

Plutarch's Pythian Dialogues: a Literary Approach

PhD

Classics

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December 2017

Declaration

I confirm that this is my own work and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

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Abstract

This thesis takes a literary-theoretical approach to Plutarch's three so-called Pythian dialogues, *De E apud Delphos*, *De Pythiae Oraculis*, and *De Defectu Oraculorum*. It explores the texts from the perspective of their literary qualities: their genre, their unity as a group, and the narrators and narratees they construct. It argues that the three works occupy an important position in the largely Platonic genre of philosophical dialogue, both advertising their Platonic elements to benefit from such associations, and innovating within the genre's bounds. In his innovations, the author moves beyond what is typically expected of a dialogue, emphasising the works' unusual Delphic setting, and using this as a starting-point for philosophical discussion. The thesis contends that the three works form a coherent series, not just because of their shared setting and subject matter, but because they all function as protreptics to philosophy, providing readers with a clear guide to practising philosophy by turning to their own surroundings. Finally, this thesis examines, through a study of the works' dedicatees, the kind of readers Plutarch anticipated. It suggests that the ideal reader of these works, a city-dwelling, career-minded man is deliberately contrasted in the texts with their more philosophical narrators (including Plutarch himself), portrayed as natives of Delphi, affected by both its fortunes and the intellectual preoccupations of its god, Apollo. This highly text-focused, genre-based, and interpretative approach differs greatly from earlier approaches, more concerned with using the texts to understand the history of Delphi itself or the progression of Plutarch's philosophical thought. Its focus on the reading experience of a contemporary reader, and the self-representation of the author also signal novel ways of approaching these largely understudied texts.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere thanks to my supervisor, Timothy Duff, who has encouraged, scrutinised, critiqued, and taught me to hold all of my ideas to account. My thesis is much improved because of his thoughts and suggestions.

I thank my parents and my sister for their unwavering support (and regular supply of Tim Tams) from halfway across the world.

I thank my dear friend, housemate, and fellow PhD candidate (none of which appellations are adequate), Sonya, who has shared so much of this experience with me, and made it infinitely happier.

I thank Marcos for talking through all of my ideas with me, helping me to put my thoughts in order, and making my technology work, but most importantly for always being there for me, reminding me of my capabilities.

And finally, I thank Nick, whose translations of the French made much more sense than mine, and who has also encouraged me unstintingly.

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Introduction

The three dialogues known collectively in English as the Pythian or Delphic dialogues (*De E apud Delphos*, *De Pythiae Oraculis*, and *De Defectu Oraculorum*)¹ form a philosophically, thematically, and dramatically rich part of Plutarch's *Moralia*, the title given to the vast corpus of Plutarchan works that are not *Parallel Lives*.² The texts of the *Moralia* encompass a wide range of genres (essays, treatises, dialogues, rhetorical works, letters, questions, and collections of sayings and deeds), and address such subjects as philosophy, religion, and practical ethics. Among these varied works, the Pythian dialogues form a discrete unit.³ They are linked by their focus on Delphi, which both functions as a backdrop for the discussions and furnishes the subject matter for the works, and by their dialogic form.⁴ It is these literary features, rather than the works' historical background, that interest me most. The ways in which they construct both author and reader, and their innovations within the genre of dialogue, have not previously been studied in detail. This thesis therefore seeks to ask whether the Pythian dialogues can benefit from being read as literary texts that make use of and play with certain generic traditions. It will study all three in depth from a literary, rather than primarily historical, perspective, paying particular attention to their genre, their structure, their unity as a group, and their use and adaptation of literary conventions. We shall now survey the state of scholarship on the three texts, identifying areas in which this thesis may contribute.

¹ Following the convention for *Moralia* texts, I use the Latin titles throughout. The Greek titles are Περὶ τοῦ Εἰ τοῦ ἐν Δελφοῖς, Περὶ τοῦ μὴ χρᾶν ἔμμετρα νῦν τὴν Πυθίαν, and Περὶ τῶν ἐκλειπόμενων χρηστηρίων. All subsequent citations from these works in Greek and English are from the 1936 Loeb edition.

² Kechagia-Ovseiko (2017: 9) counts 78 *Moralia* works, using Stephanus' ordering system, which subsequent editions adopted, as a guide.

³ They appear in the order *De E*, *De Pythiae*, *De Defectu* in Stephanus' system. We will examine the question of the order in which they should be read, including their separation in the Lamprias Catalogue, later.

⁴ Another dialogue, *De Sera Numinis*, is sometimes considered the fourth work in the series, because it is also set at Delphi. In support of this idea is Brenk (1999: 211), who contends that the work was originally one of the Pythian dialogues, 'and was only artificially separated from them by the Renaissance editor, Stephanus'. However, as I shall argue in more detail later, this is unlikely. Its Delphic setting, which is only revealed in the seventh chapter (552F), is not as prominent throughout as in the other three works, and does not contribute to a greater understanding of the work. Nor does its subject matter have the same relevance to Delphi and its traditions as in *De E*, *De Pythiae*, and *De Defectu*.

Plutarch's *Moralia*

L. Mestrius Florus Ploutarchos was born around 45 A.D. in Chaironeia, where he remained, with some time abroad and in Delphi, until his death in c. 120 A.D.⁵ Writing, then, at a time when Greece was ruled by a succession of Roman emperors, Plutarch's work may justifiably be called imperial. In addition to the time at which they were written, Plutarch's works have other features in common with the large and varied body of work now known as imperial Greek literature. Like other imperial Greek texts, they are interested in the past, and in understanding the role of Greece in a world that was very different from that of the great men whose lives Plutarch selected as exemplars. Imperial Greek works tended to draw self-consciously upon earlier established literary traditions, often subverting and playing with readers' expectations of what a certain genre should be, making subtle allusions, or combining elements from multiple genres. The works of Plutarch's *Moralia* exhibit much of the creativity and innovation in genre and style that characterises works of this period. It is with this context in mind that we should read and appreciate Plutarch's works; however, it is only recently that this has been the case, with the *Moralia* texts enjoying a widespread revival in academia only over the past few decades. To understand why the *Moralia* texts, and specifically the Pythian works, fell somewhat into oblivion for so long, and remained under-studied in specific areas, it is necessary to understand the history of their reception. I shall therefore briefly outline the fortunes of the *Moralia* from the point at which they become accessible to a wide audience.

The initial reception of the *Moralia*, made widely available and popularised throughout Europe by Amyot's 1572 French translation, was first enthusiastic.⁶ Read by the educated, who were receptive to their humanism, they inspired authors like Montaigne. His *Essais*, first published in 1580, demonstrate the ways in which his thought was shaped by the Pythian dialogues and their ideas about Apollo.⁷ Later authors, like Rousseau, were also drawn to Plutarch's ideas on ethics, politics, religion, and education, which could support their own ideologies. This interest

⁵ For Plutarch's biography, see Jones (1971: 3-64).

⁶ Many of the *Moralia* works had previously been published in Latin. For example, Turnebus published a Latin edition of *De Defectu* in 1556. Johann Oporinus published *De E* in Latin for the first time in the same year, in a translation by the German Thomas Naogeorgus. The following year Arnauld Ferron published his own version of the same text. Turnebus came next, publishing a version with annotations by Joachim Camerarius in 1568. For these 16th-century Latin editions of *Moralia* texts, see Aulotte (1965: 31, 331).

⁷ Esclapez (2008: 253-74) and Pouilloux (2008: 293-308).

continued through the Enlightenment, with Romantic authors like Shelley finding in Plutarch's works on animals a defence of vegetarianism.⁸ Thus, the *Moralia* were, for the first few centuries after their publication into French and then English (in a 1603 translation by Philemon Holland) and other European languages, consulted primarily by philosophers wishing to engage with theology, and by those with a vested interest in certain topics that the works covered.

From the 19th century, Plutarch began to fall from favour. This may be attributed partly to a growing interest in the creation of a more Attic canon, into which Plutarch, as an imperial author, did not fit.⁹ In earlier centuries, the eclectic and wide-ranging nature of the *Moralia* texts, and the ethical programme they promoted, appealed to an audience that consisted of both academic and non-academic readers. In the 20th century, with the narrow specialisation of classical scholarship, the texts of the *Moralia*, which had never really formed a coherent whole in the same way as the *Lives*, were studied individually or in small groups. Some texts, including the Pythian dialogues, addressed religious and philosophical topics that had become obscure to an audience with no grounding in Platonic or Pythagorean philosophy. Interest shifted to the quality of the *Moralia* texts, with scholars judging works that seemed juvenile or too rhetorical less worthy of study, or as not even the work of Plutarch. Academia also focused on what these texts could contribute to an understanding of Plutarch's life and imperial Greece, or on particular details that could help answer wider historical questions about Greek myths, cultic practices, and traditions. Until recently, then, the *Moralia* have not been studied within the context of their generic and literary traditions. It is my objective to read the three Pythian works, within the context of imperial Greek literature and of the *Moralia*, as what they actually are: dialogues, in a wider dialogic tradition, which construct a specific ideal audience, to whom they impart, as I shall contend, not only specific philosophy, but a way of philosophising.

⁸ See his *A Vindication of Natural Diet* (1813).

⁹ In her 2013 paper, 'After Exemplarity: a Map of Plutarchan Scholarship', delivered at the Afterlife of Plutarch conference (Warburg Institute), the proceedings of which have not yet been published, Constanze Güthenke notes that Plato, Plutarch's guiding influence, was read, rather than Plutarch. The paper is available online: <http://www.sas.ac.uk/videos-and-podcasts/classics/after-exemplarity-map-plutarchan-scholarship> [accessed 15/02/2017].

Since we know from occasional references in some of Plutarch's works and a dedication from Delphi that Plutarch was a priest there,¹⁰ much of the scholarly interest in the Pythian dialogues has been devoted to what they can add to our somewhat limited picture of Plutarch's life and the state of Delphi at that time.¹¹ For example, the *De E* in particular, in which Plutarch appears uniquely as both narrator and character, provides scholars with the opportunity to analyse Plutarch's self-representation and its significance. Yet rather than focusing on how the author portrays himself, why he does so in certain ways, and the effect of this on readers, scholars have more often tried to use the vague 'autobiographical' references to his early zeal for mathematics and the Academy, and his presence during Nero's visit to Delphi, to reconstruct his entire biography.¹² But those expecting to find detailed information in these works about Plutarch's role as a priest, his day-to-day activities at Delphi, or the way that Delphi was run as an oracular site will be disappointed.¹³ The work is not concerned with daily trivia, but with philosophy. An approach that seeks to build a biography from texts not designed for this purpose ignores the function of the texts individually and as a group. We shall explore this and other limitations of the scholarship in detail in the next section.

¹⁰ The Delphic inscription, CID 4.150/FD 3.4.447, records the erection of a statue 'ἐπιμελητεύοντος ἀπὸ Δελφῶν Μεστρίου Πλουτάρχου τοῦ ἱερέως'. References to this priesthood in Plutarch's *An seni respublica gerenda sit* (792F), and *Quaestiones convivales* (700E) corroborate this.

¹¹ Jaillard's work (2007: 158, 161), for example, emphasises how Plutarch's dedication to his role as priest at Delphi had an impact on the way that he thought about and constructed his philosophy. Alcock (1993: 25-30) attempts to use the dialogues to reconstruct the historical background, judging Plutarch's veracity by asking if Greece's population really was in decline, as Ammonios states in *De Defectu* (414A-C). For Stadter (2004: 19), Delphi is 'essential to understanding Plutarch in his historical and social context'.

¹² Plutarch's educational history is, in fact, quite difficult to reconstruct. The 'facts' presented in *De E* (387F) are vague enough to have been interpreted in multiple ways (e.g. Moreschini 1997: 18, 132 n. 66, Donini 1986: 97-110). The character of the young Plutarch ends up being criticised either for knowing too much (Brenk 1977: 67-8) or not enough, with authors speculating on how 'authentically' the author portrays 'himself'.

¹³ As Stadter (2015: 83) notes, 'these works, despite their background in ritual, address issues concerning the oracle in philosophical, generally abstract, terms, and thus are somewhat removed from the historical context which stimulates the discussion'. Lamberton (2001: 53-4) also points out that 'Plutarch never depicts himself in such a role [priest], however, and although he writes more about Delphi than any other surviving author does, we look in vain in the midst of all his Delphic lore for any hard facts about ritual or about the mechanics of consulting the oracle in the late first and early second centuries'.

The State of Scholarship on the Pythian Dialogues

Scholarship on the Pythian dialogues has been dominated by an interest less in the dialogues as entire literary works, but more by individual questions, often treated in separate studies, relating to their historicity, subject matter, and textual traditions. Examples of this include assessments of the interlocutors' speeches, and new attempts to answer the questions that the dialogues raise. Thus, over the past century, scholars have made their own suggestions regarding the meaning of the Delphic E and the reason for the colour of the bronzes in *De Pythiae*.¹⁴ Unusual episodes, like those in *De Defectu* of the death of the Pythian priestess and the death of Pan are studied primarily for their historical and social interest.¹⁵ These are all worthwhile topics for research, and together enable us to form a more historically and archaeologically complete picture of the world Plutarch inhabited; however, because their focus is on individual components of the dialogues, they cannot tell us about the dialogues' structures, nor about each element's literary and structural value within the texts. Thus, they can answer specific questions, but do not provide – and do not intend to provide – a reading of any of the dialogues as a whole, or of all three as a series, as is my aim. The difference is simply between reading the dialogues for items of historical interest, and approaching them, as I shall do here, from a literary perspective.

Introductions to commentaries on the dialogues have also focused less on questions of literary interpretation in a wider, contextual sense. Often constrained by the limitations of space, they tend to give a brief overview of the text's historical background (its date of composition and dramatic date), and survey each textual element (content, style, structure, characterisation)

¹⁴ See Moreschini (1997: 8-11) for a summary of authors from the early 19th century onwards who have attempted to interpret the 'real' meaning of the Delphic E, e.g. Bates (1925: 239), Berman and Losada (1975: 117), Hodge (1981: 84), and Griffiths (1955: 238). Bates (1925: 240) calls the interlocutors' interpretations 'fanciful and unsatisfactory, if not impossible'. Much later, Berman and Losada (1975: 115) also found the explanations unsatisfactory. For the colour of the bronzes in *De Pythiae*, see Pouilloux (1965), Jouanna (1975), and Franke and Mircea (2005). In a similar archaeological vein, Deonna (1951: 173-8) studied the symbolism of the sculpture of the palm and frogs, the information from Plutarch adding to information derived from other sources.

¹⁵ On the death of the priestess, see Bayet (1946: 53-76). Indications of a shift in scholarship may be seen from a reading of Jaillard (2007), who notes how the stories fit into the dialogue's wider scheme (pp. 155-8, 166). In relation to the story of the death of Pan, Nock (1923: 164-5) is interested in identifying the god, and Dušanić (1996: 277) in proving the historical truth of the voyage, but the story's exact function in the text has not been given sufficient attention. Borgeaud (1983) both places the story in its Plutarchan context, and surveys subsequent interpretations, but his interest is on the story's religious significance.

individually.¹⁶ Separated into these short sections, they are unable to address the types of questions that I seek to answer: how the dialogue can be read as a whole, how readers' familiarity with its genre could guide them, and how each text fits into the series as a whole. Schröder's introduction to his 1990 commentary of *De Pythiae Oraculis* is thoroughgoing, but engages with questions already established in the scholarship, rather than developing new approaches.¹⁷ Manuscript readings and the manuscript tradition have also received much attention, particularly in the recent *Corpus Plutarchi Moraliū* commentaries, where explanations of these tend to form large sections of the introduction.¹⁸

This has meant that while textual questions have continuously – and rightly – remained one object of scholarly interest, interpretative scholarship has lagged behind. While addressing questions about the textual tradition is a valid exercise, we should also ensure that new questions are asked. It is only recently that scholars have recognised that questions relating to genre, structure, and the reader's experience may contribute to a greater understanding of Plutarch's works individually and as a unit.¹⁹ It is these questions that I wish to ask for the Pythian works, reading them specifically as dialogues, participating in a wider dialogic tradition.

¹⁶ Valgiglio's introduction (1992) to his commentary of *De Pythiae* is a good example. It is divided into six sections: Plutarch and Delphi, the content of *De Pythiae* (which includes subdivisions on oracles in ancient times and Plutarch's time, and the dialogue's themes), the structure of the dialogue, the problems the dialogue addresses, the value of the dialogue, and the text itself.

¹⁷ The introduction is divided into three sections, all engaging with earlier scholarship: 'Komposition und Gedankengang', 'Die "Inspirationstheorie" und die Quellen der Schrift *De Pythiae oraculis*', and 'Der religiöse Charakter der Schrift'.

¹⁸ On the manuscript tradition, see Goldschmidt (1948: 299), O'Sullivan (1975: 269-70), Valgiglio (1992: 42-48). Rescigno (1995) devotes by far the greater part of his introduction to *De Defectu* to an examination of the manuscript tradition. Strijd (1914: 217-18) suggests some alternative manuscript readings of *De Pythiae* 395B, 395F, 396B, 397B, 397C, 397D, 398E, 399A, 399E, 400A, 400D, 401F, 403F, 407F, and 408F. Later, Bolkestein (1964) addresses difficulties in the at 394E (pp. 367-8), 395D (p. 368), 397C (pp. 368-9), 400B (pp. 369-70), 403B (pp. 370-1), 404A (pp. 371-2), 404D (pp. 372-3), 404F (p. 373), and 408C (pp. 373-4). Teodorsson (1988: 141-44) examines 405E-F.

¹⁹ See, for example, the introduction to Klotz and Oikonomopoulou (2011), which addresses, among other topics, the generic traditions underlying the *Quaestiones Convivales* (pp. 12-24), its structure (24-27), and its readership (27-29). For dialogue specifically, see – from only the past few years – Oikonomopoulou (2013) and Müller (2012 and 2013) and Kechagia-Ovseiko (2017).

1. Lack of interest in dialogic form

One result of the lack of intense scholarly interest in the Pythian works' dialogic form is that the incredibly rich openings of all three have rarely merited the attention paid to the prologues of the *Lives* and, more recently to great effect, those of the *Quaestiones Convivales*.²⁰ Much work remains to be done in identifying links between the clues given in the openings regarding how readers should approach the works, and the questions and ideas that follow. Understanding how the works function as dialogues, and how their settings interact with their subject matter, can help with ascertaining their philosophical aims, and the kinds of readers they construct. One example of this is the link between setting and content in *De Pythiae*, made clear first in its prologue, which sees the interlocutors gather at Delphi, where they are immediately inspired by their surroundings to start a discussion. The few studies dedicated entirely to this aspect of the text are far from exhaustive, and often resort to stating the simple fact that there *is* a link, listing the stops on the Delphic tour in order without elaborating on their meaning in the context of the dialogue's framework.²¹ In such approaches, setting and content become elements to be measured on a balance, one necessarily dominating the other.²² In contrast, my approach seeks to analyse not so much the particular content of the discussions that Delphi encourages, but the process that participants go through: their reasons for visiting and their initial reactions to the site (and, in the case of *De Pythiae*, their reactions to specific objects), the connections between

²⁰ For the *Quaestiones Convivales*, see Kechagia (2011: 81-92). Valgiglio (1992: 21-29), in his commentary on *De Pythiae*, does not even mention the introduction of the characters in the dialogue's opening, which he describes as 'baldly archaeological' (p. 22).

²¹ Foucart (1865: 51), cited in Flacelière (1974: 46), Zagdoun (1995: 589). Babut (1992) sees the setting as important because, he argues, Plutarch uses each stop to establish a dynamic of argumentation between representatives of different philosophical schools, e.g. the disagreement between the Stoic Sarapion and the Epicurean Boethos upon hearing the guides recite an oracle at 396C (p. 202).

²² Thus, Babut (1992: 202) proposes the question: 'Autrement dit, le déroulement de cette périégèse est-il commandé par les monuments devant lesquels s'arrêtent les visiteurs du sanctuaire? Ou bien la visite prépare-t-elle, d'une façon ou d'une autre, l'examen du problème qui a donné au dialogue son titre, et faut-il supposer, par conséquent, que le choix même des monuments qui marquent les diverses étapes de la périégèse est déterminé par le sujet du débat conclu par l'exposé de Théon?'. Saïd, in an unpublished conference presentation from the International Plutarch Society's 2014 meeting, argued that 'the Plutarchan *periegesis* is completely subordinated to the needs of the philosophical discussion'.

what they see and what they say, and the turns that their conversation takes, all phenomena unique to dialogue.²³

2. The problem of the 'real' Plutarch

a) The dialogues as accounts of 'real' conversations

A second outcome of scholarship's lack of emphasis on the importance of the Pythian works' dialogic form is the confusion of fiction with reality. In earlier scholarship, this frequently manifested in treating the dialogues as mostly accurate accounts of 'real' conversations that took place in Plutarch's past. This situation arose largely because a young Plutarch himself is a character in *De E*, and because other characters who appear in the dialogues have 'real-life' counterparts. Thus, Plutarch's teacher, brother, sons, friends, and acquaintances all act as interlocutors. Over the last few decades, it has become more widely accepted that the frames of Plutarch's dialogues are 'literary fictions'.²⁴ Despite this consensus, however, the speeches of various characters are still taken to represent Plutarch the author's own opinions. This is particularly harmful when elements of the dialogues are taken out of context, making it more difficult to realise that they are part of a character's speech, rather than part of Plutarch's ideology.²⁵ Where Plutarch does not appear as a character, other characters, usually those deemed most authoritative, are taken to be his 'mouthpiece', as though the expression of the author's own thoughts by at least one of his characters is a necessary feature of dialogue. This seems to arise from a desire for a single authorial voice, which is by nature absent

²³ This process echoes, but is not the same as, that in the *Table Talk*, especially in book 1, where elements related to symposiastic practice, reflect (and are prompted by) the setting occupy the participants' discussion.

²⁴ Thus, for Russell (1973 (2001 reprint): 3), *De E* is 'an older man's nostalgic picture', whose 'setting must be assumed fictitious'. Despite acknowledging the fictitious nature of the setting, Russell nevertheless approaches the text from the perspective that it is in some way a representation of the 'real' Plutarch's life, noting that 'the autobiographical detail [is] stylised and selective'. This desire to see some combination of reality and fiction is common in the scholarship, but I contend that it is difficult to try and separate one from the other in a work whose intention is philosophy, not autobiography. Flacelière (1974: 4) regards the frame of *De E* as 'probably a literary fiction', fulfilling the same purpose as Plato's frames.

²⁵ Thus, instead of attributing a speech or thought to a Plutarchan character, some authors simply write that 'Plutarch says...', e.g. Stadter (2004: 26), who writes 'Plutarch was overjoyed...' and 'Plutarch praises...' when he should attribute these actions to Philinos, who narrates the dialogue.

in 'polyphonous' dialogic text.²⁶ Thus, much effort has been expended on trying to ascertain which character in each dialogue is speaking for Plutarch.²⁷ This becomes particularly difficult when, for example, the character Plutarch and his master Ammonios express different views.²⁸

This is not a unique phenomenon. Scholars of Plato have long since experienced difficulties disentangling the relationship between Plato the author and Sokrates the character.²⁹ The problem of identifying characters with their historical namesakes is, as we shall see in more detail later, that realism is precisely one of the generic features of philosophical dialogue. Thus, while it is very easy to label a dialogue featuring mythical characters or situations, like Plutarch's *Gryllus*, fictional, scholars have had more trouble seeing the philosophical dialogues, with their apparently 'real' characters, as in any way fictional. More recently, Plato's dialogues have come to be accepted as giving 'the impression of a record of actual events, like a good historical novel',³⁰ rather than representing actual discussions. It is in this way, I argue, that Plutarch's dialogues should be more consistently interpreted, too.

²⁶ The term 'polyphonous' is used by Barber (1996: 363) to denote Plato's dialogues, and adopted also by Zanetto (2000: 354).

²⁷ This has led to confusion about whether or not Theon is Plutarch's 'mouthpiece' in *De Pythiae*. Soury (1942: 53) argues that 'Plutarch is manifestly the spokesperson for Plutarch'. Swain (1991: 327) is not averse to the idea, but cautions that Theon 'is not Socrates to Plato'. Babut (1992: 190) also believes that Theon's speech 'visibly presents to us the response of Plutarch to the question proposed', without elaborating on reasons for this. Similar confusion arises over Lamprias in *De Defectu*. Brenk (1977: 114) thinks that Lamprias acts as Plutarch's spokesman because of his 'dramatic superiority'.

²⁸ Thus, Donini (1986: 108-9) expects the student to have assimilated his elder's views.

²⁹ For a good summary of this, see Charalabopoulos (2012: 9).

³⁰ Kahn (1996: 35).

b) Known individuals as fictional characters

Although there has been much interest in identifying the personalities mentioned by Plutarch throughout the *Moralia*,³¹ and using this to reconstruct Plutarch's social sphere,³² there has been less interest in understanding the role of characters from the text alone. Uncovering the identity of the 'real' individual and listing the source material from which his speeches in the dialogue derive, can go some way towards appraising his role within the framework of the dialogue itself. I suggest, however, that this knowledge should be viewed alongside the way that the character is presented in the text, in relation to other characters. Thus, we should not immediately assume, based on our own historical knowledge of named individuals, that Plutarch's characters will represent their real-life counterparts in a historically accurate way. Their role within the drama of the dialogue itself must instead be taken into account. It follows, then, that the role a character plays in one dialogue need not affirm his role in another. While it is easy for modern scholars to reconstruct a picture of these men from surviving inscriptions and references in other texts, few have asked whether ancient readers would have known who these people were, and how any prior knowledge would have coloured their reading. For example, without an explicit designation (as sometimes occurs),³³ would readers have known that Ammonios was Plutarch's teacher or Lamprias his brother, as scholarship often assumes?³⁴ If not, would they have interpreted the two characters' interactions in a similar light? It seems to me likely that members of Plutarch's social circle, such as those to whom he dedicates the work, would have had at least some idea of the identities of these people. If they did not, I contend that they could have gathered, from Plutarch's characterisation of them – their interactions and ways of addressing other characters – their social class and level of education.

³¹ See, for example, the project of Puech (1992: 4831-4893). Flacelière (1974: 41-44) seeks to distinguish Plutarch's interlocutors as known persons, with a particular focus on their philosophical allegiance. Spawforth's association of Kleombrotos with a known individual (1989: 178).

³² Flacelière (1974: 43), Moreschini (1997: 48-9).

³³ For example, Lamprias is called 'my brother' (ὁ ἀδελφός) in *De E* (385D), but narrates *De Defectu*, without ever specifying that he is Plutarch's brother. Thus, only readers familiar with *De E* (or one of the other Plutarchan works in which Lamprias appears, the *Q.C.* and *De Facie*) would know, coming to *De Defectu* for the first time, that Lamprias was the author's brother. Theon is introduced in *De E* (386D) with 'for you know my friend Theon' (οἴσθα γὰρ δὴ Θέωνα τὸν ἐταῖρον).

³⁴ This assumption may be based on the fact that the narrator occasionally addresses the reader with statements like 'for you know...' (οἴσθα γάρ...), but this chatty tone need not indicate that the author actually expects the reader to know the individual named.

Giving the characters the names of known individuals has the effect of lending an air of truth to the dialogues, leading the reader into thinking that they are records of actual conversations. It also results in readers associating Plutarch, as the dialogues' author, with a certain circle of society, comprised of poets, philosophers, and men with high-ranking positions or important duties in the imperial system.

c) Speaking for Plutarch

Similarly, rather than understanding the philosophical ideas expressed in the context of the dialogues alone, scholars have attempted to extract them from their context in order to trace the development of Plutarch's philosophical thinking from his youth.³⁵ This is linked to a desire to assign to Plutarch a clear and internally consistent 'orthodoxy': an adherence to one philosophical school and its tenets, expressed through certain views identified as being repeated across his works.³⁶ So, too, there is an expectation that other characters will neatly embody the views of one particular philosophical school each, something which is occasionally explicit,³⁷ but is certainly not always the case. Thus, Brenk presumes first that the character Plutarch represents the author, and then that the author has an orthodoxy, which he has put into the mouth of his literary creation.³⁸

It is surprising, in light of the state of scholarship on the role and fictional nature of Sokrates in Plato's dialogues,³⁹ that Plutarchan studies have not been quicker to follow, instead insisting on the historical veracity of characters and their views, and on finding a spokesman for Plutarch in each dialogue. This has resulted in some rather curious argumentation regarding whether the

³⁵ See, for example, Brenk (1977: 89, 111, 119), Russell (1973: 76), Vernière (1990: 366).

³⁶ For this, see Ferrari (2010: 47-50).

³⁷ Some examples of characters being described in relation to their philosophy in these three dialogues include Boethos, 'the mathematician', who is introduced in *De Pythiae* 396D-E with 'for you know that the man is already going over to Epicurus' (οἴσθα γὰρ τὸν ἄνδρα μεταπαττόμενον ἤδη πρὸς τὸν Ἐπίκουρον), and 'the Cynic Didymus' (ὁ κυνικός Δίδυμος) (*De Defectu* 413A). In a similar vein, Ziegler regards each character's speech in *De E* not as the expression of a particular 'orthodoxy', but as 'una rassegna di tutti gli antichi tentativi di interpretazione della *E* di cui venne a conoscenza Plutarco' (Ziegler 1965: 231).

³⁸ 1977: 67.

³⁹ This is outlined in Flinterman (2000-2001: 32-33).

character of Ammonios is Plutarch's 'mouthpiece', voicing Plutarch's own views at the time of composition, or whether the author makes the character Ammonios express views that the historical Ammonios actually held. From this text alone, Dillon constructs an entire philosophical profile for Ammonios.⁴⁰ Moreschini, while careful to point out that the character of Ammonios is a 'literary fiction', rather than an 'exact record' of the historical teacher of Plutarch, nevertheless also ends up attributing all the ideas of the literary Ammonios to the historical Plutarch.⁴¹ It is a wholly problematic notion that historical reality can be construed from a literary character's speech in a dialogue. Thus, while it is helpful to place the dialogues in their historical context, it is dangerous to weave together the multitude of thoughts expressed within them, attributing these, as a concrete whole, to Plutarch. My interest is in viewing each character's speeches in their context within each dialogue as a whole, not taking for granted that they represent the views of the author. Rather, my reading seeks to observe the ways in which characters respond to questions, deliver arguments, and absorb the speeches of other characters as part of a wider frame.

d) The benefits of reading the Pythian dialogues as dialogues

If one reads the Pythian dialogues as works of literary fiction, rather than as complete and accurate accounts of real conversations, then the problem of equating characters with their historical counterparts diminishes in importance. In addition to trying to understand the characters in historical terms, it would be beneficial to concentrate on their roles within the dialogues, as I seek to do here. For example, by asking how Plutarch ranks both as a narrator, dedicating a text and retelling a story, and as an interlocutor within a dialogue, we may arrive at a better understanding of the purpose of *De E*.⁴² This approach may also illuminate the reasons for the author's self-presentation in this way, and its effect on the reader.⁴³

⁴⁰ 1977: 189-192.

⁴¹ 1997: 30-31.

⁴² I am grateful to Anne McDonald, who sent me her unpublished 2014 conference paper on the subject of Plutarch's two roles in *De E*.

⁴³ One way of understanding the character of the younger Plutarch would be to compare him not only with his older self, as narrator, but with other young characters who fulfil a similar function in the other two Pythian works. This approach would take into account both the characters' roles within the dialogue, a genre where young, well-educated interlocutors had been a familiar fixture since Plato, and the author's

Reading the three works as aporetic dialogues, where there is not necessarily only one 'true' or 'valid' solution is also helpful for moving towards a more literary approach, which can add to existing historical approaches. The more literary approach, which I take here, considers features that are unique to dialogue (characters' silences, expressions, gestures, and conversational cues), and how these function within each text.⁴⁴ By examining what it is that prompts questions, how questions are asked, what these questions are, and the ways in which participants respond, we may observe how the dialogues provoke and guide philosophical discussion, and what readers can learn from this. In other words, we may learn not just what the texts say, but how they operate for their audience.

3. Desire for Coherence

There has until now been little scholarly interest in analysing each Pythian dialogue as a comprehensive whole, and in seeing how the three work together. Thus, while the *Lives* have recently been scrutinised more closely regarding the structure of individual books,⁴⁵ texts like the Pythian dialogues have remained largely unstudied in this regard.⁴⁶ Questions of whether all three have identifiable structural features in common (e.g. a recognisable 'prologue' or opening) have been put aside in favour of searching for thematic coherence.⁴⁷ Yet this search for overarching coherence has resulted in the tendency to dismiss whole sections as irrelevant

desire to present himself and his philosophical progress in a certain way. We shall look at this in more detail in the third chapter.

⁴⁴ Ginestí Rosell applied a similar approach to the *Quaestiones Convivales* in an unpublished 2014 conference presentation, 'Disturbed Community: Dynamics of Conversation in Plutarch's *Quaestiones Convivales*', in which she examined the role of silences.

⁴⁵ Duff (1999, 2011).

⁴⁶ A notable exception to this is Tobias Thum's comprehensive 2013 study of *De E*, which examines all aspects of the work, including the content of each speech.

⁴⁷ Babut (1992: 200) provides a notable exception, and his work explores how the opening of *De E* is significant in understanding the rest of the dialogue.

digressions.⁴⁸ This could be overcome by seeing them not as 'digressions', but rather seeking to understand how they fulfil some function in the text as a whole.

4. Literary theory as a new approach

Many of the problems identified above may be considered by using approaches derived from literary theory, a field that has only recently begun to have an impact on classical scholarship. In this thesis, I shall apply elements of reader response theory and narrative theory to the three Pythian dialogues. Reader response theory approaches the text from the perspective of a potential reader, rather than trying to ascertain what the author 'really' thought or believed. It can help in establishing the kinds of readers that Plutarch's text constructs, a technique used effectively by Van Hoof (2011) for Plutarch's works on practical ethics.

The work of Genette (1980) on voice in narrative discourse may also be helpful in understanding the roles of narrators and narratees, in particular the parallel roles of Plutarch the narrator and the character of the young Plutarch in *De E*. Genette rightly points out (p. 28) that while there may of course be resonances of the author's life in a text, we cannot use the life of the author to analyse the text, nor should we use the text as a tool to analyse the author's life. This means first analysing the appearance of the character of Plutarch in the text, and then using this to establish what kind of relationship exists between the author and his persona. Asking questions relating to narrators, narratees, and levels of narrative, may allow for new insights on the Pythian dialogues.

Finally, this thesis seeks to re-establish the Pythian dialogues within the wider dialogic tradition, and ask questions regarding their genre. This is particularly important because there has been a remarkable silence concerning Plutarch's role in the history of dialogue. This may simply be due to the fact that although dialogues make up a relatively large part of Plutarch's corpus, they are still eclipsed by his other works, like the *Lives*. In other words, unlike Plato or even Lucian, Plutarch is still not known primarily for or defined by his dialogues. Yet, as Kechagia-Ovseiko (2017: 8) has most recently noted, Plutarch forms the crucial link between the dialogues of Plato and those of the early Christians. The Pythian dialogues provide an opportunity to study

⁴⁸ E.g. Rescigno (1995: 9) calls the section in *De Defectu* on the number of worlds its 'central digression'.

Plutarch's position within this tradition, but also to understand how he adapts and innovates, making use of other, often unexpected genres, as we shall see.

Thesis aims

This study is, then, different from previous approaches in the questions that it asks. I am looking at the Pythian dialogues as literary texts, and as historical artefacts that fit into the wider current of imperial Greek literature. I am concerned less with the information they convey than by what kind of texts they are: how they function, what effect they have on the reader, and how they guide the reader towards one (or another) approach of reading and interpretation.

In order to understand how the Pythian dialogues work as texts, this thesis is divided into three sections. The first, on genre, will examine how Plutarch both conforms to and departs from the genre of dialogue, adheres to and plays with the Platonic, and draws from other genres not traditionally associated with dialogue. The second will focus on the dialogues as a unit. While it is commonly acknowledged that the three works share subject matter, and that each dialogue makes occasional references to themes and specific discussion points in the other two, I am more interested in the wider structural elements (prologues, speeches, and endings) that they share. I ask how they function as a series, and how a reader's experience is shaped by reading them together and in a particular order. The final section of the thesis will examine the kinds of readers that the Pythian texts anticipate, and the way that Plutarch presents both himself and Delphi to such readers. It will focus on the identities and functions of both narrators and narratees, and the representation and role of Delphi as a centre and as a setting.

Chapter 1: Genre in Plutarch's Pythian Dialogues

Introduction: The meaning of 'dialogue'

It is uncontroversial – and true – to state that Plutarch's three Pythian works are clearly dialogues.⁴⁹ My aim is to assess and go beyond this statement, asking what characterised ancient dialogue, and whether Plutarch adhered to this longstanding genre's strictures. Few scholars have asked why Plutarch, with so many genres at his disposal, adopted the genre of dialogue for these three works.⁵⁰ In addition, because of their traditional appellation, scholars have not established whether the Pythian 'dialogues' display any elements that are not typical of the genre. By examining in more detail the features that constitute the genre of philosophical dialogue, we will be better positioned to see the ways in which Plutarch makes use of the genre in these three texts, and to re-evaluate how he fits into a wider tradition, which has for the most part disregarded Plutarch's place between Plato and Lucian. We will also be able to note where and how he adapts and departs from tradition, and what the effect of this is. Through this, we may appraise his innovations, which, as we will see, frequently incorporate other generic

⁴⁹ Hirzel (1895: 189-211) was the first to study the dialogues as dialogues, with 'platonische Reminiscenzen' (p. 205). As for later editions, Del Corno (2013) gives the specific dialogic form for each dialogue, noting that *De Defectu* and *De E* are diegematic (p. 40 and p. 47 respectively), while *De Pythiae*, like *De Genio*, is modelled on Plato's *Phaido*; that is, 'una conversazione riportata nella solita forma diegematica è introdotta da un breve dialogo in forma diretta' (p. 51). He postulates, following Hirzel (1895: 206) and Flacelière (1937: 13, 18) that the dialogic frame is simply a device through which the author may praise Diogenianos or his father (pp. 51-2), but does not explore other effects of its form, or indeed why it can be called dialogue. Valgiglio's 1992 commentary on *De Pythiae* does not explain how the work is dialogic. Moreschini (1997: 44) is content to direct readers to Hirzel's much earlier (1895) study of *De E*'s structure, and Babut's 1992 article (*La composition des Dialogues pythiques*), but does not comment himself on the dialogic form. In Babbitt's Loeb edition, each work is surprisingly designated as an 'essay' (pp. 194, 256, 348). The introductions to Flacelière's 1974 edition of all three texts contain nothing on the significance of the dialogue form; however, his earlier work, *Sur les Oracles de la Pythie* (1937) recognises the influence of Plato on Plutarch's works' literary form (p. 11). The most detailed study is Lamberton's chapter (2001: 146-187) on Plutarch's dialogues. Lamberton recognises dialogue as a genre, and focuses on two important dialogic conventions that he sees Plutarch's dialogues as sharing with Plato's (myths and frames) (p. 148). However, when treating each dialogue individually, he does not focus on their genre so much as their content and other scholars' analyses of them. The only reference within the texts themselves calls them Πυθικοί λόγοι (384E), a catch-all term that may include under its umbrella many genres. We shall defer a lengthy explanation of this until the next chapter, in considering the conception of the three works as a series, because the term, as a plural, refers to multiple works. Although its use at the beginning of *De E* is important, as we shall see, λόγοι on its own is far too broad a term to be considered an indicator of genre. We will, however, briefly touch on the significance to the dialogic tradition of calling the works Πυθικοί λόγοι later in this chapter.

⁵⁰ A notable recent exception is Müller (2013: 65-86), who concludes that Plutarch wrote these works as dialogues because the form was most well-suited for his aim, the teaching of philosophy.

traditions. Knowing about the genres in which the Pythian dialogues participate can help us to establish some details about the identity of their audience, and about how their readers would have approached and understood the texts. Reducing Plutarch's complex compositions to comments as simple as 'Plutarch wrote dialogues' or 'Plutarch was inspired by Plato' results in the wider devaluing of Plutarch's place in the history of dialogue. It simplifies many of the problems relating to Plutarch's use of genre that this chapter aims to explore. To address these, we may take genre theory as a starting point.

Genre Theory

Approaching a text from the perspective of the genre or genres with which it engages is one way of understanding its place in the literature of its time, its contribution to the genre or genres in which it participates, and the kinds of readers it envisaged. To understand how we can apply genre theory to the Pythian dialogues requires a grounding in the theory of genre.

At a basic level, all texts are involved in a two-way process, composition by author and reception by reader.⁵¹ For meaning to be successfully imparted and absorbed, both author and reader must be alert to a wide range of shared signifiers. Thus, in his work *Kinds of Literature*, Fowler points out that every text contains 'generic markers' or a 'generic repertoire', which guides readers towards interpreting a text in a wider literary framework.⁵² By being attuned to a text's generic markers, readers may – often unconsciously – anticipate and then confirm what kind of work an author has produced.⁵³ We are able to do this because we all approach a text equipped

⁵¹ Fowler (1982: 256), Segal (1986: 9-10), Conte (1994: 115), Todorov (2000: 198), Frow (2006: 69).

⁵² 1982 (p. 55). These markers can be formal features or conventions, but also rely on the social and historical context in which a work is received (Fowler 1982: 21-22, Frow 2006: 8-10, 16). They can also take the form of socially-constructed, internalised 'metacommunications', either within the text or outside of it (e.g. paratexts) (Frow 2006: 104-5, 115; Fowler 1982: 92, 98, 105). In this sense, 'genre is a conceptual orientating device that suggests to the hearer [or reader] the sort of receptorial conditions in which a fictive discourse might have been delivered' (Depew and Obbink 2000: 6). Segal (1994: ix) refers to the processes to which the reader must be alert in the interpretation of signifiers from the text as 'readerly competences'. The reader's reception involves 'a structure of constraints: strategies, conventions, codifications, expressive norms, selections of contents, all organized within a competence' (Conte 1994: xx).

⁵³ The reader's recognition of generic markers is frequently an unconscious process (Frow 2006: 54, Fowler 1982: 25, 259-260). Conte (1994: xviii) notes that 'the reader as the medium that actualizes the text' becomes important 'only if one agrees that the text itself has been constructed in a certain way, and not in another, precisely so that the reader can receive and decode it.' Hirsch's work, *Validity in*

with what literary theorist Jauss labels a 'horizon of expectations', an amalgamation of all of our previous reading experiences, which allows us to receive and decode the signals that it incorporates.⁵⁴ An ideal reader is one who has no trouble in recognising and interpreting these signals. Thus, from the generic markers present in a text, we may reconstruct its ideal readers.⁵⁵ Approaching a text through the study of genre has the advantage of regarding a text as a whole in itself, but also of relating it to its predecessors and contemporaries. That is, a generic approach means looking back, but also looking around.⁵⁶ Applying such an approach to the Pythian dialogues means being alert to the generic markers in each text, and comparing these with the generic markers not only of dialogue, but the other genres that they signal through their language, style, and content.

Studying genre is no longer, as it was in the past, simply about assigning a text a single category, from which it cannot move. This would be a process of classification, not criticism. Genre, rather than restricting, may be a 'creative means which authors, in their speech acts, can strategically adopt' for a number of reasons, like self-presentation, the wish to benefit from the implications of a literary tradition, and the desire to make a particular impact on an audience.⁵⁷ Studying genre involves recognising that genre is fluid, while acknowledging that texts are unable to operate successfully without the generic foundations of the works that preceded them.⁵⁸ Conte likens a text's genre to a skeleton, the fundamental 'bone structure' upon which the author builds the 'flesh', the element by which he or she makes an individual mark.⁵⁹ In this

Interpretation (1971), points out that readers are usually able to correctly guess the genre (or genres) intended by the author.

⁵⁴ Jauss (2000: 131). See also Culler (1975: 129). Frow (2006: 81) notes that 'the text presupposes certain kinds of knowledge'. Jameson (2013: 93) formulates the proposition that 'genres are essentially literary institutions, or social contracts between a writer and a specific public, whose function is to specify the proper use of a particular cultural artifact.'

⁵⁵ That is to say, readers that the text envisages in the context in which it was published. In Plutarch, dedications can help to reconstruct the identity of ideal readers, but looking at indicators in the text itself helps to build an image of the 'reading personality'. That is, while it is helpful in the cases where a text is dedicated and where we know the identity and social class of the dedicatee, the text itself gives us an idea of the education level, reading background, and religious, social, and local knowledge expected of this man in his capacity as a reader.

⁵⁶ Jauss (2000: 136).

⁵⁷ The quote is from Van Hoof (2007: 63).

⁵⁸ See Fowler (1982: 31-2) and Wellek and Warren (1973: 226, 261-2).

⁵⁹ 1994 (p. 128).

vein, literary theorists have recently emphasised considering texts not as ‘belonging to’ genres, but as ‘participating in’ them or as ‘uses’ of them, making room for texts which manifest uses of multiple genres.⁶⁰ A text can, therefore, make extensive use of a single ‘dominant’ genre, sometimes with others overlapping,⁶¹ or blend some or many genres, making use of the associations that these carry. This takes genre away from the realm of classification, allowing it instead to become one of the several tools that we can use as a guide to understanding a text’s form and function. As Frow summarises, ‘genre is neither a property of (and located ‘in’) texts, nor a projection of (and located ‘in’) readers; it exists as a part of the relationship between texts and readers, and it has a systematic existence’.⁶² Thus, genre theory makes it possible to situate a text both in its socio-historical context, as a work read actively and interpreted by a certain group (or groups) of people, and in the development and literary evolution of the genre or genres in which it participates and, potentially, shapes.⁶³

It is, then, worth re-assessing the designation of the three Pythian works as simple ‘dialogues’, first by considering what constitute the generic markers of dialogue, and seeing how the Pythian works adhere to these, and how they differ. As we shall see below, we also find in these three texts generic markers for other genres, including the type of *periegesis* exemplified by Pausanias, and the *problemata* found elsewhere in the *Moralia*, but previously in Aristotle. Studying the way that genre works in the Pythian dialogues may allow us to understand Plutarch’s use and manipulation of the genres with which he was familiar from his extensive reading, and the effect that this would have had on readers. Approaching the works from the perspective of genre also allows us to consider the reasons why Plutarch used different genres for different subjects. It can assist us in recognising in the dialogues both a deft adherence to literary traditions, and innovation in adapting and departing from these. Before asking what a

⁶⁰ Frow (2006: 2), Fowler (1982: 37).

⁶¹ Thus, Burridge (2004: 64) represents with a diagram one way of looking at the ancient βίος: as surrounded by other genres, which cross its boundaries, and contribute to its perception as a distinct genre. An example of a work with a dominant genre with an overlapping subgenre might be a detective novel that has a romantic subplot.

⁶² 2006 (p. 102). For the relationship between author and reader, see also Dubrow (1982: 31) and Culler (1975: 147), who see it as a ‘contract’.

⁶³ Frow (2006: 1), Depew and Obbink (2000: 4). For Fowler (1982: 20), the relationship between works and genres ‘is not one of passive membership but of active modulation.’ A work acquires meaning by its modulation of existing generic conventions (Fowler 1982: 23). For the idea of texts only working because certain conditions are met (the demands of readers, means of production), see Frow (2006: 137) and Jauss (2000: 135).

dialogue is, it is worthwhile to briefly outline Plutarch's own conceptions of genre, demonstrating that a genre-based approach is not simply a modern or artificial way of interpreting the Pythian works.

Plutarch's Understanding of Genre

While much modern genre theory arose to make sense of modern texts, like novels, it is valid to extend genre theory to ancient texts as well. This is not least because ancient authors, beginning with Plato and Aristotle, also had strong conceptions of genre, what certain genres could or could not do, and how some texts might represent multiple genres.⁶⁴ Other authors, while not themselves explicitly theorising, knew about and applied these generic characteristics to their works. Aristophanes, for example, continually demonstrates a nuanced understanding of genre.⁶⁵ These burgeoning ideas of genre retained currency long after their conception, and in the Hellenistic period, many genres were classified and canonised, including the dialogue.⁶⁶ This

⁶⁴ Plato and Aristotle both began to define genre in rudimentary ways in the *Republic* and *Poetics* respectively.

Plato, in the *Republic* (3.392d-394d) famously divided poetic texts into those which work through imitation (tragedy and comedy), where the poet imagines what the characters would have said and does not intervene, those where the poet speaks in his own voice (dithyramb), and those that combine both, where the poet may speak in his own voice, but also give the thoughts and words of characters (epic). Aristotle opens the *Poetics* by recognising that epic and tragic poetry, comedy, dithyramb, aulos music, and lyre music, are all examples of *mimesis*, but that each differs from the other in the medium it uses, its object, and its mode (1447a13-18). Aristotle then points out that each kind of *mimesis* has different associations. Thus, comedy represents people 'worse' than those of the time, and tragedy 'better' (1447b15-18). Each also has different characteristics and different functions. So, for example, tragedy employs a certain kind of language to depict 'elevated' action, and is acted rather than narrated, with a purpose of 'catharsis' of emotions (1449b24-28). A work can be considered a tragedy if it has six characteristics that Aristotle delineates: plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle, and lyric poetry (1450a7-10), with some, like plot, privileged (1450a38-40). But tragic works have what we would call formal elements, too, e.g. a prologue, a choral section (1452b13-18). On a broader level, Aristotle makes the essential distinction between history and poetry, or non-fiction and fiction (1451a36-1451b5).

⁶⁵ Thus Scott, in her 2016 thesis on storytelling in Aristophanes, grounds her arguments in genre theory, examining the interactions in Aristophanes' plays between comedy and other genres, notably tragedy, but also epic, the fable, and religious texts (p. 10). She notes that in addition to knowing the conventions of particular dramas as texts, the audience's understanding of how different dramatic genres were staged affected their ability to comprehend and gain from the performances they saw enacted (pp. 14-16).

⁶⁶ It seems that it was only during the Hellenistic period that the word *διάλογος* began to be used to refer specifically to the genre, rather than, as it had previously, to the act of conversing, particularly in a Sokratic way (Jazdzewska [1] 2014: 29). This is evident from Demetrios' use of the term in *On Style* (223), where he suggests that a letter should be written like one side of a dialogue, and later authors like Cicero, who begin to adopt the term in a self-aware way to describe their own writings (*ibid.* p. 30).

does not mean that all texts had concrete generic labels,⁶⁷ or that all ancient authors could adhere to a well-developed system of clearly-delineated genres. This did not exist. It does mean, however, that broadly-drawn categories of texts, like poetry and prose, tragedy and comedy, history, the apology, and the rhetorical oration were recognised, and that within these, smaller sub-categories could be postulated.⁶⁸ There was, at the very least, a conception that each genre had a unique set of characteristics that were appropriate to it.⁶⁹ Because genre is fluid, there was room to play and manoeuvre, but texts which broke the rules were always notable.⁷⁰

Thus, genre theory's idea that readers are able to conjecture from clues given by the text itself what kind of text it will be is a useful way to analyse ancient texts, too. Imperial authors' concern to assist readers is evident in the fact that many of their works begin precisely with these generic markers. That is, they open either by explicitly stating their aim – and therefore the tradition in which their author places them – or with a generic convention that readers were attuned to immediately recognise. Examples of this include *ekphrasis* in the openings of novels, and, as we shall see in more detail later, the extradiegetic frames of dialogues.⁷¹

⁶⁷ The ways in which ancient authors describe the kinds of texts that they write is illuminating (see Duff 1999: 19). We will examine Plutarch's labelling of the Pythian dialogues as *logoi* in the next chapter.

⁶⁸ For example, Asklepiades divided history into three kinds: 'true history' (factual works: included among these are histories of gods, heroes, and notable men, histories of places and times, and histories of actions), 'false history' (fictions and legends, the only proponent of which is the genealogy), and 'apparently true history' (comedy and mimes) (Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Grammarians* 1.252-3).

⁶⁹ Quint. *Inst. Or.* 10.2.21; Cicero, *Orat.* 70-75; Horace, *Ars Poetica* 73-92, especially 89-92 ('versibus exponi tragicis res comica non volt;/ indignatur item privatis ac prope socco dignis carminibus narrari cena Thyestae:/ singular quaeque locum teneant sortita decentem.).

⁷⁰ Thus, for example, Aristotle proposed that tragedy came into being 'from an improvisatory origin' (ἀπ' ἀρχῆς αὐτοσχεδιαστικῆς), evolved as poets developed it, and finally 'ceased to evolve, since it had achieved its own nature' (ἐπαύσατο, ἐπεὶ ἔσχε τὴν αὐτῆς φύσιν). Yet despite achieving perfection as a kind of genre, its proponents could still innovate in, for example, increasing the number of actors, experimenting with scenography, and changing the prevailing metre (*Poetics* 1449a9-30). See also Burridge (2004: 45-6).

⁷¹ In the novels, see, for example, the opening of *Daphnis and Chloe*, where a painting, described in detail, acts as a springboard for the story told by the novel, and the descriptive bird's-eye view of a post-battle scene with which Heliodoros' *Aethiopika* begins. The philosophical dialogue and the novel in particular are interesting cases, because both purported to report accounts of true conversations and events respectively.

Plutarch's works demonstrate a deep awareness of genre. At a very broad and basic level, the varied array of genres in his corpus testifies to his ability to associate particular content with particular forms.⁷² At the level of individual works or groups of texts, Plutarch shows an understanding of generic traditions simply, for example, by making reference to earlier works, authors, or trends, and comparing these, subtly or explicitly, to his own endeavours. An example of this is in the famous opening to the *Life of Alexander*.⁷³ Plutarch there sets out a program that holds true for his other *Lives* as well. He is writing, he says, 'not history, but lives', and he sets these two categories apart by contrasting what interests him as an author (jokes, remarks, etc) with what, by (heavy) implication, has interested his predecessors (i.e. many-corsed battles). He is, before even beginning his *bios*, countering readers' previously held generic expectations of what a biography of a famous man should entail. In Plutarch's acknowledgement and manipulation of extant traditions, we see that his knowledge and command of the genres of history and biography allow him not simply to remain within them, but to innovate. References like this bear witness to the author's recognition of the place of his work in wider literary traditions, which privilege different concerns, and have different aims in mind.⁷⁴

Another Plutarchan work, the *Quaestiones Convivales*, makes its literary origins more obvious. In the prologue to the first book, the author explicitly lists all of his predecessors in the sympotic genre, thereby inviting the reader to place his own work alongside theirs.⁷⁵ Already, at this early stage, the author is constructing the ideal reader (whether Sosius Senecio, who is addressed in the first line of the text,⁷⁶ or any other reader) by placing him or her at a very particular intellectual level, which presupposes a good literary education that has included these philosophers' works. The references to the philosophers' names should conjure in the reader's

⁷² Examples of genres covered by Plutarch include the consolation, the epistle, *aitiai* or *quaestiones*, the rhetorical speech, and dialogues, philosophical and comic.

⁷³ 1.2.

⁷⁴ It is worth pointing out, however, that we should only apply what Plutarch says in the prologue of the *Life of Alexander* to that *Life* itself (Duff 1999: 20, 21). The same principle holds true for other texts, too. In addition, these references to other authors contain meaning for the text beyond positioning it within or in relation to a generic tradition.

⁷⁵ 612D-E. He lists Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle, Speusippus, Epicurus, Prytanis, Hieronymus, and Dion the Academic.

⁷⁶ 612C.

mind the particular symposiac texts with which each is associated. Thus, the names give readers, for whom they are expected to mean something, cues, or ‘generic markers’ as to what content Plutarch’s work might (and should) contain, and what form it might take. Evoking the great authors of the past, who also treated such subjects, immediately confers legitimacy upon Plutarch’s undertaking, placing his work in that tradition. The philosophers’ names suggest both the subject matter of their endeavours (the symposium), and (more loosely) the external form in which these are recorded as written texts. Xenophon and Plato are alluded to once more in the prologue of Book 6, again in relation to the fact that they considered sympotic discourse not only appropriate subject matter for texts, but also, as a result of this, enjoyable and instructive for future generations of readers.⁷⁷ This second mention of these two authors in a book’s prologue emphasises their significance and their force for the author (and his readers) as models, generic blueprints. Plutarch’s clear elaboration of Plato’s and Xenophon’s purpose – recording sympotic discussions ‘for discoursing at table, but also for remembering the things that were handled at such meetings’ – suggests that we should ally it with that of the author.⁷⁸ Thus, without ever really saying as much, Plutarch allows readers’ interpretation of his link with the authors of the past to demonstrate the purpose and value of his undertaking.

Other books of the *Quaestiones Convivales* deal with other questions of form and genre. For example, the prologue of Book 2 explores what constitutes an appropriate question for sympotic discussion, with the author even grouping together what we might call sub-genres (questions that are necessary, and those that are not necessary but pleasant).⁷⁹ The purpose of questions at symposia is considered in the prologue of Book 3.⁸⁰ Outside of the *Q.C.*, we also see generic markers in the introduction to *De capienda*,⁸¹ where Plutarch references Xenophon’s *Oikonomikos*, taking a quotation from it as a starting point for his discussion, and in the opening of the *Amatorius*, where Autoboulos explicitly compares the events he will narrate

⁷⁷ 686D.

⁷⁸ 686D.

⁷⁹ 629C-D.

⁸⁰ 645C. Rather than using sympotic occasions simply to drink wine, it is better ‘to discourse of such matters and handle such questions as make no discovery of the bad parts of the soul, but such as comfort the good, and, by the help of neat and polite learning, lead the intelligent part [of the soul] into an agreeable pasture and garden of delight’)

⁸¹ 86C.

to a drama, and Flavius cautions against poor imitation of Plato.⁸² These references, early in the text, situate the text's content and prefigure the form of the work to come for the reader. They act as generic markers.

It is interesting to note that all of these references occur within the openings of works. Occupying such a position, these hints or 'markers', with the associations that they carry, clarify almost immediately for a reader how he or she is supposed to approach the text. By suggesting to readers that they should see the text as operating along the lines of Xenophon or Plato, the author not only provides venerable predecessors who wrote on such topics or in such ways as he intends, but also ensures that readers will, as they progress through the text, have such works in mind. This means that readers will be predisposed to seek out similarities between the texts, but will also notice, question, and, ultimately, appreciate, diversions from the 'parent' texts.

From this brief look at some examples of Plutarch's notions of genre, we can reach some conclusions. First, it indicates that a genre-based approach is not simply bringing a modern theoretical conception to works which did not take genre into consideration. Rather, given Plutarch's conception of his own works and the way that he guided readers by placing his works alongside others with which they would be familiar, we see in Plutarch a strong understanding of genre, and what it could achieve. A genre-based approach takes into account the generic markers that the author deliberately placed in his texts, with an awareness of all that they signified. In the case of Plutarch, we clearly see the two-way process of texts producing signals, which readers were meant to grasp in their interpretation of the texts. Since we know that Plutarch conceived of his works as participating in certain broad generic traditions, and have noted that genre is a valuable interpretative lens through which to view ancient texts, we turn now to the Pythian dialogues themselves, and the genres in which they participate.

⁸² 749A. See Zanetto (2000: 533-4). We shall treat the Plato reference in more detail below. Zanetto argues that there are also generic markers indicative of Aristophanic comedy in the opening, wider structure, and language of the *Amatorius* (pp. 535-8).

Dialogue as a Genre

The first step in establishing the extent to which the three Pythian works participate in the genre of dialogue, and the ways in which they do so, is to define dialogue as a genre. This includes the ways in which its ancient proponents and commentators understood it, and its place in the tradition of Greek literature. From this analysis, we shall be able to pinpoint the ways in which the Pythian works make use of the genre, and where they depart from it.

Our understanding of the dialogue as a distinct literary genre is shaped primarily by the work of Plato, and both its influence on subsequent Greek writers (such as Plutarch himself) and the analyses of it made by scholars of Greek literary traditions. This is because Plato was the first author to represent (philosophical) conversation that at least purported to be ‘real’, as opposed to the ‘dialogues’, easily recognised as mythical and fictional, that make up tragedy and comedy, and which form components of many other dramatic and narrative genres (like the novel). Because Plato’s dialogues dealt with philosophy, the dialogue form became synonymous with philosophy, emerging as one of the most popular ways to represent philosophy in a literary form. Thus, when we speak of dialogue as a genre, we refer to a primarily philosophical genre, which utilised the external literary form of the dialogue, whether direct (without verbs of speaking) or narrated, to arrange its content.⁸³ Although primarily philosophical, dialogues could also be comic or religious in mode.⁸⁴ It was this genre that later authors deliberately emulated. For example, Athenaios acknowledged that he wrote his *Deipnosophistai* by ‘dramatising the dialogue in Platonic style’.⁸⁵

In a quest to find the earliest author of dialogues, typical of later authors preoccupied by origins, Diogenes Laertios considered several contenders earlier than Plato, including the philosophers Zeno the Eleatic, and Alexamenos of Teos or Styra.⁸⁶ However, it was generally recognised

⁸³ For Press (1993: 126), ‘the dialogue actually constitutes the invention of philosophy as a discrete form of intellectual activity’. This is, he argues, because Plato equated conducting dialogue with philosophising, and because philosophical terminology derives precisely from the dialogues.

⁸⁴ ‘Mode’ is used in literary theory to refer to the register or tone of a work. A good way of thinking about mode is as an adjective used in front of the name of a work’s ‘dominant’ genre, e.g. ‘dramatic dialogue’. The genre’s philosophical debates made it an ideal medium for the early Christians, like Justin and Minucius, to discuss aspects of Christianity, or to pit proponents of different religions against one another.

