

On the Byzantine fortune of Eustratios of Nicaea's commentary on Books I and VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics*

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While philologically dependent on Proclus, Eustratios of Nicaea's commentary on Books I and VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics* was highly influential in the Latin West. Eustratios' defence of the Platonic Ideal Good, which criticizes Aristotle's interpretation in Book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, was accepted by the Medieval Latin masters as a Christian defence of divine exemplarism.¹ Furthermore, thinkers like Albert the Great understood Eustratios' Neoplatonic views on human intellect, according to which it acquires knowledge from above and participates in the separate *nous*, as the Byzantine version of the Arabic theories on the so-called *copulatio intellectus*, i.e. the idea that men's ultimate happiness consists in joining the separate substances intellectually.²

However, the history of Eustratios' Byzantine legacy has yet to be written. We know very little about the circulation of his commentary on Books I and VI of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, and the lack of a modern critical edition of these texts frustrates an accurate appraisal of Eustratios' influence on the later generations of Byzantine thinkers. The aim of this paper is to sketch some characteristics of this legacy by analysing the cases of some important Late Byzantine readers of Eustratios, in particular, the fourteenth-century scholar Nikephoros Gregoras, in order to prepare the basis for a future and more detailed reconstruction of Eustratios' Byzantine fortune.³

Some observations on the text

In his well-known book on the tradition of Alexander of Aphrodisias' lost commentary on Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*, the Aristotle scholar Paul Moraux describes Eustratios as a pedantic and boring scholar, mainly known for being verbose, prolix and repetitive.⁴ Surprisingly, this view has

¹ See Giocarinis (1964) and Steel (2002).

² See Trizio (2009a).

³ On the general topic of the Byzantine tradition of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, see the informative paper by Benakis (2009).

⁴ Moraux (1979: 6). As far as I know only Conley (1998: 56) attempted discussing some features of Eustratios' style. Conley found striking linguistic similarities between

been accepted by most Byzantinists, even though it merely perpetuates the traditional stereotype concerning Byzantine authors often presented by scholars of ancient philosophy and literature.⁵ No one seems to have realized that Moraux's negative evaluation of Eustratios depends on his view of the development of the Aristotelian commentary tradition: 'Malheureusement', writes Moraux, 'celui-ci ne résiste pas toujours à la tentation de mêler ses propres considerations à celles qu'il doit à son prédécesseur.'⁶

Eustratios' treatise on meteorology edited by Polesso-Schiavon (1965–66) and the so-called *Synopsis of Aristotle's Rhetoric* written by Eustratios' teacher John Italos and edited by Cereteli (1926). For instance, formulas such as ἀλλὰ περὶ τούτων μὲν ἰκανῶς, ἤδη ἀρκτέον δὲ τοῦ προκειμένου are nearly identical in both texts. Conley concludes that these treatises were addressed to younger readers 'not altogether comfortable with philosophical Greek'. Whereas one might agree with Conley that the readers of these texts were not well versed in philosophy, I am not fully persuaded that the formulas and expressions discussed by him can serve as clear-cut cases to establish that these texts were written for unacquainted readers. In fact, these formulas, found also elsewhere in Eustratios' works, are taken from the antique and late antique commentary tradition, and are found frequently in important authors like Theophrastus (*Hist. plant.* 7.15.4.7–9), Alexander of Aphrodisias (*In Metaph.* 239.3), Themistius (*In Phys.* 118.1–3; *In De an.* 38.34–35; 39.5–7; 115.13–15; *In An. pr.* I 46.20–21) and Philoponus (*In Meteor.* I 3.19–20). The same holds true for other formulas mentioned by Conley (1998: 51), such as ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων φανερόν ... νῦν ἂν εἴη λεκτέον, which occur, among many authors, in Aristotle himself (*An. pr.* 46b38–40) and in Themistius (*In Phys.* 227.4–5). Furthermore, Conley (1998: 59) regards Eustratios' fondness for syllogisms in his theological and philosophical works as evidence in favour of 'Eustratios' affiliation with his master Italos'. For example, Conley refers to *In Eth. Nic.* VI 306.23–26 (καὶ οὔτε ἐπιστήμη ἢ φρόνησις οὔτε τέχνη ἐστίν. ἐπιστήμη μὲν γὰρ οὐκ ἔστιν, ὅτι πρακτικὴ ἐστὶ καὶ περὶ τὰ πρακτὰ γίγνεται· πᾶν δὲ τὸ πρακτὸν ἐνδέχεται ἄλλως ἔχειν, τὸ δὲ ἐπιστητὸν οὐχί· οὐκ ἄρα ἐπιστήμη ἢ φρόνησις). Obviously one cannot dismiss the idea of a link between Eustratios and his master, but the style of this passage referred to by Conley can be easily traced back to the late antique way of commenting on Aristotle, such as in Philoponus (*In An. pr.* 250.28–33: ἡ ἡδονὴ ἀτελὲς, τὸ δὲ ἀτελὲς οὐκ ἀγαθόν, ἢ ἡδονὴ ἄρα οὐκ ἀγαθόν. Πόθεν ὅτι ἀτελὲς ἢ ἡδονή; πᾶσα ἡδονὴ κίνησις, ἢ δὲ κίνησις ἀτελής, ἢ ἡδονὴ ἄρα ἀτελής. πόθεν ὅτι τὸ ἀτελὲς οὐκ ἀγαθόν; τὸ ἀτελὲς ἢ τῷ ἐνδεῖν ἢ τῷ ἐκπεπτωκέναι τῆς ἑαυτοῦ τελειότητος ἀτελὲς ἐστίν, ἐκότερον δὲ τούτων οὐκ ἀγαθόν, τὸ ἀτελὲς ἄρα οὐκ ἀγαθόν). Needless to say, these similarities make it even more urgent to investigate how Eustratios inherits and adapts the language and way of commenting characteristic of the late antique commentators. Unfortunately this task cannot be accomplished here, even though one cannot help but notice that even Eustratios' habit (e.g. *In An. po.* II 171.15–16; *In Eth. Nic.* VI 284.30; 289.1; 326.17; 339.14) to provide the reader first with a general explanation of each lemma, and then with an explanation of each part of the same lemma was common among the late antique Aristotelian commentators and among the Neoplatonists, like Eustratios' hero Proclus (e.g. *In Alc.* 156.16–17).

⁵ See e.g. Fryde (2000: 54) where the author explicitly relies on Moraux for his evaluation of Eustratios' work.

⁶ Cf. Moraux (1979: 81). Curiously, while dismissing Eustratios as a repetitive and prolix author, scholars tend to praise Michael of Ephesus as the most accomplished scholar and commentator of his time. This view is found for example in Hunger (1978: 34–35), and Wilson (1983: 183), on the grounds that while commenting on Aristotle Michael often

Clearly Moraux condemns Eustratios for not strictly performing his task as commentator when Eustratios inserts his own views instead of Aristotle's, Alexander of Aphrodisias' and the other Peripatetic commentators' positions. However, one might fruitfully wonder—the high quality of Moraux's book notwithstanding—why we should criticize an early twelfth-century Byzantine commentator on the ground that his way of commenting upon Aristotle does not fit with the antique and late antique rules. Quite on the contrary, one should evaluate Eustratios' philosophical works with reference to the contemporary canons and the social context of Eustratios' activity, namely the erudite circle of readers around some important member of the imperial court.⁷ This is confirmed by Eustratios' appeal to the indulgence of his readers, defined as φιλόλογοι, when he apologizes for his long Neoplatonic digressions in the explanation of the Aristotelian text,⁸ and by his claim to have written his commentary on Book II of the *Posterior Analytics* on the request of certain friends.⁹ Despite the emphasis on rhetoric¹⁰

compares readings from different manuscripts. Eustratios, however, also does the same (e.g. *In Eth. Nic. VI* 304.5; 339.15; 339.37; 373.10; *In An. po. II* 84.24; 174.28) and, moreover, he often attempts to explain Aristotle *ex Aristotele* by referring to what the philosopher says elsewhere or by comparing and discussing different views of Aristotle on the same subject found in different works, like in *In An. po. II* 154.8ff., which regards Aristotle's notion of absolute and conditional necessity. Interestingly, those who actually critically edited Michael of Ephesus' works, like Mercken (1990: 433ff.) and Ebbesen (2002: 23), seem to contradict the generally accepted characterization of Michael as an accomplished scholar by remarking that he often confines himself to a merely explanatory and repetitive attitude to Aristotle's text.

