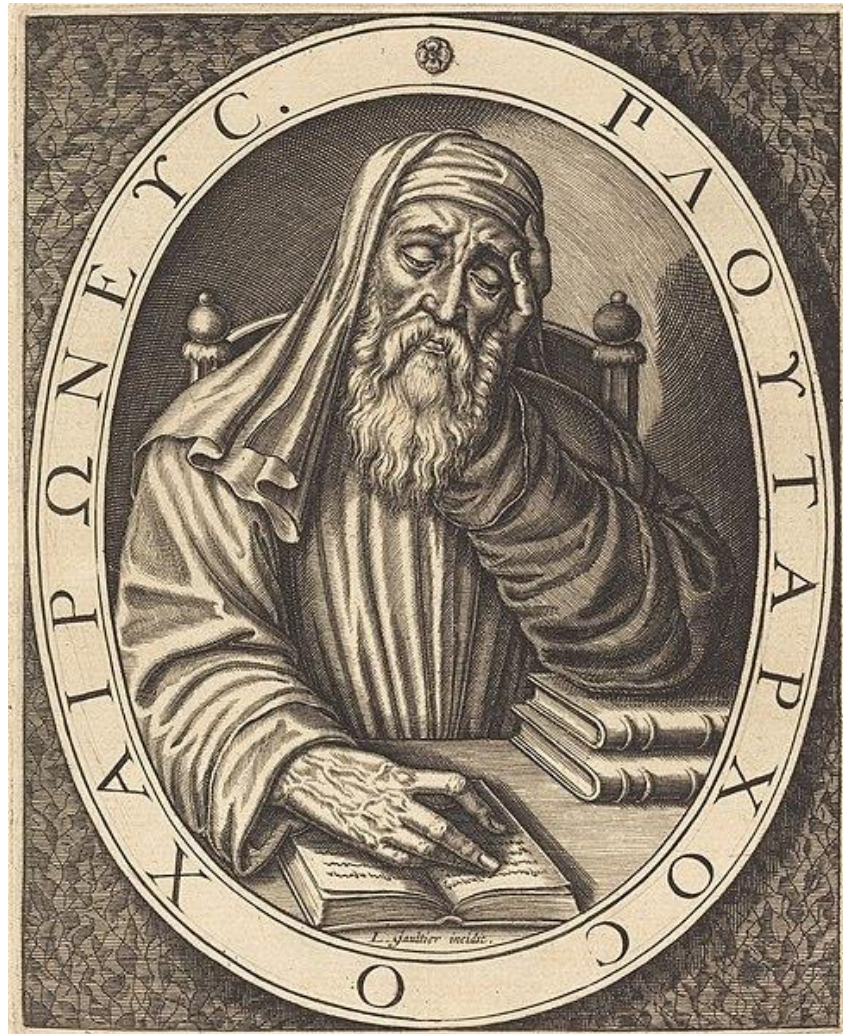


## BELLARIA LVIII



The Chaironean, Plutarch (engraving, Léonard Gaultier, d.1641)

### PLUTARCH III

#### *Politika Parangelmata*

#### Introduction

The Loeb translate this as *Precepts of Statecraft*. Fair enough, but it is important to remember that the Greek world of Plutarch's time was not the world of 5<sup>th</sup> C Athens but under the thumb of Rome, a situation to which Plutarch was perfectly reconciled. So there was nothing like the wide-ranging free-for-all of Athenian democratic assemblies. The wealthy were appointed to the council and the people's assembly voted on what the council members proposed. These would concern local issues.

