

Love in Plutarch: the necessary Platonic correction of Plato¹

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Would it be possible to correct Plato *platonico modo*? In principle, such an approach would seem to be unforgivably bold. Nevertheless, we are going to discuss Plutarch, that is, texts dating from I-II AD, and, therefore, we should consider that the Greeks have reflected for centuries on Platonic philosophy -and on Greek thought in general-, enough centuries indeed to discover all sorts of contradictions, and, more importantly, to point them out if necessary. Plutarch, who is certainly an eclectic writer, drinks intellectually from the well of several thinkers and systems of thought, and it is quite certain that he is very skilful at methodically noting other philosophers' inconsistencies³. On the other hand, true freedom of thought demands the renunciation of any sort of absolute fidelity, and, needless to say, the clear perception of the logical principles of any good system of thought, after the teachings in this field of Aristotle and Stoicism, should allow anyone to shed light on logical errors, even those made by such a great figure of Greek thought as Plato. Plutarch at the beginning of the chapters in his *Eroticus* dedicated to conclusions said:

“So it is ridiculous (ἄτοπον) to maintain that women have no participation in virtue (ἀρετῆς). What need is there to discuss their prudence and intelligence, or their loyalty and justice, when many women have exhibited a daring and great-hearted courage which is truly masculine? And to declare that their nature is noble in all other relationships and then to censure it as being unsuitable for friendship alone (φιλίαν), that is surely a strange procedure. They are, in fact, fond of their children and their husbands (φιλότεκνοι καὶ φίλανδροι); their affections are like a rich soil ready to receive the germ of friendship (φιλίας); and beneath it all is a layer of seductive grace. Just as poetry adds to the prose meaning the delights of song and metre and rhythm, making its educational power more forceful and its capacity for doing harm more irresistible; just so nature has endowed women with a charming face, a persuasive voice, a seductive physical beauty and has thus given the dissolute woman great advantages for the beguilement of pleasure, but to the chaste, great resources also to gain the goodwill (εὐνοίαν) and friendship (φιλίαν) of her husband' (769 C-D)⁴.

In this dialogue, we must note, conjugal and pederastic love –the love of women and the love of boys- are compared, and we infer from this comparison that the upholders of the former claim for them both the experience and benefits of ἔρωσ καὶ φιλία. In accordance with Protogenes, the fact of loving women guarantees the perpetuation of the human race, but ‘I deny that it is love (ἐρῶν) that you have felt for women and girls any more than flies feel love (ἐρῶσιν) for milk or bees for honey’. From his point of view, any relationship between men and women degenerates

¹ This article was published in *El amor en Plutarco. IX Simposio Internacional de la Sociedad Española de Plutarquistas*. León: Universidad de León: secretariado de Publicaciones, 2007, 123-132.

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³ Remember, for instance, his *De Stoicorum repugnantiis* o el *Compendium argumenti Stoicos absurdiora poetis dicere*, etc. In this respect, see e.g.: G. BOYS-STONES, “Plutarch, *De Stoicorum repugnantiis* 1048DE”. *CQ* 46 (1996) 571-595.

⁴ All the quotations of Plutarch's *Eroticus* are translated by W. C. Helmbold. Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann Ltd. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1969.

into passion (πάθος), into excess (ὑπερβολή), while Eros ‘it is that attaches himself to a young and talented soul (εύφουός) and through friendship (διὰ φιλίας) brings it to a state of virtue (ἀρετήν)’. At any rate, if conjugal love must be also considered Eros, ‘let it at least be qualified as an effeminate and bastard love (θηλιν καὶ νόθον)’, but ‘there is only one genuine love, the love of boys. It is not ‘flashing with desire’, as Anacreon says... or drenched with unguents, shining bright⁵... its aspect is simple and unspoiled (λιτὸν καὶ ἄθρυπτον) in the schools of philosophy, or perhaps in the gymnasia and palaestrae’. However, that other Eros ‘lax and housebound (ὑγρὸν... καὶ οἰκουρὸν) that spends its time in the bosoms and beds of women (ἐν κόλποις... καὶ κλινιδίοις), ever pursuing a soft life, enervated amid pleasure devoid of manliness and friendship and inspiration (ἡδοναῖς ἀνάνδροις καὶ ἀφίλοις καὶ ἀνενοουσιάστοις), it should be proscribed’. The final thesis passes already from an admonition to a true condemnation: ‘Friendship (φιλία) is a beautiful and courteous relationship (καλὸν καὶ ἀστεῖον)... mere pleasure is base and unworthy of a free man (κοινὸν καὶ ἀνελεύθερον)... such a love is mere copulation (συνουσία), like the love of women’ (750 C-751 B).

