Plutarch in Fifth-century Athens

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Abstract

This article explores Plutarch's contribution to our knowledge of fifth-century Athens through an examination of his biographies of *Kimon*, *Themistokles*, *Perikles*, *Aristeides*, *Nikias*, and *Alkibiades*. The article assesses the information that Plutarch conveys and, in addition, sets his work into its broader historical context through comparison with other ancient sources, and in particular with the history of Thoukydides.

Key-Words: Kimon, Themistokles, Perikles, Aristeides, Nikias, Alkibiades, Thoukydides, Athens.

My plan in this paper is to look again at what may be called Plutarch's contribution—and it is a not inconsiderable one—to our knowledge of the personal side of fifth-century Athenian history. Even if history is not exclusively (as Thomas Carlyle maintained) the study of the great men (and women) of their periods, these were certainly important actors in the dramatic events in which, in the first part of the century, Athens almost met her demise and then, in the aftermath of her surprising repulse of the Persian threat, rose to greatness as *hegemon* of a far-flung and powerful coalition of mainly maritime states in the eastern Mediterranean. We leave her towards century's end just as her fleet, previously undefeated save for a setback in Egypt in the 450s, has suffered a series of devastating blows first in Sicily and then in a final, humiliating defeat at Aigospotamoi on the Hellespont in 405 BCE.

I examine the *Lives* of Kimon, Themistokles, Perikles, Aristeides, Nikias, and Alkibiades. Plutarch is interested in these six men as public figures, generals who, to a greater or

less degree, involved themselves in the political events of their city. Beyond this, however, Plutarch strove to give his readers a feeling for them as individual personalities: the inventive and manipulative Themistokles; Aristeides the paragon of civic and personal virtue; Kimon a superlative general but a *bon vivant*, somewhat old-fashioned and probably a womanizer; Perikles, the aristocrat who, paradoxically, had almost irresistible appeal among ordinary Athenians; Nikias, a plutocrat who got involved in public events (if we are to accept Plutarch's view, based on a near-consensus of the sources he was drawing upon) almost in spite of himself and whose dithering cost Athens a victory in the Sicilian campaign; and, lastly, Alkibiades, the lion-cub who grew into one of Athens' most successful but also most self-centered (and most self-destructive) of generals.

I should add in full disclosure that I came to these *Lives* originally and still value them highly for their straightforwardly historical value. They are immensely rich treasure-troves of information about the events in which their subjects participated. Plutarch was an assiduous and careful researcher (however one is to define that term), and we should be grateful to him for his catholic tastes and the generosity he displays in sharing with his readers the results of his research. Beyond that, however, and more importantly for our purposes here he brings his subjects alive as persons. They are individuals, and, after reading what Plutarch has to say about them, we feel we have come to know them and (to use a somewhat hackneyed phrase), "where they are (or were) coming from".

1. *Kimon*

In the sequence of Athenian *Lives* that I intend to deal with here the pair *Kimon-Lucullus* were the earliest that Plutarch composed[1]. As we will see, the *Kimon* is in many ways similar to the *Aristeides*. Both men are characterized by Plutarch as being "aristocratic" in their political propensities[2]; they both had well-deserved reputations as generals and are presented by Plutarch as such, rather than, say, as political figures like Themistokles and Perikles. But the *Kimon* seems to me to be a more interesting and varied enterprise than the *Aristeides*. For one thing Kimon's career covered a wider time-period than Aristeides's, with important developments for Athens both internally and as a city bent on extending her influence far beyond Attika. Plutarch also had at his disposal, and appears to have made good use of, a wider range of

1 After some deliberation I have decided to discuss these *Lives* in the presumed order of their composition (see JONES, 1966, pp. 67-68; NIKOLAIDIS, 2005, p. 318) rather than a chronological sequence of their subjects' activities.

2 *Cim.* 10.8; *Arist.* 2.1.

source material, some of it contemporary. Thus, Plutarch delves into fifth-century elegy (Melanthios, Arkhelaos, Kritias), comedy (Kratinos, Eupolis, Aristophanes), travelogue or personal memoir (Ion of Khios), and political diatribe (Stesimbrotos of Thasos). The result is a fully rounded and convincing portrait of this perhaps somewhat underestimated fifth-century figure.

After a rather lengthy and somewhat rambling Proem, Plutarch launches into the *Life* proper with useful information about Kimon's family background—his Thracian origins on his mother's side (for which Plutarch cites as evidence "[elegiac] poems addressed to Kimon himself by Arkhelaos and Melanthios"). Plutarch then moves to Kimon's connection with Thoukydides the historian, whose gravestone, he tells us in an aside, could be seen in the Kimoneian burial grounds[3]. After a brief flashback to the sad end experienced by Kimon's father Miltiades[4], Plutarch gives his readers information about some of Kimon's personal qualities. In his youth he acquired a bad reputation for wild living and fondness for drink. In addition Plutarch reports on the authority of Stesimbrotos of Thasos—a contemporary witness, as Plutarch points out—that Kimon had no instruction in music (that is, poetry) or any other of the so-called "liberal" accomplishments, and did not have Athenian cleverness or the gift of the gab, but a nobility and candour, and what you might call a Peloponnesian kind of soul[5]. This gives Plutarch the opportunity of quoting a line from Euripides's *Likymnios*, where Herakles is described as "plain and straightforward, virtuous in the extreme"[6].

It's not clear how much of this Plutarch took directly from Stesimbrotos. What is clear is that we owe a debt to Plutarch for taking the trouble to look at his work *On Themistokles, Thoukydides [son of Melesias] and Perikles*. As A. W. Gomme points out, "Plutarch is the first known writer to have read him"[7]. Another writer whom Plutarch

3 *Cim.* 4.3. Plutarch returns to the Kimoneia burial grounds at the end of the *Life*, and implies that he has taken the trouble to look at them (μέχρι νῦν, *Cim.* 19.5). Cf. also Marcellinus (*Vit. Thuc*. 17), who adds, "where the graves of Herodotos and Thoukydides can be seen". Herodotos locates them "outside the city [by the Melitides (most westerly) gate] beyond the road that is called 'Through the Hollow' (διὰ Κοίλης)" (6.103.3).

4 The tradition about Miltiades's death was confused (Hdt. 6.132-136, with the note of Blamire, 1989, p. 91, on *Cim.* 4.4).

5 *Cim.*4.5; *FGrH* 1002 [107] F 4. The renumbering is by Engels, 1998a, who provides a measured and informative commentary on the fragments.

6 Fr. 473.1; translation of Collard & Cropp, 2008, p. 563.

7 Gomme, 1945, p. 37. He also notes that Athenaios is "the only other [writer] to have quoted from this pamphlet". He adds (p. 36, n. 2) that he has "no reason to doubt" that the

rescued from relative obscurity was Ion of Khios, a prolific and versatile contemporary author, whose work rather strangely entitled Ἐπιδημίαι, "Sojourns", would have fallen into oblivion but for Plutarch's antiquarian interest. He cites Ion for Kimon's physical appearance: a big man with thick, curly hair which he wore long[8]. Later in the *Life* Plutarch relates at some length a story told by Ion of how, while still a boy, Kimon came to Athens from Khios and was a guest at a dinner party given by a certain Laomedon. As part of the after-dinner entertainment Kimon was asked to sing and he acquitted himself well (οὐκ ἀηδῶς)—and this in spite of his having had no formal instruction, as Stesimbrotos maintained—whereupon one of the guests complimented Kimon as being cleverer than Themistokles, who used to boast that even though he had never learnt to sing or play the lyre, he knew how to make a city great (*Cim.* 9.1; Plutarch will mention Themistokles's riposte again in the *Themistokles*). Kimon then went on to relate a stratagem of his. When given a choice of keeping the spoils or the prisoners after a campaign he chose the prisoners—for whom their families were soon willing to pay large sums as ransom[9].

Plutarch picks up at various points in the narrative the theme of Kimon's roving eye. The poet Melanthios, he reports, wrote an elegy poking fun at Kimon for his involvement with a lady named Asteria, whose family were from Salamis, and another named Mnestra (which might, I suppose, be programmatic). We would know almost nothing about this poet Melanthios if Plutarch had not taken an interest in him. In the treatise *Conjugal Precepts* (144C), Plutarch reports that Melanthios ridiculed Gorgias of Leontini who discoursed on Concord at Olympia but could not bring harmony into his own life: his wife was jealous over Gorgias's involvement with a slave girl.

For all his womanizing Kimon, Plutarch insists, was genuinely fond of his wife—a woman programmatically named Isodike and a member of the genos to which Perikles belonged, the Alkmaionidai, and when she died consolatory elegies were written for

other stories in Plutarch about Kimon's relations with women, and of Elpinike's relations with Perikles and Polygnotos, are from Stesimbrotos. So, too, BLAMIRE, 1989, p. 6, citing *Cim.* 4.6, 4.8 and 15.3.

8 *Cim.* 5.3; *FGrH* 392 F 12. LEURINI, 2005, offers a succinct inventory of Plutarch's debts to Ion.

9 *Cim.* 9.1; *FGrH* 392 F 13. BLAMIRE, 1989, p. 5, suggests Ion as a possible source also of an anecdote involving Kimon's retort to a Corinthian heckler during the campaign against the revolting helots (*Cim.* 17.1-2), Kimon's judging of the dramatic competitions of 468 (8.7-9), Kimon and a Persian defector (10.9), and Perikles's "going easy" on Kimon at the latter's prosecution in 463 (14.3-5).

Kimon by the philosopher Arkhelaos[10]. Who would have known that this celebrated "physical" philosopher and alleged teacher of Sokrates also wrote elegies? For this fact Plutarch cites with approbation the Stoic philosopher Panaitios, whom we shall encounter again in the *Life of Aristeides*[11].

Not surprisingly we learn in this *Life* a fair amount about Kimon's sister or half-sister Elpinike[12]. The wags had it that Kimon started having sex with her "while he was still a *neos*", and that she was romantically involved as well with the mural painter Polygnotos, who allegedly painted her likeness on one of the figures in the murals of the Stoa Poikile[13]. In spite of, or maybe because of, all this, the family saw to it that she married well, to Kallias Lakkoploutos, the famous plutocrat whom we shall hear of again in the *Life of Aristeides*, and it was this lucrative marriage that, according to Plutarch, enabled Kimon to pay his father Militades's fifty-talent fine[14]. Elpinike's name crops up again in the aftermath of Kimon's successful suppression of the revolt of Thasos in 463 BCE. He was brought to trial on the somewhat improbable charge that he had taken bribes from King Alexander of Macedon not to invade his territory. Perikles was among the prosecutors and, according to a story Plutarch reports on the authority of Stesimbrotos, Elpinike pleaded with him to go easy on her brother, but Perikles just smiled and said, "You're too old for this sort of thing, Elpinike". Plutarch caps the tale by remarking that Perikles, who had been the "most vehement" (σφοδρότατος) accuser, did not press for a conviction but stood up just once to go through the motions of bringing an accusation[15]. (It is more than a little suspicious that a variant of this story occurs in the account of a proposal for Kimon's early recall from ostracism allegedly made by Perikles[16]).

In chapter 10 Plutarch draws the attention of his readers to certain initiatives Kimon took to boost his ratings with the Athenian voters[17].

10 *Cim.* 4.10. She was the daughter of Euryptolemos and granddaughter of Megakles, and so first cousin of Perikles's mother, Agariste.

11 *Cim.* 4.10, fr. 125 von Straaten; cf. Plut., *Arist*. 1.6-8, 27.4.

12 If half-sister, she would have been Miltiades's daughter by his first wife, not Hegisipyle.

13 *Cim.* 4.6.

14 *Cim.* 4.8. There were other, conflicting, versions of how Miltiades's fine was paid.

15 *Cim.* 14.5 (repeated at *Per*. 10.6, where Stesimbrotos is not named), *FGrH* 1002 [107] F 5.

16 *Per.* 10.5, with the note of Holden, 1894, p. 116.

17 In *Cim.* 10.1 Plutarch says Kimon was using the funds that accrued from his military operations, and note also 14.3: Kimon at his trial claimed to have "adorned the city by enriching her at her enemies' expense". (This, as we shall see, does not jibe with the implication in the *Perikles* that Kimon used his private wealth, whereas Perikles had to rely on the surplus in the imperial treasury.)

Among a variety of benefactions Plutarch reports that he removed the fences on his estates so that anyone who wished could come in and pick the fruits; he also laid on free meals in his home "so that the poor… would be able to concentrate on their duties as citizens". Plutarch then notes a discrepancy in his sources: Aristotle (*Ath.* 27.3) said these benefactions were available not to the Athenians at large (the version ascribed to Theopompos, whom, though Plutarch does not name, he appears to be following here[18]), but only to Kimon's demesmen, Lakiadai. Plutarch will re-use much of this material in the *Life of Perikles*, where Perikles is forced to introduce a variety of "demagogic" measures like kleruchies and the theoric allowance to compete with Kimon's largesses[19]. Plutarch moves on to list public works initiated by Kimon, and reports that he used the spoils of war for the south wall of the Akropolis, plane trees in the Agora, and rehabilitation of the Academy[20].

Theopompos was also behind Plutarch's account both in this *Life* and in the *Perikles* of Kimon's alleged involvement in the battle of Tanagra in Boiotia (c. 456 BCE). Kimon was living in exile because of his ostracism a few years before, but, seeing how hard pressed the Athenian troops were he allegedly turned up with his tribal contingent (Oineis) and offered his assistance; he was rebuffed (by the Boule in the *Life of Kimon*, by Perikles, of course, in the *Perikles*) but his 100 tribal colleagues all fell in the battle. When the Athenians suffered a decisive and humiliating defeat at the hands of their Peloponnesian adversaries, they passed a special decree of recall, moved by Perikles, so that Kimon could return five years early[21]. This whole story looks—to me, at any rate—somewhat fishy, not least because, in the parallel account in the *Life of Perikles*, Plutarch remarks that according to "some writers"—commentators think he had Stesimbrotos in mind—Elpinike again engineered the deal: her brother was to be recalled and the leadership of the Athenian forces divided between him and Perikles, Kimon to take command of two hundred ships (the figure is from Thoukydides 1.112) and pursue the campaign against the Persians by sea, while Perikles was to have supreme power in domestic matters.

Another major characteristic of Kimon's that Plutarch returns to several times in the *Life* was his Laconism. (We have already noted Plutarch's—or Stesimbrotos's—remark that his

[18] FGrH 115 F 89; cf. Athenaios (12.533A-B), citing Book 10 of Theopompos's Philippika.

[19] *Per.* 9.2.

[20] *Cim.* 13.5-7.

