ὥσπερ ἴχνεσι τοῖς ὀνόμασι. *Plutarch's* Cratylus

[*ὥσπερ ἴχνεσι τοῖς ὀνόμασι. Il* Cratilo *di Plutarco*]

from
Carlo Delle Donne
Research Fellow in Classical Philology, University of Turin
carlodelledonne2@gmail.com

Abstract

The article traces the presence of Plato's *Cratylus*" in the works of Plutarch, with a particular focus on its refunctionalization within the Plutarchian discursive context. Building on several scholarly contributions on this subject, the article highlights Plutarch's exegetical sophistication, demonstrating his ability to selectively appropriate and recontextualize Plato's theoretical segments without betraying their original meaning.

Key-Words: Plutarch, Language, *Cratylus*, Plato.

Riassunto

L'articolo rintraccia la presenza del *Cratilo* platonico nelle opere plutarchee, analizzandone, in particolare, la rifunzionalizzazione nel contesto discorsivo plutarcheo. Sulla scorta di alcuni contributi dedicati a questo tema, l'articolo mette in evidenza la raffinatezza esegetica di Plutarco, che si mostra capace di selezionare e riappropriarsi di segmenti teorici platonici senza tradirne il significato originario.

Parole-Chiave: Plutarco, Linguaggio, *Cratilo,* Platone.

The presence of the *Cratylus* in Plutarch's work and thought has received little attention from Plutarch scholars. One notable exception is Robbert Maarten van den Berg's book, *Proclus' Commentary on the Cratylus in Context*[1], which offers an original perspective on this issue. According to van den Berg, Plutarch did not show much interest in the *Cratylus* and interpreted it primarily as a theological text, failing to grasp its true philosophical message. The scholar

---

[1] Van den Berg 2008: 46-50.
[2] Sedley 2003 (1): 90-96.

suggests that, according to Plutarch, the etymology of the theonyms presented in Plato's dialogue can lead to a deeper understanding of the gods themselves, as discussed in a well-known section of the text (397b6 ff.)[2]. The scholar argues that Plutarch believed ancient "nomothetes" (who were experts in divine matters too)[3] encoded their wisdom about the divine within the names of the gods, and that this wisdom could be brought to light through etymology. As is evident, this perspective highlights the influence of Stoic philosophy on Plutarch's reception of the *Cratylus*. In an upcoming book dedicated to the ancient reception of the *Cratylus*, Judith Mossman dedicates a substantial chapter to the presence of the *Cratylus* in Plutarch's works, presenting an interpretation that largely surpasses van den Berg's conclusions[4]. Mossman suggests that the *Cratylus* serves as a foundation for numerous sections of Plutarch's writings, permeating the structure of entire textual sections. While Mossman's examination is comprehensive and precise, there is room for further strengthening and enriching her arguments. Therefore, the purpose of this contribution is to reconstruct the fundamental aspects of Plutarch's inter-

pretation of the *Cratylus*, emphasizing its coherence and depth. Ultimately, the findings discourage ascribing a generic "theological" and "etymological" interpretation of the dialogue to Plutarch, as proposed by van den Berg.

This investigation begins with the *De E apud Delphos* as its starting point[5]. From the outset, the dynamics of intertextuality with the *Cratylus* come into play. The author introduces his teacher, the enigmatic Ammonius, and ascribes to him an ostensibly heuristic understanding[6] of the etymological tool (385b-c):

[T1] ὅτι μὲν γὰρ οὐχ ἧττον ὁ θεὸς φιλόσοφος ἢ μάντις, ἐδόκει πᾶσιν ὀρθῶς πρὸς τοῦτο τῶν ὀνομάτων ἕκαστον Ἀμμώνιος τίθεσθαι καὶ διδάσκειν, ὡς Πύθιος μέν ἐστι τοῖς ἀρχομένοις μανθάνειν καὶ διαπυνθάνεσθαι· Δήλιος δὲ καὶ Φαναῖος οἷς ἤδη τι δηλοῦται καὶ ὑποφαίνεται τῆς ἀληθείας· Ἰσμήνιος δὲ τοῖς ἔχουσι τὴν ἐπιστήμην, καὶ Λεσχηνόριος ὅταν ἐνεργῶσι καὶ ἀπολαύωσι χρώμενοι τῷ διαλέγεσθαι καὶ φιλοσοφεῖν πρὸς ἀλλήλους.

That the God is no less a philosopher than he is a prophet Ammonius appeared to all to posit and demonstrate correctly with

---

[3] On these characters, see SEDLEY 2003 (2); PALUMBO 2004; CHURCHILL 1983; DEMAND 1975.

[4] MOSSMAN, forthcoming. I would like to thank her for sharing her unpublished work with me.

[5] My analysis of the work largely depends on BONAZZI 2008 and FERRARI 2010.

[6] By this expression, I am referring to the conception of etymology as the privileged means to discover the true being, the essence, of words' meanings.

respect to each of his names. He is 'Pythian' (Πύθιος, The Inquirer) to those who are beginning to learn and to inquire (διαπυνθάνεσθαι); 'Delian' (Δήλιος, The Clear One) and 'Phanaean' (Φαναῖος) to those for whom already a glimmering of the truth is becoming clear and being revealed (δηλοῦται καὶ ὑποφαίνεται); 'Ismenian' (Ἰσμήνιος, The Knowing) to those who possess the knowledge (ἐπιστήμην); 'Leschenorian' (Λεσχηνόριος, God of Discourse) when they are in active enjoyment of dialectical (τῶι διαλέγεσθαι) and philosophic intercourse with one another. (trans. by Babbitt)[7].

Ammonius is widely regarded by scholars as Plutarch's representative voice in the dialogue[8]. While his trust in etymology is evident from the passage, it is equally clear that, for the philosopher, etymology alone is insufficient to grasp the essence of the divine. Theonyms only become "speaking" if one already possesses knowledge of the referent, enabling them to interpret each name correctly. In other words, divine names acquire different meanings only for the philosopher who has already traversed the path to knowledge. Therefore, the polyonymy of Apollo (also found in the *Cratylus*)[9] is founded on an epistemological principle—the necessary gradual progression for humans to attain knowledge of the divine (i.e., philosophy)[10]. However, the acquisition of this epistemological principle precedes, and is indispensable for, a proper understanding of such polyonymy, while the reverse is not true. Essentially, this signifies a rejection of a purely heuristic conception of etymology, as proposed by Cratylus in the homonymous dialogue[11]. Instead, Ammonius' approach appears to stem from the conclusive remarks of the dialogue[12], where Socrates defends the

---

[7]   BABBITT 1936.

[8]   FERRARI 2010: 48-49; for a more complex examination of the question, see also OPSOMER 2009.

[9]   405c1-406a2; see MONTRASIO 1988); ADEMOLLO 2011: 175-176.

[10]   On the relationship between philosophy and religion in Plutarch, see BRENK 2017; see *De Iside*, 2, 351e: διὸ θειότητος ὄρεξίς ἐστιν ἡ τῆς ἀληθείας μάλιστα δὲ τῆς περὶ θεῶν ἔφεσις, ὥσπερ ἀνάληψιν ἱερῶν τὴν μάθησιν ἔχουσα καὶ τὴν ζήτησιν, ἁγνείας τε πάσης καὶ νεωκορίας ἔργον ὁσιώτερον; ando also 3, 352c: Ἰσιακός ἐστιν ὡς ἀληθῶς ὁ τὰ δεικνύμενα καὶ δρώμενα περὶ τοὺς θεοὺς τούτους, ὅταν νόμῳ παραλάβῃ, λόγῳ ζητῶν καὶ φιλοσοφῶν περὶ τῆς ἐν αὐτοῖς ἀληθείας.

[11]   435d7-e5: SOCR. ἴσως γάρ, ὦ Κρατύλε, τὸ τοιόνδε λέγεις, ὡς ἐπειδάν τις εἰδῇ τὸ ὄνομα οἷόν ἐστιν—ἔστι δὲ οἷόνπερ τὸ πρᾶγμα— εἴσεται δὴ καὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα, ἐπείπερ ὅμοιον τυγχάνει ὂν τῷ ὀνόματι […]. CRAT. ἀληθέστατα λέγεις. On Cratylus' theory, see WILLIAMS 1994 and ADEMOLLO 2011: 23-36.

[12]   For an overall interpretation of the dialogue, which fruitfully deploys its conclusion, see ARONADIO 2011: esp. 66-69.

necessity of knowing things as they are, "through one another [...] and through themselves" (438e, δι᾽ ἀλλήλων γε [...], καὶ αὐτὰ δι᾽ αὑτῶν), regardless of their names (439b, οὐκ ἐξ ὀνομάτων)[13]. Understanding words alone does not allow one to fully comprehend the corresponding entities[14]. Consequently, Plutarch also distances himself from the Stoic reinterpretation of the etymological method[15], as evidenced by a passage in the *Quomodo adolescens poetas audire debeat* (31 d-f):

[T2] δεῖ δὲ μηδὲ τῶν ὀνομάτων ἀμελῶς ἀκούειν, ἀλλὰ τὴν μὲν Κλεάνθους παιδιὰν παραιτεῖσθαι· κατειρωνεύεται γὰρ ἔστιν ὅτε προσποιούμενος ἐξηγεῖσθαι τὸ "Ζεῦ πάτερ Ἴδηθεν μεδέων" καὶ τὸ "Ζεῦ ἄνα Δωδωναῖε" κελεύων ἀναγιγνώσκειν ὑφ᾽ ἕν, ὡς τὸν ἐκ τῆς γῆς ἀναθυμιώμενον ἀέρα διὰ τὴν ἀνάδοσιν ἀναδωδωναῖον ὄντα. καὶ Χρύσιππος δὲ πολλαχοῦ γλίσχρος ἐστίν, οὐ παίζων ἀλλ᾽ εὑρησιλογῶν ἀπιθάνως, καὶ παραβιαζόμενος εὐρύοπα Κρονίδην εἶναι τὸν δεινὸν ἐν τῷ διαλέγεσθαι καὶ διαβεβηκότα τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ λόγου. βέλτιον δὲ ταῦτα τοῖς γραμματικοῖς παρέντας ἐκεῖνα μᾶλλον πιέζειν οἷς ἅμα τὸ χρήσιμον καὶ πιθανὸν ἔνεστιν "οὐδέ με θυμὸς ἄνωγεν, ἐπεὶ

μάθον ἔμμεναι ἐσθλὸς" καὶ "πᾶσιν γὰρ ἐπίστατο μείλιχος εἶναι". τήν τε γὰρ ἀνδρείαν ἀποφαίνων μάθημα καὶ τὸ προσφιλῶς ἅμα καὶ κεχαρισμένως ἀνθρώποις ὁμιλεῖν ἀπ᾽ ἐπιστήμης καὶ κατὰ λόγον γίγνεσθαι νομίζων προτρέπει μὴ ἀμελεῖν ἑαυτῶν, ἀλλὰ μανθάνειν τὰ καλὰ καὶ προσέχειν τοῖς διδάσκουσιν, ὡς καὶ τὴν σκαιότητα καὶ τὴν δειλίαν ἀμαθίαν καὶ ἄγνοιαν οὖσαν.

