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# CLASSICAL PHILOLOGY

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## CHRONOLOGICAL BIOGRAPHY AND *AKMĒ* IN PLUTARCH\*

G. H. POLMAN

IN HIS fundamental study of ancient biography Friedrich Leo distinguished two basic types. The first, Peripatetic biography, is a chronological narrative, written with artistic intent, portraying literary, philosophical, and political figures. The second type, which originated among the Alexandrian philologists, treats the period of youth chronologically but classifies the activities of the career into various topics or aspects. It is confined to literary figures and makes no artistic pretensions. Plutarch exemplifies Peripatetic biography; Suetonius, who adapted Alexandrian philological biography to political figures, stands in the second tradition.<sup>1</sup>

The empirical approach of Leo's book with its scope and wealth of material still makes it an indispensable tool. Unfortunately, at a crucial point Leo disregarded his strict method when he tried to abstract the form of Peripatetic biography from Aristotle's ethical theory. Since Plutarch's

biographies are clearly influenced by Aristotelian ethics, Leo argued, the form of these biographies must be the same as that of Peripatetic biographies; hence we know what Peripatetic biography must have looked like.<sup>2</sup>

A decade after Leo's book was published, sizable fragments of the *Vita Euripidis* written by the Peripatetic biographer Satyrus came to light.<sup>3</sup> Its dialogue form and Alexandrian arrangement into topics caused general surprise. Leo produced a swift analysis in which he stressed the dialogue form of Peripatetic biography and conceded the Alexandrian topical arrangement in late Peripatetic biographies.<sup>4</sup> Although Leo now put greater stress on the nonchronological material in Plutarch than he had previously, he limited himself largely to making small alterations of the views expressed in his book.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, once the dialogue form and topical arrangement are accepted as characteristic

\* This paper was read at the Free University of Berlin during the summer semester of 1972. I owe thanks to Professor R. Kassel for his great interest and rectifying criticism.

1. F. Leo, *Die griechisch-römische Biographie nach ihrer literarischen Form* (Leipzig, 1901), pp. 103, 120, 133 ff., 179 f., 187 ff., 315-20.

2. Leo, *op. cit.*, pp. 187-90. For a detailed discussion of Aristotelian ethical influence on Plutarch, see A. Dihle, "Studien zur griechischen Biographie," *AAWG*, XXXVII (1956), 57-87. Dihle (e.g., pp. 69, 75 ff.) argues that this influence is derived from the Peripatetics rather than from Aristotle himself, but Plutarch has evidently read Aristotle's ethical works: cf. *De virt. mor.* 442B; K. Ziegler, s.v. "Plutarchos," *RE*, XXI (1951), 922 (= *Plutarchos* [Stuttgart, 1964], col. 284); H. Erbse, "Die Bedeutung der Synkrisis

in den Parallelbiographien Plutarchs," *Hermes*, LXXXIV (1956), 400, n. 1.

3. POxy. 1176 (= H. von Armin, *Suppl. Eur.* [Bonn, 1913], pp. 3-9 and G. Arrighetti, "Satiro: Vita di Euripide," *SCO*, XIII [1964]).

4. Leo, "Satyros *Bios Euripiðou*," *NGG* (1912), pp. 273-90 (= *Kl. Schr.*, II, 365-83). The dialogue form of many Peripatetic writings was a known fact but largely overlooked by Leo in his attempt to find a formal connection between Plutarchian and Peripatetic biography. Papyri have a tendency to rectify even very plausible theories; for comparison's sake one might mention the now discarded views on the early date of Aesch. *Suppl.* and especially Rohde's imposing reconstruction of the origin of Greek romances.

5. Leo, "Satyros," p. 287.

of the Peripatetic biographies about whose formal aspects something definite is known, it follows that the Plutarchian form has little to do with Peripatetic biography.<sup>6</sup> Leo had argued that Nicolaus of Damascus' biography of Augustus was a formal intermediary between the Peripatetics and Plutarch. But since Steidle has shown that Nicolaus' phrase *ἔργα πολέμου καὶ εἰρήνης* points to a topical rather than a chronological arrangement, even this link loses validity.<sup>7</sup>

As a result, Plutarch's biographies may appear to be without precedent in Greek literature. There are, of course, Roman counterparts—certain biographies of Nepos and Tacitus' *Agricola*.<sup>8</sup> The *Agricola*, however, contains historiographical elements. Furthermore, Nepos and Plutarch both found it necessary to avoid confusion by stressing the biographical, nonhistoriographical nature of their writings. Evidently there was thought to be a close formal connection between historiography and chronological, narrative biography.<sup>9</sup> Sometimes a biographical section within a historical work might even be separated from it and regarded as independent. This happened to the section on Athenian politicians in Theopompus' *Philippica* (*FGrH* 115 F 100).