⁸⁵ 1.1.

⁸⁶ D.L. (3.48), evidently uncertain as to the identity of dialogue’s first proponent (a question in any case unlikely to have a definitive answer), vaguely notes that ‘they say that Zeno the Eleatic was the first to

among ancient authors that dialogue began in earnest with the σωκρατικοὶ λόγοι⁸⁷ or σωκρατικοὶ διάλογοι⁸⁸ of Plato and the other Sokratics, including Xenophon, sometimes regarded as the first among them to record Sokrates' discussions.⁸⁹ But while Plato was responsible for the genre of dialogue as Plutarch inherited it, and as it continued through Christianity to the Enlightenment, he did not invent the genre from nothing. Although almost all examples of works that fit into a dialogic tradition before Plato have been lost, we know that there was a tradition of dramatic dialogue both before and simultaneously to Plato. Plato was believed to have been influenced, at least in the dramatic component of his work, by a fifth- (or fourth-) century writer of 'mimes', Sophron.⁹⁰ Some of Sophron's mimes were dialogic in form,⁹¹ but apart from this, they seem to share with Plato only 'their common use of prose and a dramatic setting'.⁹² Unlike tragedies or comedies, they had no plot, but represented a brief, 'everyday' conversation or moment.⁹³ Among Plato's contemporary dialogue-writers were other followers of Sokrates, including Phaido,⁹⁴ Eukleides, Antisthenes, and Aischines. Their works apparently anticipated Plato's in their dramatic tone, although it seems that 'Plato's dialogues differed from earlier Sokratikoi logoi in both their aim and the means by which they

write dialogues', not naming his source. The second option D.L. puts forward, Alexamenos of Styra or Teos, is equally hazy, cited only 'according to Favorinus in his *Memorabilia*' on the authority of Aristotle, without further elaboration. Athenaios also gives Alexamenos as the first author to 'discover' dialogue, citing as his authorities first Nikias and Sotion, and then Aristotle (11.505b-c). The papyrus in Haslam (1972: 18) suggests that Aristotle only says that Alexamenos was Plato's predecessor out of malice (βασκανία) for him.

⁸⁷ The term was coined by Aristotle to describe one group of mimetic works by the Sokratics that only used language, as opposed to, for example, melody and rhythm (*Poetics* 1, 1447b11). Later writers like D.L. also refer to τοὺς λόγους τοὺς σωκρατικούς (e.g. 2.13.123).

⁸⁸ Athen. 11.505c (a fragment of Aristotle's *On Poets*), D.L. 2.64.

⁸⁹ D.L. 2.48 calls Xenophon the 'first to take notes of, and to give to the world, the conversation of Sokrates, under the title of *Memorabilia*'.

⁹⁰ Aristotle, *Poetics* 1, 1447b9, Ath. 11.505a-c. The connection between the two comes from both D.L. (3.18), who imagines Plato journeying to Sophron's native Sicily, and keeping a copy of Sophron's works under his pillow, and from a papyrus, P. Oxy XLV 3219, examined in Haslam (1972: 18), suggests that Plato developed the 'dramatic element' of his dialogues from Sophron, but that Alexamenos was not an influence (Tarrant 2000: 6). For Sophron's date, see Hordern (2004: 2-4).

⁹¹ Hordern (2004: 9).

⁹² Hordern (2004: 27).

⁹³ Hordern (2004: 4), Freidenberg (2006: 76).

⁹⁴ D.L. 2.105, Aul. Gell. 2.18.

accomplished their aim'.⁹⁵ Plato's decision to write Sokrates' discussions in dialogue form represented a new literary development: exploring philosophy in a dramatic literary form that was not intended for performance on the stage.⁹⁶ His dialogues were curated: elaborately framed and narrated, as we shall see in more detail, unlike those of the other Sokratics.⁹⁷

An important convention that emerged either among the philosophers themselves or at a later time to distinguish these early works, was to classify single dialogues or groups of dialogues by a descriptive adjective ending in -ικός, pertaining usually to the places and occasionally the people, subjects, or content involved, often followed by the term λόγος or λόγοι. Thus, particularly in the Peripatetic tradition, we find place-related works entitled *Megarikos* and *Chalkidikos*.⁹⁸ Plato's own works became Σωκράτικοι λόγοι, and those of another Sokratic, Simon, σκύτικοι λόγοι, because they took place in his shoe-making workshop.⁹⁹ Corpora of dialogic works, like Dikaiarchos' *Korinthiakoi* and *Lesbiakoi logoi*, and the many iterations of *symptikoi logoi*, like those of Athenaios, also take their names from their setting.¹⁰⁰ It is this tradition that we see Plutarch incorporating by styling his works *Pythikoi logoi* in the opening of *De E*, allying himself with his predecessors in the genre, and providing readers with an early generic hint.¹⁰¹

However, despite these other predecessors, it was Plato alone who did the most to shape the way in which dialogue would be understood, both in its formal elements, and particularly as applied to philosophical discourse. For all readers after him, Plato made dialogue a very distinct creation, with strongly philosophical connotations. Sokrates' unique argumentative style, while

⁹⁵ Waugh (2000: 47 n.28). See also Clay (1994: 28, 43-4).

⁹⁶ Plato's dialogues were, however, later performed (Q.C. 711C).

⁹⁷ For example, Xenophon's *Symposium* begins not with an elaborate frame, but with the simple statement that one should relate what men do in their lighter moments, as he came to see from the occasion he now relates.

⁹⁸ Massaro (2000: 122).

⁹⁹ D.L. 2.122.

¹⁰⁰ Massaro (2000: 122). This same Dikaiarchos is the one 'almost programmatically mentioned' in the very first lines of *De E*, a few lines before the works are referred to as *Pythikoi* (*ibid.*). His *Lesbiakoi* are referenced in Cicero (*Tusc. disp.* 1.31.77). Athenaios designates his works as συμπτικοί διάλογοι at 4.162C-E. The Latin tradition also followed the convention of naming works after places. See, for example, Cicero's *Tusculanae Disputationes*.

¹⁰¹ 384E. It is also adopted in the Imperial period by Dio Chrysostom for his dialogue, the *Borysthenitikos*.

lending itself particularly well to the dialogue form, did not guarantee Plato's success as a writer, since it was harnessed by other authors, too. Where Plato excelled was in recognising that written dialogue could serve for readers the same purpose that spoken dialogue held for listeners: leading them towards an appreciation of the truth through a conversational process of questioning that forces them to a point of understanding where they begin to question their own previously-held beliefs¹⁰² and which they would eventually be able to conduct for themselves.¹⁰³ Plato worked with the raw material of back-and-forth conversation, bringing to it dramatic flair and an overarching structure, allowing for the kind of learning that can only take place through a combination of listening to speeches and observing the reception of these, and the behaviour of the speakers.¹⁰⁴ This ability to observe the drama, with its interactions and emotions, inevitably results in a 'distancing' of the reader from the text, which allows for an assessment of the characters that leads to an assessment of oneself.¹⁰⁵ Ancient critics also recognised the style of the Platonic dialogues as 'considerable grandeur [being] combined with considerable forcefulness and charm', another feature that contributed to ease of reading, and bringing the reader 'on board' with the ideas expressed, particularly those considered more controversial.¹⁰⁶ Carefully contextualised by their frames, the past settings of Plato's dialogues

¹⁰² Demetrios makes note of this form of 'so-called Sokratic manner' (τὸ δὲ ἰδίως καλούμενον εἶδος Σωκρατικόν) in *On Style* (297), where he also calls Aeschines a proponent of it. He sets it against more blunt approaches, like direct statements or precepts (296). Because of this approach, Futter (2015: 246) sees Plato's dialogues as having a 'transformative goal'. He draws attention to a story from one of Aristotle's no longer extant dialogues in which a farmer leaves his home and heads directly to Athens upon hearing the *Gorgias* (p. 246), making the point that Plato's dialogues did have – or were believed to have – this hortative effect on readers.

¹⁰³ Thomaskutty (2015: 20-1). They would not only be able to conduct philosophy, but desire it, and in this sense they are protreptic (Griswold, 2010: 157).

¹⁰⁴ On this, see Desjardins (1988: 117), who argues that this 'twofold mode of presentation', in which there are both actions and words, helps to solve the problem of why Plato wrote dialogues at all when he himself claimed that language was fallible. The 'dramatic' element adds to the 'discursive', so that the reader acquires a deeper understanding (p. 119). See also Griswold (2010: 160), who suggests that by representing philosophy in action, and refraining from giving a solid conclusion, Plato 'seduces the reader into finding an answer for himself (just as Socrates did with respect to his interlocutors).'

¹⁰⁵ Futter (2015: 252-3). He describes this as a 'side-on' view of philosophical inquiry (p. 256). Thus, the reader is directed towards 'the recognition of a fundamental situational irony. This is that every interlocutor who claims to know virtue is shown not to know virtue on account of lack of virtue.' (p. 257) From this recognition, readers can put themselves in the place of interlocutors, acknowledging that they too are in a similar situation, where they are not yet virtuous enough to truly understand the answer to the question with which they (and the interlocutor) have been presented (p. 258).

¹⁰⁶ Demetrios, *On Style*, 37: πολλήν μὲν μεγαλοπρέπειαν καταμεμιγμένην ἔχοντας, πολλήν δὲ δεινότητά τε καὶ χάριν. He places Plato's prose, in this regard, alongside that of Homer, Xenophon, and Herodotos.

frequently make a poignant, important point for readers aware of what had transpired, including the fates of the interlocutors, in the interim.¹⁰⁷ In this way, Plato emerged as preeminent from the group of other Sokratics, and was thus regarded by later authors.¹⁰⁸

Ancient critics of dialogue recognised Plato's pre-eminence, and created definitions for dialogue, and names for its subgenres, based on style, content, or both. Albinos defined dialogue in his *Prologos* (2) as 'nothing other than a discourse composed of question and answer upon some political or philosophical matter, combined with a becoming delineation of the manners of the characters introduced, and the arrangement as regards their diction'.¹⁰⁹ In this, as Jazdzewska notes, Albinos brings together dialogue's 'association with a dialectical inquiry, which we saw in Plato's works, and the sense 'a literary dialogue', which was popularized in the Hellenistic period'.¹¹⁰ Roughly two centuries after Albinos, Diogenes Laertios, also in the context of a work on Plato, repeats Albinos' definition word for word.¹¹¹ Both Albinos and D.L. demonstrate interest not only in defining what dialogue is, but in finding similarities and differences among examples of the genre, τίνες αὐτοῦ διαφοραί.¹¹² In Albinos, this resulted in the development of a complex tree of sub-types, based on function and content, which D.L. again reproduced.¹¹³ This, as well as the famous tripartite division of dialogue into dramatic,

¹⁰⁷ Clay (1994: 44-46).

¹⁰⁸ For example, by D.L. 3.48: 'In my opinion Plato, who brought this form of writing to perfection, ought to be adjudged the prize for its invention as well as for its embellishment', and Dionysios of Halikarnassos, *Comp.* 25.ii.192.11-18. As Hösle (2012: xviii) notes, 'no one who had access to Plato's works could have escaped his influence.'

¹⁰⁹ ἔστι δὲ διάλογος <λόγος> ἐξ ἐρωτήσεως καὶ ἀποκρίσεως συγκεείμενος περὶ τινος τῶν φιλοσοφουμένων καὶ πολιτικῶν μετὰ τῆς πρεπούσης ἠθοποιίας τῶν παραλαμβανομένων προσώπων καὶ τῆς κατὰ τὴν λέξιν κατασκευῆς.

¹¹⁰ 2014 (pp. 31-2).

¹¹¹ 3.49.

¹¹² D.L. 3.50.

¹¹³ He begins with the two overarching categories (χαρακτῆρες), 'those adapted for instruction and those for inquiry' (ὁ τε ὑφηγητικός καὶ ὁ ζητητικός). 'Instructive' dialogues are divided into 'the theoretical and the practical' (θεωρηματικόν τε καὶ πρακτικόν), with 'theoretical' comprising 'physical' (φυσικόν) (the *Timaios*) and 'logical' (λογικόν) (*Statesman*, *Kratylos*, *Parmenides*, *Sophist*), and 'practical' comprising the 'ethical' (ἠθικόν) (the *Apology*, *Krito*, *Phaido*, *Phaidros*, *Symposium*, *Menexenos*, *Kleitophon*, *Epistles*, *Philebos*, *Hipparchos*, *Rivals*) and 'political' (πολιτικόν) (the *Republic*, the *Laws*, *Minos*, *Epinomis*, the dialogue concerning Atlantis). In a similar way, 'inquiry' dialogues are split into 'the one of which aims at training the mind and the other at victory in controversy' (γυμναστικός καὶ ἀγωνιστικός). The 'mind-training' type includes those dialogues 'akin to the midwife's art' (μαιευτικός) (the two *Alkibiades*, *Theages*, *Lysis*, *Laches*) and those that are 'tentative' (πειραστικός) (*Euthyphro*, *Meno*, *Io*, *Charmides*, *Theaitetos*). Dialogues aiming for victory in controversy encompass 'one part which raises critical

mimetic, and mixed, derived entirely from analysis of Plato's work.¹¹⁴ In this latter system, δραματικοί or μιμητικοί dialogues are similar to plays, where characters speak back-and-forth, without authorial intervention.¹¹⁵ διηγηματικοί dialogues are reported or narrated, with authorial intervention. Finally, μείκτοι dialogues mix both. This category can contain so-called 'metadialogic' works, like Plutarch's *De Pythiae* and *De Genio*, where one dialogue is embedded in, or 'narrated in the context of' another.¹¹⁶ It is to this system that Plutarch's sophist refers in Q.C. 711C, omitting the 'mixed' category.¹¹⁷ By opening his statement with 'you know', and so presupposing his Greek audience's familiarity with ordering systems for Plato's works, he demonstrates that this kind of genre-based knowledge would have been commonplace among Plutarch's circle.

By the time that Plutarch came to write, then, dialogue had very specific associations. When readers encountered a dialogue, they expected a text whose concern was philosophy, with a structure that would be narrated, 'direct', or mixed. Authors after Plato deliberately allied their dialogues with this tradition, namedropping Plato to benefit from the associations that his name conjured within a dialogic context.¹¹⁸ We can understand something of dialogue's status as a 'high' genre in the Imperial period, and see how Plato continued to loom large, if we briefly turn to an author writing some decades after Plutarch, Lucian, and his dialogue *The Double Indictment*, written around 165 A.D. In this work, Dialogue is personified as 'tranquil', still associated primarily with 'the walks of the Academy or the Lyceum'.¹¹⁹ Dialogue brings a charge against the Syrian, Lucian, for turning him from 'a person of exalted character' to 'a monster of

objections' (ένδεικτικός) (*Euthydemus*, *Gorgias*), and another which is 'subversive of the main position' (άνατρεπτικός) (the two entitled *Hippias*).

¹¹⁴ D.L. (3.50) is dismissive of this system. It was based on Plato's own scheme for classifying poetic texts (*Rep.* 3.392d-4d).

¹¹⁵ That these two terms are interchangeable is plausibly suggested by Haslam (1972: 21).

¹¹⁶ Martins de Jesus (2009: 11). Martins de Jesus also places the *Amatorius*, despite its dramatic elements, into this category, since it is not a drama 'stricto sensu'.

¹¹⁷ "ὅστε γάρ", εἶπεν ὅτι τῶν Πλάτωνος διαλόγων διηγηματικοί τινὲς εἰσιν οἱ δὲ δραματικοί...'

¹¹⁸ See, for example, the prefaces to Cicero's dialogues, e.g. *Tusc. Disp.* 1.4.8 ('This, as you know, is the old Socratic method of arguing against your adversary's position; for Socrates thought that in this way the probable truth was most easily discovered...'), and *De Oratore* 1.7.28 ("Why should we not, Crassus, imitate Socrates in the *Phaedrus* of Plato? For this plane-tree of yours has put me in mind of it..."). In the Greek tradition, see Plutarch, *Amatorius* 749A and Dio Chrysostom, *Bor.* 26-8.

¹¹⁹ *Double Indictment* 32.

incongruity; a literary Centaur' by mixing him with a genre not traditionally associated with dialogue, Aristophanic comedy.¹²⁰ These, then, are shown to be two distinct genres with distinct concerns. Dialogue's concern is still philosophy. His 'speculations turned upon the Gods, and Nature, and the *Annus Magnus*',¹²¹ and, according to the Syrian, 'he wants me to sit and discourse subtle nothings with him about the immortality of the soul', among other lofty and impractical subjects, which allude to the concerns of Plato.¹²² In Lucian, however, and as we shall see in Plutarch, we grasp too the enjoyment the author derives from lampooning and twisting genre. Although Lucian's dialogue is an extreme (and relatively late) example, it shows that genre could be manipulated, and that Plato, despite still occupying a preeminent position in the tradition, was by no means sacred. We turn now to Plutarch, and his use of and departures from dialogue in the Platonic tradition.

Plutarch and Plato

Plutarch's adherence to Platonic traditions throughout his work has always been recognised. This is manifest in both its content and, as we shall see, its style, but it is the former which has usually been most obvious to scholars. Much of the philosophy that Plutarch espouses throughout both the *Moralia* and the *Lives* has its basis in Plato's works.¹²³ For example, characters in the *Lives* are judged according to Platonic criteria, such as the way that they control their *thumos* and display *arete*. Across the Pythian dialogues, many characters, particularly those in authoritative positions, like Ammonios and Theon, expound Platonic beliefs. In *De Defectu*, Kleombrotos' wise 'barbarian' is revealed to be nothing of the sort, since his ideas, as the others confidently identify, derive from Plato's *Phaedrus*, *Timaeus*, and the *Sophist*.¹²⁴ On a larger scale, in the dialogue *De Genio Socratis*, Plutarch imagines a group of interlocutors involved in the Theban conspiracy, who discuss the nature of Sokrates. He is open to the guiding influence of his *daimonion* in the same way that the Pythian priestess, in prophesying, is shown

¹²⁰ *Double Indictment* 33.

¹²¹ *Double Indictment* 33.

¹²² *Double Indictment* 34. The *Phaedrus* had earlier been quoted by Dialogue twice, and heavily referenced in the mention of 'ideals', and the allusions to broken wings and upturned eyes (33). Dialogue also appears as '[philosophy's] serving-man' in another Lucianic dialogue, *Dialogues of the Dead*, 26.

¹²³ cf. what the young Plutarch says in De E about joining the Academy.

¹²⁴ Flacelière 1974: 95, *Phaedrus* 248b, *Timaeus* 55c, *Sophist* 254B-256D.

to be receptive to the influence of the god Apollo. The Platonism here is at the level of the work's overall structure. By combining lengthy philosophical speeches with action, *De Genio* is deliberately reminiscent of Plato's *Phaedo*.¹²⁵ In its representation of a wide range of characters at different levels of education and stages of philosophical growth, and in its depiction of the struggle between acting philosophically and participating in public life, it is also typical of the 'practical' Platonism in Plutarch's *Lives*.¹²⁶ We see this respect for Plato and his practice at work in other Plutarchan dialogues, too. It is found in the *Q.C.*, where Plutarch advocates recording symposiastic discussions as Plato did (612D-E, 613D, 686A-D), and sets one book at a celebration for Plato's birthday (717A). Finally, we find an appreciative allusion in the prologue of the *Amatorius*, which both references the setting of the *Phaedrus*, and slyly mocks poorer examples of the evidently popular practice of imitating Plato (749A). As we can establish from the celebration of Plato in parties commemorating his birthday, and in the slew of keen but hapless imitators to which Plutarch alludes, Plutarch was by no means alone in turning to Plato for inspiration.

This reverencing of Plato is, in fact, at least partly emblematic of the well-known wider trend wherein Imperial Greek authors sought to establish a distinct cultural identity, separate from Rome, by turning to the great authors of the past.¹²⁷ Certain key authors like Homer and Plato, whose works had long been accumulating special status among subsequent writers, who quoted and referenced them in their own very different works, came to occupy a central place in the

¹²⁵ Riley (1977: 258).

¹²⁶ As Lamberton notes, in this dialogue 'Plutarch presumes to join Plato and Xenophon in expanding the Socratic corpus' (2001: 154). See *De Genio* 575C and Riley (1977: 267-273) for its similarity to the *Lives*.

¹²⁷ This has been most notably documented in Bowie's seminal article in *Past and Present* (1970: 3-41), where he explores the tendency for 'archaism' in language, subject matter, and the treatment of this content across a variety of genres in Imperial Greek literature (oratory, historiography, and *periegesis*, among others), viewing this as just one manifestation of a wider cultural shift. He suggests (1970: 4) that this constant reflection on and reference to the 'glorious' Greek past (i.e. before the rise of the Roman Empire) owed much to a widespread feeling of 'dissatisfaction with the political situation of the present' in which Greece lacked the political and cultural autonomy it had once exemplified (pp. 18, 27). Authors could – at least in their writings, if not in the world itself – maintain a link with a past in which they imagined they could have rivalled the 'truly' great and influential speakers and politicians (p. 28). Their admiration and emulation of the past was not necessarily, Bowie argues, a rejection of Rome itself, which provided them with wealth and opportunities for an imperial career, but a longing for a more Hellenic world that seemingly offered more potential for personal greatness (p. 41). Plato was an especially relevant point of reference because, although the political world of Greek power that he inhabited was no longer accessible to Plutarch and his contemporaries, the world of philosophical conversation that he depicted *was*.

emerging Greek canon in this period.¹²⁸ Homer's works could be treated almost as gospels, concealing deep philosophical truths.¹²⁹ Plato, too, acquired such high standing that his name was regularly accompanied by the epithet 'the divine' (θεῖος).¹³⁰ Thus, Plutarch's frequent use of the phrase not only indicates his own clear admiration for Plato, but reflects the widespread Plato-worship of his age, symptomatic of Greece's desire to maintain its links with a past perceived as nobler.

By following Plato, however, Plutarch is not only echoing his philosophy, or resurrecting the past to inform his cultural identity. Rather, he is taking advantage of a well-established, comprehensive, literary structure that fit well with his own preoccupations. While scholars have been concerned in the past with detecting elements of Plato in Plutarch, this has mostly been restricted to quotations, stylistic features (in language), and, in particular, reflections of the master's philosophy. I argue here that we may also see Plato in the way that Plutarch writes dialogue; that is, in the conventions he follows, and the structure he gives to his Pythian works.

Across Plato's corpus, we see certain literary components repeated so often that they crystallised, forming the core of the genre of philosophical dialogue for which Plato achieved renown. These include framing his works through convoluted chains of reception; employing conventions borrowed from drama, such as strong characterisation, interaction between characters as a mechanism for both characters' and readers' growth, the employment of a recognisable setting, and utilising widely-applicable structures, with, for example, a clearly demarcated 'prologue', and a series of interactions that culminate in *aporia*.¹³¹ Thus, successive works purporting to subscribe to the genre, explicitly or not, needed to fulfil these generic requirements. By examining how each element of the genre was developed by and functioned in Plato, and how it was utilised by Plutarch, we can make sense of Plato's role in shaping the

¹²⁸ We see these reading tastes reflected in quotations in second-century Greek authors, as well as the papyrus deposits at Oxyrhynchus (Bowie 1970: 35).

¹²⁹ See, for example, Plutarch's *Consolatio ad Apollonium* 104D and Athenaios' *Deipn.* 2.13, 5.1, and 13.71. Plutarch also calls Hesiod 'divine' in *De Defectu* (431E).

¹³⁰ See, for example, Plutarch's *Life of Perikles* (ch. 8) and *De Capienda* 90C, and Athenaios' *Deipn.* 3.51, 6.23, 10.55, 14.68 and 15.23.

¹³¹ Press (1993: 119-124) gives, as 'structural elements', setting, characters, plot, dramatic or narrated form, dramatic order, quotations/references/allusions, first and last lines, and irony and humour. Not all of these are relevant to Plutarch, so my own list includes features I deem most relevant from a reading of both.

Pythian works with which we are concerned. We can also observe where Plutarch departs in his interpretation of the generic elements exemplified by his predecessor.

1. Dialogue as fiction: the illusion of reality

The ‘real-life’ origins of dialogue (spoken conversation among interlocutors) have always led to confusion about the genre’s status as primarily fictional or non-fictional, a sometimes misleading dichotomy, which nevertheless demonstrates how strong is the desire to separate the oral from the literary, and the ‘historical’ from the ‘fictional’. Because Plato’s dialogues feature characters with the names of real individuals, and reference events of the recent past, they look like records of real conversations. In addition, for later readers the ready availability of biographical information and other Sokratic texts meant that Plato’s dialogues could be judged by historical standards and, occasionally, treated as historical.¹³² Yet this kind of ‘transcript’ approach completely removes authorial intention. These are not Sokrates’ speeches, but Plato’s writings.¹³³ Observant readers could note that an allegedly impromptu conversation, carefully described as such, would rarely attract the combination of a master in top form, a cooperative interlocutor, and a bystander with a sufficiently strong memory to record what transpired in such a polished way.¹³⁴ What Plato did was to recognise the inherent tensions involved in gaining, retaining, and sharing knowledge. He exploited these, playing with notions of truth and memory, and creating elaborate back-stories as to how the interlocutors of his dialogues had come to know the discussions they relate.¹³⁵ Thus, the dialogue can paradoxically, with its historical characters and settings and its first-person narration, convince

¹³² Tarrant (2000: 8-9) adduces as examples of a historical reading of Plato Olympiodorus on the *Gorgias* and the anonymous *Theaetetus*-Commentator, but points out that even they would probably have accepted that ‘Plato chose the historical setting for fictional conversations to suit his philosophic purposes’.

¹³³ For this, see Charalabopoulos (2012: 9), who thoughtfully characterises Sokrates as a Platonic ‘hero’, rather than a ‘mouthpiece’.

¹³⁴ As Tarrant (2000: 8) notes, ‘That response is in fact encouraged by a straightforward reading of the opening of the *Theaetetus*...’ Rowe (2009: 28) points out, too, that the very polished structure of Plato’s works, cautions against their acceptance as reality. As he notes, ‘that Sokrates’ conversations should have managed organised perfection, over and over again, usually with different respondents, is actually impossible to believe.’

¹³⁵ Kim (2013: 313-14). See, for example, the openings of the *Theaetetus*, *Parmenides*, and *Symposium*.

readers that it represents reality, while nevertheless presenting itself as an artificial product, the inevitably flawed result of transcription, retelling, and/or the inaccuracy and embellishments of the writing process.¹³⁶ Thus, Kahn conceives of each dialogue as resembling not so much a transcript as 'a good historical novel'.¹³⁷

In Plato's works, the illusion of reality is usually introduced in a 'framing' prologue. Often 'accidental' in nature, they establish how the current text came to be recited, retold, or composed, and who is narrating it now. By introducing Sokrates and/or a stock of characters, meeting at some social occasion, Plato convinces readers of his special status as an apparently privileged recorder, creating a sense of authority, and attesting to his special closeness to Sokrates and his circle. The frames usually reveal that the discussion the dialogue relates took place at some past time. In Plato, the gap between past and narratorial present can either be large (a generation, for example) or small (a few hours or a day),¹³⁸ allowing more or less time for characters to forget or embellish the truth. This 'intricate structure of stories about stories' (Thayer 1993: 53) should put readers on guard concerning their 'reliability and "objectivity"', cautioning them to question how knowledge is transmitted, and to consider the difference between relating a dialogue and participating in it.¹³⁹ In some Platonic works, like the *Symposium*, or *Parmenides*, whose elaborate play with time, accuracy, and the indirect circumstances of the text's reception in the prologue borders on the absurd, this twisting of reality is easy to notice.¹⁴⁰ In other works, however, particularly direct – rather than narrated – dialogues, the text's fictionality is less obvious. Perceptive readers would perhaps only realise

¹³⁶ For example, we know that even if the conversation was 'real' or historical at one point, the author has had time to a) forget certain information, and b) reflect upon the original discussion, and to revise and extend the subject matter in light of this. Therefore, the text in its current form can only be at most an echo of something once spoken, which might simply have provided the inspiration for the current work and little else. Conventions such as characters pre-empting objections betray the strongly literary heritage of philosophical dialogue.

¹³⁷ 1996 (p. 35), quoted in Flinterman 2001-2: 32.

¹³⁸ Thus, the *Protagoras* is narrated immediately after the original discussion, while the *Republic* is narrated the day after (Press 1993: 121-2).

¹³⁹ Tschemplik (2008: 12).

¹⁴⁰ As Kim (2013: 313) aptly notes, with reference to Plato, 'the literary dialogue had always required a certain suspension of disbelief from its readers'.

that the works were more fiction than truth from the fact that the historical Plato, being much younger than his interlocutors, could not have been present at the conversations he records.¹⁴¹

One such perceptive reader was Aelius Aristides. His reaction to Plato, at least in his recognition of Plato as *author* and constructor rather than recorder, is probably typical of other Imperial writers. It is Plato's posture of truth that riles Aristides. In decrying Plato's dialogues, Aristides writes of Plato in terms that acknowledge that he fabricated fictions: 'contriving (ὑποθέμενος) a meeting of Gorgias and Socrates at Athens' (2.13), 'as he made (πεποιήται) Socrates answer him' (2.262), 'speaking, although he had died' (*Or.* 2.324), 'he turns the discussion in whatever direction suits him' (*Or.* 3.632).¹⁴² Aristides' stance is sophistic, and his comments are used to malign Plato for imparting his philosophical messages at the expense of historical truth.

Another Imperial author, Athenaios, also rails against Plato for what he perceives to be blatant historical inaccuracies, sarcastically nicknaming Plato 'the friend of Mnemosyne' (216b).¹⁴³ Other authors, like Diogenes Laertios, were less vicious, recognising that Plato was not distorting the truth just for the sake of it, but simply introducing different characters to fulfil specific functions and represent different ideas. D.L. pointed out that Plato could use Sokrates or Timaios as characters, but attribute to them opinions not held by their historical counterparts.¹⁴⁴ Much later, the Neoplatonist Proklos argued in his commentary on Plato's *Alkibiades* 1 (18-19) that Plato's prologues do not 'aim at mere accurate narrative, as some have considered', but are rather adapted to the 'general purpose of the dialogues', subtly indicating the topic of discussion to come. Finally, Demetrios' comment in *On Style* (224) that 'the [dialogue] imitates (μιμῆται) improvised conversation' is revealing, acknowledging that it is composed, rather than recorded: it aims at the flavour of reality, rather than strict replication.¹⁴⁵ Thus, despite the

¹⁴¹ Sayre (1995: 3). Athenaios recognised this (11.505e-f).

¹⁴² For these and more examples, see Flinterman (2000-2001: 40-45).

¹⁴³ See 215d-216a, 217a-218e, especially 216d: 'The philosophers thus lie about everything and fail to realise that much of what they write is full of anachronisms.' 217a: 'But Plato's *Symposium* is complete nonsense; because when Agathon took the prize, Plato was 14 years old.' 217c: 'That Plato makes numerous chronological errors is clear from many passages. For, as the poet says 'whatever comes to an untimely tongue, he shows no discrimination and writes it down.'" 11.505e, quoting Timo: 'What fabrications the marvellous forger Plato produced!' (ὡς ἀνέπλασσε Πλάτων ὁ πεπλασμένα θαύματα εἰδώς).

¹⁴⁴ D.L. 3.52.

¹⁴⁵ See also 226: 'All this sort of style in imitation of reality [like Plato does in the *Euthydemus*] suits oral delivery better, it does not suit letters since they are written.'

vitriol of Aristides and Athenaios, in recognising that Plato departs from reality, they at least show, along with D.L., Proklos, and Demetrios, an awareness of the creative license that one could exercise in writing dialogues.¹⁴⁶ It is precisely the misleading framing of Plato's works as 'real' that offends Aristides and Athenaios so deeply,¹⁴⁷ yet it was this illusion of reality that became pivotal to the genre. Dialogue writers after Plato prioritised grounding their work in reality, using the prologue to situate the discussion at a particular time and place, and explain the narrator's knowledge of it.¹⁴⁸

Plutarch's dialogues are no exception. The Pythian works replicate this feature of Plato's dialogues by playing with notions of memory and transmission in their prologues, which frame the discussions related as having taken place in the past. However, his readers have often failed to recall that this is a generic trope, instead taking these frames at face value.¹⁴⁹ This is not to say that they do not contain any trace of reality. But since Plutarch and his close contemporaries were aware of Plato's play with the truth, we should be careful in attributing too much historical truth to the prologues of Plutarch. In Plato, we have seen that the goals of the framing prologues include setting up their author as an intimate of Sokrates and his circle, and forcing readers to question notions of truth and authority. We shall now see how Plutarch adopted this Platonism, creating a sense of reality, and what purpose it served in its new context.

In each of the three Pythian dialogues, the prologue establishes an illusion of reality by pretending that the work, or the encounter that the work describes, was casual, the result of chance or fate, rather than careful arrangement.¹⁵⁰ This is a technique borrowed from Plato, many of whose works begin with a 'surprise' encounter.¹⁵¹ The 'chance' meeting of the dialogue

¹⁴⁶ *Or.* 3, 586: 'But these incongruities result from the licence that is customary in these dialogues. For owing to the fact that they are all largely fictions and that one is at liberty to construct the plot using any ingredient one chooses, these works are as such not conspicuous for scrupulous preservation of the truth.'

¹⁴⁷ Flinterman (2000-2001: 45-6).

¹⁴⁸ See, for example, the openings of Minucius' *Octavius* and Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*.

¹⁴⁹ So, for example, Hirzel (1895: 202): 'Durch die Worte, welche Plutarch an Serapion richtet, blicken wir in eine kleine Welt wirklicher Dialoge, von denen wir nicht wissen in wie weit sie der, überdies zertrümmerte, Spiegel der Literature jemals aufgefangen hat.'

¹⁵⁰ These tactics are also used in Dio Chrysostom's *Borysthenitikos* ('I happened to be visiting...', 'I chanced to be strolling...') and *Melankomas II*, which has obvious parallels with the opening of the *Republic*.

¹⁵¹ For example, the *Phaedrus* sees the title character unexpectedly encountering Sokrates, who rarely, as Phaedrus points out, strays beyond the boundaries of the city (230c-d, see also 228b-c for the element of surprise). *Euthydemos* 272e-273a: 'By some providence I chanced to be sitting in the place where you

deliberately sets it against other genres, like the philosophical treatise, typically composed at leisure or requested. It also reinforces the notion that the dialogue is impromptu, allowing the reader to grasp an important point for Plutarch, which Plato also sought to demonstrate: that philosophy can take place in one's daily life, and does not require an academic context. Chance is present in the very first line of *De E*, where Plutarch describes how he 'chanced upon' (ἐνέτυχον) some lines on gift-giving, which he uses to lead into the narration of the dialogue.¹⁵² Here, too, at the commencement of the narrated dialogue, we have an element of the chance or unexpected: Plutarch has been 'caught' or 'detected' (ἐλήφθη) by his sons in discussion with 'some strangers'. In the direct dialogue, *De Pythiae*, two characters, Basilokles and Philinos meet according to some prearranged plan, revealed in Basilokles' comment that he had almost given up waiting (394E). Like many of Plato's characters, he knows that an earlier gathering took place, but not that many and varied conversations took place, nor what inspired these (395A). In Philinos' outline of the discussions that transpired earlier, his military metaphor of the Spartoi being scattered seems to indicate the wide-ranging and fluctuating nature of the discussions – the antithesis of regulated, predetermined speech. The opening scene between the two men is a plausible social interaction, and Basilokles' inquiries seem natural rather than forced. *De Defectu* introduces chance in its frame on a much larger scale than in the other two works. Just as two swans or eagles happened to meet at Delphi when Zeus sent them from opposite ends of the earth, so Plutarch's two characters 'happened' (ἔτυχον) to meet at Delphi (410A). As in Plato's dialogues, the apparently chance nature of the meetings lends them an air of reality. But this illusion of reality is created by more than just a show of 'chance'.

Each frame follows a Platonic model, whether direct or narrated, in situating the circumstances of the dialogue's narration in relation to the time and place at which the dialogue itself occurred. Like Plato, there are varying degrees of removal. The dialogue component of *De E* is 'nested'

saw me, in the undressing-room [in the Lyceum], alone, and was just intending to get up and go; but the moment I did so, there came my wonted spiritual sign. So I sat down again, [273A] and after a little while these two persons entered—Euthydemus and Dionysodorus—and accompanying them, quite a number, as it seemed to me, of their pupils...' *Lysis* 203a: 'I was making my way from the Academy straight to the Lyceum, by the road outside the town wall, —just under the wall; and when I reached the little gate that leads to the spring of Panops, I chanced (συνέτυχον) there upon Hippothales...' *Lovers* 132b: 'Now it chanced (ἔτυχανέτην) that two of the young people were disputing, but about what, I did not clearly overhear.' *Theages* 122a: 'It is a happy chance, therefore, that has thrown you in our way [σὺ οὖν ἡμῶν εἰς καλὸν παρεφάνης], as I should be particularly glad, with this plan of action in my mind, to ask your advice.'

¹⁵² 394D.

within a letter that the author is ostensibly writing to the recipient, Sarapion.¹⁵³ The epistolary convention, with the author apparently writing to a known individual, acts as a sort of guarantee of its truth. Flacelière suggests that this opening frame ‘take[s] the place of an ‘introductory dialogue’, so frequently seen in Plato’.¹⁵⁴ It certainly plays a similar role in that it explains the circumstances of the dialogue’s narration, as well as the dialogue itself. The scene of the discussion, so Plutarch writes in the framing ‘letter’, took place ‘recently’ (ἔναγχος) (385A) at Delphi, when he was compelled to relate to some visitors a discussion that took place ‘long ago’ (πάλαι) (385B). It is this discussion that forms the bulk of the work. This story-within-a-story-within-a-story is reminiscent of some Platonic works like the *Parmenides* and *Theaetetus*. As in Plato, the multiple levels here seem to recommend some awareness in approaching and interpreting the text. They create distance between the Plutarch writing – and ‘recently’ narrating – the dialogue, and the young Plutarch who took part in the original ‘long ago’ discussion. Just as in Plato, the frame both asserts the dialogue’s ‘reality’, and cautions readers about too readily accepting a story that Plutarch himself, so he says, was reticent to retell (385A).

The narration of *De Pythiae* takes place immediately after the conversation it relates, with a character who was just present at the first meeting recounting it to a friend who was not present. This makes it similar to Platonic dialogues like *Menexenus*, where the action narrated has only just taken place,¹⁵⁵ but also works like the *Phaedo* (58A), where one character who was present at a past event relates it to another, who wasn’t. It is perhaps most similar to two Platonic dialogues in its opening: the *Protagoras* and *Euthydemus*. The opening of the *Protagoras* also transitions from direct dialogue into narrated. Like *De Pythiae*, it concerns a discussion that has only just taken place with a well-reputed visiting stranger, Protagoras, who is described as very wise.¹⁵⁶ *Euthydemus*, too, begins with direct dialogue: a meeting between friends, Sokrates and Krito. Like Basilokles in *De Pythiae*, Krito was aware that a conversation had taken place the previous day (and indeed had seen it), but had not known who Euthydemus was. This gives Sokrates the opportunity, like Philinos, to speak about the ‘πάσσοφοί’ guests,

¹⁵³ Hirzel (1895: 202).

¹⁵⁴ 1974: 4.

¹⁵⁵ It took place the day before (236a-b).

¹⁵⁶ 309d-310a.

who are unknown to his companion.¹⁵⁷ Because *De Pythiae* is a direct dialogue, with Plutarch neither narrating nor participating in the discussion, Flacelière sees it as the most Platonic opening of the three.¹⁵⁸ Indeed, its direct opening, which launches straight into dialogue, means that there is less room to improvise, as in the other two narrated openings, where Plutarch plays with the very un-Platonic structure of a dialogue within a letter, and with a Delphic myth as a metaphor. As in Plato, the chain of transmission is called into question, with Basilokles asking Philinos: ‘Will it be necessary to call in someone else of those who were with you; or are you willing, as a favour, to relate in full what your conversation was...?’ (394E). This scene-setting, along with explicitly framing what is retold as an act of memory, creates an illusion of reality that is very similar to what we find in Plato’s direct dialogues.

The narrated dialogue *De Defectu* opens with a myth, whose function is not immediately clear to the reader. It only becomes clear when two characters are introduced as having come together at Delphi. It is the chance meeting, as we saw, that is so suggestive of dialogue. Like *De E*, *De Defectu* has an addressee, as though it is a letter. The conversation it recounts took place, the narrator says, ‘a short time before the Pythian games, which were held when Kallistratos was in office in our own day (καθ’ ἡμᾶς)’ at Delphi (410A). Beyond this, however, it is unclear precisely how much time has passed between the discussion and the current relating of it. Hirzel (1895: 196) advocates treating the opening of *De Defectu* as a ‘framing conversation similar to those Platonic dialogues, whose persons are Terentius Priscus and Lamprias’, but I do not think we need to go this far. I would say that the opening only becomes Platonic when the characters are introduced. The letter opening, which we will examine in more detail later, is Plutarch’s. It has the same function of establishing credibility and a sense that this is real as in *De E*, and in fact could be taken as reinforcing the gift-giving, knowledge-sharing purpose of *De E*.

Judging by the concern of scholars over the past century to establish whether or not Plutarch’s dialogues represent ‘real’ discussions, Plutarch succeeded, like Plato, in using opening frames to create the illusion of reality. All three Pythian dialogues blur the distinction between historical reality and memory, past and present from the outset. In the opening frames, the Plutarchan narrator addresses and introduces real individuals, many of whom would have been

¹⁵⁷ 271c. The description is ironic, but this is only revealed later.

¹⁵⁸ 1937: 21.

known to Plutarch's contemporaries. The social interactions that take place between the narrator and interlocutors imitate 'real' or standard social interactions. Thus, in his prologues, Plutarch associates himself with real individuals of high social standing, some whose names would have been widely known (like Ammonios and Sarapion, as we shall see in chapter 3), increasing his own reputation, and situating his works in a known, familiar world.

By the generic marker of the framing prologue, a Platonic device, Plutarch deliberately places himself in the tradition of Platonic dialogue, and invites his readers to compare these dialogues to Plato's. Readers, keenly aware of what Plato's dialogues signalled, knew what to expect, and how to read a philosophical dialogue. But Plutarch did not merely copy. As we have seen, his openings take the Platonic precedent, with all its associations of real-life philosophising, but adapt them, recognising also – as we shall see below – the generic conventions, like letter-writing, of his own day.

2. Dramatic conventions

Another characteristic of Platonic dialogue is its use of dramatic conventions, made possible by the dialogic form itself, which can replicate direct genres like tragedy or comedy, or narrate both speech and action. The dramatic elements in Plato have traditionally been either rejected as decorative, and irrelevant to the philosophy of the dialogue itself, or (more recently) accepted as crucial for the interpretation of the philosophy.¹⁵⁹ This latter view is strengthened by the fact that Plato's characters are often carefully described, allowing the reader to see that their youth or occupation or nature contributes to their understanding of what is said. These characters, particularly Sokrates, *do* perform certain actions and gestures, in addition to speaking. The recording of every smile or interruption indicates their importance. Speech can lead to protest, confrontation, admission of ignorance, or capitulation, among other responses. Finally, information given in the dramatic interactions of the dialogues can assist in their interpretation. For example, the comments that Eukleides makes to Terpsion in the opening of the *Theaetetus* that relate to his fallible memory add something to an interpretation of the dialogue, which

¹⁵⁹ See, for example, Rowe (1984: 20), who argues that 'the dramatic possibilities of the form allow Plato to use Sokrates' character and actions as a means of rounding out, illustrating, and confirming the argument'. See also Desjardins (1988: 119).

examines the nature of knowledge, as a whole.¹⁶⁰ As in Plutarch's *Lives*, also participants in the Platonic tradition, we see in Plutarch's dialogues this strong combination of *logos* and *praxis* that was so essential to Plato. I shall focus here on three central dramatic components of Plato's dialogues that appear in Plutarch's Pythian works, too: characters, interactions, and settings.

a) Characters

Ancient writers saw characters as a crucial distinguishing factor of dialogue. It was 'characters in conversation', according to Olympiodoros, that differentiated a dialogue from a *logos*.¹⁶¹ As we have seen, Plato aimed at creating an illusion of reality in his works, and his characters testify to this. Plato's characters bear the names of real men, some of whom, as members of Sokrates' circle or their descendants, would have been known to the author. Indeed, Charmides was Plato's uncle.¹⁶² Plutarch himself recognised that Plato brought family members, like his brothers, into the dialogues, and treated them favourably.¹⁶³ Because Plato was using the names of real people, some still alive, and others who had died in the recent past, he could be held to account. These names held associations, and if Plato had blackened them, he would have been subject to consequences. Thus, Plato did not have quite the same freedom as one writing entirely fictional dialogues, with no basis in or pretensions to reality. His characters did not have to be exactly like their real-life counterparts, but certainly had to come close, since he was competing with widespread popular memory, particularly where a figure like Sokrates was concerned. In many cases, however, readers' knowledge of the later lives and careers of these men, like Nikias or Lysimachos, adds a dimension to a reading of Plato's dialogues.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ Tschemplik (2008: 19).

¹⁶¹ Tarrant (1999: 182). See the proem of Olympiodoros' *Commentary on the Gorgias* (0.1). See also Demetrios 227: 'Like the dialogue, the letter should be strong in characterisation.'

¹⁶² First-time readers of Plato may not have realised these characters' relation to the author, but by Plutarch's time Plato's biographical information would have been easily accessible.

¹⁶³ 'Just so did Plato make his brothers famous by introducing them into the fairest of his writings, Glaukon and Adeimantos into the *Republic*, Antiphon the youngest into the *Parmenides*.' (*De Frat. Am.* 484E)

¹⁶⁴ Press (1993: 120).

In Plutarch, we find a similar situation of writing ‘real’ characters. As in Plato, Plutarch’s characters come from his own circle. They are aristocratic, leisured, and international, with ample time to spare for discussion, a feature necessarily common to almost all subsequent philosophical dialogues purporting to depict ‘real-life’ conversations.¹⁶⁵ Unlike Plato’s Alkibiades or Laches, Plutarch’s characters derive from a less public sphere. Even those characters who would have been more well-known, like Ammonios or Sarapion, had garnered their reputation from their literary, rather than political or military, exploits, so to write about them could incur no real malice or danger.

Bearing the names of historical individuals did not preclude Plato’s characters from conforming to the dialogic ‘types’ the author required. Sokrates, so public a figure, was always the ‘master philosopher’ or ‘teacher’ figure, despite the character’s own protestations about not being qualified to actively teach in any way. Sokrates does not teach specific doctrines. Rather, as a ‘*Lebensphilosoph*’, his duty is to instil in his listeners – by his own example – the ability to conduct investigations themselves.¹⁶⁶ Thus, alongside Sokrates’ ‘master’ figure, other characters inevitably fell into the role of ‘student’.¹⁶⁷ Both roles were necessary for a philosophical message to be imparted to the reader. First, Sokrates’ method relied on an interlocutor.¹⁶⁸ Second, as Griswold emphasises, Plato was interested in the ‘genesis’ of philosophy, and an exploration of this could only be accomplished in a discussion between an expert and a novice.¹⁶⁹ The student’s credentials – his previous experience with philosophy, his family background, his intentions, and his willingness to learn – were important, and would colour his Sokratic experience. Readers could learn as much about philosophy and ethics from the personalities of the characters, the way in which their natures shape their arguments, and the way they question or respond to questioning, as from the speeches themselves.¹⁷⁰ But as

¹⁶⁵ See, for example, Cicero (*De res publica* 1.9.14), *De E* (384E), Dio Chrysostom 15.1, and D.C. 26.1 (πολλὰς ὥρας διατρίβετε...).

¹⁶⁶ Fortunoff (1998).

¹⁶⁷ Kahn (1999: 381), for example, sees Plato’s brothers in the *Republic*, and Simmias and Kebes in the *Phaedo* as akin to ‘promising young graduate students in philosophy’.

¹⁶⁸ Sayre (1995: 25), pointing out that the Seventh Letter and the *Theaetetus* recommend these types of conversation as beneficial to students of philosophy.

¹⁶⁹ 2010: 154. Griswold gives the *Statesman* and *Sophist* as rare examples of discussion taking place among mature philosophers.

¹⁷⁰ Rutherford (1995: 9).

Tarrant notes, Platonic dialogue's requirement of defined roles could sometimes result in either lazy characterisation, or characterisation which slowly deteriorated over the course of the work as each character was moulded to fit the purpose of the discussion.¹⁷¹

In Plutarch, as in Plato, the discussions mostly take place between an advanced philosopher and a number of non-specialists, who, even if they do have some philosophical knowledge, are usually not themselves experts. Scholars generally label the character who fulfils the role of the philosopher in Plutarch's dialogues a 'Sokrates' type; however, Sokrates fulfils a very particular function in Plato that does not occur in the same way in Plutarch's dialogues. In Plato, Sokrates' role is to formulate questions, and guide his interlocutors to an admission of ignorance or the abandonment of previously-held views. The (usually younger) protégé must listen, engage with his elder, and contribute his own views when invited. It is true that in Plutarch there is often a deliberate dichotomy between an older 'teacher' type and a younger 'student' type; however, this does not mean that the teacher is acting as Sokrates.

The scholarship nevertheless reflects this desire to 'find' Sokrates in Plutarch's dialogues. Thus, Hirzel reads Ammonios in *De E* as operating 'in der Rolle des sokratischen Lehrers', arguing that he encourages 'neuem Nachdenken' and 'neuen Mitteilungen' through the raising of *aporia*, and 'direkte Ermahnungen'.¹⁷² Flacelière, writing decades later, concurs that Ammonios plays 'the role that Plato in his dialogues attributed to Sokrates' because it is he who puts forth a more compelling argument than the young interlocutors.¹⁷³ Theon, too, in *De Pythiae* is a candidate for the Sokratic role.¹⁷⁴ Flacelière's arguments seem to suggest, however, that the only thing that these characters have in common is that their explanation seems to be put forward as the best solution (and therefore Plutarch's own) to the problem. But their apparent superiority need not equate them with Sokrates. While these characters may sometimes behave 'Sokratically' by gently pointing out an inconsistency in an interlocutor's argument or urging further consideration, they are not participating in or teaching the Sokratic method. They are

¹⁷¹ 1999: 184. For example, through books 2-10 of the *Republic*, 'The *prosopa* become uniformly 'aristocratic', modelled not upon Plato's memory of personal idiosyncrasies but upon his notion of the ideal teacher and of ideal participants in a philosophic conversation.' Other examples of vivid characterisation fading over the course of the dialogue include the *Parmenides*, *Theaetetus*, and *Phaedrus*.

¹⁷² 1895: 191.

¹⁷³ 1974: 5.

¹⁷⁴ Flacelière (1937: 18-19).

not, like Sokrates, guiding a single interlocutor through a specific, step-by-step question-and-answer process. Thus, while it is fair to say that, like Plato, Plutarch includes older ‘teacher’ figures like Ammonios and Theon, it is unhelpful to think in terms of the simple substitution of one character, like Sokrates, for another, who behaves in exactly the same way.

More similar to their Platonic counterparts are Plutarch’s interlocutors, but as with the ‘Sokrates’ figure, scholarship rarely offers concrete examples of specific similarities or reasons why Plutarch might imitate Plato’s characterisation. Thus, Flacelière argues that Plutarch had the ‘young men’ of Plato in mind when writing Diogenianos and Herakleon of Megara, since both exhibit a similar energy and passion, which their teachers must rein in; however, he does not describe in detail how their personalities are Platonic, nor what Platonic function they fulfil in Plutarch.¹⁷⁵ Another character often viewed as Platonic is the young Plutarch of *De E*, described by Hirzel and Moreschini as similar to the young Sokrates under Diotima’s training in the *Symposium*.¹⁷⁶ The comparison is convenient. Both the young Sokrates and the young Plutarch are represented as being under the tutelage of an advanced philosopher, formulating speeches that they would now – at the time of narration – no longer admit.¹⁷⁷ But here the similarity ends. Diotima leads the discussion, interacting with Sokrates, in a way that Ammonios does not do with the young Plutarch, who delivers a lengthy speech, on which he only comments once. The young Plutarch is not shown to be in the process of learning, as the young Sokrates is. Rather, the reader establishes Plutarch’s growth from the tone of the older Plutarch, who narrates; from the indulgent reactions of the other characters (including Ammonios); and from the fact that he does not have the last word on the subject.

As in Plato, Plutarch’s interlocutor characters may be as enthusiastically ‘overobliging’, like the young Plutarch, or stubbornly recalcitrant. Plato often draws attention to an interlocutor’s

¹⁷⁵ 1937: 17-18, 1974: 90.

¹⁷⁶ Hirzel (1895: 199), Moreschini (1997: 46).

¹⁷⁷ *Symp.* 201d-e: ‘She was my instructress in the art of love, and I shall repeat to you what she said to me, beginning with the admissions made by Agathon, which are nearly if not quite the same which I made to the wise woman when she questioned me-I think that this will be the easiest way, and I shall take both parts myself as well as I can. As you, Agathon, suggested, I must speak first of the being and nature of Love, and then of his works. First I said to her in nearly the same words which he used to me, that Love was a mighty god, and likewise fair and she proved to me as I proved to him that, by my own showing, Love was neither fair nor good.’

willingness to listen in the openings of his dialogues, where it becomes almost formulaic.¹⁷⁸ Sokrates requires his listener's explicitly expressed interest and 'keen attention' to proceed.¹⁷⁹ Like Sokrates' interlocutors, Plutarch's are consistently described as 'eager', 'willing to listen', and 'worthy of philosophy'.¹⁸⁰ Some of these 'eager listener' characters in Plutarch are even given Platonic appellations, like φιλήκοος.¹⁸¹ As in Plato, this description may later turn out to be ironic, but whether it holds true of a character or is revealed through discussion to be false, the ability to listen is an important trait in an interlocutor. Its presence allows readers to assess its role in the practice of philosophy, but so too does its absence. While many interlocutor characters are sympathetic, other characters in both Plato and Plutarch are resistant. In their refusal to engage with ideas, their insistence on relying on opinion or their deliberately provocative beliefs, they demonstrate the importance of the philosophical process in reaching truth.¹⁸² Those who are not worthy of philosophy are often barred from participating. Thus, as Kephalos must be abandoned at the beginning of the *Republic* before discussion can continue, Plutarch's Planetiades, whose inconsistent ideas about the deity are not accepted by the other interlocutors, must depart before the conversation in *De Defectu* can progress.¹⁸³ This has the effect of placing readers, too, who cannot be removed, on the same level as the interlocutors deemed worthy enough to remain. It shows the conditions in which philosophy must be practised, and these require cooperation.

¹⁷⁸ See, for example, *Protagoras* 310A, where the friend says, 'Then do let us hear your account of the conversation at once...', to which Sokrates answers, 'Very good indeed, I shall be obliged to you, if you will listen.' The audience of the *Euthydemus* (274c-d) 'were all ready to learn; to which Ktesippos assented with great eagerness, and so did the rest; and they all joined in urging the two men to exhibit the power of their wisdom.' *Lysis* 206c, *Timaeus* 20c.

¹⁷⁹ Thus, for example, Alkibiades, wondering about Sokrates' visit in the *Alk.* 1 (104d-e), says that he 'should be very glad if you would tell me'. Sokrates, before answering, first seeks to ascertain whether he has 'in you a listener who will stay to hear me out'.

¹⁸⁰ *Sept S.* 146C, *De Genio* 575B, *Amat.* 748F. In the Pythian dialogues, see *De E* 385B, *De Pythiae* 394F, and *De Defectu* 410A-B. The eager interlocutor is typical of Imperial dialogue. See also D.C. *Bor.* 8, 15, 16, 25.

¹⁸¹ *Lysis* 206c. Cf. *De Pythiae* 394F. The use of this word will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

¹⁸² Griswold (2010: 153). Futter (2015: 256) notes that, in presenting certain interlocutors as 'satirised, represented as bigoted, stupid, and lacking in virtue', Plato forces the reader to side with Sokrates.

¹⁸³ 413A-C. We see removals like this in later literature, such as Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*, which sees Justin refusing to have a serious conversation with Trypho until his rowdy followers either leave or listen in serious silence (ch. 9).

We have seen that Plutarch's characters bear at least superficial similarities to those of Plato. They are based on real individuals, and conform to standard 'teacher' and 'student' types. One difference in Plutarch is that, unlike Plato's Sokrates, who dominates discussion, no one character emerges as pre-eminent. Even if one character gives a more definitive or authoritative response, we can hardly think of any of Plutarch's characters as simple stand-ins for Sokrates – or, for that matter, Sokrates' sometimes near-speechless interlocutors, who in many cases answer in short sentences, rather than giving detailed speeches of their own. In Plutarch, conversation is divided (mostly) equally among characters, with some – not always the most authoritative – speaking for longer. There is no Socratic questioning process at work, and no character is reduced to short responses of a few words, like Sokrates' interlocutors. Plutarch is able to maintain some didacticism and the exposure of a learning process without resorting to the inclusion of a Sokrates. Rather, readers can grasp the process by noting the reactions of other characters to a speech, and the interactions between characters.

b) Interactions

Plato's dialogues work so well, from the point of view of sketching a plausible reality, because his characters do not just ask and answer questions. Rather, action and gesture are seamlessly blended with the characters' speech. Characters smile, laugh, tease, joke, interrupt, speak ironically or sarcastically, express surprise, quarrel, and fall silent. They react to the arrivals and departures of other characters. These movements, reactions, and gestures enliven what could have been simple speechmaking, adding an element of the dramatic.¹⁸⁴ But they are not simply embellishments. Rather, as was noted briefly above, it is partly by observing characters' behaviour that readers may judge and interpret what they say.

These sorts of gestures or interactions we find in Plutarch, too, often accompanied by the narrator's interpretation of them. Characters smile at the speeches or remarks of others, as Ammonios does when he thinks that Lamprias has concocted a story (διαμειδίασεν, 386A) or

¹⁸⁴ Charalabopoulos (2012: 62) expands on this feature of dialogue to represent something like stage directions in theatre.

when the young Plutarch attempts to wheedle confirmation regarding the nature of certain sacred Delphic practices from the priest Nikander, who brushes him aside (391E). Older characters encourage, as Ammonios does Theon at 386E (παρακελευομένου). Theon, in turn, prompts the young Diogenianos (395E), whose answer he then praises (395F). The other interlocutors urge Theon to continue speaking (396A), before accepting the explanation he gives (396B). On the other hand, characters incite rebuttals, teasing their opponents. Any character's adherence to a philosophical sect or movement is particularly fair game. So Sarapion's fervent Stoicism causes amusement at 397B and 400A-C, as does Diogenianos' stubborn rejection of the State's provision for the courtesan Rhodopis (401B). At 387D-F, Eustrophos simultaneously mocks Theon and issues a call to arms to the young Plutarch to defend the case of mathematics. Plutarch is aware, while he speaks, of the length and relevance of what he is saying, as we see from his comments at 388E ('If, then, anyone asks, 'What does this have to do with Apollo?' ...), 389C ('But these marks have been extended somewhat beyond what the occasion requires. '), 389F ('There are many other examples of this sort of thing... which I shall pass over. '), and 390C ('Therewith I checked myself...'). Ammonios' reaction is tempered, perhaps even amused, pleasure (391E), in accordance with the narrator's earlier comments about his youthful excess when it came to mathematics (387F). In a similar scenario in *De Pythiae*, although Philinos' and Sarapion's teasing of Boethos for his Epicureanism is gentle, their double attack, and Boethos' inability to defend himself (398D), nevertheless convey to readers how ridiculous the beliefs of the school are.¹⁸⁵ Occasionally, when a character is called to account, he falls silent, as Kleombrotos does at 411E, and Lamprias does at 414C, before renewing his argument. Silences of this kind provoke the reader's suspicion. Surprise or incredulity, like Philip's at 418A, and the group's at 421F, are indicators that a character's account should be questioned. Conversely, when Philinos calls out the guides at 400D-E, it is, as Flacelière observes, 'uniquely amusing and pleasant'.¹⁸⁶ We, as readers, feel sympathy for the character and his triumph in the situation, and so become willing to listen to what else he has to say. Finally, Plutarch's interlocutors are even self-reflexive, occasionally stopping to take stock of the discussion, and allowing the reader to do the same (e.g. 418F-419A, 423C, 428B, 434F).

¹⁸⁵ 398B-C and 399B-E.

¹⁸⁶ 1937: 31.

It is clear that Plutarch is not copying exact gestures from Plato, but rather the general tenor of the interactions in Plato's dialogues, adapting them to the circumstances of his own. They are not exactly original, but this is only because the circumstances of conversation allow for a relatively limited number of responses. Thus, Laurenti's criticism of the behavioural quirks of Plutarch's characters as 'unremarkable', arguing that they are nothing but 'brush strokes that fail at creating a painting', is unnecessarily harsh.¹⁸⁷ We should, rather, agree with Flacelière, who notes admiringly that in this respect Plutarch's 'imitation of his 'great model'... is far removed from plagiarism'.¹⁸⁸ Plutarch uses all of the conversational tools at his disposal to guide the reader.

