

### XXIII. The Character of Plutarch's Themistocles

HUBERT MARTIN, JR.

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA

#### I INTRODUCTION

This paper is a study of the intellectual and moral qualities of Plutarch's Themistocles, and also of their antecedents in Herodotus and Thucydides, with the purpose of determining to what extent Plutarch's concept of Themistocles' character was influenced by the two historians.\* Our primary concern is with the influence of Herodotean and Thucydidean ideas, not with the complicated and frustrating problem of Plutarch's sources.<sup>1</sup> In accordance with the attitude of much of the more recent Plutarchian scholarship,<sup>2</sup> it is assumed that Plutarch himself, and not some obscure secondary source, is responsible for the quotations and paraphrases of Herodotus and Thucydides that occur in the biography.

Plutarch, in the *Life* itself, attributes two natural traits of character to Themistocles, *synesis* (2.1) and *philotimia* (18.1). These are the only intellectual and moral qualities listed as component parts of his *physis* ("nature," or perhaps better "natural predisposition"); and, as will be demonstrated in the course of this study, they are also the basic components of the mature Themistocles' *êthos* ("character").<sup>3</sup> A few introductory remarks

\* I am much indebted to the Southern Fellowships Fund for a grant which helped make this study possible, and also to Professors Robert J. Getty, H. R. Immerwahr, and James H. Oliver for advice and criticism. I, of course, bear full responsibility for all opinions expressed in the paper.

<sup>1</sup> Phillip De Lacy, "Biography and Tragedy in Plutarch," *AJP* 73 (1952) 159-71, provides an excellent study of the influence of Platonic ideas on the *Life of Demetrius*.

<sup>2</sup> Bernadotte Perrin, *Plutarch's Themistocles and Aristides* (New York 1901) 25-69, and notes *passim*; A. W. Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides* 1 (Oxford 1945) 54-84; K. Ziegler, "Plutarchos," *RE* (1951) 923-25; Carl Theander, "Plutarch und die Geschichte," *Bulletin de la Société royale des lettres de Lund* (1950-51) 1-2, 32-66; K. B. J. Herbert, *Ephorus in Plutarch's Lives: A Source Problem* (Diss. Harvard 1954), summarized in *HSCP* 63 (1958) 510-13; T. S. Tzannetatos, "Ο Θουκυδίδης ως πηγή παρά τῷ Πλουτάρχῳ βιογραφοῦντι," *Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἑπετηρὶς τῆς φιλοσοφικῆς Σχολῆς τοῦ Πανεπιστημίου Ἀθηνῶν* 8 (1957-58) 492-529; "Ο Θουκυδίδης παρά τῷ Πλουτάρχῳ φιλοσοφοῦντι," *Athēna* 62 (1958) 204-47.

<sup>3</sup> For the importance of *physis* and *êthos* in Plutarch's ethical theory see Albrecht Dihle, "Studien zur griechischen Biographie," *Abh. Gött. Akad. Wiss., Phil.-hist. Kl.*,

about the meaning of the terms in this particular *Life*, therefore, will prove useful, though it is hoped that a more precise understanding of Plutarch's usage will evolve as the study progresses.

The association of *synesis* with politics and *praxis* (2.1–3) and the definition of the *sophia* taught by Mnesiphilus as *deinotés politiké kai drastérios synesis* (2.6) suggest the translation “practical intelligence” for *synesis*. Plutarch interprets (18.1) *philotimia* comprehensively as the desire to be recognized as great (*megas*) and very powerful (*pleiston dynamenos*) and indicates (18.8) that it sometimes caused Themistocles to strive merely to be different (*idios*).<sup>4</sup> It is gratified by *timé*, *doxa*, and *to thaumazein*, which are frequently thought of as the *karpos* of *philotimia*.<sup>5</sup>

## II. THEMISTOCLES ὁ συνέτος

A close examination of the pertinent references in Helmbold and O'Neil's compilation<sup>6</sup> reveals that the whole of Thucydides 1.135–38 (which tells of Themistocles' exile, his escape from Greece,

Dritte Folge, Nr. 37 (1956) 57–103. To Dihle's list (63 f.) of terms used by Plutarch to designate a person's mature character, as distinct from his natural predisposition (*physis*), should be added *prohairesis* (*Cim.* 10.8; *Them.* 2.1). In a recent article (“The Concept of *Proaïtēs* in Plutarch's *Lives*,” *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 3 [1960] 65–73) I translated *ēthos* as “ethical character.” This translation was too restrictive, since Plutarch lists *synesis*, an intellectual virtue, along with *tolma* and *dikaíosynē*, two moral virtues, as component parts of Cimon's *ēthos* (*Cim.* 5.1).

