Atticism in Plutarch:
a μίμησις τῶν ἀρχαίων or *diglossia*?[1]

José Vela Tejada
Universidad de Zaragoza
jvela@unizar.es

Albeit difficulties to carry out a linguistic research of a work as extensive as that of Plutarch – for instance, we lack of an updated lexicon after that of Daniel Wyttenbach, published in 1843[2], as well as concordances –, previous experience[3] enables us to approach Plutarch's work, so that we can establish through significant linguistic traits the degree of predominance of both linguistic-literary trends prevailing at his time:

– On the one hand, the common variety or *Koine* that spreads through the colloquial Greek language from the Ionic-Attic *High Variety* (H) in 5th century BC.

– On the other, in the 2nd century AD, the *Atticism* that seeks the creation of a *High Variety* for Literature, promoted by the nostalgic memory of a lost *Golden Age* in response to the *popularization* of Koine.

Hence, we will examine the most outstanding linguistic evidences in Phonetics, Morphology and Syntax, in order to determine the degree to which Plutarch language is near to this movement[4].

---

[2] D. A. Wyttenbach, *Lexicon Plutarcheum et vitas et opera moralia complectens*, Leipzig, 1843.

[3] After a first insight into authors of the Classical period (on Aeneas Tacticus), we faced a primal study on prepositions in the *Life of Solon*: J. Vela Tejada, "Plutarco, *Solón*: lengua literaria y reestructuración funcional del sistema preposicional", in C. Schrader, V. Ramón, J. Vela Tejada (edd.), *Plutarco y la Historia. Actas del V Simposio Español sobre Plutarco*, Zaragoza, 1997, pp. 477-488. This study is managed here as an indicative basis but it is sure not far from the general terms of the Plutarch's prose. See also J. Vela Tejada, "La reestructuración funcional del sistema preposicional griego en la *koiné*", *Habis*, 24, 1993, 235-247, as well as a first survey of Atticism in Galen, *De Antidotis*: J. Vela Tejada, "*Koiné* y aticismo en Galeno, *De antidotis:* Datos para un estudio lingüístico", *CFCegi*, 19, 2009, 41-61. Obviously, it represents a small piece within a monumental work but here we are only concerned with general trends.

[4] See, in general, I. N. Kazazis, "Atticism", in A. F. Christidis (ed.), *A History of Ancient Greek. From the beginnings to Late Antiquity*, Cambridge, 2007 [= Greek ed., Thessaloniki, 2001],

1. In **Phonetics** we shall start analysing the consonant alternation of groups -ττ- Attic / -σσ- Koine[5], insofar as it constitutes one of the most meaningful features of the linguistic evolution in Ancient Greek. Atticists made it somewhat a brand of identity, but changes are not fully homogeneous:

ATTICISM	KOINE
πράττω (625)	πράσσω (59) (ion. πρήσσω 2)
φυλάττω (491)	φυλάσσω (48)
μέλιττα (35)	μέλισσα (12)
κρείττων (189)	κρείσσων (12)
Comparative ἥττ- (575)	ἥσσ- (9)
Comparative ἐλαττ- (267)	ἐλασσ- (16)
κηρύττω (37)	κηρύσσω (7)
γλώττα (70)	γλῶσσα (55)
θᾶττων (18)	θᾶσσων (16), ταχίων (18) and ταχύτερον (2)
θάλαττα (373)	θάλασσα (367)
τέτταρες (77)	τέσσαρες (226) (ion. τέσσερες 1)

As can be seen, epichorial -ττ- prevails in Plutarch (a percentage of -σσ- 1.25 / -ττ- 2.36 is given), but in less local uses like θᾶσσων (together with the innovation ταχίων and ταχύτερον), θάλασσα and, above all, the numeral τέσσαρες, we verify more evidences, in accordance with the general evolution of Ancient Greek.

Another consonant group typifying literary language is the alternation -ρρ- Attic / -ρσ- Koine[6]:

ATTICISM	KOINE
πυρρός (9)	πυρσός (16)
θαρρ- (323)	θαρσ- (114)
Χερρονήσσος (25)	Χερσ- (0)
ἄρρεν (81)	ἄρσεν- (3)
πόρρω- (181)	πόρσω (0)

Here we check that Plutarch coincides with the Atticist current, with the exception of the word πυρσός (16 occurrences vs. 9 πυρρός) – perhaps to avoid confusion with the proper name Πύρρος. To say the truth, it should be observed that even the Common Language eventually adopted -ρσ-.

To end the phonetic section, we focus on consonant traits in which uses of Koine are the predominant:

ATTICISM	KOINE
γιγν- (451)	γιν- (1136)
σμικρο- (43)	μικρο- (960)
ξύν (1): ξὺν νηὶ θοῇ *Sol.* 26.4 ξυν- (11): ξύντασιν, ξύνοικον, ξύνεστι (quoting Euripides)	σύν (262)
ἐς (59)	εἰς (5709)
ἕνεκα (233)	ἕνεκεν (13) (ion. εἵνεκεν 1)

– For instance, the group -γν- (attested in the verbs γίγνομαι or γιγνώσκω) is replaced in literary sources by the Ionian forms from 4th century BC onwards. In our author γιν-, with 1136 occurrences, is clearly prevalent over γιγν- (451)[7].

– The same trend is observed for the initial group σμ- attested in the Atticist form σμίκρο- that appears plainly less (43 occ.) than μίκρο- (960).

– Only 41 appearances of ξυν- (one as preposition) contrast with 262 of σύν, the Ionian form attested in Koine after simplifying the initial double consonant |ks-|.

