**Plutarch**

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*For other uses, see* [*Plutarch (disambiguation)*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plutarch_(disambiguation))*.*

*Not to be confused with* [*Plutarchy*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plutarchy)*.*

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| **Plutarch *Lucius Mestrius Plutarchus* Μέστριος Πλούταρχος** | |
| [*Parallel Lives*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parallel_Lives), [Amyot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacques_Amyot) translation, 1565 | |
| **Born** | C. [AD 46](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/46) [Chaeronea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaeronea), [Boeotia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boeotia) |
| **Died** | C. AD 120 (aged 74) [Delphi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delphi), [Phocis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phocis) |
| **Occupation** | [Biographer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biographer), [essayist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Essay), [priest](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Priest), [ambassador](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ambassador), [magistrate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magistrate) |
| **Political movement** | [Middle Platonism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_Platonism), [Hellenistic literature](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_literature#Hellenistic_Age) |
| **Spouse(s)** | Timoxena |
| **Children** | Timoxena Jr. Autobulus Plutarch II |

**Plutarch** ([/](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA_for_English)[ˈpluːtɑrk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA_for_English#Key)[/](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA_for_English); [Greek](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_language): Πλούταρχος, *Ploútarkhos*, Koine Greek: [[plŭːtarkʰos]](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Help:IPA_for_Koine_Greek&action=edit&redlink=1)) then named, on his becoming a [Roman citizen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_citizenship), **Lucius Mestrius Plutarchus** (Λούκιος Μέστριος Πλούταρχος), *c.* 46 – 120 AD, was a Greek [historian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historian), [biographer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biography), and [essayist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Essay), known primarily for his [*Parallel Lives*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parallel_Lives) and [*Moralia*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moralia). He is considered today to be a [Middle Platonist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_Platonism). He was born to a prominent family in [Chaeronea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaeronea), [Boeotia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boeotia), a town about twenty miles east of [Delphi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delphi).

**Early life**



Ruins of the Temple of [Apollo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apollo) at [Delphi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pythia), where Plutarch served as one of the priests responsible for interpreting the predictions of the [oracle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oracle).

Plutarch was born in 46 AD in the small town of [Chaeronea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaeronea), in the Greek region known as [Boeotia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boeotia). His family was wealthy. The name of Plutarch's father has not been preserved, but it was probably Nikarchus ([Greek](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_language): Nίκαρχoς), from the common habit of Greek families to repeat a name in alternate generations. The name of Plutarch's grandfather was [Lamprias](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lamprias), as he attested in [*Moralia*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moralia) and in his *Life of Antony*.

His brothers, Timon and Lamprias, are frequently mentioned in his essays and dialogues, where Timon is spoken of in the most affectionate terms. [Rualdus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joannes_Rualdus), in his 1624 work *Life of Plutarchus*, recovered the name of Plutarch's wife, Timoxena, from internal evidence afforded by his writings. A letter is still extant, addressed by Plutarch to his wife, bidding her not give way to excessive [grief](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grief) at the death of their two-year-old daughter, who was named Timoxena after her mother. Interestingly, he hinted at a belief in [reincarnation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reincarnation) in that letter of consolation.

The exact number of his sons is not certain, although two of them, Autobulus and second Plutarch, are often mentioned. Plutarch's treatise *De animae procreatione in Timaeo* is dedicated to them, and the marriage of his son Autobulus is the occasion of one of the dinner-parties recorded in the 'Table Talk.' Another person, [Soklarus](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Soklarus&action=edit&redlink=1), is spoken of in terms which seem to imply that he was Plutarch's son, but this is nowhere definitely stated. His treatise on marriage questions, addressed to [Eurydice](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eurydice) and [Pollianus](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Pollianus&action=edit&redlink=1), seems to speak of her as having been recently an inmate of his house, but without enabling us to form an opinion whether she was his daughter or not.

Plutarch studied [mathematics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mathematics) and [philosophy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy) at the [Academy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Platonic_Academy) of [Athens](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athens) under [Ammonius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ammonius_of_Athens) from 66 to 67. He had a number of influential friends, including [Quintus Sosius Senecio](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quintus_Sosius_Senecio) and [Fundanus](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Fundanus&action=edit&redlink=1), both important [senators](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Senate), to whom some of his later writings were dedicated. Plutarch travelled widely in the [Mediterranean](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mediterranean) world, including central Greece, [Sparta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sparta), [Corinth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Corinth), [Patrae](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patras) (Patras), [Sardis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sardis), [Alexandria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexandria), and two trips to [Rome](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rome).