Here near the end of his *Parangelmata* Plutarch defines the job of the statesman as follows:

'But the best thing is to see to it in advance that factional discord shall never arise among them and to regard this as the greatest and noblest function of what may be called the art of statesmanship. For observe that of the greatest blessings which

states can enjoy—peace, liberty, plenty, abundance of men, and concord—so far as peace is concerned, at present the peoples have no need of statesmanship; for all war, both Greek and foreign, has been banished from among us and has disappeared; and of liberty the peoples have as great a share as our rulers grant them, and perhaps more would not be better for them; but bounteous productiveness of the soil, kindly tempering of the seasons, that wives may bear ‘children like to their sires’, and that the offspring may live in safety—these things the wise man will ask the gods in his prayers to grant his fellow-citizens.’

There must be many ordinary people across today’s world who would be ecstatic to be able to settle for that.

### Nothing better to do?



**798C** First then let there be established, for the administration of state affairs, decision-making based on judgement and reason, and not on impulse arising from empty vain-glory, infighting, or lack of anything else to do. For as those who have nothing useful to do at home frequently spend most of their time in the marketplace, even if they have no need to, so some men, because they have no other personal business worthy of their attentions, immerse themselves into public affairs, using politics as a leisure pursuit.

**798C** πρῶτον μὲν οὖν ὑποκείσθω πολιτεία, καθάπερ ἔδαφος βέβαιον καὶ ἰσχυρόν, ἢ προαίρεσις ἀρχὴν ἔχουσα κρίσιν καὶ λόγον, ἀλλὰ μὴ πτοίαν ὑπὸ δόξης κενῆς ἢ φιλονεικίας τινὸς ἢ πράξεων ἐτέρων ἀπορίας. ὥσπερ γὰρ οἷς οὐδὲν ἔστιν οἴκοι χρηστόν, ἐν ἀγορᾷ διατρίβουσι, κὰν μὴ δέωνται, τὸν πλεῖστον χρόνον: οὕτως ἔνιοι, τῷ μὴδὲν ἔχειν ἴδιον ἄλλο πράττειν ἄξιον σπουδῆς, ἐμβάλλουσιν ἑαυτοὺς εἰς δημόσια πράγματα, τῇ πολιτείᾳ διαγωγῇ χρώμενοι.



**798D** Many also, having by chance become involved in public affairs, have become infected by them and cannot easily leave the stage, suffering the same as those who embark on board a ship to be rocked about and then driven out into the open sea: sea-sick and giddy, they look out for the shore but are forced to remain and to accommodate themselves to the situation.

**798D** πολλοὶ δ' ἀπὸ τύχης ἀψάμενοι τῶν κοινῶν, καὶ ἀναπλησθέντες οὐκέτι ῥαδίως ἀπελθεῖν δύνανται, ταῦτ' οἱ ἐμβᾶσιν εἰς πλοῖον αἰώρας χάριν εἶτ' ἀποσπασθεῖσιν εἰς πέλαγος πεπονθότες: ἔξω βλέπουσι ναυτιῶντες καὶ ταραττόμενοι, μένειν δὲ καὶ χρῆσθαι τοῖς παροῦσιν ἀνάγκην ἔχοντες

[*Plutarch goes on to contrast those who 'fall into the well' of politics and those who enter it as a result of careful reflection with honourable ends in view*]

**A politician's job is to understand and mould citizens' character**



**799B** Now that they have settled their choice in their own minds, and made it fixed and irreversible, they must turn their attention to understanding the character of the citizens, which reveals itself most clearly from a combination of their individual dispositions, and wields enormous power. For his attempt from the outset to shape and change the nature of the people is neither easy nor certain, but requires much time and great ability.

**799B** οὕτω δὴ τὴν προαίρεσιν ἀπερείσαντας ἐν ἑαυτοῖς καὶ ποιήσαντας ἄτρεπτον καὶ δυσμετάθετον, τρέπεσθαι χρὴ πρὸς κατανόησιν τοῦ ἥθους τῶν πολιτῶν, ὃ μάλιστα συγκραθὲν ἐκ πάντων ἐπιφαίνεται καὶ ἰσχύει. τὸ μὲν γὰρ εὐθύς αὐτὸν ἐπιχειρεῖν ἠθοποιεῖν καὶ μεθαρμόττειν τοῦ δήμου τὴν φύσιν οὐ ῥάδιον οὐδ' ἀσφαλές, ἀλλὰ καὶ χρόνου δεόμενον πολλοῦ καὶ μεγάλης δυνάμεως.



