LIFE AFTER DEATH IN PLUTARCH'S MORALIA

I. Introduction*

The Greek author Plutarch, best known for his Lives, also wrote a number of essays, dialogues, letters and discourses on diverse subjects, which are collectively known as the Moralia.1 These miscellaneous writings cover a range of subjects and reveal their author's phenomenal learning and wide interests. Philosophical problems, particularly those of an ethical nature, receive the greatest attention, although metaphysical questions are not altogether ignored. Other topics include education, antiquities, music, politics, archaeology, aeteology, ethnology, philology, literature, history and science. Included also are personal letters, stories and anecdotes.

The entire collection is a testimony to the author's moral dignity and an index to the conditions of his age. Convinced of the benefits that Rome could derive from Greek culture and education, Plutarch has attempted to satisfy the demand for moral guidance in an age of reaction against the decadence of the Roman world, an age when faith in the old gods and philosophies was dwindling.

Accordingly, it is the religious aspect of his thinking that has attracted most attention. In fact, Plutarch, who in later life held a priesthood at Delphi, himself attached great importance to religion. He devoted his most elaborate

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*This article is constituted of six sections, entitled in accordance with the treatment as follows; I. Introduction; II. The Myth of Thespesius; III. Survival, Transmigration and Retribution; IV. The Myth of Timarchus; V. The Myth of Sulla, and VI. The Consolations.

[1]For text cf. Plutarch's Moralia with an English Translation by Frank Cole Babbit (and others), Loeb Classical Library, London (1927; repr. 1949) 16 vols.

compositions to its considerations. It is indeed this feeling for religion that makes him stand out among the intellectuals of his day. In this paper I propose to examine Plutarch's attitude to life after death as reflected in his major works.

Plutarch was born around A.D. 47 and died sometime after A.D. 120. He was thus a contemporary or near contemporary of such well-known classical authors as Tacitus, the younger Pliny, martial, Juvenal, Suetonius and Dio Chrysostom. There is reason to believe that he wrote some of his works in later life after the death of Domitian in A.D. 96.[2]

Plutarch no doubt thought of himself as a philosopher and a teacher. He was an eclectic, although inspired mainly by Plato and, to some extent, by Aristotle, the latter probably through indirect means. He quotes freely from the early Greek philosophers, but is hostile towards Stoics and Epicureans, although this hostility does not prevent him from borrowing their ideas when it suits his purpose. While leaning towards monotheism in religious matters, he retained many traditional Greek beliefs. He has been described as "a traditionalist in his philosophy as in much else, an expert in the debates of the schools, a convinced Platonist and a serious person who has no intention of putting his life and his theories into separate compartments."[3]

In his youth, stoicism was the fashionable philosophical persuasion throughout the Roman world. It was the age of Seneca, Epictetus and the influential group of first century Roman Stoics. However, towards the end of Plutarch's life Stoicism began to give way to new and developing forms of Platonist even if he was not in all respects in agreement with the orthodoxy of the school."[4]

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[2]K. Ziegler: 'Plutarchos (2)' R.E. xxi.1 (1951) p. 635 ff; C.P. Jones: 'Toward a Chronology of Plutarch's Works' J.R.S. vol. lvi. 1-2 (1966) p. 61-75.

[3]D.A. Russell: Plutarch, London (1963) p. 69.

[4]Russell: op.cit. p. 73.

With such a vast corpus of writings dealing with a variety of subjects and covering many years of their author's life, it is hardly surprising to find inconsistent and sometimes contradictory opinions on the same subject. This is specially the case with life after death, where Plutarch inherited an exhaustive tradition of Hellenic and Hellenistic thought, mythology, and our principal sources for Plutarch's views on the nature of the soul and its destiny after death are the eschatological myths incorporated in three of his major dialogues, namely, the De Sera Numinis Vindicta ("On The Delays Of Divine Vengeance"), the De Genio Socratis ("On the Sign of Socrates") and the De facie Quae In Orbe Lunae Apparet ("On the Face of the Moon"). We are at once faced with a problem: how seriously does Plutarch expect us to take these myths and the doctrines embodied in them? It may be argued that in composing these myths he was merely observing a literary convention established by his model, the Platonic dialogue. On the other hand it has been observed that, unlike Plato, Plutarch tends to put the main philosophical content of a treatise in to the myth.[5]

There has been no definite agreement on the chronological order of the three dialogues and, consequently, of the myths contained in them. I am incluned to take the De Sera Numinis Vindicta as the earliest and the De Genio Socratis representing an intermediate stage of development in Plutarch's eschatology.

Brenk would like to see in these myths a progressive drifting away from Platonic influence. According to him, the Thespesius myth is the most Platonic of the three, while the myth of Sulla is the least. Brenk however reminds us that the details and emphasis of a myth depend upon the exigencies of a theme, so that it is often difficult to determine whether the omission or inclusion of a particular detail is a conscious divergence from a Platonic parallel or whether it is simply dictated by the nature of the theme.[6] Moreover, the impact of

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[5] F.E. Brenk, In Mist Apparalled: Religious Themes in Plutarch's Moralia and Lives Leiden (1977) p.9.

[6] Brenk: op.cit. p. 134.

Platonic models on all three myths has been convincingly demonstrated.[7] In addition to the myths I propose to consider the two "Consolations" which appear among Plutarch's works, as well as other passages from his writings which have a bearing on his view of life after death.

Fundamental to the understanding of Plutarch's myths is his conception of the human being as composed of body (soma) soul (psuche) and mind (nous) and the identification of the daemon (daimon) with the soul, or its higher part, the mind. Significant also is the conception of the moon as the abode of the dead, replacing the traditional Underworld (Hades), and the association of the death experience with initiation into the mysteries. He also sees the soul undergoing a process of purification, once it has been separated from the body. This too is in keeping with the teachings of Plato (e.g. in the Phaedo) and of Aristoitle.[8]

It has also been strongly argued that underlying Plutarch's myths is an Orphico-Pythagorean doctrine, which is adopted by Plato, and which runs through the entire Greek literary tradition, namely, that the body is the tomb of the soul, that the soul begins to live only at the time of death,[9] that in reality our present life is death. The obvious corollary to this is the feeling that Hell is around us and that there is no need to look for it in another world. Now, if the body is truly the tomb of the soul, if Hell is around us, if we, who believe ourselves to be alive, are really dead, then real life must be found in the world to come, and death must become an agreeable thing. If this is so, what causes us to be reborn here on earth? What is this irresistible pull towards the body (Quae lucis miseris tam dira cupido)?[10]

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[7] W. Hamilton: 'The Myth in Plutarch's De Facie' C.Q. vol. xxviii (1934) p. 24-30; 'The Myth in Plutarch's De Genio' ibid. p. 176-182.

