

Space, time and language in Plutarch's visions of Greek culture: introversion, imperial cosmopolitanism and other forms of interaction with the past and present.

Plutarch's era (second half of 1st- early 2nd century CE) saw the co-existence of (and sometimes also confrontation between) two visions of Greek culture. On the one hand, we find purist attitudes to Greek language and cultural heritage, which look back to old models, most prominently, 5th-century Classical Athens. Thus, Atticism became established as a dominant language form, as well as an idealisation of the 5th-century Greek past. In addition, many proponents of the so-called Second Sophistic often discoursed on key historical and cultural themes in terms of a contrast between an idealised Greek past and an imperial present that looked much less glorious in comparison. On the other hand, in parallel to such introverted tendencies, imperial authors often envisage Greek culture as a dynamic agent in an imperial scene of rich cross-cultural encounters made possible thanks to the political power of Rome. Such constructs interact with ideals of Roman imperial cosmopolitanism that had a philosophical as well as a cultural-political resonance.

In this conference we seek to draw particular attention to the opportunities space, time and language offer to Plutarch for reflection on the relationship between past and present. By 'space' we refer to the geographical sites, topographical landmarks, historical locations and locales, religious and mythological landscapes (real and/or imaginary) which recurrently feature in Plutarch's biographical and moral-philosophical writings. These spaces serve not simply as the background settings for action or discussion: Plutarch's works invest them with significance as sites that bring to the fore key issues such as the relationship between local culture (in the Greek cities) and empire (as an inclusive, cosmopolitan space), or the nature of cross-cultural interactions and confrontations in the past and present. Language is often part and parcel of such considerations: locales (Greek and non-Greek) prompt examination of linguistic diversity and change, or introduce thinking on the relationship between Greek and non-Greek languages and cultures. Thought of in such terms, space, time and language help us make sense of the variable attitudes to Greek culture expressed within Plutarch's writings and, in particular, of the ways in which introverted and cosmopolitan visions of culture interacted with one another in his time.

We welcome contributions that address, but are not limited to, one or more of the following topics:

- Plutarch's vision of the Greek culture in its diachronic trajectory, and synchronic aspect: cultural homogenisation and regional culture; the perception of a common literary, linguistic and cultural heritage; translocal perspectives.
- Descriptions and depictions of Greek landscape and other locales in Plutarch, and their importance for his historical vision; spaces of interaction (economic, cultural, linguistic, military, mythological and other) between Greeks, Romans and others in Plutarch's works.
- The Greek language and Greek identity according to Plutarch; Plutarchan approaches to non-Greek languages.
- Classical past, Atticism and their alternatives in Plutarch's works.
- The resonance and influence of Plutarch's vision(s) of Greek culture in his time and beyond; fresh historical and theoretical perspectives on imperial 'introversion' and 'cosmopolitanism' through Plutarch.