Abstracts

1. Virtues for the people

L. VAN DER STOCKT, *Semper duo, numquam tres?* Plutarch’s *Popularphilosophie* on friendship and virtue in *On Having Many Friends* *De amicorum multitudine* (On Having Many Friends) is a short text that starts ‘playfully’ with a witty anecdote, treats the practical problem of the role of friendship in daily life, and ends with a clear-cut summary of the communicated instruction. K. Ziegler classified Plutarch’s *On Having Many Friends* as ‘Popularphilosophie’ for good reasons.

The contribution at hand first sketches the goals and procedures of eighteenth-century German ‘Popularphilosophie’, and then explores the interaction of philosophical tenets with rhetorical invasiveness in this particular Plutarchan ‘lecture’. It makes it clear that Plutarch’s rhetorical techniques (as they are also discernible in his *hypomnemata*) as well as his partial representation of traditional philosophical tenets (especially Aristotle) create a positive and stimulating pedagogy. More than Themistius’ *On Friendship* (Or. 22), the lecture seems to address a youthful audience, appealing to its self-esteem; more than Maximus’ *Friendship and Virtue* (Or. 35), it testifies to the confidence that the (idealized) friendship is within reach.

Chr. PELLING, What is popular about Plutarch’s ‘popular philosophy’?

This paper addresses two questions: what is popular philosophy, that is, does Plutarch conceive of it as different from other sorts of ethics, and, if so, whom is this philosophy for? It approaches these issues obliquely through the *Lives*, and concentrates particularly on questions of politics. Some passages, especially the encounter of Solon and Croesus, suggest that there are particular occupational hazards which the rich and famous face; Plutarch’s adaptation of Herodotus there highlights a sort of wisdom that is ‘reasonable’ and ‘popular’ (*metrios* and *demotikos*). However, there is no idealisation of ‘simple things’, no suggestion that ordinary people have an instinctive understanding which their leaders may lack, and ‘popular wisdom’ certainly does not involve doing whatever the *demos* wants. The *demos* needs leadership, in *Solon-Publicola* as, for instance, in *Pericles, Nicias*, and the *Praecepta Rei Publicae Gerendae*. So the ethics of leadership may be different from those of the people themselves; the people’s prejudices and lack of insight may have to be manipulated and exploited, and that may even mean that different behaviour is right for politicians in different cities. Where the *demos* is praised, as in its reaction to the disaster of Cannae in *Fabius*, it is for responding to the right lead. Proper *paideia* is necessary for such leadership, but the philosophical face occupational hazards too, and men like Dion, Cato, and Thales may lose contact with the need for compromise that lesser intellects may grasp; it may also be part of Plutarch’s own self-characterisation that he projects his ability to strike different notes at different times and in different works. Such ‘popular philosophy’ is certainly open to the good and great, who may be helped to avoid occupational hazards; but the
more regular target audience is probably, as so often in literature of this period, the elite *pepaideumenos*, who himself has to prepare to give the leadership that ordinary people require.

T.E. Duff, Plutarch’s *Lives* and the critical reader

This paper analyses the kind of reader constructed in the *Lives* and the response expected of that reader. It begins by attempting a typology of moralising in the *Lives*. Plutarch does sometimes make general ‘gnomic’ statements about right and wrong, and occasionally passes explicit judgement on a subject’s behaviour. In addition, the language with which Plutarch describes character is inherently moralistic; and even when he does not pass explicit judgement, Plutarch can rely on a common set of notions about what makes behaviour virtuous or vicious.

The application of any moral lessons, however, is left to the reader’s own judgement. Furthermore, Plutarch’s use of multiple focalisations means that the reader is sometimes presented with varying ways of looking at the same individual or the same historical situation. In addition, many incidents or anecdotes are marked by ‘multivalence’; that is, they resist reduction to a single moral message or lesson. In such cases, the reader is encouraged to exercise his or her own critical faculties. Indeed, the prologues which precede many pairs of *Lives* and the *synkriseis* which follow them sometimes explicitly invite the reader’s participation in the work of judging. The syncritic structure of the *Parallel Lives* also invites the reader’s participation, as do the varying perspectives provided by a corpus of overlapping *Lives*.

