

Julian, Plutarch, and the Dangers of Self-Praise

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IT WAS IN THE INTEREST of Julian as emperor to present his own actions and decisions in the best possible light and to seek acceptance of his policies by providing his readers with an idealised image of himself. However, as a rhetorician aware that his audience included men of lofty rank and high literary standards, he also knew of the dangers of explicit self-praise. This paper aims to deepen the enquiry into the issue of Julian's rhetorical (self)awareness by providing a closer look at his argumentative techniques and at the unusual context in which they were employed, given that his addressees were also his subjects. In particular, I will propose that Julian's political writings show the influence of a model of an unexpected nature, that is, of a source of rhetorical inspiration not stemming from the environment of rhetorical training: Plutarch's *De se ipsum citra invidiam laudando*, a short moralistic treatise in which Plutarch, touching on the theme of self-praise with unparalleled sensitivity to the social and political consequences of the practice, offers suggestions on how to pursue self-promotion without exposing oneself to charges of arrogance and conceit.

Praise (and self-praise) in late antiquity

When in his *Confessions* Augustine praises God for bringing home to him the “misery” associated with court flattery,¹ his statement does not represent a sudden disclosure, to unaware readers, of the moral dubiousness of panegyrics, for audiences

¹ *Conf.* 6.6.9: *quomodo egisti ut sentirem miseriam meam die illo quo, cum pararem recitare imperatori laudes, quibus plura mentirer et mentienti faveretur ab scientibus.*

as much as authors were fully aware of this. It is with this in mind that Julian, addressing the empress Eusebia in a panegyric composed at the time of his Caesarship, explicitly tackles the issue by promising praise that is both spontaneous and sincere (*Eus.* 105D–116D):²

Shall I then need greater instances and clearer proofs, so that I may escape the suspicion of seeming to flatter? ... Since I see that my account is in need of proofs, just as in a law-court, I will offer myself to bear witness on its behalf to these actions and to applaud them ... I swear that I will tell you no falsehood or fiction; although you would have believed, even without an oath, that I am saying all this without intent to flatter.

As a writer equipped with a clear perception of the expectations of his audience, and with an ability, enhanced by his rhetorical training,³ to adapt his own writings to these expectations, already in his earlier texts Julian displays knowledge of the rules required by the ἀύλική ὑπόκρισις, “court hypocrisy.”⁴ Such knowledge was not limited to the issue of flattery. The complementary risk arising from composing a text that,

² Transl. W. C. Wright (Loeb); letters are cited with both Bidez-Cumont’s (B.-C.) and Wright’s (W.) numbering.

³ Among Julian’s rhetorical models it is possible to mention the treatises conventionally ascribed to Menander Rhetor, Themistius’ *Panegyric in Honour of Constantius* (*Or.* 1), Libanius’ epideictic writings, and Dio Chrysostom’s *Orations on Kingship*. Further on this issue: L. François, “Julien et Dion Chrysostome,” *REG* 28 (1915) 417–439; F. Boulenger, “L’empereur Julien et la rhétorique grecque,” *Mélanges de philologie et d’histoire (Mém. Fac. Cath. de Lille* 32 [1927]) 17–21; P. Athanassiadi, *Julian and Hellenism. An Intellectual Biography* (Oxford 1981); A. Marcone, “Un panegirico rovesciato. Pluralità di modelli e contaminazione letteraria nel ‘Misopogon’ giuliano,” *REAug* 30 (1984) 226–239; J. Bouffartigue, *L’Empereur Julien et la culture de son temps* (Paris 1992) 13–47, 511–545; A. Quiroga, “Julian’s *Misopogon* and the Subversion of Rhetoric,” *AntTard* 17 (2009) 127–135; S. Tougher, “Reading between the Lines: Julian’s *First Panegyric on Constantius II*,” in N. Baker-Brian and S. Tougher (eds.), *Emperor and Author: The Writings of Julian the Apostate* (Swansea 2012) 22–30; S. Elm, *Sons of Hellenism, Fathers of the Church: Emperor Julian, Gregory of Nazianzus, and the Vision of Rome* (Berkeley 2012).

⁴ *Jul. Ep.* 32 B.-C. = 26 W. (*To Basil*).

although not flattering another, praised explicitly its own author, was likely to have entered Julian's literary agenda in his passage from Caesar to Augustus, that is, as he moved from the status of subordinate to Constantius II to a role charged with responsibilities of self-advertisement and self-assertion.

Anxiety over *περιαυτολογία* (the "discourse about oneself," implicitly assumed to be complimentary) was no novelty in Greek literature but extended back to the time of the Attic orators and of the democratic questioning of aristocratic practices. Although self-praise was and remained common, it was often regarded as distasteful and even morally objectionable. Rhetorical treatises document how, by late imperial times, the question of how to obviate charges of self-aggrandizement associated with self-praise had behind it a history of discussion.⁵

Coming at the end of this tradition, Julian does not fail to betray discomfort with self-praise throughout his whole literary production. In *Ep.* 82 B.-C. = 50 W. (*Against Nilus*), a short but significant example, Julian berates the boastfulness of his addressee, the senator Nilus: the vainglory of Nilus is so excessive that, in a sort of parodical *mise en abîme*, it is considered to be comparable only to that of a woman behaving like the proverbially narcissist poet Astydamos (443D). In the *Caesars*, a satirical work in which Julian portrays past Roman emperors as summoned by the gods to a banquet and invited to advertise their own virtues and successes in a sort of "imperial pageant,"⁶ the modesty displayed by the philosopher-emperor Marcus Aurelius and the antithetical behaviour of Constantine, his historical nemesis, provide the key to understanding the whole work. Marcus is asked to list his own virtues and merits but nobly refuses to do so, declaring that there is nothing that he could say that the gods do not already know. Constantine, in contrast, is greedy for praise and unable to understand Marcus'

⁵ See L. Pernot, "*Periautologia*: problèmes et méthodes de l'éloge de soi-même dans la tradition éthique et rhétorique gréco-romaine," *REG* 111 (1998) 101–124.

⁶ Pernot, *REG* 111 (1998) 111.

reply.⁷ Another remarkable example is found in the *Misopogon*, where Julian declares that, although he would in fact love to praise himself, he cannot do so, as his flaws outnumber his qualities (338B): his solution to this impasse is to choose self-blame over self-praise, and eventually reveal the ironic nature of the blame in the course of the text.

