VI. A CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH THE *PARALLEL LIVES*: TWO CASE STUDIES

At the outset of Plato's *Timaeus*, Socrates briefly recalls the discussion of the ideal state which he had the day before with his companions (*Tim.* 17c1–19b2). Looking back at it, he experiences what people often experience when they see beautiful creatures in repose: he wants to see them in motion (19b3–c2). This is precisely the goal of the present chapter. The previous one has provided a general overview of several essential themes and characteristics of the *Parallel Lives*. Now, it is time to see them 'in motion'.

To that end, I shall take a closer look at two books of the *Lives*. These case studies complement the previous chapter in different ways. They give a better and more concrete idea of how zetetic moralism actually works, of how the comparison between the two heroes informs and complicates the reflection on their characters and the moral value of their decisions. They also give due attention to the great versatility of the *Parallel Lives*. As a matter of fact, every pair raises its own questions, connected with the particular careers of its two protagonists. Zetetic moralism as discussed in the previous chapter may be the fundamental unifying factor between all the *Lives*, but their specific focus can be very different, as the two case studies will indeed illustrate. Finally, they may also throw some more light on Plutarch's narrative technique. Of course, the enthralling stories of the *Parallel Lives* can only be fully appreciated and enjoyed by reading them in their entirety, and the following case studies are in this respect no more than a second sailing that fails to replace such a full reading and cannot even exhaustively lay bare the wealth of the two respective pairs. Yet they may at least provide a few samples of Plutarch's captivating biographical art.

1. Themistocles–Camillus

The pair *Themistocles–Camillus* is a good touchstone for the general interpretation of the *Parallel Lives* presented in the previous chapter. For Pelling, the *Life of Themistocles* is a fairly historical life and 'not on the whole one of Plutarch's most thoughtful or incisive Lives',[1]

[1] Pelling 2002: 132.

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while *Themistocles–Camillus* as a whole is 'hardly the most successful of Plutarch's pairs'.[2] As to the *Life of Camillus*, Stadter comments that 'Plutarch has not been able to transform the historical narrative which was his source into a moral biography.'[3] If all this is true, we may well wonder whether traces of zetetic moralism can be found in this pair.

The *Life of Themistocles* opens with some information about the hero's descent,[4] nature, and character.[5] For Plutarch – as for Thucydides, his principal source of inspiration (1.138.3) – Themistocles' two main characteristics were cleverness (τῇ φύσει συνετός, 'clever by nature', 2.1) and great ambition (τῇ φιλοτιμίᾳ πάντας ὑπερέβαλεν, 'in ambition he surpassed everyone', 5.3; τῇ φύσει φιλοτιμότατος, 'most ambitious by nature', 18.1).[6] Moreover, he placed his trust in his natural capacities in particular. He was not interested in education that aimed at character formation but rather preferred practical instruction (2.3).[7] This, in Plutarch, is not a promising beginning. Here already, the tension is anticipated between Themistocles' great practical ambitions and the moral restrictions that may impede them. Thus, we are prepared for one of the most important themes of the pair: that is, the question of how far ambition can go, both in private and in public life. What should one do if useful decisions come into conflict with moral concerns?

The first moment when this conflict arises comes early in Themistocles' career. Unlike the Athenians, he foresees the danger of Darius and the Persians, but he realizes that he cannot convince his fellow citizens at this stage to spend the revenues of the silver mines in Laurium on the building of a new fleet that can be used against the Persians. Therefore, he cleverly uses the war against Aigina as a pretext for building a hundred triremes (4.1–3).[8] This cunning strategy obviously yielded interesting results, yet not everybody was enthusiastic about it. None other than Plato blames Themistocles for having turned

[2] Pelling 2002: 133.
[3] Stadter 1984: 359.
[4] Duff 2008b: 159–68.
[5] The pair lacks a proem, but this could be lost, as the *Life of Themistocles* begins with a δέ; see Duff 2008b: 176–9.
[6] Cf. H. Martin 1961.
[7] Duff 2008a: 3–11 and 2009.
[8] Frost 1980: 83 argues that the historical reality was probably different and that the Athenians were conscious of the Persian threat and the intentions of Themistocles' proposal.

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the Athenians into seafarers (*Leg.* 4, 706b7–d2) and Plutarch quotes Plato's criticism (4.4), but he adds (4.5):

> Now, whether by accomplishing this he did injury to the integrity and purity of public life or not, let the philosopher rather investigate (ἔστω φιλοσοφώτερον ἐπισκοπεῖν). But that the salvation which the Hellenes achieved at that time came from the sea, and that it was those very triremes which restored again the city of Athens, Xerxes himself bore witness, not to speak of other proofs.

This is not a straightforward rejection of Plato's criticism:[9] for Plutarch, the philosophical point of view is surely valuable and interesting, but it is only one side of the coin. No-one can deny that Themistocles' policy proved particularly useful at Salamis, and this deserves to be underlined, even against Plato. Yet it is far less certain whether such fair recognition necessarily implies an overall acceptance of Themistocles' course. The question remains open, but the confrontation of the two different points of view at least gives interesting food for thought.

Thus a refrain appears that will sound throughout Themistocles' entire career. Time and again he does not hesitate to use (morally) problematic means to reach his goals.[10] He bribes the incompetent Epicydes (6.1–2), buys the loyalty of Architeles (7.6–7), does not even hesitate to use the gods (10.1–3; 10.7),[11] and cheats the enemy (12.4–5, the so-called Sicinnus affair). This series culminates in Chapter 13: before the Battle of Salamis, the seer Euphrastides tells Themistocles to sacrifice three Persian prisoners to Dionysus Carnivorous. Themistocles' reaction characterizes him very well (13.4):

> Themistocles was terrified, feeling that the word of the seer was monstrous and shocking; but the multitude, who, as is wont to be the case in great struggles and severe crises, hoped for safety rather from unreasonable than from reasonable measures, invoked the god with one voice, dragged the prisoners to the altar, and compelled the fulfilment of the sacrifice, as the seer commanded.

Plutarch does not say that Themistocles himself bears direct responsibility for the awful sacrifice (contrast *Pel.* 21.3), yet the hero did nothing to avoid it either. He apparently complied with the irrational wish of the people and it is perfectly possible to adduce this

[9] Thus correctly Zadorojnyi 2006: 263 against the common interpretation of the passage.
[10] Larmour 1992: 4187–9. On Plutarch's position on the question whether the end justifies the means, see esp. Nikolaidis 1995; also Duff 1999b: 131–3; Frazier 2016: 217–24.
[11] Tuci 2006.

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passage as one more example of Themistocles' pragmatic sly cleverness (*synesis*).[12] Thus this anecdote brings the moral question to a head: how far can a man go in contriving and enforcing actions for the sake of the public interest? By pointing to Themistocles' shocked reaction, Plutarch clearly indicates what is morally at stake here, but omits any further explicit comment. Throughout the first part of the *Life*, he has repeatedly raised the question, has now brought it to a first climax, and then leaves the judgement to his readers. A fine example of zetetic moralism indeed.

More is to come, for in the remainder of the *Life*, the theme keeps returning. Themistocles again sends a false message to Xerxes and thus persuades him to leave Greece (16.5), a ruse that is praised by Plutarch as a sample of *phronesis* (prudence; 16.6). He misleads the Athenian citizens (18.1) and bribes or deceives the Spartan ephors (19.1). In the end, he comes into collision with his fellow citizens, who are overcome with envy – a recurrent theme in the pair and in the *Parallel Lives* as a whole.[13] Ostracism follows (22.4) and even a charge of high treason (23.1). This marks a break in Themistocles' life, though not in his character, for Themistocles always remains Themistocles. He succeeds in getting the support of Admetus, the king of the Molossians and his former enemy, by cleverly using the Molossians' customs of supplication (24.2–5) and puts pressure upon the captain of the ship that is bringing him to Asia (25.2). The last stage in his journey to the Persian king is noteworthy (26.4–6):

> Most barbarous nations, and the Persians in particular, are savage and harsh by nature in their jealous watchfulness over their women. Not only their wedded wives, but also their bought slaves and concubines are strictly guarded, so that they are seen by no outsiders, but live at home in complete seclusion, and even on their journeys are carried in tents enclosing them on all sides and set upon four-wheeled wagons. Such a vehicle was made ready for Themistocles, and safely ensconced in this he made his journey, while his attendants replied in every case to those who met them with enquiries, that they were conducting a little Hellenic woman from Ionia to one of the King's courtiers.

This is Themistocles all over. How far one can fall! The great victor of Salamis is now carried as an ordinary courtesan. Away with *decorum*, away with glory…but not with success, for the smart trick brings Themistocles precisely where he wants to be, at the court of the Persian king.

[12] Cf. Larmour 1992: 4194.

[13] H. Martin 1961: 331–4; Larmour 1992: 4196–8; Duff 2010: 46 and 54–6. See also Wardman 1974: 69–78; Verdegem 2005.

