

# Plutarch's Fragment 157 and Epideictic

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**A**N INTERESTING FRAGMENT of Plutarch's lost work *Περὶ τῶν ἐν Πλαταιαῖς Δαιδάλων* (Lamprias Catalogue 201) has been preserved for us by Eusebius in his *Praeparatio Evangelica* (3.1.1–7 = fr.157 Sandbach).<sup>1</sup> While this article will suggest that the piece can fruitfully be read through the lens of epideictic treatises, it is important to note at the outset that fr.157 has generated a great deal of controversy over the years. The major difficulty has been that Plutarch apparently embraces here Stoic physical allegoresis.<sup>2</sup> Thus, much of the debate over *De Daedalis* has focused on (the extent of) Plutarch's Stoicism in the work, and scholars have become deeply divided as to whether the Chaeronean speaks *propria persona* in fr.157.

## 1. *The controversy over Plutarch's Stoicism in fr.157*

That a professed Platonist should have anything in common with the archenemy from the Porch was hardly palatable to many a scholar.<sup>3</sup> Thus, for example, Rudolf Hirzel, in his

<sup>1</sup> The text along with translation (at times modified) is that of F. H. Sandbach, *Plutarch's Moralia XV Fragments* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1987).

<sup>2</sup> E.g. fr.157.61–62: οἱ δὲ φυσικῶς μᾶλλον καὶ πρεπόντως ὑπολαμβάνοντες τὸν μῦθον, κτλ. I. Ramelli, *Anneo Cornuto: Compendio di teologia greca* (Milan 2003) 95, points out that the tradition which Plutarch picks up in *De Daedalis* “risale almeno a Crisippo.” See also I. Ramelli and G. Lucchetta, *Allegoria I L'età classica* (Milan 2004) 392–393.

<sup>3</sup> In fact, Plutarch had a very complex attitude toward the Stoics, on which see the monumental study by D. Babut, *Plutarque et le stoïcisme* (Paris 1969) or, more recently, J. P. Hershbell, “Plutarch and Stoicism,” *ANRW* II 36.5 (1992) 3336–3352; J. Opsomer, “Plutarch and the Stoics,” in M. Beck (ed.), *A Companion to Plutarch* (Malden 2014) 88–103, and “Is Plutarch really hostile to the Stoics?” in T. Engberg-Pedersen (ed.), *From Stoicism to Platonism: The Development of Philosophy, 100 BCE–100 CE* (Cambridge 2017) 296–321.

classic study, diagnosed that the one actually espousing the method “kann nicht Plutarch sondern muss ein Anderer sein.”<sup>4</sup> The scholar surmised then that *De Daedalis* was in fact a dialogue and the unsavory views were expressed by a Stoic interlocutor. The same conjecture was made by Paul Decharme, who likewise suggested that Plutarch “fait parler un personnage dont il ne partageait pas.”<sup>5</sup> The hypothesis that *De Daedalis* was a dialogue and that the character speaking did not represent Plutarch’s own views has been accepted by Roger Miller Jones,<sup>6</sup> Jean Hani,<sup>7</sup> or, most recently, Aaron P. Johnson<sup>8</sup> and Malcolm Heath.<sup>9</sup> Other scholars, however, have vehemently impugned it.

John Gwyn Griffiths, for example, has observed that *De Iside et Osiride* shows Plutarch to be fairly sympathetic to Stoic physical allegoresis (e.g. Osiris = moisture), which sits well with what one encounters in the preserved fragment of *De Daedalis*.<sup>10</sup> Daniel Babut has forcefully argued that Plutarch neither sharply differentiated between physical allegoresis and other kinds of interpretation, nor did he associate any particular

<sup>4</sup> R. Hirzel, *Der Dialog. Ein literarhistorischer Versuch* II (Leipzig 1895) 218.

<sup>5</sup> P. Decharme, “Note sur un fragment des *Daedala* de Plutarque,” in *Mélanges Henri Weil* (Paris 1898) 111–116, at 116. Decharme also considers the possibility that *De Daedalis* was wrongly attributed to Plutarch (as was, for instance, *De Homero*), but favors the dialogue hypothesis (115–116).

<sup>6</sup> R. M. Jones, *The Platonism of Plutarch* (Menasha 1916) 24 n.92.

<sup>7</sup> J. Hani, *La religion égyptienne dans la pensée de Plutarque* (Paris 1976) 123. Hani (159–160) also adduces the dialogue hypothesis in his criticism of those scholars who (like J. Pépin, *Mythe et allégorie: Les origines grecques et les contestations judéo-chrétiennes* [Paris 1976] 184–188) assume that Plutarch adopts Stoic allegoresis.

<sup>8</sup> A. P. Johnson, *Ethnicity and Argument in Eusebius’ Praeparatio Evangelica* (Oxford 2006) 86 n.154.

<sup>9</sup> M. Heath, *Ancient Philosophical Poetics* (Cambridge 2013) 127 n.36.

<sup>10</sup> J. G. Griffiths, “Allegory in Greece and Egypt,” *JEA* 53 (1967) 79–102, at 85. For a criticism of Griffiths’ position see W. Bernard, *Spätantike Dichtungstheorien. Untersuchungen zu Proklos, Herakleitos und Plutarch* (Stuttgart 1990) 197–199.

philosophical school with any specific mode of interpretation.<sup>11</sup> While the current consensus is that Plutarch did not completely reject Stoic physical allegoresis as such, but rather its materialistic (i.e. atheistic) implications,<sup>12</sup> Babut in particular has flatly rejected “l’hypothèse désespérée d’un dialogue,” pointing to two testimonies: Eusebius (*Praep.Evang.* 3.2.1) concludes his presentation of *De Daedalis* with a strong criticism of “what Plutarch says,”<sup>13</sup> whereas Theodoret (*Gr.Aff.Cur.* 3.54) explicitly ascribes to “Plutarch of Chaeronea” certain identifications that appear in the preserved fragment of *De Daedalis* (i.e. Hera = earth, Leto = oblivion/night).<sup>14</sup>

In connection with Babut’s argument, however, two important points need to be made. First, in antiquity the author/character distinction is often ignored in citations across a wide range of genres, and doxographic texts are especially prone to this.<sup>15</sup> Second, Christian authors in particular have to be approached with a great deal of caution, since their primary aim is invariably to demonstrate the superiority of Christianity

<sup>11</sup> Babut, *Plutarque* 381: “Il faut donc admettre que Plutarque n’a pas fait de différence entre l’exégèse physique et les autres méthodes d’interprétation, ou du moins qu’il n’a pas cru que l’une ne pût être associée aux autres, selon l’opportunité.” Indeed, many Platonists saw their allegoresis as being a (greatly improved) continuation of the Stoics’ hermeneutical efforts. Porphyry is a prime example thereof. G. R. Boys-Stones, *Post-Hellenistic Philosophy: A Study of its Development from the Stoics to Origen* (Oxford 2001) 50, has acutely noted that when looking back at a century of Platonist “allegorical method” (μεταληπτικός τρόπος), Porphyry (*ap. Eus. Hist.Eccl.* 6.19.8) puts the Stoics Chaeremon and Cornutus at the head of his list of great Platonist and Pythagorean allegorists (also 58, 73 n.26, 112).

<sup>12</sup> E.g. Babut, *Plutarque* 382–384, 453–457; Opsomer, in *Companion to Plutarch* 91–92; and R. Hirsch-Luipold, “The Dividing Line: Theological/Religious Arguments in Plutarch’s Anti-Stoic Polemics,” in J. Opsomer et al. (eds.), *A Versatile Gentleman: Consistency in Plutarch’s Writing* (Leuven 2016) 17–36, at 27–28.

<sup>13</sup> Where no English reference is provided, the translation is my own.

<sup>14</sup> See Babut, *Plutarque* 381.