The effect of these characters and their interactions on Plutarch's readers may have been similar to their reception of the characters in the *Lives*. Kahn (1999: 381) suggested that Plato's audience included readers who were very similar to the dialogues' interlocutors. Given the comments that Plutarch makes at the beginning of *De E*, it seems that many of his readers shared this trait. These were men who had probably themselves participated in discussions like those related, or wished to do so. Through the dialogues, they are given the chance to observe and analyse men of a similar social standing participating in philosophical dialogue. As in the *Lives*, the reader's learning and growth comes from observation, comparison, and asking questions.

c) Settings

There is usually at least some indication of setting in Plato's dialogues. Often a location is specified at the beginning of the dialogue, only to be 'forgotten'. In some cases, which I shall call 'roving' dialogues (like the *Phaedrus* and *Laws*), the interlocutors move throughout, but the only real indication that they are moving comes from the dialogue's frame, which specifies that the interlocutors are on the road. Platonic settings may broadly be divided into 'inside' and 'outside'. Dialogues that take place inside include the *Charmides* (the wrestling-school of Taureas), *Lysis* (a wrestling-school), *Euthydemus* (the undressing-room in the Lyceum), *Crito* (prison), *Lovers* (a school), *Parmenides*, and *Symposium* (a house). Dialogues with an outside

¹⁸⁷ 1996: 65-6.

¹⁸⁸ 1937: 31-2.

setting are often situated ‘on the road’. They include the *Euthyphro* (the portico where the Archon Basileus sits), the *Theages* (the portico of Zeus Eleutherios), *Republic* (the Piraeus, the road to Athens), *Menexenus* (the way back from the Council Chamber), *Alkibiades II* (the way to a temple), *Phaedrus* (the countryside just outside of Athens), and *Laws* (the walk from Knossos to the cave and temple of Zeus). The *Timaeus* presumably takes place inside, for its occasion is a gathering to celebrate the lesser Panathenaia. The *Symposium* is an interesting case because most of the interlocutors are inside, while Sokrates stands alone outside before rejoining the remainder of the group. Sokrates’ outsider position, and his strange behaviour, are deliberately set against the behaviour of Agathon, who does not stop on the way to think, but immediately goes inside. Another common phenomenon is for the interlocutors to take a short *peripatos* before settling down, often at some crucial point, such as when a topic of conversation is decided upon, to ensure that the discussion is seriously maintained.¹⁸⁹ The examples illustrate that Plato’s dialogues occur in ‘everyplace’ settings. These settings are not unique to dialogue, since temples, houses, and festivals act as settings in tragedy and comedy, too. But when used as the backdrop for philosophical texts, rather than staged performances, they convey a different message. They can, as Press notes, ‘heighten both the dramatic intensity and the philosophic seriousness of the themes discussed’, as in the prison scenes of the *Crito* and *Phaedo*.¹⁹⁰ But more importantly and more generally, they draw attention to the fact that philosophy takes place in the ‘real’ or ‘political’ world of the public,¹⁹¹ in the company of others, suggesting the potential for all readers to practise it and, in the dialogues that deal with Sokrates’ death, its very real consequences.

Settings such as these were certainly universal enough for later authors to appropriate them.¹⁹² Indeed, Plato’s Athenian roads and private houses are mostly unspecific in a way that Plutarch’s

¹⁸⁹ Plato (*Laws*), Plutarch (*De Facie* 937C-D: ὥστε, εἰ δοκεῖ, καταπαύσαντες τὸν περίπατον καὶ καθίσαντες ἐπὶ τῶν βάρθρων ἐδραῖον αὐτῷ παράσχωμεν ἀκροατήριον), Lucian (*The Double Indictment* 9: Ἀλλὰ μεταξὺ λόγων ἤδη πλησιάζομεν τῇ Ἀττικῇ· ὥστε τὸ μὲν Σούνιον ἐν δεξιᾷ καταλείπωμεν, εἰς δὲ τὴν ἀκρόπολιν ἀπονεύωμεν ἤδη.), *The Judgement of the Goddesses* 5: ἐπειδὴ δὲ πλησίον ἤδη ἐσμέν, ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, εἰ δοκεῖ, καταστάντες βαδίζωμεν, ἵνα μὴ διαταράξωμεν αὐτὸν ἄνωθεν ἐξ ἀφανοῦς καθιπτάμενοι.), Minucius (chapter 4), Justin (the very first word of his dialogue is περιπατοῦντί), Cicero (*De Legibus* 1.4.14, *De Finibus* 5.1.1-3). See also Charalabopoulos (2012: 63).

¹⁹⁰ 1993: 119.

¹⁹¹ Griswold (2010: 165).

¹⁹² Later dialogic settings include temples (Dio, *Discourse* 12.21; Plutarch, *De E* 385B, *De Pythiae* 402C), a clubhouse (Plutarch, *De Defectu* 412D), a mole by the sea (Minucius), a private house (Cicero, *De Re*

Delphi, with all its associations, cannot be. Although the location of a dialogue may provide context or frame the text, it is rarely the settings themselves that are said to inspire the discussion. In Plutarch's Pythian dialogues, as in Plato's works, the setting, Delphi, is mentioned in the prologue. But in all three dialogues, particularly *De Pythiae*, place is pervasive, maintained, and linked to the discussion in an essential and helpful way. Unlike in Plato, its importance does not fade as the dialogue progresses. Even when not explicitly mentioned, the subject matter is a constant reminder to readers of the interlocutors' location. It intrudes, too, in the constant references to objects or events that happened 'here'.¹⁹³

The closest Platonic comparisons to *De Pythiae* are Plato's 'roving' dialogues, briefly mentioned above.¹⁹⁴ Thus, Hirzel contended that the setting of *De Pythiae* is 'so wenig als im Phaidros ein blosser Hintergrund'.¹⁹⁵ But the settings in the *Phaedrus* and *Laws*, despite having their own significance,¹⁹⁶ are not like Delphi. Plato does not utilise his countryside settings in the systematic way that Plutarch takes advantage of the specific monuments of Delphi. We shall explore the Delphic tour in more detail in a later chapter, but it is enough to note here that because the characters stop to discuss particular sculptures or to hear guides relating oracles or to rest on the temple stairs, the Delphic setting becomes crucial to the dialogue, incorporated into it in a way that Plato's settings are not. *De Pythiae* is also unique in that it is narrated at the same place that it occurred, only hours later. Thus, Basilokles and Philinos can essentially 'relive' the dialogue they relate. This total adaptation of the Platonic form of the 'roving' dialogue was one of Plutarch's greatest achievements in dialogue. Although the idea of an 'on the road' philosophical dialogue was Plato's, it was Plutarch who elevated the form, not just emphasising the setting at the outset. Rather, he broke from tradition by sustaining the interlocutors' explorative *peripatos* around the space. *De Pythiae* represents the unique

Publica IX, Dio Chrysostom 15.1), the Lyceum (Cicero, *De Divinatione* 5) or a study (Tacitus, *Dialogus* 3), the Xystus (Justin), the countryside (Plato *Phaedrus*, Cicero *De Oratore* 1.7.28).

¹⁹³ 385F, 392A, 395D, 398A, 400C, 400E, 401D, 401E, 401F, 402A, 402D, 403D, 404E, 405C, 406D, 409B, 410E, 411E, 417F.

¹⁹⁴ Zanetto (2000: 540), however, argues that 'the setting "on the road"' of *De Pythiae* 'is a typically comic feature'. He compares it to the journey to the underworld in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, but I do not find this argument convincing.

¹⁹⁵ 1895: 206.

¹⁹⁶ For example, the walk in the *Laws* traces the route that Minos followed to receive laws from Zeus. The setting of the *Phaedrus* allows for some mythological references (229a-d).

combination of a setting completely in harmony with its subject matter, and the kind of constant movement not usually expected in dialogue. We shall examine the use of the periegetic genre in this innovation below.

The Delphic setting does not just refer to the site itself, but also the individuals within it, who ensure the running of the shrine. It also allows for interlocutors of a very specific type: interested visitors to Delphi, full of questions, just like the dialogues' readers. In each dialogue, we, as reader-visitors, can follow other newcomers to the site: the unnamed strangers in the opening of *De E*, Diogenianos in *De Pythiae*, and the international travellers Demetrios and Kleombrotos in *De Defectu*. Unlike in Plato's works, where the author-narrator has no special connection with the place, the narrator of the Pythian dialogues almost immediately establishes his credentials as an expert in the opening of each dialogue.¹⁹⁷ This, too, lends authority, and allows readers to confer a more concrete identity – that of a privileged insider who has close enough access to Delphi to be found there regularly, without wishing to leave – upon the author-narrator.

In Plutarch, the Delphic setting can assist the reader in interpreting the discussions, particularly those that deal with the 'obsolescence' of the oracles. For example, although *De Defectu* is often seen as a 'pessimistic' dialogue, reflecting on Delphi's recent decline, the work presents us with characters who have travelled to Delphi from afar because of their interest in history, religion, custom, and change. The dialogue offers a Delphi that is still flourishing, at least as a centre of tourism (the demand for this clearly indicated by the guides' presence),¹⁹⁸ religion (the presence of the priests with whom Lamprias is familiar), and knowledge-sharing, where people still gather to talk or exercise, whether local men in the Knidian Clubhouse or international travellers. The setting, and the characters who actively use it, provide a contrast to the interlocutors' dire conversation about its obsolescence.

Thus, the setting not only acts as an important backdrop, full of items with the potential for discussion, but gives additional information to readers to take into account in their

¹⁹⁷ *De E* 384E-385B (where Plutarch introduces the Apolline topic in a familiar way to his recipients, and recounts feeling obliged to tell the visitors the story, implying that he is in a position to do so), *De Pythiae* 395A (where Philinos recounts their experience of the guides as one who has already suffered this frequently), *De Defectu* 409E-F (the narrator is very familiar with two Delphic myths, and seems to live at Delphi).

¹⁹⁸ For this kind of cultural tourism and the reasons behind it, see Jacquemin (1991: 218-223).

interpretation of the interlocutors' discussions. In *De Defectu*, the Delphic setting, whose location at the centre of the world is emphasised, and which can therefore stand for Greece as a whole, gives both the interlocutors and readers the opportunity to think about their place in the wider world. The settings of both Plato's and Plutarch's dialogues allow for readers' self-reflection. But Plutarch's works, where Delphi looms large, demonstrate that this self-reflection can move from the personal and ethical to a mutual exploration of heritage and legacy. The Delphic setting allows for a meditation on the past through its physical remains, and for a reflection on how that past can or should function in the present, encouraging an awareness of a wider world. Thus, we are presented with a dialogue where it is not just the interactions between *characters* that are important, but also those characters' interactions with their environment.

3. Structure: *aporia* and open endings

We have seen that Plutarch's dialogues share with Plato's the pretence of reality, and certain characteristics borrowed from drama, but that Plutarch's approach to using these conventions differs. This is also the case with the overall structure of the works. We have already observed that Plutarch's framing prologues share a similar purpose to those of Plato. In addition, we noted that Sokrates' back-and-forth method of speaking was not that of the characters in Plutarch, who generally speak for roughly similar lengths of time. We shall now determine whether the wider structures of each author – the speeches and their style, and the endings of dialogues – have anything in common, and whether this might be because they have a shared purpose.

Most – but not all – Platonic dialogues share what Press calls 'recurrent plot structures': Sokrates questions an interlocutor, who offers tentative answers, which are revealed by Sokrates to be deficient.¹⁹⁹ This questioning process is emphasised as a unique tactic, distinct from the other process available: the recitation of an uninterrupted speech, which would provide a platform for discussion. For example, in the *Sophist* (217c-d), Sokrates asks the Eleatic Stranger which method he would prefer to use. The Stranger weighs the possibilities, being fonder of speeches, but not wishing to appear arrogant or to refuse Sokrates' offer of an adept conversational

¹⁹⁹ 1993: 121. The examples he gives are (n.37) the *Euthyphro*, *Laches*, *Charmides*, and especially the *Meno*. See also Sayre (1995: 28).

partner. He eventually decides to question the young Theaitetos. In a typical Platonic dialogue, after the interlocutor has been subjected to a series of questions, and at about the half-way point of the dialogue, the discussion reaches a point of *aporia*, through which the interlocutor is ideally able to achieve the self-discovery of acknowledging his own ignorance.²⁰⁰ In Plutarch, we see questions framed as *aporiai*,²⁰¹ but not the states of *aporia* attained in Plato. Plutarch's interlocutors' *aporiai* do not result from Sokratic questioning, but from their surroundings. This is largely because Plutarch's dialogues are structured as a series of speeches, usually with short interludes or interactions, and opportunities for questions. Plutarch's characters interact with each other, but the overall effect of a Plutarchan dialogue is more like Plato's *Symposium*, where each character offers a speech in the spirit of competition, than the other, more Sokratic dialogues. *Aporiai* for Plutarch's characters are simply core questions to be solved, rather than crisis points.

While an admission of *aporia* is often a turning-point in a Platonic dialogue, dialogues can end in *aporia*, too. These 'aporetic' dialogues often end with the claim that further discussion is required.²⁰² We see their lack of conclusion, too, in the fact that many themes occur across several dialogues, while others are abandoned in one dialogue, only to be taken up in another. In Plato, endings such as these can signal the inability and unsuitability of writing, which gives 'a false appearance of certainty and clarity', for the practice of philosophy, hinting to the reader that transformation can only take place through the process of active discussion, not just reading.²⁰³ In other words, the open ending indicates that a relatively short written text, which

²⁰⁰ Moments of *aporia* in Plato include, for example, *Charmides* 167b (Sokrates'), *Symposium* 201b (Agathon's), and *Meno* (the boy's, 84a-d).

²⁰¹ For example, in *De Pythiae*, Diogenianos attempts to steer the conversation back to the question at hand, labelling it an *aporia* at 397D. It is only a little later, however, when the group sits down (402C), that the *aporia* is tackled in earnest. This is the closest that Plutarch's Pythian dialogues come to the Platonic notion of *aporia* as a turning-point.

²⁰² Aporetic dialogues include the *Euthyphro*, *Laches*, *Charmides*, and *Lysis*. See, especially, the ending of the *Lysis* (222e): 'So what more can we do with our argument? Obviously, I think, nothing. I can only ask you, accordingly, like the professional pleaders in the law courts, to perpend the whole of what has been said.' (τί οὖν ἂν ἔτι χρῆσαιμεθα τῷ λόγῳ; ἢ δῆλον ὅτι οὐδέν; δέομαι οὖν, ὥσπερ οἱ σοφοὶ ἐν τοῖς δικαστηρίοις, τὰ εἰρημένα ἅπαντα ἀναπεμπάσασθαι.) And also 223b: 'For these others will go away and tell how we believe we are friends of one another—for I count myself in with you—but what a "friend" is, we have not yet succeeded in discovering.' (ἐροῦσι γὰρ οἶδε ἀπιόντες ὡς οἴομεθα ἡμεῖς ἀλλήλων φίλοι εἶναι—καὶ ἐμὲ γὰρ ἐν ὑμῖν τίθημι—οὕτω δὲ ὅτι ἔστιν ὁ φίλος οἷοί τε ἐγενόμεθα ἐξευρεῖν.)

²⁰³ Rowe (1984: 25).

contains a set number of opinions, cannot definitively convey knowledge or solve a problem.²⁰⁴ In this way, the dialogues do not represent the final word on a specific subject (ethics, friendship, virtue, etc.) so much as a starting-point, a 'protreptic'.²⁰⁵ We see these open endings as an invitation to philosophy in Plutarch, too. Most explicit in this regard is the ending of *De Defectu*. Lamprias ends the dialogue (438D-E) with an exhortation, and an invitation: "These matters," I added, "I urge upon you for your frequent consideration, as well as my own, in the belief that they contain much to which objections might be made, and many suggestions looking to a contrary conclusion, all of which the present occasion does not allow us to follow out. So let them be postponed until another time, and likewise the question which Philip raises about the Sun and Apollo." The dialogue form's illusion of reality means that the characters are subject to the same restrictions of time as would beset a gathering such as they represent.²⁰⁶ Thus, both the characters and, by implication, readers must pursue the other avenues that the narrator implies are open in their own time. Some of these tangential questions are briefly referenced in other dialogues. Thus, Philip's question about the sun and Apollo in *De Defectu* is dealt with by Ammonios in *De E* (393D) and Philinos in *De Pythiae* (400D). Similarly, in *De Defectu* (426E), Philip wonders why the god should be thought to have created five worlds, and what the special significance of this number is. As he says, 'I feel that I would rather gain a knowledge of this than of the meaning of the E dedicated here.' These are topics taken up at length by the young Plutarch in *De E*. The combination in *De Defectu* of a character expressing a wish to examine these questions, and the appeal of the ending to, precisely, go forth and examine those questions unable to be answered within the dialogue's confines, gives a clear indication that in its structure, the Plutarchan dialogue is as protreptic as those of Plato.

Of the other two works, *De Pythiae* ends on a cautionary note, with Theon declaiming against those who think literally and uncritically, swayed by what they see, rather than questioning what lies behind it. It is these people, he continues (409D), who speak against the god, since they are 'unable by reasoning to attain to a comprehension of the god's purpose'. This, too, functions as a kind of protreptic, since it provides an example of the kind of person the reader should *not* be, and urges further, deeper thought. It also harks back to Ammonios' comments in *De E* about

²⁰⁴ Dorter (1996: v).

²⁰⁵ Fortunoff (1998), Rutherford (1995: 8-9).

²⁰⁶ See, for example, the endings of the *Euthyphro* (15e), and *Lysis* (223a-b).

those people who well-meaningly but incorrectly identify Apollo with the sun (393D). The ending of *De E* (394C) is a summary of the meanings of the Delphic E, interpreted as 'you are', and the maxim 'know thyself', 'a reminder to mortal man of his own nature and the weaknesses that beset him'. In drawing the reader's attention once again to human weakness, they implicitly encourage the reader to reflect on what has been said, and to take the kind of philosophical approach offered throughout to truly come to an understanding of the dichotomy between the human and the divine. None of the three Pythian works ends with all of the characters in agreement.

While Plato's and Plutarch's dialogues differ in their presentation of speeches, and the length of time allotted to each speaker, they do share the structural element of the open ending. I would argue that, as in Plato, this is because the point of the dialogue form in Plutarch is to draw attention to the endless process of learning, and the fact that knowledge can never be full or conclusive. This focus on demonstrating how theoretical discourse relates to the world (here, the microcosm of Delphi) and human behaviour is typical of Plutarch's oeuvre, where philosophising is always shown to have a human component.²⁰⁷ Plutarch here employs a Platonic form to convey messages that emerge throughout his entire corpus. From this review of what is generically Platonic in Plutarch's Pythian dialogues, it is clear that readers may derive some benefit from a prior knowledge of Plato when approaching Plutarch. But this is not necessary. Prior knowledge of Plato enables readers to grasp the generic markers, which signal Plutarch's works' adherence to tradition. It also strengthens readers' conception of at least some of Plutarch's reasons for utilising the genre of philosophical dialogue. Finally, it allows readers to appreciate where Plutarch diverges from his predecessor. I would argue that Plutarch was not simply plucking elements from a large pool of 'the Platonic'. Rather, he was familiar enough with Plato's corpus to be able to emulate without copying directly. This comfortable familiarity allowed him to innovate, since he recognised that it was in adapting and departing from Plato that his own voice could be heard, and his own distinct contribution to dialogue could be made.

²⁰⁷ For example, in the *Lives* or the works on practical ethics.

Plutarch beyond Plato

Plutarch's dialogues did not exist in a vacuum, however, with Plato as the only earlier proponent of the genre. Plutarch did not, and could not have relied solely on Plato's influence, as much as he admired his predecessor. Inspiration could come from his immediate predecessors, and from works of other genres, as much as from the distant past. This has not been sufficiently acknowledged in scholarship, with most scholars fixed on Plutarch's so-called imitation of Plato alone.²⁰⁸ What these scholars overlooked was the development of the tradition of dialogue between the lifetimes of Plato and Plutarch, and the fact that the authors who followed had, through necessity, to adapt their own writing to suit their own audience's tastes and demands. Of course, part of the difficulty here is that so little actually remains of a coherent dialogic tradition. With the exception of a few authors who wrote in a semi-dialogic style, there is indeed an obvious gap in the tradition of Greek dialogue between Plato and Plutarch. But although little survives, we can at least see that modifications took place over this period of several hundred years in the genre of dialogue, which paved the way for Plutarch. These include the exploration of subject matter outside the bounds of philosophy, and the addition, during and after the Hellenistic period, of more novelistic elements. Finally, if we have little surviving in the Greek tradition, the Latin tradition furnishes enough material to demonstrate to what extent the genre could change over time. My aim here is to briefly explore innovations in the genre of dialogue (and its subsidiary genres) that took place after Plato and before Plutarch, in characterisation, form, dramatic elements, style, and subject matter. From this sketch, I shall further explore the specific elements of these authors from which Plutarch drew in his own dialogues.

The first area in which change was necessary was in characterisation. Dialogue had been attached from its conception to a single individual (Sokrates), who linked all of Plato's dialogues, regardless of their subject matter. Authors after the Sokratics had to contend with the fact that they did not have a Sokrates of their own, and decide whether to furnish a stand-in or leave this character aside altogether. Modern scholarship on Plutarchan dialogue always tends to anticipate a Plato-character. Thus, many critics ask of non-Platonic dialogues 'who is the Sokrates character?' or 'who leads the dialogue?', when some different questions to ask might

²⁰⁸ See, for example, Bompaigne (1958: 298-300): 'c'est simplement en imitation de son célèbre devancier Plato que la philosophe [sc. Plutarque] l'a utilisée [sc. La forme littéraire du dialogue].' See also Bourguet, quoted in Flacelière (1937: 11, n.4): 'we should say that Plutarch, in writing, 'hardly takes his eyes off the great model, whom he may flatter himself to equal'.

be ‘why does there need to be a Sokrates?’ and ‘how do authors innovate with only Sokrates as a template?’. But since authors of dialogue who came after Plato had their own, different aims, we should not necessarily expect this particular element of dialogue, so idiosyncratic to Plato, to carry on in the tradition of dialogue in precisely the same way. Because the Sokrates-character was so ingrained in the genre, one solution to the problem was to include a Sokrates-like character who also fulfilled the function of leading the dialogue, although even this was not a necessity.

Discarding the Sokrates character entirely meant developing a new way for the characters in one’s dialogue to interact, since Sokrates’ teaching style was so uniquely recognisable. One way of doing this, particularly as different philosophical schools arose, was to structure the dialogue around the formal debate, with individual characters representing the views of particular schools.²⁰⁹ This resulted in dialogue taking the form of a series of long, mostly unbroken monologues, each character putting forward the doctrine of a school, more like debate than the kind of back-and-forth discussion, peppered with questions, favoured by Plato’s Sokrates.²¹⁰ This set it apart from the ‘stepping-stone’ format of Plato’s works, where only once a certain tenet has been accepted can the discussion progress. This technique, apparently championed by Aristotle and Herakleides of Pontos, was later revived by Cicero.²¹¹ It is a technique that has the potential to transform dialogue into ‘a series of lengthy speeches for or against’, where rhetoric comes to the fore, set against the kind of dialogue Plato wrote, where the dialogic form echoed the propaedeutic purpose.²¹² But as Gottschalk notes, it was authors like Herakleides, Aristotle, and Theophrastos who, writing in this starker way, realised the importance of variety. This awareness gave rise to the traditions that we later see not only in Cicero but in Plutarch of opening their works in elaborate ways, not always related to the texts that followed, and their ‘frequent use of illustrative anecdotes and myths’.²¹³

²⁰⁹ Gottschalk (1980: 9).

²¹⁰ See Hutchinson (2013: 255), Gottschalk (1980: 9), and Fox (2009: 51). As Fox (2009: 51) notes, Hirzel saw in post-Platonic authors ‘a more doctrinal method of philosophical investigation’.

²¹¹ Gottschalk (1980: 9). For Aristotle as a proponent, see Cicero *De or.* 3.80 and Nicgorski (2013: 45, n.29). For Herakleides’ use of this type of dialogue, see one of the fragments *On Pleasure* (55 in Wehrli, *Die Schule des Aristoteles*).

²¹² Fox (2009: 51), relating Hirzel (1895: 308-9).

²¹³ 1980: 9. See also Mejer (2009: 31). We know that Plutarch would have read Herakleides from references like that at *De Audiendis* 14e.

If an author eliminated the Sokrates-character, then he could, as we have seen, create his own 'straw-man' characters to uphold particular philosophical views. He could, as Herakleides did, make his characters personalities from ancient history or mythology.²¹⁴ Finally, he could take the measure, hitherto unprecedented in dialogue, of placing himself as a character in his own works.²¹⁵ Unlike Plato, whose few possible appearances in his own dialogues are murky, Aristotle seems to have sometimes placed himself in the reported conversations of his dialogues.²¹⁶ Although these Aristotelian works are no longer extant, it should suffice to say that developments like this no doubt paved the way for Plutarch to do the same.²¹⁷

In the dramatic components of his dialogues, Plato had set an interesting precedent, perhaps most enthusiastically taken up not by other authors of dialogue, but by Hellenistic authors. Aristotle, it seems, abandoned Plato's lively settings in favour of a more neutral school setting.²¹⁸ In the Hellenistic period, however, authors drew on the structure of back-and-forth dialogue, and the countryside setting of dialogues like the *Phaedrus* to move dialogue out of the realm of philosophy. Theokritos, and Herodas in his *Miniambos* drew from the same Sophron as Plato to create dialogic vignettes, taking dialogue down a livelier route. Playful and observant, these authors captured moments and conversations from everyday life, creating not 'mini-dramas',²¹⁹ nor dialogues of a philosophical type, but something in between, almost social studies. In their short length and their focus on place, they bear some similarity to the openings of Plato, but can act as stand-alone pieces.²²⁰ Many of these works appear to have been set at religious festivals. Thus, Theokritos' so-called 'Women Watching the Isthmia' 'probably just presented women attending a festival, and commenting on the offerings on display in the sanctuary'.²²¹

²¹⁴ Cicero *Epist. Ad Att.* 13.19.3, and *Ad Quint. Fratr.* 3.5.1. See also D.L. 5.89.

²¹⁵ Tarrant (2000: 1-2).

²¹⁶ Thomaskutty (2015: 32), Mejer (2009: 31), Lamberton (2001: 151), Gottschalk (1980: 10).

²¹⁷ Although Hirzel (1895: 199) adamantly argued that Plutarch's insertion of himself into his own dialogues could not have been Aristotelian, but rather based on the presentation of the young Sokrates in the *Symposium*, his argument fails to take into account the fact that in one we have Plato-as-author narrating Sokrates-as-character, whereas in the other we have Plutarch-as-author narrating Plutarch-as-character. This particular case will be discussed in more detail in the final chapter.

²¹⁸ Laurenti (1996: 65).

²¹⁹ Hartigan (2013: 43).

²²⁰ They are frequently compared to Plato's *Phaedrus*, for its open-air, countryside setting.

²²¹ Hordern (2004: 5).

Similarly, a poem of Epicharmus, the 'Thearoi' (fragment 68) appears to have followed individuals 'commenting on the contents of a sanctuary'.²²² In this way, the settings of dialogues, usually somewhat bare, were illuminated, and brought to the foreground, rather than, as in Plato, introduced only to be abandoned.

While authors of mimes played with the idea of place, later dialogue-writers adapted the style of Plato, which, deprived of Sokrates, and with the rise of many new methods of philosophising, risked becoming obsolete. Cicero provides the most helpful evidence here, since he discusses his own process of writing dialogues with friends in his letters. Significantly, in writing about Herakleides, whose style he imitates, Cicero seems to be 'appealing to Heraclides as the emblem of a less technical kind of philosophical writing, such as would be more accessible to the new Latin readership which he envisaged for his works'.²²³ This is in keeping with the image that we have of Herakleides as interested in conveying philosophy not through dry speeches, but through 'a body of mythical, mystical, folkloric material', which he recognised could easily be appended to dialogue to enliven the reader's experience.²²⁴ Thus, the distinctive style of Plato was adapted to appeal to a new audience, less interested in the technicalities of language and perhaps less accustomed to Sokratic dialectic as a teaching tool, and more susceptible to the influence of enjoyable, anecdotal trappings.

Another important innovation in style was the introduction of the attached prologue. Unlike the prologues of Plato, which relate processes of transmission, these prologues were more general and reflective, and did not need to relate to (or could relate somewhat obscurely to) the content they preceded. They seem, as we noted, to have originally arisen in the dialogues of Herakleides and Aristotle.²²⁵ Again, Cicero is our best surviving example of this dialogic element, which he adopted from these predecessors.²²⁶ Yet Cicero was writing in a very different context. A development in the interim was the custom of authors dedicating their works to particular addressees as a social obligation, a mark of respect, or in return for

²²² Hordern (2004: 7).

²²³ Fox (2009: 43).

²²⁴ Fox (2009: 53).

²²⁵ Laurenti (1996: 65).

²²⁶ *Ep. Att.* 4.16. See also Nicgorski (2013: 44 n.29).

patronage.²²⁷ By Cicero's time, dialogues, dedicated to a specific individual, could open with a prologue that took the form of a long personal reflection on the topic to which the dialogue was devoted, and the author's history with it.²²⁸ It is this that we see, in a rather more restrained form, at the beginning of *De E*.

Finally, moving from style to subject matter, we must explain how, with Plato as his most prominent exemplar, Plutarch could write dialogues that were not solely concerned with philosophy (and certainly not with philosophy in a wholly Platonic sense), but rather moved across boundaries of philosophy, religion, and the natural world. Part of the answer to this question must come from Latin dialogues written in this intervening period. In his *De republica*, Cicero was already exploring 'the relevance of hard philosophical debate to his own circle' (Fox 2009: 62). Indeed, we see after him Latin dialogues that deal not with philosophy, but with ever more practical subjects more pertinent to the aristocratic Roman. Varro's *De Re Rustica* takes the form of the dialogue, and makes use of the countryside setting so familiar from the *Phaedrus* and Hellenistic pseudo-dialogues. In Varro, however, the topic of conversation is not philosophical, but actually related to the setting: farming. Undeniably, as Powell suggests, the work owes some debt to Xenophon's much earlier dialogue, the *Oikonomikos*²²⁹ Yet Varro is entirely conscious of his own dialogue's Sokratic heritage.²³⁰ The scene-setting prologue of chapter 2, for example, is very reminiscent of Platonic prologues. But like Plutarch, Varro is able to both nod to dialogue's illustrious past while simultaneously innovating within the genre's bounds. In addition to his unconventional choice of subject matter, and the correspondence between setting and theme (which we later see in Plutarch's Pythian works), Varro presents the reader with a cast of characters whose names amusingly reflect their setting.

Plutarch would have been aware of this literary corpus stretching from Herakleides to Varro. As a writer in the same dialogic tradition, he must have been receptive to at least some extent to its influence. In fact, we can identify important departures from Plato in his work that instead

²²⁷ See Hutchinson (2013: 255). Tarrant (1999: 188) points out that the addition of a dedication to a text 'marks the transition from oral to written literature'.

²²⁸ See, for example, Cicero's dedications to Quintus in *De Oratore* and (probably) *De Re Republica*, to Brutus in *De Finibus*, and *De Natura Deorum*, to Varro in the *Academica*, and to Atticus in the *De Senectute*. We see such a dedication, too, in Tacitus' *Dialogus*, which Leeman (1973: 17) describes as 'Ciceronian'.

²²⁹ Powell (2005: 235).

²³⁰ Powell (2005: 235-6).

reproduce, draw on, or take as a springboard, elements found in the work of many of these authors.

In Aristotle and later Cicero, Plutarch had precedents for placing himself as a character in his own dialogues, a totally un-Platonic convention, which he utilises in the *Amatorius* and *De E*.²³¹ Plutarch is, nevertheless, selective – if not conservative – in the extent to which he participates, occupying a space somewhere between Plato (who never appeared in his own dialogues) and Cicero (who frequently appears).²³² It seems that Plutarch only places himself in a work when the personal experiences expressed by his character have something to contribute to the meaning of the text as a whole. Thus, as the narrator of *De E*, the author can shape the reader's perception of the character of his younger self, allowing readers a glimpse at a kind of self-reflection in action that could never appear in Plato. The narration of the *Amatorius* by Plutarch's son, himself the product of the marriage that the interlocutors are celebrating, is a particularly effective and subtle way of advertising Plutarch's own credentials for speaking about marriage.

From the more dramatic tradition of Plato's predecessor Sophron, later authors of mimes or vignettes like Herodas and Theokritos, and from the Hellenistic novels, Plutarch could derive the heightened emphasis on place that characterises the Pythian works, and a sense of its potential not just for setting the scene, but for shaping the atmosphere of a work. It was surely works like these, in addition to the singular example of the *Phaedrus*, that suggested to Plutarch not only the importance of place, but the sightseeing 'narratives' and festival settings, where characters meet and actively comment on their surroundings, that form the background to the Pythian works and the *Amatorius*. But Plutarch's works injected back into dialogue the philosophy that the mime-writers had eschewed in their observation of setting. The objects that the characters encounter in Theokritos' fifth *Idyll* do not form opportunities for philosophical contemplation, as the objects and monuments in *De Pythiae* do. The interest of the women in Theokritos falls more on the aesthetic side, in craftsmanship and splendour than on what the objects or monuments they encounter 'truly' convey. Where Plutarch's concern is not what an object is or what it looks like, but what it means, the mime-writers focus on what is immediately before their eyes: on objects for their own sake. They do not go beyond

²³¹ His appearance as a character in *De E* will be studied in more detail in the third chapter.

²³² E.g. *De Legibus*, *Brutus*, *De Finibus*, *Academica*, *De Natura Deorum*, and *De Divinatione*.

antiquarian or aesthetic wonder to philosophy, as we find in Plutarch's interlocutors' visits to the Delphic sanctuary, where curiosity and wonder at objects must, according to philosophical sanctions, always lead to something more intellectual.

From the Latin tradition, Plutarch could benefit from the expansion of dialogue's subject matter from philosophy to such subjects as oratory (Tacitus' *Dialogus de oratoribus*), civil law (Iunius Brutus), and farming (Varro). From Cicero, he had an example of the dedicated prologue, which had simply not existed when Plato wrote. Like Cicero, Plutarch uses his dedicatory prefaces as an opportunity for reflection; however, while Cicero devoted many words to lengthy prefaces,²³³ Plutarch's are brief, practical, pointed, and purposeful, and seem to function simply as instances of the practice adopted in his philosophical treatises. These dedications have the usual effect of associating the author with the reputation of the addressee. But they also add a personal element to the dialogue genre, which usually lacks such a 'direct' link to the reader because it represents the philosophical pursuits of a closed group of a select few. Plutarch's incorporation of this more Ciceronian convention of dialogue forges an immediate connection with the reader, and guides the reader's initial response to the text.

In his own dialogues, Plutarch went beyond simply repurposing Platonic conventions as others had done in the intervening years. While Plato remained the principal model, Plutarch was able to take advantage of many new conventions of dialogue that arose long after Plato's death. But in addition to Plutarch's Platonic and non-Platonic borrowings and inspirations, we find in the Pythian dialogues some genuinely original contributions to the genre, particularly in their use of conventions from other genres. The most important examples of this are the participation of the Pythian works in the genres of *problemata* and *periegesis*.

Plutarch and *Problemata*

The genre of *problemata* has much in common with Plutarchan dialogue. Both ask a number of questions, and attempt to provide multiple possible answers. In offering more than one solution, they expect active, engaged readers, who will survey the options, and reach their own conclusion. For this reason, Lamberton (2001: 26) sees in the two genres 'two manifestations of the same intellectual and literary orientation.' Plutarch was adept at writing both genres.

²³³ E.g. *De natura deorum*, *De finibus*, *De re publica*, *De oratore*.

Among the *Moralia* are *Quaestiones Graecae, Romanae, and Platonicae*. They date from later in Plutarch's career, and so demonstrate that he was probably composing dialogues and *quaestiones* at around the same time.²³⁴ Most relevant to our interests here, however, as a point of comparison with the entirely dialogic Pythian works, are the *Quaestiones Convivales* (*QC*), which represent the successful implementation, in one work, of both genres, dialogue and *problemata*.²³⁵ I argue that the Pythian dialogues innovate within the genre of philosophical dialogue, typically concerned with one – ethical, philosophical – subject, by implementing elements from the genre of *problemata*. In particular, they take from *problemata* that genre's concern with understanding the everyday, and placing the material, the social, the cultural, or the historical, within a wider context. In this way, they expand the possibilities of the Platonic genre. We shall briefly examine the history and features of the genre, and then observe how Plutarch's Pythian dialogues make use of it.

In recent years, little has been written on the genre of *problemata* in general. This is partly because it is difficult to find a coherent group of texts, each of which adheres to exactly the same generic principles. Plutarch's *problemata* are rarely studied from the point of view of their genre or structure, with some scholars even complaining that they lack order.²³⁶ The dearth of scholarship on their genre is also perhaps due to differences in terminology complicating efforts at labelling the genre. Texts adhering to the basic question-and-answer format that characterises the genre may be called variously αἰτίαι, αἴτια, or λύσεις (after the answers, explanations, or 'causes' they provide), ζητήματα, ζητήσεις, or προβλήματα (after the questions or problems they propose).²³⁷ Latin, as Harrison notes, uses *quaestiones* as a catch-all term for these, obfuscating the nuances in the original Greek terms.²³⁸ But even the Greek terms are

²³⁴ Scheid (2005-6): 665, 667. The *QR* at least can be placed after 96 because of a reference to Domitian's rule at 276E (Ziegler 1949: 266).

²³⁵ Teodorsson (1989: 12), Klotz and Oikonomopoulou (2011: 19).

²³⁶ Early commentaries on Plutarch's *Aitia* (e.g. Rose, Halliday) did not devote any attention to the question of genre; however, even more recent commentaries, like Carrano's *CPM* commentary, offer only very cursory comments on their genre (2007: 7). For scholars' difficulties with finding order in the work, see, for example, Rose (1924: 51). Some even argue that the work must be incomplete or in draft form, never intended for publication (e.g. Rose 1924: 48, Halliday 1928: 13, Carrano 2007: 9). The same criticism regarding lack of organisation is levelled against pseudo-Aristotle (e.g. Mayhew 2011: xv-xvi, xii).

²³⁷ Oikonomopoulou (2013: 37).

²³⁸ 2000: 194.

interchangeable, as we see in Plutarch's references to the *QC*.²³⁹ The Lamprias Catalogue designates Plutarch's Greek and Roman Questions as Αἰτίαι, and they appear alongside numerous other works – now lost – with the same title, but we also find Προβλήματα in the manuscripts.²⁴⁰ Since Plutarch himself calls them Αἴτια, we may consider each question an αἴτιον, a word loaded with philosophical connotations.²⁴¹

Yet despite the existence of works earlier than Plutarch with the title Αἴτια or Αἰτίαι, which also focused on scientific, mythological, historical, or antiquarian problems, their literary form is very different from that which Plutarch took as his example.²⁴² Thus, Darbo-Peschanski rightly dismisses Kallimachos' mythological *Aitia* as an unhelpful comparison.²⁴³ To understand the genre that Plutarch emulated in his own question literature, we must turn instead to the most famous proponent of the genre, Aristotle, and his work, Φυσικά προβλήματα κατ' εἶδος συναγωγῆς.²⁴⁴ It was the structure of this work that successive examples of the genre followed. Divided into 38 books, each deals with a set of problems relating to a particular topic (like mathematics, human biology, music, and literature). Each πρόβλημα consists of a question, usually beginning with διὰ τί, followed by one or occasionally more 'answers', these also in the form of questions ('is it that...?', 'or is it rather that...?'). Thus, answers are not concrete, but

²³⁹ He calls them alternately προβλήματα, the title also given to them in the Lamprias Catalogue (612E, 629E), ζητήματα (736C, 645C, 660D), and συμποσιακά (686E). Each question is called a πρόβλημα.

²⁴⁰ Other works listed in the Lamprias Catalogue include Αἰτίαι βαρβαρικά, Αἰτίαι ἀλλαγῶν, Αἰτίαι καὶ τόποι, Αἰτίαι γυναικῶν, Αἰτίαι τῶν περιφερομένων Στωϊκῶν, and Αἰτίαι τῶν Ἀράτου Διοσημείων. The title Προβλήματα is found only in *Vindobonensis phil. gr.* 46, with all other manuscripts simply using the less descriptive subtitle Ἑλληνικά. (Boulogne 2002: 179) For the manuscript titles, see Titchener (1924: 24-5) and Boulogne (2002: 91).

²⁴¹ References in Plutarch: *Vit. Cam.* 19.8, *Vit. Rom.* 15.5. For the philosophical pedigree of the term, see, for example, Aristotle, where it is used to refer to his four 'causes' or 'explanations' (*Phys.* 194b16 – 195a27).

²⁴² Plutarch refers to some of these texts, like the Αἴτια of Dionysios (*Amat.* 761B), those of Varro, cited extensively throughout the *QR* (263F, 264D, 264E, 267B, 271A, 285E, 288B, 289A), and those of Kallimachos (*De exilio* 602F). Earlier Αἰτίαι include those by Demokritos, which focused on scientific problems, according to D.L. (9.7). Later works in the genre tended to examine mythological and early historical aetiologies.

²⁴³ 1998: 21.

²⁴⁴ There is still debate over whether or not Aristotle really wrote the *Problemata*; however, this should not detract from their philosophical significance. Plutarch certainly thought that they were produced by Aristotle himself.

are rather presented only as possibilities or potential solutions.²⁴⁵ All of this results in something like a conversation with oneself, a sort of internal monologue. Plutarch was familiar with Aristotle's work, as we see from his many references to it,²⁴⁶ and it is this style that he mimics in his own *Aitia*. As in Aristotle, each question in the *QR* begins with *διὰ τί*. There are also, however, some Plutarchan innovations. The interrogatives of the *QG* are much more varied.²⁴⁷ Whereas Aristotle usually gives one answer, followed by its proof,²⁴⁸ in the *QR* Plutarch almost always issues a series of responses, resulting in a more dialogic style. Unlike in Aristotle, initial answers in Plutarch's *problemata* can be built on or rejected according to criteria such as probability, credibility, fictionality, and quality, just as in dialogue.²⁴⁹ Plutarch's subject matter, too, is his own, and his *Aitia* address many of the same concerns that dominate his dialogues.

The *QC* are an ideal case study, because they form a bridge between the genres of *quaestiones* and dialogue.²⁵⁰ They are clearly formulated as *problemata*, judging by their title, and references throughout the text itself. Yet despite the way the author situates them in the genre of problem-literature, they are also symposiastic. As we noted earlier, the work deliberately references other symposiastic texts in its opening, inviting comparison with them, and

²⁴⁵ For more on this, see Oikonomopoulou (2013: 53).

²⁴⁶ *QC* 627C-D, 659D, 694D, 696D, 720D, and most significantly 734D, which depicts Floros reading them. Outside the *QC*, they are also mentioned in the *Vit. Lys.* 2.3. Many of the questions in Plutarch's *Αἰτίαι Φυσικαί* derive from Aristotle. (Sandbach 1965: 134)

²⁴⁷ This allows the author to ask more specific, focussed questions and, as a result, in most cases to provide only one answer (a 'who' or 'what' question is much more likely to produce a single answer than a 'why' question) (Preston 2007: 96-7). Examples of interrogatives include *τίς* (questions 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25, 29, 30, 34, 40)/*τίνες* (1, 4, 5, 7, 11, 14, 21, 32, 38)/*τί* (10, 13, 16, 24, 27, 28, 33, 35)/*τίνος* (26), *πόθεν* (41, 43, 59), *τίς ἡ αἰτία* (52, 54), *ἀπὸ τίνος* (42, 56), *ἀπὸ ποίας αἰτίας* (57). A single answer does not, however, guarantee that the answer is correct (Boulogne 2002: 94).

²⁴⁸ Preston (2007: 95).

²⁴⁹ *QR*: For example, questions 5 (Varro's explanation is *μυθικὴν ὄλως*), 18 (*Ἡ ταῦτα μὲν οὐκ ἔχει τὴν ἱστορίαν ἀξιόπιστον...*), 19 (*Πιθανώτεροι δ' εἰσὶν οἱ λέγοντες...*), 21 (*Ἡ τοῦτο μὲν ἄπιστόν ἐστιν ὄλως...*), 25 (*Ἡ τοῦτο μὲν ἔχει πολλὰς ἀλογίας;*), 34 (*Ἡ τοῦτο... καθόλου ψεῦδος ἐστι;*), 36 (*Ἡ τοῦτο μὲν μῦθος ἐστίν...*), 47 (*Ἡ τοῦτο μὲν ἀβέλτερον...*), 81 (*Ἡ ταῦτα μὲν ἂν τις εἴποι καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα χρώμενος εὐρησιλογίᾳ*), 101 (*Ὁ μὲν γὰρ οἱ περὶ Βάρρωνα λέγουσιν οὐ πιθανόν ἐστι*), 103 (*Λεκτέον δὲ καὶ τὸν ἕτερον λόγον, ἔστι ἀτοπώτερος...*), 106 (*Ἡ φυσικώτερον ἔχει λόγον τὸ πρᾶγμα καὶ φιλοσοφώτερον...*), 111 (*τὴν γὰρ ἀληθινὴν αἰτίαν ἀγνοοῦσιν...*); *QG*: questions 25 (*οὐ γὰρ πειστέον τοῖς λέγουσιν...*) and 39 (*λέγεται οὐκ ἀληθῶς...*); *QC*: 627B, 638C, 639D, 662D, 664D, 667A, 687E, 699B, 719F, 723C, 730E, 745C.

²⁵⁰ Indeed, it is difficult to label the *QC* with reference to a single genre. Gallo and Moreschini (2000: 17) place them in a separate genre category from the *QR*, *QG*, and *Quaestiones Naturales*, because their literary form is dialogic, but acknowledges that their content is 'more or less analogous to the literature of problems'.

encouraging readers to see the QC in that tradition, too. Thus, while the work explicitly evokes the great tradition of recorded symposiastic conversation, it is certainly no Platonic *Symposium*. Rather, its dialogues often take on the appearance of the ‘internal monologues’ of Aristotle. For example, each miniature dialogue is a question, introduced by an interrogative.²⁵¹ The layout of the answers is particularly reminiscent of *aitia* literature. Thus, in 1.3, three possible explanations are presented in succession – without even being attributed to different speakers. The dialogic façade is, in cases like these, very thin, and assists the case of those who argue, as I do, that these works do not depict ‘real’ historical conversations. Ziegler (1949: 297) also singled out 6.4-6 and 9, instances ‘in which a person not named nor greatly characterised proposes some questions to which Plutarch responds’, as being specifically related to *aitia* literature. They seem, he thought, ‘intended to give a superficial clothing of ‘convivial discourses’ to problems of the type of those which Plutarch had treated in a simpler form and collected in the *Aitia physika* or in the collections of antiquarian material’. I argue that in the Pythian dialogues, we see something very similar to the QC: that is, Plutarch’s own genre-crossing creation, where the stock of characters and the literary form are dialogic, but the subject matter tends more towards the preoccupations of *problemata*.

I suggest that we can see the influence of ‘problem’ literature in the Pythian dialogues at three levels: content, language, and style. At the level of content, the themes of Plutarch’s own *problemata*, the QR and QG, range through ancient history and customs,²⁵² the gods,²⁵³ metaphors and allegories,²⁵⁴ symbolism and commemoration,²⁵⁵ to etymology,²⁵⁶ numbers,²⁵⁷

²⁵¹ That is, questions are frequently introduced by διὰ τί, but other interrogatives common in the QR and QG also appear, such as τίνας (684E, 714D, 731A, 672C, 692B, 710A), τίς (671C, 700B), and τίς αἰτία (δι’ ἧν) (675D, 679E, 684B, 686E, 693E, 696E, 737C, 741B (twice)).

²⁵² 264C, 272B, 272C, 273C, 275B, 275C, 277F-278B, 279C-D, 280A, 285F, 286A, 289D.

²⁵³ 266F, 275A, 275C, 282C.

²⁵⁴ 269B, 279D-E, 281A-B, 281E, 282A-B, 283E-F, 285C, 290E-F, 291A-B, 293C-293F, 300C-D.

²⁵⁵ 287C.

²⁵⁶ 269D, 271F, 276A, 277D, 278C-D, 280A, 280F, 282C, 282D, 285B, 285C-D, 288B, 292E-F, 297A, 302A. Cf. Apollo’s epithets in *De E* (385B-C, 393C, 394A), and the derivation at *De Defectu* 429D of πάντα from πέντε.

²⁵⁷ 264A, 288D-E. Cf. Plutarch’s extensive discussion of the number 5 in *De E* (388A-391E), and the discussion of the number of worlds in *De Defectu* (422F-431A).

and science.²⁵⁸ While many of these questions encompass philosophy in some way, and are inherently philosophical in the sense that they encourage further thought, they are not philosophical in the same way as, for example, a work of Plato. As in the Pythian works, they begin in the ‘real’ world of tradition and religious custom and proceed to its higher analysis. At their heart is the desire to understand origins, and to relate the past to the present in a meaningful way. The *Quaestiones* have these themes and these aims very much in common with the Pythian dialogues. Both texts make clear that, despite their interest in the past, they are not simply dealing with ‘antiquarian’ concerns. Rather, the use of present-tense verbs in questions, and the frequent appearance of phrases like ἔτι νῦν indicate that they are treating ongoing traditions,²⁵⁹ or, in some cases, traditions that are fading,²⁶⁰ which require both explanation and – in discussion of them – a rescuing from oblivion. They reflect the author’s desire to understand origins *in order* to understand the surrounding world, so much of which was composed – in its buildings, monuments, and corresponding traditions – of elements of the past.²⁶¹

The E is a good example of this, as the interlocutors grapple with the question of a religious object from the distant past, which is no longer understood very precisely in its current historical context. Similarly, one of the concerns of Diogenianos in *De Pythiae*, in trying to understand the reasons for the change of style in the Pythia’s responses, is that in his own time, people assume ‘either that the prophetic priestess does not come near to the region in which is the godhead, or else that the spirit has been completely quenched and her powers have forsaken her’ (402B-

²⁵⁸ 263E, 284D-F, 288C.

²⁵⁹ See, for example *QR* questions 16 (παρ’ ἡμῖν), 25 (ἔτι νῦν), 29 (παρ’ ἡμῖν ἐν Βοιωτίᾳ), 40 (παρ’ ἡμῖν), 46 (ὡς νῦν), 50 (ἐφ’ ἡμῶν), 62 (ἔχει δὲ καὶ νῦν...), 67 (ἄχρι νῦν), 68 (μέχρι νῦν), 69 (μέχρι νῦν), 86 (νῦν), 96 (μέχρι νῦν), 101 (ἔτι νῦν). In the *QG*, see questions 12 (νῦν, ἔτι καὶ νῦν), 26 (νῦν), 28 (νῦν), and 38 (μέχρι νῦν, ἐφ’ ἡμῶν). Cf. such uses in the Pythian works: 386A, 395C, 401B, 403F, 405C, 406C, 408B, 408D, 408F, 409C, 411E-412D, 413C, 414A, 414B-C, 434B, 434C-D.

²⁶⁰ *QR* question 43.

²⁶¹ Boulogne (1987: 471-2) notes that since only twenty-seven (of 113) questions are concerned wholly with the past, the work cannot be considered apart from ‘livres consacrés, sinon à des sujets d’actualité, du moins aux réalités présentes’, and that ‘l’objet principal des descriptions se révèle être la société romaine contemporaine de Plutarque’. For the use in the *QR* and *QG* of explanations grounded in the past to explore and explain present concerns, themselves ‘clearly linked to the question of identity’, see Preston (2007: 94, 117).

C).²⁶² It is this same motivation that is behind Theon's comments later in the dialogue that he and his friends are simply offering 'reasons and arguments for matters which we do not understand (αἰτίας καὶ λόγους ὑπὲρ ὧν οὐτ' ἴσμεν)' because they are (needlessly) afraid that if they do not do so, then the oracle will 'lose the repute of its three thousand years, and some few persons should cease to come here' (408D).²⁶³ Those who, Theon says, 'cannot ascertain to their satisfaction the reason (τὴν αἰτίαν) for the change, go away, after pronouncing judgement against the god...' in a damaging way (409D).²⁶⁴ This, then, is why the implications of investigating *aitia* are so crucial. The interlocutors' forays into the past are directly related to the issues of the present. Understanding reasons and origins allows one to continue respecting the oracle and its god.

Although the scope is narrowed in the Pythian dialogues from Greek to Delphic traditions, the questions have the same concerns. Thus, in the vein of Plutarch's *QG*, the Pythian dialogues are concerned with Delphic practices and objects, asking questions like 'what is the reason (αἰτία) why the Pythia casts three and the priests two?' (391D-E), 'what do 'thou art' and 'know thyself' mean?' (392E), 'why do they sometimes use the dithyramb and sometimes the paean to invoke the god?' (389C). The more site-specific focus of *De Pythiae*, too, means that Pythian monuments and their traditions can be examined in more detail, again mirroring the frequently cultic and mythological focus of the *QG* and *QR*. Thus, we are presented with questions like 'why is the treasure-house not that of Kypselos the donor, but that of the Corinthians?' (400D) and 'why was Mnesarete called Phryne?' (401A).

The language of the Pythian dialogues itself also actively encourages comparison with the genre of *problemata*. The frequent use of the word αἴτια or its cognates illustrates a common purpose, which is illuminated almost straight away in *De E*. As the opening of the *QC* encourages comparison with other symposiastic texts, so the opening of *De E* invites readers to think of *problemata*. Ammonios' comments in the very first chapter of *De E* (385C) are expressed in

²⁶² ἢ τῆς Πυθίας τῷ χωρίῳ μὴ πελαζούσης ἐν ᾧ τὸ θεῖον ἔστιν, ἢ τοῦ πνεύματος παντάπασιν ἀπεσβεσμένου καὶ τῆς δυνάμεως ἐκλελοιπυίας.

²⁶³ "Ἐδει δ' ἴσως καὶ ἡμᾶς ἔχειν οὕτως· νῦν δ' ὥσπερ ἀγωνιῶντες καὶ δεδιότες, μὴ τρισχιλίων ἐτῶν ἀποβάλλῃ δόξαν ὁ τόπος καὶ τοῦ χρηστηρίου καθάπερ σοφιστοῦ διατριβῆς ἀποφοιτήσωμεν ἔνιοι καταφρονήσαντες, ἀπολογούμεθα καὶ πλάττομεν αἰτίας καὶ λόγους ὑπὲρ ὧν οὐτ' ἴσμεν οὐτ' εἰδέναι προσῆκον ἡμῖν ἔστι...

²⁶⁴ κἂν τὴν αἰτίαν μὴ ἰκανῶς πύθωνται τῆς μεταβολῆς, ἀπίασι τοῦ θεοῦ καταγόντες, οὐχ ἡμῶν οὐδ' αὐτῶν ὡς ἀδυνάτων ὄντων ἐξικνεῖσθαι τῷ λογισμῷ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ διάνοιαν.

language that I think deliberately recalls the genre and aims of *problemata* literature: ‘it seems only natural that the greater part of what concerns the god should be concealed in riddles, and should call for some account of the wherefore (διὰ τί) and an explanation of its cause (διδασκαλίαν τῆς αἰτίας)’. Ammonios goes on to provide a short list of examples, which are precisely the kinds of questions relating to cultic custom that appear in the *QR* and *QG*.²⁶⁵ This acknowledgement, so prominent in the work’s opening, that questions relating to local cultic matters require one to ask διὰ τί, and to understand origins (αἰτίας) calls to mind the exact characteristics of *problemata*. Ammonios’ linking of such localised questions about tradition to a higher philosophical understanding of the divine confirms that such questions are not trivial.²⁶⁶ Indeed, the reason for the dedication of the E, he continues, is ‘no less productive of discourse’ than any of the other questions to which he referred (385D).

Throughout the Pythian works, interlocutors frequently use the term αἰτία in their question formulations. For example, using a question format often used in the *QR*, *QG*, and *QC*, Diogenianos asks at the beginning of *De Pythiae*: ‘what do you think, then, has been the cause (τίν’ οὖν αἰτίαν) of the colour of the bronze here?’ (395D).²⁶⁷ Upon further reflection on the bronze’s patina, Theon requests that they discover ‘through which reason (δι’ ἣν αἰτίαν) olive-oil most of all the liquids covers bronze with rust’, a question formula found multiple times in the *QR*,²⁶⁸ *QG*,²⁶⁹ and *QC*.²⁷⁰ The question which lends itself to the title of *De Pythiae*, regarding the cessation of verse oracles, explicitly requires an αἰτία: ‘For there is not one of us who does not seek to learn the cause and reason why (αἰτίαν ἐπιζητεῖ καὶ λόγον, πῶς) the oracle stopped employing verses and metres’. So, too, does the overarching question of *De Defectu*, concerning

²⁶⁵ 385C-D. These questions are: 1. Why is the pine the only wood used ‘here’ at Delphi in the undying fire, while laurel is used for offering incense? 2. Why do the Fates have two, not three, statues here? 3. Why is no woman allowed to approach the prophetic shrine? 4. The matter of the tripod (the question relating to this is not elaborated). 5. What are the meanings of the inscriptions ‘Know thyself’ and ‘Avoid extremes’?

²⁶⁶ This hypothesis lends support to that of Meeusen (2015: 139), who argues for a more philosophical purpose for the *Quaestiones Naturales*.

²⁶⁷ “Τίν’ οὖν αἰτίαν,” ἔφη ὁ Διογενιανός, “οἶε τῆς ἐνταῦθα τοῦ χαλκοῦ χροῶς γεγενῆσθαι;”

²⁶⁸ Questions 6, 107.

²⁶⁹ Questions 52, 54, and 57.

²⁷⁰ It appears in its interrogative form (διὰ τί τιν’ αἰτίαν) at 690B, 690E, and 691C. Rose (1924: 219) finds a parallel between our passage and question 17 in the third book of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Supplementa Problematorum*. The subject matter is the same, but as Kapetanaki and Sharples (2006: 13, n.73) note, ‘the point at issue is different’.

the disappearance of oracles. It is twice referred to as an αἰτία. First, as Demetrios summarises, ‘it is well worth while, here in the precinct of the Pythian god, to examine into the reason (τὴν αἰτίαν) for the change’ (412D).²⁷¹ Then, a little later, Lamprias invites Planetiades ‘to join us in seeking some other reason (ἐτέραν τινὰ... αἰτίαν) for the obsolescence of oracles’ (413D).²⁷² The characters’ consistent vocalisations of their desire to understand cause,²⁷³ and their formulation of both this and their questions in the same way as in the *Quaestiones*, places these Delphic questions in the same category.²⁷⁴ The Pythian dialogues’ ties to αἰτία literature are, then, clear in the language that they use, which evokes αἰτία literature’s concern with origins. These ties are also made evident by the simple fact that the Pythian works are composed – to more or less elaborate degrees – of questions and answers.

As we noted earlier, in their style, *problemata* texts of an Aristotelian type tend to offer a number of open-ended possibilities as answers to the questions they pose. This may be compared to the multiple responses to a question of which dialogue is capable. For example, if one omitted the characters, condensed each of the seven definite answers to the specific question ‘what is the E?’ in *De E*, and added the πότερον ὅτι, ἢ ὅτι and ἢ μᾶλλον ὅτι typical of the genre of *problemata* before each, we would have a text that resembled a *problema*.²⁷⁵ This raises the question of the importance of characters, since different viewpoints can be represented without their aid in αἰτία literature. Indeed, regardless of whether a text is a dialogue or a *problema*, the asking of questions and the offering of solutions follow similar stylistic strictures. The addition of characters has the effect of creating levels of authority, empathy, and guidance. We noted earlier that the characters in Plutarch’s dialogues frequently adhere to teacher/student roles, giving readers clues as to which perspectives they should perhaps trust or question more. But it is true that even in dialogue, where one might expect more interaction between characters when a question requires answering, the general pattern still mostly follows that of works of αἰτία: one solution presented after another, with little superfluous material in between, and anything *too* superfluous flagged as such. This is yet

²⁷¹ γεγονάσι δὲ καὶ νεώτεροι τούτων ἐπιφάνειαι περὶ τὰ μαντεῖα ταῦτα, νῦν δ’ ἐκλέλουπεν· ὥστε τὴν αἰτίαν ἄξιον εἶναι παρὰ τῷ Πυθίῳ διαπορῆσαι τῆς μεταβολῆς.

²⁷² ἐτέραν τινὰ μεθ’ ἡμῶν αἰτίαν ζητεῖ τῆς λεγομένης ἐκλείψεως τῶν χρηστηρίων...

²⁷³ See also 402E, 411C, 411D.

²⁷⁴ We also find *aitia*-style question formulations at *De Defectu* 411E.

²⁷⁵ See Laurenti (1996: 66), who also identifies these similarities.

another reason why we should not expect particularly ‘natural’ conversation, even between characters who are presented as friends. Their discussion must follow particular rules.

In the scenario we just imagined, *De E* looked something like a single *aition* with multiple responses. But if we continue to take *De E* as an example, we must deal with the fact that the work is not a single question alone. Rather, moving beyond its ‘central’ question, we note that the work is actually comprised of a series of other, non-‘primary’ questions, which are considered either explicitly or implicitly. For example, ‘is the god Apollo a philosopher?’ (385B), ‘is he a logical reasoner?’ (386E), ‘is Apollo the same as the sun?’ (393D), ‘why is the same god given different names?’ (388E-389A), ‘what is Being?’ (392E), ‘does the number five have a role in music?’ (389D), and ‘what does Herakleitos mean by ‘it is impossible to step twice in the same river?’ (392B). Thus, one Pythian dialogue does not – despite the somewhat misleading single question of its title – present content restricted to one question alone. Indeed, it is precisely the lengthy treatment of questions considered by scholars to be subsidiary or digressive, and the meandering way that the Pythian works can jump from one topic to another (*daimones* to the number of worlds in *De Defectu*, for example) that has frustrated academics. The so-called ‘digressions’ make more sense if the dialogues are taken – like αἰτία – as a series of questions of higher or lower importance, rather than as a single question alone.