In fact, the presence of a critical, engaged reader is presupposed by the agonistic nature of much of Greek literature, and of several texts in the *Moralia* which stage opposing viewpoints or arguments. Plutarch himself argues for such a reader in his *How the Young Man Should Listen to Poems*.

P. Desideri, Greek *poleis* and the Roman Empire: nature and features of political virtues in an autocratic system

This contribution aims at assessing the particular features which mark Plutarch’s idea of the perfect statesman: better said, of the perfect Greek statesman in a situation of autocratic external control of the city-state, *i.e.*, in the context of the Roman imperial age in which Plutarch himself lived. Plutarch is well aware of the great differences which exist between contemporary and past conditions of political life in Greece, and strongly recommends his readers not to forget them. The main point, as one can easily recollect from the author’s *Praecepta rei publicae gerendae*, is that there is no foreign political activity any longer to be carried out by the Greek *poleis* of present times; as a consequence, the politician’s job is confined just to finding the best way to ensure his community’s loyalty to the Roman Empire, guaranteeing its internal order and safety. This is not to say that this is an easy job. First of all, the modern Greek statesman cannot be allowed to emphasise, in order to strengthen the political feelings of his community, or, incidentally, to promote his own career, the great military accomplishments and virtues of the glorious Greek past; on the contrary, he will carefully stress episodes of friendly behaviour inside the *polis* and among different *poleis*: much less exciting models, indeed, to be proposed to the masses. In these conditions it is difficult to emerge suddenly as a great leader, and it is much safer to grow slowly, prefer-
ably in the shadow of some successful politician of a former generation, which means, uncomfortably, to arrive at the most important political positions in old age. But apart from anything else, governing Greek poleis at that time implied steady confrontation with the symbols of the Roman central government in one’s region: that is, with the Roman governors who in fixed times followed one another in the single provinces of the Empire, supervising the correct working of the Roman administrative system therein. The problems which came out of this situation are keenly felt by Plutarch, as well as by other Greek political writers of the period (such as Dio). Plutarch strongly underlines that the Greek statesman must absolutely reaffirm his own and his polis’ dignity in any circumstance, but at the same time he is fully convinced that only concord among the well-to-do can really be a good solution for such problems.

J.C. CAPRIGLIONE, Del satiro che voleva baciare il fuoco (o Come trarre vantaggio dai nemici)
Plutarch was himself thoroughly familiar with political praxis as well as with so many politicians whose experience he took into account when addressing various writings to them. The little pamphlet How to profit from one’s enemies explores and promotes the art of taking advantage of the wickedness and the malevolence of our enemies. Those enemies offer the best possible motive for leading an irreproachable life, a life guided by sophrosynè, that makes the other virtues instrumental. Indeed, Plutarch’s pragmatic advice is not only about our control over our own passions, but also about controlling our enemies, about making them silent and impotent. Plutarch’s advice is thus ethical and at the same time social: he has in mind an ethos that makes us moral subjects capable of assessing the margins of transgression in the varying circumstances, and of moving into the direction of what is best in a given situation. It is not so much an abstract Idea of the Good that inspires Plutarch’s advice, but an uncertain code that is always in fieri.

L. VAN HOOF, Plutarch’s ‘Diet-ethics’. Precepts of Healthcare between diet and ethics
In antiquity, the question of what constitutes a healthy regimen was the object of a fierce debate among doctors, athletic trainers, and philosophers. When writing his Precepts of Healthcare (De tuenda sanitate praecepta), Plutarch’s authority was therefore far from self-evident. As the opening dialogue of the text makes clear, the author not only reveals himself to be acutely aware of this challenge, but also eager to take it up. This article examines the nature of Plutarch’s healthcare programme, and analyses some important strategies used in order to promote this ‘diet-ethical’ advice in dialogue with competing views on healthcare.

