ARTICOLI

ΣΥΖΗΤΗΣΙΣ

Behind Words. Translating Plutarch's Philosophical Vocabulary

di

Carlo Delle Donne

Abstract: Translating Plutarch's philosophical works is particularly difficult, compared to other Greek authors. The reason often resides in the polemical nature of his treatises. For his polemics is sometimes implicit – to his readers, he only leaves "traces" to let them reconstruct his dialectical strategy and unveil his hidden targets. These "signs" are mainly represented by some polysemic words, or expressions, that are, at the same time, peculiar to his polemical target, thus assuming a specific meaning (let's call it meaning A), but also crucial to his own philosophical stance (with another, new meaning: meaning B). As a result, the translator is faced with rather a complicated task: he needs to render the words at issue so as to make their semantic stratification appreciable to the modern reader, who should be able to detect – from the modern translation – both of the meanings, A and B. To substantiate my proposition, I intend to discuss several passages, from Plutarch's philosophical works, where this particular strategy is abundantly deployed with reference to etymology and the concept of "flowing matter". This way of dealing with other philosophical accounts and authors will turn out to play a remarkable role in Plutarch's works, that will consequently reveal a sophisticated philosophical subtext.

Keywords: Plutarch, Plato, *Cratylus*, Translation, Matter

Abstract: Tradurre le opere filosofiche di Plutarco è particolarmente difficile, rispetto ad altri autori greci. La ragione risiede nella natura spesso polemica dei suoi trattati. Tali polemiche sono in larga parte implicite: ai suoi lettori, il Cheronese lascia solo delle "tracce" per consentire loro di ricostruire la sua strategia dialettica e svelare i suoi obiettivi argomentativi. Questi "segni" sono principalmente rappresentati da alcune parole polisemiche o espressioni che sono, allo stesso tempo, peculiari del suo bersaglio polemico, assumendo quindi un significato specifico (chiamiamolo significato A), ma anche cruciali per la sua stessa posizione filosofica (con un altro, nuovo significato: significato B). Di conseguenza, il traduttore si trova di fronte a un compito piuttosto complicato: deve rendere le parole in questione in modo che la loro stratificazione semantica sia comprensibile al lettore moderno, che dovrebbe essere in grado di rilevare – dalla traduzione moderna – entrambi i significati, A e B. Nell'articolo, discuto diversi passi tratti dai *Moralia*, dove questa particolare strategia è abbondantemente impiegata, soffermandomi nello

specifico sullo statuto dell'etimologia e sul concetto di "materia scorrevole".

KEYWORDS: Plutarco, Platone, *Cratilo*, traduzione, materia

In a work dedicated to theological matters, the *Amphilochia*[1]*,* Photius reports that every translated text is invariably afflicted, to a greater or lesser extent, by a certain degree of obscurity, which is often absent in the original text[2]. This is due to the fact that each language possesses its own way of stringing together concepts, displaying an *heirmòs*[3] that is structurally impossible to transpose into a different linguistic system:

> Ἡ ἐν ταῖς θείαις γραφαῖς ἀσάφεια πολλὰς ἔχει τὰς αἰτίας. πρῶτον μὲν ὅτι πᾶσα γλῶσσα εἰς ἑτέραν μετατιθεμένη ἀπόλλυσι τὸν ἴδιον εἰρμόν (*Quaestio* 122).

> Obscurity in holy writings can arise from several causes. Firstly, every language loses its *heirmos* when translated into another (my trans.).

Photius' remarks aptly represent the difficulty that permeates every translational endeavor, and it is particularly fitting when it comes to translating one of the most prolific authors of antiquity: Plutarch of Chaeronea. Among the vast and heterogeneous body of work produced by this distinctive figure, I will only examine some philosophical passages that, in my view, present particularly arduous translation challenges. It should be understood that this difficulty does not stem from a generic issue of interlinguistic rendition since, as astutely observed by Photius, there is no act of translation that does not induce a state of "aporia" in the translator. The difficulty

---

[1] See M. Fincati, *Problemi di traduzione: uno Pseudo-Crisostomo commenta Geremia*, in S. Costa-F. Gallo (eds.), *Miscellanea Graecolatina III*, Bulzoni, Roma 2015, p. 109 n. 22 on the history of the work.

[2] On obscurity, see I. Sluiter, *Obscurity*, in A. Grafton-G. W. Most (eds.), *Canonical Texts and Scholarly Practices*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2016, pp. 34-51; on obscurity in holy writings, see M. Harl, *Origène et les intérpretations patristiques grecques de l'"obscurité" biblique*, «Vetera Christianorum» 96 (1982), pp. 334-371; S. Zincone, *La funzione dell'oscurità delle profezie secondo Giovanni Crisostomo*, «Annali di Storia dell'Esegesi» 12/2 (1995), pp. 361-371; S. Zincone, *Le Omelie di Giovanni Crisostomo* De prophetiarum obscuritate, «Studia Patristica» 32 (1997), pp. 393-409; S. Zincone (ed.), Giovanni Crisostomo, *Omelie sull'oscurità delle profezie*, Studium, Roma 1998.

[3] It is an eminently Stoic word: see *SVF* II 918.

I refer to pertains, rather, to a phenomenon that could be termed "semantic stratification". When a term or expression is "stratified", it signifies that it possesses a greater "semantic thickness", which renders the deciphering of its true meaning within the discourse context less immediate. This implies that, in translating such terms, beyond the identification of a more or less suitable translation equivalent, one must somehow bring to light the word's history. That explains why every authentic translation is inevitably a paraphrase as well. Moreover, as I will attempt to demonstrate, this "opacity" of Plutarch's language often serves as a symptom of the robust process of reuse and resemanticization that has affected certain words within ancient philosophy[4]. In other words, in his works Plutarch presupposes, assimilates, and reemploys the fruits of the intricate – and, to some extent, lost to us – interscholastic debates of the Hellenistic age. In the protracted disputes that pitted various representatives of the same philosophical school, or orientation, against each other, as well as different schools among themselves, individual words could become the subject of contention, heralding often antithetical conceptual elaborations[5]. The Plutarchean terms whose challenging rendering I will address in the following pages must be situated precisely within this polemical dynamic. Moreover, at least in one case, they bear traces of a matter of polemics that, if it weren't for Plutarch's words, would have been almost entirely unknown to us.

