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The complementarity of Plutarch's *Πῶς δεῖ τὸν νέον ποιημάτων ἀκούειν* and *Περὶ τοῦ ἀκούειν*: Two educational 'sessions' (re)visited*

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Introduction

Πῶς δεῖ τὸν νέον ποιημάτων ἀκούειν and *Περὶ τοῦ ἀκούειν*[1] belong to the wider group of Plutarch's educational works. In fact they are considered to be among the essays which are most representative of Plutarch's pedagogic convictions. The first reason that might encourage us to bring the two treatises into close correlation, and even suspect that they might be complementary, is the similarity of their titles, and most specifically the use of the same term *ἀκούειν*. Even though we cannot be certain whether the titles are owed to Plutarch himself, the suggestion of the complementarity of the two essays is not unjustified. The *second* essay in particular is likely to have the title that Plutarch himself would have given or did give it, if we consider the first line of the essay itself, where '*περὶ τοῦ ἀκούειν*' is explicitly stated: '*τὴν γενομένην μοι σχολὴν περὶ τοῦ ἀκούειν, ὦ Νίκανδρε, ἀπέσταλκά σοι γράψας*' (37C); and whoever gave the *first* work its title accurately reflected the emphasis of both essays, given the frequency of the word *ἀκούειν* throughout. On the other hand, the issue of the dating of the two essays does not seem particularly relevant to the suggestion of their 'companionship'. Although we cannot

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[1] The Latin equivalents of the Greek titles are *Quomodo adolescens poetas audire debeat* and *De recta ratione audiendi* respectively. For reasons of convenience the two essays will be referred to throughout the paper by the abbreviated form of their Latin titles *De Audiendis Poetis* and *De Recta* respectively.

determine fixed dates for their composition,[2] nor even place them in chronological order, it is not that important which one was written first and which followed. What is important is how the two texts interact and illustrate their common Plutarchan provenance.

The verb *ἀκούειν* in the framework of the two essays acquires the specific meaning of not just 'to hear something', but at the same time 'to understand and grasp the full implications of what one hears'.[3] Therefore, Plutarch places a good deal of emphasis on the sense of hearing by regarding it as a major pedagogic tool which can enable students, young and more mature, to master the content of the subject taught to them. But what really distinguishes the two essays? Why are they not presented as one, since they are both interested in *ἀκούειν*? In the two essays Plutarch deals with a different issue each time: in the *De Audiendis Poetis* he teaches the young man how he should study poetry, while in the *De Recta* he instructs a more mature student on how to attend philosophical lectures in the proper way. The presentation of these two related issues in two separate works offers us the opportunity to examine the two texts comparatively and draw certain metatextual conclusions. At this point, I should clarify that when I use the term 'metatextuality' I mainly refer to the way the interaction of teaching and learning has implications for how the texts themselves are functioning or may function.

Scholarly approaches to the two texts present the following limitations. First, the *De Recta* does not seem to have received the attention it deserves; for it lacks any full treatment of its pedagogic background, and any interlinking with corresponding educational or moralistic ideas amplified in the rest of the

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[2] Zadorojnyi 2002: 297-8, discusses the dating of *De Audiendis Poetis* based on textual indications; with further bibliography (note 5). Also Jones 1966: 117.

[3] See *LSJ* s.v. ἀκούω: II.3. *hear and understand, κλύοντες οὐκ ἤκουον* A.*Pr.*448, cf. *Ch.*5, Ar.*Ra.*1173; *τὸ μὴ πάντας πάντων ἀκούειν* S.E.*M.* 1.37. IV. *understand, take* in a certain sense, Jul.*Or.*4.147a; esp. in Scholl., as Sch.E.*Or.*333; τι ἐπί τινος Sch.E.*Hipp.*73. Note also that the particular verb can have the meaning of 'be the pupil of' (*ἀκούω τινός*) II 4, which is revealing of the educational-pedagogic dimension that the word could bear.

Plutarchan corpus or even beyond that.[4] Second, studies of the *De Audiendis Poetis* are mainly confined to analysis of its structure,[5] to the association of the treatise with Platonic notions of *paideia*,[6] or to the issue of the employment of poetic quotations in the essay.[7] It is indeed surprising that such striking similarities between the two texts as those seen above have not led any scholar to examine them comparatively. The present paper aims to fill this gap and show that the two essays work complementarily on four levels at least, each level being treated in a distinct section of this paper. In the first section, I shall discuss the issue of the addressees of the two essays, which is important for how the pedagogic content of the *De Audiendis Poetis* prepares the ground for that of the *De Recta*. In the second section, I seek to explore the way in which poetry is presented as the preliminary stage of philosophy. The third section will touch on the correlation of the role of the poet and the philosopher as both being teachers of the young. The resemblances between poetic and philosophical mechanisms will be the subject of investigation in the fourth section. The interrelationship of the two texts on these four levels will reveal the manner in which Plutarch shows an obvious predilection for philosophy in relation to poetry. For, what we shall find stated in the case of *poet – poetry – receiver/student of poetry* in the first essay, we shall then be able to trace, but with substantial development, in the triptych of *philosopher – philosophy – receiver/student of philosophy* in the second one. This fits Plutarch's general objective of highlighting the superior status of philosophy in comparison with every other kind of art/science; he himself after all considers philosophy to be the '*τέχνη τοῦ βίου*' – the art of life (613B). Thus, we shall additionally in some cases cast an eye on Plutarch's self-presentation as a philosopher, based on some common ground that is to be found between the

