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Caesar's Ambition: A Combined Reading of Plutarch's *Alexander-Caesar* and *Pyrrhus-Marius**

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SUMMARY: Plutarch's analysis of ambition in *Alexander-Caesar* cannot be understood within the confines of that pair alone. However, when read together with the *Pyrrhus-Marius,* the pair most closely tied to *Alexander-Caesar* by common themes and by implicit and explicit cross-references, an important link between ambition and *paideia* emerges. Though Alexander's ambition is as prevalent as Caesar's, he does not earn Plutarch's reproach because his innate susceptibility to reason and his love of philosophy enable him to restrain his ambition. Caesar cannot, so his ambitions prevent him from deriving any benefit from his accomplishments.

PLUTARCH'S PORTRAYAL OF CAESAR'S AMBITION IS A PROBLEM. WITHIN the confines of Caesar, no difficulty is apparent. Caesar's unrelenting lust for conquest and achievement drives his career but ultimately undermines his ability to acquire any benefit from the glory he has attained, just as one might expect. It is only when we read *Alexander-Caesar* as a single work, as recent Plutarchan scholarship argues we must, that the problem emerges.[1] Alexander's ambition is no less prominent than that of his Roman counterpart, and produces equally ambivalent results, but Plutarch never criticizes it with the explicit vehemence he directs towards Caesar's ambition. The reader is left wondering why Caesar's should be so much worse than Alexander's. I submit that we might best answer this question by drawing upon another pair, *Pyrrhus-Marius*, in which Plutarch's analysis of ambition is more explicit.

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[1] A strong case for combined readings has been made by Sansone (1980) in his commentary on *Aristeides–Cato* and by Duff (1999) in his work on moral virtue in the *Lives.* See also Pelling 2002d; Duff 2000; Candau Morón 2000; Harrison 1995; Larmour 1988, Geiger 1981: 99–104; Stadter 1975; and Erbse 1956.

A close reading of the two pairs together will enable us to understand better the analysis in *Alexander-Caesar*.

Alexander-Caesar and *Pyrrhus-Marius* are ideally suited for such comparative analysis because they are so closely intertwined. First, there is an explicit literary cross-reference to the former pair within the latter.[2] If a reader has already encountered *Alexander-Caesar* this reference will keep it foremost in his or her mind; if not, it suggests that the reader might take up that pair next.[3] Second, there are twelve additional references linking the subjects of the four *Lives*:[4] Marius's name appears eight times in *Caesar*; Alexander is mentioned four times in *Pyrrhus*.[5] Third, the two pairs address many of the same moral and political issues, including hope (ἐλπίς), demagogy (δημαγωγία and sundry periphrases), culture and education (παιδεία), and ambition (φιλονικία, φιλοτιμία, πλεονεξία).

The same cannot be said of the *Lives* in general, and I will therefore not attempt a more expansive study of ambition in Plutarch's entire corpus. There are, of course, perspectives and broad tendencies that pervade Plutarch's work and much has been gained by searching out common threads. Yet there are also inevitable discrepancies between texts produced at very different times in Plutarch's career. The *Lives* were published serially over a period as long as twenty years and their thematic program varies, so evidence drawn from one *Life* should not be too freely employed to elucidate another.[6] Even greater caution is required when drawing upon Plutarch's non-biographical works, known collectively as the *Moralia*, which are not only disparate in date of composition but also in genre.[7]

[2] "…(Marius) married Julia of the Caesars, who was the aunt of that Caesar who later became greatest of the Romans and who emulated Marius somewhat in accordance with their family connection, as has been written in [my work] concerning him (ὡς ἐν τοῖς περὶ ἐκείνου γέγραπται)" (*Mar.* 6.4). The translations into English in this article are my own.

[3] Much of the work on the explicit cross–references has employed them as evidence for reconstructing the original order of the composition of the *Lives*: see Nikolaidis 2005 (especially 318); Van der Valk 1982: 214 and 328; and Jones 1995: 66. But Beck 2002: 468–10, following Pelling 2002b, has argued convincingly for the thematic significance of the cross–references.

[4] Beck 2002: 470 has dubbed as "foil figures" those secondary subjects who are elsewhere themselves the subject of a *Life* and has shown how they serve as cross–references between two *Lives*.

[5] Marius appears in *Caes.* 15, 18, 19, and 26, Alexander in *Pyrrh.* 8, 11, 12, and 19.

[6] On the chronology of Plutarch's works see Nikolaidis 2005; Delvaux 1995: 105 and 112–13; Van der Valk 1982; and Jones 1995.

[7] The *Moralia* are frequently adduced for a more lucid explication of Plutarch's moral themes, e.g., Duff's 1999 (105–07) analysis of *De tranq. an.* and Swain's use of *Quaest.*

A few examples of the inconsistencies between pairs are perhaps in order. Plutarch's narrative of the *Lupercalia* incident between Caesar and Antony is perhaps the most famous example: Caesar's behavior when publicly offered a crown is depicted much more negatively in his own *Life* than in *Antony*. Plutarch's interpretation in the latter follows that of Cicero's second *Philippic*, and places the blame on Antony.[8] Throughout the early chapters of *Antony*, moreover, Caesar is often portrayed as a marvel of calculated restraint, and is in turn a restraining influence on the *Life*'s subject (*Ant.* 6.2, 10.26, 11.3–6). If we try to read *Caesar* and *Antony* together our interpretation will be hampered by these differences. Marius and Sulla present a similar problem. The latter is portrayed much more negatively in his own *Life* than in *Marius* (*Sul.* 2, 4; *Mar.* 10.2–9, 25–27). Likewise with Phocion, as Duff (1999: 133–34) has shown, Plutarch is critical of the Athenian statesman and his foreign policy in *Demosthenes* but praises him in his own *Life* in order to establish a contrast with the paired *Cato min.* Because Plutarch was a sophisticated author in a rhetorically sophisticated age, and because his thematic focus and his construction of narrative *personae* varied from work to work, broader readings of Plutarch's *Lives* must be employed judiciously if they are to be illuminating.[9]

We can avoid such complexities if we reduce the scope of our interpretations to a thematically consistent subset of the *Lives*. This is not to say that we should seek out only pairs that Plutarch meant to be read together, a standard for which we have no evidence. Nor need we restrict ourselves to *Lives* that were researched or composed at the same time. I mean instead that we might combine pairs for which a synthetic reading produces a richer, more satisfying interpretation. Important work has already been done identifying such readings for groups of Roman or Greek *Lives*, notably by Pelling (2002b), Beneker (2004), Harrison (1995), and Mossman (1992).[10] The next logical step is to pursue readings of multiple pairs.

Rom., *De virt. mor.*, *De sera num. vind.*, *De aud. poet.* (all 1990: 193), and *De prof. in virt.* (1995: 130). The practice can be hazardous. Plutarch's description of malevolent *daemones* in *Dion* 2.5–6, for example, is inconsistent with his denunciation of such theories in *De superstitione*. The complex relationship between the *Lives* and *Moralia* was the topic of the seventh International Plutarch Society Congress in May 2005.

[8] Cf. *Caes.* 61, *Ant.* 12, Cicero *Phil.* 2, and see Pelling 1988: 144–47.

[9] This is the one aspect of Duff's otherwise excellent book that I find difficult. His analyses of authorial problematization in the *synkrises* (e.g., 1999: 201–4) are convincing, but I suspect that his attempts to establish similar difficulties between pairs are unnecessary. The problems he describes could be artifacts caused by combining pairs that would better be read separately or in other combinations.

[10] Pelling's article 2002b arguing that *Pompey*, *Crassus*, *Cicero*, *Caesar*, *Cato min.*, *Brutus*, and *Antony* were researched and perhaps to a degree composed simultaneously is now very well known. Beneker 2004 offers a closer reading of three *Lives* within Pelling's group.

My analysis will proceed through three stages. I will first address the role of ambition in *Alexander-Caesar*, restricting myself to the evidence of that pair. I will then consider Plutarch's analysis of ambition in *Pyrrhus-Marius*. Finally, I will return to *Alexander-Caesar* and re-evaluate Caesar's ambition from the more informed perspective of a reader familiar with *Pyrrhus-Marius*.[11]

AN INITIAL READING OF *ALEXANDER-CAESAR*

The portrayal of Alexander in his own *Life* is a positive one, taken as a whole. The Macedonian king is pious (25.5, 34.1), trusting (19, 49.2), generous (15.3–6, 39.1–13), and well-disposed towards his peers (41.3–10).[12] Yet no Plutarchan *Life* is pure encomium, and there are several passages in *Alexander* where even this greatest of Macedonians is put under a critical microscope. At times, Plutarch's criticism even targets Alexander's ambition, the driving force of his success.[13] Because ambition will prove a difficult trait to assess, however, I will first establish the framework of Plutarch's depiction through two more straightforward flaws in the king's personality, his drinking and his volatility.

Plutarch introduces these two themes at the same time, early in the *Life*, through an anecdote on Alexander's peculiar aroma:

> I have read in Aristoxenus's memoirs that he gave off a very pleasant odor from his skin, and that a sweet smell pervaded his mouth and entire body, so that

Mossman 1992 makes the relationship of *Pyrrhus* to *Alexander* the basis for a study of epic and tragic elements in the two *Lives* and for a comparative assessment of their two subjects. Harrison's 1995: 92 claim that all the *Lives* must be read with either *Pericles–Fabius* or *Alexander–Caesar* in mind probably goes too far, but the parallels he draws between the latter pair, *Demetrius–Antony*, and *Agesilaus–Pompey* are insightful.

