

Symposion and Philanthropia in Plutarch

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CENA APUD CATONES: IDEOLOGY AND SYMPOTIC BEHAVIOR

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Abstract

In this paper I will analyze the ideological ramifications of the sympotic behavior of Cato Censorious and Cato Minor as exhibited in their respective *Lives*. In particular their treatment of slaves or other participants at the symposia will be discussed. I will demonstrate that Plutarch is at pains to contrast their behavior negatively with that of Socrates who figures in all four *Lives* of the two pairs as an extraneous foil. Ultimately I will examine the primary target of Plutarch's literary attack; Cicero's highly idealized portraits of both of these Roman exemplars. I will show that Plutarch is pursuing an ideological agenda that seeks to negatively evaluate two great symbols of Roman virtue against the truly philosophical Socratic paradigm.

Our earliest sources of information in the history of Greek literature and culture characterize the symposium as a place of relaxation for the elite members of society. Dining, drinking, sexual activity, all of this and more took place with regularity. It was also a social function in which an individual's "civilized behavior patterns" or lack thereof could be scrutinized behind "a pretence of entertainment"¹. From the gross transgressions of Penelope's suitors to Alcibiades' encomium to his would-be-*erastes* Socrates, the attention to social norms or their violation could be represented in great works of literature that depict such scenes. Socrates, for Plato, as well as for Plutarch, was the exemplar, the canon, whose public behavior mirrored his philosophic principles. As Plutarch writes: "He was first to show that life at all times and in all parts, in all experiences and activities, universally admits philosophy" (*An seni ger. r. p.* 796D)². This paper will explore Plutarch's use of the Socratic paradigm in several biographies that touch on sympotic behavior³.

The *Lives of Aristides, Cato the Elder, Phocion, and Cato the Younger* all contain explicit and implicit references to the Athenian. The figure of Socrates functions as an extraneous foil in all of these *Lives*⁴. In the *Life of Aristides*, Socrates is mentioned comparatively early on in the section discussing Aristides alleged poverty (*Arist.* 1.9)⁵. The linkage of Socrates with Aristides appears to be a natural one for Plutarch elsewhere. Aristides is mentioned in the same breath with Socrates as an example of moderation in the *De cohibenda ira* (458C-D), both of whom exemplify the qualities of "mildness (πραότητος) and forgiveness (συγγνώμη), and moderation in passion (μετριοπαθείας)".

¹ T. WHITMARSH, 2005, p. 32.

² Translation by H. N. FOWLER, *Plutarch's Moralia X*, LCL.

³ See C. B. R. PELLING, 2005b. Pelling focuses in particular on the *Life of Alcibiades*.

⁴ I treat this topic in greater detail in a forthcoming article, "Contrasting Catos: The Socratic Paradigm in Plutarch's *Lives*".

⁵ See also the reference to the book by Demetrius of Phalerum entitled *Socrates* in the proem (*Arist.* 1.2).

Phocion underwent philosophic training in the Academy that informed to some extent his political behavior, and his mode of death recalled Socrates' end (*Phoc.* 5.4-5⁶; 32.6-7⁷, 38.5)⁸. The contrast of the two Catos with Socrates is distinctly different and, for obvious reasons, much less natural.

We know that when Plutarch penned the Censor's *Life* he had the Younger Cato in mind since he makes explicit reference to him saying that he was "the best and most illustrious man of his time" (*Cat. Ma.* 27.7). This statement comes at the close of the *Life*, just prior to the *synkrisis*. Plutarch's lavish praise of the Younger Cato at the conclusion of the Censor's *Life* makes us immediately realize that no such comparably enthusiastic assessment of the Censor has been made in his *Life* that we have just read. In contrast we discern in it the exploration of several realms of activity that find no parallel in the *Life of Aristides* and that Plutarch construes quite negatively. These same themes, moreover, appear to link the *Life of Cato the Elder* to the *Life of Cato the Younger*, a linkage reinforced by references to Socrates and by the explicit reference to the Censor at the beginning of the Younger Cato's *Life* and twice thereafter (*Cat. Mi.* 1.1; 5.1; 8.2-3). They include the treatment of slaves, women, and frugality. The intertwining of the theme of the treatment of slaves with the Socratic paradigm is particularly crucial, as we shall see.

The Elder Cato, whom I shall call the Censor to avoid confusion, explicitly rejects Socrates, the blameless symbol of Greek culture in the eyes of Plutarch⁹. Plutarch portrays the Censor's criticism as an attempt "to discredit Greek civilization and culture as a whole":

After all, even Socrates was, according to him [sc. Cato] a chatterbox and coercive, whose intention it was to lord it over his homeland by using whatever means he could, namely by undermining traditional values and by compelling his fellow citizens to modify their views so that they were no longer in conformity with the laws (*Cat. Ma.* 23.1)¹⁰.