I

The starting point of this brief investigation will be a passage from the *Quomodo adolescens poetas debeat audire*, where Plutarch engages in a polemic with the Stoics Cleanthes and Chrysippus regarding etymology[6]:

---

[4] See D. Lanza, *Lingua e discorso nell'Atene delle professioni*, Liguori, Napoli 1979, pp. 88-125; B. Centrone, *Prima lezione di filosofia antica*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 2015, pp. 18-28; W. Lapini, *Philological observations and approaches to language in the philoosophical context*, in F. Montanari-S. Matthaios-A. Rengakos (eds.), *Brill's Companion to Ancient Greek Scholarship*, Vol. II: *Between Theory and Practice*, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2015, pp. 1012-1056.
[5] M. Bonazzi, *The Platonist Appropriation of Stoic Epistemology*, in T. Engberg-Pedersen (ed.), *From Stoicism to Platonism. The Development of Philosophy, 100 BCE - 100 CE*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2017, pp. 120-141.
[6] On Stoic etymologies, see J. Allen, *The Stoics on the origin of language and the foundations of etymology*, in D. Frede-B. Inwood (eds.), *Language and Learning. Philosophy of*

δεῖ δὲ μηδὲ τῶν ὀνομάτων ἀμελῶς ἀκούειν, ἀλλὰ τὴν μὲν Κλεάνθους παιδιὰν παραιτεῖσθαι· κατειρωνεύεται γὰρ ἔστιν ὅτε προσποιούμενος ἐξηγεῖσθαι τὸ "Ζεῦ πάτερ Ἴδηθεν μεδέων" καὶ τὸ "Ζεῦ ἄνα Δωδωναῖε" κελεύων ἀναγιγνώσκειν ὑφ᾽ ἕν, ὡς τὸν ἐκ τῆς γῆς ἀναθυμιώμενον ἀέρα διὰ τὴν ἀνάδοσιν ἀναδωδωναῖον ὄντα. καὶ Χρύσιππος δὲ πολλαχοῦ γλίσχρος ἐστίν, οὐ παίζων ἀλλ᾽ εὑρησιλογῶν ἀπιθάνως, καὶ παραβιαζόμενος εὐρύοπα Κρονίδην εἶναι τὸν δεινὸν ἐν τῷ διαλέγεσθαι καὶ διαβεβηκότα τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ λόγου. βέλτιον δὲ ταῦτα τοῖς γραμματικοῖς παρέντας ἐκεῖνα μᾶλλον πιέζειν οἷς ἅμα τὸ χρήσιμον καὶ πιθανὸν ἔνεστιν "οὐδέ με θυμὸς ἄνωγεν, ἐπεὶ μάθον ἔμμεναι ἐσθλὸς" καὶ "πᾶσιν γὰρ ἐπίστατο μείλιχος εἶναι". τήν τε γὰρ ἀνδρείαν ἀποφαίνων μάθημα καὶ τὸ προσφιλῶς ἅμα καὶ κεχαρισμένως ἀνθρώποις ὁμιλεῖν ἀπ᾽ ἐπιστήμης καὶ κατὰ λόγον γίγνεσθαι νομίζων προτρέπει μὴ ἀμελεῖν ἑαυτῶν, ἀλλὰ μανθάνειν τὰ καλὰ καὶ προσέχειν τοῖς διδάσκουσιν, ὡς καὶ τὴν σκαιότητα καὶ τὴν δειλίαν ἀμαθίαν καὶ ἄγνοιαν οὖσαν.

While it is also necessary not to pass over the words carelessly, yet one should eschew the puerility of Cleanthes; for there are times when he uses a mock seriousness in pretending to interpret the words, "Father Zeus, enthroned on Ida", and "Zeus, lord of Dodona", bidding us in the latter case to read the last two words as one (taking the word 'lord' as the preposition 'up') as though the vapour exhaled from the earth were 'updonative' because of its being rendered up! And Chrysippus also is often quite petty, although he does not indulge in jesting, but wrests the words ingeniously, yet without carrying conviction, as when he would force the phrase 'wide-seeing' son of Cronos to signify 'clever in conversation,' that is to say, with a widespread power of speech. It is better, however, to turn these matters over to the grammarians, and to hold fast rather to those in which is to be found both usefulness and probability, such as "Nor does my heart so bid me, for I have learned to be valiant", and "For towards all he understood the way to be gentle". For by declaring that bravery is a thing to be learned, and by expressing the belief that friendly and gracious intercourse with others proceeds from understanding, and is in keeping with reason, the poet urges us not to neglect our own selves, but to learn what

Language in the Hellenistic Age, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2009, pp. 14-35 and A.A. Long, *Stoic linguistics, Plato's* Cratylus*, and Augustine's* De dialectica, in D. Frede-B. Inwood (eds.), *Language and Learning. Philosophy of Language in the Hellenistic Age*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2009, pp. 36-55.

is good, and to give heed to our teachers, intimating that both boorishness and cowardice are but ignorance and defects of learning (trans. by Babbitt)[7].

As acutely noted by Judith Mossman in a splendid forthcoming book[8] and by Robbeert van den Berg in a recent (and brilliant) paper[9], in this passage the anti-Stoic polemic is conducted through the exploitation of a Platonic subtext: the *Cratylus*. In particular, Plutarch's treatement revolves around a dual teaching. On one hand, there is a caution against careless listening to names (δεῖ δὲ μηδὲ τῶν ὀνομάτων ἀμελῶς ἀκούειν). On the other hand, there is an admonition to avoid treating words as the whole truth, which is taken to be akin to mere wordplay (τὴν μὲν [...] παιδιὰν παραιτεῖσθαι). Note that the latter warning finds resonance in Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride* too (376a, ἥκιστα μὲν οὖν δεῖ φιλοτιμεῖσθαι περὶ τῶν ὀνομάτων)[10], where an excessive emphasis on words is also refuted, once more in the wake of the *Cratylus*. Notably, this cautionary approach finds support in Plato's works[11] and is also inherited, for example, by Galen[12]. Anyway, in the aforementioned passage, the notion of words as "places of truth" is explicitly attributed to Stoicism. Plutarch invokes Cleanthes and Chrysippus as examples of how not to practice etymology. Interestingly, this criticism is steeped in Platonic terminology deriving from the *Cratylus*. In addition to the dialectics playfulness/seriousness, which also characterises Plato's dialogue[13], the phrase

---

[7] F. C. Babbitt (ed.), Plutarch, *Moralia*, Volume I, Loeb, Cambridge (MA) 1927, pp. 165-167.