– Other phonetic changes in prepositions resulted in doublets like ἐς / εἰς: here Plutarch prefers the common εἰς (5709 occurrences) to the Atticist ἐς (59). The only exception in this section is the Attic preposition ἕνεκα, which appears 233 times in contrast with 13 times of Koine ἕνεκεν (and Ion. εἵνεκεν 1)[8].

Regarding to the vowels, changes affecting long vowels and diphthongs are not recognized in literary sources. In these documents intervocalic -ι- is the less stable phoneme[9], so much so that it may disappear from the first literary evidences. In relation to that, our author stands for the common trait mostly in the temporal adverb ἀεί (844), attested in Koine, versus the Attic αἰεί (23). In the unstable forms of the comparative we have more instances with -ι- (πλεί-, 487) than attesting elision (πλέ-, 204).

---

[7] W. Schmid, op. cit., IV, p. 579, stresses that only Aelius Aristides and Philostratus write γιγν-, while Polemon, Herodes Atticus and Aelian choose γιν-. On Galen, see J. Vela Tejada, loc. cit., 2009, 45; J. Redondo, loc. cit., 22.

[8] For these three linguistic features see W. Schmid, op. cit., IV, pp. 579-580; J. Vela Tejada, loc. cit., 2009, 45.

[9] W. Schmid, op. cit., II, p. 143, III, pp. 24 and ff., IV, pp. 17 and ff.

2. In **Morphology**[10], nominal declension was characterized by a process of simplification and regularization in Koine[11], as seen also in Plutarch:

– In thematized forms of Genitive like δικτύου [δικτύον] (2) and σικύου (4).

– In the thematic inflection of ναός (70) and λαός (27), in contrast to the Attic declension λεώς (only in 3 cases).

– In the analogical accusative of diphthong stem τοὺς βασιλεῖς (32), instead of βασιλέας (11).

– *Aeolic* Dative in -εσσι (33) is also present, as in literary Attic and Koine.

However, Atticism resorts to old declensions for imitation, albeit 20 forms derived from athematic υιε- (from υἱύς) are a minority in contrast to 496 evidences of thematized υἱό-ς.

One of the more prevalent marks in Atticism is the presence of athematic no-contracted Genitives in –εος coming from hiatus in -σ- stems, and in semi-vowel stems (-ι-, -υ-). The point is that, by means of an ending -εος, they imitated Ionian models rather than an Attic one. We can check its literary source by seeing the occurrences of proper names Ἄρεος (20), but also Ἄρεως (21), and Τυδέος (2) vs. Τυδέως (1).

Concluding this section, old Attic evidences are yet widespread in conjugation. Nevertheless innovations and regularizations typical of Koine are well attested[12]: for instance, in using long augment in ἤθελ- (43); 3rd person plural of Imperatives -τωσαν (37) -σθωσαν (14); analogical Aorist εἶπας (10) and ἔλεξα (3) – in contrast to no examples of εἶπες (0) –; equality in the uses of Koine θέλω (108) and old Attic ἐθέλω (126); evidences of innovative analogical aorists with -κ-, ἔδωκαν (61), ἔθηκαν (15) –actually attested from Ionian sources –, together with athematic inflection in Attic form ἔδοσαν (41), ἔθεσαν (18). But the most noteworthy fact is the balance between athematic (197) and thematic forms (131) in verbs with Present Suffix -νυμι[13], according to an earliest thematization.

3. If we survey the **Syntax** of names it stands out the anachronistic recovery of the dual number[14]. With regard to that, we find in Plutarch 128 instances (above all ἀμφοῖν, χεροῖν, but yet presenting χερ-, the characteristic root of Koine). Nevertheless, if we attend to the numeral *two*, we locate δύο 437-times as against to 44 of δυοῖν – archaic δύω appears only in one quotation from Homer.

Nevertheless, it seems to us that, as previous research shows, the study of the prepositional system can provide further information on the true

---

[10] Cf. W. SCHMID, op. cit., IV, pp. 581-590; J. VELA TEJADA, loc. cit., 2009, 46-48; J. REDONDO, loc. cit., 18.

[11] See G. HORROCKS, op. cit., pp. 73 and ff.

[12] See G. HORROCKS, op. cit., pp. 143-144.

[13] Evidences have been specifically taken from verbs ἀμφιέννυμι, δείκνυμι, κεράννυμι, μείγνυμι, ὄμνυμι, πήγνυμι, ρήγνυμι, ρώννυμι, σβέννυμι, and στρώννυμι.

[14] On Galen see J. REDONDO, loc. cit., 18-19.

Atticist aim of Plutarch (extracted from the *Life of Solon*[15]), in contrast to Galen (*De Antidotis*) – a contemporary author and also moderate Atticist – and other witnesses of Koine[16].

The reorganisation of the prepositional system surely is not an exclusive trait of Koine: also in Homer, DAT(ive) uses with prepositions were reduced to 7, in contrast to 13 + GEN(itive) and 15 + ACC(usative). Nevertheless, in the early stages of Koine a reorganisation of the prepositional system took place following a tendency to simplify language. Accordingly, given the unclear distinction between functional roles of prepositions linked to more than one prepositional phrase, opposition is neutralized and a tendency to generalise just one case is attested, while, at the same time, the number of prepositions is being reduced.