⁷ Cf. Browning (1962: 1–12), who reasonably points to princess Anna Komnene as the very sponsor of Eustratios' activity as a commentator. However, I am not persuaded that there are enough elements favouring Browning's view on the so-called 'philosophical circle' around Anna. On this point scholars tend to be more prudent than Browning. For example, in a famous article on the 11th–12th century high class literary circles, Mullett (1984: 178) commented on Browning's views by remarking that '... evidence of an independent literary salon of her own [i.e. Anna Komnene], as distinct from that of her mother, is so far lacking'. Seemingly, Conley (1998: 59–60) suggests an account of Eustratios' activity as commentator different than Browning's, suggesting that Eustratios might have started to work on his philosophical commentaries before his involvement with Anna Komnene, as witnessed by the dedicatory preface to Empress Mary of Alania (d. after 1103) found in Eustratios' treatise on meteorology.

⁸ *In Eth. Nic. VI* 294.28.

⁹ *In An. po. II* 123.27–28.

¹⁰ As a matter of fact, Eustratios' reference to a request by friends in *In An. po. II* 123.27–28 (διὰ τὴν τῶν ἐταίρων ἀξίωσιν) reflects similar references found in late antique literature, such as in Galen (*De compositione medicamentorum per genera libri vii* 887.18). References to friends or φιλόλογοι are often found in highly educated authors of that time. John Mauropous, for example, who is to be regarded as one of the most important 11th-century authors, claims (*Epigr.* 1.28) to have composed his collection of epigrams for the sake of the erudite 'lovers of letters'. Surely these references are to be regarded as forms of

that is evident in these references,¹¹ all the evidence suggests that these texts were destined for erudite and highly educated readers—the erudite philologists mentioned by Eustratios—rather than young students.

Determining the social status of both the writer and the intended audience of a Byzantine work from a text's style and characteristics is a tricky task as one can easily misinterpret literary quotes, expressions, and the usage of classical material as being academically specialized, when such a style may have been commonplace for contemporary Byzantine authors. The task becomes even more difficult if one bears in mind that those scholars who rightly posed and tried to solve this methodological problem did not investigate Byzantine philosophical material.¹² Thus, speculation on the quality of Eustratios' commentaries must involve some features that would position his works within the highly educated literary society. In this regard, Eustratios noticeably enriches his commentaries on Aristotle's text, especially the *Nicomachean Ethics*, with quotes and references to the tragic poets. For example, while describing the case of someone who knows rationally what is the right thing to do but acts wrongly because of the interference of the passions, Eustratios refers to the case of Medea (*In Eth. Nic. VI 279.35–280.2*), who killed her children in a fit of rage, even though she knew her act was irrational.

Other features relevant to the reassessment of Eustratios' traditionally negative evaluation concern the author's reference to Homer as a model of rhetoric. In his commentary on Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (268.27–33), Eustratios refers to the idea that in God there are neither future events nor contingency, 'for He knows things instantly and in a necessary manner' (ὡς τῆς γνώσεως αὐτῷ κατὰ τὸ νῦν τε οὐσης καὶ ἀναγκαίας). Describing God's knowledge, he contends that the First Cause knows things in a unified manner since He is the One and the superabundant and super-substantial Cause of everything, 'and because of this He embraces everything present, future and past in a non-conceptual and supersubstantial manner' (καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πάντα περιέχοντι ἀεννοήτως τε καὶ ὑπερουσίως τὰ τ' ἐόντα τὰ τ' ἐσόμενα πρό τ' ἐόντα). Despite the Christian over-

rhetorical *captatio benevolentiae lectoris*, but they cannot be considered as merely fictitious.

¹¹ *In Eth. Nic. I 1.13–23; In Eth. Nic. VI 256.3–258.30*. As already pointed out by Rose (1871: 70) and later by Mercken (1973: *11), the first passage mentioned is an interpolation, maybe by Eustratios himself.

¹² On this and other similar problems see Hunger (1974: 148); Ševčenko (1974: 69–76; 1981: 312); Wilson (1975); Kazhdan (1982); Mullett (1984: 183–87); Magdalino (1984: 92–111).

tones,¹³ Eustratios clarifies that the expression ‘present, future and past’ was meant ‘to speak Homericly a little’ (ἵνα καὶ καθομηρίσω μικρόν).¹⁴ The extremely rare expression ‘to describe something Homericly’ (καθομηρίζειν) is first found in the funeral oration for Basil the Great by Gregory the Theologian,¹⁵ whom Michael Psellos regarded as the best model of Christian rhetoric,¹⁶ while Joseph Rhakendytes explicitly refers to Gregory as the source for καθομηρίζειν in his *Synopsis artis rhetoricae*.¹⁷ Eustratios’ use of this term exemplifies his intention to enrich his commentaries with refined expressions, rhetorical topoi, and quotes from classical authors that might have corresponded to his readers’ tastes.

Following Hermogenes, who considered Homer as the best of poets, rhetors and prose-writers,¹⁸ the Byzantines credited Homer with the invention of rhetoric, and this belief was reasserted throughout both primary and higher education.¹⁹ While we need not lengthily discuss the use of Homer among Byzantine authors, one cannot help but notice that similar erudite references to Homer enrich Eustratios’ commentaries. Furthermore, many deem Eustratios one of the most important Byzantine witnesses to attribute the *Margites* to Homer, although Eustratios’ reference to Archilochus (*In Eth. Nic. VI* 320.39–321.1) as support has been considered so unreliable that it suggests a textual emendation from Ἀρχίλοχος to Ἀρχιλόχοις (nowadays accepted as the authentic reading), which is suggested by Eustratios’ reference also to Cratinus, who is credited with being the real author of the *Archilochuses*.²⁰ Unsurprisingly, then, Eustratios accounts (*In Eth. Nic. I* 92.10–14) for Aristotle’s reference to Priam in the so-called ‘Trojan Cycle’ (*Eth. Nic. I* 10, 1110a7–8) as an example of someone who, once prosperous, fell into disgrace as an old man, remarking that Homer was the best among

¹³ Compare *In Eth. Nic. VI* 268.30–31 (ὡς αὐτὸ τοῦτο ἐνὶ καὶ ὡς αἰτίῳ πάντων ὑπερηπλωμένῳ τε καὶ ὑπερουσίῳ καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πάντα περιέχοντι ἀνευνοήτως τε καὶ ὑπερουσίως τὰ τ’ ἐόντα τὰ τ’ ἐσόμενα πρό τ’ ἐόντα) with Ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, *De div. nom.* 189.4–5 (πάντα δὲ ὡσαύτως περιέχει κατὰ τὴν ὑπερηπλωμένην αὐτῆς ἀπειρίαν καὶ πρὸς πάντων ἐνικῶς μετέχεται).

¹⁴ The reference is to *Il.* 1.70.

¹⁵ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 43, 17.5. The Homeric expression quoted by Gregory is ἔφεπε κλονέων (*Il.* 11.496).

¹⁶ Michael Psellos, *Orationes panegyricae* 17.275ff.

¹⁷ Joseph Rhakendytes, *Synopsis artis rhetoricae* 7, 593.15–17.

¹⁸ Περὶ ἰδεῶν λόγου 389.21–27.

¹⁹ One can avoid referring to the countless bibliographies on this topic by mentioning the informative Browning (1992).

²⁰ The emendation was first suggested by Meineke (1839: 188), and accepted by Bergk (1853: 570). On this reference see also Davison (1968: 80–81); Bossi (1986: 40); Fowler (1987: 113); Gostoli (2007: 10–13).

the poets who wrote about Priam. Eustratios maintains that it is probable that Aristotle's reference can be explained as an allegorical interpretation and restoration of meaning from the poetic form. In so doing, Eustratios interestingly ascribes to Aristotle himself the method of interpreting Homer allegorically, which he might have found in Origen and Clement of Alexandria or in the Neoplatonists, who in fact held the view that Homer was the best among the Greek poets.²¹

Homer is not the only model of rhetoric to which Eustratios refers; he mentions other ancient rhetors while explaining Aristotle's text. Along with Demades and Lysias, Psellos in his *Encomium for John Mauropous* regards Demosthenes and Isocrates as the best examples of pagan rhetoric, whereas Gregory the Theologian—as previously mentioned—is said to be the best model in the Christian tradition.²² Isocrates and Demosthenes are explicitly mentioned by Eustratios in order to enrich the explanations of some passages from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* with erudite references. For example, Eustratios comments (*In Eth. Nic. VI* 355.7–10) that Aristotle's reference (*Eth. Nic. VI* 9, 1142b3–4) to the common opinion that one should carry out quickly the conclusions of one's deliberation can be traced back directly to Isocrates.²³ As for Demosthenes, Eustratios demonstrates Aristotle's claim that universal rules are derived from the particular and variable facts by referring to the *Philippics* (*In Eth. Nic. VI* 378.20ff.), where, according to Eustratios, Demosthenes attempts to discredit Philip as a trustworthy interlocutor precisely by mentioning particular reasons and facts.

