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Philip A. Stadter, *Paidagogia pros to theion: Plutarch's Numa*

Although an important source for early Roman religion, Plutarch's *Life of Numa* is difficult to understand as a biography. Numa reigned for 43 years, but Plutarch does not tie the religious and social legislation with which the king is credited to specific events, presenting it rather as an undifferentiated list of enactments. Numa's life before he took the throne is summarized in a paragraph, and we learn only briefly of his family before reading of his death (3.6-4.2, 21). Plutarch states early on that Numa cannot have been a student of Pythagoras, but then notes so many similarities to Pythagorean teaching throughout the *Life* that Flacelière identified this as a *Leitmotiv*.¹

It is even less clear what a contemporary audience might have expected to learn from *Numa*. The picture of Roman religion is highly selective, the etymologies willful and often contrary to mainstream Roman thinking. The *Life* celebrates peace and tranquillity at a time when the emperor, Trajan, was the most active Roman military commander since Julius Caesar. Was this a special time to give attention to the pontifices, the Vestals, the Salii, the Fetiales? These incongruities encourage a new look at the text. Examination of the questions of chronology, etymology, religion, and Numa's role as priest-king will lead to a clearer understanding of Plutarch's purpose.

Plutarch sets Numa's life, as he does that of Lycurgus, the legislator-king of Sparta with whom he is paired, in the semi-legendary past. Both *Lives* begin with chronological uncertainty. Plutarch's dates for the Spartan legislator vary between ca. 925-900 and ca. 776, the time of the founding of the Olympic games (cf. *Lyc.* 1, 23, 29). He notes a similar discrepancy with regard to Numa, since some authors dated him to the time of Pythagoras (not specified by Plutarch, but he was active ca. 530-510), others some five generations earlier, that is, to his standard position in the Roman king list, ca. 715-673 B.C. (*Num.* 1). In Lycurgus' case, the uncertainty allowed the biographer to connect the Spartan king with the establishment of the Olympic games and the Olympic peace (*Lyc.* 1); in Numa's case the Roman is coupled with Pythagoras against all chronological probability. The variants warn the reader not to expect a purely historical account. The double notice, that Clodius in his book on chronology argued that the records of Rome before the Gallic sack were invented and that Hippias composed his list of Olympic victors much later than the reign of Numa, places the account of Numa's life and legislation in a historical

no-man's land, beyond the reach of verifiable history.² Numa, like Lycurgus, will be the subject of an idealized, abstract account, focusing on his legislation: "what we have received which is worthy of note" (*Num.* 1.7).³

In both cases, the chronological problem also permits Plutarch to introduce a major theme: the issue of peace in *Lycurgus*, the teaching of Pythagoras in *Numa*. The treatment in *Numa* also suggests two possible ties between the legislation of Lycurgus and Numa. The Roman may have met the Olympic victor Pythagoras of Sparta, and learned from him, on a possible visit to Italy, the customs of the Spartans.⁴ Moreover, Numa was a Sabine, and the Sabines claimed to be colonists of the Spartans.⁵ Although many writers denied any influence of Greek education (Ελληνική παιδείσις) on Numa and asserted his independence in acquiring virtue (1.3), Plutarch seems determined to find it--but at this point leaves indeterminate what that influence is.

Who then is this legendary figure, Numa? After a brief notice of his father and family--remarking the divine coincidence that he was born on the very day Rome was founded⁶--Plutarch describes the future king (3.6-4.2). His character was by nature disposed toward every sort of virtue, and he further tamed it (ἐξημέρωσε) by training, hardships, and philosophy. Plutarch imagines a sort of self-discipline which removed not only commonly recognized faults (πάθη τῆς ψυχῆς), but even those which are praised among the barbarians, such as force and acquisitiveness, since he considered "true courage to be the containment of desires within himself by reason" (3.7).⁷ He renounced luxury and extravagance and acted as an honest judge and adviser. His free time was devoted neither to pleasure nor business, but to the service (θεραπεία) of the gods and contemplation (θεωρία) of their nature and power. After his wife's death, he left the city to live in the country and wander by himself, spending his time in the groves of the gods, in sacred meadows, and in desert places (4.1).⁸ These bucolic intervals, Plutarch deduces, gave rise to the popular belief that he had a special relation with the nymph Egeria.

