

GEERT ROSKAM / FLANDERS (BELGIUM)

## From Stick to Reasoning

### Plutarch on the Communication between Teacher and Pupil

παιδείας δὲ καὶ λόγου  
δεόμεθα πάντες,  
Quaest. conv. 9, 14, 743f.

#### 1. Introduction

In his voluminous oeuvre, Plutarch repeatedly exhibits his thorough familiarity with the most different aspects of Greek culture. And not only does he appear to be well versed in Greek παιδεία himself, but he expects familiarity with this παιδεία from others as well. He firmly believes that there should exist, for example, a close connection between the degree of culture someone has reached, on the one hand, and his socio-political influence, on the other. For that reason, he employs the presence or absence of an adequate παιδεία in the great heroes of the past as an important criterion to evaluate their achievements.<sup>1</sup> For that reason, he also emphasizes more than once that rulers should receive an appropriate education (*Ad principem ineruditum*) from philosophers (*Maxime cum principibus*), for uneducated, ignorant rulers often commit fatal mistakes (*Ad princ. iner. 779f–780b; 782e*). In such a view, the topic of education, its concrete interpretation, its aims, and the way of reaching them, is clearly of prime importance.

---

<sup>1</sup> See, e. g., C. B. R. Pelling, *Plutarch: Roman Heroes and Greek Culture*, in: M. Griffin-J. Barnes (eds.), *Philosophia Togata. Essays on Philosophy and Roman Society*, Oxford 1989, 199–232; Id., *Rhetoric, Paideia, and Psychology in Plutarch's Lives*, in: L. Van der Stockt (ed.), *Rhetorical Theory and Praxis in Plutarch. Acta of the IV<sup>th</sup> International Congress of the International Plutarch Society. Leuven, July 3–6, 1996, Louvain-Namur 2000 (Collection d'Études Classiques, 11)*, 331–339; S. C. R. Swain, *Hellenic Culture and the Roman Heroes of Plutarch*, *JHS* 110 (1990), 126–145; Id., *Hellenism and Empire. Language, Classicism, and Power in the Greek World AD 50–250*, Oxford 1996, 139–145.

The point of departure of this contribution is the characterization of the educational process as a process of communication between a teacher and his pupil. This process of communication takes place at different levels. It begins in the earliest childhood, at the moment when the mind is most impressionable and open to instruction.<sup>2</sup> The child is then further guided through the period of his youth to the threshold of adulthood and even beyond. At each level, the process of communication between teacher and pupil passes off in a different way.

## 2. From child to adult

### 2.1. The propaedeutic phase

#### 2.1.1. The level of the *παιδαγωγός* and the *διδάσκαλος*

2.1.1.1. From the lowest level on, the pedagogical process consists of two components. The child learns to read, to write, and to calculate, but also enjoys his first moral education. In general, the *διδάσκαλος* is entrusted with the intellectual instruction of the child (Alc. 7, 2), whereas the *παιδαγωγός* assumes the task of the first moral schooling, preventing his pupil from doing harm (Marc. 9, 7), and training his character so as to put him on the way to virtue (An virt. doc. 439f).<sup>3</sup> However, the distinction between the two domains is not always strictly maintained.<sup>4</sup> The *διδάσκαλος*, for instance, also contributes to the correction of character (*ἐπανόρθωσις ἤθους*; De ad. et am. 73e). One should further note that Plutarch often uses the terms *διδάσκαλος* and *παιδαγωγός* in a metaphorical sense: one can be a *διδάσκαλος* of the laws (Thes. 25, 2), of economy and agriculture (Comp. Arist. et Ca. Ma. 3, 2), of financial administration (Ca. Mi. 16, 3), of the art of hunting (Aem. 6, 9), of the art of government (Sept. sap. conv. 151de) and even of theology (Amatorius 763c); one can even become a *διδάσκαλος* of the good life (Lyc. 30, 5), of the greatest blessings (Pel. 33, 1), and of self-restraint (Cleom. 13, 1).<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, one can

<sup>2</sup> Ca. Mi. 1, 8/9; Ca. Ma. 21, 1; Praec. ger. reip. 820a; cf. also Ps.-Plutarch, De lib. educ. 3ef.

<sup>3</sup> See also De virt. mor. 443d, 451c and 452d; De cur. 521c; Quaest. conv. 7, 5, 706c; An seni 795f; De soll. an. 980c. Therefore, *παιδαγωγείσθαι* and *νοουθετεῖσθαι* are terms which are closely connected with one another (De Her. mal. 858d). One should note that not all *παιδαγωγοί* fulfil their task equally well; see De aud. poet. 36e.

<sup>4</sup> This holds in general as well; see B. Legras, *Éducation et culture dans le monde grec. VIII<sup>e</sup>–I<sup>er</sup> siècle av. J.-C.*, Paris 1998 (Campus. Histoire), 93; T. J. Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds*, Cambridge 1998 (Cambridge Classical Studies), 28.

<sup>5</sup> And, in a negative sense, of unfaithfulness and betrayal (Pyrrh. 12, 12).

function as a *παιδαγωγός* in theological (Num. 15, 1) and political (Arat. 48, 4) matters.<sup>6</sup>

The *διδάσκαλος* and the *παιδαγωγός*, who are often closely linked in Plutarch's works,<sup>7</sup> thus find themselves at the bottom of the ladder of the educational process. As such, the professions are not held in high esteem.<sup>8</sup> The name "pedagogue" itself appears to have a negative connotation,<sup>9</sup> and the professions of both teacher and pedagogue appear to be on a level with that of door-keeper, sailor or boatman (De vit. aer. 830b).<sup>10</sup> And yet, the profession is not unimportant. First of all, one should note that their profession does not prevent pedagogues from playing an important military or political role,<sup>11</sup> even though the question remains as to what extent they really do so in their capacity as pedagogues. More importantly, the great talents of the later hero can often be discovered already in his early infancy. This was the case, for instance, with Themistocles, whose teacher predicted that he would be nothing insignificant, but certainly something great, either for good, or for evil (Them. 2, 2). And Alcibiades even succeeded in influencing the programme of liberal education (Alc. 2, 5–7). In such cases, a pedagogue can be important for his pupil, not only by giving him lessons which later bear fruit (as Leonidas' trainings in frugality left

<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the whole educational programme of reading poetry, which is strictly speaking the domain of the *γραμματικός* (infra), is also connected with *παιδαγωγία* (De aud. poet. 15a and 15c). See also A. Schlemm, *De fontibus Plutarchi Commentationum De audiendis poetis et De fortuna*, diss. inaug., Gottingae 1893, 8.

<sup>7</sup> Dem. 5, 2; Ca. Mi. 16, 3; Aem. 33, 6; Phil. 4, 1; Alex. 5, 7; Lyc. 30, 5; Galba 17, 3; De aud. 37d and De gen. Socr. 589f; cf. also Ps.-Plutarch, *De lib. educ.* 9d, 12a and 12b.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. D. Fauré, *L'éducation selon Plutarque d'après les „Œuvres morales“*, 1.2., Aix-en-Provence 1960 (Publ. des Annal. de la Fac. des Lettr. d'Aix-en-Provence, Trav. et Mém. 13), 1, 42; contra: J. J. Hartman, *De avondzon des heidendoms. Het leven en werken van den wijze van Chaeronea*, Leiden 1912, 165–167. See in general also H.-I. Marrou, *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'Antiquité*, Paris 1965, 220 (on the *παιδαγωγός*) and 222–224 (on the *διδάσκαλος*), and B. Legras, o. c. [n. 4], 94.

