

## THE FAIREST VICTOR: PLUTARCH, ARISTIDES AND THE PERSIAN WARS\*

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*Abstract.* Plutarch's narratives of the Persian Wars assign a place of primary importance to Aristides the Just, and give him an influence not seen in any other source. At Marathon, Salamis and Plataea Aristides is front and centre, not only taking part in the battles, but also and especially offering sage counsel, reconciling differences, and managing the fractiousness of the Athenians and the Greek commanders. This prominent role assigned to Aristides probably results from Plutarch's concern in his own day (as evidenced, for example, in the *Political Precepts*) with concord and harmony amongst the ruling elite, and Aristides thus becomes for Plutarch an *exemplum* of how the statesman should conduct himself vis-à-vis his colleagues and the people at large.

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Plutarch's interest in the Persian Wars can be seen from the many comments he makes about them in both the *Moralia* and the *Lives*, especially those of Themistocles, Aristides, Cimon, and even Alexander. By his time, of course, the Persian Wars were ancient history and had long been subjected to a process of mythicisation begun only shortly after the Persians evacuated Greece in 479 BCE.<sup>1</sup> Over the centuries they had been appealed to in a variety of ways, and Plutarch in this sense is no different from his predecessors. Plutarch himself saw the Persian Wars as a high point of Greek history, referring to Marathon, Salamis and Plataea as 'the fairest, the most glorious and the first of Greek achievements'.<sup>2</sup> In his *Life* of Flamininus, at the point of the proclamation of Greek freedom at the Isthmian games of 196, Plutarch portrays the Greeks themselves as meditating on their history and offering an assessment that must, of course, be Plutarch's own (*Flaminin.* 11.6):

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<sup>1</sup> There is no single treatment of the entire Persian Wars tradition, but see Kierdorf (1966) and Bridges–Hall–Rhodes (2007).

<sup>2</sup> Plut. *Comp. Arist. Cato Maior* 5.1: τὰ κάλλιστα καὶ λαμπρότατα καὶ πρῶτα τῶν Ἑλληνικῶν ἔργων ... ὁ Μαραθῶν, ἡ Σαλαμίς, αἱ Πλαταιαί.

ἀλλ' εἰ τὸ Μαραθώνιον τις ἔργον ἀφέλοι καὶ τὴν ἐν Σαλαμῖνι ναυμαχίαν καὶ Πλαταιᾶς καὶ Θερμοπύλας καὶ τὰ πρὸς Εὐρυμέδοντι καὶ τὰ περὶ Κύπρον Κίμωνος ἔργα, πάσας τὰς μάχας ἣ Ἑλλὰς ἐπὶ δουλείᾳ μεμάχηται πρὸς αὐτήν, καὶ πᾶν τρόπαιον αὐτῆς συμφορὰ καὶ ὄνειδος ἐπ' αὐτήν ἔστηκε, τὰ πλεῖστα κακία καὶ φιλονικία τῶν ἡγουμένων περιτραπίσης.

But with the exception of the battles of Marathon and Salamis and Plataea and Thermopylae, and the deeds of Cimon at the Eurymedon and around Cyprus, all her other battles Greece fought against herself and for her own enslavement, and every trophy stands as her misfortune and reproach, since she was subdued for the most part by the wickedness and competitive zeal of her leading men.

A full study of Plutarch's attitude towards the Persian Wars is certainly a desideratum,<sup>3</sup> but the present paper offers only a modest contribution to that study, focusing on the figure of Aristides. The material comes mostly from his *Life* and that of Themistocles, although reference is also made to Plutarch's remarks scattered throughout the *Moralia*.

## I

When we look at Plutarch's treatment of the Persian Wars, at least as it can be seen in those *Lives* that treat the fifth century, it becomes immediately clear that Aristides occupies a position of cardinal importance in every one of the major battles, Marathon, Salamis and Plataea, and Plutarch (uniquely) places him at all three of those great victories of the war. Moreover, although Plutarch realises that Aristides was not the chief commander in any of the battles,<sup>4</sup> Aristides nevertheless plays an important, indeed one might say decisive, role in each of them. This is rather a far cry from his portrayal in Herodotus' history and in other sources, and it may be worthwhile to ask what Plutarch found so compelling about the figure of Aristides.<sup>5</sup>

Before we get to the Persian Wars, however, it will be useful to say something about Aristides' portrayal in the early chapters of Plutarch's *Life*.<sup>6</sup> After an opening discussion about the extent of Aristides' wealth, Plutarch notes

<sup>3</sup> I hope to provide such a treatment in a forthcoming work.

<sup>4</sup> *Comp. Arist. C. Maior* 56(2).2: ἐν οὐδενὶ τῶν κατορθωμάτων γέγονε πρῶτος.

<sup>5</sup> Aristides is mentioned thrice in Herodotus, twice at Salamis and once at Plataea (see below). For his role in the Aristotelian *Atheniaion Politeia* see below, n. 21.

<sup>6</sup> For the structure of these opening chapters see, most recently, Duff (2011b) 232–3.

that Aristides was an associate of Cleisthenes, but admired and modelled himself on Lycurgus of Sparta.<sup>7</sup> The first observation may be no more than Plutarch's usual procedure trying to tie together the great leaders of Athens in an unbroken string.<sup>8</sup> The admiration for Lycurgus alerts the reader at the outset to several of Aristides' 'Spartan' characteristics, especially his lack of concern with wealth and his dedication to the unity of the state.<sup>9</sup>

Once the lengthy discussion of Aristides' wealth or poverty is concluded, Plutarch immediately introduces Themistocles as a foil for Aristides from their childhood days—not surprising, of course, since the two had been coupled in history and popular imagination from the fifth century onwards.<sup>10</sup> The characterisation of the two here redounds, not surprisingly, to Aristides' credit (*Arist.* 2.2):

ἔνιοι μὲν οὖν φασιν παῖδας ὄντας αὐτοὺς καὶ συντρεφόμενους ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ἐν παντὶ καὶ σπουδῆς ἐχομένῳ καὶ παιδιᾷς πράγματι καὶ λόγῳ διαφέρεσθαι πρὸς ἀλλήλους, καὶ τὰς φύσεις εὐθὺς ὑπὸ τῆς φιλονικίας ἐκείνης ἀνακαλύπτεσθαι, τὴν μὲν εὐχερῆ καὶ παράβολον καὶ πανοῦργον οὖσαν καὶ μετ' ὀξύτητος ἐπὶ πάντα ῥαδίως φερομένην, τὴν δ' ἰδρυμένην ἐν ἡθελίᾳ βεβαίῳ καὶ πρὸς τὸ δίκαιον ἀτενῆ, ψεῦδος δὲ καὶ βωμολοχίαν καὶ ἀπάτην οὐδ' ἐν παιδιᾷς τινι τρόπῳ προσιεμένην.