Even Eustratios' fondness for the philosophers Plutarch and Proclus corresponds with the contemporaneous canons. Eustratios explicitly cites Plutarch twice: *In Eth. Nic. I* 5.14–19 concerns the definition of the intellectual part of the soul as 'daimon'; and *In Eth. Nic. VI* 331.29–34 applies Aristotle's practical wisdom to the case of God, supporting the view that in this case φρόνησις refers to God's unified knowledge of beings before their creation.²⁴ As known to the specialists, among the classical authors Plutarch was one of the most beloved by the Byzantines. John Mauropous' epigram famously requests Christ to save Plato and Plutarch because, although not Christian, they lived in close accordance with the Christian laws,²⁵ suggest-

²¹ On this topic see Lamberton (1989: 44–82; 241–48).

²² Michael Psellos, *Orationes panegyricae* 17.276–83.

²³ Isocrates, *Ad Demonicum* 34.

²⁴ The reference is to Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride* 351D.

²⁵ John Mauropous, *Epigr.* 43. With regard to the importance of Plutarch for the highly erudite Byzantine intellectuals Wilson (1983: 151) writes: 'No other classical author, apart

ing Plutarch's importance in the highbrow literature between the eleventh and twelfth centuries. As for Proclus, Psellos in his *Chronographia* ranks him highest among the philosophers that he studied during his voyage on the path to wisdom,²⁶ and writes, elsewhere, that Proclus is 'the chief of the most theological of the Greeks'.²⁷ Secretly admired or publicly despised as a source for the heretics, Proclus certainly fascinated and influenced Byzantine intellectuals between the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and, although Eustratios never explicitly mentioned his name, Proclus' shadow always lurks behind his scholarship of Aristotle's text.²⁸

Surely any attempt at evaluating Eustratios' work must consider many other stylistic features, but unfortunately this would go far beyond the scope of the present paper. Nevertheless, it seems clear to me that the accepted prejudice against Eustratios as a boring and repetitive author that has gained a kind of tacit acceptance can no longer be regarded as representative of Eustratios' real place within the history of the Byzantine philosophical tradition under the Komnenoi. Interestingly, that Eustratios' commentaries were not poorly written seems to be confirmed by their later fortune, in so far as these were read and used by many authors unanimously regarded as highly educated and erudite intellectuals. For example, we know that Theodore Prodromos, who belongs to the generation of intellectuals that immediately followed Eustratios, used Eustratios' commentary on book II of the *Posterior Analytics* for his own commentary on the same Aristotelian work.²⁹ More importantly, as I will demonstrate, quotes from Eustratios' commentaries on Books I and VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics* are found also in later authors like George Pachymeres (13th c.) and Nikephoros Gregoras (14th c.).

from those occupying a central place in the school curriculum, was so frequently transcribed.'

²⁶ *Chron.* VI 38.1–5.

²⁷ *Theol.* 22.38–39. On Proclus and Psellos see Kaldellis (2007: 194–231).

²⁸ See Trizio (2009b: 90–109). On Proclus' influence and reception in Byzantine thought, see Podskalsky (1976); Angelou (1984); Benakis (1987); Parry (2006). There is an interesting element found in Eustratios' commentary on Book II of the *Posterior Analytics* (206.31–33): as noted by Swift Riginos (1976: 149), Eustratios is one of the few sources that reports that Plato found the body of a dead Nereid. However, Swift Riginos does not seem to notice that Eustratios just takes this anecdote from another main source of it, namely Philoponus' commentary on the *Posterior Analytics* (411.7–8).

²⁹ See Cacouros (1989).

Some case-studies of Eustratios' Byzantine fortune:

1 Pachymeres and Heliodoros of Prusa

As probably known to specialists, George Pachymeres wrote a paraphrase of the *Nicomachean Ethics* as part of his twelve volume work, *Philosophia*.³⁰ What is less known is that, according to Golitsis,³¹ three manuscripts, *Marcianus gr.* 212 (1^r–44^r),³² *Vaticanus gr.* 1429 (1^r–79^v)³³ and *Escorialensis* T.I.18 (1^r–74^v),³⁴ contain a fragmented commentary (from book I to the beginning of book VI) on the *Nicomachean Ethics* by the same Pachymeres, which has often been confused in the manuscript catalogues with the paraphrase contained in the *Philosophia*. As one compares the *incipit* of this commentary, reported by Golitsis from *Marcianus gr.* 212,³⁵ one will notice that it closely resembles the beginning of Eustratios' commentary on Book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1.3ff.), where the commentator refers to the traditional division of philosophy into the theoretical and the practical. A comparison of these two commentaries would be obviously helpful in determining Pachymeres' dependence upon Eustratios, and I will devote future research to this topic.³⁶

Heliodoros of Prusa's paraphrase of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (14th century?), edited by Heylbut in the *CAG* series, is an enigmatic commentary, but leaving aside the problems of the author's identity and the work's composition date,³⁷ I shall show this paraphrase's reliance upon Eustratios' own commentary.³⁸ For example, some lines before the aforementioned quote from Homer, Eustratios states that God knows things 'instantly and in a necessary manner' (268.28–29), and remarks that this type of knowledge is grounded on the correspondence or conformity between intellect and intellectual knowledge (268.29). Earlier in the text (268.10–12), Eustratios declared that knowledge, in general, is the assimilation between the one who knows and what is known, and that the knowledge of necessary things

³⁰ This paraphrase was edited by Oikonomakos (2005).

³¹ See Golitsis (2008: 66)

³² On this manuscript see Mioni (1981: 326).

³³ On the *Vaticanus gr.* 1428 see Gamillscheg & Harlfinger (1997: no. 283 and 351).

³⁴ On the *Escorialensis* T.I.18 see Revilla (1936: 449–50).

³⁵ See Golitsis (2008: 66–67).

³⁶ I ordered a microfilm of *Vaticanus gr.* 1429, but unfortunately I did not receive it in time for the present paper.

³⁷ Further information on this paraphrase, probably written in the 14th century, are found in Nicol (1968) and Moraux (1973: 137–38).

³⁸ On Heliodoros' dependence upon the Greek-Byzantine commentators on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, see Marcovich (1974).

is a necessary one (like in the case of God's knowledge) while the knowledge of contingent things is a contingent one. Interestingly, Eustratios supports this Aristotelian view found in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (VI 1, 1139a10–11), which can also be traced back to the *De anima* (III 4, 430a2–4), via a quote from Proclus' commentary on the *Timaeus*, since Eustratios mentions (268.21–22) the case of a form of direct knowledge of things which represents a mutual agreement or conformity between that which knows and that which is known (ὡσπερ ἐπαφή τις καὶ ἐφαρμογή γίνεται τοῦ γινώσκοντος καὶ τοῦ γινωσκομένου πρὸς ἄλληλα),³⁹ and thereby applies this notion to God's type of knowledge. Heliodoros' paraphrase incorporates the whole argument, including Eustratios' quotation from Proclus, in such a way that it leaves no doubt that the author must have known Eustratios' text quite well.⁴⁰

2 Nikephoros Gregoras' *Solutiones quaestionum I*

The third, and most important, case-study carried out here is represented by Nikephoros Gregoras' *Solutiones quaestionum*.⁴¹ This set of short treatises addressed to the Empress Helena Palaiologina (d. 1396), daughter of John Kantakouzenos (d. 1383) and spouse of John V Palaiologos (d. 1391), follows the traditional Byzantine model of aporias and solutions. The set of *quaestiones*, edited by Leone in 1970 together with Gregoras' *Refutation of*

³⁹ Cf. Proclus, *In Tim.* 2, 287.3–5: καὶ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἀλήθεια εἶναι ἢ πρὸς τὸ γινωσκόμενον ἐφαρμογή τοῦ γινώσκοντος.