[4] The scholarly references to the *De Recta* are restricted to concise résumés of the content of the treatise in basic handbooks of the studies of Plutarch, e.g. Westaway (1922) 81-4. I discuss elsewhere the important connection between the *De Recta* and the *De Profectibus in Virtute* (DPhil *thesis*).

[5] Schenkeveld 1982.

[6] Zadorojnyi 2002; D' Ippolito 1995; Hershbell 1995.

[7] Papadi (PhD *Thesis*): 19-44; Carrara 1989; de Wet 1988: 16-7.

two essays and the *Quaestiones Convivales*. Finally, I wish to end this paper with certain concluding remarks and metatextual suggestions.

Setting the Common Ground – The Addressees of the Two Texts

One aspect that illuminates the relationship between the *De Audiendis Poetis* and *De Recta* is the different addressee of each essay. The first treatise is dedicated to Marcus Sedatus,[8] who, just like Plutarch, is the father of a young man – '*οὑμός τε τὸ νῦν Σώκλαρός ἐστι καὶ ὁ σὸς Κλέανδρος*' (15A). Plutarch offers Sedatus an aggregate of pieces of advice that he should keep in mind and try to pass on to his son so as to enable him to receive poetry in the best possible way, and thereby benefit himself. Plutarch is (self-)presented as the father of a son, which informs the way he instructs another father on how to initiate his son into the right way of listening to poetry. This becomes significant in four ways. First, the age of both dedicatee and dedicator – they must have been quite mature – helps to lend *gravitas* and prestige to the advice offered, since this is the outcome of experience acquired over a long period of life.[9] Second, the fact that the advice is shared between two fathers gives the text a paternal quality, bringing out an intimate element in the anxiety that a father feels and should feel when it comes to the proper formation of his son's character. As a consequence, there follows the third outcome, relating to the crucial role that a father plays in his son's moral development.[10] Fourth, Plutarch's resort to turning to a father is an implicit

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[8] Zadorojnyi 2002: 305 appositely contends that Sedatus (or Sedatius) may serve as a symbol of the fusion of the Greek and Roman world.

[9] The mature age of both Plutarch and Sedatus is important due to its association with experience, a vital notion in Plutarch's pedagogic thinking. In the *An Seni*, Plutarch stresses the significance of *ἐμπειρία* as a didactic tool applied by the aged politician when he guides the younger one in the art of statesmanship. The pedagogic dimension of experience is an issue I treat in detail elsewhere.

[10] Remarks on the paramount role of a father in raising his child are amplified in the *De Liberis Educandis* (although there are serious doubts about the authenticity of the essay). On this, see Albini 1997: esp. 63-6. For the role of the parental model in the formation of the son's *ēthos*, see also *Republic*, 550a-b.

though tangible indication that the indirect recipient of the advice is indeed a young man, who most probably has not yet gained the maturity of thought needed to accept instruction without his father as an intermediary.

In contrast to this, in the *De Recta* the age of the addressee has changed. In this case the whole set of advice is directed and applied to a young man who is now capable of receiving Plutarch's advice directly, because he is more mature and experienced, having already assumed the *toga virilis*. The striking thing to note at this point is that Nicander's transition to manhood and adulthood is marked by the retention of his *sophrosynē* and control of passions (37D-F), the very traits that Sedatus' son, and by implication also Plutarch's, still lack due to their youthfulness – we learn that they are impetuous and lively in everything (15B). Therefore, Nicander, as a mature student of philosophy, possesses the self-contained disposition which Cleander, as a student of poetry and hence still a beginner in philosophy, does not yet have.[11]

At the end of the *De Audiendis Poetis* Plutarch draws the conclusion that the young man who has been trained to listen to and understand poetry in the correct way is now qualified in advance in how to accept philosophy 'in a spirit of friendship and good will and familiarity'.[12] Therefore, we gather that poetry

[11] On the matter of the addressee of the *De Audiendis Poetis*, based on the structure of the essay, Schenkeveld 1982: 62, argues that the work is not 'a theoretical dissertation' but 'a very practical guide for an educator and his son', so that 'the young boy also is expected to read this treatise'. I agree that the boy might at some point later in his pedagogic training come across the treatise, but I have hesitations in accepting that the essay is directly transmitted to both father and son. The mediation of the father in the address on the one hand, and the contrast with the *De Recta* case, which is straightforwardly directed to the more mature Nicander on the other, support my doubts about Schenkeveld's view. Schenkeveld actually softens the assertiveness of his former opinion in the very last paragraph of his paper (71), where he abruptly claims that Sedatus could share the treatise with his son 'after approval'. But does this 'after approval' not again presuppose a former stage of reading carried out by the father, and a second stage by the son?