Here is indeed a perfect instance of how Greek Philosophy, and not in one of its best known texts, illustrates perfectly well a centuries-old Western intellectual vice: the sexualization –i.e., masculinization- of ethics. From this perspective, one of the biological features which has traditionally been attributed to women’s bodies, i.e. softness –with the help of the explicit mention of their bosoms-, degrades ethically that love which husbands receive at home from their wives –since Greek men decided that gynaeceum was women’s kingdom- while the also traditional vigorous nature of men’s body and mind, the result of physical training in the palaestras and intellectual training in the schools of philosophy, turns love between men into something firm –it does not break up- or, in other words, it is completely alien in ethical terms to softness, which is always blameworthy. As a consequence, it is not surprising that Western men –like those from other cultural latitudes, I am afraid- have been taught for centuries to be firm and rigorous, and not to be tender, since tenderness is ethically doubtful -i.e. soft and effeminate- or, still worse, deviation from the traditional proper and manly manners⁶.

However, since the title of my contribution is “the Platonic correction of Plato”, I have quite probably already gone beyond what I am really concerned with, while it remains to demonstrate above all that the absurd (ἄτοπον) to which Plutarch refers can be attributed as well –though not exclusively- to the Platonic conception of love. Bearing in mind at least Plato’s *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*, Plutarch’s *Eroticus* furnishes us with everything necessary to conceive of a Platonic dependence –or clearly Platonizing- dependence without taking any risks. Indeed:

‘So we see Love chosen as king, chief magistrate, and harmonizer by Hesiod, Plato, Solon. He is brought down with a crown on his head from Helicon to the Academy. Richly adorned, he is given a triumphal procession in which there are many two-horse chariots bound in a communion of love –not such as Euripides describes, *Yoked in bonds not forged by metal*, for he is imposing a cold constraint that is oppressive in practice because of shame. No, this is a winged communion that soars to the region of the fairest and most divine realities...’ (763 E-F).

From the mention of Plato and the Academy one can pass to the also specific mention of the two Loves: Pandemos and Uranios, which must be associated immediately with Pausanias’s speech in the *Symposium*: ‘... the Egyptians recognize two Loves, just as the Greeks do, Uranios

⁵ Anacreon. D. PAGE, *Poet. Mel. Gr.*, p. 216, fr. 444.

⁶ An accurate analysis of all these aspects will be found in P. Gilabert. “The Ismenodora of Plutarch’s *Eroticus*. Has Western Culture ‘sexualized’ –i.e. ‘masculinized’- Ethics?”. *Anuari de Filologia. Universitat de Barcelona* XXII, Secció D (2003) 35-50.

and Pandemos, but they believe that the sun is a third Love; Aphrodite... they reverence greatly' (764 B). And now let us go on to transcendence: '... the sun with equal candour exhibits both the beautiful and the ugly to men's eyes, while Love illumines only what is beautiful. Only this does he persuade lovers to contemplate and turn to; everything else they must overlook' (764 D)⁷. But, as usual, Plutarch is far more concrete:

'One might even say, if the statement is not too unpalatable, that the sun's activities are directly opposed to those of Love. For it is the sun that turns our attention from intelligibles to sensibles... *It's clear that we unwisely love / The dazzling gleam we see on earth*, as Euripides says⁸, *because we have not known other life* or rather because of our forgetfulness of the realities of which Love is a recollection. If we awaken in the face of a great brilliant light, everything that has been seen in our dreams leaves our souls and vanishes; just so, when we pass from one life to another and are born on this earth... And yet the soul's true period of wakefulness is there in that other life and in that realm; since its arrival in this world, it is by means of dreams that it joyfully greets and gazes upon that which is most beautiful and most divine. *About it are shed sweet but treacherous dreams*, for the soul is persuaded that beauty and value exist nowhere but here, unless it secures divine, chaste Love to be its physician, its saviour, its guide. Love, who has come to it through the medium of bodily forms, is its divine conductor to the truth from the realm of Hades here; Love conducts it to the Plain of Truth⁹ where beauty, concentrated and pure and genuine, has her home... But while we are being brought safely to that higher ground, Love does not approach our souls in isolation by themselves, but through the body. Teachers of geometry, when their pupils are not yet capable of initiation into purely intellectual conceptions of incorporeal and unchanging substance, offer them tangible and visible copies of spheres and cubes and dodecahedrons; in the same way heavenly Love contrives for us, as in a glass, beautiful reflections or beautiful realities. These are, however, merely mortal reflections of the divine, corruptible of the incorruptible, sensible of the intelligible. By showing us these in the form and hue and aspect of young men radiant in the prime of their beauty, Love gently excites our memory (τὴν μνήμην)' (764 E-765 B).

