

## THE QUESTION OF CHARACTER-DEVELOPMENT: PLUTARCH AND TACITUS

It is often claimed that in the ancient world character was believed to be something fixed, given at birth and immutable during life.<sup>1</sup> This belief is said to underlie the portrayal of individuals in ancient historiography and biography, particularly in the early Roman Empire;<sup>2</sup> and to constitute the chief point of difference in psychological assumptions between ancient and modern biography.<sup>3</sup> In this article, I wish to examine the truth of these claims, with particular reference to Plutarch and Tacitus.

These claims are rather startlingly at variance with the preoccupation of ancient philosophers with the development of character.<sup>4</sup> The accounts of character-formation in the various schools differ in detail; but they all present the developed, adult character as the product of a number of factors, working in combination. 'Nature', that is, the innate element, is one factor considered, in the form of either innate temperament or some kind of potential excellence (*euphuia*).<sup>5</sup> But this is considered alongside other factors, such as upbringing, habit and habituating training, the influence of parents, teachers and society in general.<sup>6</sup> In the formation of character,

<sup>1</sup> This article is based on papers read at the Universities of Cambridge and Reading, the University Colleges of Cardiff and Swansea, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I am grateful to the audiences at these occasions for their helpful comments and criticisms, and particularly to Michael Crawford and Philip Stadter.

<sup>2</sup> R. M. Ogilvie, *The Romans and their Gods* (London, 1970), 18: 'The psychology of the Romans was based on the assumption that a man's character is something fixed, something given to him at birth. Nothing could ever alter that character or the actions which flowed from it'. Cf. Ogilvie, *A Commentary on Livy* (Oxford, 1965), note on 3. 36. 1. R. Syme, *Tacitus* (Oxford, 1958), 421: 'It was the way of thought of the ancients to conceive a man's inner nature as something definable and immutable'. Cf. F. R. D. Goodyear, *The Annals of Tacitus* (1–6), 1 (Cambridge, 1972), 37–40, Ronald Martin, *Tacitus* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1981), 105, and W. H. Alexander, 'The Tacitean "Non Liquet" on Seneca', *University of California Publications in Classical Philology* 14. 8 (1952), esp. 352–77.

<sup>3</sup> e.g. Albrecht Dihle, *Studien zur Griechischen Biographie* (Göttingen, 1956), 76 ff.; he modifies his statement somewhat on pp. 81 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Martin, loc. cit., and Alexander, op. cit. 352 ff., cite Theophrastus' *Characters* in support of their views. But, apart from the relative triviality of this work, its psychological presuppositions are unclear. It is not apparent whether the 'characters' are intended to be one-dimensional caricatures (types of personality dominated by one overriding trait), or simply collections of the behavioural 'marks' or 'tokens' (*charaktēres*) of a given defective trait, e.g. distrustfulness or superstition. These little sketches give no indication of the origin of the traits, whether innate or acquired. Cf. R. C. Jebb, *The Characters of Theophrastus*<sup>2</sup> (London, 1909), 22–3, A. Körte, 'Charakter', *Hermes* 64 (1929), 77–8, Gordon Allport, *Personality* (New York, 1937), 56–8, W. W. Fortenbaugh, 'Die Charaktere Theophrasts', *Rh.M.* 118 (1975), 62–82.

<sup>5</sup> For *euphuia*, see Arist. *EN* 3. 5. 17–18, 1114b12 and context, 10. 9. 3, 8 and 6. 13. 1. In Stoic theory, all men have a natural capacity for excellence at birth, though this often fails to develop fully; see e.g. SVF 1. 566, 3. 214, and cf. A. A. Long in *Problems in Stoicism*, ed. Long (London, 1971), 184, and 'The Stoic Concept of Evil', *PQ* 18 (1968), 336 ff. On innate temperament see n. 6 below.

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., Pl. *Prt.* 323–7 (much of Pl. *R.* Books 2–4 is concerned with this question; cf. C. Gill, 'Plato and the Education of Character', in *Plato's Concept of Education, Paideia* Special Issue, 1983, ed. George Simmons); Arist. *Pol.* 7. 12. 6–7, *EN* 2. 1, 10. 9. 6 ff. (cf. M. F. Burnyeat, 'Aristotle on Learning to Be Good', in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty [Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1980], 69 ff.); cf. Plu. *Mor.* 2a ff. On the interplay between innate temperament and other factors, see Pl. *Ti.* 86b–87b, Epicur. *On Nature* (text in *Epicuro, Opere*,<sup>2</sup> ed. G. Arrighetti [Turin, 1973], 34. 25–30), Lucr. 3. 288–322, Sen. *Ira* 2. 19 ff.

the person is not viewed only as a passive object, open to various influences, but as an active, independent force. On becoming an adult (a process associated, in ancient thought, with the development of rationality), the person becomes, in principle, capable of playing a major role in his own character-formation through reasoned reflection and decision. Whether he becomes a good or a bad person is, to a significant extent, 'up to him', as ancient theorists typically put it.<sup>7</sup> The transition from childhood to adulthood is regarded as a critical stage in character-development, and one which often determines the qualities exhibited in later life.<sup>8</sup> But most schools also emphasise the importance of continued self-criticism throughout adult life, and the possibility, and value, of rooting out ingrained defects and inclinations by deliberate, sustained effort. This is a particular preoccupation of philosophy in the late Republic and early Roman Empire. It is a dominant theme in Cicero's *Tusculans*, Seneca's *Epistulae Morales* and *De Ira*, and Plutarch's essays *Progress in Virtue* and *The Control of Anger*, and it figures in more popular works such as Horace's *Satires* and *Epistles*.<sup>9</sup>

It would seem, then, that there is a wide divergence between the views held on character-formation in ancient philosophy and those which allegedly underlie ancient historiography and biography. This apparent divergence is the more surprising because in the late Republic and early Empire, at least, philosophy (especially moral philosophy) was not the remote and specialised discipline it is today, but formed part of the intellectual framework of many authors of the period.<sup>10</sup> In fact, I think this apparent divergence can be reconciled to some extent (though not, perhaps, completely). Before attempting to do so, however, I want to discuss the sense in which the terms 'character' and 'character-development' are being used here. A good deal of what seems problematic in this topic derives, I think, from vagueness and unclarity about the meaning attached to the word 'character'. I wish to draw a distinction between two senses of character, which I call 'character' and 'personality', and between two perspectives on human psychology, a 'character-viewpoint' and a 'personality-viewpoint'.<sup>11</sup> The salient feature of the character-viewpoint is that it regards the person evaluatively (often morally) as the possessor of good or bad qualities that merit praise or blame. The person is judged or assessed in this viewpoint, by reference to a

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g. Arist. *EN* 3. 5 (cf. T. H. Irwin, 'Reason and Responsibility in Aristotle', in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. Rorty, 117–55); for Epicurus' views, see D.L. 10. 133, ref. in n. 6 above, and J. M. Rist, *Epicurus* (Cambridge, 1972), 90 ff., David Furley, *Two Studies in the Greek Atomists* (Princeton, 1967), 227–36; for the Stoics, see Long, in *Problems in Stoicism*, 173 ff., and Margaret E. Reesor, Charlotte Stough, in *The Stoics*, ed. J. M. Rist (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1978), 187–202, 202–31.

<sup>8</sup> For the 'choice of lives' theme, associated with arrival at adulthood, see W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* III (Cambridge, 1969), 277–8, 366–7, Pl. *R.* 358–68, 617d ff. (cf. *R.* 550b, 553b–d, 572d; the psychic types choose their way of life on becoming adult); Plu. *Mor.* 12c; Cic. *Off.* 1. 115 ff. and cf. refs. in n. 46 below.

<sup>9</sup> See further Paul Rabbow, *Seelenführung* (Munich, 1954), B. Farrington, in *Lucretius*, ed. D. R. Dudley (London, 1965), 24 ff., M. J. McGann, *Studies in Horace's First Book of Epistles*, Collections Latomus, 100 (Brussels, 1969), esp. 33 ff., Niall Rudd, *Lines of Enquiry: Studies in Latin Poetry* (Cambridge, 1976), 158–9, 163–4. Cf. also Aristotle, refs. in n. 61 below.

<sup>10</sup> Of the two authors I am most concerned with here, Plutarch's philosophical background needs no elaboration. Tacitus is not a philosopher in this sense (passages such as *Ann.* 6. 22 on fate and free will are exceptional) but would be familiar with the main lines of Stoic and Epicurean moral theory. In any case, as I argue below, there is a good deal of overlap between philosophical and popular thinking on character-development in this period. Cf. n. 23 below.

<sup>11</sup> Here I simply sketch this distinction, which I explore more fully in a forthcoming book. This distinction is partly based on the historical development and associations of the terms 'character' and 'personality', partly on a divergence of perspectives on human nature I find in contemporary thinking.

determinate standard of excellence, such as 'virtue' or 'good character'. He is regarded, as we say nowadays, as a moral agent, responsible, under normal circumstances, for his actions, and having some responsibility too for his dispositions or character-traits.<sup>12</sup> The personality-viewpoint, by contrast, does not aim to judge the person as a moral agent but to understand him, or explain him, psychologically, in an ethically neutral way. It is concerned, as we say, with the real 'personality', the authentic 'self' or 'identity'.<sup>13</sup> This viewpoint, like the character-viewpoint, is concerned to identify the person's long-term dispositions (which are seen, in this perspective, as personality-traits rather than ethical qualities);<sup>14</sup> though it is also interested in charting the transient phases of the person's psychological life.<sup>15</sup> The person is not typically regarded as a self-determining agent with respect to his psychological phases and personality-traits; he is seen as relatively passive with respect to them, and is not liable to moral praise or blame on their account.

I do not propose to use this distinction to contrast the viewpoints of ancient philosophy, on the one hand, and ancient biography and historiography, on the other. I think that in both areas the predominant concern is with 'character' not 'personality'. But it is a distinction that is useful in defining the difference between the typical viewpoint of ancient and modern biography (at least, of some modern biography). It is sometimes said that ancient biography is based on the notion of character as something static and immutable, modern biography on the notion of character as something that changes and develops.<sup>16</sup> This statement focuses on one significant difference between ancient and modern biography; though it exaggerates the degree of difference in this respect. But it is more helpful to conceive the difference as being that between a character-centred and a personality-centred form of biography. I think this way of stating the difference is more accurate; and also that it highlights more clearly the connections between the distinctive features of modern biography and developments in the conception of the self in the modern period. If we contrast the innovative biographical style of Lytton Strachey with the Victorian biographical style he wanted to replace, we find Strachey concerned to identify the real personality behind

<sup>12</sup> It is typical of the character-viewpoint to draw a distinction between temperamental qualities, which are a product of the innate, psycho-physical constitution and developed, ethical character-traits. Immanuel Kant, for instance, distinguishes between 'temperament', i.e. 'what nature makes of man' (e.g. being melancholic or phlegmatic) and 'character', i.e. 'what man makes of himself', *Anthropology*, tr. V. L. Dowdell (Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1978), 195–207, esp. 203. Cf. also refs. in n. 67 below.