At some point, Plutarch took up [Roman citizenship](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_citizenship). As evidenced by his new name, **Lucius Mestrius Plutarchus**, his sponsor for citizenship was [Lucius Mestrius Florus](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Lucius_Mestrius_Florus&action=edit&redlink=1), a Roman of [consular](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_consul) status whom Plutarch also used as an historical source for his *Life of Otho*.

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| "The [soul](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soul_(spirit)), being eternal, after [death](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death) is like a caged bird that has been released. If it has been a long time in the body, and has become tame by many affairs and long habit, the soul will immediately take another body and once again become involved in the troubles of the world. The worst thing about old age is that the soul's memory of the other world grows dim, while at the same time its attachment to things of this world becomes so strong that the soul tends to retain the form that it had in the body. But that soul which remains only a short time within a body, until liberated by the higher powers, quickly recovers its fire and goes on to higher things." |
| Plutarch (*The Consolation*, Moralia) |

He lived most of his life at Chaeronea, and was initiated into the [mysteries](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greco-Roman_mysteries) of the Greek god [Apollo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apollo). However, his duties as the senior of the two priests of Apollo at the [Oracle of Delphi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pythia) (where he was responsible for interpreting the auguries of the Pythia) apparently occupied little of his time. He led an active social and civic life while producing an extensive body of writing, much of which is still extant.

For many years Plutarch served as one of the two priests at the temple of Apollo at Delphi, the site of the famous Delphic Oracle, twenty miles from his home. By his writings and lectures Plutarch became a celebrity in the Roman empire, yet he continued to reside where he was born, and actively participated in local affairs, even serving as mayor. At his country estate, guests from all over the empire congregated for serious conversation, presided over by Plutarch in his marble chair. Many of these dialogues were recorded and published, and the 78 essays and other works which have survived are now known collectively as the *Moralia*.

**Work as magistrate and ambassador**

In addition to his duties as a priest of the Delphic temple, Plutarch was also a magistrate in Chaeronea and he represented his home on various missions to foreign countries during his early adult years. Plutarch held the office of [archon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archon) in his native municipality, probably only an annual one which he likely served more than once. He busied himself with all the little matters of the town and undertook the humblest of duties.

The [Suda](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suda), a [medieval](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medieval) Greek encyclopedia, states that emperor [Trajan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trajan) made Plutarch [procurator](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Procurator_(Roman)) of [Illyria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Illyria). However, most historians consider this unlikely, since Illyria was not a procuratorial province, and Plutarch probably did not speak [Illyrian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Illyrian_languages)[[*citation needed*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed)].

According to the 10th century [historian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historian) [George Syncellus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Syncellus), late in Plutarch's life, emperor [Hadrian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadrian) appointed him nominal [procurator](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Procurator_(Roman)) of [Achaea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Achaea_(Roman_province)) – a position that entitled him to wear the vestments and ornaments of a consul himself.[[*citation needed*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed)]

Plutarch died between the years AD 119 and 127.

***Lives of the Roman emperors***

The first biographical works to be written by Plutarch were the Lives of the Roman Emperors from Augustus to Vitellius. Of these, only the Lives of Galba and Otho survive. The Lives of Tiberius and Nero are extant only as fragments, provided by Dasmascius (Life of Tiberius, cf. his Life of Isidore)[[8]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plutarch#cite_note-8#cite_note-8)and Plutarch himself (Life of Nero, cf. Galba 2.1), respectively. These early emperors’ biographies were probably published under the Flavian dynasty or during the reign of Nerva (CE 96–98).

There is reason to believe that the two Lives still extant, those of Galba and Otho, “ought to be considered as a single work.” Therefore they do not form a part of the Plutarchian canon of single biographies – as represented by the Life of Aratus of Sicyon and the Life of Artaxerxes (the biographies of Hesiod, Pindar, Crates and Daiphantus were lost). Unlike in these biographies, in Galba-Otho the individual characters of the persons portrayed are not depicted for their own sake but instead serve as an illustration of an abstract principle; namely the adherence or non-adherence to Plutarch’s morally founded ideal of governing as a Princeps (cf. Galba 1.3; Moralia 328D-E).

Arguing from the perspective of Platonian political philosophy (cf. Republic 375E, 410D-E, 411E-412A, 442B-C), in Galba-Otho Plutarch reveals the constitutional principles of the Principate in the time of the civil war after Nero’s death. While morally questioning the behavior of the autocrats, he also gives an impression of their tragic destinies, ruthlessly competing for the throne and finally destroying each other. “The Caesars’ house in Rome, the Palatium, received in a shorter space of time no less than four Emperors,” Plutarch writes, “passing, as it were, across the stage, and one making room for another to enter” (Galba 1).