2. Some theoretical questions on ethical praxis
H.M. MARTIN, Plutarchan morality: arete, tyche, and non-consequentialism
This essay begins with an examination of Demosthenes 12.7-13.6, where Plutarch extols Demosthenes for consistently advocating in his public policy the principle that Athens should do what is right (to kalon), regardless of the consequences.
This moral position is then contrasted with consequentialism, ‘the view that all actions are right or wrong in virtue of the value of their consequences’. Various passages in the Lives and the Moralia are successively analysed in order to present the Platonic essence of the morality extolled in the Demosthenes and to emphasise the non-consequentialism of such morality: Pericles 1-2, De Iside et Osiride 351CD, De sollertia animalium 960A-965B, De facie 942F-945D, De sera numinis vindicta 550DE, Phocion 1.4-6, Dion 1.1-2. Special attention is paid to to kalon as the term and concept that stands at the heart of Plutarch’s moral thought and links it inextricably to Plato’s. The essay then shifts to an array of passages in the Lives in which Plutarch assumes a consequentialist position, in that he advocates or approves the notion that expediency (to sympheron) must have precedence over what is right (to dikaion) when the welfare of one’s country is at stake: Phocion 32.1-9, Theseus-Romulus 6.1-5, Themistocles 3.5-4.4, Aristides 13.2 and 25.1-3, Cimon 2.5, Nicias-Crassus 4.3-4. Finally, this inconsistency in Plutarch’s moral thought is explained as the expression of something that is actually a common feature of human experience, and as a reflection of his unguarded reaction to the moral dilemmas he personally faced when he gazed into the mirror of history and evaluated the conduct of the subjects of the Lives.

J. Opsomer, Virtue, fortune, and happiness in theory and practice
This contribution explores the relations between (good and bad) luck, character, and happiness, primarily in the Life of Dion, but also in other works. In order to examine this issue, it is possible to make abstraction of theological and cosmological issues, though they were important to Plutarch. The question whether virtue is conducive to, or even sufficient for, happiness was of great concern to ancient philosophers. As a Platonist, Plutarch is committed to the view that virtue, which consists in the rule of reason over the passions so that the latter are moderated (metriopatheia), is strongly conducive to happiness. He is even attracted by the view that virtue constitutes a sufficient condition to that end. Yet he distances himself from the view that luck plays no role at all towards happiness. In De virtute morali Plutarch takes into account the role of luck when he is discussing prudence, an intellectual virtue that is exercised in the realm of contingency. The relationship between virtue and luck is central to the Life of Dion. Upbringing and education, but also our individual innate nature, are a matter of constitutive moral luck. Dion had a good nature, grew up under adverse circumstances, and was lucky to meet Plato. Dionysius the Younger also met Plato, but, unfortunately for him, he did not have an equally good innate predisposition toward virtue. Once virtue is achieved, it is its own reward, although it does not guarantee worldly success. Even a rather virtuous person such as Dion has to worry about contingencies. Adversity is also a test for character. In the Life of Sertorius Plutarch comes close to the Stoic view that virtue cannot be lost due to ill-fortune. Yet he allows for less than perfect forms of virtue, which are not incorruptible. In the Life of Solon he claims that a virtuous disposition can be destroyed by drugs or disease. I argue there is no inconsistency between these claims. Plutarch accepts the existence and moral relevance of pure luck, for this is where practical virtues and prudence become relevant. He also accepts constitutive moral luck as a given.
G. ROSKAM, Plutarch against Epicurus on affection for offspring. A reading of De amore prolis

This paper contains a full discussion of Plutarch’s De amore prolis (Περὶ τῆς εἰς τὰ ἔγγονα φιλοστοργίας), a fairly brief but problematic text about the natural character of love for one’s children. A correct understanding of Plutarch’s position presupposes a good insight in the previous philosophical tradition about the concept of φιλοστοργία in general, and particularly about the previous debate between Stoics and Epicureans on the issue of parental love for children. A concise survey of this rich tradition is then followed by a systematic interpretation of Plutarch’s argument in De amore prolis, which throws a new light on the argumentative, cumulative structure of the work and points to several interesting parallels from other Plutarchan works and from the works of other authors. This analysis also shows that the text should be understood as an anti-Epiclean polemic and that overemphasising the importance of the topic of animal psychology or family ethics risks misrepresenting the true scope of the work.