[8] C.J. Giankaris: Plutarch New York (1970) p. 137.

[9] Plato: Gorgias 493a.

[10] Virgil: Aeneid vi, 721.

Each of Plutarch's myths responds in a different manner to this perplexing problem. But they all have this in common: they describe that fatal earthward pull of carnal pleasure, which leads to reincarnation. The approach is decidedly pessimistic, and represents the darker side of destiny.[11]

Plutarch's threefold division of the human being into body, soul and mind can be traced back to Plato.[12] The possible influence of Posidonius has been urged, but is made unlikely by Galen's remark that Posidonius thought of the appetitive, the emotional and the rational, not as parts, but rather as faculties of the soul.[13]

The characteristic feature of Plato's psychology is the doctrine that the soul consists of three parts, namely, the rational (to logistikon), the emotional (to epithumetikon) and the appetitive (to thumoeides). In the Republic[14] Socrates adopts it as a short and convenient, though inaccurate, classification. This doctrine also forms the kernel of the Phaedrus myth. But in the Timaeus this threefold division of the soul is combined with a new principle of classification. The soul has an immortal and a mortal part, and the mortal part includes both the emotional and the appetitive. As Hamilton has pointed out,[15] it is only a step from this distinction to the one which Plutarch makes between mind and soul. With Plutarch, however, body, soul and mind are three separate things, even more distinct than the three parts into which Plato divides the soul. Nevertheless for Plutarch, as much as for Plato, the threefold division signifies the affinity of the highest part with the divine.[16]

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[11] G. Meautis: 'Le Mythe de Timarque' R.E.A vol. lii (1950) p. 201-211.

[12] Cf. Plato: Timaeus 30b, 41-43; 90a; cf. also Laws 961d-e and Phaedrus 247d.

[13] Galen: De Plac. Hipp. et Plat. p. 501 (Muller); cf. W. Hamilton: 'The Myth in Plutarch's De Facie' p. 28 n.1.

[14] Plato: Republic 435d.

[15] Hamilton: loc.cit.

[16] W.A. Beardslee: 'De Facie Quae In Orbe Lunae (contd.)

This affinity was given an astronomical setting by the later Platonists, according to whom the purified soul left the air and rose to its original home in the aether, having become immortal through purification by philosophy or ritual, or both, and having freed its eternal and intelligible essence, which is mind, from the perishing sensible vehicles of earthly body and aerial soul. Though united to God, this purified aether-like soul was believed to retain its individuality for ever.

This view came to be associated with Posidonius, who did most to reconcile Stoic thought with Pythagorean and Platonic concepts. It is also mentioned in Cicero's Tusculan Disputations[17] and finds expression in his Dream of Scipio and in some writings of Seneca, such as his letter to Marcia. It also inspired Orphic, Mithraic and Egyptian mystery cults, which played such a prominent role in Roman life during the first two centuries of the Empire.[18] Plutarch's own involvement in such mystery cults is attested by many passages, including a specific reference in the 'Consolation' to his wife,[19] which will be discussed in the last section of this paper.

These mystery cults brought into vogue the celestial eschatology, whose beginnings in Greece can be traced back to Orphic and Pythagorean sources, and whose earliest embodiments in literature go back to the opening lines of Parmenides poem and the writings of Plato, the Phaedrus in particular.

Apparet' in H.D. Betz, ed.: Plutarch's Theological Writings And Early Christian Literature, Leiden (1975) p. 286-300.

[17] Cicero: Tusc. Disp. i, 17-19.

[18] J.A. Stewart: The Myths Of Plato, London (1905) p. 437 and 439.

[19] Plutarch: Consolatio Ad Uxorem 611e.

Whereas the traditional eschatology conceived of the dead as going to a place on earth, or under the earth, to be judged and sent over to eternal feasting or otherwise, this celestial eschatology conceives the soul as an exile from Heaven, returning at death to its native land in an upward flight through the heavenly spheres.

So completely did this notion of ascent (anabasis) replace that of descent (katabasis) that even the place of torment came to be localized somewhere in the air. All three of Plutarch's myths follow this celestial eschatology.

Celestial eschatologies of a similar nature were also current in ancient India around the sixth century B.C., and probably much earlier. One of the Upanishads describes the departed soul rising up to the moon which is the door of the heavenly world. If it passes this door successfully, it proceeds to the worlds of fire, wind, sky, and the gods.[20] Similarly, the Syrian cults and the Persian mysteries of Mithras, which came into vogue in the West around the Christian era, taught that the soul of the just man, instead of going below the ground, rose to the sky, where it enjoyed divine bliss in the midst of the stars in the eternal light. Only the wicked were condemned to roam the earth's surface or to be dragged by demons into the dusky depths ruled by the spirit of evil. There was no common opinion regarding the abode of the just. According to the Chaldeans, reason, when it left the body, returned to its author, the sun, the master and intelligence of the universe. Mithraism taught that the spirit rose to the summit of the heavens by way of the planetary spheres.[21]

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[20] Kaushitaki Upanishad i, 2 p. 303 (tr. R.E.Hume, O.U.P. (1921; repr. 1954); cf. G. Parrinder: 'Religions of the East' in A. Toynbee and A. Koestler, ed.: Life After Death, London (1976) p. 81.

[21] F.Cumont: After-Life In Roman Paganism, Y.U.P. (1959) p. 37.

It was widely believed that the spirits of the dead went to inhabit the moon. The Manichaeans affirmed that when the moon was in crescent, its circumference was swelled by the souls which it drew up from the earth, and that when it was waning it transferred these souls to the sun. The boat of the moon, which plied in the sky, received a load of souls, which every month it transferred to the sun's larger vessel. The Pythagoreans, who identified the Isles of The Blessed with the sun and moon, believed that souls, after purification by air, went to dwell in the moon, which contained the Elysian Fields, the meadows of Hades, where the shades of the heroes enjoyed their repose, and which was ruled by Persephone, whom they assimilated to Artemis. These views are parodied in Lucian's Vera Historia.[22]

During the last two centuries B.C., with the spread of oriental astrology, a new doctrine reached the West and was adopted by the Pythagoreans, followed by other schools. The sun, the intelligent light, the ruler, placed at the centre of the universe, regulated the harmonious movement of the heavenly bodies by attracting and repelling them periodically through its heat. Since the stars were thought to govern physical and moral phenomena on earth, the sun, which regulated them, became the author of human reason, presiding over the birth of souls, while bodies developed under the influence of the moon. Similarly, at death the sun drew the soul back to itself, so that Reason returned to its divine home. Just as the stars were alternately attracted and repelled by the sun, so the souls underwent a cycle of migrations, which caused them to circulate between heaven and earth.