Galba-Otho was handed down through different channels. It can be found in the appendix to Plutarch’s Parallel Lives as well as in various Moralia manuscripts, most prominently in Maximus Planudes’s edition where Galba and Otho appear as “Opera” XXV and XXVI. Thus it seems reasonable to maintain that Galba-Otho was from early on considered as an illustration of a moral-ethical approach, possibly even by Plutarch himself.

***Parallel Lives***



A page from the 1470 Ulrich Han printing of Plutarch's [*Parallel Lives*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parallel_Lives).

Main article: [Parallel Lives](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parallel_Lives)

Plutarch's best-known work is the [*Parallel Lives*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parallel_Lives), a series of [biographies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biography) of famous Greeks and Romans, arranged in pairs to illuminate their common [moral](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morality) virtues and vices. The surviving *Lives* contain 23 pairs, each with one Greek *Life* and one Roman *Life*, as well as four unpaired single *Lives*.

As is explained in the opening paragraph of his *Life of Alexander*, Plutarch was not concerned with history so much as the influence of character, good or bad, on the lives and destinies of men. Whereas sometimes he barely touched on epoch-making events, he devoted much space to charming anecdote and incidental triviality, reasoning that this often said far more for his subjects than even their most famous accomplishments. He sought to provide rounded portraits, likening his craft to that of a painter; indeed, he went to tremendous lengths (often leading to tenuous comparisons) to draw [parallels between physical appearance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Physiognomy) and [moral character](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moral_character). In many ways, he must be counted amongst the earliest [moral philosophers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethics).

Some of the *Lives*, such as those of [Heracles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heracles), [Philip II of Macedon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_II_of_Macedon) and [Scipio Africanus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scipio_Africanus), no longer exist; many of the remaining *Lives* are truncated, contain obvious [lacunae](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lacuna_(manuscripts)) or have been tampered with by later writers. Extant *Lives* include those on [Solon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solon), [Themistocles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Themistocles), [Aristides](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristides), [Pericles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pericles), [Alcibiades](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alcibiades), [Nicias](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicias), [Demosthenes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demosthenes), [Pelopidas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pelopidas), [Philopoemen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philopoemen), [Timoleon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timoleon), [Dion of Syracuse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dion_of_Syracuse), [Alexander the Great](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_the_Great), [Pyrrhus of Epirus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pyrrhus_of_Epirus), [Romulus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romulus_and_Remus), [Numa Pompilius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Numa_Pompilius), [Coriolanus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coriolanus), [Theseus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theseus), [Aemilius Paullus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aemilius_Paullus), [Tiberius Gracchus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiberius_Gracchus), [Gaius Gracchus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaius_Gracchus), [Gaius Marius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaius_Marius), [Sulla](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucius_Cornelius_Sulla), [Sertorius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sertorius), [Lucullus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucullus), [Pompey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pompey), [Julius Caesar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_Caesar), [Cicero](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cicero), [Cato the Younger](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cato_the_Younger), [Mark Antony](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_Antony), and [Marcus Junius Brutus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcus_Junius_Brutus).

***Life of Alexander***

Plutarch's *Life of Alexander*, written as a parallel to that of Julius Caesar, is one of only five extant tertiary sources on the Macedonian conqueror [Alexander the Great](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_the_Great). It includes [anecdotes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anecdote) and descriptions of events that appear in no other source, just as Plutarch's portrait of [Numa Pompilius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Numa_Pompilius), the putative second king of Rome, holds much that is unique on the early [Roman calendar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_calendar).

Plutarch devotes a great deal of space to Alexander's drive and desire, and strives to determine how much of it was presaged in his youth. He also draws extensively on the work of [Lysippus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lysippus), Alexander's favourite [sculptor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sculptor), to provide what is probably the fullest and most accurate description of the conqueror's physical appearance.

When it comes to his character, however, Plutarch is often rather less accurate, ascribing inordinate amounts of self-control to a man who very often lost it. It is significant, though, that the subject incurs less admiration from his biographer as the narrative progresses and the deeds that it recounts become less savoury.

