plying to Latin the technique elaborated by the rhetorical tradition of the Greeks. We have no explicit evidence that Coelius Antipater had adopted the doctrine of Tauriscus, according to which the object of historical investigation is a "forest without method"[71], a vast repertory of information and heterogeneous facts not susceptible to an analysis governed by rigid methodological norms. But it is certainly significant that his most illustrious disciple, the orator L. Licinius Crassus, transferred this theory from the field of historical criticism to that of rhetoric[72]. According to Cicero[73] he defended the view that, while a technique of elocution is possible for the orator since the language can be regulated by precise norms, the contents of the speech, in their inexhaustible variety and thematic diversity, cannot become the object of a schematic knowledge, but are a *silva magna*: the choice, the structure and the organization of the contents are exclusively entrusted to the discernment, the culture, and the good taste of whoever pronounces the speech.

71. Cf. p.23 n.50.

72. G.Cerri, 'Crasso, Taurisco e la selva senza metodo', *Parola d.passato* 146, 1972, pp.312-320.

73. *De or.*3,24,93.

CHAPTER III

THE IDEA OF BIOGRAPHY

At the beginning of his admirable work on the development of Greek biography, Arnaldo Momigliano (1974)[1] states peremptorily that the ancient Greeks clearly distinguished and separated biography from history. He writes (p.8 [6 of the English edition]):

> Nobody nowadays is likely to doubt that biography is some kind of history. We may well turn back to the inventors of biography, the ancient Greeks, to ask why they never recognized that biography is history.

Such a categorical affirmation immediately suggests to the reader that the present tendency to identify biography with history *tout court* is a phenomenon typical of our time and totally extraneous to Greek thought. In reality, however, as he goes on Momigliano does not always seem so convinced of what he explicitly announced as his point of departure and arrival, since he admits, with H. Homeyer[2], that Herodotus already devoted ample space within his history to biographical profiles in the fifth century (p.14 [12]). With regard to the *Philippica* of Theopompus he rightly observes "the interplay of biography and history" in a single tale (p.65 [62]). Similar observations

1. In view of the bibliographical supplements made by the author himself and the addition of a lecture not contained in the English edition (*The Development of Greek Biography*, Cambridge Mass.1971), the Italian version (by G.Donini, 1974) should be considered in every way a new edition. Gallo 1974 wrote a balanced and lucid review of the edition in English, with personal contributions of his own.

2. *Philologus* 106, 1962, p.75 ff.

appear in the pages he devotes to Xenophon and the historians of Alexander (p.52 ff. [50 ff.]). But, at this point, it is surprising to read (p.108 f. [102 f.]):

> Xenophon wrote portraits of generals in the *Anabasis*. Theopompus recognized the importance of the individual as such and put one man at the centre of his historical narration in the *Philippica*. The historians of Alexander the Great followed his example. *But biography and history did not merge* [the italics are ours].

As we see, the initial idea of a clear separation between biography and history is again affirmed, in spite of the series of examples to the contrary which Momigliano himself has lucidly analysed[3].

Momigliano has had the undoubted merit of posing the problem of the relationship between biography and history in Greek culture. But in order to reach an unambiguous view we must first recognize that the two notions are intimately connected to two different conceptions of history: on the one hand history understood as a series of political events alone, on the other history seen as an anthropology that embraces all aspects of human life: selective history or global history. This diversity of approach to history, as Momigliano points out in his introductory pages, underlies the contemporary debate; but, we must add, it was also operative in the historiographic thought of the Greeks[4]. We must keep this in mind since the evaluations of biography in Greek culture, whether or not it was a kind of history, were actually connected to the very concept of history.

3. This is the main idea of the whole volume and is constantly repeated. See for ex. p.14[12]: "Biography was never considered as history in the classical world"; p.42[41]: "Indeed the implicit separation between biography and history of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. was to become explicit later, at least from Polybius onwards"; p.117: "The distinction between biography and history (i.e. political history) was formulated as a theory in the Hellenistic period, but it already existed in practice in the 5th century ... we must acknowledge that the dichotomy between biography and history is as old as Greek historiography itself".

4. See Chapter I.

When Dionysius of Halicarnassus[5] delineates the aspects and the tendencies of the historiography of Theopompus[6], he explicitly underlines the fact that the biographical objective was one of the guiding lines of his *Histories*. In contrast to other historians, he did not make the biographical narrative (*bíos*) a sort of incidental digression (*párergon*) from the proper historical narrative, but a necessary and indispensable part of it. The foundations of cities, the lives of kings, psychological characterizations and descriptions of environments and customs, all represented what Dionysius calls the narrative *polymorphía* of the historian.

In Theopompus then the biographical interest was inseparable from the critical exposition of the facts and their causes. Dionysius writes[7]:

> The most characteristic element of his historiography, which is not developed with equal care and effectiveness in any of the other historians either past or present ... is not only to see and to say what is evident to everyone in various political events, but also to seek *the hidden motives (aitíai) of the actions and of the man who accomplished them and the passions which move the soul*, which are not easy to discern in the majority of men, and to unveil the secrets of an apparent virtue and of a vice concealed and ignored.

Hence the charge of slander and acrimony (*pikría*) which Polybius levels at Theopompus, a view which marks the difference between two concepts of history attributing a different space and a different function to the use of biography[8]. It is obvious that from the point of view of the apodeictic method[9] followed by Polybius an accentuated biographism, which had a specific role of moral and psychological analysis of the events

5. *Epist.ad Pomp.*6 (II p.244 ff. Us.-Rad.) = *F.Gr.Hist.*115 T 20. See Chapter I, p.16 f.

6. Cf.p.16 f.

7. *Epist.ad Pomp.*6,7 (II p.246,6 Us.-Rad.).

