

both the Greek language and courses in his areas of expertise: Greek phonology and ancient philosophy. Among us students, it was said—half in jest—that in any of his brief survey courses in ancient philosophy one learned more than in the entire basic and intermediate curriculum in philosophy. Whether or not this was literally the case may be left unsaid; what is beyond doubt, however, is that his teaching provided us students of Greek with both depth and breadth across the many branches of Greek scholarship.

As I bring these reflections to a close, I wish to express my deep appreciation as someone who had the honour of being both a student and, in later years, a colleague of Sven-Tage. His life's work, conducted with unwavering distinction within the field of Hellenic studies, stands as a testament to his scholarly integrity and dedication. In offering these words, we honour the memory of a distinguished scholar whose unfailing kindness and encouragement touched all who had the privilege of learning from or working alongside him.

πηγή γὰρ καὶ ρίζα καλοκαγα-
θίας τὸ νομίμου τυχεῖν παιδείας
(Plutarch, *Deliberise educandis* 7)

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In memoriam

**Prof. em. dr. Luc Van der Stockt,
born 9 Marz 1952, died 13 May
2025**

On May 13, 2025, after a long illness, Prof. Luc Van der Stockt passed away. With him, the Greek Studies research group at KU Leuven has lost a brilliant, refined, and highly valued colleague.

Luc Van der Stockt began his career as a researcher at KU Leuven with a



PhD on the literary views of Plutarch of Chaeronea¹. And Plutarch was an author who would never let him go. Throughout his career, he published numerous articles on Plutarch, exploring the most diverse topics and domains. He discussed problems in the fields of rhetoric, ethics and political philosophy, natural philosophy and theology. Friendship and love, painters and historians, τέχνη and music, animals and gods: he reviewed everything and treated it with his inimitable blend of

scholarly precision (ἀκρίβεια) and light-hearted humour. In many respects Luc proved to be as versatile as Plutarch²

Literary questions remained a recurring theme throughout his academic career. His research into Plutarch's authorial strategies earned him considerable international renown. One of his most important discoveries concerns Plutarch's writing methods in his highly diverse works. Luc demonstrated that Plutarch made use of so-called ὑπομνήματα, unpolished personal notes that underlie



¹ Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België, and was entitled *Twinkling and Twilight. Plutarch's Reflections on Literature* (Brussel 1992). It remains to this day the classic study of Plutarch's view of literature.

² This aspect of Luc's scholarly personality was particularly highlighted in the tribute volume presented to him upon his retirement: *A Versatile Gentleman. Consistency in Plutarch's Thinking* (ed. J. OPSOMER, G. ROSKAM & F. TITCHENER), Leuven, 2016.

many of his writings. He succeeded in convincingly reconstructing these notes through a thorough philological analysis of repetitive clusters of quotations, images, and motifs in various Plutarchan works. In numerous contributions, he demonstrated how Plutarch creatively adapted and recycled these preliminary notes³. His name will forever be associated with this meticulous research into Plutarch's working methods.

Luc Van der Stockt also became the 'founding father' of a rich research tradition at KU Leuven. Luc indeed led numerous research projects on Plutarch's work and became an inspiring 'Doktorvater' for many young researchers. His first project, '*Bis repetita placent*', dealt with the reconstruction of Plutarch's ὑπομνήματα. Next, he coordinated research projects on Plutarch's moral 'psychagogy', on Plutarch's relation to the so-called 'Second Sophistic', and on Plutarch's *Natural Questions*, and he also supervised numerous PhD dissertations on Plutarch's work: on his social ethics (Geert Roskam), on *De adulate et amico* (Birgit Van Meirvenne), on the *Life of Alcibiades* (Simon Verdegem), on his 'popular-philosophical writings' (Lieve Van Hoof), and on the *Natural Questions* (Michiel Meeusen).

Luc was a welcome participant at international conferences and organized several ones himself. In 1996, he hosted the 4th congress of the International Plutarch Society (IPS), on 'Rhetorical Theory and Praxis in Plutarch', and other congresses were organized in 2004 ('Virtues for the People'), 2006 ('Philosophy in Society'), 2009 ('The Lash of Ambition') and 2013 ('Natural Spectaculars'). Luc felt at home in international Plutarchist circles and was held in high regard by his colleagues. This also led to his election as president of the IPS, a position which he held from 2008 to 2011. And Luc would continue to chair the Belgian section of the IPS until his death.