[8] *Etymology and the Gods*, forthcoming. I would like to thank her for sharing her unpublished work with me.

[9] R. M. van den Berg, *A Sticky (γλίσχρος) Affaire (Plato,* Crat. *435c): Platonists versus Stoics on How (Not) To Do Etymology and Allegoresis*, «Incontri Italiani di Filologia Classica», 19 (2019-2020), pp. 227-247. See also R. M. van den Berg, *Proclus' Commentary on the* Cratylus *in Context. Ancient Theories of Language and Naming*, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2008, pp. 46-50.

[10] On this point, see C. Delle Donne, ὥσπερ ἴχνεσι τοῖς ὀνόμασι. *Plutarch's* Cratylus, «Ploutarchos», 20 (2023), pp. 3-26.

[11] *Plt.* 261e: «καλῶς γε, ὦ Σώκρατες· κἂν διαφυλάξῃς τὸ μὴ σπουδάζειν ἐπὶ τοῖς ὀνόμασιν, πλουσιώτερος εἰς τὸ γῆρας ἀναφανήσῃ φρονήσεως». The assumption clearly stems from the end of the *Cratylus*; see also F. Aronadio, *L'*aisthesis *e le strategie argomentative di Platone nel* Teeteto, Napoli 2016, pp. 67-106.

[12] C. Delle Donne, *Artigiani di parole. Il linguaggio e la sua genesi a partire dal* Cratilo *di Platone*, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Roma 2024, pp. 275-294.

[13] 406b8-c3: «ἀλλὰ ἔστι γὰρ καὶ σπουδαίως εἰρημένος ὁ τρόπος τῶν ὀνομάτων

κατειρωνεύεται [...] προσποιούμενος, with reference to Cleanthes, is a near *verbatim* allusion to Cratylus' attitude. Hermogenes describes Cratylus as one who οὔτε ἀποσαφεῖ οὐδὲν *εἰρωνεύεταί* τε πρός με, *προσποιούμενός* τι αὐτὸς ἐν ἑαυτῷ διανοεῖσθαι. A similar Platonic influence can also be found in παραβιαζόμενος. As Francesco Aronadio has convincingly demonstrated[14], Plato often equates arbitrary distortion of referential relationships and illegitimate use of language with violent acts. Hence, it is evident that Plutarch holds a negative view of an overly "etymologizing" approach to language, especially when dealing with theonyms. However, from the passage mentioned above, it also becomes clear what should be the positive focus of interest when engaging with texts, particularly poetic texts: the acquisition of virtue. Plutarch asserts that cowardice is a form of ignorance (ἀμαθίαν καὶ ἄγνοιαν), emphasizing the Socratic influence behind this assumption[15]. Therefore, for Plutarch, prioritizing the acquisition of knowledge regarding content, especially moral values, takes precedence over delving into the intricacies of language itself. Understanding virtue cannot be achieved by solely focusing on linguistic aspects.

Thus far, in my analysis, I have omitted a significant term that designates Chrysippus and proves challenging to translate: γλίσχρος. The Liddell-Scott-Jones lexicon provides three distinct meanings: 1) sticky; 2) sticking close, importunate, clinging; 3) penurious, niggardly; 4) mean, shabby. *Sub voce* γλοιός, Pierre Chantraine observes[16]: «La forme nominale usuelle est γλίσχρος "collant, gluant", d'où "tenace, insistant", et par un dernier développement "qui s'attachè à son bien, chiche, mesquin", en parlant de personnes et parfois de chose [...]».

Plutarchian translators have opted for rather diverse renderings.

τούτοις τοῖς θεοῖς καὶ παιδικῶς. τὸν μὲν οὖν σπουδαῖον ἄλλους τινὰς ἐρώτα, τὸν δὲ παιδικὸν οὐδὲν κωλύει διελθεῖν· φιλοπαίσμονες γὰρ καὶ οἱ θεοί».

[14] F. Aronadio, *L'*aisthesis *e le strategie argomentative di Platone nel* Teeteto, Bibliopolis, Napoli 2016, pp. 73-86. Plato never uses παραβιάζομαι, but he uses βιάζομαι in 436d1 to describe the attempt made by the inexperienced nomothetes to achieve ficticious harmony among words (εἰ γὰρ τὸ πρῶτον σφαλεὶς ὁ τιθέμενος τἆλλα ἤδη πρὸς τοῦτ' ἐβιάζετο καὶ αὐτῷ συμφωνεῖν ἠνάγκαζεν etc.).

[15] On Plutarch's Socrates, Ch. Pelling, *Plutarch's Socrates*, «Hermathena», 179 (2005), pp. 105-139. On Plutarch's ethics, see now B. Demulder, *Plutarch's Cosmological Ethics*, Leuven University Press, Leuven 2022.

[16] P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque. Histoire des mots*, Klincksieck, Paris 1999, p. 228.

However, every attempt at interpretation and translation of this term necessitates, as its indispensable condition, the recognition of the "semantic thickness" of γλίσχρος, of the "stratification" it endowed with. Undoubtedly, behind the choice of the adjective lies Plutarch's or his source's intention to echo the Platonic subtext. For γλίσχρος is rarely used by Plato, except in the *Timaeus* (74d, 82d, 84a) and, what matters most, the *Cratylus*. In the latter, Socrates employs it to distance himself from Cratylus' approach to the relationship between words and things (435c: ἀλλὰ μὴ ὡς ἀληθῶς, τὸ τοῦ Ἑρμογένους, γλίσχρα ᾖ ἡ ὀλκὴ αὕτη τῆς ὁμοιότητος), casting doubt on his interlocutor's rigid etymological stance and favoring a more moderate conventionalist perspective[17]. Notably, the adverb is already used by Hermogenes in 414b-c, with reference to Socrates' temptative etymology of *techne* (καὶ μάλα γε γλίσχρως, ὦ Σώκρατες): as a consequence, Socrates refutes Cratylus by evoking his opponent's account. In his monumental commentary on the dialogue, Francesco Ademollo demonstrates a keen awareness of the difficult semantics of the term, providing a meticulous lexicographic analysis before endorsing «poor» as the most appropriate translation[18]. I will return shortly to the question of the most suitable translation equivalent for the Greek. However, it is worth pausing to examine a valuable passage from Cicero that has also drawn the attention of van den Berg. In the third book of the *De natura deorum* (62-64), Cotta extensively criticizes the position of the Stoic Balbus, that has been presented in the previous book, and at a certain point, he formulates an objection that deserves to be quoted in full:

> Iam vero quid vos illa delectat explicatio fabularum et *enodatio nominum*? exsectum a filio Caelum, vinctum itidem a filio Saturnum, haec et alia generis eiusdem ita defenditis, ut i qui ista finxerunt non modo non insani sed etiam fuisse sapientes videantur. *in enodandis autem nominibus quod miserandum sit*

---

[17] On Socrates' balanced position between naturalism and conventionalism, see C. Delle Donne, *Artigiani di parole*, cit., pp. 3-11.