8. Cfr.D.Musti, *Società antica. Antologia di storici greci*,Roma-Bari 1973, p.161.

9. On the term *apodeiktikós*, used by Polybius as the correct attribute for describing his own historical method, see p.32 n.86.

in Theopompus' global historiography, would appear mystifying in comparison with a rigorous and scientific analysis of purely political reasons.

Dionysius of Halicarnassus shows that he does not share this critical position when he observes in the *Roman Antiquities*[10] that the duty of the historian is to relate not only the military exploits of illustrious leaders or the most salutary governmental measures they have taken for the advantage of the cities, but also their private lives, emphasizing their personality and their coherence with patriotic traditions. This is a use of history in the line of Isocratean historiography, and in clear opposition to a uniform and monochord (*monoeidês*)[11] type of history, exclusively centred on political and military facts. As has been observed[12], there is an implicit polemical reference to the pragmatic history of Polybius.

Cicero proves himself to be in this same tradition in the letter to Lucceius[13]: here he elaborates on a type of history in which the monographic and unitary dimension of the narrative concentrates the reader's attention on a single personage placed at the centre of the events. As we see, this presupposes a close interaction between history and biography[14].

At this point we may wonder what the true position assumed by the theorist of pragmatic-apodeictic history was. Momigliano writes[15]:

> The old and honoured distinction between history and biography — which Polybius (10, 21 [24]) had proclaimed, Plutarch (*Alex.* 1,2) had recognized, and Eduard Meyer had reconfirmed as late as 1902 — was apparently being denied by the boisterous international clan to which Emil Ludwig, André Maurois, and Lytton Strachey most conspicuously belonged.

10. 5,48,1.
11. *Ant.Rom.*1,8,1-3.
12. S.Gozzoli, 'Polibio e Dionigi di Alicarnasso', *Studi classici e orientali*. 25, 1976, p.157 f.
13. See above, p.56 f.
14. As Momigliano 1974 himself seems to acknowledge on pp.86 [83] and 124.
15. 1974, p.3[1].

But did Polybius really proclaim this "old and honoured distinction", in other words, a rigid separation of tasks and functions between historical and biographical investigation? From an objective reading it would not appear that Polybius had intended to radicalize the theoretical distinction between the two genres. Rather, he defined those elements of biographical information which could be of use within the limits of his historical method. In the chapter in question (10,21), preparing himself to deal with Philopoemen's political and military action, he observes that it would be as well to introduce a portrait of the man, illuminating above all his educational training (*agōgé*) and the characteristics of his temperament (*phýsis*) — a procedure which he followed where other men worthy of particular interest were concerned[16]. In his view it is only right that the formative period of the protagonists of events should be dealt with on account of its relevance and usefulness for the listeners and readers. But in this specific case Polybius abandons these biographical aspects because he has already spoken of them in a work in three books dedicated to Philopoemen in which he narrates the events of his life. Some he describes in detail (those of his private life beginning with his youth). Others are reduced to significant moments (*kephalaiōdôs*) relevant to his political activity at the climax of his career. For the purpose of his narrative he therefore has to make a choice, to give in more detail those biographical data which have a more limited space in the preceding work because of its *encomiastic* intent. What Polybius rejects is not the biographical fact or biography in general, which he instead regards as relevant, not to say essential, to the historical narrative, but an encomiastic bias proper only to a monograph destined to extol a man[17]. History, on the other hand, also on the level of biographical recognition, calls for a veracious exposition of the apodeictic type that

16. Thus, for example, about Xanthippus (1,32,1), Tarquin the Elder (6,2a,7), Hannibal (9,22), Scipio (10,2 f.), Chaeron (24,7,1). Cf.Osley 1946, p.19; P.Pédech, *Rev.ét.gr.*64, 1951, p.91.
17. Hence opposition between encomium and history, not between biography and history. Cf. the perceptive remarks by Walbank 1967, p.223.

mingles praise with blame, without neglecting any reflection or hypothesis useful for the objective, non-tendentious evaluation of the facts.

A reviewer of Momigliano's work spoke of the "divorce between political-military history and the antiquarian treatise", a divorce embracing "the entire range of antiquity" and confirmed by Polybius, both in the passage just examined and in three chapters of Book VIII[18]. Polybius affirms that the accounts of the historians of Philip of Macedon do not have the characteristics of a "history", but of an "encomium". In his view one should neither insult with lies nor flatter monarchs, but construct a narrative suitable for illustrating the principles and the choices which inspired their action. Here begins the polemic against Theopompus who, though recognizing the great merits and the genius of Philip of Macedon in his *Histories*, had insisted bitterly and violently on his intemperance and vices, using false information. Polybius really insists in both passages on the idea that the task of the historian is to evaluate objectively the vices and the virtues that animated and determined the political action, rejecting both a narrative of the encomiastic type, more pertinent to the strictly biographical account, and a tendentious and denigratory sort of narrative. Merits and demerits should be evaluated in as much as they are useful for explaining the causes of the events. What really distinguishes biography from history is the selection of the biographical data, in the first case mainly orientated towards the reconstruction of the educational development, in the second towards the cause of political and military events. There is really no dichotomy, no divorce, in Polybius, between historical and biographical narrative, only a fortunate interaction between the two, with a different accentuation on the one or the other according to the type of work written.

In the field of the biographical essay, on the other hand, Plutarch interprets this same need to select the material in order

18. 8 (10) - 10 (12). We refer to the essay by G.Camassa, *Quaderni d.storia* 4, 1976, p.249 ff.

to limit the area of interference between the two fields of interest, with a special view to his own particular type of writing. Addressing his readers in the introduction to the *Life of Nicias* he says that he will deal briefly with those same actions and events which have already been treated so expertly by previous historians like Thucydides and Philistus, events and actions that nevertheless implicate the nature and the behaviour of the characters. He will refer summarily to them for the sake of completeness, but will try to concentrate on those events which have been ignored by many writers and are attested by epigraphic documents and decrees. His object is not so much to compile a useless history (*historía*), but to offer the reader the material necessary for understanding the nature and the behaviour of the protagonist. He shows a full awareness of the different approach of the two types of narrative according to the different functions of the biographer and the historian. This is the sense in which we should also take the peremptory statement contained in the introduction to the *Life of Alexander*: "For it is not Histories I am writing but Lives; not only in the most illustrious deeds is there a manifestation of virtue or vice, nay, a slight thing like a phrase or a jest often makes a greater revelation of character than battles where thousands fall, or the greatest armaments, or sieges of cities"[19].

