

Plutarch's Predecessors in the Exegesis of Plato

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Abstract

Not much is known about the traditions of Platonic exegesis prior to Plutarch. In this contribution I shall focus mainly on two works of Platonic exegesis, the *De animae procreatione in Timaeo* and the *Quaestiones platonicae*, examining some crucial pieces of information they contain about Plutarch's predecessors. Next, I shall bring to light some parallels with various texts from the pseudo-Pythagorean corpus, arguing that these works or their sources constituted a substantial part of the philosophical background within which Plutarch's exegetical work should be situated.

1. Earlier exegesis referenced by Plutarch

Plutarch's *De Animae procreatione in Timaeo* is a zetematic commentary – that is, an exegetical text organised around a small number of problems to be discussed¹ – on two consecutive passages from the *Timaeus* (35 A 1 – B 4; 35 B 4 – 36 B 5). The author highlights certain aspects that he presents as novel. One is his conviction that the cosmos had an actual beginning; the second, that prior to the generation of the world there was already an irrational principle of motion, a soul.² This irrational soul received order from the demiurge, as a part of himself bestowed upon the precosmic soul and thus integrated in the cosmic soul. Because of its causal influence on the soul and thereby also on the world, Plutarch considers it to be the principle of evil. Later interpreters of Plutarch, ancient but also modern, have focused on the very same aspects, thus following Plutarch's own framing of the issues at stake. Plutarch

¹ This text is part of a project that has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (GA 885273 – AdG *PlatoViaAristotle*).

² Cf. F. Ferrari, "La letteratura filosofica di carattere esegetico in Plutarco", in I. Gallo – C. Moreschini (eds.), *I generi letterari in Plutarco*, Atti del VIII Convegno plutarco, D'Auria, Napoli 2000, pp. 147-75; Id., "I commentari specialistici alle sezioni matematiche del *Timeo*", in A. Brancacci (ed.), *La filosofia in età imperiale. Le scuole e le tradizioni filosofiche*, Atti del Colloquio Internazionale Roma, 17-19 giugno 1999, Bibliopolis, Napoli 2000 (Elenchos 31), pp. 169-24, here pp. 204-13. On early Imperial commentaries in general, see F. Ferrari, "Struttura e funzione dell'esegesi testuale nel medioplatonismo: il caso del *Timeo*", *Athenaeum* 89 (2001), pp. 525-70; Id., "Esegesi, commento e sistema nel medioplatonismo", in A. Neschke-Hentschke – K. Howald – T. Ruben – A. Schatzmann (eds.), *Argumenta in dialogos Platonis*, I, *Platoninterpretation und ihre Hermeneutik von der Antike bis zum Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Schwabe, Basel 2010, pp. 51-76; F.M. Petrucci, "The Structure and Philosophical Orientation of Middle Platonist Commentaries", *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 138 (2018), pp. 209-26; Id., "Wave-Like Commentaries: The Structure and Philosophical Orientation of Middle Platonist Commentaries", *The Journal of Hellenic studies* 138 (2018), pp. 209-26. In my view, there is nothing objectionable about calling Plutarch's text a commentary, different as it may be from the standard commentaries known especially from later antiquity and the Middle Ages.

² On these issues, and in particular on the relation between the exegesis of the *Timaeus* and the *Statesman*, see now also B. Demulder, *Plutarch's cosmological ethics*, Leuven 2022 (Plutarchea Hypomnemata) pp. 29-66.

does not, however, thematise the interpretative framework from which he starts and which he inherited from the preceding tradition. As a result, this implicit framework has not received the attention it deserves. By studying the authorities mentioned³ by Plutarch, supplemented by other sources that besides these same authors quote still other interpretations, it is possible to get a clearer view of the questions that engaged earlier Platonists and other philosophers that had an interest in Plato's account of the composition of the soul, from the Early Academy onwards. This is not the focus of the present contribution, however.⁴ Instead, I shall try to determine who were the interpreters of Plato whose views Plutarch knew, on which his exegetical texts build and to which they react (such people are sometimes called 'interlocutors', but of course most of them already belonged to the past and could therefore not write or say anything back).⁵ I shall argue that some of them left traces in Plutarch's vocabulary.

Let me first summarise, however, some earlier findings on the exegetical background of the *De Anima procreatione*, as this will be useful for our present purposes.⁶ Plutarch cites and discusses definitions and accounts of the soul by Crantor ("soul is a mixture of the intelligible nature and of the opinable nature of perceptible things"), Xenocrates ("soul is a self-moved number"), and Posidonius ("soul is the idea of what is everyway extended, herself constituted according to number that embraces concord"). The core of Posidonius' definition ("soul is the idea of what is everyway extended") is attributed, in other sources, to Speusippus. These references thus establish a solid link to debates in the Early Academy. Our earliest source for this debate is an enigmatic passage in Aristotle's *De Anima*, that starts with an unmistakable reference to *Timaeus* 35 A (I 2, 404 b 16-30). A careful analysis of the definitions, which draws on additional information provided by Aristotle and Plutarch, shows that they can be regarded as interpretations of *Timaeus* 35, or were at least inspired by this passage.⁷ This is true for the definition of soul as a self-moving number, unattributed in Aristotle, but attributed to Xenocrates and Pythagoras in the *Placita*,⁸ and to Xenocrates

³ Like many other ancient philosophers, Plutarch makes what one may call 'doxography' an integral part of his philosophical enterprise: he studies philosophical views of his predecessors and, to a lesser extent, contemporaries for the philosophical insights they may contain, without necessarily being interested in the proper historical study of the context in which they originated and the historical developments to which they belong. For this sense of 'doxography', see M. Frede, *The Historiography of Philosophy*, ed. by K. Ierodiakonou, with a Postface by J. Barnes, Oxford U.P., New York 2022, p. 26.

⁴ I discuss this issue in J. Opsomer, "The Platonic Soul, from the Early Academy to the First Century CE", in B. Inwood – J. Warren (eds.), *Body and Soul in Hellenistic Philosophy*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 2020, pp. 171-98, and Id., "L'intellect et l'âme chez Plutarque de Chéronée" (forthcoming).

⁵ As already Plato highlighted in the *Phaedrus*, it is a property of written texts not to lend themselves to a philosophical conversation.

⁶ See Opsomer "The Platonic Soul" (above, n. 4).

⁷ According to Sextus Empiricus, *AM* 1.301, the grammar of this passage raises difficulties and its obscurity is comparable to that of Heraclitus, but all exegetes of Plato remain silent about the wording: *περὶ τὴν λέξιν πάντες οἱ Πλάτωνος ἐξηγηταὶ ἐσίγησαν*. Theiler finds the reading of the manuscripts unacceptable ("grotesk"), and proposes alternatives, amounting to the claim that all interpreters of Plato have laboured (*ἐτίβησαν* / *ἐμόγησαν*) on the wording of *Tim.* 35 A. Cf. W. Theiler, *Gnomon* 28.4 (19856), pp. 282-8, part. p. 286. D.L. Blank, *Sextus Empiricus. Against the grammarians (Adversus mathematicos I)*, Oxford U.P., Oxford-New York (Clarendon Later Ancient Philosophers), 1998, pp. 333-4 deletes the words *περὶ τὴν λέξιν πάντες οἱ Πλάτωνος ἐξηγηταὶ ἐσίγησαν*, because they are evidently false. In my view, it is possible to keep the parenthesis and to understand *τὴν λέξιν* as the "Wortlaut" or wording. The claim would then not be that the interpreters fail to discuss the meaning of the passage, but rather that they fail to discuss the exact meaning of the words and the way they are connected. The same passage on the composition of the soul is ridiculed by Lucian (*Bis accusatus* 34).

⁸ Aet. IV.2.3 (Stobaeus, ps.-Plutarch / l. 6-7 Mansfeld-Runia) = *DG* 386 b 8-10; 386 a 12-14: Πυθαγόρας

or the ancients in Plutarch. Aristotle also establishes the link between the composition of the soul and the spatial dimensions, which is central in Posidonius' definition (quoted by Plutarch), in the part of the definition that is elsewhere attributed to Speusippus (whom Plutarch does not mention here). Also the focus on the cognitive function of the ingredients by Crantor is paralleled in Aristotle's account.

The different readings of Plato's account have in common that they regard the soul as a blend of four components: (1) indivisible being; (2) the being that becomes divisible around bodies; (3) sameness; (4) difference. These four are ingredients or, on a less materialistic reading, interacting principles from which the soul's activities and powers can be understood.⁹ What they are held to explain is the soul's motion and its cognition. In his interpretation of the *Timaeus*, Plutarch brings these two aspects together when he speaks of a 'the motion of perception' (ἡ αἰσθητικὴ κίνησις, 1024 C 9-10). The idea that the world-soul perceives through its motions is plainly attested in the *Timaeus* (37 A 2 –C 5). The different cognitive faculties are moreover related to the ingredients out of which it is composed. What is more, Aristotle in his doxographic survey of his predecessors' views on the soul establishes that they try to account for motion, cognition, or both. A closer look at the different accounts to originate from the Early Academy shows, however, that there is a third function, which one could call 'ontological'. The soul, in virtue of the ingredients out of which it is composed, is then held either to be itself three-dimensionally extended (as is Plato's world-soul) or to contain the principles of dimensionality (the latter view could already be an answer to Aristotle's criticism of the view that the soul is itself spatially extended). This ontological function appears to be less important for Plutarch's interpretation.

Aristotle does not detail the exact provenance of the views he discusses in the *De Anima* I 2 passage, except for a reference to "Plato in the *Timaeus*" (404 b 16) and to "the things said [in the work?] on philosophy" (404 b 19), which could be lectures by Plato or some student of Plato, or Aristotle's own lost work *On Philosophy*. The various views discussed in the passage seem to be meant to convey the idea of a hodge-podge of Pythagoreanising ideas, in line with the perceived Pythagorean character of the *Timaeus* itself. Later philosophers who were inspired either by this passage or by the ideas contained in it, possibly transmitted through alternative channels, appear to have been well-aware of this Pythagorean character. It is therefore no coincidence that the *Placita* presents the definition of the soul as self-moving number as both Pythagorean and Xenocratean, and that Plutarch attributes it to Xenocrates, but also to "the ancients", as I have already mentioned. Moreover, as we shall see now, Plutarch's own interpretation stands in the tradition of predecessors many of whom presented themselves as Pythagoreans, Platonists, or both.

ἀριθμὸν ἑαυτὸν κινουῦντα, τὸν δ' ἀριθμὸν ἀντὶ τοῦ νοῦ παραλαμβάνει. Stobaeus, but not Plutarch, adds the information that this is also Xenocrates' view: Aet. IV.2.4, DG 386 b 11: ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ Ξενοκράτης. Further background on this chapter of the *Placita* is provided in J. Mansfeld – D.T. Runia, *Aëtiana V. An Edition of the Reconstructed Text of the Placita with a Commentary and a Collection of Related Texts* Part 3, Book 4 Text and Commentary; Book 5 Text and Commentary, Brill, Leiden [etc.] 2020 (*Philosophia Antiqua* 153), pp. 1392-420; see esp. pp. 1400-1, 1405; 1411.

⁹ At *Tim.* 36 B 6 – D 7, after the account of the soul's composition and harmonic division, and prior to the account of its cognition, *Timaeus* expounds the creation of the circles of the Same and of Difference. He does not explain their relation to the original ingredients that have the same name. They can hardly be identical, but it is unlikely that they are unrelated. This unclarity has certainly contributed to the wide variety of ancient interpretations.

Plutarch's *De Animae procreatione in Timaeo* is a rich source of information on the earlier exegesis of the *Timaeus*. The following table presents a survey of the interpreters and interpretations mentioned by Plutarch.