[11] My decision to begin with *Alexander–Caesar* facilitates my argument but is not necessary. The thematic ties between *Alexander–Caesar* and *Pyrrhus–Marius* would be equally significant regardless of which pair was read first.

[12] Alexander was a central figure in ancient constructions of Greek identity, so Plutarch's depiction of him in *Alexander* has naturally become a central text for modern discussions of Hellenism. For example see Mossman 1992 and 2005; Whitmarsh 2001 and 2002. Previous studies of *Alexander* have centered on *Alexander* alone, however. Whitmarsh 2002: 177 invites a combined reading of *Alexander–Caesar* but does not attempt one. A comprehensive treatment would require no less than a commentary on the entire pair, a daunting task that no one has yet undertaken. This article is made feasible by its narrow focus, and issues of Greek identity will not be addressed.

[13] Ambition is mentioned more often in this pair than in any other. πλεονεξία appears once, φιλονικία four times, and φιλοτιμία no less than 22 times. The only other pair that approaches this frequency is *Agesilaus–Pompey*.

> his clothing was filled by it. The explanation is probably the composition of his body, which was very hot and fiery…. And it was probably the heat of his body that made Alexander bibulous and hot-tempered (*Al.* 4.4–7).

These two vices, derived from the same physical circumstance, are also complementary in the accounts of Arrian and Q. Curtius who, like Plutarch, connect Alexander's anger to his drunkenness. Arrian does so after the death of Black Clitus, Curtius in his concluding summary of the king's character.[14] The parallel is too close for coincidence, but we have no evidence that Curtius knew Plutarch's or Arrian's work, nor they his. The link between Alexander's violence and drunkenness should be attributed perhaps to an influential earlier account that is now lost.

Plutarch's treatment of these vices is very much his own, however, and he eschews ready condemnation of his subject. Alexander's drinking, to take the lesser vice first, is mentioned often, as are its negative consequences (*Al.* 9.10, 13.4, 48.5, 72.2, 75.6), but Plutarch states categorically that Alexander's consumption was neither so great nor so pernicious as was commonly assumed: "He was less susceptible to wine than he seemed, but seemed so because of the time (he spent drinking it), which he drew out more by talking than drinking…. And when conducting his affairs, neither wine, nor sleep, nor play, nor marriage, nor shows hindered him as they did other commanders" (*Al.* 23.1–2). Whitmarsh (2002: 186–88) is nonetheless correct to stress the negative consequences of Alexander's drinking elsewhere in the *Life*, and to interpret Plutarch's depiction as an opposition between Alexander's philosophical and Dionysiac selves. The king's death is a victory of the latter over the former; his drunkenness may be overemphasized by some sources, but it still kills him.

Alexander's volatility is even more prevalent than his drinking. It motivates the comparisons of Alexander with his horse Bucephalas (6) and with Babylonian naphtha (7 and 35), and is prominent in Alexander's argument with his inebriated father (9), in his sack of Thebes (11–12), in his severing of the Gordian knot (18), and in his slaughter of countless Persians (37).[15] The crescendo of violence reaches a critical stage in chapter 42, which narrates his increasing susceptibility to slander and accusations of treason. Plutarch

[14] "I pity Alexander for his misfortune, that he showed himself susceptible then to two vices…wrath and drunkenness" (Arrian *Anab.* 4.9.1). "Just as youth had exacerbated his wrath and his desire for wine, so might old age have mitigated them" (Q. Curtius 10.5.34).

[15] See Stadter 1998: 308 and Sansone 1980 on the thematic significance of the Bucephalas and naphtha passages respectively.

claims that Alexander finally "revolted from reason" (ἐξίστατο τοῦ φρονεῖν, 42.2)—a phrase that Hamilton in his commentary calls "very strong" (1969: 111)—marking an important lapse in Alexander's self-control. Thereafter, the king's violent potential erupts increasingly often into actual murder, and not only of Persians but also of Greeks. When Bucephalas is stolen Alexander threatens to have the families of the guilty parties exterminated (44); when one of his chief subordinates, Black Clitus, rebukes him too freely at dinner Alexander skewers him with a spear (51); when the orator Callisthenes becomes too abrasive Alexander has him killed and orders the stoning of his sons (53–55); when Indian philosophers cause him too much trouble, Alexander has them hung (59). He becomes so terrifying a figure that another of his generals, Cassander, would quake, years after Alexander's death, whenever he passed by one of the king's statues (74.6).

Here also Plutarch resists straightforward condemnation of Alexander, molding his depiction of the king's violence instead into another opposition. On one side he places Alexander's murderous rage, on the other his capacity to be persuaded by reasoned argument. The latter theme enters the *Life* when Philip of Macedon observes the rationality in his young son and decides to place him under Aristotle's tutelage (7.1–2). Under the sage's influence, Alexander develops a deep appreciation for Greek culture and philosophy that persists throughout the *Life*. His interest in philosophical lectures is mentioned in chapter 27, his patronage of dramatic competitions in chapters 4, 29, and 72. His fascination with literature, especially Homer, is emphasized in chapter 8. His interests even extend to other philosophies, notably that of the Indian savants, the so-called gymnosophists, who are the subject of chapter 64. He is himself an eager ambassador of Greek culture, ordering the education of 30,000 barbarians in chapter 47 and taking great pride in their progress in chapter 71.

Alexander's rational successes are best understood in terms of his *paideia*. Plutarch marks the importance of the concept by employing the term *paideia* three times in the chapter introducing Aristotle (7.2, 7.7, and 7.9).[16] In *Alexander*, as in the other three *Lives* I will address, *paideia* refers not only to what we would consider education, the transmission of knowledge, wisdom, and cultural ideals, but also to the continuous reappraisal and reapplication of this material later in life. It is an ongoing philosophical process for which

[16] The Persian noble Barsine, the only woman to share Alexander's bed before his marriage to Roxanne, is the only other character in the *Life* whose *paideia* receives comment (21.8–9).

the English language has no analogue.[17] So although Alexander's educational credentials as we would define them are impeccable, his rationality must be continuously reinforced by the Greek cultural and philosophical wisdom he received from Aristotle if he is to restrain his vices successfully.

Plutarch gives his readers some cause to doubt Alexander's commitment to philosophy, repeatedly adducing quarrels between the king and his philosophical mentor. Immediately after Aristotle is introduced into the *Life*, Plutarch recounts the first argument between teacher and pupil, an exchange of letters in which Alexander chides Aristotle for publishing aspects of his philosophy that had not been disseminated widely before. Alexander claims to be upset because he would rather distinguish himself by his expertise in virtue than by his might (7.7), which sounds very well. But when Aristotle writes back, arguing that inexperienced readers would be unable to understand the books anyway, Plutarch tells us that he is trying to mollify Alexander's ambition (τὴν φιλοτιμίαν αὐτοῦ παραμυθούμενος, 7.8). The rift deepens with time. Plutarch describes at length the enmity between Alexander and Aristotle's nephew, Callisthenes (53.1–55.9), records Alexander's derision of Aristotle's sophistries (74.5), and suggests that Aristotle was behind Alexander's death (77.3). Even the famous anecdote about Alexander's copy of the *Iliad*, which Aristotle edited, has an edge: the king keeps it under a pillow next to his sword.[18] Plutarch summarizes their relationship thus in 8.4:

> He admired Aristotle at first, and loved him no less than his father, as he himself said, since the latter gave him life, and the former taught him to live well.

[17] Whitmarsh 2001: 6 calls *paideia* "the locus for a series of competitions and debates concerning the proper way in which life should be lived" (see also 95–99 on *paideia* and power, 96–108 on *paideia* and social status, 109–16 on *paideia* and gender, and 116–17 on *paideia* and Hellenism). The analyses of *paideia* in Plutarch's parallel *Lives* are among our most extensive and sophisticated examples of this process, and have accordingly received a great deal of attention. Hershbell 1993 compares the treatment of *paideia* in the *Lives* (especially *Lyc.–Numa*) to that in Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*, and stresses the importance of education and culture for Plutarch's statesmen. Swain 1995 focuses more on the role of *paideia* in the Roman *Lives*, particularly those of Cicero, Cato, Brutus, Coriolanus, Marcellus, Lucullus, and Marius, and concludes that *paideia* is the most important virtue for a Plutarchan subject to possess. More recently, Pelling 2002c: 332–33 and Schepens 2000 have studied the relationship between *paideia* and rhetoric in the *Lives*, and the ways in which each enriches the portrayal of a speaker's character. See also Swain 1990, Frazier 1996: 78–80, and Duff 1999: 53–65 and 72–77.

[18] "He had a natural (φύσει) love of reason, learning, and reading…and kept the *Iliad* that Aristotle had corrected…under his pillow" (*Al.* 8.2). The genitive absolute "Aristotle having corrected" (Ἀριστοτέλους διορθώσαντος) suggests indirectly Aristotle's role in correcting Alexander's behavior.

> But later he held him under suspicion: not so that he did him any harm, but the absence of the former enthusiasm and love in his affections was proof of their estrangement.

