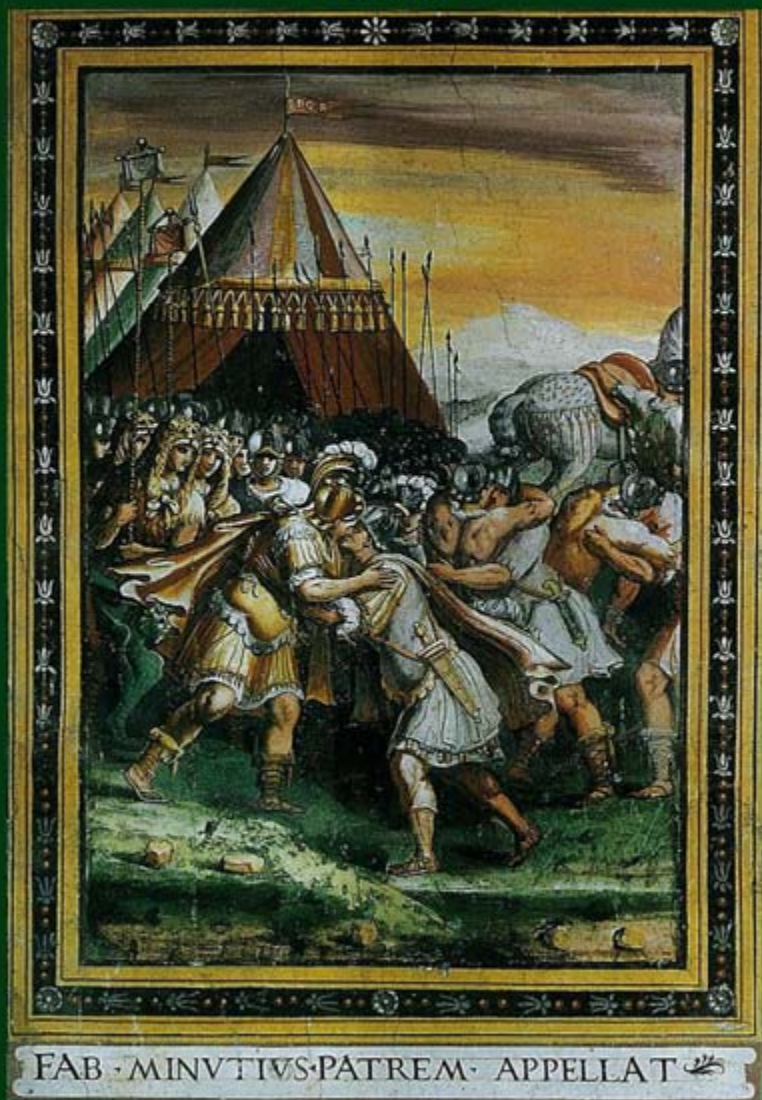


*PHILOSOPHY IN SOCIETY
VIRTUES AND VALUES IN PLUTARCH*

JOSÉ RIBEIRO FERREIRA
LUC VAN DER STOCKT
MARIA DO CÉU FIALHO
Editors



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JOSÉ RIBEIRO FERREIRA, LUC VAN DER STOCKT & MARIA DO CÉU FIALHO

EDITORS

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VIRTUES AND VALUES IN PLUTARCH



Fabius Maximus' Loyalty

Vitae Plutarchi Cheronei novissime post Jodocum Badium Ascensium longe diligentius repositae maioreque diligentia castigatae, cum copiosiore verioreque indice, nec non cum Aemilii Probi vitis, una cum figuris, suis locis apte dispositis, Venetiis 1516, fol . 65v

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FABIUS MAXIMUS AND MINUCIUS (Francesco da Siena, Grottaferrata, Palazzo Abbaziale).
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Plutarch on (Un)Sociable Talk: Ethics. And Etiquette?

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When browsing through Ziegler's¹ list of what he called Plutarch's "popularphilosophisch-ethischen Schriften", apart from some 'obvious' titles, one comes across *On Curiosity*, *On Talkativeness*, *On Love of Wealth*, *That We Ought Not to Borrow*, *On Compliancy*, *On Inoffensive Self-Praise*, etc. If these subjects are not what most people would nowadays consider the most obvious topics ethics ought to deal with, they do not figure amongst Aristotle's list of ethical virtues either, nor do we possess any other ancient writings on them as such. Hence two questions: 1) what carries away Plutarch's interest so as to make him write about it, and 2) given the fact that he treats all these subjects in the way ethical topics were dealt with, what does 'ethics' mean for Plutarch?

The present paper focusses on *On Talkativeness*². Regarding this work, I will answer the first question arguing that Plutarch, having observed the *adoleschēs*'s rash use of speech and his resulting social exclusion, presents a penetrating analysis of what the problem is. Conversely, the author offers the necessary education needed to be(come) part of the community the *adoleschēs* aims at. On the other hand, the fact that *On Talkativeness* is conceived by Plutarch as an ethical treatise is significant as to what this less obvious *popularphilosophisch-ethische Schrift* may be about: the art of living well in a community of educated people. Thus an analysis of *On Talkativeness* will throw some light on the second question.

¹ 1951, 637.

² JONES, 1966, 70 limits himself to giving the work's *terminus post quem*, which is 68. After him, DUMORTIER – DEFRADAS, 1975, 224 and PETTINE, 1992, 28-29, with further bibliography on the question, suggested a composition during Trajan's reign.

1. *Adoleschia*1.1 The Scope of *Adoleschia* Extended

The word ἀδολεσχία, probably derived from *ἀαδο-λέσχη³, traditionally refers to 'idle, excessive talk': "Das Wort bezeichnet [...] den Vorwurf, den man einem Gesprächspartner macht, wenn dieser sich im Gespräch, wie es scheint ungebührlich lange, bei einem Gegenstande aufhält oder die Gedankenführung in seiner Rede unübersichtlich und nicht einsichtig erscheint"⁴. Groups of people liable to accusations of *adoleschia* were therefore the orators⁵, and, albeit in a somewhat different sense, sophists⁶ and philosophers⁷. On the other hand, ἀδολεσχία was applied as a label to 'ordinary' people who chatted too much. Theophrast in his *Characters* probably offers the most elaborate description of the phenomenon, distinguishing the idle chatterer (ἀδολέσχης, *Character* 3), the garrulous man (λάλος, *Character* 7), the rumor-monger (λογοποιός, *Character* 8), and the slanderer (κακολόγος, *Character* 28). In Plutarch's own days, Dio Chrysostom disapproves of

τὸ συνδιατρίβειν αἰεὶ τῷ ἐντυχόντι ἀδολεσχοῦντα καὶ ἀκούοντα λόγων οὐδὲν χρησίμων ἢ περὶ τὰ βασιλέως πράγματα διατρίβειν ἢ τὰ τοῦ δεῖνος (*Twentieth Discourse, On Retirement* 3. Text taken from Cohoon, 1939, p. 248).

wasting all one's time in palavering with anyone you happen to meet, and in listening to talk that is utterly futile, or spending your time discoursing about the affairs of the Emperor or of what's his name (*Twentieth Discourse, On Retirement* 3. Translation taken from Cohoon, 1939, pp. 249).

Plutarch, in *On Talkativeness*⁸, is in line with Theophrast and Dio in focussing

³ Whereas the etymology of the first part, indicating disapproval, is unclear, the second part of the compound is λέσχη, which is the "public building or hall, used as a lounge or meeting-place", and, by extension, the conversations taking place there. See FRISK, 1973, s.v., and CHANTRAINE, 1968, s.v. See also PETTINE, 1975, 26, n. 1.

⁴ STEINMETZ, 1962, 54.

⁵ Demosthenes, for example, when inserting a longer account of some event, repeatedly stresses that he does not do so just in order to talk (ἀδολεσχεῖν). See, for example, *Philippic* 2, 32.4 and *Oration* 50, 2.4. Analogous is the argument of orators that they are not 'practised speakers', to use the expression of DOVER, 1974, 25-28. See also BEARDSLEE, 1978, 264-265, with further bibliography, and MONTIGLIO, 2000, 116-157, esp. 116-122.

⁶ See, for example, Isocrates, *Against the Sophists* 8, and Plato, *Sophist* 225d.

⁷ For Socrates as an ἀδολέσχης, see Aristophanes, *Clouds* 1480 and 1485, Plato, *Phaedo* 70c, and Xenophon, *Oeconomicus* 11.3.3.