This solar eschatology (in which Nilsson saw the influence of hellenized Egyptian priests) came to be combined with the earlier lunar eschatology, so that the moon was thought of as presiding over the formation and decomposition

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[22] Cumont: op.cit. p. 101-3.

of the body in the physical life, while the sun was the author of reason. In coming down to earth the soul acquired an aerial body in the sphere of the moon. Similarly, when at death the soul ascended to its home, the moon dissolved this subtle image.[23] The impact of all these teachings on Plutarch will be evident from the following examination of his eschatological myths.

II. The Myth of Thespesius[24]

The principal theme of Plutarch's dialogue De Sera Numinis Vindicta is the inevitability with which the guilty are punished: "The mills of the gods grind slow but sure."[25] (Every) crime is punished in this world. Though the direct intervention of the gods is suggested by the title, Plutarch insists that vice usually brings its own punishment with it; if retribution comes at all, it is through human agents rather than through supernatural intervention. Those who appear to escape punishment altogether are nevertheless punished by their own conscience. The dialogue seeks to rationalize Greek history and justify divine providence by attempting to answer such perennial questions as why the wicked appear to flourish while the innocent suffer in this world, and why justice takes so long to come. It is also argued that sins of parents are visited on their children; just as in property and glory, so in retribution, inheritance affects individuals as well as families and cities.

The eschatological myth which is appended to this dialogue was no doubt suggested by the Myth of Er, which concludes Plato's Republic. Since the message of Plutarch's dialogue is that all wickedness is punished in this life, the concluding myth might appear to be not altogether essential to the argument of the word as a whole. The suggestion has sometimes been made, therefore, that the myth may have been added largely for literary reasons, to conform with the

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[23] Cumont: op.cit. p. 101-3.

[24] Plutarch: De Sera Numinis Vindicta chs. 22-31.=563b ff.

Platonic practice. "A modern reader," says R.H. Barrow, "who has read with some admiration the earlier part of this dialogue, with its conception of God as an infinitely patient and sympathetic healer of souls and its conviction that sin is its own punishment, will find the concluding myth to be a crude anticlimax, however well narrated. The only defence can be that it was in the Platonic tradition and it must be understood so."[26]

It can, however, be argued that the myth is an essential and integral part of the dialogue, which reinforces its main theme. In the dialogue Plutarch has attempted to substitute for the concept of divine punishment a process of spiritual therapy. Chastisement must therefore be reinterpreted as a corrective and preventive measure. The myth about the soul's destiny in the life to come serves to confirm this reinterpretation in a way that the arguments of the dialogue itself could not have done.[27] Though hard to demonstrate, retribution in after-life is a concept with an ethical value; and through the myth Plutarch hopes to impress it on the imagination, if not on the intellect.[28] Within the dialogue as a whole, the myth also serves an apologetic purpose. The vision of punishment in the world to come ultimately acquits Providence of any injustice in delaying punishment for the wicked in this life.[29]

The myth narrates how a certain Aridaeus (afterwards renamed Thespesius, i.e. "inspired"), a notorious profligate of Soli, lay unconscious for three days as the result of an accident, and revived at the time of his funeral. There followed such a remarkable change in his way of life that people began to ask him for the reason. According to his story, while he lay unconscious, the "intelligent part" (to

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[26] R.H.Barrow: Plutarch And His Times, London (1967) p. 102; cf. Brenk: op.cit. p. 26.

[27] H.D. Betz, P.A. Dirkse and E.W. Smith: 'De Sera Numinis Vindicta' in Betz ed. op.cit. p. 183-235; cf. p. 182.

[28] J. Oakesmith: The Religion Of Plutarch: A Pagan Creed for Apostolic Times, London etc. (1902) p. 116.

[29] Betz. Dirkse and Smith: loc.cit.

phronoun) of his soul left the body (leaving the rest of the soul behind to act as an anchor so that it would not be completely detached); and as it rose up, it seemed to open as though it were all one eye. He beheld the constellations which gave out such powerful rays of light that his soul seemed to ride upon the light as though on a calm sea.

It has been remarked that what we have here is a story in the form of an apocalyptic vision--a literary embodiment of the experience of initiation into the mysteries. Initiation is conceived as a death followed by a new birth--hence the new name. The initiate passes into a state of ecstacy from which he returns to ordinary life as a new man. As J.A. Stewart has observed, "The apparent death of Aridaeus-Thespesius stands in the myth for the ceremonial death which an initiated person suffers, who, in simulating actual death by falling into a trace or even by allowing himself to be treated as a corpse, dies to sin in order to live henceforth a regenerate life in this world." According to this interpretation, the accident that befalls our hero is in fact the mythological equivalent of the confusion (ekplexis) which confounds the candidate at the beginning of his initiation--comparable with the sharpness of death, and resulting in a trance during which he is ceremonially a dead man.[30]

At least four different locations are described in the myth: the place of emergence, the chasm of Lethe, the crater of dreams and the place of punishment. Attempts have been made to assign definite locations to these places.[31] Thus the place of emergence has been located at the confines of the sub-lunary region where the atmosphere of air gives way to one of fire or aether. The chasm of Lethe is identified with the earth's shadow, ending at the upper limit of the sub-lunary region. The crater of dreams has also been located at the confines of the sub-lunary region being identified either with

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[30] Stewart: op.cit. p. 368 and 377.

[31] See Loeb vol. vii, p. 177 and Stewart: op.cit. p. 376 ff.

the shadow of the moon or the moon itself. The place of punishment has been identified both with the sub-lunary region and the lower region of the earth, i.e. the southern hemisphere.

However, Plutarch's creation is a myth whose significance is purely symbolic and ethical, and the question of geographical validity need not arise. It will be sufficient to insist that none of these places is thought of as subterranean: the entire description conforms to the celestial eschatology current in Plutarch's age.