- 1) Part I: Composition of the soul (1012C-1017C; 1022E-1027A)
 - a) Xenocrates (1012D2-F1): definition of soul, based on *Tim.* 35A, soul as a self-moving number (in agreement with Zaratas, teacher of Pythagoras, on the dyad)
 - b) Crantor (1012D1-8, 1012F2-1013A5): definition of soul, based on *Tim.* 35A, accounting for its cognition of both intelligible and sensible reality, in both cases discerning identity and difference
 - c) Xenocrates and Crantor reject the temporal origin of the soul (1013A6-11)
 - d) Eudorus claims that Xenocrates and Crantor are probably right in rejecting the soul's temporal origin (1013B5-9)
 - e) "Most students of Plato" (1013D12-E1) believe the world to be sempiternal (*a parte ante*)
 - f) Those who identify matter with "necessity" and "measurelessness" (1014E9-F1).
 - g) Eudemus' misguided criticism of Plato's theory of matter as the principle of evil (1015D7-10)
 - h) Posidonius and his followers (τοῖς περὶ Ποσειδώνιον) defining the soul, and understanding it as the mixture of the 'being of limits', which they identify with divisible being, with the intelligible (1023B5-C11)
 - i) Xenocrates (?) and Posidonius (1023C11-D2)¹⁰
 - j) Interpreters who criticise Plato's characterisation of "difference" as "refractory to mixture" (1023D3-10).
- 2) Part II: harmonic division of the soul (1027A-1027F, 1017C-1022E; 1027F-1030C)
 - a) Quantity of the numbers used
 - i) Some claim (τοὺς λέγοντας) it is fine to multiply the original numbers (1027D9)
 - ii) Eudorus following Crantor (possibly to be identified with the 'some' mentioned above) starts from the number 384 (1020C3-7; 1020D6-7)
 - iii) Eudorus' method for calculating the means (1019E)
 - iv) lemma:
 - (1) "the customary treatments in the Pythagorean treatises" (ἐν ταῖς Πυθαγορικαῖς σχολαῖς, 1020E2-4)¹¹
 - (2) "others" (ἄτεροι δέ, 1022A6)
 - b) Arrangement of the numbers used by Plato
 - i) Theodorus (1027D1-5)¹²
 - ii) Crantor, Clearchus (1022C8-11)

¹⁰ Cf. H. Cherniss, *Plutarch's Moralia in Seventeen Volumes* 13,1, 999C-1032F, Harvard U.P.-Heinemann, Cambridge MA-London 1976 (Loeb Classical Library), p. 223, n. h.

¹¹ Cf. F. Ferrari – L. Baldi, *Plutarco. La generazione dell'anima nel Timeo*, M. D'Auria, Napoli 2002 (Corpus Plutarchi Moraliū 37) p. 348, n. 281: "ἐν ταῖς Πυθαγορικαῖς σχολαῖς; non si tratta necessariamente di commentari al *Timeo*, del tipo di quello di Adrasto. Plut. ha qui in mente la produzione pitagorizzante fiorita in epoca ellenistica e poi consolidatasi nei secoli successivi. I trattati aritmo-logici di Teone, Nicomaco e Giamblico dipendono in larga misura da questa tradizione".

¹² Theodorus of Soli is also discussed at *De Def. or.* 427 A-E. See below.

c) Use of the numbers

- i) Various anonymous interpreters, geometers (1028A9-B4; these are familiar with the astronomy of Hipparchus)¹³
- ii) Many interpreters who use Pythagorean arithmological notions (1028B4-5; C2-3)
- iii) Others who look for geometrical demonstrations (1028C3-6)¹⁴
- iv) Chaldeans (1028E11-F2 – a view attributed to the Pythagoreans by Aristides Quintilianus, *De Mus.* 3.19)
- v) “some” (ἐνιοι, 1028F7) (not identical with the “Pythagorean” interpreters mentioned in (ii); cf. 1029A5-6; cf. 1028C)
- vi) ancient (τοὺς παλαιούς) and more recent (οἱ δὲ νεώτεροι) musicologists (1029B8-11)¹⁵

This certainly is an intriguing list. Many interpreters remain anonymous, especially those cited in the mathematical section. Who they were remains a matter of speculation. It is tempting to think of the *Pythagorika hypomnemata*, mentioned by Alexander Polyhistor,¹⁶ for the various Pythagorean texts and thinkers, and generally, for all those whose mathematical speculations are cited.¹⁷ We will probably never know whether groups mentioned by Plutarch and the texts mentioned by Alexander overlap. Familiar names are predominantly found in the first part of Plutarch's text. In modern scholarship, some of those have been credited with commentaries on the *Timaeus*, but this too remains uncertain.

Proclus famously calls Crantor the first exegete of Plato (*In Tim.* I, 1.76.1-2 Diehl = 1.115.5-6 Van Riel: ὁ πρῶτος τοῦ Πλάτωνος ἐξηγητῆς Κράντωρ);¹⁸ Sextus Empiricus states that Posidonius has interpreted the *Timaeus* when drawing attention to an analogy between reason and the senses of sight and hearing.¹⁹ Instead of exploring this issue in great detail, let me state that I do not think that the debate of who wrote a commentary or the first commentary is terribly fruitful, as long as we do not make clear what we mean by that term. Many

¹³ Cf. Ferrari-Baldi, *Plutarcho. La generazione dell'anima nel Timeo* (above, n. 11), pp. 360-1, n. 305.

¹⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 362-3, n. 307.

¹⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 369, n. 320: “Non siamo nelle condizioni di riferire questa contrapposizione tra *palaioi* e *neoterói* a figure ben precise. Ma con il secondo termine si allude certamente a quegli *ἐνιοι*, già rammentati in 1028 F, che collocavano la nota aggiunta al di sotto dell'hypate (la Luna), cioè in corrispondenza della Terra. [...] I *palaioi* dovrebbero comprendere Platone, e forse certi Pitagorici della prima generazione”.

¹⁶ *Apud* Diog. Laert. 8.25; 36: ἐν Πυθαγορικοῖς ὑπομνήμασιν.

¹⁷ Cf. P. Donini, *Le scuole, l'anima, l'impero: la filosofia antica da Antioco a Plotino*, Rosenberg & Sellier, Torino 1997, pp. 137-40. For the general influence of the Pythagorean interpretation of Plato on Plutarch's thought, see P. Donini, “Platone e Aristotele nella tradizione Pitagorica secondo Plutarco”, in A. Pérez Jiménez – J. García López – R.M. Aguilar (eds.), *Plutarcho, Platón y Aristóteles*. Actas del V Congreso Internacional de la I.P.S. (Madrid-Cuenca, 4-7 de Mayo de 1999), Ediciones Clásicas, Madrid 1999, pp. 9-43; P. Donini, “L'eredità accademica e i fondamenti del platonismo in Plutarco”, in M. Barbanti et alii (eds.), *Ἐνωσις καὶ φιλία. Unione e amicizia. Omaggio a Francesco Romano*, Cooperativa Universitaria Editrice Catanese di Magistero, Catania 2002, pp. 247-73; P. Donini, *Commentary and Tradition. Aristotelianism, Platonism, and Post-Hellenistic Philosophy*, De Gruyter, Berlin 2011 (*CAGB*, Quellen und Studien, 4), pp. 373-402.

¹⁸ Cf. A.E. Taylor, *A commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, Oxford U.P., Oxford 1928, p. 106: “Crantor, the author of the first commentaries on the dialogue”.

¹⁹ Sext. Emp., *AM* 7.93-94: καὶ ὡς τὸ μὲν φῶς, φησὶν ὁ Ποσειδώνιος τὸν Πλάτωνος Τίμαιον ἐξηγούμενος, ὑπὸ τῆς φωτοειδοῦς ὀψεως καταλαμβάνεται, ἡ δὲ φωνὴ ὑπὸ τῆς ἀεροειδοῦς ἀκοῆς, οὕτω καὶ ἡ τῶν ὄλων φύσις ὑπὸ συγγενοῦς ὀφείλει καταλαμβάνεσθαι τοῦ λόγου.

scholars will spontaneously be thinking of prototypical specimina from the *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* (CAG) – running commentaries covering entire works (an early example is the anonymous commentary on the *Theaetetus*) –, but also other formats, such as the so-called *Spezialkommentare* (works such as *De Animae procreatione in Timaeo*) may come to mind. The fact of the matter is that we have no clue what form the exegetical activities of these people took. What should be uncontroversial, however, is that they did engage in exegesis, that is, explication of texts in order to establish what an author meant or what philosophical meaning can be elicited from a text (these two goals may often coincide). Exegesis is certainly not an activity that originated only in the post-Aristotelian period. It was practised already in the text preserved in the Derveni papyrus.

The fact that Proclus tells us that Crantor is the first exegete of Plato, and not Speusippus, Xenocrates, or others who engaged in discussing Plato's views, may be significant: possibly the nature of Crantor's philosophical engagement with Plato's texts or the textual outcome of this activity were sufficiently different to merit this comment. Even so, the term Proclus uses, ἐξηγητήης, does not mean "author of a commentary", but picks out a certain philosophical attitude to a text as being clad with epistemic authority. That said, Crantor was a prolific author who according to Philodemus (*Acad. hist. PHerc.* 1021, XVI.13-14) bequeathed to posterity 30.000 lines of text. Philodemus also speaks of Crantor's *hypomnemata* (*Acad. hist. XVIII.34-35*), but there is no reason to consider this a technical term denoting a commentary. In sum, we know nothing about the literary form that Crantor's exegetical activity adopted.

What other predecessors of Plutarch are suspected authors of a commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*? Posidonius' credentials are quite strong. The clearest statement to this effect is found in the aforementioned passage from Sextus Empiricus,²⁰ and can be combined with the information provided by Plutarch. These texts prove that Posidonius commented on – that is, interpreted – more than one passage from the *Timaeus*.²¹ In the past, many scholars

²⁰ C. Reinhardt, *Poseidonios*, Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, München 1921, pp. 416-17, n. 4, points out, that ἐξηγητῆσαι does not mean "to write a commentary". See also C. Reinhardt, *Poseidonios von Apameia, der Rhodier genannt*, Druckenmüller, Stuttgart-München 1953, pp. 569.29-61; 725.57-62; 730.30-40; 791.47-55. D.N. Sedley, "Antiochus as Historian of Philosophy", in Id. (ed.), *The philosophy of Antiochus*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge-New York 2012, pp. 80-103, part. pp. 88-9, argues that Sextus takes his information from a work *On the Criterion*. The mention of an interpretation of the *Timaeus* does not constitute sufficient evidence for the attribution of a commentary. I do not believe anyone would take as such evidence the words "our teacher Plotinus also shared this view, when he interpreted the *Timaeus*", in the anonymous Syrian text recently discovered and attributed to Porphyry by its editor (*De Principiis et materia* 94, ed. Y. Arzhanov, *Porphyry, On Principles and Matter. A Syriac Version of a Lost Greek Text with an English Translation, Introduction, and Glossaries*, De Gruyter, Berlin 2021 [Scientia Graeco-Arabica 34]). We have good reasons to accept that this work derives from a text by Porphyry: see A. Michalewski, "Porphyry, *On Principles and Matter*", *Études platoniciennes* 2021, online <URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesplatoniciennes/2195>. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110747027>>; A. Michalewski, *Le dieu, le mouvement, la matière: Atticus et ses critiques dans l'Antiquité tardive*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 2024 (Anagôgê 16), pp. 13-14; Y. Arzhanov, "Preface", in Id., *Porphyry in Syriac: The treatise On Principles and Matter and its Place in the Greek, Latin, and Syriac Philosophical Traditions*, De Gruyter, Berlin-Boston 2024 (Philosophy and Sciences in the Christian Orient 1), pp. V-VII.

²¹ See also F291 = Theon Smyrn., p. 103.16-18. There is some evidence that Panaetius wrote a work on philological issues in Plato's texts. He was an admirer of Plato (Test. 1; 79; 120 Alesse = Philod., *Stoic. hist. (PHerc.* 1018), col. LXI; Cic., *De Fin.* IV.28, 79; *Tusc. disp.* I.32, 79) and is therefore often believed to incorporate Platonic and Academic elements in his doctrines (F. Alesse, *Panezio di Rodi. Testimonianze*, Bibliopolis, Napoli 1997 [Elenchos 27], pp. 193, 222, 242, 268). A possible influence of the *Timaeus* can be detected in Test. 134 (Epiph., *De Fid.* 9.45: τὸν κόσμον

were more than happy to regard Posidonius as the author of a commentary on the *Timaeus*,²² but nowadays they are reluctant to do so.²³ This is undoubtedly also a matter of scholarly fashion. In my view, since the evidence is insufficient in either sense, one should pronounce a *non liquet*.²⁴ In the debate on Posidonius' authorship of a commentary on the *Timaeus* much has been made from the expression used by Plutarch, "Posidonius cum suis" (1023B5-6: τοῦς περὶ Ποσειδώνιον). I do not think much can be inferred from this.²⁵ The literal meaning of the formula "οἱ περὶ X" is of course "those around X", but the expression is commonly used to denote "X and his followers" or simply "X". In my view, the literal meaning of this expression does not justify excluding Posidonius from the people to whose views Plutarch

ἔλεγεν ... ἀγῆρω. Cf. *Tim.* 33A2-7; Alesse, *Panezio di Rodi*, p. 266). Panaetius was moreover interested in Plato's grammar and style (Test. 149, 155). Galen, *De Indol.* 13 mentions a "Plato of Panaetius" (Πλάτων ὁ Παναητιῶν), which was probably a philological work on the text of Plato (see J.-B. Gourinat, "Le Platon de Panétius", *Philosophie antique* 8 (2018), pp. 139-51 for a *status quaestionis*). Proclus appears to rank Panaetius with the Πλατωνικοί (*In Tim.* 1.162.11-15 = Test. 157), but this could mean no more than that he wrote on Plato (J. Gucker, *Antiochus and the late Academy*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1978 (Hypomnemata 56) pp. 216-19). According to Test. 160-3, from Porphy., *In Ptol. Harm.*, Panaetius also wrote on the type of musical theory that is necessary to understand the *Timaeus*, if Porphyry indeed refers to the Stoic and not to a namesake. Alesse, *Panezio di Rodi* (cit. n. 20), p. 301-2 provides good arguments for assuming he does. If there were a different Panaetius, however, Test. 157 could be explained more easily. Even without taking into account Test. 160-3 and even 157, it is clear that the Stoic Panaetius was indeed an enthusiast of Plato and was familiar with his work. Unlike Posidonius, however, there is no trace of any exegetic activity that goes beyond an interest in language and style. The Platonic traces can all be explained by a direct reading of the dialogues. We know, in addition, that he admired Crantor's work *De Luctu* (Cic., *Ac. pr.* II.44, 135 = Test. 89).