6. A. Weisäcker, "Untersuchungen über Plutarchs biographische Technik," *Problemata*, II (1931), 81 f.; cf. D. A. Russell, "On Reading Plutarch's Lives," *G and R*, XIII (1966), 148.

7. Nicolaus, *FGrH* 90 F 130. 58; Leo, *Biographie*, pp. 190-92; W. Steidle, "Sueton und die antike Biographie," *Zetemata*, I (1951), 139 f. The extant portions of the epitome of this biography are generally chronologically ordered (cf. Jacoby, *FGrH*, IIC, 262) and show Augustus on his way to power (*ὁπως παρήλθεν εἰς τὴν ἀρχήν*). The topical procedure of the missing part (*ἔργα πολέμου καὶ εἰρήνης*) is found already in Isoc. *Evag.* 41-51 (peace, civic administration), 52-64 (war) and occurs also in the rhetorical rules for encomia, e.g., Men. Rhet. 3. 372Sp, *διχα εἰς τε τὰ κατ' εἰρήνην καὶ τὰ κατὰ πόλεμον*. This is the arrangement followed by Philo *De vita Mosis*; Philo gives a chronological account of Moses' kingship (war) in Book 1 and deals with law-giving, the high-priestly office, and prophecy in Book 2 (peace).

8. Leo, *Biographie*, pp. 203-207, 224-33. The chronological arrangement was one of the possibilities for a writer of encomia: Quint. 3. 7. 15.

Because of obvious similarities it is reasonable to conclude that chronological biography is an offshoot of Hellenistic historiography. The strong interest in individuals in fourth-century B.C. historiography need not be documented here; but this and the development of encomia and Peripatetic biographies all in the same century must have been factors which led to the writing of chronological biographies.<sup>10</sup> Following Xenophon's example, Hellenistic historians wrote biographical monographs, but unfortunately the fragmentary state of their writings renders a detailed account of the early development of chronological biography impossible.<sup>11</sup>

Of the two types of biographies distinguished by Leo, the topical biography deals with the first few topics (birth, family, education, youth) relatively chronologically, but it then proceeds to group related aspects of the career into a number of categories which have no chronological relation to one another.<sup>12</sup> The essential difference between the topical and the chronological biography lies in the arrangement of the events of the career, for the chronological biographer generally adheres to the succession of events in the order of their occurrence. The period of the career, the most important and most

9. Cf. A. Momigliano, *The Development of Greek Biography* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), pp. 20, 83 f.; Leo, *Biographie*, pp. 231 f. (historical elements in the *Agricola*), 146 f. (Plutarch), 199-205 (Nepos); Plut. *Alex.* 1. 2, *Galba* 2. 5.

10. Cf. A. von Mess, "Die Anfänge der Biographie I," *RhM*, LXX (1915), 336-57, esp. 345 ff.; H. Homeyer, "Beobachtungen zu den hellenistischen Quellen der Plutarch-Viten," *Klio*, XLI (1963), 152-57; Momigliano, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

11. Hellenistic examples of political biographies are Polybius *Philopoemen* and Nicolaus *Vita Caesaris*. Dihle, in *GG4*, CCVIII (1954), 51 ff. (review of Steidle) and in "Studien z. gr. Biographie," pp. 1 ff., is skeptical about tracing back the formal elements of ancient biography. Certainly the approaches of W. Uxkull-Gyllenband, *Plutarch u. d. gr. Biographie* (Stuttgart, 1927) and N. I. Barbu, *Les procédés de la peinture des caractères et la vérité historique dans les biographies de Plutarque* (Paris, 1934), who treat Plutarch as a "scissors-and-paste" biographer and prefer to neglect much evidence to the contrary, do not inspire much confidence.

12. Leo, *Biographie*, pp. 1-84.

productive period of life, the Greeks termed *akmē*.<sup>13</sup> In the topical biography the *akmē* marks a significant shift from a chronological to a nonchronological arrangement of topics. The early topics lead up to the career; the career itself is regarded as a totality in which the succession of events plays very little part. Plutarch, however, employed a chronological arrangement in nearly all his biographies. This method allowed him considerable freedom in dealing with the *akmē*, since, consistent with its exact meaning, he could connect it to an individual action rather than to the whole career. The notion of *akmē* both types of biographers employed was basically that of Hellenistic historical literature; hence, for a better understanding of Plutarch's biographies, it will be useful to review the meaning of *akmē* as it relates to biography.