[21] *Cim.* 17.4-8; *Per.*10.1-4; *FGrH* 115 F 88.

temperament was more Peloponnesian than Athenian.) He famously named one of his sons, presumably his first-born, "Lakedaimonios". Plutarch reports that Kimon was so relentless in his praise of things Spartan that the Athenians got fed up with hearing him say, whenever he wanted to dissuade them from a course of action, "That's not what the Spartans would do"—this on the authority of Stesimbrotos[22]. Plutarch gives an account of the debate at Athens in the late 460s about whether to send aid to the Spartans when their helots had revolted and they appealed to Athens for help. Plutarch aptly cites the lines in Aristophanes's *Lysistrata* describing the Spartan envoy—somewhat improbably named Perikleidas—sitting at the altar, all pale in his scarlet cloak, asking for troops[23]. And Plutarch once more draws on Ion of Khios for the report that Kimon won the Athenians over to his side by urging them "not to allow Greece to go lame or Athens be deprived of their yoke-fellow"[24]. Plutarch also cites Kritias's somewhat critical remark —in what work is not clear— that in pressing for a positive response to Sparta's appeal, Kimon "was putting his country's benefit second to Sparta's advantage"[25]. The Spartan request was opposed by Perikles's associate Ephialtes, who urged the Athenians "not to aid or raise up a city that was Athens' rival but leave her where she had fallen and let Sparta's pride be trampled down". If Plutarch's account can be trusted—he cites no authority for his view—Kimon attempted unsuccessfully to get the Athenians to repeal the reforms of c. 462 BCE that docked the powers of the Areiopagos[26]. The debate seems to have turned nasty, for Plutarch says that the democratic reformers dredged up the old slanders of Kimon's involvement with his half-sister and his Laconism, and it was this verbal sparring match that Plutarch says the comic poet Eupolis was referring to years later in the lines (from his play *Poleis* of c. 422 BCE): Kimon "was not a bad fellow, but he loved to tipple,

22 *Cim.*16.3; *FGrH* 1002 [107] F 7. In Stesimbrotos's account of Kimon's trial after Thasos Kimon is reported to have boasted that, as a proxenos of Sparta (and unlike others who were proxenoi of wealthy Ionian and Thessalian cities), his admiration for their "economy and moderation" made it improbable that he would have yielded to an offer of money by the Macedonian monarch.

23 *Cim.* 16.8; Ar., *Lys.* 1137 ff.

24 *Cim.* 16.10; *FGrH* 392 F 14.

25 *Cim.* 16.9; Kritias *Vorsokr*. 88 fr. B 52. Plutarch had earlier quoted an elegiac couplet in which Kritias mentioned Kimon's μεγαλοφροσύνη as his distinguishing characteristic *(Cim.* 10.5, fr. 8 West).

26 *Cim.* 15.3.

and was an idler, and would sometimes make his bed in Sparta leaving Elpinike here all by herself"[27]. (To this Plutarch comments, rather huffily, "If an idle and drunk Kimon could capture so many cities and win so many battles, obviously no Greek before or after him could have surpassed his exploits when he was sober and paying attention").

Plutarch is the only other source besides Aiskhines in his speech *Against Ktesiphon* to record three celebratory epigrams erected to commemorate a signal victory won by the Athenian forces under Kimon in the first allied undertaking of the renewed hostilities against the Persians, who c. 476 BCE were driven out of Eion on the Strymon River in Thrace, and the inhabitants enslaved[28]. The Eion campaign was followed by an attack on the Dolopian inhabitants of Skyros in the Cyclades. "They enslaved the inhabitants and colonized the island themselves", is Thoukydides's dry comment (1.98.2). Plutarch fleshes out the episode with an account of how Kimon, following a convenient lead provided by the oracle at Delphi which he consulted, "discovered" Theseus's bones and organized their ceremonious return and reinterment at Athens. "This exploit", Plutarch remarks, "contributed more than any other to Kimon's high standing with the people"[29]. A few years later Kimon and the rest of the board of generals were given the unusual honour of being appointed extraordinary judges for the Dionysia when Sophokles, in his maiden appearance, won first prize, 469/8 BCE, and, according to Plutarch, Aiskhylos went off to Sicily in a huff and died there[30].

Kimon died while on campaign in Kypros c. 450 BCE, a sad event which Plutarch marks by a short passage from the comedy *Arkhilokhoi* of Kratinos[31], who praised Kimon as a "man who was godlike, most hospitable and by far the best leader of the Panhellenes"[32]. Plutarch follows up this quote from Kratinos with a *bon mot* by Gorgias of Leontini: Kimon "acquired wealth in order to use it, and used it in order to be honoured"[33].

In the *Life of Kimon* Plutarch provides a full and believable portrayal

27 *Cim.* 15.4, *PCG* fr. 221.

28 *Cim.* 7. 4-6; Th. 1.98.1, Aiskhines 3 *Against Ktesiphon*, 183-5, Tzetzes *Lykophron* 417 (see BLAMIRE, 1989, p. 113). Heroic resistance by the Persian governor Boges is reported by Herodotos (7.107), naming Kimon.

29 *Cim.* 8.5-7, also *Thes.* 36; Paus. 3.3.7; Schol. Ar., *Pl.* 627; Arist., *Ath.* fr. 4.

30 *Cim.* 8.7-8. The implied date of Aiskhylos's death is, of course, erroneous.

31 Dated by BAKOLA, 2009, p. 71, to "sometime between 435 and 422".

32 *Cim.* 10.4; *PCG* fr. 1.2-3.

33 *Cim.* 10.5; *Vorsokr*. 82 B 20.

of his subject. Readers come away with a clear view of Kimon's relatively uncomplicated character: gruff, likeable, something of a *bon vivant* and definitely a ladies' man. A man of action rather than a thinker, much less an amateur musician, he was a capable general, who could take bold steps when these were called for, even at the cost of his own political capital with Athenian voters (the Thasos campaign, the helot revolt). The narrative flows smoothly. Plutarch deploys a variety of relevant source-material, all the while following—when it was available—the narrative thread in his best source, Thoukydides (and falling back, when he needed to fill gaps, on respectable second-string players like Theopompos). All in all, the *Kimon* is the shortest, but also one of the most successful of these fifth-century *Lives*.

2. *Themistokles*

If we did not have Thoukydides's so-called "Excursus" on Themistokles at the close of Book I of *The Peloponnesian War*, we might be tempted to write off much of what Plutarch tells us about this extraordinary—I believe the modern term might be "conflicted"—hero as later fiction, the fevered ravings of a Douris of Samos, or material largely invented by the later writers of Athenian history, the so-called Atthidographers. But Thoukydides tells an exciting story of Themistokles's escape from Athens sometime in the later 470s—a rebuff by the Kerkyreans when he asked for asylum there, the theatrical appeal to King Admetos of the Molossoi, Themistokles clutching the infant prince as he made his plea, his threat to the sea-captain transporting him from Pydna to Ephesos via Naxos, his letter of appeal to Artaxerxes, and his final haven, a hero battered but unbowed, living out his last years as a Greek mini-potentate among barbarians in Magnesia, making promises to the Great King that he had no intention of ever carrying through. With Thoukydides providing this thrilling, faintly exotic, model, how could Plutarch's own imagination not be fired, if not to surpass at least not fall dismally short of his great predecessor? It is reassuring to us as we critically sift through this *Life* that in the *Themistokles* Plutarch cites both Herodotos and Thoukydides, the former three times and Thoukydides twice[34]. But from the number of times Herodotos's name appears in Ziegler's testimonia —some 34, apart from the direct citations—, it is clear that Plutarch's debt to Herodotos is far larger —indeed, pervasive. From his rich knowledge of the fifth-century poetic corpus Plutarch excerpts valuable material about Themistokles's personal relationship with Simonides[35] and—not

[34] Hdt. 7.6, 17.1, 21.1; Th. 25.2, 27.1.
[35] Simonides, *Them*. 1.4, 15.4.

a fan of Themistokles—Timokreon of Rhodes[36]. Of fifth-century prose writers he draws on Ion of Khios[37] and the censorious Stesimbrotos of Thasos[38].

Let's start with the poets. The most interesting—to me, at least—is the close relationship Themistokles seems to have had with Simonides. He has a fairly large presence in this *Life*. To establish Themistokles's connection with the genos of Lykomidai, whose telesterion, or initiation-house, had been burnt down during the Persian occupation, Plutarch reports, on Simonides's authority, that Themistokles had it restored and decorated with paintings at his own expense. (A probable inference is that the information was contained in some kind of celebratory poem, perhaps written for the occasion[39].) There are a couple of pleasant anecdotes connecting the two men in chap. 5. While serving in some kind of official capacity—Plutarch here calls him "general"[40]—Themistokles was approached by Simonides to do him a favour which Themistokles considered out of line (τι τῶν οὐ μετρίων). Themistokles refused: why would Simonides expect him to do something παρὰ νόμον when he, Simonides, would never consider singing παρὰ μέλος[41]? On some other occasion, Themistokles got a little personal in his banter, commenting that it did not make sense for Simonides to pour abuse on the Corinthians—when? where?—while he himself had portrait-busts made of himself although he was ugly to look at (ὄντος αἰσχροῦ τὴν ὄψιν)[42]. Much more substantial is the information Plutarch provides later when he paraphrases a poem of Simonides celebrating the "Sea-fight at Salamis", "no more brilliant action at sea had ever been undertaken by Greeks or barbarians" "thanks to the courage and zeal of the sailors, and the planning and cleverness of Themistokles"[43]. Much later in the *Life* Plutach quotes

36 Timokreon, *Them*. 21.

37 *Them*. 2.4. (cf. *Cim*. 9.1).

38 *Them*. 2.5, 4.5.

39 *Them*. 1.4. MARR, 1998, p. 72, suggests that it may have been a commemorative epigram, inscribed on the wall of the building after it was restored by Themistokles.

40 *Them*. 5.6. Plutarch repeats the anecdote elsewhere (*Reg. et imp. apoph*. 185D; *De vit. pud*. 534E; *Praec. ger.* 807B) where, as MARR, 1998, p. 82, points out, the office Themistokles held was the archonship.

41 This is a pun, for μέλος is a synonym for νόμος in one of its senses.

42 Cf. MARR, 1998, p. 82, on the background on this (for Plutarch's biographical purposes, slightly irrelevant) exchange.

43 *Them*. 15.4. I have adapted some of the translation of MARR, 1998, p. 111, citing also *De Her. mal*. 869C-871B.

three passages from Timokreon of Rhodes in which, as Plutarch remarks, the Rhodian poet attacked Themistokles rather bitterly (πικρότερον). The back story here appears to be (or so Timokreon claimed) that Themistokles promised to see that Timokreon was restored to his homeland after the war, and then went back on his word—after taking a bribe, according to Timokreon. Plutarch reports that Timokreon pursued his poetic vendetta still further, heaping insults on Themistokles when the latter had been condemned on a charge of Medism and was living in exile. (Interestingly, Timokeron also picked a poetic fight with Themistokles's friend Simonides, if verses under the poets' names in the Palatine Anthology are to be credited).

The other fifth-century lyric poet cited in the *Life* is Pindar, who celebrated the allied victory in the sea-battle off Cape Artemisium in northern Euboia in late summer 480 BCE as the place "where the sons of the Athenians laid the bright foundation of freedom"[44]. (Plutarch was evidently very attached to the phrase which he quotes in four other places in his works[45].) For the number of ships in Xerxes's fleet, what better source of information than Aiskhylos, who, as Plutarch says, "both knew and confirmed the number strongly", when he had the Messenger in *Persians* tell the Queen at vv. 341-43 that "The multitude of ships in Xerxes's fleet ... were no less than 1000, and those of outstanding speed 207" (1207 was to become the canonical number, repeated by all later writers: Herodotos, Isokrates, Diodoros—and here, in Plutarch).

Old Comedy, normally a rich source of gossip and bawdy invective, offered only slim pickings, probably because by the time comedies began to be performed at the Lenaia festival shortly before 440 BCE (they were included in the City Dionysia from the 480s) Themistokles was long off the local political scene, indeed, off any scene even on a late chronology. Plutarch did, however, remember that in *Knights* (presented at the Lenaia 424 BCE) the Sausage-seller refutes Paphlagon's claims to have done more for Demos than Themistokles, who "kneaded the Peiraieus on to the city" (v. 815). Plutarch quibbles with this: what really happened was that Themistokles "fastened the city on to Peiraieus and the land on to the sea"[46]. Almost at the end of the *Life* Plutarch adduces the valuable testimony of Plato Comicus, four lines which Diodoros, the third-century writer on topography, claimed supported his identification of a monument near the great harbour of Peiraieus as the "Tomb of The-

[44] *Them*. 8.2; Pi. fr. 77 Race; I quote his translation.

[45] *Apoph. Lac*. 232E; *Mul. virt*. 250E; *De sera num*. 552B; *De Her. mal*. 867C.

[46] *Them*. 19.4.

mistokles": "Your tomb, mounted high in a lovely spot where seafaring merchants will address it, in view of all who sail in or out, and itself a spectator at every trireme race"[47].

Of fifth-century prose writers Ion and Stesimbrotos—whom we have encountered already in the *Life of Kimon*—had some items to offer. Without naming Ion as his source, Plutarch recounts again how Themistokles, when at social gatherings he was put on the defensive by those who thought of themselves as more "cultured and refined", retorted rather brusquely (φορτικώτερον) that "even though he had never learnt to sing or play the lyre, he did know how to make a city great"[48]. The Thasian pamphleteer Stesimbrotos was the source Plutarch loved to hate. He cites him eleven times in these Athenian *Lives*, three of which are in this *Life*, and often Plutarch rejects—sometimes strongly—Stesimbrotos's testimony. Apart from its title (*On Themistokles, Thoukydides [son of Melesias] and Perikles*), virtually nothing can be asserted with certainty about the nature and date of publication of his book. What Stesimbrotos reported about Themistokles Plutarch found less than satisfactory. How could Themistokles have studied under Anaxagoras and Melissos the physical philosopher? Anaxagoras and Melissos, Plutarch says huffily, were contemporaries of Perikles, so Stesimbrotos has "got his chronology wrong"[49]. According to Stesimbrotos Themistokles had to get his plans to enlarge the Athenian fleet accepted by the people in the face of opposition from Miltiades (*Them*. 4.5; Plutarch does not comment, although his readers—and we—would know that with Militades off the scene by 489, this would have been another example of poor chronology). Finally, Stesimbrotos gave a strange variant of what happened to Themistokles after he left Greece. According to him, Themistokles went from mainland Greece to Sicily, where he sought asylum at the court of Hieron and offered to marry Hieron's daughter (the other item for which Plutarch cites Stesimbrotos is plausible enough, that Kimon brought a capital charge against the man who helped get Themistokles's wife and children out of Athens to rejoin him in exile[50]).

Five times in this *Life* Plutarch cites Phanias or Phainias of Eresos on Lesbos, who was a pupil of Aristotle and "a typical scholar and writer of the early Peripatetic school"[51]. Plutarch

47 *Them*. 32.6; *FGrH* 372 F 35; *PCG* fr. 199.

48 *Them*. 2.4 = *Cim.* 9.1; Ion *FGrH* 392 F 12.

49 *Them*. 2.5; *FGrH* 1002 [107] F 1 οὐκ εὖ τῶν χρόνων ἁπτόμενος.