However, as *Misopogon*'s satirical questioning of what is praiseworthy and what is blameworthy reveals, Julian's awareness of the problematic nature of self-praise did not prevent him from pursuing *περιαιυτολογία*. On the contrary, his letters and orations reveal a cautious exercise of the practice clearly indebted to past rhetorical speculation on the theme. In particular, I believe that Julian's source of inspiration was Plutarch's treatise *De se ipsum citra invidiam laudando*. Before moving to a comparative analysis of the Plutarchean and Julianic works, however, two preliminary questions need to be addressed: first, how acceptable is the hypothesis of Julian's interest in Plutarch's *Moralia* in the context of late antique reception of the literary past; second, which features of Plutarch's treatise enable us to consider it as a unique case in the history of the rhetorical handling of self-praise and the most likely source of inspiration to Julian?

Plutarch in Late Antiquity

The question of Julian's knowledge of, and debt to Plutarch, is complex. While scholars tend to agree on his interest in the *Lives*,⁸ his appreciation of the *Moralia* is controversial. Traces of the *Moralia* seem to be detectable among Julian's works, but in most cases there is nothing more to go on than a slight reminiscence, which might anyway be taken as arbitrary or derived

⁷ Eloquently stating: "As for Marcus here, by saying nothing for himself he yields precedency to all of us" (*Caes.* 29 [329C]).

⁸ Textual reminiscences of the *Lives* in Julian's works are listed in J. Bouffartigue, *L'empereur Julien et la culture de son temps* (Paris 1992) 287–292. Besides the panegyrics, where exemplary deeds from the past are employed with epideictic purposes, it is particularly in the *Caesars* that Plutarch's *Lives* seem to have provided source-material on Julian's imperial predecessors.

from other sources (perhaps shared by Plutarch as well). Jean Bouffartigue argued against an interest in Plutarch's more philosophically-oriented writings: Plutarch's exclusion from the late antique literary canon would have prevented Julian from developing an interest in the *Moralia*, as the biographer from Chaeronea could hardly have been perceived as an authoritative philosopher.⁹

The supposed absence of Plutarch in late antique culture is, however, open to question. Marianne Pade has argued for the impact of Plutarch's writings in imperial culture already from the Antonine period on.¹⁰ As to the later period, Plutarch is attested as a rhetorical model: in the third century, Menander Rhetor judges the *Lives* "very useful in the exercise of *λαλῖαι*" (392.28–30), and in the fourth two passages of Himerius show that, among the orators, Plutarch was considered a great writer and a reliable source of culture.¹¹ The spread of florilegia based on his writings and the attribution to him of pseudepigraphic *sententiae* give additional support to the construction of his status in the educational curriculum. While Eusebius mentions him from time to time in his *Praeparatio Evangelica*,¹² it is in Eunapius (fourth century) that is found the remarkable characterisation of the *θειότατος* Plutarch as *ἡ φιλοσοφίας ἀπάσης ἀφροδίτη καὶ λύρα*, "the charm and lyre of all philosophy" (*VS* 2.1.3). And, of significance for the present paper, additional consideration for Plutarch as a philosopher comes from Julian himself. In the *Misopogon* Plutarch is referred to in these terms (29 [359A]):

⁹ Bouffartigue, *L'empereur Julien* 101–103, 285–293.

¹⁰ M. Pade, "The Reception of Plutarch from Antiquity to the Italian Renaissance," in M. Beck (ed.), *A Companion to Plutarch* (Chichester 2014) 531–541. On Plutarch's reception see also K. Ziegler, "Plutarchos," *RE* 21 (1951) 636–962, at 947–948, and L. Roig Lanzillotta and I. Munoz Gallarte (eds.), *Plutarch in the Religious and Philosophical Discourse of Late Antiquity* (Leiden 2012).

¹¹ Himerius *Decl.* 7.4.12–13 Colonna; cf. also Photius *Bibl.* 365a40.

¹² E.g. in *PE* 3.8.2 and 11.35.2.

If any rumour has come round, even to your ears, of the man of Chaeronea, who belongs to that worthless class of men who are called by impostors philosophers (ἐκ τοῦ φαύλου γένους, ὃ δὴ λέγεται παρὰ τῶν ἀλαζόνων φιλόσοφον)—I myself never attained to that class though in my ignorance I claimed to be a member of it and to have part in it...

In support of his thesis of the scholarly overestimate of Julian's interest in Plutarch's philosophical production, Bouffartigue suggested that the ironical character of this passage rules against taking seriously Julian's description of Plutarch as a philosopher.¹³ Satirical reversal in the *Misopogon* is, however, deliberate, repeated, and designed to produce a consistent picture: Julian mocks exactly those people and things that inform his own ideological system.¹⁴ The reference to Plutarch and to his status as a philosopher appears, in this light, as a fervent—although *en passant*—homage. Other texts give additional support to this interpretation. In the oration *To the uneducated Cynics*, Plutarch's *Life of Crates* is invoked as the reference book for those who seek true understanding of Crates' doctrine.¹⁵ Moreover, Julian appears to be the only ancient source to mention a Plutarchean treatise on myths listed in Lamprias' catalogue as no. 46 (Μύθων βιβλία):¹⁶ the work is referred to as an exemplary source for mythopoiesis with didactic purposes and employed to demonstrate the possibility of interaction between philosophy and myth.¹⁷

¹³ “L'ironie creuse ici une telle distance entre l'auteur et l'énoncé que le jugement concernant Plutarque ne saurait avoir le valeur d'une assertion”: Bouffartigue, *L'empereur Julien* 101.

¹⁴ Cf. the paradoxical praise of Mardonius at *Mis.* 24 [353B].

¹⁵ *Cyn.* 17 [200B].

¹⁶ *Heracl.* 21 [227A].

¹⁷ For other possible references to the *Moralia* in Julian's works see *Sal.* 4 [244D], perhaps depending on *Moralia* 797D, and *Contra Galilaeos* fr.45 Masaracchia, which might hint at the *De defectu oraculorum* (see S. Ponzzone, *Giuliano, Encomi e lettere* [Varese 2012] 284 n.36). For the hypothesis of iconographic influences see E. R. Varner, “Roman Authority, Imperial

It seems therefore reasonable to claim that Plutarch was still considered a significant writer in the time of Julian, and also that Julian himself regarded Plutarch's writings as a source of inspiration the scope of which went beyond rhetoric, crossing over into the field of moral philosophy. And in fact rhetoric and moral reflection do come singularly together in Plutarch's *De se ipsum citra invidiam laudando*, as comparison with other instances of rhetorical handling of self-praise in the imperial era will demonstrate.

In Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* (11.1.15–28) remarks on self-praise are inserted within a general reflection on rhetorical opportunity; there can be only a superficial comparison with Plutarch, whose systematic argumentation remains unparalleled also when juxtaposed with the discussions of self-praise in other rhetorical manuals. In *On the method of forceful speaking*, a work preserved in the Hermogenic corpus,¹⁸ only three methods of avoiding offensiveness in self-praise are identified: generalisation of language (i.e. speaking in general terms about good and bad men, and implicitly suggesting one's belonging to the former category), claim of necessity (declaring to be forced by the situation to draw on self-praise), and change of person. Something very similar can be read in the section τοῦ δὲ μὴ φορτικῶς <ἐαυτὸν>¹⁹ ἐπαινεῖν of the *Rhetoric* of the Pseudo-Aristides.²⁰ Here the conditions for inoffensive self-praise are listed in these terms: self-praise must appear as spontaneous and required by the situation; an apology has to be first presented to the judges; self-praise has to be generic (presumably in the sense intended by Pseudo-Hermogenes in his first point); it must be stated that “it is in the personal interest of the listeners to receive the praise favourably”; finally, the rhetorician has

Authoriality, and Julian's Artistic Program,” in *Emperor and Author* 194.

¹⁸ H. Rabe, *Hermogenis Opera* 414 ff.; transl. G. Kennedy, *Invention and Method* (Atlanta 2005) 245–246.

¹⁹ I follow Pernot's defense of Norrmann's supplement in the title: *REG* 111 (1998) 113 n.44.

²⁰ At 1.165 (W. Schmid, *Rhet.Gr.* V 62).

to show that, as his adversaries also praise themselves, it is unacceptable that he not be allowed to do the same. Although more thorough than Pseudo-Hermogenes, Pseudo-Aristides still offers, when compared to Plutarch, an elementary treatment of the topic.

Moreover, none of these works actually lingers on the significance of self-praise in the moralising tones that are found in Plutarch. A case of ethical reflection on the practice is to be found in Aelius Aristides' *Or.* 28 Περὶ τοῦ παραφθέγματος ("Upon an accidental remark"). The argument developed is, however, quite simple: Aristides dismisses complaints about self-praise with the assertion that, since excellence is granted by the gods, περιουτολογία is a duty, because it implies the celebration of those gods who have made excellence possible. As Dana F. Fields has observed, what is notable about this thesis is the absolute priority given to the legitimisation of self-praise above anything else.²¹ Aristides' solution was unlikely to be effective in winning over an audience; far from responding to practical exigencies, it is rather to be read as an assertion of cultural superiority, an "expression of Hellenic pride in times of Romanisation."²²

Plutarch's problematisation offered something more suitable to Julian's rhetorical requirements. Not only does his *De se ipsum citra invidiam laudando* pursue the practical purpose of isolating and defining those cases where περιουτολογία can be regarded as morally and socially acceptable, but it also locates the ideal addressee of his work in the ἀνὴρ πολιτικός, the statesman. Compelled to cope with a predisposed (if not hostile) audience or constituency, the statesman can find in the cautious handling of self-praise a precious instrument to win the trust and favour of his addressees and to pursue an enlightened political agenda with the support of his subordinates (539E–F).

²¹ D. F. Fields, "Aristides and Plutarch on Self-praise," in W. V. Harris and B. Holmes (eds.), *Aelius Aristides between Greece, Rome, and the Gods* (Leiden/Boston 2005) 151–172.

²² Pernot, *REG* 111 (1998) 117.

Plutarch's ethical redefinition of the issue finds particular resonance in Julian's exercise of *περιαυτολογεῖν*. Moreover, Plutarch's treatise and Julian's works are comparable not only in their moral aims and systematic approach, but also in the subtlety with which self-praise is employed. In insisting on the opportunity for the rhetorician to apologise explicitly for indulging in self-praise, Pseudo-Hermogenes and Pseudo-Aristides both fail to recognise the naivety of a tactic that discloses the intentions of the speaker and draws undesired attention to his aims. More effective is the covert presentation of one's own qualities. This principle, despite being never formulated explicitly by Plutarch, still links all of Plutarch's exempla, where self-praise is always performed but never declared. And it is also the *fil rouge* of Julian's approaches to self-praise.

Self-praise in theory (Plutarch) and in practice (Julian)

Having defined the legitimacy of *περιαυτολογία* as within the realm of action of the political leader, Plutarch moves on to illustrate its *φάρμακα* (544C), those "remedies" that render self-praise inoffensive, allowing the politician to win support from his audience. The cases where *περιαυτολογία* should be employed are the following:²³

1. Self-praise as *ἀπολογία*. Self-praise is justified when the speaker is defending himself (540C), is unfortunate (541A), or the victim of injustice (541C).
2. Use of contrast (*ἀντίθεσις*): the opposite of conduct with which the speaker is charged would have been shameful (541F).
3. Self-praise interwoven with praise of the audience (542B).
4. Praise of others of similar merits (542C).
5. The credit must be given partly to chance, partly to God (542E).
6. Amending the praise (*ἐπανόρθωσις τῶν ἐπαίνων*): praise has already been introduced by others, the speaker corrects it now (543F).

²³ The outline of the prescriptive section of the work is adapted from Ph. H. De Lacy and B. Einarson's introduction to the treatise in *Plutarch. Moralia* VII (Loeb) 112.

7. Inclusion of certain shortcomings of one's own (543F).
8. Mention of the hardship endured in winning the praise (544C).
9. The self-praise must be beneficial, with advantages and a further end in view (544D).

An overall analysis of the Julianic corpus leads to two considerations. First, it can be observed that all the Plutarchean *φάρμακα* recur many times. Second, the *φάρμακα* appear sometimes in isolation, but in some occasions are skillfully combined. The more noteworthy instances of combination all feature in writings belonging to the time of Julian's rule as Augustus (360–363 CE), that is, when the pressure and the necessity of self-advertisement was more intense, as a survey of relevant passages will show.