But as wine in the beginning is controlled by the character of the drinker, but **799C** afterwards, gently warming him and mixing itself in his veins, the wine itself shapes the drinker and changes him, so too a statesman, till by his reputation and credit he has built up a leading position of strength, must accommodate himself to the existing dispositions of his subjects and make that his aim, aware of what naturally pleases the people and by whom they are usually won over...

δεῖ δ' ὥσπερ οἶνος ἐν ἀρχῇ μὲν ὑπὸ τῶν ἡθῶν κρατεῖται τοῦ πίνοντος, ἡσυχῇ δὲ **799C** διαθάλπων καὶ κατακεραυνύμενος αὐτὸς ἡθοποιεῖ τὸν πίνοντα καὶ μεθίστησιν, οὕτω τὸν πολιτικόν, ἕως ἂν ἰσχὺν ἀγωγὸν ἐκ δόξης καὶ πίστεως κατασκευάσῃται, τοῖς ὑποκειμένοις ἤθεσιν εὐάρμοστον εἶναι καὶ στοχάζεσθαι τούτων, ἐπιστάμενον οἷς χαίρειν ὁ δῆμος καὶ ὑφ' ὧν ἄγεσθαι πέφυκεν...

### Character of the Athenians



**799C** For example, the Athenians are easily moved to anger, and easily changed to mercy, more prone to instant suspicion than willing to be to be informed at leisure; and just as they are more willing to help out humble people of little importance, so do they applaud and rate highly wit and amusement in their speeches; they take particular delight in those that praise them, and are very little offended by those that mock them; they strike fear into their archons, but then again are benevolent to their enemies.

**799C** οἶον ὁ Ἀθηναίων εὐκίνητός ἐστι πρὸς ὀργήν, εὐμετάθετος πρὸς ἔλεον, μᾶλλον ὀξέως ὑπονοεῖν ἢ διδάσκεσθαι καθ' ἡσυχίαν βουλόμενος. ὥσπερ τῶν ἀνδρῶν τοῖς ἀδόξοις καὶ ταπεινοῖς βοηθεῖν προθυμότερος, οὕτω τῶν λόγων τοὺς παιγνιώδεις καὶ γελοίους ἀσπάζεται καὶ προτιμᾷ. τοῖς μὲν ἐπαινοῦσιν αὐτὸν μάλιστα χαίρει, τοῖς δὲ σκώπτουσιν ἥκιστα δυσχεραίνει. φοβερὸς ἐστὶν ἄχρι τῶν ἀρχόντων, εἶτα φιλάνθρωπος ἄχρι τῶν πολεμίων...

## Character of the Carthaginians



1-5-1937, hàng trên: Stalin, Kaganovich, Akulov, Andreyev, Dimitrov, Yezhov, Mikoyan, Molotov, Chubar, Kallinin; dưới: Tukhachevsky, Belov, Voroshilov, Yegorov, và Budyonny

**799D** The disposition of the Carthaginian people is quite different: severe, grim-faced, subordinate to their rulers, harsh to their subordinates, most abject in their fear, most cruel in their anger, inflexible in adhering to their decisions, unpleasant and unmoved by witty and agreeable discourse. Never, if Cleon had asked them to delay an assembly because he has just made a sacrifice and was about to feast some guests, would they have risen to their feet, laughing and applauding; nor, if in mid-speech a quail had slipped out of Alcibiades' cloak, would they have eagerly joined in hunting it down and giving it back to him, but would have killed him for humiliating them and taking liberties. After all, they banished Hanno for using a lion as his baggage-carrier on campaign, accusing him of aspiring to be a tyrant!...