<sup>15</sup> I thank the anonymous reviewer for pointing this out to me.

rather than to give an objective account of a pagan doctrine.<sup>16</sup> Eusebius, for example, makes no attempt to hide his bias, as he supplements his excerpt from *De Daedalis* with the telling complaint (*Praep. Evang.* 3.2.1) that “this wonderful (θαυμαστή) and secret (ἀπόρρητος) physical exposition (φυσιολογία) of the Greek theology led on to nothing divine, nor anything great, befitting god, and worthy of attention.” This harsh criticism reflects Eusebius’ conviction that heathen theology frequently results in atheism because of its materialism. He cites (3 *prooem.*) Plutarch’s method of converting myths into “mystic theologies” (μυστηριώδεις θεολογίας) precisely to make this point. From his perspective, this φυσιολογία abolishes the concept of God, for as the divine is conflated with physical objects (e.g. Hera = earth), it becomes subject to change and decay. For the purpose of the present considerations, however, we should observe that since Eusebius seeks to disparage pagan theology, it is more than probable that he portrays Plutarch’s method of interpretation in accord with his polemical agenda. Crucially, then, when Eusebius refers to “what Plutarch says,” and when Theodoret ascribes certain identifications to “Plutarch of Chae-ronaea,” they do not provide decisive evidence that Plutarch was expressing his own views in fr.157.

## 2. *Beyond eclecticism and syncretism*

Everything that has been said so far shows that it is very difficult (if possible at all) to determine conclusively whether fr.157 comes from a dialogue or an essay in which Plutarch speaks *propria persona*. Of course, the easiest way out of this controversy is simply to characterize Plutarch’s approach as *eclectic* or *syncretic*. Thus, for example, Rosario Scannapieco, in his recent and otherwise excellent study on fr.157, speaks of Plutarch’s “eclectic approach” and “balanced syncretism.”<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> As Bernard, *Spätantike Dichtungstheorien* 195, cautions.

<sup>17</sup> R. Scannapieco, “Μυστηριώδης θεολογία: Plutarch’s fr. 157 Sandbach between Cultural Traditions and Philosophical Models,” in L. Roig Lanzillotta et al. (eds.), *Plutarch in the Religious and Philosophical Discourse of Late*

Though convenient, such labels can be somewhat misleading since they have the unfortunate implication that Plutarch freely blended various heterogeneous (perhaps even contradictory) positions without paying much attention to their internal consistency. Indeed, John M. Dillon has made a strong case that describing Plutarch's position as "eclecticism" is hardly useful,<sup>18</sup> and the recent trend in research on Plutarch as well as on ancient thought in general has been to avoid such labels.<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, this article will suggest that a more fruitful avenue to pursue may be to approach fr.157 from the perspective of the guidelines laid down in epideictic treatises.<sup>20</sup> This will throw interesting light on Plutarch's complex use of myths and his unPlatonic willingness to allegorize them physically. While to the best of my knowledge such an analysis has not been attempted yet, it is important to make two caveats here.

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*Antiquity* (Leiden 2012) 193–214, at 194.

<sup>18</sup> J. M. Dillon, "'Orthodoxy' and 'Eclecticism': Middle Platonists and Neo-Pythagoreans," in J. M. Dillon et al. (eds.), *The Question of "Eclecticism": Studies in Later Greek Philosophy* (Berkeley 1988) 103–125, at 111–112. See also J. M. Dillon, "Plutarch and Platonism," in *Companion to Plutarch* 61–72, at 61, and M. Domaradzki, "Marrying Stoicism with Platonism? Pseudo-Plutarch's Use of the Circe Episode," *AJP* 141 (2020) 211–239, at 214 with n.16.

<sup>19</sup> For Plutarch in particular see e.g. Opsomer, in *Companion to Plutarch* 88 (but also n.61 below). For ancient thought in general see e.g. T. Engberg-Pedersen, "Introduction: A Historiographical Essay," in *From Stoicism to Platonism* 1–26, at 3–10.

<sup>20</sup> Menander is cited after D. A. Russell and N. G. Wilson, *Menander Rhetor* (Oxford 1981), Pseudo-Dionysius after W. H. Race, *Menander Rhetor. [Dionysius of Halicarnassus] Ars rhetorica* (Cambridge [Mass.] 2019). English translations are adapted from both these excellent editions. For the progymnasmata, this paper relies on: M. Patillon and G. Bolognesi, *Aelius Théon: Progymnasmata* (Paris 1997); H. Rabe, *Aphthonii Progymnasmata* (Leipzig 1926); J. Felten, *Nicolai Progymnasmata* (Leipzig 1913); R. Foerster, *Libanii Opera VIII* (Leipzig 1915). The translations (at times slightly modified) are those of G. A. Kennedy, *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (Atlanta 2003), and C. A. Gibson, *Libanius's Progymnasmata: Model Exercises in Greek Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (Atlanta 2008).

First of all, it has to be emphasized that although it is hoped that various rules given by rhetorical theorists can offer some new insights into the problems surrounding fr.157, this paper will not argue that *De Daedalis* assumed the form of a φυσικὸς ὕμνος, an epithalamium, etc. Rather, it will be suggested that such genres and their topics provide a valid way of examining a fragment from the work whose purpose was clearly to praise the heritage of Greek culture. This entails that the following references to epideictic treatises will serve as illustrations of certain general tendencies and principles that can arguably be discerned in fr.157. For example, it will be contended that a ‘hymnic’ reading of the fragment enables us to look at the astounding prominence of φυσιολογία in the piece from a fresh perspective.<sup>21</sup> Thus, this article will hypothesize that at least some part of the controversy over what to make of Plutarch’s approach to myths in fr.157 might result from scholars’ not recognizing several epideictic elements which, by Plutarch’s time, had become embedded in both rhetorical and philosophical discourse.

Second, it needs to be stressed that this article will not seek to portray Plutarch as a rhetor and/or sophist: it has been well-established that Plutarch was a convinced Platonist philosopher who frequently defined himself against the sophistic-rhetorical tradition.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, in his seminal study, Robert Jeuckens

<sup>21</sup> This contention is particularly indebted to L. Pernot, *La rhétorique de l'éloge dans le monde gréco-romain* I-II (Paris 1993), who offers an excellent discussion of the structure of “l’hymne rhétorique” (220–238) and convincingly shows that the account put forward by Menander I is consistent with that of the other authors (221–222). Also, R. M. van den Berg, *Proclus’ Hymns: Essays, Translations, Commentary* (Leiden 2001) 13–34, has persuasively demonstrated that in Platonism doing philosophy was tantamount to singing hymns to the gods (esp. at 22–34). Finally, groundbreaking work on applying Menander’s treatises to the study of Roman poetry has been done by Francis Cairns and the present article has greatly benefited from his analysis of Horace’s *Odes* 3.1 as a φυσικὸς ὕμνος: “Horace’s First Roman *Ode* (3.1),” *PLLS* 8 (1995) 91–142.

<sup>22</sup> On Plutarch’s Platonism see e.g. Jones, *Platonism of Plutarch* or, more

has documented that Plutarch's various utterances cannot be traced back to "ein bestimmtes rhetorisches System," because the Chaeronean philosopher did not employ a consistent terminology, but rather "einzelnen Ausdrücken in Beziehung auf Rhetorik einen ganz andern Sinn unterlegte als seine durch und durch rhetorisch gebildeten und rhetorisch verbildeten Zeitgenossen."<sup>23</sup> This does not mean, however, that (1) Plutarch was completely impervious to various sophistic-rhetorical influences,<sup>24</sup> or that (2) the boundaries between sophists, rhetors, and other intellectuals were always clear-cut.<sup>25</sup>

Undoubtedly, Plutarch was convinced of the indispensability of oratory for political success.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, we know that he received rhetorical training and the Lamprias Catalogue attests several works on the subject: *Περὶ ῥητορικῆς βιβλία γ'* (47),<sup>27</sup> *Εἰ ἄρετὴ ἡ ῥητορικὴ* (86), and *Πρὸς τοὺς διὰ τὸ ῥητορεύειν μὴ φιλοσοφούντας* (219) are particularly noteworthy. If Plutarch possessed

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recently, J. M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* (Ithaca 1996) 184–230, and in *Companion to Plutarch* 61–72. On Plutarch's opposition to the sophistic-rhetorical tradition see e.g. Pernot, *La rhétorique* 506–509, and T. A. Schmitz, "Plutarch and the Second Sophistic," in *Companion to Plutarch* 32–42.

<sup>23</sup> R. Jeuckens, *Plutarch von Chaeronea und die Rhetorik* (Strassburg 1907) 185–187. Jeuckens operates though with a fairly narrow understanding of the terms 'sophist' and 'rhetor', as pointed out by G. W. Bowersock, *Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire* (Oxford 1969) 12–13 with n.1 (see also n.25 below).

<sup>24</sup> As T. Whitmarsh, *The Second Sophistic* (Cambridge 2005) 78, aptly stresses.