50 *Them*. 24.7; *FGrH* 1002 [107] F 3

51 ENGELS, 1998c, 291. For an up-to-date treatment of various aspects of Phainias's life and writings see now HELLMAN and MIRHADY, 2015.

goes out of his way to praise him as "a philosopher and not unversed in literature"[52]. He draws on Phainias for a variety of items: Themistokles's mother was not Thracian, as generally believed, but a Carian named Euterpe[53]. With the fleet off Artemisium Themistokles used a particularly tricky scheme to prevent one of the ship captains from breaking ranks and sailing away[54]. As part of his Salamis narrative Plutarch tells at length the story of how some Persian royals, Xerxes's nephews, were taken captive and sacrificed to Dionysos ὠμηστής[55]. (This is where Plutarch stops to pay Phainias the compliment just mentioned. He will repeat the tale in the *Life of Aristeides*[56]). He cites Phainias again for variant versions of two minor details in the last, the Asian, part of Themistokles's life[57].

Plutarch cites Plato twice in this *Life*. In the *Laws*, Themistokles is faulted for turning Athenian "hoplites who stood firm"—μονίμων ὁπλιτῶν - into mariners and seafarers[58] and in *Meno* we are told that Themistokles's son Diophantos had been taught by his father, if nothing else, how to be a good horseman[59]. The Aristotelian *Constitution of Athens,* a ready source for many constitutional details in these *Lives*, is cited here for the eight-drachma stipend paid by authority of the Areiopagos to the Athenian sailors before Salamis[60].

In the *Nikias* Plutarch speaks with a note of justified pride of what he feels he can add to his written sources and the traditions he has inherited as a Greek man of learning: monuments, dedications, inscriptional evidence which he has himself examined. In this category are to be placed the votive plaque that Themistokles set up to commemorate his choregic victory in 477/6 with plays by Phrynikhos[61]. Plutarch mentions, very likely from

52 *Them*. 13.5; *FGrH* 1012 F 19.

53 *Them*. 1.2; *FGrH* 1012 F 17.

54 *Them*. 7.7; *FGrH* 1012 F 18: a one-talent "bribe" which, if the man, Arkhiteles, did *not* accept, Themistokles would denounce him for accepting bribes.

55 *Them.* 13.2-5; *FGrH* 1012 F 19.

56 *Arist*. 9.2.

57 *Them*. 27.8; *FGrH* 1012 F 20, Themistokles's meeting with the chiliarch Artabanos; *Them*. 29.11; *FGrH* 1012 F 22, two additional tributary cities to those mentioned by Thoukydides, Perkote for bedding and Palaiskepsis for clothing.

58 *Them*. 4.4; *Laws* 706C.

59 *Them*. 32.1; *Meno* 93B.

60 *Them*. 10.6; *Ath.* 23.1-2.

61 *Them.* 5.5, probably *Phoinissai,* allegedly a model for Aiskhylos's *Persians*.

autopsy, the shrine Themistokles had built near his own house in Melite, dedicated to "Artemis Best Counsellor", in which—much to the displeasure of the Athenians—he placed a bust of himself, which Plutarch says survived right down to his own time, καθ' ἡμᾶς. He describes dedications made to celebrate the victories at Artemision in N. Euboia; "the stone", Plutarch remarks, "when rubbed gives off the colour and odour of saffron" (*Them*. 8.4). Plutarch closes his *Life* with a short account of Themistokles's descendants. He adds valuable personal details of his dealings with the Themistokles who was a contemporary of his at Athens, and who was the beneficiary of certain honours that had been accorded Themistokles's descendants by the people of Magnesia where he ended his days.

Theopompos, thought to be an important though unnamed source in some of these *Lives*, is cited three times in the *Themistokles*, and Theophrastos twice. Theopompos's was the lone dissenting voice in Plutarch's sources for the way Themistokles managed the refortification of Athen over the opposition of the Spartans: Theopompos said Themistokles had bribed the Spartan ephors not to oppose his plan, whereas οἱ πλεῖστοι said it was by deception[62]. When Themistokles made his final escape to the Persian court, the value of his confiscated property was set at one hundred talents by Theopompos, eighty by Theophrastos[63]. Plutarch rejects Theopompos's report that when in exile Themistokles "wandered about" Asia. Instead, he accepts the common view that he settled in as a grandee in Magnesia[64]. From Theophrastos's "On Kingship" Plutarch retails the story of Themistokles arousing the ire of the spectators at the Olympic games against Hiero of Syracuse[65].

The structure of the *Themistokles* is relatively simple. Chapters 1 - 17 are "almost pure narrative"[66], covering the period to the close of the Persian Wars. There follows a bridge chapter 18 devoted to anecdotes and apophthegms, eight of each, a larger number in a single chapter than any Athenian *Life* except *Phokion*, where chapter 9 has ten anecdotes and apophthegms[67]. Then the narrative resumes, chapters 19-31 dealing with events from 479 BCE to Themistokles's death in 460/59 BCE on the high chronology or 450/49 BCE on the low[68].

62 *Them*. 19.1; *FGrH* 115 F 85.
63 *Them*. 25.3; *FGrH* 115 F 86; *FHSG* fr. 613.
64 *Them*. 31.3; *FGrH* 115 F 87.
65 *Them*. 25.1; *FHSG* fr. 612; MIRHADY, 1992, pp. 137-38.
66 See GOMME, 1945, p. 61.
67 PODLECKI, 2005, p. 273 and p. 275.
68 MARR, 1998, pp. 159-60, on the (unresolvable) problems.

Pelling called the *Themistokles* "not on the whole one of Pluarch's most thoughtful or incisive *Lives*"[69], but it remains a real treasure-trove to students of fifth-century Athenian history who have to look in unlikely places to reconstruct the details of this strange but fascinating individual[70].

3. *Perikles*

When Plutarch sat down to collect his thoughts for his *Life of Perikles* he knew he had a problem, several problems, in fact. Sources he could consult (or remember) were spotty and partisan. They offered him next to nothing about Perikles's early life, although he could of course fall back on traditions about the Alkmeonidai. In addition, many of the accounts with which he was familiar (Stesimbrotos, Theopompos) were actively hostile, and they singled out an unattractive characteristic of Perikles's personality, his aloofness (σεμνότης). Plutarch knew that he could deal with this by turning it into a positive virtue, μεγαλοφροσύνη, high-mindedness. Furthermore, although Perikles's background was one of privilege and he kept company with others of his kind, he became the προστάτης τοῦ δήμου with the best track record of all the other men who were later dubbed, sometimes with a slight tone of disparagement, δημαγωγοί. What could have impelled a man of (as Plutarch believed) a staunchly "aristocratic" background and temperament to initiate, at various points in his career, measures that were, or could be characterized as, shamelessly "crowd-pleasing"? Plutarch set himself the formidable task of trying to elucidate for his readers, and for us, the reasons why and the stages by which this unlikely transformation occurred, but in my opinion he was only partially successful in this enterprise, and the real motives behind some of Perikles's undertakings remain shrouded in mystery.

I shall start with an overview of the major sources Plutarch relied on in composing the *Perikles*.

For the last part of Perikles's career Plutarch sensibly relied heavily upon Thoukydides the historian, whom he cites by name five times: *Per.* 9.1 = 2.65.10, the famous *aperçu*, that Athens was "in name a democracy but in fact the *arkhê* of the foremost man"; *Per.*15.3, recapitulated at *Per.*16.3 = 2.65.8 praise of Perikles's incorruptibility[71];

69 Pelling, 1992, p. 29 (= 2002, p. 132).

70 It is worth quoting Gomme, 1945, p. 61, for an appreciation of Plutarch's achievement: "everything Themistokles did, both great and small, illustrates his remarkable, complex, but yet simply drawn, character, which for Plutarch is all high lights and darkness; and there was much material, full of interest if somewhat monotonous in tone".

71 Perikles's incorruptibility was a feature that clearly impressed Plutarch. He returns to it twice in the *Comparison* 30(3) 5 and 6. Interestingly, as Rhodes, 1988, p. 243, points out, Thoukydides has Perikles in his last speech make this claim in his own behalf (2.60.5).

*Per.*28.2 Thoukydides is named among historians who, by their silence, refute the charge laid by Douris of Samos that Perikles had dealt with the rebellious Samians with excessive brutality; *Per*.28.8 = 8.76.4 the Samians had come very close to defeating the Athenians in that revolt; *Per*.33.1 = 1.127.1, on the eve of the outbreak of hostilities the Spartans made the unrealistic demand that war could be averted if the Athenians should "drive out the curse" of Perikles's genos, the Alkmeonidai (viz., by exiling Perikles himself). To these specific citations, however, there should be added the numerous echoes of Thoukydides that Ziegler tabulates in his testimonia. A good example of this is Plutarch's comment at *Per.* 13.16 on the difficulty a historian faces in getting at the truth of past events = 1.22.3. (In passing, I note that this is similar to the way Plutarch uses Thoukydides in *Kimon*[72], where he cites the historian five times by name but follows him in a general way in his narrative of the period after the Persian Wars.) Another contemporary witness was Ion of Khios. His enigmatically titled *Sojourns* (*Epidêmiai*) was a potentially fruitful source of information, especially of a personal nature. As far as we can tell from Plutarch's citations, Ion was no friend of Perikles, but showed a strong bias towards Kimon. In a claim that savours of personal animus, Ion charged Perikles with having "a rather disdainful and arrogant manner of address, and…his pride had in it a good deal of superciliousness and contempt for others"[73]. (Kimon, by contrast, elicited Ion's praise for his "ease, good humour and polished manner"). In the account of the Samian Revolt later in the *Life*, and clearly chiming in with this rather sour account of Perikles's manner, Ion is cited for Perikles's boast that, whereas it had taken Agamemnon ten years to capture Troy, he had brought Samos to heel in nine months[74]. Stesimbrotos of Thasos likewise appears to have been no admirer of Perikles. Four times in this *Life* Plutarch cites his work *On Themistokles, Thoukydides [son of Melesias] and Perikles*, but little can be gleaned about it from the meagre remains and generally the tone is negative, even abusive. The reader is treated to scurrilous gossip about Perikles's involvement with the wife of his son Xanthippos (*Per.* 13.6, *FGrH* 1002 [107] F 10b), which Plutarch dismisses as "shocking and completely unfounded". These unsavoury rumors

[72] ZIEGLER, in the Teubner edition, notes this general similarity, pointing to *Cim.* 6 = Th. 1.94.5; *Cim.* 11 = Th. 1.99.

[73] *Per*. 5.3, tr. Scott-Kilvert, *FGrH* 392 F 15. To these charges of arrogance, disdain for others and superciliousness I shall return later.

[74] *Per.* 28.7; *FGrH* 392 F 16.

according to Stestimbrotos had been spread by Xanthippos himself and father and son remained unreconciled even to the death of the latter in the plague (*Per*. 36.6, *FGrH* 1002 [107] F 11). More promising as historical fact are a couple of items from the Samian campaign. In his epitaphios for the Samian War dead Perikles made the memorable comparison of the casualties to the immortal gods for, he said, "We cannot see the gods, but we believe them to be immortal from the honours we pay them and the blessings we receive from them"[75]. It looks as if Stesimbrotos had given a fairly full account of the Samian campaign, for Plutarch records a tactical detail (which, however, he rejects *Per*. 26.1, *FGrH* 1002 [107] F 8). Plutarch also recounts the story here of Kimon's sister Elpinike supposedly intervening with Perikles and pleading with him to show clemency toward her brother at the latter's trial c. 462 BCE, a detail he had already reported in the *Kimon*, where he names Stesimbrotos as his source[76]. Stesimbrotos may also be behind the story that Elpinike intervened yet again and brokered a deal with Perikles to secure her brother's early recall from ostracism (*Cim.* 17.8, *Per*.10.5, where Plutarch ascribes the story to ἔνιοι[77]).

In spite of Plutarch's professed distaste for and disapproval of Old Comedy[78], luckily for us he was not above enlivening his narrative with a barrage of the anti-Periklean invective to be found there. Students in any subsequent period are deeply indebted to his researches in this area for the light thrown on the social and cultural, as well as at times also political history of the period[79], Since I have explored the evidence at several reprises previously, I shall summarize the results in more or less tabular form[80]. Plutarch inserts into his narrative direct quotations (or in one instance, a paraphrase) from six comic poets, as well as three times excerpting from authors to whom he refers generically as οἱ κωμικοί, οἱ κωμῳδοποιοί, αἱ κωμῳδίαι *vel sim*. In the following table I list them in roughly chronological order with the number of passages quoted or referred to by Plutarch in curved brackets ( ),

75 *Per*. 8.9, trans. Scott-Kilvert; *FGrH* 1002 [107] F 7.

76 *Per*.10.6; *Cim.* 14.5; *FGrH* 1002 [107] F 5.

77 Holden, 1894, p. 116.

78 *Comp. Ar. et Men*. 853B and following.

79 I sidestep here the knotty question of whether, and to what extent, Plutarch was directly familiar with the comic works from which he cites so appositely and amusingly (a pre-existing compilation cannot be ruled out, but for our purposes here the issue has no relevance).

80 Fuller discussions at Podlecki, 1973; Podlecki, 1987 [1990], pp. 81-88; Podlecki, 1998, pp. 169-76.

and an indication by understrike of whether the author in question is cited or mentioned in another *Life* and using boldface to indicate an occurrence in the Moral Essays (*Moralia*). After the name of each author I tabulate the section of the *Life* where the reference or citation occurs and where possible, the number assigned to the passage in Kassel-Austin *PCG*. Figures in square brackets [ ] following each citation refer to the introductory tabulation of themes touched on in the passage (in some cases, more than one), as follows:

1. Themes

[1] Perikles's alleged cranial peculiarity; [2] his liaison with Aspasia, and the notoriety this occasioned; [3] his Zeus-like, "Olympian" comportment; [4] "tyrannical" behaviour imputed to him; [5] his involvement with Athenian building projects; [6] external, imperial, initiatives; [7] other.

2. Authors

Kratinos (5) 3.5 from *Kheirons PCG* fr.258 [1] [4], from *Nemesis PCG* fr. 118 [1] [3]; 13.8 an unnamed play *PCG* fr. 326 [5]; 13.10 from *Thracian Women PCG* fr. 73 [1] [3] [5] [7]; 24.9 an unnamed play *PCG* fr. 259 [2].

Eupolis (2) 3.7 from *Demes PCG* fr.115 [1]; 24.10 also from *Demes PCG* fr.110 [2] [7].

Aristophanes (3) 8.4 *Akharnians* 531 paraphrase [3]; 26.4 from *Babylonians PCG* fr.71 [6]; 30.4 *Akharnians* 524-527 [2] [6].

Telekleides (2) 3.6 an unnamed play *PCG* fr.47 [1] [5]; 16.2 an unnamed play *PCG* fr. 45 [6].

Plato Comicus (1) 4.4 an unnamed play *PCG* fr. 207 [7].

