

MARK BECK

PLATO, PLUTARCH, AND THE USE AND MANIPULATION
OF ANECDOTES IN THE *LIVES OF LYCURGUS AND AGESILAEUS*
HISTORY OF THE LACONIC APOPHTHEGM

The city on the banks of the Eurotas exerted a captivating influence on successive generations of Greeks and foreigners. The origination or inception of what Francois Ollier termed "Le Mirage Spartiate"¹ is in no small way attributable to Plato, who in his political treatises, such as the *Republic* and the *Laws*, adopted many elements of the Spartan constitution². Beyond Plato's admiration for the social structure of Sparta, however, we can discern something more, something which Plutarch detected, himself heavily under the spell of Plato³. This inadequately articulated and perhaps deeper source of Plato's, and later Plutarch's, admiration finds expression in words placed in Socrates' mouth in the dialogue bearing the name of the Sophist Protagoras (342d-343b):

γνωίτε δ' ἄν, ὅτι ἐγὼ ταῦτα ἀληθῆ λέγω καὶ Λακεδαιμόνιοι πρὸς φιλοσοφίαν καὶ λόγους ἄριστα πεπαιδευταί, ὥδε· εἰ γὰρ ἐθέλει τις Λακεδαιμονίων τῶ φαυλοτάτῳ συγγενέσθαι, τὰ μὲν πολλὰ ἐν τοῖς λόγοις εὐρήσει αὐτὸν φαῦλόν τινα φαινόμενον, ἔπειτα, ὅπου ἂν τύχη τῶν λεγομένων, ἐνέβαλεν ῥῆμα ἄξιον λόγου βραχὺ καὶ συνεστραμμένον ὥσπερ δεινὸς ἀκοντιστής, ὥστε φαίνεσθαι τὸν προσδιαλεγόμενον παιδὸς μὴδὲν βελτίω. τοῦτο οὖν αὐτὸ καὶ τῶν νῦν εἰσὶν οἱ κατανενοήκασιν καὶ τῶν πάλαι, ὅτι τὸ λακωνίζειν πολὺ μᾶλλον ἐστὶν φιλοσοφεῖν ἢ φιλογυμναστεῖν, εἰδότες ὅτι τοιαῦτα οἷόν τ' εἶναι ῥήματα φθέγγεσθαι τελέως πεπαιδευμένου ἐστὶν ἀνθρώπου.

¹ F. OLLIER (1933, 1943).

² The most developed account of this is still E.N. TIGERSTEDT (1965), pp. 244-275. See also E. RAWSON (1969).

³ G.J.D. AALDERS (1982) *passim*, documents in page after page just how pervasive Plato's influence on Plutarch was in the sphere of political philosophy. In general see J. DILLON (1977), pp. 184-229. See also L. DE BLOIS and J.A.E. BONS, "Platonic Philosophy and Isocratean Virtues in Plutarch's *Numa*." *Ancient Society* 23 (1992) 159-188 and *idem*, "Platonic and Isocratean Political Concepts in Plutarch's *Lycurgus*." *Teoria e prassi politica nelle opere di Plutarcho*, ed. by I. GALLO and B. SCARDIGLI. Naples (1995) 99-106.

The admiration Socrates expresses for Laconic brevity seems genuine as does his contextualization of this ability in the realm of philosophy. This is significant. The brevity and aphoristic terseness of Spartan speech which a modern interpreter, Ernst Curtius, regards, and perhaps rightly, as an artifact of an excessively militaristic society⁴ is for Plato a measure of the success of Spartan παιδεία.

Plutarch openly expresses his admiration for the Laconic style of speech in *De garrulitate* (Περὶ ἀδολεσχίας) 510E-571A. In this passage he cites the passage in Plato's *Protagoras* quoted above, repeating Socrates' simile that the Spartans resemble javelin throwers in their potent use of language. He ascribes this linguistic mastery (ἡ δεινότης) to Lycurgus' educational reforms. Their apophthegmatic style of speech, Plutarch says, is a direct result of prolonged silence which gives way to the pointed retorts known as apophthegms. In the case of both Plato and Plutarch I feel that the admiration they express is quite genuine, and contributes significantly to their appreciation of Sparta and its educational system.

Undoubtedly Plutarch's admiration for statements which condense meaningful thought in the briefest possible compass (πολὺς νοῦς ἐν ὀλίγῃ λέξει)⁵ led him to collect apophthegms forming the collections transmitted to us under his name⁶. It is not surprising, moreover, that a significant number of these apophthegms are attributed to Spartans, some famous, some anonymous.

