

*Nomos, Kosmos & Dike*  
in Plutarch

José Ribeiro Ferreira, Delfim F. Leão  
& Carlos A. Martins de Jesus (eds.)



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Each volume in this series is first submitted to a panel of independent referees.

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José Ribeiro Ferreira, Delfim F. Leão & Carlos A. Martins de Jesus

TITLE

*Nomos, Kosmos & Dike in Plutarch*

PUBLISHER

Centro de Estudos Clássicos e Humanísticos da Universidade de Coimbra (1<sup>st</sup> ed./ 2012)

ACADEMIC CO-ORDINATOR

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Delfim F. Leão

DESIGN

Rodolfo Lopes, Nelson Ferreira

PRINTED BY

SIMÕES & LINHARES, LDA. AV. FERNANDO NAMORA, N.º 83 LOJA 4. 3000 COIMBRA

ISBN: 978-989-721-011-2

DIGITAL ISBN: 978-989-721-012-9

LEGAL DEPOSIT:

©CENTRO DE ESTUDOS CLÁSSICOS E HUMANÍSTICOS DA UNIVERSIDADE DE COIMBRA

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**FCT**  
Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia  
MINISTÉRIO DA CIÊNCIA E DA TECNOLOGIA  
POCI/2010

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# ΚΟΣΜΟΣ AND ITS DERIVATIVES IN THE PLUTARCHAN WORKS ON LOVE

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## Abstract

This paper aims to explore the different meanings of the word κόσμος and its derivatives, also looking for a unified understanding of them in the Plutarchan works on love, namely *Amatorius*, *Amatoriae Narrationes*, *Coniugalia Praecepta*, *Mulierum Virtutes* and *Consolatio ad Vxorem*. By analyzing first a more general and primordial meaning of ‘cosmical organization’ and then a more domestic one – that of female cosmetics –, as well as others, an attempt is made to understand Plutarch’s use of those words, as well as the moral and philosophical principles they imply.

The term κόσμος is one of those words whose semantic range and versatility most surprises philologists, since even words which are etymologically derived from it can be seen to bear the imprint of its diversity. When Plutarch, in the second century AD, uses it to characterize the position of women in the context of a loving relationship, especially marriage – and I refer mainly to the works *Coniugalia Praecepta*, *Consolatio ad Vxorem* and *Amatorius* –, there is already an immeasurable philosophical and linguistic tradition conveyed by κόσμος. Thus, this study aims to analyse, briefly but as completely as possible, the appropriation and manipulation of this term by Plutarch.

According to Liddell-Scott’s *Greek English Lexicon*, κόσμος has two primary meanings: (1) “order”, that corresponds to the semantic value of τάξις (cf. Latin *ordo*)<sup>1</sup>, and, also related to the previous one, (2) “ornament” or “adornment” (cf. Latin *ornamentum*, *ornatus*). In fact, they both came to signify the same idea of aesthetical organization of unrelated elements and it is actually difficult to detect which one comes first in Greek language and literature. In relation to its more concrete and scientific sense still used nowadays – “cosmos” or “cosmic order” – it is traditionally ascribed first to Pythagoras (apud *Placit.* 2.1.1, D.L. 8.48; cf. [Philol.] 21) and Parmenides (Thphr. ap. D.L. l.c.), although it is already found in the fragments of their predecessors, such as Anaximander (fr. 12A 10 Diels) and Anaxymenes (fr. 13B 2 Diels). Nevertheless, it must have reached this meaning, in a definitive way, by the time of Empedocles (fr. 134 Diels)<sup>2</sup>. However, Greek literature

<sup>1</sup> E.g. *Il.* 10.472 (εὖ κατὰ κόσμον), *Od.* 8.179 (οὐ κατὰ κόσμον), *Il.* 2.214, *Od.* 13.77, *Il.* 12.225; Hdt. 2.52, cf. 7.36; Ar. *Av.* 1331; Pi. *P.* 3.82; A. *Ag.* 521; Hdt. 8.86, 9.59, 9.66; Th. 3.108; A. *Pers.* 400. It also started to relate to the specific order of States (e.g. Th. 4.76, cf. 8.48, 67; Hdt. 1.65).

<sup>2</sup> For another examples see Heraclit. 30 Diels (κόσμον τόνδε οὔτε τις θεῶν οὔτε ἀνθρώπων

shows that it soon gained moral connotations related to attitudes and conducts in several areas, the ones listed in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* under the category of “modo et ratione omnia facere” and “decens habitus”<sup>3</sup>.