After leaving his body, Thespesius is said to have moved upwards. In the place of emergence Thespesius sees the souls of the dead rising up in bubbles of flame, displacing the air. As the bubbles burst, the souls came out, human in form but slight in bulk, and moving with dissimilar motions. Some were wailing in fear and rushed about in confusion and bewilderment, while others, who had grown accustomed to their new environment were happy and kindly.[32]

> Some leapt forth with amazing lightness and darted about aloft in a straight line, while others, like spindles, revolved upon themselves and at the same time swung, now downward, now upward, moving in a complex and disordered spiral that barely grew steady after a very long time.
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> Most of the souls indeed he failed to recognize, but seeing two or three of his acquaintance, he endeavoured to join them and speak to them. These however, would not hear him and were not in their right mind, but in their frenzy and panic avoiding all sight and contact, they at first strayed about singly; later, meeting many others in the same condition, they clung to them and moved about indistinguishably in all manner of aimless motions and

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[32] Plutarch: op.cit. 563f.

> and uttered inarticulate sounds, mingled with outcries as of lamentation and terror. Other souls, above, in a purer region of the ambient, were joyful in aspect and, out of friendliness, often approached one another, but shunned the other tumultuous souls, indicating their distaste, he said, by contracting into themselves, but their delight and welcome by expansion and diffusion.

It was among these latter souls that Thespesius found an old acquaintance who gave him his new name and acted as his guide. The guide shows him how Adrasteia (The Inescapable), daughter of (Necessity) and Zeus, ensures that no criminal shall escape punishment. She assesses the right punishment and supervises a "division of labour" in the punishment of the guilty; for she has three kinds of justice as her instruments and three wardens to execute them.[33]

> Those who are punished at once in the body and through it are dealt with by swift Poiine in a comparatively gentle manner that passes over many of the faults requiring purgation; those whose viciousness is harder to heal are delivered up to Dike, by their daemon after death; while those past all healing, when rejected by Dike, are pursued by their daemon after death; while those past all healing, when rejected by Dike, are pursued by the third and fiercest of the ministers of Adrasteia, Erinys, as they stray about and scatter in flight, who makes away with them, each after a different fashion, but all piteously and cruelly, imprisoning them in the Nameless and Unseen.

Thus Poine (Punishment) looks after retribution on earth, while Dike (Justice) looks after retribution in the other world. But those who cannot be cured at all are cast by Erinus (Fury) into total oblivion.

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[33] ibid. 564c.

Plutarch seems to believe that this oblivion is itself the punishment for the incurably bad. They are not seen or heard of any more. We are reminded of the etymology of Hades as "the Unseen".

We also note Plutarch's insistence on the therapeutic value of punishment. Dike administers punishment only to curable souls, some of whom also undergo reincarnation through ignorance and love of pleasure.[34]

> Some of these, after repeated punishment, recover their proper state and disposition, while others are once more carried off into the bodies of living things by the violence of ignorance and the image of the love of pleasure. For one soul, from weakness of reason and neglect of contemplation, is borne down by its practical proclivity to birth, while another, needing an instrument for its licentiousness, yearns to knit its appetites to their fruition and gratify them through the body; for here there is nothing but an imperfect shadow and dream of never consummated pleasure.

Plutarch evidently feels that the effect of punishment on earth (including disease and loss of property is only marginal, because it effects only man's outside and does not attack the evil within him. In the hereafter, however, the soul is not accompanied by its body, but nevertheless feels pain even more strongly than when it was in the body.[35] This also gives point to the later description of torments administered to various sinners in the place of punishment.[36]

In this therapeutic view of punishment Plutarch has no doubt been influenced by Plato, who, in the myth of the

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[34] ibid. 565d.

[35] ibid. 565b.

[36] ibid. 567d ff; see below.

Gorgias, represented punishment, not as a vengeance (timoria) but as correction (kolasis) leading to purification (katharsis) of the soul. The Gorgias myth also depicts the souls of the deed at judgement as being marked corrigible or incorrigible, while in the Myth of Er those sent to Heaven and those sent to Tartarus have tablets fixed on their front or back respectively, with records of their deeds and sentences.[37] (The mention of tablets suggests that there may be Orphic or Bachic influence here.) Plutarch, like many Christians, believes that some sins are expiated either in this life or in the next, while other sins condemn the sinner to eternal damnation. But his debt to Plato and the mysteries is seen in his view of reincarnation as a product of ignorance and yearning for bodily pleasures.

These bodily pleasures, which cause the soul to lose its bouyancy and to sink down to another birth, are also represented by the chasm of Lethe, which is next shown to Thespesius. Above it the souls hovered in rapture and mirth produced by odours coming from sweet-scented herbs and plants adorning the sides of the chasm. This chasm of Lethe (Forgetfulness) is connected with Dionysus, for it was through here that he went up to Heaven and also brought thither his mother, Semele, and made her immortal.[38] In fact, the chasm has the appearance of a Bacchic grotto.

> Within, it had the appearance of a Bacchic grotto; it was gaily diversified with tender leafage and all the hues of flowers. From it was wafted a soft and gentle breeze that carried up fragrant scents, arousing wondrous pleasures and such a mood as wine induces in those who are becoming tipsy; for as the souls regaled themselves on the sweet odours they grew expansive and friendly with one another; and the place all about was full of Bacchic revelry and laughter and the various strains of festivity and merry-making. This was the route, the guide said, that Dionysus had taken in his ascent, and later

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37 Plato: Gorgias 528b, Republic 814c.

38 Plutarch: op.cit. 565e-566b.

> when he brought up Semele; and the region was called the place of Lethe. On this account, although Thespesius wished to linger, the guide would not allow it, but pulled him away by main force, informing him as he did so that the intelligent part of the soul is dissolved away and liquefied by pleasure, while the irrational and carnal part is fed by its flow and puts on flesh and thus induces memory of the body; and that from such memory arises a yearning and desire that draws the soul toward birth (genesis), so named as being an earthward (pi gen) inclination (eusis) of the soul grown heavy with liquefaction.

In traditional Greek mythology, Lethe is a river whose water induces forgetfulness. This idea, which occurs in the Orphic hymns and in the so-called Orphic tablets,[39] finds poetic expression in the sixth book of Virgil's Aeneid.[40] In mystic lore concerning the destiny of the soul, Lethe, the River of Forgetfulness, is contrasted with Mnemosyne, the River of Memory. Pausanias says that before consulting the oracle of Trophonius at Lebadeia, the applicant was made to drink from two fountains called Lethe and Mnemosyne. The first made him

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[39] The gold tablets found in graves at Thurii and Petelia in South Italy (now in the British Museum) contain hexameter verses giving directions to initiated persons concerning the journey into the beyond. These tablets were formerly thought to belong to the "Orphic" mystery cults, and Kaibel, who printed them in his edition of the Greek inscriptions from Sicily and Italy, assigned them to the fourth or third centuries B.C. The modern tendency is to regard them as originating in a Bacchic rather than Orphic context. Cf. W. Burkert: Ancient Mystery Cults, Cambridge, Mass. and London (1987) p. 76 and 87.

