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The religious vocabulary in Plutarch's *Moralia*

Adamantia Katsoula

University of Peloponnese, Greece
https://orcid.org/0009-0006-3805-6941

ABSTRACT

Plutarch had shown a keen lexicographical interest in the religious sphere, a fact that is clearly reflected in *Moralia*. This article presents some of the writer's religious linguistic creations, to which he had imparted internal unity and coherence as they relate to the divine world. Through the construction of these words, Plutarch expressed his theology and offered a philosophical interpretation of religious phenomena. The study also analyzes certain festivals, specific deities, priestly offices and rare terms that appear only in *Moralia*, examining whether these words are directly linked to his role as a philosopher-priest. Another issue explored is Plutarch's extensive use of mystical terminology and its connection to key aspects of human life. This paper therefore aims to demonstrate that Plutarch's use of religious vocabulary is directly intertwined with his philosophical theology.

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Introduction

Plutarch had a deep religiosity which he also reflected in practice through the undertaking of various religious functions such as a high priest of Apollo in Delphi for over twenty years. He was also initiated into the Dionysian Mysteries as he also states in *Consolatio ad uxorem*[1]. However, this religiosity of Plutarch is not directly intertwined with only one religious doctrine, as in *Moralia* beyond the Greek twelve Gods he also refers to the Egyptian religious world but also to the Jewish one. Plutarch, living in an environment of religious comparability, had treated the different religions with respect. The author from Chaeronea had also received strong influences from Plato, as well as that related to the attempt to acquire a partial

[1] *Cons. ad ux*. 611E.

* **CONTACT Adamantia Katsoula** Email: amanda.katsoula@yahoo.gr

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similarity with God (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν)[2] ('to become as much like God as possible'). Hirsch-Luipold[3] claim that Plutarch had embraced a general theological system and one doctrine of God. Teodorsson[4] and Lötscher[5] still talk about this monotheistic tendency of Plutarch[6]. Teodorsson emphasizes that among the traditional gods Apollo is more likely to show similarities with the Supreme Being due to his connection with light and divination. The aim of this particular article is to demonstrate that this deep religiosity of Plutarch with its philosophical approaches and extensions is also reflected lexicographically. I will analyze some of the religious linguistic creations attributed to the author and I will highlight their interconnection with Plutarch's philosophical theology. Some festivals, descriptions of deities and rare religious terms, which are found only in *Moralia*, will also be presented and I will prove that testify Plutarch's religious erudition, but also to his role as a philosopher-priest who also follows a lexicographical religious hermeneutic. Another special topic is the connection of Plutarch with the mystery religions and whether this is also reflected lexicographically. According to Hirsch-Luipold this issue connects Plutarch with other thinkers of his time, such as Clement of Alexandria. In this article there will be a recording of some mystery terms that Plutarch uses in *Moralia* and will be highlighted their connection with his philosophical way. I will emphasize that Plutarch connected the use of mystery terminology with basic areas of human life, such as the erotic or the political in order to underline their importance.

Religious linguistic creations connected with the divine world

About the authenticity of Plutarch's linguistic creations some doubts have been expressed, as the loss of Hellenistic texts prevents their complete lexicographical clarification, because the prose writer was probably a diligent reader of the literary works of the Hellenistic period. This view is shared by Teodorsson[7], who argues that there will always be reservations about the authenticity of the philosopher's lexical constructions, but emphasizes that we must also rely on this relative possibility, which links the lexicographical authorship of these terms to the writer. This scholar also underlines that we must assume that the author's corpus includes a large number of his own linguistic creations.

Plutarch in *Moralia* constructed several terms related to the field of religion. However, there is no systematic bibliographic analysis of these words, and this is precisely what makes them fertile ground for research. Some of these ἅπαξ λεγομένα are not merely linguistic

[2] Pl. *Theaet*. 176b.
[3] Hirsch-Luipold (2021).
[4] Teodorsson (2001).
[5] Lötscher (2021).
[6] *De Is. et Os.* 377F.
[7] Teodorsson (2005).

embellishments, as they have profound philosophical implications, because Plutarch sought, through them, to explain various religious mysteries. Indeed, some of these religious terms, with their profound cosmological and religious content, acquire an internal coherence, as they share a common thematic core: that of the divine world.

One such word with a deep philosophical background is the verb φαλληφορέω[8] ('to carry a phallus in a procession'), which is found in *De Iside et Osiride* (365C): ἡ δ' Ἶσις οὐχ εὗρεν, ἀλλ' ἐμφερὲς ἄγαλμα θεμένη καὶ κατασκευάσασα τιμᾶν καὶ φαλληφορεῖν ἔταξεν ('and that Isis could not find it, and therefore fashioned and prepared the resemblance and effigies of it, and appointed it to be worshipped and carried about in their processions'[9]). This is a compound word whose first components are the words φαλλός ('phallus') and φέρω ('bring') and it is used to denote the carrying of a phallus in the context of a cultic procession, in order to honor the god Osiris. Plutarch placed this word at a pivotal point in this treatise concerning the dismemberment of Osiris. The only part of Osiris that Isis could not find was his genital organ, which Typhon had thrown into the river. Isis then created a replica of the Phallus, which she ordered to be honored and carried in a procession. Through φαλληφορέω, Plutarch does not merely describe a religious ritual but also interprets it philosophically. As he himself explains later, this procession symbolizes that Osiris's generative and seminal power is due to moisture. Plutarch, as a Platonic philosopher, emphasizes the narrative aspect of the myth but also offers a philosophical interpretation of it, as he believes that myths conceal profound cosmological truths. Roger Jones[10] even notes that Plutarch uncovers hidden mysteries within myths and religious rituals. In this particular case, Plutarch, through φαλληφορέω explains the hidden allegory of the myth and, more specifically, the fundamental function of the procession. The fact that the actual phallus is lost signifies that the divine essence does not mix with the material world. With the help of φαλληφορέω the author emphasizes that the phallic procession achieves a spiritual connection between the faithful and the creative force of the universe, through which life continues to be sustained. This terminus technicus its aesthetic function, it has a purely philosophical function and served as the appropriate linguistic medium for the deconstruction of the myth and the role of phallic processions. Through this, however, it also attempts to link Osiris with Zeus and, consequently, implies the existence of a deity who sustains and perpetuates all things.

Συνεπιθειάζω ('to ascribe to divine interposition') is another word related to the divine and its presence in the sensible world and is found in *De Pythiae oraculis* (409C): ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλως ὅτι τηλικαύτην καὶ τοσαύτην μεταβολὴν ἐν ὀλίγῳ χρόνῳ γενέσθαι δι᾽ ἀνθρωπίνης ἐπιμελείας, μὴ θεοῦ παρόντος ἐνταῦθα καὶ συνεπιθειάζοντος τὸ χρηστήριον ('And yet it is not to be thought that such and so great change should come to pass in so small a time by human

[8] Σαρίσχουλη (2017).
[9] For the translation of all the passages of *Moralia* has been used Goodwin (1874).
[10] Jones (1980).

industry, without the favor of the Deity assisting and blessing his oracle'). Συνεπιθειάζω consists of the prefixes σὺν[11] και ἐπὶ and the verb θειάζω ('I act or speak as if I were divinely inspired'). The word θειάζω was an important religious term in the ancient world, as it emphasized the connection between believers and God. Θειάζω was used by many ancient authors such as Plato who used it primarily to mean complete absorption by God. Plutarch, however, by placing the prefix σὺν as the first component of the compound introduced a crucial semantic distinction, as he focuses on the collaboration between the divine and the human factors. Through this linguistic construction, Plutarch thus emphasizes that the prosperity enjoyed by the Oracle of Delphi in his time was the result of the collaborative framework that developed between the divine and human elements. This word, with its philosophical implications, reflects Plutarch's monotheistic inclination regarding the issue of religion; as Lipka points out, Plutarch does not refer specifically to the god Apollo, but more generally to God, since he uses the term θεός rather than ὁ θεός. Lipka[12] also argues that Plutarch may be referring to the daimon, echoing Brenk's[13] view that Plutarch's daimon tends to appear in apocalyptic or prophetic contexts. This compound term also appears in the Life of *Sulla*[14] in *Parallel Lives*. Plutarch used this word to convey Sulla's view, according to which he attributed the accomplishment of his feats to divine intervention. The term συνεπιθειάζω reflects Plutarch's role as a philosopher-priest because it is a philosophical term through which achieved the connection between man and God.