<sup>25</sup> See e.g. Bowersock, *Greek Sophists* 10–15, and Schmitz, in *Companion to Plutarch* 37–38. In a similar vein, M. Heath, *Menander: A Rhetor in Context* (Oxford 2004) 130, observes that Menander could easily be characterized as "philosopher and sophist," since the term 'sophist' was "flexible and ambiguous."

<sup>26</sup> As Heath, *Menander* 284, emphasizes. Heath (289) also notes that both Plutarch and Menander recommended serving on embassies, which often involved advocacy.

<sup>27</sup> Jeuckens, *Plutarch* 15, questions the authenticity of this treatise, whereas Pernot, *La rhétorique* 506 with n.70, accepts it.

some rhetorical knowledge, one may expect it to be detectable in his writing. While there have, therefore, been quite a few studies that search for various rhetorical influences in Plutarch's extant works,<sup>28</sup> *Amatorius* is especially relevant for the present analysis, because this work is often characterized as (resembling) a rhetorical hymn.<sup>29</sup> Finally, we should highlight the fact that the Neoplatonists—as Robbert M. van den Berg has persuasively shown—regularly viewed doing philosophy itself as singing hymns to the gods.<sup>30</sup> It is not a stretch to imagine that a Delphic priest would be fine with this. For all these reasons, then, this paper will venture the suggestion that fr.157 can be productively approached from the perspective of a φυσικὸς ὕμνος that praises the gods for their εὐρήματα.

### 3. *Menander's φυσικὸς ὕμνος and philosophical tradition*

Menander distinguishes eight kinds of hymns (333.2–26), but also says in no uncertain terms (343.27–29) that it is combinations of these that are the “most complete laudations” (τελειότατοι ἔπαινοι) and “most appropriate for prose-writers” (μάλιστα τοῖς συγγραφεῦσι πρέποντες). This shows that hymns could assume diverse forms and that the boundaries between the various types could be somewhat fuzzy. However, among the various kinds of hymns discussed by Menander in his first treatise, the φυσικοὶ ὕμνοι (333.12–14, 336.25–337.32) seem particularly important for making sense of Plutarch's praise (fr.157.61) of those who understand myths “more physically

<sup>28</sup> See e.g. the collection of essays in L. van der Stockt (ed.), *Rhetorical Theory and Praxis in Plutarch* (Leuven 2000).

<sup>29</sup> Thus, for example, Pernot, *La rhétorique* 221, observes: “le second discours de l'*Erôtikos* de Plutarque établit d'abord qu'Éros est un dieu (*phusis*), puis examine sa *dunamis* et son *ôpheleia*.” In a similar vein, D. A. Russell, “Plutarch, *Amatorius* 13–18,” in J. Mossman (ed.), *Plutarch and his Intellectual World: Essays on Plutarch* (London 1997) 99–111, at 105 with n.23, speaks here of “an encomium of the god” and characterizes the description of Eros' δύναμις (16–17 [759D–762A]) and ὠφέλεια (17–18 [762B–763A]) as “natural hymn topics.”

<sup>30</sup> Van den Berg, *Proclus' Hymns* 22–34.



and appropriately” (φυσικῶς μᾶλλον καὶ πρεπόντως). These “scientific”<sup>31</sup> or “philosophical”<sup>32</sup> hymns are initially characterized (333.13–14) as “expounding (παρατιθέμενοι) the nature (φύσις) of Apollo or Zeus,” upon which it is further clarified (337.1–5) that this exposition consists in equating a deity with a physical element:

Such hymns are found, for example, when, in delivering a hymn to Apollo, we say that he is the sun and discuss the nature of the sun, and that Hera is air, and that Zeus is heat. Such hymns are philosophical (φυσιολογικοί).<sup>33</sup>

While this φυσιολογία builds on identifications that are typical of natural philosophy (see also below), two further points are worth noting here. First, Menander’s examples of φυσικοὶ ὕμνοι include not only poems. He mentions Parmenides and Empedocles (333.13, 337.6),<sup>34</sup> but also two Platonic dialogues: *Phaedrus* (337.7–9)<sup>35</sup> and *Timaeus* (337.22–24).<sup>36</sup> Second, in his treatment of φυσικοὶ ὕμνοι, Menander recognizes different levels of their overtness. Thus, he observes (337.14) that hymns can be written “enigmatically” (κατ’ αἰνίγματα) or “straightforwardly” (ἐκ τοῦ φανεροῦ) and illustrates (337.15–17) the former with hymns which “circulate as Pythagorean,” whereas with regard to the latter he points, again, to Parmenides, Empedocles, and Plato.

<sup>31</sup> As Russell and Wilson translate it.

<sup>32</sup> As Race renders it.

<sup>33</sup> This translation follows partly Russell and Wilson and partly Race.

<sup>34</sup> Who are later characterized (337.24) as “more philosophical poets” (φυσικώτεροι ποιηταί).

<sup>35</sup> Plato’s description of Eros in *Phaedrus* (esp. 252B1–C4) is given by Menander (337.7–9) as an example of Plato’s “explaining the nature” (φυσιολογῶν) of Eros.

<sup>36</sup> While Menander incorrectly maintains (337.22–24) that in *Critias* Plato calls his *Timaeus* a “hymn of the universe” (ὕμνος τοῦ Παντός), several scholars have pointed to passages that could justify the label: *Ti.* 27C and 92B or *Criti.* 106A (Russell and Wilson 236), *Ti.* 47B (van den Berg, *Proclus’ Hymns* 16 n.9), etc.

Menander's account of a φυσικὸς ὕμνος can offer interesting insights into Plutarch's purpose in *De Daedalis* for the following reasons. First of all, fr.157 expounds the nature of various gods and the exposition often amounts to physical equations (e.g. Hera is the earth, Apollo is the sun, etc.). Second, these identifications make it possible for Plutarch to account for various physical and social aspects of the cosmos, which sits very well with Menander's characterization (337.23) of Plato's *Timaeus* as a ὕμνος τοῦ Παντός.<sup>37</sup> Third, Plutarch identifies various gods with one divinity. This strategy goes back to the Derveni Papyrus<sup>38</sup> and is the hallmark of Stoic theology,<sup>39</sup> but it is also commonly used in hymns. As will be seen, it is precisely this strategy that enables Plutarch to explain such a broad range of phenomena (eclipses, droughts, floods, etc.). Fourth, similarly to a hymn of the universe, fr.157 combines a discussion of the gods' εὐρήματα (the rite of marriage and the Daidala festival) with a presentation of their relations. While the latter include the gods' παῖδες and their common δυνάμεις, Plutarch in addition moves from physical interpretations to cultic identifications.<sup>40</sup> Finally, he often employs the τόπος ἀπὸ τοῦ ὀνόματος.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>37</sup> See n.36 above.

<sup>38</sup> The Derveni author fuses the various divinities from Orpheus' poem, as he shows them to be different names for the same cosmic god (i.e. air/Mind), on which see the excellent discussion by G. Betegh, *The Derveni Papyrus: Cosmology, Theology and Interpretation* (Cambridge 2004) 182–223.

<sup>39</sup> For the idea that various gods and goddesses are manifestations of one deity see esp. *SVF* II 1021 but also e.g. I 537. While this feature of Stoic theology has even prompted L. Brisson, *CR* 56 (2006) 7–11, to argue for the presence of “a Stoicising influence” in the Derveni papyrus (at 10–11), the hypothesis has been convincingly disproved by G. Betegh, “The Derveni Papyrus and Early Stoicism,” *Rhizai* 4 (2007) 133–152. For further skepticism see K. Algra, *Conceptions and Images: Hellenistic Philosophical Theology and Traditional Religion* (Amsterdam 2007) 9 n.13, and G. W. Most, “Allegoresis and Etymology,” in A. Grafton et al. (eds.), *Canonical Texts and Scholarly Practices: A Global Comparative Approach* (Cambridge 2016) 52–74, at 70 n.51.

<sup>40</sup> On these three elements of a hymn see Pernot, *La rhétorique* 232.

<sup>41</sup> For an extensive discussion of the topic see, again, Pernot, *La rhétorique*

The topic is analyzed by Aristotle (*Rh.* 1400b17–25)<sup>42</sup> and cautiously recommended by Theon (111.3–7), but it utilizes the assumption that is pervasive in the allegorical tradition: the name is indicative of the god's φύσις and δυνάμεις.<sup>43</sup> This tradition plays an important role in fr.157.