Still, we should not equate Alexander's devotion to philosophy and his relationship with Aristotle. And the consequences of the estrangement between the philosopher and his pupil are perhaps not so worrisome as they seem. Plutarch immediately counters the summary of 8.4 with a more optimistic point: "(Alexander) had from the beginning an innate and nurtured eagerness (ζῆλος) and longing for philosophy, which did not drain out from his spirit…" (*Al.* 8.5). Admittedly, the term Plutarch chooses for Alexander's fervor, ζῆλος, is not entirely positive, and in some contexts can shade towards jealousy and rivalry. But the point remains that Alexander's growing separation from Aristotle does not negate his love of philosophy.

Plutarch thus establishes the theoretical framework for the conflicts within Alexander's character, with his more dangerous traits opposed by his innate self-restraint and *paideia*. Some internal battles are successful; others are lost. When pitted against his innate violence, Alexander's restraint and *paideia* ultimately fail. Alexander is aware of his dangerous potential, striving to hold himself in check and often regretting his rash actions after the fact. His efforts earn Plutarch's explicit approval at 21.7: "Alexander apparently considered ruling himself more kingly than conquering enemies."[19] But his successes are limited and increasingly infrequent. Like his drinking, his anger proves too strong to control. It undermines his authority while he lives and diminishes his legacy after he dies.

His ambition, which we may now address, is a more difficult trait to assess. Unlike violence and drunkenness, which are wholly negative, ambition frequently acts as a positive force. Frazier has argued that although it often leads to imprudent squabbles and civic strife in the *Lives*, ambition is still for Plutarch a necessary and admirable quality in a great general (Frazier 1988 and 1996: 199–200).[20] In *Al.* 4.8, for instance, Plutarch lauds Alexander's am-

[19] Plutarch's interjection at 21.7 is motivated by Alexander's admirable treatment of Darius's wife and daughters, but he extends the scope of his praise beyond this single incident to encompass Alexander's relations with women in general. D'Agostino 1957: 195–99 adduces a precursor to this passage from Xenophon *Mem.* 4.1.3, where Xenophon argues that the best natures are the ones most in need of *paideia*. Xenophon elaborates his argument with the same analogy Plutarch employs in *Al.* 6, the nature and training of thoroughbred horses. Plutarch also discusses the importance of *paideia* for great natures in *Demetr.* 1.7–8, but as Duff notes (1999: 45–49), he is there probably developing a plant analogy borrowed from Plato (*Resp.* 491d–492a, 495b).

[20] Walsh 1992: 214–15 extends the negative consequences of φιλονικία to encompass the self–destructive rivalry of the Greek states in *Flamininus*.

bition (φιλοτιμία) for reinforcing his reason: "He was ambitious beyond his years, which kept his intellect firm and great-spirited." His ambitious deeds are also praised: Plutarch calls Alexander's dedication after his victory at the Granicus, one in which he shares the credit for his victory with the Greeks, very ambitious (φιλοτιμοτάτην, 16.17). He also describes as ambitious (φιλοτιμούμενος, 53.1) Alexander's letter to the Greeks after Gaugamela, which claims to restore the political autonomy of the Greeks and to return Plataea to its citizens in gratitude for their services in 479 B.C.E. against the Persian invader.[21] Perhaps most important, Plutarch never explicitly criticizes Alexander for his ambition: the king's efforts to restrain it and direct it into positive channels appear successful.

Other aspects of Alexander's ambition are less positive, however.[22] The magnitude of his father's accomplishments distresses him, for instance, because he would prefer to inherit a realm rife with struggles, wars, and opportunities for ambitious deeds (φιλοτιμίας, 5.6). Ambition also drives him to burn down Xerxes' palace (φιλοτιμίας, 38.5), a decision he later regrets (38.8).[23] Most perplexing are the two ambiguous passages concerning Alexander's fortune (τύχη) and his ambition. In the first, Plutarch expresses his wonder at the way fortune conspires to strengthen the king's resolve. "By giving way to his assaults…it made his ambition (φιλονικίαν) invincible, able to overpower not only his enemies but places and crucial times" (26.14). He illustrates his point with Alexander's journey to the oracle at Ammon, in which first the weather, then a flock of crows eases his passage across the desert. But it is unclear whether such miracles make Alexander's ambition admirable. In the second passage, the analysis of fortune is by Alexander himself. Beset by difficulties in India, he is still confident in his ambition (φιλοτιμούμενος, 58.2) that fortune and might can be overcome by daring and virtue. His bold opinion is subverted, however, by the mixed results of his Indian expedition. He drives deep into the country and eventually defeats Porus (60.11) but is turned back by the disaffection of his own men (62.1–4) and, after a grueling march, eventually returns home with only one-fourth of his original army

[21] Cf. Callisthenes' ambitious (φιλοτιμούμενος, *Al.* 53.1) yet admirable motive for leaving home to accompany Alexander: he wishes to restore his fellow Olynthians to their native city.

[22] This view is more common in Roman authors than in Greek. It was once attributed to Stoic or Peripatetic opposition, but is now recognized as a rhetorical *exemplum* opposing tyranny and *libertas* that was employed against Caesar, Tiberius, Caligula, Nero, and Domitian by elite Romans like Cicero (*Off.* 1.26.90); Seneca (*Ep.* 94.62–66); and Lucan (10.14–53). See Fears 1974: 120–30.

[23] Cf. *Al.* 48.5, where Philotas's φιλοτιμία leads to his death, and 52.9, where Callisthenes' φιλονικία annoys Anaxarchus and sets the stage for his later execution.

still alive (66.4). Is his ambition at fault? Or is it fortune, which leads him by stages to this pass? He has clearly strained the loyalty of his troops, who are unable to match his drive and force him to retreat. Is he to be blamed for doing so or does the fault lie with his men alone?

These questions became an acute problem when we expand the scope of our analysis to include Plutarch's treatment of ambition in *Caesar*. We might normally expect the paired *Life* to clarify the role of ambition within the pair, but *Caesar* complicates it instead. The subjects of the two *Lives* share many traits. Both are "hot" (*Al.* 4.7, *Caes.* 11.1); both appreciate Greek literature and culture (*Al.* 8.1–3 *Caes.* 2.4, 3.1); both are prolific correspondents (*Al.* 17.8, 27.8, *et passim Caes.* 17.8); both are brilliant military tacticians (*Al.* 20.7, *Caes.* 15). In almost every respect, Caesar is an equally admirable figure, and even lacks Alexander's propensity for drink and violence.[24] His ambition likewise seems as prevalent a force as that of Alexander: he labors very ambitiously (φιλοτιμότατα, *Caes.* 3.2) at his rhetorical studies with Apollonius; his expenditures as aedile submerge all previous ambition (φιλοτιμία, 5.9, 6.1, and 6.3); his ambition (7.2) drives him to seek the *pontificatus maximus*, to mourn Cato's suicide (φιλοτιμούμενος, 54.1), and to compose his *Anticato* (φιλοτιμία, 54.4); once his soldiers grow accustomed to his ambition (17.2) they begin to emulate it themselves (17.1). The results of his ambition are equally impressive: the repulse of invading German tribes, the subjugation of Gaul, the defeat of Pompey, the conquest of Rome, and the beginnings of wide-reaching domestic reform. Plutarch even devotes the *Life*'s fifteenth chapter to an encomium of the Gallic campaigns. Yet the parallel eventually breaks down. Caesar's ambition somewhere, somehow becomes excessive, and Plutarch begins to subvert his subject's accomplishments with criticism. For a reader seeking moral illumination from the *Lives*, this shift poses a serious problem. Why disparage Caesar and not Alexander? Where does the distinction between proper and improper ambition lie? How should one define excess?

Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon in *Caes.* 32 would seem our best opportunity for an answer. Plutarch links reason, self-control, and ambition more closely there than anywhere in the paired *Life*. His one vague critique of Alexander's growing ambition is dissociated from any specific event: "Later, the numerous accusations made him harsh…especially when he was himself abused…since he was more enamored of his reputation than of his life or kingdom" (*Al.* 42.3). When Caesar crosses the Rubicon, Plutarch addresses his mental processes while pondering and then performing that specific act.

[24] Ambition aside, Plutarch reproaches Caesar's character and career infrequently (5.4–5, 13.4, 14.2, 20.2–3).

> …he stopped, driven to doubts by the magnitude of what he dared. His progress halted, he argued with himself in silence, swaying his opinion hither and thither, his plans now inflicting great indecision upon him. And he shared his distress at length with those of his friends who were present, among whom was Asinius Pollio, reckoning the magnitude of the evils that his crossing would inaugurate for all mankind, and of the account it would leave behind for future generations. At last, in a sort of passionate frenzy, as if hurling himself out of reason and into the future, he uttered that phrase often used by people embarking upon desperate chances and daring endeavors: "Let the die be cast!" (*Caes.* 32.5–8).

When Alexander crosses the Granicus, a similarly momentous occasion, he is decisive despite the fears of his men, and assuages both their religious concerns and the more practical worries of Parmenio (*Al.* 16.1–3). Caesar, conversely, shares his distress with his friends before proceeding. Plutarch chooses a philosophically pregnant word for this sharing, the verb συνδιαπορέω (*Caes.* 32.7), which is etymologically related to the noun ἀπορία. The latter, defined as the state in which a disputant recognizes his own ignorance, is a fundamental goal of Socratic dialectic in Plato's earlier, so-called "aporetic" dialogues.[25] Jaeger (1934) explains this goal succinctly in *Paideia* 2.91: "From the *Apology* we know that the real Socrates tried above everything else to exhort his fellow-men to practise 'virtue' and 'the care of the soul'; and that the cross-examination which went along with his exhortation and convinced his interlocutor of his own ignorance was just as much a part of that protreptic mission. Its aim was to disquiet men and move them to do something for themselves." The "something" of which Jaeger writes is envisioned as a rational act, a reasoned attempt to restructure one's own life. As he later puts it, "…helplessness becomes the true source of learning and understanding" (Jaeger 1934–45: 2.169).[26] Ideally, therefore, Caesar's quandary at the Rubicon should lead him to careful reflection. But the opposite occurs. Because of some flaw in his character, Caesar cannot resolve his aporetic moment. He hurls himself out of reason (ἐκ τοῦ λογισμοῦ, 32.8) and into desperate chances (εἰς τύχας ἀπόρους, 32.8, again invoking ἀπορία).