Rationalizing this story, Plutarch imagines an extraordinary vision of Numa as a contemplative, distant from human companionship, communing with the gods in solitude. The picture recalls Euripides' Hippolytus, who hunted in the woods and fields with Artemis and manifested the same distance from normal human affairs. However, Plutarch's Numa shows a more abstract bent, with his focus on θεραπεία and θεωρία. This conception of Numa does not derive from Dionysius of Halicarnassus, whom Plutarch used often in this life,⁹ and is not found in Livy or Cicero, our other major sources for Numa: Plutarch seems to construct this picture on his own.¹⁰ He imagines a kind of hermit--ascetic, self-disciplined, and constantly considering the gods. His conversations with the Muses (not only Egeria) suggest a knowledge of Greek culture.¹¹ The portrait contrasts sharply with that of Lycurgus, a man enmeshed in politics and canny in dealing with the difficult situation after the birth of the young heir to the throne (*Lyc.* 3). Rather than contemplating the divine, Lycurgus in his travels to Crete, Asia Minor, and Egypt looks for means to handle the political situation in Sparta. On his return, he is ready

to attempt a political coup. The god at Delphi supports him for his justice, not his practice of piety (*Lyc.* 4-5).

Far from down-playing the supposed relation with Egeria, Plutarch makes it the springboard of a digression on stories of divine love affairs for humans, such as those of Atthis, Rodoites, and Endymion.¹² The basis for such stories is the fact that the gods are loving of humans (φιλάνθρωπος) and delights in the company of men who are pious and moderate (4.4); it is reasonable for the gods to feel toward a man affection (φιλία) and a love (ἔρως) which cares for character and virtue (ἦθος καὶ ἀρετή, 4.7). The fabulous stories point to an underlying truth, and Plutarch finds it credible that the gods also have contact (ὄμιλία) with men engaged in ruling kingdoms or ordering cities, to give them instruction and advice (4.11). The motif of divine care reappears at other points in the life: the *ancile* fallen from heaven comes "for the safety of the city," 13.3;¹³ Egeria provides an abundance for Numa's table, 15.2-3;¹⁴ Jupiter is favorable, 15.10.

Numa is a "holy man," one who had a private relation with the gods which gave him a special wisdom. Like other such men, he is in some ways an outsider. First, the tradition made him a resident of Cures, and not a citizen of Rome. Second, Plutarch makes him a kind of hermit. Unlike the holy men of Plutarch's day and later, such as Apollonius of Tyana, he was not especially a wonder-worker or magician: the tales of Egeria's banquet, the trapping of Faunus and Picus, and the dialogue with Jupiter (13, 15) although traditional do not fit Plutarch's characterization. But like those men, he used his fabled contact with the divine to awe and sway the people. Numa, as an outsider to the community gifted with special authority, was able to act as mediator to the social and political problems which erupted after the disappearance--perhaps by assassination--of Romulus.¹⁵ The fathers attempted to calm the Romans with religious awe by decreeing that Romulus was a god. But the city needed more, and this led them to appeal to Numa, someone outside the normal structure of the city and noted for his virtue (ἀρετή, 3.5). His fame derived from his disciplined regime and reputation for close contact with the divine, in the person of Egeria. The delegation of Romans to Numa resembles other occasions in classical tradition when the outstanding justice of an individual led people to look to him for arbitration and judgment.¹⁶ The divine aspect of Numa's authority, on the other hand, points forward to cases such as the Syrian holy men described by Brown, who were frequently invited to resolve disputes. Like these men, it was important for Numa to continue to maintain his external authority, founded on his special relation to the divine, even while ruling in the city for forty-three years.¹⁷

On becoming king, Numa at once initiated a comprehensive religious reform to quiet the city's incipient strife and its compulsively aggressive relations with its neighbors. These reforms--here Plutarch accepts Roman tradition--unified citizens of diverse origins and classes and gave them a common focus and, in the rituals, opportunities for common action. As Plutarch explains in c. 8, Numa employs religious ritual to lead this "feverish" city away from war and dispose it toward peace, but through means appealing especially to the senses.¹⁸ He made use of the gods' help: through frequent sacrifices and processions and dances which he himself led and established, rituals possessing a delightful attraction in their solemnity and a humane pleasure, he

swayed the people and softened their spirited and war-loving nature (8.3). On occasion he also used other methods, appealing more to superstition than to reason: Sometimes he enslaved their minds and made them docile through superstition, reporting from god some frightening thing--strange visions of spirits and angry voices (8.4). This flamboyant appeal to the drama--one might even say charlatantry--of religion is at the heart of the parallel between Numa and Pythagoras.