#### 4. *Plutarch's φυσιολογία and rhetorical theory*

Fr.157 contains two aetiological myths: Zeus' abduction of Hera (ch. 3) and the goddess's quarrel with her spouse (ch. 6). Both myths celebrate Hera as the goddess of marriage, but the former focuses on the origin of marriage, whereas the latter on the origin of the Daidala festival (which commemorates the marital reunion). While in both cases Plutarch explicitly signals his distance from the narratives he relates,<sup>44</sup> his qualms about telling myths echo Plato, who often disparaged myths and, at the same time, stressed their usefulness (e.g. *Grig.* 527A5–B2 or *Resp.* 376E11–377A8). However, Plutarch's approach is different, as he also eagerly unveils the allegorical meaning of the myths he presents. When embracing allegoresis, Plutarch departs from Plato, who sternly frowned upon this practice (esp. *Resp.* 378D3–8).<sup>45</sup> Although it can hardly be denied that Plutarch was (at least to some extent) influenced by the Stoics (see below), it is noteworthy that his espousal of allegoresis is consistent with what epideictic theorists recommend.

233–237.

<sup>42</sup> Who also makes the important point that this topic is customarily used in praises of the gods (1400b19).

<sup>43</sup> For the allegorists, the following editions are used: C. Lang, *Cornuti theologiae graecae compendium* (Leipzig 1881); J. F. Kindstrand, [*Plutarchus*]: *De Homero* (Leipzig 1990); and D. A. Russell and D. Konstan, *Heraclitus: Homeric Problems* (Atlanta 2005).

<sup>44</sup> See nn.59 and 76 below.

<sup>45</sup> It may not be superfluous to note here that Plutarch can object to allegoresis (see e.g. *De aud. poet.* 4 [19E–F] and also nn.60 and 77 below). His position is, therefore, more ambivalent than that of such Platonists as Numenius, on which see M. Domaradzki, “Of Nymphs and Sea: Numenius on Souls and Matter in Homer's *Odyssey*,” *G&R* 67 (2020) 139–150, at 140.

As we have seen, Menander (337.14) distinguishes between different levels of overtness in his φυσικοί ὕμνοι (viz. κατ' αἰνίγματα and ἐκ τοῦ φανεροῦ). However, he also admits of a hidden φυσιολογία in his *Mythical hymns*, which proceed καθ' ὑπόνοιαν (338.25–26) or κατ' ἀλληγορίαν (333.16), and he likewise allows various fables to be expressed καθ' ὑπόνοιαν in his *Fictitious hymns* (341.26–27). Crucially, this appreciation of allegorical message is not confined to Menander I. In the *Sminthian Oration*, for example, Menander II alludes first (438.27–29) to the “truer knowledge” (ἀληθεστέρα γνώσις) concealed in the myth about Apollo's birth, upon which he explicitly associates (442.28–30) philosophy with unravelling the “more secret doctrine” (ἀπορρητότερος λόγος) hidden in myths. As far as the progymnasmata authors are concerned, one may mention, for example, Nicolaus, who in his discussion of myths that “treat of gods,” classifies (7.4–7) the myth about “Hera's living together with Zeus” as belonging primarily to philosophy, whose task is to “discern the allegories” (εὐκρινεῖν τὰς ἀλληγορίας) in such stories. Plutarch's philosophical use of allegoresis in fr.157 fits well in this picture, although the Chaeronean also adopts the position that not only myths are to be interpreted allegorically.

Thus, in ch. 1, Plutarch praises (fr.157.16–19) the “ancient physical exposition” (παλαιὰ φυσιολογία) which took the form of a “physical account (λόγος φυσικός) concealed in myths (μύθοις),” on the one hand, and a “theology such as is found in mystery ceremonies (μυστηριώδης θεολογία),” on the other.<sup>46</sup> He then (21–25) clarifies that this venerable esoteric message can be discovered in the Orphic poems, in the Egyptian and the Phrygian accounts, as well as in the various initiation rites and rituals that are performed “symbolically” (συμβολικῶς). While this shows that Plutarch sees allegoresis as applicable not only to ‘literature’,<sup>47</sup> in ch. 2 he reveals (26–31) the symbolic signifi-

<sup>46</sup> There are several important parallels in the *corpus Plutarcheum*, but suffice it to mention here *De Iside* 10 (354E) τὸ μυστηριώδες and 78 (383A) ὁ παλαιὸς λόγος.

<sup>47</sup> This feature of ancient allegoresis has been brilliantly discussed by G.

cance of why the rites of Hera and Dionysus are kept apart from each other and why ivy is not introduced into the goddess's τέμενος. Drawing on Plato (*Leg.* 775B4–D8), Plutarch elucidates (32–37) that as Hera is the “goddess of marriage” (γαμήλιος) and “leader of bridal procession” (νυμφαγωγός), intoxication (i.e. Dionysus) is unacceptable at weddings, for drinking affects not only the soul and body of the couple, but also their offspring. Then, this allegorical message is shown (37–40) to underlie the practice of sacrifice: the “bile” (χολή) is not offered to Hera, but buried by the altar because conjugal life should be “without anger or bile” (ἄθυμος καὶ ἄχολος).<sup>48</sup> Thus, Plutarch's allegorical interpretation of the aforementioned rites demonstrates the importance of moderation and concord. While these subjects will be further developed in the next chapters, it is noteworthy that ch. 3 begins with the forceful assertion (41–42) that “this symbolic aspect (συμβολικὸν εἶδος) is more common in stories and myths.” This makes a rapprochement between fr.157 and rhetorical theory very attractive, since a substantial portion of fr.157 is devoted to the allegorical interpretation of myths, which is precisely what epideictic theorists view as the task of philosophy (see above).

Furthermore, Plutarch's two aetiological myths (crediting the

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W. Most, “Cornutus and Stoic Allegoresis: A Preliminary Report,” *ANRW* II 36.3 (1989) 2014–2065, who has convincingly shown that the practice cannot be adequately understood as a literary activity performed exclusively upon texts: Stoic allegoresis formed part of theology rather than literary studies because it was defined by the truths it uncovered and not by the material upon which it operated (2023–2026).

<sup>48</sup> In *De Daedalis* Plutarch uses the term “symbol” in connection with the practice he interprets (see fr.157.41 and also 157.24), but in *Coniugalia praecepta* (27 [141E–F]) he employs different nomenclature when putting forward the same explanation: the lawgiver who established that bile ought to be discarded rather than offered to Hera, thus, “hinted enigmatically” (αἰνιττομένου) that there should be no bile or anger in a marriage. On the interchangeability of such terms as σύμβολον or αἰνίγμα in Plutarch see R. Hirsch-Luipold, *Plutarchs Denken in Bildern. Studien zur literarischen, philosophischen und religiösen Funktion des Bildhaften* (Tübingen 2002) 144.

gods with inventing the rite of marriage and the Daidala festival) invite comparison with marriage speeches, on the one hand, and encomia of festivals, on the other, for “l’*éloge de dieu*,” as Laurent Pernot brilliantly observes, was frequently inserted by such authors as Pseudo-Dionysius and Menander II “dans le discours panégyrique ou dans l’*épithalame*.”<sup>49</sup> Given that the epithalamic and panegyric themes were naturally combined with a praise of the gods’ *εὐρήματα*, it is worth examining the possibility that Plutarch’s fr.157 has certain characteristics of such a discourse.

Finally, while Menander hails Plato as the supreme writer who masterfully uses all types of hymns in his dialogues (334.5–21), reading (parts of) Plutarch’s works as hymns also sits well with the Chaeronean’s Platonism, for Plato’s criticism of poetry, as Malcolm Heath astutely points out, does not apply to hymns to the gods, which (along with encomia of good men) are explicitly allowed in the ideal city (*Resp.* 607A3–5 and *Leg.* 801E1–4).<sup>50</sup> Hence, since in the Platonist tradition Plato’s dialogues were regularly interpreted as hymns and since philosophizing itself was increasingly synonymous with singing hymns, a ‘hymnic’ reading of fr.157 does not seem too far-fetched.

##### 5. *The first myth and the epithalamic theme*

In ch. 3, Plutarch relates a myth which shows the divine origin of marriage and the transformation that married persons experience. Thus, the myth brings to mind the tradition of the epithalamium in at least two points: it informs young people about the sanctity of marriage and exhorts them to moral progress.<sup>51</sup> Before discussing this further, let us first note that

<sup>49</sup> Pernot, *La rhétorique* 220. On the connection between hymn and festival in Proclus see van den Berg, *Proclus’ Hymns* 24.