⁸ Since ZIEGLER'S (1951, 778) statement that the work has not been subject to *Quellenforschung* – confirmed by BEARDSLEE, 1978, 267 – INGENKAMP, 1971, 126-128, DUMORTIER – DEFRAZAS, 1975, 225-226, and PETTINE, 1992, 19-26 have suggested parallel passages from antecedent and contemporary ancient Greek and Latin literature.

on ἀδολεσχία of ‘ordinary’ people rather than of orators, sophists, or philosophers. Compared to Theophrast, Plutarch is less technical, using ἀδολεσχία and λαλιά indistinctively⁹. Theophrast’s other two variants, λογοποιία and κακολογία, do not occur as such in *On Talkativeness*. Regarding λογοποιία, it can be noted that Plutarch indicates that the ἀδόλεσχος often lies (503D), although he generally does not stress this aspect. The aspect of κακολογία, finally, is completely absent from *On Talkativeness*¹⁰. On the other hand, Plutarch significantly extends the scope of what ἀδολεσχία means. Indeed, *On Talkativeness* is concerned with more than the quantity or content¹¹ of the *adoleschēs*’ words alone. Two anecdotes will suffice to make this clear. First (§9), Plutarch approves of Eumenes for preferring to tell a lie rather than revealing the truth at the wrong moment. For indeed, instead of informing his friends that Craterus was approaching, Eumenes told them that it was Neoptolemus, whom they looked down upon. As a result, they won the battle. Plutarch comments that Eumenes’ was a clever strategy, for it was better to save his friends by not telling them something, than to ruin them by doing so. Second (§12), there is the story of a farmer who had hosted king Seleucus at a time when the king wanted to stay incognito, but was killed by him because he could not restrain himself from showing his knowledge of who the man he had hosted, was. Had he but stayed silent a little time, Plutarch says, until Seleucus was in control again, the king would have bestowed great favours on him, not only for his hospitality, but even more for his silence. At stake here is not the quantity of words, but their timing.

What Plutarch is here criticising, in other words, is not just that the *adoleschēs* talks too much. In that case, a simple advice would have been sufficient: “stay silent”. On the contrary, as we will see, Plutarch reveals himself fully aware of the necessity, use, and pleasure conversation can yield, and this consciousness is what coined his writing and advice on the subject¹².

⁹ Other words Plutarch uses in *On Talkativeness* to denote the behaviour he aims at, are λήρος (504B and 512D) and φλυαρία (503F, 505C, 508C, 510C, and 511D). Apart from these terms, Plutarch also uses λέγειν (see esp. 505B, 508C, and 509D). The fact that some of the *adoleschēs*’ behaviour is denoted by that verb is significant: it implies that Plutarch is not merely interested in talking nonsense, but also in saying things that are interesting but ought to be kept silent in certain circumstances. Compare the discussion of Plutarch’s use of these various verbs by AUBERGER, 1993, 298-306.

¹⁰ Plutarch does tell the story of the Athenians reviling (κακῶς [...] ἔλεγον, 505B) Sulla and his wife Metella from their walls, but this does not coincide with Theophrast’s κακολογία, which is always behind the reviled person’s back. Note also that Plutarch does treat κακολογία in *On Curiosity*, and that he does so in a passage highlighting the relationship of curiosity and talkativeness. *On Talkativeness* is therefore more about *bavarder* than about *mauvaise langue*. On the difference between both, see HUNTER, 1990, 300.

¹¹ For an analysis of Plutarch’s criticism on “Quantität” and “Inhalt” of the *adoleschēs*’ words, see INGENKAMP, 1971, 126-128.

¹² Cf. also BEARDSLEE, 1978, 288: “His final word in the practical sphere is not the counsel of silence, but the counsel of moderation in speech”.

If, then, *ἀδολεσχία* in *On Talkativeness* does not fully coincide with what it traditionally meant, the question arises what Plutarch here does understand when using the term. What, in other words, is the *ἀδολεσχία* Plutarch aims at with this writing?

1.2 Adoleschia: An Ill-considered Use of Speech

As a starting point for our examination of Plutarch's specific treatment of *adoleschia*, I will quote a larger passage, which, as will gradually become clear, contains the core of Plutarch's argument:

τὸν λόγον ἥδιστον ὄντα καὶ φιλανθρωπότατον συμβόλαιον οἱ χρώμενοι κακῶς καὶ προχείρως ἀπάνθρωπον ποιοῦσι καὶ ἄμικτον, οἷς οἴονται χαρίζεσθαι λυποῦντες καὶ ἀφ' ὧν θαυμάζεσθαι καταγελώμενοι καὶ δι' ὧν φιλεῖσθαι δυσχεραίνόμενοι. ὥσπερ οὖν ὁ τῷ κεστῷ τοὺς ὀμιλοῦντας ἀποστρέφων καὶ ἀπελαύνων ἀναφρόδιτος, οὕτως ὁ τῷ λόγῳ λυπῶν καὶ ἀπεχθανόμενος ἄμουσός τις καὶ ἄτεχνός ἐστι. τῶν δ' ἄλλων παθῶν καὶ νοσημάτων τὰ μὲν ἐστὶν ἐπικίνδυνα τὰ δὲ μισητὰ τὰ δὲ καταγέλαστα, τῇ δ' ἀδολεσχίᾳ πάντα συμβέβηκε· χλευάζονται μὲν γὰρ ἐν ταῖς κοιναῖς διηγήσεσι, μισοῦνται δὲ διὰ τὰς τῶν κακῶν προσαγγελίας, κινδυνεύουσι δὲ τῶν ἀπορρήτων μὴ κρατοῦντες (504E-F. All Greek texts are taken from Paton-Pohlenz-Siebeking, 1929).

Speech, which is the most pleasant and human of social ties, is made inhuman and unsocial by those who use it badly and wantonly, because they offend those whom they think they please, are ridiculed for their attempts at gaining admiration, and are disliked because of the very means they employ to gain affection. As, then, he can have no share in Aphrodite who uses her girdle to drive away and alienate those who seek his company, so he who arouses annoyance and hostility with his speech is no friend of the Muses and a stranger to art. Now of the other affections and maladies some are dangerous, some detestable, some ridiculous; but garrulousness has all these qualities at once; for babblers are derided for telling what everyone knows, they are hated for bearing bad news, they run into danger since they cannot refrain from revealing secrets (504E-F. All translations are taken from Helmbold, 1939).

This passage, in my view, contains a clear indication as to what is the common denominator of all instances of *ἀδολεσχία* which Plutarch mentions in *On Talkativeness*: *adoleschai* are people “using speech badly and wantonly” (χρώμενοι κακῶς καὶ προχείρως, 504E). Speaking badly (κακῶς) means speaking whatever occurs to one (προχείρως), without thinking, that is. And indeed, throughout *On Talkativeness*, the *adoleschēs* appears as a person who does not know or take into account the impact of his words. His use of speech makes it seem indeed as if he regards speech as the most worthless thing in the world (πάντων ἀτιμότατον ἡγεῖσθαι τὸν λόγον εἰκόασιν, 503D) – and a worthless something, of course, has no impact. As Plutarch stresses, however, the contrary is true: words can cause no less pain than deeds (509D).

The thoughtlessness of the *adoleschēs* comes to full light of day through his dealing with ἀπόρρητα. Literally, ἀπόρρητα are ‘forbidden things’, things, that is, which should not be said. Plutarch explicitly states that if something is not to be known (εἰ [...] ἀγνοεῖσθαι τὸν λόγον ἔδει, 506E), it should not be told to *anybody* in the first place, for a word is only a real secret if there is only one person who knows it: λόγος ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ καταμένων ἀπόρρητος ὡς ἀληθῶς ἐστίν (507A). The *adoleschēs*, then, is the kind of person who, if he perceives such a word, does not keep it to himself, but tells it on. Fulvius is an obvious example, telling his wife what he had heard from the Emperor. On the one hand, it would have been wise of Augustus himself not to say anything in Fulvius’ presence; on the other hand, Fulvius should not have told his wife what he heard. The reason why each one of them *should* have acted in that way - after all, there is no ‘formal’ interdiction to speak a certain word involved -, is that they could have *foreseen* what would happen if they acted as they did. Augustus, in this case, may have thought of the possibility, but estimated that he could trust his friend Fulvius (Φούλβιος δ’ ὁ Καίσαρος ἔταιρος, 508A). Fulvius, behaving as an *adoleschēs*, may have had the same feeling about his wife, or he may not have considered what could happen if he told her. She herself points this out to him:

δικαίως (sc. μέλλεις ἀναιρεῖν σεαυτὸν), εἶπεν, ὅτι μοι τοσοῦτον συνοικῶν χρόνον οὐκ ἔγνωσ οὐδ’ ἐφυλάξω τὴν ἀκρασίαν (508B).