Pythagoras, the prototypical sage and "holy man" of ancient Greece, according to tradition had established himself at Croton in southern Italy, introduced radical legislation, then governed the city with his followers.¹⁹ Pythagoras' philosophy gave a leading role to divinity, according to Plutarch, but also used impressive external signs, such as his tame eagle, and his golden thigh, and other "marvelous devices and actions". The impression could be summed up in the verses of Timon of Phlius, quoted by Plutarch:

Pythagoras, who inclines to the fame of a wizard,
Hunting after men, expert in high-sounding discourse. (8.9)

Numa's "drama," Plutarch explains, was his supposed love of and intercourse with the nymph Egeria and his meetings with the Muses. The most important parallel brought out by Plutarch in chapter 8, devoted to the similarities of Numa and Pythagoras, is their blending of religion and politics in government and legislation. In both cases the ruler-sage employed deception to awe the people and make them docile.²⁰

Plutarch remarks in *The E at Delphi* that in his early years he was much taken with Pythagorean number lore and his teacher Ammonius considered number "not the least part of philosophy" (387F). Neo-Pythagoreanism flourished in his lifetime, and seems to have been a significant trend in contemporary Platonism. Several Pythagorean acquaintances appear in his works.²¹ In Plutarch's works it seems to show itself as a special fascination with music and numerology.²² His fascination with the importance of harmony in the universe, in the city, and in the individual human soul, surely is related to these early Pythagorean interests. In *Numa*, as in *Lycurgus*, this concern is directed toward how the legislators introduce concord into their states.

Despite the emphasis on Pythagoras in this life, the fundamental approach is still Platonic.²³ The debate on the occasion of Numa's acceptance of the kingship reveals this clearly.

In Dionysius of Halicarnassus, when the Roman ambassadors come to Cures to invite Numa to become king, he deliberates a while, then accepts (*Ant. Rom.* 2.60,1). Plutarch enlarges this notice with two speeches in direct discourse, in which Numa first gives reasons for rejecting the nomination, and then his father and Marcius give reasons for accepting (5-6). This mini-debate on the role of the philosopher in politics echoes some of the arguments found in Dionysius, but focuses on the contrast of the contemplative and active life. Why, Numa argues, should he exchange the quiet life of leisurely discussion he leads for the trouble of governing an unruly state, or his love of peace and his conversation with pious and friendly

country folk for the Roman habit of war? If he were king, he would be ridiculous, honoring the gods and justice and trying to teach the Romans to hate violence and war (5.4-8). Although Numa's situation appears quite un-Socratic, his words recall the famous description of the sage's confusion in the political arena (cf. *Rep.* 7, 516C-517E, *Gorg.* 486A-C, 522B). His father's reply to these objections is the same as that of Socrates, the Platonic call for the philosopher to return into the cave. For a man like Numa, ruling is a service to the god, because it actively employs his unusual justice and gives him an opportunity for great and noble deeds. "The god does not permit your justice to lie useless," the father argues. The philosopher must act in the world, which is his proper arena of expression. Among the deeds which he can accomplish are divine cults (θεραπειά θεῶν) and taming men to be pious (πρὸς εὐσέβειαν ἀνθρώπων ἡμερώσεις, 6.2).²⁴

This argument is very close to Plutarch's own interests as philosopher and teacher. The aim behind the *Parallel Lives* is the philosopher's goal of leading men to better their lives. They address *in extenso* the role of the statesman and frequently consider the position of philosophers and advisers in politics. In two lives he considers more particularly the philosopher as statesman: Solon and Numa.²⁵ But Solon is an adviser, one who is willing to draft a law code, but refuses to take the tyrannical power offered him (*Sol.* 14), whereas Numa accepts the kingship and shapes the state to his ways. The great accomplishment of Numa is peace and a right relationship for Rome with the gods. Numa for Plutarch represents the philosopher become king envisioned by Plato, but one made in a special mold, quite different from Lycurgus or other exemplary leaders.

Almost the whole of Numa's program of legislation concerns the worship of the gods and management of ritual. Although Numa's justice is often mentioned,²⁶ it is his reverence for the gods which lies at the center of his personality. Unique among our sources, Plutarch records that Numa was pontifex maximus (9.1), responsible for the proper conduct of every aspect of Roman public and private religion. For Plutarch, Numa is both king and chief priest, that is, interpreter, spokesman, and hierophant (ἐξηγητοῦ καὶ προφήτου, μᾶλλον δ' ἱεροφάντου τάξιιν, 9.8). Since our other sources say that Numa appointed one of the patres, Numa Marcius, son of Marcius, as pontifex,²⁷ this variant apparently represents a conscious decision on Plutarch's part.²⁸ No other king is recorded as being pontifex maximus. Numa thus represents an ancient exemplar for the role of the princeps as leader of Roman religion.

During the Republic, the pontifex maximus was leader of the college of pontifices and the expert on "problems of sacred law and procedure within their province--such matters as the games, sacrifices and vows, the sacra connected with Vesta and the Vestals, tombs and burial law, the inheritance of sacred obligations."²⁹ They were also responsible for the calendar, which gave Julius Caesar, who held the office, the authority for his calendar reform. Once Augustus became pontifex maximus in 12 B.C., he made it "the keystone of the religious system."³⁰ After him every emperor held the office. Two centuries later, Dio Cassius could write of the emperors, "from the fact that they are enrolled in all the priesthoods and moreover can grant most of the priesthoods to others, and that one of them, even if two or three emperors are

ruling jointly, is pontifex maximus, they control all sacred and religious matters" (53.17.8).