[18] F. Ademollo, *The* Cratylus *of Plato: A Commentary*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2011, p. 417: «The back-reference to 414bc, where γλίσχρως did not have its literal meaning 'viscously' or 'stickily' (in the literal sense of the English), suggests that γλίσχρα and ὀλκή, instead of forming a single figurative expression, might have figurative meaning independently of each other: γλίσχρα would then mean something like 'poor' or 'little', while the ὀλκή of resemblance would be its 'weight' or 'power'. Actually, I suspect that the phrase is designed to admit of both construals».

laboratis: "Saturnus quia se saturat annis, Mavors quia magna vertit, Minerva quia minuit aut quia minatur, Venus quia venit ad omnia, Ceres a gerendo". quam periculosa consuetudo. *in multis enim nominibus haerebitis*: quid Veiovi facies quid Volcano? quamquam, quoniam Neptunum a nando appellatum putas, *nullum erit nomen quod non possis una littera explicare unde ductum sit*; in quo quidem magis tu mihi natare visus es quam ipse Neptunus. Magnam molestiam suscepit et minime necessariam primus Zeno post Cleanthes deinde Chrysippus, commenticiarum fabularum reddere rationem, *vocabulorum cur quidque ita appellatum sit causas explicare*. quod cum facitis illud profecto confitemini, *longe aliter se rem habere atque hominum opinio sit; eos enim qui di appellantur rerum naturas esse non figuras deorum*. Qui tantus error fuit, ut perniciosis etiam rebus non nomen deorum tribueretur sed etiam sacra constituerentur. Febris enim fanum in Palatio et Orbonae ad aedem Larum et aram Malae Fortunae Exquiliis consecratam videmus. Omnis igitur talis a philosophia pellatur error, ut, *cum de dis inmortalibus disputemus, dicamus digna dis inmortalibus*. de quibus habeo ipse quid sentiam, non habeo autem quid tibi adsentiar.

Then again, why does this explanation of fables, and unravelling of names, possess such a charm for you? That Cælus was mutilated by his son, and Saturn in like manner bound by his, these and other statements of the same kind you uphold in a way which gives to the men who invented them the appearance not only of sanity, but of positive wisdom. And in unravelling names the difficulties into which you get are of a pitiable kind. Saturn is so called because he makes himself full (*saturat*) with years; Mavors because he is the overturner of greatness (*magna vertit*); Minerva because she lessens (*minuere*), or threatens (*minari*); Venus because she comes to all things (*venit*); and Ceres derives her name from *gerere*, to bear. What a hazardous principle to go upon! For there are many names over which you will be brought to a stand-still. How will you treat Vejovis and Vulcan? And yet, as you think that the word Neptune was formed from *nare* [swim] (in which you seemed to me to be more at sea than Neptune himself), there will be no name of which you would not be able to trace the derivation so far as one letter is concerned. Great and quite unnecessary pains were taken first by Zeno, and afterwards by Cleanthes, and then by Chrysippus to provide an explanation of the legendary stories, and to set forth the reasons for the form of each proper name. Of course in doing so your school acknowledges that the facts are widely different from the popular belief, for you maintain that what

are called gods are abstract qualities, and not divine persons. XXV. And this error extended so far that even hurtful things had not only the title of gods assigned to them, but also sacred rites instituted in their honor. We see, for instance, the shrine of Fever upon the Palatine, the shrine of Bereavement by the temple of the Lares, and the altar of Evil Fortune dedicated on the Esquiline. Let all the mistaken notions, then, be banished from philosophy which make us, when treating of the immortal gods, bring forward qualities which are unworthy of an immortal nature —, qualities as to which I am prepared with an opinion of my own, but am not prepared to agree with you (trans. by F. Brooks).

There are two key terms in the passage: *enodatio* and *haerebitis*. The first is a translation of the Greek term διάρθρωσις[19] and alludes to a famous polemic that pitted the Stoics against the Platonists regarding the status of ἔννοιαι[20]. According to the Platonists, these ἔννοιαι were traces of prenatal contemplation of intelligible forms and, therefore, innate and *a priori*. They merely needed to be "articulated", that is, developed dialectically and philosophically, to derive definitions and other "implicit" content[21]. This is attested by a parallel passage from the well-known papyrus containing fragments of an anonymous commentary on Plato's *Theaetetus*[22]: Αἱ γὰρ φυσικαὶ ἔννοιαι δέονται διαρθρώσεως, πρὸ δὲ τούτου ἐπιβάλλουσι μὲν τοῖς πράγμασι τῶι ἔχειν αὐτῶν ἴχνη, οὐ μὴν τρανῶς (XLVI, 43-49).

On the other hand, according to the Stoics, ἔννοιαι were *a posteriori* mental contents, as sensory experience was the sole source of human knowledge. It is worth noting that this theoretical constellation likely underlies Paragraph 31 of Cicero's *Topica*[23]:

Genus et formam definiunt hoc modo: Genus est notio ad pluris differentias pertinens; forma est notio cuius differentia ad caput generis et quasi fontem referri potest. Notionem appello quod Graeci tum ἔννοιαν tum πρόληψιν. Ea est insita et ante

---

[19] R. Tobias (ed.), *Cicero's* Topica, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2004, p. 270.

[20] M. Bonazzi, *Platonist appropriation*, cit.

[21] See Alc. *Did*. 155, 20-32. M. Bonazzi, *À la recherche des idees: platonisme et philosophie Hellenistique d'Antiochus à Plotin*, Vrin, Paris 2015, p. 35 ff.

[22] XXIII, 1-12; XLVII, 37-XLVIII, 7. See D. N. Sedley, *Three Platonist Interpretations of the* Theaetetus, in Ch. Gill-M. M. McCabe (eds.), *Form and Argument in Late Plato*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1996, pp. 79-103.