[40] Virgil: Aeneid vi, 748-751.

> Has omnis, ubi mille rotam volvere per annos.
> Lethaeum ad fluvium deus evocat agmine magno.
> Scilicet immemores supera ut convexa revisant
> Rursus, et incipiant in corpora velle reverti.

forget all his previous thoughts; the second gave him the power to remember what he saw when he went down into the cave.[41] There appears to be some connection between the mythology of the descent into Hades and the consulting of oracles such as that of Trophonius, which involved cave-descents. We know that Aeneas went down into Avernus to consult his father Anchises,[42] and that in Egyptian incubation the sleeper was thought to be a temporary guest of the other world. Thus, the fountain of Lethe has a connection with the dead in much the same way as the river Lethe.

While the traditional idea of Lethe was that of a body of water, Plato's Myth of Er mentions a barren plain called Lethe, through which souls reach the river whose water induces forgetfulness.[43] While Plutarch is indebted to both these concepts, his own idea of Lethe is altogether different; it is a chasm, and a sort of road, extending from the etherial regions down to earth. Moreover, although higher beings like Dionysus and Semele may ascent through it, as far as other souls are concerned, it is essentially a downward path leading to reincarnation.

Nevertheless, it is possible to discern the impact of the Myth of Er. There we read of a certain ghostly place with two openings in the earth side by side,[44] and opposite and above them two openings in the sky. The souls, after judgment, are sent up toward heaven by the opening on the right, or down toward the earth by the opening on the left. Similarly, souls about to be reincarnated come respectively down from heaven by the opening on the left, or up from the earth by the opening on the right. Thus, ascent is always on the right, while descent is always on the lefe. Here Plato appears to have

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41 Pausanias, ix.39.8.

42 Steward: op.cit. p. 159.

43 Plato: Republic 621c.

44 ibid. 614c.

been influenced by Orphico-Pythagorean teachings, a possibility strengthened by the mention of tablets, to which I have already referred.[45]

While Plutarch may have been influenced by this description, yet the connection cannot be pressed too far. Plutarch's chasm of Lethe is single, not double, and, but for the exception already noted, the movement is essentially downward. There is no suggestion that the disincarnated souls, after purgation, took this route to heaven. Its pull is downward and earthward i.e. toward reincarnation,[46] and this pull is induced by the memory of, and yearning for, bodily pleasures.

This pull of the soul toward the earth is said to be the result of the soul gaining weight through liquifaction. If earthly life is, as the Orphic doctrines teach us, nothing other than real death, and if the body is a tomb, then we should perhaps see in this passage the influence of Heraclitus who said that it was death for souls to become water.[47] For the soul's rebirth in a body, caused by its liquifaction, in reality only leads to death.

The influence of Heraclitus may also be relevant in explaining the Dionysiac character of the description. We know that Herraclitus identified Dionysus with Hades.[48] Plutarch describes the interior of the chasm of Lethe in terms of a Bacchic grotto of the type which became current during Hellenistic times and which sought to reproduce the legendary

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[45] Cf. G. Soury: "La Vie de Haut-Dela: Prairie et Gouffre" R.E.A. vol. xlvi (1944) p. 169-178: cf. especially p. 174, where Soury aptly compares Aristotle fr. 95 (1513A24 ff).

[46] Y. Vernie re: 'Le Lethe de Plutarque' R.E.A. vol. xvi (1964).

[47] Heraclitus: fr 68 (Diels).

[48] ibid. fr. 167.

cave of Nysa,[49] as described, for instance, by Diodorus Sicules. In fact, the Neoplatonists regarded the Theban Dionysus,[50] son of Semele, as the god who presided over rebirth.

In keeping with all this, the effect of the Bacchic atmosphere is not one of elevation but of degredation. The fragrance wafted by the breeze is not the odour of sanctity which the ancients normally associated with gods, paradise, the blessed dead, living beings of a higher order, sacred precincts, etc., but a voluptious inhalation which aroused "wondrous pleasures and such a mood as wine induces in those who are becoming tipsy." Similarly, the Bacchic revelry and laughter and the various strains of festivity and merry-making do not represent eternal rejoicing in the world beyond, prefigured on earth by the banquets, dances and processions of the mystae. Instead, they have the effect of dissolving and liquifying the intelligent part of the soul and nourishing the irrational and carnal part, thus inducing a nostalgia for the flesh, which leads to reincarnation.[51]

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[49] Diodorus Siculus, iii, 68; cf. Philodemus: Paean To Dionysus 340 (Powell: Collectania Alexandrina p. 169); Socrates of Rhodes apud Athanaeus, 148b; Philostratus: Imagines i.14.3 Macrobius: sat. i.18.3 mentions Bacchic grottos on Parnassus, honouring Dionysus and Apollo. These grottos originate from a hellenistic Egyptian variant of the story of Dionysus' infancy. See note 46 above.

[50] Cf. Hermias In Plat. Phaedr. schol. ch. 24, p. 32.11-14; ch. 52 p. 15.21 (Couvreur); Proclus In tim. vol.iii, p. 4739.29 ff (Diehl); Olympiodorus In Phaed. p. 208.1 ff (Norvin)

[51] Perhaps we should also see here the influence of Plato's Phaedrus (250c), where the soul is said to be incapable of following the divine procession if, through some mishap, it has become charged with forgetfulness and vice and been thereby so burdened as to shed its feathers and fall to the earth. The Neoplatonists, while retaining this explanation of the soul's fall, also stressed the notions of illusion and intoxication. On seeing its reflection (contd.)

It is thus obvious that Plutarch's chasm of Lethe is the counterpart of his place of emergence, where the disincarnate souls, coming from below, were raised in the air, forming bubbles of flame, which burst out gently, releasing the souls contained in them. What we had there was, in effect, the representation of birth in a new and dematerialised form, involving a change of nature. Now, rebirth in a carnal form would require the soul to undergo a similar change of nature, and Y. Verniere[52] thinks that it is the Dionysiac intoxication which plays the role of motherhood, as it were. It may not be altogether irrelevant to see in Plutarch's description of the soul's passage through Lethe a suggestion of the biological process of birth.