⁴⁰ *In Eth. Nic. VI* 268.10–21: τοῖς γὰρ γινώσκουσι, φησὶν, ἢ γινῶσις τοῖς γινωσκομένοις ἐξομοιοῦται, ὡς εἶναι τῶν μὲν ἀναγκαίων ἀναγκαίαν καὶ τὴν γινῶσιν, ἐνδεχομένην δὲ τῶν ἐνδεχομένων. πῶς γὰρ ἂν εἴη ἀναγκαία τῶν ἐνδεχομένων ἢ γινῶσις, ἢ ἐνδεχομένη τῶν ἀναγκαίων; ὡς γὰρ εἴ τις ἀποφαίνοιτο ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι τὸ ἀπλῶς ἐνδεχόμενον καὶ εἴ τις τὸ ἀνάπαλιν ἀπλῶς ἐνδεχόμενον τὸ ἀναγκαῖον ψεύδεται, οὕτω ψεύδεται καὶ ἡ γινῶσις ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον ὡς ἀπλῶς ἐνδεχόμενον γινώσκουσα καὶ τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον ὡς ἀναγκαῖον. τὴν γὰρ ἀληθεύουσαν γινῶσιν, ὡς ἔχει κατὰ τρόπον τὸ πρᾶγμα, δεῖ γινώσκειν αὐτό. ἢ εἰ μὴ οὕτως ἔχει, ἀληθεύσει καὶ ὁ τὸ μὴ ὄν εἶναι λέγων καὶ τὸ ὄν μὴ εἶναι, ὅπερ ἀδύνατον. ὡς γὰρ ἐπὶ τοῦ εἶναι ἀπλῶς τὸ ψεῦδος καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια, οὕτω καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ πῶς εἶναι, ὅπερ ὁ τρόπος ἐστὶ τῆς ὄντοτης· ἄλλως τε καὶ ὡσπερ ἐπαφή τις καὶ ἐφαρμογή γίνεται τοῦ γινώσκοντος καὶ τοῦ γινωσκομένου πρὸς ἄλληλα. Cf. Heliodoros of Prusa, *In Eth. Nic.* 114.15–24: τὴν γὰρ γινῶσιν ὁμοίαν εἶναι τῶν γινωσκομένων καὶ ἀναγκαίαν μὲν τὴν τοῦ ἀναγκαίου, ἐνδεχομένην δὲ τὴν τοῦ ἐνδεχομένου, πᾶσα ἀνάγκη· καὶ γὰρ ἐνδεχομένη γινῶσις ἐστίν, ἥτις οὐκ αἰεὶ ἀληθεύει· ψεύδεται δὲ ἡ γινῶσις, ὅταν τὸ γινωσκόμενον μὴ οὕτως ἔχη ὡσπερ γινώσκειται· τὸ δὲ μὴ οὕτως ἔχειν ὡσπερ εἶχε τῶν ἐνδεχομένων ἐστὶ καὶ ἄλλοτε ἄλλως ἐχόντων· τῶν ἐνδεχομένων ἄρα ἢ γινῶσις ἐνδεχομένη ἐστὶ. διὰ τὰ αὐτὰ δὴ καὶ τῶν ἀναγκαίων ἀναγκαία ἢ γινῶσις· πᾶσα γὰρ γινῶσις καθ' ὁμοιότητά τινα καὶ οἰκειότητα γίνεται· καὶ γὰρ ἐφαρμογή τις ἐστὶ καὶ ἐπαφή τοῦ γινωσκομένου καὶ τοῦ γινώσκοντος.

⁴¹ On this work see Guiland (1926: 136ff.).

Those who Deny Men's Miserable Condition (Antilogia), concerns different topics, including natural philosophy, but, interestingly, the first treatise strictly relates to the topic treated by Gregoras in his *Antilogia*, in so far as it concerns the place and dignity of human beings in the universe. In discussing this topic, Gregoras seems to share his master Theodore Metochites' rather pessimistic view of men and the world which assumes that the instability of human affairs and the mutability of the transient world preclude man's attainment of stable forms of knowledge. Metochites himself admits that this view was a commonplace⁴² as large sections of his *Semeioseis gnomikai* are devoted to the instability of human affairs, which is explicitly linked to ancient scepticism.⁴³

A discussion, however, of the sceptical tendencies in late Byzantine thought will not be addressed here⁴⁴ since I will confine myself to the analysis of one section from Gregoras' *Solutiones quaestionum* 1 and its evident reference to Eustratios of Nicaea. After some rhetorical praise of the empress' φιλομάθεια and πολυμάθεια (488.1–489.51), which is strengthened by a quote from Plato's *Republic* II (376c) following the same pattern as Eustratios' praise of Anna Komnene's love for wisdom and learning in his commentary on *Nicomachean Ethics* VI (256.1–257.11), Gregoras introduces (489.51–490.63) the topic of *Solutiones quaestionum* 1. Irrational animals, contends Gregoras, often seem to act according to wisdom, even more than the wisest among men, who in fact can neither understand nor imitate their wisdom. Therefore, are irrational animals really irrational? The issue is not novel since antique and late antique philosophers debated at length the rationality proper to non-human animals.⁴⁵ Gregoras' *positio quaestionis* seems to be even more optimistic than the one held by Plutarch and Porphyry, who grant animals other than men a form of rationality and virtue.⁴⁶ However, his initial answer is a negative one because Gregoras maintains that their rationality is only apparent since God Himself actually acts through them. The sentence 'they are instruments of God's activity as a craftsman, and they are passive, rather than active' (490.70–71) attests that animals do not perform any operation on their own, but only mechanically and unconsciously through God's causality (490.77–85).

⁴² Cf. Ἠθικός ἢ περὶ παιδείας 10, 84.5–15. See also Demetracopoulos (1999: 88–93).

⁴³ *Semeioseis gnomikai* 29; 61.

⁴⁴ For an excellent account of this problem, see Bydén (2002).

⁴⁵ See, for example, Sorabji (1993); Dierauer (1997); Steiner (2005: 53–111); Labarrière (1984: 17–49; 2000: 107–22).

⁴⁶ See Plutarch, *De soll. an.* 959A–965D; Porphyry, *De abst.* 3.2.

Gregoras' reference (490.85–491.91) to the widespread Biblical image of man's creation in God's image (Gen. 1:26–28) emphasizes the Christian flavour of the whole argument, in so far as only men were given a rational soul, whereas the other animals were just naturally provided with everything necessary for their survival. Surprisingly, from this assumption the author does not infer the rather traditional superiority of men over the other animals, but the exact opposite: the absolute humility that characterizes the human condition. Gregoras grounds his conclusion on his interpretation of Adam's fall and man's post-lapsarian condition, arguing (493.178–494.191) that had man remained in the condition in which God created us and preserved the rationality that characterizes us as human beings, we would remain superior to the nature of the irrational animals in both sense-perception and knowledge (493.178–81). Unfortunately, Gregoras continues, we forfeited this condition because of our ill-advisedness and fell straight from the rational life to the life according to sense-perception, which is a condition improper to our nature and rank (493.181–84). Quoting from Exodus 2:22 (493.184–85), Gregoras contends that in their present state men are 'like strangers in a foreign land' (ὡς ἐν ἀλλοτρία χώρα πάροικοί τινες), precisely like Moses describes himself when he calls his first son Gherson ('stranger'). By falling straight, concludes Gregoras, to the 'life according to sense-perception', men are 'like fish out of water', or beings out of their natural element (494.188–91).

Whereas non-human animals live in perfect harmony with their natural state, men suffer from the gap between their previous condition (the life according to the intellect) and their present state (the life according to sense-perception). Despite irrational animals' wisdom predicated upon God's providence acting through them, they can be regarded as superior to men (494.191–98) because 'that which exists according to nature is always and in any case preferable to that which exists against nature, in the same way as sanity is preferable to insanity and straightforwardness is preferable to deception' (494.199–201). Gregoras' description of the loss of the Adamic condition reflects *verbatim* a passage found in Eustratios' commentary on Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. A comparison between the two texts evidences this.

Nikephoros Gregoras, *Sol. quaest.* 1, 493.178–494.191: εἰ μὲν γὰρ ἐμένομεν εἰς ὅπερ ἐπλάσθημεν πρὸς θεοῦ καὶ τὸ λογικὸν ὅπερ ἡμεῖς ἐτηροῦμεν ἀκήρατον, ἐνικῶμεν ἂν καὶ κατ' αἴσθησιν τῶν ἀλόγων φύσιν καὶ γινώσκοντες. Ἄλλ' ἐξόριστοι γεγονότες διὰ κακοβουλίαν ἐκεῖθεν, τῆς λογικῆς τε ἐκπεπτῶκαμεν ζῶντες εὐθύς καὶ εἰς τὴν κατ' αἴσθησιν ταύτην καὶ παρὰ φύσιν ἡμῖν κατηνέχθημεν καὶ ἐσμέν ἤδη οὐκ ἐν τῇ οἰκείᾳ ἡμῶν φύσει τάξει, ἀλλ' ὡς ἐν ἀλλοτρία χώρα πάροικοί τινες καὶ ἐπήλυδες καὶ

ἀλλότριον μὲν ἐκείνης ἢς ἐκπεπτώκαμεν, ἀλλόφυλοι δ' ἢς ἔχομεν, λέγω δὴ τῆς κατ' αἴσθησιν ταύτης ζωῆς, τοῦτ' ἐκεῖνο πεπονθότες αὐτόχρομα, ὅπερ ἂν καὶ ἔαν ἰχθύες ἐκ τῆς ὑγρᾶς καὶ κατὰ φύσιν διαίτης ἐστὴν τῶν χερσαίων μετενεχθέντες ἡμαρτημένην αἰεὶ καὶ τοῦ ὀρθοῦ καθάπαξ ἀποπεφυκυῖαν καὶ πόρρω βαδίζουσαν τοῦ προσήκοντος ἐποίουν ἂν.