By making Numa both king and pontifex maximus, secular and religious leader, Plutarch made him more similar to the princeps of his own day. One clear allusion reveals that Plutarch had the contemporary world clearly in mind as he composed this life. When discussing the names of the months, he writes: "The fifth month is named for Caesar, who defeated Pompey; the sixth is named August from the second to rule, called Sebastos (Augustus). Domitian gave his own names to the next in order, though not for long, since they took their own names back after he was assassinated and are called seventh and eighth" (19.7). The first two Caesars were honored by having months named after them. Domitian attempted to double the honor for himself, but his violent death (ἐκεῖνου σφαγέυτος) revealed how little support there was for this tribute. The other named months, except February, honored gods: to give a man this honor put him in an exalted class of benefactors to the state. Domitian asserted but did not earn this privilege, and the restoration of the original names marked the negative judgment on his rule. Domitian attempted to equal both Julius Caesar and Augustus, but failed in both cases.³¹

The vivid account of the punishment prescribed for a Vestal accused of sexual activity in *Numa* 10.8-13 also recalls an incident from Domitian's reign. The pontifex maximus, as Plutarch records, had a special relation to the Vestals and special responsibility for them, both to help and punish. This relationship was given special form by Augustus, who soon after becoming pontifex dedicated an image and shrine to Vesta in his own house on the Palatine, making his own house a kind of annex to the temple of Vesta.³² Of the later emperors Domitian chose to take the role of guardian of the Vestals especially seriously. On one occasion he had three Vestals executed for sexual laxity. Not long after, however, another Vestal, Cornelia, was accused of the same sacrilege, and Domitian exacted the ancient and crueler penalty of burial alive described by Plutarch, as Pliny the Younger informs us in an indignant letter (*Ep.* 4.11, see also *Suet. Dom.* 8.4). Plutarch may well have drawn the elements of his description from an earlier written source, such as Dionysius *Ant. Rom.* 2.67.3-4, rather than from direct observation or contemporary accounts. But Domitian's action--and Pliny's response-- shows that this power of the pontifex maximus was very present to contemporary Romans.

This contemporary context may explain why Plutarch offers a unique and significant interpretation of the term pontifex.³³ He rejects out of hand the standard interpretation, found in Varro, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and Servius, that it means bridge-builder,³⁴ calling it "especially ridiculous". In its place he accepts an etymology derived from potens, explaining that the pontifices "serve the gods, who are powerful and lords of all."³⁵ This etymology asserts the preeminence of the gods, the notion which lies at the heart of Plutarch's interpretation of Numa's life.

His suggestions for the etymology of the ancilia are similar. Although he notes the possible derivation of ancile from Greek ἀγκυλα or ἀγκῶν, referring to their shape, he suggests as well others which indicate the nature of the shield, sent by the gods as a sign of relief from the plague besetting the city: ἀνέκαθεν φορά

(fallen from above), ἄκεσις τῶν νοσοῦντων (healing of the sick), τῶν αὐχμῶν λύσις (relief from drought), or ἀνάσχεσις τῶν δεῖνων, (relief from calamities), comparing it with the appearance of the Dioscuri at Athens, which gave them the title Anakes (13.9-10).³⁶ These etymologies suggest what the gods' connection with Numa reveals, that the gods are φιλόανθρωποι, loving men and exercising care over them.

Other etymologies mark the peacekeeping mission of the Fetiales,³⁷ the leaping dance of the Salii in honor of the gods (13.7), and Numa's fabled dialogue with Jupiter, by which he shifted the god's temper from angry to propitious (15.10). Plutarch often will follow Varronian etymologies, but feels free to employ his own when they support his interpretation of Numa's contribution to Rome.³⁸ The many month-names derived from the names of the gods indicate the city's divine patronage.³⁹ Numa's two new months mark two points of his ideology. The etymology of February characterizes it as the month of purification (19.8). Ritual purity is a continuing theme in this life, which is the explanation for the extended discussion of the Vestal fire or the full treatment of Numa's dialogue with Zeus.⁴⁰

Numa's shift of the beginning of the year from March, dedicated to Mars, to January, dedicated to Janus, embodies in the calendar his preference for peace over war. As Plutarch explains, Janus was more than a god of beginnings: in tradition, as *daimon* or king, he was a god of the city and of common action (πολιτικὸς καὶ κοινῶν ἰκός), and changed the life of men from the bestial and savage to civilization (19.10)--that is he tamed men to live in a community, and is properly a god of peace. Numa's calendar reform put Janus at the head of the year; his "taming" of the Romans' souls meant that the temple of Janus was closed and peace at hand for the whole forty years of his reign: "so completely did he eradicate from every side whatever pertained to war" (20.1-3).