<sup>13</sup> The development of these sorts of concerns in the modern period is brought out well by Lionel Trilling in *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Oxford, 1972).

<sup>14</sup> Examples of personality-terms are melancholic, choleric, introvert, extravert, stolid, volatile, aggressive, defensive, stable, neurotic. In the personality-viewpoint, there is not the same concern to distinguish innate temperamental from developed personality-traits as in the character-viewpoint (cf. n. 12 above); indeed the two types of traits are very closely related. See further Allport, op. cit., H. J. Eysenck, *The Structure of Human Personality* (London, 1953), Rom Harré, ed., *Personality* (London, 1976).

<sup>15</sup> The character-viewpoint is also interested in psychological change, which it describes in terms of the development of good or bad character-traits.

<sup>16</sup> e.g. Dihle, op. cit. 76. Curiously enough, Dihle gives no examples of the type of modern biography he is describing; he refers only to the *Entwicklungsroman* 'Grüne Heinrich'. Cf. Goodyear, op. cit., who contrasts ancient historiography with 'the eighteenth-nineteenth-century novel' in this respect, p. 37, n. 3. Cf. Alexander, op. cit. 355: 'Character in human life as we view it is something developmental. It is not a thing of fixed nature... but a developmental result, definable at any given time as being a certain something, and again at the next point of review perhaps capable of being exhibited as a certain quite different something' (his italics). This seems to me very overstated; cf. n. 19 below.

the public persona, whether that of Queen Victoria or of Dr Arnold, rather than to give the highly evaluative (often deeply respectful) assessment of character that was typical of Victorian biography.<sup>17</sup> This tendency has become more marked in recent years. This is obvious in biographies written from a psychoanalytic viewpoint, such as Erikson's famous study of Luther; but the tendency is not limited to works of this kind.<sup>18</sup> A concern with personal development is a feature of modern biography and one that is more pronounced in Erikson's work than Strachey's.<sup>19</sup> But more significant, I think, is the assumption that an individual personality is of interest in its own right, and is something that the biographer should study with little overt moral judgement. Sexual proclivities, for instance, form a prominent theme in contemporary biographies; and these are, typically, not seen as giving material for moral judgements, but as an important constituent of the subject's personality, which needs to be taken into account if we are fully to understand the person.<sup>20</sup>

Ancient biography and historiography, at least in the late Republic and early Roman Empire, is, by contrast, written predominantly from a character-viewpoint.<sup>21</sup> In the case of Plutarch, his own statements make this quite clear. He presents his writing of biography as designed to improve the character of others, and to help him improve his own, by conspicuous examples of excellence (*aretē*) combined with a few deterrent examples of defectiveness (*kakia*).<sup>22</sup> He claims to be concerned with *ēthos*, and with its improvement through the study of the figures of history; and for him, as for Aristotle, *ēthos* means 'character' in an evaluative sense, excellence or defectiveness.<sup>23</sup> Scholars have suggested that his actual practice outruns his overtly

<sup>17</sup> cf. Virginia Woolf's appraisal of Strachey's work in *Collected Essays* iv (New York, 1967), 221–8, cf. 229–35. For an earlier stage in the debate, see Laurel Brake, 'Judas and the Widow', *Prose Studies* 4. 1 (1981), 39–54; see further Edward Mendelsen, 'Authorized Biography and its Discontents', in *Studies in Biography*, ed. Daniel Aaron (Cambridge, Mass., 1978), 9 ff.

<sup>18</sup> Erik Erikson, *Young Man Luther* (New York, 1958). Cf. Alan Shelston, *Biography* (London, 1977), 10–13, 62 ff. For questions about the notion of personality, in relation to biography, see James Clifford, '"Hanging up Looking Glasses at Odd Corners": Ethnobiographical Prospects', in *Studies in Biography*, ed. Aaron, 41 ff. Modern psychological approaches have been applied to the subjects of ancient biographical and historiographical writing, e.g. Gregorio Marañón, *Tiberius, The Resentful Caesar*, tr. W. B. Wells (London, 1956), J. H. Thiel, *Kaiser Tiberius* (Darmstadt, 1970).

<sup>19</sup> Alexander, op. cit., actually finds in Strachey's work a 'Tacitean' sense of 'the persistent strength of... innate characteristics' (365 and context). This seems oddly inconsistent with his previous description of modern conceptions of character (cf. 355 ff. and n. 16 above); does he regard Strachey as somehow pre-modern or untypical?

<sup>20</sup> Suetonius, of course, like Tacitus, includes accounts of sexual activities; but these are presented with implicit or explicit moral judgments. Contrast Marañón's psychological treatment of 'Tiberius' love-life', op. cit. 36–60.

<sup>21</sup> Arnaldo Momigliano in *The Development of Greek Biography* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971) points to various signs of interest in 'individuals' and 'personalities' in Classical Greek and Hellenistic biography, e.g. in his conclusion, pp. 101–4. But he is not there contrasting 'personality' and 'character' as I am here, and is thus not dealing with the same issue. I am, in any case, concerned here only with the later period, esp. the early Empire.

<sup>22</sup> Plu. *Aem.* 1 (sometimes printed as a preface to *Tim.*, e.g. in the Loeb), *Demetr.* 1. 3–6. Cf. D. A. Russell, 'On Reading Plutarch's Lives', *G & R* 13 (1966), 140 ff., *Plutarch* (London, 1972), 100 ff., A. J. Gossage, 'Plutarch', in *Latin Biography*, ed. T. A. Dorey (London, 1967), 49–51, Alan Wardman, *Plutarch's Lives* (London, 1974), 18 ff.

<sup>23</sup> cf. Dihle, op. cit. 60 ff., Friedrich Leo, *Die Griechisch-Römische Biographie* (Leipzig, 1901), 188 ff. I am not assuming 'that Plutarch as a biographer thought in Aristotelian terms under the influence of previous Peripatetic biographers', the view criticised by Momigliano in *Second Thoughts on Greek Biography* (Amsterdam, 1971), 251. Rather, I think that Plutarch shared certain general attitudes of post-Aristotelian Greek morality, notably in emphasising 'the importance of continuous moral choice and... habit in shaping the character of a man' (Momigliano, *ibid.*).

moralistic programme, and that the later stages of his *Antony*, for instance, give a more sympathetic, quasi-tragic view of the central figure.<sup>24</sup> But there can be little doubt that, in comparison with much modern biography, his viewpoint is highly evaluative and 'character-centred', in my terms. Roman historians typically present their work as being to pass moral judgement on great men of the past, and so to provide the reader with examples of conduct to imitate or avoid.<sup>25</sup> Tacitus says that, in an imperial period, it is useful for a historian to examine the character of emperors, and he describes this project in evaluative terms.<sup>26</sup> These writers, Greek and Roman alike, talk as if their job was to pass judgements on the qualities of the great men of history, and to see how they measure up to certain preconceived norms of excellence, as statesmen and as men.<sup>27</sup> They do not suggest that their job is to understand these people as interesting individuals or personalities, to give a sympathetic or 'empathetic' picture of them, to 'get inside their skin', psychologically, as a modern biographer might.

If it is right to say that, in the period of the late Roman Republic and early Empire, the delineation of figures in biography and historiography is typically carried out from a 'character-viewpoint', how does this affect the question whether character is conceived as static or developing? I shall suggest later that a character-viewpoint does, to some extent, predispose a historian or biographer to present character as something relatively fixed; but it is important neither to exaggerate this predisposition, nor to misunderstand its basis. In ancient moral philosophy, we see that a character-viewpoint can be combined with a strong interest in the formation of character, that is, in the factors which promote the development of excellence or defectiveness in *ēthos* or *mores*. Plutarch shares these concerns in his own moral essays. In *The Education of Children*, he also sees *aretē* as the product of *phusis*, *ethos* and *logos*, working in combination. In childhood, habit (*ethos*) is seen as the primary medium of education, in adult life, *logos*.<sup>28</sup> Consistently with this, Plutarch writes a series of essays for his adult readers, in which he gives them reasoned advice about the deliberate improvement of *ēthos* and the correction of faults.<sup>29</sup> In these essays, Plutarch does not assume that *phusis* is the sole determinant of character, and that it produces, automatically or inevitably, a certain kind of *ēthos*. Indeed, the attainment of a stable character, an *ιδίαν ἡθους ἐστίαν*, is sometimes treated as a rather rare achievement, and something that requires special effort.<sup>30</sup> In one essay, he gives advice which is commonplace in ancient ethical writing, that one should take into account one's own *phusis* in formulating for oneself

<sup>24</sup> Russell, *Plutarch*, 142, C. B. R. Pelling, 'Plutarch's Adaptations of his Source Material', *JHS* 100 (1980), 127–40, esp. 138–9; cf. Phillip de Lacy, 'Biography and Tragedy in Plutarch', *AJPh* 73 (1952), 159–71.

<sup>25</sup> Liv. *Praefatio*, 10: 'hoc illud est praecipue in cognitione rerum salubre ac frugiferum, omnis te exempli documenta in industri posita monumento intueri; inde tibi tuaeque rei publicae quod imitere capias, inde foedum inceptu, foedum exitu, quod vitis'. Tac. *Ann.* 3. 65. 1: 'praecipuum munus annalium reor, ne virtutes sileantur, utque pravis dictisque ex posteritate et infamia metus sit'. Cf. *Ann.* 14. 64. 3, *Hist.* 1. 3. 1. Sallust's concern with private and public (ethical) *mores* is clear in *Cat.* 4 ff. The use of historical figures as moral *exempla* is pervasive in Rome; cf. Donald Earl, *The Moral and Political Tradition of Rome* (Ithaca, 1967), 30 ff., 74 ff.; H. Litchfield, 'National *Exempla Virtutis* in Roman Literature', *HSCP* 25 (1914), 1–71.

<sup>26</sup> *Ann.* 4. 33. 2: 'quia pauci prudentia honesta ab deterioribus... discernunt', cf. 4. 33. 4: 'malefacta... gloria ac virtus'.

<sup>27</sup> Wardman studies these features of Plutarch's approach at length, op. cit., chs. 2–4.

<sup>28</sup> *Mor.* 2a–b. The essay is thought to be spurious; but there seems nothing un-Plutarchian in this particular, rather traditional, formulation; cf. n. 6 above.

<sup>29</sup> See, e.g. *Mor.* 80e ff., 452f ff., refs. in n. 30 below, and cf. n. 9 above, 61 below.