Much, too, is made of Alexander's scorn for luxury: "He desired not pleasure or wealth, but only excellence and glory." This is mostly true, for Alexander's tastes grew more extravagant as he grew older only in the last year of his life and only as a means of approaching the image of a ruler his Persian subjects were better accustomed to - thus making it easier for him to succeed in uniting the Greek and Persian worlds together, according to the plan he had announced in his famous Speech given in Opis in 324 BC.

***Life of Caesar***

Together with [Suetonius's](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suetonius) [*The Twelve Caesars*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Twelve_Caesars) this *Life* is the main account of [Julius Caesar's](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_Caesar) feats by ancient historians. Plutarch starts by telling us the audacity of Caesar and his refusal of dismissing [Cinna's](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cinna) daughter, Cornelia. Other important parts are these containing his military deeds, accounts of battles and Caesar's capacity of inspiring the soldiers.

His soldiers showed such good will and zeal in his service that those who in their previous campaigns had been in no way superior to others were invincible and irresistible in confronting every danger to enhance Caesar's fame. Such a man, for instance, was Acilius, who, in the sea-fight at Massalia, boarded a hostile ship and had his right hand cut off with a sword, but clung with the other hand to his shield, and dashing it into the faces of his foes, routed them all and got possession of the vessel. Such a man, again, was Cassius Scaeva, who, in the battle at Dyrrhachium, had his eye struck out with an arrow, his shoulder transfixed with one javelin and his thigh with another, and received on his shield the blows of one hundred and thirty missiles. In this plight, he called the enemy to him as though he would surrender. Two of them, accordingly, coming up, he lopped off the shoulder of one with his sword, smote the other in the face and put him to flight, and came off safely himself with the aid of his comrades. Again, in Britain, when the enemy had fallen upon the foremost centurions, who had plunged into a watery marsh, a soldier, while Caesar in person was watching the battle, dashed into the midst of the fight, displayed many conspicuous deeds of daring, and rescued the centurions, after the Barbarians had been routed.

Then he himself, making his way with difficulty after all the rest, plunged into the muddy current, and at last, without his shield, partly swimming and partly wading, got across. Caesar and his company were amazed and came to meet the soldier with cries of joy; but he, in great dejection, and with a burst of tears, cast himself at Caesar's feet, begging pardon for the loss of his shield. Again, in Africa, Scipio captured a ship of Caesar's in which Granius Petro, who had been appointed quaestor, was sailing. Of the rest of the passengers Scipio made booty, but told the quaestor that he offered him his life. Granius, however, remarking that it was the custom with Caesar's soldiers not to receive but to offer mercy, killed himself with a blow of his sword.

— *Life of Caesar, XVI*

However, this *Life* shows few differences between Suetonius' work and Caesar's own works (see [*De Bello Gallico*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_Bello_Gallico) and [*De Bello Civili*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_Bello_Civili)). Sometimes, Plutarch quotes directly from the *De Bello Gallico* and even tell us of the moments when Caesar was dictating his works.

In the final part of this *Life*, Plutarch counts Caesar's assassination, and several details. The book ends on telling the destiny of his murderers, and says that Caesar's "great guardian-genius" avenged him after life.

***Life of Pyrrhus***

Plutarch's *Life of Pyrrhus* is a key text because it is the main historical account on Roman history for the period from 293 to 264 BC, for which neither [Dionysius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dionysius_of_Halicarnassus) nor [Livy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Livy) have surviving texts.

**Criticism of *Parallel Lives***

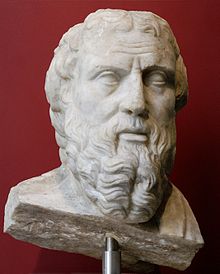
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| "It is not histories I am writing, but lives; and in the most glorious deeds there is not always an indication of virtue or vice, indeed a small thing like a phrase or a jest often makes a greater revelation of a character than battles where thousands die." |
| Plutarch (*Life of Alexander/Life of Julius Caesar*, Parallel Lives, [tr. E.L. Bowie]) |

Plutarch stretches and occasionally fabricates the similarities between famous Greeks and Romans in order to be able to write their biographies as parallel. The lives of Nicias and Crassus, for example, have nothing in common except that both were rich and both suffered great military defeats at the ends of their lives.

In his *Life of Pompey*, Plutarch praises Pompey's trustworthy character and tactful behaviour in order to conjure a moral judgement that opposes most historical accounts. Plutarch delivers anecdotes with moral points, rather than in-depth comparative analyses of the causes of the fall of the [Achaemenid Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Achaemenid_dynasty) and the [Roman Republic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Republic), and tends on occasion to fit facts to hypotheses rather than the other, more scholastically acceptable way round.