The praise of Numa for keeping the temple of Janus closed throughout his reign leads into a rhetorical αὐξησις of his accomplishments and a paean to the peace he inspired (20.4-12). Powerful imagery expresses the effect of Numa on other cities: "like a breeze or healing breath . . . a longing flowed into all of peace, and cultivating the land, and raising children in tranquillity, and honoring the gods . . . as if flowing from the spring of Numa's wisdom, goodness and justice flowed out to everyone and the calm around him flowed forth" (20.4-5).⁴¹ Numa's taming of himself and idyllic life in communion with nature (3.7, 4.1) has now spread to Rome and its neighbors. This evocation of a paradise on earth is supported by two quotations from Bacchylides, singing of the shield covered with spider webs, and rust on the spear and sword. The peace throughout Italy is echoed by a peace within the city: no civil war or faction or revolution, no hostility toward, or envy of the king. Numa is protected by fear of the gods, or respect for virtue, or divine fortune, so that his pure life becomes an exemplar and testimony of Plato's statement that only the combination of royal power with a philosophical mind could bring surcease of troubles for men. A second Platonic quote conveys the formal μακαρισμός or blessing: "He (the truly self-controlled person) is blessed, and blessed as well are those who hear the words coming from the mouth of such a man."⁴² Plutarch then

paraphrases the quote and applies it--in a highly rhetorical and complex sentence--directly to Numa. The Romans imitate his virtue and "put themselves in step with his blameless and blessed life, full of affection and concord toward themselves, expressed with justice and moderation."⁴³

Plutarch's Numa emerges as one type of ideal *princeps*, the ruler whose virtue becomes an example to his subjects and the font of peace and prosperity to the nation. As ruler-priest, βασιλεύς and ἀρχιερέυς, he assures the right relation with the gods on which Rome's prosperity is founded. Plutarch's parallel between Numa and the *princeps* may extend further. Numa was himself pious, but according to Plutarch he also used exterior pomp and posturing in the manner of Pythagoras. Plutarch seems to find this show acceptable as a means of domesticating an unruly populace. Here perhaps we glimpse Plutarch's attitude toward the imperial cult: a necessary performance needed to awe the populace into accepting the rule of the virtuous *princeps*, a contemporary kind of Pythagorean wizardry.⁴⁴

The allusions to Domitian indicate a negative type, a ruler who does not understand his proper role. We should no doubt read an allusion to Domitian's assassination in this same passage, where Plutarch notes that under Numa there was neither faction nor revolution.⁴⁵ The references point forward as well, for Trajan, in whose reign the *Parallel Lives* were composed, succeeded to the throne only shortly after Domitian's assassination, following the brief reign of Nerva. It is not fanciful to see a parallel with Numa, who became king after Romulus' disappearance and possible assassination, and a troubled interregnum (2.1-3.5). Trajan was adopted by Nerva while outside the city (he was serving on the frontiers, perhaps in Germany) to calm tensions. After a brief visit to Rome, he returned to the frontier, and then when Nerva died had to act quickly (though more physically) to end rebellion and quiet neighboring peoples. When he entered Rome as emperor, to joyous acclamation,⁴⁶ in him lay the empire's hopes for peace.

Numa and Lycurgus present two different ideal rulers and the societies they create. Lycurgus is born to the royal house, an insider who surrenders the throne only to regain power in a coup; Numa is an outsider, not even a Roman, recruited for the kingship because of his outstanding virtue. Lycurgus' constitution is based on a careful balance of political roles between king, council of elders, and assembly; the establishment of a common mess; the rejection of a money economy; and perhaps most important, a rigid and demanding educational system, designed to perpetuate the values of his new society. Numa's reform is a "pedagogy toward the divine" (παίδευσίς πρὸς τὸ θεῖον, 15.1), but it also is more personal, depending on his own charismatic role as holy man and go-between with the gods. His innovations establish an institutionalized relationship with the gods and give peace to the Romans, but do not guarantee the continuing virtue of the society as a whole. Rome grew and prospered through war, but Plutarch refuses to say that this course was preferable to one based on virtue.⁴⁷

As the initial questioning of chronology indicated, Plutarch's Numa is an ideal, not a historical ruler. The philosopher accepts neither Numa's discipleship of Pythagoras nor the fabulous story of his meetings with Egeria as fact. He looks beyond these stories and beyond the religious regulations of Numa to imagine their underlying

premises. The *Life of Numa* argues that the gods are favorable to mankind, φιλόανθρωποι, and love all that is virtuous in man, that a proper attention to the gods is a sign of virtue and is rightly associated with justice, and that a ruler who possesses this virtue inspires the people to follow his example and is a source of peace, both internal and external. Finally, it was not important for Plutarch whether Numa learned from Pythagoras or not: the significant fact was that his virtue could be seen as embodying the principles of Greek, and especially Platonic, philosophy. Plutarch's utopian vision invited his contemporaries, including the emperor, pontifex maximus as well as imperator, to learn these principles from the example of Numa.