**799D** ἕτερον ἦθος τοῦ Καρχηδονίων δήμου, πικρόν, σκυθρωπόν, ὑπήκοον τοῖς ἄρχουσι, βαρὺ τοῖς ὑπηκόοις, ἀγεννέστατον ἐν φόβοις, ἀγριώτατον ἐν ὀργαῖς, ἐπίμονον τοῖς γνωσθεῖσι, πρὸς παιδιὰν καὶ χάριν ἀνήδυντον καὶ σκληρόν: οὐκ ἂν οὗτοι, Κλέωνος ἀξιοῦντος αὐτούς, ἐπεὶ τέθυκε καὶ ξένους ἐστιᾶν μέλλει, τὴν ἐκκλησίαν ὑπερθέσθαι, γελάσαντες ἂν καὶ κροτήσαντες ἀνέστησαν, οὐδ' Ἀλκιβιάδην, ὄρτυγος ἐν τῷ λέγειν διαφυγόντος ἐκ τοῦ ἱματίου, φιλοτίμως συνθηρεύσαντες ἀπέδωκαν ἂν: ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀπέκτειναν ἂν, ὡς ὑβρίζοντας καὶ τρυφῶντας: ὅπου καὶ Ἄννωννα, λέοντι χρώμενον σκευοφόρῳ παρὰ τὰς στρατείας, αἰτιασάμενοι τυραννικὰ φρονεῖν ἐξήλασαν...

**While improving citizens, you must regulate your own behaviour**



**800B** When therefore you have attained power and are trusted, you must try to bring into line the people's frame of mind, leading them calmly to better ways and handling them gently. For reforming people *en masse* is hard work. As for you yourself, about (as it were) to lead the rest of your life on a wide-open stage, train up and regulate your habits; and if it is not easy for you wholly to banish vicious behaviour from your soul, at least eliminate and curtail those offences which are most flourishing and conspicuous.

**800B** τὸ μὲν οὖν τῶν πολιτῶν ἦθος ἰσχύοντα δεῖ καὶ πιστευόμενον ἤδη πειραῖσθαι ῥυθμίζειν, ἀτρέμα πρὸς τὸ βέλτιον ὑπάγοντα καὶ πράως μεταχειριζόμενον: ἐργώδης γὰρ ἢ μετάθεσις τῶν πολλῶν. αὐτὸς δ' ὥσπερ ἐν θεάτρῳ τὸ λοιπὸν ἀναπεπταμένῳ βιωσόμενος, ἐξάσκει καὶ κατακόσμη τὸν τρόπον: εἰ δὲ μὴ ῥάδιον ἀπαλλάξαι παντάπασι τῆς ψυχῆς τὴν κακίαν, ὅσα γοῦν ἐπανθεῖ μάλιστα καὶ προπίπτει τῶν ἀμαρτημάτων ἀφαιρῶν καὶ κολούων.

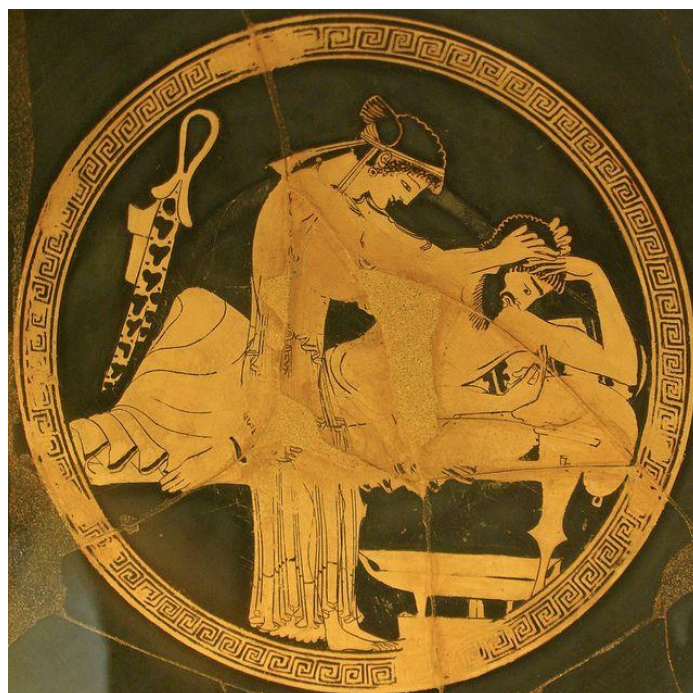
**800B** For you have heard how Themistocles, intent on entering public life, withdrew from drinking and partying, but stayed up at night, sober and laying plans, saying to his close friends that Miltiades's trophy refused to let him sleep.