Thespesius is next taken to the crater (i.e. "mixing-bowl") of dreams, where three daemons preside over the mixing of true and false dreams. The crater receives a white stream representing truth, and coloured streams representing falsehood. This crater is associated with the oracle of Night (Nux) which preceeded that of Apollo at Delphi. This was the limit, the guide tells Thespesius, of Orpheus journey, when he went in search of Euridice. But from faulty memory he published a false report that Apollo shared the oracle with Night. But Apollo, the god of light and truth, could have no connection with the oracle of Night, which is a mixture of truth and deception. In fact, Night shares it with the moon; and their oracle communicates through dreams, which too are a mixture of truth and deception. The true prototype of the Delphic oracle, on the other hand, is the sun, the seat of Apollo, the home of reason.

In the Myth of Sulla Plutarch tells us that the mind can reach the sun only after it has been separated from the soul in a second death on the moon. Commentators have therefore

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in the mirror of Dionysus, which is the flowing stream of sense and generation, the soul, mistaking the image for reality, like Narcissus, plunges into it and drinks forgetfulness of divine truths. Souls who have not drunk so deeply retain some recollection of their disembodied state and obey their daemon.

[52] See note 46 above.

argued that the furthest point reached by both Orpheus and Thespesius was the moon.[53] We may also note how, with the replacing of the terrestrial eschatology by the celestial, Orpheus' descent (katabasis) has changed to an ascent (anabasis).

Thespesius could not reach the true oracle of Apollo, we are told, because the cable of his soul, which fastened him to his body, was not long enough. Earlier we were told that the irrational part of his soul had remained in his body, acting like an anchor to prevent the intelligent part from ascending too far. To prove that he had not really died, his guide had told him (probably echoing a Pythagorean belief) that the souls of the dead never blink or cast a shadow, and looking round, Thespesius saw a shadowy line which was the shadow of his cable. It is this same cable that grabs him back into his body at the end of his adventure.

This idea of a cable or connection, to which parallels can be found in modern near-death experience narratives, is characteristic of Plutarch's psychology.[54] Usually, this cable attaches the soul either to the mind or to the logos, but occasionally, as in the present passage and in the De Anima,[55] to the body; in which case it is thought to be severed in the process of death. In the De Genio Socratis it is said that the fear of death is the only bond (sundesmos) that keeps us in the body, just as Odysseus clung to the fig tree for fear of Charybdis. In sleep the soul can take off like a runaway slave, but only in death is the bond definitely severed.[56] Sometimes the soul is thought of as a ship, which is kept from being swept over the sea or dashed downstream on the river current only by its cable.[57]

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53 Stewart: op.cit. p. 379.

54 Brenk: op.cit. p. 133.

55 Plutarch: op.cit. 566e, De Anima 177.2.

56 Plutarch: De Genio Socratis 591f and 592b.

57 Plutarch: Moralia 465b, 493e and 501d.

Although Thespesius could not reach the heavenly prototype of the tripod of Delphi, he is dazzled by its radiance, and is able to hear the Sibyl proclaim oracles which foretell, among other things, the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius (24-26 August, A.D. 79)[58] and the natural death of a "good" emperor, generally thought to be Titus, who died on September 13th A.D. 81.[59] Thus, the dramatic date of Thespesius' vision would fall between June 24, A.D. 79 (the date of Titus' accession) and August 24-27 of the same year, when the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius occurred. Incidentally, these allusions also serve to fix the terminus post quem for the composition of the De Sera Numinis Vindicta at A.D. 81.

The Sibyl also foretells Thespesius' own death. In the Myth of Timarchus the hero's death is similarly foretold.[60] Prediction of the visionary's death is a frequent motif in apocalyptic tales. We might compare the underworld scene in Homer's Odyssey, where Odysseus' own death is predicted.[61]

It is in the place of punishment that Thespesius beholds the torments of the wicked, including those of his own father. Plutarch gives a vivid and imaginative account of the torments that are administered for different vices, and echoes of the Myth of Er are never very far away. Hypocrisy is punished more severely than open vice. The avaricious are punished by daemons who plunge them into three lakes of molten metal. But

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[58] The destruction of Cumae and Dicaearchia (i.e. Puteoli) is mentioned as a foretold event both here and at Mor. 398e. But there is no other evidence that these towns were destroyed during the erruption of A.D. 79. See Loeb ed. vol. vii, p. 173.

[59] Titus' death is recorded by Plutarch in his De Sanitate Tuenda (121e), from which it is evident that our author did not accept the rumour that the emperor was poisoned.

[60] Plutarch: De Genio Socratis 592e.

[61] Homer: Odyssey xi. 134-137.

the most severe punishment is reserved for ancestors whose crimes have been visited on their descendants. There is no end to their torments: they are constantly taken back into the hands of Justice.[62]

> Most piteous of all, he said, was the suffering of the souls who thought that they were already released from their sentence, and then were apprehended again; these were the souls whose punishment had passed over to descendants or children. For, whenever the soul of such a child or descendant arrived and found them, it flew at them in fury and raised a clamour against them and showed the marks of its sufferings, berating and pursuing the soul of the other, which desired to escape and hide, but could not. For they were swiftly overtaken by the tormentors and hastened back once more to serve their sentence, lamenting from foreknowledge of the penalty that awaited them. To some, he said, great clusters of the souls of descendants were attached, clinging to them like veritable swarms of bees or bats, and gibbering shrilly in angry memory of what they had suffered.

In the earlier part of this dialogue Plutarch had insisted that retribution, as much as reward, should be inherited by the individual just as by a family or a city. But he does not appear to have been entirely satisfied with his own reasoning. As far as life on earth is concerned, punishment of children for the sins of their parents would leave the advantage with the sinners. Plutarch, convinced as he was of the wisdom of Providence, must have felt that the balance must be redressed somewhere; and the myth serves to reinforce the doctrine of rewards and punishments in the hereafter. Thespesius is warned that if he did not mend his ways he would be punished too. His temporary excursion into the beyond had, we are told, a profound effect in reforming his character. Plutarch must have thought that his myth would have a similar effect on his readers, even if his arguments should fail to convince them altogether.[63]

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62 Plutarch: De Sera Numinis Vindicta 567de.

