Man to Man
Masterson, Mark

Published by The Ohio State University Press

Masterson, Mark.
Man to Man: Desire, Homosociality, and Authority in Late-Roman Manhood.
The Ohio State University Press, 2014.
Project MUSE. muse.jhu.edu/book/35538.

⇒ For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/35538

⇐ For content related to this chapter
https://muse.jhu.edu/related_content?type=book&id=1348510
INTRODUCTION

In a passage from Iamblichus’ *De Mysteriis*, a treatise in ten books in which he re-theorizes pagan religious practice as theurgy (“God-Work”; *theourgia*), the late third-/early-fourth-century philosopher describes how the divine makes its way from still singularity into increasing motion and differentiation; he shows how the transcendent manifests in this world. In the context of considering the connections between same-sex desire, homosociality, and the making of authority among late-ancient men, the Platonicizing and, indeed, Platonic vocabulary is worth taking time over because of the importance of Plato in *paideia* in late antiquity. Terribly interesting too is the manifestation of beauty as manliness at the passage’s end:

---

1. A new edition of this work appeared in the Budé series in 2013. The new title appearing on the cover is *Réponse à Porphyre* with the old title, *De Mysteriis*, in parentheses. As this treatise is Iamblichus’ detailed response to Porphyry about the theoretical basis of his philosophy, the new title is sensible. Inside the book, however, the editors favor a different title for the work, “An Answer from Abamon” (*Ἀβάμωνος Ἀπόκρισις*), Abamon being the persona of an Egyptian priest that Iamblichus adopted when addressing Porphyry, who had started a dialogue with him taking the name of Anebo (also an Egyptian name). The words *ἈΒΑΜΩΝΟΣ ΑΠΟΚΡΙΣΙΣ* appear at the top of each of the 217 pages of the Greek text. I find this puzzling, and, while I have consulted this edition (its page and line numbers appear in brackets) and favor its readings, I have decided to retain *De Mysteriis* (*Myst.*) as the title.
Besides these characteristics [of ever increasing motion and differentiation (2.3.72–73 [54.4–55.2])], things divine flash forth a sort of irresistible/uncanny beauty, seizing those beholding it with wonder, providing a divinely sweet cheerfulness, manifesting itself with unspeakable symmetry, and transcending the fitting attractiveness of all other forms. The blessed visions of archangels also themselves have an extremity of beauty, but it is not at all as unspeakable and wonderful as that of the divine. The beauty of angels already divides up into parts the beauty that it receives from the archangels. The spirits of the daemons and heroes appearing in direct visions, each of them, possess beauty in distinct forms: the beauty which is arrayed in words determining essence is daemonic, and the beauty showing itself as manliness/courage is heroic. . . . (Myst. 2.3.73 [55.3–17])

“A sort of irresistible or uncanny beauty” (kallos hoion amēchanon/κάλλος οἷον ἀμήχανον) flashes forth from divinity (ta . . . theia/τα . . . θεια). This beauty moves through the archangels, angels, and thence to the daemons and heroes as a signal manifestation of each. The material world participates with rising increments of contingency and perishability. Although this beauty expresses itself in increasingly less direct ways, the divine source of this beauty remains in view through Iamblichus’ metaphors of light and vision. Beauty (kallos/κάλλος, to kalon/τὸ καλὸν) “flashes forth” (apastraptei/ἀπαστράπτει), “transcends the fitting attractiveness of all other forms,” and ultimately is evident in epiphanies of the spirits (autopitika pneumata/αὐτοπτικὰ πνεύματα) of daemons and heroes. In the case of daemons, this irresistible or uncanny beauty is a thing arrayed/arranged (diakosmēthen/διακοσμήθην)—significantly diakosmeō/διακοσμέω is a word not only used in philosophical contexts, but also in military ones (e.g., Iliad 2.126 or 2.476) and ones related to beauty—in speech that depicts essence, thereby associating logic and philosophy with beauty both military and fetching. Finally, this beauty appears in heroes, manifesting as manliness or courage (tēn andrian/τὴν ἀνδρίαν).

2. Πρὸς δὴ τούτοις τοῖς ἰδιώμασι τὰ μὲν θεῖα κάλλος οἷον ἀμήχανον ἀπαστράπτει, βαίνοντα μὲν κατέχον τοὺς ὁρῶντας, θεσπεσίαν μὲν κατέχουσα, ἀρρήτω δὲ τῇ συμμετρίᾳ ἀναφαίνομαιν, ἐξηρρημένου δ' ἀπὸ τῶν ἄλλων εἰδῶν τῆς ἐπιστείας· τὰ δὲ τῶν ἀρχαγγέλων μακάρια θέματα μέγιστον μὲν ἔχει καὶ αὐτά τὸ κάλλος, οὐ μὴν ἔτι γ' ὁμοίως ἄρρητος καὶ βαϊμαστος ἦσσερ τό θεῖον· τὰ δὲ τῶν ἄγγελων μεριστός ἔδει διαιρεῖ τὸ κάλλος ὅπερ ἀπὸ τῶν ἀρχαγγέλων παραδέχεται· τὰ δαιμόνια δὲ καὶ τὰ ἡρωικά αὐτοπτικὰ πνεύματα ἐν εἴδει καὶ ὁμοίως ἄρρητος ἔχει τὸ κάλλος ἀμφότερα, οὐ μὴν ἀλλ' τὸ μὲν εἰν λόγοις τοὺς τὴν οὐσίαν ἀφορίζουσι διακοσμήθην έστι δαιμόνιον, τὸ δ' ἐπειδεικνυόμενον τῷ ἄνδριαν ἡρωικόν. . . .

3. E.g., one meaning of diakosmeō (LSJ 1.3) according to the Stoics is the reordering of the world order after its destruction in an ekpurōsis (ἐκπύρωσις).
Iamblichus here asserts the presence of the transcendent in the material world, and a notable manifestation of this presence is divinity’s beautiful appearance in the social field as *andria* (manliness or courage). The resultant gleaming *andria* possesses divine attributes and, further, Iamblichus’ use of *kallos amēchanon* suggests the presence of same-sex desire. A primary meaning of *kallos* is physical beauty that attracts desire, and men comprise the presumed audience for the *De Mysteriis*. But perhaps even more important, the phrase *kallos amēchanon* makes a notorious appearance at the end of Plato’s *Symposium* when Alcibiades tells the story of his attempt to seduce Socrates. A reader in possession of *paideia* will likely think of Plato’s text when this phrase appears and remember this scene with its intriguingly unexpected contours of same-sex desire. Recollection of Plato thematizes same-sex desire as an essential companion to *kallos amēchanon*, and, admiration of *andria* is metaphorized powerfully by a story that includes, and even incites, corporeal arousal. Admiration metaphorized in this way provides an additional support to Iamblichus’ assertion of the transcendent’s presence in this world. The inappropriateness of same-sex desire as a medium—its corporeality in the case of the divine and the possibility of an “unmanly” submission in the case of manhood—proposes that the universe and an admirable man are governed by forces that cannot be explained in terms that will avoid contradiction. And this surely is Iamblichus’ claim about how to think about the social, for this passage is ontological and, indeed, “daemonic” in its presentation of the essence of paradoxically related levels of reality, a reality that, as it acquires contingency and mortality, might be said to “[assume] the features of a heterogeneous, inconsistent *bricolage,*” whose burgeoning liveliness becomes an incitement to “enjoyment” (Žižek 1991: 149).

If the foregoing reading of same-sex desire and attractiveness into this passage from Iamblichus is to be persuasive, it needs parallels and an investigation into why the evocation of same-sex desire as a metaphor for the admirability of manhood would have been an effective strategy in late antiquity. To these ends, and building on what has already been said in the introduction to this book, there will shortly be discussion of emperor Julian’s use in his *Caesares* of the same phrase Iamblichus uses, *kallos amēchanon*, in order to gauge its remarkable effects. As does Iamblichus, Julian invokes the *Symposium* at the carnal and transgressive moment of Alcibiades with Socrates. This intertextuality infuses Julian’s portrait of Marcus Aurelius with a narration of same-sex desire. It will be also

---

4. This episode from the *Symposium* is discussed in detail below.
suggested that Julian's text at this point should be read with the *Charmides* (as could Iamblichus' for that matter), for the eponymous hero of this dialogue and object of Socrates' (supposed?) desire is arguably in possession of *kallos amēchanon* too. Since *kallos amēchanon* in the *Symposium* is an attribute of the desired Socrates and, in the *Charmides*, belongs to Charmides who is the object of Socrates' (supposed) desire, a narrative of an adult masculine sexual persona, who can be either subject or object of same-sex desire, is called to mind. To the extent readers of Julian's text will want to associate proper manhood with being the impenetrable penetrator in sexual relations, this vision of masculine versatility is a scandalous and even impossible one. The undecidability of sexual roles, i.e., inability to determine who is penetrator and who is penetrated, means that the asymmetry claimed for male/male sexuality in antiquity is not present in the case of Julian's Marcus Aurelius. A picture emerges of an idealized Marcus (and an ideal Socrates too) insouciantly separated from the protocols of penetrator and penetrated, subject and object of desire, honor and shame. Indeed, the “impossible” carnal desire of one man for another is offered for contemplation, and its transfixing, forbidden liveliness glamourizes Marcus' *auctoritas* or *axiōma*/ἀξίωμα. The chapter concludes with both Plotinus' use of *kallos amēchanon* to designate the emperor and discussion of the Missorium plate of Theodosius I. This massive and famous silver plate has both emperors and, significantly, cupids on it.

In between these discussions featuring *kallos amēchanon* associated with authoritative men, however, is an argument to show why an evocation of same-sex desire to glamourize manhood would have been effective, for it is the case that such a procedure is counterintuitive, given the presumption of shame accompanying penetration. Plato, as all, then and now, would agree, is wonderful, but, at the very least to a scholarly orthodoxy wedded to the idea that penetrating is an essential mark of manhood, it seems that something unmanly is happening to some man, if the intertexts are allowed their interpretability. Since the argument is that the intertextuality with Plato increases masculine glamour through importing the liveliness of actual life, and because the evocation of what is forbidden increases this glamour through the late-ancient love of paradox, an explanation of the mechanism involved will be welcome, if not necessary.

Given the widespread late-ancient penchant for enlivening paradox, there is more than one way to make this explanation. The retheorization of late-ancient pagan religious practice, i.e., *material* devotional practices like sacrifice are the way to a *dematerialized* transcendent, might have provided one corollary example of the mechanism posited for this valuation of same-
sex desire. The theorization of the effects of relics, i.e., treasured bits and pieces of a saint’s body and clothing are able to be, miraculously, the saint him- or herself on earth even as they are in heaven at the same time, could have provided another. However, since Julian’s Caesares—a work which Julian characterizes as a mythos—is the centerpiece of the first part of the chapter, his defense of myths in his seventh oration (with the addition of Saloustios’ De Deis et Mundo) has been chosen.

In the seventh oration, Julian provides a powerful example of a discourse that features an embrace of what is forbidden to underscore value and engineer transcendent glamour. Conveying nothing less than divine truth, the myths, whose surfaces of violence and sex are hardly in line with community norms, are valuable, and, the more objectionable they are, the more value they possess. This oration, in which Julian takes to task late-ancient Cynics in general and one late-ancient Cynic in particular, Heralcleius (hence the title of the oration, Against Heralcleius), is doubly useful in the present investigation of late-ancient manhood’s relation to forbidden same-sex desire: paradox is visible not only in the valuation of myths, it also marks the speaking voice and persona of Julian himself in both the speech itself and in the mythos he tells of his own life. One moment he is critical of allegory and indirection in speech, and then, in the next, he praises them to the skies. Now he is mightily concerned that Cynics have been disregarding the opinions of society, and then he quotes with approval the Cynic maxim, “Give a new stamp to the currency” (paracharaxon to nomisma/παραχάραξιν τὸ νόμισμα). This maxim recommends a challenge to society’s ideas, because the impression that the mores of society make on human life are an imposture that must be erased in preference to what is real and true to the substance that has been defaced. In his discussion of this maxim (and another one not specific to the Cynics, “Know yourself” [gnōthi sauton/γνῶθι σαυτόν]), Julian recommends that the man who has ambitions to be wise consider what he is in reality, and not what society tells him he is, as he lives a life that aims at brilliant virtue. There is a scale of value extending beyond society; it is the liveliness of things that exist and are connected to the transcendent that matters, and not the judgements of society on both them and the man.

PLATONIC GLAMOUR IN THE CAESARES

In a passage from the moderately satiric and most Lucianic of all his works, the Caesares (also known as the Kronia and, significantly, Symposium),
emperor Julian offers a portrait of emperor Marcus Aurelius in which he depicts his predecessor’s glorious connection to the transcendent. In this portrait Julian also depicts Marcus’ same-sex sexual attractiveness by means of Platonic intertexts. This intertextuality has a number of effects. In the first place, Julian infuses the portrait with a narrative of same-sex desire transgressive of the norms, well known to scholars of antiquity, of activity and passivity; it is not possible to tell whether Marcus’ attractiveness should inspire in the reader a desire to penetrate or to be penetrated. Second, the collocation of authoritative glamour and same-sex sexual attractiveness is a further instance of masculine admirability metaphorized by sexual attractiveness to add to those already discussed in the introduction to this book. Lastly, the paradoxical embrace of the forbidden makes Marcus uncanny and therefore all the more transcendent.

Julian begins this work from late 362 with a conversation (10.1/306A–307A) between himself and (probably) his friend Saloustios at the time of the festival of the Saturnalia or Kronia. Coming at the end of the year, the Saturnalia was a festival in which there were parties, gifts, role reversals, and the allowance of license for lower-status members of society. In his first words, Julian presents himself not wanting to speak nonsense and not being able to get into the spirit of the holiday, for, he says, he has no talent for being amusing. His friend notes that boors construct amusements laboriously. Agreeing, Julian proposes instead to tell a “myth” (10.1.11/306B: mythos/μῦθος) that he says Hermes told him (10.1.21/307A). He promises that this myth will be an amusement appropriate to the season and that it will contain “perhaps many things worth hearing.” Julian’s friend rejoins: “I agree, reckoning with you and your

---

5. There is debate about precisely who this friend is. Saloustios/Saturnius Secundus Salutius (the probable author of De Deis et Mundo) is considered a possibility because Julian dedicated his prose hymn to Helios to him on the grounds that he, Julian says, thought the earlier-written Kronia to be worth something (11.44.4–5/157C: ἔπει σοι καὶ τὸ πρότερον εἰς τὰ Κρόνια γεγραμμένον ἡμῖν οὐ παντάπασιν ἀπόβλητον ἐφάνη). Much hangs on whether or not the Kronia mentioned is the same as the Caesares and there is the additional problem of the fact that showing appreciation for a work does not of necessity make one a character in the work in question. Still, given Saloustios’ showing up as addressee in the hymn to Helios and as an overwhelming presence in Oration 4, he is a likely addressee at this moment. Sardiello (2000: 83) provides a way into this debate. See, too, Baldwin 1978: 452–53; Gilliam 1967: 205; and Pack 1946: 152, 154.

6. But since it is necessary to obey the law of the god [of the festival], do you wish that I tell you by way of entertainment a myth in which there are perhaps many things worth hearing? (10.1.10–12/306B)

Ἐπεὶ δὲ χρὴ τῷ νόμῳ πείθεσθαι τοῦ θεοῦ, βούλει σοι ἐν παιδιὰς μέρει μοῦθον διεξέλθω πολλὰ ἴσως ἔχοντα ἀκοῆς ἄξια;
esteemed, or, rather, the universally esteemed Plato: many things were pursued zealously by him through myths.\textsuperscript{7}

This exchange raises questions about how to interpret the \textit{Caesares}. Julian presents this work as an entertainment and it does not lack for entertaining aspects, but the invocation of Plato and his myths suggests that deeper reflections on its contents are warranted. After all, although he disparages myths in the \textit{Republic},\textsuperscript{8} Plato nonetheless presents the effective “Myth of Er” in the same work.\textsuperscript{9} Also important is the fact that one of the subtitles of the \textit{Caesares} is \textit{Symposium}. There are structural similarities between this work and Plato’s dialogue.\textsuperscript{10} Like Plato’s dialogue, the \textit{Caesares} features six major speeches. In the \textit{Symposium}, the line-up is Phaedrus, Pausanias, Eryximachus, Agathon, Aristophanes, and Socrates, while the \textit{Caesares} presents Julius Caesar, Alexander the Great, Augustus, Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, and Constantine. Furthermore, Silenus, whose satiric commentary figures prominently in Julian’s work, is also present in the \textit{Symposium}; Alcibiades compares Socrates to him a number of times.\textsuperscript{11} These connections to Plato’s iconic work suggest that taking this amusement seriously is worthwhile.

