

## The Sophist and his Beard

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### Introduction

Plutarch is not a sophist. He belongs to the πεπαιδευμένοι, a highly educated social stratum in the Hellenistic world of the imperial period, which also brought forth the members of the so called Second Sophistic and was raised with the ideals of the παιδεία. His writings often serve as a source for the phenomenon of the display oratory. Nevertheless, Plutarch does not form part of the Second Sophistic.<sup>1</sup> Philostratus, our main source for the sophists, does not mention him in spite of listing “real” sophists and even “philosophers renowned as sophists”. He groups Dio Chrysostom and Favorinus into the latter category, authors quite similar to Plutarch.<sup>2</sup> The reason for this is Plutarch’s harsh critique of Gorgias, founder of the sophistic in Philostratus' eyes, according to a letter assigned to him. This means that the dislike is mutual, neither does Plutarch see himself as a sophist, nor accept the sophists him as one of them.<sup>3</sup> Plutarch interprets and stages himself as a philosopher – in his point of view quite the contrary to a sophist.

This clear differentiation between the terms sophist and philosopher assigned to Plutarch becomes fuzzier when considering other texts of this time. There seems to be no clear-cut difference between rhetor, sophist and philosopher. At times one gets the impression of their synonymous use. Plutarch’s pronounced discrimination

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<sup>1</sup> “Second Sophistic“ is being used in the narrower sense proposed by T. Whitmarsh, i.e., related to the “form of display oratory during the period of the early Roman empire” and not as term for an epoch (T. Whitmarsh 2005, 4-5).

<sup>2</sup> V.S. 484: σοφιστὰς δὲ οἱ παλαιοὶ ἐπωνόμαζον οὐ μόνον τῶν ῥητόρων τοὺς ὑπερφωνοῦντάς τε καὶ λαμπρούς, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν φιλοσόφων τοὺς ξὺν εὐροίᾳ ἐρμηνεύοντας, ὑπὲρ ὧν ἀνάγκη προτέρων λέγειν, ἐπειδὴ οὐκ ὄντες σοφισταί, δοκοῦντες δὲ παρῆλθον ἐς τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν ταύτην. *The men of former days applied the name „sophist,“ not only to orators whose surpassing eloquence won them a brilliant reputation, but also to philosophers who expounded their theories with ease and fluency. Of these latter, then, I must speak first, because, though they were not actually sophists, they seemed to be so, and hence came to be so called* (Tr. W.C. Wright). With respect to the comparable character of the works of Plutarch, Dio Chrysostom and Favorinus, see T. Whitmarsh’s comment “Quasi-sophistic moralizing speeches of Plutarch, Dio Chrysostom, Favorinus and Lucian” (T. Whitmarsh 2005, 22).

<sup>3</sup> F. Mestre 1999 with Philostratus’ justification for not considering Plutarch (*Ep.* 73).

when connoting sophists as negative and philosophers as positive stems from the Platonic tradition. On the other hand, numerous contemporary sources give sophists a positive meaning, for example honorary inscriptions. And even in Plutarch a few references can be found where the sophist is the guarantor for the preservation of the Greek παιδεία in a Roman context.<sup>4</sup>

In the *Quaestiones Convivales* Plutarch revives symposia he participated in over the years. The other participants are his contemporaries, members of the circle of the πεπαιδευμένοι. In the following we will examine a symposium where a sophist plays a particular role. His appearance will be compared to the image of sophists in other contemporary literary works.

### 1. *Questiones Convivales* VII 7 and 8 and the Right Manners of Conversation

According to Fuhrmann the *Questiones Convivales* were written after 110; they would thus be one of Plutarch's last works.<sup>5</sup> This is one of Plutarch's two writings about symposia. Since it differs considerably in formal aspects from the *Septem Sapientium Convivium*, his first such writing, it could be stated that the *Quaestiones Convivales* create a new genre.<sup>6</sup> In the *Quaestiones Convivales* Plutarch stages the world of the πεπαιδευμένοι by reviving conversations that supposedly were held at the symposia.<sup>7</sup> Plutarch claims to have attended all these conversations and to recite them just as they cross his mind.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See T. Schmitz 1997, 12, footnote 11, about the missing negative connotation of the term "sophist" in the texts of that time, F. Mestre 1999 for its use by Plutarch.

<sup>5</sup> F. Fuhrmann in the introduction to the *Les Belles Lettres* edition. C. P. Jones 1996 has dated the writing less exactly after 96 (death of Domitian) and before 116 (death of Sosius Senecio), he also argues several reasons for a possible dating after 99 or even later.