A review of Plutarch's data in the *Life of Solon* highlights statistical patterns consistent with this evolution and only isolated uses can be considered *Atticist*:

– Disappearance of ἀμφί and prepositional phrases (or syntagms) of μετά, περί, ὑπό + DAT and πρός + GEN.
– Decline due to limited functionality of ἀνά, ἀντί, πρό, σύν (only 263 occurrences in the whole work), κατά+ GEN, and ὑπέρ + ACC.
– Confusion of ἀπό and ἐκ, with predominance of ἐκ (4074 vs. 2451 of ἀπό in the whole work), as in the first Koine.
– Prepositions with three cases do not disappear, but tend to be limited to a single prepositional phrase: ἐπί, πρός + ACC (but also ἐπί + DAT in Plutarch), and μετά, ὑπό, παρά, περί + GEN, unlike Koine where παρά and περί are mostly construed + ACC.
– Preservation of ἐν + DAT, and διά, εἰς, κατά + ACC.
– In general, prepositional phrase + ACC is the best preserved, contrary to prepositional phrase + DAT, according to the earlier weakening of this case.

In short, the deep relationship between reduction of random functions and simplification of the prepositional system is attested in our author with few exceptions; the restructuring of nominal case system that took shape even in the earliest versions of Koine is proceeding, and Atticism retains a few archaisms.

We end this section facing probably the most prominent feature: the reappearance of the Optative Mood[17] under the influence of Atticism. Thus,

---

[15] Information provided by this *Life* is merely indicative of a general pattern. For further information and comprehensive statistics see, as a whole, J. Vela Tejada, loc. cit., 1993, 235-247; in Plutarch *Life of Solon*, J. Vela Tejada, loc. cit., 1997, 477-488. With reference to Galen, see J. Vela Tejada, loc. cit., 2009, 49-52. Further J. Redondo, loc. cit., 23-26.

[16] See Table 1 at the end of the paper.

[17] According to A. López Eire, "Koiné y aticismo en la lengua de Libanio", in A. López Eire (ed.), *Ático, koiné y aticismo: estudios sobre Aristófanes y Libanio*, Murcia, 1991, p. 78 (pp. 63-102), the reappearance of optative mood is an example of interconnection between the cultivated and the popular use of language inherent to the linguistic change.

whereas in the whole work of Strabo we can find only 76 instances – and earlier 37 in Polybius[18] – , in Plutarch we found 1662 occurrences in a partial search[19]. We shall note too 260 appearances of *Aeolic* Optative, a modal variant well documented yet in the early-stage of literary Koine[20] as in Polybius, Flavius Iosephus or the New Testament, from which we should infer a literary intention: we find more *Aeolic* occurrences than those of regular Aorist[21].

In addition, with regard to the use of moods in subordinate sentences we meet contradictory data. In Final sentences Plutarch seems to be Atticist: ὅπως (600) vs. ἵνα (368), while data coincide with those of Koine in Temporal sentences: ὅταν (670) vs. ὅτε (309) and ὅππότε (1).

4. Therefore**,** Plutarch's language displays patterns of Atticism, the hallmark of the Greek Language and Literature in the *Second Sophistic* – a successful term coined by Philostratus (*Lives of the Sophists* 481 and 507) –[22], but not in absolute terms. Hence, we primarily speak rather of a phonetic and lexical *imitation*. In any case, we glimpse a grammar revolution, as experienced by the Attic dialect from 5th century BC[23], a fact that requires to reconsider the very concept of Atticism[24].

According to an accurate sociolinguistic methodology, we should overcome this sort of dichotomies in order to reach more enlightening conclusions. In this sense, a first starting point must necessarily be accepted[25]: both varieties, the popular and the Atticist one, should not be understood as *self-contained areas*; both styles coexisted and permeated each other. Koine and Atticism were not running in parallel without mutual interferences, insofar as, from the beginning, Literary Attic continued to reproduce distinctive

---

[18] A. MEILLET. op. cit., p. 290.

[19] Taking into account the lack of philological updated *instrumenta*, we have accounted evidences from Thematic Present -οιμι, -οιμεν, -οιτε, -οιεν, -οιμην, -οιτο, -οιμεθα, -οισθε, -οιντο (631); Future -σοιμι, -σοις, -σοι, -σοιμεν, -σοιεν, -σοιτο (24); Aorist -σαιμι, -σαις, -σαι, -σαιμεν, -σαιτε, -σαιεν, -σαιμην, -σαιο, -σαιτο, -σαιμεθα, -σαισθε, -σαιντο (129); Athematic and Contracted (618).

[20] J. VELA TEJADA, loc. cit., 2009, 47; J. REDONDO, loc. cit., 26.

[21] See W. SCHMID, op. cit., IV, p. 588.

[22] See T. WHITMARSH, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire. The Politics of Imitation*, Oxford, 2001, pp. 42 and ff.

[23] With J. REDONDO, "Precisiones sobre la lengua de los *Moralia*", in A. Pérez Jiménez, G. del Cerro (edd.), *Estudios sobre Plutarco: obra y tradición* (*Actas del I Symposion sobre Plutarco. Fuengirola, 1988*), Malaga, 1990, p. 139 (pp. 135-139), we witness old phenomena having a literary and diverse background that mostly respond to the distinctive array of the Greek Koine.

[24] However, according to epigraphical data, Attic dialect probably persisted in written and spoken communication until the Hellenistic period. See E. CRESPO, "The Significance of Attic for the Continued Evolution of Greek", in Ch. C. Caragounis (ed.), *Greek, a Language in Evolution: essays in honour of Antonios N. Jannaris*, Hildesheim, 2010, p. 119 (pp. 119-136).

