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Emperor Julian, Paul of Tarsus, and the Octopus

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Abstract: The so-called "octopus norm" was originally described by Pindar and Theognis. It represented the way in which a poet could adapt to contingent circumstances without abdicating his own sensibility, grasping what might be appropriate to say or not to say in relation to a specific audience or context. This contribution considers two occurrences of this so-called norm in the works of the Emperor Julian, revealing a polemical use of the image of the octopus. This study primarily attempts to contextualize the two Julian passages, highlighting their sources, and to clarify the polemical value of his use of the "octopus norm", which is very different from the virtuous manner suggested by the archaic poets.

Keywords: octopus norm; Pindar; Theognis; Emperor Julian; Paul of Tarsus; polemic; *Misopogon*; *Contra Galilaeos*

The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;
The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass,
And silent was the flock in woolly fold.
(John Keats)

1. Introduction

Sixty years ago, Bruno Gentili published an important contribution theorizing the so-called "octopus norm", a contribution that he later redefined and improved in a well-known volume of 1984, itself updated and expanded several times (see Gentili 1965, pp. 70–88; Gentili 1984, pp. 153–202; Gentili 2006, pp. 186–236. More recently see Suárez de la Torre 2015 and see also Debiasi 2013). This so-called "octopus norm" derives from an image present in Pindar (Ὦ τέκνον, ποντίου θηρὸς πετραίου/χρωτὶ μάλιστα νόον/προσφέρων πάσαις πολίεσσιν ὁμίλει/τῷ παρεόντι δ' ἐπαινήσαις ἑκών/ἄλλοτ' ἀλλοῖα φρόνει[1]) and in Theognis (Θυμέ, φίλους κατὰ πάντας ἐπίστρεφε ποικίλον ἤθος, /ὀργὴν συμμίσγων ἥντιν' ἕκαστος ἔχει/πουλύπου ὀργὴν ἴσχε πολυπλόκου, ὃς ποτὶ πέτρηι, /τῆι προσομιλήσηι, τοῖος ἰδεῖν ἐφάνη. /νῦν μὲν τῆιδ' ἐφέπου, τοτὲ δ' ἀλλοῖος χρόα γίνου. /κρέσσων τοι σοφίη γίνεται ἀτροπίης[2]).

This image, or norm, expresses the poet's effort to adapt to contingent circumstances without abdicating his own poetic sensibility or nature, grasping what might be appropriate to say or not to say in relation to a specific audience. In this manner, the poet's ability is revealed through his assuming an adaptable attitude, being sensitive to the social context in which he is working, and eliminating any difficulty in communicating with his hearers.

I intend here to consider two occurrences of this precept—which in antiquity was much reaffirmed (see Peretti 1953, pp. 42–9, 93–104; Tosi 2017, n. 677; De Martin 2021, pp. 132–33)—that occur in the works of the Emperor Julian and that reveal a polemical use of the norm: in one case, it is the emperor himself who has to defend himself from the accusation of being inconsistent like an octopus; and in the other, it is Julian who accuses Paul of Tarsus of behaving as an octopus, in reference to his contradictory statements about God.

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I propose primarily to contextualize the two Julian passages, highlighting their sources to the extent possible, and clarifying the polemical value of the "octopus norm", which Julian uses in a manner very different from the virtuous one suggested by the archaic poets. In this way, it will be easy to note how a traditional motif can be used in a reverse or contradictory meaning even by an author like Julian, who famously proposed himself as the restorer of classical paideia.

2. Julian and the Failed Imitation of the Octopus

Composed at the end of February 363 when Julian was about to leave Antioch to undertake his dangerous campaign against Persia (see McLynn 2020),[3] *Misopogon* is a work that eludes precise literary definition (see Marcone 2020, pp. 340–42; Niccolai 2023, p. 179): it contains undoubted satirical traits, evident elements from the Cynic–Stoic diatribe, and entirely original aspects, such as his self-praise in the context of the accusations leveled at him by the Antiochenes.

From this perspective, Julian—who appears with uncut hair and a full beard in a city that cannot tolerate such a style—explicitly recalls the recommendation of Theognis that the Antiochenes accuse him of not respecting: Οὐκ οἶσθα ἀνθρώποις ὁμιλεῖν, οὐδὲ ἐπαινέτης εἶ τοῦ Θεόγνιδος, οὐδὲ μιμῇ τὸν ἀφομοιούμενον ταῖς πέτραις πολύπουν, ἀλλὰ ἡ λεγομένη Μυκόνος ἀγροικία τε καὶ ἀμαθία καὶ ἀβελτερία πρὸς πάντας ἐπιτηδεύεται παρὰ σοῦ.[4]

It is easy to notice how the criticism reported—and only apparently accepted—by Julian lets transpire an adherence to the Theognidean recommendation. This recommendation, however, no longer refers to the poet's behavior but is adapted more generally, almost in a proverbial sense, to knowing how to live appropriately by adapting to the social contexts in which one finds oneself. In other words, for the Antiochenes, adapting to the habits and customs of a region is a virtuous behavior demonstrating the ability to know how to be in the world, while Julian's way of presenting himself demonstrates wildness, ignorance, and stupidity, comparable to the way of life of the inhabitants of the island of Mykonos, proverbially known for poverty and sordidness (see Prato and Micalella 1979, p. 114).