In fact it is within this last sense that we must place the Plutarchan use of the term and its derivatives, especially when referring to female conduct in the context of a loving relationship, preferably marriage. Lamprias’ Catalogue lists a work under the number 113 titled Περὶ φιλοκοσμίας (“On the love for adornments”), which, despite the lack of testimonies or fragments<sup>4</sup>, we can reasonably conceive that it might also advocate the value of other type of adornments, those that enrich a woman’s soul and make her an example to other women. Regarding female conduct, the entry of the *Thesaurus* is clear when considering “quod ad ornatum muliebre transtulit Plutarchus (*Mor.* 141E)”. It refers to one passage of the *Conjugal Praecepta* (141E), which is very elucidative of Plutarch’s linguistic use of this term, going as follows:

Ταῖς Λυσάνδρου θυγατράσιν ὁ τύραννος ὁ Σικελικὸς ἱμάτια καὶ πλόκια τῶν πολυτελῶν ἐπεμψεν· ὁ δὲ Λύσανδρος οὐκ ἔλαβεν εἰπὼν, “ταῦτα τὰ κόσμια καταισχνεῖ μου μᾶλλον ἢ κοσμήσει τὰς θυγατέρας.” πρότερος δὲ Λυσάνδρου Σοφοκλῆς τοῦτ’ εἶπεν,

οὐ κόσμος, οὐκ, ὦ τλήμων, ἀλλ’ ἀκοσμία  
φαίνοιτ’ ἄν εἶναι σῶν τε μαργότης φρενῶν.

“κόσμος γάρ ἐστιν,” ὡς ἔλεγε Κράτης, “τὸ κοσμοῦν.” κοσμεῖ δὲ τὸ κοσμιωτέραν τὴν γυναῖκα ποιοῦν. ποιεῖ δὲ τοιαύτην οὔτε χρυσοῦς οὔτε σμάραγδος οὔτε κόκκος, ἀλλ’ ὅσα σεμνότητος εὐταξίας αἰδοῦς ἔμφασιν περιτίθῃσιν.

ἐποίησεν, ἀλλ’ ἦν αἰεὶ καὶ ἔστιν καὶ ἔσται πῦρ); X. *Mem.* 1.1.11 (ὁ καλούμενος ὑπὸ τῶν σοφιστῶν κ.), Pl., *Grg.* 508a, *Ti.* 27a, etc.; Arist. *Cael.* 280a 21 (ἡ τοῦ ὅλου σύστασις ἐστὶ κ. καὶ οὐρανός); Epicur. *Ep.* 2 p.37 U, Chrysipp. *Stoic.* 2.168, etc. For other derivated meanings see Posidon. ap. D.L. 7.139, Isoc. 4.179, Arist. *Mete.* 339a 20, Herm. ap. Stob. 1.49.44, [Pl.], *Epin.* 987b, Anaximand. et alii ap. Placit. 2.1.3, etc.

In late Greek it started to have a parallel meaning to οἰκουμένη (“the known or inhabited world”). E.g. *OGI* 458.40 (9 B.C.), *SIG* 814.31 (ὁ τοῦ παντὸς κ. κύριος – referring to Nero), *Ep. Rom.* 1.8, etc.; *IG Rom.* 4.982 (Samos); *Ev. Matt.* 16.26 (ἐὰν τὸν κ. ὅλον κερδήσῃ).

<sup>3</sup> E.g. *Il.* 2.214, 5.759, 8.12, 8.179; *Od.* 3.138. See also Hdt. 8.60, 142; Ar. *Nu.* 914; Th. 1.5; D. 60.36; X. *Cyr.* 6.4.3; Arist. *EN* 1124a 1. Therefore, it opposes to ἀκοσμία, as expressed in the fragment of Sophocles (Soph. fr. 762, cit. Plu. *Conj. praec.* 141E). In fact, in a popular passage from the Sophoclean *Ajax* (v. 293), it appears in a misogynist context (γύναι, γυναιξὶ κόσμον ἢ σιγῇ φέρεῖ).

<sup>4</sup> In the *Conjugal Praecepta* (145A) Plutarch alludes to a similar themed work (with no mention to the title) that had supposedly been written by his wife, Timoxena. U. WILAMOWITZ-MOELLENDORFF 1962: 655 suggested that this authorship was fictional and that it was, in fact, written by Plutarch himself.

The Sicilian despot sent clothing and jewellery of the costly kind to the daughters of Lysander; but Lysander would not accept them, saying, "These adornments will disgrace my daughters far more than they will adorn them." But Sophocles, before Lysander, had said this:

Adornment! No, you wretch! Naught that adorns  
'Twould seem to be – your crazy mind's desire.

For, as Crates used to say, "adornment is that which adorns", and that adorns or decorates a woman which makes her more decorous. It is not Gold or precious stones or scarlet that makes her such, but whatever invests her with that something which betokens dignity, good behaviour, and modesty<sup>5</sup>.