Plutarch's Lycurgus

One of these Spartans is Lycurgus. The paucity of information about Lycurgus available to Plutarch is reflected in the structure of the biography. In a significant number of passages Plutarch simply describes the organization of Spartan social institutions. Nearly all of these institutions (excepting the Krypteia) are attributed to Lycurgus unquestioningly. Of Lycurgus' birth and youth we are told nothing⁷. There are no anecdotes of childhood feats prefiguring adult greatness as we have for example in the *Lives of Cato the Younger* and *Alexander the Great*⁸. The *Life* begins

⁴ (1874⁴), pp. 181f.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, 510E.

⁶ For a discussion of these collections and their authenticity see BECK, 1998.

⁷ Typically if Plutarch has access to such detail about his subjects' early years he presents it. See, e.g. PELLING (1990), pp. 213-244.

⁸ For the series of anecdotes exhibiting Alexander's promising precocity see STADTER (1996), 291-296.

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⁹ 225E-229

¹⁰ W. NACHS vol. II, pp

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with the events of Lycurgus' maturity which seems to draw heavily on the collection of anecdotes and exempla known as the *Apophthegmata Lakonika*⁹. This was noted by Nachstädt, who concluded that the close correspondence between the *Ap. Lac.* collection (including the section called the *Instituta Laconica*, 236F-240B) and the *Life of Lycurgus*, even extending to the order in which the anecdotes are presented, indicates that Plutarch used the collection as his source¹⁰. In all Plutarch incorporates 22 of the 31 apophthegms attributed to Lycurgus and 19 of the 42 apophthegms in the so-called *Instituta Laconica* collection. He also supplements this material with apophthegms attributed to other Spartans in the *Ap. Reg. et Imp.* and *Ap. Lac.* collections.

An anecdote which displays Lycurgus' measured and thoughtful response to a violent and vicious deed occurs both in the *Life* (11.1-8) and the *Ap. Lac.* collection (227A-B). This anecdote recounts the story of how Lycurgus, owing to the unpopular nature of one of his reforms, the *sussitia*, among the wealthy, is forced by an angry mob to flee for his life. One of his pursuers, a certain Alkandros, succeeds in overtaking him and knocks out his eye with his staff. Alkandros is punished for this by being placed in Lycurgus' custody where he acquires firsthand knowledge of the man's greatness. Ultimately Lycurgus founds a temple in honor of Athena with the epithet of Optilletis to commemorate his loss. The significant elaboration this anecdote receives in the *Life* testifies to the importance Plutarch attaches to it. The version in the *Life* takes up thirty lines in the Teubner edition or 243 words. The version in the *Ap. Lac.* collection by contrast takes up only thirteen and a half lines or ninety-nine words. This phenomenon, termed ἐπεκτείνωσις when referring to the expansion of a *chreia*, was a common exercise in the *progymnasmata*. If we compare the two texts it becomes obvious that most of the elaboration this anecdote undergoes in the version found in the *Life of Lycurgus* occurs in the middle. There are, however, slight differences in phrasing which are significant. In the *Ap. Lac.* version the crowd becomes verbally abusive (ἐβλασφημοῦν); in the *Life* two verbs replace this which give greater expression to the heightened emotionality and volatility of the crowd (καταβοᾶν καὶ ἀγανακτεῖν). Lycurgus in the *Life* is driven not just through the agora as in the *Ap. Lac.* version, but out of the agora altogether, at a run. Alkandros, his assailant, is not identified nor described in the *Ap. Lac.* version. In the *Life* by contrast not only is his youth mentioned (εἶς δέ τις νεανίσκος)¹¹ but the young man's gifted nature and sharp temperament are noted (ἄλλως

⁹ 225E-229A.

¹⁰ W. NACHSTÄDT (1935), pp. 4ff. He also presents his results in his Teubner edition, *Plut., Moralia* vol. II, pp. 165-167. ZIEGLER cites with approval this study in his *RE* article.

¹¹ This is also mentioned again towards the end of the anecdote.

μὲν οὐκ ἀφυῆς, ὄξυς δὲ καὶ θυμοειδής). Plutarch, it appears, is extrapolating the οὐκ ἀφυῆς from Alkandros' later response to Lycurgus' example and instruction. His sharp temperament he divines from the violence of the act.

Beginning with Lycurgus' steadfast reaction to the blow, the next nineteen lines in the *Life* version seems to be elaborated freely by Plutarch for the most part, with the *Ap. Lac.* version providing a rough outline of Lycurgus actions. Some of the significant details found in the *Life* but not in the *Ap. Lac.* seem clearly designed to add drama to the presentation (πάθος) and serve to describe more vividly Lycurgus' character (ἦθος) e.g.:

- Lycurgus does not succumb to the pain of his wound but stands fast and confronts the crowd showing them his bloody socket.
- The crowd's reaction of shame is emphatically described with a hendiadys: αἰδῶς δὲ πολλή καὶ κατήφεια τοὺς ἰδόντας ἔσχευ.
- Not only does the crowd remand Alkandros to Lycurgus' custody on the spot¹² but are outraged at what has happened (συναγανακτοῦντας) and give him an escort home. Lycurgus in return, despite all that has happened, still has the presence of mind and élan to praise them for their response.
- Whereas in the *Ap. Lac.* version Plutarch renders the results of Alkandros' cohabitation with Lycurgus in rather vague terms (συνδιαιτώμενον δ' ἔχων ἀπέδειξεν ἐπαινέτην αὐτοῦ τε καὶ τῆς διαίτης ἣν εἶχε σὺν αὐτῷ καὶ καθόλου τῆς ἀγωγῆς ἐραστήν), the *Life* version contains a rather explicit discussion of what the source of Alkandros admiration was: ἐν τῷ κατανοεῖν τὴν πραότητα καὶ τὸ βάθος αὐτοῦ τῆς ψυχῆς, καὶ τὸ περὶ τὴν δίαιταν αὐστηρόν, καὶ τὸ πρὸς τοὺς πόνους ἄκαμπτον. The rather abstract term ἐπαινέτης given to Alkandros in the *Ap. Lac.* version is portrayed in concrete form in the *Life*: καὶ πρὸς τοὺς συνήθεις καὶ φίλους ἔλεγεν ὡς οὐ σκληρὸς οὐδ' αὐθάδης ὁ Λυκοῦργος, ἀλλὰ μόνος ἐκεῖνος ἡμέρος καὶ πραῖός ἐστι τοῖς ἄλλοις.

- The result of Lycurgus' influence on Alkandros (mentioned nowhere in the *Ap. Lac.* version) is described in superlative terms (ἐκ πονηροῦ δὴ νέου καὶ αὐθάδους ἐμμελέστατος ἀνὴρ καὶ σωφρονικώτατος γενόμενος.)

¹² In the *Ap. Lac.* version the words κοινῷ δόγματι imply a formal decision-making process and not a spontaneous act.

This anecdote veils little of Lycurgus' vivid descriptive Plutarch obvious Lycurgus' humane : a central theme in Plutarch's ability to depict and his austere and frugal (ἀκαμπτον) portrait is not only in living in it and in living it serves to demonstrate on a proper possible that Plutarch's educational system by a part of virtue, namely parts¹⁶. The parts of justice, ἀνδρεία, πραότης, φρόνησις, ἀγωγή as practical ἀκαμπτον and σωφροσύνη.

This example compared to elaborate all anecdotal in the *Ap. Lac.* collection.

One anecdote subsequent to his return to the country just as equal in size, he s

¹³ We of course do

¹⁴ These are the qualities of his encomium.

¹⁵ See L. PICCIRILLI

¹⁶ *Pol.* 1338b 11-19

¹⁷ 1366b 1.9.4-6. cf

This anecdote then, which in its original form¹³ in the *Ap. Lac.* collection conveys little of Lycurgus' character and personality, is transformed by Plutarch into a vivid descriptive anecdote containing much direct and indirect characterization. Plutarch obviously found this anecdote to be a useful vehicle for portrayal of Lycurgus' humane and gentle temperament (viz. *πραότητα* and *ἡμερος καὶ πρᾶος*), a central theme in the Lycurgus-Numa pair. He also, however, utilizes this opportunity to depict and describe Lycurgus' courage (in facing down an angry crowd) and his austere and frugal lifestyle and great capacity for hard tasks (*τὸ πρὸς τοὺς πόνοους ἄκαμπτου*) all very military sounding and Spartan¹⁴. Lycurgus in Plutarch's portrait is not only instrumental in the establishment of the Spartan *ἀγωγή*, he lives it and in living it he demonstrates it to others. This version of the anecdote then serves to demonstrate the practical application of the Spartan *ἀγωγή* when employed on a promising subject (*οὐκ ἀφυῆς* and *ὁ δ' οὐκ ὦν ἀγεννήης*)¹⁵. It is also possible that Plutarch is attempting to counter criticism leveled at the Lycurgan educational system by Aristotle who accused the Spartans of a single-minded fixation on one part of virtue, namely manly courage (*andreia*), to the neglect of instilling the other parts¹⁶. The parts of virtue (*μέρη ἀρετῆς*) as listed by Aristotle in his *Rhetoric*¹⁷ are: *δικαιοσύνη, ἀνδρεία, σωφροσύνη, μεγαλοπρέπεια, μεγαλοψυχία, ἐλευθεριότης, πραότης, φρόνησις, and σοφία*. In this anecdote which describes a form of the *ἀγωγή* as practiced by Lycurgus himself we witness how the gentler virtues such as *πραότης* and *σωφροσύνη* are modeled by Lycurgus and cultivated by Alkandros.