Eustratios, *In Eth. Nic. VI* 297.16–31: τέλειος γὰρ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ὁ ἄνθρωπος παρὰ τοῦ δημιουργήσαντος πέπλασται καὶ μηδεμιᾶς λειπόμενος τῶν αὐτῶ συμβαλλομένων εἰς τελείωσιν ἕξεων. εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, δῆλον ὅτι καὶ σοφὸς καὶ οὐ μόνον διανοητικῶς ἀλλὰ καὶ νοερῶς ἐνεργῶν κατὰ τὸ ἀνάλογον τῆς φυσικῆς αὐτῶ τάξεως. τὸ δὲ νοερῶς ἐνεργεῖν τὸ ἀμέσως καταλαμβάνειν ἐστὶ τὰ νοούμενα ἀπλάτῃς ἐπιβολαῖς αὐτοῖς ὑποβάλλοντα, εἰ μὲν οὖν μὴ τὴν τάξιν ἐκείνην καὶ τὸν θεσμόν, ὃν ἐκ τοῦ κτίσαντος εἴληφε, παραβέβηκεν ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὴν κρείττω ἑαυτοῦ ἀνανεύων διέμεινε, καὶ τῆς ἐκείνων ἀνευδότητος ἐρῶν ἀπολαύσεως, τῶν δὲ χειρόνων τοσοῦτον εἶχετο, ὅσον προνοεῖσθαι αὐτῶν κατὰ τὸ ἀνάλογον τῆς προσηκούσης αὐτῶ τάξεως τε καὶ φύσεως, διέμεινε ἂν αὐτῶ καὶ τὸ τέλειον ἀπαράθραστον. ἐπεὶ δ' ἐλιχνεύθη περὶ τὰ χείρονα καὶ τῆς κατ' αἴσθησιν ἀπολαύειν ζωῆς προτεθύμηκε τῆς πρὸς τὰ κρείττω καταπεφρονηκῶς ἀνανεύσεως, διὰ τοῦτο καὶ τῆς οἰκείας ἐκπέπτωκε τελειότητος, γενέσει τε ὑπέπεσε καὶ φθορᾶ, καὶ τὸ νοερὸν αὐτῶ ὄμμα συμμέμυσται τε καὶ συγκεκάλυπται, τῆς παχυτέρας σαρκὸς καὶ θνητῆς ἐπιθολωσάσης αὐτό, ἐντεῦθεν καὶ τῆς αἰσθητικῆς δέδεκται γνώσεως

Gregoras echoes the very structure of Eustratios' passage when he introduces his account of man's present condition with the same unreal conditional clause as Eustratios (Gregoras: εἰ μὲν γὰρ ἐμένομεν εἰς ὅπερ ἐπλάσθημεν πρὸς θεοῦ; Eustratios: εἰ μὲν οὖν μὴ τὴν τάξιν ἐκείνην καὶ τὸν θεσμόν, ὃν ἐκ τοῦ κτίσαντος εἴληφε, παραβέβηκεν ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὴν κρείττω ἑαυτοῦ ἀνανεύων διέμεινε), lifting some expressions, and carefully paraphrasing other expressions with his own vocabulary. Among the many similarities, the form ἐκπεπτώκαμεν used by Gregoras (493.182) to describe man's fall from his previous condition matches with the occurrence of the same form (ἐκπέπτωκε) in Eustratios' passage (*In Eth. Nic. VI* 297.28) describing man's fall from his proper rank and perfection.⁴⁷

Other notions found in Gregoras further reveal his dependence upon Eustratios. For instance, both Eustratios and Gregoras use the notion of natural rank or place (φυσικὴ τάξις) to refer to men's proper condition and place in the hierarchy of beings. In the above-mentioned passage, Eustratios links this notion to that of analogy (κατὰ τὸ ἀνάλογον), intending to emphasize the necessary correspondence between the mode of existence and

⁴⁷ Eustratios' expression τῆς οἰκείας ἐκπέπτωκε τελειότητος seems to parallel John Philoponus, *In An. pr.* 250.32 (τῶ ἐκπεπτωκέναι τῆς ἑαυτοῦ τελειότητος).

operation of each thing and its position in the hierarchy of beings,⁴⁸ since everything, in general, participates in the First Cause according to its place and rank in the hierarchy of beings.⁴⁹ Proclus seems to be Eustratios' main source for this idea,⁵⁰ although the commentator also mentions the notion of θεσμός, 'law' or 'ordinance', which imparts a Christian flavour to the whole argument by referring to men's violation of a divine rule.⁵¹

Secondly, Gregoras reveals his dependence upon Eustratios' argument by distinguishing between the life according to the intellect, or according to reason, and the life according to sense-perception.⁵² Despite occurring in many sources such as Philo,⁵³ this dichotomy depends, at least in Eustratios, upon Proclus' work, and Eustratios' description of the life according to the intellect mirrors Proclus' account of the grasping of the intelligibles via direct apprehensions (ἀπλαῖς ἐπιβολαῖς).⁵⁴ Nevertheless, Gregoras does not simply reproduce Eustratios' arguments. Although both agree that the post-lapsarian state entails the decay from purely intellectual to merely sensory cognition, they hold different views on the possible recovery from this degradation. Eustratios optimistically contends that men retain the possibility to recover partially from the shock of the fall by recollecting the intelligible contents encrypted in the soul through a process starting with sense percep-

⁴⁸ *In Eth. Nic. VI* 297.19; 297.25. This expression is also borrowed by Gregoras (*Sol. quaest.* 1 496.277). The notion φυσική τάξις seems to be widespread in the Neoplatonic tradition, e.g. Proclus, *In Parm.* 821.32, and Ammonius, *In Cat.* 59.16.

⁴⁹ *In Eth. Nic. I* 49.2–3.

⁵⁰ See for example *In Eth. Nic. VI* 317.30–32, where Eustratios stresses the necessary unity and uniformity of the procession of beings from the First Cause in such a way that each term of the causal chain is strictly related to the one immediately superior to it by the possession of an element of similitude between the two terms. This argument consists of an abridged version of similar arguments mainly found in Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, like in *El. theol.* 11.8; 21.15–18; 29.3–4; 132.29–30; *Theol. Plat.* 5, 103.5–6. On this passage in Eustratios, see Trizio (2009a: 96).

⁵¹ *In Eth. Nic. VI* 297.21–22: εἰ μὲν οὖν μὴ τὴν τάξιν ἐκείνην καὶ τὸν θεσμόν, ὃν ἐκ τοῦ κτίσαντος εἴληφε, παραβέβηκεν The same link between τάξις and θεσμός is found in Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 1, 732.28; Ps.-Dionysius Areopagita, *De divinis nominibus* 224.9–10; Maximus Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 19.24–25.

⁵² *In Eth. Nic. VI* 297.27; *Sol. quaest.* 1, 493.182–85.

⁵³ See for instance Philo, *Quis rerum divinarum heres sit* 52.1–4. On the notion of 'life according to the intellect' corresponding to man's proper essence, see Iamblichus, *De myst.* 3, 4.33–35; *Protr.* 4.2; Synesius, *Epist.* 137.58–59. Commenting on Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Michael of Ephesus maintains (*In Eth. Nic. X* 586.9–10) that the highest form of happiness consists in the 'life according to the intellect'.