<sup>4</sup> In this paper we are concerned with *philotimia* as a personal, moral quality. For the particular and impersonal meanings of the term see Hendrik Bolkestein, *Wohltätigkeit und Armenpflege im vorchristlichen Altertum* (Utrecht 1939) 152–56 (an index of Greek and Latin terms provides a complete list of this author's references to *philotimia*); Louis Robert, *Les gladiateurs dans l'orient grec* (Paris 1940) 276–80; A. D. Nock, “Religious Attitudes of the Ancient Greeks,” *Pr. Am. Philos. Soc.* 85 (1942) 472–82. The general development of the term seems to be somewhat as follows. Basically a desire for public recognition, *philotimia* found its chief expression in services and benefactions to the state and developed the meanings “zeal” and “generosity.” *Philotimos* (sometimes *philodoxos*) eventually became a title in the sense of English “benefactor” and Latin *munerarius*, and *philotimia* even a designation of the function for which the *philotimos* paid or the office which he held. Plutarch uses *philotimia* in the senses of “generosity” (*Arist.* 1.4, 5; *Them.* 10.6) and “zeal” (*Cim.* 8.7, 9; *Arist.* 1.9; 16.6; *Them.* 5.3 [near end], 5) and to designate the *stratēgia* (*Them.* 6.2).

<sup>5</sup> These three basic types of recognition are initially set forth in 18.3–5. See section III of this paper for a discussion of them.

<sup>6</sup> W. C. Helmbold and E. N. O'Neil, *Plutarch's Quotations* (Baltimore 1959), 71. The pertinent references are Thucydides 1.135: cf. Plutarch, *Them.* 123c ff. *et sim.*; 1.136: cf. 123E–F; 1.137.2: cf. 124c; 1.137.3: 125B; 1.137.4: 125E; 1.138: 126c ff.; 1.138.5: cf. 128c. (For the function of “cf.” see the preface to the compilation, p. viii.) Only in this footnote is Helmbold and O'Neil's system of pagination followed.

his treatment by the Great King, and his death) has been worked into chapters 23–29 of Plutarch's biography<sup>7</sup>—with the surprising exception of Thucydides' analysis of Themistocles' character. Plutarch has utilized the portions of Thucydides immediately preceding and following the character analysis, but the analysis itself has been ignored in these chapters. Now Plutarch had read his Thucydides carefully and thoroughly and admired him greatly, so that we should not expect a passage of such biographical import to be ignored;<sup>8</sup> and a comparison of vocabulary will disclose its influence on other portions of the biography. The analysis (1.138.3) is nothing more than a detailed description of Themistocles' native intelligence, his *oikeia xynesis*, which Thucydides defines more generally as a "natural power" (*physeōs ischys*) and a "natural ability" (*physeōs dynamis*), having already (1.138.2) listed Themistocles' proven *xynesis* as the chief cause of the favor he found with the Great King. Accordingly we read in the biography (2.1) that Themistocles was "gifted with a native intelligence" (*tēi physei synetos*) and find Plutarch emphasizing that *synesis* was a component part of his subject's *physis* (2.3, 2.6–7).

Plutarch has thus taken the phrase *tēi physei synetos* directly from the Thucydidean character analysis and incorporated it into chapter 2, just as in chapters 23–29 he has combined the purely narrative portions of Thucydides with the material drawn from other sources.<sup>9</sup> Plutarch's reason for omitting the analysis in chapters 23–29, where it would have come if he were slavishly copying his source, is now obvious. In these chapters his first concern is the narration of events, while in chapter 2, where he makes use of the Thucydidean analysis, he is himself analyzing his subject's character. Plutarch has quite naturally organized his material to suit his own purposes.

Other similarities in vocabulary attest that the Thucydidean influence permeates Plutarch's portrayal of Themistocles' intellectual character. In *Them.* 14.3 Plutarch remarks that the

<sup>7</sup> Plutarch does not hesitate to repeat Thucydides' vocabulary, though seldom reproducing his syntax. In general he has preferred to express the Thucydidean idea in his own words, with the addition of very many details and the omission of others. This is undoubtedly typical of Plutarch's use of his sources (see Theander [above, note 2] 37–45).

<sup>8</sup> See the bibliography cited above, note 2.

<sup>9</sup> The most lengthy and prominent additions are 23.2–5, 26, 27.3–8, 28.3–6, 29.1–4, 29.7–9.