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This leads to yet another climax in Chapter 27, where Plutarch tells how Themistocles asks for an audience with the king. The Chiliarch replies that this is possible, provided that Themistocles observes the local customs, including the obeisance (27.3–5). But this is by no means simple: Greeks do not prostrate themselves before kings and a well-known episode from Alexander's life illustrates how delicate the matter was. When Alexander wanted to introduce the Persian custom of such *proskynesis* among the Macedonians, he met with vigorous opposition (*Alex.* 54.2–6; 74.2–3; cf. 45.1; 51.5). A true Greek refuses to demean himself like this. Or does he? Themistocles, the conqueror of the barbarians, sees no problem (*Them.* 27.6), but readily adapts himself and gives obeisance, not once (28.1) but later too (πάλιν προσκυνήσαντος, 'having once again paid obeisance'; 29.3). As usual, Plutarch adds no further comment, but his passing reference to the renewed obeisance illustrates the relevance of the theme and stimulates further reflection. Rejecting Themistocles' un-Greek behaviour may seem the obvious reaction, yet it would also be a premature and oversimplifying one. In any case, Themistocles' decision once again yields a useful result, as it enables him to gain personal security and even reputation among the Persians, and to enjoy the pleasures of a luxurious life (29.6–10; 31.3).

The whole *Life*, then, illustrates that Themistocles was πανοῦργος, ready to do anything that suited his purposes (see 1.3; *Arist.* 2.2). The idiosyncratic combination of his cleverness and ambition, not checked by any moral concern, made him willing to accomplish whatever could bring him benefit. And, indeed, this attitude yielded many great successes, for Greece, Athens, and himself.[14] Yet the picture is more nuanced than that. Themistocles also acted as an impartial arbitrator (5.6) – although this, of course, added to his good reputation among the people. He once warned Simonides that he had to obey the law (5.6), a statement that suggests a noble stance, even though it remains unclear how consistent he was in such matters.[15] Particularly revealing is his opposition to Aristides, surnamed 'the Just' (*Arist.* 6.1–2). The two had characters that were diametrically opposed (*Them.* 3.3; *Arist.* 2.2). Accordingly, Themistocles had Aristides

[14] Duff 2008b: 165–7 and 2010: 53–4 and 57–8. Themistocles' attitude towards money (*Them.* 25.3; cf. 5.1) is discussed by Zadorojnyi 2006: 270–85 (who aptly links him to Plato's timocratic man).

[15] Contrast Timocreon's sharp attack on Themistocles (21.3–7); Zadorojnyi 2006: 279–81.

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ostracized but later wrote a decree to call him back (*Them.* 11.1) and thus showed himself open to reconciliation and collaboration.[16] Plutarch appreciates this as a great deed but, again, this reconciliatory course is not opposed to Themistocles' *synesis*. We may well wonder whether, in such cases, Themistocles' apparent devotion to what is honourable (τὸ καλόν) is not the servant of his cleverness.

The course of events, however, repeatedly thwarts his plans, and Chapter 20 is especially interesting in this respect. Plutarch there relates how Themistocles divulges to Aristides his secret plan to destroy the fleet of the Greeks. Aristides then tells the Athenians that, in his view, no plan could be either more useful or more unjust (20.2; cf. *Arist.* 22.3). Again, we encounter a situation in which the general theme of the *Life* is brought to a head. Significantly, the historicity of the event is by no means certain,[17] yet Plutarch has inserted the anecdote because it is especially relevant for the overarching philosophical theme of the *Life*. Aristides' judgement was correct, no doubt; more interestingly, he left the final decision to the Athenians, thus inviting his fellow citizens to deliberate on the matter in a way that recalls the well-considered zetetic moralism typical of Plutarch himself. The Athenians decided to abandon the plan, thus preferring justice to usefulness (*Them.* 20.2; cf. *Arist.* 22.4). This decision will prove interesting in light of the *Life of Camillus*, where the Romans face a similar dilemma.

Finally, in the *Life of Themistocles* Plutarch points to the tension between short-term and long-term usefulness. So far, we have seen that Themistocles' decisions usually yielded great profit in the short term, yet it is not evident whether they would always prove advantageous in the long run as well. Themistocles himself was not blind to the problem. His decision to abandon Athens, for instance, was undoubtedly problematic when one only takes into account its direct consequences. The city risked plundering and utter destruction. In a moving scene, Plutarch evokes the departure from Athens (10.8–10):

> When the city was thus putting out to sea, the sight provoked pity in some, and in others astonishment at the boldness of the step; for they were sending off their families in one direction, while they themselves, unmoved by the lamentations and tears and embraces of their parents, were crossing over to the island. Besides, many who were

[16] See Duff 2010: 53.
[17] See Flacelière *et al.* 1961: 94; Marr 1998: 123.

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left behind on account of their great age invited pity also, and much affecting fondness was shown by the tame domestic animals, which ran along with yearning cries of distress by the side of their masters as they embarked. A story is told of one of these, the dog of Xanthippus the father of Pericles, how he could not endure to be abandoned by him, and so sprang into the sea, swam across the strait by the side of his master's trireme, and staggered out on Salamis, only to faint and die straightway. They say that the spot which is pointed out to this day as 'Dog's Mound' is his tomb.[18]

Themistocles, then, did not always go for immediate success but also had an eye for the more distant future. Nevertheless, in most cases his policy aimed at short-term success but later turned out to be problematic if not detrimental. For instance, the initial dilemma raised in Chapter 4 returns in Chapter 19, where Plutarch argues that Themistocles filled the common people with boldness (19.5–6),[19] thus echoing Plato's criticism in a moment of φιλοσοφώτερον ἐπισκοπεῖν. Moreover, Themistocles reaped what he had sown. He was often willing to do whatever served his personal interest, but as soon as a price was put on his head, he became the prey of equally unscrupulous opportunists (26.1). Finally, his contrivances ultimately led to his death. He had promised the Persian king to assist him in dealing with Greek affairs, but when the king reminded him of his promise, he contemplated suicide as his last resort (31.5),

neither embittered by anything like anger against his former fellow citizens, nor lifted up by the great honour and power he was to have in the war, but possibly thinking his task not even approachable, both because Hellas had other great generals at that time, and especially because Cimon was so marvellously successful in his campaigns; yet most of all out of regard for the reputation of his own achievements and the trophies of those early years.

Sic transit gloria mundi. Themistocles finally finds himself in a situation which precludes both cunning wiles and honourable conduct. The difficulty with which he is now confronted is the last consequence of his previous career and decisions, and he does not shrink from facing facts unflinchingly.[20] Plutarch adds that the king admired Themistocles when he heard about his death (31.7). This is certainly one possible perspective on the hero's end – although it is here attributed to a

[18] On this passage, see Graninger 2010 (who regards the scene as an example of 'creative reconstruction' on the basis of Thucydides' account of the departure of the Sicilian expedition; cf. Flacelière *et al.* 1961: 100–1).

[19] See Duff 2008b: 171–2 and 2010: 55–6.

[20] Duff 2010: 56–8.

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barbarian. Alternative views are conceivable too, yet Plutarch leaves it at that. Readers should arrive at their own conclusion, but do well to turn first to the *Life of Camillus*, where they will become acquainted with a different course that may further deepen their understanding and judgement.

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The *Life of Camillus* immediately sets the tone through a fine characterization of its protagonist as a man full of moderation (*metriotes*) and prudence (*phronesis*) (1.4). This combination strikingly differs from Themistocles' dominant character traits. This *Life* will not contain the story of excessive ambition and knavery but of moderate restraint in exercising power and of a cleverness that can be called virtuous prudence rather than sly cleverness (*synesis*).[21]

That is not to say, however, that Camillus lacks ambition and cleverness. His ambition especially appears from an episode early in his career, when he celebrates a pompous triumph (7.1–2), whereas his cleverness is illustrated by the many ingenious tricks which he uses throughout his career. He allows his soldiers to plunder the city of Veii (7.7), although he has vowed a tenth of the booty to Apollo, and later comes up with 'the absurdest of all explanations' (τὸν ἀτοπώτατον τῶν λόγων), viz. that he has simply forgotten his vow (8.2). He smartly uses the war against the Falerians as a means to distract attention from internal problems (9.2–3). In the lawsuit against Manlius, he transfers the court outside the city, away from the Capitol, so that it becomes easier to forget Manlius' former bravery (36.7).[22] He feigns sickness when confronted with serious political difficulties (39.4). Aside from all that, he repeatedly shows himself as an extremely competent general, always able to assess what the particular situation requires (see 35.3: ὀρθῶς λογισάμενος, 'having reasoned correctly'), and accumulating victories for Rome. All of these successes were the rewards of his cleverness and vigour (τῇ δεινότητι καὶ τῷ δραστηρίῳ; 36.1). These are certainly features which he shares with Themistocles, yet he is led by entirely different concerns.

Those concerns become clear early in his life, after the sack of Veii. Camillus' reaction to it is far from triumphalist. He addresses the gods

[21] On the difference between *phronesis* and *synesis* in Plutarch, see Frazier 2016: 283–4.