While it is also necessary not to pass over the words carelessly, yet one should eschew the puerility of Cleanthes; for there are times when he uses a mock seriousness in pretending to interpret the words, "Father Zeus, enthroned on Ida", and "Zeus, lord of Dodona", bidding us in the latter case to read the last two words as one (taking the word 'lord' as the preposition 'up') as though the vapour exhaled from the earth were 'updonative' because of its being rendered up! And Chrysippus also is often quite petty, although he does not indulge in jesting, but wrests the words ingeniously, yet without carrying conviction, as when he would force the phrase 'wide-seeing' son of Cronos to signify 'clever in conversation,' that

---

[13] 439b: SOCR. ἀγαπητὸν δὲ καὶ τοῦτο ὁμολογήσασθαι, ὅτι οὐκ ἐξ ὀνομάτων ἀλλὰ πολὺ μᾶλλον αὐτὰ ἐξ αὑτῶν καὶ μαθητέον καὶ ζητητέον ἢ ἐκ τῶν ὀνομάτων. CRAT. φαίνεται, ὦ Σώκρατες.

[14] In the wake of Gorgias, the idea is that words and things are heterogeneous; on Gorgias' legacy in the dialogue, see DELLE DONNE 2024 (2): § I.2.

[15] On Stoic etymologies, see ALLEN 2009 and LONG 2009.

is to say, with a widespread power of speech. It is better, however, to turn these matters over to the grammarians, and to hold fast rather to those in which is to be found both usefulness and probability, such as "Nor does my heart so bid me, for I have learned to be valiant", and "For towards all he understood the way to be gentle". For by declaring that bravery is a thing to be learned, and by expressing the belief that friendly and gracious intercourse with others proceeds from understanding, and is in keeping with reason, the poet urges us not to neglect our own selves, but to learn what is good, and to give heed to our teachers, intimating that both boorishness and cowardice are but ignorance and defects of learning. (trans. by Babbitt)[16].

This chapter revolves around a dual teaching. On one hand, there is a caution against careless listening to names (δεῖ δὲ μηδὲ τῶν ὀνομάτων ἀμελῶς ἀκούειν). On the other hand, there is an admonition to avoid treating words as the whole truth, which is taken to be akin to mere wordplay (τὴν μὲν […] παιδιὰν παραιτεῖσθαι). Note that the latter warning finds resonance in Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride* too (376a, ἥκιστα μὲν οὖν δεῖ φιλοτιμεῖσθαι περὶ τῶν ὀνομάτων), where an excessive emphasis on words is also refuted (more on this later). Notably, this cautionary approach finds support in Plato's works[17] and is also inherited, for example, by Galen[18]. Anyway, in the aforementioned passage, the notion of words as "places of truth" is explicitly attributed to Stoicism. Plutarch invokes Cleanthes and Chrysippus as examples of how not to practice etymology. Interestingly, this criticism is steeped in Platonic terminology[19]. In addition to the dialectics playfulness/seriousness, which also characterises the *Cratylus*[20], the phrase κατειρωνεύεται [...] προσποιούμενος, with reference to Cleanthes, is a near *verbatim* allusion to Cratylus' attitude in Plato's homonymous dialogue. Hermogenes describes Cratylus as one who οὔτε ἀποσαφεῖ οὐδὲν εἰρωνεύεταί

---

[16] Babbitt 1927: 165-167.

[17] *Plt.* 261e: καλῶς γε, ὦ Σώκρατες· κἂν διαφυλάξῃς τὸ μὴ σπουδάζειν ἐπὶ τοῖς ὀνόμασιν, πλουσιώτερος εἰς τὸ γῆρας ἀναφανήσῃ φρονήσεως. The assumption clearly stems from the end of the *Cratylus*; see also Aronadio 2016: 67-106.

[18] Delle Donne 2024 (3).

[19] See also Van den Berg 2019-2020.

[20] 406b8-c3, ἀλλὰ ἔστι γὰρ καὶ σπουδαίως εἰρημένος ὁ τρόπος τῶν ὀνομάτων τούτοις τοῖς θεοῖς καὶ παιδικῶς. τὸν μὲν οὖν σπουδαῖον ἄλλους τινὰς ἐρώτα, τὸν δὲ παιδικὸν οὐδὲν κωλύει διελθεῖν· φιλοπαίσμονες γὰρ καὶ οἱ θεοί.

τε πρός με, προσποιούμενός τι αὐτὸς ἐν ἑαυτῷ διανοεῖσθαι. Furthermore, Chrysippus is characterized as γλίσχρος[21], an adjective rarely used by Plato except in the *Timaeus* (74d, 82d, 84a) and the *Cratylus*. In the latter, Socrates employs it to distance himself from Cratylus' approach to the relationship between words and things (435c: ἀλλὰ μὴ ὡς ἀληθῶς, τὸ τοῦ Ἑρμογένους, γλίσχρα ᾖ ἡ ὁλκὴ αὕτη τῆς ὁμοιότητος)[22], casting doubt on his interlocutor's rigid etymological stance and favoring a more moderate conventionalist perspective[23].

A similar Platonic influence can also be found in παραβιαζόμενος. As Francesco Aronadio has convincingly demonstrated[24], Plato often equates arbitrary distortion of referential relationships and illegitimate use of language with violent acts. Hence, it is evident that Plutarch holds a negative view of an overly "etymologizing" approach to language, especially when dealing with

theonyms — an interpretation contrary to van den Berg's beliefs.

However, from the passage mentioned above, it also becomes clear what should be the positive focus of interest when engaging with texts, particularly poetic texts: the acquisition of virtue. Plutarch asserts that cowardice is a form of ignorance (ἀμαθίαν καὶ ἄγνοιαν), emphasizing the Socratic influence behind this assumption[25]. Therefore, for Plutarch, prioritizing the acquisition of knowledge regarding content, especially moral values, takes precedence over delving into the intricacies of language itself. Understanding virtue cannot be achieved by solely focusing on linguistic aspects. This order of priority aligns with the perspective presented by Ammonius in the continuation of the *De E*. According to Ammonius, attaining knowledge of divinity, the eternal and unchanging essence[26], comes through a direct cognitive experience[27], trans-

---

[21] See also *De Iside*, 362a-b, where some fanciful allegorical readings are at issue.

[22] But the adverb is already used by Hermogenes in 414b-c, with reference to the etymology of *techne* (καὶ μάλα γε γλίσχρως, ὦ Σώκρατες): as a consequence, Socrates refutes Cratylus by evoking his opponent's account.

[23] On Socrates' balanced position between naturalism and conventionalism, see Delle Donne 2024 (2): § I.5.

[24] Aronadio 2016: 73-86. Plato never uses παραβιάζομαι, but he uses βιάζομαι in 436d1 to describe the attempt made by the inexperienced nomothetes to achieve ficticious harmony among words (εἰ γὰρ τὸ πρῶτον σφαλεὶς ὁ τιθέμενος τἆλλα ἤδη πρὸς τοῦτ' ἐβιάζετο καὶ αὑτῷ συμφωνεῖν ἠνάγκαζεν etc.).

[25] On Plutarch's ethics, see now Demulder 2022.

[26] See Whittaker 1969, which is still a seminal paper on the issue.

[27] See also *De Iside et Osiride*, 382d: ἡ δὲ τοῦ νοητοῦ καὶ εἰλικρινοῦς καὶ ἁπλοῦ νόησις ὥσπερ ἀστραπὴ διαλάμψασα τῆς ψυχῆς ἅπαξ ποτὲ θιγεῖν καὶ προσιδεῖν παρέσχε. διὸ

---

cending mere word analysis and subjective associations of ideas. This notion echoes the profound message of the *Cratylus*, its fundamental theoretical core[28], which is only briefly outlined before the discussion between Socrates and Cratylus is (temporarily) halted[29]. It is through this understanding of the divine essence that Ammonius is able to correctly interpret the Apollonian theonyms, which in this context reveal their true nature as "speaking names":

[T3] οὐ γὰρ πολλὰ τὸ θεῖόν ἐστιν, ὡς ἡμῶν ἕκαστος ἐκ μυρίων διαφορῶν ἐν πάθεσι γιγνομένων, ἄθροισμα παντοδαπὸν καὶ πανηγυρικῶς μεμιγμένον· ἀλλ᾽ ἓν εἶναι δεῖ τὸ ὄν, ὥσπερ ὂν τὸ ἕν. ἡ δ᾽ ἑτερότης, διαφορᾷ τοῦ ὄντος, εἰς γένεσιν ἐξίσταται τοῦ μὴ ὄντος. ὅθεν εὖ καὶ τὸ πρῶτον ἔχει τῷ θεῷ τῶν ὀνομάτων καὶ τὸ δεύτερον καὶ τὸ τρίτον. Ἀπόλλων μὲν γὰρ οἷον ἀρνούμενος τὰ πολλὰ καὶ τὸ πλῆθος ἀποφάσκων ἐστίν, Ἴηιος δ᾽ ὡς εἷς καὶ μόνος· Φοῖβον δὲ δήπου τὸ καθαρὸν καὶ ἁγνὸν οἱ παλαιοὶ πᾶν ὠνόμαζον, ὡς ἔτι Θεσσαλοὶ τοὺς ἱερέας ἐν ταῖς ἀποφράσιν ἡμέραις αὐτοὺς ἐφ᾽ ἑαυτῶν ἔξω διατρίβοντας,

οἶμαι, 'φοιβονομεῖσθαι' λέγουσι. (393b-c).