The dialogues take not just the style of their questions from *aitia* literature, but also the form of their answers. Both tend to present answers in an ascending order of likeliness, with the final answer of a dialogue usually given to the most senior or most authoritative member of the company. In the *Quaestiones*, this is represented by the opening of the first possible response with πότερον ὅτι, while subsequent, likelier responses tend to open with ἢ μᾶλλον ὅτι.²⁷⁶ Answers are never verified, but in both cases readers are presented with *some* clues for interpretation, whether the responses of other interlocutors, personal judgements from the author,²⁷⁷ or phrases like ἢ μᾶλλον ὅτι.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁶ This phrase appears in *QR* 2, 6, 7, 9, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 28, 37, 46, 51, 78, 95, 97, 105, 106, 113; *QG* 36.

²⁷⁷ In some cases, the author’s personal comments make it clear that he does not accept a particular response, as at *QR* 21 (ἢ τοῦτο μὲν ἄπιστόν ἐστιν ὅλως...;), 18 (Ἡ ταῦτα μὲν οὐκ ἔχει τὴν ἱστορίαν ἀξιόπιστον), 36 (Ἡ τοῦτο μὲν μῦθος ἐστιν...;), to which cf. *De Defectu* 435D (εἶ γε δὴ τοῦτο μὴ μῦθος ἐστι μὴ δὲ πλάσμα κενόν, ὡς ἔγωγ’ ἠγοῦμαι).

²⁷⁸ See also σκόπει μὴ: *QR* 10, 46, and ὄρα δὲ μὴ: *QR* 5, 19, 25, 74, 78, 101, and the use of πιθανώτερος at *QR* 19 and 21.

We noted earlier that Plutarch's dialogue is not the back-and-forth dialogue of Sokrates. Rather, it is the laying out of one potential answer after another. It is, essentially, αἰτία enclosed in the form of a dialogue. In both dialogues and αἰτία texts, questions and answers are submitted to the reader for consideration.²⁷⁹ One of the key differences is that in dialogue, the questions are asked by 'eager listener' characters, and the answers given are presented as the opinions of many named individuals. But perhaps the most important difference is that dialogues are much clearer in their philosophical purpose than αἰτία. Readers are launched into αἰτία with no directions, and no assistance in disentangling whether and how subsequent questions are linked. The Pythian dialogues offer not only questions and answers, but a coherent narrative structural framework, which certainly has the potential to offer much more guidance to a novice philosopher. Finally, although both the dialogues and αἰτία explore problems from different angles, it is only the dialogue that allows the reader a sense of progress. This is related to the aims of each genre, since it is the purpose of problem literature 'to raise questions', rather than to 'represent a progression'.²⁸⁰ But while αἰτία and the Pythian works appear to arise from the same philosophical impulse, and demonstrate similar concerns, it is clear that both serve different purposes. In large part, the decision to use one form over the other must rest on the volume and variety of material. Thus, while there are clear differences between the genres, and different reasons why an author would choose to write one or the other, I argue that Plutarch deliberately makes readers of his dialogues aware of their similarities to his αἰτία through their language, their subject matter, and their style. In doing so, he highlights the common purpose of each genre, and the onus on the reader to exercise judgement. He also evokes not the same world of philosophy and ethics as Plato, concerned with justice and law and love, but the preoccupations of αἰτία of the kind that he himself wrote, concerned with myth, culture, and – most importantly – the relationship between the past and the present.

Plutarch and *Periegesis*

Plutarch dips into the genre of *periegesis* in a similar way, taking the 'dramatic', site-specific elements of *periegesis*, and transferring them to dialogue, most successfully in the literary form of *De Pythiae*. Dialogue had had, since Plato, an inbuilt capacity for making use of the

²⁷⁹ For the critical role of the reader that these texts expect, see Oikonomopoulou (2013: 53-58).

²⁸⁰ Mayhew (2011: pxxi-xxii).

surroundings of its setting, but Plato had only taken advantage of this in a cursory way, the *Phaedrus* being the most famous example of this. The divide between dialogue and *periegesis* is not wide. Of course, the focus of each genre is different, but not perhaps *as* different as has usually been assumed. While the focus of dialogue is on the practice of philosophy, the focus of *periegesis* is not on travelling itself, as is sometimes supposed, but – as we shall see in *De Pythiae* – using the physical space of a site to understand its past and present. As Olshausen notes in his definition of *periegetes*, ‘in each case, the explanations [of places] provided the opportunity for various digressions into history and mythology, the history of art, ethnography and geography’.²⁸¹ Another obvious difference is that the *periegete* is almost entirely alone in his endeavour. He does, of course, occasionally converse with guides, like those in *De Pythiae*, but the focus is on his *own* observations, rather than, as in dialogue, collaboration among many. While *periegesis* had arisen in the 2nd century BC, through authors like Polemon and pseudo-Skymnos, interested not only in explaining the visible characteristics of buildings or objects, but in providing the stories of their origins, creators, or benefactors, and clarifying their use,²⁸² its most famous proponent was Pausanias, whose work dates to some decades after Plutarch’s death (c. 150-180 A.D.).²⁸³ Although writing later than Plutarch, Pausanias is the best (and most contemporary) surviving example of the genre, which stretches back several centuries, perhaps ultimately back to Herodotos, and his work demonstrates the most salient features of the tradition. It is for these reasons that we can use it as a touchstone for how the genre must have looked in Plutarch’s time. Both Pausanias’ *Periegesis* and Plutarch’s *De Pythiae* are written from the perspective of moving, alone in Pausanias and with others in Plutarch, around some culturally significant location in the Greek landscape, exploring the memories and associative chains of thought triggered by their monuments. My aim here is to explore how Plutarch takes elements of the genre crystallised most fully in Pausanias, and uses them to structure *De Pythiae*, itself unique both among the three Pythian works, and in the whole tradition of ancient dialogue. In doing so, he contributes to the genre by – finally – fully utilising its site-based possibilities.

²⁸¹ *New Pauly*.

²⁸² Akujärvi (2012: 335-6, 341), Hutton (2005: 251-2).

²⁸³ Pretzler (2004: 200).

Since Pausanias' work survives today, and makes use of many of the most recognisable elements of periegetic literature, we shall use him as an exemplar of the genre.²⁸⁴ Writing on Pausanias, Hutton (2005: 255) lists the standard generic markers of *periegesis* as follows: 'an interest in monuments and stories relating to them (Pausanias' *logoi* and *theoremata*); an interest in things associated with monuments (inscriptions, artists, etc.); an interest in religion and mythology; a tendency to deal with artworks on an objective and informational level without expressing a subjective aesthetic response to it; an appetite for unusual and recherché (or even risqué) stories.'²⁸⁵ The *periegete* satiates these interests by walking around a site and stopping at particular monuments, the choice of which is dictated by their effect on his senses; that is, they ought to be worthy of seeing,²⁸⁶ worthy of note,²⁸⁷ or even worthy of hearing.²⁸⁸ Overall, they should 'deserve to be recorded' (39.3).²⁸⁹ Pausanias is attracted by anything that is considered a θαῦμα,²⁹⁰ and is also guided by antiquity (24.3), and objects that are already well-known and distinguished (23.4).

While previous authors seem to have arranged their material according to subject, Pausanias uniquely organises his spatially, describing objects in relation to their landscape.²⁹¹ As Hutton points out, this kind of approach emphasises the fact that to walk among the monuments is an experience.²⁹² Nevertheless, Pausanias is still free, in writing, to follow a different organisational pattern from that which a traveller might in real life; to feature only monuments that fit an artificial schema that suits any purpose he might have, and to omit other, perhaps more magnificent, monuments.²⁹³ Monuments in Pausanias generally provoke comment

²⁸⁴ In my examples, I take almost exclusively from the first book of Pausanias, since all books follow the same format.

²⁸⁵ See also Elsner (2001: 14-15).

²⁸⁶ 1.3, 5.4, 14.1, 17.2, 17.5, 18.6, 18.8, 19.2, 21.4, 28.2.

²⁸⁷ 20.1.

²⁸⁸ 19.6, 21.5, 26.5.

²⁸⁹ τὰ ἐς συγγραφήν ἀνήκοντα.

²⁹⁰ 19.6, 23.4, 27.3, and, indirectly, 26.5.

²⁹¹ Akujärvi (2012: 334), Hutton (2005: 261-2), Elsner (2001: 4).

²⁹² 2005: 262-3.

²⁹³ Thus, Pausanias, in his journey around Athens, from the Tholos to the Odeon, selects and utilises his objects in such a way as to tell the stories of Alexander's successors.

because they incite his curiosity, triggering a string of questions of the *aitia*-type we have explored in Plutarch.²⁹⁴ In all instances, the introduction of a new monument signals an equivalent change in the narrative, which branches off to explore the monument's history or describe associated traditions.²⁹⁵ In other words, monuments function as springboards, and Pausanias uses them to offer his own personal observations, judgements,²⁹⁶ and even the occasional philosophical apophthegm.²⁹⁷ Pausanias' process is mostly solo, but occasionally also involves conversing with locals and, in particular, priests or those in charge of temples, about the monuments he encounters.²⁹⁸

Periegesis differs from other literature most strongly, however, by its indication of movement around physical space. This is often represented by aorist participles that incorporate the verb εἶμι.²⁹⁹ Pausanias also occasionally expresses movement by phrases that give both the place of origin and the destination (e.g. κατὰ τὴν ὁδὸν τὴν ἐς Ἀθήνας ἐκ Φαληροῦ at 1.5),³⁰⁰ by the connective μετὰ,³⁰¹ or by πρὶν + the infinitive (e.g. 18.6). These expressions of movement are used very specifically to indicate changes of scene, rather than, for example, wandering around aimlessly. This means that sometimes there is no movement for long stretches of text, as Pausanias follows up the mention of a person or place.³⁰² Thus, as in Plutarch's *De Pythiae*,

²⁹⁴ For example, 'why does a site or object bear a particular name or names?' (14.1, 17.2, 28.5, 28.8, 30.1), 'what used to be there?' (29.2), 'how did an object come to be constructed?' (9.4), 'how did it end up there?' (8.5), 'who build, crafted, or embellished an object?' (14.1), and 'why is it in its current state?' (1.5, 2.2, 20.4, 27.6). For sculptures and paintings, the questions tend to be 'who or what does it depict?' or 'why is the subject depicted in this pose?' (19.6), and 'why does it represent one particular moment and not another?' (15.1).

²⁹⁵ Elsner (2001: 6, 19).

²⁹⁶ 1.5, 6.7, 9.8, 12.2, 12.4, 12.5, 13.9, 14.3, 14.5, 16.3, 17.5, 20.7, 21.2, 22.7, 23.4, 27.1, 28.1, 28.7, and 29.2.

²⁹⁷ 5.4, 8.3, 10.3.

²⁹⁸ See, for example, in the first book 13.8, 18.8, and 19.5. We see this in Plutarch, too. Of course, the most obvious example is the guides with whom the interlocutors (rather unwillingly) interact throughout *De Pythiae* (395A-B, 396C, 400D, 400F, 401E). See also, however, 386B (Lamprias' comments incite those connected with the temple), 410E-F (Ammon recites what the Egyptian priests of Ammon told him), 419F (Demetrios retells stories he heard from the Britons), and 433C-D and 435D (local Delphic legends)

²⁹⁹ 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 14.1, 15.1, 18.4, 18.6, 21.4, 22.1, 24.4, 26.5, 28.4, 29.2.

³⁰⁰ See also 21.4.

³⁰¹ See 2.5, 8.2, 9.4, 19.1, 22.1, 29.11.

³⁰² For example, at 14.1, Pausanias finally takes readers into the Odeon, returning to where Pausanias left off at 8.6, at the statues of the Egyptian kings in front of the entrance to the Odeon.

Pausanias' work is comprised of sections of movement and contemplation of objects, and sections of discussion and interpretation. Sometimes, certain movement-related phrases need to be repeated to reorient readers after a particularly long digression relating to a monument.³⁰³ It is this element in particular that Plutarch adopts in the Pythian works that hints at some periegetic heritage.

We see all of these periegetic elements, typified by Pausanias, in Plutarch's Pythian works, too. Like Pausanias, Plutarch's selection of objects on his interlocutors' tour of the Sacred Way is curated and artificial, rather than particularly logical. Objects are selected because they can be used either as the basis for questioning or as examples of what is being said, and/or because they provoke amazement (e.g. 395B, 399F). Plutarch's standard way of introducing the significance of an object in *De Pythiae* is very similar to that of Pausanias. Plutarch's description of the Sibyl's rock 'on which it is said' (ἐφ' ἧς λέγεται) the Sibyl sat is just like Pausanias' use of a prepositional clause to indicate what 'they say' about an object (e.g. at 1.2.5). Both function as a way of opening further discussion. As in Pausanias, then, objects in Plutarch are never described in great detail, but act only as springboards for discussion, which we shall see in more detail in the following chapter. The difference is that while Pausanias usually simply relates the story associated with an object, the characters in Plutarch's Pythian works are more concerned with understanding the object's significance in philosophical and intellectual terms.

Thus, for example, the appearance of the sculpture of the palm and frogs in the treasure-house of the Corinthians in *De Pythiae* is not actually elucidated in anything but the barest detail. More important to the interlocutors is the discussion it provokes on allegorical representations. The use of objects as springboards is not limited to *De Pythiae*, but appears once, too, in *De Defectu*, in Lamprias' excursus on the role of matter in creation (436A). He turns to his surroundings to find examples of the combination of material causes with human art and reason. He lights upon 'the far-famed stand and base for the mixing-bowl here, which Herodotos has styled the 'bowl-holder'', and some unspecified 'likenesses and portraits' by Polygnotos, both of which required a combination of raw materials and human initiative. In both cases, the objects are selected not for their aesthetic properties, but for their suitability to the discussion.

Representation of movement in Plutarch is, as in Pausanias, demonstrated through participles (397E: προϊόντες, 400F: παρελθοῦσιν, 402C: περιελθόντες, and *De Defectu* 412D: προϊόντες,

³⁰³ For example, the repetition of ἐσελθόντων δὲ ἐς τὴν πόλιν at 2.1 and 2.4.

παρελθόντες) and occasionally through indicative verbs (398C: ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ἔστημεν, 399E-F: προήειμεν). In Plutarch, too, this is because it is not the act of movement in itself that is important, but the need to convey the transition from one monument to another. Verbs of movement signal not the narration of the walk itself, but a new, significant stop on the Delphic tour. Because of this narrated movement, *De Pythiae* is not static, like other dialogues, but dynamic. Its characters not only encounter but engage with specific elements in their surroundings in an elaborate way that was unprecedented in dialogue up to that point. This advancement allowed later authors much more freedom within the dialogue form.

Two later examples can provide instructive comparisons, which demonstrate the extent to which works after Plutarch could combine dialogue and *periegesis*. The first is Lucian's *Menippus and Aiakos* (*Dialogues of the Dead* 6). Although other Lucianic dialogues are also periegetic in nature, *Menippus* is the closest to *De Pythiae*, because it includes, in addition, a component of *ekphrasis*. Its first line is an explicit indication of its periegetic structure: 'Πρὸς τοῦ Πλούτωνος, ὦ Αἰακέ, περιήγησαί μοι τὰ ἐν ἄδου πάντα'. In this dialogue, though, the emphasis is on amazement, and the focus on famous men, rather than observation and investigation, particularly of objects.

Another work that incorporates a dialogic frame and a *peripatos* whose central purpose is *ekphrasis* of objects, is Philostratos' *Imagines*. In this work, the focus is not on philosophy, as in Plutarch, or on history, religion, and culture, as in Pausanias, but on mythology. The dialogic frame establishes a narrator-guide, and an eager listener character, whose presence is acknowledged throughout, and whose actions are 'narrated' in the narrator's response to them or very occasionally given.³⁰⁴ The frame provides some clues, in the form of generic markers, to readers. It situates the discussion at a time (the time of the public games, cf. *De Defectu*), and a place (Naples, and more specifically in the stoa of the author's host's house, which is furnished with a collection of paintings). But instead of being indicative of dialogue, as we might expect, the work takes on more of a narrative form. While the work is addressed to the boy and an invisible group of youths, it is not a dialogue, because they do not reply. Sometimes, however, we find echoes of the dialogue form in narratorial comments that pre-empt a listener's potential

³⁰⁴ 'It seems, my boy, that you have a feeling for the beauty in this figure and desire to hear something on this point also, so listen.' (Book 2) Why do you seize hold of me, my boy? Why do you not let me go on and describe the rest of the painting? (Book 2) Answer for the boy "I agree, let us go sailing." (2.17.1) 1.13.6: 'Why do you not go on to another painting? This one of the Bosphorus has been studied enough for me.'

reaction.³⁰⁵ The *periegesis* element is present in the group's traversal of the gallery of paintings.³⁰⁶ Each painting inspires discussion on its subject matter, with certain descriptions encompassing geography, natural history, and botany.

In the genre of *periegesis*, Plutarch found a useful and appropriate frame for his site-specific dialogues, most notably *De Pythiae*, which we could go so far as to call a periegetic dialogue. From *periegesis*, Plutarch extracted the ability to combine sightseeing and reflection. He takes this a step further, however, turning it into a form of introspection and philosophical investigation. For Plutarch, *periegesis* is a means to an end. In this, his motivation for using it differs from those, like Pausanias, writing 'pure' periegesis. Pausanias stops at monuments primarily to discuss them, for the sake of completeness, as part of his wider plan of describing Greece. He is not interested in philosophy, and records no intellectual, emotional, or philosophical reactions to what he sees.

The dialogue form allows Plutarch to rely not only on a single narrator character to impart information, as in Pausanias and Philostratos, but to bring the responses of other characters into the picture. As in Plato, the identity of the interlocutors colours their interpretations and the way that we as readers view them. From our examination of these characters, we are permitted the opportunity for self-reflection that pure *periegesis* cannot provide.

Conclusion

From the above survey, it is possible to say with certainty that the *Pythikoi logoi* are philosophical dialogues, which carefully and deliberately follow the Platonic tradition, but that they also participate in other genres. They contain 'generic markers' that show this, and which give us an idea of both their ideal readers, who knew their Plato, and their anticipated readers, who, regardless of their experience of Plato, would benefit from the Platonic treatment. In the Pythian works' use of the dialogue tradition, they draw extensively from Plato in form, characterisation, and function. By referencing Plato so extensively, they invite active, involved readers to participate in their own dialogues with the texts. They also ally their author with Plato – not just with his philosophy, but with his way of teaching it – and demonstrate, in their

³⁰⁵ 1.1.1, 1.6.4.

³⁰⁶ This is subtly indicated, e.g. 'let us withdraw, my boy, and leave the maiden' (1.8.2)

total familiarity with the conventions of the genre, that Plutarch, too, was a master of the form, highly capable not only of reusing it, but of repurposing it. Whereas Plato wrote only dialogues, Plutarch had additional generic choices at his disposal. His choice of writing these works was deliberate, and he was able to move beyond Plato by incorporating elements from other genres that had emerged in the period that separated him from his predecessor. Thus, while the Pythian dialogues remain part of – and propel forward – the dialogic tradition, they also innovate, particularly in the way that they subtly manipulate what is Platonic, and make use of other genres. For these reasons, Plutarch deserves a much more important place in the history of the genre than he has hitherto been awarded. As Harrison (2000: 198) aptly noted, ‘when so many genres left his station, they departed fundamentally changed’. The dialogue is no exception. Plutarch was familiar enough with its essential stylistic and content-based features to modify them, and to allow his own voice to emerge.

Chapter 2: The Unity of the Pythian Dialogues—a Structural Perspective

Introduction: Πυθικοὶ λόγοι

The Pythian dialogues form a united body of work. This is widely acknowledged on a somewhat superficial level because of their obvious shared subject matter and setting. But the homogeneity of the three texts is not an indisputable fact. While Turnebus' 1576 edition, *De Natura et effectibus Daemonum*, paired *De Defectu* and *De E* for their demonological content, it was not until the Paton edition (1893) that all three were first published together as a discrete group.³⁰⁷ *De E* is dedicated to a different individual from *De Defectu*, while *De Pythiae* is not dedicated at all, a fact which some scholars have used to argue against uniting the texts.³⁰⁸ Because the three dialogues are almost invariably published together in modern editions, and contemporary commentators refer to all three extensively when focusing on a single text, it may seem more unnatural to the present-day reader *not* to take them as a series. In this chapter, I would like to argue for the legitimacy of regarding them as a series, for reasons beyond their thematic unity and the circumstances of their publishing history.

The term Πυθικοὶ λόγοι itself, which appears for the first and only time at the beginning of *De E*, offers some assistance, as I shall argue below, because it at least indicates that *De E* is not the only 'Pythian' work. However, the author nowhere explicitly states which texts other than *De E* fall under the umbrella of the appellation, nor exactly what characterises a 'Pythian' work apart from its setting. Furthermore, the position of the term at the beginning of *De E* raises another question: in what order, if any, are they intended to be read? Thus, we have two questions, which operate in conjunction: do *De E*, *De Pythiae*, and *De Defectu* form a complete series? And if so, does the reader benefit from reading them in a particular order?

In this chapter, we shall first review the traditional reasons for grouping these three texts, which largely centre around the simple fact that they share a theme and setting. We will then focus on the prologues of each work, which set the tone for the works they precede, and offer indications of how the reader is expected to approach them. The prologues, I argue, share not

³⁰⁷ Brouillette (2014: 1).

³⁰⁸ For example, Schröder (1990: 3) views it as an impossibility that *De E* and *De Defectu* are linked, because of the latter's different dedication.

only themes and settings, but a single, clear philosophical purpose. Following this, we shall focus on the ways in which the structure of each work, particularly *De Pythiae*, echoes the formulations of the prologues. Finally, we shall see that each work ends where it began, at Delphi, and with a recommendation to readers to continue to participate in the philosophical process in their own time. From an examination of the prologues, the way that philosophy is practised by the interlocutors in each work, and the 'open' endings, which act as protreps to further philosophy, I shall clarify why I believe that we can treat the three dialogues as a coherent group, and the advantages to the reader of doing so.

Having demonstrated that the three works comprise a distinct unit, I shall further argue that they offer the reader of all three a different, more beneficial experience than the reader of only one work in isolation. I propose that, unlike Plutarch's other dialogues, all three Pythian works share a basically similar structure, with each offering an exemplary account of how one should practise philosophy, starting from the most preliminary stage. Each account is structured around the initial process of formulating questions, the exploration of these questions from different angles, and the final stage of accepting that while human knowledge has its limits, this should not prevent efforts to attain knowledge. The prologue of *De E* functions, I contest, as a prologue for all three Pythian works, and provides a framework for readers approaching not just *De E* but the other two works as well.

A question that must inevitably be addressed when discussing the effect on the reader of taking the three dialogues as a series is that of their 'intended' reading order. This question has perplexed scholars, who have often conflated the order in which the works 'should' be read with the order in which the author wrote them, two discrete processes which need not correspond. I am interested in the dialogues' reading order inasmuch as it might indicate whether reading the three dialogues not only together, but in a particular order, would also directly contribute to the reader's experience. Beyond taking *De E* as the introductory dialogue, I shall make only a tentative suggestion regarding the reading order of the other two dialogues. While I regard starting with *De E* as beneficial to the reader, I would argue that what is more important is that they are engaged with as a series in any order.

I suggest that by approaching the question of the Pythian works' unity from their structure, rather than their ostensible subject matter (which in these works can be something of a red herring), we can definitively state that they *do* form a distinct group, with each functioning as a protreptic to philosophy. One can imagine Plutarch's recipients, Sarapion, Terentius Priscus,

and their friends in the city, exchanging them, reading them as a series (regardless of the order) and using them as the foundation for further discussion, thus fulfilling what I believe is their intended purpose.

Beyond Thematic Unity

It is necessary to first examine on what grounds scholars have traditionally perceived a link between the three works that we now call Pythian. The problem is that there are very few outward indicators that we *should* unite all three texts. In the 3rd- or 4th-century list of Plutarch titles, the Lamprias Catalogue,³⁰⁹ which we shall analyse in more detail later, *De Pythiae* appears as number 116, followed by *De E* (117), but *De Defectu* is an outlier, appearing earlier at number 88. The Lamprias Catalogue is the work of a compiler, apparently acquiring works for a library, and so cannot be used as evidence that the works were ever intended to be read together. Nevertheless, the fact that two works appear in proximity suggests that they may have been transmitted together, or at least that the compiler grouped them together because *he* saw the links between them. In the manuscript tradition, which we shall examine in more detail later, a different pairing emerges. *De E* and *De Defectu* always appear in conjunction (in that order).³¹⁰ But *De Pythiae* never follows directly, and was in fact part of a different tradition of transmission altogether.³¹¹ Thus, the earliest available traditions of listing and grouping the works consistently see one dialogue separated from its apparent fellows. It was only with Stephanus' 1572 edition that the three appeared in succession, and with Paton that they were treated as a distinct unit, able to be published as such.³¹²

In the absence of clear data from the earlier tradition, scholars' justifications for treating the three Pythian works as a group have mostly centred around their shared setting, subject matter, and characters. For example, in his seminal article on the unity of the three dialogues, Babut

³⁰⁹ This document was compiled from the manuscripts Neapolitanus III. B 29, Paris. 1678 and Marc. 481 (now 863) (Sandbach 1969: 3-4). Although it purports to be the work of Plutarch's son Lamprias, it most likely dates from some time not long after Plutarch's death, perhaps the 3rd or 4th century (Sandbach 1969: 7). It is not quite comprehensive, since it does not include some definitively Plutarchan titles (Babbitt 1927: xviii).

³¹⁰ Moreschini (1997: 56).

³¹¹ Tempesta (2013: 275), Manfredini (1988: 124, 128).

³¹² Valgiglio (1992: 7).

argues from the point-of-view of their content, emphasising in particular the repetition of themes,³¹³ the opposition of Stoic and Epicurean positions that occurs in each work,³¹⁴ and the way in which philosophy is broadly enacted in each, in the sense that each speech builds upon its predecessor, with the final speech given to what Babut calls the ‘spokesperson’ of the author.³¹⁵ For Moreschini, the fact that the same characters appear across *De E* and *De Defectu* means that a link is ‘assured’; however, this ignores or trivialises the fact that characters from these dialogues appear in other works, too.³¹⁶ More recently, Brouillette characterised the Delphic themes as a ‘fil d’Ariane des trois textes’.³¹⁷ He identifies three such themes across all the dialogues: ‘reflection on the divinity’ or ‘Delphic theology’, reflection on the ‘mediatory figures’ of *daimones*, *pneuma*, and the Pythia herself, and ‘reflection on the human condition’ or ‘Delphic anthropology’.³¹⁸

But finally, and most importantly, beyond the undeniable fact that they share a common theme, scholars have pursued the uniting of these texts because Plutarch himself intimates, in the prologue of *De E*, that the dialogue is part of a series of Πυθικοὶ λόγοι:

ἐγὼ γοῦν πρὸς σὲ καὶ διὰ σὲ τοῖς αὐτόθι φίλοις τῶν Πυθικῶν λόγων ἐνίους ὥσπερ ἀπαρχὰς ἀποστέλλων, ὁμολογῶ προσδοκᾶν ἐτέρους καὶ πλείονας καὶ βελτίονας παρ’ ὑμῶν, ἅτε δὴ καὶ πόλει χρωμένων μεγάλη καὶ σχολῆς μᾶλλον ἐν βιβλίοις πολλοῖς καὶ παντοδαπαῖς διατριβαῖς εὐπορούντων. (384D)

‘I, at any rate, as I send to you, and by means of you for our friends there, some of our Pythian discourses, an offering of our first-fruits, as it were, confess that I am expecting other discourses, both more numerous and of better quality, from your and your

³¹³ 1992: 193.

³¹⁴ 1992: 203, 204, 206, 208, 219.

³¹⁵ 1992: pp. 194-233.

³¹⁶ 1997: 45. Babut (1992: 187) suggests that after their appearances in *De E*, the roles reserved for Sarapion in *De Pythiae* and Ammonios in *De Defectu* ‘permit assimilating one and the other to *De E*’. While the fact that both characters appear multiple times across the three works must surely be significant, both also appear in various *Q.C.* (Ammonios: 3.1-2, 8.3, 9.2, 9.14, Sarapion: 1.10), alongside other interlocutors from the three Pythian works, including Lamprias (1.2, 1.8, 2.2, 7.5, 8.6, 9.14), Theon (1.4, 1.9, 8.6, 8.8), Boethos (5.1, 8.3), and Diogenianos (7.8, 8.1, 8.2, 8.9).

³¹⁷ 2014b: 1.

³¹⁸ 2014: 4.

friends, inasmuch as you have not only all the advantages of a great city, but you also have more abundant leisure amid many books and all manner of discussions.’

This self-referential terminology has been widely acknowledged,³¹⁹ but has continued to mystify scholars. Brouillette, for example, takes this linguistic clue as a starting-point for ‘establishing a link between these three works which traditionally form [the corpus],’³²⁰ and postulates that solely on account of its position here, the prologue of *De E* functions as a prologue for the other two ‘Pythian’ works, too. However, as scholars recognise, the appellation can only really tell us that the author had either written or envisaged more than one Pythian work at the time of writing *De E*.³²¹ Thus, putting together the fact that according to Plutarch’s own testimony, he wrote Πυθικοὶ λόγοι, of which he sent some (ἐνίους) to Sarapion, and the fact that of all the surviving *Moralia* texts, it is these three works that share a common setting and theme, scholars have found a neat solution. But the problem is not so self-contained. As we shall explore in more detail later, other works with a Delphic setting, like *De sera*, are also sometimes posited as contenders for belonging to the series. So, too, are works now lost, with titles that seem to cover similar ground to the works *already* seen as a series. Finally, although Plutarch himself uses the phrase, he does not elaborate on what it means. It is, then, worth seeking an understanding of what an ancient reader might expect Πυθικοὶ λόγοι to be.

By the time that Plutarch came to write his works, a precedent already existed for naming philosophical dialogues or groups of dialogues with a descriptive adjective ending in -ικός, usually pertaining to the place at which the work is set, and sometimes followed by the term λόγος or λόγοι. This tradition can be seen in the naming of symposiastic works like Athenaios’ συμποτικοὶ διάλογοι (4.162b-c), and the fact that, according to Diogenes Laertius (2.13.122), Simon’s dialogues were known as σκυτικοί because they took place at his cobbler’s workshop. In the Peripatetic tradition in particular, we find place-related works entitled *Megarikos* and *Chalkidikos*.³²² In this same tradition, the very Dikaiarchos whom Plutarch quotes in the opening of *De E* had written *Korinthiakoi* and *Lesbiakoi logoi*, which take their names from their

³¹⁹ It is acknowledged by, for example, Babut (1992: 187), Flacelière (1974: VII), Valgiglio (1992: 7), Moreschini (1997: 123).

³²⁰ Brouillette (2014b: 1).

³²¹ Babut (1992: 187), Moreschini (1997: 123), Hirzel (1895: 203).

³²² Massaro (2000: 122).

setting.³²³ Even Aristotle had written a *Pythikos*, now lost (D.L. 5.1.26). Although its genre is unknown, it seems likely that it may have been one of his no longer extant dialogues. In the Latin tradition, Cicero's *Tusculanae Disputationes* were so named because they took place at his Tusculan villa, and in Plutarch's own day, Dio Chrysostom was the author of a *Borysthenitikos*. But these broad, vague titles tell us little about the contents of the works. Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* consists of five books on various philosophical problems, not thematically linked, where the setting is of minimal importance. Dio Chrysostom's work sees him recounting a discussion that he had with the inhabitants of Borysthenes, regarding the conditions of the ideal city, and the order of the universe. Thus, it seems that naming a dialogue after its setting was simply a convention along the same lines as naming works according to their subject matter, or after a principal character.³²⁴ In this way, such works could be easily referenced or found by anyone interested in them. An ancient reader, then, could have had as little idea of what to expect from these works as her modern counterpart.

In the context in which Plutarch uses the term, in the prologue of *De E*, he is speaking in terms of the contrasts between him and his recipient, the wealthy city-dweller, Sarapion. That is, Πυθικοὶ λόγοι is not so much a *title* as another way of marking the contrast between author and addressee. While Plutarch sends works that are Pythian, from Delphi, the works that Sarapion is expected to send back would be Athenian *logoi*. What differentiates these works from Sarapion's and makes them Pythian is, as Plutarch goes on to say, the fact that they are *not* Athenian *logoi*, born of libraries, and the type of discussion that Sarapion has with *his* friends. Thus, rather than seeing Πυθικοὶ λόγοι too determinedly as a title in the strictest sense, particularly when each work has its own title, we should see it as more akin to something like the *Arabian Nights*, so named in the English tradition for an audience for whom 'Arabian'

³²³ Cicero mentions both. At *T.Q.* 1.31, he refers to three books of discussions regarding the immortality of the soul 'qui *Lesbiaci* vocantur, quod Mytilenis sermo habetur', while at *T.Q.* 1.10, he mentions three books on the soul set at Corinth.

³²⁴ So, for example, Diogenes Laertius mentions Speusippos' ὑπομνηματικοὶ διάλογοι (4.1.5). Dialogues on love are usually simply called *Erotikos*, like those of Eukleides (2.10.108), and Theophrastos (5.2.43), Demetrius (5.5.81), and Demetrios (5.6.87). Sphaeros, too, wrote what D.L. calls διαλόγους ἐρωτικούς (7.6.178). The names of many dialogues derive from their interlocutors, as, of course, with Plato's, but also the case for other dialogue-writers mentioned in D.L., including Eukleides (2.10.108), Stilpo (2.11.120), Krito (2.12.121), Glaukon (2.13.122), Kebes (2.16.125), Speusippos (4.1.4), and Xenokrates (4.2.12, a *Kallikles*), and Diogenes (6.2.80). The tradition continued in the imperial period, with works like Minucius Felix's dialogue *Octavius*. The convention extended, of course, to other genres, like history, which is full of *Hellenika* and *Persika*, and novelistic works, like the *Ephesiaka*, *Aethiopika*, and *Milesiaka*.

signified something different and exciting. For the audience of Plutarch's Πυθικοὶ λόγοι, here explicitly characterised as city-dwellers, the world of Delphi evoked by the term 'Pythian' – a spectacular natural setting, the oracle, and the Temple of Apollo – may have had a similar enticing effect.

Thus, the Pythian title is perhaps not as useful as we might think for defining which works, other than *De E*, comprise the series. It tells us only that the works it encompasses took place at Delphi, not what they are about. On what grounds, then, can we conclude that the three Pythian dialogues examined here can be united as a series? First, as we have seen, unlike Cicero's multifaceted Tusculan works, the three Plutarchan works that we conceive of as 'Pythian' share not only a setting, but *also* subject matter and discussion topics. Furthermore, we noted in the last chapter that the three 'Pythian' dialogues all participate in the genre of Platonic dialogue, and that this allegiance would have been obvious to many ancient readers, who had been schooled in that tradition. Finally, I believe that we can also see a unity in their internal structures, which, along with the Delphic theme and setting, set them apart from other Plutarchan dialogues. As with the title Πυθικοὶ λόγοι, the fact that the Delphic dialogues, particularly *De E* and *De Defectu*, share broad structural similarities, has been noted in the scholarship in scattered references, but is usually sketched, rather than examined in detail, as I shall do here.³²⁵ For example, as many have observed, the dialogues themselves make evident a structural separation between preliminary arguments and final reflections by means of the device, which I have argued is Platonic, of stopping and 'settling down'.³²⁶ In addition, most commentators have recognised that the interlocutors' speeches in the Pythian dialogues seem to follow an ascending order of likelihood, with the final speech the most authoritative. Babut clarified this, arguing that each contribution is a marked improvement on its predecessor, and

³²⁵ For example, Moreschini (1997: 45) notes that in both *De E* and *De Defectu* 'the proem is linked to a citation: in *De Defectu*, to that of a legend of the temple, in *De E* to a verse adapted from Euripides'. Babut (1992: 187 n.1) draws attention in particular to 'the insistence of their respective prologues [those of *De Pythiae* and *De Defectu*] on the Delphic frame'.

³²⁶ For example, Babut (1992) divides each dialogue into sections, based on these internal clues. He sees the 'final' part of *De Pythiae* (chapters 17-30) as 'clearly separated from what precedes it'. That is, the moment at which the participants sit down on the temple steps seems 'to mark symbolically the separation between the *periegesis* and the philosophical exposition which follows'. Moreschini (1997: 45) also briefly points out that 'the structure of [*De E*] repeats the same lines as *De Defectu*: after the *peripatos* comes the discussion, which takes place when the interlocutors sit down...' In *De Facie*, too, the characters sit down at 397D, after the mid-point of the dialogue, in order to 'provide [Sulla] with a settled audience'.

highlights its particular flaws.³²⁷ In this way, he did much to dispel any notion that the speeches that come before this final contribution have no value at all,³²⁸ but nevertheless remained attached to the idea that the final speech represents ‘the author’s view’.³²⁹

Babut’s arguments demonstrate that logical philosophical threads run throughout each dialogue, with the content of one character’s speech frequently anticipating that of another,³³⁰ or the first contribution of a character expressing the kernels of thoughts that they will expound upon in more detail later.³³¹ While my position is not opposed to that of Babut, I would like to lend support to his argument that, regardless of the philosophical views expressed or the problems treated, each dialogue shares a common structure. I argue that the building-blocks – each prologue, intervention, and response, but also the very specific vocabulary of philosophy employed – play a role that contributes to their interpretation.

Each dialogue follows the same inner logic, beginning with a question that has its origins in the physical world of the temple, which produces a series of problems (ἀπορίαι). Dialogues do not conclude with any problem solved, but with an invitation to readers to continue their questioning in the world outside the dialogue. We shall examine each building-block – prologues, interlocutors’ contributions, and endings – in detail, demonstrating the similarities in structure and function between all three Pythian works.

Prologues: Delphi inspires philosophy

In the previous chapter, we noted the importance of the prologue for marking these works as inheritors of the Platonic tradition. The introduction of and emphasis upon the Delphic setting in the prologues of all three texts is important. In presenting philosophy as having its origins in

³²⁷ 1992: 199.

³²⁸ He notes, for example, that the ‘quantitative disproportion’ in the distribution of speeches in *De E* is enough to alert readers to the importance of earlier speeches, especially the young Plutarch’s (p. 194).

³²⁹ See, for example, p.212, where it is taken for granted that Theon is Plutarch’s spokesman, and p.224 where Lamprias is ‘the spokesperson of the author’ because the philosophical views that the characters are most in accord with Plutarch’s other writings.

³³⁰ He demonstrates that, for example, in *De E*, the young Plutarch touches on ideas in his speech (388F) that are later expounded by Ammonios at 393B. (1992: 198)

³³¹ Thus, he argues (1992: 222-3) that in *De Defectu* both Lamprias and Ammonios offer in their first contributions ideas that they later extend.

and taking place in the public world, where it is practised by enthusiastic amateurs as well as ‘professional’ philosophers like Ammonios, the prologues are Platonic. But in their clear delineation of Delphi in particular as a starting point, with nods to Apollo evoking the inquirer god’s constant presence, each prologue establishes Delphi not just as a standard temple site, but as a place where exploration and discussion are actively sought and encouraged. We shall focus particularly on the prologue of *De E*. As the longest prologue of the three, and the one which deals most with the actual process of philosophising common to all three, it merits special attention. Most previous attempts to understand the role that it plays within the dialogue as a whole have been rather short and colourless. Bonazzi saw the dialogue’s first two chapters simply as introducing the theme of the discussion,³³² while Flacelière viewed the prologue as a substitute for the Platonic ‘introductory dialogue’, without exploring how they differed.³³³ Babut alone recognised that the prologue goes beyond simply reporting the dialogue’s circumstances, and emphasised that it provides a framework for interpreting each interlocutor’s contribution.³³⁴ Remarkably, Moreschini in his 1997 commentary was content to accept the structural analyses of Hirzel (who, he commented, wrote a ‘finer and more precise examination of [the structure] one hundred years ago’(!)) and Babut, whose work was based upon the former.³³⁵ I argue that the opening of *De E* operates as a prologue for all three texts, and that we also find corresponding and complementary elements in the prologues of the two ‘Pythian’ texts that follow. This is most evident in the way that each draws attention to Delphi itself, and to a peculiarly ‘Pythian’ or ‘Apollonian’ method of philosophising. The idea that all three share a common foundation is crucial for suggesting that a reader benefits from reading them in conjunction.

1) The Prologue of *De E*

De E opens with a dedication to Sarapion, the implications of which we shall examine in more detail in the next chapter. Although Sarapion, as the dedicatee, is honoured by name, he is not the only intended recipient, and therefore not the only ideal narratee, of the work. Rather,

³³² 2008: 205.

³³³ 1974: 4.

³³⁴ 1992: 193.

³³⁵ pp. 44-5.

despite the initial warm address to ‘dear Sarapion’, the work is intended to be circulated among other unnamed friends in Athens (τοῖς αὐτόθι φίλοις), too (384E). Thus, while Sarapion is flattered by being named, the specificity to his personal requirements is somewhat negated. Unlike in some of Plutarch’s ‘letter-essays’, the author gives no clue as to why this dialogue is addressed to Sarapion, nor did Sarapion request it.³³⁶ Since Plutarch is not responding to any particular *expressed* need of his dedicatee, he is free to educate Sarapion – and through Sarapion, other friends – on whichever subject, and by whichever method, he deems most suitable.

After the dedication, the work opens with a quote from Euripides, to be analysed in more detail in the next chapter, the import of which is that there is no point giving small gifts to those already wealthy. Gifts of λόγος and σοφία, however, surpass anything material (384E). With an emphatic ‘I, at any rate’ (ἐγὼ γοῦν), Plutarch notes that he is sending to Sarapion and his friends τῶν Πυθικῶν λόγων ἐνίους, ‘some Pythian works’, as gifts, ὡσπερ ἀπαρχάς,³³⁷ ‘just like first-fruits’ but also that he expects πλείονας καὶ βελτίονας, ‘more and better’, works in return. We have here the first intimation of what the work(s) to come will actually be. Although the phrasing is still rather vague (that is, λόγοι, not διάλογοι), we know now that the theme will be Pythian. We can also see that the author considers these works, which constitute the gift, to consist of λόγος and σοφία. The description of the works as ‘first-fruits’ seems to have been intended to recall the dedication of the Delphic maxims by the seven sages, which is mentioned just a few lines later. The widespread designation of these maxims as ‘first-fruits’ of ‘wisdom’ or ‘philosophy’ in Greek literature,³³⁸ and the Delphic connection suggests that the use of the term here is very deliberate. It is also used in Plutarch’s *Regum et imperatorum apophthegmata* in exactly the same context. That is, Plutarch is sending to Trajan ‘trifling gifts and tokens of friendship, the common offerings of the first-fruits that come from philosophy (κοινὰς ἀπαρχὰς προσφέροντος ἀπὸ φιλοσοφίας)’, in the hope that they will provide some use (172C). The

³³⁶ For examples of the author responding to demands or requests, see *Praec. Ger.* 798C (to Menemachos, ‘since you ask for some precepts of statecraft’, *De Tranq.* 446E-F (Paccios requested a piece on tranquillity of mind), and *Q.C.* 612D-E (to Sosius Senecio, who wanted to remember the discussions in which he had participated).

³³⁷ For the importance of this term (ἀπαρχάς) in light of its recurrence in its verbal form later in the dialogue at 387E, see Bonazzi (2008: 208-9).

³³⁸ Pl. *Protagoras* 343a-b (ἀπαρχὴν τῆς σοφίας ἀνέθεσαν τῷ Ἀπόλλωνι), Diod. Sic. 9.10 (καθάπερ ἀπαρχὰς ποιούμενος τῷ θεῷ τῆς ἰδίας συνέσεως), and Dio Chrys. 72.12 (οἶον ἀπαρχὰς τινας τῆς σοφίας).

similar usage of the term in both contexts endows each work, and in particular its philosophical aims, with a kind of religious importance and solemnity. So, too, in each case is the use of the term accompanied by an anecdote regarding the giving of small gifts to important people. In *Regum*, this has the effect of placing Plutarch, with the peasant who offers Artaxerxes water, below Trajan, and yet in a vitally important position – of advice-giving – nonetheless. In *De E*, with literary gifts adjudged positive in comparison with material gifts, Plutarch elevates his status, as the sender of such honourable gifts.

Plutarch goes on to say that he expects Sarapion and his friends to send works in return because of their privileged position. While their location is not named, we know that it is in a ‘great city’ (πόλει μεγάλη), presumably Athens, where they can enjoy many books, more leisure time, and the opportunity to participate in ‘all kinds of discourses’ (παντοδαπαῖς διατριβαῖς).³³⁹ While one may postulate a negative contrast implicit in this, that is, that the author lives in a smaller place, and has less free time, the idea that living at Delphi is disadvantageous is borne out neither by Plutarch’s references elsewhere to living in a small place, nor by what follows in our text.³⁴⁰ Indeed, although Sarapion and his friends have these resources, it is still Plutarch, less materially wealthy, who has taken the initiative and written this dialogue. There is, then, a sense of irony in Plutarch’s flattery of his city-dwelling friends.

In the transition from the dedication to the world of Delphi itself, we are presented with the very specific advantages of Delphi, which can more than hold their own against those of the big city. First, readers are introduced without any preamble to another φίλος of Plutarch’s, ‘our

³³⁹ The author’s emphasis on Sarapion’s situation, more particularly the naming of these specific activities (reading books and participating in discussions) suggests to Müller (2012: 245) ‘a first hint of two thoughts that will be important for Plutarch in his essay’. These thoughts are ‘discussion as the method of finding the truth’, and ‘knowledge as it can be found in books... as the basis for the discussion in which the truth is to be found’. But I would argue that this dialogue concentrates more on the specific (Platonic) process of philosophising in dialogue (385B-C), rather than on the process of learning from books and then ‘testing’ one’s knowledge in dialogue, which is more implicit, and constantly seen here in what the characters do.

³⁴⁰ This scenario is similar to that of the prologue to the *Life* of Demosthenes (chapters 1-2). There, as here, the author does not bemoan his situation. Rather, he simply draws attention to the material advantages of the city. In the *Life*, the author says that he would like to consult other works, but is restricted by living in a small town. Here, he tells his dedicatee that he expects ‘more and better discourses’ not explicitly because of Sarapion’s ability, but precisely because Sarapion can make use of the material scholarly resources of a big city. The form of expression is also common to each. In both works, the word παντοδαπός, alluding to the city’s great variety, is used, in the *Life* (2.1) to refer to books, and here of discourses, but also coupled with ‘many books’.

beloved Apollo' (ὁ φίλος Ἀπόλλων). As we shall see, this immediate introduction to Apollo presages his prevalence throughout all three works. Apollo makes this, his first named appearance in the dialogue, immediately after the author has enumerated the intellectual advantages of the city for his friends in Athens.³⁴¹ In this sense, as ὁ φίλος Ἀπόλλων, the god seems at first almost like another one of these already-mentioned φίλοι. That is, given the two previous usages of the term in the preceding lines, which refer to 'dear' Sarapion and the author's other Athenian friends,³⁴² it seems that with this appellation Plutarch incorporates the god into this group of his own personal friends. This is not as unusual as it may at first seem. That Plutarch thinks that the gods may and should be seen as φίλοι is revealed by a section of the *Coniugalia Praecepta* (140D). There, the wife is advised not to make her own friends, but to share her husband's, and that since 'the gods are the first and most important friends', she should take care to worship only those of which her husband approves.³⁴³

In the context of the prologue of *De E*, we may interpret this as a contrast between human and divine friendship,³⁴⁴ the former having the advantage of exchanging knowledge through written works (λόγοι) and discussions (διατριβαί) (384E-F), but the latter able, as we shall see, to result in solving life's problems in other ways.³⁴⁵ The contrast between human and divine friends and their capabilities is, I think, a good way of explaining the leap from one sentence to the next, as well as this unusual use of the term φίλος, generally reserved for humans,³⁴⁶ and never an

³⁴¹ Although Moreschini translates the phrase as 'il nostro dio', it is unlikely that it is the more Homeric usage of φίλος as 'one's own' that is at work here. Babbitt's 'beloved' (1936: 201) captures the sense better.

³⁴² φίλε Σαραπίων (384D) and τοῖς αὐτόθι φίλοις (384E).

³⁴³ οἱ δὲ θεοὶ φίλοι πρῶτοι καὶ μέγιστοι.

³⁴⁴ For the contrasting force of the δέ of δ'οὔν, which does not require a μέν to complete its sense (examples are given in Denniston 1959: 462, l.2), see Denniston (1959: 460). Here, δ'οὔν also seems to indicate the commencement of a new thought. (Denniston 1959: 461 (l.2))

³⁴⁵ A further neat parallel, again strengthening the link and contrast between these two sentences, is provided by the use of the polysemic verb χράω in each sentence. Thus, the Athenian friends 'make use of' or 'enjoy' (χρωμένων, 384E) the great city and its scholarly resources, and the god issues oracles to 'those who consult' him (χρωμένοις, 384F).

³⁴⁶ This is most often in the sense of humans as dear to the gods. A famous example would be Odysseus as dear to Athena (e.g. their interaction at *Od.* 13.290-310). This is a manifestation of the idea that while the gods may show *philia* for individual mortals, humans cannot reciprocate such friendship, largely because they cannot perform equal favours in return, but can only demonstrate honour and reverence. For this idea, and other early literary examples, see Polinskaya (2013: 351). Later, Plato thinks of men who are not just, but give the impression that they are, as being as dear (φίλος) to the gods as their truly just counterparts, with the sense, however, not really of being regarded as dear, but of being favoured

epithet for Apollo or even other gods.³⁴⁷ The use of φίλος, rather than, for example, Phoibos or Delios, is perhaps the author's way of indicating where Apollo stands in relation to the dialogue's interlocutors. While Sarapion's city may have libraries and leisure, Plutarch and his friends at Delphi have Apollo as a friendly influence in their circle.

In addition to claiming Apollo as a friend, Plutarch implicitly claims Apollo for Delphi. Apollo is introduced squarely in his capacity not just as the oracular god of Delphi, but – less well-known – as a god whose interest in problem-solving extends into the realm of the philosophical.

Ὁ δ' οὖν φίλος Ἀπόλλων ἔοικε τὰς μὲν περὶ τὸν βίον ἀπορίας ἰᾶσθαι καὶ διαλύειν θεμιστεύων τοῖς χρωμένοις, τὰς δὲ περὶ τὸν λόγον αὐτὸς ἐνιέναι καὶ προβάλλειν τῷ φύσει φιλοσόφῳ, τῇ ψυχῇ ὄρεξιν ἐμποιῶν ἀγωγὸν ἐπὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν, ὡς ἄλλοις τε πολλοῖς δῆλόν ἐστι καὶ τῇ περὶ τοῦ εἶ καθιερώσει. (384F)

'It seems that our beloved Apollo finds a remedy and a solution for the problems connected with our life by the oracular responses which he gives to those who consult him; but the problems connected with our power to reason it seems that he himself launches and propounds to him who is by nature inclined to the love of knowledge, thus

(362c, although the broader idea is first introduced at 352b). On the other hand, Aristotle found the idea of a human loving a god or considering a god to be dear to be ridiculous because of the disparity between the two parties. (*MM* 1208b30, quoted in Burkert 1985: 274, and *NE* 1158b35 ff., quoted in Voegelin 1999: 419). In Plutarch, the use of φίλος is generally restricted to mean 'friend' (its most frequent sense in the *Lives*) or 'dear' (as, for example, when Eustrophos refers to mathematics as φίλη in *De E* at 387E).

³⁴⁷ Apollo already had a great store of more regular, well-known epithets (some of which Ammonios lists at 385B-C, 393C, and 394A, and the young Plutarch at 388F), any of which could have been substituted here. When the term is (rarely) used of gods by other authors, it is almost exclusively in the vocative. Sophocles, *Ajax* l. 14, where Odysseus calls upon Athena as 'dearest of the gods to me' (φιλάτης ἐμοὶ θεῶν); Aristophanes, *Knights* l. 1270, where the chorus addresses Apollo (ὦ φίλ' Ἀπολλων); Aesch. *Seven Against Thebes* l. 159, where Apollo is also addressed as ὦ φίλ' Ἀπολλων, and Aesch. *Ag.* l. 515 (Ἑρμῆν, φίλον κῆρυκα). See also the examples given in Burkert 1985: 274, i.e. Menander, *Sam.* 444 (Ἀπολλων φίλτατε), Hipponax fr. 32 (dear Hermes), Homer *Od.* 14.83f. (dear Zeus), Eur. *Hipp.* (Artemis addressed as ὦ φίλη δέσποινα at 82 and σοί γε φίλτατη θεῶν at 1394). The only other occasions in Plutarch's corpus where gods are described as dear are in the *Life* of Demosthenes (29.3), where Demosthenes addresses Poseidon (ὦ φίλε Πόσειδον), and in the exclamation 'dear Graces!' (φίλαι Χάριτες) in *QC* 710D. Versnel (2011: 99) notes that personal feelings for gods are often 'dependent on the visible presence of the national, local or even personal deities'. In view of the setting of *De E*, the temple of Apollo, and Plutarch's role as priest there, it is easy to see how the god's visible presence could provoke a sense of 'closeness'. Flacelière (1974: 8) attributes the choice of adjective entirely to the author's 'attachment and affection' for the god on account of his priesthood. While this may partially explain its use, to call a god φίλος is not a casual occurrence for an author so interested in and aware of the gods and their involvement in human affairs (see, e.g., *De Sera*), and so should be studied as an exception with a wider significance.

creating in the soul a craving that leads onward to the truth, as is clear in many other ways, but particularly in the dedication of the E.’

While collaboration with Plutarch’s Athenian friends means exchanging discourses, collaboration with Apollo means – for the philosophically-inclined soul – actively advancing towards the truth about the divinity. The god’s role in reasoning and philosophising clarifies what Delphi has to offer. At Delphi, surrounded by material evidence of his power, Plutarch and his friends are able to go straight to the source. The language here sets the tone for what is to come. According to Plutarch, Apollo ‘seems... to cure and solve perplexities’ (ἰᾶσθαι καὶ διαλύειν ἀπορίας). The use of ἰᾶσθαι is apt, given Apollo’s well-known role as a healing god;³⁴⁸ however, the latter phrase (διαλύειν ἀπορίας) is reserved in Greek literature almost exclusively for philosophy.³⁴⁹ Thus, Apollo himself, in practising problem-solving, becomes a philosopher, an implication that is strengthened and explored more explicitly some lines later when the dialogue’s first speaker, Ammonios, lists the god’s philosophical epithets (385B).³⁵⁰

The problems that the god seems to solve concern on the one hand (μὲν) life and on the other (δέ) thought/reason (385E-F).³⁵¹ The god must treat each separately, as they require different cures. For the first, ‘practical’ problems in life, the god provides a practical (although cryptic) solution by giving prophecies to those who consult the oracle (τοῖς χρωμένοις). For the second, problems regarding λόγος, the god puts a desire to understand directly into the subject. Both forms of assistance rely on Apollo’s subject receiving and interpreting, but it is only the second process, for ἀπορίας περὶ τὸν λόγον, that requires a special type of subject. That is, anyone who has the desire and means can inquire at the oracle and receive an answer (through the Pythia)

³⁴⁸ Hom. *Il.* 16.527-31; Aesch. *Eum.* l. 62; Ar. *Av.* l. 584, *Plut.* l. 11; Pl. *Symp.* 197a; Strabo 14.1.6; Paus. 1.3.4. There was even a cult of Apollo Iatros in the Black Sea region from the sixth century B.C. (Wickkiser 2008: 50).

³⁴⁹ LSJ, for example, gives only Plato and Aristotle as examples for διαλύειν in this sense of ‘to solve’, including its specific use with τὴν ἀπορίαν, because the appearance of the two words together is so common. See, for example, Aristotle *Met.* 11.1061b (διαλύοιτ’ ἂν ἢ κατ’ ἀρχὰς ἀπορία λεχθεῖσα), 1062b31 (οὐ χαλεπὸν δὲ διαλύειν τὴν ἀπορίαν ταύτην) and 1063b (πρὸς μὲν οὖν τοὺς ἐκ λόγου τὰς εἰρημένους ἀπορίας ἔχοντας οὐ ῥᾶδιον διαλύσαι). In Plutarch, see *De Pythiae* 397D, where Diogenianos requests the others to focus on solving the ἀπορία at hand (ἄλλα διάλυσον ἡμῖν ταύτην τὴν ἀπορίαν κοινήν οὕσαν).

³⁵⁰ There, the god is actually described as ὁ φιλόσοφος: Ὅτι μὲν γὰρ οὐχ ἤττον ὁ θεὸς φιλόσοφος ἢ μάντις ἐδόκει πᾶσιν ὀρθῶς πρὸς τοῦτο τῶν ὀνομάτων ἕκαστον Ἀμμώνιος τίθεσθαι καὶ διδάσκειν...

³⁵¹ ὁ δ’ οὖν φίλος Ἀπόλλων ἔοικε τὰς μὲν περὶ τὸν βίον ἀπορίας ἰᾶσθαι καὶ διαλύειν θεμιστεύων τοῖς χρωμένοις, τὰς δὲ περὶ τὸν λόγον αὐτὸς ἐνιέναι καὶ προβάλλειν τῷ φύσει φιλοσόφῳ...

about ἀπορίας περὶ τὸν βίον, but only a certain kind of person, who is philosophical by nature (τῷ φύσει φιλοσόφῳ) can truly aspire to an understanding of the divine by receiving and reflecting upon the god's ἀπορίας περὶ τὸν λόγον. The implication is that while Apollo himself 'finds a remedy for and solves the problems connected with our life', it is we, as readers, who must 'find a remedy for and solve' the problems connected with our power to reason (λόγος). Since the author has just described the dialogue as precisely a gift of λόγος and σοφία, we may see the λόγον here as referring back to (or at least incorporating) that previous usage. If so, this would mean that the author, in sending δῶρα ἀπὸ λόγου καὶ σοφίας, in which he deals with Pythian subjects, is himself participating in this Apolline enterprise. This also impacts the reader who, in sharing and engaging in the enterprise, becomes one of the philosophical souls at whom Apollo aims.

The idea of a person being 'a philosopher by nature' is very important in Plato, particularly in the *Republic*, where the phrase appears first at 375e (φιλόσοφος τὴν φύσιν) and thereafter multiple times as a quality deemed necessary for the ideal guardian of the state that Sokrates and his interlocutors are imagining.³⁵² Plutarch adopts the phrase enthusiastically, acknowledging its origin in Plato (*Vit. Cicero* 2.3), and generally using it to refer to men of learning, who are interested in acquiring knowledge through reading, listening, and discussing.³⁵³ To such philosophical souls, the god himself, Plutarch says, 'launches and

³⁵² At 376c, Sokrates encourages Glaukon to contemplate a guardian who is φύσει φιλόσοφον καὶ φιλομαθῆ. Here, φιλόσοφος is associated with being fond of learning, φιλομαθής, a term that appears frequently in Plutarch's work. For example, it is used to describe characters in the prologues to *De Pythiae* and *De Defectu*, and also in conjunction with φιλόσοφος, as at *Cic.* 2.3. See also *Rep.* 485a, where those of a philosophical nature (τῶν φιλοσόφων φύσεων) are discussed as being devoted to the worthwhile cause of learning about what is (rather than what changes or becomes); 490c-d, where Sokrates reiterates and redefines the good qualities of a philosopher's nature, which are enough to form a sort of 'chorus' (τὸν ἄλλον τῆς φιλοσόφου φύσεως χορὸν, τὴν τῶν ἀληθῶς φιλοσόφων φύσιν); 492a, where the stipulation is added that the philosophical nature (τοῦ φιλοσόφου φύσιν) must have the correct teaching (μαθήσεως προσηκούσης) in order to attain virtue, another important point for Plutarch in the *Lives*; 494a, where Adeimantos and Sokrates discuss how the philosophical nature (φιλοσόφῳ φύσει) is to be nurtured; 495a, where they realise that the parts that comprise a philosophical nature (τὰ τῆς φιλοσόφου φύσεως μέρη) can be those that ruin it if it is badly nurtured; 497b, where none of the *poleis* in their current states are deemed worthy of the philosophical nature (μηδεμίαν ἀξίαν... φιλοσόφου φύσεως), and 502a, where the speakers consider whether the son of a king or dynast could be philosophical by nature (τὰς φύσεις φιλόσοφοι), without being corrupted. Outside of the *Republic*, the philosophical soul appears in the *Phaedrus* (252e) in relation to souls searching for a Zeus-like complement (that is, a soul who is philosophical and authoritative by nature), and in the *Timaeus* (18a), again to describe the soul of the guardians in Sokrates' recapping of the *Republic*.