“It is right that you should (sc. intend to kill yourself)”, said his wife, “since, after living with me for so long a time, you did not know or guard against my incontinent tongue” (508B)¹³.

Thus his wife reproaches him that he either did not know (ἔγνωσ) or did not take into account (ἐφυλάξω) her garrulity. Doing either one of them, however, supposes that one uses one’s mind before talking, and that is exactly what the *adoleschēs*, using *speech rashly*, does not do.

As a result, he not only assesses wrongly people, but also the circumstances (καιρός, 504C, 512A, and 512F) for saying certain things. Apart from the anecdotes about Eumenes and Seleucus which have already been mentioned, Sulla’s siege and sack of Athens (505A-C) is a good example: the fact that the Heptachalcon was unguarded was apparently no secret among the Athenians, but it was not wise to mention it at the barber’s, where spies can hear everything. Nor was it thoughtful of the Athenians to revile Sulla, a powerful man, when he was before the walls: they should have taken into account the consequences in case he would take the city. More generally, Plutarch approvingly states that one should know to

¹³ Translation modified.

σιγᾶν θ' ὅπου δεῖ καὶ λέγειν ἵν' ἀσφαλές (506C).

be silent in season, to speak where speech is safe (506C).

When it is safe, speech is not bad, but often it is necessary to stay silent. For apart from people or spies who may overhear what one is saying, the friend in whom one trusts will in turn trust another friend, and soon the secret becomes a rumour (506F). Moreover, it is always possible to reveal something one has at first kept silent, but not the other way round. In other circumstances, it may be necessary to tell a lie (506D) or to uphold it (508E), as in the anecdotes about Eumenes and Seleucus.

But even if it is safe to talk, one should take into account the degree (κόρος, 504D and 513D) up to which talking is agreeable. A short (ἀναγκαῖον, 513A) or a friendly (φιλόφρων, 513A) answer is acceptable to a question, an exaggerated (περισσόν, 513A) one is not: one should take the questioner's need as the centre - regarding content, that is - and radius - defining size - of one's answer (κέντρῳ καὶ διαστήματι τῇ χρεῖα τοῦ πυνθανομένου περιγράφαντα τὴν ἀπόκρισιν, 513C). Talkative people, on the other hand, never listen, for they are always talking (§1). When a question is asked, whether to them, or to someone else, or in a group, it is always they who want to answer it (§§19-23). But even without a question being asked or anyone inviting to, the *adoleschēs* approaches people, and starts talking endlessly (§2).

1.3 The *Adoleschēs* and his Concern

Thus the *adoleschēs*' use of speech is 'rash' (προχείρως, 504E) in the sense that he does not use his mind (enough) in order to assess correctly the impact of his words, the trustworthiness of the people he is talking to, the situation in which the conversation takes place, and the right degree of talking.

On the other hand, this does not mean that the *adoleschēs* speaks *aimlessly*. On the contrary, the passage quoted at the beginning indicates that he does have a determinate goal when speaking: he wants to please and to be loved and admired (504E, 510D). In order to obtain this, he may want to prove his being a friend - and therefore loveable - directly by telling secret things which he happens to know. Augustus, in trusting Fulvius, may be a case in point, alongside a man who would tell his wife a secret in order to calm her anger at him (cf. 507C). Another *adoleschēs* says things illustrating his own achievements and merits, as did the would-be killer of Nero, pointing out to a convicted man that the latter would be grateful to him the day after (αὔριον δέ μοι εὐχαριστήσεις, 505C). Another possibility is to talk about what one happens to be good at or to know:

τοῦτο καὶ πρὸς τοὺς λόγους ἐκείνους πεπόνθασιν, ἐν οἷς κατ' ἐμ-
πειρίαν ἢ ἕξιεν τινὰ τῶν ἄλλων διαφέρειν νομίζουσι. φίλαυτος γὰρ ὦν
καὶ φιλόδοξος ὁ τοιοῦτος

νέμει τὸ πλεῖστον ἡμέρας τούτῳ μέρος,

ἴν' αὐτὸς αὐτοῦ τυγχάνει κράτιστος ὢν
 ἐν ἱστορίαις ὁ ἀναγνωστικός, ἐν τεχνολογίαις ὁ γραμματικός, ἐν
 διηγήμασι ξεικοῖς ὁ πολλὴν χώραν ἐπεληλυθὼς καὶ πεπλανημένος
 (514A-B)

Talkers have this difficulty with those subjects in which they think that they surpass all others because of some experience or acquired habit. For such a person, being self-centred and vain,

Will give the chief part of the day to that
 In which he chances to surpass himself:

the great reader will spend it in narrating tales, the literary expert in technical discussions, the wide traveller and wanderer over the face of the earth in stories of foreign parts (514A-B).

Some people bring every conversation round to their own hobbyhorses (514C)¹⁴. Plutarch gives the example of a fellow citizen of Chaeronea, who happened to have read two or three books of Ephorus, and paraded his knowledge all the time¹⁵.

The explanation Plutarch gives for such behaviour, is that talkers are subject to self-love (φιλαυτία) and vanity (φιλοδοξία). This concern for themselves and the impression they hope to make on others impedes them to take into account the impact of their words. One result is that they cause harm both to themselves and to others, as Plutarch extensively shows¹⁶. The story about Fulvius¹⁷ includes both. This friend of Augustus passed on to his wife something confidential which Augustus had told him. His wife in turn told Livia, who then used it against the Emperor. As a result, Fulvius was to die, a death caused indirectly by his own, directly by his wife's *adoleschia*. But the harmful effects of the disease are not always restricted to the *adoleschēs* himself. Sulla, for example, succeeded in attacking the city of Athens upon gaining information about the city's defence from some garrulous old men. Moreover, if he dealt with the city in a violent way, this was because he was angry at some Athenians for having scolded him (§ 7). Apart from harm, the behaviour of the *adoleschēs* also has a bearing on his aim to be loved, which will be discussed in a moment.

¹⁴ Juvenal, 7.161-162 passes criticism on the kindlike behaviour of an orator who interlarded every speech with the same example.

¹⁵ Compare Juvenal's comments on a woman showing off her knowledge at every occasion (*Satire* 6.434-456).

¹⁶ "In g. (*On Talkativeness*) widmet Plutarch den gefährlichen Folgen des πάθος die längste Untersuchung (Kap. 7-15 pass.)", according to INGENKAMP, 1971, 78. INGENKAMP, 1971, 39 discusses the harm caused as structuring part of *On Talkativeness*.

¹⁷ On the question of the correctness of the name, see HELMBOLD, 1939, 429, n. b, PATON-POHLENZ-SIEVEKING, 1929, 293, and DUMORTIER – DEFRADAS, 1975, 241, n. 2.

1.4 Speech and its Social Character

If, then, the *adoleschēs* is self-centered, this is problematic because of the very nature of speech: *speech is a social act par excellence, and supposes one transcends one's self-love* (φιλαυτία). Rather than a set of absolute guidelines holding in all circumstances, a good use of speech requires constant pondering and reassessment in every single case in the light of this social character. Several passages in *On Talkativeness* confirm this.

On the one hand, Plutarch repeatedly stresses that one's interlocutor determines the content and measure of one's talking. Apart from the image of the interlocutor as centre and radius of one's answer which was mentioned above, there is the following explicit statement:

εἰπόντος δ' ἐκείνου (sc. ὁ Καρνεάδης) “δός μοι μέτρον φωνῆς” οὐ φαύλως ὑπέτυχε (sc. ὁ γυμνασίαρχος) “δίδωμι τὸν προσδιαλεγόμενον”. τῷ δ' ἀποκρινομένῳ μέτρον ἢ τοῦ ἐρωτῶντος βούλησις (513C).

When Carneades said, “Give me something to regulate my voice,” the director aptly rejoined, “I am giving you the person conversing with you.” So, in making an answer, let the wishes of the questioner provide the regulation (513C).

Taking someone else as the criterion of one's speech of course implies transcending one's own wishes and interests, as well as an openness towards and a taking into consideration of the other(s).