<sup>50</sup> Heath, *Ancient Philosophical Poetics* 41, 82. See also van den Berg, *Proclus’ Hymns* 14.

<sup>51</sup> Additionally, it is noteworthy that the epithet *νυμφαγωγός* (fr.157.32–33) highlights Hera’s role as a bride. Plutarch’s testimony is here corroborated by Pausanias (9.2.7 *νυμφευομένη*), on which see also n.75 below.

the epithalamium frequently intertwined with other genres. Thus, for example, both Pseudo-Dionysius (261.13–23) and Menander (400.32–401.2) recommend that a marriage speech incorporate a *θέσις* about marriage. While Aphthonius (42–46) and Libanius (13.1) provide standard examples in their *Progymnasmata*, Pseudo-Dionysius (261.22–23) emphasizes even that marriage speeches employ the same kind of topics that are used in *theses*. In what follows, it will be suggested that two of these can shed interesting light on Plutarch's first aetiological myth.

First, Pseudo-Dionysius suggests (262.1–2) that one should begin *ἀπὸ θεῶν*, that is, that the gods “invented” (*εὐρόντες*) marriage and “revealed” (*δείξαντες*) it to humans. Importantly, he gives here (262.2–5) the example of Zeus and Hera, who were the “first” (*πρῶτοι*)<sup>52</sup> to have “joined” (*ζευγνύντες*) and “coupled” (*συνδύζοντες*), which is why Zeus is called the “father of all” (e.g. Soph. *Trach.* 275) and Hera is called the “Joiner” (*Ζυγία*) because of her “joining” (*ζευγνύουσι*) of female with male. In a similar vein, Libanius mentions in his thesis (13.1.4) Zeus and Hera as the gods who are worshipped with epithets based on the act of marriage: “bridal” (*γαμήλιος*) Zeus and “conjugal” (*συζυγία*) Hera.

The other marriage topic that is relevant for the present considerations is ethical perfection. Pseudo-Dionysius (262.13–21) stresses the “singular quality” (*διαφορά*) of human “intercourse” (*μίξις*) and “association” (*κοινωνία*), namely, that, in sharp contrast to animals, man has devised an “order” (*τάξις*) and “law” (*νόμος*) of marriage, which made it possible for humans to free themselves from their “bestial” (*θηριώδης*) and “wandering” (*πεπλανημένος*) existence and adopt a life that was “civilized” (*ἡμερος*) and ordered (*τεταγμένος*) through marriage (*διὰ τοῦ γάμου*.)” He then moves on to discuss the benefits of marriage for one's reputation, as he explains (263.7–9) that married persons enjoy the “finest (*κάλλιστον*) aspect of virtue, namely moderation (*σωφροσύνη*.)” The same topics appear in *theses*. For

<sup>52</sup> The topic of the first inventors appears in Menander too (e.g. 442.7: *εὔρε πρῶτος*).

example, Libanius (13.1.23) observes that with marriage comes a “better” (βελτίων) reputation, since a married man is thought to “be more moderate” (μᾶλλον ... σωφρονεῖν), while Aphthonius (43.2–5) similarly asserts that marriage brings about σωφροσύνη, which “by putting a legal limit (νόμον) on the pleasures, provides pleasure to lawful action (νόμῳ).<sup>53</sup> All this can be detected in Plutarch’s first aetiological myth.

According to Plutarch’s account (fr.157.42–53), young Hera was kidnapped by Zeus from Euboea and hidden in a “shaded nook” (μυχὸς ἐπίσκιος) of Mount Cithaeron, which became a “natural chamber” (θάλαμος αὐτοφυῆς) for the lovers;<sup>54</sup> when Hera’s nurse, Macris,<sup>55</sup> came looking for the goddess, Cithaeron protected the couple by deceiving the nurse and telling her that Zeus was living here with Leto; the grateful Hera gave Leto a share in her altar and temple, which is why the first sacrifice is made to Leto “of the Nook” (Μυχία) or Leto “of the Night” (Νυχία). The purpose of this myth—as Plutarch himself makes clear—is to explain the genesis of marriage as a socially acceptable institution. Thus, as Plutarch further elucidates (53–56), the epithets of Leto (Μυχία and Νυχία) signify “clandestineness” (κρύφτιον) as well as “absconding” (διαλεληθός), and Hera herself was referred to as Λητὼ Νυχία so long as she lived “secretly” (λάθρα) and “surreptitiously” (λανθάνουσα) with Zeus.<sup>56</sup> While these appellations convey an unequivocally nega-

<sup>53</sup> Menander moralizes less than Pseudo-Dionysius and the progymnasmata authors, but he does not shun it completely. In his κατευναστικός, for example, he recommends (411.13–18) arguing “from the outcome” (ἀπὸ τῆς ἐκβάσεως) and hails the procreation of children as the “greatest” (μέγιστον) advantage of marriage, both for the family and for the country. That this topic was very common is also attested by, e.g., Libanius, who similarly says (13.1.6) that intercourse for the sake of children is “divine” (θεία) and likewise points (13.1.12) to the indispensability of marriage for the cities.

<sup>54</sup> Could this be construed as an allusion to the topic of θάλαμος, which Menander mentions in his ἐπιθαλάμιος (e.g. 399.13, 404.15) and κατευναστικός (e.g. 405.17, 407.5)?

<sup>55</sup> In *Quaest.conv.* 3.9 (657E) the name of Hera’s nurse is Euboea.

<sup>56</sup> Homer (*Il.* 14.295–296) makes it clear that Hera’s relationship with



tive evaluation of elopement (darkness, concealment, etc.), Hera's change of lifestyle is reflected in her new names: when their marriage became "public" (φανερός)<sup>57</sup> and their association was "revealed" (ἀνακαλυφθεῖσα), the goddess, Plutarch drives home the point (56–60), was worshipped as Teleia and Gamelia.

In line with these topics, Plutarch introduces his myth to show how the law and order of marriage were invented by the gods. In his account, the emergence of the noble rite of γάμος was preceded by various illegal acts (abduction, seduction, elopement), but eventually the gods' illicit love affair was superseded by a legal relationship. The former was characterized by unconstrained pursuit of sexual pleasures, whereas the latter is defined by moderation, responsibility, and procreation. The myth shows then Hera's transformation from a mistress to a wife, and this metamorphosis is reflected in the goddess's new epithets: as she transitions from a furtive liaison to a marital union that is fully sanctioned and promoted by the community, the goddess is no longer identified with Leto of the Night/Nook (signifying darkness, illegality, etc.), for now she is worshipped as the goddess of lawful consummation and wedlock.

Thus, the myth celebrates Hera as a model to be imitated and educates young people about how to form a healthy relationship: leaving the shady chamber of sensual pleasures marks the beginning of a life ordered through marriage. While this metamorphosis accords well with the Platonic ideal of liberation from carnal desires, it is possible that Plutarch used the myth of the hierogamy to propagate an alternative to Christian asceticism.<sup>58</sup> If he did, then the story about Hera's moving from a hedonistic relationship to a union ordered through marriage might have been adduced by him to illustrate how one

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Zeus began secretly.

<sup>57</sup> The ideal of being married "publicly" (φανερῶς) appears also in *Amat.* 2 (749E).

<sup>58</sup> As Scannapieco, in *Plutarch in the Religious and Philosophical Discourse* 201, ingeniously suggests.

should steer between the Scylla of overestimating sexual love and the Charybdis of underestimating it.

Finally, it is worth noting that Plutarch introduces his myth (fr.157.42) with the telling “they relate” (ἱστοροῦσι), which is not only a typical rhetorical strategy of signaling one’s distance from the narrative,<sup>59</sup> but also prepares the ground for unravelling the latent meaning of the story.

