INTRODUCTION

1 PLUTARCH

P. was a native of Chaeronea in Boeotia where he lived most of his long life (*c.* 45 – *c.* 120 AD) as the head both of a leading local family and of an informal philosophical 'school', modelled to some extent upon the Academy at Athens and devoted principally to Platonic philosophy and related learning; in his youth P. had studied in Athens under the Platonist Ammonius of Alexandria.[1] P. also served as a priest at Delphi, and his three surviving 'Pythian dialogues' (*Moralia* 384d–438e) attest to his deep concern with, and knowledge of, the rituals and underlying theology of the oracle. Apart from his intimate familiarity with the intellectual life of Athens, P. also made, it seems, several visits to Rome and was on good terms with a number of influential Romans. Through one of them, L. Mestrius Florus,[2] P. received Roman citizenship as (probably) L. Mestrius Plutarchus, and to another, Q. Sosius Senecio (consul 99, 107), he dedicated the vast enterprise of the *Parallel lives*, the works for which he is best known.

As well as the *Parallel lives*, most of which are preserved, we also possess a corpus of some seventy-eight miscellaneous works, several of which are certainly not by P., which are today known collectively as the *Moralia*; the title is owed to a subset of these works which may go back even to late antiquity, but which was finally brought together and placed at the head of his edition, under the label τὰ ἠθικά, by Maximus Planudes in the late thirteenth century and which has a much richer textual tradition than most of the rest of what we call the *Moralia*.[3] The extant *Moralia* are, however, only a fraction of P.'s output beyond the *Parallel lives*; a list of some 227 works survives from later antiquity, the so-called 'Lamprias Catalogue', but this too is known to be incomplete.[4] At the head of the *Moralia*, as they were first printed in the Aldine edition of 1509,[5] stand three treatises on education, the first of which, on the education of children, is certainly spurious; the second, on the use of poetry as a propaedeutic to philosophy, is the subject of the present edition,[6] and the third, 'On listening to lectures', is concerned with the

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[1] On the dates for P.'s life cf., e.g., Ziegler 1951: 639–41 = 1964: 4–6, Jones 1966; for P. and Chaeronea cf. Jones 1971: 3–12. Ziegler's essay remains the best encyclopaedic account of P.'s life and work, but see also Flacelière-Irigoin 1987; for an accessible account in English cf. Russell 1972. On P.'s Platonism cf. Dillon 1977: 184–230, Van Hoof 2010: 19–40.

[2] Cf. Jones 1971: 48–9, Puech 1992: 4860.

[3] Cf. Flacelière-Irigoin 1987: cclv–vi.

[4] Cf. Ziegler 1951: 696–702 = 1964: 60–6, Flacelière-Irigoin 1987: cccxi–xviii.

[5] Cf. Flacelière-Irigoin 1987: cclxxxvii–ccxcii.

[6] The Lamprias Catalogue (103) gives the title of the present essay as Πῶς δεῖ ποιημάτων ἀκούειν, and this is reflected in the English title we have adopted; all the manuscripts, however, offer Πῶς δεῖ τὸν νέον ποιημάτων ἀκούειν, which fairly of course reflects the substance of the essay. For the relation to Chrysippus' similarly named essay cf. below p. 11.

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proper attitudes to adopt in receiving philosophical instruction.[7] Although there do seem to be links between the second and third of these,[8] the interrelationships and chronology of P.'s works are extremely obscure.[9] If, as is usually – though not universally – accepted, the Soclarus for whom the present essay was written was P.'s oldest son and, given the nature of the work, he must have been between ten and fifteen years old at the time of its composition, then *De audiendis poetis* was perhaps written in the early 80s, i.e. comparatively early in P.'s career, rather than in the last twenty or so years of his life from which much of the vast corpus appears to come. Over-confidence in this dating would, however, be misplaced.[10]

2 'HOW TO STUDY POETRY'

P.'s essay is a discussion of the dangers to young men's minds and moral attitudes which lurk within poetry, and of how those dangers may be avoided and, more positively, poetry made beneficial, if young men are taught some basic truths about poetry and are given proper guidance by older and more experienced readers, guidance which they can then use in their own way as they become more independent readers. Like much of what survives of the ancient discussion of poetry, P.'s central concern is not what we usually think of as 'literary criticism', but rather with the moral well-being of young men; the goal is the creation of the proper responses within young pupils which will prepare them for the challenges of serious philosophy when they are older. The most famous imitation of P.'s essay, St Basil's work 'On Greek Literature',[11] takes over P.'s scheme, with Christianity playing the role of philosophy: Basil finds pagan texts and anecdotes which can be shown to teach Christian virtues and/or be in accord with Christian texts.