By telling this tale<sup>6</sup> about the gifts that might have been received by the daughters of Lisander, the Spartan general of the V-IV centuries BC to whom he dedicated an entire biography, Plutarch plays with the double meaning of κόσμος, "ornament" or "adornment" and "moral conduct", or, as to preserve the ambiguity of the Greek expression, "moral ornament". This can be inferred from the statement that such adornments (τὰ κόσμια, *stricto sensu*), more than "adorning" the young women (κοσμήσει, *lato sensu*), may in fact be the cause for their disgrace and shame (κατασχυνεῖ). At that moment, Plutarch evokes a distich from a lost Sophoclean play (fr. 762 Nauck<sup>2</sup>), in which the same opposition is expressed by the dichotomy κόσμος/ ἄκοσμία. We believe that the linguistic use and even the need of summoning not one but two ancient definitions reveal the acknowledgement that a delicate matter is being discussed, mostly due to the semantic ambiguity of the term in use. The ambiguity is not even solved by Crates' very simple explanation (κόσμος γάρ ἐστιν τὸ κοσμοῦν). The verb κοσμεῖν expresses the act of making a woman κοσμιωτέρα, but this statement would only be valid for physical adornments. Thus it becomes necessary to clarify that the "cosmetics" being discussed – the one that Plutarch prescribes to Eurydice, the bride to whom the speech is addressed – is not made of gold, gems or lavish fabrics but, instead, it is based on dignity (σεμνότης), good behavior (εὐταξία) and modesty (αἰδώς). Those are the adornments that make a woman innerly "organized" and "balanced", those are the accessories of her moral cosmetics.

The same characterization of the ideal woman in the context of marriage comes later in the same work, when the final advice to the grooms is being given (145E-F):

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<sup>5</sup> All English translations, unless otherwise is mentioned, are from the Loeb Classical Library.

<sup>6</sup> It was probably a legendary story, suitable to different characters. Therefore Plutarch applied it also to Archidamus (*Apophth. Lac.* 218E).



Σὺ δ' ὦ Εὐρυδίκη μάλιστα πειρῶ τοῖς τῶν σοφῶν καὶ ἀγαθῶν ἀποφθέγμασιν ὁμιλεῖν καὶ διὰ στόματος ἀεὶ τὰς φωνὰς ἔχειν ἐκείνας ὧν καὶ παρθένος οὔσα παρ' ἡμῖν ἀνελάμβανες, ὅπως εὐφραίνης μὲν τὸν ἄνδρα, θαυμάζῃ δ' ὑπὸ τῶν ἄλλων γυναικῶν, οὕτω κοσμουμένη περιττῶς καὶ σεμνῶς ἀπὸ μηδενός. τοὺς μὲν γὰρ τῆσδε τῆς πλουσίας μαργαρίτας καὶ τὰ τῆσδε τῆς ξένης σηρικὰ λαβεῖν οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲ περιθέσθαι μὴ πολλοῦ πριαμένην, τὰ δὲ Θεανοῦς κόσμια καὶ Κλεοβουλίνης καὶ Γοργοῦς τῆς Λεωνίδου γυναικὸς καὶ Τιμοκλείας τῆς Θεαγένους ἀδελφῆς καὶ Κλαυδίας τῆς παλαιᾶς καὶ Κορνηλίας τῆς Σκιπίωνος καὶ ὅσαι ἐγένοντο θαυμασταὶ καὶ περιβόητοι, ταῦτα δ' ἔξῃστι περικειμένην προῖκα καὶ κοσμουμένην αὐτοῖς ἐνδόξως ἅμα βιοῦν καὶ μακαρίως.

As for you, Eurydice, I beg that you will try to be conversant with the sayings of the wise and good, and always have at your tongue's end those sentiments which you used to cull in your girlhood's days when you were with us, so that you may give joy to your husband, and may be admired by other women, adorned, as you will be, without price, with rare and precious jewels. For you cannot acquire and put upon you this rich woman's pearls or that foreign woman's silks without buying them at a high price, but the ornaments of Theano, Cleobulina, Gorgo, the wife of Leonidas, Timocleia, the sister of Theagenes, Claudia of old, Cornelia, daughter of Scipio, and of all other women who have been admired and renowned, you may wear about you without price, and, adorning yourself with these, you may live a life of distinction and happiness.