This example demonstrates as clearly as any to what extent Plutarch is prepared to elaborate an anecdote to suit the needs of his portraiture. He does not elaborate all anecdotes regarding Lycurgus in this way however, at least vis-à-vis the *Ap. Lac.* collection.

One anecdote for example recounts how Lycurgus, at an unspecified point in time subsequent to his agrarian reforms, while returning from abroad "was passing through the country just after reaping. As he gazed at the heaps of grain side by side and all equal in size, he smiled and remarked to the bystanders that the whole of Laconia had

¹³ We of course do not have Plutarch's probable source, Ephorus.

¹⁴ These are the qualities expected of an ideal general. Cf. Xenophon's description of Agesilaus in his encomium.

¹⁵ See L. PICCIRILLI (1981), pp. 7-10.

¹⁶ *Pol.* 1338b 11-19; cf. 1271b 2-6, 1333b 11-21.

¹⁷ 1366b I.9.4-6. cf. *Nic. Eth.* 2.7 and 3.9-4.15. Cf. Chap. 2 p. 45.

the look of a property which many brothers had recently divided between themselves"¹⁸. The version in the *Life* contains thirty-five words the one in the *Ap. Lac.* collection¹⁹ thirty-six words. There are no substantial differences in wording between the two versions and it appears that Plutarch decided to forego any elaboration which would have compromised the Laconic quality and expressive force of this anecdote.

Similarly in a section devoted to the Laconic style of speaking Plutarch after citing several examples, comments on the Laconic style of speaking: ἐγὼ δὲ καὶ τὸν λόγον ὀρῶ τὸν Λακωνικὸν βραχὺν μὲν εἶναι δοκοῦντα, μάλιστα δὲ τῶν πραγμάτων ἐφικνούμενον καὶ τῆς διανοίας ἀπτόμενον τῶν ἀκροωμένων²⁰. He then cites Lycurgus as exemplifying this style of speech²¹. This statement introduces a series of apophthegms or *chreiai* which, with one exception, are formulated in the same way as the corresponding apophthegms in the *Ap. Lac.*²² collection:

"To someone desiring the establishment of democracy in the city Lycurgus responds: «Indeed you first establish a democracy in your own home»²³. To someone questioning why he ordered that the propitiatory offerings be relatively small and cheap Lycurgus responded: «In order that we may never omit to honor the deity»²⁴.

The last two examples were apparently contained in open letters of Lycurgus to his fellow Spartans:

To the question: "How could we ward off an invasion of the enemy?" Lycurgus responds: "If we remain beggars and do not desire to be greater the one than the other"²⁵.

Regarding the walls Lycurgus responds: "A city could not be unwalled which is surrounded by men and not bricks"²⁶. A comparison of the first *chreia* with the original statement in the *Ap. Lac.*²⁷ collection is instructive.

¹⁸ *Lyc.* 8.9, trans. by TALBERT (1988), p. 17, with a slight modification of my own.

¹⁹ 226B.

²⁰ *Lyc.* 19.5.

²¹ *Lyc.* 19.6.

²² 228c-e.

²³ *Lyc.* 19.7: "σὺ γάρ" ἔφη "πρῶτος ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ σου ποίησον δημοκρατίαν."

²⁴ *Lyc.* 19.8: "ἵνα μὴ ποτε" ἔφη "τιμῶντες τὸ θεῖον διαλείπωμεν."

²⁵ *Lyc.* 19.11.

²⁶ *Lyc.* 19. 12.

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“πῶς ἂν πολεμίῳν ἔφοδον ἀλεξοίμεθα...”

“ἂν πτωχοὶ μένητε καὶ μὴ μέσδων ἄτερος θατέρῳ ἐράτε ἦμεν.”

Ap. Lac. version

“πῶς ἂν πολεμίῳν ἔφοδον ἀλεξοίμεθα...”

“ἔὰν πτωχοί” ἔφη “ἦτε καὶ μὴ μείζων ἄτερος θατέρου ἐρᾶ εἶναι.”

The words in boldface print indicate Doric forms which Plutarch has incorporated into the text without changing the entire statement into good Doric. He obviously here is attempting to give a decidedly Laconic sound to Lycurgus' statement. The question remains what prompted Plutarch to alter only this one *chreia* in this series attributed to Lycurgus?²⁸

Some apophthegms are subjected to a different kind of transformation, however. They are simply dissolved into the narrative, the direct speech of the apophthegm in the collections being then paraphrased by Plutarch in the *Life*. These are for the most part his *Rhetra* and do not involve the kind of pithy apophthegms cited above. The dramatic impact thus lost by not relating these statements in direct speech is therefore negligible. Examples of this include his reason for not waging war repeatedly against the same enemy²⁹.