The focus on Marcus Aurelius in the work also counsels an earnest approach to the \textit{Caesares}. In the first place, Julian clearly regards Marcus Aurelius as an ideal for himself in both this work and others.\textsuperscript{12} Furthermore, it is an emperor who speaks and depicts himself looking forward to having the martial god Mithras as his patron deity upon his death (10.38.16–21/336C), which is paralleled by the various emperors taking gods as their patrons at the end of the work, including Zeus and Kronos by Marcus Aurelius.\textsuperscript{13} This anticipated patronage also recalls Julian’s imperial predecessors’ associations with gods—a practice old by the fourth century. In sum, the connection of the \textit{Caesares} to Julian’s own identification with Marcus

\textsuperscript{7} 10.1.15–17/306C: ἀκόλουθα σοί τε καὶ φίλο τῷ σῷ, μᾶλλον δὲ τῷ κοινῷ, Πλάτωνι διανοούμενος, αὐτῷ πολλὰ ἐν μύθοις ἑσπούδασται.

\textsuperscript{8} 2.377E–3.192A.

\textsuperscript{9} 10.614B–621D.

\textsuperscript{10} The similarities between the \textit{Caesares} and Plato’s \textit{Symposium} are an accepted part of an approach to this work of Julian. See, e.g., Sardiello 2000: xi; Müller 1998: 39–40.

\textsuperscript{11} 215A ff., 216D, and 221E.


\textsuperscript{13} 10.37.11–12/335D.
Aurelius, along with the stated Platonic agenda, lend force to Julian’s assertion that there are “things worth hearing” here: the glamour secured for Marcus Aurelius through attribution of same-sex sexual attractiveness to him (via *kallos amēchanon*) occurs in a philosophizing text about emperors by an emperor who identified himself with Marcus Aurelius. Julian suggests in this work who and what he, a glamorous emperor, is and how he should be regarded.

The *Caesares* tells the story of a banquet Romulus, the first king of Rome, put on in heaven for the gods and rulers of Rome from Julius Caesar onward. As all the rulers enter the banquet hall, most are allowed a place at the table but a few, judged unworthy, are sent away (e.g., Caligula [10.6/310A–B], Nero [10.6/310C], Commodus [10.9/312B–C], Caracalla [10.10/312D], Elegabalus [10.10/313A]). When the feast is ready, Hermes, with Zeus’ agreement, proposes a speech contest between the various emperors, who are called “heroes.” At this point, Herakles interjects that it is hardly fair or explicable that his own Alexander the Great has not been summoned to this gathering of great leaders from the past. Zeus approves the addition of Alexander, who takes the place denied Caracalla.

In due course, the number of eligible contestants is narrowed to six: Julius Caesar, Alexander the Great, Augustus, Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, and Constantine. Each of the rulers then presents his case and faces examination on the question as to why he should be considered the greatest leader. All the rulers face considerable jibing from Silenus. At the conclusion of the contest, the overweening and imperial temperaments of the first four stand revealed, and Constantine, speaking sixth, has been tarred with the brush of being a lover of pleasure. Marcus Aurelius (having spoken fifth) is declared the winner. When asked what he thought the “most beautiful ambition in life” (*kalliston . . . tou biou telos*/κάλλιστον . . . τοῦ βίου)

---

14. R. A. Pack suggested that there is no reason for refusing to take the writer at his word when he asserts that his taste does not normally run to jesting; rather, one can well believe that the austere emperor had no real enthusiasm for Saturnalian fooleries, but that, while certain ideas or motives appropriate to the Saturnalia were thrust upon him, so to speak, by the occasion, he still retained in this piece something of the spirit as well as the external framework of a μῦθος [of the sort Plato would employ] (1946: 154).

15. Pack also identified serious philosophical aspects in the *Caesares*. Julian may be at his ease in this work, but it reflects in broad outline late-Platonic conceptions of the cosmos, especially in the spatial registration of the gods above the emperors and the setting of the banquet just below the moon.

16. See Amerise 2002 for more on Julian’s depiction of Constantine.
τέλος) was, he answered that he had always striven to be like the gods.\textsuperscript{17} This answer is not surprising nor is it a surprise that he was judged the best, given the intensely admiring portrait Julian draws of him prior to the contest’s commencement:

When summoned, Marcus entered looking excessively dignified and having eyes and face somewhat drawn from his labors. Displaying in his very self an irresistible/uncanny beauty \((\textit{kallos} \ldots \textit{amēchanon})\) and \((\textit{amēchanon})\) through the very fact that he offered himself up unadorned and unbeautified. His beard, in any case, was long and his dress was simple

\textsuperscript{17} 10.34.12.–15/333B–C:

Then Hermes looked at Marcus and said, “And you, Verus, what did you think the most beautiful ambition in life was?” He answered gently and modestly, “To imitate the gods.”

\textsuperscript{18} In the Budé edition and Sardiello 2000, the word \textit{amachon} \((\textit{amāchos})\) appears instead of \textit{amēchanon} \((\textit{amēchanon})\). In agreement with Wright (1969/1913) and E. Müller (1998)—both of whom follow Herlein in his preference for this reading from manuscript \(M\)––I prefer \textit{amēchanon}. Both words occur roughly the same number of times in Julian’s œuvre. \textit{Amachon} is seen eight times and \textit{amēchanon} nine, if my choice is followed here. If the reading in the Budé and Sardiello is favored, these numbers are reversed, of course. \textit{Amēchanon} is preferable because of its association with beauty in the prose hymn to Helios and indeed with the general feeling of the impossible or hard to comprehend \((3.11.10/62B; 3.11.42/63B; 4.5.28/247A; 5.2.5/269D; 9.10.4/189B) and the divine \((2.12.4/118A; 11.5.14/132D)\) that attends Julian’s use of the word. There are also, conclusively in my view, the Platonic intertexts and, indeed, arguable intertextuality with Plotinus \((\textit{Enneads} 5.5.3.1–15; discussed at the end of this chapter), and with Lamblichus \((\textit{discussed at the chapter’s start}).

\textit{Amachon}, on the other hand, appears \((\textit{with one exception})\) only in military contexts in Julian’s works \((1.30.12/37C; 1.12.11/16D; 1.21.13/26C; 1.30.4/37B; 3.10.4/60D; 3.27.9/84B; 10.21.15/321B)\) and refers to the notion that the warrior/army in question cannot be defeated. The single use of \textit{amachon} that departs from its usual martial meaning characterizes the hunger and loneliness that the young Hercules had to endure as “most invincible” enemies \((7.14.23/219D): \textit{amachōtātōs}/\textit{amachōtātōs})\). Sardiello \((2000: 129)\) makes a case for \textit{amachos} on the basis of the phrase, \textit{kallas amachon}, being less common and through noting parallels in Libanius, Menander \((\textit{the playwright}),\) Aelian, and John Chrysostom––the last of whom perhaps splits the difference as he speaks of the beauty \((\textit{kallas})\) of God that is both \textit{amachos} and \textit{amēchanos}:

And first of all, there is the beauty \((\textit{kallas})\) of that blessed and unblemished nature that is, thus, somehow irresistible/uncanny \((\textit{amēchanon})\) and invincible \((\textit{amachon})\), over-bounding all language/logic and escaping all thought. Whenever you hear of beauty \([\text{in this context}],\) don’t assume anything bodily, beloved, but rather some incorporeal notion and an unutterable magnificence. (\textit{Expositiones in Psalmos} 160.32–38)

\textsuperscript{21} \textsuperscript{21} Amēchanon, \textsuperscript{22} Αμήχανον, \textsuperscript{23} Ἀμίχανον, \textsuperscript{24} Ἀμαχον, \textsuperscript{25} Ἀμαχόν, \textsuperscript{26} Ἀμαχήνων, \textsuperscript{27} μηδὲν σωματικὸν ὑποπτεύσῃς, ἀγαπητὲ, ἀλλὰ ἀσώματον τινα δόξαν καὶ μεγαλοπρέπειαν ἀφραστον.
and sober, and from fasting his body was exceedingly shiny and transparent, just like, I suppose, light itself, most pure and stainless. (10.17.15–22/317C–D)\(^{19}\)

Although Marcus is of the second century historically, Julian makes him appear late-ancient. Jean Bouffartigue (1992: 74) notes that Marcus’ diaphanous body transforms him into a stand-in for a late-Platonic sage. As he enters, there is also evidence of hard work and fasting: now an ascetic, Marcus accumulates *auctoritas*/ἀξίωμα this way too.\(^{20}\) This accumulation is rendered hyperbolic by the perception of light. The light-filled terms for late-ancient senatorial elites, *clarissimi*, *spectabiles*, and *illustres*, are relevant here, as is Eunapius’ story of Iamblichus’ body and clothing acquiring a gold hue when he was at his devotions.\(^{21}\) The theurgist, the late-ancient practitioner of pagan religious practice (prayer and sacrifice), was also often figured as bathed in light.\(^{22}\) This rendering of Marcus also recalls descriptions of saints’ relics being filled with light.\(^{23}\) Indeed, Victricius, in his *De

---

19. Ἡπεὶ δὲ καὶ ὁ Μάρκος κληθεὶς παρῆλθε, σεμνὸς ἄγαν, ὑπὸ τῶν πόνων ἔχων τά τε ὄμματα καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον ὑπὸ τῶν πόνων ἔχων τά τε ὄμματα καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον ὑπὸ τῶν πόνων ἔχων τά τε ὄμματα καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον ὑπὸ τῶν πόνων ἔχων τά τε ὄμματα καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον ὑπὸ τῶν πόνων ἔχων τά τε ὄμματα καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον ὑπὸ τῶν πόνων ἔχων τά τε ὄμματα καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον ὑπὸ τῶν πόνων ἔχων τά τε ὄμματα καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον ὑπὸ τῶν πόνων ἔχων τά τε ὄμματα καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον ὑπὸ τῶν πόνων ἔχων τά τε ὄμματα καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον ὑπὸ τῶν πόνων ἔχων τά τε ὄμματα καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον ὑπὸ τῶν πόνων ἔχων τά τε ὄμματα καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον ὑπὸ τῶν πόνων ἔχων τά τε ὄμματα καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον ὑπὸ τῶν πόνων ἔχων τά τε ὄμματα καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον ὑπὸ τῶν πόνων ἔχων τά τε ὄμματα καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον ὑπὸ τῶν πόνων ἔχων τά τε ὄμματα καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον ὑπὸ τῶν πόνων ἔχων τά τε ὄμματα καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον ὑπὸ τῶν πόνων ἔχων τά τε ὄμματα καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον ὑπὸ τῶν πό


22. Iamblichus, *Myit. 1.12.41* [31.9–15]:

Therefore, by means of this [divine] will, the gods, being benvolent and gracious, shine their light generously upon the theurgists, calling their souls up into themselves and orchestrating oneness/unity with themselves for them, accustoming them—while they are yet in bodies—to be detached from bodies and to be turned around to their [i.e., the gods’] eternal and noetic principle.

Διὰ τῆς τοιαύτης οὖν βουλήσεως ὁ θεοὶ τὸ φῶς ἐπιλάμπουσιν εὐμενεῖς ὄντες καὶ ἱλεῖ τοὺς θεουργοὺς, τὰς τε ψυχὰς αὐτῶν εἰς ἑαυτοὺς ἀνακαλοῦμεν καὶ τὴν ἑνώσιν αὐτῶν τὴν πρὸς ἑαυτοὺς χορηγοῦντες, ἐθίζοντες τε αὐτὰς καὶ ἐπὶ ἐν σώματι οὖσας ἀφίστασθαι τῶν σωμάτων, ἐπὶ δὲ τὴν ἀἵδου καὶ νοοτήν ἑαυτῶν ἀρχὴν περιάγεσθαι.

23. Miller discusses Victricius’ using light as a metaphor to describe saints’ relics:

In order to make spiritual sense of the sight of body-fragments—that is to say, in order to evoke the whole [of the divine] in the part—[Victricius] needed a metaphor that was
Laude Sanctorum, depicts the arrival of relics to Rotomagus (Rouen) in the mid 390s as an imperial adventus.24 In both cases, there is a ceremonial arrival of res mortales, relics or an emperor, that have been sacralized.25 The representational ambitions of Eunapius in his Lives of the Philosophers and the anonymous author of the Historia Monachorum (both writing about 400 C.E.) and the expectations they had of their readers certainly apply here. Quoting John Onians, Patricia Cox Miller writes that petitioning the visual imagination of the spectator . . . marked the biographical literature of this period [sc. the Lives of the Philosophers and the Historia Monachorum], as authors invited readers to “see” holiness in the bodies of their heroes. Indeed, an increase in the ability to “see more than was there” . . . seems characteristic of [this] cultural scene. . . . (2005c: 24)

And so, even though this representation of Marcus Aurelius is contained within a somewhat jocular context, the contours of Julian’s flattering portrait are of a piece with the glorifications of emperors, sages and ascetics, and relics seen elsewhere in late-ancient sources. Indeed, the resemblance between this passage and the excerpt from the De Mysteriis that began this chapter is striking: heroes, light, and irresistible/uncanny beauty (kallos amēchanon) are present in both.

The kallos amēchanon with which Julian endows Marcus rewards concentrated attention. In Julian’s many works the noun, kallos, possesses a variety of meanings. It often refers to the physical beauty of either men or women.26 Moral excellence, as had been the case for centuries, is also an attribute of kallos. As noted above, Hermes asked Marcus Aurelius what he thought the most beautiful ambition in life was. Julian also has occasion to mention the “beauty of deeds” and “true beauty of the soul”27 and in the following passage from the opening to the first panegyric to Constantius II

Cf. Lamberton’s remarks on Plotinus’ resort to light to describe the One (1986: 90).
25. See chapter three for discussion of Ammianus Marcellinus’ famous depiction of the adventus of Constantius II to Rome in 357.
26. E.g., 1.7.16/9B; 1.35.37–38/43D; 2.5.13/109C; 2.5.20/109D; 2.17.32/127B; 12.14.11–12/346A.
27. 1.38.16/47B: κάλλος πράξεων; 12.20.38/351A: ψυχῆς ἀληθινὸν κάλλος.
Chapter One

(employing the for all practical purposes identical substantive form of the adjective kalos), Julian shows the close association that beauty can have with moral excellence, here denoted by the word aretē:

There is an ancient directive taught by him who first revealed philosophy to men [it is unclear whom Julian has in mind] and it goes thus: all who are looking to virtue (aretēn/ἀρετήν) and beauty/the beautiful (to kalon/τὸ καλὸν) must make it a habit in their words, deeds, and dealings with others, in short, in all affairs of life, great and small, to aim in every way at beauty (to kalou/τοῦ καλοῦ). Now who of those who have a mind would deny that virtue (aretē/ἀρετή) is the most beautiful (kalliston/κάλλιστον) thing of all? (1.2.1–7/3C–D)28

In addition to earthly beauty and moral excellence, kallos also designates cosmic transcendent beauty. In the context of quantifying a understanding of this kallos of Marcus Aurelius, whose body Julian compares to light, it is of interest that Julian associates transcendent beauty with the sun/Helios in his prose hymn to this god.29 He repeatedly notes that the sun god is the source of the noetic/intelligible30 beauty that illumines the visible world.31 And in the eighth oration (the prose hymn to the Mother of the Gods32), the bestowal of form on a formless world that Julian represents

---

28. Νόμος ἐστὶ παλαιὸς παρὰ τοῦ πρώτου φιλοσοφίαν ἀνθρώποι φήματος οὐτωσὶ κείμενος· ἀπαντάς πρὸς τὴν ἀρετήν καὶ πρὸς τὸ καλὸν βλέποντας ἐπιτηδεύειν ἐν λόγοις, ἐν ἔργοις, ἐν ἐξουσίαις, ἐπὶ τάσιν ἄπλος τοῖς κατὰ τὸν βίον μικρός καὶ μείζονς τοῦ καλοῦ πάντως ἐφίεσθαι. Πάντων δὲ ὅτι κάλλιστον ἀρετή, τίς ἂν ἡμῖν τῶν νοῦν ἐχόντων ἀμφισβητήσει; 29. Written in 362, the eleventh oration, the prose hymn To King Helios, shows Helios associated with the absolute and inaccessible, while also placed in the sensible world as both the visible sun and mediator between this world and the absolute. Among Julian’s salient preoccupations in this oration are the connections between the invisible and visible, the transcendent and embodied, and the soul and body (e.g., 11.37/152B). For more on this oration, see Elm 2012: 286–99; Smith 2012; Smith 1995: 139–59; Athanassiadi 1981: 147–52. 30. Within late-Platonic thought generally (and quot scriptores, tot historiae), there is the sensible world in which humans live and then “above” are what the late Platonists call the intellectual (noerai νοεροί) and intelligible (noetoi/νοητοί) hypostases (and “above” these is the One). Gods who have dealings with the sensible world populate the intellectual hypostasis. When saying that the sun is the source of the beauty that sheds its radiance on the world, Julian places the sun or Helios in the intellectual hypostasis. Gods in the intelligible hypostasis are beyond human ken, as is, of course, the One. For more on Late Platonism (or Neoplatonism), see, e.g., Rappe 2000, Sells 1994, Lilla 1992, or Wallis 1995/1972. 31. 11.43.9/156D: μεταδίδον τῷ φαινομένῳ παντὶ τοῦ νοητοῦ κάλλους, cf., e.g., 11.24.7–8/145A; 11.24.10/145A; 11.24.16/145B; 11.30.5/149A; 11.43.5/156D. 32. Julian probably composed Oration 8 in the spring of 362. It consists, for the most part, of a searching reading of the myth of Attis and the Mother of the Gods (aka Cybele—a name which Julian does not use in the oration). There is a lengthy section at the end of the oration in which Julian discusses which foods can be eaten to secure ritual purity. The combination of the relentlessly corpo-
allegorically through the demigod Attis’ fevered self-castration is a bringing of beauty \((\textit{kallos})\) to the mire that is this earthly domain:

But is not Attis the one who not long ago was out of his mind, but who is now through his castration the one called wise? Yes, out of his mind because he preferred matter and presides over generation, but wise because he adorned and transformed this dung [our earth], with such beauty \([\textit{kallos}/\kappa\alpha\lambda\lambda\sigma]\) as no human art or intelligence could imitate. (8.19.23–28/179C–D)\(^{33}\)

Accordingly, then, Julian’s use of the word \textit{kallos} calls to mind a number of things at once: physical beauty of persons, moral excellence, and powers emanating from the cosmos. But Marcus’ beauty is also irresistible or uncanny, \textit{amēchanon}. This adjective proves to be interesting.