Once again use is made of the image of female cosmetics' precious adornments, pearls of moral conduct that, being materially more accessible, enable a woman to give joy to her husband and commend herself to the admiration of other women. The use of specific examples, common in the Plutarchan works – in this case simple allusions that appear in accumulation – aims at making a series of conduct paradigms linger in the bride's mind, stories that shift from truth and legend, which, in fact, fulfill a valuable paradigm<sup>7</sup>. Common in epideictic rhetoric<sup>8</sup>, two key levels that contribute to the demonstration of a thesis can be defined: the λόγος (the philosophical

<sup>7</sup> The models presented by Plutarch are the following: Theano, Pythagoras' wife, referred once again later (142C); Cleobulina, daughter of Cleobulus – one of the Seven Sages –, supposedly the author of some enigmas in hexameter whom, in the *Banquet of the Seven Sages*, Thales calls a philosopher; Gorgo, daughter of Cleonomes, king of Sparta, and wife of Leonidas. About Gorgo it is told in the *Mulierum Virtutes* (225A, 227E-F) that, being asked why only Spartan women were said to have power over their husbands, she replied that only they were mothers of true men; Timocleia, whose story of courage and virtue is also told in the *Mulierum Virtutes* (259D-260D); Claudia, a Roman vestal that, after being accused of having been defiled, dragged alone a boat that was carrying a statue of Cybele to the city; Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi and Scipio the Africanus, that once referred to her sons as “jewels”.

<sup>8</sup> Several Greek authors theorize about how indispensable *exempla* are to achieve persuasive purposes: e.g. Pl. *Plt.* 277d 1-2, Arist. *Rh.* 1357b 27-30.

discussion itself), which is continuously helped by a series of μῦθοι or παραδείγματα with distinct levels of narrative development. As has been well perceived by J. A. CLÚA SERENA 1997<sup>9</sup>, we are in the presence of a clear purpose of the λόγος: to present, by resorting to μῦθος, the most suitable themes in the range of the εἰκός (the plausible)<sup>10</sup>.

The conduct implied in the female κόσμια prescribed by Plutarch is built on the concepts of order, modesty and silence, as can be seen in two passages of another brief Plutarchan work, the so-called *Consolatio ad Vxorem*. It presents itself in the narrative structure of a letter that Plutarch himself may have written to his wife, Timoxena, on the death of their only daughter, named after her mother, the last of their five children (608C). This work does not actually prescribe the proper conduct of a future wife, as Timoxena is repeatedly presented as being already the complete prototype of a perfect wife; however, Plutarch praises the decorum and silence of her attitude towards the death of her daughter, stating that “everything was done with decorum and in silence” (ἐπράττετο κοσμίως πάντα καὶ σιωπῇ: 608F) and emphasizing “the self-possession with which [she] kept order in [her] house-hold at the time that gave full scope to disorderly confusion” (οὕτω σωφρόνως κατεκόμησας τὸν οἶκον ἐν καιρῷ πολλὴν ἀκοσμίας ἐξουσίαν διδόντι: 609E). The fact that the construction of this feminine profile depends, in a large scale, on the husband’s character is supported by Plutarch in another passage of the *Conjugalia Praecepta* (140C), based on an interesting linguistic game:

Οἱ φιλόμουσοι τῶν βασιλέων πολλοὺς μουσικοὺς ποιοῦσιν, οἱ φιλόλογοι λογίους, οἱ φιλαθληταὶ γυμναστικοὺς. οὕτως ἀνὴρ φιλοσώματος καλλωπίστριαν γυναῖκα ποιεῖ, φιλήδονος ἐταιρικὴν καὶ ἀκόλαστον, φιλάγαθος καὶ φιλόκαλος σῶφρονα καὶ κοσμίαν.

Kings fond of the arts make many persons incline to be artists, those fond of letters make many want to be scholars, and those fond of sport make many take up athletics. In like manner a man fond of his personal appearance makes a wife all paint and powder; one fond of pleasure makes her meretricious and licentious, while a husband who loves what is good and honourable makes a wife discreet and well-behaved.

<sup>9</sup> The author studies the narratives (*realia*) presented in another work, the *De sera numinis vindicta*, a compilation of the life stories of a few tyrants in the hands of the Providence.

<sup>10</sup> In relation to the structure and function of this type of shorter *exempla*, true autonomous narratives with a similar paradigmatic function, see F. FRAZIER 2005 and M. VALVERDE SÁNCHEZ 2007.

R. M. AGUILAR 1990: 316 correctly assumes that statements such as this one, more than misogynistic, are in fact the result of the social evolution of women's status in the Hellenistic and Roman world, as silence and modesty are only prescribed to the moments when a woman is alone, without her husband<sup>11</sup>.

It is however in the *Amatorius* – perhaps the most popular, disseminated and imitated of all the *Moralia* – that Plutarch made the highest investment in terms of philosophical and moral precepts about love and female conduct in marriage, since that is the main subject of the dialogue. The “dramatic” situation is clear: Plutarch and his wife had gone to Helicon to make sacrifices to Eros, at the time when an astonishing local event dominated the conversations: Ismenodora, a mature widow, desired to marry Bacon, a young and single man. Then, two inhabitants, Anthemion and Pisasias, approach Plutarch with opposing opinions on the matter, clearly advocating each side of the discussion – paederastic versus conjugal love. Hence it aims to philosophically legitimize heterosexual love and to acknowledge the decisive role of women in the pursuit of true love, as she may also be able to foster and inspire the effects triggered by true Eros. Plutarch puts the reader before an extreme situation as Ismenodora, more than a random woman, is a mature widow, being beforehand more experienced than Bacon, the young man that she desires. Therefore, the manipulation of traditional philosophical arguments on love, mostly Platonic<sup>12</sup>, is clear throughout the whole dialogue.