3. Virtues and vices

A.G. NIKOLAIDIS, Plutarch’s ‘minor’ ethics: some remarks on De gar-rulitate, De curiositate, and De vitioso pudore

This paper discusses the manner with which Plutarch treats the minor foibles of ἀδολεσχία (garrulity), πολυπραγμοσύνη (indiscreet curiosity, meddlesomeness) and δυσωπία (excessive shyness, compliancy), which he regards as affections (pathē) or diseases (nosēmata) of the soul. The relevant essays comprise three distinct parts: definition and main features of the foible, examples illustrating the behaviour of the character concerned, and advice for therapy. Plutarch’s treatment of polypragmosynē and dysōpia makes it easy for one to understand why these foibles are described as affections and maladies of the soul, but for adoleschia this is not so clear and the reasons offered are hardly satisfactory or convincing. This paper attempts to give an explanation for this and proceeds to suggest some reasons. The worst of the three foibles is polypragmosynē, since it springs from a malicious nature, whereas dysōpia, irrespective of the disastrous consequences it often entails, is a blemish of good nature. In fact, what makes dysōpia an undesirable character trait is the element of excess it involves. As for adoleschia, its treatment is at the same time a eulogy of silence and reticence. Despite certain exaggerations, unfortunate comparisons, and far-fetched assertions, Plutarch’s treatises are well organized: his argumentation is clear and coherent, most of his observations judicious and on the mark, and some of his psychological insights perceptive and remarkable. Finally, the common denominator among the three essays is that the suggested therapy is effected with the aid of reason, which will not only help us to perceive both the cause and their catastrophic results of our failings, but will also dictate the proper measures (acquirement of certain habits and practices) by means of which we may minimize and ultimately get rid of them.
H.G. INGENKAMP, Plutarchs Schrift gegen das Borgen (Περὶ τοῦ μῆ δεῖν δανειζεσθαι): Adressaten, Lehrziele und Genos

Plutarch’s treatise forms a group with (at least) two other essays, De cupiditate divitiarum and De tranquillitate animi. The theoretical base of this section of Plutarch’s writings is De cup. div., ch. 3f. Plutarch says there that the person whom the essay is going to help needs an explanation why she or he is sick (and not a therapy via ἀσκησις that consists of meditation and practice). Plutarch, in this essay, is not a psychotherapist, but an educator. More specifically, (1) he writes for a group of cultured people. This may be inferred from some ‘springboard arguments’. Springboard-arguments begin with a quotation, a metaphor, an anecdote, or a simple statement, only to lead the reader in a different direction afterwards. Springboards are lost on an audience that is too uneducated to discover the joke lying in the gap. This essay (2) teaches αὐτάρκεια or ἐλευθερία. According to the treatise, a person disposes of αὐτάρκεια or ἐλευθερία, if she or he is in the state of σχολή while being ready to live on what she or he already possesses (χρῆσθαι τοῖς παροῦσιν). It is this concept of σχολή that is remarkable here. Plutarch says, on the one hand, that in order to avoid the money lender’s harsh command ‘ἀποδός’, we should try to make friends with powerful (and rich) people. This, of course, is quite in tune with what the Greek upper class thought, whose σχολή had its base in prosperity. But, on the other hand, Plutarch also suggests earning one’s living as a teacher, or a paedagogus or a baker or a doorkeeper or a sailor or a sailing merchant’s clerk. Thus we may conclude that the notion of σχολή in Plutarch’s text can be taken as a purely mental attitude. His audience may have been educated, as has been said, and, at least partly, poor. It seems to resemble that of the sermons on the same subject of Basilius (who depends on Plutarck), Gregory of Nyssa (who depends on Basilius), and John Chrysostomus.

Ph.A. STADTER, Competition and its costs: φιλονικία in Plutarch’s society and heroes

In his Moralia and Parallel Lives, Plutarch explores the positive and negative aspects of competitiveness, philonikia (literally, ‘love of victory’). After establishing that the correct form and derivation of the stem is from nik- (‘victory’), not neik- (‘strife’), this paper examines Plutarch’s use of words formed from the philonik- stem. Like classical authors, notably Plato and Aristotle, he recognizes both good and bad aspects of competition. Philonikia is a passion that can be directed positively or negatively. In the Moralia, on the one hand, Plutarch adopts a hortatory position, warning against the dangers of competitiveness within the family (On Brotherly Love), among friends (Table Talks), and in politics (Rules for Politicians, Old Men in Politics). In effect, the philonikia described is always undesirable. In the Parallel Lives, on the other hand, he recognizes that competition can on occasion spur a political figure to greatness, but can also be destructive, as is shown by an analysis of four pairs of Lives (Lycurgus-Numa, Agesilaus-Pompey, Aristides-Cato the Elder, Philopoemen-Flamininus). Lycurgus encouraged competitiveness among the Spartan youth, whereas Numa sought to soothe the Romans’ martial spirit. Agesilaus carried competitiveness too far, and Sparta suffered for it; likewise, Pompey’s insistence on being first led to Rome’s civil war and his own death. For both, philonikia was a passion they could not control. In the latter two pairs, philonikia shows a more positive aspect. Plutarch’s philosophy of civic harmony has no real place for
competition, but pragmatically he recognises its usefulness when directed towards what is just and profitable for the state, as in Aristides’ case. Therefore he regularly praises his protagonists’ self-control in managing their *philonikia*, and urges it for his contemporaries.

