philosophy could have been conducted with the awareness of the concepts of modern political theory. Rosler did not examine what Aristotle actually did and why he proceeded the way he did, whereas for the history of political thought it is more instructive to learn about the way a philosopher expressed his views, to learn the terms and concepts he used – or did not (yet) use, and the larger systematic context which gives meaning to the specific ideas he discusses.

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**Eckart Schütrumpf**


The personality and career of Alcibiades exert an endless fascination. The handsome, brilliant aristocrat and ward of Pericles captivated the Athenians, but his ambition and outrageous behavior caused his motives in war and politics to be mistrusted. His role in the defeat of Athens, from the Sicilian expedition to Aegospotami, was a major concern of Thucydides and Xenophon, as well as of Ephorus, Theopompos, and other historians preserved only in fragments. Plato admitted that Socrates charmed but could not tame his ambitious and adulation-craving spirit. Finally, hundreds of years after Alcibiades’ death, Plutarch attempted an overview of this complex and contradictory statesman/general in his *Parallel Lives*, eccentrically comparing him with the Roman Coriolanus. Writing in the age of Trajan, he aimed at an audience of his contemporaries, Greek and Roman. The distinctive portrait he created was based on his own combination of source material from historians, Socratic dialogues, and anecdotes. The multiple levels of Plutarch’s biography, historical, artistic, and moral, render this one of the biographer’s most complex lives.

Simon Verdegem’s *Plutarch’s Life of Alcibiades* offers a detailed and sophisticated reading of the life, combining monograph and commentary. He analyzes the text paragraph by paragraph, but also divides the text into ten chapters according to the life’s internal structure. The partial conclusions of the individual chapters are summed up in the final chapter.

The book addresses three major questions: where Plutarch got his information, how he reshaped it for his account, and how he evaluated Alcibiades’ character. The book’s subtitle, ‘Story, Text and Moralism’, signals V.’s overall approach and supplies the template for his introductory and concluding chapters. In the Introduction, under ‘Moralism’, V. treats the overall purpose of the *Lives* and the role of comparison, and offers a long section (pp. 35–58) on pre-Plutarchan depictions of Alcibiades. The principles of the analysis which will be developed in the course of the book follow. Under ‘Story’, V. sets out the narratological distinction between story, that is, the underlying events, and text, the words that we read, and reviews Plutarch’s adaptation of his source material to construct the basic story, or referential level, of the *Life*. V. then discusses under ‘Text’ Plutarch’s narrative technique, using the categories of time, narrator, focalization, and speech representation. Finally, he considers the pairing of *Alcibiades* with
Coriolanus and the time of composition relative to other lives, especially Nicias and Lysander.

The detailed analyses that follow in the successive chapters extend these basic topics through the whole life. In the Conclusion, V. notes that Plutarch’s method of work in Alc. 14–26 appears to follow the practice, recognized by Pelling for the lives of the late Roman republic (cf. C. Pelling, Plutarch and History, London 2002, 24), of preparing a draft based on one author (in this case Thucydides). However, in Alc. 1–13 and 27–39 Plutarch drew on multiple sources, using Plato, Isocrates, and others for the former section and Xenophon, Ephorus, and Theopompus for the latter. V. recognizes that in Alcibiades as in other lives, Plutarch employs a number of narrative techniques to enhance his presentation of his protagonist: omission, conflation or distinction of similar items, chronological displacement, and occasionally alteration (e.g. at 14.8, 17.4, and 35.6) or even fabrication (20.2, the capture of Rhegium). Such manipulation by Plutarch of his source material results in a more focused and persuasive life, although it renders more difficult the modern historian’s work of reconstructing the past. In his conclusion, V. further notes that after the achronological section in Alc. 2–9 the narrative is fundamentally chronological, but that in 17.1–39.9 Plutarch streamlines the narrative and keeps it focused on Alcibiades through prolepses and analepses. Plutarch’s narratorial comments, though they address moral issues, often «do not convey an unequivocal moral message.» V. argues that Plutarch wanted his readers to think for themselves and form their own opinion about Alcibiades (416). A man of undoubted strategic insight, skill at seizing opportunities, and rhetorical ability, but driven by personal ambition and scornful of laws and conventions, Alcibiades «appears to combine a natural potential for virtue (4.1–2, 6.1) with many uncontrolled innate passions (2.1: 16.9)» (419). In V.’s view, the reader ends with a paradox: if one reads the Life of Alcibiades in search of political advice, one learns that personal virtue should be primary, while the reader looking for a guideline for the moral evaluation of complex figures like Alcibiades is invited to question the priority of ethical standards» (423).

