

# PLOUTARCHOS, n.s.

Scholarly Journal of the  
INTERNATIONAL PLUTARCH SOCIETY

Plutarchus



Plutarchus ein natürlicher maister vnd außspracher der geschichtschreyber an gepie-  
ter vñ anreicher des kaisers Craym ist zu diser zeit an sinne vñ miferkeit in gloyb-  
würdigkeit in fast großer achting gewest. von dem Dolicates in sein viffonien also gloyb-  
Plutarchus der natürlicher maister ist in dem heiligthumb schreyen der streit ein so vuffer willfür  
ten lautter vñ freylich vnd in dem heiligthumb schreyen der streit ein so vuffer willfür  
gewest das er leichtlich ein gepietter des kaisers hat migen erkant werden. Plutar-  
chus ter sind ein fleiß dem kaiser seuen unger vñ der vnderthanen nemlich vñ des erbt-  
digkeit. sein selbs erfamer. der ambaleter man gar vil bischer von mancherley materien vñ  
sachen in kriegslichen vñ lateinischen vñ lateinischen gesung gar treffentlich beschriben vñ  
kapffschait bey Craymo angenehme begabung erlangt.

VOLUME 4 (2006/2007)

UNIVERSITY OF MÁLAGA (SPAIN)  
UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY, LOGAN, UTAH (U.S.A.)

**JUAN LUIS LÓPEZ CRUCES**  
**University of Almería**  
Department of Philology  
E04120-Almería (Spain)  
juanluis@ual.es

**Plutarch, *Pericles* 4.4**  
**Plato Comicus on Damon**

In his *Life of Pericles* (§ 4) Plutarch mentions Damon as one of Pericles' teachers<sup>1</sup>. This prominent sophist, he explains, tried to conceal his political δεινότης from the multitude behind the screen of music, but without success: Damon 'was ostracized for being a

schemer and a friend of tyranny, and became a butt of the comic poets'. To prove his point, Plutarch quotes a fragment of a comedy by Plato Comicus (hereafter simply Plato), where an unknown character addresses Damon :

Πρώτον μὲν οὖν μοι λέξον, ἀντιβολῶ· σὺ γάρ, ὡς\* φασι Χοίρων ἐξέθρεψας Περικλέα.

Wilamowitz<sup>5</sup> proposed two possible comic contexts for the fragment: either Damon was summoned to return to earth from Hades, as was Solon in Cratinus' *Chirons* (as a disciple of Agathocles, like Pindar, he must have been already dead by

\* My thanks to FREDERICK WILLIAMS (The Queen's University, Belfast-Trinity College, Dublin) for friendly advice; to B. Manuwald (University of Cologne) for useful criticism (which does not imply agreement with my proposal), and also to the DGICYT of Spain for financial support (project BFF2002-00084).

<sup>1</sup> On Damon and his political influence on Pericles see G. E. J. MOOREN, *Plutarchuss Leven van Pericles en enkele gestalten uit Pericles' omgeving*, Nijmegen, 1948, pp. 86-108 (abstract in French, pp. 133-135); K. MEISTER, "Damon, der politische Berater des Perikles", *RSA*, 3 (1973) 29-45; D. DELATTRE, "Damon d'Athènes", in: R. GOULET (ed.), *Dictionnaire de philosophes antiques* II (Paris 1994), pp. 600-607, esp. p. 603.

<sup>2</sup> *Per.* 4.3f: ὡς μεγαλοπράγμων καὶ φιλοτύραννος· ἐξωστρακίσθη καὶ παρεσχε τοῖς κωμικοῖς διατρυβῆν (transi. B. Perrin). See below, note 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Per.* 4.4: ὁ γοῦν Πλάτων καὶ τυνηθάνομενον αὐτοῦ τι να πεποιήκεν οὐτῶ· Πρώτον μὲν οὖν κτλ. (A\ 207, *PCG* VII 523). On Plato, whose production covers approximately the same years as that of Aristophanes, see A. KÖRTE, "Platon (2)", *RE* XX (1950), cols. 2537-2541; H.-G. NESSELRATH, "Platon (2)", *NPauy* 9 (2000), cols. 1109-1110. Though chronologically belonging to Old Comedy, Plato anticipates many of the traits of Middle Comedy, so that he can be rightly considered a transitional figure between the two periods; see R. M. ROSEN, "Plato Comicus and the Evolution of Greek Comedy", in: G. W. DOBROV (ed.), *Beyond Aristophanes. Transition and Diversity in Greek Comedy*, Atlanta, Georgia, 1995, pp. 119-137; J. L. SANCHIS LLOPIS, "Platón el cómico y la evolución de la comedia griega", in: A. LÓPEZ EIRE (ed.), *Sociedad, política y literatura: comedia griega antigua*, Salamanca, 1997, pp. 329-337.