For the Divine is not many things, as each of us is made up of ten thousand different and successive states, a heterogeneous collection, combined in a haphazard way. No, Being must be One, just as what is One must Be. Difference, by its distinction from Being, deviates into the creation of that which is not. Therefore the first of the names of the god is apt for him, and the second, and the third. He is "Apollo" (Not-many), in that he denies plurality and abjures multiplicity. He is Ieios, which means one and one alone; Phoebus, as we know, is a name that the ancients gave to everything clean and pure, even as the Thessalians, to this day, I believe, when their priests, on their prohibited days, and spending their time alone by themselves outside, say that the priests "are keeping Phoebus".

The passage also highlights two other elements derived from the *Cratylus*. Firstly, there is a positive evaluation of the language used by the ancients, a notion already present in Plato (*Crat.*

καὶ Πλάτων καὶ Ἀριστοτέλης ἐποπτικὸν τοῦτο τὸ μέρος τῆς φιλοσοφίας καλοῦσιν, ὡς οἱ τὰ δοξαστὰ καὶ μικτὰ καὶ παντοδαπὰ ταῦτα παραμειψάμενοι τῷ λόγῳ, πρὸς τὸ πρῶτον ἐκεῖνο καὶ ἁπλοῦν καὶ ἄυλον ἐξάλλονται, καὶ θιγόντες ἁπλῶς τῆς περὶ αὐτὸ καθαρᾶς ἀληθείας οἷον ἐντελῆ τέλος ἔχειν φιλοσοφίαν νομίζουσι.

[28] Knowledge of the intelligible should take place directly, without the mediation of language and hence without etymologies: see Silverman 2001; for a different reading, see Sedley 1998; Sedley 2019.

[29] See Aronadio 2020.

397c-d). In the wake of Thucydides, he directly associates ancient linguistic expressions with the linguistic practices still observed among peripheral and barbaric populations[30]. Secondly, as in the *Cratylus* (438d2-8)[31], there is a recognition that knowledge of the stable, self-identical, and true being is reflected in words that are capable of referring to it; but conversely, there are also words that, correspondingly, refer to the realm of becoming, which presents significant ontological and epistemological deficiencies:

[T4] καί μοι δοκεῖ μάλιστα πρὸς τοῦτον τὸν λόγον ἀντιταττόμενον τὸ ῥῆμα καὶ μαρτυρόμενον ‘εἶ’ φάναι πρὸς τὸν θεόν, ὡς οὐδέποτε γιγνομένης περὶ αὐτὸν ἐκστάσεως καὶ μεταβολῆς, ἀλλ᾽ ἑτέρῳ τινὶ θεῷ, μᾶλλον δὲ δαίμονι τεταγμένῳ περὶ τὴν ἐν φθορᾷ καὶ γενέσει φύσιν, τοῦτο ποιεῖν καὶ πάσχειν προσῆκον· ὡς δῆλόν ἐστιν ἀπὸ τῶν ὀνομάτων

εὐθὺς οἷον ἐναντίων ὄντων καὶ ἀντιφώνων. λέγεται γὰρ ὁ μὲν Ἀπόλλων ὁ δὲ Πλούτων, καὶ ὁ μὲν Δήλιος ὁ δ᾽ Ἀιδωνεύς, καὶ ὁ μὲν Φοῖβος ὁ δὲ Σκότιος. (393f-394a)

'And it seems to me right to address to the god the word "ΕΙ" (you are), which is most of all opposed to this account, and testifies against it, believing that no shift or change ever takes place near him, but that doing and suffering such things belong to some other god, or rather to some demigod set over nature in its perishing and becoming. This is clear at once from the names, in themselves opposite and contradictory. For the one is called Apollo (Ἀπόλλων, Not-many), the other is called Pluto (Πλούτων, abounding); the one Delios (Δήλιος, clear), the other Aidoneus (Ἀιδωνεύς, invisible); the one Phoibos (Φοῖβος, bright), the other Skotios (Σκότιος, dark).'

---

[30] 397c-d, φαίνονταί μοι οἱ πρῶτοι τῶν ἀνθρώπων τῶν περὶ τὴν Ἑλλάδα τούτους μόνους τοὺς θεοὺς ἡγεῖσθαι οὕσπερ νῦν πολλοὶ τῶν βαρβάρων, ἥλιον καὶ σελήνην καὶ γῆν καὶ ἄστρα καὶ οὐρανόν. On Thucydides, see L. Canfora (a cura di), Tucidide, *La guerra del Peloponneso*,Torino 1986, 75: "le zone arretrate costituiscono indizio di precedenti fasi di sviluppo (generalizzato). Intuizione metodologica indubbiamente fortunata e messa a frutto anche dall'etnologo e dall'antropologo moderni. Naturalmente una tale concezione sembra prescindere, se assunta in modo meccanico, da nozioni quali lo sviluppo diseguale o differenziato".

[31] ὀνομάτων οὖν στασιασάντων, καὶ τῶν μὲν φασκόντων ἑαυτὰ εἶναι τὰ ὅμοια τῇ ἀληθείᾳ, τῶν δ᾽ ἑαυτά, τίνι ἔτι διακρινοῦμεν, ἢ ἐπὶ τί ἐλθόντες; οὐ γάρ που ἐπὶ ὀνόματά γε ἕτερα ἄλλα τούτων· οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν; the existence of only two groups of words justifies the search for a non-linguistic criterion, in order to correctly identify really correct words: ἀλλὰ δῆλον ὅτι ἄλλ᾽ ἄττα ζητητέα πλὴν ὀνομάτων, ἃ ἡμῖν ἐμφανιεῖ ἄνευ ὀνομάτων ὁπότερα τούτων ἐστὶ τἀληθῆ, δείξαντα δῆλον ὅτι τὴν ἀλήθειαν τῶν ὄντων.

However, this does not imply that for Plutarch (and Plato), there is no connection between the signifier and the signified. Both Plato and Plutarch acknowledge that certain words are more suitable than others, that is, more apt at fulfilling their essential function of naming[32]. This instrumental understanding of language, as it were[33] is explicitly formulated in a well-known passage of the *Cratylus* (388b10-11)[34] and appears to be assumed in various instances throughout Plutarch's *Corpus*, including a passage in the *Table Talks* (8, 6, 726e-727a), where Lamprias, Plutarch's brother, plausibly his mouthpiece[35], argues for the superiority of certain Latin words (such as *cena* and *prandium*) over their Greek counterparts (like δεῖπνον, ἄριστον etc.), due to the former's unique ability to provide the essential sense coordinates necessary for understanding the nature of their referents:

[T5] ὑβριστὴς δ᾽ ὢν καὶ φιλόγελως φύσει ὁ ἀδελφὸς ἡμῶν Λαμπρίας ἔφη μυρίῳ τὰ Ῥωμαϊκὰ

δείξειν οἰκειότερα τῶν Ἑλλη-νικῶν ὀνόματα, τοσαύτης ἀδείας τῷ φλυαρεῖν δεδομένης. τὸ μὲν γὰρ δεῖπνόν φασι 'κοῖνα' διὰ τὴν κοινωνίαν καλεῖσθαι· καθ᾽ ἑαυ-τοὺς γὰρ ἠρίστων ἐπιεικῶς οἱ πάλαι Ῥωμαῖοι συνδειπνοῦντες τοῖς φίλοις. τὸ δ᾽ ἄριστον ἐκλήθη 'πράνδιον' ἀπὸ τῆς ὥρας· ἔνδιον γὰρ τὸ δειλινόν, καὶ τὴν μετ᾽ ἄριστον ἀνάπαυσιν ἐνδιάζειν· ἢ πρωινήν τινα σημαίνοντες ἐδω-δὴν ἢ τροφήν, ἧ χρῶνται πρὶν ἐνδεεῖς γενέσθαι. "καὶ μὴν ἵν᾽ ἀφῶ τὰ στρώματα" ἔφη "τὸν οἶνον, τὸ μέλι, τοὔλαιον, τὸ γεύ-σασθαι, τὸ προπιεῖν, ἕτερα πάμ-πολλα τοῖς αὐτοῖς ὀνόμασι κα-ταφανῶς χρώμενα· τίς οὐκ ἂν εἴποι ἐπὶ κῶμον Ἑλληνικῶς 'κωμισσᾶτον' λέγεσθαι, καὶ τὸ κεράσαι 'μισκῆραι' καθ᾽ Ὅμηρον, "ἧ δ᾽ αὖτ᾽ ἐν κρητῆρι μελίφρονα οἶνον ἔμισγε", καί 'μῆνσαν' μὲν τὴν τράπεζαν ἀπὸ τῆς ἐν μέσῳ θέσεως, 'πάνεμ' δὲ τὸν ἄρτον ὡς ἀνιέντα τὴν πεῖναν, τὸν δὲ στέφανον 'κορῶναν' ἀπὸ τῆς κε-φαλῆς, ὡς Ὅμηρος τὸ κράνος

---

[32] See also *De Iside et Osiride*, 379a-c, where metonymy is criticised; as Mossman, *Etymology*, *op. cit.*, correctly maintains, "*Cratylus* does not discuss metonymy as such, but the correct use of names is central to it, and as set out by Plutarch here this type of metonymy causes a serious category error through the misapplication of a name. Words are not the same as their referents, but just because they contain some information about those referents, if names are misapplied they can, over time, create serious misapprehensions about the nature of those referents: in this case, disastrously, about the nature of the gods."