²² Cf. A. Schmekel, *Die Philosophie der mittleren Stoa in ihrem geschichtlichen Zusammenhange*, Weidmann, Hildesheim 1892, pp. 430-2; G. Altmann, *De Posidonio Timaei Platonis commentatore*, E. Ebering, Berlin 1906; E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos. Untersuchungen zur Formengeschichte religiöser Rede*, Teubner, Leipzig-Berlin 1913, p. 348; G. Rudberg, *Forschungen zu Poseidonios*, Akademiska bokhandeln, Uppsala 1918 (Skrifter utgivna av kungl. humanistiska vetenskaps-samfundet i Uppsala 20,3), pp. 239-40; V. De Falco, "Sui trattati aritmetologici di Nicomacho ed Anatorio", *Rivista Indo-Greca-Italica di filologia, lingua, antichità* 6 (1922), pp. 52-60 pp. 54, 56; K. Abel "Zu Poseidonios' schriftstellerischem Nachlaß", *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 107 (1964), pp. 371-3. E. Bickel, "Senecas Briefe 58 und 65 – Das Antiochus-Posidonius-Problem", *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 103 (1960), pp. 1-20, pp. 9-11 seems to hesitate.

²³ Reinhardt, *Poseidonios* (above, n. 20), pp. 416-17, n. 4; P. Merlan, "Beiträge zur Geschichte des antiken Platonismus, II, Poseidonios über die Weltseele in Platons Timaios", *Philologus* 89 (1934), pp. 197-214, part. pp. 211-12; M. Untersteiner, *Posidonio nei Placita di Platone secondo Diogene Laerzio III*, Paideia, Brescia 1970 (Antichità classica e cristiana 7), pp. 16-18; W. Theiler, *Posidonius. Die Fragmente*, De Gruyter, Berlin 1982 (Texte und Kommentare 10), II, pp. 403-4; W. Burkert, "Xenarchos statt Poseidonios: Zu *Pap. Gen. inv.* 203", *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 67 (1987), pp. 51-5; J.M. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy*, London 1969, p. 206; I.G. Kidd, *Posidonius II. The Commentary: (i) Testimonia and fragments 1-149*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 1988 (Cambridge Classical Texts and Commentaries, 14A), pp. 339-40; H. Dörrie – M. Baltes, *Der hellenistische Rahmen des kaiserzeitlichen Platonismus*: Bausteine 36-72, Frommann-Holzboog, Stuttgart 1990 (Der Platonismus in der Antike: Grundlagen, System, Entwicklung 2), p. 332; J. Barnes, "The Hellenistic Platos", *Apeiron* 24 (1991), pp. 115-28, part. p. 116; M. Frede, "Epilogue", in K. Algra – J. Barnes – J. Mansfeld – M. Schofield (eds.), *Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 1999, pp. 771-97, p. 778; D. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria. On the Creation of the Cosmos according to Moses. Introduction, Translation and Commentary*, Brill, Leiden 2001 (Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series 1), p. 28, n. 59; Ju (2012) 100.

²⁴ As does Kidd, *Posidonius II* (above, n. 23), p. 531; G. Reydam-Schils, "Posidonius and the 'Timaeus': off to Rhodes and back to Plato?", *The Classical Quarterly* 47 (1997), pp. 455-76, part. p. 455.

²⁵ Cf. Cherniss, *Plutarch's Moralia* (above, n. 10), p. 218, n. g; T. Tieleman, *Chrysippus' On affections. Reconstruction and interpretation*, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2003 (Philosophia Antiqua 94), p. 210, n. 37; Kidd, *Posidonius II* (above, n. 23), p. 530.

here refers. Because Plutarch a few lines down, at 1023C2, uses the plural demonstrative pronoun *τούτους* in an anaphoric back reference, I assume that he intends Posidonius' circle, without being all too precise. The use of the expression *οἱ περὶ Ποσειδώνιον* coupled with the plural pronoun could be taken to constitute an indication, albeit a fairly weak one, against the assumption that Plutarch takes this information from a work by Posidonius, or exclusively from such a work. If the only source had been Posidonius himself, one could argue, how could Plutarch have known about Posidonius' followers? It could mean that he is not quoting Posidonius himself, but someone who quotes Posidonius. This could be some student of Posidonius – Phantias may come to mind, but also Eudorus, who could indeed have quoted Posidonius.²⁶ But as I have said before, this may be an example of attaching too much value to a casual expression.

Eudorus, too, is sometimes credited with a commentary on the *Timaeus*.²⁷ The main evidence actually stems from Plutarch's *De Animae procreatione in Timaeo*. For Plutarch cites Eudorus as adjudicating a dispute between two Old Academics, Xenocrates and Crantor (1013B4-6), and, on another issue, as following Crantor (1020C3-4), and as explaining the calculation of means (1019E6) – these are the only mentions of Eudorus in the *Corpus Plutarcheum*. A commentator mentioning another (presumed) commentator commenting on one or more authors expressing an opinion about the same text: this situation is familiar from the later commentary tradition. Often it is the case, in such a situation, that the first is using the second as source for the views of his predecessor(s). We have good reasons to believe, for instance, and much more evidence than in the present case, that Porphyry's lost commentaries on the *Categories* or on the *Timaeus* were used by later commentators working on the same texts. Such commentators regularly inform us about comments by Porphyry on earlier interpreters. Plutarch's twofold mention of Eudorus commenting on the view of members of the Early Academy is suggestive of the hypothesis that Eudorus wrote a treatise devoted to the *Timaeus*, possibly a commentary, and that Plutarch used this work when discussing Xenocrates and Crantor.²⁸ The likelihood that this scenario corresponds to the truth is greater the less likely it is that Plutarch had direct access to the latter two. Plutarch's testimony constitutes nearly incontrovertible evidence that Eudorus wrote on the *Timaeus*. It is plausible that the three references to Eudorus are to the same work and that this work was devoted to the *Timaeus*. However, we do not know anything about its literary form. Nor do we know that it was Plutarch's main or only source about Xenocrates and Crantor.

²⁶ Cherniss, *Plutarch's Moralia* (above, n. 10), pp. 217-18, n. g. For Phantias, see Diog. Laert. 7.41.

²⁷ See Cherniss, *Plutarch's Moralia* (above, n. 10), pp. 170-1, n. c, for a list of scholars who attribute a commentary to Eudorus. See also J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists. A Study of Platonism 80 B.C. to A.D. 220 (Revised edition with new afterword)*, Duckworth, London 1996, p. 116; Ferrari-Baldi, *Plutarco. La generazione dell'anima nel Timeo* (above, n. 11), pp. 231, n. 30; J. Dillon, "Eudore", in R. Goulet (ed.), *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques III (d'Eccélos à Juvénal)*, CNRS Éditions, Paris 2000, pp. 290-93, part. p. 291; P. Boyancé, "Études philoniennes", *Revue des Études Grecques* 76 (1963), pp. 64-110, part. pp. 79, 95; F. Ferrari, "Esegesi, sistema e tradizione: la prospettiva filosofica del medioplatonismo", in C. Riedweg (ed.), *Philosophia in der Konkurrenz von Schulen, Wissenschaften und Religionen. Zur Pluralisierung des Philosophiebegriffs in Kaiserzeit und Spätantike*. Akten der 17. Tagung der Karl und Gertrud Abel-Stiftung vom 16.-17. Oktober 2014 in Zürich, De Gruyter, Berlin-Boston 2017 (*Philosophie der Antike* 34), pp. 33-59, part. p. 39.

²⁸ A comparable case is that of Achilles citing Eudorus citing Diodorus of Alexandria. See below, note 55.

It should further be noted that different papyri contain fragments of what could be a commentary on the *Timaeus*²⁹ or references by anonymous philosophical authors to their own commentaries on that dialogue.³⁰ Scholars have of course tried to connect these fragments and references to the usual suspects, without being able to provide decisive arguments about authorship.

To the speculations about who wrote what kind of text on the *Timaeus* can be added the speculations about Plutarch's source. Several hypotheses have been put forward to explain Plutarch's access to information about earlier interpreters:

²⁹ F. Lasserre, "Anonyme, Commentaire de l'*Alcibiade I* de Platon", in F. Deleva Caizzi *et. alii* (eds.), *Varia papyrologica*, Firenze 1991 (Studi e testi per il Corpus dei Papiri Filosofici Greci e Latini, 5), pp. 7-23, claims that *PGen inv.* 203 contains a part of the commentary by Posidonius. Burkert, "Xenarchos statt Poseidonios (above, n. 23) had previously dismissed the attribution of the commentary in these papyrus fragments to Posidonius. He argues that these fragments derive from a work by Xenarchus Πρὸς τὴν πέμπτην οὐσίαν. Against Burkert, Lasserre argues that the papyrus text indeed derives from a commentary on the *Timaeus*, and on this basis restores the old attribution to Posidonius. Deleva Caizzi and Funghi extensively examine Lasserre's arguments and conclude that both attributions remain uncertain. They show that the texts contain Aristotelian and Platonic material, but that Lasserre's claim that the text comprises a commentary on the *Timaeus* is unfounded, even if it is undeniable that it contains expressions borrowed from this dialogue. The fragments probably belong to a worked consisting of objections (ἐνστάσεις), as exemplified in the argument against the existence of a fifth element (F. Deleva Caizzi – M.S. Funghi, "Natura del cielo, astri, anima. Platonismo e aristotelismo in una nuova interpretazione di *PGen inv.* 203", in *Papiri Filosofici. Miscellanea di Studi II*, Olschki, Firenze 1998 [Accademia Toscana di Scienze e lettere La Colombaria, Studi 177. Studi e testi per il Corpus dei Papiri Filosofici Greci e Latini 9], II, pp. 33-110, part. pp. 98-100; see also F. Deleva Caizzi, "*PGen inv.* 203", in *Corpus dei papiri filosofici greci e latini (CPF). Testi e lessico nei papiri di cultura greca e latina Parte III: Commentari*, Olschki, Firenze 1995, pp. 586-7). A. Falcon, *Aristotelianism in the First Century BCE: Xenarchus of Seleucia*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge-New York 2012, pp. 174-6 sees no special proximity between the papyrus fragment and Xenarchus.