³⁵³ Thus, Cicero is described as fond of learning and wisdom, and not dishonouring any kind of *logos* or *paideia*: γενόμενος δ', ὥσπερ ὁ Πλάτων ἀξιότιμὴν φιλομαθῆ καὶ φιλόσοφον φύσιν, οἷος ἀσπάζεσθαι πᾶν μάθημα καὶ μηδὲν λόγου μηδὲ παιδείας ἀτιμάζειν εἶδος, ἐρρῦη πως προθυμότερον ἐπὶ ποιητικόν. In *De*

propounds [the problems] relating to *logos*, thus creating in the soul a craving that leads onward to the truth' (384F).³⁵⁴ The importance of developing an appetite (ὄρεξιν) for the truth (ἀλήθεια) is confirmed by *De Recta Ratione* (48C), where the same thought appears, phrased using the same vocabulary. There, Plutarch says that the mind does not require filling like a vessel, but is like wood, and needs 'kindling to create in it an impulse to think independently and an ardent desire for the truth (ὄρεξιν ἐπὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν)'.³⁵⁵ The point in *De Recta* is related to lazy students who do not think for themselves. Instead of simply absorbing the principal points of a discourse, Plutarch advises students to take the discourse (λόγον) as a 'seed' (σπέρμα) from which to 'develop and expand' (ἐκτρέφειν καὶ αὔξειν) their own thoughts (48B-C).³⁵⁶ It is this that will act as 'kindling'. Here in *De E*, it is Apollo who puts this sort of kindling into the minds of philosophical souls, creating the desire for truth. In *De Recta*, as in *De E*, ὄρεξις is something that is 'created in' the mind or soul, at first by an external influence (a λόγος, the god), but then, if the subject is keen, able to recur without this outside support.

Delphi provides the perfect setting for receiving inspiration from the god, whose mysteries are everywhere. Since the god's influence is behind the E, the author continues, it must have been dedicated for a specific reason. The likeliest solution, given what we know about how Apollo works, must be that the original dedicants of the E themselves sought and received knowledge from the god. That is, in the first use of the term in the prologue, these people in the past must have 'philosophised' (φιλοσοφήσαντας) about the god, treating the E as among things 'worthy of study' (τι τῶν ἀξίων σπουδῆς) (385A).

From these obscure philosophers of the past, we move to the framing of the dialogue itself. Plutarch notes that the same subject (τὸν λόγον), the meaning and purpose of the E, had often

Tuenda (122D), Moschion presents himself as a willing listener to Zeuxippos, who attributes this appreciation for listening to the fact that Moschion is a philosopher by nature: φιλόσοφος γὰρ εἶ τὴν φύσιν, ὧν Μοσχίων. In the *QC* (734D), Florus goes through the (ideal philosophical) process of reading Aristotle's *Problems*, experiencing many perplexities (πολλῶν ἀποριῶν... ὑπεπίμπλατο), just like the philosophers by nature (αἱ φιλόσοφοι φύσεις), and conveying these to his friends (τοῖς ἐταίροις μετεδίδου).

³⁵⁴ ὁ δ' οὖν φίλος Ἀπόλλων ἔοικε... τὰς δὲ περὶ τὸν λόγον αὐτὸς ἐνιέναι καὶ προβάλλειν τῷ φύσει φιλοσόφῳ, τῇ ψυχῇ ὄρεξιν ἐμποιῶν ἀγωγὸν ἐπὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν...

³⁵⁵ οὐ γὰρ ὡς ἀγγεῖον ὁ νοῦς ἀποπληρώσεως ἀλλ' ὑπεκκαύματος μόνον ὥσπερ ὕλη δεῖται, ὁρμὴν ἐμποιοῦντος εὐρετικὴν καὶ ὄρεξιν ἐπὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν.

³⁵⁶ This idea of words or discourses as seeds also appears multiple times in the Pythian dialogues: towards the beginning of *De E* in Ammonios' first speech (385D), and again in the striking comparison with the Spartoi in the prologue to *De Pythiae* (394E), which we shall explore below.

(πολλάκις) ‘been propounded in the school’ (προβαλλόμενον ἐν τῇ σχολῇ) (385A). This new mention of a λόγον – or rather, the use of the word to describe the problem presented by the meaning of the E – will alert readers, who have been primed to expect both Pythian λόγοι and particular problems of λόγος, to pay particular attention. The use of the verb προβάλλειν, meanwhile, draws attention to its previous use some lines earlier (384F), where it referred to Apollo seeming to ‘propound ἀπορίας’ to the philosophical soul. Here, then, the repetition of vocabulary already associated with Apollo and the asking of questions suggests that we may have hit upon one of those questions (ἀπορίαί) implanted by the god in philosophical souls.

In the past, Plutarch says that when the question had been raised ‘in the school’, he had quietly ‘avoided’ or ‘turned away’ from it, ‘passing it by’ (ἐκκλίνας ἀτρέμα καὶ παρελθών).³⁵⁷ Babut postulates that the author’s elaborate comment about putting aside the question is a literary device ‘to demonstrate concretely the limits of this human inquiry for the truth’, showing that philosophy is not infallible, but may often produce no solution.³⁵⁸ In this sense, it is an early indication that we should be wary that any clear solution can be found. The only reason for Plutarch’s engagement with the question in the circumstance narrated by the dialogue was that he was discovered by his sons, deep in conversation (συμφιλοτιμούμενος) with some guests. The term is not used in this exact sense elsewhere in Plutarch, but usually contains the notion of enthusiasm and healthy competition.³⁵⁹ Added to the guests’ desire to converse is their eagerness, at 385B, to hear something (πάντως ἀκοῦσαί τι προθυμουμένους), a virtue lauded

³⁵⁷ There is a somewhat similar parallel in *De Sera* (550C); however, there, Plutarch does not actually put the question aside or refuse to answer, but defends himself in anticipation of being levelled with accusations of avoiding the topic at hand: ταῦτα δ’ οὐκ ἀποδράσεως πρόφασίς ἐστὶν ἀλλὰ συγγνώμης αἴτησις, ὅπως ὁ λόγος, οἷον εἰς λιμένα καὶ καταφυγὴν ἀποβλέπων, εὐθαρσέστερον ἐξαναφέρῃ τῷ πιθανῶ πρὸς τὴν ἀπορίαν. Another point of comparison is Cicero’s *de Divinatione* (5). There, however, Cicero says that he *had* addressed the question frequently in the past, but that the instance being related was one where more care was taken in the discussion.

³⁵⁸ 1992: 201-2.

³⁵⁹ It seems to imply doing something in concert with others (συν) and either ‘loving honour’ or ‘endeavouring earnestly’ (LSJ definition of φιλοτιμέομαι), but most often means ‘to compete’ or ‘to vie’. Throughout the rest of Plutarch’s corpus, it is used of Kratisikleia sharing Kleomenes’ ambitions (in a very literal sense of the word) in *Cleom.* 6.1; in the same way of Praecia sharing Lucullus’ ambitions in *Luc.* 6.3; of wealthy people competing or vying with the king in increasing the wealth of the city of Tigranocerta at *Luc.* 26.2; of the *demoi* supporting Nikias in *Nikias* 2.2; of the Sicilians ‘zealously labouring’ (Perrin’s translation) for Plato to overcome Philistos at *Dion* 19.1 (here, in its sense of struggling for a mutual cause, it requires another verb to complete its sense); of Alexander eagerly supporting or honouring Aristandros’ prophecies at *Alex.* 25.2; of Laelius honouring Scipio’s virtue and reputation at *Praec. ger. reip.* 806A, and of *daimones* assisting souls vying for virtue in *De Genio* 593E.

as necessary for those who wish also to converse in *De Recta Ratione*.³⁶⁰ Significantly, these otherwise featureless visitors are described only in relation to their desire to converse and listen, a clear prerequisite for philosophical discussion. It is, we are told, the combination of listeners who have proved themselves to be eager (their identity is not important) and the inspiring Delphic location that makes the difference now, prompting Plutarch to explore the question. Since Plutarch has just pointed out that those whom Apollo urges on to further study are those who are philosophical by nature, the reader must conclude that these men, with their appetite for discussion and listening, fulfil that criterion.

The opening of Plutarch's dialogue *De Tuenda* offers a parallel example. On the subject of discussion brought up, whether medicine is a part of philosophy, Moschion offers himself as an eager listener (πρόθυμος ἀκροατής) (122D). His partner in conversation, Zeuxippos, admiringly points out that this is because Moschion is a 'philosopher by nature' (φιλόσοφος [...] τὴν φύσιν) (122D).³⁶¹ Indeed, just as Plutarch had waved the question away when the company was inadequate, so Moschion had been hesitant to engage in discussion the previous day with a man he describes at 122C as 'contentious' (φιλομαχοῦντι). We can think of the visitors in *De E* in this way, too. Characterised solely by their intellectual curiosity, they make a good stand-in for readers. We shall encounter these 'eager listener' characters, who appear in this capacity to be candidates for 'philosophers by nature' in the other two 'Pythian' prologues, too. In each case, it is the presence of these eager visitors at Delphi that provides the frame for investigative dialogues of this kind to transpire.

Having sat his sons and the visitors down near the temple, Plutarch the narrator begins the philosophical process of inquiry (ἡρξάμην ζητεῖν), asking questions of his companions (τὰ δ' ἐκείνους ἐρωτᾶν) (385B).³⁶² We are able, some lines later, to make a linguistic connection between what Plutarch says he did with the visitors (ἡρξάμην ζητεῖν) and the comment that the philosopher Ammonios makes in the first speech of the dialogue (385C) that to inquire (ζητεῖν) is precisely the beginning (ἀρχή) of philosophy. The repetition of the terms in such close proximity demonstrates the importance of this notion for the author, both theoretically and in

³⁶⁰ 38E-39B. See also 45E-F on the duties of the listener.

³⁶¹ φιλόσοφος γὰρ εἶ τὴν φύσιν, ὧς Μοσχίων...

³⁶² ὥστε καθίσας περὶ τὸν νεῶν τὰ μὲν αὐτὸς ἡρξάμην ζητεῖν, τὰ δ' ἐκείνους ἐρωτᾶν, ὑπὸ τοῦ τόπου καὶ τῶν λόγων αὐτῶν ἀνεμνήσθη ἃ πάλαι ποτὲ καθ' ὃν καιρὸν ἐπέδήμει Νέρων ἠκούσαμεν Ἀμμωνίου καὶ τινῶν ἄλλων διεξιόντων, ἐνταῦθα τῆς αὐτῆς ἀπορίας ὁμοίως ἐμπεσοῦσης.

practice. As a vital component of dialogue, its introduction at this very early stage means that readers may better recognise when it appears and how it functions throughout the text.

After conferring with his companions, Plutarch says that on account of the place and the discussions (ὑπὸ τοῦ τόπου καὶ τῶν λόγων αὐτῶν) he recalled a time in the past (πάλαι) when Nero was present, and the same ἀπορία fell upon Ammonios and ‘some others’ (τινων ἄλλων), to whom he was listening, in a similar way (385B).³⁶³ The narrator now moves from his own recollections to what appears to be the first contribution of an interlocutor, Ammonios. Ammonios’ ‘speech’ is, however, still indirect, the continuation of the report of the narrator, rather than in his own voice. Its attachment to the prologue is also seen in the fact that it continues in the present tense that the narrator has been using, rather than switching to the past, as we might expect from what the narrator has just said about being inspired at a time in the past.³⁶⁴ That is, Ammonios ‘seems’ (δοκεῖ) to prove the god’s philosophical character. The past tense (ἔδόκει) is an amendment of Turnebus.³⁶⁵ In addition, rather than actually proposing a particular philosophical position regarding the E, or even responding to an imagined, unreported question, Ammonios’ contribution simply runs on from the prologue proper, supporting what the narrator has just said: ‘That the god is no less a philosopher than a prophet Ammonios seemed to all to postulate and prove correctly, with reference to this or that one of his several titles [...]’.³⁶⁶ It maintains a clearly defined link with the rest of the prologue by sustaining the theme of Apollo φιλόσοφος, and expands upon it by setting out in ascending order the titles he bears to those at different stages of their philosophical journey. Most interestingly, it is in his guise of Apollo Pythios that he assists ‘those beginning to learn and enquire’ (τοῖς ἀρχομένοις μανθάνειν καὶ διαπυνθάνεσθαι) (385B). Moving through the ranks, he is Delios and Phanaios ‘for those to whom something of the truth is becoming clear and is being revealed’ (οἷς ἤδη τι δηλοῦται καὶ ὑποφαίνεται τῆς ἀληθείας) (385B), echoing Plutarch’s earlier comment that the god creates in the philosophically-minded an appetite that leads to

³⁶³ The verb ἀναμνήσθην does not appear in the manuscripts, but was added by Bachet de Méziriac to complete the sentence, which does not make sense otherwise. The idea of a place assisting with dialogue, less because of memory, but certainly because of its associations, appears again in *De Pythiae* (402C).

³⁶⁴ In fact, we only attain this anticipated switch to the past at 385C, *after* Ammonios has already ‘spoken’ about the titles of the god. His direct speech is introduced by ‘ἔφη’.

³⁶⁵ The present tense appears in manuscripts Par. Graec. 1671, 1672, 1675, 1680, and 1957.

³⁶⁶ ὅτι μὲν γὰρ οὐχ ἦπτον ὁ θεὸς φιλόσοφος ἢ μάντις ἐδόκει πᾶσιν ὀρθῶς πρὸς τοῦτο τῶν ὀνομάτων ἕκαστον Ἀμμώνιος τίθεσθαι καὶ διδάσκειν [...] (385B).

the truth. For more seasoned philosophers, he is Ismenios ‘to those who have knowledge’ (τοῖς ἔχουσι τὴν ἐπιστήμην) and Leschenorios ‘when people have active enjoyment of conversation and philosophic intercourse with one another’ (ὅταν ἐνεργῶσι καὶ ἀπολαύωσι χρώμενοι τῷ διαλέγεσθαι καὶ φιλοσοφεῖν πρὸς ἀλλήλους) (385C). This latter is particularly interesting in light of the fact that part of the action in *De Defectu* takes place at the Lesche of the Knidians, famed as a hub for high-minded conversation (412D).

At this point, finally allowed his own voice, and thus ending the introductory narration, Ammonios said (ἔφη):

ἐπεὶ δὲ τοῦ φιλοσοφεῖν τὸ ζητεῖν ἀρχή, τοῦ δὲ ζητεῖν τὸ θαυμάζειν καὶ ἀπορεῖν, εἰκότως τὰ πολλὰ τῶν περὶ τὸν θεὸν ἔοικεν αἰνίγμασι κατακεκρῦφθαι, καὶ λόγον τινὰ ποθοῦντα διὰ τί καὶ διδασκαλίαν τῆς αἰτίας· (385C)

‘Since inquiry is the beginning of philosophy, and wonder and uncertainty the beginning of inquiry, it seems only natural that the greater part of what concerns the god should be concealed in riddles, and should call for some account of the wherefore and an explanation of its cause’.

This statement has its origins in Plato’s *Theaitetos*, from which it has been adopted and extended. There, Sokrates questions the young Theaitetos on the nature of knowledge and the character of the philosopher. At the beginning of the dialogue, Sokrates converses with Theaitetos about the nature of perception, noting especially that individuals perceive the same objects differently, but that this does not mean that the objects themselves have changed or, in Platonic terminology, ‘become’. Sokrates confuses Theaitetos after they have agreed on three axioms regarding perception by demonstrating their internal contradictions, and Theaitetos is amazed (θαυμάζω) (155c).³⁶⁷ This feeling of being overwhelmingly amazed by what one sees or hears is not, however, a negative trait, as Sokrates makes clear: ‘For this feeling, [that of] wondering, is of a philosopher: for there is *no other beginning of philosophy than this...* (οὐ γὰρ ἄλλη ἀρχὴ φιλοσοφίας ἢ αὕτη)’ (155d).³⁶⁸ The *Theaitetos* has for its major themes the importance of not only perceiving (seeing and hearing), but understanding what we perceive,

³⁶⁷ καὶ νῆ τοὺς θεοὺς γε, ὧ Σώκρατες, ὑπερφυῶς ὡς θαυμάζω τί ποτ’ ἐστὶ ταῦτα, καὶ ἐνίστε ὡς ἀληθῶς βλέπων εἰς αὐτὰ σκοτοδινῶ.

³⁶⁸ μάλα γὰρ φιλοσόφου τοῦτο τὸ πάθος, τὸ θαυμάζειν: οὐ γὰρ ἄλλη ἀρχὴ φιλοσοφίας ἢ αὕτη, καὶ ἔοικεν ὁ τὴν ἴριν Θαύμαντος ἔκγονον φήσας οὐ κακῶς γενεαλογεῖν.

and realising that this is not always true knowledge. It seems likely that Plutarch's wording, which echoes Plato's just enough for readers familiar with Plato's dialogues to consider the link, is supposed to recall the concerns that Sokrates foreshadowed, such as what philosophy is, how it is practised, and what makes a philosopher. That Plutarch meant for readers to recall the *Theaitetos* is further supported by the fact that all three Pythian works are largely concerned with the difference between the visible and invisible (e.g. the identification of the sun with Apollo), and the need to interpret what one hears rather than, for example, accepting an oracle at face value. The aim of the philosopher is to ascertain 'an account of the wherefore' (διὰ τί) and an 'explanation of the cause' (διδασκαλίαν τῆς αἰτίας) of each enigma associated with the god.

We know, then, that the god propels already philosophically-inclined souls towards a search for the truth and, according to Ammonios, as part of this endeavour, conceals whatever concerns him with riddles, which spur such souls on. Ammonios ends his first contribution by listing a series of Delphic 'enigmas' of precisely this type,³⁶⁹ concerning the oracle's traditions and monuments, which 'being suggested to those who are not altogether unreasonable and spiritless, act as a lure and invite them to investigate, listen, and converse about them' (385D).³⁷⁰ These final three verbs (σκοπεῖν, ἀκούειν, διαλέγεσθαι) are consistent with those of philosophising already used by this point (θαυμάζειν, ἀκοῦσαι, ζητεῖν, ἐρωτᾶν), and strengthen for the reader the importance of investigation and discussion as elements of the philosophical process. Ammonios' contribution completely reflects what the narrator has already said, and continues to place emphasis on both the specific powers of Delphi and the philosophical process, which involves listening and discussing (the precise two characteristics that typified the visitors to Delphi), and investigation. This further exploration of ideas already brought up in Plutarch's introduction serves to cement them in the reader's mind, ensuring that these basic philosophical and dialogic tenets do not escape the reader about to embark on this fundamentally philosophical text. By presenting these thoughts first in his own voice and then

³⁶⁹ His list includes why pine is the only wood burnt at Delphi, why Delphi has only two (rather than three) statues of the Fates, why no woman is allowed to approach the prophetic shrine, and whatever concerns the tripod (385C).

³⁷⁰ [...] καὶ ὅσα τοιαῦτα, τοῖς μὴ παντάπασιν ἀλόγοις καὶ ἀψύχοις ὑφειμένα δελεάζει καὶ παρακαλεῖ πρὸς τὸ σκοπεῖν τι καὶ ἀκούειν καὶ διαλέγεσθαι περὶ αὐτῶν.

in that of another apparently very authoritative, and certainly very knowledgeable, character, the author strengthens their reliability.

Ammonios turns from his series of questions on Delphic customs to the very inscriptions on the temple 'here':

ὄρα δὲ καὶ ταυτὶ τὰ προγράμματα, τὸ 'γνώθι σαυτόν' καὶ τὸ 'μηδὲν ἄγαν,' ὅσας ζητήσεις κεκίνηκε φιλοσόφους καὶ ὅσον λόγων πλῆθος ἀφ' ἐκάστου καθάπερ ἀπὸ σπέρματος ἀναπέφυκεν' (385D)

'Note also these inscriptions here, 'Know thyself' and 'Avoid extremes,' how many philosophic inquiries have they set on foot, and what a horde of discourses has sprung up from each, as from a seed!'

This ties the prologue of *De E* beautifully to that of *De Pythiae*, where the interlocutors were 'sowing and reaping λόγους' (394E), but also to the advice in *De Recta* (48B-C), mentioned earlier, that when practising philosophy, each λόγος *should* be a seed (σπέρμα), giving way to others. Ammonios concludes that 'of these discourses, I think none is less fruitful than the one we're now examining [the E, as we know from what the narrator has already said]' (385D).³⁷¹ Here, I think, we may see the end of this rather extended prologue.

If *De E* is the first in the series of Delphic dialogues, as I suggest and shall argue in more detail later, then Ammonios' comments, very near the beginning, may be seen as a key to interpreting the two dialogues that traditionally follow it. As we shall see later in this chapter, Ammonios' suggestions for philosophising are indeed borne out by the actions of the characters, who consistently transform their initial amazement at an object or another character's contribution into an inquiry, a problem to be solved, and whose discourses act as 'seeds' for those which follow. For the moment, however, we shall first review the other two prologues to see if they exhibit similar concerns for Apollo and the practice of philosophy.

2) The Prologue of *De Pythiae*

As we saw in the previous chapter, the opening of *De Pythiae*, with its dialogic frame, and its careful delineation of the way in which the dialogue came to be related, is particularly Platonic.

³⁷¹ ὣν οὐδενὸς ἦττον οἶμαι γόνιμον λόγων εἶναι τὸ νῦν ζητούμενον.

But it also has much in common with the prologue of *De E*. As in *De E*, the prologue of *De Pythiae* immediately gives readers sufficient indication that the scene of the action is Delphi. This can be quickly conjectured by coupling Basilokles' reference to 'escorting the visitor through the votive offerings' (ἀναθημάτων) (394E), immediately suggesting a temple worth visiting, with Philinos' admission that his party was also visiting the nearby Korukion cave (a possible old site of the Delphic oracle) and the Lykoreia, easily accessible from Delphi (394F).³⁷² The final piece of information given in the prologue to clarify the setting comes when Philinos begins to relate the dialogue that has just taken place, and refers to the guides who were trying to explain the inscriptions (395A), both indicative of a temple site, and the statues of Lysander's naval captains (395A-B), which also appear in the *Life* of Lysander.³⁷³ Educated readers, even if they had not visited Delphi, would certainly have had an image of it in their minds from literature, and known these sites and landmarks.³⁷⁴ As with *De E*, readers are left in no doubt, from the very beginning, of the dialogue's setting.

Nor are readers left in any doubt regarding the nature of the philosophical experience that will be elaborated in the dialogue which follows. In response to Basilokles' comment that he waited for Philinos and his company, Philinos says:

Βραδέως γὰρ ὠδεύομεν, ὦ Βασιλόκλεις, σπείροντες λόγους καὶ θερίζοντας εὐθύς μετὰ μάχης ὑπούλους καὶ πολεμικούς, ὥσπερ οἱ Σπαρτοί, βλαστάνοντας ἡμῖν καὶ ὑποφυομένους κατὰ τὴν ὁδόν. (394E)

'The fact is, Basilokles, that we went slowly, sowing words, and reaping them straight away with strife, like the men sprung from the Dragon's Teeth, words with meanings behind them of the contentious sort, which sprang up and flourished along our way.'

³⁷² Pausanias also wrote about these sites (10.6.2-3).

³⁷³ 18.1. Their prominence is also evident from the fact that they are among the offerings singled out by Pausanias in his chapter on Delphi, too (10.9.7-9). Explicit confirmation of the Delphic setting comes after the discussion on the patina of the bronze, with a reference to τὸν ἀέρα τὸν ἐν Δελφοῖς (396A).

³⁷⁴ For example, in *Q.C.* 5.2, the Plutarchan narrator expects that his companions will have read a famous work on Delphi: 'But Polemo the Athenian's "Commentary of the Treasures of the City Delphi" I suppose most of you have diligently perused, he being a very learned man in the Greek Antiquities.'

While there is a strong precedent throughout Greek literature for ‘sowing’ (but interestingly, not ‘reaping’) λόγοι, as in Aristophanes,³⁷⁵ Xenophon,³⁷⁶ and later biblical texts,³⁷⁷ it seems that yet again the author being evoked here is Plato. The metaphor appears in both the *Republic* (492A), where Sokrates notes that a philosophical nature will only grow and prosper if sown in the right environment,³⁷⁸ and the *Phaedrus*. In the first mention in the *Phaedrus* (260c-d), the propagation of rhetoric by careless orators is compared to the sowing of seeds, the reaping of which may have disastrous results.³⁷⁹ The second, more well-known instance (276b-277a) in the *Phaedrus* compares the man writing discourses to a gardener; like a gardener who ‘sows seeds in fitting ground’ (σπείρας εἰς τὸ προσῆκον) to flourish in due time, rather than wasting his efforts on ephemeral gardens of Adonis, the serious philosopher will write carefully and pointedly, ‘sowing [his seeds] through a pen with words’ (σπείρων διὰ καλάμου μετὰ λόγων) only for his own benefit and that of those ‘who follow the same path’ (παντὶ τῷ ταύτῳ ἴχνος μετιόντι). He will be happy when he sees these worthy recipients ‘putting forth tender leaves’ (φυομένους ἀπαλούς). Even better than writing, however, is:

‘ὅταν τις τῇ διαλεκτικῇ τέχνῃ χρώμενος, λαβὼν ψυχὴν προσήκουσαν, φυτεύῃ τε καὶ σπείρῃ μετ’ ἐπιστήμης λόγους, οἱ ἑαυτοῖς τῷ τε φυτεύσαντι βοηθεῖν ἱκανοὶ καὶ οὐχὶ ἄκαρποι ἀλλὰ ἔχοντες σπέρμα, ὅθεν ἄλλοι ἐν ἄλλοις ἤθεσι φυόμενοι τοῦτ’ ἀεὶ ἀθάνατον παρέχειν ἱκανοί, καὶ τὸν ἔχοντα εὐδαιμονεῖν ποιοῦντες εἰς ὅσον ἀνθρώπων δυνατὸν μάλιστα.’ (276E-277A)

³⁷⁵ *Frogs* I. 1206 (although the quotation seems to derive from elsewhere: see Henderson’s Loeb translation (2002: 191)): ‘Aegyptus, so the widespread rumour runs’ (ὡς ὁ πλεῖστος ἔσπαρται λόγος) (literally, ‘as the widespread story/report was sown’), with fifty children in a long-oared boat, landing near Argos...’

³⁷⁶ *Cyrop.* 5.2.30. Here, the phrase is used in the same sense as in Aristophanes: ‘and a rumour to this effect has now been widely spread abroad.’ (καὶ ὁ λόγος οὗτος πολὺς ἤδη ἔσπαρται...)

³⁷⁷ Eusebius 1.13.20: ‘And Thaddeus said... ‘and I will preach in their presence and sow among them the word of God...’ (σπερῶ ἐν αὐτοῖς τὸν λόγον τῆς ζωῆς). Mark 4.14: ‘The farmer sows the word’ (ὁ σπείρων τὸν λόγον σπείρει).

³⁷⁸ ἢν τοῖνυν ἔθεμεν τοῦ φιλοσόφου φύσιν, ἂν μὲν οἴμαι μαθήσεως προσηκούσης τύχη, εἰς πᾶσαν ἀρετὴν ἀνάγκη ἀύξανομένην ἀφικνεῖσθαι, ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ἐν προσηκούσῃ σπαρεῖσά τε καὶ φυτευθεῖσα τρέφεται, εἰς πάντα τὰναντία αὖ, ἐὰν μὴ τις αὐτῇ βοηθήσας θεῶν τύχη.

³⁷⁹ This is surprisingly not mentioned in Valgiglio’s commentary; however, his footnote on the subject (1992: 141, n.4) refers exclusively to σπείροντες λόγους, rather than to any other combination of the terms.

‘...when one employs the dialectic method and plants and sows in a fitting soul words which are not fruitless, but yield seed from which there spring up in other minds words capable of continuing the process forever, and which make their possessors happy, to the farthest possible limit of human happiness.’

The ideas, vocabulary, and harvesting imagery in Plutarch’s sentence, where λόγοι are sown, sprout, and are reaped by interlocutors, bear strong similarities to this section of the *Phaedrus*. For Plato, planting λόγοι in a fitting soul through the process of dialectic is very pertinent to the process of practising dialogue. By evoking it here, Plutarch may be prompting his readers to think about this process. We have already seen in the prologue of *De E* both the importance for philosophical dialogue of having a subject who is already a philosophical soul (cf. Plato’s ψυχὴν προσήκουσαν),³⁸⁰ and the idea that λόγοι are like seeds, and ‘fruitful’ (γόνιμος) (385D). Thus, in the economy of both dialogues, we are presented early on with references to an ideal way of practising philosophy: taking λόγοι, subjects of inquiry that Delphi itself has furnished, as seeds, and sowing these (at Delphi, among naturally philosophical souls) in order both to reap them, and for more to sprout. The prominent appearance of agricultural vocabulary – recalling, too, the description of the Pythian works as ἀπαρχαί – in the first few chapters of *De E* and *De Pythiae* suggests a link between them. At Philinos’ open and eager acknowledgement that he and his friends made a late night because they were sowing λόγοι, active readers may, then, readily have recalled both Ammonios’ similarly worded statement in the previous dialogue, and the *Phaedrus*’ elaborate agricultural analogy. The use of the seed metaphor, along with that of the Spartoi, presents a vivid image not just of dialogue in general, but of the particularly Delphic kind of dialogue that Plutarch has created.

Such a process, however, requires ‘naturally philosophical’ souls. In the prologue of *De E*, we noted that readers are presented with an audience eager to both listen and converse. We see this, too, in the prologue of *De Pythiae* at two levels. First, Basilokles presents himself as an eager listener, since he waited for Philinos for a long time, and wishes to hear all about the discussions in which his friend was involved.³⁸¹ Second, the visitor, Diogenianos, was

³⁸⁰ 384F and 385D.

³⁸¹ Basilokles opens the dialogue by commenting on the circumstances of its telling, with a particular emphasis on the great length of time he has waited: ‘You all made a late night of it, Philinos, escorting the guests through the dedications. I gave up waiting for you.’ Although it seems unclear at first whether this meeting is taking place immediately after the discussion or the day after, Schröder’s interpretation (1990: 107) that it occurs on the following day must be correct. First, Plutarch’s use of the phrase ἐσπέραν

enthusiastic enough not only to make a late night of sightseeing, but to visit *additional* sites relating to Delphi's history. Both Philinos and Basilokles characterise Diogenianos, significantly the only other interlocutor to be mentioned at this early stage, in positive terms that relate wholly to his credentials as a budding philosopher.³⁸² Basilokles first notes that 'the visitor is both fond of seeing (φιλοθεάμων) and unusually fond of listening (περιττώς φιλήκοος)' (394F).³⁸³ Philinos builds on this: 'But even more he is a scholar (φιλόλογος), and fond of learning (φιλομαθής)' (394F).³⁸⁴ It is worth examining all four terms, because they have strong philosophical implications, are widely represented across the works of Plato and Plutarch himself, and appear in another Pythian prologue, too.

In Plato, interlocutors like Lysis, Ktesippos, and Krito are frequently described as φιλήκοος.³⁸⁵ Ktesippos is especially enthusiastic, leading his companions by example to take part in the discussion,³⁸⁶ and Krito specifically points out that he is fond of listening and would 'gladly learn' (ἡδέως... μανθάνοιμι) from reputable teachers who will refute him, unlike the sophists.³⁸⁷ Plutarch's pairing of φιλήκοος and φιλοθεάμων may be intended to evoke the context of book 5 of the *Republic*, where the definition of a philosopher is discussed.³⁸⁸ At 475d, Sokrates points out that those who will eagerly see or listen to anything that catches their attention, even if by

βαθεῖαν elsewhere (e.g. *Apophth. Reg. Imp.* 179E, *De Alex.* 338D) indicates a late night. Second, if the group has already made a late evening, then there would be insufficient time for the others to travel to the nearby locations mentioned. Babbitt's Loeb translation confuses the matter by adding an unnecessary 'almost' ('I had almost given up waiting for you') (p.259). Valgiglio's 'mi sono infatti stancato di attendervi' captures the sense better (1992: 59).

³⁸² For Müller, Diogenianos is here 'einen idealen Gesprächsteilnehmer' (2013: 70).

³⁸³ Ἡ φιλοθεάμων τις ἡμῖν καὶ περιττώς φιλήκοος ἐστὶν ὁ ξένος.

³⁸⁴ Φιλόλογος δὲ καὶ φιλομαθῆς ἐστὶ μάλλον.

³⁸⁵ *Lysis* 206c, *Euthydemus* 274c, 304c.

³⁸⁶ *Euthyd.* 274c-d: βουλόμενός τε οὖν θεάσασθαι ὁ Κτήσιππος τὰ παιδικὰ καὶ ἄμα φιλήκοος ὦν ἀναπηδήσας πρῶτος προσέστη ἡμῖν ἐν τῷ καταντικρῦ: οὕτως οὖν καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι ἐκεῖνον ἰδόντες περιέστησαν ἡμᾶς, οἳ τε τοῦ Κλεινίου ἐρασταὶ καὶ οἱ τοῦ Εὐθυδήμου τε καὶ Διονυσοδώρου ἐταῖροι. τούτους δὴ ἐγὼ δεικνὺς ἔλεγον τῷ Εὐθυδήμῳ ὅτι πάντες ἕτοιμοι εἶεν μανθάνειν: ὁ τε οὖν Κτήσιππος συνέφη μάλα προθύμως καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι, καὶ ἐκέλευον αὐτῷ κοινῇ πάντες ἐπιδείξασθαι τὴν δύναμιν τῆς σοφίας.

³⁸⁷ *Euthyd.* 304c.

³⁸⁸ 474b-479d.

doing so they wish to learn something, are certainly not philosophers. What makes the φιλήκοος or φιλοθεάμων man a true philosopher is his love of seeing (and by extension hearing) the *truth* (τοὺς τῆς ἀληθείας... φιλοθεάμονας).³⁸⁹ In book 6, Sokrates argues that an aspiring philosopher must not be half-hearted in his pursuit of philosophy, willing to train his body but not his mind. An unphilosophical person would be ‘a lover of hunting and all the labours of the body, yet not fond of learning (φιλομαθής), or of listening (φιλήκοος) or inquiring (ζητητικός)’ (535D).³⁹⁰ The implication, of course, is that to be a philosopher one must be φιλομαθής, φιλήκοος and ζητητικός. According to Sokrates, a genuine φιλομαθής individual sets his sights on true being.³⁹¹ In the *Epinomis*, the best nature results from a soul that admires courage and temperance, and ‘is enabled by these natural gifts to learn’ (ἐν ταύταις ταῖς φύσεσιν δυναμένη μανθάνειν) (989B-C). Rejoicing in its good qualities, the soul will inevitably become φιλομαθής (989C). Sokrates describes himself as φιλομαθής in the *Phaedrus*, since he enjoys being taught by the people of the city.³⁹² This is unsurprising, since the Athenian in the *Laws* notes that according to popular belief, Athens is both φιλόλογος and πολύλογος.³⁹³ Thus, to be φιλομαθής and φιλόλογος will clearly stand one in good stead for participating in philosophical discussion, and in Plato they tend to be reserved for more reflective souls. The use of terms important to Platonic philosophy early in this Plutarchan dialogue may have put alert readers in mind of Plato’s ideas of philosophical development.

For Plutarch, the first two terms (φιλοθεάμων, φιλήκοος) are not negative exactly, to be entirely contrasted with the second pair. Rather, they can have either positive or negative connotations, depending on the object of the viewer’s or listener’s attention.³⁹⁴ Thus, in *De Curiositate* (517D), Plutarch encourages self-reflection regarding whether one is ‘fond of small or great spectacles’ (μικρῶν πέφυκας ἢ μεγάλων φιλοθεάμων εἰ μεγάλων), implying that additional information is

³⁸⁹ 475e. Cf. Plutarch, *De Curiositate* 517D, discussed below.

³⁹⁰ *Republic* 535d: ἔστι δὲ τοῦτο, ὅταν τις φιλογυμναστής μὲν καὶ φιλόθηρος ἦ καὶ πάντα τὰ διὰ τοῦ σώματος φιλοπονῆ, φιλομαθῆς δὲ μή, μηδὲ φιλήκοος μηδὲ ζητητικός...

³⁹¹ *Republic* 490a-b.

³⁹² 230d.

³⁹³ 641e.

³⁹⁴ For example, a φιλοθεάμων man will, Sokrates thinks, have trouble believing that there is a singular ‘beautiful’, when he is so fond of watching spectacles. (*Republic* 479a)

required for the term to be used as either an especially positive or negative judgement.³⁹⁵ If one turns one's natural curiosity towards scientific phenomena, for example, this will be positive in a way that curiosity about one's neighbours could never be. Similarly, in the *Quaestiones Convivales*, Kallistratos (the same man referenced in the prologue of *De E*) says that he would release from the charge of licentiousness a man who is simply 'φιλήκοον καὶ φιλοθέαμον' (704E). The implication in context is that to be truly licentious, one would allow the object of one's attention (for example, music) to completely take over. In the context of *De Pythiae*, since additional positive information is provided about Diogenianos, as we shall see, I think that there is no need to see the first two terms as ironic. Instead, the second pairing serves to reinforce the first.

While Plutarch enthusiastically adopts these Platonic terms on their own,³⁹⁶ he demonstrates a particular fondness for pairing φιλο- words. Most relevant to our purposes is the corresponding pairing of φιλοθέαμων and φιλομαθής in the opening of *De Defectu* to describe one of its interlocutors, Kleombrotos, which we shall examine below.³⁹⁷ In two Pythian works, then, interlocutors introduced in the work's opening are endowed with the same qualities, a fondness for observing, engaging, and learning. But this is far from the only instance of pairing such terms. Plutarch flatters the dedicatee of *Adv. Colotem*, Saturninus, by calling him φιλόκαλον καὶ φιλάρχαιον. Elsewhere, we see such combinations in the *Life* of Solon (29.6) to describe Solon himself (φύσει φιλήκοος ὦν καὶ φιλομαθής ὁ Σόλων), the *Life* of Alexander 8.1 (φιλόλογος καὶ φιλαναγνώστης), and the *Life* of Pompey (29.4), where Valerius is described with exactly the same adjectives that Philinos uses of Diogenianos (φιλόλογος ἀνὴρ καὶ φιλομαθής). Another telling usage is the pairing of φιλόλογος and φιλομαθής in *Quomodo Adulator*, when the author

³⁹⁵ See also the prologue to book 5 of the *Q.C.* (673B), in which the author comments that people enjoy watching mimes, impersonations, and scenes from Menander at drinking parties 'because in each person a natural fondness for spectacle (τὸ φύσει φιλοθέαμον) and thirst for knowledge (φιλόσοφον) in the soul seek their own gratification whenever we are relieved of the endless task of taking care of our bodies'.

³⁹⁶ Agasikles, the Spartan king, is φιλήκοος (*Aprophth. Lac.* 1). A character in the *Q.C.*, Alexander, is teased for being an Epicurean, who will not understand the speaker's avoidance of eggs, despite being φιλόλογος (635F). The best part of the soul forges a path 'to its proper meadows and pastures shepherded by literature and learning (ὑπὸ φιλολογίας)' (*Q.C.* 645C).

³⁹⁷ The manuscripts give the hapax φιλοφανής, which was later corrected to φιλομαθής. This latter term, whose meaning must be something like 'fond of bringing to light' or 'fond of revealing', also fits the context.

is describing the way that the flatterer adapts his interests to those of his victim, in this case a φιλόλογος καὶ φιλομαθῆς νέος.³⁹⁸

ἂν δὲ θηρεύῃ φιλόλογον καὶ φιλομαθῆ νέον, αὐθις. ἐν βιβλίοις ἐστὶ καὶ πώγων ποδῆρης καθεῖται καὶ τριβωνοφορία τὸ χρῆμα καὶ ἀδιαφορία, καὶ διὰ στόματος οἷ τε ἀριθμοὶ καὶ τὰ ὀρθογώνια τρίγωνα Πλάτωνος.

But if [the flatterer] is on the track of a scholarly and studious young man, now again he is absorbed in books, his beard grows down to his feet, the scholar's gown is the thing now and a stoic indifference, and endless talk about Plato's numbers and right-angled triangles.

This typical earnest student, who concerns himself with Plato's numbers and right-angled triangles, reads much like the young Plutarch of *De E*, whose preoccupations are the same.³⁹⁹

Most significantly, we may turn to another contemporary conversational setting that bears many literary similarities to *De Pythiae*, the gatherings of the *Quaestiones Convivales*. There, we find φιλόλογος in particular employed to describe members of Plutarch's social circle, especially in relation to the activity in which they are participating: philosophical dialogue. The use of the term is very much in line with a section from *De Recta Ratione* (43D), where Plutarch tells his young addressee that 'to listen good-naturedly when another advances [questions] marks the considerate gentleman and the scholar (φιλόλογον καὶ κοινωνικόν)'.⁴⁰⁰ In a question relating to bulimia in the *Q.C.*, the Plutarchan narrator ponders the nature of the discussion, and the unwillingness of φιλολογοὶ men to simply accept given explanations. Rather, they take any solution as the opportunity for further reflection:

Γενομένης δὲ σιωπῆς, ἐγὼ συννοῶν ὅτι τὰ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων ἐπιχειρήματα τοὺς μὲν ἀργούς καὶ ἀφυεῖς οἷον ἀναπαύει καὶ ἀναπίμπλησι, τοῖς δὲ φιλοτίμοις καὶ φιλολόγοις ἀρχὴν ἐνδίδωσιν οἰκείαν καὶ τόλμαν ἐπὶ τὸ ζητεῖν καὶ ἀνιχνεύειν τὴν ἀλήθειαν [...] (694D)

³⁹⁸ 52C.

³⁹⁹ 387F. While we may see this usage as faintly tinged with humour for those who take themselves too seriously or who, still occupied with the *ongoing* process of learning philosophy, continue to require the kind of support that engaging in dialogue can give, it is by no means negative. The one at fault in this context is very much the flatterer.

⁴⁰⁰ τὸ δ' ἑτέρου προτείνοντος ἀκρᾶσθαι μετ' εὐκολίας φιλόλογον καὶ κοινωνικόν.

There was a silence during which I reflected that to the idle and dull the solutions of their predecessors to such questions provide only a chance to imbibe and be content; to an eager scholar, however, they present an opening and incentive for boldly seeking and tracking down the truth, on his own.

Having reflected upon this, Plutarch brings up an Aristotelian theory. ‘Naturally enough,’ he narrates, ‘when I had said that, the discussion continued, some attacking and others defending Aristotle’s theory’ (694E).⁴⁰¹ The actual practice, in context, of the interlocutors’ conversation reflects the Plutarchan narrator’s musings. That is, rather than accepting Aristotle’s word as gospel, they disagree with part or all of it, building upon it. Thus, we can extrapolate that first, it is good for participants in philosophical dialogue to be φιλόλογος, and second, that the kind of people with whom Plutarch presents himself as associating adhere to this descriptor. Like the questions that the Pythian god propounds, the potential answers given in a philosophical debate will spur the philosophical, φιλόλογος man towards the truth. The importance of the endeavour of ‘tracking down the truth’ has already been seen in the prologue to *De E*. But it also appears elsewhere in Plutarch. For example, similar phrasing appears in the *Amatorius*, where it is revealed that ‘there are dim, faint effluvia of the truth scattered about in Egyptian mythology, but a man needs a keen wit (ἰχνηλάτου δεινοῦ) to track them down’ (762A).⁴⁰² So, too, do Pythian myths, questions, and paraphernalia conceal truths that it is up to the philosopher to discover. Indeed, so important is truth that the dishonest are seen as *enemies* of the Pythian god, according to a comment at the beginning of *Quomodo adulator* (49A-B).⁴⁰³

Elsewhere in the *Q.C.*, these same φιλο- terms relating to intellectual endeavours are equally positive. King Philopappos is complimented for ‘speaking of and listening to antiquarian matters because of his φιλανθρωπία no less than his φιλομάθεια’.⁴⁰⁴ A few lines later, confronted with the idea that an author being quoted, Nearchos, may be wrong, Philopappos points out that it does not matter if the group is, on account of φιλολογία, led down the same path as Demokritos,

⁴⁰¹ ὄπερ οὔν εἰκός, τοῦ λόγου λεχθέντος, ἐπεραίνετο, τῶν μὲν ἐπιφυσόμενων τῷ δόγματι τῶν δ’ ὑπερδικούντων.

⁴⁰² Καίτοι λεπταί τινες ἀπορροαὶ καὶ ἀμυδραὶ τῆς ἀληθείας ἐνεῖσι ταῖς Αἰγυπτίων ἐνδισπαρμέναι μυθολογίαις, ἀλλ’ ἰχνηλάτου δεινοῦ δέονται καὶ μεγάλα μικροῖς ἐλεῖν δυναμένου.

⁴⁰³ εἰ δὲ δὴ θεῖον ἢ ἀλήθεια καὶ “πάντων μὲν ἀγαθῶν θεοῖς πάντων δ’ ἀνθρώπινος” ἀρχὴ κατὰ Πλάτωνα, κινδυνεύει θεοῖς ἐχθρὸς ὁ κόλαξ εἶναι, τῷ δὲ Πυθίῳ διαφερόντως.

⁴⁰⁴ 628B: [...] τῶν παλαιῶν τὰ μὲν λέγων τὰ δ’ ἀκούων διὰ φιλανθρωπίαν οὐχ ἤττον ἢ φιλομάθειαν.

whose extensive investigation of a cucumber's honey-like taste was abruptly put to an end upon learning that it had accidentally been placed in a honey-jar.⁴⁰⁵ Another party of interlocutors in the *Q.C.*, which includes the Epicurean Boethos, who also appears in *De Pythiae*, is described as consisting of φιλόλογοι men. For them, it is natural to pursue discussion, asking questions sparked by an original topic, in this case comedy.⁴⁰⁶ Finally, Plutarch applies both φιλόλογος and φιλήκοος to those who give support to interlocutors, particularly the young and inexperienced, and who always find something to commend, regardless of the speaker's ability (45A). We can see, then, that Plutarch tends to reserve φιλόλογος and its cognates for men of learning; more specifically, men of a philosophical bent from his own circle.⁴⁰⁷ Most significantly, such individuals are capable intellectuals, more than equal to the task of philosophical discussion. From this examination, I think that we should treat all four φιλο- words as generally positive.

Returning to our prologue, Philinos' compliments regarding Diogenianos' prowess as a debater continue the positive appraisal:

οὐ μὴν ταῦτα μάλιστα θαυμάζειν ἄξιον, ἀλλὰ πραότης τε πολλὴν χάριν ἔχουσα, καὶ τὸ μάχιμον καὶ διαπορητικὸν ὑπὸ συνέσεως, οὔτε δύσκυλον οὔτ' ἀντίτυπον πρὸς τὰς ἀποκρίσεις· (395A)

'However, it is not this that most deserves our admiration, but a winning gentleness, and his willingness to argue and to raise questions (διαπορητικός), which comes from his intelligence, and shows no dissatisfaction nor contrariety with the answers'.

As we saw with the listeners in *De E*, Diogenianos is described entirely in terms of his abilities as a listener and speaker. As someone who is διαπορητικός, he raises ἀπορίαί. Here, these abilities are lauded, and the miniature panegyric ends with Basilokles' agreement that he has also heard similar reports of Diogenianos' conduct. It is important to note that Diogenianos' introduction is exceptional for an interlocutor in a Plutarchan dialogue. Plutarchan interlocutors are generally introduced in a totally minimal way, usually by birthplace, philosophical allegiance,

⁴⁰⁵ 628B-C.

⁴⁰⁶ 673C-D.

⁴⁰⁷ See also *Q.C.* 635F.

occupation, family, or relationship to Plutarch (or some other speaker).⁴⁰⁸ Thus, it is clear that readers are expected to take note of this character, introduced almost immediately, in the most glowing terms. Diogenianos' early characterisation as an eager and inquisitive learner prepares readers for his later role as principal questioner of the dialogue, as we shall see below.⁴⁰⁹

While some have used Diogenianos' contributions throughout the dialogue to demonstrate that he is somewhat inept at argumentation, I think that his introduction suggests otherwise. His introduction should be compared with that of Kleombrotos in *De Defectu*, another character much maligned for his allegedly clumsy views, who is nevertheless introduced in similar positive

⁴⁰⁸ Introduction by birthplace: Xenokles 'of Delphi' (Q.C. 2.2), Sosikles 'of Koronea' (Q.C. 2.4), Menekrates 'the Thessalian' (Q.C. 2.5), Chairemonianos 'the Trallian' (Q.C. 2.7), Euthydemos 'of Sunium' (Q.C. 3.10), Hekataeios 'the Abderite' (Q.C. 4.3), Nikeratos 'a Macedonian' (Q.C. 5.4), Nikias 'of Nikopolis' (Q.C. 7.1, also 'a physician'), Eustrophos 'the Athenian' (Q.C. 7.4), Diogenianos 'the Pergamenian' (Q.C. 7.7, 8.1, quite possibly the same Diogenianos as here in *De Pythiae*), Philip 'the Prusian' (Q.C. 7.7, also a Stoic), Tyndares 'the Spartan' (Q.C. 8.1), Aristodemos 'the Cyprian' (8.3), Sulla 'the Carthaginian' (Q.C. 8.7), Loukios 'an Etrurian' (Q.C. 8.7), Protogenes 'of Tarsus' and Zeuxippos 'the Lakedaimonian' (*Amat.* 749B), Dionysios 'of Delphi' (*De Sollertia* 965C). Introduction by philosophical school: Boethos 'the Epicurean' (673C), Themistokles 'the Stoic' (Q.C. 1.9), Xenokles 'who was an Epicurean' (Q.C. 2.2), Lamprias 'who prefers the Lyceum before the Garden' (Q.C. 2.2), Alexander 'the Epicurean' (Q.C. 2.3), Meneplylos 'a Peripatetic philosopher' (Q.C. 9.6). Introduction by occupation: Theon 'the grammarian' (Q.C. 1.9), Markos 'the grammarian' (Q.C. 1.10, 9.5), Erato 'the musician' and Trypho 'the physician' (Q.C. 3.1, 5.8), Apollonides 'the marshal' (Q.C. 3.4), Zopyros 'the physician' (Q.C. 3.6), Moschion 'the physician' (Q.C. 3.10), Philo 'the physician' (Q.C. 4.1, 8.9), Dorotheos 'the rhetorician' (Q.C. 4.2), Kallistratos 'the sophist' (Q.C. 4.4), Strato 'the comedian' (Q.C. 5.1 – additionally and uniquely 'a man of great credit'), Loukanios 'the chief priest' and Praxiteles 'the commentator' (Q.C. 5.3, 8.4), Sophokles 'the poet' (Q.C. 5.4), Onesikrates 'the physician' (Q.C. 5.5), Apollophanes 'the grammarian' (Q.C. 5.10), Kleomenes 'the physician' (Q.C. 6.8), Protogenes 'the grammarian' (Q.C. 7.1, 9.2), Euthydemos 'my fellow priest' (Q.C. 7.2), Kallistratos 'procurator of the Amphictyons' (Q.C. 7.5), Ammonios 'third time captain of the city bands' (Q.C. 8.3) and 'captain of the militia at Athens' (Q.C. 9.1), Sospis director of the Isthmian Games and Protogenes 'the grammarian' (Q.C. 8.4), Hermeas 'the geometrician' (Q.C. 9.2), Zopyrion 'the grammarian' (Q.C. 9.4), Sospis 'the rhetorician' and Hylas 'the grammarian' (Q.C. 9.5). Introduction by family: Daphnaios 'son of Archdamos' and Soklaros 'son of Aristion' (*Amat.* 749B), Nikander 'the son of Euthydamos' (*De Sollertia* 965C). Introduction by relationship to Plutarch: 'my brother Timon' (Q.C. 1.2), 'my relation Krato' and 'my acquaintance Theon' (both Q.C. 1.4), 'my friend Sulla' and 'my relation Firmus' (Q.C. 2.3), 'my relation' Patroklias (Q.C. 2.9), 'our friend Erato' (Q.C. 3.1), 'my son Autoboulos' (Q.C. 4.3), 'my relation' Patrokles (Q.C. 7.2), 'my father-in-law Alexion' (Q.C. 7.3), 'my father' Lamprias (Q.C. 7.5), 'my brother' Lamprias (Q.C. 8.6, 9.15). Anthemion and Peisias in *Amat.* (749C) are ἀνδρες ἐνδοξοί, followers of Bacchon 'the handsome'. A single exceptional character introduced in more than this perfunctory way is Ismenodora, who is 'a woman conspicuous for her wealth and breeding who led, heaven knows, over and above this a life of decorum' (749D). She is, however, only accorded further description because she plays a major role in the plot of the dialogue.

⁴⁰⁹ Indeed, at *De Pythiae* 396E, Diogenianos' characterisation as a good listener is reinforced. There, he is so concerned with listening well that he *forces* himself to listen to the guides, despite not finding their speeches of any import.

terms. It should be noted, too, that these characters' introductions do not set them up as intellectual giants, but only as extremely interested in engaging in philosophy.

When Basilokles asks Philinos about the circumstances of the dialogue to be narrated, the dialogue proper begins. As the E provides the starting point for the discussion in *De E*, so too does the conversation in *De Pythiae* stem from an object in the group's Delphic surroundings. Here, it is the patina of the bronze on the statues of the naval captains, where Diogenianos had begun his tour of the temple site. It was this patina which amazed him (ἐθαύμαζε) (395B), and then prompted him to ask questions regarding the reason (αἰτία) for it (395D). It seems that the attentive reader is expected to recall the exact terminology used in the opening of *De E*, where Ammonios elucidated the ideal philosophical process, which begins from amazement, and requires explanations of causes (αἰτία) (385C). Although Diogenianos' discussion, which is taken up by Theon, who suggests that they investigate it together (ζητῶμεν... κοινῇ) (395E), is not technically part of the framing prologue, it does form the very beginning of the dialogue proper, which Philinos narrates to Basilokles. Thus, we are again presented with a prologue where we are introduced to Delphi as a setting *and* a source of inspiration, an interlocutor characterised by his facility for philosophical discussion, and a staging of the first 'seed' of the philosophical process.

3) De Defectu

The prologue of *De Defectu* begins with the brief iteration of a Delphic myth, wherein 'some eagles or swans', sent from the ends of the earth, meet in the middle, the *omphalos* at Delphi:

Ἄετούς τινὰς ἢ κύκνους, ὧν Τερέντιε Πρίσκει, μυθολογοῦσιν ἀπὸ τῶν ἄκρων τῆς γῆς ἐπὶ τὸ μέσον φερομένουσιν εἰς ταύτῳ συμπεσεῖν Πυθοῖ περὶ τὸν καλούμενον ὀμφαλόν·
(409E)

'The story is told, my dear Terentius Priscus, that certain eagles or swans, flying from the uttermost parts of the earth towards its centre, met in Delphi at the omphalus, as it is called...'

What is interesting here is the way that Delphi again occupies a position of absolute prominence. Stripped back to its barest elements, the focus of the myth becomes the meeting-

place itself, τὸ μέσον.⁴¹⁰ The picture of the vastness of the world, implied by the reference to ‘the ends of the earth’ (τῶν ἄκρων τῆς γῆς) serves to draw the reader’s attention to Delphi’s special position at its centre. The author here uses Delphi’s most ancient name, Pytho, rather than Delphoi, which he uses elsewhere.⁴¹¹ Pytho was an ancient name that arose from the killing of the Python.⁴¹² Since it only appears for the most part in early poetry or when authors are referring to mythical contexts,⁴¹³ its use here is deliberate, and signifies the earlier, mythical iteration of Delphi, adding to the sense of antiquity and unreality created by the myth.

The myth of the birds is followed by the story of Epimenides, concerning a myth being tested:

ὕστερον δὲ χρόνῳ τὸν Φαίστιον Ἐπιμενίδην ἐλέγχοντα τὸν μῦθον ἐπὶ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ
λαβόντα χρησμὸν ἀσαφῆ καὶ ἀμφίβολον εἰπεῖν

οὔτε γὰρ ἦν γαίης μέσος ὀμφαλὸς οὐδὲ θαλάσσης·

⁴¹⁰ The myth is stripped back because it lacks the details found in other versions of the story, for example that it was Zeus who sent the birds (*schol.* Pindar *Pyth.* 4, 6s, *schol.* Soph. *Oed. Rex* 476s, *schol.* Euripides *Orest.* 327s, *schol.* Lucan *Pharsalia* 5 l.71, Claudian 16, 11s, Strabo 9.3.6). The species of the birds differs according to various authors’ accounts, e.g. eagles or crows in Strabo (9.3.6), and eagles in Lucian (*de salt.* 38). The swans make sense because Plutarch elsewhere identifies them as sacred to Apollo (*De Pythiae* 400A); however, he also sees ravens, herons, and hawks as sacred to the god (*De Pythiae* 400A, 405D). By also listing swans, Plutarch may be displaying his learned knowledge of a different, seemingly more obscure tradition. Another detail not given here is that the birds flew equal distances. This is emphasised in other accounts (*schol.* Pindar *Pyth.* 4, 6s, *schol.* Eur. *Orest.* 327, *schol.* Lucan *Pharsalia* 5 l.71, Claudian 16, 13). Finally, some accounts say that the birds came specifically from the east and west (Strabo 9.3.6, *schol.* Lucan *Pharsalia* 5, l.71).

⁴¹¹ For example, at *De E* 385A and *De Defectu* 410A.

⁴¹² Pausanias relates the story of its naming at 10.6.5: χρόνῳ δὲ ὕστερον καὶ Πυθῶ τὴν πόλιν, οὐ Δελφούς μόνον ἐκάλεσαν οἱ περιοικοῦντες, καθὰ καὶ Ὀμήρῳ πεπονημένα ἐν καταλόγῳ Φωκέων ἐστίν. οἱ μὲν δὴ γενεαλογεῖν τὰ πάντα ἐθέλοντες παῖδα εἶναι Δελφοῦ Πύθην καὶ ἀπὸ τούτου βασιλεύσαντος γενέσθαι τῆ πόλει τὸ ὄνομα ἤγηται· λόγος δὲ ὃς ἦκει τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐς τοὺς πολλοὺς, τὸν ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος τοξευθέντα σήπεσθαί φησιν ἐνταῦθα, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ὄνομα τῆ πόλει γενέσθαι Πυθῶ· πύθεσθαι γὰρ δὴ τὰ σηπόμενα οἱ τότε ἔλεγον, καὶ τοῦδε ἔνεκα Ὀμηρος πεποίηκεν ὡς ἡ τῶν Σειρήνων νῆσος ἀνάπλεως ὀστῶν εἶη, ὅτι οἱ τῆς ὥδῆς αὐτῶν ἀκούοντες ἐπύθοντο ἄνθρωποι.

⁴¹³ Although the people who inhabit the land are called Delphians (e.g. Eur. *Andromache* l. 51), Delphi seems to almost always be called Pytho when the context is that of myth or, as in Bacchylides, the desire to evoke myth (e.g. Hesiod, *Theog.* 499, Eur. *Iph. in Tauris* l. 1260 and *Andromache* l.52, Aesch. *Prometheus Bound* l. 658, Apoll. 1.4.1., Ar. *Frogs* l. 659 when Apollo is said to ‘hold Pytho’, Bacchylides 3 l. 62, 5 l. 41, 8 l. 17), or that of very ancient history (e.g. Chilon’s visit to Delphi in Diod. Sic. 9.10.1, Hdt. 1.54). Consistently with this, Delphi is always Pytho in Homer, *Il.* 2.519, 9.405 (again described as being held by Apollo), *Od.* 8.80, 11.581, *Hymns* 3.182, 3.372 (the naming of the site as Pytho, 3.517, 4.178, 24.2). Pausanias uses Pytho in a formal way to refer to victories at the Pythian Games (e.g. ‘X won at Pytho’). In the vast majority of ancient texts where Delphi is referred to as a geographical location, a historical place, and the site of the oracle, it is simply called Δελφοί.

εἰ δέ τις ἔστι, θεοῖς δῆλος θνητοῖσι δ' ἄφαντος.

ἐκεῖνον μὲν οὖν εἰκότως ὁ θεὸς ἠμύνατο μύθου παλαιοῦ καθάπερ ζωγραφήματος ἀφῆ διαπειρώμενον. (409F)

'...and at a later time Epimenides of Phaestus put the story to test by referring it to the god and upon receiving a vague and ambiguous oracle, said 'Now do we know that there is no mid-centre of earth or of ocean; yet if there be, it is known to the gods, but is hidden from mortals.' Now very likely the god repulsed him from his attempt to investigate an ancient myth as though it were a painting to be tested by the touch.'

The Epimenides tale is also presented here as a Delphic myth. Indeed, it forms the second part of the opening sentence, also taking the verb *μυθολογοῦσιν* (409F). It is not one of the usual myths associated with Epimenides, a sage-like figure who was more famous for a decades-long sleep that left him with prophetic powers, and for restoring order to Athens after the murders of the descendants of Megakles, a story Plutarch also knew.⁴¹⁴ The story in *De Defectu* is more obscure, and it is particularly interesting that it is only found in Plutarch. The short story seems to be condensed in order to emphasise a few salient points: a) Epimenides, having heard the myth of the birds, did not believe it; b) he tested it by putting it to the god; c) he received a vague oracle in response; and finally, d) he composed two lines in a pastiche of the god's own hexameter, asserting, because of the unsatisfactory oracle, that either there is no mid-point of the earth, or it is hidden from mortals by the gods (409F)). Plutarch's negative assessment of Epimenides' actions is conveyed not explicitly, but by his interpretation of the god's delivery of an 'unclear and ambiguous oracle' (*χρησμὸν ἀσαφῆ καὶ ἀμφίβολον*) as a means of preventing the brash Epimenides from investigating an ancient myth just as if it were a painting. Significantly, *De Pythiae* ends with Theon bemoaning the kinds of people in the past 'who complained of the obliquity and vagueness of the oracles (*τὴν λοξότητα τῶν χρησμῶν καὶ ἀσάφειαν*)' (409C) and those who now complain of their simplicity, blaming the god instead of their own inability to reason and understand the god's purpose.⁴¹⁵ We see in Epimenides a

⁴¹⁴ *Vit. Sol.* 12.2-3. As Sourvinou-Inwood (1997: 157) notes, 'The connotations of the nexus 'Epimenides' in the ancient perceptions were the following: he came from Crete and was associated with the Cretan Zeus, with cult foundations, initiation, prophecy, purification, and with eschatology of a non-mainstream kind belonging to the same general type as that of Pythagoras, and with writing in prose and poetry comparable to the poems of Musaeus and Orpheus.' The Delphi story does not feature in this 'nexus'.