It should be noted here that, as has been said, Julian accepts the criticism of the Antiochenes only in appearance because in reality it offers him the opportunity to better explain the reasons for his own behavior. It is not by whim that he appears in Antioch with unkempt hair and a thick beard, nor only by character (ἦθος), as the Antiochenes would have it (εἶτα οὐκ ἔξεστιν ἀποθέσθαι νῦν καὶ μεταμαθεῖν εἴ τι πρότερον ἡμῖν ἄγροικον ἦθος ἐνετράφη;[5]). Rather, his appearance clearly expresses his own way of life (ἔθος), formed in the course of a practice lasting over thirty years and intentionally chosen, so much so that it becomes a kind of second nature that is truly difficult to change: Ἔθος, φασί, δευτέρη φύσις· φύσει μάχεσθαι δ' ἔργον, ἐτῶν τριάκοντα μελέτην ἀφεῖναι παγχάλεπον, ἄλλως τε καὶ μετὰ τοσαύτης ἐγγενομένην τῆς χαλεπότητος· ἐμοὶ δὲ ἤδη πλείω τούτων ἐστίν.[6]

From this perspective, Julian boasts of contradicting with his own way of presenting himself the so-called "octopus norm" and, consequently, the expectations of the Antiochenes because in this way he manifests his own ἔθος, which the tutor patiently modeled for a long time based on the values transmitted by the classics:

> Σύγγνωτε οὖν ἐμοί· δίδωμι γὰρ ὃν ἀντ' ἐμοῦ δικαιότερον μισήσετε, τὸν φιλαπεχθήμονα παιδαγωγόν, ὅς με καὶ τότε ἐλύπει, μίαν ὁδὸν εἶναι διδάσκων, καὶ νῦν αἴτιός ἐστί μοι τῆς πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἀπεχθείας, ἐνεργασάμενος τῇ ψυχῇ καὶ ὥσπερ ἐντυπώσας ὅπερ ἐγὼ μὲν οὐκ ἐβουλόμην τότε, ὁ δὲ ὡς δή τι χάριεν ποιῶν μάλα προθύμως ἐνετίθει, καλῶν οἶμαι σεμνότητα τὴν ἀγροικίαν καὶ σωφροσύνην τὴν ἀναισθησίαν, ἀνδρείαν δὲ τὸ μὴ εἴκειν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις

> μηδὲ εὐδαίμονα ταύτῃ γίνεσθαι. Ἔφη δέ μοι πολλάκις, εὖ ἴστε, μὰ Δία καὶ Μούσας, ὁ παιδαγωγὸς ἔτι παιδαρίῳ κομιδῇ· "Μή σε παραπειθέτω τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ἡλικιωτῶν ἐπὶ τὰ θέατρα φερόμενον ὀρεχθῆναί ποτε ταυτησὶ τῆς θέας. Ἱπποδρομίας ἐπιθυμεῖς; ἔστι παρ' Ὁμήρῳ δεξιώτατα πεποιημένη· λαβὼν ἐπέξιθι τὸ βιβλίον. Τοὺς παντομίμους ἀκούεις ὀρχηστάς; ἔα χαίρειν αὐτούς· ἀνδρικώτερον παρὰ τοῖς Φαίαξιν ὀρχεῖται τὰ μειράκια· σὺ δὲ ἔχεις κιθαρῳδὸν τὸν Φήμιον καὶ ᾠδὸν τὸν Δημόδοκον. Ἔστι καὶ φυτὰ παρ' αὐτῷ πολλὰ τερπνότερα ἀκοῦσαι τῶν ὁρωμένων· ‚Δήλῳ δή ποτε τοῖον Ἀπόλλωνος παρὰ βωμὸν/Φοίνικος νέον ἔρνος ἀνερχόμενον ἐνόησα', καὶ ἡ δενδρήεσσα τῆς Καλυψοῦς νῆσος καὶ τὰ τῆς Κίρκης σπήλαια καὶ ὁ Ἀλκινόου κῆπος· εὖ ἴσθι, τούτων οὐδὲν ὄψει τερπνότερον."[7]

Julian's response, which contrasts the accusers' ἦθος with his own ἔθος, therefore suggests an intentional choice that can be placed in a reflection, attested for example by the Pseudo-Plutarch *De liberis educandis*, which defines character (ἦθος) as a consolidated habit (ἔθος) over a long period of time—as demonstrated by the example of the puppies raised by Lycurgus, the famous Spartan legislator. Lycurgus took two puppies born of the same parents and raised them in completely different ways, teaching one to be greedy and incompetent and the other to be skilled at scenting and hunting. Then, when the Spartans were assembled, he called the dogs, placed before them a bowlful of food and a hare, and let them loose; immediately the first one pounced on the hare, while the other leaped on the bowl. Then Lycurgus explained that the dogs were born of the same parents but had been raised in completely different ways: so one became greedy; the other suited to hunting.[8] In this same sense, returning to the passage of *Misopogon* under examination, Julian's behavior, which the Antiochenes did not like, was not so much the result of a wild character but the consequence of a choice and of a way of life.

The polemical reference to the character (ἦθος) that does not change—in contrast with the mere external changeability of the octopus—finds a significant confirmation in a reflection by Plutarch on the similarity between friends. In this context, Plutarch also cites the Theognidean recommendation, underlining however that in the octopus the change does not touch the depth of the person but only the skin, whereas in the relationship between friends a deeper similarity is required in reference to character (ἤθη), feelings, activities, and inclinations: the friend will therefore have a stable and strong character (ἦθος) if he wants to resemble his friends because he will have to bear many passions, be versatile, fluid, and easily transformable.[9]

The Plutarch passage, although referring to the relationship between friends, allows us to focus on the fact that the image of the change of the octopus cannot be used in reference to the change of character (ἦθος) because the second is related to a profound aspect of the person, while the first touches the surface of the man. In this sense, if character (ἦθος) is a consolidated habit (ἔθος), the request for change made of Julian by the Antiochenes appears even more contradictory since his second nature evidently cannot bend to a different way of living, which would undoubtedly be contradictory and therefore false.