¹ R. Flacelière, *Plutarque Vies I* (Paris 1964) 176, followed by Piccirilli, in M. Manfredini and L. Piccirilli, *Le Vite di Licurgo e di Numa*, third ed. (Milano 1985) XXX. There are references to Pythagoras in cc. 1, 8, 11, 14, and 22. These two works provide commentaries and introductions to the life. See also Plutarch's account of Numa in *The Fortune of Rome* 321B-E, which emphasizes the support that Fortune gave to Numa.

² *Num.* 1.2, 6. Cf. A. Momigliano, *CAH VII2*, pt. 2 (1989), p. 90: "We must admit that we do not yet know how the Roman tradition about the monarchic period took shape. This is why we cannot be sure about anything the tradition tells us of the first three successors of Romulus."

³ *Num.* 1.7. These chronological vagaries are offset by two precise calendar dates early in the life: the exact day of Romulus' death, "Rome had been inhabited and Romulus ruling for thirty-seven years. On the fifth of Quintilis, now called the Caprotine nones, [Romulus sacrificed and disappeared]" (2.1); and Numa's birthdate, April 21, the very day on which Romulus founded Rome (3.6). These days give no indication of the era of these events, however, Plutarch had an interest in dates: cf. his excursus at *Rom.* 12 and note his lost work *On days* (Lamprias catalogue 150).

⁴ The Spartan Pythagoras' travel to Italy is apparently Plutarch's own inference, since Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.58.3, a major source for this life and the only other author to mention this man, says nothing of it.

⁵ It is not clear at *Numa* 1.4 whether Plutarch himself believes that Spartan practices were mixed in with Roman or this is the opinion of a source. He does not come back to the issue in *Numa*.

⁶ *Num.* 3.6: certainly not only on the same day (April 21, the Parilia) but in the same year.

⁷ The reference to courage (ἀνδρεία) alludes to *Lycurgus*, in which the encouragement of this virtue was prominent: cf. *Lyc.* 21.3, 28.1, and *Comp. Lyc. Num.* 2.1.

⁸ Plutarch gives an interesting parallel in *The Disappearance of Oracles*,

421A-422C. There Cleombrotus of Sparta, well-travelled though perhaps somewhat credulous, reports that he met near the Persian Gulf a hermit who spent most of the year "with roving nymphs and spirits," and only once a year met with men and would give prophecies. Cleombrotus reported that in addition to speaking many languages, he had extraordinary knowledge, including the true story of Apollo and the slaying of Python. Later however, the narrator Lamprias charges that the man was a fraud, and simply a Greek learned in Greek traditions. Here as with Numa, the man's isolation implies contact with superhuman spirits and confers authority.

⁹ Dionysius says practically nothing of Numa himself, beyond that he had a reputation for wisdom (σοφία, *Ant. Rom.* 2.58.3) and was pious and just (θεοσεβής, δικαίος, 2.60.4).

¹⁰ The narratives are Dionysius *Ant. Rom.* 2. 57-76, Livy 1.18-21, and Cicero *De rep.* 2.13 (25)-15 (29). Something distantly similar is found in Ovid, *Met.* 15.5-6: Numa "animo maiora capaci concepit et quae sit rerum natura requirit."

¹¹ This connection is common in Plutarch: see P. Stadter, "Drinking, *Table Talk*, and Plutarch's Contemporaries," in *Plutarco, Dioniso, y el Vino. Actas del VI Simposio español sobre Plutarco*. Cadiz, 14-16 de Mayo de 1998. J. G. Montes Cala, M. Sánchez Ortiz de Landaluze, R. J. Gallé Cejudo, eds. (Madrid, Ediciones clásicas, 1999) 481-90.

¹² *Num.* 4. Ovid, *Amores* 2.17.15-18 takes a more humorous view of such alliances.

¹³ The point is reinforced by Plutarch's etymologies, 13.10: see below.

¹⁴ Flacelière ad loc. rightly complains that Plutarch's abbreviation of the story as found in Dionysius makes it almost incomprehensible. Plutarch's version, however, emphasizes the magical quality of the event, which is his point here.