'Listen', said my father, 'for this account is forced upon us by the phenomenon. What happens to our vision when we see a rainbow is, of course, refraction, which occurs whenever the light encounters a slightly moist, but smooth and moderately thick cloud and has contact with the sun by refraction. Seeing the radiance in this way produces in us the illusion that the thing we see is in the cloud. Now the devices and ruses of Love's operations on noble souls who love beauty (τὰς εὐφυῶς καὶ φιλοκάλους ψυχὰς) are of the very same kind: he refracts their memories (τῆς μνήμης) from the phenomena of this world, which are called beautiful, to the marvellous Beauty of that other world, that divine and blessed entity which is the real object of love... But the noble and self-controlled lover (εὐφροῦς... καὶ σώφρωνος). His regard is refracted to the other world, to

⁷ At any rate, with regard to the relation between the *Eroticus* and Plato's dialogues on love, see e. g.: A. BILLAULT, "Le *Dialogue sur l'amour* de Plutarque et les *Dialogues de Platon sur l'amour*". *Plutarco, Platon y Aristóteles. Actas del V Congreso Internacional de la IPS*. Madrid: Ediciones Clásicas, 1999, 201-214. And, on the three loves in Plutarch: J. BOULOGNE, "Trois Eros? Comment Plutarque réécrit Platon". *Ibid.*, 215-226.

⁸ *Hipp.* 193-5.

⁹ *Cf. Phdr.* 248b, 254b.

Beauty divine and intelligible. When he encounters beauty in a visible body, he treats it as an instrument to memory (τῆς μνήμης)’ (765 E- 766)¹⁰.

The Platonic content of the *Eroticus*¹¹ becomes here a true epiphany. The winged union that raises the souls towards the region of the divine realities reminds us of that long palinode in the *Phaedrus*. As we have already mentioned, the two Loves, Pandemos and Uranios, lead us in their turn to the two manifestations of Aphrodites-Eros of Pausanias’s speech in the *Symposium*. Eros illuminating us and impelling us towards Beauty might evoke, for instance, the Eros which is understood as the impulse felt by human souls towards the beautiful men –and towards many other things- of Eryximachus’s speech (186a), or might also evoke that κάλλιστος ἔρως of Agathon’s discourse. Nevertheless, there is nothing more genuinely Platonic than the reproduction of the “anamnetic” process of the souls-minds, increasingly anxious to attain again the Ideal Reality which, free from any veil, long ago was contemplated by them. Diotima explains to Socrates in the *Symposium* that the ἐραστής must begin a process of abstraction which will take him from the multiplicity of beautiful young boys to archetypal Beauty¹² and, above all, she exhorts him to delve for what is most noble in the ἐρώμενος so that both lover and beloved may bring to light the beauty with which they are ibued¹³. Well then, Plutarch maintains exactly the same thing, and illustrates this by means of the image of the refraction of light and citing the didactic skills of geometry teachers.

Bearing in mind Plutarch’s philosophical eclecticism, the possibility that what we have just read has more than one authorship –leaving aside Plato- should not be rejected. It is not worth insisting now on what was analysed in detail in the preliminary study of my edition and

¹⁰ On Plutarch’s theory on soul, see e.g.: M. BALTES, “La dottrina dell’anima in Plutarco”. *Elenchos* 21.2 (2000) 245-270.

¹¹ See e. g.: J. M. RIST. “Plutarch’s *Amatorius*: A Commentary on Plato’s Theories of Love?”. *CQ* 51 (2002) 557-75.