The word *akmē* was essentially a psychological concept used in the discussions of the poets, philosophers, and medical writers about the various periods of life. There was a variety of views on this topic, but two predominated.<sup>14</sup> According to one view, best expressed in Solon (19 Diehl), life was divided into periods of seven years. This was the most common division of human life and was held by Aristotle, most medical writers, and some Pythagoreans.<sup>15</sup> In a second approach, life was

divided into four stages of twenty years: childhood, youth, manhood, old age. This view was ascribed to Pythagoras (Diog. Laert. 8. 10) and occurs in certain medical writers. The mention of man's death at eighty in Solon (22 Diehl) and the importance of the ages of twenty and forty in several passages in Plato (*Rep.* 5. 460E, *Leg.* 6. 785B, 11. 937A, 12. 950D) probably reflect the popular four-ages view of life (not necessarily Plato's own). The period of manhood, entered at forty years, was considered the *akmē*.<sup>16</sup> This notion was institutionalized in certain Athenian offices for which age forty was a requirement.<sup>17</sup> The number forty, however, played a double role. The *akmē* began at forty, but it was also thought that the period of productivity could last for forty years.<sup>18</sup>

This concept of *akmē* was transferred from poetry and medicine to historiography. The historians had many problems of chronology. Some of these they could "solve" by simply devising dates, using the principle "*akmē* = 40." The pre-Herodotean chronographers were faced with the problem of translating the *geneai* of the successions of kings into concrete years in order to establish a working chronology from the period of the Trojan war to their own times. The duration of a *genea* varied, but it was generally put at 33 $\frac{1}{3}$  or 40 years. The second step was made in the Alexan-

13. E.g., Arist. *Rhet.* 1390b13 divides life into three periods (*ἡλικία*): νεότης, ἀκμή, γῆρας. Men at full maturity are ἀκμαῖοι, e.g., Arist. *Pol.* 1335a29; Galen *Def. med.* 104 (19. 374K).

14. F. Jacoby, "Apollodor Chronik," *Philol. Unters.*, XVI (1902), 41 ff.; F. Boll, *Die Lebensalter* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1913), pp. 5-49 (= *NJA*, XXXI [1913], 93-137 and *Kl. Schr. zur Sternkunde d. Altertums* [Leipzig, 1950], pp. 156-213).

15. Arist. *Pol.* 1335b32 ff., 1336b37 ff., *Rhet.* 1390b9; cf. *Pol.* 1335a35 f. Medical writers: cf. Jacoby, *op. cit.* (n. 14), p. 42 and Boll, *op. cit.*, pp. 26 ff. Pythagoreans: e.g., Hippon in Censorinus *DN* 7. 2 (= *Vorsokr.* 38A. 16); cf. Plato *Leg.* 6. 772D.

16. The best age for a plowman was about forty, Hes. *WD* 441 ff., on which see R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship* (Oxford, 1968), p. 256; cf. Marcus Aur. 7. 49, 11. 1. The

idea of *akmē* at forty years is found also among the Semites. R. Hirtzel, "Über Rundzahlen," *BVSGW*, XXXVII (1885), 17, argues for a causal relation but is disputed by W. H. Roscher, "Die Tessarakontaden u. Tessarakontadenlehre d. Griechen u. anderer Völker," *BVSGW*, LXI (1909), Heft 2, 25 f., 41-45.

17. Choregus for a boys' chorus, according to a Solonic law, Aeschin. *Tim.* 11 f.; Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 56. 3. Officers of the ephabates, Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 42; cf. Roscher, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-82 and Hirtzel, *op. cit.*, pp. 15 f.

18. E.g., Pythagoras founded his school at forty and taught for forty years, Aristoxenus *Frag.* 16 Wehrli; Diog. Laert. 8. 44. Other examples in Hirtzel, *op. cit.*, pp. 16 f. The second use of the number forty corresponds to *γεναί*, a notion of varying duration. E. Meyer, *Forsch. z. alten Gesch.* (Halle, 1892), I, 169 ff., argues that Hecataeus took a generation as forty years in length.

drian period. Where other evidence was lacking, it was assumed that a person was forty years old upon entering his *akmē*. The origin of this procedure is disputed. Aristoxenus employed it in his life of Pythagoras, but he may simply have been under the influence of the Pythagorean tradition for the dates of Pythagoras. There is no evidence for a general application before Apollodorus.<sup>19</sup> Whatever the value of *akmē* in supplying missing dates, it becomes a highly questionable method when known historical dates are altered in order to conform to this abstract notion.<sup>20</sup>

That the idea of *akmē*, psychological and medical in origin, but now also used to establish chronology, should play an important role in biography is understandable. During the period of *akmē*, the hero is at the height of his productive powers and performs his most significant deeds. His character has reached its most mature stage.<sup>21</sup> A particularly appropriate example of this use of *akmē* occurs in Polybius' summary of his encomium on Philopoemen where αἱ ἐπιφανέσταται πράξεις are equivalent to τὰ κατὰ τὴν ἀκμὴν αὐτοῦ ἔργα (10. 21. 6 f.). The approach of biographers to *akmē*, however, differed greatly. The writers of topical biographies saw the *akmē* as a temporal unity of analyzable aspects. Plutarch's chronological approach precluded such a view. The gradual unfolding of character through successive deeds gave his heroes that unity and dramatic quality which put Plutarch's biographies above those of topical writers. The chronological approach left Plutarch freer to decide where the *akmē* should

come; it need not be at the beginning of a career. He could select a particularly noteworthy deed and consider this the hero's *akmē*. Like the topical biographer he had the opportunity of making the *akmē* a dividing line.