Caesar's failure in chapter 32 is prepared by the discussion of his rhetorical training under Apollonius Molon in the third chapter of the *Life*. Though he excels in his studies, Caesar decides to sacrifice primacy in the courts for

[25] E.g., *Chrm.* 169c-d, *Lach.* 200e, *Lysis* 216c, *Euthydemus* 292e. On the chronology of the dialogues, see Vlastos 1991: 45–80 and 1994: 135.

[26] Jaeger supports his claim by adducing Plato *Meno* 84c: "Notice indeed that out of this ἀπορία he will also discover; he will seek with me, while I do nothing but inquire, and do not teach."

a military career. His decision is framed in terms of his nature (φύσις): he is naturally suited (φῦναι ἄριστα, 3.2) to political speech; he trains his nature with ambitious zeal (3.2); yet he falls short of his natural rhetorical genius (φύσις, 3.3). This emphasis on nature is significant. In Plutarch's ethical scheme, which owes much to earlier schemes in Plato and Xenophon, nature is only part of one's character (ἦθος). Even the best natures require education (παιδεία) and practice (κατάρτυσις, μελέτη) to reach their potential. Without proper nurture, the resulting character will be defective.[27] The analysis in *Caes.* 3 fits this model well. Caesar's concern for military matters will win him great power (3.3), but at the cost of his full development as an orator.[28]

Plutarch's emphasis on rhetoric has a further point: Caesar's interest in Greek culture is oddly one-sided. Nothing whatever is said, either here or elsewhere, about his philosophical studies or inclinations. This impression is an artifact of Plutarch's selectivity. We know from an Aristophanic scholiast that Caesar's teacher Molon composed a work *Concerning the Philosophers*;[29] he must have conveyed some of that information to Caesar during their discussions. Caesar's denial of death's cruelty in his speech against the Catilinarian conspirators in Sallust also suggests familiarity if not real sympathy with Epicurean views (*Cat.* 51.20).[30] There is no hint of this in Plutarch, though. As a result, despite his rhetorical and literary skill, Caesar's education appears unbalanced, utterly lacking in philosophical training. As we will soon see, this is precisely the same approach Plutarch will take in shaping Pyrrhus's character.

The consequences of Caesar's faulty *paideia* are revealed at the end of his *Life*, where his ambition is subjected to harsh rebuke. Plutarch offers his first reproach in chapter 58, immediately after an encomium of Caesar's clemency

[27] Cf. Plato *Resp.* 376c–412b and 442a–c, and Xenophon *Mem.* 1.6.6–7 and 2.1. On Plato's model of education and the tri–partite soul (ψυχή), comprising passionate (θυμοειδές), desirous (ἐπιθυμητικόν), and intellectual (λογιστικόν) elements, see Gill 1985: 1–26; on Xenophon see D'Agostino 1957: 196 and Berry 1958: 387–88 (Berry bases his analysis on Jaeger 1934–45: 3.63).

[28] The coincidence of reason and rhetoric that this analysis suggests is explicit in Plutarch's contemporary Quintilian: *Fueruntque haec, ut Cicero apertissime colligit, quemadmodum iuncta natura sic officio quoque copulata, ut idem sapientes atque eloquentes haberentur* (*Inst.* 1 *pr.* 13, discussed in Morgan 1998: 227).

[29] …τούτου Ἀπολλοώνιος ὁ Μόλων ἐν τῷ κατὰ φιλοσόφων ἐψεῦσθαί φησι τὴν Πυθίαν (*Schol. vet. in Aristophani Nubes* 144).

[30] The absence of superstition in Caesar's wife Calpurnia (see below, p. 199) has sometimes been taken as evidence for the Epicurean ties of her family, the Calpurnii Pisones. I rather think that the incident concerns gender and superstition.

and fairness (57.4–8), and immediately preceding an extensive catalogue of his designs for the future. The reader is presented a complex portrait that praises Caesar's personal virtues but also leads one to disapprove of his ambitious plans even before learning what those plans will be.[31]

> Since his many successes did not turn his inherent (φύσει) magnificence and love of honor towards the enjoyment of his labors, but were instead fuel and encouragement—which engendered an intention to pursue greater matters in the future, and a lust for new glory, as if he had exhausted his current resources—his condition (πάθος) was nothing other than jealousy of himself as if of another, and a sort of rivalry (φιλονικία) between the future and what he had already accomplished… (58.4–5).

Again Caesar fails to realize the potential in his nature. Unlike his earlier ambitious acts, however, he gains nothing in compensation. He has already achieved political primacy and conquered vast territories for Rome and can no longer derive any benefit from his accomplishments. Hence Plutarch's description of his ambition as an illness.[32] The subsequent catalog of Caesar's plans extends this idea. It begins by equating Caesar's condition with his ambition (φιλονικία), then through a μέν/δέ antithesis places these two abstract ideas alongside the actual places and peoples Caesar intends to subdue: the Parthians, the Black Sea, Hyrcania, the Caspian sea, the Caucasus, Scythia, Germany, Gaul, and back to Italy. His ultimate goal: "to complete this circle of an empire bounded everywhere by Ocean" (58.7). And as if these plans were not enough Plutarch goes on to list the civilian projects Caesar wishes to undertake at the same time (58.8–10). The relentless ambition that made Caesar's earlier accomplishments possible becomes at the end of his career the primary symptom of his diseased character. Plutarch makes the same point more explicitly in the *Life*'s final chapter, where he summarizes Caesar's accomplishments. "As for the power and rule he had sought his whole life, through so many dangers, and had acquired with great difficulty, he enjoyed no benefit from it except his name and a reputation among the people that inspired jealousy" (69.1).[33]

Plutarch's criticism of Caesar's ambition is unparalleled in *Alexander*. Although the fuel (ὑπέκκαυμα, *Caes.* 58.4) of his ambition recalls Alexander's

[31] Plutarch employs the same strategy in *Mar.* 42.4, where he denounces Cn. Octavius's refusal to raise an army by freeing slaves then narrates the refusal itself.

[32] Galen, writing later in the same century, often employs πάθος to refer to a condition or malady (e.g., *De constitutione artis medicae ad Patrophilum* 1.238 and 1.273).

[33] *Pace* Pelling 1995: 212, I read *Caes.* 58 and 69 as a direct rebuke of Caesar's ambition.

fiery nature, and though his plans are matched by Alexander's intention to press east until he has crossed into China, Plutarch criticizes Caesar with far greater vehemence. The description of Alexander's desire to circumnavigate Africa (*Al.* 68.1–3) is the closest parallel to the ambitious catalog of *Caes.* 58, but Alexander's preparations are cut short by unrest and he escapes without the slightest hint of reproach.[34] Our interpretive difficulties are further exacerbated by *lacunae*. The ending of *Alexander* is perhaps absent; the beginning of *Caesar* almost certainly is.[35] And the pair lacks Plutarch's usual closing comparison (*synkrisis*).[36] We must do without the three passages in which Plutarch would most likely address the differences between the two men and are therefore reduced to formulating hypotheses without strong evidence. Plutarch clearly is less critical of Alexander's ambition than Caesar's but the reasons behind his leniency are not obvious.

We might attempt to resolve the problem by adducing Alexander's receptivity to reasoned argument. Plutarch does provide a relevant parallel within the pair. When Alexander reaches the Ganges and has pushed his own countrymen farther than they can bear their tears and the reasonable entreaties of his friends (τὰ ἐικότα παρηγοροῦντες, *Al.* 62.6) eventually convince him to turn back. Caesar in a similar situation is intransigent: seeing that the leaders of his army are unwilling to advance against Ariovistus he dismisses them, stating his intent to continue on with the tenth legion alone (*Caes.* 19.3–4). He is equally stubborn elsewhere. No character in the *Life* is able to alter his actions by reasoned argument. Even Calpurnia's plea to him on the Ides of March after her portentous dream ultimately fails. Caesar takes notice. He has never

[34] Plutarch's description seems especially modest when compared to a parallel passage in Arrian *Anab.* 7.1.2–4: "…Alexander set his mind (ἐπινοεῖν) to nothing small or meager, nor would have remained satisfied with anything he had already acquired… but would still have sought further for something unknown, vying with himself if he could not with anyone else." Arrian's verb, ἐπινοεῖν, recalls Plutarch's ἐπινοίας in *Caes.* 58.4, and his analysis of Alexander's ambition in general, while unlike that in *Alexander*, is very similar to Plutarch's portrait of Caesar.

[35] See Costanza 1956: 134–53 and Ziegler 1937: 387–90. Pelling 1973: 343–44 suggests that Zonaras 4.14 p. 304, concerning Alexander's alleged plan to throw himself into the Euphrates, might epitomize part of the hypothetical lost ending. These theories do not affect my argument. The Zonaras excerpt contains no explicit criticism of Alexander, and any other reconstruction would be *ex silentio*.