[12] All the translations are taken from the Loeb edition, in this case Babbitt 1927: Vol. I.

is a pre-stage that leads into the realm of philosophy – a *propaideia* for philosophy – ‘*προπαιδευθεὶς εὐμενὴς καὶ φίλος καὶ οἰκεῖος ὑπὸ ποιητικῆς ἐπὶ φιλοσοφίαν προπέμπηται*’ (37B). In the beginning of the *De Recta* Plutarch advises the more mature addressee on how to get down to the real stuff – philosophy – now that he is well-equipped:

> *οὕτω σε δεῖ πολὺν χρόνον ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ παρατρεφόμενον καὶ πᾶν μάθημα καὶ ἄκουσμα παιδικὸν ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς ἐθισθέντα προσφέρεσθαι λόγῳ φιλοσόφῳ μεμιγμένον, εὐμενῆ καὶ οἰκεῖον ἥκειν εἰς φιλοσοφίαν […]* (37F).

The tendency to speak of complementarity is strengthened by the fact that the close parallels cited above constitute the concluding passage of the one essay and the introductory passage of the other. What is more, the linking point of the two texts becomes obvious in these verbal similarities, which suggest that the two treatises could be considered as ‘companion essays’, and not just that they derive from a similarity of authorial mindset. Still, in the case of the *De Recta* the implications are traced even further, with the opinion that philosophy *alone* can array young men in the manly and truly perfect adornment that comes from reason – ‘*ἣ μόνη τὸν ἀνδρεῖον καὶ τέλειον ὡς ἀληθῶς ἐκ λόγου τοῖς νέοις περιτίθησι κόσμον*’ (37F).

Now that we have seen that the two texts indeed work closely together, we take this as our premise to move on and investigate their textual connection more deeply. As I have already mentioned, Plutarch’s major point in the *De Audiendis Poetis* is that poetry is a proper preliminary training, preparing the ground for one’s introduction to philosophy. The question that inevitably arises is why and in what way exactly does poetry become the pre-stage to philosophy. To put it differently, how do the qualities that poetry can offer in the *De Audiendis Poetis* resemble and anticipate the qualities that philosophy exhibits in the *De Recta*? And in what manner does the correct understanding of poetry on the student’s part in the one essay compare to the correct attention to philosophy in the other?

Poetry as a Pre-stage to Philosophy

We may begin with the crucial point of the fusion of poetry and philosophy. Though an ardent Platonist in his philosophical thought, Plutarch did not follow blindly all Platonic convictions. On the contrary, he took the opportunity to alter his line from the Platonic School when he felt the need to do so.[13] In the case of the two educational essays under examination we are confronted with an apt example of this divergence from Plato. Plato believed that there is a serious contradiction between poetry and philosophy, and justified his opposition to poetry on the grounds that the nature of its imitation was removed 'three stages away from truth' (*'τρίτον ἀπὸ τῆς ἀληθείας', Republic* 602c). According to Plato, poets should even be excluded from the ideal society,[14] since they describe the immorality of the gods by attributing to them human deficiencies and shortcomings.[15] As a result, poetic narrations pervert the morality of humans and enslave young men to their passions and desires by diminishing their *sophrosynē* (self-control), a paramount element of *aretē*.

Plutarch in the *De Audiendis Poetis* gives a rather different response to the extreme Platonic view.[16] He does not accept that poetry should be abandoned

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[13] Cf. Hershbell 1995: 210. Relevant to this is the suggestion of Plutarch's philosophical 'eclecticism'.

[14] *Republic II* and *III* (esp. 377a-398b).

[15] Zadorojnyi 2002: 299-300, with full references to the Platonic works. Remember also Plutarch's irritation about the way that poets annoy the audience with their naive accounts of the gods, *Per.* 39.2. On how Plutarch treats the role of music and poetry in the life of his statesman, see Bowie: 2004. Cf. also the exclusion of music and poetry from the symposium of the learned men, and the preference for discussions between the banqueters, in *Protagoras* 347de-348a.