**800C** And Pericles also changed his appearance and life-style, to walk calmly, talk agreeably, always to look composed, to keep his hand under his cloak, and walked only one way—to the speaker's platform in the assembly and the council-house.

**800B** ἀκούεις γάρ, ὅτι καὶ Θεμιστοκλῆς, ἄπτεισθαι τῆς πολιτείας διανοούμενος, ἀπέστησε τῶν πότων καὶ τῶν κώμων ἑαυτόν, ἀγρυπνῶν δὲ καὶ νήφων καὶ πεφροντικῶς ἔλεγε πρὸς τοὺς συνήθεις, ὡς οὐκ ἔῃ καθεύδειν αὐτὸν τὸ

**800C** Μιλτιάδου τρόπαιον. Περικλῆς δὲ καὶ περὶ τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὴν δίαιταν ἐξήλλαξεν αὐτόν, ἡρέμα βαδίζειν καὶ πράως διαλέγεσθαι καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον ἀεὶ συνεστηκὸς ἐπιδείκνυσθαι καὶ τὴν χεῖρα συνέχειν ἐντὸς τῆς περιβολῆς καὶ μίαν ὁδὸν πορεύεσθαι τὴν ἐπὶ τὸ βῆμα καὶ τὸ βουλευτήριον.

**Your private life will be of great interest**

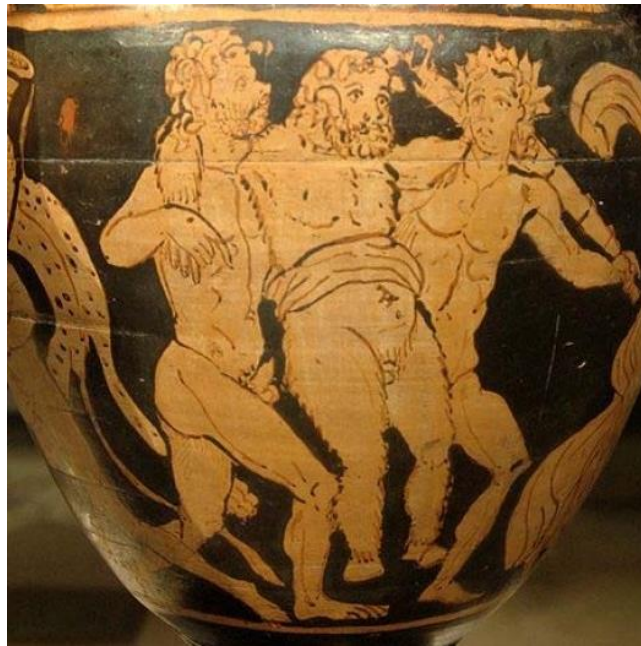


One too many...

**800C** For a crowd is not so manageable nor so easy to be controlled by just anyone, but it is desirable, if, not being frightened by sight or sound like some suspicious and skittish beast, it will submit to authority. **800D** The man for whom these matters should not be of passing concern, surely ought not to neglect taking responsibility for his own life and habits so that they are clear from all slur and censure? For statesmen are not only liable to give an account of what they say and do in public, but there is also great interest in what they eat, who they sleep with, their marriages, and every other interest, frivolous and serious.