[23] T. Reinhardt, *Topica*, cit., p. 270 argues differently.

percepta cuiusque cognitio enodationis indigens. Formae sunt igitur eae in quas genus sine ullius praetermissione dividitur; ut si quis ius in legem, morem, aequitatem dividat. Formas qui putat idem esse quod partis, confundit artem et similitudine quadam conturbatus non satis acute quae sunt secernenda distinguit.

They define genus and species in the following way: A genus is a notion applying to several different things; a species is a notion whose difference can be referred back to the genus as its source, as it were. I call notion what the Greeks sometimes call ennoia and sometimes prolepsis. This is an ingrained grasp of something, developed through previous perceptions, which requires articulation. Thus species are those things into which a genus may be divided without leaving out anything, e.g. if one were to divide 'the law' into the sum of all legal statutes, custom, and equity. Anyone who takes species to be the same as parts turns method on its head and, confused by a casual resemblance, does not distinguish sufficiently clearly what must be kept apart (trans. by Reinhardt).

Be all that as it may, as the passage from the *De natura deorum* suggests, within the Stoic framework διάρθρωσις was also applied to *nomina* (words), leading to etymologies that claimed to reveal truths about their referents. Platonists, however, would object that διάρθρωσις was only applicable to mnemonic traces of intelligible forms (the ἔννοιαι), and not to words themselves. As the closing of the *Cratylus* teaches (439b)[24], which the Stoics misunderstood, the «truth of things» (ἀλήθεια τῶν ὄντων) is not to be sought in words, nor derived from words – and, perhaps, not even expressed through words.

Another indicator of the Cratilian subtext is represented by the verb *haerebitis*. If van den Berg is correct, it could be the Latin translation of the Greek γλίσχρος, which Cicero (and his source) understood as meaning «sticky», specifically referring to something that "clings", causing resistance and difficulty. In other words, the Stoics' forced etymologization of words would lead them to become stranded, just as Socrates had objected to Cratylus, their precursor. This is because, as effectively demonstrated by Socrates himself through various etymologies, the morphology of words can accommodate different

---

[24] «ἀγαπητὸν δὲ καὶ τοῦτο ὁμολογήσασθαι, ὅτι οὐκ ἐξ ὀνομάτων ἀλλὰ πολὺ μᾶλλον αὐτὰ ἐξ αὑτῶν καὶ μαθητέον καὶ ζητητέον ἢ ἐκ τῶν ὀνομάτων».

(and antithetical) interpretations based on individual preferences. A single letter can support diverse interpretations, and likewise, a single letter can refute any etymology that relies on a presumed similarity between words and things (*nullum erit nomen quod non possis una littera explicare unde ductum sit*: *explicare* belongs to the same semantic field as *enodatio*). In the dialogue (434C ff.), this principle is efficaciously demonstrated by means of the word *sklerotes*.

The Plutarchean passage, therefore, appears to trace a strand of the polemic between Platonists and Stoics regarding the status of etymology, which, as customary, employed a rather rigid repertoire of terminology and theory. Upon closer examination, it seems that the true heart of the dispute was represented by the *ipsissima verba* of the authoritative Master, particularly in the identification of the true philosophical message of the *Cratylus*. The Stoics grounded their "truth-oriented" conception of ancient legislators' language on the dialogue, believing that the initial words encapsulated the truth about their referents, thereby legitimizing etymology as a means of seeking truth. On the other hand, Platonists (like Cicero and Plutarch, or perhaps their sources) appear to have better grasped the complex dialectical play orchestrated by Plato in the dialogue, which, so to speak, casts a serious "hypothec" on the heuristic claims of etymological tools. If this interpretation is correct, the most accurate rendering of Plutarch's γλίσχρος would therefore be *entangled*. According to Plutarch, Crisippus becomes entangled in an etymological quest that, as Socrates teaches – by temporarily adopting the hyper-conventionalistic stance of Ermogenes – is structurally inadequate to yield truly promising results. This idea resurfaces in the *De recta ratione audiendi* (47b-c), where the adjective reappears in conjunction with words in philosophy:

> Ἔτι τοίνυν ὥσπερ ἐν γράμμασι καὶ περὶ λύραν καὶ παλαίστραν
> αἱ πρῶται μαθήσεις πολὺν ἔχουσι θόρυβον καὶ πόνον καὶ
> ἀσάφειαν, εἶτα προϊόντι κατὰ μικρὸν ὥσπερ πρὸς ἀνθρώπους
> συνήθεια πολλὴ καὶ γνῶσις ἐγγενομένη πάντα φίλα καὶ
> χειρόηθη καὶ ῥᾴδια λέγειν τε καὶ πράττειν παρέσχεν, *οὕτω*
> *δὴ καὶ φιλοσοφίας ἐχούσης τι καὶ γλίσχρον ἀμέλει καὶ ἀσύνηθες ἐν*
> *τοῖς πρώτοις ὀνόμασι καὶ πράγμασιν* οὐ δεῖ φοβηθέντα τὰς ἀρχὰς
> ψοφοδεῶς καὶ ἀτόλμως ἐγκαταλιπεῖν, ἀλλὰ πειρώμενον
> ἑκάστου καὶ προσλιπαροῦντα καὶ *γλιχόμενον τοῦ πρόσω* τὴν
> πᾶν τὸ καλὸν ἡδὺ ποιοῦσαν ἀναμένειν συνήθειαν. ἥξει γὰρ
> οὐ διὰ μακροῦ πολὺ φῶς ἐπιφέρουσα τῇ μαθήσει καὶ δεινοὺς
> ἔρωτας ἐνδιδοῦσα πρὸς τὴν ἀρετήν, ὧν ἄνευ πάνυ τλήμονος

ἀνδρός ἐστιν ἢ δειλοῦ τὸν ἄλλον ὑπομένειν βίον, ἐκπεσόντα δι᾽ ἀνανδρίαν φιλοσοφίας[25].

Moreover, just as in learning to read and write, or in taking up music or physical training, the first lessons are attended with much confusion, hard work, and uncertainty, but later, as the learner makes progress, by slow degrees, just as in his relations with human beings, a full familiarity is engendered and knowledge which renders everything attractive, feasible, and easy, both to say and to do, *so also is it with philosophy, which undoubtedly has something knotty and unfamiliar in its terms and subject matter at the outset*; yet one ought not to take fright at its beginnings, and to abandon it in timorous and craven fashion; rather should he examine each point, and persist and *stick to the task of getting on*, while awaiting that familiarity which makes every noble thing a pleasure. For come it will without long delay, bringing with it abundant light for the subject of study; it will inspire also a passionate love for virtue; and anyone who could endure to pass the rest of his life without this passion, because he has exiled himself from philosophy for want of true manliness (trans. by Babbitt).