Some writers say that these two, even when they were children and pupils together, invariably opposed each other in their words and actions, not only in serious matters but even in play, and that this rivalry quickly revealed their respective natures, Themistocles' being unscrupulous, resourceful, daring, and ready to dash impetuously into any undertaking, while Aristides' was founded upon a steadfast character, which was intent on justice and incapable of any falsehood, vulgarity, or trickery even in jest.

<sup>7</sup> *Arist.* 2.1; for Cleisthenes as Aristides' political tutor, see also *Mor.* 791A and 805F.

<sup>8</sup> See Marincola (2010) 134–5; this linkage of leaders, of course, goes back at least to *Ath. Pol.* 28.2–3; on Aristides' place there see Rhodes (1981) 348–9.

<sup>9</sup> Sympathy for Sparta was a mark of Athenian 'conservative' statesmen (Levi (1955) 61–2), but the unlikely joining of Cleisthenes the democrat with Lycurgus may be meant to illustrate that Aristides was 'above party' (see below).

<sup>10</sup> The joining of the two is already evident in the contemporary poem of Timocreon of Rhodes (*PMG* 727 = *Plut. Them.* 21.4). Pelling (2002) 302 points out that Stesimbrotus of Thasos (not cited in the *Arist.* but cited several times in the *Them.*) was much interested in the childhoods of Themistocles, Cimon, and Pericles: might he have been the one to retroject their later political differences onto their youth?

The ‘fixedness’ of Aristides is, of course, meant to contrast with the wiliness and adaptability of Themistocles, which, while somewhat admired in the *Themistocles*, is clearly out of place in the *Aristides*. In addition, the avoidance of deception, chicanery and deceit on the part of Aristides marks him out as a politician who will not engage in the kinds of actions that most politicians must follow if they are to remain in the good graces of the people.

Separate, but related, to this are the remarks later in Plutarch’s observation that Aristides refused to join any political ‘party’ (*Arist.* 2.6):

Ἀριστείδης δὲ καθ’ ἑαυτὸν ὥσπερ ὁδὸν ἰδίαν ἐβάδιζε διὰ τῆς πολιτείας, πρῶτον μὲν οὐ βουλόμενος συναδικεῖν τοῖς ἐταίροις ἢ λυπηρὸς εἶναι μὴ χαριζόμενος, ἔπειτα τὴν ἀπὸ τῶν φίλων δύναμιν οὐκ ὀλίγους ἰδῶν ἐπαίρουσαν ἀδικεῖν ἐφυλάττετο, μόνῳ τῷ χρηστὰ καὶ δίκαια πράττειν καὶ λέγειν ἀξιῶν θαρρεῖν τὸν ἀγαθὸν πολίτην.

Aristides, by contrast, avoided any attachments in political life and chose to follow his own path. This was, in the first place, because he did not want to be drawn by political associates into committing injustices, nor again to vex them by denying their requests, and, secondly, because he saw that many men were encouraged to do wrong by the power they derived from their friends, and he was anxious to guard against this, believing as he did that the only true security for the good citizen lay in words and actions that were right and just.

Aristides’ commitment to doing and saying what is ‘right and just’ suggests that in a very important sense he transcends party politics, and this gives him a vantage point denied to all the others, Themistocles included: Aristides is *in* the system but not *of* it. This vantage point, as will become clear in the narrative of the Persian Wars, is absolutely essential in allowing Aristides to see beyond the petty squabbles of the various leaders and city-states and focus instead on the most important goal, that of the unity of the Greeks in their common effort of defeating the Persians.

To the extent that Aristides enters the rough and tumble world of politics, he does so because he is ‘compelled’ (*ἡναγκάζεται*, 3.1) in order to check the power of Themistocles and to protect himself as well, since Themistocles, Plutarch tells us, was working against Aristides in every way. Yet even here, Aristides already is portrayed as someone for whom the greater good was more important than a personal victory. Plutarch gives a series of illustrations of this: for example, Aristides makes a witty remark that recognises the corrosive nature of his enmity with Themistocles, and Plutarch says that Aristides once withdrew his own proposal before the people when he recognised that it would not be good for the city; he even on several occasions had

his own proposal introduced in someone else's name, so that Themistocles would not be automatically opposed to it (*Arist.* 3.1–4).

Plutarch emphasises that Aristides conducted himself in public life in the cause of justice 'not only without favouritism and partisanship but also without vengefulness or personal enmity' (*οὐ μόνον δὲ πρὸς εὐνοίαν καὶ χάριν, ἀλλὰ καὶ πρὸς ὀργὴν καὶ πρὸς ἔχθραν*, 4.1). His great virtue was his *εὐστάθεια*, his steadfastness and self-control, which meant that he was not elated in success nor depressed in failure. He did not see his public service as enriching himself or increasing his renown (3.4):

... καὶ ὁμοίως ἡγουμένου χρῆναι τῇ πατρίδι παρέχειν ἑαυτὸν οὐ χρημάτων μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ δόξης προίκα καὶ ἀμισθὶ πολιτευόμενον.

... and he believed it his duty to give his services to his country at all times freely and without reward, not merely in terms of money, but also of reputation.

These three chapters, then, brief though they are, set the stage: Aristides is fixed, resolute, a fighter on behalf of justice, beyond party, incorruptible, not beholden to personal vendetta or vengefulness and equally inoculated against favouritism and partisanship. These characteristics will all play out in Aristides' performances in the great battles of the Persian Wars.

## II

We begin with Marathon. Plutarch says that at the time of Marathon, Miltiades was the general held in the greatest renown, while Aristides was second in reputation and influence.<sup>11</sup> Before the battle, the ten generals are portrayed, as in Herodotus, as divided in their counsels, but Aristides shared Miltiades' view of the situation, and so (5.2):

... ὡς περιῆλθεν εἰς αὐτὸν ἡ ἀρχή, παρέδωκε Μιλτιάδῃ, διδάσκων τοὺς συνάρχοντας ὅτι τὸ πείθεσθαι καὶ ἀκολουθεῖν τοῖς εὖ φρονούσιν οὐκ αἰσχρόν, ἀλλὰ σεμνόν ἐστι καὶ σωτήριον.

... when Aristides' turn arrived, he handed over his authority to Miltiades, thereby demonstrating to his colleagues that it is both salu-

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<sup>11</sup> Plut. *Arist.* 5.1: μέγιστον μὲν εἶχεν ἀξίωμα Μιλτιάδης, δόξη δὲ καὶ δυνάμει δεύτερος ἦν Ἀριστίδης.

tary and dignified and certainly no disgrace to obey and follow those who are best qualified to command.

Aristides' action causes each of the other generals immediately to entrust their commands to Miltiades; and in this way the winning strategy carried the day.<sup>12</sup> In doing so Aristides 'allayed their contentiousness' (*πραΰνας τὴν φιλονικίαν*, 5.3) and inspired them to pursue a single, advantageous policy, and thereafter each of the generals no longer agreed to hold the daily command but treated Miltiades as their commander. The role of teacher (*διδάσκων*) is one that we shall see recur at Plataea.