V.’s treatment of e. 23 offers a sample of his method and interests. He rightly sees the central section on Alcibiades’ adaptability (23.4–7) as a character excursus serving also as a «thought-provoking transition» between Alcibiades’ condemnation and exile from Athens and his return to command the Athenian fleet at Samos. As a transitional passage, this section is treated in a separate chapter, as is Alc. 16, a similar if longer discussion. V. notes that the character traits of the «chameleon» hero have already been seen in Alcibiades’ behavior at Athens, and will be again at Sparta, with the same sequence of consequences: adulation, envy, distrust, and rejection. V. accepts Van Meervenne’s argument that parallel passages in Plutarch’s De adulatore et amico point to a Plutarchian hypomnema on flattery as the immediate source for the passage in the Life, although other ancient sources (Atheneus, Nepos, Aelian) are known for some items. Alcibiades’ flexibility in Plutarch’s presentation offers a major contrast to the rigidity of Coriolanus in the partner life. The significance of the episode of Timaeas’ seduction and its consequences (23.6–9) is explained by the Euripidean quote comparing Alcibiades to Helen which introduces it. It offers a particular example of the larger issue rightly recognized by V.: Alcibiades’ apparent change of character conceals an underlying continuity. V. sensitively notes Plutarch’s ever-shifting hints of moral evaluation: Theano’s refusal to curse Alcibiades after his condemnation (22.5) and the severity of the penalty he received (cf. tōsaτhōn, 23.1) may indicate that the demos erred in judgment, but the corruption of Timaeas, presented without any of the
hesitation found in Agesilaus and Lysander, shows Alcibiades clearly at fault. Although closely tied to the flattery analysis of V.’s chapter 6, the Timaea episode, rather arbitrarily, is treated separately in chapter 7.

The great virtue of V.’s study is its thorough treatment of all issues relating to Plutarch’s presentation of Alcibiades, in particular his reconfiguration of sources to create a dynamic portrait. V.’s discussion of the life’s final chapters, including the defeat at Notium, Alcibiades’ advice at Aegospotami, and his death in Phrygia, is especially good at clarifying Plutarch’s careful work in composing his account. While drawing on previous traditions, the biographer reshaped the narrative or plot of Alcibiades’ downfall to present him at this stage as a victim, both of his enemies and of his own licentious past and recent successes. V.’s detailed analysis of the different strategies behind the two narratives of Aegospotami in Lysander and Alcibiades (372–84) demonstrates Plutarch’s desire to suggest in the latter life that the Athenian confrontation with Lysander on that occasion might have ended differently, and perhaps even led to the complete defeat of the Spartan fleet rather than the surrender of Athens. Using the same sources, Plutarch was able to convey different historical scenarios, depending on the protagonist of either life.