Hermippos (1) 33.8 an unnamed play, possibly *Fates PCG* fr. 47 [6] [7].

οἱ κωμικοί (3) 7.8 *PCG* fr. 700 [6]; 13.15 *PCG* fr. 702 [7] 16.1 *PCG* fr. 703 [4]; 24.9 *PCG* fr. 704 [2].

Perusal of the above table confirms a preliminary impression that the comedians did not hesitate to look for easy laughs by alluding to Perikles's oddly shaped head: "head-gatherer", "squil-headed Zeus", Zeus the "head-god" (Kratinos, with a subtle side reference to his "Zeus-like" behaviour); "head-man [κεφάλαιον] of the Underworld-dwellers" (Eupolis); "with a big head-ache …in his eleven-couched head" (Telekleides). Aspasia too was an easy target. In an astonishing display of comedic παρρησία Kratinos had one of his characters say in an unnamed play, "Buggery gave birth to Hera-Aspasia, the bitch-faced concubine", where the reference to Hera would have had overtones of Perikles as Zeus, an identification which could also be evoked by comments such as Aristophanes's famous lines about the way Perikles "thundered and lightened" and "wore a terrible lightning bolt in his tongue". Perikles's "tyrannical" actions

could also be attacked more directly and more ominously: some comic writers whom Plutarch does not name referred to Perikles and his associates as "new Peisistratids". Of historical interest are Kratinos's jokes about Perikles "dragging his feet" in the completion of the "middle" Long Wall from the city to Peiraieus and ludicrously wearing the Odeion on his head, apparently just after escaping a vote of ostracism[81]. Plutarch quotes an excerpt from Aristophanes's first production, *Babylonians*, produced in 426 BCE: "How multi-lettered are the Samian people!" Plutarch places this in the context of the punishment of branding meted out to prisoners on both sides in the Samian campaign[82]. In the four-line snippet quoted from *Akharnians* Dikaiopolis produces a travesty of events that precipitated the Peloponnesian War: the real reason it broke out was some pranks by young hot bloods on both sides culminating in the Megarians capturing two of Aspasia's *pornai* and Perikles engineering the embargo on Megarian exports in retaliation. Plutarch names the comic writer Hermippos[83] twice, first and less reliably in chapter 32 as the sponsor of a decree charging Aspasia with *asebeia* with an additional charge of procuring free-born women for Perikles (this possibly from a comedy rather than an actual indictment[84]). Plutarch proceeds in the following chapter to quote a seven-line excerpt from an unnamed play in which one of Hermippos's characters addresses Perikles as "King of satyrs" and asks, "Why are you not willing to take up a spear [and fight], but keep offering frightening speeches about the war, but have the soul of a Teles?"—an individual otherwise unknown but clearly a by-word for cowardice—"You gnash your teeth when the knife-edge is sharpened on the hard whetstone, bitten by fiery Kleon". "King of satyrs" implies lecherousness, presupposed by stories given currency by the κωμικοί that some of Perikles's close associates

81 Plutarch quotes Kratinos's lines again in this context at *De glor. Ath*. 351A. It is not clear what wall Kratinos's joke referred to. If Plutarch was correct in citing Plato's *Gorgias* (455E) for the detail that Sokrates heard Perikles proposing the project, it cannot have been the Long Walls, which Thoukydides dates between 459 and 457 BCE (discussion at Podlecki, 1987, p. 47, and Podlecki, 1998, pp. 99-100, 170).

82 It is not clear how much credibility should be put in Plutarch's explanation: foreheads of the Samian prisoners tattooed by their Athenian captors with a *sêmaina*, a Samian warship, Athenian captives being branded with an owl.

83 Two additional fragments not in *Perikles*: *PCG* fr.69 "a head as big as a pumpkin"; *PCG* fr. 70 "Say, there, tickle my head, will you?"

84 In an interesting talk at the annual meetings of the Classical Association of Canada Prof. Ian Storey of Trent University suggested that the play was *Fates*, for which he proposed a date of 430 BCE.

acted as procurers[85]. The charge against Perikles that he "was all talk, but no action" reflects the pressure Perikles was under in the early years of the war to move from a defensive to an offensive stratgegy. And Kleon, his soon-to-be successor as *prostates*, appears here, as Gomme noted[86], for the first time in the historical record. The unnamed κωμῳδοποιοί whom Plutarch cites at chap. 7.8 charged that Perikles had given in to pressures for expanding the empire: the demos "no longer had the nerve to obey authority, but nibbled at Euboia and leapt on the islands", where the reference to Euboia is probably to be taken as an allusion to Perikles's speedy action in suppressing the island's revolt in 446 BCE (*Per*. 22.1, 23.3-4). Allegations that Perikles was arrogating to himself "tyrannical" power could be spelled out in detail, as in a trenchant three-line excerpt from an unnamed play by Telekleides quoted by Plutarch at *Per*. 16.2, where perhaps the Chorus are mocking the Athenians for handing over to Perikles "both tribute from the cities and the cities themselves, some to bind, others to loose [this appears to refer to various adjustments in the tribute-payments the allies were expected to pay annually to Athens], walls of stone, some to build, others to throw down again, treaties, power, force, peace, wealth and happiness". Eupolis's *Demes*, produced after Perikles's death (c. 412 BCE), had a scene in which various generals and statesmen of a bygone age were conjured from Hades, with Perikles emerging last. He asks the general Myronides, who had preceded him, "And my bastard, is he still alive?" —the audience will have recognized the allusion to his son by Aspasia, the younger Perikles— to which Myronides replies, "Yes, and he would have been a man long before now if he were not so scared of the blemish of the whore" (*Per.* 24.10).

As is his custom in these *Lives* Plutarch combs through traditions concerning philosophical "succession" and comes up with names of his subject's "teachers", those who exercised a formative intellectual or moral influence. He took over, somewhat uncritically, Plato's *jeu-d'esprit* that Perikles owed his "high-mindedness" to Anaxagoras's ethereal philosophizing[87]. Plutarch references Plato again in discussing the deleterious (from an aristocrat's standpoint) effects of the Areiopagos reforms of c. 461 BCE, like a cupbearer "pouring out undiluted freedom for the

85 *Per*. 13.15, Pheidias, Pyrilampes.

86 GOMME, 1956, p. 75.

87 *Per*. 4.6 - 5.1, 8.1-2, where Plutarch names Plato and paraphrases the passage (*Phaidros* 270A). The comment of YUNIS, 2011, p. 209, is apposite: "both the overall tone and specific terms used by S[okrates] are unmistakably ironic".

citizens"[88]. As already noted a passage in *Gorgias* provided the (somewhat problematic) information that Sokrates personally heard a proposal by Perikles regarding Athens' fortifications[89]. Plutarch cites Plato's *Menexenos* for the report that Aspasia "was reputed to have associated with many Athenians who wanted to learn rhetoric from her"[90]. Still probing for information about Perikles's teachers Plutarch turns to the Aristotelian *Constitution of Athens* (27.4) and comes up with the names of Damon (or Damonides) and the somewhat shadowy Pythokleides of Keos[91]. Plutarch also adduces the *Constitution* for the name of Ephialtes's assassin, Aristodikos of Tanagra, and uses it to counter the alternative (and scurrilous) version propagated by Idomeneus of Lampsakos that it was Perikles who orchestrated the removal of his erstwhile colleague in the Areiopagos reforms[92]. In his narrative of the Samian campaign Plutarch records two details from a work by Aristotle no longer extant: *Per*. 26.3, fr. 535 Rose, Perikles himself was defeated by the philosopher Melissos in an early sea battle and *Per*. 28.2, fr. 536 Rose, where Plutarch names Aristotle, along with Thoukydides and Ephoros, as sources which he says did not support the claim by Douris of Samos that Perikles brutalized Samian prisoners-of-war. Aristotle's pupil and successor Theophrastos is cited three times. For the first two Plutarch does not identify the treatise from which they are drawn: Perikles's alleged annual dispatch of 10 T to Sparta to stave off the war (*Per*. 23.2, *FHSG* fr. 615) and the name of Simmias as Perikles's accuser in summer 430 BCE (*Per*. 35.5, *FHSG* fr. 616)[93]. From Theophrastos's *Ethics* comes a story of how Perikles on his deathbed scoffed at his own gullibility in accepting an amulet to restore his health[94]. Plutarch

88 *Per*. 7.8; Pl., *R*. 562D.

89 See n. 81 above, with the comments of Dodds, 1966, p. 210, on the *Gorgias* passage, 455E.

90 *Per*. 24.7 = Pl., *Mx*. 235E. Plutarch recognizes that some (in fact, probably all) of this was μετὰ παιδιᾶς.

91 *Per*. 4.1-4 (with an apt citation from Plato Comicus [*PCG* fr. 207] in which someone addresses Damon as "the Khiron who brought up Perikles"—who is thereby being likened to Akhilleus) and *Per*. 9.2. Since Pythokleides's name occurs, along with Damon and Anaxagoras, in the Platonic *First Alkibiades* (118C), it is generally held that Plutarch's reference to Aristotle is an error.

92 *Per*.10.8; *Ath.* 25.4; Idomeneus *FGrH* 338 F 8.

93 Gomme, 1956, pp. 182-83, for some uncertainties surrounding this prosecution.

94 *Per*. 38.2; *FHSG* fr. 463.

castigates the scandal-monger Douris of Samos at *Per*. 28.2 for "magnifying Perikles's alleged brutality at Samos into a tragedy". (He cannot, however, refrain from retailing some of the grisly details from Douris's account, *FGrH* 76 F 67). The extent to which Plutarch drew on Theopompos is still a matter of debate among scholars[95]. At *Per*. 9.2 he repeats material he had presented in the *Kimon* (10.1-2) regarding Kimon's largesses, the popularity these gained for him, and the counter-measures Perikles took—allegedly on the advice of his "teacher" Damon/Damonides—to "out demagogue" his opponent. In his comment on the *Kimon* passage A. Blamire drew attention to Theopompos *FgrH* 115 F 89, which was "followed almost *verbatim*, but not named" by Plutarch[96]. A. Blamire further remarked that, although Plutarch does not cite Theopompos either there or in the *Perikles*, he "must be considered an important source for both"[97]. Theopompos had made Perikles a typical demagogue, a conclusion with which Plutarch had little sympathy, so Plutarch knew that he had to use the source with caution and do a little laundering, if necessary. Plutarch names Aiskhines the Socratic as his source for two items, Aspasia taking up with Lysikles "the Sheep-dealer" after Perikles's death (*Per*. 24.6) and Perikles's tearful appeal to the jurors to show clemency to Aspasia at her trial (*Per.* 32.5). From external evidence we know that it was another disciple of Sokrates, Antisthenes, who was behind the silly story that Perikles always kissed Aspasia when he left home in the morning and returned again at night[98].

From somewhere in his capacious memory (or notes) Plutarch came up with the excellent squib by Kritolaos (perhaps to be identified with the second century BCE head of the Peripatetic school) that Perikles, like the state galley Salaminia, "saved himself for great occasions"[99].

I want to move now to some problems that Plutarch had to face when he came to organize his material for

95 Thus CONNOR, 1968, pp. 114-15, sees him as the source of the demagogic measures that Plutarch enumerates in *Per*. 11, 13 and 34, possibly also Kimon's early recall from ostracism (*Per*. 10.4; *Cim.* 18.1 = *FGrH* 115 F 88).

96 BLAMIRE, 1989, p. 129.

97 BLAMIRE, 1989, p. 8. See also the terse but important discussion by WADE-GERY, 1958, pp. 235-38, with his conclusion that "Perikles the villain, not Kimon the hero, was the central figure in Theopompos".

98 Athenaios 13. 589E; *FGrH* 1004 Ff 7 a-b (*Per.* 24.9; with commentary at J. ENGELS, 1998c, pp. 104 - 105). For Plutarch's take on Perikles's relationship with Aspasia see BENEKER, 2012, pp. 43-54.

99 Kritolaos fr. 37 b Wehrli; *Per*. 7.7; *Praec. ger.* 811C-D, where Plutarch adds the name of the other state galley, Paralos.

the *Life of Perikles* and the strategies Plutarch used to address them. First, the sources said nothing about Perikles's early life. Plutarch does the best he can, mentioning his father Xanthippos's victories in the Persian Wars, and the dream that his mother Agariste had just before giving birth that she would "bring forth a lion"[100]. The explanation Plutarch came up with to explain his subject's absence from the public scene before the 460s was that he was keeping a low profile out of fear of being ostracized. What prompted this fear, according to Plutarch, was his "wealth, distinguished family and very powerful friends" (*Per*. 7.2) which might arouse a suspicion among the populace that he was aiming at tyranny (*Per*.7.4). But Plutarch introduces an additional explanation, which seems rather implausible: people thought Perikles bore a striking resemblance to the tyrant Peisistratos and there were old men who were amazed by another characteristic the two men shared, "a melodious voice, and a very fluent and rapid style of speaking". Peisistratos died in 527 BCE. Perikles will not have been heard speaking in public before the late 470s. The improbability of the story being true is obvious, and in fact an expanded version in Valerius Maximus faces the problem and tries, not altogether successfully, to bridge the gap. There it is "a very old man who in his youth" had heard Peisistratos and was in the audience when the young Perikles gave his first public speech[101]. Plutarch and/or his source appears to have been duped by passages from Old Comedy, such as the one at *Per*.16.1 already mentioned, where Perikles's followers are satirized as the "new Peisistratids" and he himself is called on to "swear an oath that he will not become a tyrant"[102]. Pressed to tell his readers something about Perikles's early years Plutarch can do no better than insist that "although he had taken no part in political affairs, he showed himself brave and careless of danger in military campaigns" (*Per*. 7.2; about which these might have been Plutarch is silent).

Another potential obstacle to his biographer was the uniformity with which the sources, when they addressed the topic of Perikles's personal qualities, put at the top of the list a characteristic

[100] *Per*. 3.2, closely paraphrasing Herodotos (6.136.2).

[101] Val. Max. 8.9 ext 2 (an adaptation of Shackleton Bailey's translation).

[102] One of the reasons Plutarch adduces for Damon's ostracism was that he was φιλοτύραννος. Also relevant in this context is Plutarch's report that Perikles's opponents claimed that his policies were a "terrible hubris and a blatant exercise of tyranny over Greece" (*Per*. 12.2). The eulogy with which Plutarch closes the *Life* returns to this theme: "Then it was [sc. after Perikles's death] that that power of his, which had aroused such envy and had been denounced as a monarchy and a tyranny, stood revealed in its true character as the saving bulwark of the state" (*Per*. 39.4 tr. Scott-Kilvert).

labeled variously as ὄγκος, σεμνότης, φρόνημα, ἀξίωμα or, if you were tolerant or even well-disposed, τὸ μεγαλόψυχον, μεγαλοφροσύνη (as we saw, detractors like Ion labeled it μεγαλαυχία, ὑπεροψία and περιφρόνησις τῶν ἄλλων). How does Plutarch deal with this uncomfortable datum? Well, it was because (as Plato insisted in the *Phaidros*) the young Perikles fell under the spell of Anaxagoras who instilled in him a love of "ethereal" matters, "rarefied" thinking and a corresponding "elevated" style of speaking (*Per*. 4.6, 5.1 and 8.1-2: "by applying this training to the art of oratory he far excelled all other speakers", Scott-Kilvert's trans). From Anaxagoras Perikles learned the importance of withdrawing from frivolous and time-wasting activities such as dinner parties[103], and adopting an ascetic lifestyle—like an athlete in training[104]. As a corollary benefit of this conversion, Perikles could delegate less pressing public business to trusted subordinates who would thus be made to feel they had an important role to play in his grand scheme[105]. Perikles could thus—to turn Kritolaos's barb into a compliment—"save himself for great occasions".