Another word in which Plutarch took care to emphasize the presence of the divine is ἀθείαστος[15] ('uninspired'). This term seemingly gives the impression that it does not encompass the concept of the divine within it, due to its first component, the negative *α-*, Plutarch, however, took care—in most cases—to accompany this word with a negation and thus to incorporate within the divine influence and inspiration. This approach reflects his piety, but also his effort to emphasize the divine interest in human affairs. For Plutarch atheism and superstition constitute two extremes, while the ideal is piety[16]. The terminus technicus ἀθείαστος appears twice in *Amatorius* and Plutarch, as a Platonic philosopher, used the word in the context of developing his theory of divine madness[17]. With the adjective ἀθείαστος the author refers to a type of madness that is not devoid of divine origin and thus distinguishes it from ordinary physical madness (758E): ἑτέρα δ' ἐστὶν οὐκ ἀθείαστος οὐδ' οἰκογενής ('The other is a kind of fury, partaking something of divine inspiration neither is it engendered within'). In its second appearance in this erotic work the prose writer underlines with ἀθείαστος that the divine is not uninvolved in the excitement of lovers since in this way

[11] About the preposition σύν in Plutarch's *Moralia* see Κατσούλα (2024).
[12] Lipka (2017).
[13] Brenk (1977).
[14] *Life of Sulla*, 6.5.
[15] *Parallel Lives* (*Marcus Coriolanus*, 33.3.2).
[16] *De supersitione* 171F.
[17] Pl. *Phaedrus* 244a-245c.

he wants to highlight the divine origin of love (759D): ὡς οὔτ' ἀθείαστον ὁ τῶν ἐρώντων ἐνθουσιασμός ἐστιν ('In short then I say, that the enthusiasm of lovers is neither void of divine inspiration, neither is it under the guardianship and conduct of any other Deity'). Beyond *Amatorius* this word is found in *De defectu oraculorum* and with the help of this terminus technicus Plutarch underlines that divination is related to divine inspiration (417A): ἡμεῖς δὲ μήτε μαντείας τινὰς ἀθειάστους εἶναι λέγοντας ἢ τελετὰς καὶ ὀργιασμοὺς ἀμελουμένους ὑπὸ θεῶν ἀκούωμεν ('But as to us, let us not think there are any oracles or divinations without some divinity, or that the Gods are not pleased with sacrifices, and our services, and other ceremonies'). This word also appears in Parallel Lives[18], where Plutarch notes that human thoughts are not devoid of divine inspiration).

Συνίερος ('having joint sacrifices') is another terminus technicus related to the divine world and is found in *Amatorius* (753F): ἡ δὲ σύνναος μὲν ἐνταυθοῖ καὶ συνίερος τοῦ Ἔρωτος ('And as for her who is in this very city enshrined in the same temple and honored with the same solemnities as Cupid'). This particular term conceals a profound philosophical and theological foundation, as Plutarch, through it, sought to emphasize the value of Eros, not as a mere carnal impulse, but as a as a secular and metaphysical force. While Plato argued that Eros was a daemon, Plutarch takes a different view and maintains that he is a god and deserves to be accorded the appropriate honors. Plutarch chose the preposition σὺν for the construction because he wanted to under lune that Phryne, the famous courtesan of antiquity, shared the same worship of the god Eros at Delphi through the offering of joint sacrifices.

Plutarch constructed numerous compound and polysynthetic words, which wear as their first linguistic garment prepositions. Teodorsson[19] emphasizes that the philosopher adopted this lexical preference from the writers of the Hellenistic period, as they liked to create words whose first compounds were prepositions. In fact, authors of that particular period preferred to combine two prepositions as the first linguistic elements for the formation of their words. However, according to Teodorsson, Plutarch further developed this characteristic, transforming it into a distinctive feature of his own style.

Plutarch's religious vocabulary is directly intertwined with his philosophical theology. Influenced by Plato[20], Plutarch believed in a God whom people can approach, in part, through their virtuous lives. Plutarch in *Moralia* constructed a collection of religious terms with philosophical dimensions. This group or terms are internally organized because they refer to the divine world and demonstrate his monotheistic inclination toward religion. For Plutarch, the creation of new term served as a key tool for expressing his theology.

[18] *Life of Coriolanus*, 33.4.
[19] Teodorsson (2005).
[20] Pl. *Timaeus* 28a-c.

Festivals, Names of Deities, and Priestly Offices

Plutarch also expressed his intense verbal religiosity through the citation of a series of holidays, identifying deities, priestly offices and Pythian terms, which are found exclusively in *Moralia*. I will begin our reference to the world of holidays from the following festive trilogy, which took place at Delphi every eight years: Στεπτήριον, Ἠρωίς and Χάριλα. Information about it is quoted by the prose writer in *Quaestiones Romanae* (293C): τρεῖς ἄγουσι Δελφοὶ ἐνναετηρίδας κατὰ τὸ ἑξῆς, ὧν τὴν μὲν Στεπτήριον καλοῦσι, τὴν δ' Ἠρωίδα, τὴν δὲ Χάριλαν ('The Delphians solemnized three nonennial feasts in regular order, of which they call one Stepterium, another Ilerois, and the third Charila'). The first holiday in the hierarchical reference, the Στεπτήριον, which owes its name to the στεπτήρια (of or for crowning), as we can learn about them from the lexicographer Hesychius (Σ1756.1), seems to have been a representation of the events which were related to the conflict between Apollo and Python.

Ἠρωίς was a celebration with Dionysian roots and a mystical one as it was attended by the Thyades, the followers of the god Dionysus, who were the only ones who knew the secret meaning of the celebration. In reference to the overt events connected with its specific holiday, these had to do with the invocation and return of Semele[21], the mother of Dionysus, from Hades to the upper world. Dionysos also played a decisive role in this comeback.

At the end of this chain of festivals we meet Χάριλα, who owes her name to an orphaned young girl who had taken refuge with the king of Delphi in order to ask for food because of the famine. But he himself, maintaining an inhuman and arrogant behavior, preferred to help the people who belonged to the upper social classes and this resulted in him manifesting a violent behavior towards the little girl with noble morals. The girl, however, was led to the doomed journey, because she could not stand the rude and petty attitude of the king. Therefore, because of the unacceptable behavior of the king, the god Apollo became angry and caused the manifestation of various diseases.