On the other hand, he generally sets out his moral anecdotes in chronological order (unlike, say, his Roman contemporary [Suetonius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suetonius)) and is rarely narrow-minded and unrealistic, almost always prepared to acknowledge the complexity of the human condition where moralising cannot explain it.

***Moralia***



A bust of the early Greek historian [Herodotus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herodotus), whom Plutarch criticized in *On the Malice of Herodotus*.

Main article: [Moralia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moralia)

The remainder of Plutarch's surviving work is collected under the title of the [*Moralia*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moralia) (loosely translated as *Customs and Mores*). It is an eclectic collection of seventy-eight essays and transcribed speeches, which includes *On Fraternal Affection*—a discourse on honour and affection of siblings toward each other, *On the Fortune or the Virtue of* [*Alexander the Great*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_the_Great)—an important adjunct to his Life of the great king, *On the Worship of* [*Isis*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isis) *and* [*Osiris*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Osiris) (a crucial source of information on [Egyptian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Egypt) religious rites), along with more philosophical treatises, such as *On the Decline of the Oracles*, *On the Delays of the Divine Vengeance*, *On Peace of Mind* and lighter fare, such as [*Odysseus*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Odysseus) *and* [*Gryllus*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gryllus), a humorous [dialogue](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dialogue) between [Homer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homer)'s Odysseus and one of [Circe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Circe)'s enchanted pigs. The *Moralia* was composed first, while writing the Lives occupied much of the last two decades of Plutarch's own life.

***On the Malice of Herodotus***

In [*On the Malice of Herodotus*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/On_the_Malice_of_Herodotus) Plutarch criticizes the historian [Herodotus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herodotus) for all manner of prejudice and misrepresentation. It has been called the “first instance in literature of the slashing review.” The 19th century English historian [George Grote](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Grote) considered this essay a serious attack upon the works of Herodotus, and speaks of the "honourable frankness which Plutarch calls his malignity." Plutarch makes some palpable hits, catching Herodotus out in various errors, but it is also probable that it was merely a rhetorical exercise, in which Plutarch plays devil's advocate to see what could be said against so favourite and well-known a writer According to Plutarch scholar R. H. Barrow, Herodotus’ real failing in Plutarch’s eyes was to advance any criticism at all of those states that saved Greece from Persia. “Plutarch,” he concluded, “is fanatically biased in favor of the Greek cities; they can do no wrong.”

**Questions**

Book IV of the *Moralia* contains the *Roman and Greek Questions*. The customs of Romans and Greeks are illuminated in little essays that pose questions such as 'Why were patricians not permitted to live on the Capitoline?' [(no. 91)](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Moralia/Roman_Questions*/E.html#91) and then suggests answers to them, often several mutually exclusive.

**Pseudo-Plutarch**

Main article: [Pseudo-Plutarch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pseudo-Plutarch)

Pseudo-Plutarch is the conventional name given to the unknown authors of a number of [pseudepigrapha](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pseudepigrapha) attributed to Plutarch. Some editions of the *Moralia* include several works now known to be pseudepigrapha: among these are the *Lives of the Ten Orators* (biographies of the [Ten Orators](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten_Orators) of ancient [Athens](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athens), based on [Caecilius of Calacte](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caecilius_of_Calacte)), *The Doctrines of the Philosophers*, and *On Music*. One "pseudo-Plutarch" is held responsible for all of these works, though their authorship is of course unknown. The thoughts and opinions recorded are not Plutarch's and come from a slightly later era, though they are all classical in origin.

**Lost works**

The Romans loved the *Lives*, and enough copies were written out over the centuries so that a copy of most of the lives managed to survive to the present day. Some scholars, however, believe that only a third to one-half of Plutarch’s corpus is extant. The [lost works](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lost_work#Classical_world) of Plutarch are determined by references in his own texts to them and from other authors' references over time. There are traces of twelve more Lives that are now lost.

Plutarch's general procedure for the *Lives* was to write the life of a prominent Greek, then cast about for a suitable Roman parallel, and end with a brief comparison of the Greek and Roman lives. Currently, only nineteen of the parallel lives end with a comparison while possibly they all did at one time. Also missing are many of his *Lives* which appear in a list of his writings, those of Hercules, the first pair of *Parallel Lives*, [Scipio Africanus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scipio_Africanus) and [Epaminondas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epaminondas), and the companions to the four solo biographies. Even the lives of such important figures as [Augustus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustus), [Claudius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claudius) and [Nero](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nero) have not been found and may be lost forever.