[36] On Plutarch's *synkriseis* see Nikolaidis 2005: 317; Pelling 2002d (especially the postscript on 359–61); Duff 1999: 243–86; Harrison 1995; van der Valk 1982: 329–31; Wardman 1974: 236–37; and Erbse 1956. Four pairs lack *synkriseis*: the two under consideration here, *Phocion–Cato Min.*, and *Themistocles–Camillus*. I myself side with those who believe that the pairs without *synkriseis* never had them.

observed "womanly superstition" in Calpurnia before, and the warning of her dream is confirmed by dire auspices before the senate meeting (63.10–12).[37] Decimus Brutus nonetheless easily confirms him in his original purpose by deriding the priests and by warning him that to postpone the meeting would be viewed as a tyrannical act (63.8–64.6).

The opposition between reason and excessive ambition is still not as clear as we might wish. Caesar's stubbornness against Ariovistus produces results, and is certainly more admirable than the cowardly behavior of his decadent commanders.[38] Even in the Rubicon passage, where Caesar's irrationality and ambition are seemingly both at issue, ambition is not explicitly discussed. Conversely, Plutarch's harshest critique of Caesar's ambition in chapter 58 adduces only his subject's nature, not his character, education, or susceptibility to reason. Ambition is a likely motive for Caesar's moral failures, but because the same ambition also motivates his accomplishments and thus is not detrimental in proper measure we are left wondering which of his ambitious deeds are excessive and which are admirable. To resolve these issues we require a more explicit analysis of the relationship between the two themes.

SUBSEQUENT READING OF *PYRRHUS-MARIUS*

Plutarch's depictions of Pyrrhus and Marius are more negative than those of Alexander and Caesar. His subjects are more violent, less restrained, less successful, and pursue a more destructive, less nuanced ambition. A greater part of Plutarch's narrative is therefore devoted to analyzing the flaws in their character. *Pyrrhus-Marius* can provide us the analytical framework for ambition that we lack in *Alexander-Caesar.*

The differences between Pyrrhus's character and that of his distant cousin, Alexander, are most evident in the two passages where they are compared explicitly, *Pyrrh.* 8.1–12 and 19.1–4.[39] The former passage comprises four

[37] Suetonius describes the sacrifices only vaguely (*pluribus hostiis caesis*, *Div. Iul.* 81.4). Appian makes them part of the *auspicia* administered by the magistrates before every meeting of the senate: ἔθος δ' ἐστὶ τοῖς ἄρχουσιν ἐς τὴν βουλὴν ἐσιοῦσιν οἰωνίζεσθαι προσιοῦσι (*Bel. civ.* 2.16.116). Plutarch is not as specific as Appian, but does mention the involvement of priests (σκέψασθαι διὰ μαντικῆς ἄλλης καὶ ἱερῶν, *Caes.* 63.10), separating the portents from the realm of superstition, and so further disparaging Caesar's decision to attend. See Talbert 1984: 224–25 for evidence on the senatorial procedure.

[38] Most of the cowards were young nobles, men "who came with him to enjoy the luxury and profit of a campaign with Caesar" (*Caes.* 19.3).

[39] Alexander's mother, Olympias, ruled the Molossians jointly with Pyrrhus's father, Aeacides. Both were members of the Aeacidae, a royal line that traced its ancestry back to Achilles. See Garoufalias 1979: 16–18.

anecdotes, the first praising Pyrrhus's generalship, the second considering his military writings, the third listing various assessments of his military ability by famous generals, the fourth addressing his rejection of non-military pursuits. The last of these also recounts the comparison of Pyrrhus and Alexander made by Ap. Claudius Caecus in his famous speech before the Roman senate. None of the comparisons is made by Pyrrhus himself. Other Hellenistic kings in the *Lives* seek to lend legitimacy to their rule by emulating their great predecessor.[40] Pyrrhus never does so. Alexander is instead adduced by other characters or by Plutarch as narrator, a distinction that raises the comparisons above mere political posturing.

The comparison that opens the eighth chapter is focalized through the thoughts of Macedonian soldiers that Pyrrhus has just conquered. The soldiers are upset by their defeat, but their anger is outweighed by their admiration of Pyrrhus as a true successor to Alexander.

> This contest…engendered respect and admiration of his excellence, and discussion among those who witnessed his accomplishments and faced him in battle. For they thought that his appearance and speed and activity resembled those of Alexander, and that they saw in him some shadow, some copy of that man's bearing and force in combat. Other kings displayed themselves as Alexander in their purple robes and their bodyguards, in the inclination of their neck and in their exalted speech. Only Pyrrhus did so by his skill in arms (*Pyrrh.* 8.1).

The admiration of the Macedonians is sincere, but its scope is narrow. Pyrrhus reminds them of Alexander's military leadership, but nothing is said of Alexander's generosity, his self-control, his rationality. A reader with no knowledge of *Alexander-Caesar* would probably interpret this assessment as praise; a reader coming to *Pyrrhus* from *Alexander* might already begin to wonder if Pyrrhus shares any of Alexander's other virtues.[41]

The military focus persists in the second anecdote, where Plutarch offers a brief analysis of Pyrrhus's memoirs. He cites them only as evidence for

[40] Cf. *Demetr.* 10.3, where Demetrius Poliorcetes and his father Antigonus appropriate for themselves the title *basileus*, which no dynast since Alexander's death had dared to assume.

[41] *Pyrrh.* 8.1 is Plutarch's first discussion of Pyrrhus's character. His subject is already an adult. Education in the modern sense, i.e., a formal process undergone by children, is never considered. The lack of interest in a subject's childhood development here is typical of Plutarch. Cf. Pelling 2002a: 257–58. Frazier 1996 (78–80 and n31) draws an important distinction between *paideia* as a result and *paideia* as an action and notes that while both can reveal character Plutarch focuses almost exclusively on the latter. The result is the static characterization analyzed in Swain 1989a. See Mossman 1992: 104–5 and 2005: 512–15 for more on Pyrrhus's failure to live up to Alexander's example.

Pyrrhus's strategic brilliance: "One may glean examples of his expertise in tactics and generalship, and of his ingenuity, from the writings he has left behind concerning these matters." (8.3). Unlike Alexander, whose letters on a variety of subjects are cited repeatedly, Pyrrhus *qua* author is only mentioned twice and even then only as a general recounting his campaigns.[42] Far from granting Pyrrhus literary credentials, this anecdote actually reinforces Plutarch's characterization of Pyrrhus's interests as solely military.[43]

The third section of *Pyrrhus* 8 contains two assessments of Pyrrhus's military prowess by famous generals of antiquity, Antigonus and Hannibal. The former, when asked who the greatest general is, replies "Pyrrhus, if he manages to survive." The latter ranks Pyrrhus higher than himself or even Scipio Africanus.[44] This all sounds well, but the apparent praise is mitigated by context.[45] Antigonus's caveat suggests that some aspect of Pyrrhus's character forebodes a short career; Hannibal's assessment of Pyrrhus is restricted to the Epirote's experience and ingenuity (8.5). Furthermore, both Antigonus and Hannibal are ultimately defeated despite their military genius. The career of Antigonus—assuming Plutarch means Antigonus Monophthalmus—ends in political defeat when he is overwhelmed by an alliance of other Hellenistic dynasts at Ipsus;[46] Hannibal, though a brilliant strategist, is nonetheless

[42] Plutarch also cites Pyrrhus's memoirs in *Pyrrh.* 21.12 for casualty figures after Ausculum. By contrast, there are over 30 letters mentioned in *Alexander*, e.g., 17.8, 20.9, 42.1, 47.3, 55.6–7, and 60.1. See Hamilton 1969: lix–lx.

[43] The military nature of Plutarch's citation, so aptly suited to his narrative, was not inevitable. Dionysius of Halicarnassus gives his readers an entirely different impression of the *Hypomnemata*, mentioning aspects that were, at best, tangential to Pyrrhus's military operations (e.g., his portentous dream before engaging the Romans in battle, *Ant. Rom.* 20.10). On Pyrrhus's memoirs see Canfora 1994: 138–39 and 140–41; La Bua 1971: 14n2; and Flacelière and Chambry 1971: 8–9. Jacoby 1923–98: *FGrH* 229 F 2 considers the attribution of memoirs to Pyrrhus doubtful; Lévêque 1957 rightly disagrees: "Un témoignage si bien fondé ne peut guère être mis en doute…"(20).

[44] There are fuller versions of the latter anecdote in Plutarch *Flam.* 5 and Livy *AUC* 35.14. See Mossman 2005: n3.

[45] Antigonus's remark, if true, may not originally have referred to Pyrrhus's character at all; it could have meant almost anything. Within chapter eight, which inaugurates Plutarch's recurring contrast between Pyrrhus's ambitions and his inability to enjoy life, it becomes an indictment of Pyrrhus's character.

[46] The identity of this Antigonus is disputed. Flacelière 1971: 295 assumes that the Antigonus mentioned is Pyrrhus's coeval, Antigonus Gonatas, though without argument. Nederlof 1940 argues instead for Antigonus Monophthalmus: "If one attributes this statement to Antigonus Gonatas, who was about the same age as Pyrrhus, then the words ἂν γηράσῃ become problematic" (41). The dates of Pyrrhus's life (319–272 B.C.E.) coincide with both Gonatas (320–239) and Gonatas's grandfather, Monophthalmus (382–301).

defeated by Rome and forced to abandon Italy, foreshadowing the failure of Pyrrhus's own Italian expedition. Plutarch adduces great praise for Pyrrhus's generalship, but the manner in which he does so suggests that military ability is not in itself enough.