Pythia then prophesied that Χάριλα should be propitiated so that the situation could be reversed. Thus, it was established that a purification ceremony should be held for Χάριλα every eight years. According to her etiquette, the king had to distribute barley and flour[22] to all the citizens, regardless of whether they were residents of Delphi or came from another city. When the distribution of food was completed, the king would strike a child effigy of Χάριλα, which had been brought there. Then the leader of the Thyades took it to some place full of gorges and there they performed a reenactment of the hanging of the little girl. In the end the effigy was buried exactly where the girl had been buried.

[21] Pausanias (2.37.5).
[22] Tanga (2021).

The Delphic holiday atmosphere is also preserved in *De Exilio*, where reference is made to *Μεταγείτνια*[23] which were held in honor of Metageitnius Apollo[24] who was the patron of relocations and maintaining good relations with neighbors (601B-C): ἆρ᾽ οὖν ξένοι καὶ ἀπόλιδές εἰσιν Ἀθηναίων οἱ μεταστάντες ἐκ Μελίτης εἰς Διωμίδα, ὅπου καὶ μῆνα Μεταγειτνιῶνα καὶ θυσίαν ἐπώνυμον ἄγουσι τοῦ μετοικισμοῦ τὰ Μεταγείτνια (‘Do you look upon those Athenians as strangers and banished persons who removed from Melite to Diomea, — whence they called the month Metageitnion, and the sacrifices they offered in memory of their removal Metageitnia’). This festival was held during the month of Metageitniona, to commemorate the migration of the residents of the Athenian municipality of Melitis to the municipality of Diomi. However, apart from this internal migration, the warm welcome extended by the inhabitants of Diomeda to the Meliteans was also celebrated. Offering sacrifices was also included in the ceremonial framework of this celebration.

In addition to the rare holidays associated with the god Apollo, Plutarch in *Moralia* wrote information about some unknown holidays, which were related to the god Dionysus. One of them was held in Boeotia in honor of the Agrionian[25] Dionysos and information about this festival can be found in *Quaestiones convivales*, in *Quaestiones Romanae* and in *Quaestiones Graecae*. In *Quaestiones convivales* we are informed that the women during this celebration were looking for the god Dionysus because he had fled, but when they had come to the conclusion that the god of the vine had taken refuge with the Muses, they partook in a dinner and proposed riddles to one another and riddles with the aim of imparting a pedagogical mood to their discussion (717A): οὐ φαύλως οὖν καὶ παρ᾽ ἡμῖν ἐν τοῖς Ἀγριωνίοις τὸν Διόνυσον αἱ γυναῖκες ὡς ἀποδεδρακότα ζητοῦσιν (‘It is a good custom therefore of our women, who in their feasts called Agrionia seek after Bacchus as if he were run away’).

In *Quaestiones Romanae* we are informed that on this particular holiday the use of ivy was allowed due to its connection with Dionysus, while in the temples of the other Olympian gods not only its use, but also its existence as a plant was prohibited. Another piece of information we get is that the majority of the ceremonies related to the celebration of Ἀγριώνια took place in the evening like those of Νυκτέλια, another Dionysian celebration (291A): διὸ τῶν μὲν ὀλυμπίων ἱερῶν εἴργεται, καὶ οὔτ᾽ ἐν Ἥρας Ἀθήνησιν οὔτε Θήβησιν ἐν Ἀφροδίτης ἴδοι τις ἂν κιττόν· Ἀγριωνίοις δὲ καὶ Νυκτελίοις, ὧν τὰ πολλὰ διὰ σκότους δρᾶται, πάρεστιν (‘Hence ivy is forbidden at the Olympic festivals, and neither at Athens in Juno's sacrifices, nor at Thebes in those belonging to Venus, can any wild ivy be seen; though in the Agrionia and Nyctelia’).

[23] A similar type of celebration, called Μετοίκια, can also be found in *Parallel Lives* (*Theseus* 24.4.2).
[24] Lysimachus (fr. 21.2).
[25] The adjective Ἀγριώνιος, which is attributed to the god of wine, is found only in the *Parallel Lives* (*Antony*, 24.5.2).

Plutarch in *Quaestiones Graecae* mentions that the inhabitants of Orchomenos, within the framework of the festival of Ἀγριώνια[26], decided to reenact the flight and pursuit of the Minyads[27] by the priest of Dionysus, who held a sword and, in fact, any woman he captured had the right to kill any woman he captured (299E): καὶ γίνεται παρ' ἐνιαυτὸν ἐν τοῖς Ἀγριωνίοις φυγὴ καὶ δίωξις αὐτῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ Διονύσου ξίφος ἔχοντος ('And it is so ordered that, in the yearly feast called Agrionia, there is a flight and pursuit of them by the priest of Bacchus, with a drawn sword in his hand'). According to Plutarch's personal testimony, which is underlined by the intentional determination of time ἐφ' ἡμῶν, in his time a priest named Zoilos killed one of these women. However, this act of his constituted a sacrilege, as a result of which he himself died and his family was stripped of the priestly office. Volpe[28] argues that, for Plutarch, Dionysus was a spirited god. Therefore, Plutarch's inclusion of these festivals is intended to highlight this spiritual aspect of Dionysus, as well as Plutarch's attempt to connect him with the essence of God.

Φαλληφόρια is a festival that is found in *De Iside et Osiride* (355E): καὶ τὴν τῶν Παμυλίων ἑορτὴν αὐτῷ τελεῖσθαι Φαλληφορίοις ἐοικυῖαν ('resembling the Priapeian procession which the Greeks call Phallephoria'). This particular word is a neologism, because Plutarch wanted to create a linguistic construct that would refer to a Greek festival, in order to compare it with the corresponding Egyptian festival, that of Παμύλια. Φαλληφόρια were a phallic procession within the festive context of the Dionysian celebrations. It is worth mentioning that φαλλός played a central role in these celebrations as a symbol of fertility and production. Plutarch in *De cupiditate divitiarum* referring to the simple cloak that originally surrounded the celebrations of Dionysus, also informs us about these processions, in which φαλλός played a leading role (527D): ἡ πάτριος τῶν Διονυσίων ἑορτὴ τὸ παλαιὸν ἐπέμπετο δημοτικῶς καὶ ἱλαρῶς· ἀμφορεὺς οἴνου καὶ κληματίς, εἶτα τράγον τις εἶλκεν, ἄλλος ἰσχάδων ἄρριχον ἠκολούθει κομίζων, ἐπὶ πᾶσι δ' ὁ φαλλός ('Our country's feast of Bacchus was in old time celebrated in a more homely manner, though with great mirth and jollity. One carried in procession a vessel of wine and a branch of a vine, afterwards followed one leading a goat, another followed him bearing a basket of dried figs, and after all came a phallus').