The allusion to Plato's *Apology* and the charges against Socrates presented therein is evident in Plutarch's paraphrase of the Censor's critique of Socrates cited above.

Early in the *Life* the Censor's oratorical ability is favorably compared with Socrates' (*Cat. Ma.* 7. 1). This is Plutarch's own assessment, since the general

⁶ Cf. Pl., *Prt.* 342a-343d.

⁷ Cf. Pl., *Grg.* 469c; 474b ff.; *Crit.* 49b; *R.* 335d; *Ap.* 30c-d; 41d.

⁸ See M. B. TRAPP, 1999, pp. 487-98. See also H.-J. GEHRKE, 1976, pp. 139-41; L. TRITTLE, 1988, pp. 30-3; C. ALCALDE MARTÍN, 1999, pp. 159-71, T. DUFF, 1999, pp. 131-58, and C. B. R. PELLING, 2005b, 115-6.

⁹ A. E. ASTIN, 1978, p. 339 thinks that the Censor's remarks about Socrates may be derived from the *Ad filium*.

¹⁰ Translation D. SANSONE with some modification.

viewpoint is that Cato's brand of oratory resembles that of Lysias, as he himself informs us (*Cat. Ma.* 7.2). Socrates is not the man one would normally expect to be mentioned as a rhetorical paragon. The youth of Rome emulate him and associate with him (*Cat. Ma.* 4.2-5; 8.6; cf. also 19.7, and 25.3). The Censor is their role model. The Censor's only positive remark about Socrates concerns his role as father and husband. As Plutarch relates, Cato used to say that "the only thing he admired about him [sc. Socrates] was his abiding civility and restraint in his dealings with a shrewish wife and retarded children" (*Cat. Ma.* 20.3)¹¹.

The Censor, we are informed, enjoyed dinner parties at which the topic of virtuous conduct was aired. Plutarch comments on this (*Cat. Ma.* 25.3-4):

He tried to outdo himself also with the feasts that he provided on his farm. He would always invite his friends from the neighboring farms and the surrounding areas and would have a delightful time with them. Nor was it only his contemporaries who found his company pleasant and who sought him out. He appealed also to the young, since he had, after all, undergone so many valuable experiences and since he was familiar with so many writings and important speeches. He regarded the table as the very best creator of friendships and, while considerable praise of fine and upstanding citizens was allowed, considerable neglect of those who were worthless and wicked was the order of the day, since Cato would permit neither censure nor commendation of such men to gain admittance to the party.

His role as exemplar for the youth, it will be noted, is brought out by Plutarch in this passage. This is an important theme throughout the *Life*¹². Apparently he had some less successful imitators like Socrates (Pl., *Apol.* 23c-d) who were known as "left-handed Catos" (*Cat. Ma.* 19.7). Early in the *Life* the frugality of Manius Curius, who is visited by an embassy from the Samnites while he is boiling turnips for dinner, inspires the Censor's own brand of frugality, according to Plutarch (*Cat. Ma.* 2.1-3). Manius Curius' example has a profound impact on the young man:

With his head full of these things Cato would return home and, when he contemplated instead his own house, his estate, his slaves, his way of life, he would exert himself all the more and would cut back inessential expenses (*Cat. Ma.* 2.3)¹³.

This is the first mention of slaves (θεράποντας) in the *Life*, another very significant theme, as we shall see, and one that is interlocked with the frugality

¹¹ Translation by D. SANSONE.

¹² On the Elder Cato as a moral example in Plutarch see A. PÉREZ JIMÉNEZ, 2002, pp. 109-11.

¹³ Translation by Sansone with a slight modification. On Plutarch's source for this anecdote see D. SANSONE, 1989, p. 205 ad loc who thinks, with F. PADBERG, 1933, p. 57, that Plutarch found it in Cato's *Origines*.

theme. Use of Cicero's *De senectute* has been detected in this anecdote¹⁴. While Manius Curius's meeting with the Samnite embassy is referred to in other ancient sources¹⁵, only Cicero in *De senectute*¹⁶ connects it explicitly with the Censor's visit to the great Roman statesman's farm.

Immediately after this passage we encounter the introduction of another major theme, the Censor's first encounter with Greek philosophy, his training in Pythagorean doctrine by Nearchus:

In the course of conversation he heard from him those doctrines which Plato too had formulated, namely that the greatest enticement to wrongdoing is pleasure, that the soul's chief encumbrance is the body, that those exercises of reason that most successfully sunder and divorce the soul from corporeal sensation are the true liberators and purifiers of the soul. This caused him to espouse still more fondly the life of simplicity and self-discipline (*Cat. Ma.* 2.3-4)¹⁷.