Indeed, regarding philosophical theories on love, the *Banquet* and the *Phaedrus* are the most direct models of the *Amatorius*, alongside noticeable influences of passages from the *Phaidon*, the *Republic* or the *Laws*. By recalling Plato's notion that Eros is the guide of souls to supreme Beauty, the Polygraph shows the evolution of coeval thinking and strips the original misogyny of the Platonic theory, by giving woman a determinant role and – as well stated by M. B. CRAWFORD 1999: 290 – by rescuing marriage from a linear and anti erotic conception<sup>13</sup>. At other moments, several philosophical doctrines merge to address the same subject, but Plato is indeed to be seen as the main inspiration.

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<sup>11</sup> This becomes clearer in another passage from the *Conjugalium Praecepta* (139C), by resorting to the simile of the moon and the sun: τὴν σελήνην, ὅταν ἀποστῇ τοῦ ἡλίου, περιφανῇ καὶ λαμπρὰν ὀρώμεν, ἀφανίζεται δὲ καὶ κρύπτεται πλησίον γενομένη τὴν δὲ σώφρονα γυναῖκα δεῖ τοῦναντίον ὀρᾶσθαι μάλιστα μετὰ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς οὔσαν, οἰκουρεῖν δὲ καὶ κρύπτεσθαι μὴ παρόντος (“Whenever the moon is at a distance from the sun we see her conspicuous and brilliant, but she disappears and hides herself when she comes near him. Contrariwise a virtuous woman ought to be most visible in her husband's company, and to stay in the house and hide herself when he is away”).

<sup>12</sup> From the many titles focused on the Platonism in Plutarch, especially in relation to the love theme, see H. MARTIN 1984, F. FRAZIER 1999, 2008a, A. BILLAUT 1999, J. BOULOGNE 1999, M. B. CRAWFORD 1999, J. M. RIST 2002 and P. GILABERT BARBERÀ 2007.

<sup>13</sup> See also F. E. BRENN 1988, who reaches a similar conclusion.

Plato had also used the term κόσμος and its derivatives in the philosophical legitimization of paederastic love in order to refer himself to the conduct of the ideal lover, as a vehicle to achieve Beauty and Good, the aim of the true Eros. An unequivocal example appears in the *Symposium* (187d-e), after the distinction between two Eros and two Aphrodites (180d-182a), a subject recapped by Plutarch in his dialogue (764B-765D). The Platonic text goes as follows:

πάλιν γὰρ ἡκεῖ ὁ αὐτὸς λόγος, ὅτι τοῖς μὲν κοσμίους τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ ὡς ἂν κοσμιώτεροι γίγνοιτο οἱ μήπω ὄντες, δεῖ χαρίζεσθαι καὶ φυλάττειν τὸν τούτων ἔρωτα, καὶ οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ καλός, ὁ οὐράνιος, ὁ τῆς Οὐρανίας μούσης Ἔρω·

Round comes the same conclusion: well-ordered men, and the less regular only so as to bring them to better order, should be indulged in this Love, and this is the sort we should preserve; this is the noble, the Heavenly Love, sprung from the Heavenly Muse.

To another level, in Plato's *Symposium* references to the value of "restrained love" (e.g. κοσμίους... ἔρωτος: 188a; κοσμίῳ Ἔρωτι: 188c) are frequent, and one may come to accept that Plutarch might have used the same linguistic expression in his works on that subject. Nevertheless, the κόσμια that Plato uses as an ethical, moral and even political value in the masculine<sup>14</sup> will appear in Plutarch with new drapery and, deliberately, in the feminine. Thus, it is our belief that the rhetoric interrogation to which Anthemion gives voice (ἐπεὶ τί κοσμιώτερον Ἰσμενοδώρας ἐν τῇ πόλει; *Amat.* 755D) is intentional, since the whole discussion of the dialogue aims to attempt a proper answer to it.