Luc had broad interests and refused to be confined to any one domain. A vast and varied oeuvre like Plutarch's can hardly be considered a small niche, yet Luc's research was by no means limited to Plutarch. He also published contributions and lectured on Greek tragedy, lyric poetry, and rhetoric, and he supervised PhD dissertations on Maximus of Tyre (Jeroen Lauwers), on Roland Barthes and the Greek desire (Maarten Depourcq), on the *Song of Songs* (Dries De Crom) and on Modernism and Rhetoric (Matthias Somers).

³ See esp. 'A Plutarchan Hypomnema on Self-Love', in *AJPh* 120 (1999), 575-599; cf. also 'Three Aristotle's Equal but One Plato', in A. PÉREZ JIMÉNEZ *et al.* (eds.), *Plutarco, Platón y Aristóteles*, Madrid, 1999, 127-140; 'Plutarch in Plutarch: The Problem of the Hypomnemata', in I. GALLO (ed.), *La biblioteca di Plutarco*, Naples, 2004, 331-340.

Moreover, Luc was not only a passionate researcher but also an exceptionally enthusiastic teacher. In his lectures, the dry subject matter of Greek grammar could suddenly transform into unadulterated entertainment. But his passion lay above all in the teaching of ancient Greek literature: Aristotle's vision of *catharsis*, Demosthenes' powerful rhetoric in the oration *On the Crown*, Plutarch's *Life of Pericles*, and, of course, Euripides' *Bacchae*. This last text, in particular, held a special place in his heart, because of its vitality and its tension between sobriety and intoxication, rigidity and decisive action. The way he brought these ancient texts to life captivated and inspired generations of students. As a lecturer, he was adored by his students. Many alumni and alumnae continue to cherish fond memories of him and his lessons.

It sometimes seemed as if he delivered his inspiring lectures casually or fired off his sharp punchlines *ex abundantia cordis* at his audience. To a certain extent, that was true – but only to a certain extent. For in fact, he meticulously prepared his lessons, and continued to do so, even as an experienced lecturer. His approach, moreover, was based on a well-considered view of academic education. It is therefore no surprise that he was elected by his colleagues as program director. He took that mandate very seriously, as evidenced by his excellent knowledge of the dossiers, again the fruit of careful preparation. He was a committed program director, with keen insight and understanding

of the challenges of the dossiers that came his way, and with a strong commitment to the common good.

For the Greek program at KU Leuven, no effort was too much for him. Within the Greek curriculum committee, he devoted considerable attention to the program's structure and content, closely monitored recruitment, and was passionate about his students. His keen interest in educational issues also translated into a teaching project on the linear reading of ancient Greek texts.

Luc was dedicated to his faculty in numerous ways, for example, as chair of the Literary Studies Research Unit and as a member of various committees. He also made significant contributions outside the academic world. For example, he captivated a wider audience with popularizing and passionate lectures on ancient Greek literature, and he repeatedly appeared on the Belgian radio, where he offered amiable commentary on politicians' speeches, with a deep understanding of both literary studies and realpolitik. He always did so in a way that made the relevance of the classics tangible.

For all these reasons, it is more than fitting to gratefully recall "how great and beautiful he was" (ὅσος ἦν οἷός τε; Homer, *II*. 24.630). Luc was straightforward and principled, always ready to fight for a good cause, even when success was far from guaranteed. He was not afraid to lose his case after a committed plea, but he was afraid to betray his own ideals. Colleagues, both younger and older,

could always count on well-considered and sensible advice. He gave the doctoral students under his supervision complete freedom to pursue their own path, even when it conflicted with his own insights or interests. His generosity was combined with a gentle humanity that made him who he was. And of course, Luc will be remembered by everyone who knew him as an unparalleled orator who always managed to captivate his audience with refined, sparkling humour.

I would like to conclude with a quote from Luc's words in the foreword to a volume he published. It is a conviction I wholeheartedly endorse and one that applies perfectly to him: "it is [...] our conviction that a life in the service of truth cannot be lost forever, nor be deprived of our lasting esteem"⁴.

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⁴ In *Plutarchea lovaniensia. A Miscellany of Essays on Plutarch*, Leuven, 1996, p. vii.