<sup>6</sup> H. Görgemanns (DNP) carefully, S.-T. Teodorsson 2009 decidedly.

<sup>7</sup> The question of historicity has been a topic of research for a long time. For a good updated summary see F. Titchener 2011, 38-39.

<sup>8</sup> Prologue of book I (612E: ἡμᾶς τῶν σποράδην πολλάκις ἔν τε Ῥώμῃ μεθ' ἡμῖν ἐν τῇ Ἑλλάδι παρούσης ἅμα τραπέζης καὶ κύλικος φιλολογηθέντων συναγαγεῖν τὰ ἐπιτήδεια (...) *to collect such talk as suits our purpose from among the learned discussions in which I have often participated in various places both at Rome in your company and among us in Greece, with table and goblet before us*) and prologue of book II (629C: Σποράδην δ' ἀναγέγραπται καὶ οὐ διακεκριμένως, ἀλλ' ὡς ἕκαστον εἰς μνήμην ἦλθεν *The conversations which follow have been written in a haphazard manner, not systematically but as each came to mind*) (tr. P.A. Clement and H.B.

The *Quaestiones* 7 and 8 of book 7 describe a symposium that took place in Chaeronea, probably in Plutarch's house. Participants and opponents in this conversation are a Stoic sophist on the one hand and Plutarch himself and his friends Diogenianos of Pergamon and Philip of Prusias on the other hand. From the beginning the narrator Plutarch clearly stresses these two opposing camps by saying (710B): καὶ πράγματ' εἶχομεν ἀμυνόμενοι βαθυπώγωνα σοφιστὴν ἀπὸ τῆς Στοᾶς. This confrontation, announced early on, culminates in the course of the conversation making it more and more obvious that it is not primarily based on differences of opinion, but on the manners of conversation. The sophist acts instantly and continuously aggressive and polemic. He often changes his opinion only to contradict and he continually breaks the rules of communication at a symposium. In clear contrast to this Plutarch shows the reader the example of the three friends (Diogenianos, Philip, and Plutarch himself) representing together the image of the ideal symposiast.<sup>9</sup>

The contrary behaviour of the two groups is listed summarily in the following table.

Sophist	Plutarch, Philip, and Diogenianos
Conditions: symmetry of knowledge <sup>10</sup> (Both the <i>Symposium</i> and <i>Protagoras</i> by Plato and the <i>Symposium</i> by Xenophon are the origins of the discussion, 710B-C, 713C-D) No dispute between schools of philosophy (Both the sophist and Philip belong to the Stoic school, 710B)	
Seriousness but missing irony (σπουδῆ)	Seriousness and irony <sup>11</sup> (σπουδῆ καὶ

Hoffleit). This coincidence of order is to be understood as topos and may need to be challenged. See a similar statement in Pliny the Younger (Ep. I 1: *collegi non servato temporis ordine (neque enim historiam componebam), sed ut quaeque in manus venerat*).

<sup>9</sup> An exact analysis of this passage was introduced at the symposium of the Spanish Plutarch Society „Plutarco y las artes“ in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria on 9 November 2012. Since this text is in print, the results are summarized here.

<sup>10</sup> According to Föllinger 2006 a premise for a well working dialectical conversation.

<sup>11</sup> For example the god Apollo's imaginary visit at Plato's symposium where he had to wait with his music for the philosophers to finish speaking: 710D τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος ἤκοντος εἰς τὸ συμπόσιον ἡρμοσμένην τὴν λύραν ἔχοντος, ἰκέτευσαν <ἄν> οἱ παρόντες ἐπισχεῖν τὸν θεὸν ἕως ὃ λόγος συμπερανθῆ καὶ λάβῃ τέλος. *If Apollo himself had entered the party with his lyre tuned, the company would have asked the*

	παιδιά)
Obstructs the further progression of the dialogue (no questions, no invitations to participate, tendency to dialogues between only two participants)	Support the progression of the dialogue (mutual questioning, invitation of others to participate – <i>current speaker selects next speaker</i> <sup>12</sup> , open round of talks)
Interruption in order to give his own opinion (712D) <sup>13</sup>	Interruption in order to avoid dialogues between only two participants (711B) <sup>14</sup>
Depreciation of others (711C) <sup>15</sup>	Mutual respect (711B, 712E) <sup>16</sup>

*got to hold his music till the conversation ran its course and reached its natural conclusion* (tr. E.L. Minar, F.H. Sandbach and W.C. Helmhold).

