

APULEIUS, *FLORIDA* 23
AND POPULAR MORAL PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the links between Apuleius *Florida* 23, Philo *De Providentia* 2.22, and popular philosophical ideas in Seneca's works. All these writings use the metaphors of a rich man whose wealth matters little in comparison with his health, and an expensively fitted ship whose costly features are useless in a storm. Such material is also to be found in *Florida* 14, 22, and 23, which suggests that all these fragments are related and may have come from the same original speech.

Much attention has recently been given to intertextuality ('the mosaic of memory') in the *Florida*.¹ However, insufficient notice has been taken of the link between *Flor.* 23 and Philo, *De Providentia* 2.22 – a text (as its very title suggests) strongly influenced by the ideas of the Stoa.² In this article I broaden the discussion to include a consideration of Seneca's *De Providentia* and other possible Stoic intertexts.³ The common philosophical background

¹ Marangoni 2000 provides a general account of the complex *iuncturae* to be found in the *Florida*. Lee 2005:26-30 also discusses these briefly.

² The connection is briefly noted by Mras 1949:205-23 at p. 216. No doubt Mras came across the passage in the penultimate year of the second World War when he was engaged in his work on Eusebius, who preserves the Greek text of Philo's work in his *Praeparatio Evangelica* (8.14.386-99); cf. Mras 1944:217-36 at p. 234 – a discussion of the reading *λιθογραφημένα* in the Philo passage in Eusebius. The most recent edition of the Philo treatise on Providence is by Hadas-Lebel 1973, who also gives Aucher's nineteenth-century Latin translation of the Armenian version of the treatise. Hadas-Lebel regards the treatise as an authentic, youthful piece of work much influenced by Hellenistic ideas and composed by Philo for his nephew Tiberius Julius Alexander (23-46, esp. 45-46). See also Wendland 1892:53. For *Florida* 23 see now Lee 2005:189-92; La Rocca 2002:290-93; Hunink 2001:212-14; Opeku 1974:416-21. None of these commentaries deals fully with the Stoic intertexts in *Flor.* 23.

³ The treatises of Alexander of Aphrodisias *On Fate* and *On Providence* are later than Apuleius and contain nothing of relevance to the present discussion. See Fazzo & Zonta 1998 and Sharples 1983.

of the three principal texts – Apuleius, Philo, and Seneca – shows that *Florida* 14, 22 and 23 have more in common than previously supposed.⁴ *Florida* 22 was moved to follow fragment 14 by many earlier editors, but more recently fragments 22 and 23 have been kept together.⁵ By reading *Florida* 23 with Philo, Seneca’s *De Providentia*, and other philosophical texts, the case for linking fragments 14, 22 and 23 together becomes more convincing.

Both *Florida* 23 and Philo, *De Providentia* 2.22 describe how doctors visiting a wealthy patient ignore the beautiful paintings, rich decorations and crowds of attendants in the rich man’s luxurious abode, focusing instead on the state of the invalid’s health as shown by his pulse. The specific similarities between the two passages include: the beautiful paintings (*tabulina perpulchra in aedibus*, ‘the exquisite picture galleries⁶ in the house’; cf. τὰ περίστωα, τοὺς ἀνδρῶνας, τὰς γυναικωνίτιδας, γραφάς, ‘the colonnades, the men’s rooms, the women’s rooms, the paintings’); the gold (*lacunaria auro oblita*, ‘gilded ceilings’; cf. χρυσόν ἄσημον ἐπίσημον, ‘gold uncoined and coined’); the crowd of attendants (*gregatim pueros ac iuvenes eximia forma*, ‘crowds of boys and young men of rare beauty’; cf. τὸν οἰκετικὸν ὄχλον καὶ τὴν φίλων καὶ συγγενῶν, ὑπηκόων τῶν ἐν τέλει θεραπείαν ἄξαντες, τῶν σωματοφυλάκων, ‘and opening a path through the crowd of household attendants, and the Ministry of Friends and Kinsmen, the subjects of those in charge, his bodyguards’);⁷ the mention of the bed (*in cubiculo circa lectum*

⁴ There is no mention of Stoic influence on *Flor.* 23 in Sandy 1997:186 n. 26, who attributes the argument specifically to Socratic moral exhortation. Harrison 2001:129 refers to the Platonic origin of the imagery.

⁵ See the discussion in Lee 2005:33-34. This hypothesis, based on the thematic similarity of the two fragments, goes back to the edition of Oudendorp 1786-1823: *ad loc.*; cf. also Opeku 1974:416; Hunink 2001:213.