1. Self-praise as *ἀπολογία*. In *Ep.* 82 B.-C. = 50 W. (*Against Nilus*), a letter composed at the end of 362 or early 363,²⁴ self-celebration of Julian's non-despotic traits proceeds from his attempt to seek justification for a previous mistake. The letter's ostensible purpose is to reprimand the rough, uneducated senator Nilus, who had refused to assume an office. Julian himself, however, was responsible for entrusting this office to Nilus: the letter aims therefore also, and especially, at self-justification, as Julian finds himself in the position of having to explain why he had trusted a notoriously unreliable person. The strategy adopted consists in deriving Julian's unfortunate decision from his faith in an individual's possibility of redemption through the exercise of philosophy. The figure of Phaedo of Elis, the young man ransomed by Socrates and saved through philosophy, is put forward as the archetype of self-improvement achieved through striving towards knowledge (445A):

You have heard tell of the famous Phaedo of Elis, and you know his story ... He thought that there is nothing that cannot be cured by philosophy, and that by her all men can be purified from all their modes of life ... for these reasons my estimate of

²⁴ See M. Caltabiano, *L'epistolario di Giuliano imperatore* (Naples 1991) 124, with additional bibliography.

you, as all the gods know, inclined little by little to be more favourable.

As self-justification turns into self-praise, the image of Julian melts into that of a benevolent philosopher-king. The same effect is achieved in two other strongly self-representative texts, the *Letter to the Athenians* and the *Misopogon*. After accepting the title of Augustus in 360 (thus provoking a rupture with Constantius II), Julian composed the *Letter* in 361 with the purpose of deflecting accusations of political ambition and of rousing public opinion against Constantius. As the latter's bad conduct is set against Julian's own repertoire of merits throughout the text, it becomes progressively clear to the reader how the work goes beyond a neutral apologetic purpose of clearing away slanders and becomes an occasion of vindication of Julian's qualities.²⁵ Likewise the best known of Julian's works, the *Misopogon* (363 CE), aims at transforming a defence for Julian's own lifestyle, perceived as rough and barbaric by his addressees and enemies, the Antiochenes, into an occasion for self-promotion. Contrasted with the Antiochenes' abuse of *τροφή*, Julian's crude lifestyle is put forward as the symbol of a life led with simplicity and a sense of justice. The employment of Cynic diatribe allows him to exploit the contrast in full. Antiochene speakers are introduced with the purpose of raising somewhat surreal accusations against Julian's policy, leading by way of contrast to the understanding and appreciation of his morality (10 [343C–D]):²⁶

[Antiochene speaker]: But what an affectation of humility is yours! You say that you are not our master (*δεσπότης*) and you will not let yourself be so called ... and yet you compel us to be enslaved to magistrates and laws ... Then again you harass us by forcing the rich to behave with moderation in the law courts.

2. *ἀντίθεσις*, the presentation of one's own virtues as a counter to another's blemishes, appears on many occasions. An

²⁵ See on this M. Humphries, "The Tyrant's Mask? Images of Good and Bad Rule in Julian's *Letter to the Athenians*," in *Emperor and Author* 75–90.

²⁶ See also *Mis.* 11 [344A] and 20 [349D].

exemplary case is offered by the *Letter to the Athenians*, where Constantius II is evoked as a negative term of contrast: his conduct suggests selfish motives and lack of foresight; he is a tyrant who does not respect laws and traditions and does not hold back even from murdering members of his own family (*Ath.* 3 [270C–D]):

Our fathers were brothers, sons of the same father. And close kinsmen, as we were, how this most humane Emperor treated us! Six of my cousins and his, and my father who was his own uncle and also another uncle of both of us on the father's side, and my eldest brother, he put to death without a trial; and as for me and my other brother, he intended to put us to death but finally inflicted exile upon us; and from that exile he released me, but him he stripped the title of Caesar just before he murdered him.

Drawing on a set of accusations that will be used again for Constantine's portrayal in the *Caesars*²⁷ (see below), Julian ascribes to Constantius selfishness, corrupt behaviour, and greed; he claims to have suffered from the latter's cruelties, as his prisoner (7 [277A]) and victim of his sycophants, eventually contrasting his own sense of loyalty with the meanness of Constantius, whose promises could be "written in ashes, so little do they inspire belief" (12 [286C]).

A more complex employment of ἀντίθεσις is to be found in *Ep.* 82 B.-C. = 50 W. (*Against Nilus*) and in the *Misopogon*: on the one hand, Julian proposes a preliminary contrast between his own behaviour and that of his addressees, who happen to be his enemies as well (the Roman senator Nilus in one case, the Antiochenes in the other one); on the other, he establishes a further distinction between the conduct that anyone might have expected of him (violent repression) and his actual, enlightened behaviour (446A).

The efficacy of ἀντίθεσις emerges with particular force in the

²⁷ The dating of the work is debated, oscillating between December 361 and December 362: see Chr. Lacombrade, *Discours de Julien Empereur* II.2 (Paris 1964) 27–30.

Caesars, where the contemporary contrast between Julian and Constantius is reinterpreted in the form of a symbolic clash between Marcus Aurelius and Constantine. In the contest of the satirical pageant of emperors portrayed in the work, the characterisation of Constantine as despicable is developed not just for its own sake, but as ultimately providing the basis for the exaltation of Marcus, in his turn closely modelled on Julian himself.²⁸ Constantine's detestable nature emerges as he is called before the gods to proclaim his deeds (*Caes.* 30 [329A–D]). Boastfully listing false accomplishments, Constantine is aware of their insignificant nature, but his attention is diverted by the presence of the personification of Lust.

3. Self-praise interwoven with praise of the audience is already to be seen as a component of *Panegyric II* in honour of Constantius, a work composed at the time of Julian's Caesar-ship where the praise of the ideal monarch has been regarded as overlapping, in many ways, with Julian's imperial ideals.²⁹ The device makes a significant appearance in the *Letter to the Athenians*. Here Julian traces back his choice of Athens as his privileged addressee to the noble history of the Athenians and their "reputation for justice" (268B–269B):

I desire to bring forward on your behalf only this fact to which I can discover nothing that can be set against it on the part of the other Greek states, and which has been assigned to you by ancient tradition. When the Lacedaemonians were in power you took that power away from them not by violence but by your reputation for justice; and it was your laws that nurtured Aristides the Just ... It would be hard to find a whole people and city enamoured of just deeds and just words except your own.³⁰

Further examples are found e.g. in *Ep.* 30 B.-C. = 16 W. (*To*

²⁸ See D. Hunt, "Julian and Marcus Aurelius," in D. Innes et al. (eds.), *Ethics and Rhetoric: Classical Essays for D. Russell* (Oxford 1995) 287–298.

²⁹ See on this H. Drake, "'But I digress...': Rhetoric and Propaganda in Julian's Second Oration to Constantius," *Emperor and Author* 14.