³⁰ *POxy.* 1609, containing a commentary on *Alcibiades I*, mentions a commentary on the *Timaeus* (περὶ μὲν οὖν τούτων ἐν τοῖς εἰς τὸν Τίμαιον εἰ[ρ]ηται, recto col. II) on the subject of mirrors. Diels originally attributed this commentary to Posidonius, but in DK6, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, I, Weidmann, Zürich-Berlin 1952, p. 352.1-6 W. Kranz thinks that Eudorus is its author. Mazzarelli includes it in the fragments of Eudorus: C. Mazzarelli, "Raccolta e interpretazione delle testimonianze e dei frammenti del medioplatonico Eudoro di Alessandria", *Rivista di filosofia neo-scolastica* 77, 197-209, 535-55 (1985), F33. According to the editors of CFP I.1** Anon, *Corpus dei papiri filosofici greci e latini (CPF). Testi e lessico nei papiri di cultura greca e latina Parte I: Autore noti, 1***, Olschki, Firenze 1992, p. 197, who quote Lasserre, "Anonyme, Commentaire de l'*Alcibiade I* de Platon" (above, n. 29), the identification with Eudorus has become untenable due to the discovery of a new fragment. Lasserre is in fact not as emphatic as is claimed. He situates the commentary in the Middle Platonic period. The firm *t.a.q.* is ca. 210 BC, the only firm *t.p.q.* is provided by the mention of Epicurus. Lasserre, however, thinks that the activity of Eudorus gives us a more precise *t.p.q.*, assuming that Eudorus was the first to formulate the ὁμοίωσις θεῶν doctrine (p. 9). Unfortunately, we do not know that Eudorus was indeed the first to do this. But if Lasserre is right to claim that the text was more "an instrument de travail" than a polished commentary (p. 12), it is indeed more likely that the text was authored at a time not very remote from the production of the papyrus text, i.e. not more than half a century before 210 AD. A further mention of a commentary on the *Timaeus* can be found in the anonymous Commentary on the *Theaetetus* (*PBerol inv.* 9782) XXXV.10-12. The identity of the author of the Commentary on the *Theaetetus*, and hence also that of the Commentary on the *Timaeus* referred to here, cannot be established. H. Tarrant, "The date of Anon. in *Theaetetus*", *Classical Quarterly* 33 (1983), pp. 161-87, has argued that it is Eudorus, but see J. Mansfeld, "Two Attributions", *Classical Quarterly* 85 (1991), pp. 541-4; G. Bastianini – D.N. Sedley, "Commentarium in Platonis *Theaetetus*", in *Corpus dei papiri filosofici greci e latini (CPF). Testi e lessico nei papiri di cultura greca e latina, Parte III: Commentari*, Olschki, Firenze 1995 (Unione Accademica Nazionale. Accademia Toscana di Scienze e Lettere La Colombaria), pp. 227-562, part. pp. 252-4.

1. Eudorus was Plutarch's source for Crantor and Xenocrates.³¹
2. Eudorus was Plutarch's source for Posidonius.³²
3. The combination of (1) and (2): Eudorus was the source for information on Crantor, Xenocrates, and Posidonius – which could be expanded to include all others quoted by Plutarch.³³
4. Posidonius was Plutarch's source for Crantor and Xenocrates.³⁴
5. A follower of Posidonius or someone influenced by him (this could be Eudorus, in which case this position reduces to (2)) was Plutarch's source for Posidonius.³⁵

All of this is, of course, speculation. That Plutarch had access to one or more works by Eudorus and that through him he possessed information on Crantor and Xenocrates is a certitude. Scholars have claimed with great confidence that Eudorus was his only source and that it is extremely unlikely that Plutarch had direct access to Crantor.³⁶ Yet is it so likely that Plutarch relied on a single source? He starts his treatise saying that he has rehearsed Plato's views on the soul countless times, that his own interpretation is opposed to most Platonists (1012B1–8) and that it would be pointless to look at all the dissensions *Tim.* 35A has occasioned among the interpreters, since his sons, whom he here addresses, have read most of them. (1012D1–4). If all the interpretations known to him and his sons were to be found in Eudorus' commentary, this may seem to be a strange statement to make. He could just as well have told them to look it up in their one and only textbook. There is some indirect evidence that we should not

³¹ J. Helmer, *Zu Plutarch's 'De animae procreatione in Timaeo'. Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Platon-Deuters Plutarch*, Diss. inaug., München-Würzburg 1937, p. 13, n. 18: "Überblicken wir Plutarchs Auseinandersetzung mit Xenokrates und Krantor, so können wir uns des Eindrucks kaum erwehren, daß Plutarch die beiden nicht selbst gelesen hat. Auch Taylor (*Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* S. 2) glaubt, daß Plutarch die beiden Akademiker nicht selbst gelesen hat; er denkt an Poseidonios als Mittelquelle. (...) Demgegenüber scheint es mir näher zu liegen, Eudorus die Rolle des Vermittlers zwischen den beiden Akademikern und Plutarch zuzuweisen."; Cherniss, *Plutarch's Moralia* (above, n. 10), pp. 170–1 n. c.; 165, n. c., 216 n. g.; J. Dillon, *Alcinous. The Handbook of Platonism*, Clarendon, Oxford 1993 (Clarendon Later Ancient Philosophers), p. 122; Cherniss, *Plutarch's Moralia* (above, n. 10), pp. 164–5, n. c., on the report on Xenocrates and Zaratras: "(...)Eudorus (...), who is cited by Plutarch at 1013B, 1019E, and 1020C not only for the parenthetical reference to Zaratras here but also for the summary in which it stands."; H. Dörrie – A. Dörrie, *Die geschichtlichen Wurzeln des Platonismus. Bausteine 1–35: Text, Übersetzung, Kommentar*, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1987 (Der Platonismus in der Antike. Grundlagen – System – Entwicklung 1), p. 333.

³² Cherniss, *Plutarch's Moralia* (above, n. 10), pp. 217–18, N.G. Ju, "Posidonius as Historian of Philosophy: an Interpretation of Plutarch, *De Animae Procreatione in Timaeo* 22, 1023b–c", in M. Schofield (ed.), *Aristotle, Plato and Pythagoreanism in the First Century BC. New Directions for Philosophy*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 2012, pp. 95–117, p. 100, n. 21, concurs with Cherniss. Much earlier, Merlan, "Beiträge zur Geschichte des antiken Platonismus, II" (above, n. 23), p. 211 and Helmer, *Zu Plutarch's 'De animae procreatione in Timaeo'* (above, n. 31), pp. 17–18, n. 22, also considered Eudorus to be the likely source for Plutarch's doxographical report on Posidonius. See also Kidd, *Posidonius II* (above, n. 23), p. 530: "There is a strong presumption that Plutarch used some intermediary sources for this essay, such as Eudorus (1013B, 1019E, 1020C), who may also have reported Posidonius (cf. F. 149), although there could easily have been some other 'Posidonian' source more immediately identified with οἱ περὶ Ποσειδώνιον". F149, here quoted by Kidd (= Eud. F10 Mazzarelli), provides no conclusive evidence for the possibility that Eudorus was a source for information on Posidonius.

³³ Cf. Dillon, "Eudore" (above, n. 27), p. 291; Kidd, *Posidonius II* (above, n. 23), p. 530.

³⁴ Cf. Taylor, *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* (above, n. 18), pp. 2, 112, 465. This hypothesis is unlikely. If Posidonius had been Plutarch's only source, he could not have known what Eudorus says about the Early Academicians.

³⁵ Cf. Kidd, *Posidonius II* (above, n. 23), p. 530; Cherniss, *Plutarch's Moralia* (above, n. 10), pp. 216–18, n. g.

³⁶ This is the view expressed by Dörrie in *Der Platonismus in Der Antike*. Cherniss, on the contrary, admits that even if Plutarch used a secondary source he may have known the original as well. See above, n. 31, for the references.

underestimate the libraries to which Plutarch had access: Plutarch sets great store by first-hand information, while ridiculing colleagues who based their views on second-hand reports.³⁷

For these reasons, I believe it to be unlikely that Plutarch has used a single source. What we now know about Plutarch's working methods also speaks against this hypothesis. Indeed, several publications by Luc Van der Stockt have shed light on Plutarch's hypomnematic method. To be sure, Plutarch's use of *hypomnemata*, which in this case means personal notes from which he composed his works, in itself does not tell us anything about the origin of the material he used. But the *hypomnemata*, whose traces can be detected throughout his works, have been shown to be collections of heterogeneous material that was reused in different contexts.³⁸ This makes it *prima facie* unlikely that Plutarch would copy out his material from just one main source. Moreover, we know, because Plutarch tells us, that he had compiled such notes precisely on the *Timaeus*. This is what he says in the famous "hypomnemata statement" with which he begins his essay *De Tranquillitate animi*, 464 E 1 – 465 A 3.

Another author whom Plutarch cites by name is Theodorus of Soli. The same Theodorus receives a trenchant criticism in *De Defectu oraculorum*, ch. 32 (427 A-E). A character in Plutarch's dialogue references the views of Theodorus, the author of a work on Plato's mathematical theories.³⁹ Theodorus is said to have praised the beauty of the regular solids, claiming that this is due to the symmetries and equalities in their relations. The dodecahedron, Theodorus is claimed to have said, is the largest of the regular solids and consists of the most elements (427 B: μέγιστον δὲ καὶ πολυμερέστατον – cf. *Quaest. plat.* V, 1003 C: τῷ πλήθει τῶν στοιχείων).⁴⁰ Starting from his analyses of the properties of the regular solids Theodorus allegedly went on to tackle the problem of the number of worlds. Since the figures that are smaller and simpler will respond more readily and quickly to the power that moves and shapes matter, the pyramid will be the first body to take shape, he claimed (427 C). However, there will be five worlds, in each of which a different solid will come into being first. The remaining figures will have their origin from the type that is primary in any world. For the solids transform into one another when the elements of which they consist come apart and reassemble. Note that Theodorus has not explained why the simplest of the five solids does not acquire substantiality first in every world.⁴¹ Later in the dialogue, the character Ammonius,

³⁷ Cf. *Adv. Col.* 1114F5 – 1115C10.

³⁸ L. Van der Stockt, "Plutarch in Plutarch: The problem of the hypomnemata", in I. Gallo (ed.), *La biblioteca di Plutarco*. Atti Del IX Convegno Plutarcho, Pavia, 13-15 Giugno 2002, M. D'Auria, Napoli 2004 (Collectanea 23), pp. 331-40; Id. "A Plutarchan hypomnema on self-love", *American Journal of Philology* 120 (1999), pp. 575-99; Id., "Three Aristotle's equal but one Plato. On a cluster of quotations in Plutarch", in A. Pérez Jiménez – J. García López – R.M. Aguilar (eds.), *Plutarco, Platón y Aristóteles*. Actas del V Congreso Internacional de La I.P.S. Madrid – Cuenca, 4-7 de Mayo de 1999, Ediciones Clásicas, Madrid 1999, pp. 127-40. See also B. Van Meirvenne, "Plutarch on the healing power of (a tricky) *παρρησία*. Observations in favour of a political reading of *De adulatore et amico*?", in ed. P.A. Stadter – L. Van der Stockt (eds.), *Sage and Emperor. Plutarch, Greek intellectuals, and Roman power in the time of Trajan (98-117 A.D.)*, Leuven U.P., Leuven 2002 (Symbolae, Series A 29), pp. 141-60; C. Pelling, *Plutarch and History: Eighteen Studies*, Classical Press of Wales, London 2002, pp. 70-3, 84-5; S.A. Xenophontos, "Plutarch's compositional technique in the *An seni respublica gerenda sit*: clusters vs. patterns", *American Journal of Philology* 133.1 (2012), pp. 61-91, part. 61-3.

³⁹ Plut., *De Def. or.* 427A5-7: Καὶ μὴν ἔφη ἐγὼ ἴδομαι Θεόδωρος ὁ Σολεὺς οὐ φάυλως μετιέναι τὸν λόγον, ἐξηγούμενος τὰ μαθηματικὰ τοῦ Πλάτωνος.

⁴⁰ Theodorus' analysis of the surfaces of the dodecahedron in triangles is moreover similar to that found in Alc., *Did.* 13, 169.2-3 Whittaker, and has probably influenced the latter. See J. Opsomer "Arguments non-linéaires et pensée en cercles. Forme et argumentation dans les *Questions Platoniciennes* de Plutarque", in X. Brouillette – A. Giavatto (eds.), *Les dialogues platoniciens chez Plutarque. Stratégies et méthodes exégétiques*, Leuven U.P., Leuven 2011 (Ancient and Medieval philosophy. De Wulf-Mansion Centre, Series I, 43), pp. 93-116, part. p. 100.

⁴¹ Theodorus merely asserted that the doctrine of the five worlds would solve the problem (427 C 2-4): ἔστιν οὖν ἕνα καὶ ταύτης τῆς ἀτοπίας ἢ τῆς ὕλης εἰς πέντε κόσμους διαίρεσις καὶ διάστασις.