⁶ The term *tabulinum* or *tablinum* referring to a verandah, balcony, room or covered space used for entertaining guests has attracted comment from Opeku 1974:418-19 and Lee 2005:192. The collocation of this word with the adjective *perpulchra* indicates that the walls would have been decorated with paintings. It has not been noted that *tabulina* conveys the same idea as the Greek περίστωα.

⁷ The text here is very uncertain; I take θεραπεία, φίλων, συγγενῶν and σωματοφυλάκων as technical terms of Alexandrian court officials. These are discussed by Fraser 1972:1.101-03 and 2.152-53 n. 224. The Friends, Kinsmen and Bodyguards were hierarchical offices arranged here in order from the lowest to the highest. At a time of crisis the Bodyguards are in charge (ἐν τέλει) and all other ranks are subordinated to them. None of this specifically Alexandrian material is to be found in *Flor.* 23. Its presence in Philo indicates that his narrative was influenced by Ptolemaic accounts of medical diagnoses by means of the pulse (see following note). The variant ἐάσαντες (Viger, Colson) for ἄξαντες (MSS) does not greatly affect the overall sense.

stantes, ‘standing around the bed in his bedroom’; cf. ἄχρι τῆς εὐνῆς ἀφικόμενοι, ‘approaching his bed’); and the way the doctors grasp the sick man’s hand and take his pulse (*manum hominis prehendit, eam pertrectat, uenarum pulsus et momenta captat*, ‘he takes the man’s hand, palpates it and monitors his arterial pulse-rate’; cf. ἄπτονται χειρῶν, καὶ τὰς φλέβας προσπιεζοῦντες ἀκριβοῦσι τοὺς παλμούς, εἰ σωτήριοι, ‘they take hold of his hands, and pressing his arteries, they measure the beats, to see whether they indicate that he will live’).⁸ These close parallels occur in exactly the same order in both texts; they must therefore be related – either directly or indirectly.

There are minor differences between the two texts. Not only does *Flor.* 23 not contain the references to the Ptolemaic court, but the medical analogy follows on from another conventional illustration of the theme – the vulnerability of a beautiful and expensively fitted ship to shipwreck.⁹ Finally, *Flor.* 23 concludes with a pointed paradox of the rich man going without food in his own home while his servants hold a feast; this is absent from Philo and appears to be a rhetorical trope introduced by Apuleius. Altogether, these differences suggest that he is not using Philo directly, but that he has drawn illustrative material from a third text – in all probability a treatise on providence.

These themes also occur in the writings of Seneca, who may have made use of Philo’s treatise in composing his own *De Providentia*.¹⁰ This possibility has been suggested on the grounds that Seneca was in Rome at the time of

⁸ The similarity between *pertrectat* and προσπιεζοῦντες is quite striking here. In the 2nd century both Galen and Marcellinus wrote treatises on the pulse as a method of diagnosing illness. Cf. Nutton 1978 on Galen (*On Prognosis* 631-33; and *Commentary on the Prognosis of Hippocrates* 1.8; CMG 5.9.2, p. 218.20.) Pulse lore was a commonplace in sophistic literature of this time; cf. Plutarch (*De Sera Numinis Vindicta* 565D2 [Stephanus]; *Demetr.* 38.4.6); Lucian (*On Writing History* 35; *De Syria Dea* 17.20; *On Dancing* 58). Cicero (*De Fato* 15, cf. 28-30) uses the connection between the pulse and fever to illustrate a logical proposition. He may have taken this example from Stoic treatises on fate and necessity. However, his treatise is different from those under consideration here.

⁹ Comparisons between the arts of navigation and medicine on the one hand, and philosophy on the other, are commonplaces of ancient philosophy and feature particularly in the Platonic tradition; cf. Harrison 2001:129, citing Plato, *Plt.* 299, *Phlb.* 56b and Maximus of Tyre, *Dial.* 8.7, 13.3-4 and 30.1-3. However, the application of these commonplace analogies is rather different here. La Rocca 2002:290-93 provides a good discussion of the images of the ship and the doctor in *Flor.* 23.

¹⁰ This possibility is discussed by Scarpat 1977:68-73. Scarpat concludes that Seneca was influenced by Alexandrian thinking at the time he composed his work, whether or not he used Philo directly. See also Traina 1997:13-14.