¹⁵ In a fundamental article, P. Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *JRS* 61 (1971) 80-101, notes the important political and social role of the holy man in late antiquity, especially in Syria. As with Numa, their special connection with the divine (in their case through extreme acts of penance) creates a perceived power, which allows them to act with authority in turbulent times. It seems important that Numa, like these holy men, was perceived as an outsider to the community, and so above its quarrels.

¹⁶ See e.g. Hdt. 1.96-98, on the future king of Media, Deioces.

¹⁷ Cf. the case of Ephrem at Edessa, cited by Brown, (above, note 15) 92, who even after twenty active years in the city "insisted that he should be buried in the stranger's plot." In Plutarch's account, Numa continues to refer his reforms to the advice of Egiria and the Muses.

¹⁸ *Num.* 8.2-3. Plutarch alludes to Plato's description of the "feverish" city (*Rep.* 2, 372e, *Laws* 3, 691e).

¹⁹ Porphyry, *Vita Pyth.* 18, FVS 14,8a.

²⁰ Other parallels also influence him, which he lists here and elsewhere: 8.11, Pythagorean silence, *echemuthia*; 8.12-14, prohibition of images; 11.1, fire at the center of the universe; 14.4-5, insistence on attention in addressing the gods; 14.6-7, unusual regulations; 22.3-4, and refusal to pass on mystic teaching in writing. See also the indications cited by other authors which he reports at 8.16-20. We might add that Pythagoras was venerated as more than a man (*FVS* 14,7, Aristotle fr. 191, 192 Rose) and the importance of purification in his tenets (see Plutarch's etymology of February, *Numa* 19.8). Lycurgus was hailed as "more a god than a man" and had Delphic sanction (5.4), but he does not blend religion and legislation as do Numa and Pythagoras.

²¹ See J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* (London 1977) 341-383, J. Hershbell, "Plutarch's Pythagorean Friends," *CB* 60 (1984) 73-79. One of them, Lucius, was a student of the distinguished Pythagorean Platonist Moderatus of Gades. See *Table Talk* 8.7-8 (727B-728E). On Moderatus, see Dillon 1977, 344-51. In the account of the party, Lucius emerges as strict in his dietary rules and firmly convinced that Pythagoras was an Etruscan, because of the relation he saw between Pythagorean and Etruscan *symbola*. Plutarch was familiar with people making unhistorical associations with Pythagoras on the basis of parallels. Hershbell, 1984, 74-75, argues that he is the same as the Lucius of *The Face in the Moon*.

²² Seen, for example, in his treatment of ethics in *Moral Virtue*, in speaking of the relation of soul to body in *Socrates' Daemon*, and in physics in his interest in the Indefinite Dyad. See Dillon, (above, note 21) 196, 222, 229.

²³ See most recently J. Bons and L. de Blois, "Platonic Philosophy and Isocratean Virtues in Plutarch's *Numa*," *AncSoc* 23 (1992) 159-88, studying the many passages influenced by Plato and Isocrates.

²⁴ Service to the god: ὑπηρεσίαν γε θεοῦ τὸ βασιλεύειν, 6.2; see Plato *Apol.* 30A, *Laws* 715C, Plut. *An Old Man in Politics* 780D. The philosopher must enter the world: *Rep.* 7, 519C-520D. The notion of the the god, the ruler or other educators "taming" the people is also Platonic: see *Protag.* 326 B, *Gorg.* 516B, *Rep.* 442A, 591B, and *Laws* 709B, 766A.

²⁵ The heroes in the lives parallels to these, Publicola and Lycurgus, are not properly philosophers, though Lycurgus' wisdom leads him to create a republic superior to those of the philosophers (*Lyc.* 31). Brutus and Cato Uticensis, also subjects of lives, are imbued with philosophy, but not philosophers.

²⁶ *Num.* 6.2, 20.4, 22.9. Other passages describe how he makes the Romans more just, the true test of the ruler: 12.7-8, 16.2, 20.5, 20.11.

²⁷ Cf. Cic. *Rep.* 2.14.26, Livy 1.20.5.

²⁸ Though it may also be an error, confusing the two men named Numa.

²⁹ J. A. North, *CAH VII*2, pt. 2 (1989), p. 587. See in general on the pontifices North 585-87, G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer*2 (Munich 1912) 501-23; for an interpretation of Roman priesthood, including the pontifices, see M. Beard, "Priesthood in the Roman Republic," in M. Beard and J. North, *Pagan Priests: Religion and Power in the Ancient World* (Ithaca NY 1990) 18-48, esp. 34-48; on the emperor as priest, F. Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World (31 BC- AD 337)* (Ithaca NY 1977) 355-61, R. Gordon, "The Veil of Power: Emperors, Sacrificers, and Benefactors," in *Pagan Priests*, 201-21.