Plutarch's teacher, will denounce this failure (427 E-F). He also brings a more decisive objection, however: it is essential for Theodorus' theory that there are transmutations from one solid to the other, so that every single world would end up having all of the solids, even if it started out having only one type. Ammonius remarks with fine irony that Theodorus, when discussing these transformations, has wisely left the cube out of the picture. For the cube is made of isosceles triangles, and not of scalenes (427 F – 428 A). This makes the cube unsuitable for transformation into other elements. Hence in the world in which the cube is the first element there will be none of the others, "since, because of its nature, it cannot transmute itself into any one of them" (428 A). Theodorus has no excuse for not knowing this, so the criticism goes, for this is the clear and unambiguous teaching of Plato himself.⁴²

The dodecahedron, however, had not been discussed by Plato in any detail. Unfortunately for Theodorus, there is a similar problem with this geometrical figure, as Ammonius points out: it does consist of scalenes, but not of scalenes of the same type as those that are used for the construction of the pyramid, the octahedron and the icosahedron. Its elements can never break up to form these other solids.⁴³

Not coincidentally, the same mathematical mistake is made in the fifth *Quaestio platonica*, but there it stands uncorrected. It is part of the textual strategy of the *Quaestiones* that while the author offers several solutions the reader should be able to discern which solution is preferred and spot the mistakes in the others. The authors whose views are reported in the different solutions to the problem remain anonymous. In the case discussed here, however, because of the similarities with *De Defectu oraculorum*, we know it is Theodorus of Soli.⁴⁴

Clearly, Theodorus was a rather unsophisticated exegete of the *Timaeus* whom Plutarch regarded as one of his predecessors. Unfortunately, we do not know more about this exegete of Plato, not even whether we have to assume a Hellenistic or a Posthellenistic date.⁴⁵ The fact that Plutarch cites him on more than one occasion is interesting in itself. We can only guess at possible relations between Theodorus and other exegetes of the mathematical aspects of the *Timaeus*⁴⁶ cited in *De Anima procreatione*.

The scholarly diaphonia on the philosophical sources used by Plutarch is telling; there has been a great deal of speculation and little certainty. On the basis of the evidence surveyed so far, the hypothesis I regard as the most plausible is that Plutarch certainly had access to a work by Eudorus in which the latter discussed at least two other predecessors — Crantor and Xenocrates — and in addition drew on works by other philosophers when he, over many years, compiled his notes — *hypomnemata* — on the *Timaeus*. These notes he then used when writing the *De Anima procreatione in Timaeo*, but also the *Quaestiones platonicae*, in particular the quaestiones dealing with the *Timaeus*. In this collection of short texts, Plutarch examines several answers to given problems (ζητήματα) before giving his own solution. These can sometimes be connected to earlier philosophers; sometimes they may have also have arisen at discussions such as those portrayed in the *Quaestiones convivales* — even if in that work, too, the answers provided by interlocutors often reflect views from earlier

⁴² Cf. *Tim.* 53 D – 55 C; 56 D 4-6.

⁴³ *De Def. or.* 428A. See R. Goulet – B. Vitrac, "Théodore de Soles", in R. Goulet (ed.), *Dictionnaire des Philosophes Antiques VI (de Sabinillus à Tyrséno)*, CNRS Éditions, Paris 2016, pp. 928-30, part. p. 929.

⁴⁴ Cf. Opsomer, "Arguments non-linéaires et pensée en cercles (above, n. 40), pp. 112-14.

⁴⁵ Cf. Goulet– Vitrac, "Théodore de Soles" (above, n. 43), pp. 928-30.

⁴⁶ See F. Ferrari, "I commentari specialistici alle sezioni matematiche del *Timeo*" (above, n. 1) for a survey of what we know about specialised mathematical commentaries on the *Timaeus*.

philosophers and scientists. At any rate, there can be no doubt that the *Quaestiones platonicae* contain material that Plutarch borrowed from anonymous earlier exegetes, mostly to engage critically with them.⁴⁷

2. Parallels from the Pythagorean pseudepigrapha

I believe it is possible to shed more light on some of the circles of philosophers with whom Plutarch was engaging. More in particular, it is possible to find parallels between Plutarch's work of Platonic exegesis, on the one hand, and several pseudepigraphic Pythagorean texts, on the other. Plutarch does not name any of these authors. I nonetheless believe that some of the unspecified references to unnamed Pythagorean authors or texts (see above) could very well be to texts that belong to this corpus. It is equally possible, that both Plutarch and the pseudo-Pythagorean texts drew on the same material. That there was some kind of connection, however, is nearly certain. At least parts of this corpus belong to the same philosophical environment as several of the predecessors Plutarch discusses.⁴⁸ I shall now try to show this based on a comparison of the vocabulary used by Plutarch and some pseudepigraphic authors.

Although much is uncertain about the origin of the Pythagorean pseudepigraphic tradition, what is clear is that the corpus is far from uniform and cannot have been the work of a single author. The dating of the various tracts is controversial; they may stem from different periods. Generally, the earlier parts of the corpus focus more on Aristotelian texts (*Categories*, *De generatione et corruptione*), whereas at a later stage Platonic texts such as the *Timaeus* became more important.⁴⁹ Despite their heterogeneous origins, at some point in time, at the latest when Iamblichus wrote his *On the Pythagorean school* (*Περὶ τῆς Πυθαγορικῆς αἰρήσεως*),⁵⁰ most of the pseudepigrapha that we have today were considered to belong to some kind of

⁴⁷ For the way in which they are composed and the authorial strategy, see J. Opsomer, "Zητήματα: structure et argumentation dans les *Quaestiones Platonicae* de Plutarque", 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, Ediciones Clásicas, Madrid 1996, pp. 71-83; Opsomer, "Arguments non-linéaires et pensée en cercles (above, n. 40).

⁴⁸ Iamblichus' *De Anima* contains a doxographical section that overlaps with the information provided by Plutarch. Cf. *De An.* 4 (Finamore-Dillon) / 7 (Martone), *ap. Stob., Ecl.* I.49, p. 363.26-364.7 Wachsmuth. In this doxography he quotes, among others, Hippasos. This philosopher is the alleged author of a text in the pseudepigraphic Pythagorean corpus.

⁴⁹ For a status quaestionis, see A. Ulacco, *Pseudopythagorica doric: i trattati di argomento metafisico, logico ed epistemologico attribuiti ad Archita e a Brotino. Introduzione, traduzione, commento*, De Gruyter, Boston-Berlin 2017 (Philosophie der Antike. Veröffentlichungen der Karl und Gertrud Abel-Stiftung 41), pp. 1-16.

⁵⁰ For this project, see Dillon, *Iamblichi Chalcidensis in Platonis dialogos commentariorum fragmenta*, Brill, Leiden 1973 (Philosophia Antiqua 23), pp. 19-21; D. O'Meara, *Pythagoras Revived. Mathematics and Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, Oxford U.P., Oxford 1989, pp. 30-105; Macris, "Le pythagorisme érigé en *haireisis*, ou comment (re)construire une identité philosophique. Remarques sur un aspect méconnu du projet pythagoricien de Jamblique", in N. Belayche – S.C. Mimouni (eds.), *Entre lignes de partage et territoires de passage. Les identités religieuses dans les mondes grecs et romain. 'Paganismes', 'judaïsmes', 'christianismes'*, Peeters, Paris-Louvain-Walpole 2009 (Collection de la *Revue des Études juives*), pp. 139-68; Macris 'Jamblique et la littérature pseudo-pythagoricienne', in S.C. Mimouni (ed.), *Apocryphité. Histoire d'un concept transversal aux religions du livre. En hommage à Pierre Geoltrain*, Brepols, Turnhout 2002 (Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, Sciences Religieuses 113), pp. 77-129; J. Opsomer, "Iamblichos und seine Schule (1.-4.)", in C. Riedweg – C. Horn – D. Wyrwa (eds.), *Philosophie der Kaiserzeit und der Spätantike Band 5/2*, Schwabe, Basel 2018 (Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie, begründet von Friedrich Ueberweg, Die Philosophie der Antike, völlig neu bearbeitete Ausgabe), pp. 1349-83, pp. 1434-50, part. pp. 1351-5.

corpus. As I shall show, Plutarch may have been familiar with several of these texts, material of which he uses in his most technical philosophical works – if not material directly taken from these texts themselves, then at least material from the same tradition.

If we want to look for parallels with Plutarch's texts on the *Timaeus*, the natural place to start is the text that presents itself as the Ur-version of this Platonic dialogue, that is, the purported source of the physical account in Plato's *Timaeus*. Pseudo-Timaeus Locrus – henceforth I shall just call this author and text Timaeus Locrus⁵¹ – not only espouses the same non-literal reading of the *Timaeus* as Plutarch's opponents Crantor and Xenocrates, but also uses the same expression as Plutarch does in this respect: the world is generated “in account (only)” (λόγῳ γενέσθαι TL 206.11-12; cf. Plut., *De An. procr.* 1013A).⁵² He moreover describes (208.13-209.1) the same two-step mixture from four ingredients (indivisible being - divisible being - the same - the different) that we find in Plutarch, Xenocrates, and Crantor (Timaeus Locrus 208.13-209.1). What is more, Timaeus Locrus concurs with Plutarch in seeing an ontological, possibly derivational connection in (two of) the four ingredients, when stating that ‘divisible being’ is on the side of Difference (which Plutarch further derives from the Dyad).⁵³ Like Crantor, followed by Eudorus, Timaeus Locrus takes the number 384 as the basis for the calculations of the proportions of the soul (209.3-6). Plutarch criticises this interpretation (*De An. procr.* 1020C3-9; 1020D6-7). In other words, Timaeus Locrus proposes the same interpretation on this issue as two named authors criticised by Plutarch, whose views on the matter we only know thanks to Plutarch.

The *Quaestiones platonicae* provide us with additional evidence. Just like Plutarch in *Quaest. Plat.* V, 1003C8-9, Timaeus Locrus, at 216.20-21, claims that the dodecahedron is close to the sphere.⁵⁴ As it happens, the same link is established by Achilles, who in his introduction to Aratus' *Phaenomena* associates the view that the universe is spherical with the Pythagorean view according to which it is dodecahedral, explaining that Pythagoreans

⁵¹ W. Marg, *Timaeus Locrus. De natura mundi et animae. Überlieferung, Testimonia, Text und Übersetzung*, Brill, Leiden 1972 (Philosophia Antiqua 24). For the other pseudopythagorean texts quoted here, I use the edition H. Thesleff, *The Pythagorean Texts of the Hellenistic Period*, Åbo Akademi, Åbo 1965 (Acta Academiae Aboensis, Ser. A, Humaniora 30, 1).

⁵² As Baltes has pointed out, this expression — λόγῳ in the sense “in account” (meaning *only* in the account, not outside of it) – derives from Plato. It is used for the ‘creation in account’ of a world or a city-state: *Tim.* 27A7-8; 55D7; *Crit.* 106A4; *Resp.* V, 472D9-E1; 369A5; *Leg.* IV, 712B2; VI, 778B5; *Menex.* 239D5. Cf. Baltes (below, n. 60), pp. 48-9. It is also part of the vocabulary of some post-Hellenistic authors: see Max. Tyr. XVII.2 (citing Plato on the conceptual creation of a state). There is no evidence, however, *pace* M. Bonazzi, “Eudorus of Alexandria and the ‘Pythagorean’ pseudepigrapha”, in G. Cornelli – R. McKirahan – C. Macris (eds.), *On Pythagoreanism*, De Gruyter, Berlin-Boston 2013 (Studia praesocratica 5), pp. 385-404, part. pp. 388, 392, that Eudorus used the expression to defend the non-temporal interpretation of the generation of the world. The only passage in which it is connected to Eudorus is in *De An. procr.* 1013A, where Plutarch uses it to refer to the non-temporal interpretation generally – an interpretation here linked to the names of Xenocrates and Crantor. Only later, at 1013B, Plutarch adds Eudorus' comment that neither of them “is without all title to likelihood” (trans. H. Cherniss). The expression λόγῳ may just be Plutarch's own wording of the issue. At any rate it cannot be quoted to show a commonality in expression between Plutarch and Eudorus, since this presumption of commonality would be based on one and the same occurrence.

⁵³ Timaeus Locrus, p. 206.3-4 (τὰν δὲ περὶ τὰ σώματα μεριστὰν εἴμεν καὶ τᾶς θατέρω φύσιος); compare Plut., *De An. procr.* 1024D9-11 (ἐκότερον γὰρ ἀπὸ τῆς ἐτέρας ἀρχῆς κάτεισι, τὸ μὲν ταῦτόν ἀπὸ τοῦ ἑνός τὸ δὲ θατέρω ἀπὸ τῆς δυάδος); 1025B4-6 (συνήγαγεν οὐ δι' αὐτῶν, ἀλλ' οὐσίας ἐτέρας μεταξὺ, τὴν μὲν ἀμερίστον πρὸ τοῦ ταυτοῦ πρὸ δὲ τοῦ θατέρου τὴν μεριστήν, ἔστιν ἢ προσήκουσαν ἐκατέραν ἐκατέρα τάξας).