#### 6. *Allegorical interpretation of the first myth*

In the next two chapters, Plutarch puts forward an allegoresis of Hera’s friendship with Leto. First (fr.157.61–63), he commends those who understand the story “physically” (φυσικῶς) and “identify” (συνάγουσι) Hera with Leto. Plutarch establishes the identity of the goddesses in the following manner. He begins (63–64) by equating Hera with the earth and Leto with night and oblivion. The former identification is hardly a commonplace,<sup>60</sup> but the latter builds on the *locus ab etymologia* (Δητώ – ληθώ) that recurs in the Stoicizing allegorical tradition (e.g. Heraclit. *Quaest.Hom.* 55.2 or Ps.-Plut. *De Hom.* 102) and can be traced to *Cratylus* 406A6–9. Plutarch justifies these physical interpretations by pointing out (64–67) that Leto is night because those who fall asleep become oblivious, whereas night is the shadow of the earth, because when the earth covers the setting sun, its shadow spreads upwards to thus “blacken” (μελαίνει) the air. Consequently, the myth of how Leto facilitated Hera’s furtive liaison with Zeus and enabled the lovers to live secretly together is shown to hint enigmatically at the disappearance of the full moon in eclipse: “at that time the shadow of the earth

<sup>59</sup> On the pervasiveness of this strategy see Pernot, *La rhétorique* 763–765.

<sup>60</sup> As Plutarch himself attests (*De Iside* 32 [363D]), Hera is typically equated with air (e.g. Pl. *Cra.* 404C2–3; *SVF* II 1021, 1066; Heraclit. *Quaest. Hom.* 15.3, 25.7, 39.3; Ps.-Plut. *De Hom.* 102; Men. *Rhet.* 337.4). While Plutarch rejects this identification in *De aud. poet.* 4 (19E–F), it may go back to Homer (e.g. *Il.* 21.6), on which see F. Buffière, *Les mythes d’Homère et la pensée grecque* (Paris 1956) 107, and Heath, *Ancient Philosophical Poetics* 122 n.23. The earth, on the other hand, is identified by Plutarch with Isis (e.g. *De Iside* 32 [363D] or 57 [374C]).

falls upon the moon in its orbit and darkens (διαθολώση) its light" (67–69).

While Hera's relationship with Leto is here interpreted physically, as an allegory of an astronomical event involving one celestial body passing into the shadow of another, this explanation is consistent with what one finds in *De facie in orbe lunae*, where not only similar physics is presented (e.g. 6 [923A–B] or 19 [931D–932D]),<sup>61</sup> but also the myth of Demeter's search for Kore is likewise subject to a physical interpretation (27 [942D–F]): the daughter's union with her mother is an allegory of the descent of the moon in the shadow of the earth.<sup>62</sup> In the next chapter, Plutarch brings together this λόγος φυσικός and the μυστηριώδης θεολογία.

Ch. 5 continues with an exposition of the identity of the deities, which is now established by the τόπος ἀπὸ τῶν παίδων. While Artemis is the daughter of Leto (e.g. Hes. *Theog.* 918–920) and Eileithyia is the daughter of Hera (e.g. *Theog.* 921–923), the two are often conflated (e.g. *Hymn. Orph.* 2.12).<sup>63</sup> Accordingly, Plutarch concludes (fr.157.72–73) that Hera and Leto are two names of one and the same goddess. The conclusion is based on the fact that both deities have a daughter

<sup>61</sup> For a discussion of the different philosophical traditions that appear in the work see P. Donini, "Science and Metaphysics: Platonism, Aristotelianism, and Stoicism in Plutarch's *On the Face in the Moon*," in *The Question of "Eclecticism"* 126–144, who also persuasively argues that "*De facie* hardly justifies the old prejudice that makes Plutarch an eclectic" (144).

<sup>62</sup> On this interpretation's consistency with Platonist theology see Babut, *Plutarque* 385, and, especially, Bernard, *Spätantike Dichtungstheorien* 198–199. On the possibility that the Daidala festival celebrated the periodic departure and return of the fertility goddess see the classic study by W. Burkert, "Katagógia-Anagógia and the Goddess of Knossos," in R. Hägg et al. (eds.), *Early Greek Cult Practice* (Stockholm 1988) 81–88, with an illuminating discussion by A. Chaniotis, "Ritual Dynamics: The Boiotian Festival of the Daidala," in H. F. J. Horstmanshoff et al. (eds.), *Kykeon: Studies in Honour of H. S. Versnel* (Leiden 2002) 23–48, at 30–33.

<sup>63</sup> In *Quaest.conv.* 3.10 (658F–659A), Artemis is identified with Locheia and Eileithyia as well as with the moon (for the latter equation see esp. *De facie* 25 [938E–F] but also 5 [921F–922A] = *SVF* II 673).

who presides over childbirth and it also explains why Hera and Leto share the same cult.

Similarly, Apollo is the son of Leto (e.g. Hes. *Theog.* 918–920) and Ares is the son of Hera (e.g. *Theog.* 921–923), but, according to Plutarch (75–78), they both have one and the same δύναμις, since Ares is the one “aiding” (ἀρήγων) in violent clashes of a battle, whereas Apollo is the one “freeing” (ἀπαλλάττων) and “relieving” (ἀπολύων) man from morbid bodily conditions. The former interpretation seems to be a Plutarchean innovation,<sup>64</sup> but the latter τόπος ἀπὸ τοῦ ὀνόματος can again be found in both Plato (*Cra.* 405B6–C1) and the Stoics (Cornutus 65.20–21). Subsequently, the affinity of the two gods’ powers is taken by Plutarch (78–80) to be reflected in the similarity of the heavenly bodies assigned to them: Apollo is the sun and Ares is the fiery planet (Mars).

We should note that Plutarch’s φυσιολογία comes here very close to what Menander classifies as a φυσικὸς ὕμνος. Of course, such identifications as Apollo = the sun were commonplace.<sup>65</sup> However, given that we find them in Menander (337.2),<sup>66</sup> who also regards them as the essence of his φυσικοὶ ὕμνοι, we can safely assume that Plutarch was (at least to some extent) influ-

<sup>64</sup> This explanation of Ares as a “helping power” is consistent with Plutarch’s other account of the god (*Amat.* 16 [759E]) as the power that “facilitates resistance to the disgraceful” (ἀντιτακτική πρὸς τὸ αἰσχρόν). Plato, on the other hand (*Cra.* 407D1–4), derives the name Ares from “virility” (ἄρρεν) and “obstinacy” (ἄρρατον), whereas the Stoics—as Plutarch himself relates (*Amat.* 13 [757B] = *SVF* II 1094)—derive the god’s name from “destroying” (ἀναρπεῖν). See also Cornutus 40.19–41.1 and Heraclit. *Quaest. Hom.* 31.1.

<sup>65</sup> E.g. Aesch. *Supp.* 213–214. While the Apollo–sun equation appears frequently in the *corpus Plutarcheum* (e.g. *De E* 4 [386B], 21 [393C–D], *De Pyth. or.* 12 [400C–D], *De def.or.* 42 [433D], 46 [434F], Plutarch’s attitude to it is helpfully discussed by G. Roskam, “Apollon est-il vraiment le dieu du soleil? La théorie plutarquienne des symboles appliquée à un cas concret,” in J. Boulogne et al. (eds.), *Les platonismes des premiers siècles de notre ère. Plutarque: L’E de Delphes* (Brussels 2006) 171–210.

<sup>66</sup> See also Men. *Rhet.* 438.11–12 and Ps.-Dionys. 256.19–257.1.

enced by rhetorical theory, especially in light of the fact that like a φυσικός ὕμνος, Plutarch's φυσιολογία too reveals the φύσις of the gods through their ὀνόματα, δυνάμεις, παῖδες, and its upshot is that the two sons (Apollo and Ares) represent one and the same power, just as the two mothers (Leto and Hera) are one and the same goddess. Finally, Plutarch also moves from physical interpretations to cultic identifications: having brought this hidden physics to light, Plutarch shows that the identity of Hera and Leto underlies the rite of marriage. The same divinity is the patroness of marital union and mother of the child-birth goddess as well as of the solar deity, for, explains Plutarch (fr.157.82–84), “the purpose (τέλος) of marriage is birth, and birth is the journey (πορεία) out of the darkness into the sun and light.” To support his interpretation, Plutarch resorts to an analysis that is typical of rhetorical criticism.