Hellenes obeyed Themistocles because "he saw best what was advantageous" (ὡς ὁρῶντι μάλιστα τὸ συμφέρον), echoing Thucydides' judgment, τό τε ἄμεινον ἢ χεῖρον ἐν τῷ ἀφανεῖ ἔτι προεώρα μάλιστα (1.138.3), though the change in context perhaps indicates an unconscious reminiscence.<sup>10</sup> And when praising Themistocles' foresight in preparing Athens for a second Persian invasion with the phrase πόρρωθεν ἔτι προσδοκῶν τὸ μέλλον (*Them.* 3.5), Plutarch has in mind the Thucydidean Themistocles, who was τῶν μελλόντων ἐπὶ πλείστον τοῦ γενησομένου ἄριστος εἰκαστής (1.138.3) and who anticipated the Persian invasion (καὶ ἅμα τοῦ βαρβάρου προσδοκίμου ὄντος) while the Athenians were still at war with the Aeginetans (1.14.3).<sup>11</sup> In general Plutarch and Thucydides are fond of the verb *horaō* when describing Themistocles' clairvoyance,<sup>12</sup> and for both he constantly reveals his *synesis* in the ability to persuade (*peithein*) others to follow his advice (*gnōmē*). This unique ability is listed as a trait of Themistocles' *xynesis* in Thucydides' character analysis<sup>13</sup> and also figures prominently in his narrative. For example, Themistocles persuaded (*epeisen*) the Athenians to build ships during the war with Aegina (1.14.3), and on his advice (*gnōmē*) they built a thick wall around the Peiraeus (1.93.5).<sup>14</sup> The Plutarchian Themistocles scarcely falls behind the Thucydidean one in utilizing this aspect of his *synesis*, as when (6.5) Plutarch contends that Themistocles' greatest diplomatic achievement was his persuading (*peisanta*) the Greek city-states to lay aside their mutual enmities and when (15.4) Themistocles' shrewd advice (*gnōmē kai deinotēs*) is recognized for its part in the victory at Salamis.<sup>15</sup>

Let us now turn our attention briefly to Herodotus, whose name appears even more frequently than that of Thucydides in

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Thucydides 1.93.4 and *Them.* 4.1 (for the phrase with *etolmēse*). Plutarch seems to have known his Thucydides so well that he sometimes inadvertently borrowed a favorite phrase.

<sup>11</sup> I take the Thucydidean phrase (1.14.3) to mean that Themistocles, in contrast with the Athenians in general, anticipated the Persian invasion. *Them.* 3.5 indicates that Plutarch so interpreted the remark.

<sup>12</sup> In addition to the phrases just cited see also *Them.* 7.3, 14.3 (first sentence), and Thucydides 1.93.7.

<sup>13</sup> This seems to be the approximate meaning of *exēgēsasthai* (1.138.3), which Gomme in his commentary on Thucydides translates *explicare oratione* and equates with Pericles' gift, γυνῶναι τε τὰ δέοντα καὶ ἐρμηνεύσαι ταῦτα (2.60.5).

<sup>14</sup> For other examples of *peithein* and *gnōmē* see 1.90.3, 91.1, and 93.3.

<sup>15</sup> See *Them.* 4.2, 7.1–2, 10.4–5, 12.1, 20.3, 27.7, and 29.8 for other examples.

Helmbold and O'Neil's listings for the *Life of Themistocles*.<sup>16</sup> The most prominent quality of the Herodotean Themistocles is *sophia*, attributed to him on four occasions (8.110.1, 3; 124.1, 2). It is roughly equivalent to Thucydidean *xynesis*, since it is essentially practical intelligence and also implies the ability to persuade (*anagignôskein* and *peithein*) others to follow one's *gnômé*. Again a few representative examples must suffice. Since Themistocles had previously proved to be truly *sophos* and *euboulos*, the Athenians were ready to obey (*peithesthai*) his proposal to give up the pursuit of the Persians (8.110.1-2); and he persuaded (*anegnôse*) the Athenians to use the revenue from the silver mines for building ships, furnishing the *gnômé* best for the situation (7.144.1).<sup>17</sup> Once, after citing Herodotus as his source,<sup>18</sup> Plutarch has employed *sophia* to designate Themistocles' intellectual virtue, so that the Herodotean influence in this regard is not to be ignored.