[33] See Aronadio 1987; Palumbo 2005.

[34] ὄνομα ἄρα διδασκαλικόν τί ἐστιν ὄργανον καὶ διακριτικὸν τῆς οὐσίας ὥσπερ κερκὶς ὑφάσματος.

[35] The appearance of his brother as the last character may be revealing, as it happens with the decisive *lysis* in the *Platonic Questions*: see Opsomer 2010.

εἴκασέ που στεφάνῃ· τὸ δὲ καῖρε ‘δέρε’, καί ‘δέντης’ τοὺς ὀδόντας, καί ‘λάβρα’ τὰ χείλη ἀπὸ τοῦ λαμβάνειν τὴν βορὰν δι᾿ αὐτῶν; ἢ καὶ τούτων οὖν ἀκουστέον ἀγελαστὶ λεγομένων, ἢ μηδ᾿ ἐκείνοις εὐκόπως οὕτως διὰ τῶν ὀνομάτων ὥσπερ τριγχίων τὰ μὲν ἐκκόπτουσι μέρη τὰ δὲ καθαιροῦσι παραδύσεις διδῶμεν.”

My brother Lamprias, being of a scoffing, jeering nature, said: “Since we are in a trifling humor, I can show that the Latin names of these meals are a thousand times more proper than the Greek; δεῖπνον, ‘suppler’, they call *coena*, from community; because they took their ἄριστον by themselves, but their *coena* with their friends. Αριστον, ‘dinner’, they call *prandium*, from the time of the day; for ἔνδιον signifies ‘noon-tide’, and to rest after dinner is expressed by ἐνδιάζειν; or else by *prandium* they denote a bit taken in the morning, before they have need of any. And not to mention *stragula* from στρώματα, vinum from οἶνος, *oleum* from ἔλαιον, *mel* from μέλι, *gustare* from γεύσασθαι, *propinare* from προπίνειν, and a great many more words which they have plainly borrowed from the Greeks,— who can deny but that they have taken their *comessatio*, ‘banqueting’, from our κῶμος, and *miscere*, to ‘mingle’, from the Greeks too? Thus in Homer, ‘She in a bowl

herself mixt (ἔμισγε) generous wine’. They call a table *mensam*, from ‘placing it in the middle’; ‘bread’, *panem*, from satisfying πεῖναν, ‘hunger’; a ‘garland’, *coronam*, from κάρηνον, the ‘head’;—and Homer somewhat likens κράνος, a ‘head-piece’, to a garland;—*caedere*, ‘to beat’, from δέρειν; and *dentes*, ‘teeth’, from ὀδόντας; ‘lips’ they call *labra*, from taking our victuals with them. Now we ought either to give a straight-faced hearing to these latter derivations, or refuse so easily to allow the ones set forth earlier to break through parts and tear down other parts of its fortification-wall by means of words.” (Trans. by Goodwin, modified by Mossman)

This passage, however, does not imply that anyone who engages in etymology of the word *cena* can automatically grasp the nature of its referent, as one would have to acknowledge if strictly adhering to a Cratylean perspective on the relationship between words and things. The knowledge of the nature of the *nominatum* appears to be presupposed in the process of dissecting the word itself. Therefore, the functional superiority of Latin over Greek lies in its greater aptness to facilitate the opening of a space of precomprehension, which makes it easier for both the speaker and, especially, the interlocutor to understand the referent. In other words, the functional adequacy of the word is measured in its communicative dimension, which is fun-

damentally didactic (as exemplified by the hierarchy of the theonyms of Apollo)[36]. Remarkably, this perspective aligns Plutarch with Galen, particularly in their reappropriation of the *Cratylus*[37]. The well-known thesis of the superiority of *cerebrum* over *enkephalos* is rooted in the greater functional suitability of the former[38]. In summary, as Judith Mossman aptly puts it, "etymology is an important clue to the truth, but not the whole truth". It is precisely this kind of interpretation of Plato's conception of words as "traces" (ἴχνη) that Plutarch himself presents in the *Table Talks* (IX 746b):

[T6] τούτοις ἐπιφωνήσαντος τοῦ Ἀμμωνίου τὰ τοῦ Ξενοφάνους ὥσπερ εἰώθει "ταῦτα δεδοξάσθαι μὲν ἐοικότα τοῖς ἐτύμοισι" καὶ παρακαλοῦντος ἀποφαίνεσθαι καὶ λέγειν τὸ δοκοῦν ἕκαστον, ἐγὼ μικρὸν διασιωπήσας ἔφην ὅτι 'καὶ Πλάτων αὐτὸς ὥσπερ ἴχνεσι τοῖς ὀνόμασι τῶν θεῶν ἀνευρίσκειν οἴεται τὰς δυνάμεις'.

To this discourse Ammonius, as he used to do, subjoined that verse of Xenophanes, "This fine discourse seems near allied to truth", and desired every one to deliver his opinion. And I, after a short silence, said: "Plato too believes to discover the powers of the Gods by their names, as if they were tracks." (trans. by Goodwin, modified)

In other words, this complex dialectic reveals why both Plato and Plutarch, even though they recognize the inherent limitations of etymology as a heuristic tool, frequently illustrate how certain words are more effective than others in terms of communication: this is because these words maintain some form of connection, whether it is clearly evident or subtly implied, with the entities they refer to. As a consequence, in the *De E* (388e-f)[39], the attempt to comprehend

---

[36] Teaching is the aim of words according to Hermogenes, Cratylus and Socrates: 388b13-c1, 428e5-6.

[37] See DELLE DONNE 2004 (3).

[38] *UP* III 614, 13 ss. καὶ τοίνυν καὶ τὸν ἐγκέφαλον, εἰ καὶ ὅτι μάλιστα τὴν προσηγορίαν ἐκ τῆς θέσεως ἐκτήσατο, τῷ γὰρ ἐν τῇ κεφαλῇ κεῖσθαι διὰ τοῦθ' οὕτως ὠνόμασται, ἐπειδὰν ἐν τοῖς κατὰ τὸν θώρακα μέρεσιν εὑρίσκωμεν ἐν τοῖς οὐκ ἔχουσι ζῴοις κεφαλήν, οὐκ ἄλλο τι καὶ ἀνάλογον αὐτῷ φήσομεν ὑπάρχειν, ἀλλ' αὐτὸ μὲν ἐκεῖνο, μὴ πρέπειν δ' αὐτῷ τὴν ἀρχαίαν προσηγορίαν. ἵνα δ', ὃ λέγω, σαφέστερόν τε καὶ ἐναργέστερον μάθῃς, τὸ τῶν Ῥωμαίων ὄνομα καλέσας αὐτό, οὐκ ἀπὸ τῆς θέσεως οὐδ' ἀπ' ἄλλου τινὸς τῶν συμβεβηκότων γεγονός, ἀλλ' αὐτῆς τῆς οὐσίας δηλωτικὸν ὑπάρχον, εἴσῃ σαφῶς, ὅτι μηδὲν κωλύει σε λέγειν ἀνθρώποις μὲν ἐν τῇ κεφαλῇ τὸ κέρεβρον εἶναι, τοῦτο γὰρ αὐτὸ ὀνομάζουσι, καρκίνοις δ' ἐν τῷ στέρνῳ. See MANETTI 2003.

[39] 388f-389a: κρυπτόμενοι δὲ τοὺς πολλοὺς οἱ σοφώτεροι τὴν μὲν εἰς πῦρ μεταβολὴν Ἀπόλλωνά τε τῇ μονώσει Φοῖβόν τε τῷ καθαρῷ καὶ ἀμιάντῳ καλοῦσι. τῆς δ' εἰς πνεύματα καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ γῆν καὶ ἄστρα καὶ φυτῶν ζῴων τε γενέσεις τροπῆς αὐτοῦ καὶ

the nature of Apollo *solely* based on the theonyms, as advocated by the young Plutarch, ultimately proves futile and illegitimate. This application of etymology in the wake of the Stoics, and conveying a flux-ontology reminiscent of that in the *Cratylus*, represents a notable discontinuity in Plutarch's intellectual journey, particularly in relation to his later, more mature works; it can be compared to his analogously excessive youthful fascination with mathematics[40]. Only Ammonius, who symbolises the philosopher, will be capable of recontextualizing and correctly interpreting the Apollonian theonyms, liberating them from the transient and flux-based cosmological framework to which Plutarch had consigned them.