Philo's visit in 39-40 AD, and had the leisure to read and write philosophy after his banishment to Corsica in 41 AD. Naturally, there are many differences between the two philosophers; while Philo makes use of Greek *exempla* in his work, those chosen by Seneca are naturally all drawn from Roman history and culture. The arguments are different too; Seneca argues that suffering and poverty make people tough and resilient, unlike the rich man for whom a change in fortune would be disastrous (cf. e.g. *De Prov.* 2.6-10, 3.2, 3.10, 6.4-5), while Philo has a greater interest in cosmology (*De Prov.* 50-53) and natural history (*De Prov.* 59-71). Another hypothesis therefore is that both Seneca and Philo may have been using a work of an earlier Stoic, such as Posidonius, on the subject, though there is no direct evidence of this,¹¹ and, according to strict Stoic dogma, wealth and beauty belonged to the category of 'indifferent things' (τὰ ἀδιαφόρα).¹²

On the other hand, however, it does appear that Apuleius was using material similar to that found commonly in Seneca's writings. Apuleius was clearly familiar with Stoicism; in the *Apologia*, for example, he describes Claudius Maximus, the proconsul of Africa in 158-59, as an adherent of an 'austere sect' (19.2; cf. also 9.11, 25.3; *Flor.* 9.33, 14.6 and Hunink's commentaries on these passages).¹³ He also evidently makes wide use of Senecan material in the *Florida* and *De Deo Socratis* (167-78).¹⁴ Furthermore, in the *Apologia* (17-23) Apuleius discourses on the merits of poverty in much the same vein as Seneca.¹⁵ In *Flor.* 23 the image of the fine ship caught in a gale recalls Seneca's lesson that a highly-decorated ship laden with riches is not as useful as a stout, sea-worthy vessel (*Ep. Mor.* 76.13).¹⁶ This last reference is particularly instructive and is worth quoting:

¹¹ Wendland 1892:17 argues that Seneca and Philo depend on Posidonius. No record of such a work by Posidonius has survived, however, and none is mentioned by Edelstein & Kidd 1988. For Stoic arguments on providence, see Dragona-Monachou 1976:31-160. For Chrysippus on providence, see Gould 1970:156-60. Neither discussion touches directly on the concerns raised in this article.

¹² DL 7.102-07; Seneca, *Vita Beata* 15.1-2; Sandbach 1975:155-56.

¹³ See Hunink 2001 *ad loc.* For the *Apol.*, see Hunink 1997 *ad loc.*

¹⁴ See Harrison 2001:166; *De Deo Socratis* 167-78 is 'a tissue of commonplaces from the protreptic tradition and shows a diatribic style highly reminiscent of the works of Seneca, which like the philosophica of Cicero and the *De Rerum Natura* of Lucretius presented a natural model for Apuleius'; cf. also Beaujeu 1973:244-47. For the use of Seneca in the *Florida* see the *index locorum* in Hunink 2001:243-44.

¹⁵ For popular morality in Apuleius, see Sandy 1997:84-86.

¹⁶ Hijmans 1994:1708-84 at 1738 n. 102, compares this maritime metaphor in *Flor.* 23 with Sen. *Ep.* 76.13. Finally, Seneca frequently makes use of the comparison between the soul and a ship at sea in danger of shipwreck. Cf. Armisen-Marchetti

Quae condicio rerum, eadem hominum est: navis bona dicitur non quae pretiosis coloribus picta est nec cui argenteum aut aureum rostrum est nec cuius tutela ebore caelata est nec quae fiscis atque opibus regis pressa est, sed stabilis et firma et iuncturis aquam excludentibus spissa, ad ferendum incursum maris solida, gubernaculo parens, velox et non sentiens ventum.

‘The condition of human beings is the same as that of things. A ship is said to be good not if it is painted with precious colours, nor if it has a silver or golden prow, nor if its guardian deity is made to shine with ivory, nor if it is laden with treasures and the wealth of kings, but if it is stable, steady and tightly constructed with seams that keep the water out, and enough to withstand the buffets of the sea, obedient to the helmsman, swift and unaffected by the wind.’

Finally, Apuleius stresses the importance of the *gubernator*, ‘helmsman’ (*Flor.* 23.2) which invokes Seneca’s frequent use of the analogy (*Ep. Mor.* 85.32; 95.7).