Plutarch uses the word *akmē* in a variety of meanings but has several instances of the senses described in this article. In *Quaest. conv.* 5. 7. 5 (682E), *akmē* stands for the prime time of life. In an epitome, *Compar. Aristoph. et Menandr. compend.* 853F, we read that the comic writer Menander died ἐν ἀκμῇ τοῦ ποιῆν καὶ διδάσκειν. In a number of cases *akmē* denotes that short period of time during which a hero is at the pinnacle of his power, e.g., *Fabius* 5. 1, 19. 3 (both of Hannibal); cf. *Per.* 13. 2, 16. 3, *Luc.* 43. 3. In *Inst. Lac.* 238A f., Plutarch, like Aristotle, gives a threefold division of life and calls men in the prime of life ἀκμάζοντες.<sup>22</sup> There can be no doubt that Plutarch, following general Greek practice, sees *akmē* as the zenith of human life.

Now Plutarch was interested above all in character. He combined this interest, appropriately enough, with the notion of *akmē* by frequently giving a characterization of the hero exactly at the point of the *akmē*. Some of these *akmē*-characterizations were pointed out by Weizsäcker, who, however, did not consider them independent entities but part of a larger element which he termed *Akme-Eidologie*. But not every *Akme-Eidologie* has a characterization. Furthermore, since Weizsäcker's schematism and mind-boggling terminology are heavily burdened by the

19. Th. Bergk, *Gr. Lit.* (Berlin, 1872), I, 300 ff., first showed that the Alexandrians applied this procedure. For Aristoxenus, see Frag. 16 Wehrli and E. Rohde, "Die Quellen des Jamblichus in seiner Biographie des Pythagoras," *RhM*, XXVI (1871), 565 f. (= *Kl. Schr.*, II, 114 f.). H. Diels, "Chronologische Untersuchungen über Apollodors Chronika," *RhM*, XXXI (1876), 12 f., thinks that Aristoxenus may have been the intermediary between the Pythagoreans and Apollodorus. Jacoby, *op. cit.* (n. 14), p. 47, essentially agrees. Hirzel, *op. cit.*,

pp. 9-16, minimizes the role of Apollodorus and regards the general popularity of the *akmē*-notion as responsible for its introduction into chronology.

20. Examples in Hirzel, *op. cit.*, pp. 9 ff.; Plutarch *Pomp.* 46. 1, *An recte dict. sit lat. esse viv.* 1129C (Epaminondas; cf. *Pelop.* 4. 3-5).

21. Arist. *Rhet.* 1389a3 ff.

22. Cf. n. 13. See also [Longinus] *Subl.* 9. 13.

ballast of Heidegger's metaphysical speculation, it is best to regard his book with considerable skepticism.<sup>23</sup>

Plutarch, of course, does not use the phrase "akmē-characterization"; and, since he has a great many characterizations, a criterion for deciding which are akmē-characterizations and which are not must be employed. I consider a characterization an akmē-characterization if it comes at a highly significant moment in the hero's career. Such a moment can be the beginning of a career (e.g., Demosthenes), especially in the case of kings (e.g., Numa, Agis); the attainment of high office, used predominantly for Romans (e.g., Cato the Elder, Aemilius Paulus, Caesar); an outstanding military victory (e.g., Themistocles, Alexander); a combination of military victory and high office (e.g., Aristides, Flamininus, Sulla); the high point of a political career (e.g., Pericles, Sertorius, Cicero). Plutarch's superlatives generally do not make it difficult to find the akmē. Sometimes he emphasizes the akmē by including a list of honors the hero received (e.g., Themistocles, Aristides, Flamininus). But at other times the reader himself must pick out the akmē from the events of the hero's life (e.g., Alexander, Demetrius). The method I have used to find akmē-characterizations asks two questions: (1) does Plutarch indicate the akmē of a given hero; and (2) if so, is there a characterization at this point? It is possible to identify akmē-characterizations in about half of the *Lives*.

In the next section I propose to discuss

23. Weizsäcker, *op. cit.*, pp. 18, 67–72, 80 (*Akme-Eidologie*). Cf. Steidle's criticism, *op. cit.*, pp. 151 f., n. 3. Weizsäcker's concepts of chronography and eidology should be used with great caution and preferably not at all. Much of what he calls eidology is in fact chronological material. See esp. Ziegler's criticism in *RE*, XXI (1951), 907 f. (= *Plutarchos*, col. 270). The tension Weizsäcker claims to see between Plutarch's moral-eidological interest and his chronographical source material completely disregards Plutarch's statements that deeds show men's character; cf. *Dem.* 3, 11, 7, *Pomp.* 8, 6;

various akmē-characterizations and features connected with akmē in Plutarch's biographies. The akmē-characterizations by their very nature are among the most important characterizations in Plutarch and will shed some light on his method of characterizing men.