At any rate, the key words used by Plutarch in depicting his subject's intellectual quality have been taken, with few exceptions,<sup>19</sup> directly from Herodotus and Thucydides. Though these two streams of influence have merged in Plutarch's writing and thinking, the Thucydidean one seems to predominate; for Plutarch has chosen Thucydides' word *synetos* in his analytical chapter (2), and only *synesis* is accompanied by the biographically meaningful *physis*. This is, of course, what we should expect, since Herodotus furnishes no elaborate analysis of Themistocles' intellectual virtue, alluding to it only incidentally. But what is basic for an understanding of Plutarch's method is that he has altered or rejected certain Herodotean and Thucydidean notions about the quality. The Thucydidean Themistocles is a man capable of correct decision by means of his native intelligence alone, without instruction or training;<sup>20</sup> but Plutarch attributes the young Themistocles' unstable character to his relying entirely upon his untutored, native intelligence and quotes one of his

<sup>16</sup> See above, note 6.

<sup>17</sup> Herodotus employs a similar vocabulary in 8.5.1-3, 57.2, 58.2, 63, 75.1, 80.2.

<sup>18</sup> *Them.* 17.1-3 and Herodotus 8.124.2. Plutarch's rewording is typical (see above, note 7).

<sup>19</sup> They are *deinotês* (*Them.* 15.4; cf. *Cim.* 5.6) and *phronêsis* (*Them.* 16.6; cf. *Phoc.* 3.7 and *De Herodoti malignitate* 869F). *Phronêsis* and *synesis* are closely associated in Aristotle (*Eth. Nic.* 1143A, 6-8). Plutarch again chooses *synesis* in *Cim.* 5.1.

<sup>20</sup> So much seems clear. The phrase is *οἰκεία γὰρ ξυνέσει καὶ οὐτε προμαθὼν ἐς αὐτὴν οὐδὲν οὐτ' ἐπιμαθὼν* (1.138.3). For the problems raised by this remark see Gomme's commentary.

sayings to prove that later in life he came to the same conclusion (*Them.* 2.1–7).<sup>21</sup> Doubtless Plutarch's attitude is based partly on his own feeling about the character of Themistocles, and this is why he ignores the Herodotean hearsay which made Mnesiphilus the real author of Themistocles' brilliant ideas (8.57–58).<sup>22</sup> Yet Plutarch's general theories about character and behavior preclude Thucydides' point of view, for Plutarch does not recognize the efficacy of a mature person's natural predisposition (*physis*) in determining his behavior: *physis* is first transformed into character (*éthos*) by reaction to *pathê*.<sup>23</sup> And *paideia* is necessary for the proper development of *physis* (*Them.* 2.7, *Cor.* 1.3).

### III. THEMISTOCLES ὁ φιλότιμος

The Plutarchian Themistocles' other natural quality, *philotimia*, is found in nascent form in Herodotus 8.124–25. Herodotus there writes that because of envy (*phthonos*) Themistocles was "not honored" (*ouk etimêthê*) for his achievements at Salamis. He therefore went to Sparta, "wishing to be honored" (*thelôn timêthênai*); and his desire was fulfilled, for the Lacedaemonians "honored him greatly" (*megalôs etimésan*). Herodotus concludes the passage by quoting a witty remark of Themistocles to a man who, because of *phthonos*, would not stop upbraiding him for his visit to Sparta. This passage has made its impression on Plutarch.

<sup>21</sup> That Plutarch does not here call attention to his disagreement with Thucydides should not surprise us, since he follows the same practice when diverging from the Thucydidean narrative in *Them.* 23–29. Plutarch has Themistocles follow the route Pydna–Thasos–Cyme to Asia Minor (25.2–26.1), while Thucydides' route (1.137.1–2) is Pydna–Naxos–Ephesus (see R. Flacelière, "Sur quelques points obscurs de la vie de Thémistocle," *REA* 55 [1953] 5–14, whose reading *Thason* in *Them.* 25.2 is preferable to the *Naxon* of the latest Teubner edition); and Plutarch's Themistocles speaks through an interpreter to the Persian King (*Them.* 28.1–2), paraphrasing almost the entire letter which Thucydides' Themistocles sends to Artaxerxes (1.137.4).

<sup>22</sup> In *De Herodoti malignitate* (869c–f) Herodotus is bluntly censured for this. Cf. *Them.* 11.3 and 11.5, for the composition of which Plutarch has relied on Herodotus 8.59 and 8.61 respectively, even reproducing much of the Herodotean vocabulary. Nevertheless, Plutarch has consciously and thoroughly eliminated the conflict between Themistocles and the Corinthians, so prominent in Herodotus, even going so far as to substitute Eurybiades for Adimantus the Corinthian (*Them.* 11.3).

<sup>23</sup> Dihle (above, note 3), especially 68 f. Dihle finds the roots of Plutarch's ethical theory in Aristotle, convincingly pursuing a thesis already proposed by Friederich Leo, *Die griechisch-römische Biographie nach ihrer litterarischen Form* (Leipzig 1901) 178–90.