There is only a very short vignette of the battle itself, where Plutarch says that the Athenian centre was hardest pressed, and that this part of the line was held by the tribes Leontis and Antiochis. It was there, he notes, that Themistocles and Aristides fought brilliantly side-by-side (*ἡγωνίσαντο λαμπρῶς*, 5.4) since one was a Leontid, the other an Antiochid.<sup>13</sup> Only Plutarch puts both men at Marathon, and while almost certainly not historical, the appearance of Aristides here presages the cooperation between him and Themistocles at Salamis, and in much the same way: a second in command, Aristides inevitably both recognises the right policy and proves to be crucial in ensuring that that policy prevails.

One final note: after the battle, when the rest of the Athenians hurry off to Athens to save the city from the Persian fleet which is sailing there, Aristides' tribe is left behind to guard the prisoners and booty. Not surprisingly, and in keeping with everything we know of him up to this point, Aristides displays perfect integrity of character, neither himself taking any of the booty nor allowing anyone else to do so.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> In *Table Talk* 628E Glaucius follows the Herodotean line (6.109–10) that it was Callimachus who was most responsible after Miltiades for the victory. Strictly speaking, Plutarch's account in the *Aristides* is not in contradiction with that of Herodotus, since Herodotus says only that Miltiades won from Callimachus approval for his strategy of quick attack; one can imagine that, since Herodotus says that all the generals on their particular day handed over their command to Miltiades once this decision had been made, Plutarch envisioned Aristides as going first and thus showing the way. But the spirit of Plutarch's account seems rather different from that of Herodotus.

<sup>13</sup> *Arist.* 5.4: ἐν δὲ τῇ μάχῃ μάλιστα τῶν Ἀθηναίων τοῦ μέσου πονήσαντος καὶ πλείστον ἐνταῦθα τῶν βαρβάρων χρόνον ἀντερεισάντων κατὰ τὴν Λεωντίδα καὶ τὴν Ἀντιοχίδα φυλῆν, ἡγωνίσαντο λαμπρῶς τεταγμένοι παρ' ἀλλήλους ὃ τε Θεμιστοκλῆς καὶ ὁ Ἀριστείδης.

<sup>14</sup> *Arist.* 5.6: ἐν δὲ Μαραθῶνι μετὰ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ φυλῆς Ἀριστείδης ἀπολειφθεὶς φύλαξ τῶν αἰχμαλώτων καὶ τῶν λαφύρων οὐκ ἐψεύσατο τὴν δόξαν, ἀλλὰ χύδην μὲν ἀργύρου καὶ χρυσοῦ παρόντος, ἐσθήτος δὲ παντοδαπῆς καὶ χρημάτων ἄλλων ἀμυθῆτων ἐν ταῖς σκηναῖς καὶ τοῖς ἡλωκόσι σκάφεσιν ὑπαρχόντων, οὐτ' αὐτὸς ἐπεθύμησε θιγεῖν οὐτ' ἄλλον εἶασε, πλὴν εἴ τινας ἐκεῖνον λαθόντες ὠφελήθησαν. One wonders whether Aristides' self-restraint here is meant

## III

For the battle of Salamis we have both the *Themistocles* and the *Aristides*, and, not surprisingly, there are some differences between the two.<sup>15</sup> Before Salamis Aristides is in exile, having been ostracised, and Plutarch notes that although some suspected that he might collude with the Persians, in fact during his whole time in exile he kept urging the Hellenes to win their freedom.<sup>16</sup> Aristides, then, was recalled and here Plutarch notes that he assisted Themistocles, who had been chosen *στρατηγὸς αὐτοκράτωρ*, and ‘gave him all the aid he could both in advice and in action, and ... he helped his bitterest enemy to become the most famous of men’, and he did this, Plutarch explains, ‘for the sake of the safety of all’.<sup>17</sup> This action of Aristides points to an important aspect of Aristides’ character, one that has already been hinted at, namely, his lack of concern with his own interests and honours where the public good was at stake.

The circumstances surrounding the battle are told somewhat differently in each life. In the *Themistocles*, Themistocles sends the false message to Xerxes that the Greeks are intending to sail away, as a result of which the King gives orders for his fleet to surround the Greeks. Aristides is the first to perceive the situation, and comes to the tent of Themistocles with the information that the Greeks are surrounded. Themistocles admires Aristides’ *καλοκαγαθία*, especially since they are enemies, and he asks Aristides to use the greater credit he has with the leading men to help him persuade the Greeks to do battle in the narrows. Aristides, in turn, praises Themistocles for his stratagem and he goes to the other generals to incite them to battle.<sup>18</sup>

In the *Aristides* we are not told the circumstances by which the Greeks are encircled, only that they are, and that Eurybiades was planning to sail

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to parallel that of Pausanias after the victory at Plataea, which Herodotus had highlighted: see Hdt. 9.76–82 with Flower and Marincola (2002) ad loc.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Duff (2011a) 73–4 on the way that the *Parallel Lives* as a whole offer ‘multiple presentations of the same periods from very different angles ... In fact the whole collection of *Parallel Lives* can be regarded as a fabric of overlapping narratives, each presenting history from a slightly different angle’

<sup>16</sup> *Arist.* 8.1: ...ὅς [sc. Ἀριστείδης] γε καὶ πρὸ τοῦ δόγματος τούτου διετέλει προτρέπων καὶ παροξύνων τοὺς Ἕλληνας ἐπὶ τὴν ἐλευθερίαν, κτλ.

<sup>17</sup> *Arist.* 8.1: ... Θεμιστοκλέους στρατηγούντος αὐτοκράτορος, πάντα συνέπραττε καὶ συνεβούλευεν, ἐνδοξότατον ἐπὶ σωτηρία κοινῇ ποιῶν τὸν ἔχθιστον.

<sup>18</sup> *Themist.* 12.7–8: ὁ δὲ τὴν τ’ ἄλλην καλοκαγαθίαν τοῦ ἀνδρὸς εἰδὼς καὶ τῆς τότε παρουσίας ἀγάμενος λέγει τὰ περὶ τὸν Σίκιννον αὐτῷ καὶ παρεκάλει τῶν Ἑλλήνων συνεπιλαμβάνεσθαι καὶ συμπροθυμεῖσθαι πίστιν ἔχοντα μαλλον, ὅπως ἐν τοῖς στενοῖς ναυμαχῆσωσιν. ὁ μὲν οὖν Ἀριστείδης ἐπαινέσας τὸν Θεμιστοκλέα τοὺς ἄλλους ἐπήγει στρατηγούς καὶ τριηράρχους, ἐπὶ τὴν μάχην παροξύνων.

away. Aristides is the first to realise the situation, and, although on Aegina, he runs the risk of sailing through the Persian line without regard for his personal safety (*παραβόλως*, 8.2) in order to bring the message to the Greeks. He goes immediately by night to Themistocles' tent and calls him forth alone, and he gives a speech in which he urges Themistocles to join him, rather than the other way around as in the *Themistocles* (*Arist.* 8.3–4):

εἰ σωφρονοῦμεν, ἤδη τὴν κενὴν καὶ μαιρακιώδη στάσιν ἀφέντες ἀρξώμεθα σωτηρίου καὶ καλῆς φιλονικίας πρὸς ἀλλήλους, ἀμιλλώμενοι σῶσαι τὴν Ἑλλάδα, σὺ μὲν ἄρχων καὶ στρατηγῶν, ἐγὼ δ' ὑπουργῶν καὶ συμβουλεύων· ἐπεὶ καὶ νῦν σε πυνθάνομαι μόνον ἄπτεσθαι τῶν ἀρίστων λογισμῶν, κτλ.