<sup>9</sup> See Alex. 5, 7; see also Fab. 5, 5 (cf. Reg. et imp. apophth. 195c and Marc. 9, 7) and Ant. 10, 6 (cf. Ant. 29, 1). The term *παιδαγωγείν* is connected with the notion *ἀηδής* (Quaest. conv. 1, 4, 620c).

<sup>10</sup> See also Maxime cum principibus 776b, where the profession of the *γραμματιστής* is on a par with that of a shoemaker; cf. also Alc. 7, 2.

<sup>11</sup> The Persian Sicinnus, pedagogue of the children of Themistocles, had an important part to play in the preparations of the battle of Salamis. Plutarch nowhere gives more concrete information on Sicinnus' pedagogical activities, but relates how the Persian was sent as a messenger to Xerxes, and succeeded to deceive the King (Them. 12, 4/5). And Olbius, pedagogue of the children of Nicogenes, utters a prophetic verse at the moment when Themistocles is in great troubles. Here as well, Plutarch omits any reference to Olbius' concrete pedagogical occupations (Them. 26, 2).

their mark on Alexander; Alex. 22, 7–10), but also by giving the incipient hero the opportunities to develop his natural talents. Demosthenes, for instance, persuaded his pedagogue to take him to the trial concerning the city of Oropus, in order to listen to the plea of the famous orator Callistratus. The pedagogue appealed to his acquaintances, and succeeded in procuring a hidden place for his pupil, thus laying the foundations of the latter's rhetorical career (Dem. 5, 1–5; cf. also Ps.-Plutarch, Dec. or. vit. 844b). It is not surprising, then, that some pedagogues, such as Connidas, the pedagogue of Theseus, were even held in esteem by later generations (Thes. 4).

In any case, it is important to choose teachers and pedagogues deliberately. Some of them are really capable persons<sup>12</sup> and one should select these as educators of one's children. In order to find those who are best qualified, one must be cautious, testing prospective educators carefully (De am. mult. 94c; cf. also Ps.-Plutarch, De lib. educ. 4a–5a), unless the education is a matter of the state, as it was in the Sparta of Lycurgus (Lyc. 16, 7), who in that respect surpassed Numa as a legislator (Comp. Lyc. et Num. 4, 4–9). It is clear, then, that one should not necessarily choose those who apply for the job (De vit. pud. 532ab). One can even prefer to educate one's children oneself. This was done by Cato the Elder, who taught his son to read, even though he had a slave Chilo who was an experienced schoolmaster himself (Ca. Ma. 20, 5).

2.1.1.2. In which way, then, do the child and his teacher or pedagogue communicate with one another? At this level, the pupil remains largely passive: he is neither without master (*ἄναρκτος*), nor independent (*αὐτοτελής*; Amatorius 754d), but he should listen to both his teacher and his pedagogue. Indeed, the *διδάσκαλος* rules over his pupil (Amatorius 754d: ἄρχει ... παιδὸς ὁ διδάσκαλος), and does not hesitate to strike (De sera num. 560a; Caes. 61, 3). Also the *παιδαγωγός* has authority over the child. He prescribes all kinds of rules, giving much attention to etiquette,<sup>13</sup> even at the cost of being pedantic,<sup>14</sup> and is peevish about everything, even to such a degree that his admonitions lose their effectiveness (De ad. et am. 73a). It is the pedagogue who leads, even if he walks behind the child and not before (Quaest. Plat. 9, 1008f). Therefore, it is also the pedagogue who

<sup>12</sup> See De def. or. 419b and Crass. 3, 6; cf. also Quaest. conv. 9, 3, 738f–739a and 9, 4, 739b–d.

<sup>13</sup> See An virt. doc. 439f–440a; cf. also De fortuna 99d; Quaest. conv. 3, 645b; and Ps.-Plutarch, De lib. educ. 5a.

<sup>14</sup> See De tuenda 124d; on the meaning of the term *παιδαγωγικά* in this passage, see Plutarco. Precetti igienici, Introduzione, testo critico, traduzione e commento a cura di L. Senzasono, Napoli 1992 (Corpus Plutarchi Moralium, 12), 149.

bears all responsibility, not the child. Accordingly, when Diogenes saw a child eating delicacies, he struck the boy's pedagogue, being convinced that the mistake was not made by the child who had not learned, but by the pedagogue who had not taught (An virt. doc. 439de). In general, then, it should cause no surprise that both διδάσκαλος and παιδαγωγός are regarded by young men as harsh masters (χαλεπούς δεσπότας; De aud. 37d).

An important aspect of the relation between child and teacher or pedagogue at this level is loyalty and fidelity. On the part of the children, this fidelity is evidently present, at least when the teacher is cultivated (De virt. mor. 448e). Even Alcibiades (Alc. 2, 5) and Cato the Younger (Ca. Mi. 1, 10), who far surpassed their peers in critical attitude and independence, still gave evidence of great loyalty to their respective teachers, as became evident in their complete obedience. The teacher also has the high duty of remaining faithful to his pupil. Not every teacher, however, appears to meet these expectations. The teacher of the Falerians, for instance, planned to win the favour of his city's enemy, the Roman general Camillus, by handing over to him the children he was in charge of. To that purpose, he accustomed the boys to walk outside the walls, and gradually dispelled their fear, until he finally brought them into the Roman camp (Cam. 10, 1–4). The treacherous teacher did not escape punishment, though, for Camillus rejected the perfidious gift, and ordered the man bound and stripped. And the children, having been given rods by Camillus, drove the teacher back to their city (Cam. 10, 5/6). An equally bad example is Theodorus, pedagogue of Antyllus, the son of Antony. Theodorus betrayed the boy and had him executed, and afterwards removed the very costly stone from the neck of the boy and sewed it into his own girdle (Ant. 81, 1/2). He also was brought to justice, even though he denied the charges; having been detected, he was crucified (Ant. 81, 2). Also Rhodon, co-responsible for the death of Caesarion, belongs to the group of bad examples (Ant. 81, 4). Nonetheless, there are teachers worthy of imitation. Among them are the pedagogues and teachers of Perseus' children. They did not abandon the children after Perseus' defeat, but accompanied them even in the triumphal procession, teaching them how to supplicate (Aem. 33, 6). Also Euphronius, teacher of the children of Cleopatra and Antony, distinguishes himself for his fidelity, being one of the few who remains faithful even in the adversity of his masters (Ant. 72, 2).