[25] S. SWAIN, *Hellenism and Empire: Language, Classicism, and Power in the Greek World AD 50-250*, Oxford, 1996, p. 18. Likewise, J. FRÖSÉN, *Prolegomena to a Study of the Greek Language in the First Centuries A. D. The Problem of Koiné and Atticism*, Helsinki, 1974, p. 98, stresses that the writers use both *features of Koine* as well as *features of Atticistic language*. See also A. LÓPEZ EIRE, op. cit., p. 72.

sounds of pure Attic[26]. Certainly, the wide chronological gap between Atticist authors and the linguistic stage prevented them from perceiving that the Attic literary language emulated by them had already been *contaminated* by linguistic features of the primeval Koine, even in the more *pristine* authors.

This fact could largely explain the Atticist unsuccessful attempt of reproducing a hypothetical *pure Attic*[27] from literary patterns to the extent that the Attic dialect was too tainted by the Koine. Actually, this *pure Attic* was found only in the colloquial variety, which they could no longer have a record from. In short, Atticists were so close to the Koine, Koine that the most marked linguistic features were already present in the *High Variety* of the Classic Attic[28].

A process of interaction and integration between both levels of language – and stress between two linguistic trends – seems, in general, an adequate argument to explain the presence of Atticist traces in Plutarch: few if any writers were in practice able to sustain a consistent *Attic style*, and many authors simply fell back on decorating a grammatically old-looking Koine – from key *rules* learned at school – with vocabulary and phraseology randomly excerpted to meet the needs of the moment[29].

In the same line as the emerging Atticism, it is evident indeed in Plutarch a willingness to return to an idealized past[30]. But herein lies the mistake of linking our author exclusively to movement, to the extent that the imitation of the Ancients, the μίμησις τῶν ἀρχαίων[31] – a term coined by Dionysius of Halicarnassus[32] in the fragmentary treatise *On Imitation* (fr. 6.5 = 2.211 Usener-Radermacher) – is represented not only by the Atticists[33] but also by authors cultivating the most diverse genres: from Strabo to Quintus Smyrnaeus.

---

[26] A. LÓPEZ EIRE, op. cit., p. 101. In the words of J. FRÖSÉN, op. cit., p. 99, *Atticist language* and *Koiné* are not exclusive phenomena: "they are better regarded as representing different levels of linguistic behaviour".

[27] See J. FRÖSÉN, op. cit., p. 98; A. LÓPEZ EIRE, op. cit., p. 102.

[28] J. FRÖSÉN, op. cit., p. 179, regards *Atticistic language* as a stylistic fiction: "Even used in this sense there is reason to limit its use: the use of automatised features of classical Attic is not in itself Atticism".

[29] See G. HORROCKS, op. cit., p. 135: "While the written Koine could be accepted as the language of business, the expression of the highest forms of Greek culture demanded better, and only Attic, the embodiment of the *purest* and *noblest* form of the language, could possibly serve as its vehicle".

[30] With L. KIM, op. cit., p. 468, we can see "a widespread archaizing nostalgia for the past". But also, G. HORROCKS, op. cit., p. 134, notices "the perception of the written Koine as a *technical* or *bureaucratic* language". Thus, Hellenistic education system required the study and imitation of classical authors as a vehicle for *higher* literary purposes.

[31] On the μίμησις as stylistic identity see S. SWAIN, op. cit., p. 20. According to L. KIM, op. cit., p. 481, authors used Atticizing language individually "as a means of connecting to the past, appropriating and transforming their Classical models".

[32] According to S. SWAIN, op. cit., p. 39, Roman taste for Attic authors and the Latin stylistic controverse in terms of "Attic" and "Asiatic" had some influence on Dionysius of Halicarnassus and his generation.

[33] A. LÓPEZ EIRE, op. cit., p. 102.

Thereon, we should note information given by Strabo[34] in the sense that the notion of Greek identity is shaped and Roman hegemony, far from weakening this idea, has strengthened it. Just as the glimpses of Greek identity in Homer and Herodotus reinforces this notion, the geographer links Hellenic oneness to the Greek language. Thus, in 14.2.28[35], Strabo notes: "Those, therefore, they called barbarians in the special sense of the term, at first decisively, meaning that they pronounced words thickly or harshly; and then we misused the word as a general ethnic term, thus making a logical distinction between Greeks and all other races". The closer contact between Greeks and Barbarians – favoured first by the Macedonian expansion and later by the Roman empire –, does not diffuse Greek identity, but rather enhances the contrast between Hellenism and alterity: "And there appeared another faulty and barbarian-like pronunciation in our language, whenever any person speaking Greek did not pronounce it correctly, but pronounced the words like barbarians who are only beginning to learn Greek and are unable to speak it accurately, as is also the case with us in speaking their languages":

> οὖν ἰδίως ἐκάλεσαν **βαρβάρους**, ἐν ἀρχαῖς μὲν κατὰ τὸ λοίδορον, ὡς ἂν παχυστόμους ἢ τραχυστόμους, εἶτα κατεχρησάμεθα ὡς **ἐθνικῷ κοινῷ ὀνόματι** ἀντιδιαιροῦντες πρὸς τοὺς Ἕλληνας. […] ἄλλη δέ τις ἐν τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ διαλέκτῳ ἀνεφάνη κακοστομία καὶ οἷον βαρβαροστομία, εἴ τις ἑλληνίζων μὴ κατορθοίη, ἀλλ᾽ οὕτω λέγοι τὰ ὀνόματα ὡς οἱ βάρβαροι οἱ εἰσαγόμενοι εἰς τὸν **ἑλληνισμὸν** οὐκ ἰσχύοντες ἀρτιστομεῖν, ὡς οὐδ᾽ ἡμεῖς ἐν **ταῖς ἐκείνων διαλέκτοις**.

