure in this development.

As is well known, we witness in Hellenistic and early Imperial times the development of philosophical commentary as a new genre signaling a renewed interest in the authoritative works of the founding fathers (esp. Plato and Aristotle). Alongside the founders of the philosophical traditions the wise men of old are now regarded as founding figures: they handed down their knowledge which is believed to be inspired by God or the gods themselves in the form of religious traditions. Such traditions are being interpreted philosophically alongside the writings of Plato. Philo of Alexandria, the Hellenistic-Jewish exegete, who in this way interprets the founding document of his religious tradition, the law of Moses, and Plutarch who interprets for instance the Epsilon in front of the temple of Apollo in *De E apud Delphos*, but also Egyptian myth, ritual and law in *De Iside et Osiride* are the most compelling examples of this development. This decidedly religious strand of philosophy in the early Empire (religious in the sense of a strong bond with the traditions of lived religion rather than just speculative metaphysics) was strongly influenced by the interpretation of Plato's writings and especially of the *Timaeus*<sup>6</sup> and the *Laws*<sup>7</sup>. The authors asked where the world came from and whether the *πατήρ και ποιητής* who brought it into being (*Tim.* 28c) would be able and willing to sustain – or even restore – it. And what it might tell us about

<sup>4</sup> Both texts are discussed by Thom (2012).

<sup>5</sup> Contrary to recent criticisms I would still hold that for Plutarch his priesthood at Delphi is much more than just an office (even though this is surely one aspect of it): 1. he discusses the theology of the oracle with Apollo at the centre; 2. he makes the shrine of Apollo the venue of several dialogues discussing religious traditions and theology; 3. he combines his philosophical schooling with the oracle; 4. he speaks in personal terms of his relationship to Apollo – not too much different from the ways in which Aelius Aristides talks about Asclepius or Dio Chrysostom about Zeus in the *Olympian oration* (or. 12).

<sup>6</sup> Reydams-Schils (1999).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Engberg-Pedersen (2010b) 12, made out “transcendence” as a key objection of the Platonists against the Stoic concept of God, for which Plutarch is a pagan-religious witness. The other issue, according to EP, is freedom and determinism.

## THEOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS IN PLUTARCH'S ANTI-STOIC POLEMICS 19

the relationship between man and God (especially since man – like the rest of the world – is obviously a corruptible, mortal being while God is not), if he is not just a maker (*ποιητής*), but also a father (*πατήρ*)? Further they ask, what kind of intermediate beings may have taken part in the creation of the world? Whether it is possible to know anything about God in his complete otherness (28c). How humans were able to relate to him, to emulate his absolute goodness (29e) and even become part of his everlasting life. This religious strand of Platonism construed God as opposed to the corruptible, sense-perceptible world. In that context, I do not believe so much in the common opinion that religious writers (be they Jews, Christians or religious “pagans”) felt “the need to articulate and buttress” their message in philosophical terms<sup>8</sup>. Rather, philosophical argumentation had become part of their religious enterprise (and the other way round).

In what follows, I will point to the fact that in Plutarch's polemics against the Stoics' theological topics and arguments (or arguments developed in dialogue with the traditions of lived religion) occupy a prominent place. By investigating these theological or religious arguments I will take Plutarch as a test-case for the role attributed to such arguments in philosophical discourse in Early Imperial times<sup>9</sup>. Now, few people would doubt that in Plutarch's case we are in fact dealing with a philosopher, but many scholars might ask to what extent his religious standpoint is of relevance when one wants to interpret his philosophy. Already Babut has devoted two long chapters to religion and theology comprising more than a hundred and fifty pages: “Religion: L'interprétation allégorique; la démonologie” (367–440), “Religion: Dieu. La religiosité” (441–527) – which is about twice as much as he spent on “Les principes” and “Éthique” – and rightly so! And J. Opsomer concludes: “Plutarch is a deeply religious thinker; the nature of the divine as well as our relation to it are for him what philosophically matters most”<sup>10</sup>. My intention in this contribution is to link this question to another one, namely how we are to interpret the many Stoic traits in a basically Platonist thinker<sup>11</sup>: I want to argue that Plutarch can borrow heavily from Stoicism, but

<sup>8</sup> Engberg-Pedersen (2010b) 12.

<sup>9</sup> “Theological” and “religious”, of course, are not identical: while most scholars would agree that speculative metaphysics are part of the philosophical agenda of Hellenistic and Post-Hellenistic philosophy, for many scholars arguments taken from religious traditions have no place in philosophical argumentation; cf. Mansfeld (1999) 452.

<sup>10</sup> Opsomer (2014) 91.

<sup>11</sup> That Plutarch is indeed basically a Platonist is hardly ever questioned since Jones (1916).

that theological issues form the dividing line which he will not cross. A discussion of some of the crucial points of disagreement in part 3 will hopefully support this view. Plutarch's harsh polemics, as we shall see, take place particularly within the sphere of theology.

At times such theological arguments are brought forward with the authority of the priest or the rigor of the preacher. Clearly, what is at stake here is more than philosophical insight. Philosophical enquiry is here part of the pursuit of happiness and eventually life. It not only improves our current way of life, but leads the way to new and lasting life. That may explain why, as Engberg-Pedersen has rightly observed<sup>12</sup>, the polemics are so much more aggressive from the Platonist side: a lot is at stake! For the Platonist, Stoic immanence poses a threat to the concept of a transcendent, personal, benevolent, life-giving deity as formulated not only by Judaism and Christianity, but increasingly also by pagan-religious writers.

### ***1. Plutarch's mixed attitude towards the Stoics***

With the opening dedication of the *De E apud Delphos* to his Stoic friend Sarapion<sup>13</sup> (to which we will soon return) Plutarch openly and explicitly acknowledges the importance of Stoic reasoning in philosophical and religious discourse elevating Sarapion's competence above his own (even if, of course, the praise of one's addressee is part and parcel of the genre of a prooemium). Plutarch's writings show many imprints of Stoic reasoning: his emphasis on moral philosophy<sup>14</sup> and the treatment of different *πάθη* (even if in a more Peripatetic way pursuing an ideal of tempered *πάθη* rather than Stoic *ἀπάθεια*), his emphasis on providence<sup>15</sup>, the central role given to the *λόγος* which pervades the world (esp. in the *De Iside et Osiride*), terminology like *ἀπόσπασμα*, *μορίον*, *ἐγκατασπείρειν* in the doctrine of the soul<sup>16</sup>. Plutarch's use of Stoic ideas is more than just an element of a "syncretistic" philosophical program, more than just another philosophical voice that Plutarch would give to one of the speakers of his dialogues. Rather, many tenets of Stoic origin are integrated in Plutarch's philosophical thought. On the plane of theology, Plutarch's move towards immanent visibility of the utterly transcendent divine, his religious aesthetics and his hermeneutical optimism may be influenced by Stoic thinking (they can, however, also be traced all the way back to Plato's *Timeaus*). Plutarch is fascinated with the idea of the presence of

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Engberg-Pedersen (2010b) 12.

<sup>13</sup> Sarapion plays a major role in Plutarch's *De Pythiae oraculis*.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. e.g. Oakesmith (1902); Babut (1969); Opsomer (2014).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Swain (1989).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Quaest. Plat.* II,1000E–1001C.

## THEOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS IN PLUTARCH'S ANTI-STOIC POLEMICS 21

God within the corporeal world<sup>17</sup>. He plays with the idea that the sun is in fact the clearest image of the divine (most prominently in clearly natural scientific terms in *De facie*)<sup>18</sup>.

All this can be understood in the context of Stoicizing tendencies within Platonism<sup>19</sup>. But if Plutarch is so close to Stoicism, how are we to account for the rather harsh criticisms of Stoic doctrines not only in his anti-Stoic treatises, but throughout his work? The positive attitude towards a (religiously flavored) philosophical dialogue with Stoic friends discussed in the second part of my paper is all the more remarkable in view of the polemics that make up its third part.

Jean Sirinelli tried to explain these differing views by a development in Plutarch's thought: in later years when Plutarch formulated the religious dialogues as his "four testaments" he had grown more moderate towards Stoic doctrines<sup>20</sup>. In my view this interpretation does not really match the evidence. The religious dialogues, which certainly belong to the latest phase in Plutarch's work, still show the same harsh criticisms of Stoic teaching (despite the dedication of the Pythian dialogues to a Stoic!).

In his magisterial study, Babut notes Plutarch's favorable attitude towards some Stoics as well as towards some tenets of Stoicism which he shared (like for instance the definition of the divine by Antipater of Tarsus: ζῶν μακάριον καὶ ἄφθαρτον καὶ εὐποιητικὸν ἀνθρώπων; *De Stoic. rep.* 1051F), but at the same time Plutarch's fundamentally differing world view: "Tandis que chez Plutarque, alors même que les mots sont les mêmes que dans les textes stoïciens, le fond, le soubassement d'idées et les croyances qu'ils traduisent, se révèle inconciliable avec la vision stoïcienne du monde"<sup>21</sup>. If Babut is correct we have to be very careful when using Stoic terminology in order to explain Plutarch's stance vis-à-vis Stoicism. Not only does Plutarch not feel bound to the Stoic semantics of Stoic terminology, he sometimes consciously uses Stoic terminology in order to subvert its meaning and correct the concepts attached to it.

Where Plutarch does indeed use Stoic ideas and concepts, he does not simply rearrange traditional tenets into a new picture. "He shows himself willing to incorporate foreign ideas and techniques only insofar as they agree with the fundamental ideas and practices of Platonism.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *De tranq. an.* 477CD where the world is called a temple full of images of the divine.

<sup>18</sup> At the same time stressing, however, that as soon as the sun pretends to be divine itself it darkens our vision of God, because it holds us captive within the physical realm; cf. *De Pyth. or.* 400CD; *Amatorius* 764DE. Cf. Roskam (2006).

<sup>19</sup> Bonazzi – Helmig (2007).