[22] Duff 2010: 63 with 77–8 n. 109, points to the parallel in *Them.* 19.6 about the Thirty changing the orientation of the Pnyx.

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and argues that the assault of the Romans is not unjust but simply necessary (οὐ παρὰ δίκην, ἀλλὰ κατ᾽ ἀνάγκην), an act of self-defence (5.7). Themistocles usually had far fewer problems with injustice and mainly considered the exigencies of the moment. Camillus, in contrast, tries to reconcile the two.

The same concern for justice reappears during the siege of Falerii. When a local schoolteacher betrays his city and hands his pupils over to Camillus, the latter is given an excellent chance to force the Falerians to their knees. Themistocles, who used the Persian Sicinnus against Darius, would probably not have hesitated to make use of this opportunity. Camillus, however, sends the traitor back to the city, with the comment that 'even wars have certain laws which good men will respect' (10.5), and the Falerians later declare that Camillus has indeed honoured justice before victory (10.7). Camillus thus begins to resemble the righteous Aristides much more than the wily Themistocles;[23] what is more, his strategy pays off, for he obtains the city without bloodshed.

Yet Camillus, just like Themistocles, then comes into conflict with his fellow citizens and, when he is indicted and risks condemnation, he curses the city and goes into exile (11.1–13.1).[24] What follows is a lengthy account of the Gallic invasion of Italy, and Camillus disappears from the scene for many chapters. This long section has been regarded as evidence of Plutarch's historical interests,[25] but it also develops the central issue of the pair. When Clusium is attacked by the Gauls and turns to the Romans for help, the latter send envoys to Brennus, the king of the Gauls, and ask what wrong they have suffered from the Clusians. Brennus replies (17.3–5):

> The Clusians wrong us in that, being able to till only a small parcel of the earth, they yet are bent on holding a large one, and will not share it with us, who are strangers, many in number and poor. This is the wrong which you too suffered, Romans, formerly at the hands of the Albans, Fidenates, and Ardeates, and now lately at the hands of the Veientines, Capenates, and many of the Faliscans and Volscians. You march against these peoples, and if they will not share their goods with you, you enslave them and despoil them and raze their cities to the ground; not that in so doing you are in any wise cruel or unjust, nay, you are but obeying the most ancient of the laws which gives to the stronger the goods of the weaker, beginning with God himself and ending

[23] See Larmour 1992: 4184; Pelling 2005: 335; Duff 2010: 62.
[24] Duff 2010: 59–61.
[25] Stadter 1984: 359; Pelling 2005: 335–6.

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with the world of the beasts. For these too are so endowed by nature that the stronger seeks to have more than the weaker.

This is a splendid piece of rhetoric, built on a quite embarrassing and sarcastic *argumentum ad hominem*. It characterizes Brennus very well, but also problematizes the view of other people, mentioned earlier in the *Life* (6.3), that Rome would never have become so famous and powerful without divine assistance. Brennus takes a very different stand on this issue and such confrontation of alternative perspectives obviously contributes to the zetetic dynamics of this *Life*. Moreover, Brennus' reply shows with merciless precision that the Romans had themselves few scruples or moral concerns in their past history. Their pragmatic policy indeed recalls a Themistoclean attitude.

This is confirmed by the sequel of the conversation. The Roman envoys see that their attempts are to no avail and therefore decide to incite the Clusians against the Gauls and even participate in the fight (17.6–7). In condemning such inappropriate behaviour (17.8), Brennus has a point – ambassadors should not take up arms – as even the Roman Senate has to acknowledge (18.1). The people, however, pay no heed to such concerns (18.3). The Gauls attack Rome and the Romans soon get into serious trouble. After a long siege, they finally agree to buy their freedom for a thousand pounds of gold, but the Gauls tamper with the scales and Brennus scornfully abuses his military preponderance. The Romans are at a loss (28.7):

Some of the Romans were incensed and thought they ought to go back again with their gold and endure the siege. Others urged acquiescence in the mild injustice. Their shame lay, they argued, not in giving more, but in giving at all. This they consented to do because of the emergency; it was not honourable, but it was necessary (οὐ καλῶς ἀλλ᾽ ἀναγκαίως).

Here we encounter the same motif of conflict between a more principled attitude and a willingness to set aside concerns for what is honourable. Here, too, the Roman people are prepared to prefer the useful to the noble course and thus adopt a basically Themistoclean approach. However, this also constitutes an interesting reversal of the pattern described in the *Life of Themistocles*. There, it was the protagonist who had a distinct preference for pragmatic decisions, whereas the Athenian people were more concerned with justice. Here, it is not Camillus but the people who are more prone to focus on what is useful (see also 7.6). In this light, the whole section about the Gallic invasion has a moral relevance, developing as it does the central moral

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issue of the pair. Furthermore, the contrast between the pragmatic behaviour of both Gauls and Romans, on the one hand, and Camillus' policy, on the other, throws additional light on the latter's decisions and character.

During the Gallic invasion, Camillus at first lives a quiet and sequestered life in Ardea, although he has not turned his back on Rome (23.2) – contrary to Themistocles, who sought refuge with the Persian king. He assumes the command of the Ardeans and gains a victory over the Gauls (23.3–7). As a result, many Romans join his side and ask him to take the command (24.1–3). Themistocles would have welcomed their offer with open arms. But Camillus is no Themistocles: he declines and declares that the citizens on the Capitol should first legally elect him as their commander (24.3). Is this stubbornness? Coriolanus-like rancour? Or sweet revenge? Plutarch rather presents it as a telling example of caution (*eulabeia*) and nobleness (*kalokagathia*) that wins general admiration (24.4). Even when obtaining such a great opportunity to rescue Rome, Camillus insists on obedience to the laws. Again, this reminds us more of Aristides than of Themistocles.

Yet Camillus' policy, honourable though it may be, raises an obvious difficulty: it is far from easy to reach the citizens on the Capitol (24.4). The problem is solved by the ambitious Pontius Cominius, who ventures the extremely dangerous journey to Rome and succeeds in mounting the Capitoline hill and delivering Camillus' message to the Senate.[26] When the Senate has indeed appointed Camillus dictator, Pontius repeats his gallant deed, again steals through the lines of the Gauls, and reports the decision of the Senate to Camillus (25.1–5). This interesting episode is not without significant moral relevance, as it shows that the pragmatic Themistoclean course is not a *conditio sine qua non* of success. An alternative *prohairesis* (fundamental choice) that respects the demands of justice may require more boldness and be much more dangerous, but turns out equally successful.

[26] Duff 2010: 63 points out that Pontius' ambition recalls that of Themistocles: 'The brief parallel might be read as a reminder that ambition, although it can get out of hand and become dangerous, is necessary for the performance of great exploits: men like Themistocles and Cominius are needed at such times of crises.' We may add that Pontius' boldness, while recalling that of Themistocles, is not opposed to Camillus' vigour (τῷ δραστηρίῳ; 36.1) either.

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Or does it? Simplifying moral conclusions are seldom correct in Plutarch and, here as well, reality proves to be more complex. The Gauls find the route that Pontius has taken and at night climb the hill. At that critical moment, Rome is about to be destroyed. The watchers are sleeping, the Gauls ready to take the citadel, with neither man nor dog being aware of their approach, but (27.2–3)

> there were some sacred geese near the temple of Juno, which were usually fed without stint, but at that time, since provisions barely sufficed for the garrison alone, they were neglected and in evil plight. The creature is naturally sharp of hearing and afraid of every noise, and these, being specially wakeful and restless by reason of their hunger, quickly perceived the approach of the Gauls, dashed at them with loud cries, and so awakened all the garrison.

The attack of the Gauls is repelled, and somewhat later Camillus arrives with his army, just in time to prevent the ignoble ransom. After all the perils, his way of dealing with the situation bears fruit at last, since he can now act as the legitimate ruler of Rome and overrule all those willing to compromise and preferring the necessary to the honourable (29.3).

And thus Rome is saved. All's well that ends well? Yes indeed, though not immediately so, for there remains another difficult problem that has to be solved first. Rome is in ruins and needs to be almost completely rebuilt. But why take all this trouble, when Veii is close by and provides everything the exhausted Roman people need (31.2)? Camillus would not be Camillus if he did not opt for the more difficult and noble path and plead for the reconstruction of Rome. And once again, he gains unexpected support. When Lucius Lucretius is about to declare his opinion (32.2–3),

> it chanced that a centurion with a squad of the day watch passed by outside, and calling with a loud voice on the standard-bearer, bade him halt and plant his standard there, for that was the best place to settle down and stay in. The utterance fell at the crisis of their anxious thought for the uncertain future, and Lucretius said, with a devout obeisance, that he cast his vote with the god. The rest, one by one, followed his example.

Mere coincidence or evidence of providential care? Arguments for both positions could be adduced, but Plutarch leaves the question open and continues his account. Rome will be rebuilt and Camillus will gain several other important victories (33.1–41.7) which all illustrate his military talents but which need not further detain us here.