On the other hand, *On Talkativeness* ends with an explicit statement about what speech is about:

ἢ δι' αὐτοὺς ἄνθρωποι δεόμενοι τινος λαλοῦσιν ἢ τοὺς ἀκούοντας ὠφελούντες ἢ χάριν τινὰ παρασκευάζοντες ἀλλήλοις ὥσπερ ἀλσι τοῖς λόγοις ἐφηδύνουσι τὴν διατριβὴν καὶ τὴν πρᾶξιν, ἐν ᾗ τυγχάνουσιν ὄντες (514E-F).

When men talk, it is either for their own sake, because they need something, or to benefit their hearers, or they seek to ingratiate themselves with each other by seasoning with the salt of conversation the pastime or business in which they happen to be engaged (514E-F).

If one needs something oneself and asks someone else about or for it, the other is by definition implied and one has no choice but to depend on - and thus adjust oneself to - the other's goodwill. Truly benefitting one's hearers, on the other hand, supposes other-concern in the form of taking the point of view of the other to see what would bring benefit to him. Finally, people provide pleasure to one another (ἀλλήλοις), and make business or free time more agreeable with words as with salt¹⁸. In order for

¹⁸ Conversely, the *adoleschēs* spoils every pleasure his deeds may yield by his words. Cf. 504C.

this to be the case, there must be a dialogue, not a monologue (cf. ἀλλήλοισ), and both parties must try to do their best in order to do the other a favour (cf. χάριν), that is, to make the other enjoy it (cf. ἐφιδύουσι). And indeed, if someone asks a question, this is often not a demand for information, but an invitation to talk:

καίτοι πολλάκις τινὰς ἐρωτῶμεν οὐ τοῦ λόγου δεόμενοι, φωνὴν δὲ τινα καὶ φιλοφροσύνην ἐκκαλούμενοι παρ' αὐτῶν καὶ προαγαγεῖν εἰς ὁμιλίαν ἐθέλοντες (512B).

And yet we often ask people questions, not because we need an answer, but to elicit some friendly word from them, and because we wish to draw them on to friendly converse (512B).

When answering such a question, it is of course important to *enable* a friendly converse, and not to start a monologue. This is not the case with an exaggerated (περισσόν, 513A) answer. Among the two other kinds of answers, the short (ἀναγκαῖον, 513A) one is correct, but does not seize the offered opportunity for a conversation. The answer which does, is the friendly one. The word Plutarch uses for it, is φιλάνθρωπον (513A), which recurs in the passage quoted at the beginning of our discussion of Plutarch's treatment of talkativeness. There he called speech "the most pleasant and human of social ties" (ἡδιστον ὄντα καὶ φιλανθρωπότατον συμβόλαιον, 504E) - stressing, that is, the social aspect of it: speech unites (cf. συμβόλαιον) people and is pleasant (ἡδιστον) and friend-ly (φιλανθρωπότατον) *par excellence*.

1.5 The *Adoleschēs* and his Speech in a Face-to-Face Society

As was said above, the *adoleschēs* wants to please and to be loved and admired. What his behaviour earns him, however, is harm (βλάβη) and shame (αἰσχύνη), as Plutarch summarizes it later in the text. If something has already been said about the former, the focus will now be on the shame caused by the *adoleschēs*' behaviour. This is of course of great importance, as the *adoleschēs* himself is, as was shown, aiming precisely at social recognition. Thus if a friendly person (φιλάνθρωπος) has a pleasant manner and a person giving 'correct' answers (ἀναγκαῖον, 513A) may not wish for more contact, the failure of developing a satisfactory social life is all the more bothersome for an *adoleschēs*. Indeed, although the *adoleschēs* Plutarch is writing about and for is *self-loving* (φίλαυτος), he needs *others* to gratify his vanity. His desire to please and to be loved and admired is even so strong and desperate as to make him deal rashly with speech – and thereby miss out regarding his desire.

Ingenkamp¹⁹ has rightly noted that "die αἰσχύνη spielt [...] die Rolle für den Menschen als ζῶον πολιτικόν, die die βλάβη für ihn als ζῶον spielt". As a consequence, the shame caused by the *adoleschēs*' behaviour is a *social* consequence,

¹⁹ 1971, 76.

and cannot be discussed properly unless the community (cf. *πολιτικόν*) in which the *adoleschēs* is living, is taken into account. Conversely, that community may also help to explain the *adoleschēs*' desire for social approval. As I will show, this is indeed the case: Plutarch's *adoleschēs* is both an extreme exponent and a victim of the face-to-face society he is living in.

By the – much used²⁰ – expression 'face-to-face society' I mean a community of people who know, observe and react to each other's faces, face being "the public, projected self-image that is the basic currency of social interactions"²¹. The world Plutarch's *adoleschēs* is active in, appears indeed to be such. First of all, he lives in a community: Plutarch's *adoleschēs* does not dwell in the removed countryside, but lives in a city, as appears from his frequenting the market-place (*ἀγορά*, 504B), the theatre (*θέατρον*, 504B), and the gymnasium (*γυμνάσιον*, 502F)²² – the most typical elements of all Greek – and, by extension, some Roman – cities²³. In the text, there is no clear indication as to where this city is located: the historical anecdotes Plutarch recounts to illustrate the behaviour of the *adoleschēs* stem from both the Greek and the Roman world, and the opposition of the Roman to the Attic slave (511E) is of no help in this respect. On the other hand, the gymnasium, and maybe also the theatre, is more typically Greek than Roman²⁴. Moreover, when Plutarch presents an *adoleschēs* who lived *παρ' ἡμῶν* (514C), there is no reason to doubt that this refers to Chaeronea²⁵ – which situates the only contemporary anecdote in a (relatively) small²⁶ city in Greece. An encounter with this man, who, as will immediately become clear, is likely to have frequented the same circles as Plutarch him-

²⁰ On the history and 'political' use of the expression, see OSBORNE, 1985, 64-65. Recently, M. GLEASON (1995, 55) interpreted it in a physiognomical sense. Mine, as will be clear, is different from both.

²¹ OLIENSIS, 1998, 1.

²² The *γυμνάσιον* is a walking place, often in a gymnasium, either covered or not. See LIDDELL – SCOTT, s.v. I 1 and 2.

²³ On the importance of these central public areas for gossip, see HUNTER, 1990, 302.

²⁴ The market-place was of course central both in Greek and in Roman cities. As for the theatre, although perhaps more typically Greek than Roman – as opposed to the amphitheatre –, in Plutarch's days most cities possessed one. The gymnasium, finally, combining intellectual and physical education, seems to be typically Greek: Roman exercise rather took place around bathing complexes. Cf. also OWENS, 1991, 155: "Most cities boasted a theatre and many also provided stadia and, under Roman influence, amphitheatres. In the cities of the Greek world the gymnasium assumed an increasingly important social and relaxational role".

²⁵ HELMBOLD, 1939, 463 translates "in my native town", PETTINE, 1992, 117 "uno dei nostri concittadini". This way of referring to one's home town is in line with the general practice of defining a city in terms of its inhabitants. See, for example, LONIS, 1994, 7.

²⁶ Note that subdivisions of bigger cities formed face-to-face societies as well. See OSBORNE, 1985, 89, and HUNTER, 1990, 301.

self, may well have made Plutarch's interest in *adoleschia* raise up to the level of undertaking to write a work on it²⁷. Although Plutarch repeatedly mentions garrulous women²⁸ and slaves²⁹, the *adoleschai* he is actually writing for are most probably people possessing full citizenship, for having their say in lawsuits and politics (510C). As membership of, say, the council was, in Plutarch's days, the prerogative of a city's upper class³⁰, the *adoleschēs* is therefore likely to have belonged to that class. This is confirmed by other elements in the text. Plutarch for example mentions the pride some *adoleschai* took in their knowing governors or kings (513D) - a level which they themselves have not reached, though³¹. Moreover, the *adoleschēs* appears as having plenty of time to walk through the city³², accost people³³, and have a chat³⁴ - a way of life reserved for rich people, who either did not have to work at all or practiced a 'privileged' profession, as did doctors or rhetoricians³⁵. If, conversely, hairdressers³⁶ are mentioned repeatedly as extremely talkative, Plutarch may be using this as an argument in the same way as when associating women and slaves with *adoleschia*: a free,

²⁷ That there is no formal dedication, is understandable: "The dedication is a compliment; that is the fundamental rule", according to RUSSELL, 1973, 11.

²⁸ Cf. the anecdotes about the wife of a Roman senator and of Fulvius. Women were generally regarded as talkative, as appears for example from Semonides fr. 7 DIEHL, 20, Juvenal 6.398-412 and 434-456, or from the point of an epigram discussed by O'SULLIVAN, 1980, 51-52. See also HUNTER, 1990, 303, who, referring to a recent study on gossip in a Greek mountain village, gives the following quote: "Men gossip, but women are thought to do nothing but gossip".