⁵⁴ *In Eth. Nic. VI* 297.20–21. See also *In Eth. Nic. VI* 273.5–6; 283.5–6; 314.15–16; 315.35–36; 317.20; 378.2–3. See for example Proclus, *In Parm.* 704.28–34; *In Alc.* 246.15–18; *In Tim.* 2, 313.13–15. See also Ierodiakonou (2005: 81). For Proclus' reference to the notion of 'life according to the intellect' or 'intellectual life' see for example *Theol. Plat.* 1, 166.21; 5, 88.15; *In Parm.* 1025.28.

tion.⁵⁵ While in general Proclus' vocabulary dominates the commentary,⁵⁶ some Christian elements sporadically enter the discussion.⁵⁷ For example, in describing the condition that follows the loss of men's proper perfection, Eustratios refers to the Neoplatonic as well as Christian image of the intellectual eye of the soul 'obstructed and veiled' because of the fall,⁵⁸ whereas Eustratios' reference to the 'thicker and deadly flesh' that made this intellectual eye turbid seems to be a direct quote from Gregory of Nazianzus.⁵⁹ Furthermore, the induction from sense perception and the awakening of the innate knowledge in the soul makes it possible for the human being to 'get rid of the veil of ignorance' (*In Eth. Nic. VI* 297.38–39), which refers to the veil that Moses wore before his people after talking with God (Ex. 34:29–

⁵⁵ See *In Eth. Nic. VI* 297.31–38: ἐντεῦθεν καὶ τῆς αἰσθητικῆς δέδεκται γνώσεως, ἀμέσως μὲν ἐνεργούσης περὶ τὰ οἰκεῖα γνωστά, ἀφυπνιζούσης δὲ καὶ αὐτὸν ὡσπερ τῆ γενέσει καταδαρθάνοντα καὶ ἐξ ὧν αὐτὴ γινώσκει καθ' ἕκαστα πρόφασιν αὐτῷ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ καθόλου ὑποτιθείσης σύστασιν καὶ ἐξ ἀμέσου ἐνεργείας τῆς ἑαυτοῦ, ἣν περὶ τὰ μερικὰ ἐπιδείκνυται, χορηγίαν αὐτῷ παρεχούσης τὰς κοινὰς ἐννοίας ἐπαγωγικῶς συνιστᾶν, ἐξ ὧν ἀμέσων οὐσῶν ὅτι καὶ ἐξ ἀμέσων ἀφορμῶν αὐτὰς ὁ νοῦς συναγίχοι, τὰ ἐπιστημονικὰ συνάγεται συμπεράσματα. The expression ἀφυπνιζούσης δὲ καὶ αὐτὸν ὡσπερ τῆ γενέσει καταδαρθάνοντα (297.32–33) seems to be a paraphrase of Plato, *Phaedo* 71d, where the process of generation is said to be in one case falling asleep, in the other waking up. Quite on the contrary, Eustratios' standard account for the induction process of the universals from the individuals (297.33–38) seems to reflect the terminology proper to the late ancient commentators, as is clear from Eustratios' usage of the form συνιστᾶν, found for example in Alexander of Aphrodisias, *In Top.* 537.7–8; John Philoponus, *In An. po.* 438.2–3; *In Phys.* 12.20–21. See also Proclus' aporematic argument in Proclus, *In Eucl. I* 13.27–14.4. Eustratios' other passages where this form is used with regard to the constitution of the universals by induction are *In An. po. II* 89.5–6; 268.30–31. This dependence is even more clear once one compares *In Eth. Nic. VI* 297.31–38 (ἐντεῦθεν καὶ τῆς αἰσθητικῆς δέδεκται γνώσεως ... χορηγίαν αὐτῷ παρεχούσης τὰς κοινὰς ἐννοίας ἐπαγωγικῶς συνιστᾶν, ἐξ ὧν ἀμέσων οὐσῶν ὅτι καὶ ἐξ ἀμέσων ἀφορμῶν αὐτὰς ὁ νοῦς συναγίχοι) with John Philoponus, *In An. po.* 439.19–20 (ἀλλ' ἀπὸ αἰσθήσεως, ὡς δέδεικται, ἐνδίδονται ἡμῖν ἀφορμαὶ ἐξ ὧν τὸ καθόλου συνάγεται καὶ ἐπιγινώσκουμεν).

⁵⁶ On Eustratios' dependence on Proclus' theory of concept formation, see Trizio (2009b: 90–99).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 99–103.

⁵⁸ *In Eth. Nic. VI* 297.29–30. The expression τὸ νοερὸν ὄμμα is widespread both in pagan and Christian literature. For some relevant occurrences see Synesius, *Epist.* 154.86; Syrianus, *In Metaph.* 25.6; Proclus, *In Parm.* 1128.32; Ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, *De caelesti hierarchia* 50.13–14; Damascius, *In Parm.* 94.27; Maximus Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 59.112; John of Damascus, *Dial.* 1.27; Photios, *De Spiritu Sancti myst.*, in Migne (*PG* 102: 77A–B); *Epist.* 284.478; Michael Psellos, *De omn. doct.* 95.7.

⁵⁹ *In Eth. Nic. VI* 297.30–31: τῆς παχυτέρας σαρκὸς καὶ θνητῆς ἐπιθολωσάσης αὐτό. Cf. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 38, 324.46–47; *Or.* 45, 633.11–12.

35) and mentioned by Saint Paul in his Second Letter to the Corinthians (3:13–15).⁶⁰

Despite these Christian elements, the framework of the argument remains firmly Neoplatonic, because Eustratios defines the ‘common notions’ as that which is constituted through induction,⁶¹ while the related discursive and dianoetic activity of the soul serves as the starting point of the recollection process.⁶² Thus, the human being can ‘regain his power and capacity by getting rid of the burden of being affected by passions, and strive again for the higher realities and his Creator’.⁶³ Elsewhere, Eustratios expounds this very same argument without any Christian references by simply elaborating on Proclus’ distinction between intellect by essence (κατ’ οὐσίαν) and intellect by disposition (καθ’ ἔξιν). The former refers to the Separate Intelligence that acts and operates by its own essence and possesses all the intelligibles in an unitarian and concentrated manner; the latter refers to the particular intelligent soul that only performs intellection through participating in the above-mentioned Separate Intelligence, and only possesses the intelligibles dianoetically, or as echoes (ἀπηχήματα) of the Forms found in the Separate Intelligence.⁶⁴ Like Proclus, Eustratios maintains that even when the soul becomes capable of reverting upon the separate and higher substances, it cannot perform intellection in the way proper to the Separate Intelligence

⁶⁰ However, the precise expression used by Eustratios, namely ‘the veil of ignorance’ (τῆς ἀγνοίας κάλυμμα) is only found in Origen, *Contra Celsum* VI, 50.5–7, and in Theodore the Studite, *Sermones Catecheseos Magnae* 30, 84.36.

⁶¹ This usage of the term ‘common notions’ (κοινὰ ἔννοιαι) as the starting point for discursive reasoning and the principles of scientific demonstrations can be traced back to Syrianus, *In Metaph.* 18.9–10; 21.31–34; Proclus, *In Eucl. I* 240.11–14; Ammonius, *In De int.* 7.16–22; Asclepius, *In Metaph.* 158.11–13; John Philoponus, *In An. pr.* 2.24–27. For a survey of the Neoplatonic usage of the expression ‘common notions’, see Saffrey & Westerink (1968: 155, n. 4), O’Meara (1986: 12–13) and Steel (1999: 295–97). Often Eustratios identifies the common notions with the scientific axioms, like in *In Eth. Nic. VI* 319.8–9 and in *In An. po. II* 45.27–33. Also this usage seems to be quite traditional, as it is found for example in Alexander of Aphrodisias (*In Top.* 18.19–21).

⁶² On this point see Trizio (2009b: 99–108).

⁶³ *In Eth. Nic. VI* 297.39–40: ἑαυτοῦ τε γίνεται καὶ τὸ ἐπαχθὲς τῆς ἐμπαθείας ἀποφορτιζόμενος, ἀνανεύει τε πρὸς τὰ κρείττω καὶ πρὸς αὐτὸν τὸν ποιήσαντα. This argument seems to be an elaboration of Michael Psellos, *Orationes hagiographicae* 1c 80.381–85: ἂν γὰρ μὴ ἐμβαπτισθεῖ τῷ σώματι ἢ ψυχῇ διὰ τῆς πρὸς τὰ πάθη ῥοπῆς τε καὶ προσνεύσεως, ἀνευχθεῖ δὲ μᾶλλον οἶον ἐκείθεν διὰ τῆς πρὸς τὰ κρείττονα ἀνανεύσεως, ἑαυτῆς τε γίνεται καὶ τὸ οἰκεῖον ἐπιγινώσκει ἀξίωμα.