2.1.1.3. At this level, education is de facto understood as transfer of knowledge and values. The process of learning is passive-receptive: μαθηάνειν is πάσχειν (Ca. Mi. 1, 8). Consequently, the process of communication turns out to be a one-way traffic from teacher (who strives for

great clarity; De Pyth. or. 406ef) to pupil. True reciprocity and exchange between two poles is largely out of the question. And yet, even at this level, Plutarch occasionally propagates an higher ideal. Cato the Younger, for instance, was obedient to his pedagogue, to be sure, and performed everything that was prescribed to him, but in each case, he asked the reason of the precept (Ca. Mi. 1, 10; De aud. poet. 28b). Cato's pedagogue Sarpedon took advantage of this attitude, being a cultivated man who preferred reasoning to striking (Ca. Mi. 1, 10). Accordingly, when Cato once asked Sarpedon why nobody dared to kill Sulla, he received a well-considered and profound answer: "Because men fear him more than they hate him" (Ca. Mi. 3, 5/6). This exchange of rational arguments between pedagogue and pupil did not imply, however, that Cato was already free to do whatever he wanted to do. On the contrary, Sarpedon kept a careful watch on his pupil, in order to prevent the latter from committing some reckless deed (Ca. Mi. 3, 7).<sup>15</sup>

It is clear, however, that such an education is reserved for only the more talented pupils. Those who are less gifted have to memorize the subject matter that is taught to them (Ca. Mi. 1, 7). Those who are more endowed, on the other hand, are more able to recall things to mind (*ἀναμνηστικούς*; Ca. Mi. 1, 7). Here, we discover the germs of another, more philosophically inspired view of education, and at the same time a completely different conception of the process of communication between teacher and pupil. This perspective will gradually gain importance at the higher levels.

### 2.1.2. The level of the *γραμματικός*

2.1.2.1. When the pupil leaves the school of the *διδάσκαλος*, he is placed under the charge of the *γραμματικός*.<sup>16</sup> There, he gets acquainted with poetry (in the first place, of course, with Homer, but also with tragedy and comedy),<sup>17</sup> and with all kinds of encyclopedic knowledge. Plutarch attaches a certain importance to such encyclopedic knowledge, which he defends at great length against Epicurus (Non posse 1092d–1096e), although he usually underlines that it should be completed by a moral perspective.

The *grammaticus* has the reputation of being erudite,<sup>18</sup> and feels at home in technical discussions (De gar. 514ab). Often, they are held in high

<sup>15</sup> Somewhat similarly, Philip, who knew the nature and qualities of his son Alexander, tried to persuade him rather than to command him (Alex. 7, 1).

<sup>16</sup> See, e. g., H.-I. Marrou, o. c. [n. 8], 244; M. L. Clarke, *Higher Education in the Ancient World*, London 1971, 11.

<sup>17</sup> M. L. Clarke, o. c. [n. 16], 18/19; H.-I. Marrou, o. c. [n. 8], 246–248.

<sup>18</sup> M. L. Clarke, o. c. [n. 16], 12.

esteem, as was the case with, for instance, Demetrius (De def. or. 410a), Epitherses (De def. or. 419b) or Tyrannio, who played an important role in the arrangement and publication of Aristotle's works (Sull. 26, 2; cf. also Luc. 19, 8/9). Also in the Table Talks, grammatici often appear as esteemed interlocutors who are able to defend their view authoritatively. And yet, the grammaticus is also opposed to the good man (De exilio 606cd), to the extent that he often lapses into hackneyed topics (Quaest. conv. 5, 2, 675a) and sophisticated ingenuity (De aud. poet. 31ef) instead of looking for what is useful.<sup>19</sup>

2.1.2.2. As to the concrete course of the communication process between grammaticus and pupil, the treatise De audiendis poetis gives much interesting information. The teacher introduces his pupil to a number of hermeneutic methods: see whether the poet himself gives a hint for the correct understanding of the passage (19a–d), compare different passages of the same author (20c–21d) or of different authors (21d–22a), and pay attention to the surrounding context of the passage (22bc). Also, the pupil's erudition should be developed further. It is true that the teacher should not focus too much on glosses (22cd), but he should go into a full consideration of the precise meaning of important words such as "fortune" or "god" (22d; 23a–25b). Furthermore, the reading of the poets should serve a moral purpose, and attention should be given to passages that are useful (infra). The pupil is expected to assimilate and apply the instruction he receives. The teacher, just as the parents, keeps the pupil under close watch (15a: εὐμάλα παραφυλάττωμεν; cf. also 37b), and gives him a share (15b: μεταδίδου) of his own knowledge.

2.1.2.3. At this level as well, the educational process appears for the most part as a transfer of knowledge and values. Active participation and training on the part of the pupil is presupposed, to be sure, but in general, the instruction remains largely one-way, from teacher to pupil. However, Plutarch clearly lays his own accents. The erudition of the grammaticus should be entirely at the service of philosophy. The method that is recommended in De audiendis poetis implies a philosophical reading of the poets, not a grammatical one. Consequently, the reading of the poets is regarded as a preparation to philosophy, as a pro-paedeutic phase (37b), adapted to the level of the pupils (15f–16a).

First of all, the orientation towards the moral domain, which was already started off at the level of the παιδαγωγός and the διδάσκαλος, is continued. The attention of the pupil should be fixed on what is

---

<sup>19</sup> Cf. also De prof. in virt. 79c; D. Fauré, o. c. [n. 8], 1, 47.

morally useful (14f, 28e, 30e and 32ef; cf. also *De prof. in virt.* 79cd). The teacher should blame what is bad, and praise good things, in order to create in his pupil an emulation of, and a choice (*προαίρεσις*) for the better (27ef). With regard to bad things, he should not permit his pupil to laugh at them, but should let him loath them (28a); good things, on the other hand, he should affirm, and connect them with philosophical insights (35f).

Secondly, the teacher should develop in his pupil an attitude of *critical distancing*. The pupil should learn to distinguish (*κρίνειν*) between reality and fiction. He should realize that poetry is only imitation (*μίμησις*) of reality, not reality itself<sup>20</sup> (17f), although it also bears some resemblance to the truth<sup>21</sup> (25bc). He should also distinguish between good and bad, and instead of praising anything he reads, he should confidently recognize both right and wrong (26ab). Finally, he should adopt a critical attitude towards everything that is said, by always seeking after the cause of what is said, certainly in important matters (28a–d).

Thirdly, the pupil should be stimulated to adopt a *zetetic attitude*. He should realize at each moment that poetry contains much that is untrue (*πολλὰ ψεύδονται ἄοιδοί*; 16a), that it is not even concerned with the truth (17d), and that the truth is in any case hard to find, even for those who have made it their sole business to achieve an understanding of being (17d–f). The reading of the poets, then, presents no easy access towards philosophical insight: the pupil should look for the truth.

In this way, also at the level of the *grammaticus* can be detected important traces of another conception of education, even though the emphasis still remains on the transfer of knowledge and values.

To conclude, it is clear that at both levels communication mainly proceeds in one direction, that is, from teacher to pupil. The former passes his knowledge to his pupil, and exercises constant supervision over him. The latter assimilates and trains himself, and is perfectly obedient to his teacher. Such a picture fits in with the pedagogical customs current in Plutarch's times (when one was mainly thinking in terms of transfer of knowledge and values, rather than in terms of *maieutics*<sup>22</sup>) and with the limitations inherent

<sup>20</sup> On Plutarch's position towards poetic *μίμησις*, see L. Van der Stockt, *L'expérience esthétique de la mimésis selon Plutarque*, QUCC, NS 36 (1990), 23–31; Id., *Twinkling and Twilight. Plutarch's Reflections on Literature*, Brussel 1992 (AWLSK, Klasse der Letteren, 54, n° 145), 39–48.