Much in P.'s essay stands firmly within the mainstream of the Hellenistic discussion of poetry, which takes its direction primarily from Aristotle and his Peripatetic successors.[12] We are, however, constantly reminded of three particular traditions or bodies of material – Plato, the detailed critical and interpretative analysis of Homer, itself importantly indebted to Aristotle and the Peripatetics,

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[7] Cf. Hillyard 1981.   [8] Cf. Hunter 2009a: 169 n.1.

[9] Jones 1966 and 1971 are important contributions.

[10] For doubts about an early date for the treatise cf., e.g., Zadorojnyi 2002: 298.

[11] Cf. Wilson 1975. The exact title of the work is uncertain, and it will be cited throughout this book as 'St Basil, *Greek lit.*'.

[12] Rostagni 1955: 308–14 argues for a debt, in itself perfectly likely, to Aristotle's *On Poets*, as well as to the *Poetics*. Schlemm 1893 is an important collection of material on P.'s possible sources, but the attempt to 'source' virtually all P.'s quotations seems fundamentally misconceived, and the attempt is not repeated in this edition. On this essay and P.'s ideas on literature more generally see Valgiglio 1967 and 1973, Tagliasacchi 1961, von Reutern 1933, Van der Stockt 1992, Hunter 2009a: Chapter 6.

which comes down to us (largely) in the scholia and Eustathius' commentaries, and finally the Stoics.

In a general way, P.'s essay is a contribution to the same educational project which Protagoras is made to outline in the Platonic dialogue named after him:

> People teach and admonish their children from earliest days throughout their lives. As soon as a child understands what is being said to him, the nurse and the mother and the *paidagôgos* and the father himself[13] struggle to make him excellent; with regard to every action and statement they teach him by pointing out (διδάσκοντες καὶ ἐνδεικνύμενοι) that 'this is just, that unjust', and 'this is honourable, that disgraceful', and 'this is pious, that impious', and 'do these things, do not do those'. If he obeys willingly, fine; if not, they straighten him (εὐθύνουσιν) with threats and blows as though he was a piece of wood which was bent and twisted . . . [Later in school when they have learned to read] the teachers give them the poems of good poets to read and compel them to learn them by heart; in these poems there are many admonitions (νουθετήσεις) and many descriptions and passages of praise and encomium of good men from the past, so that the child will imitate them from envy and desire to be like them. (Plato, *Protagoras* 325c5–6a3)

P.'s two ideal students are perhaps slightly beyond the two ages which Protagoras describes here, but the pattern is much the same: what is at stake is the moral health of the young, the wish to make them 'useful members of society', which inevitably means inculcating approved and traditional social values – the aim of ancient élite education was unsurprisingly conservative. P.'s fathers and teachers will not use corporal punishment on their charges, but they will deploy the same certainty about right and wrong in the texts they teach, and they will point this out (ἐνδείκνυσθαι) to the young with such regularity that the young eventually will be able to do this for themselves. If the 'end product' of the education which Protagoras describes is model élite Athenians, ready to hold public office, P.'s students will – if all goes well – end up as replicas of P. himself, important men in their own worlds with serious philosophical interests (cf. 33b). Another way to view P.'s educational project is as a specific instance of the general rule that the Athenian Stranger lays down in Book 1 of Plato's *Laws*:

> I say that the man who is going to be good at anything must practise this very thing from earliest childhood . . . In short, we say that the correct nurture which education offers is to turn the soul of the child at play towards love of that of which, when he has become a man, he will be a perfect master. (Plato, *Laws* 1.643b–d)

As the opening of P.'s essay makes clear, it is never too early to introduce the young to 'philosophy'; as Plato had put it elsewhere in the *Republic*, 'while [the citizens

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[13] Cf. n. on 36d οὐδ᾽ ἀκρίτως . . . παιδαγωγοῦ.

of the ideal state] are adolescents and children (μειράκια...καὶ παῖδες), their education and philosophy should be appropriately adolescent' (*Rep.* 6.498b2–3).