Finally throughout the *Life of Lycurgus* there are numerous apophthegms attributed to various Spartans of different historical periods. Some are kings such as Theopompus or Agis, an Ephor such as Antalcidas, a wife such as Gorgo (the wife of king Leonidas) a mother such as Argileonis (the mother of Brasidas), or an anonymous Spartan chef who had the unsavory task of preparing black broth for some foreign potentate. Some are related in the koine dialect like the one told about Theopompus who, when reproached by his wife for leaving their sons a weaker

²⁸ One possible explanation is that Plutarch's shift to the Doric dialect here is a direct response to the questionable credibility of his source: *περὶ μὲν οὖν τούτων καὶ τῶν τοιούτων ἐπιστολῶν οὐτ' ἀπιστῆσαι ῥάδιον οὔτε πιστεῦσαι* (*Lyc.* 19.13). Consciously or subconsciously his use of Doric here would tend to shore up the apophthegm's credibility by making it sound more like something Lycurgus would have said. The second *chreia* in the letter contains *ἀνδρείοις* for *ἀνδράσι*. This is not to my knowledge a true Doric form. See also *Lyc.* 22.2 and *Ap. Lac.* 228E and *Lyc.* 22.9 and *Ap. Lac.* 227F for other examples of *chreiai* with similar wording.

²⁹ *Lyc.* 13.8 and *Ap. Lac.* 227C. Another example is his reason for not setting down in writing a code of laws. *Lyc.* 13. 1-3 and *Ap. Lac.* 227B. See also *Lyc.* 10.4 and *Ap. Lac.* 226E.

kingship than he had assumed, retorted "greater, because [it will be] more lasting"³⁰. The true Laconic brevity of the king's response can hardly be rendered in English: "μείζω μὲν οὖν" εἶπεῖν "ὄσω χρονιωτέραν." Sometimes at least for some of the *dicta* the Doric dialect is employed, as in the case of Argileonis who asked the men arriving from Amphipolis if Brasidas had died a noble death, one worthy of Spartan. When they praised him, saying that Sparta has no man to match him, she responded: "μὴ λέγετε" εἶπεν "ὦ ξένοι· καλὸς μὲν γὰρ ἦν καὶ ἀγαθὸς ὁ Βρασιδᾶς, πολλοὺς δ' ἄνδρας Λακεδαιμῶν ἔχει τήνου κάρρονας"³¹. The Doric adds authenticity to her statement, but the statement is too good not to want to believe anyway. Of the twenty-six apophthegms or *chreiai* attributed to personages other than Lycurgus two are attributed to non-Spartans: the Theban Epameinondas³² and the Socratic philosopher Antisthenes³³. Of the remaining twenty-four apophthegms seventeen do not contain Doric forms; seven do; in other words 71% without Doric forms as opposed to 29% with³⁴.

If one compares the apophthegms with Doric forms with similar apophthegms in the collection it becomes apparent that Plutarch has on more than one occasion Doricized the apophthegms in the *Life*:³⁵

It should be apparent that Plutarch is not at all averse to performing manipulations on the anecdotes, or, to use the ancient terms, apophthegms and *chreiai*, which he incorporates in the *Life of Lycurgus*. This is not to say that he modifies all that he touches. Rather the alterations he makes seem to be in response to thematic considerations or for literary reasons, i.e. greater verisimilitude. It remains to be seen whether these findings are also applicable to the *Life of Agesilaus*, our next subject.

³⁰ Lyc. 7.2.

³¹ Lyc. 25.9.

³² Lyc. 13.6.

³³ Lyc. 30.7.

³⁴ The names appearing in boldface type indicate apophthegms containing Doric forms. *Archelaos* 5.9; *Theopompos* 7.2; *Laconic chef* (μάγειρος) 12.13; *Epameinondas* 13.6; *Leotychidas the elder* 13.7; *Antalkidas* 13.10; *Gorgo* 14.8; *Anonymous young man to Derkyllidas* 15.3; *Geradas* 15.17-18; *Agis* 19.4; *Leonidas* 20.1; *Charilaos* 20.2; *Archidamidas* 20.3; ***Demaratos* 20.5; *Agis* 20.6; *Theopompos* 20.7; ***Pleistoanax* 20.8; *Archidamos* 20.9; *Anonymous* 20.12; *Anonymous* 20.13; *Young Anonymous* 20.14; *Anonymous* 20.15; *Pedaritos* 25.6; *Polystratidas the ambassador* 25.7; *Argileonis* 25.8-9; *Antisthenes* 30.7.****

³⁵ Cf. e.g. Lyc. 20.6 with *Reg. et Imp. Ap.* 190C-D and *Ap. Lac.* 215E-F, and Lyc. 20.8 with *Reg. et Imp. Ap.* 192B, *Ap. Lac.* 217D, and *Ap. Lac.* 231D.