On closer inspection, however, one can easily discern in the Julian passage an ironic intention on the part of the emperor. In this perspective, though with an evident antiphrastic value, it seems interesting to recall a passage by Philostratus who, presenting a sophist Egyptian of the same name devoted to philosophy together with Cleopatra,[10] had made the Egyptian queen's lifestyle the sophist's own, respecting the Theognidean recommendation, so much so as to resemble her and to be the object of satire for his effeminacy:

> Οἶδα καὶ Φιλόστρατον τὸν Αἰγύπτιον Κλεοπάτρᾳ μὲν συμφιλοσοφοῦντα τῇ βασιλίδι, σοφιστὴν δὲ προσρηθέντα, ἐπειδὴ λόγου ἰδέαν πανηγυρικὴν

> ἥρμοστο καὶ ποικίλην, γυναικὶ ξυνών, ᾗ καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ φιλολογεῖν τρυφὴν εἶχεν, ὅθεν καὶ παρῴδουν τινὲς ἐπ' αὐτῷ τόδε τὸ ἐλεγεῖον·
>
> πανσόφου ὀργὴν ἴσχε Φιλοστράτου, ὃς Κλεοπάτρᾳ
>
> νῦν προσομιλήσας τοῖος ἰδεῖν πέφαται.[11]

The passage is of interest because it represents by way of parody the consequences of unconditionally adopting someone else's lifestyle, which is an evident denaturing of one's own deepest characteristics. This result is even more problematic in the case of a philosopher, who by adaptation assumes a lifestyle so effeminate as to be the object of satire: the behavior of the very wise (πάνσοφος) Philostratus is far from the ability (σοφίη) recommended by Theognis and indeed represents its clearest contradiction.

From this perspective, the controversy that Julian is waging with the inhabitants of Antioch and his own determination to wear a "philosophical" beard also emerges more clearly, even if it costs him the accusation of being compared to a goat: he does not want to resemble beardless boys and hairless women, as had happened—I may add—to Cleopatra's Philostratus. He, rather, intends to distinguish himself from the Antiochenes who, despite being old, out of softness and weakness compete to resemble their sons and daughters and to hide their virility:

> Νομίσῃ δὲ μηδεὶς δυσχεραίνειν ἐμὲ τῷ σκώμματι· δίδωμι γὰρ αὐτὸς τὴν αἰτίαν ὥσπερ οἱ τράγοι τὸ γένειον ἔχων, ἐξὸν οἶμαι λεῖον αὐτὸ ποιεῖν καὶ ψιλόν, ὁποῖον οἱ καλοὶ τῶν παίδων ἔχουσιν ἅπασαί τε αἱ γυναῖκες, αἷς φύσει πρόσεστι τὸ ἐράσμιον. Ὑμεῖς δὲ καὶ ἐν τῷ γήρᾳ ζηλοῦντες τοὺς ὑμῶν αὐτῶν υἱέας καὶ τὰς θυγατέρας ὑπὸ ἁβρότητος βίου καὶ ἴσως ἁπαλότητος τρόπου λεῖον ἐπιμελῶς ἐργάζεσθε, τὸν ἄνδρα ὑποφαίνοντες καὶ παραδεικνύντες διὰ τοῦ μετώπου καὶ οὐχ ὥσπερ ἡμεῖς ἐκ τῶν γνάθων.[12]

In the light of this literary and wisdom tradition, which does not hesitate to see the octopus as a fearful animal, imitated by malicious and cunning people,[13] Julian's wild behavior—his pride in being accused on account of his lifestyle and his determination to preserve his ἔθος, the legacy of the teachings of his tutor, and of the paideia, which the emperor could not renounce (see Smith 1995, pp. 23–48) under penalty of distorting his own identity—will appear much clearer.

3. Paul and the Changing Views on God

Contra Galilaeos, composed by Julian in Antioch in the winter of 362–363 and, thus, only a short time before and in the same social and cultural context as *Misopogon*, is known to have reached us only partially and indirectly.[14] In fragment 20 of Emanuela Masaracchia's edition, Julian accuses Paul of being contradictory on account of his stating that only the Jews are God's property, in agreement with what Moses and Jesus say, while elsewhere, when he wants to convert the pagans to Christianity, he states that even the Gentiles belong to God, as he declares in Rom. 3:29 (ἢ Ἰουδαίων ὁ θεὸς μόνον; οὐχὶ καὶ ἐθνῶν; ναὶ καὶ ἐθνῶν).

This contradiction leads Julian to apply the image of the octopus to Paul. The apostle, depending on the circumstances, changes his opinions about God, just as the octopus changes color when it comes into contact with rocks: Καίτοι τοῦτο θαυμάσαι ἄξιον ὑπὲρ τοῦ Παύλου. πρὸς γὰρ τύχας, ὥσπερ οἱ πολύποδες πρὸς τὰς πέτρας, ἀλλάττει τὰ περὶ τοῦ θεοῦ δόγματα, ποτὲ μὲν Ἰουδαίους μόνον τὴν κληρονομίαν τοῦ θεοῦ εἶναι διατεινόμενος, πάλιν δὲ τοὺς Ἕλληνας ἀναπείθων αὐτῷ προστίθεσθαι, λέγων· "μὴ Ἰουδαίων ὁ θεὸς μόνον, οὐχὶ δὲ καὶ ἐθνῶν· ναὶ καὶ ἐθνῶν".[15]

Here it is not so much a question of going into the details of the doctrinal contents to which Julian is addressing himself—and more generally of the debate between pagans

and Christians[16]—as of grasping the depth of the Pauline contradiction denounced by the emperor and the use of the image of the octopus in the polemical perspective already outlined in the previous pages of this essay. It immediately appears evident that Paul's changeability of opinion, according to Julian, is not simply caused by a lack of conceptual coherence but is the fruit of an intentional choice by the apostle, who, by presenting the Gentiles as God's property, seeks to lead them to himself—that is, to associate them with his own faith. In other words, Julian is explicitly accusing Paul of proselytizing, without fear of contradicting himself, Moses, or even Jesus. This perspective will appear even clearer if we pay attention to two important aspects of Julian's text, which require careful analysis—the verb ἀναπείθω and the image of the octopus—that here the emperor seems to use with an even more polemical value than the examples noted previously.