<sup>12</sup> H. Sacks, E. A. Schegloff, G. Jefferson 1974, especially 712-714: In conversations with two participants a differential distribution of turns is not relevant. It becomes relevant with three or more participants. In the latter a current speaker interested in choosing the next speaker must accomplish the selection before the first possible transition-relevance place (TRP). In Plutarch's symposia, the selection of the next speaker is used to get a balance in the distribution of turns.

<sup>13</sup> ἐπιφουόμενου δ' αὐτῷ τοῦ σοφιστοῦ πάλιν καὶ ῥήσεις τινὰς οἰόμενου δεῖν τῶν Ἀριστοφανεῶν περαίνειν (...) *and the sophist launched another attack upon him, finding it necessary to recite some passages from Aristophanes* (tr. E.L. Minar, F.H. Sandbach and W.C. Helmhold).

<sup>14</sup> βουλόμενον αὐθις ἀντιλέγειν τὸν σοφιστὴν ἐγὼ διακρουόμενος 'ἐκεῖνο μᾶλλον' ἔφην 'σκέψαιτ' ἂν τις, ὃ Διογενιανέ, πολλῶν ἀκροαμάτων <όντων>, ποῖον ἂν μάλιστα γένος εἰς πότον ἐναρμόσειεν, καὶ παρακαλῶμεν ἐπικρῖναι τουτονὶ <τὸν> σοφόν: ἀπαθῆς γὰρ ὢν πρὸς ἅπαντα καὶ ἀκήλητος οὐκ ἂν σφαλεῖη πρὸ τοῦ βελτίονος ἐλέσθαι τὸ ἥδιον.' *I forestalled the sophist, who was intent on rebuttal, by saying: "Don't you think, Diogenianus, that it would be a better question, which of the many kinds of entertainment would be most in keeping with a dinner party? Let us call upon this wise man here to give judgement on the point; being free of emotion of all kinds, and proof against enchantment, he would not be so misled to choose the more pleasant in preference to the better* (tr. E.L. Minar, F.H. Sandbach and W.C. Helmhold). "Plutarch tries to counter the threat of schism (see footnote 12).

<sup>15</sup> 'Ταῦθ' οἱ μὲν αὐστηροὶ καὶ χαρίεντες ἠγάπησαν ὑπερφυῶς, οἱ δ' ἄνδρες καὶ διατεθρυμμένοι τὰ ὤτα δι' ἀμουσίαν καὶ ἀπειροκαλίαν, οὓς φησὶν Ἀριστόξενος χολὴν ἐμείν ὅταν ἐναρμονίου ἀκούσωσιν, ἐξέβαλλον: καὶ οὐ θαυμάσαιμ' ἂν εἰ τὸ πάμπαν ἐκβαλοῦσιν: ἐπικρατεῖ γὰρ ἡ θηλύτης.' *Men of solid character and culture gave it enthusiastic approval, but such as had no manly quality and were so unmusical and uncultured that their ear had lost its purity – those who (as Aristoxenus says) vomit bile when they hear something in tune – would have banned it. I will not in fact surprise me if they get it altogether banned in the end, since effeminate taste is in the ascendant'* (tr. E.L. Minar, F.H. Sandbach and W.C. Helmhold).

<sup>16</sup> The showing of this kind of mutual respect makes clear that Plutarch is the symposiarch and Diogenias is ranked the highest guest in the hierarchy.

Ostracism humour (711 C) → insults	Affirmative humour (711B, 712D) → mockery <sup>17</sup>
Contradictions, change of opinion without any cause (710B vs. 712D) <sup>18</sup>	Jointly progressing the discourse
Acting on his own – individuality	Acting together - collective

With his egocentric and aggressive character the sophist attacks the highest goods of a symposium: κοινωνία and φιλία. Because of that he is being excluded from the group of symposiasts and thus he cannot gain any knowledge. In contrast to his behaviour the joint approach of the others guided by κοινωνία and φιλία leads to exchange and gain of knowledge.