The theoretical premise is that of Polybius, but reversed, as it were, to suit the focus of the biographer, even if the awareness of the complex mediations between the two distinct and complementary levels of writing remains.

With regard to the relationship between history and biography in the thought and the works of Plutarch, we cannot but refer to the illuminating pages by Mazzarino, who has centred the problem. About *Alex.* 1, he writes[20]: "Here there is indeed a rejection of *history* as a literary genre of extended narration; but not the rejection of historical investigation and the historical

19. Cf.also *Galb.*2,3.
20. 1966, II/2 p.137.

art as such, even if it be concentrated on the form of life of the various personalities, that is, on the *ethos*"[21].

When faced with this problem, what is the point of associating biography with erudition and antiquarianism, in an arbitrary simplification, which opposes it to political-military history? The simplification confers the dignity of history only on the selective narration of political and military facts, i.e. exclusively on Thucydidean and Polybian history. Thus not only biography, but also the global Isocratean or mimetic historiography fall back into the cauldron of erudition, while the former was of an anthropological nature and the latter was essentially dramatic[22].

On the other hand, the frequently repeated distinction[23] between a biography of an erudite nature and a biography with a more complex structure, including historical, political, ideological and ethical elements, would not be understood in a schematic sense, but in relation to the function and to the type of audience for which the individual biographical narrative is intended[24]. In his recent volume on Suetonius[25] H. Gugel starts with this need to surpass certain schematic classifications which tend to flatten the multiple reality of biographical narrative. His criticism stems from a concrete analysis of the *Lives of the Caesars,* which can hardly be reduced to the idea, elaborated by Leo, of a biography of an erudite nature and of grammatical derivation[26]. A correct analysis of Greek biography should thus

21. For the interpretation of the two programmatic passages, and to the manner in which Plutarch used his sources, see now B.Scardigli, *Die Römerbiographien Plutarchs,* München 1979, p.3 ff.

22. We have clearly individuated the various tendencies of Greek historiography in Chapter 1. Camassa misrepresents the thought of Momigliano whose work is substantially alien to formalistic classifications, as Gallo (1974, p.186) has rightly remarked.

23. Leo 1901.

24. On the notion of allocutory activity in relation to the theory of genres, see E.W.Bruss, 'L'autobiographie considerée comme acte littéraire', *Poétique* 17, 1974, p.16, with bibliography (French translation by J.-P.Richard).

25. *Studien zur biographischen Technik Suetons*, Wien-Köln-Graz 1977.

26. The opposition he established somewhat mechanically between a "Suetonian" and a "Plutarchean" type of biography was recently attacked

proceed from within, that is, from the identification of the purpose the author has set himself. This principle reveals its validity for examples with regard to the cultural system of the 6th and 5th cent. B.C., when we consider the various motivations behind the Homeric biography of Theagenes and the biographical pages in Herodotus' history.

The object of Theagenes, a rhapsode of the second half of the 6th century B.C., was evidently to furnish the audience of his public recitals of Homeric poems with some essential information on the activity, the family and the epoch of the poet whose verses he recited[27] — a custom observed in a later epoch by other interpreters of Homer like Stesimbrotus of Thasos and Antimachus of Colophon. Different, instead, was the function and, consequently, the typology of the biographical insertion intimately connected with the historical context in Herodotus. Different, too, was the point of view adopted by Ion of Chios for the gallery of biographical portraits in the work (*Epidēmíai*) in which he narrated his meetings at Chios or in other Greek cities with intellectuals and politicians of his time[28]. It is a series of *close-ups* — to use the title of a recent work by Domenico Porzio devoted to interviews with contemporaries — which describe the typical behaviour of the protagonists at significant moments of their daily life. Episodes such as the one when Sophocles contrives a stratagem during a banquet in order to attract the boy who is serving wine and kiss him are neither banal nor gratuitous, but illustrate human qualities, like lasciviousness and wit, in the personality of a great poet who, Ion adds, was only a mediocre politician[29]. Between the lines we sense a

also by I.Gallo on the basis of new material furnished by the discovery of papyri (*Frammenti biografici da papiri*, II: *La biografia dei filosofi*, Roma 1980, p.18).

27. Fr.8 B 1 D.-K., cf.Pfeiffer 1968, p.11.

28. *F.Gr.Hist.*392 F 4 ff. Judging from their content, some fragments of Ion transmitted by the sources without any indication of the work from which they were taken and inserted by Jacoby in the section of fragments with no title, undoubtedly belong to the *Epidēmíai.* In the following brief discussion we have used them in order to reconstruct Ion's technique of portraiture.

29. F 6.

subtle psychological observation which holds true to this day: intellectuality and the exercise of power are not easily reconcilable virtues. The psychological biographical purpose of such anecdotes is also discernible in the encounter with Cimon at a symposium: unlike Sophocles he is not thinking of love but of music. He demonstrates his singing ability and then narrates his stratagem for deceiving the allies in the division of the spoils of war[30]. His behaviour is consistent with Ion's overall judgement of the man, insisting on his tact, on his shrewdness, and on the jovial urbanity of his social behaviour[31].