³⁰ See further the full context here, and the description of Julian's farewell to the city of Athens as presented in *Ath.* 5 [275A–B].

Theodorus), where Julian praises Theodorus' conduct towards a governor who (incidentally) had acted against Julian himself, or in *Ep.* 82 B.-C. = 50 W. (*Against Nilus*), where Julian declares (446B):

And indeed I have written this letter now, not for your perusal alone, since I knew it was needed by many besides yourself, and I will give it to all, since all, I am convinced, will be glad to receive it.

This assertion contributes to marking the contrast between Nilus, the uneducated addressee of the invective, and the learned Roman senators, who share both Julian's high cultural level and his exasperation over Nilus' inappropriate behaviour.

4. A much exploited device is the praise of others of similar merit. In *Panegyric II* for Constantius, the long *speculum principis* in which the traits of the ideal governor are discussed is clearly (as already observed in relation to item 3) also an homage to Julian himself. Elsewhere, Julian pursues the idealisation of the philosopher-king *par excellence*, Marcus Aurelius, whose virtues are presented as identical to Julian's own. A first example of this is found at the beginning of the *Letter to Themistius*, where Marcus, although put forward as a model of contemplative kingship, nevertheless shares part of his prestige with the symbol of active monarchy, Alexander (*Them.* 1 [253A]).³¹ It is rather in the *Caesars* that Julian isolates and idealises definitively the figure of his predecessor, presenting him as the champion of a process of ὁμοίωσις θεῶν very similar to that pursued by himself.³² This becomes evident in the description of Marcus' entrance in the contest (*Caes.* 17 [317C]):

³¹ The date of the *Letter to Themistius* is debated. I agree with the hypothesis that it is a very early text, presumably written in 355/6; on the question see S. Bradbury, "The Date of Julian's *Letter to Themistius*," *GRBS* 28 (1987) 235–251; S. Swain, *Themistius, Julian, and Greek Political Theory under Rome* (Cambridge 2013) 53–57.

³² Cf. *Caes.* 28–29 [328B–D], 34–35 [333B–335A].

Accordingly Marcus was summoned and came in looking excessively dignified and showing the effect of his studies in the expression of his eyes and his lined brows. His aspect was unutterably beautiful from the very fact that he was careless of his appearance and unadorned by art (ἄκομψον καὶ ἀκαλλώπιστον); for he wore a very long beard (ὑπὴν βαθεία), his dress was plain and sober (τὰ ἱμάτια λιτὰ καὶ σώφρονα), and from lack of nourishment his body was very shining and transparent (διαυγέστατον καὶ διαφανέστατον), like light most pure and stainless.

Marcus' majesty is exalted by his severe conduct; tired eyes reveal how he deprives himself of sleep in order to fulfil his commitments; the modesty and simplicity of his aspect are enhanced by the long, philosophical beard and the humble clothing; as a consequence of his ascetic habits, his body has become transparent, as pure light. The praise, developed through a few essential traits, appears to be based here, more than anywhere else, on a description dependent on Julian's personal traits. The features presented are unhistorical: they do not necessarily belong to Marcus Aurelius, but they do fit very well Julian's description of his own appearance and lifestyle as outlined in the *Misopogon*. The long beard, dishevelled appearance, and unsocial behaviour are at the core of the description developed in *Mis.* 2–3 [338C–339C], as well as the ascetic habits in eating and sleeping (6 [340C]); the Antiochene interlocutors of Julian find fault with the latter's parsimony in eating, alleging that he is attempting to impose it on the entire city (20 [350B–D]).³³

The ambitious nature of the *Letter to Themistius*, which purports to outline a general ideal of kingship while at the same time competing with Themistius in political philosophy, leads to a sort of multiplication of ideal models, among whom Plato

³³ These features are part and parcel of Julian's public image: cf. Claudius Mamertinus' panegyric for Julian (14.3, "Our emperor extends the hours of work, depriving himself of free time. He doesn't care about sleep, table, rest ... everything is subordinated to public interest") and Amm. Marc. 16.5.1–5.

stands out (as a forerunner of Julian's ideal, *Them.* 5 [257D]), together with Socrates (10 [264B–C]). In this respect, however, the *Misopogon* remains the work where the praise of others of similar merit is exploited in the most original way, as the device finds a twofold development: on the one hand, Julian evokes a set of ideal figures, well known (Cato of Utica: 29 [358A–359A]) or less familiar (Mardonius: 20–23 [351A–352D]); on the other, he pursues an unparalleled form of self-promotion: self-celebration as a 'barbarian emperor', as his frankness and loyalty are repeatedly juxtaposed with the sincerity of the Celts.³⁴

5. Credit must be given partly to chance, partly to the gods: in fact Julian's writings are permeated with invocations of the gods. Thus this device appears at the same time as the most recurrent and as the least relevant if we are to make a convincing case for specific rhetorical influences. But it is possible to single out meaningful instances. Opposing the statements of his addressee, in the *Letter to Themistius* Julian proclaims that in public life success is determined by Fortune (3 [255D]):

Then shall we try to force into that career men who are reluctant and conscious of their deficiencies, and urge them to be self-confident about such great tasks? For in such matters not virtue alone or a wise policy is paramount, but to a far greater degree Fortune holds sway throughout (πολὸν δὲ πλέον ἢ τύχη κρατοῦσα πανταχοῦ) and compels events to incline as she wills.

Analogously (but more emphatically), the main argument put forward in the *Letter to the Athenians* relies on Julian's attempt to present himself as "saved by the gods through philosophy's work of purification" (4 [272A]). The demonstration of divine favor in his Caesarship is confirmed by his military victories, a sign of celestial benevolence (7–8 [277D–280D]), and even by Zeus' intervention in the course of Julian's acclamation as Augustus (11 [284C–D]):

I prayed to Zeus. And when the shouting grew still louder and all was in a tumult in the palace I entreated the god to give me a

³⁴ See particularly *Mis.* 18 [348B–D], 20 [349D–350D], 30 [359B–D].

sign; and thereupon he showed me a sign and bade me yield and not oppose myself to the will of the army ... But since I could not singlehandedly control so many, and moreover the gods, who willed that this should happen (οἱ τε τοῦτο βουλόμενοι γενέσθαι θεοί), spurred on the soldiers and gradually softened my resolution...