*Themistocles*. The battle of Salamis and its aftermath make up Themistocles' akmē (13–16). Chapter 17 reviews the honors he received; 18 contains the akmē-characterization, which stresses his φιλοτιμία (cf. 3, 4, 5, 3–5).<sup>24</sup>

*Aristides*. There are several characterizations in this life (3, 4–4, 7, 6, 25), but the akmē-characterization (6) comes after the battle of Marathon, which was followed by Aristides' election as eponymous archon (5, 9). The whole characterization deals with the justice of Aristides (also 4, 1, 22, 3, 24, 2). The two other characterizations give a fuller picture of the man and also add some negative details, including an instance in which Aristides preferred expediency to justice (25, 3).

*Cato maior*. This biography has two akmē-characterizations. The first (4–6) shows Cato during the early stages of his political career—he is not yet consul (10, 1)—and emphasizes his μικρολογία (5, 1) and ἐγκράτεια (6, 1). It contains a good deal of criticism (5) of his lack of kindness and his nasty character (ἀπενὲς ἄγαν ἦθος). Three chapters of ἀποφθέγματα form a bridge between this akmē-characterization and Cato's consulship. A second akmē-characterization (20, 21) follows the censorship (16, 1–19, 3), an office Plutarch considers κορυφή τιμῆς ἀπάσης καὶ τῆς πολιτείας ἐπιτελείωσις (16, 1; cf. *Flam.* 18, 1). A transitional element about Cato's attitude to praise and honor leads to this akmē-characterization, in which Cato is depicted as a good father, a harsh master, and a shrewd businessman.<sup>25</sup>

*Pericles*. Plutarch's statement that Pericles' political primacy lasted forty years is an exaggeration. Pericles' total political career, which began shortly

Leo, *Biographie*, pp. 184–89; Dihle, "Studien z. gr. Biographie," ch. iv.

24. Cf. A. W. Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, I (Oxford, 1945), 61. On φιλοτιμία in Plutarch, see A. E. Wardman, "Plutarch and Alexander," *CQ*, XLIX (1955), 105–107.

25. Contrary to his usual method, Livy (39, 40) gives a direct characterization of Cato in connection with the censorship; cf. I. Bruns, *Die Persönlichkeit i. d. Geschichtsschreibung d. Alten* (Berlin, 1898), pp. 50 ff.

after 470 B.C. (7. 3), did in fact last about forty years, but he was not among the foremost politicians until 461. Under the influence of the *akmē*-principle, here partly corroborated by historical fact, the primacy of the last thirty years has been extended to Pericles' whole career.<sup>26</sup>

The *akmē*-characterization (15–16) follows the ostracism of Thucydides in 443 B.C., when Pericles became the sole claimant to Athenian power. It stresses his statesmanship, incorruptibility, and frugality. Pericles' statesmanship is a unifying thread in this biography, which Gomme has with justice called the "most complex" of Plutarch's biographies.<sup>27</sup> The change in Pericles' tactics (*μεταβολή*, 9. 1–15. 2) is basically responsible for the division in this biography at the point of *akmē*.

*Demosthenes*. After discussing Demosthenes' training and ability in oratory, Plutarch takes up his political career (11. 7). In 355/54 Demosthenes entered Athenian public life with a series of prosecutions and his first political oration (12. 1, 15. 3).<sup>28</sup> With the *Philippics* he quickly established a reputation for his outspoken defense of Greece (12. 7). The *akmē*-characterization (13) is for the most part a *synkrisis* contrasting Demosthenes' unchanging policy with the fickleness of other fourth-century politicians.<sup>29</sup> At the end Plutarch mentions Demosthenes' corruptibility (cf. 20. 4, 25, *Cic.* 52. 5 f.) and lack of bravery in war (cf. 20. 2). The leading theme of Demosthenes' political career is his continued anti-Macedonian policy (*Cic.* 53. 3).