Similarly, attitudes of arrogance, superiority, disdain and contempt for others are detected in the personality of Pericles — attitudes in striking contrast with the amability and sociability of Cimon. These aspects of his character are certainly reprehensible, but Ion justified them by affirming that human virtue always has something unseemly and laughable as an intrinsic element, just as a tragic performance always has its satirical moment[32].

In Ion of Chios we undoubtedly already find the basis of a portrait which represents the entirety of a man's character, his positive and his negative qualities[33]. It is a biographical technique which does not even neglect particular physical features, as in the case of Cimon, tall in stature, impeccable in appearance, with thick curly hair[34].

It has been rightly said that the biographical portrait differs from the figurative portrait because it introduces "duration and movement"[35] — movement in the sense of existential vicissitudes. This is an aspect that the figurative portrait can in no way describe, while it can, on the other hand, represent the movement of the man in action. We have only to recall the group of tyrannicides, sculpted by Kritios and Nesiotes for the

30. F 13.
31. Plut. *Per.*5,3 = F 15.
32. F 15.
33. Hölscher (1973, p.209 f.) has rightly noted this.
34. F 12.
35. J.Starobinski, 'Le style de l'autobiographie', *Poétique* 3, 1970, p.257.

agorá of Athens, in which Harmodius and Aristogiton are represented in the positive moment of the combative action, not in the negative moment of their death[36]. Both, however, presuppose the same cultural context in which interest centres on the realistic representation and comprehension of the ethos of illustrious men. Nor can we speak of biographical narrative and neglect the phenomenon of the portrait in the figurative arts, a relationship which has been detected by historians and art historians more than by literary historians[37]. It is hardly a coincidence that it should be in the artistic milieu of Chios that we have some of the first portraits, like the gem of Boston, with the physiognomic portrait of a bearded man carved by Dexamenos between 450 and 430 B.C.[38], in the very years when Ion was probably composing the *Epidēmíai.* We can safely go still further and note that the portrait of Pericles by Kresilas really represented that combination, emphasized by Ion, of severe nobility and *satyrikón* in Pericles' temperament. It is rendered by the realistic treatment of the elongated form of the skull, "squill-head"[39], which was, as Plutarch observes[40], subject to recurrent attacks by the comic poets. There are, moreover, attestations of physiognomic portraits, some decades earlier, like, for example, the one by the painter Egesibulus, portraying an old Jew leaning on a cane and accompanied by his dog[41]. Nor

36. See I.Calabi Limentani, *Acme* 29, 1976, p.15.
37. We refer especially to the book by Hölscher (1973) and the intelligent observations of Finley 1976, p.86.
38. Cf.Erika Diehl, 'Eine Gemme des Dexamenos', *Berliner Museen* 16, 1966, p.44 ff., fig.2; D.Metzler, *Porträt und Gesellschaft*, Münster 1971, p.309, fig.25. The relationship we have mentioned between the figurative portrait and the literary portrait was the subject of a seminar held in May 1977 at the Institute of Classical Philology, Urbino, by C.Gasparri, to whom our thanks are due.
39. Cf.B.Schweitzer, 'Bedeutung und Geburt des Porträts bei den Griechen', *Acta Congressus Madvigiani* 3, 1957, p.35 ff. = *Zur Kunst der Antike. Ausgewählte Schriften* II, Tübingen 1963, p.196 ff. Metzler's scepticism seems excessive, *op.cit.*p.217 ff., when he maintains that the detail of visible locks of hair in the eye openings in the helmet is a mere "artistic motif".
40. *Per.*3,4-7.
41. J.Boardman, *Athenian Redfigure Vases. The Archaic Period,* London 1975, p.62 and fig.126.

should we overlook the important information in Plutarch[42] on the poet Simonides, mocked by Themistocles for his mania of having his portrait done in spite of his ugliness. This presupposes that the need for a degree of similarity between the portrait and the physical features of the subject was already felt in that period.

Certainly, the portraits sketched by Ion in the *Epidēmíai* recall the technique of the painted portrait more than a real biographical narrative. As far as we can tell from the available fragments, however, they must have contained one of the distinctive elements of later biography, concentrating on daily behaviour rather than on the great historic events, on a significant daily routine in which the *ethos* of the hero is thoroughly displayed.

Biographical impulses can, of course, be discerned even in a work like the *Certamen between Homer and Hesiod*, which may probably be attributed to the Sophist Alcidamas[43]. Here the two poets are presented practising their profession, in a reconstruction that certainly borrowed elements from the rhapsodic tradition which, as we noted in the case of Theagenes, combined the exposition of biographical information about the poet with the declamation of Homeric poems. In this specific case the information comes from an autobiographical reference by Hesiod himself[44] which recounts a poetic agon in which he took part in the city of Chalkis. The reference may be qualified as the earliest allusion to autobiography, and it clearly situates the poet in a context typical of oral culture and rhapsodic agonism. In this relationship between the biography and the poetic work, we have the first signs of the method which G. Kaibel perceived in Aristotle's *Constitution of Athens* where the section referring to the life and work of Solon is illustrated and documented with

42. *Them.*5,7.

43. For the attribution to Alcidamas and an analysis of the narrative technique perceptible in the composition, cf.E.Vogt, *Rh.Mus.*102, 1959, p.193 ff.; Arrighetti 1977, p.23 ff.

44. *Op.*654 ff.

the poet's verses. This narrative scheme becomes the rule in the lives of the lyric poets by the Aristotelian Chamaeleon and in the *Life of Euripides* by Satirus[45]. An identical technique seems to be used in a treatise on the lyric poets (Alcman, Stesichorus, Sappho, Alcaeus)[46], particularly in the most legible part of the papyrus which concerns Alcaeus. With reference to the accusation made against the poet by a boy, Amardis, of having killed a man (probably Pittacus), the poem is quoted in which Alcaeus expressly proclaims his innocence ("I am in no way guilty of the blood ... ")[47], attributing responsibility for the deed to one of the Allienes. This expository method suggests a Peripatetic ancestry, confirmed by the explicit quotation of Aristotle, Dicaearchus and Chamaeleon.