In Julian’s œuvre, \textit{amēchanos} often conveys a notion of divine, or nearly divine, invincibility. It accordingly is most useful in panegyrical situations, and not surprisingly appears in Julian’s speech of praise to empress Eusebia, the wife of Constantius II. Julian asserts that Constantius took care that was \textit{amēchanos} to ensure that he and his brother Gallus were not killed when the rest of his side of the family was slaughtered in 337 after Constantine I died:

He seized me from dangers so great that not even “a man in the strength of his youth” [\textit{Iliad} 12.382] could have, indeed, successfully fled away from them, unless he obtained some means of safety divine and irresistible/uncanny \((\textit{amēchanon}/\acute{\alpha}μηχάναν)\). (2.12.2–4/117D–118A)\(^{34}\)

Julian also uses this word to designate things that defeat human efforts to understand how they work: \textit{amēchanos} twice denotes, in hyperbolic fashion,

---

33. "Ἄττις δὲ οὐχ οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ μικρῷ πρόσθεν ἄφρων, νῦν δὲ ἀκούων διὰ τὴν ἐκτομήν σοφός; Ἀφρών μὲν ὅτι τὴν ὕλην εἵλατο καὶ τὴν γένεσιν ἐπιτροπεύει, σοφὸς δὲ ὅτι τὸ σκύβαλον τούτο εἰς κάλλος ἐκόσμησε καὶ τοσοῦτον μετέστησεν ὅσον οὐδεμία μιμήσαι τοιῷδε καὶ σύνεσις.

34. κινδύνων τε ἐξ ἑξήρπασε τηλικοῦτων, οὐς “οὐδὲ ἤβαψιν ἀνήρ” εὐ μάλα διαφύγοι μὴ θείας τινώς καὶ ἀμηχάνου σωτηρίας τυχῶν.
military divisions that are not able to be reckoned up in Julian’s second panegyric to Constantius. Amēchanos is the speed of thought in the consolation Julian wrote to himself on the departure of his friend Saloustios, and, in a moment of self-panegyric in the “Letter to the Athenians,” Julian characterizes the velocity of his crossing the empire’s North after he was declared emperor as amēchanos. Amēchanos also appears, showing an extension from the meanings hitherto offered for it, when Julian speaks of the human body in his oration, To the Uneducated Cynics:

Now then, there are parts of a body such as eyes, feet, and hands but also hair, nails, and excrement—a sort of class of superfluities—that accompany them, and without these things the human body is an impossible (amēchanon/amēχανον) thing. (9.10.1–4/189B)

If the body were not to include that which is destined to flake, fall off, or be expelled (and this is tantamount to envisioning a body that will neither decay nor exhibit natural processes), then this body, irresistible/uncanny to intellection, will no longer be human: it will be divine.

Applying the adjective amēchanos to Marcus Aurelius’ kallos, Julian attributes to it, then, uncanniness, impossibility, irresistibility, and divinity—which is to underscore what is present already in the word kallos. But there remains another facet to amēchanos and it appears in the Helios hymn. The beauty (kallos) that emanates into the world from the One comes into existence in company with an irresistible or uncanny (amēchanos) power:

[A]t any rate, this uncompounded cause of the whole universe (in accordance with the primal creative essence that abides in it) revealing to all

35. 3.11.10/62B; 3.11.42/63B.
36. 4.5.28/247A.
37. 5.2.5/269D: ἀμήχανῳ τάχει.
38. Julian wrote his ninth oration, To the Uneducated Cynics, mid-year in 362. It was a sequel to the seventh oration, which is discussed later in this chapter. This work was an “instructional treatise on how to lead a life pleasing to the gods, this time [as opposed to the more polemical orientation of the seventh oration] by pointing out how one ought to prepare for the true philosophical life, in contrast to that led by uneducated Cynics” (Elm 2012: 136). Julian recommends much paideia and is critical of what he sees as the Cynics’ overemphasis on the body and neglect of the mind. Also see Elm 2012: 136–39; Marcone 2012; Billerbeck 1996: 216–20; Krueger 1996: 232–34; Smith 1995: 49–90; Athanassiadi-Fowden 1981: 137–41.
39. Οὐκοῦν ἐπειδὴ σώματος μέρη μὲν ἐστίν, οἷον ὀφθαλμοί, πόδες, χεῖρες, ἄλλα γε ἐπίσμηβαινε, τρίχες, ἰνυχες, ρύπος, τοιούτων περιττωμάτων γένος, ὡν ἄνευ σώμα ἀνθρώπινον ἀμήχανον εἶναι.
things in existence beauty (kallous/κάλλους), perfection, oneness/unity, and irresistible/uncanny (amēchanou/ἀμηχάνου) power—[this uncompounded cause] brought forth into the light Helios, the greatest god, proceeding from himself and in all things like unto himself, as middle cause out of the middle, intellectual, and demiurgic causes. (11.5.12–17/132D–133A)40

The primal uncompounded cause produces the god Helios/the sun as the middle term linking all things in the universe to one another.41 For Julian the sun is both a physical object (in the sky sending material warmth) but also a transcendent entity remote from this material world, associated not only with the gods of the Pantheon but also with the principle of reality transcendent even of them. Both sensible (disclosing things to sight and giving warmth), and yet utterly evanescent and instantaneous in its action, light is the perfect attribute for this god who is both physical body in the sky and transcendent entity. The combination of light, beauty, and irresistibility attending Helios strongly recalls the kallos amēchanon of Marcus Aurelius and what Iamblichus says about divinity.

Not only intertextual with Iamblichus’ De Mysteriis, kallos amēchanon in the Caesares is also intertextual with Plato’s Symposium and Charmides. A further instance of Julian’s frequent engagement with Plato throughout his writings,42 intertextuality with these highly glamorous Platonic texts puts a further sheen on an already otherworldly Marcus. The contents of this dazzlement are worth close inspection. Plato does not function merely as a gorgeous accessory; this intertextuality with Plato was interpretable then, because of paideia, and, of course, now. Reading this section of the Caesares with Plato creates Marcus Aurelius as both the Socrates of Alcibiades’ longing in the Symposium and the Charmides of Socrates’ (possible) longing in the Charmides. Marcus’ masculine transcendent glamour is inflected with same-sex sexual attractiveness, and, to the extent that Marcus is associated with Socrates, who is both subject and object of desire, and of

40. αὕτη δὴ οὖν ἡ μονοειδὴς τῶν ὅλων αἰτία, πᾶσι τοῖς οὖσιν ἐξηγουμένη κάλλους τε καὶ τελειότητος ἐνώσεως τε καὶ δυνάμεως ἀμηχάνου, κατὰ τὴν ἐν αὐτῇ μένουσαν πρωτουργὸν οὐσίαν, μέσον ἐκ μέσων τῶν νοερῶν καὶ δημιουργικῶν αἰτιῶν ῞Ηλιον θεὸν μέγιστον ἀνέφηνεν ἐξ εαυτοῦ πάντα ὅμοιον [ἐν] εαυτῷ.

41. For more on the middleness (μεσότητα) of Helios and his consequent mediating function, see 11.3.11–14.5/138D–139A. Also see Elm (2012: 293–97) and Smith (1995: 148–51).

42. While dubious about the depth of Julian’s knowledge of Plato, Bouffartigue (1992: 170–97) lists 81 references to Plato throughout Julian’s works. The passages discussed here don’t appear in Bouffartigue’s helpful survey. The addition of these increases Bouffartigue’s total of 81 to at least 82, if not 83 (if amēchanon is regarded as attached to both the Symposium and Charmides).
course with the exorbitantly good-looking object, Charmides, then to this extent Marcus is likewise both subject and object of desire.43

Before proceeding with the argument, however, it is necessary to explain why same-sex desire, instead of pederastic desire, is the term used in this discussion based in Plato’s texts. In the first place, the perceptible intertextuality of Julian’s text with those of Plato is an employment of golden-age Athenian pederasty to speak of relations between men: both Marcus Aurelius and the presumed audience for the Caesares are adult men. The desire rendered visible in Julian’s text, stripped of asymmetries of age, is no longer pederastic and better described as same-sex. Second, it is true that if Plato’s texts were the sole object in view, pederastic desire, as it is commonly understood, would be the correct term for the most part. Male/male desire in the Platonic corpus is generally desire of an older male for a younger one; prevalent are the asymmetries of age, societal position, and, it seems, sexual role. That said, this picture of Platonic same-sex desire from the secondary literature, while acceptable much of the time, is overconfident. Alcibiades’ attempt at seduction (to be seen shortly) problematizes the asymmetries asserted for Platonic pederasty. Agathon and Pausanias, both adult, appear in the Symposium, and their doing so puts the question to the insistence that it was an adolescent on the verge of manhood and a man with a full beard who exhaust the visibility of male/male sexual desire in representations from the Platonic corpus and, indeed, Athens.44 The kallos amēchanon that Julian takes from Plato and attributes to Marcus Aurelius also raises this question: associated with both Socrates and Charmides, Marcus comes to seem both subject (erastēs) and object (erōmenos) of desire. Awareness, in late antiquity and now, of Plato at the point of reception of Julian’s text makes perceptible same-sex desire that lacks the supposedly necessary asymmetries of age and activity, the presence of which is already under some question in Plato’s text anyway. Hence, speaking of male same-

43. The Charmides also appears in Julian’s fourth oration, his self-consolation on the departure of his friend Salutius (=Saloustios). See my “Erotics and Friendship in Emperor Julian’s Fourth Oration” (2010) for an extended discussion of this oration.

44. For the presence of asymmetry in sexual role and in age in Athenian pederasty, see, e.g., Halperin 1990, Winkler 1990, or Dover 1978. With some controversy, James Davidson has twice (2001, 2007) asserted (contra this orthodoxy) that scholars have found too much sexual activity, and anal penetration especially, in the works of Plato (while Davidson does for the most part leave in place asymmetry of age). The asymmetries dear to the orthodoxy are often perceptible in Plato’s works, and the presence of sexual activity is undeniable both if relevant comparanda such as Aristophanes are brought to bear, and if the possibility of (nearly) complete ironization of expressions of desire is sensibly rejected. In any case, evidence of the indeterminacy of real life is visible in Plato’s works. Depictions of desire and sexual agency on the part of young men who are supposed to be passive according to the norms are there to be seen.
sex desire is a more accurate way to proceed, as a normative understanding of Athenian pederasty is not sufficient to explain the phenomena under discussion in Julian’s text or, some of the time, in the texts of Plato.

Toward the end of the Symposium, a boisterously drunk Alcibiades bursts into the party. He tells tales and hearkens back to the time he wanted to seduce Socrates. In his narration, Alcibiades tells Socrates he will give his body to him because Socrates is the only man worthy to be his lover. Alcibiades is willing to take teasing from persons who just don’t understand, for he knows that such an association will make him a better person. Socrates refuses the offer on the basis of a characteristic (for him) hierarchization of embodied and disembodied beauties, speaking of his own disembodied *amēchanon kallos* as greater than Alcibiades’ own embodied *kallos*. Socrates, however, also characteristically undercut this hierarchization through the “ironical simplicity”45 that inflects his reply. Alcibiades speaks first:

“‘I would be ashamed much more before thoughtful persons at not gratifying such a man [as you] than I would be ashamed before the many unthoughtful ones when I had gratified him.’ Having heard me out, he [Socrates] responded with that pronounced and customary ironical simplicity of his: ‘My dear Alcibiades, it seems likely that you are not incorrect, if what you are saying about me is true and there is some power in me through which you can be made better. You would surely be seeing in me some irresistible/uncanny beauty (*amēchanon* . . . *kallos*/ἀμήχανον . . . κάλλος*) and one decisively surpassing the handsomeness you possess. And if you’re trying to barter your own beauty for the beauty you have found in me, you are aiming to get much from me for but a little: you’re trying to exchange the semblance of beauty for the thing itself, in truth *bronze for gold* [sc. *Iliad* 6.232–36].’” (*Smp*. 218D–219A)46

Socrates’ remarks about hierarchized beauties might at first seem all too familiar, in essence a mini-replay of the “ladder of love” (210A–211C) that

---

45. “Ironical simplicity” is Michael Joyce’s apt phrase from his translation of the Symposium (Hamilton and Cairns 1971: 570).

46. "ἐγὼ δὴ τοιούτῳ ἀνδρὶ πολὺ μᾶλλον ἂν μὴ χαριζόμενος αἰσχυνοίμην τοὺς φρονίμους, ἢ χαριζόμενος τοὺς τε πολλοὺς καὶ ἄφρονους.· Καὶ οὗτος ακούσας μάλα εἰρωνικῶς καὶ σφόδρα ἐσωτερικῶς ἐν τούτῳ τε καὶ εἰσοδήμῳ ἔλεξε, ‘Ἰω φίλε Ἀλκιβιάδη, κινδυνεύεις τῷ ὑπὲρ σοῦ φαύλους εἶναι, ἐπεὶ ἀληθῆ τυγχάνει οὐτα ἑκάτερας περὶ ἔμου, καὶ τις ὑπὸ ἐμοὶ δύναμις δι’ ἧς ἂν σὺ γένοις ἀμήχανον τοῦ κάλλους ὀραίας ἂν ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ τῆς παρὰ σοι εὐμορφίας πάμπολυ διαφέρειν. εἰ δὴ καθορῶν αὐτὸ κοινόνασθαι τέ μοι ἐπιχειρεῖς καὶ ἀλλάξασθαι κάλλος ἀντὶ κάλλους, οὐκ ἄλγει μοι πελεοντεκτίν διανοοῦ, ἀλλ’ ἀντὶ δόξας ἀλλήλιαν καλῶν κτάσθαι ἐπιχειρεῖς καὶ τῷ ὑπὸ χρύσας χαλκεῖων διαμειβεῖσθαι νοεῖς.’"
The “ironical simplicity” of Socrates’ reply naturally signals, for it is ironic, something at odds with the surface meaning of the words. Alcibiades accordingly makes his move which accomplishes nothing, as is known. But Alcibiades’ sexual strike-out does not matter for the present analysis. Socrates’ ironic mode raises questions about how serious he is about his disembodied \textit{amēchanon kallos} and suggests how much stock others are putting in his ostensible valuation of it; why otherwise would Alcibiades suspect that this might be a moment for saying one thing while meaning another? The hierarchy of disembodied beauty and its physical counterpart is ironized: it seems that where the former is the latter is never far away. Indeed, it appears possible to climb up \textit{and} down the ladder of love. It is of course possible that Alcibiades is lying.\footnote{Mark Jordan (2006: 29–32) considers the interesting ramifications of understanding Alcibiades’ speech as a misrepresentation.} But even if this interesting interpretative position is taken up, abstract and physical beauties remain entangled in unstable counterpoint in a canonic work of great influence in late antiquity. And the fact of this unstable counterpoint is the point to take away: this disembodied \textit{amēchanon kallos} found itself in company with a sexual approach and encouraged it.