The chapter concludes with an explanation, supported by an anecdote, for Pyrrhus's tactical brilliance. First, the explanation: "It seems that Pyrrhus always persisted in his concern for and study of (φιλοσοφῶν) this subject alone, considering it the most regal, and disdained (ἐν οὐδενὶ λόγῳ) other pursuits as delicacies (γλαφυρίας)" (8.6–7). Plutarch's language here, as often, is rich in allusive power. The collocation of γλαφυρίαι and λόγος, for instance, suggests an ironic misappropriation of priorities, especially given the militaristic portrayal of Pyrrhus's literary output earlier in this chapter. But nothing in this sentence is more suggestive or ironic than the participle φιλοσοφῶν, which invokes a sphere of human endeavor, philosophy, that Pyrrhus will utterly reject. This point is driven home by the concluding anecdote. "When asked while drinking whether he thought Python or Caphisias the better flautist, Pyrrhus is said to have replied that Polyperchon was the better general, meaning that such matters were the only ones appropriate for a king to pursue and understand" (8.3). Plutarch's use of the terms "always" and "only" in 8.3 reflects the great flaw in Pyrrhus's character as portrayed throughout this chapter and the *Life* as a whole. His military preoccupation is absolute, and therefore by Greek axiom unsound. Plutarch employs a similar musical/military dichotomy in an anecdote concerning Alexander in the first chapter of *Pericles*. There Philip scolds his son for neglecting his royal duties and seeking excessive musical competence. Alexander and Pyrrhus in a sense make the same mistake: both devote too much attention to one sphere of activity and too little to their other responsibilities. But Alexander is checked by the rational correction to which he is susceptible. Pyrrhus's remark passes without comment. Whether or not the two men are innately similar—Plutarch does not mention Pyrrhus's nature (φύσις)—there is clearly a stark difference in their training and resulting character. The four anecdotes in chapter 8 emphasize this difference, and so demonstrate the accuracy of the assessment of the Macedonian soldiers at the beginning of the chapter. Pyrrhus truly is a military shadow of Alexander.

The degree to which Pyrrhus falls short of his predecessor is made clearer still in the speech of Ap. Claudius Caecus, which forestalls a proposed Ro-

Since, moreover, Pyrrhus was serving under the latter's son Demetrius in 301 (at the same age, coincidentally, as Alexander at Chaeroneia) and fought at the battle of Ipsus, Antigonus Monophthalmus would have had both cause and opportunity to assess Pyrrhus's military ability. The question cannot be resolved with certainty, but I am inclined to agree with Nederlof and to attribute the remark to the elder Antigonus. See Garoufalias 1979: 223n36 for the extensive bibliography on this question.

man treaty with the Epirote invader (19.1–4). As part of his indictment of the Roman capitulation, Claudius rebukes the senate for its cowardice. They had earlier asserted their regret that they were never able to measure themselves against Alexander; now they intend to submit a lesser man and people.[47] "You fear Chaonians and Molossians, who have always provided the Macedonians with plunder, and tremble at Pyrrhus, who has spent all his time trailing around as the servant of one of Alexander's bodyguards (sc. Antigonus Monophthalmus)." Claudius's indictment, like much of *Pyrrh.* 8, is focused upon the king's military ability: "…he wanders around Italy in flight from his enemies back home, sending us notice of his supremacy from that army which did not suffice to guard a small portion of Macedon for him."[48] Plutarch has already told his readers that Pyrrhus lost Macedon to Lysimachus through Macedonian treachery, not military incompetence (12.5–7), so Claudius's rhetoric must be taken *cum grano salis*. Yet the point remains that even in Pyrrhus's chosen sphere of excellence, which he pursues to the exclusion of all else, he is Alexander's inferior.

We should naturally suspect that Pyrrhus's reaction to reasoned opposition will also prove inferior to Alexander, but thus far we cannot be sure. The early chapters of *Pyrrhus*, like *Caesar*, lack the direct confrontation between reason and ambition that we require for certainty. These traits are not explicitly opposed until the pseudo-Platonic dialogue of chapter 14, a purple passage that, like Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon in *Caes.* 32, exposes the dangers of an unbalanced character. It also demonstrates clearly the limitations of rational correction. The interlocutors are Pyrrhus himself and a Thessalian named Cineas, who is Pyrrhus's foremost ambassador, orator, and advisor. The latter is an ideal narrative instrument for the dialogue. So great is his oratorical ability, Plutarch tells us, that Pyrrhus used to say he had won over more cities through his ambassador's words than by force of arms (14.3). Cineas is a kind of *logos* personified, an ideal proponent of reason to set against the king.[49]

[47] The alleged Roman confidence mirrors *AUC* 9.16–9, in which Livy recites a catalog of fourth–century Roman heroes and concludes (despite the claims of certain "frivolous Greeks") that Alexander would have been defeated if he had lived long enough to turn his attentions westward. See Spencer 2002: 41–53 and Fears 1974: 128, with bibliography in n97. Cf. also Plutarch *De fortuna Romanorum* 326a–b and Whitmarsh 2002: 176.

[48] Mossman 2005: 509–12 offers an analysis of Claudius's character as revealed by this speech, arguing convincingly that Plutarch's Roman and Greek audiences could read this same passage very differently and consequently derive very different versions of Claudius from it.

[49] Cf. Plutarch's comment that Aristotle is recruited to instruct Alexander because he is the most rational (λογιώτατος) of the philosophers (*Al.* 7.2).

In a dialogue that in its entirety occupies almost two full pages in Ziegler and Gartner's Teubner text (1996), Cineas tries to convince Pyrrhus that the goals of his invasion, relaxation and pleasure, are already in his possession, and that he need not subject himself and his people to an arduous campaign. The following excerpt is greatly abridged:

> When he saw Pyrrhus relaxing, [Cineas] led him into conversation with the following words: "If the god should grant that we surpass these men, how will we enjoy our victory?"
>
> Pyrrhus replied, "Cineas, the problem you raise is a simple one: with the Romans defeated, there will be neither a foreign nor a Greek city able to stand against us…."
>
> Pausing a moment, Cineas said "What will we do, my king, after we have taken Italy?"
>
> Pyrrhus, not yet noticing Cineas's intent, said, "Nearby Sicily extends its hands, an island prosperous and well populated, but easily taken…."
>
> "What you say is plausible," answered Cineas, "but is this then the goal of our campaign, the capture of Sicily?"
>
> "May the god grant that our conquest is successful," Pyrrhus replied. "We will make these the preliminaries for great accomplishments. For who will keep us from Libya and Carthage, which will be within easy reach?… And once we have defeated them, it goes without saying that none of these enemies who are now so arrogant will be able to stand against us."
>
> "Not a one," Cineas said, "since it will clearly be possible to regain Macedonia and rule Greece safely with such a force. And what will we do after we have accomplished all that?"
>
> Pyrrhus laughed at him and said, "We will live in great leisure, my good man, and there will be constant drinking, and we will enjoy each other's company and conversation."
>
> Having brought Pyrrhus at last to this point in their discussion, Cineas said, "What then prevents us, if we wish it, from drinking and relaxing together right now, since we already possess without effort those things which we are liable to achieve through blood and much effort, after we have both inflicted and suffered many troubles?"
>
> With these words, Cineas disturbed Pyrrhus more than he changed his mind. He knew the magnitude of the good fortune he was leaving behind but was unable to give up his hopes and desires (14.5–14).

Cineas's argument is irrefutable. It is also an utter failure. Despite the skill with which the inquiry is conducted, and despite Pyrrhus's recognition that his ambassador is correct, Pyrrhus is unable to set aside his dreams of conquest.

This dialogue has a close parallel in the Platonic corpus, the pseudo-Platonic work now known as *Alcibiades I*.[50] The text was central to the middle-Platonism of Plutarch's day. It was employed as a primer for the basic tenets of Plato's philosophical system, and many of Plutarch's original readers would have known it well. In it Socrates brings Alcibiades through a series of leading questions to *aporia*. Unlike *Caes.* 32.5–8, where *aporia* marks only Caesar's inability to choose a rational course of action at the Rubicon, Alcibiades' *aporia* also indicates his own recognition that he is ignorant about justice, excellence, and virtue, and that he is unprepared to begin the political career he so eagerly desires. According to Plato's Socrates, Alcibiades may still be redeemed by his youth. He is at most eighteen years old at the dramatic date of the work and despite his ignorance may yet become a wise statesman because he is still young enough, malleable enough, to subject his character to a proper philosophical regimen if he so desires.[51]

The dialogue with Cineas in *Pyrrhus* 14 is quite similar in most respects to *Alc. 1*, but there is a fundamental difference between Pyrrhus and Alcibiades. While Pyrrhus shares Alcibiades' ignorance of proper statesmanship, and is likewise made to recognize the irrationality of his desires (unlike Caesar), he is too firmly set in his ways to abandon his campaign. By chapter 14 of the *Life* he is some thirty-nine or forty years old. He has never tried to incorporate philosophy into his life and has never been schooled in non-military aspects of Greek culture. Unlike Alexander and Alcibiades, he cannot be swayed by rational argument. He has survived, despite Antigonus's doubts in chapter 8, and has become a great general, but has not developed in other respects. Through this dialogue Plutarch transforms Pyrrhus's irrationality into the proximate cause of the series of campaigns that lead eventually to his death.