⁶⁴ *In Eth. Nic. VI* 317.19–28. The source for the distinction between the two types of intellect, ‘by essence’ and ‘by disposition’, is Proclus, *In Tim.* 2, 313.1–4; *In Alc.* 65.19–66.6. The term ἀπήχημα to describe the status of the intelligibles found in the human soul occurs also in *In Eth. Nic. VI* 315.34; 317.23; 377.37; *In An. po. II* 22.25; 257.38. In using this term Eustratios follows Proclus, *In Alc.* 99.13–19; *Theol. Plat.* 1.125.5–8; *El. theol.* 129.26–28. On this topic, see Ierodiakonou (2005: 81 n. 30).

because a particular soul must pass from one Form to the other,⁶⁵ ‘dancing in a circle around the Intellect and grasping them one by one’, as Eustratios literally quotes from Proclus’ commentary on the *Parmenides*.⁶⁶

Eustratios’ emphasis on induction’s stimulating and kindling effect on the soul’s innate knowledge derives from Proclus’ positive account of the role played by concepts derived from sensible data for the recollection process.⁶⁷ In fact, he often refers to Proclus’ vocabulary to describe the awakening and stimulation of the innate knowledge in the soul by means of teaching and learning. For example, Eustratios follows Proclus’ usage of the term ἀνεγείρειν (‘to awaken’ or ‘to rouse’) to describe the beginning of the recollection process,⁶⁸ or the need to awaken ‘the One in us’.⁶⁹ Or consider

⁶⁵ *In Eth. Nic. VI* 303.19–26: ἡ γὰρ ψυχὴ ὡς μὲν ψυχὴ ἀνειλιγμένως ἐνεργεῖ, συλλογιζομένη καὶ μεταβαίνουσα εἰς συμπεράσματα ἐκ προτάσεων, ὡς δὲ μετέχουσα νοῦ ἀπλῶς ἐπιβάλλει, ἔχουσα μὲν καὶ τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ τοὺς ὄρους ὡς νοῦ ἀπηχήματα, γινομένη δὲ καὶ τούτων ἐπέκεινα, ὅταν νοερά γένηται, τοῖς νοητοῖς νοητῶς ἐπιβάλλουσα, εἰ καὶ μὴ ἀθρόως καὶ ὁμοῦ ὡς ὁ καθ’ ὑπαρξιν, ἀλλὰ καθ’ ἕν περιεχομένη τὰ πάντα καὶ νοοῦσα καθ’ ἕκαστον, διὸ καὶ ἡ τοιαύτη κατάσταση οὐ φύσις ἀλλὰ ἕξις τῆς ψυχῆς ὀνομάζεται, ὡς ἔξωθεν ἐπεισιοῦσα καὶ γινομένη ἐπίκτητος. This passage results from Eustratios’ elaboration of several of Proclus’ passages. (1) The distinction between the soul *qua* soul (ὡς μὲν ψυχὴ), which acts by unfolding the Forms found in itself within the discursive reasoning, and the soul as participating in the *nous* (ὡς δὲ μετέχουσα νοῦ) is borrowed from Proclus’ commentary on the *Timaeus* (1, 246.5–7), where Proclus distinguishes between two ways for the *logos* to have knowledge of the eternal Being: the first is ὡς μὲν λόγος, characterized as discursive; the second is ὡς δὲ νοῶν, characterized as simple and non-discursive. (2) Eustratios’ statement on the soul *qua* soul as operating by unfolding intelligible contents (ἀνειλιγμένως) can be found in Proclus, *In Eucl. I* 16.10–16; *In Parm.* 937.37–39. (3) The same holds true for Eustratios’ mention of the direct apprehensions that characterize the soul’s intellectual activity (see n. 53). (4) The idea that the soul’s non-discursive thinking activity still cannot grasp the intelligibles all at once and simultaneously (μὴ ἀθρόως καὶ ὁμοῦ) as the *nous* is taken from Proclus, *In Parm.* 1165.24–25. (5) Eustratios’ description of men’s intellectual capacity as ‘supervening upon the soul from outside’ (ὡς ἔξωθεν ἐπεισιοῦσα) and ‘acquired’ (ἐπίκτητος) seems to reflect Proclus’ general usage of these terms in order to describe participatory or acquired characteristics against the essential possession (κατ’ οὐσίαν) of them, like in *In Remp.* 1, 28.17–20; *In Tim.* 1, 352.19–22. Needless to say, Eustratios’ distinction between νοῦς καθ’ ἕξιν and νοῦς κατ’ οὐσίαν just represents a particular case within the above-mentioned Proclean scheme. On this see Trizio (2009b: 97).

⁶⁶ *In Eth. Nic. VI* 303.24–25; *In Eth. Nic. I* 47.4–11. The source is Proclus, *In Parm.* 807.29–808.11. On this quotation, see Giocarinis (1964: 191 n. 86) and Steel (2002: 52–53).

⁶⁷ See e.g. Proclus, *In Eucl. I* 18.10–20. For other passages where this function performed by the so-called ‘later-born’ concepts is found explicitly, see Steel (1999: 331).

⁶⁸ Compare *In An. po. II* 22.24–28 with Proclus, *In Eucl. I* 18.15–20, where the author speaks about mathematics and its importance for *anamnesis*, contending that the recollection process needs to be referred to the innate *logoi* of the soul, but it must be ‘awakened from that which is later born’ (ἀνεγείρεται ἀπὸ τῶν ὑστέρων).

⁶⁹ Like in Proclus, *In Parm.* 1072.7–8.

Eustratios' reference to the expression ἐκπληττόμενοι (men's 'being astonished'), found verbatim in Proclus regarding the effects of beauty on the souls for their conversion to the Good.⁷⁰ Eustratios intends the latter expression to refer to the effect of the beauty of the sense perception data on the soul as that which moves the soul in an anagogic ascension towards the First Cause.⁷¹

Quite to the contrary, despite sharing Eustratios as a source and emphasizing the mainly epistemological character of the fall and the loss of man's perfection, Gregoras expresses a rather pessimistic view of men's possibility to recover from the miserable condition that characterizes human beings in their present state.⁷² As a matter of fact, Gregoras maintains that if men can somehow be regarded as superior to irrational animals, it is only because of their God-given capacity for speaking, which allows them to help each other without remaining lonely (493.201–8). Therefore, according to Gregoras, we can be labelled 'rational animals' only in so far as we can produce sounds and articulate our voice. If this is the case, however, the definition

⁷⁰ Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 3, 64.6–12; *In Alc.* 328.6–10. Börje Bydén has recently suggested to me a link between this passage of Eustratios and Philoponus' commentary on *De anima* 3 in the Latin translation by William of Moerbeke (40.34–37 = Sophonias, *In De an.* 135.19–24). Here Philoponus describes the active intellect as making evident the beings which were unclear and hidden because of the torpor due to the shock of the birth. There are striking similarities between the two passages, especially in regard to Philoponus' 'propter id quod a nativitate nubilum' (διὰ τὸν ἀπὸ γενέσεως κάρον), i.e. the idea that the shock of the birth makes the intellect unaware of the intelligible contents contained in it, which strongly echoes similar formulas in Eustratios. However, it is remarkable that even the Philoponian expression reported by Sophonias (διὰ τὸν ἀπὸ γενέσεως κάρον) occurs in Proclus' commentary on the *Alcibiades* (226.6–7), where he contends that before transcending the matter and the body the bodily potencies were sterile and poor διὰ τὸν ἀπὸ γενέσεως κάρον. I will devote my future research to a more detailed study of Philoponus' influence upon Eustratios. Some formulas of Eustratios on the shock of the birth process or the disturbance of the passions as obstacles to gaining pure intellection are discussed in Trizio (2009b: 78–79; 101; 106) (also with regard to Philoponus).

⁷¹ *In Eth. Nic. VI* 348.32–37: ταῦτα δὲ τὰ ἐν σώμασι θεωρούμενα, ἃ ἔστιν αἰσθητὰ καὶ καθ' ἕκαστα, οἷς ἐπιβάλλοντες καὶ τὴν τούτων ποικιλίαν καὶ σύστασιν καὶ συνοχὴν καὶ διεξαγωγὴν ἐκπληττόμενοι αἰεὶ πρὸς τὸ προσεχὲς διὰ τῆς λογικῆς καὶ νοεῶς θεωρίας ἀνατρέχουμεν αἴτιον, ἔστ' ἂν διὰ τῶν μέσων διακόσμων εἰς τὴν πρώτην καὶ μίαν ἀρχὴν καταστήσωμεν. The whole argument seems to be a free interpretation of Proclus, *In Parm.* 879.17–19 (ἀπὸ γὰρ τῶν ἐν τοῖς καθέκαστα κοινῶν ἐπὶ τὸ προσεχὲς αἴτιον αὐτῶν ἀνατρέχουμεν, ὃ δὴ ἔστι πάντως εἶδος φυσικόν), where nevertheless Proclus speaks about the λόγοι φυσικοί. Furthermore, Eustratios' reference to the 'intermediate realms' (διὰ τῶν μέσων διακόσμων) through which the ascension towards the first cause takes place reflects once again Proclus' terminology. See for instance *In Alc.* 112.1–5.