This portrayal of Plutarch's appropriation of the *Cratylus* finds further confirmation in another renowned and, in many ways, exceptional work: the *De Iside et Osiride*[41]. Traces of the Cratylean subtext can be discerned throughout several chapters, and upon closer examination, it becomes evident that all the philosophically significant assumptions of Plato's dialogue are skillfully reutilized in Plutarch's work. This body of evidence further underscores Plutarch's profound grasp of the dialogic dynamics and speculative implications of the *Cratylus*. The initial noteworthy step in this investigation emerges in chapter 29 (362d-e), where the influence of the *Cratylus* is distinctly manifested:

[T7] ἐγὼ δ᾽, εἰ μὲν Αἰγύπτιόν ἐστι τοὔνομα τοῦ Σαράπιδος, εὐφροσύνην αὐτὸ δηλοῦν οἴομαι καὶ χαρμοσύνην, τεκμαιρόμενος ὅτι τὴν ἑορτὴν Αἰγύπτιοι τὰ Χαρμόσυνα ᾽Σαίρει᾽ καλοῦσιν. καὶ γὰρ Πλάτων τὸν Ἅιδην ὡς ὠφελήσιμον τοῖς παρ᾽ αὐτῷ γενομένοις καὶ προσηνῆ θεὸν ὠνομάσθαι φησί· καὶ παρ᾽ Αἰγυπτίοις ἄλλα τε πολλὰ τῶν ὀνομάτων λόγοι εἰσὶ καὶ τὸν ὑποχθόνιον τόπον, εἰς ὃν οἴονται τὰς ψυχὰς ἀπέρχεσθαι μετὰ τὴν τελευτήν, Ἀμένθην καλοῦσι σημαίνοντος τοῦ ὀνόματος τὸν λαμβάνοντα καὶ διδόντα. εἰ δὲ καὶ τοῦτο τῶν ἐκ τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἀπελθόντων πάλαι καὶ μετακομισθέντων ὀνομάτων ἕν ἐστιν, ὕστερον ἐπισκεψόμεθα· νῦν δὲ τὰ λοιπὰ τῆς ἐν χερσὶ δόξης προσδιέλθωμεν.

But it is my opinion that, if the name Serapis is Egyptian, it denotes cheerfulness and re-

---

διακοσμήσεως τὸ μὲν πάθημα καὶ τὴν μεταβολὴν διασπασμόν τινα καὶ διαμελισμὸν αἰνίττονται· Διόνυσον δὲ καὶ Ζαγρέα καὶ Νυκτέλιον καὶ Ἰσοδαίτην αὐτὸν ὀνομάζουσι. The idea that names require something of an initiation to be unveiled also belongs to Cratylus, who is compared to a seer by Hermogenes (384a, εἰ οὖν πῃ ἔχεις συμβαλεῖν τὴν Κρατύλου μαντείαν, ἡδέως ἂν ἀκούσαιμι); see GOMES DE PINA 2005.

[40] 87f, ταῦτα δὲ πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἔλεγεν οὐ παίζων ὁ Εὔστροφος, ἀλλ᾽ ἐπεὶ τηνικαῦτα προσεκείμην τοῖς μαθήμασιν ἐμπαθῶς, τάχα δ᾽ ἔμελλον εἰς πάντα τιμήσειν τὸ ᾽μηδὲν ἄγαν᾽ ἐν Ἀκαδημείᾳ γενόμενος. See FERRARI 1995: 38-68.

[41] On Plutarch's relationship with Egyptian culture and language, see RICHTER 2011: 207-242.

joicing, and I base this opinion on the fact that the Egyptians call their festival of rejoicing sairei. In fact, Plato says that Hades is so named because he is a beneficent and gentle god towards those who have come to abide with him. Moreover, among the Egyptians many others of the proper names are real words; for example, that place beneath the earth, to which they believe that souls depart after the end of this life, they call Amenthes, the name signifying 'the one who receives and gives.' Whether this is one of those words which came from Greece in very ancient times and were brought back again we will consider later, but for the present let us go on to discuss the remainder of the views now before us. (trans. by Griffiths).

First of all, Plutarch employs the verb τεκμαιρόμενος to describe his etymological interpretation of the name "Sarapis". This choice of word serves to emphasize the speculative nature of his own investigation. In a similar vein, Socrates in the *Cratylus* extensively employs expressions of doubt and limitation to convey the conjectural nature of his own etymological endeavors[42]. Furthermore,

the hypothesis that the underlying text influencing this passage is the *Cratylus* is reinforced by the explicit allusion to *Cratylus* 403e-404a, where Plato presents the philosophical etymology of the name "Ades" that Plutarch accurately paraphrases[43]. Additionally, the notion that words can be seen as condensed sentences, which Plutarch evokes (ἄλλα τε πολλὰ τῶν ὀνομάτων λόγοι εἰσί) as a theoretical justification for his own etymological practice, is clearly derived from the dialogue itself. For instance, in the *Cratylus*, we encounter references to this concept in passages like 409c, 410d, 415d, 416b, and especially in 421a7-b1, where the etymology of the word ὄνομα makes it possible to decode its constitutive λόγος[44].

The same Platonic subtext continues to permeate chapter 49, further supporting my interpretation:

> [T8] Τυφὼν δὲ τῆς ψυχῆς τὸ παθητικὸν καὶ τιτανικὸν καὶ ἄλογον καὶ ἔμπληκτον τοῦ δὲ σωματικοῦ τὸ ἐπίκηρον καὶ νοσῶδες καὶ ταρακτικὸν ἀωρίαις καὶ δυσκρασίαις, καὶ κρύψεσιν ἡλίου καὶ ἀφανισμοῖς σελήνης, οἷον ἐκδρομαὶ καὶ ἀφηνιασμοὶ Τυφῶνος· καὶ τοὔνομα κατηγορεῖ τὸ Σήθ, ᾧ τὸν Τυφῶνα καλοῦσι· φράζει μὲν γὰρ τὸ καταδυναστεῦον καὶ

---

[42] See Delle Donne 2024 (2): I.9 and I.10.

[43] On this etymology, see Sedley 2003 (1): 95.

[44] ἔοικε τοίνυν ἐκ λόγου ὀνόματι συγκεκροτημένῳ, λέγοντος ὅτι τοῦτ᾽ ἔστιν ὄν, οὗ τυγχάνει ζήτημα ὄν, τὸ 'ὄνομα.' See Sedley 2003 (1): 120-121.

καταβιαζόμενον, φράζει δὲ τὴν πολλάκις ἀναστροφὴν καὶ πάλιν ὑπερπήδησιν. Βέβωνα δὲ τινὲς μὲν ἕνα τῶν τοῦ Τυφῶνος ἑταίρων γεγονέναι λέγουσιν, Μανεθὼς δ᾽ αὐτὸν τὸν Τυφῶνα καὶ Βέβωνα καλεῖσθαι· σημαίνει δὲ τοὔνομα κάθεξιν ἢ κώλυσιν, ὡς τοῖς πράγμασιν ὁδῷ βαδίζουσι καὶ πρὸς ὃ χρὴ φερομένοις ἐνισταμένης τῆς τοῦ Τυφῶνος δυνάμεως.

Typhon is the element of the soul which is passionate, akin to the Titans, without reason, and brutish, and the element of the corporeal which is subject to death, disease and confusion through bad seasons, imperfect coalescence of air, eclipses of the sun, and disappearances of the moon, which are in the manner of sallies and rebellions by Typhon; and this is implied by the name Seth, by which they call Typhon; for it denotes the overpowering and violent, it denotes frequent return and overleaping. Some say that Bebon was one of the companions of Typhon, but Manetho says that Typhon himself is also called Bebon. The name indicates restraint or hindrance, because the power of Typhon resists the deeds which proceed in good order and pursue a worthy end.

The passage presents a dualistic portrayal, where Osiris and Typhon are depicted as two opposing "forces"[45]. However, as subsequent chapters clarify, Plutarch's dualism does not imply that only two entities interact within his onto-cosmological framework. Despite being dualistic[46], Plutarch does not shy away from postulating the existence of multiple entities[47] that interact in various ways with the two fundamental forces. In other words, his dualism can be described as "temperate"[48], or balanced. In the latter part of the chapter, on the face of it, etymology appears to be employed to support the philosophical interpretation of the myth presented thus far. Nonetheless, upon closer reading the statement καὶ τοὔνομα κατηγορεῖ τὸ Σήθ, ᾧ τὸν Τυφῶνα καλοῦσι employs etymology only as a secondary and supplementary piece of evidence. As mentioned before, Plutarch views etymology as not encompassing

---

[45] For a discussion of Plutarch's cosmological account in the work, see PETRUCCI 2016.

[46] DELLE DONNE 2024 (1).

[47] DELLE DONNE 2021 (1).

[48] For this definition, see JOURDAN 2015; see already FROIDEFOND 2018: 298-299. See also the Persian and Chaldaean accounts dealt with by Plutarch before: […] Χαλδαῖοι δὲ τῶν πλανήτων οὓς θεοὺς γενεθλίους καλοῦσι, δύο μὲν ἀγαθουργούς δύο δὲ κακοποιούς, μέσους δὲ τοὺς τρεῖς ἀποφαίνουσι καὶ κοινούς.

the entirety of truth. There are also other similarities between the *Cratylus* and Plutarch's chapter that support the notion of Plutarch reevaluating Plato's dialogue. For instance, the juxtaposition of two "etymologies" of the same term as if they were equivalent (φράζει μὲν γὰρ τὸ καταδυναστεῦον καὶ καταβιαζόμενον, φράζει δὲ τὴν πολλάκις ἀναστροφὴν καὶ πάλιν ὑπερπήδησιν)[49]; the tendency to accumulate different names by which the same entity is called (Μανεθὼς δ᾽ αὐτὸν τὸν Τυφῶνα καὶ Βέβωνα[50] καλεῖσθαι· σημαίνει δὲ τοὔνομα κάθεξιν ἢ κώλυσιν)[51]; expressing the reason for a specific etymology using ὡς + participle (ὡς […] ἐνισταμένης τῆς τοῦ Τυφῶνος δυνάμεως)[52]; and the underlying flux-ontology[53] in the interpretation of Βέβωνα (according to this reading, Typhon is also called Βέβωνα because it obstructs the natural movement of

reality: τοῖς πράγμασιν ὁδῷ[54] βαδί-ζουσι[55] καὶ πρὸς ὃ χρὴ φερομένοις; see also *supra*, σημαίνει δὲ τοὔνομα κάθεξιν ἢ κώλυσιν)[56].