[16] Zadorojnyi 2002 interprets Plutarch's stance towards Platonism in the *De Audiendis Poetis* by trying to reduce the contradiction between the two philosophers. He claims that Plutarch's treatment is in fact compatible with the Platonic views and not so hostile towards his master's. Zadorojnyi ponders the question of why Plutarch avoids mentioning the fact that Plato supported the banishment of poets from his ideal society, a point that he does not take as a coincidence (300); and he then distinguishes the two stages of the Platonic educational programme as expanded in the *Republic*, first the pre-reflective/pre-philosophical stage and

and, though he recognises the serious danger that the wrong study of poetry could cause to the young,[17] he even then insists that students could derive real benefit from it. This could be achieved '*ἂν [...] τυγχάνῃ παιδαγωγίας ὀρθῆς ἡ ἀκρόασις*' (15C). In the course of this pedagogical process the role of the instructor is, of course, of paramount importance, since he is called to act as an 'indispensable mediator',[18] so as to make sure that the artistic representation is being received by the student in the appropriate ethical manner. In an article which examines the Euripidean quotations that are integrated in the *De Audiendis Poetis*, Paolo Carrara argues that Plutarch is favourable towards poetry for the one and only reason that the study of the Classical poets constituted a basic part of his contemporary educational practice.[19] No-one could deny that Homer and Euripides were broadly studied in the Greco-Roman world of Plutarch's time;[20] nevertheless, Carrara's explanation would seem to be restricting Plutarch's interest in poetry and reducing the stature of its employment to mere compliance with contemporary educational norms. Carrara's view might have been reasonable if Plutarch had simply inserted Homeric and Euripidean material just for the sake of it without proceeding to a personal corroboration of their application and to the

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then the fully rational/philosophical stage (301). It is from the second educational stage that Plato excluded poetry, considering it as a rival to philosophy (302). Plutarch in the *De Audiendis Poetis* is dealing with this former, pre-reflective Platonic stage, of which a regulated form of poetry was still part, given that it remained subordinate to normative ethics (302-3). Plutarch's reconciliation with his master could be also reflected in the non-coincidental silence that Plutarch maintains about poetry in his political essays. D'Ippolito 1995: 125 observes that Plutarch mentions neither the positive nor the negative function of poetry in statesmanship, and regards this as a 'damnatio memoriae'.

[17] 'Wrong' in the sense that it is misinterpreted and understood in the wrong way. That is why Plutarch proposes a proper manner of conceiving poetry.

[18] Cf. Van der Stockt 2005: 141-2, who classifies the imitation encountered in the *De Audiendis Poetis* under the type of what he calls 'passive *mimēsis*', a category that owes its name to the lack of innate awareness of ethical calibre on the one hand, and to the lack of imperative repulsion from ethical ugliness on the other. According to Van der Stockt, passive mimesis is reasonably communicated via the authoritative presence of the instructor.

[19] Carrara 1989: 450.

[20] Morgan 1998: chapter 2.

establishment of a philosophical explanation for his choice. But is this the case? As I shall demonstrate below, Plutarch had a very rigid aesthetic and philosophic agenda while writing his two essays.

When clarifying the nature of poetry,[21] Plutarch states that the mythological core is the fundamental requirement in the production of high-quality poetry, since poetry is based on the fabulous and fictitious. In the framework of this explanation Plutarch strikingly employs the example of Socrates – the philosopher *par excellence* – and presents him as accepting that there is no poetic composition that does not rest on falsehood (16C). Through this use of the paramount philosopher, Plutarch provides some justification for the false element that is inherent in poetry and tries to show that poetic falsehood is not necessarily negative, since, as he says, mythological diction makes poetry more pleasurable. Plutarch concludes by proposing that poetry, with its mythological-pleasurable nature, could be combined with the *χρήσιμον* and *σωτήριον* element of philosophy (14F).[22] Therefore, prospective students of philosophy should not avoid poetry but consider it as a suitable testing-ground, since they should be able to seek the profitable in the pleasurable, a quite difficult task, which examines the strength of their *sophrosynē*. In short, the Plutarchan student, if he succeeds in reading poetry in the correct way, then gains in essence a double profit: he first manages to enhance his self-constraint and master the sentiments that poetry is liable to evoke in the audience, and he secondly embarks on philosophy having already pre-trained and tested himself in a rather challenging area. In this regard poetry is the preliminary examination taken by the student, in which, should he prove successful, he gains the ticket to the real *σπουδή*, philosophy.

Plutarch, of course, is encouraging the view that philosophy should be mixed with poetic myth for the obvious reason that in this way learning becomes light and agreeable to the young – '*ἐλαφρὰν καὶ προσφιλῆ παρέχει τοῖς νέοις τὴν*

[21] For an impressive bibliographical accumulation of works on Plutarch's aesthetic views, see D' Ippolito 1995: 125-7, note 8.

[22] See Klotz 2007: 657.