In order to inspire true love, Ismenodora's conduct should not reduce itself to the κόσμια of a woman who stays at home with all her decency and modesty, as Protogenes argued earlier in the discussion (εἰ δ' αἰσχύνεται καὶ σωφρονεῖ, κοσμίως οἶκοι καθήσθω περιμένουσα τοὺς μνωμένους καὶ σπουδάζοντας: 753D). The Platonic discussion on love (766E-768F) is carried on against this unambiguous misogyny, aiming to demonstrate, by recurring to the same arguments used by Plato, that true Eros does not obey gender issues. It only

<sup>14</sup> There are several Platonic passages in which the ethical sense of this term and its derivatives is detected but, in most cases, they are in the masculine. Some examples: *Grg.* 504d (ταῖς δέ γε τῆς ψυχῆς τάξεσι καὶ κοσμήσεσιν νόμιμόν τε καὶ νόμος, ὅθεν καὶ νόμιμοι γίγνονται καὶ κόσμιοι: ταῦτα δ' ἔστιν δικαιοσύνη τε καὶ σωφροσύνη.), *Men.* 90a (κόσμιος καὶ εὐσταλὴς ἀνὴρ), *Phd.* 108a (ἡ μὲν οὖν κοσμία τε καὶ φρόνιμος ψυχὴ ἔπεται τε καὶ οὐκ ἀγνοεῖ τὰ παρόντα), *Smp.* 190e (ἵνα θεώμενος τὴν αὐτοῦ τμήσιν κοσμιώτερος εἴη ὁ ἄνθρωπος, καὶ τὰλλα ἰᾶσθαι ἐκέλευεν.), *Gorg.* 506e: καὶ ψυχὴ ἄρα κόσμον ἔχουσα τὸν ἐαυτῆς ἀμείνων τῆς ἀκοσμήτου;).

leads a person to make his/her choice by the beauty and virtue of other being (767A):

ὁ δὲ φιλόκαλος καὶ γενναῖος οὐ πρὸς τὸ καλὸν οὐδὲ τὴν εὐφυΐαν ἀλλὰ μορίων διαφορὰς ποιεῖται τοὺς ἔρωτας· καὶ φίλιππος μὲν ἀνὴρ οὐδὲν ἦττον ἀσπάζεται τοῦ Ποδάργου τὴν εὐφυΐαν [ἦ] ‘Αἴθης τῆς Ἀγαμεμνονέης’ (Ψ 295), καὶ θηρατικὸς οὐ τοῖς ἄρρεσι χαίρει μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ Κρήσσας τρέφει καὶ Λακαῖνας σκύλακας, ὁ δὲ φιλόκαλος καὶ φιλάνθρωπος οὐχ ὁμαλὸς ἐστὶν οὐδ’ ὅμοιος ἀμφοτέροις τοῖς γένεσιν, ἀλλ’ ὥσπερ ἱματίων οἰόμενος εἶναι διαφορὰς ἐρώτων γυναικῶν καὶ ἀνδρῶν.

... the noble lover of beauty engages in love wherever he sees excellence and splendid natural endowment without regard for any difference in physiological detail. A lover of horses takes pleasure in the excellent qualities of Aethê, Agamemnon's mare no less than in those of the horse Podargus. The hunter has no special preference for male dogs, but also keeps Cretan and Laconian bitches. So to will not the lover of human beauty be fairly and equably disposed toward both sexes, instead of supposing that males and females are as different in the matter of love as they are in their clothes?

Therefore, the Platonic inspired argumentation in Plutarch is to be understood as the amplification of Plato's own arguments on love for both genders, instead of being a gender shift. It intends to legitimize conjugal love, first philosophically, then ethically. The afore mentioned amplification is based on the defense of the ideal ἦθος of true love, notwithstanding its gender:

(766E-F) καὶ τὰς καλὰς ταύτας καὶ ἱερὰς ἀναμνήσεις † καλοῦμεν ἡμεῖς ἐπὶ τὸ θεῖον καὶ ἀληθινὸν καὶ Ὀλύμπιον ἐκεῖνο κάλλος, αἷς ψυχῇ πτεροῦται, τί οὖν κωλύει γίνεσθαι μὲν ἀπὸ παίδων καὶ ἀπὸ νεανίσκων, γίνεσθαι δ’ ἀπὸ παρθένων καὶ γυναικῶν, ὅταν ἦθος ἀγνὸν καὶ κόσμιον ἐν ὥρᾳ καὶ χάριτι μορφῆς διαφανὲς γένηται, καθάπερ ὄρθιον ὑπόδημα δείκνυσιν ποδὸς εὐφυΐαν, ὥς Ἀρίστων ἔλεγεν· <ἦ> ὅταν ἐν εἵδεσι καλοῖς καὶ καθαροῖς σώμασιν ἵχνη λαμπρᾶς κείμενα ψυχῆς ὀρθὰ καὶ ἄθρυπτα κατίδωσιν οἱ δεινοὶ τῶν τοιούτων αἰσθάνεσθαι; (...) (767B) πότερον οὖν ἱταμοῦ μὲν ἦθους καὶ ἀκολάστου καὶ διεφθορότος σημεῖα τοῖς εἵδεσι τῶν γυναικῶν ἐπιτρέχει, κοσμίῳ δὲ καὶ σώφρονος οὐδὲν ἔπεστι τῇ μορφῇ φέγγος, <ἦ> πολλὰ μὲν ἔπεστι καὶ συνεπιφαίνεται, κινεῖ δ’ οὐθὲν οὐδὲ προσκαλεῖται τὸν ἔρωτα; οὐδέτερον γὰρ εὐλογον οὐδ’ ἀληθές.’