\textit{Kallos amēchanon} is also found in the \textit{Charmides}, when the extravagently handsome Charmides discountenances Socrates with a glance that is \textit{amēchanon}. Indeed, seemingly with only the greatest of efforts does this dialogue settle in and down to being an inconclusive, and ironic, investigation of temperance (\textit{sōphrosynē}).

When Charmides arrives at the palaestra of Taureas (the setting for the dialogue\footnote{Chrm. 153A.} and, therefore both a homosocial and [potentially] sexually charged place where males exercised in various stages of undress\footnote{The following exchange between Chaerephon and Socrates underscores that the palaestra was a place where the removal of clothing was unremarkable:}), featured earlier in Diotima’s remarks. But the “ironical simplicity” and what happens next indicate complexities; hearing Socrates’ protestations as coy, Alcibiades moves in to take what he thinks he has made his own:

“Having heard and spoken these things, and having shot my arrows, as it were, I thought that he had been wounded. And having gotten up and not allowing him to say another word, I wrapped my cloak around him. . . .” \textit{(Smp. 219B)}\footnote{Ἑγὼ μὲν δὲ ταῦτα ἀκούσας τε καὶ εἰπών, καὶ ἀφεὶς ὥσπερ βέλη, τετρῶσθαι αὐτὸν ᾤμην· καὶ ἀναστάς γε, οὐδ᾿ ἐπιτρέπας τούτῳ εἰπεῖν οὐδὲν ἔτι, ἀμφιέσας τὸ ἱμάτιον τὸ ἐμαυτοῦ τοῦτον. . . .}
Socrates admits that “[Charmides] appeared marvelous to him on account of his stature and his beauty (kallos/κάλλος).” Chaerephon soon makes a similar point, saying that Charmides’ form is “all-beautiful” (154D: pan-kalos/πάγκαλος). Hearing that Charmides has a headache and wanting to get closer, Socrates decides to pass himself off as a doctor in possession of a remedy. Interested in relief, Charmides comes over and sits down, expectant. Socrates seems at a loss for words. Charmides then gives Socrates a glance that is irresistible/uncanny (amēchanon/ἀμήχανον), and Socrates, in the midst of these difficulties, happens to get a provocative glance inside Charmides’ cloak:

[And then, my noble friend, I saw what was inside his cloak and I was set ablaze. I was no longer in possession of myself . . . but all the same, since he had asked if I knew the remedy for his head, I somehow and with difficulty answered that I knew it. (Chrm. 155D–E)]

Now off his game, Socrates finds it hard to proceed with dialectic, and then, in time, the dialogue with pronounced irony turns into a lengthy and inconclusive discussion of sōphrosynē. The macro-motion of the dialogue suggests that it is difficult to move from the physical to the transcendent. Both remain in play and finality is not reached. Indeed, the remedy that

“What does the young man [Charmides] look like to you, Socrates?” [Chaerephon] said. “Handsome face, no?” “Super!” I said. “Yet,” he continued, “if he should be willing to disrobe [today], you will utterly forget his face, so all-beautiful is he as regards his form.” (Chrm. 154D)

Τί σοι φαίνεται ὁ νεανίσκος, ἔφη, ὦ Σώκρατε; οὐκ εὐπρόσωπος; ῾Υπερφυῶς, ἦν δ᾿ ἐγώ. Οὗτος μέντοι, ἔφη, εἰ ἠθέλοι ἀποδύναι, δόξει σοι ἀπρόσωπος εἶναι· οὕτως τὸ εἶδος πάγκαλός ἐστιν.

51. Chrm. 154C: ἐκεῖνος ἔμοι θαμμαστός ἐφάνη τὸ τε μέγεθος καὶ τὸ κάλλος.
52. Chrm. 155C:

Coming over, he [Charmides] sat between me and Critias and then I was indeed at a loss, my friend, and my former boldness had been knocked out of me—the boldness that I had that it would be possible for me to speak with him with consummate ease.

ὁ δ᾿ ἐλθὼν μεταξὺ ἐμοῦ τε καὶ τοῦ Κριτίου ἐκαθέζετο. ἐνταῦθα μέντοι, ὦ φίλε, ἐγώ ἐξηγή ἡπόρουν, καὶ μου ἡ πρόσθεν δρασάτης ἐξεκόπτο, ἐγὼ εἶχον ἐγὼ ὡς πάνω ραδίως αὐτῷ διαλεξόμενος.

53. Chrm. 155D: he gazed upon me with those eyes of his with a sort of irresistible/uncanny (amēchanon) look . . . (ἐνέβλεψε τέ μοι τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἀμήχανον τι οἶον . . .)
54. τότε δὴ, ὦ γεννάδα, εἰδὼν τε τὰ ἐντός τοῦ ιματίου καὶ ἐφλεγόμην καὶ οὐκέτ᾿ ἐν ἐμαυτοῦ ἦν . . . ὅμως δὲ αὐτῷ ἐρωτήσαντος, εἰ ἐπισταίμην τὸ τῆς κεφαλῆς φάρμακον, μόνος πως ἀπεκρινάμη πολὺ ἐπισταίμην.
55. Of course, Socrates is not really completely laid low by lust. But the conceit of this dialogue is that sexual desire (and desire between males at that) is able to disable the pursuit of virtue, even
Socrates offers Charmides for his headache can likewise be seen as a metaphor for this macro-motion. The remedy consists of a leaf (*phyllon*/*φύλλον*) and a spell (*epōidē*/*ἐπῳδή*), which shows that this therapy has material and immaterial aspects to it, both of which are necessary for it to be efficacious.⁵⁶ Alcibiades’ embodied and Socrates’ disembodied beauties may come to mind at this point; similar to what happens in the *Symposium*, the *Charmides* features an enmeshment of the physical and the transcendent.⁵⁷ as it is connected over and over to just such a thing: at the beginning of the dialogue, Socrates asks “about the young men, whether any of them might be excelling in wisdom, beauty, or both” (153D: *περὶ . . . τῶν νέων, εἴ τινες ἐν αὐτοῖς διαφέροντες ἢ σοφία ἢ κάλλει ἢ ἀμφότεροι ἐγγεγονότες εἶεν*). This dialogue is, in a sense and typical of Plato, a tribute to the connection of desire for wisdom with that for bodies.

⁵⁶. *Chrm.* 155E.

⁵⁷. *Kallos amēchanon* is in Plato’s *Republic* at 6.509A. In the lead-in to this passage, Socrates explains to Glaukon how the soul betters itself by focusing on things beyond the material world (6.508D). He also speaks of “the Good” as the source of knowledge and truth and how it is greater than both of them. He employs a metaphor of the sun and its relation to light and vision to explain how the Good is related to knowledge and truth:

But with regard to knowledge and truth, just as in the present instance it is right to consider light and vision sun-like but it is an error to believe that they are the sun, it is right to consider these two good-like, but it is not right to believe that either of them is the Good, and even more must the enduring existence of the Good be honored. (*R.* 6.508E–509A)

> ἐπιστήμην δὲ καὶ ἀλήθειαν, ὡσπερ ἐκεί φῶς τε καὶ ὄμος ἡλιοειδῆ μὲν νομίζειν ὀρθῶν, ἣλιον δὲ ἡγεῖσθαι οὐκ ὀρθῶς ἔχει, οὕτω καὶ ἐνταῦθα ἀγαθοειδῆ μὲν νομίζειν ταῦτα ἀμφότερα ὀρθῶν, ἀγαθὸν δὲ ἡγεῖσθαι ὀπότερον αὐτῶν οὐκ ὀρθῶν, ἀλλὰ ἐτί μειζόνως τιμητέον τὴν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἕξιν.

Given that *kallos amēchanon* appears presently, the mention of light suggests that this passage also could have been in Julian’s mind (and that this passage could have come into the mind of an educated late-ancient reader of the *Caesares*). In any case, that which follows is revelatory of the enmeshment of this phrase, *kallos amēchanon*, in an erotic dynamic, even as it designates the transcendent. Having heard the words above, Glaukon remarks:

> “You speak of an irresistible/uncanny beauty (*amēchanon kallos*),” he said, “if it gives us knowledge and truth, and yet it is above/beyond them in beauty (*kallei*). You surely don’t say that it is pleasure.” (*R.* 6.509A)

> Ἀμήχανον κάλλος, ἔφη, λέγεις, εἰ ἐπιστήμην μὲν καὶ ἀλήθειαν παρέχει, αὐτὸ δ᾿ ύπερ ταῦτα κάλλει ἑστίν· οὐ γὰρ δήπου σύ γε ἡδονὴν αὐτὸ λέγεις.

Glaukon’s jump to pleasure (*hēdonē*) is more than likely physical, is difficult to square with the thrust of the text up to this point. Has Glaukon not been listening as carefully as he might have? Socrates has been insisting that value is something beyond physical things. Socrates’ immediate reaction (509A: “Hush!” *euphēmei*) shows that Glaukon has said something that he should not have. But said it he did and his saying so underlines the way in which this particular phrase, *kallos amēchanon*, even as it seems to designate things disembodied, puts the corporeal in play. And so, the connection between disembodied virtue and the physical, and surely tending in the direction of sexual matters on account of the use of the word *hēdonē*, is present here as it is in both the *Symposium* and *Charmides*. Once again, awareness of a Platonic intertext suggests a physical and erotic dimension to the admiration of Julian’s Marcus Aurelius.
When both intertexts inflect an understanding of Julian’s Marcus Aurelius (one moment Marcus is Socrates and the next he is Charmides), Julian will be seen to trope admiration for his hero as same-sex desire and to borrow the intensity of sexual excitement—for the corporeal remains in play—to render his predecessor even more glamorous. It is a borrowing, via intertextual means, of the real and existent to make his hero and admiration for him more lively and compelling. Since Marcus, an adult male, appears to be both subject and object of desire, however, does this glamorization of his masculine profile perhaps promise part-time shameful passivity? In a word, no. As there seems to be no shame here and instead a profusion of honor, looking for losers to blame and winners to crown is a mistake. The protocols of honor and shame asserted for ancient male/male sexual desire and relations don’t inform these intertextual dynamics. But the question of honor/shame aside, men having it off with men was not an approved activity either. The question may be asked as to why evocation of these real pleasures and desires should add to the sheen—otherworldly like “light itself, most pure and stainless”—of Marcus Aurelius’ auctoritas or axiōma/ἀξίωμα.

A quick answer to this question is that use of paradox to depict the transcendent and holy was just in the air. Matter was an expression of the transcendent in Iamblichus’ reformulation of the pagan religious practices of prayer and blood sacrifice as theurgy.58 The transcendent worthiness of a saint was said to be present in the fragmentary materiality of his or her relics.59 It would be possible, accordingly, to compare the paradoxical use

58. Reacting to the devaluation of matter by the late-Platonists Plotinus and Porphyry, Iamblichus put Platonism on a new footing that, going forward, saw matter as paradoxically implicated in the transcendent (and vice-versa). Sacrifice and the material practices of pagan worship were now theurgy, or “God-Work,” which could put religious persons in touch with sacred and transcendent divinity in a way not able to be described logically. Shaw puts it well: “Iamblichan Platonism, with its emphasis on theurgy, succeeded in incorporating pagan religious rites into the intellectual edifice of Platonism while, at the same time, infusing the Platonic school with the vitality of popular cultic practices” (1995: 17). For general discussion of theurgy, see Shaw 1985 and 1993 (in addition to 1995); Struck 2004: 210–213; Van Liefferinge 1999; Johnston 1997; Smith 1995: 91–113; Luck 1989; Fowden 1986: 116–41 and 1982; Wallis 1995/1972: 100–123; Lewy 1978/1956; RE: Theurgie. Dodds (1951: 283–93), superseded in the matter of the distinction between magic and theurgy, is helpful on the mechanics of sacrifice and ritual conceived as theurgy.

59. Similar to the theorization of theurgy (and, as will be seen, that of myths), the discourse around the veneration of saints and their relics, developing in the course of the fourth century, identified a series of coincidences between the physical (profane) with transcendent (sacred). There was an existent economy that guaranteed that what one saw, whether, say, dried blood or bone, was something greater. There was a connection between this world and the next; a way to the transcendent holiness of the saints was through their poor remains, their relics. Victricius’ late-fourth-century sermon, De Laude Sanctorum, is a key text in this regard. For discussion of this work and of relics more generally, see Brown 1981; Miller 1998a, 2000b, 2004, 2005b: passim, but 44–50, 2005c: passim,
of disavowed pleasure and desire to theorizations of theurgy and relics. But since Julian calls the *Caesares a mythos*, the discourse around the valuing of myths fits better (and makes poetic sense). The process of rescuing myths from disapprobation entailed finding indubitable value in physical matters (including sexual ones) that were usually the object of moralizing solicitude. The treatise, *De Deis et Mundo*, of Julian’s friend, Saloustios, and Julian’s own seventh oration (*Against Heracleius*) provide accounts of the paradoxical value myths have. Julian’s seventh oration also features masculine self-presentation—embodied by a representation of the cynic Diogenes and by Julian himself in his speaking voice and in the *mythos* he tells of his life—that ignores the opinions of society to hitch its star to a reality lively and paradoxically beyond earthly morals. Indeed, the impression that Julian makes in the seventh oration recalls the idealized portrait he offers of Marcus Aurelius in *Caesares*: the liveliness of the corporeal in counterpoint with the celestial creates a paradoxical glamour that is most assuredly irresistible and transcendent because earthbound logic cannot account for it.

SALOUSTIOS AND JULIAN ON THE PROPER USE OF MYTHS

There had been questions raised about the appropriateness of myths from an early date in antiquity, and indeed well before Rome was much of anything. 60 Myths feature care-free carnality, criminality, and lack of control: things hardly to be encouraged among mere mortals. Plato famously questions the value of myths in the *Republic* but, within this work and others, he uses mythic material and modes to illustrate and present his arguments. 61 But even as questions were raised over the centuries, the stories of the Olympic pantheon, and the crude ones especially, never lacked for apologists. If something seemed immoral or too carnal, this was a call for further interpretation and not wholesale rejection. 62 What to do with and about myths were critical questions because of the centrality of mythic

---

60. E.g., Xenophanes faults myths for their anthropomorphism in the sixth century B.C.E.
62. Feeney (1991) provides an overview of the mixed reactions that the adulteries and other connivances of the Olympians evoked in ancient readers and critics. Also see Brisson (2004) for the debates in and between the various philosophical schools over the value of myths. Lamberton’s (1986) discussion of the reception of Homer among the late-Platonists is illuminating on the status of myths in late antiquity.
material to the ancient world in all its facets: in addition to their role in religion, myths provided a storehouse of images and metaphors in constant use in all media, and major texts learned in paideia were drenched in myth.

With the coming of Christian ascendency, the status of myths and the stories of the Olympic Pantheon became more problematic. There were wholesale attacks on myths in works such as Arnobius’ *Adversus Gentes* (c. 300) and Firmicus Maternus’ *De Errore Profanarum Religionum* (mid-fourth century). In response, late-Platonists intensified interpretive pressure on myths, in essence doubling down on prior approaches: contradiction was no longer something to be explained away but, rather, to be embraced. The late-ancient defense of myths not only tolerates the disjunction between surface aspect (obscenity) and asserted value (sanctity) of the myths, but finds this disjunction a choice indicator of the transcendent. As is the case with other discourses that could have been discussed in this context (i.e., justifications of theurgy, theorizations of the effects of relics), there is embrace of things that could be regarded as bad. This embrace reveals a realm indifferent to and greater than earthly moral strictures and understandings. Hence, the defense of these stories recalls the late-ancient embrace of same-sex desire and pleasure as a way to metaphorize manly admirability. This defense also increases authority’s credibility in a way similar to how brandishing knowledge of same-sex sexual behavior makes prohibiting authority grander: not limited by strictures of society, it is able to go anywhere.

In *De Deis et Mundo*, a short treatise written in the mid-fourth century on the gods, their relation to the world, and pagan religious practice, Saloustios defends myths.63 Saloustios is probably the major political figure, Saturninius Secundus Salutius,64 and, as noted above, perhaps Julian’s conversation partner in the *Caesares*. After stating that myths are divine (3.2: *theioi*/*θεῖοι*) in their nature, he asserts that words spoken about the

---

63. Nock’s (1926) lavish introduction to *De Deis et Mundo* and Clarke (1998: 341–47) were helpful for formulating this discussion of Saloustios (and the one of Julian’s seventh oration to follow). See Lamberton (1986: 139–43) also.