If we have any sense, let us now stop this vain and childish feud of ours, and begin a more honourable kind of contest to save Greece, with yourself in command and with me to advise and help you. I see already that you are the only man who has grasped what is the best course for us, etc.

Themistocles responds equally nobly (*Arist.* 8.5):

οὐκ ἂν ἐβουλόμην ὦ Ἀριστείδη σε κατὰ τοῦτο κρείσσονά μου γενέσθαι, πειράσομαι δὲ πρὸς καλὴν ἀρχὴν ἀμιλλόμενος ὑπερβαλέσθαι τοῖς ἔργοις.

I would not have chosen to be outdone by you, Aristides. But I admire the example you have set me and I shall try to follow it and to exceed it in my deeds.

It is at this point that he tells Aristides of his trick against the Persians, and then asks Aristides to use his influence and to persuade Eurybiades that they could not prevail without a battle at sea, which Aristides does in the ensuing council of war.

The minor differences between the two accounts ought not to obscure the fact that the accounts largely agree, and that in each one the role of Aristides is the same. (That this is spelled out at greater length in the *Aristides* is, of course, not surprising.) In each account one can see echoes of Aristides' behaviour at Marathon. Just as at Marathon Aristides threw in his lot with Miltiades, so likewise at Salamis he uses his influence to advance the plan of Themistocles, which he recognises as offering the best hope of victory. He even clearly states his 'secondary' role as advisor with the words *σὺ μὲν ἄρχων καὶ στρατηγῶν, ἐγὼ δ' ὑπουργῶν καὶ συμβουλεύων*, and, as we have seen, he counsels an end to their personal differences that had gone back to

childhood.<sup>19</sup> His extraordinary actions then elicit from Themistocles equally noble sentiments, both leaders rising to the occasion and offering Plutarch the opportunity to accentuate the common effort made by the great statesmen who united against the common enemy. Indeed for Salamis one might say that the enemy is two-fold: on the one hand, the Persians themselves, of course; but, on the other hand, the rest of the Greeks with their wrong-headed strategy. Aristides' selfless commitment to what was right, already seen in incidents that now seem trivial by comparison, is able at the great testing time of the Greek world to have profound consequences on the entire course of history.

Now much of this, of course, is based on Herodotus, who likewise has Aristides sail through the Persian lines to his own peril and then call Themistocles forth from his tent. Herodotus too comments on the fact that Aristides and Themistocles were enemies, and he also gives him a speech in which he urges an end to their political differences (8.79.1-4):

συνεστηκότων δὲ τῶν στρατηγῶν, ἐξ Αἰγίνης διέβη Ἀριστείδης ὁ Λυσιμάχου, ... οὗτος ὠνήρ στας ἐπὶ τὸ συνέδριον ἐξεκαλέετο Θεμιστοκλέα, εὐόντα μὲν ἐωυτῷ οὐ φίλον ἐχθρὸν δὲ τὰ μάλιστα· ὑπὸ δὲ μεγάλῃ τῶν παρεόντων κακῶν λήθην ἐκείνων ποιούμενος ἐξεκαλέετο, θέλων αὐτῷ συμμείξαι· προακηκόεε δὲ ὅτι σπεύδοιεν οἱ ἀπὸ Πελοποννήσου ἀνάγειν τὰς νέας πρὸς τὸν Ἴσθμόν. ὡς δὲ ἐξηγήθη οἱ Θεμιστοκλής, ἔλεγε Ἀριστείδης τάδε. 'ἡμέας στασιάζειν χρεόν ἐστι ἐν τε τῷ ἄλλῳ καιρῷ καὶ δὴ καὶ ἐν τῷδε περὶ τοῦ ὀκότερος ἡμέων πλέω ἀγαθὰ τὴν πατρίδα ἐργάσεται. λέγω δέ τοι ὅτι ἴσον ἐστὶ πολλά τε καὶ ὀλίγα λέγειν περὶ ἀποπλόου τοῦ ἐνθεῦτεν Πελοποννησίοισι. ἐγὼ γὰρ αὐτόπτης τοι λέγω γενόμενος ὅτι νῦν οὐδ' ἦν θέλωσι Κορίνθιοί τε καὶ αὐτὸς Εὐρυβιάδης οἰοί τε ἔσσονται ἐκπλώσαι· περιεχόμεθα γὰρ ὑπὸ τῶν πολεμίων κύκλῳ. ἀλλ' ἐσελθὼν σφι ταῦτα σήμερον.'

While the generals' dispute was still at its height, Aristides came over in a boat from Aegina. ... Arrived at Salamis, Aristides went to where the conference was being held and, standing outside, called for Themistocles. Themistocles was no friend of his; indeed he was his most determined enemy; but Aristides was willing, in view of the magnitude of the danger which threatened them, to forget old quarrels in his desire to communicate with him. He was already aware of the anxiety of the Peloponnesian commanders to withdraw to the Isthmus; as soon, therefore, as Themistocles came out of the conference in answer to his

<sup>19</sup> One wonders whether τὴν ... μεираκιώδη στάσιν is an oblique reference to their original quarrel over the μεираκιον Stesilaus.

call, he said, ‘At this moment, more than ever before, you and I should be rivals to see which of us can do most good to our country. First, let me tell you that the Peloponnesians may talk as much or as little as they please about withdrawing from Salamis—it will make not the least difference. What I tell you, I have seen with my own eyes: they cannot now get out of here, however much the Corinthians or Eurybiades himself may wish to do so, because our surrounded. So go in and tell them that.’

Yet although there are clear similarities here to Plutarch’s account, the differences, while subtle, are important. First, whereas in Herodotus Aristides says that they should be rivals to see who can do more good for their country, in Plutarch Aristides emphasises that now they must end their rivalry.<sup>20</sup> Second, Herodotus says that Aristides was willing to forget their previous rivalry in view of the gravity of the situation, whereas in Plutarch Aristides tries actively to move Themistocles beyond their rivalry, towards a better and more cooperative behaviour. Third, there is no suggestion in Herodotus that Aristides envisions himself as a counsellor only to Themistocles, willing to take a back seat while Themistocles runs the show; indeed, his suggestion that they be rivals in striving to do good for their country suggests that Aristides envisions himself as Themistocles’ equal.<sup>21</sup> Finally, Themistocles in Herodotus does not respond with any kind of noble sentiment suggesting that he has taken up Aristides’ call to better behaviour; on the contrary, he is delighted only because Aristides confirms that the situation engineered by himself has been successful (Hdt. 8.80.1–2).