⁴¹⁵ Ἄλλ' ὥσπερ ἐν τοῖς τότε χρόνοις ἦσαν οἱ τὴν λοξότητα τῶν χρησμῶν καὶ ἀσάφειαν αἰτιώμενοι, καὶ νῦν εἰσὶν οἱ τὸ λίαν ἀπλοῦν συκοφαντοῦντες.

concrete example of this type of behaviour, which the narrator condemns. This is perhaps also a good indicator that *De Defectu* should follow *De Pythiae* if the reader is to benefit from the comparison. Epimenides erred by not realising that myths are simply reflections of or allegorical representations of divine truths. Thus, the Epimenides story is presented as a negative exemplar.

That the portrayal of Epimenides here, repulsed by a god, is deliberate, may be seen in Plutarch's much rosier characterisation of him in the *Life* of Solon. There, he is described as 'a man beloved of the gods (θεοφιλής), and endowed with a mystical and heaven-sent wisdom in religious matters' (12.4),⁴¹⁶ and is 'vastly admired' (μάλιστα θαυμασθείς) by the Athenians, not even asking for reward for his services in purifying the city (12.6). We thus see the same character appearing in a different guise, being used for different ends, in two works. In the *Life*, there is no reason to question Epimenides, who assists Solon, whereas in *De Defectu*, his attitude towards the divine, questioning the deity himself, rather than trying to understand the myth or the god's response through philosophy, serves to arouse the reader's suspicion about such practices. By questioning and condemning Epimenides' enquiry, Plutarch suggests that the god knew precisely what he was doing, and that the myth, so prominent here, contains some truth, even if it is difficult to interpret.

The prologue now moves from the mythical past to the present (καθ' ἡμᾶς), and from the meeting of the two birds to the meeting of two men, Demetrios and Kleombrotos, at Delphi:

ὀλίγον δὲ πρὸ Πυθίων τῶν ἐπὶ Καλλιστράτου καθ' ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τῶν ἐναντίων τῆς οἰκουμένης περάτων ἔτυχον ἄνδρες ἱεροὶ δύο συνδραμόντες εἰς Δελφούς, Δημήτριος μὲν ὁ γραμματικὸς ἐκ Βρεττανίας εἰς Ταρσὸν ἀνακομιζόμενος οἴκαδε, Κλεόμβροτος δ' ὁ Λακεδαιμόνιος, πολλὰ μὲν ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ καὶ περὶ τὴν Τρωγλοδυτικὴν γῆν πεπλανημένος, πόρρω δὲ τῆς Ἐρυθρᾶς θαλάττης ἀναπεπλευκῶς οὐ κατ' ἐμπορίαν, ἀλλ' ἀνὴρ φιλοθεάμων ὦν καὶ φιλομαθῆς οὐσίαν δ' ἔχων ἰκανὴν καὶ τὸ πλεῖον τῶν ἰκανῶν ἔχειν οὐκ ἄξιον πολλοῦ ποιούμενος ἐχρήτο τῇ σχολῇ πρὸς τὰ τοιαῦτα, καὶ συνήγεν ἱστορίαν οἷον ὕλην φιλοσοφίας θεολογίαν ὥσπερ αὐτὸς ἐκάλει τέλος ἐχούσης. (410A-B)

⁴¹⁶ ἐδόκει δὲ τις εἶναι φεοφιλής καὶ σοφὸς περὶ τὰ θεῖα τὴν ἐνθουσιαστικὴν καὶ τελεστικὴν σοφίαν...

‘Yet a short time before the Pythian games, which were held when Callistratus was in office in our own day, it happened that two revered men coming from opposite ends of the inhabited earth met together at Delphi, Demetrius the grammarian journeying homeward from Britain to Tarsus, and Cleombrotus of Sparta, who had made many excursions in Egypt and about the land of the Cave-dwellers, and had sailed beyond the Persian Gulf; his journeyings were not for business, but he was fond of seeing things and of acquiring knowledge; he had wealth enough, and felt that it was not of any great moment to have more than enough, and so he employed his leisure for such purposes; he was getting together a history to serve as a basis for a philosophy that had as its end and aim theology, as he himself named it.’

The move from myth to reality is indicated, too, by the change of name from ‘Pytho’ a few lines earlier to ‘Delphi’.⁴¹⁷ Again, the fact that these two men alone, but Kleombrotos in particular, are introduced at the beginning of the work, is significant. With a δέ following on from the previous sentence’s μέν, the journeys of Kleombrotos and Demetrius are contrasted, in their purpose, with the much less favoured visit of Epimenides. In this comparison, Epimenides, elsewhere θεοφιλής, and a holy man *par excellence* throughout Greek literature, is opposed to Kleombrotos and Demetrius, described as ἄνδρες ἱεροί. The phrase ἀνὴρ ἱερός (and cognates like θεῖος) is usually positive, and tends to be reserved in the imperial period for famous and honoured men, particularly philosophers, like Plato and Homer.⁴¹⁸ Plutarch also uses similar

⁴¹⁷ The naming of the site as Pytho or Delphi according to past myth or present reality is not brought out in the Loeb translation, but is translated first as ‘Pito’ and then as ‘Delfi’ in the Italian translations (Cavalli 1983: 59, Rescigno 1995: 105). There are similar examples in Plutarch’s near contemporary, Pausanias, who in almost the same breath refers to both ‘Delphi’, the present-day location, and ‘Pytho’, this latter name enshrined in oracles the author quotes in relation to some matter of myth or myth-history. For example, at 2.33.2: Καλαύρειαν δὲ Ἀπόλλωνος ἱερὰν τὸ ἀρχαῖον εἶναι λέγουσιν, ὅτε περ ἦσαν καὶ οἱ Δελφοὶ Ποσειδῶνος· λέγεται δὲ καὶ τοῦτο, ἀντιδοῦναι τὰ χωρία σφᾶς ἀλλήλοις. φασὶ δὲ ἔτι καὶ λόγιον μνημονεύουσιν· ἴσον τοι Δῆλόν τε Καλαύρειάν τε νέμεσθαι Πυθῶ τ’ ἡγαθήν καὶ Ταίναρον ἠνεμόεσαν.” See also 5.3.1: καὶ τοὺς μὲν ἐτιμωρήσατο αὐτῶν ὁ Ἡρακλῆς, τῆς δὲ ἐπὶ τοὺς Πισαίους στρατείας αὐτὸν χρησμὸς ἐπέσχευ ἐκ Δελφῶν ἔχων οὕτω: “πατρὶ μέλει Πίσης, Πυθοῦς δὲ μοι ἐν γυάλοισι.”

⁴¹⁸ Plato as a ‘holy’ or ‘divine’ man: Plut. *Vit. Per.* 8.1, *De Capienda* 90C, D.L. 3.1.43, Athenaeus 3.57, 6.23, 10.55, Lucian, *Amores* 24, 31, *Philops.* 24, *long.* 21, *fugit.* 18, *vit. auct.* 15, Aelian, *N.A.* 5.13. Homer: Plut. *Cons. ad Ap.* 104D, Athenaeus 2.13, 5.1, 13.7 (in the context of a quote by Hermesianax), 14.68, 15.23, Dio Chrys. 11.4, Aelian, *N.A.* 7.29. Other famous men called ‘holy’ include Simonides (Plat. *Rep.* 331e), Epicurus (Lucian, *Alex.* 61), Herakleitos (Athenaeus 13.91), Hippokrates (Galen, *Nat. Fac.* 3.13), Hesiod (Plut. *De Defectu* 431E), Timoleon (*Vit. Tim.* 16.6), Kimon (Plut. 10.4, quoting Cratinus’ *Archilochi*), and Lykourgos (*De Esu Carnium* 997C). ἱερός is used, too, in a more ironic sense, of wandering sages, like the Egyptian holy man who can transform household objects into slaves in Lucian, *Philops.* 34, and the kinds of sophists Dio Chrysostom implicitly denounces in *Oration* 33.4, who ‘claim to know all things’ (οἱ πάντα

terminology in the context of another dialogue, *De genio Socratis*, set against the background of the Theban conspiracy. There, Simmias invites a Pythagorean stranger to join in the inquiry: 'For it is one most fitting and appropriate to inspired men' (οἰκεία γὰρ πάνυ καὶ προσήκουσα θείοις ἀνδράσι) (592F). The company of 'inspired men' includes such illustrious figures as Epameinondas and Archias, indicating that it is exceptional to be considered in such a way.

In addition to being ἄνδρες ἱεροί, Demetrios and Kleombrotos are initially characterised in terms of their long, international journeys, which correspond to those of the birds. Although Demetrios is briefly mentioned in conjunction with him, Kleombrotos is the only interlocutor in the dialogue to be afforded so lengthy an introduction. The narrator extends upon the nature of his journeys, which were 'not for business, but he was fond of seeing things (φιλοθεάμων) and of acquiring knowledge (φιλομαθής)'. The exact same pairing of φιλο- words appears in the opening of the *Life of Perikles* (1.2). In the context of encouraging readers to focus their attention on virtuous deeds, he notes that 'since our souls are by nature possessed of great fondness for learning and fondness for seeing, it is surely reasonable to chide those who abuse this fondness on objects all unworthy either of their eyes or ears, to the neglect of those which are good and serviceable'.⁴¹⁹ We can compare the use of these adjectives, too, to the similarly positive introduction of Diogenianos in *De Pythiae*, who is fond of seeing and hearing only worthwhile things that are enriching to the soul.

Further contributing to this positive assessment of Kleombrotos is the additional piece of information that the narrator provides, that Kleombrotos was travelling not for business, but precisely for philosophical reasons. His concern is not for acquiring more wealth, but to understand philosophy, as the brief description of the work he is undertaking suggests. This is a standard virtue, praised elsewhere in Plutarch. In *De Cupiditate* (527D-528B), for example, the acquisition or misuse of wealth is contrasted negatively with the acquisition of knowledge.

Kleombrotos had, the narrator continues, recently been at the oracle of Ammon (410B). This indicates, too, that he is no casual traveller, but is adhering to an itinerary that includes other

εἰδέναι φασι), and whose speeches are a kind of θεωρία or πομπή. Here, however, I would caution that in Lucian the term only becomes ironic retrospectively or because of the bizarre fictional context in which it appears. The implication seems to be that one should be careful of such mysterious 'holy men' or sages, who, unlike Dio Chrysostom himself, may turn out to be frauds.

⁴¹⁹ ἄρ' οὖν, ἐπεὶ φιλομαθὲς τι κέκτηται καὶ φιλοθέαμον ἡμῶν ἢ ψυχὴ φύσει, λόγον ἔχει ψέγειν τοὺς καταχρωμένους τούτῳ πρὸς τὰ μηδεμιᾶς ἄξια σπουδῆς ἀκούσματα καὶ θεάματα, τῶν δὲ καλῶν καὶ ὠφελίμων παραμελοῦντας;

famous religious sites. At the shrine of Ammon, he was *not* amazed by much of what he saw (μὴ πάνυ θαυμακῶς), but his interest was piqued by an oil-lamp, which he was told consumed less oil with each successive year. The explanation that he gives the company of interlocutors is that given to him by the priests of Ammon, and it is this which, attracting the amazement of those around him (θαυμασάντων δὲ τῶν παρόντων), sparks the dialogue proper of *De Defectu* (410C). We noted in the prologues of *De E* and *De Pythiae* that philosophical discussion is prompted by amazement. Here, it is triggered by the interlocutors' astonishment not at an object per se, but by their companion's explanation of it. The principle, however, is the same.

Previously, scholars have used comments made throughout the dialogue by (and about) Kleombrotos, including his interpretation of the oil lamp, to 'devalue' his contributions.⁴²⁰ In line with this, they interpret his introduction here in the prologue as 'délibérément satirique'.⁴²¹ I suggest, however, that the phrase ἄνδρες ἱεροί, the positive contrast of Demetrios and Kleombrotos with Epimenides, and the other complimentary philosophically-loaded descriptors that closely follow, are hints to the reader that both characters, but Kleombrotos in particular, should be taken seriously.⁴²² This is not to say that either character is, as Brenk vehemently denies, 'philosophically gifted'.⁴²³ Rather, Kleombrotos is described with adjectives and an anecdote that illustrate his active *interest* in philosophy. Any attempt to describe his description here as ironic can only be a retrospective reading. Furthermore, the emphasis here is not that he knows everything, but that he has the correct investigative spirit to participate in philosophical dialogue. Evidence of this can be found, as we shall see, in his later contributions, which also indicate his curiosity, and frequently transform the direction of the discussion.⁴²⁴ In addition, while his conclusion may be faulty, his method of 'drawing great conclusions from

⁴²⁰ 1992: 216. For example, Flacelière (1947: 22-26, 1974: 87-7), Brenk (1973: 2, 1977: 89, 97, 115, and 1987: 292), Eisele (1904: 40-1), Russell (1973: 75), and Cartledge-Spawforth (1989: 178). The question of whether or not to take Kleombrotos seriously, Babut argues, has ramifications for the interpretation of the whole dialogue, since the value of his contributions depends on the narrator's portrayal of him as a character. Since this passage is the reader's first introduction to Kleombrotos, its interpretation is important.

⁴²¹ Babut (1994: 535).

⁴²² This supports the argument of Babut (1994), and R.M. Jones (1916: 37-8), who nevertheless do not go into detail about the terms with which the characters are introduced. Babut (p. 537) mentions this sentence, but only in passing. See also Flacelière (1947: 25 n.2).

⁴²³ 1977: 111.

⁴²⁴ For example, his recount of his visit to the sage at the Red Sea leads to the discussion on the potential number of worlds that may exist (421A-422A).

small data' (ἀπὸ μικρῶν πραγμάτων οὔτω μεγάλα θηρᾶν, 410C), which is mocked by Demetrios, is elsewhere praised by Plutarch as a necessary skill of a philosopher.⁴²⁵ Again, while Kleombrotos may not be a master philosopher, he has certainly exercised his mind by drawing a conclusion from the evidence with which he was presented.

In the prologue of *De Defectu*, then, we again see the same features that characterised the prologues of *De E* and *De Pythiae*: an emphasis on the particularity of Delphi and its introduction as the dialogue's setting; a character praised for his intellectual attributes; and a burgeoning philosophical discussion, arising from amazement.

The Prologues as Reinforcements of the Same Key Ideas

Synthesising our evidence, we have in each work a prologue that is not only Platonic but also distinctly 'Plutarchan' and 'Pythian'. Each makes clear the Delphic setting; puts forth a question related to the realm of a temple (whether the Delphic surroundings or, in the case of *De Defectu*, the temple of Ammon); furnishes one or more 'listener' characters with whom the reader can ally herself; and illustrates the commencement of the philosophical process (perception leading to amazement leading to inquiry leading to philosophy). In other words, we can distinguish several components common to each prologue.

1. An emphasis on Delphi as both setting and inspiration. The notion that it is in some way an exceptional place.
2. One or more characters who are introduced entirely in relation to their ability or desire to listen and practise philosophy.
3. A clear valuing of discussion, philosophy, and a critical spirit.
4. Some kind of spur towards philosophy. This can relate to a material object that is in the surroundings or one that is brought up by a character (Kleombrotos' lamp).

In each successive dialogue, the discussion is prompted by some item in a sacred setting – the E, the statues of the nauarchs in *De Pythiae*, and the oil lamp in the temple of Ammon in *De Defectu*. But the initial questions they provoke – regarding their state or condition, their

⁴²⁵ *Amatorius* 762A: καίτοι λεπταί τινες ἀπορροαί καὶ ἀμυδραὶ τῆς ἀληθείας ἔνεισι ταῖς Αἰγυπτίων ἐνδιεσπαρμέναι μυθολογίαις, ἀλλ' ἰχνηλάτου δεινοῦ δέονται καὶ μεγάλα μικροῖς ἐλεῖν δυναμένου.

meaning, or the reasons for their dedication – are superficial, in the sense that they act as a gateway, grounded in the ‘real’ world, to more esoteric questions.

The fact that each prologue reinforces the interests of the other two, and that the links between them extend to the vocabulary used, suggests a connection between all three. Although none of the three prologues includes anything that might be termed a ‘programmatically’ statement, all three emphasise their grounding in the ‘real’ world of the temple, their concern with higher things (philosophy and understanding the divine), and the necessity – in solving problems – for appropriate, discerning company: the kinds of people who will notice and wonder at their surroundings, and spark discussion with their questions. Each prologue raises within its first few lines the issue of problem-solving and/or engaging in discussion for this purpose, establishing the expectation in readers that the works deal precisely with these matters.

In the past, scholars have conjectured that *De E* should be regarded as the first of the series simply because of its reference to λόγοι, which implies that it is only one of many. If we take into account the elaborate, explanatory form of the prologue, its length (in comparison to the prologues of *De Pythiae* and *De Defectu*), its content (which invites the reader to think about philosophy and dialogue), and its relevance not only to the specific dialogue it precedes, but to the other two, where philosophising and asking questions about the divine remain important, we may add credence to the theory that it comes first. While, as we have seen, the prologue places clear emphasis on the traditional Platonic and Aristotelian vocabulary of problem-solving, and on the fact that this text is both itself a λόγος and concerned with λόγοι,⁴²⁶ it concentrates not on extolling philosophy, or focusing on the solutions that it can provide, but rather on its problems: the questions and enigmas which themselves spark the practice of philosophy.⁴²⁷ The ideas for conducting philosophy that are elaborated in this prologue, which, as we saw, echo those of the *Theaetetus*, form the seeds of the broader philosophical process. Because of this wider importance, they can be borne in mind not only throughout this dialogue, but also while

⁴²⁶ The term appears in this prologue alone five times in its various forms. It also features prominently in the prologue to *De Pythiae* (sowing λόγους, and the questions of what the λόγοι and who the speakers (οἱ λέγοντες) were at 394E, the description of Diogenianos as φιλόλογος at 394F, many people approving of Diogenianos’ λόγος, and what the pretext for the λόγοι was at 395A).

⁴²⁷ Bonazzi (2008: 207, referencing Opsomer 1998: 78) draws attention to the importance of ζήτησις in this section of *De E*, noting that Plutarch emphasises the idea of philosophy being concerned more with seeking answers and asking questions than necessarily finding or attaining a definite answer.

reading *De Pythiae* and *De Defectu*, since they provide readers with the basic ‘guidelines’ for approaching philosophical dialogue.

The Speeches: Philosophy in action

1) The starting point of philosophy: amazement to *aporia*

In each dialogue, we see the strictures of the prologue of *De E* regarding the practice of philosophy – the transformation from amazement to perplexity to inquiry – put into practice. I shall first explore how this functions in *De Pythiae*, the dialogue in which it is most obvious, where a succession of Delphic monuments provokes the interlocutors’ amazement. After this in-depth focus on *De Pythiae*, I shall explore how the philosophical process that forms the beginning of *De E* is also evident in *De E* itself and *De Defectu*.

At each stop on the Delphic tour, Diogenianos’ famed abilities of seeing, questioning, and comprehending, already touted in the work’s prologue, come into play, alongside his capacity for intelligent argument. As readers, we are invited to follow him, in his role as questioner, in his particularly well considered form of sightseeing. At the very beginning of the dialogue, 395A-B, we noted that Diogenianos is amazed (ἐθαύμαζε) by the surface of the statues of Lysander and his admirals, which have been affected by inadvertently attractive discoloration.

τὸν δὲ ξένον ἢ μὲν ἰδέα καὶ τὸ τεχνικὸν τῶν ἀνδριάντων μετρίως προσήγετο, πολλῶν καὶ καλῶν ἔργων ὡς ἔοικε θεατὴν γεγεννημένον· ἐθαύμαζε δὲ τοῦ χαλκοῦ τὸ ἀνθηρὸν...

The appearance and technique of the statues had only a moderate attraction for the foreign visitor, who, apparently, was a connoisseur in works of art. He did, however, admire the patina of the bronze...

Diogenianos’ admiration ignites the philosophical process. It prompts him first to speculate about the colour of the bronze, before framing his amazement as a question, and asking Theon about its possible cause (αἰτία) (395D). Thus, Diogenianos, the lover of seeing, proves that he is also a lover of learning by translating his astonishment and the resulting perplexity (explicitly characterised as an ἀπορία by Theon at 395F) into an inquiry into causation of the type enumerated by Ammonios at *De E* 385C. From the outset, then, we see Diogenianos participating in a kind of philosophical protocol for sightseeing – not simply seeing, but expressing interest in his surrounds and what they might signify. The author clearly lays out the

bridge between the visible, tangible prompt provided by Delphi, and Diogenianos' observation, wonderment, and questioning of it.

Immediately following the statue episode, Diogenianos encounters another source of amazement. The recitation of an oracle by a guide prompts him to recall that he has often been amazed (θαυμάσαι) by the 'commonness' and 'cheapness' of oracles (396C).⁴²⁸ Although he and the others ruminate over potential explanations for the poor wording of the oracles, Diogenianos becomes impatient, and urges his companions to take the matter seriously.

καὶ ὁ Διογενιανὸς 'μὴ παῖζ' εἶπεν ὧς πρὸς θεῶν, ἀλλὰ διάλυσον ἡμῖν ταύτην τὴν ἀπορίαν κοινὴν οὖσαν. οὐδεὶς γὰρ ἔστιν ἡμῶν, ὃς οὐκ αἰτίαν ἐπιζητεῖ καὶ λόγον, πῶς πέπαυται τὸ μαντεῖον ἔπεσι καὶ μέτροις χρώμενον." (397D)

And Diogenianos said, 'Don't joke, by the gods, but solve this difficulty that we share. For there is not one of us who does not seek for a cause and reason why the oracle has ceased using verses and metres'.

Again employing the vocabulary of philosophy, Diogenianos calls the problem, which had first amazed him, an ἀπορία. Each of the other interlocutors, he says, also seeks a cause and reason for the dilemma. The verb ἐπιζητεῖ clearly recalls ζητεῖν, which for Ammonios functions as the beginning of philosophy (385C). This part of Ammonios' speech is evoked, too, by Diogenianos' focus on finding an αἰτίαν and λόγον. According to Ammonios, any question that concerns the god 'should call for some account of the wherefore (λόγον τινὰ διὰ τί) and an explanation of its cause (διδασκαλίαν τῆς αἰτίας)' (385C), so Diogenianos' concerns are precisely those of the philosopher. At this point, Theon advises Diogenianos to let the guides speak first, after which he shall have the opportunity to raise further questions (διαπορήσεις) (397E). This use of the verb διαπορεῖν echoes Philinos' earlier characterisation of Diogenianos as διαπορήτικος, stressing again the importance of this quality in a philosopher. But Theon's interruption, too, suggests the equal importance attached to listening to others.

The guides relate the story of a bronze pillar of Hiero, which had fallen of its own accord the day that Hiero died. Theon's suggestion to listen proves worthwhile, as the story attracts Diogenianos' amazement (ἐθαύμασε) (397E). Although the question of divine influence on

⁴²⁸ χρησμοῦ δέ τινος ἐμμέτρου λεχθέντος... πολλάκις ἔφη θαυμάσαι τῶν ἐπῶν ὁ Διογενιανός, ἐν οἷς οἱ χρησμοὶ λέγονται, τὴν φαυλότητα καὶ τὴν εὐτέλειαν.

inanimate objects is not explicitly called an ἀπορία, it does provoke discussion, with multiple interlocutors offering different interpretations. Again, rather than explicitly labelling it, Plutarch subtly but clearly illustrates the process of using one's surroundings to fuel philosophical discussion.

After a stop at the rock on which it is said that the first Sibyl sat, which prompts Sarapion to recite the words in which the Sibyl hymned herself (398C), the group halts at the treasury of the Corinthians and observes the bronze palm there. The frogs and water-serpents sculpted around its base 'caused much wonder to Diogenianos (θαῦμα τῷ Διογενιανῷ παρεῖχον), and naturally to ourselves as well' (399F).⁴²⁹ Here again, the act of looking (θεωμένοις) prompts wonder (θαῦμα), and wonder provokes questions and discussion on metaphors and allusions, the difference between actual objects and representations of them, concealment and revelation, perceptions of the gods, and their connection with natural phenomena.

The final instance of this pattern in *De Pythiae* occurs when the company settles down, at Diogenianos' suggestion, on the temple steps to attempt to solve the problem of the Pythia's prophesying in prose once and for all. As with the previous sites at which the group stopped, this place has the potential to inspire. Boethos explicitly suggests that the place itself will assist Diogenianos in his ἀπορία: ὥστ' εὐθύς εἰπεῖν τὸν Βόηθον, ὅτι καὶ ὁ τόπος τῆς ἀπορίας συνεπιλαμβάνεται τῷ ξένῳ (402C). Although it has not been stated outright in the dialogue until this point, it is clear that the buildings, monuments, and pervasively inquisitive atmosphere of Delphi, with its innate *ethos* of curiosity, questioning, and truth, have been assisting and guiding the philosophers in their progress all along.

The ability of place to assist in recollection or inspiration is also found in the prologue of *De E* (385A-B), which, as we noted before, appears to be prescriptive for the other two works, too:

ὥστε καθίσας παρὰ τὸν νεῶν τὰ μὲν αὐτὸς ἠρξάμην ζητεῖν, τὰ δ' ἐκείνους ἐρωτᾶν, ὑπὸ τοῦ τόπου καὶ τῶν λόγων αὐτῶν ἀναμνήσθην ἃ πάλαι ποτὲ καθ' ὄν καιρὸν ἐπεδήμει Νέρων ἠκούσαμεν Ἀμμωνίου καὶ τινῶν ἄλλων διεξιλοντων, ἐνταῦθα τῆς αὐτῆς ἀπορίας ὁμοίως ἐμπεσοῦσης.

⁴²⁹ ἐν δὲ τῷ Κορινθίων οἴκῳ τὸν φοῖνικα θεωμένοις τὸν χαλκοῦν, ὅσπερ ἔτι λοιπός ἐστι τῶν ἀναθημάτων, οἱ περὶ τὴν ῥίζαν ἐντετορευμένοι βάρτραχοι καὶ ὕδροι θαῦμα τῷ Διογενιανῷ παρεῖχον, ἀμέλει δὲ καὶ ἡμῖν.

So that, having sat them down near the temple, I myself began to inquire, and to ask them questions, [and] I remembered, in consequence of the place and the speeches themselves the things that I had heard in the past at the time when Nero was visiting, when Ammonios and the others were discoursing, the same dilemma having fallen in a similar way there.

Thus, in *De E*, as in *De Pythiae*, participants draw inspiration from the site that they are visiting, with objects in the surroundings triggering thoughts and memories. *De Pythiae* simply offers by far the most intensive application of this process. The same basic pattern, which conforms exactly to that outlined by Ammonios at the beginning of *De E*, appears multiple times. The group comes across and looks upon an object or monument, or hears the speech of a guide. Each scenario provokes the initial amazement or admiration (θαῦμα), either good or bad, of Diogenianos, the eager listener character who acts as a substitute for the reader. This admiration leads to the confession, either implicit or explicit, of a state of ἀπορία, which initiates further philosophical inquiry, usually regarding the cause (αἰτία) or reason (λόγος) for the object under discussion. Although not every feature of Ammonios' ideal arrangement of being amazed, reaching a state of perplexity, and inquiring, is found in each instance, we can see that the fundamental pattern is important by consistency with which it appears throughout the dialogue, and by the repeated use of cognates of θαῦμα, ἀπορία, αἰτία, and ζητεῖν. Thus, the reader of *De Pythiae* is confronted with a kind of guidebook on how to initiate philosophical discussion.

While the other dialogues are not so firmly entrenched in the physical space of Delphi, they do also reinforce *De Pythiae's* concern for this philosophical process. For example, the problems that arise in both *De E* and *De Defectu* are also consistently referred to as ἀπορία.⁴³⁰ Characters recognise the need, identified by Ammonios at the beginning of *De E*, to 'make inquiries', 'raise questions', and 'investigate' the cause behind problems like the obsolescence of Greek oracles.⁴³¹

⁴³⁰ *De E* 387F, *De Defectu* 415A, 430B, and especially 428B and 435A.

⁴³¹ For instances of terminology relating to the interlocutors' problem-solving, see *De E* 385B (ἡρξάμην ζητεῖν, ἐνταῦθα τῆς αὐτῆς ἀπορίας ὁμοίως ἐμπεσοῦσης), 385D (ὅσας ζητήσεις κεκίνηκε φιλοσόφους, τὸ νῦν ζητούμενον), 387F (λύειν τὴν ἀπορίαν), 387A (ἐπεὶ τοίνυν φιλοσοφία μὲν ἐστὶ περὶ ἀληθείαν, ἀληθείας δὲ φῶς ἀπόδειξις, ἀποδείξεως δ' ἀρχὴ τὸ συνημμένον...), 387B (ὁ τὰς αἰτίας εἰς ταῦτ' οὐκ ἐπιτελεῖται τε πρὸς ἄλληλα καὶ συμπλέκειν φυσικῶς ἐπιστάμενος οἶδε καὶ προλέγειν 'τά τ' ἐόντα τὰ ἐσόμενα πρὸ τ' ἐόντα'); *De Pythiae* 395D (τὶν' οὖν αἰτίαν' ἔφη ὁ Διογενιανός), 395E (ἐπιθυμεῖς μαθεῖν; and also ὦ παῖ:

The idea that Delphi itself could raise problems relating to the god, which we have noted in both *De E* and *De Pythiae*, also occurs in *De Defectu*, where Demetrios proposes to the friends that he and the others encounter in the Knidian Clubhouse ‘a subject which has naturally occurred to us, one which is related to the place and concerns all of us on account of the god’ (412F).⁴³² Planetiades, although mocking the enterprise, recognises that it requires investigation (ζητήσεως δεόμενον), and calls it ‘amazing’ (θαυμαστόν) that divine providence seems to have abandoned the oracles (413A). Lamprias, trying to coax Planetiades towards reason, invites him

ζητῶμεν οὖν κοινῇ καὶ πρότερον, εἰ βούλει, δι’ ἣν αἰτίαν μάλιστα τῶν ὑγρῶν ἀναπίμπλησιν ἰοῦ τοῦλαιον; and also ἄλλο δ’ αὐτῷ μοι δοκεῖ τούτου τὸ αἴτιον ὑπάρχειν), 395F (ἂν οὖν καὶ αὐτοὶ τι τοιοῦτον ὑποθέσθαι δυναθῶμεν, οὐ παντάπασιν ἀπορήσομεν ἐπωδῆς καὶ παραμυθίας πρὸς τὴν ἀπορίαν; and also σκόπει δ’ εἰ βούλει καὶ τὴν ὑπ’ Ἀριστοτέλους αἰτίαν λεγομένην), 397D (ἀλλὰ διάλυσον ἡμῖν ταύτην τὴν ἀπορίαν κοινὴν οὔσαν. οὐδεὶς γὰρ ἔστιν Ἑλλήνων, ὃς οὐκ αἰτίαν ἐπιζητεῖ καὶ λόγον, πῶς πέπαυται τὸ μαντεῖον ἔπει καὶ λόγοις χρώμενον.), 397E (εἶτα περὶ ὧν βούλει καθ’ ἡσυχίαν διαπορήσεις), 400D (ὁ Σαραπίων ἤρετο τί δὴ τὸν οἶκον οὐ Κυψέλου τοῦ ἀναθέντος ἀλλὰ Κορινθίων ὀνομάζουσιν), 400E (ἀπορία δ’ αἰτίας ἐμοὶ γοῦν δοκεῖ σιωπῶντων ἐκείνων), 402B (ἐμοὶ δ’ ἀναγκαῖόν ἐστι τὴν πρώτην ὑπόσχεσιν ἀπαιτῆσαι περὶ τῆς αἰτίας; and also ὥστ’, εἰ δοκεῖ, τὰ λειπόμενα τῆς θεᾶς ὑπερθέμενοι περὶ τούτων ἀκούσωμεν ἐνταῦθα καθίσαντες), 402C (...ὅτι καὶ ὁ τόπος τῆς ἀπορίας συνεπιλαμβάνεται τῷ ξένῳ), 402E (ἀλλὰ τῶν ὑπεναντιοῦσθαι δοκούτων λύσεις ἐπιζητεῖν τὴν δ’ εὐσεβῆ καὶ πάτριον μὴ προῖεσθαι πίστιν.), 403A (καθ’ αὐτὸν ἀπορεῖν ὁμολογεῖ, καὶ θαυμάζειν ὅτι... οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐστὶ δεινὸν οὐδ’ ἄτοπον αἰτίας ζητεῖν τῶν τοιούτων μεταβολῶν ἀναιρεῖν δὲ τὰς τέχνας καὶ τὰς δυνάμεις, ἂν τι κινήθῃ καὶ παραλλάξῃ τῶν κατὰ ταύτας, οὐ δίκαιον.), 404B (ἀλλ’ αὐθις ἄξιον μὲν ἐστὶ διὰ μακροτέρων εἰπεῖν τι καὶ πυθέσθαι περὶ τούτων, τὰ δὲ νῦν ἐν βραχεῖ μαθόντες διαμνημονεύωμεν), 406B (οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τῆς προνοίας σκοποῦντες, ὁψόμεθα πρὸς τὸ βέλτιον γεγενημένην τὴν μεταβολήν.), 406E (φιλοσοφία δὲ τὸ σαφές καὶ διδασκαλικὸν ἀσπασαμένη μᾶλλον ἢ τὸ ἐκπληττον, διὰ λόγων ἐποιεῖτο τὴν ζήτησιν), 408D (ἀπολογούμεθα καὶ πλάσσομεν αἰτίας καὶ λόγους ὑπὲρ ὧν οὐτ’ ἴσμεν), 408E-F (ἀλλ’ ἐὰν σκοπῆς τί γέγραπται καὶ λέλεκται περὶ αὐτῶν τοῖς ὅπως ἕκαστον ἔχει βουλομένοις καταμαθεῖν, οὐ ῥαδίως τούτων λόγους ἐτέρους εὐρήσεις μακροτέρους.), 409D (ἐπιποθοῦσι κἂν τὴν αἰτίαν μὴ ἰκανῶς πύθωνται τῆς μεταβολῆς, ἀπίασι τοῦ θεοῦ καταγνόντες); *De Defectu* 411E (ὁ Δημήτριος ‘οὐδέν’ ἔφη ‘δεῖ περὶ τῶν ἐπεὶ πυνθάνεσθαι καὶ διαπορεῖν τὴν ἐνταῦθα τῶν χρηστηρίων ἀμαύρωσιν, μᾶλλον δὲ πλὴν ἐνὸς ἢ δυεῖν ἀπάντων ἔκλειψιν ὀρώντας: ἀλλ’ ἐκεῖνο σκοπεῖν, δι’ ἣν αἰτίαν οὕτως ἐξησθένηκε.), 412D (γεγόνασι δὲ καὶ νεώτεροι τούτων ἐπιφάνειαι περὶ τὰ μαντεῖα ταῦτα, νῦν δ’ ἐκλέλοιπεν ὥστε τὴν αἰτίαν ἄξιον εἶναι παρὰ τῷ Πυθίῳ διαπορῆσαι τῆς μεταβολῆς), 412E-F (τὰ δ’ ἄλλ’ ἔξεστι τὰς ὀφρῦς κατὰ χώραν ἔχοντας φιλοσοφεῖν καὶ ζητεῖν, ἀτρέμα μὴ δεινὸν βλέποντας μηδὲ χαλεπαίνοντας τοῖς παροῦσιν), 413A (δύσκριτον πρᾶγμα καὶ ζητήσεως δεόμενον πολλῆς ἠκετε κομίζοντες ἡμῖν; and also τούναντίον δ’ ὑμῖν ἐγὼ προβάλλω διαπορῆσαι, πῶς οὐχὶ καὶ τότε ἀπείρηκεν), 413D (ἐτέραν τινὰ μεθ’ ἡμῶν αἰτίαν ζητεῖ τῆς λεγομένης ἐκλείψεως τῶν χρηστηρίων), 415A (ἐμοὶ δὲ δοκοῦσι πλείονας λύσαι καὶ μείζονας ἀπορίας οἱ τὸ τῶν δαιμόνων γένος ἐν μέσῳ θέντες θεῶν καὶ ἀνθρώπων), 418A (θαυμάσαντος δὲ τοῦ Φιλίππου (παρῆν γὰρ ὁ συγγραφεύς) καὶ πυθομένου, τίσιν ἀντιμαρτυρεῖν θεοῖς οἶεται τοὺς ἀγωνιζομένους’), 421F (τοῦ δ’ Ἡρακλέωνος πυθομένου πῆ ταῦτα προσήκει Πλάτωνι καὶ πῶς ἐκεῖνος τὸ ἐνδόσιμον τῷ λόγῳ τούτῳ παρέσχε), 424C (‘σκόπει δ’ οὕτως’ ἔφην ‘ὦ φίλε Δημήτριε.’), 426F (ἡδὶον ἂν μοι δοκῶ μαθεῖν ἢ τῆς ἐνταῦθα τοῦ Ε καθιερώσεως τὴν διάνοιαν), 427C (ἡμῖν δὲ βραχέως ἀρκέσει μαθεῖν), 428E-F (ἐκεῖνο δ’ ἤδη σκοπεῖτε κοινῇ προσέχοντες), 430B (εἴπερ οὖν δεῖ πρὸς τὴν ἐκείνου διάνοιαν ἐπάγειν τὸ εἶκος, σκοπῶμεν ὅτι ταῖς τῶν σωμάτων καὶ σχημάτων ἐκείνων διαφοραῖς ἀνάγκη καὶ κινήσεων εὐθύς ἔπρασθαι διαφορὰς), 431A (καὶ σχολὴν ἄγοντας ἀκροατὰς ἔχεις καὶ προθύμους τὰ μὲν ζητεῖν τὰ δὲ μανθάνειν), 431B (ἕτερον λόγον ἐγείρει τὸν περὶ τῆς αἰτίας μείζονα καὶ δυνάμεως).

⁴³² ...λόγον, ὃς δὴ προσπέπτωκεν ἡμῖν οἰκεῖος ὧν τοῦ τόπου καὶ διὰ τὸν θεὸν ἅπασι προσήκων...

to 'join us in seeking some other reason' (ἐτέραν τινὰ μεθ' ἡμῶν αἰτίαν ζητεῖ) for the alleged obsolescence of the oracles (413D). Kleombrotos' suggestion that certain 'hallowed rites' (τίσιον... ὁσίους) of Delphi are represented in competitions in the theatre provokes the amazement and inquiry (θαυμάσαντος... καὶ πυθομένου) of Philip (418A). Here, we should pay particular attention to the use of the verb *πυθάνομαι*, from which Plutarch derives *Pythios* at 385B. This same familiar pattern of amazement and inquiry is again prompted by Kleombrotos, after he recounts the story of his visit to the holy man at the Erythrean Sea. His account 'appeared marvellous' (ὁ λόγος ἐφάνη θαυμαστός), and spurs Herakleon to enquire (πυθομένου, again recalling the derivation of *Pythios* from this verb) how it relates, as Kleombrotos had intimated, to Plato (421F). Finally, the interlocutors in *De Defectu* are characterised, rather late in the work, as 'listeners with nothing to distract them and eager to seek and gain information on this point or that' (431D-E).⁴³³ They will give Lamprias, whose speech they are anticipating, a 'sympathetic hearing', and in response to their displays of enthusiasm, Lamprias continues.⁴³⁴ Thus, despite lacking the clearly-delineated pattern of *De Pythiae*, both *De E* and *De Defectu* present numerous instances of the beginnings of philosophy: the asking of questions, which arise from amazement, and the presentation of oneself as a keen listener.

2) Interaction and collaboration: encouragement, assistance, and listening

The Pythian dialogues first clearly demonstrate how one should practise philosophy by illustrating the largely individual process of seeing, being amazed, reaching an ἀπορία, and asking questions. They also exemplify, through narrating specific interactions between characters, how philosophical dialogue in the company of others facilitates this process, especially – but certainly not only – for the young. One could argue that there is nothing particularly unique about the furnishing of a young 'eager listener' character early in the dialogue, with whom the reader is supposed to identify, and that this is both indicative of

⁴³³ "Ἄλλα νῦν," ὁ Ἀμμώνιος ἔφη, "καὶ σχολὴν ἄγοντας ἀκροατὰς ἔχεις καὶ προθύμους τὰ μὲν ζητεῖν τὰ δὲ μανθάνειν..."

⁴³⁴ "...ἔριδος ἐκποδῶν οὔσης καὶ φιλονεικίας ἀπάσης συγγνώμης δὲ παντὶ λόγῳ καὶ παρρησίας ὡς ὀρθῶς δεδομένης."

Platonic borrowing,⁴³⁵ and a standard convention in Plutarchan dialogue.⁴³⁶ But I propose that what differentiates the Plutarchan dialogue from the Platonic is the fact that, as we shall see, the early importance placed on listening to one's companions and engaging in discussion continues throughout. Unlike in Plato, where characters tend to be either almost entirely silent (with an occasional 'yes' breaking this pattern) or obstreperous, and where their only conversational partner is Sokrates, the Plutarchan dialogue sets up such characters in its prologues precisely to observe their responses and engagements with both their setting and other characters throughout.

Where Sokrates interrogates, the characters in our three dialogues interact, and the reader is able to observe how one should and should not conduct oneself in philosophical discussion. The characters already introduced in Plutarch's prologues as critically capable, and therefore on the reader's radar from an early stage, may be subjected to particular scrutiny.⁴³⁷ In the three Pythian dialogues, then, we are presented with a (remarkably unique) combination of characters already established as good listeners, as well as easily observable interactions or conversational behaviours between a number of diverse speakers at different levels of their philosophical careers. It is this that separates the three Pythian works not only from those of Plato, but from other Plutarchan dialogues, too. The *Q.C.*, for example, are too short and varied to allow the reader much observation of conversational habits between individuals of whose credentials they are left in the dark. The *Amatorius* and *De Sollertia* are framed explicitly as debates, rather than discussions, and so the interactions between characters that take place in them are more characteristic of two-sided debate than the meandering philosophical journeys of the Pythian works. *De Tuenda* has only two interlocutors, both described as keen philosophers, but also apparently of the same age and social group, unlike the speakers of the Pythian works, whose ages, relationships to one another, and places of birth fluctuate greatly. Even *De Facie*, also set at Delphi, and therefore superficially similar to our three Pythian works, differs in its presentation of characters and their interactions. Although it illustrates occasional 'moments' between characters, such as Lamprias allowing Lucius time to think, its characters

⁴³⁵ See, for instance, *Laches* 187a-b, *Euthydemus* 274c, *Lysis* 206c, *Timaeus* 204a-, *Charmides* 154E-155A, and *Alkibiades* 1 104D-E.

⁴³⁶ See, for example, *Amat.* 748F, *De Genio* 575D, *De Tuenda* 122D, and *Septem Sapientium* 146C.

⁴³⁷ Indeed, we have noted that in *De Pythiae* Diogenianos lives up to readers' initial expectations by continually proving his interest in his surroundings, and his eagerness to listen to his fellow interlocutors.

are not introduced in any detail, nor are they explicitly characterised in the same way as the characters in the three Pythian works.⁴³⁸ Thus, other Plutarchan dialogues lack the Pythian works' explicit emphasis on both characters' credentials and the ways in which their interactions can benefit the way in which they practise philosophy. For this reason, I think we should move beyond categorising the Pythian dialogues by their content as 'religious' works. This unnecessary categorisation merely serves to frustrate readers wishing to learn Delphic secrets. Rather, we should view them through the lens of philosophy. As philosophical protreptics, the illustration of the whole philosophical process, to which the reader's attention is consistently drawn, is every bit as important as their content. As such, they are designed not for the modern reader, attempting to elucidate what Roman Delphi was like, but for the amateur philosopher.

We shall observe how the interactions between characters in each Pythian dialogue illustrate key elements necessary for successful philosophical discourse with others. These include the encouragement of other speakers, the correction of erroneous views, knowing when to be silent, and displaying concern for keeping the discussion on track. Many of these conversational behaviours are explored in Plutarch's essay *De Recta Ratione*, which may suggest a similar intended audience of younger readers for both texts.⁴³⁹ The representation of these ideas in the Pythian works is well in keeping with the idea, suggested by the prologue of *De E* and the pattern exemplified in *De Pythiae*, that all three works are protreptics to philosophy, with a uniquely Delphic bent.

In each dialogue, older characters consistently encourage or urge on their juniors. For example, at the beginning of *De Pythiae*, the question of Diogenianos – who has already been introduced as a youth – about the cause of the bronze's colouring rouses Theon to take the lead, and engage with the younger man. At Diogenianos' suggestion that oil does not cause rust, and his comparison with the effects of other liquids, Theon praises him with a simple 'well done' ('εὖγε') (395F), before urging him to also consider the explanation of Aristotle. This encouragement, combined with Theon's engagement with the question, is sufficient not only to maintain Diogenianos' interest, but to direct him towards other possible avenues of interpretation. The praise is not excessive, and is therefore in accord with Plutarch's recommendation in *De Recta*

⁴³⁸ This may, admittedly, be due to the fact that its prologue is clearly missing.

⁴³⁹ Although *De Recta* is concerned specifically with listening to lectures, rather than participating in dialogues, its advice about listening to speakers and asking questions at appropriate moments is clearly also relevant to a dialogic context.

(45F) that ‘the terms used in commendations must not be indiscriminate’.⁴⁴⁰ Affirmations like Plato’s simple ‘good!’ and ‘right!’ fulfil the function of praising far more appropriately than an exaggerated ‘divine!’ (45F). Theon’s position as an authoritative speaker, or at least one to whom the interlocutors are willing to give time, is confirmed by the narrator’s claim that ‘we urged him on and gave him his opportunity’ (396A).⁴⁴¹

Theon also appears in *De E*, this time as the junior of Ammonios. The priest Nikander offers an explanation that the E, pronounced in the same way as the word ‘if’, represents the questions of those who consult the oracle, i.e. ‘if they shall be victorious’ (386C-D). Rather than responding to Nikander directly, Theon picks up on the flaw of Nikander’s argument, its lack of logical reason, and directs his query to Ammonios. As though turning to a teacher, he asks Ammonios ‘if Logical Reason had any rights in free speech, after being spoken of in such a very insulting manner’ (386D).⁴⁴² Ammonios encourages Theon to speak in its defence (τοῦ δ’ Ἀμμωνίου λέγειν παρακελευομένου), and it is only after this that Theon responds (386E). This whole discussion manages to avoid direct conflict or insult, guiding any novice philosophers who happen to be reading it about how dialogue can flow smoothly.

Later in the same dialogue, Ammonios appraises the young Plutarch’s lengthy speech on mathematics. Ammonios was, says the narrator, ‘pleased with these remarks’, (ἦσθη τε τοῖς λεγομένοις) since he recognised the important place of mathematics in philosophy (391E). Although Ammonios’ reaction makes it clear that the young Plutarch’s interest in mathematics is not unfounded, his criticism is implicit in his remark that ‘it is not worth while to argue too precisely over these matters with the young, except to say that every one of the numbers will provide not a little for them that wish to sing its praises’ (391E),⁴⁴³ pointing out that what Plutarch did for the number five could be done for the number seven, too. This comment also reveals Ammonios’ own age, as older in relation to Plutarch and, presumably, Plutarch’s friends. Thus, in line with the idea expressed in *De Recta* that for a φιλόλογος man, any speech will have

⁴⁴⁰ δεῖ δὲ μηδὲ ταῖς φωναῖς τῶν ἐπαίνων ὡς ἔτυχε χρῆσθαι.

⁴⁴¹ ὡς οὖν ἐκελεύομεν καὶ συνεχωροῦμεν...

⁴⁴² ...ἤρετο τὸν Ἀμμωνίων εἰ διαλεκτικῆ παρρησίας μέτεστιν οὕτω περιουρισμένως ἀκηκούϊα...

⁴⁴³ οὐκ ἄξιον πρὸς ταῦτα λίαν ἀκριβῶς ἀντιλέγειν τοῖς νέοις, πλὴν ὅτι τῶν ἀριθμῶν ἕκαστος οὐκ ὀλίγα βουλομένοις ἐπαινεῖν καὶ ὑμνεῖν παρέξει.

something commendable in it (43D), Ammonios can both appreciate Plutarch's effort, and criticise gently.

Encouragement is not only, however, the domain of elders. Contemporaries, too, familiar with each other's interests, open the floor to one another, as we see in Eustrophos' invitation to Plutarch to speak in *De E*. Eustrophos, says Plutarch, speaks 'not in jest, but for the reason that at this time I was devoting myself to mathematics with the greatest enthusiasm, although I was destined soon to pay all honour to the maxim 'Avoid extremes,' when I had once become a member of the Academy' (387F).⁴⁴⁴ As readers will soon notice, there is a certain irony in the fact that the young Plutarch declares himself to be on the cusp of honouring the maxim 'Avoid extremes'. A good speaker must understand his audience, and know when to stop. This is light-heartedly illustrated in the speech of the young Plutarch. Despite a series of interruptions to his own speech, which indicate his awareness of the audience's patience potentially running thin,⁴⁴⁵ his speech runs on for nine chapters.⁴⁴⁶ So, too, is Sarapion gently mocked for 'yield[ing] as usual to his propensity by taking advantage of the incidental mention of Mischief and Pleasure' in *De Pythiae* (397B).⁴⁴⁷

This can be contrasted with the self-recognition displayed by other characters, who check themselves and acknowledge silences. For example, at *De Defectu* 434F, Demetrios finishes his speech and falls silent (ἔσιώπησεν). Lamprias is on the point of pouncing on this silence, 'wishing to crown, as it were, the discussion' (βουλόμενος ὥσπερ τι κεφάλαιον ἐπιθεῖναι τῷ λόγῳ); however, he glances at Philip and Ammonios, seated beside him, and gauges their response first: 'They seemed to me to be desirous of saying something to us, and again I checked myself'.⁴⁴⁸ This was the correct move, because Ammonios then explicitly states that Philip has more to say. It is only by observing his fellow interlocutors' countenances that Lamprias can make the appropriate decision to wait his turn. The silence exhibited by many characters, like

⁴⁴⁴ Ταῦτα δὲ πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἔλεγεν οὐ παίζων ὁ Εὐστροφος, ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ τήνικαῦτα προσεκέειμην τοῖς μαθήμασιν ἐμπαθῶς, τάχα δὴ μέλλων εἰς πάντα τιμήσειν τὸ "μηδὲν ἄγαν" ἐν Ἀκαδημείᾳ γενόμενος.

⁴⁴⁵ 389C (ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν ἱκανοῦ καιροῦ μάλλον ἀπομεμήκυνται), 389F ("Πολλὰ δ' ἄλλα τοιαῦτα," ἔφην ἐγώ, "παρελθόνων..."), 390C (Ἄμα δὲ πῶς ἐπιστήσας καὶ διαλιπών...), and 391D (ἐν βραχύ).

⁴⁴⁶ 387F-391E.

⁴⁴⁷ "ὁ Σαραπίων μὲν," εἶπε, "τὸ εἰωθὸς ἀποδέδωκε τῷ τρόπῳ, λόγου περὶ Ἄτης καὶ Ἡδονῆς παραπεσόντος ἀπολαύσας"

⁴⁴⁸ πρὸς τὸν Φίλιππον αὐθις ἀπέβλεψα καὶ τὸν Ἀμμώνιον ὁμοῦ καθημένους.

Kleombrotos in *De Defectu* (411E), has often been taken as a sign that the character is dumbfounded, or that his solution to the problem is incorrect. But silences need not be problematic, as a passage in *De Recta* (39B) makes clear:

Πανταχοῦ μὲν οὖν τῷ νέῳ κόσμος ἀσφαλῆς ἐστὶν ἢ σιωπῆ, μάλιστα δ' ὅταν ἀκούων ἐτέρου μὴ συνταράττηται μηδ' ἐξυλακτῆ πρὸς ἕκαστον, ἀλλὰ κἂν ὁ λόγος ᾗ μὴ λίαν ἀρεστός, ἀνέχεται καὶ περιμένη παύσασθαι τὸν διαλεγόμενον, καὶ παυσάμενου μὴ εὐθέως ἐπιβάλλῃ τὴν ἀντίρρησην, ἀλλ' ὡς Αἰσχίνης φησί, διαλείπῃ χρόνον, εἴτε προσθεῖναι τι βούλοιο τοῖς λελεγμένοις ὁ εἰρηκῶς, εἴτε μεταθέσθαι καὶ ἀφελεῖν. οἱ δ' εὐθὺς ἀντικόπτοντες, οὔτ' ἀκούοντες οὔτ' ἀκουόμενοι λέγοντες δὲ πρὸς λέγοντας, ἀσχημονοῦσιν· ὁ δ' ἐγκρατῶς καὶ μετ' αἰδοῦς ἀκούειν ἐθισθεὶς τὸν μὲν ὠφέλιμον λόγον ἐδέξατο καὶ κατέσχε, τὸν δ' ἄχρηστον ἢ ψευδῆ μᾶλλον διεΐδε καὶ κατεφώρασε, φιλαλήθης φανείς, οὐ φιλόνηκος οὐδὲ προπετῆς καὶ δύσερις.

'In all cases, then, silence is a safe adornment for the young man, and especially so, when in listening to another he does not get excited or bawl out every minute, but even if the remarks be none too agreeable, puts up with them, and waits for the speaker to pause, and, when the pause comes, does not at once interpose his objection, but, as Aeschines puts it, allows an interval to elapse, in case the speaker may desire to add something to what he has said, or to alter or unsay anything. But those who instantly interrupt with contradictions, neither hearing nor being heard, but talking while others talk, behave in an unseemly manner; whereas the man who has the habit of listening with restraint and respect, takes in and masters a useful discourse, and more readily sees through and detects a useless or false one, showing himself thus to be a lover of truth and not a lover of disputation, nor forward and contentious.'

It is, then, natural both for a speaker to pause, and for a listener to 'allow an interval to elapse' before offering his own contribution. Of course, a speaker who falls silent may indeed be saying something that requires refuting, but this need not always be the case.⁴⁴⁹ Silences like that produced after Theon's explanation of the blue lustre of the naval captain statues (396C) seem likelier to indicate acceptance than rejection. A silence like Lamprias' at *De Defectu* 414C does not mean that Lamprias has nothing to say, since Kleombrotos' interjection immediately

⁴⁴⁹ For example, silence ensues after Planetiades' departure, but this is natural after that awkward encounter.

prompts further thoughts from Lamprias. Herakleon's silence at 419A is explicitly reflective, and so, probably, are many other silences. The silence of Kleombrotos at 411E, after being questioned by Lamprias, has typically been adduced as evidence that he should not be taken seriously as a character. But given the great variety of meanings that a silence can have, we should be wary of such interpretations. In addition, as Babut notes, 'such a reduction of the role of Kleombrotos [to someone with little critical thinking] is rendered impossible by an impartial examination of the text'.⁴⁵⁰ He argues that throughout *De Defectu*, Kleombrotos' contributions are criticised no more or less than other characters', and that Kleombrotos agrees with the views of others.⁴⁵¹ I propose that the character's important role in the prologue, and his lengthy contributions throughout, do much to lessen the likelihood of Kleombrotos being a fool.

In addition to maintaining appropriate self-awareness, interlocutors must not let the discussion get too out of hand, as can inevitably occur in a large group. We consistently see characters pointing out digressions when they occur, as Diogenianos does in *De Pythiae* (402B), and Lamprias does in *De Defectu* (423C).

Another hallmark of appropriate philosophical discussion is the ability to combat views regarded as erroneous. As Plutarch notes in *De Recta* (40B-C), 'where there are mistakes, we should direct our intelligence to these, to determine the reasons and origin of the error'.⁴⁵² This should be done not by embarrassing the speaker, but rather – as Ammonios did with the young Plutarch – implicitly pointing out where they went wrong. This can be done with some humour, particularly by drawing attention to the fanatical adherence of one's opponents to their school. Thus, for example, before beginning his own argument, Eustrophos mocks Theon in *De E* (387D-E): "Do you see how zealously Theon defends logic, all but arraying himself in the lion's skin?"⁴⁵³ In his refutation of Lamprias' mathematical discourse in *De Defectu* (428B), Ammonios' tone is playful, rather than accusatory, focusing on the fact that Lamprias' arguments derive from Theodoros of Soli: "So," added Ammonios, laughing (γελῶν), "either you must solve these problems or else contribute something of your own concerning this difficulty in which we all

⁴⁵⁰ 1992: 216.

⁴⁵¹ Babut (1992: 217-19).

⁴⁵² τοῖς δ' ἁμαρτανομένοις ἐφίστάναι χρή τὴν διάνοιαν, ὑφ' ὧν αἰτιῶν καὶ ὅθεν ἡ παρατροπή γέγονεν.

⁴⁵³ "ὄρῳ, ὡς ἀμύνει τῇ διαλεκτικῇ Θεῶν προθύμως, μονονοῦ τὴν λεοντῆν ἐπενδυσάμενος;"

find ourselves involved.”⁴⁵⁴ Philinos corrects the Stoicism of Sarapion in *De Pythiae* (400A) by first demonstrating his amusement: ‘I laughed and said, “Where now, my good friend? Are you again slyly thrusting in your Stoicism here...?”’.⁴⁵⁵ He continues by actually taking up Sarapion’s Stoic methods, and using them to prove their absurdity. Sometimes, particularly for older, more authoritative speakers, the kindest way of negating an interlocutor’s contribution is simply to greet it with a ‘tranquil smile’, which Babut interprets as ‘the mark of superiority of the true philosopher’.⁴⁵⁶ We see Theon smile, for example, at Sarapion’s contribution in *De Pythiae* (397B), and Ammonios smile at Lamprias (386A), ‘suspecting privately that Lamprias had been indulging in a mere opinion of his own and was fabricating history and tradition regarding a matter in which he could not be held to account’.⁴⁵⁷ The narrator explicitly interprets for the reader this smile of Ammonios, in case the reader was in any doubt about its intention. It is in this way, I think, that the other smiles should also be interpreted as wry, indicative of their bearer’s scepticism.

A final method of overturning an argument is to make use of allegorical stories. In *De Pythiae* (396E-F), Boethos recounts a story about a painting of a galloping horse, which appeared, when the canvas was turned upside down, to be rolling, as its patron had originally intended. The simple act of inverting the painting had the effect of completely altering the viewer’s perception of it. The act of seeing, although necessary, was not in itself enough. To interpret the painting correctly, viewers had to perceive it in a different way, from a different perspective. The story is told here as an analogy for the illogicality of inverting arguments. It also serves to remind viewers of the fact that while it is good to be fond of seeing – like Diogenianos – one must be aware that sight can be deceptive.

One could argue that it is perfectly reasonable for a reader of a dialogue to expect interaction of the types enumerated here among its characters. But first, the type of interaction exhibited here is unique to the setting and circumstances of the Pythian works, and the questions examined. It is not, as in the *Amatorius* or *De Sollertia*, discussion in the form of a competition,

⁴⁵⁴ “ὥστε,” ἄμα γελῶν ὁ Ἀμμώνιος εἶπεν, “ἢ ταῦτά σοι διαλυτέον ἢ ἴδιόν τι λεκτέον περὶ τῆς κοινῆς ἀπορίας.”

⁴⁵⁵ ...γελάσας ἐγώ, “ποῦ σὺ πάλιν,” εἶπον, “ὦ χρηστέ, τὴν Στοὰν δευρὶ παρωθεῖς...;”

⁴⁵⁶ 1992: 195.

⁴⁵⁷ ...ὑπονοήσας ἰδίᾳ τὸν Λαμπρίαν δόξῃ κεχρησθαι, πλάττεσθαι δ’ ἱστορίαν καὶ ἀκοὴν ἐτέρων πρὸς τὸ ἀνυπεύθυνον.

nor a refutation of a lecture that has just taken place, like *Ad. Colotem*. Second, Plutarch's other philosophical dialogues, like *De Sera* and *De Facie*, do not have prologues that so clearly state their philosophical concerns, calling for readers to bear the conversational attitudes of the speakers in mind from the very beginning.⁴⁵⁸ Thus, while it is not inherently unusual for dialogues to illustrate the philosophical process in action, it is unique to see a version of this process, based on questions relating to Delphi, represented so consistently across three works. The fact that we see not only philosophy, but *Delphic* philosophy, according to Apollo's brand of inspiring the philosophically-minded, presented 'in action' across these three dialogues is a good indication that we should take the small interactions between characters seriously, as part of the works' larger framework. This is in perfect accord with the earnest philosophical aims of the prologue of *De E*. It is also 'contemporary', with various commonly-held philosophical views represented and mocked. For dedicatees like Sarapion and Terentius Priscus, the presentation of conversational behaviours represented here, at a site with which they were familiar, from their own time rather than the distant past of Plato, could certainly act as a guide.

3. 'Endings'

In the previous chapter, we noted that like Plato, Plutarch makes use of 'open' endings, which serve to encourage the reader's further reflection. Although the endings do not neatly 'tie up' the dilemma, I suggest that they are perfectly in accord with philosophical and propaedeutic aims of the three dialogues. That is, they echo the sentiments expressed by Ammonios in the prologue of *De E* that the nature of the Delphic god is to conceal, rather than reveal, and that it is up to the naturally philosophical person to seek the truth by observing and questioning. The idea that the god does not provide answers should prepare the reader from the start to accept that a single, simple solution to any dilemma may not exist.⁴⁵⁹

De E ends, as it begins, with a contribution from Ammonios, in 'pendant' fashion.⁴⁶⁰ Ammonios refutes the idea that Apollo is the same as the sun, but says that rather than censuring those who believe this, we should commend them for their wish to see the god 'in that thing which

⁴⁵⁸ In the case of *De Facie*, this is because the prologue no longer exists, since the beginning of the text has been mutilated.