The references to the *Phaedo* (64e-65d) and the *Timaeus* (69d) are unmistakable¹⁸. As David Sansone in his commentary notes, the only other source that mentions this most likely fictitious encounter is Cicero in his *De senectute* 12.41 and it is most likely of Cicero's own invention. In his commentary on *De senectute*, Powell also thinks that Plutarch draws on Cicero here, but is less inclined to think that Cicero is "indulging in completely unfounded invention at this point"¹⁹. We know that Plutarch was familiar with this work of Cicero's because he explicitly cites it (*De senectute* 12.42) in his *Life of Titus Flamininus* (18.10) and in his *Life of Cato the Elder* (17.5)²⁰. The scene in the *Life of Titus Flamininus* (18.3-19.6) dramatizes the cruel execution of a prisoner at a symposium by Titus' brother Lucius to gratify a young male lover. The scene, which is also depicted even more lavishly in the *Life of Cato the Elder* (17.1-6) also serves to introduce the Censor's successful expulsion of Lucius from the Senate for this horrific spectacle committed at

¹⁴ On Plutarch's use of *De senectute* in general, see J. G. F. POWELL, 1988, p. 19, n. 50 and on this passage in particular 218-219, ad loc.

¹⁵ Plu., *Mor.* 194f, *Apophth. Rom.* Curius 2, Ath. 10.419a (=Megacles, FGH 4,443), Plin., *Nat.* 19.26 (87), Flor. 1.13.22, V. Max. 4.3.5a.

¹⁶ He also makes very brief reference to the Censor's connection with Manius Curius in *De rep.* 3.40.

¹⁷ Translation by D. SANSONE.

¹⁸ Cf. D. SANSONE, 1989, p. 206 ad loc., who only notes here the reference to Plato's *Timaeus* 69d.

¹⁹ J. G. F. POWELL (ed.), 1988, p. 182 ad loc. notes: "...it seems highly likely that this passage of Plutarch derives from Cicero, and so cannot be used as independent corroboration."

²⁰ See E. VALGIGLIO, 1982, p. 291, in reference to the close correspondence of Plu., *Cat. Ma.* 2.5 and Cic., *Sen.* 1.3, who acknowledges the possibility that Plutarch used *De senectute*, but thinks it probable that Plutarch used another (unnamed) source, yet nevertheless concedes (p. 299) the significance of Cicero as an important source for Plutarch in general: "Cicerone è fonte autorevole per Plutarco". Valgiglio appears to be unaware of the direct citation of *De senectute* in the *Life of Titus Flamininus*. See also the suggestive remarks of A. E. ASTIN, 1978, p. 300.

the banquet. There can be little doubt that Plutarch has his eye on Cicero's representation of the Censor as he composes his *Life*.

Cicero's idealized portrait of the Censor not only makes him out to be a *sapiens*, a proto-philosopher in a pre-philosophic era in Rome, it also explicitly contrasts him positively with Socrates²¹. For Cicero at any rate Cato's superiority as a paradigm derives not just from his words, as in the case of Socrates, but from his deeds as well²². Especially in *De senectute*, Cicero holds up the Censor's behavior in old age as exemplary and praiseworthy. The vigor in old age that Cicero praises is an ambiguous trait for Plutarch because it leads to immoderate behavior, actions never mentioned or even misrepresented by Cicero. For example, one immediate consequence of his wife's death is that the Censor takes a young slave girl as his concubine (*Cat. Ma.* 24.1-10). This act is the²³ source of estrangement between father and son. Cato attempts to eradicate the problem by contracting a marriage with a young woman of lower status who is a fraction of his age. His explanation to his son that he wishes to sire more sons is branded a boldfaced lie by Plutarch, who evidently regards the old man's inability to master his passion in old age as reprehensible (*Cat. Ma.* comp. 33/6.1-2). This entire chain of events is related in great detail by Plutarch who does not always delve into his subject's private lives with the enthusiasm and graphic detail of a Suetonius²⁴. Both the Censor and Cato the Younger lie to their sons, according to Plutarch!

Clearly however Plutarch adopts his most critical stance with respect to the Censor's treatment of slaves. We are informed initially that he works alongside them in summer and in winter, eating the same bread and drinking the same wine as they do (*Cat. Ma.* 3.2)²⁵. We are also told that he never paid more than 1,500 drachma for a slave as a general rule and was accustomed to sell off the aged and infirm ones (4.5-6). This latter habit elicits one of the most decidedly critical discussions in the entire *Life*, in which Plutarch maligns the unfeeling attitude (ἀτενοῦς ἄγαν ἥθους) that he thinks must be responsible for this practice (*Cat. Ma.* 5.1-7)²⁶.