²⁹ See 507D and 511D-E. Slaves were represented as extremely talkative by other authors as well. See, for example, Aristophanes, *Frogs* 750-753, and Juvenal, *Satires* 9.92-101. Cf. HUNTER, 1990, 304.

³⁰ Cf. JONES, 1940, 170-191, esp. 176, and 179-180.

³¹ In 514D-E Plutarch argues the should talk to "superiors" (μετὰ κρείττωνων), which implies they are not on the top of the social ladder themselves.

³² Cf. περιάσιν, 502E and 508C.

³³ See, e.g., 503A.

³⁴ This is clearly the *adoleschēs*' intention in 502E-F. From this passage it also appears that the people whose company he is aiming at, are in the same situation.

³⁵ Compare 504B: "As your physician, he is worse than the disease; as your ship-mate, more unpleasant than sea-sickness; his praises are more annoying than another's blame" (ἔστι δὲ θεραπείων τῆς νόσου βαρύτερος, συμπλέων τῆς ναυτίας ἀηδέστερος, ἐπαιμῶν τοῦ ψέγοντος ἐπαχθέστερος). I do not wish to contend that Plutarch is here necessarily, in all three cases, referring to professions, but he *may* be doing so.

³⁶ See 508F, 509A, and 509B. Compare also 505A. A discussion of the social function of barbers, including the gossip told in their shops, can be found in CARCOPINO, 1986, 233-243, esp. 233-234 and notes 70-75, which contain references to primary sources. See also HUNTER, 1990, 302. The argument holds true even if Plutarch would count with 'promoted' hairdressers - who, as appears from Martial 7.64, did exist among his model readers: changing the behaviour typical of their former lives is a *conditio sine qua non* to become truly part of another class of people.

educated man will want to distinguish himself from these inferior categories of people, and therefore want to flee the behaviour associated with them³⁷.

As a result, the 'community of people' the *adoleschēs* mainly moves in, within his city, is a group of wealthy citizens. This is, of course, the group of people to which Plutarch himself would also belong. As most people in this group, the *adoleschēs* was able to read - otherwise Plutarch's written therapy by word would *a priori* be doomed to fail - and write - if Plutarch's advise to divert some of one's talkativeness to writing (514D) is to be believed. A second characteristic of the face-to-face society is that its members know each other. People sitting or walking together (502F) are in this case, and so must be the *adoleschēs* who approaches them: in order to address people, it is likely that one has at least an idea of who they are³⁸. Moreover, Plutarch repeatedly mentions symposia³⁹, and once even explicitly a "gathering of people *who know each other*" (συνέδριον γνωρίμων, 502F)⁴⁰. Next, people observe each other in a face-to-face society, and are, conversely, observed by one another: the face one presents is thus of primary importance.

As such, the *adoleschēs* reveals himself an *extreme exponent* of the face-to-face society: he is desperately in search of confirmation and admiration from others. The result of this extreme concern for one's own face, however, is to forget to watch the faces of the others, and this, in a face-to-face society, is a capital mistake. For indeed, in such a society, people also judge each other and *show their judgements in their own faces*⁴¹. People hate the *adoleschēs* (cf. μισοῦνται, 504F and 510D), and will try to get away from him:

πᾶς φεύγει προτροπάδην· κἂν ἐν ἡμικυκλίῳ τιλὶ καθεζόμενοι κἂν περιπατοῦντες ἐν ξυστῶ θεάσωνται προσφοιτῶντα, ταχέως ἀνάξευξιν αὐτοῖς παρεγγυῶσι (502E-F).

Every one runs away headlong. If men are sitting in a public lounge or strolling about in a portico, and see a talker coming up, they quickly give each other the counter-sign to break camp (502E-F).

³⁷ For the association of people of lower sort with *adoleschia*, see, for example, Petronius, *Satyricon* 41-46, as discussed by PERUTELLI, 1985.

³⁸ Horace is rather startled to be addressed by someone known to him only by name (*notus mihi nomine tantum*, *Satire* 1.9.3). On the importance of the theme of garrulity in this *Satire* of Horace's, see FABBRI, 1996, 219-229, esp. 223. Theophrast deems the fact that the *adoleschēs* starts talking to someone he does not know worthy of mention (*Character* 3.2).

³⁹ See, for example, 502F, 503F, 504A, and 514C.

⁴⁰ DUMORTIER – DEFRAZAS, 1975, 229 interpret γνώριμος in this sense, translating "un cercle d'amis", and so does Pettine, 1992, 47, translating "una brigata di amici". The other possibility is that γνώριμος refers to "the notables or wealthy class" (LIDDELL – SCOTT, s.v. II) – which then confirms what I said above, that Plutarch's *adoleschēs* moves in the higher circles.

⁴¹ Cf. also VEYNE, 1983, 3-30.

This example shows other people enjoying their talking together but stopping with it when an *adoleschēs* arrives. Moreover, they are all in league together (παρεγγυῶσι) against the *adoleschēs*. Another option is to make fun⁴² of the *adoleschēs* they have to put up with, for example by asking questions which kindle his talking (512D). The humor of that situation lays in the fact that the *adoleschēs* is too glad for being offered an occasion to talk to notice the real tenor of the question, and thereby proves the questioner to have assessed him correctly to be an *adoleschēs*. The faces of the other are thus the mirror reflecting the impression one makes. If one does not look into this mirror and therefore does not somehow adapt one's face to the others, their judgement becomes a negative renown, which *de facto* excludes one from true participation in the community: thus the *adoleschēs* is at the same time a *victim* of the face-to-face society he is an extreme exponent of. And indeed, in the examples just given, the *adoleschēs* is preceded by his own bad renown: he does not even have to start talking in order to make people go away or make fun of him. As a result, true friendships become impossible for the *adoleschēs*: people do not speak boldly to him⁴³, and instead of a (pleasant) dialogue, he has his monologue with at best unvoluntary listeners (502F-503A).

1.6. Paideia

The *adoleschēs* Plutarch is writing for and about thus belongs to the community of the elite in his city, an elite which could read and write and must therefore have enjoyed some education. As was shown above, on the other hand, the *adoleschēs* himself is the kind of man who shows off whatever he happens to know. A closer look at the example of Plutarch's fellow Chaeronean is revealing:

ὡς τῶν παρ' ἡμῖν τις κατὰ τύχην ἀνεγνωκὰς δύο τῶν Ἐφόρου βιβλίων ἢ τρία πάντα ἀνθρώπους κατέτριβε καὶ πᾶν ἀνάστατον ἐποίει συμπόσιον, αἰεὶ τὴν ἐν Λεύκτροις μάχην καὶ τὰ συνεχῆ διηγούμενος· ὄθεν Ἐπαμεινώνδας παρωνύμιον ἔσχευ (514C).

Just so, in my native town, there was a man who chanced to have read two or three books of Ephorus, and would always bore everybody to death and put every dinner-party to rout by invariably narrating the battle of Leuctra and its sequel; so he got the nickname of "Epaminondas" (514C).

⁴² Compare also χλευάζονται, 504F and καταγελῶνται, 510D. Plutarch's use of derision as an argument against *adoleschia* makes clear that the author's interest, in *On Talkativeness*, is carried away by the social aspect of *adoleschia*. Very different is his concern in *Advice about Keeping Well*, where he recommends to keep speaking even if everybody deride one (ἂν πάντες καταγελῶσιν, 130E). The (seeming) contradiction between both works was noted by DODDS, 1933, 106.

⁴³ Cf. 506E: "Yet, speaking generally, who has left himself the right to speak out boldly against one who has not kept silent?" (τίς δ' ὄλως ἑαυτῷ παρρησίαν ἀπολέλοιπε κατὰ τοῦ μὴ σιωπήσαντος;) Speaking boldly (παρρησία), for Plutarch, was one of the characteristics of true friendship. Compare the importance παρρησία has in, say, *How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend*.

Plutarch says that “Epaminondas” *happened* (κατὰ τύχην, 514C) to have read *two or three* – out of the thirty! – books of Ephorus⁴⁴. The author may well be suggesting that his fellow Chaeronean had not enjoyed that good an education⁴⁵. In *Talkativeness*, however, Plutarch argues that there is more than just the fact that one recites only the content of two or three books which reveals one’s lack of education:

οἱ γὰρ εὐγενοῦς καὶ βασιλικῆς τῷ ὄντι παιδείας τυχόντες πρῶτον σιγᾶν εἶτα λαλεῖν μαθάνουσιν (506C).