Later in the *Protagoras*, Socrates makes clear that the discussion of poetry will only get you so far (not, in his view, very far at all) along the road to understanding, and in the *Republic* Plato went much further and banned virtually all poetry from his ideal state, for, to put it very broadly, three related reasons: poets retail dangerous untruths, particularly about the gods and morality, poetry has an emotional power which plays upon the worst parts of us and which can work deleterious effects at a psychological level (particularly upon the young), and poets imitate not 'truth' but merely imitations of truth, and – an argument very familiar from the *Ion* – have no genuine knowledge of what it is they represent in their poetry. In many ways, *Republic* 2–3 and 10 set the agenda for all subsequent discussion of poetry; the potential damage that poetry could cause was an idea which would lie in wait at every stage of the subsequent critical tradition. At the conclusion of his second discussion of poetry in Book 10, the Platonic Socrates indeed issues what was to prove an invitation to the subsequent tradition:

> I assume that we would also allow poetry's champions – those people who, though not poetically gifted themselves, are lovers of poets – to speak on its behalf in prose and to try to show that it is not only pleasurable (ἡδεῖα) but also beneficial (ὠφελίμη) for societies and for human life. We would listen to this sympathetically, for no doubt we will profit if poetry is shown to be not only pleasurable but also beneficial. (Plato, *Republic* 10.607d7–e2)

The earliest and most influential response to that challenge which we possess is Aristotle's *Poetics*. P.'s essay is another kind of response,[14] and like much else of what we know of the ancient reaction to Plato – including the fullest such discussion we possess, in Proclus' commentary on the *Republic*[15] – an important part of its strategy is to show that poetry and philosophy work to the same ends and, indeed, that philosophy has borrowed from the poets.

One further Platonic disquisition on early education may also have been important for P. here. In Book 7 of the *Laws* (810e–811f) the Athenian notes that they have very many poets – some who write seriously, others who aim at laughter – and that some citizens want the learning by heart of 'whole poets' to be the basis for a correct (ὀρθῶς) education for the young. In what is perhaps the earliest explicit reference to the making of poetic anthologies (cf. further below), he further notes that others 'choose summaries of all the poets and put them

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[14] Cf. Valgiglio 1967: 337. On different aspects of P.'s use of and response to the *Republic* cf., e.g., Bréchet 1999, Whitmarsh 2001: 50–4, Halliwell 2002: 296–302, Zadorojnyi 2002, Hunter 2009a: 181–8. Schlemm 1893: 20–2 argues that P.'s response to Plato was not direct, but reflects rather an intervening Peripatetic response. In as much as such things can be established, this seems very improbable; P.'s essay reflects both a direct engagement with Plato and such engagements by P.'s predecessors.

[15] Cf. Sheppard 1980. It seems very probable that Proclus knew and used P.'s essay.

with particular speeches given in full and say that the children should commit these to memory . . . '. To this practice the Athenian objects that 'every poet has said many things well and many things the opposite (of well)', and as a result of this 'wide learning' (πολυμαθία) is a danger for children. This is very close to P.'s opening assertions about the 'much good and much bad' to be found in poetry (15c); P.'s comparisons of poetry to the head of an octopus and to the mixed drugs of Egypt, comparisons which urge the need for παιδαγωγία ὀρθή, 'correct guidance', read almost like a mannered elaboration of the Platonic statement. The Athenian's suggested answer to this situation is that children should be made to learn philosophical discourses, such as the one the characters in the *Laws* are themselves engaged in, and 'if in his search he should happen upon[16] poems of poets and prose writings, or even simple statements which have not been written down, which are closely related to these discourses of ours, he should in no way neglect them, but should have them written down and first compel the teachers to learn and commend them . . . '. Here then is an alternative to the banning of poetry; poetry will be permitted which is closely akin (ἀδελφά) to philosophy. P. takes up this 'idealizing' challenge also by making poetry, not – as some did[17] – the same thing as philosophy or – as others did[18] – the origin of all philosophical insights, but rather preparatory for philosophy.