<sup>21</sup> On the precise meaning of the term *ἀλήθεια* in *De aud. poet.*, see D. Schenkeveld, *The Structure of Plutarch's De audiendis poetis*, Mnemosyne, Ser. IV, 35 (1982), 67, n. 15 and L. Van der Stockt, *Twinkling ...*, o. c. [n. 20], 43/44.

<sup>22</sup> See H.-I. Marrou, o. c. [n. 8], 240; cf. also 325; B. Legras, o. c. [n. 4], 96.



in the age of the child. However, Plutarch already at this level leaves room for a different, more philosophically inspired ideal, quite early for the more gifted children,<sup>23</sup> and more generally at the level of the grammaticus.

In that sense, this phase of the educational process indeed appears to be pro-paedeutic: it is already a preparation for the subsequent phase of philosophical instruction, but it is also only a preparation. The seeds are sown in this stage already, but the true plant has yet to begin growing.

## 2.2. The philosophical παιδεία: the level of the καθηγητής

2.2.1. The philosophical παιδεία begins at the moment when the pupil leaves the classroom of the grammaticus.<sup>24</sup> In the school of the philosopher, he is initiated<sup>25</sup> into the different philosophical doctrines. The positions of the own school are examined by means of commentaries on (passages from) the most important works of the great predecessors.<sup>26</sup> Besides, the student also gets acquainted with the convictions of antagonistic schools; their doctrines are presented and subjected to violent criticism.<sup>27</sup> Also at this level, intellectual education is harmoniously linked to moral training. The teacher has mastered all methods of *Seelenheilung*, and enters into combat, in a quite systematic and philosophically based way, with the excessive passions that defile the soul of his pupil. The school remains the place par excellence where life can, and must be amended (De aud. 42a).

The good student, then, should be interested both in intellectual and moral matters. He should aim at the truth, rather than striving for personal success and acting in a spirit of contentiousness (De aud. 39d; De prof. in virt. 80bc; De soll. an. 964d) and he should be prepared to recognize his moral shortcomings and to disclose them in order to receive treatment (De aud. 43de; De prof. in virt. 81f–82f; De lat. viv. 1128de). In short, he should be both ductile (εὐάγωγος) and orderly (κόσμιος), and fond of

<sup>23</sup> Cf. E. Eyben, *Children in Plutarch*, in: L. Van der Stockt (ed.), *Plutarchea Lovaniensia. A Miscellany of Essays on Plutarch*, Lovanii 1996 (*Studia Hellenistica*, 32), 110–112.

<sup>24</sup> The average student also passes by the rhetor, and is sometimes formed by other instructors as well; D. Fauré, o. c. [n. 8], 1, 53–60.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. G. Roskam, “And a great silence filled the Temple ...”. Plutarch on the Connections between Mystery Cults and Philosophy, in: A. Pérez Jiménez-F. Casadesús Bordoy (eds.), *Estudios sobre Plutarco: Misticismo y religiones místicas en la obra de Plutarco. Actas del VII Simposio Español sobre Plutarco* (Palma de Mallorca, 2–4 de Noviembre de 2000), Madrid-Málaga 2001, 221–232.

<sup>26</sup> M. L. Clarke, o. c. [n. 16], 87; H.-I. Marrou, o. c. [n. 8], 311.

<sup>27</sup> M. L. Clarke, o. c. [n. 16], 88.

learning (φιλομαθής; Maxime cum principibus, 778a; cf. also De Pyth. or. 394f–395a).

2.2.2. In which way should teacher and pupil communicate with one another at this level? The situation now becomes more complex, to the extent that the two conceptions of education are even more mixed together. On the one hand, the student still needs much instruction. Indeed, if the previous phase should be regarded as propaedeutic, the actual philosophical παιδεία should even still begin. This implies that at this level as well, education is to a large extent a matter of transfer of knowledge. Thus, Diadumenus still gives a lengthy discourse to his comrade at the Academy (De comm. not. 1060b sqq.), and Plutarch himself indulges in elaborate argumentations against Colotes (Adv. Colot. 1108b sqq.). Furthermore, many philosophical treatises are read by the pupils under the guidance of the teacher. More than once, Plutarch refers to such reading sessions.<sup>28</sup> After the reading, the texts were discussed and interpreted.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, the student must attend ex cathedra lectures about the most diverse topics. In each of these cases, he is regarded as a kind of vessel into which doctrines and good attitudes are poured by the teacher (De aud. 38f and 39a; De prof. in virt. 81c). It is clear, then, that the student even at this level at least to a certain extent plays a rather passive part.

Yet, several elements point to a much more active role of the pupil. First of all, the listening of the student is obviously not regarded as an entirely passive process, but as a capacity which should be trained and which follows its own rules. The student should listen to the lectures patiently and attentively, without interrupting the speaker (De aud. 39b–d and 42f). He should not give in to feelings of envy (39d–40a), but should combine an attitude of goodwill (40b) with a critical mind (40f–41a). And instead of paying excessive attention to matters of style, he should always look for what is useful (De aud. 41c–42e; De prof. in virt. 79b–d). An example of a good student is Aristodemus of Aegium, a very enthusiastic follower of Plato, who managed to suppress his indignation during the reading of

<sup>28</sup> See, e. g., Quaest. conv. 7, 2, 700c (Plato), De soll. an. 959b (the notorious Encomium of Hunting; cf. esp. H. Martin, Plutarch's De Sollertia Animalium 959bc: The Discussion of the Encomium of Hunting, *AJPh* 100 [1979], 99–106) and Adv. Colot. 1107ef (the book of Colotes; cf. also Non posse 1086d).

<sup>29</sup> Perhaps, one could think of some institutional customs, the lessons taking place at a fixed hour, and with settled habits; see M. Schuster, *Untersuchungen zu Plutarchs Dialog De sollertia animalium, mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Lehrtätigkeit Plutarchs*, diss. inaug., Augsburg 1917, 19–21. Still, it is important to recall that by the time of Plutarch, the Academy had ceased to exist as an institution for nearly two hundred years; see J. Gucker, *Antiochus and the Late Academy*, Göttingen 1978 (Hypomnemata 56).

Colotes' book, and succeeded in listening silently and orderly to the end (Adv. Colot. 1107ef).

Second, the student's activity is not confined merely to good listening. Already in the propaedeutic phase, his critical mind was stimulated and his independence prepared. This evolution now continues. Next to learning, independent thinking gains importance (De aud. 48d). The fact that the young student does not fall back on well-known, traditional arguments, but himself searches for a personal solution, is worthy of praise (Quaest. conv. 3, 7, 656ab; cf. also 8, 2, 719f).<sup>30</sup>

A third important aspect of the educational process is the asking of questions.<sup>31</sup> The student is invited to ask questions when the lecture is over, although in this case too, he should keep in mind several rules. He should, for instance, wait for the right moment (De aud. 39c and 42f), and then ask useful questions (42f–43b) which are adapted to the competence of the speaker (43b–d). Also the teacher adduces all kinds of problems (ζήτημα, πρόβλημα or αίτια),<sup>32</sup> sometimes himself giving the solution, often inviting the students to answer. Different perspectives can be combined in order to illuminate various dimensions of the problem (as, e. g., in De E and often in the Quaest. conv.), or one can opt for an argumentation in contrarias partes (as, e. g., in De soll. an.). In this way, the zetetic attitude of the students is further developed. By proposing problems, the teacher stimulates the pupil's attitude of looking for the truth. This attitude fits in very well with Plutarch's epistemological position, which is influenced by the sceptical Academy. For Plutarch, indeed, philosophy itself is in the end a continuing search for the truth.<sup>33</sup>

Finally, by means of his questions, the teacher can bring to the surface the knowledge which is already present in the students themselves. Indeed, when the highest philosophical themes are concerned, that is, when one aims at wisdom about the divine and intelligible, the process of learning turns out to be a matter of reminiscence (ἀνάμνησις; Quaest. Plat. 1,

---

<sup>30</sup> In this way, the student also imitates the teacher, who should develop personal insights too; cf. De virt. mor. 440e and De an. procr. 1012b.