Chapter 52 of the text also provides valuable insights into Plutarch's relationship with the *Cratylus*:

> εἰσὶ γὰρ οἱ τὸν Ὄσιριν ἄντι-κρυς ἥλιον εἶναι καὶ ὀνομάζεσθαι Σείριον ὑφ᾽ Ἑλλήνων λέγοντες, εἰ καὶ παρ᾽ Αἰγυπτίοις ἡ πρόθεσις τοῦ ἄρθρου τοὔνομα πεποίηκεν ἀμφιγνοεῖσθαι, τὴν δ᾽ Ἶσιν οὐχ ἑτέραν τῆς σελήνης ἀποφαίνοντες· ὅθεν καὶ τῶν ἀγαλμάτων αὐτῆς τὰ μὲν κερασφόρα τοῦ μηνοειδοῦς γε-γονέναι μιμήματα, τοῖς δὲ μελανο-στόλοις ἐμφαίνεσθαι τὰς κρύψεις καὶ τοὺς περισκιασμοὺς ἐν οἷς διώκει ποθοῦσα τὸν ἥλιον. διὸ καὶ πρὸς τὰ ἐρωτικὰ τὴν σελήνην ἐπι-καλοῦνται, καὶ τὴν Ἶσιν Εὔδοξός

---

[49] For Plato's analogous juxtapositions, see e.g. *Crat*. 399e3-400a3; 400 b11.

[50] Already according to the historian Hellanicus (HF 47 = Athen. XV, 679F), the Egyptian name of Seth was Βάβυς. But as Froidefond, *Oeuvres Morales*, *op. cit*., 299 n. 4 points out, "dans les textes funéraires figure […], sous le nom de 'Babi', un monstre effrayant, démon des ténèbres de l'au-delà, parfois confondu avec Seth en tant qu'ennemi d'Osiris, ce qui peut expliquer l'invention de l''étymologie' dont Plutarque fait état." See also GRIFFITHS 1970: 487-489.

[51] See e.g. *Crat*. 401c-d; for the couple κάθεξιν ἢ κώλυσιν, see e.g. 403d2-404a3 (Ades' etymology) and 418e8 (the etymology of δέον).

[52] See e.g. *Crat*. 402e5, 407b7-8.

[53] See e.g. *Crat*. 404d1, ἅτε γὰρ φερομένων τῶν πραγμάτων.

[54] Here the word means "in *good* order", according to GRIFFITHS 1970: 489: this would be another sign of Plutarch's positive assessment here of the (alleged) movement of reality.

[55] The verb is used by Plato to describe Poseidon's movement, to which his name allegedly alludes: 402e1.

[56] See also *De Iside*, 62, 376a-b.

φησι (fr. 61) βραβεύειν τὰ ἐρωτικά. καὶ τούτοις μὲν ἀμωσγέπως τοῦ πιθανοῦ μέτεστι, τῶν δὲ Τυφῶνα ποιούντων τὸν ἥλιον οὐδ᾽ ἀκούειν ἄξιον. ἀλλ᾽ ἡμεῖς αὖθις τὸν οἰκεῖον λόγον ἀναλάβωμεν.

For there are those who say bluntly that Osiris is the sun and that he is called Seirios by the Greeks, even if among the Egyptians the prefixing of the article has caused the name to be obscured (O-Seirios = Osiris); and they affirm that Isis is none other than the moon. Thus they explain those of her statues that bear horns to be imitations of the crescent moon, while those with black clothes are deemed to indicate the concealments and obfuscations in which she longingly pursues the sun. For this reason they also summon the moon for help in love affairs, and Eudoxus says that Isis is arbiter in matters of sexual love. This view has indeed a certain cogency, but those who equate Typhon and the sun are not worth attention. Lut us revert, however, to our proper theme.

In the case of Osiris, the influence of the *Cratylus* can be clearly per-ceived in the background. Plutarch expresses the belief that the meaning of the word Osiris has been somehow "obscured" by the use of the article (ἡ πρόθεσις τοῦ ἄρθρου). However, if we restore the ancient form of this term, it aligns perfectly with the Greek denomination of Σείριον[57], which implies the assimilation of Osiris to the Sun. Additionally, the identification of Isis with the moon is presented as a typically Greek notion, potentially not of Egyptian origin (τὴν δ᾽ Ἶσιν οὐχ ἑτέραν τῆς σελήνης ἀποφαίνοντες)[58]. The use of the verb ἀμφιγνοεῖσθαι in this context may also indicate the influence of the *Cratylus*[59]. Moreover, there are several other passages where the same idea is conveyed: ancient words contain the truth about their referents, while throughout history humans tend to needlessly alter the original morphological structure of words. Therefore, etymology can illuminate the modifying and even corruptive effects caused by certain euphonic modifications of words:

θέασαι, ὦ Ἑρμόγενες, ὡς ἐγὼ ἀληθῆ λέγω λέγων ὅτι προστιθέντες γράμματα καὶ ἐξαιροῦντες

---

[57] *Crat.* 398b: καὶ ἕν γε τῇ ἀρχαίᾳ τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ φωνῇ αὐτὸ συμβαίνει τὸ ὄνομα.

[58] Griffiths 1970· 500: "it is purely Greek exposition that is here projecting Isis-Selene in analogy to Osiris-Helius. Attempts to find a purely Egyptian lunar Isis have certainly failed."

[59] *Crat.* 389d-e: εἰ δὲ μὴ εἰς τὰς αὐτὰς συλλαβὰς ἕκαστος ὁ νομοθέτης τίθησιν, οὐδὲν δεῖ τοῦτο ἀ<μφι>γνοεῖν. The paradosis has ἀγνοεῖν, which makes little sense; ἀμφιγνοεῖν is Peipers' emendation, whereas Heindorf reads ἐννοεῖν.

σφόδρα ἀλλοιοῦσι τὰς τῶν ὀνο-
μάτων διανοίας, οὕτως ὥστε σμι-
κρὰ πάνυ παραστρέφοντες ἐνίοτε
τἀναντία ποιεῖν σημαίνειν. οἷον
καὶ ἐν τῷ 'δέοντι'· ἐνενόησα
γὰρ αὐτὸ καὶ ἀνεμνήσθην ἄρτι
ἀπὸ τοῦδε ὃ ἔμελλόν σοι ἐρεῖν
ὅτι ἡ μὲν νέα φωνὴ ἡμῖν ἡ καλὴ
αὕτη καὶ τοὐναντίον περιέτρεψε
μηνύειν τὸ 'δέον' καὶ τὸ 'ζη-
μιῶδες,' ἀφανίζουσα ὅτι νοεῖ,
ἡ δὲ παλαιὰ ἀμφότερον δηλοῖ ὃ
βούλεται τοὔνομα. (418a5-b6)

See, Hermogenes, how true
my words are when I say that by
adding and taking away letters
people alter the sense of words so
that even by very slight changes
they sometimes make them mean
the opposite of what they meant
before; as, for instance, in the
case of the word δέον (obligation,
right), for that just occurred to me
and I was reminded of it by what
I was going to say to you, that this
fine modern language of ours has
turned δέον and also ζημιῶδες
round, so that each has the
opposite of its original meaning,
whereas the ancient language
shows clearly the real sense of
both words. (trans. by Fowler)

However, Plutarch's commitment
to this type of argumentation appears
questionable. The information discuss-
ed so far, including the 'etymologies'
and beliefs, is described as merely
"plausible": καὶ τούτοις μὲν ἀμωσγέπως
τοῦ πιθανοῦ μέτεστι. This could suggest
a probabilistic nuance, which might be
attributed to Plutarch's indebtedness to Aca-
demic skepticism/probabilism[60]. However,
as likely as this interpretation may seem,
I would like to propose an alternative hy-
pothesis. In the *Cratylus*, Socrates ex-
plicitly expresses doubt regarding the
plausibility and methodological validity of
his etymologies. He appears uneasy with
their inherent 'probabilistic' nature since it
is always possible for the same 'etymology'
to be interpreted in two different, if not
opposite, ways with a comparable or
equivalent level of persuasiveness[61].
In fact, in 41, 367d, Plutarch employs
the same 'etymology' that we found in
Chapter 49 (41: διὸ τὸν Τυφῶνα Σὴθ
[ἀεὶ] Αἰγύπτιοι καλοῦσιν, ὅπερ ἐστὶ κα-
ταδυναστεῦον ἢ καταβιαζόμενον; 49:
καὶ τοὔνομα κατηγορεῖ τὸ Σήθ, ᾧ τὸν
Τυφῶνα καλοῦσι· φράζει μὲν γὰρ τὸ
καταδυναστεῦον καὶ καταβιαζόμενον).
However, in the former passage, Typhon
is equated with the Sun, while in the
subsequent chapters (especially 51-52),
the Sun becomes the visible sign of
Osiris, and the assimilation of Typhon
to the Sun is consistently condemned.
Thus, the same 'etymology' can be used
to support two opposing philosophical
interpretations because, as Plutarch may
have learned from the *Cratylus*, every
etymology reflects a philosophically

---

60 Opsomer 1998; Bonazzi 2013.
61 *Crat.* 437a-c.

qualified conception of reality, rather than the reverse[62].