**Philosophy**

Plutarch was a [Platonist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_Platonism), but was open to the influence of the [Peripatetics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peripatetics), and in some details even to [Stoicism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stoicism) despite his polemics against their principles. He rejected absolutely only [Epicureanism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epicureanism). He attached little importance to theoretical questions and doubted the possibility of ever solving them. He was more interested in moral and religious questions.

In opposition to Stoic materialism and Epicurean "atheism" he cherished a pure idea of [God](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God) that was more in accordance with [Plato](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plato). He adopted a second principle ([*Dyad*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dyad_(Greek_philosophy))) in order to explain the phenomenal world. This principle he sought, however, not in any indeterminate matter but in the evil world-soul which has from the beginning been bound up with matter, but in the creation was filled with reason and arranged by it. Thus it was transformed into the divine soul of the world, but continued to operate as the source of all evil. He elevated God above the finite world, and thus [daemons](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daemon_(mythology)) became for him agents of God's influence on the world. He strongly defends freedom of the will, and the immortality of the soul.

Platonic-Peripatetic [ethics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethics) were upheld by Plutarch against the opposing theories of the Stoics and Epicureans. The most characteristic feature of Plutarch's ethics is, however, its close connection with religion. However pure Plutarch's idea of God is, and however vivid his description of the vice and corruption which superstition causes, his warm religious feelings and his distrust of human powers of knowledge led him to believe that God comes to our aid by direct revelations, which we perceive the more clearly the more completely that we refrain in "enthusiasm" from all action; this made it possible for him to justify popular belief in [divination](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divination) in the way which had long been usual among the Stoics.

His attitude to popular religion was similar. The gods of different peoples are merely different names for one and the same divine Being and the powers that serve it. The [myths](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_mythology) contain philosophical truths which can be interpreted allegorically. Thus Plutarch sought to combine the philosophical and religious conception of things and to remain as close as possible to tradition.

**Influence**

Plutarch's writings had an enormous influence on [English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Literature) and [French literature](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_literature). [Shakespeare](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Shakespeare) in [his plays](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shakespeare%27s_plays) paraphrased parts of [Thomas North](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_North)'s translation of selected *Lives*, and occasionally quoted from them in verbatim.

[Ralph Waldo Emerson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ralph_Waldo_Emerson) and the [Transcendentalists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transcendentalism) were greatly influenced by the *Moralia* — so much so, in fact, that Emerson called the Lives "a bible for heroes" in his glowing introduction to the five-volume 19th-century edition. He also opined that it was impossible to "read Plutarch without a tingling of the blood; and I accept the saying of the Chinese [Mencius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mencius): 'A sage is the instructor of a hundred ages. When the manners of Loo are heard of, the stupid become intelligent, and the wavering, determined.'"

[Montaigne](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_de_Montaigne)'s own [*Essays*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Essays_(Montaigne)) draw extensively on Plutarch's *Moralia* and are consciously modelled on the Greek's easygoing and discursive inquiries into science, manners, customs and beliefs. *Essays* contains more than 400 references to Plutarch and his works.

[James Boswell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Boswell) quoted Plutarch on writing lives, rather than biographies, in the introduction to his own [*Life of Samuel Johnson*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life_of_Samuel_Johnson). Other admirers included [Ben Jonson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ben_Jonson), [John Dryden](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Dryden), [Alexander Hamilton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Hamilton), [John Milton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Milton), [Louis L'amour](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_L%27amour), and [Francis Bacon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Bacon), as well as such disparate figures as [Cotton Mather](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cotton_Mather) and [Robert Browning](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Browning).

Plutarch's influence declined in the 19th and 20th centuries, but it remains embedded in the popular ideas of Greek and Roman history. One of his most famous quotes was one that he included in one of his earliest works. "The world of man is best captured through the lives of the men who created history."

[Plutarch Heavensbee](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plutarch_Heavensbee) is a character from the [The Hunger Games](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hunger_Games) by [American](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_United_States_of_America) [author](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Author) [Suzanne Collins](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suzanne_Collins), presumably based on Plutarch, adding to a line of many ancient Greek and Roman or Greek- or Roman-sounding names in Collins' work (the inspirations often taken from [literature](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literature), [myths](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myth), [religions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion) or [philosophy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy)), which may or may not also include [Cinna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cinna), [Caesar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caesar_Flickerman), [Coriolanus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coriolanus_Snow) and the name of the country in the series, [Panem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panem), which is taken from the old phrase "[panem et circenses](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panem_et_circenses" \o "Panem et circenses)" AKA "[bread and circuses](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panem_et_circenses)".