63 Oaksmith: op.cit. p. 117 f.

Thespesius is shown how souls destined for birth in the forms of lower animals are reshaped by artisans. This too is a painful process.[64] By introducing this reshaping process Plutarch meets the objection that human souls could not be incarnate in lower animals as the bodies of brutes could not provide the proper organs for a human soul.[65] No such transformation is mentioned in Plutarch's model, the Myth of Er. Plutarch's story also differs from the latter in that the souls about to be reborn are not given a choice as to their future life.

Thespesius sees the soul of Nero "pierced by incandescent rivets" and about to be given the body of a viper, when suddenly a great light shoots forth, and a voice commands the artisans to transform him into a frog. The gods have shown him this bit of kindness because he had been good to his subjects, especially to that nation most dear to the gods, namely, the Greeks. Plutarch has here combined two contrasting ideas. On the one hand, the viper was believed to eat his way through its mother's womb; and Nero was a matricide. On the other hand, he fancied himself as a musician, and emancipated Greece in A.D. 67.[66] Thus he was a monster and a liberator both in one,[67] and merited both punishment and grace. Nothing could demonstrate better the justice and wisdom of Providence. Like the utterances of the Sybil, this episode too serves to unite the realms of history and myth as complementary to one another. The myth serves to justify the role of Providence in history.

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[64] Plutarch: op.cit. 567e.

[65] Aristoitle: De Anima i.3.407B20-26; Nemesius, ch.2 p. 119 ff. (Matthaei). We are reminded of the Indian philosopher, Sankara's attack on the Jains for supposedly teaching that the soul is of the same size as the body; the soul of a man might go in his next birth into the body of an elephant and not be big enough to fill it, or into an ant and be too big. Cf. Parrinder: op.cit. p. 90.

[66] Plutarch: Flaminus ch. 13, 376 C; cf. Pausanias, vii,18.

[67] Russell: op.cit. p.2.

As Thespesius is about to turn back, he is drawn back into his body by a great rush of wind and revives just at the edge of his grave. His mode of leaving the body and coming back to it obviously constitutes a special case. The normal procedures for others are death and reincarnation, as described in the myth.

Plutarch's strongest philosophical and literary influence was Plato, whom he studied and imitated with enthusiasm, sometimes reproducing his actual words, but always echoing his thought and spirit. The Myth of Thespesius shows exceptionally heavy dependence on Plato. The figure of Adrasteia and her wardens of retribution, the welts and scars on the souls, the torments they undergo, their spindle-like movement through the heavens, their transmigration and reincarnation, all have Platonic parallels. But his story is an original creation in so far as he has utilized the mythology of after-life to rationalize the action of Providence in the present life.

III. Survival, Transmigration and Retribution

It should be clear from the foregoing that Plutarch considered the Myth of Thespesius as an integral part of the De Sera Numinis Vindicta carrying an important message complementary to its principal theme. But how seriously did he intend his readers to take its eschatological details? In particular, how earnest was he regarding (1) the survival of the soul after death, (2) transmigration into animal bodies, and (3) punishment in the other world? Passages from his other works may throw some light on these problems.

(1) That Plutarch was firmly convinced regarding the soul's survival after death is clear from what he says earlier in this dialogue, when attempting to justify the punishment of children for the sins of their parents.[68] He feels that even the most puzzling forms of divine reaction to man's conduct become intelligible if we presume that the soul survives after

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[68] Plutarch: De Sera Numinis Vindicta 560a ff.

death. This presumption is directly linked with Providence. Introducing one of his favourite and often repeated comparisons, also used by Plato and probably of Orphico-Pythagorean origin, he says that in this life we are like athletes taking part in a contest.[69] The soul receives its prize or penalty in the next world after death.

Plutarch gives two reasons for believing that the soul survives after death at least for some time. Firstly, the gods care for us and attend to every particular detail of our lives. Secondly, the Delphic oracle prescribes many appacements for the dead and enjoin great honours and considerations for them. Now, it is unthinkable that Apollo would deceive his believers; so the theological ideas presupposed by these appeacements and honours must be correct.

In other words, Plutarch cannot conceive of the gods as showing so much concern for men and enjoining so many sacrifices and honours for the dead if they knew that at death souls perished straightaway like a wreath of mist of smoke. God would not take so much trouble over us if our souls were as brief in their bloom as the tender plants that women grow and tend in flowerpots, the so-called "gardens of Adonis".

For Plutarch, faith in the soul's survival stands or falls with faith in divine providence. If we accept the latter, we must accept the former. Now, if the soul survives death, does it not necessarily follow that it must receive due reward or punishment for its conduct on earth?[70] Thus, the survival of the soul becomes the "great hypothesis" upon which the solution to the problem of the entire dialogue ultimately depends.

The survival of the soul after death is also maintained and argued for in other works of Plutarch. The dialogue

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[69] Plutarch: op.cit. 561a, De Genio Socratis 593d-e and 593f-594a, De Facie 943c ff., Non Posse Suaviter Vivi Secundum Epicurum 1105a; cf. Plato: Republic 621c-d, Phaedrus 256b; cp. St. :aul: 2 Tim. iv,6.

[70] Oakesmith: op.cit. p. 113.

entitled Non Posse Suaviter Vivi Secundum Epicurum ("That Epicurus actually makes a Pleasant Life Impossible")[71] is a polemic seeking to subvert the fundamental position of the Epicurean school, namely, that Epicurus had become one of the greatest benefactors of mankind by his conquering of the fear of punishment in the next life.[72] Here Plutarch is not concerned with the truth or falsehood of any position on life after death, but only whether the Epicurean position does in fact give greater pleasure than that of the Stoics or of the Platonists.[73]

He points out that the denial of after-life takes away all meaning from the present life, leading to its being spent in a useless manner. Far from removing fear of death, the doctrine that the dead have no sensation intensifies it. For, everyone entertains hopes of survival in preference to tales of impending terrors; and, in any case, those who are troubled by such tales believe that these terrors can be removed by mystic ceremonies and rituals of purification.

> A Life that is actually dealt the finishing blow by those who say: 'We men are born once; there is no second time; we must forever be no more.' Indeed, by discounting the present moment as a minute fraction, or rather as nothing at all, in comparison with all time, men let it pass fruitlessly. They think poorly of virtue and manly action; they lose heart, you might say, and despise themselves as creatures of a day, impermanent, and born for no high end. For, the doctrine that 'what is dissipated has no sensation, and what has no sensation is nothing to us' does not remove the terror of death, but rather confirms it by adding what amounts to a proof. For, this is the very thing our nature dreads: May all of you be turned to

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[71] Plutarch: Non Posse Suaviter Vivi... 1104b ff.