<sup>4</sup> The manuscripts read ὁ Χείρων. In the recent editions both of Plutarch and Plato, Cobet's deletion of the particle ὁ is accepted. In the nineteenth century the correction ὁ Χείρων figured e.g. in the editions off BEKKER (Leipzig 21855, 1 249f), F.H. BOTHE (Paris 1855, 256), T. DOEHNER (ibid. 1857, 1.184), and C. SINTENIS (Leipzig 1884, 1.302), followed in the next century by B. PERRIN (LCL, 1951, 10).

<sup>5</sup> U. v. WILAMOWITZ-MOELLENDORFF, "Δάμων Δαμωνίδου Ὁαθεν", *Hermes*, 14 (1879) 318-320, esp. p. 319 n.l.

the time of Plato), or the whole scene was set in the Underworld. Damon's interlocutor begs him to answer a question—which Plutarch has not included in his quotation—and explains why he is directing the question to him: 'For you, as they say, are the Chiron who brought up Pericles'. As the mythical centaur Chiron had been the teacher of great heroes like Asclepius, Achilles, and Heracles<sup>6</sup>, the comparison is apparently a compliment, and has been understood as such by almost all the commentators and translators of the passage, who differ only about the range of disciplines—music alone or many others as well—which Damon and Chiron taught to their respective pupils<sup>7</sup>.

As the context of the conversation is missing, that is all that can be said with certainty on the passage, which proves Damon's con-

nection with tyranny and that he was sometimes represented in comedy. Nonetheless, when Plutarch says that Damon παρεσχε τοῖς κωμικοῖς εἰς διατριβήν he is not simply saying that he occasionally appeared as a character on the comic stage, but that the comic poets made fun of him. As the passage is the only example adduced by Plutarch of this ridicule, the remark of Damon's interlocutor may be less innocent than it seems. In fact, the *prima facie* compliment of comparing Damon with Chiron implies the corresponding compliment of comparing Pericles with great mythical heroes, and praise of Pericles is surely not to be expected from a comic author famous for his attacks on political leaders<sup>10</sup>.

Therefore, either there was something in the passage which could provoke the laughter of the audience or the comparison Da-

<sup>6</sup> In X., *Cyir.* 1-2 we find a long list of Chiron's disciples κυνηγεσίων τε καὶ ἐτέρων καλῶν. See also ESCHER, s.v. "Chiron (1)", *RE* III (1899), cols. 2302-2308, especially cols. 2004-2007.

<sup>7</sup> As an example of the first view, see B. PERRIN, *Plutarch's Lives of Cimon and Pericles*, New York, 1910, p. 213: "As Cheiron taught Jason and Achilles music, so Damon Pericles"; of the second, MOOREN (n. 1) 134: "If we give credit to the fragment of Plato Comicus (Plut., *Per.* 4), Damon must have been the 'Chiron' of his younger friend, which would mean that Damon's activities were not restricted to music" (my translation). See also P. A. STADTER, *A Commentary on Plutarch's Pericles*, Chapel Hill/London, 1989, p. 72.

<sup>8</sup> See LSJ s.v. "διατριβή I 1 (*materiam jocandi*)". This negative sense of the comic διατριβή is generally acknowledged in the translations of the passage: Damon 'became a butt for the Comic poets' (EDMONDS), 'became a source of light relief for the comic poets' (WATERFIELD), "sirvió de entretenimiento a los cómicos" (PÉREZ JIMÉNEZ), 'il ... donna matière aux attaques des poètes comiques' (CHAMBRY). Cf. the more explicit expression that Plutarch uses of Hyperbolus in *Ale.*, 13.4: τοῖθ' δὲ κωμικὸς ὁμοῦ τι πασι διατριβήν δεῖ σκωπτόμενος ἐν τοῖς θεάτροις παρῆγεν.