Finally, and this was perhaps the most challenging task Plutarch set himself, he had to account for the fact, which his sources made abundantly and undeniably clear, that this blue-blooded aristocrat was responsible for a host of crowd-pleasing, "demagogic" enactments, and that these seem to have been scattered over various points in Perikles's public career. What accounted for this apparent discrepancy between Perikles's beliefs and his behaviour? The short, and ultimately unsatisfactory, explanation Plutarch produces is that Perikles had to fend off opposition from other political leaders who at various stages in their careers presented a serious challenge to Perikles for προστασία τοῦ δῆμου. First, Kimon. His personal wealth, Plutarch says (returning to material that he had already used in the *Kimon*[106]), allowed him to initiate a variety of social welfare

[103] The theme of withdrawal from social events (*Per*. 7.5-6) is suspect, in part because Plutarch tells a similar story about Nikias, who, however, had different reasons for doing so (*Nic.* 5.1-2). The motif recurs in the *Themistokles* (3.4, a related story of Themistokles's "conversion" from youthful pranks and debauchery to serious statesmanship).

[104] Plutarch uses the image specifically in connection with the "training in political life" allegedly given Perikles by Damon (*Per*. 4.2).

[105] *Per*. 7.7. The ability to assign tasks to subordinates, Plutarch insists, was important for anyone aspiring to a career in public life (*Praec. ger*. 812C-D). Note that Perikles apparently went too far in the case of Metiokhos (*Praec. ger.* 811F citing three lines from an anonymous comic writer lampooning his officiousness, *PCG* fr. 741).

[106] Plutarch is effusive in his praise: his "unstinting generosity…surpassed even the legendary hospitality and benevolence of ancient Athens" (*Cim.* 10.6, tr. BLAMIRE).

programs. Finding himself thus out demagogued (καταδημαγωγούμενος) Perikles put into practice the advice of his mentor Damon to "give the people their own": he turned to a distribution of public property (πρὸς τὴν τῶν δημοσίων διανομήν *Per.* 9.2). But there is some incoherence in the way Plutarch presents the match-up between Kimon and Perikles in this respect. It is not at all clear that Kimon's largesse was totally paid for out of his own pocket. We are told that after his victory at the Eurymedon River in 468/7, the captured spoils were sold and "the people had ample funds available for various purposes"; the south wall of the Akropolis was "built from the proceeds of that campaign" (*Cim.* 13.5 tr. Blamire). In returning to this topic in chapter 10 he remarks, "Now that Kimon had ample funds at his disposal through the success of his military operations, he was able to spend what he had gained with honour from the enemy still more honourably upon the citizens of Athens" (*Cim.*10.1, tr. Blamire), and he proceeds to specific items of social welfare, removal of the fences from his estates, changes of clothing and hand-outs of money to the needy. In concluding his discussion of this topic in *Perikles* Plutarch mentions among Kimon's achievements that he had "won the most brilliant victories over the Persians and filled the city with money and treasure" (*Per*. 9.5, tr. Scott-Kilvert). The other side of the balance has some inconsistencies as well. Although Plutarch says Perikles could not afford to match the lavish scale of Kimon's largess, his *ploutos*, as we have seen (*Per*.7.2), made him susceptible to ostracism. Later in the *Life* when he is discussing the ambitious building program initiated by Perikles after the removal of his last serious opponent Thoukydides son of Melesias, Plutarch has him respond to the carping criticism that he was misusing surpluses in the imperial treasury to "tart up" the city with gorgeous temples and other public works, "Chalk it up to my own personal account —and let my name be put on the dedicatory inscriptions" (*Per*.14.1).

A further difficulty: the "demagogic" measures Perikles is alleged to have had to resort to against his "true" nature simply to outmaneuver his opponents exist for Plutarch in a kind of chronology-free cloud. In fact, they were not introduced as Plutarch suggests at specific crisis-points in Perikles's career (*Per*. 9.3, 11.4), but sporadically, spread out over the period 460-430 BCE. Plutarch implies that Perikles in his exercise of power in the uninterrupted succession of generalships after the removal of Thoukydides son of Melesias was following the promptings of his true, "aristocratic", nature and had left the popularity-buying tactics behind. But in discussing the pressures Perikles was feeling in the summer of 431 because of his "defensive" policy of keeping the Athenians cooped up within the city walls and refusing to bow to charges of inaction and even

cowardice from noisy critics like Kleon, Perikles reverted to measures that would assuage the people's anger: "to placate the people…he won back some of his popularity by giving them various subsidies and proposing grants of conquered territories" (*Per*. 34.2 tr. Scott-Kilvert). Plutarch returns to this topic in his summing up of Perikles's career in the Comparison: unlike Fabius, Perikles had the opportunity as general to "stuff the city with holidays and festivals" (ἐνεορτάσαι ... καὶ ἐμπανηγυρίσαι τὴν πόλιν *Fabius* 28 [1] 2).

We need to take Plutarch's view of the (relatively) smooth and steady trajectory of Perikles's development as a political leader with a measure of critical skepticism. I conclude with a brief summary of items which, for lack of a better term, I will call the pluses and minuses of this *Life*. I start with the minuses, items Plutarch asks his readers to accept with very little, if any, evidential support.

First, the campaign at Tanagra (spring 457 BCE; *Per*. 10.1-6, *Cim.* 17.4-9). Plutarch's narrative is riddled with improbabilities. Kimon, though in exile, shows up to prove that in spite of what his critics say he is a patriot. Perikles's buddies dismiss him for his pro-Spartan leanings and Perikles has to show how superior he is by fighting more bravely and even recklessly than usual. The people have a change of heart and so Perikles too, in a breathtaking volte-face, sponsors a decree for Kimon's recall. "Some sources" had it that the rapprochement was effected by Kimon's sister Elpinike and that hereafter there was to be a division of command, Kimon taking charge of the war at sea and Perikles given *carte blanche* to exercise power in the city. Obviously, little if any of this can be accepted as historical[107]. Concluding this episode in the *Kimon*, Plutarch remarks that Perikles's change of position vis-à-vis Kimon illustrates how "in those days partisanship had to give way to expedient compromise for the common good and ambition, that most powerful of human emotions, gave way to the exigencies of the state"[108].

The "Congress Decree" (chapter 17), too, has all the earmarks of a skillful fabrication, perhaps in the fourth century when so-called "universal historians" were looking for documents to inject some *realismus* into their narratives. There may be some solid

[107] Some of it may derive from Theopompos (*FGrH* 115 F 88). Athenaios (13.589E-F) reports that the "price" exacted by Perikles for engineering Kimon's early recall was having sex with Elpinike. Note that the "division of powers" motif is picked up again at *Praec. ger*. 812F: "one of them [Perikles] was more gifted for civic government, the other for war" (tr. Fowler).

[108] *Cim.* 17.9, tr. BLAMIRE.

facts in the farrago of gossip, innuendo and outright calumny in Plutarch's narrative of the run-up to the actual invasion by the Peloponnesians in spring 431, but I feel fairly safe in rejecting (or at least withholding assent from) all the theatrics surrounding the alleged "trials" of Pheidias, Aspasia and Anaxagoras in chapters 31 and 32[109].

It would be good to be able to distinguish fact from fantasy in the stories involving the troubled relationship between Perikles and his eldest son Xanthippos. Reports of a sexual involvement by Perikles with his daughter-in-law can safely be dismissed, as even Plutarch realized. What of the financial aspects, Perikles's parsimony and his daughter-in-law's resentment of it (*Per*. 36.2-6)? One would like to believe that Plutarch had a reliable source for Perikles's arrangements regarding annual income from his estates (*Per*.16.3-6), but again, introduction of the name of Perikles's house slave-manager, Evangelos, does not guarantee authenticity.

On the plus side of the ledger Plutarch frequently produces items that have the look of hard fact for which he gives no provenance. He lists settlements sent on Perikles's initiative to Khersonese, Naxos, Andros, Thrace and Thourioi (*Per*.11.5, with a further account of the Khersonese venture at 19.1). We are given a very full account of a major expedition to the Black Sea with Lamakhos as co-general and a subsequent settlement of Athenians at Sinope[110]. Not quite at mid-point but at a climactic position in the *Life* stands the famous panegyric to Perikles's vision for the educative role of Athens towards the rest of Greece embodied in the magnificent structures on the Akropolis (*Per*. 12) together with Plutarch's surprisingly detailed information about individual structural features and architects' names (*Per*.13.6-13). But for his interest we should not have known about Perikles's personal involvement in arrangements for musical performances at the Panathenaia (*Per*.13.11). As often, Plutarch includes items which, by implication, he has taken the trouble to search out and record: the marble slab on the Akropolis recording Pheidias's work on the Athena Parthenos (*Per*.13.14); the inscription on the forehead of the bronze wolf at Delphi certifying Athens' right of προμαντεία (*Per*. 21.3) and Perikles's nine victory trophies (*Per.* 38.3, *Comparison* [*Fabius*] 29 [2]. 1). To return briefly to the railery (and worse) against Perikles by the comic poets

[109] It is usually held that the naming of informers and accusers gives the accounts some credibility, but in fact these are as susceptible to fabrication as other circumstantial details.

[110] *Per*. 20.1-2 with the discussion of Gomme, 1945, pp. 367-68, where Theopompos is cited (*FGrH* 115 F 389). Discussing these settlements elsewhere in his *Commentary* Gomme (p. 379, n.1) allows himself to remark that Plutarch is "carefree… in chronological matters".

which Plutarch abundantly reports, we are grateful for the glimpse these extracts give us into what prominent (and not so prominent) public figures in fifth-century Athens were subjected to.

Gomme judged the *Perikles* to be "the most complex and the most interesting of these [Fifth-century] *Lives* (perhaps the most interesting of all), and the most valuable to the historian"[111]. Plutarch's admiration for his subject stands out on every page, and if this leads him to gloss over, or leave unexplained, some faults of character and inconsistencies of behaviour, that seems a small price to pay for the pleasure (and profit) to be derived from reading this specimen of ancient biography at its best.

4. *Aristeides*

It has long been recognized that Plutarch's main source for most of the historical material in the *Life of Aristeides* was Herodotos's *Histories*. Plutarch names him twice in the *Life*, one of these a quibble over Herodotos's figure for the fallen at the battle of Plataia[112]. This dependence on Herodotos is both a strength and a weakness of this *Life*: a strength because we can relax in the knowledge that the information purveyed about the tactics of the battles of Salamis in chapters 8 and 9 and Plataia in chapters 10 to 21 is reliable. But at the same time this very dependence on Herodotos makes us—at least sometimes—want to put Plutarch away and turn to the source nearer to the events being narrated. Presumably part of Plutarch's mission as he saw it was to save his contemporary readers the trouble of doing that (as well as, of course, to entertain them with some interesting facts about his subject).

Besides Herodotos Plutarch cites by name a handful of other sources and in the opening chapter he gives a virtuoso demonstration of his skill in deploying them. The theme here is, Because Aristeides was just, was he, as was generally believed, also poor? Demetrios of Phaleron in his treatise *On Sokrates*—a work Plutarch cites several times in this *Life*—used a variety of arguments to counter the "poor Aristeides" view. He owned an estate in Phaleron, where he was in fact buried; he held the office of archon—this was another contentious point that Plutarch returns to later—which was restricted to the top property class. He was ostracized, a procedure that, according to Demetrios, "was not inflicted on the poorer citizens, but only on members of the great houses whose family pretensions excited envy"[113] and he dedicated tripods in the precinct of Dionysos commemorating a choregic

[111] GOMME, 1945, p. 65: a rare but well-deserved accolade.

[112] *Arist*. 16.1, Hdt. 9.46; Plut., *Arist*. 19.7; Hdt. 9.85. In the *Comparison* he cites Herodotos's assigning the "finest victory" at Plataia to Pausanias (*Cato mai*. 29 [2].2; Hdt. 9.64).

[113] *Arist.*1.2, tr. Scott-Kilvert; *FGrH*. 228 F 43.

victory (which, Plutarch adds, "were pointed out even in our own day"). The first three "proofs" of Aristeides's non-poverty adduced by Demetrios Plutarch passes over in silence (and so shall we). He attacks the last argument by pointing out that choregoi often used not their own money but someone else's, like Plato[114], who was bankrolled in his liturgy of a dithyrambic chorus of boys by Dion of Syracuse, and Epaminondas, whose choregiai were financed by Pelopidas. Besides, Plutarch adds, there was some question about the identity of the victorious choregos mentioned in the inscription. The Stoic philosopher Panatios of Rhodes (c. 150 BCE), whom Plutarch will cite again later (*Arist.* 27.4), argued that the name Aristeides appeared twice in the choregic victor lists, but both were much later. Plutarch reports that Panaitios based his refutation on epigraphic as well as prosopographical grounds. The inscription was in Ionic letter-forms, therefore after 403 BCE, and the Aristeides named there appeared in connection with another poet, Arkhestratos, who was active not during the Persian War period but in the Peloponnesian.

I have gone into this first chapter of the *Life of Aristeides* at some length to illustrate the care Plutarch has taken with his source-material. He wants his readers to feel that they are in the hands of an industrious and careful researcher, who has consulted a variety of sources, presented evidence on disputed points fairly, and reached conclusions they should accept as being as near to the truth as one is likely to get[115].

After this impressive display of source-criticism Plutarch launches into his main theme in these opening chapters, the total dissimilarity, deep personal animosity and fierce political rivalry between the two towering figures of Athenian resistance to the Persians, the subject of the present *Life* and his arch-rival Themistokles, whose *Life* Plutarch had already completed and from which—not surprisingly—he re-uses some material (a point to which I shall return). The cleft between the two ran deep, to the level, in fact, of each man's *physis*, and this, Plutarch claims (on the authority of anonymous sources: ἔνιοι...φασι, *Arist*. 2.2), could be seen in the way they behaved even in their boyhood years. Themistokles's nature, "resourceful, daring, unscrupulous, and ready to dash impetuously into any undertaking", was in sharp contrast to Aristeides's, which was "founded

[114] Cf. Diogenes Laertios 3.3, citing Athenodoros (1st cent. CE Stoic philosopher in a work entitled *Peripatoi*, "Walks").