At this point one may wonder why Aristotle and his school rigorously stuck to this type of biographical narrative interwoven with poetic quotations. The answer lies in the pragmatic nature of all archaic lyric poetry and in the recurrent autobiographical elements which the poet inserted in his work either for propagandistic and apologetic purposes or in relation to the daily vicissitudes of his private life. This kind of poetry was the most immediate point of reference for the biographer who had to evaluate the information provided in the text on the basis of other evidence, taking into consideration the necessarily personal and subjective perspective of the poet oscillating between truth and fiction. This procedure was naturally undermined by the tendency not always to distinguish with proper attention between the *I* of the *persona loquens* and the *I* of the author.

In this respect we must emphasize the complete scepticism

45. See Arrighetti 1977. On some errors in the biographies of Euripides caused by the tendency to accept literally the metaphors and critical allegories elaborated at the expense of the poet by the "hyper-real world" of the ancient Attic comedy, see P.Fornaro, 'Γένος Εὐριπίδου: commedia e biografia', *Vichiana* 8, 1979, p.3 ff.

46. *P.Oxy.*2506, ed.D.Page, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* XXIX, 1963; cf. M.Treu, *Quad.Urb.*2, 1966, p.9 ff.; *R.E.* Supplbd.XI, s.v.'Sappho', col.1228 f.

47. *P.Oxy.*2506, fr.77,20 ff. = fr.306 A b Voigt.

displayed in the last few years by certain groups of critics inclined to treat the references to real life and to contemporary reality in archaic lyrical poetry as purely literary inventions[48]. Poetry, by its nature, undoubtedly organizes referential reality in an autonomous linguistic universe. Consequently it would be absurd to reduce it to a mere chronicle. But it is equally erroneous to consider poetic reality as completely free of any historical reference, as if we were always dealing with a system of conventional inventions. Yet this is the implicit assumption of whoever denies the pragmatic aspects of archaic Greek poetry deriving from its specific function in relation to the audience and the concrete situation. Instead, in each case we must distinguish the various levels of reality used by the poet. Let us take the poetry of Archilochus, which really was a poetry of daily life with its autobiographical dimension. It deals, in a concrete and direct manner, with his relations with the community of his fellow-citizens in the alternating episodes of political struggle and colonial ventures on the isle of Thasos. It is a poetry permeated with historical data, political polemics and all the characteristic motifs of the serio-comic, from personal attack to the playful and farcical representation of persons and situations. This vision of the poetry of Archilochus, moreover, is confirmed by a fairly straightforward biographical tradition of which Critias, the Athenian intellectual and politician of the late 5th century B.C., is our oldest representative[49]: he speaks of having derived from the verses of the poet information about the emigration from Paros to Thasos and the political events which determined it. And, beyond the biographical tradition, the early historiography of Paros and Thasos, as we know, did not hesitate to use the poetry of Archilochus as a primary and direct source. The particular structure of poetry, though sometimes containing polemical or even mystifying messages, is not a reason for denying its relationship with the historic event. In the case of Archilochus the information which can be inferred from his poetry corresponds perfectly to the evidence furnished by archaeological research[50].

48. Typical of this attitude is the essay of M.R.Lefkowitz, 'The Poet as Hero: Fifth-Century Autobiography and Subsequent Biographical Fiction', *Class.Quart.*28, 1978, pp.459-469.

49. Fr.88 B 44 D.-K. = Archil.Test.46 Tarditi.

On the whole, any autobiographical narrative is the account of a "human action"[51], if it is true that the essence of man is the combination of the social contacts in which he lives. Autobiography, therefore, always implies a process of construction and reconstruction of the social element, in the sense that the individual "takes it over, mediates it, filters it and retranslates it projecting it in another dimension, which is the dimension of his subjectivity"[52].

Also in the tradition of the serio-comic poetry of Archilochus we have a significant autobiographical document in which a poet of Thasos, Hegemon (5th century B.C.), narrates in hexameters his personal and professional experiences, recalling the success achieved in Athens in the rhapsodic agons and the abundant earnings obtained[53]. The great favour that he encountered in the Athenian public with his epico-rhapsodic recitals is confirmed by the biographer Chamaeleon[54] with regard to his memorable performance of the parodic narrative of the *Gigantomachia*, which provoked an uncontrollable outburst of laughter in the audience.

But apart from the personal references to the poets' own live with which archaic poetry is interlaced, autobiography had its effect on historiographical production in the ancient world more as a propagandistic and apologetic narrative intended to specify contingent facts and socio-political situations than as the

50. Cf.J.Pouilloux, in *Archiloque, Entret.Hardt* X, Vandoeuvres-Genève 1963, p.3 ff. and B.Gentili, *Poesia e pubblico nella Grecia antica*, Roma-Bari 1984, p.233 ff.

51. F.Ferrarotti, *Storia e storie di vita*, Roma-Bari 1981, p.41.

52. F.Ferrarotti, *op.cit.*p.42.

53. Cf.P.Brandt, *Parodorum Epicorum Graecorum et Archestrati Reliquiae*, Lipsiae 1888, p.42, = *Poeti parodici greci* a cura di E.Degani, Bologna 1982, p.39 ff.

54. Fr.43 Steffen = 44 Wehrli.

deliberate choice of a literary genre. It is in this sense that we should understand the view of Wilamowitz and Leo[55], who denied to ancient culture the idea of autobiography understood as a reconstruction of one's own existential development represented in the multiplicity of one's moral and intellectual experiences[56]. On the other hand, if we give to the term *autobiography* the general meaning of "biography of one's self", that is, of a type of narrative which requires the identification of the narrator with the protagonist of the facts narrated, we have to admit that autobiography was not unknown to the Greeks. But what was at stake was a type of narrative intended to furnish *memorabilia* and direct testimonies of diplomatic, military and political facts which could later be used in a real historical narrative: hence the significantly reductive title of "notes", "memories" (*hypomnḗmata, commentarii*). This is the function Cicero[57] attributes to the *Commentarii* of Caesar, when, acknowledging the beauty and the plainness of the writing, he observes that, composed by the author in order to offer the necessary documentation to the historian, they really dissuade anyone with any discernment from reelaborating a work already perfect in its genre.