He adduces (84–86) Homer's description (*Il.* 16.187–188) of how Eileithyia brought Eudorus out “to the light” (προφώσδε)<sup>67</sup> and praises the poet (87–88) for having “compressed” (συνέθλιψεν) the preposition into the compound to thus convey the “forced character” (βεβιασμένον) of labor. The same strategy is employed by the author of *De sublimitate*:<sup>68</sup> Homer's depiction (*Il.* 15.624–628) of how Hector's charge leaves the Achaeans “barely carried away from (ὑπέκ) death” is commended (10.6) for the “compression” (σύνθλιψις) of the two prepositions, which thereby conveys the “emotion” (πάθος) and “the special character (ιδίωμα) of the danger (κινδύνου).”<sup>69</sup> Both authors explain, then, that Homer achieves vividness by masterfully

<sup>67</sup> On the πρὸ φώσδε see R. Janko, *The Iliad: A Commentary* IV (Cambridge 1994) 344.

<sup>68</sup> Whose identity remains uncertain, though the case for Cassius Longinus has been strongly restated by M. Heath, “Longinus *On Sublimity*,” *PCPS* 45 (1999) 43–74, and “Longinus and the Ancient Sublime,” in T. M. Costelloe (ed.), *The Sublime: From Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge 2012) 11–23, at 15–16. The text is that of D. A. Russell, *‘Longinus’ On the Sublime* (Oxford 1964).

<sup>69</sup> For an excellent discussion of Longinus' reading see J. I. Porter, *The Sublime in Antiquity* (Cambridge 2016) 148–155, whose translation I follow.

transferring physical violence onto the language: whether it is labor or fight, forcing the words together enables the poet to suggestively capture the brutal reality he portrays.

Apart from this grammatical device, however, Plutarch also applauds (88–90) Homer’s metaphor: since seeing the sun is the τέλος of birth, the poet’s description of delivery as transition from darkness to light shows the consistency between the physical and cultic account of divinity. With that Plutarch turns to another εὔρημα of the gods.

### 7. *The second myth and the panegyric theme*

Plutarch often uses the term πανηγυρικός synonymously with ἐπιδεικτικός and very frequently gives it a pejorative sense (e.g. *De ad. et am.* 22 [63D] or *De prof. in virt.* 7 [79B]).<sup>70</sup> However, given that fr.157 offers considerable attention to a festival (whose name provides the title of the work), a comparison with panegyrics does not seem out of place.

Towards the end of his discussion of how to praise cities (366.2–13), Menander presents various rules for encomia dealing with festivals, and clarifies that these can be extolled either on general or on special grounds: the “common” (κοινά) ones are the “thesis-topics” (θετικά) of the “benefits” (ἀγαθά) that people derive from festivals, whereas the “particular” (ἴδια) ones are the so-called “circumstantial” (περιστατικά), since they relate to such aspects as the person, place, time, cause, and material. To exemplify the common topics, Menander (366.15–18) cites Isocrates’ *Panegyricus* 43, where it is said that those who have established festivals are “justly” (δικαίως) praised for handing down this custom.<sup>71</sup> To illustrate the particular topics, Menander provides the following examples: “person” (366.18–19), that is, *for whom* the festival is held (e.g. the Olympia in honor of Zeus); “place” (366.28–31), that is, *where* the festival is

<sup>70</sup> See further Jeuckens, *Plutarch* 102, and Pernot, *La rhétorique* 507.

<sup>71</sup> In a similar vein, Menander II (444.24–26) quotes *Panegyricus* 44, as he explains that the description of the festival should include the θέσις about the benefits that come from festivals.

held (e.g. the Pythia at Delphi); and “time” (367.2–8), that is, *how often* the festival is held (e.g. the Daidala at Plataea every sixty years).<sup>72</sup>

While Menander explicitly mentions the festival that is the subject of Plutarch's work, Pseudo-Dionysius' chapter on Panegyrics is also highly instructive. Two points are particularly interesting: on the one hand, Pseudo-Dionysius asserts (255.1) that festivals are an “invention” (εὔρημα) and “gift” (δῶρον) of the gods,<sup>73</sup> and, on the other, he recommends (257.18–20) that the origin be given in the form of a “myth” (μῦθος) or “some other ancient [legend]” (ἄλλό τι ἀρχαῖον).<sup>74</sup> As to the latter point, it is worth stressing that myths were indeed very frequently employed in the panegyric discourse. For example, in his *Panegyricus* Isocrates presents (28) “the mythical account” (μυθώδης ὁ λόγος) of how Demeter bestowed two gifts upon the Athenians: the fruits of the earth and the mystery rites (see also below). Accordingly, Nicolaus, in his *Progymnasmata* (9.2–3), approvingly cites certain unnamed authors who say that “it is customary (ἔθος) to include myths among panegyric hypotheses.” Ch. 6 of fr.157 fits well in the picture.

Plutarch relates here the second aetiological myth which shows the divine origin of the Daidala festival. Thus, he reports (fr.157.91–109) that when Hera fell out with Zeus and hid herself from him in Cithaeron, Alalcomeneus cunningly helped Kronion to change his wife's anger into jealousy: they secretly cut down a beautiful oak tree, which they shaped and dressed like a bride, giving it the name Daidale; then, they sang the “wedding song” (ὑμέναιος), while the nymphs of Triton brought

<sup>72</sup> The treatise breaks off without discussing the remaining two περιστατικά (cause and material), which, however, are briefly touched upon at 366.12–13.

<sup>73</sup> This formula goes back to Demosthenes, who characterizes (*In Aristog.* 1.16) law in exactly the same words as εὔρημα μὲν καὶ δῶρον θεῶν.

<sup>74</sup> Of course, reference to an ancient tradition is frequently recommended by Menander too: ἀρχαῖα διηγήματα (e.g. 387.16, 395.4), παλαιὰ διηγήματα (e.g. 426.11, 28), etc.

the bridal bath and Boeotia provided flutes as well as revelers. On seeing this, Hera, overwhelmed “by anger and jealousy” (ὕπ’ ὀργῆς καὶ ζηλοτυπίας), stormed down from Cithaeron to confront Zeus. When she realized the trickery, she reconciled with her spouse and led the bridal procession “with joy and laughter” (μετὰ χαρᾶς καὶ γέλωτος). Hera honored the “wooden image” (ξόανον) and named the festival Daidala, but she burned the statue out of jealousy.

In keeping with these guidelines, Plutarch presents the origin of the festival in the form of a myth. The myth returns to the topic of concord and harmony between spouses that was signaled in ch. 2, as the festival celebrates marriage and unity. Four of Menander’s περιστατικά can be discerned: “person” (Hera), “place” (Plataea), “cause” (happiness), and “material” (celebrations).<sup>75</sup> Also, the rhetorical strategy of introducing myths reappears.<sup>76</sup> Thus, Plutarch begins with the observation (fr.157.91) that the myth he is about to tell is “more naïve” (εὐηθέστερον), but “perhaps” (ἴσως) it should be told anyway. A similar rhetorical maneuver is employed by Isocrates, who in the *Panegyricus* (28) likewise says that the story about Demeter’s gifts to the Athenians should be told “even (καί) if the account has [already] become mythical (μυθώδης).” Again, the strategy paves the way for unveiling the latent meaning of the story.

#### 8. *Allegorical interpretation of the second myth*

When putting forward an allegoresis of the myth about Hera’s quarrel with Zeus, Plutarch (fr.157.110–115) excavates the following λόγος from underneath the story: the discord between the two deities stands for the “disturbance (δυσκρασία) and disorder (τάραχος) of the elements,” that is:

<sup>75</sup> Pausanias (9.3.3–9) provides the “time” and a more detailed account of how the festival was celebrated. Basically, his account (9.3.1–2) agrees with that of Plutarch, the major differences being that Hera retreated to Euboea and Zeus was advised by Cithaeron.

<sup>76</sup> See n.59 above.



when they no longer limit (συμμετρήται) one another in an orderly fashion (κατὰ κόσμον) but, as irregularity (ἀνωμαλία) and turbulence (τραχύτης) arise among them, they have a desperate fight (δυσμαχήσαντα) in which they dissolve their union (κοινωνία) and work the destruction of the universe (φθορὰ τῶν ὅλων).