As a matter of fact, throughout the Hellenistic period ancient local dialects suffered a slow decay in Greece in comparison to their rapid decline in the new Hellenistic centres. Former dialects continued to be used for spoken communication in the homeland, while in the territories more recently conquered the meeting of a wide range of population under a Greek linguistic pattern favoured a faster spread of Greek Koine. Attic dialect fell into decline during the Hellenistic period but, as far as it can be distinguished from Koine, it remained both for high variety of written communication until Roman times and for Greek literature until the Byzantine period and farther.

The reaction of the Atticist movement[36] should be understood also into a context of Hellenic identity not only as a literary vogue but also through

---

[34] Further E. ALMAGOR, "Who is a barbarian? The barbarians in the ethnological and cultural taxonomies of Strabo", in D. Dueck, H. Lindsay, S. Pothecary (edd.), *Strabo's Cultural Geography. The Making of a Kolossourgia*, Cambridge, 2005, p. 47 (pp. 42-55). According to D. DUECK, *Strabo of Amasia. A Greek Man of Letters in Augustan Rome*, London, 2000, p. 76, Strabo preserves the traditional Greek distinction between Barbarians and Greks and rejects the attempt by Eratosthenes to modify this definition.

[35] English translation comes from H. L. JONES, *Strabo*, London: Loeb Classical Library, 1917-1932. With regard to that, S. SWAIN, op. cit., p. 17, highlights the importance of language in defining cultural behaviour.

[36] In relation to that, S. COLVIN, *A Historical Greek Reader*, Oxford, 2007, p. 71, stresses criticism on that authors who aim to make a name as sophisticated speakers while lacking the

language. Thus, from 2nd century AD the Hellenic educational system required the study and imitation of classical authors as a vehicle for *higher* literary training. But, at the same time, high culture reinforces the idea of superiority of Greek language as read in Aelius Aristides, whose *Panathenaic* (above all §§ 322-330 = 13.180) exalts Panhellenism: "For all the cities and all the races of mankind turned to you and your form of life, and dialect"[37] (ἅπασαι γὰρ αἱ πόλεις καὶ πάντα τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένη πρὸς ὑμᾶς καὶ τὴν ὑμετέραν δίαιταν καὶ φωνὴν ἀπέκλινε. § 322).

Greek language is definitely identified as a means of civilization, as a sign of identity of the Greek-Roman *oikoumene* opposed to the barbarians who lived across the borders of the Roman Empire: "But emulation of your wisdom and way of life has spread over every land by some divine fortune, and all men have come to believe that this single dialect is the **common speech** of the human race"[38] (ἀλλὰ πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν τύχῃ τινὶ θείᾳ ζῆλος ἐπέρχεται τῆς ὑμετέρας σοφίας καὶ συνηθείας, καὶ ταύτην **μίαν φωνὴν κοινὴν** ἅπαντες τοῦ γένους ἐνόμισαν, καὶ δι᾽ ὑμῶν ὁμόφωνος μὲν πᾶσα γέγονεν ἡ οἰκουμένη. § 325).

In short, we envisage a situation of *diglossia*[39] – two dialects or languages used by a single community – between the new Low (Koine) and High (Atticism) varieties that will be maintained throughout the future history of the Greek language, reaching the Modern Greek. In our opinion, the attempt to recover the Old Attic should be understood from the perspective of identity, linked closely to the prestige of the Greek language and culture, but also stressed by both linguistic levels, the Attic dialect and the Greek Koine, a fact that marks the evolution of the Greek language from the second half of the 5th century BC[40]. In other words, the further evolution of the Greek language cannot be explained regardless the creation of a Greek identity rooted in a common language, the same that gives rise to the Neo-Hellenic language after the medieval period.

---

true educational preparation, which "reflects the anxieties that a diglossic society engenders". Again G. Horrocks, op. cit., p. 135, rightly observes the perception of the written Koine as a *technical* or *bureaucratic* language: "While the written Koine could be accepted as the language of business, the expression of the highest forms of Greek culture demanded better, and only Attic, the embodiment of the *purest* and *noblest* form of the language, could possibly serve as its vehicle". See also L. Kim, "The Literary Heritage as Language: Atticism and the Second Sophistic", in E. J. Bakker (ed.), *A Companion to the Ancient Greek Language*, Oxford, 2010, p. 470 (pp. 468-482), who sets forth a state of *diglossia*. See also S. Swain, op. cit., pp. 17 and ff.

[37] Transl. Ch. H. Behr, *Orations, Vol. I*, Leiden, 1986.

[38] Ibidem.

[39] We can consider, with G. Horrocks, op. cit., p. 135, a dichotomy between an unchanging Attic ideal and the Koine in all its heterogeneity (ranging from the standardized written language of official documents at the highest level down to the speech of bilingual peasants) quickly established a formal state of *diglossia* that became steadily more problematical with the passage of time, and which was not to be finally abandoned until the late 20th century.

[40] We believe that the method of analysis of the Atticism should be rethought. Even the ideology of Atticism did not affect every author in the same way and it was not represented only by Atticists, but also by authors cultivating the most diverse genres. Further, see I. N. Kazazis, op. cit., pp. 1203-1204; J. Vela Tejada, loc. cit., 2009, 57-59.

Therefore, the use of the Common Language remained essential as a means for writing – with the aim of making it accessible to a wide audience. Always existed a wish to enrich it with contributions from the most prestigious models of the past documented in literary Attic Prose. Then, we can understand, for instance, that one of the most marked features of the Atticism, the use of the Optative Mood, is anachronistically attested in literary sources both Atticist and Non-Atticist, even in non-literary sources[41].