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The *Themistocles–Camillus* pair lacks a concluding *synkrisis*, but the book as a whole illustrates Plutarch's project of zetetic moralism very well.[27] Apart from the clear outline of the protagonist's characters at the outset of each *Life*, Plutarch's account contains relatively few explicit and straightforward moral comments, yet the entire book thematizes and examines the moral problem of the difficult relation between usefulness and justice by juxtaposing the different policies of the two heroes. Plutarch's overall sympathy seems to lie with Camillus, but the reader looks in vain for clear-cut and definitive answers. Themistocles' choices enabled him to save Greece: a great achievement that should not be underestimated,[28] even if the means to that end were often problematic from a moral point of view. In the long run, however, his pragmatic course ended in demeaning himself before the Persian king, and suicide. Camillus resembles Aristides instead in his persistent concern for justice. This is praiseworthy, no doubt, yet he comes into no less conflict with his people, and later his honourable decisions entail the greatest dangers and difficulties. The success of such a course is far from certain: in fact, without sacred geese and a passing centurion, it would have ended in utter disaster. In this respect, Themistocles had a better control over the direct course of events, although Camillus' policy proved more advantageous in the long run.

The pair, then, clearly stimulate nuanced moral reflection, and the parallel between Themistocles and Camillus serves this end particularly well. The two heroes belong to different periods and cultures, have different characters, and often make opposite choices, yet their careers also contain several striking similarities[29] that enable Plutarch to raise in their respective *Lives* the same basic philosophical problem, to deal with it in two different ways, and thus to examine its different dimensions and perspectives. This, in short, is ingenious parallelism in the service of zetetic moralism, providing much food for moral reflection. . .and imitation.

It should be clear by now precisely what this imitation means. The reader should not slavishly copy Themistocles or Camillus. This would not be possible, since they will never find themself in exactly

[27] The most likely hypothesis is that the *synkrisis* is lost: see Swain 1992: 111; Duff 1999b: 253; Larmour 2014: 410; *contra* Pelling 2002: 377–82. Discussions also in Erbse 1956: 403–6; Larmour 1992: 4175–7; Duff 2011b: 258–9.

[28] Cf. Duff 2008b: 165–6 and 2010: 53 on the recurrence of the motif of greatness in the *Life of Themistocles*.

[29] See esp. Larmour 1992: 4176–8.

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the same situation. History repeats itself, no doubt, but always with significant variations. The readers should therefore remain who they are, but their careful reading of this pair can help them in understanding the relation between virtue and usefulness in all its complexity. Readers can ask themselves what Themistocles or Camillus would have done in their situation (cf. *De prof. in virt.* 85A–B) and then, inspired by the heroes' decisions, translate their new insights into well-considered deeds.

2. Sertorius–Eumenes

Sertorius–Eumenes is one of the few books in which the Roman hero comes first. Several scholars have argued that Plutarch shows Sertorius in the best possible light, which seems to suggest a fairly straightforward, unproblematizing moralism.[30] Eumenes seems to receive less sympathy and his *Life* is also less appreciated among modern scholars.[31] Moreover, we are here dealing with two generals. As early as the first chapter, Sertorius is included among the most warlike (πολεμικώτατοι) of generals (*Sert.* 1.8) and the parallel between the two heroes rests on their military careers (1.11–12):

> Both were born to command and given to wars of stratagem; both were exiled from their own countries; commanded foreign soldiers, and in their deaths experienced a fortune (τύχῃ) that was harsh and unjust; for both were the victims of plots (ἐπιβουλευθέντες), and were slain by the very men with whom they were conquering their foes.

This book, then, will contain fascinating stories of military tricks, endless fighting, and brilliant generalship, but what has all this to do with zetetic moralism? On closer inspection, it raises interesting moral questions which are already anticipated by two key terms in Plutarch's explanation of the parallel. Both heroes were often confronted with external circumstances that forced decisions upon them: *tyche* (fortune), then, and the necessity it involves, is a major issue in this book. Another one is that of confidence and loyalty, and their limits (as hinted at in the participle ἐπιβουλευθέντες). The tension

[30] Konrad 1994: xxx–xxxi; García Moreno 1992: 146–52 (Sertorius as an ideal ruler); Flacelière and Chambry 1973: 2–6. On Plutarch's sources, which include both very critical and positive views of Sertorius, see esp. Konrad 1994: xli–liii; also Scardigli 1979: 98–100.

[31] Geiger 1995: 185 regards it as a 'biography so inferior to the very best in the series'; cf. García Moreno 1992: 134 and Konrad 1994: xxxii–xxxiii.

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between these two issues – between loyalty and necessity – thus constitutes one of the central themes throughout this book: how far should loyalty go in situations conditioned by necessity and how genuine can such loyalty actually be? These are complicated moral issues indeed.

In the first chapters of the *Life of Sertorius*, the hero is introduced as an excellent general, combining cleverness (*synesis*) with daring (*tolme*) (3.4) and distinguishing himself as a young man in several battles (3.1–4.5). Yet even at this early stage, we may wonder whether this splendid military career really results from Sertorius' own deliberate choice. For he also had rhetorical talents and acquired some influence in this way, but, so Plutarch adds, 'his brilliant successes in war turned his ambition (φιλοτιμίαν) in this direction' (2.2). It is probably not without reason that φιλοτιμίαν is the *object* of the sentence, suggesting that Sertorius is almost in spite of himself dragged away by his own military success. This anticipates the many times when his decisions will result from events which he is unable to control.

However that may be, his great military accomplishments persuade him to make a bid for the tribunate, yet he loses the election due to Sulla's opposition (4.6) and therefore joins the party of Marius and Cinna (4.6–7).[32] This decision, logical though it may be, is the direct result of a political fiasco, which raises the question of how loyal Sertorius really is to the Marian cause. Is this not merely loyalty *faute de mieux*? That will soon come to light, when Marius proposes to serve under Cinna as a private citizen. Sertorius opposes this plan, either out of personal ambition or because he fears Marius' excessive passions (5.1). Cinna agrees with Sertorius but still has a problem, since he has himself invited Marius (5.3). Sertorius replies (5.4):

> Indeed, I for my part thought that Marius came of his own accord into Italy, and so I was trying to discover what was advantageous in the matter; but in your case it was not well to deliberate at all after the arrival of one who you yourself did ask to come; nay, you should have received and employed him, since a pledge leaves room for no reasoning (τῆς πίστεως μηδενὶ λογισμῷ χώραν διδούσης).

Sertorius' answer raises an interesting problem and was probably elaborated by Plutarch precisely for this goal, viz. the issue of loyalty and its importance.[33] As long as a man has made no agreement or

[32] For the historical background, see Konrad 1994: 59–62; I. König 2000: 445–7.

[33] The historicity of this conversation between Sertorius and Cinna has been questioned by Katz 1983: 62.

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commitment whatsoever, he is free to consider the most useful strategy, but once the demands of loyalty come into play, there is no longer room for reasoning. Thus Sertorius makes loyalty an absolute value in this context. In other words, loyalty entails necessity. For Cinna, this means self-chosen necessity: he has to take the consequences of his previous decision. Sertorius, however, is confronted with a necessity to which he has to adjust himself and this is exactly what he decides to do. Nevertheless, this enforced loyalty need not imply blind obedience. When Cinna and Marius take bitter revenge on their enemies, Sertorius does not follow them and recommends moderation (5.6), thus qualifying his previous absolute statement about loyalty by his independent conduct: loyalty is certainly important, but it does not always preclude reasonable deliberation.

This appears even more clearly after the deaths of Marius and Cinna. Sertorius sees how things risk going wrong for the Marian party and warns Scipio, to no avail. Once again, necessity proves too strong and Sertorius sees only one way out: that is, to flee to Spain in order to afford a refuge (καταφυγή) for his friends (6.4).[34] This characterizes Plutarch's Sertorius very well: his decision to leave Rome for Spain is not primarily motivated by military considerations but by his concern for loyalty to his friends and by the necessity of the situation.

Yet Sertorius' first results in Spain are rather disappointing: he meets with adversity and is forced to sail with his fleet along the Spanish coast (7.1–8.1). Then he encounters sailors who have recently returned from the so-called 'Atlantic Islands' and describe them to him in the most positive terms (8.2–5). 'When Sertorius heard this, he was seized with an amazing desire to dwell in the islands and live in quiet, freed from tyranny and wars that would never end' (9.1). This is the first occurrence of a key motif that will be of paramount importance for Plutarch's general evaluation of Sertorius' character and career. It can also be found in Sallust (*Hist.* 1, fr. 87–90 Ramsey) – probably Plutarch's principal source for this *Life* – but Plutarch gives it an interesting turn. For Sallust, such an escape to the Atlantic Islands was no more than a brief and utopian dream.[35] For Plutarch, it was a

[34] Plutarch here considerably abridges the events; more details about the historical background of Sertorius' decision to go to Spain can be found in Strisino 2002; cf. de Michele 2005 and Konrad 1994: 73–85.