<sup>20</sup> Sirinelli (2002) 417.

<sup>21</sup> Babut (1969) 533.

When he integrates Stoic ideas he takes care to subordinate them to the encompassing Platonic framework<sup>22</sup>. I cannot put it any clearer than this. This is the fundamental insight about Plutarch's use of Stoic material (and any other philosophical – or religious – tradition, for that matter). What I would like to add to the picture is the suggestion that in the context of the religious fabric of Plutarch's kind of Platonism the view of the divine is a key concept that decides what can be accepted from Stoicism and what cannot. The most heated debates arise where eventually theological questions are at stake<sup>23</sup>.

## ***2. Plutarch's positive attitude towards the Stoics: dialogue between schools***

In order to get a better grip on Plutarch's attitude towards the Stoics it seems helpful to start with the following question: "Exactly how did these two schools (Stoicism and Platonism) interact with one another? Did they at all react to one another? And if they did, what was the character of that reaction?"<sup>24</sup> They did indeed, as the example of Plutarch shows. It is well known that Stoics are amongst Plutarch's friends and amongst the interlocutors of his dialogues<sup>25</sup>. But the proem of Plutarch's *De E apud Delphos* bears witness to an even more fundamental relationship and interaction not just of individuals, but of *schools*<sup>26</sup>. We witness here a dialogue (or at least the one half of a dialogue) between two schools – Plutarch's Platonist school and the school of his Stoic friend Sarapion<sup>27</sup>, that is, school interaction on a historical level. Plutarch writes:

I, at any rate, as I send to you, and by means of you for our friends there, some of our Pythian discourses, an offering of our first-fruits

<sup>22</sup> Opsomer (2014) 88.

<sup>23</sup> Similarly Opsomer (2014) 98: "Plutarch reserves his most severe criticism for Stoic theology". Opsomer shows that the theological argument plays a vital role even in Plutarch's polemical writings which are usually regarded as technical philosophical works. Already Babut had argued that the question of the immanence or transcendence of the divine is what ultimately renders Plutarch's position and that of the Stoics irreconcilable (for a comprehensive treatment of Plutarch's view of the theology of the Stoics, cf. Babut (1969) 441–527). But to make it absolutely clear: Plutarch does not only criticize Stoic statements about the divine, but he traces all the different issues back to their theological implications.

<sup>24</sup> This was one of the questions posed by Troels Engberg-Pedersen to the participants of the symposium held at the Carlsberg Academy of Sciences in Copenhagen in summer 2014.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Babut (1969) 239–270.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Hirsch-Luipold (2014) 107–115.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Babut (1969) 246–248.

## THEOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS IN PLUTARCH'S ANTI-STOIC POLEMICS 23

(ἀπαρχή), as it were, confess that I am expecting other discourses, both more numerous and of better quality, from you and your friends, inasmuch as you have not only the advantages of a great city, but you have also more abundant leisure amid many books and all manner of discussions (384E).

Four aspects have to be stressed here:

1. This is a rare testimony of an ongoing *dialogue and interaction between a Platonist and a Stoic school*. Interdenominational dialogue, so to speak, in a joint effort to search for the truth<sup>28</sup>. The dialogue happens on equal terms: Plutarch even gives up the role of the authoritative teacher in his introductory notes asking Sarapion and his Stoic circle for discourses “of better quality” in return<sup>29</sup>. Even considering the laws of genre, Plutarch clearly expresses his intention to enter into discussion with his Stoic friend and – as he says explicitly – the philosophical circle around him<sup>30</sup>! This fact has, as far as I can see, been mainly overlooked in discussions on the interrelation and interaction between philosophical schools in the Early Imperial period.
2. The subject matter: what exactly does Plutarch want to discuss with his Stoic friend? The subject matter of the philosophical discussions within the Pythian dialogues is the philosophical meaning of traditional *religious symbols, the nature of God and his interaction with man* as well as the *modes of communication* of God with man (through media like the Pythia, through oracles, *daimones*, and the like). In other words: the Pythian dialogues are about theological issues arising from the religious traditions at life in Delphi<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> That truth is to a large extent theological truth, truth about the gods, is stated explicitly at the beginning of *De Iside et Osiride* 351CD.

<sup>29</sup> If we look more closely at the composition of the dialogue, which has a double frame, the same happens within the dialogue: Plutarch – when asked about the meaning of the enigmatic E as the authoritative teacher and priest at Delphi – accepts this role only in order to recount a discussion on this very topic that took place in Delphi 30 years earlier – with his teacher Ammonius in the role of the teacher and he himself figuring as the slightly over-motivated student.

<sup>30</sup> For a completely different interpretation of *De E* as an amusing intellectual play cf. Obsieger (2013) 93: “nicht als ernste Abhandlung über das delphische Epsilon, sondern als hübsches Kabinettstückchen intendiert”.

<sup>31</sup> The question of the conception of God arising from certain aspects of religious tradition and praxis is also the subject of some of Maximus of Tyre’s philosophical orations not too much later; cf. Trapp – Hirsch-Luipold (forthcoming). This is a precious testimony, because Maximus’ orations were intended as an introduction for the educated non-specialist into philosophy, and thus offer a glimpse into what was regarded as the standard repertoire of philosophical knowledge.

3. This theological focus of the philosophical discussion is underlined by the *religious flavor* added by the *setting* of the dialogue (the conversation takes place on the steps of the temple of Apollo in Delphi where Plutarch held office for many years as one of the two priests) as well as by the *metaphorical language* used in the dedication<sup>32</sup>. The cultic metaphor of an offering (*ἀπαρχή*) used in 384E not only constitutes an intertextual reminiscence of Plato's *Protagoras* 343b<sup>33</sup> where the Delphic sayings of the Seven Sages (of which Plutarch will speak a little later in the text in 385DE) are called an *ἀπαρχή*.
4. The *programmatic* nature of this religious-philosophical subject matter of the school-dialogue with Sarapion's school is underscored by the fact that this cultic metaphor is part of one of Plutarch's often programmatic prooemia (later in the dialogue taken up especially by the speeches of Plutarch's teacher Ammonius). Plutarch, it becomes clear from this dedication to his Stoic friend Sarapion, regards the Stoics in principle as pious philosophers. This is why they qualify to form part of Plutarch's philosophical and religious search for the truth. Accordingly, Plutarch quotes several times with approval from Antipater of Tarsus' work "On the gods".

The positive disposition toward Stoics and Stoic doctrine is to be found throughout Plutarch's oeuvre, even in his polemical works. In ch. 38f. of *De Stoicorum repugnantibus*, for instance, Plutarch discusses the Stoic doctrine of the gods with a quotation from Antipater: "We conceive God to be an animate being, blessed and indestructible and beneficent towards men" (θεὸν τοίνυν νοοῦμεν ζῶον μακάριον καὶ ἀφθαρτον καὶ εὐποητικὸν ἀνθρώπων; *De Stoic rep.* 1051E–1052A). Even though it is not Plutarch's intention in a polemical work to actually engage with the Stoic doctrine about God (his intention is rather to point to dogmatic differences within the Stoa), he could surely subscribe to all aspects of this definition<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> An aspect that is completely overlooked in the commentaries by Thum (2013) and Obsieger (2013). Thum cannot see where Plutarch's position as priest in Delphi has any impact on his philosophy. Both, setting and imagery, are part of the answer.

<sup>33</sup> Οὔτοι (sc. the seven sages) καὶ κοινῇ συνελθόντες ἀπαρχὴν τῆς σοφίας ἀνέθεσαν τῷ Ἀπολλωνί εἰς τὸν νεὼν τὸν ἐν Δελφοῖς, γράψαντες ταῦτα ἃ δὴ πάντες ὑμνοῦσιν, Γνώθι σαυτὸν καὶ Μηδὲν ἄγαν (cf. Bonazzi (2008) 208; Obsieger (2013) 99, rejects this view without sufficient argumentation: "wegen des verschiedenen sachlichen Bezugs" [?]).

<sup>34</sup> That is actually the reason why he quotes Antipater: in order to show how far Chrysippus departs from this sensible doctrine.

### 3. *Plutarch's critique of Stoic doctrines on the basis of their theological implications*

Despite Plutarch's positive disposition toward the Stoics and quite a few of their doctrines, we find harsh criticisms also. Having argued already that such criticism in most cases has to do with theology (in terms of the doctrine about God), I will in the next part survey some of the most important theological objections against Stoicism, taken from the polemical works as well as from Plutarch's other religious and philosophical writings. One polemical quotation from *De comm. not.* 1074E that sums up Plutarch's critical view of Stoic theology may suffice: "... they began to upset from the very hearth and foundation, as it were, the established traditions in the belief about the gods and, generally speaking, have left no conception intact and unscathed" (transl. Cherniss). In what follows we will not be able to discuss in detail whether or not the Stoic theory of God can be justifiably described as monistic and as materialistic<sup>35</sup>. What is important for our current purposes is that Plutarch attacks the philosophy of the Stoics on the basis of their doctrine of God.

#### 3.1. Theological monism of the Stoa and Plutarch's polylatric monotheism

Plutarch, to be sure, has great sympathy for monistic views of God. In a celebrated speech placed in the mouth of his teacher Ammonius, Plutarch stresses that God as the only true being necessarily has to be one (*ἀλλ' ἓν εἶναι δεῖ τὸ ὄν, ὡσπερ ὄν τὸ ἓν*; *De E* 393B). The appellations of Apollo are interpreted etymologically to the same effect: *Ἀπόλλων μὲν γὰρ οἶον ἀρνούμενος τὰ πολλὰ καὶ τὸ πλῆθος ἀποφάσκων ἐστίν, Ἴήιος δ' ὡς εἷς καὶ μόνος* (393BC)<sup>36</sup>. As other gods like Eros, Zeus or Osiris in other writings, Apollo is here treated as *the* God; what is said about him is in fact said about the divine as such<sup>37</sup>. I have argued elsewhere that Plutarch's position could be described as one of "polylatric monotheism": he believes that the multitude of approaches to traditional gods with their respective mythical and cultic actualizations have to be regarded as multifaceted phenomenal representations referring ultimately to one and the same

<sup>35</sup> This is an ongoing discussion; cf. for instance Gourinat (2009).