In the Greek language, the verb ἀναπείθω can have the positive meaning of "to persuade or convince" or the negative meaning of "to seduce, deceive, or corrupt". It is quite significant that only with this meaning does the verb appear in two other surviving fragments of *Contra Galilaeos*. In the first case, Julian uses the verb in reference to the Midianite woman who had seduced an Israelite to idolatry: Εἴ τις ὑμῶν ἀνέγνω τοὺς Ἀριθμοὺς, οἶδεν ὃ λέγω. ἐπειδὴ γὰρ φησι τὸν τελεσθέντα τῷ Βεελφεγὼρ μετὰ τῆς ἀναπεισάσης αὐτὸν γυναικὸς αὐτοχειρίᾳ λαβὼν ἀπέκτεινεν αἰσχρῷ καὶ ὀδυνηροτάτῳ τραύματι, διὰ τῆς μήτρας, φησὶ, παίσας τὴν γυναῖκα...[17] In the second case, the emperor makes explicit reference to Jesus who seduced the worst kinds of men: Ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἀναπείσας τὸ χείριστον τῶν παρ' ἡμῖν...[18] From these parallels it, therefore, appears evident that in the passage under discussion (*C. Gal. fr.* 20), Julian uses the verb ἀναπείθω with a clearly negative meaning, aimed at underlining Paul's attempt to change his mind about God in order to win over new followers.

In this perspective, even the reference to the image of the octopus acquires a much more ironic and polemical value than one might imagine at first glance. A passage from Plutarch, in fact, allows us to understand better the purpose of Julian comparing Paul to the octopus and the image of the apostle that he intends to present. In *De sollertia animalium*, Plutarch offers a series of examples of animals that are cunning in attacking and capturing their prey (τῆς δ' ἐπιχειρητικῆς καὶ θηρευτικῆς δεινότητος αὐτῶν ἐν πολλοῖς σοφίσματα κατιδεῖν ἔστιν[19]) and, after having spoken of the starfish, the torpedo fish, the anglerfish, and the cuttlefish, he focuses on the octopus, whose change of color was made famous by the well-known verses of Pindar and Theognis: Τῶν δὲ πολυπόδων τῆς χρόας τὴν ἄμειψιν ὅ τε Πίνδαρος περιβόητον πεποίηκεν εἰπὼν 'ποντίου θηρὸς <πετραίου> χρωτὶ μάλιστα νόον/προσφέρων πάσαις πολίεσσιν ὁμίλει·' καὶ Θέογνις ὁμοίως 'πουλύποδος νόον ἴσχε πολυχρόου, ὃς ποτὶ πέτρῃ, /τῇ περ ὁμιλήσῃ, τοῖος ἰδεῖν ἐφάνη'.[20]

We should note that, unlike the chameleon that changes nature out of shyness and cowardice, the change of color in the octopus is not an emotional reaction but an intentional change: in this way, the octopus flees what it fears and takes what it feeds on, capturing with deception the prey that, precisely because it is deceived, does not try to escape, and escaping the predators that pass by: Τοῦ δὲ πολύποδος ἔργον ἐστὶν οὐ πάθος ἡ μεταβολή· μεταβάλλει γὰρ ἐκ προνοίας, μηχανῇ χρώμενος τοῦ λανθάνειν ἃ δέδιε καὶ λαμβάνειν οἷς τρέφεται· παρακρουόμενος γὰρ <τὰ μὲν> αἱρεῖ μὴ φεύγοντα τὰ δ' ἐκφεύγει παρερχόμενα.[21]

This Plutarchan passage opens a perspective on the behavior of the octopus that is far from that proposed as a model by Pindar and Theognis. Plutarch emphasizes that the octopus changes color not only to defend itself but also to attack, that this change is intentional, and that its action is based on deception, so that the prey, which is not alarmed, allows itself to be captured without realizing it.

Because of this description, one can understand how Julian is attacking Paul in a much more subtle and incisive way: he does not simply accuse the apostle of being contradictory with respect to opinions on God but also of acting with deception to attract new followers. In other words, unpacking the comparison implicit in Julian's words, just as the octopus uses the deception of changing color to capture its prey, so Paul uses deception by affirming that the pagans are God's property, to seduce them, as the verb ἀναπείθω suggests, and to add them to the number of his followers. In this sense, the image of the octopus, which Julian proposes almost in passing, permits a sarcastic anti-Christian charge of notable intensity to shine through.

4. Conclusions

Another passage from *Misopogon* allows us to reach the conclusion of this contribution. *Misopogon*, as we have seen, is the other text—very close to *Contra Galilaeos*—in which Julian defends himself from the accusation of not respecting the Theognidean recommendation inspired by the behavior of the octopus. Now, once again, we are guided by the occurrences of ἀναπείθω.

Indeed, it cannot be overlooked that the verb recurs with significant insistence in a short space of time in relation to Julian's education under the guidance of his tutor Mardonius:

> Δεινὸς δὲ <u>ἀνέπεισε</u> γέρων, ὃν καὶ ὑμεῖς ὡς ὄντα μάλιστα αἰτιώτατον τῶν ἐμῶν ἐπιτηδευμάτων ὀρθῶς ποιοῦντες ξυλλοιδορεῖτέ μοι, καὶ τοῦτον δέ, εὖ ἴστε, ὑπ' ἄλλων ἐξηπατημένον. Ὀνόματα ἥκει πρὸς ὑμᾶς πολλάκις κωμῳδούμενα, Πλάτων καὶ Σωκράτης καὶ Ἀριστοτέλης καὶ Θεόφραστος· ἐκείνοις ὁ γέρων οὗτος <u>πεισθεὶς</u> ὑπὸ ἀφροσύνης, ἔπειτα ἐμὲ νέον εὑρών, ἐραστὴν λόγων, <u>ἀνέπεισεν</u> ὡς, εἰ τὰ πάντα ἐκείνων ζηλωτὴς γενοίμην, ἀμείνων ἔσομαι τῶν μὲν ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων ἴσως οὐδενός—οὐ γὰρ εἶναί μοι πρὸς αὐτοὺς τὴν ἅμιλλαν –, ἐμαυτοῦ δὲ πάντως. Ἐγὼ δὲ—οὐ γὰρ εἶχον ὅ τι ποιῶ—<u>πεισθεὶς</u> οὐκέτι δύναμαι μεταθέσθαι, καὶ ταῦτα ἐθέλων πολλάκις...[22]