For those who have received a truly noble and royal education learn first to be silent, and then to speak (506C).

If a “truly noble and royal education” teaches “first to be silent and then to speak”⁴⁶, the correct use of speech will be one of the elements by which noble (and royal) people distinguish themselves as a group from the rest: the elite⁴⁷ was indeed defined not only by wealth (and descent), but also by culture and virtue⁴⁸, which could both be achieved only through education (παιδεία)⁴⁹. The fact that the *ado-*

⁴⁴ Cf. GLEASON, 1995, xxiv: “They did not display their level of culture by owning books, or even by having read books owned by others, but only by having absorbed books so completely that they could exhale them as speech”. Compare also Pindar’s criticism on the man who has learnt something: “The wise man is he who knows many things by the gift of nature: those who learned, boisterous in their garrulity, utter (the pair of them) idle words like crows against the holy bird of Zeus” (σοφὸς ὁ πολλὰ εἰδὼς φυᾶ· μαθόντες δὲ λάβροι παγγλωσσία κόρακες ὡς ἄκραντα γαρύετον Διὸς πρὸς ὄριχα θεῖον, *Olympic* 2.86-89). Note that the word λάβρος recurs in *On Talkativeness*, 512E.

⁴⁵ The desire to show the education one has enjoyed may be compared to the well-known sociological principle of overcompensation. A clear example is offered by the research of LABOV, 1972, esp. 43-69 on the “social stratification of (r) in New York City Department Stores”, and the comments on “‘hypercorrect’ behavior” of the lower middle class on pp. 244-245 and 291.

⁴⁶ Compare also Plutarch’s pedagogical advice to the young in *On Listening to Lectures*, which also highlights the importance of silence. *On Talkativeness*, conversely, offers advice for a man whose education in these matters has not taught him to remain silent in time. As such, it is an example of *Erwachsenenerziehung*. Cf. FOUCAULT, 1984, 65. For the parallels between *On Listening to Lectures* and *On Talkativeness*, see INGENKAMP, 1971, 81-82. The importance of what and how one speaks for the impression one makes on others is also discernable in other writings of Plutarch.

⁴⁷ Cf. EDWARDS, 1993, 12-17, GLEASON, 1995, 70-72, GOLDHILL, 2001, 17, and WHITMARSH, 2001, 90-130, esp. 96-108. Compare the situation in modern Europe, as described by BRYSON, 1998, 7, 20, and 279-280.

⁴⁸ Compare also EDWARDS, 1993, 4 on moral criticism among the Roman elite: “Attacks on immorality were used by the Roman elite to exercise control over its own members and to justify its privileged position”.

⁴⁹ Concerning the social connotations of *adoleschia*, it is worthwhile referring to BEARDSLEE, 1978, 266: “For Plutarch it is a major social problem, for Christianity it is only a minor one (this changes, however, as soon as Christianity moves into the same social circles to which Plutarch belongs)”. MAYER, 1985, 39 argues that the manners described in Horace, *Satire* 2.6 emit a “buzz of impli-

leschēs is not in this case, shows that his education was not “truly (τῷ ὄντι)⁵⁰ noble and royal”: he falls short, even in case he does have a (broad) factual knowledge⁵¹.

The tragedy of the *adoleschēs*, then, is that he regards speech as a means to parade his knowledge⁵², whereas his very speech shows his lack of education. Conversely, stating that the correct use of speech is a sign of a noble education is a strong argument in favour of this control for a man who is driven by the desire to show his knowledge and education, but does so in a contraproductive way.

2. Ethics, an Art of Living

2.1. Ethics?

What Plutarch offers in *On Talkativeness*, however, is not only an analysis and a condemnation of *adoleschia*, but also a cure⁵³. This cure, apart from overthinking (ἐπιλογισμός, 510D and 514E) positive and negative examples, consists of habituation (ἔθος, 511E, ἐθισμοί, 514E). The first exercise Plutarch proposes, is the following:

πρῶτον μὲν οὖν ἐν ταῖς τῶν πέλας ἐρωτήσεσιν ἑαυτὸν ἐθιζέτω σιωπᾶν, μέχρις οὗ πάντες ἀπείπωνται τὴν ἀπόκρισιν [...] ἂν μὲν ἰκανῶς ἕτερος ἀποκρίνηται, καλῶς ἔχει συνεπαινέσαντα καὶ συνεπιφήσαντα δόξαν εὐμενοῦς ἀνθρώπου λαβεῖν· ἂν δὲ μή, τότε καὶ διδάξαι τὸ ἡγνοημένον καὶ ἀναπληρῶσαι τὸ ἐλλείπον ἀνεπίφθονον καὶ οὐκ ἄκαιρόν ἐστι (511F-512A).

In the first place, then, when questions are asked of neighbours, let him accustom himself to remaining silent until all have refused a response [...]. If another makes a sufficient answer, it is proper to join in the approval and assent and so acquire the reputation of being a friendly fellow. But if such an answer is not made, then it is not invidious or inopportune both to point out the answer others have not known and thus to fill in the gap (511F-512A).

cation [...] readily absorbed by the Roman reader who owned his own slaves and knew not only the civil but also the moral distinction between the two classes”. Still more generally, BOURDIEU, 1972, 184 stressed that one’s habitus – in which manners play an important role – determines one’s social position.

⁵⁰ Pace HELMBOLD, 1939, 421 and PETTINE, 1992, 69, I prefer to interpret and translate τῷ ὄντι ἀπὸ κοινοῦ with εὐγενεοῦς and βασιλικῆς, as do DUMORTIER - DEFRADAS, 1975, 237.

⁵¹ Cf. 514A-B.

⁵² Cf. GLEASON, 1995, xxiv: “In the ancient world, cultural capital tends to be incorporated in particular individuals, who must compete directly with each other to establish relationships of dominance and authority”.

⁵³ Pace PETTINE, 1992, 17, who has “l’impressione che lo scopo moralistico e didascalico, con i vari riferimenti storici ed aneddotici inneggianti alla virtù del silenzio o stigmatizzanti il vizio della loquacità, sia servito al Nostro da mero pretesto per abbandonarsi piacevolmente alla raffigurazione arguta a gustosa del tipo immortale del linguacciuto pettegolo e blaterone”.

Plutarch here gives concrete advice which will earn one a good name if followed up: stay silent; if someone else knows the answer, praise him; if no-one does, give the answer yourself. These are 'mechanical' guidelines for correct behaviour. As a result, one may wonder whether Plutarch is here concerned with etiquette⁵⁴ rather than with ethics⁵⁵. Ethics, according to the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, is "the philosophical study of morality", studying "what ends we ought, as fully rational human beings, to choose and pursue and what moral principles should govern our choices and pursuits". Etiquette, on the other hand, can be defined as "the conventional rules of personal behaviour in polite society"⁵⁶. If ethics is about (internal) values and principles, etiquette is concerned with (external) norms and behaviour. Plutarch's first exercise is clearly concerned with the latter. And there are more arguments which can be put forward in favour of this hypothesis. First, concrete behaviour may have triggered Plutarch's attention for *adoleschia*, and is given much attention throughout *On Talkativeness*: many descriptions and anecdotes sketch the *adoleschēs*' behaviour⁵⁷. Also, what will have bothered the *adoleschēs*' fellow citizens was his behaviour rather than the underlying values. Second, Plutarch twice uses the combination of words αἰδήμων καὶ κόσμιος (503D and 512C), "self-respecting⁵⁸ and well-behaved" – words which both refer to the outward aspect of one's behaviour rather than to internal principles or values. Third, in *On Talkativeness*, comment on the bad condition of the *adoleschēs*' soul "tritt [...], verglichen mit den übrigen Schriften, weit zurück"⁵⁹. Related to this is the fact that if *adoleschia* is condemned, it is so as something unpleasant and unsocial, rather than as something intrinsically bad. The *adoleschēs*' problem – to return once more

⁵⁴ Much of the advice given by Plutarch recurs indeed in humanistic and early modern courtesy manuals. BRYSON, 1998 cites passages of such books stressing how important it is to adjust one's words to the company (p. 163), not to praise oneself (p. 164; compare also Plutarch's work *How to Praise Oneself Inoffensively*), to yield to superiors in conversation (p. 166), and not to parade one's knowledge (p. 184), to name just a few things.