²¹ See in particular F. PADBERG, 1933; R. GNAUK, 1936; U. KAMMER, 1964.

²² *Amic.* 2.6-10.

²³ Cf. Cicero's Censor (*Sen.* 14.47).

²⁴ See, e.g. Plutarch's *Life of Julius Caesar* in comparison with Suetonius's *Divus Julius*. On male sexual behavior in Plutarch in general see P. A. STADTER, 1995, P. WALCOT, 1998, T. DUFF, 1999, pp. 94-7, J. BENEKER, 2003 and M. BECK, 2007a, pp. 53-66. See also H. GUGEL, 1977, pp. 73-95, for a detailed analysis of the category *Erotika* in Suetonius' biographies.

²⁵ This was not a typical Greek *desiderium*. Cf. P. CARTLEDGE, 1998, p. 12: "...the Pagan Greeks were mostly agreed that working for one's living was not an intrinsic good, and their term for hard physical toil, *ponos*, is generally pejorative; to be without *ponos* was, according to Hesiod, to live like the blessed immortal gods." See also *Cat. Ma.* 1.9.

²⁶ See P. A. STADTER, 1997, pp. 77-8, M. BECK, 2000, pp. 15-32 and B. AHLRICHS 2005, pp. 220-2. This same adjective *atenes* (indicating in Plutarch rigid, inexorable, and inflexible behavior) recurs in the *Life of the Younger Cato* several times (2.3; 4.1-2), where it appears to characterize Cato's unbending pursuit of justice (*dikaiosune*) in association with the Stoic

Later in the *Life* the Censor's commitment to frugality is called into question. We are told he possessed many slaves (*Cat. Ma.* 21.1). Cato, we are told, regularly subjected those slaves who delivered less than attentive service at the dinner table to a postprandial lashing (*Cat. Ma.* 21.4). The fear of severe punishment was the determinant of his slave Paccius' suicide (*Cat. Ma.* 10.6)²⁷. We can infer this from Plutarch's later description of the harsh discipline and complete control the Censor appears to maintain over his slaves, even restricting even their sexual behavior in a way that generates increased revenue for himself (*Cat. Ma.* 21.1-3). He contrived to foment divisiveness among them as a prophylactic measure against any suspected concord which he feared (*Cat. Ma.* 21.4). Those slaves whom he found guilty of some serious offence he executed in front of the other slaves, presumably as a warning (*Cat. Ma.* 21.4). The repeated evocation of this theme in the *Life of the Elder Cato* finds no corresponding parallel in any of the other *Lives* with perhaps one exception. Generally slaves are mentioned in their expected roles, as incidental participants in various events²⁸. Only in the *Life of Antony* do we find frequent reference to slaves and slave-like behavior that appears to be thematic, though in a very different way²⁹.

In the context of our discussion, his punishment of slaves at *symposia* requires further scrutiny because Plutarch describes a transformation in the Censor's behavior over time:

Now, at first, when Cato was still poor and serving in the army he was not at all fastidious about his meals. Instead, he made it clear that it was singularly reprehensible to bicker with a slave for the sake of one's belly. Later however,

philosopher Antipater of Tyre. It is no accident that this same adjective is applied to Aristides (*Arist.* 2.2), in contrast to Themistocles, to describe his characteristic unwavering pursuit of justice.

²⁷ "...when Cato found out about it he hanged himself rather than face him." (trans. D. SANSONE) Cf. K. R. BRADLEY, 1994, p.111: "It seems that Paccius was so afraid of Cato and his powers of correction that forestalling certain punishment by the act of suicide was all that he could do."

²⁸ See, e.g. *Lyc.* 2 (enslavement of helots), 11, 16, 24 (helots), 28 (the killing of helots during the *krupteia*, etc.), *Sol.* 7, *Arist.* 10 (Spartans accompanied by 7 helots each), *Them.* 30, *Aem.* 22, *TG.* 2, 8, *CG.* 37(16), *Mar.* 2, 5, 37, 43-44, *Sull.* 9, 28, 37, *Pomp.* 49, 75, *Caes.* 46.

²⁹ Antony is depicted as dressing like a slave (*Ant.* 10). He changes into a slave's clothes to avoid detection (*Ant.* 14). Slave boys resembling Eros accompany Cleopatra, as Aphrodite, on her yacht as she sails to Antony, as Dionysus (*Ant.* 26). Both Antony and Cleopatra dress like slaves to walk the streets of Alexandria (*Ant.* 29). The role of various slaves is foregrounded in the final phase of the *Life*, as their master and mistress become increasingly passive and helpless (*Ant.* 63, 67, 75, 76). Antony and Cleopatra die as slaves among their slaves (*Ant.* 75-87). Perhaps telling in this context of Plutarch's underlying motives is the depiction of Antony's virtual enslavement of freeborn Greeks, including Plutarch's great-grandfather Nicarchus, by forcing them with whips to carry grain to the harbor, after having taken their money, slaves, and yoke-animals (*Ant.* 68). The negative paradigmatic value of the *Lives of Demetrius and Antony* is of course explicit (*Dem.* 1). Here the criticism is directed at those who behave in slavish ways, hinting at a lack of self-mastery.

as his circumstances improved, when he entertained friends and colleagues, no sooner was dinner over than he would punish those who had been the slightest bit negligent in any aspect of the service or preparation of the feast by beating them with a leather strap (*Cat. Ma.* 21.4).