<sup>30</sup> *Mor.* 97a, cf. 52a–b, 52f–53a; cf. Russell, *Plutarch*, 93–6. Aristotle too associates stability with excellence (see *EN* 2. 4. 3, 1104b34, *βεβαίως καὶ ἀμετακινήτως*, *EE* 7. 5. 2, 1239b12–15, καὶ ὁ ἀγαθὸς μὲν ὁμοίως αἰεὶ καὶ οὐ μεταβάλλεται τὸ ἦθος, ὁ δὲ φαῦλος καὶ ὁ ἄφρων οὐθὲν ἔοικεν ἔωθεν καὶ ἐσπέραις).

a harmonious and happy life<sup>31</sup> – advice which is rather superfluous if the *phusis* is thought to determine the course of life in any case. In another essay, *God's Slowness to Punish*, Plutarch lays greater stress on innate, genetically inherited, *phusis*, innate nobility or its opposite. But he also says that innate *γενναῖον* sometimes *ἐξανθεῖ δὲ τὴν κακίαν παρὰ φύσιν, ὑπὸ τροφῆς καὶ ὁμιλίας φαύλης φθειρόμενον* (551 d). And, on the other hand, through the influence of *ἔθῃ καὶ δόγματα καὶ νόμους*, men can sometimes *παντάπασιν ἐξαλεῦσαι καὶ διαφυγεῖν ἐγγενῇ κηλίδι τῆς κακίας* (562 b). Thus a man's innate qualities are not necessarily expressed in the ethical character he eventually develops. Plutarch argues that the susceptibility of human nature to modification in this way explains why many rulers show changes (*metabolai*) in the course of their rule; and he gives a series of examples of rulers who began as harsh and tyrannical and ended as mild and humane (551 f–552 d). He generalises the point: whatever a man's nature is, various factors go towards the development of his adult character (*ēthos* or *tropos*), and the progress of life can introduce changes and modifications in this.<sup>32</sup>

It is clear, then, from Plutarch's moral essays, that his holding what I am calling a 'character-viewpoint' in no way rules out an awareness of, or interest in, the development of character. Indeed, the question, what combination of factors makes for the development of excellence of *ēthos* in an adult man, is clearly central to his concerns. A number of his biographies also show his interest in the interplay of nature and education or outside influences and reflect his belief that the development of excellence of *ēthos* generally depends on a combination of nature and education. He contrasts the younger and the older Brutus by saying that in the younger his *phusis* was 'blended' and 'harmonised' by education and reason to develop its capacities for *τὸ καλόν*; whereas in the elder his harsh *phusis* was not so softened, so that he acquired the kind of *ēthos* that was capable of executing his sons.<sup>33</sup> An account similar to that of the elder Brutus is also given of Marius and Coriolanus, to explain their failure to acquire control over their violent and extreme emotions.<sup>34</sup> Plutarch analyses notable Greek examples in the same terms. In the case of Dion, the influence of Plato (and of the *logos* and *philosophia* he brought) was sufficient to counteract the bad effects of Dion's early upbringing.<sup>35</sup> This enabled him to develop the kind of character that could resist violent impulses; in Plutarch's account, Dion said 'he had studied for a long time in the Academy how to conquer anger, envy and contentious rivalry

<sup>31</sup> *Mor.* 472c; cf. 465f–466a, *Cic. Off.* 1. 110, *Hor. Epi.* 1. 7. 98, *Sen. Tran.* 7. 2. For the history of this theme, see McGann, *op. cit.* 10 ff.

<sup>32</sup> 551e. In 552c he says that *μεγάλαι φύσεις* eventually *εἰς τὸ μόνιμον καὶ καθεστηκὸς ἦθος ἐλθεῖν*, but only after *ἐν σάλῳ διαφέρονται* and when their innate nobility arrives at *λόγον καὶ ἀρετῆς συνεργὸν ἡλικίαν* (552d). Cf. Russell, *Plutarch*, 85–7; the neat distinction between *phusis* and *ēthos* made here is not consistently maintained (see n. 61 below). The theme of *metabolē* of character among rulers, and the question of its causes, is well established, as is clear from Polybius. In 9. 22. 7–26. 11, Polybius, discussing Hannibal, considers that his real *phusis* was obscured by the pressure of circumstances and the advice of associates. In the case of Philip V, he gives a different analysis: *δοκεῖ τὰ μὲν ἀγαθὰ φύσει περὶ αὐτὸν ὑπάρχειν, τὰ δὲ κακὰ προβαίνοντι κατὰ τὴν ἡλικίαν ἐπιγενέσθαι*, 10. 26. 8. Cf. F. W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius* (Oxford, 1967), notes on 9. 23. 10, 10. 26. 7–10. For Plutarch's analysis of Philip V, see *Arat.* 51. 4, discussed below, and n. 64 below.

<sup>33</sup> *Brut.* 1. The passage recalls Plato's account of excellence as psychic harmony produced by education, *R.* 410c ff., cf. esp. (Plu.) *ὥσπερ τὰ ψυχρήλατα τῶν ξιφῶν, σκληρὸν ἐκ φύσεως καὶ οὐ μαλακὸν ἔχων κτλ* and *Pl. R.* 411a10–b1, *ὥσπερ σιδήρον ἐμάλαξεν καὶ χρήσιμον ἐξ... σκληροῦ ἐποίησεν*.

<sup>34</sup> *Cor.* 1. 2–4, *Mar.* 2; cf. 45–6, esp. 46. 1–4. Cf. Russell, 'Plutarch's Life of Coriolanus', *JRS* 53 (1963), 21–8, esp. 27.

<sup>35</sup> *Dion* 4. 2–3; for the comparison with the younger Brutus in this respect, see *Dion* 1.

(*philoneikia*)' (47. 2). In the case of Alcibiades, on the other hand, the influence of Socrates was ineffective in counteracting certain bad features of an otherwise good or promising nature (*euphuia*), namely his φύσει...τὸ φιλόνηκον...καὶ τὸ φιλόπρωτον.<sup>36</sup> The apparent ἀνωμαλία in Alcibiades' character and life partly reflects his chameleon-like ability to adapt himself to any environment and to conceal his basically ambitious *phusis*.<sup>37</sup> But Plutarch also wants to suggest, I think, that a potentially good *phusis* that is not 'harmonised' by education and reason never develops real stability and excellence of *ēthos*, and that this lack of cohesion in the character leads to capricious variety in the life.<sup>38</sup> These are clear signs of an interest in personal development, in the sense appropriate to Plutarch's ethical 'character-viewpoint': that is, an interest in the factors that do or do not lead an adult person to become a good moral agent, capable of controlling his emotions.<sup>39</sup>

It might be thought that Plutarch's approach is distinctively Greek, and reflects his philosophical interests. But I think we can find in Roman writings a rather similar framework of thinking on this subject, and one that is not specifically derived from philosophical sources. The Romans are intensely aware of the potential impact on the *mores* of their children of early upbringing, teachers, and, later, the whole range of social influences.<sup>40</sup> They stress the importance of young men developing the capacity for moral self-direction and the control of their desires and emotions.<sup>41</sup> Such concerns would be incomprehensible if it were really the case that 'the psychology of the Romans was based on the assumption that a man's character is something fixed, something given to him at birth. Nothing could ever alter that character or the actions which flowed from it'.<sup>42</sup> This awareness that the adult character is a product of external influences as well as innate qualities is sometimes reflected in the Roman historians. In the opening chapters of the *Bellum Jugurthinum*, Sallust presents the young Jugurtha as a person of great natural abilities who at first responded positively to the good influence of Scipio but was then stimulated in the opposite direction by certain ambitious and acquisitive Romans who told him that 'in ipso maxumam virtutem, Romae omnia venalia esse' (8. 1). The worse influences eventually prevailed; remembering their advice, he became dominated by ambition (20), *cupidine caecus* (25. 7).<sup>43</sup> The idea that youth is a period of instability, in which a young man may

<sup>36</sup> *Alc.* 2. 1, cf. 4. 1 ff.

<sup>37</sup> 16. 6, 23. 5–6; cf. Russell, *Plutarch*, 117, 122–4, and 'Plutarch, "Alcibiades" 1–16', *PCPhS* 12 (1966), 37 ff.

<sup>38</sup> This seems implicit in *Alc.* 16. 1–6; and perhaps also in *Demetr.* 1. 7 (which refers to Pl. R. 491e and context, a discussion of the crimes committed by ψυχᾶς...εὐφροσύνας deprived of good παιδαγωγία); cf. also *Mor.* 552c–d. This idea may also underlie Plutarch's remark in *Alc.* 2. 1, τὸ δ' ἦθος αὐτοῦ πολλὰς μὲν ὕστερον, ὡς εἰκὸς ἐν πράγμασι μεγάλοις καὶ τύχαις πολυτρόποις, ἀνομοιότηας πρὸς αὐτὸ καὶ μεταβολὰς ἐπεδείξατο. But his point here is more probably that his *ēthos* did not have sufficient strength to remain consistent in life's contingent vicissitudes (in spite of what he says in 23. 5–6); cf. Russell, 'Plutarch, "Alcibiades" 1–16', 38.

<sup>39</sup> Plutarch exhibits strongly the tendency common in ancient moral theory to conceive a good *ēthos* as one which is effective in controlling its emotions or *pathē*; cf. Dihle, op. cit. 64–9, Daniel Babut, *Plutarque et le Stoïcisme* (Paris, 1969), 318 ff., and discussion below.

<sup>40</sup> A few examples: Sen. *Contr.* 1. 8. 5, Juv. 14. 1 ff., Cic. *Att.* 10. 11, Quint. 1. 2. 6–8, 1. 3. 6 ff., esp. 1. 3. 12–13, 2. 2. 1 ff., esp. 5–8, Ter. *Ad.* 414 ff., Plin. 3. 3, Hor. C. 3. 6. 16 ff. See further Stanley Bonner, *Education in Rome* (London, 1977), index entries 'moral standards', 'moral training'.

<sup>41</sup> e.g. Plaut. *Trin.* 301 ff., *Most.* 133 ff., Hor. *Sat.* 1. 4. 103 ff., *Epi.* 1. 2. 55–71, Cic. *Off.* 1. 1–2, 1. 93–123. <sup>42</sup> Ogilvie, ref. in n. 2 above.

<sup>43</sup> cf. Donald Earl, *The Political Thought of Sallust* (Cambridge, 1961), 60 ff. None the less, Earl repeats the usual formula, 'Sallust seems to have been incapable of conceiving a slowly developing...character', p. 87.

go either in a good or bad direction, is a cliché in Rome. In the *Bellum Catilinae*, Sallust refers to his own *imbecilla aetas*, which was temporarily corrupted by the *mores* of his society and taken over by *ambitio mala* (3. 3, 4. 2). Similarly, he describes Catiline's corruption of young men whose 'animi molles...et fluxi dolis haud difficulter capiebantur' (14. 5). The theme of *lubrica adolescentia* is a key element in Cicero's defence of Caelius. Youth is a *tempus infirmum*, exposed to the *multas vias adolescentiae lubricas* which nature herself offers. Nevertheless, under proper guidance, the instability of youth will settle down into stable maturity. So the behaviour that is natural in youth should not necessarily be taken as an index of that which will come in mature adulthood.<sup>44</sup> Tacitus makes Nero repeat this well-worn theme, in his apparent effort to dissuade Seneca from retirement: 'Quin, si qua in parte lubricum adolescentiae declinat, revocas ornatumque robur subsidio impensius regis?' (*Ann.* 14. 56. 1). Earlier in his account, Tacitus describes the efforts of Seneca and Burrus 'quo...lubricam principis aetatem...retinerent'.<sup>45</sup> The idea that the development of the adult character depends not only on innate qualities but also on upbringing and the influence of individuals and of society at large is apparent in these and many other Latin passages, and is strikingly illustrated in the stock theme of *adolescentia* as a *lubrica aetas*.<sup>46</sup> The idea that the formation of character (that is, ethical or moral character or *mores*, not 'personality')<sup>47</sup> depends on a combination of factors is no more alien to Roman thinking in general than to Greek philosophy.