He cites Herodotus in 17.1 as the source for a remark about the *phthonos* of the allies toward Themistocles, relies on him throughout this chapter,<sup>24</sup> opens the next by observing that Themistocles was "by nature most fond of honor" (*tēi physei philotimotatos*), and includes among the witty sayings illustrating this *philotimia* a version (18.5) of that related by Herodotus (8.125).<sup>25</sup> It is noteworthy that Plutarch in this biography frequently designates the animosity against Themistocles with the Herodotean word *phthonos* (*Them.* 17.1; 22.1, 5; 23.4; 24.3) and that he elsewhere remarks that *philotimia* produces *phthonos* (*Comp. Arist. Cat. Maj.* 5.4).

Plutarch has, however, vastly expanded the Herodotean *philotimia* by attributing to that quality Themistocles' desire for greatness. He observes that while still a youth Themistocles was *παράφορος πρὸς δόξαν καὶ πράξεων μεγάλων ὑπὸ φιλοτιμίας ἐραστής* (*Them.* 3.4)<sup>26</sup> and *τῇ μὲν φύσει συνετός, τῇ δὲ προαιρέσει μεγαλοπράγμων καὶ πολιτικός* (*Them.* 2.1). Emphasis is gained by repetition. "Speedily, however, as it seems, and while he was still in all the ardour of youth, public affairs (*ta politika pragmata*) laid their grasp upon Themistocles, and his impulse to win reputation (*doxa*) got strong mastery over him (*Them.* 3.1)."<sup>27</sup> *Philotimia* is thus depicted as the great energizing force in Themistocles' life: it drove him to exercise his *synesis* in politics, the only sphere of activity where he could find the recognition he craved. It was, accordingly, the ultimate cause of his services to Athens and to Hellas; for Themistocles identified himself with the causes he championed, as is patent in his youthful boast (*Them.* 2.4) that he knew how to transform a small (*mikra*) and obscure (*adoxos*) *polis* into one that was famous (*endoxos*) and great (*megalē*), as well as in other anecdotes where he lauds the greatness and *doxa* of his native city (11.5; 18.5, 7). Plutarch implicitly pays tribute to this *philotimia* when he writes (*Them.* 7.4), "he seems to have

<sup>24</sup> Plutarch uses Herodotus 8.93.1 and 8.123–24 for *Them.* 17.1–3.

<sup>25</sup> Plutarch's preference for the non-Herodotean version of the anecdote is far from unique (see above, note 22; and cf. *Them.* 16.2 and 16.5 with Herodotus 8.108.2 and 8.110.2 respectively). Although Herodotus calls the Athenians the *sôtēres* of Hellas (7.139.5), Plutarch claims that Themistocles was the man most responsible for the *sôtēria* of Hellas (*Them.* 7.4).

<sup>26</sup> The *legetai* introducing this remark should cause no difficulty, since the tenor of the chapter (3) and similar statements to be discussed presently indicate that Plutarch is expressing his own belief. Cf. *Cim.* 10.9.

<sup>27</sup> Tr. Bernadotte Perrin, Loeb Classical Library.

been the one most responsible for the survival of Hellas and above all others to have brought fame (*doxa*) to Athens."

Themistocles' *philotimia*, directing the *synesis* subordinate to it, finally drove him to such a height of preeminence that he of necessity fell prey to *phthonos*, the unreasoning envy that persecutes those who are too successful. Plutarch observes (*Them.* 22.4), almost indignantly, that Themistocles' ostracism was not a punishment, but a means of purging the state of *phthonos*, "which delights in humbling the preeminent" and in depriving them of honor (*timê*).<sup>28</sup> And the *phthonos* of the Athenians is a recurrent motif throughout Plutarch's account of Themistocles' political downfall in Greece (*Them.* 22-24). Because of *to phthonein* the Athenians welcomed the slander against him, and in defending himself he became even more offensive (22.1). Among his fellow citizens *hoi phthonountes* accused him after his ostracism (23.4). He feared the *phthonos* of his own people more than the wrath (*orgê*) of King Admetus (24.3). Even before this Themistocles had been the victim of such envy, when the Greek commanders "because of *phthonos*" denied him the *aristeion* for his performance at Salamis (17.1-2); and he later experienced the *phthonos* of the Persian nobles, jealous because his *timai* from the Great King were not like those of other foreigners (29.5-6, cf. 31.2).