It is therefore evident that the vast work of Misch (1950) on the history of ancient autobiography, though still containing the most exhaustive research on the subject, is marred by the preliminary definition of autobiography as "history of human self-awareness". As Momigliano [58] has rightly observed, this definition, influenced by W. Dilthey, does not really apply to ancient texts since true autobiography in the modern sense which associates self-awareness with the narration of facts only

55. U.von Wilamowitz, *Intern.Wochenschrift für Wissenschaft. Kunst und Technik* 1, 1907, p.1105; Leo 1913, p.342.

56. Leo's position is specified by E.Fraenkel in a letter to Momigliano of 24 February 1968 and now published by the latter in his book (1974, p.102 n.23): Leo's attitude is not due to ignorance or neglect of a whole series of autobiographical writings by Greek authors, but to the fact that he maintains "too distinct" a division in literary genres.

57. *Brutus* 75, 262.

58. 1974, p.20 [17 f.].

begins with the *Confessions* of St. Augustine. Thus, J. Starobinski, having pointed out "the importance of the personal experience, the necessity of offering a sincere account to others", adds[59]:

> This presupposition establishes the legitimacy of the *I* and authorizes the subject of the narrative to take his past existence as a theme. Moreover the *I* is confirmed in its function as permanent subject by the presence of its correlative *you* that confers its motivation on the narrative. I am thinking of the *Confessions* of St. Augustine: the author addresses God with the intention of edifying his readers.

The very term *autobiography* was not invented until the 19th century and it is in the last two centuries that this type of narrative has become institutionalized as a literary activity endowed with a certain margin of autonomy. Contrary to what happened in ancient memoirs, psycho-affective revelation has become obligatory in the eyes of the modern reader: its omission would be felt as an absence of information. The verifiability of the facts plays a secondary role in respect to "sincerity"[60].

To conclude, ancient autobiography was a narrative genre whose "generic" *dominant* feature[61], apart from some sporadic hints at anecdotes from daily life (as, for example, in the *Hypomnḗmata* of Ptolemy VIII Evergetes II)[62], was its apologetic and propagandistic objective. This objective assumes a completely explicit character in the *Bios* of Flavius Josephus, the most ancient autobiography which has come down to us in

59. *Art.cit.*p.260. See also E.Vance ('Le moi comme langage', *Poétique* 14, 1973, p.163 ff.), who, however, strongly emphasizes the difference between romantic autobiography and the "mnemonic *epistḗmē*" peculiar to St. Augustine, that is, his aptitude for seeking divine truth, in the memory of his own past.

60. E.W.Bruss, *art.cit.*p.26. On the impossibility of a metahistorical definition of the concept of autobiography, see Ph.Lejeune, 'Le pacte autobiographique', *Poétique* 14, 1973, p.137 ff.

61. The notion of "dominant feature ", used by the Russian formalists in relation to the theory of genres, seems relevant here: see, for example, J.Tynjanov, 'Il fatto letterario', in *Avanguardia e tradizione*, It.trans. by S.Leone, Bari 1968, p.23 ff.

62. *F.Gr.Hist.*234.

its original form: here, after a brief introductory note on the family from which he came and on his education, the narration of the historic events of which the author had been a protagonist begins in the third chapter. The declared purpose of the book is to reveal the author's attitude in one of the most critical moments of the history of his people, i.e. at the moment when the conflict exploded between the Jews and the Romans. It is nothing less than a self-defence against the accusations and insinuations of his political adversaries. Similarly *His Own Life* by Nicolaus of Damascus[63] would be an apologetic self-portrait, at times striking the unusual note of the self-encomium, if we did not entertain serious doubts about whether the writings *De virtutibus* and *De periculis* really contain authentic extracts from his work[64].

The treatise on his own books by the doctor-philosopher Galen of Pergamum, who lives in the 2nd century A.D., is an exception[65]. It is a curious work, destined to become, from late antiquity until modern times, a model for the autobiography of an intellectual or a scientist. It hardly assumes the form of a true autobiography since it is primarily a review of the medical texts composed by the author in the course of his professional activity. However, in the relationship constantly maintained between every book and the events that determined its composition, the itinerary of Galen's cultural formation in his youth and his progressive, inspiring conquest of medical sciences is recounted with precise self-awareness. The existential development is seized in the decisive moment of an intellectual experience strongly attuned to the search for knowledge and wisdom rather than in the external events of his life.

63. *F.Gr.Hist.*90 F 131-139.

64. It is hardly credible, particularly if we keep fr. 137 in mind, that this is the original text of Nicolaus' autobiography, as Misch (1950, p.307 f.), Jacoby (II C, p.288 f.) and most recently Momigliano (1974, p.92 f.[91]) maintain. The difficulty is constituted not so much by the use of the third person, which has an obvious parallel in the *Commentarii* of Caesar and in the *De memoria vitae suae* of Augustus, of whom Nicolaus himself wrote a biography (*F.Gr.Hist.*90 F 125-130; cf. B.Scardigli, *Studi it.filol.class.*50, 1978, pp.245-252), as by the eulogy, which Leo already regarded as "singular" for an autobiography (1901, p.191 n.3). The most probable hypothesis, already advanced by 19th century philology, is that the present text is the work of a fervent admirer who used Nicolaus' autobiography.