[35] McAlhany 2016; see also García Moreno 1992: 143–6 (who connects the episode with the paradoxographic tradition).

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real option and we can easily see why: Sertorius' longing for these blessed islands is perfectly in line with his character as we have come to know it so far. For we have seen how his decisions are time and again dictated by necessity. In such a light, Sertorius' supposed desire to rid himself of the endless wars is not implausible, and the ideal of a quiet life (ζῆν ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ) will from now on constitute an important voice in the counterpoint of his motivations.

Here too, however, necessity proves too strong. The sailors refuse to bring Sertorius to the Atlantic Islands and the latter begins a new campaign in Africa in order to sustain the morale of his army and keep them together (9.3).[36] He now achieves great successes (9.4–5) and shows himself as a loyal and reliable ruler, complying with the requests of those who have put their trust in him (πιστεύσαντας) (9.11). Then he is asked by the Lusitanians to become their leader.[37] Their confidence in him is explained in a kind of 'second introduction', containing a lengthy discussion of Sertorius' many qualities.[38] His military talents are again underlined – his daring, his insight, his willingness to turn to ruse whenever necessary – but the positive traits of his character are also listed anew: his moderation and generosity and his insensibility to pleasure and fear (10.2–4). Sertorius incarnates the ideal ruler – or nearly so… (10.5–7):

> And yet, in the last part of his life, the savage and vindictive treatment which he bestowed on his hostages would seem to show that his mildness was not natural to him, but was worn as a garment, from calculation (λογισμῷ), as necessity required (διὰ τὴν ἀνάγκην). In my opinion (ἐμοὶ δὲ…δοκεῖ), however, a virtue that is sincere and based upon reason (ἀρετὴν μὲν εἰλικρινῆ καὶ κατὰ λόγον συνεστῶσαν) could never by any fortune (τύχη) be converted into its opposite, although it is true that excellent principles and natures (προαιρέσεις καὶ φύσεις), when impaired by great and undeserved calamities, may possibly change their character (ἦθος) as the guiding genius changes. And this, I think, was the case with Sertorius when fortune at last began to forsake him; as his case grew hopeless he became harsh toward those who did him wrong.

This is a much discussed passage,[39] which raises the interesting philosophical question of the possibility of character change. Plutarch's answer is nuanced and typically enough considers two

[36] Konrad 1994: 111: 'P.'s explanation here shows the levelheaded, calculating, risk-taking soldier we encountered in chapters 3–6; surely it is correct.'

[37] On the role played by Sertorius' friends in Spain, see *Sert.* 22.10 and Konrad 1987.

[38] Beneker 2010: 108.

[39] See, e.g., Brenk 1977: 177–9; Wardman 1974: 132–40 (esp. 134–6); Gill 1983; Swain 1989a.

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alternative views. According to the first, Sertorius' nature did not undergo any change at all: his mildness was merely dictated by necessity. This view is not a priori wrong: Plutarch endorses it in other contexts concerning other figures (see esp. *Arat.* 51.4 on Philip of Macedonia; *Sull.* 30.6 on Sulla) and it also suits the specific case of Sertorius, who, as we have seen, was continuously pursued by adversity and necessity, and who was certainly capable of such calculation. This first explanation, then, should not be dismissed too quickly and may well contain at least a kernel of truth. Yet there is also a second one, introduced by an emphatic ἐμοὶ δὲ…δοκεῖ, according to which Sertorius' nature *did* change. Plutarch there makes a clear distinction between perfect virtue and its necessary conditions. The former marks the end of a long process of moral progress; once it has finally been reached, it can no longer be lost, even under the most adverse circumstances. This conviction echoes a philosophical position that Plutarch defends elsewhere too.[40] The presence of a good nature and a correct fundamental choice (*prohairesis*), on the other hand, though an important *conditio sine qua non* of moral virtue, is not in and of itself virtue. It obviously has a decisive influence on one's character (*ēthos*), but even a good *ēthos* should not simply be equated with perfect virtue.[41] As long as this perfect virtue is not yet reached, a reversal is always possible,[42] and this is what actually happened in Sertorius' later career.

This passage thus provides a fine illustration of Plutarch's general zetetic approach in the *Parallel Lives*. Theoretical philosophical ideals about perfect virtue (ἀρετὴν εἰλικρινῆ καὶ κατὰ λόγον συνεστῶσαν) are confronted with and challenged by concrete reality. The heroes never completely embody the high philosophical ideals, nor do the *Parallel Lives* contain samples of such perfect virtue. In the famous proem to the *Cimon–Lucullus* pair, Plutarch explicitly deplores the fact that no human character is absolutely good and indisputably set towards virtue (*Cim.* 2.5). This applies to Sertorius as well: he was a noble man, no doubt, but he was not perfect and thus his cruel behaviour at the end of his life should not be explained in terms of losing

[40] E.g. in moral works such as *On fortune* and *Is vice a sufficient cause for unhappiness?*; see also *De tranq. an.* 475B–476A; *De virt. et vit.* 101D–E.

[41] We can improve our character (βελτιουμένῳ τὸ ἦθος, *De prof. in virt.* 85C) but we improve *towards* virtue (βελτιουμένου πρὸς ἀρετήν, 75B).

[42] Cf. *De prof. in virt.* 76C–78A on intermissions and retrogressions during the process of moral improvement; Roskam 2005b: 247–55.

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virtue but as a change in his nature, *prohairesis*, and character, influenced by misfortune.

Moreover, these reflections do not come out of the blue but are closely connected to the overall theme of the book. The disloyalty shown by Sertorius' former allies, the merciless influence of necessity (ἀνάγκη), and the motif of fortune abandoning Sertorius all constitute key issues that return in this passage. The fundamental question of how all this affects Sertorius' character is a natural one and Plutarch answers it in a sensible and nuanced way. In short, this is a characteristic example of careful zetetic moralism fed by the warp and weft of history.

The next section of the *Life* presents Sertorius as an excellent general and thus confirms the correct assessment of the Lusitanians. He far surpasses his opponent Metellus (12.5–13.12; 18.1; 22.1–4), displays his cleverness in the war against the Characitani (17.1–13), and even outgenerals Pompey at Lauron (18.5–11) and after the Battle of Saguntum (21.7–8). In all these instances, his military skills bring the greatest and most capable Roman generals into serious difficulties (21.9). This is the connecting thread throughout this section of the *Life*. Sertorius is simply a particularly clever tactician and strategist. If need be, he can be very warlike (πολεμικώτατος) indeed. Furthermore, Plutarch dwells at length on the way in which Sertorius knew how to gain and keep the loyalty of the Lusitanians. After all, it is not obvious that a foreign people would be willing to be led by a Roman general. Many were attracted by Sertorius' mildness and efficiency (11.2),[43] others were deceived by his cunning tricks. He made clever use of a white doe in order to take advantage of the barbarians' superstition (11.3–8; 20.1–5). But he also converted their forces into a well-ordered army, gave them a beautiful array, and provided the sons of their most distinguished families with a Greek and Roman education (14.1–4).[44] All this results in an ambivalent picture of Sertorius. On the one hand, he takes diligent care of the troops which fortune has granted him, almost like a loving father. On the other hand, this loving father is also a clever manipulator. His concern for well-equipped and well-ordered barbarian troops of course suits his own purposes as well, and, while telling (λόγῳ) the barbarians that he educates their sons, he in reality (ἔργῳ) makes hostages of them

[43] On this balance between mildness and efficiency, see also *Sert.* 6.9 and 18.11.

[44] The last of these topics is discussed by Scherr 2015; cf. Konrad 1994: 141–4; Payen 2002: 106–8.

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(14.3). We begin to wonder how sincere his loyalty actually is (the more so in light of Plutarch's comments in Chapter 10).

Who, then, is the real Sertorius and where does his loyalty really lie? The answer to this pressing question is elaborated in the following chapters, where he appears as a magnanimous man (22.5; 23.1) and a true patriot (ἀνὴρ φιλόπατρις; 22.7). This, again, is by no means obvious: as the commander of the Lusitanians, he can be regarded as the public enemy of Rome.[45] Plutarch, however, underlines Sertorius' great loyalty to Rome. The general creates a new Senate in Spain, consisting of Roman senators who have joined his cause (22.5), and his aim is not to strengthen the barbarians against Rome but rather to regain freedom for the Romans (22.6). This echoes Plutarch's earlier statement that Sertorius has fled to Spain in order to afford a refuge (καταφυγή) for his friends (6.4). From the later passages we can see that he has not forgotten his intentions, and thus follows a perfectly consistent policy. Yet this unfaltering loyalty towards his friends and fatherland also generates questions about his loyalty towards the Lusitanians, whom he apparently uses as mere means for his own goal. This impression is corroborated by his proposal to Metellus and Pompey (22.7–8):

> as a victor he sent to Metellus and Pompey expressing his readiness to lay down his arms and lead the life of a private citizen if he could get the privilege of returning home, since, as he said, he preferred to live in Rome as her meanest citizen rather than to live in exile from his country and be called supreme ruler of all the rest of the world together.