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⁴² Cf. SHIPL

The Life of Agesilaus

If the number of anecdotes ascribed to Agesilaus in the *Ap. Lac.* collection (79)³⁶ is an accurate reflection of the Spartan king's popularity in the ancient world as a coiner of memorable statements, then he truly was without peer in this regard. Lysander by contrast, from an historical point of view a very important man indeed, has only fifteen to his credit in the same collection³⁷. One explanation for the abundance of anecdotes attributed to Agesilaus may of course be that he was simply very witty. Yet it is difficult to believe that Agesilaus was wittier than all the other notable historical figures mentioned in *Reg. et Imp. Ap.* collection and the *Ap. Lac.* collection. A more likely explanation is that when Agesilaus made a memorable remark there was someone there to record it for posterity: his friend the Socratic Xenophon³⁸. Undoubtedly Xenophon's encounter with Socrates, the putative founder of ethical philosophy in the western world, had an impact on his representation of Agesilaus in the encomium, especially regarding the choice of ethical categories.

Agesilaus and Megabates

In his depiction of Agesilaus Plutarch thinks that the king's interpersonal relations were governed at least periodically by the competitive drives of *philotimia* and *philonikia*. How did Plutarch assess these relationships?

Agesilaus' encounter with Megabates the handsome son of his ally Spithridates reveals significant facets of this complex man's personality³⁹. Megabates attempts to kiss Agesilaus, who avoids the kiss to his own regret. A comparison of Plutarch's two versions⁴⁰ with Xenophon's version⁴¹ shows that Xenophon is almost surely Plutarch's source⁴². Plutarch did not however simply copy down Xenophon's version, he modified it.

³⁶ 208B-215A.

³⁷ 229A-230A.

³⁸ On Agesilaus and Xenophon see most recently P. CARTLEDGE (1987), pp. 56-71 and *passim*. See also E. DELEBECQUE (1957), especially pp. 138-168. H.R. BREITENBACH (1966), especially coll. 1701-1708. J.K. ANDERSON (1974), pp. 146-171. W.E. HIGGINS (1977), pp. 76-82 and *passim*.

³⁹ *Ag.* 11. 5-10.

⁴⁰ A version of this anecdote also appears in the *Ap. Lac.* collection 209 D-E.

⁴¹ *Ag.* 5. 4-7. This anecdote is not related in his *Hellenika* where Megabates receives only brief mention (4.1.6 and 4.1.28).

⁴² Cf. SHIPLEY (1997), *ad loc.*, pp. 175-180.

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Xenophon relates the anecdote in a section of the *Agesilaus* devoted primarily to Agesilaus' temperance as a vivid illustration of the king's self-restraint with respect to sexuality⁴³. For Plutarch, however, this anecdote serves to represent the amplitude of Agesilaus' emotional involvement with Megabates⁴⁴. Plutarch does concede, however, that Agesilaus, in the presence of Megabates, did attempt to fight against his desire in a juvenile fashion (*νεανικῶς*)⁴⁵. Moreover Plutarch asserts that Agesilaus employed his competitive nature in affording resistance (*τῷ φιλονικίῳ χρώμενος*)⁴⁶. Clearly Plutarch's view of Agesilaus' behavior in this instance differs from Xenophon's; *φιλονικία* is not normally associated with the virtues of self-control, self-restraint, or temperance⁴⁷. Both Xenophon and Plutarch mention that Agesilaus loved Megabates and that the young man attempted to give Agesilaus a kiss, but only Xenophon points out that it is customary for the Persians to bestow a kiss (i.e. give accolades) on those whom they honor, thereby clarifying the context of this encounter. Xenophon expresses in strong language Agesilaus' attempt to avoid the kiss (*διαμάχεσθαι ἀνά κράτος τὸ μὴ φιληθῆναι*)⁴⁸. Plutarch, however, has but a simple *ἐξέκλινεν*. Xenophon's comment on Agesilaus' action in the form of an excited rhetorical question is unequivocal: ἄρ' οὐ τοῦτό γε ἤδη τὸ σωφρόνημα καὶ λίαν γεννικόν;⁴⁹ Plutarch, far from interpreting Agesilaus' behavior as

⁴³ 5.4.

⁴⁴ 11.6.

⁴⁵ When applied to adults this adverb or its corresponding adjective have a pejorative connotation in Plutarch. SHIPLEY's (*ad loc.*, p. 177) translation of *νεανικῶς ἀπομάχεσθαι* as "he fought off manfully" not only ignores the typical use of this word in Plutarch, it also fails to consider the immediate context, i.e. the subsequent anecdote with its unflattering depiction of Agesilaus' behavior.