³⁰ S. R. F. Price, *CAH X*2 (1996), 827. Price gives a concise account of Augustus' reshaping of the office, pp. 825-27.

³¹ This allusion is not part of a history of the months' names: Plutarch does not mention, e.g., Nero's change of April to Neroneus (Suet. *Nero* 55).

³² See Price *CAH X*2 (1996), 825, citing *Inscriptiones Italicae* xiii.2, p. 452.

³³ Like Romulus, Numa gives many etymologies or translations of words tied to Roman institutions: *Celeres* (7.8), *flamen* (7.9, with two other words close to Greek, *laena* and *camillus*), *Tacita* (8.11), *Fetiales* (12.5), *Salii* (13.7), *ancilia* (13.9-10), *Hilicium* (15.10), *Fides* and *Terminus* (16.1) and the names of the months (19.4-11).

³⁴ Varro *De Lingua Latina* 5.83, Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.73.1, 3.45.2, Servius Dan. to *Aen.* 2.166.

³⁵ *Numa* 9.2. Varro, *L.L.* 5.83 reports an etymology from *potens*, though the exact interpretation is not stated: "*Pontufices, ut Scaevola Quintus pontufex maximus dicebat, a posse et facere, ut potifices. Ego a ponte arbitror....*" Plutarch also offers an alternate etymology, still based on *potens*, with the sense that the priests were to do all in their power, but not worry if some greater force blocked them. Nevertheless, he goes on to explain this "false" derivation in several sentences on the wooden bridge at Rome, built by Marcius two generations later. In this life the frequent etymologies most often are tied to the role of the gods.

³⁶ Plutarch offers three equally stretched etymologies for ἀνακες at *Thes.* 33.2-3.

³⁷ Plutarch explains the name as guardians of peace, εἰρηνοφύλακες, and seems to connect the name with φημί, speak, with the notion that disputes were resolved by word, not violence, 12.5. This is different from Varro, *L.L.* 5.96, who derives the word from *fides*.

³⁸ On the complex question of Plutarch's use of Varro, see E. Valgiglio, "Varrone in Plutarco," in *Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Studi Varroniani*, Rieti, Settembre 1974 (Rieti 1976) II, 571-95, who thinks Plutarch used other works of Varro, not *L.L.*, but also used sources such as Juba, who did read *L.L.*

³⁹ *Num.* 19.3-5. For this reason Plutarch prefers to derive April from Aphrodite, May from Maia, and June from Juno rather than from respectively, aperio, maiores, and iuniores with Varro *L.L.* 6.33, though he alludes to these derivations.

⁴⁰ See 9.10, 12 (the Vestal fire); 14.4; 15.7-8, 10 (Zeus and the piamen for lightning); 16.2; 19.8; 20.8. For the explanation of February, see Varro, *L.L.* 6.13.

⁴¹ The passage also employs hyperbaton (20.4: δ' Ρωμαίων ... δῆνος , 20.11: πρὸς τὸν ... βίον , 20.12: ὁ ... δυνάμενος) and polysyndeton of καί , 20.4, 20.5, of οὔτε , 20.7, and of εἶτε , 20.8.

⁴² Μακάριος μὲν γὰρ αὐτός, μακάριοι δ' οἱ συνήκοοι τῶν ἐκ τοῦ σωφρονούντος στόματος ἰόντων λόγων (20.10, cf. Plat. *Laws* 711e).

⁴³ *Numa* 20.11-12. Bons and de Blois, (above, note 23) 180-83, have acutely pointed out how this sentence, and the whole life, combine the Platonic idea of the philosophic ruler with Isocrates' notion (found also in Xenophon) of the ruler as model for his subjects.

⁴⁴ See Timon's words on Pythagoras, who "inclines toward the fame of a wizard, hunting after men" (8.9). On Plutarch's uncritical attitude toward the imperial cult, see G. W. Bowersock, "Greek Intellectuals and the Imperial Cult in the Second Century A.D.," in *Le Culte des Souverains dans l'Empire Romain, Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique* 19 (Vandoeuvres-Genève 1973) 179-212, correcting Kenneth Scott, "Plutarch and the Ruler Cult" *TAPA* 60 (1929) 117-35.

⁴⁵ *Numa* 20.7. He may think as well of earlier years of turmoil, especially 69 A.D.

⁴⁶ Described in adulatory rhetoric by Pliny, *Panegyricus* 22.

⁴⁷ *Comp. Lyc. Num.* 4.13, "What, someone will say, did not Rome advance for the best with its warlike ways? The question is one demanding a long answer for men who consider 'better' to reside in wealth, luxury, and rule rather than security, mildness, and a just independence (σωτηρία, πραότης, ἢ μετὰ δικαιοσύνης αὐταρκεία)."