  P.'s response, which owes of course much to intervening Peripatetic and scholastic traditions (cf. further below), operates on several fronts. Chapter 2 lays down a basis for responding to *Republic* 2–3, whereas chapters 3 and 7 on *mimêsis* tackle the challenge of Book 10. 'Poets tell many lies' is one motto of the work (16a), but it yields primacy to the assertion that, like the head of an octopus, poetry contains much that is indeed pleasurable (ἡδύ), but also much that is 'nourishing for a young soul' (15b); when P. asserts at the head of the work that 'it is perhaps neither possible nor beneficial (ὠφέλιμον) to keep [young men] away from poems' (15a), he is not merely drawing a line between the 'real' educational world in which he lives and which had poetry at its heart and, on the other side, the education envisaged in Plato's ideal state, but he is also, as with the immediately following declaration of poetry's 'nourishing' power, stating, almost as a given, what Plato had taken very great pains to deny in the *Republic*. The proof of his assertion lies both in the whole educational tradition which he implicitly evokes and in the essay which follows; P. will demonstrate that, with the proper guidance and the proper tools, the young can not merely avoid the

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[16] The language here is also very evocative of the activity of the 'bee-like' anthologist, cf. below p. 16; for περιτυγχάνηι (811e2) in this connection cf. περιεπέσομεν in Apollodorus of Athens' account of how he 'came across' the Coan epic *Meropis* (*SH* 903A).

[17] A good statement of the position that poetry and philosophy are essentially the same thing, varying only in mode of expression, is Maximus of Tyre 4, and cf. also Dio 55; such a view is related to, but different from, the Stoic position, cf. further below pp. 12–13.

[18] Cf. Hillgruber 1994/9: I 5–34. This popular ancient game appears, however, to be reflected at 35e-6d, see nn. on 35e ἀποδιδόντας . . . ἐκείνοις and 36d συνοικειοῦν.

dangers which poetry poses, but actually draw moral benefit from it and use it as important preparation for the serious study of philosophy which lies ahead. Poetry may be very dangerous, but – with the proper guidance – it contains within itself the weapons with which to combat those dangers.

Plato himself is made a willing partner in P.'s educational project: the engagement with poetry which P. envisages will prepare the young men for the philosophic ascent from the cave towards that which Plato had held out as truly 'real' (36e).[19] As for the lies themselves, Plato had begun his discussion by noting that there were two kinds of λόγοι, the 'true' (ἀληθής) and the 'false' (ψεῦδος), and it will turn out that, as far as poetry is concerned, it is the latter which overwhelmingly dominates. For P. also, μῦθος and πλάσμα are a defining characteristic of poetry ('we do not know any poetry which is without *mûthos* and *pseudos*', 16c), and absolutely central to its appeal, but it is that very knowledge which will safeguard young readers. P. here tracks this part of the *Republic* very closely, with several of the same poetic examples being adduced; the Platonic intertext, and hence the purpose of P.'s arguments, is always present. The tools for dealing with these examples which P. places in the hands of young men and their teachers are of two kinds: first, knowledge of the nature of poetry, particularly of its inevitable falsehoods (chapters 2, 7) and of the fact that it is mimetic (chapters 3, 7), and, secondly, an array of interpretative methods for always getting the best out of one's reading.

It may well be thought that P. is at least unrealistic in his claim that, provided the young know, and keep repeating, that poetry contains falsehoods, they will be able to resist 'the sorcery of poetry' (16d), for this would seem to go against not only a Platonic or 'Longinian' insistence on the sweeping emotional and psychological power of poetry, but also upon our own experience of reading literature or watching plays or films. In his account of this aspect of poetry in *Republic* 10, Plato stresses the performance of poetry as an important element in its power:

> The very best of us, when we listen to Homer or one other of the tragedians representing (μιμουμένου) one of the heroes in grief and delivering a long speech amidst lamentation or even singing and beating their breasts, feel pleasure, as you know, and we surrender ourselves and are carried with them in sympathy. We earnestly praise as a good poet whoever most of all can affect us in this way. (Plato, *Republic* 10.605c9–d5)

Here is where Plato's insistent identification of Homer as a tragedian in Book 10 has its force; the rhapsodic performance of Homer is for Plato (cf. esp. the *Ion*) no different (for both performers and audience) in its effects from drama. In this, Plato's views are very much those of his time (cf. esp. Gorgias, *Helen*

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[19] Cf. Hunter 2009a: 169–70.