Indeed Plutarch is involved in an intellectual stream that turns its sight on the most pristine records of the Classic Literature from 5th century BC, even though he displays his originality by moving away from the most purist Atticism[42]. Thus, in *De recta ratione audiendi* (42D-E), a very critical Plutarch warns young disciples about the need to listen carefully to false eloquence[43]: he criticizes rhetoricians who "does not stick to the subject matter, but insists that the style shall be pure Attic"[44] – and they are sitting inactive with a delicate thin jacket of Lysias's language cast over – and the younger men [τῶν μειρακίων], who do not pay attention to the life, actions, and the public conduct of a man who follows philosophy, "but rate as matters for commendation points of style and phrasing, and a fine delivery, while as for what is being delivered, whether it be useful or useless, whether essential or empty and superfluous [εἴτε χρήσιμον εἴτ' ἄχρηστον εἴτε ἀναγκαῖον εἴτε κενόν], they neither understand nor wish to inquire"[45]:

[D] **ὁ δ' εὐθὺς ἐξ ἀρχῆς μὴ τοῖς πράγμασιν ἐμφυόμενος ἀλλὰ τὴν λέξιν Ἀττικὴν ἀξιῶν εἶναι** καὶ ἰσχνὴν ὅμοιός ἐστι μὴ βουλομένῳ πιεῖν ἀντίδοτον, ἂν μὴ τὸ ἀγγεῖον ἐκ τῆς Ἀττικῆς κωλιάδος ᾖ κεκεραμευμένον, μηδ' ἱμάτιον περιβαλέσθαι χειμῶνος, εἰ μὴ προβάτων Ἀττικῶν εἴη τὸ ἔριον, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ **ἐν τρίβωνι Λυσιακοῦ λόγου λεπτῷ καὶ ψιλῷ καθήμενος** ἄπρακτος καὶ ἀκίνητος. [E] ταῦτα γὰρ τὰ νοσήματα πολλὴν μὲν ἐρημίαν νοῦ καὶ φρενῶν ἀγαθῶν, πολλὴν δὲ τερθρείαν καὶ στωμυλίαν ἐν ταῖς σχολαῖς πεποίηκε, τῶν **μειρακίων** οὔτε βίον οὔτε πρᾶξιν οὔτε πολιτείαν φιλοσόφου

---

[41] See A. LÓPEZ EIRE, op. cit., pp. 74-87; J. VELA TEJADA, loc. cit., 2009, 52-54. With regard to that, J. REDONDO, loc. cit., 2017, 14, echoes remarks made by López Eire: "La koiné pura de Galeno se antoja una ilusión de mal maridar con la realidad de nuestros textos, único espacio en el que ha de trabajar el filólogo".

[42] Thus J. KOLESCH, "Galen und die Zweite Sophistik", in V. Nutton (ed.), *Galen: Problems and Prospects*, London, 1981, p. 9 (pp. 1-11), diminishes the influence of *Atticism* on Galen, since she identifies it most with *Classicism*. With regard to that, G. HORROCKS, op. cit., p. 137, points out that only writers of scientific prose were in a position to reject in part Atticist demands in the interests of clarity and precision. Further, see I. KAZAZIS, loc. cit., 1203-1204, and S. COLVIN, op. cit., p. 71.

[43] Isidorus of Pelusium (*Epistulae* 2.42) noted that our author identified Atticism with clarity and economy: Πλουτάρχῳ δοκεῖ τὸ σαφὲς καὶ λιτὸν γνήσιον εἶναι Ἀττικισμόν – cf. I. KAZAZIS, loc. cit., 1204. Furthermore, G. HORROCKS op. cit., p. 136, underlines that Plutarch was complaining about the banality of thought and cliched verbiage of the doctrine of Atticism.

[44] Transl. F. C. BABBITT, *Plutarch. Moralia*, Cambridge (MA) / London, 1927.

[45] Ibidem. With regard to this quote, we can apply the words of A. V. ZADOROJNYI, "Mimesis and the (plu)past in Plutarch's *Lives*", in I. Gerthlein, C. B. Krebs (edd.), *Time and Narrative in Ancient Historiography. The* Pluplast *from Herodotus to Appian*, Cambridge, 2012, p. 176 (pp. 175-198), when he points out that "exemplarity converts into mimetic responsion which has been traditionally linked with stylistics".

παραφυλαττόντων ἀνδρός, ἀλλὰ **λέξεις καὶ ῥήματα καὶ τὸ καλῶς ἀπαγγέλλειν ἐν ἐπαίνῳ τιθεμένων, τὸ δ᾽ ἀπαγγελλόμενον εἴτε χρήσιμον εἴτ᾽ ἄχρηστον εἴτ᾽ ἀναγκαῖον εἴτε κενόν ἐστι καὶ περιττὸν οὐκ ἐπισταμένων οὐδὲ βουλομένων ἐξετάζειν.**

In summary, Plutarch raises an ethical and pedagogical imitation of the past[46] rather than a linguistic and literary pattern, and thus his Atticism differs in content and form from the precepts of other authors of the *Sophistic* movement[47]. From this perspective, we are ultimately dealing with a type of language having pretensions to *High Literature* and being firmly anchored in the common level, a sort of "literarische κοινή" – to use the definition coined by Radermacher[48] – differing from the "mündliche κοινή". Or better, with Frösén[49], we should definitely talk in terms of *Classicism* rather than *Atticism*[50].