It is unclear whether the Censor's guests were still present to witness this unsightly spectacle. The important point is that it is not the mark of a *sapiens* to behave in this manner. This passage needs to be read with the one cited above that follows about the discussions permitted at the Censor's dinner parties (*Cat. Ma.* 25.3-4)³⁰. This type of behavior would be unthinkable for Socrates who also preferred edifying topics of conversation at the dinner table. As we can well imagine, Cicero does not refer to the Censor's punitive treatment of slaves in *De senectute* (14.46). Nevertheless *De senectute* may be Plutarch's source for the Censor's custom of hosting edifying dinner parties³¹. Notably Cicero has the Censor quote a remark of Socrates related in Xenophon's *Symposium* (2.26). Plutarch's insertion violently disrupts the Socratic illusion. In Plutarch's *Life of Cato the Elder*, self-mastery vis-à-vis his own slaves seems to be a central issue³².

This same question is raised in the *Life of the Younger Cato*. If we turn to that *Life* we encounter a dramatic scene that abruptly calls into question the Younger Cato's self-mastery and treatment of his slaves³³. I am referring to the prelude to his suicide and the depiction of his death. This scene has recently been closely analyzed by several scholars so I will be brief³⁴. We are first made aware of Cato's state of mind at a symposium the night prior to his death. Cato rises to the defense of one of the paradoxes of the Stoic position that "the good man alone is free, and that all the bad are slaves" which has been opposed by an unnamed Peripatetic³⁵ who is present (*Cat. Mi.* 67)³⁶. Cato's long reply is delivered in a tone that is loud, harsh, and astonishingly contentious (σφοδρὸς ἐμπεισῶν ὁ Κάτων, καὶ τόνον προσθεὶς καὶ τραχύτητα φωνῆς, ἀπέτεινε πορρωτάτω τὸν λόγον, ἀγῶνι θαυμαστῶ χρησάμενος). The vehemence of this verbal onslaught, we are informed, signals to the onlookers that Cato has decided to take his own life. This type of behavior at a symposium is obviously unacceptable and unphilosophic in the extreme. His emotional

³⁰ Read this also with his prosecution of Lucius for disrupting a symposium with violence (*Cat. Ma.* 17.1-6).

³¹ See J. G. F. POWELL, 1988, p. 19, n. 50.

³² T. WIEDEMANN, 1988, p.182, in citing this passage, notes: "Even in antiquity, Cato was seen as an example of a cruel master, and his attitude towards his slaves was considered inhumane."

³³ Cf. also Cato's reluctance to free the slaves in an emergency situation (*Cat. Mi.* 60. 3-4).

³⁴ See J. GEIGER, 1999, M. B. TRAPP, 1999; A. V. ŽADOROJNYI, 2007 and M. BECK (forthcoming, see n. 4).

³⁵ Presumably Demetrius. Cf. *Cat. Mi.* 65.11 and GHILLI's note, 1993, p. 514 n. 458, in her edition.

³⁶ Perrin's translation. The intensity of Cato's reaction would appear to contradict Plutarch's earlier (*Cat. Mi.* 1.5-6) assessment of Cato's slowness to anger.

volatility is again underscored when, later that night, he begins to raise his voice (μᾶλλον ἐνέτεινε τὴν φωνήν) at his slaves who do not bring him his sword and ends by striking one of them on the mouth with his fist so hard that he injures his hand, now in a state of anger and shouting loudly (χαλεπαίνων καὶ βοῶν ἤδη μέγα) (*Cat. Mi.* 68.4-5). This type of behavior towards slaves is explicitly rejected by Plutarch (*De coh. ira* 459B-460C; 461A-462A; 463B) and Seneca (*De ira* 2.25.4; 3.1.4; 3.24.2; 3.35.1-3; 3.39.2-4) in their treatises on restraining rage³⁷.