<sup>31</sup> M. L. Clarke, o. c. [n. 16], 90–92.

<sup>32</sup> On the meaning of those terms, see J. Opsomer, Ζητήματα: structure et argumentation dans les Quaestiones Platonicae, in: J. A. Fernández Delgado-F. Pordomingo Pardo (eds.), Estudios sobre Plutarco: Aspectos Formales. Actas del IV Simposio Español sobre Plutarco. Salamanca, 26 a 28 de Mayo de 1994, Madrid 1996, 71–76.

<sup>33</sup> See J. Opsomer, In Search of the Truth. Academic Tendencies in Middle Platonism, Brussel 1998 (AWLSK, Klasse der Letteren, 60, n° 163), 189.

1000de).<sup>34</sup> In that field, Socrates presents himself as the teacher par excellence, refraining from teaching anything, but creating perplexities in his pupils and thus inciting them to develop their own innate conceptions (1000e).<sup>35</sup> This pedagogical technique, which he called maieutics (μαειευτική τέχνη), is in the end the most preferable, since instead of implanting in the student knowledge from without, it shows that he has it within himself and that it should only be developed and nurtured (1000e).

In the moral domain, the same tension returns between the teacher's scrupulous supervision and an important degree of independence on the part of the student. On the one hand, the teacher holds theoretical discussions on moral evil. In his moral psychagogy, the phase of κρίσις precedes that of ἄσκησις.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, his moral instruction is rather directive: he rebukes and admonishes, blames faults and praises right conduct. It is important that he should use his frankness correctly, that is, not in a spirit of rancour and fault-finding, but of sincere concern for the welfare of his students (De ad. et am. 66e–67e), without arrogance or scurrility (67e–68c), at the right occasion (68cd, 70b and 74d) and in private (70e–71d). He should avoid harshness (73e–74a and 74de), but blend praise and blame (72b–e; cf. also Praec. ger. reip. 810bc), and in addition take care that his admonition is backed by his own good character (71e).

On the other hand, the teacher no longer rules over his student; he is no pedagogue. The student is old enough to be free from such supervisors. This, however, does not imply that he is henceforth free from any control. The transition from childhood to adulthood is not a throwing away of all supervision (ἀποβολή ἀρχῆς), but a change in supervisor (μεταβολή ἄρχοντος; De aud. 37de), to the extent that one no longer follows a hired person, but reason itself (37e). It is clear, then, that the student should play a more active part. He is the one who should take the initiative to cure himself from his moral wickedness (De prof. in virt. 82a; cf. Animine an corp. 501b). He should then examine himself very closely (De prof. in virt. 83e–84a), paying attention to even the most trivial details (85e–86a). He should not only admire, but also imitate the great examples of the past (84b–85b), and thus, by gradual habituation and exercise (76c–78a and 83a–c), make progress on the road towards moral virtue.

<sup>34</sup> For the presence of the Platonic doctrine of reminiscence in Plutarch's works, see J. Opsomer, o. c. [n. 33], 193–212.

<sup>35</sup> The terms ἐμφύτους νοήσεις betray an anti-Stoic polemic, see J. Opsomer, o. c. [n. 33], 207–210.

<sup>36</sup> De gar. 510c, cf. H.G. Ingenkamp, Plutarchs Schriften über die Heilung der Seele, Göttingen 1971 (Hypomnemata, 34), 74.

The greater degree of independence of the pupil requires the teacher to mitigate the authoritarian aspect of his guidance. Here as well, Socrates remains the ideal example, since he continues to refute his younger interlocutors without claiming any knowledge himself, even involving himself in his own admonition (De ad. et am. 71f–72a). And precisely for that reason, he gains credibility, since he thus gives the impression of seeking the truth together with his listeners and of having the same need of moral amelioration (De ad. et am. 72a; Quaest. Plat. 1, 999ef).

2.2.3. It is clear, then, that another conception of the educational process has gradually come to the fore. At this level, education can no longer be equated exclusively with a transfer of knowledge and values from teacher to pupil. More and more, education is a matter of maieutics: the teacher should bring the knowledge which is present in the student to the surface. This different view on the process of education also entails other ideals of communication. More and more, the authoritarian position of the teacher has to yield to a context of philosophical dialogue. It is true that the educational process is to a large degree still supervised by the teacher, but the student nonetheless gains a much greater independence. Education becomes a matter of exchange between teacher and pupil, and is finally transformed to reciprocal *συμφιλοσοφείν*.<sup>37</sup>

Also at this level, fidelity between teacher and pupil remains important. And whereas the loyalty of the child towards his *παιδαγωγός* and/or *διδάσκαλος* was never called into question, the fidelity of the mature student towards his teacher is thematized. A student who makes progress towards virtue is afflicted when he recalls a dead teacher who can no longer see him in his present condition, and he would pray to the gods that he would come to life again so as to be able to observe his life and actions (De prof. in virt. 85d). And also a student who enters a political career should remain faithful to his political mentor, and should even contribute to the latter's honour by his own brilliance (Praec. ger. reip. 806a). Good examples in this respect are Alexander (who held also his earlier schoolmasters in esteem; Alex. 24, 10/11 and 25, 6–8; cf. Reg. et imp. apophth. 179ef),<sup>38</sup> Metellus Nepos (who gave his teacher a beautiful funeral; Cic. 26, 11; cf. also Reg. et imp. apophth. 205a), and Plutarch himself, who repeatedly honours his own teacher Ammonius (infra) and who also dedicated one of his writings

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Cic. 24, 8; Dion 20, 2; Brut. 24, 1; De prof. in virt. 77c; De tuenda 122b; cf. also Brut. 12, 3 and De genio Socr. 578f.

<sup>38</sup> Also his relation with Aristotle was at first one of friendship (Alex. 8, 4); later on, however, Alexander was more suspicious towards his teacher, although he even then gave evidence of a certain kindness towards him (Alex. 8, 4).

to him;<sup>39</sup> as usual, Epicurus sets a bad example, rejecting all his teachers, even Democritus, out of his own passion for fame (*Non posse* 1100a).