Once again, this gives a good idea of what kind of person Sertorius really is, and it is no coincidence that in such a context the ideal of a quiet life reappears (22.12). Sertorius is not a man who pursues the greatest ambitions, and his military accomplishments are essentially engendered by necessity.[46] He would freely give all of them away for a peaceful life. Yet this attitude problematizes his loyalty to the Lusitanians even further. Indeed, abandoning his present life and military power would mean leaving his barbarian allies and his Roman friends to fend for themselves.

[45] I. König 2000.

[46] His preference for a simple, anonymous life in Rome is diametrically opposed to that of Caesar (*Caes.* 11.4). See Konrad 1994: 189; Beneker 2010: 114–15.

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Moreover, Sertorius decides to make a treaty with Mithridates, Rome's arch-enemy. Here as well, Plutarch presents Sertorius' policy in the best possible light, as one more example of his magnanimity (23.1). For indeed, Sertorius is not prepared to unquestioningly accept Mithridates' proposals, even though his entourage eagerly supports the plan, but flatly refuses to hand over a Roman province to the king (23.2–7). And his principled course bears fruit, because Mithridates consents to Sertorius' alternative proposal and a treaty is finally made (24.1–3). Once again, Sertorius succeeds in using the support of the barbarians without compromising his high Roman ideals. He sends his general Marcus Marius to Asia and, when the latter conquers several cities, Mithridates voluntarily follows him as his vassal (24.4).

The final chapters of the *Life* show us the precariousness of a loyalty that basically rests on necessity. We have seen so far that Sertorius pursues the interests of his Roman friends, providing them with a safe refuge (καταφυγή), even if this course is only an inferior option (a δεύτερος πλοῦς as Plato put it) enforced by necessity, since the ultimate ideal of a tranquil life is beyond reach. Yet it will be these friends who betray Sertorius' confidence. The villain in this case is Perpenna, repeatedly characterized as a worthless and conceited fellow (15.2; 25.2). He begins to set the senators and the men of equal rank in Sertorius' circle against the general, pointing to their paradoxical situation. They have come to Spain, so he argues, because they refused to obey the omnipotent Sulla and preferred to live as free men, but they have now of their own free will become the slaves of Sertorius the exile (25.3). Perpenna may be wicked and his disloyalty may be blamed, yet he does make an interesting point. What, after all, has remained of Sertorius' honourable ideal? And what will be their fate if Sertorius is allowed to lead a carefree, quiet life? These are challenging questions indeed, concealed behind the sophistic rationalization of Perpenna's wickedness.

Subsequently, the loyalty of the barbarians is put to the test as well. The conspirators repeatedly maltreat them and provoke rebellion (25.4), which entails Sertorius' cruel reaction anticipated in Chapter 10: he kills the sons of the Iberians who are being educated in Osca and sells others into slavery (25.6). Plutarch adds no further comment but the reader can now reconsider the issue in light of new evidence.[47]

[47] The moral evaluation of Sertorius' deed has been discussed in *Sert.* 10.5–7 and is recalled in the brief phrase ἐκ τῆς προτέρας ἐπιεικείας καὶ πρᾳότητος μεταβαλόντα ('having laid aside his former clemency and mildness'; 25.6).

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In fact, Sertorius' loyalty to the barbarians is here further questioned. It turns out to be a mere means for his own purposes, which makes us wonder whether the first explanation proposed in Chapter 10 is not, after all, the correct one!

Perpenna's conspiracy will lead to Sertorius' death: he is killed at a symposium, without associates and trusting his friends (26.8–11; cf. *Comp. Sert. et Eum.* 2.6). Yet that is not the end of the story. The last chapter of the *Life* briefly deals with the fate of the conspirators. Perpenna, worthless as ever, is defeated by Pompey and promises to show him Sertorius' private correspondence (27.3). Thus the motif of loyalty returns for the last time: by being prepared to betray Sertorius' powerful friends in Rome, Perpenna even proves perfidious after Sertorius' death. Yet he is brought to justice for this perfidy (27.4–5):

> Pompey, then, did not act in this emergency like a young man, but like one whose understanding was very well matured and disciplined, and so freed Rome from great revolutionary terrors. For he got together those letters and all the papers of Sertorius and burned them, without reading them himself or allowing anyone else to do so; and Perpenna himself he speedily put to death, through fear that seditions and disturbances might arise if the names of the correspondents of Sertorius were communicated to anybody.

Pompey's action is praised as wise statesmanship (cf. also *Pomp.* 20.6–8) but it also provides a telling conclusion to the theme of loyalty explored in this *Life*. Pompey, Sertorius' most formidable opponent, is the one who ultimately proves most loyal to him after his death. Here at last, loyalty towards Sertorius and his friends is combined with genuine loyalty towards Rome.

The very last words of the *Life* recall Sertorius' ideal of a quiet life. Such an ideal is finally reached by Aufidius, the only one of the conspirators who has managed to escape, but there is little reason for envy here. In fact, his situation is diametrically opposed to Sertorius' ideal. Whereas Sertorius dreamt of living a tranquil life as a respected citizen in Rome, Aufidius grows old in a barbarian village, as a poor and hated man (27.7).

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In the *Life of Eumenes*, Plutarch further explores the same moral questions. From the very beginning, Eumenes is introduced as one of the cleverest (συνέσει) and most loyal (πίστει) friends of Alexander

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(1.4). His *synesis* resembles that of Sertorius and will bring him great military success. His *pistis* to Alexander reintroduces the central theme of loyalty, which thus becomes one of the most important leitmotifs in the entire book. In the *Life of Eumenes*, the hero's loyalty to the Macedonian royal house will often be underlined and equally often be questioned. For Eumenes, loyalty never means blind obedience. This already appears in the first chapters, where Plutarch tells how Eumenes more than once comes into collision with Alexander (2.1–10). Moreover, these conflicts are caused by Eumenes' greed, so much so that Plutarch even characterizes the hero as πανοῦργος and πιθανός: a persuasive rogue willing to do anything (2.10). This label henceforth puts his behaviour into perspective. Eumenes' loyalty, then, is always somewhat suspect.

This first impression is soon confirmed. In the conflict between the heavy infantry and the officers, Eumenes does not commit himself and assumes the role of reconciler (3.1–2). At first sight, such a course has much to be commended, even more so since Plutarch actually advises his young friend Menemachus to follow such a conciliatory policy if need be (*Praec. ger. reip.* 824B). Yet, in Eumenes' case, it also implies a wily dissimulation of his own sincere convictions. Eumenes clearly sides with the officers (3.1) but strategically conceals this loyalty, which results in a conflict between his true view and his words.[48] This, then, is a typical action of Eumenes the *panourgos*. Moreover, he cleverly takes advantage of his status as a foreigner (ξένος): he claims that, being an outsider, he should not intervene in a conflict among Macedonians (3.1). Here we come across a motif that will become very important in later chapters of the *Life*. For the time being, this approach does not harm Eumenes, to say the least: when the conflict is settled, he is appointed satrap of Cappadocia, Paphlagonia, and the southern coast of the Pontic Sea as far as Trapezus (3.3).

Somewhat later, Leonnatus tells Eumenes in confidence (πιστεύσας) that he intends to lay claim to Macedonia, and asks for his collaboration (3.6–9). Eumenes, however, declines the invitation, flees to Perdiccas, tells him everything, and accordingly gains great influence (3.10–12). Again, this episode leaves the reader with mixed feelings. By refusing Leonnatus' offer, Eumenes confirms his reputation as a loyal friend.

[48] See *Eum.* 3.1: τῇ μὲν γνώμῃ. . .τῷ δὲ λόγῳ ('in his opinion. . .but in what he said. . .'). Caesar is similarly criticized for his cunning reconciliation of Pompey and Crassus (*Pomp.* 47.2). On Solon's compromising between the poor and the rich, see *Sol.* 14.1–2; Leão 2003–4: 54.

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He sticks to his word and, as is explicitly underlined at the end of the chapter, does not wish to be separated from the kings (τῶν βασιλέων ἀπολείπεσθαι μὴ βουλόμενος; 3.14). Yet the question remains to what extent his decision rests on genuine loyalty. In fact, Plutarch mentions two possible motivations behind Eumenes' course and neither has anything to do with loyalty: either he was afraid of Antipater or he was sceptical of Leonnatus' capacities. Eumenes, then, is primarily a clever man concerned with his own interest.