<sup>36</sup> Important is the move from Plato's *τὸ ὄν ἀεί* (*Tim.* 27d; cf. *De E* 392E) to the personal *εἷς καὶ μόνος* (*De E* 393C; cf. 393A).

<sup>37</sup> To what degree the theological opinions expounded here have to be attributed to the historical Ammonius is a matter of some discussion; cf. Brenk (2005); Opsomer (2009). For our purposes what is crucial is that this theology can be shown to be in accord with Plutarch's own theological convictions elsewhere.

divine essence. He thereby differentiates the oneness and unity of God from his phenomenal expressions<sup>38</sup> and local forms of worship.

However, the monistic view of God, as Plutarch argues most forcefully against what he perceives as the Stoic monistic position in the *De Iside et Osiride*, has to be complemented by a second active principle. The first half of the treatise (after Plutarch has recounted the myth of Isis and Osiris) is taken up by several approaches to explain Egyptian mythology which culminate in a long section on Stoic allegorical interpretation (here in fact called τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν Στοικῶν θεολογουμένα; 367C). At the end of this section Plutarch rejects a strict, unqualified monism. “We must neither place the origins of the universe in inanimate bodies, as Democritus and Epicurus do, nor yet postulate one reason and one providence, dominating and ruling everything, as the creator of characterless matter, as the Stoics do.”<sup>39</sup> Rather, theological monism needs to be supplemented for two reasons: the explanation of evil and the differentiation of the immaterial and thus imperishable and eternal divine on the one hand and the physical realm of becoming and decay on the other. It is neither acceptable, says Plutarch against what he portrays as the Stoic position, to make God the origin of evil nor to dissolve him into the corporeal realm by identifying him with physical objects like images of the gods or natural phenomena like the sun.

### 3.2. The attribution of evil to God<sup>40</sup>

If it is true that God is good (Plato, *Rep.* II 379bc)<sup>41</sup>, how are we to account for all that is dark, for the destructive forces in the world and eventually for death? A world-view which allows for only one causal principle, argues Plutarch in the *De Iside et Osiride*, makes it impossible to account for evil without making God its cause. This is why two opposing principles are needed, “two gods who are rivals, as it were, in art, the one being the creator of good, the other of evil”. Some people, however, Plutarch hastens to add, would rather call the better one God, the other one a *daimon* (369DE) – and he leaves no doubt that they are right. It is not by chance that this dualism of two opposing gods which is found here for the first time in the history of philosophy and may well have to do with the influence of the Zoroastrian myth that follows<sup>42</sup>,

<sup>38</sup> Represented, for instance, by the variegated robe of Isis as opposed to the white robe of Osiris; *De Is. et Os.* 382CD.

<sup>39</sup> *De Is. et Os.* 369A; transl. Griffith.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Babut (1969) 287–307.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. e.g. *De an. procr.* 1015AB; Philo e.g. *De spec. leg.* I 209 (ὁ γὰρ θεὸς ἀγαθὸς τέ ἐστι καὶ ποιητὴς καὶ γεννητὴς τῶν ὄλων καὶ προνοητικὸς ὧν ἐγέννησε, σωτὴρ τε καὶ εὐεργέτης μακαριότατος καὶ πάσης εὐδαιμονίας ἀνάπλεως).

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Görgemanns (2009) 352 f.

reappears in the context of the most monotheistic passage in Plutarch's oeuvre, once again Ammonius' speech at the end of *De E*. In Plutarch's view, only a Platonic framework allows for this kind of an asymmetrical dualism<sup>43</sup>.

### 3.3. Immanentism and materiality/corporality

Theological monism, if it does not recognize that God's oneness stands over the multifaceted nature of the phenomenal world, necessarily leads to the idea that God pervades everything (a position often called "pantheism"). In several places Plutarch mocks the idea that God is physically present within the corporeal realm (e.g. *De Is. et Os.* 369A; 377D; *De comm. not.* 1075A)<sup>44</sup>, because it has a number of detrimental theological consequences. To say, as some philosophers do, that God is mingled with the material sphere (ἕλη) is neither plausible nor fitting (οὐ γὰρ εἰκόδες οὐδὲ πρέπον) because it subjects the divine to change (*Ad princ. iner.* 78IF).

#### a) The contamination of God by matter

Contrary to the Stoic idea of the physical presence of God within the corporeal world, the One according to Plutarch has to be "simple and pure" (*De E* 393C; cf. *De Is. et Os.* 382C). Every contact with anything else results in a *μίαισμα*, a defilement, which would corrupt the divine One (Plutarch uses the image of dying and the mixing of colors which is called "spoiling" [φθορά] in this passage in *De E* 393C). Through this defilement with the physical world God would lose his absolute status. The consequence would be change, destruction and eventually the death of God – negating the very idea of the divine.

#### b) Dissolution of the divine into matter

The supposed corporality of the divine, according to Plutarch, dissolves the divine into matter and thus – by blurring the distinction between the divine intelligible realm and the corruptible material world – negates the

<sup>43</sup> Cf. also Alt (1993).

<sup>44</sup> God is not immanent, according to Plutarch, but the world-soul is (as the principle of movement within the world). The world-soul is set in order by the divine logos, but never fully. We here find an analogy with the human soul which is not just rational; it does have the *nous* as a divine part within itself but is of mixed nature (cf. *De virt. mor.* 443BC; *Quaest. Plat.* IX, 1008C; *De an. procr.* 1026C; in contrast to the Stoics' monistic view of the soul).

very idea of God who is by definition not subject to decay, but eternal. One expression of this confusion is the allegorical interpretation of the classical Gods as physical realities<sup>45</sup>. This leads to an absurd identification of gods with material objects like crops or wine, “winds or streams” (πνεύματα και ρεύματα; *De Is. et Os.* 377D), or even the statues of gods thereby dissolving them (διαλύοντες). This would be like mistaking sail, rope and anchor for the helmsman. But it is ungodly (ἄθεος) to call objects that have neither perception nor a soul by the name of gods. “It is impossible to conceive of these things as being gods in themselves; for God is not senseless nor inanimate nor subject to human control” (*De Is. et Os.* 377EF); “we should not honor these, but through these we should honor the divine”; for “the divine is not engendered in colors or in forms or in polished surfaces” (*De Is. et Os.* 382A). Plutarch makes it very clear whom he has in mind by adding just one quotation: “Persephone is called somewhere by Cleanthes ‘the wind (πνεῦμα) that rushes through the crops and dies away’” (transl. Griffith). This quotation leads us to a short digression on πνεῦμα.

One example: the role of πνεῦμα in the context of divination in Delphi

The aforementioned quotation from the *De Iside et Osiride* serves a double purpose in its polemic context: firstly, by quoting one of the Stoic champions Plutarch makes it clear that in his view it is indeed the Stoics who are liable to the charge of unduly mixing the gods with the corporeal world; and secondly, the quote allows Plutarch to pick on one of the key concepts of Stoic theology, namely the notion of πνεῦμα. Plutarch will argue a little later that the divine is defined by its being life, but Cleanthes, in this quotation, says about the πνεῦμα that it “dies away”. What, the alert reader may wonder like Celsus, the Platonist critic of the Christian concept of incarnation, what is supposed to be divine about this dying πνεῦμα? Plutarch does not even bother to explicate this thought.

Plutarch also criticizes the idea of a physical presence of God in a divine πνεῦμα elsewhere, namely in the context of the discussion about oracular activity and divine inspiration in *De defectu oraculorum*. In this dialogue, several explanations are put forward why oracular activity may have declined in recent decades in Greek oracular sites. According to the daimonological interpretation *daimones* who are actually mortal are responsible for the inspiration at Delphi. When they die oracular inspiration ceases. This brings Cleombrotus, one of the main speakers of the dialogue, to point to the Stoic belief (420AB) that even the gods are mortal (with the exception of Zeus who is eternal). This theory, as we have seen, is repeated (and rejected) elsewhere in Plutarch’s work.

<sup>45</sup> For Plutarch’s critique of Stoic *allegoresis*, cf. Hani (1972) 169–187.

## THEOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS IN PLUTARCH'S ANTI-STOIC POLEMICS 29

What interests us here is the Stoic theory – adopted by several writers – that the mechanisms of inspiration at Delphi are explained by a divine stream (*πνεῦμα*) that is said to evaporate from a chasm right below the tripod and to fill and thus inspire the Pythia<sup>46</sup>. It is interesting to see how Plutarch takes up this Stoic tradition in order to twist it. The theological reason why the idea of a divine *πνεῦμα* is unacceptable is given by Plutarch's teacher Ammonius. He explains:

I do not know how it happened, but a little time ago we yielded to logic in wresting the prophetic art from the gods and transferring it merely to the demigods. But now it seems to me that we are thrusting out these very demigods, in their turn, and driving them away from the oracle and the tripod here, when we resolve the origin of prophecy, or rather its very being and power, into winds and vapors and exhalations ... (*εἰς πνεύματα καὶ ἀτμούς καὶ ἀναθυμιάσεις; De def. or. 435A*<sup>47</sup>).