The sophist's acting at the symposium is set as a negative example against the positive example of Philip, Diogenianos, and Plutarch. Plutarch's rather short description of the sophist is not unimportant for his image: βαθυπώγωνα σοφιστήν ἀπὸ τῆς Στοᾶς. It raises immediate attention that the sophist's name is not mentioned, what is pretty unusual for such an active participant. This was already interpreted by Teodorsson as the sophist remaining outside the identification group.<sup>19</sup> At the same time this anonymity enables the reader to project existing prejudices against the sophist onto him. The beard seems to be of special importance for the sophist's appearance, since the author stresses its length. Further information to be drawn from the short introduction is that he belongs to the Stoic school - this being a sign of his philosophical interest. The attentive reader, however, notices that this is questioned by the author Plutarch since he is introduced as σοφιστής and not as φιλόσοφος.<sup>20</sup> These characteristics present a known typus to the reader and are

<sup>17</sup> It is to add here that the figure Plutarch uses both kinds of humour to flatter the sophist in 711B ἀπαθῆς γὰρ ὦν πρὸς ἅπαντα καὶ ἀκήλητος οὐκ ἂν σφαλεῖη πρὸ τοῦ βελτίονος ἐλέσθαι τὸ ἴδιον: ostracism humour since the sophist takes the flattery seriously without perceiving the mockery and affirmative humour since the identification group of the three is consolidated. Thus the sophist is more and more ostracized.

<sup>18</sup> In 710B, the sophist refuses everything coming from the stage as unsuitable for a conversation in symposia (τᾶλλα μὲν ἐπὶ τὴν θυμέλην καὶ τὴν ὀρχήστραν ἐξελαύνειν); however, he later defends the admittance of Aristophanes (712D: ῥήσεις τινὰς οἰομένου δεῖν τῶν Ἀριστοφανείων περαίνειν).

<sup>19</sup> S.-T. Teodorsson 1989-1996, s. v. Moreover Plutarch can be adjudged a particular sense of tact since he avoids a clear identification with a person casted a shadow on.

<sup>20</sup> For the first time the belonging to the Stoics shall not carry a judging since the

meant to help him to interpret correctly the following course of the conversation.

## 2. Hirsute Sophists and Philosophers

Plutarch uses the picture of the hairy sophist - or “wannabe” philosopher - to elucidate the superficiality of their concern with philosophy. For example, *Quomodo adulator ab amico internoscatur* 52C narrates that a flatterer, when aiming to please a lad eager to learn, grows a beard, wears old clothes, and simply cites Plato’s writings about arithmetic and geometry.

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

*But if he 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 number and right-angled triangles* (tr. F.C. Babbitt).

He merely pretends his interest in philosophy. He changes his look and his discourse in dependence of his victim’s interest.

*Quomodo quis suos in virtute sentiat profectus* 81B-C displays the link between beard and superficial philosophic interest even more obviously. It states that someone who was guided onto the right path of philosophy stops wearing his beard and used coat with pride.

οἱ μάλιστα κενοὶ καὶ βάρος οὐκ ἔχοντες θράσος ἔχουσι καὶ σχῆμα καὶ βάδισμα καὶ πρόσωπον ὑπεροψίας καὶ ὀλιγωρίας μεστὸν ἀφειδούσης ἀπάντων, ἀρχόμενοι δὲ πληροῦσθαι καὶ συλλέγειν καρπὸν ἀπὸ τῶν λόγων τὸ σοβαρὸν καὶ φλοιῶδες ἀποτίθενται. καὶ καθάπερ ἀγγείων κενῶν ὑγρὸν δεχομένων ὁ ἐντὸς ἀῆρ ὑπέξεισιν ἐκθλιβόμενος, οὕτως ἀνθρώποις πληρουμένοις τῶν ἀληθινῶν ἀγαθῶν ἐνδίδωσιν ὁ

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reader learns later on that Philip – a paradigmatic symposiast – also belongs to this school (710B: ἀπὸ τῆς αὐτῆς παλαίστρας).

τύφος καὶ γίγνεται τὸ οἶμα μαλακώτερον, καὶ παυόμενοι τοῦ διὰ πύγωνα καὶ τρίβωνα φρονεῖν μέγα τὴν ἄσκησιν ἐπὶ τὴν ψυχὴν μεταφέρουσι, καὶ τῷ δηκτικῷ καὶ πικρῷ χρῶνται πρὸς ἑαυτοὺς μάλιστα, τοῖς δ' ἄλλοις πραότερον ἐντυγχάνουσι.  
*Those who are most empty and have no weight, have assurance and a pose and a gait, and a countenance filled with a haughtiness and disdain which spares nobody; but, as their heads begin to fill and to accumulate some fruitage from their lectures and reading, they lay aside their swagger and superficiality. And just as when empty vessels are being filled with a liquid the air inside is expelled by the pressure, so when men are being filled with the really good things, their conceit gives way and their self-opinion becomes less inflexible; and, ceasing to feel pride in their philosopher's beard and gown, they transfer their training to the mind, and apply their stinging and bitter criticism most of all to themselves, and are milder in their intercourse with others* (tr. F.C. Babbitt).