⁴⁶ 11.6. On Plutarch's use of *filovnikon* here to explain Agesilaus' behavior see SHIPLEY (1997), *ad loc.*, pp. 175f. SHIPLEY notes that the military metaphor is continued by the terms *ἀπομάχεσθαι* and *φυγῆ*. If SHIPLEY is correct in his assumption that Plutarch is attempting here the "different recreation of Agesilaus' feelings and motivation, constructed from the record of his actions," then Plutarch's use of such metaphorical language would indicate that the element of competition even existed in Agesilaus intrapsychically and not just interpersonally.

⁴⁷ Concepts associated with temperance in Plutarch tend to refer to the private sphere and the reaction to, and control of, passions, while the proactive competitive drives of *φιλοτιμία* and *φιλονικία* hold sway in the civic or military sphere, where a premium is placed on the active engagement of challenges. Cf. F. FRAZIER (1996), pp. 191-195 and 199f.

⁴⁸ 5.4. We see where Plutarch obtained the idea for the military metaphor.

⁴⁹ The interrogative *ἄρ' οὐ* of course, like the Latin *nonne*, definitely expects an affirmative response. See DENNISTON (1954), pp. 46f.

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exhibiting self-control and nobility of bearing, attributes to Agesilaus the feelings of irritation and regret at having avoided the kiss⁵⁰ as well as the reprehensible behavior of dissimulation (προσεποιεῖτο θαυμάζειν)⁵¹.

In the subsequent dialogue⁵² Xenophon records a conversation Agesilaus had with only one friend, whereas Plutarch relates that his friends (οἱ συνήθεις) reproached him for his behavior, implying that he avoided the kiss out of fear: Σὺ γὰρ αἴτιος, οἱ συνήθεις ἔφασαν, οὐχ ὑποστάς, ἀλλὰ τρέσας τὸ φίλημα τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ φοβηθείς· and ἀλλ' ὅπως αὐτοῖς οὐκ ἀποδειλιάσεις. Xenophon has Agesilaus swear a double oath in response to his friends question whether he will give Megabates a kiss if he (Megabates) should be persuaded to try once again. This double oath is interesting for several reasons. Xenophon does not, for the most part—the exception being τὸ σίω—relate Agesilaus' remarks in the Doric dialect. Plutarch, however, Doricizes much of Agesilaus' statement (cf. τήναν τὰν μάχαν τὰν...ἄδιον...χρυσία). Plutarch's version contains no oath whatsoever and consequently lacks the vigor and force of Xenophon's original version. It is also introduced by the tentative expression: ἐγὼ γάρ μοι δοκῶ⁵³. Plutarch's Agesilaus seems to be contemplatively entertaining a thought rather than passionately rejecting a possibility. This interpretation receives support from the way Plutarch introduces this statement of Agesilaus: χρόνον οὖν τίνα πρὸς ἑαυτῷ γενόμενος ὁ Ἄγησίλαος καὶ διασιωπήσας⁵⁴. Xenophon for his part feels that Agesilaus exhibits remarkable self-control.

If we return to Plutarch's version we see that the tentative vacillating quality of his *Agesilaus* is reflected in Plutarch's concluding comment. He states that Agesilaus' behavior changed when Megabates was absent, he suffered passionate longing, so much so that Plutarch doubts whether he would be able to suppress his desire to kiss Megabates if given the chance again⁵⁵. It is apparent that Plutarch does not use this anecdote to depict Agesilaus as a paragon of temperance and self-control, as Xenophon does. Instead he employs it to reveal a king who is reproached by his friends for being

⁵⁰ Ag. 11.7.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Xen., Ag. 5.5, Plut., Ag. 11.8.

⁵³ Cf. with Xenophon's direct and vehement Οὐ τῷ σίῳ, followed by a string of superlatives μάλα κάλλιστός τε καὶ ἰσχυρότατος καὶ τάχιστος.

⁵⁴ Cf. Xenophon who simply writes ἐνταῦθα διασιωπήσας.

⁵⁵ 11.10.

timid, fearful and even cowardly, who sustains this insulting tone with thoughtful silence and who seemingly can barely get a grip on himself when the boy is away⁵⁶.

Plutarch's version of this anecdote in his apophthegmata collection⁵⁷ reveals that Plutarch was well aware of the anecdote's original import, i.e. according to Xenophon. He attributes to Agesilaus in this version the following closing statement:

Indeed I think that I wish to be above such things rather than capture by force the most well-mannered city of my adversaries; since it would be better to preserve my liberty for myself than to take it from others.

This concluding statement of the anecdote, the *dictum*, clearly demonstrates Agesilaus' unflinching resolve not to succumb to his desire for Megabates and therefore testifies to his temperance⁵⁸.