¹² 210-211: ‘He (Diotima says) who would proceed rightly in this business must not merely begin from his youth to encounter beautiful bodies. In the first place... if the conductor guides him aright, he must be in love with one particular body, and engender beautiful converse therein; but next he must remark how the beauty attached to this or that body is cognate to that which is attached to any other, and that if he means to ensue beauty in form, it is gross folly not to regard as one and the same the beauty belonging to all... his next advance will be to set a higher value on the beauty of souls than on that of the body, so that however little the grace that may bloom in any likely soul it shall suffice him for loving and caring, and for bringing forth and soliciting such converse as will tend to the betterment of the young; and that finally he may be constrained to contemplate the beautiful as appearing in our observances and our laws, and to behold it all bound together in kinship and so estimate the body’s beauty as a slight affair. From observances he should be led on to the branches of knowledge, that... an turning rather towards the main ocean of the beautiful may by contemplation of this bring forth in all their splendour many fair fruits of discourse and meditation in a plenteous crop of philosophy; until... he descries a certain single knowledge... When a man has been thus tutored in the lore of love, passing from view of beautiful things, in the right and regular ascent, suddenly he will be revealed to him... a wondrous vision, beautiful in its nature... First of all, it is ever existent and neither comes to be nor perishes...’ –translated by W. R. M. Lamb. *Loeb Classical Library*. London: William Heinemann Ltd.; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983, all the quotations of Plato’s *Symposium* will, correspond to this edition).

¹³ 209b-c: (Diotima): ‘So when a man’s soul is so far divine that it is made pregnant with these from his youth, and on attaining manhood immediately desires to bring forth and beget... and if he chances also on a soul that is fair and noble and well endowed, he gladly cherishes the two combined in one; and straightway in addressing such a person he is resourceful in discoursing of virtue and of what should be the good man’s character and what pursuits; and so he takes in hand the other’s education. For I hold that by contact with the fair one and by consorting with him he bears and brings forth his long-felt conception’.

translation of Plutarch's *Eroticus*¹⁴, but it is generally accepted that Plutarch is much indebted to Stoicism from an intellectual point of view, as well as in the erotic realm, and these unquestionable debts must be ever taken into account. Indeed, the Stoics adopted a Platonizing definition of Love or, in other words, the στωικός ἔρως would be the late-born son of Platonic ἔρως: “Love is an impulse towards friendliness due to visible beauty appearing (ἐπιβολὴ φιλοποΐας διὰ κάλλος ἐμφαινόμενον)”¹⁵. “When Chrysippus says that ἔρως is an impulse towards friendliness, he thinks of boys in the full bloom of youth (νέων ὠραίων)... no one loves old men”¹⁶. “They say that the wise man will feel affection for the youths who by their countenance show a natural endowment for virtue (τὴν πρὸς ἀρετὴν εὐφυΐαν). So states Zeno in his *Republic*, Chrysippus in book I of his work *On Modes of Life*, and Appolodorus in his *Ethics*. Their definition of Love is an effort towards friendliness due to visible beauty appearing, its sole end being friendship (φιλίας), not bodily enjoyment (συνουσίας)”¹⁷. “For Love, they say, is a kind of chase after a stripling who is developed but naturally apt for virtue (θήρα... ἀτελοῦς μὲν εὐφυοῦς δὲ μειρακίου πρὸς ἀρετὴν)”¹⁸.

Let us note in the final quotations of the *Eroticus* the reiterative presence of the adjective εὐφυής, since, in spite of the Platonic orthodoxy this reveals, there is still enough room for some important changes. Indeed, Plutarch devoted his *De communibus notitiis adversos Stoicos* to embarrassing those haughty Stoic philosophers –of whom, on the other hand, he often took advantage- for arrogating to themselves the intellectual aptitude for defining everything with an outstanding ἀκρίβεια, while on many occasions they did not use common sense. Plutarch knows perfectly well that, as far as the Stoics are concerned, the visible beauty of the beloved does not play in fact any significant role when a wise man begins his pedagogical mission in life, consisting of guiding youths towards virtue. Indeed, wise men are no longer lovers but masters and, therefore, they do not need beautiful boys, who cannot help them by means of their visible beauty appearing (διὰ κάλλος ἐμφαινόμενον) to attain a science, the ἀρετή, which they already possess. On the contrary, their pedagogical vocation demands now talented pupils and their constant effort¹⁹. Why do the Stoics, then, still use a vocabulary which is clearly pederastic and Platonic? The answer cannot be given in a brief contribution such as this, but I should like to point out that, while building his intellectual personality and bringing into agreement different influences, Plutarch, with regard to ἔρως, continues to be mainly Platonic, not leaving aside, however, certain Stoic clarifications -among others- clearly meant to emphasize the more intellectual nature of the relationship between an ἐραστής and his ἐρώμενος.