The influence of the god Dionysus, beyond Egypt, seems to extend to Judaism. In *Quaestiones convivales*, on the issue of the origin and identity of the Jewish god, Plutarch refers to the possible proximity between the god of wine and the god of the Jews (671C): Τίς ὁ παρ' Ἰουδαίοις θεός ('What God is Worshipped by the Jews'). The philosopher confirms this connection with a series of festivals that he lists. It is worth mentioning that some of these make their first and only appearance in this sixth problem of the fourth book of *Quaestiones convivales*. In one of them, a procession was held with fig branches, called κραδηφορία, as

[26] Volpe (2021).
[27] Tanga (2021).
[28] Volpe (2021).

well as with thyrsus, called θυρσοφορία (671E): ἔστι δὲ καὶ κραδηφορία τις ἑορτὴ καὶ θυρσοφορία παρ' αὐτοῖς, ἐν ᾗ θύρσους ἔχοντες εἰς τὸ ἱερὸν εἰσίασιν εἰσελθόντες δ' ὅ τι δρῶσιν, οὐκ ἴσμεν, εἰκὸς δὲ βακχείαν εἶναι τὰ ποιούμενα ('Within a few days after they celebrate another feast, not darkly but openly, dedicated to Bacchus, for they have a feast amongst them called Kradephoria, from carrying palm-trees, and Thyrsophoria, when they enter into the temple carrying thyrsi. What they do within I know not; but it is very probable that they perform the rites of Bacchu'). The Jews entered their sanctuary with these thyrsi, but we do not know what took place inside. They were probably performing a Bacchic-type ritual, as underlined by the use of the participle εἰκός. They also used trumpets to summon the god, and this action reminds us of a similar one performed by the Argives in order to invite the thunderous Dionysus (*De Iside et Osiride*, 364F). There were also some who led the way playing the guitar. These were the so-called Λευίτες, the priests of the Jews. Here we see an etymological attempt on behalf of Plutarch, as he may be trying to link the name of these priests with the names of Dionysus Λύσιος and Εὔιος (671E): καὶ γὰρ σάλπιγξι μικραῖς, ὥσπερ Ἀργεῖοι τοῖς Διονυσίοις, ἀνακαλούμενοι τὸν θεὸν χρῶνται καὶ κιθαρίζοντες ἕτεροι προΐασιν, οὓς αὐτοὶ Λευίτας προσονομάζουσιν, εἴτε παρὰ τὸν Λύσιον εἴτε μᾶλλον παρὰ τὸν Εὔιον τῆς ἐπικλήσεως γεγενημένης ('First they have little trumpets, such as the Grecians used to have at their Bacchanalia to call upon their Gods withal. Others go before them playing upon harps, which they call Levites, whether so named from Lusius or Evius, — either word agrees with Bacchus').

It is worth mentioning that in the introductory section of this issue of *Quaestiones convivales* there is a talk about τριετηρικὴν παντέλειαν (671D): καὶ τὰ μὲν πολλὰ τῶν εἰς τοῦτο τεκμηρίων μόνοις ἐστὶ ῥητὰ καὶ διδακτὰ τοῖς μυουμένοις παρ' ἡμῖν εἰς τὴν τριετηρικὴν παντέλειαν ('And no man is able or fit to hear the chief confirmation of this truth, but those amongst us who are initiated and skilled in the triennial nanilua, or great mysteries of the God'). In ancient Greece, the word παντέλεια meant completion, perfection, fulfillment, but also the number ten, according to the Pythagoreans. However, when adorned and embellished with the adjective τριετηρικήν, this word takes on religious dimensions, as it refers to the mysteries performed every three years, which were probably associated with the god Dionysus and took place in the Greek world.

Plutarch talks about Φωσφόρεια[29] in the treatise *Adversus Colotem* (1119E): πῶς δὲ φωσφόρεια, βακχεῖα, προτέλεια γάμων ἄξομεν, μὴ ἀπολιπόντες μηδὲ βακχεῖς καὶ φωσφόρους καὶ προηροσίους καὶ σωτῆρας; ('How shall we celebrate the Phosphoria, or torch-festivals, the Bacchanals, and the ceremonies that go before marriage, if we admit neither Bacchantes, Gods of light, Gods who protect the sown field, nor preservers of the state'). This celebration was held in honor of the phosphor gods or was a celebration during which there were

[29] Hesychius (Φ1123.1).

processions with torches. It is worth noting that the phosphor gods include Apollo as the god of light, his sister Artemis, as well as Hekate.

Apart from the occasional sayings and the religious map of the rare holidays, Plutarch also captured his intense interest in the world of religion through the presentation of a series of defining deities, which are found exclusively in his work. A group of such nicknames that has the verb γίγνομαι as the second component is the following: ἁλιγενής, Ἑβδομαγενής, κορυφαγενής. The adjective ἁλιγενής is found in *Quaestiones convivales* (685F): οἶμαι δὲ καὶ τὴν Ἀφροδίτην ἁλιγενῆ τοὺς ποιητὰς προσαγορεύειν καὶ μῦθον ἐπ' αὐτῇ πεπλασμένον ἐξενεγκεῖν, ὡς ἀπὸ θαλάσσης ἐχούσῃ τὴν γένεσιν, εἰς τὸ τῶν ἁλῶν γόνιμον αἰνιττομένους ('And I think the poets had a respect to this generative power of salt in their fable of Venus springing from the sea. And it may be farther observed, that they make all the sea Gods very fruitful, and give them large families'). This word illuminates some important detail from the birth of the goddess Aphrodite, as it is used to denote the birth of the goddess of beauty from the sea and her connection with salt. In fact, salt underlines the role of Aphrodite as the goddess of love and procreation, and references to the fertilizing effect of salt are also made by the prose writer in *Quaestiones naturales* (912F).

In *Quaestiones convivales* we also find another adjective, which also has as its second component γίγνομαι, the attributive Ἑβδομαγενής (717E): οἱ προφῆται καὶ ἱερεῖς Ἑβδομαγενῆ καλεῖτε ('Nay, the God himself (he continued) you, his priests and prophets, call Hebdomagenes, as if he were born on the seventh day'). This word is associated with the god Apollo, who had received this name because he was born on the seventh day of the month. The god of music seems to have been directly connected to the number seven, as can be seen from his aforementioned name, and this is also confirmed in *De E apud Delphos* (391F) where a corresponding reference is made. In *Quaestiones Graecae* (291E) we are informed that, before the monthly oracles were established, the only month in which oracles were given was βύσιος or πύσιος. On the seventh day of the month in question, Pythia prophesied and this day in the Delphi area was considered as the birthday of the god Apollo.

Another attributive adjective, which is colored with the meaning of birth, is *κορυφαγενής*. This specific name is attributed to the goddess Athena and is found in *De Iside and Osiride* (381F): οἱ δὲ Πυθαγόρειοι καὶ ἀριθμοὺς καὶ σχήματα θεῶν ἐκόσμησαν προσηγορίαις. τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἰσόπλευρον τρίγωνον ἐκάλουν Ἀθηνᾶν κορυφαγενῆ καὶ τριτογένειαν, ὅτι τρισὶ καθέτοις ἀπὸ τῶν τριῶν γωνιῶν ἀγομέναις διαιρεῖται ('The Pythagoreans also honored numbers and geometric figures with the names of Gods. For they called an equilateral triangle Minerva Coryphagenes (or croionhorn) and Tritogeneia, because it is equally divided by perpendiculars drawn from the three angles'). This name is probably linked to the birth of the goddess from the head of her father, Zeus. Here, however, we observe an interesting tactic of the Pythagoreans, who used to name shapes and numbers after gods. In

this case, the name of the goddess Athena is used to name the equilateral triangle, as well as the qualifiers that accompany it, κορυφαγενῆ and τριτογένειαν.