μάθησιν' (15F). In the complementary essay *De Recta* Plutarch spends a whole chapter (ch.17, 47B-D) advising the student not to give up philosophy nor abandon its study due to the difficulty of the subject, but to persist and stick to the task until he is accustomed to it. He therefore acknowledges the 'harshness' in studying philosophy and resorts to a practical solution which will extenuate and mitigate philosophical grandeur through the light use of myth. In this manner Plutarch intimates his own kind of philosophy which is aptly demonstrated in the First Problem of the First Book of the *Quaestiones Convivales*. Here, in examining whether philosophical discussions have a place in symposia, Plutarch suggests that philosophy should be present in all kinds of pleasurable activities and entertainment. The scholars (*φιλόλογοι*) are encouraged to mix philosophy with myths, so as to adapt the content of the conversation to the light atmosphere of the environment and at the same time to make the object of the discussion approachable to participants of all intellectual levels – both learned and non-learned should be able to follow (613D-E). So, what Plutarch claims separately in the two educational essays is combined in the *QC* and presented as a whole – another indication of the complementarity of the *De Audiendis Poetis* and *De Recta*.

That correctly comprehending poetry could be advantageous for the prospective student of philosophy is to be seen in the following: when, in Plutarch's opinion, the receiver of poetry is aware of the fact that poetic production is based on imitation, then he can and should control the passions that arise from his emotional attachment to the *μίμημα* (16E-F). Plutarch's confidence that the alert reader will be able to detach himself from poetry's negative effects is verbally communicated by his employment of the future tense (16E – *οὐδὲν πείσεται*, *οὐδὲ πιστεύσει*, *ἐπιλήψεται* (twice), *παύσεται*, *οὐκ ὀκνήσει*). What is more, this awareness of the reader would itself assume that the reader as well (and not only Plutarch) has accepted much of the Platonic argument, especially from *Republic* 10, dealing with the pre-philosophical stage of education from which poetry is not yet excluded.[23] As for his

[23] This builds on the views of Zadorojnyi, discussed in note 16.

interpretation of *mimēsis*, Plutarch seems to be deviating from both the Platonic and the Aristotelian version of this. Plato held *mimēsis* to be an imitation of the ideal world (*Republic II*, *III*, *X*), whereas Aristotle associated it with literary representation (*Poetics,* 1447a 8-14448b 38, 1450a 19-21).[24] Plutarch is mainly following the Platonic line in his own definition of *mimēsis* but with the crucial difference that, contrary to his predecessor, Plutarch included a pragmatic element in his view of imitation; poetry is for him tightly connected with literary and philosophical *paideia* in the sense that he considers it feasible to be employed in real life and produce concrete results in the educational process. This is fully in accord with Plutarch's pragmatic technique applied in the entire corpus of his work: in his *Lives*, *Moralia*, and *Quaestiones Convivales* the philosopher from Chaeronea is consistently interested in how his admonition will be fulfilled in his audience's real lives.

The effectiveness of *sophrosynē* against the delusive power of poetry which is described in the *De Audiendis Poetis* (taking the specific form of an artistic *sophrosynē* in this context) is reflected in the *De Recta* at a different level. Here Plutarch teaches the major importance of the student remaining still while the speaker presents his ideas; he should not react[25] or be excited by his words even if he disagrees with him, but he should keep silent, show patience and respect, and hold back any objections until the speaker finishes (39C-D). This exhibition of *sophrosynē* suppresses the arrogance of the young and their *philotimia*. Furthermore, by listening cheerfully and affably ('*ἵλεων καὶ πρᾶον*', 40B) and without envy to what is said, students could even

[24] On *mimēsis*, see Halliwell 2002.

[25] Note the verbal resemblance in the identical use of *συνταράττηται*: *μὴ συνταράττηται μηδ' ἐξυλακτῇ πρὸς ἕκαστον* (40B-C) - *ἂν δέ που συνταράττηται τοῖς πάθεσι* (16E). The idea of *ταραχή* contains important philosophical baggage, for it corresponds to the Epicurean formulation which recommended the abstention from political engagement for the sake of personal tranquillity. *Ataraxia* is for the Epicureans the freedom from any kind of worry and anxiety that is generated by interaction in political affairs. Sedley 1997 has discussed how different philosophical outlooks are found among the conspirators of Caesar's assassination, with special emphasis on the Epicurean lack of *ταραχή* in that context. For the notion of *ταράττεσθαι* in this, see esp. his pp. 44-7, with further bibliography (esp. note 31, p.46).

become imitators and admirers of the speeches and ideas produced through practice, hard training, and study. At a deeper level this patient and mild acceptance of what is presented can motivate the process of self-exploration by means of comparison between what the others said and what the listener would have said in such a case; in other words, as Plutarch urges, appositely quoting Plato, we should reach the point at which we should be posing ourselves the question 'Am I not possibly like them?' (40D).