8–11).[20] P. writes the same language, but he is thinking of a paedagogical system in which the pupil is alone (or in a very small group) with his teacher – there is not the danger of 'group emotion' of which Plato was only too aware – and where what might be studied are not large stretches of text, a whole play for example, where emotional power is given time to develop and the audience can indeed 'surrender' to a sustained representation, but rather (as the essay everywhere demonstrates) short, often very short, extracts lacking full context. P.'s pupils may well be working with anthologies, as he himself was (see further below). For Plato too, of course, there is serious danger to the pupil's moral and psychological health when he reads out even a short extract which contains 'bad' thoughts or the views of a low or evil character (cf. *Republic* 3.395b–6e), but P. largely ignores the question of the effect of poetry on the performer, and this absence may reflect the reception situation which he imagines. Be that as it may, P.'s hopes for the efficacy of his interpretative tools may indeed be rather optimistic, but they arise within a framework which makes them at least comprehensible.

For P. there are two fundamental facts about the mimetic nature of poetry which we must understand. The first is in fact ultimately a development from the passage of Plato which we have just considered. After his account of how we 'surrender' to performance, Plato notes that when real disaster strikes in our lives, we try to behave in the opposite way to the emotional 'weakness' we show in the theatre (605d7–e1); in other words we know what is right, but this knowledge is overcome when we are in the theatre or listening to a rhapsode, and indeed we want it that way, because that is what 'good poets' can do. As we have seen, P. on the other hand thinks that we can actively deploy our knowledge while experiencing poetry, but this does not mean that we are rejecting the quality of the poetry, merely its subjects or characters or the sentiments it expresses. In chapter 3 P. also turns to his own purposes Plato's repeated (e.g. *Rep.* 2.377e2, 10.600e7–1a2) analogy between poets and painters. Poets, like painters, are 'good', if the imitation that they produce is good; the subject of the imitation may be ugly or morally reprehensible, but the imitation can be praiseworthy (ἡδόμεθα καὶ θαυμάζομεν, 18a with n.) and indeed καλόν. Again, this view, which ultimately goes back to a reading of Aristotle (cf. introductory note to chapter 3), might suggest an amoral approach to art, which might be thought surprising in this treatise, but again the reception-situation which P. envisages must never be forgotten: the teacher is never far away – we are not to think that the pupil will snigger by himself at pornography (18b).

Secondly, we are always to remember that poetry does not abandon 'likeness to the truth' (ὁμοιότης τοῦ ἀληθοῦς, 25b), for 'plausibility' is crucial to the effect of poetry;[21] P. forestalls an obvious objection – how can, e.g., poetic tales of

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[20] Cf. n. on 15d Γοργίας.
[21] Cf. Strabo 1.2.9 on Odysseus 'telling many lies like truth' (*Odyssey* 19.203), a verse also cited by P. at 347e to illustrate with approval how poetry tells τοῖς πεπραγμένοις ἐοικότα.

the Underworld be 'plausible'? – by now focusing his attention after chapter 7 largely on human characters in poetry and what they say. P.'s 'truth' here is not, of course, the truth of a Plato, but rather the truth of our experience of life: we know that no one is perfect, that everyone has good and bad qualities or behaves well or ill at different times, and that no one is always successful; therefore, there will be good and bad in poetry and characters will be 'mixed'. It may be true that poets exaggerate the upsets of fortune, the twists and turns of a plot, more than is 'normal' in our experience (25d), but that is not fundamentally untrue to what we know is actually a 'fact of life'. That poetry was 'an imitation of life' had long been established as a critical cliché,[22] and we may also be reminded of the Hellenistic classification of material into the 'true' (realized in literature in history), the 'like true' (realized in comedy and mime, where there are indeed good and bad characters), and the 'fantastical' (realized in the higher reaches of poetry);[23] this is the kind of 'truth' which P. has in mind. Armed with this knowledge, we will be able to take a properly discriminating attitude to poetry, not assuming that because a character in Homer says something, it must be praiseworthy, because Homer is a great poet.