In a parabolic atmosphere in *Quaestiones Romanae* concerning Γενείτα, Mother of the Romans, Plutarch also cites the example of Εἰλιονεία who was worshipped by the Greeks and more specifically by the Argives (277B): ὥσπερ οὖν οἱ Ἕλληνες τῇ Ἑκάτῃ, καὶ τῇ Γενείτῃ κύνα Ῥωμαῖοι θύουσιν ὑπὲρ τῶν οἰκογενῶν. Ἀργείους δὲ Σωκράτης φησὶ τῇ Εἰλιονείᾳ κύνα θύειν διὰ τὴν ῥᾳστώνην τῆς λοχείας (‘for as the Greeks do sacrifice a dog to Hecate, so do the Romans to Geneta on the behalf of the natives of the house. Moreover, Socrates saith that the Argives do sacrifice a dog to Eilioneia (Lucina) to procure a facility of delivery’). The inhabitants of Argos sacrificed a female dog to her because of the ease with which she gave birth to her children. Εἰλιονεία may also refer to Ειλείθυια, the protector of childbirth and delivery.

Plutarch, in expressing his bewilderment at the sacrifice of dogs by the Roman Luperci in *Quaestiones Romanae*, also tells us about a Greek festival in honor of the goddess Hecate, in which puppies were used as sacrifices in purification rites. Περισκυλακισμός[30], therefore, in the context of the aforementioned festival, is a way of purifying and cleansing individuals through their contact with sacrificed puppies during their procession (280C): καὶ τῇ Ἑκάτῃ σκυλάκια μετὰ τῶν ἄλλων καθαρσίων ἐκφέρουσι καὶ περιμάττουσι σκυλακίοις τοὺς ἀγνισμοῦ δεομένους, περισκυλακισμὸν τὸ τοιοῦτο γένος τοῦ καθαρμοῦ καλοῦντες (‘and among other sacrifices of purification, they offer whelps to Hecate, and sprinkle those that need cleansing with the puppy's blood, calling this kind of purifying puppification’). Plutarch is the first writer to place these sacrificial practices associated with Hecate within the context of contamination and, consequently, purification[31]. It is interesting that Plutarch showed particular interest in Hekate, as he refers to her in various works and discusses various aspects of her such as ritual, astrological, and magical. Plutarch attempted to discuss Hekate in a philosophical manner.

In *Moralia* we also find a series of priestly offices, which do not appear in other works of ancient Greek literature. Such a group is made up of certain female priestly offices, which were associated with Artemis of Ephesus and are found in *An seni respublica gerenda sit* (795E): καὶ τῶν ἐν Ἐφέσῳ περὶ τὴν Ἄρτεμιν ὁμοίως ἑκάστην Μελλιέρην τὸ πρῶτον εἶθ’ Ἱέρην τὸ δὲ τρίτον Παριέρην καλοῦσιν (‘and as in like manner they call every one of those who are consecrated to the service of Diana in Ephesus, first Mell-hiere (one that is to be a priestess), then Iliere (priestess), and thirdly Par-hiere (or one that has been a priestess)’) . Plutarch, wishing to emphasize that the course of a complete political man passes through various stages and gradations, lists these Ephesian priestly offices in stages. Μελλιέρη, as indicated by the composite parts of which it is composed, μέλλω and *ἱέρεια*, is the probationary priestess, Ἱέρη is the active priestess and Παριέρη is the former priestess.

[30] *Parallel Lives* (*Romulus* 21.10.4).
[31] López Carrasco (2021).

Another rare priestess that Plutarch mentions in *Quaestiones Graecae* is Ὑπεκκαύστρια[32], who was a priestess of the goddess Athena in Solos and was responsible for performing some sacrifices and rites with the aim of removing evil. Her name, therefore, is reflective and indicative of her role, as it includes the concept of burning (292A): Τίς ἡ παρὰ Σόλοις Ὑπεκκαύστρια; τὴν τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς ἱέρειαν οὕτω καλοῦσιν, ὅτι ποιεῖταί τινας θυσίας καὶ ἱερουργίας ἀποτροπαίους ('Who is *ὑπεκκαύστρια* among the Solenses? They call the she-priest of Minerva so, because she offers certain sacrifices and oblations for the averting of impending calamities').

Plutarch in *Quaestiones Graecae* also mentions a male priestly office and more specifically that of *κριθολόγος* among the Opundians (292C): τὸν μὲν οὖν ἐπὶ τῶν θυσιῶν ἄρχοντα καὶ ταύτας κομιζόμενον τὰς ἀπαρχάς 'κριθολόγον' ὠνόμαζον ('now they called him Crithologus who presided over the sacrifices and received the first-fruit'). As the word itself informs us, this priestly function is associated with barley, since this official, in addition to performing sacrifices, was responsible for offering barley as initiations. The distributive quotations *ὁ μὲν* and *ὁ δὲ* emphasize that there were two priests who were responsible for performing sacrifices, one responsible for those related to the gods and the other for those related to demons.

Plutarch also refers to certain offices related to the structure of the Egyptian priesthood, which we find in *De Iside and Osiride* (352B): διὸ καὶ τῶν ἐν Ἑρμοῦ πόλει Μουσῶν τὴν προτέραν Ἶσιν ἅμα καὶ Δικαιοσύνην καλοῦσι, σοφὴν οὖσαν, ὥσπερ εἴρηται, καὶ δεικνύουσαν τὰ θεῖα τοῖς ἀληθῶς καὶ δικαίως ἱεραφόροις καὶ ἱεροστόλοις προσαγορευομένοις ('Isis being (as we before said) no other than wisdom, and revealing things divine to such as are truly and justly styled the sacred bearers, and keepers of the sacred robes'). Isis, who was considered the first muse in Hermopolis, revealed divine matters to those who rightfully bore the titles of ἱεραφόροι and ἱεροστόλοι. It is worth noting that the adverbial synonymous pair ἀληθῶς and δικαίως emphasizes the proper exercise of the priestly office on their part. The ἱεροστόλος seems to have been responsible for the sacred vestments, and perhaps his office was comparable to that of the στολιστοῦ, which we encounter again in this religious work by Plutarch (366F): καὶ τὴν ἱερὰν κίστην οἱ στολισταὶ καὶ οἱ ἱερεῖς ἐκφέρουσι χρυσοῦν ἐντὸς ἔχουσαν κιβώτιον ('and the priest and sacred livery bring forth the chest, having within it a little golden ark'). Στολιστής, according to the above, seems to have been responsible for dressing the divine statues. As for ἱεραφόρον, he was responsible for carrying the sacred vessels. This word, whose linguistic origin is the plural form of ἱερόν, appears in literature only in Plutarch but it also appears in inscriptions (*SIG* 2754). However, a slightly different form of the first component is ιεροφόρος, which is attested in inscriptions (IG 9(1).486.16 (1st-2nd century AD) and in some Aesopian collections *Vita G* (4.3), (4.17), (5.1), (5.11), (8.7) from the 1st century AD.

[32] Hesychius also mentions *ὑπερκάϋστρα* (Υ424.1).

Plutarch in *Moralia* sheds light on some lexicographical information, which is related to the Pythian world as in *De Pythiae oraculis* he refers to certain Pythian lexical terms, which do not correspond to any other written text of ancient Greek literature (406E): ἀπέπαυσε δὲ τὴν Πυθίαν ὁ θεός 'πυρικάους' μὲν ὀνομάζουσαν τοὺς αὐτῆς πολίτας, 'ὀφιοβόρους' δὲ τοὺς Σπαρτιάτας, 'ὀρεᾶνας' δὲ τοὺς ἄνδρας, 'ὀρεμπότας' δὲ τοὺς ποταμούς ('And then it was, that Apollo caused the Pythian priestess to surcease calling her fellow-citizens fire-inflaming, the Spartans serpent-devourers, men by the name of Oreanes, and rivers by the name of mountain-drainers'). Through an unrelated figure we are informed that the Pythia called her fellow citizens πυρικάους ('fire-starters'), the Spartans ὀφιοβόρους ('snake-eaters') and the men ὀρεᾶνας[33]. He described their rivers as *ὀρεμπότας* that is, like those that drink from the mountains. We notice that the Pythia's words are imbued with this oblique and ambiguous fragrance with which she perfumed her oracles to convey them to the divinatory audience.