*Phthonos* was, therefore, the lot of Themistocles, the unavoidable result of his *philotimia* and the price of his greatness. But Themistocles' *philotimia* was overweening and produced an abundance of unnecessary animosity. Plutarch remarks, "He surpassed everyone in *philotimia*" (*Them.* 5.3), and then (5.4) tells how he ostentatiously competed with Cimon at Olympia and "displeased the Hellenes." Furthermore, the excesses of his *philotimia* are underlined by the use of the superlative *philotimotatos* (*Them.* 18.1) and by the narration of numerous other anecdotes involving needless display and boasting (*Them.* 2.4, 5.3, 18.1-9, 22.2, 31.1). Plutarch himself neatly distinguishes between the unavoidable animosity awaiting the *philotimos* and that unnecessarily acquired by a *philotimotatos* (*Them.* 22.1-2):

And at last, when even his fellow-citizens were led by their jealousy (*to phthonein*) of his greatness to welcome such slanders against him,

<sup>28</sup> Plutarch emphatically connects *phthonos* and ostracism in the *Life of Aristides* (1.2, 7; 7.1-3), and attributes the *phthonos* toward Aristides to his excessive virtue (7.1-2, 7-8; 26.2-3).



he was forced to allude to his own achievements when he addressed the Assembly, till he became tiresome thereby, and he once said to the malcontents: "Why are ye vexed that the same men should often benefit you?" He offended the multitude also by building the temple of Artemis, whom he surnamed *Aristoboulê*, or Best Counsellor, intimating thus that it was he who had given the best counsel to the city and to the Hellenes.<sup>29</sup>

This distinction is already implicit in Herodotus 8.124–25, where the *phthonos* of the Hellenes is unavoidable but Themistocles' craving for *timê* creates needless *phthonos* among his fellow citizens, so that perhaps again Plutarch is expanding an idea suggested by Herodotus.

But Plutarch does not dwell over long on the frustration of his subject's *philotimia*. Despite ominous signs of *phthonos* (*Them.* 17.1), it was at least once completely gratified, when the admiration (*to thaumazein*) accorded him at Olympia caused him to acknowledge that he was reaping in full the harvest (*karpós*) of his labors on behalf of Hellas (17.4). Though beset by the *phthonos* of the Persian nobles, Themistocles still expressed satisfaction in the fact that he was *megas* and courted by many (*Them.* 29.10–11); and he lived for a long time in Magnesia, *καρπούμενος δωρεὰς μεγάλας καὶ τιμώμενος ὅμοια Περσῶν τοῖς ἀρίστοις* (*Them.* 31.3). Themistocles' *philotimia* was also granted posthumous gratification in the form of *to thaumazein* of the King (*Them.* 31.7) and certain *timai* conferred on his descendants in Magnesia (*Them.* 32.6), and in the final sentence of the biography Plutarch remarks that one of his own friends enjoyed (*ekarpouto*) these *timai*.

#### IV. THE MINOR CHARACTERISTICS

On occasions Plutarch's Themistocles performs acts of *tolma* and *praotês*<sup>30</sup> (*Them.* 4.1, 7.3, 11.2–4, 28.6, 29.5), though he is never called *tolmêros* or *praos*. Plutarch is, therefore, consciously distinguishing between an act of virtue and the virtue itself, so that *tolma* and *praotês* are not to be construed as components of his

<sup>29</sup> Perrin (see above, note 27).

<sup>30</sup> For *praotês* see Martin (above, note 3). In the *Lives*, *praotês* is basically a self-restraint which avoids excess of every kind, whether physical or emotional, whether within the individual or in his relations with other people. It manifests itself in the dignity of a person's appearance, his control of an emotional impulse, and the forbearance with which he treats another.

subject's *êthos*. Whether or not Themistocles' *physis* contained a capacity for these virtues is of no great significance for Plutarch, who looks at the *physis* only from the vantage point of the *êthos* and is interested, not in the manifold qualities of which a person's *physis* is capable, but in those actually transformed into *êthos* through practice.<sup>31</sup> In fact, Themistocles' acts of *tolma* and *praotês* are so completely subordinated to his *synesis* and *philotimia* that they are actually expressions of the latter qualities. His *synesis* is responsible for his naval policy, but acts of *tolma* and *praotês* are necessary to effect the policy (*Them.* 4.1, 7.3, 11.4);<sup>32</sup> and he employs *tolma* to obtain recognition at the Persian court (*Them.* 28.6, 29.5).

In regard to *tolma* the Thucydidean influence is again evident, for Thucydides' phrase (1.93.4), *prôtos* (Themistocles) *etolmêsen eipein*, is paraphrased by Plutarch (*Them.* 4.1) as *monos eipein etolmêse*. The context is somewhat different, since Plutarch is describing Themistocles' attempt to persuade the Athenians to use the revenue from the silver mines for building ships, and Thucydides his program for fortifying Athens and the Peiraeus. But both measures aimed at increasing Athenian naval power, and in both authors *tolma* is merely an instrument of native *synesis*.