As a matter of fact, many sophists of that time seem to have attached great importance to their hair as symbol of masculinity as Gleason convincingly describes in her examination of the sophists' construction of the image of masculinity.<sup>21</sup> According to Philostratus, for example, the reason for a furious dispute between Timocrates, a philosopher, and Scopelian, a sophist, was the latter's habit of depilation. This was a dispute that forced the entire youth of Smyrna to take a stand.<sup>22</sup> Further, the emphasis of masculinity by hairiness was given special attention by the Stoic philosophers<sup>23</sup>, the same school the sophist in Plutarch's work belongs to.

The importance of their hair for sophists and philosophers was picked up by the Cynics and satirists. Lucian describes in his symposium the gathering of a great number of philosophers at a wedding celebration. The habitual dialectic disputes led

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<sup>21</sup> M. W. Gleason 1995, 67-79.

<sup>22</sup> Philostratus, VS 536: διαφορᾶς γοῦν τῷ Τιμοκράτει πρὸς τὸν Σκοπελιανὸν γενομένης ὡς ἐκδεδωκότα ἑαυτὸν πίπτη καὶ παραπιλτρίαις διέστη μὲν ἢ ἐνομιλοῦσα νεότης τῇ Σμύρνῃ (...) *At any rate, when a quarrel arose between Timocrates and Scopelian, because the latter had become addicted to the use of pitch-plasters and professional "hair-removers", the youths who were residing in Smyrna took different sides* (...) (tr. W.C. Wright). M. W. Gleason 1995, 73 calls this confrontation a "contest between hirsute philosophy and depilated rhetoric" and transfers it to the enmity between Polemo and the smooth-skinned Favorinus.

<sup>23</sup> Musonius fr. 1 and Epictetus 3, 1, 26-31 as cited by M.W. Gleason.

to a violent fight here in which the philosopher's beards played an important role at one point.<sup>24</sup>

*Symp.* 43: ὁ δὲ Ζηνόθεμις, φημί, τὴν παρ' αὐτῷ ἀφείς τὴν πρὸ τοῦ Ἑρμῶνος ἀνείλετο πιότεραν, ὡς ἔφην, οὔσαν ὃ δ' ἀντεπελάβετο καὶ οὐκ εἶα πλεονεκτεῖν. βοή τὸ ἐπὶ τούτοις, καὶ συμπεσόντες ἔπαιον ἀλλήλους ταῖς ὄρνισιν αὐταῖς ἐς τὰ πρόσωπα, καὶ τῶν πωγῶνων ἐπειλημμένοι ἐπεκαλοῦντο βοηθεῖν.

*Zenothemis, I say, let the bird beside him alone and proceeded to take the one before Hermon, which was fatter, as I have said. Hermon, however, seized it also and would not let him be greedy. Thereat there was a shout: they fell on and actually hit one another in the face with the birds, and each caught the other by the beard and called for help* (tr. A.M. Harmod).

Martial extends the motive and not only connects the care for sufficient hair with the superficiality of a sophist or a philosopher but even questions them as symbols of masculinity. For him hairiness is a camouflage of homosexuality.

Martial 1, 24

Aspicias incomptis illum, Deciane, capillis,  
cuius et ipse times triste supercilium,  
qui loquitur Curios adsertoresque Camillos?

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<sup>24</sup> The feud between sophists and philosophers at the symposium was a topic of the Cynic symposium literature, cf. H. Görgemanns (DNP). Probably this was not without touch with reality because Plutarch refers to the risk of a dispute to emerge between sophists at a symposium several times in the *Questiones Convivales*, e.g., VII 8 713F). It would be in the hands of the symposiarch and the good symposiast to avoid these disputes and to ensure harmonious entertainment in order to maintain *κοινωνία* und *φιλία*. Dio Chrysostom likewise reports in *Διατριβή περὶ τῶν ἐν συμποσίῳ* 1-4 the misbehaviour of speakers in symposia to endanger the *κοινωνία*. Like Plutarch, he sees in the pleasant and well-balanced behaviour of a man (ὃς δ' ἂν ἧ πρᾶος ἀνὴρ καὶ τὸν τρόπον ἰκανῶς ἡρμοσμένος) the possibility to reverse these excesses into a harmonious and friendly coexistence (ὥστε ἐμμελέστερον καὶ φιλικώτερον ζυνεῖναι ἀλλήλοις). The Cynic symposium literature, founded by Menippus in the 3rd century BC, was very popular with Greek as well as Roman authors during the imperial period. The works of Lucilius, Varro, Horatius, Petronius, Lucian und Julian shall be recalled here. S.-T. Teodorsson sees this popularity of the Menippean Cynic symposia as a possible incentive for Plutarch to revive the Socratic symposium as an answer, even if only the *Septem Sapientium Convivium* fulfils the formalities of a Socratic symposium and the *Questiones Convivales* are rather to be understood as an entirely new gender (S.-T. Teodorsson 2009).