When we turn to the battle itself, the *Themistocles* proceeds in one way, the *Aristides* in another. The former has the spotlight clearly on Themistocles and the naval battle, and Aristides does not feature here at all. By contrast, in the *Aristides*, again in keeping with the focus on the subject himself, Aristides takes a more active role. In this case he sees that the island of Psyttaleia is full of Persians, so he takes ‘the most ardent and warlike of the citizens’ and makes a landing, joins battle with the barbarians, and slays them all,

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<sup>20</sup> See Stadter’s excellent treatment (2011) of competition in the *Lives*; he notes in particular that Aristides’ competitive nature ‘develops in a positive direction’, and his suggestion to Themistocles here ‘is still between two politicians, but the motive is not personal honour or anger, but the freedom of Greece’ (250–1).

<sup>21</sup> This ‘division of labour’, so to speak, may have been inspired by the Aristotelian *Athenaion Politeia*, which calls both Aristides and Themistocles *προστάται τοῦ δήμου κατὰ τοῦτους τοὺς καιροὺς* and notes *ὁ μὲν τὰ πολέμια ἀσκῶν, ὁ δὲ τὰ πολιτικὰ δεινὸς εἶναι <δοκῶν>* (AP 23.3). For the (at times contradictory) portrait of Aristides in the *Ath. Pol.*—both Themistocles’ rival and his ally—see Rhodes (1981) 292–3, 348–9. Plutarch may have been inspired by such treatment to give Aristides a similar dual role.

save for a few distinguished men who are taken alive. So far this is nothing more than a slight expansion of Herodotus' brief account of Aristides' actions in the battle (8.95). Plutarch, however, adds another aspect (9.3–4):

τὴν δὲ νησίδα τοῖς ὄπλοις πανταχόθεν ὁ Ἀριστείδης περιστέψας ἐφήδρευε τοῖς ἐκφερομένοις πρὸς αὐτήν, ὡς μήτε τῶν φίλων τινὰ διαφθαρῆναι μήτε τῶν πολεμίων διαφυγεῖν. ὁ γὰρ πλείστος ὠθισμὸς τῶν νεῶν καὶ τῆς μάχης τὸ καρτερώτατον ἔοικε περὶ τὸν τόπον ἐκεῖνον γενέσθαι· διὸ καὶ τρόπαιον ἔστηκεν ἐν τῇ Ψυτταλείᾳ.

Aristides then lined the beaches of the island all round with his infantry, to watch for anybody who might be washed up, so that none of the Greeks should lose their lives and none of the Persians escape. Indeed, the main clash between the two fleets and the heaviest fighting of the whole battle seems to have taken place near this spot, and for this reason the trophy stands on Psyttaleia.

In Plutarch's reconstruction, Aristides on Psyttaleia becomes an integral part of the naval battle in a way that he is not in Herodotus' account.<sup>22</sup> This is emphasised by the remark that the greater part of the naval engagement took place there—just as at Marathon the greatest fighting took place where Aristides was stationed—and 'confirmed' by the observation that this is where the trophy was set up.<sup>23</sup>

There are some slight differences as well in the accounts of Themistocles' plan after the battle to attack the Persians by destroying the bridges at the Hellespont and penning them up within Europe. In the *Themistocles* he confides in Aristides, who makes an impassioned speech explaining that they should do everything they can to get the Persians out of Greece. In the *Aristides*, Aristides cries out aloud and is given a short speech in indirect discourse. Despite these small differences, Themistocles in each case immediately accedes to Aristides' idea, and says that the best thing would be to get the Persians out of Europe as quickly as possible.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Herodotus mentions him after the main narrative of the naval action (8.95) and says only that he and the Athenians with him killed the Persians who had been stationed on the island.

<sup>23</sup> There has been much controversy over this trophy on Psyttaleia, but a full survey of bibliography would serve little purpose here; for representative divergent views see Fornara (1966) and Wallace (1969). Plutarch's use of ἔστηκεν ('stands') suggests autopsy, though it cannot, of course, guarantee it.

<sup>24</sup> *Themist.* 16.1–4; *Arist.* 9.5–6.

In the winter between Salamis and Plataea, Mardonius, acting for Xerxes, offers, as in Herodotus, to give the Athenians special treatment if they will come over to the Persian side; as in Herodotus, the Spartans hear this and are alarmed and send a delegation to Athens offering to assist the Athenians. Whereas in Herodotus all of this is the work of unnamed ‘Athenians’ and ‘Spartans’, in Plutarch it is Aristides who puts forward a decree and gives an ‘admirable response’ (*ἀπεκρίναντο θαυμαστὴν ἀπόκρισιν*, 10.4) to the Spartans in which he extols Athenian valour and dedication, while to the men sent by Mardonius he gives the Herodotean speech about Athenian resolve remaining the same so long as the sun keeps its present course.<sup>25</sup> In the spring, Plutarch says that Aristides went to Sparta to urge the Spartans to send men to Boeotia, although having narrated an account of Aristides’ actions at Sparta, he then says that according to the decree that Aristides himself proposed, Aristides was not one of the ambassadors who went on this trip.<sup>26</sup>

#### IV

It is at Plataea that Aristides finally comes into his own. He is now the commander-in-chief of the Athenians, and no longer a second in command who must play the role of counsellor to the man of action. At the same time, however, Plutarch was aware that Plataea was a Spartan victory—even Aeschylus had had to admit that—and Pausanias, not Aristides, was commander-in-chief of the Greek forces. Thus the Athenians could not play the leading role against the Persians in this battle, and Aristides was again consigned to the position of second-in-command. The challenge, then, was to carve out a place for Aristides and the Athenian actions in the battle, and give both a role in the overall victory, a victory that Herodotus after all had called ‘the fairest of all those of which we know’ (9.64.1). Plutarch was aware that although named by Herodotus as general of the Athenians at Plataea (9.28.6), Aristides played no role at all in Herodotus’ account of the actual battle. Plutarch, therefore, decided (or will have found in his sources) that those events in Herodotus attributed to ‘the Athenians’ without further

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<sup>25</sup> *Arist.* 10.4–6 ~ *Hdt.* 8.143–4. Plutarch has omitted Herodotus’ ‘middle-man’, Alexander of Macedon, in this incident no doubt because he did not wish to countenance the belief that the Macedonians had taken the side of the Persians; and he may have thought such behaviour contradicted by Alexander’s later secret message to the Greeks before the Persian attack (15.3–5).