Whatever the case, the structure of the *Eroticus* leads any reader to discover the skilful polemist, Plutarch, who will permit the pederasts to make an apology for their erotic passion, whose noble examples are by no means denied, but with the evident aim of both paying tribute to

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, above all chapters VI, VII and VIII.

¹⁵ Stob., *Ecl.* II, 91, 10. *SVF* III, 935, the translation is mine.

¹⁶ S.E., *M.* VII, 239. *SVF* III, 399, the translation is mine.

¹⁷ D.L., VII, 129. *SVF* III, 716, 7, translated by R. D. Hicks. Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann Ltd. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1965, all the quotations of this text will correspond to this edition; Cic., *Tusc.* IV, 72. *SVF* III, 652; Stob., *Ecl.* II, 115. *SVF* III, 650.

¹⁸ Plu. *De communibus notitiis adversos Stoicos* 1073 B, translated by H. Cherniss, Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann Ltd. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976.

¹⁹ In fact, Plutarch himself holds in *De liberis educandis*: “... I say... that ... the beginning, the middle, and end in all these matters is good education and proper training; and it is this, I say, which leads on and helps towards moral excellence and towards happiness” (5 C)... “Wherefore it is necessary to make philosophy as it were the head and front of all education” (7 D) –translated by F. C. Babbitt. Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann Ltd. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1969, all the quotations of Plutarch's *De liberis educandis* will correspond to this edition.

γάμος καὶ τὰ τέκνα²⁰ and despising pederastic ἔρωσ which in his opinion is threatened by too many real dangers²¹. But, for the same reason, may Plutarch continue to hold the essence of the Platonic erotic logos without correcting it? And, if not, should he abandon Plato definitively – which is certainly inconceivable? Needless to say, this last question is clearly rhetorical, but, at the same time, it might guide us towards a logical answer. Plutarch does not infringe at all the laws of Platonic love but applies common sense to his erotic logos, that is to say, ἔρωσ is finally also attributed to γυνή, γάμος καὶ τὰ τέκνα in accordance with the most elementary logics, which is enemy of the absurd (τὸ ἄτοπον). Plutarch, in short, makes a Platonic correction of Plato:

“Furthermore, the causes that they give for the generation of love are peculiar to neither sex and common (κοινὰ) to both. For is it really the case that visual shapes emanating from boys can, but the same from women cannot, enter into the body of the lover where, coursing through him, they stimulate and tickle the whole mass and, by gliding along with the other configurations of atoms, produce seed?²² And those beautiful and sacred passions which we call recollections of the divine, the true, the Olympian beauty of the other world, by which the soul is made winged – why should they not spring from maidens and women, as well as from boys and striplings, whenever a pure and disciplined character shines through from within a beautiful and charming outward shape... or whenever the clearcut traces of a shining soul stored up in beautiful forms and pure bodies are perceived undistorted, without a flaw, by those capable of such perceptions. In the play, the pleasure-lover is asked whether *To women more than men is he inclined?* And he answers *Where there is beauty, he is ambidexterous*²³... If he is to be given credit for an answer well suited to lust, it is no less true that the noble lover of beauty engages in love wherever he sees excellence and splendid natural endowment without regard for any difference in physiological detail. A lover of horses takes pleasure in the excellent qualities of ‘Aethê, Agamemnon’s mare’ no less than in those of the horse Podargus. The hunter has no special preference for male dogs, but also keeps Cretan and Laconian bitches. So too will not the lover of human beauty be fairly and equably disposed toward both sexes, instead of supposing that males and females are as different in the matter of

²⁰ See e.g.: F. FRAZIER, “L’*Érotikos*: un éloge du Dieu Éros? Une relecture du dialogue de Plutarque”. *Ploutarchos, n.s. Scholarly Journal of the International Plutarch Society*. Volume 3 (2005/2006) 63-102.