⁵⁴ Timaeus Locrus, p. 216.20-21: τὸ δὲ δωδεκάεδρον εἰκόνα τῷ παντὸς ἐστάσατο, ἔγγιστα σφαῖρα ἐόν. Plut., *Quaest. plat.* V, 1003C8-9: Πότερον, ὡς ὑπονοοῦσιν ἔνιοι, τὸ δωδεκάεδρον τῷ σφαιροειδεῖ προσέειμεν;

want to have everything be composed of lines and numbers (*Isag.* 6, p. 37.29-38.2 Maass).⁵⁵

In the seventh *Quaestio platonica*, Plutarch examines the process of antiperistasis (ἀντιπερίστασις, cyclical replacement), a theory deriving from the *Timaeus*. As Cherniss remarks,⁵⁶ Plato does not call it thus, but Aristotle does.⁵⁷ Aristotle in addition uses the term periosis (περίωσις),⁵⁸ in agreement with the verb used by Plato (περιωθέω, 79 C 6; E 2; 80 C 4). Aristotle makes clear it is not his theory, but that of others, without however naming either Plato or Platonists. Now, the expressions used by Plutarch in expanding on Plato's theory are often closer to Timaeus Locrus than to the corresponding section in the *Timaeus*. Timaeus Locrus' deviations from Plato can only be the result of an earlier exegetical engagement with Plato's text, whether by the same author or someone else. Plato's more complex definition of sound or voice based on an earlier passage in the *Timaeus* (φωνή: "the blow by air upon the brain and the blood by way of the ears and transmitted to the soul"), for instance, is replaced by a simpler one both in Timaeus Locrus ("the blow in the air transmitted to the soul by way of the ears") and Plutarch ("the blow by air by way of the ears upon the percipient").⁵⁹ Timaeus Locrus and Plutarch do not mention the brain and the blood as that upon which the impact is made.⁶⁰ It would seem reasonable to assume that either Plutarch relies on Timaeus Locrus, or that both authors rely on the same preceding commentary tradition. Where Plutarch agrees with Plato and differs from Timaeus Locrus is in the agency ascribed to the air. The latter seems to say it is merely a blow in the air. Possibly Plutarch opposes such an

⁵⁵ Mazzarelli includes this testimony among the uncertain fragments of Eudorus (fr. 39). Cf. Mazzarelli, "Raccolta e interpretazione delle testimonianze" (above, n. 30). In this attribution, he follows the editor of Achilles, E. Maass. Cf. E. Maass, *Commentariorum in Aratum reliquiae*, Weidmann, Berlin 1898, *ad loc.* There may be no direct reference to Eudorus in this passage, yet he is believed to be the source of large parts of Achilles' introduction. Cf. Dillon, "Eudore" (above, n. 27), p. 292. Achilles, however, mentions Eudorus only twice, namely in chapter 2 (p. 30.20-29), where he cites Eudorus citing Diodorus of Alexandria, and once in chapter 13 (p. 40.25). The other references are to Diodorus (5, p. 35.29; 10, p. 39.6; 14, p. 41.17). In the passage at hand (p. 37.8-38.2), however, no source is cited. Even though it is plausible that references to Diodorus are traceable to Eudorus (see already H. Diels, *Doxographi graeci (editio iterata)*, De Gruyter, Berlin-Leipzig 1929, pp. 20-2), there is no evidence that connects our reference to the Pythagoreans to Diodorus or Eudorus. See also Mansfeld-Runia, *Aëtiana V* (above, n. 8), p. 302: "There is absolutely no reason to conclude on the basis of this passage that 'the main doxographical source of Achilles' *Isagoge* is [...] Eudorus who relies on Diodorus', as done by A.V. Lebedev, "Aristarchus of Samos on Thales' Theory of Eclipses", *Apeiron* 23 (1990), pp. 77-85, part. p. 79.

⁵⁶ Cherniss, *Plutarch's Moralia* (above, n. 10), p. 63 n. g.

⁵⁷ Arist., *Phys.* IV 8, 215 a 14-15 (ἡ δι' ἀντιπερίστασιν, ὡς ἐνιοί φασιν); VIII 10, 267 a 15-20 (16-17: ἡ τοιαύτη κίνησις, ἣν λέγουσί τινες ἀντιπερίστασιν εἶναι).

⁵⁸ Arist., *Parv. nat.* 472 b 6 (ἡ δ' ἐν τῷ Τιμαίῳ γεγραμμένη περίωσις).

⁵⁹ Plut., *Quaest. plat.* VII, 1006B4-5 (ἔστι γὰρ ἡ φωνὴ πληγῆ τοῦ αἰσθανομένου δι' ὠτων ὑπ' ἀέρος); Timaeus Locrus 220.4-5 (Φωνὰ δ' ἐστὶ μὲν πλάξις ἐν ἀέρι δεικνυμένα ποτὶ τὰν ψυχὰν δι' ὠτων); Plat., *Tim.* 67 B 2-4 (ὄλωσ μὲν οὖν φωνὴν θῶμεν τὴν δι' ὠτων ὑπ' ἀέρος ἐγκεφάλου τε καὶ αἵματος μέχρι ψυχῆς πληγῆν διαδιδομένην). The text of the *Placita* deviates in an interesting way in that it puts the brain and the blood on a par with the ears (καὶ), as that through which the impact is transmitted (*Plac.* IV.19.1, Mansfeld-Runia: πληγῆν ὑπὸ ἀέρος δι' ὠτων καὶ ἐγκεφάλου καὶ αἵματος μέχρι ψυχῆς διαδιδομένην). The same peculiarity is found in Theophr., *Sens.* 6. Philo, *Quod deus sit immutabilis* §84, contains a theory of consonance, partly inspired by the same section of the *Timaeus* with Stoic terminology and some Pythagorean speculation on the dyad mixed in. Cf. D. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato*, Brill, Leiden 1986 (*Philosophia Antiqua*, 44) p. 299.

⁶⁰ M. Baltes, *Timaios Lokros. Über die Natur des Kosmos und der Seele*, Brill, Leiden 1972 (*Philosophia Antiqua* 21), p. 171: "nur daß TL das ἐγκεφάλου τε καὶ αἵματος wegläßt". And note 1: "Die Worte bereiten antiken und modernen Erklärern erhebliche Schwierigkeiten; [...] TL hat sie wohl nicht verstanden und deswegen weggelassen".

interpretation by explaining that the air is the instrument of consonance of high (swift) and low (slow) sounds (τούτων ὄργανον ὁ ἀήρ ἐστίν).

Plato enumerates some other phenomena that he claims could be explained by cyclical replacement. For some, like the working of the medical instrument for cupping, the process of swallowing or the motion of projectiles, the flow of water, the falling of thunderbolts, and the ‘alleged’ attraction of amber and the load-stone Plato gives hardly any details.⁶¹ Plutarch takes the task set by Plato seriously and develops these cases. On the cupping instrument, Plutarch provides details that are not in Plato, but are paralleled in Timaeus Locrus, such as the agency of fire and the air being made finer. The same is true for the attraction allegedly exercised by the loadstone (the term *elektron*, the reference to a flame-like or pneuma-like substance).⁶² In his account of respiration, the phenomenon for which *antiperistasis* was originally invoked, Timaeus Locrus appeals to natural heat (220.23: ὑπὸ τᾶς φυσικᾶς θερμότητος), as does Plutarch. An important difference should be noted: Timaeus Locrus does not avoid the vocabulary of attraction (ἔλκω, ὀλκή), which is exactly the interpretation of *antiperistasis* Plutarch emphatically rejects.⁶³ This confirms my general hypothesis on the relations between these texts. Let me repeat that it is not my intention to argue that Plutarch adopts interpretations from Timaeus Locrus, but rather that the latter offers us glimpses of the kind of interpretations with which Plutarch was familiar.

Further literal parallels between Timaeus Locrus and various works by Plutarch can be detected.⁶⁴ Plutarch repeatedly calls matter “amorphous and unshaped”⁶⁵ The combination of these adjectives is paralleled in Timaeus Locrus,⁶⁶ but not in Plato’s *Timaeus*.⁶⁷ At 219.5-6, Timaeus Locrus states that “god kindled vision for us so that we could contemplate the

⁶¹ Plat., *Tim.* 79 E 10 – 80 A 2: καὶ δὴ καὶ τὰ τῶν περὶ τὰς ἰατρικὰς σικύας παθημάτων αἴτια καὶ τὰ τῆς καταπόσεως τὰ τε τῶν ῥιπτουμένων, ὅσα ἀφειθέντα μετέωρα καὶ ὅσα ἐπὶ γῆς φέρεται, ταύτη διωκτέον. 80 B 8 – C 2: ἔτι δὲ τὰ τῶν κεραυνῶν πτώματα καὶ τὰ θαυμαζόμενα ἠλεκτρῶν περὶ τῆς ἔλξεως καὶ τῶν Ἡρακλείων λίθων.

⁶² Timaeus Locrus, p. 221.1-7 (ἀ γὰρ σικύα καὶ τὸ ἠλεκτρον εἰκόνες ἀναπνοᾶς ἐντι. [...] ἀ δὲ σικύα ἀπαναλωθέντος ὑπὸ τῷ πυρὸς τῷ ἀέρος ἐφέλκεται τὸ ὑγρὸν, τὸ δ’ ἠλεκτρον ἐκκρίθεντος τῷ πνεύματος ἀναλαμβάνει τὸ ὅμοιον σῶμα). Plut., *Quaest. plat.* VII, 1004E11-1005A3 (πρῶτον μὲν οὖν τὸ περὶ τὴν σικύαν τοιοῦτόν ἐστιν· ὁ περιληφθεὶς ὑπ’ αὐτῆς πρὸς τῆ σαρκὶ μετὰ θερμότητος ἀήρ ἐκπυρωθεὶς καὶ γενόμενος τῶν τοῦ χαλκοῦ πύρων ἀραιότερος ἐξέπεσεν οὐκ εἰς κενὴν χώραν, οὐ γὰρ ἐστίν, εἰς δὲ τὸν περιεστῶτα τὴν σικύαν ἐξωθεν ἀέρα, κάκεῖνον ἀπέωσεν· ὁ δὲ τὸν πρὸ αὐτοῦ καὶ τοῦτο πάσχων ἀεὶ καὶ δρῶν ὁ ἔμπροσθεν ὑποχωρεῖ, τῆς κενουμένης γλιχόμενος χώρας, ἣν ὁ πρῶτος ἐξέλιπεν· οὕτω δὲ τῆ σαρκὶ περιπίπτων, ἧς ἡ σικύα δέδρακται, καὶ ἀναζέων ἅμα συνεκθλίβει τὸ ὑγρὸν εἰς τὴν σικύαν.) and 1005B6-C20 (τὸ δ’ ἠλεκτρον οὐδὲν ἔλκει τῶν παρακειμένων [...] ἀλλ’ ἡ μὲν λίθος τινὰς ἀπορροίας ἐξίησιν ἐμβριθεῖς καὶ πνευματώδεις [...] τὸ δ’ ἠλεκτρον ἔχει μὲν τι φλογοειδὲς ἢ πνευματικόν).

⁶³ In this respect, Plutarch religiously follows Plato’s lead: ὀλκή μὲν οὐκ ἐστίν οὐδενὶ ποτε (80 C 3). For Plutarch’s interpretation of *antiperistasis*, see J. Opsomer, “*Antiperistasis*: A Platonic Theory”, in A. Pérez Jiménez – J. García López – R. Aguilar (eds.), *Plutarco, Platón y Aristóteles*. Actas del V Congreso Internacional de la I.P.S. (Madrid-Cuenca, 4-7 de mayo de 1999), Ediciones Clásicas, Madrid 1999, pp. 417-30. See also Cherniss, *Plutarch’s Moralia* (above, n. 10), pp. 64-5, n. a: “It was Plato’s express purpose to banish ὀλκή from physical theory [...]. This point is missed entirely in Timaeus Locrus 101D-102A”.

⁶⁴ The cases in this paragraph are already listed, partly, in G. Ryle, “The Timaeus Locrus”, *Phronesis* 10 (1965), pp. 174-90, part. pp. 178-9.

⁶⁵ *De An. procr.* 1014F: ἄμορφον καὶ ἀσχημάτιστον. *Quaest. plat.* VIII, 1007C9: ὅσπερ ἄμορφος ὕλη χρόνου καὶ ἀσχημάτιστος. Cf. *Quaest. conv.* VIII.2, 719D5 (ἄμορφος ἦν καὶ ἀσχημάτιστος).