64. I believe it likely that Saloustios is Saturninius Secundus Salutius, Julian’s friend and an important man in the empire, to whom the army offered the imperial throne right after Julian’s death. There is debate, however. While there is authoritative opinion that Saloustios is Saturninius Secundus Salutius (e.g., Clarke 1998: 347–50; Rochefort 2003/1960: x–xxi; Nock 1926: ci), a mid-fourth-century political figure from Gaul, Flavius Sallustius has proponents (e.g., Jones 1971: 796), and still others regard the question as open (e.g., Brisson 2009). As the text is in Greek and the authorship question is not a burning one for the present argument, Saloustios, a transliteration of the Greek that appears in the text and which is a Greek rendering of either Salutius or Sallustius, is used.
The myths imitate the gods themselves according to what is speakable and unspeakable, according to what is invisible and visible, according to what is obvious and hidden; they also imitate the goodness of the gods—because, just as the gods have made the good from perceptible things for all persons and have made good things from things intellectual for the wise alone, so then the myths say to all that the gods exist but what they are and what their nature is, they say these things to those able to know alone. (3.3)\textsuperscript{66}

The likeness of myths to divinity registers in ways that can and cannot be articulated; myths have a pervasive and incomprehensible relationship to divinity, although the wisest can come to a rough estimation of its shape. Saloustios’ ambiguous language gestures to something existing outside the scope of human intellect and experience.

Continuing, Saloustios explains how myths force the mind into interpretation. Not just inert stories, they compel the mind to realization of sublime truth through their paradoxical embodiment of transcendent divinity:

But why have they spoken of adulteries, thefts, the binding of fathers, and other strangeness in the myths? Or is this also worthy to wonder over, namely, that on account of apparent strangeness the soul straightaway supposes the words a veil and believes the truth to be something unspeakable? (3.4)\textsuperscript{67}

Having posed a question as to why these stories are told at all, Saloustios answers it: these obscene and disreputable stories, out of place and strange, cause the soul to read them in ways opposite to their manifest content.\textsuperscript{68}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{65} ἐχρῆν καὶ τοὺς περὶ θεῶν λόγους ὁμοίους εἶναι ἐκεῖνοις.
\item \textsuperscript{66} αὐτοὺς μὲν οὖν τοὺς θεοὺς κατὰ τὸ ῥήτον τέ καὶ ἄρρητον, ἀφανὲς τε καὶ φανερόν, σαφὲς τε καὶ κρυπτόμενοι οἱ μύθοι μιμοῦνται, <καὶ> τὴν τῶν θεῶν ἀγαθότητα, ὅτι ὃσπερ ἐκεῖνοι τὰ μὲν ἐκ τῶν αἰσθητῶν ἄγαθά κοινά πάσιν ἐποίησαν, τὰ δὲ ἐκ τῶν νοητῶν μόνοις τοῖς ἔμφροσι, οὕτως οἱ μύθοι τὸ μὲν εἶναι Θεοὺς πρὸς ἀπαντας λέγουσι, τίνες δὲ οὕτως καὶ ὁποῖοι τοῖς δυναμένοις <μόνοις> εἰδέναι.
\item \textsuperscript{67} ἀλλὰ διὰ τὰ μισήσαι καὶ κλοπῆς καὶ πατέρων δεσμοῦς καὶ τὴν ἄλλην ἀτοπίαν ἐν τοῖς μέθοις εὑρίσκοιν; ἢ καὶ τούτο ἄξιον θαύματος, ἵνα διὰ τῆς φαινομένης ἀτοπίας εὐθὺς ἢ ψυχῆς τοὺς μὲν λόγους ἡγήσῃται προκαλύμματα, τὸ δὲ ἀληθές ἀπόρρητον εἶναι νομίσω; \textsuperscript{68}
\item \textsuperscript{68} Cf. Clarke 1998: 341; Lamberton 1986: 141.
\end{itemize}
head. Saloustios offers a surfeit of violence and bodily excess to function as a “chaste” covering for the unspeakable. The thing which is not able to be spoken is veiled by that which must not be spoken: the unspeakable unknowable is, as a result, metaphorized by the obscene. 69

It is worth emphasizing what has been occurring here. An embrace of the morally suspect enables an approach to what would normally be considered moral: divinity. A scale of value extending beyond earthbound morality, intellects, and experience is present. Saloustios translates the corporeal and material out of the earthly moral economy (where prevailing assumptions often associate them with immorality) into a transcendent existent one: an assertion about ontology forecloses ethical questions about myths. The moral concerns that carnal mythical scenes can evoke are beside the point as the myths lead the mind to perception of the more capacious reality, whose contours are greater than earthbound intellects and morals can comprehend. 70 The use of disavowed carnality recalls the way late-ancient manhood gains glamour and draws strength from its involvement with same-sex desire. The enlivening effects of corporeality direct the mind to value understood, through the power of paradox, as transcendent of corporeality. In his seventh oration, Julian also discusses this paradoxical dynamic and offers more details on its workings.

Written in early 362, Julian’s seventh oration, Against Heracleius, is a riposte to Heracleius, a Cynic who declaimed a myth at an imperial function. Hearers of Heracleius’ myth of Zeus and Pan understood these gods to be figures allegorical of Heracleius and Julian respectively (7.23/234C–D). 71 Julian’s taking exception to this allegorical myth leads him into reflections on how to understand and use myths. His notions accord with those of Saloustios. For Julian too, myths are paradoxically valuable through the fact that the more objectionable or puzzling their surface content, the more treasurable they are: paradox and puzzling incongruities indicate value and summon interpretation. Also, sprinkled throughout the speech are reflections on the Cynic way of life and a presentation of the Cynics, Diogenes and Crates, as free of the strictures of society and, yet, curiously deco-

---

70. Writing in the next century in Latin, Macrobius approaches myths in a similar way. He worries more, though, about the possible obscene content, preferring to reject stories out of hand (Comm. In Somn. Scip. 1.2.11). But even as he does so, he inflects his philosophizing with the carnal to such an extent that his comments meant to explain Nature call to mind a striptease and references to the father gods, castrated and not, call to mind male genitalia (Comm. In Somn. Scip. 1.2.17–18).
rous and pious (e.g., 7.8–9/212C–214A). Julian offers them as examples of a proper philosopher (and it is no coincidence that they resemble Julian). Julian contrasts these “good” Cynics to “bad” Cynics, Philiscus and Oenomaus (e.g., 7.6/210C–211A; 7.8/212A), and, of course, Heracleius. Even as he endorses the Cynic notion of “giv[ing] a new stamp to the currency,” he believes that these new Cynics are mistaken in their practice of physical short-cuts to realize the properly philosophical life. While the community standards are to be ignored to some extent, the recipe for philosophic success is not ostentatious somatic deviance but, Julian says, contemplative asceticism and paideia.\footnote{72} Over the course of the oration, Julian’s idealizing of the Cynic, as one who both stands apart from society and yet is somehow a decorous and obedient participant in it, generates considerable tension. While it was the case that the centuries had seen consistent efforts, especially by the Stoics, to idealize Cynics in general (and Diogenes in particular),\footnote{73} the more outrageously corporeal strategies of the Cynics were known to Julian\footnote{74} (and surely others), and, besides, these bad Cynics had to have learned how to behave badly from somewhere. In any case, this tension is mirrored in Julian’s statements about his modes of speaking and in his self-presentation in the speech. One minute Julian embraces words of Bacchic abandon but then, elsewhere, praises speech of rational clarity. At one moment his persona derives power from the common sense of a soldier and, at the next, from aretē produced by paideia, and then, intensifying the sense of vertigo in the reader, from divine possession by Dionysus. The tension attending both Julian’s modes of speaking and his persona increase his grandeur; his verbal effusiveness pours past any barrier, and who and what he is extends beyond all roles.\footnote{75}

\footnote{72. 7.20/226B–C: asceticism and contemplation; 7.23/235C–D: paideia.}
\footnote{73. For the idealization of the Cynics and Diogenes, see Billerbeck 1996; Krueger 1996; Smith 1995: 53–55.}
\footnote{74. See Or. 9.19/202B–C, for example.}
\footnote{75. For more on Against Heracleius, see Elm’s recent discussion (2012: 108–117). She gives welcome weight to Julian’s concerns with both the construction of the philosophic persona and the paradoxical nature and use of myths. Prior appraisals of the oration have tended to see other things in it. Controversy has centered on whether the oration was meant to be an exposition of religious syncretism in support of a revival of pagan religious practice (e.g., Athanassiadi 1981: 134–37) or whether it was a display piece composed to impress intimates (Smith 1995: 90). For the purposes of the present argument, the ultimate goal of the seventh oration does not matter so much. Whatever its purpose, the discussion of the effect of myths features serious language and concepts typical of late antiquity in much the same way the ostensibly jocular Caesares does. Van Liefferinge’s (1999: 227–33) and Clarke’s (1998: 341–42) comments on the seventh oration and the connections between it and Iamblichus’ conceptions are helpful (cf. Bouffartigue 1992: 337–45). Grasso (1996) on the incongruous (apemphainōn ἀπεμφάινων) spurring the late-ancient reader to interpretation is useful, as is Lamberton (1986) in general.}
A major feature of the latter part of the speech is the allegorical *mythos* of Julian's own life (7.22/227C–234C), which, Julian says, is the sort of thing Heracleius should have said (7.21/227B). In this *mythos*, a rich man's sons fall to fighting when he dies because they were not taught to be virtuous. Impiety then takes over the land. This myth is transparently a representation of the struggles among Constantine's sons and of the coming of Christianity to the empire. Significantly, the *mythos* has an inconsistent focus. Now it is a depiction of problems on an estate somewhere, then it shows a crisis embroiling the empire. Zeus, in any case, pities the family and finds a nephew of the rich man (the stand-in for Julian) worth saving. The nephew acquires divine sponsors in Helios, Athene, and Hermes. Hermes guides the young man to a mountain to meet Helios, and Athene provides arms. Helios teaches the disconsolate and initially reluctant young man that the world needs his leadership. The young man, now instructed in virtue and ready to do what needs doing, returns to society to bring it to a better state.

As Julian tells the reader/hearer that this tale of his life is a *mythos*, its puzzling aspects, as will be seen shortly, suggest that probing is in order, for this is what Julian says should be done when incongruities in a *mythos* are noticed. The struggles of the Constantinian dynasty after the death of Constantine and momentous change in religion in the late-ancient empire don't fit well with the small-bore size of the *mythos* (and the latter, the invocation of religious transformation, all but breaks allegory's spell), and this poor fit creates changes in focus that are, arguably, puzzling and which pull the reader/hearer in to resolve ambiguities. The argument to come will be that ambiguities inviting readerly engagement are perceptible not only in the *mythos*, they also are in the *mythos*’ ultimate object: Julian himself. Intertextuality with the story of the choice of Herakles (the hero, i.e., Julian, seems to choose the path of indolence) and with the *Iliad* (the hero is Helen, and taking up the duties of empire is allegorized as sleeping with Paris) adumbrate a complex masculine subjectivity that cannot be explained by reference to self-control and protocols of penetration alone. The excitement of carnal indulgence, i.e., Vice's road and sleeping with a prince of Troy, renders this subjectivity worthy to command an empire more lively, and its tarrying with the forbidden connects it to a scale of valuation greater than that of earthbound morals and standards. In sum, *Against Heracleius* offers both a theorization of the value of myths and an actual example of finding value in one.

A return to Julian’s *mythos* of his life and consideration of the paradoxes surrounding Julian himself are to come. First, however, Julian’s complaints about Heracleius’ story and his reflections on myths:
Not for the first time are you hearing the gods blasphemed! We don’t pursue our common interests so judiciously nor are we so temperate in private matters; indeed, we are not so lucky that we are able to keep our ears pure, or, in the final analysis, our eyes undefiled by the manifold impieties of this race of iron. In this moment, this dog [Heracleius the Cynic] has filled us, as though we had need of such evils, with impure words, depicting the best of the gods as he should never have, and as we should never have heard! (7.1/204D–205A)\textsuperscript{76}

The portrayal of Zeus as the Cynic Heracleius and of Pan as Julian was, Julian says, impious, unclean, and evil. This was not the first time Julian has heard such things from these false Cynics, these epitomes of the irreligious ferrous age. Julian then speaks of the nature of myths and their proper use.

Placing myths in relation to philosophy, which he divides into three parts, natural philosophy, practical philosophy and logic, which are in turn divided into three sections each,\textsuperscript{77} Julian states that *mythographia*\textsuperscript{μυθογραφία}, the written presentation of myths, is not appropriate to logic, physics, or mathematics, but is useful when philosophy turns to consideration of individuals, initiation, and mystery cults:

Now of these branches [of philosophy], logic has no concern with *mythographia*; nor do physics and mathematics; but, if at all, the part of practical philosophy which deals with the individual man, and the part of theology which deals with initiation and the Mysteries do [have something to do with *mythographia*]. (7.11/216B)\textsuperscript{78}

The myths with their often obscene contents (see below) are worthwhile because they tell people how to understand themselves as individuals and how to live and worship communally.

\textsuperscript{76} οὐ πρῶτον ἀκούεις τῶν θεῶν βλασφημουμένων, οὐχ οὕτω τὰ κοινά πράττομεν καλῶς, οὐχ οὕτω τὰν ἰδίων ἐνεκα σωφρονοῦμεν, οὐ μὴν οὐδὲ εὕτυχες οὕτως ἔσμεν ὡστε τὰς ἀκοὰς καθαρὰς ἔχειν ἢ τελευταῖον γοῦν τὰ δοματα μὴ κεχράνθαι τοῖς παντοδαποῖς τοιούτως τούτως τοῦ ἀνθρώπου γένους αἰσθήμασιν· ἐπεί δὲ ὡσπερ ἐνδεέες ἡμᾶς τῶν τοιούτως κακῶν ἀνέπλησεν οὐκ εὐσωμάτων ὁ κόσμων ῥήματος τὸν ἀριστον τῶν θεῶν ὀνομάσας, ὡς μήποτε ὅρθελε μήτε ἐκεῖνας ἐπείν μήτε ἡμεῖς ἀκούσας.

\textsuperscript{77} 7.10/215C–216A. Julian divides natural philosophy into theology, mathematics, and concepts related to both things perishable and things eternal in their essential natures, i.e., “physics.” Practical philosophy sees a division into individual ethics, the ethics of the household, and politics. Logic concerns itself with a) the truth of propositions (demonstrative logic), b) general opinions (polemical logic), and c) probabilities (eristic logic).

\textsuperscript{78} τούτων δὴ τῶν μερῶν οὔτε τῷ λογικῷ προσήκει τῇ μυθογραφίᾳ οὔτε τῷ φυσικῷ οὔτε τῷ μαθηματικῷ, μόνον δὲ, εἴπερ ἄρα, τοῦ πρακτικοῦ τῷ πρὸς ἔνα γινομένω καὶ τοῦ θεολογικοῦ τῷ τελεστικῷ καὶ μυστικῷ.
Continuing, Julian speaks about taking the measure of nature and the hidden quality of the divine, noting that both are elusive and that persons who are not pure (or discerning) will not be able to perceive them directly. All is not lost, though; the “unspeakable and unknown nature of charaktēres” and myths provide beneficent, if indirect, access:

Nature (\textit{physi}/*φύσις*) loves to hide itself, and the hidden-away essence of the gods does not allow itself to be flung in naked words into unpurified ears. With regards to this conundrum, the unspeakable and unknown nature of charaktēres was brought into being to help: it nourishes both souls and bodies and brings about the presence of the gods. Many times, I think, this comes about through the action of myths—whenever through riddles and in the company of the dramatic settings of myths, it (\textit{sc.} this unspeakable nature of charaktēres) is insinuated into the ears of the multitude who cannot receive divine things in their pure form. (7.11/216C–D)\textsuperscript{79}

Employing a tag from Heraclitus (“Nature loves to hide itself”\textsuperscript{80}) and thereby importing a bit of Pre-Socratic glamour, Julian says that nature does not yield its secrets easily and that divinity’s essence is likewise mysterious. Neither of them can be revealed as they truly are to most people; not initiated, the unworthy majority will not understand such communication. But it need not be the case that they learn nothing of nature or divine essence. “The unspeakable and unknown nature of charaktēres” (\textit{tōn charaktērōn hē aporrētos physis . . . kai agnooumenē/τῶν χαρακτήρων ἡ ἀπόρρητος φύσις . . . καὶ ἀγνοουμένη}) provides a means of communication. It is fitting that Julian uses the word charaktēr: it is polysemous (and extraordinarily difficult to translate) and therefore appropriate in the present circumstance. In \textit{LSJ} (χαρακτήρ II.2), “magical symbol” is suggested as the meaning for this precise passage and the suggestion does make a degree of sense. But the word is richer than that, and more meanings would have come to the mind of a fourth-century reader. Charaktēr can designate a letter of the alphabet, and Julian uses it with this meaning in his third oration (section 17/71D). Charaktēr can also mean “characteristic,” “pattern,” or even an “engraver” or a “mark engraved.” In a letter to the Alexandrians written in 362, taking them to task for lynching their bishop, Julian

\textsuperscript{79} φιλεῖ . . . η φύσις κρύπτεσθαι, καί τὸ ἀποκεκρυμμένον τῆς τῶν θεῶν οὐσίας οὐκ ἀνέχεται γυναικείαι εἰς ἀκαθάρτους ἀκοὰς ῥήμασιν. Ὅπερ δὲ δὴ τῶν χαρακτήρων ἡ ἀπόρρητος φύσις ὀφείλει πέρικε καὶ ἀγνοουμένη θεραπεύει γοῦν οὐ ψυχῆς μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ σώματα, καὶ θεῶν ποιεῖ παρουσίας τούτης ἀναπαύει πολλάκις γίγνεσθαι καὶ διὰ τῶν μύθων, ὅταν εἰς τὰς τῶν πολλῶν ἄκοις οὐ δυναμέναι τὰ θεῖα καθαρῶς δεῖξασθαι δι’ αἰνιγμάτων αὐτῶν μετὰ τῆς μύθων σκηνοποιίας ἐγγέχεται.