*Cicero*. This biography contains the largest *akmē*-characterization (24–27) of any of the *Lives*. As one might expect, it follows upon the events of the consulship of 63 B.C., to which Plutarch

devotes a very large section (10–23). Plutarch discusses a number of Cicero's characteristics—*φιλοτιμία*, lack of envy, ability to make clever retorts and biting jests, and *πειραιτολογία*. The last two are the ones that stand out most in this biography (1. 5, 3. 5, 5. 6, 6. 3, 6. 5, 7. 6–8, 28. 1, 50. 4, 51). These two traits made Cicero very much disliked, and, in Plutarch's view, were a factor in the troubles with Clodius which led to Cicero's banishment (28. 1). The function of these traits goes beyond the *akmē*-characterization; they are integrated in the events that follow.<sup>30</sup>

*Timoleon*. The *akmē*-characterization (36) follows the pacification of Sicily, which Plutarch considers the noblest action performed by a Greek of that time (37. 4; cf. 35). Basically this characterization is a *synkrisis*. Timoleon is compared to contemporary generals, whom he excels because of a combination of nobility and military ease (36. 4). Plutarch regards valorous generalship, perhaps a result of good luck (3. 5, 19. 1, 21. 4, 37. 5, *Aem.* 1. 8), and nobility of character (3. 3–5, 5. 1, 37. 5) as Timoleon's leading traits.

*Flaminius*. Plutarch sandwiches Flaminius' *akmē*-characterization (17) between his activities in Greece (from 198 to 190 B.C.) and his censorship, *ἀρχή μεγίστη καὶ τῆς πολιτείας ἐπιτελείωσις* (18. 1; cf. *Cat. mai.* 16. 1). The career of Flaminius after his censorship was not very noteworthy (20. 2); hence the characterization comes at the high point of his life. The bridge to this characterization is formed by a section (16. 5–17. 1) dealing with honors Flaminius received from the Greek cities. His overriding characteristic, *φιλοτιμία*, is mentioned only once in the *akmē*-characterization (17. 2).<sup>31</sup>

26. *Cic. De or.* 3. 138 also mentions a forty-year administration. Cf. A. Wilkinson's commentary *ad loc.*; G. Busolt, *Gr. Gesch.* (Gotha, 1897), III<sup>1</sup>, 495 f., n. 3; and R. Sealey, "The Entry of Pericles into History," *Hermes*, LXXXIV (1956), 234–47 (= *Essays in Greek Politics* [New York, n.d.], pp. 59–74). Weizsäcker, *op. cit.*, pp. 22 f.; Steidle, *op. cit.*, p. 158, n. 1; V. Ehrenberg, *Sophokles u. Perikles* (Munich, 1956), pp. 95 f., n. 3; and E. Buchner in *Gnomon*, XXXII (1960), 309, argue that the fifteen years of sole rule (16. 3) are in addition to the forty years. H. F. Clinton, *Fasti Hellenici*<sup>2</sup> (Oxford, 1827), sub "429 B.C., 'Events'"; E. Meinhardt, *Perikles bei Plutarch* (Diss., Frankfurt, 1957), p. 46, along with most editors and translators, hold that the final fifteen years are included within the forty. An impartial reading of the text certainly leaves the impression of 40 + 15 years. The nasty alternatives: a chronological error on Plutarch's part or sloppy writing. Since *ἐλαττω* takes a definite article, the use of the article cannot be used to explain this passage as some nineteenth-century editors thought it might; cf. Kühnegerth, *Gr. Gramm.*, II<sup>1</sup>, 639.

27. For the chronological and literary problems of the *Pericles*, see Weizsäcker, *op. cit.*, pp. 11–59; Gomme, *op. cit.*, pp. 65 ff.; Steidle, *op. cit.*, pp. 151–66; A. B. Breebaart, "Plutarch and the Political Development of Pericles," *Mnemosyne*, XXIV (1971), 260–72.

28. W. Jaeger, *Demosthenes* (Berlin, 1939), p. 215, n. 21; H. Bengtson, *Gr. Gesch.*<sup>4</sup> (Munich, 1969), p. 315.

29. For *synkrisis*, see F. Focke, "Synkrisis," *Hermes*, LVIII (1923), 327–68, 465; Erbse, *op. cit.*; Russell, *op. cit.*, pp. 150 f. Several *akmē*-characterizations contain *synkrisis*es, e.g., *Timoleon*, *Caesar*; cf. *Pomp.* (below, p. 175).

30. Erbse, *op. cit.*, p. 412.

31. R. E. Smith, "The Sources of Plutarch's Life of Titus Flaminius," *CQ*, XXXVIII (1944), 94; C. P. Jones, *Plutarch and Rome* (Oxford, 1971), p. 94; also *Flam.* 1. 3, 2. 1, 3. 3, *Philop.* 5. 1. F. M. Wood, "The Tradition of Flaminius' 'Selfish Ambition' in Polybius and Later Historians," *TAPA*, LXX (1939), 93–103, argues that the reputation of Flaminius as an ambitious man is a "malicious tradition" begun by Polybius.