The juxtaposition of πρῶτα ὀνόματα – a highly evocative phrase both for its use in the *Cratylus* (422c ff.) and its Stoic reuse[26] – and γλίσχρος (later echoed by the cognate γλιχόμενον) represents further evidence of the profound assimilation achieved by Plutarch in Plato's teachings regarding language. Words, indeed, are like the resemblances that exist between things: as Plato maintains, they can be misleading[27]. For both words and resemblances presuppose, for their correct interpretation, a «strong knowledge», an *episteme*, of the truth; they do

---

[25] See also *De recta ratione audiendi* 43a: «μᾶλλον δ᾽ ἄν τις ἀκροατοῦ καταγελάσειεν *εἰς μικρὰ καὶ γλίσχρα προβλήματα* τὸν διαλεγόμενον κινοῦντος, οἷα τερθρευόμενοί τινες τῶν νέων καὶ παρεπιδεικνύμενοι διαλεκτικὴν ἢ μαθηματικὴν ἕξιν εἰώθασι προβάλλειν περὶ τῆς τῶν ἀορίστων τομῆς, καὶ τίς ἡ κατὰ πλευρὰν ἢ κατὰ διάμετρον κίνησις».

[26] Origen, *Against Celsus* I 24 (= *SVF* II, 146): «πότερον, ὡς οἴεται Ἀριστοτέλης, θέσει εἰσὶ τὰ ὀνόματα ἤ, ὡς νομίζουσιν οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Στοᾶς, φύσει, μιμουμένων τῶν πρώτων φωνῶν τὰ πράγματα, καθ᾽ ὧν τὰ ὀνόματα, καθὸ καὶ στοιχεῖά τινα τῆς ἐτυμολογίας εἰσάγουσιν, ἤ, ὡς διδάσκει Ἐπίκουρος, ἑτέρως ἢ ὡς οἴονται οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Στοᾶς, φύσει ἐστὶ τὰ ὀνόματα, ἀπορρηξάντων τῶν πρώτων ἀνθρώπων τινὰς φωνὰς κατὰ τῶν πραγμάτων».

[27] See C. Delle Donne, *On the trail of Plato's* συγγένεια, «Antiquorum Philosophia», 15 (2021), pp. 163-178.

not represent the key to access it, as one might mistakenly believe. Notably, in the *De Iside* (381d), Plutarch employs the term γλίσχρος to criticize the excessive valorization, by the Egyptians, of entirely insignificant «resemblances»: οὐ δεῖ δὲ θαυμάζειν, εἰ γλίσχρας ὁμοιότητας οὕτως ἠγάπησαν Αἰγύπτιοι[28].

II

A second example of a semantically "stratified" term is the verbal adjective ῥευστός. Rarely used by Plutarch, it appears only in three philosophical passages[29], without always clearly indicating its exact meaning at first glance. The occurrence I would like to start with is taken from the *Roman Questions*, 268C-D[30]:

> ὅρα δὲ μὴ μᾶλλον ὁ Νομᾶς τῇ φύσει προσήκουσαν ἀρχὴν ἔλαβε τοῦ ἔτους ὡς πρὸς ἡμᾶς. καθόλου μὲν γὰρ οὐδέν ἐστι φύσει τῶν ἐν κύκλῳ περιφερομένων οὔτ᾽ ἔσχατον οὔτε πρῶτον, νόμῳ δ᾽ ἄλλην ἄλλοι τοῦ χρόνου λαμβάνουσιν ἀρχήν· ἄριστα δ᾽ οἱ τὴν μετὰ τροπὰς χειμερίας λαμβάνοντες, ὁπηνίκα τοῦ πρόσω βαδίζειν πεπαυμένος ὁ ἥλιος ἐπιστρέφει καὶ ἀνακάμπτει πάλιν πρὸς ἡμᾶς· γίνεται γὰρ αὐτοῖς τρόπον τινὰ καὶ φύσει, τὸν μὲν τοῦ φωτὸς αὔξουσα χρόνον ἡμῖν, μειοῦσα δὲ τὸν τοῦ σκότους, ἐγγυτέρω δὲ ποιοῦσα τὸν κύριον καὶ ἡγεμόνα τῆς ῥευστῆς οὐσίας ἁπάσης.

> But consider whether Numa may not have adopted as the beginning of the year that which conforms to our conception of

---

[28] The resemblances in question pertain to certain animals and God, and are typical of Egyptians and Greeks as well: see J. G. Griffiths (ed.), *Plutarch's* De Iside et Osiride, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1970, pp. 556-559. They are not contingent upon a direct perception of the divine but are merely conventional. Furthermore, they appear to be reversible and hence superficial. Similar to etymologies, analogies can also be described as γλίσχρος, as they have the potential make individuals "cling" to them, when improperly employed.

[29] I won't discuss *De curiositate* 522A-B, because the word is used there in its etymological sense: «ἡμεῖς δὲ τοῖς φορείοις τῶν γυναικῶν ὑποβάλλοντες τὰ ὄμματα καὶ τῶν θυρίδων ἐκκρεμαννύντες οὐδὲν ἁμαρτάνειν δοκοῦμεν οὕτως ὀλισθηρὰν καὶ *ῥευστὴν εἰς ἅπαντα* τὴν πολυπραγμοσύνην ποιοῦντες».

[30] See the commentary by J. Boulogne (ed.), Plutarque, *Oeuvres Morales. Tome IV, Traités 17 à 19*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 2002, pp. 327-328; H.J. Rose (ed.), *The* Roman Questions *of Plutarch*, Ayer, Oxford 1924, p. 177.

the natural beginning. Speaking generally, to be sure, there is not naturally either last or first in a cycle; and it is by custom that some adopt one beginning of this period and others another. They do best, however, who adopt the beginning after the winter solstice, when the sun has ceased to advance, and turns about and retraces his course toward us. For this beginning of the year is in a certain way natural to mankind, since it increases the amount of light that we receive and decreases the amount of darkness, and brings nearer to us the lord and leader of all mobile matter.