\textsuperscript{80} Frag. 123 (Diels): φύσις δὲ . . . κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ.
expresses the hope that their Greek heritage has put “a worthy and noble stamp (charaktēr) on [their] minds and habits.” As will be seen in discussion of the Vita Antonii in the next chapter, both Antony’s life conceived as a whole and Athanasius’ text itself provide a pattern, i.e., a charaktēr, that guides a potential or practicing ascetic in his vocation. Whatever the precise meaning of charaktēres, their “unspeakable and unknown nature” indicates in this passage from Julian’s oration so great a surfeit of mystery around nature and “the hidden-away essence of the gods” (to apokekrummenon tēn theōn ousias) that it spreads to the mode of communication meant to convey an understanding of them. His choice of this word, with its profusion of possibilities, redoubles all by itself the effects of the adjectives, “unspeakable” and “unknown,” making the surface of the valuable myths even more mysterious.

Having distinguished the surface of myths from their esteemed contents, Julian next tells how these myths with their riddling exteriors lead the hearer/reader to higher beneficent realizations. The incongruity between the surface of the myths and their asserted value spurs the mind to search for significance:

The incongruous element in myths by its very self leads to the truth. For the more paradoxical and monstrous the riddle is, the more it seems to bear witness that we should not believe simply the things said in it, but that we should, rather, expend our efforts on the hidden things, and not cease until, under the guidance of the gods, those hidden things, having become plain, initiate or, better, perfect our mind—without us forgetting that there exists something more powerful than our mind: a certain small particle of the One and the Good which contains everything indivisibly, embracing both the soul’s fulfillment [from the One] and comprehending in the One and the Good the whole of the soul itself through the prevailing, separate, and transcendent presence of It [i.e., the One].

---


82. Τὸ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς μῦθοις ἀπεμφαῖνον αὐτῷ τούτῳ προοδοποιεῖ πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν. Ὄσω γὰρ μᾶλλον παράδοξόν ἐστι καὶ τερατῶδες τὸ αἴνιγμα, τοσούτῳ μᾶλλον ἐοίκε διαμαρτύρεσθαι, μη τοῖς αὐτόθεν λεγομένοις πιστεύειν, ἀλλὰ τὰ λεληθότα περιεργάζεσθαι καὶ μὴ πρότερον ἀφίστασθαι, πρὶν ἂν ὑπὸ θεοῖς ἡγεμόσιν ἡγεσεῖν τὸν ἐν ἡμῖν τελεσθεῖν, μᾶλλον δὲ τελειώσῃ, νοῦν καὶ εἰ δὴ τι κρεῖττον ἐμῖν ὑπάρχει τοῦ νοοῦ, αὐτοῦ τοῦ ἑνὸς καὶ τὰ ἀνάπτυκτα, τὸ ἐν τῷ ἑνί καὶ τὰ ἀνάπτυκτα.
Inherently valuable through their relation to the gods and sacred truth, myths are also obscene things of mystery. The wise man, however, will recognize that the more obscene and monstrous a riddle the myth presents, then all the harder he should work for revelation of what has been hidden. Interaction with myths leads to an understanding of the pervasive presence of the divine in the world. This achieved understanding also initiates the mind and puts it on the road to perfection. The objectionable appearance offered by myths is valuable and what seems unworthy of welcome is to be welcomed. Enlivening corporeality—"monstrous" (teratōdes/τερατῶδες) and "incongruous" (apemphainon/ἀπεμφαῖνον), and what could be more "incongruous" with the singularity that is the One?—brings minds to enlightenment. But the wise one will also remember that mystery abides; he or she cannot understand everything. The embrace of the monstrous for the sake of divinity, of disorder for the sake of order, indicates a scale of value transcendent of earth-bound morals and logic; things exist prior to moral judgments and their liveliness, existent and indifferent to morals, lends mysterious, paradoxical, and frequently beneficent power to whatever they touch.


84. A similar performative discourse appears elsewhere in Julian’s works. In his eighth oration (Hymn to the Mother of the Gods), Julian sees the role of the reader as crucial whenever he or she is faced with the paradoxical contents of myths. Julian remarks that men of old “clothed” the truths of the universe “in paradoxical myths, so that through paradox and incongruity the fiction, detected, might turn us toward the search for truth” (8.10/170A–B: ἐσκέπασαν...μύθοις παραδόξοις, ἵνα διὰ τῶν παραδόξων καὶ ἀπεμφαίνοντος τὸ πλάσμα φωραθὲν ἐπὶ τὴν ζήτησιν ἡμᾶς τῆς ἀληθείας προτρέψῃ). The great unwashed will accept the myths as they are, of course (8.10/170B), but those who are wise, because they recognize that these myths are a riddling representation of a higher reality, will search for meaning beyond them (8.10/170B: διὰ μὲν τῶν αἰνιγμάτων ὑπομνησθεὶς ὅτι χρή τι περί αὐτῶν ζητεῖν). Saloustios’ De Deis et Mundo also features this performative discourse. The puzzling aspects of myths engender respect in the uninformed and compel wise men to work to understand the mystery:

[W]ish to teach all men the truth about the gods causes the foolish to despise, because they cannot learn, and the good to be slothful; whereas, to conceal the truth in myths prevents the former from despising philosophy and compels the latter to study it. (De Deis et Mundo 3.4)

tό μὲν πάντας τὴν περὶ Θεῶν ἀλήθειαν διδάσκειν διὰ μὴ δύνασθαι μανθάνειν, καταφρόνησιν, τοῖς δὲ σπουδαῖοις ὑπομνησθεῖς τὰ μυθίστων δείησιν. Μέν τοῖς μὲν καταφρονεῖν εἰς οὐκ ἑξάντων ἀναγκάζειν.

Lamberton has helpful comments on similar dynamics to be found in Porphyry’s and Proclus’ understandings of Homer (1986: 113, 173).
As empowering paradox marks the valuation of myths in his seventh oration, so it marks Julian’s characterization of proper modes of speech and of his own persona as authoritative. Julian speaks now in simple, direct, and calm language, and now in speech complex, allegorizing, Dionysian. His persona exhibits corollary contradictions. In one moment, he is the fear-somely educated philosopher, in another a rough-hewn soldier, and, in still one more, Bacchus’ crazed thrall. As Julian disciplines Heracleius, speech and persona, constructed through paradox, accordingly have a connection to a scale of value greater than earth-bound logic: who and what he is are not able to be explained in a manner that will not leave an unexplained remainder.

Julian has praise for both possessed enigmatic speech and that which is direct and clear in the oration. As seen above, he finds much to like in the riddling and dramatic presentation of myths in the company of charaktēres (7.11/216C–D, cf. 7.17/222C–D). The One even appears through the kind offices of paradox. At other times, however, he will come right out and say that clear and direct speech—speech for a mythos—is the desiderandum:

It is said well by Euripides: “The mythos (μῦθος) of truth was born straightforward”85: He says that the liar and unjust man have need of “a writing of shadows.” (7.9/214A–B)86

But not only does he say that both riddling and straightforward speech are to be preferred, leaving a contradiction to be sorted out, he also worries about being misunderstood no matter which kind of speech he uses.

At 7.16 (220D–221A), Julian straightforwardly rationalizes Semele’s destruction by Zeus’ thunderbolt. He says she, a hasty priestess, actually perished in a fire in a sacrificial rite undertaken before it should have been. It was not time for her son to be worshipped: Semele is impatient always and ever dies in flames, just prosaically this time. Julian then worries that this and other disambiguations of Dionysus’ spectacular biography will not

85. Λέγεται . . . ὑπ’ Εὐριπίδου καλῶς, “Ἁπλοῦς ὁ μῦθος τῆς ἀληθείας ἔφυ.” σκιαγραφίας γάρ φησι τὸν ψευδῆ καὶ ἄδικον δεῖσθαι.

86. Λέγεται . . . υπ’ Εὐριπίδου καλῶς, “Ἀπλοῦς ὁ μῦθος τῆς ἀληθείας ἔφυ.” σκιαγραφίας γάρ φησι τὸν ψευδῆ καὶ ἄδικον δεῖσθαι.
be understood properly. Is it a matter of a certain lack of finesse owing to his own ignorance, he wonders, or does the difficulty stem from ambivalence about presenting such important material to an audience who will not understand it?

[This explanatory activity of mine poses difficulties for me] perhaps because I still don’t know all these things clearly, or perhaps I don’t want to put this god at once hidden and evident on display, as though in a theater for non-discerning ears and minds turned to anything except philosophy. (7.16/221D)87

And as clear language causes anxiety, exuberantly “Bacchic” language does so too. Immediately after the passage on the power of the incongruous in myths to lead the mind to realization of the nature of the utterly transcendent One, Julian frets:

Something, I know not what or how, impelled me to rave with his own sacred frenzy about the attributes of great Dionysus, “and now I set an ox on my tongue”88: it is necessary to say nothing about unspeakable things. However, may the gods grant their benefit to me and to many of you, as many as are still uninitiated. (7.12/217D–218A)89

The upshot of these contradictions, i.e., clear speech is both good and bad, as are Bacchic incongruities, is that Julian showcases the insufficiency of earthbound means to get at the thing Julian has in mind; whichever route he takes will always fail in one way or another. These inevitable failures show that divinity and truth are greater than earthbound language can lay hold of and communicate to an audience: there is always a remainder. The empowering paradox engendered by the collision of contrary valuations of language in the speech is mirrored by the contrary impressions seen previously in the matter of myths, and by the aspects of himself, in contradiction with one another, that Julian sports in this oration. If these

87. τυχὸν μὲν καὶ διὰ τὸ ἀγνοεῖν ἔτι περὶ αὐτῶν τὸ ἀκριβές, τυχὸν δὲ καὶ οὐκ ἔθελον τὸν κρύφιον ἅμα καὶ φανερὸν θεὸν ὠς ἐν θεάτρῳ προβάλλειν ἀκοαῖς ἀνεξετάστοις καὶ διανοίαις ἐπὶ πάντα μάλλον ὡς ὁ παθητικὴς πάθεις προφανεῖς

88. Julian perhaps quotes from one (or more) of these sources: Theognis 1.815; Aeschylus, Agamemnon 56; Sophocles, Oedipus at Colonus 1051.

89. Ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν ἀμφὶ τὸν μέγαν Διόνυσον οὐκ οἶδ᾿ ὅπως ἐπῆλθέ μοι βακχεύοντι μανῆν· τὸν βοῦν δὲ ἐπιτίθημι τῇ γλώττῃ· περὶ τῶν ἀρρήτων γὰρ οὐδὲν χρῆ λέγειν· Ἀλλὰ μοι θεοὶ μὲν ἐκεῖνων καὶ υἱῶν δὲ τοῖς πολλοῖς, ὅσοι τέως ἐστὶ τούτων ἀμύητοι, τὴν ὄνημα δοεῖν.
Contradictions are read as paradox, and they should be, they suggest power and glamour that comes from beyond this earth.

Emergent in the oration is a portrait of Julian reminiscent of his idealized portraits of Diogenes and Crates. He has nothing but praise for them. As is Julian, they are pious. Diogenes’ transgressions amount to refusing honors and pleasures, and there is little of the edgy behavior for which Cynics were famous, such as public masturbation. The bad Cynics are liable to tell raunchy and blasphemous myths, like Heracleius did, or write tragedies of a similar quality, as Philiscus evidently and Oenomaus surely did (7.6/210D). Julian also criticizes the current Cynics for thinking that virtue (aretē) can be acquired through a purely physical praxis:

The staff, cloak, the (long) hair, and, from there, Voilà!, the ignorance, the effrontery, all that kind of stuff quite simply. They say they travel the short and intense path to virtue. You [Cynics] would do better to travel the long path. You would arrive with greater ease on that path in comparison to the one you are travelling now. Don’t you know that shortcuts have great difficulties? (7.19/225B–C)

Julian’s point here is that these Cynics have neglected their minds, thinking only of their bodies; they have erroneously thought that they truly know themselves and that they can give a new stamp to the currency and thereby come to virtue (aretē) through physical means alone. In contrast, the road to virtue for Julian has been different. Unlike Heracleius, Julian was educated properly in the poets and in philosophy (7.23/235A–B), and through this course of study he acquired aretē and increased his piety to the gods (235B). Indeed, to be educated (235A: paidotribesthai/παιδοτριβεῖσθαι) by his master (235A, C: kathégemón/καθηγεμών), reading the books and attending the lectures he was told to, was tantamount to being initiated in a religious sense by a man (235A: teleisthai [hyp‘ andri telesthēsomenos]/

---

90. See, e.g., Diogenes Laertius 6.46: “Once when he [Diogenes] was working with his hands (i.e., masturbating) in the Agora, he said, ‘if only I could rub my belly and in that way not be hungry’ (ἐπ’ ἀγορᾶς ποτὲ χειρουργῶν, “εἴθε,” ἔρρη, “καὶ τὴν κοιλίαν ἦν παρατρίψαντα μὴ πεινήν”). While such a thing is not mentioned in Against Heracleius, Julian is more forthcoming about Diogenes’ public defecation, flatulence, and masturbation in the ninth oration at 19/202B–C.

91. Diogenes’ supposed tragedies, which Julian prefers to attribute to some or other Cynic or to Philiscus, were notorious for cannibalism and incest and Oenomaus evidently continued in this vein and created even more outrageous plays (Dawson 1992: 249).

92. βακτηρία, τρίβων, κόμη, τὸ ἐντεῦθεν ἀμαθία, βράσος, <κιάμω>τῆς, <καὶ πάντα> ἀπλὸς τὰ τοιαῦτα. Τὴν σύντομον φασίν ὁδὸν καὶ σύντομον ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρετὴν <πορεύεσθαι> ὄφελον καὶ ώμες τὴν μαχρὰν ἐπιρρέεσθαι· ῥάζον ἀν δι’ ἑκένης <ἡ διὰ ταύτης> ἠλθετε. Οὐκ ἴστε ὅτι μεγάλας ἔχουσιν αἱ σύντομοι τὰς χαλεπότητας;
Throughout this process Julian says that his master “removed what was mad and overly bold (from me) and he tried to make me more temperate (sōphronesteron/σωφρονέστερον) than myself” (7.23/235B). The making of the boy into a man by paid-eia is on display here, and it contrasts with the superficiality of adopting only a physical stance against the institutions of society, like the “bad” Cynics do. The educative scene in the manner of a dialogue of Plato (perhaps the Charmides?), with man and boy on a search for sōphrosynē, may occur to a sensitive reader. Indeed, speaking from this place of investment in paideia and the product of it, Julian accuses these Cynics of simply “throwing expectations held in common about appropriate behavior into confusion . . . through bringing in a worse and more disgusting way of life for the polis/the citizenry (politeia).” They thought they had found a shortcut to aretē, bypassing education and hard years of instruction, and, with their cheeky impudence posing as wisdom, they have merely offered degradation.