[115] I note the similar evaluation of Pelling, 2002, p. 144, that Plutarch in this section of the *Life* "is using his wide reading and general knowledge very effectively".

upon a steadfast character, which was intent on justice and incapable of any falsehood, vulgarity or trickery even in jest"[116]. The difference showed itself also in the way the two men discharged their public duties, and here Plutarch dips into his extensive stock of anecdotal material. When an unnamed Athenian commented to Themistokles that he would be a good magistrate provided that he was fair and impartial to all, Themistokles replied, "I hope I shall never sit on a tribunal where my friends do not get better treatment from me than strangers do" (*Arist*. 2.5). Aristeides for his part took a different tack. On one occasion, after having proposed a bill before the Assembly and having argued for it successfully so that it looked like it would pass, he nevertheless, after listening to the speeches by the opposition and being convinced that his bill was not in the best interests of the people, moved to have it withdrawn before a final vote was taken (*Arist.* 3.3). And there were times when he was prepared to bend his high principles and resort to subterfuges when he felt this had to be done to thwart some particularly dangerous initiative by Themistokles[117]. There were occasions when he would oppose a Themistoklean initiative simply to check his opponent's rise to power: "he thought it better that the people should lose out on some things that were advantageous to them rather than have his opponent's power grow through winning every contest" (*Arist.* 3.1). Plutarch claims—on what authority he does not say—that Aristeides would often use other men to bring his measures to the Assembly so that Themistokles would not oppose them just because they were Aristeides's initiatives (*Arist.* 3.4). In chapter 4 Plutarch describes an elaborate legal sparring match between the two men involving charge and countercharge over Themistokles's alleged embezzlement and misuse of public monies. Stripped to its bare essenetial, the story—where Idomeneus's name crops up for one of the details[118]—was that because Aristeides had uncovered financial malpractice by Themistokles the latter

[116] *Arist*. 2.2, tr. Scott-Kilvert. The contrast is adumbrated in the earlier *Life* where Aristeides is characterized as πρᾷος... φύσει καὶ καλοκαγαθικὸς τὸν τρόπον (*Them*. 3.3).

[117] Anecdotes illustrating the rivalry (not always harmful) between the two men had a long pedigree, such as the story Herodotos tells of Aristeides and Themistokles discussing how best to keep the Peloponnesian fleet from abandoning their position at Salamis and sailing away to the Isthmus (with Aristeides's telling comment, "Let the rivalry between us be now as it has been before, to see which of us shall do his country more good", 8.79. tr. Godley). As Plutarch tells it, in the run-up to Salamis, Aristeides "gave [Themistokles] all the aid he could both in advice and in action, and for the sake of Athens he helped his bitterest enemy to become the most famous of men" (*Arist*. 8.1, tr. Scott-Kilvert).

[118] I return to this point below.

got his claque to support a motion to have Aristeides removed from office and fined. The people then repented of their action and not only absolved Aristeides of the fine but restored him to his office[119]. Aristeides then laid an elaborate ruse to entrap those whom his investigations had shown to be the likely culprits. He pretended to turn a blind eye to their shady financial dealings and, when the proper moment arrived, he rose in the Assembly and denounced their misdeeds, saying, "When I acted in an upright way and did my job you condemned me, but now that I have connived at your misdeeds you praise me. I am more ashamed of your present honouring of me than of your former condemnation, and I am sorry for you because you think it more praiseworthy to cozy up to criminals than to keep a secure lock on public funds" (*Arist*. 4.7). It is a good story, and Plutarch takes evident pleasure in telling it.

At *Arist*. 5.9-10 Plutarch touches on the controversy of when if ever Aristeides was archon, and his discussion again allows him to display control of his sources. He starts with the assertion, found somewhere in his books (or his memory) that "Aristeides held the office of archon eponymous immediately [after Marathon]". *Per contra*, Demetrios of Phaleron held that Aristeides was archon "just a little before his death, after the battle of Plataia"[120]. Plutarch critiques this: "in the public records" there was no Aristeides listed after Plataia but there was an Aristeides named as archon in the year after Marathon. (It has been suggested that Plutarch consulted the list from the Atthis, not from examination of the records themselves, but no matter; he took the trouble of looking up the list of archons[121]). As Plutarch's discussion shows, his sources also betrayed confusion over whether Aristeides—if he was archon—was chosen by lot as Demetrios of Phaleron maintained (*Arist*. 1.2), or by election, as Idomeneus held (*Arist*. 1.8), therefore after 487BCE[122].

Plutarch was widely versed in the dramatic, lyric and elegiac poetry of his subjects' era, and seems, to judge from his citations, to have kept a sharp look-out for apposite material, which in many cases he used to liven up what may have struck some readers as rather bland narrative. But when he pressed the "Search" button in his library—or his memory—the results for "Aristeides"

[119] The whole tale shows suspicious similarities to the demos's treatment of Perikles in 430 BCE (*Per*. 35.4-5).

[120] *FGrH* 228 F 44.

[121] Discussion at Perrin, 1901, p. 275; I. Calabi Limentani, 1964, p. 26 (n. on *Arist*. 5.10). Plutarch's testimony is accepted by Develin, 1989, p. 57.

[122] Arist., *Ath.* 22.5, with the discussion of Rhodes, 1981, pp. 272-74.

were disappointing. He re-uses the tag from Aiskhylos's *Seven against Thebes* about the doomed prophet Amphiaraos, "He wanted not to seem, but to *be*, just, reaping the harvest from deep furrows of his mind, from which excellent plans develop"[123]. There is a passing reference to οἱ κωμικοί, the comic poets, making fun of descendants of the hugely wealthy Kallias, who was Aristeides's kinsman (*Arist*. 5.8), and a brief quote from an unnamed comic writer—Eupolis has been suggested—which slammed his rival Themistokles, "a clever man, but could not control his fingers" (*Arist*. 4.3, Eupolis [?] *PCG* fr. 126).

Not surprisingly, there are some duplications with the *Life of Themistokles*, which was written earlier. The two men were rivals in other respects but also because they were in pursuit of the same *eromenos*, Stesileos of Keos. In the *Themistokles* Plutarch had named his source, the Peripatetic Ariston of Ioulis on Keos (so the boyfriend was a local celebrity)[124]. Plutarch retails the story that some Persian royals captured in the sea-battles of 480 BCE were sacrificed to Dionysos ὠμηστής, an episode mentioned briefly at *Arist.* 9.2 and reported fully at *Them*. 13.2-5, where Plutarch names Phainias of Eresos as his source, and praises him as ἀνὴρ φιλόσοφος καὶ γραμματῶν οὐκ ἄπειρος, "both a philosopher and not unversed in literature". He draws on Idomeneus of Lampsakos for several pieces of information. He is credited with works "On the Socratics" and "On Demagogues", and it is unclear from which Plutarch drew his information. As already mentioned, Plutarch identifies Idomeneus as his source for the story that Themistokles successfully prosecuted Aristeides for embezzlement after his year as ἐπιμελητὴς δημοσίων προσόδων, "Supervisor of the Public Revenues"[125]. Later in the *Life* Plutarch challenges Idomeneus's assertion that Aristeides himself went as ambassador to Sparta in spring 479 to get the Spartans on side to face the Persian invading force under Mardonios; Plutarch points out that in the actual decree authorizing the embassy the ambassadors named were Kimon, Xanthippos and Myronides[126].

[123] *Arist*. 3.5; *Seven against Thebes* 562-4; cf. *De aud.* 32D; *De cap. et inim.* 88B; *Reg. et imp. apoph.* 186B.

[124] *Arist*. 2.3; *Them*. 3.2. Ariston fl. 225 BCE probably from Ariston's Ἐρωτικὰ ὁμοῖα, "Erotic Examples" (see FORTENBAUGH & WHITE, 2006, p. 206). The story crops up again in Aelian, who does not name a source (*VH* 13.44).

[125] *Arist.* 4.4; *FGrH* 338 F 7. How much of this we can believe is unclear. The title is generally held to be an anachronism. GOMME, 1945, p. 76, n. 1, at least was dismissive of "the untrustworthy Idomeneus", but he allows that Idomeneus's source may have designated Aristeides simply as ταμίας.

[126] *Arist*. 10.10; *FGrH* 338 F 6; Plutarch's correction derives possibly from Krateros's *Decrees*.

On the other hand, in the confused and conflicting testimony about whether Aristeides ever held the eponymous archonship and, if he did, whether this was through election or sortition, it looks as if Idomeneus, who held that Aristeides was elected archon, was on the winning side against Demetrios of Phaleron, who plumped for allotment. Plutarch retails the anecdote with which Aristeides's name was ever after to be associated, the illiterate and uncouth voter at an ostrakophoria for whom Aristeides—uncomplainingly—inscribed his own name on an ostrakon[127]. Plutarch perhaps became conscious that his audience—like the unnamed fellow in the anecdote—might get fed up with always hearing Aristeides referred to as "the Just", so he calls in the testimony of Theophrastos—possibly from the περὶ καιρῶν—for the view that Aristeides may have been (as well as seemed) habitually just in private matters, but in public affairs he was prepared to go along with what was necessary for the general good of his country, even if this required, on occasion, a certain amount of injustice[128]. Elsewhere Plutarch reports that when the Athenians had to tighten their grip on the allies, Aristeides told them to act in whatever way suited their interests best, and put the blame on him (*Arist*. 25.1). In the *Comparison of Aristeides and Cato*, Plutarch comments that while Cato's frugality made him a model to others, Aristeides "was so poor as to bring even his righteousness into disrepute" (*Cato mai.* 3.2 tr. Perrin).

Information was to be gleaned from the abundant tradition concerning Aristeides's kinsman Kallias Daidoukhos, "Torchbearer" at the Eleusinian Mysteries. At *Arist.* 5.7-8 Plutarch tells a story how he (in stark contrast to Aristeides) enriched himself in a very discreditable way after the battle of Marathon, and so earned for himself and his descendants the unflattering epithet "Lakkoploutoi", "Pit-rich". Towards the end of the *Life* we are given a lengthy account of Kallias's trial on a capital charge. His accusers charged him with stinginess in not providing for his cousin Aristeides, so Kallias called him as a character witness to attest that his offers of material assistance had been frequent, and just as frequently refused, with the opportunity for a *bon mot* by Aristeides, that "he had better cause to be proud of his poverty than Kallias of his wealth". The voters left the court with the same sentiments: they would rather be poor with Aristeides

[127] *Arist*. 7.7-8. Plutarch tells the story again in the *Sayings of Kings and Commanders* (186A). It had occurred already in Cornelius Nepos's *Aristeides* (3.1), which may suggest Theopompos as the source.

[128] *Arist*. 25.2; *FHSG* fr. 614.

than rich with Kallias. Plutarch cites as his source for this story Aiskhines the Socratic[129] and he goes on to mention that Plato singled out Aristeides among the famous fifth-century leaders for his refusal to pander to the demos[130].

Plutarch draws on personal experience and local traditions in an extended account of the aftermath of the battle of Plataia (*Arist*. 20-21). Eighty talents from the spoils were handed over to the Plataians, with which they rebuilt the sanctuary of Athena, set up the shrine and decorated the temple with frescoes which have remained in perfect condition μέχρι νῦν (*Arist*. 20.3). Arrangements were also made for an annual sacrifice to the fallen held by the Plataians, a ritual carried on, Plutarch says, μέχρι νῦν (*Arist*. 21.3, again at 21.8, "These rites have been observed by the Plataians ἔτι καὶ νῦν"). Plutarch then goes on to describe the celebrations. in full, and interesting, detail.

There is some new material, for which Plutarch does not name a source; how much credence should we give it? He says Aristeides was a ἑταῖρος of Kleisthenes the Lawgiver (*Arist*. 2.1[131]). Plutarch is also the only source for Aristeides's part in the battle of Marathon (*Arist.* 5), but he is probably wrong about Aristeides's tribe Antiokhis being drawn up next to Themistokles's tribe Leontis. He recounts an enquiry to the Delphic oracle on Aristeides's initiative before the battle of Plataia (*Arist*.11.3-9); this may or may not be historical. He also records a proposal by Aristeides after Plataia that archons be elected from the whole body of voters (*Arist*. 22.1), about which moderns have shown some skepticism.

Plutarch closes his *Life*, as with some others, by offering a dazzling array of information about Aristeides's descendants (and here again he mines material from the Socratic tradition). The items included are: a conviction at the end of Aristeides's life on the unlikely charge of accepting bribes from some of the Ionians during the tribute-assessment (*Arist*. 26.1, Krateros *FGrH* 342 F 12, but Plutarch says he was unable to find corroboration in the other works he consulted on how badly the Athenians treated their leading men); state-sponsored dowries to his daughters; a subvention in cash and property to his son Lysimakhos, on the motion of Alkibiades, and a daily food allowance to Lysimakhos's daughter

[129] *Arist*. 25.9 (from the dialogue Καλλίας); 75 [fr. 32] *SSR*. As we saw, Plutarch drew on Aiskhines for two items regarding Perikles and Aspasia (*Per*. 24.6; 66 [fr. 23] *SSR*, *Per*. 32.5; 67 [fr. 24] *SSR*).

[130] *Gorgias* 526B.

[131] Also at *Praec*. *ger* 791A, 805F. As CALABI LIMENTANI, 1964, p. 11, notes, if this connection is historical, Aristeides will have been born c. 520 BCE.

Polykrite (*Arist*. 27.3, Kallisthenes *FGrH* 124 F 48).

Plutarch's subject did not have peculiarities or depths of character that would call for analysis and explanation by a biographer intent on holding his audience's intention, not the austere and brooding profundity of a Perikles, nor the creative inventiveness and often charming egotism of a Themistokles, not Alkibiades's unpredictability and manic iconoclasm. Aristeides's signature virtue was εὐστάθεια, a dignified determination to maintain a steady footing once he had decided to take a stand that he considered to be in the best interests of those he had been called on to serve—not very exciting, perhaps, but admirable both in itself and for the rarity with which it was to be found in other leading figures of fifth-century Athens.

5. *Nikias*

Plutarch opens his *Life of Nikias* by telling his readers that he knows he has competition in choosing this subject. He cannot hope to match Thoukydides's magisterial account of the Sicilian expedition, which Plutarch eulogizes in glowing terms here and in the essay *Fame of the Athenians*[132]. Thoukydides's narrative, he says, is characterized by an inimitable vividness (ἐνάργεια) in portraying emotions and character, and with great variety, in a manner designed to arouse amazement and consternation in his readers—no, Plutarch does not want his work compared to that of the incomparable Master's. But the fourth century historian Timaios of Taormina, that's another matter. Plutarch is prepared to go head-to-head with him, with a little help from Philistos of Syracuse, who lived through the Sicilian campaign (as Plutarch tells us towards the end of the *Life*[133]) and whose work—of which little is known beyond what Plutarch has chosen to tell us—he accuses Timaios of churlishly disparaging.