Lastly, chapters 60 and 61 introduce additional noteworthy elements to this investigation. When presenting the etymology of Isis, which reflects Cratylus' theory of flux (παρὰ τὸ ἴεσθαι μετ᾽ ἐπιστήμης καὶ φέρεσθαι, κίνησιν οὖσαν ἔμψυχον καὶ φρόνιμον), Plutarch explicitly dismisses the possibility that her name is of barbaric origin (οὐ γάρ

ἐστι τοὔνομα βαρβαρικόν)[63]. In his opinion, resorting to this genetic hypothesis would amount to refusing to unveil the rationale of the word, which is unacceptable to both Socrates[64] and Plutarch. Furthermore, the *Cratylus* is soon mentioned explicitly in support of the aforementioned conception of words as complex entities (ἀπὸ δυεῖν γραμμάτων τοῦ θεατοῦ καὶ τοῦ θέοντος ἔστιν ὄνομα κοινόν)[65], which often result

---

[62] *Contra* ADEMOLLO 2011: 239, and SEDLEY 2003 (1): 40 n. 28, who believe Plutarch to have taken seriously Plato's etymologies. If we disregard the variety and disputable nature of words, etymologies, customs, and cultural habits, a comprehensive hermeneutic perspective seems to emerge. Plutarch may use the myth as a striking case study to convey a specific philosophical message. In other words, he likely clarifies the ontocosmological significance of the myth's characters to illuminate the profound essence of the tale, specifically the nature of the divine. If this is indeed the case, the Egyptian myth could be seen as an apparently playful device, a παίγιον, with a philosophically profound and serious hidden content (all in all, the couple playfulness/seriousness frames the etymological section of the *Cratylus* too, see 406b8-c3); myths offer a challenging opportunity to discuss the unchanging nature of the truth of the divine: 377f-378a, ὥσπερ ἥλιος καὶ σελήνη καὶ οὐρανὸς καὶ γῆ καὶ θάλασσα κοινὰ πᾶσιν, ὀνομάζεται δ᾽ ἄλλως ὑπ᾽ ἄλλων, οὕτως ἑνὸς λόγου τοῦ ταῦτα κοσμοῦντος καὶ μιᾶς προνοίας ἐπιτροπευούσης καὶ δυνάμεως ὑπουργῶν ἐπὶ πάντα τεταγμένων, ἕτεραι παρ᾽ ἑτέροις κατὰ νόμους γεγόνασι τιμαὶ καὶ προσηγορίαι. RICHTER 2011: 213 offers quite a different (but equally persuasive) account: "I suggest that Plutarch's *De Iside* was motivated less by early imperial Egyptomania than by an unwillingness to accept what he saw as the culturally derivative status of Greece which an Egyptian origin of Greek wisdom implies. 39 This is not to say that the *De Iside* dismisses the Egyptian material as worthless; a deep for the wisdom of Egypt and an insistence on the priority of Greek philosophical speculation are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, I believe that Plutarch chose to explicate his middle-Platonic metaphysics in terms of an allegorical interpretation of the cult and myth of the Egyptian goddess Isis in an effort to dispute the traditional—though by no means universally accepted—derivative status of Greek cult."

[63] On Isis as a Greek name, see RICHTER 2011: 214-215.

[64] 425d5-b2, where this approach is labelled as a mere ἔκδυσις.

[65] The subtext is *Crat.* 397d. See also 61, 375e: ὁ δ᾽ Ὄσιρις ἐκ τοῦ ὁσίου καὶ ἱεροῦ τοὔνομα μεμιγμένον ἔσχηκε; 62, 376a: τὴν μὲν γὰρ Ἶσιν πολλάκις τῷ τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς ὀνόματι καλοῦσι φράζοντι τοιοῦτον λόγον ‘ἦλθον ἀπ᾽ ἐμαυτῆς,› ὅπερ ἐστὶν αὐτοκινήτου φορᾶς

from heterogeneous components. In fact, the passage is intricately intertwined with references to the *Cratylus*:

> οὕτω δὲ καὶ Πλάτων φησὶ τὴν οὐσίαν δηλοῦν τοὺς παλαιοὺς 'ἰσίαν' καλοῦντας[66]· οὕτω καὶ τὴν νόησιν καὶ τὴν φρόνησιν, ὡς νοῦ φορὰν καὶ κίνησιν οὖσαν ἱεμένου καὶ φερομένου[67] καὶ τὸ συνιέναι καὶ τἀγαθὸν ὅλως καὶ ἀρετὴν ἐπὶ τοῖς ῥέουσι καὶ θέουσι θέσθαι[68]· καθάπερ αὖ πάλιν τοῖς ἀντιφωνοῦσιν ὀνόμασι λοιδορεῖσθαι τὸ κακόν, τὸ τὴν φύσιν ἐμποδίζον καὶ συνδέον καὶ ἴσχον καὶ κωλῦον ἴεσθαι καὶ ἰέναι κακίαν ἀπορίαν δειλίαν ἀνίαν προσαγορευόντων[69]. (375d)

> So also Plato says that the men of ancient times made clear the meaning of 'essence' (*ousia*) by calling it 'sense' (*ista*). So also he speaks of the intelligence and understanding as being a carrying and movement of mind hasting and being carried onward; and also comprehension and good and virtue they attribute to those things which are ever flowing and in rapid motion, just

as again, on the other hand, by means of antithetical names they vilified evil: for example, that which hinders and binds fast and holds and checks Nature from hasting and going they called baseness, or 'ill-going' (*kak-ia*), and helplessness or 'difficulty of going' (*apor-ia*), and cowardice or 'fear of going' (*deil-ia*), and distress or 'not going' (*an-ia*).

Plutarch's inclusion of references to the *Cratylus* in these chapters further reinforces the notion that the dialogue holds an unquestioned authority in the realm of words and language (not only as far as etymologies are concerned, but also when it comes to the essence and the function of language)[70]. Chapter 61, in particular, presents an intriguing explanation of word ἀνάπλασις ("modification" or "reshaping"), that can be traced back to the influence of the *Cratylus*:

> οὐ δεῖ δὲ θαυμάζειν τῶν ὀνομάτων τὴν εἰς τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν ἀνάπλασιν· καὶ γὰρ ἄλλα μυρία τοῖς μεθισταμένοις ἐκ τῆς Ἑλλάδος συνεκπεσόντα μέχρι νῦν παραμένει καὶ ξενιτεύει παρ' ἑτέροις, ὧν

δηλωτικόν. ὁ δὲ Τυφών, ὥσπερ εἴρηται, Σὴθ καὶ Βέβων καὶ Σμὺ ὀνομάζεται, βίαιόν τινα καὶ κωλυτικὴν ἐπίσχεσιν, ὑπεναντίωσιν ἢ ἀναστροφὴν ἐμφαίνειν βουλομένων τῶν ὀνομάτων. The verb βούλομαι is analogously used also in the *Cratylus* (e.g. 415a9-b1, 414d1-4), as Ademollo 2011: 233-234, observes.

[66] 401c-d. See Van den Berg 2008: 50 on Plutarch's changes of Plato's wording.

[67] 411d4-6; 411d8-e3.

[68] 412a4-8; 412c1-6; 415c10-d5.

[69] 415b1-6; 415b6-c9; ἀνία is not examined in the dialogue (Plutarch's memory goes lost here).

[70] On the concept of 'authority', see Ulacco 2020 (1) and 2020 (2).

ἔνια τὴν ποιητικὴν ἀνακαλουμένην διαβάλλουσιν ὡς βαρβαρίζουσαν οἱ γλώττας τὰ τοιαῦτα προσαγο-ρεύοντες. (375e-f)

There is no occasion to be surprised at the revamping of these words into Greek. The fact is that countless other words went forth in company with those who migrated from Greece, and persist even to this day as strangers in strange lands; and, when the poetic art would recall some of these into use, those who speak of such words as strange or unusual falsely accuse it of using barbarisms.

First of all, the term ἀνάπλασις is reminiscent of Plato's exploitation of the semantic field of "fiction"[71]; in particular, in the *Cratylus* (415d6) Plato ironically uses the verb πλάσσω (in its Attic dialect variant, πλάττειν) to describe his own etymologies (Socrates' distance from his statements can be also inferred from the "coherentism" underlying his whole reasoning)[72]. However, the most notable reevaluation of the *Cratylus* is evident in Plutarch's recognition of the mutual contamination that languages undergo throughout history[73]. But, unlike Socrates, who considers

certain words to be foreign or even barbaric (and therefore unintelligible from an etymological standpoint)[74], Plutarch entertains the possibility of the opposite phenomenon. He acknowledges that some Greeks left their homeland and migrated abroad, which explains why Egyptian words can be analyzed as if they were originally Greek: in reality, these words were indeed Greek because Greek individuals imported them to the countries they relocated to. This idea, which also justifies Plutarch's overall attempt to derive a (Greek) rationale from Egyptian names, seems to partially depart from a theoretical principle proposed (and, unfortunately, not fully explored) by Socrates in the *Cratylus* — namely, the existence of talented *nomothetai* ("lawgivers") among barbarians as well. Arguably, Plutarch believes that, among foreign and barbarian *nomothetai*, (at least) some of them were essentially Greek immigrants.

In conclusion, after this thorough discussion, in the wake of *Cratylus*' closing remarks, Plutarch cautions the reader against placing excessive emphasis on words themselves. In the previously mentioned passage, he states:

---

[71] On Plato's πλάττειν, see NARDI 2023.

[72] See 436d-e, where the correctness of the previous etymology is hypothetically accepted as sufficient grounds to infer the correctness of the subsequent one; see FERRARI 2019.

[73] On Plato's approach to other languages, see DELLE DONNE 2021 (2).

[74] 409e: ἐννοῶ γὰρ ὅτι πολλὰ οἱ Ἕλληνες ὀνόματα ἄλλως τε καὶ οἱ ὑπὸ τοῖς βαρβάροις οἰκοῦντες παρὰ τῶν βαρβάρων εἰλήφασιν.

ἥκιστα μὲν οὖν δεῖ φιλοτι-
μεῖσθαι περὶ τῶν ὀνομάτων, οὐ
μὴν ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον ἂν ὑφείμην
τοῦ Σαράπιδος Αἰγυπτίοις ἢ τοῦ
Ὀσίριδος, ἐκεῖνο μὲν ξενικόν,
τοῦτο δ᾽ Ἑλληνικόν, ἄμφω δ᾽
ἑνὸς θεοῦ καὶ μιᾶς δυνάμεως
ἡγούμενος.