However, the general awareness, in Greek and Roman culture of the late Republic and early Empire, that the adult character is a product of a combination of factors, and is therefore something which develops, is not fully reflected in the historiography and biography of the period. We have found allusions to this theme in Roman historiography; and in Plutarch the theme underlies a number of his biographies, particularly in their opening chapters.<sup>48</sup> But it would not be true to say that their accounts regularly or typically highlight the process of character-development. Even when the author regards the theme of character-formation as relevant to his narrative (as Plutarch clearly sometimes does), the actual process of personal development is very lightly sketched. This feature of the ancient accounts has perhaps contributed to the impression that ancient authors believed that character was innate, and existed, in all essentials, in the child. This impression, however, oversimplifies the situation. Plutarch certainly does, like Suetonius, sometimes relate anecdotes which suggest that individuals exhibited in childhood, or at least youth, qualities which were later exhibited, on a grander scale, in adult life.<sup>49</sup> But this simply shows, what is in any case

<sup>44</sup> *Cael.* 10, 41, 42–3, 76–7.

<sup>45</sup> 13. 2. 2. In Nero's case, this attempt at moral guidance is ineffective and ineffectual ('si virtutem aspernaretur, voluptatibus concessis'). But we should not generalise this case to the belief that all attempts at moral guidance are ineffective, because of the determining power of innate character (as Alexander seems to, *op. cit.* 358 ff.). Nero's combination of innate, or at least already developed, bad character (13. 2. 1, 'abditis adhuc vitiis') and absolute power, given to him at seventeen, is not a common one.

<sup>46</sup> Other examples: Plin. 4. 2. 1, 'erat puer acris ingenii, sed ambigui, qui tamen posset recta sectari, si patrem non referret'; Pers. 5. 34–5, on adopting the *toga virilis*, 'cumque iter ambiguum est et vitae nescius error / diducit trepidas ramosa in compita mentes...'; Hor. *AP* 161–3, 'imberbis iuvenis...cereus in vitium flecti'.

<sup>47</sup> cf. refs. in nn. 40–1. Whether the Romans are *ever* interested in personality, not character, is too large a question to raise here; but in connection with the developing adult, the concern with (moral) character is certainly much more prominent.

<sup>48</sup> See the examples discussed above.

<sup>49</sup> e.g. *Alex.* 2, *Demetr.* 4, *Alc.* 2, *Lys.* 2.



clear from other passages, that Plutarch believes that nature makes a contribution to the developed adult character, not that it is the sole determinant.<sup>50</sup> It certainly does not show, what I think Plutarch would have denied, that there is no qualitative difference between the character of a child, in whom the capacity for rational self-direction is relatively undeveloped, and that of a mature, morally responsible adult.<sup>51</sup> In Tacitus, too, although we do not find the same obvious interest as in Plutarch in the factors contributive to character-formation, we do not find the famous Tacitean character-sketches made of children and the immature, but of adults.<sup>52</sup> Thus, the practice of these authors does not bear out the view that they thought the adult character was already essentially present in the child.

However, there are features of these authors' overall approach which predispose them to present a relatively static picture of a person's character, and make them disinclined to explore personal development closely. We saw that Plutarch and most Roman historians tend to conceive their project in ethical terms, as being that of passing judgement on the moral character of historical figures.<sup>53</sup> As though in some kind of historical law-court, they set out to answer the question 'what sort of person was X?, what qualities, what virtues and vices did he have?'.<sup>54</sup> It is the adult character they are normally concerned with, the character of the developed moral agent, to whom virtues and vices can properly be ascribed.<sup>55</sup> Their interest in childhood or early youth is normally confined to discerning early signs of the characteristics which develop fully later, though in some cases they are also interested in seeing how the person came to acquire those good or bad qualities.<sup>56</sup> This framework of concern is different from that of the biographer who takes as his central subject the individual 'personality', which he explores, both in its transient and lasting aspects, for its inherent interest, and without overt moral judgement. Erikson pays much closer attention, in his biography of Luther, to the evidence of childhood experiences than Plutarch ever does. He does so partly because he sees these experiences as determinant of Luther's later personality in a way Plutarch could not have done;<sup>57</sup> but also because the gradual unfolding of the individual personality, with all its psychological complexity and distinctiveness, is central to his concerns. The modern biography differs then in laying more stress on development; but this in turn reflects a wider

<sup>50</sup> cf. refs. in nn. 28–32 above.

<sup>51</sup> Dihle points out, op. cit. 63, that in these childhood anecdotes Plutarch tends to use *phusis* not *ēthos* to denote the child's 'character', thereby indicating its incomplete development. This is perhaps right, though the *phusis/ēthos* distinction is not consistently maintained, and *phusis* is also used for adult character; cf. below, esp. n. 61.

<sup>52</sup> For examples, see S. Daitz, 'Tacitus' Technique of Character Portrayal', *AJPh* 81 (1960), 30–52, esp. 36 ff.; as Daitz notes, 40, many of his sketches are quasi-obituaries. The fact that a person can be introduced *into the narrative* with his characteristics neatly itemised should not be taken as evidence that he enters *into life* with his character already defined.

<sup>53</sup> cf. n. 25 above.

<sup>54</sup> cf. Russell, *Plutarch*, 102–3. This concern is very obvious in Plutarch's comparisons; cf. H. Erbse, 'Die Bedeutung der Synkrisis in den Parallelbiographien Plutarchs', *Hermes* 84 (1956), 398–424. The predominant connotation of *ēthos/mores* in rhetorical treatises is an ethical one; see e.g. Arist. *Rh.* 1. 2, 1. 9, Cic. *De Or.* 2. 182–4, Quint. 6. 2, 8, 11, 13, 18.

<sup>55</sup> Whether or not the adult moral agent is directly responsible for the development of his own vices, he is held liable to judgment, to praise and blame, for the virtues and vices he possesses. This is a standard feature of ancient and modern views of moral character; cf. refs. in n. 7.

<sup>56</sup> e.g. Sallust's Jugurtha, Plutarch's Brutus the younger, Dion, Coriolanus, etc. Cf. discussion above.

<sup>57</sup> op. cit. 50 ff. His account reflects Freud's theories about the importance of infantile experience, particularly sexual experience.

difference, that of the whole conception of the person the biographer takes as his subject, a difference which carries with it a quite different notion of personal development.<sup>58</sup>

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In Plutarch's framework of thought about character, there are two kinds of development he seems to regard as psychologically normal. One kind is the development which leads a child or youth to form (or fail to form) a good adult character. The other kind is the process by which an adult, in the course of adult life, improves his character, in some cases by conscious correction of his own defects. The kind of case he finds problematic is that in which an adult who seems to have developed a good character deteriorates in later life.<sup>59</sup> Why does he find this problematic? There are three key texts in Plutarch which bear on this question.

μεγίστην γὰρ ὁ Φίλιππος δοκεῖ καὶ παραλογωτάτην μεταβαλέσθαι μεταβολήν, ἐξ ἡμέρου βασιλέως καὶ μεираκίου σώφρονος ἀνὴρ ἀσελγῆς καὶ τύραννος ἐξώλης γενόμενος. τὸ δὲ οὐκ ἦν ἄρα μεταβολὴ φύσεως, ἀλλ' ἐπίδειξις ἐν ἀδείᾳ κακίας πολλὴν χρόνον διὰ φόβον ἀγνοηθείσης (*Arat.* 51–3).

Μάριος μὲν οὖν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς χαλεπὸς ὦν ἐπέτεινεν, οὐ μετέβαλε τῇ ἐξουσίᾳ τὴν φύσιν. Σύλλας δὲ μετρίως τὰ πρῶτα καὶ πολιτικῶς ὁμιλήσας τῇ τύχῃ καὶ δόξαν ἀριστοκρατικοῦ καὶ δημωφελοῦς ἡγεμόνος παρασχών... εἰκότως προσετρίψατο ταῖς μεγάλας ἐξουσίαις διαβολὴν ὡς τὰ ἦθη μένειν οὐκ ἐώσαις ἐπὶ τῶν ἐξ ἀρχῆς τρόπων, ἀλλ' ἐμπληκτα καὶ χαῦνα καὶ ἀπάνθρωπα ποιούσαις. τοῦτο μὲν οὖν εἶτε κινήσις ἐστὶ καὶ μεταβολὴ φύσεως ὑπὸ τύχης, εἶτε μᾶλλον ὑποκειμένης ἀποκάλυψις ἐν ἐξουσίᾳ κακίας, ἑτέρα τις ἂν διορίσειε πραγματεία (*Sulla*, 30. 4–5).

καίτοι δοκεῖ περὶ τὸν ἔσχατον αὐτοῦ βίον ὠμότητος καὶ βαρυνθυμίας τὸ περὶ τοὺς δμήρους πραχθέν ἔργον ἐπιδείξει τὴν φύσιν οὐκ οὖσαν ἡμερον, ἀλλ' ἐπαμπεχομένην λογισμῷ διὰ τὴν ἀνάγκην. ἐμοὶ δὲ ἀρετὴν μὲν εἰλικρινῇ καὶ κατὰ λόγον συνεστῶσαν οὐκ ἂν ποτε δοκεῖ τύχῃ τις ἐκστῆσαι πρὸς τούναντίον, ἄλλως δὲ προαιρέσεις καὶ φύσεις χρηστὰς ὑπὸ συμφορῶν μεγάλων παρ' ἀξίαν κακωθείσας οὐκ ἀδύνατον τῷ δαίμονι συµμεταβαλεῖν τὸ ἦθος. ὁ καὶ Σεργώριον οἶμαι παθεῖν ἤδη τῆς τύχης αὐτὸν ἐπιλειπούσης, ἐκτραχυνόμενον ὑπὸ τῶν πραγμάτων γινομένων πονηρῶν πρὸς τοὺς ἀδικούντας (*Sertorius*, 10. 3–4).

It is evident that he finds an apparent change from good to bad character problematic (he calls it *παραλογωτάτην* in the case of Philip); and it seems that he does so because he regards the notion of a *μεταβολὴ φύσεως* problematic. He does not rule this out as a possibility: he considers it as a possible explanation for Sulla's behaviour, but reserves the issue for fuller analysis elsewhere (which he never provides). But what is it about the notion of a *μεταβολὴ φύσεως* that he finds problematic? It is often stated by scholars that Plutarch draws a sharp distinction between *phusis*, the innate and unchanging element in character, and *ethos*, the acquired and mutable element.<sup>60</sup> In fact, Plutarch is not always consistent in maintaining this distinction;<sup>61</sup> but if this distinction were present in his mind here,

<sup>58</sup> The 'character-viewpoint' lays much more stress on education and conscious self-modification, the 'personality-viewpoint' on more complex, less fully conscious processes of change. Dihle has similar observations, *op. cit.* 78, though not made in these terms. Cf. also Georg Misch, *A History of Autobiography in Antiquity*, tr. E. W. Dickes (London, 1950), vol. 1, 291–2. Of course, not all modern biographers are as psychoanalytic and 'personality-centred' as Erikson; for discussion, see refs. in nn. 17–18 above.