Beyond the ironic game with which Julian places the blame for his own pedagogue on his shoulders and with which he suggests that the great classics of ancient thought are known only thanks to the satire of comedy, it is noteworthy to see how the verb ἀναπείθω is used twice to indicate the educational work of Mardonius directed to the future emperor, educated in the values of classical tradition, which are so far removed from the cultural panorama and lifestyle of the Antiochenes. Julian did not resist his teacher's work of persuasion, as his own life testimony demonstrates and as is also proved in the specific passage in question—the two occurrences of the verb πείθω, both in the passive—which clearly indicates the acceptance of the teaching of Mardonius.

In this relationship between persuader and persuaded, there is no trace of deception or corruption but everything appears transparent and crystalline, even though the emperor's lifestyle and cultural background are misunderstood and even contested by the Antiochenes. In all this, we can once again see a point of contact between the passages of *Misopogon* and *Contra Galiaeos* examined here. The duo of the persuader Mardonius and the persuaded Julian seems to be opposed by that of the seducer Paul and the pagans seduced to become his followers: the first pair is based on truth, the second on deception; the first is founded on coherence, the second on contradiction; the first appears ancient and aristocratic, the second recent and vulgar.

With apparently simple prose, an essential style, and an allusive procedure typical of the writers of his time (see Prato 1989), Julian communicates much more than he explicitly says. The irony, which is typical of noble souls such as his, allows him to remodel a recommendation so characteristic of Greek literature that it has crossed it for almost a millennium. What was an ideal for the archaic poet becomes the accusation from which he

defends himself and the blame he attributes to the enemy: nothing deserves more attention and respect than what the master had taught him, and which finds its foundation in fidelity to the most authentic spirit of the Hellenic tradition.

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Notes

1 Pind. *Hym. fr.* 43 (Maehler 1975, p. 12): "O son, make your mind most like the skin of the rocky sea creature in all the cities you visit; readily praise the person who is present, but think differently at other times" (transl. Race 1997).

2 Theog. *El.* 1,213–218 (Young 1971, pp. 15–6): "My heart, keep turning a versatile disposition in accordance with all your friends, mingling with it the mood which each one has. Adopt the mood of the cunning octopus which seems to resemble the rock to which it clings. Now follow along in this direction, now take on a different complexion. Cleverness is in truth superior to inflexibility" (transl. Gerber 1999).

3 More generally on the Antiochian contest see (Elm 2012, pp. 269–335).

4 Iul. *Misop.* 20,349D (Nesselrath 2015, pp. 189–90): "'You do not know,' you answer, 'how to mix with people, and you cannot approve of the maxim of Theognis, for you do not imitate the polypus which takes on the colours of the rocks. Nay rather you behave to all men with the proverbial Myconian boorishness and ignorance and stupidity'" (transl. Wright 1913); see (De Martin 2021, p. 135).

5 Iul. *Misop.* 23,353A (Nesselrath 2015, p. 193): "What then, you will ask, is it not possible even now for me to lay aside my character, and to repent of the boorish temper that was bred in me in earlier days?" (transl. Wright 1913).

6 Iul. *Misop.* 23,353A (Nesselrath 2015, p. 194): "Habit, as the saying goes, is second nature. But to fight with nature is hard; and to shake off the training of thirty years is very difficult, especially when it was carried on with such painful effort, and I am already more than thirty years old" (transl. Wright 1913). For possible parallels of this expression see (Fontaine et al. 1987, p. 336; Nesselrath 2015, p. 194).

7 Iul. *Misop.* 21,351B–352A (Nesselrath 2015, pp. 191–92): "Therefore forgive me. For I hand over to you instead of myself one whom you will more justly detest, I mean that curmudgeon my tutor who even used to harass me by teaching me to walk in one straight path and now he is responsible for my quarrel with you. It was he who wrought in my soul and as it were carved therein what I did not then desire, though he was very zealous in implanting it, as though he were producing some charming characteristic; and boorishness he called dignity, lack of taste he called sobriety, and not yielding to one's desires or achieving happiness by that means he called manliness. I assure you, by Zeus and the Muses, that while I was still a mere boy my tutor would often say to me: 'Never let the crowd of your playmates who flock to the theatres lead you into the mistake of craving for such spectacles as these. Have you a passion for horse races? There is one in Homer, very cleverly described. Take the book and study it. Do you hear them talking about dancers in pantomime? Leave them alone! Among the Phaeacians the youths dance in more manly fashion. And for citharode you have Phemius; for singer Demodocus. Moreover there are in Homer many plants more delightful to hear of than those that we can see: 'Even so did I once see the young shoot of a date palm springing up near the altar of Apollo on Delos.' And consider the wooded island of Calypso and the caves of Circe and the garden of Alcinous; be assured that you will never see anything more delightful than these'" (transl. Wright 1913). See (Fontaine et al. 1987, p. 335; Moreno Molina 2023, pp. 307–8).