⁶⁶ Timaeus Locrus, p. 206.2-3: ὕλαν ... ἄμορφον [ἀμόρφωτον, B]...κατ’ αὐταύταν καὶ ἀσχημάτιστον.

⁶⁷ At *Phaedr.* 247 C 6, Plato uses *ἀσχημάτιστος*. ἄμορφος is used for the receptacle at *Tim.* 50 D 7, 51 A 7. Plato does not use the combination of the two terms, as we find it in Plutarch and Timaeus Locrus.

heavens and acquire knowledge” (τὰν μὲν ὄψιν ἀμῖν τὸν θεὸν ἀνάψαι⁶⁸ εἰς θεῶν τῶν ὠρανίων καὶ ἐπιστάμας ἀνάλαψιν), thus taking up the idea of a longer passage in the *Timaeus* (47 A 1 – C 4), and adopting an expression that Plato had used earlier for the creation of the sun (39B4).⁶⁹ Plutarch expresses the idea in very similar terms in *De Sera numinis vindicta* 550D6-10⁷⁰ and in *Aqua an ignis* 958E5-7.⁷¹

These echoes, even combined, fail to provide irrefutable evidence that Plutarch knew the pseudepigraphic text attributed to Timaeus Locrus.⁷² Yet the evidence discussed is in my view strong enough to conclude that Plutarch was familiar with texts belonging to the tradition in which Timaeus Locrus stands. This text may not be a commentary, but there can hardly be any doubt that it relies on exegetical work done either by its author or by others whose texts this author knew.⁷³ The many affinities with Plutarch tend to show that Timaeus Locrus or possibly his source(s) were among the exegetical predecessors of Plutarch (an alternative possibility would be that the influence goes in the other direction – I shall explain, at the end of this contribution, why I consider this unlikely). These Pythagoreanising authors may be identical with, or belong to the same circles as, the Pythagoreans and mathematical exegetes mentioned in *De Animae procreatione in Timaeo*.

Let us now look at other pseudo-Pythagorean texts for which parallels can be found in Plutarch's exegetical works. Plutarch's third *Quaestio platonica* is a piece of exegesis of the simile of the Divided Line and is a treasure trove for information on Plutarch's predecessors, though none of them are named. Plutarch examines the question which segment is greater, that of intelligible reality or that of sense-perceptible things. In the first part of the *quaestio* he reproduces various, often incompatible, arguments that are supposed to show that the sense-perceptible realm is bigger, in the second part he argues for the opposite thesis and basically shows that the question was wrong-headed. The first part, in particular, has many affinities with pseudo-Pythagorean texts.

The question itself, which segment of the line is greater (μεῖζόν ἐστιν),⁷⁴ turns out to have been asked already by pseudo-Brotinus, with the principal difference that whereas

⁶⁸ The interpretation of this verb as meaning “to fasten” is not plausible. See footnotes 69 and 70.

⁶⁹ For the presence of fire in the eye, see *Tim.* 45 B 6 – C 2.

⁷⁰ Plut., *De Sera* 550D6-10: καὶ τὴν ὄψιν αὐτὸς οὗτος ἀνὴρ [sc. Plato] ἀνάψαι φησὶ τὴν φύσιν ἐν ἡμῖν, ὅπως ὑπὸ θεᾶς τῶν ἐν οὐρανῷ φερομένων καὶ θαύματος ἀσπάξασθαι καὶ ἀγαπᾶν ἐπιζομένη τὸ εὐσχημονή ψυχῇ.

⁷¹ Plut., *Aqua an ignis* 958E5-7: ἡ ὄψις, ἥτις ὄξυτάτη τῶν διὰ σώματός ἐστιν αἰσθήσεων, πυρὸς ἕξαμμα οὔσα.

⁷² Ryle, “The Timaeus Locrus” (above, n. 64), p. 190 believes Plutarch has used Timaeus Locrus. Ryle further argues that Aristotle was the real author of this text.

⁷³ Cf. A. Ulacco – J. Opsomer, “Elements and Elemental Properties in Timaeus Locrus”, *Rheinisches Museum* 157 (2014), pp. 154-206. Similar observations about other pseudo-Pythagorean texts have been made by Ulacco, *Pseudopythagorica dorica* (above, n. 49), pp. 13-15.

⁷⁴ To be precise, Plutarch asks two questions: why has Plato divided the line segment in unequal parts, and which of the parts resulting from the first division is greater (*Quaest. plat.* III, 1000D3-6). Contrary to Plutarch and pseudo-Brotinus, pseudo-Archytas *De Intell. et sens.*, takes the division to be in equal parts. On this issue, see Ulacco, *Pseudopythagorica dorica* (above, n. 49), pp. 148-50. I disagree with H. Dörrie, “Formula analogiae. An Exploration of a Theme in Hellenistic and Imperial Platonism”, in H.J. Blumenthal – R.A. Markus (eds.), *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought. Essays in honour of A.H. Armstrong*, Variorum, London 1981, pp. 33-49, part. pp. 40-1, who thinks that Plutarch's *quaestio* was really about the correct reading of *Republic* 509D: equal or unequal parts? Dörrie argues that Plutarch challenges the kind of reading familiar to pseudo-Archytas, according to which the line is divided in equal parts (see below). We have, however, no indication that Plutarch was aware of a different reading. Cf. Opsomer, “Ζητήματα” (above, n. 47), p. 80, n. 38.

Plutarch compares the two main segments, pseudo-Brotinus asks the same question about the two sub-segments of the highest main segment.⁷⁵ Plutarch motivates the question by pointing out that intelligible being is indivisible (*ἀμέριστος*), while the being that is dispersed (*σκεδαστή*) and dwells around bodies — a variation on the ‘the being that becomes divisible around bodies’ of *Tim.* 35 A — gives rise to the sensible. In his answer Plutarch distinguishes between different ways of being indivisible or partless (*ἀμερές ... και ἀμέριστον*), stating that intellect is considered thus because of its simplicity and purity (*ὡς ἀπλοῦν και εἰλικρινές*).⁷⁶ Let us compare this to pseudo-Brotinus.⁷⁷ Pseudo-Brotinus reasons that intellect is greater than discursive reason (*διάνοια*) and says that intellect is simple and uncompounded (*ἀπλόον και τὸ ἀσύνθετον*), and partless (*ἀμερές*), whereas discursive reason is divisible (*μεριστόν*). The passages are lexically alike, but it is especially the peculiarity of the question itself that is indicative of a genealogical affinity.

Pseudo-Archytas *De Intellectu et sensu* is another text that contains a version of the Divided Line.⁷⁸ What is interesting is that the author has also made use of the doxographical report on Platonist views of the composition of the soul in Aristotle, *De Anima* I 2, without of course blowing his cover by mentioning either Plato or Aristotle. In the description of the different segments pseudo-Archytas uses vocabulary and ideas borrowed from *Timaeus* 35 A (divisible and indivisible being) and from *De Anima* I 2 (in particular the association of intellect with the monad⁷⁹), characteristics he shares with Plutarch’s treatment of the same passage.⁸⁰ We cannot be certain whether ps.-Archytas read these source texts in the original or adopted the concepts and views from intermediate sources, but nothing as far as I can see speaks against the former option. Walter Burkert thinks that the rejection of the identification

⁷⁵ See also Ulacco, *Pseudopythagorica dorica* (above, n. 49), pp. 15; 160; 164.

⁷⁶ Plut., *Quaest. plat.* III, 1001D4-5: πότερον τῶν τμημάτων, τὸ νοητὸν ἢ τὸ αἰσθητὸν, μεῖζόν ἐστιν; D7-11: Δόξει δ’ αὐτόθεν μὲν εἶναι μεῖζον τὸ αἰσθητὸν· ἢ γὰρ ἀμέριστος οὐσία και κατὰ ταῦτὸν ὡσαύτως ἔχουσα τῶν νοητῶν ἐστὶν εἰς βραχὺ συνηγμένη και καθαρόν, ἢ δὲ σκεδαστή περὶ τὰ σώματα και περιπλανῆς τὸ αἰσθητὸν παρέσχεν. Plutarch’s reply 1002C10-D4: και μὴν ἀμερές γε λέγεται και ἀμέριστον τὸ μὲν σῶμα μικρότητι, τὸ δ’ ἀσώματον και νοητὸν ὡς ἀπλοῦν και εἰλικρινές και καθαρόν ἀπάσης ἐτερότητας και διαφορᾶς. και ἄλλως εὐθιγῆς ἐστὶ τοῖς σωματικοῖς τεκμαίρεσθαι περὶ τῶν ἀσωμάτων.

⁷⁷ Ps.-Brotinus, *De Intell.* p. 55.20-29 Thesleff (Iambl., *Comm. math. sc.*, pp. 34.19-35.6): διόπερ και Βροτίνος ἐν τῷ Περὶ νοῦ και διανοίας χωρίζων αὐτὰ ἀπ’ ἀλλήλων [sc. τὰ διανοητὰ ἀπὸ τῶν νοητῶν] τάδε λέγει· ἃ δὲ διάνοια τῷ νόῳ μεῖζόν ἐστι, και τὸ διανοητὸν τῷ νοητῷ ὁ μὲν γὰρ νόος ἐστὶ τὸ τε ἀπλόον και τὸ ἀσύνθετον και τὸ πρᾶτον νοεόν και τὸ νοεόμενον (τοιοῦτον δ’ ἐστὶ τὸ εἶδος· και γὰρ ἀμερές και ἀσύνθετον και πρᾶτὸν ἐστὶ τῶν ἄλλων), ἃ δὲ διάνοια τὸ τε πολλαπλόον και μεριστόν και τὸ δευτερον νοεόν (ἐπιστάμαν γὰρ και λόγον [τὸν] προσείληφε)· παραπλησίως δὲ και τὰ διανοητὰ· ταῦτα δ’ ἐντὶ τὰ ἐπιστατὰ και τὰ ἀποδεικτὰ και τὰ καθόλου τὰ ὑπὸ τῷ νόῳ διὰ τῷ λόγῳ καταλαμβανόμενα. Brotinus’ identification of the mathematical entities, the objects of discursive reason, as secondary intelligibles, resonates with Plutarch’s identification of the intelligibles proper as primary Forms (*Quaest. plat.* III, 1001C10-11; cf. Ulacco, *Pseudopythagorica dorica* (above, n. 49), pp. 162-3) See also Alc., *Did.*, pp. 155.39-42 Whittaker; H. Dörrie – M. Baltes, *Die philosophische Lehre des Platonismus. Einige grundlegende Axiome/Platonische Physik (im antiken Verständnis)*, I: Bausteine 101-124, Frommann-Holzboog, Stuttgart 1996 (Der Platonismus in der Antike: Grundlagen, System, Entwicklung 4), pp. 342; 345.

⁷⁸ Ps.-Archytas, *De Intell. et sens.* (Περὶ νοῦ και αἰσθήσεως), p. 39.4-8 Thesleff: καθάπερ γὰρ γραμμᾶν δίχα τετραμμένην και ἴσα πάλιν ἐκατέρων τμήματα τεταμμένα ἀνά τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον, και οὕτω διηρήσθω και τὸ νοητὸν ποττὸ ὁρατὸν, και πάλιν ἐκατέρον οὕτως διωρίσθω, και διαφέρεν σαφηνεῖα τε και ἀσαφεῖα ποττάλλα.

⁷⁹ Arist., *De An.* I 2, 404 b 22 and 404 b 29-30, combined with I 4, 409 a 1.

⁸⁰ Ps.-Archytas, *De Intell. et sens.*, p. 38.9-13 Thesleff: ἐτι ὁ μὲν νόος ἀμερῆς και ἀδιαίρετος, καθάπερ μονὰς και στιγμῆ, παραπλησίως δὲ και τὸ νοητὸν (τὸ γὰρ εἶδος οὔτε πέρας σώματος ἐστὶν οὔτε ἄλλο, ἀλλὰ μόνον τύπωσις τῷ ὄντος, ἢ ὄν ἐστὶν), ἃ δ’ αἰσθησις μεριστὰ και διαιρετὰ. τῶν γὰρ ὄντων ἐστὶ τὰ μὲν αἰσθητὰ, τὰ δὲ δοξαστά, τὰ δ’ ἐπιστατὰ, τὰ δὲ νοητὰ.

of the *eidos* with the limit of bodies (τὸ γὰρ εἶδος οὔτε πέρασ σώματος ἐστὶν οὔτε ὄρος) in this text, could very well be a polemical remark against Posidonius.⁸¹ This is a plausible hypothesis, but we cannot obtain certainty.⁸² On the one hand, Posidonius apparently includes limit in his definition of soul and links it with the formal aspect of bodies,⁸³ on the other Plutarch claims that Posidonius identified limit with divisible being (a remarkable identification that has led to some disagreement among modern commentators). Divisibility is normally associated with the corporeal, not the intelligible, and this is exactly how Plutarch understands it. Posidonius therefore does not appear to have identified form with limit. It is however possible that statements such as those reported by Sextus Empiricus at *Adversus mathematicos* 7.119 suggested an identification of limit with the immanent forms of bodies (the forms of hylomorphism).