V.’s treatment of the moral issues raised in the Life, while containing many excellent observations, seems less successful than his analysis of Plutarch’s method. Plutarch’s presentation is hardly straightforward, but rather veers back and forth. V. often looks for a firm, all-encompassing moral evaluation which the biographer is reluctant to offer. The comparison with Coriolanus, appropriately cited by V. at 422–23, praises Alcibiades’ accomplishments and finds his flattery of the demos more acceptable than Coriolanus’ pride, but excoriates his rejection of standard moral values. A key to Plutarch’s thinking may lie in the role of doxa (opinion, or the opinion of the many, i.e. fame), a central Platonic concept. Plutarch asserts that Alcibiades wished for fame (cf. 6.4, his philotimia and philodoxia), and he won it, but he only partially achieved his goal to be first (cf. 2.1, to philoprôton). Socrates tried to convince him that only excellence in virtue could fulfill his driving ambition (cf. 7.5), but instead he rushed into politics, encouraged by those who said he would surpass Pericles in power and doxa (6.4). He forced his way ahead of Nicias and other older men through cleverness, a glib tongue, and deception. However, his outrageous disregard for traditional standards of behavior won him an ambivalent notoriety, and led to his exile from Athens, and again from Sparta. Sometime after his flight from Sparta, Plutarch suggests, perhaps at the court of Tissaphernes, he must have realized that his ambition for fame required Athens’ success and bent all his formidable energies to that goal, restraining the fleet at Samos from attacking the junta in the capital and winning victories in the Aegean. Here V. brings out well how Plutarch’s narrative is shaped to demonstrate his hero’s new direction (cf. 26.4–5). Perhaps, the Life hints, Alcibiades had finally chosen to pursue virtue rather than mere fame and that Socrates’ latent influence had taken hold. The tragedy for Alcibiades and for Athens was that it was too late: his earlier behavior, which had established him as brilliant but unreliable and perhaps tyrannical, led to his second exile, the rejection of his advice at Aegospotami, and his death. V. presents much of this role of doxa in Alcibiades’ career, but is uncertain how to interpret it. Pelling has
rightly observed that Plutarch often declines to give specific advice, but combines descriptive and protreptic moralism with the aim of sensitizing his audience and increasing his readers’ insight into moral issues in politics. The Life of Alcibiades displays Plutarch’s method at its most sophisticated. Alcibiades’ behavior appears so varied, and its consequences so contradictory, that there is a tendency for readers to throw up their hands, concluding with V. that he is «a difficult character to judge.» Rather, I suggest, Plutarch has shown us a man who chose to pursue fame and success without a concern for virtue. When finally, forced by his own desperate situation and that of his city, he did act nobly, it was too late. His doxa betrayed him. Or to put it another way, his licentious and self-centered behavior won him fame but undercut the actions which were his noblest achievement.

The book’s monograph form has some negative features. The very expansiveness of V.’s treatment leads to some repetition, though readers will find individual passages and the conclusion easy to consult. The commentary does not comment on grammar or style. While there are indices of passages and a very full and up-to-date bibliography, an index of topics would have been helpful. V. has reserved his full discussion of Plutarch’s Comparison with Coriolanus, touched upon at various points in the commentary, for an article now in press. These are quibbles: V.’s commentary is a thorough guide to this challenging biography of an extremely controversial figure.

Chapel Hill

Philip A. Stadter


Se la storia della tradizione della letteratura greca antica è anche storia della sua perdita, il caso di Galeno e dei suoi scritti sembra in parte smentire questa idea. L’indice del cosiddetto ‘unknown Galen’ – sconosciuto perché non incluso nella pubblicazione degli Opera omnia di C. G. Kühn, Lipsia 1821–1833 –, segna infatti una crescita costante: dal 1945 al 1999 il ritrovamento di un nuovo frammento, e spesso di un’opera intera, è stato annunciato in media ogni due anni, incrementando la fruibilità del Corpus Galenicum, sia in lingua greca sia attraverso le traduzioni nelle lingue vicino-orientali, di un quarto rispetto al Kühn. La scoperta di A. Pietrobelli a Salonico nel gennaio 2005 del codice Vlatadon 14, un manoscritto greco del XV secolo, ha costituito senz’altro l’episodio più fortuna-

2 Sono dati che desumo dalla prefazione al volume The Unknown Galen, a c. di V. Nutton, London 2002 (BICS 77), VII–VIII: VII.