<sup>9</sup> As STADTER (n. 7) 71, observes, this is the only evidence which has come down to us of the presence of Damon on the comic stage.

<sup>10</sup> For a list of his targets see KÖRTE (n. 3) 2540-2541. He dedicated one play to an attack on the general Cleophon (*PCG* VII 456), another on Hyperbolus (*PCG* VII 505), and called Cleon a Cerberus (fr. 236, *PCG* VII 533); cf. also fr. 115, *PCG* VII 480: Ὅς πρῶτα μὲν Κλέωνα πόλεμον ἤραμην. On the comic attacks on Pericles see R. M. ROSEN, *Old Comedy and the Iambographic Tradition*, Atlanta, Georgia, 1987, p. 51, 60, and M. FARIOLI, "Mito e satira politica nei Chironi di Cratino", *RFIC*, 128 (2000) 406-431, esp. pp. 415ff.

mon-Chiron was in itself a joke. Let us examine the first option. Judging from what remains, the only element of the passage which could be useful for this purpose is the name of Chiron<sup>11</sup>. As far as I know, the notion of a pun on the name of the centaur has been suggested only by the eminent Greek writer and politician of the nineteenth century Alexandras R. Rangavis . In his translation of the *Life of Pericles* (Athens 1864, 2.246) he comments on the passage: “(Plato) calls him Chiron, comparing him with Achilles’ teacher, perhaps alluding to Cratinus’ comedy”. This is a reference to a footnote on a previous passage of the same life (3.4), where Plutarch quotes some lines of Cratinus’ *Chirons* (fr. 258, *PCG* IV 253). Presumably misled by an error of the manuscripts, which read *εν χείροσι* instead of *εν Χείρωσι*<sup>13</sup>, Rangavis comments (p. 244): “Probably from Chiron, the centaur, the expert in medicine and teacher of Achilles. In this comedy the poet perhaps scoffed at public teachers or doctors, who were in fact worse than the people they wanted to look

after (όντας\* πραγματικής χβίρωνας [sic] των ούς έθελον νά διοικήσωσι)”. Therefore, he proposed for Cratinus’ *Chirons*<sup>14</sup> and for this passage of Plato a play between the name of Chiron and the comparative of κακός, just the same kind of play which Tryphon, a grammarian of the first century B.C., adduced to exemplify the *tropos* of the enigma:

ολον Ἡσων ἀλήσας παιδα τον εκ Θέτιδος ἀνέθρεψε\* ἥσων γάρ ο χοίρων, ἀλήσας πονήσας\* έστί δε οτι Χείρων ο Κένταυρος έξέθρεψε τον Ἀχιλλέα .

The compliment of calling Damon a Chiron could then be two-sided: its reverse was the insult of calling him χείρων<sup>16</sup>, which can be interpreted in a technical sense: the instruction of Damon harms Pericles<sup>17</sup>, as Pericles benefits from being taught by someone who is worse than himself. This is a recurrent attack against the sophists: they claim to be expert in politics and in the art of *logos*, but are in fact extremely incompetent . Plato’s audience would

<sup>11</sup> According to Orion’s *Etymologicon* (s. vv., p. 161, 6-8 STURZ), Χείρων is the name of the centaur, but principally denotes ο κατά χειρός ήπτων.

<sup>12</sup> His translation of Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives*, based on Corais’ edition (Paris 1809-1814), was published in ten volumes in Athens between 1864-1866.

<sup>13</sup> The erroneous reading in the mss. is regularly reported in the apparatus criticus of all the editions.

<sup>14</sup> Wrongly: the Chirons of the title were real centaurs, not bad teachers or doctors. See KAIBEL’S reconstruction of the comedy in *PCG* IV 245, and FARIOLI (n. 10), pp. 406-409.

<sup>15</sup> *Τεpl τρόπων* III p. 193, 18-21 SPENGL. Cf. Plato’s Χείρων εκθρέψας Περικλέα.