8 Cf. Plut. *Lib. educ.* 4,2F–3B (Paton et al. 1993, pp. 4–5) Καὶ γὰρ τὸ ἦθος <ἔθος> ἐστὶ πολυχρόνιον, καὶ τὰς ἠθικὰς ἀρετὰς ἐθικὰς ἄν τις λέγῃ, οὐκ ἄν τι πλημμελεῖν δόξειεν. ἐνὶ δὲ περὶ τούτων ἔτι παραδείγματι χρησάμενος ἀπαλλάξομαι τοῦ [ἔτι] περὶ αὐτῶν μηκύνειν. Λυκοῦργος γὰρ ὁ τῶν Λακεδαιμονίων νομοθέτης δύο σκύλακας τῶν αὐτῶν γονέων λαβὼν οὐδὲν ὁμοίως ἀλλήλοις ἤγαγεν, ἀλλὰ τὸν μὲν λίχνον ἀπέφηνε καὶ σινάμωρον, τὸν δ' ἐξιχνεύειν καὶ θηρᾶν δυνατόν. εἶτά ποτε τῶν Λακεδαιμονίων εἰς ταὐτὸ συνειλεγμένων, 'μεγάλη τοι ῥοπὴ πρὸς ἀρετῆς χτησίν ἐστιν, ἄνδρες,' ἔφησε, 'Λακεδαιμόνιοι, καὶ ἔθη καὶ παιδεῖαι καὶ διδασκαλίαι καὶ βίων ἀγωγαί, καὶ ἐγὼ ταύτα ὑμῖν αὐτίκα δὴ μάλα ποιήσω φανερά.' εἶτα προσαγαγὼν τοὺς σκύλακας διαφῆκε, καταθεὶς εἰς μέσον λοπάδα καὶ λαγωὸν κατευθὺ τῶν σκυλάκων. καὶ ὁ μὲν ἐπὶ τὸν λαγωὸν ᾔξεν, ὁ δ' ἐπὶ τὴν λοπάδα ὥρμησε. τῶν δὲ Λακεδαιμονίων οὐδέπω συμβαλεῖν ἐχόντων τί ποτ' αὐτῷ τοῦτο δύναται καὶ τί

βουλόμενος τοὺς σκύλακας ἐπεδείκνυεν, ‘οὗτοι γονέων,’ ἔφη, ‘τῶν αὐτῶν ἀμφότεροι, διαφόρου δὲ τυχόντες ἀγωγῆς ὁ μὲν λίχνος ὁ δὲ θηρευτὴς ἀποβέβηκε.’ καὶ περὶ μὲν ἐθῶν καὶ βίων ἀρκείτω ταῦτα.

9 Cf. Plut. *Amic. mult.* 9,96F–97B (Paton et al. 1993, pp. 195–96) Τίς οὖν ἐστιν οὕτως ἐπίπονος καὶ μετάβολος καὶ παντοδαπὸς ἄνθρωπος, ὥστε πολλοῖς ἑαυτὸν ἐξομοιοῦν καὶ προσαρμόττειν καὶ μὴ καταγελᾶν τοῦ Θεόγνιδος παραινοῦντος ‘πουλύποδος νόον ἴσχε πολύφρονος, ὃς ποτὶ πέτρῃ, /τῇ περ ὁμιλήσῃ, τοῖος ἰδεῖν ἐφάνη; καίτοι τοῦ πολύποδος αἱ μεταβολαὶ βάθος οὐκ ἔχουσιν, ἀλλὰ περὶ αὐτὴν γίγνονται τὴν ἐπιφάνειαν, στυφότητι καὶ μανότητι τὰς ἀπορροίας τῶν πλησιαζόντων ἀναλαμβάνουσαν· αἱ δὲ φιλίαι τὰ ἤθη ζητοῦσι συνεξομοιοῦν καὶ τὰ πάθη καὶ τοὺς λόγους καὶ τὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα καὶ τὰς διαθέσεις. Πρωτέως τινὸς οὐκ εὐτυχοῦς οὐδὲ πάνυ χρηστοῦ τὸ ἔργον, ἀλλ’ ὑπὸ γοητείας ἑαυτὸν εἰς ἕτερον εἶδος ἐξ ἑτέρου μεταλλάττοντος ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ πολλάκις, φιλολόγοις συναναγιγνώσκοντος καὶ παλαισταῖς συγκονιομένου καὶ φιλοθήροις συγκυνηγετοῦντος καὶ φιλοπόταις συμμεθυσκομένου καὶ πολιτικοῖς συναρχαιρεσιάζοντος, ἰδίαν ἤθους ἑστίαν οὐκ ἔχοντος. ὡς δὲ τὴν ἀσχημάτιστον οἱ φυσικοὶ καὶ ἀχρώματον οὐσίαν καὶ ὕλην λέγουσιν <ταῖς ποιότησιν> ὑποκειμένην καὶ τρεπομένην ὑφ’ αὐτῶν νῦν μὲν φλέγεσθαι νῦν δ’ ἐξυγραίνεσθαι, τοτὲ δ’ ἐξαεροῦσθαι πήγνυσθαι δ’ αὖθις, οὕτως ἄρα τῇ πολυφιλίᾳ ψυχὴν ὑποκεῖσθαι δεήσει πολυπαθῆ καὶ πολύτροπον καὶ ὑγρὰν καὶ ῥᾳδίαν μεταβάλλειν. ἀλλ’ ἡ φιλία στάσιμόν τι ζητεῖ καὶ βέβαιον ἦθος καὶ ἀμετάπτωτον ἐν μιᾷ χώρᾳ καὶ συνηθείᾳ.

10 On the use of the term ”sophist” see (Stanton 1973).

11 Philostr. *Sophist*. 1,5,486 (Kayser 1871, p. 9): ”I am aware that Philostratus the Egyptian also, though he studied philosophy with Queen Cleopatra, was called a sophist. This was because he adopted the panegyrical and highly-coloured type of eloquence; which came of associating with a woman who regarded even the love of letters as a sensuous pleasure. Hence the following elegiac couplet was composed as a parody aimed at him: Acquire the temperament of that very wise man, Philostratus, who, fresh from his intimacy with Cleopatra, has taken on colours like hers” (transl. Wright 1922); see (Barbagli 2019, p. 48). Julian’s knowledge of Philostratus’ works has been discussed without reaching any clear conclusions: see (Bouffartigue 1992, pp. 27 and 321).