65. *Galeni scripta minora* II, pp.91-124 (Περὶ τῶν ἰδίων βιβλίων) Mueller; cf.Galeno, *Opere scelte*, ed.I Garofalo and M.Vegetti, Torino 1978, pp.61-90.

This type of reflection on one's own studies and education still survives: take, for example, the classic work of Sigmund Freud, *My Life and Psychoanalysis* (*Selbstdarstellung*) and, more recently, K. Popper's book[66], in which the author tries to offer a panorama of the ideas and problems on which he has worked in recent years and which are still the object of his research. It is an autobiography in which historical facts, encounters with eminent personalities or episodes in the author's daily life are indeed mentioned when they have some connection with the development of his theories. Thus, in the autobiography of the physicist Max Born the itinerary of his scientific research, from his early youth up to his mature years spent in voluntary exile, is interwoven with such tragic events as the persecution of the Jews and, later, the Second World War. It is a peaceful, relaxed narrative, which is nevertheless animated by the passion of the scientist and a constant concern with the future of European culture[67].

Galen has shown that we can speak of our books as a vital experience; but it is equally true that the story of our life may be traced through the books not written but read by us, as Henry Miller shows — his is a kind of examination of conscience conducted through the reevocation and critical analysis of books read by choice or by chance[68].

Studies on ancient biography and autobiography, and on other literary genres, have been almost exclusively concerned with problems of a genetic type, often approached too schematically and accompanied by ideas and categories more

66. *Unended Quest: an Intellectual Autobiography*, London 1976.

67. M.Born, *My Life. Recollections of a Nobel Laureate*, London-New York 1978.

68. *The Books in My Life*, London 1961.

relevant to the literature of our time. From this point of view the work of Momigliano has the undoubted merit of having shown, on the basis of a healthy empiricism, the inadequacy of the various theses tending to seek the origin of biography either in Aristotle and his school, following the indications of Leo, or in the Socratic dialogues (and more precisely in the *Apologia of Socrates*), as Dihle believes[69], or in certain historical situations particularly favourable to the emergence of strong personalities. This last view was that of Ivo Bruns[70] and it reflects the tendency of a certain kind of criticism to approach the historicity of literary phenomena of the ancient world with the categories of a mechanistic historicism. We may wonder up to what point it is correct to define biography not as the description of the facts of a life but as the description of the nature of a personality necessarily considered in the unity of his actions and words[71]. This is a restrictive interpretation which tends to dismiss a whole series of texts undoubtedly relevant to the biographical genre. Certainly no one can deny that the *Apologia of Socrates* is a proper biography, as Dihle has rightly pointed out. But there are also other forms of biography. We should therefore adopt a different approach: biographical narrative varies in relation to the specific functions it assumes in particular historical contexts and in different literary systems. At this point we must share M.I. Finley's astonishment at some theories on the emergence of the notion of individuality both in biography and in portraiture. He writes:

> I have never been able to understand how it could be held that Archilochus and the *dramatis personae* of the *Oresteia* were less individual than Socrates (whether Aristophanes', Xenophon's or Plato's) or Menander's Misanthrope [...] Patently we are faced with a complicated social-psychological-artistic development, not with a simple linear-evolutionary process. A variety of impulses came into play, generated by the complexity of the Greek world at the time, and they did not all pull in the same direction[72].

69. 1956, p.25.

70. *Das literarische Porträt der Griechen im fünften und vierten Jahrhundert vor Christi Geburt*, Berlin 1896; *Die Persönlichkeit in der Geschichtsschreibung der Alten*, Berlin 1898.

71. Such a presupposition is shared by M.Untersteiner, following Dihle, in his historical survey of biographies of the philosophers which forms a chapter in his latest work, *Problemi di filologia filosofica*, ed.by L.Sichirollo and M.Venturi Ferriolo, Milano 1980, pp.223-247.

The unitary vision of the personality was functional in the apologia of Plato (and Socrates himself) which aimed at representing the integrity of a civic behaviour and a moral disposition and the continuity of a doctrine. It was obviously alien to other types of narrative, like that of Theagenes whose purpose was only informative, or that of Ion of Chios with its portraitistic and anecdotical elements, not to mention the Homeric precedents present in the epigrammatic characterizations of some heroes[73] defined by indicating their lineage and the dominant quality of their personalities. Where the constant and variable features of the biographical genre are concerned we must take into consideration already in the archaic age a type of song which Plato classified in the 4th century with the generic term of encomium[74], that is, the song which praises an illustrious man, celebrating his moral virtues and his deeds. The Alexandrians defined it more restrictively, in order to distinguish it from the epinician song, as a convivial song in honour of important personages, worthy of praise[75]. Isocrates too refers to this type of celebrative poetry in the *Evagoras* (5-11), when he claims polemically that he was the first to transfer the encomiastic genre from poetry to prose, a transformation which involves a rejection of the technical instruments of poetry, such as divine intervention in human action, the resources of figurative and

72. 1976, pp.86 and 88.

73. *Il.*3,178 ff. (Agamemnon); 200 ff. (Odysseus); 6,460 f. (Hector). The ancients already saw in these verses the structure typical of the epigram, cf.O.Vox, *Belfagor* 30, 1975, p.67 ff.

74. *Resp.* 10,607a.