The passage addresses the issue of the beginning of the year and, in particular, why the Romans associate it with the month of "January". The author takes a stance (ἄριστα) in favor of the option that places the start of the year after the winter solstice (μετὰ τροπὰς χειμερίας). The reason for this preference is constructed based on some assumptions derived from Plato (albeit with various mediations) and is formulated using highly evocative and pregnant language. The pair of light/darkness (τοῦ φωτὸς [...] τοῦ σκότους), which is dear to Plutarch and holds significant communicative power[31], permeates the entire argument. For humans, a yearly cycle that increases light and diminishes darkness is preferable to any other option. Light and darkness often carry metaphorical meanings, symbolizing knowledge and ignorance, virtue and vice, glorious fame and ignominious anonymity[32], Therefore, it is plausible to assume a similar ethical and cognitive resonance in the occurrence of our passage. However, the most interesting element is represented by the third member (μέν ... δέ ... δέ) of the last sentence, where the sun is described as τὸν κύριον καὶ ἡγεμόνα τῆς ῥευστῆς οὐσίας ἁπάσης. That it refers to the sun can easily be inferred from the phrase τὸν κύριον καὶ ἡγεμόνα, which recalls a famous Platonic passage in Book VI of the *Republic* (516B-C), where a complex and articulated functional analogy between the sun and the idea of the Good is developed[33], Furthermore, confirmation that the allusion refers to the sun also comes from the semantically challenging phrase τῆς ῥευστῆς οὐσίας ἁπάσης. The ῥευστή οὐσία must necessarily refer to the sensible world, of which the sun is the

---

[31] See J. Boulogne, cit., p. 328 n. 18.
[32] See *Lat. viv*. 5-6.
[33] See the commentary by F. Fronterotta, *Il sole e il bene. Funzione e limiti dell'analogia in* Resp. *VI 505a-509b*, «ΠΗΓΗ/FONS», 2 (2017), pp. 109-122.

«master and ruler». But what exactly does the phrase ῥευστή οὐσία mean and how should it be translated? Οὐσία is a term difficult to interpret, especially in Plato and the Platonic tradition[34]. In our case, it seems to retain its original meaning, as οὐσία is the substantiation of the feminine participle of the verb εἰμί, designating the «being» in the sense of "all that exists" (confirmed by the adjective ἀπάσης, used predicatively and in an emphatic position). Therefore, the reference is to an entire "realm of being", which is further qualified by the rare adjective ῥευστή, derived from the verb ῥέω, meaning «to flow». If in this occurrence the adjective retains, albeit loosely, a "potential" value, it signifies «capable of flowing», «fluid». Therefore, the «fluid realm of being», ῥευστή οὐσία, refers to the historical-empirical world, the sensible dimension in which the sun plays a role similar to the idea of the Good in the intelligible *cosmos*. However, Plato never uses the adjective ῥευστός, and although there are passages in the Platonic *corpus* that could support a "flowing" interpretation of the sensible world, influenced by Heraclitus[35], where does this framework for interpreting the world of senses come from? If Fernanda Decleva Caizzi is correct – the only scholar who, many decades ago, attempted to reconstruct the fascinating and mysterious history of the notion of «flowing matter», ὕλη ῥευστή[36] – the roots of this concept can be

---

[34] See F. Ferrari, *La traduzione della lingua filosofica di Platone: alcune riflessioni sul significato di* ousia, in M. Taufer (ed.), *Tradurre classici greci in lingue moderne*, Rombach Verlag, Freiburg 2017, pp. 67-86.

[35] E. Benati, *La teoria del flusso nel* Cratilo *e nel* Timeo *di Platone: il problema di un mondo in divenire e il rapporto con Eraclito*, «Studi Classici e Orientali» 63 (2017), pp. 73-89.

[36] F. Decleva Caizzi, *La 'materia scorrevole'. Sulle tracce di un dibattito perduto*, in J. Barnes-M. Mignucci (eds.), *Matter and Metaphysics: fourth* Symposium Hellenisticum, Bibliopolis, Napoli 1988, pp. 425-470. See also the critical remarks made by M. Isnardi Parente, Ὕλη ῥευστή, «La Parola del Passato», 45 (1990), pp. 277-284. The notion has been recently examined also by Francesco Verde in some seminal papers: *Antiochus and the Epicureans on the Doctrinal Agreement between Plato and Aristotle*, «Bruniana & Campanelliana» XXV/2 (2019), pp. 363-384; *Plato's Demiurge (NF 155 = YF 200) and Aristotle's Flux (fr. 5 Smith). Diogenes of Oinoanda on the History of Philosophy*, in J. Hammerstaedt-P.-M. Morel-R. Güremen (eds.), *Diogenes of Oinoanda. Epicureanism and Philosophical Debates*, Leuven University Press, Leuven 2017, pp. 67-88; *Arcesilao scettico? Problemi e considerazioni*, in M. De Palo-L. Marchetti-F. Sterpetti (eds.), *Quaderni di Villa Mirafiori*, vol. 1, Mimesis, Milano-Udine 2024, pp. 15-39 (https://www.mimesisedizioni.it/download/16184/0f3e6edb0a29/sterpetti-villa-mirafiori-14x2-st.pdf [06.10.2024]). Verde's contributions compellingly demonstrate the necessity of reconstructing the history of the concept of ὕλη ῥευστή in the context of the ongoing polemics between Platonism and Epicureanism.

traced back to the ancient Academy, particularly to the teachings of Xenocrates. If this were the case, Plutarch (or his source) would be repurposing a philosopheme from the ancient Platonic tradition and applying it to a different argumentative context (the division of the year). Ultimately, the theoretical framework underlying this point in the *quaestio* proves to be quite rich and stratified.