Pyrrhus's Roman *comparandus*, Marius, comes the nearest of any of Plutarch's characters to being an outright villain. Demetrius may be more

[50] Modern doubts about the authorship of this dialogue are irrelevant. It is included in Thrasyllus's tetralogies and was thus considered authentic in Plutarch's time. See Johnson 1996: 53–83 for a survey of the work's *Nachleben* and the arguments for and against Platonic authorship.

[51] Canfora 1994: 136–37 argues for a Cynic influence in *Pyrrh.* 14, adducing as evidence a diatribe of Teles. The parallel is apt, but Canfora concludes in a skeptical tone: "Ma forse non è necessario ricondurre il capitolo 14 della *Vita di Pirro* all'ambiente cinico…." I agree, and consider a Platonic origin more likely. Canfora also mentions an earlier theory of Corcella (1988 [sic]) that linked the dialogue between Pyrrhus and Cineas with the advice Artabanus gives Xerxes in Herodotus 7.8–18, but I find it unconvincing. The Cineas dialogue is concerned with Pyrrhus's faulty *ethos*, Herodotus with the impossibility of giving an absolute monarch honest advice.

disingenuous, Antony more licentious, but no one, not even Sulla, can surpass the sheer violence and barbarity of Marius's career. The two most prominent aspects of Plutarch's depiction are Marius's ambition, which spurs on his violent behavior, and the causal link Plutarch forges between that ambition and Marius's rejection of Greek culture. There are two passages in *Marius* that are particularly telling: one at the beginning of the *Life*, the other in its final chapter. The former passage establishes Marius's unsavory character and his disdain for Greek society. The latter refines Plutarch's analysis and invites the reader to consider how Marius's career might have been different if only he had not rejected the benefits of Hellenism out of hand.

In the former passage, the second chapter of the *Life*, Plutarch describes a statue of Marius that he himself saw at Ravenna. His description does not give the reader any idea of Marius's physical appearance as such. It introduces instead a lengthy description of Marius's character, in which Plutarch addresses his warlike bearing and manly nature, characteristics he shares with Pyrrhus, as well as his harshness and bitterness, the traits in which the two men are most different.[52] Plutarch concludes his character sketch in terms of *paideia*: "Marius partook of a *paideia* more military than a political" (…στρατιωτικῆς μᾶλλον ἢ πολιτικῆς παιδείας μεταλαβών, 2.1). "Political *paideia*" is an oddly redundant phrase for Plutarch, who normally uses *paideia* to encompass philosophy, literature, rhetoric, politics, all the skills that are proper to active life in a *polis* (and hence political). He mentions political *paideia* only one other time in his work, at *Praec. ger. rep.* 816f, and notes with approval the common opinion that it teaches one proper submission to those in authority. Because far fewer rule than are ruled, he argues, and because those who do rule usually do so for a brief time, the noblest and most useful lesson is obedience. His analysis in the *Praecepta* illuminates Marius's behavior nicely. Marius's education is antithetical to the norm, more military than political, and so leads him to rule harshly and to obey poorly.[53]

Plutarch devotes the remainder of the second chapter to the cause and consequences of Marius's defective education. The cause is his disdain for

[52] Cf. Plutarch's praise of Pyrrhus's mildness towards his friends in *Pyrrh.* 8.8–12. Both *Pyrrh.* 8 and *Mar.* 2 conform well to the εἰκονισμός model proposed by Tatum 1996: 139, in which apparently ornamental descriptive passages on the subject's origins and early character are actually integral elements of Plutarch's narrative. Tatum 1996: 136 notes that this passage, unlike *Mar.* 34.5 and 43.2, is more of a character sketch than a physical description. See Mossman 1991 for a broader discussion of statues in Plutarch.

[53] He is abusive to Metellus Delamaticus, his patron (4.4), disloyal to Metellus Numidicus, his commanding officer in the early Jugurthine war (8.6–9, 29.2–12), and vies repeatedly with Sulla (32.3–4, 35.5–7, 45.1–2).

the Greeks themselves. He considers them mere slaves, and has no interest whatsoever in their language or culture (*Mar.* 2.2). The consequences will be significant:

> Plato was frequently accustomed to say to the philosopher Xenocrates, who seemed to possess a rather dour nature, "My dear Xenocrates, you should sacrifice to the Graces." If someone had similarly urged Marius to sacrifice to the Greek Muses and Graces, he would not have capped his brilliant campaigns and political successes with an unsightly [end].[54] Thanks to his temper, his unseasonable love of rule, and his inexorable lust for glory, he ran aground into a savage and wild old age (2.3–4).[55]

The last sentence of this passage, strongly reminiscent of *Caes.* 69.1, defines the limits of military *paideia* still further. Whatever its benefits, it does not enable Marius to control himself. Plutarch enumerates several flaws in Marius's character that will be revealed by his actions in the *Life*—his temper, his lust for glory, his desire for rule—but his career is ultimately a failure because of his willful ignorance of Greek language and culture, which might have enabled him, like Alexander, to rein in his destructive impulses. For Plutarch, Marius's faults are not themselves the fundamental problem, but rather his deficient education and consequent inability to restrain his faults.

Plutarch concludes the second chapter thus: "Let these things be observed directly from the events themselves." And the body of the *Life*, as promised, is concerned with Marius's deeds, not with analysis. Only in the final chapter does Plutarch finally return to his explicit evaluation of Marius's career and develop the themes he introduces in chapter two. The relevant portion of the last chapter, sections 1–5 in the Teubner edition, contains two philosophical anecdotes then a longer condemnation in Plutarch's own voice. The three parts, 46.1, 46.2, and 46.3–5, form an ascending tricolon, a rhetorical structure comprising three elements, each longer and more elaborate than its predecessor.

The first anecdote is itself also an ascending tricolon; Plutarch has clearly taken great care in drafting his conclusion. It concerns Plato, who ended his life fulfilled, thankful (1) that he had been born a man instead of an unreasoning beast, (2) that he was a Greek and not a barbarian, and (3) that he was fortu-

[54] Plutarch offers a more extensive discourse on the beneficial influence of the muses in *Cor.* 1.

[55] Plutarch allows himself a great deal of latitude in his use of foil–figures like Xenocrates. He adduces the same man in *Phoc.* 29, but there treats him as an exemplar of untimely stubbornness, and so as a precursor of Cato Minor's inflexibility in the paired *Life*. See Duff 1999: 150.

nate enough to have lived in the time of Socrates. Each point is antithetical to Marius's experience. First, Marius throughout the *Life* consistently relies upon hope instead of reason, behaving less like a man than an irrational beast. And when he returns to Rome from exile, two chapters before the conclusion, Plutarch describes him as a brute, a silent, savage butcher.[56] Second, Marius is decidedly not Greek. Plutarch does depict early Roman culture in a favorable light elsewhere in the *Lives*, but Marius's willful rejection of everything Hellenic, the main point of Plutarch's opening analysis, reduces him to the level of a true barbarian.[57] And as for living in the time of Socrates, Plato's third cause for gratitude, it is abundantly clear by the time the reader reaches the end of this *Life* that even if Marius had been fortunate enough to encounter Socrates, he would not have appreciated him. Read in this context, Plato's remark becomes a thankful prayer to his guardian spirit that his own life and character were nothing like those of Marius.

The second anecdote, section 46.2, recounts the gratitude of Antipater of Tarsus, a Stoic philosopher who, at the end of his life, even counted a safe voyage to Athens among his blessings.[58] This anecdote is more emphatic than the first because Antipater is a lesser figure than Plato and the good fortune he adduces is so much less imposing. Unlike Marius, Antipater "reckoned every gift of beneficent fortune as a great favor, and kept it in his memory, the surest steward of good things, for his entire life."[59] Unlike Marius (and Pyrrhus and Caesar) he could reflect back on his accomplishments with pleasure, untroubled by the things he had yet to achieve.

The third part of the analysis, sections 46.3–5, is ostensibly a statement of Plutarch's own view. It is longer and more elaborate than the two anecdotes that precede it. *Pyrrhus-Marius*, like *Alexander-Caesar*, lacks a formal *synkrisis*. Plutarch offers instead this final summary of Marius's character, leaving his readers to draw the implicit comparison with Pyrrhus themselves:

> With the passage of time, events slip away from the forgetful and the thoughtless. Wherefore they neither retain nor preserve anything, and are always devoid of what is good but full of hopes. They look off towards the future and throw away

[56] "Marius made no sound, but ever glowered with a fierce expression and with hate in his eyes, as if he would straightaway fill the city with murder" (43.2).

[57] Contrast Plutarch's praise for archaic Roman virtue in *Numa* 3.

[58] *RE* 26; *floruit* ca. 150 B.C.E.. Antipater was a follower of Diogenes of Babylon and a teacher of Panaetius.

[59] φιλόχρηστος, the word I have translated as "beneficent," is a rare term, occurring only four times in the *TLG* corpus. It suggests here the same propitious sense of *tyche* that appears elsewhere in Plutarch's works. Such *tyche* is more often associated with great world events, such as Rome's rise to world dominion. See Swain 1989b: 294–96.

> what is at hand. Chance might prevent the former; the latter cannot be taken away. They nonetheless reject the latter as if it belonged to another, dream of the former, which is uncertain, and suffer accordingly. They do so because they gather and collect external benefits before they have first established through reason and education (*paideia*) a base and foundation for [those benefits], and are therefore unable to satisfy the insatiable part of their spirit.