As was seen above, however, in the case of myths and in Julian’s words about the desirability and limitations of riddling and clear language, the distinction Julian draws between himself and these Cynics is not as clear-cut as it might first appear. Once again Julian is holding positions on both sides of the question. Even as he insists on the necessity of paideia, elsewhere he indulges the notion that he is but a soldier who has come by what he knows via experiences not mediated by paideia:

[It] is not a surprising thing if a soldier-man is not overly precise [about these philosophical matters] or if he does not have such things right at his fingertips, inasmuch as he does not speak on the basis of extended study of books [lit. from an askēsis of books] but from his way of coming upon them haphazardly. (7.10/216A)

---

93. For more on Julian’s idea of education as ecstatic religious initiation, see Bouffartigue 1992: 633–34.
94. ἐξῄρει τὸ μανιῶδες καὶ θρασύ, καὶ ἐπειρᾶτό με ποιεῖν ἐμαυτοῦ σωφρονέστερον.
95. Indeed, a sensitive reader who knows the twelfth book of the Anthologia Graeca may recall that both the verb paidotribeō/παιδοτριβέω (to educate, to train a boy) and the noun paidotribēs/παιδοτρίβης (educator, trainer of boys) are liable to quite naughty doubles-entendres (see 12.34 and 12.222), i.e., the trainer “grinds into” the boy.
96. 7.5/210C: τὰ κοινὰ νόμιμα συγχέοντες . . . τῷ χείρονα καὶ βδελυρωτέραν ἐπεισάγειν πολιτείαν.
97. οὐδὲν βασιλιστῶν ἄνδρα στρατιώτην μή λιαν ἐξακριβοῦν ἢδ’ ἐξουσίζει τὰ τοιαῦτα, ὀτὲ οὐκ ἐκ βιβλίων ἀσκῆσεως, ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς προστυχούσης αὐτά ἔξως ἀποφθεγγόμενον.
Pretending that his fairly detailed description, just offered, of the parts of philosophy (three sections divided into three each [7.10/215C–216A], discussed above) is rather imprecise, Julian asserts that this is because he is a soldier man (andra stratiōtēn/ἄνδρα στρατιώτην) who has learned philosophy not from books but through hearing of them in the context of experiences he has had. Not in the study, taming his boyish wild side, he is in the camps coming to manly understanding amid muscles flexing and weapons flashing (and the occasional book). 

Furthermore, in his praise of Bacchus, Julian prays that the god will excite his mind and that of Heracleius to a frenzy for true knowledge about the gods. Books seemingly are not enough, and neither is the rough-hewn attentiveness of a soldier-man; madness is needed for knowledge and peace in this life and the next. One must yield to Dionysus:

I pray that my mind and yours may rage with Bacchic frenzy for true knowledge of the gods, lest, staying for a long time uninitiated by the god in Bacchic rites, we should suffer the things Pentheus did, perhaps while living and, at all events, when we have been freed from our bodies (in death). For in whomever the fullness of life has not been perfected by the singular and entirely indivisible and unmixed pre-existent substance of Dionysus through the divinely infused madness that exists all about the god, for this one there is the danger of life flowing in all directions, having been made to disperse and, torn apart, to be lost utterly. . . .

(7.16/221D–222A)  

Complete with the possibility of salvation, a surrender to Bacchic madness enables knowledge of the gods and an ordered life. Lack of surrender, in contrast, means total loss. What to all appearances is abandon to disorder is an embrace of pre-existent substance embodied by Dionysus that enables an orderly life in this world. This looks very different from the picture that Julian draws elsewhere of himself as the obedient student whom his teacher endeavored to train to be more temperate than himself. It is different too

---

98. Julian speaks of himself in similar fashion in the Misopogon (Or. 12) at 30/359B–D. In the context of his depiction of himself as hard and masculine and the Antiochenes as soft and effeminate, he brandishes his formative experiences as a soldier man on hard campaign in Gaul.

99. προσεύχομαι τάς τε ἐμὰς καὶ τὰς ὑμετέρας ἐκβακχεῦσαι φρένας ἐπὶ τὴν ἀληθῆ τῶν θεῶν γνῶσιν, ὡς ἄν μὴ πολὺν ἀβάκχευτοι χρόνον τῷ θεῷ μένοντες ὁπόσα ὁ Πενθεὺς ἔπαθε πάθωμεν, ἵσως μὲν καὶ ξόντες, πάντως δὲ καὶ ἀπαλλαγέντες τοῦ σώματος. Ὄτῳ γὰρ ἄν ἐν τῷ πεπληθυσμένον τῆς ζωῆς ὑπὸ τῆς ἑνοειδοῦς καὶ ἐν τῷ μεριστῷ παντελῶς ἄδαιρετον ὀλίς τε ἐν πᾶσιν ἀμιγγοῦς προϋπαρχούσῃ τοῦ Διονύσου οὐσίᾳ τελειουργηθεῖ διὰ τῆς περὶ τῶν θεῶν ἑνώθου βακχείας, τούτῳ κίνδυνος ἐπὶ πολλὰ ρυῆσαι τὴν ζωὴν, ῥυεῖσθαι δὲ διεσπάσθαι καὶ διασπασθεῖσαν οἴχεσθαι . . .
from the soldier-man who acquires his knowledge through practical experience and unsystematic study. Here, instead of suppressing parts of himself in the service of *askēseis* educative or martial, he is to let loose. In doing what he is not supposed to and giving the appearance of transcending the strictures of society that are often supported by him elsewhere,\textsuperscript{100} he looks quite like the “good” Cynics, and even rather like the “bad” ones.\textsuperscript{101}

In the context of a discussion of guidance Diogenes received from Apollo, Julian speaks of a close relationship he sees between the general philosophical maxim, “Know yourself,” and the one particular to the Cynics, “Give a new stamp to the currency.” At the conclusion of the following quotation, he comes to a strong statement about what he values and what anyone should value in this life:

Do we know what the god said? [We know] that he ordered him (Diogenes) to disregard the opinions of the many and to give a new stamp not to truth but to the currency. How shall we understand the “Know yourself” in relation to this? Should we associate it with the currency? Or will we declare it to be the summation of truth and (at the same time) say that the way of “Give a new stamp to the currency” is an indirect way of saying “Know yourself”? For just as a man, placing no value in any way in conventional opinions and having come to truth itself, will manage himself not on the basis of conventional opinions about him but on the basis of things as they really are ([τοῖς ὄντως οὖσι](http://pergamon.jstor.org.proxy.library.vt.edu/10.1111/j.1749-8137.2013.04974.x)), so I think he who knows himself will know accurately what he is ([ὅπερ ἔστιν](http://pergamon.jstor.org.proxy.library.vt.edu/10.1111/j.1749-8137.2013.04974.x)) and not [only] what conventional opinion says he is. (7.7/211B–D, emphasis added)\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{100.} For more on Julian’s decorous side, see Amm., *Res Gestae* 25.4.2–6 or see Julian contrasting his abstemious habits to the luxury of the Antiochenes in his *Misopogon* (*passim*). See, too, Barnes (1998: 156–57), Cosi (1986: 48–75), and Bowersock (1978: 12–20, 79–93). Smith (1995: 78) underscores Julian’s discomfort with actual Cynicism. A letter, written in 362 from Antioch to an unknown non-Christian priest (see, especially, 300C–D [89B in Bidez and Cumont 1922 / Wright 1969/1913: 324]) provides further evidence of Julian’s scolding tendencies (though note Smith’s observation that Julian was in this case perhaps “prescribing a pious ideal for a restricted group” [1995: 14]).

\textsuperscript{101.} Throughout a book on Julian’s eighth oration (*Hymn to the Mother of the Gods*), Dario Cosi (1986) reveals and assesses the tension between these two aspects of Julian’s thought and character. At the book’s end, Cosi writes that for Julian “the ancient myth [of Attis and Cybele], vital and orgiastic, is all but turned on its head in a philosophic mystery that preaches sexual abstinence” (112: “L’antico mito vitalistico e orgiastico è ormai capovolto in un filosofico mistero che predica l’estensione sessuale”). At this moment Julian is close to Christian authors such as Victricius who are liable, say, to envision sobriety inebriated by denial seeking pardon for its excesses: “May sobriety drunk on vigils and fasts seek forgiveness for its sins” (Victric. 5: *Vigiliis et ieiuniis inebriata sobrietas ablationem postulet pecatorum*).

\textsuperscript{102.} Τί δὲ εἶπεν ὁ θεός, ἄρ’ ἴσμεν; Ὅτι τῆς τῶν πολλῶν αὐτῶ δόξης ἐπέταξεν ὑπερορᾶν καὶ πα-
This quotation is key to Julian's effort to propose an idealized Cynicism as a foil to Heracleius' and other late-ancient Cynics' short-cut of physicality to philosophical gravitas. Julian writes the reflection embodied by gnōthi sauton into what he believes is a properly pursued Cynic activity of opposing societal norms: the proper Cynic “gives a new stamp to the currency,” but only after searching reflection about who and what he is. After reflection, and only then, he acts. That this is an idealized version of Cynicism is beside the point, however; the point is that an ideal subjectivity should be tied to a standard that stretches beyond earthbound systems of morality. Not harnessed by the opinions of society, an admirable subjectivity takes existence as its guiding star, and Julian's suggestion, idealizing though it may be, turns out to have implications less tame than it might first appear to have.

Similarity between this proferred way of life and the attitude toward myths that Julian recommends elsewhere in the oration is manifest. The commandment for personal deportment—the man is supposed to privilege “things as they really are” in order to live in accordance with “what he is” in reality and “not on the basis of conventional opinions about him”—shares features with the approach to myths that finds value in the somatic and obscene as indicators of an order of existence more essential and important than things of this earth. The monstrosity and incongruity of myth draw the mind in and are signs of this greater order. What is unacceptable to society is to be accepted and contradiction is the sign of a transient, mysterious, and better order. To value myths and to live life well both involve disregarding society's judgments.

It is therefore of considerable interest that the major feature of the latter part of the oration is a mythos. On the present reading, the mythos Julian gives of his own life is in essence an embodiment of the two concerns of the oration: myth and how to live a life. In the scholarly literature, when this portion of the speech is engaged, the allegory has been read almost solely in terms of one of its indubitable meanings: the story of Julian and how his taking over the affairs of his family will turn the empire back to worship of the pagan gods. 103 This is sensible but does not exhaust the meaning able to
be found in the *mythos*. As myths, on Julian’s own testimony, solicit active engagement from a hearer/reader because of incongruities (*apemphainonta ἀπεμφαίνοντα*) to be seen in them, it seems sensible to take Julian at his word and read his own *mythos* as probingly as he would have all *mythoi* read. A commitment, emphatically appropriate in the present instance, to search out complexities and the powers provided by *paideia* lead the reader to the surprisingly complex man who *is* there.

**IOULIANOS MYTHOUMENOS**

Just prior to beginning his *mythos*, Julian mentions a *mythos* Demosthenes told the Athenians when Alexander the Great asked that the *rhetores* be sent to him (7.21/227B). Plutarch in his life of Demosthenes (23.4–6) relates a fuller version which gives an idea of the probable level of knowledge in Julian’s audience about this historical event. After the destruction of Thebes, Plutarch says, Alexander summoned the leading *rhetores* (the text has *dēmagōgoi*). This was sinister. One of those on Alexander’s list, Demosthenes, told a *logos* about how wolves persuaded the sheep to give up their guard dogs. The flock, dogless, was soon destroyed. Demosthenes and the other *rhetores*, of course, were the dogs, and Alexander the wolf.104 Heracleius should have fashioned something like this (7.21/227B: ἐχρῆν οὖν τι τοιοῦτο πλάσαι), Julian says. Not having done this, Heracleius has forced Julian to become a mythmaker (*mythopoion genesthai*-*μυθοποιὸν γενέσθαι*) who tells a story allegorical of his life, a story with political dimensions—and in this regard certainly similar to Demosthenes’ story—and with incongruities that invite interpretation. Julian offers a picture of a leader with *axiōma* for whom duty and work are luxuriating pleasures, i.e., he takes the easy road, and, after a possible schooling in masturbation, he appears as Helen of Troy, whose duty is to sleep with Paris. These incongruities suggest that this man is complicated, and they glamorize him with a hypertrophy of improprieties that employ carnalities of various kinds to infuse his imperial authority with life’s vitality.

The *mythos* proper commences with a nameless wealthy man arranging his affairs poorly: after he died, his heirs quarreled among themselves.

---

104. Gert-Jan van Dijk (1997: 291–96) discusses various appearances of this tale of flock, wolves, and dogs in Greek literature.
Amid these struggles, the sons fostered impiety in the land by demolishing temples and not respecting ancestral usages (7.22/228C). A nephew of this irresponsible man, and the hero in the story, eventually comes into the inheritance. Much of the allegory works well enough. The sons of the rich man and the young man traumatized by the destruction of his relatives read neatly as the sons of Constantine I and Julian himself. The picture of the one son of the rich man left standing surrounded by mostly vicious shepherds (7.22/232B) draws the kind of unsympathetic portrait of Constantius II and his court that Ammianus Marcellinus will make familiar.

That said, the veil of allegory is rendered surpassingly thin by its inconsistent focus that whipsaws between the familial and ecumenical. How is it that troubles on this estate led to the profanation of temples, and why should faith in the country be transformed (7.22/228B–C)? Julian’s wish to fold the Constantinian embrace of Christianity into the allegory stresses it a great deal. Furthermore, the picture of this young man, who is not even a direct heir of this curiously potent patrimony of an out-of-the-way estate, exciting divine interest stretches the allegory beyond the breaking point. Why should this no-account young man interest four gods (Zeus, Helios, Athene, and Hermes)? And why should they want the young man to take over this estate (7.22/232C)? That the mythos Demosthenes told the Athenians had no such excess of divine sponsorship is yet another incongruity summoning interpretation.

In any case, Helios takes over the education of the young man at the behest of Zeus. The sun god sees a spark of himself in the hero to be. Athene aids in raising him too. Disconsolate over what had happened to his relatives, the young man considers killing himself, but Helios and Athene throw him into a trance so that he does not do this. Eventually, he makes his way to the desert and, alone there, he worries about his sorry situation. Appearing to him, Hermes offers to guide him through the terrain to come:

Then he [the young man], having found a rock, stopped there for a little while, and he was considering how he might make an escape from the enormity of such great troubles. Everything appeared wretched to him and there was nothing good anywhere at that moment. Then Hermes, for he was simpatico with him and appearing as an age-mate, greeted him with kindly intent and said, “Here, I will be a guide for you on a smooth and flatter path when you have gotten over this twisted and steep little patch, where you see all these ones tripping and making their way back away from here.” (7.22/230C)
The appearance of Hermes at this point in the *mythos* is interesting and interpretable. It has often been assumed in the secondary literature that Heracleius’ *mythos* of Zeus and Pan (i.e., of Heracleius and Julian) included the story that Hermes taught his son, the woodland god Pan, how to masturbate when the nymph Echo refused to have sex with him. While such an assumption about what Heracleius said in his *mythos* can only be tentatively accepted because Julian only tells of the respective identifications of Heracleius and himself, it is plausible and doing so makes for the interesting prospect that this part of Julian’s *mythos* responds directly to Heracleius’. It is also conceivable that this schooling in self-pleasure would have occurred to listeners without it appearing in Heracleius’ oration, just as it has in the secondary literature which has no direct knowledge of Heracleius’ oration. If we accept this story as plausibly in the minds of the audience at least, Julian depicts the young man, disconsolate over the death of his relatives, receiving Hermes’ guidance to overcome his grief as a sort of antidote to Heracleius’ Pan, disconsolate over the dearth of sexual opportunity, receiving Hermes’ guidance on how to alleviate his feelings of sexual frustration through masturbation. But whether this posited confrontation between texts, with its carnality, can be accepted or not, there is still more that can be done with Julian’s *mythos* at this point.

Hermes says that once the young man is done with the “twisted and steep little patch,” he will then have an easier and smooth road to travel to, as it turns out, the foot of the mountain on which Zeus resides (7.22/230D). The mention of that patch that causes defeat to the many is a possible jibe against the short-cuts of the “bad” Cynics. The patch may also encode a reference either to the difficult goal of perfect self-mastery, or to the need for hard decisions about how to lead a worthy life. In addition, the prospect of paths difficult and easy is an (even hoary) intertextual crux; it recalls the famous Choice of Herakles, which has already appeared in the oration. Julian reported earlier that this famous moment from Herakles’ biography, first presented by Prodikos, was a feature of Heracleius’ oration (7.11/217A–B). As all educated people in late antiquity would have known, Herakles had to decide whether to follow Virtue on the long and difficult path, or Vice on the short, easy one (see, e.g., Xenophon, *Memo-

106. This story is told by Dio Chrysostom at Or. 6.20. For more, see, e.g., Elm (2012: 109–111), though with one qualification: she thinks, incorrectly, that Pan invented masturbation. If anyone did, according to Dio at least, it was Hermes as teacher of it; cf. Branham 1996: 101.
While Julian’s hero is certainly on his way to Virtue, the paths have incorrect shapes and qualities and, on top of that, the hero spends time on both of them. These are incongruities, *apëmphantonta*, that invite even more interpretation, which will be forthcoming. But first, as the *mythos* continues, the young man makes his way on the longer and easier path:

The young man, as he was departing, set off with great reverence, having in his possession sword, shield, and spear, though he was without helmet for the time being. Having persuaded him, Hermes led him forward along the smooth and untrodden path which was pure and flourishing with many good flowers and fruits, as many as are the gods’ own, and with trees too of ivy, laurel, and myrtle. (7.22/230C–D)

With the naked head of the armed young man perhaps indicating the military commander and emperor Julian will become, he makes his way along the easy path which, inexplicably, is untrodden and, in any case, is surrounded by plants belonging to the gods: ivy to Bacchus, laurel to Apollo, and myrtle to Aphrodite.