Stoic immanentism, Plutarch argues, detracts from the actual source of inspiration (the divine), or, even worse, it dissolves the divine into matter<sup>48</sup>. Thus, because he is opposed to the Stoic idea of the physical *πνεῦμα* as a divine entity, Plutarch consciously uses Stoic terminology, but repudiates the theological concept behind it. What he does accept is the Stoic concept of a material *πνεῦμα*; as we will see, he even calls it *θειότατον* because it helps in the divinatory process. But Plutarch allots to the *πνεῦμα* a different, merely physiological role in the mechanisms of divination, turning it into a corporeal precondition for the reception of the divine message: far from being the divine essence permeating the physical world, the *πνεῦμα* is a wind that cleanses and dries the moist surrounding of the soul in the human body. The logic is the following: every human soul has the capacity to communicate with the divine, but

<sup>46</sup> Strabo 9,3,5: *πνεῦμα ἐνθουσιαστικόν*; Pseudo-Longinus' *On the sublime*: breath "full of god" (*ἀτμός ἔνθεος*; 13,2); Dio Chrysostom, *or.* 72,12: "the spirit that filled" the Pythia (*ἐμπιπλωμένη τοῦ πνεύματος*); Pliny speaks of an intoxicating exhalation (*exhalatione temulenti*; *Natural History* 2,95,208); later Iamblichus *On Mysteries* 3,11 speaks of a fiery *pneuma* that surrounds the Pythia. Cf. Gunkel – Hirsch-Luipold – Levison (2014) 78 f.; Holzhausen (1993).

<sup>47</sup> Transl. Babbitt.

<sup>48</sup> The actions of the gods can be seen within the physical world, but never the gods themselves. In the same way the divine cannot be directly involved in the process of inspiration: "Certainly it is foolish and childish in the extreme to imagine that the God himself after the manner of ventriloquists ... enters into the bodies of his prophets and prompts their utterances, employing their mouths and voices as instruments". The theological reason follows right away: "For if he allows himself to become entangled in men's needs, he is prodigal with his majesty and he does not observe the dignity and greatness of his preeminence" (414DE).

this capacity is blinded when the soul is combined and mixed up with the body (432A), just like the sun's ability to shine is sometimes dimmed by clouds or fog<sup>49</sup>. These corporeal limitations overshadowing the reception of divine messages can be overcome by the prophetic current and breath (*μαντικὸν ῥεῦμα καὶ πνεῦμα*) in Delphi: it opens up pores or makes the moist soul dry, like a steamy mirror (cf. 433A for the image of a mirror) thus bringing about the predisposition for the reception of divine inspiration (*De def. or.* 435F–436A). The *πνεῦμα* is thus called “most divine and holy” (*τὸ δὲ μαντικὸν ῥεῦμα καὶ πνεῦμα θειότατόν ἐστι καὶ ὀσιώτατον*; 432D) not because it is the carrier of divine inspiration, but because it renders the medium receptive for the divine message. The central point of Plutarch's Platonist reinterpretation of the (Stoic) concept of a physical *πνεῦμα* is that the Delphic *πνεῦμα* belongs to those physical means – and may in fact be the principal means – by which the God in Delphi prepares the way for human beings to become prophetic and visionary.

It may just be a rhetorical strategy on Plutarch's part to incorporate a theory that he could not neglect, because it was so prominent in his days. However, it not only shows Plutarch's ability to incorporate Stoic ideas and Stoic terminology while adjusting them to his own theological framework, but also underscores the point that the dividing line lies in the theological implications of some Stoic concepts.

### c) Ridiculous identification of God with physical objects

Already Xenophanes had mocked as most ridiculous those who lament their gods: “if they believed in the gods, they ought not to bewail them, and if they bewailed them, they ought not to believe they were gods” (*De Is. et Os.* 379B); the same applies to the veneration of animals as gods (379DE). Plutarch attacks the confusion of material images of the divine with the actual divine essence<sup>50</sup>. What is said here about some Egyptians or “barbarians”, therefore, also goes against the Stoics, namely that it is illogical, and also impious, to identify physical objects with gods. The physical realities, be they statues or animals or even the sun, are not gods, but images and instruments of God who orders all things (*De Is. et Os.* 378F–379B). We are not supposed to honor these in themselves, but through them *τὸ θεῖον* (382A). Plutarch's Platonist answer to Stoic

<sup>49</sup> The image of the sun which is often used as a metaphor for God underscores Plutarch's point that the sender (God – sun) is beyond the physical realm of the body (cloud) while the *πνεῦμα* operates within the corporeal sphere.

<sup>50</sup> The clearest example is the sun: it is the clearest image of God within the physical realm, but as soon as it is mistaken to be divine itself it actually begins to obstruct our view on the divine, as is argued against the Stoic Sarapion in *De Pyth. or.* 400D; cf. *Amatorius* 764DE.

## THEOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS IN PLUTARCH'S ANTI-STOIC POLEMICS 31

immanentism takes up an image from *Theaet.* 191c: the divine is visible in the corporeal world but not through physical presence, but in the form of an image without being physically present (like the imprint of a seal in wax<sup>51</sup>).

## d) The destructibility of God

The “idea, sharply condemned by Plutarch, that God is destructible”<sup>52</sup> in Plutarch’s view follows as a natural consequence from his corporality. As we have already seen above, Plutarch quotes the *consensus omnium* as expressed by a Stoic authority (Antipater) to support his point: “... all men hold them [the gods] to be indestructible” (καὶ μὴν ἀφθάρτους αὐτοὺς ἡγοῦνται πάντες; 1051F; cf. *De comm. not.* 1074F–1075A). According to Plutarch this consensus only shows how far off Chrysippus, arguably the most influential Stoic thinker, is<sup>53</sup>. For he holds that only fire is indestructible while “sun and moon and the rest of the gods” are subject to generation and destruction (1052A; cf. *De comm. not.* 1075AB). Thus Plutarch continues: “against this opinion of all men stands Chrysippus who thinks that there is nothing indestructible in the gods except fire”<sup>54</sup>. And he concludes: “if, then, he who holds that the gods are subject to destruction is as absurd as is he who believes that they are not provident and humane, Chrysippus has erred as much as has Epicurus, for the latter eliminates the beneficence of the gods and the former their indestructibility” (ὁ μὲν γὰρ τὸ εὐποιοτικὸν ὁ δὲ τὸ ἀφθαρτον ἀφαιρεῖται τῶν θεῶν; 1052B). The thought would render any form of piety and reverence of the gods obsolete (1052D)<sup>55</sup>.

**3.4. Ekpyrosis**

Especially unacceptable is the theory of *ekpyrosis*. As we have seen, Plutarch rejects in several places as absurd the idea that gods are in fact corruptible and mortal (with the exception of Zeus who is eternal; 420AB; cf. 398A; 415F<sup>56</sup>). But in addition, the theory of *ekpyrosis* would imply

<sup>51</sup> Plutarch, *De Pyth. or.* 404C.

<sup>52</sup> Opsomer (2014) 99.

<sup>53</sup> The goal of the piece is of course to prove as many self-contradictions as possible in the Stoic system or, more specifically, in the writings of Chrysippus.

<sup>54</sup> Several other theologically problematic passages from Chrysippus’ third book *On the gods* follow.

<sup>55</sup> The last sentence introduces a further error which is attributed here to Epicurus, but later in *De Stoicorum repugnantibus* (1055D) also to Chrysippus: their views undermine the beneficent providence of the gods and their benevolence toward man.

<sup>56</sup> Babut (1969) 242 discusses whether Demetrius who is attacked here by Cleombrotus actually has to be classified as a Stoic or not. For our purposes this issue does not matter. What is clear is that Plutarch is attacking a Stoic doctrine in the words of Cleombrotus.

that the creator God is even more foolish than the little boy in Homer who builds a sandcastle only to destroy it again when he gets bored (*De E* 393E; cf. *De Stoic. rep.* 1052B). Quite the opposite is true: the creator God also sustains the world by binding its being together and thereby overcoming the world's corporeal weakness which always tends towards dissolution (συνδᾶι τὴν οὐσίαν καὶ κρατεῖ τῆς περὶ τὸ σωματικὸν ἀσθενείας ἐπὶ φθορὰν φερομένης; *De E* 393E).

### 3.5. Ethics: determinism and free will

There are also ethical reasons for Plutarch's rejection of Stoic ideas, but once again the problem turns out to be theological: Plutarch rejects Stoic determinism which is bound to the idea of the immanence of God, because it undermines human responsibility. But God is not the immanent determining factor of all events, but rather he watches over the world as judge, as the δημιουργὸς δίκης (*De sera* 550A) – ready to punish human wrongdoing and willing to cure human shortcomings. This idea has another dimension, namely, that of theodicy. Even if it is not always comprehensible to us, God reacts in a fair and appropriate manner to human sin. But his punishment is not an automatism. Rather, God reacts as a pedagogue and physician in accordance with what is needed under the circumstances (cf. *De sera numinis vindicta*).

### 3.6. Why theology forms the dividing line: soteriology

What is interesting in Plutarch's attacks on Stoicism in the field of religion and theology is the religious language in which it is phrased. The opponents are shown to be not just intellectually wrong. Rather, says Plutarch, their opinions are impious. It is sacrilegious even to listen to their doctrines (οὐδ' ἀκούειν ὄσιον<sup>57</sup>) – like the idea that God allows himself to suffer change and alteration through fire or that he may be pulled down into land and sea and winds, and into the misery of animals and plants (*De E* 393E). Theology as the goal of philosophy is obviously more than just an intellectual enterprise. But what is so important about it that it gives rise to Plutarch's fierce attacks against his otherwise close philosophical allies? This becomes clearer when we look at the "dialectical theology" that follows in *De E*: as humans, says Plutarch, we have no share in being (ἡμῖν μὲν γὰρ ὄντως τοῦ εἶναι μέτεστιν οὐδέν; *De E* 392A). As the mysterious EI signals, God is the only being in the true sense. Because this is so, only through ὁμοίωσις θεῷ will we overcome our mortal existence.

<sup>57</sup> Other expressions: τὰ ἀκίνητα κινεῖν (1074E) – an accusation usually waged against the Epicureans; τὰ καθεστῶτα κινεῖν καὶ πάτρια τῆς περὶ θεῶν δόξης; wash someone's mouth etc.