So what does Plutarch say he can add to what had already been written about Nikias? He will not go over again at any length material already to be found in Thoukydides and Philistos, but he feels he must touch on the episodes briefly, if only not to seem, he says, careless or lazy. What he has looked for are items that have gone unrecorded by others or have been treated only haphazardly (σποράδην), such as information that was be found in ancient dedications and inscriptions. His purpose is to provide not a collection of useless stories, but material that will lead to a deeper understanding of Nikias's character and temperament. Let's see how well Plutarch has succeeded in this enterprise.

[132] *De glor. Ath*. 347A. Plutarch aptly cites the dictum attributed to Simonides, "painting is silent poetry, and poetry is painting given a voice".

[133] *Nic.* 19.6.

In a long and rather involved discussion of Nikias's characteristic cautiousness (εὐλάβεια) which could be read as timidity and defeatism, Plutarch tries to make the paradoxical case that this was really taken by οἱ πόλλοι as a virtue: the masses took his nervousness (τὸ ψοφοδεές) as a sign that he did not look down on them (although earlier in the chapter Plutarch had mentioned Nikias's "gravity", τὸ σεμνόν), but rather feared them. He formulates this—counterintuitive—view with an aphorism: "The masses can have no greater honour shown them by their superiors than not to be despised"[134]. Plutarch then mentions Nikias's efforts to outmaneuver his main political opponent, Kleon; he courted popular favour in a time-honoured tactic used by wealthy politicians, lavish expenditures on choral and athletic events such as Athens had not seen before. Plutarch then makes good on one of his promises to highlight new material. To testify to Nikias's opulent benefactions he cites two dedications which, he says, have survived to his own day (καθ' ἡμᾶς), a statue of Athena on the Akropolis (which, Plutarch adds, had lost its gold plating), and a shrine in the precinct of Dionysos surmounted by tripods commemorating Nikias's choregic victories[135]; these choregic monuments by Nikias and his brothers drew the attention also of Plato, who mentions them in the *Gorgias* (472A). Plutarch then gives his readers an expanded version of an event dealt with in more summary fashion by Thoukydides, the purification and re-dedication of the island of Delos winter 426/5[136]. Thoukydides does not mention Nikias by name but Plutarch naturally turns the spotlight on him. He outdid the show put on by the Samian tyrant Polykrates, that Thoukydides describes: he had joined the nearby island of Rheneia to Delos only by a chain; Nikias used a specially built bridge of boats over which at dawn he solemnly led a chorus chanting hymns. Among other lavish expenditures by Nikias Plutarch lists a bronze palm-tree (Leto was said to have held on to a palm tree on Delos when in labor with her twins) and an estate

[134] *Nic.* 2.6 (Perrin's trans. modified). Cf. *Nic.* 4.3: apparently because of his superstition, Nikias gave money to those who could harm him just as much as to people who deserved his benefactions; bad men made money from his cowardice (δειλία) and good men from his *philanthropia*.

[135] STADTER in WATERFIELD, 1998, p. 419, remarks that an inscription points to the dedication being by a later Nikias in 320/19 BCE.

[136] *Nic.* 3.5-7; Th. 3.104. GOMME, 1945, p. 415, says Plutarch "does not connect this [i.e. Nikias's organizing of choruses and other ceremonies] with the purification of Delos, of which he says nothing". But I think that is the natural supposition, that Plutarch had this event in mind.

whose annual revenues were made over to the Delians for their ritual purposes ("at which they were to pray to the gods for Nikias's welfare", Plutarch adds).

As chap. 4 opens you can almost hear Plutarch debating with himself over what could be taken as "vulgar and ostentatious displays". Were these aimed at increasing Nikias's prestige and satisfying his ambition? No, he decides; these were more probably the result of his piety (εὐσέβεια). Here he notes, naturally enough, Thoukydides's remark about Nikias's "excessive reliance upon divination" (7.50.4). Plutarch then inserts, on the authority of an exceedingly obscure Eretrian writer of dialogues named Pasiphon[137], an explanation *in malam partem*: Nikias kept a *mantis* at his house ostensibly for consultations on public matters but really to make sure he was investing his own money profitably. Perhaps the best known—and most regrettable—example of Nikias's δεισιδαιμονία influencing the course of history was his decision to delay the Athenian retreat from Sicily because of the lunar eclipse of 27 August 413 BCE. Plutarch remarks disapprovingly that Nikias "now became more and more oblivious of his other duties and completely absorbed in sacrifice and divination" (*Nic.* 24.1 tr. Scott-Kilvert). But Thoukydides is fairer to Nikias when he remarks that "most of the Athenians [i.e. in the army], taking the incident to heart, urged the generals to wait" (7.50.4, tr. Forster Smith).

After a brief glance at the source of Nikias's great wealth, the leases he held to the silver mines at Laureion and the army of slaves he used to work them, Plutarch moves on to some testimonies from Old Comedy. Three are otherwise unknown. The first is a passage from a play of Telekleides (title not preserved) in which the speaker alleges that Nikias paid a four-mina bribe to Kharikles, apparently a συκοφάντης, to cover up some unsavoury act. The second, from Eupolis's *Marikas* (421 BCE., a satirization of Hyperbolos), substantiates a characteristic of Nikias that Plutarch will take up in the following chapter, his reclusiveness. Third comes a line from Aristophanes's *Knights* where Kleon boasts about his ability to "shout down the speakers and rattle (ταράξω) Nikias" and fourth, a couplet from an unnamed play of Phrynikhos taking a shot at Nikias's bravery—or alleged lack of it[138].

In chapter 5 Plutarch describes at length how paranoid Nikias was about informers. We are told that he never dined out, or took part in discussions with friends, and indeed avoided social

[137] The claim was made that he tried to pass off his dialogues on famous figures as written by Aiskhines the Socratic (Diog. Laert. 2. 61).

[138] Telekleides *PCG* fr. 44; Eup. *PCG* fr. 193; Ar., *Eq.* 358; Phryn. *PCG* fr. 62.

contacts of any kind. When he had some official post, he would stay in the office from morning to night and, if there was no public business to attend to, he kept himself locked up at home with one of his friends guarding the door and sending away callers with the excuse that Nikias had no time for visitors because he was so deeply immersed in affairs of state. Plutarch names as Nikias's mentor in this weird (and somewhat dishonest) behaviour an individual called Hiero, about whom we know even less than the person whom Plutarch identifies as his father, Dionysios surnamed Khalkos, "Bronze (Bronzino)". This latter was a poet whose works survived (Plutarch implies that he had read them; about 25 of his elegiac verses are to be found in modern collections), and who was one of the colonists who went out to the Athenian foundation at Thourioi in S. Italy in 443 BCE. I would be prepared to accept some of this—maybe not all—but for the suspicious similarities with a story Plutarch tells also about Perikles who, as a young man, was afraid that the demos would think he had aspirations to become a tyrannos (Plutarch says people thought he looked like the tyrant Peisistratos). So, to avoid the risk of being ostracized, Perikles changed his habits entirely. "The only street along which he could be seen walking was the one to the agora or the Council Chamber". Perikles also, we are asked to believe, stopped accepting invitations to dinner with his friends. (Plutarch says he kept up this reclusive behaviour through all the years of his public life, with one exception, the wedding- feast given by his cousin Euryptolemos[139]). Plutarch then provides some salutary—to Nikias—examples of leaders whose successes got them into trouble with the people[140]. To escape envy Nikias made a point of attributing his successes to his good fortune and the gods' favour. Then, as if remembering his promise at the beginning of the *Life* to leave out nothing of importance, Plutarch provides a (very) abbreviated list of successes—and not in chronological order (*Nic*. 6.3-4).. To be noted in this connection is the verdict of Thoukydides that Nikias "did better in his military commands than anyone else of his time" (5.16.1[141]).

After giving a somewhat fuller account of operations in the Korinthiaka in 425 BCE (*Nic.* 6.4), Plutarch settles into his main narrative, Nikias's commands from Pylos (chapters 7 - 8)

[139] *Per*. 7.1-5.

[140] *Nic.* 6.1. For our purposes perhaps the most interesting is Antiphon of Rhamnous, whose downfall Plutarch attributes to ἀπιστίᾳ τῶν πολλῶν. His name will come up again in the *Alkibiades* (3.1).

[141] The follow-up is also of interest. Thoukydides claims that Nikias was pressing for peace in 422/1 BCE "while still untouched by misfortune and still held in honour" because he "wished to rest on his laurels, to find an immediate release from toil and trouble both for

to the Sicilian debacle (chapters 12 - 30), with side glances at the arrival of Alkibiades on the Athenian political scene (chapter 9), negotiations for the peace which bore Nikias's name (end of chap. 9 - 10 [τὸ Νικίειον 9.9]), and the infamous ostracism of Hyperbolos (ch.11[142]). All, or almost all, of this is straight out of Thoukydides. Why should Plutarch try to better what he acknowledges to have been done superbly well by the master, who he told us in chapter 1 treated the Sicilian campaign "incomparably, surpassing even his own high standards" (*Nic.*1.1)?

There are a few points, however, that seem to me worthy of comment. In retelling the events of the Pylos campaign, Plutarch says that Nikias gave up his command to Kleon "out of sheer cowardice" (δειλίᾳ *Nic.*8.2). This seems to me rather unfair. Thoukydides reports that "Kleon never thought Nikias would τολμῆσαι ὑποχωρῆσαι the leadership" to Kleon[143]. Plutarch did not care for Kleon any more than Thoukydides did, and he comments on Kleon's boorish behaviour as a public speaker: he shouted abuse at his opponents, slapped his thighs, threw open his cloak, and paced about as he was speaking[144]. He also in this chapter treats his reader to two passages from Aristophanes, one known, from *Birds* (Dionysia 414 BCE) where Peishetairos tells Tereus, "It's no longer time for napping, or succumbing to Nikias-dithers (μελλονικιᾶν 638-9, where, according to N. Dunbar, the verb-form implies a morbid physical condition[145]). The other quote is from *Farmers* of

himself *and for his fellow citizens*, and to leave behind him the name of one whose service to the state had been successful from start to finish. He thought that these objectives were to be achieved by avoiding all risks and by trusting oneself as little as possible to fortune (ὅστις ἐλάχιστα τύχῃ αὐτὸν παραδίδωσι) and that risks could be avoided only in peace" (5.16.1, trans. Warner; my italics).

[142] At *Nic.* 11.7 Plutarch quotes 3 lines from Plato Comicus (*PCG* fr. 203) accusing Hyperbolos of being a "branded slave", and at 11.10 he cites Theophrastos for the minority (and probably erroneous) view that in the notorious ostracism of 417 BCE it was not Nikias but a certain Phaiax who colluded with Alkibiades to secure Hyperbolos's removal (*FHSG* fr. 639, with discussion of Mirhady, 1992, pp. 196-200).

[143] Th. 4.28.2. Gomme, 1956, p. 468, comments that this was "characteristic also of *Nikias'* daring" (Gomme's emphasis). This is particularly interesting in light of the fact that at *Nic.* 12.5 = *Alc.* 18.1, Plutarch gives τόλμα as *Alkibiades's* distinguishing characteristic as contrasted with Nikias's εὐλάβεια and προνοία.

[144] *Nic.* 8.6. This appears to be from the *Constitution of Athens* (28.3), referred to elsewhere by Plutarch but not here. In his *Life of Tiberius Gracchus* (2.2) Plutarch says that Gaius Gracchus declaimed in the manner of Kleon.

[145] Dunbar, 1995, p. 414.

the late 420s, where the implication is that Nikias offered a bribe of 1000 talents to resign his command at Pylos (fr. 102 Henderson). In his narrative of the negotiations that led to peace in 421 Plutarch cites Theophrastos (*FHSG* fr. 639), who maintained that Nikias used bribery so that the lot would fall against the Spartans, so they would have to go first, before the Athenians, in surrendering the territories they had captured in the Arkhidamian War[146]. In his discussion of the mutilation of the herms Plutarch lists among the omens that boded ill for the expedition that at Delphi crows pecked away at and defaced a gold statue of Athena mounted on a bronze palm-tree, a dedication by the Athenians from their *aristeia* in the Persian Wars (*Nic.* 13.5). Plutarch does not name his source here, but other evidence points to Kleidemos the Atthidographer[147].

At the end of chapter 15 Plutarch makes brief mention of Alkibiades's capture of the "barbarian stronghold" of Hykkara in Sicily in the winter of 415/14 BCE; among the captives taken was the courtesan Laïs, whom Alkibiades took back to the Peloponnese. It was this lady's mother, Timandra, who was with Alkibiades at the end, and wrapped his body in her own clothes for burial (*Alc.* 39.8). The story is reported by Athenaios (13.588C) as deriving from the 6th book of Polemon's "Against Timaios". Since Plutarch cites Polemon the Periegete[148] elsewhere (*Aratos* 13.2), he is very likely Plutarch's source here. Later Plutarch quotes a couplet which he ascribes to Euripides, characterizing it as an ἐπικήδειον, a lament sung before burial, "These men won 8 victories over men of Syracuse, as long as the gods' favour stood in equipoise for both sides"[149]. Plutarch indulges in a short exercise in source-criticism in chapter 19 when he quotes various authors—Timaios, Thoukydides and Philistos are named—for differing views about the impression made by the Spartan Gylippos and his effect upon the course of the fighting. Timaios held that the Sicilians did not think much of him, but Plutarch throws in his lot with Thoukydides and Philistos, whose view was that Gylippos's arrival in spring 414 BCE transformed the whole balance of the campaign, for he used

[146] *Nic.* 9.9.

[147] *Apud* Paus. 10.15.3. Levi (1971: 445 n. 99) gives some useful information. There are ten pages of fragments in *FGrH* III.B, 323; he published c. 350 BCE, and the only earlier Atthidographer was Hellanikos of Lesbos.

[148] Polemon of Ilion, fl. 190 BCE, a Stoic geographer, especially interested in monuments and dedications at Delphi, Athens and Sparta. The *Aratos* reference is to a painting of the tyrant Aristratos of Sikyon (c. 350 BCE) in which Apelles was said to have had a part.

[149] *Nic.* 17.4, fr. 1 Diehl, T 2 Kannicht.

the same resources of men, horses, and arms but with different—and decisively superior—tactics[150]. The fatal lunar eclipse of 27 August 413 gives Plutarch (chapter 23) the excuse for a learned excursus on eclipses, citing philosophers (Anaxagoras, Protagoras, Sokrates, Plato) and historical authorities (Philokhoros [*FGrH* 328 F 135], Autokleides [*FGrH* 353 F 7] and τὰ ἐξηγητικά, Commentaries). Plutarch tries to exculpate Nikias—somewhat—by noting, probably on Philokhoros's authority, that Nikias's household seer, a man named Stilbides, had recently died and so the brake this man normally put on Nikias's more extreme superstitious fears had been removed[151]. In his description of the final battle in Syracuse harbour, Plutarch rises, at least partially, to the emotive heights of his model: it "aroused as much anguish and passion in the spectators as in those who were fighting" (*Nic.* 25.2 = Th. 7.71). The *Life* ends with a personal reminiscence. Plutarch says he was told that an elaborately worked gold and purple shield said to belong to Nikias could be seen in a temple in Syracuse "to this day" (μέχρι νῦν 28.6) and in the final chapters he recounts the celebrated anecdote concerning some of the Athenian prisoners in the stone quarries who had been able to win their freedom by reciting verses from Euripides's plays; some survivors even made a point of visiting the poet when they got back to Athens and thanking him for the service he had, albeit unwittingly, rendered them. And in the final chapter (*Nic.* 30), the terrible news of the disaster brought to the disbelieving, and later grieving, people of Athens by the barber from Peiraieus[152].