After a brief description of the different types of beings, pseudo-Archytas follows up with a remark about the four cognitive faculties, which in Aristotle's doxographical report are likewise connected to Plato's account of the composition of the soul.⁸⁴ Clearly, pseudo-Archytas uses the same texts as the predecessors to whom Plutarch refers in *De Animae procreatione* and he expresses ideas that Plutarch references (before abandoning them) in his argumentation in *Quaestio platonica* III. This is true, e.g., for pseudo-Archytas' description of intellect as the criterion of intelligibles, and of discursive reason as intellect turning towards mirror images of intelligibles.⁸⁵

Several of the views discussed in *Quaestio platonica* III, notably in the first part of the text,⁸⁶ rely on different derivational systems that are meant to explain the (metaphorical) generation and sequence of the dimensions (see especially 1001F1-1002A3 and 1002A5-8).⁸⁷

⁸¹ W. Burkert, "Zur geistesgeschichtlichen Einordnung einiger Pseudopythagorica", in *Pseudepigrapha I: pseudopythagorica, lettres de Platon, littérature pseudépigraphique juive*, Vandoeuvres, Genève 1971 (Entretiens sur l'Antiquité classique 18), pp. 23-55, part. pp. 38-9.

⁸² See also Ulacco, *Pseudopythagorica dorica* (above, n. 49), pp. 138-9.

⁸³ Cf. Plut., *De An. procr.* 1023B5-D2; J. Opsomer "The Platonic Soul, from the Early Academy to the First Century CE", in B. Inwood – J. Warren (eds.), *Body and Soul in Hellenistic Philosophy*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 2020, pp. 183-94.

⁸⁴ Ps.-Archytas, *De Intell. et sens.*, p. 38.19-23 Thesleff: τυγχάνοντι δὲ καὶ ἐν ἀμῖν αὐτοῖς κατὰ ψυχᾶν γνώσεις τέτταρες· νόος, ἐπιστάμα, δόξα, αἰσθασίς. [*De An.* I 2, 404 b 21-27] ὧν αἱ μὲν δύο τῷ λόγῳ ἀρχαί ἐντι, οἷον νόος καὶ αἰσθασίς, τὰ δὲ δύο τέλη, οἷον ἐπιστάμα καὶ δόξα. τὸ δ' ὅμοιον αἰεὶ τῷ ὁμοίῳ γνωστικόν [*De An.* I 2, 404 b 16-18].

⁸⁵ Ps.-Archytas, *De Intell. et sens.*, pp. 36.20-37.1 Thesleff: καὶ τὸ μὲν κρῖνον εἶμεν τὸν νόον καὶ τὰν αἰσθησιν, τὸ δὲ κρινόμενον τὸν λόγον· ποθ' ὅπερ δὲ κρίνεται τὸ αὐτόθεν φαινόμενον· τούτου δὲ τὸ μὲν νοατὸν, τὸ δ' αἰσθατὸν. ἐπικρίνει δὲ ὁ νόος τὸν λόγον, ὅκα μὲν ποτὶ τὸ νοατὸν ποτιβάλλων, ὅκα δὲ ποτὶ τὸ αἰσθατὸν. ὅκα μὲν γὰρ περὶ νοατῶν μαστεύεται ὁ λόγος, ποτὶ τὸ νοατὸν ποτιβάλλει, ὅκα δὲ περὶ αἰσθατῶν, ποτὶ τὸ αἰσθατὸν. καὶ δι' αὐτὸ ψευδογραφίαι ἐν γαμετρία κατὰ σχήματα καὶ ἀριθμοὺς ἐμφαίνονται. Plut., *Quaest. plat.* III, 1002A8: τῶν μὲν νοητῶν ἐν κριτήριον ὁ νοῦς. 1002A8-10: ἔτι τῶν μὲν νοητῶν ἐν κριτήριον ὁ νοῦς· καὶ γὰρ ἡ διάνοια νοῦς ἐστὶν ἐν τοῖς μαθηματικοῖς ὡσπερ ἐν κατόπτροις ἐμφαινόμενον τῶν νοητῶν. 1002D8-11: κριτήριον δὲ τοῦ νοητοῦ μόνον ἐστὶν ὁ νοῦς, ὡς φωτὸς ὕψις, δι' ἀπλότητα καὶ ὁμοιότητα· τὰ δὲ σώματα, πολλὰς διαφορὰς ἔχοντα καὶ ἀνομοιότητος, ἄλλα ἄλλοις κριτηρίοις ὡσπερ ὄργανοις ἀλίσκεσθαι. See also Archytas, *De Intell. et sens.*, p. 37.15 (Αἰσθασίς μὲν ἐν σώματι γίγνεται, νόος δ' ἐν ψυχῇ) and Plut., *Quaest. plat.* IV 1002F2-4 (πάλιν φησὶν οὐκ ἂν γενέσθαι ψυχῆν ἄνευ σώματος οὐδὲ νοῦν ἄνευ ψυχῆς, ἀλλὰ ψυχῆν μὲν ἐν σώματι νοῦν δ' ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ;), reflecting *Tim.* 30B3 (νοῦν δ' αὐτὸν χωρὶς ψυχῆς ἀδύνατον παραγενέσθαι τῷ). The parallel between the two authors regarding intellect as criterion of the intelligibles, has been spotted also by Ulacco, *Pseudopythagorica dorica* (above, n. 49), pp. 114-15.

⁸⁶ For an analysis of the structure of this quaestio, see Opsomer, "Ζητήματα" (above, n. 47), pp. 79-82.

⁸⁷ Compare 1001A2-3 (ταῖς νοηταῖς ιδέαις, οὐδεμίαν διαφορὰν ἐχούσαις πρὸς ἀλλήλας, κατὰ τὸ ἐν καὶ μόνον

The derivational system of 1001E8–F6 reflects the order of the sciences in Plato’s *Republic* 522 B – 531 D, but Plato does not present it as a derivational schema. The account of 1001F6–1002A4 expands on the first derivation by adding ‘one’ as the principle and starting point of the derivation. This is followed by another derivational sequence that explains the generation of number from the one and the unlimited dyad, followed by the generation of the point – another addition compared to the first derivation –, lines, surfaces, depths, physical bodies and qualities (1002A4–A9). Plutarch appears to rely here on several sources. Many ideas in this section are inspired by the Early Academy,⁸⁸ and were already then connected to Plato and Pythagoreans. Sextus Empiricus attributes a very similar system to the early Pythagoreans, which he distinguishes from the later Pythagoreans, who construct the body from a single point, without bringing in the dyad.⁸⁹ These parallels suggest that the views Plutarch is discussing here stem from circles that provide the kind of blend of Platonism and Pythagoreanism that we also find in the pseudepigrapha.

This hypothesis finds additional support by the long-known⁹⁰ parallels that exist between the Pseudo-Pythagorean ethical works (in particular pseudo-Metopos, *De Virtute*; pseudo-Archytas, *De Educatione ethica*; pseudo-Theages, *De Virtute*) and Plutarch’s works on moral virtue, especially in *De Virtute morali*. I shall not survey them here, as these have already been the object of several thorough studies. Suffice it to say that some of these parallels are quite literal and undeniably show either influence or a common background.⁹¹

Because only a small fraction of the philosophical texts produced in the Posthellenistic or Middle Platonic era has survived, any speculation about the sources supposedly used by an author carries great risks. On the basis of the evidence reviewed above, however, it is safe to conclude that Plutarch’s work of Platonic exegesis – the *Quaestiones platonicae* and the *De Anima procreatione in Timaeo* – share a common background with some texts belonging to the pseudepigraphic Pythagorean corpus.

[μονάδα Cherniss] νοουμένων<αις>) with *Aet. I.3, Ps.-Plut. 877A, DG 282a5-17*: διὸ καὶ ἐφθέγγοντο οἱ Πυθαγόρειοι, ὡς μεγίστου ὄρκου ὄντος τῆς τετράδος, ‘οὐ μὰ τὸν ἀμετέρα ψυχῆ παραδόντα τετρακτύν,’ [...] ‘καὶ ἡ ἡμετέρα ψυχὴ’ φησὶν ‘ἐκ τετράδος σύγκριται.’ εἶναι γὰρ νοῦν ἐπιστήμην δόξαν αἴσθησιν, ἐξ ὧν πᾶσα τέχνη καὶ ἐπιστήμη καὶ αὐτοὶ λογικοὶ ἐσμεν. νοῦς μὲν οὖν ἡ μονάς ἐστίν· ὁ γὰρ νοῦς κατὰ μονάδα θεωρεῖται, κτλ. and *Sext. Emp., Adv. math. 10.258*. Further parallels are given by Ulacco, *Pseudopythagorica dorica* (above, n. 49), pp. 135-6.

⁸⁸ Cf. Theophr., *Met. 6 a 23 – b 17*, with its focus on the attempts to go from the principles to sensible reality. Cf. D. Gutas, *Theophrastus On first principles (known as his Metaphysics). Greek text and medieval Arabic translation, edited and translated with introduction, commentaries and glossaries. as well as the Medieval Latin translation, and with an excursus on Graeco-Arabic editorial technique*, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2010 (*Philosophia antiqua* 119), pp. 305-6. For the relation between the Early Academy and Middle Platonism, see the very useful methodological remarks in Ferrari, “La nascita del platonismo”, in M. Borriello – A.M. Vitale (eds.), *Princeps philosophorum: Platone nell’Occidente tardo-antico, medievale e umanistico*, Città nuova, Roma 2016 (*Institutiones* 5), pp. 13-29.

⁸⁹ *Sext. Emp., Adv. math. 10.281-282*. See also Cherniss, *Plutarch’s Moralia* (above, n. 10), pp. 38-40.

⁹⁰ See P. Moraux, *A la recherche de l’Aristote perdu. Le dialogue “Sur la justice”*, Publications Universitaires, Louvain-Paris 1957 (*Aristote. Traductions et études*), p. 90; M. Pinnoy, *De peripatetische Thema’s in Plutarchus’ “De virtute morali”*, Diss. inaug., Leuven 1996, and Id., “Metopos en Plutarchus over de ethische deugd”, *Antiquité classique* 50 (1981), pp. 655-63; D. Babut, *Plutarque. De la vertu éthique. Introduction, texte, traduction et commentaire*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1969, p. 152, n. 95; B. Centrone, *Pseudopythagorica ethica. I trattati morali di Archita, Metopo, Teage, Eurifamo*, Bibliopolis, Napoli 1990 (*Elenchos*, 17).

⁹¹ Let me just give a few examples: see pseudo-Metopos, *De Virt. 119.8* (τὰ δὲ πάθεα τᾶς ἀρετᾶς ὕλα); *Plut., De Virt. mor. 440D2-3* (τὸ μὲν πάθος ὕλην ἔχειν τὸν δὲ λόγον εἶδος). And compare the Platonic account of soul partition and the interaction of soul parts; *ps.-Met., De Virt. 117.12-20*; *ps.-Theag., De Virt. 190.7-25*; *Plut., De Virt. mor. 442A*.

Can we say more than that? As I have said earlier, the dates of the various pseudepigraphic texts are uncertain. This would seem to make it difficult to assert with confidence that Plutarch drew on them, rather than the other way around. The genre to which the different texts belong may, however, provide some clues. The pseudepigraphic texts usually propound one specific interpretation. The authorial strategy is to attribute authority to this interpretation in virtue of its alleged antiquity. Plutarch in his *Quaestiones platonicae*, on the contrary, examines various views before settling on his own answer – usually the last of the proposed solutions to the problem stated at the beginning. The parallels with the pseudepigraphic texts are to be found either in the way in which the question is formulated (*Quaest. plat.* III) or, more commonly, among the answers that will be ultimately rejected – and typically not in Plutarch's favoured solution. It is therefore highly likely that the pseudepigraphic texts in question predate Plutarch and that the latter drew either on them, or possibly also on their sources, or on sources intermediate between him and the *pseudepigrapha*.