<sup>59</sup> cf. refs. in nn. 29, 32 above, and Wardman, *op. cit.* 132–6.

<sup>60</sup> Russell, 'On Reading Plutarch's Lives', 144–7, Dihle, *op. cit.* 84–7, J. R. Hamilton, *Plutarch, Alexander: A Commentary* (Oxford, 1969), xxxviii–xxxix.

<sup>61</sup> Both Russell, *ibid.* 147, n. 2, and Dihle, *op. cit.* 63–4, admit that this distinction is not consistently maintained. Examples include *Demetr.* 2. 3 (τὸ ἦθος ἐπεφύκει), *Dion* 8. 2 and *Numa* 3. 5 (φύσει... τὸ ἦθος), *Arist.* 2 (φύσις... ἐν ἡθει), *Lys.* 23. 2 (φύσεις used of developed, adult

it might seem to explain both his puzzlement and his way of resolving this. Change of the innate (unchanging) *phusis* he either denies (Philip) or refrains from affirming (Sulla). Change in *ēthos*, *ēthē* or *tropoi*, the acquired and mutable elements, he finds more acceptable.<sup>62</sup> But I am not sure this interpretation of the passages is quite right; or that it gets to the root of Plutarch's puzzlement. Is it clear, for instance, that *phusis* means 'innate character', and that it is contrasted with acquired qualities?<sup>63</sup> Certainly, this might be appropriate for Philip V: in spite of seeming to be a *μειρακίον σῶφρον*, his later emergence as an *ἀνὴρ ἀσελγὴς καὶ τύραννος ἐξώλης* showed an innate but concealed and unrecognised predisposition to *κακία*.<sup>64</sup> But this is not very appropriate for Sulla and Sertorius, whose behaviour changed late in life. The *phusis* in question here is a property of the developed adult, exhibited life-long until the change of course.<sup>65</sup> The question that Plutarch confronts is the question whether or not a man can change his developed, adult character; and that is the natural meaning of the term *phusis* in the two passages.<sup>66</sup> Where other terms are introduced, such as *ēthē*, *tropoi*, *proaireseis*, these do not seem strongly contrasted with *phusis* (*phuseis* is actually coupled with *proaireseis*); rather they are used to articulate more fully Plutarch's meaning, and the exact nature of the change he envisages.

But if Plutarch's problem does not consist in the difficulty of conceiving how innate character can change, what does it consist in? I think it consists rather in the difficulty of conceiving how fully developed excellence of character can change to its opposite (a point which comes out most clearly in the passage on Sertorius, the most fully articulated of the three). It is important to remember that for Plutarch, as for other ancient moral theorists, *ἀρετή* is not just a habit or conditioned reflex but depends on some kind of rational decision, the decision, at some level of consciousness, *to be*

characters; contrast the *παιδεία/φύσις* distinction in *Lys.* 2. 2), *Arat.* 49. 1, ἡ δ' ἔμφυτος κακία, τὸν παρὰ φύσιν σχηματισμὸν... διέφαιεν αὐτοῦ τὸ ἦθος; cf. *Cato* 1. 2, discussed by Dihle, op. cit. 63. Dihle finds the origin of Plutarch's alleged belief in an unchangeable *phusis* in Aristotle, op. cit. 84–6. But in Aristotle's ethical writings, which are the most relevant to this question, while he thinks *phusis* makes a contribution to the developed *ēthos*, he does not, to my knowledge, assert that the *phusis*-element is unalterable. Indeed, he states in the *Politics* (7. 12. 7) that ἔνια δὲ οὐθὲν ὀφελος φῖναι· τὰ γὰρ ἔθνη μεταβαλεῖν ποιεῖ... πολλὰ γὰρ παρὰ τοὺς ἔθισμους καὶ τὴν φύσιν πράττουσι διὰ τὸν λόγον, ἐὰν πεισθῶσιν ἄλλως ἔχειν βέλτιον. Cf. *EN* 2. 9. 4, advice on correction of natural defects, σκοπεῖν δὲ δεῖ πρὸς ἃ καὶ αὐτοὶ εὐκατάφοροί ἐσμεν· ἄλλοι γὰρ πρὸς ἄλλα πεφύκαμεν... εἰς τοῦναντίον δ' ἑαυτοὺς ἀφέλκειν δεῖ.

<sup>62</sup> *Sulla*, 30. 5: ὡς τὰ ἦθη μένειν οὐκ ἐώσας ἐπὶ τῶν ἐξ ἀρχῆς τρόπων κτλ. *Sert.* 10. 4: φύσεις χρηστὰς... οὐκ ἀδύνατον... συμμεταβαλεῖν τὸ ἦθος; cf. Russell, *ibid.* 146.

<sup>63</sup> See e.g. *Them.* 2. 5, *Lys.* 2. 2, *Cor.* 1. 2, *Mar.* 2. 1, for *phusis* in this sense.

<sup>64</sup> cf. *Arat.* 49. 1, which also, however, touches on the corrupting effect of power, a theme developed in *Sulla*, 30. 5: ἐπεὶ δὲ τῆς τύχης εὐροσύνης ἔπαιρόμενος τοῖς πράγμασι πολλὰς μὲν ἀνέφνε καὶ μεγάλας ἐπιθυμίας, ἡ δ' ἔμφυτος κακία, τὸν παρὰ φύσιν σχηματισμὸν ἐκβιαζομένη καὶ ἀναδύουσα, κατὰ μικρὸν ἀπεγύμνου καὶ διέφαιεν αὐτοῦ τὸ ἦθος. Plutarch scarcely mentions the evil influence of Demetrius (50. 3–4), which Polybius sees as crucial to the corruption (4. 77. 1–4, 5. 12, 7. 11–14, 10. 26–7).

<sup>65</sup> In *Sert.* 10. 3, he considers a possibility (which he does not accept) that Sertorius' *phusis* was not exhibited in his life but concealed; but it is the *phusis* of the developed adult he is concerned with, whether it is exhibited or concealed.

<sup>66</sup> Note *Μάριος μὲν οὖν... οὐ μετέβαλε τῇ ἐξουσίᾳ τὴν φύσιν. Σύλλας δὲ κτλ... εἴτε κινήσεις ἐσσι καὶ μεταβολὴ φύσεως ὑπὸ τύχης...* (*Sulla*, 30. 4–5). *Σερτώριος... φύσει δὲ ἀνέκπληκτος ὢν παρὰ τὰ δεινὰ καὶ μέτριος εὐτυχίαν ἐνεγκεῖν*; cf. *τὴν φύσιν, φύσεις χρηστὰς* (*Sert.* 10. 2–4). It is the qualities exhibited in adult lives Plutarch is discussing. Perhaps he thinks that such qualities have their roots (at least in part) in innate qualities, but that idea is neither explicit nor relevant here. This usage is not unique; see, e.g., αἱ φιλότιμοι φύσεις (*Lys.* 23. 2). When Plutarch uses the phrase *παρὰ φύσιν* to describe temporary political expedients (*Mar.* 28. 1, *Luc.* 6. 2, *Per.* 7. 2), he is surely not ascribing to people innate political inclinations but life-long, if interrupted, political attitudes.

a σώφρων or ἥμερος person.<sup>67</sup> This explains the tendency for *proairesis* to be used, in historians from Polybius onwards, to signify a person's general pattern of intentions (the rational side of his 'character') as well as a specific decision.<sup>68</sup> Again this explains the otherwise puzzling combination of *προαιρέσεις καὶ φύσεις χρηστὰς*, as well as the description of ἀρετὴν . . . εἰλικρινῇ as κατὰ λόγον συνεστῶσαν, in *Sert.* 10. 4.<sup>69</sup> Plutarch seems to find it virtually unthinkable that someone who had made a rational decision to be a good person should then deliberately choose to become bad. And yet he envisages some sort of change here: what sort is it?

To explain this point requires further exploration of ancient thinking on this topic. In ancient ethical theory, excellence of character is often conceived as a kind of psychological stability or consistency, including the capacity to keep emotions in line with what reason approves, regardless of the impact of circumstances, which often invite rather different emotional reactions.<sup>70</sup> Plutarch presents this idea in his comparison of Timoleon and Aemilius (2. 5): 'A body that can bear only heat or cold is less powerful than one which is naturally capable of bearing both changes (*metabolas*). Similarly a psyche is completely vigorous and strong if prosperity does not spoil it by (inducing) *hubris* and disasters (*sumphorai*) do not humble it'. Plutarch touches here on a very old theme in Greek thought, the idea that wealth and power corrupt men's minds with *hubris* while poverty and misfortune degrade them.<sup>71</sup> The typical response to this theme by ethical philosophers is to insist that excellence of character consists, in part, in the kind of self-control that can maintain psychological stability regardless of circumstances. This view underlies one of the standard criticisms of Alexander the Great: that he lacked the inner strength to resist the emotional temptations his success provided, and that his character changed with his fortune.<sup>72</sup> This view also underlies Plutarch's comments on Sulla. 'Σύλλας δὲ μετρίως τὰ πρῶτα καὶ πολιτικῶς ὀμιλήσας τῇ τύχῃ'. But later his conduct seemed to confirm the old accusation against great power 'ὥς τὰ ἥθη μένειν οὐκ ἐώσας ἐπὶ τῶν ἐξ ἀρχῆς τρόπων';<sup>73</sup> instead, the exceptional circumstances of great power determine men's state of mind, 'ἐμπληκτα καὶ χαῦνα καὶ ἀπάνθρωπα ποιοῦσας'.<sup>74</sup> Plutarch says of Sertorius that for most of his life he seemed capable of bearing both good and bad

<sup>67</sup> The link between ἀρετή and προαίρεσις goes back at least as far as Aristotle; cf. n. 69 below. This is also a feature of modern moral thinking; see, e.g., Lester Hunt, 'Character and Thought', *APQ* 15 (1978), 177–86, Charles Taylor, 'Responsibility for Self', in *The Identities of Persons*, ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1975), 281–99.

<sup>68</sup> See, e.g. Plb. 5. 12. 7, 9. 22. 10 (most rulers are forced to act παρὰ τὴν αὐτῶν προαίρεσιν; the issue in question is whether τὰς φύσεις of rulers are concealed or revealed by circumstances), 16. 28. 5–6. Cf. Plu. *Arat.* 48. 3, ἡ . . . προαίρεσις αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸ ἥθος.

<sup>69</sup> See also the combination τὰς φύσεις αὐτῶν καὶ τὰς διαθέσεις in *Dem.* 3. For this aspect of Plutarch's thought cf. Leo, op. cit. 188 ff., Dihle, op. cit. 60 ff., Wardman, op. cit. 107 ff.; see further K. von Fritz, 'Die Bedeutung des Aristoteles für die Geschichtsschreibung', *Fondation Hardt, Entretiens vol. iv* (Vandoeuvres-Genève, 1956), 104–5.

<sup>70</sup> cf. refs. in n. 69, Cic. *Off.* 1. 66 ff., 1. 102 ff., 3. 100, and discussion below.

<sup>71</sup> A few examples: Aesch. *A.* 750–6, Hdt. 3. 80. 3, Thuc. 3. 45. 4, Pl. *Prt.* 339 ff. (Simonides' poem), *Lg.* 875a–c.

<sup>72</sup> e.g. Cic. *Tusc.* 3. 21, 'summa potentia summaque fortuna sed ignarum quem ad modum rebus secundis uti conveniret' (Cicero ascribes the criticism to Theophrastus); Liv. 9. 18. 1–4, esp. 'nondum merso secundis rebus, quarum nemo intolerantior fuit . . . ex habitu novae fortunae novique, ut ita dicam, ingenii quod sibi victor induerat'. See further Hamilton, op. cit. lx–lxii; Arrian's response to these criticisms is discussed by Philip A. Stadter, *Arrian of Nicomedia* (Chapel Hill, 1980), 103–14.

<sup>73</sup> cf. refs. in n. 71 above, esp. Hdt. 3. 80. 3 and Pl. *Lg.* 875a–c.

<sup>74</sup> This leads Plutarch to raise the general question whether *phusis* can change; and *phusis* here is surely used as a general term for 'character' (the developed character of the adult Sulla) and not in contrast to the terms *ēthē* and *tropoi*; cf. n. 66 above.

fortune: 'οὔτε ὑφ' ἡδονῆς οὔτε ὑπὸ δέους εὐάλωτος γενέσθαι, φύσει δὲ ἀνέκπληκτος ὢν παρὰ τὰ δεινὰ καὶ μέτριος εὐτυχίαν ἐνεγκεῖν'. Yet eventually Sertorius proved unable to withstand bad fortune (τῆς τύχης αὐτὸν ἐπιλειπούσης) and he allowed his state of mind to be determined by his circumstances (ἐκτραχυνόμενον ὑπὸ τῶν πραγμάτων γινομένων πονηρῶν).<sup>75</sup> Plutarch implicitly rejects the suggestion he mentions, that Sertorius' character (*phusis*) was not, for most of his life, as ἡμερος as it seemed (10. 3). Instead he proposes that Sertorius' excellence of character was not complete, not fully and rationally integrated into his psyche (κατὰ λόγον συνεστῶσαν),<sup>76</sup> so that it proved ultimately unequal to the emotional strain of his later failure. Thus, neither in the case of Sulla or Sertorius does the issue turn, for Plutarch, on the notion of immutable, innate *phusis*; nor does his analysis depend on a contrast between innate and acquired characteristics.<sup>77</sup> His analysis depends on his view of good character (fully developed, reasoned excellence of character), and his conviction that it guarantees emotional continuity regardless of circumstances.

The emperor Tiberius obviously raised the same kind of issue, with his apparently good life terminating in the brutality of his final years;<sup>78</sup> and he invited the same kinds of analysis that Plutarch gave in the case of Philip V, Sulla and Sertorius. Dio Cassius' discussion of the question has a kind of family resemblance to Plutarch's analyses.

μετὰ γὰρ τοῦτο (i.e., the death of Germanicus) συχνὰ αὐτῶν μετέβαλεν, εἴτ' οὖν φρονῶν μὲν οὕτως ἀπὸ πρώτης ὡς ὕστερον διέδειξε, πλασάμενος δὲ ἐφ' ὅσον ἐκείνος (Germanicus) ἔβιω, ἐπειδὴ περ ἐφεδρεύοντα αὐτὸν τῇ ἡγεμονίᾳ ἑώρα, εἴτε καὶ πεφυκῶς μὲν εὖ, ἐξοκείλας δ' ὅτε τοῦ ἀνταγωνιστοῦ ἐστερήθη (57. 13. 6).

First Dio considers the kind of explanation applied by Plutarch to Philip V: there was no change in character but only a revelation of an underlying but concealed *kakia*. The second explanation is closer to Plutarch's analysis of Sulla. Tiberius was a person of good character (πεφυκῶς μὲν εὖ) but 'ran aground' or 'was shipwrecked' (ἐξοκείλας) when he was deprived of a rival. Dio's use of the verb ἐξοκέλλειν here is interesting. For it is used repeatedly in Greek in cases of moral collapse, or collapse of character, especially under the strain of excessive power, wealth, or (in Plutarch) violent emotions unmoderated by education.<sup>79</sup> The 'shipwreck' Dio considers as a

<sup>75</sup> *Sert.* 10. 4; cf. τῷ δαίμονι συµμεταβαλεῖν τὸ ἦθος; Plutarch here adapts Heraclitus' dictum, ἦθος ἀνθρώπῳ δαίμων (fr. 118), which seems to be one of the earliest statements of the 'ethical' view of the relationship between character and circumstances.

<sup>76</sup> The phrase recalls the Platonic picture of complete ἀρετή as a unification of the psyche under reason, guaranteeing psychological stability (Pl. *R.* 442–4), an idea elaborated by Aristotle and the Stoics; cf. refs. in nn. 30, 33 above.

<sup>77</sup> In *Sert.* 10. 4, all the terms (κατὰ λόγον συνεστῶσαν... προαιρέσεις καὶ φύσεις... συµμεταβαλεῖν τὸ ἦθος), in combination, contribute to Plutarch's analysis of the precise nature of Sertorius' incompleteness of excellence in character. The analysis given of Sertorius would also fit Sulla (with success, instead of failure, showing up incompleteness of excellence), although Plutarch does not articulate it so fully there. In Sulla tyrannical power is said to alter his emotional tenor (φιλόγελως ἐκ νέου... καὶ πρὸς οἶκτον ὕγρος... χαῖνα καὶ ἀπάνθρωπα) as well as his political attitudes.

<sup>78</sup> Our evidence for the recognition of this disparity goes back to Sen. *Clem.* 1. 6, Pliny, *HN* 14. 144 ('in senecta iam severo atque etiam saevo'), 34. 62 ('quamquam imperiosus sui inter initia principatus'), and is strongly marked in Suet. *Tib.* 41 (cf. 61 and *Gaius* 6. 2), Tac. *Ann.* 4. 1, 6. 51. 3. The ancient accounts and their problems and inconsistencies are brilliantly analysed by D. M. Pippidi, *Autour de Tibère* (Bucharest, 1944), 11–87; cf. J. P. V. D. Balsdon's review in *JRS* 36 (1948), 168 ff. Bibliography is reviewed by Albino Garzetti, 'Sul Problema di Tacito e Tiberio', *RSI* (1955), 70–80. Cf. Ronald Syme, *Tacitus* (Oxford, 1958), 420 ff., 688 ff., Robin Seager, *Tiberius* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1972), 255 ff.

<sup>79</sup> D.C. 58. 23. 1: Tiberius appeals to the senate not to give Gaius untimely honours μή... ἐξοκέλη (cf. 58. 12. 6, Sejanus ἐξεφρόνησεν by excessive honours). Plb. 4. 48. 11: ἐπαρθεῖς

possible explanation for Tiberius' last years is presumably one caused by absolute, unchallenged power. Suetonius and Tacitus also favour the idea that the removal of rivals influenced Tiberius' moral decline. But in their accounts, this merely enabled Tiberius to reveal pre-existing evil tendencies,<sup>80</sup> whereas Dio, in his second alternative, considers the possibility that Tiberius had a good character but was none the less 'shipwrecked' by absolute power.<sup>81</sup> Dio's second suggestion then is similar to that which Tacitus ascribes to Lucius Arruntius, 'cum Tiberius post tantam rerum experientiam vi dominationis convulsus et mutatus est' (*Ann.* 6. 48. 2). Lucius Arruntius too ascribes some kind of real change of character to Tiberius, and one that comes late in life (*post...experientiam*), and identifies its cause as the psychic 'collapse' induced by absolute power.<sup>82</sup>

Tacitus himself, notoriously, does not pursue the suggestion of Lucius Arruntius; his account is based firmly on the idea that Tiberius' character did not change, degenerate or 'collapse' but was simply concealed until all external restraints were removed and he felt he could reveal it.<sup>83</sup> It is sometimes claimed that Tacitus adopted this view (which is at variance with much of the evidence he himself provides)<sup>84</sup> because he was incapable of conceiving the notion of change of character; and that this was an incapacity he shared with other ancient writers.<sup>85</sup> I hope it is clear from my discussion that these claims constitute a gross over-simplification of the actual situation. The idea that character-formation depends on a combination of factors, and that character develops, especially in youth but also sometimes within adult life, is a familiar one in Greece and Rome.<sup>86</sup> Plutarch finds the notion of degeneration of character in adult life problematic; but this seems to derive from his conception of the nature of good character, as we have seen, rather than from the idea that character is both innate and immutable.<sup>87</sup> The idea that absolute power can cause any character

τοῖς εὐτυχίμασι παρὰ πόδας ἐξώκειλε; 7. 1. 1, πλοῦτον περιβαλομένους ἐξοκείλαι εἰς τρυφήν καὶ πολυτέλειαν; 18. 55. 7, τυχών...μεγάλης ἀποδοχῆς καὶ περιουσίας...εἰς ἀσέλγειαν ἐξώκειλε καὶ βίον ἀσυρῇ. *Plu. Mar.* 2. 3, ὑπὸ θυμοῦ καὶ φιλαρχίας ἄωρον καὶ πλεονεξιών ἀπαρηγόρητον εἰς ὀμώτατον καὶ ἀγριώτατον γῆρας ἐξοκείλας; 45. 6, εἰς ἄτοπον ἐξοκείλαι παρακοπήν; *Brut.* 1. 1, σκληρὸν ἐκ φύσεως καὶ οὐ μαλακὸν ἔχων ὑπὸ λόγου τὸ ἦθος ἄχρι παιδοφονίας ἐξώκειλε τῷ θυμῷ. Earlier examples: *E. Tr.* 136–7; *Men. fr.* 587, ὁ πλοῦτος ἐξώκειλε τὸν κεκτημένον εἰς ἕτερον ἦθος. See further, LSJ<sup>9</sup>, s.v. ἐξοκέλλω, and for the theme, refs. in n. 71 above.

<sup>80</sup> Suet. *Gaius* 6. 2 (change at the death of Germanicus), *Tib.* 61. 1 (change at the death of Sejanus); cf. *Tib.* 42. 1, 57. 1 ('saeva ac lenta natura ne in puero quidem latuit'), 59. 1, 62. 1. This theme is well embedded in Tacitus' account; see esp. *Ann.* 1. 4. 3, 5. 3, 6. 51. 3. It has been suggested that the idea of the deleterious effect of the removal of external restraints was transferred by Tacitus from a political to a personal context, F. Klingner, *Studien zur griechischen und römischen Literatur* (Zürich, 1964), 658. Perhaps so; though the corrupting effect of absolute power is an old theme (cf. n. 73 above).