However, the relation between teacher and pupil is not only a matter of sincere loyalty, it is also a matter of friendship (*De virt. mor.* 448e; *Maxime cum principibus* 778ab). Indeed, the student's growth towards greater independence clears the way for a greater reciprocity between teacher and student, and allows the mainly unilateral relation of fidelity (from teacher towards pupil) to develop into a bilateral relation of friendship.<sup>40</sup>

### 3. Two case-studies

#### 3.1. An ideal student: Fundanus

In the *Corpus Plutarcheum* more than one student is praised for his good disposition. Aristodemus of Aegium, for instance, one of the *ἐταῖροι*<sup>41</sup> who participates in the discussion on Colotes' book,<sup>42</sup> is characterized as "no mere thyrsus-bearer of the Academy, but a very enthusiastic follower of Plato" (*Adv. Colot.* 1107f). He apparently had mastered the technique of good listening (1107f) and knows that he should not be carried away by his feelings of anger (even at this point referring to his great example Plato; 1108a). Diogenianus, as well, is praised as a young man with an excellent nature, combining intellectual and moral qualities (*De Pyth. or.* 394f–395a).

Here, we focus on another ideal student, Fundanus, the principal speaker of *De cohibenda ira*. The account of his moral progress, which he gives to his friend Sulla, is rich in anecdotes and quotations. Fundanus appears to be quite familiar with the sayings of the great philosophers. The references to Socrates (455ab, 458c, 461d), Plato (457c, 463c, 463e), Aristotle (454c, 458f–459a, 460c), Arcesilaus (461d), Polemon (462d), Heraclitus (457d), Diogenes (460e), Aristippus (462de), Zeno (462f), Panaetius (who refers to Anaxagoras, 463d), Empedocles (464b), Seneca (461f–462a) and Hieronymus (454f, 460cd) sufficiently illustrate his learning and acumen.

A striking aspect of Fundanus' person is his great independence. He refers to his teacher Musonius only once, although he takes care to mention

<sup>39</sup> See Lamprias catalogue, n° 84: Ἀμμώνιος, ἢ περὶ τοῦ μὴ ἡδέως τῇ κακίᾳ συνείναι; cf. also the mentioning of his name at the end of the *Life of Themistocles*, 32, 6.

<sup>40</sup> In *Maxime cum principibus* 777d, Plutarch underlines that the philosopher should not ask a tuition-fee from the ruler: the relation should rather be one of friendship. Cf. also *Quaest. Rom.* 278de.

<sup>41</sup> On the meaning of the term *ἐταῖρος* in this context, see J. Glucker, o.c. [n. 29], 265/266.

<sup>42</sup> He is one of the principal speakers in *Non posse*; cf. H. Adam, *Plutarchs Schrift non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum*, Amsterdam 1974 (*Studien zur antiken Philosophie*, 4), 9.

him at the very outset of his account (453d), thus showing his respect for his honoured teacher. Yet it is clear that Musonius' name does not function as *argumentum ex auctoritate*: Fundanus only adopts the position of his teacher because he can himself support it with personal (cf. οἶμαί) arguments (453d). In that way, he gives evidence, from the very beginning of his discourse, of his capacity for autonomous thinking.<sup>43</sup>

Furthermore, his great independence appears to go hand in hand with a critical mind. Fundanus is able to make a correct and nuanced distinction between right and wrong opinions. He has very good reasons to reject a certain opinion of Hieronymus (454f), but this disagreement does not lead to an overall negative evaluation of the author. On the contrary, Fundanus hastens to add that on other points, Hieronymus' words and advice are useful (454f) and he indeed quotes him with approval further on in his account (460cd). The same is true in the case of Plato. The great philosopher is once criticized (although he is not mentioned nominatim), and his position is replaced by a better alternative (457c), but he later on wins Fundanus' approval in other matters (463c and 463e).

In the moral domain, Fundanus has mastered the theoretical aspects of his personal problem. He has a good insight into the typical characteristics and the nature of anger<sup>44</sup> and into the powers of reason (453e, 459ab, 459d). These theoretical insights are then related to a concrete moral therapy. Fundanus is not blind to his own faults (459c), and continually keeps an eye on himself (456ab, 463e, 464c). Proceeding quite methodically (455e), he starts off a process of moral amelioration in which gradual habituation is of paramount importance (459b, 461e, 464c). Personal observations, which once again illustrate Fundanus' independence, contribute to the whole process of improvement. Finally, he does not lose himself in one aspect of his personality, but succeeds in connecting different elements in a meaningful way. When he sees, for instance, that curiosity (πολυπραγμοσύνη) can often lead to anger, he decides to do away with it (463f–464a), and he finally places his therapy of anger on a level with abstention from love, wine, or lying (464bc).

---

<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, one should note that it is not clear whether Fundanus regarded himself as a Stoic philosopher (as his teacher Musonius, of course, did); see D. Babut, *Plutarque et le stoïcisme*, Paris 1969, 240.

<sup>44</sup> See 453ef, 454b, 454d, 455c–e, 456c, 456e–457c, 458cd, 460d, 461a, 462f–463a, etc.

The result of this process is certainly worth seeing: Fundanus stands out because of his mildness (453b and 464d),<sup>45</sup> which does not in the least damage his activity (453b). Moreover, although it is clear that he is (deservedly) quite satisfied with himself (464d), he usually refrains from self-praise: he tones down the praising words of his friend Sulla (453cd), he leaves open whether the course he preferred to follow was indeed the right one (455e), and he does not forget to attribute part of his success to the god (464d).<sup>46</sup> But in spite of this avoidance of boasting self-praise, Fundanus by his whole discourse reveals himself as an ideal pupil, in whom the great possibilities of the whole educational process come to light and who also for that reason presents himself as a new, shining example that is worthy of imitation.

### 3.2. An ideal teacher: Ammonius

Just as there can be found more than one “ideal student” in the Corpus Plutarcheum, one can find several individuals who appear to qualify for the title of ideal teacher. We already met Socrates, who preferred the pedagogical method of maieutics to merely teaching knowledge from without (Quaest. Plat. 1, 1000de), and who, in the moral field, found the ideal way of admonishing his interlocutors (De ad. et am. 71f–72a; Quaest. Plat. 1, 999ef). However, Socrates (who, by the way, had an excellent teacher himself, in the person of his famous δαμόνιον; De gen. Socr. 589ef) refused to play the part of teacher within the framework of traditional institutions (An seni 796d), but gave his task of educator a highly personal interpretation, being the first to show that life as a whole, in all its aspects, admits philosophy (An seni 796e). Also Plutarch himself is sometimes depicted as an ideal teacher (who directs himself to ideal students; De soll. an. 964d). An examination of Plutarch’s way of acting in *De sera numinis vindicta*, *Non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum* and in some of the *Quaestiones convivales* would yield some interesting conclusions. Here, however, we focus on another ideal teacher, Ammonius.

Plutarch writes of his own teacher in three works.<sup>47</sup> In *De E apud Delphos*, Ammonius opens the discussion with a short introduction on the nature of the god Apollo (“no less a philosopher than a prophet”; 385bc), and about

<sup>45</sup> On the prominent place of *πραότης* in the works of Plutarch, see H. Martin, *The Concept of Praotes in Plutarch’s Lives*, GRBS 3 (1960), 65–73, and J. de Romilly, *La douceur dans la pensée grecque*, Paris 1979, 275–307.

<sup>46</sup> A conduct which Plutarch explicitly recommends to the politician in *Praec. ger. reip.* 816e.