In *Moralia* we also find some rare religious words, such as the compound verb φοιβονομέομαι ('I live according to the laws of Phoebus/I am purified'), which is found in *De apud Delphos* (393C): Φοῖβον δὲ δήπου τὸ καθαρὸν καὶ ἁγνὸν οἱ παλαιοὶ πᾶν ὠνόμαζον, ὡς ἔτι Θεσσαλοὶ τοὺς ἱερέας ἐν ταῖς ἀποφράσιν ἡμέραις αὐτοὺς ἐφ' ἑαυτῶν ἔξω διατρίβοντας, οἶμαι, 'φοιβονομεῖσθαι' λέγουσι ('and Phoebus was the name given by the ancients to everything that is pure and chaste; as the Thessalians even to this day, if I am not mistaken, say of their priests, when on vacant days they abstain from the temples and keep themselves retired, that they purify themselves (φοιβονομεῖσθαι)'). It is a word of Thessalian origin and is used to denote the theological activity of the priests there, who during the inauspicious days lived outside the city in order to follow a process of purification. It is a word of Apollonian origin with a purifying connotation, as indicated by its constituent parts: Φοῖβος και νόμος.

The religious term ἐναγικός ('relating to someone cursed') is found in *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae* (825C): ἀποκτείναντες οἱ Δελφοὶ τὸν Κράτητα καὶ τοὺς συστασιάσαντας ἐκ τῶν χρημάτων ἐναγικῶν προσαγορευθέντων τοὺς κάτω ναοὺς ἀνῳκοδόμησαν ('After many such things were perpetrated, the Delphians, putting to death Crates and his companions in the sedition, out of their estates which they called excommunicated, built the temples in the lower part of the town'). The word ἐναγικός is not a lexical creation of Plutarch, as he chooses to present it through a transitive verb and, in this particular case, with the participle προσαγορευθέντων ('having been designated/called'). The religiously colored adjective incorporates within itself the concept of *miasma* and sacrilege, as its second component also states, which is none other than the archaic noun ἄγος ('pollution' or 'guilt'). This linguistic term has been placed in a paradigmatic context related to the personal conflict between Crates and Orsilaos at Delphi. Crates even went so far as to kill Orsilaos and some of his relatives who had taken refuge as suppliants in the temple of Athena Pronoia in Delphi. This act did not go unpunished, for the inhabitants of Delphi in their turn killed Crates.

[33] In Hesychius (O1137.1) we find the word *ὀρείονες*.

Therefore, the money used to build the lower temples at Delphi was labeled sacrificial because it bore the brunt of this defilement.

In *Quaestiones Graecae* we found the noun ἔγκνισμα, which is connected to a local funerary custom, according to which those who had lost a relative or friend had to first offer a sacrifice to the god Apollo and after thirty days to Mercury (297A): καὶ τὸ πῦρ ἀποσβέσαντες ὡς μεμιασμένον παρ' ἑτέρων δ' ἐναυσάμενοι, τοῦτο τὸ κρέας ὀπτῶσιν 'ἔγκνισμα' προσαγορεύοντες ('Giving then barley to Apollo's minister, they take the flesh of the sacrifice, and extinguishing the fire as polluted but kindling it again afresh, they boil this flesh, calling it ἔγκνισμα'). Within this ritual context they decided to remove meat from the sacrificed animal and then cook it on another hearth for purification purposes. This grilled piece of meat was called ἔγκνισμα.

This religious glossary of festivals, divine attributes, priestly offices, and rare terms attests to Plutarch's religious erudition, which is not limited to a single religious doctrine. This rich lexicographical world, with its varied nuances, attests to the monotheistic tendency that characterized the philosopher. Plutarch acknowledges a Higher Being without however rejecting the polytheistic system. Teodorsson[34] also argues that Plutarch believed in a higher power and that Apollo was the god who most closely resembled it. This is also documented lexicographically, as while Plutarch dedicated many of these religious terms—which appear only in his works—to various religions, he dedicated quite a few of them to Apollo. More specifically these words are the following: Στεπτήριον, Χάριλα, Μεταγείτνια, Φωσφόρεια, Ἑβδομαγενής, πυρικάους, ὀφιοβόρους ὀρεᾶνας, ὀρεμπότας, φοιβονομέομαι.

Mystical Terminology

Mystery cults were a key feature of the religious development of the Roman Empire[35]. Plutarch had expressed a keen interest in them, as he was an initiate in the Dionysian Mysteries, the Eleusinian Mysteries, and possibly those of Osiris. Hirsch-Luipold[36] notes that Plutarch had also been lexically influenced by the Mysteries, as he uses terms from mystery religions to describe the encounter with the divine, as well as terms of initiation to refer to philosophy.

In *Moralia*, Plutarch's keen interest in the Mysteries is reflected lexically through the use of numerous mystical terms, as well as in several passages where there is a significant concentration of mystical vocabulary. One such example is the following quotation from *De tranquillitate animi* (477C-E):

[34] Teodorsson (2001).
[35] Belayche& Massa (2021).
[36] Hirsch-Luipold (2021).

ἱερόν μὲν γὰρ ἁγιώτατον ὁ κόσμος ἐστὶ καὶ θεοπρεπέστατον· εἰς δὲ τοῦτον ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἰσάγεται διὰ τῆς γενέσεως οὐ χειροκμήτων οὐδ' ἀκινήτων ἀγαλμάτων θεστής, ἀλλ' οἷα νοῦς θεῖος αἰσθητὰ μιμήματα νοητῶν, φησὶν ὁ Πλάτων, ἔμφυτον ἀρχὴν ζωῆς ἔχοντα καὶ κινήσεως ἔφηνεν, ἥλιον καὶ σελήνην καὶ ἄστρα καὶ ποταμοὺς νέον ὕδωρ ἐξιέντας ἀεὶ καὶ γῆν φυτοῖς τε καὶ ζῴοις τροφὰς ἀναπέμπουσαν. ὧν τὸν βίον μύησιν ὄντα καὶ τελετὴν τελειοτάτην εὐθυμίας δεῖ μεστὸν εἶναι καὶ γήθους· οὐχ ὥσπερ οἱ πολλοὶ Κρόνια καὶ Διάσια καὶ Παναθήναια καὶ τοιαύτας ἄλλας ἡμέρας περιμένουσιν, ἵν' ἡσθῶσι καὶ ἀναπέμψωσιν τὸν γέλωτα μίμοις καὶ ὀρχησταῖς, μισθοὺς τελέσαντες. εἶτ' ἐκεῖ μὲν εὔφημοι καθήμεθα κοσμίως· οὐδεὶς γὰρ ὀδύρεται μυούμενος οὐδὲ θρηνεῖ Πύθια θεώμενος ἢ πίνων ἐν Κρονίοις· ἃς δ' ὁ θεὸς ἡμῖν ἑορτὰς χορηγεῖ καὶ μυσταγωγεῖ καταισχύνουσιν, ἐν ὀδυρμοῖς τὰ πολλὰ καὶ βαρυθυμίαις καὶ μερίμναις ἐπιπόνοις διατρίβοντες.