For God as true being is able to bind all the corruptible parts of the world together in his unity<sup>58</sup>. Thus, to acknowledge God as the only true being and at the same time to acknowledge our own nature, i.e. to realize that we are bound to decay and death, is the only road towards an overcoming of death. Bearing in mind that the question of death and the search for an overcoming of death was a central topic in religious as well as philosophical texts of Early Imperial times (cf. for instance the Ps.-Platonic *Axiochos*), it becomes obvious that more is at stake here than a mere display of intellectual cleverness and rhetorical excellence.

### 3.7. Final Verdict: Atheism

All the above views, which are eventually tied to the idea of the immanence of God, have to be rejected most forcefully according to Plutarch, because they are detrimental and lead directly into atheism. In a way what Plutarch has said in *De superstitione* could apply here as well: to deny the existence of God is less damaging than to spread sacrilegious views of the divine<sup>59</sup>. It amounts to an “abyss of ἀθεότης”, if we regard the gods as mere passions or δυνάμεις or virtues (*Amatorius* 757B), a remark clearly aimed at Stoic physical or psychological allegory. Plutarch thus calls the Stoics “atheists” – just like the Epicureans, even if for very different reasons. This designation clearly shows the theological nature of his quarrel with Stoicism.

In the case of the Epicureans Plutarch stresses the ethical implications of their erroneous theology. Atheism of the Epicurean variety actually destroys the life of the community as well as the happiness of the individual<sup>60</sup>. It is different with the Stoics. Plutarch would never question their high moral and ethical standard (and indeed, as we have already said, he incorporated many of their ideas into his philosophy). Nor would he generally question their piety<sup>61</sup>. But he would still call them “atheists”, because in his opinion their views of the divine amount to a negation of the very concept of God as eternal and good. If Plutarch's religious

<sup>58</sup> This thought is extremely close to the theology and ontological soteriology of Paul in 1Cor, especially ch. 15,28.

<sup>59</sup> “But professed atheists are less dangerous than certain Stoics whose impiety, though concealed, is fundamentally more scandalous”; Hadas (1941/2) 273.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. *Non posse; De latenter vivendo*.

<sup>61</sup> But of course the first attack against a philosophical opponent will always be that his philosophy is not matched by his conduct (cf. the very first line of *De Stoic. rep.* 1033AB). In that context Plutarch also criticizes the piety of the Stoics: on the one hand, Zeno claims temples to be worthless, on the other, Stoics attend mysteries and do reverence to statues of the gods (*De Stoic. rep.* 1034BC). They are even more inconsistent in this than the Epicureans.

standpoint is accepted, this must surely be viewed as a harsh rejection. How can this be reconciled with Plutarch's high esteem for Stoics and Stoicism in other contexts? If we turn for a moment, just for the sake of comparison, to the New Testament which is sometimes no less polemical in tone, we might realize that there is no need to be too surprised about Plutarch's wording. In the Gospel of Mark Jesus notoriously calls Peter, the leader of the disciples, a "stumbling block" and even: "Satan" (Mk 8,33; compared to this, "atheist" seems a rather mild reproach!). Has Jesus changed his positive disposition towards Peter? No, his attack is directed at a certain damaging behavior and opinion on Peter's part. It is a position that does damage to Jesus' message and as a consequence also poses a threat to the salvation of the individual follower. Likewise, bearing in mind the theological and also religious-soteriological side of Plutarch's criticism of Stoicism may help to explain the fervor of the attack despite the marked affinities. If the goal of Plutarch's philosophical endeavor was not only the search for the truth, but also "Seelenheilung" (Ingenkamp) in the broadest sense, including even the well-being of the soul after death, the centrality of this goal may explain the harshness of his attack against those who in his view stand in the way even though they may have important things to say. It may explain why "Plutarch's attitude towards this rival school [sc. the Stoics] can indeed be characterized as a mixture of respectful acknowledgment of its merits and condemnation of some of its key tenets"<sup>62</sup>.

#### 4. *Some conclusions*

1. As is well known, Plutarch is on good terms with the Stoics and accepts some of their doctrines as well as their terminology. However, caution is in place: as we have seen especially in the case of *πνεῦμα*, Plutarch sometimes uses Stoic terminology (and concepts) in order to correct the concepts behind it. On the other hand, Stoicism is also heavily criticized, and these criticisms are not confined to Plutarch's polemical works or to a certain phase in his life (Sirinelli), but run through his entire work including the dialogues (we have not, of course, considered the *Lives* here).

2. While Plutarch accepts several Stoic ideas, the decisive dividing line is constituted by the theological implications of some Stoic tenets, above all the idea of the immanence of the divine within the corporeal sphere, or, in other words, a monism that encompasses both the physical and the intelligible realm<sup>63</sup>. Whittaker stated in 1981: "One of the most important

<sup>62</sup> Opsomer (2014) 88.

<sup>63</sup> de Faye (1927) 104: Plutarch thought of the Stoics as his closest relatives, "mais la doctrine de l'immanence de Dieu dans le Cosmos le scandalise".

## THEOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS IN PLUTARCH'S ANTI-STOIC POLEMICS 35

themes of late Hellenistic intellectualism is that of the transcendency of the supreme God, who is regarded as utterly remote from this universe and as completely incomprehensible to the mind of man. In part this conception must be viewed as a reaction against the grosser forms of Stoic materialism, which in pantheistic fashion identified God with the physical universe and declared that God and the world are one.<sup>64</sup> Plutarch's most severe criticism arises in the field of theology, or rather: they arise from the theological implications of the respective doctrines. This view is corroborated by the religious language used ("atheists"; sacrilege etc.) as well as by the religious contexts in which some of the discussions arise.

3. If we take Plutarch as a prime witness to the transformations happening in the philosophy of the first century AD, Plutarch's dividing line may indeed signal a transformation happening within (Platonist) philosophy of the Early Empire, namely a move towards a religious philosophy not only in Jewish circles, but also in pagan-religious philosophy. This transformation, as far as Plutarch's witness goes, is characterized by two aspects: on the one hand, the Platonic sphere of ideas came to be interpreted (if not gradually replaced) by the idea of God. On the other hand, traditions of lived religion became a second authoritative tradition (along with Plato's dialogues) leading towards divine truth. *θεολογία* not just in the sense of philosophical speculation about the divine, but in the sense of a reflection and philosophical interpretation of traditional wisdom about the divine (as represented in myths, images, rites and the like) became part of the philosophical discourse. And conversely: more than in classical and Hellenistic times philosophy became part of the religious life of an intellectual person. The vehemence of Plutarch's attacks against the Stoics becomes much more understandable if we consider the religious nature and implications of the conflict.

4. What eventually separates these Platonists from the Stoics is their different stance vis-à-vis traditional religious beliefs and practices<sup>65</sup> as well as the belief that God is beyond the physical realm of this world.

5. Basing itself on traditions of lived religion, this form of Platonism searched for a new, lasting life beyond human mortality. To this soteriological goal opposing views posed a fundamental threat. Much more than just an intellectual dispute was thus at stake: wrong opinions were not just regarded as intellectual mistakes, but as leading to a distorted and sacrilegious view of the divine and an unholy (and in the end disastrous)

<sup>64</sup> Whittaker (1981) 50.

<sup>65</sup> This may be best grasped when one looks at Seneca's 41st letter.

life. This may explain why these Platonists attacked the Stoics who were otherwise so close to them<sup>66</sup>, but not so much the other way round.

6. This view of a religious turn of philosophy in the first century AD, if accepted, would indeed change our reconstruction of the way in which philosophical discourse developed in the first three centuries AD. The integration of arguments from religious traditions and theology into philosophical discourse which turns such traditions into a second authoritative source for the search of the truth along with Plato and perhaps even into a basis for philosophy, would then have to be regarded not as a special development within Hellenistic Judaism or a way of rendering Christianity acceptable to Greek intellectuals, but rather as a general development within a religious strand of (Platonic) philosophy in the first century AD, in which Jewish as well as Christian Platonism also partake. Philo as well as Plutarch and the Christian Platonists would have to be seen not as the exception, but as the rule or rather: the new trend.

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<sup>66</sup> Celsus will later attack the Christians on the same grounds.

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269

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273

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275

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277

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## Index locorum

<p>Aelian  <i>De nat. an.</i>  7,38                    225</p> <p>Aeschines  3,171                    235  3,172                    151</p> <p>Alexander of Aphrodisias  <i>in Metaph.</i>  39,13–15                57</p> <p>Anaximenes  <i>FGrH</i> 72 F 24        245</p> <p><i>Anonymus Seguerianus</i>  436 ll. 8–12            161</p> <p><i>AP</i>  6,50                    84  7,258                    75  9,700                    84</p> <p>Apostolius  <i>Cent.</i>  xiii 94                    85</p> <p>Appian  <i>BC</i>  1,97,451–455        209  2,6,22                    207</p> <p>Archilochus  <i>Fr.</i> [West]  5                        157</p> <p>Aristophanes  <i>Nub.</i>  63–64                    218  65                        218  66–67                    218  134                        218</p>		<p>985–989                219  1353–1368             219  1178–1195             246</p> <p>Aristotle  <i>Ath.</i>  27,5                    169  <i>Frg.</i> [Rose]  189                    197  190                    197  <i>Frg.</i> [Ross]  II                        62  <i>Metaph.</i>  985b                    57  <i>Poet.</i>  5, 23–26                115  5, 1449b16–20        115  6, 1449b27             115  9, 1452a4              115  11, 1452a25–26      115  13, 1453a7–10        115  14, 1453b33–1454a9                                    119  15, 1454a26–33      114  15, 1454b9             115  <i>Polit.</i>  I,2, 1253a29            13  <i>Rhet.</i>  1363a14                76</p> <p>Arnobius  <i>Adv. nat.</i>  4,31                    174  7,39                    172</p> <p>Asclepius philosophus  <i>In Arist. Metaph.</i>  6.35                    263</p> <p>Athenaeus  456AB                    110</p>
---	--	---