*Alexander.* Alexander has captured Persepolis and with it the palace and throne of Darius. An *akmē*-characterization follows (39. 1–42. 4), which stresses his good will and discipline. The choice of these traits shows, I think, that Plutarch did in fact see Alexander’s character as many sided and not explicable wholly in terms of τὸ θυμοειδές and φιλοτιμία.<sup>32</sup>

*Caesar.* Plutarch, the only ancient writer to do so, divides Caesar’s life into two parts (15. 1), for which the consulship of 59 B.C. forms the dividing line. Steidle has suggested that the reason for this division may be that Caesar is being compared with Alexander. Before 59 B.C., in contrast with afterward, Caesar’s military career was not particularly outstanding; hence this division.<sup>33</sup> Also, Caesar was forty years old at this point; his age and the beginning of a period of military conquests ending in sole rule make this a good place for an *akmē*-characterization. The characterization falls into three parts: a *synkrisis* with other generals (15); the military spirit of Caesar’s soldiers (16); and his refusal to live a life of ease (17). In the background is φιλοτιμία (17. 1 f.), which is a basic drive of Caesar (e.g., 11. 3–6, 22. 6, 58. 4–10, 69. 1).

*Agis.* The *akmē*-characterization (4) occurs when Agis becomes king. This short chapter reveals him as avoiding luxury and observing the traditional Spartan way of life. These characteristics fit in well with the leading theme—Agis’ attempts to restore Sparta’s ancient traditions (2. 10, 5, 6. 1 f., 7. 1–4, 10. 1, etc.).

*Numa.* Numa was born on the day Romulus founded Rome (3. 6) and was forty years old (5. 1) when he was asked to become king. Both dates are fictional, of course. The first is a synchronism, a chronological device for connecting a famous person with a famous date.<sup>34</sup> The second is a clear application of the *akmē*-principle. Numa’s age is mentioned first in Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Ant. Rom.* 2. 58. 2 and is not to be found in Cicero *Rep.* 2. 25 ff. or Livy 1. 18. The *akmē*-characterization (3. 7–4. 2) stresses Numa’s sober way of life, his devotion to the gods, and his natural disposition

to every virtue (cf. 5. 4–8, 20. 8–12). His most characteristic virtue is εὐσέβεια (also 22. 12, 23. 2). Correspondingly, Plutarch deals with Numa’s administration of religious affairs at great length. Numa’s career is not treated chronologically but topically: religion (7. 9–16. 1), agricultural reform (16. 2–7), tribal reform (17), reform of the calendar (18–19). The topical approach is found also in other biographies of semi-mythical figures for whom no detailed chronology exists (e.g., *Theseus*, *Lycurgus*, *Solon*).

*Pompey.* Pompey’s *akmē* occurred in 61 B.C., when he celebrated his third triumph after the successful completion of campaigns on three continents (45. 7). Some writers who make forced parallels between Pompey and Alexander in their *synkrisis* make Pompey thirty-four years old at this point. Plutarch rejects this comparison and states that Pompey was really (ἀληθείᾳ) forty years old (46. 1). In actual fact Pompey was forty-five (born in 106 B.C.). This is an example of how the notion of *akmē* could distort established chronology. Although Plutarch takes a quick look at Pompey’s political reputation after his triumph (46. 1–4), there is no *akmē*-characterization.

“*Akmē*”-characterizations in other biographies. *Alcibiades* 16 (after having been elected general, 15. 1); *Dion* 52 (after the liberation of Syracuse in 357 B.C.); *Aem. Paulus* 3 (on becoming aedile and augur); *Sertorius* 10 (at the height of his power in Spain, 9. 11); *Demetrius* 19. 4–20. 9 (upon the retirement of Antigonos); *Antonius* 4 (after his first major activity, the invasion of Egypt, 3); *Aratus* 10 (after the capture of Sicyon, 2–9); *Artaxerxes* 4. 4–5. 6 (at the beginning of his kingship, 2. 5); *Cleomenes* 13 (at the height of his success after his reforms); *Lysander* 19. 1–6 (at the height of his power, 18. 4); *Sulla* 6. 4–17 (after his achievements in the Social War on the basis of which he was elected consul, 6. 18).

*Doubtful “akmē”-characterizations.* (a) *Cimon* 4. 4–5. 3. The characterization is of his youth, just before entering politics (5. 5). (b) *Lucullus* 39–41. This characterization belongs to the second, and rather inconspicuous, part of Lucullus’ career. It marks a turning point, but not, I think, an *akmē*.

32. As Wardman, *op. cit.*, pp. 102–107, tries to do. J. R. Hamilton, *Plutarch: Alexander* (Oxford, 1969), p. lxiv, correctly emphasizes the many-sided character of Plutarch’s Alexander.

33. Steidle, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

34. Such synchronisms were popular: cf. Rohde, “*Ἔγρονε*

in den Biographica des Suidas,” *RhM*, XXXIII (1878), 171, 184 f. (= *Kl. Schr.*, I, 125, 139 f.); “Zur Chronologie d. gr. Literaturgeschichte,” *RhM*, XXXVI (1881), 410 ff., 416–28 (= *Kl. Schr.*, I, 32 ff., 38–52), on Homer and Hesiod; Jacoby, *op. cit.* (n. 14), pp. 47 ff.