In a brief digression (*Them.* 5.1–2) Plutarch never decides whether Themistocles practiced *eleutheriotês* or *glischrotês* and *mikrologia*. The former would have been an expression of *philotimia*, the latter of *synesis*, as the accompanying anecdote shows. At any rate, the distinction between the quality and the act is maintained. This is also true of *deinotês* (*Them.* 15.4), a product of *synesis*, and of *alazoneia* (*Them.* 5.4), one of the uglier manifestations of *philotimia*, the allusion to this vice being introduced by the remark, "Themistocles surpassed everyone in *philotimia*" (5.3).

Plutarch could easily have branded Themistocles an *adikos*; for he quotes Timocreon's charges of *adikia* (*Them.* 21.3–7), had certainly read Herodotus' comment on Themistocles' dishonesty in money matters (*Hdt.* 8.4–5), and narrates an anecdote clearly

<sup>31</sup> Plutarch's distinction between an act of *aretê* and the *aretê* itself fits well into the thesis of Leo (above, note 23) and Dihle (above, note 3) that Plutarch's ethical theory is derived ultimately from Aristotle (cf. *Eth. Nic.* 1104A, 10–1104B, 8).

<sup>32</sup> Eurybiades' cowardice serves as a foil to Themistocles' *tolma* (*Them.* 7.5, 11.2–5). It is not surprising that Plutarch asserts (*Them.* 7.4) that Themistocles was the one most responsible for the Athenians' reputation for *andreia* and *eugnômosynê* (prudence).

implying *adikia* (*Them.* 20.1–2). Plutarch instead has rejected Timocreon's charges as wanton and outrageous slander (*Them.* 21.5) and, while citing Herodotus as his source for the account of the bribery of Eurybiades (*Them.* 7.6), has nevertheless ignored the imputation of dishonesty. Likewise Themistocles' treatment of the islanders (*Them.* 21.1–2) and the riches amassed during his political career (*Them.* 25.3) are mentioned without condemnation. In fact, Plutarch has even pointed out that Themistocles was an impartial arbitrator in the case of private contracts (*Them.* 5.6) and has illustrated his impeccable honesty with two anecdotes (5.6, 18.2). The phrases introducing the anecdotes, however, are revealing: "he surpassed everyone in *philotimia*" (5.3) and "he was by nature *philotimotatos*" (18.1). Plutarch thus considers his personal integrity merely an expression of his *philotimia*: Themistocles is honest because he thereby gains recognition. This is emphatically brought out in the second anecdote (18.2):

Surveying once the dead bodies of the Barbarians which had been cast up along the sea, he saw that they were decked with golden bracelets and collars, and yet passed on by them himself, while to a friend who followed he pointed them out and said: "Help thyself, thou art not Themistocles."<sup>33</sup>

According to the anecdote implying *adikia* (*Them.* 20.1–2), when Themistocles proposes to the Athenians a *praxis* characterized by him as *ôphelimos* and *sôtêrios* but one which must be kept secret, he is instructed to impart the scheme to Aristides alone, and, if he gains his approval, to carry it out. Though Aristides judges that there is no *praxis lysitelestera* or *adikôtera* than the one proposed by Themistocles—namely, that the Athenians burn the Greek fleet wintering at Pagasae—and the Athenians order Themistocles to desist, Plutarch doubtless regarded the anecdote as an illustration of *synesis* and for that reason treated it prominently. Plutarch has again let his overall concept of his subject's character determine his attitude toward specific aspects of his source material. That which seemed incompatible with the overall concept has been rejected.

#### V. SUMMARY

Thus the biography of Themistocles is essentially a study in

<sup>33</sup> Perrin (above, note 27).

*synesis* and *philotimia*: Plutarch has conceived his character in terms of these qualities.<sup>34</sup> The analytical chapters of the *Life* are devoted primarily to them (2, 3, 5, 18), and Themistocles' acts of *synesis* and *philotimia* dominate the narrative portions,<sup>35</sup> all other ethical and intellectual qualities exhibited by Themistocles being regarded only as particular expressions or instruments of these two.

