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**The Theory and Practice of Ostracism in Plutarch's *Lives***

Ostracism as it appears in the works of Plutarch has been examined closely during the past century. The focus of study, however, has always been on the politics of fifth-century Athens and, more often, on the date and the circumstances surrounding the vote against Hyperbolus, who was the last Athenian to receive the ten-year exile and whose ostracism is recounted three times by Plutarch. This paper will examine Plutarch's accounts of ostracism with the goals of illuminating how he thought the practice worked and how he inserted his views into his narratives.

Accounts of ostracism appear in six of Plutarch's *Lives* and in one of his *Moralia*. These accounts are often versions of the same event, however, which give us the opportunity to see how Plutarch manipulates the same material in differing circumstances. Instances of ostracism in the *Lives* may be divided into two classes: those that explain how the system worked in theory, and those that tell how it was used in practice. In the first class, we find descriptions which explain that ostracism was implemented in order to deal with the jealousy of the people. Thus in *Aristides* we learn that not only wealth but also high standing made one a target for ostracism (1.2-4, 7), and that the practice was a kindly way of venting *phthonos* (7.2). In another *Life*, *Themistocles* is ostracized by his fellow citizens on account of his exceptional stature, and Plutarch explains that such action was customary in order to maintain a democratic balance of power (*Themistocles* 22.4-5).

However, when Plutarch recounts the details of an ostracism, he demonstrates that theory was different from practice. In each case, it is not the *demos* that seeks to remove a man, but his political opponent. Again in *Aristides*, Plutarch tells us that the envy of *Aristides* which led to his banishment was fueled by rumors put forth by *Themistocles* (7.1), and in *Themistocles* he is more explicit: *Themistocles*, he says, removed *Aristides* by means of ostracism (5.7). Pericles, in the next generation, enters upon his political career and then builds his power to the point where he can contend with Thucydides son of Melesias in a contest of ostracism, and he has his opponent banished (*Pericles* 14.1-3).

Plutarch provides us with a case study of practical ostracism in his three narratives of the vote against Hyperbolus and the political maneuvering that preceded it (*Aristides* 7.3-4, *Nicias* 11.1-8, *Alcibiades* 13). The paper will consider this incident, not to determine the historical circumstances of the ostracism, which have been thoroughly examined (e.g. Carcopino 1935, 195-215; Fuqua *TAPA*1965, 165-179; Connor 1971, 79-84), but to illuminate further the theory and practice of ostracism in Plutarch.

In conclusion, the paper will suggest that Plutarch's theoretical explanations differed from his practical accounts not due to the mechanical insertion of descriptions from other sources or from his own notes, but that in Plutarch we see a real distinction between ostracism *de jure* and *de facto*. Missing, however, is an explicit attempt by the author to provide a bridge between the two systems.

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