75. As we see from the early quotations of the verses of Bacchylides and Pindar, which the Alexandrians had classified as *encomia*: cf.Bacchyl.frr.20-21 Sn.-Maehl.; Pind.frr.118-120 Sn.-Maehl. This is a poetic genre which had been designated with the term *skólia* (table verses) in the pre-Alexandrian age. Cf.A.E.Harvey, *Class.Quart.* n.s.5, 1955, p.162 ff.

metaphorical language, and the harmony of meter and rhythm, and requires greater adherence to the spoken language of the poet's own city. By removing the subliminal and mystifying effect of the poetic language, this procedure necessarily brings the mind back to the truth of the facts. In this sense, the didactic narrative of Isocrates takes its place alongside that of Euripides, Thucydides and Plato in vindicating the principle of the true and the useful as opposed to the hedonistic objective of poetic expression[76], with the notable difference that Isocrates explains the deforming power of poetry with its metalinguistic character connected with the use of neologisms, of words alien to common usage, of figurative and metaphorical expressions. Here the implicit reference is to that very power of illusion and magic suggestion of the poetic word which was justified by Gorgias[77], but which Isocrates rejects in the name of the true and the useful. The new position of Isocrates, like that of Thucydides and, later, of Plato, was founded on the theoretical premise of the greater validity of the written narrative which excluded the notion of 'pleasure' and 'delight' (*hēdonḗ*) as exercised on the audience by the word united to song, gesture and dance[78]. His attitude fits into the new system of written communication which triumphs over the culture of oral communication between the end of the 5th and the beginning of the 4th century.

If we see them in this perspective, we can elucidate the distinctive features of the *Evagoras*. In analyzing the work as a literary genre, ancient criticism already noted its peculiar character at the borders of the encomium and the funeral oration[79]. If, in as much as it was supposed to celebrate a dead person, the narrative can be regarded as a funeral oration, it nevertheless lacks two of the 'generic' elements, the lament and the consolation, which would have appeared improper because of the long time which had elapsed since the death of Evagoras and the not immediately funerary purpose of the work, regarded by its author rather as an ethical-political exhortation addressed to Nicocles, the dead man's son. For these reasons the denomination constantly adopted by Isocrates himself is 'encomium' or 'eulogy'[80] — an eulogy which distinguishes itself from the traditional poetic encomium by the exactitude and concreteness of the biographical references to a great contemporary who had restored Greek culture to Salamis in Cyprus of which he was the sovereign, transforming his fellow citizens from barbarians to Greeks[81], and thus accomplishing a true work of civilization. It is an encomium *sui generis*, and thus also a biography. The physical and moral qualities of the adolescent Evagoras, his noble and heroic descent going back to the Aeacidai, his intellectual gifts and his conduct in the exercise of power and the wars he fought are all linked to form a systematic biographic narrative the chief function of which is not only educative and useful to Nicocles, but also politically useful for the pan-Hellenic ideal of Isocratean propaganda. The boast, expressed by Isocrates in another work[82], of being superior to Pindar as a writer of encomium, is not fortuitous. We therefore have an encomiastic biography which leads, in its structure and attitude, directly to the conception of biography as an autonomous text with an encomiastic function, like the *Life of Philopoemen* by Polybius[83]. In this same tradition developed by Isocrates Xenophon too takes his place with the *Agesilaus* and the *Cyropaedia*[84]. In the former he raises the problem of whether the treatment of the family origins, of the acts and the virtues of the defunct Spartan king, represents a funeral lamentation (*thrênos*) or rather a true encomium (10,3); just as Isocrates does in the *Evagoras*, he emphasizes the necessarily truthful character of the eulogy addressed to a contemporary (3,1). The

76. Above, p.11 ff.
77. Fr.82 B 11,9 ff. D.-K.
78. Isocr.*Panath.*10-11, cf. p.15 f.
79. Cf.the *Hypóthesis*.

80. *Enkómion*: 8; 11; 73. *Eulogía*: 5; 6; 11; 77. *Épainos*: 3; 5; 6; 73; 77.
81. Especially 66-67.
82. *Antídosis* 166.
83. See above, p.65.
84. On the importance of Isocrates and Xenophon for the history of biography, see Osley 1946, p.9.

Cyropaedia is notoriously difficult to classify as several 'generic' features of the history, the eulogy and the pedagogic treatise seem to converge. The intention of revealing in the biographic narrative the deep reasons for the extraordinary governmental capacities of the protagonist emerges fully in the author's programmatic declarations (1,1,6). This is a novel about real life rather than a novelized biography (as it has sometimes been defined).

In these pages we have endeavoured to clarify the idea of biography in Greek thought already implicit in the concrete activity of the earliest authors, but explicitly theorized in later times when biography was already institutionalized as a "genre", that is, when, in a bookish civilization, writing was felt to be a *literary* act. The line we have tried to follow implies the acknowledgment of the principle, held by the most open and perceptive critics, that the differential quality of any literary work depends: a) on its function; b) on the correlation of its constitutive elements with the series of similar elements in other systems and other series. The discussion of biography should be inserted in a wider discussion of literary genres of ancient Greece. We should avoid any excessive schematism which stiffens the differential 'generic' features, and keep our eye on their functional flexibility and the generative and dialectic processes which represent the historicity of the literary act. An incontrovertible fact where ancient Greece is concerned, is that we cannot speak of a systematic theory of literary genres before the classification effected by Hellenistic philology in the 3rd — 2nd century B.C. Practical, technical and organizational requirements, connected with the activity of editors and librarians, induced the Alexandrian grammarians to classify the works of the poets of the past in genres and sub-genres, according to the necessity of dividing them into various *volumina*[85]. It is in the cultural climate of Hellenistic philology, as we have seen, that the biographical pamphlet assumes the status of a literary genre though still retaining its organic relationship with

85. Cf.Pfeiffer 1968, p.171 ff. and especially p.183.

historiography. In this respect the theorization of Polybius is particularly significant. We can conclude this brief discussion of the idea of biography with the appropriate words of S. Mazzarino[86]:

> Once again: the opposition between the literary genres *historía* and *bíos* should not be 'pressed' beyond certain limits.

86. 1966, II/2 p.138.

LONDON STUDIES IN CLASSICAL PHILOLOGY

edited by

GIUSEPPE GIANGRANDE

Volume Twenty

HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY IN ANCIENT THOUGHT

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J.C. GIEBEN, PUBLISHER

AMSTERDAM 1988