12 Iul. *Misop.* 3,338D–339A (Nesselrath 2015, p. 176): ”And let no one suppose that I am offended by your satire. For I myself furnish you with an excuse for it by wearing my chin as goats do, when I might, I suppose, make it smooth and bare as handsome youths wear theirs, and all women, who are endowed by nature with loveliness. But you, since even in your old age you emulate your own sons and daughters by your soft and delicate way of living, or perhaps by your effeminate dispositions, carefully make your chins smooth, and your manhood you barely reveal and slightly indicate by your foreheads, not by your jaws as I do” (transl. Wright 1913); see (Niccolai 2023, pp. 181–82, 203–4).

13 Cf. Plut. *Quaest. nat.* 19,916B-F (Hubert 2001a, pp. 15–8) Πότερον, ὡς Θεόφραστος ᾤετο, δειλόν ἐστι φύσει ζῷον· ὅταν οὖν ταραχθῇ τρεπόμενον τῷ πνεύματι, συμμεταβάλλει τὸ χρῶμα καθάπερ ἄνθρωπος· διὸ καὶ λέλεκται ‘τοῦ μὲν γάρ τε κακοῦ τρέπεται χρώς’; ἢ τοῦτο πρὸς τὴν μεταβολὴν πιθανῶς λέλεκται πρὸς δὲ τὴν ἐξομοίωσιν οὐχ ἱκανῶς; μεταβάλλει γὰρ οὕτως, ὥστε τὴν χρόαν αἷς ἂν πλησιάζῃ πέτραις ὁμοιοῦν· πρὸς ὃ καὶ Πίνδαρος ἐποίησε ‘ποντίου θηρὸς χρωτὶ μάλιστα νόον προσφέρων πάσαις πολίεσσιν ὁμίλει’, καὶ Θέογνις ‘πουλύποδος νόον ἴσχε πολυχρόου, ὃς ποτὶ πέτρῃ, τῇ προσομιλήσῃ, τοῖος ἰδεῖν ἐφάνη.’ τοῦτο δὴ καὶ τοὺς πανουργίᾳ καὶ δεινότητι ὑπερφέροντας ἔχειν τὸ ἐπιτήδευμα λέγουσιν, ὡς ὑπὲρ τοῦ λαθεῖν καὶ διαφυγεῖν † τοὺς πλησίον ἑαυτοὺς ἀεὶ ἀπεικάζειν πολύποδι. ἢ καθάπερ ἐσθῆτι τῇ χρόᾳ νομίζουσι χρῆσθαι, ῥᾳδίως οὕτως ᾗ βούλεται μετενδυόμενον. ἆρ’ οὖν τὴν μὲν ἀρχὴν αὐτὸς ἐνδίδωσι τοῦ πάθους δείσας, τὰ δὲ κύρια τῆς αἰτίας ἐν ἄλλοις ἐστί; σκόπει δή, κατ’ Ἐμπεδοκλέα ‘γνοὺς ὅτι πάντων εἰσὶν ἀπορροαὶ ὅσσ’ ἐγένοντο·’ οὐ γὰρ ζῴων μόνον οὐδὲ φυτῶν οὐδὲ γῆς καὶ θαλάττης, ἀλλὰ καὶ λίθων ἄπεισιν ἐνδελεχῶς πολλὰ ῥεύματα καὶ χαλκοῦ καὶ σιδήρου· καὶ γὰρ φθέγγεται πάντα καὶ ὄδωδε τῷ ῥεῖν ἀεί τι καὶ φθείρεσθαι συνεχῶς· καὶ γὰρ ἕλξεις ἢ ἐπιπηδήσεις ποιοῦσι ταῖς ἀπορροίαις, οἱ μὲν ἐμπλοκὰς αὐτῶν οἱ δὲ πληγὰς οἱ δ’ ὤσεις τινὰς καὶ περιελάσεις ὑποτιθέμενοι. μάλιστα δὲ τῶν παράλων πετρῶν ἐπιρραινομένων καὶ ψηχομένων ὑπὸ τῆς θαλάττης ἀπιέναι μέρη καὶ θραύσματα πολλὰ καὶ λεπτὰ <εἰκὸς> συνεχῶς, ἃ τ<οῖς χρώμασιν ἀλλήλων διαφέροντα τοῖς μὲν ἄλ>λοις οὐ προσί<σχεται> σώμα<σιν> ἀλλὰ λανθάνει περιολισθάνοντα τῶν πυκνοτέρους ἐχόντων πόρους ἢ διεκθέοντα τῶν μανοτέρους. ὁ δὲ πολύπους τήν τε σάρκα προσιδεῖν αὐτόθεν ἀνθρηνιώδης καὶ πολύπορος καὶ δεκτικὸς ἀπορροιῶν ἐστιν, ὅταν τε δείσῃ, τῷ πνεύματι τρεπόμενος καὶ τρέπων οἷον ἔσφιγξε τὸ σῶμα καὶ συνήγαγεν, ὥστε προσδέχεσθαι καὶ στέγειν ἐπιπολῆς τὰς τῶν ἐγγὺς ἀπορροίας. καὶ γὰρ ἡ τραχύτης μετὰ τῆς μαλακότητος ἕλικας παρέχουσα τοῖς ἐπιφερομένοις μέρεσι, μὴ σκεδαννυμένοις ἀλλ’ ἀθροιζομένοις καὶ προσμένουσι, σύγχρου<ν ἀπεργάζεται> τὴν ἐπιφάνειαν <τοῖς ἐγγύ>τατα. τεκμήριον δὲ τῆς αἰτίας μέγα τὸ μήτε τοῦτον πᾶσιν ἐξομοιοῦσθαι τοῖς πλησίον μήτε τὸν χαμαιλέοντα τοῖς λευκοῖς χρώμασιν, ἀλλὰ μόνοις ἑκάτερον, ὧν ταῖς ἀπορροίαις πόρους συμμέτρους ἔχουσιν.