<sup>26</sup> Sansone (1989) 188–9 points out that the story, probably taken from Idomeneus of Lampsacus, is meant to demonstrate Aristides’ straightforward character in contrast with the well-known post-war duplicity of Themistocles at Sparta.

specification were actually those of Aristides himself or those done on his orders.<sup>27</sup>

Even so, Plutarch follows Herodotus' account rather closely, adding details or putting a particular interpretation on this or that incident.<sup>28</sup> This is supplemented, however, with a number of actions not known from Herodotus (or elsewhere, in some cases) but which are likely to have come to Plutarch through local histories or earlier biographies which treated Aristides.

Plutarch notes that the Spartans and the Greeks in general had as their diviner Teisamenos of Elis, who had forecast victory if the Greeks did not begin the hostilities (*Arist.* 11.3 ~ Hdt. 9.36), but he then adds that Aristides sent to Delphi from which he received a response indicating where the battle should take place, and Plutarch then tells the story of how the Athenians and Plataeans finally figured out where the right spot was. Plutarch includes here a Plataean general, Arimnestus (a figure known from Herodotus),<sup>29</sup> who has a dream in which Zeus Soter appears to him. The incident culminates in a grand gesture by the Plataeans, whereby they move their boundary stones 'so that, in accordance with the oracles, the contest for the freedom of Greece might take place in the Athenians' own territory' (*Arist.* 11.8), and Plutarch rounds this story off with an analepsis to the time of Alexander the Great, who rewarded the Plataeans for their heroism and unselfishness.

The origins of this story cannot now be known,<sup>30</sup> but it is clear that Plutarch wishes to set up a significant role for the Athenians here, who have their own connection to Delphi, receive an all-important prophecy about where the actual battle is to take place,<sup>31</sup> and can then claim that the battle took place in their own territory.

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<sup>27</sup> This is a common technique in Plutarch's work: see Russell (1966) 87–8.

<sup>28</sup> That Herodotus is Plutarch's main source for most of the incidents at Plataea in the *Aristides* is clear from a comparison with Diodorus (11.29–32). Diodorus' account has nothing about the delay due to the seers' prophecies, nothing of secret messages by night, nor of the Spartan delay while the Persians attack; instead, the Greeks throughout are the initiators of action (see, e.g., 11.30.6; on Diodorus' sources for these events see Haillet (2001) x–xi, xvii–xix). It is significant that Plutarch, with a rather more rousing narrative at his disposal, still chose in the main to follow Herodotus. I shall treat Plutarch's 're-writing' of Herodotus' narrative here in a future article.

<sup>29</sup> See Hdt. 9.72.2 with Flower and Marincola (2002) ad loc.

<sup>30</sup> See Calabi Limentani (1964) 52; Prandi (1985) believes the second part of the prophecy, the site of the plain of Demeter and the yielding of territory to the Athenians, to be authentic.

<sup>31</sup> The exact place has an important role in Plutarch: see earlier in the *Aristides* (10.1), where Mardonius denigrated the naval victory at Salamis and emphasised that the Boeotian plain would be the better indicator of the abilities of Persians and Greeks.

The next incident is known from Herodotus, the struggle over who would hold the left wing opposite the Spartans. The Tegeans rehearse their great deeds (though in Plutarch only in indirect discourse), and this angers the Athenians. Aristides then comes forth and is given a speech in direct discourse (*Arist.* 12.2–3), largely modelled on the speech of the anonymous ‘Athenians’ in Herodotus, in which he says to the Spartans that the Athenians will fight wherever they are told to, since behaviour, not position, in battle confers honour (*Arist.* 12.3):

ἤκομεν γὰρ οὐ τοῖς συμμάχοις στασιάζοντες, ἀλλὰ μαχόμενοι τοῖς πολεμίοις, οὐδ’ ἐπαινεσόμενοι τοὺς πατέρας, ἀλλ’ αὐτοὺς ἄνδρας ἀγαθοὺς τῇ Ἑλλάδι παρέξοντες.

For we have come not to be at odds with our allies but to fight with our enemy, not to praise our fathers but to show ourselves brave men in the service of Greece.

The slightly different emphasis here—the Athenians in Herodotus say that they have come not to make speeches but to fight the enemy—is crucial for the point Plutarch wishes to make, and the phrase οὐ τοῖς συμμάχοις στασιάζοντες shows Aristides defending the panhellenic ideal.

The next incident is again unique to Plutarch. Some men of wealth and nobility hold a clandestine meeting in which they plot to destroy the democracy because they have lost their fortunes in the war and because upstarts now hold positions of power and authority. They were prepared as well, should they fail in this endeavour, to ally with the Persians. Aristides learns of the situation, but realising the delicacy of the situation and the fact that he does not know how many are involved, proceeds with caution. He has eight men arrested, of whom two immediately flee into exile; the remaining six he does not prosecute, because he wishes to give those undetected an opportunity to redeem themselves, and so he tells them that the coming war is a great tribunal in which they can disprove their guilt by showing their good intentions towards their country (*Arist.* 13.1–3). There has been a good deal of discussion concerning the authenticity of this incident,<sup>32</sup> but the important point for us here is that it affords Plutarch the opportunity to highlight the ability of Aristides to encourage unity amongst the Athenians themselves, just as he reminds the Greeks at large of their duty towards panhellenism. Aristides shows a pragmatic side here as well, in his ability to motivate the

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<sup>32</sup> See Calabi Limentani (1964) L–LI, who gives references to earlier discussions; Harvey (1984); Sansone 190–1.

men who only just before had been plotting against the state to now go and fight on behalf of that state.<sup>33</sup>

The bravery of the Athenians is again on display in the next incident. When the Megarians are hard pressed by the Persians and send to Pausanias for help, all the other Greeks hesitate, but ‘Aristides undertook the mission in the name of the Athenians’, dispatching Olympiodorus and three hundred of the elite corps, who then beat back the Persians and kill the handsome Masistius (*Arist.* 14.5–8). This is largely based on Herodotus (9.20–4), with Aristides substituting for ‘the Athenians’,<sup>34</sup> as happens also in the next incident, where Alexander of Macedon comes by night to give the message that the Persians will attack in the morning, and he asks to speak specifically to Aristides (in Herodotus it is simply ‘the Athenian commanders’).<sup>35</sup>

Then follows the odd incident whereby Pausanias wishes the Athenians to switch wings with the Spartans. In Herodotus Pausanias tells the Athenians that their superior knowledge of the Persians is the motivating factor for his wish to place them opposite the Persians and the Athenians gladly accept. In Plutarch, by contrast, the Athenians react angrily to Pausanias’ proposal, grumbling that they are being treated like helots and that they will face the greater onslaught against the Persians. It is Aristides who must recall them to their earlier desire to display their bravery, telling them that they are failing to see the singular honour involved here and that they can now face off against the barbarians rather than fellow Greeks. The Athenians are thus won over, and with eager hearts look forward to the battle.<sup>36</sup>

For the battle itself Plutarch gives many of the incidents as in Herodotus, with some additions here and there, but following generally Herodotus’ approach. The only matter not to be found in Herodotus concerns Aristides and the medising Greeks. When word comes to the Athenians that the battle has begun and they seek to go to the aid of the Spartans, they are blocked by the Greeks, especially the Thebans, who are allies of the Persians. Aristides’ reaction is swift and decisive (*Arist.* 18.6):

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Calabi Limentani (1964) 58: ‘la condotta di A. appare qui improntata a una astuzia che non gli è caratteristica; preferire l’utile al giusto’.