This final analysis is crucial for the reader's understanding of Pyrrhus's and Marius's characters and of the role of *paideia* in their *Lives*. The scope of Plutarch's analyses expands from the particular to the universal, from the circumstances of his subject's career to the benefits conferred upon anyone by *paideia*. Marius represents an entire class of people who fail to appreciate Greek culture. Within this broader scope his similarity to Pyrrhus is evident. Their characters and circumstances are quite different in other respects but each undermines his accomplishments through an unphilosophical approach to life. Pyrrhus's campaigns end in failure because he is unsatisfied with moderate success. He could have lived a prominent if unspectacular life as the king of the Molossians but his ambitions for conquest in Macedon, Italy, Sicily, Sparta, and Argos draw him from one disaster to the next, and finally kill him. Marius has greater success. He defeats the Cimbri and Teutones and is worshipped as a savior at home, hailed by the mob as the third founder of Rome. They praise him and the gods together and grant him a double triumph (27.9). He gains nothing from all his accomplishments, however, because he, like Pyrrhus (and Caesar), is always eager for new campaigns, new sources of honor. He cannot control his ambition, and so is incapable of deriving satisfaction from success.[60]

The same flaw mars the careers of two other statesmen in the *Lives*, Philopoemen and Themistocles, and it would be well to take note of them before returning to *Alexander-Caesar*. In *Phil.* 3.1 Plutarch compares Philopoemen to his compatriot Epaminondas and criticizes his subject's military preoccupation in terms similar to *Marius* 2. "The ambitious (φιλότιμον) part of his character was not wholly pure of rivalry or free from anger. Although he desired above all to emulate Epaminondas…he seemed better suited to military than political excellence (στρατιωτικῆς ἢ πολιτικῆς ἀρετῆς)."[61]

[60] Memory is a common theme in the educational analyses of Plutarch's time. See Morgan 1998: 250–51 on the role of memory within the educational programs of Plutarch's contemporaries, Quintilian (*Inst.*) and Ps.–Plutarch (*De lib. ed.*).

[61] Walsh 1992: 208, 212–18 argues that rivalry (φιλοτιμία/φιλονικία) is the primary theme uniting *Philopoemen–Flamininus* and governing Plutarch's depiction of the two statesmen. Swain 1988 argues that the most important unifying theme is the liberation of

Despite his many virtues and successes, Philopoemen's ambition leads him to an unhappy end that recalls *Marius* 46: he desires peace and leisure but is compelled to rejoin public life by his jealousy over the accomplishments of others (*Phil.* 18.1–4). He rises from his sickbed to oppose a revolt at Messene, is defeated, captured, imprisoned, and executed (*Phil.* 18.6–20.4). Themistocles' early character and training offers an equally damning case study of destructive ambition in the civic sphere. The Athenian statesman is much more politically inclined than either Philopoemen or Marius. Too much so, in fact. Like Marius, he rejects moral and gracious pursuits (τὰς ἠθοποιοὺς ἢ πρὸς…χάριν, *Them.* 2.3). He attaches himself to one Mnesiphilus, who advocates political shrewdness and action, "the so-called wisdom of the day," instead of true philosophy (*Them.* 2.6). His success is perhaps even more imposing than that of Marius: his leadership achieves Athenian victory and independence and lays the foundation for the Athenian empire. But his abuses so annoy his fellow citizens that they ostracize him (*Them.* 21–22). He ends his life by suicide in exile, a victim of his monomaniacal ambition (*Them.* 31.4–7). Not even his political *paideia* is sufficient because it dominates his character to the exclusion of all other concerns.

ALEXANDER-CAESAR REVISITED

Just as our initial reading of *Alexander-Caesar* informed our subsequent study of *Pyrrhus-Marius*, so does the treatment of ambition in the latter pair allow us to reflect back upon the former with greater insight and to address the rather obscure relationship between Caesar's ambition and his irrational behavior. The crucial passage from *Pyrrhus* in this regard is the dialogue between Cineas and Pyrrhus, the sole confrontation in these four *Lives* between an irrational subject and a rational argument. The dialogue is thematically parallel to *Caes.* 58, Plutarch's first critique of Caesar's ambition. Though the formal structure of the two passages is different, one composed as a dialogue, the other as a list, Plutarch's catalog of Caesar's future plans in the latter performs essentially the same narrative function as the imaginary conquests Pyrrhus himself enumerates to his ambassador in the former. Pyrrhus's refusal to take Cineas's advice and abandon his own ambitious plans is matched by Caesar's inability to rest and enjoy his successes. Pyrrhus's resistance to Cineas's ineluctable logic is likewise matched by Caesar's resistance to the

Greece (336) and concludes that the overall portrayal of the two men is positive despite their imperfections (343–37). Like Pelling 1995: 213–17, Swain sees strong affinities between the pair and the prescriptions in Plutarch's *Praec. ger. reip.* See also Frazier 1988: 120–21 on the *Praecepta* and φιλοτιμία.

arguments of his soldiers before attacking Ariovistus and those of his wife Calpurnia before his assassination. Both men are driven to *aporia*—Caesar at the Rubicon, Pyrrhus by his Italian opportunity—but neither is able to respond rationally. And Plutarch's reproachful analyses within each passage, which rail against ambition and hope respectively, decry each man's obsession with the future at the expense of the present (*Caes.* 58.5; *Pyrrh.* 14.14). These parallels encourage readers of both *Lives* to view Caesar in much the same light as Pyrrhus. He too is inferior to Alexander, a defective character who is brilliant and accomplished but lacks the Macedonian king's innate propensity for reason and self-control.

The opening and closing narrative analyses of *Marius* further clarify the flaws in Caesar's ambition. Plutarch declares in *Caes.* 69.1 that Caesar gained nothing from his success except "his name and a reputation among the people that inspired jealousy," but does not explain why that should be so. The explanation he there eschews is spelled out in *Mar.* 2 and in the ascending tricolon of *Mar.* 46. The forgetful, the thoughtless, those who "look off towards the future and throw away what is at hand," these are the people who fail to reap the benefits of their accomplishments. And as Plutarch explains in *Mar.* 2.2–4, the underlying reason for such thoughtless behavior is a lack of *paideia*. Despite his later disputes with Aristotle, Alexander maintains his zeal for philosophy, and so can restrain his ambitions when necessary. Caesar's repeatedly cited literary activities, whether poetical, historical, or epistolary, and his inadequate training under Molon do not serve him as well. They are revealed as the mere trappings of *paideia*, not its true essence. And so, though Caesar does not reject Greek culture wholesale as Marius does, he fails to reap its full benefits and in the end pays the same price. He is driven by his ambitions and cannot enjoy the rewards that his deeds have earned him.

Paideia is such a prominent theme in the opening and concluding analyses of *Marius* that modern discussions of *paideia* have quite naturally focused often on that *Life*.[62] And with the increased attention to Plutarch's parallel scheme has come a greater interest in *Pyrrhus* (see Schepens 2000; Duff 1999:

[62] See Swain 1990: 192 and 1995: 139. Swain's analysis follows much the same line as those of Martin 1960: 71 and Russell 1973: 131–33, which further emphasize the special importance of *paideia* for Plutarch's Roman subjects. "Most Romans, for Plutarch, had a potentiality for barbarism: it is part of his picture of the Greco–Roman symbiosis that Greek *paideia* is the prime means of neutralising this risk" (Russell 1973: 132). This line of reasoning can be carried too far, however: Schepens 2000: 420n20 adduces Swain 1995 and 1996 to support his claim that *paideia* is more prevalent in *Marius* than in *Pyrrhus*, a conclusion which does not account for the effects of *paideia*'s absence in Pyrrhus's adult career.

101–30). To my knowledge, however, no one has yet adduced *paideia* to explain Plutarch's narratorial condemnation of Caesar's ambition. *Paideia* is a central element in the Bucephalas and naphtha episodes of *Alexander*, yet neither isolated readings of *Alexander*, nor of *Caesar*, nor of the combined pair have elucidated its role within that pair. And the various studies addressing *paideia* within Plutarch's entire corpus have concentrated upon those *Lives* in which *paideia* plays a more obvious role, ignoring *Alexander-Caesar* altogether. It is only when *Alexander-Caesar* is read together with *Pyrrhus-Marius*, the pair with which it is most closely intertwined, that the role of *paideia* in *Alexander-Caesar* becomes clear and Plutarch's narrative condemnation of Caesar can be understood.

The combined reading of *Pyrrhus-Marius* and *Alexander-Caesar* that I have pursued in this article is perhaps only the beginning. Plutarch's explicit and implicit cross-references may very well point the way to many new insights. The *Life* of Demetrius covers many of the events in the early chapters of *Pyrrhus*, and a joint reading of *Pyrrhus-Marius* and *Demetrius-Antony* should therefore also be enlightening. The same argument could be made on the Roman side for *Pyrrhus-Marius* and *Lysander-Sulla*. And if Christopher Pelling (1973) is correct in arguing that the late Republican *Lives* were researched and written at approximately the same time, then the six Greek *Lives* with which they are paired might also be interpreted together with profit. While we must remain wary of spurious combinations, the judicious application of combined readings will undoubtedly reveal many new correlations between the pairs and provide an important complement to our more exclusive and inclusive analyses of Plutarchan biography.

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