<sup>81</sup> The inconsistency of this suggestion with his unfavourable character-sketch of Tiberius in 57. 1 is brought out by Pippidi, op. cit. 82–4. Elsewhere Dio simply notes change in behaviour but attempts no further explanation, e.g. 57. 19. 1 (absence of rivals, again), 58. 28. 5.

<sup>82</sup> *Convulsus*, 'his state of mind was undermined' (cf. *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, 2e), is close in meaning to ἐξοκέλλειν. For discussion of Arruntius' remark, see A. R. Hands, 'Postremo suo tantum ingenio utebatur', *CQ* n.s. 24 (1974), 312–17, esp. 314–15.

<sup>83</sup> cf. refs. in n. 80 above and n. 98 below.

<sup>84</sup> See refs. in n. 78 above, esp. Pippidi, op. cit. 50–66; cf. Syme, op. cit. 420–2, Seager, op. cit. 262.

<sup>85</sup> See refs. in n. 2 above.

<sup>86</sup> Examples in Tacitus: *Hist.* 1. 50. 4 (Vespasian) 'solusque omnium ante se principum in melius mutatus est' (noted by Goodyear, op. cit. 40). Cf. *Ann.* 3. 69. 2 'multos in provinciis contra quam spes aut metus de illis fuerit egisse: excitari quosdam ad meliora magnitudine rerum, hebescere alios'.

<sup>87</sup> A further issue for Plutarch was whether excellence of character can be lost through bodily illness (*Per.* 38; cf. Wardman, op. cit. 46–7, 137) or old age (*Fab.* 26. 4) or over-relaxation and decadence (comparison of *Cim.* and *Luc.*, 1–4).

that is less than perfect to 'collapse' or 'run aground' is almost a cliché. Indeed, it is one Tacitus' Tiberius himself seems to refer to, in rejecting the title of *pater patriae*: 'neque in acta sua iurari, quamquam censente senatu, permisit, cuncta mortalia incerta, quantoque plus adeptus foret, tanto se magis in lubrico dictitans' (*Ann.* 1. 72. 1). That the *mortalia* said to be *incerta* are intended to include possible change in character is suggested by Suetonius' version of this incident: 'similem se semper sui futurum nec umquam mutaturum mores suos, quamdiu sanae mentis fuisset; sed exempli causa cavendum esse, ne se senatus in acta cuiusquam obligaret, quia aliquo casu mutari posset' (*Tib.* 67).<sup>88</sup> It seems unlikely that Tacitus presents Tiberius the way he does because he finds the idea of character-change psychologically inconceivable.

In fact, Tacitus' own account of Tiberius contains some passages which would seem to fit a theory of degeneration rather than of unchanging character. These passages suggest a rather different picture from Tacitus' overall view, something closer to Polybius' picture of Philip V: that of a man significantly influenced by a corrupt adviser, Sejanus, and giving way to the temptations all men are liable to in positions of great power, the temptation to satisfy, in a wanton and uncontrolled way, feelings of greed, lust, brutality and arrogance.<sup>89</sup> Underlying Polybius' account, and perhaps to some extent Tacitus' too, is Plato's picture of the tyrant in *Republic* Book Nine, as someone who has given way to the lawless, sensual passions (the many-headed beasts within us), to which all of us are at some level susceptible.<sup>90</sup> Interestingly enough, Tacitus cites another Platonic picture of the tyrant's soul (that in which it is lacerated and scarred by crime) to describe Tiberius' state of mind. He interprets the Platonic passage as supporting his idea that Tiberius, at this time, was agonised by guilt – an idea that is inconsistent with his usual picture of Tiberius as a deliberately evil man.<sup>91</sup> I am not suggesting that Tacitus actually did adopt the view that Tiberius' character degenerated through absolute power. I am suggesting rather that such degeneration was a familiar theme to him, and that certain passages in his own (very different) account seem to be coloured by this theme and its well-established motifs.

The claim, then, that Tacitus was forced to adopt his interpretation of Tiberius by his psychological preconceptions and those of his age, does not seem to me well grounded; particularly as the prime piece of evidence for these alleged preconceptions

<sup>88</sup> According to Dio, 57. 23. 4, there were speculations later about Tiberius' having gone mad (ἐξεστηκέναι... αὐτοῦ τῶν φρενῶν), though he does not say whether this was thought to be a result of absolute power (cf. refs. in n. 79 above).

<sup>89</sup> *Ann.* 4. 1. 1, 'cum repente turbare fortuna coepit, saevire ipse aut saevientibus vires praebere. initium et causa penes Aelium Seianum'; cf. 4. 6. 1, 'Tiberio mutati in deterius principatus initium ille annus attulit'; 4. 20. 1, 'ea prima Tiberio erga pecuniam alienam diligentia fuit'; 6. 1. 1., 'saxa rursum et solitudinem maris repetiit, pudore scelerum et libidinum, quibus adeo indomitis exarserat, ut more regio pubem ingenuam stupris pollueret'; 6. 19. 1–2, 'magnitudinem pecuniae... sibimet Tiberius seposuit inritatusque supplicis cunctos... necari iubet'. (On the inconsistency between these passages and other parts of Tacitus' account, see Pippidi, op. cit. 57–66.) For refs. in Polybius, see n. 64 above; for the bad influence on character of an evil adviser as a continuing theme, see D.C. 73. 1–2 (Commodus), 78. 11. 5 (Caracalla) (cf. J. Crook, *Consilium Principis* [Cambridge, 1955], 26, 76 ff., 81 ff.). On *avaritia*, *libido*, *crudelitas*, *superbia* as stock tyrannical faults, see J. R. Dunkle, 'The Rhetorical Tyrant in Roman Historiography: Sallust, Livy, Tacitus', *CW* 65 (1971), 12–20, esp. 18–20; cf. 'The Greek Tyrant and Roman Political Invective of the Late Roman Republic', *TAPA* 98 (1967), 151–71.

<sup>90</sup> Plb. 7. 13. 7 (καθ' ἅπερ... ἐγγενεσάμενος αἵματος ἀνθρωπείου... οὐ λύκος ἐξ ἀνθρώπου... ἀλλὰ τύραννος ἐκ βασιλέως); he refers to Pl. *R.* 565d–e; cf. 571–5, 588c–591e. Cf. Tac. refs. in n. 89 above, esp. *Ann.* 4. 1. 1, *saevire*, 6. 19. 2, 'inritatusque supplicis... necari iubet' and context; cf. 6. 39. 2. Cf. B. Walker, *The Annals of Tacitus* (Manchester, 1952), 210–11.

<sup>91</sup> *Ann.* 6. 6. 1–2 (cf. Suet. *Tib.* 67); cf. Pl. *Grg.* 524d–e (the idea of conscious guilt is not present in Plato's passage). For Tiberius as deliberately evil, see discussion below.

is none other than Tacitus' own portrayal of Tiberius.<sup>92</sup> It seems much more likely that Tacitus' portrayal of Tiberius' character rests on a deliberate choice of psychological model out of a number of available possibilities.<sup>93</sup> But what, exactly, is the psychological model that Tacitus has adopted? It seems clear that Tacitus' account is intended to show that Tiberius' character did not change during his rule but was only more clearly revealed. But does he also intend to make the stronger claim that this character was innate in Tiberius, and that its innateness is an important fact, and one that underlies the whole account? Some scholars take this view;<sup>94</sup> it rests, so far as I can see, essentially on two words, *insita* in *Ann.* 1. 4. 3 and *ingenio* in 6. 51. 3. It is worth studying these words in context to see how far they will bear the interpretative weight sometimes placed on them.

In the first passage, which comes in Tacitus' reconstruction of popular appraisals of Augustus' possible successors, the phrase 'vetere atque insita Claudiaie familiae superbia' does, indeed, suggest that *superbia*, at least, was an innate quality of Tiberius.<sup>95</sup> However, the passage as a whole does not support the view that Tiberius' character is derived solely from innate factors.<sup>96</sup> Tacitus continues: 'hunc et prima ab infantia eductum in domo regnatrice; congestos iuveni consultatus, triumphos'. The implication of this sentence (one underlined by the rhetorically coloured *regnatrice* and *congestos*) is that, whatever Tiberius' original nature was, an upbringing in a 'tyrannical' household and the lavishing on him of excessive honours in youth helped to promote the traits of *superbia* and *saevitia*.<sup>97</sup> The next comment is even more suggestive. The salient features of Tiberius' character during his reign, as Tacitus presents them, are his *dissimulatio*, his concealed, but deeply considered, cruelty and capacity for hatred.<sup>98</sup> Referring to the years at Rhodes (when Tiberius was in

<sup>92</sup> cf. refs. in n. 2 above.

<sup>93</sup> cf. Hands, op. cit. esp. 314, n. 6, 317. Hands thinks Tacitus' method of portrayal drew on rhetorical advice, such as that, in accusing a man whose previous life is good, one should argue 'eum ante classe, nunc manifesto teneri, etc.' (*auct. ad. Her.* 2. 5, Hands, 313); but he denies that rhetorical preconceptions compelled Tacitus to adopt this approach. The question which interpretations of Tiberius were available before Tacitus has been much discussed (see e.g. the scholars cited in n. 78 above and F. B. March, *The Reign of Tiberius* [Oxford, 1931], pp. 233 ff.); certainty is impossible, but I incline to Pippidi's view, op. cit. 66 ff., that Tacitus' portrait is in many respects an original and fully thought-out conception. I think it likely that he considered, but rejected, alternative psychological models, such as the good man corrupted by power (of which Polybius' Philip V, Lucius Arruntius' Tiberius, and Plutarch's Sulla, are variations; cf. D.C. 57. 13. 6), even though hints of 'the tyrant's decline' colour his own account (nn. 89–90 above). Indeed, his own account is a kind of sustained, if implicit, argument against such a view. Tacitus' reasons for forming his interpretation have been much discussed; the Domitian-parallel is often noted, e.g. Walker, op. cit. 206.

<sup>94</sup> e.g. Olive, 'The Romans and their Gods', 18, Alexander, op. cit. 355–6, Daitz, op. cit. 32–3.

<sup>95</sup> Strictly speaking, the words do not actually specify that the *superbia* is innate in Tiberius. They state that *superbia* was 'an old and ingrained' characteristic of the Claudian family. It was well known that family traits, both good and bad, could be transmitted from one generation to another by a variety of means, including family stories (of the kind Suetonius reports, *Tib.* 1 ff.; cf. Plb. 6. 53–4 for a famous report of this means of transmission). Thus the comment does not specifically assert *genetic* transmission of this trait to Tiberius, although this is probably implied.

<sup>96</sup> *Saevitia*, while associated syntactically with *superbia*, is not presented as innate in the same way.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Goodyear, op. cit. nn. on 1. 4. 4, pp. 121–2. Cf. D.C. 58. 23. 1, Tiberius warns the senate, in the case of Gaius, not to ἀκαίρως τιμαῖς αὐτόν, μὴ καὶ ἐξοκείλη ποι, ἐπαίρη. For *superbia* and *saevitia* as tyrannical traits, cf. n. 89 above.