P. therefore replaces Plato's rejection of poetry with a controlled régime which puts the responsibility for correct interpretation upon the pupil and teacher;[24] poetry is to be enjoyed within very strict parameters and for clearly defined purposes. The dangers of unfettered access have been removed, not by eliminating access altogether, but by placing between poetry and its young audience the barriers of critical interpretation and socially approved goals. In the case of poetry, no less than in that of alcohol, attempts at complete prohibition, such as Lycurgus' attempt to eradicate the vines (15d–e), are not only doomed to failure, but are themselves positively harmful, as they block access to what is beneficial (τὸ χρήσιμον) in the banned product. That P. elsewhere (451c–d) uses this same analogy of Lycurgus to illustrate how we should not try to free ourselves of all irrational emotion, but rather use our reason to control and channel it, strikingly illustrates how the view of poetry in *How to study poetry* reflects P.'s whole approach to moral education. For P., poetic interpretation is not, as it is sometimes for us, a

[22] Cf., e.g., Strabo 1.2.5 (on Homer), Valgiglio 1973: 168; for Aristotle, 'tragedy is an imitation not of men, but of action and life' (*Poetics* 1450a16). An early expression of this idea, in a non-technical context, is Lycurgus, *Against Leocrates* 102: 'Poets imitate human life and, selecting out the noblest actions, they win men over with argument and demonstration (μετὰ λόγου καὶ ἀποδείξεως)'. Two points are worth noticing in the present context. Lycurgus does not, of course, here mention philosophers, but it is clear how easy it would be to use his words to establish the affinity between poets and philosophers. Secondly, the rhetorical context demands that, for Lycurgus, poets here are positive models; P. would not disagree, but for his purposes he does not write of poetry's 'selection': rather, his treatise recognizes and tries to deal with the fact that, because poetry imitates life, not everything in poetry is καλόν.

[23] Cf., e.g., Quintilian 2.4.2, Sextus Empiricus, *Against the grammarians* 263.

[24] Cf. Konstan 2004.

'literary' matter; rather, it is indeed a matter of moral health, and the pursuit of τὸ χρήσιμον in poetry, which was the challenge which Plato had issued, is part of a whole approach to life, not merely the choice of a particular mode of poetic interpretation. *How to study poetry* may be seen from this perspective, not just as a kind of prologue to the next stage of education as represented in *On listening to lectures*,[25] but also to foreshadow the 'adult' discussions of *Sympotic questions*, themselves a rewriting of a 'classic' Platonic text, the *Symposium*. In the *Sympotic questions* P. and his friends pursue τὸ χρήσιμον across a wide spectrum of subjects; the pursuit is no less than one for a fulfilled life as a serious (σπουδαῖος) and educated (πεπαιδευμένος) member of élite society. *How to study poetry* is designed to guide those at the beginning of this path.

The second set of traditions of the greatest importance to P. is educational practice in the study of poetry. At every turn throughout the treatise the reader finds similarities, often amounting to virtual verbal identity, between Plutarchan comments on particular passages and what remains of post-Aristotelian commentary on classical poetry; this is, of course, particularly true for Homer, a fact which reflects both the dominance of Homer in ancient criticism and education and the richness of the surviving scholia, particularly on the *Iliad*.[26] The origins of our Homeric scholia, particularly the difficulty of assigning individual notes or observations to particular scholars or particular dates, are a notorious problem,[27] but this uncertainty does not prevent us from gaining a broad understanding of P.'s relationship to this material. This essay of P. shows particularly close links to two classes of Homeric scholia, the so-called D-scholia and the bT or 'exegetical' scholia. The D-scholia derive from many different sources and periods, but some of the material is clearly old and goes back at least to the late classical period; this is particularly true of the large amount of simple glossing or explanation of Homeric words which is found in these scholia, a feature which points to the very close links between these notes and educational practice. Given the proclaimed purposes of P.'s essay, a link with such material is both expected and welcome, as it helps to anchor the treatise within a genuine educational context.[28] The 'exegetical' scholia are similarly diverse in origin, but they contain much which is clearly Alexandrian or at least Hellenistic and would have been familiar to P; in general, these scholia are particularly valuable for their 'literary criticism'[29] and for their view, congenial to P. and shared with what the papyri tell us of how poetry was approached in Egyptian schoolrooms, of the poet as moralist