The Poet as a Reflection of the Philosopher

Let us now cast an eye on the affinity between the role of the poet and the philosopher in the two texts. In the *De Audiendis Poetis* Plutarch mentions that since poetry is an imitative art it should be assessed by its degree of resemblance to the original. So, 'since poetry often gives an imitative recital of base deeds, or of wicked experiences and characters, the young man must not accept as true what is admired and successful therein, nor approve it as beautiful, but should simply condemn it as fitting and proper to the character in hand' (18B). The reference to the propriety which should be squared with the character that is entailed in a certain poetic passage was a fundamental 'law' (cf. the so-called principle of *ἀπρέπεια*)[26] in the method that Aristarchus of Samothrace employed, when he judged the authenticity of lines preserved in Homeric manuscripts of his time. Most importantly, Plutarch himself accommodates the propriety of character to his own biographical working method; for time and again in his *Lives* we find instances in which his arguments are constructed according to the coherence of the character of his subjects.[27]

[26] For instance, see sch. Hom. *Il.* 1.29-31; 9.46-7a1; 14.1a; sch. Hom. *Od.* arg. 3.73; arg. 8.77. For *aprepeia* as a text-critical principle in Homer, see Xenis 2007: 108, 109. On the notion of propriety in ancient literary criticism and in Attic oratory, see DeWitt 1987 and Carey 1999 respectively.

[27] Duff 2008: 7, with additional references. Also Martin 1961: 337 (note 34).

To return to the statement in 18B, this helps Plutarch make his point that the poetic audience should not be influenced by the delusive nature of poetic presentations in general, and most specifically should not be led astray by the morally inferior characters that the poets themselves present as such.[28] Thus, he provides the exemplum of Paris whose effeminacy in the field of battle Homer bluntly condemns. Afterwards follows the example of Menander who in the prologue of his *Thais* gives indications that he is aggrieved with his heroine's behaviour. So, here we witness two poets who can act as *paidagōgoi* as it were, since through their personal judgments they give their own moral position and thus encourage their young readers and listeners towards moral elevation. They reveal their personal estimation of immoral deeds, and hence they show their concern for the morality of their subject.

This could perhaps be taken as a fitting reflection of Plutarch's method of work in his *Lives*. Throughout the vast biographical enterprise, Plutarch wishes to promote the morality of his audience by setting examples to imitate or to avoid and at the same time by projecting his own comments on the moral condition of his exempla. As we shall see later on, Plutarch's self-presentation, especially in the proems of his *Lives*, gives him the quality of an instructor who directs the morals of his 'students' while concomitantly being himself improved as well. Moreover, poetic *διδασκαλία* becomes more explicit when in 19E-F we read that poets can offer *μαθήσεις* and that the poet actually *διδάσκει*, for instance in the case where Euripides punishes Ixion on stage. The philosopher in the *De Recta* seems to be a more advanced *paidagōgos* than the poet, since he proceeds much deeper into the task of improving the youth's morality. He teaches them how to listen to many things but not say much (39B), without reacting to every word of their interlocutor, which means overcoming the predominant characteristic of youthfulness – lack of control. The philosopher also limits ambition, envy, enmity, arrogance, presumption, self-esteem, and accentuates patience, respect, self-exploration, and

[28] The distinction between 'subject of imitation' and 'manner of imitation' is treated also in Aristotle's *Poetics*, 1448a 1-8.

affability. So both poet and philosopher advise and teach, though by employing different means – the former myth, the latter truth.

Now a difference between the philosopher and the poet that might demonstrate the more vital pedagogic contribution of the former is the responsibility that the philosopher has to address specifically each participant in person and judge him, something that many times causes annoyance in the receiver, precisely due to the effectiveness of such a procedure.[29] In this respect, Plutarch points out, philosophers in the schools are different from tragedians in the theatres (43E-F), who try to captivate the benevolence of their audience by cajoling them. This could be most probably seen as a self-referential analogy that the philosopher Plutarch offers to himself, especially if we take into account the various 'polyphonic and polymorphous'[30] philosophical personas that he acquires in the framework of the *QC* – all of which are to show that Plutarch's main interest is 'not just to stimulate emulation but also questioning, self-exploration, and most of all further discussion in readers'.[31] Plutarch the philosopher is indeed concerned with the moral improvement of his 'students'.

But to be able to promote the ethical enhancement of his readers, Plutarch ought first to manage to establish some sort of rapport with them, which will open the channel of communication between author and reader. Stadter has brought out how Plutarch shares with his readers his own authorial preoccupations and expectations in the proems of his *Lives.*[32] Interestingly enough, in the proem of *Theseus* Plutarch attempts to justify the mythical tone of his subject; he warns against its danger, but still assures his reader of 'the

[29] In *Gorgias* 457c-458b Socrates distinguishes two groups of people, those who get sad and angry when are examined by the listeners, and those who accept the *elegchos* for their improvement.