The term ῥευστός also appears in a passage of the *Adversus Colotem*, where Plutarch responds to a polemical pamphlet (much earlier) by the Epicurean Colotes, who criticized numerous philosophers for making it impossible to live life in accordance with their doctrines[37]. Most likely, the philosophers criticized by Colotes had already been evoked by Arcesilaus, the head of the skeptical Academy, as precursors to the skeptical turn he himself had introduced to Plato's school. In other words, Plutarch reopens a heated interscholastic debate, centuries later, concerning the construction of ideologically oriented philosophical genealogies, resulting from a "historiography" aimed at legitimizing new theoretical perspectives. At one point, while defending Democritus against the harsh criticism of the Epicurean[38], Plutarch turns the accusation of dualism against the Epicureans themselves:

> *Adv. Col.* 1116C: Ἀλλ' αὐτὸν ἡδέως ἂν ἐροίμην τὸν κατήγορον, εἰ τοῖς ἑαυτῶν πράγμασι τὴν διαφορὰν οὐκ ἐνορῶσι ταύτην, καθ' ἣν τὰ μὲν μόνιμα καὶ ἄτρεπτα <τὰ δὲ μεταβλητὰ καὶ τρεπτὰ> ταῖς οὐσίαις ἐστίν, ὡς λέγουσι καὶ τὰς ἀτόμους ἀπαθείᾳ καὶ στερρότητι πάντα χρόνον ὡσαύτως ἔχειν, *τὰ δὲ συγκρίματα πάντα ῥευστὰ καὶ μεταβλητὰ καὶ γινόμενα καὶ ἀπολλύμενα εἶναι*, μυρίων μὲν εἰδώλων ἀπερχομένων ἀεὶ καὶ *ῥεόντων*, μυρίων δ' ὡς εἰκὸς ἑτέρων ἐκ τοῦ περιέχοντος *ἐπιρρεόντων* καὶ ἀναπληρούντων τὸ ἄθροισμα ποικιλλόμενον ὑπὸ τῆς ἐξαλλαγῆς ταύτης καὶ μετακεραννύμενον, ἅτε δὴ καὶ τῶν ἐν βάθει τοῦ συγκρίματος ἀτόμων οὐδέποτε λῆξαι κινήσεως οὐδὲ παλμῶν πρὸς ἀλλήλας δυναμένων, ὥσπερ αὐτοὶ λέγουσιν.

> But I should like to ask the very man who brings this indictment if his school does not see this distinction in their own system, whereby some objects are enduring and unchanging

[37] See E. Kechagia, *Plutarch Against Colotes. A Lesson in History of Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2011; A. Corti, *L'*Adversus Colotem *di Plutarco: storia di una polemica filosofica*, Leuven University Press, Leuven 2014.
[38] E. Kechagia, cit., pp. 201-212.

in their being, just as atoms too in their doctrine are forever-
er the same because they are too hard to be affected, while all
aggregates of atoms are subject to flux and change and come
into being and pass out of it, as innumerable films leave them in
constant stream, and innumerable others, it is inferred, flow in
from the surroundings and replenish the mass, which is varied
by this interchange and altered in its composition, since in fact
even the atoms in the interior of the aggregate can never cease
moving or vibrating against one another, as the Epicureans say
themselves (trans. by B. Einarson-Ph.H. De Lacy).

The dualism that Colotes attributed to Democritus similarly affects
the philosophy of Epicurus, according to Plutarch. The distinction
between the atomic level and that of aggregates seems to reproduce a
divergence between a foundational dimension, dominated by invar-
iance and eternity, which is characteristic of atoms (and void), and
another dimension in which aggregations and disaggregations occur,
involving the intertwining of atoms and void. Among the adjectives
used to qualify the dimension of aggregates, which are transient
and possess mutable properties, the term ῥευστά stands out in an
emphatic and prominent position. Upon closer examination, the
other determinations (μεταβλητὰ, γινόμενα καὶ ἀπολλύμενα) pro-
vide explanations of the first adjective. The semantic field of "flow"
is then reintroduced with ῥεόντων, referring to the motion of *simu-
lacra* detaching from the surface of objects, and ἐπιρρεόντων, which
designates the motion of atoms from the surrounding environment
that replace those previously detached. This "flowing" interpretation
of the dimension of aggregates, emphasizing their lack of diachronic
persistence, could be symptomatic of interference with the doctrine
of «flowing matter» (ὕλη ῥευστή). Two hypotheses can be formu-
lated, both of which are inevitably destined to remain speculative.
1) It is reasonable to suppose that Colotes was the first to employ
the ancient-academic conception of ὕλη ῥευστή to characterize
Democritus' atomic compounds as completely impermanent and
unknowable (with the logical consequence of the practical impos-
sibility of living in a world with such characteristics). In this way,
he would have employed a theoretical segment of Academic origin
against the genealogy likely constructed by Arcesilaus, the head of
the same Academy. Plutarch, on the other hand, had good reason
to turn this instrumental use of the doctrine of the old Academy
against Colotes and his school, observing that, in reality, the category

of ὕλη ῥευστή could rightfully be applied to Epicurean atomic compounds. 2) A second equally plausible hypothesis is that Plutarch himself reread (and refuted) Colotes' polemic in light of the "flowing" conception of compounds. In this sense, the polemical use of the ancient-academic doctrine would fall within the realm of Plutarch's argumentative strategies[39], which include not only "internal" refutation but also "external" refutation, achieved by applying Plutarch's own patterns and categories to the doctrine of his opponent, rather than those of the latter.

The examination conducted thus far has highlighted a phenomenon undoubtedly well-known to scholars of the ancient world, namely the "stratification" that affects certain particularly pregnant terms. The new insight that I hope has emerged is that the attempt to distinguish the different conceptual contributions concealed behind the same word can aid in reconstructing, albeit provisionally, some debates that animated Hellenistic and post-Hellenistic philosophy. Both γλίσχρος and ῥευστός testify to the "stratification" to which Plutarch's language is subject, especially in the philosophical realm. In particular, it has emerged that behind γλίσχρος lies an allusion to the text of *Cratylus* and the dispute (witnessed by Plutarch and other sources) concerning the status of words and the epistemological value of etymology. But even ῥευστός has allowed the uncovering of new traces of a theoretically impactful polemic, of which we know very little, that affected the history of ancient Platonism – the notion of ὕλη ῥευστή. Ultimately, it has become evident that the modern translator faces considerable challenges in faithfully conveying the lexical richness of the prose writing of the «versatile gentleman»[40].

Università di Salerno
carlodelledonne2@gmail.com

---

[39] G. Roskam, *How to Deal with the Philosophical Tradition? Some General Rules in Plutarch's Anti-Epicurean Treatises*, «Ploutarchos» N.S. 8 (2011), pp. 133-146.
[40] I take this from J. Opsomer-G. Roskam-F. B. Titchener (eds.), *A Versatile Gentleman. Consistency in Plutarch's Writing. Studies offered to Luc van der Stockt on the Occasion of His Retirement*, Leuven University Press, Leuven 2016.