Finally, we could consider the existence of a close relationship between the *diglossia* emerging with the phenomenon of Atticism and the framework of the recipients at whom this variety characterized by the subtle presence of Classicist features is aimed. In this line, Swain[51] underlines the purpose of Atticism in order to educate a Greek elite – differential from the broad mass of Greek speakers –, an elite in charge of leading the fate of Greece. For this purpose, Greek intellectuals looked forward to the cultural superiority of Greek culture and in such a context language was going to be the best way to reproduce the past in a culture that placed such enormous value both on the classical heritage and on the oral communication. Actually, we could glimpse language as a badge of elite identity: Attic language and literature were dominant and inescapable as the high standard over time. Even so, Greeks never abandoned entirely using Attic. In contrast with

---

[46] T. Whitmarsh, op. cit., p. 55, sees a primary pedagogical virtue of mimetic characterization as lying in the inculcation of the ability to discern between the representation of good and that of bad. With S. Swain, op. cit., p. 139, Plutarch reflects "in the area of paideia ('education', 'culture') and in the effect of education on the production of virtue and vice in a man". See also pp. 140-145.

[47] Those like Plutarch and Galen who thought of themselves more as philosophers and thinkers than as littérateurs did not feel overly bound by rules of the linguistic purist". See also T. Whitmarsh, op. cit., pp. 41-89.

[48] L. Radermacher, "Studien zur Geschichte der griechischen Rhetorik", *RhM*, 54, 1899, 351-380. As reported by C. C. Caragounis, "Atticism. Agenda and Achievement", in C. C. Caragounis (ed.), *Greek. A Language in Evolution. Essays in Honour of Antonios N. Jannaris*, Hildesheim / Zürich / New York, 2010, p. 173 (pp. 153-176), the influence of Atticism on language and literature has been immense and permanent "thanks to Atticism and such authors as Phrynichos and Moiris that Neohellenic today is still Hellenic".

[49] As points out J. Frösén, op. cit., p. 126, "ἀττικοί are identical with παλαιοί".

[50] According to T. Whitmarsh, op. cit., p. 88, literary *mimesis* – the imitation of texts written in the Classical past – was a fundamental means of constructing the cultural status of the present.

[51] S. Swain, op. cit., pp. 21, 38-39. Also, for A. V. Zadorojnyi, "Mimesis and the (plu)past in Plutarch's Lives", in I. Gerthlein, C. B. Krebs (edd.), *Time and Narrative in Ancient Historiography.The* Plupast *from Herodotus to Appian*, Cambridge, 2012, p. 198 (pp. 175-198), "The Plutarchan (macro)textual universe is geared towards the well-informed, alert and paideutically avid readership".

modern and entirely artificial *katharevusa,* the study of Attic language was continuous from Classical times to the Second Sophistic, to the extent that it seems preferable to us to speak of a trait of *diglossia* rather than a fashionable trend.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

CARAGOUNIS, C. C., "Atticism. Agenda and Achievement", in C. C. Caragounis (ed.), *Greek. A Language in Evolution. Essays in Honour of Antonios N. Jannaris*, Hildesheim, Zürich and New York, 2010, pp. 153-176.

FRÖSÉN, J., *Prolegomena to a Study of the Greek Language in the First Centuries A. D. The Problem of Koiné and Atticism*, Helsinki, 1974.

HORROCKS, G., *Greek: A History of the Language and its Speakers* [revised and expanded 2nd edition], Chichester, 2010.

KAZAZIS, I. N., "Atticism", in A. F. Christidis (ed.), *A History of Ancient Greek. From the beginnings to Late Antiquity*, Cambridge, 2007 [= Greek ed., Thessaloniki, 2001], pp. 1200-1217.

KIM, L., "The Literary Heritage as Language: Atticism and the Second Sophistic", in E. J. Bakker (ed.), *A Companion to the Ancient Greek Language*, Oxford, 2010, pp. 468-482.

KOLESCH, J., "Galen und die Zweite Sophistik", in V. Nutton (ed.), *Galen: Problems and Prospects,* London, 1981, pp. 1-11.

LÓPEZ EIRE, A., "Koiné y aticismo en la lengua de Libanio", in id., *Ático, koiné y aticismo: estudios sobre Aristófanes y Libanio*, Murcia, 1991, pp. 63-102.

MEILLET, A., *Aperçu d'une histoire de la langue grecque*, Paris, 1920 [repr. 1975].

REDONDO, J., "Precisiones sobre la lengua de los *Moralia*", in A. Pérez Jiménez, G. del Cerro (edd.), *Estudios sobre Plutarco: obra y tradición* (*Actas del I Symposion sobre Plutarco. Fuengirola, 1988*), Málaga, 1990, pp. 135-139.

——, "Koiné y aticismo en el tratado de Galeno, *Sobre los procedimientos anatómicos*", *Nova Tellvs*, 35:1, 2017, 11-28.

SWAIN, S., *Hellenism and Empire: Language, Classicism, and Power in the Greek World AD 50-250*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1996, pp. 56-64.

SCHMID, W., *Der Atticismus in seinem Hauptvertretern. Von Dionysius von Halikarnass bis auf den zweiten Philostratus*, vols. I-V, Stuttgart, 1887-1897 [repr. Hildesheim, 1964].

VELA TEJADA, J., "La reestructuración funcional del sistema preposicional griego en la *koiné*", *Habis*, 24, 1993, 235-247.

——, "Plutarco, *Solón*: lengua literaria y reestructuración funcional del sistema preposicional", in C. Schrader, V. Ramón, J. Vela Tejada (edd.), *Plutarco y la Historia. Actas del V Simposio Español sobre Plutarco*, Zaragoza, 1997, pp. 477-488.

——, "*Koiné* y aticismo en Galeno, *De antidotis*: Datos para un estudio lingüístico", *CFCegi*, 19, 2009, 41-61.

WHITMARSH, T., *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire. The Politics of Imitation*, Oxford, 2001.