(766E-F) And those beautiful and sacred passions which we call recollections of the divine, the true, the Olympian beauty of the other world, by which the soul is made winged –why should they not spring from maidens and women, as well as from boys and striplings, whenever a pure and disciplined character shines through from within a beautiful and charming outward shape... or

whenever the clear-cut traces of a shining soul stored up in beautiful forms and pure bodies are perceived undistorted, without a flaw, by those capable of such perceptions. (...) (767B) Do the ‘signs’ betokening a flight, unchaste, and corrupt character overrun women’s faces, while no luster is added to a female’s beauty by a chaste and modest character? Or are there many ‘signs’ of the latter, which ‘present themselves in combination’, yet nevertheless do not move or evoke our love? Neither position is well taken or true.

The ἦθος ἀγνὸν καὶ κόσμιον that is advised does not exclude at any moment the role of physical pleasure and sex<sup>15</sup>, as they should always be moderated and calculated<sup>16</sup>; instead, it tries to elevate pleasure to a superior stage, to the Platonic supreme Good. At that stage, there is no great difference to the paederastic love advocated by Plato, in which modesty and decency of the young male lover was also recommended. The implied decorum in the κόσμια of the lover is more related to a conduct that inspires total fidelity and concentration on one being, as it can be concluded in the following passage (767E-F):

Ἐρωτι δ’ ἐγκρατείας τοσοῦτον καὶ κόσμου καὶ πίστεως μέτεστιν, ὥστε, κὰν ἀκολάστου ποτὲ θίγη ψυχῆς, ἀπέστρεψε τῶν ἄλλων ἐραστῶν, ἐκκόψας δὲ τὸ θράσος καὶ κατακλάσας τὸ σοβαρὸν καὶ ἀνάγωγον, ἐμβαλὼν <δ’> αἰδῶ καὶ σιωπῇν καὶ ἡσυχίαν καὶ σχῆμα περιθείς κόσμιον, ἐνὸς ἐπήκοον ἐποίησεν.

Love, however, has in himself enough self-control, decorum and mutual trust, so that if he ever but touches the heart even of a profligate, he turns him from his other lovers, drives out insolence, humbles pride and intractability, and brings in modesty, silence, calm. He clothes him with the robes of decorum and makes him deaf to all appeals but one.

<sup>15</sup> This is a common ground in the discussion. E.g. 770C (καὶ συζυγίας ὀλίγας ἔστι παιδικῶν, μυρίας δὲ γυναικείων ἐρώτων καταριθμήσασθαι, πάσης πίστεως κοινωνίαν πιστῶς ἅμα καὶ προθύμως συνδιαφερούσας· ἐρώτων καταριθμήσασθαι, πάσης πίστεως κοινωνίαν πιστῶς ἅμα καὶ προθύμως συνδιαφερούσας), where προθύμως, opposing to πίστεως, seems to allude to the physical part of a conjugal relationship. Therefore, it reminds and compliments the Solonian law according to which spouses should have sexual intercourse at least three times a month, as Plutarch says, “definitely not by the pleasure itself but – in the same way that cities, from time to time, renew the pacts that they have among each other – because they wanted to revitalize the marriage from the complaints that accumulates day by day with such a display of affection” (769A-B: οὐχ ἡδονῆς ἕνεκα <δή>πουθεν, ἀλλ’ ὥσπερ αἱ πόλεις διὰ χρόνον σπονδὰς ἀνανεοῦνται πρὸς ἀλλήλας, οὕτως ἄρα βουλόμενον ἀνανεοῦσθαι τὸν γάμον ἐκ τῶν ἐκάστοτε συλλεγομένων † σχημάτων ἐν τῇ τοιαύτῃ φιλοφροσύνῃ).

<sup>16</sup> J. F. MARTOS MONTIEL 1990, 1999a, 1999b: 111-125 developed the notion of calculation of pleasure by the conception of a μετριοπάθεια that gathers Platonic, Aristotelian and Epicurean influences, and departs from the stoic ἀπάθεια. About the reception of Epicurism in Plutarch, mainly in the *Amatorius*, see A. BARIGAZZI 1988.



Once again, the inner value expressed by the term κόσμος is emphasized by the image of exterior clothing, with garments of nobility and decorum existing in the soul. Although translating κόσμος into “decorum”, as we have seen in the just quoted passage, may seem too moralizing, several different translations that we found, once compared, prove that its main sense is that of “moral adornment or cosmetics”. Moreover, it may be said that both Plutarch and his translators seem to agree on keeping this ambiguity within the cosmetics’ semantic range, the exterior and interior ones.