Seneca also frequently dwells on the paradox of the pampered rich man, who despite his wealth is vulnerable to fall ill at the slightest draught (*De Prov.* 4.9). The rich (*De Prov.* 6.4) are only superficially blessed (*extrinsecus culti*) but the veneer of their prosperity hides an inner ugliness; it is better not to shine outwardly but to direct good impulses inwardly (*non fulgetis extrinsecus, bona vestra introrsus obversa sunt*). In Seneca’s letters, primitive simplicity is contrasted with decadent luxury (*Ep. Mor.* 90.9: a tree is cut down *ut ex illa lacunaria auro gravia penderent*; cf. *lacunaria auro oblita* in *Flor.* 23.3). Similarly, the portrait of Maecenas (*De Prov.* 3.10), troubled by love affairs and an unfaithful wife, drugged by wine and as sleepless amid pleasure as a man on the cross (*tam vigilabit in pluma quam ille in cruce*), is less happy than those who are less wealthy, but more resilient against the uncertainties of fortune, such as Regulus.

The second argument of this article is that the link between *Flor.* 23 and Philo, *De Prov.* 2.22 will help secure the connection between *Flor.* 14, 22 and 23 more firmly. The Philo passage is drawn from a Stoic polemic against Epicureans. The Stoics are characterized as devout people who honour truth and virtue and who have improved their nature by training (*ἀσκήσις*). This group does not value human or artistic beauty of any kind and are contrasted

1989:140-43, who cites *Ep.* 43.2c; and especially *Ep.* 76.13c – riches are superfluous in life as is a richly decorated ship; *Phoen.* 429-30.

with the ‘bastard philosophy’ (νόθος παιδεία) – Epicureanism – which (implicitly) does.

καὶ τί θαυμάζομεν εἰ μὴ παρὰ Θεῶ; οἰδὲ γὰρ παρὰ ἀνθρώποις τοῖς θεοφιλέσι, παρ’ οἷς τὰ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν ἀγαθὰ καὶ καλὰ τετίμηται, φύσεως μὲν εὐμοίρου λαχοῦσι, μελέτη δὲ μετ’ ἀσκήσεως τὴν φύσιν ἐπικκοσμήσασιν, ὧν ἡ ἀνοθος φιλοσοφία δημιουργός.

Why are we surprised if they (sc. Greek artistic masterpieces) are not <honoured> by God? For even those men do not do so, who are very religious, and who hold true goodness and virtue in honour, and who, although blessed by nature, have improved their natural good qualities by study and practice, which are the creation of genuine philosophy.

Flor. 14 provides a similar account of how the decorous behaviour of Zeno contrasts with the shamelessness of the Cynic, Crates, who attempts to mate with his wife Hipparche after persuading her to marry him despite his lack of beauty. Thus Stoicism is presented as a mean between the Epicureans and Cynics (Crates is also the subject of *Flor.* 22 and is therefore linked to *Flor.* 23).¹⁷ *Flor.* 14 is also thematically connected with *Flor.* 23 (both preach the rejection of material wealth) and with the Philo passage (both reject the allure of beauty). Like *Flor.* 14, *Flor.* 22 deals with Crates, and is also closely linked with *Flor.* 23 since it mentions (*Flor.* 22.5) that Crates was of high status, had many slaves and a large hall – all of which he rejected in favour of the philosophical life. All three of these texts therefore incorporate popular moral philosophy drawn chiefly from the Stoic and Cynic schools of philosophy.

To conclude, *Florida* 23 contains much popular Stoic moralizing, but while we cannot assume that Seneca was necessarily using Philo directly, or that Apuleius was necessarily inspired by either of his predecessors, the close relationship between *Florida* 23, Philo, *De Prov.* 2.22, and Senecan moral philosophy shows that he must have been aware of works of Stoic dogma as well as ethical commonplaces, and it should therefore be taken as further confirmation of the extremely broad range of his intellectual interests.¹⁸ The similarity between the two passages also provides more convincing evidence that *Flor.* 14, 22 (on the cynic philosopher Crates) and 23 may originally have been part of the same work, since the polemic between Stoics and

¹⁷ Lee 2005:132 interprets the presence of Zeno in *Flor.* 14 as ‘a jab at the Stoics’. However, this is merely an inference. Apuleius shows great respect for Crates and his rejection of worldly wealth in *Apol.* 22.

¹⁸ For Apuleius’ demonstrable Platonic inspiration, see Harrison 2001:136-73; Sandy 1997:22-26.

Epicureans on this point in the Philo passage suggests that *Flor.* 23, like *Flor.* 14 (which similarly rejects material wealth and beauty), was drawn from a text discussing the views of competing philosophical schools of the day on these questions.

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