14 On the tradition of this text see recently (Crawford 2022).

15 Iul. *C. Gal. fr.* 20,106B (Masaracchia 1990, p. 111): ”Though in Paul’s case this is strange. For according to circumstances he keeps changing his views about God, as the polypus changes to match the rocks, and now he insists that the Jews alone are God’s portion, and then again, when he is trying to persuade the Hellenes to take sides with him, he says: ‘Do not think that he is the God of Jews only, but also of Gentil es: yea of Gentiles also’” (transl. Wright 1923, modified); see (De Giorgi 2017, pp. 100–1).

16 For a framing of the fragment in the history of the controversy between pagans and Christians see (Rinaldi 1998, pp. 459–60) (with extensive bibliography).

17 Iul. *C. Gal. fr.* 33,160D (Masaracchia 1990, pp. 128–29): "If any of you has read the Book of Numbers he knows what I mean. For when Phinehas had seized with his own hand and slain the man who had dedicated himself to Baal-peor, and with him the woman who had persuaded him, striking her with a shameful and most painful wound through the belly…" (transl. Wright 1923). The negative meaning of the verb ἀναπείθω is better understood in the light of the broader biblical passage (Num. 25:1–9), which Julian shows he knows well and in which reference is made to the fornication of the Israelites with the daughters of Moab and to the killing of the Israelite and the woman in the alcove: cf. Num. 25:1–3.7–8 (Wevers 1982, pp. 295–98) Καὶ κατέλυσεν Ἰσραὴλ ἐν Σαττίμ· καὶ ἐβεβηλώθη ὁ λαὸς ἐκπορνεῦσαι εἰς τὰς θυγατέρας Μωάβ. καὶ ἐκάλεσαν αὐτοὺς ἐπὶ ταῖς θυσίας τῶν εἰδώλων αὐτῶν, καὶ ἔφαγεν ὁ λαὸς τῶν θυσιῶν αὐτῶν, καὶ προσεκύνησαν τοῖς εἰδώλοις αὐτῶν. καὶ ἐτελέσθη Ἰσραὴλ τῷ Βεελφεγώρ· […]. Καὶ ἰδὼν Φινεὲς υἱὸς Ἐλεαζὰρ υἱοῦ Ἀαρὼν τοῦ ἱερέως ἐξανέστη ἐκ μέσου τῆς συναγωγῆς, καὶ λαβὼν σειρομάστην ἐν τῇ χειρὶ εἰσῆλθεν ὀπίσω τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τοῦ Ισραηλίτου εἰς τὴν κάμινον καὶ ἀπεκέντησεν ἀμφοτέρους, τόν τε ἄνθρωπον τὸν Ισραηλίτην καὶ τὴν γυναῖκα διὰ τῆς μήτρας αὐτῆς· καὶ ἐπαύσατο ἡ πληγὴ ἀπὸ υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ. On Julian and the Bible see (Ugenti 2017).

18 Iul. *C. Gal. fr.* 41,191E (Masaracchia 1990, p. 136). Celsus had already made a similar accusation: Orig. *C. Cels.* 1,62 (Borret 1967, p. 244) Μετὰ ταῦτα δ' ἐπεὶ μηδὲ τὸν ἀριθμὸν τῶν ἀποστόλων ἐπιστάμενος *δέκα εἶπεν ἢ ἕνδεκά τινας ἐξαρτησάμενον τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἑαυτῷ ἐπιρρήτους ἀνθρώπους, τελώνας καὶ ναύτας τοὺς πονηροτάτους, μετὰ τούτων τῇδε κἀκεῖσε αὐτὸν ἀποδεδρακέναι, αἰσχρῶς καὶ γλίσχρως τροφὰς συνάγοντα*; 2,46 (Borret 1967, p. 388) Πῶς δ' οὐ ψεύδεται ὁ λέγων παρὰ τῷ Κέλσῳ Ἰουδαῖος *ὅτι παρὼν δέκα ναύτας καὶ τελώνας τοὺς ἐξωλεστάτους μόνους εἷλε καὶ οὐδὲ τούτους ἅπαντας*; see (Greenwood 2016).

19 Plut. *Soll. anim.* 27,978B (Hubert 2001b, p. 57): "As for cleverness in attacking and catching prey, we may perceive subtle examples of it in many different species" (transl. Cherniss and Helmbold 1957).

20 Plut. *Soll. anim.* 27,978E (Hubert 2001b, p. 58): "As for the octopus' change of colour, Pindar has made it celebrated in the words To all the cities to which you resort/Bring a mind like the changing skin of the rocky sea creature; and Theognis likewise: Be minded like the octopus' hue:/The colour of its rock will meet the view" (transl. Cherniss and Helmbold 1957, modified).

21 Plut. *Soll. anim.* 27,978F (Hubert 2001b, pp. 58–9): "But this same action on the part of the octopus is not an emotional response, but a deliberate change, since it uses this device to escape what it fears and to capture what it feeds on: by this deceit it can both seize the latter, which does not try to escape, and avoid the former, which proceeds on its way" (transl. Cherniss and Helmbold 1957).

22 Iul. *Misop.* 24,353B-C (Nesselrath 2015, p. 194): "Yes, it was that terrible old man who convinced me that I ought to do so; and you also do well to help me to abuse him, since he is of all men most responsible for my way of life; though he too, you must know, had in his turn been misled by others. Theirs are names that you have often met when they are ridiculed in Comedy—I mean Plato and Socrates, Aristotle and Theophrastus. This old man in his folly was first convinced by them, and then he got hold of me, since I was young and loved literature, and convinced me that if I would emulate those famous men in all things I should become better, not perhaps than other men—for it was not with them that I had to compete—but certainly better than my former self. Accordingly, since I had no choice in the matter, I obeyed him, and now I am no longer able to change my character, though indeed I often wish I could…" (transl. Wright 1913).

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