<sup>47</sup> See also C. P. Jones, *The Teacher of Plutarch*, HSPH 71 (1966), 205/206.



inquiry as the ἀρχή of philosophy (385c). From the beginning, then, he strongly underlines the zetetic aspect of the discussion: they are all together searching after the truth. In that way, the conversation about the meaning of the enigmatic “E” is placed in a broader philosophical perspective. For the time being, however, Ammonius does not offer a personal solution to the problem at hand; his words should be understood as an invitation to personal reflection.

Lamprias is the first to propose a theory (the mysterious E shows that the Sages were originally five in number; 385d–386a). Ammonius immediately sees through the intentions of his pupil, but confines himself to quiet smiling, thus leaving room for others (386ab). After the intervention of Nicander (386b–d), Theon explicitly addresses Ammonius, asking him permission to make a logically inspired contribution (386de). Without wasting words, the latter encourages his pupil to do so (386e). Thereafter, he, for a long time, remains in the background. It is Eustrophus of Athens who counters Theon’s contribution and thus clears the way for Plutarch’s own mathematical interpretation (387d–f). When all positions have been taken, Ammonius thinks the moment ready for his final intervention. He mildly evaluates the last contribution, recognizing the importance of mathematics in philosophy, and refraining from overly detailed refutation, he limits himself to pointing out one essential weakness in Plutarch’s argument (391ef). Then, he recalls the different positions that were defended in the previous discussion (391f–392a), thus proving that he has followed all argumentations attentively, and both linking and opposing his own answer to what has been said before. Finally, he gives his own explanation, in a neatly arranged, pedagogical discourse that is rounded off by a beautiful conclusion (392a–394c).

In *De defectu oraculorum*, the first problem is not introduced by Ammonius, but by Cleombrotus (410b). Not everyone, however, is convinced of the importance of the latter’s question, and Demetrius, the erudite grammarian, does not hesitate to make his scepticism perfectly clear (410c). When Cleombrotus nonetheless insists (410c–f), Ammonius for the first time intervenes, and by his intervention immediately closes a debate which appeared to offer few interesting perspectives (410f–411d).

Demetrius then sets the real problem of the obsolence of the oracles (411e–412d), and later also presents it to other friends (412d–f). After the first tempestuous reaction of the Cynic Didymus (413ab) and the reply of Lamprias (413cd), Ammonius again appears on the scene: he points to the implications of Lamprias’ answer (413de) and reveals an inconsistency in the position of Didymus (413ef). Finally, he finds his own solution in the

depopulation of Greece (413f–414c). This time, however, Ammonius' answer does not close the discussion. Even if Lamprias remains silent (no doubt out of respect for his teacher), he is clearly not convinced that Ammonius' solution has done away with all difficulties (414c–e). The discussion is indeed continued, and for a long time, Ammonius disappears from the scene. He interrupts Cleombrotus only to specify an Epicurean doctrine about demigods and its weakness (420c–e), taking care to remain courtly, by underlining that it is not considerate to attack people who are not present (420e), and again handing the floor over to Cleombrotus (420ef), thus formulating some rules for a good discussion. Again, Ammonius then keeps silent for a long time, and also his next intervention is rather short and intended to create greater clearness. First of all, by praising Theodorus' position, he also gives a positive evaluation of Lamprias' discourse (427e). Then, he reveals an important contradiction (427e–428a), and refraining from solving the question himself, he invites, with a smile, Lamprias to seek a solution or to make a personal (ἴδιον) contribution (428b). The latter accepts the invitation, and offers his contribution as a homage to Plato for Ammonius' sake (430f), in this way showing once more his faithful respect. After a short intervention of Demetrius, Ammonius again takes the floor, but this time too, he does not indulge in elaborate discussions. Rather, he once again incites Lamprias to expound his views, guaranteeing that the public is eager to listen and that the whole conversation is held in a climate of friendship (431b–d).

Finally, when the dialogue gradually approaches its end, Ammonius again appears in the limelight. The question which he raises is essential and important, and elaborated at great length: what is the place of the gods in Lamprias' physicalistic explanation that seems to reduce the essence of prophecy to vapours and exhalations (435a–e)? It is clear that the final question of the dialogue, from the mouth of Ammonius, does not only contrast with Philip's much easier problem (on the relation between the sun and Apollo; 434f–435a), but also with the opening question of the dialogue, which was formulated by Cleombrotus (410b). Unlike Philip and Cleombrotus, but just like Demetrius (411e–412d), Ammonius clearly knows to ask the right questions. Once again, however, he does not give the answer himself, but only introduces the problem and thus sets everyone thinking. And here as well, he invites Lamprias to develop his own position (435e). It is Lamprias who has the last word, but the dialogue concludes with a question; the search for the truth is not finished, but should be continued at another occasion (438de).

In general, there can be detected a few differences between Ammonius' way of proceeding in *De E apud Delphos* and in *De defectu oraculorum*.<sup>48</sup> In the latter dialogue, he acts less as a teacher, and more as one of the participants in the conversation. However, even in this dialogue, there is much that points to Ammonius' function as *καθηγητής*, especially in his interactions with Lamprias. Some general characteristics gradually begin to take shape. But before bringing them together, we must first deal with a third work.

In the *Quaestiones convivales*, Ammonius more than once plays an important role. At the symposium which the musician Erato organizes at Athens, Ammonius calls into question the custom of wearing flower-garlands at such occasions, introducing the topic as an exercise in discussion for the young men (3, 1, 646a).<sup>49</sup> Erato and Trypho take up the challenge (646b–648a), whereupon Ammonius keeps the conversation going: with a smile (and a *jeu de mots*), he renounces polemics, but instead introduces a new problem, concerning the nature of ivy (3, 2, 648b). His discourse makes a deep impression, and Trypho is unable to find a reply (648f). Still, the discussion proceeds in a good atmosphere: Ammonius promises that he will not reply (649a), and keeps his promise.

On another occasion, Ammonius acts as host himself. First, he takes some measures in order to reduce the tumultuous noise outside his house, and to restore the quiet inside. From this follows the first problem: why are people who are inside able to hear clearly those who are outside, whereas those who are outside cannot hear those inside so well (8, 3, 720d). This question is solved by Ammonius<sup>50</sup> (by means of a doctrine of Aristotle), and is replaced by another one, for which he proposes an answer himself, leaving, however, some room for further discussion (720de). When Boëthus has proposed his Epicurean explanation, Ammonius incites his pupil

<sup>48</sup> Cf. also C. P. Jones, o. c. [n. 47], 206.

<sup>49</sup> The fact that Plutarch explicitly dissociates himself from the group of *νεανίσκοι* who were unused to Ammonius, does not imply that he did at that moment no longer belong to the group of *νέοι* (cf. 649a: *ἡμῶν τῶν νέων*); see also C. P. Jones, o. c. [n. 47], 206 and S.-T. Teodorsson, *A Commentary on Plutarch's Table Talks*, Vol. I (Books 1–3), Göteborg 1989 (*Studia Graeca et Latina Gothoburgensia*, 51), 289; contra: K. Ziegler, *Plutarchos von Chaironeia*, in: *RE XXI 1*, Stuttgart 1951, c. 651: "Quaest. conv. 3, 1, bei der Schilderung des Gastmahls, das der Musiker Eraton in Athen gibt, wird nicht deutlich, ob P. sich hier noch zu den Schülern des das Gespräch leitenden Ammonios rechnet oder sich schon ein wenig auf gleichem Fuße mit ihm fühlt."