[72] Cicero (Tusc. Disp. i.10-11) had already challenged this position.

[73] Brenk: op.cit. p. 24.

> earth and water--- the resolution of the soul into what has neither thought nor feeling; and Epicurus, by mking dissolution a scattering into emptiness and atoms, does still more to root out our hope of preservation, a hope for which (I had almost said) all men and all women are ready to match their teeth against the fangs of Cerberus and carry water to the leaky urn, if only they may still continue to be and not to be blotted out. Yet, such tales as these, as I said, are not feared by very many, being the doctrine and fabulous argument of mothers and nurses; and even those who fear them hold that there is an answering remedy in certain mystic ceremonies and rituals of purification, and that when cleansed by these they will pass their time in the other world in play and choral dancing in regions where there is radiance and a sweet breeze and a sound of voices. Whereas privation of life is a gnawing thought to young as well as old: Smit with a painful love are we of this. We know not what, this brightness here on earth as Euripides says; and it is not calmly or without a pang that we give ear to this:
>
> Thus spoke he; and the radiant face
> Ambrosial of the charioting day
> Departed from him.

The Epicurean philosophy thus takes away from life one of its greatest pleasures, namely, the expectation of a better life to come. The good can expect only beautiful and divine things after death: they cannot expect any evil. Athletes receive prizes not during contests, but after they have won. In the same way men become enthusiastic for virtue through expectation of the prize of victory in the life to come, and this expectation is counterbalanced by that of punishment for the wicked.

Plutarch also repeats an argument which Plato makes Socrates use in the Phaedo. Truth and reality cannot be attained on earth. Therefore man hopes to be free from the body and escape into something grand and splendid. Philosophy

is the practice of death. The Epicureans not only destroy the only pleasures left to men during their miserable existence on earth by denying hope of reward after death, but they offer in return only the dismal prospect of complete annihilation. Belief in punishment after death can benefit the wicked by turning them to a life of virtue, but in fact men fear extinction more than punishment after death; for annihilation is a fearful prospect. (2) The case for transmigration is more difficult. In the De Esu Carnium ("On the Eating of Flesh") a rather poorly preserved work on vegetarianism, Plutarch refers to reincarnation and transmigration as a basis for this practice. After quoting a passage from Empedocles about the fall of the soul and the original sin of flesh eating, he also mentions the myth of the dismemberment of Dionysus.[74]

The earnest tone and vehement rhetoric of this work has given rise to the view that it was written in Plutarch's youth. Brenk, for instance, is of the opinion that the young Plutarch may have accepted the possibility of transmigration into animal bodies, but that his seriousness in the later myths is doubtful, that (for example) the story of Nero's transmigration in the Myth of Thespesius is "something of a joke" at the expense of this belief.[75]

I have already said something about the serious implications of the Nero episode for Plutarch's convictions regarding the justice and wisdom of the divine dispensation. I should also add that the doctrine of transmigration is equally fundamental to Plato's Myth of Er, which is Plutarch's obvious model. There is no doubt that, like Plato, Plutarch too realised the symbolic and ethical value of this doctrine, even if it were proved that he did not himself adhere to it in later life.

(2) The most perplexing problem, however, concerns Plutarch's attitude to punishment after death. We have already noted the relish and imagination with which he depicts the torments of the wicked in the Myth of Thespesius.

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74 Plutarch: De Esu Carnius 996c.

75 Brenk: op.cit. p. 76-80.

He believes that their souls feel pain more severely than when they were in their bodies.[76] But elsewhere he is critical of punishment after death, in particular the torments of the underworld presented in traditional terrestrial eschatologies.

In the De Virtute Morali ("On Moral Virtue"), for instance, Plutarch stigmatises belief in torments under the earth as a form of madness comparable with the madness of those who, being afflicted by poverty, are led to leap off a cliff. "Some think death to be an evil,," he says, "merely because it deprives them of the good things of life; others because there are eternal torments and horrible punishments beneath the earth."[77]

Similarly, in the work popularly known as De Audiendis Poetis ("On Listening to Poets"), discussing the correct interpretation of literature, Plutarch declares that, while the poets did sincerely believe in the gods sending vengeance (Ate) to an individual for his destruction, neither Homer nor Pindar nor Sophocles[78] believed in the torments of the underworld.

> Then again, the monstrous tales of visits to the shades, and the descriptions, which in awful language create spectres and pictures of blazing rivers and hideous places and grim punishments, do not blind very many people to the fact that fable and falsehood in plenty have been mingled with them like poison in nourishing food. And not Homer nor Pindar nor Sophocles really believed that these things are so when they wrote:
>
> From there the slow-moving rivers of dusky night
> Belch forth a darkness immeasurable,
> and

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[76] Plutarch: De Sera Numinis Vindicta 565b and 567d.

[77] Plutarch: De viritute Morali 450 a.

[78] Plutarch: Quomodo Adulescens Poetas Audire Debeat 17 b ff.

On past Ocean's streams they went and the headland
of Leucas,
and
The narrow throat of Hades and the refluent depths.

We have already seen how Plutarch condemned these tales as "the doctrine and fabulous argument of mothers and nurses."[79]

In a polemic against the Epicureans, popularly known as De Latenter Vivendo ("Live Unknown"), Plutarch rejects the idea of torments in the underworld because it is inconsistent with the immaterial nature of the soul. He argues that nothing is more ridiculous than the Epicurean maxim "live unknown" (lathe biosas) because it negates both the aspirations of noble minds and the benifits they might shower on humanity. The desire to know and to be known is part of human nature. Those who have won fame for virtuous activity are rewarded after death, whereas the punishment for those who have accomplished nothing is oblivion.

This last point is developed in mythical and eschatological terms, but in a decidedly satirical vein. Plutarch elaborates on two fragments of Pindar. One describes the joy of the Elysian fields; the other is about the impious, who are carried forth on murky streams. These streams, he adds, lead from the river Lethe to a pit of darkness, where the souls are engulfed in obscurity and oblivion. Neither vultures tear at the liver, nor do souls carry heavy burdens; for nothing remains of their bodies, which have already been consumed by fire or rotted in the earth.[80]

> Yet to fame and to being belongs, they say a place reserved for pious dead: For some the sun shines bright below, while here is night, on

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[79] See note 71 above.

[80] Plutarch: An Recte Dictum Sit Latenter Esse Vivendum 1130c; cf. Brenk, op.cit. p. 22-23 and 134.