<sup>16</sup> See LSJ s.v. “χείρων I”, and the passages collected by E.C. WELSKOPF, s.v. “χείρων”, *Soziale Typenbegriffe im alten Griechenland und ihr Fortleben in den Sprachen der Welt*, Berlin, 1985, II 1963-1966.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. X., *Mem.* 4.8.10: εγώ ήδίκησα μεν ούδένα πάποτε ανθρώπων ουδέ χείρω έποίησα.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Isoc., C. *soph.* 9: χείρον γράφοντες τούς λόγους ή των ιδιωτών τινες αυτοσχεδιάζουσιν, όμως ύπισχνούνται τοιούτοις ρήτορας τούς συνόντας ποιήσιν ώστε μηδέν των ένόντων εν τοις πράγμασιν παραλίπειν, and also Pl., *Ti.* 19e2-8.

catch the joke only if the comparative *χειρών* or another word related to *κακός* appeared in the context of the lines quoted by Plutarch, as it does in the following apophthegms of Diogenes the Cynic preserved by Diogenes Laertius:

ιδών ποτέ δύο Κενταύρους κάκιστα  
έξωγραφημένους έφη, Τότερος  
τούτων Χοίρων έστί; (6.51)

Upon seeing two centaurs very badly painted, he asked, ‘Which of these is Chiron?’

εύμόρφω μειρακίω άπίόντι εις  
συμπόσιον έφη, ‘χειρών έπανά-  
ξιεις\*’ τού δ επανελθόντος και τή  
έξης είπόντος, ‘καί άπήλθον και  
χειρών ούκ έγενόμην,’ έφη, ‘Χεί-  
ρων μέν ού, Εύρυτίων δε.’ (6.59)

To a handsome youth, who was going out to dinner, he said, ‘You will come a worse man’. When he came back and said next day, ‘I went and am none the worse for it’, Diogenes said, ‘Not Worse-man, but Lax-man’.<sup>19</sup>

Let us turn to the second option, that is, that the comparison Damon-Chiron could provoke the laughter of the audience. In this sense, one other interpretation would make good sense of the context in Plutarch: calling

Damon a *χειρών* can also be a political attack in itself, as the term also denotes a mean person or one from a low social condition, as in *S. Phil.* 456f.: *όπου θ ο χοίρων τάγαθοῦ μειζον σθένει / κάποφθίνει τά χρηστά χώ δειλός κρατεί*. By the time of Plato, the association *Δάμων-Χείρων* would recall that the *δήμος* was habitually referred to as *οι χειρους* by writers hostile to democracy: see e.g. *Isoc.*, XV72: *χρή δεινόν νομίξειν όταν όρα τούς χειρους των βελτιόνων άρχοντας*, *Old Oligarch*, 1.4: *οί μέν γάρ πένητες καί οί δημόται καί οί χειρους εύ πράττοντες καί πολλοί οί τοιοῦτοι γιγνόμενοι την δημοκρατίαν αύξουσιν*. Damon, the *éminence grise* of Pericles’ radical democratic politics which gave great power to the *χειρους*, is equated with his antithesis the centaur Chiron, the “idealization of the Athenian élitist pedagogy”. The paradoxical assimilation of the aristocratic education given by the centaur to his pupils to the democratically-oriented upbringing of Pericles by Damon could well explain why Plutarch quotes Plato’s passage as an example of the jibes of the comic playwrights against Damon.

<sup>19</sup> R. D. HICKS’ Loeb translation (Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, 1925, 2.53 and 61). As Diogenes made extensive use of Old Comedy (cf. *M. Aur., Med.* 11.6; *Demetr., Eloc.* 259), his pun on the name of Chiron may be traced back to Plato’s passage on Damon. Indeed, the two anecdotes which follow the joke on the painting of the centaurs at 6.51 may be of comic origin; see J. L. LÓPEZ CRUCES, “Two Sayings of Diogenes in Comedy (D.L., 6.51)”, *Hermes*, 132 (2004) 248-252. On the comic background of the cynic literary style see J. F. KINDSTRAND, *Bion of Borysthenes*, Uppsala, 1976, pp. 44-46; J. L. LÓPEZ CRUCES, “Diógenes y sus tragedias a la luz de la comedia”, *Itaca*, 19 (2003) 47-69.

<sup>20</sup> See M. VEGETTI, “Il dominio e la legge”, in: M. VEGETTI, D. LANZA, G. CAIANI, F. SIRCANA, *L’ideologia della cita*, Naples, 1977, pp. 29-56, esp. pp. 31ff.

<sup>21</sup> In the words of G. W. DOBROV and E. URIOS-APARISI, “The Maculate Music: Gender, Genre and the Chiron of Pherecrates”, in: DOBROV (n. 3), pp. 139-174, esp. p. 143.