Least of all is there any need of being very eager in learning about these names. However, I would rather make a concession to the Egyptians in regard to Serapis than in regard to Osiris; for I regard Serapis as foreign, but Osiris as Greek, and both as belonging to one god and one power.

Engaging in debates solely about words is not appropriate since the diffe-rences among them lack philosophical significance. The most crucial aspect is the identification of the referent, which is expressed here using the highly Platonic term δύναμις - the inherent, semantic power, or potentiality, of ὀνόματα[75]. The words that have been passed down to us may be deceptive as they frequently conceal the unifying force of meaning, the δύναμις, which should be the primary focus of philosophical inquiry into language. As Judith Mossman puts it, "Plutarch in fact follows the intellectual pattern of the *Cratylus* in beginning with etymologies which con-vey cosmic intelligence, moving on to those which allude to flux, and then

spurring the reader on to focus on the study of things themselves (without in fact ever wholly rejecting the study of names as useful, if imperfect, evidence for the nature of their referents)." Ultimately, Plutarch's fascination with language and its components reaches as far as his Master's *Cratylus*. He delves into etymologies, explores the influence of every philosophical stance on word interpretation, and discusses the potential corruption of words throu-ghout history. Thus, Plutarch's en-gagement with the themes and ideas presented in the *Cratylus* demonstrates his deep interest in language and its philosophical implications　- beyond theology and theonyms.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ADEMOLLO, F.,
- *The* Cratylus *of Plato: a Commentary,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

ALLEN, J.,
- "The Stoics on the origin of language and the foundations of etymology", in D. FREDE & B. INWOOD (eds.), *Language and Learning. Philosophy of Language in the Hellenistic Age*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009: 14-35.

ARONADIO, F.,
- "Il *Cratilo*, il linguaggio e la sintassi dell'*eidos*", *Elenchos*, 8 (1987) 329-362.
- *I fondamenti della riflessione di Platone sul linguaggio: il* Cratilo, Roma: Edi-zioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2011.
- *L'*aisthesis *e le strategie argomentative*

---

[75] See DELLE DONNE 2022.

di Platone nel Teeteto, Napoli: Bibliopolis, 2016.

- "Platone, il 'noi' e gli 'altri': la relazione oppositiva città/campagna e il suo valore emblematico", in F. ARONADIO, L. PALUMBO & M. SERRA (eds.), *Lo straniero e le voci della città*, Napoli: Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici Press, 2020: 113-117.

BABBIT, F.C., (ed.),
- Plutarch, *Moralia*, Volume I, Cambridge (MA): Loeb. 1927.
- Plutarch, *Moralia*, Volume V, Cambridge (MA): Loeb. 1936.

BONAZZI, M.,
- "L'Offerta di Plutarco. Teologia e filosofia nel *De E apud Delphos*", *Philologus: Zeitschrift für Antike Literatur Und Ihre Rezeptio*n, 152 (2008) 205-211.
- "Plutarch and the Skeptics", in M. BECK (ed.), *A Companion to Plutarch*, London: Wiley Blackwell, 2013: 121-134.

BRENK, F.E.,
. *On Plutarch, Religious Thinker and Biographer*, ed. by L.R. LANZILLOTTA, Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2017.

CANFORA, L.,
- (a cura di), *Tucidide, La guerra del Peloponneso*, Torino: Einaudi, 1986.

CHURCHILL, S.,
- "Nancy Demand on the *nomothetes* of the *Cratylus*", *Apeiron*, 17 (1983) 92-93.

DELLE DONNE, C.,
- "Uno, Diade, identico e diverso. Su Plut. *An. Procr*. cap. 24 Ch.", *Ploutarchos*, 18 (2021) 3-26 (1).
- "Tackling conventions: Plato's Barbarians between Language and Ontology", *Scripta Classica Israelica*, 40 (2021) 15-30 (2).
- "Il medico e il nomoteta. Su *Crat.* 394a5-b7", *Florentia Iliberritana*, 33 (2022) 17-34.
- "Dualism and Philosophy: Plutarch's Parmenides", in CH. KURFESS & A.

MOTTA (eds.), *Eleatic ontology in Hellenistic period to late antiquit*y, 2024, forthcoming (1).
- *Artigiani di parole. Il linguaggio e la sua genesi a partire dal* Cratilo *di Platone*, Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2024, forthcoming (2).
- "Parole, monete e legislatori. Galeno e il *Cratilo* di Platone", *Technai*, 2024, forthcoming (3).

DEMAND, N.,
- "The *nomothetes* of the *Cratylus*", *Phronesis*, 20 (1975) 106-109.

DEMULDER, B.,
- *Plutarch's Cosmological Ethics*, Leuven: Leuven University Press 2022.

FERRARI, F.,
- *Dio idee materia. La struttura del cosmo in Plutarco di Cheronea*, Napoli: D'Auria, 1995.
- "La construction du platonisme dans le *De E apud Delphos* de Plutarque", in X. BROUILLETTE & A. GIAVATTO (eds.), *Les dialogues platoniciens chez Plutarque. Stratégies et méthodes exégétiques*, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2010: 47-62.
- "*Homologia* e dialettica in Platone", *Antiquorum Philosophia*, 13 (2019) 23-44.

FROIDEFOND, CH., (ed.),
- Plutarque, *Ouvres Morales. Traité 23, Isis et Osiris*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres 2018.

GOMES DE PINA, M.G.,
- "L'interpretazione dell'oracolo di Cratilo", in G. CASERTANO (a cura di), *Il* Cratilo *di Platone: struttura e problematiche*, Napoli: Loffredo, 2005: 52-64.

GRIFFITHS, J.G., (ed.),
- *Plutarch's* De Iside et Osiride, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1970.

JOURDAN, F.,
- "Plutarque développe-t-il réellement une pensée dualiste?", *χώρα*, Hors-série (2015) 185-223.

LONG, A.A.,
-   "Stoic linguistics, Plato's *Cratylus*, and Augustine's *De dialectica*", in D. FREDE & B. INWOOD (eds.), *Language and Learning. Philosophy of Language in the Hellenistic Age*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009: 36-55.

MANETTI, D.,
-   "Galeno, la lingua di Ippocrate e il tempo", in J. BARNES & JOUANNA (eds.), *Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique: Galien et la philosophie*, Genève: Fondation Hardt, 2003: 171-228.

MONTRASIO, F.,
-   "Le etimologie del nome di Apollo nel *Cratilo*", *Rivista di Storia della Filosofia*, 43 (1988) 227-259.

MOSSMAN, J.,
-   *Etymology and the Gods*, forthcoming.

NARDI, M.A.,
-   "Il verosimile, le idee, il dialogo di Platone. Alcune considerazioni", in F. PIANGERELLI (ed.), *Platone e la teoria delle Idee,* Pistoia: Petite Plaisance, 2023: 93-106.

OPSOMER, J.,
-   *In search of the truth. Academic tendencies in Middle Platonism*, Brussel: Paleis der Academiën, 1998.
-   "M. Annius Ammonius: A Philosophical Profile", in M. BONAZZI & J. OPSOMER (eds.), *The Origins of the Platonic System. Platonisms of the Early Empire and Their Philosophical Contexts*, Louvain -Namur -Paris -Walpole: Peeters, 2009: 123–186.
-   Arguments non-linéaires et pensée en cercles. Forme et argumentation dans les Questions Platoniciennes de Plutarque, in X. BROUILLETTE & A. GIAVATTO (eds.), *Les dialogues platoniciens chez Plutarque. Stratégies et méthodes exégétiques*, Leuven: Leuven University Press 2010: 93-116.

PALUMBO, L.,
-   "Il *nomos* e la trasmissione dei nomi nel *Cratilo* di Platone", *Elenchos*, 25/2 (2004) 397-412.
-   "La spola e l'*ousia*", in G. CASERTANO (ed.), *Il* Cratilo*: struttura e problematiche*, Napoli: Loffredo 2005: 65-94.

PETRUCCI, F.M.,
-   "Plutarch's Theory of Cosmological Powers in the *De Iside et Osiride*", *Apeiron*, 49 (2016) 329-367.

RICHTER, D.S.,
-   Cosmopolis: Imagining Community in Late Classical Athens and the Early Roman Empire, Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press 2011.

SEDLEY, D.N.,
-   "The etymologies in Plato's *Cratylus*", *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 118 (1998) 140-154.
-   *Plato's* Cratylus, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003 (1).
-   "The *nomothetes* in Plato's *Cratylus*", *Studia Philonica Annual*, 15 (2003) 5-16 (2).
-   "Etymology in Plato's *Sophist*", *Hyperboreus*, 25 (2019) 290-301.

SILVERMAN, A.,
-   "The End of the *Cratylus*", *Ancient Philosophy*, 21 (2001) 25-43.

ULACCO, A.,
-   "Autorità Epistemica e Storia Della Filosofia: Un Caso Dalla Filosofia Antica", *Archivio Di Storia Della Cultura*, 33 (2020) 37–52.
-   "The Creation of Authority in Pseudo-Pythagorean Texts and Their Reception in Late Ancient Philosophy", in E. GIELEN & J. PAPY (eds.), *Falsifications and Authority in Antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2020: 183–214.

VAN DEN BERG, R.M.,
-   *Proclus' Commentary on the Cratylus in*

Context. Ancient Theories of Language and Naming, Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2008.
- "A Sticky (γλίσχρος) Affaire (Plato, *Crat.* 435c): Platonists *versus* Stoics on How (Not) To Do Etymology and Allegoresis", *Incontri Italiani di Filologia Classica*, 19 (2019-2020) 227-247.

Whittaker, J.,
- "Ammonius on the Delphic E", *The Classical Quarterly*, 19 (1969) 185-192.

Williams, B.,
- "Cratylus' theory of names and its refutation", in S. Everson (ed.), *Language*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994: 3-28.