²¹ Daphnaeus says for instance: ‘If, then, Protogenes, we have regard for the truth, excitement about boys and women is one and the same thing: Love. But if, for the sake of argumentation, you choose to make distinctions, you will see that this boy-love of yours is not playing fair: like a late-born son, an aged man’s bastard, a child of darkness, he tries to disinherit the Love that is his legitimate and elder brother. It was only yesterday, my friend, or the day before, in consequence of young men’s stripping their bodies naked, that he crept furtively into the gymnasium. At first he merely caressed and embraced; then gradually he grew wings in the palaestra and can no longer be restrained. He rails against and vilifies that great conjugal Love which co-operates to win immortality for the human race by kindling afresh through new generations our being, prone as it is to extinction’ (751 F-752). And in the treatise *De liberis educandis* Plutarch introduces some shades: “What is then? It is the question whether boys’ admirers are to be permitted to associate with them and pass their time with them, or whether, on the contrary, they should be kept away and driven off from association with the youth. For when I have regard to those uncompromising fathers, harsh and surly in their manner, who think the society of admirers an intolerable outrage to their sons, I feel cautious about standing as its sponsor and advocate. But again, when I think of Socrates, Plato, Xenophon, Aeschines, Cebes, and that whole band of men who sanctioned affection between men, and thus guided the youth onward to learning, leadership, and virtuous conduct, I am of a different mind again, and am inclined to emulate their example ” (11 D-E).

²² Needless to say, this is Epicurean tradition.

²³ NAUCK, *TGF* p. 906. Adespoton 355; KOCK, *CAF* III, p. 476. Adespoton 360.

love as they are in their clothes? To be sure they say that beauty is the ‘flower of virtue’; yet it would be absurd (ἄτοπον) to deny that the female produces that flower or gives a ‘presentation’ of a ‘natural bent for virtue’ (εὐφυΐας)... Neither position is well taken (εὐλογον) or true (ἀληθές)’(766 E- 767 C).

“Beauty they describe as the bloom or flower of virtue” (τὴν γ’ ὥραν ἄνθος ἀρετῆς) as Chrysippus says in his treatise *Of Love* (περὶ Ἔρωτος)²⁴. However, we have already seen how often Plutarch takes advantage of the Stoics in order to build his always ponderous arguments and refutations. He knows perfectly well that Greek thought evolved throughout the centuries, too slowly –to tell the truth- with regard to the role to be played by wives as real companions of their husbands, who were sometimes philosophers. Women had been considered for centuries more a hindrance than a true help but, on the other hand, the Cynics and Stoics had already proclaimed that men’s virtue and women’s virtue are the same thing²⁵, and ἀρετή in its turn was a science which they both had to learn and pass to the youths²⁶. This is an ideal dream, for instance, in their theoretical *Republics*²⁷. Plato himself makes Socrates say in his *Republic* that only one design is necessary for both masculine and feminine rulers²⁸. What does still prevent him, then, from passing from theory to facts? He must be corrected by making his thesis go beyond the absurd (ἄτοπον) limit where he had stopped as a consequence of a centuries-old tradition –which is certainly misogynist²⁹- or, in other words, as a result of a well-known and also centuries-old intellectual sluggishness. The time has now come to remind him: a) that supreme Beauty, reflected in men’s and women’s visible beauty, makes no distinctions between

²⁴ D.L., VII, 130. *SVF* III, 718.

²⁵ One of the Cleanthes’s works is entitled *On the thesis that virtue is the same in man and woman* (περὶ τοῦ ὅτι ἡ ἀρετὴ καὶ ἀνδρὸς καὶ γυναικός) (D.L., VII 174. *SVF* I, 481). Antisthenes had held the same: ἀνδρὸς καὶ γυναικός ἡ αὐτὴ ἀρετὴ (D.L., VI 12).