According to Plutarch's allegoresis (115–120), Zeus is the “hot and fiery power” (θερμὴ καὶ πυρώδης δύναμις)<sup>77</sup> whose prevalence brings about “drought” (ἀρχμός) on the earth, whereas Hera is the “wet and windy nature” (ὕγρὰ καὶ πνευματικὴ φύσις)<sup>78</sup> whose predominance causes a “great flood” (ῥεῦμα πολὺ) that deluges everything. This allegorical interpretation of the gods as the elements that tend to clash but must preserve their balance recurs in the Stoicizing allegorical tradition (e.g. Heraclit. *Quaest.Hom.* 56–58 or Ps.-Plut *De Hom.* 102),<sup>79</sup> but it actually goes back to Theagenes of Rhegium (D.-K. 8.2).<sup>80</sup> While the topic of the cosmic balance of the elements was quite popular with the philosophers from the Porch,<sup>81</sup> we should also

<sup>77</sup> Plutarch's criticism of those who equate Zeus with fire in *De aud. poet.* 4 [19E–F] shows, again, that it was a commonplace (e.g. *SVF* II 1066; Heraclit. *Quaest.Hom.* 15.3, or Men. Rhet. 337.4); but as M. Hillgruber, *Die pseudoplutarchische Schrift De Homero* II (Stuttgart 1999) 219, aptly points out, it is Pseudo-Plutarch, who offers a particularly close parallel: Ζεὺς δὲ ὁ αἰθήρ, τούτέστιν ἡ πυρώδης καὶ ἔνθεμος οὐσία (*De Hom.* 96).

<sup>78</sup> While Ps.-Plutarch (96) interprets Hera as ἀήρ, that is, ὕγρὰ οὐσία, this equation, as Hillgruber, *Die pseudoplutarchische Schrift* 218, also stresses, is otherwise “ungewöhnlich.”

<sup>79</sup> In *De primo frigido* 14 (950E), Plutarch mentions two episodes from Homer's theomachy (*Il.* 21.330–382, 435–467) and praises the poet for speaking “physically rather than mythically” (φυσικῶς μᾶλλον ἢ μυθικῶς).

<sup>80</sup> As Ramelli, *Anneo Cornuto* 98, rightly notes. See also Ramelli and Lucchetta, *Allegoria* 397. For a recent discussion of Theagenes' allegoresis see M. Domaradzki, “The Beginnings of Greek Allegoresis,” *CW* 110 (2017) 299–321 (with further references).

<sup>81</sup> Thus, for example, Homer's story about the Olympians' conspiracy against Zeus (*Il.* 1.399–400) is interpreted by Cornutus (27.2–18) as a fight against the cosmic order, where the “moist” (ὕγρὸν) seeks to prevail so that everything turns into water, “fire” (πῦρ) seeks to prevail so that everything turns into fire, and so on. See also Heraclit. *Quaest.Hom.* 21–25.

note that Chrysippus (in)famously allegorized the hierogamy of Zeus and Hera (*SVF* II 1071–1074).<sup>82</sup>

Drawing on this tradition, Plutarch shows that the estrangement of the divine couple hints enigmatically at the disastrous battle of the elements: Zeus' anger stands for the growing fire which begins as a drought but may transform into the all-consuming conflagration, whereas Hera's resentment signifies the rising water which may transform into the all-overwhelming flood. Does this mean that Plutarch embraces Stoic allegoresis and its underlying physics? It seems that the allegorical interpretation of the discord and reconciliation of the gods serves two goals in fr.157.

On the one hand, it is adduced as illustration of Plutarch's metaphysical dualism.<sup>83</sup> Thus, for example in *De Iside et Osiride* (46–47 [369D–370C]) Plutarch first uses for this purpose Zoroastrian material, upon which he also cites (48 [370C–F]) various Greek authors (Hesiod, Heraclitus, Empedocles, the Pythagoreans, Anaxagoras, Aristotle, Plato) to illustrate his views. The allegoresis of the myth about Hera's quarrel and reunion with Zeus sits well with, say, Empedocles' account (e.g. D.-K. 31 B 17) of the cosmos in terms of the alternate activity of Love and Strife, which appears not only in *De Iside* (48 [370D–E]), but in other Plutarchean works as well (e.g. *Amat.* 13 [756D], *De facie* 12 [926E–927A], etc.).

On the other hand, Plutarch might be invoking the story about the gods' discord and reconciliation in connection with the rapprochement of Thebes and Plataea in the fourth century BCE.<sup>84</sup> This political dimension of the Daidala festival is

<sup>82</sup> See P. Gilabert, "Eros i el seu paper en la Física de l'Estoïcisme Antic," *Itaca* 1 (1985) 81–106, and M. Domaradzki, "Chrysippus on the Hierogamy of Zeus and Hera," *Studia Philosophica Wratislaviensia* 9 (2014) 7–12 (with further references).

<sup>83</sup> See Scannapieco, in *Plutarch in the Religious and Philosophical Discourse* 209–210.

<sup>84</sup> See L. Prandi, "L'Heraion di Platea e la festa dei Daidala," in M. Sordi (ed.), *Santuari e politica nel mondo antico* (Milan 1983) 82–94, with an excellent

particularly conspicuous in Pausanias, who says (9.3.6) that “the Thebans also (καί) wished to be reconciled (διαλλαγῆναι) with the Plataeans.” While the phrase καὶ οὗτοι implies that Pausanias refers to the reconciliation he has previously discussed (Hera’s reconciliation with Zeus), it is possible that Plutarch likewise had in mind the turbulent history of Plataea, when he said (fr.157.120–124) that a catastrophe occurred once in Boeotia and the Daidala festival was established precisely to celebrate and commemorate the “fair weather” (εὐδία), that is, the “concord” (ὁμόνοια) and “reconciliation” (διαλλαγή) of the gods. Yet even if the historical events are not directly referred to, it is clear that Plutarch concludes this chapter with a praise of his native country and the cultural identity of Boeotia becomes the main topic of this chapter.

Plutarch relates further (124–130) that the first plant to rise from the earth after the cataclysm was the oak, and he cites Hesiod’s description (*Op.* 233) of the food-providing tree. However, in Hesiod the oak bears acorns for the “righteous” (230), whereas in Plutarch all the “survivors” (128) of the calamity get to live on its fruits. Thus, Plutarch’s account gives hope to the entire community: as the story shows how Boeotia could survive the disaster by divine grace and flourish, Boeotia emerges as the real heroine of the tale.<sup>85</sup> The Daidala festival honors, thereby, the greatness of Plutarch’s homeland.

### 9. *Conclusions*

Plutarch was an exceptionally versatile member of an elite intellectual community that was well-versed in both philosophy and rhetoric (political and epideictic). He was at ease with expressing philosophical ideas in allegorical form and, conversely,

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discussion by Chaniotis, in *Kykeon* 36–37.

<sup>85</sup> For various uses of this topic see Pernot, *La rhétorique* 770–771, who brilliantly discusses similar recoveries of Smyrna (in Aristides) and of Rhodes (in Ps.-Aristides). Scannapieco, in *Plutarch in the Religious and Philosophical Discourse* 210–213, on the other hand, points to the Platonic dialogues (*Ti.* 22C–23A, *Criti.* 111A–112A and, especially, *Plt.* 272D–273E), but also stresses the hope-giving function of Plutarch’s myth.

interpreting myths as oblique expressions of philosophical ideas. Fr.157 testifies to this. In this beautiful piece, Plutarch first hails allegoresis as a tool for unravelling the ancient wisdom hidden in myths and rituals (ch. 1). He then unveils the symbolic significance of rites (ch. 2) and stresses the pervasiveness of allegories in mythology (ch. 3). He introduces two aetiological myths which present the origin of marriage (ch. 3) and the Daidala festival (ch. 6). This paper has suggested that when Plutarch interprets these myths allegorically, he is influenced not only by the Stoics but also by rhetorical theory.

Plutarch evidently utilizes several epithalamic and panegyric topics. Furthermore, his φυσιολογία is highly reminiscent of a φυσικός ὕμνος in the following aspects. Plutarch's exposition builds on physical equations, which allow him to account for various physical and social aspects of the cosmos: from the disappearance of the full moon in eclipse (ch. 4), through the nature of the heavenly bodies and the purpose of marriage (ch. 5), to the occurrence of droughts and floods, on the one hand, and the purpose of the Daidala festival, on the other (ch. 7). In the course of his exposition, Plutarch discusses the gods' εὐρήματα, δυνάμεις, and παῖδες. Moreover, he passes from physical interpretations to cultic identifications and employs the τόπος ἀπὸ τοῦ ὀνόματος. Although fr.157 eludes unequivocal classification, it is tantalizing to view the piece as approximating a ὕμνος.<sup>86</sup>

*November, 2020*

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<sup>86</sup> This work was supported by the National Science Centre, Poland (grant number 2017/25/B/HS1/00559). I would like to thank the journal's anonymous reviewer for useful comments and helpful suggestions.