Nevertheless, from this moment on, Eumenes' loyalty gradually comes to the fore. Perdiccas uses him as an efficient and faithful guardian (δραστηρίου τε καὶ πιστοῦ φύλακος; 4.1). Eumenes prepares a military campaign against Craterus and Antipater and shows himself as a competent general (5.1–5). Craterus and Antipater then propose that he should come over to their side. Their offer is certainly a very attractive one: Eumenes will be confirmed as satrap and will even receive more resources and a better position (5.6). Yet he refuses: he is willing to reconcile Craterus and Perdiccas but not to compromise his honour (5.7–8). Again, Eumenes plays the part of the noble reconciler, but this time the accent is more on his loyalty to Perdiccas than on his concern for personal benefit. Plutarch begins to present Eumenes in a more positive light: the *panourgos* becomes more and more *pistos*.

When a confrontation between Eumenes and Craterus becomes unavoidable, the former once again shows his great talents as a clever strategist. He makes the appropriate preparations and decides to keep his Macedonians out of the battle, for fear that they would defect to the enemy (7.1–2). Eumenes knows perfectly well how to secure his soldiers' loyalty but, at this stage of his career, he deems it safer not to overestimate the dedication of the Macedonians, which is a wise decision indeed. Thus, the theme of loyalty has become more complex than in the *Life of Sertorius*. There, the barbarians were outsiders in a conflict between two Roman factions and there was no evident reason why the Lusitanians would desert to Pompey and Metellus. They only began to revolt after much provocation. Eumenes, on the other hand, is himself the outsider. He commands as a *xenos* (3.1) Macedonian troops that fight against Macedonians. Under such circumstances, it is far less obvious how to keep the army obedient (see also 5.3; 6.2–3; 6.6), and this will be a recurrent motif in the remainder of the *Life*.

After a fierce battle, Eumenes emerges victorious and Craterus dies on the battlefield (7.13):

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When Eumenes learned of the fate of Craterus and had ridden up to where he lay, and saw that he was still alive and conscious, he dismounted, wept bitterly, clasped his hand, and had many words of abuse for Neoptolemus, and many words of pity for Craterus in his evil fortune (τῆς τύχης), and for himself in the necessity (τῆς ἀνάγκης) which had brought him into a conflict with a friend and comrade (ἀνδρὶ φίλῳ καὶ συνήθει), where he must suffer or do this harm.

Thus the clash between necessity and loyalty, the leitmotif of the *Life of Sertorius*, reappears but also gains a new dimension. Faithfulness is now closely connected with friendship, for Eumenes and Craterus have a common history as companions of Alexander. This motif will repeatedly return in the *Life of Eumenes*, since all the wars that are related in it are wars between former friends. The problem of loyalty is thus defined and examined from a new perspective, but necessity, too, plays its inexorable role.

The result of Eumenes' victory over Craterus is fame and envy – a recurrent motif in many books of the *Parallel Lives*. Remarkably enough, both friends and enemies agree that he has made use of the Macedonians to slay their best man (8.1). Eumenes' precarious position as a stranger keeps popping up. According to Plutarch's interpretation of the facts, Sertorius was loyal to Rome until his last day, but can such a principled loyalty be expected from a *xenos* like Eumenes? We have seen that his loyalty has gradually been emphasized in the previous chapters, but his non-Macedonian descent remains his Achilles heel and the consensus among both friends and enemies surely makes the question even more pressing. Yet Eumenes succeeds in gaining the goodwill of his soldiers by giving them their pay (8.9–11) and, when a price is set on his head, his Macedonians form a bodyguard for him (8.11). For the time being, then, the Macedonians are faithful to their foreign commander, although their loyalty rests on money rather than on common Macedonian origin.

After Craterus' death, Eumenes has to fight Antigonus. In this campaign, he faces several difficulties (9.1):

Now prosperity lifts even men of inferior natures to higher thoughts, so that they appear to be invested with a certain greatness and majesty as they look down from their lofty state; but the truly magnanimous and constant man reveals himself rather in his behaviour under disasters and misfortunes. And so it was with Eumenes.

This recalls the key Chapter 10 from the *Life of Sertorius*, where Plutarch tells how the noble Sertorius later degenerated when confronted with adversity. In this respect, Eumenes, initially characterized as a suspect

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panourgos, proves to be superior in the long run. When he is defeated by Antigonus (through treachery), he punishes the traitor and returns to bury his dead. Even Antigonus admires his boldness (τὸ θάρσος) and steadfastness (τὴν εὐστάθειαν) (9.5). Eumenes again shows himself as a bold general and a reliable friend. Even when he is betrayed, he remains faithful to his soldiers who have given their lives for him, and he takes care of their burial.

At this point of the *Life*, then, Eumenes proves superior to Sertorius in his loyalty to his soldiers. Yet the *panourgos* has not entirely disappeared. At a certain moment, Eumenes has an excellent opportunity to seize Antigonus' baggage, but he understands that this would harm rather than benefit him, as the booty would restrict his freedom of movement. Since he is unable to stop his Macedonians, he sends a secret message to Menander, the commander of Antigonus' baggage, and warns him to withdraw to the hills, as if being concerned for him as an old friend and comrade (ὡς κηδόμενος αὐτοῦ φίλου γεγονότος καὶ συνήθους; 9.8). This sounds honourable indeed and Eumenes is even praised for his deed among Antigonus' Macedonians (9.11), but Antigonus himself easily understands Eumenes' true intentions and explains that the latter's supposed loyalty only serves his own interests (9.12). This is no unequivocal example of true friendship but rather one of wily calculation. Moreover, Eumenes now persuades his own soldiers to abandon him and sends several of his friends away (10.1–2).[49] His motivation to do so is ambivalent, to say the least: he shows concern and friendship but also pursues his own advantage. A conference with Antigonus follows. The two embrace each other as old friends (10.5), yet Eumenes makes high demands. He is not content with his safety but requires that he should be confirmed as a satrap and recover his possessions. Those present, so Plutarch adds, admire his lofty spirit (φρόνημα) and courage (εὐτολμίαν) (10.6). This, however, is only one side of the picture. It also recalls Eumenes the *panourgos*, always concerned with his own interests. Tellingly, not the slightest reference is made to the theme of Eumenes' loyalty to the Macedonian royal house, which therefore seems irrelevant in the present situation. Moreover, Eumenes' behaviour is in striking contrast with that of Sertorius, who was prepared to accept a quiet life.[50] Here, loyalty primarily comes from Antigonus: he keeps to his

[49] At least, this is how Plutarch presents the matter. In reality, many soldiers simply deserted to the enemy: see Bosworth 1992: 79.

[50] Plutarch will make this point in the concluding comparison: *Comp. Sert. et Eum.* 2.1–5.

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word and even protects Eumenes with his own body against his soldiers (10.8).

The *Life of Eumenes* is thus characterized by a fluctuating movement in which the protagonist's loyalty is alternately questioned and confirmed. In the previous scene, we have encountered Eumenes the *panourgos*; in the next scene Eumenes the *pistos* will take over again. Antigonus makes a new attempt to win Eumenes over and proposes a treaty with an oath in which the kings are hardly mentioned. Eumenes, however, adds the names of Olympias and the kings and proposes his new version to the Macedonians, who consider his alternative the more just one (12.2–7). In this way, Eumenes' loyalty to the Macedonian kings is once more emphasized. He refuses Antigonus' offer, even though he foresees difficulties, and consequently stands by his principles, keeping faithful to the legitimate kings, although it implies that he will have to flee. This account, however, is a misrepresentation of what actually happened. In all likelihood, Eumenes did accept Antigonus' proposal and even became his ally for some time, until he received a mandate from the royal family.[51] Plutarch therefore replaces the historical *panourgos* with an honourable and principled *pistos*. Interestingly, this adaptation further implies that a comparison with Sertorius once again works out in Eumenes' favour. Sertorius likewise changed Mithridates' proposal, yet he in the end decided to make a treaty with the enemy of Rome. Eumenes is less prepared to accept such questionable agreements and consequently remains loyal to the legitimate royal family.

It is not surprising in such a perspective that Polysperchon and King Philip grant Eumenes authority to fight against Antigonus and provide him with financial means and new troops (13.1–2). This is the beginning of a new military campaign for Eumenes, who again faces the difficulty of winning the loyalty of his army. He succeeds in winning the generals of the Silver Shields by taking advantage of their superstition. He tells them how Alexander has appeared to him in a dream and promised him to attend their deliberations and assist them when they meet in a royal tent with a throne reserved for him (13.4–8). Eumenes' clever trick recalls Sertorius' equally clever use of the white doe, but Eumenes also employs the generals' loyalty towards Alexander. Cleverness and loyalty are thus again combined and Eumenes the *panourgos* joins Eumenes the *pistos*. He

[51] See, e.g., Anson 1977; Bosworth 1992: 66–7; Hadley 2001: 18–20.

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also buys the loyalty of his opponents, by borrowing large amounts of money – yet another clever trick (13.12–13). The soldiers, however, trust his military talents and want only him as their commander (14.1–16.1), so that other generals become envious – the usual refrain – and conspire against Eumenes. When the latter hears about this, he makes his will and destroys his personal documents because he does not want to get his friends into trouble (16.4). Sertorius was not given this chance and depended post mortem on the goodwill and understanding of his enemy Pompey. Eumenes is luckier, and shows his loyal concern for his friends even in the face of death.