²⁶ “If human nature is suitable to wisdom, it is necessary that not only craftsmen, but also peasants and women (*mulieres*)... are taught in order to become wise... the Stoics understood it and said that slaves and women had to philosophize (*mulieres philosophandum esse*)” (Lactant., *Instit. Div.* III 25. *SVF* III, 253, the translation is mine). “Let us recognize that we all have by birth the same nature and virtue (τὴν αὐτὴν φύσιν... τὴν αὐτὴν... ἀρετὴν). With regard to the human nature it does not seem that women have one virtue and men another one ... so women have to philosophize (φιλοσοφητέον οὖν καὶ ταῖς γυναιξίν)” (Clemens Al. *Strom* IV, 8. *SVF* III, 254) (the translation is mine).

²⁷ I analyse all these aspects in the following article “¿Mujer, matrimonio e hijos en el Estoicismo Antiguo bajo el amparo de Eros? (Women, marriage and children in the Ancient Stoicism under the protection of Eros?)”. *Emerita. Revista de Lingüística y Filología Clásica* LIII, fasc. 2º (1985) 315-345.

²⁸ 540c: ‘A most beautiful finish, Sócrates, you have put upon your rulers, if you were a statuary’. ‘And on the women too, Glaucon’, said I, ‘for you must not suppose that my words apply to the men more than all women who arise among them endowed with the requisite qualities’ –translated by Paul Shorey. Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann Ltd. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1970.

²⁹ Many centuries later, the great Victorian translator of Plato, Benjamin Jowett, felt also obliged to correct Plato so that he became both intelligible and acceptable in the Nineteenth-Century England. To tell the truth, according to Jowett’s thesis, Plato would have corrected himself if he had lived under different social circumstances: “... what Plato says of loves of men must be transferred to the loves of women before we can attach any serious meaning to his words. Had he lived in our times, he would have made the transposition himself. But seeing in his own age the impossibility of women being the intellectual helpmate or friend of man (except in the rare instances of a Diotima or an Aspasia), seeing that, even as to personal beauty, her place was taken by young mankind instead of womankind, he tries to work out the problem of love without regard to the distinction of nature” (quoted by P. Cruzalegui, *The Platonic Experience in Nineteenth-Century England*. Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú. Fondo Editorial, 2006, p.539).

them; b) that genderless Nobility of which visible beauty is simply a poor copy transmits a sole sign, which is neither masculine nor feminine, or as much masculine as feminine; c) that, through the contemplation of the reflections in our physical world of that distant Beauty-Good, men and women begin indiscriminately an “anamnetic” ascent towards the highest Realities, i. e. towards that archetypal Beauty which should be the goal of all human beings; d) that the pores of men’s and women’s skin open *simile modo* in order to welcome the renewed wings of their souls; e) that being ambidexterous in an erotic -and also Platonic- sense makes all human beings, men or women, grow spiritually and intellectually; f) to sum up, that beauty, goodness and talent pertain to all those men and women who are disposed to delve into the interior of the beloved –leaving aside his / her visible beauty- in order to find out in him / her, and also in themselves, a metaphysical and bright Beauty-Good. In other words, the Highest Idea will lead them out from a dark cave where they have lived too long.

Here is undoubtedly a logical correction, elaborated in detail, pursuing a single objective: to solemnly affirm that marriage, that is, to love women, not merely get offspring, deserves what has been attributed for centuries to pederasty: ἔρως καὶ φιλία. At the very beginning of this contribution we heard Protagoras maintaining that that other Eros ‘lax and housebound (ὕγρὸν... καὶ οἰκουρὸν) that spends its time in the bosoms and beds of women (ἐν κόλποις... καὶ κλινιδίοις), ever pursuing a soft life, enervated amid pleasure devoid of manliness and friendship and inspiration (ἡδοναῖς ἀνάνδροις καὶ ἀφίλοις καὶ ἀνευθουσιάζουσι), it should be proscribed’. Nevertheless, here are the significant instances of Camma³⁰ and Empone³¹, whose loyalty to their husbands leads them to a heroic death³², thus showing to everyone their boldness and courage –paradoxically ἀνδρεία- and also the friendship beyond any limit (φιλία) of feminine love³³. At the same time, Protagoras maintained that women lovers are not inspired by any enthusiasm, and in this respect Plato’s texts were an obligatory reference. Plutarch knows it very well and hastens to write in his *Eroticus*:

‘But’, my father said, ‘Plato’s doctrine³⁴ might help in the discussion at this point... There is one form of madness that rises from the body to the soul: when a noxious exhalation is put into circulation as a result of distempers or commixtures of a certain sort, a madness ensues that is savage, harsh, and diseased. There is a second kind, which does not exist

³⁰ 768 B- D. See as well *Mulierum virtutes* 257 E- 258 C.