A further interesting use of the device is found in the invocation to the gods at the end of the letter (13 [287D]), where the theme is linked to the *captatio benevolentiae* of the audience (on which see item 3).³⁵ The fact that Julian's actions are in line with what the gods ordered "in specific terms, promising safety if I obeyed," is stated also in *Ep.* 28 B.-C. = 9 W. (*To his uncle Julian*) and made explicit in *To the Cynic Heracleios* through a declaration of descent from Helios (*Her.* 22 [229C, 232C]).

6. The device of correcting the praise received with a more exact reformulation is rare, almost absent, in Julian's writings. This however fits well with the general picture of Julian's self-fashioning. The employment of this specific strategy would presuppose that the speaker has already received some form of praise; but this hardly applies in the case of Julian, who rather aims to present himself as a victim of hostility and slander. Nevertheless, in the (few) circumstances in which the expedient can be regarded as appropriate, Julian shows he can use it. This is the case of the *Letter to the Athenians*, where the technique is exploited in a subtle formulation that introduces praise under the appearance of blame (7 [278B-C]):

And when the commander-in-chief of the forces fell under the suspicion of Constantius and was deprived by him of his command and superseded, I in my turn was thought to be by no means capable or talented as a general, merely because I had shown myself mild and moderate (ἄτε πρῶτον ἐμαυτὸν παρασχῶν καὶ μέτριον).

Not only are the reasons for the commanders' criticism (mildness, moderation) immediately apparent to the readers as good

³⁵ For invocations of divine *συμμαχία* see further *Them.* 13 [266D-267A], *Mat. Deorum* 20 [180B], *Helios* 43 [157B].

qualities, but, additionally, these very qualities are corrected (or, better, integrated) in the following paragraph by Julian's list of his military successes. Similarly, in the letter *Against Nilus* Julian rejects flattering assimilations to Constans and Magnentius (probably advanced by the senator Nilus in a previous letter) in order to vindicate qualities that are his own (443D):

For must I not regard it as abuse and slander that you supposed me to be like your own friends ... However, whether I am like Constans and Magnentius the event itself, as they say, will prove.

But the text where the device comes to a full exploitation is the *Letter to Themistius*. This work is entirely based on Julian's correction of the excessive (and presumably stereotypical) praise addressed to him by the rhetorician Themistius in an earlier letter. In an attempt to put forward a revised and more personalised ideal of monarchy, Julian exploits the device of correction in such a way as to present himself as a lover of the philosophical life and as a prudent sovereign aware of the uncertainty of human events (1–2 [253A–254C]):

The expectations you have raised both in the minds of others, and still more in your own, are beyond my powers ... But by your recent letter you have increased my fears, and you point to an enterprise in every way more difficult. You say that God has placed me in the same position as Heracles and Dionysus ... I could not tell therefore how I ought to interpret such expressions, until God brought it into my mind that perhaps by your very praises you wished to exhort me, and to point out how great are those trials to which a statesman must inevitably be exposed every day of his life.

7. The recital of errors and shortcomings in order to take the shine off of a claim to excellence finds two distinct expressions in Julian's writings. The first, whose nature is generically rhetorical, involves admission of modesty of style.³⁶ More

³⁶ Cf. e.g. *Ep.* 4 B.-C. = 25 W. (*To Evagrius*), 428B; *Ep.* 40 B.-C. = 30 W. (*To Philip*); or the precautionary justification proposed at the beginning of the *Caesars*, where Julian declares that he “has no turn for raillery, or par-

interestingly, he sometimes indulges in mentioning genuine shortcomings. In *Ep.* 32 B.-C. = 26 W. (*To Basilus*) Julian displays modesty (he criticises his own “nonsense chatter”) while rebuking at the same time his own lack of modesty (“but perhaps I have been wearying you with my chatter and nonsense, displaying stupid conceit, for I have praised myself like Astydamas”). Similarly, in *Ep.* 82 B.-C. = 50 W. (*Against Nilus*) the sympathy of the audience is sought through confession, rather than negation, of Julian’s own error (“and if you are aggrieved that I did not honour you before all others, I for my part reproach myself for having ranked you even among the last in merit,” 445B), even though this same error is later justified through declaration of the nobility of Julian’s intentions (belief in philosophy). The device is exploited with satirical purpose in the *Misopogon* (338B ff.), where Julian, reversing Menander Rhetor’s instructions for epideictic praise, provides the reader with a lengthy list of his own physical blemishes and character deficiencies, integrating them with a selection of lively anecdotes (such as the one concerning his succumbing to coal fumes in Paris: 7 [340D–342A]).³⁷

8. The mention of hardship endured in winning praise (or, more broadly, in the course of Julian’s political ascent) finds extensive employment in his *Letter to the Athenians*: exemplary cases are 12 [285D–286A] (a description of his efforts to seek reconciliation with Constantius) and the narrative of the oppression endured during his Caesarship (see item 2 above). Also in the *Letter to Themistius* Julian dwells on past struggles in a passage whose dubious relevance to its context supports the hypothesis that it is serving a self-referential purpose (6 [259C–D]):

ody, or raising a laugh.”

³⁷ Further examples of this device can be seen in Julian’s admission of having remained for a long time in the error of Christianity (*Ep.* 111 B.-C. = 47 W. *To the Alexandrians* [434D]) and in the paragraph that introduces the oration *To King Helios* (1 [131A]), where, speaking of the fascination with solar light experienced since his childhood, Julian admits the state of his past ignorance about divine things.

Did I not endure to leave the country for the sake of my friends? ... Finally, before I went to Greece, while I was still with the army and running what most people would call the greatest possible risks, recall now what sort of letters I wrote to you, never filled with complaints or containing anything little or mean or servile.

Self-praise in the mention of the hardships endured seems also at the base of the *Misopogon*'s emphasis on the harshness of the winters in Lutetia, the severe education received, and, above all, the ingratitude of the Antiochenes (36 [364B–C]):

Throughout the whole city, then, you both uttered and listened to all the jests that were made about this miserable beard of mine ... Next with respect to the slanders which both in private and publicly (ὑπὲρ μὲν δὴ τῶν βλασφημιῶν, ἅς ἰδίᾳ τε καὶ δημοσίᾳ) you have poured down on my head, when you ridiculed me in anapaestic verse, since I too have accused myself I permit you to employ that method with even greater frankness; for I shall never on that account do you any harm (ὥς οὐδὲν ὑμᾶς ἐγὼ διὰ τοῦτο πώποτε δεινὸν ἐργάσομαι), by slaying or beating or fettering or imprisoning you or punishing you in any way.