Here in the final moments of his life Cato clearly does not embody the calm and serene Stoic sage³⁸. In the world of Socrates, as portrayed to us by Plato, Cato's behavior is more like that of a Thrasymachus or Calicles. This comportment unbecoming of a philosopher is juxtaposed with the eminently philosophic pastime of reading Plato's *Phaedo*, bearing here its ancient title of *On the Soul*³⁹. We are informed no less than four times that Cato is reading or returning to his reading of this dialogue, the classic portrait of philosophic death (*Cat. Mi.* 68.2; 68.3; 68.4; 70.2)⁴⁰. This striking contrast reflects the culmination of the Socrates-motif, a motif alluded to in the *Life* (cf. *Cat. Mi.* 46.1, where Cato is implicitly compared to Socrates). Through mention of this dialogue an educated audience is prompted to recollect and contrast Cato's agitated final moments with Socrates' calm bearing to the detriment of our image of the former⁴¹. Cato's bloody mode of death is equally divergent (*Cat. Mi.* 70). Returning to his reading of the *Phaedo*, we are informed that he has managed to read it through twice completely. After sleeping for a while he summons his freedmen Butas and doctor Cleanthes. Cleanthes bandages his hand. Left alone he then attempts to kill himself with his sword, but because of his injured hand the thrust is not lethal and his bowels sag out of the wound. In his death throes (δυσθανατῶν) he falls to the floor overturning a geometric

³⁷ W. V. HARRIS, 2001, pp. 317-36 provides an excellent survey.

³⁸ Plutarch also related that Cato shifts the focus of the conversation (which has now stalled thanks to his outburst) to those who are attempting to escape by sea, etc. At this juncture Cato expresses his fear (δεδιώς repeated twice) for their safety, another inappropriate emotion for a Stoic sage to confess (*Cat. Mi.* 67.4). Cf. also *Phaedo*'s assessment of Socrates's fearlessness (ἄδεώς) and nobility (γενναίως) in confronting death that finds confirmation in the subsequent dramatization of the condemned philosopher's death (Pl., *Phaed.* 58e). I find it impossible to follow T. DUFF, 1999, pp. 143-4) here who writes: "The calm of both men [sc. Phocion and Cato] at crises, and particularly at their deaths, is another Sokratic feature... Like Sokrates, both men remain calm despite the emotions of others." T. DUFF, 1999, p.151) later seems to notice the incongruity of Cato's behavior.

³⁹ Plato (*R.*, 8. 548e-549a) associates the harsh treatment of slaves with the uneducated man.

⁴⁰ Cf. TH. EBERT, 2004, p. 7: "Das Bild des philosophischen Todes, das Platon seinen Lesern im *Phaidon* vorstellt, hat diesen Dialog über die Jahrhunderte zu dem klassischen Beispiel einer *consolatio philosophiae* werden lassen."

⁴¹ The *exemplum Socratis* includes inter alia the restraint of anger. Cf. e.g., Sen., *De ira* 3.13.3 and Plu., *De coh. ira* 455B. Socrates' calm and jovial bearing is frequently alluded to in the *Phaedo*.

abacus that stood near him⁴². His servants, summoned by the noise, discover him still alive. His doctor tries to replace his bowels and sew up the wound but Cato thrusts him away, rips open the wound and claws at his bowels with his hands and so dies. Only Plutarch's account provides us with details such as the striking of the slave and the repeated references to Cato's resumption of reading the dialogue until he has read it through twice. The other major accounts of this event that we possess lack these details⁴³.

This Socrates-motif⁴⁴, as I said, is found in the *Life of Phocion* too⁴⁵. The difference is that Phocion's death reminded the Athenians of Socrates' end and was not antithetical to it (*Phoc.* 38.5). Cato and Phocion may both go around barefoot in public as Socrates⁴⁶ customarily did (*Phoc.* 4.4; *Cat. Mi.* 6.6; 44.1; 50.1), both underwent philosophic training which informed in some way their political activities (*Phoc.* 3.1 (referring to Cicero's critique of Cato acting as though he lived in Plato's commonwealth⁴⁷); 4.1-2; 5.4-5⁴⁸; 32.6-7⁴⁹, *Cat. Mi.* 4.2; 10.1-3; 46.1), but, in a crisis situation, only Phocion maintains fidelity to the behavioral guidelines his training in philosophy advocates and thus faces death with admirable calmness and élan (ἐθαύμαζον τὴν ἀπάθειαν καὶ μεγαλοψυχίαν τοῦ ἀνδρός) (*Phoc.* 36.1)⁵⁰. Cato's behavior in contrast appears to cast doubt on the depth of his commitment to philosophy and successful internalization of its precepts⁵¹. The contrast in the *Life of Phocion*, as we have indicated, focuses on the retention of emotional control under trying circumstances. The possession of inner calm founded on conviction so vividly depicted in the *Phaedo* is reduplicated in Phocion's death scene. The Younger Cato lacks this inner calm born of conviction. His frenetic reading and rereading of the *Phaedo* in the final moments of his life may serve to underscore this. His overt display of immoderate grief at the death of his half-brother Caepio

⁴² On the symbolic nature of this see A. V. ZADOROJNYI, 2007, p. 219, and Plato, *Phaedo* 108d with BURNET's, 1911, p. 128 and 150) note and Appendix II.