4. ‘Popular philosophy’ in context

A. Pérez Jiménez, Astrometeorología y creencias sobre los astros en Plutarco
This contribution shows that Plutarch, who was highly interested in contemporary religious and scientific issues, was familiar with certain popular beliefs about the stars. This concern is evident in the titles of some lost works, in some *Table Talks* of which only the titles remain, and in several passages of the *Lives* where Plutarch echoes the activity of the astrologers. In this contribution I pay attention to Plutarch’s beliefs on astral mysticism as they appear in *De Iside*, as well as to his interpretation of astrometeorological phenomena concerning the behaviour of animals and plants under the influence of the sun and moon. Sufficient information about this theme can be found in the above mentioned *De Iside*, in the *Comment on Hesiod’s Works and Days*, and in the *Table Talks*. A closer analysis also shows that Plutarch’s beliefs concerning this influence are in line with other literary testimonies of Imperial times and, in particular, with some prescriptions in astrological lunar calendars of late antiquity.

J. Mossman – F. Titchener, Bitch is not a four-letter word. Animal reason and human passion in Plutarch
It is no surprise to the authors that a humane, compassionate, tolerant, and wise human like Plutarch wrote several essays specifically about animals, notably *Terrestriane an aquatilia animalia sint callidiora* (*De sollertia animalium*), *Bruta animalia ratione uti*, and *De esu carnium orationes ii*. These essays were used by philosophers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as early evidence of the so-called ‘theriophilic paradox, the notion that while the human being occupies a higher rung in the universal hierarchy than the beast, as indicated by human power over the animal world, human behaviour justifies the claim that human morality is on a lower level than that of the beasts’. In modern times, classical scholarship has tended to use these essays as ammunition for an animal rights movement, which of course can be seen as an extension of the Enlightenment interest in theriophily.

Yet although these ‘animal’ essays are grouped with Plutarch’s other ‘scientific’ essays in Loeb vol. xii (*De facie, De primo frigido, Aquane an ignis sit utilior*), our interest in Plutarch’s animals is not particularly scientific – rather, we are focusing on rhetoric. We hope that analysis of *De sollertia animalium* (and, to a lesser extent, *Bruta animalia ratione uti*) will provide insight into Plutarch’s own attitudes about virtues, arguing that the use of animals provides a kind of surrogacy or a place for Plutarch to argue his points at a safe remove. We also hope to show that there is more to these charming dialogues in terms of rhetorical skill and subtlety than may immediately be apparent, or has traditionally been assumed.
F. Frazier, Autour du miroir. Les miroitements d’une image dans l’œuvre de Plutarque

This paper aims at an exhaustive reconsideration of the simile of the mirror in Plutarch’s works. Generally speaking, the comparison enables drawing nearer something that is far away (e.g., knowledge or virtue) and shows what deserves to be sought or imitated. More precisely, the vast range of uses of this ‘mirror’ may be classified under two headings, ontology (with its epistemological sequel) and ethics. In the epistemological field, the mirror imagery appears in relation to mathematics – especially geometry – and reminds us of the necessity for human knowledge to lean on sensible images that only reflect intelligible beings and may be deceptive as well as initiatory, as is shown by the ambiguous action of the sun. In the ethical field, Plutarch insists on self-knowledge and emulation of the glorious models of the past, but he also takes into account the demands of particular circumstances. In everyday life friends can contribute to moral improvement, but Plutarch does not use the simile of the mirror for them – as the Stoics, Seneca, or Epictetus do for the philosophers. Instead, only wives or flatterers are called ‘mirrors’, denoting either conjugal harmony or contemptible servility. The analysis finally raises the (still open) question of the respective roles which interiority and the example of other people have in moral life.