9. Special attention has to be given to the last item (self-praise must be beneficial, with advantages accruing and a further end in view), as it is fundamental to Julian's apologetic works. The device is central also to Plutarch's reflection, presented in *De se ipsum citra invidiam laudando* both as a specific "remedy" and as the justification for Plutarch's whole attempt to moralise self-praise (it becomes acceptable when a politician draws on it in order to gain the trust of the audience and to achieve, through this, nobler aims). It is therefore not surprising that item 9 finds such resonance with Julian. In *Ep.* 13 B.-C. = 1 W. (*To Priscus*) Julian puts his activity in the service of the philosophical communities ("I desire to live only that I may in some degree be of use to you. When I say 'you', I mean the true philosophers"), while in *Ep.* 32 B.-C. = 26 W. (*To Basil*) the benefit is to embrace all his subjects ("hence it is that I am able ... to sleep

securely. For when I have kept vigil it was less on my own behalf probably than on behalf of all my subjects”).³⁸ In *Against Nilus* (item 3 above) the development of the technique is two-fold: on the one hand, Julian professes repugnance at repression and thus shows that his intervention is a victory of words over violence; on the other, and with a more immediate concern, his declared aim is to please the senatorial audience, who will finally be freed from Nilus’ annoying presence.

The device appears particularly effective when used in combination with ἀντιθεσις (see item 2): in the *Letter to the Athenians*, where Constantius is portrayed as a selfish tyrant, Julian presents himself as a selfless philosopher who, although desiring a life in retirement, accepts the throne out of a sense of duty.³⁹ Also in the *Caesars*, where the clash between Julian and Constantius is in a sense prefigured by the (ideal) conflict between Marcus Aurelius and Constantine, Constantine is presented as shamelessly selfish: he proudly identifies his purpose in life and government as “to amass great wealth” (36 [335B]). Another development of item 9 is finally to be found in the *Misopogon*, where Julian insists (first ironically, later explicitly) on his own philanthropy, distance from despotism, respect for the traditional cults, and generosity.⁴⁰

³⁸ This is also the case with *Ep.* 73 B.-C. = 27 W. (*To the inhabitants of Thrace*), “I have not made it my aim to collect the greatest possible sums from my subjects, but rather to be the source of the greatest possible blessings to them”.

³⁹ The point is well exemplified in *Ath.* 12 [286A]. Here Constantius is described as aggressive towards the barbarians and intent on devastating the Celtic territory with the sole purpose of defeating Julian, while the latter decides to claim his role as Augustus “partly out of regard for what is seemly and fitting, but also to secure the safety of my friends.”

⁴⁰ See for instance *Mis.* 20 (350A-C), where the accusations addressed to Julian by a hostile interlocutor end up serving as praise of some of his qualities. What the Antiochene speaker presents as unacceptable behaviour (Julian prevented the landowners from enjoying excessive profits at the expense of the citizens, prohibited drunkenness and licentious dances, and, although providing food for the populace, took care that everyone main-

Combinations of φάρμακα: four significant cases

As this review has made evident, Julian's most political and apologetic works (the letters *To the Athenians* and *Against Nilus*, the *Misopogon*, and, although through the filter of allegory, the *Caesars*) are also those works where the efficacy of Plutarch's devices is enhanced by their combined employment.

A good example is the *Letter to the Athenians*, composed in a moment of political necessity. If in 361 Julian felt menaced by being depicted (by Constantius' supporters) as a usurper pursuing his ambition for power, the aim of the letter was to deny this accusation in the presence of the 'privileged' audience of the Athenians (item 3) and to transform therefore an occasion of self-defence into a moment of self-celebration (item 1).⁴¹ Julian's elevation to the imperial throne is ascribed not to his ambition but to external forces and, above all, to divine will (item 5): in this connection, he claims to have been "saved by the gods through philosophy." This dedication to philosophy is actually what made possible the representation of his conduct as Caesar as particularly temperate, a quality which he however 'corrects' by referring also to his military successes (item 6). The letter includes additionally reference to hardship endured in winning the praise (item 8): relevant in this sense is the description of his attempt (*Ath.* 11–12 [285D–286A]) to placate the bellicose Constantius. Julian's dutiful subservience to Constantius even after his elevation is stressed repeatedly, for instance in the description of his selfless behaviour after the

tained simple eating habits) becomes, in the eyes of the sympathetic reader, unadulterated (and therefore decisive) evidence of Julian's care for the well-being and the morality of his subjects.

⁴¹ *Ath.* seems to betray, in general, the influence of the structure for epideictic praise outlined by Menander Rhetor. At 2 [270B] Julian says that, as he wishes none of the readers to be ignorant of anything that concerns him, he will begin the narrative of events from his ancestors. The remark inevitably reminds one of Menander's precepts on the construction of the *basilikos logos*, where mention of ancestors is supposed to follow the *prooemium* (369.18–370.28, Russell-Wilson pp.78–80).

victory over the Alamanni at Strasbourg. This allows him to build up his case for praise also through contrast with a negative figure (item 2): Constantius is portrayed as a tyrant greedy for power, enslaved by his own interests, assassin of his relatives. Most of all, since Constantius emerges in the letter as an emperor who did not have the interests of the empire at heart and was disposed to work against his subjects (13 [287A]), the use of ἀντίθεσις leads to the employment of another Plutarchean prescription, displaying Julian's selflessness as a ruler (item 9).

Written not long after, the *Caesars* represents a bizarre case. With the death of Constantius, Julian's authority as Augustus was formally not subject to challenge. And yet, the necessity of self-assertion, partially disguised behind a playful occasion (the celebration of the Saturnalia), still emerges strongly in the text. The way the narrative is framed is significant. Julian's preliminary claim to have "no turn ... for raising a laugh" but to be compelled to attempt it "by the ordinance of the god of the festival" (1 [306A–B]) offers not only an example of Plutarch's item 7 (inclusion of certain shortcomings of one's own) but is also, in a sense, a clever re-interpretation of item 1: as Julian presumably believed in his skills as a satirical author, he is somewhat disingenuous in declaring that the divine order compels him to show what a good writer he is. In other words: he is forced by circumstances to display his good qualities. Item 1 comes additionally into play within the core of the text, emerging also from the reversed negative model represented by Constantine's explicit, unmotivated self-praise—also, from a skillful use of contrast (item 2), as Constantine's despicable features are presented as antithetical to the virtues of Julian's alter ego, Marcus Aurelius. The praise of others of similar merits (item 4) is exploited through the idealisation of Marcus, presented as the champion of a set of values shared by Julian himself: commitment to his role, dedication to intellectual activities, modesty and simplicity, ascetic habits. Additionally, Marcus' refusal to indulge in self-praise could be read as at the same time providing a meta-literary exemplum of the inappropriateness of explicit bragging and as a case of the combination