**800C** οὐ γὰρ εὐμεταχείριστον οὐδὲ ῥάδιον ἀλῶναι τὴν σωτήριον ἄλωσιν ὑπὸ τοῦ τυχόντος ὄχλου, ἀλλ' ἀγαπητόν, εἰ μήτ' ὄψει μήτε φωνῇ πτυρόμενος ὥσπερ θηρίον ὑποπτον καὶ ποικίλον ἐνδέχοιτο τὴν ἐπιστασίαν. **800D** ὧ τοίνυν οὐδὲ τούτων ἐπιμελητέον ἐστὶ παρέργως, ἥπου τῶν περὶ τὸν βίον καὶ τὸ ἦθος ἀμελητέον ὅπως ψόγου καθαρὰ καὶ διαβολῆς ἀπάσης; οὐ γὰρ ὧν λέγουσιν ἐν κοινῷ καὶ πράττουσιν οἱ πολιτευόμενοι μόνον εὐθύνας διδόασιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ δεῖπνον αὐτῶν πολυπραγμονεῖται καὶ κοίτη καὶ γάμος καὶ παιδιὰ καὶ σπουδὴ πᾶσα.

### Look at Alcibiades, Cimon, Scipio and Pompey



**800D** For what need we say of Alcibiades who, the most man active in public affairs and an invincible general, was destroyed by the vulgarity and rashness of his private life, and prevented the city benefiting from all his other good qualities by his irresponsibility and extravagance? By the same token the Athenians blamed Cimon's wine, **800E** the Romans, having nothing else to complain about, found fault with Scipio's sleeping habits, and Pompey the Great's enemies, reproached him for having caught him out scratching his head with one finger.

**800D** τί γὰρ δεῖ λέγειν Ἀλκιβιάδην; ὃν περὶ τὰ κοινὰ πάντων ἐνεργότατον ὄντα καὶ στρατηγὸν ἀήττητον ἀπώλεσεν ἢ περὶ τὴν δίαιταν ἀναγωγία καὶ θρασύτης, καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀγαθῶν αὐτοῦ τὴν πόλιν ἀνόνητον ἐποίησε διὰ τὴν πολυτέλειαν καὶ τὴν ἀκολασίαν; ὅπου καὶ Κίμωνος οὔτοι τὸν οἶνον, καὶ Ῥωμαῖοι **800E** Σκιπίωνος οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἔχοντες λέγειν τὸν ὕπνον ἠτιῶντο, Πομπήιον δὲ Μάγνον ἐλοιδόρουν οἱ ἐχθροί, παραφυλάξαντες ἐνὶ δακτύλῳ τὴν κεφαλὴν κνῶμενον.

**800E** For as in the face a freckle or wart is more unpleasant than brand-marks, mutilations and scars in the rest of the body, so little faults appear great when observed in the lives of leaders and statesmen, on account of the view that most men hold on power and politics, which they look on as important matters that should be cleansed of all oddities and abnormalities.

**800E** ὡς γὰρ ἐν προσώπῳ φακὸς καὶ ἀκροχορδῶν δυσχεραίνεται μᾶλλον ἢ στίγματα καὶ κολοβότητες καὶ οὐλαὶ τοῦ λοιποῦ σώματος, οὕτω τὰ μικρὰ φαίνεται μεγάλα τῶν ἀμαρτημάτων ἐν ἡγεμονικοῖς καὶ πολιτικοῖς ὀρώμενα βίοις διὰ δόξαν, ἦν οἱ πολλοὶ περὶ ἀρχῆς καὶ πολιτείας ἔχουσιν, ὡς πράγματος μεγάλου καὶ καθαρεύειν ἀξίου πάσης ἀτοπίας καὶ πλημμελείας.

**Next week:** Plutarch on marriage