**Translations of *Lives* and *Moralia***

There are translations in [Latin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin), [English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_language), [French](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_language), [German](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_language), [Italian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_language), [Polish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polish_language) and [Hebrew](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_language).

**Italian translations**

[Giuliano Pisani](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giuliano_Pisani), *Moralia I - «La serenità interiore» e altri testi sulla terapia dell'anima*, with Greek text, Italian translation, introduction and notes, La Biblioteca dell'Immagine, Pordenone 1989, pp. LIX-508 (*De tranquillitate animi; De virtute et vitio; De virtute morali; An virtus doceri possit; Quomodo quis suos in virtute sentiat profectus; Animine an corporis affectiones sint peiores; De vitioso pudore; De cohibenda ira; De garrulitate; De curiositate ; De invidia et odio ; De cupiditate divitiarum*)

[Giuliano Pisani](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giuliano_Pisani), *Moralia II - L'educazione dei ragazzi*, with Greek text, Italian translation, introduction and notes, La Biblioteca dell'Immagine, Pordenone, 1990, pp. XXXVIII-451 (*De liberis educandis; Quomodo adolescens poetas audire debeat ; De recta ratione audiendi ; De musica*, in collaboration with Leo Citelli)

[Giuliano Pisani](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giuliano_Pisani), *Moralia III - Etica e politica*, with Greek text, Italian translation, introduction and notes, La Biblioteca dell'Immagine, Pordenone, 1992, pp. XLIII-490 (*Praecepta gerendae rei publicae; An seni sit gerenda res publica; De capienda ex inimicis utilitate; De se ipsum citra invidiam laudando; Maxime cum principibus philosopho esse disserendum; Ad principem ineruditum; De unius in republica dominatione, populari statu et paucorum imperio; De exilio*)

[Giuliano Pisani](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giuliano_Pisani), Plutarco, *Vite di Lisandro e Silla*, Fondazione Lorenzo Valla, 1997 (in collaboration with Maria Gabriella Angeli Bertinelli, Mario Manfredini, Luigi Piccirilli).

**French translations**

[Jacques Amyot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacques_Amyot)'s translations brought Plutarch's works to Western Europe. He went to Italy and studied the Vatican text of Plutarch, from which he published a French translation of the *Lives* in 1559 and *Moralia* in 1572, which were widely read by educated Europe. Amyot's translations had as deep an impression in England as France, because Thomas North later published his English translation of the *Lives* in 1579 based on Amyot’s French translation instead of the original Greek.

**English translations**

Plutarch's *Lives* were translated into English, from Amyot's version, by [Sir Thomas North](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sir_Thomas_North) in 1579. The complete *Moralia* was first translated into English from the original Greek by [Philemon Holland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philemon_Holland) in 1603.

In 1683, [John Dryden](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Dryden) began a life of Plutarch and oversaw a translation of the *Lives* by several hands and based on the original Greek. This translation has been reworked and revised several times, most recently in the 19th century by the English poet and classicist [Arthur Hugh Clough](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Hugh_Clough) which can be found in [The Modern Library](http://www.randomhouse.com/modernlibrary/library/display.pperl?isbn=9780679600084&view=excerpt) Random House, Inc. translation.

In 1770 the English brother [John](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Langhorne_(poet)) and his brother [William Langhorne](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=William_Langhorne_(clergyman)&action=edit&redlink=1) published "Plutarch's Lives from the original Greek, with notes critical and historical, and a new life of Plutarch" in 6 volumes and dedicated to Lord Folkestone. Their translation was re-edited by Archdeacon Wrangham in the year 1819.

From 1901–1912, American classicist [Bernadotte Perrin](http://mssa.library.yale.edu/findaids/stream.php?xmlfile=mssa.ms.1018.xml) produced a new translation of the *Lives* for the [Loeb Classical Library](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loeb_Classical_Library) series. The *Moralia* are also included in the Loeb series, though are translated by various authors.

**Latin translations**

There are multiple translations of Parallel Lives into Latin, most notably the one titled "Pour le Dauphin" (French for "for the Prince") written by a scribe in the court of [Louis XV of France](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_XV_of_France) and a 1470 Ulrich Han translation.

**German translations**

**Hieronymus Emser**

In 1519, Hieronymus Emser translated *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate* (wie ym eyner seinen veyndt nutz machen kan, Leipzig).