The tone is set in chapter 1, where the young Themistocles reveals two fundamental ingredients of his *synesis*, cleverness and persuasiveness, as well as his passion for recognition. Finally, Plutarch sees in Themistocles' suicide the triumph of the nobler aspect of his *philotimia* over its more unpleasant traits; for when actually summoned by the Great King to wage war against the Hellenes, Themistocles ended his life,

. . . neither embittered by anything like anger against his former fellow-citizens, nor lifted up by the great honor (*timé*) and power (*dynamis*) he was to have in the war, but possibly thinking his task not even approachable . . . yet most of all out of regard for the reputation (*doxa*) of his own achievements (*praxeis*) and the trophies of those early days (*Them.* 31.4–6).<sup>36</sup>

Herodotus and Thucydides clearly have contributed abundantly to Plutarch's concept of Themistocles' character, probably more abundantly than any of his other sources, which frequently only furnished the narrative material to illustrate a Herodotean or Thucydidean idea, though the almost complete loss of these other sources reduces to guesswork any assessment of their individual contributions.<sup>37</sup> There is no doubt that Plutarch owes much to them, for he has consistently revised and reinterpreted the original Herodotean and Thucydidean ideas in the light of his general concept of Themistocles' character, a concept which had evolved

<sup>34</sup> Hartmut Erbse, "Die Bedeutung der Synkrisis in den Parallelbiographien Plutarchs," *Hermes* 84 (1956) 398–424, argues that the parallel *Lives* were composed within the framework of certain qualities common to the pair in question. I suggest that Plutarch was more interested in biographical than in historical truth and that his attitude toward his sources was always governed by this fact. As a result, many an incident of doubtful historical authenticity, perhaps even to Plutarch himself, has been related because it conformed with his general concept of a man's character.

<sup>35</sup> For the form of the *Lives* and a survey of the pertinent scholarship see Ziegler (above, note 2) 905–10.

<sup>36</sup> Perrin (above, note 27).

<sup>37</sup> Ephorus is one of the most important (see Herbert [above, note 2] 54–65). Herbert's bibliography includes the studies of Plutarch's sources for the *Themistocles*.

from a comprehensive study of all his source material and was consistent with his own ethical theory. The resulting synthesis is a penetrating and independent analysis of a great man's character.<sup>38</sup>

## VI. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Perhaps this study has illustrated too the application of one of Plutarch's remarks on method and purpose. He writes in *Cim.* 2.3–5.

We demand of those who would paint fair and graceful features that, in case of any slight imperfections therein, they shall neither wholly omit it nor yet emphasise it, because the one course makes the portrait ugly and the other unlike its original. In like manner, since it is difficult, nay rather perhaps impossible, to represent a man's life as stainless and pure, in its fairest chapters we must round out the truth into fullest semblance; but those transgressions (*hamartiai*) and follies (*kérai*) by which, owing to passion (*pathos*), perhaps, or political compulsion (*politiké anankê*), a man's career is sullied, we must regard rather as shortcomings (*elleimmata*) in some particular excellence (*aretê*) than as the vile products of positive baseness (*kakia*), and we must not all too zealously delineate them in our history, and superfluously too, but treat them as though we were tenderly defending human nature for producing no character (*êthos*) which is absolutely good and indisputably set towards virtue (*aretê*).<sup>39</sup>

It is, therefore, not surprising that Plutarch has attributed no *kakia* to Themistocles' *êthos* and that his *hamartiai* and *kérai*, his unjust and pretentious acts, while faithfully recorded, are presented as the *elleimmata* of the two *aretai* constituting his *êthos* and are overshadowed by the positive achievements of these *aretai*. That his unjust and pretentious acts were occasioned by uncontrolled *pathê* and political necessity is evident.

<sup>38</sup> Themistocles appears with an entirely different character in the *Aristides* (*Arist.* 2.2, 4.3), though Herodotus was a primary source for both *Lives*. I suggest that the references to Themistocles' character in the *Aristides* convey Plutarch's first impressions and that the *Themistocles*, composed at a later date, represents his final judgment based on a careful study of all his sources. This suggestion admittedly does violence to the chronological schemes worked out by Ziegler (above, note 2) 899–903 and Theander ("Zur Zeitfolge der Biographien Plutarchs," *Eranos* 56 [1958] 12–14) for the order of composition of the *Lives*. For another explanation of this difference see Perrin (above, note 2) 181.

<sup>39</sup> This and the following quotation are from Perrin's translation (above, note 27).

The *Life of Themistocles* also bears witness to Plutarch's basic interest, so clearly enunciated in the introduction to the biographies of Alexander and Caesar:

For it is not Histories that I am writing, but Lives (*Bioi*); and in the most illustrious deeds there is not always a manifestation of virtue (*aretê*) or vice (*kakia*), nay, a slight thing like a phrase or a jest often makes a greater revelation of character (*êthos*) than battles where thousands fall, or the greatest armaments, or sieges of cities.