In the battle that follows, he gains an overwhelming victory but loses his baggage, due to the lax fighting of his officer Peucestas (16.9). Antigonus then proposes to Teutamus, the commander of the Silver Shields, that he should restore the baggage to them and he offers to treat them kindly, provided they hand over Eumenes to him (17.1–2). This time, his invitation to betrayal proves successful, for the Silver Shields accept the offer, arrest Eumenes, and send him to Antigonus. When he is led through the Macedonians, Eumenes is allowed to address his troops for the last time (17.6–11):

> 'What trophy, you basest of Macedonians, could Antigonus have so much desired to set up over your defeat, as this which you yourselves are now erecting by delivering up your general as a prisoner? Was it not a dreadful thing, then, that in the hour of your victory you should acknowledge yourselves defeated for the sake of your baggage, implying that victory lies in your possessions and not in your arms, but you must also send your leader as a ransom for that baggage? As for me, then, you lead me away undefeated, a victor over my enemies, a victim of my fellow-soldiers; but as for you, by Zeus the god of armies and by the gods who hallow oaths, I bid you slay me here with your own hands. Even should I be slain there, it will be wholly your work. Nor will Antigonus find any fault; for he wants a dead and not a living Eumenes. And if you would spare your own hands, one of mine, if released, will suffice to do the business. And if you cannot trust me with a sword (οὐ πιστεύετέ μοι ξίφος), cast me under the feet of your elephants, all bound as I am. If you do this, I will absolve you from your guilt towards me, holding that you have shown yourselves most pious and righteous in your dealings with your own general.'

This is an impressive piece of rhetoric, swollen with true *pathos*, but also containing a challenging message. The full emphasis is on the perfidy of the Macedonians, who go so far as to hand over their own general for the sake of their baggage. Look how low they have sunk! But no less emphasis falls on Eumenes' loyalty. Even if they kill him (in whatever way they please), he claims that he will not find fault

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with them but rather consider their deed as most devout and just. Justin adds that Eumenes became angry when he failed to convince the Macedonians and that he even cursed them (14.4.10–14). Plutarch keeps silent about this and prefers to underscore Eumenes' loyalty to the very end. Thus, he again contrasts the hero with his counterpart Sertorius, who cruelly took revenge on his allies at the end of his life. Here too, Eumenes, the *pistos*, appears in a better light.

As a result of Eumenes' moving speech, many are dejected, but the Silver Shields dismiss his words as nonsense (φλυαροῦντι) (18.2):

> It was not so dreadful a thing, they said, that a pest (ὄλεθρος) from the Chersonesus should come to grief for having harassed Macedonians with infinite wars, as that the best of the soldiers of Philip and Alexander, after all their toils, should in their old age be robbed of their rewards and get their support from others, and that their wives should sleep the third night now with their enemies.

This is a completely different perspective, which completes another important motif of this *Life*.[52] Until the very end, Eumenes has remained the *xenos* who commands Macedonian troops, the outsider who has caused so much trouble for the Macedonians, the ὄλεθρος from the Chersonesus.[53] How can such a foreigner lay credible claims to loyalty? From their perspective, Eumenes is indeed no more than a *panourgos*.

This confrontation of two diametrically opposed perspectives, inspired by the zetetic spirit that permeates the whole book, is completed by the addition of a third one, viz. that of Antigonus. His reaction brings out the intricacy of the whole matter. He cannot endure to see Eumenes because of their former friendship and he is long in doubt as to what he should do (18.4–6). His doubts indirectly reveal the value of the different perspectives. An ὄλεθρος deserves to be killed without further ado; a friend should be embraced and pardoned. But what about a friendly ὄλεθρος? Antigonus cannot sit on the fence, and his final decision is not to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds but to kill both the hare and the hounds. In the end, the claims of friendship prove too weak and Antigonus decides to kill his former friend, while allowing his friends to burn the body, place the ashes in a silver urn, and return it to Eumenes' wife and children (19.1–2).

[52] In all likelihood, Plutarch developed this perspective *ad hoc*, for the majority of the Silver Shields were probably not led by concerns for ethnicity: see Roisman 2011: 72–3.

[53] See Bosworth 1992: 64–5 on the parallel with *Sert.* 6.6.

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Yet the Silver Shields fare no better. Although Antigonus promised to treat them well, he does not keep his word but sends them to Arachosia, requesting its governor to destroy them in every possible way. Of all the conspirators against Sertorius, only one man survived, albeit in the most ignoble circumstances, but, of the Silver Shields, not one man 'would ever return to Macedonia or behold the Grecian sea' (19.3).

⋆⋆⋆

The penetrating internal comparison of Sertorius and Eumenes throughout the book is completed by a short but thought-provoking formal *synkrisis*. Its first part focuses on a few external similarities and differences in their careers. Both commanded great armies as strangers, but Eumenes had to cope with more opposition (*Comp. Sert. et Eum.* 1.1–9). Plutarch here recalls some obvious matters of fact, but these, of course, are also relevant for moral reflection. We have seen how Sertorius' and Eumenes' position as strangers raised interesting moral questions and how Eumenes' case was more complicated than that of Sertorius. Plutarch's evaluation in the *synkrisis* is thus basically in line with his account in the two *Lives*.

Of course, Plutarch could have added many more correspondences between the two heroes (with respect to details too), yet that would perhaps have resulted in a tedious and pedantic list. The attentive reader is more than able to do this themself if they wish. All those correspondences make the book *Sertorius–Eumenes* a very successful pair. Plutarch generally had a keen eye for parallels. He saw the many opportunities and did not hesitate to fashion two heroes after one another if that would further his comparative purposes. In this book, he has gone far in this approach. The result is an in-depth exploration of the different dimensions of challenging moral questions.

This moral interest more directly surfaces in the second part of the *synkrisis*. Eumenes there appears as fond of war (φιλοπόλεμος) and contentious (φιλόνικος) (2.1). Plutarch argues that, if he had been content with second place, Antigonus would gladly have given that to him, but he was always eager for power and even led by greed (2.2–3; 2.5). Thus the concluding comparison returns to Eumenes the *panourgos*: this is how he is introduced at the very outset of his *Life* and this is how he appears at the very end. It is striking that his loyalty to the Macedonian royal family – whether real or feigned – is not even mentioned here. The *Life* is certainly more detailed in this respect, but this straightforward evaluation is, in a sense, no less

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problematizing, inviting the reader to return to the essential question of where Eumenes' real loyalty lay.

In Sertorius' case, the answer to this question is easier: he loved a quiet life (ἡσυχία) and regarded war as a dire necessity (2.1–5). This motif has been important in the *Life of Sertorius* and is now underlined once more. Again, Plutarch no longer raises the question of Sertorius' (alleged or real) loyalty to Rome and to the barbarians. At this moment, he is rather interested in the ultimate motivations of his heroes, in a movement of searching ἀποθεώρησις ('distanced reflection'). This, of course, is not a denial of the nuanced and more detailed story of the preceding *Lives*, but a new horizon against which the story can be reconsidered and reassessed.

Finally, Plutarch briefly compares the deaths of Sertorius and Eumenes. The former died unawares, because he trusted his friends (2.6); the latter tried to escape and even supplicated, thus making his enemy master not only of his body but of his soul as well (2.6; 2.8). This is a severe Platonic verdict that is somewhat discordant with the account of the *Life of Eumenes*,[54] although it is consistent with the general view of Eumenes in the *synkrisis*, which focuses on Eumenes the *panourgos* rather than the *pistos*. This assessment seems to support the view that Plutarch ultimately preferred Sertorius to Eumenes on moral grounds.[55] This is not impossible, yet perhaps the matter is less simple than that. A careful reading of the two *Lives* shows that Eumenes was superior to Sertorius in several respects, on moral grounds as well as others. It would certainly be an oversimplification to tip the scale now in favour of Sertorius in every respect, and Plutarch definitely does not do this himself in the *synkrisis*.

What, then, can Plutarch's readers learn from this book? Will they become better generals by reading it?[56] Although it cannot be denied that they can pick up an inspiring idea here and there, that is probably not Plutarch's first goal. A straightforward imitation of models like Sertorius and Eumenes is far too simplistic. In this book, Plutarch is interested in a much more fundamental, philosophical reflection about complicated moral problems. Together with his readers, he pursues deeper insight into loyalty at different levels, into the relation

[54] Duff 1999b: 275.

[55] Thus, e.g., Bosworth 1992: 56–7; García Moreno 1992: 134.

[56] This is the view of Jacobs 2018, who sees the *Parallel Lives* as pragmatic biography (see above, Chapter V, §1).

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between goal and means, into the heroes' fundamental decision (*prohairesis*) and its stability in adverse circumstances. These are huge questions indeed and the readers never receive easy, ready-made answers. They do, however, receive much interesting food for thought. And thus, the pair *Sertorius–Eumenes* exemplifies zetetic moralism at its best.

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