Taking into account the above-explained argumentative logic, according to which a finished theory demands exemplary illustration, we are presented with the story of *Lais* (767F-768A). She was a famous courtesan from Corinth who might have been intimate with Aristippus of Cyrene, a philosopher of Socrates’ circle, known for being the founder of the Cyrenaic school of Philosophy and one of the predecessors of Epicurism. The story concerns the love that she might have dedicated to the Thessalian Hipollocus, for whom she abandoned the profession of courtesan, her homeland and, finally, her own life, as other women’s jealousy came to be responsible for her death. In fact, the conclusion of her story is categorically paralleled to the previous argument: “escaping secretly from the vast throngs of her other lovers and from the great army of harlots, she beat and orderly (κοσμίως) retreat” (767F-768A). In this specific passage, our opinion diverges from the translation of the Loeb Classical Library collection, as the adverb κοσμίως, in order to state a more direct identification between the argument and the exemplary illustration, should have also a moral sense in the case of *Lais*, instead of the most concrete one that describes only her “orderly retreat”. We would thus translate the adverb as “virtuously” or, as we actually did in our Portuguese translation of the *Amatorius*, “covered with honour”.

An attentive reading of the works that we discussed seems to prove that Plutarch focuses on the characterization of the female κόσμια to reinstate women as a determinant element in love relationships, especially in a conjugal one. Implied or explicit characteristics as silence, decorum, modesty or fidelity as well as exterior beauty all fit in the primordial sense of the term κόσμος, if understood as “organization” or “balance” of pre-existing elements. Therefore, the woman who is κόσμη, as intended by Plutarch, is the one that shows, both innerly and externally, the presence of adornments at the right amount and disposition, in the same way that the Pythagoreans stood for the *harmonia* as the principle of all cosmic (universal) organization. Taking the subject further, one may still read in Plutarch the influences of the Platonic theory on κόσμος, mainly the one from *Timaios*. If such a reading is possible, in the same way that the κόσμος αἰσθητός is no more than a pale reflection of the κόσμος νόητος, also a woman’s external adornments would be nothing other than reflections,

pale images of those other adornments with which she embellishes her soul. Hence, by comparison, Timoxena – the author’s wife – is the ultimate model to work on the descriptions of other historical or legendary examples. The Galatian Camma<sup>17</sup> (*Amatorius* 768B-D; *Mulierum Virtutes* 257E-258C) and Empone<sup>18</sup> (*Amatorius* 770D-771C) are perhaps the most polished examples.

However, the question cannot be read in every work that we have discussed in the same terms. F. FRAZIER 2008b: XX has hit the target when saying: “sans doute n’est-il pas difficile non plus de dégager une certaine ‘rhétorique de l’exagération’ dans la défense de l’amour conjugal de Plutarque, particulièrement sensible dans sa condamnation des viragos austères (753D), assez différente des propos plus mesurés qu’il tient sur le thème dans ses *Préceptes conjugaux*.” As we have previously mentioned, it is clearly Plutarch’s intention, with the *Amatorius*, to present his readers with a limit situation illustrated by limit examples<sup>19</sup>, and that is why, in this dialogue, Ismenodora is so different from Timoxena’s model in the *Praecepta*. Nevertheless, both these women have an inner ability to inspire true love, the one that lives by the correct combination of pleasure and friendship; a combination already consummated in Timoxena, but also possible in Ismenodora. She may thus be seen, despite her singularities, as a more practical and realistic feminine prototype.

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<sup>17</sup> The character of Camma was studied by F. FRAZIER 2005 and F. E. BRENK 2005. She was an authentic romantic heroine. After her husband’s death, when his assassin wanted to marry her, she pretended to be interested in him and then killed him, by poisoning, and ended up committing suicide. This story is not transmitted by any other source before Plutarch, being developed in the *Amatorius* and, and in a greater extent, in the *Mulierum Virtutes*. Nevertheless, this episode is addressed by Polienus (*Strat.* 8.39) in a very similar way to Plutarch, mostly to the version portrayed in the *Mulierum Virtutes*. Therefore, one may come to think that Polienus knew Plutarch’s version, the one that influenced at least two tragedies in the Modern Period: *Camma, reine de Galatie*, of T. Corneille (1661), and *The Cup*, of Alfred Lord Tennyson (1884).

<sup>18</sup> Other sources are Tac. *Hist.* 4.67 and D.C. 65.3. We have studied this character ourselves, in a recent paper: C. A. M. Jesus 2011.

<sup>19</sup> The *Amatorius* is pertinently understood as an exercise of “rhetoric of exaggeration” by F. E. BRENK 2000: 45-60.



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