<sup>50</sup> According to S.-T. Teodorsson, *A Commentary on Plutarch's Table Talks*, Vol. 3 (Books 7–9), Göteborg 1996 (*Studia Graeca et Latina Gothoburgensia*, 62), 182, Ammonius' intervention closes a whole discussion: "Judging from the phrase *ἐζητοῦμεν ἡμεῖς* we may suppose that the discussion of this problem had lasted for some time when Ammonius intervened and proposed another subject."

Plutarch to reply (721d), and after the latter's contribution, he still adds some personal insights (722bc), without closing the discussion.

Finally, Ammonius plays an important role in the symposium which he organizes for a great number of erudite guests during the festival of the Muses. When rivalry between the different teachers leads to confusion, Ammonius intervenes, making use of the situation to pose the first problem (9, 1, 736e), and thus succeeding in assuaging the disturbance (9, 2, 737d). He also prevents further quarrels by preventing different teachers with the same competence from competing against one another (737e). Hermeias the geometer is the first to set a problem, and after the answer of Protopogenes, Ammonius invites Plutarch to reply (738a). Somewhat later, after several topics have been dealt with, Ammonius once again intervenes briefly. This time, he incites Lamprias to give a serious discussion of the problem at hand (9, 5, 740ab). Ammonius then remains in the background for a long time. We have to wait until the libations to the Muses have been made and a paean to Apollo has been sung, before Ammonius reappears. He agrees with the words of Herodes (9, 14, 743ef), and then introduces a new question, on the number of the Muses (744a). Herodes' reply is very brief (744ab), but Ammonius is not satisfied at all: smiling, he reformulates the question (744b), and encourages others to look for a more satisfying solution (744c). He also defends his own opinion (745d–746b), but does not claim to have offered the definitive answer: others should say what they think (746b). This time, however, Ammonius does have the last word. He gives a learned discourse on dancing, as an answer to the question of Thrasybulus, thus closing the conversation (9, 15, 747b–748d).

Before reconstructing, on the basis of these three works, the ideal image of the teacher Ammonius, we should give attention to an interesting passage from *De adulatore et amico*. There, Plutarch recalls an anecdote from his student days. He tells how Ammonius once, at an afternoon lecture, saw that some of his students had taken a luncheon that was far from frugal, and how he then ordered his freedman to strike his own slave, "because the boy could not lunch without wine". At the same time, he looked to his students, so that the rebuke took hold of the guilty (70e). In that way, Ammonius shows himself an expert in moral education: by reproving others for the shortcomings which he knows are present in his own acquaintances, he succeeds in correcting the latter without offending them (70e).

How, then, is Ammonius as a teacher portrayed in the works of Plutarch? First of all, he frequently raises all kinds of interesting questions, sometimes giving the answer himself, but much more often inviting others to

develop their own views.<sup>51</sup> In this way, he stimulates the independence and the zetetic attitude of his students. His pedagogical method is clearly much closer to maieutics than to ex cathedra teaching. Furthermore, several indications show that Ammonius speaks and acts with authority. Students honour him, and sometimes ask him permission to speak. More than once, he has the last word. He also lays down rules for a good discussion, and guarantees the smooth running of the conversation. In general, however, his authority does not harm the independence of the students. Ammonius usually keeps in the background, and only intervenes at key moments in the discussion, or at its beginning or end.

One of his most important tasks is the evaluation of what others have said. In this, Ammonius shows himself quite subtle. Often, he begins his evaluation with some positive comment which affirms the student. On the other hand, he does not hesitate to reveal weaknesses and problems in the positions of his students, although he always takes care that the good atmosphere remains intact. To that purpose, smiling can be very useful. Indeed, it is striking how often Ammonius smiles after one of his students has finished his contribution. Such smiling does not only illustrate the teacher's superiority,<sup>52</sup> but also takes the place of a lengthy (and polemical) discourse, makes room for other opinions, and contributes to the amicable atmosphere of *συμφιλοσοφείν*. If this picture matches the historical Ammonius, one begins to understand why Plutarch held his teacher in great esteem.

#### 4. Conclusion

4.1. Plutarch's writings contain two conflicting conceptions of education. On the one hand, education is regarded as a transfer of knowledge and values from teacher to pupil: *μανθάνειν* is *πάσχειν*. On the other hand, education is considered to be a maieutic process; the student discovers the knowledge and virtue which is already present in himself: *μανθάνειν* is *ἀνάμνησις*. The second conception is preferable, and is, in the first place, connected with the highest level of philosophical *παιδεία*. The first conception is important in the phase which precedes this philosophical *παιδεία*, that is, the propaedeutic phase.

---

<sup>51</sup> In that sense, he resembles Plato himself, at least if we can believe the comic poet Epicrates; see Athenaeus, *Deipnosophist.* 2,59f (fr. 11 Kock = fr. 10 Kassel-Austin); cf. also M.L. Clarke, o. c. [n. 16], 66: "it is significant that Plato is shown leaving the students to themselves and confining himself to encouragement."

<sup>52</sup> Cf. D. Babut, *La composition des dialogues Pythiques de Plutarque et le problème de leur unité*, *Journal des savants* (1992), 195: "le tranquille sourire [...], qui est comme la marque de la supériorité du vrai philosophe."

4.2. There is a direct relation between the conception of education and the way in which the teacher and pupil communicate with one another. In the first case (education as a transfer of knowledge and values), the communication process between teacher and pupil is *monological*. The teacher gives his pupil a share of his own knowledge. The pupil, on his part, remains passive-receptive, and assimilates what the teacher offers him. He is, as it were, a kind of vessel into which knowledge and values are poured. In the second case (education as a maieutic process), the communication process is clearly *dialogical*. The student gains considerable independence, and is himself in search of the truth (zetetic attitude) and striving for virtue; Fundanus is the paradigm. Accordingly, the teacher mitigates his authoritarian way of acting. He still offers much knowledge, to be sure, and still supervises the whole educational process, but he in the first place stimulates and encourages his student, without endangering the latter's independence; Ammonius is the paradigm.

4.3. Both conceptions of the educational process fit in with the age differences of the pupils (even though exceptionally well endowed children can move up to the maieutic phase earlier), and with the educational framework and insights that existed in Plutarch's times. The conception of education as a transfer of knowledge and values fits in with the contemporary system of education; the conception of education as a maieutic process is based on the convictions that were defended in a Platonist doctrine. Plutarch, then, was certainly no innovator. He did not propagate revolutionary ideas, but reflected on existing opinions and handed them on to the next generation, thus entering himself the pedagogical process. Plutarch indeed was himself *καθηγητής* in his hometown Chaeroneia, and nothing prevents us from believing that he really delighted in his pedagogical activities. No doubt he would have been glad if he knew that he was not only honoured by his own pupils, but also by many generations after them, as appears from the beautiful testimonium of Himerius (Ecl. 7, 4):

Πλουτάρχου, δι' οὗ πάντας ὑμεῖς παιδεύετε.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> This article is a more elaborate version of a paper that was read at the 133<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting of the American Philological Association (Philadelphia, January 3–7, 2002).