Augustinus		Dio of Prusa	
<i>C.D.</i>		12	18
4,19	178	72,12	29
4,26	172		
8,13	172	Diodorus of Sicily	
Ausonius		3,38,4	260
<i>Epigr.</i>		9,36,2	164
32	110	13,64,4	169
33	110	13,64,5-7	169
		13,64,6	169
Cassius Dio		16,26,1-4	94
46,16,1	119	Diogenes Laertius	
61,13,3	131	9,1	58
61,16,2 <sup>2</sup>	132		
63,9,4	132	Dionysius of Halicarnassus	
63,22,6	132	<i>Ant. Rom.</i>	
63,28,4-5	132	2,34,3	119
78[77],2,1-6	132	6,3,1-12,5	165; 192
Catullus		6,13	165; 192
38,7-8	72	6,13,1-3	185
		6,13,4-5	165; 185
Cicero		6,23-24	189
<i>De amic.</i>		6,45-90	189
6	200	6,54	168
<i>Div.</i>		6,70,2	119
1,55	172; 174	6,93,1	167
<i>Div. in Caecil.</i>		6,94,2	168
66	200	6,94,3	177
<i>Har.</i>		7,1,5	193
23	174	7,2,4-11,4	193
<i>N.D.</i>		7,15-18	193
2,6	192	7,19,4	170
3,11-13	192	7,21,2	168; 170; 193
3,38,90	44	7,58,3	171; 172; 185
<i>Phil.</i>		7,62,3	170
2,67-69	142	7,68,1-2	171
2,67	142	7,68,2	172
2,77-78	141	7,68,3-69,2	172; 185
2,77	141	7,68,3	173
<i>Pro Caelio</i>		7,69,2	173
62	204	7,70,1-73,5	174
		7,73,5	172; 185
Demosthenes		8,2,2-4,4	172
43,51	248	8,25,4	166
		8,28,1-3	166
		8,28,5	166
		8,29,1-2	166

## INDEX LOCORUM

289

8,29,4	163; 165; 192	Gellius	
8,39,1-2	177	5,6,12	164
8,39,2	175		
8,39,5	166	Harpocratio	
8,40,3	166	sv. δεκάζων	169
8,41,2-6	166		
8,44,3-4	166	Heraclides	
8,45,1-3	166	Fr. [Wehrli]	
8,47,4	166	81	214
8,47,5	166	146	248
8,48,1	166	149	245
8,51,1-53,4	166		
8,51,3	166	Heraclitus	
8,52,3	166	Fr. [D.-K.]	
8,53,3	166	22 B 27	58
8,54,1	166	22 B 41	58
8,56,1-4	178; 185	22 B 45	58
8,56,1	178; 179	22 B 62	58
8,56,2	178		
8,56,4	178	Herodotus	
8,62,2	181; 185; 190; 193	1,66,5-7	164
<i>Comp.</i>		6,105-106	213; 216
6	72	6,117	221
23	72	9,95	84
<i>De imitat.</i>			
2,420	72	Hesiod	
		Fr. [Merkelbach – West]	
Epicurus		235	72
Fr. [Us.]			
228-229	175	Homer	
		<i>Il.</i>	
Euripides		14,86-87	202
<i>Alc.</i>		<i>Od.</i>	
780	81	12,105	119
Fr. [Nauck]			
979-980	42	Hyperides	
<i>I.T.</i>		<i>Or.</i>	
289	118	5, frg. 4 col. 13	238
<i>Or.</i>			
420	42	Iamblichus	
		<i>Myst.</i>	
Festus		3,11	29
67 ll. 15-18	167		
87	201	Inscriptions	
		<i>IG</i>	
Galen		ii2 3606	222
<i>Adh. art. add.</i>		<i>SEG</i>	
8,1	250	LVI 430	223

290

## INDEX LOCORUM

LVI 431	223	Macrobius	
LVI 432	223	I,II,3-4	172
LXI 269	223	I,II,5	174
Isocrates		Minucius Felix	
<i>Antid.</i>		7,3	172
304	64	27,4	172
Lactantius		Nepos	
<i>Inst.</i>		<i>Miltiades</i>	
2,7,II	178	4	217
Livy		Pausanias	
2,36-37	172	I,14,5	220
2,36	172	I,15	224
2,40,1	175	I,28,4-5	218
2,40,12	178	I,32,3	223
5,22	180	I,32,5	224
[Longinus]		I,32,7	224
13,2	29	2,33,3-5	237
		10,25-27	84
Lucian		Philo of Alexandria	
<i>Bis acc.</i>		<i>Abr.</i>	
9-10	218	255-261	11
<i>DDeor.</i>		257	11
22,3	218	<i>Spec. leg.</i>	
<i>Demonax</i>		I 209	26
14,7	227		
53	227	Philolaus	
<i>Dialogi meretricii</i>		44 B 13 D.-K.	57
10,1,12	227		
10,2,9	227	Philostratus	
<i>Icaromenippus</i>		<i>VS</i>	
18	223	2,1,15	223
34,9	227	2,1,546	223
<i>Navigium</i>		2,1,558	223
13,12	227	2,1,562	222
<i>Phalaris</i>		2,1,566	223
1,3	227		
<i>Pro lapsu</i>		Pindar	
3	213; 215	<i>Ol.</i>	
<i>Somnium</i>		2,86-89	71
1-4	226	<i>Pyth.</i>	
<i>Zeus Tragoedus</i>		3,81	81
16	227		
32	226		
33	226		

## INDEX LOCORUM

291

Plato		Plutarch	
<i>Crat.</i>		<i>De aud. poet.</i>	
400c	65	15CD	118
<i>Grg.</i>		15C	75
524a	259; 260	16A–17E	118
<i>Ion</i>		19DE	133
543ab	85	25B	117
<i>Lg.</i>		26F–27A	192
816de	140	<i>De aud.</i>	
896de	68	41F	85
<i>Phd.</i>		<i>De ad. et am.</i>	
85e–86d	59	50E	117
86cd	59	56F	117
93c–94a	59	63A	117
<i>Phdr.</i>		<i>De prof. in virt.</i>	
246a	65	76A	12
<i>Phlb.</i>		79C	85
48c	140; 141	83BC	12
48d	140	83E	12
49bc	140	<i>De cap. ex inim.</i>	
<i>Prt.</i>		91E	85
339a	75; 85	<i>Cons. ad Apoll.</i>	
343b	24	102CD	11
<i>Rep.</i>		105A	73
344de	108	107B	81
379bc	26	111C	82
396c–409b	138	121D	259; 260
457b sqq.	240	<i>De tuenda</i>	
460c	240	133C	107
472a3–4	41	<i>Con. praec.</i>	
599b sq.	240	138D	245
<i>Tht.</i>		141A	204
191c	31	<i>Sept. sap. conv.</i>	
<i>Ti.</i>		148E–149C	108
27d	25	152D	244
28c	18; 19	163D	180
29e	19	<i>De superstit.</i>	
30b	63	167A	259
51ab	67	<i>Reg. et imp. apophth.</i>	
Pliny the Elder		172E	194
<i>NH</i>		193A	166
2,95,208	29	204E	200
7,84	217	206BC	207
35,34	224	<i>Apophth. Lac.</i>	
		239B	157
		<i>Quaest. Graec.</i>	
		279F	245

<i>Quaest. Rom.</i>		392E	25
42	171	393A	25
49	168; 169	393BC	25
70	173	393B	25
92	164	393C	25; 27
<i>Parall. Graec. et Rom.</i>		393E	32
305C	224	394A	67
<i>De fort. Rom.</i>		<i>De Pyth. or.</i>	
317A	175	397E–398A	180
319A	178	398A	31
<i>De Al. Magn. fort.</i>		398AB	180
329F	117	398BC	180
334A	119	400CD	21
<i>Bellone an pace</i>		400C	118
345F	225	400D	30
346F	77; 80	402C	80
347CD	213; 214	403A	95
<i>De Is. et Os.</i>		403B	95
351CD	23	403EF	95
359F–360A	68	404B	96
359F	85	404CD	96
367C	26	404C	31
369A	26; 27	404EF	96
369DE	26	404E	94
369D	67	404F–405B	176
370F	68	405CD	96
372E	67	405E	95
374A	68	406BC	95
377D	27; 28	406C	96
377EF	28	406DE	96
378F–379B	30	406E	96
379B	30	407BC	96
379DE	30	407C	96
381B	179	407DF	96
382A	38; 30	407D	96
382B	58	408BC	100
382CD	26	408B	96
382C	27	408CD	97
382F	176	408C	97
<i>De E</i>		408DE	96
384E	23; 24	408D	97
385DE	24	408F	97
386D	95	409B	100
387F	91	<i>De def. or.</i>	
388EF	91	413A1–D7	38
388F	91	414DE	29
391F	85	415F	31
392A	32	420AB	28; 31

## INDEX LOCORUM

293

428B	68	548D2-3	42
428F	68	548F-549A	43
432A	30	549AB	43
432D	30	549A6-II	42
433A	30	549BC	43
433CD	94	549CD	43
435A	29	549C	44
435CD	94	549D3-7	42
435F-436A	30	549E5-550A3	49
436B	84	549E2-3	41
438B	94	549E5-7	39
438CD	95	549F-550C	49
<i>De virt. mor.</i>		550A	32
441F-442A	59	550C-551C	47
443BC	27	550C	252
443CD	10	550D-552B	47
449B	10	551CE	47
449E	170	551CII	49
<i>De coh. ira</i>		551D	49
459D	173	551E	48
463D	170	552A-553C	48
464A	176	552B12	48
<i>De tranq. an.</i>		552DE	48
465A	204	552E2	49
470D	75; 85	552F-553A	49
473DE	92	553A5	49
477CD	21	553D	49
<i>De frat. am.</i>		553F-554B	49
478C	122	553F3-4	49
485C	75; 85	554BC	49
492A	202	554B	49
<i>De am. prol.</i>		554C9-D1	50
493E	245	554EF	48
494A	85	554F5-555D4	49
<i>De gar.</i>		555C11-D4	50
514F-515A	77	555DF	49
<i>De cur.</i>		555F-556D	49
518C	235	556D6-9	49
<i>De vit. pud.</i>		556E6-9	44
534CD	113	556E9-11	44
<i>De se ipsum laud.</i>		556F-557E	51
545E	119	557E-558A	51
<i>De sera num.</i>		558AD	51
548A1-B7	39	558C	52
548B3	38	558DF	51
548B7-C5	39	558D5-9	49
548C3	38	558F4-5	49
548D	43	559AC	52