For the world is a spacious and beautiful temple; this a man is brought into as soon as he is born, where he is not to be a dull spectator of immovable and lifeless images made by human hands, but is to contemplate sublime things, which (as Plato tells us) the divine mind has exhibited to our senses as likenesses of things in the ideal world, having the principles of life and motion in themselves; such as are the sun, moon, and stars; rivers which are still supplied with fresh accessions of water; and the earth, which with a motherly indulgence suckles the plants and feeds her sensitive creatures. Now since life is the introduction and the most perfect initiation into these mysteries, it is but just that it should be full of cheerfulness and tranquility. For we are not to imitate the little vulgar, who waits impatiently for the jolly days which are consecrated to Saturn, Bacchus, and Minerva, that they may be merry with hired laughter, and pay such a price to the mimic and stagedancer for their diversions. At all these games and ceremonies we sit silent and composed; for no man laments when he is initiated in the rites, when he beholds the games of Apollo, or drinks in the Saturnalia. But when the Gods order the scenes at their own festivals, or initiate us into their own mysteries, the enjoyment becomes sordid to us; and we wear out our wretched lives in care, heaviness of spirit, and bitter complaints.

This is a passage with philosophical undertones that also reflects Plutarch's lexicographical interest in the Mysteries[37]. Plutarch, in addition to the religious terms ἱερός ('of divine things') and ἅγιος ('devoted to the gods'), included in this passage the sacramental words μύησις ('initiation') and τελετή ('initiation in the mysteries'), which were used to characterize the entry of those who wished to be initiated into the world of Mysteries. In this

[37] Roskam (2001).

moral work of the author, they are used metaphorically, because life introduces us to the mysteries of animate and inanimate beings. Another sacramental term we trace is the verb μυσταγωγέω[38] ('initiate') which the prose writer again placed in a figurative mood in his text in order to emphasize that God initiates people into the mysteries of the cycle of life. The philosopher, through the use of mystical terminology in this quotation, wanted to convey to his readers messages with timeless power and above all to emphasize that they should be godly and surround their lives with manifestations of joy and not with sorrows.

Through the use of mystical terminology, Plutarch tried to highlight the importance of various areas of human life, such as the philosophical one. One such intention of the prose writer can also be found in the treatise *Quomodo quis suos in virtute sentiat profectus*. Here those who are about to be initiated are likened to those who wish to be introduced into the philosophical realm (81E):

> ὥσπερ γὰρ οἱ τελούμενοι κατ' ἀρχὰς μὲν ἐν θορύβῳ καὶ βοῇ συνίασι πρὸς ἀλλήλους ὠθούμενοι, δρωμένων δὲ καὶ δεικνυμένων τῶν ἱερῶν προσέχουσιν ἤδη μετὰ φόβου καὶ σιωπῆς, οὕτω καὶ φιλοσοφίας ἐν ἀρχῇ καὶ περὶ θύρας πολὺν θόρυβον ὄψει καὶ λαλιὰν καὶ θρασύτητα, ὠθουμένων πρὸς τὴν δόξαν ἐνίων ἀγροίκως τε καὶ βιαίως· ὁ δ' ἐντὸς γενόμενος καὶ μέγα φῶς ἰδών, οἷον ἀνακτόρων ἀνοιγομένων, ἕτερον λαβὼν σχῆμα καὶ σιωπὴν καὶ θάμβος ὥσπερ θεῷ τῷ λόγῳ ταπεινὸς συνέπεται καὶ κεκοσμημένος.
>
> Those that are to be initiated in the ceremonies of the Gods run to their temples at first with a great deal of noise, clamor, and rudeness; but as soon as the solemnity is seen and over, they attend with a profound silence and religious fear. So it is with the candidates in philosophy; you may perceive a throng, noise, and pother about the school-doors, by reason that several press thither eagerly, rudely, and violently for reputation, more than learning; but when you are once in, and manifestly see the great light, as if some royal shrine were opened unto you, you are presently possessed with a quite different notion of things; are struck with silence and admiration, and begin, with humility and a reverend composure, to comply with and follow the divine oracle.

The mystical terms that we find in this passage are οἱ τελούμενοι, that is those who would be initiated, as well as δρώμενα and δεικνύμενα, which were some means and some ways by which they were led to initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries. More specifically δρώμενα were various rituals and δεικνύμενα were what the priests showed to the initiates, such as various symbolic representations, the statue of the goddess Demeter but also

[38] This word first appears in Democritus (fr. 300.17).

everything else that could be connected to her worship. In this section we are informed that those who were to be initiated gathered making a lot of noise and commotion at the beginning, which is also underlined by the synonymous pair θορύβῳ καὶ βοῇ. According to those who gathered around the door of philosophy were at first equally unruly. In fact, this noisy situation is underlined by the synonymous group πολὺν θόρυβον καὶ λαλιὰν καὶ θρασύτητα. But when the action and display began, then the wave of commotion and noise subsided and was replaced by feelings of awe and silence. A situation closes to the one mentioned above can also be found in the philosophical world, because those who managed to open the door of philosophy saw a bright light that calmed them down, just like those who had managed to enter the sanctuary of the Mysteries. The entry, therefore, into the philosophical space is likened to the initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries and according to Plutarch, initiation is the process that one must follow in order to join the crew and group of philosophy. The religious terminology and, in this case, the sacramental, has a special dynamic and in this particular treatise it is used to demonstrate how important the philosophical space is. Roskam[39] notes that there are many similarities between philosophy and mystical rituals. He further states that the view, that there are several steps one must take in order to enter both the philosophical world and the mystical world, is a central tenet of Middle and Neo-Platonism.

The political domain is another area whose importance Plutarch tried to emphasize through the use of mystical terminology. In the following simile from *An seni respublica gerenda sit*, the mystical terms μυούμενος καὶ μυσταγωγός are found, which are included in pairs with synonymous terms μανθάνων καὶ μυούμενος, διδάσκων καὶ μυσταγωγῶν (795D-795E):

> καθόλου δ’ ὥσπερ ἐν Ῥώμῃ ταῖς Ἑστιάσι παρθένοις τοῦ χρόνου διώρισται τὸ μὲν μανθάνειν τὸ δὲ δρᾶν τὰ νενομισμένα τὸ δὲ τρίτον ἤδη διδάσκειν, καὶ τῶν ἐν Ἐφέσῳ περὶ τὴν Ἄρτεμιν ὁμοίως ἑκάστην Μελλιέρην τὸ πρῶτον εἶθ’ Ἰέρην τὸ δὲ τρίτον Παριέρην καλοῦσιν· οὕτως ὁ τελέως πολιτικὸς ἀνὴρ τὰ μὲν πρῶτα μανθάνων ἔτι πολιτεύεται καὶ μυούμενος τὰ δ’ ἔσχατα διδάσκων καὶ μυσταγωγῶν.
>
> In brief, as in Rome the Vestal virgins have their time divided into three parts, in one of which they are to learn what belong to the ceremonies of their religion, in the second to execute what they have learned, and in the third to teach the younger; and as in like manner they call every one of those who are consecrated to the service of Diana in Ephesus, first Mell-hiere (one that is to be a priestess), then Iliere (priestess), and thirdly Par-hiere (or one that has been a priestess), so he that is a perfect statesman is at first a learner in the management of public affairs, then a practitioner, and at last a teacher and instructor in the mysteries of government.