⁷² On Gregoras' *Solutiones quaestionum* 1 see also Moschos (1998: 167–70), who nevertheless does not discuss the problem of Gregoras' sources.

applies to men only improperly and by a misuse of language (495.240–45). Therefore, the traditional Stoic argument that only men can be called rational, in so far as they can articulate speech⁷³ is dismissed by Gregoras as the sign of men’s lack of perfection, since, according to him, our previous and purer condition did not necessitate speech and language, as we could enjoy the same non-verbal intellection as the angels (495.222–36). Thus, non-human animals are superior to man because they perform their operation in perfect accordance with their rank and status; those whose life fits better with their present condition must be granted higher consideration than those who live ‘like fish out of water’.

There are other similarities between Eustratios and Gregoras that might suggest that in writing his *Solutiones quaestionum* 1 Gregoras actually had Eustratios’ text in front of him, as he follows Eustratios in conceding that even in the so-called irrational animals there seem to be echoes (ἀπηχίματα) of intelligence or rationality.⁷⁴ The parallel becomes even more striking if one considers that according to Gregoras (491.100–108) this is made possible because of God’s causality, which reaches ‘the last terms’ (ἄχρι τῶν ἐσχάτων) of the causation process through ‘the intermediate and more perfect terms’ (διὰ τῶν ἐντελεστέρων). This is clearly found in Eustratios too; for example, when speaking about the eternal, ungenerated and immaterial realities the commentator maintains that precisely ‘through these’ (δι’ αὐτῶν μέσων) God’s creation and providence reaches ‘even the last terms’ (μέχρι καὶ τῶν ἐσχάτων) of the causation process.⁷⁵

Eustratios’ emphasis on the merely epistemological consequences of the loss of the Adamic condition, rather than on the moral or eschatological ones, seems to have attracted Gregoras’ attention, even though he differs from Eustratios in denying that men can somehow restore partially their previous condition. This pessimistic view characterizes Gregoras’ opinion on men’s dignity elsewhere.⁷⁶ While his teacher Theodore Metochites’ re-

⁷³ On this argument cf. supra n. 45.

⁷⁴ Compare *Sol. quaest.* 1, 491.103 with *In Eth. Nic. VI* 328.15. The same idea is literally found in Nikephoros Gregoras, *Florentius* 1659–61.

⁷⁵ *In Eth. Nic. VI* 294.12–16. Quite to the contrary, Gregoras’ reference (491.105–6) to God’s causality as taking place in a ‘certain natural ordered chain’ (εἰρμῶ καὶ τάξει τινὶ τῆς φύσεως) is a quote from Gregory of Nyssa’s *Dialogue on the Soul and Resurrection* (Migne, *PG* 46: col. 129.10–11). This evidence would make it even more interesting to try to detect one by one the sources of Gregoras’ *Solutiones quaestionum* 1, which appears to be constructed as a patchwork of quotations taken from several different authors. Unfortunately this task cannot be undertaken here; I will confine myself to the investigation of Eustratios’ influence on Gregoras.

⁷⁶ I would like to thank John Demetracopoulos for his precious suggestions on the other passages where Gregoras’ view is found explicitly.

marks on human misery strictly reflect his own personal misfortunes,⁷⁷ Gregoras' distrust of mankind seems to be an unconditioned and philosophically grounded one. The whole history of mankind, states Gregoras in his *Antilogia* (482.58–64), proves that human beings are miserable, after which he quotes Plato's *Theaetetus* (146a) to demonstrate that as men seek for the truth they are like 'kids playing ball in a moonless night' (484.142).⁷⁸ Although the human intellect intends to order the events and the sensorial data, its attempt does not always succeed due to its weakness. That is why, according to Gregoras in *Solutiones quaestionum* 1, the human intellect's detection of similarities and identities among diverse phenomena cannot safely establish science, and men readily forget that mental constructions and epistemic models do not really reflect the transient and unstable reality.⁷⁹

The Greek Patristic tradition elaborated on the topic of men's dignity and place in the universe on the basis of several passages from the Old Testament (e.g. Gen. 1:26–28; 2:7; Ps. 8:5–9; 38:5–6; 48:13; 143:3–4). This could also have served as a reliable source for Gregoras, especially since he maintains that only Revelation and the spirituality of the Fathers of the Church are a reliable source of wisdom, whereas men's knowledge is nothing more than shadows.⁸⁰ Basil of Caesarea⁸¹ and Gregory of Nyssa,⁸² for example, often stressed the fact that men fail to recognize their own honour and rank, which derives from being created in God's image. Thus, men's condition is humble, for they were created out of dust, that is to say from a humble material, and they come into being by means of sexual intercourse, which perpetuates sin.⁸³ Apparently, Gregoras adheres to this traditional way of posing the problem, as he refers (490.85–491.91) to Genesis 1:26–28 (men's creation in God's image), but the very core of his understanding of Adam's fall is Eustratios' intellectualist interpretation of it, where the fall and the attempt to revert again to the Creator is described as the loss of purely intellectual knowledge and the need to move from discour-

⁷⁷ See e.g. Theodore Metochites, *Poem XIV* 80–110 and *Poem XV* 13–29.

⁷⁸ The expression 'moonless night' (ἐν σκοτομήνῃ) is taken from Ps. 10:2–3. The Greek Fathers agree in explaining this expression from the Psalms as referring to a state of ignorance.

⁷⁹ Περὶ κατασκευῆς καὶ γενέσεως ἀστρολάβου 1.19–20.

⁸⁰ *Antilogia* 484.143–45.

⁸¹ Basil the Great, *Homil. in Psalmos* 48.21ff.

⁸² Gregory of Nyssa, *De op. hom.*, in Migne (*PG* 44: col. 136).

⁸³ See Gregory of Nyssa, *De Beat.* 1, 85.1–86.2.

sive to non-discursive thought that results from this.⁸⁴ All the traditional philosophical arguments in favour of men's superiority over animals, such as, for instance, the Stoic⁸⁵ and then Christian⁸⁶ ideal of living in accordance with nature's providentially determined order of being, which granted man a superior rank than that of other animals, or the emphasis on the exclusively human capacity to articulate speech, are reversed by Gregoras. Eustratios' interpretation of Adam's fall offers the crucial key that allows Gregoras the possibility of maintaining that man fell into a condition contrary to his very nature, whereas non-human animals live in perfect accordance with their rank.

Conclusion

Any thorough reconstruction of the reception of Eustratios' commentaries in the Greek-speaking medieval world requires new critical editions of these works,⁸⁷ also because some manuscripts containing the whole set of commentaries on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, which were probably compiled under the supervision of Anna Komnene, have important paleographical value.⁸⁸ Therefore, we can easily recognize the fruitfulness of a thorough reconstruction of the textual tradition of Eustratios' work, as our few case-studies discussed in the present paper suggest. As is well known to specialists, there are three thirteenth–fourteenth century Byzantine lists of Aristotle's works and related commentaries and commentators, and they all mention Eustratios as commentator of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.⁸⁹ This suggests once more that Eustratios was widely read by the later generations of authors, not only among those who worked on Aristotle's *Ethics*, like Pachymeres and the enigmatic Heliodoros of Prusa, but also among Byzantine scholars like Gregoras, who must have been attracted both by the

⁸⁴ There are striking similarities between this passage by Eustratios and Isaac Komnenos' *De providentia et fato* (48.19–49.5), which actually consists of a re-elaboration of one of Proclus' *Tria opuscula*.

⁸⁵ See e.g. Cicero, *De officiis* 1.50. For an account of the Stoic view see Sorabji (1996).

⁸⁶ See e.g. Basil the Great, *Homil. in Hex.* 7.3; John Chrysostomos, *In Gen.* 8.4.

⁸⁷ Already more than 90 years ago, Mercati (1915) complained about the poor *CAG* edition by Heylbut, remarking that the editor ignored several manuscripts which could have represented a more solid base for the edition of Eustratios' text.

⁸⁸ Consider the *Coislinianus* 161, collated by Heylbut for the *CAG* edition and attributed by Harlfinger (1971: 55–57) to the 'Anonymus Aristotelicus' who has been recently identified by Mondrain (2004) as a monk called Malachia. On the 13th–14th century Eustratios manuscripts see Mondrain (2000: 19–21).

⁸⁹ These lists, contained in the *Marcianus gr.* 203 (f. 293^v), *Vaticanus gr.* 421, and *Hierosolymitanus Sti Sep.* 106 (f. 7^v), are edited respectively in Wendland (1902: xvii), Hayduck (1885: v), and Usener (1865: 163–66).

philosophical content and by the style and erudition found in Eustratios' text. Thus, if one considers that modern scholarship commonly regards Eustratios as a pedantic and boring scholar, one will not err in concluding that evidently the Byzantines themselves thought otherwise.

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