559C10–D6	52	<i>De exilio</i>	
559DE	52	602D	72
559E6–7	52	<i>Quaest. conv.</i>	
560A1–10	52	612D	103
560B2–4	40	612E	103; 104; 105
560B5–8	53	613A	103; 105
560B8–C7	53	613C	103; 105
560F6–A6	53	613D	103; 105; 106
560F3–6	53	613E	107
561A1–8	53	614A	103; 106
561A1–6	41	614E	107
561A6–8	54	615AB	107
561A9–B7	54	615A	103; 104
561B7–10	43	615BC	107; 108; 109
561B7	49	615B	103
561C	45	615F–616A	62
561C1–10	54	618B	93
561C1–3	42	620B–622B	95
561C10–562A12	51	623C	103
561E9–F3	45	624A	103
562A13–D9	51	624B	103
562D10–E9	49	629DE	101
562E9–563B5	54	635B	93
<i>De genio Socr.</i>		636E	103
575C	98	641D	93
576DE	98	643E	93
576EF	98	648E	103
576E	99	648F	103
576F	97; 98	653A	103
577AB	98	654F	103; 105
577D	99	655A	103
578E	99	655E	103
579CD	99	657B	103
580A	180	657D	202
583D–585D	97	657E	103; 106
584B	99	669D	109
585F–586A	99	671B	103
586DE	99	671C–672C	102; 103
588CD	179	671C	103; 110
588E	179	671D	110
591D–592C	99	671E	104
591DE	61	675E	103
594BD	97	680AB	112
594BC	98	680A	103; 106
597AD	100	683F	103
597F	100	700B	233
598AB	100	705B–706C	93
598CD	100	705B	104

## INDEX LOCORUM

295

710F	104	<i>De Her. mal.</i>	
711E	119	855B	231
714C	104	858B	237
715B-716C	93	867F	83
715E	104	869BC	74; 77
716B	104; 106; 108	870C	126
717A	104	871B	74
722C	80	872DE	73
726E-727A	206	873B	84
726F-727A	93	<i>Plac. philos.</i>	
728F	179	900DF	179
738A	107	<i>De facie</i>	
738B	104	921C	258
741A	104	926C	118
743F	75; 85	942DE	263
745A	104	942D	262
746B-747A	93	942F	262; 263
747C	104	943CE	263
<i>Amatorius</i>		944A	262
751B	244	944BC	5; 255
757B	33	944C	94; 255; 256; 264
759B	94	944F	262
764DE	21; 30	<i>De soll. an.</i>	
769A	251	959D	11
<i>Ad princ. iner.</i>		965D	252; 253
781F	27; 176	972F-973A	178
<i>An seni</i>		<i>De esu</i>	
783E	85	996B	126
784BC	86	998E	119
785A	83; 86	<i>Quaest. Plat.</i>	
786B	76; 86	1000E-1001C	20
786D	166	1000E	66
<i>Praec. ger. reip.</i>		1001BC	61
798D	82	1002EF	63
802E	118	1008C	27
808E	113	<i>De an. procr.</i>	
809B	85	1012A-1030C	59
811D	176	1014E	66
812C	175	1015AB	26
813E	204	1015B	67
814AE	97	1016C	66
815D	175	1025D	60
819F	234	1026C	27
821F	169	1028B	263
823F	252	<i>De Stoic. rep.</i>	
<i>Dec. or. vit.</i>		1033AC	232
846B	238	1033AB	33
		1033F	232

1034Asq.	233	2,7	64
1034A	233	<i>Aem.</i>	
1034BC	33	1,1-2	151
1034F	233	5,3	204
1036C	233	24,4-25,7	203
1038E	233	25,2-4	165
1039Dsq.	233	25,4	203
1040Asq.	233	<i>Ages.</i>	
1040D	233	15	100
1041A	233	<i>Alc.</i>	
1051E-1052A	24	1-9	188
1051F	21; 31	1,3	188
1052A	31	1,7	188
1052B	31; 32	1,8	188
1052D	31	2	114
1055D	31	2,1	114
1057A	176	2,2-2,7	189
<i>De comm. not.</i>		3,1-2	189
1066D	229	4,4-4,6	189
1074E	25; 32	4,5-5,5	189
1074F-1075A	31	6,2	189
1075AB	31	6,3	189
1075A	27	6,4	189
<i>Non posse</i>		7,1-3	189
1086D	229	7,3-5	189
1086EF	95	8,1-6	189
1087CD	95	16,1-9	187
1092Esq.	230	16,1	131
1093B	231	19,1-2	131
1098AB	166	22,4	131
<i>Adv. Colot.</i>		23,2-5	131
1122BD	176	23,4-5	187
1123B	118	23,4	114
1127A	229	27-37,5	169
<i>De lib. et aegr.</i>		32,2	169
9	63	34,3-8	131
<i>Pars an facultas</i>		34,3-7	189
6	64	34,7	190
<i>Fr. [Sandbach]</i>		35,3	131
144	62	36,6-37,4	190
145	63	39	190
177	65	<i>Alex.</i>	
178	64; 68	1,2	147
<i>Fr. [Tyrwhitt]</i>		19,7	130
1,8	63	29,1-6	130
2	64	35,2-16	162
2,5	62	37,5	133
2,6	64	42,4	131

## INDEX LOCORUM

297

45	130	58,5-59,1	129
47,5-12	130	59,7-8	205
51	130	60,3	178
52,7	131	63	145
54,3-6	130	67	145
67,8	130	68,4	146
71	130	71,3	145
71,8	130	75-87	145
72,1-2	130	75	145
74,2-3	130	76	145
75,5	118	77,5	129
75,8	130	84	129
<i>Ant.</i>		<i>Arat.</i>	
1,1-3	141	15,3	117
1,2-3	205	<i>Arist.</i>	
2,8	128	19,7	84
4	128	20,4-5	219
4,7-9	204	<i>Art.</i>	
4,9	205	6,9	118
10,3	141	18,6-7	118
10,4-5	141	27,10	202
10,4	142	<i>Brut.</i>	
14,1	142	31,4-6	122
17,4-5	128	33,5	203
21,2	142; 203	40,3	203
23-24	142	<i>Caes.</i>	
24,1-5	111	32,7	207
24,1-2	143	37,2	180
24,3-4	129	45,7	202
24,3	143	46,1	207
24,4	143	50,3-4	207
24,7-8	143	50,4	208
24,9-12	129	51	208
24,11	144	<i>Cam.</i>	
25,1	143	6	185
26,1-2	144	6,1	180
27,1	144	6,2	180
28,2	145	6,3	180
29,1-2	144	6,4	180
29,1	128	6,5	180
29,2	144	6,6	180
29,4	129; 145	13,2	199
31,5	181	19,12	164
43,5	205	<i>Ca. Ma.</i>	
43,3-6	128	1,2-3	200
45,4	128	1,2	200
54,5	129	1,3	200
56,7-8	129	1,7	170

3,2	173	<i>Comp. Dem. et Cic.</i>	
4,2	169; 173	3,5sq.	238
4,4	173	3,5	236; 239
4,5-5,7	173	3,6	236
18,2	169	<i>Comp. Demetr. et Ant.</i>	
<i>Ca. Mi.</i>		3,1-3	128
8,4	207	6,2	145
16,7	113	6,4	129
61,6	203	<i>Comp. Lyc. et Num.</i>	
65,4-5	14	3,12-3,13	169
69	14	<i>Comp. Sol. et Publ.</i>	
<i>CG</i>		1,3	177
17,9	206	2,2	244
<i>Cic.</i>		2,4	244
1,1-2	152	<i>Comp. Thes. et Rom.</i>	
1,2	149	6,4	169
1,3-5	200	<i>Cor.</i>	
1,5	152	1	182
5,1	158	1,1-1,6	184
5,2	158	1,2-6	163
5,3	158	1,2-3	13
6,4-5	158	1,3-1,6	163; 188
6,4	158	2,1-21,4	182; 184
7,6	203	2-4	182
8,3	149; 199	2	182
16,3	207	2,1-2,2	188
17,2-4	200	3	182; 189
22,4	207	3,1-3,3	163; 188
23,6	242	3,1	192
29,5	204	3,3-3,4	163; 182; 184
45	158	3,3	191
45,6	159	3,4	164
46,1	159	3,5	164; 194
46,2-6	159	3,5-3,6	165; 182; 190; 192
<i>Cim.</i>		4	182; 186
2,4sq.	239	4,1-2	163; 165
4,6-7	224	4,1-4,5	188
<i>Comp. Ages. et Pomp.</i>		4,3-4	166
4,4	203	4,3	166
4,6	123	4,5	166
<i>Comp. Arist. et Ca. Ma.</i>		4,6-4,7	188
1,3	173	4,6	166; 182
<i>Comp. Cor. et Alc.</i>		5-21,4	182
2,6-7	188	5-7	182
3,3-3,6	189	5,1-4	163
4,7-5,1	189	5,2	170
4,7-9	188	8-11	182
		8-9,1	182