⁴³ Appian, *b. c.* 2.99; Cassius Dio, 43.11.4-5; Florus, 2.13.71-2; Livy, *Per.* 114; [Caes.], *b. Afr.* 88.3-4. On the provenance of this account see J. GEIGER, 1979 and below.

⁴⁴ The parallels and differences between Cato's suicide and Socrates's execution are recounted in detail by M. B. TRAPP, 1999.

⁴⁵ See H.-J. GEHRKE, 1976, pp. 139-41; L. TRITLE, 1988, pp. 30-3; C. ALCALDE MARTÍN, 1999, pp. 159-71, and T. DUFF, 1999, pp. 131-58.

⁴⁶ Cf. Pl., *Phdr.* 229a and *Smp.* 220b supported by Aristophanes, *Clouds* 103 and 363.

⁴⁷ Cicero, *Att.* 2.1.8.

⁴⁸ Cf. Pl., *Protagoras* 342a-343d.

⁴⁹ Cf. Pl., *Grg.* 469c; 474b ff.; *Crit.* 49b; *R.* 335d; *Ap.*, 30c-d; 41d.

⁵⁰ Cato appears to possess this quality too in better times (*Cat. Mi.* 65. 10).

⁵¹ We remember Plutarch's early judgment that Cato's apparent "reluctance to be persuaded made his learning more laborious" (*Cat. Mi.* 1.8). His rereading of the *Phaedo* in such a short time span might seem to allude to this defect. Another problem that may have troubled Cato (at least in Plutarch's conceptual world) is that Socrates in the *Phaedo* (61c-62c) appears to forbid suicide explicitly. On suicide in the *Phaedo* see J. WARREN, 2001, pp. 91-106. On the Stoic conception of suicide as permissible for rational reasons in certain exigencies (εὐλογος ἐξαιγωγή) see *SVF* 3.757-768 with GIGON's, 1951, p. 476) note in his edition of the *Tusculan Disputations*, M. GRIFFIN, 1986, pp. 72-5, and J. WARREN, 2001, pp. 100-1.

is interpreted by Plutarch as signaling a failure in his philosophic training (*Cat. Mi.* 11. 3-8)⁵², a failing shared by another contemporary Roman devotee of Greek philosophy, Cicero, whose overwhelming grief at the death of his daughter Tullia is regarded by Plutarch as a sign of the statesman's philosophic insufficiency (*Cic.* 41.8)⁵³.

Michael Trapp has rightly pointed out that Socrates is an intermediary foil sharing resemblances that allow comparison of Cato and Phocion in a way that obviates the need for a formal *synkrisis* at the end, which this pair lacks⁵⁴. He also notes (correctly in my opinion) that the message – whatever it may be – that Plutarch is seeking to communicate “bears more closely on Cato than on Phocion”⁵⁵. Trapp then suggests that Plutarch's intent was to critique subtly earlier Roman writing on Cato known (?) from Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* (1.71ff.); Cicero had employed the Cato-Socrates comparison to embellish the man's legend⁵⁶. For Cicero, Cato in particular exemplified the principle that the philosopher's way of life is really a preparation for death. In a particularly telling passage a comparison of Cato's with Socrates's mode of death serves to introduce a paraphrase of Plato's *Phaedo*⁵⁷ (*Tusc.* 1.71-75). Undoubtedly there was more of this in Cicero's lost work *Cato*, in response to which Caesar penned his scathing *Anti-Cato*, also lost to us⁵⁸. This book, as Goar notes, “established Cato as

⁵² [sc. Κάτων] ἐμπαθέστερον ἔδοξεν ἢ φιλοσοφώτερον ἐνεγκεῖν τὴν συμφορὰν. Cf. *Consol. ad uxor.* 608c, 609b, 611a. See also T. DUFF, 1999, p. 151. We are informed in the *Life* (*Cat. Mi.* 6.2-4) that Cato's civic duties kept him from literary pursuits (*philologeîn*) and that he spent his nights drinking and conversing with philosophers (νύκτωρ καὶ παρὰ πότον συγγίνεσθαι τοῖς φιλοσόφοις). Early in the *Life* we are led to question Cato's pursuit of literature in a passage that stresses his excessive love of dice-throwing and overindulgence in drinking: “At suppers he would throw dice for the choice of portions [...] At first, also, he would drink once after supper and then leave the table; but as time went on he would allow himself to drink very generously, so that he often tarried at his wine till early morning. His friends used to say that the cause of this was his civic and public activities; he was occupied with these all day, and so prevented from literary pursuits, wherefore he would hold intercourse with the philosophers at night and over the cups. For this reason, too, when a certain Memmius remarked in company that Cato spent his entire nights in drinking, Cicero answered him by saying: ‘Shouldn't you add that he also spends his entire days throwing dice?’” (*Cat. Mi.* 6.2-5)