⁵⁵ Note that the distinction between both discourses is not always clear. See BRYSON (1998), 159-162, who shows that behaviour is often "condemned as immoral rather than uncivil". I do not agree with LEYERLE, 1995, 124-126 when he uses "the social" as the distinctive element for determining whether advice belongs to ethics or to etiquette, as this would render social ethics a problematic category.

⁵⁶ Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, s.v.

⁵⁷ The behaviour described by Plutarch is by definition *his description* of it, that is, serving the aim Plutarch has with his writing, and may, as such, *à la limite* even be invented. Yet in order to be effective, the described behaviour must at least have been recognisable for the reader. On the caution with which to use (prescriptive) literature as a source for actual behaviour, see EDWARDS, 1993, 29, and BRYSON, 1998, 3-8.

⁵⁸ The αἰδήμων, the man who knows shame, is concerned for what the faces of the others say about his own, and thus self-respecting.

⁵⁹ Cf. INGENKAMP, 1971, 78.

to the larger passage quoted at the beginning – is that he makes the word *unhuman* (ἀπάνθρωπον, 504E) and *unsocial*⁶⁰ (ἄμικτον, 504E), and as a result, his company not being appreciated, people avoid him. Next, there are repeated comparisons of talkativeness to the abuse of food and drink (512E-F, 513D, and 515A) – the latter being objects *par excellence* of etiquette⁶¹.

Apart from all this, two more elements need to be pointed out. On the one hand, much attention goes to the appreciation of one's behaviour by others: what the *adoleschēs* is after, is social approval, and his problem is that he does not take into account the actual opinion of the others. As was shown, the text presupposes a face-to-face society. On the other hand, Plutarch himself plays along with the importance of faces. His using παιδεία as an argument as discussed above, is a clear example, but one can also point to the importance of shame – a social argument – in Plutarch's plea against *adoleschia*, or to the association he makes of *adoleschia* with groups traditionally considered inferior – women, slaves, handworkers⁶².

The interest revealed by these two elements would make *On Talkativeness* a fruitful object of study for sociology. For indeed, building upon the work of Elias⁶³, which showed the importance of manners for the study of society, Bourdieu⁶⁴ elaborated the possibility of an active, strategical manipulation of the 'cultural capital'. This is not only what the *adoleschēs* may be doing when trying to parade his knowledge in order to be loved, but also what Plutarch's concern in writing against the *adoleschēs*' behaviour might be about: what is needed in order to manipulate one's cultural capital successfully?

And yet, Plutarch himself appears to see things in way which any ancient Greek or Roman would recognise to refer unmistakably to philosophy and ethics. First of all, Plutarch begins *On Talkativeness* by terming his undertaking "philosophy" (φιλοσοφία, 502B). Conversely, when recounting anecdotes illustrating good behaviour regarding *adoleschia*, it is more than once explicitly mentioned that the

⁶⁰ The quoted passage being the *comparandum* to the abuse of wine, the word ἄμικτος refers to the drinking of undiluted wine, of which Plutarch did not approve. See NIKOLAIDIS, 1999, 341 and THEODORSSON, 1999, 57-69.

⁶¹ See, for example, LEYERLE, 1995, 126: "The task of etiquette is to intervene in order to distance human eating from that of animals". LEYERLE more than once (e.g. p. 126, and 134-135) refers to Plutarch on this subject. Apart from food and drink, controlling talkativeness is also repeatedly linked with sexual self-control (503B, 504E, and 505A). Cf. also GOLDHILL, 2002, 273.

⁶² Compare also INGENKAMP'S (2000, 261-265) concept of "Standesethik".

⁶³ 1939, esp. the last, general chapter: "Zusammenfassung: Entwurf zu einer Theorie der Zivilisation".

⁶⁴ See BOURDIEU, 1972 and 1979. For a brief survey of BOURDIEU'S analysis of "social rules and standards as forms of social action, which individuals and groups use and develop strategically", see BRYSON, 1998, 16-18.

person exhibiting the good behaviour is a philosopher (503B, 504A, and 505D)⁶⁵. Apart from this, Plutarch conceives of *adoleschia* as an affection (πάθος, 504E, 505E, and 510C-D), and a desire (ἐπιθυμία, 502E). The *adoleschēs* shows a lack of self-control (ἀκρασία, 503C, 503E, 506F, 507F, 508B, and 508F)⁶⁶, in that his tongue does not obey reason. Moreover, the criteria for choice - fine (καλόν), advantageous (σύμφερον), and pleasant (ἡδύ) - are the criteria recognised by Aristotle and almost all philosophers after him⁶⁷. All these elements recur, say, in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. But there is a more important argument to prove that Plutarch's interest in *On Talkativeness* is with ethics: notwithstanding the importance of behaviour, Plutarch also sees what the deeper problem behind that behaviour is. As a result, *On Talkativeness* contains all the arguments which built up the analysis presented above, including, that is, the *adoleschēs*' self-love and the inability it causes to take into account either other people or what speech is about. Moreover, Plutarch not only sees the values behind the *adoleschēs*' behaviour, he also seems to realise that the former and the latter cannot be changed but together. For indeed, what other practical exercises does Plutarch prescribe the *adoleschēs*?

Δεύτερον τοίνυν ἄσκημα πρὸς τὰς ἰδίας ἀποκρίσεις ἐστίν, αἷς οὐκ ἤκιστα δεῖ προσέχειν τὸν ἀδόλεσχον. πρῶτον μὲν, ἵνα μὴ λάθῃ τοῖς ἐπὶ γέλῳ καὶ ὕβρει προκαλουμένοις εἰς λόγους αὐτὸν ἀποκρινόμενος μετὰ σπουδῆς [...]. ὅταν δὲ φαίνεται τῷ ὄντι βουλόμενος μαθεῖν, ἐθιστέον ἐφιστάναι καὶ ποιεῖν τι διάλλειμμα μεταξὺ τῆς ἐρωτήσεως καὶ τῆς ἀποκρίσεως, ἐν ᾧ προσθεῖναι μὲν ὁ ἐρωτῶν, εἴ τι βούλεται, δύναται, σκέψασθαι δ' αὐτὸς περὶ ᾧ ἀποκρινεῖται [...]. ἄλλως δὲ τὸ λάβρον τοῦτο καὶ πρὸς τοὺς λόγους ὀξύπεινον ἀνακρουστέον [...]. [...] ὅπως ἐθίζεται τὸν τοῦ λόγου καιρὸν ἀναμένειν τὸ ἄλογον (512C-F).

Then the second matter for diligent practice concerns our own answers; to these the chatterer must pay very close attention: in the first place, that he may not inadvertently give a serious answer to those who provoke him to talk merely that they may insolently ridicule them [...]. And when it appears that the questioner is really anxious to learn, the babbler must accustom himself to stop and

⁶⁵ BEARDSLEE, 1978, 266 states that for Plutarch, *adoleschia* is "irreconcilable with being a philosopher". Juvenal, *Satire* 2.14 cites reluctance to speak as characteristic of the philosopher.

⁶⁶ The fact in itself that Plutarch resolutely conceives of *adoleschia* as ἀκρασία and not as ἀκολασία, may be another indication of his awareness of traditional opinions on the subject. For indeed, Aristotle wrote the following: "If people love stories, are always telling how something happened, and spend their days on matters of no consequence, we call them chatterers, not self-indulgent" (τοὺς γὰρ φιλομύθους καὶ διηγητικῶς καὶ περὶ τῶν τυχόντων κατατρίβοντας τὰς ἡμέρας ἀδόλεσχας, ἀκολάστους δ' οὐ λέγομεν, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1117b35). The sentence occurs in a passage discussing with what moderation (σώφροσύνη) - and, correlatively, self-indulgence (ἀκολασία) - have to do: not, Aristotle argues, with words.

⁶⁷ Cf. INGENKAMP, 1971, 74-75.

leave between the question and the answer an interval, in which the asker may add anything he wishes and he himself may reflect upon his reply [...]. In any case this ravenous hunger for talking must be checked [...]. [...] so that his irrational part might be trained to await the time dictated by reason (512C-F).