[39]Roskam (2001).

According to the author, a politician must follow the aforementioned educational steps, corresponding to the priestly offices, in order to succeed in becoming a proper political man. The mystical terminology, therefore, inspired the writing pen of Plutarch, because he clothed some of his political linguistic references with religious attire, in order to give the necessary prestige to his words, but also to emphasize their importance.

Plutarch mentions that the philosophical discourse must have mystagogic dispositions, as he states *in De Iside and Osiride* (378B) as well as Eros as he notes in *Amatorius* (765A). It is worth noting that in these treatises he did not use the verb μυσταγωγέω ('initiate') but the noun μυσταγωγός ('introducing or initiating into mysteries'), which made its first appearance in Menander (*PCG* VI 2 fr. 500.1sq. K.-A.).

An important word of the Mysteries is ὄργια, which indicated the initiation rites and is found in *De gloria Atheniensium* and in *Adversus Colotem*. A linguistic derivative of this word is ὀργιαστής ('one who celebrates ὄργια') which is found four times in Moralia. In *De defectu oraculorum* (417A-B) it is used to indicate and emphasize the participation of demons in sacramental rites. With this very concept of participation in the orgies and, in fact, in those of Eros, we also find it in *Amatorius* (762A). In *Quaestiones convivales* (717D), however, this mystical word takes on the semantic nuance of follower and ardent supporter. In this case he declares the worship of Karneadis towards the Academy. We find a similar use of it in *Adversus Colotem* (1107F) to state that Aristodemus from Aegio was a fan of Plato.

Within this orgiastic linguistic climate, we will also mention the verb ὀργιαζω, which is used in the sense of 'perform sacramental orgiastic ceremonies', but also 'express my adoration towards someone through orgies'. It also sometimes emphasizes the intense participation of initiates in the Mysteries. With these literal semantic nuances the verb makes its appearance in the writing space of *Moralia* and is also found in *Animine an corporis affectiones sint peiores* (502A), in *Non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum* (1101E) and in *Quaestiones convivales* (671F).

Plutarch also used some derived words from ὀργιαζω and more specifically κατοργιάζω. He included this word in a literal tone in *De defectu oraculorum* and in *An seni respublica gerenda sit* (792F), but also metaphorically in the writings in *Amatorius* and in *De garullitate*. The verb κατοργιάζω is used to denote initiation into the Mysteries and in *Amatorius* (766B) this initiation took on metaphorical dimensions, as Plutarch presented the true lover as sprouting wings and being initiated into the orgiastic rites of Eros, dancing the heavenly dance. In *De garullitate* (505E-F) the verb κατοργιάζω takes on metaphorical dimensions there as well, as it refers to an initiation, which is connected to the realm of secrets. In this work Leaina, the courtesan who belonged to the circle of Armodius and Aristogeiton and probably the mistress of one of the two, is presented as initiated into the

mysteries of the secrets. She may have shared this with some members of the anti-tyrannical group and but she didn't reveal it in order to not endanger the lives of her friends.

Plutarch, influenced by the mysterious lexical environment, was also led to produce his own orgiastic linguistic creation, συνοργιάζω ('to celebrate mysteries together'), which is introduced in the first chapter. The specific word is found in *De facie in orbe lunae* (944D) and denotes the celebration of the sacraments with others and the preposition σύν, which is placed in front, emphasizes this sense of togetherness. In fact, the participatory activity and interest of the demons surrounding the orgiastic rituals is emphasized here.

Μύστης is a mystical term which is used to denote the initiate in the various Mysteries of antiquity. Plutarch in *Moralia* made use of this specific word in *Amatorius* (762A) where it is placed in a mystical synonymous pair: ὀργιασταῖς καὶ μύσταις. The word μύστης belongs to the language family of μυέω, a verb which we encounter in *Quomodo adulescens poetas debeat* (22A), *De fuga* (607B) and *De Stoicorum repugnatis* (1034B). Metaphorical glimmers seem to radiate in *An seni respublica gerenda sit* (795E), because the participle μυούμενος is used to denote an initiation, which is connected to the realm of politics. The prose writer has placed a metaphorical tone and the infinitive μυηθῆναι in *Amatorius* (765A-B), because their reference is made to a mathematical type of initiation, which we find included in a simile. The noun μύησις is also a linguistic child of the same family, which is found literally in *De tranquillitate animi* (477D) in *De superstitone* (169D) and in *De defectu oraculorum* (422C).

Another term related to the mysteries that Plutarch used in *Moralia* is τελετή ('initiation in the mysteries')[40]. Jimenez San Cristóbal[41] concluded that τελετή is a cultural celebration of mystery cults, with the primary aim of providing a proper preparation for death. In fact, she also notes the etymological connection between τελευτᾶν ("I'm dying") καὶ τελεῖσθαι ("I am initiated into the mysteries") mentioned by Plutarch[42] to emphasize the connection between death and initiation, as death constitutes a form of initiation into a new state.

In *Quaestiones convivales*, in the context of the following problem (718B): Πῶς Πλάτων ἔλεγε τὸν θεὸν ἀεὶ γεωμετρεῖν ('What is Plato's Meaning, when he says that God always PLAYS the Geometer?'), it is stated that geometry is what directs man towards the conceivable and mental nature, the observation of which is also the final goal of philosophy. We see something similar happen in the Mysteries, because the main goal of the initiation ceremony is εποπτεία. Mystical references include the sacramental term ceremony, τελετή, as well as εποπτεία, the highest degree of initiation in the Eleusinian Mysteries[43].

[40] *De def. or*. 415A, 422C, *De Is. et Os*. 361E, 382E, *De tranq. An*. 477D, Fr. 202.
[41] Jimenez San Cristóbal (2001).
[42] Fr. 178.
[43] Burkert (2015).

Mystery religions flourished particularly during late antiquity. Some writers, such as Lucian[44], even adopted certain lexical influences[45]. Plutarch, however, made extensive use of mystery terminology due to his personal initiation into the Dionysiac and Eleusinian Mysteries, as well as the connection between the Mysteries and his philosophical views. In addition to their literal use, we have seen him use them in a metaphorical tone, as well as several times incorporating them into similes. The mystical terminology was an important reservoir for the philosopher, from which he drew terms in order to use them in specific and important areas. In this way he was able to emphasize their importance, but also to surround his words with the necessary sanctity, because one of his aims was to relay messages with universal force. Plutarch's philosophical theology is closely intertwined with the Mysteries, as it is through them that he can best approach the God.

Conclusion

In *Moralia* Plutarch employed a rich religious vocabulary, a fact that attests to his deep religious devotion. Through this article, I have demonstrated that Plutarch's religious linguistic creations are directly intertwined with his philosophical theology. I noted that Plutarch presented in *Moralia* a series of festivals, specific deities, priestly offices and Pythian terms, which appear exclusively in *Moralia*. This lexical compilation highlights Plutarch's religious erudition but also strongly emphasizes his role as a philosopher-priest who attempted, even though lexicography, to interpret various religious events in order to establish a deeper connection with God. I have also demonstrated that Plutarch made extensive use of mystical terminology in his treatises in order to imbue his words with the requisite sacredness, but also to connect it with fundamental aspects of human life. Plutarch also sought, through his choice of words, to demonstrate that the world of the Mysteries aligns with his philosophical views. Plutarch's use of religious vocabulary also reflects his philosophical approach to religion.

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