## INDEX LOCORUM

299

8,1-2	163	22,3	188
8,3	162; 188	23	172
9,1-2	167	23,10-27,1	183
9,2-II	182	23,10	187; 189
9,2-II,6	187	24-25	187
9,2	187	24,1-7	172; 183
9,3	167; 177; 182; 187	24,1-5	183
9,4	167	24,1	171; 187
10,1-5	167	24,6-7	183
10,8	163	24,7	172; 173
II	168	24,8-10	172; 173; 183
II,1	167	24,8	172; 177
II,2-6	161; 162; 167; 168; 182	24,9	173
II,2	168; 193	24,10	173
II,4	191	25,1	172; 183
II,5	194	25,2-7	173; 183
II,6	167; 191	25,2-4	173; 174
I2-21,4	182	25,2	191
I2-13	182	25,5-7	173
I3,6	170; 171	25,6	191
I4-15	182	25,7	173
I4	168; 189	26	172
I4,1-15,7	187	26,2-6	172
I4,1-15,1	193	27,2-29	183
I4,1	170; 187	29,2-5	163
I4,2-6	168; 170; 171; 182; 187	30-38	183
I4,2-3	168	30-32,4	183
I4,3-6	168; 169	32	175
I4,5	169; 191	32,1-4	175
I4,6	169; 191	32,1	175
I5,1	170; 192	32,4-38	183
I5,2-3	170	32,4-33	183
I5,4-5	163; 171; 187	32,4-38,7	187
I5,4	162; 188	32,4	175; 187; 193
I6-21,4	182	32,5-8	175; 176; 183
I6,1-17,6	171	32,6-7	176
I6,1-2	163	32,7-8	176
I6,1	193	32,8	176
I8,3-8	171	33,1-2	177
I9,1	171; 177; 182	33,1	177
20,9	177	33,2	177; 183
21,1-2	163	33,3	175
21,5-39	183	34-36,5	183
21,5-39,13	184	36,6-38	183
21,5-29	183	36,5	186
21,5-23,10	171; 183	37,1-5	178
		37,5	178
		38	180

38,1	178; 179	10,3-5	155
38,2-7	178; 183	11,3	235
38,2-3	178	11,7	155
38,3	178; 179	12	155; 235
38,4	179; 193	12,4	235
38,6	179	12,7sq.	235
38,7	162	12,7	155; 241
39	183	13,5-6	156
39,1-8	183	13,6	235
39,9-II	183	14	156
39,9	180	14,1	156; 234
39,10-II	180; 183; 184	14,2sq.	236
39,10	180; 181; 193	14,3	156
39,11	164	15,1sq.	236
39,12-13	183	17-18	236
<i>Crass.</i>		17	156
12,5	203	18	156
33	125	19	156; 236
33,7	125	20,1	157
<i>Dem.</i>		20,2	157; 236
1,1	148; 149; 152	20,4sq.	237
1,4	148	21-22	237
2	152	21,2	118
2,1	149	21,3	237
2,2-4	152	22,1	237
2,2	149	23,2sq.	237
3,1	149; 150; 152; 155;	23,6sq.	237
	164	25,5	238
3,2	153	26,2	238
3,3	234	26,5	238
3,4	151	27	238
4-II	235	28,2	238
4	234	30,5	238
4,1-2	151	31,3	238
4,1	152	31,4	238; 241
4,2	235	<i>Demetr.</i>	
4,7	235	1	151
5-II	153; 155	1,3-4	139
6,5	153	1,3	141
7,1-4	154	1,5	138
7,5	154	2,3	128
8	154	13,3	127
8,3	235	18,5	127
8,7	154	19,4-10	128
9	154	24,1	127
9,2-3	154	25,5	127
9,2	155	25,9	127
10,1	155	28,1	127

## INDEX LOCORUM

301

30,2-3	127	<i>Marc.</i>	
34,4	127	1,1	201
41,5-8	126	1,2-5	202
42,1-6	127	1,2	202
42,1-7	127	<i>Nic.</i>	
44,8	127; 128	29	125
44,9	126	<i>Num.</i>	
47,6	127	1,3-1,5	174
53,1	128	4	185
53,10	128	4,2	179
<i>Dion</i>		4,3-4,11	179
2,4-7	162	4,11-4,12	180
2,7	165	8,4	180
21,7-9	162	8,5-8,21	174
21,9	186	12,3	181
32,1	12	14,3-5	174; 195
52,5	241	14,6-12	174
<i>Fab.</i>		18,6	181
1,2	201	19,1	181
1,3-4	201	19,8-9	181
1,3	15	22,3-5	174
1,4	201	<i>Oth.</i>	
4,6	198; 199	4,8	180
19,2	202	18,2	206
<i>Flam.</i>		<i>Pel.</i>	
11	100	29,9-10	119
<i>Galba</i>		<i>Per.</i>	
1,6-8	124	2,5	165
12,4-5	124; 127	28,2	118
27,4	124	33,6	156
<i>Luc.</i>		39,2-3	162
11,2	117	<i>Phoc.</i>	
21,3	117	3,2-3,5	169
21,6	117	3,5sq.	241
<i>Lyc.</i>		3,8sq.	241
15,1-2	245	8,3	156
28	139	16,1sq.	234
<i>Lys.</i>		17,7	241
12,1	190	33,7sq.	242
12,2-9	162	33,9	242
21,7	117	36,2	13
28,7-9	189	<i>Pomp.</i>	
<i>Mar.</i>		13,7	202
I	162	13,11	202; 203
1,2-1,3	168	22,8	202
1,2-1,5	168	24,12	204
27,2-3	123	31,10	117
		31,11-13	117

40,9	202	1,5	169
43,5	202	1,6-7	197; 199
44,3	202	2,1-2	208
60,4	207	6,7-17	208
64,3	202	17,7-8	189
68,7	123	19,9-10	209
70,1-2	123	30-33	208
70,1	123	30,4	174
72,1	202	34-35	208
72,6	123	34,3	208
74,6	202	34,4	208
75	123	34,5	209
77,3	202	38,6	206
78,4-79,2	203	<i>TG</i>	
79-80,1	123	8	200
80,4	203	8,5	201
80,5	203	8,6-10	201
80,6	203	<i>Them.</i>	
<i>Publ.</i>		5,6-7	76
6	13	8,4	83
9,1-8	192	10,1	125
9,9	244; 245	15,4	79; 84
23	177	32,4	125
<i>Rom.</i>		<i>Thes.</i>	
13	199	1,3	118
15,7	164	10,2	85
18,9	207	17,4	79
<i>Sert.</i>		<i>Tim.</i>	
8,2	260	37,1	85
<i>Sol.</i>		<i>Lamprias-catalogue</i>	
1,6	244	42	192
2,1-2	247	100	168
18,6-7	246	210	176
20,1	251; 253		
20,2-6	245; 250; 253	<i>PMG</i> [see also Simonides]	
20,3-4	245	1005	82
20,4	251		
21,1-2	247	<i>Polybius</i>	
22,1	250	2,56,7	120
22,4	248	2,56,11-12	120
23,7-8	247	5,48,9	122
24,3	247	30,18,3	204
24,4	249; 252		
24,5	245; 247; 252	<i>Porphyry</i>	
25,4-5	246	<i>De antro Nymph.</i>	
31,3-4	245	31	259
<i>Sull.</i>			
1,3	208		

## INDEX LOCORUM

303

Posidonius		593	85
<i>Fr.</i> [Edelstein-Kidd]		594	85
261	201	595	80; 82; 86
<i>Fr.</i> [Jacoby]		643	85
41	201	650	72
		<i>Fr.</i> [West <sup>2</sup> ]	
<i>P.Oxy</i>		15–16	73
3965	78	15	73
3965, fr. 5	73	16	73
		16,1–3	73
Proclus		22	75
<i>De dec. dub.</i> [Boese]			
I, 19–21	37		
Quintilian		Simplicius	
<i>Inst.</i>		<i>In Arist. de cael.</i>	
8,6,53	204	7:512	263
10,1,64	72		
<i>Schol. in Aeschin.</i>		Solon	
1,87	169	<i>Fr.</i> [Leão – Rhodes]	
2,130,4	218	32a	247
<i>Schol. in Pindar.</i>		35	247
157a, i 99 Dr.	71	37c	244
		38d	251; 253
Seneca		38e	252
<i>Cl.</i>		38f	252
1,12,2	174	38/l	252; 253
<i>Epist.</i>		39/1c	244
41	35	40b	246
		50b	248
Seneca the Elder		51a	251
<i>Suas.</i>		51b	251
1,7	205	52a	245; 250; 253
		56/a	250
Simonides		56/b	250
<i>Fr.</i> [PMG]		56/c	250
520	81	57/a	248
531	78; 85	60b	247
538	85	74b	244
539	73	74c	244
542	75; 85	74d	244
543	72	75	249; 252
550	79	87	246; 247; 252
571	72	123a	246
572	76	123b	246
577	80	127a	245
		127b	245
		127c	245
		139	245
		144b	244; 245

304

## INDEX LOCORUM

146	245; 246	<i>Testamentum Novum</i>	
<i>Fr.</i> [West]		Mk	
27,9-10	245	8,33	34
		12,42	204
Sophocles		Mt	
<i>Fr.</i>		5,26	204
761	81	1Cor	
<i>OR</i>		15,28	33
4	143		
Strabo		Tzetzes	
1,2,36	119	<i>ad Lyk.</i>	
9,3,5	29	831	110
11,13,3, 523	205	Valerius Maximus	
15,3,2, 248	73	1,7,4	172
<i>Suda</i>		1,8,1	192
I, 367.3	232	1,8,4	178
I, 545	218	5,2,1	178
IV, 337.5-9	72	8,7,13	83
IV, 361.13	73	Varro	
Suetonius		<i>RR</i>	
<i>Div. Iul.</i>		2,4,21	203
30,4	207	Vitruvius	
Syrianus		<i>De Arch.</i>	
<i>In Hermogen.</i>		6, <i>praefatio</i> 3-4	250
p. 86 R.	83	Xenophon	
Tacitus		<i>Ages.</i>	
<i>Hist.</i>		9,3	10
5,5	110	<i>Apol.</i>	
		18	10
		<i>Hell.</i>	
		6,4,33-35	124