Some of the elements pointing towards etiquette recur: Plutarch again gives very concrete advice, for example to leave some time before answering, and there is a comparison of talkativeness to food. On the other hand, things are not that simple in this case. For indeed, determining the tenor of a question on the one hand, and giving the questioner the chance to add something while at the same time overthinking one's own answer before actually giving it, on the other - these are not counsels to be followed up 'mechanically'. The former supposes that one takes into account the faces of the others and to *adapts oneself* to their negative judgement. The latter supposes one *transcends one's self-love* and really takes into account the needs and wishes of others. Both imply breaking through the closed circle of self-love which looks no further than the immediate satisfaction of the desire for recognition: they suppose an *openness towards others*, which, for the *adoleschēs*, means a change of values. An ethical change, that is. As a result of that change, others may eventually change their opinion about the (former) *adoleschēs*, who may then again become a member of the community. But even though the *adoleschēs* may thus *indirectly* gratify his self-love, a preliminary transcending - and *ipso facto* breaking - of it is necessary: the others have definitively entered the picture. The same goes, *à la limite*, also for Plutarch's most indulgent advice concerning *adoleschia*:

τὸν δ' ἀδολέσχην ἴσως ἂν ἢ πρὸς τὸ γραφεῖον σκιαμαχία καὶ βοή τοῦ πλήθους ἀπερύκουσα καθ' ἡμέραν ἐλαφρότερον παρασκευάσειε τοῖς συνοῦσιν (514D).

But with the talker, such shadowboxing with the pen and such alarms, by keeping him away from the multitude, may perhaps make him less of a daily burden to his associates (514D).

For the *adoleschēs* to keep away from the multitude and write instead of talk, supposes an awareness of being an *adoleschēs* and therefore a burden to others. If the result, then, is that others perceive him as less of a burden, the *adoleschēs* merits it, for having changed not only his behaviour, but also - as a *conditio sine qua non* for that - his thoughts.

If Plutarch tries to heal both through the symptoms and through the cause, this may be rhetorical⁶⁸, but it may also be that he believes in the "double processus d'intériorisation de l'extériorité et d'extériorisation de l'intériorité"⁶⁹: behaviour

⁶⁸ So INGENKAMP, 2000, 252-253.

⁶⁹ Cf. BOURDIEU, 1972, 163.

and values are inextricably bound up⁷⁰.

2.2 An Art of Living

Thus Plutarch does not limit his scope to behaviour, but is at least as much concerned with ethics. The *discourse* on behaviour and values he presents with *On Talkativeness*, yet, is definitely an ethical one: Plutarch writes about *adoleschia* as he wrote about, say, anger, a typical object of ethical treatises.

One explanation might be that Plutarch ‘had no choice’, because the ancient Greeks, although they did give advice which we would be inclined to assign to etiquette, never developed anything like that concept, nor, therefore, a way of speaking about it⁷¹. The closest related concepts they did know would be either *παιδεία* or *τὸ πρέπον*⁷². The importance of the former in *On Talkativeness* has already been highlighted. As for the latter, it is by definition a relative notion: ‘befitting’ is befitting to someone, regarding something, at a certain moment, etc., and thus implies one uses one’s mind and takes the right things into account. This, as has been shown, is exactly the advice Plutarch gives to the *adoleschēs*.

But interestingly enough, it also coincides with what Aristotle saw as the criteria for ethical choices⁷³. All this shows that ancient ethics does not fully coincide with what we regard as ethics⁷⁴. Simplyfying things, one could say that whereas for us, ethics is in the first place the *philosophical study* of what ends we ought to choose and pursue and what moral principles should govern our choices and pur-

⁷⁰ Compare the fact that Plutarch (*To an Uneducated Ruler* 779F) stresses that it is important, in order to have real power, not only to have the outward appearance, but also the concomitant inner disposition. See SASSI, 1992, 355.

⁷¹ Cf. INGENKAMP, 1989. For a discussion of the relationship between ethics and etiquette in antiquity, see, furthermore, SHERMAN, 2005.

⁷² POHLENZ, 1933, 137, who discussed the concept, concluded that *τὸ πρέπον* was sometimes used as an standard for moral behaviour of groups and individuals, “ohne doch zu einem Terminus von konstitutiver Bedeutung zu werden”. MAYER, 1985, 36 points out a passage of Cicero (*De Oratore* 2.16-17) where the Roman orator notes the absence of a Greek equivalent for *ineptus*, “one of Roman society’s most potent words of disapproval”. Note that *τὸ πρέπον* in rhetorical theory stressed the importance of adapting one’s words to the circumstances if one is to convince one’s audience, that is, if one is to engender belief (*πίστις*) – which is exactly what Plutarch’s *adoleschēs* lacks.

⁷³ Compare, for example, what Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1109b15ff. says about anger: it is important to know “not only how, but with whom, in what sorts of circumstances, and for how long one should be angry” (transl. BROADIE – ROWE, 2002, 122).

⁷⁴ See also the numerous accounts on the differences between ancient (virtue) ethics and modern (consequentialist or deontological) ethics. For a survey of discussions of the differences, see ANNAS, 1993, 3-1, with further bibliography. See also WHITE, 2002, *passim*, esp. 327-345, who admits that “although there are numerous quite specific differences that are perhaps easy enough to describe, there is also an overall difference that is hard to articulate, but that nevertheless strikes one quite forcibly”, but shows that after all, modern and ancient ethics may be less different than they seem at first sight.

suits, for the ancient Greeks philosophy in general, and ethics in particular, was mainly an *art of living* (τέχνη τοῦ βίου)⁷⁵. The latter way of looking at ethics, of course, more than the former, has concrete behaviour in a specific community as its central scope⁷⁶, and – an art (τέχνη) having to be *learnt* –, conversely, exploits the fact that behaviour reveals “not only moral encoding but also social structure”⁷⁷ more thoroughly⁷⁸. Thus if nowadays people generally see a strong difference – or even an opposition – between ethics and etiquette, regarding the latter with suspicion lest it be an idle concern for manners⁷⁹, a philosopher like Plutarch, on the contrary, may start writing after taking umbrage over particular behaviour, trying to change both that behaviour and the values which inspired it. The fact that only (relatively) few would ever get into contact with such writings, at the same time made the promoted behaviour a way of distinguishing oneself – which, in turn, was an argument for those who did read them, to put what they read into practice⁸⁰.

As a result, *adoleschia* – which in itself was precisely a problem connected with faces, that is, with outward behaviour in a specific community – was not odd as a subject of an ethical discourse⁸¹. Conversely, it is no more than normal that Plutarch, when dedicating an ethical work to *adoleschia*, is concerned with behaviour no less than with underlying values, and played on the implied social distinc-

⁷⁵ See ANNAS, 1993, 27-46, the second part of HADOT, 1995, entitled “La philosophie comme mode de vie”, and SELLARS, 2004. Cf. also FOUCAULT, 1984, 51-85, esp. 57-69.

⁷⁶ I therefore agree with MACLEOD, 1979, 18 when he says that “ethics and etiquette [...] the ancients did not sharply distinguish” – that this holds true only from the philosophical point of view (cf. MAYER, 1985, 36-37) does not cause any problems in this case: the initial question was what ethics means to Plutarch, *to a philosopher*, that is. Cf. also GRÉARD, 1874, 160-161: “... les événements qui agitaient la petite ville. Vivant au milieu de ces passions, Plutarque travaille à les corriger. Éclairer ses concitoyens [...] sur les dangers et les remèdes du bavardage, de la curiosité, de la fausse honte, de l’envie, de l’amour des richesses, élever leur pensée au-dessus de ces faiblesses, de ces travers, de ces vices, épurer et pacifier leur âme: tel était le fréquent objet de ses conférences et de ses entretiens et tel est le sujet d’un grand nombre de ses Traités”.

⁷⁷ Cf. LEYERLE, 1995, 125.

⁷⁸ Note that the *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, s.v. morality, discusses an “Aristotelian approach to practical reasoning, based on the notion of virtue, and generally avoiding the separation of ‘moral’ considerations from other practical considerations”

⁷⁹ ELIAS, 1939, 8-10 quotes modern authors opposing inner virtue and outward appearance. Cf. also LEYERLE, 1995, 140 and BRYSON, 1998, 197-208.

⁸⁰ Compare also EDWARDS, 1993, 4 on moral criticism among the Roman elite: “Attacks on immorality were used by the Roman elite to exercise control over its own members and to justify its privileged position”.

⁸¹ Compare BEARDSLEE, 1978, 264: “De garrulitate [...] De curiositate [...] both treat a common form of anti-social behavior as an illness to be diagnosed and cured by philosophy”. This interest of philosophy for “daily affairs” was not exceptional. See MACLEOD, 1979, 18.

tion. Thus the ethical discourse was not merely the only developed discourse to speak about behaviour, it also was a good discourse for it in a face-fo-face society.

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