Other modifications of this anecdote can also be understood in the light of the continuity of the thematic context imposed on the *Pompey-Agesilaus* pair. If one compares their attitudes towards sexual relations as Plutarch seems to be doing, one would expect that Plutarch would also incorporate some anecdote or story about Pompey's passion in the sexual sphere. This he does early in the *Life of Pompey*⁵⁹ with anecdotes about Pompey's love affair with the courtesan Flora and the beautiful wife of the freedman Demetrius. Both anecdotes stress Pompey's self-control with respect to women, but the anecdote about Flora is especially telling. Plutarch relates that although Pompey was deeply in love with Flora, he nevertheless was

⁵⁶ SHIPLEY (1997) *ad loc.*, 178, thinks that the jocular nature of the occasion renders what, on any other occasion, would have been grave insults, simply playful barbs. This interpretation, however, skirts the issue of why Plutarch introduced this insulting tone, not present in Xenophon, which certainly **does** diminish the dignity and stature of the king. The jocular nature of this occasion, if that is what Plutarch wants us to perceive here, is also not present in Xenophon.

⁵⁷ *Ap. Lac.* 209 D-E.

⁵⁸ The closeness of the wording also indicates that Plutarch was probably working directly from the *Ap. Lac.* version rather than from Xenophon's. If he did this systematically his procedure would have been to excerpt from a main source and then work from the excerpted material, supplementing it perhaps with his excellent memory. The nature of ancient papyrus books in scroll form without indices would encourage such a method. See in general on this P.A. STADTER (1989). This method could also account in part for some of the divergencies in wording and content since the version of the anecdotes in the *Life* are twice removed from the source.

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able to surrender her to his friend Geminus and stop seeing her without any overt signs of emotional distress like those evinced by Flora herself⁶⁰. The contrast which Plutarch wishes to demonstrate is clear: Megabates is to Agesilaus what Flora is to Pompey, but the apparent ease with which Pompey is able to overcome his passion for Flora is not paralleled by Agesilaus' behavior⁶¹.

The two men's relations with their friends is also an issue in both anecdotes. We have already seen how Plutarch has modified Xenophon's original version to represent the king being rudely chided by his "friends." In Pompey's case we witness the surprising readiness with which he gives in to Geminus' request. The two men's susceptibility to their friends is, as we have seen, a major theme in both *Lives*. This example clearly demonstrates how Plutarch may manipulate, alter, elaborate and comment on an anecdote in response to thematic considerations active in both *Lives* of a pair⁶².

In the series of anecdotes presenting Agesilaus' generalship⁶³ and in the series detailing his recall from Asia Minor, his return to Greece⁶⁴, and his involvement in the internecine struggles of the Greeks⁶⁵, a comparison with Xenophon reveals that Plutarch did indeed respect Agesilaus' military ability. The alterations he makes in his source tend not to detract significantly from the generally very positive characterization of the king's skill as a commander of men and sometimes they even add details which render Agesilaus in an even more positive light than his eulogizer Xenophon.

⁶⁰ This anecdote among others is discussed by P.A. STADTER (1995), pp. 221-236.

⁶¹ See also, e.g. Plutarch's depiction of Agesilaus' encounter with Pharnabazus' son (Ag. 13.1-4), modified from Xenophon's *Hellenika* 4.1.39. See also Agesilaus' handling of the Sphodrias affair (25.1-10).

⁶² I should note that this modification of his source seems to take place initially, at least in this example, at the excerpting stage, since Plutarch's preliminary version in the *Ap. Lac.* collection (209 D-E), although showing modifications in response to the relations with friends theme, does not deviate significantly from Xenophon with respect to the *Eigenbedeutung* (See H. LAUSBERG (1990³), pp. 231f (§421) for an explanation of this term as opposed to the *Ernstbedeutung* of an exemplum, or in this case, an anecdote. This may indicate that even at the excerpting stage Plutarch had already selected some themes for development in the *Life* and he therefore immediately made some modification of his source material.

⁶³ Ag. 9-10.7

⁶⁴ Ag. 15.2-16.4.

⁶⁵ Ag. 16.6-19.5.

Conclusion

Plutarch, it seems, expands anecdotes and alters their content in response to certain themes. The probability that such elaborations will take place appears to be directly proportional to how problematic the theme is, either in the realm of public opinion concerning the biographical subject's life and works, or in the subject's own life and its impact on his contemporaries. Frequently his editorial work is restricted to a few minor changes which add color and life to a portrait, such as changes in dialect, or the wording, of an anecdote. It is often amazing, however, to see how great an impact a series of relatively minor alterations can have. Like a proficient artist Plutarch uses color sparingly and lavishes the greatest attention on those details which infuse the portrait with the most profound aspects of his subject's personality.

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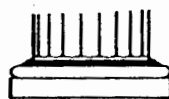
PLUTARCO, PLATÓN Y ARISTÓTELES

*ACTAS DEL V CONGRESO INTERNACIONAL DE LA
I.P.S. (MADRID-CUENCA, 4-7 DE MAYO DE 1999)*



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