⁴⁵⁹ Babut (1992: 200).

⁴⁶⁰ Babut (1992: 200).

they honour most of all the things that they know and yearn for' (393D).⁴⁶¹ They commit the mistake of seeing the god as a physical manifestation, rather than seeing the sun as the god's symbol. Arguing that the god should be set apart from constant motion, in a state of being rather than becoming, Ammonios adduces more Apollonian epithets, echoing the list he gave in the prologue (385B-C). Where the epithets were used in the prologue to demonstrate Apollo's capacity as a philosopher god, they are here paired with the epithets of Hades, Apollo's unpredictable counterpart, to demonstrate the clear, bright, and singular nature of Apollo. Apollo is again called Delios, Phoibos, and Phanaios, but also Theorios ('observing'). Readers encountering these same epithets in a new context in the same dialogue were likely expected to recall their earlier usage, and the god's philosophical nature. Indeed, after a small digression on Hades, Ammonios ends the dialogue on a distinctively philosophical, distinctively Delphic note:

“Ἀλλά γε τῷ εἶ τὸ ‘γνώθι σαυτόν’ ἔοικέ πως ἀντικεῖσθαι καὶ τρόπον τινὰ πάλιν συνάδειν· τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἐκπλήξει καὶ σεβασμῷ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ὡς ὄντα διὰ παντὸς ἀναπεφώνηται, τὸ δ’ ὑπόμνησις ἐστὶ τῷ θνητῷ τῆς περὶ αὐτὸν φύσεως καὶ ἀσθενείας.”

‘But it appears that as a sort of antithesis to ‘Thou art’ [Ammonios’ interpretation of the E], stands the admonition ‘Know thyself,’ and then again it seems, in a manner, to be in accord therewith, for the one is an utterance addressed in awe and reverence to the god as existent through all eternity, the other is a reminder to mortal man of his own nature and the weaknesses that beset him.’ (394C)

The E, the Delphic inscription that sparked the dialogue, is in the closing remarks of the work paired with *another* Delphic inscription, ‘know thyself’, which had in the prologue been given as another example of an inscription which had inspired a ‘horde of discourses’. This both reminds the reader of the initial subject of the work, and signals a return to the original Delphic setting. The final words, that ‘Know thyself’ ‘is a reminder to mortal man of his own nature and the weaknesses that beset him’ act, therefore, as an implicit injunction to the reader to practise further philosophy. If it can be done for the E, as the author has shown, then it can be done for ‘know thyself’, and the reader is now in a position to know how one might begin this investigation.

⁴⁶¹ ὁ μάλιστα τιμῶσιν ὧν ἴσασι καὶ ποθοῦσιν, εἰς τοῦτο τιθέντας τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν ἐπίνοιαν

The discussion in *De Pythiae* also ends with a return to Delphi. Theon, in the speech which concludes the dialogue, advises his companions not to try to appease those who come to the oracle and complain of the ambiguity of the oracles. Such men, he says, praise ‘the inscriptions here, ‘know thyself’ and ‘avoid extremes’, because of their conciseness (βραχυλογίαν)’, rather than for the truth they contain, which should be investigated in depth (408E). To these kind of people’s lack of faith in the oracle, Theon contrasts the reality of Delphi, which is full of offerings, and has recently benefited from restoration (409A). Although, Theon says, he is grateful to the help of a number of individuals involved in the rebuilding process, ‘it is not possible that a change of such sort and of such magnitude could ever have been brought about in a short time through human diligence if a god were not present here to lend divine inspiration to his oracle’ (409C).⁴⁶² Again, we are presented not only with a return to the original setting of the dialogue, but a contrast between human and divine abilities. Readers are implicitly set against those men who ‘make an unwarranted indictment against [the oracles’] extreme simplicity’ (οἱ τὸ λίαν ἀπλοῦν συκοφαντοῦντες) (409C). Such men are blinded by the showy spectacles of rainbows, haloes, and comets, preferring these to the moon and sun, and unable to see beyond them to attain any kind of truth. Theon seems to be saying that these men are unlike *us*, who philosophise, and are fond of seeing important, rather than trivial things. Indeed, they blame the god, instead of themselves, ‘for being unable by reasoning (λογισμῶ) to attain to a comprehension of the god’s purpose’ (409D).⁴⁶³ With this, the dialogue ends, and readers are reminded of the importance of moving beneath the surface to attain a true understanding of the divine. Again, the contrast between human and divine in the reparation of the Delphic shrine, and the detailed reflection on the failings of those who do not use reason, encourage the reader towards further exercising of her mind.

The final speech in *De Defectu* is given by Lamprias. He, too, brings the discussion, which advertised its opening at Delphi so strongly, back to Delphi towards the end, in his narration of the story of a Pythian priestess who ‘recently’ (ἔναγχος) died (438A). Readers are again forced to reconsider the concerns of the dialogue by observing an instance of prophecy that went wrong, because the priestess was unwilling. Lamprias’ speech, and so the dialogue itself, ends

⁴⁶² ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλως ποτὲ τηλικαύτην καὶ τοσαύτην μεταβολὴν ἐν ὀλίγῳ χρόνῳ γενέσθαι δι’ ἀνθρωπίνης ἐπιμελείας, μὴ θεοῦ παρόντος ἐνταῦθα καὶ συνεπιθειάζοντος τὸ χρηστήριον.

⁴⁶³ κἂν τὴν αἰτίαν μὴ ἰκανῶς πύθωνται τῆς μεταβολῆς, ἀπίασι τοῦ θεοῦ καταγνόντες, οὐχ ἡμῶν οὐδ’ αὐτῶν ὡς ἀδυνάτων ὄντων ἐξικνεῖσθαι τῷ λογισμῷ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ διάνοιαν.

with an incitement – to his interlocutors, but of course also to readers – to continue contemplating the issues that the discussion raised:

“Ταῦτ’,” ἔφην ἐγώ, “πολλάκις ἀνασκέπτεσθαι καὶ ὑμᾶς παρακαλῶ καὶ ἑμαυτόν, ὡς ἔχοντα πολλὰς ἀντιλήψεις καὶ ὑπονοίας πρὸς τούναντίον, ἃς ὁ καιρὸς οὐ παρέχει πάσας ἐπεξελεθεῖν ὥστε καὶ ταῦθ’ ὑπερκείσθω καὶ ἃ Φίλιππος διαπορεῖ περὶ ἡλίου καὶ Ἀπόλλωνος.” (438D-E)

“These matters,” I added, “I urge upon you for your frequent consideration, as well as my own, in the belief that they contain much to which objections might be made, and many suggestions looking to a contrary conclusion, all of which the present occasion does not allow us to follow out. So let them be postponed until another time, and likewise the question which Philip raises about the Sun and Apollo.”

The endings of all three dialogues see a return, if not to the exact topic at hand, to the setting that gave rise to them. This reinforces the idea, explored in the prologue to *De E*, that one’s setting, particularly if it is as full of *aitia* as Delphi, may assist in the practice of philosophy. Each ending emphasises in some way – as each dialogue does throughout – the disjunction between divine and human capabilities, prompting the reader to reflect in more depth on what has been said, and thereby further her philosophical journey beyond the text itself. The importance of taking what one has already heard or read as a basis for further philosophy is found in *De Recta* (40E):

χρήσιμον δὲ πρὸς τοῦτο καὶ τὸ τῆς παραβολῆς, ὅταν γενόμενοι καθ’ αὐτοὺς ἀπὸ τῆς ἀκροάσεως καὶ λαβόντες τι τῶν μὴ καλῶς ἢ μὴ ἰκανῶς εἰρησθαι δοκούντων ἐπιχειρῶμεν εἰς ταῦτο καὶ προάγωμεν αὐτοὺς τὰ μὲν ὥσπερ ἀναπληροῦν, τὰ δ’ ἐπανορθοῦσθαι, τὰ δ’ ἐτέρως φράζειν, τὰ δ’ ὅλως ἐξ ὑπαρχῆς εἰσφέρειν πειρώμενοι πρὸς τὴν ὑπόθεσιν. ὃ καὶ Πλάτων ἐποίησε πρὸς τὸν Λυσίου λόγον.

‘To this end the process of comparison is useful, if, when we have come away from the lecture and are by ourselves, we take some topic that seems to have been ineffectually or inadequately treated, and try our hand at the same thing, and address ourselves to supplying a deficiency here, or amending there, to saying the same thing in other words, or attempting to treat the subject in a wholly new way; and this is what Plato actually did for the discourse of Lysias.’

This examination of the structural components of the three ‘Pythian’ works highlights the fact that they have much in common. I have not examined the particular arguments given by characters in any of the works, since this has been done extensively elsewhere, nor have I focused in great detail on whether the speeches are presented in a kind of ascending order of likeliness. Rather, I have focused on the fact that the prologues of all three works are similar, each – but especially *De E* – outlining a philosophical aim, an enterprise that can be undertaken only at Delphi. This, along with the introduction of eager listener characters with whom the reader can sympathise, and whom the reader can follow, suggests that the role of the reader is, precisely, to take note not only of the content of the conversation, but the way in which it is practised. Scholars of Plutarch’s *Lives* have long been aware that the reader is asked not just to study the history of the subject of the *Life*, but to engage with the work on a philosophical level, using it as a kind of mirror. This, I think, is similar to what we have here. The open endings of each Pythian work, which both push the reader towards further thought, and – significantly – bring her back to Delphi (the origin of the enterprise), confirm their philosophical aims. Thus, we can argue for the unity of the three works for a much more nuanced reason than their Delphic setting alone. All three are intimately bound by their philosophical aims, which both start and end with Delphi.

The question of the reading order

For almost as long as the three Pythian works have been recognised to be and published as a series, mostly on account of their shared setting, the question has arisen of whether they should be read in a particular order. Scholars’ arguments tend to take into account a) the dates of composition of the three works, and internal cross references, and b) the ordering of the three titles in the Lamprias Catalogue and ancient manuscripts. We shall examine the rather scanty evidence for reading them in a specific order according to each of these frameworks, before arguing, from the preceding discussion, that *De E* comes first, but that the order in which a reader approaches the other two works does not matter.

1) Compositional dates and cross references

It could be argued that the reading order of the Pythian works should be drawn from the order in which they were composed, although this argument is not without a flaw. Even if they were written at different points in Plutarch’s life, the chronological order does not necessarily

correspond to the way in which the author intended them to be conceived, or how he arranged all three after composition, as with far more recent mythologies such as the *Star Wars* saga.

Most scholars agree that the Pythian works were written some time in the 80s or 90s A.D., due to a combination of circumstantial evidence presented within them (e.g. dates of Pythian Games (410A), and approximate ages of characters known to be based on real individuals (e.g. Lamprias' comment on his age at 435E), the exploratory voyage of Demetrios to Britain), and the length of time that must have elapsed between the dramatic date and the date of composition.⁴⁶⁴ Yet there is some discrepancy regarding the order in which they were composed. In participating in these arguments, scholars rely on two aspects of the dialogues: internal references to historical events, and apparent 'cross-references'.

One of the most serious problems with the historical references is that they are vague enough to require corroboration from other sources, and can at best provide us with a *terminus post* or *ante quem*. For example, in Theon's praise of the restoration work at the end of *De Pythiae* (408F-409C), he mentions τὸν καθηγμόνα ταύτης τῆς πολιτείας ('the leader of the administration') (409C). While many wished to use this reference to date the text to the reign of Hadrian, who is known to have contributed to rejuvenating Delphi,⁴⁶⁵ the difficulties involved in speculating about the identity of this man are apparent: he is not named, and there is a lacuna after he is mentioned.⁴⁶⁶ Furthermore, as Jones points out, 'the earliest datable indication of Hadrian's benefactions to Delphi falls in 125, when Plutarch was about 80, and this is late for him to have noticed them in a published work'.⁴⁶⁷ Thus, as Jones concludes, we cannot definitively call the dialogue Hadrianic.⁴⁶⁸ Indeed, there is nothing inherent in the phrase to suggest that the leader need be an emperor at all.

Other 'historical' references are equally vague. Plutarch's description of the 'recent' (ἔναγχος) eruption of Mount Vesuvius in *De Pythiae* cannot provide any justifiable date except 'some time

⁴⁶⁴ Jones (1966: 72), Laurenti (1996: 59), Moreschini (1997: 50-51), Ogilvie (1967: 108-119), Valgiglio (1992: 42).

⁴⁶⁵ See Jones (1966: 64).

⁴⁶⁶ In favour of Hadrian as the leader, see, for example, Flacelière (1934: 56ff., 1974: 40).

⁴⁶⁷ 1966: 64.

⁴⁶⁸ 1966: 65.

after' 79 A.D., because he uses the term loosely elsewhere.⁴⁶⁹ Similarly, the reference in *De E* to Nero's visit (which happened long before *De E* was composed, when Plutarch himself was still a student of around twenty) can only confirm that a compositional date some time in the 90s, when Plutarch's own sons were young men, is probable enough.⁴⁷⁰ The dating of *De Defectu* on the grounds of its dedicatee, Terentius Priscus, is untenable, since two men, father and son, bore this name, and it is impossible to tell to which it is dedicated.⁴⁷¹

There is, then, little ground on which to base any conjectural dates of composition, except within the 80s or 90s A.D. At most, we can probably agree with Brenk's suggestion that they were probably composed 'fairly close together',⁴⁷² since they share characters, and their themes are consistent. Despite a meticulous examination of previous scholars' arguments, based on internal references, regarding the dating of *De Defectu*, Rescigno (1995: 20) concludes that 'none of the chronological traces singled out by Bayet and Ogilvie have a decisive character'. This is typical of the other two dialogues, too. Ultimately, Rescigno opts, as I do, to base his reading order on the fact that the opening of *De E* seems to 'offer the idea of a promise', which would not make sense if the other two works had already been circulated.⁴⁷³

The greatest difficulty with the 'cross references' is that they are not specific at all. Unlike references in the *Lives*, where Plutarch directs readers to another *Life* in order to enhance their understanding of an event or character,⁴⁷⁴ the references in the Pythian works tend to be thematic and vague. Nowhere does Plutarch say in one, for example, 'see my other Pythian works'. The fact that he uses similar language when discussing particular themes,⁴⁷⁵ or that the

⁴⁶⁹ For example, as Jones points out (1966: 70), it is used to describe an event that took place almost a decade earlier than the initial date in the *Lucullus* (11.6). For a date of after 95, see Jones (1966: 72). For the same reason, it is difficult to fix a date based on the 'recent' death of a Pythia, referenced at the end of *De Defectu* (428A). Rescigno (1995: 13) lists parallel uses of the term ἔναγχος.

⁴⁷⁰ Nero's visit to Greece took place in 66/7, just before his death, and is described by the narrator as having happened πάλαι.

⁴⁷¹ Jones (1966: 70).

⁴⁷² 1977: 87.

⁴⁷³ 1995: 21.

⁴⁷⁴ Stadter (2010: 198).

⁴⁷⁵ Babut (1992: 205) points out the linguistic similarities between Boethos' speech at *De Pythiae* 398A-B and Lamprias' in *De Defectu* 426B.

same topics appear across dialogues,⁴⁷⁶ cannot indicate that one precedes another. Rather, if Plutarch were working from the same notes and his own memory, it would not be surprising if he repeated favourite thoughts, and used the same vocabulary to describe it in multiple passages. For example, Babut, despite surmising that the arguments about Delphic *pneuma* in Theon's speech in *De Pythiae* perhaps make more sense if one has read Lamprias' contribution in *De Defectu* (433F, 434B), accepts that 'it does not necessarily follow that *De Defectu* is anterior to *De Pythiae*'.⁴⁷⁷

Aside from similarities in vocabulary and theme, the clearest 'cross references' are those at *De E* 389F and *De Defectu* 426E-F. At 389F, in his diatribe on the number five, the young Plutarch briefly mentions Plato's idea that if there is more than one world, then there can only be as many as five altogether. In *De Defectu*, the question of the number of the worlds is examined in great detail (421F-431A). Although the idea appears in two Pythian works, the context that gives rise to it is different in each case. In *De Defectu* (426E-F), in the context of the discussion of the number of worlds, Philip expresses his intense interest in the subject by comparing it with another Delphic topic: 'I feel that I would rather gain a knowledge of this than of the meaning of the E dedicated here'. Conversing with the other interlocutors, Philip brings up the idea that he harbours of Apollo and the sun being the same. After a contribution from Demetrios, the attention of the narrator, Lamprias turns to Ammonios, who says that 'Philip also has some remarks to make, Lamprias, about what has been said; for he himself thinks, as most people do, that Apollo is not a different god, but is the same as the sun' (434F). But, Ammonios continues, 'my difficulty is greater and concerns greater matters' (435A). Moreschini sees in this turning aside of the discussion of Apollo and the sun a reference to, or rather 'foretelling' of *De E*, 'which the writer was already planning to write or had written in part', where the topic is discussed in greater detail.⁴⁷⁸ He goes so far as to suggest employing the reference to order the dialogues thus: 1. *De Defectu*, 2. *De E*, 3. *De Pythiae oraculis*. The problem with this is that the notion of Apollo and the sun as the same or different is significant to all three works,⁴⁷⁹ and also appears

⁴⁷⁶ Babut gathers similar themes at 1992: 193.

⁴⁷⁷ 1992: 215, n.89.

⁴⁷⁸ 1997: 50.

⁴⁷⁹ *De E* 386B, 393C-D, *De Pyth* 400D, and *De Defectu* 433D-E, 434F, 438D.

elsewhere in Plutarch.⁴⁸⁰ Philip's allusion is a throwaway comment. I would categorise it, at best, as a nod to *De E*, already in circulation. For a reader who has already encountered *De E*, its humour arises from the fact that Philip says he would rather *not* hear about the E. Read in isolation, each reference to Apollo and the sun can, at best, prompt the reader to think. Reading them together, the reader can delight in piecing all the strands that run through the three works together.

It is clear, then, that neither the references to historical events, nor the small number of 'cross references' in the three Pythian works can give a clear indication of the order, if any, in which their author intended them to be read.

2) The Lamprias Catalogue and manuscripts

The current convention of grouping the three works together, with *De E* first, followed by *De Pythiae* and ending with *De Defectu*, goes back to Stephanus' 1572 edition, whose pagination system influenced future publications. Previous to that, the works had not always been presented together. Our most ancient source of documentation regarding the titles of Plutarch's works is the Lamprias Catalogue, a list containing both the *Parallel Lives* and what we now call the *Moralia*, which includes titles of works no longer extant, works now believed to be spurious, and some repetitions.⁴⁸¹ It seems likely that, composed in the 3rd or 4th century, it represents the inventory of a library, since it adheres to the 'principles of classification... of ancient libraries'.⁴⁸² While the Lamprias Catalogue is explicitly just a list, and a sometimes flawed one at that, its order occasionally suggests that its compiler grouped certain texts together in an order that seemed logical to him (and presumably his contemporaries).⁴⁸³ For example, a grouping of texts from 63-71 concerns Platonic works and Academic theories (including *de Genio*, yet excluding the *Quaestiones platonicae*, which appear much later at 136, near a lost work entitled Σχολαὶ Ἀκαδημαϊκαί), while numbers 76-79 contain works against the

⁴⁸⁰ *De Latenter* 1130A.

⁴⁸¹ For double mentions of a single title, see Irigoin (1986: 320), who speculates that the redactor had two copies of the same work.

⁴⁸² Irigoin (1987: CCXXIX). For the argument that it was the catalogue of a 3rd- or 4th-century library, see Treu (1873: 54), whose argument is accepted by Irigoin (1986: 320, 1987: CCXXVIII-CCXXIX).

⁴⁸³ Irigoin (1986: 319).

Stoics, which are followed by works critical of the Epicureans and other philosophical schools.⁴⁸⁴ 102 and 103 are about listening (to philosophers and poets), and 111 and 112 are consolatory letters. *Aitiai* often appear in pairs, but not together (e.g. 138 and 139 (Roman and Barbarian questions), 160 and 161, and 166 and 167 (Greeks and women)). The works on the fortune of Rome and Alexander appear one after the other (175, 176). Two texts on Sokrates appear later on (189, 190). Irigoin speculates that, despite these and other groupings of Plutarchan texts, the general tenor of the *Moralia* section of the Lamprias Catalogue is of ‘great disorder’,⁴⁸⁵ due to the ‘circumstances of its establishment’.⁴⁸⁶ However, although the Lamprias Catalogue is in many ways spurious, it can certainly tell us either how someone familiar with Plutarch’s works would ‘naturally’ categorise them, or how one buying the works of Plutarch would ‘naturally’ receive or collect them in groups of smaller series.

In the Lamprias Catalogue, *De Pythiae* appears as number 116, followed by *De E* (117), which in turn is succeeded by *De Iside* (118). *De Defectu* appears many titles earlier, at 88, between *Progress in Virtue* and *How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend*. For this ancient collector and/or compiler, then, *De E* and *De Pythiae* were seen as similar enough to be placed together. I suggest that one logical explanation for *De Defectu*’s position could be that the compiler was relying in his work on titles alone, either in his process of acquiring works or his process of compiling (or both). The Greek titles of *De E* and *De Pythiae*, Περὶ τοῦ Ε τοῦ ἐν Δελφοῖς and Περὶ τοῦ μὴ χρᾶν νῦν ἔμμετρα τὴν Πυθίαν, which the catalogue gives, both relate explicitly to Delphi, whereas the Greek title of *De Defectu*, Περὶ τῶν ἐκλελοιπότηων χρηστηρίων, does not concern Delphi specifically, but only oracles in general. Thus, the most that we can conjecture is that the author of the Lamprias Catalogue grouped *De E* and *De Pythiae* together because he perceived a common theme in their titles.

The manuscript tradition for Plutarch’s *Moralia* continues what Tempesta recognises as ‘the gradual formation of *corpuscula* on a thematic or typological basis’, which was already evident, as we noted, in the Lamprias Catalogue.⁴⁸⁷ All surviving manuscripts group together a different

⁴⁸⁴ Yet titles of other works on the Stoics appear at 149 and 154, while titles relating to the Epicureans also appear much later at 129, 133, 143, 155, and 159.

⁴⁸⁵ 1986: 319, and again in 1987 (p.CCXXIX).

⁴⁸⁶ 1986: 20.

⁴⁸⁷ 2013: 278.

pair than the Lamprias Catalogue: *De E* and *De Defectu*, always in that order. I am not concerned here with manuscript families or ties, but rather with what the general chronological progression of manuscripts indicates about the ordering of the three Pythian texts.

One of the earliest surviving manuscript to contain these texts seems to be the 10th-century manuscript *Marcianus graecus* 250 (commonly X), where *De E* is followed by *De Defectu*.⁴⁸⁸ *Marc. gr.* 250 does not include *De Pythiae* in its contents. We then find both *De E* and *De Defectu* in the same order, again without *De Pythiae*, in *Parisinus Graecus* 1957 (F) and 1956 (D),⁴⁸⁹ and later, in the fourteenth-century *Par. grec.* 1680. The order of works in 1957 is: 1. *De repugnantiis stoicorum*, 2. *Quomodo quis suos in virtute*, 3. *De sera numinis*, 4. *Bruta Animalia*, 5. *De sollertia*, 6. *De E*, 7. *De Defectu*, 8. *De utilitate ex inimicis capienda*, 9. *De differentia adulatoris et amici*, etc. 1956 sandwiches *De E* and *De Defectu* between the *Consolatio ad Apollonium* and *Quomodo quis suos in virtute*, with which it ends. Most interesting here is the fact that the small grouping of texts in 1957 in which *De E* and *De Defectu* appear seems to be formulated according to genre, since it includes other dialogues (*De sera*, *Bruta Animalia*, and *De Sollertia*).

We find another, larger assemblage of dialogues again in later manuscripts of the Planudean tradition. This tradition began with Planudes' endeavour to collect all the *Lives* and *Moralia* in a single volume.⁴⁹⁰ *Par. gr.* 1671 (A), which brought both series of works together, was completed in July 1296.⁴⁹¹ To the works contained within 1671 were added, in the definitive and 'monumental' *Par. gr.* 1672 (E), further works, which had been recovered in the interim.⁴⁹² It is only at this point in the tradition that we begin to find *De Pythiae* in the manuscripts. *De Pythiae* was part of a grouping of *Moralia* texts (now labelled 70-77) whose existence first

⁴⁸⁸ For its 10th-century date, see Tempesta (2013: 279). Earlier scholars had dated it slightly later. Manton (1949: 98) proposed the early 11th century, while Manfredini (1988: 128) dated it to the 11th or 12th century.

⁴⁸⁹ Tempesta (2013: 279) places *Par. gr.* 1957 in the 10th century. Moerschini (1997: 51) dates all three early manuscripts, *Marc. gr.* 250, *Par. gr.* 1957, and *Par. gr.* 1956, to the 10th-11th centuries. The Bibliothèque Nationale de France catalogues both 1957 and 1956 as 11th-century manuscripts.

⁴⁹⁰ Planudes first put forward the idea in 1293, when he wrote to his friend Alexius Philanthropinus. See Tempesta (2013: 282).

⁴⁹¹ Tempesta (2013: 282), Valgiglio (1992: 43), Manfredini (1988: 123).

⁴⁹² 2013: 280. Both Tempesta (2013: 280) and Manfredini (1988: 124) call it 'monumental'. The manuscript certainly belongs to the Planudean tradition, and was initially thought to date from a little after 1302 (Manton, 1949: 97), but has more recently been judged to date from the mid-14th or even early 15th century, making it somewhat later (Valgiglio 1992: 43, n.12). Moerschini, therefore, calls it 'post-Planudean' (1997: 53).

appears in a later note appended to *Marc. Gr.* 250 some time after its original production in the 10th century. The writer of the note first lists the 29 *Moralia* texts included in the manuscript, before adding:

ἕως ὄδε ὁ πίναξ τῶν λόγων τοῦ παρόντος βιβλίου· λείπουσι δὲ ἐκ τῶν ἠθικῶν ἕτεροι δέκα λόγοι ὧν αἱ ἐπιγραφαί εἰσιν αἶδε· πλουτάρχου ἐρωτικός, περὶ τοῦ ἐμφαινομένου προσώπου τῷ κύκλῳ τῆς σελήνης, περὶ τῆς ἐν τιμαίῳ ψυχογονίας, πλατωνικὰ ζητήματα, περὶ τοῦ μὴ χρᾶν ἕμμετρα νῦν τὴν πυθίαν.⁴⁹³

Up to this point, the list of works of the present book; there remain ten other works of the *Moralia*, of which the titles are these; [authored] by Plutarch: the *Amatorius*, *De facie*, *De animae procreatione in Timaeo*, *Quaestiones Platonicae*, *De Pythiae oraculis*.

The texts in this list, along with four others, appeared in only the two subsequent manuscripts just mentioned, *Par. Gr.* 1672 and *Par. Gr.* 1675 (B).⁴⁹⁴ Thus, because of the vagaries of the tradition, *De Pythiae* had remained detached from the other two Pythian works for a long time. Both 1672 and 1675 maintain the order of the first 69 *Moralia* texts (including grouping *De E* and *De Defectu*), but add the texts from the new set in the following order: *Amatorius* (70), *De facie* (71), *De Pythiae* (72), *Ad Colotem* (73), *De communibus notitiis* (74), *De genio Socratis* (75), *De Herodoti malignitate* (76). After this, manuscripts E and B branch off.⁴⁹⁵ Notably, this is a group comprised almost entirely of dialogues, or texts with largely dialogic elements (like the *Adv. Col.*, which has a particularly dialogic prologue), and in manuscript 1672, they are immediately preceded by other dialogues (*De Sollertia*, *De E*, and *De Defectu*). At last, we find all three ‘Pythian’ works in close proximity, separated only by two other dialogues.

The manuscript tradition can assist us only so much. Obviously, Plutarch had no sway over the order in which his texts were transcribed or published after his death, but as we can see from the Lamprias Catalogue and the medieval manuscripts, certain texts *were* grouped together, indicating that either a) they had come to the compiler of a list or the scribe of a manuscript as

⁴⁹³ See Manfredini (1988: 128), Manton (1949: 98), and Sandbach (1941: 11) for the quote and the manuscript history of the *Moralia* texts.

⁴⁹⁴ Valgiglio (1992: 42), Manfredini (1988: 124), Manton (1949: 97). Manfredini postulates that the tenth work may have been *Stoicos absurdiora poetis dicere* (1988: 128).

⁴⁹⁵ In E, the texts that follow are only *Q.C.* book 9, and Appian’s comparison of Alexander and Caesar, whereas in B the texts that follow are the *Quaestiones platonicae*, *quod Stoici absurdiora docent quam poetae*, *De sera*, and *de utilitate ex inimicis capienda*.

a group, or b) that the creator of the list or manuscript recognised a logical order, possibly self-evident to readers of his day, in the large set of Plutarchan texts at his disposal, that is no longer as obvious to modern readers.

The constant appearance of *De E* and *De Defectu* together surely indicates a long-standing regard for the two as a unit; however, it is undeniable that in the context of manuscript E, both these and *De Pythiae* are linked simply by virtue of appearing in what seems to be a broad category of Plutarchan dialogues. The fact that each work appears ‘independently’, with its own title, need not negate the fact that they form a group. As a point of comparison, all *Lives* have their own titles, but the reader is supposed to read two (Greek and Roman) in conjunction with one another. So too is the effect on the reader amplified by reading as many pairs of *Lives* as possible. Similarly, a reader of two Pythian dialogues (*De E* and *De Defectu*) could only benefit from reading a third, *De Pythiae*. While we cannot determine a definitive reading order from the manuscript tradition, I would say that a reader of the dialogues in manuscript E likely would have had an experience similar to the one that Plutarch postulated Sarapion as having, reading *De E* and the other unnamed *Πυθικοί λόγοι*.

A new approach to the reading order

From our examination of the three Pythian works, I suggest that it is very likely that all three are similar enough to form a series, and that *De E* should be conceived as the first in the unit. The three works all share a strong unity of purpose. *De E* sets forth in its prologue a method of conducting philosophy that is especially helpful for the amateur philosopher. The author’s application of this structure to each work creates for the reader of all three a reading experience that leads to a more fulfilling understanding of Plutarchan philosophy and, particularly, the way in which it is supposed to be executed (a sort of Plutarchan method). Thus, I argue that reading *De E* first gives the reader a framework for approaching the other two texts, but that regardless of the order in which they are read, the experience of reading all three together is useful for the budding philosopher.

We have seen that the prologue of *De E*, steeped in the vocabulary of Platonic and Aristotelian traditions, forges a very particular link between the god Apollo, his sanctuary, and the practice of philosophy. Most crucially, the prologue establishes that it is at Delphi that these problems expounded by the god are apparent to the philosophically-minded. While it is the god himself who propounds questions, the environment of Delphi, so alive with traces of the god, provides

the ideal starting point for the eager budding philosopher. We learn from Ammonios that questions (or *aitia*) can have their origin in the material world. For example, that of the *E*, which relate to customs and religious offerings like the inscriptions can function as stepping-stones to higher questions of philosophy. Initial questions may be superficial, but they act as a gateway, grounded in the 'real' world, to more esoteric questions and higher philosophy. Since we see identical philosophical concerns, and similar vocabulary in the shorter prologues of *De Pythiae* and *De Defectu*, and since we see this 'Delphic' philosophy in action in all three dialogues, I believe that the prologue of *De E* functions as a kind of prologue for all three works. It sets the pattern for each to take Delphi as a starting-point for philosophy. The concern of these works is not simply asking questions for their own sake. In this, we may contrast them with Plutarch's various *Quaestiones*, which, although they ask similar questions regarding religious customs, do not make their purpose explicit, and feature no dramatic elements. The Pythian dialogues, however, give more guidance, and thanks to the prologue of *De E*, the purpose and direction of the Delphic questions they ask is more obvious. In other words, Plutarch exploits the potential of the dialogue format to illuminate the process of philosophy, rather than its end result.

Other works have occasionally been conjectured as participating in the Pythian series, too. In the case of lost works, like 'On 'know thyself' and whether the soul is immortal' (Lamprias Catalogue number 177), it is impossible to tell.⁴⁹⁶ Its title, which relates, like that of *De E*, to an inscription at Delphi, makes it a promising contender; however, we have no idea whether the work was a dialogue or an essay. In the absence of any indicators, we can hardly know whether, as Babut speculates, it 'formed with *De E* a sort of diptych'.⁴⁹⁷ A more concrete contender for the series is *De Sera*.⁴⁹⁸ On account of its common themes, and the fact that it also takes place with Delphi, it is sometimes grouped together with our three Pythian works. From the preceding arguments, I think we can firmly conclude that *De Sera* should not be included among the Pythian series. As Flacelière pointed out, 'this work does not treat a question relating to the sanctuary of Pythian Apollo, like *De E* and *De Pythiae*'.⁴⁹⁹ But much more than that, a setting at Delphi alone does not, as we have observed, make a *Pythikos logos*. For this reason, and on

⁴⁹⁶ Ziegler, *Plutarchos* (p.192), first made this suggestion.

⁴⁹⁷ 1992: 201.

⁴⁹⁸ So, for example, Soury (1945: 166) argues that '*De sera* 'se rattache [...] assez étroitement aux trois dialogues pythiques'.

⁴⁹⁹ 1974: VII.

account of their role as pieces of a much larger work, we can also exclude any of the short, and wildly varying *Q.C.* which take place at Delphi, like 2.4 and 5, to which Valiglio pointed.⁵⁰⁰ We can, then, be fairly certain that our three works alone should be united.

Thus, while it would be possible to read any one of the three Pythian dialogues in isolation, the fact that, as we have seen, all three share a common framework suggests that the message that Plutarch imparts would be strongest from reading them as a series. Duff's interpretation of the reading experience of the *Lives* in his seminal work *Plutarch's Lives: Exploring Virtue and Vice* may be used as a parallel. Reading one *Life* would introduce a reader to important concepts. Reading a pair allows the reader, in comparing the two heroes, to more actively exercise her mind. It is only, however, by reading multiple pairs of *Lives* that the reader is able to form a coherent picture of the author's ethical message, and to develop her own powers of analysis. In a similar way, the reader of one Pythian dialogue will have an introduction to a particular method of practising philosophy, in which objects and experiences in the material world can provoke philosophical discussion. But if encountered only once, this philosophical method may recede into the background for a reader whose interest is Delphi itself, and who is interested in answers, rather than questions. A reader of all three, encountering the same philosophical method three times, although sparked by three different questions, will be unable to ignore it, and will therefore understand that the subject matter of the Pythian dialogues is only half the story. Such a reader will derive the greatest and most longstanding benefit not from learning about Delphi itself, but from learning how to practise philosophy.

One of the lessons that readers may learn from a reading of all three dialogues is that questions more frequently produce further questions than definitive answers, and that this is how philosophy should be. The title of each dialogue, with its implication that the interlocutors will be restricted to a single question, is therefore misleading. The three dialogues are only ostensibly concerned with the topics given in their titles. A reader of *De E* will, for example, finish the dialogue having gained a basic initiation into the significance of numbers, while the reader of *De Defectu* may have learnt more about *daimones* and the possible number of worlds that exist than about why the Delphic oracle is experiencing a decline. Indeed, chapters 16 to 37, 22 out of a total of 52, are concerned with matters only tangentially related to the obsolescence of oracles.

⁵⁰⁰ 1992: 8. We can add *Q.C.* 7.2.

By reading the three Pythian works as a series, irrespective of the order, the reader is left with a much more thorough understanding of how one should engage in philosophy. It should start from questions from the world around one; it should be practised in the company of those experienced in philosophy; and it should arise from wonder and inquiry. Each dialogue presents the traps a young or inexperienced philosopher might fall into, but shows, too, that these need not spell the end of his philosophical career, but are simply part of the course. The reader at the start of a philosophical career may take a great deal of pleasure in reflecting on the young Plutarch's transformation from long-winded novice to mature author.

The wider reading experience

While I believe that the best reading experience comes from treating all three Pythian dialogues as a unit, a reader could also feasibly benefit from reading them in the wider context of other Plutarchan dialogues, such as the *Amatorius*, *De Sollertia*, or *De Facie*, alongside which they frequently appear in the manuscripts, as we noted earlier. This is because *all* Plutarchan dialogues present to the reader some way of practising philosophy. Thus, while not 'Pythian' in setting, they are roughly 'pythian' in aim, acting as examples of the process of inquiry for, I suspect, an audience of readers like Sarapion.

The *Amatorius* in particular may seem at first like a relevant parallel. It shares with the three Pythian works a setting at a religious site, Mount Helicon during the festival of love, rather than Delphi. But the way in which philosophy is practised in the *Amatorius* differs very much from in the Pythian works. In the *Amatorius*, two opposing sides attempt to win over an arbiter, and therefore the debate. This kind of contest-based philosophical discussion is also the case in *De Sollertia*, and is a far cry from the three Pythian works, which present philosophical discussion as interactive and multifaceted, rather than rhetorical and two-sided. The *Amatorius*, too, is particularly unique on account of its novelistic elements. *De Facie*, also set at Delphi, and populated by several educated interlocutors (mathematicians, geometers),⁵⁰¹ presents philosophy in action, too. But its philosophy is, I would argue, a step up from that of the three Pythian works. This is because a) Delphi is practically irrelevant as a setting, and b) the interlocutors use not the Theaetetan formula for practising philosophy that Plutarch adopts in the Pythian works, but a more strictly 'proof'-based philosophy that relies not on one's

⁵⁰¹ 930A: Menelaos 'the mathematician'. Apollonides is a geometer (920F, 925A-B).

surroundings, but by the demonstration of science and logic.⁵⁰² Thus, reading several Plutarchan dialogues at once would provide a somewhat different experience than reading the three Pythian dialogues as a unit on their own.

The Pythian works, unlike Plutarch's other dialogues, are united by their Delphic foundation, which is explicitly linked to the philosophical method they present. It is this that is so effective for the imagined ideal reader, who – as we shall see in the next chapter – may be a young philosopher, an older philosopher requiring a refresher, or a keen (educated) amateur. We may think of a contemporary equivalent as something like the 2009 essay collection, *Science Fiction and Philosophy*, where the interested reader is encouraged to contemplate philosophy by starting from works of science fiction. What we have in the Pythian works is an introduction to the practice of philosophy that takes Delphi as a particularly fruitful and relevant point of departure.

⁵⁰² See, for example, Lamprias' remark that it is time for ἀποδείξεις (928E).

Chapter 3: Narrators and narratees

Introduction: Reader meet author

We began our investigation of the Pythian works with the texts themselves, rather than from any biographical details of Plutarch's life. So we end our investigation with the texts, again detaching them from what is known of their author's life. The work of literary theorist Gérard Genette assists us in this task, since it is founded on the principle that we must not simply accept everything that a narrator says as evidence of the author's life. In the case of the Pythian dialogues, instead of taking a narrator's 'facts' at face value, we can recognise that the context of these remarks is dialogic *fiction*. Yet this is not to say that the texts' author is entirely absent from them. Named dedicatees reveal the author's intent to be associated with a particular individual. Even the fact that the text is presented to readers through the lens of a narrator, who is sometimes eponymous with the author, reveals an authorial decision.

In a genre like dialogue, which deliberately occupies the boundaries between history and fiction, we can at least see in a work's narrator, narratees, and characters – *especially* if they are named, and *especially* if they bear the names of the author and his own coterie – a kind of idealised, convincing representation of reality. In this 'reality', narrator and narratee (and therefore author and dedicatee) can be on equal footing; discussion can progress eloquently and exemplarily among men the author-narrator intimates are his own close friends; and the author-narrator has a captive audience, which never interrupts his monologue (the retelling of the dialogue itself). This author-narrator can use his own life experience, a manipulated version of this, or a completely fabricated version to provide readers with any desired idea of his own situation, personality, and trustworthiness. The intended effect on readers may be for them to sympathise with him, to take him as an exemplar, or to accept his expertise on a subject. For other reasons, an author can choose to adopt a narrator other than himself. Any details of this narrator's life will then, ideally, be taken by readers not to be the author's own, creating an effect of distancing and dissociation. In studying the Pythian works, we are not looking to find the author himself, but rather possible reasons for his employment of different narrators for different texts, and for his portrayal of himself, his dedicatees, and his friends in these texts.

We can gain some idea about Plutarch's anticipated audience from the way that he constructs his ideal reader from the very early stages of each text and throughout. This ideal reader is at least partly reflected in the dedicatee, whom the author ostensibly addresses throughout, and

who has presumably been selected for some qualities that make the text particularly useful for him. Thus, an examination of the two dedicatees found in the Pythian dialogues, Sarapion and Terentius Priscus, can give us an idea of the texts' expected readership. Plutarch's dedication of the works to specific individuals can also tell us something about the purpose of the texts. Finally, the fact that only one of the three works is narrated by Plutarch himself, and that he appears in this text alone as a character, raises the question of what we can learn about the author's representation of himself in his texts, particularly those in which he does not appear. That is to say, how does the author's construction of himself and his characters affect the reading experience? In what capacity does the author appear as a character? I argue below that, despite Plutarch's 'absence' from *De Pythiae* and *De Defectu*, he paints in all three dialogues a picture of Roman Delphi that is intimate enough for readers to realise that he has a profound knowledge of the site, but removes himself enough for them to focus on his current *authorial* role as a philosopher and teacher.

The Role of the Dedicatee

While the dedication of philosophical treatises was standard practice, the dedication of dialogues had little precedent. The nature of direct dialogue, launching straight into the conversation, made dedications impossible.⁵⁰³ In the case of narrated dialogues, the focus of the work's opening was always to set the scene and/or emphasise the perils of textual and oral transmission. To attach a dedication could have risked spoiling the illusion or creating one level too many in an already densely-layered system. Thus, the dialogue, by its nature, did not require them.

The only real point of comparison for this feature of Plutarch's dialogues is Cicero. By Cicero's time, it had become possible, and indeed expected because of social conventions, to insert a dedication. As Plutarch does later, Cicero usually puts the name of the dedicatee in the first few lines.⁵⁰⁴ The prologues of Cicero's narrated dialogues are, however, extremely lengthy, especially in comparison to those of Plutarch. Cicero's prologues address not only the subject matter of the work to come in a far more detailed way than Plutarch's, but also tend more

⁵⁰³ Indeed, the only direct dialogue of the three Pythian works, *De Pythiae*, does not have a dedication.

⁵⁰⁴ See, for example, the dedications to Quintus in *De Oratore*, to Brutus in *De Finibus*, and *De Natura Deorum*, to Varro in the *Academica*, and to Atticus in *De Senectute*.

towards the personal, as in the tracing of his own philosophical journey in the prologue of *De deorum natura* (3-4), the mention of other works he had written (ibid. 3, 5), and his narrating of his personal response to Hortensius' death in the *Brutus* (1). In *De deorum natura*, it takes almost seven chapters of introduction before the setting of the dialogue is even given. *De oratore* has the same personal focus in its introduction as *De deorum natura*, and takes six lengthy chapters to reach the scene-setting of the dialogue itself.

With only the Latin Cicero as a precedent, the fact that Plutarch *does* dedicate two of the three Pythian works, thereby moving away from Plato, indicates the importance of the dedications. But the dedications in Plutarch's dialogues take a rather different form from Cicero's. The dedication in *De E* to Sarapion includes a few vague intimations about Plutarch's personal circumstances, but to nowhere near the same extent as the elaborate personal histories that Cicero gives in the *Brutus* and *De deorum natura*. Plutarch's dedication of *De Defectu* is little more than the naming of the dedicatee, with no indication of a deeper personal relationship, and no reasons given for the dedication. The dedication is also, as we discover later, apparently given by the narrator, Lamprias, rather than the author himself, since Lamprias speaks in the first person throughout.

I suggest, then, that in the dedications of his dialogues, Plutarch is not following the precedent of Cicero. Rather, Plutarch's prologues seem to continue the practice adopted in his philosophical treatises. These prologues are usually brief and pointed, but also friendly in tone.⁵⁰⁵ Plutarch addresses a dedicatee, and frequently adds an explanation as to why the dedicatee might benefit from the specific work.⁵⁰⁶ This is often on an apparently personal note, revealing to readers what appears to be a close relationship. The explanation does not always appear, and some works only address a dedicatee in the first line, without expanding upon the reasons for the dedication, but moving directly into the subject matter of the work.⁵⁰⁷ The

⁵⁰⁵ As Stadter (1988: 292) writes of the *Lives*, they 'express an air of friendship, intellectual pleasure, and high moral values'. This is equally applicable to the dedications of the *Moralia*.

⁵⁰⁶ In line with Stadter (2014: 33), I count twenty-six dedications, some to the same individual. Prologues which address the reader's specific need include *Conj. Praec.* 138A-B (addressed to Pollianos and Eurydike, the work will be 'useful', χρήσιμον, and in accord with tradition), *De Capienda* 86B-C, *De Fato* 568B-C, *De Iside* 351C-F, *De Fraternali Amore* 478B, *De Recta* 37C-D, *De Tranq.* 464E-465A, *De Se Ipsum* 539A-B, *Mulierum Virtutes* 242E-243A, *Praecepta Gerendae* 798A-C, *Quomodo Quis Suos* 75A-B, *Quomodo adolescens* 14D-15B, *Quomodo adulator* 48E-49A, *An seni* 783B-C, *Ad Colotem* 1107D-E.

⁵⁰⁷ For example, *De Herodoti Malignitate* (854E), *De Primo* (945F).

explanation does, however, assist the reader in understanding the intended function of the work. Plutarch also very frequently follows the dedication with a pertinent quotation by an author with whose work (and its context) the dedicatee is positioned as being familiar.⁵⁰⁸

Since Plutarch's dedications differ from Cicero's, and since a dedication need not even be a feature of the dialogue genre, we ought to explore the effect of Plutarch's dialogues' dedications, and whether they differ strongly from the dedications of his philosophical essays. One key difference is that a dedication has the potential to add a personal element to the dialogue genre. This is important because a dialogue often (particularly in the case of direct dialogues) lacks such a 'direct' link to the reader, representing, as it does, the philosophical pursuits of a closed group of a select few. A work of a genre that is philosophical by nature becomes somewhat more accessible if readers note immediately that it is at least ostensibly aimed at a contemporary of, ideally, a similar cultural and educational background to them, whom the author expects to benefit from it.

Thus, although Plutarch was not the first to dedicate dialogues, his incorporation of a convention more typical of the philosophical essay guides a reader's initial response to his text. On their first encounters with *De E* and *De Defectu*, readers familiar with Plutarch's philosophical essays would recognise in their first lines the author's standard practice of dedication. From this, they would expect the work to come to impart information easily intelligible to and of some advantage to the dedicatee and, by extension, a wider audience of similar readers. Thus, as Van Hoof demonstrates, a dedicatee can act as a kind of 'dramatic character' who might 'guide the reader's responses'.⁵⁰⁹ If a reader felt – or knew – herself to be at a different level of education than the dedicatee, then she may have striven towards moulding herself like the dedicatee, using the text as a guide to what she *should* one day know. In addition, while direct dialogues only allow the reader to identify with one or more interlocutors, dedicated narrated dialogues provide another immediate *outside* figure with whom the reader can identify. This identification

⁵⁰⁸ Bowie (2008: 156) makes the observation that many *Moralia* works begin with a quotation, but does not extend upon this, nor provide examples. Prologues which open with a quotation: *Mul. Virt.* (an indirect quotation of Thuc. 2.45), *Quaest. Conv.* 612C (a proverb), *Quomodo adulator* (an indirect quotation from Plato *Laws* 731d), *Praec. ger. reip.* 789A (a quotation from Homer *Il.* 9.55), and *An Seni* 738B (some lines from Pindar). *De Genio*, a dialogue which does not have a dedicatee in the conventional sense, nevertheless opens with one character addressing another with a quotation, in a style very reminiscent of opening dedications (576B).

⁵⁰⁹ 2010: 13, 42-3. See also Tarrant (1999: 188), who argues that dedications and framing dialogues are 'a way of fixing the audience of the narrative'.

of reader with dedicatee should, then, allow a reader to be more objective, with the knowledge that the text has been written with another person's education (and perhaps enjoyment) in mind.⁵¹⁰ Thus, instead of following an interlocutor, a reader may ally herself with the dedicatee, in a position of observation. This is more plausible because in almost all cases the addressee is addressed by name only once at the beginning of a work, but the second-person singular appears throughout, allowing readers to substitute themselves in the place of the dedicatee.⁵¹¹

From Plutarch's dedications and the introductory or explicatory lines that follow (in both essays and dialogues), readers can usually gather something about the addressee and his or her relationship with the author, or at least how the author would like that relationship to be perceived. A dedicated work is clearly intended for wider circulation than the dedicatee alone. But knowing the identity and character of the dedicatee, the reason for which a text is dedicated, and the level at which it is being pitched may help us to extrapolate a wider readership and that readership's concerns.⁵¹²

In addition to providing a figure with whom the reader may identify, addressing a work to a dedicatee can highlight the reciprocal relationship between dedicatee and author. An author can flatter an addressee by dedicating a work to him. In doing so, the author can also emphasise to a wider audience the addressee's admirable qualities, some of which may be different from those the addressee displays in public (for example, a general praised for being learned and scholarly). The (often very subtle) equation of the addressee to other famous figures contributes to this praise, as we shall see in the dedication to Sarapion in *De E*.⁵¹³ But the author

⁵¹⁰ Akujärvi (2012: 344) and Alexander (1999: 10) differ in their interpretation of dedications. Referring to the opening sentences of Arrian's *Periplus* and the book of *Luke*, they see in these works' dedications a distancing of the reader. In the case of the book of *Luke*, Alexander sees a reminder that the work 'is, after all, a literary creation, a *logos* "created" by a particular writer and addressed in the first place to a particular reader'. While this distancing may be the case for dedications to emperors, kings, or those in positions of power, like Arrian's dedication to Hadrian (ch. 1), I would argue that dedications like Luke's to Theophilus, or Plutarch's to Sarapion and Terentius, bring readers closer by positing one kind of reader for whom the work might be beneficial, allowing other readers to see in them a practical purpose.

⁵¹¹ This sort of process results in creating 'the fictitious presence of the interlocutor' (d'Ippolito 1996: 23). Examples in the Pythian works include 386D (οἷσθα), 391B (οἷσθα), 396D (οἷσθα), and 404D (οἷμαι δέ σε γινώσκειν).

⁵¹² As Stadter (1988: 275) summarises, 'since proems are especially directed at gaining the interest of the reader, they implicitly reveal the nature of his audience: their social status, leisure activities, and intellectual interests.'

⁵¹³ It is also apparent in the prologue of *Ad Col.* (1107D-E). Plutarch notes that Colotes had written a work dedicated to King Ptolemy. He writes teasingly to his dedicatee, Saturninus: 'you, I think, would enjoy

can also, significantly, use the status and visibility of the addressee – simply by mentioning his name – to elevate his own reputation, and possibly even to garner the acquaintance of other important figures in the addressee’s circle. Thus, a dedication can tell us not only about the wider audience of a work, but about how the author wishes to be perceived by this audience.

Dedicatees in the Pythian Dialogues

In the Pythian works, as in many other Plutarchan texts, the author does not mention any request from the sender, but positions himself as sending the text on his own initiative.⁵¹⁴ Since *De Pythiae* is a direct dialogue, it has no dedication; however, the two narrated dialogues are both addressed to different individuals, *De E* to Sarapion and his friends, and *De Defectu* to Terentius Priscus. We shall first focus on the dedicatee about whom most is known, and whose dedication contains some personal remarks, Sarapion, before remarking briefly on Sarapion, with the aim of extracting more information about Plutarch’s audience and his own interests.

1) Sarapion

The dedication to Sarapion that opens *De E* is couched in Plutarch’s remark that he recently encountered some lines of verse:

Στιχιδίους τισὶν οὐ φαύλως ἔχουσιν, ὧ φίλε Σαραπίων, ἐνέτυχον πρώην, ἃ Δικαίαρχος
Εὐριπίδην οἶεται πρὸς Ἀρχέλαον εἰπεῖν (384D)

Not long ago, my dear Sarapion, I came upon some lines, not badly done, which Dicaearchus thinks Euripides addressed to Archelaüs:

The first point to note about the dedication here is the prefacing of Sarapion’s name with φίλε, a term of endearment never used in any of Plutarch’s twenty-five other dedications.⁵¹⁵ The fact

perusing a written account of the answer it occurred to me to make to Colotes, as you are a lover of all that is excellent and old and consider it a most royal occupation to recall and have in hand, so far as circumstances allow, the teachings of the ancients’.

⁵¹⁴ For examples of the author responding to demands or requests, see *Praec. Ger.* 798C (to Menemachos, ‘since you ask for some precepts of statecraft’, *De Tranq.* 446E-F (Paccius requested a piece on tranquillity of mind), and *Q.C.* 612D-E (to Sosius Senecio, who wanted to remember the discussions in which he had participated).

⁵¹⁵ All other dedications simply give the dedicatee’s name alone (Sosius Senecio in *Dem.*, Apollonius in *Cons. ad Apoll.*, and Paccius in *De Tranq. An.*) or, more commonly, use the format ‘ὧ (name)’ (as in *Aratus*,

that Plutarch honours Sarapion with something stronger than the simple φίλος would seem to indicate that he is immediately constructing a relationship of such closeness as to suggest that Sarapion would not to be offended by the familiarity that φίλος could intimate.⁵¹⁶ This use of φίλος would lead readers to believe that the two men are on friendly terms (at least in the eyes of its author, since they and we possess no response from Sarapion). This is important, because the friendship the author construes is with a man in a higher social position than him, as I will prove below, and the prologue shapes this work as a gift, a sort of testament to that friendship.

The second striking observation is that, as in the opening of *Ad Colotem*, where Plutarch makes a humorous connection between his own addressee and the addressee of Colotes' work, King Ptolemy (1107D-E), we are here presented with another 'dedicator/dedicatee' pair within a Plutarchan dedication. The author Plutarch was reading, Dikaiarchos, was a Peripatetic student of Aristotle, whose ὑποθέσεις τῶν Εὐριπίδου καὶ Σοφοκλέους μύθων proved popular in the early empire.⁵¹⁷ One of these hypotheses concerned Euripides' play *Archelaos*, of which only fragments survive. The excerpt that Plutarch quotes here appears to relate to the circumstances in which the tragedian presented the propagandistic play to Archelaos, the king of Macedon at the time when Euripides was staying in the Macedonian court. To understand the significance of Euripides and Archelaos in relation to Plutarch and Sarapion, we must examine the quotation itself, and Plutarch's further explanation of its relevance to the dedication:

Dion, Thes., Mul. Virt., Quaest. Conv., De Defectu, De Isid. et Osir., De Frat. Am., Praec. Ger Reip., De Se Ipsum, Adv. Col., De Cap. ex Inim., De Herod. Mal., De Prim Frig., De Rect. Rat. Aud., Quomodo adolescens, Quomodo quis suos in virtute sentiat profectus, De Sera, An Seni, Quomodo adulator. Sarapion (called φίλος) and Trajan (called μέγιστε αὐτόκρατορ Καῖσαρ Τραϊνέ) are the only exceptions. The dedication to Pollianos and Eurydike in *Coniugalia Praecepta* is in an epistolary style, and so does not conform to the usual types. Babut (1993: 208) sees in this prologue a particularly warm and effusive dedication, noticeably different from others in its length and sympathetic tone. Babut (1993: 208) does not specifically mention the use of φίλος, which would strengthen his case, but does point to the fact that Plutarch usually simply names a dedicatee, and only occasionally provides a compliment or a short comment concerning the dedicatee's interests.

⁵¹⁶ Dickey (1996: 128) conjectures that 'there is little difference between one FT [friendship term] and another in Plutarch, except for some rare terms like φίλτατε which are always taken in their affectionate lexical meaning', and that Plutarch generally adheres to classical rather than contemporary systems of address in his works. This may hold true for his biographical works, where characters' speech should be appropriate to their time, and the dialogues, where Platonic imitation may be at play, but it does not explain the prologues, addressed to contemporaries, and why it is Sarapion alone who merits φίλος, which certainly has affectionate connotations, even if they are not especially strong.

⁵¹⁷ The title is found in Sextus Empiricus *Math.* 3.3. That the hypotheses were well-known in the early empire is attested also by papyri and the mythographers. (Haslam 1975: 154)

οὐ βούλομαι πλουτοῦντι δωρεῖσθαι πένης,

μή μ' ἄφρονα κρίνης ἢ διδοὺς αἰτεῖν δοκῶ. (384D)

I will not give poor gifts to one so rich,

Lest you should take me for a fool, or I

Should seem by giving to invite a gift.

Plutarch explains the relevance of these lines by telling Sarapion that there is no point in giving small gifts to wealthy men, and that in addition the giver may acquire a reputation for sycophancy. More worthwhile gifts are literary, rather than material, and one should feel no shame in bestowing literary gifts even on the wealthy. By quoting these two lines, which see the speaker, the poorer man, Euripides, resolving not to give gifts to a wealthy man, Plutarch adds some meaning to the dedication. He begins to shape the nature of the relationship by putting himself (the sender of gifts) in the place of Euripides, and Sarapion (the recipient) in that of the wealthy Archelaos. The almost flippant way in which Plutarch introduces the lines from Dikaiarchos, referring to them with the diminutive στιχιδίους (rather than στίχοις), the litotic phrase οὐ φάυλως (rather than, for example, καλῶς), and the phrase ἐνέτυχον πρῶην (rather than something less fortuitous, like 'I know some lines' or 'Euripides says not badly')⁵¹⁸ is perhaps suggestive of his casual familiarity with them, and a deliberate downplaying of his industry. This may contrast with the knowledge that Sarapion is assumed to have, since Plutarch must elaborate upon the lines. While these first small hints regarding the relationship between

⁵¹⁸ LSJ lists 'to read' as a definition of ἐντυγχάνω (III), and it could certainly be that this is the case here. In Plutarch, see also, for example, *Dem.* 2.2, where Plutarch explains that he only began to read Latin works later in life (ὁψέ ποτε καὶ πόρρω τῆς ἡλικίας ἠρξάμεθα Ῥωμαϊκοῖς γράμμασιν ἐντυγχάνειν); *Dem.* 5.5, where Hermippos says that he 'encounters' or 'reads' some anonymous memoirs (Ἑρμιππος δέ φησιν ἀδεσπότης ὑπομνήμασιν ἐντυχεῖν); *Rom.* 12.6 with the sense of annoying readers (ἐνοχλήσει τοὺς ἐντυγχάνοντας); *Phil.* 4.3, in which Philopoimen's (self-) education is described: he used to listen to discourses and 'encounter' or 'read' the works of philosophers (ἠκροῶτο δὲ λόγων καὶ συγγράμμασι φιλοσόφων ἐνετύχανεν); *Mul. Virt.* 243D, where Plutarch thinks that his dedicatee, Klea, certainly has knowledge, since she has read books (οἷμαί σε βεβαίως βιβλίους ἐντυχοῦσαν ἱστορίαν ἔχειν καὶ γνῶσιν); *Q.C.* 8.10, where Florus reads Aristotle's physical problems (Προβλήμασιν Ἀριστοτέλους φυσικοῖς ἐντυγχάνων Φλώρος), and *De Comm. Notit.* 1077C (ἀκοῦσαι τοίνυν ἔστιν αὐτῶν καὶ γράμμασιν ἐντυχεῖν πολλοῖς). Plutarch, does, however, sometimes use the term in a more negative sense to refer to reading in a 'chance, casual' way. For this usage, see Duff 2004: 279, where the text being examined is *Dem.* 1.5. Duff (2004: 279 n. 27) also points to the examples of *Nic.* 1.1 and *Alex.* 1-3 given by Pelling (2002: 275-6) as parallels.

dedicator and dedicatee could be detected by any attentive reader, they would be appreciated more by readers who knew of Sarapion.

It is, indeed, likely that at least some readers, particularly those who lived in Athens and those who were members of Greek intellectual circles, would have recognised Sarapion's name, as the historical Sarapion seems to have achieved some degree of fame as a poet.⁵¹⁹ A tripod base, now known as the Sarapion Monument, dedicated to Sarapion and deposited in the Athenian Asklepieion, is inscribed with one of his poems.⁵²⁰ The dedicator describes Sarapion as a $\pi[\omicron\iota\eta\tau\acute{\eta}\nu$ -- -- | καὶ φι]λόσοφον Στωικ[όν], indicating that Sarapion was either perceived as or wished to be remembered as both a poet and Stoic philosopher.⁵²¹ Oliver postulates that the location of the dedication, an Asklepieion, could signify that Sarapion 'had won a victory in a literary contest to the greater honour and glory of the Savior God [Asklepios]'.⁵²² If so, this victory would suggest that Sarapion attained some glory as a poet in his lifetime.