of items 6 (amending the praise) and 3 (self-praise interwoven with praise of the audience): when Marcus is about to speak before the gods, Silenus declares himself to be curious to listen to the “paradoxes and wonderful doctrines that this Stoic will produce” (29 [328C]). By replying that, since nothing is hidden from the gods, he would rather not speak about his own successes, Marcus implicitly corrects Silenus’ praise, as he proves to be a better philosopher than imagined (i.e., one not indulging in clever paradoxes, but piously understanding the true nature of the gods), and also pays homage to his audience, as this is composed of the gods themselves. Finally, the *Caesars* is not without Plutarch’s most important φάρμακον, beneficial self-praise (item 9): while Constantine is portrayed as shamelessly selfish, proudly identifying his purpose in life as to amass great wealth, the opposite is the case with his antithesis, Marcus.

The *Misopogon* is arguably more than an attack on hostile, Christian citizens of Antioch; it is a sometimes ironical, sometimes blunt and aggressive attempt by Julian to legitimise his own rule.⁴² It is striking that also in constructing this work he has made full use of the Plutarchean devices, with a few (explicable) exceptions: missing is item 3, that is, self-praise interwoven with praise of the audience, which would not have made sense, given that in this case the addressees, the Antiochenes, were Julian’s outright enemies. For the same reason there is no item 6, “amending the praise”: again, the Antiochenes were not disposed to praise Julian. With regard to the other items, in addition to self-defence (item 1), which is the basis of the whole operation, since Julian is bent on justifying himself to the Antiochenes, we find a prominent use of contrast (item 2), developed through the comparison of the behaviour of despicable Antiochenes with the praiseworthy actions of others (item 4): Mardonius, Cato of Utica, the barbarian Celts. Much space is

⁴² See N. Baker-Brian, “The Politics of Virtue in Julian’s *Misopogon*,” in *Emperor and Author* 261.

dedicated also to item 7, emphasis on one's own shortcomings: in this case, Julian's roughness and anti-social behaviour are underlined. Item 8 is present, in the reference to hardships endured in winning praise (harsh winter in Lutetia, severe education received, the insults of the Antiochenes), as is also the idea that self-praise must be beneficial (item 9): Julian reminds how he forced the shopkeepers to sell at a just price, avoided inflicting physical punishments, gave centrality to laws and magistrates, etc.

Finally, a comparison between the *De se ipsum citra invidiam laudando* and *Ep.* 82 B.-C. = 50 W. (*Against Nilus*) reveals, strikingly, that every single Plutarchean item can be detected here. Elements of self-praise emerge in the context of self-defence (item 1): thus, Julian's clemency, lack of despotic traits, and philosophical beliefs are put forward in justification of his own erroneous conduct towards Nilus. Contrast (item 2) is exploited at two different levels: first, between Julian's conduct and that of negative figures (mainly Nilus, but also Julian's predecessors, Constans and Magnentius, at 443D, and even Alexander the Great, at 446A); second, as a way of interpreting Julian's own choices—thus, a distinction is made between the conduct everyone might have expected of him (violent repression) and his actual, enlightened course of action (446A). Praise of the audience (item 3) is achieved through Julian's association with the senators, who share with him culture and irritation at Nilus' conduct (446B). The senators are also included in the technique of praising others of similar merit (item 4), together with Plato, whom Julian compares to himself in that both made errors for the sake of philosophy (444D), and with Phaedo of Elis (445A), embodying the ideal of the philosopher who redeems his life through intellectual exercise. The responsibility of chance and the gods (item 5) is introduced not only via Julian's insistence on divine will and assistance (e.g. 444A, 445D)—a recurrent device, as already stated, in Julian's work—but also in his invocation of the responsibility of the goddess Fame in his choices (445B). Julian amends praise (item 6) when he rejects the flattering comparison of his behaviour to that of Constans and Magnentius, previously advanced by

Nilus, in order to vindicate his real merits (443D). Allusion to his shortcomings (item 7) is realised through reflection on his erroneous evaluation of Nilus' conduct, which is however traced back to Julian's high-minded philosophical ideals (445B). Mention of hardship endured in winning praise (item 8) makes an entry when Julian insists on his long endurance of Nilus' behaviour and his repeated attempts to rebuke Nilus in correspondence (446A): it is all the more to his credit, then, that he did not opt for violent repression. Finally, that Julian's actions in the Nilus affair had an exemplary purpose (and were not vindictive)—item 9—is underlined by his final declaration at 446B. In the light of this impressive combination of devices in such a short text, it becomes apparent how *Against Nilus* represents, brief though it is, an illuminating (and so far under-utilised) case study for the analysis of Julian's employment of rhetorical strategies for political ends.

Conclusions

An appreciation of the originality of Plutarch's moralistic reflection on self-praise and a re-evaluation of Julian's interest in Plutarch's philosophical production (including therefore the *Moralia* as well as the *Lives*) clear the ground for developing the thesis of Julian's employment of *De se ipsum citra invidiam laudando* as a source of inspiration for morally and socially acceptable self-praise. In light of the many instances of Julian's use of Plutarchean devices and, in addition, of the striking concentration of these devices in the political works composed after Julian's proclamation as Augustus (especially the *Letter to the Athenians*, *Caesars*, *Misopogon*, and *Against Nilus*), it is clear that he systematically exploited Plutarch's whole set of rhetorical strategies with the aim of presenting himself in a better light without risking exposure to charges of arrogance and conceit. This argument has broader repercussions in terms of our understanding of Julian's rhetorical awareness in the context of elite political and rhetorical culture of the fourth century. The exceptional fact that the author devising these strategies of concealment was the reigning emperor, i.e. the figure who was the usual object of explicit praise by others in the form of panegyrics, sheds ad-

ditional light on Julian's assessment of his imperial role and on his willingness to pursue consent through the medium of the rhetorical code shared by the most learned of his interlocutors. His choice of subtle argument over explicit self-projection ultimately offers an exact parallel, within the field of rhetoric, to the pursuit of an ideal of philosopher-emperor in which Julian was at the same time engaged, on a broader scale, through his imperial policy.⁴³

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