<sup>34</sup> Diod. 11.30.4 also names Aristides as the one sending the corps of Athenians to the Megarians’ aid, but the context is entirely different: the incident occurs during a night battle in which each of the Greek contingents defeat the barbarians opposed to them except for the Megarians who faced the best of the cavalry and thus needed reinforcements to defeat them. So it is clear that Diodorus or his source play no role in Plutarch’s reconstruction.

<sup>35</sup> *Arist.* 15.3–6 ~ Hdt. 9.44–5.

<sup>36</sup> *Arist.* 16.1–6 ~ Hdt. 9.46.

... Ἀριστείδης δὲ πρῶτον μὲν, ὡς εἶδε, πολὺ προελθὼν ἐβόα, μαρτυρόμενος Ἑλληνίους θεούς, ἀπέχεσθαι μάχης καὶ μὴ σφίσιν ἐμποδῶν εἶναι μηδὲ κωλύειν ἐπαμύνοντας τοῖς προκινδυνεύουσιν ὑπὲρ τῆς Ἑλλάδος, ἐπεὶ δ' ἑώρα μὴ προσέχοντας αὐτῷ καὶ συντεταγμένους ἐπὶ τὴν μάχην, οὕτω τῆς ἐκεῖ βοηθείας ἀποτραπόμενος συνέβαλε τούτοις περὶ πεντακισμυρίουσιν.

... as soon as Aristides caught sight of them, he went on far ahead and called out in a loud voice, appealing to them in the name of the gods of Greece to stay out of the battle and not oppose or hinder those on their way to help men who were risking their lives for the sake of Greece. However, when he saw that they were taking no notice, but had already formed up for battle, he turned aside from the attempt to relieve the Spartans and engaged these men, who numbered some fifty thousand.

There is something quite Homeric in Aristides' behaviour here, going 'far ahead' and crying out 'in a loud voice', and his message is one that by now is familiar: Greeks should be united in the face of the Persian threat. And if the medisers cannot renounce the Persians, they could at least not hinder those of the Greeks going to fight against the enemy. The Athenians then finally defeat the Thebans, and join up with the Spartans to assail those who had taken refuge within the walls of their camp, finally expelling them, killing some and putting others to flight (*Arist.* 18.7–19.5).

The threat of disunity reveals itself again immediately after the successful conclusion of the battle. Plutarch says that the Athenians would not allow the Spartans either to receive the *aristeia* or to erect a trophy. The Greek cause would have collapsed then and there, he says, in civil strife, had not Aristides exerted himself and taught—the same word, *διδάσκων*, as is used of his action at Marathon—his fellow generals that the decision should be referred to the Greeks (*Arist.* 20.1). When a Megarian proposed that the *aristeia* be given to some third city and Cleocritus of Corinth proposed Plataea, Aristides immediately agreed on behalf of the Athenians, after which Pausanias agreed on behalf of the Lacedaemonians; thus reconciled, the Greeks awarded the booty and made their dedications to the gods (*Arist.* 20.2–3). Later, at a general assembly of the Greeks, Aristides proposed that delegates from Greece assemble every year in Plataea and every fourth year

games be celebrated, and that a Greek force be levied to prosecute the war against the barbarian (*Arist.* 21.1–2).<sup>37</sup>

At Plataea, therefore, Aristides' role, while greater, is of the same nature as before. Although he is given a command and he does perform well in combat, it is off the battlefield that his major influence is felt. He is always on the alert for anything that will destroy the unity of the Athenians or of the Greeks at large, and he constantly reminds all parties of the greater good to which they should be committed. As at Marathon, where he gave up his command to Miltiades, and as at Salamis, where he worked together with his bitterest enemy, Themistocles, so too at Plataea Aristides considers first and foremost not his own glory or power, but rather that of the Greek cause itself, and if that requires him or the Athenians at times to take a subservient role, so be it: as he himself says, it is behaviour that brings renown.

## V

Aristides is thus a very busy man according to Plutarch's account of the Persian Wars, having a hand in all of the major business of the three great Greek victories. He plays nowhere near so important a role in Herodotus nor indeed even in Diodorus, whose account may reflect Ephorus.<sup>38</sup> Whence, then, comes the importance of Aristides for Plutarch? The answer—or, perhaps to be more accurate, one answer—is to be found in the *Political Precepts*, a treatise whose importance for the *Lives* has long been recognised by scholars.<sup>39</sup> In this work, addressed to Menemachus of Sardis and, by extension, all the Greeks of Plutarch's time who were men of importance in their individual city-states, Plutarch goes through a number of things that make for successful governing in a Greece ruled by Rome.

He emphasises, for example, that the ruler must learn the nature of the people he rules (*Praec. Ger.* 3, 799B–C):

... τρέπεσθαι χρὴ πρὸς κατανόησιν τοῦ ἥθους τῶν πολιτῶν, ὃ μάλιστα συγκραθὲν ἐκ πάντων ἐπιφαίνεται καὶ ἰσχύει.

<sup>37</sup> Like several of the incidents in this *Life*, the authenticity of this one has been disputed: see the references in Calabi Limentani (1964) XXXI–XXXII, 89, and Sansone (1989) 197.

<sup>38</sup> See above, n. 28.

<sup>39</sup> On the *Praecepta* see the editions of Valgiglio (1976) and Caiazza (1993); there is a great deal of scholarship on the work: I have found most helpful Jones (1971) 110–21; Carrière (1977); Swain (1996) 162–83; Duff (1999) 293–8; and Desideri (2011).

... statesmen must apply themselves to the understanding of the character of the citizens, which shows itself as in the highest degree a compound of all their individual characters and is powerful.

The leader must then not ape the people's character but use his knowledge in such a way that he can lead the people towards right behaviour both by the force of his character and by persuasion (*Praec. Ger.* 3-4, 800A-B):

τῷ δὲ πολιτικῷ μιμεῖσθαι μὲν οὐ προσήκει τοῦ δήμου τὸν τρόπον, ἐπίστασθαι δὲ καὶ χρῆσθαι πρὸς ἕκαστον, οἷς ἀλώσιμός ἐστιν. ... τὸ μὲν οὖν τῶν πολιτῶν ἦθος ἰσχύοντα δεῖ καὶ πιστευόμενον ἤδη πειρᾶσθαι ῥυθμίζειν ἀτρέμα πρὸς τὸ βέλτιον ὑπάγοντα καὶ πράως μεταχειριζόμενον. ἐργώδης γὰρ ἡ μετάθεσις τῶν πολλῶν.