[30] Klotz 2007: 666.

[31] Klotz 2007: 666.

[32] Stadter 1988: esp. 283-7; Stadter also mentions the feature of Plutarch's *ēthos*: 'understanding and intellectually curious person', 'aware of life in all its manifestations', 'he shares his feelings and assessments', 292.

conscientiousness of his (the reader's) guide'.[33] Plutarch's self-projection benefits his technique of building up an effective transmission of moralistic instruction in successive stages; as in the *Theseus*, in the *De Audiendis Poetis* Plutarch first elaborates the aspect of the mythical core of philosophy, he next recognises its pitfalls, but then highlights the significance of the author's role in providing a sense of security for his audience. This role can also be attributed to the poets in the *De Audiendis Poetis*, who express a moral evaluation of the actions of their heroes and thus promote the upright morals of their readers.[34]

Resemblances between Poetic and Philosophical Procedures

The way that poetry's mechanisms work, as they are presented in the *De Recta*, brings poetry into close similarity to philosophy. In the *De Audiendis Poetis* Plutarch suggests that the contradictions and disagreements among poets could be beneficial, because they offer the reader an opportunity to examine divergent opinions and choose the best one. That is exactly how philosophy works. In the framework of a philosophical lecture, or better still a philosophical discussion, the opposing philosophical speeches encourage the quest for the best opinion, which is closest to truth and the most capable of leading people to moral goodness. This is after all why Plutarch in the *De Recta* places so much emphasis on the ability of the listener to accept patiently all the opinions before taking his own position towards them. To take my point further, Plutarch's emphatic preference for the examination of contradictory opinions on every topic can be seen in action in his way of developing the philosophical dialogues in the *QC*. For instance, in Problem 2 Book 1 Plutarch is the judge of an *agōn* between his brother and his father on the issue of whether the host should arrange the placing of his guests or not.

[33] Stadter 1988: 284.

[34] Russell 1993: 427 similarly claims that 'both Plutarch and Horace seek to help their readers, as well as to advance their own case, by talking sometimes about themselves'; see also 436.

Likewise in Problem 4 Book 1 Crato and Theon express opposing beliefs while pondering the question of the symposiarch's conduct.

Another aspect that might disclose the similar function of poetry and philosophy is the common procedure of receiving another person's ideas, either a poet's or a philosopher's, and specific content, either poetic or philosophic, through oral reception (*ἀκούειν*). The implications are important especially in the case of philosophy, since a high proportion of the educational responsibilities when it comes to philosophical lectures fall to the listener himself, who has to be pre-trained and practised before entering the lecture-room. Thus, philosophy appears to be a much more serious and laborious area of study than poetry. Nicander in the *De Recta* has already gained deep experience in philosophy and he is thus properly equipped to move on to his philosophical education (37F), whereas in poetry the young man could have no specific background (without being *μεμελετημένος*, 16A), but still be able to understand poetry.

A further similarity between a poetic and philosophical mechanism is the following: in cases where the things said in poems seem to be *ἄτοπα* and without obvious solution, we should try to find contradictory opinions set out by the same poet on the same issue to offset the immoral passage. This is the so-called procedure of *ἐπανόρθωσις*,[35] according to which certain poetic words, phrases, or passages are amended to suit the moralistic agenda of the author who is employing them. Notice though that the things that are *ἄτοπα* are those which are liable to cause *ἀπορία*, the basic element to induce a philosophical discussion.[36] But *ἀπορία* in its turn forms the basis of Socrates'

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[35] Papadi (PhD *thesis*) 33, proposes the interesting connection between poetic *ἐπανόρθωσις* in Plutarch's *De Audiendis Poetis* (21B; 33C-D) and moralistic *ἐπανόρθωσις* in the programmatic prologue of *Aem*. 1. 4.

[36] Plato *Theaet*. 155d; Also Aristotle *Metaph*. 982^{b}14: *διὰ γὰρ τὸ θαυμάζειν οἱ ἄνθρωποι καὶ νῦν καὶ τὸ πρῶτον ἤρξαντο φιλοσοφεῖν, ἐξ ἀρχῆς μὲν τὰ πρόχειρα τῶν ἀτόπων θαυμάσαντες*. Plutarch himself holds that the *θαυμαστόν* is the key-element for the genesis of philosophical discourse, 680C-D; 734D.

midwifery method[37] – when examining his interlocutor, Socrates aimed to produce *ἀμηχανία* in him, in order to show him that he is wrong and thus to make him realise that the knowledge that he hitherto held on a specific issue was insufficient. He managed this by posing certain questions of the type 'You are saying that A is like this, right?', 'But you yourself just previously and a moment ago said that A was otherwise! So you are contradicting yourself'.[38] The philosophical way to discover truth is through tracing contradictions, a method that Plutarch applies in the case of poetry as well.