We can, in fact, deduce that Sarapion's poetic work was appreciated by some, since it survived for long enough to be available to Stobaios, who quotes it at 3.10.2.⁵²³ But in Plutarch's dialogues, the comments of his fellow interlocutors, which demonstrate a familiarity with his poetry, suggest that he had gained a reputation, even if only among the elite of Athens, in his lifetime, too. In *De Pythiae*, Boethos refers to the serious, philosophical style in which Sarapion

⁵¹⁹ It is unlikely that readers would have known Sarapion from Plutarch's other works. *De Pythiae*, in which he appears as an interlocutor, seems to have been published at about the same time as *De E*, and the *Quaestiones Convivales* (where there is in any case only a single reference to Sarapion) after 99. (Jones 1966: 72-3)

⁵²⁰ For the association of Sarapion with the monument, on account of other clues on the monument itself (regarding family and with reference to nearby monuments), see Oliver (1936: 244) and Jones (1978: 229-30), and for the identification of the Sarapion Monument with Plutarch's friend, see Oliver (1949: 245) and Flacelière (1951: 325). The verses in the inscription, composed in dactylic hexameter and making use of epic forms, match to some extent Boethos' (exaggerated) appraisal of Sarapion's work in *De Pythiae* (396E). For more on the nature of the verses, see Oliver (1936: 92), Oliver and Maas (1939: 317).

⁵²¹ For the text and interpretations of the inscription, see Oliver (1936: 95-8), Oliver (1939: 321-323), Keydell (1941: 320), Oliver (1949: 246), Flacelière (1951: 325-6), Jones (1978: 230) and Samama (2003: 128-30). The π of $\pi[\omicron\iota\eta\tau\acute{\eta}\nu$ appears as an uncertain line with a dot underneath in Oliver 1936, but in Oliver's 1940 publication is amended to a π with a dot underneath, suggesting, according to the Leiden conventions, that the letter is 'worn or damaged and cannot be read with 100% accuracy' (for this, see Cayless et. al. 2009: 11), but also that Oliver changed his interpretation in the intervening years. The poem accompanying the inscription makes this emendation likely.

⁵²² 1936: 93.

⁵²³ Jones (1978: 229) provides the Stobaios reference.

writes.⁵²⁴ Later in that dialogue, the narrator Philinos makes a comment to ‘ἄριστε Σαραπίων’,⁵²⁵ noting that while other philosophers ceased using metre in their works, Sarapion’s revival of metre ‘sounds a clear and noble challenge to the young’.⁵²⁶ Although clearly a piece of praise among friends, Philinos’ comment nevertheless indicates that Sarapion’s philosophical poetry stands out from other work being produced at the time on account of its unique style. In *Quaestiones Convivales* 1.10, written some years later, we find Plutarch and his friends celebrating Sarapion’s victory as *choregos* at the Dionysia, an event superintended by the famous Philopappos and undoubtedly attended by many. As Plutarch himself points out, this would have been no small achievement.⁵²⁷ Sarapion’s public image, resulting in this appointment as *choregos*, would not have been a sudden occurrence. Rather, Sarapion was probably already quite well-known by the time and would have had the chance to cultivate the image of poet and philosopher. With this in mind, it is probable that Sarapion was relatively well-known, like many of Plutarch’s dedicatees, who would have been recognisable due to their visible roles as public figures.⁵²⁸

While Sarapion is clearly honoured by being placed at the forefront of the work as its dedicatee, he is not the only ‘original’ recipient that Plutarch has in mind:

⁵²⁴ 396F: ποιήματα γὰρ γράφεις τοῖς μὲν πράγμασι φιλοσόφως καὶ αὐστηρῶς, δύναμει δὲ καὶ χάριτι καὶ κατασκευῇ περὶ λέξιν ἑοικότα τοῖς Ὀμήρου καὶ Ἡσιόδου μᾶλλον ἢ τοῖς ὑπὸ τῆς Πυθίας ἐκφερομένοις. ‘For you write poems in a philosophic and restrained style, but in force and grace and wording they resemble the poems of Homer and Hesiod more than those produced by the Pythia.’

⁵²⁵ According to Dickey’s study on Greek terms of address (1996: 108), ἄριστε, like φίλε is part of a ‘group of addresses which have lexical meanings indicating respect or affection’. In other words, they are ‘friendship terms’, which can help in interpreting the nuances of a relationship. See n. 1 for further examination of friendship terms in Plutarch.

⁵²⁶ 402F: διὰ σοῦ δ’ αὖθις εἰς φιλοσοφίαν ποιητικὴ κάτεισιν, ὄρθιον καὶ γενναῖον ἐγκελευομένη τοῖς νέοις. ‘Because of you the poetic art returns to philosophy, sounding a clear and noble challenge to the young.’

⁵²⁷ Plutarch writes that the contest had involved a most intense conflict: ‘ἔσχε γὰρ ὁ ἀγὼν ἐντονωτάτην ἄμυλλαν’. (628A-B) This particular victory is thought to have taken place in the first decade of the second century A.D. (Oliver 1949: 245, n.9, referencing Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1928: 22). Scarcella (1998: 343) makes the plausible, though unattested, suggestion that the winning work could have been one of Sarapion’s own.

⁵²⁸ As Stadter (2014: 33) notes, ‘[Plutarch’s] Greek dedicatees were prominent local dignitaries; the Romans belonged to the governing elite of the empire.’ Some, Stadter points out (n. 45), had even achieved consular rank.

ἐγὼ γοῦν πρὸς σὲ καὶ διὰ σὲ τοῖς αὐτόθι φίλοις τῶν Πυθικῶν λόγων ἐνίους ὥσπερ ἀπαρχὰς ἀποστέλλων, ὁμολογῶ προσδοκᾶν ἐτέρους καὶ πλείονας καὶ βελτίονας παρ' ὑμῶν, ἅτε δὴ καὶ πόλει χρωμένων μεγάλη καὶ σχολῆς μᾶλλον ἐν βιβλίοις πολλοῖς καὶ παντοδαπαῖς διατριβαῖς εὐπορούντων. (384E)

I, at any rate, as I send to you, and by means of you for our friends there, some of our Pythian discourses, an offering of our first-fruits, as it were, confess that I am expecting other discourses, both more numerous and of better quality, from you and your friends, inasmuch as you have not only all the advantages of a great city, but you have also more abundant leisure amid many books and all manner of discussions.

It is important to stress the idea that even though we can identify Sarapion as a real individual, Plutarch's act of sending the text to recipients may, like the dialogues themselves, be fictional/ised. Introducing the idea of other 'friends' around Sarapion has the effect of immediately widening the circle of ideal narratees, demonstrating that (even if it did not happen in reality) the text is very specifically directed towards some kind of public (rather than being, for example, purely an indulgence of the author, or a personalised diatribe for one or two people requiring advice). We envisage the text, therefore, not in the hands of one recipient, but as doing the rounds among a wider group in a large city. In doing so, we confer upon it – almost at once – the same importance that its narrator does, regardless of whether it was ever received by any of the recipients it lists.

By drawing attention to this ideal cultural and material situation of Sarapion and his friends, as we observed in the previous chapter in our discussion of the prologue as a whole, the author also subtly engineers a place for himself in relation to his dedicatee and his readers. That is, readers can extrapolate that when Plutarch emphasises the advantages available to Sarapion and his friends, as compared to him, through the comparatives πλείονας, βελτίονας and μᾶλλον, he means that he himself does not have the benefit of such luxuries. Plutarch flatters Sarapion and his friends by saying that he would regard any works that they send in return as not only equal to but better than his own efforts. Yet despite the city's material resources, and the author's expectation that they should produce better works, Plutarch has already subtly indicated that this is not necessarily the case. Indeed, Plutarch has already equated himself with Euripides in the Archelaos comparison suggesting to readers that, despite Sarapion's materially better situation in a prominent city, it is he, Plutarch, who is the 'real' author and literary superior, offering discourses to his social superior, just like Euripides did for Archelaos. If

Sarapion and his friends have these resources, it is still Plutarch, less materially wealthy, who has taken the initiative and written this dialogue.

Because of this broadening of the audience, and the fact that Sarapion has not requested the texts, their specificity to Sarapion's personal needs is somewhat negated. In addition, Sarapion and his friends form an audience characterised solely by their interest in reading, writing, and discussion, thereby placing them in a category very similar to that of the 'eager listener' character found elsewhere in these works. Thus, we are presented with a group of recipients who form a kind of literary set, men whom Plutarch paints as having an interest in the texts they are receiving from Delphi. These men seem similar to the educated, literary-minded interlocutors in the dialogues themselves. That is, they are presented as being likely to benefit from instruction in the art of discussion. They are so precisely like Plutarch's 'interlocutor' type that Sarapion himself actually appears as an interlocutor in *De Pythiae*. If, as I have argued, *De E* comes first, then readers are able to follow his neat transition from observer to participant, yet another indication that the works act as protreptics to philosophy for those with less experience.

Other readers may align themselves with these educated, cultured men, with an awareness of the kind of reader that they too should be: one who is frequently occupied by reading, writing, and discussing. But even if readers do not live in a big city, as the author himself demonstrates, writing from Delphi, they are welcome to 'participate' and are capable of doing so, as long as they appreciate gifts of λόγος and σοφία.

From this brief examination, we can conclude that the dedication to Sarapion performs several specific functions: a) it honours and flatters Sarapion, a poet of some repute, and acts as a way of sustaining and honouring Plutarch's friendship with him; b) it attaches Plutarch to the wealthy, more metropolitan milieu of Sarapion and his friends, elevating Plutarch's own position and the relevance of his literary work by this association with eminent men; c) it frames the relationship between the two as that of author/intellectual (Euripides) and wealthy patron (Archelaos), but also intellectual benefactor (Plutarch) and beneficiary (Sarapion), thus allowing Plutarch to make use of his friendship with the young author, and even to subtly place his own writing above Sarapion's in terms of its usefulness; and d) it places Sarapion, revealed to be just one of a much wider set of readers, in the position of the ideal reader, giving other readers a figure with whom to relate and to whom they can aspire. By praising not only the wealth and status of Sarapion and his friends, but also their abilities as authors and intellectuals, Plutarch is

able to negotiate his own position as an intellectual, presenting himself to readers as humble, educated, and (like Euripides) talented and socially aware. Thus, the dedication here not only allows for the standard praise of the dedicatee expected from a dedication, but also the creation of an authorial persona.

2) Terentius Priscus

We shall move on to the dedicatee of *De Defectu*, another known individual, before treating *De Pythiae*, which lacks an explicit dedication. Interestingly, the dedicatee of *De Defectu* appears, like Sarapion, to have been a very literary man. Unlike Sarapion, however, whose situation is revealed in some detail, the narrator gives no extra information regarding why this dialogue is being addressed and/or sent to Terentius. If the reader has, as I postulated, already read *De E*, then it would be easy for her to suppose that *De Defectu* is simply another Pythian *logos* being sent to Sarapion and his friends, and that Terentius is just one of these friends. But even if this is the case, why should the author have selected another dedicatee when Sarapion was already expected to share the works with his friends? We shall examine here how Terentius might function as ideal narratee, and what the narrator may have expected readers to extrapolate from the dedication and its context in *De Defectu*.

It is not unlikely that some – particularly educated – readers would have known something of Terentius. Martial dedicated book 12 of his *Epigrams* to a Terentius Priscus, a patron of his writing, in 101.⁵²⁹ Although previous scholarship postulated that there were two separate men of this name, father and son, I agree with Hemelrijk that there is no reason to distinguish between references in Martial, and that it is likelier that there was only one.⁵³⁰ Martial and Terentius appear to have shared a long-standing alliance, since a reference at 12.4 indicates that their friendship dates back to the rule of Domitian.⁵³¹ It would not have been unusual for this Priscus to have supported other writers over a similarly lengthy period of time. Interestingly, Martial's dedication to his friend has much in common with Plutarch's dedication of *De E*. Like

⁵²⁹ Howell (1998: 174).

⁵³⁰ 2004: 316 n.196.

Jones, unable to disentangle whether Plutarch's Terentius Priscus is the father or son from Martial, does not commit to either (1966a: 70).

⁵³¹ Howell (1998: 175).

Plutarch, Martial draws the conventional distinction between the literary and cultural fervour of the city and the isolation to which he must now accustom himself in the country. Specifically, he too misses the city's accommodability to study: the 'penetration of judgement, fertility of invention, the libraries, the theatres, [and] the social meetings, in which pleasure does not perceive that it is studying'.⁵³² Martial's list evokes that expounded by Plutarch to Sarapion at *De E* 384E. As in Plutarch, Martial expects his dedicatee not only to accept, but to really engage with the material. In the introduction to Book 12, he writes: 'Be pleased to weigh considerately the offering, which is entrusted without apprehension to you, and do not think it too much labour to examine it; and, what you may find most difficult, judge of my trifles without scrupulous regard to elegance, lest, if you are too exacting, I send you to Rome a book not merely written in Spain, but in Spanish.'⁵³³ As Saller notes, the kind of patronage that Martial sought from Priscus appears to take the form of 'encouragement, publicity, protection, and criticism for his literary efforts', rather than specifically material contributions.⁵³⁴ This fits with Martial's flattering, but telling, description of Priscus as his 'Maecenas' at 12.4. It also echoes the kind of relationship that Plutarch constructs with Sarapion in *De E*.

But *De Defectu* lacks the kind of further detail regarding the reasons for its dedication that *De E* and Martial's twelfth book of *Epigrams* offer so freely. One reason why Plutarch cannot push his relationship with Terentius here is that this dedication is not in Plutarch's own words, but is part of Lamprias' narration. If this is the case, one may ask why Plutarch gave the work a dedicatee at all. One reason is, of course, to advertise to his readership another relationship with a wealthy 'patron' friend, along the same lines as the relationship with Sarapion. Although readers later find out that the dedication is not in Plutarch's voice, they do not and *can* not know that at this stage. So for all intents and purposes, the dedication is seen as Plutarch's own.

Although the words of the dedication are given to Lamprias, we can still draw some information from them about the role of Terentius Priscus as 'ideal reader' and about Plutarch's own self-representation. For example, the narrator clearly expects Terentius to immediately understand

⁵³² Dedication to book 12: *illam iudiciorum subtilitatem, illud materiarum ingenium, bibliothecas, theatra, convictus, in quibus studere se voluptates non sentiunt...*

⁵³³ Dedication to book 12: *imperavi mihi, quod indulgere consueam, et studui paucissimis diebus, ut familiarissimas mihi aures tuas exciperem adventoria sua. Tu velim ista, quae tantum apud te non periclitantur, diligenter aestimare et excutere non graveris; et, quod tibi difficillimum est, de nugis nostris iudices nitore seposito, ne Romam, si ita decreveris, non Hispaniensem librum mittamus, sed Hispanum.*

⁵³⁴ 1983: 247, also p256.

– and supplement the considerable omissions in – the myth about the birds meeting at Delphi, which appears, with the dedication, in the opening sentence. While such knowledge was surely common among Greeks,⁵³⁵ it is interesting that it is expected of someone clearly Roman.⁵³⁶ Indeed, the very Romanness of Terentius' name makes it conspicuous within this most Greek myth. The Epimenides myth and the associated verse which follow are related just as tersely as the myth of the birds. Thus, it is clear that Terentius is expected to have some knowledge of this apparently unusual myth. In reality, Terentius may not have been familiar with the Epimenides myth. The author may here be deliberately assuming knowledge that his dedicatee did not have, precisely to demonstrate where the strengths in his *own* knowledge lay. Naming Terentius Priscus, a Roman, and perhaps a famous Roman at that, as a second dedicatee in addition to Sarapion has the effect of broadening still further Plutarch's own circle of friends and acquaintances. This serves much the same purpose as in *De E*, where the intimation of a more well-known and worldly dedicatee demonstrates that Plutarch has retained strong connections to the wider world, despite living in a somewhat remote part of Greece. It is also very fitting in the context of a prologue – and a dialogue – where international travel is so much at the fore.⁵³⁷ For one reading *De Defectu* on its own, the narrator (assumed to be Plutarch) becomes, as in *De E*, someone with a clear knowledge of Delphi *and* an apparently wider circle of famous friends. For a reader of all three dialogues, Plutarch becomes a figure with multiple identifiable friends in high places, made all the more impressive by what was revealed in *De E* of his own less cosmopolitan life.

⁵³⁵ Contemporary knowledge of it is suggested by, for example, Lucian's *de Saltatione* 38, where 'the flight of the eagles, whereby the earth's centre was discovered' (τὸ μέσον τῆς γῆς εὕρισκόμενον πτήσει τῶν ἀετῶν) is provided as a suitable theme for pantomime. Pausanias, writing of the *omphalos* (10.16.3), does not give the myth of the birds, but simply says that it 'is made of white marble, and is said by the Delphians to be the centre of the earth. Pindar in one of his odes supports their view.' (τὸν δὲ ὑπὸ Δελφῶν καλούμενον Ὀμφαλὸν λίθου πεποιημένον λευκοῦ, τοῦτο εἶναι τὸ ἐν μέσῳ γῆς πάσης αὐτοῖ τε λέγουσιν οἱ Δελφοὶ καὶ ἐν ᾧ δῆ τι Πίνδαρος ὁμολογοῦντά σφισιν ἐποίησεν.)

⁵³⁶ Greeks, regardless of whether or not they possessed Roman citizenship, are always referred to by a single name.

⁵³⁷ In the prologue, the journeys of Demetrios to Britain and Kleombrotos to Egypt, the Troglodytic land, and the Persian Gulf (410A). In the dialogue itself, visits of interlocutors and other characters include trips to the shrine of Ammon (410B), Italy via Paxi under the command of an Egyptian (419B-C), Britain (419E-F), and the Persian Gulf (421A).

3) Basilokles as intradiegetic narratee

De Pythiae lacks the 'direct' contribution from its author/narrator that we saw in *De E.* Launching straight into dialogue, it is narrated by a character called Philinos, who took part in the events that he narrates, to another character, Basilokles, a narratee with no relation to the walk that just transpired, but who, interestingly, knew that a walk had occurred, and so may helpfully immediately ask the 'right' questions about it. This is a concrete example of Genette's notion of 'the curiosity of the intradiegetic listener' being 'only a pretext for replying to the curiosity of the reader',⁵³⁸ something that we have seen in Plato's and Plutarch's mostly silent 'eager listener' characters. In this case, Basilokles essentially disappears from the work after he has 'set up' the dialogue proper with his questions. After the prologue, Philinos no longer explicitly addresses or refers to him, and Basilokles, the purported narratee, is – like Sarapion – transformed from a specific recipient into a general member of a wider audience, comprised of anyone else who happens to hear (or, on the level of reality, to read) the tale.⁵³⁹ His role of asking questions is taken over in the dialogue proper (or the intradiegetic dialogue) by the character of Diogenianos, who voices the questions or sometimes rudimentary answers that a reader might give or ask.

4) Expectations of the ideal reader

From an examination of the specific dedicatees to whom Plutarch dedicated the Pythian works, and the intradiegetic narratee of *De Pythiae*, we may surmise more generally the kind of reader Plutarch anticipated. Plutarch's ideal reader is, at least judging by the dedicatees, positioned as something of an outsider, at least from the world of Delphi. The ideal reader's worldliness (and wealth) can be subtly contrasted with Plutarch's own more specific, 'niche' knowledge of Delphi, as well as the high level of philosophy that he has attained, *in spite of* his less convenient circumstances. This acts as a spur for readers to make use of the resources that they are lucky enough to have in the city. Ideal readers are expected to demonstrate the same level of enthusiasm shown by both the dialogues' dedicatees and the 'eager listener' characters. Ideal

⁵³⁸ 1980: 232.

⁵³⁹ '...an extradiegetic narratee... merges with the implied reader... with whom each real reader can identify' (Genette 1980: 260).

readers should also display a high level of education, at least enough to pick up the literary (and mythological) references, which open the Pythian works. This puts the ideal readers of the Pythian dialogues on a similar level to the ideal readers expected of Plutarch's other *Moralia* works, which are also liberally peppered with quotations. As with the quotations in *De E* and *De Defectu*, the quotations of other *Moralia* works usually begin directly after the dedication, indicating the tone to come, and perhaps warding off those unable to derive the connection between quote and subject matter.⁵⁴⁰ Since many of these quotes are given without any context, the reader must extrapolate, and is therefore expected to be familiar with a particularly Greek canon of authors (Euripides, Pindar, Plato, Sophokles, and Homer, for example).⁵⁴¹ But reading the standard Greek authors does not make one a philosopher. Indeed, most aristocratic men would have learnt the Greek canon of classics as children or young men. Thus, I suggest that the ideal reader Plutarch anticipates for the Pythian works is one who is well-read, but not necessarily an advanced philosopher – or at least, not as advanced a philosopher as Plutarch portrays himself to be. That is the power dynamic constructed by the dedications, at any rate: wealth and worldliness do not equate to intellect, industry (the kind involved in actually *writing*, rather than just receiving, dialogues), and philosophical acumen. This is the target audience of the dialogues: those requiring an education not just in philosophy, but in its practice. The dedicatees provide a good touchstone for readers who, presumably, also participate (or are aiming to participate) in dialogues of this type.

Narrator versus author

Having observed how Plutarch positions his audience, we now turn to the way that he represents himself in these texts. Why, in other words, should these readers listen to him? How does he demonstrate that he is an authority? Does he *want* to be perceived as an authority, or rather to show his readers, much like Plato, that everyone, even an 'expert', is fallible?

In the Introduction, we touched upon Genette's theories of voice, which warn against the identification of the author with the narrator or spokesperson. For Genette, the text is a

⁵⁴⁰ See n. 507.

⁵⁴¹ See, for example, *Quomodo adolescens* 14D (Philoxenos); *Quomodo adulator* 48E-F (Plato); *Quis suos* 75B (Sophokles); *Mulierum virtutes* 243E (Thucydides); *De laude ipsius* 539B (Euripides); *An seni* 783B (Pindar); *Praecepta gerendae* 798A (Homer).

separate entity from the author's life. It should be treated as such, even if we do possess external knowledge of the author's life, which might suggest that elements of his life might be reflected in the text. This is particularly important in the case of Plutarch, where something is already known about his role as priest at Delphi. Rather than bringing this external knowledge to our readings, we should take note of how Delphi is presented to readers in these works. Similarly, we must be aware that the narrator in these texts is not the same as the author, even if they bear the same name, or, in the absence of a named narrator, we are left to assume that the narrator is the author.⁵⁴²

The role of the narrator is, as we have already seen, bound – at least in part – to that of the narratee. The narrator, having already introduced the reader to his ideal narratee, narrates – theoretically – with that particular narratee in mind before all others. This can occasionally result in intimate addresses and asides in the second-person singular to that narratee. These can have the immediate effect of emphasising the closeness between narrator and intended narratee. But they can also remind readers that there *is* an ideal narratee, whose qualities they should, perhaps, be mimicking, or allow the reader (having forgotten the dedicatee) to substitute himself in this somewhat 'privileged' position.

The narrator is granted a special status in the Pythian works, since his perspective is twofold. Having first taken part in a dialogue (or two!), he is now apparently, as he narrates, committing his narration of the dialogue to a person *not* involved in it to writing. In the process of relating the original narration first in speech and then in writing, he has two opportunities in hindsight to order, embellish, and shape his own and other characters' observations for a desired effect on his audience (even if this purpose is not stated). He can, from his omniscient position outside of and after the action he is narrating, act as commentator, describing and shedding light on the meanings of interlocutors' statements, expressions or gestures.⁵⁴³ This is, of course, not possible in direct dialogue. In this role, the narrator embodies Genette's idea that 'the narrator's interventions, direct or indirect, with regard to the story can also take the more

⁵⁴² Cf. Genette's example (1980: 28) of critics 'coolly attributing to Proust what Proust says of Marcel [the fictional character]', confusing author with narrator, or (if applicable) spokesperson with author. This practice would seem to be more obvious in the works of 'ideological' or moral novelists, like Tolstoy, as Genette points out (p. 257).

⁵⁴³ Thus, Plutarch comments at *De E* 387F that Eustrophos brought up mathematics because he knew that Plutarch was studying it.

didactic form of an authorized commentary on the action'.⁵⁴⁴ Depending on the relationship of the narrator to the interlocutors, readers are able to assess his reliability, just as in Plato. Thus, if the narrator has set himself up as an authority somehow, the reader is more inclined to take him as a guide and accept his commentary. Finally, as we shall see, the narrator can engineer the transition from prologue to dialogue proper, having the responsibility of moving from scene-setting to an apparently word-for-word recount of the discussion itself.

The narrators of the Pythian dialogues vary, but in each case the narrator was a participant in the dialogue he narrates. *De E* is the only one of the three dialogues whose narrator is also a version of its author. In the other two works, the identities of the narrators are initially withheld. While their dedicatees are introduced in their first lines, allowing readers to prepare for a first-person narrative given by someone close to the named recipient, readers of both works must wait some time before the identity of the narrator is revealed or able to be guessed. The revelation of the narrator only comes about through his intradiegetic interactions with interlocutors in the dialogue he is narrating.

We will begin our study of the Pythian dialogues' narrators by focusing on how the author represents himself in a work that he, almost in character, narrates. We will continue by noting the effect – on the reader and in terms of the author's self-representation – of cases where the narrator is explicitly not the author himself.

1) Plutarch as author-narrator of *De E*

The narrator of *De E* is never explicitly named. Readers can conjecture that it is Plutarch *only* from the fact that no other narrator is named. Similarly, his identity can be guessed if readers already have outside knowledge of the author from the details revealed about his life (and, of course, from the dedication at the beginning) over the course of the work: he lives in Delphi, has some kind of school (perhaps), and is the father of sons (385A), his brother is Lamprias (385D), Theon is his friend (386D), and he studied mathematics as a young man (387F). This alone assumes an audience already familiar with the author and his work.

In the prologue, the narrator claims to send a text, which explains an occasion when, after repeated requests, he was forced to explain to some guests the meaning of the Delphic E. We

⁵⁴⁴ 1980: 256.

may easily begin to think that this will be the conversation reported throughout the rest of the dialogue, but it is not. Instead, the narrator introduces a further level. The discussion that he narrates (and which forms the text of *De E*) is, in fact, one which, influenced by the place, he remembers. Thus, his sons and the listening strangers, who have just been introduced, disappear, in favour of this narrative (ultimately) of a memory – a remembered discussion that took place in different circumstances ‘when Nero was here some years ago’ (385B). The fact that there are three levels of narration here perhaps makes it more logical that author and narrator should be one and the same. But we, as readers, do not know how much of *this* discussion, which is given in full, Plutarch then decided to relate to his sons and guests. The narrator leads us, telling us that the text is being sent to a friend, and presenting how the discussion transpired, to perceive a sort of ‘reality’, which is, in fact, entirely contained within the world of the text (even if the historical Plutarch *did* end up sending the product to the historical Sarapion). Thus, the narrator cleverly introduces us not only to *one*, but to *three* groups of potential audiences with an interest in the topic being discussed: the dedicatee himself and his friends, the out-of-town visitors and Plutarch’s own sons, and the narrator himself as a young man. It is the narrator’s own involvement with the question, and his own struggles with it, which allow readers to identify with him. This, too, suggests that the intended audience consists of less experienced philosophers. But the narrator’s reticence also acts as a particular lure. The framing of the question as difficult or obscure gives readers the feeling that they, too, like the foreign visitors, are being let in on a secret, not just for anyone to hear. The fact that he seats the guests, too, suggests that a brief, clear-cut answer does not exist. Rather, the question requires a potentially long and involved discussion that could not take place at the school. Only now, when Plutarch has been presented with interested individuals who will surely understand (both the foreign visitors and readers themselves) can the discussion take place.

The prologue of *De E* manages, then, to draw readers into its author-narrator’s own world. In the space of a few lines near the beginning of the text, the narrator imparts several crucial ‘personal’ details that, borne in the reader’s mind throughout, shape her understanding and acceptance of what the narrator has to say. First, the narrator is revealed to be the type of person who confronts philosophical problems on a regular basis, noting that ‘on many other occasions when the subject had been brought up in the school I had quietly turned aside from it and passed it over’ (385A). Since this is immediately contrasted with the present occasion on which the question has been put forward, it seems that the previous occasions refer not to Plutarch’s own inner debates on the subject, but to actual discussions or lectures in which he

was involved, whether ἐν τῇ σχολῇ refers to a specific school, his own leisure time, or ‘learned discussion’.

Second, the narrator reveals his responsibility as a sort of representative for Delphi. With the visitors on the point of leaving Delphi, he says that ‘it was not seemly to try to divert from the subject, nor was it seemly for me to ask to be excused from the discussion, since they were altogether eager to hear something about it’ (385A). ‘It was not seemly’ indicates that the narrator is not just *present* at Delphi, but is personally obliged to act as its spokesperson. Although he does not reveal in what capacity he speaks for Delphi, his conviction, and the pragmatic way in which he directs his guests to sit down by the temple to listen, indicate some kind of duty. It is this that subtly indicates to readers, as to the foreign visitors, that they are in safe hands with this particular narrator.

Finally, the conversation that the narrator remembers took place ‘when Nero was here some years ago’, in which Ammonios was involved, contributes to the reader’s impression that the narrator has had a longstanding association with philosophy and discussion. An ideal reader, aware of Ammonios’ high status, reputation, and the regard in which he was held, would appreciate this even more; however, since these facts become apparent throughout the course of *De E*, even those unaware of Ammonios’ identity could soon readily grasp the significance of the association.⁵⁴⁵ As the prologue transitions into the dialogue proper, we see Lamprias and Ammonios in discussion. Plutarch, narrating, says of Lamprias’s speech that the Delphians knew nothing of it, ‘but they were used to bring forward the commonly accepted opinion which the guides give’ (386B). Thus, Plutarch’s privileged association with Delphi is not restricted to the dialogue, but is casually reinforced in the dialogue itself.

As readers, then, we are presented very early on in the text with certain ‘facts’ pertaining to the author-narrator that shape the reader’s reading experience. These point towards the narrator’s Delphic ties, as well as his philosophical credentials, inviting the reader to trust in both. This section of the text also, however, reveals much about how the narrator wants readers to see Delphi. It portrays an iteration of Delphi that the narrator clearly values, Delphi as philosophical centre. This is clear in Delphi’s introduction in the work as the site of a ‘recent’ ‘animated discussion’, as well as that of a similar dialogue in the past. Its continued role as a place that

⁵⁴⁵ For Ammonios’ standing as a public figure and an intellectual, see Jones (1967: 205, 211) and Opsomer (2009: 124).

attracts the intellectually curious and provokes discussion is at the forefront of the work. The fact that this is not specifically Delphi-as-oracle, nor Delphi-as-religious-site per se, may explain why Plutarch the narrator does not mention in greater detail his personal connection to the site.

It is interesting that Plutarch should narrate *only* this dialogue of all three, which we have identified as most likely to come first. *De E* is also the only Plutarchan dialogue that is both narrated by and features Plutarch as a character. This would seem to indicate that the author did not want his character, this namesake who is a (fictional) projection of himself, reflected through the perspective of any narrator other than himself. The effect of this is that Plutarch the narrator can mediate and comment upon the actions and speeches of the character of his younger self with a knowledge (and hindsight) that other narrators would be unable to possess. This allows for a double perspective wherein the inevitable ‘difference in age and experience’ of the ‘narrating I’ and the ‘narrated I’ ‘authorizes the former to treat the latter with a sort of condescending or ironic superiority’.⁵⁴⁶ In other words, the presentation of the young Plutarch allows us a great deal of insight into the intentions of the older, narrating Plutarch.

In his 1895 work on dialogue, Hirzel is struck by the similarity between Plutarch’s portrayal of his young self in *De E* and Sokrates’ report of his conversation with Diotima in the *Symposium* (p. 199). The comparison is an interesting and relevant one, but there are some crucial differences. As Hornsby notes, Sokrates’ report is encapsulated in the narration of Aristodemos, itself then retold by Apollodoros,⁵⁴⁷ while Plutarch is narrating his own experience in *De E*. Another key difference is that Diotima plays a very active role in guiding Sokrates’ way of thinking. In *De E*, Plutarch’s master, Ammonios, lets the young Plutarch speak at great length without interrupting at all. The only acknowledgement of the speech that Ammonios gives is delivered by the narrating Plutarch as follows:

‘Ο δ’ Ἀμμώνιος, ἄτε δὴ καὶ αὐτὸς οὐ τὸ φαυλότατον ἐν μαθηματικῇ φιλοσοφίας τιθέμενος, ἦσθη τε τοῖς λεγομένοις καὶ εἶπεν, “οὐκ ἄξιον πρὸς ταῦτα λίαν ἀκριβῶς ἀντιλέγειν τοῖς νέοις, πλὴν ὅτι τῶν ἀριθμῶν ἕκαστος οὐκ ὀλίγα βουλομένοις ἐπαινεῖν καὶ ὑμνεῖν παρέξει. καὶ τί δεῖ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων λέγειν; (391E-F)

⁵⁴⁶ Genette (1980: 252).

⁵⁴⁷ 1956: 37.

Ammonius, inasmuch as he plainly held that in mathematics was contained not the least important part of philosophy, was pleased with these remarks, and said, "It is not worth while to argue too precisely over these matters with the young, except to say that every one of the numbers will provide not a little for them that wish to sing its praises. What need to speak of the others?"

In Ammonios' comment about being able to speak at length about the exceptional properties of *any* number, which thus lessens the impact of much of what the young Plutarch had to say, the narrating Plutarch shapes the way that readers are expected to react. The older Plutarch does not directly judge his young self. Rather, he uses Ammonios as an intermediary lens. Thus, while the Sokrates/Diotima relationship is a useful point of comparison, I do not think that Plutarch intended to recall it here. It is perhaps more suitable to situate the young Plutarch alongside the similarly eager – and similarly proud! – young Diogenianos of *De Pythiae*.⁵⁴⁸

In relating his own history with the question of *De E*, the narrator presents his experience as both a cautionary tale and an encouragement to younger readers that – like him – they will get better at asking and answering questions. By setting the dialogue at such great remove from the present, Plutarch is able to signpost to readers his own longstanding association with and interest in both the site of Delphi itself, and the practice of philosophy, boosting his credentials as an authority in both.

2) Other narrators

a) Lamprias

De Defectu is narrated by one of its interlocutors, Lamprias. This is, however, only revealed to readers after eight whole chapters – and several first-person asides – at 413D, where he is addressed by name by his fellow interlocutor, Ammonios.⁵⁴⁹ Lamprias' long-undisclosed identity means that readers must initially fend for themselves in guessing the narrator's relationship to the characters whose actions he is narrating. But the effect of withholding the

⁵⁴⁸ Diogenianos' arrogance is manifest at 395A-B and 400F-401A. His earnestness is seen in his eagerness to set the dialogue back on track (402B).

⁵⁴⁹ 411D, 413B, 413D.

narrator's identity, and encountering the intended recipient – the ideal narratee – before coming to know the narrator himself at least has the effect of permitting readers to immediately place themselves into the dedicatee's position. If they know that this dedicatee is an important Roman citizen (and, even better, if they know that he is a literary man), then they may be more inclined to adopt his perspective (consciously or not) in their own reading. If readers are given the bare minimum of information regarding the dedicatee of *De Defectu* (his name), they are given little more concerning the identity of the narrator, and could certainly be forgiven for assuming that author and narrator were one and the same. Since the narrator does not name himself, we must turn to what he actually says.

The narrator immediately establishes himself as a fount of Delphic myth. While the myth of the birds meeting was, as noted above, a relatively well-known myth, that of Epimenides' visit to the oracle was not, and is found only in this text. Thus, we are presented with a narrator so familiar with Delphic myth that he is able to tell a story not found elsewhere, as well as offer judgement ('it was very likely') on the god's motivation for giving Epimenides an ambiguous oracle (409F). The narrator then compares the circumstances of the related myth with the circumstances 'in our own day' (καθ' ἡμᾶς, 410A) of two men journeying to Delphi, a statement that indicates the chronological relationship between the act of narrating and the narrated episode. That is, the narrating to Terentius Priscus is apparently taking place at roughly the same time, or rather just after, the events of the narrative (the two men coming to Delphi and becoming involved in a conversation).

The narrator introduces the characters of Kleombrotos and Demetrios first, as we noted in the previous chapter, immediately suggesting their importance to the reader. But in highlighting their importance as characters, the narrator also signals his own ties to these men. Indeed, the narrator neatly ushers us into this small circle of interlocutors like a host at a party providing newcomers with preliminary information about guests who have already arrived. He has special familiarity not only with the corpus of Delphic mythology, but with these men who are presented as noteworthy. Significantly, he is able to introduce them as one close enough to them to know their recent histories and, especially, their motivations. In the case of Kleombrotos, the narrator implicitly claims to know the reasons for his travels, the name that Kleombrotos himself gives the kind of philosophy he is doing, and his feelings regarding his recent trip to oracle of Ammon (410A-B).

I suggest that Plutarch deliberately withholds the introduction of Lamprias as narrator until the eighth chapter, so that readers retain their original impression that the voice of the opening passages is Plutarch's own. This is an unusual – and surely deliberate – departure from the Platonic model, where the identity of the narrator is made certain from the beginning.⁵⁵⁰ Certainly, since Plutarch only dispels this at 413D, readers have already absorbed what has been said as, presumably, the words of the author himself.

The narrator's juxtaposition of the mythical past, in the mention of Delphi's foundation myth, and the present, through the introduction of interlocutors travelling from distant destinations, emphasises that Delphi's centrality has been a constant throughout time. As with the reference in the prologue of *De E* to the passing of time (the dialogue in the present and the discussion with Ammonios being narrated, separated by decades), the reference in *De Defectu* encourages readers to compare the Delphi of the past to that of the present. Significantly, by highlighting Delphi's centrality in the very opening of the text, the narrator asserts for readers not only Delphi's claims to a divinely and culturally significant place in the wider world, but also, in the narration of this Delphic tale in which he takes part, his own important position within it.

The narrator slips quickly and without warning from the extradiegetic opening, where he addresses Terentius Priscus, to an intradiegetic situation, where readers are suddenly – without warning – in the presence of a not yet introduced 'company' (τῶν παρόντων, 410C). This subtle transition is achieved by moving from a description of Kleombrotos to the exposition of the character's views, which are taken up by Demetrios, 'with the company having been surprised'. This introduction of the company is the first indication that we are dealing not with an essay but a dialogue.

Lamprias' dual role as narrator/character is comparable to Plutarch's in *De E*. It allows him not only to participate in the action, but to comment upon it in an omniscient sense. For example, when Planetiades rants at the other interlocutors, causing a scene, Lamprias, commenting on the action, notes that 'he would have said more' (413B) if Herakleon had not grabbed him. This is, of course, Lamprias' own subjective interpretation of events. So, too, is his comment that 'what I had said was so far effective that Planetiades went out through the door without another

⁵⁵⁰ In all of Plato's narrated dialogues, it is made clear from the beginning that it is Sokrates who is narrating, e.g. *Lysis* 203a (Sokrates), *Symposium* 172a-173c (Apollodoros), *Parmenides* 126a (Kephalos), *Republic* 327c (Sokrates), *Charmides* 153b (Sokrates), *Lovers* 132c (Sokrates).

word' (413D). Both are conjectures at best, because Lamprias could not possibly have known precisely what Planetiades was thinking, and whether or not it was his own words or Planetiades' rage that caused him to exit swiftly.

In his long speech, which closes *De Defectu*, Lamprias continues to reveal evidence of the close Delphic knowledge that he disclosed at the beginning of the text. This is apparent in the confidence with which he turns to his surroundings to adduce examples for his argument (436A-B); his claim that his theory about the exhalations from the ground at Delphi would be supported by 'many foreigners and all the officials and servants at the shrine', indicating that his knowledge is completely on par with those who have consulted the oracle *and* those who work there (437C); his anticipation that his own knowledge of this emanation will be disbelieved by his fellow interlocutors (437D: 'if this does not seem credible'); and, most importantly, his closeness to the story of a Pythian priestess 'whom we know died not long ago' (438A). Despite the use of ἴσμεν ('we know'), the fact that Lamprias goes on to explain the story in detail demonstrates that Plutarch does not, in fact, take for granted readers' knowledge of the incident. Indeed, in the intradiegetic context, the international visitors, too, cannot be expected to know of this local event. Thus, Lamprias narrates yet another peculiarly Delphic story, this one, however, from its recent, rather than mythical history. The naming of 'the prophet' (ὁ προφήτης) Nikander, who also appears as a Delphic authority at 386C (there as ὁ ἱερεὺς, 'the priest'), indicates the probable source of Lamprias' story, again revealing his close familiarity with the place and its mechanisms (438B). The flourishes of drama in his speech,⁵⁵¹ and the laying out of minute details that would be unknown to a general audience suggest that the author is relishing this chance for his narrator to display an insider's knowledge of Delphi's recent past. The multiple indications of Lamprias' Delphic credentials, which bookend *De Defectu*, have the effect of gaining and sustaining the reader's trust.

Lamprias ends his speech with an exhortation to further thought, much more typical of an author writing an essay than an interlocutor ending a dialogue (438D-E). It is an abrupt ending, which it is easy to forget is supposed to come from Lamprias, rather than Plutarch himself. Positioned at the end of the work, it allows the author to intrude somewhat. In Lamprias' suggestion that there is much remaining to discuss, Plutarch is able to push his own message of

⁵⁵¹ For example, the almost gossipy use of 'they say' (λέγεται, ὡς φασιν), the rhetorical question 'and what was the result...?' (τί οὖν συνέβη...;), and the poetic description of the Pythia (438B).

constantly engaging in philosophy to his readers. This call to philosophy may remind critical readers of the reading experience of *De E*, where the narrator Plutarch's relation of his prior experience of philosophy implicitly encourages readers to re-evaluate their own philosophical practice.

b) Narrating Delphi in *De Pythiae*

Although *De Pythiae* is a direct dialogue, it does have an internal narrator. It also includes a character whose Delphic knowledge rivals that of Lamprias, and who – partly because of this – has often been taken for a thinly-veiled version of the author. The fact that scholarly opinion has been so keen to see in Theon's speech the words of Plutarch himself simply indicates how in a work that does *not* have a narrator, anything said by the characters is taken to be the opinion of the author himself.

De Pythiae opens not with a dedication, but with two men (Basilokles and Philinos) meeting, and discussing the visit of Diogenianos, the promising young visitor from out of town, whose interests include history and art. Clearly at ease with each other, and with their surroundings, Basilokles and Philinos strike up a conversation, which leads Philinos to narrate the dialogue that had just transpired. Philinos' narration is matter-of-fact, extending only to changes of speakers. Philinos himself participates in the discussion only rarely, but occasionally comments on his surroundings, particularly the guides, in a way that suggests his total familiarity with them and their tricks (e.g. 395A and 396C). His fellow interlocutor Theon, however, speaks extensively: from chapter 19 until the end of the dialogue (chapter 30). As with the abrupt ending of *De Defectu*, which belies the author's intention to finish far more than it does the character's, the ending of *De Pythiae*, which culminates in Theon's speech, has been taken to be particularly Plutarchan. I would argue instead that it is simply particularly Delphic, and that it has this in common with the endings of both *De E* and *De Defectu*.

Theon celebrates the Delphi of the present in order to show the magnanimity of the god, in whose faith everyone should trust. From 408F to 409C, he paints a vivid picture of a thriving Delphi, which is literally in front of his companions' eyes (ὀρᾶτε at 409A), replete with new buildings, which allow the site to attract more wealth. Theon admits to feeling pleased by his own role in Delphi's recent successes, alerting readers to the fact that he, like Plutarch and Lamprias, is personally invested in the site (409B-C). But it is Theon who is the clearest of the three about his exact role. He was the 'leader in our administration and planned and carried

out practically all that has been done' (τὸν καθηγεμόνα ταυτῆς τῆς πολιτείας γενόμενον ἡμῖν καὶ τὰ πλεῖστα τούτων ἐκφροντίζοντα καὶ παρασκευάζοντα) (409C). He names and thanks two other companions, Polykrates and Petraios, lending authenticity to the whole scene.

The fact that *De Pythiae* is a direct dialogue, and lacks a strongly characterised narrator, has had the interesting effect of making readers identify not with Philinos, but with Theon. But in speculating that Theon represents the views of Plutarch, I suspect that readers – particularly in recent years – are simply transposing onto the text their own ideas of Plutarch's feelings towards Delphi. For our purposes, it is most important to note that both 'narrating' characters, the true narrator Philinos, and Theon, are portrayed as strongly involved in life at Delphi, while the narratee character, who acts as a substitute dedicatee, Diogenianos, is an outsider, looking in.

Plutarch and Delphi

From our examination of the narrators of *De E* and *De Defectu* and the pseudo-narratorial speech of Theon, we can see that all three are presented as close to Delphi, with special knowledge of its myths and practices. But of the exact nature of these characters' relationship to Delphi, we can say little, beyond that they probably lived there. From this, we can extrapolate only that the author wished readers of his Pythian works to place trust in their noticeably Delphic characters, and so to trust the version of Delphi that these particular characters created through their narration of international visits, their stories, and their praise. If they are never shown to be especially devoted to Delphic religion – and certainly do not speak as priests like Nikandros, and like we know Plutarch to have been – then in what capacity do they speak for Delphi? I think that readers are meant to envisage Plutarch's narrators not as proponents of religion, but of philosophy. And through Plutarch's populating of Delphi in these dialogues with – specifically – philosophers, mystagogic narrators who settle their guests more deeply in their Delphic environs, and those seeking knowledge, readers are left with an image of Delphi as not only a religious, oracular site, but a cultural, historical, and – most importantly – philosophical centre.

I argue here that Plutarch manages to impart to readers the idea that he has a close knowledge of Delphi without relying on his priesthood, because he is writing as Plutarch the *philosopher* in these works, rather than Plutarch the *priest*. Plutarch is writing neither Delphic history, nor sacred texts. The young Plutarch who appears in *De E* is no priest, and his older counterpart,

narrating a long-since-past dialogue, has no reason to bring his own more recent experiences as a priest into a primarily philosophical work. In fact, fellow-priest Nikandros is prevented from divulging any detail regarding sacred matters in his speech in *De E* (391E), since they are not to be spoken of (ἄρρητος) to the uninitiated. The religious aspect of the site is only one among many topics covered in all three works. The task of the reader is to be immersed in the philosophical world of Delphi – fertile ground for discussion of enigmatic topics, and full of rich associations – rather than to gain an accurate picture of Delphic religion itself. This is why narrators must both contribute to the overall Pythian flavour of the works, *and*, more importantly, serve the higher purpose of framing and guiding the discussion from the perspective of interlocutors' (and readers') philosophical development. For this purpose, Plutarch's own priesthood is irrelevant.

We have so far elucidated the kind of readers that Plutarch expected, modelling them on the texts' narratees. We have noted that the works' narrators ground the works in Delphi through occasional hints of their own familiarity with the place, but also encourage readers towards philosophical reflection, with Delphi as a useful basis. A careful reader's assessment of these narrators and narratees would allow her to see an author whose primary task is to educate; who has constantly in his mind the experiences of those (including his younger self) who come to Delphi to seek knowledge.

With this purpose in mind, the author subtly insists throughout all three works on Delphi's liveliness, and its continuity as a cultural centre by showing the sorts of activities (intellectual and otherwise) that transpire there in his own day (through phrases situating the work in the present, like *vũv* and *καθ' ἡμᾶς*).⁵⁵² These pursuits include discussion, sightseeing (which takes place in all three works, indicating a high demand), seeking oracles, mythologizing/storytelling, and exercising. It is a picture that could be seen as affectionate and proud on the author's part, but it is also daring, in its assertion of Delphic (and Greek) self-importance and centrality in a much wider Roman world. But this picture is not restricted to Plutarch alone. Writing some centuries later, and therefore through a veil of nostalgia, Heliodoros captures the same idealised Delphi as Plutarch in his novel, the *Aithiopika*. For Heliodoros, too, Delphi is characterised not just as the sacred site of Apollo, but as 'a college of wise men' (ἀνδρῶν τε σοφῶν ἐργαστήριον)

⁵⁵² *vũv*: 386A, 388F, 395C, 397D, 401B, 403F, 404B, 406C, 408B, 409C, 411E, 412B, 413C, 414A, 414B, 414C, 431D, 434B, 434C. *καθ' ἡμᾶς*: 410A. *ἔτι*: 393C. *πρώην*: 394B.

(2.26). The character of the wise Egyptian man, Kalasiris, travels to Delphi, where he ‘conferred with philosophers, of whom no small number come hither, so that the city is in a manner a study dedicated to prophecy, under the god who is captain of the Muses’ (2.27).⁵⁵³ His experience at Delphi is much like that of Plutarch’s interlocutors, as he is occupied with answering questions about Egypt. In Heliodoros’ novel, too, Delphi functions as a meeting-point for an international cast of characters. As Scott notes in his book on Delphi, the novel ‘creates a picture of a vast yet connected world with Delphi at its centre’.⁵⁵⁴ Thus, Plutarch’s picture of Delphi was not an isolated one. Nor, indeed, does it seem to have been pure fantasy. Rather, Plutarch’s and Heliodoros’ accounts of Delphi as a place that attracted learned men is corroborated by a large number of inscriptions found at Delphi, dating to the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D., which honour many philosophers, orators, poets, sophists, rhetors, *grammatikoi*, and historians, specifically designated by their occupations.⁵⁵⁵

In the Pythian works, the combination of Delphic content and dialogic form allows for a certain ‘coming to terms’ with the significant places that the interlocutors occupy or traverse, with the history that they represent and the mythology they evoke, which are transformed by the interlocutors into philosophy. There is a concern to ‘air’ ancient traditions, and to understand the place of Delphi in the wider world of the empire, the breadth of which is often mentioned or implicit in characters’ comments, particularly in *De Defectu*. But I think, too, that we find in these three works a kind of sacred guardianship of Delphi, whereby the interlocutors (by means of their author) protect, advertise, and enrich Delphi’s heritage, and the divinity of Apollo simply by speaking about them. Implicit in the concerns that they occasionally voice about how *others* might perceive their beloved Apollo (e.g. *De E* 393D) and his oracular art (*De Pythiae* 402B, 408D, 409C-D) is the idea that they themselves have come close to understanding them, and have a duty to speak on their behalf.

From this study, we can conclude that Plutarch’s selection and utilisation of Delphic narrators and cosmopolitan narratees contribute to a surprisingly detailed picture of his own life and aspirations. They indicate that Plutarch maintained – or wished to maintain – close relationships

⁵⁵³ Ἡ γὰρ πρὸς ἱεροῖς ἦν, ἢ πρὸς θυσίαις ἐξηταζόμεν, ἄς πολλὰς καὶ παντοίας ἀνὰ πᾶσιν ἡμέραν ξένος τε καὶ ἐγχώριος λεῶς τῷ θεῷ χαριζόμενοι δρῶν, ἢ φιλοσοφοῦσι διελεγόμεν.

⁵⁵⁴ 2014: 18.

⁵⁵⁵ Bouvier (1985: 130-135).

with the wider world beyond Delphi and Chaironeia, to uphold and enhance his reputation and status both as an author and as a valuable friend to wealthy, socially important men. They also demonstrate that Plutarch wished his readers, less *au fait* with the actual daily workings of Delphi and less philosophically advanced, to understand and appreciate the cultural significance of the remote site, and to use both Delphi itself and the experiences of the interlocutors there to encourage them on their own philosophical journeys, wherever else in the world they may be.

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to examine the three Pythian dialogues primarily as literary texts, within wider literary traditions. Although this involved delving into their historical context and the Platonic philosophy that they propound, it was not my aim to see them as concrete evidence for Delphic history, nor to use them to construct the philosophical beliefs of Plutarch himself or any of the men he represents as characters in these works. Finally, although there is much in the dialogues that is Platonic, my intention was not to select specific instances of Platonic thought in Plutarch and trace them to their origins, as has been the usual preoccupation of scholarship. My search for the Platonic in Plutarch was for the most part confined to the ways in which Plutarch made use of a genre dominated by Plato, and utilised it as a teaching tool. Viewing the Pythian dialogues as fictional texts invites the investigation not only of their characters, but of their narrators and narratees. In both cases, I acknowledged that care must be taken to see Plutarch's characters *qua* characters, who play specifically engineered roles in the dialogues in which they appear. I also suggested, however, that we should take note of the effect in a literary text of representing real individuals, whose personal relationships with the author are filtered through the author's own eyes in his works.

In this literary and interpretative approach, which draws on literary theory, I have eschewed other, more traditionally 'classical' approaches, such as more systematic commentary-writing. This allowed me to spend more time focusing on understudied or misinterpreted parts of the texts, like the prologues, which have never been studied in such detail along genre-based lines. This literary approach naturally narrowed the scope of the material of the dialogues with which I dealt. Thus, I have not explored the content of characters' speeches or the conflict between characters of varying philosophical sects in any detail. This has been done by others. My approach concentrates instead on the works' literary features, in particular their genre and structure; the effect that these have on readers of either one, two, or all three texts, and the ways in which the narrator guides the reader's experience.

Chapter 1 examined the genre of the three Pythian works, starting from the premise that they are generally designated 'dialogues'. Making use of modern genre theory, I argued that the three works can indeed be regarded as participating in the very specialised genre of philosophical dialogue, popularised (but not invented) by Plato. Since the genre does not survive in a recognisable way today, contemporary readers are not trained to identify its generic markers. Ancient readers, however, would have been accustomed, from their readings of Plato,

Aristotle, and other non-extant dialogue-authors like Herakleides, to distinguishing the textual clues that immediately signalled that a work belonged to the genre of dialogue. Plutarch's oeuvre demonstrates his own familiarity with a wide range of genres, their connotations, and the ways that each could be used to serve specific (usually educational) purposes. His familiarity with aporetic Platonic dialogue allowed him to create the Pythian works in their image. For the Pythian works in particular, he made use of Platonic dialogues' capacity for both encouraging readers' critical thinking and fostering their interest in philosophy as something able to be practised in daily life. But his understanding of his own audience, and his expectations of their capabilities, led him to initiate some important transformations in the genre, which expanded its possibilities for later authors like Lucian.

From Plato's dialogues, Plutarch borrowed the scene-setting and dramatic framing prologue, wherein the narrator explains how he comes to be relating the dialogue which follows. Plutarch used properties already inherent in the Platonic prologues, such as their play with time and memory, to alert critical readers of the Pythian works to the problems involved in the transmission of knowledge. So, too, did Plutarch borrow Platonic dialogues' ability to present the reader with characters, whose speeches and actions act as guides for readers. But in confronting this staple of the genre, Plutarch had some freedom to innovate. His characters are not the generals and public men of Plato, although some participate in the public sphere. Rather, they are leisured, aristocratic men, who have the time to discuss philosophy. Plutarch's 'teacher' figures do not conform to the Sokrates-type of Plato, guiding their students through long series of pointed questions. Instead, they hold back, and let their students learn simply from the experience of talking to other, more advanced philosophers. Without a Sokrates figure, Plutarch's dialogues move away from being dominated by a single character, but they are also far removed from Cicero's dialogues, characterised by their lengthy, personal prologues, and characters who act merely as vehicles for particular philosophical schools.

I argued that Plutarch's most unique innovations in the genre of philosophical dialogue were his intertwining of setting and discussion, unprecedented in Plato, and the expansion of subject matter from the purely philosophical to the culture and traditions of the material world. The setting allows Plutarch's readers to connect the process of philosophy with the world around them, using their surroundings as a starting point. But the very specific Delphic setting also invites interlocutors and readers to reflect on its place and status in the wider world. Linked to this is Plutarch's narrators' special knowledge of their environment, which gives them automatic credibility in the eyes of readers. This close association not only between characters, but

between characters and their surroundings is more reminiscent of the genre of *periegesis* than the genre of dialogue, and represents a particularly Plutarchan advance. The interlocutors' investigation of the world around them also borrows not from previous examples of philosophical dialogue, but from the genre of *problemata*, preoccupied with Greek and Roman customs, and the reasons for changes to these over time.

I concluded from this investigation of their genre that the Pythian dialogues occupy a much more important position in the tradition of philosophical dialogue than they have previously been afforded. Rather than working entirely within the bounds of Platonic precedent, Plutarch took Plato as a foundation on which to build. He kept many Platonic elements, so that his own dialogues are recognisably Platonic, and benefit from their associations with both Plato and the genre of dialogue itself. However, writing for a very different audience than his predecessor, Plutarch both manipulated Platonic features for his own purposes, and played with the generic markers of other genres, like *periegesis* and *problemata*.

In the second chapter, I argued that there are many more reasons for seeing the three works as a series than their shared setting and related subject matter alone. All three dialogues share a common structure. Each firmly situates itself at the very beginning in the material world of Delphi, presented as the kind of inspirational place which, because of Apollo's presence, is brimming with questions. In this setting, readers are introduced to one or more 'eager listener' characters, described as curious and willing to learn. These characters, naturally philosophical, are generally the ones to ask the opening question, which sparks the dialogue proper. The interlocutors, in tackling this problem, find themselves having to digress and ask other, loftier *aporiai* concerning *logos*, precisely the type of questions that Apollo does not solve, but sanctions in his sacred site. Ultimately, however, each dialogue ends not with a solution, but with a rather Platonic call to arms to continue investigating such themes. Each Pythian dialogue, but particularly *De Pythiae*, is also structured around one of the tenets of Plato's *Theaitetos*, illuminated by Ammonios at the beginning of *De E*: that philosophy begins with wonder, and that wonder begins with sense perception. Thus, all three works, in their presentation of philosophical characters, the emphasis on Delphi as a site of inspiration, and the attention paid to the actual practice of philosophy, make their shared philosophical aims very clear.

Their aims are, as we noted in chapter 2, borne out by the discussions themselves, where characters conform to the strictures of philosophical discussion that Plutarch outlined in *De Recta Ratione*. Thus, each dialogue is a veritable handbook on the good practice of philosophy.

Delphi, so important as a setting, is also a convenient way for Plutarch to introduce amateur philosophers not only to examples of philosophical questions, but to ways in which these questions might be tackled, each the unique perspective of a character who brings his own philosophical beliefs and life experiences to the discussion.

Having outlined the qualities that the three Pythian works have in common, I argued that a reader derives the most benefit from reading all three together, with *De E*, the text that offers the most guidance about practising philosophy, at the beginning. The shared setting means that the philosophical message can be reinforced more easily and consistently. An even stronger reading experience is that which is reflected in the manuscripts, where the Pythian works usually appear alongside other Plutarchan dialogues. Reading the Pythian works in the context of other Plutarchan dialogues would strengthen the reader's understanding of different kinds of processes of inquiry, and when and where these are appropriate. In other words, techniques that work for amateur philosophers at a religious site like Delphi, which readily offers topics for conversation, will probably not work in the context of a two-sided debate among more advanced philosophers, like those of the *Amatorius* or *De Sollertia*. Thus, reading the Pythian works alongside other Plutarchan dialogues highlights the uniqueness of the site-based philosophical approach that they offer to readers.

Finally, the third chapter of this thesis focused on the roles of narrators and narratees in the Pythian works. Taking as a starting point the practice of dedication, and the reasons why one might dedicate a dialogue, I studied the named dedicatees of *De E* and *De Defectu*, who function as ideal narratees, with whom the reader can sympathise. Through an examination of both men's histories, their characterisation in these and other works, and the level of knowledge that Plutarch expects from them, I drew some conclusions about Plutarch's conception of the ideal reader of his Pythian works. This reader probably, unlike Plutarch, inhabits one of the great cities of the empire. Although well-educated, the reader is perhaps more interested in public life than philosophy, able to enjoy the latter only in moments of leisure. The dedications also reveal something about their author, too, who can contrast his own position with that of the dedicatees to whom he writes. We see in the dedications Plutarch's own concern to uphold ties with wealthy friends (or possibly patrons), and remain relevant, dispensing philosophical information from his remote position in Delphi among his friends in the city, where it will be seen and distributed.

Plutarch constructs his narrators – and other main interlocutors, like Theon – as intimately bound to Delphi, and having a particular, often longstanding or apparently habitual, interest in philosophical discussion. While these narrators share their philosophical interest with the ‘eager listener’ ideal narratees, they differ from them in being able to act as guides, not only of the Delphic site, but also of the reader. These Delphic narrators are able to present to their narratees – and so to any readers of the text – the kind of Delphi that their author wished to show the world: a philosophical and cultural hub, frequented by international visitors, and enjoying recent attention (in the form of donations and building activity) from Rome. This Delphi is as much a centre, according to the Plutarchan narrators, as it used to be, from earliest mythology, through to its height as an oracular site. In their obscure knowledge of Delphi, their concern for its traditions, and the enjoyment they take in participating in philosophical discussions there, the reader begins to see these narrators, including Plutarch himself, as denizens of Delphi. Thus, I argue that through his choice of narrators and narratees, Plutarch deliberately sets up a contrast between the ‘country’ philosopher, industrious in his quiet surroundings, and the man of the city, interested in philosophy, but not *so* interested as to devote his own time to writing it, and therefore requiring some assistance. Through the Pythian dialogues, then, Plutarch is able to bring not only Delphi, but his own particularly Pythian philosophy, to a wider audience in the city.

By studying in detail aspects of the Pythian dialogues to which attention is not normally devoted, we have gained great insights into the author, audience, and purpose of these works. More than simple reflections on Delphi, discourses on Platonism, or obscure flights of *daimonic* fantasy, the Pythian works offer themselves as polished examples of and innovators in the traditional of philosophical dialogue. They reveal a sophisticated author, able to make use of multiple levels within a single text, and to use a site with which he was familiar to act as a way of attracting his readers to philosophical contemplation and discussion. For these reasons, I believe that Plutarch should occupy a higher place in the history of philosophical dialogue. The Pythian works still have much to reveal, beyond the veneer of their subject matter. No doubt Plutarch’s other dialogic works are a fruitful avenue for similar approaches, too. But like Plutarch, I recognise that those discussions must take place elsewhere. For now, I hope that my own Pythian *logos* forms the starting-point for further reflection, and raises as many questions as it answers.

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