For the statesman it is fitting not to imitate the character of his people, but to understand it and to employ for each type those means by which it can be brought under his control. ... So, then, the statesman who already has attained to power and won the people's confidence should try to train the character of the citizens, leading them gently towards that which is better and treating them with mildness; for it is a difficult task to change the multitude.

And in this enterprise, oratory plays an important role, for speech is 'not the creator of persuasion but its co-worker' (μὴ δημιουργὸν ἀλλὰ τοι συνεργὸν εἶναι πειθοῦς, *Praec. Ger.* 5, 801C).

Overriding everything, however, in the *Political Precepts* are the notions of harmony and freedom from strife. This harmony and concord is, not coincidentally, the most characteristic feature of Plutarch's portrayal of the Persian Wars, and it manifests itself in three different ways: first, harmony amongst the members of the ruling elite; second, harmony between leaders and the common people; and third, pan-hellenic harmony, the united Greek front of individual city-states against Persia.

Aristides is key to all three.<sup>40</sup> He is *the* model of elite co-operation: we noted at the outset his willingness to yield the command to Miltiades at Marathon, and his cooperation with Themistocles is of the utmost importance to the victory at Salamis, as well as to the good deliberations that preceded and followed the battle. He is respected and obeyed by the people be-

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<sup>40</sup> This is not to say, however, that *only* he exhibits the ability to instil harmony: note *Them.* 6.5 where Themistocles' greatest contribution to the war effort was his reconciliation of the Greek cities to the cause, or *Them.* 11.1, where Themistocles engineers the recall of Aristides from ostracism because of the importance of the struggle before them.

cause of his intrinsic qualities: he persuades the troops out of their anger and frustration not once but twice, and is able to channel their dissatisfaction with others into effort and behaviour that makes them fight to the best of their ability in battle. Even his attempt to persuade the medising Greeks not to attack the forces going to Pausanias' aid, though it is a failure, nevertheless shows the responsible leadership that was, Plutarch suggests, characteristic of the Greek victory over Persia. Finally, Aristides is the force behind common Hellenic striving both at Salamis (where his authority persuades the rest of the Greeks, many of whom distrusted Themistocles) and especially at Plataea, where in the aftermath he brokers a compromise between Athenian and Spartan claims to be best, and then proposes a panhellenic force and festival that will commemorate the great achievements made there.

Now it is probably not the case that Plutarch is responsible for the panhellenic cast of the narrative of the Persian Wars; *that* already appears in Diodorus which very likely goes back to Ephorus. But the emphasis on harmony amongst *leaders* must certainly be due to Plutarch himself, and this is (again) a theme close to his heart in the *Political Precepts*. He even uses there the example of Themistocles and Aristides (*Praec. Ger.* 14, 809B):

οἱ μὲν οὖν πολλοὶ τὸν Θεμιστοκλέα καὶ τὸν Ἀριστείδην ἐπαινοῦσιν ἐπὶ τῶν ὄρων τὴν ἔχθραν ἀποτιθεμένους, ὁσάκις ἐπὶ πρεσβείαν ἢ στρατηγίαν ἐξίειεν, εἶτα πάλιν ἀναλαμβάνοντας.

The majority praise Themistocles and Aristides because they laid down their enmity at the frontier whenever they went on an embassy or took up a command, and resumed it only when they returned home.

Elsewhere in this work he has harsh words for those in his own time who referred all matters great and small to the Roman governor, thereby forcing him to be more involved in the affairs of the city than he himself wanted; the reason this happens, he says, 'is especially the greed and ambition of the leading men'.<sup>41</sup>

Holding office, Plutarch says, is a sacred and serious thing, which the holder must especially respect, and this respect lies in harmony (*ὁμοφροσύνη*) and friendship (*φιλία*) with one's colleagues (*Praec. Ger.* 20, 816A):

<sup>41</sup> *Praec. Ger.* 19, 815A: αἰτία δὲ τούτου μάλιστα πλεονεξία καὶ φιλονικία τῶν πρώτων.

ἱερὸν δὲ χρῆμα καὶ μέγα πᾶσαν ἀρχὴν οὖσαν καὶ ἄρχοντα δεῖ μάλιστα τιμᾶν, τιμὴ δ' ἀρχῆς ὁμοφροσύνη καὶ φιλία πρὸς συνάρχοντας πολὺ μᾶλλον ἢ στέφανοι καὶ χλαμύς περιπόρφυρος.

And deeming every public office to be something great and sacred, we must also pay the highest honour to one who holds an office; but the honour of an office resides in concord and friendship with one's colleagues much more than in crowns and a purple-bordered robe.

And at the conclusion of the work, Plutarch remarks that there remains for the statesman one thing which is second to none of good things (*Praec. Ger.* 32, 824D):

λείπεται δὴ τῷ πολιτικῷ μόνον ἐκ τῶν ὑποκειμένων ἔργων, ὃ μηδενὸς ἔλαττόν ἐστι τῶν ἀγαθῶν, ὁμόνοιαν ἐμποιεῖν καὶ φιλίαν ἀεὶ τοῖς συνοικοῦσιν, ἔριδας δὲ καὶ διχοφροσύνας καὶ δυσμένειαν ἐξαιρεῖν ἅπασαν.

There remains, then, for the statesman, of those activities which fall within his province, only this—and it is the equal of any of the other blessings: always to instil concord and friendship in those who dwell together with him and to remove strifes, discords, and all enmity.

This ensuring of concord (ὁμονοία)<sup>42</sup> and friendship among one's fellows, and the elimination of all kinds of strife, dissension (διχοφροσύνη) and enmity in political dealings is, for Plutarch, the statesman's highest goal and the thing that brings him more renown than anything else.

## VI

What all of this leads to is a portrait of the Persian-War victories very much in keeping with Plutarch's constant concerns both in the *Lives* and the *Moralia*. The war is won not so much on the battlefield as in the hearts and minds of the leaders and combatants. In the *Cimon*, Plutarch explicitly commends the virtue of the leaders of that time (*Cim.* 17.9):

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. Sheppard (1984–6) for the importance of ὁμονοία in Greek cities under the Roman empire.

οὕτω τότε πολιτικά μὲν ἦσαν αἱ διαφοραί, μέτριοι δ' οἱ θυμοὶ καὶ πρὸς τὸ κοινὸν εὐανάκλητοι συμφέρον, ἡ δὲ φιλοτιμία πάντων ἐπικρατοῦσα τῶν παθῶν τοῖς τῆς πατρίδος ὑπεχώρει καιροῖς.

At that time differences were based on political matters, and men's spirits were moderate and easily recalled to conformity with the common benefit. Even ambition, that most dominating passion, yielded to the needs of one's country.

Above all it is Aristides who represents for Plutarch the ideal leader of those times: fearless, incorruptible, greater than the passions of the people and the jealousies of his colleagues, and willing to forego his own glory for the common good. He sees beyond the petty rivalries of the others, and remembers to keep both the common people and his colleagues on the proper path to virtue and victory. More than the generals who won the battles, more even than the men who constructed the winning strategy for the war, it was Aristides who made it all possible.

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