Similarly, an examination of the subtle meanings of words in specific contexts when studying poetry and an awareness of the various connotations of a term that can give a better and more *ὠφέλιμον* interpretation can be employed against a philosophical background. For philosophical discussions, and particularly Platonic ones, are marked by the procedure of clarifying the specific meaning with which a term is used, especially when it comes to abstract morally-oriented words, such as *ἀγαθόν-κακόν, ὠφέλιμον-βλαβερόν*, *δίκαιον-ἄδικον*. In each case the interlocutors in a philosophical discussion specify how and with what meaning they colour the term they are using.

Conclusion

[37] Plutarch elaborates Socrates' midwifery method and its connection with the Platonic theory of pre-existing knowledge (*anamnēsis*) in his *Platonic Questions,* 1000D-E.

[38] A vivid example of this is to be found for instance in 453b-c of the *Republic*. Here Socrates disputes with Glaucon on the difference between men and women, and shows him the procedure for tracing self-contradictions: 'There's nothing to stop us.' 'All right. Let's speak for them. ''Socrates and Glaucon, there's no need for anyone else to challenge you. You yourselves agreed, when you first started founding your city, that in the natural order of things each individual should carry out one task, the one for which he was fitted.''' 'Yes, I think we did agree that. How could we disagree?' '''Can you deny that a woman's nature is completely different from a man's?''' 'No. Of course it's different.' '''In that case, shouldn't each also be assigned a task appropriate to his or her nature?''' 'Of course.' '''Then you must be wrong now. You must be contradicting yourselves when you say that men and women should perform the same tasks, despite having widely different natures.''' [transl. Tom Griffith 2000].

Before we end let us make the following concluding remarks. Plutarch in his *De Audiendis Poetis* and *De Recta* amplifies his pedagogic beliefs. He manages in two distinct treatises to give his own answer and alternative to the Platonic conviction that so utterly separated poetry from philosophy. Although he presented each *σπουδή* in a separate context, nevertheless the close affinities between poetic and philosophic aspects on the one hand, and the parallelisms in the way that poet and philosopher can appear as both *paidagōgoi* on the other, offer sufficient evidence to show that the two essays complement one another, so as to produce Plutarch's united and solid opinion. For in Plutarch's mind poetry constitutes a microcosm of philosophy. Should we correlate the two texts, we get a full picture of how Plutarch reconciled poetry and philosophy with the aim of achieving the moral improvement of his audience.

My final paragraph will concentrate on a thought-provoking metatextual suggestion that could be added as the corollary of the whole discussion in this paper. I have already argued throughout that the two texts work complementarily; the young student of *De Audiendis Poetis* receives instruction in how to employ the study of poetry in the most beneficial manner, so as to prepare himself for his introduction to philosophy. The more mature recipient of the *De Recta* must have already acquired the poetic advice of the *De Audiendis Poetis* as he is now an initiated student of philosophy. In light of this, we could claim that, since the *De Audiendis Poetis* is embodying a specific sort of guiding advice, this guidance could have been a textual equivalent of what the more experienced student in the *De Recta* must have acquired. In other words, the *De Audiendis* text gains a living existence in the *De Recta* environment as the textbook that Nicander would have taken as a reminder of his earlier pedagogic grounding in poetry. He could thus take advantage of the presence of his previous pedagogic handbook and evaluate his own progress by comparing his former stage of pedagogy to his current one. In like manner the *De Recta* textbook with its more advanced philosophical material, if transferred to the *De Audiendis Poetis* environment, could prefigure, for both Sedatus and Cleander, how each of their sons' future

educational state would develop after he had received proper poetical instruction. The *De Recta* text offers a reflection of the results of poetic study. The two works are metatextually interwoven and vindicate their textual presence, with the one moving into the domain of the other.[39]

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[39] As regards the metatextual relevance of the two texts, a quite close parallel is the one to be seen in the interrelationship of the *Praecepta Gerendae Reipublicae* and the second section of the *An Seni Respublica Gerenda Sit* (chapters 18-28). The two works could be taken as complementary; since the *Praecepta* is an aggregation of guidelines of how the political novice should participate in public life in the best possible way, this particular guidance becomes a textual equivalent of what the elderly statesman in the *An Seni* ought to be giving. The *Praecepta* could have been the textbook that the *An Seni* politician consulted when advising others, and in the same sense the *Praecepta* text is what the intratextual statesman figuratively holds in his hands in the *An Seni.* This is a point I shall be arguing in detail elsewhere.

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