³¹ 770 D- 771 C.

³² Women’s loyalty is affirmed throughout the dialogue: ‘We also know quite well that slave girls will fly from the embrace of their masters, and subjects reject their own queen, when Love becomes the lord of their souls. At Rome, they say, when the so-called dictator is proclaimed, all the other magistrates resign their offices; just so when Love enters as sovereign, men are ever after free and released from all other lords and masters and continue throughout their days to be, as it were, slaves of the god. A noble woman united by love to her lawful husband could endure the embrace of bears and snakes more readily than the touch and couch of another man’ (768).

³³ Not to mention the usual reference to Alcestis: “It is fortunate that I mentioned the name of Alcestis. Women have no part at all in Ares; but if Love possesses them, it leads them to acts of courage beyond the bounds of nature, even to die’ (761 E).

³⁴ *Phdr.* 244a (Socrates): ‘Understand then, fair youth, that the former discourse was by Phaedrus, the son of Pythocles (Eager for fame) of Myrrhinus (Myrrhtown); but this which I shall speak is by Stesichorus, son of Euphemus (Man of pious Speech) of Himera (Town of Desire). And I must say that this saying is not true, which teaches that when a lover is at hand the non-lover should be more favoured, because the lover is insane, and the other sane. For if it were a simple fact that insanity is an evil, the saying would be true; but in reality the greatest of blessings come to us through madness, when it is sent as a gift of the gods’ –translated by H. N. Fowler. Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann Ltd. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971.

without divine inspiration. It is not intrinsically generated but is, rather, an extrinsic afflatus that displaces the faculty of rational inference; it is created and set in motion by a higher power. This sort of madness bears the general name of ‘enthusiasm’. For just as what possesses breath within it is called ‘breathing’ and what has sense is called ‘sensible’, just so this kind of agitation in the soul has been named ‘enthusiasm’ (ἐνθουσιασμός) because it shares in and participates in a power that is divine’ (θειοτέρας δυνάμεως). There are several kinds of enthusiasm: the prophetic... the Bacchic... There remains within the class of mutations and aberrations that man is subject to yet another kind, Daphnaeus, that is neither inconspicuous nor quiescent. I have a question about it to put to Pemptides here *Which god shakes the thyrsus of fair fruits*³⁵ this enthusiasm which arouses affection for virtuous boys and chaste women (σώφρονας γυναῖκας), which is much the fiercest and warmest of all our enthusiasms?’ (758 D-759).

Therefore, it would be unforgivable not to note the conscious correction of what Plato says in the palinode in his *Phaedrus*, which goes as far as transforming women into receivers of the enthusiasm that gods gave to men as a gift. By correcting Plato from his own doctrines, conjugal love is put on the same level with pederastic love and even surpasses it. Γάμος implies doubtless sexual relations, but love and friendship (ἔρως καὶ φιλία) accompany them³⁶. The conclusion is already as unavoidable as it is easy to predict: ‘For this truly is what is called ‘integral amalgamation’³⁷, that of a married couple who love each other... there can be no greater pleasures derived from others nor more continuous services conferred on others than those found in marriage, nor can the beauty of another friendship be so highly esteemed or so enviable as *When a man and wife keep house in perfect harmony*³⁸ (769 F-770).

³⁵ NAUCK, *TGF* p. 917. Adespoton 406.

³⁶ See e.g.: M. B. CRAWFORD, “*Amatorius*: Plutarch’s Platonic Departure from the *Peri gámou* Literature”. *Plutarco, Platón y Aristóteles. Actas del V Congreso Internacional de la IPS*. Madrid: Ediciones Clásicas, 1999, 287-298; R. J. GALLÉ CEJUDO, “Belleza y grandeza del amor conyugal en el *Erótico* de Plutarco”. *Plutarco, Dioniso y el Vino. Actas del VI Simposio Español sobre Plutarco*. Madrid: Ediciones Clásicas, 1999, 232-242.

³⁷ Cf. HANS VON ARNIM, *SVF* III, Antipater Tarsensis 63.

³⁸ Hom., *Od.* VI, 183-4.