[25] For the links between the two cf. Hunter 2009a: 169 n.1.

[26] P. cites the *Iliad* more than three times as often as the *Odyssey* in this treatise; this may well reflect the dominant position of the *Iliad* in school education.

[27] For helpful summaries of the classes of Homeric scholia cf., e.g., Snipes 1988: 196–204 and Dickey 2007: 18–28.

[28] On this context see esp. Cribiore 2001a: 205–10 and Morgan 1998a *passim* and 1998b: 87–8.

[29] On this see esp. Nünlist 2009.

and teacher. Much here goes back to Peripatetic and Alexandrian scholarship;
the familiar exegetical pattern of 'problem' and 'solution' which structures so
many of these scholia may be traced back to Aristotle's *Homeric problems* (cf. also
chapter 25 of the *Poetics*) and beyond.[30] Whereas Aristotle and his successors used
this technique to show that Homer did in fact know his job, P. is here less con-
cerned with the poet than with his vulnerable audience; the two concerns often,
of course, overlap. This rich scholarly material can often be supplemented from
elsewhere; many of these other sources, such as the vast Homeric commentaries
of Eustathius, bishop of Thessaloniki in the twelfth century, are considerably
later than P., but given the conservatism of the tradition, they will often contain
suggestive material that could have been familiar to P.

The similarities between P.'s explanations and those of the D and bT scholia
show him firmly in the mainstream of Hellenistic discussion of Homer and of
how the poet was used in education; some of P.'s explanations can strike us as
very 'forced', but we must be wary of assuming that that is how they appeared
in antiquity. The other major class of Homeric scholia, the so-called A-scholia
(named from the famous Venetus A manuscript), are here particularly valuable,
as they explicitly contain material deriving from four works of the Augustan and
imperial periods on the text and interpretation of Homer, two of which were
devoted to the work of Alexandrian scholars, notably Aristarchus; the A-scholia
are our principal source of information on the Alexandrian constitution of the
text. Unsurprisingly, given the level at which the essay is aimed, P. has little to say
about this 'higher' area of ancient Homeric scholarship, though he does once take
pointed issue with an alleged Aristarchan athetesis (26f–7a, where see n. on ὁ μὲν
οὖν . . . φοβηθείς), and does so quite in the manner of scholiastic debate (note the
appeal to ethical 'teaching'). This may, however, be the exception which proves
the rule, for the verses at issue there are ones which have entirely disappeared
from our texts of Homer and very probably also led a most precarious existence
in P.'s day; athetized verses did not, on the whole, disappear (after all, they
survived for the scholiasts to record the athetesis). Elsewhere, P. seems to make
no distinction between verses which had been excised or athetized by one or more
of the Alexandrians and those on which no suspicion had ever been cast; it has
been suggested that this shows him rejecting the Alexandrian methodology and
the resulting textual interventions,[31] but P. (and/or his sources) behave entirely

[30] Cf. Hunter 2009a: 21. It is a great pity that we do not know more of P.'s Ὁμηρικαὶ
μελεταί (frr. 122–7 Sandbach); Hillgruber 1994/9, however, makes a strong case for seeing
this work as the principal source of the pseudo-Plutarchan *On Homer*, and cf. also Babut
1969: 161–3.
[31] Cf. Bréchet 2005. As far as we know, it was never suggested in antiquity that Plato's
'censorship' in *Republic* 2–3 was the origin of later practices of textual editing, though of
course it was Plato who, for us and probably for subsequent critics, first identified many
'problematic' passages.