⁵³ Cf. also Cicero's reaction to his exile (32.5-7). S. SWAIN, 1990b/1995, p. 242f. sees excessive grief in Plutarch as symptomatic of “ineffective education”. For Plutarch's attitude towards how one ought to mourn the death of a loved one see the *Life of Fabius Maximus* 24.6.

⁵⁴ M. TRAPP, 1999, p. 495: “And Socrates, ultimately the Socrates of the *Phaedo*, is the principle medium through which the comparison is developed. Plutarch uses him as a ‘third man’, a *tertium comparationis* whose resemblances to both of the other two individually allow them to be compared not only with him but with each other.” The only other pairs lacking a formal *synkrisis* are the *Lives of Themistocles and Camillus, Pyrrhus and Marius*, and *Alexander the Great and Caesar*.

⁵⁵ M. TRAPP, 1999, p. 496.

⁵⁶ M. TRAPP, 1999, p. 496 (Trapp himself does not in the end subscribe to this view). See also J. GEIGER, 1999, pp. 357-64 on the subsequent tradition of the Cato/Socrates coupling.

⁵⁷ Cf. Pl., *Phaedo* 67d and 80e

⁵⁸ On Cicero's role in establishing the Cato legend and Caesar's response see R. GOAR, 1987,

the Roman model of the Stoic sage — a fact of great importance for later adherents of Stoicism”⁵⁹. Seneca’s frequent juxtaposing of the deaths of Cato with Socrates attests to this⁶⁰. Much of the material critical of Cato that Plutarch presents in the *Life* appears to be drawn from the *Anti-Cato*⁶¹. It is notable that Plutarch, in his *Life of Julius Caesar* (54.6), mentions that both of these works continued to have many eager readers in his own day because of Caesar and Cato. The presentation of this material in the *Life* and the nature of the juxtaposed portrait of Phocion, in my opinion, are expressive of Plutarch’s opposition to Cicero’s idealized image of the man qua Stoic sage and its survival into the imperial period, especially in the writings of Seneca⁶². Plutarch’s portraits go a long way towards undermining this image of the proto-Stoic Censor and his grandson Cato, the paradigmatic Stoic sage.

In conclusion it appears that Plutarch inserted the figure of Socrates into the *Lives of Aristides, Cato the Elder, Phocion, and Cato the Younger* to discredit the ideologically motivated comparison of the Censor and Cato the Younger with Socrates that Cicero presented to posterity. Both men are portrayed as disrupting the civilized and civilizing atmosphere of the symposium with reproachable behavior. While Aristides and Phocion are positively compared to Socrates who clearly functions as a positive canon, the Censor and Cato the Younger fall short. Superficially they resemble Socrates. Their virtue is admired in certain circles. They function as role models for the youth. They dress modestly. The younger Cato even goes barefoot in public. Both however deviate most strongly from the Socratic paradigm in their violent treatment of slaves. Not surprisingly the treatment of women, children, slaves, and animals is constantly mentioned by Plutarch in *De cobibenda ira* as indicative of a man’s self-control. Ability in this area is for Plutarch directly related to education (*paideia*), specifically philosophical training. Plutarch, in adopting this rhetorical strategy, invites us to contrast the Censor with the Younger Cato and both with Socrates. He wants us to realize that Late Republican Rome had made some progress that could be directly attributed to their increasing assimilation of Greek culture but that even their best representatives still were not fully trained in the philosophic arts as the comparison with the Socratic paradigm fully reveals. The Ciceronian idealization of the two men is thus repudiated.

pp. 13-8.

⁵⁹ R. GOAR, 1987, p.15.

⁶⁰ See Sen., *Ep.* 67.7; 71.17; 98.12; 104. 28f.; *Prov.* 3.4; 3.12ff.; *Tranq.* 16.1; *Marc.* 22.3 (collected by J. GEIGER, 1979, p. 64-5, n. 61).

⁶¹ See, e.g., J. GEIGER, 1979, pp. 54-6. I disagree with Geiger’s skeptical conclusion (p. 56) that questions Plutarch’s direct acquaintance with both the *Anticato* and Cicero’s *Cato*. Just the opposite would likely be true, i.e., that the availability and continued popularity of both works in Plutarch’s own time (cf. *Caes.* 54.6) would virtually ensure that he read them.

⁶² See especially J. GEIGER, 1999 on this.

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