Nolito fronti credere: nupsit heri.

*You see that fellow with unkempt hair, Decianus, whose gloomy scowl you too fear, who prates of the Curii, and of the Camilli, champions of liberty? Don't credit his appearance; he was a bride yesterday* (tr. D.R. Shackleton Bailey).

Martial 9, 47

Democritos, Zenonas inexplicitosque Platonas  
quidquid et hirsutis squallet imaginibus,  
sic quasi Pythagorae loqueris successor et heres.  
praependet sane nec tibi barba minor:  
sed, quod et hircosis serum est et turpe pilosis,  
in molli rigidam clune libenter habes.

Tu, qui sectarum causas et pondera nosti,  
dic mihi, percidi, Pannyche, dogma quod est?

*Of Democrituses, Zenos, and enigmatic Platos, and of every philosopher shown, dirty and hirsute, on a bust, you prate as if you were successor and heir of Pythagoras; and before your chin hangs a beard certainly no less than theirs. But- and this is something slow-coming to men with goatly smell, shameful too for the hairy –you cheerfully keep a stiff beard on a soft behind. You, who know the origins of the schools and their arguments, tell me this: what dogma, Pannychus, is it to be poked?*  
(tr. D.R. Shackleton Bailey)

### 3. The Sophist in Plutarch's Symposium

Plutarch relates to several themes of the cultural life of his time with the character of the sophist in the *quaestiones* 7 and 8 of the seventh book. The introduction of this figure with the meagre description βαθυπώγωνα σοφιστήν ἀπὸ τῆς Στοᾶς turns the reader's attention to a contemporary discussion of the ideals of masculinity that allows characterising this figure right from the beginning. The reader should be aware that Plutarch sees taking care of the looks of oneself, especially the importance of a beard, as meaningless and that nothing but diverts ones true

attention from the occupation with philosophy.<sup>25</sup>

In the following scene Plutarch takes up some of the prejudices against sophists and philosophers, which are depicted most of all in the Menippean Cynic symposia, but also in the satires: belligerence, shallowness of speech, superficiality and narcissism. The sophist thus endangers the *κοινωνία* and the *φιλία* of a symposium.<sup>26</sup> However, unlike in the Cynic and satiric symposia, Plutarch does not let the misbehaviour of the sophist be victorious. He rather sets three good symposiasts against him, thus defending and preserving the "true" symposium. It may not be a coincidence that there are three figures and not just one that oppose the sophist because the *κοινωνία* can only be defended with joint efforts.<sup>27</sup> This alone does not, however, prove the attractive theory of Plutarch writing the *Questiones Convivales* as answer to the satirical and Cynic description of the educational elite at a symposium by having the educated act as such. Nevertheless it shows that Plutarch integrates trends from the literary and cultural life of his time into the portrayal of contemporary characters and thus renders the reception of his text by the reader more complex and multi-layered.

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(English translation by Tanja Dobrick)

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<sup>25</sup> The reader of Plutarch should be able to critically discuss the text to form his own opinion. As aptly put by T. Withmarsh 2001, 57, Plutarch takes "an intelligent reader capable of making informed and independent judgements" for granted.

<sup>26</sup> With respect to the motive of the *Cena Inaequalis* and the violation of the *amicitia* by the satirists that goes along with it, see the contribution by B. Santorelli, "Democrazia a tavola: Giovenale (Sat. 5), Marziale, Luciano", 1.4 on the website of this project. Particularly interesting in context with the Greek symposium are the two verses at Martial 2, 43: "*κοινὰ φίλων.*" *haec sunt tua, Candide, κοινά, / quae tu magnilocus nocte dieque sonas?*

<sup>27</sup> Plutarch would probably contradict Dio Chrysostom in his judgement that one good symposiast alone could steer all other guests to a harmonious coexistence (see footnote 24) because he sets the successful joint action of the three friends against the futile individual and egotistical behaviour of the sophist.

Literature

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