ZADOROJNYI, A. V., "Mimesis and the (plu)past in Plutarch's *Lives*", in I. Gerthlein, C. B. Krebs (edd.), *Time and Narrative in Ancient Historiography. The* Plupast *from Herodotus to Appian*, Cambridge, 2012, pp. 175-198.

APPENDIX

Table 1

PREPOSITIONS CONSTRUCTED WITH ONE CASE

	Plutarch	**Galen** (*De antidotis*)	**Koine**
ἀνά	**0**	151	Thuc(ydides) 2/ Antiph(on) 0/ Aen(eas) Tact(icus) 2/ Polyb(ius) 24/ N(ew) T(estament) 13
ἀντί	**2**	5	Thuc. 51/ Antiph. 6/ Aen. Tact. 6/ Polyb. 27
ἀπό/ἐκ	**14/30**	—	Thuc. (I) 110/108, Antiph. 6/102, Aen. Tact. 38/83, Polyb 620/2130, NT 20/100
εἰς/ἐς	**33** (5768)	—	Aen. Tact. 174
ἐν	**75** (8262)	—	Antiph. 139/ Ps. Xen. 48/ Aen. Tact. 227
πρό	**5**	8	Thuc. 80/ Antiph. 2/ Aen. Tact. 5/ NT 48
σύν	**0** (274)	24	Thuc. 38/ Antiph. 2/ Aen. Tact. 6

PREPOSITIONS CONSTRUCTED WITH TWO CASES

	Plutarch	**Galen**	**Koine**
διά	ACC: **15** GEN: **8**	—	ACC: Thuc. (I) 61/ Antiph. 39/ Aen. Tact. 36 GEN: Thuc. (I) 28/ Antiph. 11/ Aen. Tact. 18
κατά	ACC: **14**. GEN: **0**	ACC: 7 GEN: 0	ACC: Thuc. (I) 120/ Aen. Tact. 84/NT 398 GEN: Thuc. (I) 1/ Aen. Tact. 3/NT 73
ὑπέρ	ACC: **1** GEN: **5**	ACC: 2 GEN: 4	ACC: Thuc. 6/ Antiph. 0/ Aen. Tact. 0. GEN: Thuc. 58/ Antiph. 30/ Aen. Tact. 4

PREPOSITIONS CONSTRUCTED WITH THREE CASES

	Plutarch	**Galen**	**Koine**
ἀμφί	0	0	Thuc. 3 (+ACC)/ Antiph., Aen. Tact. 0
ἐπί	ACC: **15** GEN: **4** DAT: **15**	—	ACC: Thuc. (I) 102/ Antiph. 16/ Aen. Tact. 47 GEN: Thuc. (I) 34/ Antiph. 9/ Aen. Tact. 21 DAT: Thuc. (I) 56/ Antiph. 30/ Aen. Tact. 33
μετά	ACC: **5** GEN: **8** DAT: **0**	ACC: 36 GEN: 117 DAT: 0	ACC: Thuc. (I) 32/ Antiph. 5/ Aen. Tact. 10 GEN: Thuc. (I) 57/ Antiph. 17/ Aen. Tact. 40. DAT: Thuc. (I) 0/ Antiph. 0/ Aen. Tact. 0/NT 0
παρά	ACC: **3** GEN: **6** DAT: **4**	ACC: 3 GEN: 15 DAT: 13	ACC: Thuc. (I) 36/ Antiph. 11/ Aen. Tact. 21 GEN: Thuc. (I) 11/ Antiph. 12/ Aen. Tact. 13 DAT: Thuc. (I) 8/ Antiph. 5/ Aen. Tact. 7

	Plutarch	**Galen**	**Koine**
περί	ACC: **13** GEN: **18** DAT: **0**	ACC: 17 GEN: 44 DAT: 1	ACC: Thuc. (I) 17/ Antiph. 5/ Aen. Tact. 36 GEN: Thuc. (I) 50/ Antiph. 71/ Aen. Tact. 19 DAT: Thuc. (I) 5/ Antiph. 1/ Aen. Tact. 0
πρός	ACC: **70** GEN: **0** DAT: **3**	ACC: 206 GEN: 2 DAT: 6	ACC: Thuc. (I) 98/ Antiph. 21/ Aen. Tact. 90 GEN: Thuc. (I) 3/ Antiph. 7/ Aen. Tact. 0 DAT: Thuc. (I) 8/ Antiph. 6/ Aen. Tact. 5
ὑπό	ACC: **0** GEN: **25** DAT: **0**	ACC: 3. GEN: 51 DAT: 3.	ACC: Thuc. (I) 3/ Antiph. 8/ Aen. Tact. 3 GEN: Thuc. (I) 56/ Antiph. 124/ Aen. Tact. 36 DAT: Thuc. (I) 1/ Antiph. 0/ Aen. Tact. 1

ABSTRACT: This paper deals with Plutarch's work in order to establish, by means of its linguistic traits, the degree of dominance of the two linguistic-literary trends prevailing at this time: on the one hand, the *Common Language*, or *Koine*, which became the standard variety of the Greek language after an evolution starting from the Ionic-Attic *High Variety*; on the other, the *Atticism*, a reaction to this vulgarization or colloquialization that seeks the creation of a high variety for Literature, inspired by the nostalgic memory of a lost Golden Age. In short, we shall attempt to unravel whether Plutarch issues a nostalgic *Atticist* attempt to return to an idealized past or also evidences a relationship of *diglossia* rooted in the Attic dialect from the rise of *Koine*.

KEYWORDS: Plutarch; *Koine*; Atticism; Mimesis; Diglossia.