(c) *Brutus* 29. This chapter contains a *synkrisis* of Brutus and Cassius. Although it might be argued that Brutus' anti-Caesarian opposition is here at its zenith, the evidence is inconclusive. (d) *Pyrrhus* 8. This characterization follows a military victory. Although the battle is the first described in some detail, Pyrrhus has already had several successes and is not at the high point of his career.<sup>35</sup> (e) *Marius* 6. Similar to *Pyrrhus* 8.

The large number of *akmē*-characterizations shows the unmistakable influence of the concept of *akmē* on Plutarch. The biographies of Numa, Pericles, and Pompey reveal the strength of *akmē* as applied by chronologists since Apollodorus. In the cases of Pericles, Caesar, and, to a lesser extent, Flamininus, the *akmē* marks a basic division within the biography. In view of the significance the Greeks attached to the *akmē* as the high point of life, it is a natural consequence that a biographer as interested in character as Plutarch should exploit it. The fact that for most of his biographies he chose a chronological rather than a topical arrangement gave him certain advantages. First, he could instill a dramatic flavor in his figures by keeping the action unified and dynamic.<sup>36</sup> This the topical biographer, who chopped up the career into parallel bits, could not do. And second, Plutarch had greater flexibility in adapting *akmē*-characterizations to circumstances. In Suetonius the *akmē* had a fixed place; Plutarch could select.

Nevertheless, the *akmē*-characterization is not merely a compositional technique; it is also part of Plutarch's method of characterizing men. Consistent with Aristotelian ethics, all the *akmē*-characteriza-

tions are connected with historical events (actions). Among the Peripatetic biographers, however, there had been a tendency to view people from the basis of a single character trait and to explain the whole personality from this trait.<sup>37</sup> It is sometimes argued that Plutarch followed the same approach.<sup>38</sup> But Plutarch's theory of personality is more differentiated than that of the Peripatetic biographers. The Plutarchian hero may have a dominant trait, but he is not a Peripatetic *χαρακτήρ* (type).<sup>39</sup> More or less hesitantly, Plutarch admits that the dominant vice of Crassus is avarice (2. 1, 6. 6), but he also stresses Crassus' ambition (6. 5, 7. 1 and 5, 14. 5, 16. 1 f.). Cimon, Lucullus, and Sulla in fact show a change of character.<sup>40</sup> The *akmē*-characterizations show that Plutarch saw men as more complex than the Peripatetic biographers did. Many *akmē*-characterizations present the hero's dominant trait, or at least the one for which he is best known, but generally not to the exclusion of other traits. Often two or more characteristics are stressed and regarded as independent. Caesar's refusal to live a life of ease in spite of physical frailty is considered to be unconnected with his ambition (17. 2). Sometimes, as in the *Aristides*, for instance, the *akmē*-characterization is highly idealized but qualified by a later characterization in which Plutarch rounds out his subject's personality. The tendency, so often found in ancient writers, to reduce character to one basic drive has usually resulted in distorted portraits. Plutarch's heroes, however, are neither wholly good nor wholly bad; even those exemplars of vice, Demetrius and Marcus Antonius,

35. Hence it is questionable to call it an "Ersterfolgs-Eidologie," Weizsäcker, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

36. Cf. P. De Lacy, "Biography and Tragedy in Plutarch," *AJP*, LXXIII (1952), 159-71.

37. Cf. Aristoxenus in F. Wehrli, *Die Schule d. Aristoteles* (Basel and Stuttgart, 1967), II<sup>2</sup>, 64 f.; Dihle, "Studien z. gr. Biographie," pp. 69-74, 104 ff.

38. Steidle, *op. cit.*, pp. 23 f., 113, 118, 164, n. 2; see also n. 32.

39. On the meaning of *χαρακτήρ* in Theophrastus, cf. A. Körte, "ΧΑΡΑΚΤΗΡ," *Hermes*, LXIV (1929), 77 f.

40. *Luc.* 44. 4 (= *Synkr.* 1. 4), *Sulla* 30. 5; cf. Russell, *op. cit.*, pp. 144-47.

have great virtues (*Demetr.* 1. 6 f.). Plutarch preferred to be kind to his heroes and give them the benefit of the doubt.<sup>41</sup> The nature of biography allowed him to be highly selective in his facts, but the resulting

portraits are slightly idealized pictures rather than willful distortions.<sup>42</sup>

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41. *Cimon* 2. 5, *De Hdt. mal.* 855B–856D; C. Theander, *Plutarch u. d. Geschichte* (Lund, 1951), pp. 32 ff.

42. *Alex.* 1, *Nicias* 1, *Cimon* 2, *Aem.* 1, *Demetr.* 1. Cf. D. A.

Russell, "Plutarch, *Alkibiades* 1–16," *PCPhS*, CXCII (1966), 45–47.