**Gottlob Benedict von Schirach**

The biographies were translated by Gottlob Benedict von Schirach (1743–1804) and printed in Vienna by Franz Haas, 1776–80.

**Johann Friedrich Salomon Kaltwasser**

Plutarch's *Lives and Moralia* were translated into German by [Johann Friedrich Salomon Kaltwasser](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Johann_Friedrich_Salomon_Kaltwasser&action=edit&redlink=1):

* *Vitae parallelae. Vergleichende Lebensbeschreibungen*. 10 Bände. Magdeburg 1799-1806.

**Subsequent German translations**

* *Biographies*
  + [Konrat Ziegler](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Konrat_Ziegler&action=edit&redlink=1) (Hrsg.): *Große Griechen und Römer*. 6 Bde. Zürich 1954-1965. (*Bibliothek der alten Welt*).
* *Moralia*
  + Konrat Ziegler (Hrsg.):*Plutarch. Über Gott und Vorsehung, Dämonen und Weissagung*, Zürich 1952. (*Bibliothek der alten Welt*)
  + Bruno Snell (Hrsg.):*Plutarch. Von der Ruhe des Gemüts - und andere Schriften*, Zürich 1948. (*Bibliothek der alten Welt*)
  + [Hans-Josef Klauck](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hans-Josef_Klauck) (Hrsg.): *Plutarch. Moralphilosophische Schriften*, Stuttgart 1997. (*Reclams Universal-Bibliothek*)
  + [Herwig Görgemanns](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Herwig_G%C3%B6rgemanns&action=edit&redlink=1) (Hrsg.):*Plutarch. Drei Religionsphilosophische Schriften*, Düsseldorf 2003. (*Tusculum*)

**Hebrew translations**

Following some Hebrew translations of selections from Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* published in the 1920s and the 1940s, a complete translation was published in three volumes by the [Bialik Institution](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Bialik_Institution&action=edit&redlink=1) in 1954, 1971 and 1973. The first volume, *Roman Lives*, first published in 1954, presents the translations of Joseph G. Liebes to the biographies of [Coriolanus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coriolanus), [Fabius Maximus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fabius_Maximus), [Tiberius Gracchus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiberius_Gracchus) and [Gaius Gracchus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaius_Gracchus), [Cato the Elder](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cato_the_Elder) and [Cato the Younger](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cato_the_Younger), [Gaius Marius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaius_Marius), [Sulla](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sulla), [Sertorius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sertorius), [Lucullus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucullus), [Pompey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pompey), [Crassus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crassus), [Cicero](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cicero), [Julius Caesar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_Caesar), [Brutus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brutus) and [Mark Anthony](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_Antony).

The second volume, *Greek Lives*, first published in 1971 presents A. A. Halevy's translations of the biographies of [Lycurgus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lycurgus_of_Sparta), [Aristides](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristides), [Cimon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cimon), [Pericles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pericles), [Nicias](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicias), [Lysander](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lysander), [Agesilaus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agesilaus), [Pelopidas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pelopidas), [Dion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dion_of_Syracuse), [Timoleon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timoleon), [Demosthenes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demosthenes), [Alexander the Great](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_the_Great), [Eumenes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eumenes) and [Phocion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phocion). Three more biographies presented in this volume, those of [Solon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solon), [Themistocles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Themistocles) and [Alcibiades](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alcibiades) were translated by M. H. Ben-Shamai.

The third volume, *Greek and Roman Lives*, published in 1973, presented the remaining biographies and parallels as translated by Halevy. Included are the biographies of [Demetrius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demetrius), [Pyrrhus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pyrrhus_of_Epirus), [Agis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agis_IV) and [Cleomenes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cleomenes_III), [Aratus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aratus) and [Artaxerxes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artaxerxes_I_of_Persia), [Philopoemen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philopoemen), [Camillus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camillus), [Marcellus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcus_Claudius_Marcellus), [Flamininus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flamininus), [Aemilius Paulus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aemilius_Paulus), [Galba](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galba) and [Otho](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otho), [Theseus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theseus), [Romulus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romulus), [Numa Pompilius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Numa_Pompilius) and [Poplicola](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poplicola). It completes the translation of the known remaining biographies. In the introduction to the third volume Halevy explains that originally the Bilaik Institution intended to publish only a selection of biographies, leaving out mythological figures and biographies that had no parallels. Thus, to match the first volume in scope the second volume followed the same path and the third volume was required.

**See also**

* [Middle Platonism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_Platonism)

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