Whether or not these paths are considered in relation to the Choice of Herakles or not, though especially if they are, they pose questions. Is this easy path untrodden because so many persons are impious, as the ivy, laurel, and myrtle imply? But how can the path be untrodden, when it is easy? Related to this, why do “all these ones” choose the difficult path only to trip and leave in defeat? And if it is not a choice, because the easy path can only be taken after the hard work of the first path, then what to make of the practical inaccessibility of the easy path? It is, in any case, an unlikely *mythos* that starts with a rich man’s inattention to succession and
then comes to an armed young man making his way along the easeful path: shouldn't he be working hard?

This path to virtue and enlightenment and indeed to manhood (for this is a mythos of a young man's growing up) combines items that run athwart one another: precipice and plain, labor and ease. It is hard to get a read on this partially armed young man who has it tough and easy. There is rather more carnality here than is generally accorded to Julian in the secondary literature or in, for example, Ammianus Marcellinus (e.g., Res Gestae 25.4.2), especially if Hermes' lesson to Pan about self-pleasure is in the mind of listeners, and even more so if Vice's promise to Herakles is, when the text comes to the enchanting path leading to the foot of Zeus' mountain.

Somewhat later in the mythos there is another remarkable intertextual crux. When Helios is telling the young man that he must leave him and Athene, and fulfill his destiny on earth, the young man physically supplicates the god so that he will not have to do this. Having none of this, Helios quotes Homer to him:

[At] this moment the young man clung (to Helios) and kept up with much supplication so that he could stay there. Helios said, “Don’t you be so disobedient lest it ever be the case that ‘I should hate you as much as I now so excessively love you.’” (7.22/232C)

The quotation is nearly all of line 415 from book three of the Iliad (τῶς δὲ ὁ νεανίσκος ἀντείχετο καὶ πολλὰ ἱκέτευεν αὐτοῦ μένειν. Ὁ δὲ, “Μὴ λίαν ἀπειθής ἐς,” φησί, “μὴ ποτὲ ὁ ἀπεξεχθήρω, ὥς νῦν ἐκπαγάλ’ ἐφιλήσα.”)

What, then, to make of the incongruities (apemphainonta) in the mythos, for it is surely fair to evaluate them and the mythos according to Julian’s prescription earlier in the oration (7.12/217C)?
The mythos offers apemphainonta along two axes. One axis is seen in elements, imperfectly allegorized and incongruous because of this imperfection, of the story of empire, succession, and religious change. The nameless estate groans under the weight of empire, and the stress on the allegory cues the reader/listener to keep at the story to find meaning. The other axis of incongruities can be seen in the attributes of the young man: who and what he is (and therefore who and what Julian is) raise questions and invite interpretation. The spectral presence of a schooling in self-pleasure haunts the text as this armed young man, who might be another Herakles and who is an emperor to be, has it easier than usual: the path the young man treads is unexpectedly smooth and enjoyable. The intertextuality with Iliad 3 makes Julian/the young man into Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world. It depicts the emperor as the object of insistent masculine desire and possessor of an acme of glamour. Duty is also luxuriating sexual activity.

Registering what had to come to mind for anyone in possession of paideia and allowing the incongruous elements to drive interpretation leads to a reading of the mythos that supplements the usual meanings asserted for it of biography and hopeful teleology. The mythos is also about “know[ing] accurately what [a man] is” (7.7/211D), about understanding what a man with auctoritas really is. There are veins of paradoxical carnality in the construction of manhood, and this oration constitutes a strong example of the way in which the erotic pervades the male homosocial field molded by paideia in late antiquity. Oration Seven as a whole also provides a theorized model of the operation, and then in the mythos an example of it, whereby the perceptible same-sex sexual charge of Marcus’ kallos amēchanon could be an effective support to his auctoritas or axiōma/ἀξίωμα, even though “conventional opinion” would have it otherwise.

CONCLUSION

Discussion of Julian’s Caesares and Against Heracleius has suggested how evocation of the forbidden could consolidate rather than dissipate masculine auctoritas/ἀξίωμα. In addition to giving an example of this consolidation, the seventh oration, through its discussion of the paradoxical valuation of the myths, provided a theorization and example of the workings of this counterintuitive operation. The claim, of course, is that the making of authority by counterintuitive means was a significant dynamic in elite male homosocial circles. The way kallos amēchanon glorifies andria in Iamblichus’ De Mysteriis and Marcus Aurelius in Julian’s Caesares, such that
manhood’s grandeur and admirability is metaphorized by same-sex sexual attractiveness, is able to be paralleled in other sources. The terrain of elite male homosociality in late antiquity was pervaded by same-sex desire that increased grandeur and marked status. This chapter and the introduction have already provided some examples. Here are a few more to conclude.

*Kallos amēchanon* appears in *Enneads* 5 of Plotinus, the famous late-Platonic philosopher.\(^{111}\) Plotinus compares the advent of Mind (*Nous*) in the world to a gorgeous procession of elite men that precedes the arrival of the emperor:

And so there is one nature itself for us; it is Mind, all things existent, the truth. And if this is so (and it is), it is a great god, but not just any, but one who thinks it right to be all these things at once [i.e., Mind, all things existent, and the truth]. And the god is nature itself, a god manifesting himself before we can see him. And he watches from above and sits, transcendent, upon a fair pediment, as it were. Nature depends on him, for it is certain that he will not make his way on something soulless nor have started his journey straightway on Soul, but there is an irresistible/uncanny beauty (*kallos amēchanon*) going out before him. As before a great emperor there go first, in those preceding him, the lesser ranks, and the always more important ones and more lofty ones come after these. The ones near to the emperor are all the more imperial and, next come the honored ones with him and, suddenly the great emperor himself appears amid all these others. All utter prayers and bow down, as many as had not gone away, contented with the personages they had seen prior to the emperor. (Plot. 5.5.3.1–15)\(^{112}\)

In general terms, this passage is best seen as a not too terribly clarifying allegorical explanation and simile of the unfolding of the universe from the One. In Plotinus’ understanding of the universe, the One is the first hypostasis. The second hypostasis is Mind (*Nous*), and it is through the

\(^{111}\) Matthews (2000b: 445–46) drew my attention to this passage.

\(^{112}\) Μία τοίνυν φύσις αὐτὴ ἡμῖν, νοῦς, τὰ ὄντα πάντα, ἡ ἀλήθεια· εἰ δέ, θεός τις μέγας· μᾶλλον δὲ οὐ τις, ἀλλὰ πᾶς ἀξιός ταῦτα εἶναι. Καὶ θεός αὐτή ἡ φύσις, καὶ θεός δεύτερος προφαίνων εαυτὸν πρὶν ὁράν ἐκείνου· ο̂ δὲ ὑπερκάθηται καὶ ὑπερίδρυται ἐπὶ καλῆς οὕτως οἷον κρηπίδος, ἢ ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἐξηρτιστηκαί. Ἐδει γὰρ ἐκείνου βαίνοντα μή ἐπ’ ἀμήχανον τις ἡμῖν· οὗτις αὖ ἐπὶ ψυχῆς εὐθὺς βεβηκέναι, ἀλλ’ εἶναι αὐτῷ κάλλος ἀμήχανον πρὸ αὐτοῦ προϊόν, οἷον πρὸ μεγάλου βασιλέως προείνει μὲν πρῶτα ἐν τοῖς προδόθει τὰ εὐλαττω, οἄ μὲν τὰ μείζω καὶ τὰ σεμνότερα ἐπ’ αὐτοῖς, καὶ τὰ περὶ βασιλεία ἡμῖν μᾶλλον βασιλικώτερα, εἶτα τὰ μετ’ αὐτῶν τίμια· ἐφ’ ἀπαίσι δέ τούτοις βασιλείας προφαίνεται ἐξαίρεσις αὐτός ὑ μέγας, οἱ δ’ εὐχούσι καί προσκυνοῦσιν, ὅσοι μὴ προσπῆλθον ἀρκεσθέντες τοῖς πρὸ τοῦ βασιλέως ὀφθεῖσι.
existence of Mind that the universe manifests and is even thinkable. Mind provides the needed context for the One, which is ineffability and existence *simplex*. Not surprisingly, Mind is a master term that encompasses nature, all things in existence, and the truth. Also, mentioned here is the third hypostasis, Soul (*Psyche*).

But the clarity or lack thereof of Plotinus’ system in this passage is not important in the present moment; the contents of the simile and the heralding *kallos amēchanon* are the points of interest. Plotinus likens the majesty of the universe’s unfolding after the acme of unspeakability that is the One to a procession of elite men that concludes with the arrival of the emperor. Just prior to the beginning of the simile, the now familiar “irresistible/uncanny beauty” appears. The simile of elites and emperor that follows tells more about this beauty. For readers versed in Plato, which describes to perfection his audience, Plotinus makes transcendent glamour, already associated with the One and Mind, coincident with same-sex sexual attractiveness in his description of elites and the emperor. A corporeal immediacy paradoxically glamorizes a masculine admirability that has transcendent ambitions.

The Missorium of Theodosius I (see frontispiece) provides another example of erotics in a scene of elite masculine homosociality and grandeur. A large (74 centimeters / 29 inches in diameter), weighty (16.13 kilograms / 35.56 pounds), and elaborately engraved silver plate, the Missorium dates from 388 and commemorates the tenth anniversary of Theodosius’ imperial rule. On the plate an imperial official receives his *codicilli* (documents of appointment in a case) from Theodosius, as soldiers and Theodosius’ co-emperors, Arcadius and Valentinian II, look on. A formalized scene with all but iconic emperors (and the very three whose names grace *Coll. 5.3 / CTh. 9.7.6*), the Missorium graphically shows the way members of the *sacra scrinia* or an official in the *sacrum palatium* “[share] something of [the] aura of sanctity which surrounded an emperor” (Kelly 2004: 188; cf. 1998b: 168–69).

This aura of otherworldly transcendence is paradoxically increased elsewhere on the plate by figures who, while divine, also embody corporeal desire and fertility. On the plate’s lower third, the exurge, a mostly naked woman, appears. She is allegorical of Earth (Tellus) and reclines in a wheat field while three naked cupids flutter about. There are, in addition, two

---

113. For more, see, e.g., *Enneads 5.2.1.1–24*.


115. *Amm.*, *Res Gestae* 25.8.9; Valensi 1957: 93. Salzman (2002: 19) points out that these documents would have been displayed in the appointed man’s house.
more cupids appearing toward the top of the plate in the arcaded pediment that overhangs the scene with the three emperors, soldiers, and official. Earth and cupids, comprising a ground that compromises the integrity of the representation (the cupids are both in the allegorical lower portion of the plate and in the representation of emperors and official), are incongruities (*apemphainonta*) that demand engagement: why is this homosocial scene of investiture graced with representations of love and desire?

Looking at the plate as a whole, both the representation of the men and the allegory of the Earth and cupids, and allowing Earth and cupids to drive interpretation—Earth is the ground of representation and the cupids are pervasive—a viewer may conclude that the ceremony between men is productive of increase for the state and, further, a site of desire. Earth and cupids directly embody “terrestrial” corporeal desire, even as they indicate celestialization and divinity. With the ground pervading the representation along a circuit of erotic desire (i.e., the cupids “in frame” and “in picture”), the plate generates a narrative of masculine grandeur whose productivities make the empire a richer place. The plate also offers a picture of relations between men whose closeness and genuineness has the liveliness of actual sexual release, as the depicted homosociality is associated with cupids.

Only a promotion is perhaps what a first glance will see, but the wise, reflecting on the *apemphainonta*, will see that the contours of life among the leaders of empire are being represented through a deployment of same-sex desire. Julian’s remark, “he who knows himself will know accurately what he is and not [only] what conventional opinion says he is” (7.7/211D), encourages interpretation. Likewise, the plate speaks “to those able to know” (as Saloustios says at *De Deis et Mundo* 3.3), and the ceremony comes to gesture to realities and significance when the representation as a whole is engaged. Not only a career is here, erotics metaphorize relations between elite men. Erotics also heighten glamorous transcendence through a paradoxical invocation of forbidden desire.

---

116. Discussing the personification of Earth, or Tellus, Ruth Leader-Newby suggests that her presence on the plate was a classicizing touch that could have recalled the general zeitgeist of the reigns of much earlier emperors (Augustus and Hadrian in particular):

Does Tellus simply represent abundance as guaranteed by Theodosius’ reign and his dominion of the oikoumene, or does the image at the same time carry historic resonances which associate Theodosius with the peaceful prosperity of the earlier empire? (2004: 28–30)

As Leader-Newby knows and shows, the image is polysemous, and the present reading complements her persuasive ideas about the meaning of Tellus.
From this angle, then, the Missorium plate is of a piece with the amatory and celestializing modes of address that often accompany communication by emperors to inferiors in the legal documents. As discussed in the introduction to this book, an emperor finesses steep hierarchy and shows regard by calling his subordinates “most beloved” (amantissime), “most dear” (carissime), or “most delightful” (iucundissime). What perhaps will not seem so odd now is that these same inferiors are also addressed in abstract and lofty terms. Orientius, who is also “iucundissime,” is called “Your Experience” in *Collatio* 5.3. Another common term of address in the *Codex* is sublimitas: “Your Sublimity” appears over seventy-five times.117 Experientia and sublimitas are hardly the only such terms used. For example, “Your Acme” or “Your Loftiness” (employing the word culmen) also appears.118 The elite terms of precedence, clarissimus, spectabilis, and illustris redouble this impression of otherworldly abstraction. Each of these designations calls to mind the sensation of light, extorts perception that takes the viewer beyond what is immediately before his or her eyes, and makes them think in celestial terms.119 On this basis, these gradations of honor (clarissimus, spectabilis, and illustris) recall the descent of beauty from *ta theia* to its manifestation as *andria* in the excerpt from Iamblichus’ *De Mysteriis* that began this chapter. They also recall “the light . . . most pure and stainless”120 which Julian associates with Marcus Aurelius and his kallos amēchanon. In all these cases (i.e., Iamblichus, Julian, Plotinus, Missorium plate, imperial addresses), celestialization and same-sex desire inflect and interact with one another, and the corporeal liveliness of the latter makes the former shine more brightly through the power of paradox.

This operation whereby masculine glamour grows through paradox depends on accepting that a place exists prior to moral evaluation. The late-Platonists and others were accepting, and their positive recourse to

---

117. E.g.: Emperor Julian [sends the following words] to Mamertinus, the Praetorian Prefect: “May Your Sublimity call together the rectores of the Provinces . . . ” (*CTh*.1:15.4 [362 Jul. 6]) [Imp. Iulianus a. ad Mamertinum praefectum praetorio. Rectores provinciarum Sublimitas Tua conveniatur . . . ]. See Gradenwitz (1970/1925: 240) for a list of occurrences of sublimitas in the *Codex*.

118. Culmen occurs in the *Gesta Senatus* and in the following places in the *Codex*: 1.29.1 [364], 1.29.3 [late 360s or early 370s], 1.29.4 [368], 6.24.4 [387], 6.30.33 [421], 7.4.32 [412], 7.4.35 [423], 8.4.18 [394], 8.7.10 [369], 11.20.3pr. [424], 12.1.175 [412], 13.11.7 [396], 14.16.1 [409], 15.5.4 [424], 16.2.37 [404]. See Simon Corcoran’s helpful presentation (1996: 324–334) of the wide variety of abstract terms that the emperors give to those they address. Corcoran’s account focuses on the Tetrarchic period but looks ahead and many of his remarks are relevant to law-making and imperial address throughout the fourth century and into the fifth.

119. Christopher Kelly (1998a: 2004: 232–45) draws attention to a number of late-ancient works in which heaven was figured in terms that made God an emperor and the angels his bureaucrats.

120. 10.17/317D: τὸ καθαρώτατον καὶ εἰλικρινέστατον φῶς.
same-sex desire strips earthbound judgment from the corporeal excitement of same-sex desire and activity, and shows that it can be viewed as part of an existent order prior to the morals of society. Others in late antiquity did not accept that there was a place prior to earth’s morals, and they wanted to see the other world morally responsive to this one. This was and is a live question and will more than likely remain so: can one let things be? Or is there a need to place order on them? This is the conundrum that the late-Platonists and those similar to them solved in the direction of choosing life in all its mystery. Others chose regulation and control and strict moral standards for life’s messy indeterminacies. The next chapter, which focuses on Athanasius’ *Vita Antonii*, shows what this choice looks like. When Athanasius creates a manhood for his hero, for the desert or erēmos, and, indeed, for eternity, he rejects and corporealizes same-sex desire and pleasure with an exactitude that indicates authority’s all-discerning power. Athanasius also arguably puts the transcendent “in order,” making it a logical, mystery-less place that reflects restrictive norms around same-sex desire and pleasure on earth. Athanasius’ thorough policing of relations between men changes (the appearance of) the universe.