<sup>98</sup> See, e.g., *Ann.* 1. 7. 7, 1. 10. 7, 1. 11. 2, 1. 24. 1, 1. 33. 2, 1. 76. 4, 2. 28. 2, 2. 42. 3, 2. 3, 3. 3, 1. 3, 44. 4, 4. 57, 4. 71. 3, 6. 24. 3, 6. 50. 1, 6. 51. 3.



humiliating semi-exile, estranged from the imperial family and his disgraceful wife), Tacitus says 'ne... aliud quam iram et simulationem et secretas libidines meditatum'. He seems to be indicating a period, within adult life, when Tiberius' mature characteristics developed their distinctive form.<sup>99</sup> The passage is not, to be sure, presented in the form of an account of Tiberius' development: it is a brisk itemisation of the various 'black marks' against Tiberius as a possible emperor. Yet these several points, focusing as they do either on periods and factors generally regarded as formative of character,<sup>100</sup> or on a period of special significance in Tiberius' life,<sup>101</sup> bring together the sorts of factors any Roman might assemble, in trying to form a predictively useful picture of Tiberius as a possible emperor. Innate character, significantly, is only one type of factor considered.

The second relevant passage comes at the end of Tacitus' famous quasi-obituary of Tiberius (6. 51). After describing the phases of the emperor's life and *mores*, he concludes by saying: 'postremo in scelera simul ac dedecora prorupit, postquam remoto pudore et metu suo tantum ingenio utebatur'. Should we infer, from Tacitus' choice of the word *ingenium* here, that he means to indicate that Tiberius finally revealed his innate qualities, perhaps with some kind of implicit contrast with *mores*?<sup>102</sup> *Ingenium* certainly can, in Latin, refer to innate qualities, especially in the context of education; though in such a context it generally signifies natural intellectual ability or talent.<sup>103</sup> But the term can also be used as a general term for disposition or character, with no specific connotation of innateness.<sup>104</sup> In this passage, there is no special contrast between *mores* and *ingenium* of a kind that would justify our reading the first as acquired or developed qualities and the second as innate ones. The period in which Tiberius 'suo tantum ingenio utebatur' is one of the 'morum... tempora illi diversa'. It is one of the periods (Tacitus suggests it is the most significant) in which one can make a judgment on Tiberius' *mores* or moral character. The intended contrast is not between *mores* and *ingenium*, but between the periods in which Tiberius concealed his true character ('occultum ac subdolum fingendis virtutibus... obtectis libidinibus') and that in which he revealed it. The emphasis in *suo ingenio* is on *real* character (contrasted with apparent conduct).<sup>105</sup> Nothing in the passage gives any indication of the sources of that character (that is rather the function of the previous passage we discussed, 1. 4), or suggests that the innateness of the character is especially relevant to Tacitus' concerns here.

<sup>99</sup> The significance for Tiberius of this period is highlighted, e.g. at *Ann.* 2. 42. 2 ff. ('Archelaus... invisus Tiberio, quod eum Rhodi agentem nullo officio coluisset, etc.');

<sup>100</sup> cf. n. 99 above.

<sup>101</sup> That is, should we see the kind of contrast between *ingenium* and *mores* some scholars find in Plutarch between *phusis* and *ēthos* or *ēthē*? Cf. n. 60 above.

<sup>102</sup> e.g. Quint. 2. 8 (cf. *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, senses 4 and 5). In Tac. *Ann.* 14. 19, where one man (contrasted with another) is said to be 'ut par ingenio, ita morum diversus', this is the intended sense, esp. oratorical talent.

<sup>103</sup> See examples in *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, senses 1a and b. There are interesting and pointed uses of the term in Plaut. *Stich.* 126 ('Edepol vos lepide temptavi vostrumque ingenium ingeni) and context, *Most.* 135 ('postea quom immigravi ingenium in meum'), but in neither case does the point seem to be to stress the innate factor.

<sup>104</sup> cf. Liv. 3. 36. 1, 'ille finis Appio alienae personae ferendae fuit. Suo iam inde vivere ingenio coepit, novosque collegas... in suos mores formare', and Ter. *Ad.* 69–71, 'malo coactus qui suum officium facit, / dum id rescitum iri credit, tantisper pavet; / si sperat fore clam, rursum ad ingenium redit'. Cf. Plutarch's use of *phusis* sometimes for developed character, whether revealed or concealed, e.g. *Sert.* 10. 3, perhaps *Arat.* 51. 3, and cf. n. 66 above.

Indeed, there is a rather important reason why Tacitus, in speaking of Tiberius' *ingenium*, should want us to think of the developed, adult character. The last part of the 'obituary' consists of a judgment of Tiberius' moral character, evaluating his *virtutes* (and their genuineness) and his *vitia*. In passing this judgment, Tacitus fulfils his overall aim, and that of other historians and biographers of the period,<sup>106</sup> of passing judgment on the characters of the great men of history, and saying how well they measured up to the supreme challenge of rule. For this type of judgment, the person's (supposed) innate traits are not especially relevant; what matters is the developed adult character exhibited in the exercise of power. After the opening thumbnail sketch of Tiberius (1. 4), Tacitus shows no further interest in tracing back Tiberius' qualities to his childhood nature or in showing how his family traits came out in him.<sup>107</sup> Tacitus' concern is rather to show that Tiberius' vices express a mature consciousness, and reflect deliberate choice. His *saevitia*, for instance, is not presented as something that only comes out in intuitive or hasty reactions, but as something brooded on and deeply considered, together with the *dissimulatio* by which he generally conceals this.<sup>108</sup> Tacitus' Tiberius is evil in a strong sense; he chooses evil even though in some sense capable of good (4. 31. 1, 'gnarum meliorum...tristiora malle'). It is much more important for Tacitus' project to show that Tiberius' evil acts and emotions reflect deliberate choice, and thus express his real character as a mature ruler (*suo...ingenio*), than it is to promote speculations about the innate origin of that character;<sup>109</sup> and the whole thrust of Tacitus' presentation reflects this fact.

In the terms which I discussed earlier in this article, Tacitus' portrait of Tiberius is made, like those of Plutarch, from a 'character-viewpoint'. Tacitus incorporates into this portrait a wider range of psychological details than Plutarch; he includes not only major choices of action and significant remarks but also descriptions of facial expression (or the absence of facial expression), tone of voice and style of expression, significant silence or gesture.<sup>110</sup> These narrative touches may give one the impression

<sup>106</sup> cf. n. 25 above.

<sup>107</sup> Contrast Suetonius' 'flashback' (*Tib.* 57) to Tiberius 'saeva ac lenta natura...in puero'. In the case of other people in the *Annals*, Tacitus sometimes comments on such points, e.g. 1. 12. 4, Asinius Gallus 'patris ferociam retineret', 2. 43. 2, 'insita ferocia patre Pisone', but not in the case of Tiberius. Here, Tacitus is much more concerned to show that the middle-aged Tiberius had, in secret, the same qualities that he claims the aged Tiberius revealed. This interpretation seems designed to offer defence against any suggestion that Tiberius, like Fabius (*Plu. Fab.* 26. 4), might have declined through old age. For the idea of aged infirmity of judgment, see *Ann.* 1. 7. 7, *senili adoptione inrepsisse*; Tiberius, Tacitus insists, triumphed over physical infirmity, 6. 50. 1, 'iam Tiberium corpus, iam vires, nondum dissimulatio deserebat'.

<sup>108</sup> Sometimes, indeed, the *saevitia* 'breaks out' or 'flashes out' in spite of his guard (e.g. 1. 4. 3 'indicia saevitiae quamquam premantur erumpere', 1. 74. 4, 'exarsit...rupta taciturnitate' etc.; cf. Walker, op. cit. 62–5, 91, 159). Elsewhere, however, the *saevitia* is itself deliberated on, and is only revealed when Tiberius thinks it safe. See refs. in n. 98 above, esp. 4. 57. 1–2, 'saevitiam ac libidinem, cum factis promeret, locis occultantem...et Rhodi secreto vitare coetus, recondere voluptates insuerat'; cf. 1. 4. 4, 'ne aliud quam iram et simulationem et secretas libidines meditatum', and Goodyear, op. cit. 124, note on *meditatum*: 'The overtone "trained himself in (for)" may accompany the main sense "practised"'; 4. 71. 3, 'nullam atque...Tiberius...ex virtutibus suis quam dissimulationem diligebat...gnarus lentum in meditando, ubi prorupisset, tristibus dictis atrocita facta coniungere'; cf. 6. 24.

<sup>109</sup> If he can in addition promote such speculation, as he seems to do in the phrase *insita...superbia* (1. 43), so much the better; this point does not seem to be repeated elsewhere, e.g. in 6. 51. 3.

<sup>110</sup> e.g. 4. 32. 2, 'truci vultu'; 2. 29. 2, 'immoto...vultu'; 3. 44. 4, 'neque...vultu mutato'; 2. 28. 2, 'non vultu alienatus, non verbis commotior (adeo iram condiderat)'; 2. 29. 2, 'recitat Caesar, ita moderans, ne...etc.'; 3. 15. 2, 'Tiberium sine miseratione, sine ira, obstinatum clausumque vidit'; 1. 11. 2, 'suspensa semper et obscura verba'; 3. 51. 1, 'solitis sibi ambagibus';

that Tacitus, like Virginia Woolf or James Joyce, is probing, psychologically, below the level of conscious intention and choice; and that he has become fascinated with his subject as a 'personality' and lost interest in moral judgment.<sup>111</sup> But this is not so. This imaginative psychological probing is designed to elicit signs, often unobvious, of Tiberius' motives and intentions;<sup>112</sup> and so, in turn, to bring out the quality of his character as a moral agent, a responsible – and guilty – adult.<sup>113</sup> In this respect, Tacitus' portrayal is fully in line with the dominant preoccupations of ancient historians and biographers of the period.

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4. 31. 2, 'velut eluctantium verborum'; 4. 52. 3, 'audita haec raram occulti pectoris vocem elicuere, corruptamque etc.'. Plutarch's range of psychological data (in theory and practice) is discussed by Pelling, *op. cit.* 135 ff.

<sup>111</sup> Syme, discussing Tacitus' reproduction of Tiberius' style of speaking, says, 'He is reproducing a personality, with its characteristic manner', *op. cit.* 701, but he does not take this to denote absence of moral judgment of the man's character; cf. pp. 420 ff.

<sup>112</sup> Note his self-description as an acute observer and judge of emperors (*Ann.* 4. 33. 2), an attitude doubtless fostered by experience of the imperial court; cf. Walker, *op. cit.*, ch. ix, Syme, *op. cit.* 417–19.

<sup>113</sup> Tacitus suggests that Tiberius' character, as well as his actions and emotions, is, to a large extent, 'up to him', a product of (perverse) choice; cf. refs. in nn. 108, 98, 7, 67, above.