As a fitting epitaph we may quote Plutarch's pithy observation: "No one could find fault with his actions, for once he got started he was an energetic doer; it was in getting started that he was a ditherer whose nerve failed him". (*Nic.* 16.9; it is more epigrammatic in Greek).

6. *Alkibiades*

"[T]he protagonist of the *Life of Alcibiades* is a very difficult character to judge because his behaviour is far from consistent"[153]. Plutarch's readers were—and are—fortunate in that for the public side of his subject's life,

[150] *Nic.* 19.5-6; Timae. *FGrH* 566 F 100 a; Philist. *FGrH* 556 F 56. Similarly, *Nic.* 28.4-5, where Plutarch sides with Philistos *(FGrH* 556 F 55) and Thoukydides (7.86), who reported that the generals were put to death on order of the Syracusans vs. Timaios (*FGrH* 566 F 100 b), who held that they committed suicide upon receiving a secret message from Hermokrates.

[151] *Nic.* 23.1; Th. 7.50.4 (see the helpful remarks by Andrewes in Gomme et al., 1970, pp. 428-29).

[152] *Nic.* 30 = *De garrul.* 509A.

[153] Verdegem, 2010, p. 419.

events in mainland Greece, the Aegean and Western Anatolia, he had at his disposal excellent sources, which he put to good use: Thoukydides until 411 BCE and Xenophon's *Hellenika* thereafter[154]. Since it appears that Plutarch was working on this *Life* at the same time as the *Nikias*[155], he could call on Philistos of Syracuse (whom he cites by name three times in *Nic.*, though not here in *Alc.*) for the Sicilian debacle. The amount of information—or was it misinformation?—regarding Alkibiades's alleged involvement in the Eleusinian Mysteries travesty and the herm defacement was enormous, and Plutarch does his best to navigate through the plethora of material, mainly oratorical but also in part documentary, purporting to be authentic, and credible. For Alkibiades's early years before his first appearance on the public stage there were family traditions of the Salaminioi and Alkmeonidai as well as a galaxy of anecdotal material illustrating his subject's rather unique personal qualities: the lisp, somewhat unusual oratorical style and at times exotic dress, and a lifestyle that could be termed flamboyant by those prepared to put up with it, or if not, shockingly outrageous. Plutarch names Thoukydides four times, but perusal of Ziegler's apparatus of testimonia shows that he was intimately familiar with what he clearly recognizes as his best source. He repeats the famous formulation regarding Alkibiades's basic character flaw, his παρανομία κατὰ τὸ σῶμα; (*Alc.* 6.3 = Th. 6.15.4). In chapter 11 Plutarch takes up the matter of Alkibiades's phenomenal success in the Olympic chariot races, probably those of 416 BCE. In the speech Thoukydides wrote for Alkibiades in which the latter explained to the Athenians why they should support his plan to annex Sicily, he referred to his having won first, second and fourth prizes (6.16.2), but Plutarch knows that the victory ode commissioned by Alkibiades from Euripides has his chariots coming in first, second and third[156]. Plutarch names Thoukydides twice again later, in connection with the notorious ostracism of Hyperbolos (*Alc.*13.4 = 8.73.3) and in the affair of the travesty of the Mysteries in 415, where Plutarch remarks that Thoukydides, unlike later

[154] Available to Plutarch and also probably consulted, if only sporadically, were the continuous accounts of Ephoros and Theopompos (filtered for us through the surviving narratives of Diodoros of Sicily and Cornelius Nepos respectively).

[155] In fact, the *Nikias* probably antedates the *Alkibiades*, and the apparent cross-reference to the *Alc.* at *Nic.* 11.2 may be an interpolation (RUSSELL, 1966, p. 37, n. 2).

[156] *Alc.* 11.3. To the three lines Plutarch quotes here he adds two more at *Dem.* 1.1 (Euripides T 91a - 91b Kannicht 2004; Page, *PMG* nos. 755, 756; cf. Isoc., 16.34). GOMME et al., 1970, pp. 246-47, give various attempts to resolve the conflicting versions.

writers, passed over in silence the names of Alkibiades's accusers.

Besides in connection with the victory ode Euripides's name comes up twice more. To him Plutarch attributes the remark, "For good-looking men even their autumn looks good" and comments that this was especially true of Alkibiades[157], Despite his show of frugality and simplicity of life while at Sparta, in his feelings and actions he was really, Plutarch says, adapting a famous line from Euripides's *Orestes* (v. 129, spoken by Elektra of the apparently grief-stricken Helen), "the same woman as of old" (*Alc.* 23.6).

Plutarch again dips into his repertory of *Komoidoumenoi* by poets of Old Comedy. From Aristophanes's *Wasps* (early 422 BCE) he cites three lines poking fun at Alkibiades's lisp (vv. 43-46[158]; *Alc.*1.6) and, in a more serious vein at *Alc.* 16.3, two passages from *Frogs* of 405 BCE, the celebrated maxim, "Best not to rear a lion in the city, but if you rear him to fully grown, make sure to play along with his habits" (1431-32), and reflecting what was probably the universal Athenian reaction to Alkibiades at this point in their history, "[the city] longs for him, but hates him, and wants to have him back" (1425[159]). From Eupolis's *Demes* he quotes a line describing Phaiax, one of Alkibiades's political rivals, as "an excellent prattler, totally unable to speak" (*Alc.* 13.2, *PCG* fr. 116). Plutarch then goes on to mention a speech that Phaiax composed "Against Alkibiades" in which he alleged that Alkibiades used the city's ceremonial gold and silver vessels for his own dinner parties[160]. Plutarch moves on to the infamous ostracism of 417 BCE and cites 3 verses from Plato Comicus about Hyperbolos, whose "actions deserved his fate, although the man himself and his slave tattoos [?] did not; ostracism was not invented for people like him"[161]. Later in the *Life* Plutarch quotes from the comic writer Phrynikhos a passage

[157] *Alc.* 1.5, repeated with slight variants at *Reg. et imp. apoph*. 177A and *Amat.* 770C (allegedly said by the poet at the court of Arkhelaos of Macedon, as he planted a kiss on the forty-year-old tragedian Agathon).

[158] With the clever pun κόλακος (flatterer) for κόρακος "crow" in v. 45. MacDowell, 1971, p. 134, in a useful note on v. 44, explains that Alkibiades's lisp was "a 'Chinese' form (*l* for *r*), which modern speech therapists call 'lambdacism'".

[159] A scholiast passes on the information that the line is adapted from Ion of Chios's *Guards*.

[160] *Alc.* 13.3. Scholars are divided whether it is this speech that has been transmitted as no. 4 in the works of Andokides (thus, [Pseudo-] Andokides IV), which may have furnished Plutarch with other items in the *Life*. Russell, 1966, p. 43, suggests Plutarch may have known the speech only indirectly.

[161] *Alc.*13.9, *PCG* fr. 203; the lines are repeated at *Nic.* 11.6-7.

of 5 lines to fill in some details of the charges brought against Alkibiades for allegedly desecrating the Mysteries. Thoukydides, Plutarch says, failed to give the names of Alkibiades's accusers, but in the passage he cites from Phrynikhos they are identified as Diokleides and Teukros[162].

Here and twice in the *Moralia* (*De prof.* 80D, *Praec. ger.* 804A) Plutarch describes Alkibiades's rather odd but apparently very effective style of public speaking, citing favourable evaluations by οἱ κωμικοί and Demosthenes (21 *Against Meidias* 145). He was an effective speaker (πάντων δεινότατος), but so deliberate in his choice of what he considered to be the *mot juste* that he would pause, often for long intervals, and thus gave the impression that he was at a loss for words. Both here and at *Political Precepts* 804A, Theophrastos is credited as the source for this piece of information, and Plutarch goes out of his way to praise him as "the most diligent in research and the best informed in historical matters of all the philosophers"[163]. At *Alc.* 16.8 Plutarch cites a certain Arkhestratos for the witticism that "Greece could not handle two Alkibiadeses", and when he returns to this in the *Life of Lysander*, Plutarch mentions that Theophrastros was his ultimate source for this piece of information[164].

Not surprisingly, the name of the rhetor Andokides comes into Plutarch's account of the Hermokopidai scandal. According to Hellanikos of Lesbos (whom Plutarch cites frequently in the *Theseus* but only here in these *Lives*) Andokides claimed descent from Odysseus[165]. From Antiphon[166] Plutarch reports two stories vilifying Alkibiades that Plutarch himself rejects, pointing out that Antiphon was prejudiced against Alkibiades. He cites Antisthenes the Socratic for the name of Alkibiades's Spartan nurse, Amykla, and it seems likely that Plutarch drew on him also for other items of *personalia*[167]. As

[162] *Alc.* 20.7, *PCG* fr. 61.

[163] *Alc.* 10.4 tr. Scott-Kilvert; *FHSG* fr. 705. RUSSELL, 1966, p. 43, n. 1, suggests it was from Theophrastos's περὶ ὑποκρίσεως. There is a parallel of sorts with Perikles, who was said to have prayed, before addressing the assembly, that "no expression that was not germane to the matters at hand should occur to him" (*Praec. ger*. 803F; Plutarch goes on to describe, on Theophrastos's authority, Alkibiades's halting delivery).

[164] *Lys.* 19.5; *FHSG* fr. 618.

[165] *Alc.* 21.1; *FGrH* 4 F 170 b (cf. *Nic.* 13.3 the "Herm of Andokides", so called because it was the only one spared by the mutilators).

[166] *Alc.* 3.1, fr. 66 Blass. Cf. Th. 8.68.1 with the discussion by A. ANDREWES in GOMME et al., 1981, p. 170 ("by far the most important testimony we have" regarding Antiphon).

[167] *Alc.* 1.3; *FGrH* 1004 F 2, with the extended discussion by J. ENGELS, 1998b, p. 97.

he had in the *Life of Kimon* Plutarch again draws on the "oligarch" Kritias, quoting three verses from an elegy in which Kritias claimed credit for having proposed the decree for Alkibiades's recall in 407 BCE[168].

Among Plutarch's named fourth-century sources priority belongs to Plato. Plutarch cites him for the name of Alkibiades's tutor, Zopyros[169], and draws on him again later for the description of how the "stream of beauty [from the lover]" flows into the beloved and "fills the soul of the loved one with love in return"(*Alc.* 4.4, *Phaidros* 255D). D. A. Russell noted that in describing Alkibiades's conflicted erotic attachment to Sokrates Plutarch drew heavily on a parallel passage in the *Symposion*[170]. Plutarch recounts the episode of Sokrates rescuing the wounded Alkibiades at Potidaia in 432/1 BCE (*Alc.* 7.3-4 from *Symposion* 220 E[171]) and a story in which the roles were reversed, with Alkibiades on horseback protecting Sokrates as he trudged along on foot after the Athenian defeat at Delion in 424 BCE (*Alc.*7.6, *Symp*. 221A). In the *Comparison* 42 [3]. 3 (a recap of the *Life of Coriolanus* 15.4) Plutarch quotes Letter IV (321C) for a description of the contrast between the two men in terms of αὐθάδεια, which Plato termed the "companion of solitude". It was a fault of Coriolanus that was conspicuously lacking in Alkibiades, who was famously affable and approachable.

Ephoros and Theopompos are each named once only, at *Alc.* 32.2, where we learn that they along with Xenophon—and unlike the theatrical Douris of Samos—were relatively sparing in their descriptions of Alkibiades's triumphal return to Athens in spring 407 BCE. Commentators have looked for signs of additional borrowings in passages where Plutarch provides information that can be paralleled in the accounts of Diodoros of Sicily and Cornelius Nepos, who have been seen as surrogates for, respectively, Ephoros and Theopompos[172].

Of various anecdotes connecting Alkibiades with his guardian and mentor

[168] *Alc.* 33.1, fr. 3 West. From fr. 4 West we learn that in his elegy *On Alkibiades* Kritias complained that, since Alkibiades's name would not fit into hexameters, he had to place it in the second, iambic, line of the couplet.

[169] *Alc.* 1.1 from the *First Alkibiades* (problematically ascribed to Plato), where the man is identified as a Thracian, whom Sokrates describes unflatteringly as "a tutor so old he was perfectly useless" (122B, tr. Hutchinson. Alkibiades's aversion from playing the aulos also probably comes from this dialogue (*Alc.* 2.5, Pl., *Alc.* 1 106E).

[170] *Alc.* 6; *Symp.* 216; see Russell, 1966, p. 40.

[171] Russell, 1966, p. 41, notes that Plutarch has modified Plato's account and added a few details which "have probably come from Isocrates 16.29".

[172] Thus (from Ziegler's testimonia), Diodoros (Ephoros) in chapters. 10, 12, 20, 22, 23, 25-28, 30-37 and 39; Nepos (Theopompos) in chapters 18, 19, 22-25, 32, 33, 35-39.

Perikles perhaps the most noteworthy is the story of how Alkibiades went to his guardian's house but was turned away on grounds that Perikles was too busy to receive him because he was preparing to make an accounting to the people, to which Alkibiades retorted, "Wouldn't it be better to see how you could not render an account to them?"[173].

The *Alkibiades* seems to me to be the most compulsively readable of these fifth-century lives, even more so perhaps than the *Themistokles* and *Perikles*, which are more varied and complex, and undeniably of greater value as historical documents. The task Plutarch had set himself was to present his readers with a clear and credible account of an important Greek personage, to be set off against a parallel Roman figure, in this case Coriolanus. Plutarch was remarkably successful in this enterprise[174]. If there was anything that might have presented a problem to a biographer, it was perhaps the over-abundance of source material about the personal side of his subject: what to include and what to reject from so many examples of his subject's self-important outbursts and bizarre behaviour? In the end of course, we cannot know what Plutarch left out, but what he gave his readers was a memorable portrait of this fascinating, strange and ultimately tragic personality.

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[173] *Alc.* 7.3. Variations of this at *Reg. et imp. apoph.* 186E, Diodoros 12.38.2-3, Val. Max. 3.1, ext. 1; Aristodem. 16.4. RUSSELL, 1966, p. 41, commented that this story "belongs to the mythology of the causes of the war".

[174] Concluding a characteristically erudite and helpful analysis of chapters 1-16, RUSSELL, 1966, p. 47, criticizes Plutarch's anecdotal style for its "loose structure, alarming in its incoherence". To me this seems rather harsh, and it is outweighed by the liveliness and readability of the finished product.

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